

# The Adoption of the Dionysian Easter in the Frankish Kingdoms: Culture, Authority and Society

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*Abstract:* This paper argues that the transition from the Merovingian to the Carolingian world involved important changes in the way that Frankish communities reckoned and coordinated calendars. It analyses evidence for the spread of Easter tables, treatises, annals and other sources to demonstrate that the paschal work of Dionysius Exiguus spread from Insular-influenced centres in the north of the Frankish kingdoms rather than from the south. It finds that the process was neither as chaotic nor as politically coordinated as recently argued by Borst. Instead, it highlights the organic spread of texts and tables in the context of the foundation of new monastic centres.

*Keywords:* Easter tables, calendars, Dionysius Exiguus, Victorius of Aquitaine, Merovingian Gaul, Pippin II, Charles Martel, Pippin III, St Willibrord, St Boniface, Gregory of Tours, Isidore of Seville, Echternach, Fulda, Lorsch, Soissons.

Calendars can bring communities together or divide them. In 740 in the Frankish kingdom, a long-simmering debate over different ways to calculate Easter caused a disturbance (*turbatio*) which seems largely to have been resolved after discussion of ‘diverse Easters’ at the Council

of Soissons in 744.<sup>1</sup> No extant source gives any more details, although it is certain the dispute concerned the relative merits of the Easter tables of Victorius of Aquitaine once favoured by the Franks and the Alexandrian table of Dionysius Exiguus, with the decision at Soissons favouring Dionysius.<sup>2</sup> The two tables were constructed using different lunar cycles and employed different acceptable ranges for the lunar and solar dates of Easter Sunday, with the result that in some years they proposed Easters a week apart. The situation was complicated by the fact that Victorius listed two Easters for those years, which he labelled ‘Latin’ and ‘Greek’, leaving it for the pope to make the final choice; but, because of his lunar tables, sometimes no option corresponded with the actual Alexandrian date. Easter was too central to Christian theology and ritual to allow for multiple Easter dates in a single year, and indeed there was canon law dating back to 314 demanding all Christians observe a single date.<sup>3</sup> But on what basis did the Frankish Church change their Easter reckoning and through what channels did debate unfold?

The issues involved are far from simple. Arguments about technical details were rarely successful, as the Irishman Columbanus had found out in Burgundy in the seventh

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<sup>1</sup> *Historia vel gesta Francorum*, c. 24, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 179 which is a continuation of Fredegar’s chronicle, the title suggested by Roger Collins on the basis of its manuscript transmission: Roger Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, MGH Studien und Texte 44 (Hanover 2007) ch. 2; *Concilium Suessionense*, ed. Albert Werminghoff, MGH Conc. 2.1 (Hanover 1906), 33-6. The separate memorandum slating Easter for discussion is printed from Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.p.th.q.31, f. 54v (CLA, no. 1439; <http://vb.uni-wuerzburg.de/ub/mpthq31/index.html>) in Michael Glatthaar, *Bonifatius und das Sakrileg. Zur politischen Dimension eines Rechtsbegriff* (Frankfurt-am-Main 2004), 117, with analysis at 119-23. James T. Palmer, ‘Computus after the paschal controversy of 740’, in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín and Immo Warntjes (eds), *The paschal controversy of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages: its manuscripts, texts and tables* (Turnhout 2011) 213-41.

<sup>2</sup> The tables and accompanying texts are edited by Bruno Krusch in *Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie: Die Entstehung unserer heutigen Zeitrechnung* (Berlin 1938).

<sup>3</sup> *Concilium Arelatense*, c. 1, ed. Carolus Munier, CCSL 148 (Turnhout 1963) 5.

century when defending the Easter reckoning popular in Ireland.<sup>4</sup> Appealing to papal authority was an alternative, and indeed one Columbanus tried, but that was not always helpful. At the famous Synod of Whitby in 664, argument involving Irish, English and Gallic figures concluded that everyone should follow papal observance but that still seems to have left a choice between Victorius and Dionysius as both had come out of papal circles.<sup>5</sup> At Soissons in 744, future king Pippin III (d. 768) also had to negotiate around varied sensibilities within the Frankish Church at a time when his power as an aristocrat far exceeded that of the last Merovingian king, Childerich III (743-51).<sup>6</sup> The more ‘conciliar’ south, led by the metropolitan of Lyon, had defended Victorius before, forcing the Columbanian network of monasteries headed by Luxeuil to conform to their choice. Politically, the nobilities of Burgundy and Provence had also only recently tried to resist interference from Pippin’s father Charles Martel (d. 741), whose powerbase was in the north.<sup>7</sup> The cultural and religious dynamics of that northern region had itself been transformed over the previous half century, in no small part thanks to increased contacts with Ireland, the English kingdoms, and Rome, stimulated by St Willibrord (d. 739) and St Boniface (d. 754).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Columbanus, *Epistula 2*, ed. G. S. M. Walker, SLH 2 (Dublin 1957) 12-23. See Claire Stancliffe, ‘Columbanus and the Gallic bishops’, in Giles Constable & Michel Rouche (eds) *Auctoritas: Mélanges offerts à Olivier Guillot* (Paris 2006) 205-15.

<sup>5</sup> Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 3.25, ed. Michael Lapidge, trans. Paolo Chiesa (2 vols. Rome 2008-10), 2.118-35; Stephanus, *Vita Wilfridi*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge 1927) 20-3. Masako Ohashi, ‘Theory and history: an interpretation of the paschal controversy in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*’, Stéphane Lebecq, Michael Perrin and Olivier Szerwiniak (eds) *Bède le Vénérable entre tradition et postérité* (Villeneuve d’Ascq 2005) 177-85; Erin Dailey, ‘To choose one Easter from three: Oswiu’s decision and the Northumbrian synod of AD 664’, *Peritia* 26 (2015) 47-64.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-François Lemarignier, ‘Quelques remarques sur l’organisation ecclésiastique de la Gaule du VIIe à la fin du IXe siècle principalement au Nord de la Loire’, in *Agricultura e mondo rurale in Occidente nell’Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto 1966) 451-86: 461; J. Michael Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish church* (Oxford 1983) chs. 4-10. On the last Frankish kings see Theo Kölzer, ‘Die letzten Merowingerkönige: rois fainéants?’, in Matthias Becher & Jörg Jarnut (eds), *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751* (Münster 2004) 33-60.

<sup>7</sup> *Historia vel gesta Francorum*, cc. 18 and 20, 176-7, 177-8.

<sup>8</sup> Wilhelm Levison, *England and the continent in the eighth century* (Oxford 1946); Theodor Schieffer, *Winfrid-Bonifatius und die christliche Grundlegung Europas*, 2nd edn. (Darmstadt 1972); Lutz von Padberg, *Bonifatius: Missionar und Reformer* (Munich 2003); *Bonifatius – Leben und Nachwirken. Die Gestaltung des christlichen*

To analyse the processes by which the Frankish Church adopted Dionysius, and the routes through which the accompanying knowledge travelled, will open up new ways of understanding Christian universality in a culturally and politically diverse landscape.

