



Yaniv Fox: Image of Kings Past. The Gibichung Legacy in Post-Conquest Burgundy, in: Francia

42 (2015), S. 1-26 .

DOI: 10.11588/fr.2015.4.44567

Copyright



Das Digitalisat wird Ihnen von perspectivia.net, der Online-Publikationsplattform der Max Weber Stiftung – Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland, zur Verfügung gestellt. Bitte beachten Sie, dass das Digitalisat urheberrechtlich geschützt ist. Erlaubt ist aber das Lesen, das Ausdrucken des Textes, das Herunterladen, das Speichern der Daten auf einem eigenen Datenträger soweit die vorgenannten Handlungen ausschließlich zu privaten und nicht-kommerziellen Zwecken erfolgen. Eine darüber hinausgehende unerlaubte Verwendung, Reproduktion oder Weitergabe einzelner Inhalte oder Bilder können sowohl zivil- als auch strafrechtlich verfolgt werden.

YANIV FOX

IMAGE OF KINGS PAST

The Gibichung Legacy in Post-Conquest Burgundy

In the final chapter of the Chronicle of Fredegar, we read of an incident involving a patrician named Willebad. This was a convoluted affair, which concluded – the best Merovingian stories usually do – with a dramatic bloodletting¹. As the story goes, in 643 Floachad, the newly appointed mayor of Burgundy decided to orchestrate the downfall of Willebad. The chronicler, who, we gather, was somewhat hostile to the Burgundian patrician, reasoned that Willebad had become »very rich by seizing the properties of a great many people by one means or another. Seemingly overcome with pride because of his position of patrician and his huge possessions, he was puffed up against Floachad and tried to belittle him«².

The logic behind this enmity seems quite straightforward, and not very different in fact from any of the other episodes that fill the pages of the Chronicle of Fredegar. The new Frankish mayor was simply trying to do his job, and Willebad, who had trouble accepting a foreign source of authority, was actively getting in the way³. Floachad then moved to eradicate this disturbance at a council he had convoked in Chalon. Willebad found out ahead of time, and refused to enter the palace, causing the mayor to come out in order to engage him. Surprisingly, cooler heads prevailed, and the parties dispersed without a fight. Some months later, Floachad, who was still nursing his old hatred, was able to persuade King Clovis II to summon Willebad to Autun, where he could settle things once and for all. Willebad arrived escorted by a large group of prominent Burgundians, and again was reluctant to enter the city,

1 Fredegar, *Chronicorum liber quartus cum continuationibus*, ed. and transl. John Michael WALLACE-HADRILL, London 1960, c. 89–90, p. 75–79. For a blow-by-blow explanation of the events, see Bernard S. BACHRACH, *Merovingian Military Organization, 481–751*, Minneapolis, MN 1972, p. 94–95. – This article is supported by the I-CORE program of the Planning and Budgeting Committee of the Israeli Committee for Higher Education and the Israel Science Foundation (ISF) Grant no. 1754. I would like to thank Yitzhak Hen, Rosamond McKitterick, Lia Sternizki, Ian Wood and the anonymous readers for their comments and suggestions. Any remaining errors are, of course, my own.

2 Fredegar, IV.90, p. 76: *Willebadus cum esset opebus habundans et pluremorum facultates ingenies diversis abstollens, ditatus inplete fuisset et inter patriciatum gradum et nimiae facultates aelacionem superbiae esset deditus, adversus Floachadam tumebat eumque discipere quonaretur.*

3 For Floachad's acceptance in Burgundian circles, see *ibid.*, IV.89, p. 75–76: *Floachadus cumtis ducibus de regnum Burgundiae seo et pontefecis per epistolas etiam et sacramentis firmavit, unicuique gradum honoris et dignetatem seo amicitiam perpetuo conservavit.* On this, see also Régine LE JAN, Timor, amicitia, odium: les liens politiques à l'époque mérovingienne, in: Walter POHL, Veronika WIESER (ed.), *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat. Europäische Perspektiven*, Vienna 2009, p. 217–226, here p. 220, 222.

sensing a trap. This time around, the Neustrians came out in numbers and in the ensuing melee, Willebad and many of his men were killed.

It so happens that the Chronicle of Fredegar was not the only source to recount these events. The Life of Eligius of Noyon, for example, presents a very different point of view⁴. Here Floachad is cast in the role of a cruel tyrant, and the author revels in a detailed description of his miserable death, which was naturally foretold by Eligius⁵. A very similar description is also found in the Life of Sigiramn, although in this version the author adds that the two were once student and teacher, and that this was the reason behind their mutual disdain⁶.

The hagiography, it seems, agrees with the Chronicle of Fredegar, at least in the sense that it tends to ascribe a personal motive to this very public feud. Modern historians were less disposed to accept such an interpretation, and perhaps justifiably so. Both Floachad and Willebad commanded sizeable local followings – Willebad had »a large force from the limits of his patriciate«⁷ and Floachad was obviously Queen Nanthild's man⁸ – so a collision between the two undoubtedly would have reverberated throughout Francia.

What is difficult to accept, however, is that this was a nationalistic, or even ethnic, dispute. The Willebad story undeniably had all the makings of a good drama: an epic clash between local Burgundian aristocrats and intrusive Frankish northerners, entrapment, betrayal, and final capitulation to the inevitability of Frankish rule. As a result, various theories reading it as the swan song of Burgundian nationalism have been put forward in an attempt to explain what had transpired. Most notably, Eugen Ewig sought to interpret the feud along »ethnic« lines⁹, but he was not the only one. Factional strife in Merovingian Burgundy, unlike its northern neighbors, had a way of inviting these types of explanations, which imagined a dormant Burgundian loyalist element, ever ready to erupt and reclaim its rightful legacy¹⁰.

4 Vita Eligii episcopi Noviomagensis, ed. Bruno KRUSCH, Hanover 1902 (MGH SS rer. Merov., 4), p. 663–741, here c. 28, p. 715–716. For the late date of the *vita*, and consequently the problematic nature of the evidence it offers, see Yitzhak HEN, Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: A.D. 481–751, Leiden, Boston, Cologne 1995, p. 196–197.

5 Vita Eligii, c. 28, p. 715–716: *Nam septem diebus transactis, fortuito Flavadis percussus, iuxta sententiam viri Dei miserabiliter est defunctus.*

6 Vita Sigiramni abbatis Longoretensis, ed. Bruno KRUSCH, Hanover 1902 (MGH SS rer. Merov., 4), p. 603–625, here c. 12, p. 613.

7 Fredegar (as in n. 1), IV.90, p. 77: *colligens secum pluremam multitudinem de patriciatu sui terminum.*

8 Floachad was given Nanthild's niece, Ragnoberta, in marriage. See Fredegar, IV.89, p. 75.

9 Eugen EWIG, Die fränkischen Teilungen und Teilreiche (511–613), reprinted in: ID., Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien. Gesammelte Schriften (1952–1973), vol. 1, Munich 1976 (Beihefte der Francia, 3), p. 114–171, here p. 165, n. 276: »Fredegar äußert sich zwar nicht über die Volkszugehörigkeit Willebads, doch geht aus seiner Erzählung deutlich hervor, daß in seinen Reihen Burgunder gegen die Franken Floachads kämpften.«

10 For example, Zöllner's explanation of the Alethius affair. See Erich ZÖLLNER, Die Herkunft der Agilolfinger, in: Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 59 (1951), p. 245–264, here p. 247–248. Chaume was careful, in this case at least, to avoid such an interpretation; see Maurice CHAUME, Les origines du duché de Bourgogne, 4 vols., Dijon 1925, vol. 1, p. 18. For similar explanations of Balthild's move against Aunemund, see Louis DUPRAZ, Contribution à l'histoire du Regnum Francorum pendant le troisième quart du VII^e siècle (656–680), Fribourg 1948, p. 342–344, 352–354. For an opposing view, see Janet L. NELSON, Queens as Je-

Yet Willebad is interesting for another, more profound reason. Over the years, several genealogical reconstructions have proposed that we regard him as a descendent of the old Burgundian royal dynasty that was deposed following the Merovingian campaigns of 524 and 534¹¹. In this regard, moreover, Willebad was in good company. Every generation or so, a long-lost scion of the Gibichungs reared his head, and attempted to snatch back rightful control of Burgundy from the Merovingians. This was true of our Willebad, of Aletheus 30 years earlier, and perhaps even of another, mysterious Willebad, who operated in the obscure years after the Frankish conquest.

Historians have periodically revisited the story of Willebad and Floachad in an attempt to understand what had changed and what stayed the same in post-conquest Burgundy. This was often done by interpreting it as one episode in a string of incidents involving Burgundian potentates rising in rebellion against their Merovingian rulers. The historiographical treatment of the incident raises deeper questions, however, not only about how political legitimacy and regional identity function and adjust to changing circumstances, but also about the applicability of the terms used to describe the events in question. Many of these analyses used recurring names and *honores* as a conceptual framework with which to substantiate the claim that in Burgundy, insubordination was not only a chronic condition, but also one tied to nationalistic sentiments.

To be suspected as an offspring of the old Burgundian dynasty, so it seems, one had to have the right name, and preferably to hold the rank of patrician. In the Gibichung kingdom, the only *patricii* were the kings themselves¹². Imperial titulature went hand-in-hand with the monarchy, and was understood as an integral component of its legitimacy¹³. Gundioc was *magister utriusque militiae (per Gallias)*¹⁴, and his brother, Chilperic, was apparently *patricius*, or perhaps *magister militum*, depending on the source¹⁵. His other son, Gundobad, was *patricius* and *magister utri-*

zebels: The Careers of Brunhild and Bathild in Merovingian History, in: Derek BAKER (ed.), *Medieval Women*. Dedicated and presented to Rosalind M. T. Hill on the occasion of her seventieth birthday, Oxford 1978 (Studies in Church History. Subsidia, 1), p. 31–77, here p. 64. For a »strong tradition of independence« in Burgundy, Katherine FISCHER DREW (ed. and transl.), *The Burgundian Code. Liber Constitutionum sive Lex Gundobada Constitutiones Extravagantes*, Philadelphia 1949, p. 2–3.

- 11 On the events of 524 and 534, the best sources are Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum decem*, ed. Bruno KRUSCH, Wilhelm LEVISON, Hanover 1951 (MGH SS rer. Merov., 1,1), III.6, p. 101–103 and III.11, p. 107–108; Marius of Avenches, *Chronicum*, in: Justin FAVROD (ed. and transl.), *La Chronique de Marius d’Avenches (455–581)*, 2nd ed., Lausanne 1993 (Cahiers lausannois d’histoire médiévale, 4), p. 70, *ad a.* 524, p. 70–72. But see also Justin FAVROD, *Histoire politique du royaume burgonde (443–534)*, Lausanne 1997, p. 450–470.
- 12 For an earlier »Burgundian« *patricius*, see Sidonius Apollinaris, *Lettres*, ed. and transl. André LOYEN, Paris 1970 (Collection des universités de France, V, 16.1), p. 199: *Ecdicio, cuius auque titulis ac meis gaudes, honor patricius accedit*; John R. MARTINDALE, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 3 vols., Cambridge 1992, vol. 2, p. 383–384.
- 13 Ian N. WOOD, *Gentes, Kings and Kingdoms – The Emergence of States. The Kingdom of the Gibichungs*, in: Hans-Werner GOETZ, Jörg JARNUT, Walter POHL (ed.), *Regna and Gentes. The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World*, Leiden, Boston 2003, p. 243–270, here p. 254–255.
- 14 *Epistulae Arelatenses Genuinae* 19, ed. Wilhelm GUNDLACH, Berlin 1892 (MGH Epp., 3), p. 28.
- 15 For him as *patricius*, see *Vie des pères du Jura*, ed. and transl. F. MARTINE, Paris 1969, c. 92, p. 336–339; for *magister militum*, see Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* V (as in n. 12), 6.2, p. 182.

usque militiae, and so was Sigismund¹⁶. Under the Merovingians, men who were awarded the same *honores* and who had similar names, would, at least in theory, make for reasonable suspects of Gibichung ancestry. Since we only ever catch them in the act of undermining Frankish authority, with one quick conceptual leap they can be made into Burgundian nationalists.

