

**Wealth, Violence and Status:
Lay and Ecclesiastical Élites in the Middle Loire
Valley
c. 850 - c. 1150**

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Summary

Wealth, Violence and Status: Lay and Ecclesiastical Élites in the Middle Loire Valley, c. 850 - c. 1150

Interpretations of the period following the disintegration of the Carolingian empire in Western Europe at the end of the ninth century have long divided historians. Those who believed a violent rupture in political and social structures took place around the year 1000 – a theory widely-known in English as the ‘Feudal Revolution’ – have been opposed by those who argued for an essential continuity and a slow evolution from the Carolingian *status quo ante*. This thesis aims to transcend these debates, by approaching medieval society through a case-study in the Loire valley region relying on two fresh methodological insights. Firstly, it will investigate changes in the economic structures which provided both the clerical and the lay élite with the material basis for their positions, an area which has received little scholarly attention in the course of these debates. Secondly, it will attempt to analyse how those élites claimed, performed and maintained their status, recognising that social status is a process subject to constant negotiation and re-evaluation. Based on these two approaches, the thesis explores changing patterns of élite behaviour in order to better understand the social and economic changes which took place from the late ninth century onwards.

Following a detailed discussion of the historiography, the thesis examines landholding patterns in the middle Loire valley in the century and a half both before and after the year 1000. It concludes that from the early eleventh century onwards, while ecclesiastical institutions consolidated their landholding and ceded less control than before to the laity, lay property became subject to hierarchical tenure, resulting in more élites benefiting materially from the land. An investigation into the customs of the *seigneurie banale* finds that their principal

effects were economic, transferring more wealth from the agricultural base into the hands of the élite. This wealth was then utilised by the élite to claim an even more elevated social status. This was achieved by increased patronage to the church, which saw long-lasting, more visible relationships established between the donors and recipients by way of new liturgical rituals and spiritual counter-gifts. There was also a noticeable shift in attitudes towards violence around this time, as legitimate use or threat of force became a mark of élite status. Finally, an investigation into methods of identification in documentary sources reveals that there was increasing competition for status, with new titles and descriptive words, like *miles* and *dominus*, being used to communicate social hierarchies without claiming dependence on political élites.

This thesis concludes that there was a significant and fundamental transformation of social and economic structures, beginning in the middle of the tenth century, in the middle Loire valley, although the pace of change is slower than would be appropriate for a 'Feudal Revolution'. Nevertheless, the breakdown of the Carolingian political order unleashed a wave of competition amongst local and regional élites, which saw them innovate and adapt the heritage of Carolingian culture to create a new, 'feudal' social order. This was fuelled by the changes in economic structures which provided élites with more wealth to promote their own status; the competition for status in turn fuelled élites' need for more wealth and their incentive for economic expansion.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Marie-Claude O'Sullivan (Mamou), who first introduced me to the river Loire, its landscape and its history.

Abbreviations

Edited charters are always referenced in the notes by their number in the edition, rather than by page number. Where references to charters are joined by a forward slash (/), this indicates a charter edited in more than one location, or the archival and edited locations of a document.

A.B.	<i>Annales Bertiniani</i> , eds. Félix Grat, Jeanne Vielliard and Suzanne Clémencet, <i>Les Annales de Saint Bertin</i> (Paris, 1964), trans. Janet N. Nelson, <i>The Annals of St-Bertin</i> (Manchester, 1991).
AD	Archives Départementales
ARTEM	<i>Chartes originales antérieures à 1121 conservées en France</i> , eds. Cédric Giraud, Jean-Baptiste Renault and Benoît-Michel Tock (Nancy and Orléans, 2010), http://www.cn-telma.fr/originaux/index/ (accessed: 04/03/2019).
BM	Bibliothèque Municipale
BNF	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France
<i>Cart. Gen. Yon.</i>	Quantain, Maximilien (ed.), <i>Cartulaire général de l'Yonne; Recueil de documents authentiques pour servir à l'histoire des pays qui forment ce département</i> (Auxerre, 2 vols, 1854-60).
<i>Cat. H I</i>	<i>Catalogue des actes d'Henri Ier, roi de France (1031-1060)</i> , ed. Frédéric Soehnée (Paris, 1907).
<i>Cat. R II</i>	<i>Catalogues des actes de Robert II, roi de France</i> , ed. William Mendel Newman (Paris, 1937).
Cluny	<i>Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny</i> , eds Auguste Bernard and Alexandre Bruel (Paris, 6 vols, 1876-1903).

<i>EME</i>	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i> (Oxford, 27 vols, 1992-)
Fleury	<i>Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire</i> , eds Maurice Prou and Alexandre Vidier (Paris, 2 vols, 1900-1907).
Flodoard, <i>Annales</i>	Flodoard of Reims, <i>Annales</i> , ed. Phillipe Lauer (Paris, 1905); trans. Steven Fleming and Bernard S. Bachrach, <i>The 'Annals' of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966</i> (Peterborough, Ontario, 2004).
<i>GASGA</i>	<i>Gesta Abbatum Sancti Germani Autissiodorensis</i> , ed. and trans. Noelle Deflou-Leca and Yves Sassier, <i>Les gestes des abbés de Saint-Germain d'Auxerre</i> (Paris, 2011).
<i>GPA</i>	<i>Gesta Pontificum Autissiodorensium</i> , ed. and trans. under the direction of Michel Sot, <i>Les gestes des évêques d'Auxerre</i> (Paris, 3 vols, 2002-9).
La Charité	<i>La Cartulaire du prieuré de La Charité-sur-Loire (Nièvre), ordre de Cluny</i> , ed. René de Lespinasse (Nevers and Paris, 1887).
Micy	Marie-Marguerite Lemarignier, <i>Études sur les anciennes chartes del'abbaye de Saint-Mesmin de Micy et essai de restitution des cartulaires</i> (Unpublished Thèse de l'École des Chartes, Paris, 3 vols, 1937)
<i>MSB</i>	<i>Les Miracles de Saint Benoit</i> , ed. E. de Certain (Paris, 1858).
<i>Origo</i>	' <i>Origo Brevis Nivernensium Comitum</i> ', in <i>Monumenta Vizeliacensia; Textes relatifs à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Vézelay</i> , ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Turnhout, 1976), pp. 235-9.
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Past & Present</i> (Oxford, 244 vols, 1957-)

Pontigny	<i>Le premier cartulaire de l'abbaye cistercienne de Pontigny (XIIe-XIIIe siècles)</i> , ed. Martine Garrigues (Paris, 1981).
Rec. Ch II	<i>Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve</i> , eds Georges Tassier, Arthur Giry and Maurice Prou (Paris, 3 vols, 1943-55).
Rec. Ch III	<i>Recueil des actes de Charles III le Simple, roi de France (898-923)</i> , ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris, 1940).
Rec. Odo	<i>Recueil des actes d'Eudes, roi de France (888-898)</i> , ed. Robert-Henri Bautier (Paris, 1967).
Rec. LL V	<i>Recueil des actes de Lothair et de Louis V, rois de France (954-987)</i> , eds Louis Halphen and Ferdinand Lot (Paris, 1908).
Rec. LLC	<i>Recueil des actes de Louis II le Bègue, Louis III et Carloman II, rois de France (877-884)</i> , eds Félix Grat, Jacques de Font-Reaulx, Georges Tessier and Robert-Henri Bautier (Paris, 1978).
Rec. L IV	<i>Recueil des actes de Louis IV, roi de France, (936-954)</i> , ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris, 1914).
Rec. L VI	<i>Recueil des actes de Louis VI, roi de France, (1108-1137)</i> , eds. Robert-Henri Bautier and Jean Dufour (Paris, 4 vols, 1992-4).
Rec. RR	<i>Recueil des actes de Robert Ier et de Raoul, rois de France (922-936)</i> , ed. Jean Dufour (Paris, 1978).
Rec. Ph I	<i>Recueil des actes de Philippe Ier, roi de France (1059-1108)</i> , ed. M. Prou (Paris, 1908).
RG	Rodulfus Glaber, <i>Historiarum Libri Quinque</i> , ed. and trans. John France, <i>Rodulfus Glaber: Opera</i> (Oxford, 1989).

St-Cyr	<i>Cartulaire de Saint-Cyr de Nevers</i> , ed. René de Lespinasse (Nevers and Paris, 1916).
Ste-Croix	<i>Cartulaire de l'église cathédrale Sainte-Croix d'Orléans</i> , eds Joseph Thillier and Eugène Jarry (Orléans, 1906).
St-Étienne Nev	de Lespinasse, René (ed.), 'Les chartes de Saint-Étienne de Nevers', <i>Bulletin de la Société nivernaise des lettres, sciences et arts</i> , 3rd ser., 12 (1908), pp. 76-130.
St-Gondon	<i>Cartulaire du prieuré bénédictin de Saint-Gondon-sur-Loire (866-1172)</i> , ed. P. Marchegay (Les Roches, 1877).
St-Julien	'The Cartulary of St-Julien d'Auxerre' in <i>Three Cartularies from Thirteenth-Century Auxerre</i> , ed. Constance Brittain Bouchard (Toronto, 2012), pp. 185-223.
St-Sulpice	Buhot de Kersers, Louis (ed.), 'Essai de reconstitution du cartulaire A de l'abbaye de Saint-Sulpice de Bourges', <i>Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires du Centre</i> , 25 (1912), pp. 3-350.
Suger, VLG	Suger, <i>Vita Ludovici Grossi</i> , ed. Henri Waquet, <i>Vie de Louis VI le Gros</i> (Paris, 1929); trans. Richard C. Cusimano and John Moorhead, <i>The Deeds of Louis the Fat</i> (Washington, D.C., 1992).
Vézelay I	'Cartulaire' in <i>Monumenta Vizeliacensia; Textes relatifs à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Vézelay</i> , ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Turnhout, 1976), pp. 243-393.
Vézelay II	'Cartulaire, dit de Florence' in <i>Monumenta Vizeliacensia II; Supplément</i> , ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Turnhout, 1980), pp. 2-34.
Vierzon	<i>La Cartulaire de Vierzon</i> , ed. Guy Devailly (Paris, 1963).

A Note on Nomenclature

The orthography of proper nouns in medieval Latin documents is notoriously inconsistent. My approach to personal and place-names in this thesis is thus somewhat arbitrary, but is aimed at minimising confusion and seeking consistency. Where possible, I have translated all personal names into modern forms rather than using medieval spelling; thus ‘Robert’ not ‘Rotbertus’ and ‘Louis’ rather than ‘Ludovicus’. I have retained ‘Odo’ in its original form, as is the convention in English-language historiography, in preference to the French form ‘Eudes’. The perennially problematic ‘Rodulfus’ has been written as ‘Raoul’, following the French convention, with the exception of the eleventh-century Burgundian chronicler, who is too familiar to Anglophone readers as Ralph Glaber. For names without a modern English or French form, I have retained the medieval spellings, with the Latin endings removed from names of obviously Germanic origins: e.g. ‘Teudalgrinus’, but ‘Gundulf’ not ‘Gundulfus’. All places are referred to by their modern names, except when unidentified/unidentifiable, in which case the medieval form is kept. Lesser-known locations in France will be followed by their modern *département* (abbreviated ‘dep.’) in the first instance; for example, Bourges (dep. Cher).

Introduction

Since the publication of Marc Bloch's momentous study in 1939, the developments and characteristics of 'feudal society' have been a leitmotif of medieval historians, particularly those working on the lands that would become the kingdom of France.¹ Inspired in no small part by the intellectual influence of the *Annales* movement, of which Bloch was a founder, post-war historians produced thousands of works investigating virtually every aspect of the social history of the middle ages, drawing largely on the voluminous records preserved from the kingdom's monasteries and churches. This trend culminated in the wide-ranging, and ultimately inconclusive, debates on the 'Feudal Revolution' in the 1990s. This thesis returns once more to the study of social dynamics of the late- and post-Carolingian periods, offering an analysis of the social élites, both lay and ecclesiastic, in a defined region of the Loire valley between the mid-ninth and mid-twelfth centuries.

This central argument of this thesis is that unstable political power structures and increased access to wealth from landed property allowed persons in the tenth and eleventh centuries to claim élite social status in ways which were not possible in the preceding or succeeding centuries. The wide-ranging opportunities to claim élite status produced intense competition for wealth, privileges and power among local élites, which were manifested in many of the social characteristics labelled by early twentieth-century historians as emblematic of 'feudal society'. In this way, I suggest a nuanced and compelling new analysis of the motors of social change in France around the year 1000. This argument rests on two key methodological pillars. The first is a recognition of social (and in this particular case, élite) status as processual, subject to constant confirmation, performance, negotiation and re-evaluation. The second is a recognition of the materiality of élite status, that is to say its grounding in the possession and control of wealth and resources, as well as the structures which produce and distribute them. In the case of a medieval agricultural society such as the middle Loire valley,

¹ Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. L.A. Manyon (London, 2nd ed., 1962).

these material resources are overwhelmingly the control of landed property and its produce. Each major chapter of the thesis examines in detail one method by which people could mobilise their wealth and resources to claim and process elite status: through holding and controlling land; through the bundle of rights historians have called *seigneurie banale*; through patronage and ritual interactions with the church; through displays of violence; and through the means by which elites were identified in writing, by themselves and by others. I have chosen these particular aspects as the foci for the thesis's chapters largely because they represent themes which are well attested in the surviving sources (particularly in the charter evidence) and which most clearly demonstrate the relationship between wealth and the ability to claim status, an aspect of the study of social elites which has been largely absent from scholarly discussion. (Undoubtedly there existed many other ways in which status was claimed, not least of which were through kinship, marriage and familial relationships.²) Preceding these central chapters of the thesis is a short survey and critique of the scholarly work on medieval French society since the second world war, which forms the first chapter of the thesis proper.

Defining the Élite

Defining or recognising the elites in medieval society is not an easy task, and historians have long struggled to do so.³ Since the end of the second world war, the aristocracy/nobility of Europe has seen a huge amount of scholarship devoted to it, focusing primarily on the Carolingian and immediately post-Carolingian period in Continental Europe (i.e. the same chronological and spatial parameters as this thesis). Much of the earliest waves of this scholarship was in French and German, with contributions on the French side conducted within the framework of the regional studies inspired by Georges Duby's work on the Mâconnais.⁴ From

² These aspects of establishing status have been well-studied in both Anglophone and Francophone scholarship in recent years and are thus not a focus of this thesis.

³ For the difficulties involved, with respect to post-Conquest England, see Judith Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 7-16. See also Karl-Ferdinand Werner, *Naissance de la Noblesse. L'essor des élites politiques en Europe* (Paris, 1998) pp. 125-42.

⁴ Timothy Reuter, 'Introduction' in *idem* (ed. and trans.), *The Medieval Nobility*, (Amsterdam, 1979), pp 3-9. Thomas N. Bisson, 'Nobility and Family in Medieval France: A Review Essay', *French Historical Studies* 16 (1990), pp. 601-5, is a helpful overview on the (limited) interaction

the late 1970s Anglophone research began to tackle these questions too, stimulated (in part) by the translation and publication of many of the seminal articles on the European nobility by Timothy Reuter in 1979.⁵ The overriding research question which drove the study of the European aristocracy until the 1990s was one of origins: where did the nobility come from and how did it establish its privileged social and political position vis-à-vis the state and the king? This approach sought to determine when and how élite families became self-conscious of their own nobility and their ability to transmit it (alongside their lordships and properties) through marriage and inheritance, creating the dynastic, agnatic, patrilineal nobilities *de jure* which flourished from the late Middle Ages onwards.⁶ As a result, genealogies, kinship structures, inheritance patterns, marriage patterns and medieval attitudes and ideas about family and kinship became the main objects of attention in the study of early and central medieval élites and valuable scholarship on these topics continues to appear to this day.⁷

between the regionalist approach launched by Duby and the prosopographical work of German historians like Karl Schmid and K.-F. Werner.

⁵ Reuter (ed. and trans.), *Medieval Nobility*. Jane Martindale, 'The French Aristocracy in the Early Middle Ages: A Reappraisal', *Past & Present* 75 (1977), pp. 5-45, was the first major contribution in English to these debates and appeared two years prior to Reuter's collection.

⁶ Overviews in Timothy Reuter, 'The Medieval Nobility in Twentieth-Century Historiography' in Michael Bentley (ed.) *Companion to Historiography* (London, 1997), pp. 177-202, and Bisson, 'Nobility and Family', *French Historical Studies* 16.

⁷ Martindale, 'French Aristocracy', *PE&P* 75; Constance Brittain Bouchard, *"Strong of Body, Brave and Noble": Chivalry and Society in Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY, 1998); Eadem, *"Those of My Blood": Constructing Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (Philadelphia, PA, 2001); Eric Bournazel, 'Mémoire et parenté: la problème de la continuité dans la noblesse de l'an Mil' in Michel Parisse and Xavier Barral I Altet (eds), *Le roi de France et son royaume autour de l'an Mil* (Paris, 1992), pp. 111-15; Régine Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc (VIIe-Xe siècle). Essai d'anthropologie sociale* (Paris, 1995); Theodore Evergates, 'Nobles and Knights in Twelfth-Century France' in Thomas N. Bisson (ed.), *Cultures of Power; Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, PA, 1995), pp. 11-35; Stephen D. White, *Custom, Kinship and Gifts to Saints: The Laudatio Parentum in Western France, 1050-1150* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988); Werner, *Naissance*, esp. pp. 409-71; David Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility; Constructing Aristocracy in England and France 900-1300* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 99-155; Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, Cynthia Postan (trans.) (London, 1977), pp. 59-80, 134-57; Idem, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest; The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, Barbara Bray (trans.) (Chicago, IL, 1983); Amy Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin: Aristocratic Family Life in the Lands of the Loire, 1000-1200* (Ithaca, NY, 2010); Eadem, 'Kith and Kin: An Examination of the Kinship and Family Structures of the Nobility of Eleventh and Twelfth-Century Blois-Chartres', *French Historical Studies* 20 (1997), pp. 419-58; Eadem, 'Climbing the Tree of Jesse: Aristocratic Marriage in the Lands of the Loire, 1050-1150' in Martin Aurell (ed.) *Les Stratégies Matrimoniales (IXe - XIIIe siècles)* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 101-18.

Throughout this work, however, there has been little concerted attempt to define exactly what it was that made one a member of the *élite*, in spite of a constant search for the moment at which a family ‘became’ noble. The terms nobility and aristocracy are often used interchangeably or in very different ways from one study to another.⁸ Many early studies characterised the nobility through a multitude of juridical, legal, political and social markers, rarely made explicit.⁹ Others have based their studies on the descriptions provided by the medieval sources themselves, based on adjectives like *nobilis* and its synonyms.¹⁰ Since the beginning of this century, however, historians have made more concerted attempts to define the upper echelons of medieval society in more theoretically and methodologically sophisticated ways, in order to better understand how differentiation of status worked in practice. In a stimulating essay published in 2000, Timothy Reuter challenged historians to explain ‘how [the nobility] got away with [their social domination]’, suggesting that violence, cultural capital and moral and ideological justifications may prove fruitful avenues of research.¹¹ David Crouch, seeking to explain the transition from an ill-defined ‘aristocracy’ to a legally-circumscribed ‘nobility’ in France and England during the course of the central middle ages, analysed the foundations of emerging nobility under the headings of conduct (behaviour, chivalry and *preudommie*), descent (lineage and family links), class (in the Marxist sense - a self-conscious social group defined by its hierarchical relationships with other classes) and lordship (structures of power and domination, particularly the honor/*seigneurie*).¹² He notes that these have

⁸ Cf. Crouch, *Birth of Nobility* with Werner, *Naissance de la noblesse*; two books both speaking of two utterly different historical processes as ‘the birth of nobility’, despite the shared central thread of a strong, detailed critique of the long historiographical tradition in the field. See Werner, *Naissance*, pp. 31-93; Crouch, *Birth of Nobility*, pp. 2-3.

⁹ Leopold Genicot, ‘Recent Research on the Medieval Nobility’ in Reuter (ed. and trans.) *Medieval Nobility*, pp. 23-9.

¹⁰ Bouchard, ‘*Strong of Body*’, pp. 1-27; Janet L. Nelson, ‘Nobility in the Ninth Century’ in Anne Duggan (ed.), *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe; Concepts, Origins, Transformations* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 43-51. Werner, *Naissance*, esp. pp. 125-42, 283-328, 507-13 pushes this model to its holistic intellectual conclusions.

¹¹ Timothy Reuter, ‘Nobles and Others: The Social and Cultural Expression of Power Relations in the Middle Ages’ in Duggan (ed.) *Nobles and Nobility*, quotation at p. 88. Cf. David Crouch’s suggestion that nobility be defined as the act of looking and behaving as a noble without being laughed at; David Crouch, *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain, 1000-1300* (London, 1992), pp. 2-3.

¹² Crouch, *Birth of Nobility*.

been the dominant axes of analysis employed by historians over the past three centuries of study on the nobility. However, although Crouch uses them as a launching point to reconstruct the outlines of élite society, they reflect the historiographical legacy more than a statement of the most fruitful approaches to the medieval social reality.¹³

The most detailed examination of the definition of medieval élites in recent years has come from historians of the early middle ages, in particular from the historians and publications associated with the *Les Élités au haut moyen âge* project.¹⁴ By the mid-2000s both Chris Wickham and Jean-Pierre Devroey had published analyses of the factors which either defined an ideal-type aristocrat or which formed the aristocratic *habitus* (in a Bourdieu-ian sense) in early medieval Europe.¹⁵ Although working on a wide range of issues, the *Les Élités* project built on these proposals to produce the most sophisticated models of understanding élite status; indeed, the significant choice of ‘élites’ as a descriptor, in place of nobility or aristocracy, displays an effort to consider the group in light of its role within medieval societies more generally, rather than an effort to pre-figure later *de jure* nobilities.¹⁶ Building on his earlier work and that of the project, Chris Wickham proposed an ideal-type of medieval élite, structured around nine

¹³ Ibid, pp. 1-4.

¹⁴ Some of the project’s key questions were initially explored earlier by Régine le Jan, *La société au haut Moyen Age* (Paris, 2003), pp. 156-77.

¹⁵ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages; Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 153-5; Jean-Pierre Devroey, *Puissants et misérables. Système sociale et monde paysan dan l’Europe des Francs (VIe-IXe siècles)* (Brussels, 2006), pp. 241-64. Cf. The earlier and more limited characterisation of the Carolingian aristocracy by Goetz: Hans-Werner Goetz, ‘Nobilis. Der Adel im Selbstverständnis der Karolingerzeit’ in idem, *Vorstellungsgeschichte. Gesammelte Schriften zu Wahrnehmungen, Deutungen und Vorstellung im Mittelalter* (Bochum, 2007), pp. 173-205 [originally published in 1983]. On *habitus*, see Chris Wickham, ‘The ‘Feudal Revolution’ and the Origins of Italian City Communes’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 24 (2014), pp. 54-5; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, 1977); Idem, *On the Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, 1990) pp. 52-65.

¹⁶ François Bougard and Régine le Jan, ‘Hiérarchie: Le concept et son champ d’application dans les sociétés du haut Moyen Age’ in François Bougard, Dominique Iogna-Prat and Régine le Jan (eds), *Hiérarchie et stratification sociale dans l’Occident médiéval (400-1100)* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 5-7, 18-19; Laurent Feller, ‘Introduction. Crises et renouvellements des Élités au haut Moyen Âge: mutations ou ajustements des structures?’ in François Bougard, Laurent Feller and Régine le Jan (eds) *Les Élités. Crises et renouvellements* (Turnhout, 2006), esp. pp. 6-8; Chris Wickham, ‘The Changing Composition of Early Élités’ in François Bougard, Hans-Werner Goetz et Régine Le Jan (eds), *Théorie et pratiques des élites au Haut Moyen Âge* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 7-8.

elements, including wealth, formal office-holding and recognition by superiors, peers and underlings.¹⁷ Wickham is careful to point out that the importance of each of these elements was always contingent on a particular medieval society; not all were applicable, or of equal importance, in every case.¹⁸ This broader conception allows historians to track the changing construction, the crises and renewals of medieval élites, to better understand the dynamics of the societies which produced and sustained them.¹⁹ It provides a framework to better engage with Reuter's question, which can be nuanced from 'how did they get away with it?' to 'what were the strategies by which they attempted to get away with it (and how successful were they)?'.

This is the framework which will be followed in this study, as I attempt to trace the most important elements of élite status in the middle Loire valley during the post-Carolingian period. These elements are largely the more informal among Wickham's list: peer-recognition, prestige and expertise, alongside wealth and display, are the most prominent in this study. They are almost all present, to some degree, in each of the chapters which follows: on élite status as claimed through landholding, through *seigneurie*, through ritual performance, through violence and through patterns of identification and recognition. One further point should be made about these criteria, particularly as seen through the often ambiguous medieval evidence. While these elements each constituted a part of élite status, they did not automatically grant it; rather, each of these elements represents an avenue via which élite status could be claimed.²⁰ Treating élite status as a claim (which is ambiguous, contestable and constantly open to change), rather than an

¹⁷ Wickham, 'Composition of Élités' in Bougard *et al.* (eds) *Théorie et pratiques*, pp. 9-13. The full list of Wickham's elements are wealth (above all), ancestry, formal office-holding, *Königsnähe*, juridical status, peer-recognition, prestige, display and expertise (i.e. the cultural capital of élites).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9; Bougard *et al.* (eds), *Les élites; crises et renouvellements*.

²⁰ On status as a process/claim, see Alice Rio, *Slavery After Rome, 400-1100* (Oxford, 2017) p. 15. My thinking on this subject has been equally shaped by recent discussions among historians of power (in its broadest sense) as something processual, constantly challenged and negotiated: Reuter, 'Nobles and Others' in Duggan (ed.), *Nobles and Nobility*, pp. 85-98; Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes and Simon MacLean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 274-5. For an example of this kind of analysis in practice, see Christina Pössel, 'Authors and recipients of Carolingian Capitularies 779-829' in Richard Corradini, Rob Meens, Christian Pössel and Philip Shaw (eds), *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2006), esp. pp. 267-74.

absolute status (which is a binary approach; one is either *élite* or not) allows us more clearly to perceive the dynamics by which the importance of the various elements identified by Wickham varied through time, particularly at the lower borders of the *élites*, where social climbers successfully put forward claims even as others had their claims rejected.²¹ These are the research questions which underpin this entire thesis: how were claims to *élite* status made in the middle Loire valley, and how and why did the nature of these claims change through time and space?

The Middle Loire Valley: Outline of Political History, c. 850 - c. 1150

The area of study in which I will seek to answer these question consists of the Loire valley between Nevers and Orléans, bounded in the east by the Morvan mountain range and in the west by the Cher valley. The area covers most of the medieval dioceses of Nevers, Auxerre and Orléans, although it covers only the north-eastern portion of the archdiocese of Bourges (upper Berry). The study will cover, in modern terms, the entirety of the modern *département* of Nièvre, the vast majority of the *départements* of Cher (excluding only the extreme south and west, beyond the river Cher and the area around St-Amond-Montrond) and Loiret (excluding only the most northerly regions of Beauce and the Gâtinais around Montargis) and the south-western half of Yonne, excluding the Sénonais and the areas to the east of the river Armançon. It is not a naturally unified region: split in the Middle Ages between the duchies of Aquitaine, Burgundy and the Capetian royal demesne, it was never effectively united politically from the end of the Carolingian empire in 888 until the very end of the Middle Ages. The region contains three bishoprics (Orléans, Auxerre and Nevers) and an archbishopric (Bourges), each of whose hinterlands followed a different political trajectory after the collapse of the Carolingian empire. The political and ecclesiastical boundaries coincided with linguistic and cultural ones; the Loire, particularly in the Nivernais and Berry, remained symbolic of the boundary between Francia, Burgundy and Aquitaine

²¹ Wickham's emphasis on the transactional nature of *élite* dominance, and how it can illuminate those on the margins of *élites*, is an effort to move in this direction; Wickham, 'Composition of *Élites*' in Bougard *et al.* (eds) *Théorie et pratiques* pp. 8, 13-14, 16-17.

throughout this period.²² This was also at the heart of a zone at which the *langue d'oïl* and the *langue d'oc* came into contact. Although the numerous divisions within the region provide opportunities for comparison - to analyse whether political boundaries reflected social and economic developments - as a single river valley it retains a basic geographical unity: climatically homogenous, easily navigable, with an economy based primarily on subsistence arable agriculture, pig-rearing and viticulture.

The reign of Charles the Bald, the youngest son of Louis the Pious, coincides approximately with the opening years of this thesis. Charles's rule is traditionally seen as the apogee of the Carolingian project in Western Francia: in spite of frequent rebellions and political unrest throughout his reign, localities, including the regions which comprised the middle Loire valley, were connected to the royal court through the appointment of prelates and secular officials (bishops, royal abbots and counts). Charles was active in the middle Loire valley throughout his reign, from the battle of Fontenoy (département Yonne, 30km south-west of Auxerre) in 841 when he secured his claim to kingship, right through to his brief reign as emperor (875-77), when he continued to issue diplomas in the region.²³ There appears to have been a royal *villa* with a residence at Pouilly-sur-Loire (département Nièvre) and Charles held important political gatherings at Orléans, Fleury, Auxerre and Nevers, while his sons, Carloman and Charles, had important connections with Bourges.²⁴ Counties, bishoprics and royal abbacies in the middle Loire valley were *honores* which the king distributed to (and confiscated from) his followers frequently; these counts and bishops acted as a link between the royal court and the region in a typically Carolingian fashion.²⁵

This pattern continued across the region for much of the decade after Charles's death, with his successors continuing to issue diplomas to churches in

²² 'Annales Nivernenses' in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores (in Folio)* (Hannover, 39 vols., 1876-2009), XIII, p. 89, s.a. 958.

²³ Vézelay II 10/Rec. Ch II 446; Cart. Gen. Yon. 52/Rec. Ch II; Micy 9/Rec. Ch II.

²⁴ *AB* s.a. 845, 848, 863, 868. Carloman was lay abbot of St-Sulpice in Bourges from 863, while Charles the Younger, sub-king in Aquitaine, was buried there after his death in 866; *ibid.* s.a. 866.

²⁵ E.g. *AB* s.a. 865, 867, 868, 876; *GPA* pp. 166-9, On the archetypical Carolingian political system, see Costambeys *et al.*, *Carolingian World*, pp. 167-71.

Orléans, Auxerre, Nevers and Vézelay.²⁶ After the first interruptions to the Carolingian dynasty, with the election of the Robertian Odo to the throne of West Francia in 888, the first signs of the regionalising tendencies which are characteristic of the tenth century in France begin to emerge.²⁷ The southern half of the region in particular was hotly contested in the latter years of the ninth century and the first half of the tenth, as William the Pious and his heirs as dukes of Aquitaine established a northern stronghold at Bourges and sought to extend their influence into the Nivernais and Burgundy.²⁸ This was strongly resisted not only by the Robertians, but also by the dukes of Burgundy, Richard the Justiciar and his son Raoul (who would become king in 922), whose base in the region was Auxerre.²⁹ In this, Nevers and its hinterland seem to have become something of a battleground, with frequent armed excursions and battles recorded up until the 950s.³⁰ The second half of the tenth-century saw the gradual solidification of Robertian control of the northern half of the region, as the influence of the Carolingian kings becomes ever fainter in the documentation.³¹ Robertian control of major ecclesiastical offices was particularly apparent in Auxerre, where both the bishop and the lay abbot of St-Germain d'Auxerre were brothers of Hugh Capet.³² The pinnacle of this consolidation of power was the election of a Robertian, in the form of the duke of the Franks Hugh Capet, as king of France in 987.

By the early Capetian period, the political situation in the rest of the middle

²⁶ Ste-Croix 36/Rec. LLC 53; Ste-Croix 37, 71; Cart. Gen Yon 57/Rec. LLC no. 77; Cart. Gen. Yon 59; Vézelay II:II/Rec. LLC 5; Vézelay II:12/Rec. LLC 51; St-Cyr 33/Rec. LLC 18; St-Cyr 14/Rec. LLC nos. 50; St-Cyr 16, 34.

²⁷ On the political history of West Francia in the tenth century more generally, see Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987* (London, 1983), pp. 258-77, 305-39; Jean Dunbabin, *France in the Making, 843-1180* (Oxford, 2nd ed., 2000), pp. 27-100.

²⁸ Cluny 112/ARTEM 1581; Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Bella Parisiacae Urbis*, ed. and trans. N. Dass, *Viking Attacks on Paris: The «Bella parisiacae urbis» of Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés* (Leuven, 2007), p. 94; St-Cyr 15. See also Guy Devailly, *Le Berry du Xe siècle au milieu du XIIIe. Étude politique, religieuse, sociale et économique* (Paris, 1973), p. 118.

²⁹ GPA, pp. 188-91, 194-7; Rec. RR 25; Rec RR 26/St-Cyr 35/Cart. Gen. Yon 72; Yves Sassier, *Recherches sur le pouvoir comtal en Auxerrois du Xe au début du XIIIe siècle* (Auxerre, 1980), pp. 3-11.

³⁰ Flodoard, *Annales*, s.a. 926, 935; 'Annales Niverneses' in MGH SS XIII, p. 89, s.a. 953

³¹ The only diplomas issued by Lothar and Louis V are found in Orléans and its immediate surroundings: Ste-Croix 376/Rec. LL V 33; Ste-Croix 64/Rec. LL V 69; Fleury 55/Rec. LL V 27; Fleury 56/Rec. LL V 28; Fleury 60/Rec. LL V 34; Fleury 64/ Rec. LL V 70.

³² GPA, pp. 232-3; GASGA, pp. 8-II; Sassier, *Pouvoir comtal*, pp. 15-30.

Loire valley is once again easier to discern and it is characterised by varying levels of fragmentation.³³ In Berry and along the banks of the Loire east and west of Orléans, numerous small lordships proliferated, often centred on castles. The viscount of Bourges, attested since the time of William the Pious, was no more than one lord among many, including lords at Bourbon, Sancerre, Concessault, Mehun-sur-Yèvre, Vierzon, Sully and Beaugency. Although they held no lands directly in the region at first, there seems to have been a loose hegemony held among these lords by the counts of Blois-Champagne; a brother and a son of the count were archbishops of Bourges in the late tenth century and the first lord of Vierzon seems to have originated from the comital heartlands of Chartres.³⁴ From the 1030s the counts of Blois-Champagne had a direct foothold in Berry through the lordship of Sancerre, which they acquired by 1034 through Matilda, the only living child of Gimo, the lord of Chateau-Gordon (as the fortress was known before the twelfth century). It has traditionally been assumed that the young Matilda married the much older Odo II of Blois-Chartres; although this is based on a questionable interpretation of one of the few surviving sources for eleventh-century Sancerre, it seems certain that the counts maintained control of the lordship from this point on.³⁵ By the 1140s there was a well-established comital residence in Sancerre, with its chapel served by the nearby canons of St-Satur and in 1152 it would become the centre of its own county, headed by Stephen, who received the county as his inheritance as the third son of Theobald IV of Blois-Champagne.³⁶

³³ Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, pp. 133-222; Dominique Barthélemy, *Nouvelle Histoire des Capétiens. 987-1214* (Paris, 2012), pp. 63-81.

³⁴ Devailly, *Le Berry*, pp. 132-3.

³⁵ The first evidence of blésois control over Sancerre is the foundation charter for the house of canons at St-Satur, issued by Archbishop Aimo of Bourges in 1034: ARTEM 4414. The conclusion that Matilda married Odo seems to be based on a reading of the phrase '*Odo [...] quem sibi [Matilda] [...] emeritum elegit*'. The (rather awkward) ambiguous literal reading would translate as 'Odo, the deserved/meritorious whom she chose for herself'; scholars seem to have chosen instead to read *emeritum* as *a(d)maritum*, which would render a reading of 'Odo, whom she chose to be a husband to her'. This seems to make more sense, although it is still a very unusual way to describe marriage, which is usually signified by the verb *duco*. I have been unable to locate the original charter conserved in the AD Cher in Bourges to verify the reading of this phrase. Both possibilities - either of Matilda being married to Odo, or simply taken into some kind of wardship by him, seem equally possible.

³⁶ Comital residence: AD Cher 13 H 9, no. 1. On the formation of the county of Sancerre, see

In contrast to the extreme fragmentation west of the Loire, in the Nivernais a strong comital presence emerged in the final years of the tenth century in the form of Count Landric. The scion of the castellans in the north-east of the county, Landric had assumed the comital title by 991 and rebelled against Robert II the Pious during the so-called 'Burgundian civil war' in 1005-6.³⁷ Despite eventually submitting to the king, Landric was arguably the biggest winner of the war; recognised as count of both Auxerre and Nevers, his son and heir was married to Robert's daughter.³⁸ The dynasty established by Landric ruled the counties of Nevers and Auxerre (with Tonnerre added by Raynald, Landric's son) relatively unopposed until the end of the twelfth century, sharing power and influence with a viscomital dynasty which dominated the city of Nevers itself.³⁹ The conquest of Auxerre by the counts of Nevers in the early eleventh century, therefore, left the direct influence of the Capetian kings in the middle Loire valley restricted to the Orléannais, where they continued to patronise churches, hold court and resolve conflicts and disputes - Philip I even chose to be buried in the region, in Fleury, on his death in 1108.⁴⁰ There was a certain political *status quo* which was maintained throughout the region in the latter half of the eleventh century: royal domination in the Orléannais, comital authority in Nevers and Auxerre, small,

Devailly, *Le Berry*, pp. 359-60.

³⁷ The traditional view that Landric was granted the county as a fief by Duke Henry of Burgundy and his son-in-law and heir, Otto-William of Mâcon, has no contemporary evidence to support it: W. Scott Jessee, *Robert the Burgundian and the Counts of Anjou, ca. 1025-1098* (Washington, D.C., 2000), p. 15. Although based entirely on a clearly-fabricated twelfth-century narrative, it has largely been accepted uncritically by scholars: *Origo*, p. 237-8; René de Lespinasse, *Le Nivernais et les comtes de Nevers* (Paris, 3 vols, 1909-14), pp. 190-1; M. Chaume, *Les origines du duché du Bourgogne* (Dijon, 2 vols., 1925), pp. 458-9; Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Sword, Mitre and Cloister: Nobility and the Church in Burgundy, 980-1198* (Ithaca, NY, 1987), pp. 33, 341-3; Yves Sassier, 'La succession au comté de Nevers (XIe-XIIIe siècle)' in Frédérique Lachaud and Michael Penman (eds), *Making and Breaking the Rules: Succession in Medieval Europe, c. 1000 - c.1600 / Établir et abolir les normes: La Succession dans l'Europe médiévale, vers 1000 - vers 1600. Proceedings of the Colloquium held on 6-7-8 April 2006 / Actes de la conférence tenue les 6, 7, et 8 avril 2006* (Institute of Historical Research, University of London) (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 222-3.

³⁸ RG, II:15-16, III:6, IV:26, pp. 78-81, 104-5, 212-13; Geoffrey Koziol, 'The Conquest of Burgundy, the Peace of God and the Diplomas of Robert the Pious', *French Historical Studies* 37 (2014), pp. 188-94; Sassier, *Pouvoir Comtal*, pp. 30-41.

³⁹ St-Cyr 59, 76, 77; Cluny 3388, 3417; GPA pp. 264-5; Bouchard, *Sword, Mitre, Cloister*, p. 400.

⁴⁰ Olivier Guyotjeannin, 'Les premiers Capétiens et l'Orléannais' in *Lumieres de l'an mil en Orléannais. Autour du millénaire d'Abbon de Fleury* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 29-38; Eliane Vergnolle, 'La sépulture de Philippe Ier' in *Lumieres de l'an mil*, p. 41; Patrice Georges, 'Tombeau de Philippe Ier' in *Lumieres de l'an mil*, p. 42.

fragmentary political units in Upper Berry. Despite the political disunity, however, there remained enduring connections which crossed the region. This is perhaps most apparent in the movements of prelates: bishops of every diocese in middle Loire valley are attested at least once at the court of every Capetian king in the eleventh century.⁴¹

The growth of royal influence in the early twelfth century disrupted this established *status quo*, in particular Philip I's purchase of the viscounty of Bourges from its last viscount, Odo Arpinus.⁴² In reality, little had changed, as Philip and his son, Louis VI, continued to rule the small viscounty and the neighbouring lordship of Dun-sur-Auron very much as successors to the viscounts, rather than as kings.⁴³ The fact that Philip was in a position to buy the viscounty is due to the growth of the crusading movement, which saw both Odo Arpinus and William II of Nevers take the cross on the crusade of 1101.⁴⁴ The popular success of the crusading movement, alongside the general rising tide of religious feeling, saw a large rise in the number of religious foundations in the middle Loire valley, more than at any period since the early Christian period. Many of these new foundations were Cistercian houses, particularly popular in the Auxerrois, given its geographical proximity to Cîteaux.⁴⁵ Heightened fervour amongst clerics also led to tensions, however, as independantly-minded ecclesiastics clashed with secular leaders. William II had protracted disputes with both the monastery of Vézelay and the bishops of Auxerre, while Louis VII fought a minor war in an effort to install his choice of candidate to the archbishopric of Bourges.⁴⁶ This latter event led directly to Louis' taking of the cross at Vézelay at Easter 1146.⁴⁷ With William

⁴¹ Olivier Guyotjeannin, 'Les évêques dans l'entourage royal sous les premiers Capétiens' in Michel Parisse and Xavier Barral I Altet (eds) *Le roi de France et son royaume autour de l'an Mil*, (Paris, 1992), pp. 92-8, at p. 95.

⁴² Devailly, *Le Berry*, pp. 382-7.

⁴³ Rec. Ph I 145, 146; Rec. L VI 253; AD Cher 14G 233/Rec. L VI 328.

⁴⁴ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimatana; History of the Journey to Jerusalem*, ed. and trans. Susan B. Edgington, (Oxford, 2007), pp. 618-19.

⁴⁵ Cistercian houses founded in the region included Pontigny, Reigny, Escharlis, Bourras, Les Roches and Villegondon.

⁴⁶ Hugh of Poitiers, 'Chronicon' in *Monumenta Vizeliacensia; Textes relatifs à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Vézelay*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Turnhout, 1976), pp. 395-607; *GPA*, II, pp. 100-101; Sassier, *Pouvoir Comtal*, pp. 126-30; Devailly, *Le Berry*, pp. 392-6.

⁴⁷ James Naus, *Constructing Kingship; The Capetian Monarchs of France and the early Crusades*

If choosing to retire to a Carthusian monastery a year later, rather than take up the regency of the kingdom while Louis was in the Holy Land, the period c. 1150 represented a real political caesura in much of the middle Loire valley.⁴⁸ Royal power began to grow in earnest after Louis VII's return from the disastrous Second Crusade, bringing the élites of the region into a new world, in which the king and the emerging French state became once more one of the primary arbiters of status and power.⁴⁹

The Sources

The backbone of this study will be the surviving charter evidence from the middle Loire valley. Charters (including those issued by kings and popes known as diplomas) is the generic term used for the most ubiquitous legal documents in Europe in the early and central middle ages. They were most frequently employed to record or confirm the transfer of landed property, but were also used to record sales and purchases, legal judgments, manumissions of unfree dependents, mediation, arbitration and the settlement of disputes, obligations for the payment of tithes, taxes, duties, rents and customs or the granting of rights and immunities, both lay and ecclesiastical. As a result of this flexibility, charters are an invaluable resource for the historian, particularly for a study with a heavy social and economic focus such as this. The variety and complexity of the charter material also presents problems, however. What medieval people understood as the significance of a charter donation, how these documents have been transmitted to the present day and how to place accurately each document into its correct historical context represent significant challenges for the historian to overcome and have attracted detailed attention from historians in recent decades.⁵⁰ Three issues, of purpose,

(Manchester, 2016), pp. 87-90; Christopher Tyerman, *God's War; A New History of the Crusades* (London, 2006), pp. 278-80.

⁴⁸ Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem*, trans. V.G. Berry (New York, NY, 1948), p. 14.

⁴⁹ See Alice Taylor, 'Formalising Aristocratic Power in Royal *Acta* in Late Twelfth- and Early Thirteenth-Century France and Scotland', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 28 (2018), pp. 33-64.

⁵⁰ There is a huge existing literature on charters, diplomas and some of the accompanying problems; a comprehensive overview with bibliography can be found in Geoffrey Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas; The West Frankish Kingdom (840-*

survival and preservation and of dating, will be explored here in general terms.

Firstly, the reasons for which charters were redacted in the centuries after the collapse of the Carolingian empire were numerous, but their authors and the scribes who wrote them obviously had different aims from those of the historians reading them today. Charters typically recorded transactions and conveyances of land, usually sales, leases or donations, and the drawing up of a charter was part of the formal process by which the land was transferred. The exact processes by which they were redacted and issued are not always certain, and unlikely to have been uniform, but they were important documents which were produced with advanced planning on highly formal occasions.⁵¹ In many instances it is clear that a charter was redacted in several different stages, significantly after the events it describes or added to at a later date.⁵² Many charters, particularly those of an earlier date, are frustratingly formulaic, but even the more loquacious *notitae* of the eleventh century can omit or pass over details which are of interest to a study such as this, in particular regarding the descriptions of the usage of lands or the practicalities of customs.⁵³ Different formulae in use for the redaction of charters, as well as changing patterns of redaction, have left the surviving corpus extremely heterogeneous, leaving little room for a direct quantitative comparison on a large scale, since many features which are present in some charters may be left out of others (such as monetary values of rents or customs, the length of lease terms or the boundaries of properties).

Secondly, the issue of survival and preservation, and by extension that of representativeness, is a key challenge for a study which draws on a wide range of material surviving from a variety of contexts. All of the charters for the period

987) (Turnhout, 2012), pp. 25-64.

⁵¹ Rosamund McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word*, (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 94-8; Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 25-64. For a more detailed discussion of the formal and performative nature of the redaction of charters, see below, Chap IV.

⁵² For example AD Yonne G 1638; Vierzon 67, 78; St-Sulpice suppl. 6.

⁵³ On the transition from more the formalised language of the early Middle Ages to the more heterogeneous forms of the later period, see Benoît-Michel Tock, 'L'acte privé en France, VIIe siècle - milieu du Xe siècle', *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome. Moyen-Age* III (1999), p. 499-537; Dominique Barthélemy, *The Knight, the Serf and the Historian*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards, (Ithaca, NY, 2009), pp. 12-36; Koziol, 'Conquest of Burgundy', *French Historical Studies* 37, pp. 173-87, all of whom discuss the contested historiography of the problem.

survive, without exception, from the archives of monasteries and churches, often in the form of copies made either in the Middle Ages or later. This has two important implications. Firstly, it is apparent that we only have evidence for those lands, revenues and issues which were, at one point or another, of interest to the church. It is for that reason that it is impossible to extricate the church from our understanding of the social and economic development of the period, as scholars have been wont to do in the past.⁵⁴ This absence of any survival of material independent of the church also restricts the lands for which we have evidence to those which belonged to a stratum of society which could afford to donate land to the church. This provides an ideal base of evidence for the lay élite, for the patronage of the church was a crucial form of public claim to status, but it also means that there is very little information available on the everyday affairs and properties which were never alienated (i.e. the core patrimony of the élite family). The evidence base obscures, however, independent peasant farmers and those sections of society who were not subjected to domination by their social betters but who could not afford to alienate their lands.⁵⁵

The second implication is that the documents which survive are those which the church chose to preserve, since the majority of charters survive not as originals but as later copies in collections known as cartularies.⁵⁶ Cartularies were more than collections of documents. As Michel Parisse has put it:

The cartulary is a historical work, which must be submitted to criticism with as much precision as a set of annals, a chronicle, a *Gesta* or a *Vita*. It may be entirely reliable or it may bring with it the peculiarities of its author, who directed the choice of documents to include. It must be dated and

⁵⁴ Cf. below, chap. I.

⁵⁵ These issues are discussed at length in Wendy Davies, *Small Worlds; The Village Community in Early Medieval Brittany* (London, 1988), pp. 86-104, esp. pp. 102-4.

⁵⁶ On the effect of ecclesiastical archivists on the medieval documents which survive today, see Warren C. Brown, Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes and Adam J. Kosto, 'Introduction' in Warren C. Brown, Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes and Adam J. Kosto (eds) *Documentary Culture and the Laity in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 12-15; Constance Brittain Bouchard, 'Monastic Cartularies: Organizing Eternity' in Adam J. Kosto and Anders Winroth (eds) *Charters, Cartularies, and Archives: The Preservation and Transmission of Documents in the Medieval West. Proceedings of a Colloquium of the Commission Internationale de Diplomatie (Princeton and New York, 16-18 September 1999)* (Toronto, 2002), pp. 22-32.

studied in its historical context.⁵⁷

Cartularies were, despite having secondary legal and administrative functions, first and foremost a memorial, an act of creating, reshaping and preserving the history and memory of its church. The product of deliberate and considered compilation, cartularies were not simply a random or complete copy of a church's archive.⁵⁸ The scribe Paul, who compiled the cartulary of the abbey of St-Père de Chartres in the 1080s, explicitly commented that 'I have decided to leave out those charters in which it appears there is nothing worth remembering now.'⁵⁹ It is very possible that the compilers of cartularies edited or truncated the original charters, removing clauses which the compiler deemed irrelevant or superfluous, such as witness lists, preambles or even dating clauses, or that they unknowingly incorporated interpolated or forged material.⁶⁰ Laurent Morelle has identified four 'levels' at which information could be lost in the copying of charters into cartularies: in addition to changes in the text (such as spelling errors, orthographic changes or abbreviations), there is also the potential to lose the 'archival' character of the document (such as dorsal notes, summary headings and

⁵⁷ 'Le cartulaire est une oeuvre historique, qu'il faut soumettre à la critique avec autant d'acribie que des annals, une chronique, des *Gesta*, une *Vita*. Il peut être entièrement fiable ou transporter la partialité d'un auteur, qui a orienté son choix des pièces à citer. Il doit être daté et étudié dans son context historique.' Michel Parisse, 'Les Cartulaires: Copies ou sources originales?' in Olivier Guyotjeannin, Laurent Morelle and Michel Parisse (eds), *Les Cartulaires: Actes de la table ronde organisée par l'École nationale des chartes et le G.D.R. 121 du C.N.R.S. (Paris, 5-7 décembre 1991)*, (Paris, 1993), p. 510.

⁵⁸ Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors: Memory and Forgetting in France, 500-1200* (Philadelphia, PA, 2015), pp. 31-4; eadem, 'Monastic Cartularies' in Kosto and Winroth (eds) *Charters, Cartularies, Archives*, pp. 22-32; Georges Declercq, 'Originals and Cartularies: The Organization of Archival Memory (Ninth - Eleventh Centuries)' in Karl Heidecker (ed.), *Charters and the Use of the Written Word in Medieval Society* (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 147-70; Laurent Morelle, 'The Metamorphosis of Three Monastic Charter Collections in the Eleventh Century (Saint-Amand, Saint-Riquier, Montier-en-Der)' in Karl Heidecker (ed.), *Charters and the Use of the Written Word in Medieval Society* (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 171-204. On the process by which medieval churchmen reworked and reimagined the past in this period more generally, see Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance; Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium*, (Princeton, NJ, 1994) and pp. 81-114 on cartularies in particular.

⁵⁹ *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Père de Chartres*, ed. Benjamin Guérard (Paris, 2 vols., 1840), I:119. Cited and trans. in Bouchard, *Rewriting*, p. 23.

⁶⁰ Bouchard, *Rewriting*, pp. 16, 24-5. There are numerous examples of this form the middle Loire valley, including several egregious examples from the cartulary of Vierzon: Vierzon 5, with a pseudo-original surviving in AD Cher 8 G 1078/ATREM 4820.

other later additions to the charter), its diplomatic characteristics (when copyists excluded or abridged formal parts of the charter such as openings or witness-lists, as well as autographs, monographs and seals) and its materiality as a graphic document (the document's spacing, layout, punctuation and choice of minuscule or majuscule, for example).⁶¹ How much of this materiality and information from the original charter has been transmitted to the present day varies enormously from one cartulary to the next, depending almost entirely on the preferences of the cartulary's compiler. The cartulary of Vierzon includes many graphic features of the documents copied into it, such as papal *rotula* and royal monograms, while other medieval copyists and compilers excluded such information.⁶² Although inevitably constrained by the contents of their church's archive, cartulary copyists also in many cases, particularly from the thirteenth century, displayed a relative lack of interest in older documents, especially those which were not issued by kings or popes.⁶³ Although this thesis will seek to study what the contents of charters and cartularies can reveal about the social and economic world of medieval France, rather than their role in acts of identity and memory creation, it is important that this essential characteristic of the documentation is not overlooked in its evaluation.⁶⁴

The final issue concerning the charter evidence is the difficulty of dating the documents. In many cases, there is no problem and a charter will be dated to an exact date by the scribe. In other cases, however, the dates supplied by the

⁶¹ Laurent Morelle, 'De l'original à la copie: Remarques sur l'évolution des transcriptions dans les cartulaires médiévaux' in Guyotjeannin, Morelle and Parisse (eds), *Les Cartulaires*, pp. 91-104. On the importance of the materiality of the charter for its full understanding, see also Matthew Innes, 'On the material culture of legal documents: charters and their preservation in the Cluny archive, ninth to eleventh century' in Brown, Costambeys, Innes and Kosto (eds.), *Documentary Culture*, pp. 283-320.

⁶² BNF ms Lat. 9865, fols 1v, 2r, 3v. Cf. the Cartulary of the cathedral chapter St-Étienne de Bourges, BNF ms Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1274. See also Hartmut Astma and Jean Vezin, 'Originaux et copies: La reproduction des éléments graphiques des actes des Xe et XIe siècles dans le cartulaire de Cluny' in Kosto and Winroth (eds) *Charters, Cartularies, and Archives*, pp. 113-26.

⁶³ For example, BNF ms Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1274; Ste-Croix. 'The Cartulary of the Bishops of Auxerre' in Constance Brittain Bouchard (ed.), *Three Cartularies from Thirteenth-Century Auxerre*, (Toronto, 2012), pp. 21-172, is a clear example of a compiler constrained by limited archival resources; see Bouchard (ed.), *Three Cartularies*, pp. 6-8.

⁶⁴ For these 'two paths' of studying charters and cartularies, see Brown, Costambeys, Innes and Kosto, 'Introduction' in Brown *et al.* (eds) *Documentary Culture*, pp. 11-12.

charter are so broad as to be of little use (it is common to find charters dated only by the reign of King Philip I (*regnante Philippo*), that is to say 1060-1108) or no date is supplied, having either been left out by the compiler of the cartulary or never included in the first place.⁶⁵ There are other methods of establishing approximate dates, based on factors such as the persons who appear in the charters when they are known from elsewhere. Many of the edited collections for the region have undated charters dated approximately by their form and vocabulary or by the inclusion of certain clauses, but this type of dating should be approached with extreme caution, as there is no concrete typology for charters: even two well-dated contemporary charters can vary wildly in form and vocabulary depending on the transaction documented, the scribe, the geographical location and other factors. It is also important to bear in mind that in the majority of cases the original form does not survive and that the surviving form has been mediated through the compiler of the cartulary: in some cases even the original charters have disappeared and historians are reliant on the copies and extracts of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century antiquarians.⁶⁶ The almost inevitable result of the difficulty of dating many of these charters is that it becomes much more difficult to date securely the changes which we see represented in them. The large, comparative sample utilised in this study is therefore a necessity, since only in this way can enough securely dated charters be cross-referenced with undated, or undateable, documents to allow conclusions to be drawn on the social and economic transformations of the period.

We are fortunate that there is such a large comparative set of data available for the middle Loire Valley. Charters survive in some shape or form from all of the major churches and monasteries of the regions, although they do not all cover the entirety of the period and some provide much denser coverage than others. All four of the region's cathedrals have left material: the cartulary of the canons of St-

⁶⁵ Establishing the chronology of donations was usually of minor importance to the cartulary scribes: Bouchard, *Rewriting*, pp. 30-1.

⁶⁶ For case studies of how these factors have affected our knowledge of the medieval documents and their contexts, in the case of the abbey of Cluny, see Dominique Iogna-Prat, 'La confection des cartulaires et l'historiographie à Cluny (XIe – XIIe siècles)' in Guyotjeannin *et al.* (eds), *Les Cartulaires*, pp. 27-44 and Innes, 'On the material culture' in Brown *et al.* (eds.), *Documentary Culture*, pp. 283-320.

Cyr de Nevers is the fullest, with a particularly large amount of material from the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁶⁷ The cartulary of Ste-Croix in Orléans preserves eleven royal diplomas and several papal bulls from the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, but little other material survives from before the twelfth.⁶⁸ The thirteenth-century episcopal and cathedral cartularies from Auxerre and Bourges, respectively, contain very little material from before 1150, with only handful of documents surviving between them.⁶⁹ The region's major monasteries have also preserved charter collections and cartularies, which can help to fill some of these gaps. The cartulary and surviving documents from the abbey of St-Sulpice in Bourges preserved an near-continuous series of documents from Berry which stretch from the early ninth century right through to the twelfth, supplemented by the primarily eleventh-century collection of the cartulary of Vierzon.⁷⁰ In the Nivernais, the archives of the Cluniac houses of La Charité-sur-Loire and St-Étienne de Nevers supplement the cathedral cartulary for the later eleventh and early twelfth century.⁷¹ The northern half of the region is much more poorly represented in the chronological coverage of the charter material. Major monasteries such as St-Benoît-sur-Loire at Fleury, St-Germain d'Auxerre and Vézelay have conserved only a handful of charters from the tenth and eleventh centuries, with copyists heavily favouring large-scale royal and papal grants of immunity or confirmation; it is only in the twelfth century that evidence from these churches begins to diversify.⁷² The exception to this trend are the surviving charters of St-Mesmin of Micy, near Orléans, which are relatively complete from the late tenth century onwards.⁷³ There is a veritable explosion in the preservation

⁶⁷ St-Cyr.

⁶⁸ Ste-Croix.

⁶⁹ BNF ms Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1274; 'Cartulary of the Bishops of Auxerre' in Bouchard (ed.), *Three Cartularies*, pp. 21-172.

⁷⁰ St-Sulpice; Vierzon.

⁷¹ La Charité; St-Étienne Nev.

⁷² Fleury; Vézelay I, II. On the cartulary of St-Germain d'Auxerre, see Noëlle Deflou-Leca, 'AUXERRE, Cartulaires de l'abbaye de Saint-Germain', *Bulletin du centre d'études médiévales d'Auxerre*, available online at <http://journals.openedition.org/cem/2642> [accessed: 7/3/2018]; eadem, *Saint-Germain d'Auxerre et ses dépendances (Ve-VIIIe siècle)*, (Saint-Etienne, 2010), pp. 43-44, 648-672.

⁷³ Micy.

of documentary material in the early twelfth century across the region, as charters, often in the original, survive in huge numbers from many smaller churches, some of which were new Cistercian or Augustinian foundations.⁷⁴ There is also occasionally relevant material preserved in monastic archives outside of the middle Loire valley, usually in major monasteries such as Marmoutier or Cluny.⁷⁵ Although often uneven both geographically and chronologically, the surviving charter evidence from the Middle Loire valley forms a significant and substantial evidential basis for this study.

Many of the *lacunae* in the coverage of the documentary evidence can be partially supplemented by a variety of narrative sources, originating almost exclusively from the northern half of the region. Most of these narratives are hagiographical, such as the books of the *Miracula Sancti Benedicti* produced at Fleury, or strongly influenced by the genre, such as the series of *gesta* of the bishops of Auxerre or the abbots of St-Germain.⁷⁶ These works must be carefully considered with respect to their genre and purpose; they served to glorify and create a sanctified history for their churches, to highlight the righteousness of their patron saints and to tie properties and peoples to their institutions.⁷⁷ When used conscientiously, however, these narratives can provide not only valuable insights into the social and political context in which documents were written, but even preserve now-lost charters and letters by describing or transcribing these documents at appropriate points in the narrative.⁷⁸ The only full chronicles written in the middle Loire valley in this period were Hugh of Poitiers' Vézelay Chronicle, a largely polemic tract written to de-legitimise the counts of Nevers' claims to overlordship of the abbey in the twelfth century, and the chronicle written by the

⁷⁴ The two most significant collections are the cartulary and archives of Pontigny (Pontigny and AD Yonne, côtes H 1398 - H 1554) and the archives of St-Satur-sour-Sancerre, preserved in AD Cher, series 13 H.

⁷⁵ Cluny; *Cartulaire de Marmoutier pour le Dunois*, ed. Émile Mabille (Chateaudun, 1874).

⁷⁶ MSB; GPA; GASGA.

⁷⁷ Thomas Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of the Saints. The Diocese of Orléans, 800-1200* (Cambridge, 1990); Dominique Barthélemy, *Chevaliers et miracles. La violence et le sacré dans la société féodale* (Paris, 2004), pp. 114-87; David Rollason, 'The miracles of St Benedict: a window on early medieval France' in Henry Mayr-Harting and R.I. Moore (eds), *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R.H.C. Davis* (London, 1985), pp. 73-90; Michel Sot, *Gesta Episcoporum, Gesta Abbatum* (Turnhout, 1981), pp. 15-21.

⁷⁸ For example GPA, pp. 248-9; GASPA, pp. 10-17.

monk Ralph Glaber in the early eleventh century in Auxerre.⁷⁹ While the Vézelay chronicle is largely focused on events in the 1150s and is of little general value to the study of the region, Ralph Glaber's *Histories* provide a fascinating portrait of political, social and religious attitudes at the turn of the millennium, unafraid to diverge on tangents which elucidate moral lessons or highlight God's workings in the world. In addition to chronicles written in the region, numerous chronicles and narratives written elsewhere in West Francia/France make reference to the middle Loire valley, and can supplement or provide context for sources produced more locally.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Hugh of Poitiers, 'Chronicon' in *Monumenta Vizeliacensia*, pp. 395-607; RG.

⁸⁰ In particular, AB; Flodoard, *Annales*; Suger, VLG.

Chapter I

The Historiography of Social Change: The 'Feudal Revolution' and Beyond

One of the key aims of this thesis is to chart the dynamics of élite status in the centuries after the disintegration of the Carolingian empire, to examine not only the most significant features of claims to these type of status but also to track how these features changed over time. However, social change in the post-Carolingian period, particularly in the context of what would become the kingdom of France, is a furrow which has been well-ploughed by historians in the past. Thousands of pages of books and articles have been dedicated to the subject, which have, inevitably, shaped the contours of debate and the issues of importance in the field. In order to contribute to our understanding of the period, it is first of all necessary to engage with this historiography, to highlight and problematise some of the key issues which touch upon the history of élites and to set out a new approach to a historical subject which has (too) often been considered to have little left to add to our broader understanding of medieval Europe.

For the past three decades, the concept of a 'Feudal Revolution' or 'Mutation', seen as a turning point in the periodization of European history, has been at the heart of an intense debate on the nature of medieval society. The concept is amorphous and has been interpreted so broadly and used as a framework to discuss so many different issues, ranging from the conception of aristocratic lineages to the economic expansionism of the twelfth century, that it is difficult to sum to debate up in simple terms. Quite often, the term 'feudal revolution' has referred to whichever issues the particular author wishes to emphasize as important, or conversely, to dismiss as overstated.¹ It has been used as a shorthand for a series of highly contested changes

¹ For the clearest examples of this see Thomas N. Bisson 'The "Feudal Revolution"', *Past & Present*, 142 (1994), pp. 6-42, and the debate which followed after: Dominique Barthélemy, 'Debate: The "Feudal Revolution" I', *Past & Present*, 152 (1996), pp. 195-205; Stephen D. White, 'Debate: The "Feudal Revolution" II', *Past & Present* 152 (1996), pp. 205-223; Timothy Reuter, 'Debate: The "Feudal Revolution" III', *Past & Present* 155 (1997), pp. 177-95; Chris Wickham, 'Debate: The "Feudal Revolution" IV', *Past & Present*, 155 (1997), pp. 196-208 and Thomas N.

proposed to take place in the late tenth and early eleventh century.² In order to discuss the issue, the term must therefore be deconstructed and defined, and the crucial issues laid bare. The best way to do so is to examine not only the use of the term since the 1980s, but to dig deeper and investigate its intellectual genesis. In doing so, I hope to highlight the continuing importance of the issues subsumed by the term, to highlight some strands of thought which have been lost in the fury of the debate and to problematize and resolve some of the large-scale formulations of the 'Feudal Revolution'.

