

Toward a Prosopography of the 'Maubeuge Cycle' Saints.

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Hagiography, chronicles, cartularies and tradition preserve the memory of a family of saints who founded four monasteries in Hainaut in the early Middle Ages. Since this family's best-known member was St. Aldegunde, founder of the monastery of Maubeuge, the hagiography of Aldegunde and her relatives has long been known as the 'Maubeuge Cycle'. The core family comprises the *domesticus* Waldebert and his wife St. Bertilia, their daughters St. Aldegunde and St. Waldetrude (founder of the abbey of St. e-Waudru in Mons), Waldetrude's husband St. Vincent Madelgar (founder of the abbeys of Soignies and Hautmont), the latter's four children who all entered religion, just possibly St. Landelin (founder of the abbey of Lobbes) and St. Hydulf (husband of Waldetrude's niece St. Aye and re-founder of Lobbes). Since one of Waldetrude's sons was named Dentelin, the family may also have been connected to the duchy of Dentelin mentioned by Fredegar.

Either Waldebert or Bertilia was related to two mayors of the palace, possibly to the family of Bishop Bertamn of Le Mans, and perhaps even to the Pippinid family. Eleventh- and twelfth-century hagiographers elaborated a web of family connections with ancient aristocrats of Merovingian Francia and contemporary counts of Hainaut, while monastic forgeries suggested other possible relationships. The fourteenth-century chronicler Jacques de Guise provided the Maubeuge family and the counts of Hainaut with a magnificent Merovingian pedigree which is certainly an invention. Some scholars consider that parts of this later material are genuine. A prosopography of the 'Maubeuge Cycle' must attempt to distinguish what is true from what is demonstrably false, but should probably include both in a complete analysis of the layered picture that has been built up over the centuries. The final result must include not only relations but friends such as St. Ghislain, said to have been Waldetrude's confessor, whose abbey is close to her foundations at Mons.

I have published a first attempt at disentangling this prosopography and analysing its purpose under the title 'Les Saints du "Cycle de Maubeuge" et la conscience aristocratique dans le Hainaut médiéval' in *Revue du Nord*, 73 (1991), 583-96. At the Thirtieth Annual Congress of the Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University in 1995, I presented a paper entitled 'A Seamless Web: The Medieval Company of Saints', in which I described properties known to be held by Waldebert and his family, and the role of these properties in the spread of the cults of these saints. Examination of the diffusion of St. Aldegunde's cult led to a prosopographical investigation of the lords of Zutphen, their relations with merchant communes along the Rhine, and the church dedications in the Rhineland to St. Aldegunde and her nephew St. Dentelin. The Maubeuge saints' patronage of rural churches, together with seigniorial control of the communities where these churches are located, combined to produce a sense of civic identity even in the rural villages. I shall further study some Maubeuge Cycle saints and their functions as village patrons at the Fourteenth Congress in 1996 under the title 'Saints and Rural Civic Identity'.

Another prosopographical interlacement grows out of the *vitae* of Saints Géry and Aubert, contemporary bishops of Cambrai, which complement the Maubeuge Cycle. At his Episcopal accession, St. Géry miraculously freed prisoners held by Wado (or Waldo), count

of Cambrai, perhaps related to Waldebert. Years later, Géry repeated this unwelcome miracle to frustrate St. Waldetrude's most unsaintly uncle Landeric, Chlothar II's mayor of the palace. Hagiographers credited St. Géry with founding the village of Braine-St.-Géry on an estate held by Waldetrude's niece Aye. After his death, St. Géry appeared to Waldetruse in the church on her estate ob Boussu near Mons to assure her that her deication to charitable works pleased him. St. Géry's eventual successor at Cambrai, St. Aubert, reclaimed St. Landelin from crime, and veiled St. Waldetrude and her sister St. Aldegunde. St. Géry is patron of the church at Outre, one segment of the wine-growing commune of Herly-St.-Erme-Ramecourt-et-Outre in the department of Aisne, France. St. Erminon donated the village of Herly-St.-Erme to Lobbes as his entrance gift, before he became its abbot with the backing of Madelgar, bishoip of Paris, and of Waldetrude's nephew-in-law St. Hydulf. Lobbes also has close connections with St. Aldegunde, who brought up its abbot St. Ursmer's niece at Maubeuge.

These are but few instances drawn from the complex tangle of early medieval evangelisers and abbey-founders, bishops of Cambrai, royal officials in Hainaut, eleventh- and twelfth-century lordships, church patronage in Hainaut and the Rhineland, perhaps the future Carolingian dynasty itself, and the Capetian monarchy. Tangled in a web of connections with these elite figures appear members of middling-ranking Frankish families and obscure monks noted in memorial books. Behind this prosopography can be dimly discerned the social conditions of an important border principality, Hainaut, at two important moments: its emergence into the light of history and its counts' rise briefly as major players on the European scene in the last decades of the twelfth century.