The issue of how Alexandrian Easter tables spread in the West once attracted regular scholarly attention.<sup>9</sup> Arguably the most important study amongst this early literature was Bruno Krusch's 1884 survey, which formed a crucial part of his investigations into the chronology of the Merovingian period and the origins of AD dates.<sup>10</sup> In Krusch's view, the papacy used Alexandrian tables from the time of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) onwards, the English and Visigothic kingdoms did so from the second half of the seventh century, and Frankish kingdoms made the move last and slowest by the 730s. On various points, Krusch's story has recently been found in need of some revision, not least in the wake of the extensive research into Carolingian computistical manuscripts by Arno Borst, Bruce Eastwood, Dáibhí Ó Crónín, Wesley Stevens, and Immo Warntjes that provides significantly new foundations for understanding early medieval science.<sup>11</sup> For our present purposes, in particular, Krusch gave little attention to why change occurred in the Frankish kingdoms, except that he suspected the influence of the famous reformer and martyr, St Boniface, who had strong

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*Europa im Frühmittelalter*, eds. Franz J. Felten, Jörg Jarnut and Lutz von Padberg (Mainz 2007); Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World c. 690-900* (Turnout 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Charles W. Jones, 'The Victorian and Dionysian paschal tables in the West', *Speculum* 9. 4 (1934) 408-21: 408. One of Jones's targets was Reginald Poole, 'The earliest use of the Easter cycle of Dionysius', *EHR* 33 (1918), 57-62 and 210-13.

<sup>10</sup> Bruno Krusch, 'Die Einführung des griechischen Paschalritus im Abendlande', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 9 (1884), 99-169. A less satisfying attempt to build on this is Joseph Schmid, *Die Osterfestberechnung in der abendländischen Kirche vom I. allgemeinen Konzil zu Nicäa bis zum Ende des VIII. Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg im Breisgau 1907).

<sup>11</sup> Arno Borst, *Schriften zur Komputistik im Frankenreich von 721 bis 818*, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch. 21 (Hanover 2006); Bruce Eastwood, *Ordering the Heavens: Roman Astronomy and Cosmology in the Carolingian Renaissance* (Leiden 2007); Dáibhí Ó Crónin, *Early Irish History and Chronology* (Dublin 2003); Wesley Stevens, *Cycles of Time and Scientific Learning in Medieval Europe* (Aldershot 1995); Immo Warntjes, *Text and Translation. Irish Computistics between Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede and its Reception in Carolingian Times* (Stuttgart 2010).

connections with Rome because of his missionary and reforming work in Germany.<sup>12</sup> Charles Jones, on the other hand, did suggest a reason: the Alexandrian tables triumphed wherever they became known because they were simpler and more accurate.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, Jones misrepresented Victorius's skills as a mathematician to establish his case, and did not consider much of the Frankish material.<sup>14</sup> What the shift from Victorius to Dionysius represented in the Frankish kingdoms remained unexplored.

More recent studies have developed a number of additional lines to consider. Building on Krusch's suspicion that Boniface was involved in the change, Whitelock and Declercq argued that the saint's crucial role was as a conduit for the works of the English scholar Bede (d. 735). Crucial here were Bede's *De temporum ratione* (725), a commentary on the Dionysian table, and the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, the first sustained narrative history to use AD-dates.<sup>15</sup> Yet, as Rosamond McKitterick has pointed out, there is no evidence, manuscript or textual, that anyone was using Bede's works on the continent early enough to make the difference.<sup>16</sup> McKitterick's conclusion was that the Franks had their own Dionysian Easter tables independently of developments across the Channel. The process through which Frankish communities changed calendrical practices remains sketchy here, but McKitterick follows the argument of Arno Borst, that there was an uncoordinated 'confusion'

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<sup>12</sup> Krusch, 'Pascharitus', 138.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, 'Paschal Tables', 414 and 421.

<sup>14</sup> For Jones's negative view of Victorius see Jones, 'Paschal tables', 409-13 and Krusch, *Studien*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ed. Charles W. Jones, CCSL 123B (Turnhout 1977). For the *Historia ecclesiastica*, see n. 18 above. Krusch, 'Paschalitus', 138-9; Dorothy Whitelock, 'After Bede', Jarrow Lecture 1960, in *Bede and his World: The Jarrow Lectures, 1958-1993* (2 vols, Aldershot 1994), 1: 25-50 at 7-8; Georges Declercq, *Anno Domini: The Origins of the Christian Era* (Turnhout 1999) 179-81; Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time*, lxxxiv.

<sup>16</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, 'Kulturelle Verbindungen zwischen England und den fränkischen Reichen in der Zeit der Karolinger: Kontexte und Implikationen', in Joachim Ehlers (ed) *Deutschland und der Westen Europas im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart 2002), 121-48 at 141-2.

until the unifying power of Charlemagne intervened to establish rigorous new standards from 789 onwards.<sup>17</sup> ‘Confusion’, however, may seem to be an overly negative judgement, given the success people had in promoting the new orthodoxy and building up the resources to support it before the purported intervention of Charlemagne. A fresh investigation into the change from Victorian to Dionysius is needed which both brings the manuscript evidence back to the fore and reassesses the earliest footprints of Dionysian culture in the Frankish kingdoms.

## The Authority of Calendars

A crucial first step is to ask what calendars meant to the people who used them. Calendars certainly provided a useful way of defining community and morality in the early Middle Ages. In Gregory of Tours’ famous *Historiae*, he wrote about divisions caused by communities celebrating Easter on different days in 590 as part of a tapestry of stories exposing the potentially apocalyptic unrest in the world.<sup>18</sup> Easter was a potent festival for discussing salvation and judgement, so it is little surprise to find that Gregory also documented miracles which occurred on that day.<sup>19</sup> He used association between the calendar and sin in other ways too, with a range of stories detailing punishments for people who had

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<sup>17</sup> The fullest version of this argument appears in Borst, *Schriften zur Komputistik*, esp. 1.74-83 and 3.1054. Compare Krusch’s view that the crucial changes must predate Charlemagne in ‘Paschalitus’, 137.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory, *Historiae*, X. 23, eds. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, MGH SRM 1. 1 (Hanover 1951), 514-15; Martin Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: history and society in the sixth century* (Cambridge 2001) 82. For Gregory’s use of apocalyptic themes see James T. Palmer, *The apocalypse in the early Middle Ages* (Cambridge 2014) 68-77.

<sup>19</sup> Raymond van Dam, *Saints and their miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton 1993) 112-14. Gregory, *De virtutibus sancti Martini*, II.13, 28; III. 34; IV.16, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SRM 1. 2 (Hanover 1949), 163, 169, 190, 204.

worked or had sexual intercourse on a festival day or Sunday.<sup>20</sup> The purification of individuals and society through penance was linked to Lent across the Insular and Frankish worlds.<sup>21</sup> Such attitudes were hardened under the Carolingians, particularly once it was ordered under Charlemagne that baptism – the crucial ritual for entering the Christian community – could only be performed publicly and at Easter or at Pentecost, the date of which was 50 days later.<sup>22</sup> The liturgical cycle was an important device for defining and managing Christian communities.

As people could employ calendars to shape the social meanings of a range of activities, they could also use them in political discourse. It has long been recognised that Carolingian polemicists used historical writing to score points concerning the legitimacy of the usurpation, the successes of kings (particularly Charlemagne), and developing senses of political community and identity. In the eighth century, historians began to make use of the AD-dates to frame the passage of time – a device taken directly from the first column of Dionysius's Easter table.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, it is possible to see political action and ritual being co-ordinated by calendars to create extra layers of meaning, both for those involved directly and those observing or reading about events.<sup>24</sup> One need only note how often

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<sup>20</sup> Raymond van Dam, *Leadership and community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley 1985), 285-9, with full references to the stories in Gregory's work.

<sup>21</sup> Rob Meens, *Penance in medieval Europe, 600-1200* (Cambridge 2014) 79.