I

The *mutationiste* position emerged initially from the regional studies of France (and beyond) which flowered in the wake of Georges Duby's magisterial study of the county of Mâcon. Despite its influence, *La société aux XIe et XIIe siècles dans la région Mâconnaise* is a modest book, quite restricted in most senses. Chronologically it begins where André Déléage's monumental *La vie rurale en Bourgogne jusqu'au début du XIe siècle* leaves off and follows a three-act structure charting the before, during and after of 'the most pure forms' of 'feudal society'.³ Its most prominent contribution to the historical discourse is the concept of the *seigneurie banale* – a private lordship based on the exactions from an oppressed peasantry by a class of castle-based aristocrats (castellans) which developed around the year 1000, as Carolingian 'public' institutions, particularly the comital court, ceased to function effectively.⁴ *La Société* is, however, remarkably single-minded in its goal to describe the society and social structure of the Mâconnais. Despite the influence of the *seigneurie banale*, Duby is interested in it only as a catalyst for change in the Mâconnais' social classes and hierarchy (which is why it is never properly defined), rather than to explore how power was wielded through it, which has often been the focus of more recent debates

Bisson, 'Debate: The "Feudal Revolution", Reply', *Past & Present*, 155 (1997), pp. 208-225.

² In much the same ways as the French term *l'an mil*; see Dominique Barthélémy, 'Encore le débat sur l'an mil', *Revue historique de droit français et étranger*, 73 (1995), pp. 349-60.

³ Georges Duby, *La société aux XIe et XIIe siècles dans la région mâconnaise* (Paris, 1953), p. 365; André Déléage, *La vie rurale en Bourgogne jusqu'au début du onzième siècle* (Mâcon, 2 vols, 1942).

⁴ Duby, *La société*, pp. 205-7.

on the subject.⁵ In fact, the narrative of institutional collapse (for which Duby blames the political incompetence of the count of Mâcon more than any structural fault) is but one, and the lesser one, of two causes for the dramatic shift in social hierarchy around the year 1000.⁶ In the final analysis, Duby places far more emphasis on the underlying economic factors; the local, rural, land-based economy which suited localised *seigneuries banales* and the more monetised, urbanised and integrated economy which heralded their demise.⁷

The long term impact of Duby's book was the emergence of a new generation of medieval historians in France who attempted to replicate his work on the Mâconnais in their own areas of medieval Europe. The most influential and best-known works by this 'school' or 'family' of historians are those by Robert Fossier (on Picardy), Pierre Toubert (on Lazio) and Pierre Bonnassie (on Catalonia), although there are many more historians who wrote in the Duby mould.⁸ To a greater or lesser degree, they all share their themes, preoccupations and methods with Duby's book; a combination of agrarian history and the history of legal institutions, a subtle (and occasionally not-so-subtle) undercurrent of Marxist structuralism, a view of *longue durée* economic developments as the most significant motor of historical change and a research and writing style which is committed to 'a thickly descriptive ... history that could only be done in regional slices.'⁹ Most significantly for the idea of the 'Feudal

⁵ See esp. Bisson, "Feudal Revolution", *P&P* 142, pp. 6-42.

⁶ Duby, *La Société*, pp. 155-71, for the political failures which led to the demise of Carolingian comital institutions.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 331, 365, 640-2.

⁸ Respectively: Robert Fossier, *La Terre et Les Hommes en Picardie jusqu'à la fin du XIIIe siècle* (Paris and Louvain, 2 vols, 1968); Pierre Toubert, *Les Structures du Latium Médiéval; Le Latium méridional et la Sabine du IXe siècle à la fin du XIIe siècle* (Rome, 2 vols, 1973); Pierre Bonnassie, *La Catalogne du milieu du Xe à la fin du XIe siècle; Croissance et mutations d'une société* (Toulouse, 2 vols, 1975-6). Of other works that can be classified in the same historiographical family, of particular importance to this project is Guy Devailly, *Le Berry du Xe siècle au milieu du XIIIe: Étude politique, religieuse, sociale et économique* (Paris, 1973). On the family as a whole see Thomas N. Bisson, 'La Terre et Les Hommes: A programme fulfilled?', *French History* 14 (2000), pp. 322-45.

⁹ Bisson, 'La Terre et les Hommes', *French History*, 14, pp. 329. The Marxist influences are perhaps most overt in Bonnassie, *La Catalogne*, pp. 575-610, 647-50, 679-80. Toubert's Marxist influences on the structural study of medieval society are expressed much more explicitly in Pierre Toubert, 'Les Féodalités Méditerranéennes: Un Problème d'Histoire Comparée' in *Structures Féodales et Féodalisme dans l'Occident Méditerranéen (Xe-XIIIe siècles); Bilan et Perspectives de Recherches* (Rome, 1980), pp. 3-9. See Bisson, 'La Terre et les Hommes', *French History* 14, pp. 332-3, for the union of agrarian and institutional history and p. 335 for Marxist directions in the family.

Revolution', each of these works found something analogous to Duby's *seigneurie banale*, a fundamental rupture with Carolingian society, although its form and chronology varied wildly from region to region. Pierre Bonnassie's study of eleventh century Catalonia, the high point of regional histories *à la Mâconnaise*, 'the masterpiece of *la terre et les hommes* in its ripe phase', charted the collapse of comital authority and the rise of castle-based lordships in exquisite detail through the region's surviving original charters and, more importantly, structured his thesis around the idea of this fundamental break in the social history of the medieval West.¹⁰ This was the culmination of the development of Duby's original ideas across nearly three decades of French regional histories.

The concept of a 'Feudal Revolution' grew out of the synthesis of the ideas of these regional studies of the previous generation. Easily the most influential synthesis was that of Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel, *La Mutation Féodale*, first published in 1980.¹¹ It was the direct inspiration for the Thomas Bisson's article on the 'Feudal Revolution' in 1994.¹² These two works were, and remain, the basic texts for those who propose a radical transformation of social and political structures around the year 1000; *mutationnistes*, to borrow Dominique Barthélémy's phrase.¹³ They posit that the extreme fragmentation of centralised political authority in the tenth and eleventh centuries led to rapid and radical changes in social and political organisation. The result of these developments, according to the *mutationnistes*, was the proliferation of *seigneuries banales*: violent, affective, castle-based lordships which appropriated rights formerly pertaining to public officials of the Carolingian Empire. The two works, do, however, take different approaches to the problem and had substantially different impacts on the debate which followed. *Mutation* was very much a synthesis, using data from many different regional studies and dealing with a variety of themes: public institutions and government, feudal bonds, the aristocracy and the peasantry

¹⁰ Bisson, 'La Terre et les Hommes', *French History* 14, pp. 329.

¹¹ Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel, *La mutation féodale* (Paris, 1980); Caroline Higgitt (trans.), *The Feudal Transformation; 900-1200* (New York, NY, 1991). The other major attempt at synthesis, though its thematic scope was larger, was Robert Fossier, *Enfance de l'Europe Xe-XIIIe siècles; Aspects économiques et sociaux*, (Paris, 2 vols, 1982), published in the same series (the *Nouvelle Clio*); for detailed discussion see below.

¹² Bisson, 'The Feudal Revolution', *P&P*, 142, p. 7, n. 3.

¹³ Barthélémy, 'Debate I', *P&P*, 152, p. 197.

and the *mentalité* of feudalism. Its key concern was feudalism (*la féodalité*) taken as an ‘institution’ in the Blochian sense.¹⁴ *Mutation* was not without originality; Poly and Bournazel moved sharply away from the more technical aspects of economic history and their effects on the ‘mutation’, citing the dangers of economic determinism and stressed the very much *au courant* importance of feudalism’s ‘*appareil idéologique*’.¹⁵ In the final analysis however, the star of Poly and Bournazel’s work was the oppression of Duby’s *seigneurie banale*, which was the essential turning point in the history of the period. ‘In two or three generations, dependence had become the rule, liberty the exception. The lordly “ban” extended throughout; the Caesars were legion.’¹⁶ The (relative) equality of the peasantry had been ruptured by the ‘koulakisation’ of the emerging *milites*, who served the new nobility in order to dominate their neighbours. *Mutation*’s influence was in codifying and articulating this narrative of breakdown and transformation which had been an *idée fixe* of the regional histories since Duby. It made explicit the implicit undercurrent of the work of Duby’s school and, as a result, brought about the first objections to the idea of a radical break in the continuity of social structures.¹⁷

Bisson’s article was more generalising, less detailed and made its argument much more forcefully (as one would expect with an article in comparison with a book). Bisson’s article was both at once a continuation of the themes of French research of the previous generation, and in particular that of Poly and Bournazel, but utilised in a new way to explore issues which had not been previously engaged with. In short, Bisson’s narrative of the rise of *seigneurie banale* (for which Bisson used the term affective lordship) remained very much the same as Duby’s, but its emphasis

¹⁴ Poly and Bournazel, *Mutation féodale*, passim. On the varieties of feudalism see Chris Wickham, ‘Le forme del feudalismo’, *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo* 47 (2000), pp. 15-46 and idem, *Framing the Early Middle Ages; Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 60-1. For a sustained critique of the concept, see E.A.R. Brown, ‘The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe’, *American Historical Review* 79 (1974), pp. 1063-88 and Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals; The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1994). For a fuller discussion of the Brown-Reynolds critique of feudalism, see below, Chap. II.

¹⁵ Poly and Bournazel, *Mutation féodale*, pp. 10-14; the move away from the intricacies of economic history was based partly on Fossier’s *Enfance de l’Europe*, which was due to be published in the same series – see below and Poly and Bournazel, *Mutation féodale*, p. 12.

¹⁶ Poly and Bournazel, *Mutation féodale*, p. 484.

¹⁷ By Barthélémy; see below.

changed radically.¹⁸ More than anyone before him, Bisson stressed the violence of the new castral regime, driven by an insatiable and almost irrational greed and appetite to oppress.¹⁹ The essence of the change described by Bisson was the existence of ‘more and more of both [armed men and castles] and the temptation to constrain by force: these were elemental realities of power.’²⁰ The preceding quotation is from Bisson’s 2009 book *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century*, an intellectual sequel to the 1994 article in which the ‘Feudal Revolution’ can be more clearly seen in Bisson’s longer term paradigm for the development of European government. In his original article, Bisson’s interest is stated as ‘the way in which violent practices come to affect relations of lordship and government.’²¹ This is his great divergence from the French school: rather than seeing a *mutation* as a wholesale transformation of society, as those following in Bloch’s footsteps did, Bisson’s ‘revolution’ is one which fundamentally reshapes aristocratic society and its basis but its ripples are only felt in other areas (e.g. the economy, the peasantry, the church) through their relationships with the élite. Bisson’s descriptive, rather than analytical, views on the ‘Feudal Revolution’, and in particular its origins, are the result of this narrow interest in the development of aristocratic and royal government from the eleventh century onwards; in this paradigm, the ‘Age of Lordship’ brought about by the ‘Feudal Revolution’ is only the starting point towards the development of accountable, process-based royal government beginning in the latter half of the twelfth century.

Bisson’s *Past & Present* article had the effect of igniting what had previously been a relatively unchallenged consensus in favour of Poly and Bournazel’s synthesis into a fully-fledged academic dispute, despite its acknowledged focus solely on the political at the expense of the social or the economic.²² The range of responses which

¹⁸ Indeed, Bisson, if anything, tightened the focus of his argument to concentrate solely on the violent lordship of the *seigneuries banales*, excluding much of the wider analysis of millennial change which Poly and Bournazel, among others, had grouped together with it; Bisson, “Feudal Revolution”, *P&P* 142, pp. 41-2. This tightened focus was to be lost very soon in the debates which followed; see below.

¹⁹ Bisson, “Feudal Revolution”, *P&P* 142, esp. pp. 15-21.

²⁰ Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century; Power, Lordship and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton, NJ, 2009), p. 42.

²¹ Bisson, ‘Feudal Revolution’, *P&P* 142, p. 14.

²² Bisson, ‘Feudal Revolution’, *P&P* 142, p. 42; Barthélemy, ‘Debate: I’, p. 198.

were published in subsequent issues by *Past & Present* as a debate on Bisson's article brought the undercurrent of counter-arguments against the *mutationiste* school (as it began to be called), which had been developing throughout the 1980s, to the forefront.²³ Aside from the opposition that existed to *mutationiste* ideas, the debate also highlighted the scale of the argument. None of topics raised were irrelevant, but so many ideas were at stake that they nonetheless resulted in the 'debating' scholars actually addressing different issues. All four of the respondents to Bisson's article focused on different aspects of the debate, despite the narrow scope of the original thesis: Dominique Barthélemy concentrated on the chronology of post-Carolingian crises and the lack of appreciation for early twentieth-century models; Stephen D White criticised Bisson's unsophisticated understanding of violence; Timothy Reuter also criticised the same issue, while highlighting the Franco-centrism of the evidence for a revolution intended as Europe-wide; Chris Wickham highlighted the Carolingian *placitum* as an alternate barometer of epochal change.²⁴ The final effect of the debate was to move what had been up to that point a largely French historiographical debate into the English language. Anglophone scholarship, with the notable exception of the works of Dominique Barthélemy, has been the medium through which all major developments in the debate have been promulgated since the 1990s.

In short, Bisson's contribution to the debate was less of substance than of form and medium (as well as giving the debate its shorthand name in English, drawn from his article's title). Bisson's revolution, although certainly not at odds with those of the other *mutationistes*, has never been widely adopted among scholars; its ultra-violence and strong contrast between 'government' and 'lordship' have proven to have limited appeal.²⁵ The strong critiques which were developed in the decade following Bisson's article, which will be discussed in more detail below, were essentially reacting to the broader mutation of Poly and Bournazel. Even the explicit responses to Bisson in *Past*

²³ Barthélemy, 'Debate: I', *P&P* 152, pp. 195-205; White, 'Debate: II', *P&P* 152, pp. 205-223; Reuter, 'Debate: III' *P&P* 155, pp. 177-95; Wickham, 'Debate: IV' *P&P* 155, pp. 196-208; along with Bisson, 'Debate: Reply' *P&P* 155, pp. 208-225.

²⁴ Barthélemy, 'Debate: I', *P&P* 152, pp. 195-205; White, 'Debate: II', *P&P* 152, pp. 205-223; Reuter, 'Debate: III' *P&P* 155, pp. 177-95; Wickham, 'Debate: IV' *P&P* 155, pp. 196-208.

²⁵ On the adoption of 'lordship' as a significant category of analysis in the debate, although in a very different way in which Bisson envisaged it, see Richard E. Barton, *Lordship in the County of Maine, c.890-1160* (Woodbridge, 2004), and below.

& *Present* can be seen to confuse the wider issues with Bisson's specific thesis. Despite its central *idée fixe* of *seigneurie banale*, the *mutationiste* argument encapsulated many smaller and less clear-cut issues, some of which were dealt with by Bisson (for example castles, violent *milites* and the disintegration of central government), but many of which were tangential to his arguments (such as disappearance of a land-owning peasantry, mechanisms of dispute settlement, the disappearance of the Carolingian *mallus* or the 'ideology of feudalism'). These diverse topics were all linked to and part of the *mutationiste* thesis, rendering a comprehensive debate which covered all of the issues virtually impossible. As a result, critics of *mutationisme* in the 1990s and 2000s focused on what they saw as the foundations of the concept, with considerable success.

II

Let us examine more closely the criticisms which emerged to face the *mutationiste* historians. Open opposition emerged in the early 1990s and took off rapidly in response to Bisson's article. The charge was led overwhelmingly by two historians, Dominique Barthélemy in France and Stephen D White, writing in English. Both Barthélemy and White were heavily influenced by methods and ideas from social and legal anthropology to formulate critiques which fundamentally attacked the notion of radical change around the turn of the millennium, highlighting instead deeper continuities between the tenth and eleventh centuries and beyond. The following paragraphs will examine the work of Barthélemy, White and their successors individually, as they each tended to focus on different areas and topics when criticising the *mutationiste* model, but it should be borne in mind that their works fed off one another and were in constant dialogue: Barthélemy has recently written that 'he [White] and I have remained in continuous contact and have influenced each other, even if we have individual perspectives and methods'.²⁶ Although not as diverse as the French *mutationistes* in the 1970s and 1980s, it is nonetheless reasonable to

²⁶ Dominique Barthélemy, *The Serf, Knight, Historian, the Knight, and the Historian*, Graham Robert Edwards (trans.), (Ithaca, NY, 2009), p. 7.

speak of an anti-*mutationiste* school.

The father of this school was, without a doubt, Dominique Barthélemy. His 1992 essay 'La Mutation Féodale a-t-elle eu lieu? (Note Critique)', published in response to the second edition of Poly and Bournazel's book in the prestigious *Annales* journal, was the first direct attack on the *mutationiste* position.²⁷ Barthélemy's overall argument was that the model put forward by Poly and Bournazel was simplistic and un-nuanced, even in light of the evidence which they presented in the book.²⁸ The three main critiques put forward by Barthélemy in 1992 have remained central to the anti-*mutationiste* school: firstly, that a lack of appreciation regarding the difficulties, nuances, production, transmission and lacunae inherent in the sources which underpinned the *mutationiste* thesis, primarily monastic cartularies, had led to the fundamental interpretive errors; secondly, that the social changes which were described in *La Mutation Féodale*, which were linear progressions from slaves to serfs or from rich peasants to *milites* aspiring to nobility, were incompatible with the complexities of social reality, in which many strata and categories of person could coexist at once; finally, that the simplistic conceptions of justice, public order and violence employed were unhelpful and that methods derived from anthropology could better explain the so-called 'anarchy' of the year 1000.²⁹

It is striking even in his most recent writings on the subject, Barthélemy's arguments remain fundamentally the same and most of his work on the topic has focused on the first two points of the argument outlined above.³⁰ Barthélemy believed that an over-attention to the minutiae of the charters recorded in monastic cartularies, including changes in the words used or in the form of the charters, at the expense of a broader, more holistic view, had resulted in the false inference of sudden

²⁷ Dominique Barthélemy, 'La Mutation Féodale', *Annales. Histoire Sciences Sociales*, 47 (1992), pp. 767-77.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 769.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 769-74; the work of American medievalists, in particular Stephen White, are heavily cited in support of the final argument.

³⁰ Barthélemy, *Serf, Knight, Historian*. See esp. pp. 1-12 for the broad argument against the *mutationiste* position. Much of the central chapters of this book are a reprint and translation of Barthélemy's earlier work *La mutation de l'an mil a-t-elle eu lieu? Servage et chevalerie dans la France des Xe et XIe siècles*, (Paris, 1997), with additional introductory and concluding material updating and contextualising the debate.

and dramatic change by historians whenever there is a change in the documentation. Barthélemy, instead, saw these changes as revelatory of long-standing practice, drawing in particular on his research in the archives of the Vendôme region.³¹ Many of the characteristic terms which were suddenly abundant in the eleventh-century documents and had been taken as indicative of social change, in particular *servus* and *miles*, were traced back as concepts to the earlier Middle Ages, the Carolingian period and beyond, and shown to have a much richer and more complex intellectual tradition.³² Throughout his work, Barthélemy stressed the need to view the tenth and eleventh centuries broadly, in relation to those transformations which took place earlier and later. He frequently contrasted modern *mutationistes* with French historians of the early twentieth and nineteenth centuries, stressing that many of the changes noted in recent years as happening around the millennium, were in previous decades assigned to earlier periods, such as the decade around collapse of the Carolingian empire at the end of the ninth century.³³ Ultimately, in place of a brutal rupture around the year 1000, Barthélemy saw the gradual evolution of a post-Carolingian society, where any 'simple adjustment of the year 1000' was nothing more than the latest in a long line of gradual social changes.³⁴

Although Barthélemy was the father of the anti-*mutationiste* school, Stephen D White was its theoretical heavyweight. White's work, which was heavily influenced by methods and concepts from anthropology, and in particular legal anthropology, was a powerful influence on Barthélemy's early attacks on the Feudal Revolution paradigm.³⁵ In contrast to Barthélemy, White's work rarely engaged in direct criticism or attack on the *mutationiste* position, but worked to provide an alternative understanding of aristocratic society, violence and dispute resolution in eleventh-century France.³⁶ This work saw the eleventh century not as a period of anarchic,

³¹ Dominique Barthélemy, *La société dans le comté de Vendôme de l'an mil au XIVe siècle* (Paris, 1993), pp. 19-127, esp. pp. 61-4; Idem, *Serf, Knight, Historian*, pp. 12-18, 30-4.

³² Barthélemy, *Serf, Knight, Historian*, pp. 37-244. On Barthélemy's arguments about *milites* in particular, see below, Chap VI.

³³ Barthélemy, *Serf, Knight, Historian*, pp. 7-11 and *passim*.

³⁴ Barthélemy, 'La Mutation Féodale', *Annales*, 42, p. 775; Idem, *Serf, Knight, Historian*, pp. 310-13.

³⁵ See above, n. 28.

³⁶ White's work has been published primarily in the form of articles and essays, the most important of which are collected in *Feuding and Peace-Making in Eleventh-Century France*

unrestrained violence by castle-based knights, terrorizing peasants and clerics and waging war upon one another, as the *mutationistes* would have it, but as a time in which disputes were settled through more informal means than in previous centuries. Compromises, negotiation, gift giving and carefully-calculated, symbolic violence were all employed as strategies to resolve conflicts and maintain the social order, including 'feudal' relationships between aristocrats.³⁷ When he went on the offensive, White was highly critical of the 'structuralism' of the *mutationiste* schools, with Duby's work on the Mâconnais coming under particularly heavy fire, although much of the criticism was equally applicable across the regionalist works inspired by Duby. The main thrust of the criticism was that the preconceived structures (in this case, courts and 'public' office-holders) forced functionally similar evidence into different structural models, based often on superficial indicators such as documentary formulae. These structures were static and, no matter how elaborate, could never explain the real workings of a given society.³⁸ This has been interpreted as a criticism which is qualitatively different from that of Barthélemy, who favoured different markers of periodisation, in that it called for an acknowledgement that any type of periodisation is an artificial structure and that social change can only happen in

(Aldershot, 2005) and *Re-thinking Kinship and Feudalism in Early Medieval Europe* (Aldershot, 2005).

³⁷ Stephen D White, "Pactum...legem vincit et amor iudicium": The Settlement of disputes by compromise in eleventh-century Western France', *American Journal of Legal History* 22 (1978), pp. 281-308; Idem, 'From peace to power: the study of disputes in medieval France' in Esther Cohen and Mayke B de Jong (eds), *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power and Gifts in Context* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 203-18; Idem, 'The politics of fidelity in early eleventh-century France: Fulbert of Chartres, William of Aquitaine, and Hugh of Lusignan' in Idem, *Re-thinking Kinship*, pp. 1-9; Idem, 'The politics of exchange: gifts, fiefs, and feudalism' in Cohen and de Jong (eds), *Medieval Transformations*, pp. 169-88; Idem, 'Service for fiefs or fiefs for service: the politics of reciprocity' in Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner and Bernhard Jussen (eds), *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange* (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 63-98; Idem, 'A crisis of fidelity in c. 1000?' in Isabel Alfonso, Hugh Kennedy and Julio Escalona (eds) *Building Legitimacy: Political Discourses and Forms of Legitimacy in Medieval Societies* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 27-49. All of these have been republished in the essay collections mentioned above, the first two in White, *Feuding* and the others in Idem, *Re-thinking kinship*.

³⁸ Stephen D White, 'Tenth-Century Courts at Mâcon and the Perils of Structuralist History: Re-reading Burgundian Judicial Institutions' in Warren C. Brown and Piotr Górecki (eds) *Conflict in Medieval Europe; Changing Perspectives on Society and Culture* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 37-68, esp. pp. 58-68; reprinted in Idem, *Feuding*. See, however, the criticisms in Paul Fouracre, 'Marmoutier and its Serfs in the Eleventh Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 15 (2005), pp. 34-5.

gradual increments in the pre-modern period.³⁹

Barthélemy and White's arguments have found wide support among historians and many of their ideas have been developed by other scholars.⁴⁰ The most significant of these, and the only one to write a full-length monograph which tackled the old paradigm head-on, was Richard E Barton.⁴¹ Significantly, Barton not only synthesised many of the arguments put forward by Barthélemy and White against the *mutationiste* thesis, but added a new dimension to the anti-*mutationiste* school, arguing that an anthropological understanding of lordship is crucial both to understanding the post-Carolingian centuries and identifying the continuities in social practice across them.⁴²

Barton examined the practice of lordship in the county of Maine, in north-western France, from the very end of the ninth century to the middle of the twelfth and argued that many of the misconceptions of the 'feudal transformation' thesis derive ultimately from a too-rigid judicial, institutional and legalistic view of how power worked in the medieval world. The affective and symbolic aspects of lordship, such as honour, reputation, relationships with peers and dependants, military prowess, possession and control of places associated with power (e.g. mints or castles) and charisma, were at least as important (and in the eyes of medieval lords probably more important) than wealth or office.⁴³ Barton's argument that the values, aims and *mentalité* of lordship remained stable throughout the Carolingian period and into the central Middle Ages is used to demonstrate that the fundamental rupture in the power relations in society posited by *mutationiste* historians is mistaken.⁴⁴ Crucial to this argument is an acceptance of the 'dislocation' of power; that is to say the political devolution, decentralisation and fragmentation of political power which spread across

³⁹ Charles West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution; Political and Social Transformation Between Marne and Moselle, c.800-c.1100* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 3-4.

⁴⁰ Barthélemy, *Serf, Knight, Historian*, pp. 302-6, 310-11.

⁴¹ Barton, *Lordship in Maine*.

⁴² Barton's focus on lordship is drawn from Bisson's own call for historians to examine the subject in more detail (Thomas N. Bisson, 'Medieval Lordship', *Speculum*, 70 (1995), pp. 743-59) but, while using many of Bisson's own concepts, Barton came to radically different conclusions as to the nature of power and lordship after the year 1000.

⁴³ Barton, *Lordship in Maine*, esp. pp. 77-111.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 220-4.

France, at various speeds, after the collapse of Carolingian authority in the 880s.⁴⁵ By accepting that the political geography did change during the tenth and eleventh centuries, and the role of new factors such as castles in that change, Barton can assert that these changes were ‘structural (and cosmetic)’ and that ‘what changed was the number of persons exercising power, not the nature of power.’⁴⁶

Barton further undermined the *mutationiste* thesis by building on the themes previously written about by Barthélémy and, in particular, White, arguing for the futility of drawing sharp chronological lines for historical change (‘with all its associated heuristic issues’) and soundly rejecting the dichotomy between the public and private spheres, especially the ‘valorization’ of the former in much of the *mutationiste* literature.⁴⁷ In addition, he provided detailed, contextualised, regional deconstructions of the harsh, innovative exactions of the *seigneuries banales* known as *malae consuetudines*. The problem of ‘evil customs’ was first raised by J.-F. Lemarignier, a contemporary of Duby’s and these (allegedly) new, arbitrary and violent exactions were crucial evidence of the rapacity of the lords of the new *seigneuries banales* of the ‘Feudal Revolution’ models, in both the French (Poly and Bournazel) and English (Bisson) schools.⁴⁸ Barton argued that historians have accepted the *malae consuetudines* complained of by monastic scribes far too literally: the customs and exactions themselves were not inherently evil, but those who wielded them over monastic lands were illegitimate, unjust or had usurped the customs. *Malae consuetudines* were part of a discourse of dispute used to attack those who used or possessed customs which would be both traditional and legitimate in the right (i.e. ecclesiastic) hands.⁴⁹ The explosion of complaints of *malae consuetudines* in the late tenth- and eleventh centuries was a natural result of the political dislocation; new

⁴⁵ The idea of ‘dislocation’ is Jean-François Lemarignier’s : Jean-François Lemarignier, ‘La dislocation du “pagus” et le problème des “consuetudines” (Xe-XIe siècles)’ in *Mélanges d’histoire du moyen âge dédiés à la mémoire de Louis Halphen* (Paris, 1951), pp. 401-10. It was seen (correctly) by Barton as a key foundation for the *mutationiste* thesis.

⁴⁶ Barton, *Lordship*, pp. 115, 127. Cf. White, ‘Tenth-century Courts at Mâcon’ in Brown and Górecki (eds.), *Conflict in Medieval Europe*.

⁴⁷ Barton, *Lordship in Maine*, p. 115.

⁴⁸ Lemarignier, ‘Dislocation du pagus’ in *Mélanges Louis Halphen*; Bisson, ‘Feudal Revolution’, *P&P* 142, pp. 18-19; Poly and Bournazel, *Mutation féodale*, pp. 87-95.

⁴⁹ Barton, *Lordship*, pp. 131-43.

lordships meant the re-negotiation of boundaries, especially with monasteries which had been only recently (re-)founded (as many in Maine had been).⁵⁰ Barton's accomplished, thorough *anti-mutationiste* study appeared to be the last nail in the 'Feudal Revolution's coffin'.⁵¹

III

The moribund and stalemated debate was reawakened in recent years by the publication of Charles West's *Reframing the Feudal Revolution*.⁵² West's approach innovated in taking the Carolingian ninth century as its starting point, rather than the confusion of the tenth, arguing convincingly that because much of the dynamic of the 'Feudal Revolution' debate had been bound up with the extent to which the Carolingian world had changed, any argument which did not give significant space to the Carolingian period was flawed.⁵³ Starting from a Carolingian perspective, West argued for a *mutationiste* radical change in the tenth and eleventh centuries, but along completely different lines than Duby, Bisson or Poly and Bournazel:

[The] overarching argument is three-fold. Firstly, it proposes that a radical shift in patterns of social organisation took place within this period of time [c. 800 – c. 1100]. Secondly, it identifies that shift as primarily one of formalisation, working at different levels. Thirdly, it suggests that this shift, though radical, can nevertheless best be understood as a consequence, one might say continuation, of processes unleashed by the movement conventionally labelled as Carolingian reform.⁵⁴

The 'social organisation' which is referred to in the above quotation is the relationships between political actors and society at large, and specifically how these relationships were used to leverage political power. West demonstrated his argument through a well-executed case study of the area which would become, by the end of the period examined, the regions of Champagne and Upper Lotharingia and his choice

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 139-41.

⁵¹ Barthélemy, *Serf, Knight, Historian*, pp. 302-6.

⁵² West, *Reframing*.

⁵³ Ibid, pp. 4-9.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 1.

of subjects and examples reflect the importance of these social relationships: the book examined in detail the formal powers and informal roles of kings, higher ecclesiastics and local aristocracies. West's Carolingian empire is one in which the formalisation of social and political relations was promoted through symbolic communications (such as the swearing of oaths, the development of 'liturgised kingship' and the promulgation of written codes and rules), a process driven by the Carolingian reform's desire to impose order upon the world.⁵⁵ These processes of increasing formalisation continued beyond the fall of the empire, causing royal power to ebb as it was no longer in demand to arbitrate and legitimise local aristocratic and ecclesiastical domination, which was, instead, expressed through clearer, less ambiguous symbolic communications.⁵⁶ The culmination of these processes was the "reification of power" in the later eleventh and twelfth centuries. Power and authority were formalised to the extent that they became conceptualised as property, leading to the formation of *seigneuries banales* on a local level (as aristocratic power over peasants crystallised) and the development of (and disputes over) concepts such as homage and investiture on a larger scale.⁵⁷

West's study was convincing in its diagnostic of an increasing formalisation and reification of power, particularly in latter half of his period, although his comparative lack of evidence for the late ninth and tenth centuries tended to undermine the causal links which he tried to draw between these developments and the Carolingian reform movement. Nevertheless, the work had significant implications for the historiography of the 'Feudal Revolution'. Although he argued for a radical change, and indeed defended the use of the term 'Feudal Revolution' to describe the period, in many ways West was not so much attempting to reignite the debate on the topic as to transcend it.⁵⁸ Although the core element of his argument was prefigured in the *Past & Present* debate in the mid-1990s, West tried to move past the older polarising viewpoints and to shift the focus of discussion away from violence, castles and conflict studies towards political culture, blurring the lines

⁵⁵ See esp. *ibid*, pp. 78-106.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 139-70, esp. 167-70.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 171-227.

⁵⁸ On his justification for the term 'Feudal Revolution', *ibid*, pp. 261-2.

between social and cultural history.⁵⁹ He, however, adopted and accepted many arguments from the *anti-mutationiste* side, such as the importance of informal expressions of power and the unsuitability of a dichotomy between public and private power in this period.⁶⁰ He also drew heavily on the conceptual apparatus of anthropology in order to make his arguments, in particular in areas relating to ideas of symbolic communication, ritual and property.⁶¹ In its approach to the topic, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution* opened new approaches by which the two competing sides of the debate might be reconciled.

West has continued his work in the same direction, joined recently by Chris Wickham, with both pursuing an argument for transformation in the tenth and eleventh centuries by dealing primarily with political culture and the perceptions and operations of power. In a recent article, West tackled the issue of lordship head-on, taking issue in particular with Barton's extension of the concept back to the ninth century.⁶² West argued that lordship changed qualitatively in the tenth and eleventh centuries (*contra* Barton, who argued only for a quantitative shift), with the key change being the increasing formalisation of the relationship between a lord and his followers. West concluded that speaking of lordship, rather than of informal, disparate and highly variable individual relationships, in the Carolingian period was unhelpful and misleading.⁶³ Chris Wickham also re-entered the debate on the topic recently, tying the hitherto Francocentric debate to wider developments across post-Carolingian Europe and linking his own early emphasis on the formalisation of political structures with West's developments of the subject, as well as with Robert Fossier's idea of *encellulement*.⁶⁴ Wickham expanded the thrust of the argument to present the changes happening after the year 1000, both in France and in Italy, as dynamic responses to a collapse in Carolingian-style authority, in which previously *ad*

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 6, 258-9. On the idea of formalisation before West, see Wickham, 'Debate IV', *P&P* 155, pp. 196-208; cf. West, *Reframing*, p. 9.

⁶⁰ West, *Reframing*, pp. 49-77.

⁶¹ Ibid, pp. 10-11.

⁶² Charles West, 'Lordship in Ninth-Century Francia: The Case of Bishop Hincmar of Laon and his Followers', *P&P* 226 (2015), pp. 8-9, 38.

⁶³ Ibid, pp. 31-40.

⁶⁴ Chris Wickham, 'The 'Feudal Revolution' and the Origins of Italian City Communes', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 24 (2014), pp. 32-4.

hoc and ‘illegal’ modes of domination and control became formalised, crystallised and legalised (an argument drawing heavily on Pierre Bourdieu’s ideas of *habitus*).⁶⁵ Alessio Fiore has continued to develop these ideas in the context of the kingdom of Italy during the late eleventh century, in a study which further emphasised the potential of this approach across diverse geographical regions.⁶⁶

West, Wickham and Fiore’s latest work has shown that it is possible to put forward a more theoretically nuanced and effective *mutationiste* thesis, combining anthropological approaches with a belief in a sudden social transformation. However, their focus on political culture runs into the problem, once more, of different scholars taking past one another, and commenting on ‘Feudal Revolutions’ rather than a single event. Perhaps the way forward is to reconceptualise the ‘Feudal Revolution’ in a much broader sense than has been attempted in the past three decades; to see the bewildering array of changes and processes detailed in Poly and Bournazel’s *La Mutation Féodale* not as a weakness, but rather as a strength. If the ‘Feudal Revolution’ is seen as a more open and less rigidly defined transformational event, analogous perhaps with how the Industrial Revolution and the Reformation are treated by historians, the multitude of changes can be studied collectively, seen to interact with and effect one another, rather than disprove each other, ultimately leading to a subtler and richer understanding of the period.⁶⁷

The ‘Feudal Revolution’ model has, therefore, some excellent points and, in the light of the most recent work, its interpretation of a critical discontinuity in the structures of French society around the turn of the millennium remains a provocative and plausible position. However, in many ways it still does not have the conceptual coherence to be a useful tool in better understanding the social and political history of post-Carolingian France; the fundamental binary distinction between ‘public’ and ‘private’ power appears to be indefensible and many of the debates quickly devolve into isolated topics without its unifying force. The aim of this thesis will be to suggest

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp. pp. 49-55, esp. 53-5.

⁶⁶ Alessio Fiore, ‘Refiguring Local Power and Legitimacy in the Kingdom of Italy, c.900–c.1150’, *P&P* 241, pp. 33-67.

⁶⁷ Cf. West, *Reframing*, p. 261.

a new way to examine the changes which did take place during this period and to make better sense of them than can be provided by the older catch-all model of the 'Feudal Revolution', while recognising the ubiquity of the term and its potential if re-imagined. This work will be in parallel to the recent work on the topic by Wickham and West, which is more focused on political cultures, as this thesis will seek to refocus attention on the long-neglected socio-economic structures of post-Carolingian West Francia, through the prism of élite status.

IV

This thesis will attempt to transcend the deadlock which has been the result of the past twenty years of debate on the question of 'Feudal Revolution'. It will do so by adapting the most promising ideas and methodologies from both sides of the debate and by framing the question of social change in a new way, focusing on the ways in which élite status was claimed and performed and on how the dynamics of élite status are indelibly linked to changes in the socio-economic structures of medieval society.

To do so, this thesis will consider the middle Loire Valley region over a longer time-span than has usually been examined in the context of the 'Feudal Revolution' debate. This develops, in particular, the most recent trends in the scholarship brought forward by Charles West and in doing so, recognises that the interpretation of the 'Feudal Revolution' is inextricably tied to an interpretation of the Carolingian empire and the reasons for its disintegration. The lack of detailed study of the Carolingian period in all major works on the issue prior to West's *Reframing the 'Feudal Revolution'* is a tradition which this study does not intend to continue. Secondly, as already mentioned, the sources for this study will be drawn from across an area with radically different levels of political fragmentation. Given that regional differences and idiosyncrasies have been a methodological Achilles' heel for the *mutationistes'* attempts at synthesis for decades, a more comparative approach, even at this small, regional scale, will allow for conclusions to be drawn without any expectation of

similar trends, while simultaneously making such trends clearer when they appear.⁶⁸ A considered and measured weighting of regional differences and general trends, rather than overarching generalisations will be the goal.

Most importantly, and one of the central methodological foundations of this study, will be an approach to late- and post-Carolingian society which is firmly rooted in the social and economic structures of the middle Loire valley, rather than its political or judicial cultures. In more general, theoretical terms, rather than analysing the Carolingian collapse as one of a progressive devolution of power into smaller and smaller units (and tackling the related question of whether this ultimately changed the nature of the power), I will, instead, seek to identify transfers in the distribution of wealth, and in particular landed wealth, and from this attempt to understand the changing structures of social power – that is, the methods through which élite status could be claimed. This focus on élite status will illuminate the underlying systems and structures which allowed political power to be wielded in the first place and, by identifying any changes in these structures, will allow ultimately the debate on political power itself to move forward.

The anti-*mutationiste* school has focused on the continuous cultures of dispute resolution and lordship which persisted throughout the centuries surrounding the millennium. This anti-*mutationiste* argument neglects the rooting of these practices of aristocratic dominance in wider social and economic structures, in particular the control of resources and manpower. The problem is therefore one of a debate between structural and process-based approaches. The proposed project will explore this weakness in the anti-*mutationiste* argument to determine whether the supposed continuities in the practice of lordship in *seigneuries banales* are reflected in a fundamentally unchanging socio-economic framework. This approach, in particular the idea of studying wider networks and structures and giving little analytical weight to the changing political geography, has been strongly influenced by Richard Barton's

⁶⁸ Constance Brittain Bouchard, 'Rural Economy and Society', in Marcus Bull (ed.), *France in the Central Middle Ages, 900-1200* (Oxford, 2002), p. 77. On the value of comparative methods see Chris Wickham, 'Problems of comparing rural societies in early medieval Western Europe', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 2 (1992), pp. 221-46.

study of lordship in Maine.⁶⁹

The reconstruction of those systems and practices, by which élites accumulated wealth and claimed their social status, will be based on the large volume of recent, innovative work which has been published in the field of earlier medieval economic and social history. The incorporation of economic studies into the general understanding of society in the early Middle Ages has been more pronounced than in any other period of medieval history. Scholars such as Jean-Pierre Devroey, Adriaan Verhulst, Régine le Jan, Chris Wickham and Michael McCormick, among others, have demonstrated the value of this approach, highlighting the insights which can be gained by considering social developments in light of economic structures.⁷⁰

This glut of studies focusing on the early medieval period is in stark contrast to the study of the social and economic history of the central Middle Ages since the 1980s, upon which virtually no major work has been done.⁷¹ Falling between the two stools of the Carolingian economy before it and the far more source-rich twelfth and thirteenth centuries – the beginning of the so-called ‘Commercial revolution’ – the economic history of the vital centuries on either side of the millennium relies still primarily of the works of Georges Duby and Robert Fossier.⁷² After his study of the Mâconnais, Duby produced a comprehensive synthesis of the economic and social history of the entire European middle ages, followed by a much more impressionistic ‘essay’ dealing explicitly with the first signs of growth and development, which he

⁶⁹ Barton, *Lordship*, pp. 14-16.

⁷⁰ Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy; Communications and Commerce, AD 300-900* (Cambridge, 2002); Wickham, *Framing*; idem, *Land and Power: Studies in Italian and European Social History, 400-1200* (London, 1994); Jean-Pierre Devroey, *Économie rurale et société dans l'Europe franque (Vie-IXe siècles)*; *Fondements matériels, échanges et lien social* (Paris, 2003); idem, *Puissants et misérables; Système social et monde paysan dans l'Europe des Francs (VIe-IXe siècles)* (Brussels, 2006); idem, *Études sur le grand domaine carolingien*, (Aldershot, 1993); idem, ‘The Economy’ in Rosamond McKitterick (ed.), *The Early Middle Ages; Europe 400-1000* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 97-130; Régine le Jan, *La société du haut Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2003); eadem, ‘Continuity and Change in the Tenth-Century Nobility’ in Duggan (ed.) *Nobles and Nobility*, pp. 53-79; Adriaan Verhulst, *The Carolingian Economy* (Cambridge, 2002).

⁷¹ An exception is Chris Wickham, *Medieval Rome; Stability and Crisis of a City, 900-1150* (Oxford, 2015).

⁷² For the extent to which the history of this period relies on these narratives, see Laurent Feller, *Paysans et seigneurs au Moyen Âge, VIIIe-XVe siècles*, (Paris, 2007), pp. 100-35; it is telling that the tenth and eleventh centuries have only one chapter devoted to them in Feller’s textbook, in contrast to three on the Carolingian period and a further three on the period from the twelfth century to the crises of the fourteenth.

placed during the tenth century.⁷³ Duby viewed the Carolingian economy as backward, rigidly inefficient and a drag on innovation and growth. This “very poor and very rustic civilisation” was shocked into growth by the ‘invasions’ and raids of Norse, Saracen and Magyar bands in the tenth century, whose appetite for movable wealth forced the aristocracy to restructure their lands to produce more surplus.⁷⁴ As society became more fragmented in the eleventh century, aristocratic demand continued and the pressure created by this demand allowed for the growth of the population, the use of coinage, urban areas, productivity and the economy as a whole.

Fossier’s book was written a decade after Duby’s ‘essay’ on the economy of the millennial period, and explored much of the same ideas in more depth.⁷⁵ *Enfance de l’Europe* was intended as a socio-economic companion to Poly and Bournazel’s *Mutation féodale* in the *Nouvelle Clio* series, although it never quite achieved the controversial reputation of its partner.⁷⁶ Fossier’s central theme was that of *encellulement*, the increasing division of society into cells or small defined units, be they the village, parish, *seigneurie* or linear and nuclear family.⁷⁷ This increasingly limited autonomy, particularly among the non-aristocratic classes, but was seen as the foundation on which the economy of the remainder of the medieval period was built.⁷⁸ The idea was, however, less polarizing than that of a ‘feudal revolution’ and the economic and wider social interests of the Duby regional school of historians was lost in the linguistic/cultural turn of the 1980s.⁷⁹

⁷³ Georges Duby, *L’Économie rurale et la vie des campagnes dans l’Occident médiéval*; (France, Angleterre, Empire, IXe-XVe siècles) *Essai de synthèse et perspectives des recherches* (Paris, 2 vols, 1962); Cynthia Postan (trans.), *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West* (London, 1968) and idem, *Guerriers et paysans, VIIe-XIIe siècle; Premier essor de l’économie européenne* (Paris, 1973); Howard B. Clark (trans.), *The Early Growth of the European Economy* (London, 1974), respectively.

⁷⁴ Duby, *Guerriers et paysans*, esp. pp. 132-9; quote at p. 133. Duby’s (and Fossier’s) views on the Carolingian have been almost entirely discredited by the newer works on the period cited above: see Feller, *Paysans et seigneurs*, p. II.

⁷⁵ Fossier, *Enfance de l’Europe*. Fossier reprised some of his ideas in English in idem, ‘Rural Economy and Country Life’ in Timothy Reuter (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History; Volume III c.900 – c.1024* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 27-63.

⁷⁶ See above.

⁷⁷ Fossier, *Enfance*, pp. 228ff.

⁷⁸ Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome; A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (London, 2009), pp. 539-43, offers a short introduction, with examples, in English.

⁷⁹ For the movement’s earlier interest in such topics, see especially the *thèses* by Fossier, *La terre*

Both Duby and Fossier were ground-breaking historians but, while their work remains the most recent specialised studies on the period, there are serious flaws with their approaches to the topic which can be identified with the benefit of thirty-five years of hindsight. Firstly, the works are blatantly teleological, as evidenced by their titles, attempting to position the tenth and eleventh centuries as the crucible and birthplace of the modern, European, capitalist economic model. This inevitably led to judgements of the success or failure of medieval economies based on how closely they aligned to the features of a capitalist economy: a liquid money supply, inter-regional and international trade, increased returns for lords, either in rents or kind, and marketised farming were seen as inherently ‘good’ and progressive. Secondly, the lack of detailed work on the economic history of the period led to many assumptions being based on small data sets and easily accessible, but perhaps un-representative, narrative sources. Both Fossier and Duby noted the limitations and deficiencies of the evidence, but it remains the case that the studies were conducted largely without the huge mass of data represented by the charters of medieval Europe. Both authors favoured instead either large, atypical documents such as polyptychs or the Cluny archives, or narrative sources such as Ralph Glaber’s *Historia*. While these are valuable sources of evidence, it is dangerous to generalise from them, in particular when they are likely to contain evidence not for the normal or everyday, but for the unusual or exceptional cases. Finally, both Duby and Fossier ignore the church to a large degree. This is, indeed, true for the majority of authors writing on the economy throughout medieval history. As the largest single landholders in Europe, however, as well as the source through which the entirety of the documentation survives for this period, churches, cathedrals and monasteries are integral to the study of society and economy.⁸⁰ Historians have subscribed to an unspoken assumption that the church was, for all intents and purposes, the equivalent of an extremely wealthy lord: that it organised its lands and assets in the same way, that it pursued the same rational

et les hommes and Bonnassie, *La Catalogne*.

⁸⁰ Notable exceptions to this statement include Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Holy Entrepreneurs: Cistercians, Knights, and Economic Exchange in Twelfth-Century Burgundy* (Ithaca, NY, 1991); David Herlihy, ‘Church Property on the European Continent, 701-1200’, *Speculum* 36 (1961), pp. 81-105. For an earlier period, see Ian Wood, ‘Entrusting Western Europe to the Church, 400-750’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 23 (2013), pp. 37-73.

economic goals and that its character as a religious, collegiate institution was peripheral, at best, to its management of its wealth. These assumptions may not be wrong, but they are unquestioned, and they have subtly and powerfully shaped how the history of the topic has been written. In this study I will seek to analyse the landholding and wealth of the church independently of the laity, in order to better appreciate the role it may have played in economic developments of the period.

Having surveyed scholarship on the early medieval economy and the problems and challenges presented by the historiography of the centuries around the year 1000, my goals remain modest. I will not attempt to re-write the socio-economic history of Europe, or even of France, in the following chapters. Rather, bearing the issues detailed here in mind, I will explore the society and economy of the middle Loire Valley through the lens of the changing structures which supported the social élites, both lay and ecclesiastical. The focus on bringing issues of the structural transformation and change to the fore, through the examination of the processes by which élite status was constructed and maintained, will, however, allow for a better understanding of the social and political phenomena of the 'Feudal Revolution.'

Chapter II

The Foundations of Status: Property and Wealth

It is axiomatic that differentials of wealth are an inherent part of hierarchical status divisions in human society. Indeed, differentiation through material wealth is the primary way in which archaeologists identify the progression from egalitarian to hierarchical social structures in pre-literate society.¹ It remains the case in literate societies, both medieval and modern, that wealth is heavily linked to social status. But they are not the same thing and although material wealth, particularly in pre-literate societies, can be a valuable proxy for status, this thesis argues that because social status is continuously claimed and contested by social actors, the mere possession of wealth is not enough to immediately elevate an individual to higher social status. In the early and central Middle Ages, as in the modern world, wealth does not confer elite status in and of itself - that is to say that there is no material threshold, whether measured in head of cattle, acres of land or US dollars, upon which elite status rests - but it allows wealthy individuals the resources to make claims to higher status in a variety of ways which are recognised by their peers and by society at large.² Without access to wealth, it is difficult, albeit not impossible, for individuals to make effective claims to elite status. An understanding of the distribution of and the access to material wealth is vital, therefore, to understand how claims to social status function within a particular society.

Understanding the distribution of wealth is doubly important for the middle Loire valley from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, during the period often dubbed by historians as the 'First Expansion of the European Economy' or the 'Long Economic Boom'.³ This was a period of rapid growth in population,

¹ Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice* (London, 2nd ed., 2000), pp. 174-82; 203-15.

² Laurent Feller, 'Introduction. Formes et fonctions de la richesse des élites au haut Moyen Age' in Jean-Pierre Devroey, Laurent Feller and Régine le Jan (eds), *Les élites et la richesse au haut Moyen Age* (Turnhout, 2010), p. 5; Jean-Pierre Devroey, 'Conclusion. La richesse, entre réalités, matérielles, pratiques sociales et représentations' in Devroey, Feller and le Jan (eds), *Les élites et la richesse*, p. 511.

³ Georges Duby, *Paysans et Guerriers*; Chris Wickham, *Medieval Europe* (New Haven, CT, 2016),

productivity and economic complexity across Europe, but the details and nuances of this expansion remain under-examined within the historiography.⁴ The aim of this chapter is to examine in detail the broad parameters of this economic transformation in the middle Loire valley, with a particular emphasis on how access to wealth was managed, restricted and transferred. This will provide the basis on which to evaluate the myriad of ways in which wealth was mobilised to lay claim to elite status, which will be examined in subsequent chapters.

It is important to stress at the outset that this analysis will focus not only on the accumulation and management of wealth by lay elites, but also by elite clerics and ecclesiastical institutions. It is well-established that medieval lay aristocrats devoted a considerable proportion of their time to managing their wealth. They were enmeshed in the 'politics of land', seeking to expand and consolidate their fortunes and to pass them on to their families after their deaths.⁵ But the pursuit of wealth was not restricted to the laity. Medieval clerics were viewed as pastors and guardians of their churches, and those duties extended to the consolidation and expansion of the patron saint's patrimony. These obligations are made clear in texts like the *Gesta Pontificum Autissidorensis*, which contains long passages praising past bishops on their generosity and successful management of the cathedral's property. It also makes clear its displeasure at those who failed to do so; Bishop Richard (962-71) was criticised for being 'less industrious' than his predecessors in his augmentation of the church.⁶ His successor Heribert I (971-98), heavily criticised by his biographer for his secular lifestyle, was damned with faint praise on his handling of the church's property: 'even if by his efforts he hardly increased them [the treasures of the church], at least he did not excessively diminish them'.⁷ Cartularies also functioned in the same way to highlight the achievements of ecclesiastical elites in providing for their communities materially,

pp 121-40.

⁴ Wickham, *Medieval Europe*, pp. 121-3. See also above, chap I.

⁵ On the 'politics of land': Wickham, *Medieval Europe*, pp. 9-13; *idem*, *Framing the Early Middle Age*, pp. 58-9; Bloch, *Feudal Society*, esp. pp. 441-6; Amy Livingstone, *Medieval Lives c. 1000-1292: The World of the Beaugency Family* (London, 2018), pp. 85-97.

⁶ GPA, pp. 230-1.

⁷ GPA, pp. 236-7.

especially those, like the mid-twelfth century cartulary at Vierzon, which organised their contents by abbot.⁸ Such attitudes are evident even in individual documents, such as the account inserted into the cartulary of the canons of St-Cyr de Nevers c. 1100 which recounted the property and rights which Bishop Hugh II of Nevers, ‘through himself or through others’ gave to the cathedral canons. In this, Hugh ‘was a magnificent man, praised by all, chosen by God, favoured by the clergy and venerated by all’.⁹ Given that all surviving written evidence of wealth from this period is found in ecclesiastically-produced sources, the recognition that clerical élites were as deeply enmeshed in the acquisition and management of wealth, and that this was seen as a core function of their office, is all the more important.¹⁰

I

The most visible forms of wealth in the central Middle Ages - and therefore those with the most immediate impact in terms of communicating status - are, ironically, those hardest to locate in the historical record.¹¹ The bias of the ecclesiastical archives towards the preservation of documents which record title to property, rather than inventories or descriptions of movable wealth, mean that, although we know it existed, tracing any sorts of development in the treatment of material wealth is difficult, due to the highly fragmentary nature of the evidence. Narrative sources such as the *Gesta Pontificum* frequently mention chalices, vestments and other church ornaments which the bishops bestowed upon churches, as evidence of their sanctity and generosity.¹² But in the documentary evidence, it is often only chance survivals that can offer a glimpse into the importance of this type of wealth

⁸ Vierzon; BNF MS Lat 9865

⁹ St-Cyr 77.

¹⁰ Cf. Wannes Verstrepen, ‘“Suppressor of plunderers and robbers”; The Actions and Views of Bishop Fulbert of Chartres concerning Church Property (1006-1028)’, *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 112 (2017), pp. 634-43.

¹¹ For studies of movable wealth in the early middle ages more generally, see Le Jan, *Société au haut Moyen Age*, pp. 164-6; eadem, *Famille et pouvoir*, pp. 60-76; eadem, ‘Prendre, accumuler, détruire les richesses dans les sociétés du haut Moyen Age’ in Jean-Pierre Devroey, Laurent Feller and Régine le Jan (eds), *Les élites et la richesse au haut Moyen Age* (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 365-89; Steffan Patzold, ‘Noblesse Oblige? Se distinguer par l’emploi des richesses au haut Moyen Age’ in Jean-Pierre Devroey, Laurent Feller and Régine le Jan (eds), *Les élites et la richesse au haut Moyen Age* (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 139-54.

¹² See, for example, *GPA* pp. 180-1.

in the period. The *miles* Adelelmus, for example, donated a silver crucifix to Fleury in 975.¹³ The sculpture was not only of great spiritual value (for following its descriptions is a long meditation on the meaning of the crucifixion within the charter text), but was presumably of great material value also, as it takes pride of place in the charter, above the property donated at Villiers-Saint-Benoît (dep. Yonne). Adelelmus' charter was preserved due to his donation of property (the early modern copies present it as a '*carta [...] de potestate Villaris*' and '*charta [...] de donatione [...] ad loci Villaris*'), but for Adelelmus himself the crucifix was the primary object of donation. It suggests that donations of crucifixes and other ecclesiastical ornaments, and of transactions in movable wealth more generally, were far more common than is evident from the surviving records, as donations without land would not have been preserved by cartulary compilers or later copyists.

This suggestion is supported by the evidence of the few surviving wills from the middle Loire valley. Only three wills survive from the period 850-1150: Count Heccard of Autun's will from c. 875, preserved in the archives of Fleury; Bishop Hugh III of Nevers's will of 1074, in the cartulary of St-Cyr; and Simon, Lord of Beaugency's will (c. 1146-53) which was preserved in the archives and cartulary of Ste-Croix d'Orléans.¹⁴ Most wills or testaments during the tenth and eleventh centuries were probably not particularly detailed, if they existed at all. Those documents which do survive are largely concerned with who should receive the testator's wealth (as a whole) after death, rather than dividing assets up between beneficiaries. For example, the *miles* Raymond Tribulus wished to leave all of his wealth ('whatever I will have [at the time of my death], in money or estates or among my possessions') to St-Sulpice de Bourges, but only if he had no legitimate children surviving.¹⁵ The overriding concern of the text was to establish when this transfer should take place - what to do if Raymond died before his wife, or vice-versa - rather than establishing what Raymond's possessions and wealth were. True

¹³ Fleury 61.

¹⁴ Respectively: Fleury 25, St-Cyr 75, Ste-Croix 5.

¹⁵ St-Sulpice 18.

testaments only began to emerge and survive consistently in France in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.¹⁶ The surviving wills, however, are documents which provide three glimpses of lay aristocrats' and an aristocratic bishop's attitudes towards movable wealth and hint at the drastic changes which occurred during the post-Carolingian period.

Heccard was count of Autun, Mâcon and Chalons-sur-Saône under Charles the Bald in the late ninth century. He donated the *villa* of Perrecy, in the *pagus* of Autun, to Fleury in January 876, in the process transferring a number of documents into the archives of Fleury and the priory which was founded at Perrecy. Among these is Heccard's will (*Elemosina Heccardi Comititis*), presumably written around the same time the donation was made.¹⁷ The will specifies the distribution of landed property, not only to Fleury but to a variety of persons and churches, and it is of interest here due to the number of valuable movable objects which are listed. These include relics, books, ecclesiastical vestments and plate, money, horses, dogs, falcons, arms and armour. The sheer scale of the donation is impressive even to the modern reader and the high-status nature of the objects is clear. These bequests attest not only to Heccard's wealth but also to his lifestyle, which fit the Carolingian noble ideals of hunting, warfare, learning and religious devotion.¹⁸ These are important reminders that much of the performance of nobility and élite status was done through actions and social rituals (campaigning, attending court, and taking part in hunts) which have not been preserved by the limited sources which have survived. The very act of writing a will and appointing

¹⁶ Anne E Lester, 'Crafting a Charitable Landscape: Urban Topographies in charters and testaments from medieval Champagne' in Caroline Goodson, Anne E. Lester and Carol Symes (eds), *Cities, Texts and Social Networks, 400-1500* (Abingdon, 2010), p. 140. On the Carolingian testamentary tradition, of which Heccard's will is a part, see Christina La Rocca and Luigi Provero, 'The Dead and their Gifts. The will of Eberhard, count of Friuli, and his wife Gisela, daughter of Louis the Pious (863-864)' in Frans Theuvs and Janet L. Nelson (eds), *Rituals of Power; From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 225-80.

¹⁷ Fleury 25. On the Perrecy dossier and Heccard's donation more generally, see Olivier Bruand, 'Les villas ligériennes de l'Autunois, centres de pouvoir et d'encadrement (VIIIe – début XIe siècle)' in Dominique Barthélemy and Olivier Bruand (eds) *Les pouvoirs locaux dans la France du centre et de l'ouest (VIIIe-XIe siècles): Implantation et moyens d'action* (Rennes, 2004), pp. III-36.

¹⁸ See Rachel Stone, *Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge, 2011), esp. pp. 84-134 and Costambeys *et al.*, *The Carolingian World*, p. 284, with Heccard's will as an explicit example.

executors, of distributing gifts and donations, was an action which signals Heccard's élite status, for generosity and charity, particularly to the church and to churchmen, was a key component of Carolingian aristocratic identity.¹⁹ It should be noted that money plays only a very small part in this will. Heccard only donates three and a half *libri* directly: three to the church of St-Martin at Tours and half a *librum* for his body to be interred at Fleury after his death. The other mentions of money are indirect, as part of conditional bequests. These are five bequests of landed property to lay friends and relations of Heccard, on the condition that they donate between 100 and 300 *solidii* on his behalf. This was to be donated 'for the poor or to our friends, whether the more noble or servants'.²⁰ The phrasing suggests that these donations might not have been intended as cash donations, but as measures of the level of donations required (i.e. 100 *solidii* worth of donations on Heccard's behalf). This possibility is strengthened by the command at the end of the will that 'of all which remains, whether movable or immovable, dispense it for the poor or to those to whom I have debts or whom I have wronged'.²¹ The verb *dispensare* suggests that what was envisaged was distribution of property and movable objects, not their conversion into cash to be donated, which suggests that the same would be true in the case of the conditional bequests. Movable wealth as portrayed in Heccard's will is embodied by high-value and high-status objects, frequently of gold, silver and other precious materials, which were associated with élite pursuits, such as hunting, reading and religious devotion. These objects were then circulated through donations, patronage and gifts, in a tightly-knit and closed élite environment.

Two hundred years later, a cursory reading of the will of Bishop Hugh III of Nevers would suggest that not much had changed. Hugh was a son of the 'Hugonid' viscounts of Nevers, whose primary castle was located at Champallement; before his elevation to the bishopric, which had been held by his

¹⁹ Costambeys *et al.*, *The Carolingian World*, pp. 235-45; Feller, 'Formes et fonctions de la richesse' in Devroey, Feller and Le Jan (eds), *Les élites et la richesse*, pp. 28-30; Patzold, 'Noblesse Oblige?' in Devroey, Feller and Le Jan (eds), *Les élites et la richesse*, pp. 139-54.

²⁰ Fleury 25; 'donate per pauperes sue a nostros amicos, tam ad nobiliores quam et ad servientes'.

²¹ Ibid; 'De omnia quae remanent tam mobile quam immobile, dispensate per pauperes vel cui debitum aut misfactum habemus.'

great-uncle Hugh II in the first half of the eleventh century, he had served as a canon under his uncle, Bishop Geoffrey of Auxerre.²² He redacted his will in 1074, the first year of his episcopacy, in the presence of his uncle and the count of Nevers, William I.²³ It is, however, far less detailed than either of the surviving lay wills. It stipulates that half of Hugh's episcopal goods (*bonorum meum de episcopatu*) should go to the canons of the cathedral, that a quarter should support sick pilgrims and widows *in domo Deo* (presumably an almshouse or infirmary associated with the cathedral) and that the final quarter should go to the monastery of St-Étienne de Nevers, where Hugh was to be buried.²⁴ The 'goods' which are bequeathed are not described individually, but rather in a series of generic categories: 'as much in bread as in wine, gold and silver, and beasts and all furnishings'.²⁵ At first glance this is little different than Heccard's goods, with the interesting addition of food and wine, but the fact that the three bequests are all institutional, rather than to individuals, limits the amount which can be said about the circulation of movable wealth.

