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Local Priests and their Siblings c. 900–c. 1100

The Documentary Evidence

1. Introduction, p. 267. – 1.1 Finding Local Priests, p. 271. – 1.2 A Panoramic View of Priests, p. 272. – 2. Priests and their Family Relations, p. 274. – 2.1 Priests and their Brothers, p. 274. – 2.2 Priests as Family Representatives, p. 278. – 2.3 Priestly Brothers, p. 279. – 2.4 Priests and their Sisters, p. 284. – 3. Nephews and ‘Invisiblings’, p. 286. – 4. Local Priests and their Churches, p. 291. – 5. Priests and their Siblings. The Evidence in the Round, p. 293.

ABSTRACT: Priests’ relationships with their brothers and sisters are richly evidenced in tenth- and eleventh-century documentary sources across the Latin West. But the looming shadow of the ‘Gregorian Reform’ has focused historians’ attentions on clerical marriage and vertical familial relationships (fathers and sons, or uncles and nephews). This article redresses the balance, arguing that sibling relationships have been underestimated in their importance to the lived experience of local priests, their families and communities in the tenth and eleventh centuries in post-Carolingian western Francia. It examines how priests and their brothers and sisters managed estates, co-operated to pool resources, and developed inheritance strategies with particular emphasis on how such records may reflect both practice on the ground and the concerns of the scribes, draftsmen and archivists who recorded, copied and edited them.

1. INTRODUCTION

Local priests occupied a unique position in societies across early medieval Europe, serving as brokers and ‘middle men’ who moved between local communities and religious institutions. But priests also lived amongst these local communities, drafting documents, purchasing land, and of course providing pastoral care for their neighbours. As part of a move away from older perspectives of standing antagonism or tension between lay and ecclesiastical forces, the relationships between priests, the communities they served and broader ecclesiastical networks have been the subject of much exciting research in recent decades. Steffen Patzold, Carine van Rhijn and others have focused especially on the ninth century¹, whilst a number of broad studies have

¹ See especially the collected volume STEFFEN PATZOLD – CARINE VAN RHIJN (eds.), *Men in the Middle. Local Priests in Early Medieval Europe* (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 93), Berlin 2016, and also by the editors: *The Carolingian Local ecclesia as a “Temple Society”?*, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 29, 2021, pp. 535–554; STEFFEN PATZOLD, *Presbyter. Moral, Mobilität und die Kirchenorganisation im Karolingerreich* (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 68), Stuttgart 2020; CARINE VAN RHIJN, *Leading the Way to Heaven. Pastoral Care and Salvation in the*

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tracked clerics' lived experiences across the early and central Middle Ages². Historians have shown that local priests were vitally placed to operate between regional centres of power and their neighbours, between family and institution, and between normative expectations and lived experience.

This new view of early medieval priests challenges the pessimistic findings of Ulrich Stutz, Jan Dhondt, Michel Aubrun and others, particularly arguments that local priests held very limited power³. Increased attention paid to the nuances of the available documentary evidence has further highlighted the risks of smoothing the chronological and regional fabric of the evidence to fit assumptions about the unchanging and passive status of local clergy⁴. Local priests – even in a single region at a single time – were occupied by different duties, tasks and networks that went well beyond their most visible role as shepherds of their communities. R.I. Moore has argued that the only 'defensible' generalisation one can apply to priests in the early eleventh century is that they became increasingly important, highlighting the example of Catalonia, where priests began to serve as *boni homines* to secure the grants of other villagers, and thus took their place amongst the increasingly self-conscious residents of communes⁵. Archival interests naturally shape our view: as Thomas Kohl has shown in Bavaria, for instance, references to priests in charter evidence decline from the middle of the ninth century, exchanges or transactions between bishops and priests are very rare, and those tenth-century priests who were recorded tended to be attached to

Carolingian Period (The Medieval World), Abingdon 2022; EAD., *Shepherds of the Lord. Priests and Episcopal Statutes in the Carolingian Period* (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 6), Turnhout 2007.

² For example: SARAH HAMILTON, *Church and People in the Medieval West. 900–1200* (The Medieval World), Harlow – Essex 2013; EAD., *Educating the Local Clergy, c.900–c.1150*, in: MORWENNA LUDLOW et al. (eds.), *Churches and Education* (Studies in Church History 55), Cambridge 2019, pp. 83–113; WENDY DAVIES, *Acts of Giving. Individual, Community, and Church in Tenth-Century Christian Spain*, Oxford 2007; EAD., *Local Priests in Northern Iberia, in: Men in the Middle* (as note 1), pp. 125–144; EAD., *Local Priests and the Writing of Charters in Northern Iberia in the Tenth Century*, in: JULIO ESCALONA MONGE – HÉLÈNE SIRANTOINE (eds.), *Chartes et cartulaires comme instruments de pouvoir. Espagne et Occident chrétien (VIII^e–XII^e siècles)*, Madrid 2014, pp. 29–44; EAD., *Priests and Rural Communities in East Brittany in the Ninth Century*, in: *Études Celtiques* 20, 1983, pp. 177–197; repr. in EAD., *Brittany in the Early Middle Ages* (Variorum collected studies series 924), Aldershot 2009, pt. V, pp. 177–197.

³ MICHEL AUBRUN. *Le clergé rural dans le royaume franc du VI^e au XII^e siècle*, in: PIERRE BONNASIE (ed.), *Le clergé rural dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne. Actes des XIII^{èmes} Journées Internationales d'Histoire de l'Abbaye de Flaran, 6–8 septembre 1991* (Flaran 13), Toulouse 1995, pp. 15–27; JAN DHONDT, *Das frühe Mittelalter* (Fischer Weltgeschichte 10), Frankfurt 1968, pp. 41–43; ULRICH STUTZ, *Geschichte des kirchlichen Benefizialwesens von seinen Anfängen bis auf die Zeit Alexanders*, vol. 3, Stuttgart 1895.

⁴ ROB MEENS, *Early Medieval Priests. Some Further Thoughts*, in: *Men in the Middle* (as note 1), pp. 222–227, here p. 223. On issues of contextualising and dating medieval charters, see the collected essays in MICHAEL GERVERS (ed.), *Dating Undated Medieval Charters*, Woodbridge 2000.

⁵ ROBERT I. MOORE, *Family, Community and Cult on the Eve of the Gregorian Reform*, in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 30, 1980, pp. 49–69, here p. 56.

episcopal households and of low status⁶. Sensitivity to these chronological, regional and institutional idiosyncrasies can nevertheless bring broader patterns into focus. In her magisterial ‘The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West’, Susan Wood collated a trove of evidence to show how church owners, including priests, leveraged this property to maximise its income and bolster their standing within the community⁷.

Most of Wood’s examples are taken from private charters and royal diplomas, an evidential corpus that has been fundamental to changing conceptions of kinship in tenth- and eleventh-century Europe, and the clergy occupy a particular role in this historiography. Julia Barrow has elucidated the familial strategies used to secure estates and rights for generations through collective action, and for the first time demonstrated the importance of uncles and their nephews as a conscious strategy of succession that operated alongside the more often-studied father-son paradigm, across different regions and time periods⁸. In one of their regional studies considering the clergy in the Pyrenean region, Pierre Bonnassie and Jean-Pascal Illy compared the expertise of local priests to trade skills passed down by craftsmen, suggesting that their access to education, books and knowledge could create dynasties of priestly families who used their position to ensure familial continuity in local churches⁹. Research focusing on the children of priests has also shown that many priests protected the rights and inheritance of their offspring through careful distribution of assets¹⁰.

While a variety of familial and social relationships underpin the above studies, one familial relationship – the bond shared by siblings – has remained in the shadows¹¹. It has received far less attention than family involved in vertical inheritance strategies (from parents to children, or from uncles to their nephews), nor as much as the vexed question of the celibacy of priests and their wives and concubines¹².

⁶ On Bavarian evidence, see THOMAS KOHL, *Presbyter in parochia sua. Local Priests and their Churches in Early Medieval Bavaria*, in: *Men in the Middle* (as note 1), pp. 50–77, here pp. 76–77.

⁷ SUSAN WOOD, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West*, Oxford 2006; cf. EAD., *Bishops and the Proprietary Church. Diversity of Principle and Practice in Early Medieval Frankish Dominions and in Italy*, in: *Chiese locali e chiese regionali nell’alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 4–9 Aprile 2013) (*Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo* 61), 2 vols., Spoleto 2016, vol. 2, pp. 895–912.

⁸ JULIA S. BARROW, *The Clergy in the Medieval World. Secular Clerics, their Families and Careers in North-Western Europe, c. 800–c. 1200*, Cambridge 2015; EAD. *The Clergy in English Dioceses c. 900–c. 1066*, in: FRANCESCA TINTI (ed.) *Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (*Studies in Anglo-Saxon England* 6), Woodbridge 2005, pp. 17–26.

⁹ PIERRE BONNASSIE – JEAN-PASCAL ILLY, *Le clergé paroissial aux IX^e–X^e siècles dans les Pyrénées orientales et centrales*, in: *Le clergé rural* (as note 3), pp. 153–166; in the same volume: BENOÎT CURSENTE, *Le clergé rural gascon, de l’an Mil à la fin du Moyen Âge*, pp. 29–40.

¹⁰ See BARROW, *The Clergy* (as note 8), esp. pp. 115–157.

¹¹ Research on the bonds between siblings in other social and chronological contexts includes FIONA GRIFFITHS, *Siblings and the Sexes within the Medieval Religious Life*, in: *Church History* 77, 2008, pp. 26–53; JONATHAN LYON, *Princely Brothers and Sisters. The Sibling Bond in German Politics, 1100–1250*, Ithaca 2013.

¹² The bibliography on clerical marriage in the tenth and eleventh centuries is too large to be reproduced here, but see especially: FIONA GRIFFITHS, *Froibirg Gives a Gift. The Priest’s Wife in Eleventh-Century*

Yet priests' relationships with their brothers and sisters were no less important: sibling relationships had the potential to last longer than bonds shared with either parents or children, and are ubiquitous in records that show familial strategies of estate management or the maintenance of status within communities. As detailed below more fully, siblings were also the most frequently mentioned relatives in the documentary corpus, attested more than twice as often as any other familial relationship.

