Means, motives and opportunities: The architecture of monasteries during the reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)
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INTRODUCTION

The present-day Benedictine abbey church of Kornelimünster, built in the 1950s, betrays nothing of the abbey’s early-medieval origins (figs. I.2-I.4). Nevertheless, this abbey is one of the few places where we can draw near to Louis the Pious’ patronage of architecture. Unlike his father Charlemagne, who was king of the Franks from 768 onwards and emperor from 800 to 814, Louis, emperor from 814 until his death in 840, is not commemorated for his contributions to the built environment, neither by his contemporaries nor by us.

Of his biographers, only Ermold the Black discussed the foundation of the monastery in Kornelimünster. Ermold gave three reasons for the emperor to establish a well-endowed monastery under the aegis of Benedict of Aniane there, a mere ten kilometres from the imperial court in Aachen: firstly, the emperor needed a place of retreat to be able to bear the burden of the imperial rule better. Secondly, Benedict, as a monk, should not become too involved in the matters of the palace – Benedict had apparently voiced his concerns about this and the emperor wanted to offer him a place of retreat as well, whilst keeping him near-by. A final reason for founding the monastery was that it offered Louis a burial place close to Aachen.

The foundation of Kornelimünster is also discussed in the Life of Benedict of Aniane by Ardo, a monk from Aniane. In this text, the emperor is said to have construct-

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1 The name Kornelimünster only appears in the thirteenth century, although it is based on the presence of the relics of St. Cornelius from the second half of the ninth century onwards. Before then, the monastery was named after the nearby river Inda. Kühn, “Kornelimünster”, pp. 404-406. For reasons of clarity, I will nevertheless use Kornelimünster instead of Inda.

2 The Astronomer does credit Louis with building and restoring a large number of monasteries during his kingship in Aquitaine, but mentions nothing of the sort, apart from the foundation of Kornelimünster, after he became sole emperor. Astronomus, Vita Hludowici imperatoris c. 19, ed. and transl. Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. 64, pp. 336-341. Since he had two older brothers, Louis did not necessarily expect to become emperor one day, which may have stimulated him to make the most of his reign of Aquitaine. His involvement in building activities in Aquitaine might be an interesting subject for further study but is not what concerns me here.

3 Ermoldus Nigellus, In Honorem Hludowici Pii b. 2, ed. and transl. Faral, Ermold le Noir, pp. 94-97. Interestingly, instead of ‘monasterium’, Ermold uses ‘sacellum’, ‘chapel’ or ‘small sanctuary’. Lewis & Short, A Latin dictionary; Niermeyer, Mediae latinitatis lexicon. In the end, Louis never did use the grave that was constructed for him. He was buried in the abbey of St. Arnulf in Metz in 840. Ermold’s text is technically not a biography, but a biographical panegyric poem.
ed the monastery ‘miro opere’ for Benedict because he wanted him to be in the proximity of the palace. The building of the church must have proceeded apace: it was started at the earliest in 814 and the Life of Benedict recounts the dedication of the church in the presence of the emperor before the council of 817. We know, for example from visiting monks from St. Gall, one of the communities that will be discussed in chapter two, that the monastery was functioning by that time. A building period of three years or less is not very long. It was made possible by the monastery’s proximity to Aachen, where building supplies and craftsmen were available in plenty, but also by the modest size of the monastery, which was supposed to accommodate not more than thirty monks. The prominence of the foundation, which was sponsored directly by the emperor, may also have helped in speeding up the progression of the building works. The involvement of both the emperor and the abbey’s future abbot, Benedict, makes it difficult to determine who was responsible for the design of the church and communal buildings. The tension between different types of patrons and users – the community, its abbot, local lay sponsors, bishops and magnates – is one of the reasons why the investigation of monastic architecture is especially worthwhile. Through the examination of the remainders of the architecture of about a dozen ninth-century monasteries, this study investigates what is actually known about these buildings if we strip them from all assumptions and hypotheses that have grown on them over the course of scholarship. It then continues with a careful analysis of these buildings or their reconstructions, in which they are alternately viewed in a synchronic and a diachronic perspective as well as studied along with the specific local and temporal context from which they originated. This analysis will show how big the impact of

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6 Two letters copied into a manuscript from St. Gall attest that the monks visited Kornelimünster to experience life in Benedict’s monastery first-hand and that they sent an authoritative copy of the Rule of Benedict to Reichenau from Aachen or Kornelimünster. Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Codex 914, fol. 117-133. Rothenhäusler & Beyerle, "Die Regel des hl. Benedikt, das Gesetz des Inselklosters", pp. 281-283.
this context on the appearance of these buildings was.

Kornelimünster is the only monastery built during Louis’ reign that was directly initiated and sponsored by the emperor. The architecture of most of the abbeys under scrutiny here betrays very little direct influence from either the emperor himself or his policies. Nonetheless, the period of Louis’ imperial rule is chosen as a guideline to define this study’s chronological scope. This has a number of reasons. For one, the architecture of this period is severely under-studied. Carolingian architecture is often, especially in handbooks, reduced to the great monuments associated with Charlemagne. Not only is the rest of the Carolingian period often passed over in silence, but so are the buildings that are less grand and imposing than the few well-known monuments from the age of Charlemagne, such as the Palatine chapel in Aachen. It is important to broaden our scope, because it will alter or nuance our image of Carolingian architecture and, by extension, of the period as a whole. Another reason for focusing on the age of Louis the Pious is the belief that monastic architecture was in this period directly influenced by monastic reforms associated with the councils held in Aachen in 816 and 817. Although this theory must be downplayed, the dynamic character of the period under scrutiny

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7 Examples of this tendency are e.g. Beckwith, *Early medieval art*; Braunfels, *Die Welt der Karolinger*; Stalley, *Early medieval architecture*; Pevsner, *An outline*. This is of course not to say that no research has been done on individual buildings built before or after the reign of Charlemagne. However, the findings from these studies have not yet become a part of the general perception of Carolingian architecture; nor have any theories that go beyond the idea of the ‘Carolingian Renaissance’, apart from Jacobsen’s, which will be discussed below. The examples mentioned do name or depict later buildings, but they are discussed as part of the *Renovatio* narrative.

8 See below, pp. 11-12, 16-17. This theory has been advanced mostly by Werner Jacobsen, “Allgemeine Tendenzen”.

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Fig. I.2 Propsteikirche St. Cornelius, Kornelimünster.
has certainly had its impact on the architecture that it produced. Finally, the approach chosen in this study, which is to combine several in-depth studies of single sites instead of focusing on a single building or writing a broad overview, limits the period that can be considered. For this reason as well as the distinct character of Aquitanian architecture, the period of Louis’ kingship in Aquitaine (781-814) has not been included in this research. The end of Louis’ reign in 840 is a suitable moment to end the period under study because of the ensuing division of the realm.

