Means, motives and opportunities: The architecture of monasteries during the reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)
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chapter 1

Einhard and Hilduin
1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter revolves around the architectural patronage of two men: Einhard (ca. 775-840) and Hilduin (ca. 775?-855/859?). Both were prominent courtiers serving Charlemagne, Louis the Pious and his sons. As lay abbots, they personified the link between the court and religious institutions. They were political forces to be reckoned with as well as influential intellectuals. Hilduin and Einhard were certainly not the best of friends, but what binds them together in this chapter is their common interest in architecture. Einhard built two churches that are among the best-preserved Carolingian buildings in Europe, in places now known as Steinbach and Seligenstadt. Hilduin’s legacy is somewhat less conspicuous: in Saint-Médard in Soissons, he may have built an impressive church, but its crypt is all that remains, and in Saint-Denis he merely added a small outer crypt to the eighth-century ‘Fulrad church’. The two of them have more in common than just their patronage of architecture, such as their interest in bringing Roman relics to Francia and their sometimes precarious position amidst the political upheaval of the 820s and 830s. These are the themes to be explored in this chapter, which focuses on the role of individuals as patrons of architecture. I will argue that the design of the structures was for a large part determined by factors over which the patrons had only limited control, such as the buildings’ envisaged use, their location, extant buildings on the site and the circumstances leading up to the construction.

Einhard’s and Hilduin’s relic transports were both part of the second wave of Roman relic-imports into Francia. The first was initiated after the Franco-papal alliance that followed from Pope Zachary’s approval of the kingship of Pepin the Short in 754.\(^1\) The papal policy towards relic transports – previously frowned upon in Rome – was already starting to change and in the second half of the eighth century translations of the relics of martyrs from the catacombs to both the city of Rome itself and the Frankish realm ensued.\(^2\) The second wave was started in 826

\(^2\) Heydemann, “Text und Translation”; Heydemann, “Heiligen aan de wandel”.

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by Hilduin, who managed to obtain the relics of St. Sebastian for the community of St. Médard. For this translation, Hilduin could count on papal approval, but this was short-lived. For only a year later, when Einhard sought to obtain Roman relics through the dubious relic-merchant Deusdona, Hilduin placed an order with the latter as well.3

In their handling of the relics both men acted independently and made their own decisions. The same goes for their architectural patronage: although building for religious communities, Hilduin and Einhard acted more or less of their own accord. Especially for Einhard, we know, for example through his letters, that he was closely and personally involved with the building projects. It is therefore possible – to a certain extent – to associate these projects with the personal and political circumstances in which the men lived. This sets these men and their churches apart from other cases where the architecture can perhaps be reconstructed better, but where we know very little about the circumstances in which it came about. Einhard and Hilduin may have kept a close watch on the building projects, but they were not, of course, master builders. Even in these relatively well-documented cases it is impossible to determine the extent of their involvement. We can be almost certain that they did not take the spade in hand, but their role in the planning process is less easy to define. It is possible that they were closely involved in the creation of the design, but it is equally possible that they left this in the capable hands of someone like a master builder. The individuality of the realised designs however indicates that very deliberate choices were made, and that at the very least Hilduin and Einhard kept in close touch with the master builder and communicated their wishes to him in detail.

Far more information is available about Einhard than about Hilduin: a larger part of his buildings remains, many of his writings are extant and have been

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3 This shows that it was not simply a matter of who had the best Roman contacts. Hilduin probably managed to organize the first translation because of pope Eugenius II’s difficult position, which depended on Louis the Pious’ and Lothar I’s backing. There was a power vacuum after the death of pope Valentine on 16 September 827, so Einhard and Hilduin had no one to appeal to at that time. Heinzelmann, "Einhards 'Translatio Marcellini et Petri', pp. 279-280.
edited well, researched and translated and recently much more scholarly attention has gone out to him. For this reason, Einhard’s work will be treated in more detail here. After a brief discussion of the events leading up to his foundations, first Steinbach and then Seligenstadt will be discussed, followed by an analysis of Hilduin’s crypts in Saint-Médard and Saint-Denis. The risk of bias created by devoting more attention to Einhard than to Hilduin is reduced by taking care not to draw too many comparisons, which is problematic regardless since it negates the differences between buildings and the contexts in which they arose. Studying the two patrons together – without diametrically opposing them – instead of independently has the advantage that it sharpens our senses and makes it easier to note differences in, for example, attitude or circumstances.

1.2 EINHARDUS AEDIFICATOR

Some time in 827, Einhard sat in the imperial palace in Aachen day-dreaming about retirement and deliverance from the worldly worries that had occupied his mind for decades. This, at least, is the image that Einhard evokes in his *Translation and miracles of the blessed martyrs Marcellinus and Peter*. He carefully paints a picture of an old, tired courtier whose only wish is to retreat somewhere quiet and spend his last years in the service of the Lord. In 815, Louis the Pious benevolently granted Einhard a ‘remote piece of property’ in the Odenwald, Michelstadt, where the latter subsequently built a church. Now he just had to come upon some relics to consecrate this church with. The *Translatio* goes on to tell of the peregrinations of the relics of Marcellinus and Peter, their arrival at Einhard’s church, their wish to be moved to another one of Einhard’s churches, that in Mulinheim, and the mir-

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acles the content saints then performed.

The events described in the Translatio and Einhard’s architectural patronage are closely connected and will therefore be studied together. Einhard’s depiction of events in the Translatio is however highly coloured by his own position in the late 820s, which makes the text a source to be handled with care. I will discuss these problematic aspects of the Translatio in more detail later on. Let us first cast a brief look at Einhard’s life and deeds, followed by a closer look at the relatively small church in Michelstadt (Steinbach), for which Einhard sought relics. Subsequently, the large basilica in Mulheim, to which the relics of Marcellinus and Peter were moved shortly after their arrival in Francia, will be discussed. The fame of the relics kept there soon spread and resulted in a new name for the city: Seligenstadt, holy city.

The first relatively reliable traces of Einhard’s existence are charters written by him in Fulda between 788 and 791. Einhard, born sometime between 770 and 775/6, came from a family of local aristocracy from the Maingau and was sent to Fulda to be educated. However, he was not given as an oblate and never became a monk. In his early twenties, Einhard moved to the royal court in Aachen to complete his education. He soon became part of Charlemagne’s inner circle and was mentioned by Theodulf in a poem on the court written in 796/7. Nicknamed ‘Nardulus’ or ‘Bezaleel’, Einhard frequently reappears in contemporary writings.

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7 Nowadays most scholars, such as De Jong, Innes, McKitterick and Smith seem to date Einhard’s birth to 770. Apparently this is explained in Schefers, Einhard, but unfortunately I have not been able to see this work. Innes, “A place of discipline”; Smith, “Einhard: the sinner and the saints”, at p. 61. For now I follow Ganshof’s and Halphen’s 775/6-dating. Ganshof, “Notes critiques sur Eginhard”, p. 728.
8 Einhard may have remained in Fulda long enough to witness the start of the ‘Ratgar-basilika’. About this, see chapter 3.
10 The nard is a (prickly) plant of the Valerian family that yields a fragrant oil. According to Fleckenstein, this nickname refers to Einhard’s ‘rich and sharp mind’, Theodulf of Orleans, Ad Carolum
The biblical nickname refers to Exodus 31, 1-11 and 35, 30-35, which describe how God told Mozes to appoint Bezaleel and Oholiab to make the Tabernacle. The exact meaning of this nickname, not explained by those using it, has been debated. Some have taken it to mean that Einhard was the overseer of the ‘Aachener Bauhütte’, but it might also simply mean that he was artistically gifted.¹¹ In fact, I would argue for an even broader interpretation and focus on Exodus 35, 32-33: ‘implevitque eum spiritu Dei sapientiae et intelligentiae et scientiae omni doctrina ad excogitandum et faciendum’ (Vulgate), where Bezaleel is a wise, understanding and knowledgeable designer more than a craftsman.¹² As will become clear later on, Einhard was a patron of the arts, both at court and in his own foundations, yet I see no evidence suggesting that he was either a (practising) artisan or chief inspector of architecture in Aachen.

What exactly Einhard did do at court during the reign of Charlemagne remains somewhat unclear though, since hardly any writings can be attributed to him before 814. Yet that he was certainly in the hub of the action seems to be attested to by the Royal Frankish Annals, which name Einhard as the one who took the Divisio regnorum to Rome in 806 to be signed by Pope Leo III.¹³ Moreover, the considerable literary skill that he displayed in later years did not appear out of thin air. Einhard’s eloquence shows foremost in his Life of Charlemagne, a text widely read both in its own day and at present.¹⁴ Despite extensive scholarly debate, no
consensus has been reached so far regarding the text’s date of composition or the way it should be interpreted. The traditional interpretation of Einhard’s *Vita Karoli* as showcasing critique of Louis the Pious’ reign based on a comparison with his father, who apparently did everything better, has recently come under attack. In this light, Rosamond McKitterick’s view of the *Vita Karoli* as serving a political purpose, ‘to celebrate Charlemagne […] and underscore Louis the Pious’ legitimacy’ and consequent early dating between 814 and 823 seems convincing.\(^\text{15}\)

If we focus on the time the *Vita Karoli* was written (and possibly commissioned) instead of on the time it covers, we may see the apex of Einhard’s career more in Louis’ than in Charles’ reign. Although Einhard seems to be forever connected to Charlemagne, ‘that most outstanding and deservedly famous king’,\(^\text{16}\) he was one of the few courtiers to remain in function after Louis the Pious’ arrival in Aachen.\(^\text{17}\) Moreover, his literary, artistic and political legacy stems almost solely from the years after 814: all imperial donations to Einhard, both grants of land and lay abbeys, have for example been made by Louis, *not* Charles. As Julia Smith has pointed out, Einhard had up until 814 made an unlikely career: he neither chose a religious life for himself nor was given permission to leave royal service, marry and start a household of his own.\(^\text{18}\) Only after the death of Charlemagne can we be sure that Einhard was married and held property. His wife Imma is mentioned for the first time in a charter issued in Aachen on 11 January 815, in which Louis the Pious grants Einhard and Imma the estate (*locus*) Michelstadt, located in a forest called Odenwald, as well as the *villa* Mulinheim in the Maingau.\(^\text{19}\)

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\(^{19}\) *Donatio Ludovici primi Pii Einhardo in Michlenstadt*, ed. Pertz, *MGH SS 21*, pp. 359-360. The original charter is lost, but a reliable copy can be found in the cartulary of Lorsch, copied in the late twelfth
The fact that Imma is mentioned in this imperial grant is worthy of a small excursion. We do not know all that much about Einhard’s wife, but we encounter her remarkably often in the sources. She evidently played an important role in the household and Einhard must have been very fond of her.\textsuperscript{20} It is possible that she was merely mentioned in the donation charters because she had connections in the region; Imma may have come from a powerful local family or could have been the widow of a local count. Yet bishop Gozbald of Würzburg’s and Lupus of Ferrières’ recollections of her indicate that she was markedly different from other women.\textsuperscript{21} As Lupus put it: ‘Although in a woman’s body, she advanced in spirit to equal that of a man.’\textsuperscript{22} Knowing all this, it seems almost impossible that Imma had nothing to do with Einhard’s building projects in Steinbach and Seligenstadt. That she is not mentioned in connection to them is, as Therese Martin has powerfully argued, hardly an indication to the contrary.\textsuperscript{23} Even Einhard’s exact role in the process is difficult to pinpoint and the number of times he mentions the construction works is, as we shall see shortly, very limited. Imma’s role would have been even less likely to be recorded, especially if this was a case of shared patronage, which is being recognized in more and more works of art and architecture traditionally attributed to men.\textsuperscript{24} Although it may be worthwhile to apply Valerie Garver’s method of ‘disciplined imagination’ to Imma, for now the reader should simply keep in mind that whenever I speak of Einhard, Imma is standing right behind him, perhaps pulling


\textsuperscript{21} Smith, “Einhard the sinner and the Saints”, pp. 57-59.


\textsuperscript{23} Martin, "Exceptions and assumptions", esp. p 20.

\textsuperscript{24} Tibbetts Schulenburg, "Female piety".
In the years following 814 Einhard received the lay abbacies of no less than seven communities: St. Peter’s in Ghent, St. Cloud near Paris and St. Wandrille/Fontenelle in 815, St. Bavo in Ghent in 819, St. Servatius in Maastricht since at least 820, as well as the church of St. John the Baptist in Pavia and St. Peter’s in Fritzlar. Yet granting him these abbacies was not Louis’ manner of getting Einhard out of the way: that he remains in close contact with the court is attested to for example by letters he wrote on behalf of the emperor as well as his tutoring of Louis the Pious’ eldest son Lothar. Nevertheless, it seems as if he started a slow retreat from court. First he focused his attention on building in Steinbach, then he was occupied with the translation of Marcellinus and Peter. Especially after falling ill in 830, Einhard mostly stayed in Seligenstadt (Obermühlinheim). After his death, which probably occurred on 14 March 840, he was buried there.

Einhard’s activities as a lay abbot become apparent mostly for the communities of St. Peter and St. Bavo of Ghent and St. Servatius of Maastricht. Whether this is due to an imbalance in the survival of sources or whether it reflects Einhard’s geographical proximity to these places is unclear. Yet it is evident from both the Translatio and Einhard’s correspondence that he put in regular appearances

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25 Garver, Women and aristocratic culture. Unfortunately, Garver pays hardly any attention to architecture or to Imma.

26 As Verhulst and Declerq have shown, Ganshof was wrong to assume that Einhard gained both Ghent abbacies in 815, as is also attested to by their differently dated immunities. Declercq, “Einhard und das karolingische Gent”, p. 228; Verhulst & Declercq, “Early medieval Ghent”.

27 Einhard, Epistolae, ed. Hampe, MGH Epp 5, no. 9 at p. 113; transl. Dutton, Charlemagne’s courtier, p. 148; Einhard, Translatio b. 1, c. 6, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 15, p. 242; transl. Dutton, Charlemagne’s courtier, p. 77.


29 As Mayke de Jong had pointed out this may really have been caused by illness and old age instead of by political motifs. De Jong, The penitential state, p. 70.

in Ghent and Maastricht and seems to have felt comfortable there. To the church of St. Servatius, Einhard donated a reliquary in the shape of an arch, covered by a cross. Although neither is extant, the arch can be reconstructed from a seventeenth-century drawing.  

The communities of Ganda (St. Bavo’s) and Blandinium (St. Peter’s) in Ghent were both founded by the French missionary Amand in the seventh century. Ganda fared better due to its possession of the relics of St. Bavo, whose cult had spread far beyond the city by the early ninth century. An increase in interest in Amand’s companion Bavo also shows from the Vita Bavonis written in the first half of the ninth century, possibly under Einhard’s instigation. Both communities belonged to the ordo canonici and were designated royal abbeys in Louis’ confirmations of Charlemagne’s charters of immunity, written in 819 (the year Einhard became abbot). Einhard divided the abbeys’ property in a mensa abbatis and a mensa conventualis, thereby safeguarding the communities’ sustenance. Moreover, he may have instigated the construction of new buildings in St. Bavo’s after a devastating fire broke out in 813. Little of the excavation of the last few years has been published, so all we can be sure of for now is that there are remains of a Carolingian triple-aisled church constructed out of the regional limestone from Doornik. The likelihood of Einhard’s involvement has increased after the discovery of a small capital that echoes the ivory fragments found in Seligenstadt, yet for

31 Paris, BN cod. fr. 10440, fol. 45. See also Belting, “Der Einhardsbogen” and Hauck, Das Einhardkreuz.

32 As shows, for example, from liturgical manuscripts from St.-Riquier, Cologne, Saint-Denis and Mondsee. Declercq, “Heiligen, lekenabten en hervormers”, pp. 25-26. The myth of St. Peter’s decline and subsequent salvation by Einhard is, as Georges Declercq has shown, probably a tenth-century invention. Declercq, “Einhard und das karolingische Gent”, pp. 225-228. It is simply of less interest here since there are no signs of building activity at St. Peter’s.


34 Diplomata belgica, ed. Gysseling, & Koch, no. 49, pp. 126-127 (St. Peter’s) and no. 132, pp. 222-223 (St. Bavo’s).


now the evidence is still too fragmentary.\[^{37}\]

These examples show that Einhard also acted as a patron of art and architecture in places other than Steinbach and Seligenstadt, which are most well-known. The possible connections between the Maastricht and Seligenstadt reliquaries and the ‘court workshop’ in Aachen as well as the stylistic and iconographical choices Einhard made have been discussed elsewhere.\[^{38}\] For now, it is most important to realise that Steinbach and Seligenstadt, although privileged, were not unique in receiving Einhard’s attention. The donation of such a well-designed and precious piece of art such as the Maastricht arch shows that Einhard cared about the welfare of all of his communities, which is confirmed by his donation of (partial or contact-) relics of Marcellinus and Peter to Ghent, Maastricht and Fontenelle, recorded in the booklets of miracles they sent him in return.\[^{39}\]

The relics Einhard was able to distribute came, as has been mentioned before, from Rome. The exorcist Marcellinus and the priest Peter had been martyred there during the Diocletian persecutions, according to the epitaph Pope Damasus composed in their honour.\[^{40}\] Although he seems to have been aware of Peter and Marcellinus’ story and familiar with their Passion, Einhard was not, as Martin Heinzelmahm has already pointed out, primarily interested in explaining the Saints’ past to the Franks. For his purposes the fact that they were Roman martyrs was enough.\[^{41}\]

Einhard’s Translation and miracles of the blessed martyrs Marcellinus and Peter is a rather lengthy hagiographical text in which the martyrs are given a new, postmortem past that runs from the secret removal of their relics from a Roman church to their arrival in Mulinheim/Seligenstadt and onwards. It belongs to a

\[^{38}\] Belting, “Der Einhardsbogen”.
\[^{39}\] The libelli were copied into the Translatio. Einhard, Translatio, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 15. See below.
\[^{40}\] De SS. Marcellino et Petro, carm. XXIII, ed. Migne, PL 13, col. 396-397. Damasus claimed he heard the story from the executioner himself when he was a boy. See also Seeliger, "Die Geschichte der Katakomben", pp. 68-70.
\[^{41}\] Heinzelmahm, "Einhards Translatio Marcellini et Petri", p. 297.
genre of texts that we will encounter more often. Translationes are texts that record the translation or transfer of relics from a Saint’s previous, often original, burial place to a new home. The development of the genre went hand in hand with the increase in the translation of relics in the eighth and ninth centuries. Although the texts show a considerable amount of diversity, in general they all pay attention to the provenance of the relic, the way it was obtained, the journey to its new destination and the adventus, elevatio and depositio. Einhard’s Translatio, one of the most extensive texts within the genre, marks an important stage in its development. The Translatio and the church in Seligenstadt were probably conceived at more or less the same moment. This makes the text, in which Einhard’s motives and strategies can more easily be detected, an important tool for the interpretation of the architecture. It is therefore discussed in detail here.

