Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Carolingian *Pfalzen* and law

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ABSTRACT
The palaces (Pfalzen) of the Carolingian period, which had developed from the Frankish royal manors, were a completely new form of building in the eastern Empire. Their architecture reflected central functions of the new kingship. In spite of all the variations in those palaces that have been the subject of archaeological research (for example Aachen, Paderborn, Ingelheim, Frankfurt), a constant triad of worldly representation, religious cult practice and economical power is always discernible. This article considers the question of the juridical character of the palaces: the extent to which they were the expression of the structures of power and law within the Carolingian Empire, in other words served a function within the court offices and the manorial system: the extent to which they functioned as the seats of law-making and judgement; and the extent to which their architectural iconography and physical symbolism reflects acts and forms of a juridical practice that had its roots in the roman law. (Translation: David Wigg-Wolf).

On a June day in 826, the Emperor Louis the Pious looked down the Rhine from his *Pfalz* at Ingelheim near Mainz and was witness to an unusual display. Two years later, as if he had been present himself, Ermoldus Nigellus wrote in his panegyric to Louis:

Ecce volant centum per Rheni flumina puppes.
Velaque candidolis consociata modis,
Denorum populis oneratae munere, nec non
Heroldum regem prima carina vehit,
Te, Hludovice, petens …[1]

'Heroldus' is Harald Halfdansson 'Klak', pretender to the Danish throne, who visited the Roman Emperor Louis, son of Charlemagne, at one of the most important *Pfalzen* of the period. Ingelheim is some 15 km from Mainz, the venerable old capital of the Roman province of Germania Superior and later one of the seats of the Merovingian kings (see Figure 1). The intention behind this remarkable visit is Harald's ceremonial subordination to the Emperor as his vassal ('Lehnsmann'), together with his investiture and baptism: Harald's aim is to gain the Emperor's political and military support in his struggle for the Danish throne, while the Emperor hopes to exercise political and military

influence in an unsettled Denmark on the north flank of the Empire. In the days that follow, Harald, together with his family, retinue and courtiers – there were probably several hundred or so Danes – was to experience a court culture with extravagant ceremonies and, above all, splendid architecture that must have been overwhelming for them – Ermoldus's flowery language tells us how the Danes were in awe of the splendour of the court. At the harbour in Ingelheim, the king, his wife and retinue are met by Marshall Matfried with decorated mounts – a classic *adventus* – and received by the Emperor in the 'lofty hall', the *cesa aul*a, where they were also entertained.

According to the Royal Frankish Annals (*Annales regni Francorum*), the ceremonial baptism that followed was celebrated in St Alban's church in Mainz, with the Emperor's family as godparents to the Danish royal family (Rau 1968–1992, p. 130 ff., 324 f.). Afterwards, Harald is dressed in purple embroidered robes, crown, sword with *cingulum*, spurs, golden cloak, arm rings and white gloves – similarly Harald's family and retinue. This is a classic investiture *more Francisco*, according to Frankish tradition. A ceremonial mass then follows –
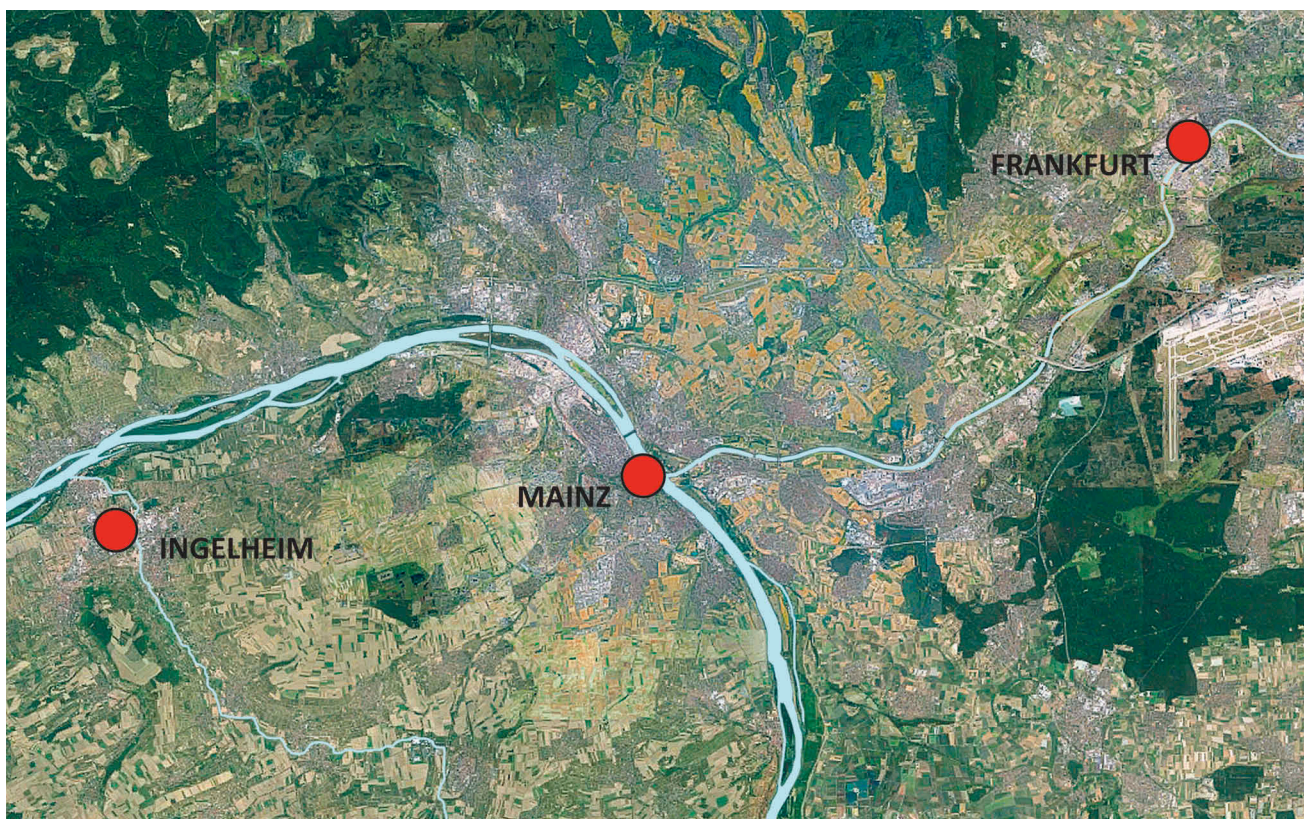
Figure 1. The Rhine-Main region with Mainz and the *Pfalzen* at Ingelheim and Frankfurt (after Google maps).

still in Mainz – as well as a feast, after which they return to Ingelheim. The next day, they go hunting together on one of the islands in the Rhine opposite Ingelheim. In the evening, on their return to the palace, the *domus palatina*, the formal commendation of Harald to Louis is celebrated, with Harald kneeling before the King and placing his hands between his.[2] The ceremony also involves the presentation of mounts and weapons to Harald – 'according to old Frankish custom', *Francisco more veterano* – as well as the gift of the County of Rüstringen in Frisia in fealty, and finally 'wine-producing' lands, presumably further south. While Harald, his family and retinue return home in their richly laden ships, one of his sons and a nephew stay at court, entering into service in the imperial bodyguard.