The case of Kornelimünster is exemplary for a number of issues grappled with in the rest of this study. Benedict’s monastery will be discussed briefly in the next part of this introduction as a showcase of these issues and the ways in which I have tried to cope with them. It is also discussed here because the abbey church of Kornelimünster has been seen as the prototype of monastic architecture built during the reign of Louis the Pious. This is due on the one hand to its connection with Benedict of Aniane, who has been viewed as the instigator of monastic reforms that supposedly also had an impact on monastic architecture, and on the other hand to the design of Kornelimünster that shows some similarities with other churches built in the early years of Louis’ reign. How Kornelimünster came to occupy such an important place in the architectural historiography of the period is the subject of the second section of this introduction. Lastly, I will introduce the reader to my methodology and its challenges as well as the case-studies that were chosen.
KORNELIMÜNSTER

The foundation of Kornelimünster and the construction of its abbey church are recorded in written sources, yet these offer very little additional information on the monastery’s early history and its architecture. The material evidence is slightly more favourable. When Kornelimünster abbey was dissolved in 1802, its church received a new purpose as parish church. As such, it is still in use today – the new abbey was founded a short distance from the old one. Excavations took place twice in the former abbey church: once while looking for the grave of Benedict of Aniane in 1889, and again during the installation of a heating system from 1959 onwards. Although the results of the second campaign, led by Leo Hugot, are more trustworthy than those of the first, undertaken by Carl Rhoen, problems nevertheless arise when Hugot’s reconstructions are examined critically. This is due not so much to the quality of his work, but to the time that has passed since he undertook these excavations, which is an issue that we will encounter more often. This means that we should consider Hugot’s reconstructions with caution.

Hugot has led several campaigns of excavations and has done a full building archaeological analysis of the church as it was in the 1960s, the results of which have been published in his 1968 monograph. Unlike his predecessor, Hugot has provided ample documentation, ranging from photographs to maps and cross-sections. The most extensive material is provided for the central and southern parts of the eastern and western ends of the ninth-century church. Hugot has reconstructed an aisled church with a transept leading towards a rectangular

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9 Rhoen, “Zur Geschichte der älteren Baudenkmale”. I have found it quite a challenge to get to the bottom of Rhoen’s discoveries. It seems as if he misinterpreted a lot of finds, but he nevertheless managed to make a reconstruction of the floor plan that at least resembles the one Hugot came up with after much more thorough (and reliable) research. The scarcity of maps and drawings accompanying Rhoen’s publications has made it virtually impossible to separate the actual finds from the reconstructions, so in the following, I am relying solely on the work of Leo Hugot, esp. Kornelimünster.

10 Hugot, Kornelimünster. The few remains aboveground that Hugot had classified as Carolingian, mostly fragments incorporated in the western wall, are nowadays no longer visible in the ‘Propsteikirche’, as the building is now called.
choir ending in an elongated apse (figs. I.4-I.6). The inner width of the nave is a mere 4.4 m; the aisles are each 2.5 m wide. The interior length of the church from the western wall of the nave to the eastern tip of the apse was just over 20 m. The nave and the side-aisles were separated by arches resting on piers. After three bays, the side-aisles were replaced by northern and southern annexes flanking the eastern end of the nave, which together constitute a transept, just over 14 m wide. To the east of the transept lay a rectangular space just over 2 m deep, followed by the elongated main apse. Hugot has reconstructed arches separating the nave from both the annexes and what he calls the ‘Chorrechteck’.\(^1\) The church was preceded by a three-part entrance structure which probably connected it to an open space, around which other buildings were grouped.

Most of Hugot’s finds consist of traces of foundations, occasionally covered with remnants of walls. Fragments of the ninth-century masonry have been incorporated in the western wall of the church, but no other Carolingian walls protrude above the floor level of the present church. The stones that were used, as well as the mortar, reflect both a local building style/technique – the same that was used in Aachen – and the Roman past of this area. The mortar used on the walls and the coat of plaster were coloured red by mixing in ground roof tiles, possibly

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\(^1\) Hugot has found continuous foundations in all of these cases, with indications of partial walls that would have rested on them. Hugot, *Kornelimünster*, pp. 30-32.
Roman, that were apparently readily available in the surroundings. The types of stone that were used have been identified by Hugot as greywacke, dolomite, some sandstones with Roman inscriptions as well as sandstone from the ‘Maasland’ area, which was used for example for the only pier of which a fragment has been found.\textsuperscript{12} The foundations that Hugot uncovered are of differing strength. Whereas the foundations of the other buildings are generally as wide as the walls they support, the foundations of the church are always thicker than the walls, mostly so in the case of the nave foundations. The apse and transept foundations are only slightly wider than the walls resting on them, which apparently did not suffice for the central apse, which is supported by two fortifications. This would suggest that the apse was vaulted. Judging from the Carolingian roof tiles that have been found as well as the relatively light walls and foundations, the rest of the church was probably provided with a timber roof covered by tiles.\textsuperscript{13}

Further remains of walls and foundations have been discovered to the south-west of the church. The wall between the nave and western structure continues in southern direction, encountering two crossing walls (A and B), which are also connected by a wall C, thus forming a room together. The presence of Carolingian flooring confirms that this really was an enclosed and roofed-over space, unlike the other structures excavated in this part of the complex.\textsuperscript{14} Most other parts seem to have had a floor of compressed mud. Walls A and B continued further west, together with parallel walls to the north and south, E and D. Hugot has reconstructed, on the basis of these finds, ’einen Kreuzgang mit anschließenden

\textsuperscript{12} Hugot, \textit{Kornelimünster}, pp. 47-48, 107.
\textsuperscript{13} Hugot, \textit{Kornelimünster}, pp. 30-31, 104-108.
\textsuperscript{14} Hugot, \textit{Kornelimünster}, pp. 57-58.
Klostergebäuden'. To complicate the matter further, Hugot also found traces of buildings to the south of the abbey church, further east than the buildings just described. Among these was a southern addition to the southern transept arm, which Hugot has interpreted as a *martyrium* built in the later ninth century to house the relics of Cornelius, amongst others. Hugot’s datings seem to be based for a large part on indications of building phases in written sources. Archaeologists nowadays would be less quick to connect uncovered walls with dates recorded in the extant sources without additional contextual evidence such as the discovery of pottery or coins and a careful stratigraphic analysis of the site. Moreover, Hugot is quick to jump to conclusions about the function of the structures surrounding the abbey-church. It is indeed likely that some of them were part of the claustral complex, but where exactly the monks’ accommodations were and what they looked like cannot be reconstructed on the basis of the evidence Hugot provides. The walkways to the west of the church, if they existed at all, may also have been part of an atrium geared more towards the reception of visitors than to the monastic community itself. As we have seen, Louis the Pious envisaged himself as becoming a frequent visitor of the monastery, and we know that it was also frequented by monks from other communities.

Hugot’s willingness to interpret the fragmentary remains as monks’ living quarters in the shape of a cloister, a square open space surrounded by covered walkways, is indicative of a more general tendency to assume a certain amount of standardisation. The cloister as we know it from Romanesque and later monasteries may eventually have become an integral part of all monasteries, but this was not yet the case in the period studied here. The matter is further complicated by the terminology that is used, since “cloister” seems to be an obvious equivalent for *claustrum*, a term we often encounter in the sources. We must, however, take

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15 Hugot, *Kornelimünster*, p. 105. Hugot has also found a tiny piece of wall to the north-west of the ‘Westwork’, which he believes is the northern equivalent of wall E. This has led him to reconstruct covered walkways on both sides.