The evidence of Simon of Beaugency's will, from the very end of our period, is drastically different. Simon was lord of the castle of Beaugency, west of Orléans, from his father Raoul's death in c. 1130 to his own death in 1154. Although his mother, Matilda of Vermandois, was a niece of Philip I, by the 1130s Beaugency's political heyday was behind it, and Simon was the epitome of an active, regionally powerful, sub-comital lord.²⁶ His will was made in the presence of Bishop Manasses of Orléans and given into the care of the abbot of St-Euverte; it was transcribed into the cartulary of Ste-Croix and survived in the original until 1944.²⁷ Two features of this will are remarkable, in comparison to those which have just been discussed. Firstly, money is far more dominant in relation to all other

²² GPA, pp. 264-5, 276-7.

²³ St-Cyr 75.

²⁴ On Hugh and St-Étienne, see below Chap IV.

²⁵ Ibid: '*tam in pane quam in vino, auro et argento, et bestiis, et omnique et suppellectili*'.

²⁶ Livingstone, *Medieval Lives*, pp 118-21; Eadem, 'Climbing the Tree of Jesse' in Aurell (ed.) *Les stratégies matrimoniales*, pp. 109-14. Note, however, that Livingstone overstates Simon's estrangement from Louis VII's court; see AD Loiret, H 163, no. 5, a diploma of Louis' from 1149, in which he confirms a donation of Simon's to Marmoutier, calling Simon *fidelis noster*.

²⁷ Ste-Croix 5. An English translation can be found in Livingstone, *Medieval Lives*, pp. 239-46.

material wealth. The vast majority of Simon's bequests and debts are described in cash, either as lump sums or as the revenues deriving from various rents and payments. Simon donated property (land and pasture to the alms-house at Blois; two mills and a neighbouring plot to St-Euverte; a claim to a *villa* conceded to Ste-Croix), churches (an unnamed church to Ste-Croix; Notre-Dame de Bonnes Nouvelles d'Orléans to Marmoutier) and raw materials (wax to Ste-Croix, salt to Nortre-Dame de Beaugency, firewood to St-Euverte, wheat and wine to the chaplain of Beaugency, silver chalices to the monks of *Burgel* and the leper-house of Meung-sur-Loire), but the overwhelming majority of his bequests are specified in cash. The fact that these are intended to be paid in money, rather than simply measured using a unit of account, is that it is specified whether the debt or bequest is in the money of Angers or Orléans (*Andevagensis monete* or *Aurelianensis monete*).²⁸ The second remarkable feature of the will is the sheer size of the wealth which Simon pledges to pay out: over 52,000 *solidii* in total. In contrast, all of Heccard's conditional bequests combined were only 800 *solidii* in value. Moreover, Simon's will is concerned only with the value of his obligations to those outside his family; his heir, his younger brother Lancelin III, would surely have received property worth much more, the core of the family's patrimony.

Although it would be crude to try to compare directly Simon and Heccard's will to determine who was wealthier, the impression given from the brief survey of both wills is that the élite economy of the twelfth century was far more complex than that of the ninth. Whereas Heccard's movable wealth was invested in the symbolic and cultural capital of possessions, Simon's wealth was expressed as 'real' capital, in the modern economic sense of the world: cash and revenue streams which were circulated among a wide range of parties (Simon names twenty-seven individual creditors and donates to twenty-three different religious houses in his will) in order to fulfil political, social and moral obligations and to enhance Simon's status. The complex economy in which Simon took part must have depended upon an increased agricultural surplus, which was converted into cash (most likely before it was paid as rent and dues) for élite use. The increased circulation of

²⁸ Ste-Croix 5.

wealth did not occur overnight, but it is difficult to trace due to the near-invisibility of movable assets and capital in the sources. That the process was well underway by the early eleventh century is suggested by the chance survival of a notice of the forgiveness of bad debts from Auxerre from the reign of Abbot Odo of St-Germain (1032-52).²⁹ Under Odo's predecessor Theobald (1020-32), the monks were compelled by a failure of the grape crop to borrow seven *libri* worth of wine from a local man named Henry. Henry was evidently a prominent moneylender in Auxerre, for he also loaned a monk named Bernard eight *libri* in cash. When it became apparent that his debts would not be repaid, Henry forgave the debts, returned the collateral he had taken (liturgical vestments and furs; evidence once again of the material wealth of élite churchmen) and paid to have the windows on the right-hand side of the monastic church restored. Although on a much smaller scale than is evident in Simon of Beaugency's will, we can see that the prestige economy of élites (in wine, windows, clothes and fur) was being mediated through complex networks facilitated by cash and credit. This fits broadly with the orthodox view of Western European economic expansion from the end of the tenth century onwards, but the implications for élite wealth (and by extension, status) have yet to be explored. The remainder of this chapter will aim to do this, examining how the nuances of this economic transformation can be traced through the kind of wealth which is best represented in the surviving sources: landed property.

II

Landed property is the overwhelming concern of most of the documentary evidence which survives from late- and post-Carolingian France. The types of documentation which survive - their content, form and outlook - vary through time, as does their abundance in the ecclesiastical archives of the middle Loire valley. As a general rule, the number of surviving documents increase as time goes

²⁹ The notice is preserved on a blank folio at the back of a volume of texts on heresy from the abbey's library, now Paris, BNF Ms Lat 1745, fol. 40r.

on, although there are many local archival variations. A common feature of all of these documents' approach to landed property, however, is that they are rarely working or administrative documents. That is to say that, with occasional exceptions, the surviving documents were not intended to function as surveys or as overviews of ecclesiastical or lay landed possessions. The vast majority of surviving charters are accounts of property transfer, rather than property management, for details are only recorded when the property in questions transfers from one owner to another, usually from a pious donor to a church who receives and records the donation. The effect of this is two-fold. Firstly, it ensures that it is rarely possible to get a holistic view of property interests. Properties emerge into the historical record as single units or in small bundles, meaning that reconstructing a coherent picture of structures of property-holding is reliant on the piecing together of an extremely fragmented evidence base. Secondly, it means that lay property tends to be visible only at the moment it is transferred into ecclesiastical control. This means that any overview of lay property is even more fragmented than ecclesiastical property and also ensures that it is forever discernible only through an ecclesiastical lens.

Although charters of donation are the majority of surviving documents for most churches, and are the basis for most historical analyses of church property produced in the last half century, in the period before the year 1000 they are often overshadowed in the archives of the churches in the middle Loire valley by other types of documentation, two of which, in particular, can provide a valuable insight into the ecclesiastical approach to landed property in the final decades of the Carolingian kings of France. These two genres of documentation are the royal and papal diplomas of immunity and privileges, and the precarial grant. Together they provide a macro- and micro-view of ecclesiastical property management and can provide a baseline for later transformations.

Virtually every church in the middle Loire valley whose archives extend back to the ninth century preserved diplomas which confirm privileges, immunities and other rights on the ecclesiastical community, with most originating from the active chancery of the long-reigning Charles the Bald (840-877) and his immediate successors in the late ninth century. From the beginning of the tenth century, royal

grants to churches outside the royal heartland of the Orléanais are rare; Louis IV issued privileges for both Vézelay and St-Germain in Auxerre on the same day in July 936 and both Hugh Capet and Robert II issued diplomas for St-Germain before Landric of Nevers consolidated his control of Auxerre after 1003, but aside from this, royal diplomas were confined to the territory of Orléans for much of the period.³⁰ These documents are a valuable resource for understanding the broad outlines of ecclesiastical property in the ninth and tenth centuries (and beyond, in the Orléanais) for royal diplomas were used to secure the most important privileges, confirm the most strategic property donations and to delineate and solidify the entirety of the church's patrimony.³¹ The material aspects of these diplomas have often been neglected by recent scholarship, which has instead focused on the carefully-constructed rhetoric of the documents. Geoff Koziol, in particular, has argued that grants like these were performative: carefully orchestrated political set-pieces, designed to publicly showcase royal power and confirm alliances.³² Such an analysis is valuable, but it elides the fact that such grants were rooted in material concerns over the control and use of ecclesiastical property. As such, these grants are a useful point of departure to understand the approach taken by churchmen to their properties in the late Carolingian period.

The simplest way in which diplomas can illuminate ninth- and tenth-century church landholding is simply through providing lists of all of, or of the most significant portions of, a church's properties. While not present in every diploma, surviving property lists can show the breadth of late-Carolingian church holdings, if not with the same level of depth which is provided by polyptyques of other regions. Where multiple property lists survive in royal diplomas, it is possible

³⁰ Louis IV: Vézelay II:18/Rec. L IV 2, Cert. Gen. Yon I:72/Rec. L IV 3. These diplomas were issued as part of Louis' expedition with Hugh the Great to Burgundy after his coronation in Laon in order to secure the submission of the Burgundian bishops and aristocracy. See Flodoard, *Annales*, s.a. 936. Hugh Capet and Robert II: Cart. Gen. Yon. I:82/Cat. R II 7; Cart. Gen. Yon 84/Cat R II 35.

³¹ Papal confirmations are much rarer in the middle Loire valley, only becoming common in the second quarter of the twelfth century, but in the churches where they are present - most notably Vézelay, but also at Ste-Croix in Orléans and at Fleury - they often perform similar functions to royal diplomas in delineating and confirming the church's patrimony.

³² Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 17-62. Cf. Below, Chap IV, on the performative nature of elite grants to churches.

to build up coherent maps of a church's patrimony, as Noëlle Deflou-Leca has done for St-Germain or Laurent Morelle for Fleury.³³ Deflou-Leca's maps shows sixty properties of St-Germain's lying almost entirely within a 30km radius of the abbey, or slightly further when easily reached by river. Morelle found an almost identical number of properties (albeit drawing from a wider range of sources) for Fleury's patrimony, although this was spread even more thinly than at St-Germain. Nevertheless, the majority of properties belonging to the monks could be found within 50km of the abbey, with the highest density found to the north of the river Loire, between Orléans and Paris.³⁴ This image of fragmented and localised property holdings is consistent with most of the other churches for which property lists survive, although they are rarely as rich as those preserved by St-Germain or Fleury. Properties outside the immediate orbit of the church were often treated differently. They could be encompassed in sweeping statements or downplayed in relation to more important nearby properties, as Charles the Fat did in a diploma for St-Cyr de Nevers in 888, where a detailed list of local holdings was followed by blanket protection for 'those benefices which are in the county of Mâcon and in the county of Châlons and in the county of Autun and in the county of Auxerre and in the county of Bourges and in the county of the Auvergne, whatsoever is known from antiquity to belong to St-Cyr'.³⁵ Alternately, more distant properties could be singled out for special mention, presumably as they were considered more vulnerable to usurpation. A diploma of Lothar for Fleury in 967 encompassed the abbey's nearby possession in the phrase 'whatever is in the *pagus* of Orléans and in the *pagus* of Blois and in the *pagus* of the Gâtinais', before going on to name eight more distant properties which were to be equally protected.³⁶ As well as granting a sense of the geographical scope of ecclesiastical property interests, royal diplomas can give a sense of the relative scale of ecclesiastical wealth. The small

³³ Noëlle Deflou-Leca, *Saint-Germain d'Auxerre et ses dépendances (Ve-XIIIe siècles)* (St-Etienne, 2010), p. 85.

³⁴ Laurent Morelle, 'Que peut-on savoir du temporel de Fleury à l'époque d'Abbon?' in Annie Dufour and Gillette Labory (eds) *Abbon, un abbé de l'an mil* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 101-50, with a map on p. 123. See also *idem*, 'La temporel de Fleury de Charlemagne à Louis VI' in *Lumières de l'an mil*, pp. 137-41.

³⁵ St-Cyr 34.

³⁶ Fleury 56/Rec. LL V 28.

convent of St-Julien in Auxerre, for example, had its patrimony of nine *villae*, a single *cella* with an altar and three plots in the city confirmed by Charles the Bald.³⁷ In contrast, Pope Leo VII confirmed 21 dependent monasteries and 38 *villae*, along with all of their respective tithes, to the cathedral of Ste-Croix in Orléans in 938.³⁸ It must be borne in mind, however, that the surviving evidence overwhelmingly privileges larger, richer churches such as Ste-Croix, since they were more likely to have access to royal and papal courts for the petitioning of charters, but also the institutional organisation and longevity to preserve such charters. While they provide a bird's eye view of church landholding, the information which can be gleaned from simply counting and mapping properties listed in diplomas is limited, particularly when seeking to understand how the wealth from such properties influenced status.

A more useful approach is to seek to understand how ecclesiastical property fit into the wider landscape of landholding in the late Carolingian period. In this, royal diplomas and property lists are also useful, for they frequently distinguish between those instances in which a church controlled an entire *villa* and when the church possessed only a single or several properties within a *villa*. The classical term for a country house or estate (the sense with which it is still used in modern English), the *villa* of the early Middle Ages cannot yet be thought of as a village, which only emerged in France in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Instead, it was a territorial unit comprised of multiple estates, farmsteads and agricultural units (each usually called a *mansus* in the sources of the middle Loire valley) knitted together through a tight network of roads and paths (the *via publicus*, which regularly appears in the boundary clauses in charters of donation or sale).³⁹ Archaeological work in the middle Loire valley confirms that this was the likely layout of local rural settlements, such as that at Sarry (Saran, dep. Loiret), showing a small agricultural settlement, probably belonging to the abbey of St-Mesmin at

³⁷ St-Julien 3/Rec. Ch II 396. Cf. the even more meagre patrimony upon its foundation of Dèvres, with only two *villae* and a handful of other properties; Vierzon 4/Rec. Ch II 42.

³⁸ Ste-Croix 19.

³⁹ Francois Bange, 'L'ager et la villa: structures du paysage et du peuplement dans la région maconnaise a la fin du Haut Moyen Age (IXe-XIe siecles)', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 39 (1984), esp. pp. 533-46.

Micy. It consisted of a small number of residential buildings, along with ovens and granaries which, through several different phases of development, oriented themselves in relation to the main roads from Orléans towards Chartres and Châteaudun.⁴⁰ Recent work on the eighth and ninth centuries has suggested that *villae* in the Frankish heartlands, in the Île-de-France and northeastwards to the middle Rhine, were more homogeneous and frequently controlled by a single proprietor, while those in more peripheral regions, such as Burgundy, Brittany and the Alps, were more fragmentary, with multiple proprietors in each *villa* the norm.⁴¹ The property lists found in royal diplomas in the middle Loire valley show that it was a region of transition, as both archetypes of *villa* organisation are found here. The ways this distinction is made is perhaps clearest in Charles the Bald's confirmation of Archbishop Raoul of Bourges' initial endowment of the monastery of Devres, primarily due to the fact that the endowment was so small that specificity was paramount.⁴² The charter lists two *villae*, *Granicas* and *Vidiliacum* (either Veuillis or Veuilly, both dep. Cher) which are to be held by the monastery in their entirety. The rest of the patrimony, however, is spread across eleven different *villae*, consisting in the majority of cases of a single *mansus* in each *villa*. At Méry-sur-Cher the monastery held fifteen *mansi* and a church, while at 'vicus Sancti Georgii' (probably Saint-Georges-sur-la-Prée, dep. Cher) its property consisted of two chapels, three mills and six *mansi*. In neither case did the possession of these significant properties result in the church's ownership of the entire *villa*. Similar patterns can be seen in other diplomas. St-Julien held the entirety of the *villa* of Nantelle (dep. Yonne), with the exception of a single *mansus*.⁴³ St-Sulpice's 855 confirmation from Charles the Bald lists twelve *villae* held in their entirety, but four further *villae* in which the monks held only one or two *mansi*. The monks were also confirmed with rights over their *burgus*, or suburb, including five mills and the right to hold a weekly market, but with twenty

⁴⁰ Sébastien Jesset, 'Les formes d'exploitation rurale du IXe au XIe siècle: les exemples de Saran et d'Ingré' in *Lumières de l'an mil*, pp. 88-91.

⁴¹ Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 495-518; Bange, 'L'ager et la villa', *Annales HSS* 39, p. 533.

⁴² Vierzon 4/Rec. Ch II 42.

⁴³ St-Julien 3/Rec. Ch II 396.

plots of land specifically exempted - evidently plots belonging to other proprietors.⁴⁴ The divisions are less clear in other diplomas, which often feature longer lists of property which alternate between *villae* in their entirety and highly specific descriptions of property within *villae*.⁴⁵ Adding to the difficulty in comparing these properties is the usage of different measurements, most drastically in Hugh Capet's 990 confirmation of the properties of Ste-Croix, whose properties in the Orléannais featured holdings of quarters and twelfth-parts of *mansi*, as well as 166 arpents of land in the *villa* of *Capersam*.⁴⁶ What is clear from these property lists, however, is that the landscape of property holding in the late Carolingian period was highly heterogeneous, composed of highly fractured individual properties within *villae*, as well as entire districts owned and controlled by churches.

III

Moving from the wide-ranging property lists of royal diplomas to the everyday charters by which churches acquired and managed their property can further illuminate how this wealth in land was distributed. A key piece of evidence for the ninth, tenth and early eleventh centuries are charters granting property in *precaria* or in benefice, the means by which ecclesiastical institutions temporarily alienated their lands. These allow us to move from a broad institutional view of what lands were held by a church to see who controlled and benefited from this property on the ground.

Most of these grants which survive from the middle Loire valley are what are known as *precaria* or precarial grants. The land in question was not totally alienated, but given over to the lay recipient on a temporary basis, with the church or monastery retaining ultimate ownership.⁴⁷ The majority of these acts come from

⁴⁴ St-Sulpice I/Rec. Ch II 178.

⁴⁵ For example Cart. Gen. Yon 46/Rec. Ch II 269.

⁴⁶ Ste-Croix 39.

⁴⁷ Barbara Rosenwein, 'Property transfers and the Church, eighth to eleventh centuries. An overview', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen-Age*, III (1999), pp. 572-3; Devroey, *Économie rurale*, pp. 280-1.

the tenth and early eleventh centuries (the latest securely dated precarial grant is from Vierzon in 1031⁴⁸), disappearing in the face of more strident resistance to any alienation of church property in the more hard-line reformist atmosphere of the mid- and late-eleventh century.⁴⁹ Recognised as a distinct category of property transfer even in the early medieval period and tightly defined and categorised by nineteenth-century legal historians, recent scholarship has emphasised the flexibility and variety of these sorts of grants: '*il faut se resigner à admettre que la precaria des sources n'est pas tout à fait la précaire des juristes.*'⁵⁰ Precarial grants have often been seen as one of the main avenues by which the church was impoverished and abused, in a material sense, by the laity in the era before the so-called 'Gregorian Reforms'.⁵¹ Recent scholarship, inspired particularly by legal anthropology and research on political culture, has overwhelmingly revised these views in the past few decades, emphasising instead the role played by the grants in cementing social and political ties of patronage between the church and the secular aristocracy.⁵² In light of this recent scholarship, it is sensible to consider *precaria* alongside ecclesiastical benefices, which transferred property to clerical or lay dependents of a church on a much more *ad hoc* basis. The act of committing the grant to writing and the regular remittance to the church of certain negotiated obligations were the defining features of precarial grants, serving, in theory, to mitigate against permanent alienation.⁵³ In contrast, benefice-holders can rarely be seen in the surviving evidence to have tightly-defined obligations towards the church from which they held their land. This distinction between *precaria* and benefice should not be pushed too far, however, for there are many grants which

⁴⁸ Vierzon 36

⁴⁹ See Susan Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 864-82, with special reference to the so-called 'Gregorian' reform's impact on lay lordship over churches, in particular.

⁵⁰ 'We must resign ourselves to admitting that the *precaria* of the sources is not quite the precarial grant of the jurists [i.e. the legal historians]': Laurent Morelle, 'Les «actes de précaire», Instruments de transferts patrimoniaux (France du nord et de l'est, VIIIe-XIe siècles)', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen-Age*, III (1999), pp. 607-17, quote at p. 611.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 630.

⁵² Rosenwein, 'Property transfers and the Church', *Mélanges de l'École française*, III, pp. 564-6; Devroey, *Économie rurale et société*, pp. 280-1.

⁵³ Morelle, 'Les «actes de précaire», *Mélanges de l'École française* III, pp. 645-6.

appear to have features of both. Rather, it is more helpful to see these alienations of church patrimony on a spectrum, as churchmen sought to leverage their properties to their advantage both materially (enforcing obligations on precarists) and socially/politically (by entering less-defined dependent relationships with benefice-holders).⁵⁴

For precarial grants, perhaps the most significant sign of their importance in the late Carolingian church is indicated by their written form. Despite the variety of circumstances they deal with, the texts remain incredibly formulaic, even by the standards of medieval charters. The potential precarist approaches the abbot or bishop and asks him to concede the land, which is then described. The prelate agrees, sets the conditions (usually a rent [*census*]) and then confirms the charter by subscribing with a list of witnesses. The stability of these formulae can be seen in the clause describing what is to be done if the payment of the *census* is not made or is late, which are remarkably stable in regional patterns. Around Bourges and also in Fleury, the precarist had a legal right to make amends for the lost *census* and thus keep the property.⁵⁵ In Nevers, the precarist was expected to pay double what was owed, in order to keep the land, a practice which was also implemented at St-Sulpice by the middle of the tenth century.⁵⁶ In Orléans, all that was required was to take an oath (presumably that one would pay the arrears) in order to hold on to one's land.⁵⁷ In fact, so formulaic are these texts that it is very possible that not much attention was paid to them at all. The widespread and stable formulae used in precarial charters in this region of the Loire valley would seem to support the suggestion by Laurent Morelle that precarial charters were once far-more widespread than can now be known, as most of the charters would not have attracted the interest of medieval cartulary compilers and have since been lost.⁵⁸ This argument is further strengthened by the evidence of the only precarial

⁵⁴ Cf. Alice Rio, 'High and Low: Ties of Dependence in the Frankish Kingdoms', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 18 (2008), pp. 43-68.

⁵⁵ Vierzon 6, 7, 8, 17, 21, 22, 24, 25; St-Sulpice 16; Fleury 46.

⁵⁶ St-Sulpice 19; Nevers 20, 37, 52, 54, 56, 86.

⁵⁷ AD Loiret H 172(1)/ARTEM 2796; Micy 13/ARTEM 2787.

⁵⁸ Morelle, 'Les «actes de précaire»', *Mélanges de l'École française* III, pp. 617-30.

charter from the regions surviving in the original, a grant by Bishop Ermenteus of Orléans of a vineyard from the patrimony of the chapel of St-Jean to a couple named Robert and Beletrudis, along with their son William, in 945.⁵⁹ This is clearly a significant grant – the *census* is twelve *solidi* annually, the highest recorded among all precarial *census* in the region – but visually and graphically the small, rectangular charter (18cm x 38.5cm at its largest) is dominated not by the details of the donation, but by the subscriptions of Ermenteus and the clerics of Orléans. The subscriptions are autographs, and do not include Robert or any other layperson. The underwhelming nature of the document not only hints at a routine act of property administration, but also that the focus of this transfer was not as much the relationship between Robert and Bishop Ermenteus (or Robert and the wider church of Orléans), but rather on the collective actions of the clergy of Orléans in managing their property as a clerical community.

The payment of an annual rent or *census*, usually on the feast of the church in question's patron, is perhaps the most obvious way in which this form of property management was used to bring revenues to the church and to stimulate the development of ecclesiastical estates. The vast majority of grants by churches from the middle Loire valley involve the payment of *census* in some form or another, although the ways in which the *census* was to be paid varied significantly. Most paid a set rent annually, with charters occasionally specifying that it should be paid in cash.⁶⁰ In Nevers, two documents attest to grants which were called *ad medietatem plantationis*, which were to be held rent-free for five years, during which time the precarist was to plant a vineyard. After the rent-free term was up, half of the vineyard was returned to the church, while the precarist paid a *census* on the remaining portion.⁶¹ Seguinus, a *fidelis* of Bishop Gosbert of Nevers, was given a precarial grant in 955.⁶² Seguinus, along with his wife and sons, was granted two properties in the *pagi* of Nevers and Auxerre, including a chapel, which had been previously held from the bishop by the cleric Arbaldus. There was explicitly

⁵⁹ AD Loiret H 172(1)/ARTEM 2796

⁶⁰ AD Loiret H 172 (1)/ARTEM 2796

⁶¹ Nevers 54, 58.

⁶² Nevers 20.

no *census* to pay, 'but only the *nones* and tithes, as is the custom'.⁶³ However, if they failed to exploit or put to use the properties, they were expected then to pay a *census* of ten *solidi* alongside the dues already expected.⁶⁴

There is a clear material motive behind these grants which incentivised the development of ecclesiastical property and ensured regular revenues for a church's clerics.⁶⁵ However, the economic motives for precarial grants have been little emphasised in previous scholarship. Laurent Morelle has argued for a broadly economic rationale behind the proliferation of precarial grants, used not only to consolidate and manage ecclesiastical estates but also to grow them, by eventually attracting additional donations through the so-called *precaria remuneratoria* – the term used for a precarial grant in which the precarist holds the usufruct of both lands granted to them by the church and lands which they have donated to the church.⁶⁶ This view is difficult to support for the middle Loire valley, however, where clear-cut examples of *precariae remunerariae* are found only at the turn of the tenth century and only in the south-east corner, stretching eastward into southern Burgundy.⁶⁷

The dominant type of precarial grant in the Loire valley was the simple *precaria data*, in which property was transferred temporarily to the precarist by the church.⁶⁸ This more straightforward grant, as we have seen, was as much an economic tool as the *precaria remuneratoria*, but for grant-holders of higher social

⁶³ *Ibid*: 'Sed tantum nonas et decimas, sicut consuetudo est.'

⁶⁴ *Ibid*: 'Si vero hanc terram deservire nullo modo potuerint, ex eadem terra solidos decem festivitatem Sancti Cyrici omnibus annis reddere studeant'.

⁶⁵ In addition to the examples cited in the previous paragraph, see also St-Sulpice 19.

⁶⁶ Morelle, 'Les «actes de précaire»', *Mélanges de l'École française* III, pp. 630-5.

⁶⁷ These two examples are St-Cyr 97 (894) and Fleury 34 (907). Beyond this are two examples from Vierzon where there are exchanges of property, with the monastic property reverting to the abbey on the death of the precarist; whether these are *precariae remunerariae strictu sensu* depends on the valuation of the properties involved; Vierzon 9, 36. On the complexities of defining *precaria remuneratoria*, see Morelle, 'Les «actes de précaire»', *Mélanges de l'École française*, III, pp. 613-15.

⁶⁸ Morelle, based on documents from monasteries in northern and eastern of France, found *precaria remuneratoria* most common: Morelle, 'Les «actes de précaire»', *Mélanges de l'École française* III, pp. 630-5. In the Germanic speaking lands further east again, the *precaria oblata* (where previously donated land was returned in a precarial grant) seems to be the dominant form: Phillipe Depreaux, 'L'Apparition de la précaire à Saint-Gall', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen-Age*, III (1999), pp. 649-73.

status, it is often difficult to distinguish from a benefice, and in many cases the same properties seem to be held as benefices and as *precaria* at different times.⁶⁹ For example, the *miles* Hubert held a benefice of the abbey of St-Victor by gift of Robert the Pious in 1005, when he granted it in *precaria* to some monks from Micy.⁷⁰ The granting of lands as benefices by both powerful laymen and church in order to reward and to support clients and allies has long been recognised as a key feature of Carolingian and post-Carolingian society.⁷¹ Benefices were awarded to secure loyalty and political position, rather than with a view for an immediate economic return. They were a common and an important feature in the management of ecclesiastical property in the middle Loire valley. Lothar's confirmation of Fleury's lands in 967 explicitly included 'all the benefices of [Fleury's] vassals'.⁷² When Bishop Heribald of Auxerre donated episcopal possessions to the canons of the cathedral of St-Etienne in 850, he included the entire *villa* of Cosne-sur-Loire, from which at least five benefices had been given to various laymen.⁷³ The benefices of Theobert, Soloman and Manua are all conceded as part of the donation, while the remaining *mansi* would come to the canons upon the deaths of those who held them. A *cella* dedicated to Saint Remigius was also included in the donation, which was held in benefice by a layman named Vuadimirus, demonstrating that even dependent churches could form part of benefice grants.⁷⁴ The political importance of benefices can be seen in both those who are granted them and those who intervene on their behalf. Robert the Pious was instrumental in securing a benefice of St-Victor near Orléans for the *miles* Hubert in the early eleventh century, while a 'lord Odo' (almost certainly Odo II of Blois-Chartres) secured a lay abbacy of the collegiate church of Notre-Dame de Bonne Nouvelle in Orléans for a certain Geoffrey and his son Peter.⁷⁵ Benefices to powerful political players could easily go astray, however, and slip

⁶⁹ Fleury 35; St-Cyr 54.

⁷⁰ Micy 13/ARTEM 2787.

⁷¹ Bloch, *Feudal Society*, pp. 163-75.

⁷² Fleury 56/Rec. LL V 28.

⁷³ Cart. Gen. Yon 31/ARTEM 718.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Micy 13/ARTEM 2787; ARTEM 2800.

from a church's grasp permanently. In 877, Charles the Bald restored an allod to St-Germain d'Auxerre which had previously been given in benefice to one of the king's *fideles*, but had later fallen into the royal fisc permanently.⁷⁶ His son Carloman similarly restored a *villa*, containing thirty *mansi* which had been given in benefice and not returned, to Bishop Abbo of Nevers in 881.⁷⁷

Perhaps the clearest indication of the political use of benefices and *precaria* is the series of ecclesiastical precarial grants from tenth and early-eleventh century Nevers. While records of precarial grants or benefices to clerics are sparse⁷⁸ when compared to grants to laymen, the series of documents from Nevers reveals that the bishops frequently used benefices and *precaria* to reward senior clerics in their entourages. In 903, the archdeacon Atto petitioned Bishop Franco to grant the priest of the chapel of Challuy two entire *villae*, in addition to a *mansus* and tithes from further *villae*, in return for an annual *census* of three *solidii*.⁷⁹ The request was granted and it seems likely that it was Atto, or at least his family, who were major beneficiaries. The chapel of Challuy next appears in the record approximately fifty years later when another Atto, an archdeacon and treasurer of the canons, returned the chapel to the cathedral.⁸⁰ This second Atto was a nephew of the archdeacon from 903, who had subsequently gone on to become bishop of Nevers from 908 to 918. Bishop Franco also granted lands of St-Cyr, including those which were held in benefice by a layman named Trutbald, to a canon named Teudgrinus, who may well have been a brother of Atto the elder and uncle of Atto the younger, for an annual *census* of ten *solidii*.⁸¹ Grants to senior and connected clerics at the episcopal court continued through the tenth century into the eleventh century: the archdeacon Wido and the provost Everard held three churches and a monastery, respectively, from the canons in 1022; the *illustris*

⁷⁶ Cart. Gen. Yon 52/Rec. Ch II 427.

⁷⁷ St-Cyr 14/Rec. LLC 50.

⁷⁸ There is only one example from outside Nevers: Vierzon 25.

⁷⁹ St-Cyr 7.

⁸⁰ St-Cyr 8.

⁸¹ St-Cyr 43. Atto the Younger certainly had an uncle named Teudgrinus, presumably a brother of Atto the Elder, who was subsequently bishop of Nevers (before 935 to after 948); see St-Cyr 8. Although the identification of Bishop Teudgrinus with the canon of 903 is not certain, it seems likely.

clericus Theoderic was granted a church and a *mansus* in 955; the canon Evrard was granted tithes and a *mansus* from the cathedral's property by his uncle, Bishop Roclenus, in 1001.⁸² These ecclesiastical *precaria* reveal a very clear pattern of reward for close allies of the bishop, but virtually all required the payment of a *census* (there is no record of the archdeacon Wido paying a *census* for the churches he held). It follows, therefore, that economic and political/social motives cannot be entirely disentangled, and this can be seen in other grants as well. Seguinus, a *fidelis* of the bishop of Nevers, was granted lands in 955 which look very much like a benefice, but was, after all, expected to pay an additional *census* if the land he held was not properly exploited; it was explicitly stipulated that the *vir inluster* Adalgualo would include all the improvements made to the property granted to him by Fleury when it was returned into the hands of the monks.⁸³ Temporary alienations, both *precaria* and benefices, were clearly motivated by a variety of factors not easily separated.

In the early eleventh century, Geoffrey of Chaudenay was granted half an allod belonging to the abbey of St-Sulpice de Bourges.⁸⁴ There was no *census* to pay, nor any specific obligations, other than that the property was to revert back to the monks on the deaths of Geoffrey and his son, a cleric named Arnustus. Only the explicit presence of the viscount of Bourges 'and all the other nobles of that city', and the written form of the charter itself, seem to be acting as guarantors of the church's continuing rights. Neither the word *precaria* nor *beneficium* appear in the text of the charter, but what is clearly happening in this instance is that control over ecclesiastical property is temporarily transferred to other individuals, presumably for social or political gain, as indicated by Viscount Geoffrey of Bourges's prominent role in the document. The difference between a *precaria* and a benefice lies in the explicitness of the grant-holder's obligations; the more quantified demands on those who held what are usually termed *precaria* would seem to indicate greater social distance between the grant-holder and the church.

⁸² St-Cyr 5, 21, 47.

⁸³ Nevers 20; Fleury 35.

⁸⁴ St-Sulpice 13

In the case of *precaria* granted with less obligations, or benefices, greater trust and the higher status of the recipient suggest that social and political motives, rather than economic ones, were to the fore in decision-making. What the surviving evidence of ecclesiastical alienation of lands, into the hands of precarists, clients and allies, shows is that the scattered holdings revealed by the property lists of royal diplomas were carefully managed in order to further the material and political aims of the church.

What were these aims? There are only hints about the internal distribution and administration of the church's wealth in the surviving documents. The most visible use to which ecclesiastical resources were put was for the material support of the monks or canons of the church - properties for which the revenues were reserved 'for the provisions and clothing of the monks' (*ad victum vestitumque*) or 'from which their welfare and necessary stipends can be amply administered' (*unde eorum utilitatibus et stipendiis necessaria satis subministrare potuissent*).⁸⁵ Bob Berkhofer has argued that the allocation of specific properties to sustain monks was a deliberate tactic of 'divide and rule', intended to restrict monastic control of their patrimony, in order that the majority of ecclesiastical property (that is, that which was not specifically designated for monastic use) could be distributed as benefices or exploited directly by Charles the Bald or his *fideles*, through their positions as lay abbots.⁸⁶ Berkhofer's argument is centred on major royal monasteries in Northern France (in particular St-Denis, St-Germain-des-Prés and St-Bertin) and there is a compelling case to be made that Charles the Bald employed similar tactics in equivalent monasteries in the middle Loire valley. The case of St-Germain d'Auxerre stands out. A royal diploma and an edict from an episcopal council at Pîtres, both issued in 864, confirmed the monastic properties which were to be used only for the provision of the monks; the rest of the monastic estates, by implication, were to be controlled by Lothar, the king's son and lay abbot of St-Germain.⁸⁷ A similar effort to divide the property of St-Germain had

⁸⁵ Fleury 34/Rec. Ch III 34; St-Sulpice 1/Rec. Ch II 178.

⁸⁶ Robert F. Berkhofer III, *Day of Reckoning; Power and Accountability in Medieval France* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004), pp. 11-33. See also, Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 60-2.

⁸⁷ *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 45/ARTEM 720; *Cart. Gen. Yon* 46/Rec. Ch II 269.

been made by Charles under the previous abbot, the powerful Hugh the Abbot.⁸⁸ There could also be a case made for Charles' similar intervention in St-Sulpice and at Fleury, both in 855, although in the former the language of the diploma is far more ambiguous and in the latter the text as it survives is almost certainly heavily interpolated.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, we must be wary of overstating the effects of these reforms by Charles the Bald, which are characterised by Berkhofer as little more than a land-grab by the king at monastic expense. As we have explored above, monasteries and churches continued to use grants of benefice and *precaria* as powerful ways of expanding their political and economic interests, long after the lessening of royal control over ecclesiastical affairs. In light of this lay control, these types of reforms may well have been viewed as a positive by many in the ninth-century church, protecting core ecclesiastical estates from the predation of impious office-holders.⁹⁰ This was how the issue was framed by the monks of Fleury in their interpolations of Charles' 855 diploma, which accused previous religious leaders of the diminishing of monastic property by its distribution to laymen, for which the solution was a confirmation of property strictly for the usage of the monks.⁹¹ Similar acts guaranteeing provisions for religious houses were initiated by non-royal actors and framed in similar (if less dramatic) terms, such as Bishop Heriman of Nevers' establishment of specific properties for the stipends of 60 canons at the cathedral of St-Cyr and 16 canons in the church of St-Martin.⁹² In this light, the designation of properties for the support of canons and monks should be seen less as a 'divide and rule' tactic and more a tool by which ecclesiastical leadership could balance the core function of monastic property with other ambitions.⁹³

In addition to the support of their religious personnel and investment in

⁸⁸ *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 34/Rec Ch II 156.

⁸⁹ St-Sulpice 1/Rec Ch II 178, Fleury 22/Rec Ch II 177.

⁹⁰ Cf. below, chap V.

⁹¹ Fleury 22/Rec Ch II 177: '*rerum diminutionem praeteriti praelati ejusdem monasterii inordinatius quam decuit saecularibus attribuerunt*'.

⁹² St-Cyr 3.

⁹³ Resistance to such designation was, of course, real as Berkhofer has clearly shown; Berkhofer, *Day of Reckoning*, pp. 13-19, 24-30. While it should not be forgotten, it can easily be overstated and there is clear evidence for good-faith proponents of such reforms as well.

the economic and political resources of the church through grants of benefices and *precaria*, ecclesiastical property and revenues were used primarily to support the provision of religious duties of care for the poor, pilgrims and the dead. Charles the Bald's immunity for St-Sulpice stipulated that all future donations of property were to increase either the stipends of the monks or the monastery's feeding of the poor.⁹⁴ A donor to Micy in the second half of the tenth century had a similar vision for his donations to the church: that they were for 'the stipends of the saints and the poor'.⁹⁵ Much of this care for the poor was administered through the church's hospital, as at St-Germain, where in 866 Charles the Bald specified that one *mansus* from his donation was to support the monk's hospital specifically, where one pauper each day was to be provided with food and drink.⁹⁶ At Micy, the pauper who was to be fed and clothed using the revenues of churches granted to the monastery by Bishop Arnulf of Orléans was required to pray on behalf of all past, present and future bishops.⁹⁷ Hospitals for the poor also existed in the ninth century at Nevers and Fleury, where there were also neighbouring hospitals catering for *nobiles*, presumably élites traveling on business or pilgrimage.⁹⁸ At Orléans, the canons of St-Aignan established a chapel in 854 in the graveyard next to the church 'for the offices of funerals and burials for the remains of both the aforesaid canons as well as the remains of the faithful'.⁹⁹ After the death of his son Lothar, abbot of St-Germain, Charles the Bald ordered that a light be lit in from of the tomb of Saint Germain in perpetuity and masses said on the anniversary of Charles and his queen Ingeltrudis' deaths, to be paid for from the revenues of a designated *mansus* of his donation.¹⁰⁰ The provision of lighting in churches is a particular issue which is highlighted not only in this diploma, but in others across

⁹⁴ St-Sulpice I/Rec. Ch II 178: '*alimoniam pauperum*'.

⁹⁵ Micy 10: '*sanctorum vel stipendia pauperum*'.

⁹⁶ *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 47/Rec Ch II 288: '*et hospitali iamdicti coenobii alius praedictae villae mansus conferatur, unde ibidem unus pauper cibo potuque cotidie reficiatur*'.

⁹⁷ Micy 11: '*unum pauperem hac eadem ratione pascant et vestiant, qui pro me meisque antecessoribus et successoribus Deum exoret*'.

⁹⁸ Fleury 29; St-Cyr 3.

⁹⁹ ARTEM 2784/AD Loiret G 91: '*ad exequiarum vel sepulturae officia ex hoc et in reliquum tam praetaxatis canonicis quam reliquis fidelium*'.

¹⁰⁰ *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 47/Rec. Ch II 288.

the regions, either explicitly or in the form of renders of wax for candles.¹⁰¹ Finally, we must expect that there were many other expenses for which no evidence survives, such as the glimpse of the production of church ornaments found in Nevers in 967. The canon Bertran, having stolen from the treasury of the chapter, donated a *mansus* and an allod which would not only pay rent, but were to furnish each year some *ornamenta*, ‘that is a censer or a chalice and plate or a candelabra or similar, which by the bishop and clerics of this place [St-Cyr] is seen to be dear and useful’.¹⁰² The provision of objects like this took place not only in larger churches, but in minor rural establishments too: the priest Isidore, who administered four churches dependent on Dévres in the late tenth century, had vestments, a set of silver vessels and plate and five liturgical books.¹⁰³ The provision of religious services for the laity was the church’s core purpose and what marked its members as élite; its wealth was therefore vital in allowing it to maintain its position in medieval society.

IV

While the patterns of ecclesiastical landholding are relatively clear from the surviving archives, the details of lay landholding in the late Carolingian period are much less clear, for no lay archives survive intact from the period. What information can be gleaned from the documentation which survives is burdened with the caveat that records have survived only from properties which eventually, one way or another, made their way into ecclesiastical hands. In most cases, this was through pious donations by landholders, or occasionally through sales and exchanges. The result is that the surviving corpus of information on lay property

¹⁰¹ E.g. ARTEM 2784/AD Loiret G 91; *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 38/Rec Ch II 215; St-Sulpice 1/Rec. Ch II 178; St-Cyr 22. The spiritual importance of light provided by oil lamps and candles, as well as the logistical and economic challenges of securing lighting for churches are well known from the work of Paul Fouracre: Paul Fouracre, ‘Eternal Lights and Earthly Needs: Practical Aspects of the Development of Frankish Immunities’ in Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (eds.), *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1995) pp. 68-78.

¹⁰² St-Cyr 36. Church ornaments are more commonly seen in donations to churches, whether in charters or narratives: see e.g. *GPA*, pp. 180-1.

¹⁰³ Vierzon 15. The books are specified as being a missal, a lectionary, an antiphonary, a homiliary and a copy of the Book of Genesis.

is inevitably skewed towards the wealthier echelons of landholders, those who possessed enough property to donate to the church while retaining enough wealth to support themselves.¹⁰⁴ The general conclusions drawn from this evidence must, therefore, be handled carefully. It is possible, however, to draw some conclusions on the landscape of lay landholding from the post-Carolingian material, particularly from an examination of the details of donors, their properties and their property boundaries.

The first of these conclusions is that the majority of lay landholding seems to have consisted of small parcels of land, often a single *mansus* or less, scattered across a locality. There is very little evidence that the laity regularly had their lands concentrated to the extent that an entire *villa* was controlled by a certain landlord. The only exceptions are royal donors or their close associates. Both Charles the Bald and Charles the Simple gave entire *villae* in donations to the church, as did Geoffrey, a count and royal *fidelis* of King Raoul.¹⁰⁵ Bertha, widow of the Count Seguinus, gave two *curtes* (estate-centres), each of which encompassed multiple *villae*, to the canons of St-Cyr in Nevers in 966, although the donation charter explains that these had once belonged to the church, but were acquired by Seguinus through a royal grant, passing to Bertha after the deaths of her husband and sons.¹⁰⁶ Royal involvement is virtually omnipresent in other instances in which laymen hold entire *villae*, or even large numbers of properties. Count Conrad, a cousin of Charles the Bald, gave an entire *villa* of his in an exchange with St-Germain d'Auxerre.¹⁰⁷ Eptinus, who would go on to become the first recorded viscount of Nevers, was granted an entire *villa* by Charles the Simple in 919.¹⁰⁸ The nineteen and a half *mans*i in the *villa* of Dornecy which Roclenus sold to Count Gerald in 852 were originally a grant from the king, while we must also assume the same for the twenty-one *mans*i donated to St-Cyr in 894 by Rocco, a royal *fidelis*.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ See Davies, *Small Worlds*, pp. 86-104, esp. 102-4.

¹⁰⁵ *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 47/Rec Ch II 228; *Cart. Gen. Yon* 67/Rec Ch III 68; St-Cyr 36.

¹⁰⁶ St-Cyr 19. The only other example of an entire *curtis* in the record is also one which was usurped and returned to the church, although in this case it is not specified whether the *curtis* encompassed more than a single *villa*; St-Sulpice 10 (983).

¹⁰⁷ *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 42/Rec. Ch II 261.

¹⁰⁸ St-Cyr 26/Rec Ch III 99.

¹⁰⁹ Vézelay II:2; St-Cyr 97/Rec Odo 37.

A layman named Elisiernus is the only example of a layman owning entire *villae* without an obvious royal connection. He donated his *predium*, along with the churches, *villae* and *mancipia* pertaining to it, to Fleury in 941, on the occasion of his becoming a monk.¹¹⁰ *Predium* (or *praedium*) was a classical Latin term for an estate or farm which can be founded regionally in the Orléannais and northern Berry in the period as a generic term seeming to mean an estate, although Elisiernus' is the only example which explicitly includes more than one *villa*.¹¹¹ Although Elisiernus did not have any obvious royal connections, his charter was subscribed by Hugh the Great, as well as five other counts. Given that Louis IV's position in November of 941 was tenuous at best, faced with a rebellion headed by Hugh, the quasi-regal status of the Duke of the Franks (styled in the charter only as a count), especially in his heartland between Paris and Orléans, may well have been the source for Elisiernus' wealth.¹¹² It certainly appears to be the case from the initial survey of the evidence that large concentrations of landholding were restricted to the highest tier of lay political élites.¹¹³

The primary obstacle to confirming this conclusion is that, despite their undoubted wealth, this tier of political élites did not always donate lands to the church in high volumes. Charles the Bald restored a single allod to St-Germain in 877, having previously donated three *mansi* to the monastery in 863.¹¹⁴ Liutgard, widow of a count Raoul, alongside Viscount Eptinus, donated two allods from her husband's properties to St-Cyr in 947, while about the same time Eptinus himself donated two *mansi* to the canons.¹¹⁵ These donations are quite evidently only a small fraction of the donors' proprietary wealth and based on these examples an argument could be made that lay landholding in large blocks by individuals without comital or vice-comital status was far more common than the evidence would suggest and that such lands were seen as the core of the family's patrimony, unlikely to be alienated through donations. Such an argument has several

¹¹⁰ Fleury 47.

¹¹¹ Cf. Fleury 61 (975), Vierzon 9 (993).

¹¹² Flodoard, *Annales*, s.a. 941; McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, p. 315.

¹¹³ See also St-Cyr 15 (886).

¹¹⁴ *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 52/Rec. Ch II 427; *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 41/Rec. Ch II 262.

¹¹⁵ St-Cyr 10, 37.

problems, not least that it is made from silence and thus impossible to prove in the positive sense. Moreover, there are a number of examples where it seems certain that a donation consists of the entirety of a donor's property, and in all of these cases the property in question is modest. In the 920s, a woman named Richildis donated an allod (with unfree tenants) and two *mansi* to Fleury, with the consent of her only living son, a cleric named Poncius Augerius.¹¹⁶ Richildis states that she came to Fleury 'offering [...] that allod which I had from my parents along with all that I have acquired', implying that these three properties scattered across three different *villae* were her entire holdings.¹¹⁷ The donation of a man named Roger to Vierzon, made while he was gravely ill, also seems to represent the entirety of a layperson's properties.¹¹⁸ In confirming his donation, Roger stresses that 'whatever I have there, I concede to the aforesaid monks'.¹¹⁹ Roger's property certainly would imply that he was a man of local significance, consisting of an allod with a mill, meadows, a forest and three servile families, but on an entirely different scale than those who controlled entire *villae*.

As far as it is possible to tell, donors like Richildis and Roger were far more typical of lay landholders in the late Carolingian period than those closely connected to the king. Most charters of donation consist of one or two properties, usually no larger than a single *mansus*, located across one or more *villae*. A typical example is the donation of Agenolf to Vézelay in 900 of a single *mansus de terra* in the *villa* of *Varginiacensum* alongside a vineyard in the *villa* of *Marnagum*.¹²⁰ The ambiguity of terms like *mansus de terra* (which seems to indicate a farmstead which consists entirely of arable land, rather than the much more common mixed farmsteads) make understanding the make-up of lay landholding a challenging task. Terminology such as 'allod' (a property owned outright), 'res' (thing, property), 'area' (plot, usually urban), 'pagina' (parcel), 'olcas' (small plot or garden) and 'whatever they are seen to have in [location]' (*quicquid visi sunt habere*

¹¹⁶ Fleury 37.

¹¹⁷ Ibid: 'Offerens [...] ipsum allodum quem ex progenitoribus meis habebam cum omnibus quae adquisieram'.

¹¹⁸ Vierzon II (987).

¹¹⁹ Ibid: 'quicquid ibi habeo, supradicto concedo coenobio'.

¹²⁰ Vézelay II:8.

in [locum] vel possidere) is ubiquitous and difficult to translate into concrete conclusions about the size and distribution of lay properties.¹²¹ Particularly difficult to interpret are the inconsistencies within the sources themselves: Viscount Geoffrey of Bourges describes land he is donating to St-Sulpice of Bourges in 912 as ‘*res* from my property’ (*res proprietatis mee*), but finished his formulaic description of the property’s appurtenances by including all ‘which pertains to this *mansus*’ (*ad ipsum mansum aspicit*).¹²² A layman named Robert donated Neuilly (*Nobilliacum*, modern-day Neuilly-en-Dun, dep Cher) to the same monastery in 959, describing it as ‘*mansus meus*’, before describing *Nobilliacum* as a *villa* in the closing lines of the charter.¹²³ Despite the inconsistencies and variations of terminology, however, it remains clear that the vast majority of lay landholding, outside those circles with direct access to royal patronage, consisted of scattered, small-scale properties.

This view is confirmed from the evidence of boundary clauses in charters from before the year 1000. Boundary clauses are far from ubiquitous, but are common enough across the middle Loire valley to conclude the dispersed nature of lay landholding. In surviving boundary clauses, it is rare to find a piece of property which is entirely surrounded by a single owner’s lands. Instead, the four boundaries listed usually include at least two or three different landholders, as well as the *via publica*.¹²⁴ The only examples which contain evidence of large coherent blocks of land are those which feature church lands. For example, in an exchange in 859, St-Sulpice received two *paginas* of arable land, one surrounded on three sides by lands owned already by St-Sulpice (and on the fourth by the *via publica*) and the other surrounded on three sides by properties of the nearby church of St-Outrille (and on the fourth by a river).¹²⁵ Lands sold at Meung-sur-Loire in 908 were surrounded on three sides by properties of the cathedral of Ste-Croix.¹²⁶ This

¹²¹ Examples: allod - Fleury 38, St-Cyr II, St-Sulpice 25; *res* - St-Sulpice 47, 81; *area* - St-Sulpice 16, 30; ‘*pagina*’ - St-Sulpice 81, St-Cyr 25; *olcas* - St-Cyr 25, 43; whatever they possess - quotation from St-Sulpice 81, see also St-Sulpice 78.

¹²² St-Sulpice 31.

¹²³ St-Sulpice 78.

¹²⁴ E.g. Fleury 46 (940), St-Cyr 13 (c. 950), 17 (10th cent.), St-Sulpice 30 (926), Vierzon 25 (974).

¹²⁵ St-Sulpice 14.

¹²⁶ ARTEM 2795/AD Loiret H 169.

trend is particularly apparent in boundary clauses in precarial grants, which make it very clear that many of the grants were carved out of larger agglomerations of a church's properties. Precarial grants from Orléans, Nevers and Vierzon all show evidence of being part of larger concentrations of church lands.¹²⁷ Indeed, the extent of ecclesiastical landholding which is seen in royal confirmations is confirmed by the detailed evidence of boundary clauses, for virtually every property for which the boundaries are known was adjacent to lands owned by a church.¹²⁸ In some instances this is clearly the result of efforts by clerics to consolidate the lands administered by their churches into manageable blocks, particularly through exchanges, but the sheer number of church properties found in boundary clauses is a clear indication of the prominent role played by ecclesiastical lands in the wider landscape of ninth- and tenth-century landholding.¹²⁹

The evidence for lay landholding thus completes and nuances the original conclusions drawn from royal diplomas of a heterogeneous landscape of property holding in the late Carolingian Loire valley. It is quite clear that there were effectively two tiers of land-holding. The first consisted of the church, the king and those political élites with close connections to the royal court (and thus access to patronage from the Carolingian fisc). Their landholdings consisted both of large consolidated blocks (including entire *villae*), as well as individual parcels and plots of land within *villae*. The extent of their holdings were regional and supra-regional.¹³⁰ They granted properties to *fideles*, clients and tenants as benefices and precaria, both to strengthen social and political ties, as well as to manage and improve the land itself, creating a more complex, two-layered tenurial structure.¹³¹ In contrast, the majority of landholding by those outside this highest élite was fragmentary, scattered in small plots and properties across one or two local *villae*.

¹²⁷ ARTEM 2796/AD Loiret H 172 (1), St-Cyr 56, 58, Vierzon 21, 24.

¹²⁸ There are only a few exceptions: Vézelay II:7 (although only for one of the two properties donated), St-Cyr 36, 49.

¹²⁹ Consolidation of church lands: St-Sulpice 14, St-Cyr 25. See also Rosenwein, *To be the Neighbor*, pp. 78-108.

¹³⁰ E.g. St-Cyr 97/Rec. Odo 37, *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 42/Rec Ch II 261.

¹³¹ E.g. *Cart. Gen. Yon* 31/ARTEM 718; *Cart. Gen. Yon* 68/Rec. Ch III 68; ARTEM 2795/AD Loiret H 169; St-Cyr 39.

The mode of tenure was almost universally allodial, involving outright ownership of the property, although the occasional presence of unfree tenants would caution us against seeing these landholders as ‘allodial peasants’, but rather as small-scale, local élites.¹³² The gulf in practice and in the level of wealth between these two tiers is, however, striking. There is regional and chronological variation in the relative presence of each of these tiers of landholding, based in particular on the continued stability of royal control over the Carolingian fisc. In Berry, for example, evidence for individuals or institutions with control over entire *villae* is impossible to find after the reign of Charles the Bald and the same is true around Nevers from the middle of the tenth century. Although there is less charter evidence from the north of the region in this period, it seems that the continued active royal presence around Auxerre and Orléans preserved the practices of the upper tier for longer, into the second half of the tenth century.¹³³ The history of landholding beyond the year 1000, however, is a history of the breakdown between these two tiers of landed wealth in the middle Loire valley and despite the slightly varying local chronologies, it is a development which is consistent across the region.

V

A donation was made in 1085 to the abbey of St-Sulpice in Bourges by a local notable known as Robert the Provost.¹³⁴ The core of the donation was a church, that of Ste-Croix ‘situated next to the walls of the city of Bourges’. Robert had been in possession of this church for a long time, and had even alienated it twenty years earlier, in 1064, to a monk named Osmund and a cleric named Ainald, so that they could restore it, keeping an interest only so that he could be ‘a guardian and defender [of the church] for all the days of [his] life’.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, in 1085 he transferred that guardianship to the monks of St-Sulpice, along with rent from a mill, a tract of land and the rights over several unfree dependants. It is striking, however, that all of the properties donated by Robert are, in one way or another,

¹³² Unfree tenants: Fleury 37, Vierzon II.

¹³³ Fleury 47, 61; Micy 13.

¹³⁴ St-Sulpice 3

¹³⁵ St-Sulpice 33. The church was actually held from Robert by a tenant named Gibert in 1064, who consented to Robert’s transfer of the church to Osmund and Ainald.

fiefs; *foeium* in the language of the charter. Robert held Ste-Croix from Sulpicius of Concessault; the rent from the 'new mill' was held from Robert by a *miles* named Adalbert. The land of *ad Mansum* had the most complex arrangement of all: the land was held by Robert but its tenants (*colliberti*) were held in fief by a man named Peter son of Everard, while Gimo, lord of the castle of Mehun-sur-Yèvre, was owed customs (*consuetudines*) from the property. Robert details a complex compromise for the hand-over of this property to the monks; he anticipated that one of his sons, or their successors, would come into the possession of Peter's fief *and* Robert's claim over the land. That son was then to serve Gimo of Mehun directly, allowing St-Sulpice to hold the land and collect the rent of 2 *solidii* from the property in perpetuity.

Although it is certainly not representative or typical in the language or manner in which the complex overlapping rights and jurisdictions are laid out (for one, it is the earliest example of the word *foeium* or any of its variants in the middle Loire valley), Robert's charter perfectly encapsulates the major changes which affected property and landholding in the eleventh century. The centrality of complex, hierarchical, overlapping property rights, the increasing use of individual private churches as media for the transfer of property from lay to ecclesiastical control and the presence of customs and renders which can be called seigneurial are all features which are totally alien to late Carolingian charters. The remainder of this chapter shall be devoted to analysing the implications of the first two of these phenomena for élite wealth; the development of seigneurial or banal lordship will be examined in the next chapter, for it has unique implications of its own for the status of élites.

For previous generations of historians, cases such as Robert's donation to St-Sulpice would present little in the way of interpretive problems: it was simply a clear-cut example of 'the feudal system', by which Robert held land (or men held land of Robert) in return for homage and military service.¹³⁶ The old certainties

¹³⁶ F.L. Ganshof, *Feudalism*, trans. Philip Grierson (Toronto, 3rd ed., 1996); Bloch, *Feudal Society*, pp. 145-240. Feudal is used here in the legal sense of a system of 'feudo-vassalic' tenure and service. On the many and varied usages of the term 'feudal' and the historiography surrounding it, see Wickham, 'Forme del feudalismo', *Settimane di studio* 47.

about feudalism have been swept aside in recent decades, however, by the iconoclastic work of Susan Reynolds, following on from Peggy Brown's ground-breaking essay 'The Tyranny of a Construct' in 1974.¹³⁷ Reynolds' critique of the feudalism model was largely centred on the demonstration that ideas of political submission and service and of property tenure (the concepts of vassalage and fiefs, respectively) are rarely, if ever, systematically connected in the medieval evidence and that historians have projected ideas originating in later medieval property law back anachronistically onto the central Middle Ages.¹³⁸ Reynolds' accusation that historians have placed too great an emphasis on assigning technical and precise meaning to words, rather than paying attention to their meaning and function in context, recalls the contemporary arguments of Dominique Barthélémy against the *mutationiste* position, although in Reynolds's view Barthélémy does not go far enough in disavowing *féodalité*.¹³⁹ Reynolds's broader arguments against 'feudo-vassalic relations' (in contrast to Marxist definitions of feudalism) have been widely accepted since the 1990s, but forceful critiques of her work have emerged which highlight her problematic reliance on abstractions such as 'government' and 'property law' while ignoring the social relations which lay behind such concepts, as well as highlighting the reductionist nature of her extreme scepticism about sources which seem to support the ideas of 'feudal' hierarchies.¹⁴⁰ These critiques are certainly valid; Reynolds' treatment of a grant of St-Martin at Le Lion d'Angers (départ. Maine-et-Loire), in which the lord of Craon (départ. Mayenne) 'to whose *casamentum* it [the church] pertained' (*ad quorum cassamentum pertinebat*) consented and received monetary compensation is typical.¹⁴¹ Phrases such as that quoted in the previous sentence 'commonly taken as meaning that the donated

¹³⁷ Brown, 'Tyranny of a Construct', *AHR* 79; Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*.

¹³⁸ Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, *passim*, esp. pp. 17-74.

¹³⁹ Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, pp. 119-23 and p. 117, n. 4.

¹⁴⁰ Frederic L Cheyette, 'Review of Fiefs and Vassals; The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted. by Susan Reynolds', *Speculum* 71 (1996), pp. 1000-2, 1004-6; Stephen White, 'Review of Fiefs and Vassals; The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted. By Susan Reynolds', *Law and History Review* 15 (1997), pp. 351-5. A good summary of the historiography can be found in Richard Abels, 'Historiography of a Construct: "Feudalism" and the Medieval Historian', *History Compass* 7 (2009), pp. 1008-31.

¹⁴¹ The original charter is in *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Aubin d'Angers*, ed. Bertrand de Broussillon, (Paris, 3 vols, 1903), 160.

property was a *casamentum* or fief [...] must be a mistranslations' in Reynolds' argument, for 'the restriction of rights by governmental or quasi-governmental power looks at least as likely as that associated with what historians call fiefs'.¹⁴² Such arguments - at best inconclusive, at worst special pleading - are common throughout the work and point to a real lack of alternative frameworks in Reynolds' thought for understanding hierarchical relationships, especially as expressed through property.¹⁴³ Although Reynolds has suggested historians focus their attentions on the far less-emphasized horizontal and community bonds in medieval society, alongside medieval 'government', this still leaves charters such as Robert the Provost's without any real explanatory framework.¹⁴⁴ Dependant landholding with clear hierarchical relationships did exist in the central Middle Ages and the explosion in its popularity from the eleventh century onwards demands explanation, most crucially in the ways it affected the wealth, social status and social relations of those who held it.

VI

To begin, it is necessary to make some broad points about the scope and chronology of the phenomenon of hierarchical tenure.¹⁴⁵ The first key point is that while hierarchical tenure appears increasingly in charters of the eleventh century, it does not dominate the evidence completely. There is ample evidence that land and property continued to be held through simple, 'allodial' tenure right until the end of the period with which this thesis is concerned. For example, Hugh of Narcy (dep. Nièvre) donated an allod and a house to La Charité in the 1140s (alongside other property with more complex arrangements), just as his first wife Ermengard

¹⁴² Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, pp. 150-1.

¹⁴³ White, 'Review of Fiefs and Vassals', *Law and History Review* 15, pp. 344-5.

¹⁴⁴ Susan Reynolds, 'Afterthoughts on *Fiefs and Vassals*', *Haskins' Society Journal* 9 (2001 for 1997), pp. 2-3, reprinted in *eadem*, *The Middle Ages without Feudalism; Essays in Criticism and Comparison on the Medieval West*, (Farnham, 2012).

¹⁴⁵ This neutral term will be used in place of the more loaded 'feudal' tenure, to distinguish from allodial tenure and rental tenancies (i.e. a tenure with regular payment of rent/*census*, which tended to be confined to lower-status persons, although the lines are not always clear-cut).

had done before her death twenty years earlier.¹⁴⁶ It should also be remembered that hierarchical tenure was not an innovation; it did not emerge out of the blue. It was present from the Carolingian period, when holding lands in benefice from the king, the Church or major aristocrats is well attested.¹⁴⁷ Heccard's vassals held parts of his allods *in beneficium*.¹⁴⁸ The changes which can be seen in the documentation of the eleventh century, therefore, are not a matter of innovation in the structures of landholding but one of the rapid diffusion of hierarchical tenure to the point where it has become the dominant paradigm by the turn of the twelfth century, rather than simply the preserve of a small section of the property portfolios of well-connected élites. Alongside this growing popularity of hierarchical tenure came an increasing complexity, as more and more individuals had a share in the tenure of a piece of property. This complexity could be manifested as several different overlords with interests in the same piece of property (especially as rights to revenues became increasingly separated from tenure of the property itself) or in a chain of tenure which could number three or four layers.¹⁴⁹ All of these complexities can be seen in the example of Robert the Provost's donations.¹⁵⁰

The second key point to note about these tenures is that while they are hierarchical - that is to say that they imply a hierarchy of multiple rights and claims to each individual piece of property - they do not establish a hierarchy of tenures: a universal or consistent system by which these rights are held. The innumerable variations on the theme present in the charter evidence suggests that the overlapping claims were negotiated and contested based on the individual status and local support of each of the parties, and that compromise solutions and compensations were frequently resorted to. Without a clear set of legal norms for how the relationships created by these hierarchical tenures were to be regulated,

¹⁴⁶ La Charité 49, 50.

¹⁴⁷ See above.

¹⁴⁸ Fleury 27.

¹⁴⁹ On the separation of revenues from the ownership of property, see West, *Reframing*, pp. 184-98 and below, chap. III.

