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Lordship in ninth-century Francia: the case of Bishop Hincmar of Laon and his followers*

The notion of lordship has long played a role as a backdrop to research on honourable forms of dependence in the Latin West during the Middle Ages, but recent work has further emphasised its importance for understanding the exercise of power, and for social history more broadly in this period.[1] Encouraged by Susan Reynolds's broadside against over-schematised ideas of vassalage and feudalism, medieval historians have sought to extricate themselves from legalist interpretations of medieval society, and many have turned to lordship instead.[2] Yet such a move has produced some significant uncertainties and disagreements. Among the most prominent of these uncertainties is whether Carolingian Francia was a society already permeated by lordship, or whether the age of lordship only really began after the turn of the first millennium.

This article seeks to contribute towards clarifying the issue by examining some especially revealing evidence from late ninth-century northern Francia for the relations between a Frankish bishop, Hincmar of Laon (died 879), and his secular

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[1] This article is not primarily concerned with less honourable forms of dependence, associated with manorialism. For an exploration of the sliding scales of dependance in the early medieval world, see Alice Rio, 'High and Low: Ties of Dependence in the Frankish Kingdoms', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Sixth Series), xviii (2008).

[2] Susan Reynolds, Fiefs and Vassals: the Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted (London, 1994).

followers.[3] This material provides an opportunity to consider more closely what historians mean by lordship, and how, and when, they should use the term, and to weigh up the implications involved. In what follows, I shall concentrate on English-language work, as cognate words in other languages have distinctive traditions and connotations, though, as we shall see, these linguistic barriers have been very far from impermeable.[4]

I.

In Anglophone research into the European Middle Ages, lordship denotes several distinct issues, which must be carefully distinguished.[5] Lordship is used to discuss late medieval arguments about the nature of the dominium which God had given to mankind, and also to label the territorially-defined sets of rights and revenues (sometimes also known as honours) of the later Middle Ages.[6] More broadly, lordship serves to describe the various extra-economic means of coercion that shaped relations between lords and peasants in agrarian settings.[7] It is however a more abstract sense of the term that is most prominent in contemporary research, and with which this article is primarily concerned.

[3] This study owes much to Janet L. Nelson, 'The Church's Military Service in the Ninth Century', Studies in Church History, xx (1983), and to many pages in her Charles the Bald (London, 1992), on Hincmar, and on power and kingship in early medieval society in general. The material under consideration also receives extensive discussion in Peter McKeon, Hincmar of Laon and Carolingian Politics (Urbana, 1978), as discussed below.

[4] Raymond Aron, 'Macht, power, puissance: Democratic Prose or Demoniacal Poetry?', in Steven Lukes (ed.), Power (Oxford, 1986), evaluates different language traditions in a Weberian context.

[5] Chris Wickham, 'Le forme del feudalismo', Il Feudalismo *nell'Alto Medioevo* (Settimane di Studio, xlvii, 2000), offers a typology of the uses of the term 'feudalism' analogous to what follows here.

[6] For the political thought, see J. H. Burns, Lordship, Kingship and Empire: the Idea of Monarchy 1400–1525 (Oxford 1992); cf. Philippe Buc, *L'ambiguité du* Livre: prince, pouvoir et peuple dans les commentaires de la Bible au Moyen Age (Paris, 1994). As an example of work on late medieval territorial 'lordships', see S. J. Payling, 'Legal Right and Dispute Resolution in Late Medieval England: the Sale of the Lordship of Dunster', English Historical Review, cxxvi (2011).

[7] For a stimulating recent discussion of these relations, see George Comninel, 'English Feudalism and the Origins of Capitalism', Journal of Peasant Studies, xxvii (2000).

Though it overlaps in a way with those listed above, this increasingly fashionable sense of lordship refers neither to a strand of political thought, nor to specific sets of rights, nor to a class-based analysis of agrarian production. Neither translating any particular word, nor representing a formalised legal institution like 'vassalage', lordship here stands for a pervasive social practice.[8] It refers to a mode of power that is personal, that cannot be grasped with terminologies oriented to the state, and that is, somehow, distinctly medieval – for it is notable that though lordship is not confined to European historiography, the term is only ever used in scholarship on 'pre-modern' society, and never for studying classical antiquity or the contemporary world.[9] It is in this vein that some historians have recently identified lordship as the ''master noun' in the medieval lexicon of power', 'a reality in medieval experience' that was 'constant and pervasive', and even 'the fundamental social reality of the Middle Ages'.[10] This kind of lordship is not simply a convenient label, it is something which can help historians explain the course of events.

Though the roots of this concept of lordship are complex, its proliferation dates back to the 1960s, when a particular strand of German historiography began to reach a wider audience in the English-speaking world. From the 1930s, German historians such as Karl Bosl, Walter Schlesinger and, above all, Otto Brunner began to develop a concept of Herrschaft quite different from the ostensibly more neutral sense

[8] Thomas Bisson, 'Medieval Lordship', Speculum, lxx (1995), 746. For vassalage, see Reynolds, Fiefs, notably 22–34, and 84–105 specifically on the Carolingian period.
[9] For an example of its use in non-European historiographical contexts, see James Heitzman, Gifts of Power: Lordship in an early Indian State (Delhi, 1997), with justification at 18–19. Lordship sometimes appears in early modern research, for example Mark Ravina, Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan (Stanford, 1999), shaped by traditions of using ideas of feudalism to interpret Japanese history. Note the deliberate lack of reference to the classical period in the entry for Herrschaft in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck (eds.), Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe, 8 vols. (Stuttgart, 1972–1997), iii.
[10] Rees Davies, 'The Medieval State: the Tyranny of a Concept', Journal of Historical Sociology, xvi (2003), at 295; Bisson, 'Lordship', at 746, and Richard Barton, Lordship in the County of Maine, c.890–1160 (Woodbridge, 2004), 223.

given to this word by Max Weber.[11] Rejecting the relevance of 'bourgeois' concepts like the state to 'Old Europe', a world whose cognitive categories they thought eluded the analytical tools developed since the French Revolution, and attacking the work of contemporary legal historians like Heinrich Mitteis, their preference was to deploy the concepts of the evidence itself ('Quellenbegriffe') in nothing less than an alternative approach to the study of history.[12]

For these historians, closely linked to the so-called neue Verfassungsgeschichte movement, and the intellectual forebears of conceptual history in its modern form (Begriffsgeschichte), Herrschaft, as a mode of power with roots in Germanic antiquity that was personal, unequal yet reciprocal, was not an analytical term, nor merely a descriptive one either. Rather, it invoked a core or an essence that underlay all other exercises of power in the pre-modern era. It constituted the essential organising principle for pre-modern European society, as the 'pre-eminent basis of legitimation' and the 'central concept of medieval constitutional history'.[13]

When samples of the work of Brunner, Schlesinger and others came to be translated into English (for example in an influential collection of essays put together and translated by Frederic Cheyette in 1968), the notion of Herrschaft they had in

[11] Melvin Richter, History of Political and Social Concepts: a Critical Introduction (New York, 1995), 58–78, offers an excellent account of Weber's notion of Herrschaft. For the difference between this Herrschaft and that espoused by Brunner and his colleagues, see Otto Brunner, 'Bemerkungen zu den Begriffen 'Herrschaft' und 'Legitimität'', in his Neue Wege der Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte (Göttingen, 1956).

[12] These assaults were not always entirely fair: in fact, historians like Mitteis were rather more innovative than Brunner and others gave credit for. See for example Heinrich Mitteis, 'Rechtsgeschichte und Machtgeschichte', in Gian Piero Bognetti et al. (eds.), Wirtschaft und Kultur. Festschrift für Alfons Dopsch (Leipzig, 1938). My thanks to Gadi Algazi for this reference.

[13] Otto Brunner, Land und Herrschaft: Grundfragen der territorialen Verfassungsgeschichte Südostdeutschlands im Mittelalter, 4th edn (Brünn, 1959), translated by Howard Kaminsky and James van Horn Melton, Land and Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria (Philadelphia, 1992). The quotations come from the critical review of the literature by F. Graus, 'Verfassungsgeschichte des Mittelalters', Historische Zeitschrift, ccxliii (1986).

mind was rendered as 'lordship'.[14] It is fundamentally this understanding of lordship, albeit to some degree domesticated and refracted through different layers of historiography (and often alongside nods to Weber), that has been programmatically restated and developed in recent Anglophone, and to some extent Francophone, work, representing in effect a delayed reception of a Brunnerian approach to medieval history.[15]

Enthusiasm for this notion of lordship has however been markedly more limited in the field of Carolingian history. In part this is perhaps because lordship tends to be analytically contrasted with the state, and English-speaking historians have generally been relaxed about the question of the state in the Carolingian period.[16] As a result, until recently relatively little consideration (though not none) was given by Carolingian historians to the notion of lordship, who have tended to use the term to describe the outcome of social relations, and not an ingredient of them, and certainly have not elevated it into a fundamental principle of social interaction.[17] This was not merely a Carolingianist idiosyncrasy. Thomas Bisson, the historian responsible for perhaps the most programmatic assertion of the centrality of medieval lordship since

[14] Frederic Cheyette (ed. and trans.), Lordship and Community in Medieval Europe (New York, 1967). This work is cited throughout E.A.R. Brown's equally influential 'Tyranny of a Construct. Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe', American Historical Review, lxxix (1974). For the problems in translating Herrschaft in its Weberian senses, see Richter, History, 72–76.

[15] Bisson's notion of lordship leans heavily on Brunner, Schlesinger and others: see Bisson, 'Lordship', 745, with n. 8. In Francophone scholarship, Alain Guerreau's influential notion of dominium (succinctly set out in his *L'avenir d'un passé incertain* (Paris, 2001), 26–28) is basically cognate with Brunnerian Herrschaft.

[16] Stuart Airlie, 'The Aristocracy in the Service of the State', in Stuart Airlie, Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (eds.), Staat im Frühmittelalter (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters xi, Vienna, 2006), offers an insightful discussion.

[17] For an acute and sensitive discussion of lordship in the Carolingian period, see Janet L. Nelson, 'Kingship and Empire', in J. Burns (ed.), Cambridge History of Political Thought, c.350–c.1450 (Cambridge, 1988), and her 'Kingship and Royal Government', in Rosamond McKitterick (ed.), New Cambridge Medieval History Volume II, c.700–c.900 (Cambridge, 1995). See now also Rachel Stone, Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire (Cambridge, 2012), esp. 188–199. Dennis Green, The Carolingian Lord. Semantic Studies on four Old High German Words (Cambridge, 1965), is a fascinating (and intimidating) set of studies, well-described by its title.

Brunner, in fact structured his entire argument about the Feudal Revolution around its emergence in the post-Carolingian age, stating that 'there was something profoundly novel about lordship in the twelfth century'.[18] In this regard, Bisson was actually following in the footsteps of Otto Brunner himself, who was noticeably reticent in applying his ideas of Herrschaft to the Carolingian empire.[19]

Other historians, attracted by Bisson's idea of lordship, have nevertheless begun to question his (and Brunner's) chronological threshold, and to wonder whether this lordship might not have been prominent at an earlier stage — as indeed the whole thrust of lordship, as a 'medieval' phenomenon, would logically lead one to presume. Hans Hummer is not alone in suggesting that 'tensions in the early medieval political order were rooted not so much in the illegitimate exercise of power at the expense of a ruler's alleged public mandate, but in the dynamics of lordship', or even that 'it is impossible to understand the Carolingian order without grasping the essentials of lordship'.[20] Indeed, a developed case along just these lines has been made by Richard Barton, who argued in an important book that the Carolingian world really was dominated by lordship.[21]

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[18] Bisson, 'Lordship', 749. See also Thomas Bisson, 'The Feudal Revolution', Past and Present, cxlii (1994), and Thomas Bisson, The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship and the Origins of European Government (Princeton, 2009), as well as his response to Reviews in History, 754, http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/754/response.

