



# The Carolingian local *ecclesia* as a ‘temple society’?

STEFFEN PATZOLD

CARINE VAN RHIJN

*This article assesses the question to what extent the model of a ‘temple society’ can be fruitfully employed as a tool of analysis for the Carolingian ecclesia, by which we mean not only the rich, well-endowed churches, but also the small, local ones. An investigation of the many different forms of ecclesiastical land-holding, and of the various functions a church and its ministers did (and did not) fulfil for early medieval Christians, shows the shape of the Carolingian ‘ecclesia-society’ as it took shape in the course of the ninth century.*

## Introduction

There is little doubt that the Carolingian world contained churches that owned vast amounts of land. In the years 813 and 814, Bishop Wadald of Marseilles had a *Descriptio mancipiorum* made. It documented at least a part of the landed property owned by his cathedral church and the monastery of St Victor, and the list of possessions was long. Wadald’s *rotulus* mentions more than 250 farms and sheep-rearing stations in fourteen different *villae* and *agri*, which were located in the large area between Marseilles and the Alps.<sup>1</sup> Wadald’s colleague Leidrad of Lyon,

<sup>1</sup> *Descriptio mancipiorum ecclesie Massiliensis*, ed. B. Guérard, *Cartulaire de L’abbaye de Saint-Victor de Marseille*, Collection des cartulaires de France 9 (Paris 1857), vol. 2, pp. 633–56 (a new edition is a desideratum, we were not able to see the unpublished edition by Jean-François Brégi from 1975); cf. J.-P. Devroey, ‘Élaboration et usage des polyptyques. Quelques éléments de réflexion à partir de l’exemple des descriptions de l’Église de Marseille (VIII–IXe siècles)’, in D. Hägermann, W. Haubrichs and J. Jarnut (eds), *Akkulturation. Probleme*

also in 813/14, even had more than 760 farms for his personal use (*ad suum opus*), whereas the fifty-two canons of St Étienne in Lyon had a further 133 farms at their disposal.<sup>2</sup> The various possessions of the monastery of St Gall, in turn, were located all over the area between Raetia in the east to Alsace in the west, and from Lake Zurich in the south to the river Neckar in the north.<sup>3</sup> The polyptych of the monastery Saint-Germain-des-Prés, commissioned by its abbot Irimino in the 820s, likewise lists in great detail the equally impressive amount of land that this community owned in the Île-de-France.<sup>4</sup>

It is common knowledge that cathedrals, monasteries and convents were among the richest institutions of the Carolingian world. This would suggest that the model of the ‘temple society’, that Ian Wood has so fruitfully employed for the period from late antiquity to the early eighth century,<sup>5</sup> would be equally useful here. The devil is, however, in the detail: on closer inspection, the image becomes more nuanced. In this paper, we argue that in the Carolingian world, neither all churches nor all ecclesiastical land (*res ecclesiasticae*) belonged to ‘the church’ (in the sense used by Wood). The reasons for this are several: for one, the distinction between ‘church’ on the one hand, and ‘society’ on the other, had become blurred and fluid in the Carolingian era.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, there was much variation in the specific forms of ecclesiastical landownership, and in the ways in which this land could, or could not, be used. For instance, not all churches owned much land,

*einer germanisch-romanischen Kultursynthese*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 41 (Berlin and New York, 2004), pp. 436–72; R.J. Faith, ‘Farms and Families in Ninth-Century Provence’, *EME* 18 (2010), pp. 175–201; É. Renard, ‘Grandes propriétés et organisation domaniale dans le Midi de la Gaule à l’époque carolingienne: que peut-on savoir?’, *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 90 (2012), pp. 381–412.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistolae variorum Carolo magno regnante scriptae*, ed. E. Dümmler, *MGH Epistolae* 2 (Berlin, 1895), no. 30, p. 544.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. H.-W. Goetz, ‘Beobachtungen zur Grundherrschaftsentwicklung der Abtei St. Gallen vom 8. zum 10. Jahrhundert’, in W. Rösener (ed.), *Strukturen der Grundherrschaft im frühen Mittelalter*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 92 (Göttingen, 1993), pp. 197–246.

<sup>4</sup> *Polyptychon von Saint-Germain-des-Prés*, ed. D. Hägermann (with K. Elmshäuser and A. Hedwig) (Cologne, 1993); for a recent in-depth analysis of one of the *breuia* cf. H.-W. Goetz, ‘Palaiseau. Zur Struktur und Bevölkerung eines frühmittelalterlichen Dorfes in der Grundherrschaft des Klosters Saint-Germain-des-Prés’, in T. Kohl, S. Patzold and B. Zeller (eds), *Kleine Welten. Ländliche Gesellschaften im Karolingerreich*, Vorträge und Forschungen 87 (Ostfildern, 2019), pp. 205–34.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ian Wood’s introduction to this volume and I.N. Wood, ‘The Early Medieval West as a Temple Society’, *Rivista di Storia Antica* 11 (2019), pp. 107–34.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the fundamental work by Mayke de Jong, for example her ‘“Ecclesia” and the Early Medieval Polity’, in S. Airlie, W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds), *Staat im frühen Mittelalter*, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11 (Vienna, 2006), pp. 113–26; *eadem*, ‘The State of the Church: Ecclesia and Early Medieval State Formation’, in W. Pohl and V. Wieser (eds), *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat – europäische Perspektiven*, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 16 (Vienna, 2009), pp. 241–54.

and some were actually rather poor. Those churches that did own land could not use all of it in the same fashion. Not all churches had enough labour at their disposal to make their land economically profitable by working it. Another element of Wood’s ‘temple society’ that will be explored below is that of the tasks and functions of single churches in the redistribution of goods. These were not limited to economic transactions: as we will show, churches had much more to offer to society than economic profit distributed among the poor and the needy.

In this contribution, we would like to investigate the limits of the ‘temple society’ model for the Carolingian world. We shall do this by not only exploring the well-documented, large, wealthy institutions such as the bishoprics of Marseilles or Lyon, or important monasteries like St Gall or Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Rather those churches that featured in the daily lives of most inhabitants of the Carolingian realms will be the main focus of attention here.<sup>7</sup> These were the local churches where people had their children baptized and where they went to hear mass.<sup>8</sup> It is in these ‘temples’ that everyday religious practice happened in Carolingian society. When we take such churches into account too, a more nuanced image appears of ‘the church’ in the Carolingian world, and of the different roles it could play for the community around it.