¹⁵⁰ St-Sulpice 3, 33.

local élites seem to have defaulted to a process of claim and counter-claim, often mediated by neutral parties (especially bishops) and settled by compromise.¹⁵¹ The effect this had on landholding was to create countless individual settlements regarding the rights and access each claimant had to a piece of property and the material form that recognition of that claim took. These settlements were not permanent, but could be re-negotiated during times of disruption of the status quo, usually as a claim was being transferred from one holder to another, either through sale, inheritance or donation - the latter is, naturally, the category of transfer which is most visible in the source material. This frequent negotiation and re-negotiation of rights and claims to property was the source of much of the growing complexity of these relations and had a profound effect on the extent to which a claimant could benefit materially from the property to which they had a claim in a tenorial hierarchy. A closer look at some examples in detail is helpful to illustrate the variables at play when such claims were made, as well as the relative flexibility of parties within the chain of hierarchical tenure to force others into compromise.

After the death of her husband Herveus of La Ferté-Avrain (modern La Ferté-Beauharnais, dep. Loir-et-Cher), a woman named Beatrice gave the church of St-Sigismund to Bishop John of Orléans, which John subsequently donated to the monks of Micy.¹⁵² Some time later, the donation was disputed by a *miles* from Pithiviers named Rather, who claimed that the church had belonged to his fief (*feodum*); the implication is that Beatrice's husband had held the church from Rather (or Rather's father) but Beatrice had not received consent before alienating the fief after her husband's death. The reasons for this appear to stem from Rather's age. He was only a young man (*juvenis*) who had recently been made a *miles* (and

¹⁵¹ The process is well studied within the framework of dispute-settlement: Fredric L. Cheyette, 'Suum cuique tribuere', *French Historical Studies* 6 (1970), pp. 287-99; Patrick J. Geary, 'Vivre en conflit dans une France sans État: typologie des mécanismes de règlement des conflits (1050-1200)', *Annales. Économies, sociétés, cultures* 41 (1986), pp. 1107-33; White, *Feuding*; Thomas Kohl, 'Competing Narratives, Churches and Monasteries in Eleventh-Century Anjou' in Vito Loré, Genevieve Buhner-Thierry and Régine Le Jan (eds) *Acquérir, prélever, contrôler: les ressources en compétition (400-1100)* (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 281-98; M.W. McHaffie, 'Law and Violence in Eleventh-Century France', *P&P* 238 (2018), pp. 1-39.

¹⁵² Micy 32. The charter is undated, with only the presence of Bishop John giving a range of 1092x1130. Lemaignier places the events in 1100.

thus, presumably, become responsible for his own affairs) at the time he raised the dispute. The death of the present holder (Herveus of La Ferté-Avrain) and the minority of the overlord (Rather of Pithiviers) had obscured the hierarchical link and allowed for the property to be alienated, but Rather's aim was not the restoration of the church to his control but a public recognition that the hierarchical tenure had existed.¹⁵³ As such, Rather publicly renounced his claim twice - once in the abbot's chambers in Micy and once again 'among the *milites* of his *castrum*'.¹⁵⁴ Despite the renunciation of his claim, the legitimacy of his hierarchical claim to St-Sigismund remained important to Rather's personal status and thus required public confirmation by the abbot and his representatives. This case highlights the need to publicly and consistently maintain a claim to a place within the chain of hierarchical tenure, lest it be lost. A claim being forgotten or ignored seems to have been a real worry for those higher up the tenurial ladder. Girbald, the *miles* of Marzy (dep. Nièvre) donated a church to the bishop of Nevers and the canons of St-Cyr during the episcopate of Hugh II (1074-93) and ensured that he did so with the consent of his heirs. He neglected, however, to get the consent of the *miles* Seguinus, of whom he and his heirs 'were seen to hold it' (*tenere videbantur*). The language of the charter implies that Girbald was deliberately careless in failing to secure Seguinus' consent, for Seguinus publicly raised a claim against the canons, which was only dropped after the intervention of Count William I.¹⁵⁵ Just as with Rather of Pithiviers, the public affirmation of these hierarchical tenures was a clear priority for élites.

Hierarchical tenures were, in theory, unequal relationships, but the levels of control any individual holder had over his (or her) property also varied and was subject to dispute. Although Rather and Seguinus strove to assert the very existence of their overlordship, other lords clearly had much more scope in

¹⁵³ Cf. The similar case in St-Sulpice 60, where property held in fief by a *miles* of Louis VII was granted to his [the knight's] sister after his death, despite having donated the property to St-Sulpice, since Louis' consent had not been explicitly secured. When the monks appealed to the king, however, the king then confirmed the original donation and reversed his grant to the original fief-holder's sister.

¹⁵⁴ '*Coram militibus ejusdem castri*': Micy 32.

¹⁵⁵ St-Cyr 95.

disposing of their fiefs. Guy, *miles* of Clamecy, founded a chapter of canons at Clamecy around 1076 and as part of his foundation grant gave a license to any of his *feodati* to give whatever goods to the church as they wished.¹⁵⁶ His *feodati* were clearly paying attention, for immediately following Guy's donation are eleven separate donations by those who held fiefs from him, including a *miles de feodo*, two priests who became canons at the new foundation and a woman (potentially a widow, for she is said to make the donation *pro morte fillii sui*). All of these gifts were publicly confirmed in the cathedral chapter of Auxerre by the bishop and his canons. Although it is not explicitly stated that Guy ordered these donations, it seems apparent that as part of his *feodum*, he had a significant influence on the decision of his *feodati* to contribute to his foundation. It is certainly not uncommon to find donations made by lords where the property is in fact held from him by another, whose consent to the donation is not always recorded - they may have had very little choice in the matter at all.¹⁵⁷ This is not to say that fief-holders were powerless in these relationships - indeed, their *de facto* possession of the property afforded certain advantages, as already discussed in the case of forgotten or ignored claims of lordship. An extreme example is the case of Odo of Dun, who held a fief from the abbot of St-Sulpice. When captured in battle in the third quarter of the eleventh century, Odo mortgaged his fief to his captor, Robert de Muro, as a ransom, without the knowledge or consent of St-Sulpice. Upon discovering this, Abbot Odo stripped Odo of Dun of this fief, an action which was upheld when Odo of Dun challenged the decision 'by the general assent of all the court'.¹⁵⁸ However, certain *honesti viri* later approached the abbot in hopes of reconciling the two and a compromise was agreed that, although the monks had redeemed the property at a cost of 70 *solidii* from Robert de Muro, half of the fief was to be given back to Odo (as well as a new *mansus* which he had not held previously), so long as he remained the abbot's and the church's man, as he had been before. This case highlights the way in which overlords (i.e. those at the

¹⁵⁶ AD Yonne G 1639.

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, St-Cyr 76.

¹⁵⁸ 'Generali assensu totius curie in potestate iamdicti abbatis feodum omnino remansit': St-Sulpice 9.

higher levels of hierarchical tenure) could be both powerful and powerless; St-Sulpice was recognised universally, even when challenged, as having the right to withdraw its fief from its holder due to a breach of trust, but were nevertheless powerless to stop the alienation in the first place, and were still forced to pay Odo's ransom to Robert de Muro in order to regain their properties. Furthermore, Odo's successful appeal to have at least some of the fief restored underlines the fact that these tenures, which revolved not only around legal right but also social obligations, could very rarely be severed or erased entirely.

A clear example of these limitations is presented by the case of Herveus, a *miles* of Philip I, who claimed to hold, by hereditary right, a *beneficium* from the abbot of Fleury. The abbot seems to have ignored this fact and, presumably after the death of the holder to whom Herveus was the heir, installed a certain Andrew, a man of Fleury (*homo sancti Benedicti*) on some of the lands which formed the benefice. The dispute ended up before Philip in 1067-8, who brokered a compromise that Herveus was to hold the lands which Andrew had held for his lifetime and was to relinquish the rest of his claim.¹⁵⁹ But Herveus was also granted the right to give other vineyards, which were at that time held by men of Fleury, to men of his own choosing. These clients of Herveus were to hold the lands for their lifetimes and for that of one generation of heirs before the vineyards reverted to Fleury, but only on the condition that the holders were not to do homage or swear fidelity to Herveus, nor to pay him any revenues from the properties.¹⁶⁰ The compromise from this dispute allowed Herveus to hold a benefice from Fleury at the expense of one of their own men, their preferred tenant, while also allowing him to install his own followers on lands held from Fleury, even if he himself was denied the material benefits from these gifts. The compromises not only drastically increase the complexity of the tenurial hierarchy, by introducing new tenants and imposing specific conditions on their tenure, but demonstrate the ability of all parties to the relationship to influence the final settlement.

It is clear from these examples that hierarchical property tenure was an

¹⁵⁹ Fleury 76/Rec. Ph I 37.

¹⁶⁰ '*Neque hominationem neque fidelitatem sibi faciant*'; Fleury 76/Rec. Ph I 37.

important element in status claims by the mid-eleventh century; the ways in which Seguinus or Guy of Clamecy asserted their claims are evidently as much about proving elevated social and political status as they are about proving a share in property rights. But the emergence of more widespread hierarchical tenure also had important ramifications for the wealth of eleventh century élites. At the most fundamental level, the rise in the number of individuals who had a legitimate claim to some ownership of a piece of property necessitated a rise in the number of individuals who could expect a material benefit from that produce or revenues associated with that property. This was not a direct relationship; that is to say that not everyone with a claim to a piece of property benefited materially from that property, either regularly or intermittently. In many of the cases discussed, such as those of Rather of Pithiviers or Seguinus, there is no evidence at all that they received any payments or other material benefit from their overlordship. Yet many overlords did, although it appears that few did so on a regular basis. The payment of *census* or regular rent is rarely specified, in sharp contrast to the precarial grants issued by churches in the tenth century. Even when a *census* is mentioned, there is evidence that it was not regularly collected. In 1040 Humbald, archdeacon of Bourges, along with his brothers and nephews, gave a *mansus* to the abbey of Vierzon. That *mansus* owed a *census* of ten *solidii* annually to Gerald of Vevres, but this had not been paid for several years.¹⁶¹ Gerald had, furthermore, given his *census* to two other men, Bernard 'Empty-Seat' (*vacua sella*) and John Denerosus. All three men contested Humbald's donation on these grounds, and while Gerald accepted spiritual benefits for himself and his family, both Bernard and John were materially compensated. Bernard was given a single payment of twenty *solidii* in return for dropping his claim, while John, it seems, refused to surrender his right to a perpetual *census*. In the end, John was given a one-off payment of only 2 *solidii*, but it was agreed that the monks would continue to pay him an annual *census* of five *solidii* on the feast of Saint Sulpice (26th August). Men like John seem to have been in the minority, however, as most landholders and overlords seem to have been content not to receive regular direct payments in recognition of their claims

¹⁶¹ Vierzon 43. It is never explicitly stated that the *mansus* was held by Humbald and his family from Gerald, but that is the clear implication of the term *census* in this context.

to property held in hierarchical tenure.¹⁶² The material benefits of overlordship came primarily when the property in question changed hands. There is a suggestion that payment was required when inheriting a fief in some instances; this is one of the revenues which Herveus, Philip I's *miles*, was forbidden to levy on the tenants he installed in Fleury's vineyards.¹⁶³ The most widespread evidence, however, is of overlords accepting counter-gifts from monks and from other ecclesiastical institutions in return for their consent to the donations made of their fiefs, much as it was common to secure the consent of heirs and other family members to a donation.¹⁶⁴ For this reason, blanket approvals of gifts made to certain churches from a lord's fiefs or *dominium*, like that made for his new foundation by Guy of Clamecy, became highly valuable.¹⁶⁵ Without such approvals, it was vital, as the canons of St-Cyr de Nevers recognised, to ensure that all lords and co-heirs (*domini* and *cohaeredes*) individually gave their consent.¹⁶⁶ While the spiritual benefits of association with a donation were acceptable to some, such as Gerald of Vèvres, in many cases securing this consent meant a sizable counter-gift for the lords. In the late eleventh century, the canons of St-Cyr paid the huge sum of 600 *solidii* to the two sons and the two overlords of a donor named Gosbert, in order to secure their consent to a change to the initial terms of donation after Gosbert's death.¹⁶⁷ Payments such as this to secure lordly consent may not have represented a regular source of income for élites, but they contributed to a situation where more élites could receive a material benefit from the same amount of property; a single landholder who received the regular revenues, with one or more overlords who gained social and/or material benefits each time the property changed hands.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² This may well be due to the boom in income from customs and exactions, which negated the need for such payments; see below, chap. III.

¹⁶³ Fleury 76/Rec. Ph I 37. The language of the charter specifies that the tenants' heirs are to hold the vineyards *sine emptione* ('without purchasing [them]').

¹⁶⁴ On consent of members of the kin-group, see White, *Custom, Kinship, Gifts*.

¹⁶⁵ AD Yonne G 1639. See also Vierzon 63, St-Sulpice 99, La Charité 55.

¹⁶⁶ St-Cyr 76.

¹⁶⁷ St-Cyr 76.

¹⁶⁸ Vierzon 63, 88; AD Yonne H 647.

VII

The discussion so far has focused primarily on lay property, since ecclesiastical landholders by and large tended to avoid the hierarchical landholding that was gaining in popularity amongst the laity. Precarial grants and grants of benefices to well-connected élites, which had played such a central part in the landholding strategies of the church in the late Carolingian period quickly disappear from the documentary evidence in the eleventh century. The latest examples come from Vierzon in the second quarter of the eleventh century, where true precarial grants were still being issued c. 1040, while monastic property was being transferred to laymen as part of exchanges for their lifetimes in the reign of Henry I (1031-60).¹⁶⁹ In fact, the landholding strategies of the church appear to have focused on eliminating, or at very least limiting as much as possible, their involvement in hierarchical tenure, and to prevent any other claims upon their property. We can see (not entirely successful) efforts at such in some of the examples discussed above, such as with Herveus and Fleury, or Odo of Dun and St-Sulpice. The lengths to which churchmen went, and the sums they were willing to pay in order to secure a freedom from such competing claims is a testament to the importance placed upon it.¹⁷⁰ There remained cases where the church was part of hierarchical chains of tenure, or where they had obligations to higher lords.¹⁷¹

Beyond a desire to extricate themselves from the increasingly complex webs of lay tenurial obligations, ecclesiastical institutions also found themselves increasingly taking possession of a large number of individual rural churches, which were being donated (alongside their associated properties) in ever greater

¹⁶⁹ Vierzon 36, 44, 45. Two late examples of grants *ad censum* from Vierzon survive, one from c. 1070 and one from c. 1100: Vierzon 59, 100, respectively. These are almost certainly agreements about tenancy for non-élites (the earlier agreement specifically mentions that the tenants are leatherworkers (*curiarii*)), rather than representing the sort of transfer of power which would be necessitated in a grant of a benefice to an élite holder. Nevertheless, they suggest a continuation of the trend of granting non-élite tenancies on the part of ecclesiastical institutions that may well be obscured by the survival patterns of the source-base.

¹⁷⁰ For example, St-Cyr 76.

¹⁷¹ For example, Micy 28; Vierzon 60. Many of these obligations involved seigneurial customs, on which see below, chap. III.

numbers, at the expense of traditional donations consisting of smaller parcels of land. Churches had been donated by the laity before the eleventh century; the earliest example from the Middle Loire Valley is from 877, when a *mansus* belonging to a cleric and his mother, along with its chapel, was granted to St-Sulpice.¹⁷² There are numerous examples from the tenth century, all of which follow the same formula as the 877 donation. The primary object of the donation is a large unit of land (a *villa*, *mansus* or *praedium*), containing within it one or more churches or chapels.¹⁷³ By the second quarter of the eleventh century, the language used by charters which donated churches had shifted quite radically. It was now the church itself which was the prime object of donation, with land and rights pertaining to it presented as secondary information. Despite the unevenness of the source-base, these types of donations seem to begin in most areas by the 1030s, and continued growing in number right through to the middle of the twelfth century.¹⁷⁴ The lands of the counts of Nevers and Auxerre are the exception, containing no donations which can be placed earlier than around 1070.¹⁷⁵ It seems probable that this is merely a matter of the survival of records of such donations; if not, and the practice was only adopted late in the eastern part of the middle Loire valley, it was clearly taken up with some gusto. In 1137, Bishop Fromund of Nevers confirmed all of the churches controlled by his cathedral's canons, totalling 53 churches and chapels.¹⁷⁶ Of course, not all of these would have been donated by lay people, for there is substantial evidence of clerical (and particularly episcopal) donations of smaller churches to larger institutions, but even so it is a testament to the surge in donations of individual churches.¹⁷⁷ Other institutions received similar confirmations from the pope in the early twelfth century. Ste-Croix d'Orléans' confirmations from Pope Eugenius III in 1151 list 36 churches and

¹⁷² St-Sulpice 40.

¹⁷³ Examples: Fleury 47 (941), 61 (975); St-Sulpice 78 (959); St-Cyr 35 (935), 23 (986), 19 (966), 11 (c. 980).

¹⁷⁴ The early examples include Micy 25 (early 1030s), 26 (mid-1030s), 27 (1044); St-Sulpice 82 (1032), 99 (1055), 58 (c. 1060); Vierzon 46 (1031-60), 47 (1044), 48 (1050); Cart Gen Yon 91 (for St-Germain d'Auxerre, late 1030s).

¹⁷⁵ St-Cyr 87 (c. 1070), 76 (c. 1080), 95 (before 1100); La Charité 37 (1089).

¹⁷⁶ St-Cyr 107.

¹⁷⁷ Episcopal donations of churches: St-Cyr 4, 23.

monasteries in its possession; Calixtus II confirmed 31 churches, 15 chapels and a monastery among the possessions of St-Sulpice in 1123.¹⁷⁸

The force behind this shift in donation practices was, without a doubt, the increasing influence of the ideals of church reformers, who held that the laity should not have access to the wealth of the church - the property of the saints was to be considered sacrosanct.¹⁷⁹ This is evident in the language of many charters of donation which speak of the unjust nature of lay tenure of churches. Hugh of Broys' donation to La Charité in 1085 recounted how the donor's father "had so unjustly held that same church [of St-Julien in Sézanne (dep. Marne)], which no layman might justly hold".¹⁸⁰ The language of injustice was clearly inspired by the fundamental idea that any control of a church by a layman was sinful. By the twelfth century, scribes felt comfortable inserting references to the intellectual roots of the reform movement into the mouths of donors. Simon of Beaugency, in his charters donating the church of Notre-Dame de la Bonne Nouvelle to the bishop of Orléans and hence to Marmoutier, made repeated references to the precepts of popes and other churchmen concerning the anathema and excommunication of those laymen who held churches.¹⁸¹ Simon's donation, however, took place in 1149, a century after these ideas had begun to gain traction among the laity. This points to a general approach to lay-controlled churches which was relatively non-confrontational on the part of the Church.¹⁸² There are exceptions, however. Archbishop Richard of Bourges (1071-90) seems to have spearheaded a consistent effort in the late eleventh century to excommunicate individually those laymen who held churches and to place political and social pressure on them to relinquish the churches to local monasteries. Although one charter states that Richard issued a general sentence of excommunication upon those laymen who held 'God's patrimony', several specific examples from both

¹⁷⁸ Ste-Croix 22, 23; St-Sulpice 48.

¹⁷⁹ Kathleen G. Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century; Spirituality and Social Change* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 139-57.

¹⁸⁰ La Charité 94.

¹⁸¹ AD Loiret H 163.

¹⁸² For example, Micy 52.

Vierzon and St-Sulpice show the archbishop intervening directly in order to ensure the restitution of churches.¹⁸³ Such tactics may have been more effective as publicity for reformist causes than as practical means to secure lands for the church. Richard managed to convince Arnulf II of Vierzon to restore to Abbot Odo of St-Sulpice two churches which he held in fief from the abbey, by explaining to him the decrees of Pope Leo the Great and the Roman church on the holding of church lands.¹⁸⁴ Some time later, however, Arnulf reneged on his pledge, claiming he had never agreed to relinquish the churches. The restitution was only secured in the end by the counter-gift of eight *libri* to Arnulf (and a further sum of five *solidii* to his brother) in 1110, at least twenty years after the initial donation instigated by Richard. Richard's militant attitude seems to have been an exception to the rule and the drive to restore privately-held churches to ecclesiastical control was structured largely around existing patterns of interaction between the laity and the church, involving negotiation, compromise and spiritual and material counter-gifts.¹⁸⁵

The overall effect of this shift from donations of land to donations of churches to large ecclesiastical institutions was two-fold. Firstly, it represented not only an enhancement of the spiritual resources of monasteries and other major institutions, but a significant transfer of material wealth from the laity to the ecclesiastical sphere. Not only were the lands attached to each church included in these restitutions, but all of the church revenues, what the documents call the *feodum presbiterialis*, were also included.¹⁸⁶ The disappearance of large lay landholders, who now shared claims within the broader structures of hierarchical tenures, meant that this trend cemented the place of ecclesiastical institutions as the most important economic players in the middle Loire valley by the beginning of the eleventh century. That is not to say that the structure of ecclesiastical wealth remained unaffected by the profound changes we can see in eleventh-century landholding. The individual properties donated to churches seem to have become

¹⁸³ Vierzon 78, 88; St-Sulpice 20, 52, 53.

¹⁸⁴ Vierzon 55.

¹⁸⁵ See Vierzon 91 for a late example of the militant approach by Leodgarius of Bourges.

¹⁸⁶ For detailed discussion of church revenues, see below, chap. 3.

smaller, symbolized by the fact that the standard donation was now a church with its appurtenances, rather than an entire *mansus* with its church. Ecclesiastical institutions could and did retain large consolidated estates, such as twenty *mans* at Orville (dep. Loiret) belonging to St-Aignan d'Orléans in 1025, but their properties increasingly consisted of packages of lands, buildings and rights scattered throughout different *mans* and *villae* and interspersed with lay properties.¹⁸⁷ The significant difference between the fragmented lay properties and the small parcels of church properties is that ecclesiastical élites largely sought to extricate themselves from the system of hierarchical tenure, often at significant expense. As a result, while it can be concluded that the economic wealth drawn from landholding was increasingly dispersed amongst all the lay élites within the chains of tenure, this wealth was consolidated and centralised by the major monasteries and churches of the middle Loire valley. The culmination of this trend was the foundation and spread of Cistercian houses in the first half of the twelfth century, to the extent that they could almost be said to be managing their own discrete economies.

The Cistercian example is perhaps the best illustration of the drastic changes in the structures of landholding which occurred from the end of the tenth century. The Cistercians were well known for their emphasis on working their own lands and a focus on each house being economically self-sufficient, an approach which led, ironically, to a huge number of lay donations.¹⁸⁸ In the middle Loire valley, the documentation of Cistercian houses survives particularly well, especially from the *pagus* of Auxerre, for which relatively little survives from older monasteries.¹⁸⁹ The small house at Escharlis (in the modern commune of Villefranche, dep. Yonne) is a particularly appropriate example, for all of its earliest acquisitions are preserved in a pancarte of the late 1130s which allow a detailed view of landholding practices in the region surrounding the monastery over the

¹⁸⁷ Micy 20.

¹⁸⁸ On the Cistercians and their economics more generally, see Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, pp. 174-80; Janet Burton and Julie Care, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 149-88.

¹⁸⁹ The geographical proximity to the order's birthplace at Cîteaux made this region an obvious choice for early expansion.

course of around a decade.¹⁹⁰ From the foundation of a small house of religious on the site by Vivien, *miles* of La-Ferté Loupière (dep. Yonne) in the late 1120s or early 1130s, fourteen donations to the monks were recorded on both sides of the large single parchment sheet. No churches were given to the monks from lay control, most likely due to the prohibition against holding parish churches among early Cistercian thinkers; most of the property donated was described in very generic terms as *terrae et nemora*, although they also received two mills.¹⁹¹ However, as part of the process of securing those lands free from any suggestion of lay overlordship as part of hierarchical tenure (or the payment of any seigneurial customs), the monks of Escharlis paid nearly 1500 *solidii* in compensation and counter-gifts to their various donors across the two decades after their foundation.¹⁹²

The dense network of properties acquired by Escharlis, freed from the pervasive tenurial hierarchies that characterised the holdings of their lay neighbours, are a microcosm for the changes in patterns of wealth and property-holdings from the later Carolingian period to the twelfth century. More and more lay élites had claims, through hierarchical tenures, to property from which they could earn wealth, most notably when it transferred from one proprietor to another. The result was more wealth in the hands of the local élites, in contrast to the Carolingian period where high concentrations of wealth can be seen only in the hands of those with close connections to the royal court. The church, meanwhile, sought to consolidate its property and to extract itself from the network of benefices and hierarchical tenures it had participated in enthusiastically until the early eleventh century. It seems almost certain that the growth of reform ideas contributed to this trend, particularly given the church's promotion of the donation of individual churches to monasteries and larger institutions and the efforts made to avoid any perception of lay overlordship of church properties. Indeed, a proportion of the increased wealth flowing into the hands of lay élites

¹⁹⁰ The pancarte survives as AD Yonne H 647.

¹⁹¹ Bouchard, *Holy Entrepreneurs*, pp. 123-5, notes that despite this prohibition, there were occasional cases of Cistercian monasteries accepting dependent churches as gifts.

¹⁹² AD Yonne H 647 - the total value of cash counter-gifts in the pancarte is 1497 *solidii*.

came from churches, like Escharlis, who gave handsome counter-gifts in return for donations. The fact that these counter-gifts were so often in cash highlights the final significant change in the post-millennial economic landscape. Wealth flowed more frequently between individuals and institutions, and in more complex patterns. The answer to why that is can be found in exploring the increased need for payments to overlords for pasturage rights, woodland rights, road and market tolls and more.¹⁹³ These customs, often known collectively as the *seigneurie banale*, were ones which Escharlis managed largely to avoid paying to local lords, but they had become a key pillar in the economics of élite status by the eleventh century and it is on them that the next chapter will focus.

¹⁹³ AD Yonne H 647.

Chapter III

Power and Exploitation:

Seigneurie and Status

In 1145, Bernard of Clairvaux brokered an accord between the bishop of Auxerre, Hugh of Mâcon, and the count of Nevers, William II, setting out their respective rights and status with regard to the other in the city of Auxerre and the surrounding countryside.¹ Conspicuous by its absence in the agreement is virtually any discussion of ownership of property or land. Only two short clauses deal with these issues: one stipulating that the count holds his residence in Auxerre and four named castles of the bishop, and he should turn them over when requested; the second asserting that everything which the count holds in the city and its surrounding, excepting those which are held in fief from the king of the duke of Burgundy, he holds from the bishop.² These are quite clearly *post-facto* efforts to impose a hierarchical tenurial obligation on the counts, but while it was agreed in principle in this document, the bishops spent most of the following century and a half struggling to assert any meaningful authority by this means.³ Although little is said about ownership of specific properties, a great deal of the accord is concerned with control, rights and revenues over various lands and peoples. These included agreements over the management of a woodland game reserve (*haia*), including punishments for trespassers, the right to try and fine criminals of various sorts, the right to first refusal of merchants' wares and the right to collect tolls and to tax various kinds of commerce in the city.⁴ These types of rights are quite distinct from the *census* taken by land-owners from their tenants and properties; they represented an enormous and unprecedented intrusion by élites into the

¹ 'The Cartulary of the Bishops of Auxerre' in Constance Brittain Bouchard (ed.), *Three Cartularies from Thirteenth-Century Auxerre* (Toronto, 2012), 1. This document is discussed in Sassier, *Pouvoir Comtal*, pp. 186-9 and Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Spirituality and Administration. The Role of the Bishop in Twelfth-Century Auxerre* (Cambridge, MA, 1979), pp. 54-5.

² 'Cartulary of the Bishops' in Bouchard (ed.) *Three Cartularies*, 1.

³ Cf. 'Cartulary of the Bishops' in Bouchard (ed.) *Three Cartularies*, 11, 12, 13, 62, 63.

⁴ 'Cartulary of the Bishops' in Bouchard (ed.) *Three Cartularies*, 1.

economic and social world around them, for there is nothing comparable from the early middle ages. Scholars working on France have termed this ill-defined bundle of rights *seigneurie banale*, setting it explicitly in contrast to the property-based *seigneurie foncière*; the sources of the middle Loire valley tended to refer to them more generally as ‘customs’ (*consuetudines*).⁵

The initial appearance in documentary records of the type of behaviour that could be said to constitute *seigneurie banale* appears in the middle Loire valley in the 990s, with instances from across a wide swath of the region appearing in this decade. The very earliest case comes from 987, when a certain Roger donated a forest to Vierzon in which hunting (specifically of deer, goats and boar) was prohibited - presumably only for those without Roger or Vierzon’s express permission.⁶ This is the first indication of the type of control and restrictions on the economic activities of the general populace which was at the heart of the *seigneurie banale*. Vierzon obtained similar rights, in this case to fish in the river Cher below the *castrum* of Vierzon, when Stephen of Mehun exchanged a weir on the river with them in 999.⁷ The appearance of these types of economic restrictions has largely passed without comment, since there was little resistance to them, at least by those whose voices are preserved by the medieval archive. Further north, however, the customs which appear are *malae consuetudines*, evil customs, because they were imposed upon the lands of monasteries and churches. In 993, Hugh Capet sent his son Robert to Yèvre-le-Châtel to defend the lands of the monks of Fleury from the ‘evil customs and incessant pillage’ of Arnulf, nephew of the bishop of Orléans.⁸ A year later, in a joint privilege on the occasion of the Cluniac reform of St-Germain d’Auxerre, Hugh and Robert forbade the customs which the monks’ enemies (*adversi*) had imposed upon them.⁹ In each of these cases the customs seem to have taken the form of direct exactions, rather than

⁵ Duby, *Maconnais*, pp. 173-4. Duby himself, in coining the term *seigneurie banale* recognised that the language which described these rights was extremely regionally varied, choosing *banale* only due to the fact that *bannum* was the most common term used in his Burgundian sources: *ibid*, p. 174 n. 3.

⁶ Vierzon II.

⁷ Vierzon IO.

⁸ Fleury 70/ Cat. R II 6.

⁹ Cart. Gen. Yon 82/Cat. R II 7

restrictions on the economic activities of others, but the documents are otherwise frustratingly vague about what exactly was involved with these early forms of seigneurial dues. The resolution to the dispute with Arnulf of Yèvre hints that his pillage may have involved a portion of all wine at harvest-time - Arnulf was to continue to receive thirty *muids* of wine annually for the lifetime of his uncle, the bishop. Crucially, this custom was not to be 'held violently' as had first been the case for Arnulf, but was to be a reward for Arnulf's pledge of service to the king. The monks at Fleury agreed to pay as part of Hugh's *salvamentum* - the exactions taken by a lord in return for his protection.¹⁰ This would suggest that the principle of these exactions was not what was in dispute when Abbot Abbo and his monks brought their complaint to Hugh Capet, but rather the specific instance in which they felt Arnulf, for whatever reason, did not have the right to impose these customs on their property. It should be of no surprise then, when customs begin to appear more widely in the archives of the Loire valley from the 1020s onwards, the same principals apply: when remitted from ecclesiastical lands or disputed by churchmen, such exactions were 'depraved' (*pravas*), like the exaction of wine taken by the bishops of Nevers from their cathedral canons' lands; when being granted to institutions, such as the three cartloads of wood and pasturage rights two hundred animals in his woods granted to Micy by Alberic, brother of Bishop Theodoric of Orléans, there was no hint of impropriety.¹¹

I

Perhaps as a result of the less dramatic nature of these uncontested grants of customs, the historiography of *seigneurie banale* since the coining of the term by Georges Duby, coupled with the influential essay on *malae consuetudines* by Jean-François Lemarignier published a few years earlier, has largely viewed the imposition of these novel exactions as emblematic of the disappearance of the 'public' power of the Carolingian state, usurped by the 'private' castellans of tenth-

¹⁰ Fleury 70. On *salvamentum*, see Duby, *Maconnais*, p. 175.

¹¹ St-Cyr 5; Micy 21.

and eleventh-century France for their own profit.¹² It has had a central place in the *mutationiste* thesis ever since.¹³ Recent work however, particularly from Anglophone historians, has sought to downplay the emergence of the *seigneurie banale* as a major turning point in the social history of post-Carolingian Europe. Stephen White has sharply criticised the public/private distinction upon which Duby's theories on the origins of the *seigneurie* lay, a criticism that has since been picked up by Francophone critics like Barthélemy.¹⁴ Richard Barton's study of Maine has clearly demonstrated the moralising and polemic rhetoric of the writers of monastic charters, who sought to portray any dues which *they* were required to pay as illegitimate, influenced by ideas of monastic reform.¹⁵ Meanwhile, both David Crouch and Charles West have launched incisive attacks on the long-standing trope of the 'descent of the *ban*', which explained the emergence of *seigneurie banale* through the gradual usurpation of the *bannum* - the royal right to command and punish - by non-royal actors.¹⁶ Although approaching the issue from different angles, West and Crouch quite clearly demonstrate that the ideal of the *bannum* was never the all-encompassing royal prerogative it was thought to be by earlier historians and its use as an explanatory device for the political changes in eleventh-century France is untenable, as contemporary writers never intended the word to be interpreted as modern historians have done.¹⁷

Despite these criticisms, it remains a worthwhile task to explore the bundle of rights and revenues known as *seigneurie banale* (a term I will continue to use, out of convenience, alongside customs) and the impact their emergence had on the economy and society of the middle Loire valley. There are two key reasons why such an exploration is necessary. The first is that, no matter how diverse or

¹² Duby, *Maconnais*, pp. 173-90; Lemarignier, 'Dislocation du *Pagus*' in *Mélanges Louis Halphen*, pp. 401-10. On much of the literature discussed in this paragraph, also above, Chap I.

¹³ Poly and Bournazel, *Mutation Féodale*, pp. 59-103, esp. pp. 87-95; Bisson, 'Feudal Revolution', *P&P* 142, esp. pp. 22-3.

¹⁴ See above, Chap. I.

¹⁵ Barton, *Lordship in Maine*, pp. 131-43.

¹⁶ For a classic narrative of the 'descent of the *ban*' in the middle Loire valley, see Devailly, *Le Berry*, pp. 192-6. More general summaries can be found in Martin Aurell, *La Noblesse en Occident (Ve - XVe siècles)* (Paris, 1996), pp. 53-63 and Crouch, *Birth of Nobility*, pp. 191-8. The term *bannum* is only found in isolated examples in the sources of the middle Loire valley; Micy 25; St-Sulpice 34; 'Cartulary of the Bishops' in Bouchard (ed.) *Three Cartularies*, I; Cluny 3724.

¹⁷ Crouch, *Birth of Nobility*, pp. 195-8; West, *Reframing*, pp. 177-9.

unconnected they appear, these rights existed. Their emergence into the historical record is relatively swift at the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century, and cannot simply be waved away by historians who find no interpretive value in them. Many recent writers have sidestepped this problem by working on the assumption that such rights were always exercised by land-owners on their tenants and that what has been interpreted in the past as the emergence of the *seigneurie banale* is merely the more regular and detailed occurrence of these customary rights in written form.¹⁸ Although Duby did view some aspects of seigneurial customs as deriving from the pre-existing rights of property holders, this interpretation has its roots in the German historical tradition, where concepts of *Grundherrschaft* conceived of a much tighter level of economic and legal control of tenants than the equivalent French concept of *seigneurie foncière*.¹⁹ The interpretation is problematic, however, since it makes an argument from silence that such practices were current long before there is any evidence to support their existence - in effect, the same methodological flaw in Barthélemy's ideas of 'feudal revelation'.²⁰ The second reason that these seigneurial rights merit a fresh analysis is that they have not been fully investigated within a socio-economic framework. Rather, virtually all work, particularly in recent decades, has approached them in a more legalistic and juridical manner. There are two reasons for this. The first is the name *seigneurie banale* given to the phenomenon by Duby. Although Duby himself paid significant attention to the economic effects of these customs, as did some of his younger contemporaries such as Robert Fossier, the overwhelming attention was given to the judicial aspects of the *seigneurie*, the right of the lord to hold court, to pass judgment and to impose punishment.²¹ This is particularly true

¹⁸ Barton, *Lordship in Maine*, pp. 73, 143; Devroey, *Économie rurale*, pp. 83-5; idem, 'Seigneurs et paysans au coeur de l'ancien empire carolingien de part et d'autre de l'an mil: Les seigneuries de saint Rémi de Reims (ix - xi s.)' in Pierre Bonnassie and Pierre Toubert (eds), *Hommes et sociétés dans l'Europe de l'an mil* (Toulouse, 2004), p. 269. Cf. West, *Reframing*, pp. 179-81.

¹⁹ Duby, *Mâconnais*, pp. 177-9. On German concepts of *Herrschaft*, see Geneviève Bührer-Thierry and Steffan Patzold, 'Introduction' in Geneviève Bührer-Thierry, Steffan Patzold and Jens Schneider (eds), *Genèse des espaces politiques (IXe-XIIe siècle); Autour de la question spatiale dans les royaumes Francs et postcarolingiens* (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 8-18; West, *Reframing*, p. 179.

²⁰ West, *Reframing*, p. 180-1. On the 'feudal revelation', see above, chap. I.

²¹ Duby, *Mâconnais*, pp. 254-62; idem, *Guerriers et paysans*, pp. 191-200, 254-60; idem, *Économie rurale*, II, pp. 84-93; Fossier, *Enfance de l'Europe*, pp. 401-22. A notable exception in recent years is the pan-European comparative project on seigneurial exactions: Monique Bourin and Pascual Martínez Sopena (eds), *Pour une anthropologie du prélèvement seigneurial dans les campagnes*

among Francophone historians, still (until relatively recently) following a paradigm which sought to contrast the eleventh century with the strong states of Charles the Bald and Philip II Augustus.²² In contrast, Anglophone historians, no matter what their stance on *mutationisme*, have tended to see lordship as affective - driven by charisma and culture - rather than structural, and so have rarely considered the how the emergence of such customs impacted those who imposed them.²³

I propose in this chapter to analyse the *seigneurie banale* - its customs, rights, exactions and revenues - largely from a material point of view; as the third major change to the structures of wealth and property in the eleventh century. Many customs were explicitly economic or aimed at raising revenues, while even those which were not provided the opportunity for lords to profit. Moreover, these rights were treated as property in the period - they could be bought and sold, donated and inherited, divided or remitted.²⁴ But the most singular feature of these new rights was that they not only provided wealth, the mere possession of which could be used to claim status, but much like the hierarchical tenures which begin to emerge during the same period, they allow status to be claimed in the process of the accumulation of wealth (or the protection of existing wealth). The fact that seigneurial customs were exploitative, that they were imposed upon those who payed them or were restricted by them, was itself a claim to status, a recognition by social inferiors of the status held by the lord. The emergence of the *seigneurie banale* was, as such, one of the key turning points in the social history of the medieval French élites.

The customs, rights and revenues which fall under the banner of 'seigneurial' are enormously varied. They never appear as a collective, a defined set of uniform rights which could be exercised; rather, each set of customs was specific and

médiévales (XIe - XIVe siècles). *Réalités et représentations paysannes* (Paris, 2004); Monique Bourin and Pascual Martínez Sopena (eds), *Pour une anthropologie du prélèvement seigneurial dans les campagnes médiévales* (XIe - XIVe siècles). *Les mots, les temps, les lieux* (Paris, 2007).

²² This unspoken comparison is nowhere more evident than in Poly and Bournazel, *Mutation féodale*, pp. 59-103, 335-48.

²³ Barton, *Lordship in Maine*, esp. pp. 77-III; Bisson, 'Feudal Revolution', *P&P* 142, pp. 14-21; Idem, 'Medieval Lordship', *Speculum* 70 (1995), pp. 743-59; Idem, *Crisis of the Twelfth Century*, pp. 3-83.

²⁴ West, *Reframing*, pp. 184-90, 196-8, 260.

particular to the individual property or group of people upon which it was imposed. The bewildering variety of rights (and the vocabulary used to describe them) is a consistent feature of research in this area over the past thirty years.²⁵ Further complicating their study is that, much in same way that lay property is only visible when at the moment it passes into the hands of the church, many customs are only alluded to in the documentary evidence when disputed or donated. Reconstructing the full extent of these customs for the eleventh and twelfth centuries is therefore a matter of attempting to tie together evidence from numerous dispersed data-points. For the purpose of this analysis, I will classify and discuss the various customs found throughout the middle Loire valley by what appears to be their primary function: those customs primarily concerned with economic activities (or their restriction); customs which had their basis in the running of courts and the provision of justice; customs of a political nature, based upon recognition of lordship and the potential of violence; and spiritual customs, derived from the Christian's charitable obligations to the church. I will conclude with a brief discussion of the ways in which the exercise of the *seigneurie* not only allowed the élites who wielded these rights to enhance their material wealth, but also permitted the public display of power and prestige - the presentation of claims to élite status through the very act of extracting wealth from their social inferiors.

II

The vast majority of the customs detailed in the surviving charters and documents from the middle Loire valley were explicitly economic in nature. When used on its own, the term *consuetudines* seems to have referred to payments and exactions

²⁵ Elisabeth Magnou-Nortier, 'Les mauvaises coutumes en Auvergne, Bourgogne Méridionale, Languedoc et Provence au XIe siècle: Un moyen d'analyse sociale' in *Structures Féodales et Féodalisme dans l'Occident Méditerranéen (Xe-XIIIe siècles)*; *Bilan et Perspectives de Recherches*, (Rome, 1980), pp. 135-72; Monique Bourin, 'Facere servitium et donare censum. Le vocabulaire du prélèvement seigneurial dans la France du Midi: l'exemple du Languedoc méditerranéen' in *eadem* and Pascual Martínez Sopena (eds), *Pour une anthropologie. Mots, temps, lieux*, pp. 87-108; Ghislain Brunel, 'Entre concessio et conventio: le vocabulaire du prélèvement seigneurial en France du Nord (XIIe - XIVe siècles)' in Bourin and Martínez Sopena (eds), *Pour une anthropologie. Mots, temps, lieux*, pp. 109-35; Daniel Pichot, 'Le prélèvement seigneurial dans l'ouest de la France (XIe - XIIIe siècle) in Bourin and Martínez Sopena (eds), *Pour une anthropologie. Réalités et représentations*, pp. 613-16.

more generally, no matter what their origin - although they were usually distinguished from *census* paid by tenants for rented land.²⁶ Many documents which relate to customs, however, spell out in detail what was entailed and the most commonly found are those which limit or demand payment for the use of economic resources in the local landscape - most frequently woodland, waterways and meadows.²⁷ Woodlands and forests were precious resources in the medieval period, valuable not only for construction but also for the daily firewood required for heat and food preparation.²⁸ Even when it was granted away, holders of seigneurial rights were eager to maintain control over how these resources were used. In grants to the lepers of Orléans and to the church of St-Martin-des-Champs in Bourges, Louis VI was explicit in his donations that the communities were permitted to harvest wood for construction and for firewood from the royal forests for their own usage - the sale of timber granted by royal generosity was prohibited.²⁹ On its foundation, the soon-to-be Cistercian house of Escharlis was granted the use of the woods of Vivian of La-Ferté-Loupière to construct their buildings and to pasture their pigs, but (except for a single designated meadow) they were forbidden from clearing the woodland for agricultural use.³⁰ Limits could be placed on usage: the nuns of the hospital of Notre-Dame in Orléans were only permitted one cart-load of wood daily from the woods at *Chantol*.³¹ Another means of limiting or controlling usage was by exacting payment for usage. Payments for pasture were demanded for the use of both woodland and meadows, as can be seen from the frequent exemptions granted to religious houses. In woodlands, the herds being pastured were of swine, which appear to have formed a large portion of the economies of many monastic estates.³² Micy received several grants allowing them to pasture one hundred pigs in different woodlands in the early eleventh century, without the need to pay the *pasagnium*, the payment for

²⁶ St-Sulpice 36; St-Cyr 79.

²⁷ St-Cyr 80 is an example concerning all of these issues.

²⁸ See, in general, Richard C. Hoffmann, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 181-8; Devroey, *Économie rurale*, pp. 88-90.

²⁹ Rec L VI 147, 253.

³⁰ AD Yonne H 647.

³¹ Rec L VI 147; see also Micy 21.

³² In addition to the examples below, see AD Nièvre H 122-2 no. 1; *MSB* II.8, pp. 109-110.

right of pasturage.³³ St-Germain d'Auxerre received a similar grant for one hundred pigs to be pastured in the forest of St-Pierre on the Armançon, which also included a tithe of the *pasagnium* which continued to be payed by other herders.³⁴ Meadows and other types of pasturage attracted similar charges, which seem primarily to have been aimed at herds of sheep.³⁵ Waterways were also tightly controlled, with restrictions placed particularly on fishing, usually through the imposition of infrastructure such as weirs, fish-traps or dedicated fish-ponds.³⁶ These types of rights were so entrenched by the beginning of the twelfth century that the monks of Micy were given permission by Louis VI to demolish buildings which had been illegally constructed on their stretch of the Loiret at its confluence with the Loire.³⁷ Such rights to rivers were wide-ranging, so much so that Louis VI could simply speak of 'the customs [...] of the river Auron' which had been paid to the king by the church of St-Martin de Plaimpied.³⁸ But the key function of all of these rights was their exclusivity, their ability to close off access to these resources to those who could not claim rights to them. The lords of Sully-sur-Loire granted the monks of St-Sulpice fishing rights in two of the rivers which ran through their forests near Les Aix d'Angillon, but also, equally importantly, they promised to guarantee that no one would be permitted to fish in the waters belonging to the monks (which had formed part of the donation) with permission.³⁹ Grants of pasturage rights to many of the Cistercian abbeys of the Auxerrois in the twelfth century placed an equal emphasis on this exclusionary nature of seigneurial rights, delineating access to pasture in such detail that it is still possible to plot out zones of control today.⁴⁰ The effect of this seigneurial control was to preserve and protect their own economic advantage, by mediating access to these natural resources, claiming élite status through the power to do so, while also ensuring their continued wealth.

Mills and ovens represented two further aspects of seigneurial control which,

³³ Micy 21, 24.

³⁴ GASGA, pp. 20-1.

³⁵ Micy 35/Rec. Ph I 142.

³⁶ St-Cyr 80, 87; La Charité 37.

³⁷ Micy 53/Rec. L VI 312.

³⁸ Rec L VI 20.

³⁹ St-Sulpice 72.

⁴⁰ AD Yonne H 1581; Pontigny 45/Cart. Gen Yon I:264.

although not natural resources, remained vitally important components of the everyday rural economy and key sources of revenues for both lay and ecclesiastical élites. Unlike in other areas, there is no evidence from the middle Loire valley before the middle of the twelfth century that indicates that these resources had become *banalités* - obligatory for all locals to use, thus forming a captive revenue stream for their owners.⁴¹ It has recently been suggested that the ubiquity of *banalités* in medieval Europe more broadly should be questioned, with a suggestion that more efficient mills, which were only possible with the level of investment available to élites, ultimately were a strong pull-factor in encouraging tenants to use a seigneurial mill. This negated the need for the push-factor of the *banalité*.⁴² This seems to fit with the evidence from the middle Loire valley. Mills had, of course, long been valued as assets by both the laity and the church alike and there are many recorded mills in the ninth and tenth centuries, donated by the laity to the church and granted by the church as *precaria*.⁴³ There are increasing references to mills from the very end of the tenth century, however, with several explicit references to newly built mills or plots of land designated for the building of mills. The *miles* Hubert gave land in *precaria* to three monks of Micy in the 990s with plots to build two mills, from which income they would be expected to pay the *census* on the property.⁴⁴ In the late eleventh century a property was given to the monks of St-Sulpice with the stipulation that they were to build a mill on it, with a certain portion of the profits to be given to the poor annually.⁴⁵ Mills clearly became an extremely profitable source of income, as numerous examples show that mills supplied revenues to multiple individuals and churches, as well as (presumably) supporting the miller. Simon of Beaugency gave his newly-constructed mills at La-Ferté-Gilbert to the canons of St-Euverte in 1149, but revenues were so high as to allow one of his knights to keep a payment of four *modii* of grain annually in fief from the mill.⁴⁶ Louis VII granted fourteen *modii*

⁴¹ On *banalités*, West, *Reframing*, p. 177; Devroey, *Économie rurale*, pp. 138-40.

⁴² Feller, *Paysans et seigneurs*, pp. 162-3.

⁴³ St-Cyr 17; Cart. Gen. Yon 67/ARTEM 723/Rec. Ch III 31; Cart. Gen Yon 42/Rec Ch II 261; St-Sulpice 19; Micy 15/Cat. R II 51.

⁴⁴ Micy 13/ARTEM 2787.

⁴⁵ St-Sulpice 44.

⁴⁶ BNF ms Lat 10089, p. 317.

annually from his mills at Bourges to the monks of La Charité.⁴⁷ Both partial and full revenues from mills were frequent objects of donation.⁴⁸ Revenues could even be extracted without ownership of a mill, as Stephen of Mehun-sur-Yèvre did from the mill owned by the brothers Constantius and Stephen, until he remitted it when the brothers donated the property to St-Sulpice.⁴⁹ Revenues could be extracted from the transport of grain and flour to and from the mill, as a payment usually known as *asinagium*, derived from the asses used to haul the sacks. Simon of Beaugency ensured that the canons of St-Euverte would not pay those sorts of charges and the monks of Fleury needed to involve the king in order to stop one of their estate administrators from imposing such a custom on the monastery's mills for his own profit.⁵⁰ Louis VI not only remitted the mills of the church of St-Samson d'Orléans from this charge at their mills, but also granted that they should be allowed to levy those customs on the neighbouring mill of a man named Geoffrey de Portus.⁵¹ While mills were not *banalités*, it is apparent that they were seen as highly important revenue-generators by élites, who strove not only to impose customs upon them to maximise their income, but also to protect them from others.⁵² The evidence for bread ovens, the other major *banalité* of the French countryside, is much scarcer, but that which we do have suggests that it occupied a similar position to mills: it was a valuable resource which could be donated or leased, its revenues were often split and great lengths were taken to preserve control over them for their owners.⁵³

The final group of purely economic customs were the rights to hold fairs and to operate mints. Much like mills and ovens, both the right to hold fairs or markets on a regular basis and the right to mint coinage had been granted since the Carolingian period.⁵⁴ However, as in the case of mills and ovens, there is far more evidence for their presence from the second half of the eleventh century, with

⁴⁷ La Charité 51.

⁴⁸ St-Sulpice suppl. 5, 6; Vierzon 92.

⁴⁹ St-Sulpice 4.

⁵⁰ BNF ms. Lat 10089, p. 317; Fleury 106.

⁵¹ Rec L VI 24.

⁵² Fleury 106; Micy 40; La Charité 39.

⁵³ Micy 24; St-Sulpice 76, 77, 100, 101; Fleury 153.

⁵⁴ See, for example, St-Sulpice 1; *MSB*, I.35, pp. 77-8.

much to indicate that élites were carefully cultivating their growth for their own profit. The rights to annual fairs, or even more frequent events, seem to have been highly sought after by churches in particular, with royal, comital and episcopal grants given to Micy, St-Satur, St-Samson d'Orléans, the leper-house at Bourges and St-Martin-des-Champs (in Bourges).⁵⁵ Profits were made from the customs and taxes taken from sales made at fairs, as well as more everyday sales.⁵⁶ For commercial activity in the city of Bourges, both the abbey of St-Sulpice and the king (or the viscount, before 1101) took customs on specified goods ranging from salmon and eels, cattle and sheep, to wax, wool and wine.⁵⁷ The counts of Nevers received similar customs in both Nevers and Auxerre, although in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries made concessions to various churches of parts of those customs on sales.⁵⁸ Much like with mills, customs, in particular tolls, could be exacted on goods coming and going from marketplaces. Micy had been granted exemptions from tolls on the river Loire for their boats in the Carolingian period.⁵⁹ The surviving evidence suggests that tolls increased hugely from the mid-eleventh century onwards, however, with tolls charged on river traffic, road traffic and passage through gates and across bridges.⁶⁰ Such tolls were so valuable that charters were forged in an effort to justify them: the monks of St-Sulpice produced a charter of Pippin II of Aquitaine, purportedly dating from 855 but in reality a forgery of c. 1100, granting them the right to charge tolls at all gates into the city of Bourges, as well as across any bridges they had built over the rivers Auron or Yèvre.⁶¹ These customs all represent the élite seeking both to encourage and to profit from the growth in trade and exchange, which was clearly booming by the early twelfth century. That such an economy was grounded in the increased use of money is clear not only from the tolls paid but from the growth in seigneurial interest in mints. Coins were minted not only in the episcopal cities, but also in

⁵⁵ Micy 57; AD Cher B H 36, no. 1/ARTEM 4429; Rec. Ph I 30; Rec. L VI 344, 430.

⁵⁶ AD Yonne H 647.

⁵⁷ St-Sulpice 80. The document seems to date from the early years of the twelfth century, for it confirms that these were the customs in both the time of King Philip and Viscount Odo Arpinus.

⁵⁸ Cluny 3724; 'Cartulary of the Bishops' in Bouchard (ed.) *Three Cartularies*, 1.

⁵⁹ Micy 7/Rec Ch II 1.

⁶⁰ Vierzon 38; St-Sulpice 6; Micy 29/Rec. Ph I 77; AD Yonne H 647; Pontigny 1, 2.

⁶¹ St-Sulpice 22.

smaller centres such at Mehun-sur-Yèvre, where the lord who controlled the castle insisted on re-paying debts with coinage minted at his own mint.⁶²

III

All of the customs discussed so far can be described as primarily economic, not only because they resulted in large amounts of revenues for the élites who held them, but also because they were largely transactional; those who paid the customs received an economic benefit for themselves, whether that was pasturage for their herds, the use of a mill or permission to bring their stock to market. There were, however, customs imposed within the context of the *seigneurie banale* which had no benefit for those upon whom it was imposed, but rather was simply another exaction to pay. The most straightforward of these were simple exactions of food and agricultural produce, such as bread and wine, grains or animals (most commonly lambs or sheep).⁶³ In other cases, these exactions were the profits of justice, which were often granted by secular authorities to churches over their own lands, with the authority to conduct their own trials and to be free of outside interference.⁶⁴ In many instances, such rights were limited either by time (when such authority was granted), by space (in what geographical areas could crimes be tried) or by the types of crime committed.⁶⁵ In a large number of grants, very little information is given regarding the practicalities involved in the process of the prosecution of crimes, with scribes describing the rights with simple, nondescript terms like *justicia*.⁶⁶ In other instances, quite complex arrangement were specified, such as how and under what conditions people and goods could be seized.⁶⁷ In all cases, however, there was a primary difference between these customs and those of a purely economic nature: while they certainly raised revenues for those who held them, exactions and justice conveyed a sense of power and authority over

⁶² St-Sulpice 49.

⁶³ Micy 31, 44; Micy 43/Rec L VI 105; St-Cyr 80; Vierzon 92; Rec L VI 82; Cluny 3724; BNF ms. Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1274, fol. 44v; GASGA pp. 46-9.

⁶⁴ Vierzon 59; Cluny 3724.

⁶⁵ ARTEM 4429/AD Cher 13 H 36, no. 1; St-Sulpice 110; Vierzon 56; Fleury 107; Micy 58.

⁶⁶ Rec Ph I 30; Rec. L VI 206, 344; GASPA, pp. 44-7.

⁶⁷ Cart. Gen. Yon 132; St-Sulpice 72.

others, allowing the holders of such customs not only to enhance their social status through material gain, but equally to perform their superior status in the act of doing so.

The double potency of such acts for the purposes of conveying status is made abundantly clear by those customs which were imposed with the implicit, or occasionally explicit, threat of force or violence. This included the *salvamentum*, the protection payment made in recognition of the 'protection' offered by a lord from outside attack. The monks of St-Germain d'Auxerre seem to have deliberately pursued a policy of avoiding such payments, for numerous exemptions are recorded for the eleventh and twelfth centuries, particularly from the *salvamentum* imposed by the Counts of Champagne and their agents over the monastery's lands.⁶⁸ *Salvamentum* was imposed not only by counts and kings, but by local élites, as the *miles* Icterus did upon the lands of St-Cyr until his pious renunciation of the custom.⁶⁹ Customs such as *vicarium* or *vicecomitatem* seem to have amounted to a similar practice, with payments made in respect to the supposed authority, who need not be either a *vicarius* or a viscount.⁷⁰ The requirement to perform armed service was theoretically a similar imposition, albeit one which did not, in theory, require any direct payment.⁷¹ Decrees of Louis VI and Louis VII for Bourges, however, indicate that the ability to call upon men for armed service could be used for profit, for the kings were compelled to order their representatives not to summon men excessively.⁷² The implication which is made is that royal provosts and other representatives were using such summons to extract payments from those who were obligated to attend in order that they would not be required to do so. The most blatant exaction of customs under the threats of violence, however, came in the form of the custom of hospitality, or *gîte*. This was, in essence, the billeting of armed men upon inhabitants, who were obligated to feed and house them, including in some cases their horses. Although royal troops were billeted this way, most examples come from lesser élites,

⁶⁸ GASGA, pp. 14-17, 20-1, 26-7, 42-3.

⁶⁹ St-Cyr 57.

⁷⁰ Micy 32; Bourges, BM ms 18, fol. 157v.

⁷¹ Micy 14/Cat. R II 15; Cluny 3724.

⁷² Rec. L VI 373.

including the viscounts of Nevers or even otherwise unknown *milites*.⁷³ There is even an example of a woman imposing this custom: Adalasia of Hubans and her son Geoffrey insisted upon their rights to be hosted with three or four of their *milites* twice a year by the canons of St-Cyr; the canons clearly felt that this was an onerous demand and eventually paid Adalasia the sum of fifty *solidii* to relinquish her right.⁷⁴ The violence behind these customs is made explicit in the case of Leotericus of Chaillant, who claimed exactions of grain and hospitality from the canons of St-Cyr in Arzembouy and Challuy.⁷⁵ Although Leotericus shed blood and stole from the cathedral's barns (according to Bishop Herveus of Nevers) in pursuit of his claims, the canons were still required to pay a huge sum of money, fifteen *libri*, in order to convince Leotericus to drop his claim for good. There was nothing which quite emphasised the superior social status of those exacting customs than their ability to violently assault those who defied them with impunity, particularly in a society which was rapidly changing its attitudes towards lay violence.⁷⁶

Violence and justice were not the only way in which wealth could be collected through the performance of social superiority. There are increasing references throughout the eleventh century to the customs which are due to a church. In many cases, this was the tithe, the payment of one-tenth of annual income which Christians were obliged to pay towards to upkeep of the church. Traditional scholarship has frequently asserted that a desire to fully implement the system of tithes was one of the motivations behind the acquisition of many rural churches by monasteries and other larger churches from the middle of the eleventh century.⁷⁷ Indeed, tithes are often mentioned in donations of churches to monasteries in the period; there are even some cases where tithes (or a portion of tithes) are donated as an independent revenue stream.⁷⁸ However, there are references to other customs and exactions which are due to holders of a church,

⁷³ Rec. L VI III; Micy 32; Cluny 3388.

⁷⁴ St-Cyr 91.

⁷⁵ St-Cyr 89.

⁷⁶ See below, Chap. V.

⁷⁷ See above, Chap. II. The standard work on this subject is Giles Constable, *Monastic Tithes from their Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1964).

⁷⁸ AD Yonne H 647; BNF ms Lat. 10089, pp. 392-3; St-Sulpice 51, 53, 105; Micy 33.

sometimes referred to in the documents as the ‘priest’s fief’ (*feum presbiteriale*).⁷⁹ An especially detailed charter from 1108 breaks down exactly what this ‘fief’ entailed.⁸⁰ A layman named Everard donated the church at Neuilly-en-Dun (dep. Cher) to St-Sulpice, to whom it rightfully belonged. With the church came lands, meadows, vineyards, fields and rents - all standard pieces of property that one would expect to find in the patrimony of a small church. However, also included in the donation was the *feum presbiteriale*: all offerings made to the church; all dues paid at burials or baptisms; the dues paid by women to re-enter the church after childbirth (*relevationes feminarum*); payments made for the blessing of the harvest and of weddings; donations given during visitations of the sick; dues paid for confessions, vigils and cycles of masses (*trecenarius*). All of these payments were to be made by the parishioners of Neuilly in addition to their tithes (which were also included in the *feum*). Any offerings made as part of annual religious festivals were not included in the ‘fief’ - Everard had the rights to only a portion of those revenues, although they were donated alongside the *feum presbiteriale*. These revenues were quite clearly substantial, for Everard received a counter-gift of 740 *solidii* in return for his donation, as well as a counter-gift of wheat for his wife and entry as a monk to St-Sulpice for his son. Although the fullness of the list given by Everard is unusual, there are numerous other examples of the requirement by parishioners to pay similar dues, particularly those associated with baptisms and burials, especially from the southern half of the region.⁸¹ It was not simply parishioners who were burdened with ecclesiastical customs, however. In 1149, an agreement was struck between the abbot of Micy and an archdeacon of the cathedral of Chartres, in which the abbot promised not to attempt to deprive the priest assigned to the church at Montliard (dep. Loiret) of what was due to him.⁸² More specifically, the monks were not to deprive him of the payments he received for baptisms, confessions, blessings, purifications or burials, nor were they allowed access to the bread destined for communion. Moreover, they were forbidden from taking any part of the meals which were provided to the priest

⁷⁹ Vierzon 46; St-Sulpice 20, 51, 53.

⁸⁰ St-Sulpice 28.

⁸¹ St-Sulpice 20, 52, 53, 54, 57; St-Cyr 76, 80, 87, 88, 90.

⁸² Micy 59.

(presumably by his congregation) on five specified annual feast-days. The most specific injunction was that the monks were not to stop the priest from performing mass on behalf of the lord of Montliard, if the lord chose to come to the church for purification.

This final clause in the Montliard charter makes quite clear that the traditional narrative of larger churches taking over small rural churches as part of a reform movement was not quite as straightforward as it first appeared. By the twelfth century, some monasteries clearly had acquired a reputation for impoverishing small churches, diverting resources away from the priest who was rooted in the local community. Overall, it is hard to maintain a view that the rise of seigneurial customs was solely of benefit to the laity. Churches, both large and small, took just as much advantage of the booming economy as lay lords did, imposing new customs and dues in order to provide additional revenue for their own benefit.

IV

Taking a broad view of the evidence, it is difficult to see the emergence of seigneurial customs as anything other than an enormous exploitative act by élites, both lay and ecclesiastical - an act which diverted the growing productivity and increasing wealth of the rural landscape upwards into their own coffers, at the expense of those who worked the land. While this statement is true, there are some nuances which should be added to it, which have important implications for the ways in which élite status was constructed. Firstly, the benefits of *seigneurie banale* were unevenly distributed, favouring smaller élites. Local *milites* and *domini* were much closer to the realities of agricultural life than counts and kings, and were thus in a position to use threats, violence or even their mere presence to ensure the payment of customs. The donations of those local élites to similarly local churches, in contrast to large royal abbeys, ensured that smaller churches benefited too. The rise of the *seigneurie banale* thus had the effect of reducing the gap between local élites and the very highest rungs of society. Secondly, this gap was not only closing in a material sense - local élites were richer relative to those

at comital level or above - but also in terms of authority and public presence. As discussed above, the imposition of customs was a very public act of authority; if it was done successfully, it was made clear to a local community that the possessor of the customs (whether a local lord or a nearby abbey) was an important and powerful figure. Finally, the huge number of seigneurial customs led to the rapid formation of a seigneurial administration. Almost as soon as the first customs appear, there are mentions of provosts, *ministeriales*, *vicarii* and *servientes* to collect and administer those customs.⁸³ Later, more specialised roles emerge, including foresters, hunt-masters, mayors and stewards.⁸⁴ In many cases these were offices which were undertaken part time, rather than as a livelihood - one of the provosts of La-Ferté-Loupière is also described as a carpenter.⁸⁵ Some of those holding these offices were of unfree status, like the mayors of Fleury, but the growth of the *seigneurie banale* provided the opportunities for them to enhance their status in their own ways in the context of rural society.⁸⁶ While it is difficult to describe these persons as élites, their frequent appearance in charters and other documentation from the early eleventh century onwards makes it apparent that the fundamental transformations of the rural economy described in the past two chapters had knock-on implications for every level of society.

