

Political influence on late Merovingian episcopal hagiographic production and the episcopal ideal



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ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with the political influence on late Merovingian episcopal hagiographic production and with the changes in the episcopal ideal. It focuses on how key elements such as the origins of the bishop, the manner of his induction into the episcopal office and the relationship between the bishop and the monarch, respectively the relationship between the performance of episcopal duties, political involvement and service at the court, are portrayed in hagiographic production. A method of comparative analysis of late Merovingian hagiographic production associated with Saint Arnulf of Metz, Audoin of Rouen, Eligius of Noyon, Aunemund of Lyon, Leudegar of Autun, and Praejectus of Clermont was applied.

KEYWORDS

Hagiography, Frankish Church, Merovingians, bishop, Carolingians

INTRODUCTION

This work deals with the topic of late Merovingian hagiographic production, meaning the writings that originated roughly between 640 and 720.¹ This definition is meaningful for several reasons — the writings produced during this period represent a coherent whole since they reflect both the Irish spiritual tradition and the changes in the structure of the Frankish church, as well as the change in society that occurred in the late 6th century. This came as an effect of the process of weakening Merovingian royal rule during the fratricidal wars, resulting in the consolidation of Frankish nobility.² At the same time, the scripts in question were written before the establishment of Carolingian hegemony in the Frankish Empire.

1 Thus, this study also follows the basic framework of the classical work P. FOURACRE — R. A. GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography 640–720*, Manchester 1996. Most recently, Merovingian hagiographic production has been comprehensively studied by J. KREINER, *The Social Life of Hagiography in the Merovingian Kingdom*, Cambridge 2018.

2 See for instance V. DRŠKA, *Divisiones regni Francorum: Královská moc a říšské elity Franské říše do vzniku císařství*, Ústí nad Labem 2010, pp. 65–95; M. BECHER, *Merowinger und Karolinger*, Darmstadt 2009, pp. 38–39.



It is precisely the influence of the Irish tradition and especially the consolidation of the Frankish nobility that is crucial for understanding the ideological developments in the background of late Merovingian hagiographic production. The Frankish nobility, having consolidated their position at the end of the 6th century, began to appreciate the lucrateness of ecclesiastical offices far more than in previous periods, especially the office of the bishop. Thus, the various Frankish families began to place their own members at the top of some bishoprics. This situation was soon reflected in hagiographic production, which served to glorify the members of the individual Frankish families or even to self-sanctification the family itself.³ The Irish impulses were then harnessed, among other things, by these noble groups to fund monasteries — independent of royal or episcopal administration — and to spread their influence through missionary activity (although this could often be limited to the declarative level).⁴

The hagiographic material defined above is also used to trace the image of the episcopal ideal of the late Merovingian period. In this context, the ideal can be understood as a set of qualities and patterns of behaviour that were considered desirable for the members of the *ordo episcoporum*. It is the hagiographic writings, among other sources, that inform us about what these qualities were since it is these writings that reflect contemporary ideals of holiness. By observing the transformations of individual *topoi* or the whole ethos, conclusions can be drawn about the changing mentality of the society that shared these ideals. In other words, if there had been no

3 See the term of F. Prinz „Selbsteheiligung des fränkischen Adels“, which F. Prinz used to describe phenomenon that K. Bosl called „Adelsheilige“. F. PRINZ, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich: Kultur und Gesellschaft in Gallien, den Rheinlanden und Bayern am Beispiel der monastischen Entwicklung (4. bis 8. Jahrhundert)*, München — Wien 1965, here pp. 489 ff.; F. PRINZ, *Heiligenkult und Adesherrschaft im Spiegel merowingischer Hagiographie*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift*, Bd 204, Heft 3, 1967, pp. 529–544; F. PRINZ, *Zur geistigen Kultur des Mönchtums im spätantiken Gallien und im Merowingereich*, in: F. PRINZ (Hrsg.), *Mönchtum und Gessellschaft*, pp. 265–353; K. BOSL, *Der „Adelsheilige“. Idealtypus und Wirklichkeit, Gesellschaft und Kultur im merowingerzeitlichen Bayern des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts*, in: F. PRINZ, (Hrsg.), *Mönchtum und Gessellschaft im Frühmittelalter*, Darmstadt 1976, pp. 354–386. Although this concept has been criticized by F. Graus and P. Fouracre, see F. GRAUS, *Sozialgeschichtliche Aspekte der Hagiographie der Merowinger- und Karolingerzeit. Die Viten der Heiligen des südalemannischen Raumes und die sogenannten Adelsheiligen*, in: BORST, Arno (Hrsg.), *Mönchtum, Episkopat und Adel zur Gründungszeit des Klosters Reichenau*, Sigmaringen 1974, pp. 131–176; P. FOURACRE, *Conflict, Power and Legitimation in Francia in the Late Seventh and Eighth Centuries*, in: I. ALFONSO — H. KENNEDY — J. ESCALONA (eds.), *Building Legitimacy: Political Discourses and Forms of Legitimation in Medieval Societies*, Leiden — Boston 2004, p. 11, in the version of F. Prinz it can still be cautiously relied on. See a revision of this concept, M. ŠENK, *Vitae sanctorum: úloha franské hagiografické tradice při nástupu Karlovců*, diploma thesis, Praha 2022, pp. 55–72, in which I have applied to the issue of *Adelsheiligen* new research proposals concerning royal sacrality.

4 Recently on this subject Y. FOX, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites*, Cambridge 2014. See also F. PRINZ, *Frühes Mönchtum*, pp. 124–141.

change in social demand, the author of a given hagiographic writing would have had no need to change established literary schemes and invent unusual clichés.⁵



THE ORIGIN OF BISHOPS, ELECTION TO THE OFFICE AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EPISCOPAL DUTIES AND SERVICE AT THE COURT

In the hagiographic production of the 7th century, the cliché of the noble origin of bishops can be observed. This aspect emerged for the first time in the literary schemes of the Gallic hagiographic tradition in the 5th century, when the emphasis on the nobility of the bishop reflected the fact that bishops tended to come from the ranks of the Gallo-Roman senatorial aristocracy. During the decline of the Roman administration, the senatorial aristocracy consolidated its position in society through the possession of the episcopal office, which provided it with a legitimizing framework for the possession of its power.⁶ In terms of its influence on the Frankish hagiographic tradition, the life of Germanus, the bishop of Auxerre (*Vita sancti Germani*), written between 475–480 by Constantius of Lyon, is particularly noteworthy. About Germanus' origin, Constantius writes: „Germanus, then, was a native of the town of Aux-