## 1. Churches and landed property

Given our patchy documentation, we do not know the exact number of local churches that existed in the Carolingian world. At least for some

<sup>7</sup> The definition of ‘local’ used in this contribution is explained in B. Zeller et al., *Neighbours and Strangers. Local Societies in Early Medieval Europe* (Manchester, 2020), p. xii–xiii.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. for these local churches and the clergy serving them: S. Esders and H.J. Mierau, *Der althochdeutsche Klerikereid. Bischöfliche Diözesanverwaltung, kirchliches Benefizialwesen und volkssprachliche Rechtspraxis im frühmittelalterlichen Baiern*, MGH Studien und Texte 28 (Hanover, 2000); C. van Rhijn, *Shepherds of the Lord. Priests and Episcopal Statutes in the Carolingian Period*, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 6 (Turnhout, 2007); C. Mériaux, ‘L’“entrée en scène” du clergé rural à l’époque carolingienne’, in M. Gaillard (ed.), *L’empreinte chrétienne en Gaule du IV<sup>e</sup> au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Culture et société médiévale 26 (Turnhout, 2014), pp. 469–90; *idem*, ‘La compétition autour des églises locales dans le monde franc’, in P. Depreux, F. Bougard and R. Le Jan (eds), *Compétition et sacré au haut Moyen Âge. Entre médiation et exclusion*, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 21 (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 85–102; J. Barrow, *The Clergy in the Medieval World: Secular Clerics, their Families and Careers in North-Western Europe c. 800 – c. 1200* (Cambridge, 2015), ch. 10, pp. 310–43; S. Patzold and C. van Rhijn (eds), *Men in the Middle. Local Priests in Early Medieval Europe*, RGA Ergänzungsband 93 (Berlin and Boston, 2016); S. Patzold, *Presbyter. Moral, Mobilität und die Kirchenorganisation im Karolingerreich*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 68 (Stuttgart, 2020).

dioceses, however, there is quite precise information. For the diocese of Salzburg, for example, 67 *ecclesiae parochiales* alone are attested for the time between 788 and 790;<sup>9</sup> how many other, minor local churches existed in addition to these is not known. For the diocese of Chur around 800, a total number of 230 local churches is documented.<sup>10</sup> For Freising around the mid-820s, more than 200 local churches can be traced.<sup>11</sup> For the diocese of Constance, more than 100 churches of the early Middle Ages are archaeologically documented today;<sup>12</sup> there must have been a lot more in the Carolingian period. A ninth-century list from the diocese of Clermont enumerates 54 churches (including, however, the cathedral and several monasteries);<sup>13</sup> unfortunately, it is no longer possible to determine exactly which types of churches were included here and which were not. The dioceses in the Carolingian empire differed considerably in size, so the number of local churches varied from diocese to diocese. Given the numbers for some dioceses, however, we postulate a total of around 200 local churches, including several dozen baptismal churches in an average diocese. In view of well over 100 episcopal sees in the area north of the Alps alone, there must have been tens of thousands of local churches in the Carolingian world apart from Italy, with its unusually dense ecclesiastical landscape.

These local churches, however, were very differently endowed with land. There were splendid, well-endowed local churches, but also poor ones that had trouble surviving in the long run. In a capitulary of 818/19, Louis the Pious therefore ordered that each church should be provided with at least one *mansus*.<sup>14</sup> There is sufficient evidence that

<sup>9</sup> Notitia Arnonis, ed. F. Lošek, 'Notitia Arnonis und Breves Notitiae. Die Salzburger Güterverzeichnisse aus der Zeit um 800. Sprachhistorische Einleitung, Text und Übersetzung', in *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde* 130 (1990), pp. 5–192, ch. 6, 26, p. 90; cf. also T. Kohl, 'Villae publicae und Taufkirchen – ländliche Zentren im süddeutschen Raum der Karolingerzeit', in P. Ettel and L. Werther (eds), *Zentrale Orte und zentrale Räume des Frühmittelalters in Süddeutschland. Tagung des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz und der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena vom 7.–9.10.2011 in Bad Neustadt an der Saale* (Regensburg, 2013), pp. 161–74, at pp. 166–8.

<sup>10</sup> Bishop Victor III of Chur complained in summer 823 in a letter to Emperor Louis the Pious: 'Ducente siquidem XXX et eo amplius ecclesiae sunt infra parochia nostra, ex quibus non amplius quam sex baptisteria, et viginti quinque minores tituli ad episcopatum remanserunt, et ipse male depraedatae' (*Bündner Urkundenbuch*, ed. E. Meyer-Marthaler and F. Perret (Chur, 1955), no. 46, p. 39).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. H. Stahleder and K. Steigelmann, *Hochstift Freising (Freising, Ismaning, Burgrain)*, *Historischer Atlas von Bayern. Tl. Altbayern* 33 (Munich, 1974), pp. 9–13.

<sup>12</sup> B. Scholkmann, 'Frühmittelalterliche Kirchen im alemannischen Raum. Verbreitung, Bauformen und Funktion', in *eadem* and S. Lorenz (eds), *Die Alemannen und das Christentum*, *Schriften zur südwestdeutschen Landeskunde* 48 (Leinfelden-Echterdingen, 2003), pp. 125–52, at pp. 149–51.

<sup>13</sup> *Libellus de ecclesiis Claromontanis*, ed. W. Levison, *MGH SRM* 7 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1920), pp. 454–67; for the dating cf. pp. 454–5.

<sup>14</sup> *Capitulare ecclesiasticum*, ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Capit.* 1 (Hanover, 1883), no. 138, ch. 10, p. 277.

this imperial demand did not remain pure wishful thinking on the part of the court; it was referred to time and again in later normative texts and, as far as we can see, also became effective in practice.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, especially in times of economic crisis, some places of worship could end up on the brink of economic ruin. Thus, at the end of nearly a decade of failed harvests, epidemics and famine,<sup>16</sup> in 829 Louis ordered that the bishops should examine poor and ruinous churches to see whether their situation was due to the negligence of those responsible, or to the fact that there were more churches than could be sustained in the region in question.<sup>17</sup>

The differences between local churches were indeed great: the polyptych of Saint-Germain-des-Prés testifies for *Villa supra mare* (Saint-Germain-Village?) a church that was ‘almost dilapidated’ (*pene dissipata*) and endowed with only one *mansus* and a mere nine *bunuarua* of arable land.<sup>18</sup> Saint-Mauritius in Villemeux-sur-Eure near Chartres, on the other hand, had manor land amounting to 24 *bunuarua* of arable land, plus cultivated land for vineyards, pastures and meadows, and 6 *mansus*, with a total of another 84 *bunuarua* of arable land.<sup>19</sup> Saint-Mauritius in Villemeux alone, then, had ten times more arable land than the church in *Villa supra mare*.

An even more differentiated picture emerges as soon as we take the possible sources of income into account. Especially in the case of baptismal churches, which enjoyed tithing rights, the income from the tithes could have been at least as important as the income that the church in question generated from other sources. However, not all

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Hincmar of Reims, ‘Zweites Kapitular’, ed. R. Pokorny and M. Stratmann, *MGH Capit. Episc.* 2 (Hanover, 1995), ch. 2, p. 46 (reception: Regino of Prüm, *Sendbandbuch* I.14, ed. W. Hartmann, Freiherr vom Stein-Gedächtnisausgabe 42 (Darmstadt, 2004), p. 26).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. M. McCormick, P.E. Dutton and P.A. Mayewski, ‘Volcanoes and the Climate Forcing of Carolingian Europe, A.D. 750–950’, *Speculum* 82 (2007), pp. 865–95, at pp. 881–4; S. Patzold and E. Ziegler, ‘Die Gefahren des Qualitätsmanagements. Überlegungen zur Vulnerabilität der politischen Ordnung des Frankenreichs unter Ludwig dem Frommen’, in C. Ligneureux et al. (eds), *Vulnerabilität / La vulnérabilité. Discourse und Vorstellungen vom Frühmittelalter bis ins 18. Jahrhundert / Discours et représentations du Moyen-Âge aux siècles classiques*, Bedrohte Ordnungen 13 (Tübingen, 2020), pp. 113–27. Cf. also Hludowici et Hlotharii epistola generalis a. 828, ed. A. Boretius and V. Krause, *MGH Capit.* 2 (Hanover, 1897), no. 185 B, p. 4: ‘Quis enim non sentiat Deum nostris pravissimis actibus esse offensum et ad iracundiam provocatum, cum videat tot annis multifariis flagellis iram illius in regno nobis ab eo commisso desaevire, videlicet in fame continua, in mortalitate animalium, in pestilentia hominum, in sterilitate pene omnium frugum, et, ut ita dixerim, diversissimis morborum cladibus atque ingentibus penuriiis populum istius regni miserabiliter vexatum et afflictum atque omni abundantia rerum quodam modo exinanitum?’