The implications of these economic development for the élites are the concern of this thesis, however, and in the remaining chapters the focus will be firmly on the ways in which élites manipulated and instrumentalised the growing wealth gained from seigneurial customs and hierarchical tenures.

⁸³ Cart. Gen. Yon 89; Fleury 79; Micy 19, 29/Rec Ph I 77; St-Cyr 72; Vierzon 36, 57; St-Sulpice 15, 18, 58.

⁸⁴ AD Yonne H 1405-1; Rec L VI 452; St-Sulpice 9.

⁸⁵ AD Yonne H 647.

⁸⁶ Fleury 106.

Chapter IV

Performing Status: Patronage and Ritual

In the early twelfth century, on the feast of Saint Stephen, the 26th of December, Prior Roger of the Cluniac priory of St-Étienne de Nevers, along with two of his senior monks, processed bare-foot through the cathedral of St-Cyr to the high altar, in the presence of city's clerical community (and many interested lay onlookers, no doubt). The stark display of penance and humility on the part of Roger and his monks was instigated by Bishop Hugh III of Nevers (1110-19), who instructed them to come to make satisfaction due to their disobedience to God and to him.¹ A record of Roger's submission was subsequently written onto a flyleaf of the cathedral's lavishly illuminated ninth-century Gospel books - one its central and most enduring possessions - where it has survived to the present day.² The disobedience which triggered Hugh's demands is unknown, but this is almost certainly a microcosm of an on-going rivalry in the city between the bishop and his cathedral and the count of Nevers' patronage for Cluniac monasticism.³ St-Étienne was initially re-founded (on the site of a legendary foundation by Columbanus) as a house of secular canons in 1063 by a joint charter of Bishop Hugh I and Count William I; the initiative seems to have originated, however, from a deacon (also) named Hugh.⁴ Hugh was a member of the viscomital dynasty of Nevers, whose base was the castle at Champallement; a great-nephew of Hugh I and a nephew of Bishop Geoffrey of Auxerre, he would later become bishop Hugh II of Nevers.⁵ However, by the time of the church's dedication in 1097, Hugh II had

¹ London, British Library, MS Harley 2790, fol. Iv. '*Propter inobedientiam quam Domino et michi fecerunt, feci venire [...] ad satisfaciendum domino et michi*'.

² *Ibid.* The notice as it survives appears to be incomplete, as it ends in a Tironian *et*, but this appears to be a result of scribal interruption, rather than a loss of text; as a result, the 'disobedience' which caused Roger's penance remains frustratingly unknowable.

³ On the comital family's patronage of Cluniac monasteries, see e.g. Cluny 2678, 2811; La Charité I; William of Volpiano, 'Letter to Odilo of Cluny, 1027', ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina Cursus Completus* (Paris, 221 vols., 1844-65), CXLI, cols. 869D-872B; trans. in John Scott and John O. Ward (eds and trans) *The Vézelay Chronicle and other documents from MS Auxerre 227 and elsewhere* (Binghampton, NY, 1992), pp. 317-18.

⁴ Cluny 3388, 3724.

⁵ Cluny 3388; *GPA* pp. 264-5; Bouchard, *Sword, Mitre, Cloister*, p. 400.

died (he would be buried in St-Étienne) and his family, who had figured so prominently in the original re-foundation charter, have faded from view.⁶ The elderly Count William is now designated as the church's *fundator*, which he gives over to the monastery of Cluny, with the consent of his grandson and heir.⁷ His followers give donations to St-Étienne and Cluny on his behalf (*dedit pro me amore*). Although Hugh II is given a key role in the charter's *narratio*, as the churchman who instigated and encouraged William's pious act of rebuilding, his successor as bishop is noticeably side-lined. Indeed, some sections of the charter, which may have been composed or even issued before Hugh's death, remit both comital and episcopal customs on the lands of St-Étienne in the name of Hugh II as though he were still alive.⁸ As well as the alienation of the rights and revenues of his church in the name of his predecessor, Bishop Guy, Hugh II's successor, was also relegated to a bit part in St-Étienne's dedication, which was performed by the renowned Bishop Ivo of Chartres, who subscribed William's charter of donation to Cluny.⁹ Guy was only one of three supporting bishops in the dedication ceremony, alongside Humbald of Auxerre and Walter of Châlons. The contrast between St-Étienne's dedication and the humbling of Prior Roger are stark. Hugh III clearly wanted to make a statement, to re-assert the cathedral's status as the foremost church in the city; the full implications of Roger's penance are only apparent once the history and context is known.

Barefoot procession in penance was not a novel ritual in the early and central middle ages, made most famous by high-profile imperial and royal penances, but the symbolism of the prior of St-Étienne submitting to the bishop of Nevers, less than a decade after the bishops' side-lining in the priory's foundation would not have been lost on the audience.¹⁰ The charters and chronicles of the Middle Loire

⁶ St-Cyr 75.

⁷ Cluny 3724.

⁸ Cluny 3724; '*Si macellarii de alia terra ad hanc, causa vendendi carnes, advenerint, ego et domnus Hugo, Nivernensis episcopus, donamus pro Deo et concedimus monachis infirmis consuetudines nostras. [...] ego Willelmus et ego Hugo Nivernensis episcopus donamus hujus loci fratribus Cluniacensis cursum et usum per omnes silvas nostras ad calefaciendum et ad ædificandum et porcis eorum pastinatum*'.

⁹ Cluny 3724; see also St-Étienne Nev 2.

¹⁰ On penances, see for example Mayke de Jong, 'Power and Humility in Carolingian Society: The Public Penance of Louis the Pious', *Early Medieval Europe* 1 (1992), pp. 29-52; I.S. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056-1106*, (Cambridge, 1999) pp. 160-4.

valley preserve hundreds of accounts of ritual, performative actions which, while rarely as dramatic as Roger of St-Étienne's penance, invoked public and symbolic performances to signal meaning to contemporary audiences, as well as to create and cement new social realities. Political implications and meanings have been at the heart of many recent studies on medieval ritual, but these performances, particularly those performed at a small-scale, intended for a local audience, also have the potential to reveal the changing claims to status made in the centuries around the year 1000.

I

Studies of ritual in the middle ages have become common since the 1980s and 1990s, when historians first drew inspiration from anthropological models to shed light on the working of medieval society. The most prominent work has focused on large-scale, one-off rites of passage, such as knighting, coronation or burials, but studies on smaller-scale, everyday or regular ritual can also be found, particularly focused on conflict-resolution and feud.¹¹ Due to this wide-ranging approach, ritual as an analytical concept has frequently been criticised, most notably amongst medievalists by Philippe Buc. For Buc, historical understanding of ritual is too reliant on problematic, functionalist interpretations which have their roots in the early-modern development of ethnology and sociology. Historians have uncritically adapted these ideas and applied them to the middle ages, seeing rituals as a reflexive tool to confirm and maintain the social order, to create consensus in a society without institutions - but devoid of inherent meaning and belief. Moreover, Buc argues that any ritualistic performance's inherent ambiguity, the potential for differing interpretations amongst the audience and

¹¹ Examples: Janet L. Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986), pp. 239-401; Jacques Le Goff, 'The Symbolic Ritual of Vassalage' in idem *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, IL, 1980), pp. 237-87; Max Lieberman, 'A New Approach to the Knighting Ritual', *Speculum* 90 (2015), pp. 391-423; Frans Theuws and Monica Alkemade, 'A Kind of Mirror for Men: Sword Depositions in Late Antique Northern Gaul' in Frans Theuws and Janet L. Nelson (eds), *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 401-76; White, *Feuding and Peace-Making*; Gerd Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers: Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe*, trans. Christopher Carroll (Cambridge, 2004), esp. pp. 136-59; Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY, 1992), pp. 289-324.

even the potential for subversion of meaning by participants, render any attempt to understand its meaning for a contemporary audience an impossible task for historians. Because, unlike the anthropologists and ethnographers from whom they borrowed the term, historians can never actually be present during a ritual, they are reliant on the interpretation of a single witness (the author of the source they exploit) and are thus trapped in an interpretive strait-jacket.¹²

Proponents of the study of rituals have largely rebuked Buc's critiques, arguing that cultural performances' mutability and flexibility are a key reason that they provide such a unique insight into individuals and societies, for they reveal a shared symbolic vocabulary which is used creatively to express meaning. When studied together over time, medieval rituals reveal a complex and ongoing cultural and social dialogue, one which was quite capable of expressing conflict and initiating new social and political hierarchies, as well as cementing existing ones.¹³ Furthermore, historians' understanding of the power of rituals in medieval France has been deepened by Geoffrey Koziol's recent work on royal diplomas, which analyses not only the rituals describing in those diplomas, but considers the issuing of the diploma itself as a performative act.¹⁴ Drawing a distinction between a performance (in which a ritual or scripted set of gestures re-enacts or represents an existing/essential reality or truth) and a performative act (in which the actions of the ritual or performance create or re-create a new reality), Koziol shows how in addition to grants of land, royal diplomas were used to enact political settlements and alliances, through how, where and before whom the rituals were enacted.¹⁵ 'Reading' the performative meaning of an act, such as the redaction of a charter or diploma, is possible only through an analysis of the wider contexts, by

¹² Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, NJ, 2001). See also idem, 'Ritual and interpretation: the early medieval case' *EME* 9 (2000), pp. 183-210 and 'The monster and the critics: a ritual reply' *EME* 15 (2007), pp. 441-52.

¹³ Koziol, *Begging Pardon*, pp. 289-324; idem, 'Review article: The dangers of polemic: Is ritual still an interesting topic of historical study?', *EME* 11 (2002), pp. 367-88; Alexandra Walsham, 'Review Article: The Dangers of Ritual', *P&P* 180 (2003), pp. 277-87.

¹⁴ Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 39-42, 57-62.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 39-42. In doing so, Koziol draws on a theoretical background which has been widely used among specialists of ritual studies since the 1970s, often known as the 'performative turn': Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford, 1992), esp. pp. 37-46; Peter Burke, 'Performing History: The Importance of Occasions', *Rethinking History* 9 (2005), pp. 35-52; Jean-Marie Moeglin, '«Performative turn», «communication politique» et rituels au Moyen Âge. À propos de deux ouvrages récents.', *Le Moyen Âge* 113 (2007), pp. 393-406.

understanding the shared histories and relationships connecting the participants, the audience and the surroundings of the ritual. This allows the historian to read between the lines and to appreciate the subtle gestures and symbolisms which would have been apparent to contemporaries. As a result, it is incredibly difficult to reconstruct the performative nature of private (that is, non-royal) charters in the late Carolingian period, leading Koziol to focus almost exclusively on royal diplomas.¹⁶

The task becomes easier in the Capetian period, due to the survival in greater numbers of more descriptive documentary and narrative sources, and the performative aspects of rituals such as Prior Roger's penance can be analysed within the context of tension between St-Étienne and the bishop. Even in this later period, such a detailed analysis is possible only in a small minority of cases, usually those involving churches whose institutional histories can be traced, rather than lay people (particularly those below comital level) who tend to flit in and out of the sources. Nevertheless, even when a performative analysis is not possible due to a lack of contextual information, the study of rituals and performances can be fruitful, particularly in aggregate. Rituals provided the opportunity to make statements and claims about participants' roles, relationships and place in the world - and, in particular, claims to their elite social status. Even if we are unable to say with certainty *what* it is they were communicating, charting the means and nature of the rituals through which would-be elites (both lay and ecclesiastical) *sought* to communicate can reveal much about the changing social structures of the middle Loire valley in the central middle ages.

II

The performative use of royal diplomas as described by Koziol was certainly operative in the middle Loire valley in the late ninth and early tenth century. The region is prominent in Koziol's work; he cites examples of diplomas issued for Dèvres, St-Germain d'Auxerre and Vézelay as key moments in the consolidation of political power early in the reigns of Charles the Bald and Louis IV.¹⁷ As well as

¹⁶ Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 14-15, 52-62.

¹⁷ Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 72-4, 88-91.

being rituals which confirmed and solidified the political order, the issuing of these diplomas were also instances where claims to status amongst the highest élites of the kingdom were made public - in these cases, Archbishop Raoul of Bourges and Hugh the Great, duke of the Franks. Other examples not discussed by Koziol can also be identified, in which carefully orchestrated political set-pieces are designed to publicly showcase royal power and confirm the high status of those associated with those grants. Charles the Fat, in his brief stint as king of the West Frankish kingdom, confirmed in 886 a gift made to the canons of St-Cyr de Nevers by William the Pious, consisting of the abbey of St-Pierre of *Isodrum* in the county of Autun and the *cella* of St-Révérien in the county of Nevers.¹⁸ The donation was made primarily in memory of William's father, Bernard Plantvelue, who had been killed earlier that year in fighting the armies of 'the tyrant Boso', '[Charles'] enemies, traitors and devastators of the kingdom'.¹⁹ This was Boso of Provence, the first non-Carolingian to set himself up as a king in the late ninth-century.²⁰ The imperial diploma is a legitimisation of William's presence as a *comes et marchio* like his father had been, establishing his claim to preeminence in the Nivernais, in addition to his familial base in the Auvergne, Limousin, Berry and the Mâconnais. This was most likely part of an ongoing strategy by Carloman and Louis III, followed by Charles, to solidify the loyalty of those closest to Boso's breakaway kingdom, but it also served to communicate William's inheritance of his father's social and political status by publicly showcasing the young count's ability to intercede with the Emperor.²¹ But such performative occasions could equally be used to send negative messages about the status of élites - to formalise the fall from grace of royal servants and to take rivals for influence and status down a peg. For example, in a diploma issued for St-Sulpice de Bourges in 855, Charles

¹⁸ St-Cyr 15. *Isodrum* is unidentified; it could either be the modern-day commune of Izeure (dep. Côte d'Or) or the commune of Yzeure (dep. Allier). Neither would have lain in the medieval diocese of Autun, but either could conceivably be part of its *comitatus*. Saint-Révérien (dep. Nièvre), survives as a modern village, approx. 40km north-east of Nevers. On Charles the Fat in West Francia, see Simon MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century; Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 2, 48-62; McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, pp. 261-2.

¹⁹ St-Cyr 15 : 'Se opposuerit contra hostes nostros et insidiatores ac devastores regni contra Bosonem tyrannum et sequaces ejus.'

²⁰ On Boso's career: McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, pp. 259-61.

²¹ Ibid, p. 261.

the Bald confirmed its status as the preeminent royal church in Berry, stating that the monastery should 'be guided by us and always be under our, and the entire kingdom's, protection'.²² This decree is issued following the petitions of Archbishop Raoul of Bourges, highlighting Raoul's importance as one of Charles' most powerful southern churchmen.²³ Conspicuous by his absence, however, is Count Gerald, the most powerful local layman: he is mentioned only when a tribute of wax and honey owed to him by virtue of his office is given instead to St-Sulpice. In exalting his ecclesiastical counterpart and in referring to him only in the process of depriving him of income, the entire charter can be read as political act designed to diminish Count Gerald's social and political standing, at the expense of Archbishop Raoul. Indeed, this suspicion is perhaps confirmed by a report in the Annals of St-Bertin, dated a decade later, in which Charles attempted to remove Gerald from office altogether.²⁴ Gerald resisted violently, and ultimately had enough local support to remain in office, but Charles' use of diplomatic to mediate disputes of status and power on a local level are undeniable.²⁵

While the rituals involved in the enactment of these royal diplomas performed and cemented social and political status for the very highest élites, those whose loyalties effected kingdom-wide politics, it is more challenging to locate ritual at a more modest level in the ninth and tenth centuries. This is in large part due to the relative dearth of charters issued by non-royal individuals before 950, but even from these few instances, there are hints that the redaction and presentation of a charter to a church functioned in a similar fashion to a royal diploma. Such charters were frequently specified as being issued 'publicly' or 'solemnly', as well as being supported by prominent witnesses, implying some form of ceremony.²⁶ The record made by Fleury of Count Heccard's donation of Perrecy is the only explicit description of this type of ritual, however.²⁷ The notice describes

²² St-Sulpice 1/Rec. Ch II 178.

²³ Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 72-3, 138-40; Devailly, *Le Berry*, p. 85.

²⁴ *A.B.*, s.a. 867, 868.

²⁵ For discussion of this episode, see Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 212, 231; Devailly, *Le Berry*, pp. 83-4.

²⁶ St-Cyr 10; Vézelay II 8; St-Sulpice 31, 40.

²⁷ Fleury 28.

how Heccard symbolically handed the charter detailing his donation over to the abbot's advocate, Artmann. The act itself took place in the main church at Fleury, between the high altar and the tomb of Saint Benedict, and present were not only the participants, but the monks and numerous vassals of both the count and the abbot. The ritual was clearly intended to communicate the élite status of all parties involved and to act as a public showcase for the new relationship which was being forged between them. The symbolic language of such rituals was varied and allowed participants to re-frame their relationships with considerable nuance. A donor named Richildis petitioned Abbot Lambert of Fleury to be allowed to share in the monks' prayers, describing with formulaic supplicatory language how she approached (*adire*) the 'place of saints and monks' over which the abbot presided and offered up her donation.²⁸ This language placed Richildis in a much more dependent position vis-à-vis Fleury in comparison to Heccard, but nevertheless this type of formalised language (and the ritual it describes) play the same role in performing publicly the new relationship between the participants.²⁹ Such petitionary language is virtually ubiquitous in surviving precarial grants, giving verbal and written form to the unequal relationship between church and tenant.³⁰

The public performance of donations like that enacted by Heccard, with the symbolic transfer of the gift from the pious donor to the church or its representative, is in line with the standard historical understanding of pious giving in the medieval period. A physical object representing the gift being made, known as a *festuca* - often a knife, a clod of dirt or the charter itself - was held aloft, given to the church's representative or placed on the church's altar in full view of an audience of witnesses, who could later be called upon to give testimony as to the facts and details of the gift. Such moments may well have been the occasion for witnesses to subscribe the charter (either verbally giving their consent or making an autograph mark), adding a further participatory element which could be used

²⁸ Fleury 37: '*locus [...] sanctorum monachorum*'. Cf. Koziol, *Begging Pardon*, pp. 1-76, discussing this type of language largely with reference to secular politics.

²⁹ Richildis' humility is a theme running throughout her donation charter, describing herself as the 'the least of the servants of Christ' (*Christi famularum minima*); Fleury 37.

³⁰ AD Loiret H 172(1)/ARTEM 2796 is a characteristic example. On precarial grants more generally, see above, chap II.

to highlight rank and status (for witness list are virtually always ordered hierarchically).³¹ At its heart, such rituals served to reinforce the act of donation in the minds of the potential witnesses, but historians have highlighted ways in which such performances could be adapted to communicate social and political status, as well as religious patronage, weaving together layers of meaning through the symbolic actions of participants.³² Once the number of surviving charters begins to increase from the eleventh century onwards, it becomes clear that rituals during donations were commonplace. Most frequently, these involved a procession into the church and the placement of a *festuca* on the altar of the church.³³ The most common *festucae* seem to have been wooden staffs (*bacula*) or small black knives (*cutella*), but more exotic examples can be found - Simon of Beaugency placed a gemstone (*lapidium berillium*) on the altar of St-Euverte in Orléans to symbolise a gift made in 1149, while Count Hugh of Champagne used a book (potentially a bible?) covered with ivory and silver to represent his renunciation of customs over the lands of St-Germain d'Auxerre in 1104.³⁴ Other ritual aspects of gifts could happen outside the church, however. The reception of the donor and their gift by the abbots and his monks in the community's chapter house was also a well-established practice.³⁵ In the 1030s, Heveus, an archdeacon of the cathedral of Orléans, built a church at La Ferté-Avrain (modern La Ferté-Beauharnais, dep. Loir-et-Cher) to house relics he acquired during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He donated the foundation to Micy (where his uncle was abbot) and had the gift confirmed by the lord of La Ferté-Avrain, Landric, and the bishop of Orléans, Isembard, in the course of the the latter's consecration of the newly-constructed

³¹ Some surviving examples of autograph subscriptions include: AD Loiret H 163, H 172(1)/ARTEM 2796; AD Nièvre H 356-1 no. 2; AD Yonne H 984/ARTEM 720/Cart. Gen. Yon. 45.

³² Marguerite Ragnow, 'Ritual Before the Altar: Legal Satisfaction and Spiritual Reconciliation in Eleventh-Century Anjou' in Joëlle Rollo-Koster (ed.), *Medieval and Early Modern Ritual; Formalized Behavior in Europe, China and Japan* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 57-79, esp. pp. 76-9. Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 25-64 provides a comprehensive overview of how historians have approached these issues in the past few decades, with a full bibliography.

³³ ARTEM 2799; Vierzon 88; St-Sulpice 38, 76; Micy 24, 33; La Charité 34. On this practice more generally, see Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, p. 44; Ragnow, 'Ritual Before the Altar' in Rollo-Koster (ed.) *Medieval and Early Modern Ritual*, pp. 59-63; Emily Zack Tabuteau, *Transfers of Property in Eleventh-Century Norman Law* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988), pp. 119-35.

³⁴ Staffs: St-Sulpice 15; AD Loiret H 163. Knives: La Charité 94; Micy 48. Gemstone: Paris, BNF ms. Lat. 10089, p. 318. Book: Cart. Gen. Yon 11:39; cf. Vierzon 67.

³⁵ St-Sulpice 57; AD Cher 6G 185/ARTEM 4412.

church.³⁶ This example moves the site of the ritual from the church receiving the donation to the donated property itself, which could also occur in the case of more straightforward gifts of land. Abbot Odo of St-Sulpice, along with a retinue of monks and servants, came to the church of St-Jacques at Les Aix-d'Angillon and walked the boundaries of the properties belonging to the church which was to be donated.³⁷ The procession at the site of the donated property was only the first step in a long series of confirmations which took participants from the donated church to the monastery and onwards to the cathedral chapter-house in Bourges. Although detailed descriptions are rare before the year 1000, it can safely be said that such rituals of donation were a key element in allowing religious patronage to be used to make a claim of status, highlighting not only the wealth of the donor (through the disposal of the gift) but also the mutual recognition of the relationship established between the church and the donor.

III

The basic tenor of these rituals of donation does not change throughout the period under examination in this thesis, but what does change is the striking increase in additional participation in the ritual life of the ecclesiastical institutions which donors sought from the tenth century onwards. While most earlier donations were made in the hope of receiving the general spiritual rewards of Christian charity - a hope signalled by the near ubiquitous *pro anima* formula in charters - there is a slow but undeniable growth in donors requesting and receiving a range of specific spiritual counter-gifts from the institutions they patronised.³⁸ These spiritual counter-gifts took four primary forms in the middle Loire valley. The first, and most widespread, was the performance of masses and other religious services specifically intended for the soul of the donor or their kin. The earliest examples of this practice are found in the tenth century and are more specifically requests

³⁶ Micy 25.

³⁷ St-Sulpice 72 (1064).

³⁸ Barbara H. Rosenwein, *To be the neighbor of Saint Peter: The social meaning of Cluny's property, 909-1149*, (Ithaca, NY, 1989), p. 41; Stephen D. White, *Custom, kinship and gifts to saints. The laudatio parentum in western France (1050-1150)*, (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988), pp. 25-39.

for an annual commemoration of the donor on the anniversary of their death.³⁹ When a certain Walter requested that the monks of Micy pray for him in front to the tomb of Saint Maximinus on the day of his death, his charter was later annotated to record that this had come to pass on the 15th March.⁴⁰ Such anniversary services become common requests in the eleventh century and often stipulated that food and drink be provided for the clerics after such services.⁴¹ As with the rituals accompanying the gifts themselves, the liturgical ceremonies granted to donors could vary enormously. The *miles* Suavis specified in detail the psalms which the monks at Micy were to sing for him, his kin and his lord.⁴² Specific numbers of masses could be requested, such as the two hundred requested by Adenordis of Beaugency at Ste-Croix d'Orléans or the thousand masses which the brothers Stephen and Constantius requested the monks of St-Sulpice sing for their deceased brother Aimericus.⁴³ Even where all that was specified was for generic services, prayers or masses, however, it is still clear that it was important for donors that they be singled out in the ritual calendar of the communities they donated to.⁴⁴

The second form of spiritual counter-gift was permission for the donor (or one of their close relatives) to be buried in the church, amongst the clerics or monks.⁴⁵ Although grants of burial can be found in other parts of France as early as the ninth century, the majority of cases from the middle Loire valley date from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when it was the most common spiritual counter-gift after masses and services.⁴⁶ These grants not only guaranteed a plot

³⁹ St-Cyr 44 (928).

⁴⁰ Micy 10 (c. 972). The original charter was extant until the nineteenth century, but survives only in the form of a copy today. The presence of a later interpolation is obvious: '*omni anno in die obitus mei que evenit idus Martii*'.

⁴¹ For example: St-Sulpice 65, 72; St-Cyr 4, 87, 95, 107; Fleury 103/Rec. L VI 19, Fleury 152; St-Etienne Nevers 4; Cart. Gen Yon. 285, II:39; AD Yonne H 1676/Cart. Gen Yon I:168; La Charité 49, 51, 57; Ste-Croix 65.

⁴² Micy 26/ARTEM 4547.

⁴³ Ste-Croix 5; St-Sulpice 4.

⁴⁴ St-Cyr 77; St-Sulpice supp. 4; Micy 27.

⁴⁵ On the burial of the dead in medieval France more generally, see Megan McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints; Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY, 1994), pp. 24-54.

⁴⁶ On early burial grants, see McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, p. 267. Examples of burial grants from the middle Loire valley: Vierzon 67; St-Sulpice 18, 62, 77, suppl. 4; St-Cyr 64, 76; La Charité 49; BNF ms. Lat. 10089, pp. 375-6.

in a certain church's cemetery, but also ensured that the clerics of that institution would take responsibility for the organisation and provision of the funeral.⁴⁷ In Nevers around the year 1060, Raymond Ocellus donated to the canons of the cathedral of St-Cyr de Nevers; his charter goes on to state that in return 'they [the canons] promise to fulfil all the expenses for my funeral when I am dead and to meet me [i.e. Raymond's corpse] with processions.'⁴⁸ Around the same time, a cleric named Stephen obtained burial rights at Vierzon for himself and his two sons – unusually, one of Stephen's sons, Arnald, had already recently died. The promise Stephen received from the monks of Vierzon was that 'when we will have passed from this world, our bodies shall be handed over from whoever possesses them to the oft-mentioned monks [i.e. of Vierzon] to be buried', which would have almost certainly applied to the already-deceased Arnald.⁴⁹ Having just experienced what, one can suppose, was the tragic loss of a son, Stephen reacted by securing for his son, and for himself, a privileged burial amongst the monks. Such burials were clearly a claim to high status, granting the donor an enduring relationship with the church until the end of time, their tomb visible to all those who came after. To be denied an appropriate burial was a deliberate insult, a counter-claim diminishing one's elite status. Bishop Hugh I of Nevers refused burial to Roclenus, *miles* of Druy, due to the latter's pillaging of the cathedral lands at Parigny-les-Vaux and this was enough of a retaliation to bring Roclenus' sons to negotiate a settlement.⁵⁰ Roclenus' case seems exceptional and the surest sign that burial in an important church was a symbol of status is that a high enough status could over-ride any animosity between the institution and the individual. Archembald of Sully had ravaged lands of Fleury, driven by a demonic fury (*daemonicus furor*), and was eventually killed through a miracle of Saint Benedict. Nevertheless, 'however undeserving', he was buried in Benedict's abbey at Fleury, much to the

⁴⁷ See, in addition to the examples below, St-Sulpice 18.

⁴⁸ St-Cyr 94: '*promittentes michi cum mortuus fuero omnes expensam in funere meo se exhibituros et cum processione sua obviam michi se esse processuros*'.

⁴⁹ Vierzon 61: '*cum, a hoc seculo migraverimus, absque ullo habere corpora cujusque nostrorum a sepelictis monachis sepulture tradantur*'.

⁵⁰ St-Cyr 77. The document does not inform us if Roclenus was given a fitting burial once the dispute had been resolved.

disapproval of the hagiographer Andrew of Fleury.⁵¹

A similar long-term (if not eternal) method to become associated with the church's rituals was for the donor, or a family member, to join the clerical community themselves. The earliest example comes from Fleury in the 930s, when Richildis requested that her only living son, a cleric named Pons Augerius, be supported by the monks after her death and be admitted as a monk if he wished to do so.⁵² Like most spiritual counter-gifts, the majority of instances are from the eleventh century onwards.⁵³ The admission of family members of the élite into ecclesiastical orders was a cornerstone of securing long term status for a kin-group. Not only would the clerical member pray on behalf of the rest of his kin, but the ongoing relationship with his lay kin could be the catalyst for continuing patronage and donations, as well as to support younger nephews or other male relatives joining holy orders.⁵⁴ Both Odo Arpinus, the last viscount of Bourges, and William II of Nevers retired to monasteries and élites went to great length to ensure that family members would become monks.⁵⁵ When the unnamed daughter of Nicholas, viscount of Avallon, was given as a nun to the convent of St-Julien, the daughters of two other prominent local families entered the convent at the same time, sharing in the prestige of the sacrament.⁵⁶ In 1108, a man named Everard was granted permission for his son to become a monk of St-Sulpice in return for the customs owed to the church of Neuilly-en-Dun.⁵⁷ He obtained guarantees from the monks, however, that if his son were to die early, his second son could take his place; if both sons died, one of Everard's nephews or other kinsmen would become a monk. It was clearly important to Everard that a family member would become a monk at St-Sulpice, most likely for the prestige and connections such a position would confer. Similar prestige would have come from an association with the

⁵¹ MSB VI.16: *'quamquam immeritus'*.

⁵² Fleury 37.

⁵³ Vierzon 94; St-Sulpice 18, 28, 76, suppl. 1; St-Étienne Nevers 3.

⁵⁴ Bouchard, *Sword, Mitre, Cloister*, pp. 46-86; Julia Barrow, *The Clergy in the Medieval World: Secular Clerics, Their Families and Careers in North-Western Europe, c.800-c.1200* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 115-57.

⁵⁵ La Charité 47; *Origo*.

⁵⁶ AD Yonne H 1689.

⁵⁷ St-Sulpice 28.

charitable activities of the church. While much rarer, there are examples of directions for charity on behalf of the donor, such as the hundred paupers to be fed by the canons of Ste-Croix through the gift of Adenordis of Beaugency.⁵⁸

IV

The fourth and final form of spiritual counter-gift which appears in the middle Loire valley is the concept of *societas*. Often translated in English as ‘confraternity’ or ‘prayer association’, grants of *societas* have received relatively little attention in modern scholarship, with most scholars simply equating the practice with other spiritual counter-gifts, dismissing it as either a hangover from the Carolingian tradition of *libri memoriales* or as a prologue to the urban lay confraternities of the later Middle Ages.⁵⁹ Unlike the other spiritual counter-gifts, they do not appear at all in the Loire valley until the middle of the eleventh century, and appear to have been rare elsewhere in France before this point as well.⁶⁰ It is often difficult to pinpoint exactly what was meant by a grant of *societas*, due in large part to the high degree of variation in the formulae and language used to describe these grants. The word *societas* appears in almost all these grants but is often framed in different ways and included in a wide variety of different formulae.⁶¹ It is frequently

⁵⁸ Ste-Croix 5; see also St-Sulpice 44.

⁵⁹ Ursmer Berlière, ‘Les confraternités monastiques au Moyen-Age’, *Revue liturgique et monastique*, 11 (1925-6), pp. 134-42; Arnoud-Jan A. Bijsterveld, ‘Looking for common ground: From monastic fraternitas to lay confraternity in the southern Low Countries in the tenth to twelfth centuries’ in Emilia Jamrozik and Janet Burton (eds.), *Religious and laity in western Europe 1000-1400: Interaction, negotiation, and power* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 291-3; Nicolaas Huyghebaert, *Les documents nécrologiques* (Turnhout, 1972), pp. 17-25; Rosenwein, *To be the neighbor*, pp. 38-40, 134-9; White, *Custom, Kinship and Gifts*, p. 26. The few scholars who have examined *societas* in its wider social context have tended to see it as a condition imposed upon a reluctant laity by the church: H. B. Teunis, ‘Societas monachorum dans les cartulaires de Marmoutier: Étude sur les rapports entre moines et laïcs,’ in *Les mouvances laïques des ordres religieux: Actes du Troisième colloque international du CERCOR en collaboration avec le Centre international d’études romanes, Tournus, 17-20 juin 1992* (Saint-Etienne, 1996), pp. 241-48; H. E. J. Cowdrey, ‘Unions and confraternity with Cluny’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 16 (1965), pp. 152-62, esp. p. 160, n. 6.

⁶⁰ The earliest mention from the enormous archive at Cluny is from 958: Cluny 1051. This is supported by McLaughlin’s survey of spiritual benefits in five major institutions in France, which finds the number of instances increasing three-fold in after 1050; McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, pp. 84, 267. The earliest securely-dated example from the region is the grant of Vierzon’s *societas* to Gerald of Les Vèvres in 1040: Vierzon 43.

⁶¹ For a rare example of what is clearly a grant of this type but which does not use the word

paired with the word *benefactum* – ‘a share in the [spiritual] benefits’ of the monastery is implied.⁶² The word *participatio* and its derivatives appear often, especially in the years in and around 1100, suggesting an emphasis on the active involvement of the donor in the life of the church.⁶³ There is also an emphasis on the uniqueness of the bond between the donor and the particular church to which they are donating: a grant of the *societas* of ‘this place’ (*huius locus*) is a common phrasing.⁶⁴ Finally, there is an equivalence made between *societas* and *fraternitas* (‘brotherhood’). They were often granted together and appear at times to be synonymous.⁶⁵

It was not common, standardised or normal practice for donors to be received into the church’s *societas*. Even for the largest institutions, grants of *societas* represented moments of special significance in creating a bond between the community of religious and a lay donor.⁶⁶ The reasons for this limited approach can be seen not in the churches who granted them, but in whom they were granted to. Churches granted *societas* almost exclusively to members of the lower lay élites, those below comital rank.⁶⁷ Of these, there are only three cases where the recipient is of unequivocal seigneurial rank – and two of those cases involve the same lord, Gilo of Sully, who received the *societas* of St-Sulpice alongside his mother and brother in 1064, before entrance into the *societas* of St-Gondon-sur-Loire thirty years later.⁶⁸ In the vast majority of cases where donors were granted *societas*, however, there is little which directly identifies them as members of the élite. Their status can only be discerned from the wealth which is revealed by their gifts. Churches and church incomes, as well as seigneurial

societas: AD Cher, 13 H 23 no. 1.

⁶² For example AD Cher, 23 H 1 nos 40, 17/ARTEM 4431. The inclusion of *benefacta* seems in some cases to have been used as a synonym for the wider grant: see for example St-Cyr 94; AD Cher, 23 H 1 no. 40. Cf. White, *Custom, kinship and gifts*, p. 26.

⁶³ For example: AD Cher, 13 H 23 no. 1; AD Cher, 23 H 1 no. 17/ ARTEM 4431.

⁶⁴ For example St-Cyr 7; St-Sulpice 20, 28, 77.

⁶⁵ For example AD Cher, 13 H 23 no. 1.

⁶⁶ The greatest concentration of *societas* grants is at St-Sulpice de Bourges, where a total of seven survive: St-Sulpice 18, 20, 28, 62, 72, 77; AD Cher 4 H 739 no. 1/ARTEM 4422.

⁶⁷ The sole exception is the admission of Count Hugh of Champagne into the *societas* of St-Germain d’Auxerre in 1104: Cart. Gen Yon II:39.

⁶⁸ St-Sulpice 72; St-Gondon 6, 7. The other seigneurial case is that of Hugh of Broys, who obtained the *societas* of La Charité-sur-Loire in 1085: La Charité 94.

consuetudines are a testament to the status of donors, for which the lavish (material) counter-gifts offered by monks and canons in return for these donation, alongside the grant of *societas*, could reach as much as 1,000 *solidii*.⁶⁹ Grants of *societas* were frequently paired with other spiritual counter-gifts, particularly burial rights and the option to retire to the monastery in old age, so it is no surprise that this status would equally be utilised in order to publicly claim one's close relationship with the church.

The frequent occurrence of these spiritual counter-gifts in tandem with grants of *societas* suggests an intellectual and emotional thread which runs through the logic of these grants – that of sharing and participation, which can help illuminate their social dynamics. This should not be at all surprising given the etymological roots of the term from the Latin verb *sociari* – to share. One of the most common features of the language of *societas* grants is an emphasis on the idea that the donor should receive a share in the religious activities of the church to which they are donating. This includes, but is not limited to, prayers, vigils, masses, the distribution of alms and all other good works. In recognition of the donations made by Hugh of Broys, the monks of La-Charité-sur-Loire gave their *societas* ‘as much in prayers as in vigils and alms’ not only to Hugh, but also to all those who accompanied him.⁷⁰ The family of Sarlo the Noble were granted that they ‘should be participants in the prayers and all the *benefacta*, as much temporal as spiritual, of that church [of St-Sulpice]’.⁷¹ There is an explicit transaction at the heart of all of these interactions, an investment in which landed property (or, very often, specific rights over land) is alienated in return for spiritual benefits and a public and enduring connection between the church and the donor. This should not be seen, however, as analogous with modern retail exchanges. The grant of *societas* did not represent a single, discrete transaction, but marked the formation of a visible and long-standing relationship between the donor and the church in

⁶⁹ St-Gondon 6, 7, 14; St-Sulpice 20, 28, 72, 77; Vierzon 54, 61; St-Cyr 71; AD Cher 13H/23, no. 1; AD Cher 23H 1, nos 17, 18/ARTEM 4431, 4439; AD Cher, 4H 739 no. 1/ARTEM 4422.

⁷⁰ La Charité 94: ‘*tam in orationibus quam in vigiliis atque eleemosynis*’.

⁷¹ St-Sulpice 62: ‘*ut [...] oracionum et omnis beneficii ecclesie tam temporalis quam spiritualis essemus participes*’.

question.⁷²

This is made explicitly clear not only in the language of the charters, granting donors the rights of *societas* ‘as much now as in the future’, but also in the carefully managed performance of the grants.⁷³ The elaborate rituals of inducting a donor into a church’s *societas* have already been studied on the basis of Cluniac customs, but the theatrical nature of the relationship is also clear from the charter evidence.⁷⁴ When Hugh of Broyes received the *societas* of La-Charité-sur-Loire, he did so in an elaborate ceremony, arranged by his guardian Stephen-Henry of Blois-Champagne and orchestrated on the ground by Stephen-Henry’s wife, Adela of Blois. In the presence of Adela, Prior Gerard and a host of knights and nobles, Hugh came to La Charité and placed a small black knife upon the altar of the church, symbolising the donation and the bond of *societas* he and his companions were about to receive.⁷⁵ Around a decade later, Sarlo the Noble was received by the monks of St-Sulpice in the chapter house of the monastery, alongside his two sons and his daughters, in order to share the privileges of the abbot and his monks.⁷⁶ Hamelin of Bourges, who was granted the *societas* of Marmoutier in recognition of his donation to the priory of St-Martin-des-Champs, traveled to the roughly 150km from Bourges to the mother house of Marmoutier in order to be received into their *societas* in the chapter house.⁷⁷ Not only were these admittances to *societas* made in semi-public ceremonies, but there is also the suggestion from Cluniac evidence that these ceremonies incorporated an act of inscription into the monastery’s liturgical books, further ensured the enduring bond between the donor and the community.⁷⁸ Explicit requests for

⁷² Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor*, pp. 202-3; McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, p. 153.

⁷³ St-Cyr 94: ‘*tam presentis quam futuri*’.

⁷⁴ Berlière, ‘Les confraternités’, *Revue liturgique et monastique* 11, pp. 136-8; Cowdrey, ‘Unions and confraternity’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 16, pp. 155-7.

⁷⁵ La Charité 94.

⁷⁶ St-Sulpice 62.

⁷⁷ AD Cher 6G 185/ARTEM 4412.

⁷⁸ There is only one explicit example of a request for inscription in martyrologia, with the attendant liturgical memorial made explicit, in the middle Loire valley: AD Cher, 13H 23 no. 1. Cowdrey (working primarily from customaries, rather than documents of practice) believed that the inscription of donors into martyrologia was much more regular than can be supported from the evidence; Cowdrey, ‘Unions and confraternity’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 16, p. 159. There are rare Cluniac examples however, such as Cluny 3737.

commemoration and inscriptions in *martyrologia* (which carried with them the expectation of liturgical commemoration) are not common in surviving charters granting *societas*, but, like grants of burial privileges, they represent the public performance of a bond which was to last forever, uniting the donor with the monks or canons until the end of time. Grants of *societas* can in some ways be seen as a culmination of the performative ritual practices explored in this chapter, further emphasising the importance attached to these grants by both donors and clerics.

It should be apparent from this discussion that grants of *societas* were highly heterogeneous, incorporating aspects of many other common spiritual counter-gifts. Despite the innumerable variations on the theme represented in the surviving charters, there is a simple logic behind virtually every grant of *societas*. It is expressed explicitly in the desire for the lay donor to be seen as a member of the church's clerical community: as Sarlo the Noble expressed, he and his family would be spiritual participants 'as much as one of them', referring to the abbot and the monastic chapter of St-Sulpice who had received them in the chapter-house.⁷⁹ While there are far too many variations within the formulae of the grants to speak of an institution of *societas*, taken together with the widespread uptake in specific spiritual counter-gifts, there is a clear trend that formalised, ritualised, public, significant connections to ecclesiastical communities formed an important part of eleventh-century elite society, which are far less visible in the tenth and completely absent in the ninth. Elites increasingly valued long-term associations and *familiaritas* with religious institutions in addition to the one-off rituals which had accompanied gifts of property since the Carolingian period.⁸⁰ The fact that the creation of such relationships was centred on property supplies the key to understanding the growth of these types of ritual. As local, smaller-scale elites gained increasing access to wealth, through their integration into chains of hierarchical tenure or through their control of seigneurial revenues, the 'market' for ecclesiastical patronage became increasingly saturated, a fact apparent by the

⁷⁹ St-Sulpice 77: '*tanquam unus ex ipsis*'.

⁸⁰ McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, pp. 153-65. As McLaughlin puts it: '[N]obles enjoyed liturgical privileges which emphasized their ties with the religious community. They were buried in the cemetery of the house. They 'participated' in its prayers and good works.'; *ibid*, p. 164.

widely-acknowledged spike in donations to monasteries in the early eleventh century. The rituals involved in the donations of property became less useful as a means of claiming élite status as more and more local élites gained access to them. Moreover, the long-term benefits of donations of property, through which the church and the donor became enmeshed in an ongoing network of property claimants, became less apparent, as monastic reformers sought to bring all donated property under the exclusive control of the church.⁸¹ Under these conditions, the surge in the popularity of spiritual counter-gifts is perfectly understandable, as élites sought to make themselves stand out and to claim a higher social status through establishing a 'special' relationship with their local churches. This was done by 'investing' their new-found wealth in the ecclesiastical sphere, leveraging their properties for social and spiritual gain. These were not *quid pro quo* transactions, a commercialised exchange of specific land or revenues for specific services or prayers, but a generous way of establishing lasting relationships based on values.⁸² These were mutually beneficial relationships, helping donors to claim an elevated social standing in a local society where increased wealth had created fierce competition for status, as well as providing churches with influential patrons, which raised the institutional status of the community, as well as the individual status of its leaders. This latter point is vital, because it is precisely in the midst of this era that the competition for status can be seen in the ecclesiastical sphere as well.

V

Alongside ritual being used to formulate bonds between the laity and the church, from the last third of the eleventh century there are frequent references to

⁸¹ Cf. Above, Chap. II. On the ways in which donated property untied church and donor through overlapping property claims, often for generations, see Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor*. See also C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (Harlow, 3rd ed., 2001), pp. 129-30; Dominique Barthélemy, *Les Deux Ages de la Seigneurie Banale. Pouvoir et Société dans la Terre des Sires de Coucy (milieu XIe – milieu XIIIe siècle)* (Paris, 1984), p. 158; Florian Mazel, 'Seigneurs, moines et chanoines : pouvoir local et enjeux ecclésiaux à Fougères à l'époque grégorienne (milieu XIe-milieu XXe siècle)', *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest*, 113 (2006), pp. 119-32.

⁸² McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, pp. 138-53, 175-7.

churches and monasteries in conflict and in competition with each other, increasingly utilising performative rituals to entrench their position in local society. In many instances these types of disputes were economically focused, rooted in conflict over access to resources or the right to extract revenues, ecclesiastical or otherwise. While violence increasingly played a part in the disputing strategies of lay élites, men of the cloth were forced to seek agreement and compromise, in which ritual performances played an important part in communicating the resolution of the dispute to the community.⁸³ In 1139, a dispute between the monks of La Charité-sur-Loire and the canons of St-Satur-sous-Sancerre over the usage of woodland and the revenues from pasturage and tithes was resolved through the arbitration of Abbot Peter the Venerable of Cluny, who appointed ‘five wise men’ (*quinque viri sapientes*) to broker a compromise - these included the bishops of Tusculum, Le Mans and Périgueux and the archbishop of Bordeaux in what was clearly an important ecclesiastical forum.⁸⁴ After agreement had been reached, the decision was formally ratified by the chapters of both houses, before a chirograph was drawn up to which the seals of both houses were attached.⁸⁵ Although there is no evidence of a similar level of arbitration, a dispute between Micy and St-Euvert d’Orléans in 1150 was concluded in a similar way; a public ratification in Micy’s chapter house, in which the abbot’s seal was affixed to the chirograph, and to which St-Euvert’s seal was later added.⁸⁶ The Cistercian abbey of Pontigny resolved numerous disputes with neighbouring monasteries in this way, using arbitration (involving neutral arbiters such as local abbots and bishops) before ratification of the agreement by in a public setting by the entire chapter or its representatives. The issues involved ranged from possession of lands and revenues (*censum*) to the boundaries between the grazing lands for the sheep and cattle of the respective houses, which were resolved *in situ*, with representatives of both the monastic leadership and its workforce (that is, a

⁸³ On violence as a characteristic of lay élites in this period, see below, Chap. V.

⁸⁴ AD Cher 13 H 74, nos. 3, 4/La Charité 82, 83.

⁸⁵ St-Satur’s portion of the chirograph survives, with the two slits where the seals were attached clearly visible: AD Cher 13 H 74, no. 4.

⁸⁶ AD Loiret H 7.

representative of the Cistercian *conversi* who worked the land).⁸⁷ *Concordia* of a similar nature were also used frequently in the early twelfth century to settle disputes between churches over the distribution of tithed revenues.⁸⁸

Although the numerical majority of surviving examples of performative rituals being used to resolve disputes between churches centre on economic issues, the most spectacular and theatrical examples concern the hierarchy of the church itself, as individual houses (and, by extension, the clerics who populated them) sought to claim higher status by publicly establishing their superiority over lesser churches. The submission of the canons of St-Satur-sour-Sancerre to the chapter of St-Étienne, the local cathedral in Bourges, is a case in point. Ever since its foundation in 1034, the canons of St-Satur had theoretically been under the protection of the chapter of St-Étienne, as its founders - Odo II of Blois-Champagne and Matilda, daughter of Gimo of Sancerre - had placed it in the power of Archbishop Aimo of Bourges.⁸⁹ In recognition of this subservience, the canons were to come in procession to Bourges annually, on the feast of the invention of Saint Stephen (3rd August), and to pay two pounds of incense. Over a century later, in 1139, Abbot Raoul of St-Satur sought to mitigate this burden and appealed to Archbishop Albericus. Albericus negotiated an accord between the two parties, whereby the canons of St-Satur would no longer be required to process to the cathedral, although they would still be required to render the tribute of incense, to which an additional twenty *solidii* was added in compensation for the lack of procession. Much like the resolutions of economic disputes, this agreement was publicly proclaimed in the chapter-house in Bourges, before the seals of both congregations were added to the archbishop's on the chirograph.⁹⁰ Six years later, the canons of St-Étienne balanced the economic scales slightly, by granting the brothers of St-Satur an annual payment of grain from certain estates. In return, however, the symbolic superiority of the cathedral was to re-enforced and the canons of St-Satur committed to send a representative to the cathedral weekly,

⁸⁷ AD Yonne H 1409/Pontigny 62/Cart. Gen Yon I:260; AD Yonne H 1457/Pontigny 102/Cart. Gen Yon I:170; Pontigny 45/Cart. Gen Yon I:264.

⁸⁸ For example AD Cher B H 88, no. 18; AD Loiret G 42/Ste-Croix 68/ARTEM 4535.

⁸⁹ ARTEM 4414.

⁹⁰ AD Cher B H 8, no. 1/BNF ms. Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1274, fol. 47v.

and on designated feast days, to sing services and public masses at the altar of St-Étienne.⁹¹ Once again, this agreement was ratified in both chapters and their seals were attached.

While the key element of this performance was to underscore the superiority of St-Étienne, the fact that this superiority could be expressed through a material payment should also be noted. The canons of St-Satur clearly thought it worthwhile in 1139 to pay more in order to have their ritual obligations reduced, while in 1145 the chapter at St-Étienne were willing to sacrifice materially in order to have their spiritual dominance confirmed ritually. This willingness to concede materially in order to have an institutions' status publicly confirmed can be seen from other contemporary disputes, such as between St-Étienne and the church of St-Ambroix de Bourges over certain parishes in the city, which saw the cathedral canons cede lands and tithes in return for a set annual payment made publicly at one of the church's great festivals, that of Saint Stephen at Christmas (26th December).⁹² The monks of Micy did similarly in 1101, agreeing to share the revenues from their lands and mill at their priory of St-Marcellus near Orléans, as well as their prebend at St-Liphard de Meung, with the monks of Bourgueil (dep. Indre-et-Loire). In return, however, Bourgueil accepted Micy's legitimate ownership of St-Marcellus (which had been contested in the past) and, in the thirty days following the ratification of the agreement in the chapter of Bourgueil, agreed to perform seven services and seven masses on behalf of the monks of Micy and their abbot.⁹³

Perhaps the best illustration of these trends is the dispute which raged between Vierzon and the abbey of St-Florent de Saumur (dep. Maine-et-Loire) over the small priory of St-Gondon-sur-Loire. Initially donated to Vierzon by Stephen, viscount of Bourges, and Gilo of Sully in 1092, St-Florent soon disputed this possession and an agreement was reached in early 1095. Vierzon would retain control of the priory but was to recognise St-Florent's ultimate superiority through

⁹¹ BNF ms Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1274, fol. 234v.

⁹² BNF ms. Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1274, fol. 48r.

⁹³ Micy 40. On the previous conflict over St-Marcellus, which had (like many of the disputes discussed above) been arbitrated by local bishops, see Micy 30.

the payment of two ounces of gold at the altar of St-Florent on the saint's feast-day (2nd May).⁹⁴ The monks of St-Florent placed great importance on this payment, beyond its material value, including specifying that if those sent with the tribute were robbed of the gold on their journey, they would still be required to present themselves at Saumur (and would be given time to find more tribute).⁹⁵ Vierzon evidently never intended to make the payment, however, and so the monks of St-Florent set about securing St-Gondon for themselves, primarily by convincing Gilo of Sully, who had donated St-Gondon to Vierzon only a few years beforehand, to transfer the priory into their possession. He did so and made an oath to uphold St-Florent's rights for his lifetime, but his consent to this new donation did not come cheaply: the monks of St-Florent made Gilo a counter-gift of 1000 *solidii* (although he returned 100 of them), as well as granting him St-Gondon's *societas* and the right to retire there as a monk.⁹⁶ Although Vierzon tried to bring a claim against St-Florent at the archiepiscopal court of Bourges, their representatives did not arrive on the appointed day and the archbishop confirmed St-Florent's control of the priory.⁹⁷ Apparently still not secure, St-Florent continued over the next few years to obtain confirmations for St-Gondon from Gilo's overlord and heir, Stephen-Henry, Count of Blois-Champagne, from the countess of Blois Adela (after Stephen had departed on Crusade), from the papal legate Richard of Albano and finally from Rome itself.⁹⁸

The increasing wealth available to élites in the middle Loire valley from the eleventh century onwards provided both the means for increased competition between élites, which we have seen resulted in increasing use of ecclesiastical ritual by a laity seeking to legitimise its status through patronage of the church. But that same wealth was also the object over which élites competed and the symbolic language of ritual and performance allowed for this competition to be articulated, particularly for churchmen. In the vast majority of cases which survive, these disputes were resolved by compromise, with the resulting hierarchy

⁹⁴ Vierzon 64, 66/St-Gondon 4.

⁹⁵ Vierzon 66/St-Gondon 4.

⁹⁶ St-Gondon 6, 7.

⁹⁷ St-Gondon 9.

⁹⁸ St-Gondon 8, 10, 11, 12.

performatively demonstrated by the rituals conducted in the processes of arbitration, ratification and (in some cases) submission. It is in cases in which the rituals failed - such as Vierzon's failure to render tribute to St-Florent de Saumur or St-Étienne de Nevers' failure to accord a leading role to Hugh II's successors as bishop - that we see the competitive edge between ecclesiastical élites emerge. Competition and rivalry between churches was not new in the eleventh century, by any means, even competition of economic resources.⁹⁹ Nor was the use of ritual in an ecclesiastical setting, as we have seen. The key difference from roughly the end of the eleventh century (but much earlier for the laity) was that church leaders were willing to use these rituals, occasionally in quite innovative ways, in order to claim and project their higher status in an as-yet-unfixed ecclesiastical hierarchy - and they were unafraid to mobilise considerable economic resources in order to do it. Even the failures of ritualised compromise between churches were ultimately settled with a further ritual performance, whether it be Prior Roger's penance in the cathedral of Nevers or Gilo of Sully's oath to uphold Saumur's claims to St-Gondon. By 1150 significant amounts of material wealth were being leveraged in order to participate in ecclesiastical ritual as a way to claim status amongst the élite, both lay and ecclesiastical. Whether or not disputes or competition over economic resources or wealth were the motivations behind such rituals does not matter so much as the fact that the increased wealth of the first period of the second millennium allowed élites to participate to a greater degree, and in more elaborate ways, than ever before.

⁹⁹ See, for example, *MSB* I:20, p. 47; *GPA* pp. 192-3.

Chapter V

Rhetoric and Force:

Status Through Violence

If donations, patronage and religious ritual were the actions which bound together the worlds of the ecclesiastical and secular élite, then violence was, ostensibly, the issue which divided it. Clerics were, in theory, the peaceful pillar of society, wielding the spiritual powers of censure and anathema to chastise society into righteous behaviour, while violence was the last resort of the king and his men, supporting the church with their temporal swords.¹ The reality was undoubtedly different, and much more complex, as numerous examples of clerics with military retinues and aggressive political ambitions demonstrate.² Understanding the role played by violence, therefore - and, more broadly, military activity - in the society of the middle Loire valley in this period is vital in order to fully understand the complex relationship between the aristocracy and the clergy. What is striking is that clerics throughout the period painted, in varying degrees of despair, a horrific picture of aristocratic warfare. Common themes in these clerical writings include the degeneration of social norms, the pillaging of church property and the construction of castles from which to dominate the countryside. It is the aim of this chapter to investigate in detail the reality which lay behind this widespread ecclesiastical rhetoric, to understand exactly how inherent violence was to medieval society in the Loire valley and how the experience of violence changed during the period between the middle of the ninth century and the middle of the twelfth century. Understanding the perceived reality, legitimacy and morality of medieval violence is the key to appreciating its role in the creation and maintenance of élite identity and status.

¹ Jean Flori, *L'idéologie du glaive ; Préhistoire de la chevalerie* (Geneva, 1983), pp. 9-28.

² In addition to those discussed below, the case of Bishop Heribert I of Auxerre (r. 972-97) stands out. His reign was notable, according to his mid-eleventh century biographer, for the devotion of much of the dioceses' patrimony to benefices for Heribert's knights and the construction of castles: *GPA*, pp. 234-5. See also, Janet L. Nelson, 'The Church's Military Service in the Ninth Century: A Contemporary Comparative View?', *Studies in Church History* 20 (1983), pp. 15-30; reprinted in eadem, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986), pp. 117-32.

Surveying the varied territories united by the Carolingian empire in the ninth century, Chris Wickham concluded that one of the defining features ‘common to all these societies [...] is violence’: interpersonal violence, feuds, violence over land disputes, and violence between classes.³ During the tenth century a concern over this type of endemic, destructive violence began to emerge in the minds and writings of the clerical authors to whom we owe the bulk of our knowledge of the period. As early as 893 the council of Metz declared that it had been convened ‘to seek out the piety of Christ, which keeps pagans at bay, and to set out the law of God, which holds back the cruellest men of our people (*nostrae gentis*) from the devastation of the poor (*a vastatione pauperum*)’; the implication was that before the council met, Christ’s piety and God’s law had been absent in the region.⁴ Indeed, we are told that all of those attending had been overrun by Vikings and worn down on all sides by ‘perverse Christians’.⁵ This began a trend of tenth-century clerics projecting in writing an image of a society perpetually upon the edge of collapse, which could (naturally) be saved only by repenting for its sins and turning back towards God and the church. In the 920s Abbo of St-Germain bemoaned a ‘world which is always in commotion and conturbation [...] and in which no-one can live in peace’.⁶ Although certainly writing within a Carolingian intellectual framework, the world Abbo presents is a very different one from that imagined in the ninth century, one rife with civil wars that had brought the kingdom to the edge of collapse. At its most fundamental level a result of the sins of the Christian population, the kingdom’s peril was both material and spiritual.⁷ The concerns of Abbo and of the clerics at Metz may not have been a direct reflection of their immediate reality, for they were writing with specific moralizing agendas and employing well-worn tropes, but their choice of language and imagery represented a new concern with violence and disorder among the clerics of

³ Chris Wickham, ‘Rural Society in Carolingian Europe’, in Rosamund McKitterick (ed.), *New Cambridge Medieval History*, II (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 533-5; quote at p. 533.

⁴ Mansi, XVIII, p. 77, canon I. On the dating of this council, see Carlo De Clercq, *La législation religieuse franque, II: De Louis le Pieux à la fin du IXe siècle* (Antwerp, 1958), pp. 337-8, quoted in Giles Constable, *Monastic Tithes from their Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1964), at p. 41, n.4.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Abbo, *Sermones*, p. 88.

⁷ Charles West, ‘«Fratres, omni dies videtis cum vadit istud regnum in perdicionem»: Abbo of Saint-Germain and the Crisis of 888’, *Reti Medievali Rivista* 17, 2 (2016), pp. 1-17.

West Francia in the tenth century.⁸ The contrast with writers from the reign of Charles the Bald, such as Hincmar of Reims – whose moralising was based on corruption and abuse, rather than violence and destruction – could not be more stark.⁹

These anxieties appear to have extended beyond the learned clergy, into local populations which were well aware of the political turmoil engulfing their society's leaders. Flodoard of Reims recorded seventeen visions experienced over a period in 940 and 941 by a confidante of his, a poor girl by the name of Flothilde from a nearby village.¹⁰ These visions began quite simply, with Flothilde flying through the heavens and encountering Mary, St Peter and Christ. They soon turn to more political matters, however, as the visions began to interact with the real world: Flothilde saw herself chased by knights, threatened by demons and remonstrated to by the saints for the state of the kingdom, and, more specifically, the state of the church of Reims, which had for decades been the centre of a protracted conflict.¹¹ It is highly likely that Flothilde was guided in her visions by Flodoard, probing and asking questions which reflected his own concerns, but the end result of their combined voices is a worldview which saw a kingdom and a church in disorder, corruption and turmoil, where the king was powerless and where only recourse to divine intervention, and in particular the power of the saints, could offer hope of change.¹² Once again, there is a stark contrast from similar ninth-century texts; when Einhard recorded miracles and visions, the social problems were of pride, injustice and greed, and the solution was a divinely inspired set of *capitula* sent to the Emperor.¹³

No similar text survives for the Middle Loire valley region from the tenth

⁸ The language, in particular, is consistent with conciliar decrees and denunciations of despoilers of church property from the sixth century onwards: see Elisabeth Magnou-Nortier, 'The Enemies of the Peace: Reflections on a Vocabulary, 500-1100' in Thomas Head and Richard Landes (eds.), *The Peace of God; Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca, NY, 1992), pp. 58-79.

⁹ Charles West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution; Political and Social Transformation between Marne and Moselle, c. 800 – c. 1100* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 60-1.

¹⁰ Flodoard, *Visiones*. Flodoard also notes the existence of two other young contemporary visionary nuns in his works; Geoffrey Koziol, 'Flothilde's visions and Flodoard's histories: a tenth-century mutation?' *Early Medieval Europe* 24 (2016), p. 169.

¹¹ Koziol, 'Flothilde and Flodoard', pp. 165-8. For a conflict over the see of Reims in the early tenth century: *ibid.* pp. 164-5 and the bibliography at p. 164, n. 18.

¹² *Ibid.* pp. 183-4.

¹³ Einhard, *Translatio*, III.13-14, pp. 252-4; trans. Dutton, pp. 101-5.

century, but the area suffered similarly during the civil wars and disruption which convulsed post-Carolingian West Francia. Although the region was raided numerous times by Vikings sailing up the Loire, the primary conflict seems to have been an ongoing dispute between the dukes of Aquitaine and Burgundy (who were, after the accession of King Raoul in 923, closely associated both with the crown and with the Robertian dynasty in Neustria) for control of the area around Nevers, as part of the solidifying boundaries of the newly-autonomous hereditary duchies.¹⁴ The result was frequent, small-scale warfare, interspersed with occasional short-lived truces, as castles and settlements were invaded, occupied, re-captured and burnt by both sides, well into the 950s.¹⁵ Major violence and warfare continued at intervals until the twelfth century: the Burgundian civil war, Archbishop Aimoin of Bourges' conflicts with the lords of Déols and Robert II's wars with Odo II of Blois in the early eleventh century; the conflicts of the counts of Nevers with their neighbours to the east and west in the later eleventh century; and Louis VI's military interventions around Orléans, the Gâtinais and Berry in the early twelfth century.¹⁶ Were the same anxieties felt by Flothilde and by Abbo applicable in the Loire valley? Perhaps these anxieties were not as keenly felt, but the region would certainly have been just as open to the type of tenth-century rhetoric found further north. More important, however, is to ask whether those anxieties were representative of a wider shift in the conception of violence in medieval society. How did this anxiety on the part of clerical writers develop during this time of frequent warfare and how did that impact elite society at large?

What is striking is that the *mutationiste* paradigm, the prevailing historiographical interpretation of the period up to the 1990s, is completely unsuited to answering these questions. In the minds of Duby and his successors, the civil wars which eventually led to the fall of the Carolingian dynasty were significant only

¹⁴ For Viking raids, see *GPA*, pp. 194-7.

¹⁵ Flodoard, *Annales*, s.a. 924, 935; 'Annales Nivernensis', MGH SS XIII, s.a. 953, 958, 959, p. 91.