<sup>22</sup> Council of Riesbach, c. 4, ed. Alfred Werminghoff, MGH Conc. 2. 1 (Hanover & Leipzig 1906) 198. Susan A. Keefe, *Water and the word: baptism and the education of the clergy in the Carolingian Empire* (2 vols, Notre Dame 2002); Owen Phelan, *The formation of Christian Europe: The Carolingians, baptism, and the 'Imperium Christianum'* (Oxford 2015).

<sup>23</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, *History and memory in the Carolingian world* (Cambridge 2004), and her *Charlemagne: the formation of a European identity* (Cambridge 2008). See also Sarah Foot, 'Finding the meaning of the form: narrative in annals and chronicles', in Nancy Partner (ed), *Writing Medieval History* (London 2005) 88-108.

<sup>24</sup> Hans Martin Schaller, 'Der heilige Tag als Termin mittelalterlicher Staatsakte', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 30 (1974) 1-24; Michael Sierck, *Festtag und Politik. Studien zur Tageswahl karolingischer Herrscher* (Cologne 1995). For a different anthropological approach to the liturgy, see Arnold

political assemblies coincide with Easter observances to understand that the coordination of a political community and the development of its (here Christian) identity overlap significantly. The decision in the Frankish Church to move from using Victorius to using Dionysius had the potential to make a strong statement about changing society more generally. Alas one could only speculate over whether the Pippinids supported the Dionysian reckoning as part of a rejection of Merovingian culture.

Use of the Victorian table was deeply entrenched in the cultural practices of the Frankish Church. This went back at least to the well-attended Council of Orléans in 541, led by Bishop Leontius of Bordeaux and with broad support stretching from Narbonne to Paris and Rouen to Constance. The emphasis of the bishops was on unity as they decided ‘that Easter should be observed according to the holy laterculus of Victorius by all priests at one time [and] that the feast should be announced to the people in church each year at Epiphany’.<sup>25</sup> Once established as a common resource in the Church, the table of Victorius played a supporting role in conceptualising historical time. Gregory of Tours listed Victorius alongside Eusebius, Jerome and Orosius as a model for producing a linear conception of time from Adam to his own time.<sup>26</sup> Cross-referencing between the age of the world and the Victorian paschal year became widespread in Gaul, although no history was structured using the year *annus passionis* in the same way later historians would use AD-dates.<sup>27</sup> By the 740s,

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Angenendt, ‘Donationes pro anima: gift and counter-gift in the early medieval liturgy’, in Jennifer Davis & Michael McCormick (eds), *The long morning of medieval Europe* (Aldershot 2008) 131-54.

<sup>25</sup> *Concilium Aurelianense* (541), c. 1, ed. Carolus de Clercq, CCSL 148A (Turnhout 1963) 132: ut sanctum pascha secundum laterculum Victori ab omnibus sacerdotibus uno tempore celebretur; quae festivitas annis singulis epyfaniorum die in ecclesia populis nuntietur’.

<sup>26</sup> Gregory, *Historiae*, pref., 5.

<sup>27</sup> Krusch collected examples in ‘Chronologia regum Francorum stirpis Merowingicæ’, MGH SRM 7 (Hanover 1920), 468-516: 490-1, 493, 496-8, 500, 503. Mommsen collected examples as ‘Additamenta ad Chronica maiora ex codicibus diversis’, no. 3, ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH AA 11 (Berlin 1894) 492; no. 7, 493. ‘Additamenta ad Chronica maiora’, no. 3, 505-6

Victorian tables had been a well-used liturgical guide and cultural resource and for two centuries.

The attraction of Dionysius's work, in contrast, rested on a rhetoric of orthodoxy. In his letter to Petronius, which prefaced his paschal table, Dionysius set his work in the context of the first ecumenical council of Nicaea and the combating of heresy.<sup>28</sup> To underscore the point further, he quoted Leo I's concern for the authority of Nicaea and the peace of the Church from a letter to Pulceria.<sup>29</sup> While this letter had nothing to do with Easter, it laid the rhetorical groundwork for Dionysius to mention that he had translated a letter by Proterius of Alexandria to Leo which outlined the Alexandrian reckoning.<sup>30</sup> The author of the *Computus of 737*, the first pro-Dionysian Frankish computus, seized on precisely these passages from Dionysius, quoting them at length when outlining the authority of the Alexandrian reckoning.<sup>31</sup> To these, the author added similar quotations about Nicaea. One is from a letter of Pseudo-Cyril of Alexandria which often circulated with Dionysius's work. The other, building on the theme of authority, is from the sixth-century forgery *Decretum Gelasianum*, which provides a list of works the author found acceptable or not. Interestingly, the author's quotation about Nicaea is from a passage which goes on to praise Cyril and then to list his *opuscula* amongst those to be considered orthodox.<sup>32</sup> Such statements did nothing to explain

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<sup>28</sup> Dionysius, *Libellus de cyclo magno paschae DCCCII annorum*, ed. Krusch, *Studien*, 63 and 67. Later a legend circulated that the attendees had been given the authoritative advice about Easter by an angel: Charles W. Jones, 'A legend of Pachomius', *Speculum* 18. 2 (1943) 198-210: 207-8.

<sup>29</sup> PL 54. 999.

<sup>30</sup> *Epistola Proterii*, ed. Bruno Krusch, *Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie. Der 84-jährige Ostercyclus und seine Quellen* (Leipzig 1880) 269-78.

<sup>31</sup> *Computus of 737*, cc. 15-17, ed. Borst, *Schriften*, I. 396-8.

<sup>32</sup> *Decretum Gelasianum*, IV.1-2, ed. Ernst von Dobschütz, *Das Decretum Gelasianum. De libris recipiendis et non recipiendis in kritischem Text* (Leipzig 1921), 8. The *Decretum Gelasianum* is found in Boniface's Ragiandrudis Codex: Fulda, Landesbibliothek, Codex Bonifatius 2, 57r-61v (CLA, no. 1197), providing one possible context for the borrowing in the *Computus of 737*.

the accuracy of one Easter reckoning over another. They did, however, generate gravitas for the reckoning as these treatises were passed around.

## The Breakdown of Consensus over Victorius

A useful way into assessing the move away from using Victorius is to examine the extant manuscript evidence for use of the tables. Much of this evidence, it should be noted, was likely to the circulation of Dionysian tables after 690.<sup>33</sup> The second oldest copy of a Victorian table is from a northern centre, possibly northern Burgundy, and it is datable to 696 on the basis of a change in the style of entries.<sup>34</sup> Shortly afterwards, in 699, a scribe called Pallagius produced a copy of Eusebius's *Canones* which he dated to the 'fifth year of King Childebert, with Pippin [II] ruling' and to the 140<sup>th</sup> year of Victorius's cycle.<sup>35</sup> If we accept Bischoff's attribution of the manuscript to the scriptorium of Rheims, then we are not dealing with a minor centre here, but rather one of the pre-eminent centres of Frankish Christianity since Bishop Remigius of Rheims had baptised King Clovis at the beginning of the sixth century.<sup>36</sup> The same can be said of the centre which produced the Insular-influenced half-uncial copy of Victorius early in the eighth century, which McKitterick has suggested was the well-

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<sup>33</sup> Immo Warntjes, 'Computus as scientific thought in Ireland the early medieval West', in Roy Flechner & Sven Meeder (eds), *The Irish in early medieval Europe: identity, culture and religion* (London 2016) 158–78 at 176 n. 31.

<sup>34</sup> Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 645, f. 62r (CLA, no. 868); Krusch, *Studien II*, p. 7. The oldest copy – in BAV Reg. lat. 2077 (CLA, no. 115) – is likely from Vivarium in Italy and certainly not the Frankish world, and therefore it is not relevant to the present study.