As I intend to show, explanations seeking to uncover ethnic motivations, or which regard Willebad and others as Burgundian legitimists, are not easily reconciled with the history of post-conquest Burgundy, or, for that matter, of its patricians. The development of the Merovingian patriciate was a long process, which eventually produced an office that was only distantly related to the title borne by the Gibichung kings¹⁷. Ultimately, it was a Frankish development that had different responsibilities attached to it and different reasons behind it; but the thought of attributing Gibichung ancestry to patricians, of all people, is connected to the notion that the Burgundian royal family was not wiped out in the events of 534. As the theory goes, the remaining Gibichungs, who were necessarily the offspring of Godomar II, the »last Gibichung left standing«, continued to occupy public positions under the new regime¹⁸. While I do not intend to discuss the development of the Merovingian patriciate in Burgundy and Provence in any detail here, I will attend to each of the members in this lineup of suspects, and explain why, in my opinion, it is unjustified to view them as descendants of the royal Burgundian line.

A second common feature shared by all of these reconstructions is that they seek to uncover Gibichung ancestry by making onomastic arguments. Put differently, these men all had names that were reminiscent of the old Burgundian royal names, and since naming patterns usually ran in the family, it could then be argued that they were, in fact, descendants of Gundobad, albeit rather distant ones. As a means of illuminating some of the darker recesses of Burgundian history prosopographical methods are no doubt quite valuable. It is when prosopography is employed to justify preconceived ideas about ancestry and consanguinity that its worth as an instrument of historical inquest becomes questionable. Names are components of identity, and can be used in a variety of ways to transmit meaning. One possible meaning, certainly in the royal families of the post-Roman West, was to broadcast the continuity

- 16 Ian N. WOOD, Royal Succession and Legitimation in the Roman West, 419–536, in: Stuart AIRLIE, Walter POHL, Helmut REIMITZ (ed.), *Staat im frühen Mittelalter*, Vienna 2006 (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 11), p. 59–72, here p. 68–69; David BOYSON, Romano-Burgundian Society in the Age of Gundobad: Some Legal, Archaeological and Historical Evidence, in: *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 32 (1988), p. 91–118, here p. 93. Given his association with Ricimer, Wood would prefer to see Gundobad (and possibly Sigismund as well) as *magister militum praesentalis*; see Ian N. WOOD, The Governing Class of the Gibichung and Early Merovingian Kingdoms, in: Walter POHL, Veronika WIESER (ed.), *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat – europäische Perspektiven*, Vienna 2009, p. 11–22, here p. 12.
- 17 On this, see Fritz KIENER, *Verfassungsgeschichte der Provence seit der Ostgotenherrschaft bis zur Errichtung der Konsulate (510–1200)*, Leipzig 1900, p. 254–270; Yaniv Fox, *New honores for a Region Transformed: the Patriciate in the First Merovingian Century* (forthcoming).
- 18 Katalin ESCHER, *Genèse et évolution du deuxième royaume burgonde (443–534). Les témoins archéologiques*, 2 vols., Oxford 2005 (BAR International Series, 1402), vol. 2, p. 765: »Ainsi, il apparaît que la branche principale de la famille royale burgonde se perpétuait, déclassée au niveau d'une famille aristocratique de Bourgondie.«

of family and to claim privileged social standing. When we know enough about a family's history, its use of names can further our understanding how it perceived itself. The opposite method, whereby similarity is used to identify kinship, does not work nearly as well.

My goal in this paper is therefore to explain how names, especially ones that evoke nostalgic regional sentiments, were employed by the Merovingians and their elites to achieve concrete political objectives. Examining the various bearers of traditional Gibichung names, I aim to dispel a persistent theme in Merovingian historiography, that of a Burgundian particularity, a notion that implied that the southern *Teilreich* was especially susceptible to separatist attempts. As a component of local identity, names were a useful construct that enabled leading families to create a sense of historical continuity, thereby legitimating contemporary claims to property, *honores*, or in short, to power. Acknowledging this fact can help us understand why onomastic patterns recur in Merovingian history, but it is equally useful in disproving the notion that similarities are necessarily indicative of kinship. Nevertheless, the allure of this idea proved irresistible to a number of twentieth-century historians, who sought to identify elaborate lineages spanning many decades, based on nothing more than prosopographical resemblances.

Names are a notoriously tricky subject, especially when they are so often misspelled, corrupted, or simply »culturally adapted« in the manuscript evidence. The names of the contenders for Burgundian royal ancestry all have certain characteristics that qualify them as such, but as I shall attempt to demonstrate, this is, more often than not, a case of wishful thinking. While the limitations of prosopographical techniques are universally recognized in current scholarship, Burgundian historiography – perhaps because of the unusual longevity of a »Burgundian regionalism« – remains more forgiving to such narratives.

Willebad: A Rediscovered King

In a letter composed between the years 809 and 812, Archbishop Leidrad of Lyon listed for the emperor Charlemagne the numerous restoration projects he had undertaken in his archdiocese¹⁹. Among the many monasteries, basilicas, and other places of worship restored by the industrious archbishop, one admittedly small remark almost goes unnoticed. At the very end of his letter, following a description of the work done on the monastery of Saint-Ragnebert, Leidrad goes on to remark that: »I have restored another church in the same parish, which is dedicated to St Wibaldus, and where the body of that same saint rests²⁰.«

The church in question, located some 55 kilometers from Lyon, was situated in the parish of Ambronay, in a village that is still named after the saint housed within it: St Vulbas. Some centuries later, an *ecclesia sancti Wilbali* appears, alongside other properties, in a privilege awarded to the monastery of Saint-Eugendus (previously

19 Epistola ad Carolum, ed. Ernst DÜMMLER, Berlin 1895 (MGH Epp., 4), 30, p. 542–544. For some context on the letter, see Mayke DE JONG, Charlemagne's Church, in: Joanna STORY (ed.), Charlemagne. Empire and Society, Manchester, New York 2005, p. 103–135.

20 Epistola ad Carolum, p. 544: *Aliam quoque ecclesiam in eadem parochia, quae est in honore sancti Wibaldi, ubi eiusdem sancti corpus requiescit, restauravi.*

Condat)²¹ in the Jura Mountains by Emperor Frederick I²², as well as in a privilege confirmed by his quarrelsome pope, Urban III²³. So far, this is hardly out of the ordinary: a small, rural church with a local cult that predates the ninth century and has, so it seems, survived into the late twelfth. Two martyrologies composed nearby, however, add a curious dimension to this story.

A Lyon martyrology, dubbed »Martyrologium Lugdunense sancti Stephani« by the Bollandists²⁴, includes a rather enigmatic entry. Under the date May 10th, it lists the *dies natalis* of one »saint Villebad the martyr«²⁵. A second martyrology, this time from the monastery of Saint-Eugendus, goes a step further, naming May 11th as the day of »Guilbad king and martyr«²⁶. As we all know, there was never a King Willebad in Burgundy, which invites the obvious question of who, exactly, was this mysterious saint. The obvious conjecture would be that it was the patrician Willebad, and that at some point during the long years that spanned between our *patricius* and these compositions, a regional cult had developed and certain facts were distorted (Willebad as king), or reinterpreted to suit new realities (Willebad as martyr).

Willebad was a very high profile military leader who lost his life as the result of his struggle with a new mayor. Floachad's appointment came after a long hiatus – 17 years, in fact – following the death of Warnachar II, the last mayor to have been appointed to this post²⁷. Memorably, the magnates of Burgundy requested to abolish the mayoralty altogether and deal directly with the king, who at the time was Chlothar II²⁸. It is thus not impossible that in certain sympathetic circles, the idea of viewing Willebad's death as an act of martyrdom could have gained some traction. But

21 Known as Saint-Oyan or Saint-Oyend de Joux, or, from the 17th c. onwards, Saint-Claude.

22 Die Urkunden Friedrichs I., ed. Heinrich APPELT et al., vol. 4, Hanover 1990 (MGH DD regum et imp. Germ., 10), 884, p. 128–131, here p. 129: *in pago Lugdunensi ecclesiam sancti Wilbalii cum appendiciis suis*.

23 Wilhelm WIEDERHOLD, Papsturkunden in Frankreich. Reiseberichte zur Gallia Pontificia, vol. 1, Vatican City 1985 (Acta Romanorum Pontificum, 7), 74, p. 126–129, here p. 127; cf. René LOCATELLI, Gérard MOYSE, Une pierre d'attente du volume de »Gallia Pontificia« en chantier pour le diocèse de Lyon: l'abbaye de Saint-Claude, in: Revue Mabillon, nouv. sér. 18 (79) (2007), p. 253–273, here p. 272 n. 29. Pope Innocent IV has reaffirmed the privilege in 1245. See Pope Innocent IV, Bulle contenant le pouillé des églises et prieurés dépendants de l'abbaye de Saint-Oyend de Joux (1245), in: Paul BENOÎT, Histoire de l'abbaye et de la terre de Saint-Claude, Montreuil-sur-Mer 1890, p. 646: *in pago Lugdunensi sancti Vilbasii*. Also see *ibid.*, p. 579, esp. n. 2.

24 For more on MS 925 of the Bologna University Library, see Henri QUENTIN, Les martyrologes historiques du Moyen Âge. Étude sur la formation du martyrologe romain, Paris 1908 (Études d'histoire des dogmes et d'ancienne littérature ecclésiastique), p. 231–233. See also Jacques DUBOIS, Les martyrologes du Moyen Âge latin, Turnhout 1978 (Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental, 26), p. 40–42.

25 QUENTIN, Les martyrologes historiques du Moyen Âge, p. 232: *Eodem die (V id. Mai.), natale sancti Villebadis martyris*.

26 *Ibid.*: *sic enim legimus in S. Stephani Lugdunensis veteri martyrologio; V Idus Maji, natalis Sancti Villebadis Martyris. At in Martyrologio S. Eugendi Iurensis; VI idus Maii, in territorio Lugdunensi, Guilbadi Regis et Martyris*.

27 On Warnachar's death, see Fredegar (as in n. 1), IV.54, p. 44; Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani discipulorumque eius, libri II, ed. Bruno KRUSCH, Hanover 1905 (MGH SS rer. Germ., 37), p. 1–294, here II.9, p. 249; Odette PONTAL, Histoire des conciles mérovingiens, Paris 1989 (Cerf Histoire), p. 225.

