Proceedings Paper:

Priestly Provision at the Periphery: Building the Church in Tenth-Century Catalonia

Abstract

In standard accounts of Christian expansion into the frontier with Islam in early medieval Iberia, if the Church plays a rôle it is the monastic church, operating as frontier land developer. Alternatively, this action is left to pioneer peasantry or acquisitive warlords, with the Church only following. Close-up study of the activities of priests around the Catalan frontier town of Manresa, however, shows a collegiate secular Church structure building up frontier infrastructure well in advance of developing monasticism. These peripheral priests wove neighbourhoods into larger Church networks which were the first institutional structures to develop in this area. Such a pattern may also characterise similar areas elsewhere.

Priestly Provision at the Periphery: Building the Church in Tenth-Century Catalonia[*]

Introduction

Catalonia's position on the frontier between what have become Spain and France has made it the sort of periphery which can be critical to a ruling core, but which rarely directs core policy, despite some economic importance.[1] Only in the Middle Ages can a Catalonia be found that was not governed either from a distant centre to which its counties were, if not peripheral, at least secondary – such as the united Spanish crown – or by a Catalonia-based power whose legitimacy derived from elsewhere, such as the kings of Aragón. To complicate matters, medieval Catalonia was not a unit, but a disparate set of counties initially grouped under rival families of counts, not all related.[2] Nonetheless, from the tenth century, the growing importance of the count-marquises of Barcelona gave this 'pre-Catalonia' its own peripheries, initially in the Pyrenees, but more famously thereafter in the 'no-man's land'

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[1] Outlines in a huge literature: Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: the Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley, 1989), and Flocel Sabaté, 'Catalonia Among the Long-Standing Regions of Europe', in idem, ed., *Historical Analysis of Catalan Identity* (Bern, 2015), 13–28.

[2] An accessible account is Thomas N. Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon: a Short History* (Oxford, 2000).

between Christian and Muslim polities to the south-west.[3] Over the following centuries, accelerated by the collapse of Umayyad rule at Córdoba after 1013 CE, that space was filled, in a process many scholars no longer call *Reconquesta* (Sp. *Reconquista*).[4] But in the tenth century, the south-western edge of this cohering space was substantially ungoverned, and subject to pioneer efforts by various agencies, the agency in which is a matter of historiographic debate. This article's task is to reassert the secular Church as a factor in that debate.

A good place to start is the city of Manresa. One of the Catalan counties' more substantial urban foci, Manresa was also one of the furthest-flung, an originally Roman town deep in the Llobregat Valley.[5] It was not the seat of a count, centre of a county or an episcopal see. For these functions Manresa looked to the older city of Vic d'Osona to its north-east.[6] Vic's

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[3] Both the terms 'pre-Catalonia,' and in this context, 'no man's land,' originate in the work of Ramon d'Abadal i de Vinyals, for which see especially Ramon d'Abadal, 'La pre-Catalunya (segles VIII-XI)', in Ferran Soldevila, ed., *Història dels Catalans*, 5 vols, 2nd edn (Barcelona, 1970), 2: 601–991, and Abadal, *Els primers comtes catalans*, Biografies catalans: sèrie històrica 1, 2nd ed. (Barcelona, 1965), esp. 73–114. For the newest account of the area in this period, see Cullen J. Chandler, *Carolingian Catalonia: Politics, Culture, and Identity in an Imperial Province, 778–987*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4th Series 111 (Cambridge, 2019), and for historiography, idem, 'Carolingian Catalonia: The Spanish March and the Franks, c.750-c.1050', *History Compass* 11 (2013), 739–50.

[4] Alejandro García Sanjuán, 'Cómo desactivar una bomba historiográfica: la pervivencia actual del paradigma de la Reconquista', in Carlos de Ayala Martínez, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes and J. Santiago Palacios Ontalva, ed., *La Reconquista: ideología y justificación de la Guerra Santa peninsular*, Historia & Arte 5 (Madrid, 2019), 99–119.

[5] Philip Banks, 'Las ciudades y su papel', in Jordi Camps, ed., *Cataluña en la época carolingia: arte y cultura antes del románico (siglos IX y X)* (Barcelona, 1999), 65–71, ET 'The Cities and their Role', in *ibid.*, 451–55. For Manresa specifically see notes 26 and 27 below.

[6] On Vic, see Ramon Ordeig i Mata, *Els orígens històrics de Vic (segles VIII-X)*, Osona a la butxaca 1 (Vic, 1981), online at: <http://www.patronatestudisosonencs.cat/uploads/files/Els_origens_historics_de_Vic.pdf>, accessed 30 July 2018; M. Dolors Molas i Font, Imma Ollich i Castanyer and Antoni Caballé i Crivillés, 'De l'Auso romana al Vicus Ausonensis medieval', *Ausa*, 33/161–162 (2008), 719–22, online at: <http://raco.cat/index.php/Ausa/article/view/128429>, accessed 17 October 2014.

bishop acted as distant head of Manresa's clergy and to an extent in the place of a count; mostly, however, the town and its church were left to govern themselves.[7] It is, nonetheless, quite well documented, which allows a close study of how the Church was established, or reestablished, in this peripheral zone.

Debate over Frontier Settlement

There is already a competing pair of standard answers for how this happened.[8] Peasants might begin a settlement venture themselves, or with capital provided by an aristocrat or monastery with conditions involving dependence or renders. Once established, they might demand or even construct protection through fortifications. Alternatively, deeper needs of defence against Muslim raids might press the authorities to establish fortifications first, after which settlers would move in under their protective shadow or because of incentives offered by relevant patrons. Either way, before long they would need a church. With that church's (re-)establishment, Christianity's periphery was extended another step closer to Islam's.

The agencies that founded churches in this zone are also debated. It is accepted that monasteries, aristocrats and bishops all did so,[9] but the balance between them is contested.

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[7] The bishop's position is clear in *Catalunya carolíngia Volum IV: els comtats d'Osona i Manresa*, ed. Ramon Ordeig i Mata, 3 vols, Memòries de la Secció Històrico-Arqueològica 53 (Barcelona, 1999), 1: 365−77 (doc. no. 182). Digital access is via 'CatCar', December 2019, online at: <https://catcar.iec.cat/documents>, accessed 25 February 2024. As this edition contains almost all the primary material for the rest of the paper, references to it hereafter are abbreviated as CC4 + document number.

[8] Compare Paul Freedman, *The Origins of Peasant Servitude in Medieval Catalonia* (Cambridge, 1991), 56−88, for peasant initiative, with Flocel Sabaté Curull, 'Las tierras nuevas en los condados del nordeste peninsular (siglos X-XII)', *Studia Historica: Historia Medieval* 33 (2005), 139–70, online at: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=1704747>, accessed 9 March 2014, for military and aristocratic priorities.