[19] The earliest editions of Brunner's Land make scarcely any reference to the Carolingians, perhaps because of the difficulty of fitting the evidence with Brunner's model; occasional references were added in the fourth edition in 1959, for example at 18 (to the effect that Carolingian distinctiveness was not sustained subsequently).

[20] Hans Hummer, 'Review of Barbero, Charlemagne', H-France Review, v (2005), no. 48, http://www.h-france.net/vol5reviews/vol5no48hummer.pdf; 'Were the Lords really all that bad?', Historical Methods: a journal of quantitative and interdisciplinary history, xliii (2010). See also the review article by Simon MacLean, 'Apocalypse and Revolution: Europe around the Year 1000', Early Medieval Europe, xv (2007), calling for 'more sustained study of lordship and violence in the ninth century', and Ildar Garipzanov, The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World (Turnhout, 2008), 320–1.

[21] Barton, Lordship, 222–3, arguing that post-Carolingian change took place principally in the steady multiplication of lords, not in the nature of lordship. Barton emphasises that his notion of lordship is based on Weber, but a Brunnerian inflection can be discerned too, expressed through his appeal to

However, as Barton himself acknowledged, crucial elements of his thought-provoking argument in fact relied on post-Carolingian evidence.[22] What is needed to settle the question is investigation of authentically ninth-century material. Drawing on a dossier of material concerning the entourage of a Frankish bishop, effectively a cache of documentation about unequal personal relations, what follows is intended to provide that investigation.

II.

In 858, a young man named Hincmar was appointed to the bishopric of Laon in what is now northern France. The appointment doubtless owed something to family connections, for Hincmar was the nephew of the eponymous and influential archbishop of Rheims in whose province Laon was located.[23] This uncle had provided him with a first-rate education at Rheims, probably in preparation for the episcopate.[24] The young Hincmar seems to have been something of a child prodigy, mastering Latin grammar, elements of Greek and the works of the Church Fathers, much to the proud archbishop's delight.

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charisma, his insistence on the rupture between medieval and modern, and his preference for adopting the 'perspective of medieval contemporaries' (cf. Brunner's Quellenbegriffe): 5–6.

[22] Barton, Lordship, 51. His analysis of Carolingian Maine, in a book largely focused on the tenth and eleventh centuries, rests heavily on eleventh-century sections of the Actus Pontificum Cenomannis. It is of course likely that these sections do record fragments of earlier texts, as Barton supposes (at 35), but the transmission makes it impossible to rely on the phrasing or the details, particularly if they seem unusual. For an effort to place these texts in their historical context, see Bruno Lemesle, 'Le discours de l'Église aux temps grégoriens: évêques et laics dans le Maine aux XI–XII^{e} siècles d'après les Actus Pontificum', Annales de la Bretagne, cii (1995).

[23] On Hincmar's age and education, see McKeon, Hincmar, 14. Contemporaries certainly assumed that kinship had played a part in Hincmar of Laon's career: see Hincmar of Rheims, Opusculum LV Capitulorum, in Die Streitschriften Hinkmars von Reims und Hinkmars von Laon 869–871, ed. Rudolf Schieffer (Monumenta Germanicae Historica [hereafter MGH], Concilia aevi Karolini, iv/2, Hannover 2003), 306.

[24] As Hincmar of Rheims put it, the church of Rheims had educated him 'ab ipsis, ut ita dicam, cunabulis': Hincmar of Rheims, Opusculum (ed. Schieffer), 195.

Once securely installed as bishop of Laon, however, Hincmar began to draw on his education in ways of which his uncle did not approve, asserting a muscular view of episcopal autonomy against not only metropolitan authority but also royal power. This led to a complex, long-running set of disputes with Archbishop Hincmar and with King Charles the Bald, and eventually to the younger Hincmar's dramatic deposition in 871. Happily for the historian, one thing that Hincmar had learned from his uncle beyond a sure grasp of canon law was the importance of documentation. Both uncle and nephew kept records of their correspondence and other texts; the survival, whether as originals or as copies, of the manuscripts in which these texts were copied means that we are relatively well-informed on the course of the dispute.[25] It is amongst this material that the evidence for Hincmar of Laon's secular retinue is preserved.

The documentation names around a dozen or so members of his retinue in different contexts. There were certainly however more, and an estimate of a group of thirty to forty men in Hincmar's entourage would probably not be far wrong.[26] These men were, as Hincmar and everyone else called them, 'his men' (mei homines). Although apparently more technical terms like casati homines or vassalli were used only seldom in this documentation, these men formed nevertheless a distinctive group. They were, for instance, always distinguished from more important figures

[25] Three manuscripts are particularly important for the purposes of this article. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale (hereafter BnF) MS lat. 2865 is a ninth-century manuscript containing Hincmar of Rheims's Opusculum that Hincmar of Rheims himself seems to have commissioned as a 'working copy': Streitschriften, ed. Schieffer, 113–6. Paris BnF. MS Lat. 5095 is a ninth-century manuscript from Laon which preserves the only copy of Hincmar of Laon's Rotula Prolixa, as well as a number of other relevant letters: Streitschriften, ed. Schieffer, 60–1. And Paris BnF. MS Lat. 1594 is a late ninth-century manuscript from Rheims that is the only copy of the minutes of the Council of Douzy (871) and related texts: Die Konzilien der Karolingischen Teilreiche 860–874, ed. Wilfried Hartmann (MGH, Concilia aevi Karolini, iv/1, Hannover, 1998), 411–413.

[26] Hincmar wished to come to the council of Douzy 'cum omni plenitudine suorum hominum armata manu', but was allowed only to bring ten or twelve 'de ipsis casatis hominibus': Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 507.

with whom Hincmar dealt, like counts and the people often termed vassi in Carolingian sources, who came from established aristocratic families. Those men might be installed on the bishop of Laon's land, but that was usually due to their personal relationship with the king, not the bishop.[27] Hincmar sometimes got on well with these people, sometimes not; whatever the case, neither he nor anyone else thought of them as 'his' men.[28]

Hincmar's secular retinue was also distinguished from his clerical staff, made up of archdeacons, provosts and priests, though these also called him their lord (senior).[29] They were different too from domestic and household servants, who are called servientes or sometimes familia, but who are never individually identified. Finally, and perhaps most importantly from their own perspective, the men in his retinue were clearly distinguished from those who worked the lands of the bishopric, who are usually called villani or coloni.[30] Of course, it is one thing to note objective differences in terminology and quite another to prove collective consciousness. Yet

[27] Compare a charter from Charles the Bald, preserved in Flodoard, Historia Remensis Ecclesiae, ed. Martina Stratmann (MGH, Scriptores, xxxvi, Hannover, 1998), 194, in which the king involves himself directly in establishing a group of men on Rheims lands; most of the secular men named in this charter are of comital status. Cf. Brigitte Kasten, 'Aspekte des Lehnswesens ins Einhards Briefe', in H. Schefers (ed.), Einhard. Studien zu Leben und Werk (Darmstadt, 1997), and Charles Odegaard, Vassi and Fideles in the Carolingian Empire (Cambridge, 1945). Hincmar of Laon complained that the king had obliged him to take on homines: Rotula Prolixa, in Die Streitschriften Hinkmars von Reims und Hinkmars von Laon 869–871, ed. Rudolf Schieffer (MGH, Concilia aevi Karolini, iv/2, Hannover, 2003), 366. It is not clear though whether the king entrusted specific people to the bishop, or whether he merely asked him to increase his retinue. The fact that some of these men's parents had themselves held land from the bishop (see below) makes the latter more likely. The editor dates this event to 870, but 858 is also possible.

[28] Cf. Hincmar of Rheims, Opusculum (ed. Schieffer), 304, where he distinguishes between the king's men and Hincmar's men.

[29] For clerics calling Hincmar their senior, see Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 392; Hincmar regarded one of them, Hadulf, as 'serving for' (proservire) his lands, and Hadulf promised to be faithful (fidelis). For the distinction, see for example Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 508: 'sui clerici ac sui vassalli et servientes'. The relationship was not always entirely amicable: some Laon clerics, probably from the cathedral, actually drafted a canon law collection defending their rights against the bishop. See Klaus Zechiel-Eckes, Rebellische Kleriker? Eine unbekannte kanonistisch-patristische Polemik gegen Bischof Hinkmar von Laon in Cod. Paris, BNF, nouv. acq. lat. 1746 (Hannover, 2009), with an excellent introduction.

[30] For instance, Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 507–8; and Hincmar of Laon, Epistolae, in Patrologia Latina, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–1864), cxxiv, col.1032.

Hincmar's men do seem to have been aware that they were a separate group. They called each other 'coequals' (compares), and they defended each other's interests in difficult times.[31]

We have a reasonably clear idea of what this group of men was supposed to do. Bishop Hincmar expected them to keep in close contact with him, to serve him (servire), and to provide him with advice and support whenever necessary, for example by acting collectively in sorting out disputes.[32] They acted as Hincmar's escorts and bodyguards, and carried the bishop's letters on his behalf, and their duties could take them far from Laon itself. We know that Hincmar took one of them with him on an expedition to the Spanish March, and that he ordered others to take his letters to the Pope in Rome. Men like this were also entrusted by the bishop with other missions, for example in carrying the church of Laon's treasures out of harm's way.[33]

But Hincmar's retinue served as more than just postmen and travelling companions. These men were responsible for fulfilling Hincmar's obligations as bishop to his king, some of which were military (an issue to which I shall return). They also provided the force for any intimidation that Hincmar deemed necessary. For instance, when Hincmar wanted to see a cleric called Hadulf who he guessed might not want to see him, he sent his armed followers to ensure Hadulf turned up,

[31] On the compar, see Hincmar of Laon, Rotula Prolixa (ed. Schieffer), 369: 'meis pro eo petentibus hominibus'.
[32] For their decision-making role, see Hincmar of Laon, Rotula Prolixa (ed. Schieffer), 369, complaining of one of his men that he had not come 'to any meetings (placita) to consider my business' ('ad ulla placita de consideratione mearum necessitatum'). Such placita are evidently to be distinguished from 'publica placita' to which Hincmar refers elsewhere, for instance Hincmar of Laon, Epistolae (ed. Migne), col. 979. For the court service (c.868), see Hincmar of Rheims, Libellus Expostulationis Hincmari, in Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 424. Cf. Hincmar of Laon, Epistolae (ed. Migne), col. 987, 'assistentibus presbyteris, diaconibus, ac laicis'.
[33] Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 508 and 525.

willingly or otherwise.[34] He also sent them to evict a certain Count Nortman and his wife who were occupying the bishop's lands, in Bishop Hincmar's view illegally. Sometimes this intimidation spilled over into actual physical violence. Hincmar's men were involved in a death which took place in the process of evicting a certain Amalbert from the bishopric's land.[35]

In return for this service, these men received personal favours and rewards from their lord. Hincmar considered himself personally responsible for them, and attempted to use his influence to shield them from formal legal proceedings.[36] But Hincmar's followers stood to gain material benefits, besides. Lords were supposed to be generous, and as Hincmar put it, his men expected not just subsistence (subsistentia), but sufficiency (sufficientia).[37] That sufficentia might include gifts of valuable objects. Hincmar allegedly went so far as to melt down church gold and ornaments to make swords, belts, spurs and other symbols of elite status, including trouser buckles (hosobindas).[38] A major form of reward however was clearly landed property, usually called benefices (beneficia), and made up, so far as we can see, of rural estates cultivated by peasants, woods and of churches, all of which were managed by these men.[39] The sources make no bones about the fact that these men served for (proservire or praeservire) their benefices, which were revocable.[40]