This study first establishes a methodology for collecting and interpreting the often oblique evidence for local priests and their siblings in the tenth and eleventh centuries. It incorporates charters from the West Frankish kingdom (including Brittany and Normandy), and from the kingdoms and counties of the northern Iberian peninsula; for reasons of space it has not been possible to incorporate evidence from the post-Carolingian East Frankish kingdom, nor the many thousands of documents preserved in Italian archives. I begin with an examination of how local priests and their male siblings represented themselves or were represented in interactions with their neighbours, friends, family and ecclesiastical institutions, showing that the priesthood was not an automatic path to leadership of a sibling group or family. In cases where pairs of brothers were both priests, I have outlined how their involvement in land transactions might differ from those involving priests and lay siblings. The study then turns to the evidence showing priests and their sisters acting together. While far fewer cases survive, those that do shed light on continued and accepted relationships priests might have with women that could last for their lifetimes, and challenge some of the assumptions around the agency of such women as landowners and legal actors. I then turn to the evidence for the relationship between local priests and their nephews, many of whom followed in their uncles' footsteps. While records of this relationship show how succession and inheritance strategies might be managed, we must also pay attention to the siblings and in-laws of priests who often did not enter the historical record themselves but whose children provide the only evidence for such continuity. The study ends by interpreting these findings in light of the limited explicit evidence for any connection between church ownership and priestly families, with particular emphasis on the difference between West Frankish documents and those from the northern Iberian peninsula.

Bavaria, in: *Speculum* 96, 2021, pp. 1009–1038; LEIDULF MELVE, The Public Debate on Clerical Marriage in the Late Eleventh Century, in: *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61, 2010, pp. 688–706; HEINRICH BÖHMER, Die Entstehung des Zölibates, in: *Geschichtliche Studien. Albert Hauck zum 70. Geburtstag* dargebracht, Leipzig 1916, pp. 6–24; ROGER GRYSO, Dix ans de recherches sur les origines du célibat ecclésiastique. Réflexion sur les publications des années 1970–1979, in: *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 11, 1980, pp. 157–185; ELISABETH VAN HOUTS, *Married Life in the Middle Ages, 900–1300*, Oxford 2019, pp. 170–200.

1.1 Finding Local Priests

Many thousands of charters, notices of sale and other records of transactions from across western Europe record the participation of priests in what Miriam Czock called the “local property market”¹³, a vitally important corpus that preserves the voices of its protagonists, of those who preserved the transactions in the written record, and of the copyists and editors of these documents down the centuries. As a body of material, it is naturally diverse: at times opaque and at others detailed and explicatory, preserving deeply personal stories alongside many formulaic and impersonal notices. Priests in these records performed many of the same functions as other actors: as owners of property, land and moveable goods, or holders of serfs; as intercessors or neighbours to those making the transaction; and as witnesses to deeds of sale or donation. Priests depended on and benefitted from family networks making exchanges, purchases and sales within their own family, and often had the co-operation of their close kin when they transacted land with their neighbours, whether that took the form of sales, purchases or leases.

Yet for the modern historian, identifying local priests in the early medieval archive is a challenging task. The ostensible benchmark is that they could not be members of an episcopal or royal household, a cathedral chapter or a monastery, but even this can be difficult to determine, and their presence in any of these institutions did not preclude ownership of a local church. In her study of tenth-century Christian Spain, Wendy Davies set out useful ‘clues’ for establishing whether a cleric could be categorized as local: Priests whose land bordered someone else’s small plot; references to priests who bought, sold or exchanged small plots within a single locality; priests described as being of a particular place; and finally, priests who were involved in small transactions alongside peasants. But many individuals appear only once in the archives examined here, curtailing opportunities to discover where priests and their families lived, which churches they were associated with, or the extent of their social networks. Consequently, the following analysis has adopted a more inclusive policy, generally ruling cases out rather than in to show the breadth and variety of evidence for local priests and their siblings in the period c. 900–1100. I have nevertheless applied a terminological criterion: the corpus assembled for this study (i.e. local priests with family members) includes individuals called *presbiter* and/or *sacerdos* at some stage in their careers. It omits individuals exclusively referred to as a *clericus*, since to date I have not found a convincing case where we can demonstrate that the individual in question served as a priest.

¹³ MIRIAM CZOCK, *Practices of Property and the Salvation of one’s Soul. Priests as Men in the Middle in the Wissembourg Material*, in: *Men in the Middle* (as note 1), pp. 11–31, here p. 15.

1.2 A Panoramic View of Priests

The collection of data has been principally shaped by the availability of archives and access to them. I have used major databases including the ‘Chartes originales antérieures à 1121 conservées en France’ and ‘Charta Galliae’, both hosted by TELMA (Traitement électronique des manuscrits et des archives), ‘Chartae Burgundiae Medii Aevi’ and ‘Cartae Cluniacenses Electronicae’, and in some cases I have used Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to expedite reading cartularies available in PDF format¹⁴. Many others have been read on paper, too, with an eye to capturing as many cases as possible. Since (as will be shown below) the identificatory labels applied to family or to priests and those in clerical orders are often inconsistent or intermittent, some cases have been identified by piecing together multiple documents to establish sibling relationships. To date, c. 350 editions have been examined, as well as a large number of single sheet charters. A list of cartularies found to date that include local priests and their siblings is provided online¹⁵.

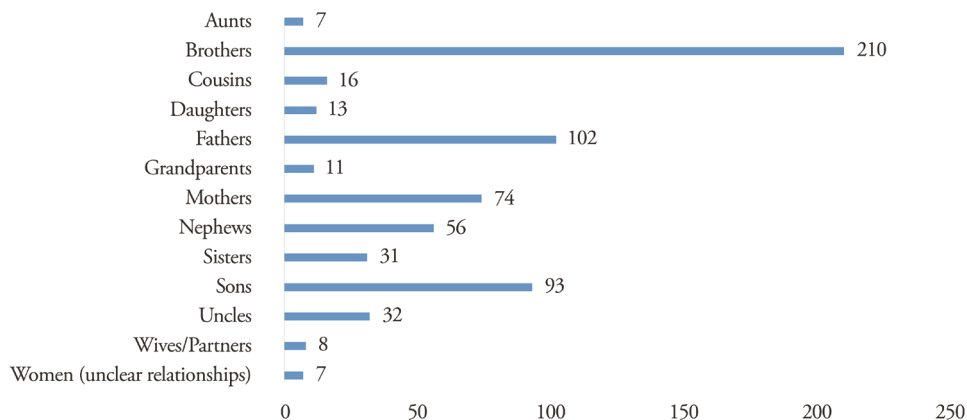
Although far from comprehensive, a panoramic view enables the identification both of broader patterns of the control of estates, and regional and personal idiosyncrasies as preserved in written archives. In response to the nature of the evidence, this study has stretched further chronologically than other contributions within this special issue. While many tenth-century charters survive across the corpus, in northern France in particular private charters (especially those containing local priests) only survive in significant numbers from the second half of the eleventh century. Equally, the amount of detail included can vary not only on a case-by-case basis but also by archive. That some regions are better furnished than others naturally impacts on the number of documents generally, and thus specifically on the numbers of individual priests with families.

Since the evidence is best understood in its local context, this study will not lean extensively on statistical analysis. The sample size is nevertheless large enough to begin with an overview of the evidence for local priests and their kinship ties, including trends and tendencies that occur across and within regions and throughout the time period under scrutiny.

¹⁴ <http://telma.irht.cnrs.fr//outils/originaux/index/>; <http://telma.irht.cnrs.fr/chartes/chartae-galliae/index/>; <https://philologic.lamop.fr/cbma/>; <https://www.uni-muenster.de/Fruehmittelalter/Projekte/Cluny/CCE/Welcomes-e.htm>; all last accessed 21 July 2022. The database of NICOLAS PERREAUX, ‘Cartae Europae Medii Aevi’, was published online after the data for the present study had been collected and analysed.

¹⁵ Cf. <https://doi.org/10.15131/shef.data.22568431>; last accessed 12 April 2023.

Local Priests and their Relations



The above graph counts every relative of a local priest I have found to date, excluding repeated references to the same individuals. Priests' brothers are more than twice as numerous as any other relative in the corpus, despite the many estates described as inherited by priests from their parents, or grants made for the souls of mothers and fathers. While the vast majority of notices of siblinghood refer to brothers, priests' sisters also appear in some numbers, almost equalling references to uncles and outstripping mention of local priests' wives, concubines, or female partners whose status cannot be determined precisely. The most common sibling relationship we find is between priests and lay brothers. Priests with brothers described as *clerici* appear quite rarely, though sibling groups that included two priests are better attested, and as we will see below one or both priestly brothers might serve a local church. It is important to note, however, that there are far fewer cases involving local priests than instances where two or more siblings entered cathedral communities, monasteries, or nunneries¹⁶.

References to siblings are not clustered regionally or chronologically within this period, but instead appear stable despite changes to the volume of charters preserved across the two centuries. The only significant exception to this is that while overall a single sibling is most commonly attested, two or three are not uncommon, and some records show even larger groups of brothers. One eleventh-century group sale re-

¹⁶ See, for example, the late eleventh-century priest Uruoedus, his brother Killae the cleric, and Uruoedus' son Marcher: *Cartulaire de l'abbaye Sainte-Croix de Quimperlé*, ed. LÉON MAITRE – PAUL DE BERTHOU (Bibliothèque Bretonne Armoricaïne publiée par la Faculté des Lettres de Rennes 4) Rennes – Paris 1904, nos. 85–86, pp. 238–240.

corded in the cartulary of Saint-Victor Marseille involved the priest William Tornellus and his two brothers, while in another we find Jeirunclus, Jaulendis and their brother Pontius *presbyter*¹⁷. In general, priests who had many siblings are far better attested in archives from the Iberian peninsula and to a lesser extent from what is now southern France, likely a reflection of the ways in which inheritance was divided down the generations. At the upper end of the scale, in 922 Ermegildus *confessor* and his six brothers Argemirus, Mehemutus, Doninus the priest, Julian, Ferrus and Vistia each gave their portion of a church at *Calzata* (Calzada del Coto) to León¹⁸.