¹⁶ Burgundian civil war and Robert II's wars: *RG* II.15-16, pp. 78-81; Aimoin of Bourges: *MSB* V.1-4. Counts of Nevers: *Origo*, p. 238, trans. Scott and Ward, p. 95, *Epistolae Hugonis Diensis Episcopi*, in Michel-Jean-Joseph Brial (ed.), *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, XIV (Paris, 1877), p. 782; *MSB*, V.15, pp. 212-13; Louis VI: Suger, *VLG*, cc. 6, 25, ed. Waquet, pp. 28-9, 180-3, trans. Cusimano and Moorhead pp. 36, 109-10.

politically, in the lessening power of the king and the increased autonomy of nominal public office-holders, such as counts. The real social change came later, starting in the 980s, with the emergence of violent, castle-based *seigneuries banales*.¹⁷ And yet here it can be seen that there existed a very concrete sense of violent disruption in the minds of some tenth-century writers. This suggests that the *mutationiste* view of violence as a catalyst for social change, rather than as a constant in élite social relations, is flawed. As such, this section will try to put forward a more complex scenario, in which the meaning and use of violence, both in reality and in rhetoric, was profoundly transformed between the Carolingian world in the ninth century and the world of knights and reformers in the eleventh. This more nuanced approach will not only explain the rhetorical anxiety which is present across West Francia in the tenth century, but will also elucidate how violent behaviour became a key strategy in the practice of élite relationships.

I

What do we mean when we talk about violence? Medieval violence has long been an object of study for scholars, but the word is broad, encompassing a wide range of behaviours including personal feuds and vendettas, arson and other violence against property, murder and mutilation (either for personal or political reasons), skirmishing and plundering, large-scale warfare, and even ritualised and psychological violence.¹⁸ The consequences of violence could vary equally, from personal injury and loss of life, property or honour to fundamental reshaping of the political landscape. It is, therefore, vital to establish a framework with which to approach violence in the Loire valley of the central Middle Ages and to define clearly the intellectual categories which can be used to analyse its role in society.

¹⁷ Of course, in the past few decades this view has been rejected by historians such as Dominique Barthélemy, who would place a much greater emphasis on change throughout the tenth century and who has made similar observations to those in the preceding paragraphs: Barthélemy, *Serf, Knight, Historian*, pp. 10-11; see also *idem*, *Chevaliers et miracles*, esp. pp. 9-72.

¹⁸ For a broad overview of historians' approaches to violence, see Guy Halsall, 'Violence and society in the early medieval west: an introductory survey' in *idem* (ed.), *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 1-45.

One approach which must be immediately ruled out is an attempt to understand violence by measuring it on a quantitative level. Even ignoring the difficulties which quantitative measures introduce in distinguishing between various types of violence, the source materials simply do not exist to allow any such measures to be used, given that both our narrative sources and the surviving documentary sources are for the most part carefully curated selections made by clerics. The authors had agendas and goals in mind other than providing a representative sample of violent incidents. The focus must be placed not on how violent medieval French society was, but in what ways violence was used and perceived in that society, and how this changed through time.¹⁹ This involves attempting to pin down the social norms of violence - the ways in which contemporaries expected and accepted that violence could be used - by analysing each particular violent incident present in the sources within its unique social context.²⁰

The interpretation of violence and the drawing out of norms must be done with care, not only because of the wide variety of language and vocabulary which is used by medieval writers to discuss or imply violence, but also because of the role of the observer, through whose eyes we must by necessity view the violence, even though the observer themselves might be party to it, either as perpetrator or as victim.²¹ Studied from a historical perspective, violence is always an act of interpretation, since as historians we are reliant on the sources portraying an event as violent or not; there is no way to decide or evaluate the violent nature of an event independently.²² Deciding on the perceived legitimacy of violence is a fraught task since virtually all of our accounts of violence in the middle Loire valley come from ecclesiastical sources, who, if not directly involved in violent disputes, certainly had a moralising stance regarding its use. For an author who is party to a violent dispute, say a scribe drawing up a charter over a property dispute, any violence on the part of the opposing party, such as the forcible seizure of the disputed property, might be portrayed as

¹⁹ On the difficulties of quantitative measures and the imperative for an interpretive approach to medieval violence, see Warren C. Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe* (Harlow, 2011), pp. 3-5.

²⁰ For the concept of norms of violence, see Brown, *Violence*, pp. 8-15.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 7.

²² William Ian Miller, *Humiliation and Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence* (Ithaca, NY, 1993), pp. 57-9.

illegitimate, when it may well have been a perfectly normal and rational action on the part of the scribe's opponent.²³

Careful interpretation of violence is vital, but many of the most common analytical categories used in modern discussions of violence are distinctly unsuitable for the medieval context. Distinctions between 'public' and 'private violence' are inherently unhelpful in a society where the state had little or no accepted monopoly on legitimate violence.²⁴ Drawing a line between criminality and warfare raises similar problems – they are historically-contingent interpretative distinctions, based on the perceived legitimacy of the action. If organised bands of soldiers seize property from a church *contra jus* or *injuste*, should this be seen a legitimate act of war or the actions of organised criminals?²⁵ As a result, most of the violence in medieval France (and medieval Europe more broadly) has been studied through the lens of 'feud', with an anthropological understanding of the term carrying a large influence.²⁶ 'Feud' is also a loaded term, however, without a widely agreed-upon definition and despite attempts by theorists to broaden its meaning, it is still largely used to describe vendettas: tit-for-tat bouts of violence usually stemming from a homicide, in pursuit of vengeance.²⁷ Although not unheard of, this specific form of violence was relatively rare in the Loire valley, and so the lens of feud is less useful when trying to study the meaning of violence more broadly.

In categorising the violence recorded in the medieval sources then, inferential categories – based on context and results and drawn from the sources, rather than

²³ On the complex relationship between roles of perpetrator, victim and observer of violence: Miller, *Humiliation and Other Essays*, pp. 55-60; Brown, *Violence*, pp. 7-8. For an astute study of the role of violence within the context of disputes, see Chris Wickham, *Courts and Conflict in Twelfth-Century Tuscany* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 142-55, 210-22, 300-8.

²⁴ Barthélemy, 'La Mutation Féodale', *Annales HSS* 47, pp. 767-77; White, 'Debate: The "Feudal Revolution" II', *P&P* 152 (1996), pp. 205-223, esp. p. 222; Halsall, 'Violence and Society', in idem (ed.), *Violence and Society*, pp. 10, 29; Brown, *Violence*, pp. 20-2. Tom Lambert argues convincingly that prohibiting or limiting violence entirely was never the aim of the early medieval state (or of its kings); Tom Lambert, *Land and Order in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 1-7, 56-7, 224-37.

²⁵ Halsall, 'Violence and Society' in idem (ed.), *Violence and Society*, p. 10.

²⁶ Howard Kaminski, 'The Noble Feud in the Later Middle Ages', *Past & Present* 176 (2002), pp. 55-65; Stephen D. White, 'Feuding and peace-making in the Touraine around the year 1100', *Traditio* 42 (1986), pp. 195-263, reprinted in Idem, *Feuding and Peace-Making*; Lambert, *Law and Order*, pp. 1-7.

²⁷ White, 'Feuding and peace-making', *Traditio* 42, pp. 195-206.

imposed on them - may provide us with a clearer understanding. This approach relies on conceiving of violence as a dialogue rather than a single act committed in a vacuum. The act of violence is part of an ongoing relationship and dispute between the actors; the violence is an attempt to, directly or indirectly, bring that dispute to an end.²⁸ Wickham and Halsall suggest a helpful categorisation of violence based on the aims and outcomes of the act. Tactical violence is aimed at directly resolving a dispute, through murdering a rival, for example, or defeating an opposing army. Strategic violence, on the other hand, aims to resolve the dispute indirectly, by calling attention towards it and by attempting to coerce the opposing parties into submission, arbitration or compromise.²⁹ Examples could include attacking property or dependants, a common strategy in disputes with ecclesiastical institutions where direct attacks on clerics were socially unacceptable. Strategic violence could often be highly ritualistic and involve very little permanent injury or damage.³⁰

Rather than applying these categories of strategic and tactical violence in a context of public or private defined by the state, this chapter will instead consider them in the context of internal and external violence.³¹ Internal violence, that is violence committed *within* a particular polity, community or society provides a chance to explore the dynamics through which ecclesiastical and lay élites interacted throughout the central Middle Ages, and the extent to which that dynamic was focused on the performance of violence. Whether violence is internal is, of course, just as much an interpretive act on the part of the author of the source as the legitimacy of the violence. External violence, such as invasion or rebellion on a kingdom-wide level, contributes little to an understanding of the aforementioned relationships, but instead allows medieval authors to distance themselves and their society rhetorically from disorder or injustice. It serves, as we shall see, as a distinct mode of comment on higher level relationships between royalty and aristocracy which form the basis of kingdom-wide politics and warfare, as well as a useful analytical

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 11-12, 16-17.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 18-19.

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 32-5.

³¹ For 'internal' and 'external' contexts for violence: Halsall, 'Violence and Society' in idem (ed.), *Violence and Society*, p. 29.

contrast to more localised, small-scale disputes.

II

Let us consider firstly how violence was perceived and portrayed in the late Carolingian period, to establish a baseline for changes in later centuries. The most vivid illustrative examples of how violence was perceived by ecclesiastical authors before the year 1000 in the Loire valley is found in the narrative sources. Of particular interest is the first book of the *Miracula Sancti Benedicti*, written by the monk Adrevald at Fleury before c. 870, and the anonymously-authored entry on Bishop Gerannus of Auxerre (910-14) in the first continuation of the *Gesta Pontificum Autissidorensis*, written in the city c. 944. A first point to note is that the apocalyptic tone of Flothilde's visions and Abbo's sermons is not present, even in the life of Gerannus, which is contemporary or later than those texts. Furthermore, neither Adrevald nor the anonymous episcopal biographer portrays local aristocracies as violent in character, or as committing illegitimate violence against the church. This is all the more surprising since there are plenty of aristocrats who attempted to exercise illegitimate control over the church in these narratives, and there is a clear agenda in both texts to legitimise the temporal possessions of the church and to warn against lay interference or control.

Adrevald's book of miracles provides an excellent example. A clear theme in his writing is to insist that Saint Benedict's (i.e. Fleury's) property and *familia* (the monks, servants, followers, tenants, serfs etc.) were sacrosanct and protected through the divine patronage of the saint.³² There is an obvious concern for the church's property in the narrative and the integrity of the church's temporal property was a key concern for the monastery's leadership, but it is interesting that Adrevald never connected any attempt to alienate permanently Fleury's property with violence. When violence appeared in the narrative, it was always external to Fleury's disputes with its neighbours and took place in the context of what might be called 'normal'

³² Barbara H. Rosenwein, Thomas Head and Sharon Farmer, 'Monks and their Enemies: A Comparative Approach', *Speculum*, 66 (1991), pp. 778-9; Barthelémy, *Chevaliers et miracles*, p. 130.

warfare. Adrevald described the sins which take place when an area is subjected to an army (*exercitus*): ‘the plundering of the poor, the dishonouring of good men, the violation of sacred places and the rest of the evils which are too disgusting too enumerate’.³³ He went on to describe a miracle in which soldiers from the armies of the Emperor Louis the Pious, on an expedition against his sons in Aquitaine, tried to steal from the cowherds of the monastery. The soldier who led the thieves was paralysed by the saint the moment he laid hands upon the first cow, leading the rest of his comrades-in-arms to come penitent to Benedict’s church in an effort to appease the violated patron.³⁴ While there is undoubtedly disapproval of the plundering and harrying of the countryside which was the reality of medieval warfare, there is also a tacit acceptance of it; the message seems only to be that church property was off-limits in such circumstances.³⁵ There is also a sense that violence and warfare are external problems – the soldiers who tried to plunder the monastery’s cattle were Germans (*transrhenani*) and the other major instances of violence in Adrevald’s work were perpetrated by Vikings raiders and by Burgundians.³⁶

The latter example, which involved Burgundian soldiers attempting to attack Fleury’s lands, is particularly interesting because it also deals with the monks’ relationships with their local aristocratic enemies and it is *through* the external violence of the Burgundian army that the violator of the monastery is brought (miraculously) to justice. It is an incident worth examining in detail, since it illuminates quite clearly not only how Adrevald perceived violence against the monastery, but also his concerns over non-violent intrusions into monastic control by ambitious laymen.

The layman in this particular case was Count Odo of Orléans, who was appointed to the office in 828, in the lead-up to the tumultuous civil wars between Louis the Pious and his sons in the 830s.³⁷ Odo quickly began to seize control of all

³³ *MSB*, I.27, pp. 61.

³⁴ *MSB*, I.27, pp. 62-3.

³⁵ Large monasteries were, however, expected to provide resources for royal armies as part of their general obligations towards the Carolingian kings: Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450-900* (London, 2003), p. 150.

³⁶ *MSB*, I.41, pp. 86-9; *MSB*, I. 20-1, pp. 47-51.

³⁷ *MSB* I.20-1, pp. 47-51.

the property of the church in the diocese of Orléans, despite the entreaties and embassies of both the bishop and the monks at Fleury, who staged a dramatic appeal to the count, bringing several of the monastery's relics in procession before him, to no avail.³⁸ Furthermore, Odo came into conflict with a man named Matfrid (who had been Odo's predecessor as count and who had defected to the future-Emperor Lothar I) during the uprising against Louis.³⁹ Odo demanded the support of Bishop Jonas of Orléans and Abbot Boso of Fleury in his war, and they were obliged to provide it, which endangered the *familia* of Saint Benedict by dragging them into their oppressor's conflict.⁴⁰ Adrevald described in detail the efforts of Abbot Boso to ferry the abbey's tenants and moveable property across the Loire and out of the path of Matfrid's Burgundian troops. He revealed that his source for this account was the priest who had led the evacuation effort, a man named Hermenbald. After three days and nights, Hermenbald, eventually confronted in a vision by Saint Benedict, despairingly asked the saint why he had allowed his flock to have such evil brought down on them by this 'nefarious' man. The man in question was Odo, who was ostensibly Fleury's ally in this war, not Matfrid who had sent the troops. Two evils had been inflicted upon the monastery, the loss of control of its property and the violence against its *familia*, and both were blamed on Odo, although he was only directly involved in one of them. The affair came to a satisfactory conclusion however. Benedict assured Hermenbald that he would deal with Odo within the week if the monks remained faithful in their discipline and adherence to the Rule; sure enough, the count was killed in battle by his enemies seven days later.

As we can see from this example, Adrevald regarded the violence to which his monastery was subjected as an inevitable result of the civil wars and invasions which

³⁸ In doing so, Odo may have been attempting to keep control of regional churches which had been the object of power struggles between the count and bishop of Orléans in the 820s; Philippe Depreux, 'Le comte Matfrid d'Orléans (av. 815-836)', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 152 (1994), pp. 347-53.

³⁹ Matfrid was involved in two major rebellions against Louis, in 830 and again in 833. In 830, Matfrid successfully re-took Orléans from Odo, but did so attacking from Aquitaine (Adrevald says the attack came from Burgundy); in 833, we know much less about Matfrid's movements (he may have been exiled in Germany), but focal point of the rebellion was further east: Depreux, 'Matfrid d'Orléans', pp. 362-6. Adrevald's narrative – a hagiography rather than a history – could well be a conflation of the two revolts in the turbulent early 830s. On the wider context, see Stuart Airlie, 'The Aristocracy' in McKitterick (ed.) *NCMH* II, p. 445.

⁴⁰ Halsall, *Warfare and Society*, p. 150.

convulsed the kingdom for nearly a century from the 830s. This is not necessarily an accurate history of events, but a literary image of a turbulent and warlike world. Although the church clearly made an effort to mitigate the damage done, as Hermenbald's actions, both practical and spiritual, showed, the moral seems to be simply to soldier through and persevere in the face of the endemic warfare. In contrast, Odo's actions in usurping the church's property are presented as a much more immediate threat, and the ultimate reason for the saintly intervention in Adrevald's story. The late Carolingian church in the Loire valley took a clear interest in protecting its property from the avaricious hands of laymen, but these secular depredations were never framed in the language of violence.

This impression is further corroborated by a review of the documentary evidence from the period. Relatively few charters and diplomas have been preserved from the region's monasteries from the later ninth and early tenth centuries, compared to later periods, but those that do survive have tended to be the most important grants of lands, of immunities and of other rights to the churches by the West Frankish kings, which were accorded enough importance that they were usually the first to be preserved in later twelfth-century cartularies. Over and over again these diplomas show a concern with securing the running of the church, and its property, from the interference of powerful local laymen, but never imply any violence on the part of the imagined transgressors.

The importance that ecclesiastical leaders placed on the protection of these diplomas is perhaps best illustrated by the monastery of Vézelay, nestled in the foothills of the Morvan south of Auxerre. It was founded in 858-9 by Count Gerard and his wife, Bertha, and displayed an unusual desire for independence from early in its history, having its founding charter and immunities confirmed by the papacy in 863.⁴¹ In the thirty years following its foundation, the monastery also received five surviving royal diplomas, from Charles the Bald, Louis the Stammerer, Carlomann and Odo, all of which re-iterated the privileges enshrined by the founding charter and its associated papal privileges: 'that no count or viscount or secular judge or royal *missus*'

⁴¹ Vézelay I:1, I:2, I:3.

should have any power over the church's lands, nor should they exact any tolls or taxes from it.⁴² These were very much immunities in the Carolingian mould, framed as the exclusion of would-be usurpers by the power of the king or founder, rather than as a proto-Gregorian ecclesiastical *libertas*, but the sentiments remained urgent.⁴³ As late as the reign of Louis IV, as the efficacy of the Carolingian kings in the west was rapidly disintegrating, the monastery continued to receive royal diplomas of immunity.⁴⁴ Even after the end of effective royal power to protect monasteries outside their immediate heartlands, the monks of Vézelay continued to seek papal privileges throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries confirming these immunities, a testament to the significance they placed in the right to be free and independent of outside control.⁴⁵

These desires to limit the rights of secular officials over the church were not unique to Vézelay. A similar series of documents can be found at Fleury, where confirmations of their immunity from the power of public judges, including a prohibition on any seizure of the monks' property, were issued regularly by Charles the Simple, Lothar, Louis V and Hugh Capet, based on a precedent set by Louis the Pious.⁴⁶ St-Germain d'Auxerre also fits the pattern: its mid-thirteenth-century cartulary preserves six diplomas of Charles the Bald which confirm the inviolability of its property (often alongside donations), along with other similar acts of Carloman, Charles the Fat, Louis IV, Hugh Capet and even an episcopal council.⁴⁷ Situated closer to the royal heartlands, it is not surprising that Fleury and St-Germain so frequently requested royal diplomas right up to the end of the tenth century, but there are similar diplomas found in almost all the major collections of charters from the region.⁴⁸ The

⁴² Vézelay II:9, II:10, II:11, II:12, II:13.

⁴³ Barbara Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space; Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe*, (Manchester, 1999), pp. 130-4; the case of Vézelay is discussed specifically at pp. 158-9.

⁴⁴ Vézelay II:18.

⁴⁵ Vézelay I:4, I:5, I:6, I:7, I:8, I:9, I:10, I:11, I:12, I:13, I:14.

⁴⁶ Fleury, 34, 55, 60, 64, 69. For the original charters of Louis the Pious, dated 818: Fleury, 14, 15.

⁴⁷ Charles the Bald: *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 34, 37, 39, 40, 41, 46. Other royal acts: *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 57 (Carloman), 59 (Charles the Fat), 61, 62 (Odo), 72 (Louis IV), 82 (Hugh Capet, with Robert II). Council of Pîtres: *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 45. For St-Germain's cartulary and confirmations, see Deflou-Luca, *Saint-Germain d'Auxerre*, pp. 43-44.

⁴⁸ On Fleury's relationships with the kings of West Francia, as well as with the Robertian dukes in the tenth century, see Rosenwein, Head and Farmer, 'Monks and their Enemies', pp. 779-80.

majority of them come from Charles the Bald, who issued grants of immunity for the cathedrals of St-Cyr in Nevers, St-Etienne in Auxerre and Ste-Croix in Orléans, as well as the convent of St-Julien in Auxerre, and the abbeys of Dévres, Micy St-Mesmin and St-Sulpice.⁴⁹ All of these diplomas emphasise that counts, judges and other secular officials, including in the cases of St-Germain and St-Julien the lay abbot or any advocates, were not to have any power over the resources of the church, in particular the right to alienate the property of the community.⁵⁰

However formulaic these diplomas may be, it was clearly important to the leaders of religious communities that they be confirmed and re-confirmed, although in many cases (Adrevald's story being only one example) they were patently ineffective. However, even when the sanctity of ecclesiastical property is violated and usurped by laymen, there is very little sign of violence in these documents in the later ninth century. When it does appear, such as in the bequest made by Bishop Herimann of Nevers to his cathedral in 849, it is with the resigned attitude we have already seen in Adrevald's narrative: 'it is known to many that due to having been disturbed by enemies and torn apart by kings, the property of that church [of Nevers] was convulsed and sundered and the foundations of all religious orders had been annihilated'.⁵¹ Despite the somewhat apocalyptic language of the charter, Herimann had little interest in righting the wrongs of the enemies and kings whom he mentioned. Indeed, one of the kings at fault for the disturbances, Charles the Bald, confirmed the donation the following year.⁵² His focus was instead on restoring the patrimony of the cathedral through new donations and ensuring that his successors as bishop 'should give none of the properties named above to any layman as a benefice (*beneficiario jure*)'.⁵³ We have numerous surviving examples of where church property, having fallen into lay hands or even the royal fisc, was returned without any indication that violence, or even malice, was involved in the usurpation. In 877, Charles the Bald acknowledged that although an estate at *Revisiacum* and *Sarmasia*, in the valley of the Serein near Pontigny, had been held by a layman named Adelbert

⁴⁹ *St-Cyr* 1, 2; *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 31; *Ste-Croix* 33, 35; *St-Julien* 3; *Vierzon* 4; *Micy* 7, 8, 9; *St-Sulpice* 1.

⁵⁰ Cf. above, Chap II.

⁵¹ *St-Cyr* 3.

⁵² *St-Cyr* 38.

⁵³ *St-Cyr* 3.

from St-Germain d'Auxerre as a benefice, 'through his negligence, it passed [*decedit*] into our fisc and legally came into our power and lordship [*in jus et dominionem nostram legaliter devenit*']'.⁵⁴ Only after Charles was absolved from blame in this way, did he restore the property to the church. Four years later, Charles' grandson Carloman restored 30 *mansi* at Cours-les-Barres (dep. Cher) which were by rights the property of the cathedral of Nevers, but which 'were for a long time possessed in benefice by outsiders [*externis*']'.⁵⁵ In these cases, and others that survive, the property has been lost to the church, not through violence, but through mismanagement, usually inappropriate or negligent management of church lands given in benefice.⁵⁶ Just as in the miracles recounted by Adrevald, in the rhetoric and narrative of diplomas the protection of church property was paramount; but it was protection from corruption and mismanagement, rather than violence, which was incidental. To use a modern analogy, the late Carolingian church was far more worried about potential embezzlement than armed robbery.

One final text from the Loire valley region, this one from the early tenth century, can bring this issue into sharper focus, by giving a more rounded picture of positive and negative aspects of violence in the late Carolingian period. It is the account by an anonymous canon of the cathedral of Auxerre of the career of Bishop Gerranus (910-14), written into the *Gesta Pontificum Autissidorensium* at some point before 945.⁵⁷ Gerranus' biography in the *Gesta Pontificum* begins, in quite typical fashion, by lauding the bishop's virtues; his erudition, his humility and his charity. Despite this, we are told that Gerranus only managed to obtain the bishopric of Auxerre through the 'nefarious machinations' of the rich and powerful Ragenald, viscount of Auxerre.⁵⁸ Ragenald did this, we are told by the *Gesta's* author, in order to install a compliant bishop in office, who would allow the viscount free rein to plunder the resources of the church – which Ragenald and his brother promptly did, usurping

⁵⁴ *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 52

⁵⁵ *St-Cyr* 14.

⁵⁶ For other examples, which include mismanagement of ecclesiastical benefices by Charles the Bald, see *St-Cyr* 2; *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 40, 69. Cf. above, chap. II.

⁵⁷ *GPA*, pp. 185-201.

⁵⁸ Machinations which involved hoodwinking and bullying Duke Richard of Burgundy, King Charles the Simple, Archbishop Gautier of Sens and the canons of Auxerre: *GPA*, pp. 190-1.

two *villae* from the church. Ragenald's grip on the church was so complete, that 'none of Gerranus' clerics, nor of his soldiers, dared to oppose Ragenald, but rather he [Ragenald] commanded them all, as though they were his own [men].'⁵⁹ Despite the negative portrayal of Ragenald and the bishop's apparent compliance, the author was full of praise for Gerranus, for he took up the duties which the wicked viscount had neglected. Faced with Viking attacks in the Loire valley, Gerranus bravely led the army of Auxerre to victory numerous times, 'positioned in the first line of battle with a small number of men'.⁶⁰ These campaigns were conducted alongside Dukes Robert of Neustria and Richard of Burgundy, taking Gerannus and his army from Chartres in the north to Nevers in the south. Despite Gerranus' appeals for aid, Ragenald conspicuously stayed safely behind the walls of Auxerre, filled with jealousy at the victorious bishop.⁶¹ Gerannus' premature death meant that this rivalry between the bishop and the viscount was not further developed by the author, nor are the internal contradictions in this narrative addressed; the only form of resolution is the note that the properties which had been usurped by Ragenald were later purchased back by Bishop Betto (915-18), Gerannus' successor.⁶²

This text puts many of the points made already in this section in perspective. Firstly, it confirms the view of violence as an external phenomenon, not one which shaped relationships between the church and the local élites. This view continued right up to the mid-tenth century in the middle Loire valley, in contrast to Reims, where Flothilde's visions were full of the anxiety of local conflict. Internal violence has no place in the priorities of late Carolingian churchmen in Auxerre, Fleury or in any of the monasteries which were granted royal diplomas of immunity in the region. Despite a very clear nemesis in the form of Ragenald, the violence in Gerannus' life comes from the external Viking raids, not from his conflict with the viscount. It is furthermore noteworthy that the bishop used violence and participated in battle, a fact which is praiseworthy in the eyes of his biographer. Gerannus' use of violence was legitimised by his association with secular authority (in the shape of Dukes Robert

⁵⁹ "*Clericorum illius nullus, militum nemo ei refragari audebat, sed sicut suis, ita illis omnibus imperabat*": GPA, pp. 195.

⁶⁰ "*in prima cum paucis acie positus*": GPA, p. 197.

⁶¹ GPA, pp. 194-7.

⁶² GPA, pp. 206-7.

and Richard) and the defence of his city, and is seen as spiritually righteous: the clerical author approvingly quotes John the Evangelist regarding Gerannus' actions, saying 'the good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep' (John 10:11).⁶³

This perspective allows us to clarify some of the events narrated by Adrevald in his story of Count Odo. Despite the condemnation of the count, Adrevald did not see Odo's violent war against his rival, Matfrid, as illegitimate. Matfrid's actions were not seen in a particularly negative light either, although he had defected to the side of the Emperor's rebel son, Lothar. His soldiers were certainly unjustified in attacking the saint's property, but as with the German soldiers who sought to rustle Fleury's cattle, it was the act of plundering church lands rather than their violent lifestyle more generally which was subject to condemnation. Odo's illegitimacy, and the ultimate reason for his downfall, came, therefore, from his non-violent usurpation of ecclesiastical rights. In his position as count, Odo was expected to use violence to defend Fleury and the rest of the county and the church's acceptance of this position was clear by the participation of Bishop Jonas of Orléans and Abbot Boso of Fleury in his campaign, despite the ongoing dispute between the count and the church. A similar use of legitimate violence was Duke Hugh the Great's protection of the monks at Fleury from a Viking raid, mentioned by Adrevald's continuator Adelerius.⁶⁴

In the latter half of the ninth century and the first half of tenth, the attitude of the clerical authors seems, therefore, to be one in which office-holding was the basis of the legitimisation of violence; as a result, it has little impact on the relationships between secular and ecclesiastical élites.⁶⁵ In all of the cases examined, the baseline assumption is that the bishop and other major ecclesiastical leaders would work closely together with the leading men of the county. Gerannus worked closely with both Robert of Neustria and Richard the Justiciar to repel the Viking raids in the Loire valley and Ragenald's reluctance to participate is an indictment of his petty and envious character; the implication is that a man of his stature and office would be

⁶³ Cf. *GPA*, pp. 195.

⁶⁴ *MSB*, I.41, pp. 86-9.

⁶⁵ That is not to say, however, that violence and warfare was not important to élite identity; see Rachel Stone, *Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 85-91 and below, Chap. VI.

expected to contribute to the defence of his city.⁶⁶ Jonas and Boso agreed to participate in Odo's campaign (*expeditio*) against Matfrid, despite their opposition to his treatment of their churches. It is significant that in neither case are the churchmen tainted by their association with, and submission to, corrupt lay office-holders, even regarding matters of such importance as episcopal elections and the alienation of church lands. Instead, it is seen as proper that Gerannus, Jonas and Boso aid their colleagues in times of need – in Gerannus' case rather dramatically taking the viscount's place in the line of battle.

There is a tension evident in these texts, however, between the ideal of ecclesiastical support for their local count (or similar office-holder) and the reality that their interests could come into conflict over, above all else, the issue of property. Concerns over property form the core of Odo's dispute with the church as well as being central to Ragenald's motivations for promoting Gerannus to the see of Auxerre. Landed property and the rights of immunity which protected it are the primary reason for the church's engagement with the king, as can be seen from the diplomatic of the later Carolingian kings; in this way, the ecclesiastic relationships with the lay élite are once again formed through the prism of office, in this case the royal office, which is the guarantor and defender of the church's rights. Violence was marginal to this relationship, confined to external tactical conflicts which pursued as part of wider political disputes, such as Louis the Pious' wars with his sons.⁶⁷ This is not to claim, of course, that violence was not present or marginal in Carolingian society as a whole. Carolingian aristocrats routinely engaged in violence in pursuit of personal and political goals: Gerald, count of Bourges in the 860s, murdered a rival by decapitating him and throwing his body into a burning house; Charles the Bald retaliated by ravaging Berry.⁶⁸ Even apart from the well-known civil wars among Charlemagne's kin, there is plenty of evidence for feuds, murders, intimidation, theft and arson in the ninth century.⁶⁹ But this violence is largely absent from the writings and evidence

⁶⁶ Stone, *Morality and Masculinity*, p. 86.

⁶⁷ Cf. Charles West, 'Lordship in Ninth-Century Francia: The Case of Bishop Hincmar of Laon and his Followers', *Past & Present* 226 (2015), pp. 30-1.

⁶⁸ *Annals of St-Bertin*, s.a. 868; trans. Nelson, p. 143.

⁶⁹ E.g. Brown, *Violence*, pp. 69-91, Dominique Barthélemy, 'Debate: The "Feudal Revolution" I', *Past & Present* 152 (1996), pp. 198-203, West, 'Lordship in Ninth-Century Francia', pp. 12-16; cf.

preserved by churchmen. The rhetoric and discourse of violence positioned it as an external factor to élite relationships, which had little impact on the structure of élite society. It is this discourse, rather than the level of violence itself, that would radically change after the middle of the tenth century.

III

An indication of just how radically ecclesiastical attitudes towards the lay élite had changed by the middle of the eleventh century can be seen in the account in the *Miracula Sancti Benedicti* of Archbishop Aimo of Bourges' attempt to impose peace upon his diocese in the 1030s. Written by Andrew of Fleury in the early 1040s, the story began with the archbishop deciding that he wished to impose a Peace upon his diocese by oath, which would be sworn by every free man over the age of fifteen.⁷⁰ Clearly inspired by the Peace of God movement which had spread across southern and central France, Aimo's oath (which Andrew of Fleury gives in full) was sworn over the relics of Saint Stephen in Bourges' cathedral and stipulated that swearers were not only to abide by the Peace but were to attack those who defied it by pillaging church property, oppressing the clergy or bearing arms against the church.⁷¹ He gathered an army of laypeople (variously described throughout the text as a *populus*, *inermis vulgus*, *agrestes humiles* or a *multitudo plebum*) and successfully managed to defeat the 'faithless rebels' who were opposing the Peace. This feat is described by Andrew as a miracle, as the powerful knights and their imposing castles were brought down by the pious army of the faithful. Andrew goes on to relate, however, that due to their success, Aimo and his army were seized by ambition and while attacking the castle of a knight named Stephen, burnt down the castle with more than 1,400 people inside,

Janet L. Nelson, 'Ninth-Century Knighthood: the evidence of Nithard' in Christopher Harper-Bill, Christopher J. Holdsworth and Janet L. Nelson (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History presented to R. Allen Brown*, (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 255-66, reprinted in eadem, *The Frankish World 750-900*, (London, 1996), pp. 75-88.

⁷⁰ *MSB*, 5.1-4, pp. 192-8. Thomas Head has translated this particular section of the *Miracula* in Head and Landes (eds.), *The Peace of God*, pp. 339-42. On the date of composition for this passage, see Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints*, p. 70.

⁷¹ *MSB*, pp. 193-4. On the Peace of God movement more generally, see Head and Landes (eds.) *The Peace of God*; Brown, *Violence*, pp. 116-24; Geoffrey Koziol, 'The Conquest of Burgundy', *French Historical Studies* 37, pp. 173-214, esp. pp. 203-4 and idem, *The Peace of God*, (Leeds, 2018).

including women and children. Stephen alone escaped the blaze and was imprisoned in Bourges; 'and so the just bore the responsibility for the crime of the iniquitous and the just perished in place of the impious.'⁷² For this sin God was to punish Aimo and his followers through the sole remaining rebel, Odo, lord of Déols. Aimo faced Odo's army on the banks of the river Cher but, seeing themselves outnumbered, the hapless peasants of his army panicked and fled, and were slaughtered by Odo's pursuing knights. Thus God's judgement on those who had overstepped their authority was fulfilled.⁷³

Despite recounting events which are similar on a basic level to many of those examined above, involving well-intentioned bishops, rapacious aristocrats and violent confrontations, Andrew presents his account in radically different ways to his ninth- and tenth-century predecessors. The importance of church property to relations between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the laity is quite clearly consistent between the two periods, as it was the source of most of the tension between the groups in all of the sources surveyed so far. What is strikingly different, however, is Aimo's (and Andrew's) approach to local lay élites and the expectations which Andrew had of aristocratic magnates in his narrative. Although Aimo of Bourges was an aristocrat by birth, and although Andrew of Fleury was in fact quite hostile to him, there is a very obvious opposition between the church and the aristocracy presented in the narrative.⁷⁴ Aimo's attempts to impose the peace upon his diocese were essentially virtuous, as seen by its enormous success at first (a clear sign of God's favour). Those who opposed him were rebels. We are never told against whom they were rebelling, but the clear implication is the unwillingness of the rebels to swear the Peace oath was in clear opposition to God's will⁷⁵. Even Odo of Déols, 'reserved [from defeat by the partisans of Aimo's Peace] by the judgement of God for the punishment of evil doers', the deliverer of punishment for Aimo and his followers' sins, was still a rebel in the

⁷² "*Taliterque justus tulit crimen iniqui et justus pro inpio periit*": MSB, p. 196; Head and Landes (eds.), *The Peace of God*, p. 341.

⁷³ For a general commentary on this episode, see Thomas Head, 'The Judgement of God: Andrew of Fleury's Account of the Peace League of Bourges' in Head and Landes (eds.) *The Peace of God*, pp. 221-8 and Koziol, *Peace of God*, pp. 72-5.

⁷⁴ Head, 'Peace League of Bourges' in Head and Landes (eds.) *The Peace of God*, p. 224. On Andrew's antipathy towards Aimo; *ibid.*, p. 229 and 224, n. 16.

⁷⁵ Cf. Koziol, *Peace of God*, pp. 74-5.

eyes of Andrew.⁷⁶ Violence in Andrew's world was legitimised only by the blessing of God or of the saints. The account of Aimo's Peace has been interpreted by Thomas Head as part of a larger effort in Andrew's hagiographical writings to demonstrate the ultimate efficacy of sacred power to triumph over the secular violence of armies (even the armies of clerics).⁷⁷ Such an outlook belonged to a distinctive world where the church and its property felt at risk from the violence of the laity and would not have been conceivable a century before, in a world where violence played little part in the anxiety over lay exploitation of the church.

The existence of institutions like the Peace of God are themselves evidence of this drastic shift in the outlook of ecclesiastical (and ecclesiastically-minded) leaders from the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Emerging in the late tenth century in the Auvergne and Limousin, Peace Councils spread rapidly in the early eleventh century and Peace legislation continued to be promulgated well into the twelfth.⁷⁸ The movement was far from homogenous and the model seems to have been endlessly adapted to take account of local contexts and (authorial) priorities. For example, the Peace Councils convened by Hugh of Châlons, bishop of Auxerre, for example, at Verdun-sous-les-Doubs and Héry in the early 1020s are framed by his biographer as a means of reconciliation in Burgundy after the civil wars of the previous decades, and were strongly supported by Hugh's ally, Robert the Pious.⁷⁹ The existence of the Peace movement in and of itself cannot, therefore, be taken as a certain sign social unrest or anarchy, as has often been argued.⁸⁰ But one crucial feature of the Peace movement was the requirement for participants to take an oath to uphold its strictures, as we have seen in the case of the Peace at Bourges. The oath was vital because, despite ecclesiastical leadership, the Peace was envisaged as a horizontal, self-policing institution, rather than something which was to be imposed from the top down.⁸¹ The

⁷⁶ "vindictori malorum Dei iudicio reservatus"; *MSB*, p. 194; Head and Landes (eds.) *The Peace of God*, p. 340.

⁷⁷ Head, 'Peace League of Bourges' in Head and Landes (eds.) *The Peace of God*, pp. 228-38.

⁷⁸ The most recent overview is Koziol, *Peace of God*, pp. 24-103.

⁷⁹ *Constituit ergo pro redintegranda seu firmanda pace concilium: GPA* pp. 250-1. On this context see Koziol, 'The Conquest of Burgundy', esp. pp. 187-96, 200-5.

⁸⁰ Cf. Thomas Head and Richard Landes, 'Introduction' in Head and Landes (eds.), *The Peace of God*, pp. 9-18 and R.I. Moore, 'Postscript: The Peace of God and the Social Revolution' in Head and Landes (eds.) *The Peace of God*, pp. 308-26.

⁸¹ Koziol, 'The Conquest of Burgundy', *French Historical Studies* 37, p. 204; idem, *Peace of God*,

subservience of churches to lay office-holders and their symbiotic cooperation in the face of those who would usurp church property, which was so prominent in the late Carolingian texts from the Loire valley, is almost entirely absent from the Capetian-era sources. In the eleventh century, churches and monasteries assumed that they needed to fight against those who would encroach on their rights, rather than rely on a secular superior. They were not alone in this fight, of course; religious houses forged strong links with local aristocrats for this very reason and, in most hagiographical and narrative texts, the power of the patron saint could always still be relied on. Although there are some cases of conflict over property between rival ecclesiastical groups, in most cases of dispute and violence it was lay lords who were characterised as avaricious and usually unrepentant, a characterisation that could not be made in the same way in the early tenth century.⁸² In miracle stories from several Loire valley monasteries in the eleventh century, the patron saints intervened personally to punish aristocrats who had violated the saint's community in more cases than any other category of transgressor.⁸³ In reality, this was not a case of the church alone against a violent secular world – Aimo of Bourges was supported by his brother, the lord of Bourbon, and by Viscount Geoffrey of Bourges, while Odo of Déols was lauded as victorious through God's aid by the monks of his local abbey – but a fragmented and multi-polar local society, in which violence appears to have been common and ecclesiastical institutions needed to rely on moral authority as much as on secular protectors to safeguard their patrimonies.⁸⁴

IV

Charters from the eleventh century paint a very similar picture, of churches working

pp. 75-81.

⁸² For an example of ecclesiastical encroachment on Fleury's lands: *MSB* 2.19, pp. 123-5; Rosenwein, Head and Farmer, 'Monks and their Enemies', p. 780.

⁸³ Szymon Wiczorek, 'A Beato Maximino Se Letaliter Ictum Eiulando Indicavit: Visions of Saints Personally Executing Physical Punishments in 10th- and 11th- Century French Hagiography' in Radosław Kotecki and Jacek Maciejewski (eds.) *Ecclesia et Violentia: Violence against the Church and Violence within the Church in the Middle Ages* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2014), pp. 261-3.

⁸⁴ On the various players in Aimo's conflict with Odo of Déols, see Koziol, *Peace of God*, pp. 73-4; Head, 'Peace League of Bourges' in Head and Landes (eds) *The Peace of God*, pp. 227-8; Devailly, *Le Berry*, pp. 142-8.

to navigate difficult and contentious relationships with their neighbours, who were not averse to using violent means to enforce their claims. Towards the end of the century a *miles* named Leotericus, who was in dispute with Bishop Herveus of Nevers, billeted his soldiers upon the cathedral of St-Cyr's property and 'if any robberies were committed by him [Leotericus], or any blood spilt or any crime was perpetrated, he denied compensation [to the canons]'.⁸⁵ A further piece of the cathedral's property at Tronsonges was later re-donated to the canons by its repenting owner. In the charter confirming the gift, the scribe described how the land had initially fallen 'unlawfully [*contra jus*], because of certain depraved men, being taken away fraudulently, violently and unjustly from the provisioning of the canons.'⁸⁶ In 1023, followers of both Robert II and Landric of Beaugency 'daily plundered and inflicted many robberies and injuries on the men living' on the lands of the monastery of Micy.⁸⁷ Arnulf of Yèvre-le-Châtel 'violently' levied 'evil customs and constant plundering' from the lands of Fleury in the years before 993.⁸⁸ The church of St-Sylain at Chalivoy was seized from the monks of St-Sulpice de Bourges by 'a certain plunderer [*vastator*] named Raymond, son of the cleric Itier'.⁸⁹

This kind of vivid language leaves little doubt as to what kind of impression the clerical scribes wished to convey to the charter's reader; there is a very obvious effort to claim the moral high ground. However, this language brings with it several problems of interpretation. Most significantly, it raises questions as to what exactly was meant, particularly when the terminology was frequently ambiguous.⁹⁰ When the monks of Vierzon recorded around 1090 that their church at Clémont had been unjustly seized [*subferre*] by Bernard, a knight of Sully-sur-Loire, what exactly had happened?⁹¹ When the 'perverse' lords of Pithiviers 'audaciously violated and transgressed' the royal immunity of Fleury, how much of what we would consider violence was actually involved?⁹² This ambiguity is particularly evident when the

⁸⁵ *St-Cyr* 89.

⁸⁶ *St-Cyr* 76.

⁸⁷ *Micy* 19.

⁸⁸ *Fleury* 70.

⁸⁹ *St-Sulpice* 82.

⁹⁰ Cf. McHaffie, 'Law and Violence', *P&P* 238, p. 9.

⁹¹ *Vierzon* 88.

⁹² *Fleury* 82.

charters mention *injuria*, ‘injuries’.⁹³ When the canons of Nevers were in conflict with a local lord by the name of the Gosbert Gosbelinum over the *villa* of Challuy, Gosbert and his entire family ‘earnestly sought to inflict the greatest injuries’ upon the canons and their property.⁹⁴ In 1075 Philip I acknowledged the ‘many injuries’ which had been inflicted on the monks of Micy, not only by his own *ministeriales*, but also by the *milites* and servants of Beaugency and Sully.⁹⁵ While the modern reader’s mind is initially inclined to interpret this as a physically injury, either to bodies or property, its meaning is in fact broader, signifying harm and injustice in a generalised sense, including financial and spiritual harm.⁹⁶ Some examples make this point explicit. In 1101, a certain Herveus relinquished customs which were owed to him by Micy, which is framed as a pious act for the good of his and his associates’ souls, rather than an injustice – these are not ‘evil’ customs. But Herveus still recognised the *injuria* which these customs had inflicted [*inferre*] on the monks, and offered monetary compensation.⁹⁷ In the late eleventh century, a certain Stephen Turmellus held half of the church at Gy, which had rightly belonged to St-Sulpice; but once again, there is no suggestion of violence being used to obtain it. After his excommunication by Archbishop Richard of Bourges (1071-93), Stephen restored the church to the monks, ‘and afterwards Stephen, acknowledging the injury he had done to Saint Sulpice on account of that church [...] did homage to the aforesaid Abbot Odo [of St-Sulpice].’⁹⁸

The conclusion which could be drawn here is that the language of the charters amplifies violence. By seeking to vilify their enemies, monastic scribes asserted the legitimacy of the institution’s claim in the dispute.⁹⁹ Just as we have seen for the narrative sources, there is clearly a decisive shift in the discourse and rhetoric of violence in charters from the late tenth century.¹⁰⁰ Despite many of the same tensions around control and exploitation of ecclesiastical property in the late Carolingian

⁹³ In addition to the examples below, see *Fleury* 110; *Micy* 19, 28; *ARTEM* 2800.

⁹⁴ *St-Cyr* 73.

⁹⁵ *Micy* 29.

⁹⁶ C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1963), s.v. *injuria*

⁹⁷ *Micy* 35.

⁹⁸ *St-Sulpice* 20.

⁹⁹ Barthélemy, *Serf, Knight, Historian*, pp. 5-34; idem, *Chevaliers et miracles*, pp. 146-8; White, ‘Debate: II’, pp. 205-23.

¹⁰⁰ Barthélemy, *Serf, Knight, Historian*, pp. 12-36.

period, there are no charters surviving which describe the local lay élite in such violent terms. This raises two questions: firstly, what is the explanation behind such a shift; why did it occur when and where it did? And secondly, is this rhetorical shift indicative of genuine changes in the practice of violence in the eleventh century, or is it merely a trick of the source material? Matthew McHaffie has recently proposed the most detailed answer to the former question, suggesting that the discourse of *violentia* formed part of evolving legal practice, particularly from the latter half of the eleventh century. This legal discourse masked the inherently political decisions of court-holders in resolving disputes and the legal structure of complaints centred on violence has been preserved in the records of these cases.¹⁰¹ The charters of the middle Loire valley tend to fit the model put forward by McHaffie, although the legal culture is nowhere near as dense and rich as that described by his Angevin charters.¹⁰² The best examples come from the northern periphery of the region: in 1035, Count Theobald II of Champagne delivered a judgement against Walderic of St-Florentin for the customs he had exacted by force (*per vim*) from the lands of St-Germain d'Auxerre at Villiers-Vineaux; Louis VI heard complaints by Abbot Boso of Fleury against the depredations at La Cour-Marigny committed by Fulk, viscount of the Gâtinais, and his vassal in 1112.¹⁰³ In some cases, however, the true role of violence in the disputes is more difficult to discern, because these conflicts ended with some semblance of compromise and reconciliation; even when the agreements were confirmed in the presence of a potential court-holder (the king or count), these give the impression far more of negotiations or arbitrations than of judgements. Gosbert Gosbelinum's son was given the post of treasurer of the cathedral of Nevers in return for his family's renunciation of its claims to Challuy; Leotericus was paid by Bishop Herveus to renounce his rights; Arnulf of Yèvre-le-Châtel was allowed to continue to exact some customs from Fleury's lands.¹⁰⁴ Such compromises were often couched in language of penitence and humility. It can be difficult to tell whether these attributed emotions were genuine,

¹⁰¹ McHaffie, 'Law and Violence', *P&P* 238, esp. pp. 8-17, 28-39.

¹⁰² This could, of course, be a product of the various patterns of source preservation.

¹⁰³ *Cart. Gen. Yon.* 84; *Fleury* 110. Other examples which broadly follow his pattern: *Fleury* 70, 76, 82, 111; *Micy* 14, 19, 28, 29; *St-Cyr* 73, 89. Cf. *St-Sulpice* 37, a clear example of a judgement of Louis VII (1140) recorded in legal discourse without any of the accompanying language of *violentia*.

¹⁰⁴ *St-Cyr* 73, 89; *Fleury* 70.

or merely the acting-out of an expected social role which accompanied compromise and settlement. But it is certainly clear that in some cases, laymen who used violence in their disputes with churches received positive outcomes, suggesting that, to contemporaries, the claims and actions of the lay disputants were legitimate.¹⁰⁵

If accusations of *violentia* could form the basis for successful legal pleas, as well as leading to the amicable resolution of disputes, it stands to reason that this violence was real, rather than a figment of over-active scribal imagination. It is quite apparent, however, that this was not the anarchic society of arbitrary, affective violence postulated by Thomas Bisson.¹⁰⁶ Violence was an action which conveyed multiple meanings, the most important of which were legitimacy and status. Recent work by Steven Vanderputten and Chris Wickham has emphasised how violence in the context of property disputes can be understood as a claim to legitimacy of possession of a property or proprietary right, as well as a way to force others to recognise, or at least negotiate, that right by asserting a new 'social reality'.¹⁰⁷ I would argue further that violence operated not only as a signal of the legitimacy of one's claims, but also as a claim to elite social status and standing within the networks of local elites. A clear example of this is the various disputes over the ovens of St-Sulpice at La Ferté-Gilbert (comm. Reuilly, dep. Indre). Initially donated by the brothers Robert and Ebrardus in the mid-eleventh century, this donation was soon contested by a certain Walter of St-Augustin, who 'moved by rage' (*ira commotus*), took four cows by force (*per vim*) from a monastic estate. This escalation prompted the monks to request the help of Viscount Stephen of Bourges, Arnulf, lord of Vierzon and Peter, lord of Le Ferté-Gilbert itself. Brought before these men and many others, Walter renounced his claim to the ovens (and, one suspects, returned the cows, but this is not specified in the charter); in return he was paid twenty *solidii* by Abbot Odo, while Walter's wife also received five *solidii*. In contrast, the initial donation by Robert and Ebrardus had only received a

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Stephen D. White, *Custom, Kinship and Gifts*, pp. 47-9; Steven Vanderputten, 'Monks, Knights and the Enactment of Competing Social Realities in Eleventh- and Early Twelfth-Century Flanders', *Speculum* 84 (2009), pp. 591-7; Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*, (Ithaca, NY, 1994), pp. 125-60.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas N. Bisson, 'The "Feudal Revolution"', *Past & Present* 142 (1994), pp. 6-42.

¹⁰⁷ Vanderputten, 'Competing Social Realities', pp. 597-609; Wickham, *Courts and Conflict*, pp. 142-55, 210-22.

counter-gift of thirty *solidii*.¹⁰⁸ Some time later, towards the end of the century, Peter, the lord of La Ferté-Gilbert who had supervised the compromise between Walter and St-Sulpice, came into conflict with a *miles* of his, Geoffrey Rufus, who held half of the revenues of the ovens and with Leotaldus of Migny, a monk of St-Sulpice and one of its provosts. The dispute arose over the allocation of woods to supply firewood for the ovens and escalated to the point where Peter, once again ‘moved by rage’, physically destroyed the ovens, which had been located outside the castle, and built new ones in the interior of the walls. After many complaints by the monks, Peter relented and handed control of the (new) ovens over to the monks. He was, however, to keep half of the revenues of the new ovens for the duration of his lifetime and the monks were to celebrate his anniversary after his death.¹⁰⁹

In both of these cases, violence was an action which allowed the laymen not only to claim possession of rights (or compensation for lost rights) over the ovens, but it also allowed them to assert their social status, as reflected in their relationships with peers and with St-Sulpice, an important regional church. Walter’s claim was recognised, in monetary terms, as being almost as great as that of the original donors. Even more so, his claim was recognised by his peers and superiors – by all of the regional lords as well as by ‘all of the *familia* of St-Sulpice, both monks and laymen.’ Peter’s claim was not so much to be recognised as socially powerful by his peers, but to be recognised by his social dependant. His violence arose out of a dispute involving one of his *milites* and by the end of the case, Geoffrey Rufus was the clear loser. Not only were the ovens in which he held a share destroyed, but ‘his’ half of the revenue was now held by Peter, leaving Geoffrey with no compensation. But perhaps more importantly than recognition, violence and status existed in a dialectic, in which only those of élite status could exercise violence and the act of violence itself was a claim to that status. This is the significance of the key phrase used in the description of both Walter and Peter’s actions – *ira commotus*, ‘moved by rage/anger’. As Stephen White and Richard Barton have shown, anger in the central Middle Ages, even anger which incited violence, could be seen as a positive emotion, one which drove a person to

¹⁰⁸ *St-Sulpice* 100.

¹⁰⁹ *St-Sulpice* 101.

right the wrongs committed against them.¹¹⁰ More importantly, anger was acceptable and legitimate only in the élite: ‘displays of anger are almost always made by kings or other males whose noble status entitles them to express anger’.¹¹¹ That Walter and Peter are described as having been *ira commotus* in their acts of violence sends a powerful message; even if their claims are found to be illegitimate (which is not the case in either instance here), their violent reactions were understood as normal, rational and justified in light of the circumstances.¹¹² Not to react violently, or at the very least with the threat of violence, in such a circumstance, would call one’s status into question.

V

The extent to which lay élite status had become intertwined with the performance of violence is confirmed by the middle Loire valley’s only monastic chronicle. The *Histories* of Rodulfus Glaber present perhaps the most holistic view of society in the eleventh century available from a single source. As a monk from a young age, Glaber quite naturally infused his chronicle with his own ecclesiastical and theological concerns, but the focus was squarely on secular events and the major players in Glaber’s account were all individuals of high aristocratic status. Like all of the authors and scribes discussed in this chapter, Glaber is also deeply concerned with lay appropriation of church property, a phenomenon which is almost always associated with aristocratic violence in his narrative. The story of Arlebaud, a nobleman from Joigny, is a case in point.¹¹³ Arlebaud’s family held land (lawfully, Glaber emphasised)

¹¹⁰ Stephen D. White, ‘The Politics of Anger’ in Barbara H. Rosenwein (ed.) *Anger’s Past; The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), pp. 127-52 and Richard E. Barton, ‘“Zealous Anger” and the Renegotiation of Aristocratic Relationships in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century France’, in Rosenwein (ed.) *Anger’s Past*, pp. 153-70.

¹¹¹ White, ‘Politics of Anger’, p. 139. As this quotation makes explicit, violence is also exclusively gendered male. On the wider link between masculinity and the performance of violence in the middle ages, see Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men; Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*, (Philadelphia, PA, 2003), pp. 20-41.

¹¹² This can be seen explicitly in the case of Raoul of Nids, who slew two dependants of Fleury in the mid-twelfth century during the course of a feud (*in guerra*). As compensation, Raoul donates one of his own unfree dependants. Raoul’s violence has clearly gotten out of hand, but his right to act in such a way, to pursue his *guerra*, is never questioned; *Fleury* 140.

¹¹³ RG, II.21, pp. 88-9.

from the monastery of St-Colombe in Sens, but this land was attacked by some mysterious *milites Autisidori*. It is quite unclear who these attackers were: Glaber describes them as ‘neighbours’ and it is known that the cathedral of Auxerre had property interests nearby, but it is perhaps a stretch too far to describe these *milites* as agents of the bishop. In any case, the deadly quarrel was presaged, Glaber wrote, by a rain of rocks and stones upon Arlebaud’s house, which lasted for three years. The quarrel lasted for more than thirty years and caused innumerable deaths in Arlebaud’s family, including the deaths of no less than eleven sons and grandsons in a single battle. Glaber’s message in this story, and it is repeated elsewhere in the chronicle, is that evil and misfortune befall those who threaten the property of the church.¹¹⁴ That both parties in this case had links to the church (if the *milites Autisidori* are presumed to be connected in some way to the bishop who ruled the city) makes it clear that even those who held property legally were at great risk of violent conflict. Violence, in Glaber’s mind at least, was pervasive for the landholding class in eleventh-century society. It was a society full of people like Arlebaud, living in a world full of chaos and sin, who in spite of their noble aims and pious intentions became embroiled in deadly conflict.

The most striking case of this type of character from Glaber’s narrative is the man who is in many ways Glaber’s hero figure, King Robert II the Pious (996-1031). Although viewed favourably by the author, Robert is still seen to be recklessly and impulsively violent at times.¹¹⁵ Robert’s attack, while ‘beside himself with rage’, on Glaber’s home monastery of St-Germain in Auxerre during the Burgundian civil war in 1003, and his violent invasion of Burgundy after 1027, ‘blazing with resentment’ at the slights of his son Duke Henry are clear examples of this type of behaviour.¹¹⁶ In both cases, the king saw the error of his ways and repented: at St-Germain his army was confounded by a miraculous black fog and, while at Dijon in 1027, he was convinced into patience and restraint towards his son by Abbot William of St-

¹¹⁴ For other examples *RG*, V.8, 19, pp. 224-9, 242-5. Glaber’s very general account of the Peace of God movement also serves to reinforce this point: IV.14-17, pp. 194-9.

¹¹⁵ Studies on royal *ira* more generally: J.E.A. Jolliffe, *Angevin Kingship*, (London, 2nd ed., 1963), pp. 87-109; Gerd Althoff, ‘*Ira Regis*: Prolegomena to a History of Royal Anger’ in Rosenwein (ed.), *Anger’s Past*, pp. 59-74.

¹¹⁶ *RG*, II.16, III.35, pp. 80-1, 156-7.

Bénigne. Although Glaber was most possibly an eyewitness to both of these examples of the royal temper (if not, he certainly had access to eyewitness testimony), for the majority of his chronicle he went on to characterise Robert as a good king, in spite of his outbursts of violence.¹¹⁷ Violence is expected in an eleventh-century king; the overwhelming impression of Robert which emerges from Glaber's writing is that of Robert using violence frequently and legitimately against rebellious and treacherous subjects, such as Odo II of Blois-Champagne.¹¹⁸

But while Glaber was forgiving of times when his hero-king's legitimate violence had gone too far, it is also striking how often Glaber justified and legitimised violence *against* Robert. Robert's assault on his son, the future Henry I, discussed in the previous paragraph, is just one instance. His troubles with his eldest son, Hugh, are another, perhaps even more striking.¹¹⁹ Hugh was a paragon of a young man, according to Glaber, such that 'of the character and greatness [...] he [...] attained, my pen cannot write'. Glaber was even compelled to write a thirty-two-line panegyric poem upon his death.¹²⁰ After Hugh had been crowned co-king with his father at Pentecost 1017 in Compiègne, however, Robert refused to grant him any lands over which he could rule over personally. '[T]he boy saw that he could no longer calmly tolerate the situation, so he joined together with some other youths of his own age and began at will to attack and despoil the property of his parents.'¹²¹ This was, in Glaber's eyes, a perfectly legitimate reason, it seems, to embark upon a series of violent attacks against his father's properties, although he is quick, in the typically misogynistic fashion of many monastic chroniclers, to shift the blame for Hugh's actions from Robert to Queen Constance, the prince's mother. A similar case is found in the murder of Hugh, Robert's *comes palatii*, in Robert's presence by knights of Count Fulk Nerra of Anjou.¹²² Hugh had been stirring up trouble in the royal household and pitting members of the royal family against one another and as a result

¹¹⁷ On Glaber's career and the writing of the *Histories*, see John France, 'Introduction' in Rodulfus Glaber, *Opera*, ed. and trans. John France (Oxford, 1989), pp. xix-xli.

¹¹⁸ E.g. *RG*, III. 5-7, pp. 60-5.

¹¹⁹ *RG*, III.33, pp. 152-5.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.* On the later social problems caused by groups of aristocratic youths, see Duby, *Chivalrous Society*, pp. 112-22.

¹²² *RG*, III.7, pp. 106-9.

his murder was seen as justified. It went uncriticised by Glaber, despite being quite critical of Fulk of Anjou in other parts of his chronicle.¹²³

It is important to point out that all of the violence presented by Glaber is highly personal. It is inflicted upon its victims by neighbours, social peers and even family members. Although historians have argued convincingly for increasingly formalised political and personal relationships in this period, it is clear that when put under stress these relationships were seen by ecclesiastical writers like Glaber as releasing that tension through violence.¹²⁴ This was an unwritten assumption throughout the *Histories*; it was seen as natural and not in need of justification. Ralph Glaber saw aristocrats as creatures whose first reaction was to reach for the sword, whose decisions were motivated by anger and vengeance. Most significantly, while there were certainly sinful aristocrats who committed illegitimate violence, Glaber approved of – indeed, was a part of – the overall culture which accepted this behaviour as normal.

VI

Understanding the changing reality of violence in eleventh-century France has remained a key interpretive debate for historians, fuelled by the infamy of the ‘Feudal Revolution’ debate.¹²⁵ I would propose that this evidence has shown that violence was more ingrained in everyday disputes and local politics in the French countryside in 1100 than it had been in 900. This is, however, quite unlike the pre-governmental anarchy imagined by Thomas Bisson; it was never a lawless, anarchic society and the vast majority of violence which appears in the evidence was resolved peacefully, through judgements, compromise and arbitration. There is, nonetheless, a fundamental societal shift in the quality of the violence. The authors of the surviving sources writing after c. 950 were much more willing to see lay élites as an inherently violent group, particularly when seeking control of church lands. These same

¹²³ E.g. *RG*, II.5-7, pp. 60-5.

¹²⁴ West, *Reframing*, esp. pp. 169-227; Chris Wickham, ‘Debate: IV’ *P&P* 155, pp. 196-208; idem, ‘Origins of Italian City Communes’, *TRHS*, 6th ser., 24, pp. 32-4, 49-55.

¹²⁵ Cf. McHaffie, ‘Law and Violence’, *P&P* 238, pp. 1-3.

churchmen fought back, employing the lay violence rhetorically in order to force their neighbours to compromise, settle or enter into legal proceedings.¹²⁶ Lay élites not only used this violence strategically, to draw attention to legitimate claims to property, but also to claim the social status associated with angry, violent reactions to injustice. Narrative sources like Ralph Glaber's *Histories* confirm the impressions found in the documentary evidence that, in their actions and in their *mentalités*, eleventh-century élites employed violence in very different ways than their ninth-century predecessors. It had become inseparably linked to élite status itself.

It is, of course, impossible to know whether these developments precipitated a real quantitative shift in the levels of violence between the beginning and end of this period, but the *qualitative* shift is undeniable. This shift in the period after c. 950 saw violence, or the capacity to perform and threaten violence, play a much more central role in élite social relationships in the middle Loire valley. In ecclesiastical sources, including charters, élites came to be viewed as almost inherently violent; a recognition that the ability to perform violence in the pursuit of one's grievances, property claims or political aims was in and of itself a marker of social status.

¹²⁶ Brown, *Violence*, pp. 106-110, 126-8; McHaffie, 'Law and Violence', *P&P* 238, pp. 8-24.

Chapter VI

The Identification of Status:

Office, Hierarchy and Independence

In 1108, Odo of Lignères made a large donation to the abbey of St-Sulpice in Bourges. A detailed charter was drawn up to commemorate the gift and as a result of this Odo's social status can be discerned without much difficulty.¹ The sheer amount of property donated make it clear that Odo was wealthy: he donated a church, along with all the tenancies which pertained to it. He gave to the abbot and his monks a mill, which lay adjacent to the church, along with the rent (*census*) which was derived from it – assessed at eight pence annually. He also gave to the abbey a property which he owned at Verneuil (c. 40km east of Lignères, both dep. Cher). While these material possessions give us an indication of Odo's wealth, his human connections also display his status. He donated two *mancipia* to the abbey; one of these, Hugh *Tuabovem* was almost certainly present at the ceremony in which the gift was formalised, for he is listed amongst the witnesses to the charter. He was the landlord of another Hugh, this one a priest, who held the property at Verneuil from Odo. Odo also managed to assemble ten named men to witness his donation. In short, this charter exemplifies many of the makers of status (wealth, lordship, participation in rituals of patronage) which have been discussed in this thesis thus far.