To be sure, Danish ambassadors will already have been acquainted with Carolingian palaces and court ceremonial, having already visited palaces such as Compiegne or Aachen or attended the Imperial Diet at Frankfurt in 823. But this will have been the first time that the Danish *stirps regia*, together with the highest nobility, will have enjoyed such

intensive, intimate and personal experience of the complex system of power in the new Roman Empire.

Pfalzen and court offices during the Carolingian period

Pfalzen played a particularly important part in this system. They were high-ranking seats of government that served as imposing bases for the exercise of the business of rule by the king on his travels ('Reisekönigtum') and were both factual and symbolic manifestations of royal power.[3] At the same time, they were central institutions in the young Carolingian legal system, forming what French scholars call a 'système palatiale' (Barbier 1990).

During the Carolingian period, *Pfalzen* primarily performed very much the same function as the royal courts ('Königshöfe'), the *villae*, which had existed since Merovingian times, and almost all *Pfalzen* were either extensions or developments of *villae* (Jacobsen 1999, p. 91 f., Zotz 2001b). Fine examples of this in East Francia are Aachen, Ingelheim, Paderborn and
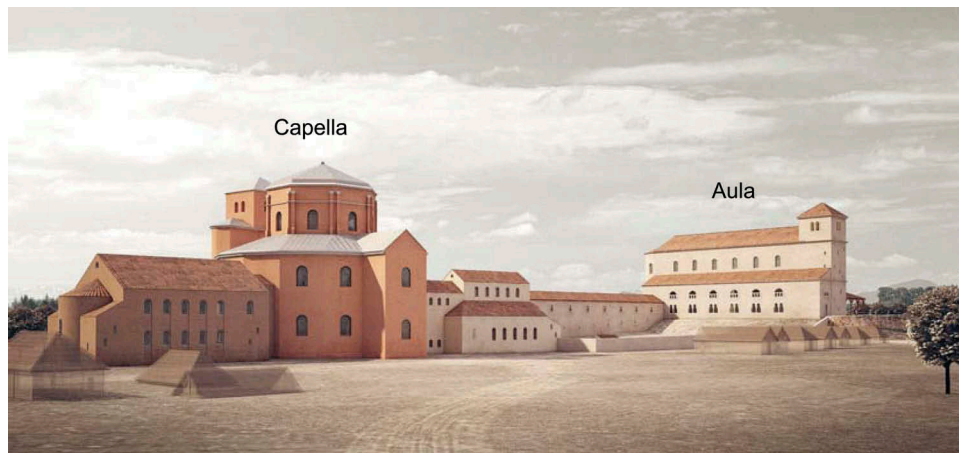
Figure 2. Model of the Pfalz at Aachen, *c.* 830 (Narmer Architecture Studio, Budapest [Zs. Vasáros, G. Nagy], ArchaeoPlanRistow, Köln [S. Ristow]). After Ristow 2016).

Frankfurt (see Figure 2). *Villa* and *palatium* are not always clearly differentiated in the written sources, and the distinction was a fluid one. In terms of their architecture, the *Pfalzen* were extensive complexes of buildings, the individual elements of which had distinct functions. In addition, the *Pfalzen* were also spiritual institutions within the structure of power.

The written sources use the Latin term *palatium* for 'Pfalz'.[4] 'Palatium' is the original name for the hill in Rome that from the Renaissance was known as the 'Palatine'. Here Romulus is purported to have founded the city of Rome, and from Augustus onwards, the Roman emperors had their residence here (Ziegler 1942, 1972). During the 2nd century, 'palatium' became the standard term for the imperial residence and was later extended to centres of imperial power such as Milan, Pavia, Arles and Trier. In Late Antiquity, 'palatium' also came to be used more generally for the 'court' as an institution. In the Merovingian period, north of the Alps, the term increasingly replaced the old Roman term for the official public building, the *praetorium*, with the result that there were numerous *palatia*, seats of royal power. From the late 8th century, it became the name for a concrete centre of power.

From the beginning, the Palatium ('Palatine'), the legendary site of the foundation of Rome, was regarded as a holy place around which Romulus had drawn the sacred boundary of the *pomerium*. As late as the 3rd century, a simple straw hut still stood among the splendid villas. This was the *casa Romuli*, reputed to be Romulus's original old house and revered as a holy site. For this reason, the term 'Palatium' ('Palatine')

always had a sacred connotation: places of holy power. As early as the Synod of Frankfurt, convened by Charlemagne in 794, Italian bishops noted '*in aula sacri palatii*' and '*capella sacri palatii*' (*Libellus sacrosyllabus episcoporum Italiae* [MGH Conc. 2] 130 f.: Orth 1986, p. 181 f., Zotz 2001a, p. 21).

According to Annie Renoux (2001, p. 29 f.), originally during the Merovingian period, the *palatium* was above all a prestigious building manifesting the king's *auctoritas*, but under the Carolingians became 'a royal attribute par excellence' and served to legitimate power. 'The *Pfalzen* formed a network composed of places where the king exercised his power and which he periodically visited during the course of the travels he had to undertake. They served to establish the *regnum*. This conceptual background was enriched by the king's consecration and the *renovatio imperii*. The narrative and literary tradition presents the *Pfalz* as a holy place where a holy personage resided. This concept was reinforced by the increased sacralisation of power and of the person of the emperor and king. The *Pfalz* is an anticipation of paradise'.

This is confirmed by the special position of the *capella*, the court chapel, a college of literate clerics known as the *capellani*. The *capella* (Fleckenstein 1959, p. 11 ff., 1991) accompanied the ruler from *Pfalz* to *Pfalz*, performed important administrative and programmatic religious functions and composed the central administrative organ of the empire. The church in the *palatium* is named after it: the chapel, the religious pole beside the worldly pole of the *aula*. The *capella* grew out of the group of clerics who guarded the old Frankish relic, the

cappa, the halved cloak of St Martin of Tours, the patron saint of the Franks. Since Chlodwig the cloak always had to accompany the kings on their military campaigns and under the Carolingians from the early 8th century onwards was kept permanently at court. This too demonstrates the century old sacral character of the Frankish Carolingian kingdom.