The vast troves of charters from (for instance) Conques, León, Marseille and above all from Cluny have a far greater body of material, yet while they may appear in the following analysis more frequently than sparser collections, I have tried to show that – despite geographical variation in how transactions were recorded and in inheritance practices – the horizontal bonds between priests, their brothers and sisters are a near universal phenomenon in the corpus. In what follows I have selected from examples found across eighty-two published editions and a number of single-sheet charters, highlighting cases that are enriched by local context and offer a window into the family dynamics under scrutiny.

2. PRIESTS AND THEIR FAMILY RELATIONS

2.1 Priests and their Brothers

Over two hundred transactions involving priests and their lay brothers survive, in which they co-operated to buy, sell, lease or lend land to lay neighbours, or conveyed land to religious institutions, sometimes as a sale, but more usually as a donation, either giving it outright or retaining usufruct for themselves or family members. Joint action and collaborative activity mark all of the surviving cases, and the following examples are intended only to illustrate the variety of the evidence in broad strokes. In c. 940 Rainaldus and his brother Aiglulfus the priest jointly donated their estates in *Brolio* (Le Breuil) to the monks of Saint-Cyprien Poitiers¹⁹, while around the millennium the brothers Grimardus *presbyter* and Deusdet sold some of their property to Limoges²⁰. Piecing together several records reveals that the priest Bernard and his brother

¹⁷ Cartulaire de l'abbaye Saint-Victor de Marseille, ed. BENJAMIN GUERARD (Collection des cartulaires de France 8), Paris 1857, 2 vols., nos. 53 and 92, vol. 1, pp. 76–81 and 118–119.

¹⁸ Colección diplomática del monasterio de Sahagún, I. Siglos IX y X, ed. JOSE MARIA MÍNGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ, León 1976, no. 29, pp. 60–61; cf. no. 32, in which the six brothers made a joint donation with two other (presumed) relatives, Ato and his son Stephen the priest, at pp. 64–65.

¹⁹ Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Cyprien de Poitiers [931–1155], ed. LOUIS REDET, in: Archives historiques du Poitiers 3, 1874, pp. 1–350, no. 530, p. 319.

²⁰ Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Conques en Rouergue, ed. GUSTAVE DESJARDINS (Documents historiques publiés par la Société de l'École des chartes), Paris 1879, 2 vols., no. 402, vol. 1, pp. 297–298.

Constantine donated their land to Beaulieu, but reserved its use for their lifetimes²¹. A case from 993 records that the priest Bonusfilius and his brother Gotmar successfully claimed against one Eldemir in a dispute, receiving twenty *solidi* in compensation²².

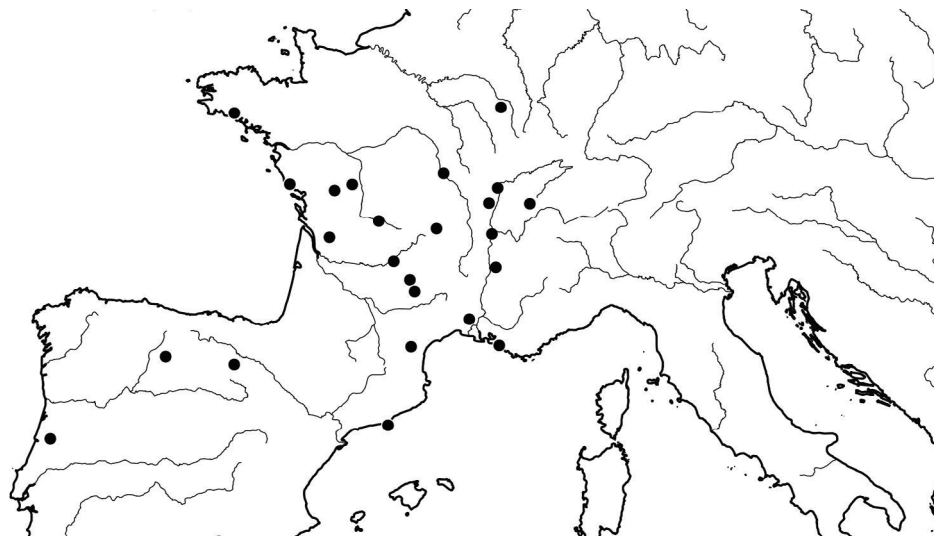


Figure 1: Cartularies / recipient institutions cited

Priests and their brothers also featured in provisions for usufruct made by other family members or friends and in clauses referring to the souls of donors and their families. Thus, when in c. 957 Trutbertus made a donation to Saint-Barnard de Romans he stipulated that after his death usufruct would pass first to the clerics Curson, Godavertus and Rollandus, and then to his relatives Stephen the priest and his brother Alcherus²³. In 1008, meanwhile, the priest Teduin gave land to Saint-Marcel-lès-Chalon for his soul, those of his parents, and for his brother Teutbertus²⁴. Priests and their brothers also attested grants: for instance Girbertus the priest and Constantine

²¹ Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Beaulieu (en Limousin), ed. MAXIMIN DELOCHE, Paris 1859, no. 118, pp. 170–171; Bernardus is identified as a priest because of the preceding charter, a sale by a married couple to a Bernard *priester* to which this fragment was (apparently erroneously) attached by the compiler of the cartulary: no. 117, p. 170.

²² Diplomatarium de la Catedral de Barcelona 1. Documents dels anys 844–1000, ed. ANGEL FÀBREGA I GRAU (Fonts documentals 4, 1), Barcelona 1995, here no. 243, pp. 465–466.

²³ Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Barnard de Romans, ed. ULYSSE CHEVALIER, Paris 1898, no. 31/90, pp. 42–43.

²⁴ Cartulaire du prieuré de Saint-Marcel-lès-Chalon, ed. PAUL CANAT DE CHIZY, Chalon-sur-Saône 1894, no. 16, pp. 40–41.

witnessed the sale of a mill by another pair of brothers in the earlier decades of the eleventh century²⁵.

When one brother had sole possession of the transacted land or property, just as with lay siblings the agencies involved in the charter's production often stated the rights (or lack thereof) and participation of the donor's brother. This ranged from careful delimitation of the boundaries of each brother's property to allocation of usufruct and when this began or ended. Many included explicit acceptance of the grant by the brother(s) who did not participate. A charter dated to October 941 records such a donation made by the priest Adalfredus to Nîmes. The large grant explicitly excluded a portion of land that belonged to Adalfredus' brother Eldradus: *Isto campo suprascripto dono totum, exceptus petiolas . in . que frater meus Eldradus comparavit, et exceptus petiolas . m . que sunt de infantes Rotbaldo qui fuit condam*. The charter includes the unusual stipulation in Adalfredus' voice that if the monks chose not to work the land or vineyards after his death, the priests' brothers and nephews would have first refusal to work it themselves: *Et si ipsi canonici in opus dominicum laborare non voluerint ipsa terra vel ipsa vinea, alii non laborent nisi aut fratres mei aut nepotes mei, si hoc facere potuerint*²⁶. The family no longer owned the land, yet Adalfredus was evidently able to leverage a future outcome that privileged his brothers and nephews and retained their connection to the estate granted.

Many priestly siblings assented to their brothers' grants or sales at the time of the transaction, but it was also fairly common to confirm their donation later, for instance after the death of their sibling, particularly if they had not done so when the grant was made. Shoring up a donation in this way was a widely attested practice visible in documents issued in the name of everyone from small lay freeholders to royal and imperial authorities. Confirmations of this kind occurred most often when children restated their commitment to grants made by their parents: such moments of transition from one generation to the next were a vulnerable time for the recipients of bequests, especially when members of that family continued to retain rights of usufruct, had a claim to ownership, or possessed neighbouring properties²⁷. To give two pertinent examples that involved local priests, in 962 executors appointed by the priest Ingelrannus stated that they had permission to donate the estate to Saint-Pierre de la Salvetat in Rodas from both Ingelramnus and his brother Leutarius: *per iussione[m] Ingelranno seu per iussonem*

²⁵ Chartes et documents pour servir à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Maixent, ed. ALFRED RICHARD, in: Société des archives historiques de Poitou 16 and 2, Poitiers 1886 and 1873, pp. 1–384 and 1–484, no. 110, pp. 138–139.

²⁶ Cartulaire du chapitre de l'église cathédrale Notre-Dame de Nîmes, ed. EUGÈNE GERMER-DURAND, Nîmes 1874, no. 43, pp. 49–50.

²⁷ For discussion of this practice at the highest levels of tenth-century society, see GEOFFREY KOZIOL, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas. The West Frankish Kingdom (840–987)*, Turnhout 2012, pp. 97–117.

*Leutario germano suo*²⁸. In the 1050s Robert, priest of Mortemart, donated his property to Abbot Gausfred of Saint-Étienne Limoges before he departed on pilgrimage to Spain. The donation was later confirmed by the priest's brother Constantius: *istud idem postea confirmavit Constantius frater illius*²⁹.

An instance of the aforementioned vulnerability of recipients in such moments is preserved by a single-sheet charter dated to c. 1100 and in the archives of the cathedral of Clermont-Ferrand. Between 1042/43 and 1077 the priest and canon Arbertus of Saint-Alyre sold his family church at *Turris* to the cathedral community for the impressive sum of 350 *solidi*³⁰. Arbertus' name was recorded in Clermont-Ferrand's necrology around thirty years later, providing us with a *terminus ante quem* for his death, around which time the grant was updated to include notice of a second, repeated purchase of the same church³¹. The vendor was Arbertus' brother Austorgius, who had claimed the church for his own after his brother's death and ceded it with a promise to relinquish his claim only on receipt of 330 *solidi*:

*Arberto denique mortuo, Austorgius de Rocafort, ipsius frater, hanc calumpniando ecclesiam a canonicis abstulit. Itaque diu tenuit donec, Deo permitente, beate Marię et canonicis antedictam ecclesiam, cum rebus ibidem pertinentibus, omnino tribuit ac dimisit. Quamobrem canonici, volentes quod hanc donationem vel dimissionem Austorgius filiique ejus in eternum firmiter conservarent, tradiderunt [ei] de suo hoc est CCCtos XXXta solidos*³².