[34] Hincmar of Rheims, Epistolae, in Patrologia Latina, ed. Migne, cxxvi, col. 280.
[35] 'unus homo fuit occisus': Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 525, perhaps drawing on Hincmar of Rheims, Epistolae (ed. Migne), col. 637.
[36] Hincmar of Rheims, Libellus expostulationis Hincmari (ed. Hartmann): 'ut meos, qui innoxii erant et causa mei opprimebantur, possem liberare', 478.
[37] Hincmar of Laon, Rotula Prolixa (ed. Schieffer), 366.
[38] Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 524. On the elite status transferred by such objects, see Dominique Barthélemy, 'Le chevalerie carolingienne', in Régine le Jan (ed.), Le royauté et les élites *dans l'Europe carolingienne (début IX siècle aux environs de 920)* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1998), at 165–6.
[39] Hincmar of Laon, Rotula Prolixa (ed. Schieffer), 369 and 371, both implying close engagement with the land and those living on it, though not necessarily in a formal judicial sense. On benefices, see now Paul Fouracre, 'The Use of the Term Beneficium in Frankish Sources: a Society based on Favours?', in

Finally, the documentation allows us to give the men in Hincmar of Laon's retinue a socio-economic context. One of them, a man named Grivo, was given twelve holdings (mansi) by Hincmar, in addition to what his father had held.[41] We do not know the total size of Grivo's lands (he may have had some personal lands too), but twelve holdings was not an enormous estate. Men like Grivo could rely on their kin to support them in confrontations, but do not appear to have had their own personal retinues. One has the impression that Grivo and his peers were at the bottom of the Frankish 'elite', broadly defined: the kind of person that the capitularies call a poor man (pauper), who was always at risk of sliding down the social scale and falling into a more dishonourable dependence.[42] It was perhaps by holding estates such as those dispensed by Bishop Hincmar that such people could distinguish themselves from those whose narrower horizons and manual labour excluded them from membership of the elite altogether.

III.

Bishop Hincmar should not be held up as a typical Carolingian lord, partly because he was after all a bishop, and partly because to assume that there was a 'typical' Carolingian lord would assert a uniformity that remains to be proved. However, there are grounds for treating the relations revealed by this dossier of material as at least representative of lordly behaviour in West Francia. In the first

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Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (eds.), The Languages of Gift in the early Middle Ages (Cambridge, 2010).

[40] Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann: 'Beneficia, quae apud antecessores tuos et apud te proservierunt', 393.

[41] Hincmar of Laon, Rotula Prolixa (ed. Schieffer): 'duodecim mansa', 370.

[42] Régine le Jan, 'Pauperes et Paupertas aux IX^{e} et X^{e} siècles', Revue du Nord, i (1968); Etienne Renard, 'Une élite paysanne en crise? Le poids des charges militaires pour les petits alleutiers entre Loire et Rhin au IX^{e} siècle', in Francois Bougard, Laurent Feller and Régine le Jan (eds.), Les élites au haut Moyen Age: crises et renouvellements (Turnhout, 2006).

place, Hincmar was certainly far from the only Carolingian bishop to have a retinue of laymen.[43] For instance, a list of nearly thirty Rheims episcopal vassalli is preserved in a letter written by the clerics of Rheims in 883, in the wake of Hincmar of Rheims's death, while the Liber Memorialis of Brescia records the names of ten homines of Bishop Rothad of Soissons who died at Rome during the bishop's stay there in 864, names carefully distinguished from a separate list of Soissons clerics.[44] A few years earlier, the armed men of another Frankish bishop, in this case Gunthar of Cologne, had forced their way into St Peter's, killing a guard in the process.[45] Carolingian abbots too had military retinues, again separate from those aristocrats who had been given monastic lands in precaria by the king, as shown by letters such as those of Lupus of Ferrières, and by estate surveys such as the polyptych of the monastery of St-Bertin, with its detailed descriptions of the holdings of named caballarii.[46]

The importance of these church military retinues has been rightly stressed in recent work.[47] Yet we should not forget that secular aristocrats in the ninth century had armed retinues as well; indeed historians have recently surmised that, together

[43] For bishops' retinues in Merovingian Gaul, see J. Kreiner, 'About the Bishop: the Episcopal Entourage and the Economy of Government in post-Roman Gaul', Speculum, lxxxvi (2011), esp. 341.
[44] The Rheims list is edited in Gerhard Schneider, Erzbischof Fulco von Reims (883–900) und das Frankenreich (Munich, 1973), 259–261. Rheims milites are recorded in Flodoard, too, quite probably in a Carolingian context: see M. Stratmann, 'Die Königs- und Privaturkunden für die Reimser Kirche bis gegen 900', Deutsches Archiv, lii (1996), 14–5. For the Brescia list, see Der Memorial- und Liturgiecodex von San Salvatore/San Giulia in Brescia, ed. Dieter Geuenich and Uwe Ludwig (MGH, Libri Memoriales, nova series iv, Hannover, 2000), at 93.
[45] Annales de Saint-Bertin, ed. Félix Grat (Paris, 1964), 111.
[46] Correspondance: Loup de Ferrières, ed. and tr. Léon Levillain, 2 vols. (Paris, 1927–35), for instance nos. 15–17 and 111–112. St Bertin: Le Polyptyque de Saint-Bertin, 844-859, ed. F.L. Ganshof (Paris, 1975); their service is unsurprisingly described as caballicare. Their holdings are presented schematically in Joseph Morsel, *L'aristocratie* médiévale (Paris, 2004), 82. Barthélemy, 'La chevalrie carolingienne', suggests these might be considered 'cavaliers de seconde zone' (161, n. 13). See Jean-Pierre Devroey, Économie rurale et so*ciété dans l'Europe franque (VI*^{e}–IX^{e} siècles) (Paris, 2003), 289–294 for elites at this level. For precaria verbo regis grants held by well-connected figures (often called vassi), the quickest guide remains Giles Constable, 'Nona et Decima. An aspect of Carolingian Economy', Speculum, xxxv (1960).
[47] Notably, Nelson, 'Church's Military Service'. For instance, in 866 Charles the Bald gathered an army 'confecta maxime de episcopis', Annales de Saint-Bertin (ed. Grat), 132.

with the contributions from the church, it was these followings, and not peasant levies, that formed the core of Carolingian armies.[48] The evidence for them is sketchier than for episcopal retinues, and historians have generally been content with pointing to condemnations in royal capitularies; but occasionally they do surface in the historical record.[49] Narratives of various kinds mention military retinues of aristocrats in passing: for example the men of Count Gerald, recorded as assassinating his rival in 868 in the Annals of St-Bertin, or, earlier in the ninth century, the followers of Rothelinus, a local iudex fisci, who took them along in their armour to formal court proceedings for intimidation (six fell foul of Saint Denis's wrath and died the same day).[50] There are occasional documentary traces of these groups, too, such as in the will of Count Eccard. First drafted in 876, this will included amongst the beneficiaries a number of people who were probably the count's clients of one kind or another; some, rewarded with gifts of swords and military equipment, might well have been men in his personal retinue.[51]

[48] On these secular retinues and the historiography surrounding them, see Nelson, Charles, 60; Régine Le Jan, 'Satellites et bandes armées dans le monde franc (VIII^{e}–X^{e} siècles)', in Le combattant au Moyen Age (Paris, 1991), and more recently, Jean-Pierre Devroey, Puissants et misérables: système *social et monde paysan dans l'Europe des* Francs (VI^{e}–IX^{e} siècles) (Brussels, 2006), 158–161, 186. For recent discussion of their role in providing military services, see Guy Halsall, Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West (Abingdon, 2003), at 56, 73 and 96.

[49] As an example of condemnation in capitularies: Capitulare missorum Silvacense (853), in Capitularia regum Francorum, ed. A. Boretius and V. Krause, 2 vols (MGH, Hannover, 1893-7), ii, no. 260, 272, ch. 3, 'de collectis'.

[50] Annales de Saint-Bertin s.a. 868 (ed. Grat), 141; Miracula Dionysii II, ch. 33, in Acta Sanctorum Ordinis Benedicti, ed. Mabillon et al., 9 vols. (Paris, 1668-1701), iii/2, 358. Timothy Reuter's classic 'Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian empire', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, xxxv (1986) has further references.

[51] Edited in M. Prou, *Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de* Saint-Benoit, 2 vols. (Paris, 1900–12), i, no. 27, here at 66. My reading here differs from Olivier Bruand, 'La gestion du patrimoine des élites en Autunois', in Dominique Barthélemy and Olivier Bruand (eds.), Pouvoirs Locaux dans la France du *centre et de l'ouest (VIII^{e}–XI^{e} siècles): implantation et moyens d'action* (Rennes, 2004), who interprets those receiving gifts of treasure as the 'vassaux de premier rang' (240). On its legal context, Brigitte Kasten, 'Erbrechtliche Verfügungen des 8 und 9 Jahrhunderts Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Organisation und zur Schriftlichkeit bei der Verwaltung adeliger Grundherrschaften am Beispiel des Grafen Heccard aus Burgund', Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Germanistische Abtheilung, cvii (1990), especially 326–9.

Such gifts of swords hint that retinues of secular lords enjoyed a regime of services and rewards similar to that of Hincmar's retinue, and there is plenty of corroboratory evidence for this inference. Flodoard of Rheims preserves a considerable amount of anecdotal evidence for the activities of the followers of secular lords in the area around Rheims, mostly in his registers of Hincmar of Rheims's letters.[52] From these letters, we learn that important secular figures had their homines carry out campaigns of violence, sometimes for unspecified reasons, but sometimes in pursuit of a specific goal.[53] We learn too about homines who had been made to perjure themselves for their lords, on account of the servitium they owed;[54] about homines whose lords were protecting them from justice;[55] and about homines who were intimidating witnesses on their lord's behest.[56] Flodoard also records homines being rewarded with land by their lord.[57] Elsewhere in Hincmar of Rheims's writings, we hear about Walchano and Lupus, the (possibly even unfree) homines of a certain Nivin, who resourcefully hired ladders to help Nivin's beloved, a nun, escape from her convent at night; and about the men of Count Baldwin and Count Nortman, who delivered messages on their lords' behalf.[58] In short, we can see the retinues of secular men carrying out similar tasks, ranging from intimidation to messenger service, and receiving similar rewards, such as legal patronage and to some extent land, to those documented in the case of Bishop Hincmar of Laon.

[52] Flodoard, Historia (ed. Stratmann), notably in III, ch. 26.
[53] Ibid., 340 for the men of Wipert, with the support of Gangulf, a regis fidelis; and the men of Count Achadeus, 345, who had attacked a property of Rheims claimed by the count.
[54] Ibid., 344.
[55] Ibid., 343.
[56] Ibid., 338.
[57] Ibid., 111.
[58] Herimund: Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 392. Walchano and Lupus: Hincmar, Opusculum (ed. Schieffer), 310. Men of Baldwin: Hincmar of Rheims, Epistolae (ed. Migne), col. 25c. Unnamed homo of Nortman: Hincmar of Rheims, Opuscula et Epistolae quae spectant ad causam Hincmari Laudunensis, in Patrologia Latina, ed. Migne, cxxvi, col. 494.