In addition, the *palatium* was also used as a wide-ranging term for the royal/imperial court as a group of persons within the structures of power. Wherever the Emperor was, there was the *palatium* – the documents issued at or by the court always carried the note '*actum palatio*' (Zotz 1993, col. 1994). The identification of *palatium* with the imperial court is particularly apparent in Archbishop Hincmar of Reims's programmatic work *de ordine palatii*,[5] written in the autumn of 882 but based on an older work by Adalhard of Corbie that is now lost. It includes an idealised description of the structure and functions of the court offices (see Figure 3): beneath the king and the queen, who sometimes had her own court, came the *capellanus* (from 825: *archicapellanus)*, who was the head of the entire court clergy (*capella*). Next to him was the head of the royal chancellery (*cancellarius*), who was responsible for documents, charters and other written matters. The *ministri*, the highest court officials, were probably of somewhat lower rank. They included the *camerarius* (chamberlain), the *comes palatii* (count palatinate), the *senescaclus* (seneschal ['old servant'] – a kind of 'head of administration'), the *buticularius* (cup bearer), the *comes stabuli* (count of the stable), the *mansionarius* (quartermaster), four *venatores principales* (principal hunters), as well as a *falconarius* (falconer). Subordinate to these ministers, who each had political responsibility for their entire own domain (for example, the army or the state finances), were a larger number of *ministeriales* with less important functions.

The *Pfalzen* as part of the system of Carolingian manorialism

From Merovingian times, the basis of the Frankish rule and the exercise of power was manorialism (Rösener and Devroey 1989, Müller and Hermann 1999, p. 115 ff., Kropp and Meier 2010, p. 97 ff., all with additional lit.). This meant almost absolute disposition over the land as well as all that was on it and was part of it: mineral wealth, water, buildings, plants, game, livestock and persons. From the 5th century, the Frankish Kingdom, which in the 8th century had passed from the Merovingian to the Carolingian ruling dynasty, was characterised by continual expansion and occupation. About 500, the Franks extended their kingdom across the Rhine to the East, and the area around the Middle Rhine and the Lower Main attained a strategic position, becoming one of the key areas of the Frankish Empire. Most of the land became royal property and was divided into fiscal units. By making use of agricultural resources and the forests for themselves, as well as granting land in fee, the kings established the economic and human basis for the exercise of power.

From 8th- and 9th-century documents, it is clear that in the Rhine-Main region (as elsewhere in the Empire), there were extensive, connected complexes
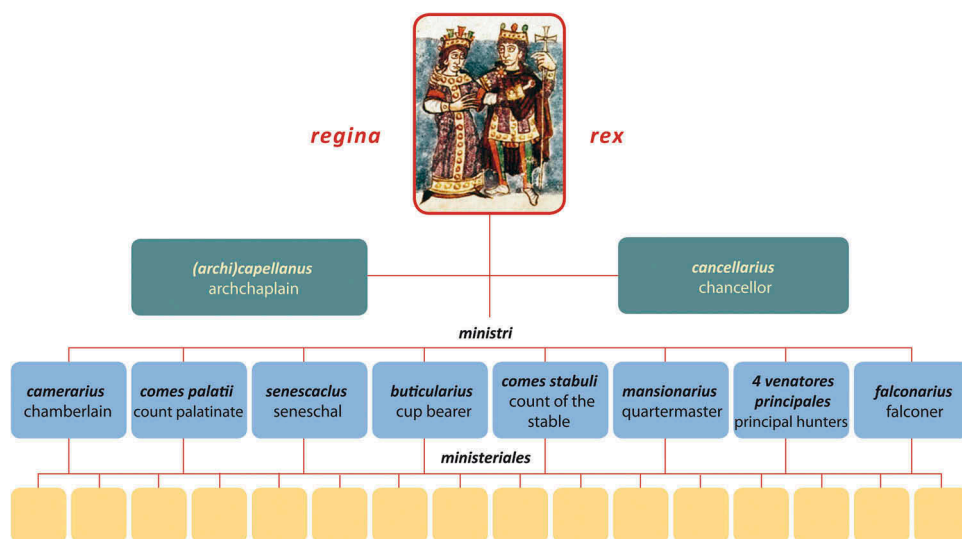

Figure 3. Scheme of the Carolingian *palatium* in the 9th century according to Hincmar of Reims.
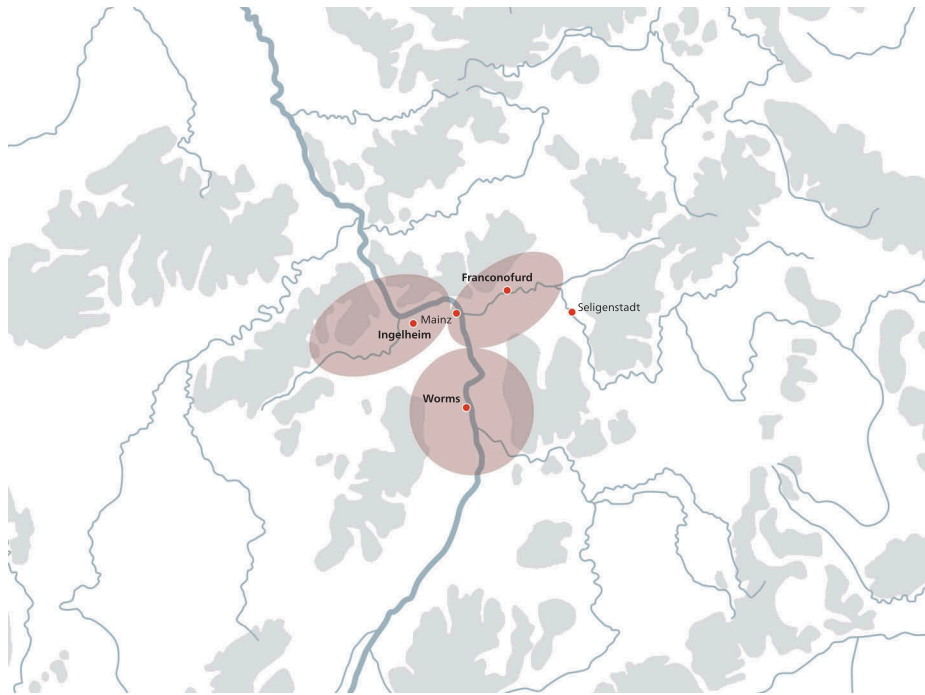
Figure 4. Carolingian royal property on the Middle Rhine and Lower Main with the fiscal units of Ingelheim, Frankfurt and Worms (after Backhaus, Karolingisch-ottonisches und salisch-staufisches Reichsgut, map 11).
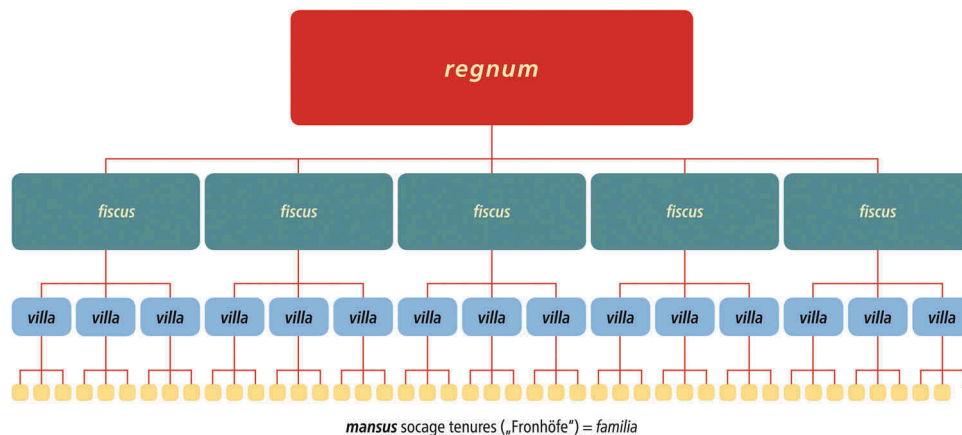

