

STUART AIRLIE

The aristocracy in the service of the state in the Carolingian period

“The state exists for the happiness of a few.” (Herder)

I.

Federico Chabod argued long ago that the “salient characteristic [of the early modern state] was a staff of trained officials with distinctive routines and a collective identity which carried out defined tasks systematically”.¹ This view has, of course, been subject to much discussion, not least in studies that have a more flexible view of the interplay of public and private and that have led to an understanding that ‘private interests’ such as the venality of offices could be “an instrument for creating a social group whose social legitimacy derives from the exercise of public functions.”² An ideology of service and the role of public authority in the maintaining of noble status meant that there were close links between aristocracy and state, even for an aristocracy that derived much of its social legitimacy from birth such as that of later medieval France or of early modern Europe. As A. Maćzac has pointed out, epigrams such as “no nobility, no king” or “no bishop, no king, no nobility” stressed the “indivisibility of ruler and elites” in the early modern period.³ While points of contrast between these later periods and the Carolingian era remain striking, Professor Maćzac’s remarks may usefully be juxtaposed with Heinrich Dannenbauer’s lapidary sentences, “Die Welt des Mittelalters war eine aristokratische Welt. Staat und Kirche und Gesellschaft werden vom Adel beherrscht.”⁴ But we have of course travelled a long distance historiographically from Dannenbauer’s 1941 article, and the debates involving such scholars as him, Walter Schlesinger, Theodor Mayer and Karl Bosl no longer hold centre stage. As Tim Reuter has written in a general survey of the historiography on the medieval nobility, “the assumption of ‘autochthonous’ noble rights and power has turned out to be difficult to demonstrate conclusively, and it has been found not all that helpful as a tool for analysing the politics of the early and high Middle Ages. ... the new paradigm ... is a view of medieval kingdoms as governed by largely co-operative oligarchies.”⁵

This view is certainly that of much current English-language work on the Carolingian period. Janet Nelson, for example, notes Hinemar of Rheims’ stress on “the collective body, the *generalitas univer-*

I am grateful to members of the “Staat im frühen und hohen Mittelalter” group for comments on the draft version of this paper and to the University of Glasgow for granting me a period of study leave that enabled me to finalise my text.

¹ Federico Chabod, *Was there a Renaissance state?* in: *The Development of the Modern State*, ed. Heinz Lubasz (New York/London 1964) 26–42, at 33–40, cited and discussed in Julius Kirshner, *Introduction: The State is ‘Back In’*, in: *Journal of Modern History (Supplement: The Origins of the State in Italy, 1300–1600)* 67 (1995) 1–10, at 1 f.

² Giorgio Chittolini, *The ‘Private’, the ‘Public’, the State*, in: *Journal of Modern History (Supplement: The Origins of the State in Italy, 1300–1600)* 67 (1995) 34–61, at 51.

³ Antoni Maćzak, *The Nobility-State Relationship*, in: *Power Elites and State Building*, ed. Wolfgang Reinhard (Oxford 1996) 189–206, at 189; this volume is one of seven produced by the European Science Foundation project on the origins of the modern state in Europe from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century. On late medieval France, Philippe Contamine, *Noblesse et Service: l’idée et la réalité dans la France de la fin du Moyen Age*, in: *Nobilitas. Funktionen und Repräsentation des Adels in Alteuropa*, ed. Otto Gerhard Oexle/Werner Paravacini (Göttingen 1997) 299–311.

⁴ Heinrich Dannenbauer, *Adel, Burg und Herrschaft bei den Germanen*, in: *Historisches Jahrbuch* 61 (1941) 1–50, and reprinted in the historiographically rich collection *Herrschaft und Staat im Mittelalter*, ed. Hellmut Kämpf (*Wege der Forschung* 2, Darmstadt 1956) 66–134, at 66.

⁵ Timothy Reuter, *The medieval nobility*, in: *Companion to Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley (London 1997) 177–202, at 182 f.

sorum maiorum, the *universitas*, which, acting at and through assemblies, together with the king, maintained the well-being of the whole realm. The idea of the state revived.” Professor Nelson’s work fits into a historiographical context of work such as that of Jürgen Hannig on the idea of consensus in the Carolingian world but it is worth noting her own stress on a precise historical context for her remarks. She is referring to the ninth century rather than the eighth and she emphasises the importance here of the reign of Louis the Pious.⁶ This is precisely the period that will concern us in this paper. More recently, Matthew Innes’ book on the Rhineland has provided a rich and complex picture of relations between localities and centres in the Carolingian world where power and authority are negotiated and built rather than simply delegated and wielded.⁷

Such views do not, however, make the Carolingian empire a cosy world. Elites ran this world with violence and compulsion; services and dues were levied with harshness.⁸ Even within the elite, some members lost out, unable to hold onto their power in the face of aggression from the rulers. To say all this, however, is merely to recognise a harshness within medieval rulership that stress on consensus may conceal, though such harshness is hardly unique to the medieval period, and the violence of political struggle together with the economically and socially precarious nature of elite status.⁹ This does not mean that early medieval politics simply followed the law of the jungle. Nor does the stress on consensus mean that writers such as Innes see the state as fatally weakened through compromise. Quite the reverse. Innes’ presentation of the relations between centre and localities, between kings and aristocrats (broadly defined) in terms of a dialectic and “not a zero-sum game” offers a way of avoiding glaring anachronisms on the nature of the state while still being able to refer to the Carolingian world as a state in a way that makes historical sense.¹⁰ Historians have continued to stress, however, that within this world a constantly re-iterated language of justice, reform, public order, pivoting on the key figure of the ruler, is a hallmark of the Carolingian political order, marking it off from other periods.¹¹ This may also be true of assemblies. It was the presence or absence of such meetings of the political elite, summoned to come together by the ruler, rather than the varying power of individual rulers that signal the existence of political community to the historian.¹² This survey of predominantly English-language historiography shows that it accepts the existence of a Carolingian

⁶ Janet L. Nelson, Kingship and royal government, in: *The New Cambridge Medieval History 2, A.D. 700–900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1995) 383–430, at 426; cf. Jürgen Hannig, *Consensus fidelium: Frühfeudale Interpretationen des Verhältnisses von Königtum und Adel am Beispiel des Frankenreiches* (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 27, Stuttgart 1982) 3–41.

⁷ Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages. The Middle Rhine Valley 400–1000* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series, Cambridge 2000); id., Kings, monks and patrons: political identities and the abbey of Lorsch, in: *La royauté et les élites dans l’Europe carolingienne (début IX^e siècle aux environs de 920)*, ed. Régine Le Jan (Villeneuve-d’Ascq 1998) 301–324.

⁸ Paul Fouracre, Carolingian justice: the rhetoric of improvement and contexts of abuse, in: *La Giustizia nell’alto Medioevo (Secoli V–VIII)* (Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo 42, Spoleto 1995) 771–803; Timothy Reuter, Nobles and others: the social and cultural experience of power relations in the Middle Ages, in: *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge 2000) 85–98.

⁹ On political tensions, Innes, Kings, monks and patrons; on “elite formation as an unending process”, Paul Fouracre, The origins of the nobility in Francia, in: *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge 2000) 17–24, at 23.

¹⁰ Innes, *State and Society* 259.

¹¹ Fouracre, Carolingian justice; Régine Le Jan, Justice royale et pratiques sociales dans le royaume franc au IX^e siècle, in: *La Giustizia nell’alto Medioevo (Secoli IX–XI)* (Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo 44, Spoleto 1997) 47–85; Janet L. Nelson, Kings with Justice, Kings without Justice: an early medieval paradox, *ibid.* 797–823. Still thought-provokingly relevant is Chris Wickham, The other transition: from the ancient world to feudalism, in: *Past & present* 103 (1984) 3–36.

¹² Timothy Reuter, Könige, Adelige, Andere: „Basis“ und „Überbau“ in ottonischer Zeit, in: *Ottomische Neuanfänge. Symposium zur Ausstellung „Otto der Grosse, Magdeburg und Europa“*, ed. Bernd Schneidmüller/Stefan Weinfurter (Mainz 2001) 127–150, at 128; Timothy Reuter, Assembly politics in western Europe from the eighth century to the twelfth, in: *The Medieval World*, ed. Peter Linehan/Janet L. Nelson (London 2001) 432–450. There is a similar stress on the relationship between assemblies and political communities in Nelson, Kingship and royal government 417–422 and *ead.*, Rulers and government, in: *The New Cambridge Medieval History 3, A.D. 900–1024*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge 1999) 95–129, at 124 f.

state, though the anachronistic overtones of the word itself can still cause unease, even while it differs from what is seen as the excessively 'institutional' vision of the state in, say, the work of Jean Durliat.¹³

It also differs from key trends in the study of Anglo-Saxon England. Here, the work of James Campbell has stressed the power of Anglo-Saxon royal government and sees the existence of an Anglo-Saxon state as unproblematic. This can be seen in the provocative title of an important collection of Campbell's essays, "The Anglo-Saxon State", and it is no historiographical accident that the *Festschrift* presented to him was entitled "The Medieval State". One of the great merits of James Campbell's work is its refusal to beat about the bush and one cannot imagine his trenchant statement that late Anglo-Saxon England "was a nation state" being repeated quite so confidently about its continental counterparts of the tenth and eleventh centuries.¹⁴ That, of course, is part of Campbell's point as his broad argument is seeking to analyse the very deep structures of the English political experience that lasted far beyond the Anglo-Saxon period in, for example, the role of public courts as opposed to seigneurial justice. Campbell's coherent vision, which is also detailed and nuanced, is not only valuable in itself but is one that should be contemplated by scholars working on the Carolingian world, a world to which Campbell relates his optimistic picture. His stress on the integration of the 'gentry' into the state is particularly striking: "The English state could not work without the participation, in important senses the active participation, of thousands of men of relatively low wealth and status."¹⁵

There is also, however, a paradox here. While James Campbell's picture of the Anglo-Saxon state is informed by a strong sense of the importance of late Carolingian institutions, differences in the source materials and historiography in their field mean that scholars of continental Europe look at the Anglo-Saxon state from different perspectives. As Janet Nelson has observed, "there is an absence [in England] of the kind of thick description supplied elsewhere by chroniclers like Widukind or Richer with their revelations of full-blooded and untidy incident, there is a relative abundance of legal material which tends to exaggerate the statelike appearance of the tenth-century realm."¹⁶ There is also the important question of the relation of governmental apparatus to the stability of the realm. Karl Leyser's brief comparison of the sophisticated government of England with the much less developed institutions of the Ottonian Reich highlighted the surprising strength of the latter on the political plane: "greater stability and security did not necessarily stem from advanced institutions and administrative virtuosity."¹⁷

The ninth century, and in particular the reign of Louis the Pious, seems to offer both the sort of thick description of narrative sources and the statelike appearance transmitted in normative sources, though of course there is no simple dichotomy between these types of source. It is thus a rich ground in which to explore some of the issues raised above. Within the confines of a single paper, however, my focus cannot be as wide as the subject demands. As we have seen, the aristocracy has been viewed as rivals to, participants in, and agents of royal government. It may be in fact that royal government is a problematic term and we should think in terms of 'regnal government'.¹⁸ Aristocracy is also of course

¹³ Jean Durliat, *Les finances publiques de Dioclétien aux Carolingiens (284–888)* (Sigmaringen 1990), discussed with critical acuteness by Chris Wickham, *La chute de Rome n'aura pas lieu*, in: *Le Moyen Age* 99 (1993) 107–126. See also Régine Le Jan, *Continuity and change in the tenth-century nobility*, in: *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge 2000) 53–68, at 62f.