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- 5 An inspiring study of hagiographic production and episcopal ideals remains S. HAAR-LÄNDER, *Vitae episcoporum. Eine Quellengattung zwischen Hagiographie und Historiographie, untersucht an Lebensbeschreibungen von Bischöfen des Regnum Teutonicum im Zeitalter der Ottonen und Salier*, Stuttgart 2000.
- 6 See the debate concerning the origin of the *Bischofsherrschaft* phenomenon. With this concept came F. Prinz and M. Heinzelmann, see F. PRINZ, *Die bischöfliche Stadtherrschaft im Frankenreich vom 5. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift*, Bd. 217, Hf. 1, 1973, pp. 1–35; M. HEINZELMANN, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien. Zur Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert. Soziale, prosopographische und bildungsgeschichtliche Aspekte*, Zürich — München 1976, *passim*, and has received numerous elaborations, including an analysis of the possible peak of episcopal rule at the end of the 7th century, when individual bishops were supposed to act as rulers of semi-independent episcopal republics in the context of the decline of Merovingian royal power. Most recently, see S. DIEFENBACH, „*Bischofsherrschaft*“. *Zur Transformation der politischen Kultur im spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Gallien*, in: S. DIEFENBACH — G. M. MÜLLER (eds.), *Gallien in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter: Kulturgeschichte einer Region*, Berlin 2013, pp. 91–152. Critical observations on the concept of *Bischofsherrschaft* were made by G. I. HALFOND, *Bishops and the Politics of Patronage in Merovingian Gaul*, Ithaca — London 2019, *passim*. Although the whole concept, or at least the research on bishops of the 7th century, would deserve a comprehensive revision in terms of hagiographic source material, as I. Wood has shown in his recent publication, I. WOOD, *The Christian Economy of the Early Medieval West: Towards a Temple Society*, Binghamton 2022, pp. 153–159, the concept of *Bischofsherrschaft* can still be used as a framework for the interpretation of Frankish ecclesiastical history, although it must be treated with considerable caution. The legitimation strategies of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy have been particularly discussed by B. JUSSEN, *Über ‚Bischofsherrschaften‘ und die Prozeduren politisch-sozialer Umordnung in Gallien zwischen ‚Antike‘ und ‚Mittelalter‘*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift*, Band 260, 1995, pp. 673–718.



erre, born of parents of the highest rank [...].⁷ Constantius also noted the noble origin of Germanus' wife, whom he had married before he was elected bishop: „While he was thus engaged and dazzling all by the praises he drew upon himself, he took a wife, whose birth, wealth, and character were all of the highest.”⁸ Nor is it without interest that, in describing Germanus' episcopal election, Constantius lists all the social groups that participated in the election: „Suddenly divine authority intervened and universal consent executed its decrees. For all the clergy, the whole nobility, the townfolk and the countryfolk, with one accord demanded Germanus for their bishop.”⁹ The *Vita sancti Germani* had a great influence on subsequent Frankish hagiographic production. Yet, as shown below, a qualitative change is clearly evident in late Merovingian hagiographic production, and noble birth became one of the essential attributes of a saint.

The first to be examined is bishop Arnulf of Metz.¹⁰ Very little has been written about the *Vita sancti Arnulfi* so far, which is somewhat paradoxical in consideration of the fact that the surviving sources on the origin of the Carolingians are scarce.¹¹ Therefore, more attention will be given to its contents than to other writings.

Arnulf belonged to that part of the Frankish nobility that emerged strengthened from the Merovingian *bellum civile*. Arnulf's area of influence was in the region between the Upper Meuse and the Moselle. During the turbulent times of the Merovingian civil wars, he formed a political alliance with another Austrasian noble, Pippin (known as Pippin I or Pippin the Elder), whose centre of power was between the Middle Meuse, the Ardennes and the region of *Silva Carbonaria*, therefore north of Arnulf's holdings. Together with Pippin, he assisted Chlothar II to ascend the throne, and his election as bishop of Metz was probably a gesture of the new Frankish king's gratitude. After the accession of Dagobert I, Arnulf was apparently forced by the Frankish king to resign from the office of the bishop of Metz and died in seclusion

7 English translation cited from T. F. X. NOBLE — T. HEAD (eds.), *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, London 1995, p. 79. Cf. „Igitur Germanus Autisiodorensis oppidi indigena fuit, parentibus splendidissimis procreatus est [...]”. R. BORIUS (ed.), *Vie de Saint Germain d'Auxerre*, Paris 1965, p. 122.

8 English translation cited from NOBLE — HEAD (eds.), *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 79. Cf. „In quo actu dum multiplici laudis luce resplendet, sublimem genere, diuitiis, moribus sortitur exorem.” R. BORIUS (ed.), *Vie de Saint Germain d'Auxerre*, p. 122.

9 English translation cited from NOBLE — HEAD (eds.), *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 79. Cf. „Cum subito diuina procedit auctoritas, quam consensus uniuersitatis exsequitur. Nam clerici omnes cunctaque nobilitas, plebs urbana uel rustica in unam uenere sententiam: Germanum episcopum omnium una uox postulat.” R. BORIUS (ed.), *Vie de Saint Germain d'Auxerre*, p. 124.