17 Such as Grimalt and Tatto from Reichenau, see chapter 2.
care to distinguish between the modern term cloister and its (architectural) connotations and the medieval term claustrum, which could refer to both a specific part of the architecture of the monastery and to a mental concept.\footnote{In classical Latin, the word is used to designate a barrier, a wall or even a prison. Lewis & Short, \textit{A Latin dictionary}. And although it would later be used almost exclusively to refer to a specific part of a monastery, this is not far removed from its original meaning. Conceptually, the monastic claustrum is the place where one is fenced off from earthly worries. See also Meyvaert, "Medieval claustrum".}
The former is exemplified by the Plan of St. Gall, which depicts, to the south of the abbey church, colonnaded walkways forming a square around which the living quarters were grouped, accompanied by an inscription pointing out the place where this claustrum could be entered and exited.\footnote{"exitus et introitus ante claustrum ad conloquendum cum hospitibus et ad mandatum faciendum" (exit and entrance to the cloister where the monks may engage in conversation with the guests and where the washing of feet takes place), ed. Berschin, "Klosterplan als Literaturdenkmal", p. 131.} Although on the Plan the claustrum is depicted in the shape that we would call a cloister, it is important to note that this was not the only possible design; claustrum could also refer to various other designs.\footnote{See also chapter 2.}

Its most important characteristic was that only the monks were allowed inside this part of the monastery, which was the most shielded from the outside world. Claustrum however also referred to the monastic confines as they existed in the minds of the monks. Even when they left the physical claustrum, it persisted as the internal claustrum in which the monks lived: a mental state of retreat from the world.\footnote{De Jong, "Carolingian monasticism; "Charlemagne’s church", pp. 103 and 121; "Internal cloisters."} The same care should be taken with regard to other terms. Some words, such as apsis or basilica, are part of the present-day architectural vocabulary and we use them to refer to...
specific types of buildings or their constituent parts. Ninth-century authors also used these terms, but it is difficult to ascertain how wide the range of shapes for which these terms could be used was. The terminology used in this study is generally that of the history of architecture and terms are used for their present-day, not their medieval, meaning. I have used architecture and buildings more or less as synonyms. For this period at least, I have to disagree with Pevsner for whom a cathedral was architecture and a bicycle shed a building.²² If any remains of an early medieval bicycle shed had been found, I would have happily studied them, since they may be equally informative about ninth-century monasticism and its built environment as the remains of an abbey church. What defines architecture for me is not aesthetic appeal but rather the combination of usefulness and meaning.

This combination is pre-eminently visible in the narthex to the west of Kornelimünster’s abbey church. The central room of this structure was, right from the start, equipped with a double grave, made out of slabs of Belgian fossil and covered with two plates of dolomite.²³ Hugot has designated this as the ‘Stiftergrabanlage’, meant for Louis the Pious and his wife Irmengarde (†818).²⁴ His interpretation seems logical considering Ermold’s claim that one of Louis’ reasons for building the abbey was to create a burial place for himself. However, if the emperor and his wife heeded the decrees of the councils of Aachen (809) and Mainz (813), which decided that only bishops, abbots and prelates were to be buried inside a church, it would not be possible for Louis and Irmengarde to find a last resting place inside the church.²⁵ A suitable alternative could be found in this spot in front of the entrance, which had already been used as a royal place of burial in St.

²² Pevsner, An outline of European architecture, p. 10.
²³ Belgian fossil is a type of dark grey to black limestone, known as ‘petit granit’, ‘hardouin’ and ‘écaussines’ in French and ‘Blaustein’ in German. Two different types are quarried in modern-day Belgium and around Aachen. Hugot has dated the grave in phase I based on the observation that mortar from the western foundation is stuck to the grave slabs. Hugot, Kornelimünster, pp. 71-72.
²⁴ Hugot, Kornelimünster, p. 109.
²⁵ Concilium Moguntinense, ed. Werminghof, MGH Conc. 2.1, p. 272.
Denis for Louis’ grandfather Pippin and possibly also in Aachen for Charlemagne.\(^26\)
Strangely enough, the grave in Kornelimünster seems not to have been filled with
any mortal remains.\(^27\) Louis’ absence from this grave – or rather his burial in Metz
- has to do mainly with the events of the 830s, amongst which Louis’ reestab-
lishment on the imperial throne in Metz on 28 February 835.\(^28\) It is rather curious
though that Irmengarde, who died shortly after the dedication of the church, was
not buried in Kornelimünster either.\(^29\)

Altogether Hugot has uncovered a relatively large part of the abbey church
of Kornelimünster and published his findings well. Nevertheless, we must be
aware that the information on the appearance of the abbey as well as the context
in which it was built and used remains limited, and that we are for a large part
depending on Hugot’s interpretations of the material evidence. The monastery is
mentioned in a number of sources, some of which have already been mentioned,
and there are some charters which attest to the economic development of the mon-
astery and its estates.\(^30\) Yet we know very little about life in the monastery through

\(^{26}\) Dierkens, "Autour de la tombe de Charlemagne". Dierkens has convincingly positioned Charlem-
agne’s grave underneath the present 'Westwork’, in passing disproving Otto III’s legendary discovery
of his predecessor’s body seated on a golden throne.

\(^{27}\) The graves were provided with a head-rest using dark brown mortar, very different from the
mortar used during the Carolingian phase I. This, combined with the presence of several layers of
Ottonian screed covering a part of the lid that remained in place during the 1889 excavations, has led
Hugot to conclude that the grave remained empty until after the completion of the Ottonian western
structure around the year 1000.

\(^{28}\) Of course, the world was a different place in 840 than it was during the dedication of Kornelimün-
ster in 817. See De Jong, The penitential state, esp. chapter 6, and below. About Louis’ burial in Metz,
his sarcophagus and the role of Judith (his second wife), see Nelson, “Carolingian royal funerals” at
pp. 155-160 and Melzak, “Antiquarianism in the time of Louis the Pious”.

\(^{29}\) She died in Angers on 3 October 818. Thegan, Vita Hludowici imperatoris c. 25, ed. and transl.
Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. 64, pp. 214-215; Astronomus, Vita Hludowici imperatoris, c. 31, ed. and
transl Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. 64, pp. 388-389; on Irmengarde, see also Simson, Jahrbücher des
fränkischen Reiches 1, p. 137. The Astronomer’s remark on Louis’ travels after the funeral seems to
imply that she was buried in Angers.

\(^{30}\) The attacks of the Norman s in the late ninth century as well as later catastrophes may be partially
to blame for the scarcity of sources. For references, see Kühn, "Kornelimünster”, pp. 405-406, 418-421;
Hugot, Kornelimünster, pp. 9-10.
e.g. narrative sources, monks’ lists etc., which limits the possibilities of a contextual analysis.

In comparison to other abbey churches, Kornelimünster is relatively small. Its size is, however, not necessarily surprising if we consider that the number of monks was set at a maximum of thirty and that the church did not need to serve lay people since there were other churches in the surroundings that they could visit. This might also explain the limited dimensions of the nave. More remarkable than the size of the church in itself is the subdivision of its spaces. The transept arms are each just over 4 by 4 m, yet they were carefully modelled and provided with apses. Due to the continuous foundations between the various elements of the building it is difficult to determine to what extent they were separated from each other, yet it seems plausible that there was some kind of division, most likely in the shape of an arch, between the eastern end of the nave and the annexes. 

It is more than likely that there was a triumphal arch between the altar room with apse and the nave. This sets apart three apsed spaces from the rest of the church. The presence of these apses in the annexes makes it likely that they were meant to house side-altars. The number of altars in churches had, over the past centuries, gradually increased, along with the number of priests among the monks. These developments were connected with the rise of private or votive masses, which were masses that priests celebrated more or less alone and ‘to order’. They were meant as votive offerings towards a certain goal, such as the wellbeing of the realm, cure from sickness or the commemoration of the dead. 

The existence of these annexes with al-

31 Hugot describes the transept as a ‘Zellenquerhaus’, Kornelimünster, p. 104. We will encounter this term again with respect to Steinbach. The two are indeed quite similar, yet I wonder if it is necessary to see the ‘Zellenquerhaus’ as a specific type, since most Carolingian transepts were not continuous but were interrupted somehow.

