

THE DISCOVERY OF THE BURIAL PLACE OF PIPPIN
THE SHORT AND HIS WIFE BERTHA AT THE
ACTUAL PRINCIPAL CHURCH IN SAN GINESIO

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Introduction

The first local scholar who pointed out the presence of the Carolingian traditions and the proper place names in Piceno was Professor Febo Allevi, lecturer of Popular Translations at the University of Macerata and which was recently posthumously published by the Administrative Council of San Ginesio¹.

In 1992 Professor Giovanni Carnevale returned to the matter of the presence of the Franks in Val di Chienti. From that year the matter was confronted with a series of six publications, nearly in a two year period, as a solitary researcher. In 2002 the “Committee for the study of the presence of the Franks, Carolingians, Saxons and Swabians in Val di Chienti” was founded with the fascinating scope of Prof. Carnavale to promote and spread his rooted research.

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□ Refer to the original Italian text

Only at the end of 2008 a seventh volume was compiled with the collaboration of Giovanni Scoccianti and Marco Graziosi. The book was published with the patronage of the Town Council of Civitanova Marche and was presented to the public by Prof. Cosimo Semeraro, a lecturer of Historical Methodology at the Pontiff Salesian University (UPS) in Rome and the Secretary of the Pontifical Committee of History and Science of the Vatican. From there the research further progressed with the landing place in 2009, at the surprising identification of the graves of Pippin the Short and Queen Bertha, parents of Charlemagne (Charles the Great), in the principal church of San Ginesio.

It was thanks to Prof. Giovanni Cardarelli and the local Administrative Council that the presence of the graves were confirmed by an investigation conducted with the help of Ground Penetrating Radar, defined as GEORADAR. We would like to point out that the discovery was made at the exact location indicated by the source and not by chance, neither by a single intuition. It was the direct result of the simultaneous focus of the historical and scientific investigations and findings. There is no doubt that who we refer to here is in fact the “Carolingian” King and Queen. Should these findings be accepted and shared by the Official Historiography of the Dark Ages, inevitably a discussion will bring us to the revision of how the Dark Ages was configured up to the present.

PART ONE

The allocation of the Franks in Val di Chienti. The arrival of Charles Martel and the politics of his son Pippin the Short.

The presence of the Franks in Italy was first noted in the 4th Century, as furnished by Procopio di Cesarea², when the Gothic War broke out and the

Franks apparently maintained a natural position between the Goths and the Byzantine who temporary occupied ample space on the peninsula. Ulterior information dates back to the time from the Lombard's presence in Italy: in the monasteries, for example males and females, monks and nuns lived together respectively of their two diverse ethnic groups.

More accurate information arrived from the start of the 8th Century where we can verify infiltration of the Arabs in the North of the Pyrenees that led to the flight of the Aquitaine groups³ into Italy. Already in 680 the Frank Thomas of Maurienne, upon his return from a pilgrimage in Jerusalem, was brought to the Sabina where he immediately started to rebuild the old monastery of Farfa that was in ruins.

Thomas was a clever, able and dynamic person who not only was well informed about the situation of his native Gaul, but was also able to stabilise good, close relationships with the Pope in Rome and positioned himself closely to Duke Faroald of Spoleto who had the authority to control the territory above the Farfa.

Towards the 8th Century, the same Faroald generously donated twelve "*cutes*", each one eleven thousand "*moggi*"(measuring unit). They were posted between Sabina and Piceno, along the old Salaria road, extending from Gallia Salaria, and at least four of these were in Piceno for certain.

The generous offer dictated that they were to aim to repopulate and cultivate the vast area of the dukedom of Spoleto who still felt the devastation of the Gothic War, wherein they bitterly fought in the 6th Century and never resurrected new life also for the successive local Lombardy groups. Furthermore, we know, from Paolo Diacono that in 680, the same year in which Farfa was founded, a terrible pestilence (plague) had depopulated many Italian villages from Pavia downwards. The favourable insertion of the abbey between Rome and the dukedom of Spoleto revealed

to be a providence when the Arabs completed their conquest of Spain around 715 and tried to invade Gallia: one can just imagine the terror and fear of the local Aquitaine population facing the prospects of being subdued and the consequent alarm of the Papacy.

The Christians, nevertheless, weren't able to take up arms, and the Aquitaine were offered the only possibility to find refuge in Italy, under the protection of the Abbey of Farfa which offered them hospitality in the territory of those twelve "curtes" put at their disposal by the Duke of Spoleto.

Meanwhile, on 16 December 714, at Herstal (today near Liege), an event destined to have implications of great historic importance: in the Merovingian Palace in Herstal, Pippin II, the Mayor of the Palace of the Merovingian Frankish dynasty who held every political and military power since 678, died.