¹⁴ James Campbell, *The late Anglo-Saxon state: a maximum view*, in: *Proceedings of the British Academy* 87 (1994) 39–65, a subtle and forceful statement of Campbell's views, reprinted with other relevant material in James Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London 2000); cf. also James Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London 1986).

¹⁵ Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* xxv.

¹⁶ Nelson, *Rulers and government* 115; David Bates, *England and the "Feudal Revolution"*, in: *Il Feudalesimo nell'alto Medioevo* (Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo 47, Spoleto 2000) 611–646. The Anglo-Saxon state may have been more Carolingian than the Carolingian state actually was, see Timothy Reuter, *Debate: The "Feudal Revolution"* 3, in: *Past & present* 155 (1997) 177–195.

¹⁷ Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society* (London 1979) 107.

¹⁸ Nelson, *Kingship and royal government* 398 n. 92.

a potentially problematic term, not least if its deployment makes us think that the Carolingian empire was run only by great men; James Campbell's stress on the participation of the 'gentry' is relevant here. What we will be looking at are aspects of the existence and activities of personnel in the service of Carolingian rulers, particularly Louis the Pious. We will investigate how far such men can be seen to have thought of themselves, and to have behaved, as public administrators, as parts of a larger whole that was public authority.

Following Max Weber, Michael Mann's wide-ranging surveys of state power offer definitions of the state that focus on "a) a *differentiated* set of institutions and personnel embodying b) *centrality* in the sense that political relations radiate outwards from a centre to cover c) a *territorially-demarcated area* ...". Centrality and place are key elements of this definition and are the hallmarks of the distinctiveness of the state as Mann sees it.¹⁹ After all, as he argues, "the state does not possess a distinctive *means* of power independent of, and analogous to, economic, military and ideological power".²⁰ It is in this light that study of Carolingian court personnel and central places of authority is truly part of the institutional history of the Carolingian state.²¹ Study of the aristocracy in its institutional role may be only a partial study of that aristocracy's history but is an essential task if we are to chart a clear profile of the Carolingian state and explain the relation of the "state elite" to other groups in "civil society" (Mann's terms).²² For there must be a 'state elite'. In working for the ruler within the framework of the public order, members of the Carolingian aristocracy had to acquire, to some extent, an extra identity and we should remember that agents within this framework were not exclusively aristocratic and that we have to conceive of 'aristocracy' as spanning a broad social spectrum.²³ They may still have pursued 'private' interests and profit, indeed this was inevitable, though we should be very careful of deploying terms such as 'private', particularly in seemingly unproblematic opposition to seemingly straightforward terms such as 'public'.²⁴ But if they were not simply the instrument of the ruler nor were they merely aristocratic atoms subject to coercive power of a bigger aristocrat. This paper sets out to show that they were conceived as, and conceived themselves as, members of a 'state elite' and acted as such.

Focusing on the idea of personnel, of men in service, and it is men that dominate the picture, as an aspect of Carolingian statehood is not necessarily to anticipate that any picture that emerges need agree completely with Karl Ferdinand Werner's vision of an aristocracy almost subsumed in a fully functioning hierarchy of office-holders in the service of the ruler.²⁵ Here, Régine Le Jan's broader view of the aristocracy is relevant. If aristocrats and kings were partners, the most powerful Carolingian kings were very much senior partners. Fundamental shifts in the structures of the aristocracy took place as a result of its pursuit of office in the service of the Carolingians. Old horizontal bonds of association, such as that of the *trustes*, collided with royal hostility and a stress on vertical bonds.²⁶

More specifically, this paper takes its cue from the following historiographical elements. Matthew Innes has recently argued that, despite the immense amount of work on counts and *pagi* in the Carol-

¹⁹ Michael Mann, The autonomous power of the state: its origins, mechanisms and results, in: Archives européennes de sociologie 25 (1984) 185–213, at 188; Mann developed this article's points in his The Sources of Social Power 1: A History of Power from the Beginnings to A.D. 1760 (Cambridge 1986) 167–174 and The Sources of Social Power 2: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States 1760–1914 (Cambridge 1993) 44–91. On social theory and the study of medieval rulership see Walter Pohl, Herrschaft, in: RGA 2nd edn. 14 (Berlin/New York 1999) 443–457, at 453–455.

²⁰ Mann, The autonomous power 198.

²¹ On personnel, see below; on central places, Stuart Airlie, The palace of memory: the Carolingian court as political centre, in: Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe, ed. Sarah Rees Jones/Richard Marks/Alastair J. Minnis (York 2000) 1–20.

²² Mann, The autonomous power 188, 196–207; Mann, Sources 1, 170.

²³ Stuart Airlie, Bonds of power and bonds of association in the court circle of Louis the Pious, in: Charlemagne's Heir. New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840), ed. Peter Godman/Roger Collins (Oxford 1990) 191–204. On the role of 'personality and ability' in Carolingian administration, Donald Bullough, 'Baiuli' in the Carolingian regnum Langobardorum and the career of Abbot Waldo († 813), in: English Historical Review 77 (1962) 625–637, at 625 and 636f.

²⁴ Reuter, Medieval nobility 181f.; Innes, State and Society 254–259.

²⁵ Karl Ferdinand Werner, Naissance de la noblesse (Paris 1998) and for a magisterial survey of Carolingian administration see Karl Ferdinand Werner, Missus – Marchio – Comes. Entre l'administration et l'administration locale de l'empire carolingien, in: Histoire comparée de l'administration, IV^e–XVIII^e siècles (München/Zürich 1980) 191–239.

²⁶ Régine Le Jan, Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc (VII^e–X^e siècle) Essai d'anthropologie sociale (Paris 1998) 122–135.

ingian empire there has been insufficient “attempt to investigate what royal officials actually did”. Innes is calling for such study to take place for the localities and his own book offers an example; its perspective is broader than that of *Landesgeschichte*.²⁷ But the same can be true for the ‘centre’, i.e. for the role of the aristocracy as *Staatsdiener* at the level of high politics, as seen in Gerd Althoff’s call for “a new phenomenology of political systems”.²⁸ Such an approach has the advantage of rooting our conceptualising of the state in contemporary actuality, though the conceptual and methodological problems of *Verfassungsgeschichte* cannot be resolved by being simply dissolved into *Personengeschichte*, as Thomas Zotz pointed out in a thoughtful review of M. Borgolte’s work on counts in Alemannia.²⁹ Study of individuals therefore has to be carried out with an awareness of the ideological claims of Carolingian rule, as demanded by J. Hannig, and therefore fits, to some extent, into the historiographical trend outlined by H.-W. Goetz, one that does not take rulership as a given but that analyses structures of power, the practice of rule, as well as mentality.³⁰

We will examine members of the aristocracy, broadly defined, as royal agents in the reign of Louis the Pious in terms of their experience in royal service as well as looking at questions of communication among and representation of such agents. We will be less concerned with the topics that have so often preoccupied historians such as the efficiency or selfishness of such men.³¹ We would also do well to bear in mind W. Rösener’s reminder that in medieval government, the person made the office and not vice versa.³² In terms of the power attached to offices, the Carolingian state may be placed at the weak end of Chris Wickham’s spectrum of early medieval states, but it is not impossible that further research and reflection may modify such views.³³ After all, the sheer existence of concepts of office is itself important and office-holding had powerful economic and social attraction.³⁴ We will begin with an aspect of representation by examining a contemporary text on governmental hierarchy. We will then analyse the activities of a group of royal followers and follow that with an examination of communication and representation in the correspondence of a royal agent. The paper concludes with reflections on the problems and advantages of such a study with its focus on Louis’ reign and considers further, and broader, agendas for future research.

II.

Walahfrid Strabo’s text *De exordiis et incrementis quarundam in observationibus ecclesiasticis rerum* provides our starting-point. Written between 840–42 at the request of his former master Regibert, this is a rich text, but it is the last chapter (*comparatio ecclesiasticorum ordinum et secularium*; the chapter title is probably Walahfrid’s own) that has mostly drawn the attention of historians.³⁵

²⁷ Innes, *State and Society* 8f.; see the rich material in Michael Borgolte, *Die Geschichte der Grafengewalt im Elsass von Dagobert I. bis Otto dem Grossen*, in: *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 131 (1983) 3–54; id., *Geschichte der Graf-schaften Alemanniens in fränkischer Zeit* (Vorträge und Forschungen, Sonderband 31, Sigmaringen 1984); id., *Die Grafen Alemanniens in merowingischer und karolingischer Zeit. Eine Prosopographie* (Sigmaringen 1986).

²⁸ Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt 1997) 126; this is not to be confused with the idea of a *Personenverbandstaat*, on which see Steffen Patzold in this volume.

²⁹ Thomas Zotz, *Grafschaftsverfassung und Personengeschichte*, in: *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 136 (1988) 1–16.

³⁰ Hannig, *Consensus fidelium* 201; Hans-Werner Goetz, *Staatlichkeit, Herrschaftsordnung und Lehnswesen im ostfränkischen Reich als Forschungsprobleme*, in: *Il Feudalesimo nell’alto Medioevo* (Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull’alto Medioevo 47, Spoleto 2000) 85–143, at 92.

³¹ On the poor press for the aristocracy as opponents of kings and order see Reuter, *Medieval nobility* 181 and Werner, *Naissance* 82–93.

³² Werner Rösener, *Hofämter an mittelalterlichen Fürstenhöfen*, in: *Deutsches Archiv* 45 (1989) 485–550, at 550.

³³ Chris Wickham, *Topographies of power: Introduction*, in: *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Mayke de Jong/Frans Theuvs/Carine van Rhijn (*The Transformation of the Roman World* 6, Leiden/Boston/Köln 2001) 3.

³⁴ Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir* 249–262; Stuart Airlie, *The aristocracy*, in: *New Cambridge Medieval History* 2, A.D. 700–900, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1995) 431–450, at 443–447.

