



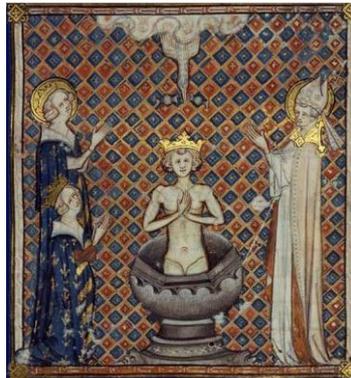
### 31 THE FRANKS AND CHARLEMAGNE

The Franks<sup>1</sup> were distinguished for their warrior and strategic abilities, and not only for the courage and the ruthlessness typical of the other barbarian peoples of Germanic descent. They were first mentioned by Tacitus who placed them in the region corresponding to the present Belgium, Holland and Rhineland. Throughout the period between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD, the Franks exercised a continuous pressure on the Gaul-Roman frontier, often reporting military successes having quickly learned from the imperial army the refined Roman art of war. In 358 they were eventually defeated by the Emperor Julian who persuaded them to become *fœderati* of the Empire, thus forming a buffer state with the duty of defending the Roman frontier of the Rhine river. In this way the Franks began to soften their customs by partially Romanizing themselves. In 451 their King, Meroveus, came to the aid of Flavius Ætius, the last great Roman general, and helped him defeat the Huns.



#### 1. The kingdom of the Franks and the conquests of Clovis

With the fall of the Roman Empire, Clovis, the third King of the Merovingian dynasty, in 486 expanded his reign to the region of *Lutetia Parisiorum* (Paris) and then expelled the Visigoths from Gaul<sup>2</sup>, who then retired to Spain. Clovis converted with all his subjects to Roman Christianity, becoming the only Germanic people never adhering to the Arian heresy.



#### 2. Baptism of Clovis

At that time, while Rome and the Italian peninsula were governed by the Heruli and the Ostrogoths, both followers of the Arian heresy, the Pope recognized the Franks as the only Germanic people who

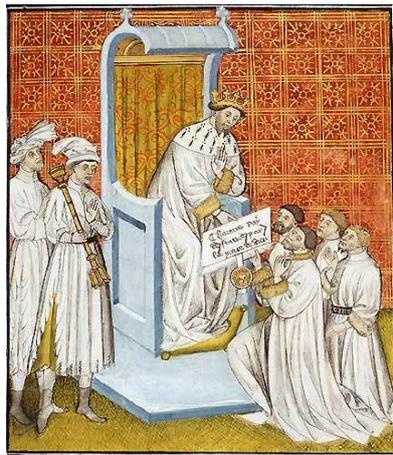
<sup>1</sup> The original name of this tribe was *Frakaz*, meaning “free and courageous”.

<sup>2</sup> From the year 888, the territories where the Franks had finally settled have been known as France, a term coined after its ruler. However, today’s French population is for the most part descendant of the Celtic Gauls. Only the Provence can be considered Gaul-Roman, having been intensely colonized by Latin peoples. Only few aristocratic families are of Frankish origin. In fact, the Franks only represented the warrior class who ruled over the other peoples of Gaul.





had joined Catholicism. The Franks were particularly receptive towards the Latin culture, a sensitivity that produced their rapid civilization after the conquest by King Clovis of the Roman Province of the Gauls, today's Provence. This marked the beginning of an alliance between the King and the Pope that had important consequences for the history of Western Europe. The Merovingian monarchs, converted to Catholicism, assumed a less warlike and a more priestly behavior. They were anointed Kings by the bishops with a ritual copied from the biblical consecration of the Kings of Israel<sup>1</sup>. Acting like the Messiah of the Old Testament, they began to bless their subjects and to heal in a miraculous fashion the ill and the possessed<sup>2</sup>. The King's military, juridical and administrative functions were therefore delegated to an official governing on his behalf: the Major-domo, the most important (*major*) figure of the Palace (*domus*).



### 3. The court of the Frankish Kings

The Royal Court became the place where the Frankish warrior caste met the Culdean monks from Ireland and the Roman patricians from Provence who performed their priestly and sapiential duties<sup>3</sup>.