28 Fredegar, IV.54, p. 46.

what of the title »king«, found in the Saint-Eugendus martyrology? Surely, this would have appeared a ludicrous statement even to the most separatist of Burgundians, presuming that such men were even around in the 640s. To be sure, fantastical stories of royal ancestry were not the sole preserve of Willebad; a very unlikely genealogy claimed that Bishop Syagrius of Autun was the brother of Queen Brunhild²⁹, while another cast him as the son of an unnamed Arian Visigothic king³⁰.

Still, Syagrius was never actually called king, unlike our Willebad. For Pierre-François Chifflet, the solution to this problem was that Willebad, while not actually a king himself, was descended of royal stock, which would have, at least in theory, provided some legitimacy to this title³¹. Granted, the prodigious longevity and fertility of the Merovingian line meant that close relatives of kings and queens were likely not very hard to find, but this did not mean that they had any justifiable claim to a royal title, either³². We would imagine that when Chifflet proposed this solution, he was, in all likelihood, thinking of the Gibichungs.

One is then naturally compelled to ask what qualified the Burgundian line, at this stage defunct for over a century, to bestow royal status upon its offspring. If, indeed, such scions of the Gibichungs were still to be found in Burgundy (and in very senior positions, no less), they were apparently living happily under Merovingian dominion, and have been doing so for quite some time. Maurice Chaume, who was also uncomfortable with the identification of Willebad as the victim of Floachad's machinations, suggested that the man mentioned in the martyrologies was an earlier Willebad, perhaps an ancestor of our patrician. His claim to the title of king, proposed Chaume, was that he was the son of Godomar II (523–534)³³, the last king of Burgundy³⁴. Justin Favrod has put forward a similar hypothesis, wherein the Burgundians made an abortive final stand against the conquering Franks, and in the process offered the crown to Godomar's son, Willebad³⁵. Chaume and Favrod both make the point that Willebad the patrician was killed in September, and not May, the date given by both

29 Vita Sancti Hugonis monachi Eduensis, ed. Jean MABILLON, Antwerp 1675 (AASS Apr., II), p. 762–772, here p. 765: *Habebat enim eadem regina religiosos ac sanctissimos praesules, sanguinitate germanum S. Syagrium, Augustodunensem episcopum, inter egregium sibi proximos affinesque, fratrem scilicet.*

30 Vita Sancti Syagrii episcopi Augustuduni, ed. Jean MABILLON, Antwerp 1743 (AASS Aug., VI), p. 74–80, here p. 74.

31 Pierre-François CHIFFLET, *Illustrationes Claudianae*, ed. Jean MABILLON, Antwerp 1695 (AASS Iun., I), p. 670–710, here, p. 671: *ubi videtur Rex dictus ob regiam aliquam consanguinitatem, vel affinitatem.*

32 For Erchinoald as a relative of the Merovingians, see Christian SETTIPANI, avec la collab. de Patrick VAN KERREBROUCK, *La préhistoire des Capétiens 481–987. Première partie: Mérovingiens, Carolingiens et Robertiens*, Villeneuve d'Ascq 1993 (*Nouvelle histoire généalogique de l'auguste maison de France*, 1), p. 95–97.

33 Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum* (as in n. 11), III.6, p. 101–103; Marius of Avenches (as in n. 11), *ad a.* 524, p. 70–72; MARTINDALE, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 2 (as in n. 12), p. 517.

34 CHAUME, *Les origines* (as in n. 10), p. 17, n. 2.

35 Justin FAVROD, *Les Burgondes. Un royaume oublié au cœur de l'Europe*, Lausanne 2002, p. 127–128. For an Ostrogothic example of this, see Patrick AMORY, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554*, Cambridge 1997, p. 11–12.

martyrologies, which renders any identification of our saint as the seventh-century patrician somewhat suspect³⁶.

The martyrologies use the term *dies natalis*, whose traditional and most likely meaning is the date of the saint's death and his birth in heaven. There is, however, some evidence that suggests that *dies natalis* could also have meant the day of the saint's *translatio*³⁷, or a second, later *depositio*³⁸, two terms whose initially different meanings have, over time, become somewhat blurred³⁹. An example of this phenomenon for a saint who was contemporary with our Willebad would be the *depositio sancti Arnulfi confessoris* – in the sense of *translatio* – found in the calendar section of the ninth-century Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Ms 3307⁴⁰. Memorably, Arnulf of Metz died as a hermit, secluding himself near Remiremont, and was only later moved to Metz⁴¹. Our case would warrant especial caution, since we are dependent on late and rather questionable evidence, and it is fairly certain that Willebad's remains were moved around⁴². Since we do not know how Willebad eventually ended up where he did or indeed even his precise identity, as a solution the existence of an earlier Willebad is no less flawed. For the sake of clarity, however, let us examine the evidence in favor of this theory.

As king, Godomar was certainly overshadowed by his older sibling, Sigismund, and his father, Gundobad⁴³. The reigns that preceded Godomar's were remembered as formative periods in the history of Burgundy – Gundobad was the first sole king of an independent kingdom⁴⁴, and the main architect of the Burgundian state⁴⁵; Sigis-

36 FAVROD, *Histoire politique* (as in n. 11), p. 464–465.

37 Charles DUFRESNE DU CANGE, *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis*, vol. 5, Paris 1885, p. 578.

38 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 70. See also Michael LAPIDGE, *The Cult of St Swithun*, Oxford 2003, p. 75, n. 8.

39 On the inventiveness of *inventio* and *translatio* stories, see Monika OTTER, *Inventiones. Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing*, Chapel Hill, NC 1996, p. 21–58.

40 On this reading, see Lothar BOSCHEN, *Die Annales Prumienses. Ihre nähere und ihre weitere Verwandtschaft*, Düsseldorf 1972, p. 56–57. See also, QUENTIN, *Les martyrologes historiques du Moyen Âge* (as in n. 24), p. 52: *XV Kl. Aug. Natale sancti Arnulfi confessoris* (Martyrology of Bede); and p. 348: *XV Kl. Aug. Apud civitatem Metensium, <sancti Arnulphi> episcopi, qui sanctitate vitae et miraculorum gratia illustris, heremiticam vitam diligens, beato fine quievit* (Martyrology of Florus of Lyon).

41 *Vita sancti Arnulfi*, ed. Bruno KRUSCH, Hanover 1888 (MGH SS rer. Merov., 2), p. 426–446, here c. 22, p. 442; Guy HALSALL, *Settlement and Social Organization. The Merovingian Region of Metz*, Cambridge 1995, p. 263–264, esp. n. 1.

42 For more on the two martyrologies, see below.

43 On Godomar's accomplishments, see Odet PERRIN, *Les Burgondes. Leur histoire, des origines à la fin du premier Royaume (534)*, Neuchâtel 1968, p. 533–537.

44 Ian N. WOOD, *Kings, Kingdoms and Consent*, in: Peter H. SAWYER, Ian N. WOOD (ed.), *Early Medieval Kingship*, Leeds 1977, p. 6–29, here p. 21–22.

45 For some initial literature on Gundobad, see Biagio SAITTA, *I Burgundi (413–534)*, Rome 2006, p. 71–127; David FRYE, *Gundobad, the Leges Burgundionum, and the Struggle for Sovereignty in Burgundy*, in: *Classica et Mediaevalia* 41 (1990), p. 199–212; BOYSON, *Romano-Burgundian Society in the Age of Gundobad* (as in n. 16), p. 91–118; Glenndon L. MCDORMAN, *Governing the Post-Roman Burgundian Kingdom*, MA Thesis, Boulder, CO 2008; Ian N. WOOD, *Arians, Catholics, and Vouillé*, in: Ralph W. MATHISEN, Danuta SHANZER (ed.), *The Battle of Vouillé, 507 CE. Where France Began*, Boston, Berlin 2012 (*Millennium-Studien/Millennium Studies*, 37), p. 139–150.

mund's claim to fame lay in his conversion to Catholicism, his patronage of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune⁴⁶, his untimely demise at the hands of Chlodomer⁴⁷, and his important posthumous cult⁴⁸. Apart from his tentative hold on the troubled rump state he had inherited from his brother, his various dealings with the Ostrogoths, and several legislative initiatives, not very much can be said of Godomar, not even his whereabouts after the final Frankish victory⁴⁹. Gregory of Tours certainly did not have a high opinion of Godomar, relegating him to eternal damnation on account of his purported Arianism⁵⁰. Yet we would perhaps do well to regard Gregory's treatment of Gibichung Arianism with some skepticism⁵¹.

Godomar's obscure familial situation means that we can say nothing about the fates of any remaining Gibichungs, making Chaume's theory impossible to disprove. There could very well have been a son of Godomar that survived beyond 534, only to be »martyred« at a later stage. Nevertheless, in many respects this creates more problems than it solves. The Merovingians that partitioned Burgundy would have had every reason to seek out and eliminate any vestigial claimants to the Burgundian throne. Clovis himself, says Gregory, systematically eradicated competing *reguli* – some of those were his family members – before uniting the Franks under his rule⁵².

- 46 For Sigismund's role in Saint-Maurice, see Jean-Marie THEURILLAT, L'abbaye de St-Maurice d'Agaune: des origines à la réforme canoniale, 515–830 environ, in: Vallesia 9 (1954), p. 30–84; Barbara H. ROSENWEIN, One Site, Many Meanings: St-Maurice d'Agaune as a Place of Power, in: Mayke DE JONG, Franz THEUWS, Carine VAN RHIJN (ed.), Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages, Leiden, Boston, Cologne 2001, p. 271–290, here p. 271–280; Albrecht DIEM, Who is Allowed to Pray for the King? St-Maurice d'Agaune and the Creation of a Burgundian Identity, in: Walter POHL, Gerda HEYDEMANN (ed.), Strategies of Identification. Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe, Turnhout 2013 (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, 13), p. 47–88; François MASAI, La Vita patrum iurensium et les débuts du monachisme à Saint-Maurice d'Agaune, in: Johanne AUTENRIETH, Franz BRUNHÖLZL (ed.), Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff zu seinem 65. Geburtstag, Stuttgart 1971, p. 43–69.
- 47 Gregory of Tours, Libri historiarum (as in n. 11), III.6, p. 101–103; Marius of Avenches (as in n. 11), *ad a.* 524, p. 70–72.
- 48 Fred PAXTON, Power and the Power to Heal. The Cult of St Sigismund of Burgundy, in: Early Medieval Europe 2.2 (1993), p. 95–110.
- 49 FAVROD, Les Burgondes (as in n. 35), p. 121, 127. For coins minted during Godomar's kingship, see Philip GRIERSON, Mark BLACKBURN, Medieval European Coinage. With a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, vol. 1: The Early Middle Ages (5th–10th Centuries), Cambridge 1986, p. 74–77; Ildar H. GARIPZANOV, The Symbolic Language of Royal Authority in the Carolingian World (c. 751–877), Leiden 2008, p. 166. For his legislative initiatives, see Constitutiones Extravagantes, ed. Ludwig R. DE SALIS, Hanover 1892 (MGH LL nat. Germ., 2,1), p. 117–122.
- 50 Gregory of Tours, Libri historiarum (as in n. 11), III.praefatio, p. 97: *Probavit hoc Godigisili, Gundobadi atque Godomari interitus, qui et patriam simul et animas perdiderunt.*
- 51 On this, see Passio Sancti Sigismundi, ed. Bruno KRUSCH, Hanover 1888 (MGH SS rer. Merov., 2), c. 4, p. 335; Avitus of Vienne, Epistulae, ed. Rudolf PEIPER, Berlin 1883 (MGH Auct. ant., 6.2), 7, p. 35–39; Martin HEINZELMANN, Gregory of Tours. History and Society in the Sixth Century, Cambridge 2001, p. 126; Avitus of Vienne, Letters and Selected Prose, ed. Danuta SHANZER, Ian N. WOOD, Liverpool 2002, p. 21–22 and p. 22, n. 1; FAVROD, Les Burgondes (as in n. 35), p. 121; for Godomar and Sigistrix as Arians, see Uta HEIL, Avitus von Vienne und die homöische Kirche der Burgunder, Berlin, Boston 2011 (Patristische Texte und Studien, 66), p. 105, n. 180.
- 52 Gregory of Tours, Libri historiarum (as in n. 11), II.40–42, p. 89–93.