³⁵ Walahfrid Strabo, *De exordiis et incrementis quarundam in observationibus ecclesiasticis rerum* (ed. Alfred Boretius/Viktor Krause, *MGH Capitularia* 2, Hannover 1897) 473–516; the text with an English translation and full commentary is available

Here Walahfrid offers a wide-ranging and detailed comparison of secular and ecclesiastical hierarchies of office. Johannes Fried has warned against seeing this text as a witness to contemporary institutional conceptions of the state. Fried's warning echoes his broader views of early medieval society as one that "describes but does not analyse". For Fried, Walahfrid's text fails to distinguish the tasks of the aristocracy from those of the king and it peters out in Pauline ecclesiastical-organic metaphors in which functions alone dominate.³⁶ Almost needless to say, K. F. Werner takes a more positive view, placing the text in a context of contemporary thinking on office (as does T. Zotz) and stressing the text's value as a reflection of Walahfrid's experience at Louis' court "où les prélats et les grands séculiers se côtoyaient quotidiennement". That is, court life and service forms and maintains an elite group with its own characteristics and consciousness. Walahfrid's text reflects this and could help maintain such a consciousness.³⁷

Walahfrid's chapter surely does have a strong analytical component and above all a sense of hierarchy. Emphasising the primacy of the sacred (*ordinationes mundanae sapientiae in spiritalem ecclesiae universalis rempublicam sacris distinctionibus commutatas in similitudinem antiquae historiae, qua vel pecuniae Aegyptiorum in usum tabernaculi ... profecisse*), the text also displays a historical sense of change and variety in, for example, its reference to the *instabilitas rerum* but goes on to associate the *reges Francorum* with the sacred in referring to their deployment of the *cappa* of St Martin in their battles "*ob adiutorium victoriae*".³⁸ Walahfrid thus firmly locates his survey in his own time and explicitly in the kingdom of the Franks, whose kings have staff (chaplains) to maintain their relationship to the sacred objects they are marked out as possessing. He structures his account of offices as a hierarchy: *summus saeculi principatus ... intellegendum de principatibus saeculi, quod quamvis in diversis orbis partibus per tempora fulserint, tamen ad ius Romanum quasi unum apicem postremo omnes pene relati sunt*. The office-holders he discusses are in a relation to the head of this hierarchy as they descend from the *summus saeculi principatus*. Some of this might seem more ingenious than entirely convincing (e.g., the equating of *capellani minores* with *vassi dominici*) but Walahfrid sees all this from a palace perspective.³⁹

Professor Fried is right in saying that Walahfrid sees all this as forming an organic whole but Walahfrid is surely also concerned with both function and competence. Not only does Walahfrid state that *summi capellani* hear clerical cases while counts of the palace hear secular ones, he also notes that counts' *missi* hear minor cases but that counts reserve major ones for themselves. In general the sense of scale matters, as in Walahfrid's references to *officia praelatorum dicebantur ex numero subiectorum ut sunt chiliarchi graece, latine millenarii ...*⁴⁰ Such numbers express a hierarchy and echo biblical texts such as Isaiah 3.3 and Deuteronomy 1.15 with their references to "captains over thousands and captains over hundreds" (and it may be worth noting in the context of discussing a text on office Deuteronomy's command that judges should not respect persons in judgment).⁴¹

Such references also coincide with similar ones in a short text on offices, *Epistula Hieronimi de gradus Romanorum*. Paul Barnwell has recently argued that this latter text is a monastic school book and in this context it is worth noting that both it, in various versions, and Walahfrid's text have St

in Alice L. Harting-Correa, *Walahfrid Strabo's Libellus de exordiis et incrementis quarundam in observationibus ecclesiasticis rerum. A Translation and Liturgical commentary* (Mittellateinische Studien und Texte 19, Leiden/New York/Köln 1996); helpful commentary in Thomas Zotz, *In Amt und Würden. Zur Eigenart „offizieller“ Positionen im früheren Mittelalter*, in: *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 22 (1993) 1–23, at 4f.

³⁶ Johannes Fried, *Der karolingische Herrschaftsverband im 9. Jh. zwischen „Kirche“ und „Königshaus“*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 235 (1982) 1–43, at 14f. and 39; id., *Der Weg in die Geschichte. Die Ursprünge Deutschlands bis 1024* (Propyläen Geschichte Deutschlands 1, Berlin 1994) 144ff., 377f., 414. For a more positive view of Carolingian perceptions of the state, Hans-Werner Goetz, *Regnum: Zum politischen Denken der Karolingerzeit*, in: *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, German. Abt.* 104 (1987) 110–189.

³⁷ Werner, *Naissance* 177f.

³⁸ Walahfrid, *De exordiis* 32, ed. Boretius/Krause 515.

³⁹ Walahfrid, *De exordiis* 32, ed. Boretius/Krause 515.

⁴⁰ Walahfrid, *De exordiis* 32, ed. Boretius/Krause 516.

⁴¹ See the discussion in Le Jan, *Justice royale* 52.

Gall manuscript connections.⁴² Visions of hierarchy were not simply confined to courtiers. We should recall here that Notker's *Gesta Karoli* may draw on Walahfrid's text for its reference to the cloak of St Martin as victory totem.⁴³ But perhaps Notker was more deeply influenced by it, in, for example, his accounts of courtiers and communication across the empire.⁴⁴ This is certainly a concern of Walahfrid's text, which refers to secular office-holders as having couriers and notaries and this is part of the detailed coherence of the text's vision of the territorial dimension of hierarchy. This territorial dimension can also be seen in the text's account of the establishing of *centenarii ... per pagos*.⁴⁵

Of course, Walahfrid's harmonious picture is an idealised vision and as such it reflects a courtier's priorities, the view from the centre.⁴⁶ It may therefore pose problems for us as a source as, in reflecting the view from the centre, it can be seen as expressing the sort of view of power analysed by R. Barthes: "power, or the shadow cast by power, always ends in creating an axiological writing in which the distance which usually separates fact from value disappears within the very sphere of the work, which is given at once as reflection and as judgement."⁴⁷ Capitularies may also be seen in this light but the nature of Walahfrid's text is in fact an important part of its value. It embodies the self-consciousness of court personnel on the tasks and structure of the hierarchy and on the very existence of hierarchy. It screens out concerns that actually exercised Walahfrid elsewhere. It does not, for example, say anything on appointment to office nor on the origins of officers. There is some contrast here with Hincmar's later *De ordine palatii* with its explicit references to the geographical origin of courtiers. There is also a contrast with Thegan's *Gesta Hludowici*, which Walahfrid edited some time in the 840s and whose strong views on the need for nobly-born counsellors were noted by him as idiosyncratic in his Prologue to that text.⁴⁸ Questions of geographical or social origin fail to ruffle the smooth surface of Walahfrid's description of offices in the *De Exordiis*. There is nothing here on noble claims to office. Walahfrid's vision here is more narrow, almost more bureaucratic, a term that is anachronistic but which nonetheless captures something of his view, the view of a self-conscious specialist in hierarchy. This text's echoes in Notker suggest that this self-consciousness, in its specialised coherence, could be transmitted to locations away from the centre but it is as evidence of the mental outlook of court personnel, an outlook of expertise and insider knowledge in the immediate aftermath of the reign of Louis the Pious, that it can best serve us here.

In this context it is worth referring to another, much larger, text produced by a more highly born courtier of Louis the Pious. One of the most striking features of the collection of capitularies assembled by abbot Ansegisus of St-Wandrille in 827 is that Ansegisus did not compile it at the court itself. In fact the court does not seem to have had a collection of its own at all comparable to that of Ansegisus and so it quickly adopted his collection as 'definitive'.⁴⁹ This lack of record of legislation at

⁴² Paul Barnwell, 'Epistula Hieronimi de gradus Romanorum': an English school book, in: *Historical Research* 64 (1991) 77–86; on manuscripts of Walahfrid, Zotz, *In Amt und Würden* 5. Barnwell errs, however, in making Walahfrid a pupil of Alcuin (84). Harting-Correa, *Walahfrid Strabo's Libellus* 14–16, sees Walahfrid's text as a didactic text for teachers.

⁴³ Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni* I, 4 (ed. Hans F. Haefele, MGH SS rer. Germ. NS 12, Berlin 1959) 5.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni* I, 18; I, 25; II, 6, ed. Haefele 22–25, 33f., 53–57.

⁴⁵ Walahfrid, *De exordiis* 32, ed. Boretius/Krause 516; Janet L. Nelson, *Literacy in Frankish government*, in: *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1990) 258–296 and reprinted in Janet L. Nelson, *The Frankish World, 750–900* (London/Rio Grande 1996) 1–36, here at 17; David Ganz, *Temptabat et scribere: Vom Schreiben in der Karolingerzeit*, in: *Schriftkultur und Reichsverwaltung unter den Karolingern. Referate des Kolloquiums der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften am 17./18. Februar 1994 in Bonn*, ed. Rudolf Schieffer (*Abhandlungen der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 97, Opladen 1996) 13–33, at 28.

⁴⁶ Janet L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London/New York 1992) 84f.

⁴⁷ Roland Barthes, *Political modes of writing*, from his *Writing Degree Zero*, in: *A Barthes Reader*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York 1982) 39.

⁴⁸ Hincmar, *De ordine palatii* 18 (ed. Thomas Gross/Rudolf Schieffer, MGH *Fontes Iuris Germanici Antiqui* 3, Hannover 1980) 66; see Walahfrid's prologue to Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* (ed. Ernst Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. [64], Hannover 1995) 169.

⁴⁹ Ansegisus, *Collectio Capitularium, Praefatio* (ed. Gerhard Schmitz, *Die Kapitulariensammlung des Ansegis*, MGH *Capitularia Regum Francorum* NS 1, Hannover 1996) 432 and see Schmitz's introduction, 1f., 12f., 69f.; Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century 1: Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford 1999) 52f.

the heart of the Carolingian world might indicate that Louis' governmental apparatus was on the sketchy side but it can also be viewed in a more positive light. While he himself was away from the court, Ansegisus generated a document that was to prove indispensable to the ruler. One is tempted to say that this reveals that there was more than one centre to the administration. Ansegisus' text was not a private text but an intensely royal one, soaked in the sense of the public order so typical of the Carolingian state.⁵⁰ Figures such as Ansegisus and Walahfrid were not automata directed by Louis but their 'independent' activities show how deeply they conceived of themselves as agents in a wider realm. Even if the exact nature of its links to the court remains problematic, the *Leges-scriptorium*, particularly active in Louis' reign, is also relevant here.⁵¹

III.