[9] Bishops in early medieval Catalonia were sometimes aristocrats, of course, but we can rarely show this. I prefer here to separate laymen, who held the rights to land on which churches lay but did not supervise the

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Moreover, some communities took the initiative themselves, as shown by the acts of consecration of the resulting churches.[10] These documents, almost unique to Catalonia, show us bishops being brought out to areas that are sometimes not subsequently documented for decades, but which on such occasions still engaged with central authority.[11] The Church on the periphery was thus one engine of that authority's expansion.

<u>Nature of the Frontier</u>

There is, of course, an extensive historiography about the nature of frontiers, now and in the Middle Ages.[12] Its competing typologies of the frontier suggest the need to make clear

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ministry, from bishops, whose business was the ministry and who did not need rights over the land to have rights over its churches.

[10] On these see Ramon Ordeig i Mata, 'La consagració i la dotació d'esglésies a Catalunya en les segles IX-XI', in Frederic Udina i Martorell, ed., *Symposium internacional sobre els orígens de Catalunya (segles VIII-XI)*, 2 vols (Barcelona, 1991), 2: 85–101, online at: <http://www.raco.cat/index.php/MemoriasRABL/article/view/202475>, accessed 1 July 2014.

[11] Wendy Davies, 'Local Priests in Northern Iberia' in Steffen Patzold and Carine van Rhijn, eds, *Men in the Middle: Local Priests in Early Medieval Europe*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 93 (Berlin, 2016), 125–44, online at: <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/24650>, accessed 28 November 2023, at 137 & n. 55, cites three from further west in the Iberian Peninsula. One Catalan example is studied in Jonathan Jarrett, 'Centurions, Alcalas, and *Christiani perversi*: Organisation of Society in the pre-Catalan "Terra de Ningú"', in †Alan Deyermond and Martin Ryan, eds, *Early Medieval Spain: a Symposium*, Papers of the Hispanic Research Seminar 63 (London, 2010), 97–127, at 104–08.

[12] This immense literature cannot be summarised in a note. A recent introduction to each of global, medieval and Iberian levels is found respectively in Brett Bowden, 'Frontiers—Old, New, and Final', *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 25 (2020), 671–86; Giles Constable, 'Frontiers in the Middle Ages', in O. Merisalo, ed., *Frontiers in the Middle Ages*, Textes et études du Moyen Âge 35 (Turnhout, 2006), 3–28; and Philippe Sénac, 'En guise d'introduction : quelques observations sur l'historiographie récente de la frontière dans l'Espagne médiévale (VIIIe-XIIIe siècles)', in Sébastien Gasc, Philippe-Claude Sénac, Clément Venco and Carlos Laliena Corbera, eds, *Las fronteras pirenaicas en la Edad Media (siglos VI-XV). Les frontières pyrénéennes au Moyen Âge (VIe-XVe siècles)* (Zaragoza, 2018), 13–24.

what kind of frontier is envisaged in this article.[13] Likewise, in the light of anthropologically informed scholarship suggesting that borders have meaning only because of being enacted, it is worth asking who in this article's understanding did the 'borderwork' of constructing a periphery as different from the spaces on either side of it.[14]

The traditional dyad of open or closed frontiers, usually but wrongly attributed to Frederick Jackson Turner, is of limited help here.[15] The space beyond the developing edge of the Catalan counties clearly had geographical depth. From Manresa to the nearest then-Muslim city, Lleida, was and is a 100-km distance, and Manresa was itself somewhat of an outpost; from Lleida to Barcelona or Vic, governmental centre to governmental centre, is 160 km. Much of the space between them was thinly populated, settled only by dispersed *villa* communities arrayed over some distance around their notional centres (often churches) or in isolated homesteads not part of wider units (and thus usually unknown to us except by archaeology).[16] What Turner called 'free land' was widely available, but people to exploit it were not.[17] In this sense this frontier was 'open'; but since there was also a substantial power on its far side, it was finite and therefore also 'closed'. On the Christian side, a network of

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[13] For some theoretical approaches, see Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, 'Theorizing Borders: An Interdisciplinary Perspective', *Geopolitics* 10 (2005), 633–49.

[14] Chris Rumford, 'Citizen Vernacular: The Case of Borderwork' in idem, ed., *Cosmopolitan Borders* (London, 2014), 22–38.

[15] Not in fact present in Turner's essay, which has many versions; here is used Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History', in *The Frontier in American History* (New York City, NY, 1921), 1–38, online at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm>, accessed 28 June 2021.

[16] Eduardo Manzano Moreno, 'Christian-Muslim Frontier in al-Andalus: Idea and Reality', in Dionisius Agius and Richard Hitchcock, eds, *Arab Influence upon Medieval Europe*, Folia scholastica mediterranea 18 (Reading, IL, 1994), 83–96, at 94–96.

[17] Turner, 'Significance', 18–22; cf. David A. Nichols, 'Civilization Over Savage: Frederick Jackson Turner and the Indian', *South Dakota History* 2 (1972), 383–405.

fortresses spread into this zone from points of established government; some also existed outside central control.[18] The historiography in recent decades has de-emphasised emptiness and emphasised the existence of 'unconnected' populations in these zones, whom sources from the centre considered bandits or heretics, if they even mentioned them. Even so, few would deny a lower population density in these areas than in those under more established governmental, and ecclesiastical, provision.[19] As to enaction of this frontier, such 'bordering' was partly done by scribes who referred to such locations as being in *marcis*, *marginis*, *limitibus* and so on, even though they also recorded established land tenure and boundaries there; however, it was also done by settlers who moved there to occupy land under favourable conditions which did not pertain closer to home, even though they probably had to compete for such lands with locals.[20] A difference about these spaces was recognised, if sometimes exaggerated, by contemporaries.[21] In accordance with the writings of those contemporaries, this article therefore understands this frontier as a space of low population density, with its population grouped sporadically, unrecognised by most wider governmental structures.

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[18] Sabaté, 'Las tierras nuevas'. For a castle outside central control see: *Cartulario de «Sant Cugat» del Vallés*, ed. José Rius [Serra], 4 vols, Textos y Estudios de la Corona de Aragón 3−5 and index vol. ed. Federico Udina Martorell (Madrid, 1945−47 and Barcelona, 1981), 2: 94−96 (doc. no. 449).

[19] Manzano, 'Ideal and Reality'; Jarrett, 'Centurions, Alcalas, and *Christiani perversi*'.