A large part of Einhard’s text was in circulation by the second half of the year 830. The manuscript transmission is not exactly impressive, especially compared to for example the Vita Karoli, yet there are indications that the text was widely read in Einhard’s time. The Translatio has received ample scholarly attention in recent years because it is a difficult and controversial yet very rich text.

The first book relates how the relics of Marcellinus and Peter were obtained by Einhard and translated, first to Michelstadt, then to Mulinheim. After having had a conversation over dinner in Aachen with the relic-merchant Deusdona, Einhard sent his notary Ratleig to Rome to receive relics from Deusdona’s private collection. On the way, they stopped in Soissons to pick up Hilduin’s priest Hunus, who was to receive the body of Tiburtius from Deusdona. Not everything...
turned out as expected. A vision revealed that Deusdona could not be trusted. Nevertheless, Ratleig managed to obtain the relics of the martyrs Marcellinus and Peter from the crypt connected to Tiburtius’ church, whereas Hilduin’s priest collected some fine dust that seemed to have been left behind by the body of Tiburtius. After a short delay in Pavia, Ratleig, believing Hilduin’s priest to be ‘so cunning and slimy’, took a detour and met Einhard’s people in Solothurn. From there they brought the relics straight to Michelstadt where the martyrs repeatedly indicated, through appearances in visions, that they were not happy and wished to be moved to Mühlheim. In the end Einhard complied.

The second book starts with a conversation between Hilduin and an unsuspecting Einhard. It turned out that the rumor had spread that Marcellinus and Peter ended up with Hilduin, not Einhard. Hilduin himself admitted that his priest removed parts of the relics of both martyrs and brought them to Soissons. According to Ratleig, Hilduin’s priest only managed to lay his hands on a part (‘as much as a pint container could hold’) of Marcellinus’ relics and Einhard made an arrangement with Hilduin for these to be returned to him. Despite Einhard’s payment of 100 coins, Hilduin stalled the transfer until after Easter. Eventually, however, the relics were returned to Einhard and venerated in Aachen by Louis and Judith themselves, working wonders there and on the journey to Mühlheim.

Book three marks the transition from the Translatio proper to the Miracula sanctorum. Einhard here recounted the miracles performed by the martyrs in Seligenstadt and its surroundings. Book three also incorporates the vision of the blind man Alberic, who received a number of edicts for the emperor from none other than the archangel Gabriel, disguised as Marcellinus, as well as the exorcism of the demon Wiggo. The contents of Alberic’s booklet are not revealed to the reader of the Translatio but were given directly to Louis the Pious: ‘And, in fact, he did receive it and read it throughout, but of the things that he was ordered or urged to do by this small book he took the trouble to fulfill very few.’

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47 Einhard, Translatio b. 3, c. 13, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 15, p. 252-253; transl. Dutton, Charlemagne’s
Wiggo was also meant to serve as an admonition to the emperor and the court. The
demon explained that the calamities striking the Frankish empire were the result
of the grave sins not only of the people themselves, but also, and mostly, of those
appointed to rule over them. As bad as the message itself was, it was even worse
that it came from the mouth of a demon who was supposed to corrupt humanity
instead of calling for reform.  

In the fourth and last book the miracles of Mulinheim are supplemented
by those that occurred in the palace in Aachen. Moreover, this book also contains
booklets with miracles that were sent to Einhard by those communities that re-
ceived partial (contact?) relics from him: St. Salvius in Valencienne, St. Bavo in
Ghent and St. Servatius in Maastricht. In a sense, Einhard thereby cast aside the
(former) saints of these communities, who apparently could not perform such mir-
acles. It also offered a nice opportunity to discredit Hilduin’s saint Sebastian, who
only partially healed a deaf and mute man, consequently of course healed properly
by Marcellinus and Peter.  

Long before Marcellinus and Peter arrived in Francia, Einhard had built
his church in Steinbach. This is what we turn to next.

STEINBACH: ‘A WELL-BUILT CHURCH SUITABLE FOR HOLDING
DIVINE SERVICES’

As has been noted before, Einhard and Imma were granted a piece of land called
Michelstadt in the forest of Odenwald by Louis the Pious on 11 January 815. The
charter attests that there was a small, wooden church in the middle of this piece of
land, which was surrounded by two square miles of fields and woods. On it lived
fourteen servants with their wives and children as well as forty dependent men

courtier, p. 102.

See Booker, Past convictions, pp. 232-233; Dutton, The politics of dreaming, pp. 92-98 and below.

Throughout the Translatio, any occasion to put Hilduin in disrepute is seized. See below.
and women. Four years later, on 12 September 819, Einhard and Imma donated this same piece of land to the monastery of Lorsch, but they reserved the right of usufruct as long as either of them or their offspring was alive. At this time, the number of dependents, of both sexes and all ages, numbered one hundred. Later on, especially in the Translatio, Einhard was keen to stress that Michelstadt was a ‘remote piece of property that was well out of most people’s way’. Which was true, in a way: the Odenwald was – and still is – a hilly, woody area by far not as cultivated as the Upper Rhine plain to its West. Yet there had been continuous settlement in this area since Roman times, consisting mainly of small villages made up of a few homesteads. Moreover, Michelstadt was located on the banks of the Mümling river and thence probably quite accessible. That it is not a remote area is corroborated by the indications that Michelstadt’s boundaries had been firmly established since at least the second half of the eighth century.

Furthermore, Einhard himself invested in this property by building a more solid stone church here:

In quo cum pro modo facultatum ac sumptuum non solum domos ac habi-

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50 Donatio Ludowici primi Pii Einhardo in Michlenstadt, in Codex Laureshamensis, ed. Glöckner, Codex Laureshamensis 1, pp. 299-300.
52 Einhard, Translatio b. 1, c. 1, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 15, pp. 239; transl. Dutton, Charlemagne’s courtier, p. 69.
53 Ludwig, Thomas, “Geschichtliche Überlieferung, pp. 1-6. Einhard’s statements are not to be taken at face value anyway, firstly since foundations in heremo are a common topos, secondly because he is eager to excuse his (or Marcellinus and Peter’s) abandonment of Michelstadt/Steinbach.
tacula ad manendum, verum etiam basilicam divinis officiis faciendis congruentem non indecori operis aedificassem [...] 54

I had constructed there, as far as my resources would allow, not only permanent houses and dwellings, but also a well-built church that was suitable for holding divine services. 55

This translation by Dutton gives the text a rather bland flavour: Einhard just built a decent stone church. However, if we see ‘non indecori’ as referring to aesthetics and interpret ‘divinis officiis’ not as divine services in general, but as the Hours, then Einhard is describing a beautiful church built for a religious community. 56

Luckily Einhard’s church is, for a large part, still extant, and has been well-studied, both archaeologically and building archeologically (figs. 1.1-1.5). 57

It was constructed on a slightly sloping hill (20-30 cm to 10 m). 58 There are some indications of earlier structures on the building site, which were possibly sunken-floored buildings (Grubenhäuser). Although their name suggests otherwise, these buildings were not used for living. Yet they were accompanied by a stone structure, attested to by two parallel walls just over 8 m apart, that may have been a dwelling. Together, the buildings seem to have made up a moderately-sized homestead. 59 A road led up to it from the small brook in the north that connects

54 Einhard, Translatio b. 1, c. 1, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 15, pp. 239-240.
55 Transl. Dutton, Charlemagne’s courtier, pp. 69-70.
56 See also Ludwig, “Baugeschichtliche Zusammenfassung”, p. 46, who suggests the ‘non indecori operis’ could refer to the painted decorations.
57 This church has been identified as the one Einhard mentions in the Translatio ever since Georg Schaefer noticed the material similarities with Seligenstadt. Schaefer, "Die Einhard-Basilika bei Michelstadt". A very thorough description of the building and its history as well as the archaeology can be found in Ludwig, Müller, Widdra-Spies & Beeh-Lustenberger, Die Einhards-Basilika. There is hence no need for me anymore to go into this.
58 Ludwig, "Geschichtliche Überlieferung", p. 12. With the naked eye it appears to be even more, at least nowadays. The level rises from east to west.
59 Ludwig, "Geschichtliche Überlieferung", pp. 11-14; Widdra-Spiess, "Grabungsbericht", pp. 179-180
to the river Mümling eastwards of the basilica. However, the buildings did not exist anymore – it remains unknown when they disappeared – at the time of construction of the basilica.\textsuperscript{60} It is also clear that the church was not built on top of the older wooden church mentioned in the charter. It must have stood at a different location.\textsuperscript{61}

All of the foundations of the church were laid at once (they are all interconnected) and the excess loam from the trenches was partly used to fill out irregularities in the terrain such as the remains of the sunken-floored buildings.\textsuperscript{62} The foundations show that the design of the entire church was carefully thought out in advance. The deeper the foundations, the higher the wall on top of it rose. Between the foundations, a crypt was constructed.\textsuperscript{63}

The crypt was only partially subterranean, and the floor level of the church itself therefore needed to be raised above the ground level. This made it necessary to ascend stairs to enter the church itself, and the height of the structure as a

\textsuperscript{60} In theory, they could be Roman, Carolingian, or anything in between. There is also a chance that the stone building was a church – it is perfectly positioned on an east-west-axis – but then why would the 815 charter only mention a wooden church? In the 819 donation to Lorsch, however, mention is made of basilicis (plural). However, it is highly unlikely that Einhard would have built a church here, demolished it and built a new one all within twelve years.

\textsuperscript{61} The location and appearance of the old church are unknown. Ludwig suggests that it was located on the other side of the river. Ludwig, "Geschichtliche Überlieferung", p. 12. Perhaps another stone church was built to replace the old one? The Annals of Fulda could be referring to this when mentioning 'dedicatio ecclesiae Michilinstat in Odtonwald' for 821. Annales Fuldenses antiquissimi, ed. Kurze, MGH SS rer. Germ. 7, p. 138. This dedication notice cannot refer to the Steinbach-Basilika if we believe that Einhard in fact started looking for relics in 827 with the future dedication of the church in mind.

\textsuperscript{62} Widdra-Spiess, "Grabungsbericht", pp. 183-184.

\textsuperscript{63} For a detailed description of the building process, see Ludwig, "Baugeschichtliche Zusammenfassung", pp. 54-55.
whole probably made it more imposing than is to be expected from its relatively small size. The oriented church consisted of a continuous nave ending in an apse (ca. 20 x 7 m), flanked by side-aisles (less than 3 m wide) and two square rooms to the north and south of the choir (ca. 4 x 4 m), both of them probably ending in apses as well. These rooms were not accessible from the side-aisles and offered only a rather narrow entry from the choir. The central apse is slightly elongated. Of the outer two apses, only the foundations of the northern one have been preserved, but it seems likely that they were more or less symmetrical.\footnote{Widdra-Spiess, "Grabungsbericht", at pp. 186-187.} The northern apse is slightly irregular: its northern side is a little dented.

The whole structure was preceded by a western porch/portal/hallway of which the floor-level was about 30 cm lower than that of the church itself.\footnote{Rudolf Adamy found remains of atrium walls in 1884 and contented that an atrium was built at the time of the foundation of the basilica. However, the most recent interpretation holds that they were built after the Romanesque tower of the late 12th century. Widdra-Spiess, "Grabungsbericht", pp. 232-236.} The nave was, at least according to the strength of the foundations, the tallest volume, so there appears not to have been a western tower. However, the exact design of the western part of the building is unknown, as only its foundations and a part of the walls leading up to the floor of the ‘Oberkirche’ remain. When we look at the foundations, we see that there were three rooms of roughly the same width, continuing the outer nave walls. The central room was a square, more narrow than the nave and protruding about a meter and a half towards the west. Several reconstructions of this western part of the building have been made, but no consensus has been reached so far.\footnote{Adamy, Die Einhard-Basilika, fig. 20; Behn, Die Einhards-Basilika zu Steinbach, fig. 7; Müller, Die Einhard-Basilika zu Steinbach 2, plate 143.} The three main issues up for discussion are where the entrance(s)
was, whether there was a second floor/gallery in the West (an ‘Empore’) and what the roofs looked like. What might be interpreted as evidence of entrances with staircases leading up to them has been found in the western wall of the central room as well as to the north of the outer wall of the northern side-aisle, off the sixth or last bay.\textsuperscript{67} Considering the lack of evidence, I am inclined to follow the most common theory of a central entrance, possibly supplemented by additional doors in the side-aisles.\textsuperscript{68} The central western space may have had a second floor, for which an ‘Empore’, a type of gallery, has been suggested. Since Ludwig has established that northern and southern anterooms could not have had a second floor, stairs leading up to this ‘Empore’ would have to be accommodated within the central room.\textsuperscript{69} This is possible, but it is neither usual nor particularly practical when holding on to the hypothesis that this was the entrance. The presence of a staircase would have made the space, which is relatively small, rather cramped, and would not contribute to its representativeness.\textsuperscript{70} Although ‘Emporen’ are often reconstructed on the basis of remarks in written sources, such as Einhard’s \textit{Translatio} in which elevated spaces from which the goings-on in the church could be seen are mentioned several times, it is difficult to find material evidence for them.


\textsuperscript{67} The western wall is made up mainly of Quadermauerwerk, meant to be visible (not to be plastered over). As became clear during Behn’s excavation though, the middle is made of Bruchsteinmauerwerk, to which an outer flight of steps could have been attached. There is no evidence of actual Carolingian stairs though. Behn, \textit{Die Einhards-Basilika zu Steinbach}; see also Ludwig, Müller, Widdra-Spiess & Beeh-Lustenberger, \textit{Die Einhards-Basilika in Steinbach}, fig. 114.1-4. In any case, I think that the difference in material clearly suggests that this was not a blind wall: it must have provided some kind of entrance. Evidence for the northern entrance to the northern side-aisle has been found in a section of stone pavement of circa 2 x 4 m which has been excavated about 90 cm to the north of the outer wall. Charcoal residue indicates that it was covered by some wooden structure; a possible interpretations is a wooden staircase leading up to the church. Ludwig, “Baugeschichtliche Zusammenfassung”, p. 40; Widdra-Spiess, “Grabungsbericht”, p. 201; Beilage 2.

\textsuperscript{68} None of the reconstructions, depict three separate western entrances, which does indeed seem unlikely.

\textsuperscript{69} Ludwig, “Baugeschichtliche Zusammenfassung”, p. 39.

\textsuperscript{70} I will not repeat the discussion on the reconstruction of the roofs, as it bears no relevance for the matters discussed here. See Ludwig, “Baugeschichtliche Zusammenfassung”, p. 39.
The nave and side-aisles of the church in Steinbach, respectively about 7 and 3 m wide, were divided by an arcade resting on square piers. Windows widening towards the inside were positioned axially above the arches. The roofs of the side-aisles were connected to the outer nave wall between the arches and the windows. The exterior walls of the side-aisles (not extant anymore) were probably provided with windows similar to those in the nave. After six bays the nave was interrupted by a choir screen, dovetailed with the western walls of the eastern side rooms. The resulting choir area was rectangular and illuminated by windows in the apse and apse arch. It opened up towards the side rooms by means of arches a bit wider and higher than those in the nave. As the foundations show, the choir screen was originally planned over the western end of the crypt (past the arcosolium niches that will be discussed below), yet it was moved towards the east making the choir-area considerably smaller. This was one of the few instances where the builders did not adhere to the original plan. The choir screen did not survive, possibly due to the make-shift foundations that were constructed for it after this change of plan. Traces of the choir screen on the nave piers indicate that a technique similar to that of the arches between the nave and side-aisles was used, which makes it quite likely that the choir screen also consisted of arches. Ludwig claims that the choir area was accessible from the West only, which means that the choir screen must have provided at least one opening.

The nave was covered by a saddleback roof, with lean-to roofs over the side-aisles and saddlebacks over the side rooms. Judging from the absence of holes in the walls, there was probably hardly any overhang of the roofs. These might, for the most part, have been made of tiles, slate or lead, since straw or wooden shingles are not what we would first expect for a relatively prestigious building.\footnote{Ludwig, "Baugeschichtliche Zusammenfassung", p. 38.}

\footnote{It is not impossible that there was also an eastern entrance – in fact, I would find it quite likely if the church was indeed used by a small religious community. Ludwig pays no serious attention to this possibility, but argues against an eastern entrance to the crypt. Ludwig, "Baugeschichtliche Zusammenfassung", p. 98.}

\footnote{According to Ludwig, the use of bricks in parts of the building makes it slightly more likely that}
The piers in the nave were, unlike the rest of the church – leaving aside some parts of the crypt – made out of bricks. The relative uniformity of the bricks used for the piers in the nave makes it more than likely that they were manufactured especially for this church, rather than being re-used here.\textsuperscript{74} Einhard used the same, rather unusual, material in Seligenstadt.