When in 613 Chlothar II took control of Burgundy he had his troops dispose of any remnants of Theuderic II's family⁵³. Shortly thereafter, Rusticula, abbess of Saint-Jean d'Arles, was brought before Chlothar to answer suspicions of harboring an escaped son of Theuderic⁵⁴. Victorious kings were eager to wipe the sleight clean, and this was as true here as it had always been. Even if the Merovingians were the ones responsible for killing Willebad, the fact that his offspring were still at large in Burgundy and aware of their privileged status a century later means that this was not a very thorough job.

What is even more peculiar in this case is that, aside from the martyrological evidence, we have absolutely no record of a Gibichung prince surviving his father. The mere fact that it was not brought up in any extant hagiography or chronicle is, in itself, not especially noteworthy, although it does not exactly help prop up this already shaky structure. Gregory's information about the events and timelines of the early sixth century are at best sketchy⁵⁵. Hagiographies from Burgundy that deal with this time period come few and far between and in any event there needs to have been a good reason for including this enigmatic Gibichung in any later composition⁵⁶. Still, neither the Chronicle of Fredegar, nor Marius of Avenches, nor any other author, contemporary or otherwise, seems to have had anything to say about what appears to be quite a noteworthy fact. All that we are left with, then, is a cryptic entry in a martyrology, which postdates the facts by some 800 years.

In its present state, the martyrology of Saint-Eugendus is a fourteenth century document, which records (apart from the usual cadre of pan-Christian figures that appear in the Roman martyrology) relevant regional saints or those whose cult was unique to Saint-Eugendus⁵⁷. Similarly, the Lyonnais martyrology has been dated to the latter half of the thirteenth century⁵⁸. It would not have been unheard of for a monastery with such a longstanding documented link to the Gibichung family to record the death of a Burgundian royal⁵⁹, and to confer upon him the title of martyr, especially if his was a politically motivated murder similar to that of his putative uncle,

- 53 Apart from Merovech, his godson, who was spared this fate and sent to a Neustria. See Fredegar (as in n. 1), IV.42, p. 35.
- 54 *Vita Rusticulae sive Marciae abbatissae Arelatensis*, ed. Bruno KRUSCH, Hanover 1902 (MGH SS rer. Merov., 4), p. 337–351, here c. 10–11, p. 344–345.
- 55 Ian N. WOOD, Gregory of Tours and Clovis, in: *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 63.2 (1985), p. 249–272; ID., Clermont and Burgundy, 511–534, in: *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 32 (1988), p. 119–125.
- 56 For one life describing the Franco-Burgundian war, see Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita sancti Leobini Carnotensis episcopi*, ed. Bruno KRUSCH, Berlin 1885 (MGH Auct. ant., 4.2), p. 73–82, here c. 16, p. 75. On the rationale behind Merovingian hagiographies and their multi-layered agendas, see Jamie KREINER, *The Social Life of Hagiography in the Merovingian Kingdom*, Cambridge 2014, esp. p. 60–83; also, see now Angela KINNEY, *An Appeal against Editorial Condemnation: a Reevaluation of the Vita Apollinaris Valentinensis*, in: Victoria ZIMMERL-PANAGL, Lukas J. DORFBAUER, Clemens WEIDMANN (ed.), *Edition und Erforschung lateinischer patristischer Texte: 150 Jahre CSEL. Festschrift für Kurt Smolak zum 70. Geburtstag*, Berlin 2014, p. 157–177.
- 57 Auguste CASTAN, *La bibliothèque de l'abbaye de Saint-Claude de Jura. Esquisse de son histoire*, in: *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 50 (1889), p. 301–354, here p. 346.
- 58 QUENTIN, *Les martyrologes historiques du Moyen Âge* (as in n. 24), p. 232–233.
- 59 For Abbot Lupicinius of Condat's meeting with Chilperic I in the 470s, see *Vita Patrum Iurensum* (as in n. 15), c. 92, p. 337.

the first royal saint in the West. However, we simply have no indication earlier than the late thirteenth century for Willebad's martyrdom, and none for his alleged royal background for several decades more. Granted, the martyrological manuscripts probably represent earlier traditions, but those are hypothetical traditions to which we have no access. We know that there was a parochial church honoring one *sanctus Wibaldus* in the ninth century, but that is all. As for the rest, it is not hard to conclude that Saint-Eugendus or the diocese of Lyon would have profited from inflating the story or even fabricating it *ex nihilo* to advance other agendas⁶⁰. Whatever the case, the evidence to support a King Willebad or a son of Godomar is simply not there.

Saint-Maurice d'Againe and Gibichung commemoration after 534

Details of the earlier years of Merovingian rule are slim, but it would appear that for Burgundy, the period 534–558 was not a completely new beginning. To be sure, some administrative changes were introduced under the first Merovingians: Autun and other *civitates* were restructured⁶¹, and new bishoprics came into being⁶². Burgundy would no doubt have seen an influx of new Frankish populations⁶³, which obviously included new royal appointments⁶⁴, but that does not indicate that the old elites were being marginalized. The ease with which the great families of the Burgundian cities transitioned between the old rule and the new is apparent in the seamless integration of Burgundian functionaries in Merovingian government. This is true for both ecclesiastical and secular nominations, since secular officials were promoted to ecclesiastical positions quite frequently.

Admittedly, for the aristocratic families occupying the Rhône cities, 534 was not a cataclysmic event. While some things started to change, they certainly did not change overnight. The Merovingians trod carefully, fully aware of their dependence on the Burgundian elite, and it seems that for the time being, the new regime sought to stabilize, rather than to reform⁶⁵. What is completely missing from this picture of

60 Especially since the *ecclesia sancti Wilbasii* was the property of the monastery. For some remarks on the advantages of a royal martyr-cult, see Dana PIROYANSKY, *Martyrs in the Making. Political Martyrdom in Late Medieval England*, Basinstoke 2008, esp. p. 99–105.

61 Walter E. BERRY, *Southern Burgundy in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, in: Carole L. CRUMLEY, William H. MARQUARDT (ed.), *Regional Dynamics. Burgundian Landscapes in Historical Perspective*, San Diego 1987, p. 447–607, here p. 470–475.

62 For the creation of new dioceses, see FAVROD, *Histoire politique* (as in n. 11), p. 472–473.

63 For some archeological evidence of this, and of the gradual cultural assimilation of the incoming Franks, see Alain DIERKENS, *Postface*, in: Françoise PASSARD, Sophie GIZARD, Jean-Pierre URLACHER et al. (ed.), *Burgondes, Alamans, Francs, Romains dans l'Est de la France, le Sud-Ouest de l'Allemagne et la Suisse V^e–VII^e siècle après J.-C.* Actes des XXI^e journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingienne, Besançon, 20–22 octobre 2000, Besançon 2003 (*Annales littéraires de l'université de Franche-Comté. Série art et archéologie*, 47), p. 319–325, esp. p. 321–322.

64 Guy HALSALL, *Social Identities and Social Relationships in Early Merovingian Gaul*, in: Ian N. WOOD (ed.), *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period. An Ethnographic Perspective*, Woodbridge 1998, p. 141–164, here p. 151.

65 See, for example, Childebert I's cautious episcopal nominations after having gained control of Arles; William E. KLINGSHIRN, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul*, Cambridge 1994, p. 26, n. 51; HEN, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul* (as in n. 4), p. 89–92.

post-conquest serenity is any mention of living Gibichungs. The only acknowledgement of the previous regime took the form of a royally sanctioned translation of the bodies of Sigismund and his family to their final resting place in Saint-Maurice d' Agaune.

The »Passio Sancti Sigismundi« reveals that it was under Theudebert I that the bodies of Sigismund and his family were exhumed from the well into which they were originally thrown by Chlodomer, and placed in Saint-Maurice d' Agaune. Ansemund, the man responsible for appealing to the king and for organizing the translation, had been an official under the Gibichungs, probably a *comes* of Vienne, perhaps later even a *dux*⁶⁶, and was certainly a close friend of the deceased Sigismund⁶⁷. According to the »Passio«, he was asked by Venerandus, the abbot of Saint-Maurice, to assist in this task. Venerandus had received a vision of the royal family, still awaiting proper burial in the muddy depths of the well, and was compelled to act⁶⁸.

Whatever the exact nature of this translation, it must have been quite a stately affair, involving a prominent magnate, the abbot of Saint-Maurice, and the sanction of the king. Given that at least one of the Burgundian aristocrats who orchestrated this translation was such a close associate of the Burgundian royal family⁶⁹, one is compelled to ask why none of the descendants of the Gibichungs, purportedly still important figures on the Burgundian scene, was even mentioned. If the family was simply »demoted« from royal to aristocratic status, which seems to be the claim Chaume and others were making⁷⁰, why, then, do we not see them taking some active role in what was, after all, an edifice erected in memory of their family? In actuality, the Gibichungs completely vanished during the early period of Merovingian dominion over Burgundy, and by the time the first figure suspected of royal background reappears, sixty years had elapsed.

The deaths of Theudebert (547), Theudebald (555), and finally Childebert (558) united the entire *regnum Francorum* under Chlothar I⁷¹. This also meant that previ-

66 He is named *dux* in the »Passio Sancti Sigismundi« and Ado of Vienne's Chronicle, both admittedly late sources. The title itself was not used in Gibichung Burgundy, and very rarely under the Merovingians before the 7th century. See *Passio Sancti Sigismundi* (as in n. 51), c. 10, p. 338–339; Ado of Vienne, *Chronicon*, ed. Georg H. PERTZ, Hanover 1829 (MGH SS, 2), p. 315–323, here p. 317; Patrick AMORY, *Names, Ethnic Identity, and Community in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Burgundy*, in: *Viator* 25 (1994), p. 1–30, here p. 16; Rolf SPRANDEL, *Dux und comes in der Merovingerzeit*, in: *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* 74 (1957), p. 41–84, here p. 53.

67 Martin HEINZELMANN, *Gallische Prosopographie 260–527*, in: *Francia* 10 (1982), p. 531–718, here p. 554.

68 *Passio Sancti Sigismundi* (as in n. 51), c. 10, p. 338: *Ibique per triennium sancta corpora limosi gurgites aqua inlesa celaverunt* (although this timeline is patently incorrect).