Figure 5. Scheme of the Carolingian manorial system.

of royal = imperial estates (see Figure 4) (Schalles-Fischer 1969, pp. 265 ff., Metz 1972, Backhaus 1984, Metzner 1992). This royal property was divided into *fisci* (Verhulst 1989). Under the Roman Empire, 'fiscus' referred to the totality of imperial revenues, but in Carolingian times, it meant exclusively what was royal property, not granted in fee. The *fiscus* was an administrative district (*ministerium*) consisting of several *villae* (see Figure 5), that in turn were subject to a head estate (*caput fisci, villa capitanea*). Each *villa* consisted of several hooves (lat. *mansus* = 'Fronhöfe') which free (*franci* or *libri*

homines) or unfree farmers cultivated as tenants, and from the produce of which they had to pay dues or levies as well as performing manual services and providing transportation. Together, all the servants were known as *familia regis*. The Frankfurt *fiscus* is estimated to have consisted of 50–60 hooves (Schalles-Fischer 1969, p. 302).

From the 8th century, Carolingian royal *Pfalzen* in the narrowest sense, with imposing stone buildings, were built on the site of existing estates: for example, Aachen from 765, with further new buildings from 780/794; Ingelheim at the end of the 8th century; Frankfurt

823. Paderborn, however, was a new foundation in Saxony in 775/776; the site at Aachen has yielded archaeological traces from late antique (4th–5th cent.), Merovingian and early Carolingian (8th cent.) eras.

Obviously, the exercise and organisation of power in such extensive, heterogeneous imperial territory were impossible without legal measures. This meant above all the hierarchical administration and organisation of property that was mainly used for agriculture and forestry.

What was the function of the royal courts ('Königshöfe') within the Carolingian system of power, and so also the function of the *Pfalzen*, and how were they organised (see Figure 6)? Our main source of reliable information is the *Capitulare de villis* (Schalles-Fischer 1969, p. 338 ff., Metz 1981, Brühl and Verhulst 1983, Verhulst 1983, Wies 1992). This was initiated by Charlemagne around 800 and laid down in detail in 70 capitularies the organisation and administration of the royal properties for the entire Empire (Mordek 1991, Schmidt-Wiegand 2000). Capitularies are collections of decrees and edicts that are arranged into chapters; they were issued by the king, as well as by mayors of the palace *(maior domus)*, bishops and archbishops, but are not laws *(leges)* in the narrower sense. Nevertheless, by virtue of being announcements made by the ruler, they had a binding authority that was almost equivalent to a law. Most capitularies were issued in the first three decades of the 9th century.

The next main task of the royal courts and *Pfalzen*, including the agricultural estates that were part of them, was the *servitium regis*, the king's service. This mainly consisted of accommodating and supplying the royal court when it was circulating and had no fixed residence – this included the retinue, the royal household, a sizeable bodyguard and accompanying persons/guests (these could amount to several hundred people) – as well as producing material revenues, whether in the form of agricultural produce, money (tythe) or whatever.

According to the *Capitulare de villis*, the royal courts and *Pfalzen* were administered by an official appointed by the king and drawn from the high aristocracy together with lower-ranking officials subordinate to him. Significantly, the highest administrator of the royal courts is called *iudex* (pl. *iudices*), that is 'judge', but also *exactor* or *actor* ('executor' or 'manager') (see Figure 7). German historians generally translate *iudex* as 'Amtmann' ('bailiff'). Subordinate officials were assigned to the *iudex*, including *maiores* (mayors/Meier), *decani* (reeves/Vogts), *cellerarii* (cellerars), *telonarii* (toll collectors), *forestani* (foresters), *poledrarii* (stud managers), *falconarii* (falconers) and many more. The *iudices* were themselves directly responsible to the king or queen; the latter explicitly had direct, supreme responsibility for the administration of the estates. In the late 9th century, the central *Pfalz* officials, seneschal and cupbearer also received additional authority over the *iudices* (see Figure 8).

The list of the various productive activities which were the task of the royal estates included cultivating all kinds of cereals, fruits and vegetables that were usual at the time, as well as pulses and medicinal plants, breeding and keeping cattle, horses, sheep, goats, pigs and poultry, hunting dogs and birds, fish farming and the construction of mills, making beer, wine and fruit wine and many other tasks. The royal estates were also expected to house numerous

Figure 6. Reconstruction of the Pfalz Franconofurd and its surroundings, *c.* 860. The reconstruction is made in accordance with the most recent excavations by A. Hampel 2012–14 (Hampel 1994, 2017) and executed by S. Ristow (Cologne), Architectura Virtualis (Darmstadt), Archimedix (Ober-Ramstadt), Archäologisches Museum Frankfurt.
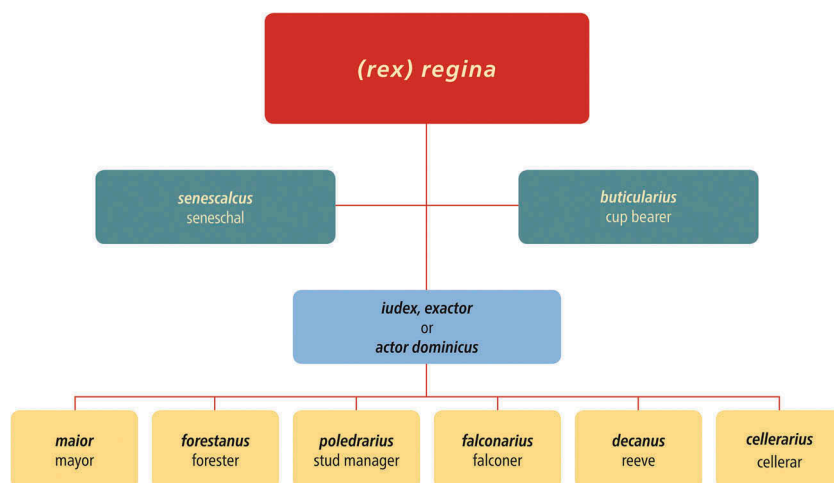
Figure 7. Scheme of the administration of the *villae* and *palatii* according to the *Capitulare de villis*.