The records of Hincmar of Rheims, both as mediated through Flodoard and as preserved independently, are admittedly unusual in providing material relating to this level of society. Other Carolingian letters collections, such as those of Einhard or Lupus of Ferrières certainly provide a broad context, in affirming the importance of personal, unequal but reciprocal relationships in the Carolingian world; but they seldom reach quite so far down the social scale in what they depict, with much more to say at about personal connections within the highest levels of the elite (a topic which has been well researched).[59] There are however some interesting exceptions. For instance, Bishop Frothar of Toul's letters reveal the efforts of an important but not central figure to make use of personal contacts to ease access to the court, whether by asking the doorkeeper (ostiarius) of the palace to put in a word for him about a piece of property, or by writing to a court chaplain to promote the interests of a new arrival; but Frothar also intervened on behalf of one of his own vassalli, whose dependant (servus) had abducted a dependant (ancilla) of the bishop of Basel.[60]

A directly comparable instance is preserved in a relatively little-known Carolingian letter collection, that of Bishop Herfrid of Auxerre. This collection preserves a letter written in the late ninth century by a woman named Bertrudis, and addressed to the bishop. Calling upon him as her domine senior, Bertrudis laments a catastrophe that has befallen her, and beseeches the bishop and her other friends (amici) to do something to help her, for instance granting her a vineyard. In return,

[59] On Carolingian letters in general, see (still) Mark Mersiowsky, 'Regierungspraxis und Schriftlichkeit im Karolingerreich: Das Fallbeispiel der Mandate und Briefe', in R. Schieffer (ed.), Schriftkultur und Reichsverwaltung unter der Karolingern (Opladen, 1994). On Einhard, see the superb discussion of Matthew Innes, 'Practices of Property in the Carolingian Empire', in Jennifer Davis and Michael McCormick (eds.), The Long Morning of Medieval Europe. New Directions in Early Medieval Studies (Aldershot, 2008), especially 259–262. On Lupus, see Thomas Noble, 'Lupus of Ferrières in his Carolingian Context', in A.C. Murray (ed.), *After Rome's Fall*: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History. Essays presented to Walter Goffart (Toronto, 1998).

[60] La *correspondance d'un évêque carolingien: Frothaire de Toul*, ed. Michel Parisse (Paris, 1998), here at 97–9, 100, 146–8 (unfortunately the end of the letter is lost).

she promises gifts made by her own hand.[61] She ends by expressing confidence, recalling the bishop's love for her son Wido who will remain under the bishop's authority (sub iure vestro) until his dying days. The social status of Bertrudis and her son Wido, both otherwise unknown, is not made clear, but the tenor of the letter suggests that, if not quite unfree, these were individuals fairly far down the Carolingian social ladder – yet nevertheless capable of appealing to personal relations with members of the elite in cases of need. Carolingian formulary collections preserve a few letters which appear to record interactions at this level, too, such as a letter from the bishop of Passau requesting a count look into a theft allegedly carried out by his own men, and also asking for him to act mercifully to another one of them.[62]

Given this kind of context, to use the evidence from Laon to confirm that a high-status figure had personal relations with free dependants in which virtues of loyalty and reciprocity figured highly is to say nothing new, and in fact would superficially seem only to add weight to the case for Carolingian lordship. However, the evidence from Laon is unusual in that the information it provides goes beyond the snapshot – one letter of intercession, or an isolated incident – and instead gives some indication of the nature of the relationship in context. This permits two characteristics of the relation between lord and follower to emerge, which together suggest a rethinking of our categories may be advisable.

IV.

[61] Martina Stratmann, 'Die Briefsammlung des Bischofs Herfrid von Auxerre (887–909), Deutsches Archiv, l (1994), 144 ('optimum croceum seu pretiosas alias res, quae manibus meis operari possunt').
[62] Translation (with Latin text, apparently based on the manuscript rather than the MGH edition) and insightful discussion in Warren Brown, 'Conflict, Letters and Personal Relationships in the Carolingian Formula Collections', Law and History Review, xxv (2007), 333-336.

The first of these characteristics is the degree of negotiability of the relationship between Hincmar and his men. For instance, it was rumoured that Hincmar had asked Grivo to take letters to Rome in the hope that Grivo would offer money to be excused the dangerous journey. Having heard this rumour, Grivo simply refused to the bishop's face to go. Grivo accepted the principle that he had to go to Rome if the bishop needed him to, but did not consider that this obligation could be redeemed by a cash payment. In the face of this refusal, Hincmar (who denied he had been hoping for cash) was in turn prepared to compromise, offering to let Grivo off further messenger duties if he would carry out this particular task.[63] The episode illuminates how the performance of a specific task was framed through the negotiation of expectations, rather than the execution of mutually-understood, clearly-defined duties.

If the terms of Hincmar's service were flexible, so too were its rewards. Although there was an acknowledged connection between land and service, the precise relationship between the two is never spelled out in our documentation. True, Hincmar's uncle once stated that such men should serve 'according to the quantity of their benefice', but this was probably meant as a rough and ready measure rather than a point of law.[64] After all, Hincmar could plausibly claim that he had given these men their benefices freely (gratis) (though others claimed that he had demanded money), and not as a contractual payment.[65] These exchanges were clearly embedded in

[63] Hincmar of Laon, Rotula Prolixa (ed. Schieffer), 370.
[64] 'Secundum quantitatem beneficii', Hincmar of Rheims, Quaterniones, in Patrologia Latina, ed. Migne, cxxv, col. 1050. Roman Deutinger, 'Seit wann gibt es die Mehrfachvasallität?' Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Germanistische Abteilung, cxix (2002), argues at 89, n. 51, that Hincmar was referring to the dues paid to the church, not the obligation to the king; but this does not do justice to the Latin.
[65] Liudo's son claimed that Hincmar had made him pay an exenium (a kind of gift) in return for his father's benefice: Hincmar of Rheims, Quaterniones (ed. Migne), col. 1035.

relations of long-term familiarity. Sometimes it is made clear that the benefices these men received had been held by their fathers from previous bishops of Laon, and the impression is that it was normal for sons to be rewarded even during their fathers' lifetime, if they looked promising. As Archbishop Hincmar put it in an intervention on his nephew's behalf during a moment of rapprochement, 'Unless the calf is fed, the ox will not be yoked to the plough'. Still, even these paternal benefices needed to be renewed by the bishop of Laon.[66] There was nothing automatic about the process.

On some occasions, Hincmar indeed revoked the grants. When he was required to account for his actions, it is revealing that Hincmar justified himself not by the breach of a specific rule or particular obligation, but by means of rich narratives, which provide much of the evidence adduced above. At the Council of Attigny, on Sunday 18 June 870, Hincmar explained that he had stripped one of his men, named Ragenard, of his benefice, because Ragenard had failed to come and see him for a number of years; he added for good measure that Ragenard had sold the woodland on his benefice, and damaged the demesne and church.[67] His accusations against Grivo were even more vivid. Hincmar claimed that after Grivo had fallen out with him over the journey to Rome, he had then notified his neighbours (vicini) that they should take whatever they wanted from the woods he held from Hincmar, since he realised that he would not hold the benefice much longer. Grivo sold some timber to peasants (villani), and gave some away outright, so that when Hincmar's envoys arrived, they found the wood swarming with innumerable peasants (sine numero

[66] Hincmar of Laon, Rotula Prolixa (ed. Schieffer), 370: 'mortuoque patre eius quod habuit beneficium illi dedi'.
[67] Ibid., 369.

villanos), happily chopping down trees.[68] The picture Hincmar offers here is of a total breakdown of trust, rather than a simple breach of any particular rule.

The fluidity in services and rewards was further manifested in the expression of the relationship in its most basic terms. There was no lack of demonstrative behaviour between Hincmar and his men, who were familiar with throwing themselves at the bishop's feet to plead for forgiveness, or offering to undergo ritual humiliations (harmiscara), or both.[69] Yet there is no mention of any ceremony marking the entry of these figures into Hincmar's orbit, and there is no reason to assume that a commendation ceremony, the sort of event associated with a famous Tours formula, had taken place.[70] Hincmar did make his men swear an oath to him — yet this was not a routine measure when they joined his retinue as old ideas of Gefolgschaft would have it, but an emergency response to an imminent threat in 869, and this controversial step was not anyway confined to his retinue.[71] Men such as Hincmar's moved from one lord to another without great scruple. Grivo had served Hincmar's predecessor as bishop of Laon, Pardulf, but had left him and commended himself to Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims, before later returning to Laon.[72] Another man's son, who had been commended to Hincmar by his father, left his service 'because', Hincmar later explained, 'I did not have anything by which I could give

[68] Ibid., 370.
[69] Ibid., 370 and 371.
[70] For a discussion of the historiography built upon document no. 43 of the formulary of Tours, see Rio, 'High and Low'.
[71] Annales de Saint-Bertin, 'omnesque homines ipsius episcopii liberos sibi sacramenta fieri fecit', 152: the wording seems to indicate a wider scope than merely his retinue. On oaths, see Matthias Becher, Eid und Herrschaft: Untersuchungen zum Herrscherethos Karls des Grossen (Sigmaringen, 1993) esp. 144–156. For the older view, see Walter Schlesinger, 'Herrschaft und Gefolgschaft in der germanisch-deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte', Historisches Zeitschrift, clxxvi (1953), translated as 'Lord and Follower in Germanic Institutional History' in Cheyette (ed.), Lordship. Commendation to the king may have been a different case: see Hincmar of Rheims's famous comments on vassallaticum in 858: Konzilien der karolingischen Teilreich, 843-859, ed. Wilfried Hartmann (MGH, Concilia aevi Karolini, iii, Hanover, 1984), 425.
[72] Hincmar of Laon, Rotula Prolixa (ed. Schieffer), 'antecessorem meum dimisit et vobis se commendavit', 370.

him another benefice', and entered the service of another, presumably more generous bishop, Rothad of Soissons.[73] A similar case was discussed in a letter of Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims about one of his own dependants, who had apparently tried to commend himself to a secular aristocrat named Welf. Archbishop Hincmar was angry about this, but his objections were phrased in moral, not legal terms, and again no reference was made to any oath.[74]

The pronounced indeterminacy of Hincmar's lordship over his retinue contrasts very clearly with concepts and practices of royal power visible from the very same set of sources. In fact, the main reason we know so much about the free clients of the bishop in the 860s and 870s is that King Charles intervened directly and forcefully in their lives, interventions that became caught up, and so were recorded, in the wider dispute. As will become clear, kingship was a far more defined presence in these men's lives than was any notion of lordship.

V.

From August 868 onwards, a string of Hincmar's men (tui homines, as his uncle dubbed them) complained to King Charles that Hincmar had mistreated them by unfairly removing their benefices.[75] Charles took their complaints seriously, and demanded that Hincmar explain his activities before a panel of (secular) judges. We know only the cases of Ragenard and Grivo in any detail, and the eventual outcome is

[73] Hincmar of Laon, Rotula Prolixa (ed. Schieffer), 367: 'unde et ipse, quia non habebam, ut aliam ei beneficium darem, a me recessit'. For the fact that he had become Rothard's man, ibid., 369.
[74] Flodoard, Historia (ed. Stratmann), III, ch. 26, 334–5.
[75] Annales de Saint-Bertin s.a. 868 (ed. Grat), 150, 'pro eo quod beneficia quibusdam suis hominibus abstulit'. The Annals of St-Bertin, trans. J. Nelson (Manchester, 1991), translates this as 'because he had taken away benefices from certain of Charles's men' (150), but in the context, the 'suis' is more likely to refer to Hincmar than Charles: cf. Hincmar of Rheims's account of the Council of Attigny in 870 in Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 393.

unclear. But we also know from this seam of material that others, namely Ariulf, Amalbert, Eligius and the son of Liudo, made similar complaints to the king, and in these cases royal judgement went in their favour.[76] We even know something of the mechanisms by which that judgement was put into effect, since Charles gave one of these men, Eligius, a writ (indiculum) which required Hincmar to give Eligius's benefice back to him.[77]

On these occasions, then, the king stepped in to defend Hincmar's followers against their lord. On other occasions, however, he acted to discipline them directly, over their lord's head. When Hincmar gave some land to one of his followers named Teduin that had been awarded to another person in the king's court, the king brought legal proceedings not against the bishop's advocate or formal representative, as Hincmar argued should have happened, but directly against Teduin himself: allegedly Teduin was threatened with death for treason (pro infidelitate regis).[78] Likewise, the king arrested Hincmar's followers for trespass, even though Hincmar claimed they had been merely accompanying him when he entered someone's lands in his capacity as the diocesan bishop.[79]

In short, Hincmar's men were able to appeal directly to the king over their lord's head; conversely, their service to Hincmar did not prevent them from being judged personally responsible to the king for their actions. These royal interventions in the affairs of Hincmar's men in the 860s show Hincmar's relations with them as

[76] Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 393; cf. 424 for an earlier instance.
[77] Ibid., 392.
[78] Hincmar of Rheims, Epistolae (ed. Migne), col. 504.
[79] Hincmar of Laon, Rotula Prolixa (ed. Schieffer), 'per bannum regium omnes mei homines in palatio retenti fuerant', 368; cf. also Hincmar of Rheims, Libellus expostulationis Hincmari (ed. Hartmann), 477.

thoroughly subordinated to royal power. It is clearly important therefore to understand the background to Charles's interventions: do they shed light on general assumptions, or were they perhaps the product of exceptional circumstances that make them an unsuitable basis for generalising conclusions?