[20] For charter language, see: Julia M. H. Smith, '"Fines Imperii": the Marches', in Rosamond McKitterick, ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History Volume II:* c. *700*-c. *900* (Cambridge, 1995), 169–89, at 176−77; for settlers, see: Freedman, *Peasant Servitude*, 56−88; for competition, see: Jonathan Jarrett, 'Settling the Kings' Lands: *Aprisio* in Catalonia in Perspective', *EME* 18 (2010), 320–42.

[21] Jarrett, 'Centurions, Alcalas and *Christiani perversi*'.

The Church and the Historiography

There is, as said, a reasonably settled paradigm that describes how and whence that population was increased and brought under authority.[22] The settling agency is almost always reckoned as monastic. This paradigm is quite easy to substantiate in the sources, but raises two problems which this article seeks to address.[23]

First is the peripheral Church itself. The standard paradigm tends to assume a starting position of no Church presence, and then an outside agency setting some up which, eventually, became sufficiently complex to develop something like a parochial structure.[24] This presents two difficulties. Firstly, it is clear from archaeology, especially from Santa Margarida de Martorell north-north-east of Barcelona, that churches could and did operate in these unconnected areas despite the lack of a supporting ecclesiastical structure, in Santa

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[22] Jonathan Jarrett, 'Engaging Élites: Counts, Capital and Frontier Communities in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries, in Catalonia and Elsewhere', *Networks and Neighbours* 2 (2014), 202–30, online at: <https://nnthejournal.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/nn-2-2-jarrett-engaging-elites1.pdf>, accessed 5 September 2024.

[23] The idea of the monastery as frontier developer probably originates, albeit in passing, with Charles Julian Bishko, 'Salvus of Albelda and Frontier Monasticism in Tenth Century Navarre', *Speculum* 33 (1948), 559–90, reprinted in Bishko, *Studies in Medieval Spanish Frontier History*, Collected Studies 124 (London, 1980), no. 1, but has been developed particularly by scholars of Cistercians, both in Catalonia (Lawrence J. McCrank, 'The Cistercians of Poblet as medieval frontiersmen: an historiographic essay and case study', in *Estudios en homenaje a don Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz en sus 90 años: anexos de Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 6 vols (Buenos Aires, 1983), 2: 313–60) and more widely (see Emilia Jamroziak and Karen Stöber, eds, *Monasteries on the Borders of Medieval Europe: Conflict and Cultural Interaction*, Medieval Church Studies 28 [Turnhout, 2013]). Two local studies of monasteries doing such work, among others: David Guasch i Dalmau, 'L'activitat repobladora del monestir de Sant Cugat del Vallès vers el Penedès al darrer quart dels segle X i primer de l'XI', *Miscel·lània penedesenca* 26 (2001), 111–40, and Jonathan Jarrett, 'Power over Past and Future: Abbess Emma and the Nunnery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses', *EME* 12 (2003), 229–58, at 240–48.

[24] For example, Ramon Ordeig i Mata, 'Cel·les monàstiques vinculades a Guifré el Pelós i a la seva obra repobladora (vers 871-897)', ed. S. Claramunt and A. Riera, *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Mediaevalia* 22 (2001), 89–119.

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Margarida's case for six centuries before making it to written record.[25] So, ecclesiastical ground zero should not always be assumed. Secondly, there is an intermediate step unexplored: what happened between the first church consecration and the completion of the parish structure and who brought it about? In this, the first churches and their incumbent clergy must have been critical.

Manresa and its Church

These are issues that the records from around Manresa can help us address. Hundreds of documents survive covering the city's area following the Frankish conquest of the area in the early ninth century. Despite this, almost everything which has been written about Manresa in this era is by one man, Albert Benet i Clarà.[26] Benet catalogued the area's churches as they appear in the documentary record, but for the processes behind their appearance he was reliant on the paradigm outlined above.[27] Neither, despite his close acquaintance with the city, did Benet make it one of his case studies of frontier development, focusing instead on the county around Manresa and the development of lay jurisdictions there. This makes sense for

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[25] For Santa Margarida see Centre d'Estudis Martorellencs, 'Santa Margarida', 7 August 2020, online at: <https://sites.google.com/a/intranetcem.net/santa-margarida/>, accessed 17 July 2024; or in English eidem, 'The archaeological site', 3 January 2011, online at: <http://www.infocem.net/publicacions/guiasm-ang.pdf>, accessed 17 July 2024.

[26] Especially Albert Benet i Clarà, *L'expansió del comtat de Manresa*, Episodis de la història 255 (Barcelona, 1982) and Benet, *Història de Manresa, dels orígens al segle XI* (Manresa, 1985).

[27] Indeed, Albert Benet i Clarà, 'Castells i llinies de reconquesta', in Udina, ed., *Symposium internacional*, 1: 365–91, online at: <http://www.raco.cat/index.php/MemoriasRABL/article/view/202539>, accessed 1 July 2014, is as clear a formulation of that paradigm as exists. For the church catalogue see Benet, *Història de Manresa*, 63–80. Much rescue archaeology has been carried out around Manresa, but it has yet to be synthesized: Jordi Gibert Rebull, 'L'alta edat mitjana a la Catalunya central (segles VI-XI): Estudi històric i arqueològic de la conca mitjana del Riu Llobregat', *Butlletí de la Societat Catalana d'Estudis Històrics*, 23 (2012), 353–85, doi: 10.2436/20.1001.01.98, is a beginning.

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frontier development as Benet understood it: its first step was fortification, which was for him primarily the task of lay noble landowners, not the Church.[28]

Since Benet wrote, two things have happened which allow for a more detailed treatment of Manresa as a peripheral Church in development. The first is a swing in the wider scholarship of frontiers and borderlands from studying processes of political control and settlement by outsiders to studying the experiences and everyday strategies of the emplaced inhabitants of the border.[29] The second is the full publication of almost every surviving document covering the area up to the year 1000 as part of the century-long *Catalunya Carolíngia* project, with painstaking indices and now digital search, making available to all data that even Benet did not have.[30] The area has also been mapped in the ongoing *Atles dels comtats de la Catalunya carolíngia*, fixing many obscure locations.[31] With that apparatus to hand, it is possible to identify some of the local Church's principal figures, determine their spheres of action and rebalance the agency in their organisation between the usually-dominant monastic colonisation and the organic expansion of local secular Church provision.

