The *Liber Historiae Francorum* – a Model for a New Frankish Self-confidence

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The *Liber Historiae Francorum* (hereinafter '*LHF*') is a historiographical text that was most probably composed by an anonymous Neustrian author in the early eighth century AD. The text lays out the events from the origins of the Franks to the inauguration of King Theuderic IV in 720 AD from a Neustrian perspective.[1] It is an important source for the understanding of the late Merovingian period as it was written in the time shortly before the transition of power from the Merovingian to the Carolingian dynasty when Charles Martel prevailed as *princeps* in the Frankish empire. Written from a Merovingian perspective, it already mentions the ancestors of the Carolingians, but characterises the period as far less chaotic than later Carolingian sources do.[2] This although (or precisely because) the Frankish nobility plays an important role along with the Merovingian kings. Indeed, Gerberding argues that the balance of power between the Frankish kings and the *Franci* is the main subject of the text.[3] According to Innes and McKitterick, 'it is possible that the *Liber historiae francorum* was commissioned by a rival, Neustrian, political

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[1] While Krusch and Kurth plead for a male monk writing in the monastery of Saint-Denis (G. Kurth, 'Étude critique sur le Liber Historiae Francorum', in idem, *Études Franques*, 2 vols (Paris, 1919), I, pp. 31-65, at p. 57-61; B. Krusch, 'Die neueste Wendung im Genovefa-Streit', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 40 (1916), pp. 265-327, at p. 276.), Gerberding favours Soissons and, in particular, the monastery of Saint-Médard (R. Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber Historiae Francorum* (Oxford, 1987), p.152). Hartmann convincingly argues that the author could be a nun from the Notre Dame convent (M. Hartmann, 'Die Darstellung der Frauen im Liber Historiae Francorum und die Verfasserfrage', *Concilium medii aevi*, 7 (2004), pp. 209-237, at p. 213). For discussion of the authorship of the *LHF* see also: J. Nelson, 'Gender and Genre in Women Historians of the Early Middle Ages', in J.-P. Genet (ed.), *L'historiographie médiévale en Europe* (Paris, 1991), pp. 149-163, at p. 161 and I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London, 1994), p. 34. Cf. H. Reimitz, *Writing for the Future. History, Identity, and Ethnicity in the Frankish World (550-850)* (Princeton, forthcoming). The author uses the term *Franci* when he or she talks of the Neustrians and mostly means the Neustrian nobility. Austrasians are called *Austrasii, Franci Superiores* or *Riboarii*. Cf. Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 167. The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013)/ERC grant agreement No. 269591

[2] The *Annales Mettenses Priores*, for instance, use the *Chronicle of Fredegar* as well as the *LHF*, but at the same time they provide a 'systematic denunciation of the Merovingian rulers' (Y. Hen, 'The Annals of Metz and the Merovingian Past', in idem, Matthew Innes (ed.), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 175-190, at p. 175).

[3] Cf. Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 166-172.

grouping in the first part of the eight century.[4] Yet, the *LHF* seems not to be oppositional historiography composed to defend against the Austrasian mayors of the palace. On the contrary, the text has a positive view on Charles Martel (*... filium (…) nomine Carolo, virum elegantem, egregium atque utilem*), as well as on Grimoald the Younger (*Grimoaldus maiorum domus pius, modestus, mansuetus et iustus*).[5] Thus, the author provides us with a confident history of the Neustrian Franks, which attaches importance to the tradition and legitimacy of the kings without denying the increasing power of the early Carolingians. Both the author's concept of the term *Franci* and Merovingian legitimism testify to his or her desire to preserve these traditions and to transfer them to the present time.[6] The Neustrian identity is thereby consolidated.

In the modern research tradition this text remains 'relatively neglected'[7], despite being used extensively in later times. The many - mostly Carolingian - manuscripts that have been preserved offer proof of this reception. Krusch lists no less than fifty manuscripts containing the corpus of the *LHF* in a preliminary note to his edition of the text. Furthermore, the text was incorporated into several chronicles.[8] Nonetheless, modern historians have primarily used the text to complete the framework of the political history of the late Merovingian period, for which it represents one of the main sources, providing us with new information to supplement the other main sources for Merovingian history: the *Decem libri historiarum* written by the sixth-century scholar Gregory of Tours and the so-called *Chronicle of Fredegar*, a text probably composed around 700 AD.[9] Interestingly, unlike Gregory of Tours or Fredegar, the *LHF* does not begin its narrative with the biblical course of events in world history on the basis of the Chronicle of

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[4] M. Innes and R. McKitterick, 'The Writing of History', in R. McKitterick (ed.), *Carolingian Culture. Emulation and Innovation* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 193-220, at p. 208.

[5] *LHF*, 49-50.

[6] H. Reimitz, 'Die Konkurrenz der Ursprünge in der fränkischen Historiographie', in W. Pohl (ed.), *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen. Von der Bedeutung des Frühen Mittelalters*, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 8 (Vienna, 2004), pp. 191-209, at p. 203. Cf. H. Wolfram, *Intitulatio vol. 1, Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel bis zum Ende des 8. Jahrhunderts*, MIÖG suppl. 21 (Graz, 1967), p 148-151.

[7] J. Nelson, 'The Unstoppable Pippinids', *Times Literary Supplement*, March 11-17 1988, p. 289.

[8] Krusch in his preface to the Latin edition: *Liber Historiae Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH, SRM* 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 215-328, at p. 215-38. For the English translations used in this paper see: *Liber Historiae Francorum*, ed. B.S. Bacharach (Lawrence, 1973); P. Fouracre, R. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France. History and Hagiography 640-720* (Manchester, 1996), p. 36. See also *Liber Historiae Francorum. Das Buch von der Geschichte der Franken*, ed. H. Haupt, Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 4a (Darmstadt, 1982), p. 333. From philological point of view, Taylor investigated the *LHF* in great detail, cf. P. Taylor, *The Latinity of the Liber Historiae Francormum. A Phonological, Morphological and Syntactical Study* (New York, 1924) and eadem, 'The Vocabulary and Style of the Liber Historiae Francorum', in J.D. Fitzgerald, P. Taylor (ed.), *Todd Memorial Volumes*, Philological Studies 2 (New York, 1930), pp. 207-214.

[9] Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*, ed. B. Krusch, W. Levison, *MGH, SRM* 1,1 (Hanover, 1937); *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii Scholastici libri IV. cum Continuationibus*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH, SRM* 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 1-193. For the most recent discussion on these texts see: M. Heinzelmann, *Gregor von Tours (538-594). Zehn Bücher Geschichte. Historiographie und Gesellschaftskonzept im 6. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt 1994); R. Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken* (Hanover, 2007) as well as Reimitz, *Writing for the Future*.