32 Angenendt, ”Missa specialis”; Das Frühmittelalter, pp. 403-406; Häussling, Mönchskonvent und Eucharistiefeier; Nussbaum, Kloster, Priestermönch und Privatmesse. The exact interrelations between the rise in altars, priest-monks and the number of masses that was celebrated daily is a complicated matter in which the increasing importance of relics and the changing attitude towards the priesthood also play a part. For now, let it suffice simply to establish that the number of masses, altars and priests in monasteries did in fact increase.
tars again fits in well with the use of the church primarily by the monastic community itself. By choosing a burial site in the narthex, the emperor acknowledged that the church was in the first place the domain of the monks and that he remained an outsider. The example of Kornelimünster is indicative of the difficulties surrounding the reconstruction of the (liturgical) use of these churches, to which I will pay attention where possible.

The fame of Kornelimünster did not last long. It did not function as an imperial burial place and it did not develop into an especially powerful imperial abbey, as e.g. St. Gall and Fulda, which may make us wonder how important it was in the first place. In the historiography of the architecture built during Louis’ reign, Kornelimünster has occupied an extraordinarily important place. On the basis of the material presented so far, we may wonder if this is justified. There are no indications that Kornelimünster was intended as an inspiration for other monasteries and neither are there signs that it was seen as such by others. Moreover, I believe we cannot be certain enough of its reconstruction to let our interpretation of other buildings depend on it, as has happened in the past. The case of Kornelimünster is indicative for the study of the architecture of this period, in which reconstructions have started to assume a life of their own.

The most important question that this study strives to answer is therefore relatively simple: what do we really know about the architecture of monasteries built in the years between 814 and 840? In order to answer this question, we must peel off the layers of reconstructions and interpretations that have grown over the remainders of these buildings in the course of time. Once we can be sure about what we know and what we do not know, we can make a fresh yet careful start in interpreting these buildings. This interpretation may offer answers to some additional questions, such as: is there a marked difference with monastic architecture that arose in the decades previous to 814? Did the year 814 constitute a breaking point? Is there a relationship between changes visible in the architecture, and societal developments, such as attempts to reform the monastic lifestyle? These questions stem directly from previous studies of this material, as will become clear from
a brief historiography.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The reconstructions of the buildings studied here have been printed and reprinted so often that they have become part of the visual memory of students of the architecture of this period. They have given us the impression that it is possible to gain a more or less comprehensive image of ecclesiastical architecture in the early ninth century. This, however, is not the case. The buildings about which we have some knowledge are far outnumbered by those about which we do not know anything. Yet those buildings, the ones that cannot be reconstructed at all, also formed an important part of the Carolingian built environment. The continual repetition of certain reconstructive drawings has moreover drawn attention away from the uncertainties, assumptions and discussions that lay at the basis of these reconstructions. In Kornelimünster, for example, the place where the northern apse is believed to have been has not been excavated at all, yet the apse is always present in reconstructions of the phase I church. There are sufficient reasons to believe in its existence, but this does not make it an attested fact. Moreover, reconstructions tend to make buildings appear more regular and orderly than they may have been in reality, thus making it appear as if they were built exactly according to a preconceived plan. And if the site was to be excavated again, not only would additional finds cast a new light on the old ones, new methods and insights would also undoubtedly lead to different interpretations of the old material. We will get back to these issues when the occasion arises.

Reconstructions of individual buildings tend to have an impact beyond the interpretation of just this one edifice: they are used together, in attempts to form an overarching image of the architecture of a period. In the light of the limited number of Carolingian buildings about which we know anything at all and the tentative nature of the reconstructions that we do have, I wonder if we can justify for-
mulating theories on the architecture of the period by comparing a large number of these reconstructions. Neither are the reconstructions all equally trustworthy nor is it certain that they constitute a representative sample. Yet this is exactly what predominant theories about the architecture of the period are based on: by comparing reconstructed churches dated to the reign of Louis the Pious, attempts have been undertaken to find common characteristics in these buildings and to explain these through empire-wide developments.

The initial starting point of this research project was a series of articles by Werner Jacobsen, in which he sets out his theory of an ‘architecture of reform’. Jacobsen observed that there were several notable differences between churches such as Kornelimünster, Maurismünster, Steinbach and Argelliers on the one hand and Aachen, Fulda, Seligenstadt and Mainz (St. Alban) on the other. Most prominent were the differences in the dimensions of the churches in both groups. As the cause for these differences, Jacobsen pointed towards ecclesiastic reforms. He characterised these only briefly, by pointing towards Louis’ prime occupation with monasticism and the goal to firmly establish the Rule of Benedict. These interests replaced his father’s (alleged) turn towards Rome and the papacy, thereby putting Roman influences on architecture and liturgy on hold. Jacobsen’s image of these reforms derives from the work of Josef Semmler, who extensively studied the ‘Anianian reforms’, named after Benedict of Aniane and his monastery in the south of France. The idea of monastic reforms carried out during the reign of Louis the Pious in which Benedict of Aniane played an important part had existed before, yet

33 Jacobsen, "Benedikt von Aniane und die Architektur" (1983); "Gab es die karolingische 'Renaissance'?" (1988); "Allgemeine Tendenzen" (1990). See also the article by Edgar Lehmann that may be seen as the initial impetus to the study of monastic architecture during the reign of Louis the Pious, as opposed to that during Charlemagne’s reign: "Kaisertum und Reform als Bauherren" (1965). Lehmann’s theory of courtly, monastic and roman styles of Benedictine buildings is still interesting, but the number of buildings taken into account is simply too small.


35 Semmler, "Die Beschlüsse des Aachener Konzils" (1963); "Benedictus II" (1983) and elsewhere. Semmler also wrote about almost all of the communities under scrutiny here in connection to the reforms. These publications will be referred to in the following chapters.
Semmler elaborated on this idea and made it more specific, defining the reforms in brief as the establishment of a strict distinction between monastic and canonic ordines and the obligation for all monks to follow ‘una regula’, the Rule of Benedict and ‘una consuetudo’, one (unified) custom. The reforms were thus geared towards unifying monasticism in the realm. In the course of his career, Semmler nuanced his earlier views. He acknowledged that Pippin and Charlemagne had already undertaken reforms that attempted to separate the ordines and subject monastic communities to the Rule of Benedict, and that the ‘Anianian reforms’ formed part of these. Moreover, Dieter Geuenich and his student Walter Kettemann, amongst others, have voiced objections to the use of the term ‘Anianian’ since it exaggerates the role of Benedict of Aniane. The reforms are now seen as part of a continuous development that started before Louis became emperor and for which there is no fixed end date, although a peak is certainly visible in the second half of the 810s. Moreover, there is increasing attention for the divide between norm and practice. As the failed attempts at establishing the Rule of Benedict as the preferred Rule for all monasteries by Louis’ predecessors show, we should be aware of the fact that not all legislation was in fact enforced – as Geuenich has pointed out, the ‘reform abbots’ themselves were the last to heed the rules.

Important moments during Louis’ rule with regard to the reforms were the councils held in Aachen in the summers of 816 and 817. In the presence of the emperor, abbots, bishops and important lay people, issues pertaining to the liturgy were discussed, such as the undesirability of the singing of the laus perrennis and the celebration of the Office of St. Benedict instead of the Roman office. In theory, these changes to the liturgy would decrease the amount of time it took to celebrate the Office, which should give the monks the opportunity to “return” to manual

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36 Alternatively, the term may refer to the monastery of Aniane. This is even less appropriate. Geuenich, “Kritische Anmerkungen” (1998); Kettemann, Überlieferungs- und textgeschichtlichen Untersuchungen (2000).