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[28] Benet, *Expansió*, focuses on rural settlement, and is very short. Benet's other studies include *Sallent, dels orígens al segle XIII*, Episodis de la història 220 (Barcelona, 1977); *idem*, 'La repoblació de la Segarra a l'alta Edat Mitjana (segles IX-XI)', *Palestra universitària*, 3 (1988), 279–95; and *idem*, 'La repoblació del Bages a l'alta Edat Mitjana', in *XXVI Assemblea intercomarcal d'estudiosos: Manresa, 17-18 octubre, 1981*, 2 vols (Manresa, 1984), 1: 39–47; as well as innumerable articles in Jordi Vigué and Antoni Pladevall, eds, *Catalunya romànica*, 27 vols (Barcelona, 1984–97). For his frontier development paradigm, see Benet, 'Castells i llínies de reconquesta', and *idem*, 'Castells, guàrdies i torres de defensa', in Udina, ed., *Symposium Internacional*, 1: 393–407, online at: <http://www.raco.cat/index.php/MemoriasRABL/article/view/202540>, accessed 1 July 2014.

[29] This is a literature too vast to be summarized here, especially since this development has largely taken place outside medieval studies. Two good illustrations are Sahana Ghosh, 'Cross-Border Activities in Everyday Life: the Bengal borderland', *Contemporary South Asia*, 19 (2011), 49–60, and Karin Dean, 'Borders and bordering in Asia', in Alexander Horstmann, Martin Saxer and Alessandro Rippa, eds, *Routledge Handbook of Asian Borderlands* (London, 2018), 56–72.

[30] CC4 (see n. 7 above).

[31] Jordi Bolòs and Víctor Hurtado, *Atles del comtat de Manresa (798-993)* (Barcelona, 2004).

Methodology and Material

The record is, however, neither straightforward nor narrative. There is no chronicle evidence beyond a few notes in Frankish sources; there are no episcopal or abbatial *gesta* or other forms of ecclesiastical history; there is not even much hagiography, and what does exist is of uncertain date or focused primarily on externalities.[32] Instead, the historian must work with hundreds of charters, detailing land sales and donations, wills, disputes and so forth.[33] This privileges the visibility of not just certain forms of social action, but also of certain social strata, the landed and respectable, with the poor or subject making few appearances. It also privileges men over women, although not to exclusion. And, perhaps surprisingly, it preserves lay interests over ecclesiastical ones. The preservation of this material, however much is now in public archives, has almost all at some point been down to the Church, and it is therefore an understandable starting assumption that it concerns property that was of interest to or ultimately owned by the Church, monastic or secular.[34] It is often possible to disprove that, however, and safer to say that the evidence we have was collected by people,

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[32] On the lack of narrative see T. N. Bisson, 'Unheroed Pasts: History and Commemoration in South Frankland before the Albigensian Crusades', *Speculum* 65 (1990), 281–308. The hagiography is primarily constituted by the *Life* of Saint Eulalie, probably fourteenth-century as we have it and focused on Barcelona (see Joan-F. Cabestany i Fort, 'El culte de Santa Eulàlia a la Catedral de Barcelona (S. IX-X)', *Lambard: estudis d'art medieval* 9 (1996), 159–65), and the *Life* of Peter Orseolo, earlier but focused on a foreign visitor to Saint-Michel de Cuxa (see Abadal, *L'Abat Oliba*, 44–48). Neither are frontier stories.

[33] See Jonathan Jarrett, 'Introduction: Problems and Possibilities of Early Medieval Charters', in idem and Allan Scott McKinley, eds, *Problems and Possibilities of Early Medieval Charters*, International Medieval Research 13 (Turnhout, 2013), 1–18.

[34] A discussion of the preservation can be found in Ramon Ordeig i Mata, 'Introducció', in CC4, 1: 11–52, at 33–45.

or families, whose materials subsequently came to the Church or were at some time stored in churches.[35]

The major preserving institution in this paper is the monastery of Sant Benet de Bages.[36] Sant Benet was founded in 950 CE by a magnate called Sal·la, who was a comital deputy *(vicarius)* and was responsible for many frontier building projects.[37] Of these, Sant Benet was probably the most enduring and successful. Admittedly, by the time the church there was consecrated in 972, Sal·la and one of his sons were already dead, and the other soon followed. The one grandson seems not to have taken an interest in the house, which was thus left unexpectedly independent, and in difficulties, by the 990s. Monks only begin to be recorded there after the consecration, and in general development there seems to have been slow. Yet it survived, in some form or another, until 1835, along with most of its archive. That

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[35] Compare Adam J. Kosto, 'Laymen, Clerics, and Documentary Practices in the Early Middle Ages: The Example of Catalonia', *Speculum* 80 (2005), 44–74; *idem*, '*Sicut mos esse solet*: Documentary Practices in Christian Iberia, c. 700–1000', 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), 259–82; and Jonathan Jarrett, 'Ceremony, Charters and Social Memory: Property Transfer Ritual in Early Medieval Catalonia', *Social History* 44 (2019), 275–95.

[36] Sant Benet is studied in, *inter alia*, Fortià Solà, *El monestir de Sant Benet de Bages* (Manresa, 1955), Xavier Sitges i Molins, *Sant Benet del Bages* (Manresa, 1975), and Francesa Español, *Sant Benet de Bages* (Manresa, 2001), but none is easily obtainable, and the reader may prefer Francesc Junyent i Mayou and others, 'Sant Benet de Bages', in *Catalunya Romànica*, 11: *el Bages*, ed. Antoni Pladevall (Barcelona, n. d.), 408–38, online at: <https://www.enciclopedia.cat/catalunya-romanica/sant-benet-de-bages-sant-fruitos-de-bages>, accessed 6 September 2024.

[37] Jordi Gibert Rebull, 'Del Conflent a la conca d'Òdena: La família del veguer Sal·la dins el marc de l'expansió del comtat d'Osona-Manresa al segle X', *Miscellanea Aqualatensia* 16 (2015), 121–56, online at: <https://www.raco.cat/index.php/MiscellaneaAqualatensia/article/view/312477>, accessed 22 July 2019; Jonathan Jarrett, *Rulers and Ruled in Frontier Catalonia, 880-1010: pathways of power* (Woodbridge, 2010), 144–51.

archive was scattered during the Spanish Civil War, but much has been reassembled at Santa Maria de Montserrat or in the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón in Barcelona.[38]

[Place marker for Figure 1]

Figure 1. Customised map of the terminium *of Santa Maria de Manresa, after Bolòs and Hurtado (see n. 41).*

I take as my area the *terminium* of the city church of Santa Maria, defined in a papal privilege of 978 and mapped by Bolòs and Hurtado.[39] Using this and the indices of the *Catalunya Carolíngia* establishes the documentary sample set out in Table 1.[40]

[Place marker for Table 1]

Table 1. Documentary sample from the terminium *of Santa Maria de Manresa as found in CC4 (see n. 7).*

This naturally involves some duplication, as several documents feature more than one place. The actual number of individual documents from between 898 and 1000 CE tabulated above includes 253 documents from Sant Benet de Bages, as opposed to fifteen from all other sources. Of these, however, only seventy-six mention Sant Benet or its lands, and a number actually predate the monastery.[41] Those presumably survive because they were somehow associated with documents that did relate to the monastery's rights; but some of our evidence

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[38] Ordeig, 'Introducció', 41–3.