We now turn from reading Walahfrid to a near-phenomenological approach, i.e. 'reading' some of the activities of selected men, and it is only men that we are concerned with here, in the entourage of Louis the Pious. Examining their activities may help bridge that gap between political and institutional history recently noted by Tim Reuter.⁵² These men should not be seen merely as servants or personnel of the ruler but as agents of the public order. That order was indeed hierarchical and the ruler was at the top of it, but, as Louis the Pious proclaimed in his *Admonitio ad omnes regni ordines*, office-holders such as bishops and counts had a share in the ruler's *ministerium*. Such figures were not simply in royal service but in public service, though we must beware of the anachronistic overtones of this term.⁵³ The following brief investigation of the activities in governance of a selected group of these participants in the *ministerium* will explore, among other things, some aspects of their 'practical consciousness'.⁵⁴ Given the constraints on our information, it is not possible to chart a Day in the Life of a Carolingian V.I.P. along the lines of Pierre Bourdieu's mordant sketch of a modern member of the 'state nobility', but some instructive patterns can be detected.⁵⁵ We shall explore the sort of group identity that could be built up by regular carrying out of tasks of running the empire. But the nature of the tasks themselves are important here. Such an investigation is made possible by the existence of Philippe Depreux's extraordinarily valuable *Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux (781–840)*. This book is not simply a repository of information on individuals but can be used for more systematic analysis of Louis' followers. There are a number of prosopographies for the Carolingian period and their value lies not simply in what they can tell us about individuals but rather in the

⁵⁰ See, for example, Ansegisus' prefatory materials to each section of his collection, *Collectio*, ed. Schmitz 431–433, 441–443, 517, 565, 615 and his inclusion of the *Admonitio Generalis*' demands for impersonal justice, *Collectio* 1, 60, ed. Schmitz 461 f.; see Le Jan, *Justice royale* 52 f.

⁵¹ Rosamond McKitterick, *Zur Herstellung von Kapitularien: Die Arbeit des Leges-Skriptoriums*, in: *MIÖG* 101 (1993) 3–16, but see the comments of Hubert Mordek, *Kapitularien und Schriftlichkeit*, in: *Schriftkultur und Reichsverwaltung unter den Karolingern*, ed. Rudolf Schieffer (*Abhandlungen der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 97, Opladen 1996) 34–66, at 61–64; see also id., *Bibliotheca capitularium regum Francorum manuscripta* (MGH Hilfsmittel 15, München 1995) 422 f., 503.

⁵² Reuter, *Assembly politics* 432 f.

⁵³ *Admonitio ad omnes regni ordines* 3 (ed. Alfred Boretius, *MGH Capitularia* 1, 150, Hannover 1883) 303; see Zotz, *In Amt und Würden*, 14–16 and Olivier Guillot, *Une ordination méconnue. Le capitulaire de 823–835*, in: *Charlemagne's Heir. New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840)*, ed. Peter Godman/Roger Collins (Oxford 1990) 455–486.

⁵⁴ The term comes from Anthony Giddens, who distinguishes "practical consciousness" from consciousness and the unconscious and links it to routinization and uses it to refer to "all the things which actors know tacitly about how to 'go on' in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression"; see his *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge/Oxford 1986) xxiiif., xxx; I will, however, also be concerned below with consciousness and 'discursive expression'. On sociological discussion of attachments to groups, see David Lockwood, *Solidarity and Schism. 'The Problem of Disorder' in Durkheimian and Marxist Sociology* (Oxford 1992) 4–9.

⁵⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility. Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, translated by Laetitia C. Clough (Oxford/Cambridge 1996) 356–359.

picture they permit to be created of groups and ‘mini-societies’.⁵⁶ We may examine such groups in a geographical context or a chronological one; we can study subjective and objective factors in the group’s existence and experience and thus explore the specific nature of the group’s existence. Space permits only a small-scale example of such analysis here, with a strictly limited set of questions. This is very much a preliminary investigation.

In 794, seventeen men subscribed a charter of Louis, as king of Aquitaine, for the *cellola* of Nouail-lé. Depreux has examined them as members of Louis’ entourage at this stage of his career but analysis can be pushed further. These men can be seen as constituting a group that can be studied as such, though Depreux rightly stresses that Louis’ entourage has to be seen as being formed of several groups; it was not homogeneous. Depreux has noted the preponderance of laymen in this group, seeing nine of them as certainly being laymen and further noting that the group was a seed-bed of future officials as six members of it can be seen to have gone on to become counts or hold court office.⁵⁷ A royal entourage generated and sustained itself.

What follows is a brief examination of aspects of the careers of members of the group, listed here in alphabetical order and with reference to their number in Depreux’s prosopography (D): Abbo (D2), Adalbert I (D3), Adhemar (D17), Bego (D42), Erlaldus (D86), Gericus I (D117), Gericus II (D118), Gisle-mar (D120), Hariald (D138), Immo (D168), Launus (D186), Magnarius (D196), Raganfred (D218), Reginpertus (D228), Wado (D268), Wigfredus (D274). One name on the charter is illegible and Gericus II, Hariald and Launus remain unidentified. Reginpertus was bishop of Limoges and I shall be concerned here only with the secular members of this list. I have looked at the duration of their service or office-holding; the location of their activities; the nature of their activities; and, finally, some aspects of the textual representation of their activities. This represents only a preliminary investigation. Other questions could well be asked and the question, for example, of the familial and social origins of these men is undeniably important. Depreux identifies Raganfred as a member of the local aristoc-racy but this is not true of Bego whose father was based in Neustria and who towered above figures such as Raganfred.⁵⁸ I have, on the whole, confined myself to the information that Depreux himself offers, though we must remember the self-imposed limits of his study. He includes in his “Prosopogra- phie” only those people with a court title or attested as serving in the palace, though he admits to being more flexible in his criteria for defining Louis’ Aquitaine entourage. He also tends not to look beyond 840. It is important for users of Depreux’s book to be aware of his criteria and limits, as they shape his perspective on Carolingian government and its agents in important ways.⁵⁹ We shall return to this point.

Let us plot their careers in time and space. There are ten secular figures for whom we have dates of their service, i. e. their membership of Louis’ entourage. The fact that nine out of these ten appear in that entourage for the first time in 794 need not mean that their careers started at that date. The one exception to this 794 date, Count Abbo, began his career in 778/80 and several of the others may have had careers stretching back before their 794 appearance.⁶⁰ In most cases we do not know for certain

⁵⁶ Philippe Depreux, *Prosopographie de l’entourage de Louis le Pieux, 781–840* (Sigmaringen 1997); Borgolte, Grafen Aleman-niens, is a prosopography based on different principles from Depreux’s. There is still much of value on royal agents in Viktor Krause, *Geschichte des Instituts der missi dominici*, in: *MIÖG* 11 (1890) 193–300; see also Régine Le Jan, *Prosopographica Neustria: les agents du roi en Neustrie de 639 à 840*, in: *La Neustrie. Les pays au nord de la Loire de 650 à 850*, ed. Hartmut Atsma (Beihefte der Francia 16/1, Sigmaringen 1989) 231–269. The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England, currently in preparation under the direction of Janet Nelson and Simon Keynes, differs from these Carolingian models and aims to “pro- vide a comprehensive biographical register of the recorded inhabitants of Anglo-Saxon England from the fifth century to the eleventh”; see the web-site at www.kcl.ac.uk/cch/pase.

⁵⁷ *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores* 19 (ed. Hartmut Atsma/Jean Vezin, Zurich 1987) no. 681; Depreux, *Prosopographie* 42–46.

⁵⁸ Raganfred: Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 218, 353 f.; for Bego’s family, Léon Levillain, *Les comtes de Paris à l’époque franc*, in: *Le Moyen Age* 51 (1941) 137–205, especially 163–189.

⁵⁹ Depreux, *Prosopographie* 2–7, and note his stress on the individual, rather than the office, at 7; Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir* and the school of *Personenforschung* offer different perspectives, stressing the role of family while Reuter, *Assembly politics*, highlights the wider political collectivity.

⁶⁰ Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 2, 68 and see also 44.

when these men died or lost office so figures can only be approximate. Nevertheless, if we accept the figures we find that the average length of service is twenty-five years and this surely gives food for thought.⁶¹

Such length of service could help give the empire stability. The ruling personnel were experienced. Of course such men should not be thought of as spending all their time in the same place, or indeed in the same office. Bego, for example only held the countship of Paris from 814 to 816 and Louis' succession to the imperial throne in 814 may also represent a break in the career of some of his followers. But of these ten, eight continued to be visibly active from 794 to after 814 (the exceptions are Abbo and probably Erlaldus). Andreas Kränzle has recently pointed out in a thoughtful article on Ottonian rule that the death of office-holders threatened continuity in a state that was 'personal'.⁶² But if this is true of counts and bishops it is even more so in the case of the ruling family itself. It is worth comparing the stability visible in our group with events in the Carolingian family itself over this period. Pippin of Italy (810), the young Charles (811), Pippin the Hunchback (811) and Charlemagne himself (814) all died, as did two of Charlemagne's wives (Fastrada in 794 and Liutgard in 800) while 818 saw the death of Bernard of Italy.⁶³ The impact of these deaths on the political constellations of the aristocracy in its relation to the royal house is well known. But beneath such shifts there was also a steady pulse of continuity at this level of personnel.

Nor should we think of our group as being merely a provincial aristocracy and thus somehow sheltered from upheavals at the centre. Gericus travelled between Louis' and Charlemagne's court in the aftermath of the deaths of Pippin of Italy and Charles, carrying messages between the courts on the significance of such deaths for the succession.⁶⁴ But not all the journeys undertaken by members of this group were so politically charged and the world of high politics is not our main concern here. Rather, more mundane journeys and appearances in various parts of the empire interest us. What light can they shed on structures of that empire? We find the following members of our group reported as active outside of Aquitaine: Adalbert at Quierzy in 820 as Raganfred may have been; Adhemar at Rouen and possibly Tours in 800 as well as in the Spanish march.⁶⁵ We find Bego in Spain too as well as much further north, e.g. at Aachen in 816. Gericus not only travelled to Charlemagne's court but was sent on the emperor's business from Louis' court to Lyon in 826/827.⁶⁶ If our Magnarius is the Meginharius who witnessed Charlemagne's will in 811, then he was attending court in the north.⁶⁷ Six

⁶¹ Dates can only be approximate due to lack of source material and problems of identification. Depreux's cautious approach to identification tends to reduce the span of possible dates. The dates that follow derive from Depreux, though they are not uncritically reproduced. Some figures, such as Erlaldus, may not have held the same office after Louis' departure from Aquitaine in 814 as before but they should still be seen as 'public' figures. Abbo: 778–795, though he is possibly also mentioned in 811, Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 2, 68; Adalbert: 794–820, *ibid.* no. 3, 69; Adhemar: 794–815 (though he almost certainly lived beyond that date) *ibid.* no. 17, 87 f.; Bego: 794–816, *ibid.* no. 42, 120–122; Erlaldus: 794–814 but may have died as late as 827, *ibid.* no. 86, 186 f.; Gericus: 794–826/7, *ibid.* no. 117, 215 f.; Immo: 794– died before 823, *ibid.* no. 168, 269 (since he appears to have had a son still alive in 864 and since the charter of 823 that refers to him as being dead may have been issued relatively soon after his death, it seems reasonable to assign him a death date of c. 821); Magnarius: 794–811?, *ibid.* no. 196, 325 f.; Raganfred: 794–837?, *ibid.* no. 218, 353 f.; Wigfredus: 794–830, *ibid.* no. 274, 397 f. It should be noted that bishop Reginpertus of Limoges appears between 794 to 817, *ibid.*, no. 228, 361.

⁶² Andreas Kränzle, *Der abwesende König. Überlegungen zur ottonischen Königsherrschaft*, in: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 31 (1997) 120–157, at 138.