<sup>17</sup> Capitulare Wormatiense, ed. A. Boretius and V. Krause, *MGH Capitularia* 2 (Hanover, 1897), no. 191, ch. 3, p. 12: ‘si vero per impossibilitatem contigit, ut aut plures sint, quam necesse sit, aut maioris magnitudinis, quam ut ex rebus ad eas pertinentibus restaurari possint, episcopus modum inveniatur, qualiter congrue emendari et consistere possint’.

<sup>18</sup> *Polyptychon von Saint-Germain-des-Prés* IX.4, ed. Hägermann, p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> *Polyptychon von Saint-Germain-des-Prés* XX.1, ed. Hägermann, p. 160.

churches in the Carolingian empire were allowed to collect tithes. It was especially the many poorer churches that had to do without this kind of income.<sup>20</sup>

Taken together, this means the following. From the perspective of the local clergy and their communities, the wealth of their respective churches – whether in land, liturgical equipment, books, building fabric, regular income from tithes, or in some other form – was by no means divided equally. Poor churches, therefore, were most probably part of the experience of many people in the Carolingian world.

## 2. Control over land, income from land

We could neglect such differences by looking only at the church as an institution: some individual churches may have been poorly endowed and even have struggled to survive, but the church as a whole was undoubtedly rich in land. Here too, however, we will have to differentiate. In practice, a substantial proportion of church property was either not under the control of the church or yielded little or no income for it. There were at least six reasons for this:

- I. First, it was easily possible for laymen to build a church on their own land, which continued to belong to them even after it had been consecrated as a place of worship by the bishop in charge. The Synod of Frankfurt (794) explicitly stated this: ‘As to churches erected by free men: it is permitted to transfer them, to sell them, only that the church is not destroyed, but daily tributes are paid to it.’<sup>21</sup> In the 850s, Archbishop Hincmar of Reims, in his treatise ‘De ecclesiis et capellis’, took it for granted that laymen could hold the *dominium* over churches; Hincmar merely insisted that the priests who ministered at these churches remain entirely subject to the supervision of the diocesan bishop.<sup>22</sup>

Hundreds of documents testify that transactions with churches were common in the Carolingian world. Laymen built a church (individually or as a community project), endowed it with land and then later sold, exchanged, gave away, or bequeathed their church, be it to other laymen, to clergymen, to monasteries, convents or bishops. Moreover, numerous churches belonged to the king; these

<sup>20</sup> Cf. S. Patzold, *Presbyter*, ch. 6, pp. 241–304.

<sup>21</sup> *Capitulare Franconofurtense*, ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Capit.* 1 (Hanover, 1883), no. 28, ch. 54, p. 78: ‘De ecclesiis quae ab ingenuis hominibus construuntur: licet eas tradere, vendere, tantummodo ut ecclesia non destruat, sed serviuntur cotidie honores.’

<sup>22</sup> Hincmar of Reims, *Collectio de ecclesiis et capellis*, ed. M. Stratmann, *MGH Fontes* 14 (Hanover, 1990).



are especially well documented in those polyptychs in which at least parts of the fiscal land are described.<sup>23</sup>

2. Second, in the Carolingian world, church property, but also churches themselves, were regularly given away as loans. It was common for bishoprics and monasteries to lend a good portion of their land to laymen (or clergy) in the form of *beneficia* or *precariae*. Such loans could be limited in time to a few years, but in the ninth century they were usually coterminous with the lifetime of the lender; sometimes even subsequent generations were included in the loan contracts.<sup>24</sup> How large the share of these loans was in the total church land can no longer be calculated today, nor can it even be estimated with any degree of reliability, for loan contracts had a far worse chance of being preserved than charters of donation. When, in the twelfth century, the monks at Lorsch recorded the old charters of their monastery in a cartulary, they decided not to include the old precarial grants at all, for, as they stated, meanwhile all these documents had become irrelevant for the present.<sup>25</sup> In St Gall, where more than seven hundred charters from the Carolingian period have survived as originals, *precariae* were so common that a considerable part of the monastery's land was *de facto* not under the control of the monks and their abbot. Precarial grants represent about two-thirds of the abbey's transactions over the entire period; they peaked in the earlier ninth century at four-fifths, but after 850 declined to about half.<sup>26</sup> For Saint-Germain-des-Prés,

<sup>23</sup> Cf. e.g. 'Das Urbar des Reichsgutes in Churrätien', ed. E. Meyer-Marthaler and F. Perret, in *Bündner Urkundenbuch*, vol. 1 390–1199 (Chur, 1955), pp. 375–96, at p. 376, l. 19 (*ecclesia sancti Petri ad Campos id est Feldchiricha*); p. 376, l. 23 (*Capella ad Rautenen*); p. 378, l. 22 (*In villa Sataginis beneficium Andree clerici ecclesia*); p. 378, l. 26 (*Est ecclesia in Nanzingas cum decima de ipsa villa*); p. 379, l. 2 (*In Seliene ecclesie duae*); p. 379, ll. 3–5 (*In villa Sanuuio ecclesia, cum decima de ipsa villa* [ . . . ] *Et in Turingos similiter cum ecclesia, quae habet mansum I*) etc. Most of the churches mentioned in this text were granted as *beneficia* to laymen or clergy.

<sup>24</sup> Still important is H. von Voltolini, 'Prekarie und Benefizium', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 16 (1922), pp. 259–306; cf. also B. Kasten, 'Beneficium zwischen Landleihe und Lehen – eine alte Frage, neu gestellt', in D.R. Bauer et al. (eds), *Mönchtum – Kirche – Herrschaft 750–1000. Josef Semmler zum 65. Geburtstag* (Sigmaringen, 1998), pp. 243–60; *eadem*, 'Economic and Political Aspects of Leases in the Kingdom of the Franks during the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: A Contribution to the Current Debate about Feudalism', in S. Bagge and T. Lindkvist (eds), *Feudalism. New Landscapes of Debate, The Medieval Countryside* 5 (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 27–55; P. Depreux, 'L'apparition de la précaire à Saint-Gall', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge* 111 (1999), pp. 649–73; L. Morelle, 'Les "actes de précaire", instruments de transferts patrimoniaux (France du Nord et de l'Est, VIIIe–XIe siècle)', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge* 111 (1999), pp. 607–47; P.J. Fouracre, 'The Use of the Term *beneficium* in Frankish Sources: A Society Based on Favours', in W. Davies and P.J. Fouracre (eds), *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 62–88. For the earlier period cf. I.N. Wood, 'Teutsind, Witlaic and the History of Merovingian *precaria*', in W. Davies and P.J. Fouracre (eds), *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 31–52.

<sup>25</sup> *Codex Laureshamensis*, ed. K. Glöckner, Arbeiten der Historischen Kommission für den Volksstaat Hessen (Darmstadt, 1929), vol. 2, p. 1: 'Ceterum precariorum transscribere formulas ociosum duximus, eo quod ipso res prestate suis traditionibus inscripte sint, et eodem precarie siue prestatie morte eorum qui eas precario acceperant, uim et locum amiserint.'