Palaeographic analysis of the grant shows two hands and two inks, added at different stages. The first entry recorded Arbertus' donation of the church, and a scribe at a later date added in notice of a second purchase of the church, this time from Austorgius³³. A further charter from Clermont-Ferrand reveals the origins of the funds used to buy the church from Austorgius: between 1077 and 1095, the archdeacon transferred a large quantity of silver to purchase both the church and some (unrelated) lands³⁴. That the updated section of the *Turris* grant explicitly included the approval and consent of Austorgius' son suggests that the community at Clermont-Ferrand sought to end any possibility of future dispute or a third purchase of the same church.

²⁸ Charte pour Saint-Pierre de la Salvétat (962) et charte romane de Pierre de Belmont (1165), ed. E. CABIE, in: *Revue historique, scientifique et littéraire du département du Tarn* 3, 1880/1881, pp. 285–286, here p. 286.

²⁹ Cartulaire de l'église Saint-Étienne de Limoges, ed. JACQUES DE FONT-REAUUX, in: *Bulletin de la archéologique et historique de Limousin* 69, 1922, pp. 190–258, no. 60/56, p. 76.

³⁰ Chartes et documents de l'église de Clermont antérieurs au XIIe siècle, ed. EMMANUEL GRÉLOIS – MARIE SAUDAN (Documents, études et répertoires [Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes] 85), Paris 2015, no. 51, pp. 151–152.

³¹ BnF, ms. lat. 9085, fol. 24v.

³² Chartes et documents, ed. GRÉLOIS – SAUDAN (as note 30), no. 51, pp. 151–152.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 151, doc. A.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 57, pp. 160–161.

2.2 Priests as Family Representatives

When brothers donated to a religious institution together, we have seen that their shared inheritance and collaborative activity was often emphasised, even if this papered over the cracks of fraternal tension. Despite concern to convey equal status and enthusiasm, then, there is (perhaps) an assumption in historiography that at the levels of society we are concerned with here, priestly siblings would represent the family's interests³⁵. In some regions this assumption is founded on good ground: Wendy Davies has shown that priests represented their families in many of the records of family churches and monasteries transferred from private possession to institutional ownership in tenth-century Iberia³⁶. Was this because priests had greater social standing than their lay siblings, or did the individuals who wrote, copied and edited charters elevate priests on the page because of their own expectations and worldview? A broad perspective shows that fraternal relationships could have complex dynamics, but that those writing charters did at times privilege the priestly sibling.

One such donation survives in a contemporary single-sheet charter dated to 950 and made for the community at La Grasse, in which the priest Geronimus gave some property that he had inherited from his parents, alongside some he had purchased from his priestly brother: *de comparatione de fratri meo Livolani presbiteri*³⁷. Geronimus retained usufruct of these lands for his lifetime; after his death it all went directly to the monks of La Grasse. On face value, Livola had already sold the land to his brother and thus would have no say in what happened to it next, a conclusion supported by the notice that Geronimus would have usufruct over his grant, and the absence of any allocation for Livola. But the list of attestations concluding the charter undermines the sense that Livola had no claim to the land or sway over his brother's actions. Whatever legal rights Livola had given up when selling, he still participated in the donation: *Livola presbiter quia consensiens sum*. Livola's consent is visually dominant, written in a larger script by the scribe Durand and accentuated with a series of ruches that precede the scribe's own confirmation and *scripsit* symbols.

Neither brother reappears in La Grasse's charter collection, so we cannot say whether they were important figures in the locality, yet it is clear that to the scribe Livola's assent was a vital element of the document to be clearly and visibly demarcated in the document, more so than the attestation of his brother, the donor.

A grant made by the priest Hugo and his brother Gerald to Conques in the mid-eleventh century hints at the negotiations and acts of appeasement that might precede such acts of piety:

³⁵ For example WOOD, Proprietary Church (as note 7), here p.665: "It may have been more usual for a priest to own a church jointly with his brothers, sometimes being put in charge of it."

³⁶ DAVIES, Acts of Giving (as note 2), here pp.52–53.

³⁷ Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de La Grasse, ed. ELISABETH MAGNOU-NORTIER – ANNE-MARIE MAGNOU (Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France 24 and 26), Paris 1996 and 2000, 2 vols., no. 62, vol. 1, pp.103–104.

Ego Hugo sacerdos et Geraldus frater meus donamus sancto Salvatore et sanctae Fidei et abbati Odalrico duos mansos in illa Beciaria ad alodium qui nobis per originem parentorum venerant. Post haec concordavimus concambium cum ipso abbate inter nos, et dedimus ego et ipse abba istos duos mansos Geraldo fratri meo ad fevum in concambio per parragines de Pomario. Propterea ego Hugo sacerdos, cum consilio fratris mei Geraldi, omnem meam partem de illo honore quem habeo dimitto et dono sancto Salvatore et sanctae Fidei de Conchas et abbati Odalrico et monachis, hoc est ecclesia de Pomario cum ipso fevo et vinea de Blos Monte et vinea de Roca Cava per quam Saluster avunculus meus et alter Saluster nepus meus monachi missi fuerunt in Conchas. Dono etiam in vita et in morte mea omnem substantiam quam habeo et in antea adquisiero. Haec concordia et placitum facta sunt coram abbate Odalrico, presentibus Ademaro monacho et Hugone de Conchas et fratrem ejus et Umberto et ipse fratre meo Geraldo³⁸.

Per the text, the brothers first donated two manses of parentally-inherited allodial land in the villa of *Beciaria* (La Bessière) to Abbot Odalric. The abbot immediately gave two manses back to Gerald to hold in fief in exchange for the *parragines* of *Pomario* (Pomiès). Explicitly said to be acting on the advice of his brother, the priest Hugo then gave the church at *Pomario* and all his independent lands to Conques, including some vineyards Hugo had previously acquired from his uncle and nephew (both named Saluster) when they had joined the community at Conques.

Whoever drafted the text, whether it was Hugo himself, a representative of the monastery or an unknown third party, created a narrative that suggested the pair had come to a cordial and mutual agreement. While the rationale behind the transfer of land first to the abbot and then straight back to Gerald is not immediately apparent, its inclusion in the text and the nature of its representation suggests that the draftsman sought to convey the acquiescence of each brother to the donation. If Gerald had used or enjoyed land acquired by his brother despite having no formal legal claim to it, then the arrangement perhaps softened the blow of losing access to the estates Hugo had ceded. If this were the case, it conveys the impression that Gerald was, at least on a local level, a force to be reckoned with, and that his consent to his priestly brother's activity had been hard won through pragmatic temporary redistribution.

2.3 Priestly Brothers

Interpersonal dynamics between brothers who were both priests must have been equally complex. Shared possession of churches is well attested in southern *Francia* and northern Iberia, and charters of donation reveal multiple related priests who all possessed a portion. In 959, for instance, the priest Eximinus *confessor* and his brother the priest Gomessanus, their relative (*consobrinus*) the priest Blesconus and one Muza *confessor* donated their jointly-owned church at Vartical to San Millán de la Cogolla³⁹. Regardless of the type of property given, as in the cases above unity of purpose is a common feature of such texts, for example in 933 when the priestly brothers Abbo and Ingelbertus made a joint donation of property at *Tremolias* (Tremolière) and *Melago*

³⁸ Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Conques en Rouergue, ed. DESJARDINS (as note 20), no. 31, p. 36.

³⁹ Cartulario de San Millán de la Cogolla, ed. LUCIANO SERRANO, Madrid 1930, no. 52, pp. 62–63.

(Mélac) to the cathedral church of Rodez⁴⁰. Ingelbertus himself may have authored the charter, if he is to be identified with the homonymous priest who served as the scribe for this charter and for two others for Rodez (and therefore likely a member of the cathedral community)⁴¹. It is therefore especially significant that the collaborative nature of the donation is emphasised throughout: *Nos [...] Abbo presbiter et Ingilbertus presbiter, frater meus, ambo pariter cedimus et condonamus*. The pair retained usufruct until their deaths, after which the property went to the canons, for the memory of Abbo and Ingelbertus' father, mother, and brothers: *Post nostrorum quoque discessum, statim Sancte Mariae remaneant in stipendia canonicorum pro pa[tre] et matre et fratribus nostris*. Despite its brevity, the charter's author takes the opportunity both to highlight the connection between the brothers and to situate them within their broader family group.

Elsewhere, we see that priestly brothers might possess individual estates and also share ownership of property. When the priest-brothers Odilus and Jorius donated land inherited from their parents at *Molarias* (Les Molières) to Conques in 1001, their bond and equal status were emphasised in the donation: *Ego igitur, in Dei nomen, Odilus presbyter et frater meus Jorius presbyter cedimus vel donamus de res proprietatis nostre que nobis per originem parentorum obvenit*⁴². If they are to be identified with their namesakes in other documents from Conques, Odilus and Jorius were landowners at the lower end of the social scale. They nevertheless did not share all their land: Odilus made both grants and sales at *Molarias* around the time of their joint donation⁴³ (and may have been married to one Adalendis), while Jorius witnessed charters from the same period and locality⁴⁴.