The outer walls of the church were mostly made up of ashlar masonry which remained visible.\textsuperscript{75} Only some of the upper parts, most notably the higher parts of the nave, were made of rubblework masonry and plastered. No signs of painting have been found on the exterior of the church. Yet especially the design of the apse arch, with a sudden rupture between ashlar and rubblework, makes it likely that at least this part was painted over with a design that visually continued the ashlar masonry.\textsuperscript{76} However, this does necessarily apply to the upper part of the nave walls as well. On the interior, though, all of the walls seem to have been plastered and partly covered with paintings. The inside of the nave was decorated with a corbel frieze and on the northern tiles were used, rather than slate or lead. I am not entirely convinced by this argument, especially since Einhard does combine brick and lead in Seligenstadt. Einhard, \textit{Epistolae} 36, ed. Hampe, \textit{MGH Epp} 5, pp. 127-128 (Dutton 46). Remains of tiles and slates as well as nails have been found near the northern side-aisle For the apses, Müller suggests screed. Ludwig, "Baugeschichtliche Zusammenfassung", pp. 43-44; Müller, "Beobachtungen am Mauerwerk", p. 150.

\textsuperscript{74} As Einhard’s letter to a certain monk N. shows, it was not unusual for ceramic tiles or bricks to be made to order. Einhard, \textit{Epistolae} 59, ed. Hampe, \textit{MGH Epp} 5, p. 139 (Dutton 38). See also Binding, Planen und Bauen, pp. 260-266. In the parts of the church that were built first, such as the lower parts of the choir and the crypt, however, large amounts of reused material have been discovered. Ludwig, "Baugeschichtliche Zusammenfassung", p. 55.

\textsuperscript{75} Ludwig has observed that many ashlars used in the 1182 western extension seem to originate from the previous building. His hypothesis that the original entryway was hence also made of ashlar masonry is corroborated by the excavated foundations. Ludwig, "Baugeschichtliche Zusammenfassung", p. 42.

\textsuperscript{76} Ludwig, "Baugeschichtliche Zusammenfassung", p. 42.
and southern sides of the apse, remains of two groups of figures were visible until recently.\textsuperscript{77} Ludwig finds it inconceivable that the rest of the apse was not painted as well, which seems likely indeed.\textsuperscript{78} We cannot be sure about the type of ceiling that was used, but it is certainly possible that this too was covered with painted plaster.

The part of the church that is most unusual and most difficult to interpret is its crypt, which was accessible from the side-aisles. It consists of a central elongated cross-shape underneath the central apse, flanked by two cross-shaped rooms, all of which were connected by a north-south corridor. The eastern ends of the cross-shaped spaces presumably housed altars. The central east-west corridor leads towards two \textit{arcosolium}-niches, located underneath the nave. The corridors are all covered in barrel-vaults, forming cloister vaults at their crossings. At the crossing of the north-south and east-west corridors, a small iron ring, probably used to hang a light from, is fixed to the vault.

The \textit{arcosolium}-niches could have been meant to receive Einhard and Imma’s sarcophagi. This is a pretty perfect constellation: they were as close as possi-
ble to the main altar and the altars in the crypts as well as to any relics that might have been planned there, without violating the prohibition of lay burials in the choir. Thomas Ludwig has, partly on the basis of Steinbach, advocated the conceptual difference between a crypt, completely subterranean and meant to receive relics, and a crypt church or undercroft, only partly subterranean and envisaged as the burial place of a founder. Although the crypt in Steinbach is only partly subterranean and may also have been intended as a burial chamber, interpreting it solely as such passes over the fact that the crypt, which is only accessible from the interior of the church, is an integral part of it instead of a separate entity. Moreover, there is no contemporary evidence suggesting that a clear-cut division between two types of crypts was indeed perceived.

The Translatio does not make it apparent where exactly Einhard deposited the relics of Marcellinus and Peter after their arrival in Michelstadt, but notes that they were deposited ‘as though they were destined to stay there forever’. In the subsequent passage, a servant falls asleep on a stool next to the bier. In his dream, he sees two doves fly in through a choir window and land on the bier. That fact that he could see both the choir window and the bier at the same time, even if it was in a dream, indicates that the relics were not placed in the crypt. This does not exclude the possibility that they were supposed to end up there eventually; Einhard may have wanted to offer pilgrims direct access and show off his new acquisition for a bit first. The design of the crypt, however, makes it more likely that

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79 Concilium Moguntinense, ed. Werminghof, MGH Conc. 2.1, p. 272, confirmed during the reign of Louis: Capitula e. concilii excerpta, ed. Boretius, MGH Capit. 1, p. 314. Exceptions could however be made, as the decision of the Council of Mainz indicates: “Nullus mortuus infra ecleiam sepeliatur, nisi episcopi aut abbates aut aut digni presbyteri vel fideles laici”.


81 Nor is the difference between the ‘upper’ and the ‘lower church’ visible or marked on the outside. Widdra-Spiess, “Grabungsbericht”, p. 183.

82 Einhard, Translatio b. 1, c. 9, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 15, p. 243; transl. Dutton, Charlemagne’s courtier, pp. 78-79.

83 The remark that they were destined to stay here forever has more to do with the justification of their later removal than with their actual placement in Steinbach.
it was built to house additional altars as well as the graves of Einhard and Imma than to house important relics.\textsuperscript{84}

We may also wonder what the intended purpose of the church itself was. Einhard himself insists that Michelstadt was a ‘remote piece of property that was well out of most people’s way’ where no holy men could be found:

But where and when could I find such a servant of the Lord Christ, particularly in this region? For although it was known that some monasteries had been founded not far from us, nevertheless, because of the crude regulation of [religious] life in those places, there was no one, or a few men, about whose holiness anything, even the slightest rumor was spoken.\textsuperscript{85}

At the same time, the presence of several priests in Steinbach is mentioned in the \emph{Translatio} more than once and in the charter recording the donation of the property to Lorsch, it is called a \emph{cella}, which makes it likely that the church was meant for a small religious community.\textsuperscript{86} This fits in well with Einhard’s expressed wish to retire here one day and live a life of contemplation – as a layman, it is unlikely that he would do so all by himself.\textsuperscript{87} And in fact, the lack of regulated religiosity in this area might be the perfect reason to found a monastery here.

The church itself also makes clear that it was meant to be seen by people

\textsuperscript{84} See also Crook, \textit{The architectural setting of the cult of saints}, for examples of crypts that were built specifically for this purpose.

\textsuperscript{85} Einhard, \emph{Translatio} b. 1, c. 11, ed. Waitz, \textit{MGH SS} 15, p. 244; transl. Dutton, \textit{Charlemagne’s courtier}, pp. 80-81.

\textsuperscript{86} From the eleventh century onwards, Steinbach is attested as a ‘Propstei’ belonging to Lorsch. Knöpp, “Geschichtliche Überlieferung”, p.27. \textit{Codex Laureshamensis} 141, ed. Glückner, \textit{Codex Laureshamensis}, p. 415. Incidentally, the charter mentions among the constituent parts of the cella basilicas (plural), which means that there were several churches on the site and may suggest that Einhard’s church was not meant as a replacement for the old church.

\textsuperscript{87} His wish to retire in Steinbach is implied by e.g. the \emph{Translatio}, b. 1, c. 1 and his letter to Lupus in which Imma is referred to as no longer his devoted wife, but as of late his ‘dearest sister’; Einhard, \emph{Epistola ad Lupum} no. 3, ed. Marshall, \textit{Servati lupi Epistulae}, pp. 4-6; transl. Dutton, \textit{Charlemagne’s courtier}, pp. 169-171.
other than just the local population of a hundred dependents. The design and floor plan were carefully planned in advance, as the foundations show. Initially, material from older buildings was used, then new bricks (although not of the best possible quality) and ashlars were incorporated in very regular and even masonry.\textsuperscript{88} Most of this masonry was not visible, however, because it was covered in plaster and decorative paintings. Although painted decoration is in itself not unusual, its presence throughout the whole church is an indication of the care and resources put into this church. As Charles McClendon, who compared the oculi above the main apse to spotlights, put it: ‘when newly completed this boxy little church […] must have shone with light and color.’\textsuperscript{89} It is remarkable how much care is taken to create and design different units, each with its own function (such as the entrance hall, the spaces for side-altars and the crypt spaces). The dimensions of the church may be relatively modest, but it could nevertheless easily house up to 200 people in the nave and 25 or so in the choir.\textsuperscript{90} The choir screen indicates that the nave and the choir were meant for different user groups, which confirms the suggested presence of a religious community, as do the spaces adjacent to the choir.\textsuperscript{91} The apses suggest the presence of side-altars here, which would not be needed in a simple parish church.

The interpretation of this church depends for a large part on its date. The Translatio tells us the church was finished at the latest in 827, and its first

\textsuperscript{88} Ludwig, "Baugeschichtliche Zusammenfassung", pp. 53-57. In the parts of the church that were built first, such as the lower parts of the choir and the crypt, large amounts of reused material have been discovered. Ludwig, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{89} McClendon, Origins, p. 138.

\textsuperscript{90} Modern handbooks for architects and fire codes calculate anywhere between 0.3 and 0.7 square meter per person for concentrated assembly rooms without fixed seating. See e.g. Jefferis & Madsen, Architectural drafting, p. 548; Bingely, Building Systems for Interior Designers, p. 350. See also Hall, The hidden dimension. I think a ratio of 0.5 m², accounting for the presence of furniture, barriers etc. and presupposing a smaller need for ‘personal space’ in the Middle Ages than nowadays, is a reasonable estimation. Steinbach’s nave, including side-aisles, is 140 m²; the choir, which could not be as densely populated because of the presence of the altar and possibly seats, was 35 m².

\textsuperscript{91} If the choir screen was placed further west, as was initially plan, the choir would have been even bigger and its interpretation as a monastic church would really be unequivocal.
possible starting date is 815, when Einhard received Michelstadt. Ludwig, Müller and Widdra-Spiess date it between 823/824 and 826. Ludwig’s arguments range from dendrochronology to the political circumstances in the 820s and a comparison with Kornelimünster and the chapel of St. Michael in Fulda, which took approximately two to three years to build. The dendrochronological evidence is inconclusive, but makes a dating in the 820s slightly more likely than an earlier one. As for the political circumstances, Ludwig assumes that retirement started to look attractive to Einhard once he lost his position as Lothar’s tutor in 822, and that Louis’ stay in Frankfurt in the winter of 822/823 was a good opportunity to pay some attention to nearby Michelstadt. He substantiates this idea by saying that churches of a comparable size, such as Kornelimünster, were also built in a few years. Kornelimünster, however, was a very different project, since it was directly sponsored by the emperor. Moreover, it was located close to Aachen, where extensive building-work was already under way, which made it much easier to obtain the necessary building materials and craftsmen. Although I am to a certain extent drawn to Ludwig’s arguments, we might conversely also argue that by the time Einhard had, after an already lengthy career at court, finally managed to lay his hands on this property, he was eager to create a place of his own there, where he could withdraw whenever the need arose. This would speak in favour of an earlier dating, with planning starting in the second half of the 810s. However, since this all remains conjecture, for now we will have to be satisfied with a broad dating between 815 and 827.

Ludwig is not the first to draw a comparison between Kornelimünster and

92 At p. 14-17, Müller proposes a date between 823 and 826. Later on in the book, however, the period 824-826 is mentioned several times. Müller, "Geschichtliche Überlieferung", pp. 14-17; Widdra-Spiess, "Grabungsbericht", pp. 183.

93 Ludwig, "Geschichtliche Überlieferung", pp. 16-17.

94 The matter is further complicated by the 819 charter in which several basilicas are mentioned, Donatio Einhardi et Imma de cella Michlenstat, in Codex Laureshamensis, ed. Glöckner, Codex Laureshamensis 1, pp. 301-302 and the dedication in Michelstadt that is recorded in the Annals of Fulda for 821, Annales Fuldenses antiquissimi, ed. Kurze, MGH SS rer. Germ. 7, p. 138: 'dedicatio ecclesiae Michilinstat in Odonwald', which is difficult to reconcile with Einhard’s claim that in 827 he needed relics to dedicate the church with.
Steinbach. In fact, the prevalent explanation of Steinbach’s design is that it is based on Kornelimünster and that Einhard thereby proclaimed himself an adherent of Benedict of Aniane’s monastic reforms or at least someone up-to-date with contemporary trends. Later on, it is argued, Einhard no longer believed in these ideals and grasped the opportunity that the arrival of the relics offered to build a bigger and better church elsewhere. My objections to the idea of an architecture of reform in general have been sufficiently asserted in the Introduction. The churches of Steinbach and Kornelimünster certainly resemble each other, especially with regard to their basic design with the tripartite entrance, the three apses and their squat nave. Yet there are also many dissimilarities. In Steinbach, the spaces are more cut off from each other. And of course, Steinbach’s crypt has no counterpart in Kornelimünster.

Most problematic about these comparisons is that they lead to an interpretation of Steinbach as a simple, unassuming church, which, as we have seen, is not correct. Moreover, they do not do Einhard justice since he comes across as someone without vision or foresight, who started building in Steinbach and donated the property to Lorsch without thinking about the future consequences of this move. To the contrary, the church in Steinbach was probably perfectly suited to the purposes for which it was built, until the relics arrived. Then, a new solution had to be found.

SELIGENSTADT: NEW ACCOMMODATIONS FOR MARCELLINUS AND PETER

Shortly after the relics of Marcellinus and Peter had come to Steinbach, nightly appearances of the Saints to up to three of Einhard’s companions in one night, twelve nights in a row, made it clear that the Saints wished to be moved to ‘another place’.


A detailed enumeration of all the similarities and differences can be found in Ludwig, pp 51-52. Despite his comparison with Kornelimünster to substantiate his claim of a short building period for Steinbach, Ludwig also has his doubts about the theory.
which was not specified. Einhard emphasized that the transferal did not happen on his initiative:

Why is Einhard so hard-hearted and so stubborn that he refuses to believe these many revelations and supposes that he should scorn these many warnings sent to him from heaven? Go and tell him that what the blessed martyrs want done with their bodies cannot remain undone, even though until now he has put off satisfying their wishes in this matter. But let him now hurry, if he does not want the reward for this deed to pass to another, to fulfil their command and not fail to transport their bodies to the place they have selected.  

Eventually, of course, he succumbed. The reliquary was loaded onto a bier and, accompanied by a large group of locals, the relics were taken to Mulinheim. This turned out to be a good decision. Within seven years of the relics’ arrival, Mulinheim was referred to as Saligunstat, holy place or city of the blessed, still reflected in the town’s current name Seligenstadt.

Immediately after their arrival in Mulinheim the relics were, enclosed in a new reliquary, placed in an apse. The Translatio offers some clues to the design of the church where the relics found shelter: it had eastern, western and southern doors, but apparently did not provide a backdoor for members of the religious community, who entered through a door that was also used by lay people. There was, however, a second floor from which Einhard could see the liturgy being car-

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98 Smith, ”Emending evil ways”, p. 210. As Wagner points out, it is also possible that the site was named after a previous owner called something like Salucho or Salicho. He even suggests that Einhard may have seen this as a good omen. This all seems a bit far-fetched to me. Wagner, ”Die Äbte des Klosters Seligenstadt”, pp. 399-400.
ried out as well as a narthex and bell-tower.¹⁰¹

Later on in the *Translatio*, two churches in Mühlinheim are mentioned: an old one and a new one ‘where the martyrs were then resting.’¹⁰² Einhard noted this in passing when discussing a miraculous healing that happened to a man in clerical habit. It is most likely that the miracle happened in 828, but in any case it was roughly before the middle of the year 830, when the *Translatio* started to circulate.¹⁰³ In combination with the traditional dating of the ‘Einhardsbasilika’ after 830, which will be discussed later on in this chapter, Einhard’s remark has been taken to mean that there were three churches in Mühlinheim.¹⁰⁴ The first one was built before 815. This is the church that already stood at the site when Einhard received the property: ‘et habet basilicam parvam muro factam’.¹⁰⁵ Secondly, there was the church referred to in the *Translatio* as the ‘new’ one (II), which therefore must have been built between 815 and 830 and in which the relics were placed upon their arrival. Thirdly, there was the basilica that is partly still extant – the newest one (III).

The chronology does indeed seem to match, yet this interpretation might also have been prompted by the presence of three churches in Seligenstadt, conveniently identified as the successors of the three churches of Einhard’s time. Recent

¹⁰³ The sequence of events in the *Translatio* is not clear at all and Einhard himself said: “I see nothing of significance to report in the order in which [the events] are set out. What must be considered more [significant] in the description of these miracles is what happened and why something happened rather than when it happened”. In the edition, Waitz seems to start again in 827 at the beginning of Book 3. I do not see why since it seems to me that this miracle has to be dated after the translation of the relics to Mühlheim on 17 January 828 since it takes place in Seligenstadt. Einhard, *Translatio* b. 3, c. 4, ed. Waitz, *MGH SS* 15, p. 249; transl. Dutton, *Charlemagne’s courtier*, p. 94.
¹⁰⁵ *Donatio Ludowici primi Pii Einhardo in Michlenstadt*, ed. Pertz, *MGH SS* 21, pp. 359. Evidence of this early Frankish settlement has been found, in the shape of bones and ceramics, underneath the northern aisle of the Einhardsbasilika: see Schallmayer, "Ausgrabungen in Seligenstadt", p. 40.
publications have cast doubt upon the existence of Carolingian predecessors of the two other churches, the chapel of St. Lawrence and the later parish church, St. Mary or St. Bartholomew. The latter, demolished in 1817, was excavated in the 1960s. Otto Müller and Günther Binding have, based on their findings at that time, reconstructed a hall church (ca. 24 x 10 m) with a rectangular choir and identified it as church II, presumably built by Einhard between 815 and 828.\textsuperscript{106} Excavations in 1994/95 have confirmed the existence of a church of this type, but have dated it to the late twelfth or thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{107} However, only the choir has been excavated, so it is still possible for a Carolingian church to be found in the nave of the present church, underneath the twelfth/thirteenth-century church. Its location on the boundary of the early medieval cemetery speaks in favour of this theory.\textsuperscript{108} In that case, however, we have no idea what it may have looked like and whether it was indeed built by Einhard.