[39] Bolòs and Hurtado, *Atles del comtat de Manresa*, 52–3, after CC4 1247.

[40] Rafel Ginebra and Ramon Ordeig, 'Índex alfabètic de noms', in CC4 3: 1355–63. In this table can be found the numbers of all documents subsequently used as evidence in this paper. To save space and avoid indigestible lists of numbers in notes, subsequent citations only cover instances where this table does not show which documents are involved.

[41] The monastery or its lands appear in CC4 861, 949, 951, 955, 967, 975, 982, 995, 996, 1014, 1021, 1022, 1032, 1059, 1063, 1083, 1113–5, 1127, 1143, 1148, 1151, 1172, 1180, 1184, 1193, 1225, 1247, 1263, 1305, 1316, 1334, 1360, 1402, 1413, 1424–6, 1428, 1430, 1461, 1472, 1475, 1478, 1481, 1489, 1504, 1522, 1534, 1549, 1612, 1614, 1629, 1632, 1641, 1645, 1658, 1665, 1721, 1731, 1737, 1741–3, 1752, 1796, 1806, 1816, 1819, 1824, 1846, 1852, 1859, 1864 & 1870. Everything earlier in the sample therefore predates the monastery.

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has only passed through that filter by association, which gives us some chance of seeing beyond the monastery's concerns.

This is also shown by mapping the areas concerned in the documents, which has been done by Bolòs and Hurtado. While the monastery's interests are certainly represented in that map, there are substantial foci where the house itself did not, as far as can be seen, hold any substantial property. In fact, although it originated many of the documents, the monastery's own territory hardly features in the sample. And while Bages, Montpeità and Navarcles do loom large in the monastery's property, none of the other stand-out areas in Figure 1 were particular foci for it.

[Place marker for Figure 2.]

Figure 2. Settlement foci in the Manresa documentation.

A considerable difference is, however, noticeable between settlement to the north and east of the city and that to the south and west. The former zone presents a relatively crowded picture, in which communities, albeit quite small ones to judge from recurrences of witnesses and neighbours, jostled for space and access to the city. To the south and west, settlements seem sparser and smaller, without the same sense of who the people who usually took part in things were. This may be because there simply were fewer of those people, or because they were not engaged in the land transactions that would have brought them to our record, or because they did not archive the charters with our institutions if they were. Even these latter options, however, suggest an earlier stage of settlement here, in which the inheriting generations who might be selling, rather than clearing, land had not yet arisen. These differences remind us that Manresa itself denoted the edge of the kind of civil operations that generated our source material, and thus of its peripheral location with respect to both Church and government.

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Delving more deeply into demography, the sample records 5,264 appearances of persons. That includes many people occurring more than once, but it is still a large number, of whom 807 used a clerical title, in 468 cases a priestly one *(presbyter*, *sacer* or *sacerdos).* These numbers illustrate the lay predominance in the record. They also demonstrate that the area was far from deserted, and while they give us no basis for guesses at local population figures, there is a difference between this landscape and that around the more northerly frontier redoubt of Cardona, where a city population had repeatedly to be re-established over the ninth and tenth century, or even places in other parts of the Iberian frontier like Castilian Sepúlveda, whose relatively early *fuero* records a similarly small-scale community.[42] This part of the frontier was admittedly governmentally peripheral, but still fairly populous, with connections to central hierarchies through the city.

On the other hand, no documentation survives from what should be the most important institution in this study, the city church of Santa Maria.[43] It is mentioned here and there in what we have and, as shown below, must have maintained a reasonably numerous staff of clergy; but, in its perilous frontier location, the city was sacked at least once and possibly twice between 997 and 1003, and this appears to have destroyed the church's archives.[44] It

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[42] For Cardona, see Victor Farías, 'Guerra, llibertat i igualitarisme a la frontera', in Josep Maria Salrach, ed., *La formació de la societat feudal, segles VI-XII*, 2nd edn (Barcelona, 1998), 112–13; for Sepúlveda, see Manzano, 'Christian-Muslim Frontier', 95–96.

[43] Our sample includes a *regestum* of the church's consecration in *c.* 937, CC4 440, which is sourced only from a reference to the document, lost even then, in the act of reconsecration of the church in 1020. For more on the church, see Francesc Junyent i Mayou and others, 'Santa Maria de Manresa o de la Seu', in Pladevall, ed., *Catalunya Romànica*, 11: 513–515, online at: <https://www.enciclopedia.cat/catalunya-romanica/santa-maria-de-manresa-o-de-la-seu>, accessed 6 September 2024.

[44] The dates are disputed. Dolors Bramon, *De quan érem o no musulmans: textos del 713 al 1010: continuació de l'obra de J. M. Millàs i Vallicrosa* (Vic, 2000), 342 and n. 310, collects both primary and secondary references. Benet, *Història*, 86–8, mounted a sustained argument for 999, but 997 or 1003 have a clearer basis in the evidence.

was sacked again in 1714, with similar effects.[45] We are, therefore, trying metaphorically to see into the next room through a door that is only ajar, and must be thankful that the view is even this good.

Churches and Clergy

None of the churches recorded in the documents of the area show any pre-Romanesque fabric, so their dates can only be suggested from the charter evidence, whose first mentions may considerably postdate their actual establishment.[46] By that inadequate metric, the oldest was Santa Maria de Manresa itself, whose consecration can probably be dated to 937.[47] Outside the city, Sant Fruitós de Bages, the most north-easterly, is first recorded in 942, and Sant Iscle de Bages in 950.[48] No other church is mentioned until after 1000. The pattern thus matches that of settlement, suggesting that churches were established behind the city early on, but not in the zone between the city and the far frontier until after the turn of the millennium and the unexpected collapse of the Andalusī caliphate.

The ratio of known clergy to known churches in the Manresa area is therefore quite high, suggesting that most churchmen were otherwise organised. The material does not identify clergy as belonging to particular churches, so affiliations can only be deduced by association. Several other features of the evidence deserve note before that is attempted, however.

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[45] Benet, *Història*, 11.