The command was passed on to his wife Plectrude and it was agreed upon that she would maintain this role until such time that their grandson, Theudoald, who was six at the time, become of age to take up power. This plan knocked against the ones of the twenty five year old Charles who was the illegitimate son of the Mayor and his concubine Alpaida and it's to whom history attribute the name Martel, which means "the Hammer". To disengage him, Plectrude could not find a better way than to send Charles away in 715, *sub custodia – ad Aquas Grani*, with the apparent reason that he wanted to help the Aquitaine refugees merged into the "curtes" of the Farfa.

Aquisgrana was a place in Piceno and the idiomatic expression – *ad aquas Grani* – at the water of Granno – derived from the fact that already in the pre-roman time along the Gallia Salaria, between the roman city of Salvia and Pausulae, existed a location, where the water was believed to have healing properties. This place was dedicated to the ancient Celtic god Granno, linked to the roman world with the Greek god Apollo. The imposed remains are still visible. They believed that a healing virtue was bestowed to

the warm water stream inside the “*themenos*” or the sacred area where the temple was erected.

Dione Cassio reported that Emperor Caracalla who sent gifts to Granno, at Iside, was a place of worship in the vicinity of Trea – currently Treia – and at Esculapio where worship was evident from a statue of the god discovered at Villa Potenza in the territory of Macerata and presently located in the courtyard of the Town Hall in Macerata. The Greek historian also refers to the Emperor who once undertook a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Apollo-Granno and submitted himself before all the usual rituals, in favour of his health, but without any results.

When, at the start of the 8th Century, the Aquitaine reached Val di Chienti with the protection of the Roman Church, they kept to the memory of their god and of its healing water. The expression – *ad Aquas Grani* – signifies that the refugees were allocated near such water.

With Thomas of Maurienne who was in favour of the refugees and Plectrude who sent Charles Martel away, Marciano, the bishop of Fermo, already monk at Farfa and friend of the founder Thomas, one can conclude that with their help they accomplished and activated great Christian authority in Europe.

When Charles Martel reached “*ad Aquas Grani*”, he was faced with a difficult situation because for centuries in Val die Chienti, had been badly weakened every form of anthropology: in the 4th Century the Piceno cities gravely felt the crisis of the Emperor and in 410 the passage of Alarico and about the places in Piceno which suffered the devastating fury of the invasion, we know that at least the city of Salvia – Urbisalia (Salvia dell’Urbe) as it was called by Procopio – was completely destroyed. In the 6th Century Piceno was devastated by a terrible war fought between the Byzantines and the Goths and just in the winter of 538 not fewer than 50,000 Roman farmers starved to death as a consequence of the devastating war⁴.

With the Byzantine victory the city of Pausolae became important and its diocese(Catholic regions) flourished again after having had a relevant role to play already in the 5th Century, in fact its bishop Claudio participated in the Roman Council and was called by Pope Ilario in the year 465 signed the proceedings. Narsete contributed to the flourishing of the foundation of the Saint Paul Greek monastery “*ad aquas Salvias*”, today erroneously recognised as the site of the Three Fountains in Rome. It was called Saint Anastasio because it held the relics of the saint. Narsete, the Christian, did not want to make use of the pagan expression *ad aquas Grani* and replaced it with the expression *ad aquas Salvias*, derived from the Roman ruined town of Salvia, which on the geographical maps of the 16th century was still indicted as *Salvi rovinata*, thereby creating not little confusion among historians.

The Lombard’s invasion that started in 568, compromised the possibility of economic and civil recovery in Val di Chienti. In fact they allowed that the valley between the Lombard’s in Fermo and the Byzantine in Osimo, became no-man’s-land. After the arrival of the Franks, every trace is lost of the important diocese “paleochristians” of Pausolae.

Plectrude, believing to have got rid of her stepson Charles, by sending him a thousand miles from Herstal, committed a grave error. The Aquitaine exiles, charged with extreme displeasure for having had to abandon their homeland, found in the young Charles Martel a most suitable leader to convert in open war their profound resentment they had fostered against the Merovingian dynasty and in particular against Plectrude who was in power.

Charles and the Aquitaine had taken up arms and moved up north in Italy, naturally with the agreement of Spoleto which protected their wives and children who remained behind, and an agreement with Pavia which gave permission to them to pass through the Lombard’s Kingdom. They crossed over the Alps and declared war on Plectrude who was defeated in 717 and had to relinquish power and hand over the Merovingian dynasty treasure in

the hands of her stepson. This war operation marked the destiny of these refugees who were welcomed in Italy as “guargangi”, that is foreigners who were submitted to a local power, while claiming for themselves the right to be “Franks”, as to say, free, with the possibility to take war to the other side of the Alps against their enemy and the Arab invaders.