<sup>26</sup> Goetz, 'Beobachtungen', p. 202.

only fragments of the list of those properties that were issued as *beneficia* in the 820s have survived, so that we cannot say exactly what portion of the land was exploited by benefice holders.<sup>27</sup> Another list of such *beneficia* is preserved for the monastery of Saint-Remi in Reims, dating from the period shortly before the middle of the ninth century.<sup>28</sup> The *Brevium exempla* from the time of Charlemagne offers a model, using the example of Weißenburg *precarii*, of how such borrowed estates were to be described by officials of the king.<sup>29</sup> Even if we cannot know exact numbers, the evidence suggests that many monasteries had lent considerable parts of their landed property to laymen.<sup>30</sup>

Local churches, too, were affected by this widespread lending practice. It was common in the Carolingian world that ecclesiastical institutions also gave such churches as *beneficia*, together with the land those churches owned. In this way, not only clerics but also laymen were granted churches. If such a grant was made by order of the king (*de verbo regis*), the transaction was subject to special conditions: the benefice holder then had to give 20 per cent of the income he had earned from the loaned property to the ecclesiastical lending institution. In addition, the holder was explicitly obliged to maintain the building fabric of the church.<sup>31</sup> Taking all these phenomena together, it can be assumed that a considerable part of the church's property (as well as many churches themselves) were actually not at the disposal of the church at all. These local churches, their regular revenues and their land benefited clerics or spiritual institutions only in part – or not at all.

3. Moreover, in the Carolingian world, numerous donations of landed property to churches were tied to conditions. Typical were gifts made

<sup>27</sup> These fragments are edited as 'Fragmenta duo', in *Polyptychon von Saint-Germain-des-Prés*, ed. Hägermann, pp. 217–19. Also the polyptych describing the *beneficia* of Saint-Amand-les-Eaux is only known by some fragments: Cf. Benefizial-Polyptychons von Saint-Amand-les-Eaux, ed. D. Hägermann and A. Hedwig, in *Das Polyptychon und die Notitia de Areis von Saint-Maur-des-Fossés*, Beihefte der Francia 23 (Sigmaringen, 1990), pp. 103–5; for an analysis cf. *ibid.*, pp. 85–9.

<sup>28</sup> *Le polyptyque et les listes de cens de l'Abbaye de Saint-Remi de Reims. IXe–XIe siècles*, ed. J.-P. Devroey, Travaux de l'Académie nationale de Reims 163 (Reims, 1984) pp. 57–8.

<sup>29</sup> *Brevium exempla*, ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Capit.* 1 (Hanover, 1883), no. 128, chs 10–22, pp. 252–4; cf. W. Metz, 'Die Weißenburger Prekarier der sogenannten *Brevium Exempla ad describendas <res> ecclesiasticas et fiscales*', *Blätter für pfälzische Kirchengeschichte und religiöse Volkskunde* 34 (1967), pp. 160–71; for the dating and the historical context cf. the different opinions of D. Campbell, 'The *Capitulare de Villis*, the *Brevium exempla*, and the Carolingian Court at Aachen', *EME* 18 (2010), pp. 243–64, and J.-P. Devroey and N. Schroeder, 'Mettre l'Empire en réseau: approvisionnement et manger à la table de Charlemagne', in R. Große and M. Sot (eds), *Charlemagne. Les temps, les espaces, les hommes. Construction et déconstruction d'un règne*, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 34 (Turnhout, 2018), pp. 353–70, at p. 358 and p. 364.

<sup>30</sup> With regard to Saint-Germain-des-Prés cf. still E. Lesne, 'Les bénéficiers de Saint-Germain des Prés au temps de l'abbé Irminon', *Revue Mabillon* 12 (1922), pp. 73–89 and pp. 209–18.

<sup>31</sup> The principle is clearly described in the *Capitulare missorum item speciale*, ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Capit.* 1 (Hanover, 1883), no. 35, ch. 56, p. 104: 'Ut ii qui per beneficium domini imperatoris ecclesiasticas res habent decimam et nonam dare et ecclesiarum restaurationem facere studeant.' The best article on this topic is still G. Constable, 'Nona et Decima'. An Aspect of the Carolingian Economy', *Speculum* 35 (1960), pp. 224–50.



during life, that only became valid upon the donor’s death. Other donors reserved the usufruct of the donated property for themselves for their lifetime (and sometimes even for their descendants). Still others tied the use of the income from the donated lands to a specific purpose: frequently attested, for example, is the earmarking of donations for the supply of candles to the community in question. In all these cases, too, the church did not have the land at its full disposal.<sup>32</sup>

4. Closely connected to this was another fundamental phenomenon: the Carolingian kings assumed, as a matter of course, that they themselves directed and led the *ecclesia*. Therefore they laid claim to public services that churches had to provide from their possessions. This included not only hospitality for the king and his court on their travels, but especially military service, i.e. the provision of contingents for war.<sup>33</sup> For this very reason, donors sought to prevent the misappropriation of their gifts: these gifts were intended to serve the poor in a permanently godly way (and thus the salvation of the donor); they were not meant to be given as benefices to lay magnates who were trained to kill others in war. Numerous churches in the Carolingian world, however, were obliged to provide troops or to give money for this purpose instead. The *Notitia de servitio monasteriorum* of 819 divided monasteries subject to the king into three categories – depending on whether they had to provide prayers only, or prayers and donations, or prayers, donations and military service.<sup>34</sup> Numerous polyptycha of the Carolingian period record duties for military service (such as the provision of ox carts) or a corresponding monetary tribute (often referred to as *hostilicium*).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Cf. R. Schieffer, *Die Entstehung von Domkapiteln in Deutschland*, Bonner historische Forschungen 43 (Bonn, 1976), pp. 438–99; J.W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4.21 (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 85–135.

<sup>33</sup> C. Haack, *Die Krieger der Karolinger. Kriegsdienste als Prozesse gemeinschaftlicher Organisation um 800*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 115 (Berlin, 2020), pp. 139–55.

<sup>34</sup> *Notitia de servitio monasteriorum*, ed. P. Becker, in *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum* 1 (Siegburg, 1963), pp. 485–99, at p. 493: ‘quae monasteria in regno vel imperio suo dona et militiam facere possunt, quae sola dona sine militia, quae vero nec dona nec militiam, sed solas orationes pro salute imperatoris vel filiorum eius et stabilitate imperii’.

<sup>35</sup> Still important for the source material: R. Kötzschke, ‘Zur Geschichte der Heeressteuern in karolingischer Zeit’, *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* 2 (1899), pp. 231–43. Recently: S. Esders, ‘“Öffentliche” Abgaben und Leistungen im Übergang von der Spätantike zum Frühmittelalter: Konzeptionen und Befunde’, in T. Kölzer and R. Schieffer (eds), *Von der Spätantike zum frühen Mittelalter. Kontinuitäten und Brüche, Konzeptionen und Befunde*, Vorträge und Forschungen 70 (Ostfildern, 2009), pp. 189–244, at pp. 229–31. In the polyptych of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, ed. Hägermann, the *hostilicium* is regularly mentioned at the end of a *breve*. Cf. e.g. IV/35: ‘Sunt mansi ingenuiles. XXIII. et dimidium, serviles. VII. Exit inde in hostilico ad unum annum de argento libras. III. et solidos. X. Ad alium annum, propter carnaticum, libras. II. et solidos. V.’; V/93: ‘Sunt in Uedrarias, sicut supra scriptum habetur, mansi. LXXXVIII. qui solvunt hostilicium solidos. CCCIII.’ Often the same tax is called *ad hostem*: *ibid.*, XI/10: ‘Sunt in Nuuliaco mansi vestiti. VI. et dimidium, et alia medietas est absa, sunt per focos. XVI. Solvunt ad hostem multones. XII.’ Sometimes the tax is given in kind: *ibid.*, VIII/42: ‘Solvunt pro hostilico vinum modios. CCV.’