Figure 8. Carolingian or Bavarian manorial lord. St. Benedict in Mals, Vinschgau. Late 8th cent. (photo: Amt für Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler Bozen-Südtirol).

widely scattered and were combined into a *fiscus*. The *iudices* were also made responsible for the well-being of the free and unfree tenants ('Hintersassen') and the farm labourers – the *familia* of the king – ensuring that they were adequately supplied. Their responsibilities also included overseeing consumption on the estate, securing seed-good, supplying the army and supplying the royal court on its travels, as well as storing and selling surpluses. The latter had to be delivered to the royal treasury, either in kind or in silver. Everything had to be accounted for, and to this end, there were detailed inventories of the estates known as *urbaria*, for example, the *Brevium exempla*.[6]

Although all of these rules and regulations cannot be regarded as a legal system of norms in the narrowest sense, they do have a distinctly legal character and illustrate in a remarkably graphic manner how, at a time when a binding legal and judicial system was being rediscovered and constructed, efforts were undertaken to ensure the normative character of the manorial system. Under the Carolingians, these regulations are closely linked with the royal courts and *Pfalzen*.

Palaces and royal courts as places of legislation and judgement

When the king was in residence at the palaces, they served as seats of justice. Not only did deliberations, celebrations and negotiations take place, official documents were signed there too – a legal procedure that today has to be carried out by offices, notaries

craftsmen, from smiths and blacksmiths, cobblers, turners, cart wrights and shield makers to brewers, bakers, soap boilers and net makers. The *iudices* oversaw and had overall responsibility for these agricultural institutions, which could often be quite

and courts – laws and capitularies were promulgated, trials were conducted and sentence was passed. At the Synod of Frankfurt in 794, for example, not only was the Frankfurt Capitulary issued, which defined a binding system of weights and measures, a currency reform was also enacted that included the binding introduction of the new denarius (penny) for the entire Empire.

> In every place, in every town and in every market the new denarii are to circulate equally and be accepted by all. If the coins bear our name, are of fine silver and of full weight, and if anyone anywhere refuses to accept them either when buying or selling, then he shall, if he is freeborn, pay a fine of 15 shillings to the King … (Fried 1994b, p. 19 ff., quote from chap. V).

Prominent examples of royal justice, the king's court, are provided by the trial of Tassilo, Duke of Bavaria, who was deposed by his cousin Charlemagne at Ingelheim in 788, and finally at Frankfurt in 794 (Becher 1993, 2005, Fried 1994a), or the trial in Frankfurt in 823, for the illegal seizure of monastery lands, of Nantcharius, the *actor dominicus* there and a member of an old Carolingian aristocratic family (Schalles-Fischer 1969, p. 324 f., Metz 1972, p. 212).

However, the *Pfalzen* were also the seats of more everyday justice. The royal estate ('Königsgut') enjoyed immunity; the *fiscus*, with its centre either at a royal court ('Königshof') or a *Pfalz*, formed a judicial district on its own; the royal court ('Königshof') was a site of trials (Verhulst 1989). The *Capitulare de villis* declared that the *iudices* were local judges responsible for legal disputes within their own district (*ministerium*), that is for the free tenants ('Königsfreie') and the royal *familia* (chap. 56) (Schalles-Fischer 1969, p. 340 ff.). Although the early medieval judiciary was essentially a one-stage system without hierarchical instances (Lück 2003, p. 218), Charlemagne explicitly granted the simple free on the royal estates the right to appeal to the King, whereby the *iudex* was on no account to interfere with this process (chap. 57) – apparently by no means an uncommon problem and a sign of a degree of arbitrariness on the part of the *iudices*.

On the iconography of the *Pfalzen*

When we consider the extent to which the *palatium*, the Carolingian court and its palace, was the symbolic and factual site of imperial acts, for example in the holding of court and in particular in 'government business', in commendation, in the ecclesiastical act of baptism, in the issue of documents, in legal pronouncements and in the passing of laws, then the question arises as to whether these legal aspects are reflected in the architecture and the structural arrangement of the *Pfalzen*.

Common to all of them are three architectural and functional elements: the *aula* as the prestigious seat and reception hall for the king; the *capella* as the spiritual pole of the king's sacred power; and the *camera* as the royal apartments (c. Figure 2) (Renoux 1999, p. 134 ff., 2001, p. 38 ff.). There is archaeological evidence for these three units at Aachen, Ingelheim, Paderborn and Frankfurt. In the *Pfalz* at Ingelheim, which Einhard ranked as one of Charlemagne's most magnificent buildings, in the early phase the apsidal hall with the throne apse as the *aula regia* and the relatively small triconch as *capella* were incorporated into an imposing semi-circular structure, an exedra – apparently a reference to Roman palace architecture (see Figure 9) (Grewe 2000, 2001, with earlier lit.).

However, there was no Merovingian *villa* to provide the basis for the *Pfalz* at Paderborn, which was built in the recently conquered lands of the Saxons, and was rebuilt and extended on several occasions. In all three Carolingian structural phases, the *aula* and the *capella* were spatially separate structures although they were related to each other (see Figure 10) (Gai 1999, 2001).

When Charlemagne stayed at the *villa* of Franconofurd in 794, the new and splendid classicising structures erected by his son Louis in 822/823 had not yet been built. Nevertheless, the sources tell us that he resided in the *aula* (*Libellus sacrosyllabus episcoporum Italiae* (MGH Conc. 2) 130 f.: Orth (1986), p. 181). A reconstruction (Wintergerst 2007, p. 20 ff., ill. 6–10, Plan 2, Wamers 2008) of the scant remains from the 7th century reveals that the Merovingian royal residence – and this will have been the form in which Charlemagne used them during the Great Council of 794 – already had stone meeting and residential buildings, as well as a small church which served as a memorial building for a young girl from the family of the *actor dominicus*: she died about 700 and was revered at the site over the centuries (Wamers 2015, p. 15 ff., ill. 5).[7] As such, the central elements of the *Pfalz*, the *aula, capella* and *camera*, were already functionally present at this early stage.