In Italy they occupied church territory, thereby directly connected from Farfa to the Church in Rome. The summer campaigns of the Franks of Piceno, in Gallia, became an annual event. After the summer the men returned to their “douce France”, to practice hunting on the hills of the local Pre-Appennines which they called *Arduenna*. They had spent Christmas and Easter with their families and in late Spring they would return up north along the “Francigena” way.

Charles Martel was for some time had to deal with a two situations: first he had to secure protection for the refugees from the Lombard’s’ sovereign Liutprand and secondly he had to reorganise the Frankish military forces to prevent an Arab invasion. In October of 732 at Poitiers, the Arab expansion in Gallia was stopped for good. The bond between the Franks and the Lombards was linked ever so more to a point that Pippin III, called “The Short”, the twenty one year old son of Charles Martel, in 735 was presented in the court of Pavia and was declared by the King as an adoptive son. In the years 737 – 738 Liutprand hastened with his military forces in Provence to join Charles Martel in the fight against the Saracens and during these campaigns he discovered that the leader of the small Frankish ethnic group of Italy, whom he considered his subjects, in reality, in Gallia, exerted a sovereign power and with the passing of time could become a deadly threat for the actual survival of the Lombard’s monarchy.

The death of Charles Martel and the relationship crisis between the Franks of Piceno and the Lombards.

The common military campaign in Gallia affected the relationship between the two nations, but wasn't compromised in the whole if the two requests for help against the King of Pavia from the part of Pope Gregory III to Charles Martel, one in 739 and the other in 740, were accepted.

In 741 Charles Martel died and was buried in a chorus, on the left side of the altar of the Saint Denis church run by the "Parisi" monks and positioned along the Gallia Salaria where today stands the residential area of San Ginesio (province of Macerata). In the last conserved document of Charles Martel, which dated back, *Carisiacum* (today Carassai in Piceno), to 17 September 741, one month before his death, he particularly expressed devotion to Saint Denis, Rustico and Eleuterio. It is significant to make mention that the actual relics of the last mentioned are held in San Ginesio. He left behind three sons of which two legitimate, Charlemagne and Pippin, and an illegitimate child Griffon, who soon had all his authority removed. By then France picena had undergone a generation turnover.

The young up to twenty five years old were born and raised in Piceno in contact with the Lombard's environment and the Roman- Byzantine influences. It was totally different from the Gallic-Germanic influences in which their fathers grew up in. Most of them had not even seen Gallia, nor had it any meaning to them that the King, or as to say, the Merovingian dynasty were located there. Other than their parental language of Germanic origin, they were able to understand some Greek and Latin and express themselves in the local language.

Liutprand warned that the relationship with the new Frankish generation was changing and in fact turned into a warlike action to isolate and maintain themselves in a foreign position by replacing the dukes of Spoleto and Benevento, traditionally allied to the Franks, with trusted men. The Franks in fact grew in numbers and power in Piceno and the Lombard's King preoccupation was added to that of the Pope, seeming that the new arrivals

occupied territory of the Church, leaving the churches and monasteries without adequate support.⁵

Such state of affairs caused Rome as much as Pavia to relook at their political views in respect of: Liutprand who proposed to the Pope an agreement to authorise him to disengage Pippin and close the Franks off of those who remained in *France* between the Sibillini and the Adriatic Sea, reinstalling a mere *guargangi* condition, leaving them without any political or military power. The accomplishment of this plan involved the risk of war against Pippin himself. The relative facts of such political developments were as follows: in August 742, Pope Zacharias in the basilica of San Valentino in Terni met with Liutprand who restored the city of Amelia, Bomarzo, Orte and Blera, as well as other land ownership in Umbria and in Sabina, provisionally remained so to conduct an ethnic cleaning operation and promised to also restore the Pentapol area not yet liberated from the Franks. To conclude, the two parties established a twenty year peace accord between them and the Pope came to an agreement with the Lombard's Sovereign in order the Franks to lose every political and military autonomy in Italy and once achieved their goals they would reoccupy the territory of Osimo, Numana and Ancona, land of the Esarcato evidently in the past under Frankish control. The agreement of Terni naturally alarmed the young Pippin who saw the future of his people in Piceno compromised and had rushed to ask of the Pontiff to negotiate with him. Zacharias agreed and the reconciliation between Giorgio, the minister plenipotentiary, and Charles Martel's son, surrounded by Church heads and laymen, happened *apud*

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□ Refer to the original Italian text.