The chapel of St. Lawrence, no longer extant, was for a long time considered the successor of the church that was mentioned in the 815 Donatio, the 'basilica parva'.\textsuperscript{109} Yet excavations that were undertaken in the summer of 1997, along with a re-evaluation of other evidence, have convincingly shown that this chapel was not founded until after the construction of Einhard’s basilica. Its reconstruction shows a rectangular hall church with a square choir and western tower; a design which can be found in this area from the early Middle Ages until well into the thirteenth century. An indication of the date of the church is its dedication to Sts. Lawrence and Lambert. Although both saints were venerated in the early Middle Ages, the dedication of a church to them would have been quite unusual in Einhard’s time.\textsuperscript{110} More persuading though are its position vis-à-vis other buildings and the radiocarbon dating of bones found underneath the choir, both pointing to-

\textsuperscript{106} Oswald, Schaefer & Sennhauser, Vorromanische Kirchenbauten, p. 311.
\textsuperscript{107} Grossbach, "Habet basilica parva muro factam".
\textsuperscript{108} Atzbach, "Die St. Laurentius-Kapelle in Seligenstadt".
\textsuperscript{110} Krüger, "Laurentius", Poulin, "Lambert of Maastricht", Lexikon des Mittelalters online.
wards a foundation date later than that of the Einhardsbasilika.\textsuperscript{111} The chapel of St. Lawrence was demolished in the nineteenth century and four of its columns found their way to the Landesmuseum. It seems that these, contrary to the church itself, do in fact date from Einhard’s time and were originally used in the basilica.\textsuperscript{112}

In short, the archaeological evidence cannot confirm the existence of three churches in Seligenstadt in Einhard’s time and the documentary evidence is far from univocal. The transfer of the relics to a new church is never mentioned in the \textit{Translatio} and it is hence unclear to which churches Einhard’s remarks should be applied. In fact, it is exactly Einhard’s silence that seems to be most telling. Despite all the effort he put into building this church, he never once mentioned it in the \textit{Translatio}. This leaves all options open: when parts of the \textit{Translatio} started circulating in 830, Einhard perhaps had not yet built or planned any churches in Mulheim. Hypothetically, the opposite is also possible: maybe a church was already finished. The most likely alternative, that either planning or building started shortly after 828 but lasted into the later 830s, is found between these extremes.

Apparently, then, Einhard did not find it important to discuss architecture or the built environment in which the relics were kept in a text such as this one, unless there was a compelling reason to do so, as was the case with Steinbach when the new church demanded the quest for relics. Nevertheless, his scattered architectural remarks may prove useful, as may the information provided about the biers that were used to transport the relics, or the reliquaries and precious textiles that adorned them.\textsuperscript{113}

As for Einhard’s patronage in Seligenstadt, we must focus on the material

\textsuperscript{111} Atzbach, ”Die St. Laurentius-Kapelle in Seligenstadt”. The C-14-research resulted in a dating of the bones between 900 and 1010. The axis of the chapel runs parallel to that of the Einhardsbasilika but different from that of the parish church. According to the archaeologists, it would be unlikely for the Einhardsbasilika to copy the orientation of the oldest church if the more recent one deviated from it. This is a strange case of circular reasoning though, since they have just claimed that it is impossible anyway for this chapel to be the pre-815 church.

\textsuperscript{112} Zöller, ”Karolingische Säulen aus Seligenstadt”.

\textsuperscript{113} Günther Binding has already commented on this in detail. See Binding, ”Die Kirchen Einhardts”, pp. 14-15.
evidence itself (figs.1.6-1.9). Perhaps unexpectedly – on the exterior, the neo-Romanesque facade and Late Romanesque/Early Gothic east end prevail – the ‘Einhardsbasilika’ that stands in Seligenstadt today is Carolingian at its core. The nave and transept are for the most part original and the basilica with transept can still be recognized. The western facade, clerestory walls, choir and crypt have unfortunately not withstood the ravages of time and the austere appearance of the nave is partly misleading since large parts of it have been reconstructed to their supposedly Carolingian state. Otto Müller has conducted (building) archaeological research between 1936 and 1955, which has been supplemented by some fragmentary dendrochronological research. Based on Müller’s reconstructions parts of the church such as the ceilings, bases and impost blocks of the piers and the cornice between the arches and the clerestory windows have been restored to their (hypothetical) Carolingian appearance. Müller was apparently planning to write a monograph on the Einhardsbasilika, to be published jointly by the ‘Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Hessen’ and the Einhard-Arbeitsgemeinschaft. Unfortunately, this project seems to have been cancelled due to lack of funding. As a consequence of this, an enormous amount of information on the early medieval building as well as on the renovations of the twentieth century, collected by Müller over the course of 40 years, is unavailable. Perhaps this partly explains the lack of attention paid to this important building over the

114 Müller, Waltjen & Einsingbach, Seligenstadt, ehemalige Benediktiner Abtei, p. 117; Hollstein, Mittel-europäische Eichenchronologie.

115 The clerestory windows have been reconstructed based on four extant Carolingian windows in the transept. The original windows have been replaced by bigger baroque ones. The cornice is a reconstruction as well. Wooden ceilings have been installed in both the nave and the aisles in 1953. Müller, Fleckenstein & Limmer, Die Einhard-Abtei Seligenstadt am Main, pp. 22, 26.

116 Müller, "Kurze Beschreibung der Einhardsbasilika in Seligenstadt", p. 87. I have not come across any monograph on the Basilika either written by Müller or published by the Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Hessen.
last decades. Recently though, a step in the right direction has been taken by Kai Thomas Platz’ survey of the crypt and his ensuing revision of the church’s building history. Although Platz has made some interesting suggestions, what is really needed is a thorough re-evaluation of the site’s archaeology and building history, resulting in the monograph Müller never wrote.

On the basis of Müller’s and Platz’ work, we can reconstruct the ‘Einhardsbasilika’ as a basilica with a nave and side-aisles of ca. 9 and 4.5 m wide respectively, separated from each other by a row of nine arches, resting on square piers. The interior length of the nave was ca. 33m. It seems likely that the church was preceded by a western entrance hall, connected to a western atrium, the outline of which is still indicated by the western flight of stairs, flanked by statues. Westwards of the nave no excavations have taken place. Further east, however, cutting across the second arch of the nave, a foundation running from north to south through the nave and aisles has been found. According to Müller, this was to be the foundation of a ‘Vorhalle’ that was abandoned before the construction of the arches. What Müller does not explain is why the foundation cuts across the rhythm of the arches.

The eastern end of the church was made up by a square choir room

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118 Müller, "Kurze Beschreibung", p. 97.
119 Oswald, Schaefer & Sennhauser, *Vorromanische Kirchenbauten*; Müller, Fleckenstein & Limmer, *Die Einhard-Abtei Seligenstad*.
120 Oswald, Schaefer & Sennhauser, *Vorromanische Kirchenbauten*, p. 309. See below for Kai Thomas Platz’ reinterpretation of this foundation and his criticism of Müller’s interpretation.
ending in an apse slightly more narrow than the nave (wall-width retracted), elevated over a crypt. The choir room was flanked by equally large square annexes, which had the same floor-level as the nave and side-aisles and were accessible from the side-aisles through arches of slightly less than three meters wide. The reconstruction of the elevation of this part of the church is severely hampered by the massive piers of the crossing which were built in the mid-thirteenth century to support the crossing tower. Notwithstanding most descriptions, the annexes and choir room did not constitute a continuous transept. It was interrupted by the crypt that rose over the floor-level of the church. Moreover, as the eastern crossing piers combined with traces higher up on the northwestern pier as well as the continuous foundations indicate, there was some sort of division between the choir and the transept arms. There must have been steps leading up to the raised choir, but their exact appearance and location are unknown. The choir and nave were probably separated by a triumphal arch, which is indicated by a foundation between the western crossing piers.121

The ring crypt that was placed in the apse was accessible through two flights of stairs in the annexes. These were connected to the ‘Spannfun-

121 For several options, see Ludwig, “Die Durchdringung von Mittelschiff und Querschiff”, pp. 129-140.
damenten’ that continued from the nave arcades to the eastern wall of the transept.\textsuperscript{122} The middle corridor of the crypt, running along the central axis of the church, was subdivided by two walls built in various phases. The westernmost one was built against, not interlocked with, the corridor walls, torn down once and rebuilt soon after. Another wall to its east was constructed after the final completion of the western one, thereby creating two enclosed spaces. Two little platforms were set up east of this wall, either to enable visitors to look through some kind of \textit{fenestella} or as the basis of an altar.\textsuperscript{123}

The piers and arches of the nave are made out of brick; most of the walls are made of ashlar and quarystone, partly re-used components of Roman buildings in the surroundings. All of the walls would have been plastered inside and out in Einhard’s time.\textsuperscript{124} We can reasonably assume that the interior had painted decorations, as did Steinbach. The rectangular piers of the nave are constructed over a continuous ‘Bankettmauer’. They rest on attic bases and are crowned by impost blocks that have been reconstructed mainly from preserved remains.\textsuperscript{125} Archaeological finds indicate that the building was roofed with a combination of slates and wooden tiles.\textsuperscript{126} All that is known about the claustral buildings is that they seem to have been located to the south of the church, as is still the case.\textsuperscript{127}

Now that we have some idea of what the church looked like in the ninth century, we may ask ourselves when exactly it should be dated. The beginning of this section has brought to the fore the three Mulinheimer churches referred to in the written sources: the ‘basilica parva’ that existed

\textsuperscript{122} Müller, “Kurze Beschreibung”; Ludwig, “Die Durchdringung von Mittelschiff und Querschiff”, p. 132. Platz interprets these finds as belonging to his phase I, p. 36.


\textsuperscript{124} Müller, “Kurze Beschreibung”; Oswald, Schaefer and Sennhauser, \textit{Vorromanische Kirchenbauten}, p. 382.

\textsuperscript{125} Oswald, Schaefer and Sennhauser, \textit{Vorromanische Kirchenbauten}, p. 309.

\textsuperscript{126} Jacobsen & Schaefer, \textit{Vorromanische Kirchenbauten}, Nachtragsband, p. 382.

\textsuperscript{127} Jacobsen & Schaefer, \textit{Vorromanische Kirchenbauten}, Nachtragsband, p. 382.
before Einhard acquired the estate, the ‘new basilica’ mentioned in the Translatio for 828 and the church that Einhard refers to in letters from the 830s. Although the existence of three churches has never really been questioned, let us keep in mind that it is theoretically possible that the new basilica and the ‘Einhard-basilika’ are one and the same building.128 This would mean that the initiative for the construction of the church was taken before the arrival of the relics, and that it was complete enough for the relics to be deposed here either immediately or shortly after they arrived in Seligenstadt.

Kai Thomas Platz has combined all of these scenario’s by suggesting that this church had a predecessor, which was located at the same spot and had for a large part the same floor plan. Platz has found traces of walls predating the crypt and annexes and combines these with the western foundation found by Müller which has never been explained satisfactorily.129 So unlike other attempts to locate the ‘new basilica’, Platz has found it right underneath the later one. Although this is certainly an enticing suggestion, the evidence as presented by Platz is paper-thin.130

Platz has reconstructed the predecessor of the ‘Einhardsbasilika’ as a triple-aisled church with a square choir, possibly closed by an apse, possibly flanked by two ‘querhausartige Annexe’ which resemble the ones reconstructed above. He fails to explain, however, when and why both churches were built, and what, aside from the crypt, their differences were exactly. In a brief remark, Platz refers to similarities between the oldest church and Steinbach and “related buildings” (does

128 I do not have any additional evidence for this assertion; nor it is my firm belief. However, I do want to point out that there is very little evidence suggesting Einhard built two new churches in Seligenstadt. A ‘new basilica’ might indeed have existed in 827, but for it to be finished then, Einhard would have to have built it long before the Roman relics were in the picture.

129 Platz, Basilika Seligenstadt, pp. 33-38. As mentioned before, Müller thinks the unused western foundation was initially supposed to be the church’s western facade or its connection to a western entryway. Platz waves this aside claiming it does not fit the system of arcades. This is of course a valid argument, but who is to say that when the foundations were laid (perhaps all at the beginning of the project, as in Steinbach?) the measures of the arcades were already established?

130 The existence of a pre-Carolingian building has been suggested before, however. See Meissner, "Zur Baugesichte der Abtei Seligenstadt".
this refer to Jacobsen’s theory?) and thereupon suggests that Einhard built this church and the one in Steinbach around the same time. Yet in Platz’s interpretation, the later rebuilding, which had almost the same shape as its predecessor since it used almost all of the old foundations but with an added crypt, yields a ‘Basilika stadträumischen Typs mit durchgeschossenem Querhaus und Ringkrypta, also eine würdige Stätte für die römischen Märtyrer’. 131 This line of reasoning must be dismissed: the floor plan of the church did not change, even if all of its walls were built anew and the addition of a crypt does not change the type of the church as a whole.

Platz’s argumentation is clearly not yet in order and more archaeological research would be desirable. Nevertheless, the existence of a ‘Vorgängerbau’ may be convincingly argued when combined with a solid time-line and interpretation explaining when and by whom this church may have been built here before the Roman relics were in the picture. While this remains forthcoming, we can only interpret the church described in the foregoing as constructed at once, by Einhard.

The Translatio’s silence about the church-building is partially made up for by several other documents. Traditionally, the start of the construction or at least Einhard’s decision to build a new church has been placed in 830 based on a letter he sent to Louis the Pious in that year. 132 In this relatively long and complicated

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131 Platz, Basilika Seligenstadt. Geschichte und Bauentwicklung, p. 41.
132 Einhard, Epistolae 10, ed. Hampe, MGH Epp 5, p. 114 (Dutton A) Dated by Hampe to ‘830in?’, by
letter, Einhard urged the emperor to continue his sponsorship of Sts. Marcellinus and Peter, by both granting them new benefices and confirming the Saints’ ownership of a piece of land in Seligenstadt that Louis exchanged with Bishop Otgar of Mainz earlier.\textsuperscript{133} In addition, Einhard asked the emperor to ‘increase, decorate, and venerate the resting place of the holy martyrs with both buildings and other necessities’ and added: ‘This building campaign will, of course, be credited to your name.’\textsuperscript{134} The question of course is whether Einhard is speaking about a building campaign that is already under way or about one he is hoping to start in the future and in the latter case, if the design had already been made. By the fall of 834, work had apparently progressed. This shows from a letter Einhard sent (to abbot Folco of Fontanelle or St. Wandrille?) requesting lead for the roof of his new basilica.\textsuperscript{135} Earlier that year, Einhard had been forced to write to Louis the German for support, since Louis the Pious’ orders for certain people to help in the construction were apparently not being followed.\textsuperscript{136} In 836, Louis the Pious visited Seligenstadt.\textsuperscript{137} It is tempting to speculate that he came by to see the finished church, but since this was also the year in which Imma died, Einhard may have had other things on his mind than building.\textsuperscript{138} Perhaps Einhard did not even get to see the church completed before his death in 840. Hrabanus Maurus’ epitaph for Einhard’s successor

\textsuperscript{133} When and why the properties were exchanged remains unclear: did the arrival of the relics have anything to do with it?


\textsuperscript{135} Einhard, \textit{Epistolae} 33, 36, ed. Hampe, \textit{MGH Epp} 5, pp. 126-128 (Dutton 46, 51).

\textsuperscript{136} Einhard, \textit{Epistolae} 33, ed. Hampe, \textit{MGH Epp} 5, p. 126 (Dutton 51). I find this letter hard to interpret – is Einhard simply speaking about labourers, or about more specialised workmen? And what exactly is the role of the bishops mentioned later on?


Ratleig (abbot 840-854) could hint at the latter’s having put the final finish to Einhard’s project. This end date of major building activity in Seligenstadt around the middle of the ninth century is corroborated by ceramics found at the site of dismantled Roman buildings in the surroundings of the basilica.

Additional evidence about the time-frame of the construction of the Basilica is provided by dendrochronology. Analysis of the wood that was used to support the roof seems to indicate that the wood was cut in the first half of the 830s. At the time these timbers were used, the church was not finished, but at least most of the walls must have been standing. Yet as clear-cut as it seems, dendrochronology has its own share of problems and the dates in the 830s come with a margin of plus or minus ten years. There is, then, no source that can provide hard evidence about either the beginning or the finishing date of the church. What we can be sure of is that building work was under way in 834.

One would think that the ‘Einhardsbasilika’ in Seligenstadt has been at the centre of scholarly attention for decades. After all, it is the culmination of Einhard’s building activities, one of the earliest and most important pilgrimage sites for Roman martyrs north of the Alps and one of the few remaining buildings that are at the core Carolingian. Besides, from a purely typological perspective the appearance of a T-shaped basilica north of the Alps remains remarkable. As has become clear by now, it has however received very little attention and has been almost completely ignored in recent scholarship. The basilica in Seligenstadt is of course mentioned in all overviews of early medieval architecture, but apart from Platz’s work there has been hardly any scholarly innovation since Müller, whose work ended in the 1970s.

Einhard is often said to have consciously used a Roman model for this

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139 Hrabanus Maurus, *Carmina*, ed. Dümmler, *MGH Poet. lat.* 2, pp. 240-241: ‘bene gessit opus’ – ‘he has carried on/managed the work(s)’.
140 Schallmayer, “Ausgrabungen in Seligenstadt”, at p. 45.
141 Hollstein, *Mitteleuropäische Eichenchronologie*, p. 117. The trees were cut down in and 835, +/- 10 years.
142 Krautheimer, “Carolingian Revival”.
building which was, at the time, not entirely novel anymore. However, the existence of a few other buildings of this kind amid hundreds of other Carolingian churches does not justify the casualness with which this is claimed. The differences between Steinbach and Seligenstadt and their place in Einhard’s legacy will therefore be further scrutinized in the next section, where both buildings will be placed in their architectural and historical context and in the local field of tension.