69 Certainly previous abbots, such as Hymnemodus and Achivus, were closely tied to the royal house; see *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, ed. Bruno KRUSCH, Hanover 1919 (MGH SS rer. Merov., 7), p. 329–336, here c. 1 p. 330 and c. 9, p. 335. Since Venerandus's appointment predates the Frankish conquest by some years and given his obvious Gibichung sympathies, it is likely that he, too, was close to the royal family. For the dating of Venerandus's abbacy, see Léon DUPONT LACHENAL, *Les abbés de St-Maurice d' Agaune*, dans: *Les Échos de Saint-Maurice* 42 (1944), p. 84–88, here p. 84.

70 CHAUME, *Les origines* (as in n. 10), p. 14; ESCHER, *Genèse et évolution du deuxième royaume burgonde* (as in n. 18), p. 765.

71 *Gregory of Tours, Libri historiarum* (as in n. 11), IV.9, p. 140–141.

ous partitions of Burgundy now became irrelevant. After his death in 561, Chlothar's bequest came to be divided by his four sons, and in this division Burgundy was given to Guntram⁷². The crystallization of Burgundy as a stable Merovingian realm is often accredited to King Guntram's (561–593)⁷³ rule⁷⁴. The establishment of the three *Teilreiche* was a prolonged and complicated process⁷⁵, but Guntram was undoubtedly partly responsible for this having taken place in Burgundy.

In many ways, Guntram faced a different set of problems than, say, Sigibert or Chilperic. As kings, all of Chlothar's sons were burdened by external military concerns, as well as having to contend with troublesome internecine squabbles for control over various *civitates* and new territories. Unlike his brothers, however, Guntram received from his father a kingdom for which the memory of its forceful integration into the Frankish orbit was relatively fresh. Moreover, Burgundy had been divided between several Merovingians until 558, a mere three years before it came into Guntram's hands.

The new Merovingian king had to figure out a way to give his patrimony the necessary tools in order to transform it into a viable and powerful political entity. To accomplish this, Guntram employed a variety of techniques, and one of those was to mimic the deeds of Sigismund, the last king to rule a united, prosperous Burgundy. Guntram's strategy of emulation was probably rooted in very concrete political considerations, and it is perhaps best to understand the limited scope and aim of these actions, rather than to view Guntram, as Chaume chose to do, along the lines of an aspiring *rex Burgundionum*⁷⁶. In any event, some of these similarities are worth repeating here.

In terms of ecclesiastical policy, and particularly his approach to monastic patronage, Guntram greatly resembled Sigismund⁷⁷. His monastery of Saint-Marcel-de-Chalon modeled itself on Sigismund's Saint-Maurice, and likewise installed a regimen of eternal chant, or *laus perennis*⁷⁸. Both men would eventually be interred in

72 Ibid., IV.21–22, p. 154–155.

73 Margarete WEIDEMANN, *Zur Chronologie der Merowinger im 6. Jahrhundert*, in: *Francia* 10 (1982), p. 471–513, here p. 472.

74 CHAUME, *Les origines* (as in n. 10), p. 5–11; FAVROD, *Histoire politique* (as in n. 11), p. 472–475; Ian N. WOOD, *Ethnicity and the Ethnogenesis of the Burgundians*, in: Herwig WOLFRAM, Walter POHL (ed.), *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, vol. 1, Vienna 1990 (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Denkschriften, 201), p. 53–69, here p. 55–56.

75 WOOD, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 55–58; EWIG, *Die fränkischen Teilungen und Teilreiche* (as in n. 9), p. 114–171; ID., *Die fränkischen Teilreiche im 7. Jahrhundert (613–714)*, reprinted in EWIG, *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien* (as in n. 9), p. 172–230.

76 CHAUME, *Les origines* (as in n. 10), p. 7.

77 Robert FOLZ, *Zur Frage der Heiligen Könige. Heiligkeit und Nachleben in der Geschichte des burgundischen Königums*, in: *Deutsches Archiv* 14 (1958), p. 317–344.

78 Friedrich PRINZ, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich. Kultur und Gesellschaft in Gallien, den Rheinlanden und Bayern am Beispiel der monastischen Entwicklung (4. bis 8. Jahrhundert)*, Munich 1965, p. 104; Barbara H. ROSENWEIN, *Perennial Prayer at Agaune*, in: Sharon FARMER, Barbara H. ROSENWEIN (ed.), *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts. Religion in Medieval Society*, Ithaca, NY 2000, p. 37–56. On the later developments of *laus perennis*, see Yitzhak HEN, »Flirtant« avec la liturgie. Rois et liturgie en Gaule franque, in: *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 50 (2007), p. 33–42.

their respective monasteries alongside their immediate families⁷⁹, and it seems that Guntram even had plans to transform Saint-Marcel into a dynastic mausoleum, although this never transpired⁸⁰. The two kings convoked church councils – Épaone in 517 and Mâcon in 585 – with the aim of outlining the future structure of the Burgundian church⁸¹, making them, in essence, tools for the consolidation of royal authority⁸².

Guntram also made the metropolitan of Lyon, styled »patriarch« in the canons of the Council of Mâcon⁸³, the effective head of the Burgundian ecclesiastical hierarchy. Together with the king, he was put in charge of convening future synods in three-year intervals⁸⁴. But the most conspicuous sign of this policy was the name Guntram had chosen for his firstborn – Gundobad – which was the name of Sigismund's father, Gibichung Burgundy's greatest king, as well as the name Sigismund chose for his own son, who had followed him into the well in 524⁸⁵.

Merovingian naming patterns were never haphazard, and usually embodied a certain set of aspirations for the future, not only because of the literal meaning of the name, but also because of the careers of those who had it last. When, a century or so later, the mayor Grimoald placed his own son on the Austrasian throne, he fittingly chose for him the name Childebert, which had previously belonged to the king of Austrasia and Burgundy⁸⁶. Therefore, before we delve into the contribution of Guntram to the emergence of the southernmost kingdom of the Merovingians, a preliminary onomastic remark is in order.

One thing immediately noticeable about Guntram is that he himself bore a highly irregular name, as far as royal Merovingian names go. He was the first and last Gun-

79 For Guntram, see Fredegar (as in n. 1), IV.14, p. 10–11.

80 Edward JAMES, Royal Burials among the Franks, in: Martin H. O. CARVER (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo. The Seventh Century in North-Western Europe*, Woodbridge, Suffolk 1992, p. 243–254, here p. 253.

81 Jean GAUDEMET, Brigitte BASDEVANT (ed. and transl.), *Les canons des conciles mérovingiens (VI^e–VII^e siècles)*, vol. 1, Paris 1989 (*Sources chrétiennes*, 353), p. 93; CHAUME, *Les origines* (as in n. 10), p. 10.

82 WOOD, *The Governing Class of the Gibichung and Early Merovingian Kingdoms* (as in n. 16), p. 13.

83 Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum* (as in n. 11), V.20, p. 227: *Coniunctique episcopi cum patriarcha Nicetio beato*; Concilium Matisconense 585, in: GAUDEMET, BASDEVANT, *Les canons des conciles mérovingiens* (as in n. 81), vol. 2, Paris 1989 (*Sources chrétiennes*, 354), p. 454: *Priscus episcopus patriarcha dixit*.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 478, can. 20.

85 *Passio Sancti Sigismundi* (as in n. 51), c. 9, p. 338: *Qui eum sub ardua custodia una cum coniuge et filiis Gisclaado et Gundobado vinctum ad locum cuius vocabulum est Belsa perduxerunt. Ibi que puteum ab antiquis constructum invenientes, ut vesaniae suae perfidia saciarent capitali sententia adiudicato, capite deorsum dimerso, una cum coniuge et filiis suis in puteum iactaverunt*.

86 On the reign of Childebert »the adopted«, see Richard A. GERBERDING, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber Historiae Francorum*, Oxford, New York 1987 (*Oxford Historical Monographs*), p. 47–66; Ian N. WOOD, *Deconstructing the Merovingian Family*, in: Richard CORRADINI, Maximilian DIESENBERGER, Helmut REIMITZ (ed.), *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, Leiden, Boston 2003, p. 149–172, here p. 159–160; Stefanie HAMANN, *Zur Chronologie des Staatsstreichs Grimoalds*, in: *Deutsches Archiv* 59 (2003), p. 49–96. For a different view, see Matthias BECHER, *Der sogenannte Staatsstreich Grimoalds. Versuch einer Neubewertung*, in: Jörg JARNUT (ed.), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit*, Sigmaringen 1994, p. 119–147.

tram to be so named, and this was true not only for kings but also for other less known princes, throughout the entire three-century lifespan of this remarkable dynasty. Just to compare, there were four kings called Clovis, and as many Theuderic and Chlothars, followed in descending order of frequency by the various Childerics, Sigiberts, Dagoberts, and Childeberts. This small list does not even take into account kings' names recurring twice (such as Chilperic or Theudebert), or the myriad repetitions of these names in Merovingian princes that never made it to the throne (and for whom Merovech seemed to have been a curiously popular choice)⁸⁷. This is, by all means, quite extraordinary, considering that Guntram was an enormously successful monarch who ruled for more than three decades, and who received exorbitant praise from both Gregory of Tours and the chronicler of Fredegar⁸⁸.

The name, which combined royal Burgundian and Frankish elements (-gund, -hrabna, meaning »battle raven«), was perhaps chosen by Chlothar I with the intent of passing onto Guntram the reins to the Burgundian realm⁸⁹. It is also possible, as Ewig believed, that the name reflected patterns from Guntram's maternal side, although apart from his mother's name – Ingund – we have very little with which to substantiate this⁹⁰. Guntram's thoughts on his father's inheritance scheme are best illustrated by the fact that his eldest son was given the manifestly Gibichung name Gundobad⁹¹. Of course for this theory to be believable, we would have to assume that Prince Gundobad's birth postdated 561, or at least that Guntram was aware of his father's designs shortly prior to the *divisio*. Different dates for the birth of Gundobad have been proposed; Ewig suggested 549, while Chaume preferred a time shortly before 567–570⁹². Both options have their problems, and while the latter is more in keeping with Gregory's narrative, it also means that Guntram would have had to have lost Gundobad, who was at that time old enough to be living – presumably, by himself – in Orléans, to lose a second son by Marcatrudis and to dismiss her, to marry Austrechildis, have two sons and to lose them both, and all by 577, making Chaume's dating especially tight⁹³.

The name Guntram chose for his son is also very similar to the name Gundovald, borne by the bothersome pretender whose attempts to gain recognition as the son of Chlothar I plagued Guntram's reign. Notably, the -gund element also appears in the name Gundovald, as does the element -ba(l)d, present in such names as Willebad and

87 Eugen EWIG, Die Namengebung bei den ältesten Frankenkönigen und im merowingischen Königshaus, in: *Francia* 18/1 (1991), p. 21–69, here p. 29–30.

88 The reasons for this are articulated in Guy HALSALL, Nero and Herod? The Death of Chilperic and Gregory's Writing of History, in: Kathleen A. MITCHELL, Ian N. WOOD (ed.), *The World of Gregory of Tours*, Leiden 2002, p. 337–350.

89 FAVROD, *Histoire politique* (as in n. 11), p. 47, n. 9. For an older brother of Guntram's with a similar name (Gunthar/Gundichar), see Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum* (as in n. 11), III.21, p. 121 and IV.3, p. 136–137; MARTINDALE, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (as in n. 12), vol. 3, p. 576.