However, in case these contextual clues were not enough, the charter's redactor was careful to highlight, one might even say exaggerate, Odo's status. When he first appears in the charter, Odo is titled 'most renowned prince' (*princeps clarissimus*) and the title of *princeps* is used to refer to Odo throughout the text, often in preference to Odo's actual name. Odo's son Peter, who is associated with his father throughout the donation and witnessed the act alongside his three younger brothers, is also given the title *dominus*. It is also worth

¹ The charter is preserved in the original (AD Cher 4H 739, No. 1) and has been published several times: St-Sulpice 114/ARTEM 4422.

noting the emphasis placed on Odo's toponym. In both instances where his name is used (rather than being referred to simply as *prefatus princeps* or similar), the scribe calls him *Odo de Lineriis*. Odo's origins or holdings at Lignères were clearly important components of his identity and status. This identification, alongside the clear evidence of his wealth and power within the text, has led to him being described as 'Odo, Lord of Lignères' ('Eudes, seigneur de LIGNERES') by the most recent editors of the charter.² Such designations are common in the study of local societies in France from the eleventh century onwards; despite lacking any sort of institutional structures or permanence, territorial 'lordships' begin to flourish in the writings of historians. Such lordships, often in the mind of the *mutationistes* indistinguishable from the *seigneuries banales*, were not concepts which would have been recognised by medieval élites (except in so far as the lordship of Lignères might be described as consisting of Odo's personal *dominicum*); rather, they are a useful description used by historians to describe the reality which has been reconstructed from the sources by generations of historians. The aim of this chapter is not to refute the emergence of such local lordships in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but to problematize the ways in which they are identified by historians. To what extent can eleventh- and twelfth-century toponyms like Odo's be taken as indicative of a status that historians would describe as lordly, aristocratic or élite? Were they ever merely indications of geographical origin or place of residence? If so, should the implicit reading of 'Odo [*senior/dominus/princeps*] de Lineriis' rejected?

More broadly, this chapter will attempt to elucidate the extent to which personal identification and description in the centuries around the first millennium was utilised to make claims to élite status. The study of identities has been a vibrant field of research in medieval history in recent years, particularly for the late antique and early medieval periods. What is attempted here, however, is more an analysis of identification than identity. Identification, as a topic, has hardly been explored at all for most of the middle ages, with the notable exception

² ARTEM 4422, sub. cap. 'Auteur'.

of a recent article by Paul Edward Dutton.³ Although closely related (and indeed, often overlapping), the distinction between identity and identification is an important one. Despite recognition in much recent scholarship for the contingent and constructed nature of personal and group identities, identity remains conceived of as a means of creating meaning by signalling oneself as belonging to a certain group (whether based on ethnicity, religion or kinship).⁴ Identification, in contrast, is concerned with recognition and acceptance of one's identity by others. Put bluntly, ultimately identity is the answer to the self-reflexive question 'Who am I/who are we?'; identification instead seeks to discern 'who are you?'. All of the sources examined in the following chapter seek to identify their subjects to the reader of the text through names and descriptions, alongside contextual markers which enabled the audience (certainly in the mind of the author) to make a correct identification. Attention will be given not only to how élites chose to name and describe themselves (or how scribes or authors of narrative works chose to describe them), but also to the social and political context of each description. A contextual analysis allows for patterns and nominative strategies to be discerned, as titles and naming practices shifted depending on the expected audience, political balance of power and relationships between actors within the same document.

Understanding practices of élite identification in the medieval period is impossible without an understanding of the process by which identificants - that is to say, the records which identify persons - were understood by contemporaries and in what ways audiences of these texts were thought by the author to use them. Dutton's 'periodic table of identifiable persons' is a useful conceptual tool to do just that. Dutton outlines three levels of identification which were possible in the

³ As Dutton himself points out: Paul Edward Dutton, 'The identification of persons in Frankish Europe', *EME* 26 (2018), p. 136.

⁴ There is a huge amount of literature which has been produced on these themes in the past two decades, particularly for the early middle ages: see, for example, Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, 'Medieval Identity: A Sign and a Concept', *American Historical Review* 105 (2000), pp. 1489-1533; Richard Corradini, Matthew Gillis, Rosamond McKitterick and Irene van Renswoud (eds), *Ego Trouble: Authors and their Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2010); Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550-850* (Cambridge, 2015); Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (eds), *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2013).

early middle ages.⁵ Firstly, there are perceptible persons, ‘a person recognized by the senses and brain of the observer’. This is the universal form of recognition in human societies, which is practiced from childhood; it is how we recognise family members, loved ones, colleagues and neighbours. Secondly, there are reputational persons, ‘a public person known by repute as important’. Once again, this is a common form of identification in the modern world, which we frequently use to identify those whom we have never personally met, such as politicians, entertainers, sports players (or even historians). Finally, there are parchment persons, ‘persons mentioned in parchment records’. Parchment persons allowed identifications to move beyond the limits of human memory and to be recalled by readers, to be associated and identified with places, actions and events mentioned in the written record. In the case of this chapter’s analysis, all of the people involved were parchment persons, for it is through the act of being written that records of them have survived to the present day. In some cases, in particular for narrative sources, this was the form in which the author intended to audience to identify persons; the identification was assumed to be reliant entirely upon the information contained within the text. The tale of the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by the Caliph of Cairo, as told by Ralph Glaber, is the perfect example of this.⁶ Each character in the story - the fugitive serf Robert, the Emir of Cairo and his Christian mother Maria, the collective of scheming Jews at Orléans - are all introduced, described and contextualised, in a way which presumes no prior knowledge. In most cases, however, parchment identifications were likely to spark or invoke identifications at a higher level on Dutton’s periodic table. By reading a short identification of a person in a text, the expected reaction is the triggering of a broader identification through reputation or personal relationships. This can be the case in narrative sources (such in Glaber’s description of Abbo of Fleury’s death), but it was certainly the case for most instances of charter identification.⁷ Within the societies of the Carolingian and post-Carolingian periods, the texts of charters and diplomas were not themselves constitutive of legal proof or evidence

⁵ Dutton, ‘Identification of Persons’, *EME* 26, pp. 138-41.

⁶ *RG*, iii.24, pp. 132-37. The lengthy account focuses largely on the ultimate responsibility of the Jews of Orléans, who bribed a runaway serf to convince the Caliph to persecute Christians.

⁷ *RG*, iii.11, pp. 112-13.

of title; they could not (independently) resolve disputes. Rather, the scribe, witnesses and subscribers to charters, those who had been the audience to the public performance of the transactions, were the only people whose sworn testimony could conclusively prove to what had taken place.⁸ Therefore, in the case of charters, methods of identification must have been intended to trigger wider identifications, connecting the written, parchment persons with persons known to the reader, either personally (or perceptually, as per Dutton's terminology), as part of their immediate network, or reputationally, through local prominence, whether these persons be donors, recipients, scribes, witnesses or guarantors. Charters will therefore provide the primary evidence for this chapter, for they constitute the most direct means by which we can recover how élites sought to identify themselves to important audiences. Narrative sources will be as a supplement, to provide a reference point for a common vocabulary of élite identification. Lay élites will be the primary focus: the textual identification of ecclesiastical élites was remarkably consistent throughout most of the period, marked by reference to their functional identity as monks or clerics, differentiated by the strict and well-defined system of clerical grades.⁹

Élite status and personal identification are not the same thing, and just because an individual is identified in our documents does not automatically mean that they are élites.¹⁰ Some are patently not, such as the two *mancipia* donated to St-Sulpice by Odo of Lignères. But status and identification were both claims which were made in charters and in other texts, and élite status could be claimed through texts as much as through wealth, lordship, ritual or violence. This chapter proposes to trace the prominence of textual claims of status within documentary and narrative identification in order to reveal the wider importance placed on status within post-Carolingian society. The methods by and the extent to which status played a role in the identifications of persons reveals a social order's stability

⁸ Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 24-6. See above, chap. IV.

⁹ Barrow, *Clergy in the Medieval World*, pp. 39-52. Clerics were also marked out visually from the laity in more general ways, including in their dress and in the tonsure.

¹⁰ Although, as Dutton has noted, *not* being identified was almost certainly a comment on their social and political importance, for 'Commoners are marked by their namelessness [in early Carolingian annals]'; Dutton, 'Identification of Persons', *EME* 26, p. 147.

and ideas of legitimacy, thereby making it an excellent investigative approach to the late and post-Carolingian centuries.

I

Locating identifications of non-royal lay élites of the middle Loire valley in the late Carolingian period in the documentary sources is no easy task. There are fewer records for the late ninth and early tenth centuries than for later periods, and the majority of records surviving from the period are royal diplomas granted to the major churches or monasteries. While valuable for understanding ecclesiastical landholding (see above, chapter II), they are of limited value for understanding the use of aristocratic, rather than royal, status as an identifier, since the majority of these diplomas do not mention any third parties. We are reliant, therefore, on the small number of donations and charters of non-royals which have survived, as well as the rare occasions when the laity make an appearance in royal diplomas (usually as intercessors): what they reveal is an élite identified by office-holding and peer recognition, suggesting a society in which relationships and connections were key.

Perhaps the clearest, and almost certainly the best documented, example of this is Heccard, count of Autun, Mâcon and Chalons-sur-Saône under Charles the Bald in the late ninth century. Heccard donated the *villa* of Perrecy, in the *pagus* of Autun, to Fleury in January 876. His donation included a series of documents proving title to the lands of Perrecy, which were preserved by the priory founded by Fleury and which provide a fascinating insight onto this region of southern Burgundy in the ninth century.¹¹ It is the documents of Heccard's donation itself, however, which interest us here. Four documents from the period of Heccard's donation are preserved from copies of the cartulary produced at Perrecy: a will (*Elemosina Heccardi Comititis*), an untitled detailed description of the donation, Heccard's charter of donation (*Donatio et Traditio Eccardi Comititis*

¹¹ On the Perrecy dossier and Heccard's donation more generally, see Olivier Bruand, 'Les villas ligériennes de l'Autunois, centres de pouvoir et d'encadrement (VIIIe – début XIe siècle)' in Dominique Barthélemy and Olivier Bruand (eds), *Les pouvoirs locaux dans la France du centre et de l'ouest (VIIIe-XIe siècles): Implantation et moyens d'action*, (Rennes, 2004), pp. 111-36.

Augustodunensis, Matisconensis et Cabilonensis, scilicet de Patriciaco et de aliis rebus ad se pertinentibus sub Teotberto Abbate) and an untitled notice of the donation, composed from the perspective of the monks.¹² These documents allow us to see not only how Heccard identified himself in the moment of his major donation, but also how his broad network of lay associates and relatives were described, for they occupy major roles in the process of donation.

The first major point to note is that Heccard is the only layperson identified by office alone. In his own charter confirming the donation he is ‘count by the gift of God’ (*dono Dei comes*), while the scribe at Fleury described his office as ‘count by divine grace’ (*divina gratia comes*).¹³ Interestingly, however, in his will, in which he instructs his named executors and associates to give to Fleury and to others, he is described solely by his Christian name.¹⁴ Heccard is identified functionally, that is by his role in society.¹⁵ The title of count would have immediately identified Heccard with the royal court, with the king, with authority and with wealth. Even for those who may not have been part of the court circles could identify Heccard by repute, and with that identification came an indubitable acknowledgment of his élite status. This is reinforced by the wealth and rituals described within the text, which combine together with the identification to confidently claim his social position.¹⁶ In his will and his charter of donation, Heccard is therefore identified both explicitly (through his office) and contextually (through his actions) as of the highest status.

In contrast, the other lay participants in Heccard’s documents are identified less by their office or by their actions (with the exception of those receiving conditional bequests, although those receiving the symbols of Heccard’s noble lifestyle – weapons, animals, landed property – would certainly have continued to use them to perform their own status) than by their relationships with Heccard or

¹² Fleury 25, 26, 27, 28 (respectively).

¹³ Fleury, 27, 28. Interestingly, in the subscription clause of the Fleury notice (Fleury 28), Heccard, subscribing in first-person, is again described as *dono Dei comes*, suggesting that this may have been his preferred personal style.

¹⁴ Fleury 25.

¹⁵ Dutton, ‘Identification of Persons’, *EME* 26, pp. 136, 146-9.

¹⁶ Cf. Above, chaps. II and IV.

with the monastery of Fleury. Although not delineated as a separate category of identity by Dutton, alongside nominal, locative and functional identities, a person's relational identity is perhaps one of the most important which can be found in Carolingian identifications.¹⁷ Relational identities can function independently of other types of identity to evoke reputational identifications - as they do in Heccard's will when identifying his niece Gerberga and an individual known as Bernard son of Malguin - they are most commonly found in conjunction with functional identities.¹⁸ For example, the only other layperson who is said to hold any kind of office (the most formalised functional identity) is Artman, the advocate of Fleury's abbot Teotbert.¹⁹ The importance of the personal relationship in determining Artman's role as advocate is clear from the wording of the charter; his is not the holder of an abstract office of advocate for the monastery, but rather he is Teotbert's own advocate. He may also have been a vassal (a more fluid category, but a functional identity nonetheless) of Teotbert, since he is mentioned in a list of 'vassals of that same abbot and several other noble men' (*nobiles viri*).²⁰ These men named in this list were the same men who subscribed the charter of Heccard's donation, alongside Heccard and his own vassals.²¹ While these men might be seen as tenants or vassals of the abbey, the documentation stresses that their relationship is not with the monastery as a community, or with the immortal patron saint, but with the person of Abbot Teotbert. Similarly, the status of the other laymen mentioned in the documents are all indicated by their relationships to Heccard. The notice of donation mentions that Heccard undertook the act in the presence of two of his vassals (*praesentibus duobus tantum vasallis suis*), Otgar and Fulk.²² These men are given no official title in the other documents, but they are clearly important members of Heccard's entourage: they are the first two subscriptions to the donation charter after Heccard himself; both receive bequests in the will (Otgar is to receive two estates - one of the conditional bequests, with

¹⁷ Dutton, 'Identification of Persons', *EME* 26, p. 136.

¹⁸ On Gerberga and Malguin: Fleury 25.

¹⁹ Fleury 28: '*Artmanus, ipsius abbatiae advocatus*'.

²⁰ Fleury 28. The Latin in this passage is slightly ambiguous, but would seem to refer indicate that all of the men listed were *nobiles*, while most were also vassals of Teotbert.

²¹ Fleury 27.

²² Fleury 28.

an obligation to donate 100 *solidii* – as well as a horse with saddle, four hunting dogs and a spear; Fulk is to receive a horse and a tapestry (*tapetum*)); and Otgar is named as one of the executors of the will.²³ Other vassals of Heccard are identified in the donation charter itself as those who held benefices from him which were to form part of the donation. While these individuals, along with their holdings, are named, their subordinate status is made clear. Heccard calls them ‘the vassals who have been placed under us and are seen to have [property] from our *allod* as a benefice’.²⁴ Two others who held benefices from Heccard are also identified in his will – Leutbold and Winetarius – and although they are not called vassals they clearly had a close relationship with him, for they are named among the executors of his will.²⁵

It is readily apparent from these documents that Heccard and Teotbert’s vassals were élites. They were wealthy, not only due to property given by their lord but also independently, as the case of Otgar shows. They were important and vital members of their lords’ entourages as named witnesses and subscribers for important occasions such as major donations of property. They maintained a close personal relationship with their lord and performed important functions on his behalf, such as advocate or executor. Indeed, it is this personal relationship that does most to identify those élites who did not hold a public office in the surviving documentation. Short of holding office, it was personal, formalised, hierarchical relationships which served to display élite status in the late Carolingian period. It remained important even for those who did hold office; Heccard himself emphasised his connections in his will to the Carolingian royal family, donating property which ‘the lord Louis, most benign emperor, by his precept gave’ to him and bequeathing two falcons and two hunting dogs to Louis’ son, Charles the Bald.²⁶ Significantly, Charles is identified in the will not by name, or even by his royal title, but only in terms of his role as Heccard’s *senior*. Such was the central role of the relational identifiers that the king’s reputational person could be

²³ Fleury 25, 27.

²⁴ Fleury 27: ‘*etiam ea [terra] quae vassalli nostri subter insterti de nostro alodo in beneficio habere videntur*’.

²⁵ Fleury 25.

²⁶ Ibid: ‘*domnus Ludovicus imperator benignissimus mihi per suum praeceptum dedit*’.

conjured in the reader's mind without even this basic information.

The importance placed on relationships and office-holding as an identifier of élite status in the Heccard dossier is mirrored across much of the surviving material in the region for the later ninth and early tenth centuries. In many cases, office-holding is virtually inseparable from the personal hierarchical relationships upon which politics in the Carolingian world was based. Offices and other *honores* were distributed by the king and *Königsnähe* was an indispensable feature in the depiction of élites of the highest status, who were the only ones we can see identified by office-holding.²⁷ Count Gerard, who alongside his wife founded the monastery of Vézelay in 859, took great care to highlight his relationships to the Carolingian royal family in the various documents drawn up for the foundation, especially the fact that much of the institution's founding patrimony consisted of lands he had been granted by Louis the Pious and the Empress Judith, much as Heccard had recalled property given to him by the same Emperor.²⁸ Although it is alluded to, Gerard's relationship with Charles the Bald, the current king, is given much less prominence, however; this is hardly surprising given that Gerard had supported Charles' brother Lothar in the civil wars of the early 840s.²⁹ *Königsnähe* was important for establishing élite status, not simply because of the *realpolitik* of an ability to influence the king's decisions or have access to royal patrimony, but as a form of legitimation and identification through recognition of status, even if that recognition had taken place decades earlier.

Recognition and office-holding went hand-in-hand when dealing with living kings too. Perhaps the clearest indication of this is the case of Hugh 'the Abbot', who held a large number of counties and offices in the Loire valley region

²⁷ On the competition for *honores* in ninth-century politics, see Airlie, 'The aristocracy', *NCMH II*, p. 845; Constambeys *et al.*, *Carolingian World*, pp. 313-17.

²⁸ Vézelay I:1, I:2.

²⁹ *Ibid.* It has been speculated that Gerard, whose main holdings were in the area around Vienne in the Middle Kingdom, founded Vézelay as a way to secure his property in the Charles' Western Kingdom, for he retained the use of the land throughout his life. On Gerard's relationship with Charles, see John Scott and John O. Ward, 'Introduction. The Abbey of Vézelay and Its History', in John Scott and John O. Ward (eds and trans) *The Vézelay Chronicle and other documents from MS Auxerre 227 and elsewhere* (Binghampton, NY, 1992), pp. p. 15 and E. L. Cox, 'The Beginnings of the Abbey of Vézelay (857-1037)', in Scott and Ward (eds and trans), *The Vézelay Chronicle*, pp. 357-60.

from the 860s to the 880s. Hugh was a cousin of Charles the Bald (his father was the Empress Judith's brother) and defected to his court from that of Louis the German's in the early 850s, when he was given the abbacy of St-Germain d'Auxerre.³⁰ (Hugh's brother Conrad was given the county of Auxerre and he is treated similarly to his brother by Charles the Bald. In a surviving charter for St-Germain, Conrad is described as *Conradus comes propinquus noster*.³¹ The choice of the word *propinquus* – which meant 'close one' and could be understood in both a familial and an affective sense – is a clear example of how office-holding and *Königsnähe* went together.) Although a subdeacon – and thus technically a cleric – Hugh engaged in a typically lay political career and came to greatest prominence after being granted the *honores* of Robert the Strong by the king in 866.³² These included the counties of Angers, Tours, Orléans, Auxerre and Nevers, as well as the important abbacy of St-Martin of Tours. Hugh leveraged his position to become one of the most powerful players in West Frankish politics by the death of Louis the Stammerer in 878. His powerbase became, in time, the future core of the French kingdom, as it was returned to Robert the Strong's son Odo, the future king, by Charles the Fat on Hugh's death in 886.³³ Hugh was undoubtedly of the highest status and held numerous offices, but what is striking from surviving charters in which he is mentioned from the Middle Loire valley is how these offices are combined with strong affective language which attempt to communicate his closeness to the king. In a charter for the small, female house of St-Julien in Auxerre, Charles the Bald refers to Hugh, the nuns' intercessor, as 'our well-loved and most dear Abbot Hugh'.³⁴ Hugh's close relationship continues to be apparent

³⁰ Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 177-9; cf. *Annales Fuldenses. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi*, VII, ed. F. Kurze (Hanover, 1891); trans. Timothy Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda* (Manchester, 1992), s.a. 858.

³¹ Cart. Gen. Yon. I:42/Rec. Ch II 261.

³² Bouchard, *Those of My Blood*, p. 20; A.B. s.a. 866. Hincmar of Reims commented (disapprovingly) on Hugh's unclerical conduct in A.B. s.a. 864, in the context of Hugh's failed bid to become archbishop of Cologne.

³³ McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, pp. 258-9, 267.

³⁴ St-Julien 3/Rec. Ch II 396. The dating of this charter, and indeed Hugh's relationship to St-Julien, is highly ambiguous. The fact that Hugh is styled only as abbot, and not as count, would seem to point to a date between 853 and 866, between Hugh's defection from the eastern kingdom and the time he was granted Robert the Strong's *honores*. The charter's editor, Constance Brittain Bouchard, has suggested that Hugh was the convent's lay abbot (incorrectly, for Hugh was technically a cleric), but this need not necessarily be the case, for Hugh's maternal

under Charles the Bald's sons. In a diploma granted to the cathedral of Orléans by Carloman in 883, in order to replace documents lost in a Viking attack, there is a stark contrast between the two intercessors, Hugh and Bishop Walter of Orléans. Despite being the occupant of the church in question, Walter is described only in generic terms as the 'venerable bishop', while Hugh is described in personal, affective terms: 'the renowned and venerable Hugh the Abbot, our teacher and greatest defender of the realm'.³⁵ At the height of his political power, it is clear that Hugh's status depended as much on his relationship to the king as it did to the offices he held. The same trend is visible throughout the early tenth century too, particularly in the case of the lay abbots of St-Germain d'Auxerre who succeeded Hugh.³⁶ Richard the Justiciar interceded on behalf of St-Germain to Charles the Simple in 901 and was described by the king in the diploma as 'the venerable and most noble count, but also our *fidelis* and not least abbot of the monastery of St-Germain of Auxerre, Richard'.³⁷ A generation later, in 936, Hugh the Great was described as 'our *fidelis* Hugh, duke and abbot of the monastery of St-Germain of Auxerre' in a diploma of Louis IV.³⁸ Displays of this sort of *Königsnähe* were without a doubt central to the performative political aspects of the granting of diplomas (see above, chap. IV), but it is also certain that at the highest level, for those élites who were involved in royal politics and the competition for *honores*, office-holding and the display of personal relationships with the king were the two primary identifiers both of persons and of status.

Beyond office-holders, the language of relationships is almost always the only way in which élite status can be identified in charters, just as in the Perrecy

grandfather, Hugh, Count of Tours, also acted as an intercessor for the convent without any indication that he held its abbacy or any other ecclesiastical office (St-Julien 2; a charter of Louis the Pious, probably issued before 828.) The most likely scenario seems to be that the house was one traditionally patronised by members of Hugh's family, and that Hugh, now installed in one of the most important ecclesiastical offices in the region, was simply continuing that patronage by acting as an intercessor to his cousin, the king.

³⁵ Ste-Croix 36/Rec. LLC 71; *inclitus ac venerabilis Hugo Abbas, tutor noster ac regni maximus defensor*.

³⁶ The same phenomenon is visible in other parts of the region too: see e.g. St-Cyr 26/Rec Ch III 99 (919), St-Cyr 35/Rec. RR 26 (935).

³⁷ Cart. Gen. Yon. 68/Rec. Ch III 68; '*venerabilis ac nobilissimus comes, sed et fidelis noster, necnon et abbas monasterii S Germani Autissiodorensis, Ricardus*'.

³⁸ Cart. Gen. Yon. 72/Rec. L IV 3; '*fidelis noster Hugo dux et abbas monasterii Sancti Germani Autissiodorensis*'.

dossier. *Fideles* and vassals are found frequently in late ninth- and early tenth-century charters as active participants in exchanges and donations of property. These men, as well as having clear close relationships with their lords also seem to have held land of them in most cases. In 859, Charles the Bald granted lands which were held in benefice by the *fideles* Gausmarus and Iterius to the monks of St-Germain, and specified that his donation in 866 to the same monastery had been previously held by a *fidelis* named Wacaldus.³⁹ In a diploma for the cathedral of St-Cyr de Nevers in 843, Charles refers to his *indominicati vassalli*, who held land which rightly belonged to the cathedral.⁴⁰ Although it is not made explicit, it is possible that Charles himself had granted these lands to his men (perhaps as a reward for their support in the succession wars of 841, as the grant to St-Cyr explicitly is); there is a similar case from Auxerre in 862, where Charles restored church lands which had ‘accidentally’ been granted by him to laymen.⁴¹ But dependents need not always necessarily have held benefices and there are several cases where there is no indication in the evidence for a *fidelis* holding a benefice from their lord.⁴² In 877, Adalbert, a *fidelis* of Charles the Bald, donated his own land near Pontigny to St-Germain, while Rocco, a *fidelis* of King Odo, made a complex exchange of his own inherited lands with the bishop and canons of Nevers in 894.⁴³ Nor were vassals and dependents found only in royal circles. References are much scarcer to other vassals in this period, but it is clear that both ecclesiastic and lay élites could have vassals; Heccard’s and Abbot Teotbert’s have already been discussed. Rotard, a vassal of Fleury, appears holding a benefice from Abbot Lambert in 907, while Grinferius, a vassal of Bishop Gozbert of Nevers was granted lands by the cathedral’s chapter in 948.⁴⁴ Bishop Franco of Nevers took counsel with his *amici et fideles laici*, as well as with his clergy, before granting part of his

³⁹ Cart. Gen. Yon. 36/Rec. Ch II 200; Cart. Gen. Yon 47/Rec. Ch II 288.

⁴⁰ St-Cyr 2/Rec. Ch II 2.

⁴¹ Cart. Gen. Yon. 40/Rec. Ch II 235.

⁴² Costambeys *et al.*, *The Carolingian World*, p. 317-18. Although benefices were not automatically tied with status as a vassal, there seems to be a consistent element of some sort of counter-gift in the Carolingian evidence for the associated royal ceremonials of oath-swearing (often the gift of a horse and arms to the new vassal); see Devroey, *Puissants et Misérables*, pp. 170-2.

⁴³ Cart. Gen. Yon. 52/Rec. Ch III 427; St-Cyr 97/Rec. Odo 37.

⁴⁴ Fleury 35; St-Cyr 52.

church's patrimony to an archdeacon in 903.⁴⁵

In the documentary records of the late Carolingian period, then, relational identifications, which also function as proxies for élite status, were extremely common, although not ubiquitous, for laymen. They persisted even when the lord was not present or involved in events – such as the case of Gundoenus, a witness to a sale which took place at Meung-sur-Loire in 908, who is described in the witness list as a *vassus dominicus* – and were even part of the vocabulary of the family.⁴⁶ The variety of terms employed, however, should not be interpreted rigidly, as scholars over the past few decades have convincingly demonstrated that different expressions of status did not form a technical vocabulary, with hard and fast implications for status or obligations.⁴⁷ As Alice Rio's recent work has highlighted, these negotiable and flexible ties of dependence permeated society at every level, without a sharp distinction between a high-status ('vassalage') and low-status ('serfdom') relationships.⁴⁸ However, it is clear that fidelity was a moral imperative for the Carolingian élite, and a central part of its identity.⁴⁹ Not only was fidelity – to God, to the king, to one's kin – stressed as the foundation of aristocratic conduct by writers such as Dhuoda, but conversely, to be seen as unfaithful or treacherous, *infidelis*, was to bring shame not only upon one's self, but upon one's entire family.⁵⁰ To be unfaithful was axiomatically to be non-noble, in the eyes of both clerical and lay authors alike: Hincmar of Reims described those *felones* who defected to Louis the German from Charles the Bald in 858 as *ignobiles*, while Nithard, while recounting defections from Charles in 840 describes nobles who 'in the way of unfree men, abandoned their fidelity' (*more*

⁴⁵ St-Cyr 7.

⁴⁶ AD Loiret H 169/ARTEM 2795. *Senior*, while used as a term to denote the king as a personal lord (e.g. Vézelay 1, Fleury 25), is also the common term used by a wife or widow to refer to her husband (St-Cyr 10, 12). On *senior* as a mark of a personal dependant relationship, see Philippe Depreux, 'Dominus. Marques de respect et expression des rapports hiérarchiques dans la designation des personnes d'autorité' in François Bougard, Hans-Werner Goetz et Régine Le Jan (eds), *Théorie et pratiques des élites au Haut Moyen Âge* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 189-91, 195-6.

⁴⁷ Constambeys *et al.*, *Carolingian World*, p. 318; Stone, *Masculinity and Morality*, pp. 188-90; Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, pp. 84-9.

⁴⁸ Alice Rio, 'High and Low', *TRHS* 18, pp. 43-68, esp. 66-8.

⁴⁹ Devroey, *Puissants et misérables*, pp. 175-82; Stone, *Masculinity and Morality*, pp. 190-9.

⁵⁰ Stone, *Masculinity and Morality*, pp. 195-6.

servorum, fidem omittere).⁵¹ The prominence of relational identifiers in the documentary material is, therefore, not in and of itself an indication of nobility, but, combined with the other prominent indicator – office-holding – functioned as a proxy to communicate other indicators of status, such as wealth or *königs/adels-nähe*. Dependant relationships, no matter the status of the participants, were a means of exchanging and obtaining gifts, rewards and material wealth, not to mention hands-on social and political support (either at a local or kingdom-wide level) in negotiating court cases, alliances, marriages and the granting of *honores*.⁵² To identify oneself as a *fidelis* of the king, or as the *vassus* of a powerful abbot or count, was not only to make oneself known to the audience, but also to clearly communicate one's implicit wealth, power, connections, privilege and moral superiority.

II

While relational identifiers, along with office-holding, are the dominant mode in which late Carolingian scribes described lay élites, there remain a handful of cases where direct identifications of nobility and élites status can be found. Significantly, none are royal diplomas, which are the majority of documentary survivals from this period. This may well be because the very act of receiving/interceding for a royal diploma was a signal of significant status, through one's *Königsnähe* alone.⁵³ These direct descriptions of nobility are centred on the terms *dominus*, *nobilis* and *inluster/illustris vir*. They are found both in grants and in documents of sale, and are used to describe individuals and groups alike. In some cases the use of these terms may be a continuation of earlier scribal practice. For example, there are two examples of sales which survive from the period, one from 852 and the other from

⁵¹ Devroey, *Puissants et misérables*, pp. 176, 181. Quotation from Nithard, *Histoire des fils de Louis le Pieux*, ed. and trans. Philippe Lauer, rev. Sophia Glansdorff (Paris 2012), II.3. See also Owen M. Phelan, 'The Scope of Fidelity in Nithard's Ninth Century', *Viator* 48 (2017), pp. 21-47.

⁵² Rio, 'High and Low', *TRHS* 18, pp. 57-8, 66.

⁵³ There is one diploma from the reign of Louis the Pious (St-Julien 2, before 828), in which Count Hugh (of Tours – maternal grandfather of Hugh the Abbot) is described as *vir illustris Hugo comes* by the Emperor. Given the exceptional nature and early date of this diploma, I have excluded it from the analysis here.

908. Both begin by addressing the buyer as *dominus*: Count Gerald is *dominus et illustris vir* in the 852 sale and Wualman is *dominus frater* in the 908 example.⁵⁴ These phrases bear a striking resemblance to sale texts which are preserved in the early medieval formulary collections.⁵⁵ When this vocabulary is used to describe a group of people, it is always to describe the collective of witness and signatories to the charter. A donation of 841 to the monastery of St-Sulpice in Bourges was confirmed by a group of *nobiles*.⁵⁶ A donation by the widow Liuthgard to the cathedral of Nevers was carried out alongside three executors of her late husband, all of whom were witness to the charter and describe as *nobiles viri*.⁵⁷ The key to understanding this practice is revealed by the founding charter of Vézelay, discussed above. In the original foundation, the charter was subscribed by Count Gerard, his wife and daughter and a large group of men, without any titles or indications of their status.⁵⁸ When Gerard sent a virtually identical document to Rome for confirmation by the Pope, however, this group of witnesses were described as *illustres viri*.⁵⁹ In this case, it is presumed that those within a local context would simply recognise the names which have subscribed the charter and, particularly given the implicit close relationship to Gerard and his family, recognise their status. That is to say, they were reputational persons, whom the audience were expected to recognise simply from their nominal identity and the context. When the charter was being read in Rome however, away from the familiar local context, additional information was required in order to justify the inclusion of these men. They were simply parchment persons to a Papal audience, and so additional identifiers were deemed necessary. Group descriptions such as these provide an alternative, if less direct, relational indication of status, by highlighting the implied relationships the donor or author of the charter possesses with the high-status group. The same is to be understood by charters where the

⁵⁴ Vézelay II, 2; AD Loiret H 169/ARTEM 2795.

⁵⁵ Rio, 'High and Low', *TRHS* 18, p. 51. The term *vir illustris/inluster* dates back to the late Roman period, when it indicated the highest rank of senator; Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, p. 28.

⁵⁶ St-Sulpice II3.

⁵⁷ St-Cyr 10. Although one of the executors was the viscount of Nevers, Eptinus (and given his title in the witness list), it was still seen as necessary to describe the entire group of witnesses in this way.

⁵⁸ Vézelay 1.

⁵⁹ Vézelay 2.

only indications of status are found in the office-holders who are among the charter's subscribers. An extreme case is the donation of Elisiernus to Fleury in 941, on the occasion of his taking the monastic habit; although he is given no title or indication of his status in his own description, the presence of six counts among the witnesses to the charter highlights his association with men of the highest status.⁶⁰ Other examples usually include only a single office-holder, rather than half a dozen, but the message conveyed to the audience is the same.⁶¹ Relationships are again, albeit indirectly, the main way in which individuals and their social contexts are identified in charters.

The final group of examples which are present in the late Carolingian material are those charters where there is little to no indication of the status of the participants: they are all identified by name only. Often these are donations by laymen to religious institutions, where it may be assumed that the participants were so well-known to one another in the local context that any further descriptions were unnecessary.⁶² The audience was expected to recognise these reputational and (in most cases perhaps) perceptual persons, with whom they would have had frequent dealings. In the case of Roger and his family, who received a grant of a mill from the abbey of St-Sulpice in Bourges in 943, it may have been the on-going relationship as a tenant which resulted from the charter which made indications of status unnecessary.⁶³ Some charters described their lay participants in only the vaguest terms, such as Milo and Archenald, who were both described only as 'a certain man' (*quidam homo*) in their charters with St-Sulpice and Fleury, respectively.⁶⁴ In most of these cases, as well as in the rare cases from Fleury of pious formulations of humility in donors' charters, it is often difficult to know whether the participants would be considered élites at all.⁶⁵

It must be concluded, however, that in the vast majority of cases these

⁶⁰ Fleury 47.

⁶¹ For example St-Cyr 10, 37; St-Sulpice 12, 14, 21, 30, 31.

⁶² E.g. Vézelay II:7, II:8; St-Cyr 12.

⁶³ St-Sulpice 19.

⁶⁴ St-Sulpice 81 (880); Fleury 46 (940).

⁶⁵ Two charters from Fleury from the 930s (Fleury 37, 38) used a humility formula (*famula/us Dei/Christi minima/us*) in describing the donors.

donors were élites, at least at a local level. In some cases it is possible to tell this despite the lack of titles or descriptions: Roclinus, a vendor of land which would eventually come into the hands of Vézelay, is without description in the charter of sale, but he is known from other documents to have been a *fidelis* of Charles the Bald.⁶⁶ A charter by which a man named Centulf donated to the fledgling monastery of Dèvres in 852 has no descriptions at all of the donor's status, but the nature of the donation – multiple properties located in the Saintonge, over 300km away – make the high status of Centulf clear from context.⁶⁷ This was apparent to medieval readers too, for in a twelfth-century forged confirmation of Centulf's donation, he is portrayed as a *fidelis* of Louis the Pious.⁶⁸ A certain amount of wealth, and by extension status, was of course necessary in order to make a donation at all, for those at the very bottom of free society could not afford to donate the property which constituted their livelihood.⁶⁹ While in some of the cases mentioned above, the charters are simply not descriptive enough to offer a definitive conclusion (such as Rollindis, who donated her 'allod called Campus Maronis, with all which rightly pertains to it, situated beside the city walls' to St-Cyr de Nevers), most of the surviving charters do give us some indication that their participants were of at least local standing.⁷⁰ Ricindis donated three different estates to Fleury c.930, at least one of which had unfree tenants; Guarulfus donated woodland and three tracts of arable land in different places; at St-Sulpice, Milo exchanged three different pieces of property with Abbot Addolenus, but the boundary clauses make it very clear that this was only a fraction of his family's holdings.⁷¹ Even when we can see petitioners receiving land from churches, it does not appear that these were always persons of little importance. Archenald received seven *mansi* and a church from Fleury in 940 in return for an annual rent of 5 *solidii*; when Roger and his family were granted a water-mill on the Yèvre in 943 they were charged a rent of 2 *solidii* per annum – a clear reflection of how much of

⁶⁶ Vézelay II:2; Rec. Ch. II II.

⁶⁷ Vierzon 16.

⁶⁸ The (very obviously) forged pseudo-original is preserved in AD Cher 8G 1078/ARTEM 4820 and was evidently written before c.1155, for it was included in Vierzon's cartulary: Vierzon 5.

⁶⁹ Davies, *Small Worlds*, pp. 102-4.

⁷⁰ Rollindis: St-Cyr 12.

⁷¹ Fleury 37, 38; St-Sulpice 81.

an economic asset the mill was.⁷² While these participants are clearly not part of the very highest echelons of society, they are participating in exerting their status in a way which was clearly understood by contemporaries. As has been discussed (above, chap IV), the act of donation itself is a very public one, a gesture which communicates not only piety, but wealth and a close relationship with the power and prestige of the local church.⁷³ What these rare charters reveal to us is that the lower and more local levels of Carolingian society identified, performed and negotiated their élite status in similar ways to their social superiors, but simply on a smaller scale: by associating themselves with abbots, counts and viscounts rather than the royal family; by donating fields and woods rather than entire churches; by forming relationships through the exchange of mills and estates, rather than offices and *honores*. They lacked the language of fidelity (*fidelis*, *vassus*) which makes these processes easier to identify in the higher-status documents, but the social dynamics of status remained, in essence, the same.

III

The charter evidence provides only a small snapshot of the processes through which Carolingian élites identified their status. There were many more ways besides, which are only visible through other types of evidence, such as literary texts, material and visual culture or archaeology.⁷⁴ The conclusions drawn from the corpus of documents examined above is consistent with what is known from these and other sources. The importance of these documents is not in what they reveal about Carolingian élite identity *per se*, but in how these élites chose to communicate their identity and status in writing. Above all, they chose to communicate it relationally. At the top end of society, relationships of fidelity and dependence to high office-holders (counts, dukes and above all, the king) were used a proxy to evoke the wealth, political sway and social standing which came to those closely associated with Carolingian officials. At a lower level, the relational

⁷² Fleury 46, St-Sulpice 19. On the economic importance of mills, see above, chap. III.

⁷³ Rosenwein, *To be the Neighbor*; Costambeys *et al*, *Carolingian World*, pp. 288-90.

⁷⁴ Costambeys *et al*, *Carolingian World*, pp. 121-9.

markers were more diverse and expressed more through action, rather than through text; through the subscription of an office-holder to a charter, or the public receipt of a tenancy from an influential local church. Status was based on material wealth, on public office-holding and on the access to power afforded by *königs-* or *adelsnähe*, but it *flowed* through relationships, and was expressed by proxy of those relationships. The reality of this is confirmed from the period's historical sources, none more so than the description of Viscount Ragenard and his brother Manasses in the *Gesta Pontificum Autissidorensis*. The pair's wealth is stressed above all, but after this come their relationships: Ragenard was always surrounded by a throng of soldiers (his own vassals, clients and dependents) and was 'second to none, except his brother Manasses, in the hall of the great and most renowned *princeps* Richard [the Justiciar]'.⁷⁵ Manasses' position at Richard's court was perhaps down to the fact that he was 'the most trusted examiner of all worldly counsels and for this was most renowned among kings and great men (*optimates*) as far as the ends of the earth.'⁷⁶ Even allowing for the episcopal biographer's rhetorical flourishes, it is clear that these relationships were what identified the perceived power of the brothers in the Auxerre region to the reader. It was, as we have seen, through their relationships that most identifications of status were made in the late Carolingian period.

IV

The importance of relational identifications of status did not retain its predominance into the central middle ages. Instead, what can be seen in the documentary evidence is an increasing variety and flexibility in the ways in which status was identified in charters and written texts, particularly for those below royal and comital level; that is to say, among those who had relied most heavily on relational identifiers of status in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. These changes served to de-emphasise relational claims to status, either by combining them with other, independent, identifiers or by excluding them entirely. This

⁷⁵ GPA, I, pp. 188-9.

⁷⁶ Ibid, pp. 192-3.

reflects a broad trend to dispense with the late Carolingian norm of identification by name only. This is replaced not with a single, uniform practice, but with a wide variety of identification practices, which were frequently combined or varied by individuals to suit the particular circumstances of a document's composition. By the beginning of the twelfth century, naming patterns and titles become more homogenous, consolidating around *cognomina* and toponyms. This trajectory has usually been explained by historians as a natural result of a growing population and the use of a more limited pool of Christian names, which necessitated greater specificity in the identification of persons, in order to avoid confusion or misidentification.⁷⁷ I will argue, however, that potential confusion and misidentification were only minor factors and that increased competition for social status was the catalyst for these developments. As new social and political structures solidified from the end of the eleventh century, and there was decreased scope for status claims to be made directly through titles and direct descriptions, toponyms, in particular, became identifiers which served as proxies through which social standing could be communicated.

The role played by the drive for social status in the transformation of naming and descriptive practices in charters is apparent when one examines those cases where Carolingian practices persisted. There are four key categories: those with 'official' titles; witnesses to charters; women; and lay people involved in the sale of property. Official titles, like those of count or viscount, remained important identifiers of status, as they had been in the Carolingian period. However, they became increasingly de-coupled from *Königsnähe* and office-holding came instead to be seen as intrinsic; the result of inheritance or a natural recognition of the holder's authority. This is perhaps most apparent in the case of Landric of Nevers. Politically active from the mid-980s, by 991 he was being referred to as a count in Nevers and was widely recognised as a count in the Capetian court in the middle of that decade.⁷⁸ Despite later traditions that he was invested with his

⁷⁷ See Bouchard, *Those of My Blood*, pp. 155-64.

⁷⁸ 'Annales Nivernensis' in *MGH SS XIII*, s.a. 991, p. 91; Richer of Reims, *Historiae*, ed. Hartmut Hoffman, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores (in Folio)* (Hannover, 39 vols., 1876-2009), XXXVIII, IV.98, p. 299.

county by the duke of Burgundy, there is no contemporary evidence to support this and, given his local power and prominence before taking the comital title, it seems that this was simply a natural recognition of his local position, which was subsequently recognised by his peers.⁷⁹ The counts of Joigny, from the northern edge of the region, appear to have similar origins. Geoffrey I (d. 1038x1043) was never explicitly titled count; the first to claim that title was his son, Geoffrey II, in a charter for St-Julien d'Auxerre.⁸⁰ This charter contains one of only two references to the elder Geoffrey; the other is in a charter he witnessed for another son, Gilduin, archbishop of Sens.⁸¹ In both cases, Geoffrey I is referred to only in relation to his sons, although he clearly held considerable local influence. The anonymous *Chronicon Sancti Petri Vivi*, written at Sens in the first decade of the twelfth century, states that Gilduin was only elected to the archbishopric by King Henry I 'through his gifts (*muneribus*)' and mentions the familial castles held by Gilduin during his tenure as archbishop.⁸² Clearly wealthy and influential locally, although supported by Henry (at least temporarily) in their quest for the archbishopric, there is little to suggest that the family's comital claims derived from the royal association.⁸³ As a result of the continuing marginal position, the status of the rulers of Joigny remained ambiguous well into the twelfth century, when Rainald was identified as both 'viscount' and 'count' of Joigny in two contemporary witness lists for the abbey of Escharlis.⁸⁴ The sense of detachment of comital office from the royal court is perhaps expressed most succinctly by Count Theobald III of

⁷⁹ For the older view, which accepts (rather uncritically) the later traditions, see Lespinasse, *Nivernais*, pp. 190-1; Chaume, *Origines*, pp. 458-9; Bouchard, *Sword, Mitre, Cloister* pp. 33, 341-3; Sassier, 'Succession' in Lachaud and Penman (eds), *Making and Breaking the Rules*, pp. 222-3.

⁸⁰ St-Julien 3.

⁸¹ Fleury 74.

⁸² *Chronicon Sancti Petri Vivi Senonensis. Chronique de Saint-Pierre-le-Vif de Sens, dite de Clarius*, Robert-Henri Bautier and Monique Gilles (eds. and trans.), (Paris, 1979), pp. 116-17, 122-3. On the wider political context for the (contested) election of Gilduin, see Robert-Henri Bautier and Monique Gilles, 'Introduction', in *Odorannus de Sens, Opera Omnia*, (Paris, 1972), pp. 25-8.

⁸³ According to the chronicler of St-Pierre-le-Vif, Henry was a participant in Gilduin's removal from the see by Pope Leo IX (*Chronicon S Petri*, pp. 120-3), when it was, in fact, Gilduin's presence in the royal host, instead of at the papal synod of Reims in 1049, which led to his excommunication and eventual removal from office; see Anselm of Reims, 'Historia Dedicacionis Ecclesiae S Remigii apud Remos', ed. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CXLII, cols. 1436C-1436D. and *Chronicon S Petri*, p. 121, n. 5 and p. 123, n. 1.

⁸⁴ AD Yonne H 647. Cf. The similar position of the viscount of St-Florentin, who first appear in the 1140s: Cart. Gen Yon I:285.

Blois-Champagne, who described himself as ‘*Theobaldus Dei gratia comes, magni comitis Palatini Odonis filius*’ in a donation to St-Germain d’Auxerre.⁸⁵ While usurping the traditional royal style of appointment by the grace of God was certainly striking and has been used as an argument for increasing comital independence from the monarchy, it is certainly not an innovation - we have already seen the same phenomenon by Heccard under Charles the Bald in the ninth-century.⁸⁶ In addition to this, however, Theobald also emphasises his father, the ‘great count-palatine Odo’ – the most persistent foe of the Capetian royal house in the early eleventh century – not only by linking his comital legitimacy to his father, but also by making a donation of the church of St-Florentin explicitly for the salvation of his father’s soul.⁸⁷ Given St-Germain’s long association with the Capetians, who had been its lay abbots for most of the tenth century, this was a clear statement that comital status had become entirely uncoupled from *Königsnähe* by the early eleventh-century, allowing identification by office to remain relevant in the new social milieu.

Outside of the comital sphere, identification of individuals using only their Christian names was already declining by the middle of the tenth century. In the northern half of the region (especially in the Orléanais, for charter evidence is minimal for the Auxerrois in this period) throughout the late tenth century, individuals who are only named are found only sporadically, although the practice remained common in the south.⁸⁸ By the eleventh century, however, individuals identified without any further description are common only in witness lists, rather than in the main body of charters, and even here they eventually fade from view. The only real exceptions to this are a series of charters preserved in the twelfth-

⁸⁵ *Cart. Gen. Yon.* I:91. The charter is undated, but considering the provisions made for Odo’s soul, it is likely to have been issued soon after his death in 1038 and certainly before 1047, when Theobald’s brother Stephen, Count of Troyes and Meaux (who assented to the donation), died.

⁸⁶ Fleury 28. See also Florian Mazel, *Féodalités (888-1180)* (Paris, 2014), p. 56.

⁸⁷ Cf. ARTEM 4414, the foundation charter for St-Satur-sous-Sancerre, where Odo is titled count-palatine during his lifetime - a charter Theobald also subscribed. On Odo II’s relationship with the Robert II and Henry I, see *RG*, III.37-9, pp. 158-65 and *Chronicon S Petri*, pp. 116-19.

⁸⁸ Examples from the late tenth-century Orléanais: Fleury 61 (975), Micy 10 (ARTEM 4871) (c. 971-1003), 13 (ARTEM 2787) (991-1000). Tenth-century charters with names as the only identifiers are common in the archives from Nevers, Bourges and Vierzon.

century cartulary from Vierzon from the first half of the eleventh century.⁸⁹ There are several possible explanations for this. The simplest is that scribal practices in Vierzon were quite conservative, and continued to prefer older forms of identification; we have already seen that Berry was slower to change these identification practices than the regions north of the Loire. A second possibility is that more elaborate descriptions and identifications existed originally, which were not copied into the surviving cartulary. It is clear that scribal practice varied enormously from institution to institution, scribe to scribe, copyist to copyist. This can cause unusual or misleading features in some documents. One of the charters from Vierzon's cartulary was witnessed by the institutions' monks, but only their Christian names are preserved in the surviving copy.⁹⁰ Without other contemporary documents which make clear their clerical status, we might mistake this for a group of lay witnesses; a powerful reminder of the local and often intimate contexts in which these documents were produced and expected to be read. Given the evidence for the ambiguous scribal practices which fail to indicate important social distinctions in Berry, the survival of the exceptional group of documents which provided nominal identifications only at Vierzon is best explained by an unorthodox approach to document production, either at source or in the compilation of the cartulary in the twelfth century. A final possibility is that the social pressures which, I argue, drove these changes were not significant in upper Berry until the middle of the eleventh century. This is unlikely; other changes in identification, such as the use of flexible status titles such as *dominus* and *miles*, are well-evidenced in the Vierzon and the wider Berrichon archival records.⁹¹

A third category of exceptions also survives almost exclusively from the south of the region. A lack of identifying features beyond the Christian name is especially common in charters which record sales of property between lay-people. Six eleventh-century sales survive from Nevers and Bourges, and none use any

⁸⁹ Vierzon 27, 28, 29, 34 (all undated, early 11th century), 49 (1042), 51 (1031-59). Two other isolated examples survive in the cartulary of St-Cyr de Nevers: St-Cyr 57 (post 1003), 85 (undated, 11th century).

⁹⁰ Vierzon 7 (991).

⁹¹ See below.

descriptions beyond names for lay participants, with a single tangential exception.⁹² It is possible that these were more ‘private’ transactions than ecclesiastical donations (which form the majority of surviving charters) and, as a result, there was less motivation to use forms of identification which signalled higher social status.⁹³ An interesting parallel is the notice which was inserted into a blank page at the back of a manuscript by the monks of St-Germain-d’Auxerre in the middle of the eleventh century.⁹⁴ It recorded the debts owed by the monks (collectively and individually) to a man named Henry and was written to commemorate Henry’s forgiveness of those debts for the remedy of his soul. Although Henry’s forgiveness of debts went alongside a substantial donation and was done in the monks’ chapter house, the origins of the document in a mundane credit transaction may be the reason why this document is the only one from the northern part of the region which does not elaborate on lay identity beyond a Christian name.⁹⁵

The final group who continued to be described by their Christian names and relational identifiers only in the eleventh century were women. Women appeared in the documentary material most frequently alongside their husbands (or, less frequently, fathers, brothers and other male relatives), often not even being named but identified only by their relationship to the male relative.⁹⁶ This is not to say that women did not wield agency, influence and power (both formal and informal). It is well established that women could and did own and control property and participated frequently in donations and other legal transactions involving their lands.⁹⁷ But it remained the case that their status was determined by their male relatives, and so there was little or no identification of women beyond a relational connection with their closest relatives. This contradiction can

⁹² AD Cher F 288, no. 81 (Notre-Dame de Salle, 1053), St-Sulpice 41 (1031), St-Cyr 55 (11th century), 60 (1003), 69 (1030). St-Cyr 75 (1080) references Anselm the Cobbler (*Anselmus Sutor*), but he is not a party to the transaction itself.

⁹³ On the use of the act of ecclesiastical donation to assert social status, see above, Chap. IV.

⁹⁴ BNF MS Lat. 1745, fol. 40r.

⁹⁵ Deflou-Leca identifies this Henry as a lord, but without basis: Deflou-Leca, *Saint-Germain*, p. 274.

⁹⁶ For example: AD Cher, 12 H 59; AD Cher, 13 H 104, no. 2/ARTEM 4438.

⁹⁷ Livingstone, *Medieval Worlds*, pp. 53-4. See also the collected essays in Theodore Evergates (ed.), *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia, PA, 1999).

be clearly seen in the charter of foundation for a house of canons at Sancerre.⁹⁸ Matilda, daughter of the deceased Gimo of Sancerre, was the legal possessor of *castrum*, which was held in benefice from the Archbishop of Bourges. As such, in the charter which established the canons of St-Satur, it was her agency in the foundation which was stressed by the language of the charter. The real impetus came from Odo II of Blois-Champagne, however, “whom the young woman (*juvencula*), alone and without brothers, had chosen for herself (*sibi ... elegit*) among her relations and friends”⁹⁹ Odo is identified as the great count-palatine, but Matilda is only identified either as her father’s daughter (a relational identity, in which her father’s status is emphasised) or with the generic terms for young woman (*puella*, *juvencula*). This attitude is prevalent even when a woman is clearly in the position of authority. In 1110 the monks of Fleury obtained a judgment from Bishop Hugh II of Auxerre against the widow of Narjotus of Toucy, who had renounced his customs on the monks’ estate on his deathbed.¹⁰⁰ Despite the fact that she was clearly the target of the judgment, Narjotus’ wife is only identified relationally via her husband as *uxor ipsius Narioti*. There is a consistent and continuous pattern in womens’ identifications which prioritises their relational status with male relatives as their primary identifier.¹⁰¹ The only cases where this does not appear, women are identified by their names only, or by generic term like *quedam femina*.¹⁰² The few exceptions, where women use identifiers that locate their social status independently of a male relative, are either very late or ambiguous.¹⁰³ One late example shows a donation of the *census* of a church in the 1140s or 1150s to St-Sulpice by a *domina* Theophania; the only ambiguous case is of

⁹⁸ ARTEM 4414.

⁹⁹ “*quem sibi eadem juvencula sola sine fratribus inter cognatos et amicos emeritum elegit*”: ARTEM 4414.

¹⁰⁰ Fleury 107.

¹⁰¹ In addition to wives and daughters, there are also examples of sisters (St-Sulpice 64), aunts (St-Sulpice 96), widowed women (*mulier vidua*; Micy 18) and *matronae*, who appear to be older married or widowed women (Ste-Croix 39; St-Cyr 62).

¹⁰² E.g. St-Sulpice 32, 38, 43. A unique case, which nonetheless follows this trend, is the self-description of Emma as *donatrix* in her charter of donation for Tronsange: St-Cyr 11.

¹⁰³ For the purposes of this analysis, I am discounting the term *comtissa*, for countesses are usually associated with their husbands while using this title: e.g. La Charité 94. The only exception is the otherwise unidentified Countess Adela, who appears in a witness list with Hugh Capet in 975: Fleury 61. Some late examples, using the title *domina*: St-Sulpice 65 (mid-twelfth century), Supl. 6 (first half of the twelfth century), Micy 57 (1149), AD Yonne H 647 (1137).

Adenaura, an executor to two sick-bed donations of a certain Ansgardis in the 980s.¹⁰⁴ Ansgardis calls Adenuara *domina mea* in the second of the two charters (both have the same dating, to 981/2) for reasons which are not apparent, for neither of her remaining executors (both male) are titled *dominus*.¹⁰⁵ The simplest explanation is that the description was being used as a mark of respect for a woman with whom Ansgardis clearly had an important relationship with, for such titles are otherwise unknown for women from this period and region.

V

In each of these four categories, identification remained largely similar to that of the preceding late Carolingian period. Identification was nominal or relational, except in the case of ‘public’ office - and even here, the relational overtones which were so prominent in the earlier period are emphatically downplayed. The common factor is the lack of an imperative to incorporate identifiers which speak to elite status, either due to lack of social power, as in the case of women and (probably) many witnesses, or due to circumstances, such as a ‘private’ sale or conservative scribal practices. For those who held comital office, although the title persisted the way it was contextually deployed changed dramatically, emphasising the independent, rather than relational, basis of the holder’s status. This stress on independent status is a trend evident throughout the identification practices of the post-Carolingian period, suggesting that the need to claim and perform social status was the initial catalyst for the change in identification practices in the later tenth and eleventh centuries.

A good example of this trend is the disappearance of the identification of individuals as *fideles*. Fidelity’s importance as a functional and relational identifier,

¹⁰⁴ Vierzon 19, 20. The unusual name caused difficulty for the twelfth-century copyist, as can be seen by the clear erasure in the original manuscript of the cartulary for the second document: BNF MS Lat. 9865, fol. 9r. This caused Devailly, the cartulary’s editor, to cast doubt on whether Adenaura was, in fact, a woman; Vierzon p. 130, n. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Vierzon 20. Devailly has dated this document to 981, while the earlier document is (inexplicably) assigned a date of 998.

along with its cultural weight amongst the Carolingian élite, has been discussed above. Given this importance, it is rather surprising to see the term (along with the closely related term *vass(al)us*) slip out of use entirely as an individual title from the middle of the tenth century. The last individual referred to in a charter as a *fidelis* is Albuin, a *fidelis* of Bishop Hugh II of Nevers, who received a number of properties in a precarial grant of 1028.¹⁰⁶ Even this reference is unusually late - there are no references at all in the Middle Loire Valley to individual *fideles* between Albuin and a previous *fidelis* of the bishop of Nevers, Seguinus, in 955.¹⁰⁷ The term does not fall completely out of use, unlike *vassus/vassalus*, for it retains not only its general meaning of ‘the faithful’ found in so many charter formulations as well as being used as plural identifier to characterise groups of witnesses.¹⁰⁸ These groups of *fideles* could be lay or clerical (just as their lords could be). For example, Bishop Odolric of Orléans confirmed a gift to the monastery of St-Euverte ‘as much in the sight of God and the Holy Mother Church as in that of our *fideles* whether clerics or laymen’.¹⁰⁹ Landric of Nevers’ donation to Flavigny in 1002 was confirmed and witnessed by ‘all of his confidants and *fideles*’.¹¹⁰ The transition to the use of the term *fidelis* only in the plural reflected the meaning it was intended to signal to its audience. In the Carolingian period, *fidelis* functioned primarily as a relational identifier for the *fidelis* himself, serving to highlight his close connection to the king or other prominent aristocrats. In the eleventh-century usage, however, groups of *fideles* functioned not as an identifier for the *fideles* themselves, but for their lord. They highlighted the lord’s ability to attract dependents and clients, as well as the extent of his influence. In an age when wealth increasingly flowed through hierarchical channels, whether in property or in seigneurial customs, a lord surrounded by *fideles* was a powerful contextual identifier of the social measure of that man.¹¹¹ In one 1035 charter, even a provost

¹⁰⁶ St-Cyr 86.

¹⁰⁷ St-Cyr 20. The last named *vassallus* is also attached to the bishop of Nevers, in 948: St-Cyr 52.

¹⁰⁸ Formulae using *fideles*: for example “*Universalis aecclesiae fideles*”; AD Loiret H 173 (2)/ARTEM 2799.

¹⁰⁹ ARTEM 2790: “*Hec autem adstipulatio tam in conspectu Dei et sanctae [matris ecclesiae quam] fidelium nostrorum clericorum scilicet et laicorum corroborata est*”.

¹¹⁰ Cart. Gen. Yon. I:83: “*ab omnibus ejus propinquis et fidelibus firmata et testificata.*”

¹¹¹ Cf. Vierzon 36, where the abbot of Vierzon highlights the entourages of *fideles* accompanying the lords who testified to the transaction. The logic even applies to royal diplomas, although here

(who appears to be acting comital or monastic estate administrator) is said to be accompanied by an entourage of *fideles*!¹¹² The term only reappears in the middle Loire valley as an individual identifier in the second quarter of the twelfth century, and only then in the royal diplomas of Louis VI and his son, Louis VII. The term was applied to both secular and ecclesiastical élites in royal diplomas of this period and must be seen as a conscious effort to place royal power at summit of pyramid of personal fidelity.¹¹³ This is in line with broader shifts in royal policy in the early twelfth century as the kings attempted to enhance their status with respect to their subjects.¹¹⁴

Social identifiers were shifting away from relational indicators to more independent, functional terms. Office-holding remained an important identifier communicating status; comital, viscomital and various ecclesiastical titles remain the most obvious markers of status.¹¹⁵ Although their contexts and implications change, as already discussed, comital and (in Bourges and Nevers) viscomital titles were still reserved for the highest ranks of the lay élite. However, more informal status titles, in particular *dominus* (and occasionally *princeps* or *consul*) appear much more frequently from the latter half of the tenth century, and in a much broader range of contexts. As noted, *senior* was widely used in the late Carolingian period to denote a personal subordinate relationship.¹¹⁶ In the final decades of the tenth century, the term *dominus* began to appear in similar contexts, denoting a personal dependant relationship, gradually replacing *senior*; in the eleventh century, *dominus* supersedes *senior* entirely as the description of a personal lord in the charter evidence.¹¹⁷ Interestingly, the evidence for the use of *dominus/senior*

the emphasis is on the status of the “*nobiles fideles*”, such as those in Henry I’s grant to Micy; Micy 28/Cat H I 100.

¹¹² Cart. Gen. Yon. 89/ARTEM 728.

¹¹³ AD Loiret H 163; Rec. L VI 232.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Naus, *Constructing Kingship*.

¹¹⁵ Ecclesiastical titles (much like less formal secular designations such as *miles*) were not necessarily applied consistently or uniformly, however: for example, Vierzon 7 and AD Cher, F 288, no. 75, where the monks and canons of Vierzon and Notre-Dame de Salle (respectively) are identified in ways which are difficult to distinguish from contemporary laymen.

¹¹⁶ See Depreaux, ‘Marques de respect’ in Bougard *et al.* (eds), *Théorie et pratiques*, pp. 187-220, and above.

¹¹⁷ *Dominus* in the tenth century: Micy 13/ARTEM 2787 (991-1000), Vierzon 20 (981). *Senior* continued to be used, and did not die out entirely: e.g. Fleury 61 (975). St-Cyr II is reveals an interesting use of the term, as the donor Emma refers to her late husband as her *senior* and

in this relational sense comes almost exclusively from areas with a significant royal presence in the Orléanais, in the archives of Micy St-Mesmin and from Fleury.¹¹⁸ There is no immediately apparent explanation for this regional pattern, although the dominance of the Capetian kings in the political culture of the area may have prompted the more conservative usage of these terms as relational identifiers along late Carolingian lines. However, far more characteristic of the eleventh century is the use of *dominus* as an independent, functional identifier, rather than as a relational one.¹¹⁹ From the beginning of the eleventh century, it is used in conjunction with other titles (including ecclesiastical titles) or names (toponyms and *cognomina*), as well as independently, to emphasise high status and power over others.¹²⁰ The earliest use of the term in the middle Loire valley is in a 1002 charter of Landric, count of Nevers and Auxerre which was issued for Flavigny at Auxerre, in which he is titled *dominus comes*.¹²¹ This is a particularly apt illustration of the reality that these titles and descriptions were claims, not matters of fact; Landric was a parvenu, who had been employing a comital title for little over a decade. This charter represents the first evidence of an attempt by him to secure control over Auxerre, triggering a conflict with King Robert II and Hugh of Chalons, Bishop of Auxerre that would last nearly two decades.¹²² The choice of a combined identifier as 'lord-count' is certainly a deliberate one, in an effort to solidify his authority in the political vacuum following Duke Henry of Burgundy's death in that same year.¹²³

Dominus was, from this point onward, used more and more frequently to signal independent power and status, that is to say that one's status was not

dominus (c. 980); cf. the contemporary acts in Vierzon 19, 20, where the donor's (living) husband is *vir meus/maritus illius*. *Dominus* in the eleventh century: Fleury 75, 80, Micy 27, 28. *Senior* appears only three times in eleventh century charters as an indicator of personal dependence, once alongside *dominus*: Micy 25 (1033-6), 27 (1044), Vierzon 55 (1030-59).