⁶³ *Annales Regni Francorum* a. 794; a. 800; a. 810; a. 811; a. 814 (ed. Friedrich Kurze, MGH SS rer. German. in us. schol. [6], Hannover 1895) 94, 110, 132, 135, 140; *Annales Laurissenses minores* (ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 1, Hannover 1826) 121, and also *Das Chronicon Laurissense Breve* (ed. Hans Schnorr von Carolsfeld, in: *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 36 [1910]) 38; Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 23, ed. Tremp 212.

⁶⁴ Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris* 20 (ed. Ernst Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. [64], Hannover 1995) 342; Airlie, *Bonds of Power* 193; Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 117, 216.

⁶⁵ Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 3, 69; *ibid.* no. 218, 354; *ibid.* no. 17, 87.

⁶⁶ Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 42, 120 f.; *ibid.* no. 117, 215 f.

⁶⁷ The several mentions of this or similar names make clear identification of this individual difficult; Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 196, 325 f. permits identification of the witness of the 794 charter with the witness of the will of Charlemagne and gives references to other proposed identifications which he rejects, in contrast to the more inclusive approach of Karl Brunner,

of our group can thus be found to be active outside Aquitaine. That activity takes place in a court orbit, and we can add to that list bishop Reginpertus of Limoges, who witnessed the charter of 794 and who probably attended an assembly at Aachen in 817.⁶⁸

Of course, a variety of factors lie behind the movements of these men and their appearance in particular locations. Bego, for example, was not parachuted into the county of Paris by Louis the Pious. His family had roots there; his father and brother had been count there before him. One might say that Bego's appointment to Paris was dictated to Louis by the former's family claims just as his service with Louis in Aquitaine was part of the sequential segmentation of the young aristocrat's *domus*.⁶⁹ Factors like this in the careers of men such as Bego do not emerge clearly from Philippe Depreux's prosopography. This, however, results from a deliberate decision by Depreux to exclude the family background of individuals from consideration. His focus is explicitly on the *appareil d'état*.⁷⁰ This focus is very instructive but we should remember that this is a focus that screens out certain elements that may help explain the career patterns of Depreux's subjects, as we have just seen in the case of Bego. This focus can be contrasted with Italian studies of early modern state which have seen "clans, courtly circles, feuds, favouritism not as alternatives to public power but as capable of functioning more incisively than the agencies of the state".⁷¹ Further, being on duty and in attendance upon the king did not take up the whole of these men's time. That is to say, they could use the opportunities provided by royal service to establish connections of their own. Vertical bonds (service to the emperor) co-existed and helped create horizontal bonds (connections and associations with fellow aristocrats). Thus Adalbert attended the assembly held by Louis at Quierzy in September 820 but he also found time to witness a charter recording an exchange between Count Hugh of Tours and the bishop of Worms, an exchange witnessed by other notables such as Count Rorico and Count Wido.⁷² Such features of aristocratic life in the Carolingian era are well known. It is precisely these patterns of movement, claims to office and wide-ranging connections that are seen as hallmarks of the *Reichsaristokratie*. For now, however, I wish to stress the utility of Depreux's sharp focus for our concerns and to concentrate on location/movement in the 'official' careers of such men.

The travels and appearances of these men that we have surveyed were carried out on royal service. This is not simply the deploying of royal agents sent out from the centre to the regions of the empire, though it is partly that. We should note, incidentally, that these men experienced various conceptualisations of the centre. In 794, the immediate centre for these men had been Louis' court in Aquitaine but, as we have seen, some of them also had links with the court of Charlemagne himself. After 814 Louis' court was no longer in Aquitaine but now resided in the traditional centres of the monarchy. That court may have been the new centre but some of the men of our group may well have had links with Pippin of Aquitaine, to whom it was assigned by the *Ordinatio Imperii* of 817.⁷³ For these men, such historical-geographical points, together with their own movements, were part of their education in empire. From the Spanish march through Aquitaine, Rouen, Quierzy and elsewhere these men car-

Oppositionelle Gruppen im Karolingerreich (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 25, Wien/Köln/Graz 1979) 79.

⁶⁸ Depreux, Prosopographie no. 228, 361.

⁶⁹ Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir* 337 f.

⁷⁰ Depreux, Prosopographie 5–6.

⁷¹ Chittolini, *The "Private", the "Public", the State* 40.

⁷² *Traditiones Wizenburgenses. Die Urkunden des Klosters Weissenburg 661–864* (ed. Anton Doll/ Karl Glöckner, Darmstadt 1979) no. 69; Depreux, Prosopographie no. 3, 69. If the Raganfredus who witnesses this charter is the Raganfredus from 794 then we have an encounter between two old hands of Louis' government in Aquitaine, i.e. Raganfredus and Adalbert, both of them members of our group, but we cannot be certain of this identification, Depreux, Prosopographie no. 218, 354; he may be a local man. On the familial and geographical context of the witnesses, Philippe Depreux, *Lieux de rencontre, temps de négociation: quelques observations sur les plaids généraux sous le règne de Louis le Pieux*, in: *La royauté et les élites dans l'Europe carolingienne (début IX^e siècle aux environs de 920)*, ed. Régine Le Jan (Villeneuve-d'Ascq 1998) 213–231, at 219 f. See Innes, *State and Society* 111 f. on the links between the palace and localities illustrated by this charter.

⁷³ Wigfredus certainly had links with Pippin; see Depreux, Prosopographie no. 274, 398.

ried the writ (metaphorically and literally, see Gericus' *capitularia* below). They knew the empire and they knew that it was an empire.

This point can be further developed by looking at some of the actual activities carried out by these men in service. Two of them, Adhemar and Bego (or three if we assume that Abbo was involved in Charlemagne's campaign of 778), are recorded as having seen military service.⁷⁴ A case of earlier military service will also concern us. Adhemar was active in the siege of Barcelona in 801, an operation whose outcome reveals the hierarchical, ruler-centred view of the warriors of Louis' Aquitaine. As the town was about to fall, the army sent for Louis so that the glory of the taking of Barcelona would redound to the reputation of the king (*ut urbs tanti nominis gloriosum nomen regi propagaret*). This decision of the warriors was described by the Astronomer as "honourable and fitting" (and we shall return later to the importance in our context of his testimony on Aquitaine).⁷⁵ It stands in stark contrast to the jealousy of the army commanders in Saxony a generation previously who resented the fact that the glory of what they fondly imagined to be imminent victory over the Saxons would be diverted from them to a *propinquus regis*.⁷⁶ We need not assume that the warriors of 801 were more deferential than those of 782. Jealousy and resentment might focus on a royal *propinquus* but a king was another matter. Louis' arrival may well in fact have prevented jealousy and disunity from breaking out among the commanders. When Louis the German sent Thuringians and Saxons against the Moravians in 872, the army fell to pieces because the king did not lead it and the counts involved were shamed.⁷⁷ At Barcelona, Louis' presence gave the army coherence, raised morale and raised the stakes too. Barcelona had to be taken as royal prestige depended on it. In his triumphal entry into Barcelona, Louis was accompanied by the army, partly as his partner along with the rejoicing clergy, but also as 'the politically significant audience' for this celebration of an explicitly royal victory.⁷⁸

Amongst this audience was Bego. He had announced Louis' mobilisation orders for the army and took part in the siege itself.⁷⁹ Later, Bego journeyed with booty and prisoners to Charlemagne in Aachen and here his own status as successful warrior was recognised in the old emperor's giving him a wine-cup. Then, laden with gifts for himself and Louis he returned to Louis.⁸⁰ Such gifts were a visible sign of the relation between the two rulers and of the fact that the men of the army at Barcelona stood in a relation to Louis and to Charlemagne. Bego's journey had symbolic value as well as being a very real instance of the functioning of bonds of empire. Among the loot from Barcelona which Bego presented to Charlemagne was the commander of Barcelona. He was displayed to the emperor on the very same day as the commander of the recently captured Italian town of Chieti was also presented to the emperor.⁸¹ Such ceremonies were stage-managed for the benefit of men like Bego who would have carried this news back to Louis and his army, along with the gifts and felicitations of Charlemagne. Men such as Adhemar thus learned from Bego of the news in Aachen of new conquests in Italy and thus learned of their place in a wider scheme of victory in the military service of Carolingian rulers.

Among the warriors at Barcelona was Liutard, who was to become count of Fezensac. Liutard was Bego's brother and had fought valiantly in the Barcelona campaign.⁸² The brothers thus enhanced their

⁷⁴ Adhemar: Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 17, 87–8; Bego: *ibid.* no. 42, 120; Abbo: Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici* 3, ed. Tremp 290.

⁷⁵ ..., *honesto, ut decebat, ut consilio regem vocant, ut urbs tanti nominis gloriosum nomen regi propagaret*, Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici* 13, ed. Tremp 318. On the discrepancies among different accounts of the siege of Barcelona, Peter Godman, Louis 'the Pious' and his poets, in: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 19 (1985) 239–289, at 260–262.

⁷⁶ *Annales Regni Francorum* a. 782, ed. Kurze 61.

⁷⁷ *Annales Fuldenses* a. 872 (ed. Friedrich Kurze, *MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol.* [7], Hannover 1891) 75 f.

⁷⁸ Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory. Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge 1986) 375.

⁷⁹ Ermold, In *Honorem Hludowici Christianissimi Caesaris Augusti*, lines 215–223, line 309 (ed. Edmond Faral, *Ermold le Noir, Poème sur Louis le Pieux et épîtres au roi Pépin*, *Les classiques de l'histoire de France au Moyen Age* 14, Paris 1932) 20–22, 38; Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 42, 120.

⁸⁰ Ermold, In *Honorem Hludowici*, lines 640–647, ed. Faral 50.

⁸¹ McCormick, *Eternal Victory* 376 f.

⁸² Ermold, In *Honorem Hludowici*, line 309, ed. Faral 28 and line 407, ed. Faral 34; Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 189, 296 f.; Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir* 250.

own reputation but did so in the context of royal service far from their family's stamping-ground in Neustria. Others who took part in the Barcelona campaign such as Bera and Isembard can be found with Adhemar (one of our group) on the later Tortosa campaign.⁸³ The Spanish wars thus helped build up a team of noble warriors. It may, however, be worth speculating on the nature of the bonds among this band of brothers. Perhaps all was not harmonious. Bego is not mentioned in the Astronomer's account of the Spanish campaigns, an account that derives ultimately from Adhemar himself. Conversely, Adhemar is not mentioned in Ermoldus' account of the campaigns, while Bego is singled out for prominence.⁸⁴ One should not make too much of this. After all, Liutard, Bego's brother, is mentioned in the Astronomer, though his relationship to Bego is not.⁸⁵ It may be that some rivalry or jealousy lies behind these silences. This cannot be proved but we will surely not err if we think that, if aristocrats formed bonds with each other in royal service, some of them would try and forge bonds with the king that were their own and that were discrete. More could and should be said on military service, which is currently too much neglected, but we may end this section, however, by noting how the great campaigns of rulers such as Pippin III, Charlemagne and Louis could leave deep memories and consequences. Among our group, we find one Immo, count of Périgord. According to a charter of Louis from 823, delivered at Compiègne, this man, with his father, had held one of the hostages taken in the course of Pippin III's campaigns in Aquitaine, but, when the other hostages had been released, Immo had reduced his to servitude. Leaving aside the plight of the wretched hostage, duly freed by Louis, what should interest us here is the vision, in Louis' charter, of the long-term impact of Carolingian campaigns of an older generation and, more specifically, the way in which the memory of such campaigns could be recalled and re-transmitted in a charter issued far in time and space (Compiègne, 823) from the events (Aquitaine, 760s).⁸⁶ This is the construction of Carolingian warfare as memory for a political culture and it is Carolingian service that is at the heart of it.