EINHARD’S MOTIVES

In the later 810s and 820s, Einhard was doing well. He was finally married, to a woman he seems to have cared for very much, his properties flourished, he was a successful lay abbot of several distinguished monasteries and he was respected by the emperor and at the court. Nevertheless, he comes across as humble and refers to himself as ‘Einhardus peccator’, Einhard the sinner. Sometime in the 820s a slow retreat from court started. Perhaps, as Ludwig believes, it started as early as 822, perhaps only as late as 830 when his health was clearly deteriorating. Yet his spending more time in Seligenstadt did not mean a retreat into silence, for his admonitions continued to reach the court.

Until the translation of the relics in 827, there is no event that stands out as the immediate occasion for building a new church in either Michelstadt or Mungenheim. The relative ease with which Einhard managed the construction of an out of the ordinary church in Steinbach, at least judging from the absence of evidence recording any problems, fits in well with both his own position and that of the realm in the 810s and 820s. He had no difficulties collecting the necessary building materials or artisans, despite his claim about how Steinbach was out of everyone’s way. Moreover, at this time of optimism, it seemed Einhard could in the near future safely retreat and start planning his burial arrangements and liturgical commem-

143 This is what Einhard calls himself in the introduction to the Translatio, but also elsewhere. Einhard, Translatio praefatio, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 15, p. 239; transl. Dutton, Charlemagne’s courtier, p. 69. See Smith, "Einhard: the sinner and the Saints", pp. 60-61.
oration. Instead of a renunciation in favour of Seligenstadt, the donation of the property to Lorsch can also be seen as a way to secure the future of the church as well as his and Imma’s continued commemoration. The most likely explanation for the *arcosolia* in Steinbach is still that they were supposed to house Einhard and Imma’s grave, which indicates that this was to be their final destination and that despite the era of optimism, there were no plans to build a bigger and better church elsewhere. The church is very much suited to the purposes for which it was built: apart from the funerary function, it can accommodate both a monastic and a lay community while at the same time making an impression on visitors through its height and colourful interior. These user groups are not, as has been claimed, strictly separated: the crypt provides three altars for the priests but is accessible from the nave aisles, which are part of the lay area.

By the time the church was finished, the situation had changed drastically. The birth of Charles in 823, ignominious military defeats in 827 and the unforeseen consequences of the banishment from court of Matfrid and Hugh were all ingredients of an explosive cocktail. Einhard took it upon himself to play an important role in guiding the emperor out of this predicament. He presented both the twelve capitula based on the vision of Alberic and the account of the exorcism of Wiggo to the 828 winter assembly in Aachen. Both documents voiced a need for correction and derived their authority from Marcellinus and Peter. The saints are deployed in a similar way in the *Translatio*, which was probably written after or during the 830 rebellion.

The *Translatio* reveals a rather precise knowledge of the circumstances in which the relics of Marcellinus and Peter were kept, which is confirmed by the archaeology of the site. Like many other martyrs such as Tiburtius and the Quattro Coronati, they had been buried on the *Inter duos lauros* cemetery along the Via La-

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144 Matfrid and Hugh were stripped of their offices as a punishment for their –alleged – role in the defeat in the Spanish March in 827. Although they were presented as grave sinners and later ‘evil schemers’, they may have functioned merely as scapegoats. To punish them this gravely was not one of Louis’ best decisions: it caused a lot of unrest since it cut their entire networks – which were very big – off from their traditional channels of patronage. De Jong, *The penitential state*, esp. pp. 148-159.
bicana. Close to the Constantinian Basilica and the mausoleum of Helena, Marcellinus and Peter had been venerated there since the fourth century. As Jean Guyon’s excavations have shown, the tufa block incorporating their graves (one above the other) had by Einhard’s time been transferred to a crypt, which was covered by a chapel offering a direct connection to the crypt by means of a fenestella or something similar. Physical access to the grave was, however, only possible from outside of the chapel. The description of the church of Tiburtius, located on the Via Labicana, about three miles from the city in the Translatio, accords with Guyon’s finds. Ratleik and Hunus travelled to the church with a hired guide, and after having examined the tomb of Tiburtius himself, they descended ‘in cryptam eidem basilicae contiguiam’: touching upon, near to Tiburtius’ basilica. After lifting the tombstone in this crypt they found, in the upper part of the sepulcher (cf. Guyon), the body of Marcellinus which could be identified on the basis of an inscription. Only on second thought did they return to take Peter as well. Whereas at first they tried (in vain) to open the tomb of the martyr in Tiburtius’ church, Einhard later on tells of Hilduin’s priest searching for the relics of Tiburtius and eventually taking only some dust from a cavity in the tomb of Marcellinus and Peter, presumably left by the body of Tiburtius that once lay there. So apparently the supposed location of Tiburtius’ relics was not unequivocal. Of course, this would only confirm Einhard’s assertion that whatever Hunus returned to Francia with were not genuine relics of Tiburtius. By means of the rather exact geographic references and the reference to the inscription found in the grave of Marcellinus, Einhard was trying to convince his audience that the relics he kept were ‘the real thing’. The precise spatial indications could however only serve this purpose if his readership was familiar with

\[145\] Seeliger, "Die Geschichte der Katakombe 'Inter duas lauros'", pp. 59-90. Despite Einhard’s claims to the contrary, the martyrs were well taken care of and venerated in the catacombs.

\[146\] Guyon, Le cimetière aux deux lauriers.

\[147\] Einhard, Translatio b. 1, c. 4, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 15, p. 241; transl. Dutton, Charlemagne’s courtier, pp. 74-75.

Rome’s sacral topography, which apparently they were.\textsuperscript{149} The need to prove the veracity of the relics and legitimize their transfer was partially instigated by the debate on iconoclasm that flared up again in the 820s. Central to the debate were questions such as: should relics be worshipped at all (and if so, adored or venerated), what are the possibilities of intercession by saints and how can saints have a ‘Doppelpräsenz’ both in their relics and in heaven.\textsuperscript{150} This was part of a more general need for reflection amongst Carolingian scholars regarding the communication between God and man as well as the role of saints on earth. Although in essence a theological debate, this had ecclesiological as well as pastoral consequences. Depriving them of the possibility of the intercession of saints and of their inspiring example might alienate the common believers from the body of the church, as well as endanger its hierarchy and material basis. Dealing with relics in the wrong way, however, might seriously harm the salvation of those same believers as well as the authority of the elite and the welfare of Frankish society in general.\textsuperscript{151} Einhard’s awareness of this debate shows in his repeated assertion that the miracles discussed are not of the saints’ own agency, but performed through them by God. As Christ’s earthly substitutes though, they are present on earth in a very real, almost physical way.

Trying to promote a new cult in Francia, Einhard was suffering from two distinct disadvantages: he was not a bishop and had no corpus of texts or local tradition to fall back on. Nevertheless, the acceptance of the relics of Marcellinus and Peter went relatively smoothly because of Einhard’s own high status as well as their extraordinary prestige as Roman martyrs.\textsuperscript{152} His choice of Roman martyrs is not necessarily a sign of his ‘Romorientiertheit’; it was the best option for him

\textsuperscript{149} This reminds one of Pope Paschal’s similar strategy to prove the authenticity of translated relics. See Goodson, \textit{The Rome of Pope Paschal I}.

\textsuperscript{150} Bronwenn, “The Western reaction to the council of Nicaea II”; Noble, \textit{Images, Iconoclasm and the Carolingians}.

\textsuperscript{151} Heydemann, “Text und Translation ”.

\textsuperscript{152} About the Roman attitude towards relics, and translations to the West, see also Goodson, \textit{The Rome of Pope Paschal I}.
since no local cult was available. Einhard presented the *Translatio* as the reflection of God’s deeds on earth. He does not have a choice; these events have to be told. By positioning himself in the roles of both narrator and protagonist, Einhard made sure that he maintained control over the interpretation of these events. Whereas the ‘Rhetorik des göttlichen Befehls’ is of crucial importance in the instances of *admonitio*, the exclusive right to provide an explanation of the meaning of events is most important in those instances that directly concern the relics. When viewing relics as in essence ‘empty’ signifiers or signs, these become valuable and useful only when the beholder sees them as signifying something. However, this strategy made Einhard dependent on the cooperation of his readers. In the epilogue, he therefore asks disbelievers and those who diminish the glory of the saints not to read the text. Einhard needed his readership to be on his side from the start and to believe that he was trustworthy, despite being a layman. Only then could he use his position as eye-witness to convince his readership of the truth of the miracles he relates. Although his letters, for example, also convok an image of intimacy between Einhard and ‘his’ Saints, this personal perspective remains, in the *Translatio*, most of all a conscious strategy.

The basilica in Seligenstadt might serve a similar purpose as the *Translatio*. The display of the relics in a suitable church reinforced Einhard’s message and from 828 onwards he could very much use this back-up. The initiative for the building project may have been taken any time between 828 and 830. As has been argued above, Einhard’s letter to Louis the Pious does not have to be read

153 See Fried, “Ludwig der Fromme, das Papsttum und die fränkische Kirche”, for a plea in favour of Einhard’s ‘Romorientiertheit’.
154 Heydemann, “Text und Translation”, pp. 119-123
155 Heydemann, “Text und Translation”, p. 120. About *admonitio*, see Jong, *The penitential state*, pp. 119-141, 157-164.
156 By the time they got to the Epilogue it may have been too late. In the Metz manuscript the actual Preface is preceded by a similar salutation. Heinzelmann, “Einhards *Translatio Marcellini et Petri*”, p. 293.
157 Julia Smith tends to overdo the personal relationship between Einhard and ‘his’ Saints a little, although she does not say all that much about the *Translatio*, “Einhard: the sinner and the Saints”.

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as evidence that building works in Seligenstadt only started after this letter, dated tentatively to the beginning of 830 by Hampe, was sent.\textsuperscript{158} And even if the building works did only start in 830, the planning process may have started earlier. Considering the situation in the empire in 830, with Pippin and Lothar rebelling against their father, 830 was actually a very bad time to start such a big project.\textsuperscript{159} The letters moreover inform us that exactly at the height of the crisis, in April 830, Einhard had fallen ill and was therefore unable to follow the empress to Compiègne.\textsuperscript{160} His letter to Lothar reminding him of his duty to honour his parents moreover shows that Einhard was personally involved in the conflict.

Considering the importance of Marcellinus and Peter for Einhard personally but also for the realm at large, it is not surprising that Einhard housed them in a new church in Mulinheim, which was far more easily accessible than Steinbach. This as well as the design of the church has nothing to do with the alleged decline of the influence of Benedict of Aniane’s reform agenda but everything with Einhard’s changed circumstances. He now needed a church that could underline the authority of Marcellinus and Peter, proclaim their Roman origin and welcome those seeking their assistance with open arms. Steinbach did not shun visitors, but it was not geared towards them either.\textsuperscript{161} Seligenstadt, on the other hand, primarily addressed the outside world through its wide nave and open view towards the apse. The transept arms could be used by the clerics serving this church for services held in relative privacy, yet the \textit{Translatio} gives the impression that their main task was to take care of the pilgrims visiting the shrine. A large part of the church was therefore accessible to visitors, who could access the relics through the ring crypt.

\textsuperscript{158} ‘830in?’ Einhard, \textit{Epistolae} 10, ed. Hampe, MGH \textit{Epp} 5, pp. 113 (Dutton A).
\textsuperscript{159} The first or last quarter is perhaps a possibility, but in April 830 e.g., when Smith claims Hampe dates the letter, both Einhard and Louis had other things on their minds. Smith, “Einhard: the sinner and the Saints”, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{160} Einhard, \textit{Epistolae} 14, 15, ed. Hampe, MGH \textit{Epp} 5, pp. 117-118 (Dutton 41, 42).
\textsuperscript{161} The \textit{Translatio} indicates that alms were distributed from Steinbach. The poor were welcome, but there were no reasons for visitors from far away to visit the church. Einhard, \textit{Translatio} b. 1, c. 12, ed. Waitz, MGH \textit{SS} 15, p. 244; transl. Dutton, \textit{Charlemagne’s courtier}, p. 81.
In Seligenstadt, Einhard was faced with more building-related problems than in Steinbach. He had to appeal for help to Louis the Pious and Louis the German and struggled to gather the necessary means and materials.\textsuperscript{162} Despite the considerable effort it cost him, he chose to go ahead with the building project during the critical years, which shows how important it was to him. Here, Einhard was trying to create a sacred place, a new summit in the sacred topography of the area around the middle Rhine valley. This becomes very clear from the \textit{Translatio}. From his holy place, away from the world, Einhard, by means of his Saints and the visions they inspired, called for \textit{correctio}. Einhard was not, as per the traditional view, cut off from the world and the court; he was still very much connected to it, but he needed this sanctified retreat to make a real difference in the world.\textsuperscript{163}

Again, it was necessary for the material shape of this holy place to reflect and underscore its religious importance. As in his literary works, ‘[Einhard] made deliberate choices as to the medium that was to convey the message’.\textsuperscript{164}

Einhard’s inspiration for his building projects may have originated in any or all of the spheres of influence that he was a part of. Springing to mind most readily perhaps is his ‘former’ place of residence, the court in Aachen and its architecture of imperial connotations. Next were the men with whom he exchanged letters as well as those he stood on less friendly terms with, such as Hilduin, who were also having buildings constructed. And then, of course, there was the local field of tension: the push and pull of the two major abbeys Lorsch and Fulda as well as the local architectural traditions. His building projects were also closely connected to his other activities, as a courtier, an intellectual, a patron to his vassals, as well as to the circumstances in which he found himself in these capacities. Einhard had grown up with the architecture of Fulda, where he spent a large part of his youth. Fulda will be discussed in detail in chapter 3. For now, I will therefore focus only on those parts of Fulda’s building history that may have

\textsuperscript{163} Jong, \textit{The penitential state}, pp. 67-72.
\textsuperscript{164} Jong, \textit{The penitential state}, p. 72.
been important for Einhard. When he arrived, the church that was in use was the one built by the monastery’s founder Sturmi and dedicated in 751. Both Sturmi and Boniface were buried in this relatively simple but big church, which had an eastern choir and may have been aisled. Not long afterwards, between 790 and 792, abbot Baugulf (779-802) commissioned Ratgar, one of the monks, to build a brand new abbey church over the axis of the old one. Its eastern altar was surrounded by an apse and the new aisled nave became twice as long as the old one, thereby putting the grave of Boniface, previously located at the western end of the old church, in the middle of the new church. After Baugulf’s resignation, Ratgar became abbot himself and added a western transept and apse to the church. This was long after Einhard had left Fulda, but it may nevertheless have influenced him. The size and design of the Ratger-church were relatively unusual, and so was the controversy that surrounded it. Even after leaving the monastery, Einhard must have heard about its new church in the corridors of court, especially after the *Supplex Libellus*. He was therefore acutely aware of what ‘immense and superfluous building projects’ could do to a community and to the career of its instigator.

The abbey church of Lorsch, the other major pilgrimage site in the region with the relics of Nazarius, was consecrated in the presence of Charlemagne in 774. It has proven difficult to reconstruct this church as it was built on a platform of mortared rubble instead of on masonry foundations. Although the rough outline of a basilica, ca. 15 m wide and over 40 m long, was found, its eastern ending is unclear since this has been replaced by a funerary chapel in the late ninth century. Subsequently the church burned down twice. Friedrich Behn, who last excavated the site in the 1920s and 1930s, held that there were no traces of an eastern transept. He did, however, believe a rectangular altar-room could be reconstructed,

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165 See below, chapter 3.
166 See chapter 3.
168 Apparently the church was built on a ‘sandy hillock’, McClendon, *Origins*, p. 91. Reconstructions are further hampered by the lack of (relatively) recent excavations and clear reports.
but more recent research holds that the design of the church’s eastern end is completely unknown.\textsuperscript{170} The other side of the church, where the entrance was located, can be reconstructed with slightly greater certainty. Platz reconstructs a tripartite structure similar to that in Steinbach with a central space more narrow than the nave and two flanking side-rooms. This entrance belonged to a separate building phase (II), which Platz dates in the reign of Louis the Pious on the basis of formal similarities with Kornelimünster and Steinbach. The church may have been preceded by a (double?) atrium, which enveloped the structure now known as the Lorsch ‘Königshalle’. This gateway, lavishly decorated on both its exterior and its interior and a familiar sight for anyone who has studied the art and architecture of the Middle Ages, has been the subject of a heated debate for decades. Proposed dates range from early in the reign of Charlemagne to late in that of Louis the German (806-876). As for its inspiration and function, the most popular theories take a secular perspective, either viewing it as a triumphal arch erected in the honour of Charlemagne, ‘copying’ the Arch of Constantine, or as a reception hall and place where justice was dispensed.\textsuperscript{171} The reconstruction and dating of the church, atri-

\textsuperscript{170} Kai Thomas Platz, who was in charge of some of the most recent excavations, occasionally depicts an eastern apse in his reconstructions, but there is no material evidence for it. Platz, “Archäologische Forschungen”; ”Die karolingischen Klosterkirchen von Fulda und Lorsch”; ”Fulda und Lorsch”.

\textsuperscript{171} The non-religious interpretation is mostly due to the lack of religious imagery in the main room on the first floor. It was not uncommon for (royal) reception halls to be situated on an upper storey, yet these were normally much bigger. Moreover, chapels on the first floor of entrance halls are also known. On the level of a purely formal or stylistic comparison, the Torhalle does indeed resemble the triumphal arch. However, the question is how this model travelled north and what it was meant to convey. Charlemagne never returned to Lorsch after his visit in 774 and it is highly unlikely that the Torhalle was built for that occasion since the visit was not planned ahead. Charles McClendon has come up with an interpretation that combines religious and secular meanings. He suggests that the Torhalle was a copy of the gatehouse of St. Peter’s in Rome where Pope Hadrian I received Charlemagne in 774. This is indeed a fascinating suggestion but as McClendon has already acknowledged himself, it is not exactly a watertight theory. McClendon mentions as the main problems that the Roman gateway was never freestanding and that one or more of its arches had been fitted with doors by 774. So McClendon returns to the triumphal arch as the primary source of inspiration and proposes a date around either the year 784 or 794, suggesting that it was built for the anniversary of Charlemagne’s visit. I fail to see though why a ‘northern’ monastery, albeit a royal one, would build a triumphal arch in its front yard and what kind of message this would convey. It is very well possible that a
um and Königshalle are too uncertain to draw any further conclusions here.