Libtinas and was known as *Concilium Liptinense*, of 743. Between the decisions that sprang off, another main theme of church discipline already discussed the year before at a council of Charlemagne, had presided over northern Europe, and we find the political notation extremely interesting afoot of the determinate context for future development. It reads:

II) Statuimus quoque cum consilio sevorum Dei et populi Christiani propter imminencia bella et persecutiones ceterarum gentium, que in circuitu nostro sunt, ut sub precario et censu aliquam partem aecclesialis pecuniae in adiutorium exercitus nostri cum indulgentia Dei aliquanto tempore retineamus...

Pippin declared to occupy land of the Church *sub precario*, recognising therefore the sovereignty of the Pope and to commit every “casato” (family name) to deposit a solid, or rather 12 money (diamonds) to the church, excluding temporarily such obligations only to the “casato” (proper family name) as to when they were to defend themselves from the unleashed war attacks to the restriction of France picena, *in circuitu*, from Liutprand⁶.

We don't know if and with which war actions Liutprand started the war against Pippin. The Sovereign died in January 744 and in Pavia his succession became difficult: first Hildebrand was elected, then overthrown, by Rachis. During the siege of Perugia in 749 Hildebrand went to Pope

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□ It was believed that *Concilium apud Liptinas*, or *Liptinas*, could be found at the actual location of S. Angelo in Montespino, where along the Gallic Salaria stood the ancient Lombard's monastery.

The term *Libitina*, in the age of the pagan goddess of deathly decomposition, mutated in the Christian age to the name of *Infernaccio*. At the bottom of the erosion, ran the river Tenna in which the water, like that of the nearby torrent, was used to darken/tan leather. The stench evoked among the pagans the presence of *Libitina* or later as it was called *Infernaccio*. It evoked in their imaginations foul smelling, infernal landscapes. The Indo-European root “tan”, was contained in the name Tenna and tannin was used in the tanning/darkening of the leather. It had an unbearable stench that not even the deepest pit could contain.

The Germanic myth of Tannhauser could historically be connected to the Piceno environment which until today has remained without constant urban growth and the reason could be linked to the unbreathable air of the place. The other stream in the area was also called *Merdarium* and its from where the stench originated.

Zacharias , laid down arms and gave up all war actions and retreated to a monastery along with his wife and children. The same Pontiff conferred them in Rome to the sacred order. Clearly in all this enters the *longa manus* of Pippin who perhaps threatened to intervene with his military forces from Piceno. Something similar had already happened to the Franks two years before, thus in 747, for unknown reasons, his brother Charlemagne, first-born of Charles Martel renounced power and clothed himself with monastic clothes in Rome⁷. On the throne in Pavia , Ratchis succeeded his brother Astolfo and immediately started up a political vault to face the dangers of another development in Italy from *France* picena; already on the first March 750 the new King took precautions and turn attention to block off other influxes by the Franks from Gallia and placing forward all military forces already stationed in Italy⁸.

In 751 the relationship between Pippin and Rome reached an optimal level so that pope Zacharias authorized the removal, on the other side of the Alps, of the Merovingian King Childeric and ordered that the Franks substitute him with Pippin. It was also a political move from Rome⁹ at the elections of “falcon” Astolfo, in which he furiously reacted and occupied land of the Esarcato Byzantine and threatened Rome from nearby. Charles Martel had already chosen a fortress as his residence, stationed along the Gallia Salaria (the actual centre of Sant’ Angelo in Pontano). In front of which was erected Saint Denis Abbey. It was in a highly strategic position because the Carolingian residence was placed in the heart of Piceno, by then it had been

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□ He left Rome to found the monastery of S.Silvester at Soratte, but three years later, to avoid the constant visits of his subjects who came from *France*, he abandoned Soratte and went to Montecassino where he lived as monk, along with the dismissed king Rachis. Refer further to the Latin text in the original script.

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□ Refer to original Italian text.

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□ Refer to original Italian text.

called “France” for the dense French population residing there. Going along the Gallia Salaria towards the South the residence was on the old Salaria road before reaching Rome and touched the territory of the powerful Frankish Abbey of Farfa; going along towards the North-East, the road reached Spoleto and then the Frangigena road, passed though every year by the Frankish army.

PART TWO

The relationship between Pippin the Short and Pope Stephan II.