That this was an exceptional matter of political expediency was the argument made by Peter McKeon. For McKeon, the underlying cause of Charles's heavy-handed intervention was Bishop Hincmar's possession at the time of secret, potentially dangerous knowledge about Charles's plans to acquire the neighbouring kingdom of his nephew King Lothar II. McKeon supposed that Hincmar was threatening to divulge the secret to Charles's enemies.[80] In McKeon's reading, the 'real' story behind Charles's involvement was the king taking advantage of a convenient opportunity to discipline a bishop who was becoming a political liability. By implication, the episode tells us little about the routine power or self-understanding of the king, and little about kingship's capacity to shape local society.

However, McKeon's hypothesis was not only founded on the questionable conviction that the Carolingian world was an undifferentiated place where everything was inter-related, his assertion that Hincmar possessed secret knowledge was based on decidedly fragile evidence.[81] Though politics doubtless played a part, Charles's actions were fundamentally a response to a challenge to how he conceived of his

[80] McKeon, Hincmar, 38 and 127 (cf. Nelson, Charles, 217–8).
[81] For the lack of differentiation, see McKeon, Hincmar, p. xi–xiii. His argument relies on a 'secret meeting' between Charles and Louis in Lothar's own kingdom in 868. However, it seems more likely that this meeting was the same as that recorded taking place in 867. J. Calmette, La Diplomatie Carolingienne. Du Traité de Verdun à la mort de Charles le Chauve (Paris, 1901), 195–200, offers a lengthy discussion of the date, based on a preface to a capitulary in a lost manuscript. Calmette himself did not envisage the alleged 868 meeting as secret, suggesting instead that it was intended to communicate a message to the pope. For a discussion of it in the context of Lothar's divorce, see Karl Heidecker, The Divorce of Lothar II: Christian Marriage and Political Power in the Carolingian World, tr. Tanya Guest (Ithaca, 2010), 141 and 173.

kingship, a challenge in the form of Hincmar's very public advocacy for episcopal independence.

Although Bishop Hincmar allegedly yearned for a layman's life, he had a strong conception of the dignity and privileges of episcopal office, and this led him to the conviction that the king's authority over his actions as bishop should be very limited.[82] In part, his position was justified by ancient canon law, but it was also based on texts of altogether more recent vintage, known today as the False or Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, with whose production Hincmar may have been involved.[83] Emphasising the privileges of the diocesan bishop, these decretals stated that the authority of the metropolitan over suffragan bishops was effectively nominal, that bishops could not legitimately be brought to justice in a secular court, and, crucially, that the disposition of church's land was the bishop's decision, and his alone.[84] In Hincmar's view, perhaps shared with other bishops too, texts like Pseudo-Isidore insulated himself and his men from royal authority, since he should be allowed to do whatever he liked with the resources of his church.[85]

[82] On this, see Hincmar of Rheims, Libellus expostulationis Hincmari (ed. Hartmann), 450; Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 508; and Hincmar of Rheims, Opusculum (ed. Schieffer), 358.
[83] Old canon law: 'Episcopus ecclesiasticarum rerum habeat potestatem', cited by the Dionysio-Hadriana collection as ch. 25 of the Council of Antioch (341). Hincmar of Laon cited this in Rotula Prolixa (ed. Schieffer), 366.
[84] H. Fuhrmann, Einfluss und Verbreitung der pseudoisidorischen Fälschungen: von ihrem Auftreten bis in die neuere Zeit (Stuttgart, 1972–4) remains the the essential background to Pseudo-Isidore; for an update, see W. Hartmann and G. Schmitz (eds.), Fortschritt durch Fälschungen? (Hannover, 2002), and now the new study by Zechiel-Eckes, Rebellische Kleriker?, cited above, n. 29.
[85] For example, Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 392, in which Hincmar of Laon asks his uncle to request of the king 'ut ille [Hincmar] possit res de sua ecclesia ordinare et illi eas liceat… disponere et gubernare', and threatening to withdraw his 'temporal service' from the king. A study of a dossier of texts drawn together by Hincmar with these goals in mind is provided by G. Schmitz, 'Die Appendix Dacherianae Mettensis, Benediktus Levita und Hinkmar von Laon', Zeitschrift für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistisches Abteilung, xcii (2006). For Archbishop Hincmar's confidential diagnosis of Hincmar of Laon's motives, see Hincmar of Rheims, Libellus Expostulationis Hincmari (ed. Hartmann), 459.

The problem was that this attitude was wholly incompatible with a principle central to Charles the Bald's kingship, the power of the king, the rex francorum, over all free Franks.[86] That Frankishness mattered much to Charles, perhaps even more than to his predecessors, is shown by the oath to him as king that he demanded in 854. Whilst working within a long tradition of royal oaths, Charles was the first Carolingian ruler to specify that those swearing the oaths were Franks, franci, in this way conspicuously breaking with precedent.[87] Charles seems to have had in mind here not merely the aristocrats and elites, but the liberi homines, the 'free men'. Clearly distinguished from those of lower social status, labelled as villani, coloni or servi, it is widely accepted now that such liberi homines were not necessarily either tenants on royal land or immediate royal dependants, but rather represented a broad stratum of society in the Frankish world.[88]

Under Charles the Bald, the traditional association between these men's liberty and their ethnicity as Franks seems in fact to have strengthened. Whereas the dependent peasantry in Francia were never described as Franks (and were often contrasted with them), the term liberi homines was for Charles the Bald and his court

[86] For Frankish identity in general, see Helmut Reimitz, 'Omnes Franci: Identifications and Identities of the Early Medieval Franks', in Ildar Garipzanov, Patrick Geary and Przemysław Urbańcyck (eds.), Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe (Turnhout, 2008). For a specifically historiographical angle, see Rosamond McKitterick, 'Political ideology in Carolingian Historiography', in Yitzak Hen and Matthew Innes (eds.), The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages (Cambridge, 2000).

[87] Capitularia, ed. Boretius and Krause, ii, no. 261, 278. For earlier oaths, see Becher, Eid, which focuses on the oaths of 789 and 802 passim.

[88] For a summary of the old argument that liberi homines were tenants on royal land (the so-called Königsfrei debate), see W. Hechberger, Adel, Ministerialität und das Rittertum im Mittelalter (Munich, 2004), 59–61. This Königsfrei argument is now largely abandoned in German work but remains influential in Anglophone (and specifically Anglo-Saxon) research, as discussed in Edward Schoenfeld, 'Anglo-Saxon Burhs and Continental Burgen. Early Medieval Fortifications in Comparative Perspective', Haskins Society Journal, vi (1994). Free men and royal dependants are clearly distinguished in Lex Ribuaria, ed. Rudolf Buchner (MGH, Leges nationarum Germanicarum, Hannover 1965), 77. This text's homines regii are glossed in one capitulary as fiscalini, a word usually used to describe people living on royal land, Capitularia, ed. Boretius and Krause, i, no. 41, 117, ch. 2. Thanks to Thomas Faulkner for drawing my attention to this.

essentially synonymous with franci homines.[89] For instance, when Charles cited previous capitularies in the Edict of Pîtres of 864, he turned the original text's liberi homines into Franks, Franci; he had already done much the same with a capitulary of Louis the Pious in 844.[90] This latter text suggests that the issue was not simply one of ethnicity: men who are explicitly described as Gothi or Hispani were nevertheless urged to carry out military service 'like the other Franks'. In Charles the Bald's kingdom, to be free was to be a Frank, almost like a class label.[91] This in turn meant being in a direct relationship with the king himself, the rex Francorum, in ways familiar from other post-Roman ethnicities, and celebrated by the Frankish heritage, 'according to the law of the Franks'.[92]

That relationship's most important manifestation was through military service, demanded from liberi homines throughout the ninth century.[93] For Bishop Hincmar, men like Grivo and Ragenard were 'his' and no one else's; but for King Charles they

[89] See Bas van Bavel, Manors and Markets. Economy and Society in the Low Countries, 500–1600 (Oxford, 2010), 57–61. As an example of the distinction, King Charles the Bald levied tolls in 866 from various kinds of mansi (ingenuiles and serviles), and, separately, the heribannum 'de omnibus Francis': Annales de Saint-Bertin (ed. Grat), 125–6; the English translation supplies the adjective 'free' which is indeed implied, 130. On notions of restricted ethnicity, see John Moreland, 'Ethnicity, Power and the English', in W. Frazer and A. Tyrell (eds.), Social Identity in early medieval Britain (London, 2000).

[90] Edict of Pîtres: Capitularia, ed. Boretius and Krause, ii, no. 273, 322, ch. 28 (cf. Capitularia, ed. Boretius and Krause, ii, no. 273, 326, where Charles notes that there are no references in the Lex Salica to Franci selling themselves, and contents himself with its reference to liberi homines). 844 capitulary: Capitularia, ed. Boretius and Krause, ii, no. 256, 259, ch. 1.

[91] On this sense of Frankishness as a status label, not merely an ethnicity, see Barthélemy, 'La chevalrie Carolingienne', 169, and most recently, T. Faulkner, 'Carolingian Kings and the Leges Barbarorum', Historical Research, lxxxvi (2013), 449–450. Aristocratic traits are often associated with Frankish ethnicity in other ninth-century texts too, for instance hunting: see for example Gesta Dagoberti, ed. Bruno Krusch (MGH, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, ii, Hannover, 1888), 401, 'ut genti Francorum moris est'). On the connection of the liberi homines to the king, see Devroey, Puissants, 330–1.

[92] For the quotation, Libellus Expostulationis Karoli, in Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 420. On the gentile basis of Frankish kingship, see Nelson, 'Kingship and Empire', esp. 214, and on Carolingian interest in Lex Salica, Rosamond McKitterick, The Carolingians and the Written Word (Cambridge, 1989), 40–60. On the background to the 'ethnicisation' of the Roman West, and the implications for ideas of freedom and kingship, see Matthew Innes, 'Land, Freedom and the Making of the Medieval West', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, xvi (2006).