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Eusebius and Jerome, but with the narration of the Trojan origin of the Frankish people. Most historians have focussed on the author's use of the legend of Troy as an *origo gentis* of the Frankish people, which is also handed down to us by Fredegar in a slightly different version. Due to their focus on the Frankish origin myth, modern historians have characterised the text as a piece of work originating from a society where ethnicity and a belief in the virtues of war represented the most important distinctions of a people. Therefore, they declared the text as fundamentally influenced by Germanic traditions.[10] It was not until the publication of Gerberding's monograph entitled *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber historiae Francorum* in the late 1980s that the text, its author and its time were examined in greater depth. But he came to the same conclusion; for him the *LHF* basically represented 'a secular and political history' that is 'notably lacking in Christian or even ecclesiastical content.'[11] He suggested that 'the *LHF* is good witness that the Germanic or epic ideals of heroism, single combat, trickery, accumulation of booty, and fierce personal loyalty were held in high esteem…'[12]

The *LHF* may extol military virtues, but this is also true of Roman historiography or the Old Testament. There is little that is demonstrably Germanic in the text. According to Innes and McKitterick, the pagan histories of classical authors, Christian historiographers and of the Bible can be identified as the three main influences on the historiography of the time. What is more, the conception of history underwent some major changes in the early Middle Ages due to the ever-increasing pervasiveness of Christianity. As Goetz puts it, Christian historiography always perceives itself as salvific history; history becomes linear, starting with the creation of the world and ending with doomsday. This change in the conception of history has far-reaching consequences: the Christian historians blur the boundaries between then and now; history is not merely an image of the past, it also relates to the present.[13] The establishment of Christianity was

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[10] Gerberding, *Rise*; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Fredegar and the History of France', in *idem* (ed.), *The Long-haired Kings and Other Studies in Frankish History* (London, 1962), pp. 71-94; E. Ewig, 'Trojamythos und fränkische Frühgeschichte', in D. Geuenich (ed.), *Die Franken und die Alemannen bis zur "Schlacht bei Zülpich" 496/97* (Berlin, 1998), pp. 1-30 and H.H. Anton, 'Troja-Herkunft, origo gentis und frühe Verfaßtheit der Franken in der gallisch-fränkischen Tradition des 5. bis 8. Jahrhunders', *MIÖG*, 108 (2000), pp. 1-30.

[11] Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 159.

[12] Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 163. On Germanic traditions and how they could have possibly influenced early medieval historiography, see: G. Scheibelreiter: 'Vom Mythos zur Geschichte. Überlegungen zu den Formen der Bewahrung von Vergangenheit im Frühmittelalter', in idem, A. Scharer, (ed.), *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 32 (Vienna, 1994), pp. 26-40; A. Ebenbauer, 'Heldenlied und Historisches Lied im Frühmittelalter', in H. Beck (ed.), *Heldensage und Heldendichtung im Germanischen* (Berlin, 1988), pp. 15-34.

[13] Innes/McKitterick, 'Writing of History', p. 194-195; H.-W. Goetz, 'Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit im früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Geschichtsbewußtsein', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 255 (1992), pp. 61-97, at p. 61-62 and p. 79-82.

an extensive process spanning several centuries, and so was the change in historiography. Christianity influenced moral values as well as the image of the perfect king; new historiographical traditions developed over time, rather than one conception simply being replaced by another.

In the light of the above, I will argue that the author of the *LHF* makes use of different long-standing traditions. What is more, I am convinced that he or she not only manages to juxtapose and balance these different traditions, but also slightly transforms them for his or her own ends. In particular, this can be observed in two examples, both somewhat neglected in previous research: the author's use of the legend of Troy, which is different from that of other post-Roman authors such as Jordanes or the so-called Fredegar, and his or her use of the Bible; the text's language and narrative structure as well as its typological comparisons indicate that the author consciously harks back to the Bible, but in a manner that is different to Gregory of Tours. This is particularly interesting, because the *LHF* is largely based upon the six-book version of Gregory's text.[14] Discussing these examples in the following two sections, the question arises as to how these different traditions were associated and as to what model of identity the *LHF* provides in comparison to other historiographical texts of the same period. I will attempt to provide an answer to this question in the last section.

A) The *Franci* – the Righteous Trojans?

The *LHF* immediately starts its narration with the *origo gentis* of the Frankish people, directly connecting Frankish history with the history of Troy. According to Wolfram, the *origo gentis* is part of a narration that mixes pre-ethnographical data with etymological explanations to clarify the origin of a people, to connect its history to universal history and to provide it with a Roman and therefore Christian identity.[15] Thus, the idea of connecting the Greek legend of Troy with the *origo gentis* of a post-Roman people is not particularly new. The sixth-century scholar Jordanes, for instance, establishes this relationship in his history of the Goths. For him, the connection between Trojans and Goths aims at legitimising Gothic rule by proving the Goths equal to the Romans.[16] At which point in time the history of the Franks was linked to the legend of Troy for

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[14] Cf. P. Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings. Peace, Power, and the Early Medieval Political Imagination* (Oxford, 2011), p. 128; Reimitz, *Writing for the Future*.

[15] H. Wolfram et al., 'Origo gentis', in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 22 (2003), pp. 174–210, at p. 174-175. This definition was recently challenged by Coumert, *Origines des peuples. Les récits du Haut Moyen Âge occidental (550 - 850)* (Paris 2007), p.16; cf. H. Wolfram, 'Origo et religio. Ethnic traditions and literature in early medieval texts', in *Early Medieval Europe*, 3 (1994) 1, pp. 19-38; A. Plassmann, *Origo gentis. Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterichen Herkunftserzählungen*, Orbis mediaevalis. Vorstellungswelten des Mittelalters 7 (Berlin, 2006).

[16] Jordanes, *Getica*, 9, ed. T. Mommsen, *MGH, AA* 5,1 (Berlin, 1882), pp. 53-138; Cf. W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History A.D. 550-800. Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, 1988), p. 36.

the first time is a question that has stirred some controversy. Wood, for example, claims that this connection could have been established in the fourth century AD, at a time when the Franks gained access to high offices in the Roman Empire and wanted to be understood as 'brothers of the Romans'. This argument seems convincing, as the first documented version of the legend of Troy handed down by Fredegar fits this interpretation perfectly.[17] Yet other interpretations seem equally plausible. Back in the first century BC, the Greek historian Timagenes, who was indirectly quoted by Ammianus Marcellinus in the fourth century AD, refers to a connection between Trojans and Gauls. It is possible that this tradition on the Gallic origin was transferred to the Franks, the Gauls' successors in power in the fifth century AD.[18]

The legend of Troy as known from the *LHF* seems to pursue a slightly different purpose. Regarding the *LHF*, the origin of the legend's Frankish version appears to be negligible. In my opinion, it is more important to focus on the different use (and thus the different meaning) of the legend of Troy within the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and the *LHF*, because it has yet to be fully appreciated that the legend can perform various functions within these texts.

Gregory of Tours does not connect the Franks with the Trojans; he does not mention the legend of Troy, even if he possibly knew it.[19] For him as a Christian author, the Christian Clovis is the first real Frankish king. Neither the origin of the Franks nor the *primus rex Francorum* is of particular interest for him. He does not want to write a Frankish history, his aim is to write a Church history that conveys moral values.[20] Fredegar hands down the Frankish legend of Troy in two different versions. In his second book, Fredegar tries to incorporate the legend in parts of the *Chronicle* of Jerome, which serves as a template. He introduces Priam as *primus rex*, but he does not constitute a direct connection with Francio.[21] In the third book, however, this genealogical connection is established. Fredegar prefixes his narration, which is based on

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[17] Fredegar, II.4-9 and III.2; I. Wood, 'Defining the Franks. Frankish Origins in Early Medieval Historiography', in S. Forde et al. (ed.), *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, Leeds Texts and Monographs. New Series 14 (Leeds, 1995), pp. 47-57, at p. 51-54. Ewig and Anton, in particular, have discussed the legend's origin in detail; cf. Ewig, 'Tojamythos', p. 1-15; Anton, 'Troja-Herkunft'; Wallace-Hadrill, 'Fredegar'.
[18] Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*, XV.9.1-5, ed. J.C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1935). Cf. H. Hommel, 'Die Trojanische Herkunft der Franken', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 99 (1956) 4, pp. 323-341, at p. 339.
[19] Cf. J. Barlow, 'Gregory of Tours and the Myth of the Trojan Origins of the Franks', in *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 29 (1995), pp. 86-95.
[20] Ewig, 'Trojamythos', p. 11-12. Cf. Reimitz, 'Konkurrenz der Ursprünge'; M. Heinzelmann, 'Die Franken und die fränkische Geschichte in der Perspektive der Historiographie Gregors von Tours' in A. Scharer, G. Scheibelreiter (ed.), *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 32 (Vienna, 1994), pp. 326-344, at p. 334; *idem, Gregor von Tours*, p. 94-96.
[21] Fredegar, II.4-6.