<sup>35</sup> Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 219, f. 1r (CLA, no. 860; <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/bbb/0219>); Krusch, 'Paschalitus', 135–6. I pass over here the recently discovered Victorian computus of 699 on the basis that it seems to have been composed in Britain or Ireland. On the text see Immo Warntjes, 'A newly discovered prologue of AD 699 to the Easter table of Victorius of Aquitaine in an unknown Sirmond manuscript', *Peritia* 21 (2010) 255–84.

<sup>36</sup> Bernhard Bischoff, 'Die europäische Verbreitung der Werke Isidores von Sevilla', in his *Mittelalterliche Studien* (Stuttgart 1966), 1.171–94 at 177.

connected one-time Columbanian house of Jouarre.<sup>37</sup> A final early copy of a table can be found in the Burgundian *Computus* of 727, which survives in a compendium with connections to Bourges and in a script which connects it to the cultural orbit of Columbanian Luxeuil.<sup>38</sup> In the decades before the Council of Soissons, it seems that there was widespread use of Victorius across the Frankish kingdoms, perhaps excluding the very north.

There is strong evidence of efforts to simplify matters with the removal of Victorius's 'double Easters'. The tables of 696 and 727 do this, and the trend can be seen in two witnesses to a table for the period 700 -771, a parallel Victorian-Dionysian table copied in Flavigny in 816, and the table in the so-called 'Sirmond Manuscript' of texts known in Ireland and to Bede.<sup>39</sup> In the tables of 700-771, there is a note for the year 740, the year of the *turbatio*, announcing that 'up to here Greeks and Latins reckoned Easter together' for 50 years.<sup>40</sup> Notably, it was Victorius's 'Latin' alternative in the years 692, 712, 716 and 736 that agreed with the Alexandrian dates of Dionysius, not his 'Greek' option. This is important because it was the Latin and Dionysian Easters which then offered serious disagreement in

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<sup>37</sup> Gotha, Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek, I 75, ff. 70r-106r (CLA, no. 1208) followed, coincidentally, by Dionysius's *Codex canonum ecclesiasticorum*; Rosamond McKitterick, 'The diffusion of insular culture in Neustria between 650 and 850: the implication of the manuscript evidence', in Hartmut Atsma (ed), *La Neustrie. Les pays au nord de la Loire de 650 à 850* (Sigmaringen 1989), 2.395-434: 409-11. Bruno Krusch, 'Über eine Handschrift des Victurius', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 9 (1884) 269-82: 276-9 lays out a good case for a sixth-century Burgundian exemplar but believed in a seventh-century date for the manuscript. Warntjes, *The Munich computus*, LXXXIV n. 228 takes this as evidence for copying in Murbach, where the manuscript came to reside, but the monastery was only founded in 727 so it is possible that the copy was an early import to the library there: see below p. x.

<sup>38</sup> Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 611, ff. 94r-96v (CLA, no. 604c; <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/bbb/0611>). The text is edited as *Dialogus de computo Burgundiae*, in Borst, *Schriften zur Komputistik*, I. 353-74.

<sup>39</sup> Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Scaliger 28, ff. 2r-21v (Bernhard Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts* [3 vols, Wiesbaden, 1998-2014] [hereafter *Katalog*], no. 2180); Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 309, ff. 113r-120r (Vendôme, eleventh-century). This last manuscript is the Sirmond one, on which see Charles W. Jones, 'The "lost" Sirmond manuscript of Bede's computus', *EHR* 52 (1937) 204-19 with Ó Cróinín, 'The Irish Provenance of Bede's Computus', in his *Early Irish history*, 173-90 and his 'Bede's Irish computus', in *Early Irish history*, 201-24. For the table of 700-771 see the following note.

<sup>40</sup> Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Reg. Lat. 586, ff. 9r-10v with the note on f. 9v (Lorsch?, early ninth-century; *Katalog*, no. 6708); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 4860, f. 147v ((Reichenau, second half of ninth century, later in Mainz; Borst, *Schriften*, I. 267 and *Katalog* no. 4342).

740 and 743 (see table below). Warntjes has pointed out that the suppression of the Victorian ‘Greek’ Easters might have had Irish origins since it is witnessed in the ‘Sirmond Manuscript’ which has a seventh-century layer.<sup>41</sup> Certainly, the Merovingian table of 696 includes only the consensus-breaking Victorian ‘Greek’ Easters in the crucial years, which may cast doubt on whether the fifty years of agreement occurred across the Frankish kingdom. The simplification of the Victorian table was not a coordinated enterprise and may only have exacerbated the problem it was intended to solve.

**TABLE 1**

Year AD	696 Table	Sirmond Table	727 Table	700-771 Table	Dionysian Table
692	7 April (V)	14 April (L)	n/a	14 April (L)	14 April
712	27 March (V)	3 April (L)	n/a	3 April (L)	3 April
716	12 April (V)	19 April (L)	n/a	19 April (L)	19 April
736	1 April (V)	8 April (L)	8 April (L)	8 April (L)	8 April
740	17 April (L)	17 April (L)	17 April (L)	17 April (L)	24 April
743	21 April (L)	21 April (L)	21 April (L)	21 April (L)	14 April

L = Victorian Latin

V = Victorian Greek

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<sup>41</sup> Warntjes, *The Munich Computus*, LXXXIV-LXXXV.

# The Spread of Dionysian Tables

With growing confusion within Victorian culture, where did Dionysian tables enter the picture? It has been argued that the strongest influences came from Visigothic Spain, although the centrality of Dionysius's work here may be doubted.<sup>42</sup> Widespread Visigothic preference for an Alexandrian Easter plausibly dates to the sixth-century conversion from Arianism to catholicism, a process guided by Bishop Leander of Seville, a friend of Pope Gregory the Great's who had spent time at the imperial court in Constantinople. It was certainly known, but not dominant, by the time of the Fourth Council of Toledo in 633.<sup>43</sup> It was the work of Leander's brother, Isidore, which made most impact in Frankish centres.<sup>44</sup> Isidore included a translated Alexandrian table in his widely-circulated *Etymologiae*, but this seems independent of Dionysius's work as he did not include many familiar structural features used north of the Pyrenees – indeed there are only the Easter dates and age of the moon on that day, and no AD-dates – and he did not associate Dionysius with the Easter reckoning when discussing relevant authorities for that subject.<sup>45</sup> Use of Alexandrian tables is hardly surprising, given Byzantine influences in the Iberian peninsula and Isidore's own interest in Greek culture. The popularity of Isidore's work across Europe may have assisted in spreading Cyril's principles, and Jones and Warntjes have even speculated reasonably that

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<sup>42</sup> Schmid, *Die Osterfestberechnung*, 83, elaborating on Krusch, 'Paschalitus', 131. Unfortunately, the crucial evidence discussed, the table of Périgueux, has been redated from the seventh to the twelfth century: *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale*, 5: *Dordogne, Gironde* (Paris 1979) 28-31.

<sup>43</sup> IV Toledo, c. 5, ed. José Vives, *Concilios hispano-romanos y visigodos* (Barcelona 1963), 191. See also the Letter of Leo the Monk, ed. Bruno Krusch, *Der 84-jährige Ostercyclus*, 298-302 at 302, which Krusch argued was written in Spain shortly before 633 (*Der 84-jährige Ostercyclus*, 98).

<sup>44</sup> See Bischoff, 'Die europäische Verbreitung'.