Written sources do indicate that the church, dedicated in 774, was finished and further embellished by abbots Helmerich (778-784), Richbod (784-804) and Adelog (804-837) who added among other things claustral buildings to the complex. This shows once again that building a monastery was an ongoing process that did not end when the church was brought into use. This process took decades and the construction of the gateway was probably part of this continuous movement. Building activities in Lorsch seem to have come to a temporary standstill in the early ninth century, only to be taken up again when the eastern Frankish kings starting with Louis the German († 876) came to be buried here.

Although we know hardly anything about the building history of Lorsch, it is an excellent example of the kinds of ‘Reichsklöster’ that were built in the last quarter of the eighth century: large complexes meant to house hundreds of monks. Perhaps a standardized layout had not yet been found or perhaps it did not matter if they did not all look similar. In fact, as the ‘Torhalle’, whenever it should be dated, shows, there was plenty of room for local innovations.

At first sight, there seem to be no direct architectural connections between Lorsch and Seligenstadt. Einhard did not copy or refer to Lorsch in his architecture, nor did the arrival of Marcellinus and Peter instigate any (re)buildings in Lorsch. Of course, there could be hardly any need for this since construction work had just ceased. Actually, one might even speculate if the artisans formerly working in Lorsch found new employment in Seligenstadt.

This brief overview of Lorsch and Fulda shows that there are no immediately apparent parallels. At first sight, the church in Seligenstadt has more in common with the Ratgar-church than with that of Lorsch: most of all its overall appearance as an aisled basilica with a transept and apse. Yet there are also many differences: the orientation of the transept, which was not continuous in Seligen-

Roman model was consciously used, but it would be good to see some other sources that corroborate this idea. McClendon, Origins, pp. 94-104. See also Jacobsen, "Die Lorscher Torhalle"; Untermann, Architektur im frühen Mittelalter, pp. 146-147.

172 References in Oswald, Schaefer & Sennhauser, Vorromanische Kirchenbauten, p. 179.
stadt, as well as the ring crypt versus the hall crypts of Fulda.

It is difficult to read the relationships between these three churches and communities from their architecture. However, we know that before the arrival of Marcellinus and Peter, Fulda and Lorsch were the two main players in the region, attracting crowds of pilgrims as well as the attention of the rulers and aristocracy, along with their patronage. If Einhard wanted ‘his’ relics to stand a serious chance against this competition, he had to make sure they were well turned out. A ‘Roman’ church was an excellent way to underscore the place of origin of Marcellinus and Peter, perhaps partly in response to Fulda’s Roman bonds.

To look for architectural parallels with Aachen or other palatinates would be a bit far-fetched since the buildings there are worlds apart with regard to their functions, their architectural context and their patrons. As has been discussed above, parallels have in the past been drawn between Steinbach and Kornelimünster and Maursmünster on the one hand and Seligenstadt and Saint-Denis and St. Prassede and other Roman churches on the other. There are indeed formal resemblances between Steinbach and Kornelimünster and other basilica’s of the tri-cellular type, such as Hrabanus’ Liobakirche that will be analysed in chapter 3. Yet Steinbach is not a copy of any of these churches and there is no evidence proving Einhard’s desire to imitate any of these churches. The crypt, for example, with its separate spaces and accessibility from the aisles, shows that the design of Steinbach was unique and created especially by or for the needs of this patron at a particular moment in time. All the same, Steinbach’s builder followed contemporary building practices and established models.

The similarities between Seligenstadt and ‘Roman type churches’ such as Saint-Denis and St. Prassede are more difficult to evaluate. The Roman origin of the ring crypt is undeniable, and I believe it was also viewed as Roman by Einhard and his contemporaries. Yet it was at the same time very practical, and was incorporated here in a church that is not necessarily Roman in other aspects. It does not do justice to the rest of the design to classify the church solely as Roman.

Most problematic about the interpretation of Einhard’s churches as quota-
tions of others is the value judgement that comes with it. It makes Einhard an un-
critical follower of trends, who took the wrong path for a little while but was quick
to correct himself and return to the hey-day of Carolingian architecture. Charles
McClendon put it as follows:

[...] the distinctly Roman form of the basilica in Seligenstadt represents a
conscious rejection of the style of church building during the first decade
and a half of Louis’s reign and a return to the ideals of the first flowering
of the Carolingian Renaissance. [...] In fact, one could go so far as to say
that, in spite of its late date, the church of SS. Marcellinus and Peter is the
last monument of the age of Charlemagne.\textsuperscript{173}

In my opinion, it would be more productive to view both ‘types’ as part of a rep-
ertory of forms that Einhard could pick from at any moment, depending on his
own circumstances, instead of interpreting both churches from the viewpoint of
the pro-Benedict of Aniane movement and its rejection. Several options were open
to him at all times, and which one he chose at a particular moment depended on a
great number of considerations.

Einhard was not our average patron of monastic architecture. His com-
munities in Steinbach and Seligenstadt were of a different category than the royal
abbeys we will study in the following chapters. Not only were they much smaller;
they could also not fall back on a long and respectable tradition or on a large num-
ber of influential patrons. Their founder was not a holy man – he was not even a
monk or a priest. Yet as Julia Smith has shown, the case of Einhard demonstrates
that the boundaries between religious and secular, lay and monastic, were not as
clear-cut as we sometimes assume.\textsuperscript{174} He may have been a layman, but he was ed-
ucated in Fulda and he had ample experience as a lay abbot by the time he started
building the churches in Steinbach and Seligenstadt. It need therefore not surprise

\textsuperscript{173} McClendon, \textit{Origins}, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{174} Smith, "Einhard: the sinner and the Saints".
us that the architecture that arose under his leadership also melded a host of different functions and influences into one coherent whole.

That the range of possibilities and forms available to Einhard and his contemporaries was indeed wide becomes clear when we look at Hilduin, Einhard’s competitor for the relics of Marcellinus and Peter, who was, as it happens, abbot at Saint-Denis near Paris, where the most well-known example of a ‘T-shaped basilica’ stood. Reading between the lines of the *Translatio*, one sees that the relationship between Einhard and Hilduin was troubled by much more than just the struggle over the possession of the relics. Einhard grasps any opportunity to give Hilduin bad press with both hands: whenever Hunus or ‘Hilduin’s man’, as he is constantly referred to, does something wrong, this can be lead back to Hilduin. Unlike Marcellinus and Peter, Tiburtius chooses to stay in Rome so instead of acquiring Tiburtius’ real relics, Hilduin has to settle for some dust left by his bones. So his priest, afraid of returning home empty-handed, steals a part of the relics of Marcellinus and Peter. To make matters worse, after finally giving back the relics to Einhard, Hilduin even has the nerve to demand payment for this. As becomes clear later on, the saints are highly displeased that their bodies were not kept intact.175 Finally, Einhard also uses the *Translatio* to discredit Hilduin’s saint, Sebastian, who apparently lacked the power to heal a deaf and mute man from Tournai properly. Of course, Marcellinus and Peter could do better than that.176

But let us not allow Einhard to shape our image of Hilduin too much, and proceed to look at his activities as a patron of architecture.

### 1.3 HILDUINUS ARCHICAPELLANUS

So who was this Hilduin who was just as keen as Einhard on acquiring Roman rel-

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ics? A secular priest who is invisible in the sources at first. Once he does appear in the sources, however, he holds the highest positions. He was a formidable rival for Einhard, to say the least: abbot of several monasteries, including St. Médard in Soissons, Saint-Germain-des-Prés and St. Denis as well as arch-chaplain to Louis the Pious from 819 until 830. In this capacity as head of the royal chapel, he was the courtier closest to the emperor, the *ambasciator* who also took care of worldly matters for Louis. For most bishops and religious communities, Hilduin was the gateway to the emperor. Like his predecessor Fulrad, Hilduin also seems to have used his position as archchaplain to further advance the interests of Saint-Denis. This sometimes makes him appear a bit unsavoury. But perhaps this is just a matter of hindsight, knowing that Hilduin sided with Lothar and the rebels in the 830 revolt against Louis the Pious. Hilduin then lost his abbacies and the chaplainhood and was ordered to spend the winter in an army camp near Paderborn. However, as most other courtiers (except for Wala, whom we will encounter in chapter 4), he was already forgiven the next year and regained control over two of his monasteries, probably St. Denis and Soissons.

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177 For sources proving that Hilduin never took a monastic vow, see Semmler, "Saint-Denis", p 108.
178 Depreux, *Prospeographie*, pp. 250-256. From 814 onwards, Hilduin is attested as abbot of St. Denis. A hypothetical date of birth around 775 (as in Lexikon des Mittelalters) or perhaps a bit later seems reasonable. Prelog, "Hilduin v. St-Denis", Lexikon des Mittelalters online. His dying day is equally unclear, but was probably 22 November in one of the years between 855 and 859. Leveillain, "Wandalbert de Prüm".
SAINT-MÉDARD: AN ABUNDANCE OF SAINTS

St. Médard in Soissons, headed by Hilduin, was the site where the emperor was held in the custody of his eldest son Lothar in October 833, and it was in the abbey church that he eventually assented to a full-blown *paenitentia publica*. The present bishops drew up a document recording their view of the events surrounding Louis’ penance (referred to as the *Relatio episcoporum*), which briefly describes the setting in which the spectacle took place. It happened in the basilica of Saint Mary, where the bodies of Saints Médard and Sebastian were resting. Here, the emperor prostrated himself before the altar over a *cilicium*, a hair shirt, and confessed his sins in the presence of all the people – as many as the church could hold.

We may ask ourselves why the church of Saint-Médard was chosen as the backdrop to this event. Soissons was conveniently located close to Compiègne, where Louis’ fate was discussed by the assembled bishops in the weeks leading up to the public penance. That Saint-Médard was in the hands of a loyal supporter of Lothar – Hilduin – may however also have played a part. It is possible that the church mentioned in the *Relatio episcoporum* was built by Hilduin himself. Written sources about Saint-Médard’s building history are very scarce, and only offer four hints about the times at which building activities took place: in the sixth, ninth, twelfth and sixteenth centuries. Chlothar I (ca. 497-561) and his son Sigebert built a basilica over the grave of St. Médard († ca. 545) and richly decorated and endowed it. Both kings were buried in Saint-Médard, making it the predecessor of

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184 Having once imprisoned the emperor was apparently considered something to be proud of in the nineteenth century: according to Lefèvre-Pontalis, "La date de la crypte Saint-Médard de Soissons", pp. 310-312.


186 These four were first identified by Lefèvre-Pontalis and are often repeated. It is likely, however, that there were more periods of building activity, e.g. after the Norman attack at which “Sicfridus famosissimam aecclesiam beati Medardi igne cremavit”. *Annales Vedastini* a. 886, ed. Pertz, *MGH SS* 2, p. 203.
Saint-Denis as a Merovingian royal mausoleum. By the ninth century, the church was in need of a replacement, which is said to have been initiated by Hilduin, sponsored by Louis the Pious and dedicated when it was almost finished by Charles the Bald on 27 August 841.\textsuperscript{187}

Nowadays, all that remains of the abbey church is a crypt, which is made up of a transverse corridor giving access to seven eastern chapels (figs. 1.10-1.12). To the west of the corridor, three rectangular chambers are located. All of these spaces are vaulted. A large part of the crypt as it is today is the result of later alterations to the original structure: e.g. the polygonal south-eastern chapel, the eastern ends of the chapels and the vaulting of most of the corridor are all not original. The structure is made up mostly of large stonework using Roman \textit{spolia}.

The crypt itself has been dated to the sixth, ninth, eleventh and twelfth centuries.\textsuperscript{188} The sources hardly mention the existence of a crypt, and are therefore not very helpful. This leaves us with (building) archaeological and stylistic analysis. Based on the former, Defente has dated the crypt to the ninth century; based on the latter, Werner Jacobsen has pleaded for an eleventh-century dating. The first to suggest that the crypt belonged to the building period in the second quarter of the ninth century was Eugène Lefèvre-Pontalis, in the late nineteenth century. His hypothesis has consequently found general acceptance, and has been corroborated by Defente’s research. John Ottaway and later Werner Jacobsen have, however, challenged it, mainly on the grounds that its construction and style were not imaginable before the eleventh century and that there are no Carolingian crypts comparable to this one.\textsuperscript{189} Both authors however interpret later interventions (the niches


\textsuperscript{188} For overviews of previous datings, see Lefèvre-Pontalis, “La date de la crypte Saint-Médard de Soissons”, pp. 318-323; Jacobsen, “Die ehemalige Abteikirche Saint-Médard bei Soissons”, pp. 256-259.

\textsuperscript{189} Ottaway, “Traditions architecturales dans le Nord de la France”, pp. 168-169. Ottaway proposes the last quarter of the eleventh century, Jacobsen its first half. Interestingly, both authors use different and sometimes contrasting arguments. These sometimes lay bare the subjectivity of dating by means of stylistic analysis: whereas Ottaway dates the crypt in the late eleventh century based on stylistic
cut out of the walls, the vault of the corridor) as belonging to the original structure and base their dating partly on these elements. Disregarding these leaves them with few and sometimes far-fetched arguments. At the core of this debate is the question in how far it is permissible to use comparisons between Carolingian buildings for purposes of reconstruction, interpretation or dating. The amount of Carolingian material at our disposal is so limited and fragmentary that it is simply not enough to point to a few well-chosen examples that have some (dis)similarities with the building under scrutiny. Moreover, both authors struggle with a complete lack of written sources suggesting any building activity in the eleventh century.

For the ninth, the situation is more favourable: texts including the *Vita S. Medardi*, Odilo’s *Translatio*, a Soissons addition to Nithard’s *Histories* and an – albeit forged – charter by Charles the Bald, refer to the destruction of the Merovingian church and the consequent rebuilding by Hilduin and the *praepositus* Roduinus (probably after the arrival of the relics of St. Sebastian), its support by Louis the Pious and its dedication by Charles the Bald in 841.\(^{190}\) That there was a ninth-century building phase is not contested. The question is whether the crypt now standing in Soissons was part of it; a question I would answer in the affirmative.

In its original, ninth-century state the crypt consisted of three western and five eastern spaces located around the central corridor. The western rooms end in

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loculi ca. 1 m wide and 2 m deep, which may have been used for burial or the deposition of relics. The three central eastern spaces are located directly opposite to the western ones. The middle space is slightly wider than the others (ca. 3.3 vs. 3 m). The outer eastern spaces are accessible from the far ends of the central corridor, and are longer than the other rooms. A seventeenth-century drawing of the church shows that an altar was placed directly above the central western loculus, which makes it likely that at least at that time the relics of Médardus were placed there. This could of course hark back to the early medieval situation. If Médardus rested in the central loculus, the outer two may have been inhabited by Sebastian and e.g. Gregory, both of whom are also mentioned in the annals. This leaves us with five other spaces of which we do not know how far eastwards they extended or what their eastern closing looked like. They could have been used to house relics or as small chapels where altars were placed. Shallow recesses of various shapes and sizes are carved out of the walls of these five spaces. The irregularity of the niches and their presence in the chapels that were still open recesses between the spaces of the crypt in the ninth century makes it most likely to me that the niches were hewn out at least a while after the construction of the crypt instead of being part of the original plan.

The Carolingian church was ravaged by a horde of Normans in 886. It is very well possible that the foundations of both the Merovingian and the Carolingian church can still be found, but the limited excavations done so far have not discovered them. Denis Defente, who has conducted several small archaeological investigations, has limited himself to the exterior of the church so as not to disturb

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191 There is no consensus in the literature about the dating of these cavities. See Crook, *The architectural setting of the cult of the Saints*, pp. 109-118.

the site before a thorough archaeological survey can be undertaken.\textsuperscript{193} His findings do however enable him to reconstruct an aisled basilica of roughly 96 by 33 m with a ‘bloc façade’ of ca. 45 m width. The foundations of both this western block and the crypt are very heavy, which suggests that at either end of the church a volume much taller than the nave arose.\textsuperscript{194} A more detailed reconstruction of the church is unfortunately not possible at this time.\textsuperscript{195} The debate over when the crypt and the church it was part of were built has drawn attention away from the other questions, such as who initiated the rebuilding, for what reasons and why this design was chosen.\textsuperscript{196}

Hilduin became abbot of Saint-Médard in 826 or shortly before. In this year, pope Eugenius gave him permission to translate the relics of the Roman martyr Sebastian, who was and continued to be highly venerated in Rome, to Soissons.\textsuperscript{197} While the relics were kept ‘inhumata in loculo […] iuxta tumulum sancti Medardi’, many miracles happened.\textsuperscript{198} This led large numbers of pilgrims to travel

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\textsuperscript{193} Defente, "Saint-Médard de Soissons et son église principale", p. 42.
\textsuperscript{194} Defente, "Saint-Médard de Soissons et son église principale", pp. 665-666.
\textsuperscript{195} Defente has suggested a U-shaped choir with an axial chapel, yet I cannot entirely concur with his grounds to do so. "Saint-Médard de Soissons et son église principale", p. 658.
\textsuperscript{196} Jean Hubert is one of the few to really attempt an architectural analysis. Unfortunately he is, for many reasons, not especially successful., "Les cryptes de St. Médard de Soissons et l’art Carolingien".
\textsuperscript{197} The relics of Pope Gregory the Great may have accompanied those of Sebastian from Rome, although it is problematic that many of the sources until at least the tenth century do not mention Gregory. See Müller, "Die Nithard-Interpolationen", pp. 699-702.
\textsuperscript{198} \textit{Annales regni Francorum}, ed. Kurze, \textit{MGH SS rer. Germ} 6, p. 171. The use of ‘in loculo’ is interesting
to Soissons, which caused some frustration among Hilduin’s contemporaries. Hilduin, however, was not yet satisfied with the presence of the saint in Soissons and, as we have seen, he endeavoured to accompany Sebastian with Tiburtius, Marcellinus and Peter and other saints. Tiburtius figures in the passions of both Sebastian and Marcellinus and Peter, which may have sparked Hilduin’s interest. Whether he believed these saints were connected or not, it is obvious that Hilduin attempted to amass a group of Roman martyrs and saints in Soissons. Even after the translation of Sebastian, Hilduin continued his quest for (Roman) relics, leading to his conflict with Einhard. As later sources attest, Saint-Médard continued to present itself as the resting-place of a large number of saints, among whom are Médard and Sebastian, and no clearly visible effort is made to promote the cult of a single saint at the expense of others. There is no written equivalent to Einhard’s Translatio informing us about the reasons behind Hilduin’s continued desire for ever more relics, or about the ways in which he deployed the martyrs. What we do have, however, is the crypt in which Hilduin probably housed the relics.