In the winter between 752 – 753 the new Pope Stephan II has by means of the an unknown intermediary, sent a letter to the new Frankish King, in which he asked his support to save Rome from the Lombard’s threat¹⁰. This letter is not found today. In the autumn of 753, Stephan II first went to Pavia to negotiate with Astolfo who he had found uninterested. He expressed his need to reach Pippin in *France picena* to also negotiate with him. The Lombard King was made known of the Pope’s plans and they angered him and refused that they pass through his territory to reach the King of the Franks. Evidently the Pontiff should have returned to Rome under Lombard’s escort, but he succeeded all the same to reach the fortress residence of Pippin in Val di Chienti. Two sources refer to the journey that Stephan II undertook: *Il Liber Pontificalis and Agnello Ravennate*. From Pavia the Pope came down towards Esarcato and from Ravenna proceeded along the Adriatic until he reached Fano, therefore he travelled up the Flaminia Road again. He passed the nearby Monte Giove, still called that today, and proceeded towards the South. At Scheggia, in Umbria, he left

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□ Refer to original Italian text.

the Flaminia Road and travelled down along the Sentino which arrived at *Clusae Francorum*, which is called Chuse today. It is from there that Carolingian San Vittore alle Chuse obtained its name. The Pope therefore reached *France* without ever stepping foot in Lombard's territory.

Pippin, who was informed of the imminent arrival, gave his authorisation because the Papal procession reached *Campum Longum*, the permanent military encampment adjacent to the seasonal *Campo Maggio*. These two places exist still today and they are found between Macerata and Morrovalle, in the middle of which is Val di Chienti. When his escort, the servants and riders of his following were settled in their nearby lodging, the Pope and his dignitaries were accompanied by Fulrado, Arch-Chaplin and Abbot of *Santum Dionysium* (Saint Denis in Frankish) – by the duke Rotardo and the eleven year old Charles, son of the King. They were taken to a place along the Gallia Salaria called *Pontem Hugonis* (*Ponticone* as it was called in their ancient language but later changed to Pontano). It was situated between Saint Denis and the Carolingian fortress. Today its called San'Angelo in Pontano, residence of Pippin. It was 6 January 754. After his honourable due welcome, the Pope took up his lodging in the Abbey of Saint Denis and was put to bed because in the heart of the winter he became ill. The journey between Ravenna and Saint Denis in *France*, passing by Monte Giove, from *Clusae Francorum*, and *Campum Longum* until *Ponticone*, historically cannot be questioned. The meeting definitely took place in Italy at Ponticone near Saint Angelo in Pontano and not at the Panthion on Marna as was believed until now. Therefore it was falsely assumed that the Pope, already in precarious state of health, made that absurd crossing of the Alps in the heart of the winter.

What remains, proves no doubt that in the Chronican of Benedetto, which was written 1000 B.C, placed the pope at the Palace of Aquisgrana in *France: in Francia pervenit in aquisgrani palatio*¹¹.

At that time the Pontiff started talks with both Pepin and Astolfo who weren't intrigued until Charlemagne, monk at Montecassino, joined the Frankish courts and supported his arguments. Charles Martel's first-born who renounced all power was irritated because his son was expelled from every position of command. In support of Astolfo's arguments he could have also induced the dismissal of king Rachis, also a monk at Monteccassino. In *France* the Great, powerful leaders were reluctant to wage war against the Lombardy. The overthrow of the alliances weren't unanimously shared because they remembered vividly their cordial relationship and not everyone had positively viewed the replacement of the Merovingian dynasty with that of the Carolingians.

On 14 April 754 in Saint Denis, Stephan II celebrated Easter with Pippin and a short while after anointed his entire family. Bertha became Queen, her husband and sons were ordained Kings by the grace of God and were named *patricii Romanorum*. For the occasion in the nearby *Carisiàcum* – today Carassai (Province of Ascoli Piceno), the Pontiff obtained that '*Promissio*' in which the control of peninsular Italy would be passed on to Rome.

In 755 every hesitation of Pippin and the Great were overcome: They moved against Astolfo who was besieged at Pavia and had to pay taxes and engaged himself to clear out the territory which was illegally occupied. Astolfo did not keep to his commitment and the following year called for a general mobilization of his Kingdom against the Franks¹². He did not invade "France" directly because he would have pushed things if he attacked a well defended bottleneck at Canelli which from Umbria reached into "France"¹³, but he rather attempted a different manoeuvre: he would attempt to siege Rome and plunder the outskirts, hoping that Pippin would rush to help Stephan II and perhaps leave Piceno military undefended. In that way other

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□ Refer to the original Italian text.

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Lombard troops could invade from Umbria. In effect, at the end of February 756, messengers parted from Rome, who evidently came along the Adriatic coast, reached Pippin and begged him to intervene immediately. The Sovereign did not fall in their trap and only in May he moved his army from *Campus Maius* to directly below the wall of Pavia. Astolfo by then had returned to defend Pavia, but he couldn't prevent its fall with the conditions a lot harder than that of the previous year of which the Lombard kingdom was reduced to a State, tributary to the Franks. Astolfo died in a hunting accident in 756.