- In addition to such services, which were regularly demanded by the king, other public services could be demanded in special situations, which similarly prove the king's access to the church property and the income from it. In 877, for example, Charles the Bald established a special levy in order to be able to pay tribute to the Northmen. This levy was due from all the territories that had belonged to his realm before 870, but also included all of Burgundy. The bishops of these regions were to contribute from the estates of their churches in the following manner: a *solidus* was due from each manor, eight *denarii* from each *mansus ingenuilis*, and four *denarii* from each *mansus servilis*. Furthermore, each bishop was to collect a levy of four *denarii* to five *solidi* from each priest in his diocese, depending on the latter's ability to pay (which again points to the huge economic differences between local churches). According to the report of Archbishop Hincmar of Reims, Charles was able to raise resources for a royal tribute of five thousand pounds of silver (= 1,200,000 *denarii*).<sup>36</sup>
5. A risk to the integrity of church property was posed not only by the king and other laymen, but also by clerics themselves. Time and again, legal texts of the Carolingian period reveal concern that a priest might alienate the furnishings of the church where he was performing his spiritual service and repurpose them for himself or for members of his family. This was not just a matter of pawning or selling precious objects, such as liturgical equipment, which Regino of Prüm reckoned with in his early tenth century 'Sendhandbuch'.<sup>37</sup> It was also, at least indirectly, about the alienation of land. Archbishop Hincmar of Reims, for example, took the following practice into account: a priest who had come to his office penniless and without any property of his own (*nichil patrimonii habens*) could, after his ordination, buy up lands (*predia*) for himself. This would now apparently be with income from his church. Hincmar wanted to stop this practice, for according to law, all that a priest acquired *after* his ordination belonged to his church.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> S. Coupland, 'The Frankish Tribute Payments to the Vikings and their Consequences', *Francia* 26 (2000), pp. 57–75, at pp. 65–7.

<sup>37</sup> Regino of Prüm, *Sendhandbuch*, ch. 1, *Notitia*, question 37, p. 30; with regard to the alienation of land cf. also question 70, p. 34.

<sup>38</sup> Hincmar of Reims, 'Zweites Kapitular', ed. Pokorny and Stratmann, ch. 18, p. 50: 'Investigandum similiter, si nichil patrimonii habens, quando proventus est ad ordinem ecclesiasticum, postea emerit predia, cuius iuris sint, quoniam ecclesiae, ad quam de nihil habentibus promotus est, esse debent iuxta canonicae auctoritatis decretum' (reception: Regino, *Sendhandbuch*, I.222, p. 124); cf. also: Capitula ecclesiastica, ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Capit.* 1 (Hanover, 1883), no. 81, ch. 11, p. 178: 'Ut unusquisque presbyter res quas post diem consecrationis adquisierit proprias ecclesiae relinquat' (= Ansegis, *Collectio capitularium*, ed. G. Schmitz, *MGH Capitularia*, n.s. 1 (Hanover, 1996), I.150, p. 512; the passage is repeated by Radulf of Bourges, *Capitula*, ed. P. Brommer, *MGH Capit. Episc.* 1 (Hanover, 1984), ch. 17, p. 246). For some further examples cf. also Regino, *Sendhandbuch*, I.355, 357, 359, pp. 184/186.

6. Finally, we must also consider that land alone did not bring in an economic yield, for land needed to be worked by people to produce anything at all. Therefore, access to a sufficient number of workers was at least as important as ownership of the land. It was precisely here, however, that individual churches in the Carolingian world repeatedly encountered difficulties. The *Descriptio mancipiorum* cited at the beginning of this article mentions numerous *colonicae apstae*. What the wording means is not completely clear, but the farms in question certainly did not yield any income for the church in Marseilles at the time of the *descriptio*, probably because the church of Marseille lacked the operating personnel. In the *villa Bedada*, for example (probably Viade, on the border between the communes of Pertuis and Tour-d'Aigues, Vaucluses), all the thirty farms listed by name were recorded as *colonicae apstae* in 813.<sup>39</sup> In addition, a little more than 8 per cent of the *coloni* are marked as *ad requirendum* in this document.<sup>40</sup> These were labourers who were bound to the soil, but who had in some way or other escaped from the control of the church of Marseilles and therefore were now legally to be reclaimed.<sup>41</sup> In Lyon in 813/14, only 33 of the 760 farms that Leidrad could use for himself were unproductive (*colonicae absae*);<sup>42</sup> but of the 133 farms that the canons of Saint-Étienne had, no fewer than 50 (i.e. more than a third) yielded no income.<sup>43</sup>

Taking all this together, a greatly differentiated picture of churches and their landed wealth in the Carolingian period emerges. It is true that a considerable proportion of the land in the Carolingian empire was in the hands of the church, and that at least in the first half of the ninth century it grew still further through donations to the church. At the same time, however, we see clear evidence that a high proportion of the estates that belonged to churches were either in other hands, or economically unproductive, or profitable only in a limited way. This may have been because the church in question itself, together with its accessories, belonged to one (or even several) laymen because the land was issued as a loan, or because the donation to a church was conditional, or because the

<sup>39</sup> *Descriptio mancipiorum*, ed. Guerard, no. D, pp. 635–6.

<sup>40</sup> Devroey, 'Élaboration', p. 460.

<sup>41</sup> Devroey, 'Élaboration', p. 460 and Faith, 'Farms', pp. 183, 186 and 195, think that *ad requirendum* means something like 'to be enquired further'; but cf. the meaning of the word *requirere* with regard to *coloni* e.g. in the roughly contemporaneous *Capitulare Karoli Magni*, ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Capit.* 1 (Hanover, 1883), no. 56, ch. 4, p. 143: 'Ut homines fiscalini sive coloni aut servi in alienum dominium commorantes, a priore domino requisiti, non aliter eisdem concedantur, nisi ad priorem locum; ubi prius visus fuit mansisse, illuc revertatur et ibi diligenter inquiratur de statu ipsius cum cognatione eius.'

<sup>42</sup> *Epistolae variorum Carolo magno regnante scriptae*, ed. Dümmler, no. 30, p. 544.

<sup>43</sup> *Epistolae variorum Carolo magno regnante scriptae*, ed. Dümmler, no. 30, p. 544.

king demanded public services from the land in question, or because there was a lack of manpower to work the land.

The Carolingian kings, as a matter of course, considered themselves accountable before God for the church and its land; they therefore accessed church property for their own rule just as naturally. And not only the king, but also other laymen held churches – either as their property, or as a loan. All this was brought together in a fundamental set of ideas that we encounter time and again in the Carolingian world: in the eyes of the intellectual elites of the time, the *ecclesia* was neither a separate organization of clergy, nor an institution within society. What these intellectuals called *ecclesia* was often enough the community of all Christians in the Frankish empire – clergy and laity alike – in their political order, led jointly by kings and bishops.

This blurring of the boundary between church and clergy, on the one hand, and the surrounding society, on the other, is important if we are adequately to grasp the role that individual churches played in practice, locally, in and for the local world that surrounded them. This role, however, went far beyond the field of economics, as we shall show in the next section.