Finding priestly brothers can be challenging if one or both left the family's estate, as a series of records from Saint-Hilaire Poitiers shows. In 923 Fredæbaldus, his wife Airlindis and their sons Salomon, Tancilo, Ailradus, and Adalbaudus commissioned a notice of sale of land in *Bociacus* (Boussai) and *Villarius* (Villiers)⁴⁵. All members of the family confirmed the sale in the *dispositio*, and all attested the notice. Although not described as a priest in the main body of the text, since the charter survives in single sheet form we are able to see that the draftsman identified Salomon as a priest using a Tironian note in the list of attestations. The group never appears *en famille* again in the written record, but several members were involved in subsequent grants and

⁴⁰ Histoire des évêques de Rodez 1, ed. ANTOINE BONAL – J.L. RIGAL, Paris 1935, no. 7, pp. 561–562. The charter is preserved in its original single-sheet: Chartes originales antérieures à 1121 conservées en France (digital edition), ed. CÉDRIC GIRAUD et al., Orléans 2012, no. 3952, at <http://www.cn-telma.fr/originaux/charte3952/>, last accessed 27 November 2022.

⁴¹ Histoire, ed. BONAL – RIGAL (as note 40), nos. 1 and 4, pp. 554–556 and 558–559.

⁴² Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Conques en Rouergue, ed. DESJARDINS (as note 20), no. 257. On the social status of priests in the Conques archive, see FRÉDÉRIC DE GOURNAY, *Le Rouergue au tournant de l'an mil. De l'ordre carolingien à l'ordre féodal (IX^e–XII^e siècle)*, Rodez 2004, pp. 109–134.

⁴³ Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Conques en Rouergue, ed. DESJARDINS (as note 20), vol. 1, no. 125, p. 114.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 258, pp. 213–214.

⁴⁵ Documents pour l'histoire de l'église de Saint-Hilaire de Poitiers, ed. LOUIS REDET, in: *Mémoires de la société des antiquaires de l'ouest*, 1847, 1848, pp. 1–362, no. 14, pp. 18–19.

transactions. In 939, Airlindis sold a mill on the river *Alsantia* (l'Auzance) and land at *Primiacus* in *Sanciacus* (Sanxai) and *Fanum* to her sons Tancilo and Ailradus for five *solidi*⁴⁶. Extant records of sales made by mothers to their children are quite unusual in this period, but when one considers the incredibly low price of three *solidi* for three estates, particularly compared to the hefty fine of sixty *solidi* for violation of the grant, this can barely be classed as a sale at all. Airlindis may have essentially donated the land to her two sons, albeit in a document dressed up as a sale. While Tancilo and Ailradus confirm and attest the document, Airlindis' other sons Salomon and Adalbaudus are conspicuously absent in not only the witness list but in the document as a whole.

Where were Salomon and Adalbaudus? Their absence might be explained by an extant record of the sale of land located near the *castrum* of Saint-Hilaire from one Salomon, a priest of the cathedral chapter at Poitiers, to his brother the priest Adalbaudus; Salomon was evidently his brother's neighbour, since the land abutted Adalbaudus' property⁴⁷. I suggest that these two brothers are to be identified with the homonymous siblings who first appeared alongside their parents and other brothers in the grant the family made to Saint-Hilaire in 923. If the identification is correct then Salomon had joined the cathedral chapter as a canon by 923, explaining why he did not confirm or witness the transaction by his mother of a portion his family's estate. By 942 Adalbaudus may also have joined the cathedral community, since in that year two individuals named Salomon and Adalbaudus attested a charter issued at the cathedral alongside twenty-five other witnesses. That these are once again the same brothers is suggested both by their appearance one after the other in the list of witnesses, and because on the surviving single-sheet charter Salomon is again uniquely identified as a priest through a Tironian note. We cannot know whether Adalbaudus had been affiliated with the cathedral for as long as his brother had, or had previously served as a priest in a local church, and so the siblings may not fulfil all the criteria for identification as local priests. Nevertheless, the shifting of their interests from the earliest grant to these later texts shows a movement by the brothers away from focusing on familial property to their own estates and then those of the cathedral, suggesting mobility by the priestly brothers not often revealed by our corpus.

This kind of knitting together texts from a patchwork of archival material is often limited by the number of surviving documents. The extraordinary wealth of material from Cluny is therefore particularly valuable, and allows us to piece together the careers in the later tenth century of a pair of priestly brothers named Dodo and Raimbert, who owned property and perhaps lived at Chassigny (*villa Carsiniaco*). The pair likely appear in nine texts, and the table below details which of the brothers appeared in the dispositive section of each charter, whether they were identified as priests, and whether (if both appear) they were said to be brothers. The same three questions are then asked of the lists of witnesses that end each document. Finally, the

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 16, p. 20.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 27, p. 32.

table notes whether any other family members participated or were mentioned. Eight of the texts involve land in Chassigny; the exception is a sale made to the brothers of land at *Monciaco* (Moussy) ⁴⁸.

In his first grant to Cluny, for instance, Dodo is described as a priest in the main text, yet his title is not repeated at its end. None of his family appear in the main body of the charter, and while Dodo's confirmation at the end of the grant is immediately followed by that of one Raimbert their familial connection is not made explicit: *Dodonis, qui fieri et firmare rogavit. S. Raimberti* ⁴⁹. In Raimbert's sole grant to Cluny Dodo appears in the body of the charter, but no familial link is drawn between the pair in its list of confirmations: *S. Raimberti sacerdotis, qui hanc donationem fecit et firmare rogavit. S. Dodonis sacerdotis* ⁵⁰. We can see therefore that despite the omission of their fraternal connection, when one brother made a donation their brother witnessed first, and thus occupied on the page the most important position of those gathered to bolster the grant's validity. This tendency to include family members one after the other in lists of attestations is visible across many private charters, but requires at least one document to make their connection clear before we can begin to map a family and its members, something that is possible relatively rarely.

These nine charters serve as an important reminder that agencies drafting such documents did not always privilege priestly status, nor identify sibling relationships, leaving us to wonder how many more siblings appear in the corpus but are never identified as such.

The nature of a transaction could thus shape how draftsmen recorded not only fraternal relationships between priests but the status of priesthood itself, and whether this information was included. Dodo and Raimbert's kinship was an unnecessary detail if only one brother participated, while when the pair were not the protagonists of a document but neighbours to the donors or witnesses, their priestly identity was not written down. Conversely, only two documents include mention of their parents, and these are also the only two charters that identify the pair as brothers in the main text: in the earlier the pair appeared alongside their mother, and in the second they made a donation together for the souls of their parents. The pair's fraternal relationship was thus of greater importance in joint donations, but joint donations also saw the pair situated vertically within their family with specific reference to their parents ⁵¹.

⁴⁸ Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny, ed. BERNARD AUGUSTE – ALEXANDRE BRUEL (Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France. Première série, Histoire politique), Paris 1876–1903, 6 vols., nos. 496, 1495, 1572, 1635, 1667, 1732, 1799, 1956, 2424, vol. 1 pp. 481–482, vol. 2 pp. 547–548, 617–618, 671, 697–698, vol. 3 pp. 4–5, 53, 173, 512–513.

⁴⁹ Ibid, no. 496, vol. 1, pp. 481–482.

⁵⁰ Ibid, no. 1732, vol. 3, pp. 4–5.

⁵¹ Ibid., nos. 1572 and 2424, vol. 2, pp. 617–618 and vol. 3, pp. 512–513.

	BB 496 [986x7]	BB 1495 (979)	BB 1572 (981x982)	BB 1635 (983?)	BB 1667 (984)	BB 1732 (987)	BB 1799 (989?)	BB 1956 (993)	BB 2424 (997x1031)
DONOR	Dodo	Raimbert	Dodo Raimbert Plectruda	Eldele- nus Dizia	Ingelardus Frooera Hugo	Raimbert	Oylardus	John	Dodo Raimbert
RECIPIENT	Cluny	Cluny	Cluny	Cluny	Dodo Raimbert	Cluny	Cluny	Cluny	Cluny
NAMED	Dodo	Dodo Raimbert	Dodo Raimbert		Dodo Raimbert	Raimbert			
NAMED (IN WITNESS LIST)	Dodo Raimbert	Dodo Raimbert	Dodo Raimbert		Dodo	Dodo Raimbert	Dodo		
IDENTIFIED AS PRIEST?	Dodo	Dodo	Dodo Raimbert		Dodo Raimbert	Raimbert			
IDENTIFIED AS PRIEST IN WITNESS LISTS			Dodo Raimbert	Dodo Raimbert		Dodo Raimbert	Dodo		
IDENTIFIED AS BROTHERS?			Yes	Yes* *Witness List					Yes
	BB 496 [986x7]	BB 1495 (979)	BB 1572 (981x2)	BB 1635 (983?)	BB 1667 (984)	BB 1732 (987)	BB 1799 (989?)	BB 1956 (993)	BB 2424 (997x1031)

2.4 Priests and their Sisters

Priests' sisters break the surface of the documentary record far more rarely, but charters that do survive show these women played as full a role in controlling familial property as the brothers of priests. Around the millennium the siblings Bernardus the priest, Andreas and Martina sold some of their land (*alodus noster*) to the abbot and monks of Sainte-Foy, Conques, for thirty *solidi*. All three are described as vendors: *Bernardus sacerdos et frater meus Andreas et soror mea Martina venditores*; Martina attested the sale alongside her brothers, although her name was not repeated⁵². Similarly, Morellus the priest, his brother John and sister Maria gave land to the abbey of Cardeña in Castile in 1066⁵³, while in 974 the priest Romario and his sister Euila gave several churches to Sé da Coimbra, and numerous grants made by priests and their sisters survive, especially in documents from Iberia⁵⁴.

A very unusual document in the cartulary of Lézat dated to around the millennium records a priest named Gaston and his sister (or perhaps his aunt) Alodia working together to pool their individual resources. The *narratio* recounts that the local lord Raimond Eco had captured a married couple and threatened to hang them unless a ransom of two hundred *solidi* was paid. Gaston, described as a priest from *Lociverte* (Ladivert), his father Solman, and a sister of one of these men named Alodia (the wording is ambiguous), wished to save them but did not have sufficient capital. To aid them a pair of priestly brothers also gave Saint-Béat all their property, land and vineyards in Ladivert, and in return, the group received sufficient funds to pay the ransom⁵⁵. Alodia's participation is framed in the same terms as both that of the male members of her immediate family and that of the priestly brothers, who may have been extended family given their involvement. As with the cases considered earlier, Alodia's relationship to her priestly brother (or nephew) shows both that she possessed independent property and that she collaborated with the wider family to pool resources if necessity dictated.