10 The section dedicated to Saint Arnulf is partially based on the author's diploma thesis.

11 The author of the *Vita sancti Arnulfi* remains anonymous. The *Vita* was written in the second half of the 7th century, perhaps shortly after 650. *Vita sancti Arnulfi* was recently studied by C. M. NASON, *The Mass Pericopes for Saint Arnulf's Day from the Drogo Sacramentary*, in: *Revue bénédictine*, Vol. 124, 2014, pp. 298–324; C. M. NASON, *The 'Vita Sancti Arnulfi' (BHL 689–692): Its Place in the Liturgical Veneration of a Local Saint*, in: *Sacris erudiri. Jaarboek voor godsdienstwetenschappen*, Vol. 54, 2015, pp. 171–200. On the datation of the *Vita sancti Arnulfi* and on its influence on further Carolingian production, see M. ŠENK, *Vitae sanctorum*, pp. 72–95.



around 640.¹² Soon after his death, he began to be venerated as a saint,¹³ and the indications in the *Vita sancti Arnulfi* for an early translation of relics of Arnulf's body can be given tentative credit, although it is far from certain that this occurred under Arnulf's successor Goericus, as the author of the *Vita sancti Arnulfi* informs us, but it may have taken place when Arnulf's son Chlodulf was bishop of Metz since that is probably when the *Vita sancti Arnulfi* itself was written.¹⁴

The emphasis on the noble origin of Saint Arnulf in the *Vita sancti Arnulfi* is quite evident: „*The blessed Bishop Arnulf was thus begotten by parents of a very ancient and noble Frankish family and abounded in immeasurable worldly wealth.*“¹⁵ As the anonymous author tells us, he was educated and then sent into the service of King Theudebert II. Arnulf further married an unnamed noble maiden and they had two sons. Arnulf then turned his thoughts to spiritual matters while working at the court and even considered joining the monastery of Lérins. Arnulf was diverted from it by the will of God, for a different path in life was about to be chosen for him, and Arnulf was not to be hidden from the world, though he would have liked to be.¹⁶ Then, when by chance, the city of Metz found itself without a bishop, Arnulf was elected by the unanimous will of the people.¹⁷ Although Arnulf, following the classical *topoi*, did not want to become a bishop, he could do nothing against God's will. At the same time, however, he retained the office of *domesticus* and oversight of the court.¹⁸

Arnulf was also supposed to always be close to the royal court, with whom he was to travel to the land of the Thuringians, for example.¹⁹ The contradiction between the exercise of the episcopal office and Arnulf's activities at the court is shown in chapter

12 For a basic overview, see for example E. EWIG, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, Stuttgart 2012, pp. 117–121; R. SCHIEFFER, *Die Karolinger*, Stuttgart 2014, pp. 12–19.

13 The cult of Saint Arnulf has so far been dealt with mainly by G. O. OEXLE, *Die Karolinger und die Stadt des hl. Arnulf*, in: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien. Jahrbuch des Instituts für Frühmittelalterforschung der Universität Münster*, Bd. 1, 1967, especially pp. 361–362.

14 Arnulf's successor in the office was Goericus — a member of Agilolfingian family. Given that Arnulf was behind the murder of another member of the Agilolfings — a certain Chrodoald — it seems unlikely that Goericus was behind the origin of the cult of Arnulf. See *Chronicarum Fredegarii libri IV cum Continuationibus*, B. KRUSCH (ed.), MGH SS rer. Mer. 2, Hannover 1888, p. 146. For interpretation, see J. JÖRG, *Agilolfingerstudien: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte einer adligen Familie im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 1986, pp. 68–78.

15 Author's translation. Cf. „*Beatus igitur Arnulfus episcopus prosapie genitus Francorum, altus satis et nobilis parentibus atque oppulentissimus in rebus saeculi fuit;*“ *Vita Sancti Arnulfi*, KRUSCH (ed.), MGH SS rer. Mer. 2, p. 432.

16 *Ibidem*, pp. 432–434.

17 Author's translation. Cf. „[...] *forte fuit, ut urbs Metensium praesule indigeret. Tunc una vox populorum Arnulfum domesticum adque consiliarium regis dignum esse episcopum adclamavit.*“ *Ibidem*, p. 434.

18 *Ibidem*, pp. 434–435.

19 *Ibidem*, pp. 436–437. On the interpretation of the Thuringian journey and on Noddo, see for example V. SCHIMPF, *Bemerkungen zu den fränkisch-thüringischen Beziehungen im ersten Drittel des 7. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Archäologischen Gesellschaft in Thüringen e. V., Terra prae-historica: Festschrift für Klaus-Dieter Jäger zum 70. Geburtstag*, Langenweißbach 2007, pp. 411–415.



thirteen of *Vita sancti Arnulfi*. A certain Noddo, and other unnamed people, were to have said of Arnulf: „[...] that he was not a worshipper of God, but rather a man devoted to pleasure, to whose bedside at night not only the king, but also the queen, hastened to seek counsel.“²⁰ Such a rumour, of course, according to the author of the writing, was not true, and they were punished for it, first by divine fire, which burned their buttocks and genitals, and then by the king, who had Noddo and his son beheaded.²¹

One of the biggest and most important intentional deviations from what apparently actually happened is the author's description of Arnulf's withdrawal from the bishopric of Metz. Arnulf was sent into exile by Dagobert I and Arnulf's rival, Goerich of the Agilolfingian family, was put in his place at Metz.²² However, according to the author of the *Vita sancti Arnulfi*, the situation was almost the opposite. Arnulf himself was about to leave the episcopal office, which he was frantically discouraged from doing by King Chlotar II, who was about to entrust Arnulf with the administration of his kingdom and his son and successor Dagobert I.²³ Arnulf nevertheless desired to become a hermit, which became the cause of the conflict between Arnulf and Dagobert I. The young king, according to the author of the writing, had no qualms about putting Arnulf back on the bishop's seat at Metz, so much so that he threatened to behead Arnulf's youngest son if he would not return. At last, after the intervention of a certain nobleman, the king desisted from the murder. The queen eventually interceded on Arnulf's behalf, and Goericus, who is in the writing intentionally not described as an enemy of Arnulf, was elected the new bishop of Metz.²⁴

Arnulf was then supposed to stay in various places, heal the sick and perform miracles. These accompanied Arnulf's death, and the writing itself ends with a list of miracles after his passing.²⁵

The author of the *Vita sancti Arnulfi*, in the description outlined above, emphasized the saint's noble origin and made no secret of the secular life Arnulf had lived before his election to the office of bishop of Metz. This secular activity, as in other cases shown below, is mitigated only by the declarative monastic ethos that is presented in the *Vita sancti Arnulfi* in the case of Arnulf's desire to retire to the monastery of Lérins and especially in his subsequent departure from the episcopal office. The description of the episcopal election is portrayed as the result of the will of the people, thereby deliberately omitting the role of the king, which was certainly crucial in the election itself. Along with the proclaimed reason for Arnulf's resignation from the episcopal office, this appears to be a reflection of the politics of the early Carolingians, who,

20 „[...] non esse scilicet cultorem Dei, sed potius hominem voluptati deditum, a cuius videlicet lectum nocturnis horis non solum rex, vero etiam et regina tamquam consilium flagitans properaretur.“ *Vita Sancti Arnulfi*, p. 437.

