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**INTRODUCTION TO THE SACRAMENTARY OF GELLONE (B.N. lat 12048)**

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abbreviations

Introduction

# Historical Context

From the late sixteenth century onwards, knowledge of various liturgical manuscripts classified as “Gelasian” from libraries around Europe gradually increased. Within those years of discovery, liturgical scholars have widely accepted this term as a valid classification amongst medieval books, commonly contrasted with another classification of medieval liturgical books coined as “Gregorian.” One of these scholars, Pierre Le Brun, seemed to have known various of these Gelasian Sacramentaries and was the first to have presented a series of criteria to distinguish them from the Gregorian Sacramentaries.[[1]](#footnote-1) However, today, scholars have opted to make a distinction between the Old Gelasian Sacramentary – which is solely confined to one Vatican manuscript, Reg. lat 316 – and the 8th-century Gelasian Sacramentaries[[2]](#footnote-2).

The name “8th-century Gelasian” was first attributed to a group of manuscripts by the liturgist Edmund Bishop precisely distinguishing it from the Vatican manuscript[[3]](#footnote-3). From then on, scholars have used variations of this term to refer to the later form of Gelasian Sacramentaries: Frankish Gelasian, a name that hints to its Romano-Frankish attributes; Mixed Gelasian, which coincides with the theory of its having originated from the Gelasian Sacramentary and the Gregorian Sacramentary; Young Gelasian or the *Junggelasiana*, distinguishing it from the Old Gelasian; Sacramentary of King Pippin III or of St. Boniface, linking it with the alleged Liturgical Reform during the Carolingian period. These terms may constitute for us a starting point for constructing the historical context in which these eighth century sacramentaries were developed.

<Here make an INTRODUCTION to what you are about to develop next… Pippin, Charlemagne, why, 8th cent… etc.>

*The Carolingian Liturgical Reform*

Basing on the estimated dates of composition of the eighth-century Gelasian Sacramentary manuscripts and their apparent Frankish roots,[[4]](#footnote-4) we now deliberately situate ourselves within the rise of the Carolingian era, the central theme in the history of the Frankish Empire of the late seventh and the early eighth century. In this chapter we do not intend to reproduce the historical development of the Carolingian regime; instead we will limit the study to the connection found between specific protagonists of this era and their apparent interest in Liturgy.

The Carolingians began to take rise within the courts of the Frankish nobility mainly beginning from Pippin II (†714) and his son Charles Martel (†741) who were *maiores domus* of the Merovingian royal palace on their respective years.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Through time, we noticed the growing sympathy of the first Carolingians towards the Church. «Like his predecessors, Charles Martel nominated bishops and abbots, bestowed a large amount of landed property on ecclesiastical institutions, and supported the activities of several missionaries. »[[6]](#footnote-6) Like the Merovingians before them, through this political rapproachment to religious realities, among other means, the Carolingians steadily managed to hold influence to the whole of the Frankish region. This influence went closer to its climax when the they turned ambitious enough to approach the Frankish monarchy ruling side by side with the declining Merovingians.[[7]](#footnote-7) Charles Martel’s reign, upon his death, was divided into two and was inherited by two of his sons: Pippin III and Carloman. Pippin III eventually was left as the one *maior domus*, since, not long after their election, Carloman entered the monastery.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Even before Pippin III’s total reign over the Franks, it seems that Carloman together with St. Boniface have already started an ecclesiastical reorganization in Frankish churches, which they regarded as having deviated deeply from Church norms.[[9]](#footnote-9) Upon taking over the whole Frankish kingdom, and eventually being lifted as *rex francorum*, Pippin III continued and intensified the reform comenced by his brother and St. Boniface. While many testimonies point out that Carloman’s and Boniface’s reform was more structural and disciplinary than liturgical,[[10]](#footnote-10) another series of post- pippinid testimonies hints on Pippin III’s direct intervention on Liturgical Chants. In his book, Yitzhak Hen presents five texts that bear witeness to this fact: (a) in a letter to the clergy of Ravenna, Charles the Bald points out that until Pippin’s reign the Churches of Gaul and Spain celebrated the divine office differently as to how it was celebrated in Rome; (b) Charlemagne, in his *Admonitio Generalis*, ordered the clergy to employ the divine office in conformity with what Pippin III established upon abolishing the Gallican chant; (c) in one of his letters, while praising his father Pippin, Charlemagne made reference to his direct role in bringing to Gaul the chants of the Roman tradition; (d) the *Libri Carolini* mentions the close unity between the Frankish church and the Roman Church, citing its oneness in singing the same chants, attributing it to the efforts of Pippin III and the visit of Pope Stephen; (e) Walahfrid Strabo, in his *Liber de exordiis et incrementis*, gives an account on Pope Stephen’s visit to Francia carrying with him material for the Chant reform requested by Pippin III.[[11]](#footnote-11)

1. Cfr. P. Le Brun, *Explication litterale, historique et dogmatique, des prières et des cérémonies de la messe suivant les anciens auteurs, et les monumens de toutes les églises du monde chrétien: avec des dissertations et des notes sur les endroits difficiles, et sur l’origine des rites*, II, Chez Seguin Ainé, Imprimeur-Libraire, Paris 1843, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cfr. B. Moreton, *The Eighth-century Gelasian sacramentary: a study in tradition.*, *Henry Bradshaw Society*, Oxford University Press, London 1976, Introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cfr. E. Bishop, *Liturgica Historica: Papers on the liturgy and religious life of the Western Church.*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1918, 62; E. Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books from the Beginning to the Thirteenth Century.*, M. Beaumont (trans.), The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota 1998, 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cfr. Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books*, 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. R. McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Y. Hen, *The Royal Patronage of Liturgy in Frankish Gaul to the death of Charles the Bald (877).*, *Henry Bradshaw Society*, The Boydell Press, London 2001, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Cfr. McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 63–71. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Cfr. Hen, *The Royal Patronage of Liturgy*, 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Cfr. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1983, 143–161; W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*, *The Ford lectures delivered in the university of Oxford in the Hilary Term*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1946, 70–93. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. «A close examination of the sources reveals that Boniface and his Carolingian patrons were not particularly interested in reforming the Frankish Liturgy, and that liturgical matters were brought forward in a very general way. » Hen, *The Royal Patronage of Liturgy*, 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Ibidem*, 47–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)