[93] For important evidence on this matter, see Alain Sigoillot, 'Les liberi homines de Saint-Germain-des Prés', Journal des Savants 2008, esp. 270–1.

were the 'free men of the bishopric of Laon', a core component of the Frankish army, and as such were liable to be directly summoned to royal service, for example to prepare to defend the homeland (patria) against the Vikings.[94] The only complaint of Hincmar's about his homines to which King Charles and his court were sympathetic was that Ragenard had left Hincmar's escort when the bishop was on royal business in the Spanish March. To Hincmar's irritation (because he thought it was deliberately ignoring the matter of episcopal authority), this was deemed desertion from royal service, and treated as a crucial fact for the case.[95]

So, while Charles's intervention was doubtless sparked by the political crisis instigated by an intransigent bishop, the point that Charles was hammering home in this case as he had in others was precisely that Hincmar's status as bishop was irrelevant: Hincmar's men were free men (liberi) who could accordingly also be thought of as Franks (Franci).[96] They might well have obligations towards other Franks such as the lord to whom they were commended, and if so these ought to be respected.[97] In this Charles was simply following Carolingian tradition, which generally promoted obligations of fidelity.[98] However, as their king, Charles claimed

[94] For the army service, see Council of Douzy 871 (as n. 33 above), 507 and also the council's episcopal letter, 554 ('Franci homines… qui regi hostem de capite suo debent'); for the reference to the men as the homines liberi episcopii Laundunensi, see Hincmar of Rheims, Libellus expostulationis Hincmari (ed. Hartmann), 426.
[95] Hincmar, Rotula Prolixa (ed. Schieffer), 369. Cf. again for the general point of immediate royal connection, Le Jan, 'Satellites'. On Heerflucht, whose most famous example in this period is that of Tassilo, see Becher, Eid, 45.
[96] See Flodoard, Historia, III ch. 18, 256, for evidence suggesting a similar controversy between the king and Bishop Rothad of Soissons.
[97] For the reference to commendation, Libellus expostulationis Karoli, in Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 420, and ibid., 507; 508 further emphasised that Hincmar's clerics 'ac sui vassalli et servientes' should perform the 'debitum obsequium sicut seniori et episcopi'.
[98] For a discussion of fidelity in capitulary legislation, see Stone, Morality, esp. 191–4 (cf. below, n. 136). Note however that often capitularies read as reinforcing lordship may in reality be about loyalty to kings. For instance, ch. 9 of the Capitulare missorum in Theodonis villa datum (Capitularia, ed. Boretius and Krause, i, no. 44, 124) is regularly cited in discussions of Carolingian lordship, because it states that no one will swear oaths of loyalty except to the king and 'his own lord' (unicuique proprio

the right to a direct relationship that overrode any alternative relationships or dependencies.[99] It was to impress this principle that Charles sent agents (missi) to oblige Hincmar's men to make, or to renew, their oath to the king — the only oath that these men took upon which any weight was put.[100] When Hincmar protested, the predictable answer could be and was made that these were Franci homines, who were able to represent themselves.[101]

It was Hincmar's strident assertion of episcopal autonomy that provoked King Charles into issuing one of the clearest Carolingian statements about royal power over free men, in the capitulary of Pîtres of 869. If bishops acted unjustly to their clergy, that was something to be dealt with by the appropriate church procedures. But if bishops acted unjustly to their laity, then they were subject to royal authority in the matter: in this respect, their consecration did not mark them out.[102] As we have seen, and as Hincmar found out, this was not merely a theoretical point. The relationship of Hincmar's retinue to the king was, when it came to it, more definite and closely conceptualised than their relationship to their lord, even a lord armed with the latest

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seniore). But that lord could well have one of Charlemagne's sons; certainly both oaths are deemed to be for the king's utilitas. See further Becher, Eid, 159.

[99] Cf. Eckhard Müller-Mertens, Karl der Grosse, Ludwig der Fromme und die Freien. Wer waren die liberi homines der karolingischen Kapitularien (742/743–832)? (Berlin, 1963), esp. 60, 72–4, together with the critical evaluation on methodological grounds in Johannes Schmitt, Untersuchungen zu den 'liberi homines*' der Karolingerzeit* (Frankfurt, 1977), summarised at 245–7.

[100] Libellus expostulationis Karoli (as n. 97, above), 418; ch. 4. Cf. the oath in Capitularia, ed. Boretius and Krause, ii, no. 261, 278.

[101] Hincmar of Rheims, Libellus expostulationis Hincmari (ed. Hartmann), ch. 14, 437. The case of a dependant of Rothad of Soissons has similar implications: despite the support of King Louis the German and of the prominent aristocrat Rodulf, he was not able to see King Charles, for fear of being arrested for theft for his own actions, as a homo accusatus, though his actions were probably on Rothad's instruction: Flodoard, Historia, 235.

[102] Capitulary of Pîtres 869, ch. 5, in Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 356: 'ut episcopi comitibus, missis et vassis nostris, sed et suis ipsis subditis, tam clericis quam laicis, et comitum ac vassallorum nostrorum hominibus, paternam benignitatem secundum suum ministerium et debitum honorem ac legem et iusticiam unicuique secundum suum ordinem et dignitatem impendant et conservant, sicut sanctae leges, tam mundanae quam ecclesiastici et capitula avi et patris nostri decernunt'. Despite the final words, the editor notes in n. 17 that no precise basis for this legisation is known.

canon law; that is why Hincmar's control over 'his men' began to break down under pressure from the king.[103]

VI.

Having characterised something of the relationship between Hincmar and his men, with particular reference to its negotiability and the role of the king, the question arises of whether any of this was distinct from later conditions. The answer might at first glance seem to be no. Bishops of Laon continued to fall out with kings, spectacularly so in the cases of Adalbero (970–c.1030) or Waldric (1106–1112); and after a brief struggle in the 890s, resolved by the dramatic execution in Laon of a certain Waltger, kings visited Laon perhaps more than ever before, at least before the changes wrought by Hugh Capet's accession to the kingship in 987.[104] Moreover, as elsewhere in post-Carolingian Europe, the bishops of Laon continued to have military retinues, sometimes on a quite considerable scale.[105]

Some of these resemblances are however more apparent than real. To begin with, despite their proximity and notwithstanding Laon's reputation as a royal city, post-Carolingian kings actually impinged far less on its bishops than had their ninth-

[103] Konzilien 860–874, 392: Hincmar summoned 'suos homines' to come on a Saturday to discuss various things, but they simply did not turn up.
[104] Carlrichard Brühl, Palatium und Civitas: Studien zur Profantopographie spätantiker Civitates vom 3 bis 13 Jahrhundert, 2 vols. (Cologne, 1975), i, 74–76 and Jackie Lusse, *Naissance d'un*e cité: Laon et la Laonnois du V^e^ au XI^e^ siècle (Nancy, 1982), 234–241, on the visiting. On Adalbero of Laon, see R. Coolidge, 'Adalbero, Bishop of Laon', Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History, ii (1965), 66–93. On Waldric, see Guibert of Nogent, Autobiographie, III ch. 6, ed. and trans. E. Labande (Paris, 1981), 310. On the execution of Waltger in 892, see Annales Vedastini, ed. B. von Simson, Annales Xantenses et Vedastini (MGH, Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum, xii, Hannover, 1909), 72. Whether Waltger was formally a count of Laon is not clear; certainly the sources do not call him this. For context, see Lusse, Naissance, 346–7.
[105] Guibert of Nogent, Autobiographie, III ch. 6 (ed. Labande), 314 ('manus equestris'). For wider references to episcopal retinues, Timothy Reuter, 'Filii matris nostrae pugnant adversum nos: Bonds and Tensions between German Prelates and their Milites in the High Middle Ages', in Chiesa e mondo nei secoli X–XII (Milan, 1995).

century forebears.[106] Charles the Bald boasted of having donated around two thousand holdings to the bishopric, and though few Carolingian charters for Laon now survive, we know they had once existed.[107] There is a conspicuous lack of evidence for comparable royal generosity in later periods, and good reason to suppose that this lack of evidence is not simply an accident of preservation. A charter issued by King Odo around 890, committing not to stay there without the bishop's express permission, signals a royal disengagement with the bishopric that is borne out by later sources.[108] A later Laon necrology, for instance, that records some tenth- and even ninth-century benefactors, including Hincmar's own successor Bishop Dido, does not mention any royal grant except for some vineyards from Queen Gerberga; later royal charters seem to confirm that no other donations had in fact been made.[109] General confirmation of this picture is provided by a text probably written in Laon in the 960s, the Dialogus de Statu Ecclesiae, which depicts a world where the king was simply not locally important (and indeed would not be again, until the twelfth century).[110] In its extended discussion of the relations between bishops and their dependants, there is not a word

[106] For Laon as a royal city, see Guibert of Nogent, Autobiographie, III ch. 10 (ed. Labande), 366, 'caput regni'; cf. though III ch. 7, 316.
[107] It is certain that many Carolingian charters for Laon are lost: see Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 508, mentioning the 'praecepta et strumenta chartarum de rebus ipsius ecclesiae'. On the two thousand holdings, see the letter of King Charles in Konzilien 860–874, ed. Hartmann, 531.
[108] Recueil des Actes de Eudes, roi de France (888–898), ed. G. Tessier (Chartes et diplômes relatifs à l'histoire de France, Paris, 1967), no. 29, 126–130.
[109] The necrology is edited by J. Foviaux, 'Amassez-vous des trésors dans le ciel: les listes d'obits du chapitre cathédrale de Laon', in J-L. Lemaitre (ed.), *L'*Eglise et la mémoire des morts dans la France médiévale (Turnhout, 1986). On vinea in charters, see Guerreau, *L'avenir*, 195–198. For later charters that conspicuously lack any reference to now lost tenth-century royal donations, see Recueil des actes de Philippe I, roi de France, ed. J.M. Prou (Chartes et diplômes relatifs à l'histoire de France, Paris 1908), no. 61 (1071) and Recueil des actes de Louis VI, roi de France, ed. J. Dufour, 4 vols. (Chartes et diplômes relatifs à l'histoire de France, Paris 1992), no. 182 (1121). The charter of King Philip I, which does not survive in the original, is incidentally not above suspicion, and might have been produced or interpolated in the twelfth century, so the absence of charters might have extended still longer.
[110] Heinrich Löwe, 'Dialogus de statu sanctae ecclesiae. Das Werk eines Iren im Laon des 10 Jahrhundert', Deutsches Archiv, xvii (1961). On twelfth-century practices of royal justice, the most convenient summary is now Alan Harding, Medieval Law and the Foundations of the State (Oxford, 2002), here at 109–123.

about the importance of lobbying the king, or indeed of the king's involvement in this relationship at all.

To this should be added the remarkable evidence provided by the ninth-century manuscript known as Laon, Bibliothèque Municipale 67. This commentary on the Gospel of Matthew was in Laon in the ninth century, and it has remained there ever since. At some point, traditionally and perfectly plausibly during the episcopate of Bishop Adalbero (who died around 1030), a 'truce of God' text was copied into it.[111] The earliest of a group of similar texts, it set out defined periods of time in which assaults and violence were not to take place within the diocese.[112] While is true that the king retained a privileged place in this scheme, since only he was allowed to carry out military action during these times, he and his followers were nevertheless viewed as outsiders, riding through the region.[113] Moreover, the entire thrust of the text presupposes violence which the king is either unable or unwilling to control, and which a bishop is using his pastoral powers to regulate instead. Such texts do not imply anarchy, but they do give the impression of a perception that kings were now hands-off, unlike in the days of King Charles. Meanwhile, the Frankishness that had been so important for the ninth-century debates had all but disappeared; of the

[111] John Contreni, The Cathedral School of Laon from 850–930: its Manuscripts and Masters (Munich, 1978), 44, for the manuscript's presence in Laon in the ninth century; Bernhard Bischoff, Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 2004), ii, 22–23 for the addition's late 10th-century date. On its traditional association with Adalbero, see Michel Bur, 'Un étrange figure de l'an mil: l'évêque Adalbéron', in Michel Bur (ed.), Histoire de Laon et du Laonnois (Toulouse, 1987), and Georges Duby, Les Trois ordres*, ou, l'imaginaire du féodalisme* (Paris, 1980), 42 and 173; for more recent, sceptical discussion, Dominique Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu:* la France chrétienne et féodale 980–1060 (Paris, 1999), 481 and 546, n. 3.