21 Ibidem, p. 437.

22 See for example F. PRINZ, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich*, p. 141.

23 *Vita Sancti Arnulfi*, pp. 438–439. See especially „Nam praefatus rex Chlotharius tanta eum fide et amore dilexit, ut, cum prolem suam Dagobertum in principatus culmine sublimasset, eidem regnum ad gubernandum et filium erudiendum in manu tradidisset. Quem ille acceptum ita altissima et profunda eruditiv sapientia, ut in Secamborum natione rex nullus illi similis fuisse narraretur.“ Ibidem, p. 439.

24 Ibidem, pp. 439–440.

25 Ibidem, pp. 440–446.



at the time of the *Vita sancti Arnulfi*, were already consolidating their autonomous position in Austrasia over the Merovingian kings, which culminated in the attempt of Grimoald to place his son on the royal throne.²⁶ Saint Arnulf undoubtedly did not live the life of an exemplary saint (it is enough to mention his involvement in military campaigns, intrigues at the court or participation in the murder of Chrodoald), which is reflected in the pages of the *Vita sancti Arnulfi*. It is worth asking, for example, why the anonymous author inserted a passage in the writings in which the accusation of intercourse with the queen is depicted. Given that the quoted passage from the *Vita sancti Arnulfi* certainly does not belong to the standard hagiographic *topoi*, it seems the most likely option to see in this passage an echo of the polemic against the numerous accusations made at the court by rivals of early Carolingians (which is supported by the presumed dating of the writing not long after Arnulf's death).

Merovingian kings of the 7th century chose their bishops among those who had served at their court. One of them was Audoin of Rouen (also known as Dado). The *Vita Audoini episcopi* was written in the late 7th or early 8th century by an unknown author. Audoin was born during the reign of Chlothar II into a prominent family of Frankish nobility. His family owned estates in the vicinity of Paris, particularly in the Seine and Oissy valleys and on the lower Marne, which made them one of the most prominent houses around the Neustrian court. Audoin had two brothers, Ado and Rado, who also made careers at the court of Dagobert I. Audoin had an excellent education, which, together with his origin, predestined him for service in the royal court. There he held the office of referendary and in 641 he was elected bishop of Rouen. Audoin was involved in the foundation of the monasteries of Rebais, Saint-Wandrille, Fécamp and probably Saint-Germer-de-Fly. He was a key figure in the spread of Irish monastic influence, which may be related to his desire for power control of church estates. Audoin was active in the regency government of Queen Balthilde and his ally was the Neustrian mayor of the palace Ebroin. Audoin of Rouen died in the early 680s, and his family soon lost a power struggle with the Carolingians, who eventually infiltrated the centre of the Audoin family's estates, as well as the governance of the ecclesiastical foundations that Audoin had originally gathered around him.²⁷

The anonymous author of the *Vita Audoini episcopi* reports on Audoin's noble origin and points out that Audoin had a close relationship with the king since childhood: „[...] in the province of Gaul, at the stronghold of Soissons, three venerable men were born, begotten as noble from one stock, and made famous by the grace of God from the high: Ado, Dado and Rado. Their father was Audecharius, their mother Aiga, each decorated with the height of Christianity. From the first stages of infancy, having been instructed in the subtlety

26 On the interpretation of this event, see for example provocative thesis of M. BECHER, *Der sogenannte Staatsstreich Grimoalds. Versuch einer Neubewertung*, in: J. JÖRG — U. NONN — M. RICHTER (Hrsg.), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit*, Sigmaringen 1994, pp. 119–147; of more classical narrative in DRŠKA, *Divisiones regni Francorum*, pp. 166 ff.

27 On the *Vita Audoini episcopi* and on Audoin's life in general, see especially F. PRINZ, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich*, pp. 124–136; P. FOURACRE, *The Work of Audoenus of Rouen and Eligius of Noyon in Extending Episcopal Influence from the Town to the Country in Seventh-Century Neustria*, in: *Studies in Church History*, Vol. 16, 1979, pp. 77–91; FOURACRE – GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 133–152.



of letters, they were beloved by the king himself and most well and most wisely educated by men of illustrious standing.²⁸ The description of Audoin's episcopal election is given only vaguely in the *Vita Audoini episcopi*, with references in three different places. In the very first chapter, the author states: „The venerable Audoin, therefore, also named Dado, was elevated as bishop to the episcopal cathedra, having attained royal recognition. And he performed his duties for a long time.“²⁹ Subsequently, Audoin, together with Saint Eligius, served at the court (which is portrayed positively), after which Audoin was installed into the episcopal office at Rouen.³⁰ In chapter seven, the role of the king and the reasons that prevented his immediate accession are discussed: „So too, seeing that this holy man of God had by royal command occupied the episcopal position from a lay status, he feared in accordance with the sentiment of the Apostle where he forbids that a neophyte be ordained lest he fall into the snare of devil. After taking up the authority, until a year should turn over in time, [he passed] as an exile from his homeland through the grades and orders rightly until he became a learned scribe in the Church.“³¹ In the *Vita Audoini episcopi*, the installation to the office is thus portrayed as the result of royal patronage. Indeed, as is shown below, the ministry at the court plays a central role throughout the whole writing and is a firm part of the presented episcopal ideal.

Although the life of the court itself is not always portrayed in a positive light in the *Vita Audoini Episcopi*, Audoin is never criticised for his participation in the court's life and is instead portrayed as one who tries to resolve conflicts and bring peace.³² The author places particular emphasis on the peaceful journey that Audoin made in

28 English translation cited from FOURACRE –GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 153–154. Cf. „[...] *provintia Galliarum Suessionico opido orti sunt tres venerabiles viri, ex uno semine nobiles generate, gratia Dei caelitus inluminati, Ado, Dado et Rado. Pater eorum Audecharius, mater vero nomine Aiga, uterque christiano apice decorate. Qui a rudimentis infantiae litterarum sunt acumine informati, ab ipso principe dilecti, prudentissime eruditi ab illustri viris optime.*“ *Vita Audoini episcopi Rotomagensis*, W. LEVISON (ed.), MGH SS rer. Mer. 5, Hannover 1910, p. 554.

29 English translation cited from FOURACRE –GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, p. 154. Cf. „*Venerabilis ergo Audoinus cognomento Dado pontifex episcopale cathedra sublimatus, una cum honore regale indeptus, funcxit official per tempora longa.*“ *Vita Audoini episcopi Rotomagensis*, pp. 554–555.