### 3. Local churches as ‘economic distribution centres’

Let us now shift our focus away from the many ways in which various kinds of churches could (or could fail to) own, use, or be the beneficiaries of land, in order to zoom in on the roles that a local church could play for its community as the local hub of what Ian Wood has called ‘moral and economical transactions’.<sup>44</sup> To begin with the latter: in ways similar to the process by which temples redistributed believers’ gifts to the temple’s community, those churches in the Carolingian period that had the right to collect tithes (as we have seen, by no means all churches), were expected to use part of these resources locally to take care of widows, orphans, pilgrims and the poor.<sup>45</sup> One bishop in southern Germany, writing around the middle of the ninth century, instructed the priests of his diocese that

all Christians should faithfully render tithes to the holy church of God, and that the priest should take care that he divides these tithes into four

<sup>44</sup> Wood, ‘The Early Medieval West as a Temple Society’, p. 109.

<sup>45</sup> There is a substantial literature on the development of tithes, and several views, see for instance: G. Constable, *Monastic Tithes from their Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1964); M. Lauwers (ed.), *La dime, l’église et la société féodale* (Turnhout, 2012), esp. J.-P. Devroey, ‘L’introduction de la dime obligatoire en Occident: entre espaces ecclésiastiques et territoires seigneuriaux à l’époque carolingienne’, at pp. 87–106; S. Patzold, *Presbyter*, ch. 6 at pp. 241–304.

parts according to the canonical rule. That is: one part for his own maintenance, another one for the roof and lights, a third one for pilgrims and the poor, widows and orphans, the fourth for the bishop.<sup>46</sup>

While pilgrims were, in all likelihood, travelling when they knocked on a priest’s door to ask for short-term hospitality, churches that had enough resources to do so were expected to take more permanent care of a more or less stable group of widows, orphans and the poor. Most of what we know about this through prescriptive texts comes in the shape of instructions about the division of tithes like the one just quoted: one part of such revenues (usually a quarter) was reserved for those members of the community who needed it most. Only in rare cases do we find more explicit references to so-called *matricularii*, ‘registered poor people’,<sup>47</sup> in episcopal instructions to the secular clergy. One bishop, for instance, sternly pointed out that each priest should ‘have’ such *matricularii*, taking into account the size and possibilities of their churches.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, the same bishop indicated there was a distinct lack of enthusiasm for this pastoral duty: he notes negligence (*neglegentia*) on this point throughout his diocese and therefore admonishes his secular clergy to do better.<sup>49</sup> Another bishop’s instruction suggests that some priests made clever use of the system by subsidizing friends or members of their families who had fallen on hard times. Such people, so the author admonished his audience, should be maintained out of the priest’s own part of the tithes, not with the resources meant for the ‘real’ poor.<sup>50</sup>

Even though the tithe-collecting local churches of the Carolingian world were undeniably engaged in the redistribution of resources in this way, it would, however, be going too far to conclude that this was

<sup>46</sup> *Capitula Frisingensia tertia*, ed. R. Pokorny, *MGH Capit. Episc.* 3 (Hanover, 1995), pp. 216–32, ch. 28, p. 229: ‘Decimae ab omnibus christianis fideliter sanctae dei ecclesiae reddantur et presbiteri provideant, ut illam decimam secundum canonicam regulam in quatuor partes dividant, hoc est sibi unam ad victum, alteram ad tectum et luminaria concinnanda deputet, tertiam peregrinis et pauperibus, viduis et orphanis erogat, quartam ad recipiendum episcopum observet.’

<sup>47</sup> On the *matricularii* see M. Rouche, ‘La matricule des pauvres. Evolution d’une institution de charité du Bas-Empire jusqu’à la fin du Haut Moyen Âge’, in M. Mollat (ed.), *Études sur l’histoire de la pauvreté*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1974), pp. 83–110.

<sup>48</sup> *Capitula Silvanectensia secunda*, ed. R. Pokorny, *MGH Capit. Episc.* 3 (Hanover, 1995), pp. 84–92, ch. 20, p. 91: ‘Ut unusquisque presbiter iuxta modulum et possibilitatem suae ecclesiae clericos et matricularios habeat . . .’.

<sup>49</sup> *Capitula Silvanectensia secunda*, ed. Pokorny, pp. 91–2: [the same sentence continues] ‘. . . quia, sicut nobis relatum est, usque nunc in parrochia nostra permaxima neglegentia extitit’.

<sup>50</sup> Hincmar of Reims, ‘Zweites Kapitular’, ed. Pokorny and Stratmann, pp. 45–70, ch. 17, p. 50: ‘Ut matricularios habeat iuxta qualitatem loci, non bubulcos aut porcarios, sed pauperes ac debiles et de eodem dominio, nisi forte presbiter habeant fratrem aut aliquem propinquum debilem aut pauperrimum, qui de eadem decima sustententur. Reliquos autem propinquos, si iuxta se habere voluerit, de sua portione vestiat atque pascat.’

at the centre of their activities.<sup>51</sup> Whereas the rich monasteries and well-endowed bishoprics we encountered before were the recipients of substantial amounts of land and wealth through gifts and income, and participated in all kinds of economic transactions, the vast majority of the tens of thousands of local churches mentioned above were a mere fraction of that size. Two factors are important here: firstly, the size of the land that maintained the church and its clergy; secondly, the size of the community and the amount of tithes it generated. As we have seen, Carolingian local churches existed in great variety, from large and well-endowed to those that owned less than the minimum needed to survive. At the same time, a church serving a relatively poor community would receive fewer tithes with which it could maintain the poor than one with a larger and richer flock of tithe-payers.<sup>52</sup> One may well wonder how much (or little) those churches on the poorer end of the spectrum received in tithes to begin with. The mere fact that most episcopal instructions concerning the care of the local poor are conditional is telling:<sup>53</sup> priests should only take on this responsibility if the size of their churches (and, presumably, their revenues from tithes) allowed this. In a subsistence economy where surplus was small to begin with, the 10 per cent donated every year to a modest-sized local church by a small community, in all probability did not leave the priest with the resources to feed and clothe small armies of needy Christians.<sup>54</sup> What is more, royal and episcopal instructions devote remarkably little attention to this aspect of local religious life. Even though, then, the big, wealthy institutions were engaged in all kinds of transactions that moved and redistributed resources in various ways, the majority of churches in the Carolingian world most likely only participated to a limited extent, if they had the resources to do so at all. The role of local churches as hubs that distributed ideas and ideals and offered a range of important services to members of their communities seems to have been more significant than such economic activities.

#### 4. Local churches as hubs of knowledge and practical experience

Like the temples of south India described by Appadurai and Appadurai Breckenridge, early medieval churches were the religious and social focal points of cities and settlements throughout the Carolingian

<sup>51</sup> Wood, 'The Early Medieval West', p. 110–11.

<sup>52</sup> Patzold, *Presbyter*, pp. 117–23.

<sup>53</sup> See above, n. 48.

<sup>54</sup> On the size, fabric and resources of local societies in early medieval Europe see now Zeller *et al.*, *Neighbours and Strangers*, esp. ch. 3, pp. 52–85.



world.<sup>55</sup> It was exactly this period that witnessed the development of a much finer infrastructure of pastoral care than had existed previously: instead of making believers cover sometimes substantial distances to reach the nearest church,<sup>56</sup> Carolingian kings and bishops reasoned that round-the-clock pastoral care should be within reach for everybody.<sup>57</sup> Churches and their clergy, therefore, became fixed features of local communities, and increasingly entered those areas where churches had previously been thin on the ground. Even though we are still far removed from the development of the clearly defined parishes and villages of the later Middle Ages, the coming into being of a finer-mazed network of local churches had important consequences for the functions that such churches could fulfil. The most relevant aspect of this development is that it allowed churches to become the kind of local hubs that made possible the ‘moral transactions’ mentioned by Ian Wood.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, literate and educated priests not only had pastoral care on offer, but also other forms of knowledge and practical experience from which the community could benefit. However, other than in the temple model, the church was not always directly at the centre of these functions, even though it was the source of the practices and knowledge that underpinned them. Three examples will clarify how we should picture this.