War, however, was only one of the activities that the men in our group undertook. Men such as Count Abbo of Poitiers heard cases, though such local business could be explicitly linked with the ruler, as when Abbo attended the case heard at Poitiers in 795 which was presided over by the *missi* of Louis the Pious.⁸⁷ One of these *missi* was Hermingaud whose court service (he may have been one of Charlemagne's counts of the palace) was explicitly mentioned in his epitaph by Theodulf (*praefectus in aula palatina*).⁸⁸ If Abbo was not recalled as a court officer in this way, some members of our group were. To wear the badge of the court was to belong to a special group that was perceived to be such. This was not always seen as a positive thing. Bego, for example, was remembered in some circles for his greed and this certainly tells us something of how closeness to the king could be perceived.⁸⁹ More pertinent to our concerns, however, is the fact that Bego would regularly visit Louis early in the morning. Ermold tells us this in order to demonstrate Bego's special closeness to Louis but such regular encounters fit into a wider pattern of routinization in the palace. This can be seen in, for example, the weekly reports Louis the Pious required his '*agentes vel ministeriales*' to make on the maintenance of order in the palace and in Einhard's explicit testimony on the time-bound routines of courtiers.⁹⁰

Einhard's testimony is that of an insider but outsiders also testified to the potency of palace identity. One of our group, the falconer Gericus, was sent by Louis in 826/827 to investigate the situation

⁸³ Bera and Isembard at Barcelona: Ermold, In Honorem Hludowici, lines 308 and 310, ed. Faral 28; Adhemar at Barcelona: Astronomus, Vita Hludowici 13, ed. Tremp 316. For all three at Tortosa: *ibid.* 14, ed. Tremp 322.

⁸⁴ Astronomus, Vita Hludowici Prologus, ed. Tremp 284; Ermoldus, In Honorem Hludowici, lines 214–223, ed. Faral 20–22; line 309; *ibid.*, ed. Faral 28; lines 578–599; *ibid.*, ed. Faral 46–48; lines 636–647; *ibid.*, ed. Faral 50.

⁸⁵ Astronomus, Vita Hludowici 13, ed. Tremp 314 and 16, ed. Tremp 330.

⁸⁶ Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France 6, no. 44, ed. Martin Bouquet (Paris 1870) 655; Depreux, Prosopographie no. 168, 269.

⁸⁷ Depreux, Prosopographie no. 2, 68.

⁸⁸ Theodulf, Carmina 40 (ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini 1, Berlin 1881) 532, line 7; NB also the reference to him as "*Gloria ... patriae*", line 2, *ibid.*; Depreux, Prosopographie no. 147, 243.

⁸⁹ Paul Edward Dutton, The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire (Lincoln/London 1994) 71 f.

⁹⁰ Ermoldus, In Honorem Hludowici, line 757, ed. Faral 60; Capitulare de disciplina palatii Aquisgranensis 8 (ed. Alfred Boretius MGH Capitularia 1, Hannover 1883) no. 146, 298; Einhard, Translatio et Miracula SS. Marcellini et Petri II, 1 (ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS 15, Hannover 1887) 245. See Airlie, Bonds of Power, 195 and Depreux, Prosopographie 25, 121.

of the Jews in Lyon. Gericus was hardly a figure of the stature of Bego but Archbishop Agobard of Lyon was cowed and affronted by his arrogance. Agobard is not exactly an impartial witness but his testimony is striking. In a letter to Louis he vividly expresses his outrage at the behaviour of Gericus and his companions (*missi quidem vestri, non tamen per omnia vestra agentes, sed ex parte alterius*) together with his disbelief that the documents they brought with them could actually have emanated from the emperor (... *missi, habentes in manibus tractoriam stipendialem et capitularia sanctionum, que non putamus vestra iussione existere talia*). Agobard expresses similar incredulous outrage at the documents delivered to the Jewish community and the viscount of Lyon (*Quos indiculos, licet ex sacro nomine vestro recitarentur, et vestro anulo essent signati, nullatenus tamen credidimus ex iudicio vestro tales prodisse*).⁹¹ Thanks to Agobard's vivid letter, we can see the apparatus of official documentation that accompanied Gericus' visit to Lyon and also catch something of the resentment felt by outsiders when they were visited by court officers, who can be described on the basis of Agobard's account as institutionally confident. What gave them this confidence was their relation to the centre and documentation authorising their intervention in Lyon. It is hard to trace origins and connections of these men, but one of Gericus' companions on this mission may have had family connections with Lyon. These connections, if they did exist, were not what Agobard focused on. Rather, he turned his outraged gaze on the relation to the centre and the documentation emanating from there.⁹²

A third member of our group also deserves consideration in this section. This is Count Adhemar who clashed, towards the end of Charlemagne's reign, with the 'Hispani' who held *aprisiones* in the lands under his jurisdiction. These holders of *aprisiones* held land that was, in Roger Collins' valuable summary of these disputes, "under personal royal protection, free of any rents, payments or duties and ... under their own jurisdiction and free of that of the count".⁹³ Inevitably, there were clashes between them and local counts such as Adhemar who chafed at limits to their jurisdiction and who sought to encroach on their lands. It was precisely this sort of unwelcome pressure on the holders of *aprisiones* that Charlemagne rebuked and sought to correct in his *Praeceptum pro Hispanis* issued at Aachen in 812 which was addressed to Adhemar, among others.⁹⁴

As R. Collins has stressed, the *aprisio*-holders depended on the active involvement of the 'central administration'.⁹⁵ But that administration should not be seen as being hostile to Adhemar; he was its representative and thus stood in a positive relation to the central administration. The *Praeceptum* reminded him and other counts of their place under Charlemagne, whose sonorous *intitulatio* opens it (*Karolus, serenissimus augustus, a Deo coronatus ...*), while the closing dating clause gives the history of Charlemagne's empire building ("given in the twelfth year of empire, the forty-fourth of our reign in Francia and the thirty-eighth in Italy") as the reference to its being issued at the royal palace of Aachen evokes a conceptual and concrete centre of the empire.⁹⁶ Such features of royal documents are commonplace but it is precisely the repetition of this language of legitimacy to counts and others that is hallmark of the Carolingian world. The *Praeceptum* refers to misdemeanours committed by counts

⁹¹ Agobard, *De insolentia Iudeorum* (ed. Lieven Van Acker, *Agobardi Lugdunensis Opera Omnia*, CCCM 52, Turnholt 1981) 191 f., and also *Agobardi Epistolae* 7 (ed. Ernst Dümmler, *MGH Epistolae Karolini Aevi* 3, Berlin 1899) 182–185; Mark Mersiowsky, *Regierungspraxis und Schriftlichkeit im Karolingerreich: Das Fallbeispiel der Mandate und Briefe*, in: *Schriftkultur und Reichsverwaltung unter den Karolingern*, ed. Rudolf Schieffer (Abhandlungen der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 97, Opladen 1996) 109–166, at 154 f.

⁹² It is possible that Evrardus, the *missus* mentioned by Agobard (see previous note), was the father of Bertmundus the prefect of Lyons, see Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 94, 192; see also Karl Ferdinand Werner, *Hludovicus Augustus. Gouverner l'empire chrétien – Idées et réalités*, in: *Charlemagne's Heir. New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840)*, ed. Peter Godman/Roger Collins (Oxford 1990) 3–123, at 49.

⁹³ Roger Collins, *Charles the Bald and Wifred the Hairy*, in: *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, ed. Margaret T. Gibson/Janet L. Nelson (Aldershot 21990) 169–188, at 186.

⁹⁴ *Praeceptum pro Hispanis* (ed. Alfred Boretius *MGH Capitularia* 1, 76, Hannover 1883) 169; also edited in Ramon d'Abadal i de Vinyals, *Catalunya Carolingia II: Els Diplomes Carolingis a Catalunya* (Geneva 1952) no. II, 312–314.

⁹⁵ Collins, *Charles the Bald and Wifred* 186; Cullen J. Chandler, *Between court and counts: Carolingian Catalonia and the aprisio grant, 778–897*, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002) 19–44.

⁹⁶ *Praeceptum pro Hispanis*, ed. Boretius, no. 76, 169 and d'Abadal i de Vinyals, *Catalunya Carolingia*, no. II, 312–314.

and their *iuniores*. The latter were classified in negative terms by F. L. Ganshof as members of the “absurdly inadequate” staff of counts and “other agents of public power”.⁹⁷ These men’s appearance in this document, however, reveals their place, along with the counts and *missi*, in a conceptual framework combining the centre and the administrative structure in the territories. Further, this case, at the end of 814, pulled those involved in it north to Aachen where some of the Hispani and Adhemar and other counts, including Bera, his old partner in the Spanish campaigns, argued their claims. This took place in the basilica of St Martin (*ecclesiae Sancti Martini, cujus basilica sita est in Aquis palacii*) seen by L. Falkenstein as a private oratory in the palace district.⁹⁸ His comital business thus exposed Adhemar to the ‘ideological’ apparatus of documentation, palace buildings, etc. that continually informed him and his fellows that they were members of a larger public community, that they lived in a Carolingian kingdom. This in fact was how Adhemar defined himself. He is very probably the “most noble and devout monk Adhemar” whose account of the early years of Louis the Pious, his *connutritus*, formed the basis of the Astronomer’s early sections in his *Vita Hludowici*.⁹⁹ Adhemar served the Carolingians in war, was monitored by them in his county and finally deployed his memories of such service in the representation of that royalty.