<sup>45</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, VII.17.1-9, ed. Wallace Lindsay (Oxford 1911) [unpaginated]; Krusch, 'Paschalitus', 118-19; Schmid, *Die Osterfestberechnung*, 110-112.

this work was central in the teaching of computus in schools in the Britain and Ireland.<sup>46</sup>

Treatment of the table in manuscripts, however, was decidedly poor if it had been that

important, with many scribes in Francia miscopying the table or leaving it out altogether.<sup>47</sup>

Beyond Isidore's work, there is evidence of Visigothic knowledge of Dionysius in two ninth-century manuscripts, one from Limoges and one from Cologne.<sup>48</sup> It is not enough, however, to suggest that knowledge from Spain was at all decisive in the Frankish debates.

The papacy in Rome stands as the major obvious alternative source proposed for the spread of Dionysian tables. Such an argument is initially attractive because Victorius and Dionysius both composed their works for papal circles. Moreover, for Krusch and others, the process began with the energetic pontificate of Gregory the Great, which saw the pope develop an epistolary network across Christendom to include English and Frankish communities more fully.<sup>49</sup> But, while it is possible Gregory favoured an Alexandrian Easter, there is no certain proof of this, and he never raised the question of the Franks switching from Victorius when he wrote to bishops or courts north of the Alps. On the other hand, there is

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<sup>46</sup> Charles W. Jones, *Beda opera de temporibus* (Cambridge MA 1943), 130-1; Warntjes, *The Munich computus*, LIII.

<sup>47</sup> There was an attempt to adjust the table for the period 627-721, evident in two manuscripts with Fleury connections with some possible echoes in other copies, but this was at best a limited enterprise. See Warntjes, *The Munich computus*, XC-XCI. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 5543, ff. 145r-v (possibly from Fleury around 847; *Katalog*, no. 4367) and London, British Library, Harley 3017, ff. 50r-51r (Fleury or Nevers around 861-4; *Katalog*, no. 2466). Discussion by Charles W. Jones, 'Two Easter tables', *Speculum* 13. 2 (1938) 204-5 but Jones was unaware of both the Paris manuscript and the Isidorian connection.

<sup>48</sup> Iberia is famous for its use of 'era' dates instead of AD dates but use of AD-dates was not unknown: see the traces of the unpublished computus of 663 in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 609, ff. 76r- 96v (*Katalog*, no. 3994), an edition of which is being prepared by Alden Mosshammer. See also Krusch, 'Paschalitus', 121 for evidence of cross-referencing AD and Era dating in 672. The Limoges manuscript, Chartres MS 70, is now lost but discussed by Jones, *Beda opera de temporibus*, 40-54. The evidence in the Cologne manuscript is from the inclusion of a column for the era: see Cologne, Dombibliothek, 83ii, 76v-79r (Cologne, 798-805; CLA, no. 1154; *Katalog*, no. 1907; <http://www.ceec.uni-koeln.de/>), and Immo Warntjes, 'Köln als naturwissenschaftliches Zentrum in der Karolingerzeit: Die frühmittelalterliche Kölner Schule und der Beginn der fränkischen Komputistik', in Heinz Finger and Harald Horst (ed.), *Mittelalterliche Handschriften der Kölner Dombibliothek* (Cologne 2012), 41-96: 78-80.

<sup>49</sup> For an overview see Robert Markus, *The world of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge 1997).

evidence that the papacy advocated use of Victorius's tables into the 640s.<sup>50</sup> If the papacy adopted Dionysius's work specifically at that point, it did not adopt AD-dates for other purposes. Bede recorded an inscription from a candle seen by a friend in Rome in 701 dated by the year *a passione* (a Victorian trait!), while letters by Gregory II (pope 715-731) and Gregory III (731-741) were dated using only indictions and the year of reigning emperor.<sup>51</sup> At no other point that we know did a pope query paschal divisions between Rome and the Franks. Indeed, the silence about the issue in papal letters discussing abuses in the Frankish Church in the eighth century, when we know there was debate about Computus in the north, perhaps suggests relative tolerance on that specific issue in Rome. One has to look to Hadrian I (pope 772-795) for the earliest explicit papal reference to Dionysius as an authority on Easter.<sup>52</sup> Of course, with plenty of traffic between the Frankish kingdoms and Rome throughout the period, it remains entirely possible that Dionysian tables travelled north from the city in a more organic exchange, maybe through Provence and the Rhone Valley. The absence of evidence and the popes' lack of engagement with the issue, however, makes it impossible to be sure.

The evidence from Rome is complemented by the wider picture for Italy. In Ravenna, in the sixth century, someone had carved a majestic paschal rota in marble for the church, giving the Alexandrian Easters for the years 532 to 616.<sup>53</sup> It has been argued that this reflects early adoption of Dionysius there, but one may prefer Krusch's argument that the table is

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<sup>50</sup> Poole, 'Earliest use', 60; Warntjes, *The Munich Computus*, XL n. 86 (with a full overview of alternative points of view).

<sup>51</sup> *Bonifatius-Briefe*, nos. 12, 17, 18, 24, 26, 45, ed. Michael Tangl, MGH Epp. Sel. 1 (Berlin 1916), 18, 31, 32-3, 43, 47, 74. This affected the dating clause in Boniface's own episcopal oath: *Bonifatius-Briefe*, no. 16, ed. Tangl, 28.

<sup>52</sup> *Codex Carolinus*, nos. 95 and 96, ed. Wilhelm Gundlach, MGH Epp. 3 (Berlin 1892), 640 and 645.

<sup>53</sup> *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e Vaticanis codicibus edita*, ed. Angelo Mai (Rome, 1831), V. 472.

from another Alexandrian source as Isidore's may have been.<sup>54</sup> There are, for a start, no AD-dates. It is true that Cassiodorus had praised Dionysius when devising a syllabus for sixth-century Squillace and some Dionysian formulae were edited in 562 to support this project, but Cassiodorian influence seems to have been limited here.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the first piece of hard evidence for using AD-dates in Italy is a computistical text from a Lombard centre under Irish influences, possibly Bobbio, which refers to the '747 years [*ab incarnatione*] of its *annus praesens*.<sup>56</sup> It is impossible to know, however, whether this is indicative of the long-term use of Dionysius in the centre. More likely, it reflects the Columbanian network falling into line with Frankish practices following Soissons, as Bobbio was strongly connected to Luxeuil in Burgundy and the world of the Victorian *Computus* of 727. The oldest Italian manuscript witnesses to a Dionysian table, both from the important Beneventan centre of Monte Cassino, do little to suggest that Dionysius was central to Alexandrian observances to the south, as they both start in 779 rather than with a full 95-year cycle starting in 722.<sup>57</sup> From 763 there is an intriguing appropriation of a Byzantine table in which the first year of each 15-year indiction cycle is given an AD-date and a Greek AM-date.<sup>58</sup> But even here, the

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<sup>54</sup> Krusch, 'Paschalritus', 114. Mosshammer, *The Easter Computus*, 61 notes that recent scholars have moved away from Krusch's position, but there remains no good argument against Krusch's argument.

<sup>55</sup> Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, I.23.2-3, ed. R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford 1961), 62. Paul Lehmann, 'Cassiodorstudien', in his *Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 2 (Stuttgart 1959), 38-108 at 47-52 (on the authorship) and 52-55 (for the text of the formulae); Warnfjes, 'The *Argumenta* of Dionysius Exiguus and their early recensions', in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín & Immo Warnfjes (eds), *Computus and its Cultural Context AD300-1200* (Turnhout 2008) 40-111: 67-8; Krusch, 'Paschalritus', 113-14.