Gregory, with the legend of Troy, and he emphasizes the connection between Franks and Romans.[22]

The *LHF* uses a version of the legend of Troy independent of Fredegar's:

> 'Let us set out the beginnings of the kings of the Franks and their
> origin and also the origins of the people and its deeds. There is in
> Asia the city of the Trojans in the region called Illium. This is
> where Aeneas reigned…'[23]

Neither the connection to biblical history through Jerome's *Chronicle*, nor the connection to Roman history is of any importance to the *LHF*. Based on the legend of Troy, the *LHF* provides a continuous history of the Merovingian dynasty with Antenor and Priam as its ancestors and Priam's grandson Faramund as its first king.[24] Hence, unlike Gregory of Tours and Fredegar, the *LHF* does not attempt to integrate the Franks into an existing universal or religious history. Therefore, I do not want to compare the *LHF*'s version with the *origines gentium* of other post-Roman peoples, but to directly compare it with Roman history. A multitude of Roman histories have been handed down to us, but the *Origo gentis Romanae* (hereinafter 'OGR') is a text which seems particularly suitable to this end. It is a text most probably composed in the fourth century AD by an anonymous author and was used by Isidore of Seville in the sixth or seventh century and possibly also by Paul the Deacon for his *History of the Lombards* in the mid-eighth century.[25] The *OGR* is the only coherent outline of mythical Roman history from late antiquity. The text does not simply retell an *origo*, but rather connects different origin myths by integrating the stories of Italy, Lavinium, Alba Longa, and Rome into the Greek conception.[26] A comparison of the conception of history in the *OGR* and the *LHF* provides us with interesting parallels. Both texts were composed in a Christian environment, yet they largely omit ecclesiastical politics. In contrast

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[22] Fredegar, III.2; cf. Anton, 'Troja-Herkunft', p. 18.
[23] *LHF*, 1: *Principium regum Francorum eorumque origine vel gentium illarum ac gesta proferamus. Est autem in Asia opidum Troianorum, ubi est civitas quae Illium dicitur, ubi regnavit Aeneas…*
[24] *LHF*, 1: 'Priam and Antenor, two of the other Trojan princes, embarked on ships with twelve thousand of the men remaining from the Trojan army. They departed and came to the banks of the Tanais [Don] river' (*Alii quoque ex principibus, Priamus videlicet et Antenor, cum reliquo exercitu Troianorum duodecim milia intrantes in navibus, abscesserunt et venerunt usque ripas Tanais fluminis*). As well as *LHF*, 4: '… and they chose Faramund (…) and raised him up as the long-haired king above them' (*… et elegerunt Faramundo (…) et eleveverunt eum regem super se crinitum*).
[25] Cf. T. Mommsen, 'Zu der Origo Gentis Romanae', *Hermes*, 12 (1877) 4, pp. 401-408, at p. 401; A. Momigliano, 'Some Observations on the "Origo gentis Romanae"', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 48 (1958) 1, pp. 56-73, at p. 64; M. Sehlmeyer, *Origo Gentis Romanae. Die Ursprünge des römischen Volkes* (OGR; Darmstadt, 2004), p. 20. The Latin text used in this paper is based on Sehlmeyers' edition. For the English translation see: K. Haniszewski et al., *Origo Gentis Romanae. The Origin of the Roman Race* (New York, 2004)
[26] Sehlmeyer, *Origo Gentis Romanae*, p. 7 and 148.

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to the *LHF,* the *OGR,* which was composed 350 years earlier, is clearly imbued with pagan spirit. Both texts, nonetheless, tell the story of an independent people; the *OGR* focuses on the history of the Romans, the *LHF* on the history of the Franks. Both texts trace the origin of their people back to the refugees of Troy, even though they use the history of Troy in a contrary manner.

The key to the legend's interpretation lies in the different imaging of Aeneas and Antenor in the two texts. While the first chapters of the *OGR* can be seen as a commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid*, interestingly enough, Virgil is replaced as the main source the moment it comes to the history of Aeneas. 'The author of the "Origo" had to abandon Virgil when he came to Aeneas, because Virgil on Aeneas was not history,'[27] Momigliano maintains. Nevertheless, following classical Roman tradition, Aeneas is the *OGR*'s unquestioned hero. Conversely, Antenor, who also managed to escape from Troy, is depicted as a traitor:

> 'When <u>Ilium was betrayed</u> to the Achaians <u>by Antenor</u> and the other leaders, Aeneas departed in the night, placing his household gods and his father Anchises ahead of himself by carrying them on his own shoulders, and even pulling his little son along by the hand.'[28]

While Virgil just gives an account of Antenor's escape from Troy, some authors like Lycophron and others see him as traitor to the Trojans as early as the third century BC. This tradition persists until the fourth century AD. Not only does the *OGR* call Antenor a traitor, but also the Roman grammarian Servius in his commentary on Virgil.[29]

In complete contrast, the *LHF* recounts the situation the other way round. It introduces Aeneas (rather than Priam) as King of Troy and indirectly justifies the Greek attack on Troy by claiming that Aeneas's men are *viri bellatores atque rebelles nimis*.[30] The *LHF* describes the fall of Troy as follows:

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[27] Momigliano, 'Some Observations', p. 70.
[28] *OGR*, 9.1: *Aeneas, <u>Ilio</u> Achivis <u>prodito</u> <u>ab Antenore</u> aliisque principibus, cum prae se deos penates patremque Anchisen humeris gestans nec non et parvulum filium manu trahens noctu excederet.*
[29] Virgil, *Aeneid*, I.242-249, ed. J. Götte (Düsseldorf, 1997⁹): *Antenor potuit mediis elapsus Achivis | Illyricos penetrare sinus atque intuma tutus | regna Liburnorum et fontem superare Timavi, | unde per ora novem vasto cum murmure montis | it mare proruptum et pelage premit arva sonanti. | hic tamen ille urbem Patavi sedesque locavit | Teucrorum et genti nomen dedit armaque fixit | Troïa, nunc placida compostus pace quiescit*; cf. Lycophron, *Alexandra*, v. 340, ed. A.W. Mair, G.R. Mair, *Callimachus, Hymns and Epigrams. Lycophron. Aratus*, Loeb Classical Library 129 (London, 1921); Servius, *In Vergilii carmina comentarii. Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii carmina commentarii*, II.15, ed. G. Thilo, H. Hagen (Leipzig, 1881): … *porta quqam eis Antenor aperuit … non nulli signum equi datum, ut internoscerent Graeci suos, vel hostes …*
[30] *LHF*, 1.

'… when the city was conquered, the <u>tyrant Aeneas</u> fled to Italy to seek men <u>to carry on the fighting.</u> <u>Priam and Antenor</u> (…) arrived at the frontiers of Pannonia, which were near the Maeotian swamps, and <u>began to build a city</u> (…); they lived there many years, growing into a great people …'[31]

The author of the *LHF* explicitly calls Aeneas a tyrant[32] who settles his people in Italy for combat, while Antenor has peaceful intentions. He or she does not report on any military actions undertaken by Antenor's people.