Figure 9. Model of the *Pfalz* at Ingelheim, *c.* 800 (photo: Kaiserpfalz Ingelheim - Forschungsstelle).
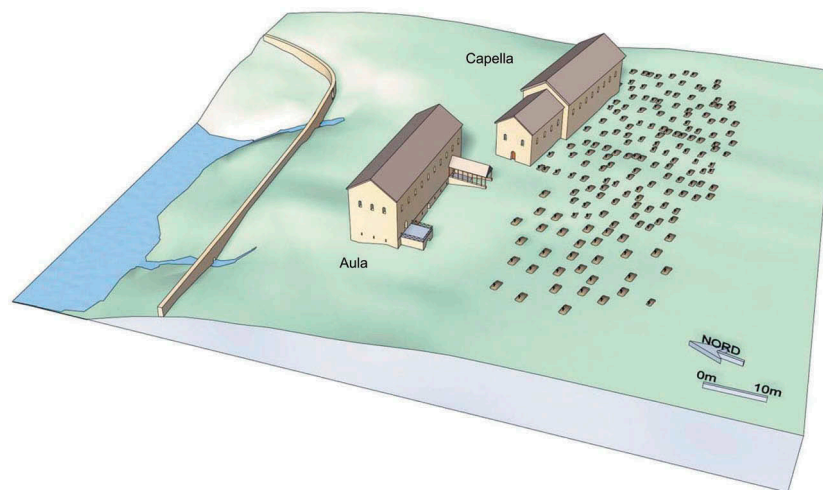

Figure 10. Model of the *Pfalz* at Paderborn, 1st phase, from 775/776 (after Gai, Die Pfalz Karls des Großen in Paderborn).

By 823, under Louis the Pious, a new magnificent *aula regia* had been built in a new architectural style. In the years before 855, his son Louis the German added a new *capella* – which he also did at Regensburg, his second man residence – and joined the *aula* and the *capella* with a corridor as at Aachen (see Figure 11)

(Wintergerst 2007, p. 46 ff., Wamers 2008, 2011, 2015, p. 216 ff.).

We can only guess which rooms in the *Pfalzen* were used for the judicial proceedings of the *iudices*. The *aula*, which Ermoldus Nigellus still described as the building 'for justice' (Renoux 2007, p. 27
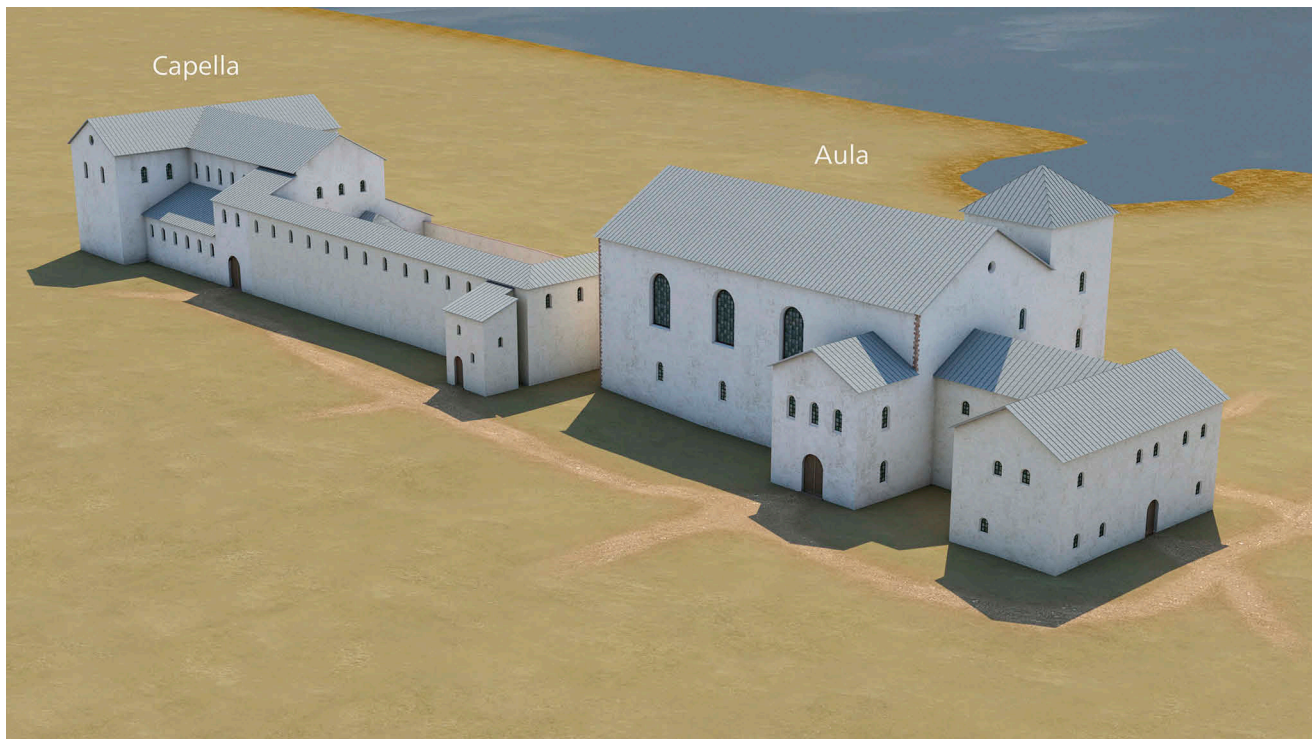
Figure 11. Model of the imperial Pfalz at Frankfurt am Main, *c.* 855. The reconstruction is made in accordance with the most recent excavations by A. Hampel 2012–14 (Hampel 1994, 2017) and executed by S. Ristow (Cologne), Architectura Virtualis (Darmstadt), Archimedix (Ober-Ramstadt), Archäologisches Museum Frankfurt.

[Justitiae virtus nullam sibi vindicat aulam …]), was certainly reserved for cases directly judged by the king or emperor, for example cases involving political matters of state such as that against Tassilo. Perhaps there was another important building. But where did everyday cases conducted by the *iudices* take place? At Aachen it is thought that the so-called *curia* was in the building situated in the corridor that joined the *aula* and the *capella* (*c.* Figure 2) (Riché 1981, p. 63). Similarly, we can only speculate as to where corporal or even capital sentences were carried out. For high medieval Frankfurt, the 'oldest' place of execution is thought to have been located on the south side of St Bartholomew's church, since the entrance to the nave there was known as the 'red door' (Schalles-Fischer 1969, p. 239 f.). This was where official measures such as the municipal scales and the cubit were kept in the Middle Ages (Wamers 2007, p. 348 f., ill. 7), and the fact that such places often enjoyed a long tradition might suggest there had been a court on the site as early as the 9th century. But it is equally possible that in Frankfurt cases were heard by the *iudex* in the building

between the *aula* and the *capella*, or else in the west portico.