[46] A photograph exists of a now-vanished church at Santpedor that may been pre-Romanesque; see Antoni Gallardo, 'Portal de l'antiga església', n. d., online at: <https://mdc.csuc.cat/digital/collection/afcecemc/id/5114>, accessed 1 March 2024. This church is not included in the *Catalunya Romànica*.

[47] See n. 43 above.

[48] Sant Fruitós in CC4 501; Sant Iscle in CC4 663.

[Place marker for Figure 3.]

Figure 3. Chart of clerical titles in the documentary sample for Manresa 898-1000.

In the first place, the visible structure of the clergy is strongly top-heavy. The material records 476 appearances of priests as opposed to 145 of deacons, twenty-two of subdeacons and seventy-seven of *clerici*. Examining these clerical appearances by rôle suggests a reason for this, which is the pre-eminence of priests as agents of the written record. It is not that only priests were literate; fragmentary evidence, including some non-clerical scribes in charters, suggest that writing was not a clerical monopoly here.[49] It seems clear from our sample, however, that it was usual and perhaps preferable for a priest to write one's charter.[50] This is true in sixty-nine per cent of our documents, with deacons, *clerici* and subdeacons writing in rough proportion to their overall frequency of occurrence, among a few other scribal dignities, including apparent laymen. This, of course, means that most charters show us at least one priest, but often involve no other churchmen. If we saw priests only when they were actually party to, witnesses of or neighbours in the transaction of land, more than half our count would disappear.

[Place marker for Figure 4.]

Figure 4. Activities of priests in the documentary sample for Manresa, 898-1000

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[49] Michel Zimmermann, *Écrire et lire en Catalogne (IXe-XIIe siècle),* 2 vols, Bibliothèque de la Casa de Velázquez 23 (Madrid, 2003); compare also for laypersons [*sic*] Jonathan Jarrett, 'Nuns, Signatures, and Literacy in late-Carolingian Catalonia', *Traditio* 74 (2019), 125–52. More broadly, see Roger Collins, 'Literacy and the Laity in Early Medieval Spain', in Rosamond McKitterick, ed., *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990), 109–33, reprinted in Collins, *Law, Culture and Regionalism in Early Medieval Spain*, Variorum Collected Studies 356 (Aldershot, 1992), no. 16.

[50] Jesús Alturo i Perucho, 'Le statut du scripteur en Catalogne (XIIe-XIIIe siècles)', in Marie-Clotilde Hubert, Emmanuel Poulle and Marc H. Smith, eds, *Le statut du scripteur au Moyen Age*, Matériaux pour l'histoire 2 (Paris, 2000), 41–55.

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Even then, though, the number of priests would nearly equal appearances of all other ecclesiastical orders combined and be double the next most numerous one, deacons, so there seems genuinely to have been a large proportion of priests in the clergy here. Perhaps this was because, unlike other dignities, it is one which could last for decades.[51] It is also possible, however, that priests appear in such numbers because they were the basic unit of ecclesiastical provision. A rural church could be operated by a single priest. He might prefer to have a deacon or two, a doorkeeper and so on; but without a priest the others would probably not be there.[52]

Because of their predominant role in documentary production, however, priests naturally appear first and foremost as scribes, three times more often than as witnesses, their next most commonly recorded activity. They were directly party to transactions much less often. Were the priests working as scribes associated with the communities who thus enlisted them? If so, we would expect consistent appearances of a given priest in a particular area. It transpires, however, that things were not that simple.

Priestly Profiles

Some places do indeed seem to have had associated clergy. The strongest case is Santpedor, in whose territory a settlement called el Buc shows us nine priests, firstly Arduin in 957, then in the period 958–63 one Abo, who would later join Sant Benet de Bages, with some interleaved appearances by one Sendred. In 963 there is a single appearance by Eliseu; then Esteve in 966–87, as well as Sesgut in 970–80 and Julià in 990–1000, with two further priests

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[51] I have not found any cases as extreme as the centenarian priest in Marco Stoffella, 'Local Priests in Early Medieval Rural Tuscany', in Patzold and van Rhijn, *Men in the Middle*, 98–124, at 105–06, but several 30-year careers are demonstrable.

[52] Cf. Davies, 'Local priests', 131–32.

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mentioned later.[53] They all appear as scribes and several occur nowhere else. It thus seems reasonable to assume that Santpedor had a steady establishment of one, and perhaps sometimes two, priests, including at least Abo, Esteve and Julià.

It is possible to attempt the same exercise with the two secular churches of Bages, although their proximity to each other adds to the problems caused by their closeness to the monastery. Montpeità also offers a plausible sequence, although complicated by the fact that almost all the priests involved, and all the scribes, became monks at Sant Benet and were involved with the house before joining it. There seems to have been some kind of church at Montpeità, but its ministry was being delivered by priests connected to Sant Benet.[54] These two to four churches are the only cases of established clergy even this plausible.

When the exercise is performed within the city limits of Manresa, indeed, the result is quite different: nineteen priests in total, of whom twelve wrote documents, none more than one each.[55] That suggests that many priests were available in the city. If Santa Maria's archive had survived these men might be more clearly recorded; but, as it is, they might either be very local to the places with which their appearances are associated, or, conversely, associated with the city church rather than any specific locale outside.

The latter suggestion can be supported by looking at some specific priests. A problem is that those associated with the monastery appear most in our record, not because the

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[53] See Table 1 *s. n.* el Buc.

[54] Sant Benet seems to have recruited among active clergy, which complicates its members' attestations considerably. It is a separate article to demonstrate that, but many of the monks in the act of election of Abbot Ramio in 1002, printed in Jaime Villanueva, *Viage á la iglesia de Vique, año 1806*, Viage literario a las Iglesias de España 7 (Valencia 1821), online at <https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Viage_literario_%C3%A1_las_iglesias_de_Espa/Sa3uYC1tU80C>, accessed 13 October 2013, 281−83 (ap. XIII), can also be found in our sample as priests.

[55] See Table 1 *s. n.* Santa Maria de Manresa.

monastery employed them but because they apparently deposited their documents in its archive. Two in particular have to be ignored: Baldomar, one of the confusing presences at Montpeità, apparently himself from Balsareny to the north-west but not clearly the priest there, and the slightly older Badeleu, whose origins are obscure. Both had comital connections; both became stalwart, if perhaps retired, members of the monastic community at Sant Benet; and both fail to help us with this question because the material they deposited at the monastery had more to do with their landholding interests than their pastoral roles.[56] A more helpful example is Sunyer, who wrote, among many other documents, the monastery's 972 endowment.[57] His hand is recognisable in extant autograph documents, and he spelled his name unusually (*Sunierius*), which helps identify him in others.[58] Despite this presence in their archive, and an evidently important role there, he does not seem to have been either a monk or a client of Sant Benet's founders; he is never entitled *monachus* and does not otherwise appear with Sal·la's family.