Although the *OGR* alludes to the Roman historian Quintus Lutatius Catulus, who lived in the first century BC and identified both Antenor and Aeneas as traitors of their home country (namely as *proditor patriae*), this reference need not be regarded as tantamount to political criticism. In contrast to Romulus, Aeneas was not a particularly prominent figure in Rome until Caesar incorporated the Trojans into his genealogy, as Walter has recently demonstrated.[33] So the *LHF* uses the legend of Troy in a way other than its contemporaries. It is worth noticing that the *LHF* mentions Antenor together with Priam; this combination is possibly taken from Ovid.[34] While Titus Livius refers to Aeneas' and Antenor's hospitality towards the Greeks in a neutral way, the Greek historian Strabo indicates that Antenor survived the war because of his enmity to Priam and the hospitality shown to Menelaus.[35] Because of the tendency to characterise Antenor as a traitor in literature, to present him as a Frankish ancestor would have been of little use in the context of an attempt to prove equality with the Romans originating from Aeneas. In the *Chronicle of Fredegar* for instance, Antenor is not mentioned. The author of the *LHF* does not try to connect the Roman history with the history of the Franks; he rather creates a new tradition. Both peoples, the Romans and the Franks originate from the *populus Troianorum*, but each of them

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[31] *LHF*, 1: ... *Ipsa enim civitate subacta, fugiit <u>Aeneas tyrannus</u> in Italia locare gentes <u>ad pugnandum</u>. Alii quoque ex principibus, <u>Priamus</u> videlicet <u>et Antenor</u> (…) pervenerunt iuxta terminos Pannoniarum iuxta Meotidas paludes et <u>coeperunt aedificare civitatem</u> (…); habitaveruntque illic annis multis creveruntque in gentem magnam ...*

[32] Note that *tyrannus* does not always have a depreciative meaning; in Medieval Latin the term *tyrannus* is often used in a neutral manner so that it is important to consider the context. For the depreciative meaning of the word *tyrannus* see for instance Bede: 'For he is a tyrant because, rebelling against the Creator, he strove to obtain the citadel of God and the kingdom of the world.' – *Tyrannus est enim quia contra conditorem rebellans arcem diuinitatis ac regnum orbis obtinere contendit* (Bede, *On Genesis*, ed. C.B. Kendall, Translated texts for historians 48 (Liverpool, 2008); Bede, *In principium Genesis usque ad natiuitatem Isaac etc.*, III.10, ed. C.W. Jones, *CCSL* 118A (Turnhout, 1967).

[33] *OGR*, 9.2; cf. U. Walter, 'Die "Communes Historiae" des Lutatius: Einleitung, Fragmente, Übersetzung, Kommentar', *Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft* 12 (2009), pp. 1-15, at p. 6.

[34] Ovid, *Metamorphoseon*, XIII.201, ed. H. Magnus (Berlin, 1914).

[35] Titus Livius, *Ab urbe condita*, I.1, ed. R.M. Ogilvie, Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca Oxoniensis, Oxford classical texts (Oxford, 1974); Strabo, *Geographika*, XIII.1.53, ed. S. Radt (Göttingen, 2004).

is based on its own tradition. While, in the eyes of the author, the Roman tradition originated with the illegitimate Aeneas, that of the Franks went back to the righteous Antenor. Consequently, they are not only equal but even superior to the Romans. Thus the *LHF*-author's aim is not to prove the equality of Romans and Franks; he or she demonstrates the independence of the Frankish people by carefully transforming the legend of Troy.

B) The *Franci* – God's Chosen People?

The simple fact that the author of the *LHF* uses Gregory of Tours' *Decem libri historiarum* as the major basis for his or her text, but mainly ignores the information given by Gregory on ecclesiastical history is generally taken as proof of the secular intentions of the author. However, the author was not pagan and there is broad consensus that the text was written in a monastery.[36] In addition, not all the Christian elements in the text are taken from Gregory; the *LHF*'s author added some of them independently. The example of Clotild, for instance, proves this. While Gregory limits himself to the remark that Clovis had sent a delegation to Gundobad to propose to her,[37] the author of the *LHF* provides a more detailed account, stating:

> 'Clotild was a Christian. On a certain Sunday when Clotild came to
> the solemn mass, Aurelianus, Clovis' messenger, left his good
> clothes with his followers in the woods and put on poor clothes.
> Then he sat down before the table for doling out alms in the
> church in the midst of the poor. After the solemn mass ended,
> Clotild, according to custom, went alone to give alms to the
> poor.'[38]

Clotild is characterised entirely in the style of a saint. Furthermore, according to the *LHF*, Clotild makes the following remark concerning Clovis' call to war against Alaric:

> 'Listen to your servant, and we will build a church in honor of the
> most blessed Saint Peter, prince of the apostles, so that he may be
> a helper to you in the war.'[39]

In addition, the *LHF* depicts Clotild as the king's wise advisor, using the phrase 'listen to your

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[36] For further discussion see the references quoted in footnote 1.

[37] Cf. *Libri historiarum*, II,28.

[38] *LHF*, 11: *Erat enim Chrotchildis christiana. Quadam die dominica cum ad missarum sollempnia Chrotchildis venisset, Aurilianus missus Chlodoveo, acceptas vestes paupercolas, – bonas vero vestes a, quassecum vestitas habuerat, sociis suis insilvas reliquit, – et ante ecclesiae matricolam in medio pauperum consedit.*

[39] *LHF*, 17: *Audi ancillam tuam, et faciamus ecclesiam in honorem beatissimi Petri principe apostolorum, ut sit tibi auxiliator in bello.*

servant' (*audi ancillam tuam*). There are biblical parallels to this phrase, including in the account of Saul's visit to a woman from En-Dor.[40] Thus, the author of the *LHF* omits most of Gregory's ecclesiastical detail, but at the same time adds Christian content as far as it concerns kingship. As a result, focussing on the impact of the legend of Troy and other pagan traditions on the *LHF* does not suffice; the examples above show that it is important to analyse the impact of Christianity on the *LHF* as well.

To show the influence of the Bible on the *LHF*, it is necessary first to take a closer look at the language and narrative structure of the text. Lehmann, for example, has emphasized the importance of the underlying tone of the narrative books of the Bible.[41] When reading the *LHF*, we can easily detect some recurrent phrases, all structured in a similar way, such as:

> 'Then the most glorious lord Childebert, a just king of good
> memory, went to the Lord; he had reigned for seventeen years and
> was buried at the monastery of Choisy-au-Bac in the church of
> the protomartyr Saint Stephen. And Dagobert, a young boy, his
> son, reigned for him.'[42]

On the one hand, by using these recurrent phrases to open new paragraphs, the author structures the text. On the other hand, these phrases recall biblical text structure; the Bible generally uses a similar phrase structure to indicate a change in rulership after a king's death.[43] This means that the author of the *LHF* uses the Bible as a formal structure for his or her narrative. This could be unintentional as we may expect the author to be a monk or a nun familiar with the Bible. Yet, one can identify another layer of meaning: the author does not only use Merovingian kings to

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[40] I Samuel XXVIII.22: 'Now therefore, you also obey your servant' (*Nunc igitur audi et tu vocem ancillae tuae*). Also the wise woman from Abel of Beth-maacah gives advice to Joab: 'Listen to the words of your servant' (*Audi sermones ancillae tuae*; II Samuel XX.17).