Pfalzen and legal symbolism

A note on legal symbolism is also worthwhile. In the early Middle Ages, judicial life mainly took place in an oral milieu (Kroeschell 1995, col. 512, Lück 2003, p. 210). As a result, legal acts were heavily influenced by a formulaic legal language (e.g. oath), by behaviour and gestures, as well as by legal symbols (e.g. judges staff), symbols of power (e.g. insignia) or regalia. As for the *Pfalzen*, the sources consistently mention a particular legal symbol that was vital for the exercise of royal power, whether as a ruler or a judge, the throne (on the throne *c.* Schramm 1954, p. 316 ff., Engemann *et al.* 1997, Wamers 2005, p. 43 ff., Steuer 2007).

An Italian source tells us that when Charlemagne stayed in the *villa* of Franconofurd in 794, he presided over the Great Council seated on a raised *sella regia* (*Libellus sacrosyllabus episcoporum Italiae* (MGH Conc. 2) 130 f.: Orth (1986), p. 181). The Aachen throne – interestingly in St Mary's chapel –

was made of marble slabs from the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and set on six steps, just like the throne of the wise judge King Solomon (Schütte 2000, 2011, for a more sceptical viewpoint, see Ristow 2016, p. 38 f. and especially his Figure 18 with proposal for a reconstruction). Such a seat, which became the seat of empire when the king took his place on it, endowed whoever sat on it with authority as ruler and judge, with legal power and might (Wamers 2005, p. 43 f.). A fragment from Mainz, probably from the royal palace there, is testimony to an identically constructed throne of the late 8th century (see Figure 12(a)) (Schulze-Dörrlamm 2004). Holger Grewe (Kaiserpfalz Ingelheim, ArchimediX GbR and Grewe 2002) and the author (Wamers 2008) have accordingly reconstructed a similar throne for the *aula regia* in Ingelheim and Frankfurt, respectively (see Figure 12(b,c)).

Carolingian kings and emperors are always enthroned in images of 9th-century rulers (Schramm 1983, p. 33 ff., pl. 21–22, 36, 38–41, Wamers 2005, ill. 6–11). In the oldest of these, from shortly after 842, Emperor Lothar sits on a folding chair with lions' heads on the arms and feet, and he is characterised as a ruler with cloak, sword, crown, spurs and a long sceptre (see Figure 13(a)) (Wamers 2005, ill. 6). Probably this is the so-called Dagobert throne, which
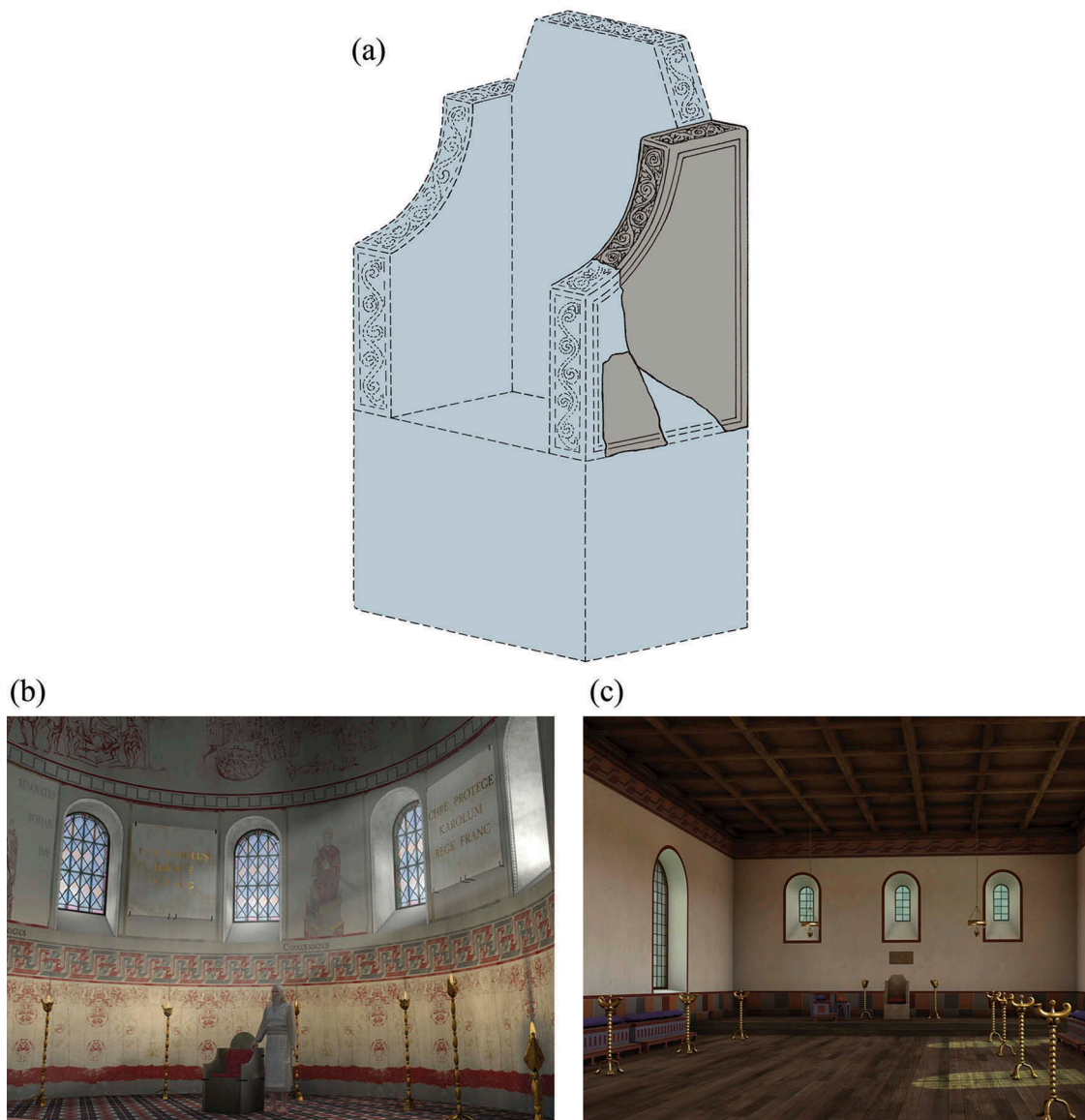