30 Cf. „*Ex hoc beatum Eligium Novomensem antestitem, virtutibus conprobatum, fidei caritate conunxit, et quasi duae olivae pinguisssimae vel duo candelabra aurea splendentes, solem iustitiae inluminati, ambo pariter fulgebant aula palatii. Quem cum Dominus videns militem suum gratum atque sillicitum esse circa sua praecepta, de terreno et naufragio saeculo erepto, pontificale cathedra sede in Rodomo civitate conlocans, sacerdos egregius funcxit officium.*“ *Ibidem*, p. 556.

31 English translation cited from FOURACRE –GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 157–158. Cf. „*Ita demum, dum ipse sanctus Dei ex laico ordine ad honus pontificalem iusso regali insedisset, verebat iuxta apostoli sententiam, ubi prohibuit, ut neque neophitus ordinetur et ut nequaquam incidens in laqueum diabuli: post acceptam potestatem exsul de patria, dūm annus verteretur in tempore, per grados et ordines merito fieret scriba doctus in ecclesia.*“ *Vita Audoini episcopi Rotomagensis*, p. 558.

32 Cf. „[...] *invenit vir pacificus in regno Francorum inter principes palatii orta scandala, instigante diabulo, seminatore discordiae. [...] et multas tribulationes beatus senectus sustinuit, ut pacificos redderet, quos diu odia animas eorum foedaverant, et ut effusio sanguinis, humana caedis non fieret, usque pene ad mortis terminum pie atque fideliter desudabat [...].*“ *Ibidem*, p. 561.



his old age to the Austrasian court during the war between the Austrasians and the Neustrians.³³ It is this peacemaking activity that is also highlighted by the author in his description of Audoin's death and is, in fact, seen as one of the important aspects of the bishop's sainthood: „*The royal house bewailed its most prudent adviser and the whole people rose openly in mourning because he [Audoin] always procured peace for the people and strongly exerted himself to prevent the shedding of human blood. [...] Then the king with the queen, the assembly of bishops, the mayor of the palace, and the nobles of the palace, who had also come together, carried the holy man on the funeral bier and celebrated the holy obsequies with grief.*“³⁴ Thus, in *Vita Audoini episcopi*, service at the court is not only portrayed positively, but it becomes directly part of the episcopal ideal and, together with the miracles that Audoin performed during his lifetime (often linked to his diplomatic activities),³⁵ constitutes the bishop's holiness.

Evidence of Audoin's education is provided by another episcopal hagiography, the *Vita Eligii episcopi*, of which Audoin is the author. Eligius began his career as an artisan under Chlothar II. Eligius' election to the episcopate can clearly be linked to his previous service at the court. He was consecrated bishop of Noyon-Tournai in 641, on the very same day as Audoin at Rouen. As bishop, he fought the local elite around Noyon, spread the Irish ethos and also went on a missionary journey to the pagans. Eligius died probably in 660.³⁶

Audoin informs us of Eligius' origin with the following words: „*So Eligius was born and raised in that region from free parents of an ancient Christian line. His father was called Eucheria and his mother Terrigia.*“³⁷ Therefore Eligius came from the ranks of the former Gallo-Roman elite. In his youth, he was trained as a goldsmith.

33 Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 562–563. On the context, see for example S. SCHOLZ, *Die Merowinger*, Stuttgart 2015, pp. 243–257.

34 English translation cited from FOURACRE – GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, p. 163. Cf. „*Domus regia plangitur prudentissimum consiliarium; sed plane universus populus in lamentum adsurgit, quia pacem populo semper procurabat et, humanus sanguis ne effunderetur, viriliter desudabat. [...] Igitur rex cum regina et episcoporum conventum atque maiorum domus seu priores palatii una pariter conglobati, sanctum virum in feretrum deportantes, sancta exsequia cum merore celebrantes, gaudebat se quisque et in maximo lucro deputabat, qui mereretur beati viri corpus in suis humeris deportasse.*“ *Vita Audoini episcopi Rotomagensis*, p. 564.

35 Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 559; 562–563.

36 On the *Vita Eligii episcopi* and the life of Eligius in general, see especially FOURACRE, *The Work of Audoenus of Rouen and Eligius of Noyon*, pp. 77–91; J. A. MCNAMARA, *Dado of Rouen, Life of St. Eligius of Noyon*, in: T. HEAD (ed.), *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, New York — London 2000, pp. 137–139; W. BERSCHIN, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter. Bd. 2: Merowingische Biographie. Italien, Spanien und die Inseln im frühen Mittelalter*, Stuttgart 2020, pp. 53–66; S. LIN, *Rereading Absence: Silent Narratives in the 'Life of Eligius of Noyon'*, in: M. FAFINSKI — J. RIEMENSCHNEIDER (eds.), *The Past Through Narratology: New Approaches to Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Heidelberg 2022, pp. 27–39.

37 English translation cited from MCNAMARA, *Dado of Rouen*, p. 141. Cf. „*In hac ergo regione parentibus ingenuis atque ex longa prosapia christianis Eligius natus atque alitus est; cuius pater Eucherius, mater vero Terrigia vocitata est.*“ *Vita Eligii episcopi Noviomagensis*, KRUSCH (ed.), MGH SS rer. Mer. 4, Hannover 1902, p. 670.



Through his skills, he won the favour of Kings Chlotar II and Dagobert I, and his ministry at the court itself is portrayed in good light.³⁸ According to Audoin, Eligius would have entered the monastery he founded, if God had not chosen a different path for him.³⁹ Audoin paid great attention to the episcopal election of Eligius and did not omit to mention his own election as bishop of Rouen.⁴⁰ The part related to the beginning of Eligius' episcopate begins with a description of the ideal process of choosing a bishop, which according to Audoin, Eligius fulfilled: „*Thus a single counsel was pleasing to all, accepted in the Holy Spirit and by royal order, that no one who had paid a price should be admitted to sacerdotal offices, nor those who, like rapacious wolves, profited by putting the gifts of the Holy Spirit up for sale. But only men of good reputation and irreproachable life should be chosen for the pontifical offices. And in that spirit they chose Eligius for the merits of his sanctity and good works, now radiating light, for the holy sacerdotal office.*“⁴¹ Although Audoin does not mention it directly, the connection between the service at the court of the Merovingian kings (a summary of this service precedes the passage cited above) and the episcopal election is clear from the text.⁴² Audoin and Eligius then both had to wait until the canonical prerequisites for consecration were fulfilled.⁴³