In surveying our group of 794, we have focused on secular figures. That may give a misleading impression. Churchmen naturally had an important place in the structures that we have been examining and our last case-study from Louis’ reign demonstrates this. The letters of Frothar, bishop of Toul from c. 813 to 847, can cast light on the self-perception of an officer of state, so to speak, if we examine them with a view to our concerns with hierarchy, communication, memory of service etc. The fact that the collection may have been put together, possibly in Frothar’s lifetime or shortly after his death, as model letters to help in tasks of episcopal administration is relevant here.¹⁰⁰ We know little of Frothar’s origins, though he had some connection with Gorze, but as a bishop he was *ex officio* a member of the clerical aristocracy and his connections with the court are striking. The new edition of his letters (this includes letters sent to Frothar) classifies 18 of the surviving 32 as being concerned with what we might call palace business.¹⁰¹ It is worth remembering that Frothar does not appear in any of the main narrative sources for the reign of Louis the Pious and that there is only a barebones account of his career in the twelfth-century *Gesta Episcoporum Tullensium*. In other words, without his correspondence we would not know the richness of his cultural formation as a courtier/member of the entourage of Louis the Pious (he is so classified by Depreux) and one can only agree with Philippe Depreux’s comment that he can stand as representative of these bishops and counts whose activities in government are now lost to us.¹⁰²

These activities were manifold and much of them have already been commented upon by historians. For example, the letter giving orders for mobilisation of troops in the face of rebellion by Bernard

⁹⁷ François Louis Ganshof, The institutional framework of the Frankish monarchy, in: id., *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy* (London 1971) 86–110, at 91.

⁹⁸ D’Abadal i de Vinyals, *Catalunya Carolingia, Apèndixs XII, 442–444*; Ludwig Falkenstein, *Otto III. und Aachen* (MGH Studien und Texte 22, Hannover 1998) 12f.; Depreux, *Prosopographie* 401–403.

⁹⁹ Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, Prologus, ed. Tremp 284 and see Tremp’s introduction 69–75; Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 17, 88.

¹⁰⁰ Frothar’s letters are most recently edited, with French translation, in: *La correspondance d’un évêque carolingien Frothaire de Toul (ca. 813–847)*, ed. Michel Parisse (Paris 1998) 80–150; reference is made to this edition but the letters are also available in: *MGH Epistolae Karolini Aevi* 3 (as above n. 91). On the collection, Martina Stratmann, *Schriftlichkeit in der Verwaltung von Bistümern und Klöstern*, in: *Schriftkultur und Reichsverwaltung unter den Karolingern*, ed. Rudolf Schieffer (*Abhandlungen der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 97, Opladen 1996) 85–108, at 88f. and Laurent Morelle, *Enquête sur le manuscrit*, in: *Correspondance d’un évêque carolingien: Frothaire de Toul (ca. 813–847)*, ed. Michel Parisse (Paris 1998) 53–79.

¹⁰¹ Josiane Barbier, *L’évêque et le palais*, in: *Correspondance d’un évêque carolingien: Frothaire de Toul (ca. 813–847)*, ed. Michel Parisse (Paris 1998) 27–40, at 31; Barbier’s figures differ from those in the table of Monique Gouillet and Charles Vulliez, *Étude littéraire de la correspondance*, *ibid.* 41–55, at 52–54 because the former includes letters nos 15–17; on these letters, Morelle, *Enquête sur le manuscrit* 68.

¹⁰² Depreux, *Prosopographie* no. 106, 205; Stratmann, *Schriftlichkeit in der Verwaltung* 86. Frothar does not appear in the main narrative sources for the reign of Louis.

of Italy is relevant to our theme but does not need more comment here.¹⁰³ Further, we can match up Frotharius' reports on his activities with the instructions that officials like him received from the centre. Thus, he reported to the emperor that he had indeed seen to it that wolves in his diocese were killed, to the number of 240. The letter refers to this slaughter as the fulfilment of an order and we also know that such killings were commanded in the capitulary *De villis*.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, we find Frothar fretting over the arrangements he had to make for receiving envoys travelling up from Italy to Aachen, arrangements enjoined by the *Admonitio ad omnes regni ordines* of 823/5.¹⁰⁵ The letters reveal Frothar as a conscientious administrator, and this aspect has been well analysed by Josiane Barbier in the new edition of the correspondence. Frothar thus appears as the positive counterpart to the negative picture of bishops' response to royal commands in Notker's *Gesta Karoli*.¹⁰⁶

The letters can be made to tell us more, however, than the nature of tasks laid on dutiful bishops. They can reveal much of the mind-set of members of the imperial entourage. We catch something of the awe with which a Carolingian emperor could be regarded in a letter sent, probably in 828–9, to the archchaplain Hilduin. Here Frothar explains how misfortunes in Toul prevent him from carrying out orders to work on the palace at Aachen. In fact the wretched state of the Toul diocese has impeded work on another palace project, the enhancement of the local palace of Gondreville. J. Barbier has neatly summed up this projected work as being intended to “increase the comfort and monumentality” of the palace buildings and this can be seen as a manifestation of the maintenance of palace buildings as permanent reminders of royal authority in the landscape whether the ruler was resident in them or not.¹⁰⁷ But what is really striking here is the vivid description Frothar gives of Louis' issuing of the orders to work on Gondreville. Frothar writes that Hilduin will remember how, when the lord emperor was staying at the palace of Gondreville in one of his rare stays there, he took Hilduin by the hand as he gave the orders for the building work. Giving further instructions, Louis also pointed silently to Hilduin (*vestri personam tacite innotescens*). The point of this description is to help Hilduin recall the occasion (*Recordari siquidem vestra paternitas valet*) and it clearly shows how a palace and the physical presence of the emperor acted as a hook for memory amongst courtiers.¹⁰⁸ The physical proximity of Hilduin to the emperor on this occasion is obviously something that stayed in Frothar's own mind and, while this reveals something of the palace hierarchy and how access to the ruler could be tightly controlled and monitored, Frothar's description also suggests, in its tight focus on the words and silent gestures of the exalted personages, how the charisma of the ruler was perceived in the eyes of an aristocratic audience. Louis himself in the *Ordinatio ad omnes regni ordines* defined the seeing of Carolingian rulers as part of the admonitory moralising of the Carolingian state.¹⁰⁹

The palace and the tasks it laid on Frothar loom large in his correspondence and these letters have recently been studied in the broad context of studies of written communication and administration in the Carolingian empire.¹¹⁰ But it is worth looking at some of these letters in detail to get a sense of what this communication meant to the people involved in it, to continue our investigation of the mind-

¹⁰³ Frothar, *Epistula* 26, ed. Parisse 136; François Louis Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions under Charlemagne* (New York 1970) 64; François Louis Ganshof, *Louis the Pious reconsidered*, in: *History* 42 (1957) 171–180 and reprinted in Ganshof, *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy* 261–272, at 267; Werner, *Missus – Marchio – Comes* 198–199; Mersiowsky, *Regierungspraxis und Schriftlichkeit* 160; Rosamond McKitterick, *History and its Audiences. An Inaugural Lecture given in the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge 2000) 4–6.

¹⁰⁴ Frothar, *Epistula* 21, ed. Parisse 130; Barbier, *L'évêque et le palais* 37.

¹⁰⁵ Frothar, *Epistula* 18, ed. Parisse 126; Barbier, *L'évêque et le palais* 36. See also Werner, *Missus -Marchio – Comes* 234 f.

¹⁰⁶ Barbier, *L'évêque et le palais*; on Notker's anecdotes about bishops, see Hans-Werner Goetz in this volume.

¹⁰⁷ Frothar, *Epistula* 11, ed. Parisse 110–114; Barbier, *L'évêque et le palais* 36–40, who notes that Hilduin was explicitly designated as being allowed to reside in the palace; Airlie, *Palace of memory*.

¹⁰⁸ Frothar, *Epistula* 11, ed. Parisse 112.

¹⁰⁹ *Omnibus vobis aut visu aut auditu notum esse non dubitamus, quia genitor noster et progenitores, postquam a Deo electi sunt, in hoc praecipue studuerunt, ut honor sanctae ecclesiae et status regni decens manet*, *Admonitio ad omnes regni ordines* 1, ed. Boretius 303.

¹¹⁰ Stratmann, *Schriftlichkeit in der Verwaltung von Bistümern und Klöstern* 85–89; Mersiowsky, *Regierungspraxis und Schriftlichkeit im Karolingerreich* 130–135.

set and mental horizons of the imperial entourage. Here, Frothar's four letters to the layman Gerungus, the chief *ostiararius*, are relevant. These letters reveal Frothar's knowledge of how the court works. Frothar writes to Gerungus as a man who can control access to the emperor and his request to the latter to bring his messenger before the emperor if Hilduin is not present and able to do so reveals his knowledge of the hierarchy and arrangements of the court.¹¹¹

But through their very existence and through their delivery to court by messengers from Toul these letters to the courtier Gerungus remind him of the world outside the court and how it stood in relation to the centre. Frothar's letters inform him of the concerns of the bishop of Toul, who can be seen as a regular correspondent.¹¹² Also, if Gerungus is to busy himself with the concerns of the bishop of Toul, he in turn is thought of in Toul. Frothar tells Gerungus that masses and the psalter are sung for him in Toul, as prayers for his salvation and to aid him in carrying out the will of heaven through a long life for the benefit of the many. This reveals Frothar's perception of Gerungus' role in the Carolingian state as an enterprise informed by the divine will but also reveals how the officer in the palace is recalled far from that palace in the churches of Toul: *Vestrae prosperitatis vestriquae profectus semper sumus memores*.¹¹³

In his turn, Gerungus is asked to be mindful of Toul (*Vos vero nostri semper reminiscimini*), though his memories are to be the spur to action at court in Toul's interests.¹¹⁴ These memories are to be supplemented by communications as Frothar asks for his letters to be answered, though his request for Gerungus to reply 'discreetly' (*secrete per vestras litteras*) suggests that he was not seeking an official reply on that occasion.¹¹⁵ Gerungus' position at court thus makes him look out from the court. Further, both he and Frothar, because of the burdens of their office, i.e. their place in the structure of the empire, have to be aware of the geographical space of the empire. Frothar's letters to Gerungus naturally centre on the palace and the imperial presence. But one letter shows that Frothar is worried about the prospect of being sent to Spain and he asks Gerungus to help him avoid this obligation. His excuse is that the emperor is planning to visit Toul in the following year and Frothar has to prepare for this. Thus, Frothar in Toul is thinking of the space of empire in his concerns over Spain but also over the prospect of the court coming to Toul and he thinks also of time, of the rhythms of imperial service (*in partes Hispaniae ... me senior noster ista hieme futura destinare voluerit*) and that of imperial travels (*domnus imperator sequenti anno locum nostrum vult visitare*). This letter is a sequel to a conversation that Frothar had with Gerungus in the palace itself (*nuper vobiscum in palatio locutus sum*) which is a pivot for Frothar's sense of himself as imperial servant.¹¹⁶ It is worth noting that Frothar's concerns are historically specific. After the Treaty of Verdun in 843, expeditions to Spain were no concern of the bishops of Toul.

IV.

In examining Walahfrid's text, the activities of the group of 794 and the correspondence of Frothar we have gained a clear picture of the activities and consciousness of some members of the *appareil d'état* in the time of Louis the Pious. The essential limiting of our study to Louis' reign has the advantage of giving us a firm historical context for our study. Of course, such limits have disadvantages too. We have not even covered the whole of Louis' reign. A focus on the upheavals of 830 and after could yield a different picture of the meaning of office-holding. Beyond the broad context of the high politics of the decade, individual cases would be instructive. The fall of Matfrid of Orleans, for example, can cast light on contemporary understandings of office-holding and Matfrid's career also demonstrates

¹¹¹ Frothar, Epistula 2, ed. Parisse 94.