Figure 12. (a) Fragment of the throne from the royal palace at Mainz (reconstruction); (b, c) Reconstructions of *aulae* with throne at imperial *Pfalzen*. (b) Ingelheim, (c) Frankfurt (a. after Schulze-Dörrlamm 2004; b. Kaiserpfalz Ingelheim - Forschungsstelle; c. Archäologisches Museum Frankfurt - Architectura Virtualis Darmstadt).
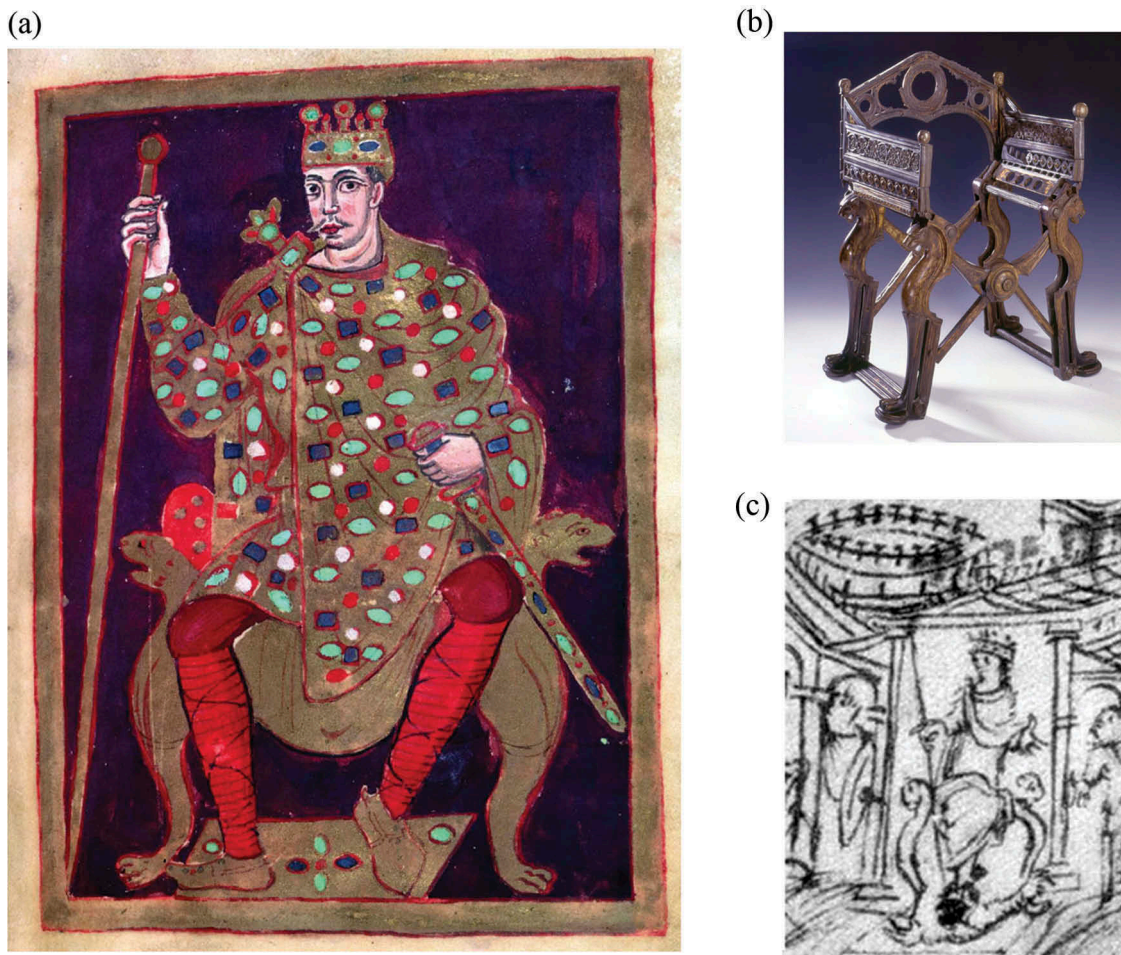
Figure 13. Examples of the folding chair as throne in the Carolingian period. (a) Image of Emperor Lothar I., after 842 (Lothar Psalter, Br.Libr.); (b) So-called 'Dagobert throne', 7th/9th cent.; (c) King David on a folding lion chair in his palace (Utrecht Psalter, fol. 51v, 820–830). (a. photo: British Library; b. Photo: RGZM Mainz; c. nach De Wald (1932).

was perhaps used by the Merovingian king Dagobert as early as the 7th century and was modified in the Carolingian period (see Figure 13(b)) (Wamers 2005, p. 45 f, cat. 11, with earlier lit.). It was often represented as the ruler's seat in the 9th century (see Figure 13(c)). The type is that of the *sella*, the official seat of the consuls and the high curule magistrates of Rome – originally it was the chair of the Etruscan and early Roman kings, who pronounced judgement seated on it in their chariot (*currus*) (Gugel 1975, Engemann *et al.* 1997, col. 738 f., Steuer 2007, p. 137). Numerous folding chairs have been found in almost four dozen burials from Southwest Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary and Italy where they performed as 'special gifts'. However, there is no distinct indication that they were also linked to an official or ruling function of the buried persons – except with the Anglo Saxon princely grave from Prittlewell (Gütermann 2011).

When Harald Halfdansson set off back down the Rhine and headed north with his family and followers, he was satiated with impressions of the imperial court and palaces and of the exercise of power and justice associated with them – an exercise which was essentially symbolic and semiotic. Many other Norsemen will have made the same experience in these decades. It remains a topic for research to assess the extent to which these close contacts with what was essentially the classical world, whether on the continent in the south and the south-east, or the islands in the west, contributed to the emergence of Nordic systems of power and justice.

Notes

1. Ermoldus Nigellus (1884), *Carmina*, v. 287–291: '*Behold, there come a hundred ships on the swell of the Rhine. Together with them approach the sails shining white, laden*

with gifts from the Danish people. The first ship carries Harald, the King, who seeks you, Louis …'. – On Ermoldus *c.* Schaller (1986). On the occasion in its historical (*c.* Helten 2011, 91 ff.) and historico-archaeological context, see Wamers (1994, p. 32 ff., 2005, p. 159 ff.). The historic value of Ermoldus' report is sometimes doubted, in particular because in his poem Mainz is not mentioned as the place of Harald's baptism, which stands in contrast to the Imperial Annals (Reichsannalen) and the *Anonymi Vita Hludovvici Imperator* and also because there are no archaeological findings corresponding to the wall paintings referred to in the poem (e.g. Geißler 2008). Even if Ermoldus' poem is a panegyricus, this general rejection is not convincing as there are so many detailed facts and realities.

2. The vassal ('Lehnsmann') folded his hands and placed them between the lord's ('Lehnsherr'), who enclosed them. In this manner, he symbolically placed himself under the protection of his new master. The enclosing of hands as part of the late Roman ritual of commendation is first recorded in the 8th century (Cordes 1991).
3. On the palaces as centres of power, see Zotz (1993, 2001a, 2003, 2010)), Jacobsen (1999).
4. On the following, see Zotz (2010).
5. Hincmar von Reims (1980), De ordine palatii; – see also Fleckenstein (1965, p. 33 f., 1971, 1976).
6. On *urbaria* and the *Brevium exempla c.* Hägermann (1997), Metz (1978, 1983).
7. The most recent excavations in the 8th-century Pfalz area by the Denkmalamt Frankfurt am Main (between 2012 and 2014) cannot yet be evaluated adequately as they are still being analysed (Hampel 2017).

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

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