⁵² Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Conques en Rouergue, ed. DESJARDINS (as note 20), no. 127, vol. 1 pp. 145–146.

⁵³ El Becerro gótico de San Pedro de Cardeña, ed. LUCIANO SERRANO (Fuentes para la Historia de Castilla por los PP. Benedictos de Silos III), Silos 1910, no. 258, pp. 275–276. Since the sixteenth century, the text has survived only as a fragment. Morellus likely also attests a grant at the same location, *Ormaza maior* (Las Hormazas), at no. 259, pp. 276–277.

⁵⁴ Livro Preto: Cartulário da Sé de Coimbra. Edição crítica. Texto integral, ed. MANUEL AUGUSTO RODRIGUES, Coimbra 1999, accessible at <http://codolpor.ul.pt/livro-preto/1167>, last accessed 27 November 2022; also printed in Portugaliae Monumenta Historica a saeculo octavo post Christum usque ad quintum decimum 3: Diplomata et Chartae, vol. 1, ed. ALEXANDRO HERCULANO DE CARVALHO E ARAUJO – JOSÉ DA SILVA MENDES LEAL, Lisbon 1868, no. 112, pp. 70–71. Note that the editors of this volume identify the grant as being made by two brothers, despite the Latin: *Ego serbo christi rromario [sic!] presbitero et germana mea emilo*.

⁵⁵ Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Lézat, ed. PAUL OURLIAC – ANNE-MARIE MAGNOU, Paris 1984, 2 vols., no. 447, vol. 1, p. 341. On the charter, see BONNASSIE – ILLY, *Le clergé paroissial* (as note 9). Online edition: <https://books.openedition.org/pumi/23166#ftn2>, at pp. 20–21, last accessed 27 November 2022.

Sisters can be found further down the social scale, too. At the lowest end, an exceptional marginal note added to the cartulary of Montier-en-Der describes the actions of the priest Herbert, likely from the nearby estate of Vaucogne⁵⁶, who bought his mother, his sister and his sister's children out of the servitude of the lord Erlebaudus for 31 *solidi*. Herbert then gave them to the church of St Peter: *Notum sit omnibus fidelibus presentibus et futuris, quod Herbertus presbiter de Guascognia redimens matrem et sororem suam cum filiis a seruitute, donavit Erlebaudo cuius erant XXXI solidos. Deinde subiungavit eas Sancti Petri dominio in perpetuum*⁵⁷. While I have not so far found any parallels to this case, Herbert's actions show that even priests with unfree mothers and sisters sought to improve the lives (and perhaps secure the safety) of their female relatives.

Elsewhere, the importance of sisters to their priestly brothers (and vice versa) must be coaxed out from multiple texts. In 1073, Bishop Pontius of Marseille gave a vineyard near the church of Sainte-Croix to his *fidelis* Julian the priest and Julian's sister Bligarde: *Ego Poncius in vice presuli positus, dono ad fidele meo nomine Juliano presbitero et sorore sua Bligarda*⁵⁸. I suggest that the siblings also witnessed a slightly earlier grant that survives only in a fragmentary and damaged single sheet form, made by the brothers Pons of Chateaurenard and Arbertus to the abbey of Montmajour. Bligarde's importance and continued co-operation with her brother is in evidence here too, as both siblings attested the donation and were evidently neighbours of the donors: [...] *manso uno in villa que nominant sancto Andeolo de Juliano presbitero ipso consenciente et sorore sua B [...] garda* [...] ⁵⁹.

Another striking case of this kind begins with a donation made by a priest named Ademar, who in c. 960 gave allodial land near the villa of *Gragoni* (Cragon) and *Luniaco* (Leugny) to Saint-Cyprien's Poitiers. His sister Oda and her children were to have usufruct of the donated estates, though it is not specified whether this began during the lifetime of Ademar or after his death⁶⁰. I suggest the former arrangement is more likely, principally because Ademar did not allocate usufruct to himself, and secondly because the absence of reference to Oda's husband or (if she had married more than once) the children's father suggests that Oda was a widow at the time of its drafting. The usufruct clause included by Ademar for Oda was therefore perhaps intended to support his sister.

Yet this is not the full picture. Although Ademar does not appear elsewhere in the cartulary, his sister Oda does, and we can therefore fill in some of the background

⁵⁶ CHARLES HIGOUNET, *Défrichements et villeneuves du bassin Parisien (XI^e–XIV^e siècles)*, Paris 1990, here p. 127, contra the conclusion reached by the cartulary's editor, as below, note 58.

⁵⁷ *The Cartulary of Montier-en-Der, 666–1129*, ed. CONSTANCE BRITAIN BOUCHARD, Toronto 2004, no. 115, pp. 244–245. Bouchard has dated the entry to the later eleventh century based on the hand and its position in the manuscript.

⁵⁸ *Chartes originales*, ed. GIRAUD et al. (digital edition) (as note 40): no. 4121, at <http://www.cn-telma.fr/originaux/charte4121/>, last accessed 28 July 2022.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 4124, at <http://www.cn-telma.fr/originaux/charte4124/>, last accessed 25 July 2022.

⁶⁰ *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Cyprien de Poitiers*, ed. REDET (as note 19), no. 133, p. 93.

to her life and thus that of her brother. In an earlier charter dated to 932 she and her husband Isembertus permitted one Joseph to build a mill on land they gave (or more likely leased) to him near Cragon (the same location in which property was allotted to Oda by her brother). Isembertus and Oda's grant was confirmed by their sons Robert and Peter, a *praepositus* of Saint-Pierre, Poitiers⁶¹. Between 963 and 975 (thirty years after granting land to build a mill and five to fifteen years after Ademar gave Oda usufruct of his own property), Oda made a grant of her own. She donated the mill built by Joseph and a chapel dedicated to St Salvator to the monks of Saint-Cyprien⁶². We learn from the attestations that Oda's son Peter, who attested the gift, had since been elevated to the bishopric of Poitiers.

A case-study from Saint-Étienne de Baigne adds a further dimension to our understanding of priests and their sisters: that of the local churches that tied them to a community. Between 1075 and 1080 Arnaldus Ermefredi, his unnamed wife, and her brother Iterius the priest donated three quarters of their lands near the church of St Lawrence in *Novo Vico* (Neuic, Mont Guyon), for their souls and those of their parents⁶³. Unusually, we can tie the priest Iterius to this locality: in another charter copied into the cartulary and dated to 1076 Iterius, *presbyter de Novo Vico*, witnessed a transaction⁶⁴. Iterius and his family do not seem to have owned the church, since in c. 1066 a woman named Nonia and her sons donated it to Saint-Étienne de Baigne; although it cannot be ruled out that Nonia and Iterius were related, there is no indication of any connection between the individuals in the documents⁶⁵. The donation Iterius made with his sister and brother-in-law might suggest his status as the priest of Neuic predated the transfer of the church into the hands of the bishop. Interpreted this way, the trio used almost all of their familial land around the church in Neuic to shore up their position in the local community and bolster their relationship with its new owners.

3. NEPHEWS AND 'INVISIBLINGS'

Unlike the cases above, many siblings (particularly sisters) were not mentioned in extant written documents from the period. In a number of cases, their existence must be adduced from mentions of their children: the nephews and (very rarely attested) nieces of priests. Barrow described this connection as "the uncle-nephew paradigm", an inheritance strategy that operated alongside father-son and brother-brother dynamics⁶⁶. The majority of uncle-nephew relationships found in the corpus of local

⁶¹ Ibid., no. 126, p. 90.

⁶² Ibid., no. 130, pp. 91–92.

⁶³ Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Étienne de Baigne, ed. PAUL-FRANÇOIS-ÉTIENNE CHOLET, Niort 1868, no. 188, p. 90.

⁶⁴ Ibid., no. 197, pp. 93–94.

⁶⁵ Ibid., no. 193, p. 92.

⁶⁶ BARROW, *The Clergy* (as note 8), here p. 117.

priests assembled here involved an older relative in clerical orders and at least one nephew who had followed the same path. In c. 1040, for instance, a priest named Hiadbertus made a donation of a vineyard at *Pradellas* (perhaps Le Pral) to Saint-Barnard de Romans; his nephew, also named Hiadbertus and also a priest, witnessed the document⁶⁷. Uncles and nephews were connected through family ties but could also be bound together by shared property, shared names, and similar positions within the church. But it is important to remember that for every visible priestly uncle and nephew who forged a connection and continuing relationship, that priest had a sibling and that sibling had a spouse. While these family members often went unrecorded, priests' siblings and their spouses had made a conscious decision that one or more of their children should follow their relative into the priesthood, or a proximate career.

We can begin to piece together a case for just these kinds of plans from a charter dated to c. 925, in which the priest Ingilramnus donated allodial property to Nîmes that comprised a church dedicated to John the Baptist in *Rediciano* (Redessan), land in *Juncaria* (la Jonquière), *A-Pogio-Astrigilio* (Puech Astril), *Tabernulas* (Tavernolles), as well as at *Colonellas* (Colonelles) and in its environs of *Ad-ipsas-Colonellas* and *Subtus-ippo-Semedario* (“Under the Cemetery”), places we will return to below⁶⁸. The sense of the document, from its lugubrious preamble onwards, is that this was in effect a living will: it is made to the house of God and its canons at Nîmes for the souls of the donor, his father, mother and family, and for all Christians⁶⁹.