It is most likely that the construction of the crypt started after the arrival of the relics of Sebastian, and that this was in fact what instigated the reconstruction, along with the increasing pilgrimage traffic to Saint-Médard. Combined with the dedication in 841, this would constitute a building period of roughly

considering our use of the term for a burial niche. Here, however, it can also refer to coffin or bier. Lewis & Short, Latin dictionary; Niermeyer, Mediae latinitatis lexicon.

This can be inferred from a number of later sources such as Odilo of Saint-Médard’s Liber de translatione reliquiarum S. Sebastiani martyris et Gregorii pape, ed. Migne, PL 132, col. 575-622C. See also Geary, Furta sacra, pp. 40-41.

Aside from Einhard’s comments, contemporary information about other relics than those of Médard and Sebastian is scarce. Later sources include the Translatio SS. Tiburtii, Marcellini et Petri et aliorum ad S. Medardum, ascribed to Odilo of Soissons, ed. Holder-Egger, MGH SS 15, pp. 391-395.


Saint-Médard’s self-representation would be an interesting aspect to consider for the study of the history of the abbey that is long overdue.

The aforementioned sources contribute the rebuilding to Hilduin, who was attested as arch-chaplain for the first time in 819. He must have been abbot of Saint-Médard in 826 at the latest. Depreux, Prosopographie, p. 251.
fifteen years, which is reasonable, especially if we consider that the building activities may have been delayed by Hilduin’s exile in 830/831. Hilduin’s motives for the rebuilding may include practical (the church was by then almost three hundred years old and not necessarily suited to the veneration of a multitude of relics) as well as representational needs. The sheer size of the church, as reconstructed, does suggest that it was meant to impress, or at least to convey the abbey’s importance – on the other hand, its Merovingian predecessor may already have had a considerable size which makes it more than likely that Hilduin would have built a new church that was comparable or even bigger.\(^{204}\)

The original entrances to the crypt were most likely located at either end of the corridor, in principle allowing a relatively smooth flow of people filing past the western *loculi*.\(^{205}\) However, if visitors had to enter one of the five eastern chapels, things would get more complicated. These spaces, some barely three meters wide, were more suited to liturgical purposes than to the veneration of relics. Yet there were more than enough relics in Saint-Médard to fill all the rooms of the crypt. First of course came its founder Medardus, who was joined by Sebastian in 826. These two, together with Gregory or Tiburtius, were most probably buried in the *loculi* in the west, an arrangement which may have reminded visitors of the Roman catacombs in which the martyrs were buried before their arrival in Soissons – whether this was an association that Hilduin consciously tried to evoke, we cannot say. The relics of other saints may have been kept in altars in the eastern rooms. Instead of competing for attention, the relics reinforced each other by creating a holy site where a local bishop was buried side by side with Roman martyrs. In practice the crypt may have served a dual purpose: the veneration of relics in the west, the (monastic) liturgy in the east. The eastern chapels themselves were also carefully crafted and hierarchically ordered. The three in the middle were grouped together, the central chapel slightly bigger and extending further eastwards than the other

\(^{204}\) This predecessor frequently appears in Gregory of Tours’ Histories.

\(^{205}\) The entrances were subsequently moved to the outer western chapels, and after that to the central western chapel. Defente, “Saint-Médard de Soissons et son église principale”, p 662.
two, thereby making it the most prominent of the three. A tri-cellular set-up is thus created. These three chapels may even have ended in apses, which would all of a sudden make them reminiscent of e.g. Kornelimünster and Steinbach, making Saint-Médard stand out less from other buildings we know from the period than it seems at first sight. The spaces in the far north and south of the crypt are, with a length of ca. 7.5 m, the largest and most detached. Services could be held here more or less undisturbed by goings-on in the rest of the crypt.

The crypt made by Hilduin, Roduinus and their master builder was a highly sophisticated and meaningful creation. We have distinguished three units making up the crypt: the loculi, the central eastern chapels and the outer chapels, and all three were carefully crafted to suit specific needs and evoke certain associations. We can only imagine what the church rising above it may have looked like, but we may assume that it had an equally well-considered design.

SAINT-DENIS: ‘CRIPTAM ANTE PEDES MARTYRUM’

Hilduin instigated another, much smaller, building campaign in another monastery he headed: Saint-Denis (figs. 1.13-16). However, the building campaign may have been less significant; the monastery certainly was not. Dagobert I († 638/639) has been credited with the foundation of the monastery as well as with the rebuilding of the church, but evidence for both claims is scarce. He did, however, embellish the existing church, which was centred around the remains of Dionysius, Paris’ first bishop, who was buried in a necropolis after his death in ca. 250 and was venerated there ever since. The first church at the site, ‘Geneviève’s basilica’, was built over the grave a century or two later. Dagobert I and other Merovingian kings

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206 The interpretation of these spaces as chapels where services were held is, I believe, justifiable because of our knowledge of the use of similar spaces elsewhere. However, there is no specific evidence such as the presence of (remainders of) altars here.

were buried here among other Frankish aristocrats. The Merovingians’ support of Saint-Denis was continued by the Carolingians after their take-over of the throne. Charles Martel was buried here in 741 and Pippin, along with his sons Carloman and Charlemagne, was anointed by the pope in Saint-Denis in 754, whereupon the royal family is said to have instigated the rebuilding of the church.\footnote{The pope’s anointment was the confirmation of a previous consecration or anointment by the bishops in Soissons in 751.} It was this Carolingian church which abbot Suger provided with a new west end and choir in the twelfth century, later dubbed ‘gothic’ by art-historians, which were connected by a novel nave a century later, thus forming the building that has been at the centre of so many debates among historians of art and architecture.\footnote{See amongst Kimpel & Suckale, Die gotische Architektur in Frankreich, pp. 76–92 and Murray, "The study of gothic architecture", with references. Incidentally, Suger, according to his own writings, strove to adjust the additions to the church in form and material to the old structures, so as not to disturb to unity of the building. Bosman, "Spolien aus Roms Vergangenheit", p. 43.}

The study of the building history of Saint-Denis has been considerably hampered not only by damage inflicted by the revolutionaries or nineteenth-century restorations, but also by the extended time over which archaeological research was carried out and the large number of people overseeing it. The findings of many of these men (among whom Viollet-le-Duc, Sumner McKnight Crosby, Formigé and others) have never been published in full; more problematically, they came to partially different and sometimes opposing conclusions, and both the finds and their interpretations have been challenged by third parties in the meantime.\footnote{A brief overview of the archaeological historiography is given in Wyss, Meyer-Rodrigues & Bernardi, Atlas historique de Saint-Denis, pp. 25–27. For a survey of the post-medieval alterations to the church, see also Crosby, The Abbey of St.-Denis, pp. 4–12.}

In the following, I will be able to avoid many of these discussions, for my primary focus is on a very limited part of Saint-Denis’ history: Hilduin’s time. His crypt, however, is itself the subject of debate; moreover, we need to have some idea of the church that he added this crypt to. I will approach the Fulradchurch through the publications of the Unité d’archéologie de Saint-Denis, among which are the \textit{Historical Atlas} and the website \textit{Saint-Denis, a town in the Middle Ages}, which are
based on the most recent, wide-ranging project begun in 1973, including not only the abbey church but also the town of Saint-Denis.211

The so-called Fulradchurch, dedicated on 24 February 775 in the presence of Charlemagne, was a columnar basilica, ca. 56 m in length, with a continuous transept and an eastern apse.212 The columns of the nave, ca. 9 m apart, were resting on the foundations of the Merovingian church and the side-aisles were slightly wider than the (putative) Merovingian ones (inner width ca. 4.5 m).213 In its entire-

211 Wyss, Meyer-Rodrigues & Bernardi, Atlas historique de Saint-Denis, http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/. The Atlas historique is the outcome of a monumental effort. Trying to do so much at once – perhaps the authors already foresaw that the series to which this is supposed to be the introductory volume would not see the light of day for at least the next twenty years – however, has resulted in descriptions of the building phases that are very short and dense, more accessible to the expert on Saint-Denis than to the beginner. Moreover, it is often difficult to judge the amount of evidence for a certain claim, or – conversely – to establish what exactly Wyss himself thinks. See also Garrigou-Grandchamp, “Archéologie - Atlas historique de Saint-Denis”.

212 Diplomata Karolinorum, no. 92, ed. Mühlbacher, MGH DD Karol. 1, p. 133. The starting date of the rebuilding has been much-debated. See below. The length of 56 m includes the apse but not the western structure.

213 The ’Merovingian’ church was itself the outcome of three building phases. The first church was built on a pre-existing cemetery using Roman spolia blocks. Its eastern end is unknown; two side-walls and a straight western end mark a rectangle of ca. 9 x 20,6 m. It was extended towards the west sometime between the middle of the fifth (Patrick Périn) and the middle of the sixth centuries (Michel Fleury). A second extension brought the church to an impressive total length of 55 m. In this phase, an eastern apse and western entrance hall were also added, perhaps along with (partial) side-aisles. Evidence for the latter has only been found to the northwest of the church. The date of this phase is
ty, the old nave was just a little narrower than the present one. The transept probably only protruded ca. 2 m beyond the outer nave wall, making its proportions very different from e.g. those of Fulda or St. Peter. The new apse encircled the old one, and held an annular crypt at its centre. Both the material and the textual evidence for the western end of the church is inconclusive. Suger relates that he tore down an *augmentum* said to have been built by Charlemagne over the grave of his father, who was buried ‘extra in introitui valvarum’. That Pippin was in fact buried outside of the western doors of the church is corroborated by a letter from Louis the Pious to Hilduin, which speaks of ‘ante limina basilicae’. Carolingian sources do not, however, as Suger does, speak of towers. The unearthing of the remains of many different walls by the various archaeologists has not made

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214 No remains of the crypt exist thanks to Viollet-le-Duc’s imperial crypt. Its existence is however generally accepted based on several nineteenth-century drawings.

215 Suger, *In administratione* 25, ed. Lecoy de la Marche, *Oeuvres Complètes de Suger*. Charlemagne is believed to have built this structure after becoming emperor based on a *titulus*. MGH Poet. Lat. 1, pp. 404-405. See also Hoffmann, ”Zur Entstehung des Königsportals in Saint-Denis”.


217 Suger, *De consecratione* 20, ed. Speer & Binding, *Abt Suger von Saint-Denis*.
matters any easier. Charlemagne’s building of the *augmentum* may have coincided with the construction of a palace to the north-west of the church.\(^{218}\) Although it does make sense for him to embellish and protect his father’s grave, especially if he was lying outside, exposed to the elements, the large number of consecutive building phases at this spot make it seem unlikely that Pippin’s grave was in fact exposed to the elements. What exactly the *augmentum* looked like is impossible to say.\(^{219}\)

Fulrad’s church has long been viewed as the paradigmatic Carolingian church, embodying Charlemagne’s ideals of reviving Constantian examples. The combination of a continuous transept ending in a semi-circular apse (instead of a slightly elongated one, as was more common in Francia) and a basilical nave has been interpreted since Krautheimer as an attempt to ‘copy’ Early Christian Roman churches, thereby supposedly marking the start of the Carolingian *Renovatio*.\(^{220}\) Since the discovery of the ring crypt, a more specific prototype has been found in Old St. Peter’s.\(^{221}\) However, why exactly this relationship with Rome or St. Peter’s was sought is not often made explicit. Was it a reference to Constantine, the first Christian emperor, to St. Peter himself or to the popes? Did it have anything to do with the desire to celebrate the liturgy *more romano*? Judson Emerick has recently argued that a reference to St. Peter’s may very well be at the base of this

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\(^{219}\) For a more recent (but not generally accepted) view on the matter see Jacobsen & Wyss, “Saint-Denis: essai sur la gen èse du massif occidental”.

\(^{220}\) Krautheimer, “The Carolingian Revival”. It is interesting that Krautheimer’s view on Saint-Denis has had such a long-lasting influence considering the changes that have been made to the reconstruction of the church since his time: the dimensions of the transept are now believed to be different and he had no idea about the ring crypt. We will encounter something similar in the case of Fulda. As Krautheimer himself admits, however, the number of early Christian Roman churches with a ground plan comparable to Saint-Denis is in fact rather limited: St. Peter’s, St. Paul’s outside the walls and San Giovanni in Laterano. Krautheimer does not value St. Peter’s higher than the other Early Christian Roman churches; he views Saint-Denis as referring to Constantine, the best prototype of the Christian emperor.

Fig. 1.15 Saint-Denis, reconstruction of the Fulrad-church. Wyss, Meyer-Rodrigues & Bernardi, Atlas historique, p. 113.
design, but if so, it is the eighth-century, not the early Christian, St. Peter’s.\textsuperscript{222} This of course considerably alters the implications of the choice for a Roman model: according to Emerick, the design was meant to portray the abbey’s monastic and secular patrons as bishops of a sort, ‘as leaders who might pose as God’s earthly vicars’.\textsuperscript{223} St. Peter’s was both Rome’s most important centre for the veneration of Saints and the place most associated with the papal liturgy. Here, the pope was presented as the supreme mediator between the faithful and God. It was this association, Emerick argues, that Fulrad and the Carolingian rulers wished to evoke.

Because of its position outside of the Episcopal city of Paris, St. Denis – even though a monastic church since Merovingian times – had always been a centre of lay worship and functioned as a parish church. At the same time, it was one of the most important sites of worship to the saints, as was St. Peter’s. Besides ideological, this also had practical implications: it was necessary for the relics of Denis and his companions to remain accessible to pilgrims, despite the ongoing monastic liturgy and pastoral functions.

It is undeniable that the simultaneous appearance of the colonnaded basilica, the continuous transept and the ring crypt make Saint-Denis reminiscent of St. Peter’s and other Roman churches such as St. Paul’s outside the walls. That this combination did not – as far as we know – appear north of the Alps before then does make it likely that the relationship was consciously sought after, although the execution and proportions differ considerably. One of the most important differences is the orientation of the church: whereas the placing of the transept in the west is said to be crucial in the case of Fulda to prove its dependency on St. Peter’s, Jacobsen nor anyone else seems to be bothered by the fact that it was placed in the east in St. Denis. This has to do with the position of the grave of St. Denis, which was located to the east of the nave. Nevertheless, this is a sign that certain local traditions were respected; it also makes it less likely that the main goal was not to

\textsuperscript{222} Emerick, “Building \textit{more romano}”. I would like to express my sincere thanks to prof. Emerick for allowing me to read this article in advance of publication.

\textsuperscript{223} Emerick, “Building \textit{more romano}”, p. 138.
quote St. Peter’s – if it was, then other aspects of St. Peter’s such as the proportions and position of the transept may have been followed more closely since especially the orientation is rather crucial in the celebration of the liturgy.

There has been a lengthy discussion over the date at which building commenced. The first option is that work had already started when Pippin was anointed in Saint-Denis in 754: at that time, Pope Stephen also dedicated an altar here to Sts. Peter and Paul.224 Alternatively, the church may have been started sometime after the papal anointing but before the death of Pippin in 768.225 In both cases, it would have been finished by Carloman and Charlemagne. Lastly, Pippin’s sons may have been solely responsible for the building of the church after their father’s death. This is suggested by a description of the church written in 799, published by Bischoff in 1981, which says that Carloman and Charlemagne built the church after Pippin’s death, but on his command.226 Werner Jacobsen is an ardent advocate of this dating (i.e. 768-775), and it has also been adopted by Michaël Wyss.227 However, the 799 description is contradicted by the Miracula Sancti Dionysii, in which it is said that Charlemagne merely finished the church, which had already been started by Pippin.228

The frequent citation in the debate of all of these documents referring to Pippin, Carloman and/or Charlemagne as the builders has put a disproportionate stress on the role of the kings at the expense of that of Fulrad. All sources mentioning Charlemagne as the abbey’s builder stem from the abbey. Obviously, Charlemagne’s involvement in the rebuilding of Saint-Denis was more important for

224 Ex Hilduini abbatis libro de Sancto Dionysio, ed. Wattenbach, MGH SS 15, p. 3.
225 Pippin was buried to the west of the church in 768; assuming that the church was started from the east, it must have been almost finished by then. See Krüger, Königsgrabkirchen, pp. 177-183. However, as Jacobsen has already pointed out, it is equally possible that both the dedication of the altar by Pope Stephen and the burial of Pippin took place in (front of) the old church.
226 Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek Aug. CCXXXVIII. Bischoff, "Eine Beschreibung der Basilika von Saint-Denis aus dem Jahre 799”.
the community of Saint-Denis than for the Carolingians themselves, who never included Saint-Denis among Charlemagne’s greatest achievements.229 This is not to say that the abbey was not important for the royal family – it clearly was. Their predecessors were buried here, and Charlemagne expressed the wish to join them after his death. The 754 anointing did take place here, and for good reason: by taking over the Merovingians’ sponsorship of Saint-Denis, the Carolingians legitimised their authority as kings. Yet the construction of an abbey church was first and foremost a monastic, not a royal project. It was the territory of the abbot and his community. For all his involvement in politics, Fulrad is very much committed to the abbey, and we can see him trying to put his connections to use for it. These connections included a strong link with Rome and especially St. Peter’s: Fulrad spent time in the Schola Francorum and in his role as archipresbiter Franciae, as the Pope called him, he was the link between the king (first Pippin, then Charlemagne) and the high clergy as well as between the Carolingians and the papacy. He was therefore able to bring back relics from his journeys to Rome in 756 and 757, which he distributed among some of his newly founded cellae and monasteries.230 Their (building) history might offer an interesting new perspective on Saint-Denis and Fulrad, but that shall have to wait until another time.