Pippin was educated at Saint Denis by the *Parisii* monks. He has made that Royal Abbey the administrative centre of all the churches in *France picena*. The Abbey became the *Cappella* which was in charge of the "ecclesiasticum ministerium". Charlemagne was responsible for its upkeep and had it enlarged, as witnessed and recorded by Eginardo in his testament. A chaplain was appointed to every church, endowed with some land for its proper upkeep. The chaplains were answerable to the Arch-Chaplain who was also the Abbot of Saint Denis. This new order made provisions anyhow, that the Frankish Churches were dependent on *Palatium* only. The property and the jurisdiction of the *Ministeria*¹⁴ typical of Piceno were not under the authority of the Church but directly reserved for the King¹⁵. Furthermore at the start of 753, Saint Denis of Piceno assumed a function of the highest importance, as to the arrival of Pope Stephan II and it was the place where the Pope ordained Pippin as king of the Franks. This event constituted the pinnacle of the rise of Saint Denis, but when Pippin decided to move his residence further downstream towards the sea, where a new, more suitable royal residence was constructed, the Abbey had lost its position of importance.

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Also given the fact that the Sovereign and the Arch-Chaplin transferred to the new residence.

DEATH OF PIPPIN AND HIS BURIAL AT SAINT DENIS.

In 768, Pippin was in Gallia where he became seriously ill. In the hope to be healed, he undertook a pilgrimage to the grave of Saint Martin in Tours, but without any results. He then returned to the Abbey of Saint Denis in Piceno where he came to his death on 24 September 768. We obtained this information from the fourth book of the chronicles of Fredegario and also from “*Annales Mettenses priores*”. Before his death, he gave instructions to be buried at Saint Denis, in the same church where his father, Charles Martel was buried. From a letter of Ludevico il Pio in 835, it emerged that his grandfather was made laid to rest *ante limina basilicae sanctorum martyrum*¹⁶ (Saint Denis, Rustico and Eleunterio) . The same letter revealed the *titulus* , a relative inscription on the “*conditorium*” where Pippin was buried, made reference to his humility. For this reason he wanted to be buried at the actual entrance of the church – *ante Limina basilicae sanctorum martyrum* – in this way whoever entered had to pass over his body. The *titulus* is thought to be a sort of a lengthwise funeral stone of which the top part was engraved with an image of king Pippin and under that was the inscription of which Ludovico il Pio spoke of in his letter. From an authentic document of Charlemagne released in Acuisgrana on 13 January 769, that is, a few months after the death of his father, the Sovereign expressed his wish to be also buried at Saint Denis. Next to Pippin was laid to rest his wife Queen Bertha after eleven years after his death. Her image was engraved next to that of her husband. The two images were saved because they were walled in the entrance doors of the present principal church of San Ginesio. It was Charlemagne who carried out the shifting of his mother’s body to Saint Denis next to her husband

The ten years that followed saw the flourishing of the Carolingian rebirth at Aquisgrana, in the plains of lower Val die Chienti. Saint Denis remained isolated in the Pre-Apennines and ended up playing a modest historical role, wrapped in a halo of its glorious past. At the death of Charles Martel, as Eginardo recalled, he discussed the idea of being buried in the new, splendid Palatina chapel or elsewhere (evidently in the nearby Saint Denis where his parents and grandfather were buried).

One other severe blow to the prestige of the Abbey was towards the middle of the 4th Century when the children of Lotario I, the emperor Ludovico II and Lotario II, died at Aquisgrana. With them the Carolingian descendents became extinct on the Peninsula.

For Aquisgrana in Val di Chienti initiated a period of political instability: the territory of “Charles the Bald” King of Gallia and the stepbrother of Lodovico the Germanic, King of Germany, came under dispute. In 881 the Abbey was besieged by the Arabs. It was then liberated by Charles III the Great, and Val die Chienti faced more aggravated political instability. Vidoni, Guido (+894) and Lamberto (+898) contested the control of the local emperor and they opposed Berengario (+924) and Arnalfo di Carinzia (+899). After the Vidoni dynasty was extinguished, Alberico I inherited power and the military forces, who were allies of the papacy. With the battle of Garigliano (915) the Arab threat to the peninsula was eliminated for good. Alberio II, son of Alberico I and Marozia did not enjoy the same prestige and power their father had. Alberico II was opposed to the new local Saxon dynasty.

Enrico I (+936), was born in Aula Regali at is the palace of Charlemagne. Since 919 he was King of Germany. In 933 he was placed in charge of the Roman legions which were previously under Alberico II and annihilated the Ungari in *reatino* (the battle of Reate o Riade) where they were stationed and a tax was imposed on them by France picena, as accounted by Widukind¹⁷.