Ingilramnus stipulated that his nephew Gerald would possess the allod of the church at Redessan in usufruct, paying an annual fee to Nîmes in return. Unusually, the document also states that a certain Aimericus was to serve as priest of the church under Gerald: *Et Aimericus, presbiter, subtus eum tenere faciat, dum vivit*. The church may have been owned by one priest and served by another, but it may be that while Ingilramnus intended for Gerald to become its priest, at the time of the grant his nephew was not old enough to assume the priesthood. This second interpretation is strengthened by a charter dated to 943 (around two decades after Ingilramnus' grant)⁷⁰. Issued by one Leutaldus and his wife Ranganda, the donation included many places within the *villa* of Redessan, some of which coincide with locations where Ingilramnus had made donations, including La Jonquièrre, Les Colonelles, and Sous-le-Cimitière, as well as (I believe) at Tavernolles and possibly at Puech-Astril. Crucially, the pair also gave land near the church at Redessan, making this the only other surviving Nemois text to mention the *villa* of Redessan or its church. The boundary clauses of these lands included three references to a neighbouring priest or priests named Guirard, Gairard, and Guirard, likely one individual based on the mapping of the places men-

⁶⁷ Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Barnard de Romans, ed. CHEVALIER (as note 23), no. 84/103, pp. 100–101.

⁶⁸ Cartulaire du chapitre de l'église cathédrale Notre-Dame de Nîmes, ed. GERMER-DURAND (as note 26), nos. 13 and 27, pp. 23–24 and 49–50.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., no. 44, pp. 74–79.

tioned. Given the chronological separation of the grant by Ingilramnus and this text, that Aimericus was intended to hold the church during the minority of Ingilramnus' nephew, who then replaced his uncle as the holder of the church, seems convincing.

Uncles such as Ingilramnus paved the way for their nephews, and Barrow has shown this practice was an important part of clerical life across social strata. We also find nephews who had climbed the ladder rather more quickly, apparently equaling or surpassing their uncles' status within the latter's lifetime. In such cases, it seems likely that priests' 'invisiblings' were of considerable social standing, despite their absence in the sources. In one such tenth-century charter the priest Rannucus donated the church of Saint-Just-en-Bas to two Lyonnaise churches for the souls of his parents, reserving the usufruct for his lifetime. Rannucus' donation was confirmed by his paternal uncles Rannucus and Phanuhel, and by his relative Braydincus; the lands of the church he gave bordered those of Phanuhel and Braydincus⁷¹. Although we cannot say whether the priestly donor had a priestly uncle himself, based on the donation Rannucus' parents and other close family were clearly of some local standing; his avuncular namesake may well have held the donated church before his nephew, who would despite the donation continue to possess the church for the rest of his life.

Other charters are less opaque. In c. 971, the deacon Rotbaldus of Saint-Barnard de Romans made a donation for his own soul and for those of his parents and uncle, Islenus the priest⁷². As the lengthy surviving witness list does not include Islenus, he may have been resident elsewhere or perhaps had died. In any case he does not appear to have ever been a member of the cathedral chapter, unlike his nephew. In 995 the *clericus* Rodulf made a donation to Saint-Cyr Nevers for the souls of his uncle Ingelonus the priest and a relative named Goffridus, also a priest⁷³. Thirty years later, in 1029, we almost certainly find the same Rodulf and his relative Goffridus, the pair now elevated to *decani sive secretarii* and treasurer of Saint-Cyr respectively, suggesting considerable advancement by the younger generation⁷⁴. As with Islenus, there is no indication that Rodulf's uncle Ingelonus had ever been anything other than a local priest.

Depending on the ages and life-stages of family members, land could be jointly held by siblings and their parents, siblings and their offspring, or by representatives of three generations of the same family. Sometimes we find a single priest amidst the kin-group, more rarely priests are found in more than one generation. These families often

⁷¹ Cartulaire Lyonnais. Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire des anciennes provinces de Lyonnais, Forez, Beaujolais, Dombes, Bresse & Bugey, comprises jadis dans le Pagus major Lugdunensis I: Documents antérieurs à 1255, 2 vols., ed. MARIE-CLAUDE GUIGUE, Lyons 1885–1893, at vol. 1, no. 5, pp. 9–10. On the family, see HERVÉ CHOPIN. Le prieuré Saint-Irénée de Lyon. Essai d'histoire d'un témoin de la réforme grégorienne, in: PHILIPPE Racinet et al. (eds.), Les monastères de chanoines réguliers en France du XI^e au XVIII^e siècle (Actes de la sixième journée d'étude du 26 Mai 2018 à Saint-Martin-aux-Bois [Oise]) (Histoire médiévale et archéologie 32), Compiègne 2019, pp. 121–150, here p. 127.

⁷² Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Barnard de Romans, ed. CHEVALIER (as note 23), no. 39/258, pp. 50–51.

⁷³ Cartulaire de Saint-Cyr en Nevers, ed. RENÉ DE LESPINASSE, Paris 1916, no. 63, pp. 108–109.

⁷⁴ Ibid., no. 59, pp. 103–104.

possessed lands that appear as a complex patchwork of single and shared ownership. We learn from a charter made in 882 for the abbey of Beaulieu that the priest Godinus held some land jointly with his brother Ragamfredus, and had also purchased estates with his nephew Donadeus that the pair shared; the latter parcel abutted land owned by Donadeus alone⁷⁵. The evidence is fuller when we turn to provisions for usufruct, which could involve allocations for both the siblings of the donor and their children. Also in Beaulieu, the priest Ebroin donated a chapel at *Chauci* and four ecclesiastical manses to the monks in 936, but allocated usufruct to his family for the lifetimes of his brother Amalricus, and his nephews John and Girbertus⁷⁶.

Cluny's documentary abundance unusually allows for the reconstruction of families across generations, providing a glimpse of how its members might co-operate and exert efforts on creating a lineage of priests. One such case study concerns a family with two generations of priests both named Amalfredus, who can be traced through a series of documents centred on *Metono* (Mions) and issued between 949 and 976⁷⁷. The logical starting point is a grant made in March 951. In this text, Amalfredus the priest (hereafter referred to as Amalfredus Senior), his brother Gerald, and Gerald's wife Anastasia transferred their properties in Mions to the son of Gerald and Anastasia, Amalfredus *clericus* (hereafter referred to as Amalfredus Junior):

*Quapropter ego, in Dei nomine, Amalfredus presbiter, et germanus meus Giroldus, genitor tuus, et Anastasia, genitrix tua, in pro amore et plenissima bona voluntate pariter nostra, quod nos apud te abemus, pro anc ipsa amore, donamus nos tibi aliquid ex rebus propriis nostris, [...] tibi pariter donamus; et terra quod ego Amalfredus, presbiter, in ipso congrio conquisivi, tibi dono; [...] dum ego Amalfredus presbiter et Giroldus vivimus, usum et fructum pariter possideamus; post nostrum quoque amborum discessum, Amalfredus clericus securus teneat et possideat; post discessum Amalfredo clerico, Sisfredo germano suo perveniat [...]*⁷⁸.

The priest Amalfredus Senior held some of this land with his brother, but independently possessed other estates he now promised first to Gerald, then to Amalfredus Junior, and then to his other nephew Sisfredus, if he survived his brother. By first sharing his property with his own brother and then handing over his estates to Amalfredus Junior, Amalfredus Senior and Gerald seem to be acting to secure the advancement and clerical career of Amalfredus Junior. Within this text we see two different attitudes to how priests and their brothers might share land: Amalfredus Senior opted to pool his resources with his brother before transferring them to his nephew. But Amalfredus Junior's brother Sisfredus would only have access to the land after the former's death, at once echoing and deviating from the strategy of the older brothers.

⁷⁵ Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Beaulieu (en Limousin), ed. DELOCHE (as note 21), no. 127, pp. 178–179.

⁷⁶ Ibid., no. 178, pp. 247–249.

⁷⁷ On the family, see also ULRICH WINZER, Zum Einzugsbereich Clunys im 10. Jahrhundert. Eine Fallstudie, in: Frühmittelalterliche Studien 22, 1988, pp. 241–265, here pp. 261–264.

⁷⁸ Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny, ed. AUGUSTE – BRUEL (as note 48), vol. 1, no. 803, pp. 757–758.

Amalfredus Junior did not remain in minor orders for long, and became a priest no later than 962⁷⁹. Amalfredus' uncle and namesake did not make or witness any grants after 951, and so he perhaps died between then and 962, when his nephew replaced him as the priest in a church held by the family. Although no church is mentioned at Mions until the twelfth century, on the balance of evidence both uncle and nephew likely served at a local church held or owned by the family. After his elevation to the priesthood, Amalfredus Junior became the first member of his family (at least in the extant corpus) to donate to Cluny, which he did on three occasions, in 966, 971 and 976⁸⁰. The land given to Cluny in these three charters had been acquired piecemeal by Gerald and his sons Amalfredus and Sisfredus from their neighbours in the 950s and 960s⁸¹.

Two donations made by other senior members of the family to Amalfredus Junior and his brother confirm that the family had decided collectively to pool their resources to further the career of the younger priest, and reveal that between them the priest Amalfredus Senior, his brother Gerald and sister-in-law Anastasia had at least one (and likely two) other siblings. In one of his donations to Cluny we learn that Amalfredus Junior had inherited land from his *avunculus* Berno, while one Arhimtrudis gave property to her *nepotes* Amalfredus Junior and Sisfredus in 965, with their father Gerald's implicit approval or at least acceptance indicated by his presence in the charter's attestations. That both Arhimtrudis transferred her holdings to the brothers rather than to them and their father suggests that by this time the nexus of the family had shifted to the younger generation.

Records of the family's transactions reveal a third generation that perhaps included a candidate for the priesthood. In his first grant to Cluny, Amalfredus requested that the monks build a monastery or cell within the family's estate, the purpose of which was to serve as a place for his own nephew Girbert to be educated: *Omnia autem trado ad supradictum locum, ea conditione ut donnus abbas vel seniores Cluniacenses in Medone talem construant locum in quem bene valeant degere monachi ad Deo serviendum, ac nepotem meum Girbertum litteris inbuant, et monachum faciant*⁸².