<sup>56</sup> Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Conv. Soppr. 364, f. 117v (North Italy, late tenth century) and Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Plut. 20.54, f. 15v (North Italy, eleventh century).

<sup>57</sup> For Monte Cassino: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 7530, ff. 284v-287r (*CLA*, no. 569). I have not seen Cava, MS 2 (*CLA*, no. 284), but the table is described in Elias A. Lowe, *Die ältesten Kalendarien aus Monte Cassino* (Munich, 1908), 1-4, followed by a description of the Paris manuscript at 4-6.

<sup>58</sup> The manuscript is BAV Vat. Lat. 6018 ('Central Italy', first half of ninth century; *Katalog*, no. 6928), with the table on ff. 68v-71v. This is discussed in Leonid S. Chekin, 'Easter tables and the Pseudo-Isidorean Vatican Map', *Imago Mundi*, 51. 1 (1999), 13-23 but Chekin. There are other Byzantine tables which do synchronise correctly, such as British Library, Add. 18231, 5r-11v, starting in AM6385/AD877. See also the table for 777-835 in the Reichenau manuscript St Paul im Lavanttal, Stiftsarchiv, Cod. 8/1, with Easter table at 5r-6r, and

scribe did not use AD-dates systematically, and indeed even failed to synchronise them accurately with the other reckonings as if they were a poorly understood novelty. Alexandrian and Byzantine practices may have dominated in Italy, but the importance of Dionysian tables specifically seems less certain, which may count against any argument that Frankish use of Dionysius had its origins here.

It is only from Britain and Ireland that Dionysian tables can be shown to enter use in the Frankish kingdoms with certainty. The three earliest in manuscript form – the only three from the first half of the eighth century – all have demonstrable Insular connections. The earliest, running from 684 to 702 but later extended, was written in an Irish minuscule and formed part of the computistical material taken from Rath Melsigi to the continent by St Willibrord (d. 739) in 690.<sup>59</sup> The cultural centre of Willibrord's work was a new monastery founded at Echternach, near Trier, which bound Willibrord to the powerful mayor Pippin II (d. 714).<sup>60</sup> The second oldest table, which survives for 706 to 789 only (with numerous errors), Ó Cróinín has argued could also be associated with Echternach on the basis of the Insular-influenced script.<sup>61</sup> The third oldest was composed in Northumbria but found its way to Fulda, a new monastery founded in 744 through collaboration between Boniface and Pippin's grandson Carloman, Pippin III's brother.<sup>62</sup> It may be coincidental, but together these

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described in Eberhard Katz's *Annalium Laureshamensium editio emendata secundum codicem St. Paulensem XXV c/32 de* (St Paul im Lavanttal 1889) 13 and 47.

<sup>59</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 10837, 43r (CLA, no. 606). Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Rath Melsigi, Willibrord, and the earliest Echternach manuscripts', revised in his *Early Irish history*, 145–72, esp. pp. 155–6. Immo Warntjes, 'The Computus Cottonianus of AD 689: a computistical formulary written for Willibrord's Frisian mission,' in *The Easter controversy*, 173–212.

<sup>60</sup> Arnold Angenendt, 'Willibrord im Dienste der Karolinger', *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 175 (1973) 63–113.

<sup>61</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 9527, ff. 201r–v (CLA, no. 585, where it is listed with the wrong shelf mark; <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9076719m>).

<sup>62</sup> Münster, Staatsarchiv, I. 243, ff. 1–2 and 11–12 (CLA, no. 1233). The manuscript was repaired in Fulda by the same scribe as the Easter table in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14641, ff. 32v–46r (CLA, no. 1306; <http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0006/bsb00065770/images/>). On these tables see Joanna Story, 'The

tables seem to suggest that Dionysian tables were first used in Insular-influenced new monastic centres with strong links to the increasingly dominant Pippinid family.

A feature here, which problematises Krusch's argument about Boniface's importance in events specifically, is that Boniface seems to have followed rather than led these developments.<sup>63</sup> Boniface's perceived importance rests on the fact that the record of the *Concilium Germanicum* of 742, led by the bishop and Carloman, was the first official Frankish document to use AD-dating.<sup>64</sup> Boniface also demonstrated an interest in AD-dates in his letters, especially if we include requests to obtain more works by Bede.<sup>65</sup> But, despite being a serial complainer about the mores of his northern contemporaries, the bishop never once complained about use of different Easter calculations, and his books do not seem to have included much on computistical matters.<sup>66</sup> Pippin III's territory, in which Easter was discussed at Soissons, comprised the southern and western parts of the kingdoms of the Franks, while Boniface belonged to the northern parts run by Carloman. The implication of discussing Easter in Pippin's territory but not Carloman's would be that diversity was a more significant issue in the south. Boniface must have found the northern centres he visited

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Annals of Lindisfarne and Kent', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 34 (2006), 59-106, esp. 61-66; with editions of the annals: Eckhard Freise, *Die Anfänge der Geschichtsschreibung im Kloster Fulda* (Diss. Münster 1979). On early Fulda, Janneke Raaijmakers, *The Making of the Monastic Community of Fulda, c. 744-c. 900* (Cambridge 2012); Ulrich Hüssong, 'Studien zur Geschichte der Reichsabtei Fulda bis zur Jahrtausendwende. Erster Teil', *Archiv für Diplomatik* 31 (1985) 1-225 and 'Studien zur Geschichte der Reichsabtei Fulda bis zur Jahrtausendwende. Zweiter Teil', *Archiv für Diplomatik* 32 (1986) 129-304.

<sup>63</sup> On this point, see Palmer, 'The Paschal Controversy of 740', in *The Easter Controversy*, 235-7.

<sup>64</sup> *Concilium Germanicum* = *Bonifatius-Briefe*, no. 56, ed. Tangl, 99.

<sup>65</sup> *Bonifatius-Briefe*, no. 33, ed. Tangl, 58.

<sup>66</sup> Eugen Ewig, 'Milo et eiusmodi similes', in *Sankt Bonifatius: Gedenkgabe zum zwölftausendsten Todestag (754-1954)* (Fulda 1954), 412-40. See also von Padberg, *Bonifatius*, 95-101. On Boniface's books, see Herman Schüling, 'Die Handbibliothek des Bonifatius. Ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte der ersten Hälfte des 8. Jahrhunderts', *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 4 (1963) 286-348.

already more-or-less united in their practices in the wake of the activities of Willibrord and his associates earlier in the century.

Treatises on calculating Easter do little to alter the suspicion that these northern centres were important. The *Computus* of 737 may have been composed in the Cologne region, given its close relationship to the later *Computus Coloniensis* (805), and may even be associated with the circle of Boniface.<sup>67</sup> The resources the author used to construct his (or her) arguments are predominantly Insular too, drawing on *The Munich Computus* written in Ireland in 719, as well as other early Irish texts. None of these texts included discussions of AD-dates, but the crucial dynamic here is that the author's adoption of AD-dates occurred in an environment in which computistical learning was rooted in Insular learning. The same can be said for the other early Frankish texts advocating Dionysius from the reigns of Pippin and Charlemagne up to 789: the *Compotus Grecorum* of 757, the *Lectiones sive regulae computi* of 760/92, the *Computus Guelferbytanus* of 764 or the *Computus Rhenanus* of 775.<sup>68</sup> It is, of course, completely plausible that this might all represent an appropriation of Insular material to flesh out a Dionysian tradition spread independently from a continental source; at present, however, evidence even hinting at that kind of situation is decidedly lacking.