The first example intersects in interesting ways with tithe-collecting churches that had the duty to care for the poor. It concerns a core subject of Christian teaching to all believers, be it via the Sunday sermon or through other forms of pastoral care: that of charity (*caritas*), especially towards the poor. One homily for the beginning of Lent that survives in several pastoral handbooks, for instance, admonishes the people gathered in church ‘to receive pilgrims assiduously, and to give alms to the poor frequently’.<sup>59</sup> Episcopal instructions, too, frequently admonish the laity to give to the poor for the benefit of their souls. The giving of alms, after all, was one of the good works that every Christian should practice in order to deserve eternal life in heaven. As Bishop Theodulf of Orléans put it to his priests, instructing them to teach this to the laity and quoting the biblical books of Daniel, Ecclesiasticus and Luke: “redeem your sins with alms, and your iniquities with works of

<sup>55</sup> A. Appadurai and C.A. Appadurai Breckenridge, ‘The South Indian Temple: Authority, Honour and Redistribution’, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, n.s. 10 (1976), pp. 189–211.

<sup>56</sup> R. Godding, *Prêtres en Gaule mérovingienne* (Brussels, 2001).

<sup>57</sup> Van Rhijn, *Shepherds of the Lord*, ch. 2, pp. 49–100.

<sup>58</sup> Wood, ‘The Early Medieval West’.

<sup>59</sup> The sermon was once edited as a possible work of Augustine (ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 39, cols 227–40), but has also been edited as the work of Caesarius of Arles (ed. D. Morin, *CCSL* 103, pp. 64–8). Authorship remains unknown to this day, but it was quite popular as preaching material for the laity. See for instance the priests’ manuscript Laon, Bibliothèque Municipale 288, fols 40r–46r and, in a slightly different version, MS Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek codex 27, fols 128v–130v.

mercy to the poor" (Dan. IV.24), "water quenches a flaming fire, and alms resist sin" (Eccl. III.33). And the Lord says in the Gospel: "give alms and behold, all things are clean unto you" (Luke XI.41).<sup>60</sup> What is interesting here is how local churches perhaps did not always have the resources to take care of many poor and weak members of their flocks themselves, but gave out a strong message that good lay Christians should take up these acts of charity for the well-being of their souls. One may say that such economic transactions did have the church at their centre (in the sense of the ideas of charity that priests spread), but in practice operated within the wider circle of the Christian community belonging to a church.

This brings us to the second example, that of the church as the place where community-shaping rituals took place. It is in this sense that the term 'moral transactions' fits best in the context of the early medieval church: laymen became members of the community of Christians (so: the *Ecclesia*) by being baptized by a priest in a church (the *ecclesia*). It has been pointed out in recent literature how the vows of a baptismal candidate were similar to those of a faithful man to his lord: they (or their godparents if too young) renounced the devil and pronounced their correct belief in the articles of faith. Through baptism they became Christians, which meant the promise of heaven after death on the condition that they led lives pleasing in the eyes of God, their Lord.<sup>61</sup> In cases where members of the Christian community broke their baptismal vows by indulging in sinful behaviour, the rituals of confession and penance, again orchestrated by the priest in church, gave sinners the possibility of redeeming their misdeeds and returning to the right path. The morality underpinning ideas about good behaviour and sin, in turn, were spread through various forms of pastoral care. Here, knowledge was of the essence, for in order to distinguish good behaviour from bad, Christians sometimes had to negotiate a potential minefield. The mandatory Sunday rest, for instance, taught that no work should be done on the day of the Lord (following Exodus XX.10), but this left open many questions that could only be answered by a religious expert. It was only a priest who could teach worried Christians that cooking and bathing indeed counted as

<sup>60</sup> Theodulf of Orléans, 'Erstes Kapitular', ed. P. Brommer, *MGH Capit. Episc.* 1 (Hanover, 1984), pp. 73–142, ch. 36, p. 135: 'Peccata tua elemosini redime in misericordiis pauperum. [. . .] Ignem ardentem extinguit aqua, et elemosina extinguit peccatum. Et dominus in evangelio: Veruntamen date elemosinam, et ecce omnia munda sunt vobis. (Luc. II,41).'

<sup>61</sup> On baptism as a *sacramentum* see O.M. Phelan, *The Formation of Christian Europe. The Carolingians, Baptism and the Imperium Christianum* (Oxford, 2014), esp. ch. 3.

work and were therefore not permitted on Sundays, but that it *was* allowed to wash one’s feet on a Sunday in cases of emergency.<sup>62</sup>

As a third, brief, example, we will highlight a few other, community-binding functions that the priest of a local church could fulfil, each of them derived from his literacy and education, but not directly part of religious ritual or pastoral care in a strict sense.<sup>63</sup> It is well known, for instance, that – episcopal objections notwithstanding<sup>64</sup> – priests often acted as scribes or witnesses of charters, and that local churches were a common venue for charters to be signed even if the land transactions recorded in these charters did not concern the church itself.<sup>65</sup> One could say that the local church with its literate priest simply offered what was needed for land transactions to happen; it thereby functioned as a hub for these activities, but was often not at the centre of such business itself. Of a completely different order is medical knowledge that at least some priests had on offer. Pastoral manuscripts of the Carolingian period occasionally contain medical recipes useful for man and beast (against headaches and haemorrhoids, cures for coughing sheep and sick cattle), and requiring common ingredients only.<sup>66</sup> This, too, suggests how the priest and his church constituted not only a religious, but also a social hub that attracted people with different kinds of problems and questions, and that these issues could concern the health of one’s sheep as easily as that of one’s soul. The tendency for priests to become the people to consult on any question on any subject at all in the course of the Carolingian period is also underlined by the presence of prognostic texts in pastoral manuscripts. With such writings at hand, a priest could tell those who wanted to know a wide range of matters highly relevant to agricultural societies. The observation of the moon, for instance, foretold what the weather would be in the coming year, whether the harvest would be a

<sup>62</sup> Cooking: Council of Ver (a. 755), ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Capit.* 1 (Hanover, 1883), no. 14, ch. 14, p. 36. Bathing and washing feet: *Paenitentiale Merseburgense A*, ed. R. Kortje, L. Körntgen and U. Spengler-Reffge, *Paenitentia minora Francicae et Italiae saeculi VIII–IX*, CCSL 156 (Turnhout, 1994), pp. 132–69, ch. 132: ‘Lavacrum capitis in die dominico potest esse si necesse est et inlixiva pedes lavari, balneos non licet fieri.’

<sup>63</sup> C. van Rhijn, ‘Carolingian Priests as Local (Religious) Experts’, in S. Patzold and F. Bock (eds), *Gott handhaben. Religiöses Wissen im Konflikt um Mythisierung und Rationalisierung* (Berlin, 2016), pp. 131–46.

<sup>64</sup> For instance by Radulf of Bourges in his episcopal statute, ed. P. Brommer, *MGH Capit. Episc.* 1 (Hanover, 1984), ch. 19 and note 105.