90 EWIG, *Namengebung* (as in n. 87), p. 36, 39.

91 Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum* (as in n. 11), IV.25, p. 156.

92 EWIG, *Namengebung* (as in n. 87), p. 28; CHAUME, *Les origines* (as in n. 10), p. 8.

93 Marius of Avenches (as in n. 11), *ad a. 577*, p. 84: *Eo anno mortui sunt regii atque egregii adulescentes Chlothacarius et Chlodomeris filii Gunthegramni regis*; MARTINDALE, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (as in n. 12), vol. 3, p. 568–569.

Gundobad⁹⁴, making it the perfect name for any prospective Burgundian usurper. Guntram, who scornfully referred to Gundovald as »Ballomer« (the miller's son), obviously did so in a bid to strip him of his name and claim⁹⁵.

What the Gundovald affair so strikingly illuminates is the fact that two competitors for the Burgundian throne – a Merovingian and a »potential Merovingian« – considered it fitting to adopt a Gibichung name in the late sixth century as a means toward this end. If Gundovald was really not one of Chlothar's sons, despite the acceptance he earned from some of his Merovingian contemporaries and Byzantine patrons⁹⁶, then the name he chose was probably designed to evoke some nostalgic sentiment in his prospective subjects. Conversely, if he was Chlothar's son, it is nevertheless indicative of the naming policies of the previous generation. Guntram, who gave his son a name that was almost identical to that of his enemy, must have had the same idea. Names, we may conclude, were not mere markers of familial identity. They could equally have functioned as creative indicators of regional sentiment or political ambition.

For Guntram, an unfortunate unfolding of events meant that he had outlived all of his sons, and thus decided to leave his kingdom to his nephew, Childebert II⁹⁷. The name Guntram, as well as the other traditional Gibichung names (except Chilperic), were destined to die out in the Merovingian family. Guntram's next two sons were to be called Chlodomer and Chlothar, the same names borne by the conquerors of Burgundy in the previous generation. For Guntram, Chaume remarked poetically, these choices reflected an inevitable realization that he was not, in fact, a *rex Burgundionum*, but a Merovingian, although it is doubtful that he had ever lost sight of this fact; his decision to marry Marcatrudis, daughter of a Frankish *dux* named Magnachar, says as much⁹⁸. More plausibly, the names echo Guntram's desire – much like his father before him – to leave his realm to his sons, and in this sense they are more than fitting. Tellingly, Guntram never again strayed from classic Merovingian choices, naming his two daughters by Austrechild Chlodeberga and Clothild⁹⁹. Chlothar I's philandering ensured that he had enough children and grandchildren scat-

94 CHAUME, *Les origines* (as in n. 10), p. 529.

95 Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum* (as in n. 11), VI.24, p. 241–242, VII.36, p. 357; Wolfgang HAUBRICHS, *Frühe alemannische Personennamen* (4.–8. Jh.). Eine komparatistische Studie, in: Hans-Peter NAUMANN (ed.), *Alemannien und der Norden*. Internationales Symposium vom 18.–20. Oktober 2001 in Zürich, Berlin 2004, p. 57–114, here p. 59; Raymond VAN DAM, *Merovingian Gaul and the Frankish Conquests*, in: Paul J. FOURACRE (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 1: C. 500–700, Cambridge 2005, p. 193–231, here p. 223–224; MARTINDALE, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (as in n. 12), vol. 3, p. 566–567; Constantin ZUCKERMAN, *Qui a rappelé en Gaule le ballomer Gundovald?*, in: *Francia* 25/1 (1998), p. 1–18.

96 WOOD, *Deconstructing the Merovingian Family* (as in n. 86), p. 161–162.

97 Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum* (as in n. 11), IX.11 and 20, p. 426 and 434–441, respectively.

98 CHAUME, *Les origines* (as in n. 10), p. 9. See Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum*, IV.25, p. 156–157. On Magnachar, see Karin SELLE-HOSBACH, *Prosopographie merowingischer Amtsträger in der Zeit von 511 bis 613*, Bonn 1974, p. 129–130. On the conjunction between his second marriage to Marcatrude and his decision to send away Gundobad, see Brigitte KASTEN, *Königssöhne und Königsherrschaft. Untersuchungen zur Teilhabe am Reich in der Merowinger- und Karolingerzeit*, Hanover 1997 (MGH Schriften, 44), p. 33.

99 See *Concilium Valentinum* a. 585, ed. Friedrich MAASSEN, Hanover 1883 (MGH Conc., 1), p. 162–163, here p. 162.

tered throughout the *tria regna* to guarantee the survival of his name, but once Burgundy was given over to the Austrasian progeny of Sigibert, the names Chlodomer and Guntram became extinct.

To conclude this point, Guntram was unquestionably a skilled politician whose actions reflected a clear desire to give his patrimony the tools it needed to succeed. That these would have included certain allusions to Burgundy's historical traditions is not very surprising. Of course, none would seriously argue in favor of a familial link between Guntram and the Gibichung family simply on the basis of this similarity, apart from the obvious connection to Clothild, who had become the *materfamilias* of the entire Merovingian clan. By the same token, the onomastic argument falls short of convincing that a similarity in names between late fifth-century royals and early seventh-century aristocrats is indicative of the survival of the Gibichungs into the late Merovingian period.

The Gibichungs return? – 613 and beyond

The dramatic episode in Merovingian history, which concluded in 613 with Chlothar II as sole king over the entire Frankish realm, also spelled a change for the ruling class of Burgundy. A disgruntled aristocracy, anxious to rid itself of an overbearing Brunhild, allowed the Neustrian armies to take Austrasia and Burgundy without a fight¹⁰⁰. Interestingly, the Burgundian aristocrats who were so displeased with Brunhild as to plot her overthrow were termed *Burgundae farones* by the Chronicle of Fredegar¹⁰¹. Debates about the identity of these *Burgundae farones* occupy copious volumes, and need not be reintroduced here¹⁰². In short, the evidence is not quite sufficient to support a notion of these men as somehow ethnically distinct, but it is important to note that immediately following Chlothar's takeover of Burgundy, we witness the reappearance of what seems at first to be an indigenous bid to retake the kingdom.

Before turning to Aletheus, whose notorious attempt to usurp the Burgundian throne was allegedly rooted in his Gibichung ancestry, we should try to retrace the purported descendants of this family who preceded him. After the hypothetical career of King Willebad, which was cut short by an early martyrdom, there is a suspicious gap in the reconstruction of the Gibichung stemma proposed by Chaume¹⁰³.

100 Fredegar (as in n. 1), IV.43, p. 36.

101 Ibid., IV.41, p. 34: *Burgundae faronis vero tam episcopi quam ceteri leudis timentis Brunechildem et odium in eam habentes, Warnachario consilium inientes, tractabant ut neque unus ex filiis Theuderici evadaret sed eos totus oppressus Brunechilde delirent et regnum Chlothariae expeirent; quod probavit eventus.*

102 For some initial literature, see ZÖLLNER, Die Herkunft der Agilolfinger (as in n. 10), p. 247; Alexander C. MURRAY, Germanic Kinship Structure. Studies in Law and Society in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, Toronto 1983, p. 93; Wolfgang HAUBRICH, Germanic and Gothic Kinship Terminology: Discussion, in: Samuel J. BARNISH, Federico MARAZZI (ed.), The Ostrogoths from the Migration Period to the Sixth Century. An Ethnographic Perspective, Woodbridge, Rochester, NY 2007, p. 173–182, here p. 178–181; Matthew INNES, Land, Freedom, and the Making of the Medieval West, in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 16 (2006), p. 39–74, here p. 72–74.

103 CHAUME, Les origines (as in n. 10), p. 529.

The next we hear of the progeny of the Burgundian royal line it is in the persons of one Gundovald, count of Meaux¹⁰⁴, and a high official named Ricomer (or Ricimer).

Ricomer, who is given the improbable title *princeps* in the Life of Rusticula¹⁰⁵, was the man who instigated the plot accusing the abbess of abetting an escaped son of Theuderic II. Ricimer, as it is often spelled, was of course also the name of the famous patricius and Roman general who practically controlled imperial affairs for a time in the late fifth century; more importantly, he was King Gundobad's uncle¹⁰⁶. In 607, our Ricomer was appointed patrician by Theuderic II, replacing Wulf, who was implicated in the murder of Protadius¹⁰⁷. The name, coupled with a prolific public career, is all the evidence we have to suggest a link between Ricomer and the Gibichung family¹⁰⁸. The name itself does not recur anywhere during the lifespan of the independent Burgundian kingdom, although it is attested as a Frankish name: Flavius Richomerus was a *magister utriusque militiae* and consul under Gratian, as well as being an uncle to Arbogast, and possibly even an ancestor of the Merovingians¹⁰⁹. Other than that, there is really nothing to indicate that the title *princeps* is anything more than an inaccurate description of Ricomer's office¹¹⁰.

Gundovald, the other purported descendant of the Gibichungs, was the count of Meaux. The name is also attested two generations later, in the bishop of the same city, who appears in a section of the Life of Columbanus that deals with the nun Burgundofara as well as on the list of co-signatories for the Councils of Paris and Clichy¹¹¹. At first glance, the connection between these aristocrats and the Burgundian house is not self-evident. Meaux is a long way off from the Rhône basin. However,

104 Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum* (as in n. 11), VIII.18, p. 385.

105 *Vita Rusticulae* (as in n. 54), c. 9–10, p. 343–345.

106 On the activities of Ricimer and Gundobad, see Penny MACGEORGE, *Late Roman Warlords*, Oxford 2002 (Oxford Classical Monographs), p. 165–294.

107 Fredegar (as in n. 1), IV.29, p. 19.

108 Chaume claims to have seen a *Ricomeres de prosapia Sigismundi et Gothmari* in the twelfth-century »Chronicon Marcianense«, although he fails to mention exactly where; see CHAUME, *Les origines* (as in n. 10), II.1, p. 205–206. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate this phrase. For an edition of the »Chronicle of Marchiennes«, see Steven VANDERPUTTEN, *Compilation et réinvention à la fin du douzième siècle. André de Marchiennes, le Chronicon Marchianense et l'histoire primitive d'une abbaye bénédictine (édition et critique des sources)*, in: *Sacris Erudiri* 42 (2003), p. 403–436. Even if Chaume saw some version of this text containing said note, it hardly proves the claim, as it is a very late piece riddled with historical inaccuracies. More likely, Chaume was referring to the claim about the wife of Leudesius, son of Erchinoald, in the contemporary *Chronicon Ebersheimense*, ed. Ludwig WEILAND, Hanover 1874 (MGH SS, 23), p. 427–453, here c. 5, p. 434: *Leudesius itaque, ut prediximus, maior domus existens, duxit uxorem nobilissimam de prosapia Sigismundi et Gothmari regum Burgundie genuitque ex ea filium nomine Athicum seu Adabricum*, which repeats the wording verbatim.

109 See MARTINDALE, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (as in n. 12), vol. 1, p. 765–766; Christian SETTIPANI, *Continuité gentilice et continuité familiale dans les familles sénatoriales romaines à l'époque impériale. Mythe et réalité*, Oxford 2000 (*Prosopographica et Genealogica*, 2), p. 417, n. 6. For Ricomer the Visigothic Balth, see Herwig WOLFRAM, *History of the Goths*, Berkeley, CA 1988, p. 202.