¹¹² Frothar, Epistulae 2, 4, 24 and 25, ed. Parisse 94–96, 96–98, 134–136; Barbier, L'évêque et le palais 32f. These letters should be dated more narrowly than they are in the Parisse edition as Gerungus withdrew from the palace by 836, Depreux, Prosopographie no. 115, 213f.

¹¹³ Frothar, Epistula 2, ed. Parisse 94.

¹¹⁴ Frothar, Epistula 4, ed. Parisse 98.

¹¹⁵ Frothar, Epistula 24, ed. Parisse 134.

¹¹⁶ Frothar, Epistula 25, ed. Parisse 134–136; on the prospect of expeditions to Spain, see also epistula 8, *ibid.* 102–104.

that status was not simply identical with the holding of office.¹¹⁷ But Matfrid's fall from office had knock-on effects in other spheres, as it triggered administrative machinery that reached out to more than simply the *dramatis personae* of the high politics that caused his fall. The sending of *missi* in 829 to gather incriminating material from victims of what was now labelled Matfrid's bad government and the ruler's instructions that complainants were to come to the next assembly illustrate the framework of communication and report under royal authority within which the activities of an official existed. The copying and preservation of these orders later in the ninth century on the Matfrid case in centres such as Rheims and Fulda illustrates the reverberations such orders could continue to have.¹¹⁸

If conflict deserves more study, so too does the role of family. High office may have been in the king's gift but aristocratic families had expectations here. Count Orendil in Bavaria in 814 expressed the hope that one of his sons would gain the office of count but he recognised that such a son would have to be worthy of it. It is hard to tell how typical this attitude was but this example does at least show a count holding subjective and objective claims in balance and recognising the validity of both.¹¹⁹ In so far as the gaining of office is linked to the workings of patronage it is a matter of concern for more than the office-holder and we should look at the activities of aristocratic families, including their women, here.¹²⁰

Again, the very notion of 'aristocracy' needs some refining as, in dealing with personnel in Carolingian service, we are hardly dealing with a monolithic and homogeneous class. We would certainly benefit from looking more attentively at the activities of the 'gentry' and this means looking at the relationship between 'centre' and localities. What matters is how such a relationship was itself constituted. There is, for example, potentially rich material on the 'hundred man' (*centenarius*, or 'witness-leader', from his prominent position in witness lists in charters) a local figure prominent in a variety of transactions recorded in such charters as those of the abbey of St Gall, but whose local identity was supplemented by more 'official' duties and status whereby he helped run royal administration at local level.¹²¹ Such figures, while hardly members of the high aristocracy, could be connected to it and should not be seen as trapped in low status. In the Mainz region, Walaram fulfilled this function in the second half of the eighth century and his son went on to become a major figure in the Carolingian church, for Walaram was the father of Hrabanus Maurus.¹²² Nor should Walaram be imagined as being active in only local theatres. The activities of figures like him intersected with other structures and sites of public authority. The centenarius Brunicho, who appears in several St Gall charters of the late eighth and early ninth century was 'witness-leader' in an 815 transaction at Kirchen, which was to become a royal palace; similarly, Walaram appears away from his usual stamping-ground in a charter issued at Paderborn, likewise site of a royal palace.¹²³ Palaces were not neutral places but acted as per-

¹¹⁷ *Capitulare missorum* 3 (ed. Alfred Boretius/Viktor Krause, *MGH Capitularia Regum Francorum* 2, 188 (Hannover 1890–1897) 10; Nelson, *Kingship and royal government* 415; Philippe Depreux, *Le comte Matfrid d'Orléans*, in: *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 152 (1994) 331–374, at 355 f.

¹¹⁸ Mordek, *Bibliotheca capitularium* 155 (on Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. 141a in scrinio) and 599 (on Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale Lat. 10758).

¹¹⁹ *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Freising* 1, no. 313, ed. Theodor Bitterauf, (München 1905) 268; Zotz, *Grafschaftsverfassung und Personengeschichte* 4; Zotz, *In Amt und Würden* 12 f. On suitability for ecclesiastical office see Frothar, *Epistula* 15, ed. Parisse 120.

¹²⁰ Families, including widows and mothers, took a lively interest in the retaining of benefices which could be seen as *honores* as the example of Landrada, widow of the count Donatus who had been granted Neuilly, shows; see Hubert Mordek, *Ein exemplarischer Rechtsstreit: Hinkmar von Reims und das Landgut Neuilly-Saint-Front*, in: *Zeitschrift der Savigny Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* 114, *Kanonistische Abteilung* 83 (1997) 86–112. General comment on the aristocracy and honores in Airlie, *The aristocracy* 443–447, and Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir* 249–262.

¹²¹ Borgolte, *Geschichte der Grafschaften*, 118–121; Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge 1989) 101 f.; Innes, *State and Society* 126–129; Katherine Bullimore, *Folcwin of Rankweil: the world of a Carolingian local official*, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 13, 1 (2005) 43–77; Peter Erhart/Julia Kleindinst, *Urkundenlandschaft Rätien* (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 7, Wien 2004).

¹²² Innes, *State and Society*, 65–68.

¹²³ *Kirchen: Urkundenbuch der Abtei Sanct Gallen* 1, no. 214 (ed. Hermann Wartmann, Zürich 1863) 203 f.; Borgolte, *Geschichte der Grafschaften* 119; McKitterick, *Carolingians and the written word* 105. Paderborn: *Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda* 1 (ed. Edmund Stengel, Marburg 1913) no. 165; Franz Staab, *Untersuchungen zur Gesellschaft am Mittelrhein in der Karolingerzeit* (*Geschichtliche Landeskunde* 11, Wiesbaden 1975) 429; Innes, *State and Society* 150.

manently present and visible reminders of royal authority, whether for exalted figures such as Frothar or for humbler figures such as these *centenarii*. If we are to examine the ways in which relationships between centres and localities operated, the role of journeys, itineraries, palaces and indeed towns would surely repay study and students of the Carolingian aristocracy could surely learn from work on the aristocracy in an urban setting in Italy and Anglo-Saxon England.¹²⁴ To look at relations between regions is to look at communications and much recent work on literacy and orality is relevant here.¹²⁵ We certainly need to remember, however, that literacy in itself does not guarantee that the centre's will is carried out. Nick Everett's study of a dispute between the churches of Siena and Arezzo that stretched from the era of Lombard to Carolingian rule in Italy reveals that a wealth of documentation was generated by the case, but that the royal will failed to prevail.¹²⁶ Nor did rulers always heed what they were told. The survival of the 891 letter of margrave Aribio to Arnulf on the Moravian situation casts valuable light on communication between frontiers and centre but Arnulf was not convinced by Aribio's picture of peace and went ahead with war preparations.¹²⁷ Communication, of course, involves more than documents, though close study of their content and tone can yield insights into the 'psychology' of authority, as demonstrated recently by studies of capitulary texts of Charlemagne.¹²⁸ Other forms of communication can also be instructive here. When the rebel Count Gundachar fell in battle, news of his death was brought to Louis the German who ordered all the church bells of Regensburg to be rung.¹²⁹ Perhaps this may not be seen as a manifestation of state power as such but the Carolingian empire was an empire that was ruled by Carolingians and assertions of the authority of the reigning Carolingian were definitions of the nature of that community.

That empire cannot be understood in isolation. If we need studies of the kind undertaken here in order to offer a firm historical context, we also need other kinds of studies to help give us comparative contexts. Chris Wickham's view of the aristocracy of Lombard Italy as less economically stratified than its Frankish counterpart but "better able to control the rules of the game at a local level" gives students of the Carolingian state food for thought.¹³⁰ The same is true of the debate on "la mutation de l'an mil".¹³¹ Such studies and debates can profit from work on the Carolingian context which itself can only benefit from being related to such studies. It is to be hoped that such studies will be undertaken. For now, this paper stands as a contribution to a clearer understanding of a specific Carolingian context of a strong state.

¹²⁴ Chris Wickham, *Aristocratic power in eighth-century Lombard Italy*, in: *After Rome's Fall. Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History. Essays presented to Walter Goffart* (Toronto/Buffalo/London 1998) 153–170, at 158–162; Robin Fleming, *Urban Elites and Urban Communities in Late-Saxon England*, in: *Past & Present* 141 (1993) 3–37. On aristocrats and urban and fortified places in the Frankish world: Matthew Innes, *People, Places and Power in Carolingian Society*, in: *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Mayke de Jong/Frans Theuvs/Carine van Rhijn (The Transformation of the Roman World 6, Leiden/Boston/Köln 2001) 397–437.

¹²⁵ McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word; New Approaches to Medieval Communication*, ed. Marco Mostert (Turnhout 1999).

¹²⁶ Nick Everett, *Literacy and the law in Lombard government*, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000) 93–127, at 120f.

¹²⁷ Text of Aribio's letter and context in: Hansmartin Schwarzmaier, *Ein Brief des Markgrafen Aribio an König Arnulf über die Verhältnisse in Mähren*, in: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 6 (1972) 55–66; Johannes Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte* 436.

¹²⁸ Rudolf Pokorny, *Eine Brief-Instruktion aus dem Hofkreis Karls des Grossen an einen geistlichen Missus*, in: *Deutsches Archiv* 52 (1996) 57–83, at 63f.; Janet L. Nelson, *The voice of Charlemagne*, in: *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages. Studies presented to Henry Mayr-Harting*, ed. Richard Gameson/Henrietta Leyser (Oxford 2001) 76–88.

¹²⁹ *Annales Fuldenses* a. 869, ed. Kurze 68.

¹³⁰ Wickham, *Aristocratic Power* 170; for important aspects of the state in Italy in this period, see François Bougard, *La justice dans le royaume d'Italie de la fin du VIII^e siècle au début du XI^e siècle* (Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 291, Rome 1994) and G.V.B. West, *Charlemagne's involvement in central and southern Italy: power and the limits of authority*, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 3 (1999) 341–367.

¹³¹ Thomas Bisson, *The "Feudal Revolution"*, in: *Past & Present* 142 (1994) 6–42; Dominique Barthélemy, *The "Feudal Revolution"*. Debate 1, in: *Past & Present* 152 (1996) 196–205; Stephen D. White, *The "Feudal Revolution"*. Debate 2, in: *ibid.* 205–223; Reuter, *The "Feudal Revolution"*. Debate 3, in: *ibid.* 177–195; Chris Wickham, *The "Feudal Revolution"*. Debate 4, in: *ibid.* 196–208; Thomas Bisson, *The "Feudal Revolution"*. Reply, in: *ibid.* 208–225. See also David Bates, *England and the "Feudal Revolution"*, in: *Il Feudalesimo nell'alto Medioevo* (Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo 47, Spoleto 2000) 611–646.