38 Laus perrennis, literally perennial praise, was the continuous singing of the psalms by choirs of monks.
labour.\footnote{Notwithstanding this reduction of the daily prayers, overall the celebration of the liturgy had tripled in comparison with the original requirements of the Rule of Benedict. De Jong, "Carolingian monasticism", p. 633. Moreover, the amount of private masses to be celebrated also steadily increased.} Entirely different matters were also discussed, such as the admission of lay children to monastic schools, the frequency with which monks were allowed to bathe and the relation between abbots and monks. In theory, abbots were to be chosen freely by the community, yet as the existence of lay abbots appointed by the emperor – some of whom we will encounter later – indicates, not all legislation was put into practice. To prevent the abuse of monastic property by the abbot, however, resources were to be divided between a mena fratrur and a mena abbatum. Subsequent councils confirmed and adjusted these decisions, yet none of them was as influential as the councils of 816 and 817.\footnote{De Jong, "Carolingian monasticism"; Semmler, "Die Beschlüsse des Aachener Konzils".}

As I will argue more extensively later, the 816/817 councils did not directly influence the architecture of this period; neither did most of the other events I will briefly discuss in the following. We may wonder if the supposition that events with a short-term impact had a wide-ranging effect on architecture is even tenable. Architecture as a medium is inherently durable, due to a building’s size, the materials used and the effort it takes to construct and deconstruct it. I believe those commissioning buildings in the Middle Ages intended for them to last a very long time – the same holds true for most other art forms. Moreover, it takes time to amass the funds needed for a project as extensive as (re)building an abbey church and it takes an even longer time to build the structure. Such an investment of time, energy and resources was not made lightly. Although individual patrons may have let their decisions depend on their acute circumstances, the likelihood of a large number of projects being directly influenced by specific events that turned out to have had only a short-term impact seems to be quite small.

Louis’ reign certainly was an eventful period. Of these events, I will highlight only a few to give the reader some idea of the period under scrutiny.\footnote{In this extremely concise overview of events, I cannot do justice to their intricacies. Not only am I forced to leave aside many equally important facts, the room for interpretation is also limited.} After...
the death of his father in January 814, Louis became sole ruler of the Frankish empire. Once he had arrived in Aachen, one of his first moves was to replace most of the old courtiers with his own advisers. Among them was Benedict of Aniane († 821), who had already served Louis in Aquitaine. After a brief period of strict asceticism, Benedict came to see the advantages of the Rule of Benedict (of Nursia), which he had rejected earlier as a Rule for ‘beginners and weak persons’. He then founded a monastic settlement based on the Rule of Benedict on his own land, near the river Aniane. Thanks in part to his expertise in the Rule, as well as his connections with the royal court and important men in the rest of the realm, he was asked to help reform other monasteries. He continued these efforts after his arrival in Aachen in the entourage of Louis.

Three years into his imperial rule, Louis made arrangements for his succession. He divided the realm among the three sons he had with his first wife Irmingarde: Louis (the German), the youngest, received the kingdom of Bavaria, Pippin that of Aquitaine, and Lothar, the eldest, became co-emperor. The events this, as well as a discussion of the sources on which our image of the events is based, I refer the reader to the excellent studies by Mayke de Jong and Courtney Booker, which have been the basis for the following overview. De Jong, The penitential state (2009); Booker, Past convictions (2009). See also Boshof, Ludwig der Fromme (1996).

42 Among those who were exiled from the court were Adalhard and Wala, who we will encounter later, as well as many of Louis’ female relatives.

43 Benedict was originally called Witiza, a Visigothic name. Ardo’s Life of Benedict, the most important source regarding Benedict’s early years, describes him as an extreme ascetic. It is not a pretty picture. Benedict’s extreme asceticism caused his body to be emaciated, overrun with lice, and his skin hanging from his bones while he stood barefoot in the cold for days, sustained by tears and groans, all the while correcting and scolding his fellow brethren. Needless to say, he was not well-liked. Ardo/Smaragdus, Vita sancti Benedicti, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 15.


45 E.g. Theodulf of Orléans and Alcuin of York; Ardo/Smaragdus, Vita sancti Benedicti, c. 24, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 15, pp. 209-210. Other sources are in agreement with Ardo’s Life of Benedict on Benedict’s importance as a religious advisor to Louis the Pious, first as King of Aquitaine and later as Emperor. Such as Astronomus, Vita Hludowici imperatoris, ed. Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. 64 and Thegan, Gesta Hludowici imperatoris, ed. Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. 64.

46 Ordinatio imperii, ed. Boretius, MGH Capit. 1, no. 136, pp. 270-273. The unity of the empire was more important than this division: the younger brothers were subordinate to Lothar, and after his
surrounding the division, including days of fasting, are an indication of the way in which Louis understood his office: it was imperative that God endorsed this arrangement since the rulers were above all accountable to him. Despite these precautions, the division caused a problem for Louis. It occasioned Louis’ nephew Bernard, king of Italy, who was not included in the succession arrangement, to attempt a rebellion against the emperor. This in itself was not especially problematic, but when Louis decided to punish Bernard by blinding him, the latter died. This killing of his relative would haunt Louis for years to come. A year later his wife died, and Louis remarried. In 823, he had son with his new wife, Judith – another recipe for disaster, as it would turn out later. In the meantime, Louis had pardoned those who had supported Bernard as well as those who had been exiled at the beginning of his imperial reign, including his relatives Adalhard and Wala. After the death of Benedict of Aniane, the former took his place as one of Louis’ prime advisors.

In 822, Louis publicly did penance for his sins, including causing the death of Bernard of Italy. From then on, the cycle of revolt, punishment and penance repeated itself. In the second half of the 820s, Louis’ military defeats – for which several influential courtiers had to take the fall – the ill omens appearing in the sky and a number of other misfortunes led to the general feeling that the empire was in crisis. Attempts to counter this trend focused on correcting the sins of those in the realm, most prominently those of ministeriales. In spite of these actions, the crisis deepened when a new succession arrangement considerably diminished the position of Louis’ eldest sons, in favour of the new chamberlain Bernard of Septimania and the queen. In 830 the rebellion that had long been waiting to happen finally broke out, and Louis’ enemies united around Pippin and later Lothar. However, after a summer in his son’s custody and the veiling of his wife, Louis managed to regain power in the autumn, thanks in part to the support of his son Louis death, the most suitable successor should be chosen instead of further subdividing the realm.


50 On Judith, see also Ward, "Ceasar’s wife".
as well as strategic manoeuvring by the emperor. In the following years, the relation between Louis and his sons remained strained, and a number of different succession arrangements were made. The final clash happened in 833, when the three eldest sons, once again united and in the company of the Pope, stood against their father on the Rothfeld, later renamed the Field of Lies. There, Louis was abandoned by most of his troops and forced to surrender. He was incarcerated in St. Médard in Soissons while his faith was decided at the assembly in Compiègne that Louis himself had convened long before then. From there, the assembled bishops came to the emperor to convince him to undergo a public penance, to which he assented. Prostrated on a hair cloth, Louis confessed to being a violator of divine and human laws. This may have saved Louis’ soul and placated God for the sins of the realm, but in theory it forever excluded Louis from the imperial office. It did not, however, turn out that way. On 1 March 834, Louis was reconciled with the Church in Saint-Denis. Louis regained the throne in 835 but continued to struggle with his sons. After his death in 840, civil war broke out, leading to the Treaty of Verdun in 843 that divided the empire into three kingdoms.