¹¹⁸ The exception is Vierzon 55 (1030-59).

¹¹⁹ *Senior* is also used occasionally in this way: Vierzon 53 (1030-59).

¹²⁰ Cf. the typology of naming patterns for France in the central middle ages in Monique Bourin and B. Chevalier, 'L'Enquete: buts et méthodes' in *Genese médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne. Études d'anthroponymie médiévale: 1e et 2e rencontres - Azay-le-Ferron* (Tours, n.d.), pp. 11-12.

¹²¹ Cart. Gen. Yonne 83

¹²² Glaber III.15-16, Sassier, *Pouvoir Comtal*, pp. 31-41. Koziol, 'The Conquest of Burgundy', *French Historical Studies* 37, pp. 187-96, is the most succinct account of the wider political context.

¹²³ Cf. Similar title used by Viscount Geoffrey of Bourges in 1014: St-Sulpice 42.

directly dependent on appointment, office or the grace of a social superior. It became particularly widespread for those directly below comital rank. The lordships from which these men drew their power and status were informal, comprised of those properties and areas over which they held *dominium* - whether in the sense of outright ownership or lands over which they held *consuetudines* or other seigneurial dues. Landric of Beaugency is consistently titled *domnus* in an early eleventh century charter in which he granted to Marmoutier the *dominatio* and *commendatio* which he held over property in the Orléannais.¹²⁴ The link between his power over the property and the status and title he is afforded by the scribe is clear. Such identifications were part of a process of claiming status, for the usage is very often strategic and contextual, just as Landric of Nevers' had been. In the third quarter of the eleventh century, a *domnus* Gosbert Gosbelinus appeared before Landric's grandson, Count William I of Nevers, to formalise a settlement he had made with the canons of St-Cyr. Gosbert had been engaged in a long-running dispute with the canons over the *villa* of Challuy, which included attacking their estates, before ultimately relinquishing his claims to the *villa* in return for the appointment of his son, also named Gosbert, to the position of the cathedral's treasurer.¹²⁵ Such behaviour is entirely consistent with the ways in which claims to elite status were made in the mid-eleventh century: possession of important properties, use of violence to pursue claims, public and formalised relationships with other local lay and ecclesiastical elites. It is not a surprise to see Gosbert identified as a 'lord' in this instance. But outside of this context, it was more difficult for Gosbert to claim such a high status. When Gosbert appears among the witnesses to a donation for the small priory of St-Aignan in Aubigny(-sur-Loire) (modern day Marseilles-les-Aubigny, dep. Cher) he is identified simply by his distinctive *cognomen*.¹²⁶ Gosbert seems to have been part of the entourage of Bishop Hugh I of Nevers when witnessing this charter, alongside other individuals who are identified by toponyms and are clearly local elites themselves (Ebo of Garchizy, Girbert of Tronsanges, Gerald of Aubigny - all within 7km).

¹²⁴ AD Loiret H 173/ARTEM 2799.

¹²⁵ St-Cyr 73.

¹²⁶ AD Cher 4 H 786, no. 1/ARTEM 4424.

Within this context, Gosbert was clearly unable to maintain a claim to lordly status and relies solely instead on a reputational identifier. Likewise, the otherwise unknown Lord Geoffrey appears only in a mid-eleventh century charter of Vierzon, pressuring the *miles* Ingenaldus to resolve a dispute with the monks over some mills at Lury-sur-Arnon (dep. Cher).¹²⁷ We can see once more that the context of the dispute - and Geoffrey's ability to use his military entourage (*milites suorum*) to persuade Ingenaldus to compromise - is the reason Geoffrey is able to put forward a claim to the identifier of *domnus*. The use of the lordly identifier was a method for the sub-comital élites to divorce their status from their relationships with office-holders, in stark contrast to the late Carolingian period. In the same way, Robert of St-Brisson (dep. Loiret) was identified as *dominus* of the *castrum* in a papal privilege recalling his donations to the monks of Fleury, but when he appears as a witness to other transactions in Berry, he is called simply by his toponymic.¹²⁸ Those hierarchical relationships continued to exist, of course, and remained an important structuring element in eleventh-century politics. Landric of Beaugency's rise was closely tied to his ability to strategically form alliances with both the counts of Anjou and the counts of Blois-Chartres in the second quarter of the eleventh century.¹²⁹ Gosbert Gosbellinus very clearly had a strong relationship with Hugh I of Nevers and his cathedral, as well as very likely links (as a result) to Hugh's family, the viscounts of Nevers and lords of Champallement. But élites in the eleventh century were keen to distance themselves, in their identifications, from these relationships and to stress the fundamentally independent nature of their status, using titles such as *dominus/domnus*. The word *miles*, which appears in even greater numbers than *dominus* from the end of the tenth century, is quite clearly playing a similar role as an identifier in this way, although this has been overlooked due to the term's connection with 'kighthood', meaning that it is much more difficult to unpack its contemporary meaning to an eleventh-century audience. It is worth briefly attempting to untangle these historiographical knots before examining *miles's* use as an identifier in the medieval evidence.

¹²⁷ Vierzon 45.

¹²⁸ Fleury 83; St-Sulpice 34.

¹²⁹ Livingstone, *Medieval Lives*, pp. 86-9.

VI

The increased prominence of *milites* in the charter evidence has long been recognised by historians and has been the subject of far more discussion than the role of the *domini* who emerged at around the same time.¹³⁰ Studies have focused not only on the role these *milites* might have played in the ‘Feudal Revolution’, but equally on the history of the development of knighthood as a formal institution and the growth of chivalry as an ideological and cultural touchstone for European lay society from the twelfth century onward. The origins of the idea of knighthood have remained the most divisive aspect of these debates, centred particularly around the semantics and translation of the Latin word: when is it acceptable (both in chronological and contextual senses) to translate the word *miles* as ‘knight’ (or *chevalier*), with all the status and chivalric ideology this word implies in modern English (or French), rather than a more direct translation as ‘soldier’ or even ‘servant’.¹³¹ As one might suspect, this debate often hinges more on how one defines the central or essential features of knighthood, or how the knight’s role in medieval society is envisaged, than on the often ambiguous medieval evidence itself.

Although medieval knighthood and chivalry have been objects of scholarly study since the eighteenth century, the contours of the modern debate (as with so much else in the history of medieval France) were laid out first by Georges Duby and developed and expanded upon by his student Jean Flori.¹³² Duby and Flori argued that the meaning of the word *miles* was used essentially to signify

¹³⁰ On this Georges Duby, ‘La diffusion du titre chevaleresque sur la versant méditerranéen de la Chrétienté latine’ in Philippe Contamine (ed.), *La noblesse au moyen âge, XIe-XVe siècles. Essais a la mémoire de Robert Boutruche* (Paris, 1976), pp. 39-70. In contrast, see Barthélemy, *Deux âges*, pp. 139-75 and idem, *Vendôme*, pp. 905-7, interested in title of *dominus* but only as it spread in thirteenth century, not its origins in the tenth/eleventh. My thanks to Matthew Hammond for sharing his thoughts on this historiography.

¹³¹ Richard W. Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 71-7; Flori, *L’idéologie du glaive*, esp. pp. 24-65.

¹³² Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, IL, 1982); idem, *Chivalrous Society*, pp. 59-87 and 158-70; Flori, *L’idéologie du glaive*; idem, *L’essor de la chevalerie. XIe-XIIe siècles* (Geneva, 1986). On the study of knighthood and nobility pre-Duby, see Crouch, *Birth of Nobility*, pp. 8-28.

subordination and service.¹³³ When used as a title in charters from the late tenth century, it was applied by scribes to the retainers and warriors who formed the entourages of the lay nobility, but was not yet a identifier of élite or noble social status. In a slow process throughout the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, these lowly retainers forced their way into the nobility proper, in large part by co-opting and adapting ideologies (such as the protection of the church, women and the poor) and rituals (in particular ceremonies of granting of arms and, later, dubbing) which originally pertained only to the king and the small circle of those who shared in the royal *ministerium*.¹³⁴ This interpretation was readily adopted by proponents of the 'Feudal Revolution', who saw bands of lowly *milites* as the violent catalyst which broke down the Carolingian or post-Carolingian *status quo* and exemplified the anarchic, hyper-localised and fragmented political society of the eleventh century.¹³⁵ Like much of the historiography which ties into the 'Feudal Revolution' paradigm, the conception of *milites* as subordinate and non-élite has come under attack in recent decades, particularly by Dominique Barthélemy.¹³⁶ Drawing on the work of Carolingian historians, such as Régine Le Jan, Karl Leyser and Jinty Nelson, Barthélemy has argued that the essential components of knighthood - an élite, warrior aristocracy backed by a sacralised and Christian legitimising ideology - were present from the ninth century onwards. The widespread appearance of the word *miles* in charters from the late tenth century was less an indication of a rapidly changing social landscape and more a reflection of changing diplomatic practices and language.¹³⁷

While I do not propose to resolve the scholarly debate on the origins of knighthood in this chapter, a number of remarks should be made on the

¹³³ This is emphasised far more in Flori's work and in some of Duby's later writings. Duby's focus in his early writings based on the evidence from the Maconnais placed more weight on the essential homogeneity of the sub-comital élites, stressing their common origins: for example, Duby, *Chivalrous Society*, pp. 77-9.

¹³⁴ This work is summarised in English by Jean Flori, 'Knightly Society', in David Luscombe and Jonathan Riley-Smith (eds), *The New Cambridge Medieval History; Volume IV, c. 1024-c.1198, Part I* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 148-84. For the widespread adoption of this view by French historians see, for example, Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir*, pp. 47-52.

¹³⁵ Bisson, 'Feudal Revolution', *P&P* 142, pp. 6-42; Poly and Bournazel, *La mutation féodale*, pp. 171-83.

¹³⁶ Above all in Barthélemy, *Knight, Serf, Historian*, pp. 137-244.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 138-40, 145, 149-51.

historiographical and interpretive issues raised in this debate, before moving on to examine the role played by the term *miles* in the identification of status in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The first issue is one of definitions. Throughout much of the scholarly debate, there has been little effort to actively define what is meant by 'kighthood' and, in particular, how it is separated from its ideological counterpart 'chivalry'. This is, in part, due to the majority of the debate occurring in French, where both ideas are subsumed in the single term *chevalerie*. This has led to ambiguity and false equivalences on both sides of the debate. One of Jean Flori's central arguments in his 1983 book *L'ideologie du glaive* is that *milites* before the eleventh century were 'subalterns, servants, to whom no ideas were proposed but upon whom obedience was imposed'.¹³⁸ Proto-chivalric ideology applied only to the king and his *maiores potestates*, who were the leaders of *milites*.¹³⁹ Without a 'knightly' ideology, *milites* cannot be called knights until adoption of such an ideology in the twelfth century, after their slow social and moral climb during the duration of the eleventh century; for Flori, the First Crusade and subsequent foundation of the Knights Templar marked a turning point in the expectation for individual *milites* to adopt such an ideology.¹⁴⁰ Dominique Barthélemy, in contrast, defines kighthood in the broadest sense as 'the very status symbolised by arms and horses', a definition which (intentionally) blurs the connotations of social status in the word with the symbolic and ideological elements.¹⁴¹ This 'highly composite entity that defie[s] precise definition' allows him to push the origins of kighthood back to the Carolingian era: 'the practices glimpsed in the ninth century differ from those of the thirteenth mainly in regard to the later period's romance-like jousting and sophisticated dubbing'.¹⁴² The debate becomes then not so much about the historical reality as about the historian's chosen definition.

Rather than becoming bogged down in a subjective debate on definitions, the inherent polysemy, the multiple meanings, of *miles* should be embraced. Both

¹³⁸ Flori, *L'ideologie du glaive*, p. 65.

¹³⁹ Ibid, *passim*, esp. Pp. 65-83, 135-57. Summarised in Flori, *L'essor de la chevalerie*, pp. 1-6.

¹⁴⁰ Idem, *L'essor de la chevalerie*, pp. 164-248.

¹⁴¹ Barthélemy, *Knight, Serf, Historian*, pp. 146-7, 149-51. Quotation at p. 146.

¹⁴² Ibid, pp. 159, 156.

sides of the debate have recognised this fact.¹⁴³ These could involve *miles* as a signifier of social standing, but also a designation or description of military function (that is, an armed and armoured horseman), as title (closely related to role as a status marker), as an ideological marker (that is, a follower of chivalry) or as a marker of service or dependence (either in a public or private sense [vassalage]). Moreover, medieval scribes and readers were well aware of this, and the word can thus be potentially even be read as deliberately ambiguous, certainly in narrative or chronicle sources.¹⁴⁴ In order to determine the extent to which the word *miles* became an identifier communicating social status, therefore – and, perhaps more importantly, to interpret the significance of its presence for our understanding of social change – it is necessary to examine the instances of its appearance in context, to tease out which of its potential meanings was intended in each case.

Although all of the possible meanings of *miles* are closely intertwined, for the purposes of a study such as this one, which seeks to isolate one aspect of the term, it is helpful to break meaning down into analytical categories. Richard Kaeuper has recently written about early knighthood in terms of a tripartite division between function (that is, as a soldier, more specifically a heavily armed horseman), status (as a member of the élite) and ideology (as a practitioner of chivalry).¹⁴⁵ These are the three essential facets of the debate, and the first two are most relevant for the present study. Status is, rather obviously, at the heart of this analysis, not only to inform us whether a particular *miles* is part of the élite or not, but for any indications of his relative position within that élite. Given that so much of the debate has revolved around the subordinate origins of *milites*, it is imperative to examine the extent to which the term *miles* could be used to display differentiated grades of status, as well as its use as an indicator of relational status. But the functional aspect is of almost equal importance. As discussed in the previous chapter, the period after c. 950 saw a qualitative change in the role

¹⁴³ Flori, *L'essor de la chevalerie*, pp. 229-30 ; Barthélemy, *Knight, Serf, Historian*, pp. 138-40, 147-9.

¹⁴⁴ Barthélemy, *Knight, Serf, Historian*, pp. 148-9.

¹⁴⁵ Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry*, pp. 63-84.

violence played in social relationships in the middle Loire valley.¹⁴⁶ In ecclesiastical sources, including charters, élites came to be viewed as almost inherently violent and uniquely placed to use violence legitimately to pursue their grievances; the logical inference is that the ability to perform violence in the pursuit of one's grievances/political aims was in and of itself a marker of social status. In this case, the identification of a man as a *miles* serves as a proxy for these violent capabilities, and this for his status, if the functional aspect of the word is prominent in the context. The role of the *miles* as a soldier or cavalryman is one area which is largely uncontested in the historiography, with a general recognition that the word implied an armed and armoured horseman by, at least, the middle of the ninth century.¹⁴⁷ It also has this sense in the contemporary sources from the Loire valley: Charles the Bald clearly uses the term in this sense when speaking of the military aid he received from the church of Nevers in the earliest years of his reign.¹⁴⁸ There is an increasingly clear division within society between those upon whom the duty fell to fight and those who were not expected to: clerics and the *inermes vulgus*. Reaching its peak with the tripartite schema of those who pray, fight and work famously elucidated by Georges Duby, its origins are much older and it is clear from as early as the mid-tenth century that the *ordo pugnatorum* was a restricted and increasingly élite sphere.¹⁴⁹ Identification as a *miles* can be seen as a claim to belong to this *ordo*, a claim which blended function and status, and clearly differentiated the *miles* from the *agricultores* and *rustici* who made up the lowest stratum of society. Indeed, the fact that knightly identification could be seen as 'an act of self-exaltation' was recognised nearly thirty years ago by Geoffrey Koziol in the context of Western France (Anjou, Touraine, Chartrain), showing that it was

¹⁴⁶ See above, chapter IV.

¹⁴⁷ Bathélemy, *Serf, Knight, Historian*, pp. 138-40; Flori, *L'idéologie du glaive*, pp. 106-18 ; idem, *L'essor de la chevalerie*, pp. 164-76.

¹⁴⁸ St-Cyr 2.

¹⁴⁹ Duby, *The Three Orders*, is foundational. Duby's classic inspired many further studies, which have significantly nuanced our picture of the development of these ideas: Dominique Iogna-Prat, 'Le "baptême" du schéma des trois ordres fonctionnels. L'apport de l'école d'Auxerre dans la seconde moitié du IXe siècle.', *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Cultures* 41 (1986), pp. 43-61 ; Theo Riches, "Bishop Gerard I of Cambrai-Arras, the Three Orders, and the Problem of Human Weakness" in John S. Ott and Anna Trumbore Jones (eds), *The Bishop Reformed: Studies of Episcopal Power and Culture in the Central Middle Ages*, (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 122-36. On the *ordo pugnatorum* from the mid-tenth century, see Devroey, *Puissants et misérables*, pp. 40-6; Flori, *L'idéologie du glaive*, pp. 110-12.

frequently paired with language and symbolism suggesting power and authority.¹⁵⁰

VII

Approaching the charter material with a view to investigating the various ways in which this militarily-inflected term was applied within each specific context, rather than in the hope of identifying what we would instantly recognise as a 'knight', reveals unambiguously the way in which identification as a *miles* was employed to signal status in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The title was employed in charter contexts in ways which clearly sought to elevate and distinguish the *miles* from a mass of socially inferior laymen, or else to signal the *miles*' suitability to participate and interact with other, better defined, social élites. This is evident in some of the earliest examples of the term, in the latter half of the tenth century.¹⁵¹ In donating to Fleury in 975, the *miles* Adelelmus was very conspicuously attempting to associate himself, through his pious donation, with the upper echelons of the political élite, including the future king, Hugh Capet.¹⁵² The identification as a *miles*, in this instance, highlights Adelelmus' status as someone of the same stratum as the counts and duke witnessing his charter; although perhaps not a peer, he was more than simply one of their entourage. Nearly a decade earlier, in 966, a deacon of St-Cyr exchanged two small pieces of property at Sauvigny-les-Bois (dep. Nièvre) with a *miles* named Rainald.¹⁵³ Given the small amount of property at issue, such a title is certainly an effort to ensure that the reader is not deceived by the unimpressive size of the land and is aware of Rainald's true status. By the eleventh century, *milites* are almost ubiquitous, particularly in witness lists, across the middle Loire valley.¹⁵⁴ They continued to be

¹⁵⁰ Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor*, pp. 256-7. Koziol attempted (rather unconvincingly) to square this conclusion with Flori's claims of low-status *milites* and did not pursue the insight any further in his work.

¹⁵¹ There is one earlier example of an individual identified as a *miles* in a charter: a certain Gado, who exchanged land with St-Sulpice in 859 (St-Sulpice 14, 21). In the two charters recording the transaction he is identified as a *miles* only in the first (St-Sulpice 14). Although it may be a later interpolation (surviving only in a 12th century cartulary), it is on its face difficult to explain.

¹⁵² Fleury 61.

¹⁵³ St-Cyr 25.

¹⁵⁴ Examples: St-Cyr 47, Vierzon 43, St-Sulpice 18, 82, Cart. Gen. Yon I:83, AD Loiret H 174/ARTEM 2797, ARTEM 2800, St-Croix 48, Micy 18.

used to distinguish those men identified as such from ‘ordinary’, lower-status men. In 1028, eight *milites* subscribed a charter of Bishop Odolric of Orléans and were distinguished from other witnesses simply described as ‘laymen’ (*laicus*).¹⁵⁵ By the mid-eleventh century, the social distinction implied by the word was clearly understood, not only by those clerics who theorised about the various orders of Christian society, but by laymen in rural lordships too. Arnulf of Vierzon, in a 1052 charter, gave a succinct description of the social orders within his lordship (*potestas*), with *milites* at the summit, above townspeople (*burgenses*), peasants (*rustici*) and the various categories of unfree (*coliberti*, *servi*).¹⁵⁶ Like *dominus*, identification as a *miles* suggested a status that was independent of any higher authority, based only on the ability to participate in violence and warfare; a social implication which was evident to contemporaries. A late eleventh or early twelfth century forger, for this reason, described the first lord of Vierzon, when composing an ‘origin charter’, as ‘a certain *miles* named Humbald’, who came from Normandy in the reign of Hugh Capet to help defend the monastery from its enemies.¹⁵⁷ Although the real Humbald I originated from the region of Chartres and was probably aided in acquiring Vierzon by the counts of Blois-Chartres, it suited both the monks and the lords of Vierzon to frame the lordship’s origins as deriving from the sword-arm of a wandering Norman knight, rewarded by (and doing homage to!) a grateful Berrichon church.¹⁵⁸ Much like *dominus*, *miles* was also contingent, a claim which could be contested depending on one’s outlook. This is illustrated most starkly in two charters issued for Fleury in 1071. In the first, King Philip denounced the ‘perverse men’ (*pervasores*), Tescelinus of Pithiviers and his sons Hugh and Albert, for their exaction of *malae consuetudines* from Fleury’s lands.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ ARTEM 2790.

¹⁵⁶ Vierzon 63.

¹⁵⁷ Vierzon 26.

¹⁵⁸ On the origins of the lords of Vierzon: Devailly, *Le Berry*, p. 133; André Chédeville, *Chartres et ses campagnes (XIe-XIIIe s.)*, (Paris, 1973), pp. 289-90, 308. The family continued to have ties with their lands and with local churches in the Chartrain until at least the mid-eleventh century; see *Cartulaire de Marmoutier pour le Dunois*, ed. Émile Mabille (Chateaudun, 1874), III, 112. The origin story presented by the monks of Vierzon resembles other, more famous, narratives of genealogical history composed in the twelfth century: cf. *Origo* or Louis Halphen and René Poupardin (eds), *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou et des seigneurs d'Amboise* (Paris, 1913). The latter has been examined by Duby, *Chivalrous Society*, pp. 149-57 and Barthélemy, *Serf, Knight, Historian*, pp. 179-81.

¹⁵⁹ Fleury 82/Rec. Ph I 55.

Later that year however, Hugh and Albert (their father apparently having died) issued their own charter (which Philip confirmed), renouncing the customs and donating a *villa* in which the monks of Fleury could construct a church.¹⁶⁰ In this second charter, unsurprisingly, both men are presented as *milites*, with pious intentions towards the church and loyalty towards their *dominus*, King Philip. Albert was, around the same time, identified as an even more prestigious *nobilis miles* when taking part in the foundation of a Cluniac priory at Pithiviers.¹⁶¹

As striking as the sudden appearance of *milites* in the documentary record is from the second half of the tenth century, it is perhaps even more surprising that the term slowly disappears as an identifier just over a century later. While the origins of knighthood have been thoroughly dissected by historians, virtually none have noticed that although the concept of knighthood did not disappear in the twelfth century - rather the opposite, as the term *miles* took on its chivalric connotations and became one of the central ideas of European culture - its use as a description in charters experienced a major dip. In a pattern which begins to become clear from the last decades of the eleventh century, the flow of individuals identified as *milites* begins to dry up, until by the middle of the twelfth century it is very rare indeed. The archives of Fleury perhaps illustrate the case best: despite the huge increase in surviving documentation in the first half of the twelfth century, there is only one instance of a *miles* identification in all surviving charters up to 1150, which is from a royal diploma of 1103.¹⁶² This trend is present right across the middle Loire valley, with instances of identification as a *miles* found only in isolated cases, often referring only to a single witness or participant, in stark contrast to the large number of *milites* found in many eleventh century acts.¹⁶³ The decline in the identification of persons as *milites* at a time when the culture of knighthood was becoming central to French society is a testament to its use as a social signifier. As the identity became virtually ubiquitous among elite men, resembling more a rite of passage than a particular way of life, the title no

¹⁶⁰ Fleury 80/Rec. Ph I 56.

¹⁶¹ Cluny 3438.

¹⁶² Fleury 95/Rec. Ph I 147.

¹⁶³ Examples: St-Sulpice 60, Vierzon 88, St-Gondon 19, St-Cyr 95, AD Cher 13 H 6, no. 1/ARTEM 4428, Micy 33. The vast majority of these examples come from the earlier decades of the period.

longer offered distinction and identification practices came instead to rely on different identifiers in order to communicate both identity and status.¹⁶⁴

One factor in the adoption of *dominus* and *miles* as identifiers was undoubtedly their flexibility. Although both stressed that the fundamental status of its bearer derived from their own actions (whether their *dominium* or their military capabilities), these titles could be endlessly modified and adapted to show gradations of status, social hierarchies and geographical connections, to highlight an identification appropriate to the circumstances and context.¹⁶⁵ Landric of Nevers, before he claimed the status of a count, appears in charters as a *gloriosus miles*, justifying his status among a witness list otherwise containing only counts and bishops.¹⁶⁶ In a similar fashion, 'rich' (*dives*), 'liberal' (*liberalus*) and 'noble' (*nobilis*) *milites* can all be found in eleventh century charters throughout the middle Loire valley, as élites at the lower ends of the lay aristocracy sought to identify themselves in ways which would distinguish them from poorer or less influential *milites*.¹⁶⁷ *Miles* could itself encompass a huge range of social positions which are blurred behind the common term; it is rare to find individuals specifying their position as *miles de casatis*, that is a household *miles*, an armed retainer to a lord.¹⁶⁸ *Milites* of a lower relative status were more likely to express this positively, through an identification which combined a relational identity with the functional identification inherent in the title *miles*. Thus the terminology of *milites* could still be used to express the hierarchical links to lay or ecclesiastical lords, similar to the way in which *vassus* had been employed in the ninth and early tenth centuries. It would be dangerous to conclude that *vassus* and *miles* were no more than synonyms, reflecting simply changing scribal fashions, as some historians have

¹⁶⁴ That élite laymen were expected to become *milites* at a certain age is exemplified succinctly in a donation to the priory of St-Gondon, witnessed by a boy named Robert, 'not yet a *miles*' (*nondum miles*); St-Gondon 16. See also Liebermann, 'Knighting Ritual'.

¹⁶⁵ Barthélémy, *Deux âges*, p. 153. Cf. Georges Duby, 'Diffusion du titre chevaleresque' in Contamine (ed.), *La noblesse au moyen âge*, pp. 39-70.

¹⁶⁶ St-Cyr 23.

¹⁶⁷ ARTEM 4436, 4853; Vierzon 43; Cluny 3438.

¹⁶⁸ The only example from the middle Loire valley is an indirect one, a provision that a *miles de casatis* of Sully-sur-Loire could grant lands freely, without specific consent of the lords of Sully, to St-Sulpice and the church of St-Jean at Aix-les-Angillons (dep. Cher): St-Sulpice 72 (1064).

argued.¹⁶⁹ *Miles* cannot be considered the eleventh-century equivalent to *vassus* because not all *milites* were defined by their relationships with their lords, while this was an inherent quality of vassalage. *Milites* were primarily identified by their capacity for legitimate violence, with relational identifiers an addition which highlighted the flexibility of the term. The most common pattern for these additions is that a *miles*, or a group of *milites*, identified as belonging to a lord, using a variation of the formula *miles meus/sui/noster*.¹⁷⁰ These formulations were intended to stress the loyalty of the *miles* towards the lord, as is clear in Theobald of Blois-Champagne's identification of his 'most loyal *miles* Iterius' (*fidelissimus miles noster Iterius*) in a charter for St-Germain d'Auxerre.¹⁷¹ *Milites* serving ecclesiastical lords tended, however, to associate themselves with the institution they served, rather than an individual prelate. Thus, in the words of Archbishop Aimo of Bourges, Gimo of St-Satur was "a certain *miles* of our church" (*quidam nostrae aeclesiae miles*), rather than Aimo's personal *miles*, and Iterius described himself as a *miles* of St-Cyr (*miles sancti Cirici*).¹⁷²

VIII

The most crucial adaptation of the titles of *miles* and *dominus* was, however, their localisation; that is to say, the combination of the title together with a place-name to convey not only a functional identification, but also a locative identification.¹⁷³ Thus in the eleventh and early twelfth century, we find in the documentary sources *domini* of Beaugency, St-Brisson, Sully (all dep. Loiret), Vierzon, Montfaucon, Graçay (modern Villequiers) (all dep. Cher), Toucy (dep. Yonne), Bourbon, Cérilly (both dep. Allier) and Frasnay (modern Frasnay-Reugny) (dep. Nièvre), and *milites* of Pithiviers, Montcorbon (modern Douchy-Montcorbon, both dep. Loiret),

¹⁶⁹ Barthélémy, *Serf, Knight, Historian*, pp. 12-36. See also Duby, 'La diffusion du titre chevaleresque' in Contamine (ed.), *La noblesse au moyen âge*, p. 45, discussing the usage of the terms in an Italian context.

¹⁷⁰ AD Loiret H 173/ARTEM 2799; Fleury 76/Rec. Ph I 37; Ste-Croix 48; Micy 29/Rec Ph I 77; St-Cyr 53; Vierzon 45; ARTEM 4414.

¹⁷¹ Cart. Gen. Yon I:91.

¹⁷² ARTEM 4414; St-Cyr 64.

¹⁷³ Dutton, 'Identification of persons', *EME* 26, p. 136.

Clamecy, Tronsanges, Saxi(modern Saxi-Bourdon), St-Saulge, Marzy (all dep. Nièvre), Les Aix-d'Angillon, Lignères, Chalivoy (all dep. Cher), La Ferté-Loupière (dep. Yonne) - even a *senior* of La Ferté-Gilbert (modern Reuilly, dep. Indre).¹⁷⁴ Many of these locations are explicitly called castles (*castrum*), which adds a further layer of military (and thus élite) connotations to the identification.¹⁷⁵ The sudden appearance and importance of castles has long been one of the central foundations of the *mutationiste* argument.¹⁷⁶ This importance in the middle Loire valley is underlined not only by the *milites* and *domini* who appended their castles to their identities, but also by others identified solely with a locative identifier in the form of a castle. Thus as early as the 990s examples can be found of men identified with the locative identifier of a *castrum*, such as Arnulf of the *castrum* of Yèvre(-le-Chatel, dep. Loiret), Gaucelin of *castrum Chalenaci*, Waldric of the *castrum* of Saint-Florentin (dep. Yonne) and Stephen, Theobald and Gimo of the *castrum* of Mehun(-sur-Yèvre, dep. Cher).¹⁷⁷ Other terms, such as *rector* or *possessor* were also used to identify individuals with prominent castles, as well as simply claiming a castle as “*castellum meum*”.¹⁷⁸

Unlike in narrative sources however, the possession or control of these fortifications does not seem to be identified explicitly with violence or with a tyrannical, arbitrary control of territory, but, as with the language of *milites*, the connotations are with power and status.¹⁷⁹ This is in line with much recent work on castles and similar fortified settlements done by archaeologists and castellologists. Since the 1970s, this work has stressed the castle's nature, in France and across Europe, as largely a symbol of power, status and domination, as well as an administrative and economic centre for the surrounding locality.¹⁸⁰ Although

¹⁷⁴ ARTEM 2799; Fleury 83, 79; Vierzon 33, 63; BM Bourges, MS 218, fol. 3v; Ste-Croix 15; Fleury 107; AD Yonne H 647; St-Sulpice 126; AD Cher 14G 21/ARTEM 4436; St-Cyr 66; Fleury 80; ARTEM 4853; AD Yonne H 647; St-Cyr 80, 68, 65, 95; St-Sulpice 5, 83, 99.

¹⁷⁵ St-Sulpice 5, 99; Vierzon 63; Fleury 80, 83, 107; ARTEM 4436.

¹⁷⁶ Bisson, 'Feudal Revolution', *P&P* 142, pp. 15-21; Poly and Bournazel, *Mutation Féodale*, pp. 82-7.

¹⁷⁷ Fleury 70, 75/Rec. Ph I 18, *Cart. Gen. Yon.* I:89, Vierzon 10, St-Sulpice 15.

¹⁷⁸ Vierzon 48; *Cartulaire Marmoutier Dunois*, ed. Mabile, III; Paris, BNF ms. Lat. 5420, p. 45/Micy 38. Cf. ARTEM 4853, in which Guy of Clamecy is described as “*advocatus [...] qui tunc tenporis Pitveris castro et curiæ suae intererat.*”

¹⁷⁹ Narrative examples of castles as oppressive: *GPA*, I, pp. 234-5; *MSB*, II.15-16, pp. 117-19; *RG*, V.8, pp. 226-7.

¹⁸⁰ Oliver Creighton, *Early European Castles; Aristocracy and Authority, AD 800-1200* (Bristol,

such fortifications certainly had military value, it does not appear to have been the primary function of the castle in the middle Loire valley, as elsewhere. In many ways, the English word castle is a poor choice with which to represent the word *castrum* (or occasionally *castellum* or *firmitatis*) found in the Latin sources. Fortified settlement is perhaps a better term, for it is clear that rather than a single fortress, *castra* were frequently large spaces with several focal points, often containing overlapping jurisdictions.¹⁸¹ The tower (*turre*), the classic castle containing the lordly residence and corresponding to the modern sense of the word, was often contrasted with the wider *castrum*, as at St-Gondon, where at the time of the First Crusade, an act of Stephen of Blois was confirmed twice in the *castrum*, once in the house of the *miles* Narbert and again in the tower - both of which are distinguished from locations belonging to the monks mentioned in other charters, such as the church, the cloister and the bridge.¹⁸² Around the same time, the *castellum* of La Ferté-Hubert (modern La-Ferté-St-Cyr, dep. Loir et Cher) extended nearly 500m from the tower at the eastern end of the ridge to the ditch and embankment at the western edge, containing two churches (one of which was given as a priory to the monks of Micy), several houses (with space for more to be constructed) and a market.¹⁸³ In 1144, there were three churches in the *castrum* of Sancerre, alongside the chapel which was located in the *turre comitis*, all of which owed tithes and other customs to the canons of St-Satur.¹⁸⁴ It is no surprise then that we can find *castra* used as locations of refuge for élites and non-élites alike, whether from wars or from natural disasters like flooding.¹⁸⁵ *Castra* did not even need to have a lay presence; St-Germain d'Auxerre and Fleury are described as

2012), esp. pp. 25-84, 109-24; Charles L. H. Coulson, *Castles in Medieval Society; Fortresses in England, France, and Ireland in the Central Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 64-83; Gabriel Fournier, *Le Château dans la France médiévale. Essai de sociologie monumentale* (Paris, 1978), pp. 113-14, 125-31; André Debord, *Aristocratie et pouvoir. Le rôle du château dans la France médiévale* (Paris, 2000), pp. 102-19, 157-62; Adrien Bayard, 'Accumuler, consommer et exhiber les ressources. Les lieux de pouvoir dans l'Auvergne des IX^e et X^e siècles' in Vito Loré, Genevieve Buhner-Thierry and Régine Le Jan (eds), *Acquérir, prélever, contrôler: les ressources en compétition (400-1100)* (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 95-108. See also the synthesis in Mazel, *Féodalités*, pp. 69-82.

¹⁸¹ Fournier, *Le Château*, pp. 168-88

¹⁸² St-Gondon 10; see also St-Gondon 15, 16, 18, 20.

¹⁸³ BNF ms. Lat. 5420, pp. 45-7/Micy 38. For a detailed discussion see Fournier, *Le Château*, pp. 324-6, 374.

¹⁸⁴ AD Cher 13 H 29, no. 1.

¹⁸⁵ *MSB*, III.9, p. 151; *MSB*, V.3, p. 195.

castra in narrative sources and episcopal castles can be identified belonging to the bishops of Auxerre.¹⁸⁶ Vézelay's *castellum* had been built by 889, in response to Viking attacks on the early site of the monastery.¹⁸⁷

The combination of the identifications of *miles* and *dominus* with the invocation of locative identities tied to fortified places is a powerful testimony to the changing structure of lay élite status in the tenth and eleventh centuries. As has been seen throughout this thesis, the increased wealth in the hands of local, sub-comital élites by the second half of the tenth century brought with it increased competition for status, of which one manifestation was, for the laity, the right to utilise violence. The construction of *castra* thus allowed status to be communicated on multiple levels, expressing the lord's military capabilities, but also his economic ones, both through the resources mobilised to construct the fortification initially and the ongoing administrative and productive activities conducted within the *castrum*'s walls.¹⁸⁸ Archaeology has confirmed this general pattern in the middle Loire valley. We can see this from an early tenth-century site near Sancerre, known as the *tour de Vesvre*, (Neuvy Deux-Clochers, dep. Cher). A huge, 1.6m high fortified platform, encompassing an area of 1.5ha (with an attached 10m motte) rapidly attracted small-scale productive occupation, indicated by traces of a forge and workshops housing potters and leatherworkers.¹⁸⁹ This was characteristic of a new form of settlement across northern France, as élite sites were marked with towers, ditches, embankments, platforms and other "exterior signs of power" as well as controlling and channelling local economic resources.¹⁹⁰ An archetypal example is at Les Rousses (Ingré, dep. Loiret), in the suburbs of Orléans, where signs of a high-status, prestige lifestyle (such as spurs, arrowheads

¹⁸⁶ RG, II.15, pp. 78-9; GASGA, pp. 30-1; MSB, II.9, p. III.

¹⁸⁷ Vézelay II:13/Rec. Odo 10.

¹⁸⁸ Bayard, 'Lieux de pouvoir' in Loré *et al.* (eds), *Acquérir, prélever, contrôler*, pp. 95-108.

¹⁸⁹ Isabelle Catteddu, *Archéologie médiévale en France; Le premier Moyen Age (Ve-XIe siècle)*, (Paris, 2009), pp. 44-5; *Le site de Vesvre. Enquête patrimoniale pluri-disciplinaire sur un site archéologique: NEUVY-DEUX-CLOCHERS (CHER)*, (Orléans, 2016), Available online at <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/Regions/Drac-Centre-Val-de-Loire/Ressources/Publications/Patrimoines-en-region-Centre-Val-de-Loire/Patrimoine-protège2/Le-site-de-Vesvre-enquete-patrimoniale-pluri-disciplinaire-sur-un-site-archeologique-Neuvy-Deux-Clochers-Cher>. Accessed: 22/07/2019.

¹⁹⁰ Catteddu, *Archéologie médiévale*, p. 42.

and high-quality pottery) are found alongside facilities for agricultural management (grain silos, barns, stables and sickles), all enclosed within a 2500m² system of banks and ditches.¹⁹¹ Perhaps the most impressive *castra* are those such as Beaugency, which retain the capacity to impress today. Landric I built a 25m-high stone donjon at Beaugency in the early eleventh century (dated by dendrochronology to 1020-40), which had attracted surrounding churches and markets by the beginning of the twelfth century; it remains a vibrant village today.¹⁹²

However, this fundamental change in the material display of wealth and status at a local level emerges primarily in the written evidence through identifications.¹⁹³ It is no surprise, therefore, to see locative identities, toponymics expressed in the form *Quisque de Loco*, growing strongly in popularity throughout the period. By the 1150s it was the most common means of identification (at least in the surviving evidence), in a process long noted by historians.¹⁹⁴ This raises the issue with which we opened the chapter, that of the way in which Odo of Lignères is identified. Can his toponymic be interpreted to mean that he was the lord of Lignères? In Odo's particular case, it probably can, but the dynamics of identification examined in this chapter make it clear that this cannot be taken as a rule. Competition for status was fierce, in particular for those at the lower fringes

¹⁹¹ Catteddu, *Archéologie médiévale*, pp. 42-3; Jesset, 'Les formes d 'exploitation rurale ' in *Lumières de l'an mil*, pp. 91-3. Occupation at Ingré extended from the late tenth to the early twelfth centuries and may have belonged to, or been dependent on, the abbey of Notre-Dame de Chartres.

¹⁹² Livingstone, *Medieval Lives*, pp. 13-24; Victorine Mataouchek, 'Beaugency, la Tour César' in *Lumières de l'an mil en Orléanais; Autour du millénaire d'Abbon de Fleury*, (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 102-6.

¹⁹³ It is, of course, also mentioned in narrative sources, as well as occasionally in other ways: see, for example, the dating of a donation to St-Sulpice by Raoul of Déol's capture of the *castrum* of Étrechet (dep. Indre), St-Sulpice 108.

¹⁹⁴ Mazel, *Féodalités*, pp. 48-50; Dominique Barthélémy, 'Vendômois: Le système anthroponymique (Xe-milieu XIIIe siècles)' in *Genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne. Études d'anthroponymie médiévale: 1er et 2e rencontres - Azay-le-Ferron* (Tours, n.d.), pp. 35-60; Françoise Michaud, 'Le système anthroponymique en Berry et Nivernais d'après les cartulaires de Vierzon et de St-Cyr de Nevers (Xe-XIIIe siècles)' in *Genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne. Études d'anthroponymie médiévale: 1er et 2e rencontres - Azay-le-Ferron* (Tours, n.d.), pp. 87-112; Monique Bourin, 'Bilan de l'enquête: de la Picardie au Portugal, l'apparition du système anthroponymique a deux éléments et ses nuances régionales' in *Genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne. Études d'anthroponymie médiévale: 1er et 2e rencontres - Azay-le-Ferron* (Tours, n.d.), pp. 233-46.

of the lay élite, and we can quite clearly see cases of those who were not lords of a *castrum* adopting it as their toponymic. The III⁹ letter of the papal legate Conan of Prénest preserved in the cartulary of Vézelay presents a clear example.¹⁹⁵ It gives an account of the assault on the abbot of Vézelay by the followers [*clientela*] of Count William II of Nevers and ends with a list of the names of the perpetrators. It includes eight men with the toponymic of Monceaux-le-Comte, including Raymond, who is explicitly identified as the castle's provost. But none of them were its lord, for Monceaux was one of the main comital castles in the Nivernais.¹⁹⁶ There are other examples too, where charters of donation are witnessed by several individuals with the same locative identifications, only one of which is specified to be the *dominus*.¹⁹⁷ These are clear examples of locative identification intended to evoke status through association, rather than through a claim to dominion over a centre of power. Control of *castra* was (alongside control of, or alliances with, churches) vital to the acquisition of wealth and the exercise of political and military power, thus cementing post-Carolingian France as a multi-polar society, even on a local level.¹⁹⁸ The multi-polar nature is perhaps best expressed in the identification of Gilo of Sully as “*dominus of the castrum of Sully and of many other castra*” (*dominus Geilo Soliacensis castri et aliorum castrorum plurimorum*).¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Vézelay I:57.

¹⁹⁶ *Origo*.

¹⁹⁷ St-Sulpice 51 (Mehun-sur-Yèvre); AD Yonne H 1439 (Seignelay).

¹⁹⁸ This is the emerging consensus in recent research, displacing an older tradition in the Francophone historiography which was centred on defining the territoriality of power: see Mazel, *Féodalités*, pp.44-8; idem, ‘De quoi la principauté territoriale est-elle le nom? Réflexion sur les enjeux spatiaux des principautés «Françaises» (Xe- début XIIe siècle)’ in Geneviève Bührer-Thierry, Steffan Patzold and Jens Schneider (eds), *Genèse des espaces politiques (IXe-XIIe siècle); Autour de la question spatiale dans les royaumes Francs et postcarolingiens* (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 65-88.; Michel Lauwers, ‘De l’*incastellamento* a l’*ecclesiamento*: monachisme et logiques spatiales du féodalisme’ in Dominique Iogna-Prat, Michel Lauwers, Florian Mazel and Isabelle Rosé (eds) *Cluny, les moines et la société au premier âge féodal* (Rennes, 2013), pp. 315-38. For a discussion of the problems surrounding conceptions of territoriality and power, see Jérôme Monnet, ‘Le territoire comme télépouvoir. Bans, bandits et banlieues entre territorialités aréolaire et réticulaire’ in Geneviève Bührer-Thierry, Steffan Patzold and Jens Schneider (eds), *Genèse des espaces politiques (IXe-XIIe siècle); Autour de la question spatiale dans les royaumes Francs et postcarolingiens* (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 25-33. For an overview of the French historiography on territoriality, see Bührer-Thierry and Patzold, ‘Introduction’, in Bührer-Thierry *et al.* (eds), *Genèse des espaces*, pp. 7-21. Aside from the Carolingian system of *pagi*, there is little evidence for territorial conceptions of authority or power; two regionally-marginal exceptions are Cluny 2781 (witnessed by Landric of Nevers “*in comitatu Avalens*”) and St-Sulpice 74 (where the church of Augy-sur-Aubois is said to be in the *castellania* of Charenton-sur-Cher (both dep. Cher)).

¹⁹⁹ Vierzon 64.

Rather than expressing his status and power through office or through rule over a discrete area, the scribe saw the collection of individual castles in Gilo's *dominium* as the defining feature of his identification. The foundations of *castra* from the beginning of the tenth century, with a pronounced acceleration in instances towards the year 1000, the widespread and rapid adoption of the identifications of *miles* and *dominus* from the second half of the tenth century and the slow and steady rise in instances of toponymics from the same period are all connected. They are reactions to an increased competition for élite status that emerged from the erosion of a stable Carolingian social hierarchy and were fueled by the increasing availability of larger agricultural surpluses. The effect was to create an environment by the mid-twelfth century in which the titles of *miles* and *dominus* had become a given for lay élites, where identification by the *castrum* with which one had a connection was the norm and whose political dynamics were inextricably linked to a landscape of fortresses.²⁰⁰

It should be stressed that these changes were not the only changes in identification practices in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Other developments are not as rapid or pronounced, but nevertheless profoundly changed how persons were identified, leading to the binominal system of identification (name plus surname) common today.²⁰¹ These developments are seen in the evidence from the middle Loire valley mainly in the use of sobriquets - personal nicknames - which eventually evolve into true surnames.²⁰² Occasionally such sobriquets appear to be an effort to evoke the status of those who bore them, such as the father and son Sarlo the Noble and Sarlo the Rich, who donated to St-Sulpice around the turn of the twelfth century.²⁰³ But in the vast majority of cases they were based on physical characteristics (Geoffrey the Black, Archembald the White, Haineric the Fat, Raynald the Stout, Arnulf the Twisted, Robert the Old ²⁰⁴), occupations (Geoffrey

²⁰⁰ This is the world visible in Suger, *VLG*. Cf. Naus, *Constructing Kingship*.

²⁰¹ Bourin, 'Bilan de l'enquete' in *Genese médiévale de l'anthroponymie*, pp. 233-46.

²⁰² Such sobriquets seem to have been used not only in formal identification but in everyday interactions, as testified by the examples preserved in the vernacular: St-Sulpice 63, 65; Vierzon III.

²⁰³ St-Sulpice 62, 63.

²⁰⁴ Vierzon 54, ARTEM 4436, AD Loiret H 163; Vierzon 58; St-Sulpice 34, 9.

the hunter, Arnulf the *medicus*, Anselm the shoemaker, Godo the goldsmith²⁰⁵) or even more personal traits (Clement the heretic or Geoffrey ‘Evil Hand’²⁰⁶). Patronymics are another identification method that appears regularly, particularly in Berry, which has little obvious relationship to claims of élite status (unless the father or other family member is immediately identifiable by reputation).²⁰⁷ Competition for élite status was clearly only one of a variety of factors which drove the experimentation in identification practices in the centuries around the turn of the first millennium.

IX

There is, however, one final identification practice which appears from the eleventh century that has important implications for how status was constructed at the very lowest margins of élite lay society - functional identification through office. Unlike Carolingian identification through office, which implied the office-holder’s direct connections with the royal court, the offices which appear in the documentary evidence from the post-Carolingian period are the household and administrative offices of the seigneurie. The best known of these are the royal household offices, which have been well-studied from their emergence in the eleventh-century, first attested in the middle Loire valley in the entourage of Henry I at Orléans in 1057.²⁰⁸ They are a common sight as witnesses in royal diplomas from the time of Philip I.²⁰⁹ But these kinds of offices are found in élite (lay and ecclesiastical) as well as royal entourages, occasionally even earlier than attested for the king.²¹⁰ The lords of Vierzon had a steward (*dapifer*) as early as

²⁰⁵ Vierzon 40; AD Nièvre H 356-I, no. 3; St-Cyr 75; St-Sulpice 76.

²⁰⁶ Cluny 3724; AD Nièvre H 356-I, no. 3.

²⁰⁷ For example: ARTEM 2799/AD Loiret H 173; ARTEM 4566/AD Loiret H 170; Fleury 79; Vierzon 33, 45, 52, 54, 55, 58; St-Sulpice 33, 42.

²⁰⁸ Ste-Croix 43/Cat. H I 109. The first known mention of these officers is from a 1043 diploma of Henry I; Cat. H I 65. On development of the *grand officiers*, see Jean-Francois Lemarignier, *Le gouvernement royal aux premiers temps capétiens (987-1108)*, pp. 148-59; Éric Bournazel, *Le gouvernement capétien au XIIe siècle, 1108-1180. Structures sociales et mutations institutionnelles* (Limoges, 1975), pp. 93-128.

²⁰⁹ For example Fleury 77/Rec. Ph I 32; Micy 29/Rec. Ph I 77; Rec. L VI 148/Cluny 3936; Rec. L VI 194; Rec. L VI 323; AD Loiret H 163 (1); AD Cher 5 H 65; AD Cher 4H 455/St-Sulpice 66 + sup. 7.

²¹⁰ As recognised by Lemarignier, with reference to Normandy and Anjou; Lemarignier,

1025, while their relations the lords of Dun had one in the third quarter of the eleventh century.²¹¹ There was a monastic seneschal at Fleury by 1070.²¹² Household officers were common by the early twelfth century, as bishops, counts, lords and ecclesiastical communities began to function as small-scale, royal-style courts (*curiae*), complete with writing offices, seals and even chancellors.²¹³ While seals had previously been restricted to kings, all four bishops in the region were sealing their charters by 1150, as were the counts of Nevers.²¹⁴ Even less esteemed élites, such as the cathedral chapters of St-Étienne in Auxerre and St-Étienne in Bourges, the canons of St-Euvert and the deacon of Ste-Croix in Orléans, the monastery of Micy, the canons of St-Satur-sous-Sancerre and the lords of Seignelay were all confirming charters with a seal.²¹⁵ By the mid-twelfth century, the structure of the *curia*, even if only at a local, seigneurial level, was becoming a mainstay in not only the vocabulary of identification, but also that of status.

The dominance of toponymic identifications and the growing prestige of courtly offices are a testament to an increasing social stability (one might say conservatism) in the twelfth century. It resembles in many ways the late Carolingian patterns of identification analysed in the first part of this chapter - a heavy emphasis is placed, either explicitly (through office-holding) or implicitly (through a locative identification with a *castrum*), on the personal relationships between the identified person and a higher élite from which they derived their status. What had changed was the framework in which these hierarchical identifications were made. Rather than a kingdom-wide context, where the ultimate source of élite identification was an elevated position within a hierarchy

Gouvernement royal, p. 148, n. 29.

²¹¹ Vierzon 32; St-Sulpice 9.

²¹² Fleury 79.

²¹³ The role of signs and seals in establishing personal identity has been frequently discussed by historians, usually in the context of later medieval Europe: see, for example, Bedos-Rezak, 'Medieval Identity', *AHR* 105, pp. 1489-1533; Valentin Groebner, *Who Are You? Identification, Deception and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe* (New York, NY, 2007), pp. 39-64. Chancellors: AD Loiret H 163; BNF ms Lat. 10089, p. 318 (1149, Lords of Beaugency); Micy 39 (1106, Bishop of Orléans); AD Cher B H 74, no. 1 (Bishop of Nevers).

²¹⁴ Examples: Micy 39 (Orléans); St-Étienne Nevers 6 (Bishop and Count of Nevers); AD Yonne H 1406-6 (Bishop of Auxerre); BNF ms. Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1274, fol. 48r (Archbishop of Bourges); AD Yonne H 1405-1 (Count of Nevers)

²¹⁵ AD Yonne H 1406-6; AD Yonne H 1215-1; Ste-Croix 377, 9; AD Loiret H 7; BNF ms. Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1274, fol. 234v.

of *Königsnähe*, twelfth-century identifications take place almost entirely with a local (or, at best, a regional) frame of reference. These localities were defined by the *castra* from which persons drew their toponymics and in which men competed to hold seigneurial household office.²¹⁶ This radically altered framework was made possible by the equally radical changes in identification patterns which occurred in the century between 950 and 1050, or rather the social changes which allowed those identification patterns to shift. These shifting patterns are further evidence of a fundamental rupture of the Carolingian social framework which allowed local lay élites huge freedom to claim higher status and even regional dominance, through association with the monumental architecture of *castra* and the prestigious titles of *dominus* and *miles* which soon became associated with them. As we have seen, these claims to higher social status were ephemeral and processual; they were not always permanent or successful, and new identifications may not have always stuck. But those who were successful took full advantage, reshaping the social and political landscape around them. When looking for an explanation for the stabilisation of identifications in the decades leading up to and following 1100, these men who began to establish *curiae* and hierarchies around themselves - now that they were well-established local lords and ecclesiastical élites - must surely be the most likely suspects. The slow pulling-up of the ladder to knightly and seigneurial status was deliberate, and one which cemented a fundamentally 'feudal' world in France until 1789.

²¹⁶ Cf. Robert Fossier's ideas of *encellulement* and Wickham's adoption of them, above, Chap I. See also Crouch, *Birth of Nobility*, pp. 200-7, for a similar view of 'localisation', relating primarily to England.

Conclusions

‘How were claims to elite status made in the middle Loire valley in the early and central Middle Ages? How and why did the nature of these claims change through time and space?’

These guiding questions, set out in the Introduction to this thesis, can now be considered to have been answered, although inevitably new issues have been raised in doing so. Élite status in the Loire valley during the late Carolingian period was heavily linked to personal connections to the royal court and the local frameworks of the offices of bishop and count. These connections allowed for the visible identification of an individual with royal power, through office holding and participation in the performative granting of royal diplomas. The same connections also allowed access to the large and dispersed landed estates of the Carolingian higher elite (whether via ecclesiastical office-holding or royal benefices). The movable wealth drawn from those properties could be re-invested in ‘treasures’ to further enhance status and prestige in the vibrant cultural *milieu* of the Carolingian *Reichsaristokratie*, or used to found or endow churches and monasteries.¹ From the tenth century onwards, these strategies which had been used to claim elite status began to change. Increasing numbers of lay people were involved in the ownership and profits of landholding, as precarial grants and benefices spread beyond the immediate circles of the royal court to local churches in the tenth century, culminating the widespread practice of complex hierarchical tenure found in the eleventh century.² The emergence of seignorial customs and rights further enhanced the wealth of local elites, while simultaneously claiming higher status through their domination of those upon whom the *seigneurie* was

¹ Le Jan, *Société au haut Moyen Age*, pp. 164-6; eadem, *Famille et pouvoir*, pp. 60-76; eadem, ‘Prendre, accumuler, détruire’ in Devroey, Feller and le Jan (eds), *Les élites et la richesse*, pp. 365-89; see above, Chap II.

² Above, chap II.

imposed.³ The key consequence of these changes was the increased access to wealth for local élites and the gradual disappearance from local society of the hyper-wealthy, trans-regional *Reicharistokratie* of the Carolingian empire.

The newly-enriched élites of the middle Loire valley mobilised their increased resources in pursuit of an enhanced social status, engendering a fiercely competitive social environment which perpetuated the need for more wealth, more seignurial revenues and grander claims of élite status. In spite of the ever-presence of social hierarchies in an economic landscape of tenurial rights and seigneurial obligations, formal links to social superiors were not emphasised to nearly the same extent in the post-Carolingian era as in the previous period; élite status was more individualistic, demonstrated through horizontal relationships with churches and peers, the domination of small local territories (usually centred on castles) and (for the laity) the capacity for violence, encapsulated in the title of *miles*.⁴ These new claims to status were put forward publicly in ways which almost always revolved around the wealth of the élite, whether through the donation of lands or rights to the church resulting in a ritual connection to the ecclesiastical community, or through the pursuit and defense of one's perceived rights through threats and acts of violence.⁵ The élite stratum of the middle Loire Valley in the early twelfth century was wealthier, broader and more localised than their counterparts in the late ninth century; the avenues available to them to express and claim their status were more varied and malleable. The result was a society which was significantly more complex, both socially and economically. For élites in the 'feudal age', it was not vertical ties of oath and homage which were essential to French society. Instead, it was the exploitative relations of the *seigneurie* which drew wealth upwards from the agricultural base, and the horizontal relationships with peers and religious institutions, mediated through violence and ritual, which were the defining characteristics of the transition from the Carolingian period.

This process was not simply a shift in the size, relative wealth or geographical

³ Above, chap III.

⁴ Above, chap VI.

⁵ Above, chaps. IV, V.

horizons of the élite - the social structures of the middle Loire valley in 1100 were not simply those of the Carolingian empire writ small.⁶ The more localised élites which have been at the heart of this study did not simply adopt the affectations of the counts, bishops and *vassi dominici* of the ninth century, through a process of 'cultural diffusion' by which symbols and ideas of power and prestige migrated downward from the king and his court to the localities.⁷ All of the strategies for claiming élite status discussed in this thesis had their roots in Carolingian (or earlier) practice and it would be wrong to deny some level of continuity from the earlier period. It is important not to overstate this point, however. The élites of the tenth and eleventh centuries adapted the heritage and practices of the ninth, rather than simply conserving or copying them in more localised contexts. These adaptations resulted in a new vocabulary of status claims, one which was more suited to the localised contexts of the period and with which aspiring élites could innovate and customise to assert their status more powerfully in an increasingly competitive environment. Military prowess was a feature of Carolingian élite identity, but as the capacity for violence (and the subsequent recognition of the right to exercise violence) became markers of status, lay élites could more easily assert their claims in a society without annual musters led by the king, but in which disputes and competition over economic resource were becoming more common. When Carolingian aristocrats donated to or founded churches, rituals appear to have played a key part in the performance of status, but as lay donations rapidly increased in the tenth and eleventh centuries, liturgical interventions, burial rights and grants of *societas* became key strategies for élites to continually claim local prominence by forming a more lasting bond with the churches who received their gifts. The holding of benefices and the exactions of tolls and rents were features of the ninth-century economic landscape, but their rapid spread from the end of the tenth century meant that they would become the cornerstone of élite wealth in France until the eighteenth century. Much like the late antique period did with the culture of the Roman empire, the élites of the middle Loire valley in the central

⁶ Cf. Barton, *Lordship in Maine*, pp. 14-16.

⁷ Suggested by Georges Duby and David Crouch as a explanation for the processes of social change in the period: Duby, *Chivalrous Society*, pp. 171-7; Crouch, *Birth of Nobility*, pp. 207-21.

middle ages valued their Carolingian heritage, but moulded and shaped its practices to suit their own purposes. In doing so, they fundamentally transformed the practices themselves.

It could be argued that the changes which this study has uncovered are artificial or overestimated, as a result of the paucity of evidence for the ninth and early tenth centuries in the region. As has repeatedly been emphasised, it is difficult to trace local élites, particularly those below comital level, before the middle of the tenth century.⁸ Nor, indeed, should absence of evidence necessarily be construed as evidence of absence. There were, almost certainly, vibrant local élites across the middle Loire valley under Charlemagne and his descendants, but their activities, influence and relationships with the church and the representatives of the royal court were radically different than what can be seen in the evidence from the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁹ To claim that the practices of local élites explored here are simply the result of better, or more detailed documentation, rather than the product of genuine social and economic developments is flawed, on two levels. Firstly, it ignores or downplays the small, but existing, corpus of evidence for sub-comital local élites before 950, which shows a society far less concerned with status-competition than that which emerged over the following century.¹⁰ Secondly, to assume continuity by projecting back from later documents and practices, while far more widespread in medieval history than often realised, is methodologically risky. It underestimates the capacity for societies and individuals to change rapidly over a short period of time, while also ignoring the fact that the same social or cultural impulses which may have led to the emergence of the later evidence may well have influenced the performance of the actions recorded, rather than simply prompted its recording.¹¹ It may be that one should not bet against continuity in history, but neither should one seek to impose continuity upon every

⁸ For example, chap II; chap VI.

⁹ Chris Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, pp. 388-92; Costambeys *et al.*, *Carolingian World*, pp. 88-91, 169. Most of these assumptions are based on better documented regions for the earlier period, particularly in the eastern half of the empire: Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages; The Middle Rhine Valley, 400 - 1000* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 118-40, 180-225.

¹⁰ For example Fleury 37, 38; ARTEM 2795; Vézelay II:7, II:8; St-Sulpice 12, 30, 40; St-Cyr 17, 40, 44.

¹¹ Cf. West, *Reframing*, pp. 180-1; above, Chap. I.

issue in need of interpretation.¹² The most convincing and logical interpretation for the mass of evidence in the centuries either side of the year 1000 point to a radical change in social and economic structures.

Is this a victory for the *mutationiste* position? Do the conclusions of this thesis support the continued validity of the idea of a 'Feudal Revolution'? The short answer to these questions is 'No'. While this study would fall quite naturally into the recent trend of work re-emphasising change over continuity in the period after 888 in the former Carolingian Empire, the criticisms attracted by the works of Poly and Bournazel and Bisson since the 1990s has exposed too many fundamental weaknesses in these models of change.¹³ In particular, the chronology of the changes outlined here do not support the idea of a rapid change, visible within the space of a decade or so. The earliest evidence of status-competition, increasingly independent identification strategies and the requests for greater spiritual counter-gifts, comes from the middle of the tenth century. Many of the most important economic changes, in landholding patterns and the prevalence of seigneurial customs, are not fully evident until the first decades of the eleventh century. These developments continue into the twelfth century. What is significant in the middle Loire valley is not the pace of the changes in society, but how these changes totally reshaped the social environment for lay and ecclesiastical élites alike.

In this respect, there are two primary contributions this study makes to our wider understanding of the transformation of Western Francia after the Carolingian period. Firstly is the recognition that economic changes, in particular the increasing share of agricultural wealth which was being directed to local élites, whether they were castle-based *domini* and *milites* or the clergy and monks of religious institutions, by hierarchical tenure and seigneurial customs were a key feature which allowed these transformations to take place. The chronologies derived from the surviving evidence would suggest that these economic changes were not necessarily the catalyst for social change, but they were certainly the

¹² Cf. Bisson, 'Feudal Revolution' *P&P* 142, p. 9.

¹³ See above, chap. I.

engine which propelled it onwards, as ever increasing competition for status incentivised the spread of new practices of exploitation.¹⁴ The second key contribution is that the drivers of this transformation were local élites seeking to enhance their status, rather than the traditional figureheads of political history: kings, dukes, counts and bishops. In particular, the sub-comital élite which were so difficult to trace in the Carolingian period became the social trend-setters, defining their status by reconfiguring their relationships with their local churches through donations and patronage, with each other through violence and tenurial links and with the peasantry and non-élites through the imposition of the *seigneurie banale*. Taken together, these contributions allow us to see more clearly how the decades and centuries after the collapse of the Carolingian empire in the middle Loire Valley witnessed one of the most fundamental transformations of economy and society in medieval European history.

¹⁴ The collapse of traditional political structures associated with Carolingian kingship in the first half of the tenth century thus remains the most viable explanation for the beginning of these transformations; to continue the engineering analogy, political disintegration was likely the starter motor which set in motion the economic engine.

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