110 For a different opinion, see Jo Ann McNAMARA John E. HALBORG, E. Gordon WHATLEY (ed. and transl.), *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, Durham, NC 1992, p. 127, n. 30.

111 *Vita Columbani* (as in n. 27), C II.7, p. 243, n. 1; *Concilium Parisiense a. 614*, and *Concilium Clippiacense a. 626 aut 627*, Sept. 27, in: GAUDEMET, BASDEVANT (ed. and transl.), *Les canons des conciles mérovingiens* (as in n. 83), vol. 2, p. 523, 544 respectively.

Count Gundovald's familial situation becomes clearer when we take into account the identity of his sons, Chagnoald and Chagneric¹¹². The two brothers were probably related to the Agilolfings, an aristocratic family second in importance only to the Merovingians, and which may have had certain Gibichung roots¹¹³. The name of Chagneric's son, Bishop Burgundofaro of Meaux, retains a possible echo of this group's provenance¹¹⁴.

If in fact these two are of royal descent, which is in any case far from certain, it would not substantially further our understanding of the Gibichungs in Merovingian Burgundy. The Gundovalds, both *comes* and bishop, are hardly appropriate case studies for evaluating the processes taking place in Burgundy. Granted, the entire family could, as suggested by Jean Guérout, have relocated to Meaux relatively late¹¹⁵. Chagnoald was obviously still in the Vosges during the rule of Childebert II, where he was instrumental in petitioning the king for permission to erect a monastery¹¹⁶. This, however, seems to fly in the face of any reconstructions casting the two brothers as the sons of Gundovald, who was already bishop at Meaux years before these events took place. Wherever we may wish to place the origins of this family, the point is that it had very successfully taken root in Theudebert II's Austrasia and later in Chlothar II's Neustria, and this happened irrespective of its theoretical Burgundian ancestry.

Sadly, Ricomer is also not a very helpful example when looking for lost Gibichungs either. What we can say of him is that he was patently in the service of Merovingian kings as patrician by 607, and it would stand to reason that he held previous public posts. Having survived the turmoil of 613, he was still a high-ranking official under Chlothar II. The Fredegar chronicler refers to him as Romanus, so at least in his mind there was no question of Gibichung ancestry. Even if, as his name suggests, he was descended of old Burgundian royalty, it did not seem pertinent at any stage in

- 112 Régine LE JAN, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc (VII^e-X^e siècle)*, Paris 1995, p. 198, n. 75; Jörg JARNUT, *Agilolfingerstudien. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte einer adligen Familie im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 1986 (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 32), p. 4-43.
- 113 Herwig WOLFRAM, *Die Christianisierung der Baiern*, in: Gunter DIMT, Franz LIPP, Heidelinde JUNG (ed.), *Von Severin zu Tassilo. Baiernzeit in Oberösterreich. Das Land zwischen Inn und Enns vom Ausgang der Antike bis zum Ende des 8. Jahrhunderts*. Ausstellung des Oberösterreichischen Landesmuseums im Schloßmuseum zu Linz anlässlich der 1200jährigen Wiederkehr der Gründung des Stiftes Kremsmünster durch Herzog Tassilo III. vom 26. Mai bis 30. Oktober 1977, Linz 1977 (Kataloge des Oberösterreichischen Landesmuseums, 96), p. 177-188, here p. 181. A more plausible explanation for their roots is supplied by Joachim Jahn, who sees the Agilolfings as essentially Frankish; see Joachim JAHN, *Ducatus Baiuvariorum. Das bairische Herzogtum der Agilolfinger*, Stuttgart 1991 (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 35), p. 7-24.
- 114 Horst EBLING, *Burgundofarones*, in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 2, Munich, Zurich 1983, col. 1098-1099; for more on this family, see Yaniv FOX, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul. Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites*, Cambridge, MA 2014.
- 115 Jean GUÉROUT, *Fare (Sainte)*, in: *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, vol. 16, Paris 1967, col. 505-531, here col. 512.
- 116 Vita Agili, in: *AASS Aug. VI*, p. 575-586, here c. 3, p. 575; Ian N. WOOD, *Jonas, the Merovingians and Pope Honorius: Diplomata and the Vita Columbani*, in: Walter GOFFART (ed.), *After Rome's Fall. Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History*, Toronto 1998, p. 99-120, here p. 106-107.

his career, save the fact that it accorded him a high enough social status to be awarded the nomination. In any event, for our purposes neither he nor Gundovald emerge as very promising candidates.

Aletheus was a different matter altogether. This was the first time that Burgundian royal origins were brought up as a good enough reason to justify forceful seizure of the Burgundian kingship from the hands of a legitimate Merovingian. To recapitulate, the details of Aletheus's bid are roughly as follows: Chlothar, who had only recently taken control of Burgundy, had set in motion a comprehensive round of nominations: Warnachar II was awarded the mayoralty, Herpo the Ultrajuran dukedom, and Aletheus the patriciate. For Warnachar and Aletheus, Chlothar was merely reaffirming existing nominations, since both men carried those very same posts during Sigibert II's ephemeral rule¹¹⁷. Herpo, a Frank¹¹⁸, was sent to replace a »Burgundian« by the name of Eudila, holder of this strategic duchy. Yet here, again, some caution is warranted. We should recall that when Eugen Ewig identified Eudila as Burgundian, it was because he saw the entire affair as a »nationalburgundische Verschwörung«, and casting Eudila as the casualty of Frankish imperialism would have fit this interpretation nicely; moreover, it was not unanimously accepted¹¹⁹. Previously a *comes stabuli*¹²⁰, Herpo was probably another willing participant in the plot to remove Theuderic and Brunhild¹²¹.

Very soon after this promotion, Herpo fell victim to the knives of an inflamed mob, allegedly at the instigation of Aletheus and of his accomplice, Bishop Leudemund of Sion¹²². But Herpo's assassination was only a prelude to the next phase in the plan. Leudemund was then dispatched to lure Queen Bertrude into abandoning her husband in favor of Aletheus, a union that would presumably have granted him access to the royal treasure. Bertrude was horrified by the idea, and once the king got wind of the conspiracy, both men were forced to flee¹²³. Aletheus was soon hunted down and executed, while Leudemund made for Sion. After sheltering for a while at Luxeuil¹²⁴, Leudemund was eventually reinstated to his bishopric¹²⁵.

117 Fredegar (as in n. 1.), IV.42, p. 34: *Cumque iusso Brunehilde et Sigyberto filio TheudERICI exercitus de Burgundia et Auster contra Chlothario adgrederetur, veniesque Sygibertus in Campania territoriae Catalauninsis super fluvium Axsoma, ibique Chlotharius obviam cum exercito venit, multus iam de Austrasius secum habens factione Warnachariae maiorem domus. Sic iam olim tractuerat conscientibus Aletheo Patricio, Roccone, Sigoaldo et Eudilanae ducibus.*

118 Ibid., IV.43, p. 36: *Cum anno XXX regni sui in Burgundia et Auster regnum arepisset, Herpone duci genere Franco locum Eudilanae in pago Ultraiorano instituit.*

119 Horst EBLING, *Prosopographie der Amtsträger des Merowingerreiches. Von Chlothar II. (613) bis Karl Martell (741)*, Munich 1974 (Beihefte der Francia, 2), p. 45; Eugen EWIG, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, 5th ed., Stuttgart 2006 (Urban-Taschenbücher, 392) p. 119.

120 Fredegar (as in n. 1), IV.40, p. 33.

121 WOOD, *The Merovingian Kingdoms* (as in n. 75), p. 144–146.

122 Fredegar (as in n. 1), IV.43, p. 36.

123 Ibid., IV.44, p. 36–37.

124 Memorably, Luxeuil had been the product of Chagnoald's petition to Childebert II (or possibly Guntram) some 20 years prior. Theoretically, assuming a royal lineage in both Aletheus and Gundovald of Meaux could possibly provide some explanation for the willingness of Abbot Eustasius to shelter the bishop of Sion, although there could have been countless other, equally convincing, reasons.

125 Fredegar (as in n. 1), IV.44, p. 37.

Curiously, the Chronicle of Fredegar cites Aletheus's royal Burgundian ancestry as the reason behind his claim to the Burgundian throne, even though the obscure wording allows for other interpretations¹²⁶. As a Roman name, Aletheus is attested in several other instances, not least of which was a *vir clarissimus* from Lyon who would have served under numerous Gibichungs, having died in 512 at the ripe old age of 90¹²⁷. Nevertheless, a rather unlikely theory has proposed to regard Aletheus (or rather, Alatheus) as a royal Visigothic, or Balth name¹²⁸. Supposedly, it was later adopted by the Burgundians, who traced their ancestry to the Visigothic king Athanaric via Gundioc's wife, who was the sister of Ricimer¹²⁹. The Athanaric reference is taken from Gregory of Tours' Histories¹³⁰, whose goal was not to provide an accurate stemma of the earliest Gibichungs, but rather to pass judgment on their Arianism by equating them with a known persecutor, and should not be considered a factual account¹³¹.

Alternatively, a second reconstruction names Aletheus as the putative grandson of King Willebad, the recondite figure from the Lyonnais martyrology, and as father to the second Willebad, arch-enemy of Floachad. Here, too, the identification, though neatly arranged, is very much dependent on our desire to force this construal on the ambiguous words of Fredegar¹³². In 786 a certain Altheus, whose name is a very close variant of Aletheus, appears as abbot of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune¹³³, after having served as bishop of Sion, a see in which the seventh-century Aletheus seems to have held great sway. In both his episcopal and abbatial capacities, Altheus was preceded by one Willechar¹³⁴, whose name retains the -Wille element found in Willebad, as

126 Ibid., IV.44, p. 36–37: *Aletheos esset paratus suam relinquens uxorem Bettethrudem reginam acceperit; eo quod esset regio genere de Burgundionibus, ipso post Chlotharium possit regnum adsumere.*

127 Karl Friedrich STROHEKER, *Der senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien*, 2nd ed., Darmstadt 1970, p. 144.

128 Luis A. GARCÍA MORENO, Prosopography and Onomastics: The Case of the Goths, in: K. S. B. KEATS-ROHAN (ed.), *Prosopography. Approaches and Applications. A Handbook*, Oxford 2007 (*Prosopographica et Genealogica*, 13), p. 337–350, here p. 340, n. 9.

129 On this reconstruction and its Visigothic dimensions, see WOLFRAM, *History of the Goths* (as in n. 109), p. 33; Alexander DEMANDT, *The Osmosis of Late Roman and Germanic Aristocracies*, in: Evangelos K. CHRYSOS, Andreas SCHWARZ (ed.), *Das Reich und die Barbaren*, Vienna, Cologne 1988 (*Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 29), p. 75–86, here p. 86 (Stemma of family connections of the military aristocracy in Later Roman times).

130 Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum* (as in n. 11), II.28, p. 73: *Fuit igitur et Gundevachus rex Burgundionum ex genere Athanarici regis persecutoris, qui supra meminimus.*

131 WOOD, *Gentes, Kings and Kingdoms* (as in n. 13), p. 268; Phillip WYNN, *Wars and Warriors in Gregory of Tours' Histories I–IV*, in: *Francia* 28/1 (2001), p. 1–35, here p. 4.