In recent decades, the reign of Louis the Pious has received a good deal of attention from historians, more or less making up for the negative image of his rule that persisted before then. Louis has been rehabilitated, and a number of new perspectives on his rule have been presented. The ideas that the penance of 833 was a fateful tragedy from which Louis never recovered and that his reign heralded the end of the Carolingian empire have gradually been downplayed. Instead, the image of a society where politics and religion were interwoven on all possible fronts emerged, a society which was going through a transformative period under

52 In February of the following year, the imperial penance was declared uncanonical and the reconciliation was repeated in Metz. De Jong, *The penitential state*, pp. 44-52, 214-249; Booker, *Past convictions*.
53 For an overview of earlier historiography presenting a negative image of Louis, see Staubach, who points out that Halphen already made a start with the rehabilitation of Louis in 1947, "Des Großen Kaisers kleiner Sohn", p. 702, with reference.
the leadership of a ruler who took his ministerium and the concomitant (religious) responsibilities very seriously without letting this get in the way of his military tasks. Many more insights will undoubtedly come out of the Franco-German Hludowicus project, the results of which will be published shortly.

These new insights have a bearing on the way we view the context in which the architecture of this period came about, which may be of consequence for our interpretation of it. The upsurge in attention for Louis’ reign among historians has however not yet been matched by architectural historians. The only scholar to devote substantial attention to the architecture of this period is the aforementioned Werner Jacobsen, who has argued that it was an architecture of reform. Jacobsen sees Kornelimünster as the outcome of a development started by Benedict of Aniane in, for example, the Alsatian monastery of Maursmünster/Marmoutier, Aniane and its dependent church in Argelliers. These churches are all much smaller than the most well-known churches that were built during the imperial reign of Charlemagne, such as St. Denis, Aachen and Cologne cathedral. The characteristics of these ‘reformed’ buildings include, according to Jacobsen, their modest size, a strict division between lay and monastic areas and a shortening of the nave in favour of the extension of the eastern part of the church, which often took a tri-cellular shape. It is time for a re-examination of this theory not only because ideas about the ‘Anianian’ reforms and the reign of Louis the Pious have changed radically since the first of Semmler’s publications, but also because of discrepancies within the theory and its elaboration itself.

There are indeed marked similarities between the churches Jacobsen lists, but these buildings constitute only a small percentage of the total number of churches built in the period between 814 and 840. Moreover, their reconstructions

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54 See among others Nelson, The Frankish world, pp. 37-40; Godman & Collins (eds.), Charlemagne’s Heir, and of course the work of Mayke de Jong.
57 Jacobsen of course chose the clearest examples to illustrate his theory, but this has led to a rather one-dimensional image. Jacobsen’s articles give the impression that only churches of the ‘reformed’
and dating have been contested. Even more problematic are some of the assumptions underlying Jacobsen’s theory. He assumes that Louis the Pious was able to enforce radical changes to the religious life in his realm as soon as he became emperor, and that these changes had an immediate effect on something as permanent as architecture. After the death of Benedict in 821, the ideals of reform were, if we believe Jacobsen, apparently let go of equally quickly. Jacobsen seems to think that Louis and Benedict were directly involved in the building process of Kornelimünster and other monasteries, and that they decided more or less single-handedly on the design of the church. This made it possible for Benedict to build a church in Austrasia, the Frankish heartland, that resembled churches built in Septimania, the south-western part of Aquitaine, decades earlier. This completely bypasses not only the different purposes and user groups of these churches, but also the share of local craftsmen and building traditions and the specific local and temporal contexts in which buildings arose. In the case of Kornelimünster, for example, the reasons for the abbey church’s modest size can also be sought in the limited size of the community and the wish for the project to be finished quickly. The direct involvement of men of the standing of Benedict and Louis in the building of churches in the entire realm which Jacobsen presupposes is also at odds with the complete silence of the sources about the wish to reform the way abbey churches were built. Although it is unusual to find references to architecture in early medieval sources, we might expect some hint if there really was a reform program geared towards monastic architecture.

Jacobsen’s work remains important for scholars working on this period. He was the first and last to point out the necessity of differentiating between architecture that arose during Charlemagne’s and during Louis the Pious’ reign, or type were built during the years 814-821 or even later, but this is not entirely the case.

58 In some cases, the datings that Jacobsen provides match his theory a little too well. Maursmünster, for example, could be dated around 724 (when the monastery was founded for the second time), yet Jacobsen dates it in 814/815 based solely on stylistic resemblances with Kornelimünster and Aniane. Jacobsen & Schaefer, Vorromanische Kirchenbauten: Nachtragsband, p. 286. In “Allgemeine Tendenzen”, Jacobsen does not even acknowledge the existence of other datings.
at least of studying both in their own right. And although the elaboration of his theory is not altogether convincing, it is nevertheless worthwhile to investigate the correlation between *correctio* and church buildings. However, we should take care not to let the assumption that such a correlation existed determine our interpretation of the architecture *a priori*. As will become clear, I have found no indications that the reign of Louis the Pious was, in an architectural sense, distinctly different from those of his father and sons. This is not to say, of course, that Carolingian architecture formed a homogeneous whole. Louis’ reign was a highly eventful and tempestuous period. As has been argued elsewhere, crisis can serve as an instigator for productivity,59 and productivity there certainly was: many monasteries went through an important building phase during this time. Contemporary events did undeniably have some sort of impact on these buildings, yet we must ask ourselves how direct this correlation was.

Having discussed the basics of the historical background and the historiography of the period and its architecture, let us now turn to my own approach of it.

**METHOD**

In this study, I attempt to find a balance between sketching a sweeping overview of the architecture of the period between 814 and 840 and writing a detailed study of one site; two approaches that have been more current in scholarship. The advantage of seeking out this middle ground is that this approach makes it possible to study each building in sufficient detail while at the same time to keep an eye open for parallels, similarities and differences between sites. Buildings do not appear as independent entities, as they sometimes do in studies focusing solely on a single church or monastery, nor are they reduced to reconstructions that give an appearance of certainty that is not supported by the material evidence. The buildings are not only placed in a wider perspective by studying them along with contemporary

59 Kaschke, Review of *Produktivität einer Krise*. 
structures in other places; they are also studied from a diachronic perspective, which makes it possible to see connections and divergences between consecutive building phases on a single site. This will make clear that local circumstances and traditions could be more important than developments contemporary to a certain building phase.

The primary criterion for the selection of case-studies has been the availability of material for study. With the exception of the Plan of St. Gall, I have only scrutinised buildings of which there are material remains, either in the shape of extant architecture or of archaeological finds. Apart from the architectural material, it was important that there were other sources from or reflecting on the period in which there were construction activities, which could assist in the interpretation of the building phases and the uses of the structures. A second criterion was the ways in which the case-studies could complement each other so that together they could form a representative image of monastic architecture in the first half of the ninth century and the way in which this can be studied. In each case, different types and quantities of sources were available; in some cases, motifs of founders or patrons could partially be reconstructed, whereas in others, the influence of the community was much more visible. Thirdly, most of the case-studies that have been chosen have figured often in the literature and will presumably continue to do so in the future. This makes it all the more important to clarify what their reconstructions are based on and how these buildings can be interpreted.