Following the examples of classical hagiographic *topoi*, Eligius as a bishop made a missionary journey, miraculously found the relics of saints, performed miracles and expelled demons.⁴⁴ The politics of the time is reflected primarily through the visions that Saint Eligius was supposed to have had.⁴⁵ Eligius' funeral was attended by Queen Balthilde and her sons and nobles.⁴⁶ Among the writings presented, the *Vita Eligii episcopi* has the greatest emphasis on pastoral care, while the service at the court fades into the background in the narrative after Eligius' episcopal election.⁴⁷ This makes the *Vita Eligii episcopi* most similar to the classical early Merovingian hagiography. On the one hand, Eligius is one of those holy bishops of the late Merovingian period who owed their careers to service at the court. On the other hand, his Gallo-Roman origin, as well as the classical narrative scheme of the *Vita Eligii episcopi*, show the greatest continuity with the preceding period of the writings presented.

38 Ibidem, pp. 672–676.

39 Ibidem, p. 681.

40 Ibidem, pp. 695–696.

41 English translation cited from MCNAMARA, *Dado of Rouen*, p. 152. Cf. „*Tunc ergo placuit omnibus, uno in Spiritu sancto accepto consilio simul cum regis imperio, ut nullus, praetio dato, ad sacerdotale officium admitteretur, neque eos qui ut lupi rapaces munera dando mercanda censebant dona Spiritus sancti, sed hos potius qui essent boni testimonii viri et inreprehensibilis vitae ad officium pontificatus eligerent. Exinde igitur elegerunt ex merito sanctitatis cunctis bonis operibus praeditum ad sacerdotale officium sanctum Eligium iam lumine radiatum [...].*“ *Vita Eligii episcopi Noviomagensis*, p. 695.

42 Ibidem, p. 695.

43 Ibidem, p. 696.

44 Ibidem, pp. 696–702; pp. 709–713.

45 Ibidem, pp. 717–718.

46 Ibidem, pp. 721–722.

47 See especially ibidem, pp. 702–704.



The work ethos of the *Vita Eligii episcopi* itself, then, is quite atypical and remained unique in early medieval hagiographic production.⁴⁸

Another source that can be mentioned here is the *Acta sancti Aunemundi*. Although the study of their origin is problematic, recent research has shown that they can be regarded as a 7th-century production. The *Acta sancti Aunemundi* portray the life of a powerful Burgundian nobleman, Aunemund, who held the post of bishop of Lyon. Aunemund's family controlled the territory around Lyon, and Aunemund himself was close to the royal court and the highest politics. His political involvement also became the cause of his downfall, as he was assassinated on suspicion (which may have been well-founded) of treason. The anonymous *Acta sancti Aunemundi* serve as a good example of the conflicts between bishops' involvement in court politics and the efforts of local aristocratic groups to consolidate their position and intervene in the centre through their possession of the episcopal office.⁴⁹

The bishop's noble origin, as well as his close relationship to the royal court and the power background from which he came, are emphasized at the beginning of the *Acta sancti Aunemundi*: „He was the son of a man of most illustrious standing, Sigo, the praefectus, and of Petronia and he was fostered and grew up in the court of King Dagobert and his son, King Clovis, who ruled in his place. He was, however, of Roman stock, and, always endowed with authority, he was honoured with public office. [...] for he also had extensive property.”⁵⁰ Although Aunemund is described as a Roman, this is probably only a historicising cliché, and Aunemund's family can be described as Burgundian nobility.⁵¹ Aunemund's episcopal election is portrayed as being highly unusual — Viventiolus, the previous bishop of Lyon, had chosen him as his successor and Aunemund was also consecrated by him (i.e. during Viventiolus' lifetime) — a procedure that was contrary to contemporary church law.⁵²

As bishop, he was to have a close relationship with the royal family, a point on which the author of the *Acta sancti Aunemundi* placed great emphasis: „By the king and his followers he was held in such esteem that whatever he asked for from them he got, and nobody was able to get anything for their own benefit unless he [Aunemund] won it by his

48 See for example A. Я. ГУРЕВИЧ, *Категории средневековой культуры*, Москва 1984, pp. 268 ff.

49 On the *Acta sancti Aunemundi* and the life of Aunemund in general, see especially F. PRINZ, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich*, p. 176; J. M. WALLACE-HADRILL, *The Frankish Church*, Oxford 1983, pp. 129–130; FOURACRE –GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 166–179; R. KAISER, *Die Burgunder*, Stuttgart 2004, pp. 198–200; HALFOND, *Bishops and the Politics of Patronage in Merovingian Gaul*, pp. 79–85.

50 English translation cited from FOURACRE –GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 180–181. Cf. „Fuit itaque illustrissimi viri Sigonis praefecti & Petroniae Filii, & in praetoriis regis Dagoberti, & Clodovei filii, qui pro eo regnavit, coalitus atque nutritus: natione tamen Romanus, semper ditionum honore praeditus, atque publicis fascibus honoratur. [...] nam etiam & in facultatibus latus.” *Acta Sancti Annemundi alias Dalfini episcopi*, J. PERIER (ed.), AA SS, Sept., Tom. VII., Antwerp 1760, p. 744.

51 For the summary of the debate, see FOURACRE –GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, p. 167.

52 *Acta Sancti Annemundi alias Dalfini episcopi*, p. 744.



own request from King Clothar III who had become his godson at the font of holy baptism.”⁵³ It was the king’s favour and Aunemund’s power that should have caused the rumours of treason to emerge.⁵⁴

During Aunemund’s absence from the court, his enemies took advantage of it, accusing and having murdered Aunemund’s brother, the prefect of Lyons.⁵⁵ Aunemund subsequently accepted his fate as a martyr, which ended in his assassination.⁵⁶ The writing then concludes with an enumeration of Aunemund’s miracles.⁵⁷

The *Acta sancti Aunemundi* confirm the tendency of the hagiographic writings outlined above regarding the specific late Merovingian *topoi* — the noble origin of the saint. Although involvement in high politics cost Aunemund his life, his very participation in political events, and especially his proximity to the royal court, are clearly among the main features of the episcopal ideal presented in the *Acta sancti Aunemundi*. A similar fate to that of Aunemund befell two other late Merovingian saint bishops, also in connection with their involvement in high politics.