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<sup>67</sup> Krusch, 'Paschalitus', 138; Arno Borst, *Der Streit um den karolingischen Kalender* (Hanover 2004) 86. Warntjes, *The Munich Computus*, CIII says he would have expected the influence of Bede's *De temporum ratione* if Boniface were in the picture, but there is no evidence that anyone had a copy of *De temporum ratione* on the continent so early, so this is not a decisive factor. The *Computus Coloniensis* is ed. Borst, *Schriften*, II. 885-950.

<sup>68</sup> *Compotus Grecorum*, unedited, in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Phillipps 1831, f. 90 (Verona after 793; *Katalog*, no. 437). *Lectiones* edited Borst, *Schriften zur Komputistik*, II. 527-659. *Computus Guelferbytanus* and *Computus Rhenaus*, unedited, in Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, 91 (Weiss), f. 98 and f. 169r-174v (Worms after 799; <http://digilib.hab.de/mss/91-weiss/start.htm>), and *Computus Rhenanus*, unedited, in Cologne, Dombibliothek, 103, f. 184v-190v (Cologne, before 798; CLA 1158; <http://www.ceec.uni-koeln.de/>).

# Evidence from Annals: A New Look

Early Frankish chronicles might shed further light on the earliest networks to use Dionysius, because early use of AD-dates as a continuous framing device might indicate associations with Dionysian tables. This issue comes with considerable historiographical baggage. Georg Pertz, in the first volume of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores* series in 1826, stated his belief that Carolingian ‘annalistic’ chronicles began life as annotations in Easter tables before evolving into more complex literary forms.<sup>69</sup> Such a view of the evolution of historiographical forms has been demolished several times over, most recently by Burgess and Kulikowski, because Carolingian chronicle writing has its roots in earlier Roman chronicle writing.<sup>70</sup> In McKitterick’s view, Carolingian annalistic writing only started in the last quarter of the eighth century, with paschal chronicles developed from these texts only in the ninth century.<sup>71</sup> This does not mean, however, that Easter tables did not affect Frankish historiographical tradition. Just as Bede drew on Dionysian tables for his use of AD-dates in his historical works, so too early Frankish historians must have done.<sup>72</sup> Importantly, the beginnings of these AD-framed chronicles coincide perfectly with the introduction of Dionysian Easter tables – a point at best only impressionistically recognised in the scholarship on annals.

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<sup>69</sup> Pertz, MGH SS 1, pp. 1-2.

<sup>70</sup> Richard W. Burgess & Michael Kulikowski, *Mosaics of time: the chronicle tradition from the first century to the sixth century AD*, 1 (Turnhout, 2013) 1-62 with important critique of the label ‘annals’.

<sup>71</sup> McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 97-100 and Sören Kaschke, *Die karolingischen Reichsteilungen bis 831. Herrschaftspraxis und Normvorstellungen in zeitgenössischer Sicht* (Hamburg, 2006), 131-2. Compare Story, ‘The Annales of Lindisfarne and Kent’, esp. 73-4.

<sup>72</sup> For an interesting approach to this issue see Lothar Boschon, *Die Annales Primenses. Ihre nähere und weitere Verwandschaft* (Düsseldorf 1972).

The first clue is a set of historical notes which open chronicles which start in the year 703. The chosen year is important, as Friedrich Kurze once pointed out, because it is the first year of a 19-year lunar cycle, immediately suggesting a paschal influence.<sup>73</sup> More than this, and unfortunately missed by Kurze, it coincides exactly with the nineteen-year cycle which was the first extension of Willibrord's table, the first known to be used in the Frankish kingdoms. The earliest historical notes are commemorative notices which seem to represent a social network which included Adomnán of Iona (d. 705), Cellan of Péronne (d. 706), Tigernomalus of Dol (d. 707) and Ecgberht of Rath Melsigi (d. 729).<sup>74</sup> Two of these figures – Admonán and Ecgberht – were known to have promoted use of Dionysian tables in the course of arguments in Ireland and Dál Riata; and, moreover, Ecgberht had been Willibrord's mentor.<sup>75</sup> It may be impossible to prove that the notes belonged to an Easter table, given that they are preserved only in a ninth-century chronicle, but some kind of association would fit with the cultural horizons of the network.<sup>76</sup>

Even if the evidence of the memorial notes alone is not suggestive enough, layers in early Frankish chronicles point to the infiltration of AD-dates within the same nineteen-year window. One group, for instance, starts with the death of Pippin II's son Drogo in 708.<sup>77</sup> It has been suggested that there may be a political purpose here, with chroniclers and copyists

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<sup>73</sup> Friedrich Kurze, 'Die karolingischen Annalen des achten Jahrhunderts', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 25 (1900) 293-315: 300.

<sup>74</sup> *Annalium Laureshamensium editio*, ed. Katz, 23. For the most recent assessment of this list, see Richard Sowerby, 'The Lives of St Samson: rewriting the ambitions of an early medieval cult', *Francia* 38 (2011), 1-31: 20-21.

<sup>75</sup> Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V. 21 (ed. Lapidge, II. 458) and V. 22 (ed. Lapidge, II. 462/4).

<sup>76</sup> On the origins and developments of the *Annales Laureshamenses*, see Hartmut Hoffmann, *Untersuchungen zur karolingischen Annalistik* (Bonn 1958); Heinrich Fichtenau, 'Abt Richbod und die Annales Laureshamenses', in *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Klosters Lorsch* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Lorsch 1980) 277-304; Rosamond McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame 2006) 75-8.

<sup>77</sup> Walter Lendi, *Untersuchungen zur frühalemannischen Annalistik: die Murbacher Annalen* (Freiburg 1971) 146.

supporting Carolingian legitimacy.<sup>78</sup> But two important witnesses to this tradition – the *Annales Alamannici* and the *Annales Sangallenses breves* – still list the years 703-7 before the first memorial notice.<sup>79</sup> This is a clear indication that Dionysian Easter tables provided the framework for early chronicles. (Indeed, the *Annales Sangallenses breves* turn into a Dionysian Easter table for the years 816 to 999 in the manuscript). There are only a couple of AD-based chronicles with entries for any earlier years of Frankish history. Some begin with the Battle of Tertry in 687, when Pippin II defeated King Theuderic III and the slow eclipse of the Merovingians by the Carolingians began; but this likely represents a later insertion, as invariably there is no historical note alongside any year listed between 687 and 708.<sup>80</sup> The *Annales Sangallenses Baluzii*, in a manuscript of 810/20 from St Amand, has two pre-703 entries, but one – the death of King Childebert III – is misplaced by a decade, making it unlikely that it represents the copying of an early historical tradition.<sup>81</sup> The conclusion is difficult to escape: the use of Dionysian Easter tables and the use of AD-dates in chronicles belong to the same moment of history at the beginning of the eighth century and must surely be linked in some way.

There are further complications which may be revealing of currents within the change of calendrical practice. Many of the chronicles have a common core of material known as the ‘Murbach Annals’, recording Alemannic history back to 709 and the death of Duke

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<sup>78</sup> McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 59-60.

<sup>79</sup> St Gall, Stiftsarchiv, Zürcher Abteilung, 1, 1r (*Katalog*, no. 5502); St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 732, p. 168 (Bavaria, c. 815, and St Gall, ninth-century; *Katalog*, no. 5842; <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0732>).

<sup>80</sup> *Annales s. Amandi*, ed. Pertz, MGH SS 1, 6; *Annales Laubacenses*, 7; *Annales Petaviani*, 7.

<sup>81</sup> St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 124, p. 354 (*Katalog*, no. 5583; <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0124>).