The material evidence occupies centre stage, and forms my point of departure. This will be contextualised through contemporary written and visual sources. These are however taken into account only insofar as they have a connection with the building works, either directly, or through the people involved or their common time-frame. The sources will be discussed relatively extensively to avoid approaching them as simple repositories of facts which can be picked from at will, as has sometimes happened in the past. Written sources include for example passages from abbots’ vitae relating to the building or dedication of a church, charters with grants of immunities and liturgical sources attesting to the use of a particular altar
or cult of a certain saint. I do not present an exhaustive discussion of all of the possibly relevant sources. Sources of general interest, which are important for our image of the period and some of our protagonists, such as Ardo’s Life of Benedict and Thegan’s and the Astronomer’s Life of Louis the Pious, as well as synodal decrees and the like, have not been studied individually. Although these are very valuable texts for understanding the context in which these buildings developed and the relationships between individual monasteries and the court as well as between the leading intellectuals in the realm, they do not contribute directly to a better understanding of the architecture.

Due in part to the wide selection of sources under scrutiny, this study enters into the realm of diverse disciplines. It is necessary for our understanding of both material and written sources to know the historical, political, religious and architectural context in which they came about, which makes it impossible, I believe, to study the early Middle Ages only from the perspective of a single discipline. The discipline in which I am most at home and to which the study of buildings comes most naturally is architectural history.

Although scholars from other disciplines have also referred to the architecture of this period in their work, their approach is very different from that of architectural historians, for whom the building itself is the main object of study. Archaeologists who have worked on early medieval monasteries have, in my opinion, been primarily concerned with uncovering, sequencing and interpreting all of the remains that can be found on a particular site; historians who have paid attention to architecture in their work have used buildings as historical sources that can be analysed alongside written evidence. Whether their method is formalist, functionalist, comparative, iconographical or technological, architectural historians on the other hand start from a close analysis of the building itself, focusing either on a particular building phase or on the genesis of

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60 As a discipline, architectural history is much younger and much more difficult to define than e.g. history, art history and archaeology. Institutionally it is often a part of departments of art history or architecture, and its practitioners may have been trained as art historians, historic preservationists or architects. For an insightful reflection on the topic, see Leach, What is architectural history?
Unlike most other architectural histories, which deal with buildings that one can circumambulate, experience and scrutinise in tangible form, the analysis of the buildings that figure in this study must be based foremost on their floor plan. This considerably limits the range of methods that can be used as well as the extent of the analysis. As in the selection of case studies, I have let the sources lead the way. I have started by surveying the available archaeological material, as reflected in publications, followed by an investigation of the reconstructions that can be made on the basis of this material. Only then have complementary sources been introduced.

Most of the buildings discussed here are only known through published archaeological finds, most of which were uncovered a rather long time ago. Being a relatively young discipline, archaeology has seen many methodological innovations over the last decades. If excavations were to take place in Kornelimünster again nowadays, the archaeologists would not only make the most of technological innovations from the last five decades, they would also take place in an entirely different methodological framework, which would, I am sure, lead to many different finds and interpretations. However, it does not happen often that sites are completely re-excavated. This is partly due to practical reasons: an occasion for archaeological study arises only rarely, e.g. during the installation of a heating system as was the case in Kornelimünster, and the finances are not always available. Moreover, since the archaeological data may have been removed or disturbed during the first campaign of excavation, it may be more attractive to study a different site altogether.

In many cases, we are therefore faced with archaeological research that has been undertaken using methods that are now outdated. Moreover, we are dependent on the reflection of this research in publications, which are often more

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61 For overviews of methodologies, see e.g. Conway & Roenisch, *Understanding architecture*; Watkin, *The rise of architectural history*.

62 See for example Andrén, *Between artifacts and texts*; Whitley, *Reader in interpretive archaeology*; Thomas, *Interpretive archaeology*; Hall & Silliman (eds.), *Historical archaeology*. 
brief than we would like them to be. This is not unlike the way in which an edition reflects a group of manuscripts: despite striving for an objective rendering of the sources, an edition cannot escape the fact that it is always at the same time just one possible interpretation of them. Early medievalists from all disciplines nowadays acknowledge this issue, and therefore strive for transparency: there is no way of blocking out our own influence on the material under scrutiny, so the least we can do is acknowledge this. This, however, did not always happen in the past, which makes it difficult for an outsider to reconstruct why finds were interpreted in a certain way, and what the alternative interpretations may have been.

Most of the sites included in this research have been studied several times and by several different archaeologists. In practically all of these cases, either the previous finds have subsequently been interpreted in a different way, or entirely different finds have been unearthed. For example, in the case of Reichenau, Emil Reisser insisted in 1960 that ‘Mit den vorstehenden Überlegungen ist die älteste Klosteranlage mit hoher Sicherheit und geringem Fehlerrest wiedergewonnen’.

His successor Alfons Zettler, however, stated only two decades later ‘daß neureiche Grabungen in Reichenau […] Reste hölzerner Bauten ans Licht förderten, die ohne Zweifel als älteste Klösterliche Architectur auf der Insel zu deuten sind’. Although Zettler was acutely aware of the fact that Reisser’s failure to see the evidence of earlier wooden buildings was due to his place in a contemporary architectural historical debate that firmly believed in the monumental ‘Steinbauweise’ of the earliest German architecture, he apparently did not acknowledge that he himself was also shaped by current developments in his discipline, and that his successor might offer yet another explanation. Nevertheless, this example shows the different ways in which finds can be interpreted. The problems surrounding these interpretations are one of the central issues of this study.

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63 Goetz, Modern Mediävistik, p. 171.
64 Reisser, Die frühe Baugeschichte des Münsters zu Reichenau, p. 28.
66 Ian Wood, an archaeologist working as a truly interdisciplinary early medievalist, has even seen
Having briefly looked at the available material and the way this has been disclosed, we are left with the question how architectural historians should handle archaeological data. The first part of my answer would be that luckily, we do not have to handle ‘raw’ data, since these have already been excavated, ordered and interpreted by archaeologists. And as long as we are conscious of current developments in their field and the methodology of the particular archaeologist who occupied him- or herself with the particular site that we are interested in, there seem to be no major problems. Secondly, as Nancy Stieber has recently pointed out in the introduction to an edition of the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* dedicated to the connections between architectural history and other disciplines, architectural historians nowadays are constantly working with other disciplines such as building archaeology, architectural energetics, cultural geography, urban history, heritage conservation, material culture studies etc. In my opinion, archaeology occupies a special place within this spectrum since it offers the only opportunity for reconstructing a specific part of our architectural past. We will therefore simply have to ‘deal with it’ – which perhaps explains the negligible attention paid to this issue by architectural historians.

The study of early medieval architecture has not been greatly affected by methodological discussions within the discipline. There is, however, one issue that has received ample attention and that has proved especially influential with regard to early medieval architecture: that of architecture as a bearer of meaning. In the 1940s and ’50s, a number of publications appeared which suggested an alternative the benefits of these issues: “The uncertainties of our material are worth acknowledging openly. They are well known to specialists. They do not, on the whole, lead us to call into question the general picture that has been built up of our period [...] The uncertainty of our picture should not [...] be a cause for concern. Lacunae in our evidence do, of course, present problems. So does material which is hard to interpret, or does not provide us with the evidence we thought we wanted. Yet rather than see it as a setback we should really relish the difficulties, because they are a reflection of the complexities of the early medieval world.” Wood, ”In praise of uncertainty”, p. 311.

67 Architectural historians “now share methods of understanding the built environment with many disciplines”, Stieber, Nancy, ”Learning from interdisciplinarity: introduction”, p. 417.

68 There is something to say for Dana Arnold’s idea to place the architectural historian between the archaeologist and the historian. Arnold, ”Preface”.