[41] P. Lehmann, 'Der Einfluss der Bibel auf frühmittelalterliche Geschichtsschreiber', in Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo (ed.), *La bibbia nell'alto medioevo. 26 aprile - 2 maggio 1962*, Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 10 (Spoleto, 1963), pp. 129-40, at p. 132.

[42] *LHF*, 50: *Tunc enim bonae memoriae gloriosus domnus Childebertus rex iustus migravit ad Dominum; regnavit autem annis 17, sepultusque est Cauciaeco monasterio in basilica sancti Stephani protomartyris. Regnavitque Daygobertus puer, filius eius, pro eo.* Similar also *LHF*, 5, 9, 19, 25, 27, 35, 42, 43, 45, 49, 51, 52.

[43] See for example: I Kings XIV.20: 'And the time that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years. And he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his place.' (*Dies autem quibus regnavit Hieroboam viginti duo anni sunt et dormivit cum patribus suis regnavitque Nadab filius eius pro eo.*) Further examples can be found in I Samuel VIII.19; I Samuel VIII.22; I Samuel XII.1; II Samuel II.4; II Samuel III.10; II Samuel III.17; II Samuel XV.12; II Chronicles I.9). Also the Franks inaugurate kings *super se*; see *LHF*, 41: '… established Dagobert over them as king.' (*Dagobertum super se regem statuunt …*) as well as *LHF*, 6, 7 and 43. Ullman points out the particular significance of the word *super*: if a king rules 'over' a society, he also stands 'over' this society and therefore outside of it. This enhances the divine aspect of the inauguration ritual (cf. W. Ullmann, 'The bible and Principles of Government in the Middle Ages', in Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo (ed.), *La bibbia nell'alto medioevo. 26 aprile - 2 maggio 1962*, Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 10 (Spoleto, 1963), pp. 181-227, at p. 199).

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structure the text, but also uses the emperors of the Eastern Roman Empire or the Frankish mayors of the palace as a point of reference. In these cases, however, he or she clearly avoids phrases that could suggest royal legitimacy. The Mayor of the Palace Pippin II, for example, is described as follows:

> 'At this time Pippin was struck down by a high fever and died. He had held the chief position under the above-mentioned king for twenty-seven and one half years.'[44]

The author never uses the word *rex* for rulers others than the Merovingians. What is more, the repeatedly used biblical phrase *regnavit annis …* is missing when it comes to the description of emperors and mayors of the palace. This phrase is clearly reserved for the legitimate Merovingian kings.

These are the most obvious references, but additional evidence can be found. McClure, for instance, investigated the language and narrative structures used by Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. She states that Bede used temporal adverbs like *in diebus illis, quadam die, eo autem tempore* – all phrases which appear in the Bible, most frequently in the First Book of Samuel – on purpose. The same applies to the *LHF*. The author uses biblical phrases like *in illo tempore, eo tempore, quadam die* or *in illis diebus*, although less consistently. Other phrases used within the *LHF*, such as *succedente vero tempore, anno insequuto, in his diebus, sub his diebus* or *sequenti tempore*, are not derived from the Bible as they focus on the ruler and his role in time structuring. Nevertheless, the author mostly uses biblical phrases to start a new paragraph; other phrases appear at less prominent points in the passages.[45]

If we study the *LHF*'s language when describing military conflicts, we can arrive at similar conclusions: the author of the *LHF* makes use of biblical phrases, but not consistently.[46] Therefore, it is somewhat difficult to establish if these phrases were used on purpose, but it

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[44] LHF, 51: *Eo tempore Pippinus febre valida correptus, mortuus est obtenuitque principatum sub suprascriptos reges annis 27 et dimidio.* See also: LHF, 32 (*Iustinus ambivit imperium*) and 35 (*Tiberius quoque imperium eius suscepit*).

[45] Cf. *LHF*, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 37, 44, 51. All these chapters start with well-known phrases from the Bible. It is notable that these phrases accumulate in chapters relying on Gregory of Tours, even though they are not the rule in Gregory's text.

[46] Verbs and phrases with biblical background used by Bede like *fugare, caedere, pugnare, interficere, aciem dirigere contra, populous corruere, rebellare, occidere, succendere* or *vastare* do also appear in the *LHF*, but phrases like *delere populum* or *devastare* are far more frequent. Cf. also J. McClure, 'Bede's Old Testament Kings', in P. Wormald (ed.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society. Studies presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 76-98, at p. 88-89.

seems safe to say that not every martial description must be ascribed to barbaric archetypes.[47] Other phrases can be attributed to the Bible with reasonable certainty. As Reimitz has commented, the author of the *LHF* uses the phrase *de nocte consurgens* in several modifications. Interestingly enough, this is always the case in the context of narrations presumably of pagan background; but by recourse to this phrase he or she connects them to biblical history.[48] The same applies to the phrases *revertere in pace* and accordingly *revertere in terra sua/in Francia*, which are used in the Bible as well as in the *LHF* after a king has won a battle.[49] In so doing, the author resolves the contradiction between the pagan heroic sagas and Christianity. It is important to be aware of this recourse to biblical language and narrative structure to understand the overall concept of the text.

Having discussed the use of the Bible in the *LHF* very generally, I want to analyse the author's use of the Bible in more detail: as regards the description of kings within the text, there is consensus that the characterisation of kingship significantly influences the self-perception of a people. Nelson puts it this way:

> 'Since in the early medieval West "society" was a kingdom or accumulation of kingdoms, to consecrate a king was to assert a society's identity.'[50]

Texts like the *LHF* do not simply propagate royal ideals;[51] they legitimise kings, secure their stay in power, and, most importantly, shape social identities. Thus, by investigating the image the author of the *LHF* draws of the Merovingian kings, we can learn much about his or her conception of the Frankish people in general. In this paper I will concentrate on two selected

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[47] Hence, the *LHF* being more violent than its source cannot be an argument for Gerberding's assumption that the *LHF* preaches the 'deeds of war' to a greater extent than other (Christian) texts. Cf. Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 37 and 159.

[48] *LHF*, 36, 41, 45 and 47 plus I Moses XX.8; I Moses XXII.3; I Moses XXXI.55; II Moses XXXIV.4; Joshua III.1; Judges VI.38; Judges VII.1; Judges XIX.5; I Kings III.20; II Chronicles XXXVI.15; Proverbs XXVII.14; Jeremiah XXV.3; Jeremiah XXVI.5; Jeremiah XXIX.19; Jeremiah XLIV.4. Cf. Reimitz, *Writing for the Future*.

[49] *LHF*, cc. 6, 8, 15, 36 and 40 plus I Samuel XXIX.7; II Samuel XII.31; II Samuel XV.27; II Samuel XVII.3; II Samuel XIX.24; I Kings XXII.17; I Kings XXII.27-28; II Chronicles XVIII.26-27.

[50] J. Nelson, 'Inauguration Rituals', in P. Saywer and I. Wood (ed.), *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds, 1979), pp. 50-71, at p. 71.

[51] Cf. E. Ewig, 'Zum christlichen Königsgedanken im Frühmittelalter', in idem, H. Atsma, *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien. Gesammelte Schriften 1952-1973* (Zürich, 1976), pp. 3-71; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Gegory of Tours and Bede. Their Views on the Personal Qualities of Kings', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 2 (1968), pp. 31-44; M. Garrison, 'The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an Identity from Pippin to Charlemagne', in Y. Hen, M. Innes (ed.), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 114-161. See also: O. Höfler, 'Der Sakralcharakter des germanischen Königtums', in T. Mayer (ed.), *Mainauvorträge 1954. Das Königtum. Seine Geistigen und rechtlichen Grundlagen*, Vorträge und Forschungen 3 (Lindau, 1956), pp. 75-104 and F. Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der Merowinger* (Prague, 1965). For an overview of the most recent discussions on the Merovingian royal ideal in general and the 'Sakralkönigtum' in particular see: M. Diesenberger, 'Sakralkönigtum II. Forschungsgeschichte. § 7. Kritik am Sakralkönigtum', in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 26 (2004), pp. 216-219., at p. 217.