By the 6th century, the Merovingian Court had already become the meeting place for various initiatic currents, with the creation of a circle reminiscent of that of the Roman Emperor Augustus, also known as the Circle of Mæcenas. Hence, the wise men of the Merovingian Court assumed the names of the Pythagorean poets and writers who had collaborated in the foundation of the Roman Empire in favor of Augustus. As we will see later, this fellowship of initiates of different origins, continued in its work to resurrect the Empire. Unfortunately, few of their names have survived in the historical record as only a small number of documents were saved from the wrath of the barbarian invasions. Only the work of 'Virgil Maro Grammaticus' has remained; a text of difficult interpretation, being deliberately written in *sermo obscurus* (enigmatic language)<sup>4</sup>. Although the material dealing with this initiatic association is

<sup>1</sup> Such recognition was to some extent tolerated by the Byzantine *Basileus* (King, Emperor), probably with an anti-Ostrogothic and anti-Longobard purpose, granting an Eastern Imperial proxy to the Merovingian Kings.

<sup>2</sup> Marc Bloch questioned the attribution of both the anointment and the thaumaturgical powers to the Merovingians (a dynasty still considered "too Germanic" and "not very French"), in spite of the fact that the sources he cites say otherwise. Although of Jewish descent, he did not forget his French origins and applied the usual Gallic nationalism even to historical periods in which this concept did not yet exist. For this reason, his book, rich in references and important information, considers France the navel of the world, relegating all other realms of Christianity to a sort of "cultural periphery". Marc Bloch, *I Re taumaturghi*, Milan, Einaudi, 2013, pp. 48-49 (1<sup>st</sup> Éd. Paris, Librairie Istra, 1924).

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Augustus Strong, "Über direkte Handelsverbindungen Westgalliens mit Irland im Altertum und frühen Mittelalter", *Classical Review* XXV, 1911, pp. 70-71.

<sup>4</sup> In many ways, his *Epitomæ* evokes a similarity with the etymological explanations of the Indian *Nirukta*. The conclusions of present philologists, who attempted to interpret Virgil's writings without having any idea of what is esoteric, are truly



scarce, it can be considered as a forerunner of the Palatine School of Charlemagne and, further on, of the circle of Emperor Henry VII of Luxembourg, to which belonged also Dante Alighieri<sup>1</sup>.

With time and the massive assumption of priestly character, the Merovingian Kings completely abandoned their functions of government, devoting themselves exclusively to meditation and rituals<sup>2</sup>.



#### 4. A “Lazy King”

After one hundred and fifty years, the Major-domo Pepin the Short directly took over the reins of the Frankish Monarchy. The last Merovingians were forced into a cloistral life and locked up in monasteries<sup>3</sup>. In 751 Pepin was acclaimed Roman Patrician by the Senate of Rome and anointed King of the Franks by Pope Stephen II. Thus began the Carolingian dynasty. Pepin the Short died in 768 leaving the Kingdom to his two sons Charles and Carloman. The latter died in his twenties, leaving the crown of the great realm to Charles who further enlarged the boundaries of his domain. At the Pope's request, Charles descended to Italy to fight the Lombards. In 774, following a decisive military victory, Charles became also King of the Lombards, annexing most of Italy.



#### 5. The Iron Crown with a cross nail inside

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exhilarating. G. Polara (edited by), *Virgilio Marone grammatico, Epitomi and Epistole*, Napoli, Liguori ed., 1979, pp. XXI-XXIV.

<sup>1</sup> In both these Imperial Circles, representing the esoteric intellectual élite of Catholicity in different epochs, the participants assumed pseudonyms borrowed from the *Bucolics* and the *Georgics* of Publius Virgil Maro, such as Titirus, Melibeus, Coridon etc. These were aristocratic poets who on many occasions played an important role for the "*Renovationes Imperii*".

<sup>2</sup> For this reason they were later called "Lazy Kings", *Rois fainéants*.

