

justice, and supervise local administration where he deemed it necessary. Following his usual practice, and in accordance with the multiethnic character of his empire, Charlemagne did not impose Frankish law on the conquered realm, but left the old law-codes in place. In other respects, however, the military and political institutions of the Kingdom of Italy were transformed. Unlike the Lombards, the Franks had not entered Italy as a migrating people, but as a conquering army. They formed a new military aristocracy, superimposed on the existing structure of society, displacing but not eliminating the former Lombard-Roman ruling class; over time this new aristocracy would blend with elements of the old, as the Lombards had gradually merged with the Romans.

The most salient feature of the new Carolingian regime, which differentiated it sharply from the old Lombard government, was its close reliance on the Church. The orthodox Franks had always been close allies of the popes. As the Carolingian empire took shape, clerics came to occupy many of the high posts in the imperial chancery and the administration. The Carolingian governmental machine, such as it was, therefore relied heavily on members of the clergy, because of their administrative skills, which the military aristocracy lacked. The Church also functioned as a valuable source of patronage, through which Charlemagne and his heirs could reward faithful service and create ties of obligation. Even more importantly, the Church provided the ideological underpinning for the Carolingian regime. The anointment and coronation of successive Carolingian rulers by the popes at Rome conferred legitimacy on the dynasty and sanctified its exercise of power. The concept of a revived Roman empire, no longer pagan but Christian, over which the Carolingians reigned as heirs to the Caesars, originated with the papacy. This ideology legitimized the Carolingians' military expansion, presenting their conquests as a civilizing and Christianizing mission.

Turin provides a good example of this system of government at work. The city and its county, whose borders now included the valley of Susa, were more strategically important than ever, for they commanded a critical axis of Carolingian power, from the Frankish heartland, through the Kingdom of Italy, to papal Rome. The route across the Alpine passes now took on a new name: the *strata francigena*, or "Frankish Road". We possess little information on the Frankish counts who governed Turin and guarded this vital artery, but we know that their administration was more sophisticated than that of the Lombard dukes, which had consisted of little more than a grouping of military retainers. The count administered the county in the emperor's name, and dispensed justice with the aid of his chief men, lay and clerical. One of the few surviving