Sunyer is not the only such priest. One Esclúa is attested between 982 and 1000 in seven documents.[59] Two late ones concern property at Montpeità, but the others do not. One deals with Sant Fruitós de Bages and one with la Palanca, which were close by, but another is focused far off to the north at l'Arca. Two more tie him to Manresa itself. An explanation for this diffuse focus is that interests were coming to the priest rather than the other way round, and the obvious locus is the city church. Whether transactors knew Esclúa because he sometimes ministered to their areas or whether he was simply on duty as notary when they

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[56] On them see for now Bolòs and Hurtado, *Atles*, 79.

[57] CC4 1127.

[58] I also attribute to him CC4 949, 958, 985, 997, 1113, 1119, 1141 and 1142; a Sunyer spelt thus also appears in CC4 1117, 1143, 1161, 1171, 1172, 1180, 1193 & 1246.

[59] CC4 1381, 1438, 1580, 1632 and 1641 (as *presbiter*) and 1796 and 1815 (as *sacer*).

came into town to have their transaction solemnized, cannot be known. Likewise unclear is whether Sunyer was chosen to write prestigious documents because he was a close connection of someone important, or because his importance was institutional, but the town is likely to have been the significant location in all cases.

It is perhaps also possible to see a process of change, from provision orchestrated out of Santa Maria to ministry by a fixed incumbent of a rural church. At la Celada, close to the city, seven priests occur, three of them more than once, all as scribes.[60] The scribes overlap, and while a sequence is possible to construct, it is broken, with one Eldovigi appearing discontinuously and much scribal work being done by a deacon, Elies. All the priests appear in connection with other places, as does Elies. This looks like a collegiate operation in which duty at or concerning la Celada fell to outside clergy, presumably from the city, on some kind of rotation. After a while, however, only one priest appears, Llobet. He also appears elsewhere, but between 984 and 997, he was the priest who wrote documents about la Celada. Had he been assigned there on an ongoing basis? La Celada never acquired its own church, but it may have been given its own part-time priest.

Catalonia and Elsewhere

So far, these pre-Catalan priests have been considered in splendid isolation, but they were part of a wider Church, indeed of a Church much affected by the Carolingian conquest of the area and its alterations, as some argue, to religious, intellectual and scribal culture.[61]

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[60] Scribes for la Celada occur in CC4 as follows. no. 1109: Eldovigi *sacer*. 1156: Elies *levita*. 1181: Bonfill *presbiter*. 1183 Elies *levita*. 1267: Elies *levita*. 1278: Ermengol *presbiter*. 1286: Eldovigi *sacer*. 1297: Elies *levita*. 1299: Joan. 1346: Ansulf *sacer*. 1422: Ansulf *sacer*; 1432 Oruç *sacer*. 1456, 1527: Llobet *sacer*. 1551 Badeleu *presbiter*. 1713: Adroer. 1750 and 1777: Llobet *sacer*. 1841: Sunifred *presbiter*.

[61] Compare Zimmermann, *Écrire et lire*, broadly in favour of a small dent compared to Patristics and Visigothic survival, and Chander, *Carolingian Catalonia*, in favour of deeper Carolingian effects.

Moreover, a recent store of scholarship on local priests of this era makes possible a comparison between the Catalan material and findings from elsewhere.[62]

Many contributors to this recent scholarship have been concerned with the question of priests' learned apparatus, in the form of education and books.[63] Michel Zimmermann's expansive study of the Catalan evidence reveals a priesthood with something like a standard equipment of texts.[64] This picture is harder to get in Manresa, because it derives principally from church consecrations and priests' wills, neither of which survive in any number through Sant Benet. The observance by our scribes of what, it has been suggested, was a Carolingian modification of local charter formularies however implies that that was enforced here too (although with a sample dominated by documents from after 940, we see the results only several generations later).[65] This may also explain some negative features of our evidence which studies of other areas make seem peculiar. There are, for example, no families of clergy in the Manresa evidence, though these were common in Italy and not unknown elsewhere. Even away from the frontier, there seem to be only occasional uncle-nephew

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[62] Patzold and van Rhijn, *Men in the Middle*. The present author was kindly invited to take part in this project but was unable to rearrange employment commitments to make it possible. See also Francesca Tinti and Carine van Rhijn, 'Shepherds, uncles, owners, scribes: Priests as neighbours in early medieval local societies', in Bernhard Zeller *et al.*, *Neighbours and Strangers: local societies in early medieval Europe* (Manchester, 2020), 120–49, which I was not able to obtain in my specific working conditions.

[63] Davies, 'Local Priests', 140–41; Yitzhak Hen, 'Priests and books in the Merovingian period', in Patzold and van Rhijn, eds, *Men in the Middle*, 162–76; Carine van Rhijn, 'Manuscripts for Local Priests and the Carolingian Reforms', in Patzold and van Rhijn, eds, 177–98; Steffen Patzold, '*Pater noster*: Priests and the religious instruction of the laity in the Carolingian *populus christianus*', in idem and van Rhijn, eds, 199–221.

[64] Zimmermann, *Écrire et lire*, 1 :526–30.

[65] Jonathan Jarrett, 'Comparing the Earliest Documentary Culture in Carolingian Catalonia' in Jarrett and McKinley, eds, *Problems and Possibilities*, 89–126.

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successions, with nothing like the clerical dynasties visible in Tuscany.[66] Likewise, there is almost no record (here or in Catalonia more widely) of priests owning their own churches. The sole case known to me, not from Manresa, involves a priest who was appointed by someone else (the count of Urgell, to the north of our area, at his chief castle's church).[67]

Instead, the weight of power in the appointment of priests seems to have lain with bishops.[68] The possibility that such priests were trained at the cathedrals also raises the likelihood of episcopal preferment. This may be why the counts of Urgell, where more direct comital control of appointment is apparent, came in for occasional critique in their cathedral's documentation.[69] If Urgell is the exception that proves the rule, then the silence of the quite voluminous evidence perhaps suggests this was a Church established on fairly canonical lines, arguably even more so than some closer to the core. One might suppose that a frontier Church would be unguided and anarchic, but the process of establishment visible here seems to set things up as reformers would have wanted.