<sup>3</sup> In the second half of the 20th century, Pierre Plantard proclaimed himself last descendant of the Merovingian dynasty, which in his opinion was then descending from Jesus Christ himself. In this way, he declared to be the pretender to both the thrones of France and Israel. According to him, the occult continuation of the Merovingians allegedly survived under the protection of an "initiatic" organization called "Priory of Sion". This mystification was believed and spread by a large number of occultists, neo-spiritualists and new-agers such as Gerard de Sède, Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln among others. In 1993, Plantard, following a judicial investigation, confessed the hoax. However, his fraud has survived thanks to the worldwide popularization of Dan Brown's poor novels. Certainly, this mystification was not only an innocent joke, but it reflects the interests of a disturbing network of complicities involving several secret services of nations interested in spreading the idea of a "Franch-Sionist" Great Monarch of the World.



He was crowned with the Iron Crown as King of Italy, thus merging a Catholic consecration, represented by the nail of the cross of Christ inserted into it, with the continuity of the Constantinian imperial tradition<sup>1</sup>.

In the same year he was proclaimed Roman Patrician. At the height of his power, Charlemagne (Charles the Great) visited the most important Latin villas and cities, arming knights the Patricians of Roman origin and surrounding himself with a following of loyal supporters. At the same time, he reorganized his Court and the structure of his realm.



## 6. Coronation of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor

The Court became a laboratory for the *Renovatio Imperii*. The group of monks of the Culdean Church, of direct Celtic origin or of more recent Anglo-Saxon lineage, played a fundamental role in such process. Among these surely stands out the figure of Alcuin of York, successor of the Venerable Bede and *guru* of Charlemagne. He was initially assisted by Eginhard, who later succeeded him as teacher of the *Schola Palatina* (Court's School), and by Paul the Deacon, a Romanized Lombard. The ancient Roman-Pythagorean teaching of the *Trivium* and the *Quadrivium* was restored and systematized.



## 7. The Emperor Charlemagne and the *Basileus Michael*

The *Trivium* was made of Grammar, Rhetoric and Dialectic, the arts of the mind and speech; the *Quadrivium* was made of Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy and Music, the arts applied to the external

<sup>1</sup> Later, analogously to the *triregnum* of the popes (the crown corresponding to the hermetic symbolism), also the Emperors had to be invested with three crowns: those of King of Italy, the King of Germany and the King of Arles (Gaul).



objects through bodily action. Each of these arts was liable to a symbolic meaning and to a methodical and initiatic application<sup>1</sup>. Above these teachings were taught the doctrines of the cataphatic and the apophatic theologies, intended exclusively for the monks and the Sovereign. The structure of the State, as we will see in the next chapter, was then reorganized in harmony with these arts and doctrines.

Accused of a behavior unworthy of the pontifical high function, Pope Leo III, in serious difficulty, turned to Charlemagne asking for his protection<sup>2</sup>. Charles assumed the role of supreme judge of Catholicity, and absolved the Pope from any slander. In Rome, on Christmas night of the year 800, the Pope crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. With this consecration the Roman Empire rose again from its ashes<sup>3</sup>.

*Petrus Simonet de Maisonneuve*

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<sup>1</sup> The *Trivium* and the *Quadrivium*, which will remain throughout the Christian Middle Ages as the base of both worldly (*laukika*) and sacred (*vaidika*) knowledge, are closely comparable to the Vedic disciplines called *Vedāṅgas*.

<sup>2</sup> On that occasion, the Pontiff donated to the King of the Franks the keys of the sepulcher of St. Peter, recognizing him as *Defensor Fidei* (defender of the Faith). Charlemagne entertained friendly relations also with the Abbasid Caliph Hārūn ar-Rashīd, who, as a sign of sympathy, entrusted to him the keys of the Holy Sepulcher. In this way, Carlo assumed more and more the connotations of a Universal Sovereign (*Cakravartin*). Another sign of Universal Sovereignty was the spontaneous vassalage of the Kingdoms of Scotland and of Asturias to the newly restored Empire. In this way the Empire of Charles extended to nearly all the territories of western Christianity.

<sup>3</sup> There was still a test to pass: the recognition from the Byzantine *Basileus*, the Augustus Roman Emperor of the East. At the beginning the Byzantine Court was against the recognition. However, devastated by internal strife due to the usurpation of the Imperial throne by the *Basilissa* Irene, weakened by the iconoclastic polemics and worn out by the external wars caused by the Islamic expansion, after several protests and even armed clashes with the Empire of the Franks Constantinople yielded and the Emperor Michael in 812 recognized Charlemagne as Roman Emperor of the West.