In 936 his son Ottone I, at Aquisgrana, was proclaimed King of the Romans and thus deprived Alberico II of every authority, but he only remained in control of the elections of the Popes. Ottone I was involved in a lengthy series of battles with the local “Romans”. One must supposed that in all these events which had taken place, the Royal Frankish Abbey perhaps was destroyed. Indeed not, the structure of Saint Denis is still today the home of the relics of the three patron Saints; Denis, Rustico and Eleuterio, martyr in Tournai (in Belgium) in 531 and are today objects of reverence. In all these turbulent turns of historical events, the only ones who hadn’t suffered damage were the graves of Pippin and Bertha.

The oblivion which the Piceno Dark Ages sank into, naturally involved the glorious past of the Abbey and the Royal graves which are present in the basilica. The oblivion of Saint Denis picena was contrasted by the rise of the Royal Saint Denis in Paris from the moment in which, with the new Capetians dynasty, Gallia became France and Paris its capital. In reflection, the territory of Val di Chienti, “France” picena became “Rome” and the ancient *cappella* of Charlemagne became the Lateranense Church and residence of the Popes.

The “genesino” Febo Allevi, professor of Popular Translations at the University of Macarata, revealed the following translation¹⁸: the actual build up area of San Ginesio 1000 B.C wasn’t called so, but had another name which is unknown to us. Therefore this historical research which permits the affirmation that the name San Genesio, preceded that of Saint Denis.

Since the arrival of Ugo Capeto, we no longer found that Saint Denis of Val di Chienti were mentioned, but only the Royal Abbey in Paris in which 1118, the monk Abelardo was hosted (or specially watched over) and who in scriptures at a time was called *Peripateticus Palatinus*. While Abelardo was reading the *Beda il venerabile*, he had found that “*areopagita*” Saint Dionigi

wasn't bishop of Athens, but of Corinto¹⁹. His brethren were highly angered and imprisoned him. They also wanted to present him before the Kings Court, because Saint Dionigi of Athens was considered the protector of the French Royal Dynasty and they believed that there were the burial places of Charles Martel and Pippin. The outrage of the brethren were taken by the fact that Abelardo had perhaps said to them that in his native homeland was another Royal Saint Denis, where Charles Martel and King Pippin were buried.

Abelardo himself spoke of the events and was obliged to escape and to be completely understood he was inserted in the political contest that Europe was living at the time.

Abelardo was born in 1079 in *Palatio*, which wasn't the Palais in Brittany, but the ancient site of the Carolingian Palace. Now it had become a fortified village enclosed by a wall as depicted in the Coeval image on page 162 of the *Codex Calixtinus* and in which it was defined as *Aquisgrani oppidum*. He therefore grew up in the political climate of the early tenth century, in Piceno. From a child in 1084 he had seen the destruction of the *Urbs Roma picena* at the hands of Robert the Guiscardo. When he was twenty years old, he heard the preaching of Urbano II the Crusader, guided by Godfrey of Buglione, marquis of Camerino, but he did not depart on a crusade. He himself said that he had to choose between Mars and Minerva and he had opted for a life of study.

At the start of the 12th Century he was in France and in 1101 he founded a school at Corbeil. The following two years he spent in Italy – in *Palation* – in his native town with his family and as he said in his own words: “almost cut off from France”. Upon his return he was declared a brilliant professor. He spoke an elegant French which he had obtained since he was a child from a noble linguistic tradition in *Palatium*, even if by then it was reduced to little more than *castrum casalis*, a village enclosed in the wall. He also had

an excellent knowledge of the Latin language, favoured by the fact that a few hundred meters from his residence, was Laterano, residence of the Papacy of the 10th Century and from 1094 to 1099 residence of the Frenchman Urbano II. It was more than probable that the young Abelardo, son of a local Frankish feudal lord, had some connections with the Lateranese environment.

His position in Paris had become particularly difficult when in Rome, on 23 February 1130, contemporaneously were elected Pope Anacleto II, which was an expression of the local laymen force, and Pope Innocenzo II of the opposition. Anacleto II was at Saint Peter (today in Corridonia) and Innocenzo II was at Laterano (today San Claudio).

With them both initiated the great division of the West. The Cistercian Monk San Bernardo united against Anacleto II who was considered to be “anti-pope”, together with all the Powerful in Europe. Instead they rallied for the “anti-pope” Ruggero II of Sicily and the people of Rome, linked to the powerful family of Pierleoni. Abelardo was in favour of Ruggero II. We omit the events that followed.