Another writing, the *Passiones Leudegarii episcopi*, was written in the 680s, soon after the death of the protagonist of the writing. Hagiography about Saint Leudegar was extensively studied due to its importance for Frankish history and thus its historical background is not analysed in detail here. Saint Leudegar of Autun is another powerful bishop whose family shaped Frankish history — for example, Leudegar’s uncle Dido, bishop of Poitiers, was involved in the expulsion of Dagobert II to Ireland. Leudegar came to prominence due to his clash with the Neustrian mayor of the palace Ebroin. As a result, he left a trace in historical memory that portrays the Neustrian regime in a negative light. This was what kept the narrative contained in the *Passiones Leudegarii episcopi* popular through the Carolingian period.⁵⁸

The writing begins with a description of Leudegar’s noble origin, mentioning only his uncle Dido as bishop of Poitiers.⁵⁹ Leudegar was installed as bishop at a time when

53 English translation cited from FOURACRE –GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, p. 182. Cf. „*A regibus tamen & proceribus ita habebatur acceptus, ut, quicquid ab eis petered, impetraret, nullusque de aliqua re ad suum profectum quidquam valebat impetrare, nisi sua suggestion Clotario tertio principi deportaret, qui ejus de lavacro sacro fontis filiulus fuerat.*“ *Acta Sancti Aunemundi alias Dalfini episcopi*, p. 744.

54 Cf. „*Ideo dum sublimitatis suae gloriam ac brachium vindicaret extentum, nec noc & a fratribus celsior videretur in caetu, cunctis incidit in odium. Qui tractare eum seditiose caeperunt, sub clandestine accusation dicentes; quasi regnum ejusdem Clotarii, tunc temporis principis, evertere moliretur occulte.*“ *Ibidem*, p. 744.

55 *Ibidem*, p. 744.

56 *Ibidem*, pp. 744–745.

57 *Ibidem*, p. 746.

58 Leudegar’s hagiography has so far been the most studied of the set presented here. On the *Passiones Leudegarii episcopi* and the life of Leudegar in general, see for example P. FOURACRE, *Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography*, in: *Past and Present*, Vol. 127, 1990, pp. 13–38; FOURACRE –GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 193–215; DRŠKA, *Divisiones regni Francorum*, pp. 170–190; BERSCHIN, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter*, pp. 66–82.

59 *Passiones Leudegarii episcopi et martyris Augustodunensis*, B. KRUSCH (ed.), *MGH SS rer. Mer.* 5, Hannover 1910, pp. 283–284.



there were disputes over the bishopric in Autun, which ended in bloodshed: „*Meanwhile it became necessary to ordain him bishop of the city of Autun. For lately a dispute between two candidates for the episcopal office of that city had erupted and had reached the point of bloodshed. When one of the candidates lay dead on the spot and the other had been exiled for committing the crime, Balthild, who with her son Chlothar [III] was in charge of the palace of the Franks, at that point, inspired, I believe, by divine counsel, sent this energetic man to that city to be its bishop.*“⁶⁰ Thus, he was directly installed as bishop of Autun by Queen Balthilde as the regent of Chlothar III.

After taking office, Leudegar tried to appease the feuding parties, something which, according to the author of the *Passiones Leudegarii episcopi*, Leudegar pursued at the royal court as well.⁶¹ His involvement in politics and his work at the royal court are repeatedly portrayed in the writing as part of the fight against the devil, and therefore as a meritorious and necessary activity. The author of the *Passiones Leudegarii episcopi* does not even consider the possibility that Leudegar should not have participated in political events, and his service to the king is portrayed as an essential aspect of his episcopal authority.⁶² The writing itself is the closest to the history of the corpus here presented, paying little attention to aspects of the life in the diocese,⁶³ but instead discussing political events in detail — in fact, it contains extensive passages in which Leudegar is not discussed at all.⁶⁴

Leudegar’s struggle with Ebroin is portrayed as a long series of the saint’s suffering, which culminated in his murder.⁶⁵ The long writing, filled mainly with descriptions of historical events, concludes with a modest account of miracles after Leudegar’s death, which ends with a description of the death of Ebroin and thus with the punishment of evil.⁶⁶

Leudegar became a saint primarily through his participation in political life, which is described as a struggle with evil. Thus, political involvement is portrayed as good in the writing, for through it, Leudegar was able to fight the evil embodied by the mayor of the palace, Ebroin. This engagement is one of the central activities of his episcopacy and is part of the presented episcopal ideal.

The last writing is the *Passio Praeiecti episcopi*. This work by an anonymous author describes the life of Praejectus, who was bishop of Clermont during the reign

60 English translation cited from A. C. MURRAY (ed.), *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader*, Toronto 2008, p. 510. Cf. „*Incubuit interim causa necessitatis, ut in Agustudunense urbe eum ordinare deberent episcopum. Siquidem nuper inter duos contentio de eodem episcopatu exorta fuerat et usque ad sanguinis effusionem certatum. Cumque unus ibidem occubisset in morte, et alter pro perpetrato scelere datus fuisset in exilii intrusionem, tunc Balthildis regina, qui cum Chlothario filio Francorum regebant palatium, divinum, ut credimus, inspirate consilium, ad memoratam urbem hunc strinum direxit virum ibidem esse episcopum [...].*“ *Passiones Leudegarii episcopi et martyris Augustodunensis*, p. 284.

61 Ibidem, pp. 284–285.

62 Ibidem, pp. 284–291.

63 In the narrative, the inhabitants of Autun and their interests come to the fore, especially at the moments when the town was besieged because of Leudegar. Cf. ibidem, pp. 302–310.