Godefrid.<sup>82</sup> The monastery of Lorsch also features prominently in the textual tradition of the chronicles. Murbach, however, was not founded until 727, and Lorsch not until 764, so neither can have been where the earliest entries were composed. Another major broker of history in Alemannia, the monastery of St Gall, also only began to develop under Abbot Otmar (719-59), after the crucial early years of composition.<sup>83</sup> All this might still mean that a major catalyst for the spread of both Easter tables and chronicles in the region was the development of these major new monastic centres when they needed new liturgical and historical materials. There may be a political dimension here too, given that the chronicles are Pippinid-centric and either coincide with or follow the Pippinid intrusion of power into the south between 709 and 732.<sup>84</sup> If the Pippinids and their favoured churches had been following Dionysius since the beginning of the century, it would make sense for the new centres to follow suit rather than to adopt the increasingly unpopular Victorian reckoning still used elsewhere. But still we find that we are at least one stage removed from where these historical notes began, simply because the temporal horizons of the notes are older than the centres which transmitted them in the form we have them.

It is, at this point, worth resurrecting in modified form an idea put forward by Kurze in 1900. Kurze proposed that the earliest layer, starting with the death of Drogo, was actually directly connected to the monastery of Echternach, making Willibrord ‘the father of the Frankish annals’ (*der Vater der fränkischen Annalistik*).<sup>85</sup> Drogo had witnessed charters at

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<sup>82</sup> For a textual archaeology, see Lendi, *Untersuchungen*.

<sup>83</sup> Walahfrid Strabo, *Vita Ottmari*, c. 1, ed. Ildephonsus von Arx, MGH SS 2 (Hanover 1829) 42; Ratpert, *Casus sancti Galli*, 2 [5], ed. Hannes Steiner, MGH SRM 75 (Hanover 2002), 150/2.

<sup>84</sup> Jörg Jarnut, ‘Untersuchungen zu den fränkisch-alemannischen Beziehungen in der ersten Hälfte des 8. Jahrhunderts’, *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 30 (1980) 7-28; Andreas Fischer, *Karl Martell. Der Beginn karolingischer Herrschaft* (Stuttgart 2012) 83-92.

<sup>85</sup> Kurze, ‘Die karolingischen Annalen’, 296.

the monastery which, as we have seen, was dear to Pippin II's family.<sup>86</sup> Further local interest is suggested by an entry on the burial of Willibrord's one-time English associate Suidberht in March 713, which ties in with the bishop's commemoration in Willibrord's own calendar.<sup>87</sup> Finally, an Austrasian political context is suggested by unusually (if only relatively) precise entries for the date that Frisian duke Radbod visited Cologne in 716 and the day Willibrord's patron Charles Martel and Ragemfred fought in 717.<sup>88</sup> Such details do seem to be in keeping with Echternach's political and cultural connections, particularly if one remembers the important role Willibrord played in leading support for Charles Martel when the ambitious aristocratic was at his weakest.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, this complements the observations about Easter tables, as Echternach is the only centre that we can show this early engaged with Dionysian culture and its AD-dates. Indeed, this is supported by a biographical note about Willibrord in the calendar within Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 10837 (f. 39v) which uses AD-dates to date his arrival in Frankia (690), his consecration as bishop (695), and the year the note was written (728). It may be too much to say that Willibrord deserves Kurze's rather grand title. Nevertheless, it does seem to have been the world he nurtured which drove the crucial changes in liturgy and history, paving the way for the triumph of Dionysius in the 740s. There was a productive union here again between Insular Christian culture and Pippinid political world view.

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<sup>86</sup> See especially charters 14 and 15 ed. Camilius Wampach, *Geschichte der Grundherrschaft Echternach im Frühmittelalter*, 1.2 (Luxembourg 1930), 38-43, which bound Willibrord, Pippin and Plectrudis together.

<sup>87</sup> *Annales s. Amandi*, s.a. 713, ed. Pertz, MGH SS, 1: 6; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 10837, 35v. On the calendar see Henry A. Wilson, *The calendar of St Willibrord from Paris Lat. 10837: a facsimile with transcription, introduction and notes*, Henry Bradshaw Society 55 (London 1918).

<sup>88</sup> *Annales s. Amandi*, s.a. 717, 6.

<sup>89</sup> See Richard A. Gerberding, '716: a crucial year for Charles Martel', in Jörg Jarnut, Ulrich Nonn & Michael Richter (eds), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen 1994) 205-216. On the rise of Charles Martel see Paul Fouracre, *The age of Charles Martel* (Harlow 2000), 57-78 and Fischer, *Karl Martell*, 50-66. For Echternach see: Nancy Netzer, *Cultural interplay in the eighth century: the Trier Gospels and the making of a scriptorium at Echternach* (Cambridge 1994).

# Conclusion

Charles Jones once argued that the Dionysian Easter spread across Western Christendom because it was more precise. This seems to be at best an over-simplification, not least given Columbanus's failure to change practices in Burgundy on the basis of technical rigour. In the Frankish kingdoms, a number of factors were in play. As the eighth century progressed, it must have been notable that otherwise orthodox neighbours had adopted the Alexandrian reckoning in some form. Circulation of Isidore's *Etymologiae* may have paved the way for a change, but the crucial Dionysian resources entered Frankish religious life from Ireland and England, and spread in the wake of the growing influence of the Pippinids and their religious foundations. New foundations adopted the new reckoning quickly and older centres soon followed. In treatises, the justification was still not improved technical accuracy, but adherence to orthodoxy and canon law, rooted in the authority of the Council of Nicaea, all influenced not a little by Insular textbooks on computus. The success of the Dionysian table can be attributed to the introduction of a compelling cultural package into a powerful political network, just at a time when confusion about Victorius's tables was at its height. If Charlemagne found standards of computistical knowledge unsatisfactory in 789, he did so in a context in which Dionysius's work had already comprehensively triumphed.

The revised narrative above frames some important considerations about the relationship between calendars, time and power in the first half of the eighth century. Fundamentally, the story seems to be about the spread of Pippinid/ Carolingian hegemony. If political community and its social lives require temporal co-ordination, it is natural for everyone to orientate themselves to the rhythm at the centre where the time and space to get things done is most pronounced. But that is only part of the story. A crucial factor was the proliferation of resources which promoted the new orthodoxy, amplified by the proliferation

of new (mostly monastic) centres in the north and east, many beyond the Rhine, which never had to engage significantly with the old Victorian paradigm. There was opportunity here, but there was also a void that needed to be filled with information, and one way or another it was Echternach and centres in Germany which provided the material which filled the space as intellectual networks facilitated a spread of knowledge from north to south. To change a significant body of knowledge and tradition required authority, availability of resources, and opportunity. Traditional, Victorian Gaul could only fall into line.

These conclusions may assist the on-going reassessments of the nature of early medieval cultures of power. One often sees various interplays of coercive and persuasive forms of provoking action, from brute force via bureaucratic organisation to the strategic use of ritual or the written word. Analysis of networks and cultural patterns helps to map the ways in which power and ideas flow across time and why, in ways which both complement and complicate the usual political paradigms. In this present study, one can see that the change from the cultural worlds of the Merovingian kingdoms to the Carolingian ones involved a temporal shift, but not necessarily one which was dictated by Pippin II or his descendants, or Willibrord or Boniface or a pope, or anyone else to signify difference in a game of identity politics. Instead, one can see the organic spread of documents, starting from a politically important centre, but only moving contingently through ad hoc networks and exchanges. Real power here lay in the capacity to determine the framework of debate, not simply to dictate what was said.