Girbert may have been the son of Sisfredus or another unknown sibling; one text reveals that he had a brother named Gerald, whose education was not mentioned⁸³. Regardless, the plans for his advancement did not come to fruition, and a later donation mentions only Girbert's education without reference to the previously-mooted construction. With this donation the family apparently gave all the property they were willing to part with to Cluny, and so the records pertaining to them end without resolution to the question of whether Gerald became a priest.

⁷⁹ Ibid., no. 1125, vol. 2, pp. 216–217.

⁸⁰ Ibid., nos. 1200, 1307, 1424, vol. 2, pp. 282–284, 383–384, and 480–481.

⁸¹ Ibid., nos. 1089, 1125, 1160, 1165, 1181, 1185, vol. 2, pp. 182–183, 216–217, 249, 252–253, 267, and 270.

⁸² Ibid. no. 1200, vol. 2, pp. 282–284.

⁸³ Ibid. no. 1307, vol. 2, pp. 383–384.

Bringing these records together reveals a picture of a concerted family strategy across and within three generations of brothers, all of which were perhaps intended to include a priest. Although the family were by no means poor, their network and influence centered on Mions and did not extend far beyond it, and it was there that the family made a concerted effort to establish themselves. Although they did not succeed in the culmination of their ambitions, securing the rights to build a monastery, that the local count attested Amalfredus' final grant to Cluny suggests that they had nevertheless moved up in the world⁸⁴.

Cluny's documentary abundance can give the impression of slim pickings when searching for comparable families elsewhere, but careful reading reveals other groups of siblings who served as the linchpin to connect older and younger generations. In 1076, for instance, the abbot of Saint-Maixent in Poitou sold land to the three brothers Arbertus (a priest), Andreas and Bernard just outside the gates of that city: *Constat nos vendere ita et vendimus alicui viro nomine Arberto presbitero, filio Arnaldi sacerdotis [...] Nos vero isti predicto Arberto hanc vineam tradimus a die presente omnibus diebus vite sue vel duobus fratribus ejus, scilicet Andrea et Bernardo*⁸⁵.

Despite its brevity, we can see that the author of the document clearly perceived Arbertus to lead the siblings. He is more prominent than his brothers throughout, but most significantly, he alone is described as the son of Arnald the priest. On the page, his siblings are thus rather oddly relegated in importance: they are only related to their father through their brother Arbertus. This emphasis does not just impact the way the siblings are presented in relation to their priestly father, but also shapes their relationship with the younger generation too, which included their own children. Although described as a sale this was effectively a lease valid for the lifetimes of Arbertus' brothers and nephews (*omnibus nepotibus ejus*). The vague phrasing of this particular clause may be deliberate to accommodate possible future offspring yet to be born. Again, strikingly, we see a framing that results in Arbertus' brothers and perhaps sisters only being related to their children and nephews through their priestly sibling⁸⁶. A member of this younger generation may have been intended to succeed their grandfather and uncle as priest of a family church.

4. LOCAL PRIESTS AND THEIR CHURCHES

In the preceding discussion the difficulty in connecting priests and their siblings to a specific local church has been noted in a number of cases, an aspect of the evidence that deserves closer scrutiny. What, if any, is its significance? How do the various archival interests and strategies of those who wrote, collated and edited such documents shape modern impressions of local priests, their siblings and the churches they served?

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 1424, vol. 2, pp. 480–481.

⁸⁵ Chartes et documents, ed. RICHARD (as note 25), no. 134, pp. 164–165.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

In the corpus of charters assembled for this study we can connect a priest and a local church in two key contexts. The first is if a priest is said to be from a particular church or location, and thus potentially ‘of’ the church in that location.

References to priests being from or ‘of’ a particular place or church became more and more common in the later eleventh century, and simultaneously so too did inclusion of the name of their father or mother, at least in certain archives. A priestly brother might also serve as an identifier for a lay actor in such texts, as in a charter from the end of the eleventh century that describes a grant made by one Rainulfus, *frater Petri presbiteri* to the monastery of Saint-Hilaire at Talmont⁸⁷. These changes to the way individuals were identified were not limited to priests, and applied equally to lay participants, reflecting a growing tendency to identify individuals beyond a single name. While this affected how the protagonists or intercessors of a grant might be described in the dispositive section of charters, its most tangible impact is on the lists of witnesses that concluded documents. The vast majority of priests said to be ‘from’ a particular place were therefore not actors in the transaction proper but functioned only in a testificatory role in lists of witnesses, and so we gain no insight into their status within their community.

Secondly and more clearly, sometimes a church is said to be owned by a specific priest and/or their family, or served by a particular priest. Here too there is a significant methodological problem: as Thomas Kohl outlined regarding ninth-century priests in Bavaria, the terminology of these texts usually obscures whether a priest associated with a church owned it, had received it in benefice, or if there was some other arrangement⁸⁸. We are often therefore met with a frustrating dead end, since in many cases we cannot determine the nature of the priest’s connection with a particular church. For this reason, tangible proof that priests either did or did not own a church is particularly valuable, but a dearth of such statements in evidence from the West Frankish kingdom (and to a lesser extent from territories in northern Iberia) makes the silence more palpable still.

In searching for an explanation for this tendency, it is not necessary to return to the proposal made by Ulrich Stutz over a century ago and echoed by (amongst others) Dhondt and Aubrun, who suggested that we are dealing with impoverished local priests at the mercy of landowners who owned the churches in which these priests served⁸⁹. As Davies has shown in her study of Christian Spain, the vast majority of references to local churches occur in the course of their transfer from an individual, family or group to an ecclesiastical institution, often fronted by a priest⁹⁰. That these types of donations by local priests with families appear so rarely across West Frankish

⁸⁷ Cartulaire de l’abbaye de Talmont, ed. LOUIS DE LA BOUTETIÈRE, in: *Mémoires de la société antiquaires de l’ouest* 36, 1872, pp. 65–465, at no. 47, p. 126.

⁸⁸ KOHL, *Presbyter* (as note 6), here pp. 53–54.

⁸⁹ As above, at note 3.

⁹⁰ DAVIES, *Acts of Giving* (as note 2), pp. 52–53.

cartularies and archives suggests that otherwise generous donations by priests and their families consciously excluded churches, and therefore that amongst these groups there was no widespread practice of or desire to relinquish control of local churches to large ecclesiastical institutions⁹¹. While we cannot say whether or not their churches were wealthy, this suggests that – to these families at least – they were valuable, and that considerable effort went into retaining their ownership while also building connections with larger ecclesiastical institutions through donations of vineyards, farms, and estates.

It is this apparently common situation that creates our archival lacuna. Because local priests and their families maintained possession of their church, private transactions concerning the church or information regarding its physical location and incumbents rarely broke the surface of written records preserved by larger ecclesiastical institutions. What we have instead, especially if individual priests and their siblings or family appear in multiple extant transactions, are records that attest to possession of a patchwork of lands abutting a church or even encircling it, with this church sometimes explicitly mentioned and at other times – with all attendant caution to reading into silence – implied by a gap in these estates.

5. PRIESTS AND THEIR SIBLINGS. THE EVIDENCE IN THE ROUND

The flourishing of documentary written culture in the tenth century left behind huge numbers of private charters preserved in single sheets or in later cartularies compiled by ecclesiastical institutions. The richness of this material and the abundance of familial connections it contains offer invaluable insight into the history of local priests and the communities and families of which they were part. The above study has focused on the bonds between priests and their brothers, reflected in collaborative fraternal transactions where brothers might buy, sell, lease or donate estates, preserved in diverse records emanating from equally diverse contexts. For the authors of transactions made by a priest with siblings, it was vital to convey fraternal co-operation or acquiescence even (and perhaps especially) if this smoothed over negotiations or dispute between family members. In a number of cases priests dominated records of the sale or grant, acting as the ‘voice’ of their siblings and family. But to be a priest did not automatically accord prominence amongst groups of siblings, despite the survival of the vast majority of our records in the archives of major ecclesiastical institutions, whose authors and later compilers may have accorded the role of priest considerable importance. These agencies could show considerable flexibility in how they identified their protagonists’ position in the church and their familial relationships, suggesting that the type of grant and the role each family member took affected what information made it into the written record.

⁹¹ On regional legislation concerning priests’ inheritance, see CHARLES MÉRIAUX, *Ideal and Reality. Carolingian Priests in Northern Francia*, in: *Men in the Middle* (as note 1), pp. 78–97, esp. p. 87.

Co-operative grants and sales made by priests and their sisters appear only rarely in the corpus, but are no less valuable, giving us new insight into the role women might take alongside their brothers in the maintenance of local churches and family estates. Priests and their sisters were often presented as co-owners of property that they managed together in continuous arrangements that suggest long-lasting bonds and connections between male and female siblings. Priestly uncles and their nephews collaborated often, a familial succession strategy that has been recognised as of significance in recent historiography for clerics in particular. This focus on those in clerical orders can be nuanced and fleshed out by exploring priests' 'invisiblings', who played a vital part in the background. Although sisters and sisters-in-law are not recorded frequently in comparison to brothers, the role of sisters and sisters-in-law in continuing the family line was clearly vital, and the evidence of uncles and nephews has been mined to show how siblings co-operated to build families that contained successive priests in multiple generations.

Co-operation between siblings was evidently of enormous importance to families of all stripes. Yet for scholars of tenth- and eleventh-century priests the looming shadow of the 'Gregorian Reform' has resulted in intense focus on clerical marriage and the offspring of priests; other familial bonds have consequently faded into the background, and none more so than siblinghood. The above analysis has shown that the ubiquity and importance of sibling relationships have been underestimated in the lived experiences of local priests in this period, and that these relationships were an integral and long-lasting part of priests' networks. Such a perspective allows us to move away from a narrative of continuity and then abrupt change to the lives of priests and their communities in the middle of the eleventh century, which has centred their isolation. Despite the charged atmosphere of this period and the movement towards clerical celibacy, priests could still cooperate with family members including their brothers and sisters, could share land with them and ensure churches remained within the family. Many priests were part of dense and far-reaching kinship networks, and understanding how these intersected and operated on the ground is vital to enrich our view of the local priest.