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examples. The most prominent reference to the Bible can be found in chapter 42 of the *LHF*, which states:

> 'Indeed, time having passed, Chlothar the old king died. He had reigned for forty-four years. King Dagobert, his son, took the kingship <u>in all three of his kingdoms</u>. King Dagobert was <u>very brave</u>, <u>the sustenance of the Franks</u>, <u>very strict in judgements</u>, and the <u>supporter of the churches</u>. Indeed, he first ordered that much wealth from the royal fisc be distributed as <u>alms</u> through the churches of the saints. He established <u>peace through all his kingdom</u>. His reputation resounded among many <u>peoples</u>. He inspired fear and dread <u>in all the kingdoms around</u>. A <u>peaceful man</u>, **just like Solomon**, he maintained <u>peace</u> in the kingdom of the Franks.'[52]

Several historians refer to the comparison between Dagobert I and Solomon, but never discuss it in further detail.[53] This is despite the fact that in the very previous chapter, which reports on a battle against the Saxons, Dagobert is said to be 'a capable boy and also energetic and clever in all things and very accomplished.'[54] Thus the author describes him with rather martial characteristics. But then as a sole ruler, after the death of his father Chlothar, Dagobert is described in a different way: attributes like *rex fortissimus, enutritor Francourm, severissimus in iudiciis* and *ecclesiarum largitor* are not very specific but common attributes for a good Christian ruler.[55] Obviously the author of the *LHF* does not propagate a single royal ideal. While he or she provides us with a heroic saga of a king in the first case, the same king is presented as the perfect Christian ruler in the second case without any contradiction.

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[52] *LHF*, 42: *Succedente vero tempore mortuus est Chlotharius rex senex regnavitque annis 44, regnumque eius Dagobertus rex, filius eius, in monarchiam <u>in totis tribus regnis</u> sagaciter accepit. Fuitque ipse Dagobertus rex <u>fortissimus</u>, <u>enutritor Francorum</u>, <u>severissimus in iudiciis</u>, <u>ecclesiarum largitor</u>. Ipse enim <u>elimosinarum</u> copia de fisco palacii per ecclesias sanctorum primus distribuere censum iussit. <u>Pacem in cuncto regno suo statuit</u>. In multis <u>gentibus</u> rumor eius personuit. Timorem et metum <u>in universis regnis per circuitum incussit</u>. Ipse <u>pacificus</u> **velut Salomon**, <u>quietus</u> regnum obtenuit Francorum* (emphasis added).

[53] Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 169; P.D. King, 'The barbarian kingdoms', in J.H. Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political thought c. 350-c.1450* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 123-153, at p. 136; Y. Hen, 'The Uses of the Bible and the Perception of Kingship in Merovingian Gaul', *Early Medieval Europe*, 7 (1998) 3, pp. 277-289, at p. 279. Kershaw discusses the comparison between Dagobert I and Solomon in a short chapter, but he does not investigate the role of the biblical concept within the text. For him, 'the *LHF*-author's vision of peaceful rulership rested upon effective military leadership' (Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings*, p. 129).

[54] *LHF*, 41: *puer efficax atque strenuuus, ad omnia solers, versutissimus*

[55] Cf. Hen, 'Uses of the Bible', p. 284-6.

A closer look at the passage quoted above reveals that the comparison between Dagobert and Solomon is not arbitrary; it actually contains a multitude of biblical references all pointing to Solomon:

> 'For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphsah to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates. And he had <u>peace on all sides around him</u>.'[56]

> 'And his fame was <u>in all the surrounding nations</u>.'[57]

> 'But the word of the Lord came to me, saying: you have shed much blood and have waged great wars. You shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood before me on the earth. Behold, a son shall be born to you who shall be a man of <u>rest</u>. I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies. For his name shall mean <u>peaceful</u> [i.e. Solomon], and I will give <u>peace</u> and quiet to Israel in his days.'[58]

The typological comparison between these two kings can be stretched even further; like Solomon, Dagobert was the last in a series of strong sole rulers in his dynasty. Even though the *LHF* does not say anything negative about him, we know from the *Chronicle of Fredegar* that his government was not regarded as positive throughout.[59] Therefore, in the passage quoted above one could detect a subtle form of criticism by the author of the *LHF*, as the Bible tells us that Solomon's descendants lost major parts of their realm due to Solomon's immoral polygamy. The royal dignity is promised to Jeroboam instead.[60] All of this is also true for Dagobert; after his death the realm is divided between his two sons Clovis II and Sigebert III. Under the rule of Sigebert, the Austrasian Mayor of the Palace Grimoald the Elder attempted a *coup d'état*.[61] However one should be aware not to over-interpret this passage as a prediction of later events; the *LHF* neither calls into question the legitimacy of the Merovingian dynasty nor does it

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[56] I Kings IV.24: *Ipse enim obtinebat omnem regionem quae erat trans flumen quasi a Thapsa usque Gazam et cunctos reges illarum regionum et habebat <u>pacem ex omni parte in circuitu</u>* (emphasis added).
[57] I Kings IV.31: *Et erat nominatus <u>in universis gentibus per circuitum</u>* (emphasis added).
[58] I Chronicles XXII.8-9: *Sed factus est ad me sermo Domini dicens multum sanguinem effudisti et plurima bella bellasti non poteris aedificare domum nomini meo tanto effuso sanguine coram me. Filius qui nascetur tibi et erit vir <u>quietissimus</u> faciam enim eum requiescere ab omnibus inimicis suis per circuitum et ob hanc causam <u>pacificus</u> vocabitur et <u>pacem</u> et otium dabo in Israhel cunctis diebus eius* (emphasis added).
[59] Fredegar, IV.60.
[60] I Kings XI.27-39.
[61] *LHF*, 43.

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condemn the increasing power of the mayors of the palace.[62]

The second, frequently quoted example is the description of Childebert III as *rex iustus* in the *LHF*'s chapter 50. This is almost everything the *LHF* tells us about this king; nevertheless Gerberding argues that he is one of the author's heroes.[63] He is right; by calling Childebert a *rex iustus*, he becomes the righteous counterpart of every king, emperor, or mayor of the palace who exacts duties, as the Bible says 'A righteous king builds up the land, but an avaricious man tears it down.'[64] And there are several examples of rulers pressing money, starting with the imperial tax collectors sent by Emperor Valentinian, which are always described as injustices within the *LHF*.[65]

Notable, but rarely looked at, is the fact that the Neustrian Mayor of the Palace, Grimoald the Younger, is even called 'pious, modest, mild, and just'[66] in the same chapter. The pair of words *modestus* and *mansuetus* appears in the Bible twice, both times in the context of a commandment. Especially interesting is a passage in the Epistle to Titus, stating:

> 'Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.'[67]

Hence, this passage on Grimoald the Younger not only pays tribute to him, but also admonishes the mayors of the palace in general to subordinate themselves to the legitimate Merovingian kings. There is no room here to discuss other examples in greater detail, but it should be mentioned that there are far more passages where we can find parallels between the description

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[62] Cf. I. Wood, 'Usurpers and Merovingian Kingship', in M. Becher, J. Jarnut (ed.), *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751. Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung* (Münster, 2004), pp. 15-31, at p. 28. One could possibly accuse Gerberding of reading the *LHF* this way, as he programmatically titled his monograph *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber Historiae Francorum*. Concerning this critique see also: Nelson, 'Unstoppable Pippinids'.