One place, however, where the wider scholarship does find an echo in Catalonia in general, and Manresa specifically, is the idea of superior churches below cathedral rank. The model of the early English minster seems relevant here, even if disputed. This proposes a pastoral structure in the early English Church centred on large, collegiate churches, each

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[66] For Tuscany see Stoffella, 'Local Priests', 121–24; cf. Davies, 'Local Priests', 131, for north-western Iberia (no father-son succession); and more broadly Julia Barrow, *The Clergy in the Medieval World: Secular Clerics, their Families and Careers in North-Western Europe, c.800–c.1200* (Cambridge, 2015).

[67] *Catalunya carolíngia*, vol. 8: *Els comtats d'Urgell, Cerdanya i Berga*, ed. Ramon Ordeig i Mata, 2 vols, Memòries de la Secció Històrico-Arqueològica 111 (Barcelona, 2020), 1: 408–9 (doc. no. 433).

[68] Pierre Bonnassie and Jean-Pascal Illy, 'Le clergé paroissial aux IXᵉ-Xᵉ siècles dans les Pyrénées orientales et centrales', in Bonnassie, ed., *Le Clergé rural dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne*, Flaran 13 (Toulouse, 1995), 153–66, online at: <https://books.openedition.org/pumi/23166>, accessed 25 March 2024.

[69] Jarrett, 'Comparing the Earliest Documentary Culture', 125–26. Criticism of the count: *Catalunya carolíngia 8*, 1: 416 (doc. no. 444).

covering a wide area in which locally there might only be chapels or outdoor locations of worship.[70] In this respect, it is not unlike the Italian system of *plebes* or baptismal churches, with plural priests each, holding rights over smaller more local churches with fewer and more dependent clergy.[71] The newer English system naturally had fewer churches, and over the tenth to twelfth centuries, it is argued, the establishment of local churches broke the early minster territories up into parishes that largely still exist.[72]

This model and the less disputed Italian structure have obvious resemblances to the situation outlined in Manresa, with Santa Maria as minster or *plebs*. There are, nonetheless, four important differences. Firstly, Santa Maria seems to have been quite a large establishment, functionally a delegated episcopal outpost that furnished clergy for pastoral operations near and far, although there is no sign that it had any kind of canonry. It may be unhelpful to compare Santa Maria with any but the largest minsters, or with any *plebs*. Secondly, Santa Maria sat in a town. The size of that town is a mystery, although it had at least one suburb, but Santa Maria was not its only component, or even its only church, and was not therefore a settlement centre in its own right like some English minsters.[73] Thirdly, both in Blair's English hypothesis and in the Italian layout of *plebes*, the system was stable

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[70] John Blair, 'Minster Churches in the Landscape', in Della Hooke, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford, 1988), 35–58; Eric Cambridge and David Rollason, 'The Pastoral Organization of the Anglo-Saxon Church: a Review of the "Minster Hypothesis"', *EME* 4 (1995), 87–104; Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005); a more neutral view in Christopher Andrew Jones, 'Minsters and Monasticism in Anglo-Saxon England', in Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin, eds, *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin World*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 2019), 1: 502–18. For Iberia see Wendy Davies, 'Where are the Parishes? Where are the Minsters? The Organization of the Spanish Church in the Tenth Century', in David Rollason, Conrad Leyser, and Hannah Williams, eds, *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century: Studies in Honour of Wilhelm Levison (1876-1947)* (Turnhout, 2010), 379–97.

[71] For Italian *plebes* see Stoffella, 'Local Priests'.

[72] Blair, *Church*, 426−504.

[73] Benet, *Historia de Manresa*, 123−38.

and not intended to develop, whereas there are signs here, both in priestly provision and the subsequent parish map, that part of the role of Santa Maria de Manresa and its clergy was to generate new parish foci. Fourthly, in the minster hypothesis, as in the Italian context, there was little difference between a collegiate church of priests and a monastery.[74] In the Catalan counties, however, those institutions had different jobs.[75] Sant Benet de Bages may have largely drawn its community from among the pastoral clergy, but the monastery itself had no *parrochia* and no visible ministry outside its own confines (except, perhaps, at Montpeità). Everywhere else's ministry was handled from the city.

All this offers another, more or less Carolingian, micro-Christianity that might be added to our bank of comparative studies of the early medieval Church, but there was something distinctively peripheral about priestly provision around, and especially beyond, Manresa.[76] Firstly, it was more thinly churched than most places except the mission ground of early England, and priests from a large, but vulnerable, sub-cathedral in an insufficiently fortified town did much of the work. Secondly, the visible churches around Santa Maria de Manresa, even behind the frontier from it, seem to have been small; none of them except the monastic Sant Benet seem to have had more than two priests or other clergy visibly assigned, although plenty more priests can be seen. While it is possible that the lack of detectable dynastic or aristocratic control of churches or priestly office reflected the rigour of Carolingian reform in the area, the fact that what reformers would have considered failings are easier to find further east and north also points to the small size and newness of churches here; there were

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[74] For Italy here see Paul Aebischer, '«Monasterium» dans le latin de la Tuscie longobarde', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 2 (1965), 11–30.

[75] Ordeig, 'Cel·les monàstiques'.

[76] Rob Meens, 'Conclusion: Early medieval priests – some further thoughts', in Patzold and van Rhijn, eds, *Men in the Middle*, 222–28.

probably just not sufficient clergy established long enough to have built such structures of patronage or reproduction. As in England, albeit in a different context, we are seeing a Church forming at its own edge.

Conclusion

Catalonia – and specifically the Manresa area – remained a frontier. The destruction of Santa Maria around the year 1000 shows this clearly, but even without it, our limited map of Church provision on this periphery underlines Manresa's pivotal position. Beyond it were communities cut off by stretches of no-man's land (and considerable geographical obstacles); behind it were communities in development both secular and pastoral, as well as a coalescing monastery.

In standard accounts of the extension of control on the Catalan frontier monasteries like that one perform a central function as colonizers of wasteland and sponsors of settlement, and indeed churches. Bishoprics are given a lesser role, more reactive to demands from settlers than actually responsible for settlement (though bishops are in fact documented awarding frontier development concessions).[77] Frontier churches like Santa Maria de Manresa are, however, absent from such accounts. These churches, collegial or otherwise, may also have been sponsors of development, settlement and pastoral provision, which would, when the military context allowed, be bases for the next steps in the return of organized Christianity to this area, and perhaps others like it elsewhere.

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[77] See *inter alia* discussion in Gaspar Feliu, 'El bisbe Vives de Barcelona i el patrimoni de la catedral (974-995)', in *Miscel·lània d'Homenatge a Miquel Coll i Alentorn en el seu vuitanté aniversari* (Barcelona, 1984), 167–91.