<sup>65</sup> R. McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989); P. Erhart and J. Kleindinst, *Urkundenlandschaft Rätien* (Vienna, 2004); Zeller *et al.*, *Neighbours and Strangers*, pp. 143–8; many examples in B. Zeller, ‘Local Priests in Early Medieval Alamannia. The Charter Evidence’, in Patzold and Van Rhijn (eds), *Men in the Middle*, pp. 32–49.

<sup>66</sup> For instance the manuscript London, British Library, Add. 19725, a pastoral compendium which has a series of recipes added in the margins. See [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add\\_ms\\_19725\\_fso01ar](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_19725_fso01ar) [last consulted 2 March 2021].

success, what character a newborn child would have, or whether a sick person would live or die.<sup>67</sup>

All in all, then, Carolingian local churches and their clergy as religious and social focal points of a community had several things in common with the temples of southern India: they were the hubs where various (moral) transactions could take place, and it is to them that people could turn with their questions and requests for advice. They certainly fulfilled functions that went beyond pastoral care in a strictly religious sense of the word. At the same time, economic redistribution does not seem to have been all that important a function of these churches, even if churches were expected to take care of the poor. The distribution of soul-saving (and, on occasion, life-saving) knowledge appears at the centre of its activities, which is not all that surprising in a period that focussed on leading the Frankish population to salvation.

### Conclusion

At the end of the sixth century, Gregory of Tours famously made his evil king Chilperic I complain: ‘Behold, our fisc is poor, and our riches have been transferred to the churches; no one now rules at all except the bishops alone; our honour is fading and has been transferred to the bishops of the cities.’<sup>68</sup> Charlemagne and his descendants no longer had any reason for such complaints. It is true that in their realm, too, a good part of the land was in the hands of the churches, and the legal principle still applied that goods belonging to a church could not be taken away from it again. However, a discourse had now been established that defined the entire society in its political order as *ecclesia*. Precisely this allowed the Carolingians to access goods directly from churches for public tasks (and here especially for war). Parallel to this, practices of land-lending were established: church property could be lent for a limited period of time, so that church land was also used by laymen on a large scale. In addition, the elites of the Carolingian period made local churches and their priests actors of local *correctio*.<sup>69</sup> On the one hand, this initiated a process of multiplication and consolidation of smaller churches in the countryside, beyond the

<sup>67</sup> C. van Rhijn, ‘Pastoral Care and Prognostics in the Carolingian Period: The Case of El Escorial, Real Biblioteca di San Lorenzo, ms L III 8’, *Revue Bénédictine* 127 (2017), pp. 272–97.

<sup>68</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* VI.46, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, *MGH SRM* 1.1 (Hanover, 1951), p. 320: ‘Aiebat enim plerumque: “Ecce pauper remansit fiscus noster, ecce divitiae nostrae ad ecclesias sunt translatae; nulli penitus nisi soli episcopi regnant; periet honor noster et translatus est ad episcopus civitatum.”’

<sup>69</sup> C. van Rhijn, ‘Priests and the Carolingian Reforms: The Bottle-necks of Local Correctio’, in R. Corradini *et al.* (eds), *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* 13 (Vienna, 2006), pp. 219–37.

episcopal sees; on the other hand, it led to priests in the countryside not only assuming pastoral tasks in their local societies, but becoming part of the local elite, conducting rural business, caring for the poor, and imparting knowledge that went far beyond the realm of liturgy, pastoral care and the basics of Christian belief. Therefore, in this new Carolingian ‘*ecclesia*-society’ not only was the boundary between state and church obscured (so that kings and laymen had access to church lands); but at the same time churches and clergy were increasingly becoming integrated parts of local societies beyond the *civitates*.

It remains a task for future research to work out more precisely when and how this new Carolingian *ecclesia*-society emerged. The old assumption that Charles Martell ‘secularized’ church property has long been proven wrong.<sup>70</sup> And yet one can see the first beginnings of the *ecclesia*-society at least in the assemblies of the 740s convened by Charles’s sons, Pippin III and Carloman. Here, for the first time, those practices of land-lending by order of the king become visible, which were firmly institutionalized in the following decades.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, it is unclear whether these assemblies of the 740s were ecclesiastical synods or political gatherings convened by the king; the results of the episcopal deliberations were promulgated in the name of the Carolingian *principes*. During Pippin’s reign – that is, in the 750s and 760s – the line between political assemblies and synods was being blurred even further.<sup>72</sup> A generation later, under Charlemagne, the court started to consider local priests as agents of the godly

<sup>70</sup> Cf. H. Wolfram, ‘Karl Martell und das fränkische Lehenswesen. Aufnahme eines Nichtbestandes’, in J. Jarnut (ed.), *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit*, Beihefte der Francia 37 (Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 61–78; for a recent overview cf. A. Fischer, *Karl Martell. Der Beginn karolingischer Herrschaft* (Stuttgart, 2012), pp. 145–51.

<sup>71</sup> Karlmanni principis capitulare Liptinense, ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Capit.* 1 (Hanover, 1883), no. 11, ch. 2, p. 28: ‘Statuimus quoque cum consilio servorum Dei et populi christiani, propter imminetia bella et persecuciones ceterarum gentium quae in circuitu nostro sunt, ut sub precario et censu aliquam partem ecclesialis pecuniae in adiutorium exercitus nostri cum indulgentia dei aliquanto tempore retineamus, ea conditione, ut annis singulis de unaquae casata solidus, id est duodecim denarii, ad ecclesiam vel ad monasterium reddatur; eo modo, ut si moriatur ille cui pecunia commodata fuit, ecclesia cum propria pecunia revestita sit. Et iterum, si necessitas cogat ut princeps iubeat, precarium renovetur et rescribatur novum.’

<sup>72</sup> For this early period cf. now K. Ubl, ‘Das konziliare Modell: Pippin der Jüngere und die Versammlungsmonarchie im 8. Jahrhundert’, in P. Depreux and S. Patzold (eds), *Versammlungen im frühen Mittelalter*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde (Berlin and New York), forthcoming. For later developments cf. the observations by T. Reuter, ‘Assembly Politics in Western Europe from the Eighth Century to the Twelfth’, in T. Reuter (ed.), *Medieval Politics and Modern Mentalities* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 193–216; M. Costambeys and S. Airlie, ‘Talking Heads: Assemblies in Early Medieval Germany’, in P.S. Barnwell and M. Mostert (eds), *Assemblies in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 29–46; C. Pössel, ‘Authors and Recipients of Carolingian Capitularies, 779–829’, in R. Corradini, R. Meens, C. Pössel and P. Shaw (eds), *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 12 (Vienna, 2006), pp. 253–74.

betterment of as many people as possible. Around 800, the first lists of *capitula* emerged, with which bishops sought to govern this type of clergy.<sup>73</sup>

In the course of all this, church property was not simply secularized, as nineteenth-century historiography had it. Instead, one could say that society as a whole was ‘ecclesiasticized’ in its political order to such an extent that laymen and rulers within this new *ecclesia*-society could also access the lands of churches for their own purposes. Bishops and abbots, however, started to see a serious problem in this in the 820s, to which they paid more and more attention from the middle of the ninth century onwards. Now it was no longer the king who complained that the *fiscus* had fallen into bishops’ hands: instead, it was the bishops who complained loudly that kings and laymen were seizing *res ecclesiasticae*.

*Universiteit Utrecht*

*Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen*

<sup>73</sup> Van Rhijn, *Shepherds of the Lord*, pp. 33–9 but see also earlier work, e.g. R. McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms* (London, 1977), pp. 45–77.