132 CHAUME, *Les origines* (as in n. 10), p. 17, n. 2: »Ne pourrait-on pas voir en Guillebaud le fils d'Aletheus, tout jeune au moment de la mort de son père, et mis par Clotaire II sous la garde d'un homme sûr, dépêché à cet effet en Bourgogne?«; also, Christian SETTIPANI, *Addenda: Ancestors of Charlemagne*, in: *Héraldique et Généalogie* (1990), p. 1–18, here p. 10.

133 DUPONT LACHENAL, *Les abbés de St-Maurice d'Agaune* (as in n. 69), p. 85.

134 For Willechar and Altheus, see Louis DUCHESNE, *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule*, vol. 1, Paris 1907, p. 247. For Willechar, also Patrick J. GEARY, *Aristocracy in Provence. The Rhône Basin at the Dawn of the Carolingian Age*, Stuttgart 1985 (*Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*, 31), p. 140.

well as the -char radical which we know from other (Frankish) names, such as Magnachar, Guntram's father-in-law¹³⁵, Ragnachar of Cambrais, an early Frankish *regulus*¹³⁶, or even the near-identical Willachar, count of Orléans¹³⁷. I offer these examples only to demonstrate that the names were well known in Burgundy, and as such circulated among the aristocratic stratum of the region with some frequency¹³⁸. From the earliest fourth-century Gothic Alatheus attested by Ammianus Marcellinus to the latest bearer of this name in Saint-Maurice span almost five centuries¹³⁹, and while the prestige associated with the name was perhaps the reason for its popularity, it is best to put aside any notions of lineage. All things considered, it would perhaps be better to regard Aletheus as a member of the local aristocracy, not an offspring of the Gibichungs.

More likely, it was Queen Bertrude who was the one with royal Burgundian roots, and this would be concurrent with several reconstructions identifying her as the daughter of Ricomer, our patricius, and incidentally, also as aunt to Erchinoald, the future Neustrian mayor¹⁴⁰. This interpretation seems more logical, since for a Merovingian – in this case Chlothar II – it would hardly have been an anomalous choice to marry the daughter of a wealthy senatorial aristocrat, of the kind found in abundance in Burgundy. We need only think back to Theudebert I and Deuteria's whirlwind romance to be reminded of this fact¹⁴¹. Assuming that Bertrude was somehow descended of the old Burgundian dynasty, this could imaginably have served to bolster her worthiness as a royal wife, and was therefore a matter of common knowledge. In all probability, there would have been, relatively speaking of course, numerous other aristocrats from the Rhône basin who, at one time or another, had relatives that intermarried with the Gibichungs. Since we only have the Chronicle of Fredegar's garbled account to go by, a more advisable course to take would be to consider the political circumstances of this »national Burgundian revolt«.

A few years prior, with the political noose gradually tightening around his neck, Chlothar's phenomenal success in 613 would have seemed unimaginable. First, following some aggressive maneuverings by his Burgundian and Austrasian relatives, his Neustrian dominion was reduced to 12 cantons between the Seine, the Oise, and the sea¹⁴². Then, the unification of Austrasia and Burgundy under Theuderic II placed Chlothar in an extremely precarious and vulnerable state. The unexpected defection of the aristocracy was for Chlothar a veritable lifeline, and in this context we should reevaluate his motivation or ability to enforce his will in the newly acquired

135 Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum* (as in n. 11), IV.25, p. 156–157. For more on him, see above.

136 *Ibid.*, II.42, p. 92.

137 *Ibid.*, VII.13, p. 334.

138 As did other prevalent Burgundian names: the abbacy of Saint-Maurice also features a Protadius, Siagrius, and an Aygulf.

139 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*, ed. John C. ROLFE, 3 vols., Cambridge, MA, London 1964, vol. 3, XXI.4.12, p. 406: *Per hos dies interea etiam Vithericus Greuthungorum rex cum Alatheo et Saphrace, quorum arbitrio regabatur, itemque Farnobio, propinquans Histri marginibus, ut simili susciperetur humanitate, obsecravit imperatorem legatis propepe missis.*

140 CHAUME, *Les origines* (as in n. 10), p. 529; SETTIPANI, *La préhistoire des Capétiens* (as in n. 32), p. 96; FAVROD, *Histoire politique* (as in n. 11), p. 476–477, esp. n. 25.

141 Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum* (as in n. 11), III.22–23, p. 122–123.

142 Fredegar (as in n. 1), IV.20, p. 13.

kingdoms. Attitudes in Burgundy were not so much welcoming of Chlothar as they were hostile to Brunhild. His only new appointment – Herpo – was quickly thwarted by the old guard, anxious to fend off what it perceived as unwelcome meddling. Encouraged by his previous success, Aletheus was poised to take full advantage of this political vacuum, but as Ian Wood has noted, the inclusion of the queen in this gambit should make clear that it was not a separatist move¹⁴³. The intent was to remove Chlothar, not the Merovingian kingship, and certainly not to breathe new life into the long-dead notion of a Gibichung Burgundy.

Conclusions: the Gibichung legacy reassessed

The Gibichung family stepped off the stage of history with the disappearance of Godomar II. Perhaps he was killed by the Merovingians at some unknown point in time, or perhaps he escaped to Italy, where he planned to bide his time until he could launch an attack that eventually never came. Marius of Avenches reports that in 538, a contingent of *Burgundiones* took part in the siege of Milan, which could possibly suggest that some units remained intact after 534¹⁴⁴. Yet these could have been no different than Theudebert's troops, whom Procopius reports had come to the aid of Witiges, meaning simply that they originated from Burgundy¹⁴⁵. Maybe Godomar even continued to live in Burgundy as a private person¹⁴⁶, although if past Merovingian conduct is anything to go by, this theory seems somewhat unlikely. Whatever the answer, the enigmatic circumstances of its demise spawned a number of theories advocating a Gibichung afterlife in Merovingian Burgundy, which has been conveniently tied to a failed coup in 613 and to a very public feud between two Burgundian nobles some decades later.

It is my opinion that it would not be justified to see the events of 613 or those of 641/642 as inherently different from any of the factional rivalries that had bedeviled Merovingian history all along. Putting aside the Chronicle of Fredegar's opaque remark about royal origins, Aletheus's attempt to take control of Burgundy is really nothing more than naked political opportunism in the face of temporary Merovingian weakness. For the purposes of legitimacy, enlisting Bertrude would hardly have been necessary had Aletheus been the one with a royal background, assuming that such ancestry counted for much in seventh-century Burgundy. More likely it was the treasure that really caught his eye.

If the queen was the one who was of royal descent, which is what conventional wisdom seems to dictate, it could possibly indicate that such a lineage was still a political asset. All the same, it is important to remember that all that we have is the one statement from Fredegar. The entire affair is not brought up elsewhere, nor does the

143 WOOD, *The Merovingian Kingdoms* (as in n. 75), p. 145.

144 Marius of Avenches, *ad a.* 538 (as in n. 11), p. 74: *Hoc consule Mediolanus a Gotis et Burgundionibus effracta est ibique senatores et sacerdotes cum reliquis populis, etiam in ipsa sacrasancta loca interfecti sunt ita ut sanguine eorum ipsa altaria cruentata sint.*

145 Procopius, *History of the Wars*, ed. Henry B. DEWING, London, Cambridge, MA 1924, VI xxi.13, p. 48; BACHRACH, *Merovingian Military Organization* (as in n. 1), p. 33, n. 38.

146 FAVROD, *Les Burgondes* (as in n. 35), p. 127: » Au contraire, tout laisse à penser que Godomar put passer le reste de sa vie comme simple particulier en Bourgondie.«

Chronicle of Fredegar ever resort to this kind of language when relating other instances of Burgundian tension. Not even in his treatment of the Willebad affair, where »ethnic« terminology is employed, does the Fredegar chronicler evoke the idea of royal ancestry¹⁴⁷. To regard this whole episode as emanating from some renaissance Burgundian nationalism, rising from the ashes nearly a century after the last independent Gibichung reign was snuffed out by the Merovingians, would be unjustified.

In this light we should re-examine the mysterious Willebad, martyr and king. It is not impossible that he was indeed Godomar II's son, although this is quite a fanciful interpretation. The entire conjecture is based solely on the discrepancy between his *dies natalis* and that of Willebad, the seventh-century patrician, thereby suggesting that they were separate figures. Even assuming that the date given by the martyrologies is correct, it need not necessarily have meant the day when Willebad was killed, and so we cannot even be sure that he was not in fact the Burgundian patrician who collided with the Frankish mayor in the 640s.

Whoever he was, his cult and significance would not have been very different from Sigismund's, only on a much smaller scale. That the Merovingians were confident enough to allow the cult of Sigismund, and apparently that of Willebad, to continue unhindered shows that at no point did they feel threatened by its existence, nor did they perceive it as a natural extension of Burgundian separatism. A likelier interpretation is that by allowing the cult of Sigismund at Saint-Maurice d'Agaune to go on, the Merovingians were extending an olive branch to the Burgundian elites whose cooperation was needed in order to rule, in an attempt to provide closure to the events of 534.

As for Willebad the patrician, his unfortunate opposition to Nanthild and Erchinoald's attempts to reintroduce the mayoralty to Burgundy can hardly be shown to contain an ethnic dimension. Even accepting the existence of a mysterious King Willebad, any subsequent reconstruction of the Gibichung family tree after 534 would require turning a blind eye to the suspicious sixty-year gap, and expressing an overzealous desire to misconstrue Fredegar. After all Erchinoald, the man behind the policy of Neustrian interventionism and a close friend of Floachad, was, to borrow Fredegar's turn of phrase, himself *de genere regio Burgundionibus*, since Bertrude was his aunt.

Recurring naming patterns were no doubt a feature of Merovingian society. Given the porous nature of the evidence, we are often tempted to »fill in the gaps«, and envision that bearers of identical or similar names were somehow related. Insofar as we are able to determine, families, and especially elite ones, were prone to repeat and reconfigure naming elements as a means of accentuating certain aspects of their identity. No one would contest that the Merovingian family, for instance, drew its names from a finite list, which clearly marked its bearers as privileged, although here, also, there was room for innovation. The same may be said of other prominent families, royal and non-royal. This realization comes with a *caveat*, however: families were extremely flexible structures. Names, like other, more tangible, forms of entitlement, were used consciously as a means of appropriating prestige or material gain.

147 Fredegar (as in n. 1), IV.78, p. 65: *Willibadus patricius genere Burgundionum*.

The extinction of the Gibichung royal family would have meant an end to the claims of its members to the Burgundian throne, if indeed any of them remained. That, however, does not imply that the names associated with this family immediately lost their luster or ceased to be employed by regional elites. When we encounter Gibichung names in the seventh century, we are probably witnessing an attempt to tap into a cultural repository that enjoyed a certain regional cachet. Guntram did this as king, and so did other local potentates. With these prestigious names could have come family tales of royal ancestry, which, incidentally, are quite a common feature of aristocratic identity. To claim that this legitimated a challenge to Merovingian authority would be to go too far. For Burgundy, there was never a question of reviving the Gibichung kingship. The Merovingians were here to stay, at least for a while.