[63] According to Gerberding, the four heroes of the *LHF*'s author are Clovis I, Chlothar II, Dagobert I and Childebert III. See: Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 162.

[64] Proverbs XXIX.4: *Rex iustus erigit terram vir avarus destruet eam.*

[65] Valentinan sent tax collectors under the leadership of a certain Primarius to the Franks. Indignant at this, they said to one another: 'Let us rise up together against this Primarius and the tax collectors, cut them down, and take all that they have with them. Then we will not give tribute to the Romans any more and we will be free always.'(*LHF*, 3: *Consurgamus igitur contra Primarium hunc vel exactoribus istis percutiamusque eos et auferamus cuncta quae secum habent et non demus Romanis tributa et erimus nos iugiter liberi.*) For other examples see *LHF*, cc. 28 and 47 where the Mayors of the Palace Chramn and Ebroin press money.

[66] *LHF*, 50: *pius, modestus, mansuetus et iustus*

[67] Titus III.1-2: *Admone illos principibus et potestatibus subditos esse dicto oboedire ad omne opus bonum paratos esse, neminem blasphemare non litigiosos esse modestos omnem ostendentes mansuetudinem ad omnes homines.*

The *Liber Historiae Francorum*

of Merovingian and biblical kings. What is more, the references are not limited to male rulers. Fredegund, for instance, is characterised as *regina senex et plena dierum*, which compares her to the great biblical King David.[68] Plectrude and Brunhild are similarly characterised in a biblical manner.[69] In summary it can be said that the author used the Bible in various ways and the correlations between the passages of the Bible and the described persons have very individual characteristics.[70]

Thirdly, it must be stated that it was not the intention of the *LHF*'s author to narrate the history of the Frankish kings; from the outset he or she focuses on the *Franci*. It is they who install kings; all good kings rule in agreement with the Frankish nobility.[71] Therefore, the author does not rest at using the Bible to praise or criticise rulers; he or she creates a Franco-Christian identity. This can be demonstrated best by studying the manner in which the words *gens* and *populus* are used in the text. A closer examination of the words used by the author to describe the Frankish people shows that he or she uses varying expressions. While at the beginning he or she talks of a *gens Francorum* or even several *gentes* (solely the Trojans are called *populus Troianorum*), the term *populus Francorum* is first used when the *LHF* reports on the conflict between Emperor Valentinian and the Franks, most probably to demonstrate the equality between Romans and Franks. In the following chapters the author appears to use the words *populus* and *gens* interchangeably. This changes abruptly with Clovis. As he sends his envoys to Gundobad, the Burgundians advise their king as follows:

> 'Thus you will have an alliance and friendship with King Clovis
> and the Frankish people (*gente Francorum*). If you do not do this
> they will attack our land vigorously, because they are strong and a
> fierce people without God (*populus … sine Deo*).'[72]

At this point the author's distinction between the terms *gens* and *populus* becomes clear. The

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[68] *LHF*, 37. Cf. I Chronicles XXIII.1: 'When David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel.' (*Igitur David senex et plenus dierum regem constituit salomonem filium suum super Israel.*)

[69] For Plectrude see *LHF*, 48: *uxor nobilissima et sapientissima*. Cf. V Exodus I.15: *viros sapientes et nobiles*. For Brunhild's condemnation to death see *LHF*, 40. Cf. Jezebel's condemnation in II Kings IX.30-33. Regarding the role women play within the *LHF* see: Hartmann, 'Darstellung der Frauen'.

[70] Despite all individual characteristics, most of the biblical references used point to David or Solomon, possibly because the narrations on these two kings were well known to the audience, so the references were understood. Cf. Y. Hen, 'The Christianisation of Kingship', in M. Becher, J. Jarnut (ed.), *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751. Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung* (Münster, 2004), pp. 163-177, at p. 169.

[71] Cf. Reimitz, *Writing for the Future*; Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 168-70; Wood, 'Usurpers', p. 25. On the importance of consensus, see Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 262.

[72] *LHF*, 13: *[H]abeasque foedus et amicicia cum Chlodoveo et gente Francorum, ne forte inruant in terram nostram, quia populus validus et ferus est sine Deo.*

author uses *gens* when he or she thinks of the worldly concept of a people, whereas the term *populus* is used when he or she thinks of a sacred concept. This is a biblical concept known from the Vulgate. II Samuel VII, for instance, states:

> 'And who is like your people Israel (*populus tuus Israël*), the one nation on earth (*gens in terra*) whom God went to redeem to be his people (…). And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever.'[73]

Therefore, upon Clovis' conversion to Christianity, the *gens Francorum* becomes the *populus Francorum*. In chapter 15 which reports on Clovis' conversion, the Franks are called *populus* not less than eight times; the term *gens*, by contrast, is henceforth no longer used to label the Franks. This is a strong argument for the author's equalisation of the Franks and God's Chosen People, the people of Israel. There is still further evidence supporting this interpretation. Chapter 4 of the *LHF* reports:

> 'After Sunno died, however, they took counsel so that they might have one king like other peoples. Marchomir gave them this advice and they chose Faramund, his son, and raised him up as the long-haired king above them. Then they began to have laws which the leading men of their people (*priores gentiles*) managed: Wisowast, Wisogast, Arogast, and Salegast who were in charge of the localities on the other side of the Rhine, namely Bothagm, Salechagm, and Widechagm.'[74]

This passage is interesting in several respects. To begin with, one can find an explicit reference to the First Book of Samuel which gives account of the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel:

> 'Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us, such as all the other nations

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[73] II Samuel VII.23-24: *Quæ est autem, ut populus tuus Israël, gens in terra, propter quam ivit Deus, ut redimeret eam sibi in populum (…). Firmasti enim tibi populum tuum Israël in populum sempiternum: et tu Domine Deus factus es eis in Deum.* See also I Chronicles XVII.21-22. Cf. P. Geary, *Europäische Völker im frühen Mittelalter. Zur Legende vom Werden der Nationen* (Frankfurt, 2002), p. 65-66.

[74] *LHF*, 4: *Sunnone autem defuncto, acciperunt consilium, ut regem sibi unum constituerent, sicut ceterae gentes. Marchomiris quoque eis dedit hoc consilium, et elegerunt Faramundo, ipsius filio, et eleveverunt eum regem super se crinitum. Tunc habere et leges coeperunt, quae eorum priores gentiles tractaverunt his nominibus: Wisowastus, Wisogastus, Arogastus, Salegastus, in villabus quae ultra Renum sunt, in Bothagm, Salechagm et Widehagm.*

have.'[75]

As the people of Israel request a king, so do the people of the Franks; this provides a clear link between these two peoples. Besides the biblical references, the passage also contains other, more secular references. Firstly, it reports that Faramund was a *rex crinitus*, and secondly, that the Franks set their own law.[76] So, the *LHF* emphasises the role of the Franks right at the point where the Merovingian kingship is established. Thereby the author wrote the first Franco-Christian history, which reimagines Frankish history in biblical terms: unlike Gregory of Tours, he or she not only compares Frankish history with biblical history, but also directly links the two. In his or her view, the Franks are not only comparable to God's Chosen People, but also their direct descendants.

C) A New Self-confidence for the *Franci*?