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for the then-current study of style and form: the study of meaning in architecture. \(^{69}\) With regard to the study of the Carolingian period, the articles by Richard Krautheimer have been especially influential. “The Carolingian revival of early Christian architecture” has been crucial in the creation of the image of Carolingian architecture, whereas his “Introduction to an ‘Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture’” has laid the basis for the iconography or iconology of architecture. \(^{70}\) The general idea at the basis of this concept, which was elaborated on by scholars other than Krautheimer, is that certain forms and types carried meaning. When buildings or parts thereof were copied, these meanings were transported from one building to another. Meaning may be derived from a certain symbolic or allegoric association, but it may also have become attached to a form through its use in the past.

The iconographic approach has since its genesis become one of the guiding principles in the study of medieval architecture, most of all since it provided contextualisation with a methodological underpinning. Allow me to expand briefly on some of the concepts underlying this method which have, over the years, become most important to architectural history.

Central to all iconographic approaches is the importance of the context in which a building or artwork originated. Meaning is not something that exists detached from time and space; it is firmly embedded in it. The context in which a building was viewed changed depending on the person doing the viewing and the moment at which this happened. It has become more and more obvious that it is important to distinguish between meanings that were attached to certain

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\(^{69}\) There had been earlier attempts in this direction. Among the publications of the ’40s and ’50s were Bandmann, *Mittelalterliche Architektur als Bedeutungsträger*; Krautheimer, “Introduction to an ‘Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture’”, “The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture”; Grabar, *Martyrium*. For critical historiographies, see Bosman, “De sensus allegoricus”; Crossley, “Medieval architecture and meaning”.

\(^{70}\) Krautheimer, “Introduction to an ‘Iconography of medieval architecture’”. Krautheimer might actually be regarded not so much as the ‘inventor’ of an iconography of architecture, but as one of the first to theorize about an approach that was already gaining ground, as can be seen in e.g. Kitschelt, *Die frühchristliche Basilika* and Smith, *The Dome*. Iconography and the importance of meaning for artworks had earlier been put forward by Erwin Panofsky, Aby Warburg and others.
forms and buildings *post festum* and meanings that were ‘formbestimmend’.

The former category accommodates mainly symbolic and allegoric interpretations. Although familiar to the medieval mind and therefore occasionally present in the sources, this type of exegesis was more often applied to a building after its construction than a direct influence on its design. This is not surprising since one is hard-pressed to explain for example how exactly the concrete shape of a particular church building was determined by it being a symbol of the City of God. In the category of meanings that were at the basis of the design of a building and thus ‘formbestimmend’, historical meaning is most important. A famous example of this type of accumulated meaning is Napoleon’s Arc de Triomphe. He chose this shape not because it had an inherent meaning that pointed towards triumph or imperial reign, but because the Roman emperors, or, arguably, the Etruscans, had imbued this shape with that particular meaning. For Krautheimer and his followers, Rome plays an extraordinarily important part as a generator of meaning when it comes to Carolingian architecture. As far as iconography of architecture plays a role in this study, it is historical meaning that is most prominent. Meaning in architecture could however be expressed through a number of ways: through the use of certain forms or architectural concepts, but also through the dedication of a church or its altars, through the presence of relics or by referring to this meaning verbally or in contemporary written sources.

A multiplicity of meanings could simultaneously be present in the medieval building, visible to different people at different times. The tension between the intentions of a patron and the visibility of these to his audience was also at the basis of the concept of the architectural copy, introduced by Krautheimer and gradually replaced by that of the architectural quota-

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71 In a later postscript to his 1942 article, Krautheimer himself stressed the importance of distinguishing between these two. Krautheimer in *Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur europäischen Kunstgeschichte*, pp. 193-196.

72 Cf. Bosman, *De Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk*, p. 151. For an insightful view on the present relevance of Krautheimer’s work as well as a brief reflection on the creation of meaning through ways other than form, see Goodson, "Material memory", pp. 4-6.
These concepts place the patron at the forefront of the creation of meaning: by reflecting an example or a part of an example that was deemed important, a certain meaning – religious, political or otherwise – could be disseminated among a particular audience. Whether a copy or quotation actually looked like the aspect of an earlier building that it was meant to copy is of secondary importance: the intention behind it, or the concept that the example was seen to embody, mattered more. Moreover, the defining aspects of a building were not always the ones we would nowadays presume. For this reason, the concept of the architectural quotation is more useful than that of the copy, since it allows us to specify the analysis of a building by making explicit which part(s) of it constituted quotations.

The following study is divided into four chapters, each of which focuses on a group of buildings. The material evidence for these individual buildings is discussed first and in as much detail as possible, in order to make it clear what the reconstructions that will subsequently be worked with are based on. The following analysis scrutinised the reconstructed buildings in their local and temporal context. In this analysis, additional information is also taken into account. Besides being centred around a group of buildings, each chapter also highlights a number of issues that are relevant to the others.

In chapter one, Einhard and Hilduin, both lay abbots, stand at centre stage and through them, the issue of patronage is delved into. Einhard built churches in Steinbach and Seligenstadt, which have often been viewed as opposites which he chose under the influence of external motivations. As will become clear, the two churches also have a lot in common. Moreover, both times Einhard found himself in a very different position, in which he needed different things from his foundations. The comparison with Hilduin shows that different circumstances could lead to very different forms of architectural patronage.

The notion of the quotation was first introduced by Kunst, "Freiheit und Zitat". For actual uses of this term, see, e.g., Kimpel, & Suckale, *Die gotische Architektur*, pp. 102-105 and Schenkluhn, *Ordines studentes*.

Bosman, "De Sensus Allegoricus", p. 4; Mekking, "Het laatste woord?", p. 227. With regard to copies, see also Klinkenberg, *Architectuuruitbeelding in de Middeleeuwen*.
In the second chapter, the abbey churches of Reichenau and St. Gall are looked at, along with the famous Plan of St. Gall. By looking at these two communities concurrently, it becomes clear that although the communities as well as their churches had a lot in common, different choices were made because of the specifics of the local situation. The Plan in combination with the monastic complex in Reichenau, about which relatively much is known, makes clear at which points ideal and reality overlapped and diverged.

The third chapter is dedicated to the abbey of Fulda. It is a voluminous chapter, since the building history of the abbey church, which by itself provides enough material for discussion, is supplemented with the consideration of a number of other churches which belonged to the monastery. Some of these, such as the church of St. Michael, formed part of the monastic complex itself, whereas others were located on properties belonging to the abbey. By including these churches in our study of the monastery, we gain a more comprehensive view of what its built environment looked like and the ways in which consecutive abbots contributed to it.

The communities of Corvey and Herford form the subject of the fourth and last chapter. They are both a little different from the monasteries discussed until then. For one, they were located in recently conquered and not yet fully Christianised Saxony. They were relatively late foundations, and the community in Herford consisted of women instead of men. These final two case studies serve to place the others in a wider perspective.

Before we continue, there is one thing we must briefly pay attention to: the use of images in this study. In the foregoing, I have argued that reconstructed floor plans, elevations and the like give an impression of certainty that is often not justified. This argument will be elaborated on in the chapters to come. However, this does not alter the fact that these drawings can be highly illustrative. Without them, it is difficult to visualise the structures that are described. For this reason I will refer to reconstructions despite my wariness of them, yet I urge the reader to treat them
with caution. Time did not permit me to create new drawings of the studied sites, displaying both the finds and all possible reconstructions. It is however my intention to provide these in a published version of this research.