In 1138 Ruggero II (the “anti-pope”) died and in 1139 at Val di Chienti the second Lateranese Council was celebrated. It was there where Abelardo was accused of heresy. At the council the sworn adversary of Abelardo, certainly also participated. It was the all powerful Suger, Abbot of the Parisian Saint Denis which started to undergo great transformations in the previous two years. When the Council ended, Suger transported with the French fleet to Paris the columns which he has taken from the ancient palace of Charlemagne. First they crossed the Mediterranean Sea then up the Atlantic to reach the Seine²⁰. They went further up the Seine until they reached Paris where in 1140 he consecrated the new Royal Church of Saint Denis.

The destructive actions of Suger were justified with new political views pursued in Paris. The Capetians Dynasty had to submit to the supreme political power in Europe and to the local Saint Denis who had to become its symbol. It is because they had found the Merovingian Kings and what followed, what Suger intended us to believe, also Charles Martel and Pippin. Therefore from Val di Chienti had to disappear every trace of the Carolingian age.

The first step was to rename the Carolingian Saint Denis of Val di Chienti to Saint Genis. Then the Cistercian who settled in loco also undertook to remove the *titulus* from the grave of Pippin. This wasn't enough for Suger. The Carolingian Saint Denis became part of the verbal tradition of all Europeans and it couldn't be eliminated or likely substituted because they were faithful to the authentic church. In 1139, in an occasion of the Council, Suger saw that the complex of the Royal Abbey was characterised by essentially three elements: the first was that it was compounded at the *prior ingressus* of the primitive church constructed by Charles Martel; the second derived from the fact that Pippin had been buried at the entrance; the third element had been *augmentum quoddam a Carlolo Magno factum*. After the discovery of Pippin's grave, all three these elements were found at the site in San Ginesio.

Suger attempted to recover in a credible manner these three elements for his Parisian Saint Denis church. The *augmentum* was described like a sort of an extension of the original Saint Denis which had two entrances of which the one was placed in *augmentum* and the second of which was placed in the church itself. The body of Pippin laid between the two entrances extra *valvas basilicae*. He could attest to it with certainty because it was him who demolished the *augmentum* with the two entrances and he gave to understand that he had seen the grave of Pippin in which he laid with his face downwards on a cross. Unfortunately all of that were destroyed because in their place was constructed a new façade of Saint Denis²¹. It was a

fabrication who all came to believe and the real tradition was replaced with a false one. Saint Denis picena historiographically disappeared for ever and was struck from the the first *damnatio memoriae*.

Suger would have also taken the body of Charlemagne to Paris if someone hadn't prevented the shifting and taken it from the grave and placed it in hiding.

In 1165 the tomb was discovered by Barbarossa, *per divina ispirazione*, as it was written, and declared him saint by their "anti-pope". The *Annales Aquenses* informed us that in 1166 he had been moved to Germany and placed in the chapel of Aachen which was constructed as a counter alter of the Parisian Saint Denis and as a bulwark of the Empire, conceived by then as *Sacrum Romanum Imperium deutsher Nazion*.

The consequences of such events have not made sense any longer that the Papacy maintained their residence in Laterano Val di Chienti and transferred to Rome together with all the titles of the locations of cardinal picena. On the glorious past of Val di Chienti fell the most complete oblivion, or better still, the *damnatio memoriae*.

The geophysics investigation conducted with Georadar for the location of the burial place of Pippin and Bertha at San Ginesio (MC)

The actual façade of the principal Church at San Ginesio in the lower part is the same as what was constructed in the Carolingian age. It still present two entrances: the most ancient is relative to the basilica of Saint Denis as build by Charles Martel and the other extensions carried out by Charlemagne, the *augmentum a Carolo Magno factum*, of which was already widely spoken off in the literary works. In the letter of Ludovico il Pio of 835 to Hilduin, the Abbot of Saint Denis, indicated the burial place of Pippin with precision, *ante limina basilicae* – at the threshold of the *basilica* – with the long side across the entrance, so that whoever entered the church would necessarily pass over the body of the Sovereign laid buried there.

The investigation conducted with the Georadar confirmed to the letter as established by Ludovico il Pio, to be precise, that inside the basilica the tomb of Pippin was placed immediately beyond the threshold of the entrance and in a traversal position to those who stepped over. Adjacent to the burial place of Pippin was that of Bertha, who was moved there in 783 by the order of her son Charlemagne.

The Georadar also revealed that at the bottom of the two graves were not any trace of open spaces. The two graves were excavated in a terrain constituted of layers of mixed sandstone and clay. With the passing of one thousand two hundred years the particles of the clay mixed with water infiltrated in the open spaces of the graves until they were filled up completely by a humid mass not otherwise identified by the Georadar. This muddy mass has completely lumped together the internal remains of the Carolingian Sovereigns. The slow filling up of the empty spaces at the bottom of the burial place guaranteed that the two graves were preserved until today.