According to Gerberding, the *LHF* is simply 'limited to matters Frankish'[77]. And he is, of course, right about the focus on Frankish history; nevertheless, he ignores its use of different traditions. The *LHF* is Frankish history, but not limited to it. McKitterick has argued that the aim of the *LHF*'s author was to prove Frankish superiority; however, the text presents us with a far more ambivalent relationship between the Roman and Frankish peoples. As Plassmann has pointed out, the text provides a tradition of dispute. On the one hand, the Romans serve as a role model for the Frankish people, while, on the other hand, they are characterised as their counterpart.[78]

Therefore, I would plead for a different interpretation and suggest a new reading of the *LHF*. The examples I have dealt with in the last two sections of my paper, show it in a different light. The first example proved that in complete contrast to Gregory of Tours and Fredegar, the *LHF* does not try to anchor the Franks within the framework of a religious or general world history. On the contrary, Frankish history is considered as being superior to Roman history. By dispraising Aeneas and presenting Antenor as the righteous ancestor of the Franks, the *LHF* establishes a new Frankish identity: an identity where the Franks do not have to relate themselves with the Romans in order to be a prestigious people. The second example goes even further. The author directly connects Frankish history with biblical history. Unlike Gregory, he or she not only uses the Bible as a point of reference for comparing the Franks with the people of Israel, but combines different elements, which results in the creation of something new: the *LHF* presents

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[75] I Samuel VIII.5: *Ei ecce tu senuisti et filii tui non ambulant in viis tuis constitue nobis regem ut iudicet nos sicut universae habent nationes.*
[76] Ewig, 'Trojamythos', p. 23. See also: Anton, 'Troja-Herkunft', p. 25 and Reimitz, *Writing for the Future*.
[77] Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 17.
[78] Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 17-18; R. McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 10; Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, p. 181.

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us with a new Frankish self-conception that defines the *Franci* not just as one *gens* among many, but rather conceives of them as a *populus* and thus the direct descendants of the people of Israel.

Although, or perhaps precisely because, the author, as a Christian, is aware that Frankish society has been fully Christianised, starting with the time when Clovis was baptised,[79] he or she is not required to convey moral values in the manner that Gregory of Tours was. Nor does he or she follow the conception of Fredegar, who tries to integrate Frankish history into a universal history, with the aim of proving equality with the Romans and other post-Roman *gentes*. Thus, what is the conception of the *LHF* concerning the Frankish identity? And why does the author of the text feel the need to adapt the existing conceptions?

Without any doubt, both texts, Gregory's as well as Fredegar's, were well known to contemporaries and Gregory, at least, was highly respected as an authority. Nonetheless, while Frankish society was largely homogenous and Christianity had already been established before the end of the seventh century AD, the time of *LHF*'s composition was a time of serious political change: Dagobert, one of the *LHF*'s heroes, was the last Merovingian sole ruler. The Merovingian kings had to face a considerable loss of power, as the kingdom disintegrated after the death of Dagobert in 639 AD. Dagobert was the last king to intervene in Italy and Spain; also in the North the kingdom was weak, Thuringia became virtually independent, Bavaria at least to a considerable degree. At the same time, the Saxons became increasingly dangerous for the Franks.[80] Nevertheless, the Frankish nobility recognised the Merovingian kings as their sovereigns, even though they were almost powerless; Frankish noble families, notably the early Pippinids, held power. Two generations before Pippin, Grimoald tried to raise his own son, Childebert, as king, by letting the childless King Sigebert III adopt him. This attempt failed; the Frankish nobility did not recognise Childebert, although the ancestors of the Carolingians were in possession of the *de facto* power.[81]

With Gerberding and Wood, I have already pointed out that the *LHF* favours a politics of

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[79] Cf. Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Meroingian Gaul A.D. 481-751*, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions. Medieval and Early Modern Peoples 1 (Leiden, 1995), p. 212-250.
[80] Cf. J. Nelson, *The Frankish World. 750-900* (London, 1996), p. 99-102.
[81] The *LHF* account (c. 43) represents the earliest record of this coup. W. Affeldt, 'Untersuchungen zur Königserhebung Pippins. Das Papsttum und die Begründung des karolingischen Königtums im Jahre 751', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 14 (1980), pp. 95-187, at p. 125; cf. M. Becher, 'Der sogenannte Staatsstreich Grimoalds. Versuch einer Neubewertung', in J. Jarnut et al. (ed.), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit*, Beihefte der Francia 37 (Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 119-147.

consensus between the Merovingian royal dynasty and the Frankish nobility.[82] Nonetheless, the historical narrative as it appears in the *LHF* goes further than that. It is a reflexion of the new self-confidence of the Frankish nobility. In times of political change the author of the *LHF* does not tell a completely different history of the Franks, but a history based on well-known narratives. Frankish history was, nevertheless, 're-organised and shaped according to contemporary needs' within the *LHF*, as Reimitz puts it.[83] It is *Frankish* history, but the *LHF*'s author does not focus on the Merovingian dynasty any longer; he or she brings the people, namely the Frankish nobility who held the political power, to the fore. With this, political reality can be matched without having to question the legitimacy of the Merovingian kings.[84] The use of the *Lex Salica* following the *LHF*'s discussion on the inauguration of the first Frankish king proves this:

> 'After Sunno died, however, they took counsel so that they might
> have one king like other peoples. (…) Then they began to have
> laws which the leading men of their people managed: Wisowast,
> Wisogast, Arogast, and Salegast who were in charge of the
> localities on the other side of the Rhine, namely Bothagm,
> Salechagm, and Widechagm.'[85]

It is quite remarkable that these names, first mentioned in the long prologue of the *Lex Salica*, are used in the *LHF*.[86] Apparently, it is the Frankish nobility that is responsible for legislation, and not the Merovingian kings. The *LHF* emphasises the role of the Frankish nobility at the precise point where the Merovingian dynasty is constituted.

The *LHF*, therefore, is a reflection of the nobility's new political power and an expression of its new self-confidence. On the one hand, the text emphasises the independence of the *Franci* from other peoples, on the other hand it strives to secure the power of the Neustrian nobility by

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[82] Gerberding, *Rise*, p. 163 and 168-70; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 262.

[83] H. Reimitz, 'Omnes Franci. Identifications and Identities of the Early Medieval Franks', in I.H. Garipzanov et al. (ed.), *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 51-68, at p. 62.

[84] Reimitz, 'Konkurrenz der Ursprünge', p. 203.

[85] *LHF*, 4: *Sunnone autem defuncto, acciperunt consilium, ut regem sibi unum constituerent, sicut ceterae gentes. (…) Tunc habere et leges coeperunt, quae eorum priores gentiles tractaverunt his nominibus: Wisowastus, Wisogastus, Arogastus, Salegastus, in villabus, quae ultra Rhenum sunt, in Bothagm, Salechagm et Widechagm.*

[86] *Lex Salica*, §2, ed. K.A. Eckhardt, *MGH, LL nat. Germ.* 4,2 (Hanover, 1969): *Dictauerunt Salicam legem per proceris ipsius gentes, qui tunc tempore eius demaderant rectores, electi de pluribus uiris quattuor his nominibus: UUisogastis, Bodogastis, Salegastis et UUidogastis in loca cognominancia Salechagme, Bodochagme, Uuidochagmi.* Cf. Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 109; Garrison, 'Franks as the New Israel', p. 131.

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propagating a balance of power between the kings, the Austrian and the Neustrian nobility. To do so, the text does not only intercommunicate with and respond to other texts like Gregory's *Decem libri historiarum* and the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, but to a certain extent it also offers a competing model of Frankish identity.