

SAINTS, DEMONS, AND PEASANTS IN CAROLINGIAN CHRISTIANITY

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Thesis

My research examines how Carolingian dynastic legitimacy relied on the inculcation of **the empire as the church** through the correction of the ignorant. It traces the construction of a new, sacralized Frankish identity that disseminated through emerging parish networks. I argue that this identity reached its ultimate expression in the literature of the early ninth century, especially under the rule of Louis the Pious, when the ecclesiastic and royal elite bound the fortune of the empire and the fate of their souls to the religious behavior of the entire population.

Unlike existing scholarship, I introduce the peasantry as essential actors in Carolingian religious structures. The peasantry engaged with forces believed to be supernatural to access mechanisms of religious and political power. As parish networks pressed the countryside into the religious and political hierarchies, the peasants confronted the supernatural with practices that impeded the process of sacralization by which the Carolingian elites ordered the empire.

Sources

Core Primary Sources:

- . Ninth-century letters, annals, and miracle collections

Core Secondary Sources:

- Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State* (2009)
- Thomas F. X. Noble, “Carolingian Religion” (2015)

Theoretical Framework:

- Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (1977-1978)
- Edwards Shils, “Charimas, Order, and Status” (1965)



“Who does not see that this is devised either by the tricks of wicked men, or by the deceptions and mockery of demons, who easily conquer those who are slow of mind...and even invade them, so that, God justly permitting it, they are allowed to perform these things from their own wickedness?”

(Amolo, *The Letter of Amolo Archbishop of Lyon to Theobald Bishop of Langres, Concerning Suspect Relics* (c.841x844))

The Suspect Relics of Dijon, c. 840

Marginalized & gendered action

- When have relics of holy martyrs ever separated wives from husbands, mothers from children, young girls from parents.

The Project of Archbishop Amolo of Lyon

- Perversion of religious norms: penance, tithes, holy spaces
- Threatened pastoral networks: the imagined core of the Carolingian empire
- Dissemination of the holy into parish communities
- “Vanity of novelties:” realize spiritual wellness through local channels



The Demon of Kempten, 858

Communal action

- Peasant agency: exile and extrajudicial punishments
- Collective sin: “as if it were for his sins that everyone had to suffer such things” (
- Pastoral network

Parish Networks

- Reconfigure justice towards Christian theme of peace
- Ignorance undermines exorcism
- Corrupt priest, inattentive bailiff

Sacralizing the Empire. 751-888



Codex Aureus of St. Emmeran, fol. 5v-6v

Emperor of the Romans

- Legitimization of coup
- Vicar of Christ
- Redefine Frankish world as Carolingian

Carolingian Reform

- Manuscripts
 - Pre-800: 1,800
 - 800-900: 9,000+

Patronage networks

- Imperial abbeys
- Royal lordship
- Gift-giving