[112] Edited by R. Bonnaud-Delamare, 'Les institutions de paix dans la province écclesiastique de Reims au XIe siècle', Bulletin philologique et historique (Paris, 1957).

[113] Cf. Theo Riches, 'The Changing Political Horizons of Gesta Episcoporum from the Ninth to the Eleventh Centuries', in L. Körntgen and Dominic Waßenhoven (eds.), Patterns of Episcopal Power. Bishops in Tenth and Eleventh Century Western Europe (Berlin, 2011).

connections between ethnicity, freedom and kingship so prominent during the reign of Charles, there is not a whisper.[114]

If the relations between bishop and king had changed, then so too, inevitably, had the relations between the bishop and his followers, which seem to have become increasingly formalised. By the mid or later eleventh century, there is some reason to suppose that the bishop's retinue may have been participating in a ritual of entry into his service, exactly the kind of ceremony conspicuous by its earlier absence.[115] A few decades later, we have the first reference to the bishop of Laon's curia or judicial court, an institution that would be frequently mentioned thereafter.[116] Meanwhile, the way in which the bishop distributed land had changed. Surviving episcopal charters from the tenth and eleventh centuries suggest that the bishop's retinue were comfortably established in their benefices, even to the point of being capable of making donations of them, a far cry from the highly provisional situation of the 860s.[117]

[114] On the evolution of Frankishness in the post-Carolingian period, see Bernd Schneidmüller, Nomen patriae. Die Entstehung Frankreichs in der politisch-geographischen Terminologie (10.–13. Jahrhundert) (Sigmaringen, 1987), and Hans-Werner Goetz, 'Zur Wandlung des Frankennamens', in Walter Pohl and Max Diesenberger (eds.), Integration und Herrschaft: ethnische Identitäten und soziale Organisation im Frühmittelalter (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, iii, Vienna, 2002). Olivier Bruand, Les origines de la so*ciété féodale: l'exemple de l'*Autunois (Dijon, 2009), discusses the franci who appear in 10th-century charters, 220-224.

[115] Such a ritual is preserved in the ordo ad armandum, in Cologne Dombibliothek MS 141. The manuscript is generally thought to have been produced for Cambrai, with whose bishops those of Laon (like Adalbero) were in close touch. For a commentary, see Jean Flori, 'A propos de l'adoubement des chevaliers au XIe siècle: Le prétendu pontifical de Reims et l'ordo ad armandum de Cambrai', Frühmittelalterliche Studien, xix (1985).

[116] Actes des évêques de Laon: des origines à 1151, ed. A. Dufour-Malbezin (Paris, 2001): no. 75 (1116) is the first attestation, assuming that no. 63 is a later forgery, as the editor suggests.

[117] Actes, ed. Dufour-Malbezin, no. 8 (969): 'nec militibus persuaderi poterat nostris ut eandem terram ad locum redderent', though in no. 15, the abbot had more luck with the bishop's miles Peter; cf. no. 10 (974), in which Gislebertus the bishop's miles et signifer acquires Bishop Roric's permission to grant his land to the monastery of St-Vincent. Later charters frequently record donations by benefice-holders, for example no. 45.

To some extent this points to a change in the character of the episcopal entourage, which now included influential local figures.[118] Yet more than that, the way that this land was now held in chains of tenure, 'descending' from the bishop through one or more intermediate levels to be 'held' by a third or fourth party suggests that the politics of benefice-giving had by the early twelfth century become altogether more complex and layered, with hints that 'benefice' was becoming a more specialised, almost technical term.[119] In one remarkable charter, the bishop of Laon confirmed a charter granting land at Éparcy which included land held in fief (feodi) by milites. The charter set out that notwithstanding the grant, these milites were entitled to remain in their land; they merely had to do homage (hominium) to the new owner.[120]

The appearance of what might be called a specialised vocabulary of lordship is prefigured by hints that contemporaries were beginning from the eleventh century to have a concept similar to the modern notion of lordship, as an abstraction. One key illustration of this is provided by a charter from around 1046, in which Bishop Gibuin (1035–50) of Laon heard complaints that his miles Garnerus had abused the advocatio he had in benefice to extract 'excessive and unfair customs' over lands of the cathedral.[121] Advocatio here denotes not the ownership of these lands, but an abstract

[118] Alain Saint-Denis, *Apogée d'une cité: Laon et le Laonnais aux* XII^{e} et XIII^{e} siècles (Nancy, 1994), 79–82, and 217–225.
[119] Technical term: Actes, ed. Dufour-Malbezin, no. 45 (1096), talking about someone's possession of an altar 'quasi in beneficium'. The language of 'descending' appears from the early twelfth century; cf. gradatim in 1133 (Actes, ed. Dufour-Malbezin, no. 148). In general, see Fouracre, 'The use of the term beneficium'.
[120] Actes, ed. Dufour-Malbezin, no. 220 (1142).
[121] Ibid., no. 18 (1046); cf. no. 40 (1091).

power over them. This is precisely the kind of abstraction that is missing from the abundant evidence for Hincmar's relations with his followers.[122]

VII.

The evidence for the retinue of Bishop Hincmar offers a relatively detailed picture of an informal relationship between a lord and dependants who were not slaves, buttressed by expectations of loyalty and generosity. It therefore confirms, but also fills out, the broader picture of unequal personal relationships, marked by expectations of faithfulness on one side and of rewards on the other, which were undoubtedly widespread, powerful and important in Carolingian Francia, as shown by texts ranging from letters collections to royal capitularies.[123] In some ways, this might seem to represent just the kind of authentically ninth-century material required to show that lordship was indeed 'already' present. Yet looked at more closely, and with later conditions in mind, difficulties with such an interpretation become apparent. Is lordship really the best way of thinking about these relationships?

To begin with, we should remember that lordship is a loaded word, one which by its very nature inscribes the pre-modern onto the evidence. Problematic in its own terms, a further consequence of this periodising force is, ironically, a certain degree of anachronism.[124] Just as the Brunnerian notion of Herrschaft implies the later emergence of the modern state, to which it acts as the status quo ante, so too

[122] For further discussion of this growing abstraction, see my Reframing the Feudal Revolution. Political and Social Transformation between Marne and Moselle, c.800 – c.1100 (Cambridge, 2013), 199–227.
[123] On faithfulness in particular, see Nelson, 'Kingship and Empire', 221–3 and 228–229.
[124] For a recent discussion of the difficulties of periodisation, Carol Symes, 'When we talk about Modernity', American Historical Review, cxvi (2011). The most developed study of the constitutive relation between the medieval and modern as concepts is Kathleen Davis, Periodization and Sovereignty. How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time (Philadelphia, 2008).

historians who use lordship to avoid talking about the state are really still framing their discussions in its terms, merely at one remove.[125] Lordship is not a way of bypassing tedious questions about the state, it is a category of analysis that is predicated on a particular dogmatic answer to those questions. A denial that Charles the Bald's Francia was a state in a form recognisable to us, as the notion of lordship intrinsically implies, is to measure by modern standards just as much as to proclaim the opposite.

Still more problematic than the imposition of periodisation is however the essentialising work of lordship, as both term and concept. As discussed above, historians have seized upon lordship as an alternative to formal, 'institutional' kinds of power such as vassalage, which it is widely agreed is more a creation of legally-minded historians than an early medieval reality; in other words, they have advocated what could be considered a 'weak' version of lordship, in place of a strong.[126] Yet we might do well here to consider some of the criticism made of the German concept of Herrschaft. This too was conceived initially as a means of bypassing arid and unreal legalist constructions of the medieval past. In reality, though, far from acting as a transparent window onto past realities, the approach of Brunner and his colleagues has been shown to have projected assumptions from certain strands of pre-war German thought upon them. Representing late medieval society from the point of view of the dominant, Herrschaft theorists systematically elided social conflict by obliterating the heterogeneity of medieval power relations.[127] As a result, critics have

[125] A classic discussion of the importance of royal power for an understanding of lordship is provided by J. Bean, From Lord to Patron: Lordship in Late Medieval England (Manchester, 1989). I am grateful to Dr Peter Sarris for the reference.
[126] For instance, Barton, Lordship, 4–6, 8, 220, and passim.
[127] Gadi Algazi, Herrengewalt und Gewalt der Herren im späten Mittelalter. Herrschaft, Gegenseitigkeiten und Sprachgebrauch (Frankfurt, 1996); see also Gadi Algazi, 'Otto Brunner,

suggested that 'lordship theory' became a kind of disguised meta-institution, a constitutional history by other means; ironically, much the same kind of criticism as these very same historians had pioneered against feudalism.[128]

Much the same point could be made of the supposedly non-institutional version of lordship: it throws institutionalisation out of the front door, only to let it in again, in modified form, through the back.[129] To use an abstract noun necessarily implies there is 'something' to be described. Yet it is not clear that this really reflects Carolingian realities. There was after all no clear-cut terminology of lordship in the evidence concerning Hincmar, or for matter in the Carolingian period more broadly. Senior, for instance, did not always mean 'lord'; it was a word of respect applied to all kinds of different figures, without any implication that they shared a common mode of power.[130] Still less was there an abstraction in the Carolingian period which could be understood as meaning lordship even in the 'weak' sense. The Latin dominium is rarely to be found, and in any case had in the ninth century a range of meanings, not

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"Konkrete Ordnung" und Sprache der Zeit', in Peter Schöttler (ed.), Geschichte als Legitimationswissenschaft 1918-1945 (Frankfurt, 1998). For a specifically Carolingian critique, see Steffen Patzold, 'Die Bischöfe im karolingischen Staat. Praktisches Wissen über die politischen Ordnung im Frankenreich des 9. Jahrhunderts', in Airlie, Pohl and Reimitz (eds.), Staat, and his Episcopus: Wissen über Bischöfe im Frankenreich des späten 8 bis frühen 10 Jahrhunderts (Ostfildern, 2008), esp. 30–34, with further references.

[128] Julien Demade, 'The medieval Countryside in German-language Historiography since the 1930s', in Isabel Afonso (ed.), The Rural History of Medieval European Societies (Turnhout, 2007). See Otto Brunner's brilliant ''Feudalismus'. Ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte', in his Neue Wege, which in some ways anticipates the assault of Reynolds, Fiefs. For the phrase 'lordship theory', and for an exposure of its influence in other historiographical contexts, see A.C. Murray, 'Reinhard Wenskus on 'Ethnogenesis', Ethnicity and the Origin of the Franks', in Andrew Gillett (ed.), On Barbarian Identity. Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages (Brepols, 2002).

[129] And indeed of concepts like 'amicitia', which have in similar fashion been built into quasi-institutionalised forms of power in recent work. Here at least there is terminological support in the evidence, but the influence of Brunner's Herrschaft is still prominent. See Verena Epp, Amicitia: zur Geschichte personaler, sozialer, politischer und geistlicher Beziehungen im frühen Mittelalter (Stuttgart, 1999), esp. 3–4 (attempting to out-Brunner Brunner, by getting even closer to the sources).