64 Especially ibidem, pp. 299–301.

65 Ibidem, pp. 314–317.

66 Ibidem, pp. 317–320.



of Childerich II, and provides, among other things, historically valuable information about the ministry of saint Leudegar from a different perspective than that is presented in the *Passiones Leudegarii episcopi*. The anonymous *Passio Praeiecti episcopi* was written soon after Praejectus' martyrdom, which occurred in 676.⁶⁷

Praejectus did not come from the leading ranks of Frankish nobility, yet the anonymous author of the *Passio Praeiecti episcopi* took great care to portray Praejectus' origin in the most noble way possible: „*Holy Praejectus was born in the province of Auvergne and his light shone forth from a lineage of Roman origin. His father was called Gundolen, his mother Eligia. They traced their descent from a long line of Catholic men, most worthy of their Christian faith, through whom God also revealed miracles.*“⁶⁸ Subsequently, he was to be educated by bishop Genesisius and gradually worked up through service in the church.⁶⁹

The way the accession of Praejectus to the episcopal office is portrayed is the most problematic part of the whole writing. Firstly, it describes how, after the death of bishop Felix, a group of clerics formed, wanting to install their pretender, a certain Garivald, in the office, and how a dispute arose with Praejectus (who should have been granted the office because of a miracle). Garivald should have eventually prevailed because of the support of the laity. However, he died forty days after being elected to office.⁷⁰ But then the author interrupted the narrative and began to retell the story of how the town of Clermont lacked a bishop. In this case, the pretender to the office of bishop was to be Genesisius, Count of Clermont. However, since this was against canon law, Praejectus was chosen for office.⁷¹ Although the choice of Praejectus was based on the will of the people, there is no need to doubt the participation of King Childerich II in the process (which is also indicated in the writing itself).⁷² In the office of the bishop, Praejectus founded monasteries and performed miracles.⁷³

Praejectus did not come from the ranks of the highest nobility, nor did he owe his rise to the patronage of any of the most prominent families. Therefore, his activities are the most distant from the court circles. An exception is a case that turned out to be fatal for him. It was a dispute that led to the killing of Hector, an ally of Leudegar of

67 On the *Passio Praeiecti episcopi* and the life of Praejectus in general, see for example FOURACRE, *Merovingian History*, 1990, pp. 21–38; FOURACRE – GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 254–270; W. BERSCHIN, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter*, pp. 73–75.

68 English translation cited from MURRAY (ed.), *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*, p. 527. Cf. „*Igitur sanctus Praeiectus Arvernensium provincia ortus est et Romane generis stemate praefulsit. Huius pater Gundolenus, mater vero eius Eligia vocitata est, qui originem duxere ex longinqua prosapia, catholicis viris, religionem christiane dignissimis, per quos etiam Dominus multa miracula declaravit.*“ *Passio Praeiecti episcopi et martyris Arverni*, KRUSCH (ed.), MGH SS rer. Mer. 5, pp. 226.

69 *Ibidem*, pp. 228–232.

70 *Ibidem*, pp. 232–233.

71 *Ibidem*, pp. 233–234. Cf. FOURACRE – GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, p. 262, according to whom Praejectus was to take office only at the third attempt.

72 *Passio Praeiecti episcopi et martyris Arverni*, pp. 233–234.

73 *Ibidem*, pp. 234–237.



Autun.⁷⁴ It was Leudegar's involvement in this matter that seemed behind the killing of Praejectus himself. Although much space is devoted to this case in the writing, the author has given surprisingly little information about the circumstances surrounding the death of Saint Praejectus.⁷⁵ The file is then concluded with an enumeration of the miracles of Saint Praejectus.⁷⁶

From a literary perspective, the *Passio Praeiectionis episcopi* is the most poorly done of all the hagiographic writings mentioned above — some information is repeated, other information is omitted, probably in the belief that the audience is familiar with the subject, and it is not always clear which characters are mentioned and what their role is. Nevertheless, despite all these shortcomings pointed out by contemporary scholarship,⁷⁷ the *Passio Praeiectionis episcopi* still shows the central role of the court and the emphasis on the noble origin of the bishop (indeed, it was the lack of noble origin and the associated lack of family background that probably proved fatal to Saint Praejectus).

CONCLUSION

The hagiographic writings reflect only a small fraction of the lives of the late Merovingian bishops, but they have a crucial value for the study of the contemporary episcopal ideal and church practice. As J. Kreiner has aptly remarked, for a hagiographic production to be credible to its audience, it had to reflect a common social reality.⁷⁸ Therefore, the authors of individual writings may have partially modified the story of the events described, but their descriptions had to reflect the contemporary norm in terms of form and manner.

The analysis of the hagiographic writings shows that service at the court was seen as a natural part of the bishop's activity. The fact that service at the court was in conflict with the episcopal ideal is sometimes shown (as in the case of the *Vita sancti Arnulfi*), sometimes omitted, but the very involvement of bishops in politics and in court life is never seen in a negative light. Compared to the Early Merovingian period (represented, for example, by the hagiographical writings of Saint Germanus of Auxerre, Lupus of Troyes, or Anianus of Orléans), the bishop's concern for his flock and pastoral activity in the city, in general, stepped into the background of the episcopal ideal. Instead, the authors present the holiness of the saint through political activity and service at the court, which is sometimes generalized as a struggle against evil. The relationship between the political involvement of the bishop and a phenomenon such as the concept of *Bischofsherrschaft* can be understood in the context of hagiographic production and should be explored in further research.

Similarly, it is evident from the writings that the emphasis on the noble origin of the holy bishop underwent a qualitative change. This now became an essential

⁷⁴ Ibidem, pp. 237–243.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, pp. 243.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, pp. 244–248.

⁷⁷ See aptly FOURACRE –GERBERDING, *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 254–270.

⁷⁸ See KREINER, *The Social Life*, especially p. 2, p. 18 ff.



aspect that belonged both to the episcopal ideal and to lived practice. This is a very specific element in the history of Latin episcopal hagiographic production. Its roots, as has been shown, can be traced back to the 5th century, but became essential only in the late Merovingian period. Although scholars such as F. Graus and P. Fouracre were sceptical about the importance of the emphasis on the saint's origin, S. Patzold's research clearly shows that the emphasis on the noble origin of the bishop was no longer present in late Carolingian hagiographic production.⁷⁹ It is therefore a specific element of Merovingian and early Carolingian hagiographic production that found its peak in the late Merovingian period. In this light, future research should focus on a comprehensive analysis of the role of episcopal hagiographic production for the various Frankish families and a revision of the concept of *Adelsheiligen*, which, in its modified form, appears to be the most concise model so far for understanding this phenomenon of Frankish hagiographic production.

⁷⁹ See S. PATZOLD, *Episcopus: Wissen über Bischöfe im Frankenreich des späten 8. bis frühen 10. Jahrhunderts*, Ostfildern 2008, p. 467 ff., especially pp. 499–507.