Considering his ambitions for the abbey and his excellent position in the 750s and 760s, when he had the ear of the emperor, who was about his age and was an extremely active sponsor of Saint-Denis, it would have been odd if Hilduin had not seized his chance to start a rebuilding before Pippin’s death. This alone makes it more likely that construction started before rather than after 768.231 Furthermore, there are no compelling arguments to attach more value to the 799 document than

229 A brief list is for example given by Einhard, Vita Karoli Magni c. 17, ed. Holder-Egger, MGH SS rer. Germ. 25, p. 20.
230 Fleckenstein, “Fulrad von Saint-Denis”; Fleckenstein, Die Hofkapelle, pp. 45-48; Stoclet, Autour de Fulrad de St. Denis.
231 Although certainly not impossible, six years (768-774) is also a relatively short time to plan, build and dedicate a church.
to the other sources.\textsuperscript{232}

As the main instigator of the rebuilding, Fulrad must have started planning long before 768. He may have discussed the plans and designs for the abbey church with Pippin and later Charlemagne and perhaps even with the Pope at the occasion of his 754 visit. If Stephen did in fact see Fulrad as the \textit{archipresbiter} of the Frankish church, he may have found it fitting that a church reminiscent of St. Peter’s would form its liturgical centre. His abbey church may have been Fulrad’s attempt to promote Saint-Denis as such. Fulrad was certainly more familiar with the architecture of Rome than the Carolingian rulers were. Pippin never visited Rome; when his son Charlemagne first did so in 774, Fulrad already felt at home there.\textsuperscript{233} Moreover, the abbey church was by then practically finished, so it would be too late to influence the design.\textsuperscript{234} This means that, taking Emerick’s argument one step further, it was first and foremost Fulrad who chose to build a Frankish version of the eighth-century St. Peter’s, or at least to use it as a source of inspiration. This answers the question that continues to bother architectural historians: why was this example not followed in the rest of the empire for at least the next decades? The design was Fulrad’s solution for the local situation, not an attempt to start a programme of architectural innovation. Even if a king was closely associated with the design of the church, it would probably have been Pippin, not Charlemagne.

Hilduin added, around 832, a ‘criptam ante pedes sanctissimorum martyrum’ to Fulrad’s church.\textsuperscript{235} This chapel, alternatively called \textit{cripta} and \textit{ecclesia}, has always been assumed to lie to the east of Fulrad’s crypt, where a structure

\textsuperscript{232} Emerick is of the same opinion and lists other counter-arguments to Jacobsen’s dating as well. Emerick, “Building more romano”, pp. 138-140.  
\textsuperscript{234} Pippin or Charlemagne could of course have sent a third party to Rome to find inspiration at St. Peter’s, but there is no evidence for this. It would be more likely for them to have encouraged Fulrad to build a ‘Roman’ church – Fulrad knew what St. Peter’s looked like.  
has in fact been found. Whether or not this is – partially? – Hilduin’s crypt can unfortunately not be said with certainty. Levillain, Crosby and others have published reconstructions of the chapel based on documentary evidence, archaeological research and analysis of the existing masonry which are radically divergent. Viollet-le-Duc found what he thought to be a Carolingian extension of the abbey church in 1868, and this has consequently been identified as Hilduin’s chapel. Although recent scholarship accepts that at least the deviation from the axis of the church originated with Hilduin (and thus that his crypta was attached to the apse), the design of the chapel is subject to ardent debate. One of the main points of controversy is whether the chapel had a single nave or side-aisles as well. Despite the problematic nature of the evidence, it is generally assumed to have had an apse.

Along with the reconstructions, theories on the use of the structure and Hilduin’s motives to build it appeared in print. We know from the aforementioned documents that the chapel was dedicated to Mary and all other saints and that relics were deposited there. Furthermore, Hilduin made arrangements to provide for the upkeep of the chapel and established the daily celebration of mass in the chapel. An alternating group of eight monks (of the ca. 130 monks living in the

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236 His use of the word ‘cripta’ is not necessarily significant. The scarce documentary evidence is not enough to say whether the ‘crypt’ was an extension of the abbey church or a freestanding structure.

237 Wyss, Meyer-Rodrigues & Bernardi, Atlas historique de Saint-Denis, p. 44.

238 Wyss, Meyer-Rodrigues & Bernardi, Atlas historique de Saint-Denis, p. 44. The debate is mainly centred around the archaeological finds. However, reconstructions have also been made on the basis of written evidence, although these were not particularly successful. About these see Crosby, The Abbey of St.-Denis, pp. 168-170.

239 The latter has been argued by Crosby, the former by Formigé. Crosby & Blum, The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis, pp. 87-94; Formigé, L’abbaye royale de Saint-Denis, pp. 169-172.

240 Hilduin, Epistolae, ed. Felibien, Histoire de l’abbaye royale de Saint-Denis no. LXXV, pp. lv-lvi, and a charter of Louis the Pious dated 20 January 833, Regesta Imperii I no. 918; ed. Felibien, Histoire de l’abbaye royale de Saint-Denis, pp. lvi-lvii. The dedication to All Saints is not commented upon in the literature and may put the attribution of this novelty to Hrabanus in a different light. Although the concept of All Saints is not made explicit (Louis’ charter simply lists the apostles, the martyrs, the confessors etc.), the general idea is certainly the same. This is in keeping with the refectio that could be held on All Saints’ day (1 November) if there was a surplus in the revenues meant for the chapel.
monastery at the time) were to celebrate the Divine Office *more Romano* in the chapel together, both day and night.  

This way Hilduin created a sort of perpetual prayer which could take place regularly and totally undisturbed. That the monastery was in need of such continuity will emerge shortly. A few later sources also comment on the appearance of the crypt, and full advantage of these opportunities for the reconstruction of the crypt was taken by nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars. However, it is very difficult to establish to what extent they refer to the ninth-century situation.

What we can do, however, is pay more attention to the circumstances in which the crypt came about. The period in which the crypt came into being was a hectic time for the monastery as there was dissent among the monks about the Rule they were to follow. The regularity of Saint-Denis had already been questioned when Waldo of Reichenau became its abbot in 806. Waldo encountered a community that was distorted; its monks were living more secular than spiritual, yet he succeeded in leading the monks back to a correct and disciplined life.

After the ‘reform’ councils, however, none other than Benedict of Aniane himself, along with Arnulf of Noirmoutier, visited the monastery ‘ad monasticae institutionis norman corrigendam’, probably in 817. The situation they encountered was however apparently more than they could handle – that is at least suggested by the charter issued by Louis the Pious in August 832 in which the men are described as


242 Moreover, the description mostly serves a specific purpose, e.g. in the *Detectio corporum* by Haimo, ed. Félibien, *Histoire de l’abbaye royale de Saint-Denis*, p. clxvili. This text has been read as an eleventh-century description of the place in which the relics were kept that was meant to prove that the relics of St. Denis had not, as was claimed by the monks of Sankt Emmeran in Regensburg, been stolen.

boni et devoti, sed simplicissimi patres’ who were no match for the cunning and insensibility of some of the monks.\textsuperscript{244} The Aachen councils forced the monks to choose between either becoming a canonical or a monastic community. If they opted for the latter, they could no longer follow their old Rule (which was probably a\textit{ regula mixta}) and traditions, but were forced to subject to the Rule of Benedict. The majority of the monks refused the latter, which resulted in the expulsion of the minority who did want to become Benedictines. The monks remaining in Saint-Denis became canons, but not for long; the minority was forced to relocate to\textit{ cella sancti Dionysii} in Mours, on the river Oise.\textsuperscript{245} The schism in the community lasted from 817 until 829, at which time the ousted monks appealed to their abbot.\textsuperscript{246} Hilduin, who had not – to his later regret – intervened in 817, now apparently decided to support Saint-Denis’ return to monasticism. The 829 Paris synod thereupon visited Saint-Denis and established, on the basis of documents kept there, that the community had traditionally been a monastic one, which meant that the canons had broken their vows by turning their backs on the monastic ordo. The ‘dissidents’ were forced to profess again and the monks from\textit{ cella sancti Dionysii} were welcomed back.\textsuperscript{247} This was not the end of the conflict, however; as soon as Hilduin turned his back (which he was forced to do due to his exile to Corvey in 830-831) it flared up again and the ‘canonical party’ appealed to the emperor. Louis was not susceptible to their arguments and convened another synod in January 832, this time held in Saint-Denis itself. Here, the decisions of 829 were confirmed and a large number

\textsuperscript{244} \textit{Regesta Imperii} I n. 905; ed. Félibien, \textit{Histoire de l’abbaye royale de Saint-Denis} no. LXXIV, pp. liii-lv. See also Oexle, \textit{Forschungen zu monastischen und geistlichen Gemeinschaften}, p. 113. The characterisation of men of their stature as ‘simplicissimi patres’ rather surprised me, yet the literature does not comment on it.


of documents was drawn up in an attempt to prevent further trouble in the future. Every member of the community had to sign a document in triplicate, promising to obey to the Rule, and these three *cartulae* were consequently kept in the imperial and abbatial archives and next to St. Denis’ head.248 The abbot furthermore earmarked a number of the monastery’s assets for the *mensa fratrum* and the emperor confirmed that this was to suffice for a community of up to 150 monks.249

Hilduin probably started work on the crypt after his return from Corvey, where, incidentally, a similar outer crypt was constructed around that time.250 Crosby suggested that he did so ‘to commemorate his return to favour after exile’; others have commented mostly on the liturgy that would have been celebrated here *more Romano*, which was supposedly at odds with the Rule of Benedict.251 The crypt was added to a relatively new and functioning abbey church. The main relics, of Dionysius, Rusticus and Eleutherius, were not transferred to the new crypt but remained underneath the main altar. There was no need for pilgrims to visit the new crypt; in fact, this was a space meant only for the community itself. With this crypt, Hilduin created a place in the monastic complex where other forces could not penetrate and all attention could be focused on the monastic liturgy. Unlike the abbey church itself, the crypt-chapel was not frequented by outsiders, such as royal envoys or pilgrims. Relics were placed here to establish or strengthen the sanctity of the place (which came about in the first place through its proximity to the martyrs’ grave), not to create a secondary cult site. Although we cannot be sure about the shape of the celebration of the Office here, it seems that the monks

248 The events are recorded in a charter by Louis the Pious of 26 August 832 that confirms the actions of the synods. *Regesta Imperii* I n. 905; ed. Félibien, *Histoire de l’abbaye royale de Saint-Denis* no. LXX-IV, pp. liii-lv. The trust placed in written documents which these actions betray is remarkable.
250 See chapter 4.
251 Crosby & Blum, *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, p. 87; Semmler, “Saint-Denis”, p. 111. Semmler’s interpretation of the crypt and its function shows how wide of the mark explanations of buildings based solely on written evidence can be. One thing we can be sure about is that Hilduin did not, as Semmler seems to believe, build the crypt to facilitate lay access to the relics.
took turns, thereby all having a chance at a small ‘retreat’ at the chapel. The monastery within a monastery that was created this way strengthened the new-found (or newly imposed) monastic identity. Shortly after the construction of the crypt, ‘833 and all that’ happened. This time, Hilduin’s role was less apparent and although he benefitted from Lothar’s patronage, there were no negative consequences for him after Louis’ reinstatement. Cornered by his brothers and the public opinion, Lothar was forced to flee in February 834, leaving Louis behind in Saint-Denis. Here, on Sunday 1 March, the present bishops reconciled Louis and outfitted him with the regal robes and weapons. The penance of 833 was truly and officially reversed a year later, on 28 February 835 in Metz. The crown was restored to Louis’ head, Ebo of Rheims took the fall on behalf of all the bishops who took part in the imperial penance and documents countering those of 833 were drawn up. In the same year, Louis the Pious asked Hilduin to gather, as fast as he could, a collection of writings concerned with St. Denis. Based on these, Hilduin later wrote a prose and verse Life of Denis, in which he stresses St. Denis’ apostolic quality as well as the importance of forgiveness and humility. Viewing Dionysius as an apostle (through his con-

252 The deviation from the axis of the church is reminiscent of the mausoleum of the Anicii in Rome. This structure was built against the apse of St. Peter’s but the two were not interconnected. It is known through the description of Vegio, who visited it in the middle of the fifteenth century, shortly before its destruction. De Blaauw, *Cultus et decor*, p. 231. It may be worthwhile to look into this similarity further, especially considering the connection between the Fulrad-church and St. Peter’s.


255 *Regesta Imperii* 1 n. 951, ed. Dümmler, *MGH Epp* 5, pp. 325-327. See also Booker, *Past convictions*, pp. 251. Of interest could also be G.P.A. Brown, *Politics and patronage at the royal abbey of Saint-Denis (814-98): the rise of a royal patron saint*. PhD.Diss. New College, Oxford University: 1989, which I have not had a chance to consult.

256 Hilduin, *Passio S. Dionysii (Post beatam ac salutiferam)*; ed. Migne, *PL* 106; Col. 23–50D; Hilduin, *Passio Metrica S. Dionysii*; not published. Delaporte, "He darkens me with brightness". Delaporte further argues that ‘Hilduin bypasses Rome and Roman authority, to instead receive authority straight from Paul and from Denis’s inspired authorship’ in an attempt to bring new strength to Louis’ reign, pp. 233-234. Although I am not yet entirely convinced by this reading, it is surely worthwhile to look
version by Paul) of course greatly magnified the standing of the monastery and the Carolingian dynasty which supported it and forgiveness was important to Hilduin and Lothar but also to the emperor himself. In 836 Hilduin transferred the relics of Vitus to Corvey.\textsuperscript{257} We will therefore encounter him again in chapter 4, which focuses for a large part on this newly-founded Saxon monastery.

1.4 CONCLUSION

The differences between Einhard’s and Hilduin’s building projects reflect not only the differences in personalities and wishes, but also the places in which they built. Saint-Médard and Saint-Denis boasted a long and respectable tradition and had long benefited from royal patronage. Their prosperity showed in the abbey churches that were in use when Hilduin gained the abbacy of these communities. Hilduin was merely consolidating this heritage and adding spaces for which the need had recently arisen. Einhard, on the other hand, had to work hard to build something up from the ground. There was probably literally nothing for him to build on, not even foundations.

Along with their patrons, this is what tied the projects in Steinbach and Seligenstadt on the one hand and Saint-Médard and Saint-Denis on the other together. Yet as has become clear, this did not cause their patrons to choose comparable designs for both of their constructions. The design that Einhard had carried out in Steinbach was prompted by his wish for a suitable place where he and Imma could retreat, be buried and be commemorated. Although modest in size, the church’s ingenious and innovative design, especially that of the crypt, its decorations, the use of unusual materials such as custom-made brick and the effort put into all of this makes clear, to us as well as to Einhard’s contemporaries, that this was the product into the parallels between Hilduin’s literary works, his architectural patronage and the context in which these came about.

\textsuperscript{257} Translatio S. Viti martyr\is{n} 5, ed. Schmale-Ott, Translatio sancti Viti martyr\is{s}is, p. 49; Annales Corbeienses, ed. Prinz., Die Corveyer Annalen, p. 103. See also chapter 4.
of someone well-versed in art and architecture, no less than we would expect from someone nicknamed ‘Bezaleel’. Einhard again put his artistic gifts to use in Seligenstadt, but this time for another purpose. He now wanted to create a worthy environment where his Roman martyrs could be venerated. The same materials were used to produce a different effect. This church offered the local audience consisting of visitors to the holy site and the clerics taking care of their needs a practical yet magnificent place to gather, where the relics could be worshiped by a large number of people while other pastoral and liturgical services were also provided, all in a setting which proclaimed the esteem of Marcellinus and Peter. This was also the message intended for an audience further removed, at the imperial court.

Of Hilduin’s two projects, one was also purposely built for the veneration of relics: in any case those of Médardus and Sebastian. In this crypt in Saint-Médard, two functional levels can be distinguished: the ‘inner circle’, meant for the veneration of the relics, where visitors entered the crypt, viewed the loculi, and exited again, and the ‘outer circle’, passing by the five chapels. On this level, the corridor functioned not as a thoroughfare, but as a way of entry to the chapels, in which the (presumably clerical) user would linger for a longer period. In Saint-Denis the idea of the passage was missing. The crypt was a self-contained room designed only for liturgical use. The functional differences between Hilduin’s crypts are not surprising considering the different causes which gave rise to the projects. In Saint-Denis, as in Fulda which will be scrutinised later on, architecture was used in an attempt to once again bind together the community by providing a space where their common mission and purpose were emphasized.

There are also clear similarities between all the building projects discussed in this chapter, such as the presence of crypts. These were apparently popular among men such as Einhard and Hilduin, but could take many different shapes. The choice of one shape over another was the outcome of the convergence of a number of factors. A patron could not take an independent decision based on his own preferences, but instead had to take all of these factors into account. It does not do justice to the complex circumstances in which they operated to judge me-
dieval patrons of architecture solely on the outcome of their building projects. Einhard’s and Hilduin’s foundations illustrate that the designs of their churches resulted from a specific combination of means, motives and opportunities, which were different for each of their building projects.