[130] A point made by Reynolds, Fiefs, 36. More broadly, see Philippe Depreux, 'Dominus. Marques de respect et expression des rapports hiérarchiques dans la désignation des personnes d'autorité', in Francois Bougard, Hans-Werner Goetz, and Régine Le Jan (eds.), Theorie et pratiques des élites au Haut Moyen Age (Turnhout, 2011).

least the old Roman one of property.[131] References in ninth-century texts to senioratus, an abstraction derived from senior, are not only infrequent (I have found just ten in total), but often concern royal power or manual labourers and moreover are, with one exception, references to very specific instances.[132]

Of course, as Susan Reynolds famously observed, we need to distinguish between words, concepts and things.[133] We cannot conclude that there was no Carolingian concept of lordship just because the Carolingians had no word for it (any more than we can conclude that they did not have a state for that reason).[134] Yet evidence for something that could be convincingly described as a 'concept of lordship' is actually strikingly – and revealingly – hard to find.[135] As Hincmar was certainly his men's lord, their senior, and their relationship was close, important and often intense. But his control over them 'as lord' does not seem to have been defined by anything more than powerful but generic moral platitudes about loyalty and generosity. As we have seen, there was neither any distinctive essence to it, nor did any unequivocal consequences flow from it: it was a matter purely for negotiation. This fits well with the broader Carolingian evidence, too, and it is conspicuous that such relationships were only glancingly addressed in law codes or capitularies (and usually only in relation to kings).[136]

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[131] Devroey, Puissants, 267.
[132] Based on a search of Patrologia Latina, ed. Migne, and of the digital MGH, cross-referenced with J. Niermeyer, Mediae Latinitatis lexikon minus, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1954–77), ii, 1250.
[133] Reynolds, Fiefs, 12.
[134] For a recent set of discussions, see Walter Pohl and Veronika Wieser (eds.) Der frühmittelalterliche Staat – Europäische Perspektiven (Vienna, 2009).
[135] A point already made using the Old High German evidence by Klaus Kroeschell, Haus und Herrschaft im frühen deutschen Recht: ein methodische Versuch (Göttingen, 1968); cf. Richter, History: 'In other words, before 1400, Herrschaft had not yet acquired any abstract meanings which went beyond the enumeration or addition of specific exercises of those legal powers claimed by or attributed to holders (lords) of their lands', 62.
[136] As Stone, Morality, puts it: 'the capitularies are remarkably silent on how men and lords ought to behave towards one another', 194. The closest that Frankish law codes come to engaging with secular

If there was no coherent concept of lordship, this was not the result of a Carolingian inability to conceive of clearly defined forms of power altogether. 'Dishonourable' dependence between lords and those who worked the fields was increasingly being expressed through formalised property relations.[137] More to the point in the present case, the power wielded by both bishops and kings was increasingly elaborated in this period, too.[138] Compared to these, ideas of the relations between lord and follower were vague and undeveloped. Indeed, most of the normative evidence for followers and retinues, even when not directly about royal followers, is fundamentally shaped by kingship and the status of the free man, while the only use of senioratus in a generalising sense is as a rhetorically improvised equivalent for the far better defined potestas episcopi.[139] It is not therefore mere coincidence that the evidence for Hincmar's lordship discussed above is embedded within arguments about canon law and royal authority over free Franks: this was how the matter was perceived by contemporaries.

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free dependency is Lex Ribuaria (ed. Buchner), 87. Obsequium perhaps here means retinue, with the text addressing litigation over acts committed as part of that retinue: cf. Capitularia, ed. Boretius and Krause, i, no. 150, 305, ch. 17. For a brief commentary, Halsall, Warfare, 53 (though the date of Lex Ribuaria remains contested).

[137] For a sense of the dynamics of these relations, see the groundbreaking L. Kuchenbuch, 'Porcus donativus: Language Use and Gifting in Seigniorial Records between the eighth and the twelfth centuries', in G. Algazi, V. Groebner and B. Jussen (eds.), Negotiating the Gift. Pre-modern figurations of exchange (Göttingen, 2003), and J.P. Devroey, 'Communiquer et signifier entre seigneurs et paysans', in *Communicare e significare nell'alto medioevo* (Settimane di Studio 52, Spoleto, 2005).

[138] See Steffen Patzold, Episcopus: Wissen über Bischofe im Frankenreich des späten 8. bis frühen 10. Jahrhunderts (Ostfildern, 2008), and Nelson, 'Kingship'.

[139] For example, Capitularia, ed. Boretius and Krause, i, no. 50, 137, which like similar texts does not really presuppose a 'concept' of lordship so much as an implicit concept of freedom. See above, n. 98. For the use of senioratus, Hincmar of Rheims's Collectio de ecclesiis et capellis, ed. Martina Stratmann (MGH, Fontes iuris germanici antiqui, xiv, Hannover, 1990), 95. One might compare Walahfrid Strabo's struggle to devise a secular hierarchy to match the ecclesiastical, in his De exordiis et incrementis, ch. 32, ed. and tr. Alicia Harting-Correa (Mittellateinische Studien und Texte xix, Leiden, 1996), at 188–194.

On the basis of the Laon evidence, set in its wider context, to assume that there was such a thing as lordship in late Carolingian Francia in fact hinders the investigation of how informal personal relations, conditioned by undoubtedly powerful moral values, continued to be shaped by a kingship that could evidently mobilise remarkable resources, both ideological and material, as it struggled to integrate new and disruptive articulations of the place of the church and its leaders in wider Frankish society. Suggesting that within the relations between lords and dependants there was something stable and consistent enough to warrant an abstraction, even if hedged about with qualifiers (talking of 'practices' of lordship, or emphasising its 'fluidity'), is to go beyond what the evidence really permits. To treat lordship as a 'reality' is to impose an artificial unity on an inchoate, undefined set of processual relationships that were in reality interstitial, and then to animate this categorisation, endowing it with agency and a life of its own.

Reification of this kind is of course a constant peril for the historian, whose terminology always threatens to over-categorise and over-define complex, fluid realities. What however elevates the problem from mere nominalist quibbling into something more significant in this particular instance is that a programmatic application of this notion of lordship to the Carolingian period actively obscures important processes of historical change, in the course of which a more coherent set of relations actually did emerge.[140] As we have seen, both vocabularies and practices that might justify a notion of lordship are increasingly clear from eleventh- and

[140] The classic statement of this formalisation process is Chris Wickham, 'Debate: the Feudal Revolution', Past and Present, clvii (1995). For an attempt to develop some of these ideas, see my Reframing the Feudal Revolution, as n. 122 above.

twelfth-century Laon, as indeed from elsewhere in western Europe.[141] To talk of Hincmar's lordship over his men therefore masks great differences between his situation and that of, say, Bishop Gibuin or Bishop Elinand (1052–1095), let alone later Laon bishops imperiously demanding oaths from their followers in their courts.[142]

Viewed in this way, it is not surprising that many historians who have enthusiastically adopted the concept of lordship, like Richard Barton, find it difficult to see much evidence for change in social practice between the Carolingian period and Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[143] Objectifying disparate, fluid relationships in the ninth century into a 'practice of lordship' with explanatory power inevitably renders the emergence of a reified lordship in the twelfth effectively undetectable. 'Lordship' turns out indeed to have been there already: but only because historians created it, and put it there.

VIII.

Historians need to incorporate affective, interpersonal and unequal relationships into their analysis of past societies; but approaching the non-institutionalised exercise of power is always a very delicate business, perpetually prone to conceptual slippage. The evidence from Laon discussed in this article compellingly demonstrates the importance of these kinds of relations in the ninth

[141] As an example, the emergence of the word senioraticus: Niermeyer, Mediae Latinitatis lexicon, ii, 1249–1250. England may be a different case, and not just for historiographical reasons (though Anglo-Saxon scholarship has been heavily influenced by the Brunnerian approaches that this article has sought to problematise) or questions of genre. See now Levi Roach, Kingship and Consent in Anglo-Saxon England, 871–978 (Cambridge, 2013), esp. 113–8 and 230–1.
[142] Saint-Denis, Apogée, 126–128, 484.
[143] For instance, the implications of abundant evidence for new post-1000 differentiation between layers of rights over property, discussed in Barton, Lordship, 197–219, are minimalised by the book's conviction that factors such as military strength and 'personal charisma' were 'less precise, but much more real' (212).

century. Yet it also suggests that for the Carolingian period at least, a programmatic assertion of the importance of lordship as an explanatory framework shapes discussion in ways that skew our understanding of the historical dynamics at work.

Perhaps if historians are scrupulous in talking of lordship in the Carolingian period only as a consciously artificial term of convenience, hallowed by tradition, to describe the importance of personal relations and not to explain them, the dangers are not too great.[144] Yet in preference to terminology that not only, inadvertently or otherwise, gives the impression of being an authentic, direct translation of immanent 'medieval' values, but is also liable to confer an essence upon what were in fact plural and undefined relations, an essence that can then be invoked in historical argument, historians might at least consider making use instead of equally broad and inclusive but more genuinely neutral approaches to the informal exercise of power.[145] It is not, after all, essential to talk of lordship.[146]

One possibility would be to start talking, as some historians already routinely do, of early medieval patron-client relations.[147] Defined as personal, unequal but reciprocal, the terminology of patron-client relations fits the Carolingian evidence without prejudging it, and by avoiding any implication of 'essence', focuses attention

[144] As many Carolingian specialists tend to: see n. 17 above.
[145] For a critique of the dangers of using ostensibly 'quellennahe Terminologie', see Algazi, 'Konkrete Ordnung'.
[146] Geoffrey Koziol, The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas (Turnhout, 2012), entirely avoids using the terminology of lordship, instead talking of networks of patronage. Similarly, Stephen D. White's work has generally eschewed the concept, preferring more straightforward social science terminology: see his Re-Thinking Kinship and Feudalism in Early Medieval Europe (Ashgate, 2005), esp. pp. vii-xii. Cf. Susan Reynolds, 'There were States in Medieval Europe: a Response to Rees Davies', Journal of Historical Sociology, xvi (2003), 554, for doubts about the value of 'lordship' as an interpretative key.
[147] For examples of historians already using conceiving of lordship as patron-client relations, see Stone, Morality, 190; Brown, 'Conflict', 335; Matthew Innes, State and Society in the Early Middle Ages. The Middle Rhine Valley, 400–1000 (Cambridge, 2000), 87.

on individuals and their actions, and not how an invisible force worked through them.[148] Full justice could be done to the importance in Carolingian politics and society of notions of loyalty and generosity, and indeed to the importance attached by contemporaries to being a good lord, through this equally flexible but far more neutral terminology. Permitting genuine medieval specificities to be identified, and not simply taken for granted, it would also promote the now long-standing and fruitful early medievalist proclivity for learning from other disciplines.[149]

History is of course a recursive discipline, which never starts from a blank slate. We cannot simply ignore or discard the scholarship of previous generations because their history is revealed as zeitbedingt, since this happens in due course to all histories. We need abstract nouns, even if they invariably develop 'baggage'.[150] But we do need to take care that our abstractions remain subordinated to the research agenda, and are not in fact tacitly setting it. For all its allure, the concept of lordship has the potential to become tyrannical, too.

[148] For a brief overview of Roman patronage, see Peter Garnsey, 'Roman Patronage', in S. McGill, C. Sogno, and E. Watts (eds.), From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians: Later Roman History and Culture, 284–450 CE (Cambridge, 2010). For useful discussions of patron-client relations in more modern contexts, showing its flexibility, see Colin Newbury, Patrons, Clients and Empire: Chieftancy and Over-rule in Asia, Africa and the Pacific (Oxford, 2003), and Catherine Newbury, The Cohesion of Oppression. Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860–1960 (New York, 1988).
[149] Most notoriously anthropology, though cf. Patzold, Episcopus, 37–45, who draws on Mark Haugaard, The Constitution of Power: a Theoretical Analysis of Power, Knowledge and Structure (Manchester, 2002).
[150] Cf. Wickham, 'Le forme', arguing against the expurgation of feudalism. Cf. also Frederick Cooper, Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History (Berkeley, 2005), 7–9, 59–149.