Means, motives and opportunities: The architecture of monasteries during the reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)
Rulkens, A.J.R.

Citation for published version (APA):
chapter 3
The four from Fulda
3.1 INTRODUCTION

When Eigil, a long-time monk of Fulda, was elected as its abbot in 818, a magnificent and almost finished but not yet dedicated abbey church fell into his lap. Instead of granting the monks of Fulda some well-deserved rest after almost three decades of building activity, Eigil chose to continue work on the abbey church and excavate two crypts. In view of the turbulent times the monastery had just experienced, culminating in the deposition of the previous abbot Ratger, as well as in the light of Eigil’s advanced age – he was probably in his late sixties – this was a remarkable decision. And Eigil’s building activity did not stop there – during his abbacy of merely four years he also ordered the construction of another church, the funerary chapel of St. Michael, and of an entirely new monastic precinct to the west of the abbey church. The latter project may have been prompted by practical considerations, but the two others (the crypts and the church of St. Michael) were highly expressive statements, as becomes clear from contemporary sources such as the altar tituli written by Eigil’s successor Hrabanus Maurus. The design of this abbey church gradually changed over the course of the three decades it took to build it, and so did its meaning. Three consecutive abbots (Baugulf, Ratger and Eigil) each turned the project into what they thought the monastery needed.

In a sense, this process is similar to what we have seen in Reichenau and St. Gall: the first century of a monastery’s existence was crucial. During that time, the monastery grew and developed. In many building phases adjustments were made to parts of the complex, which altogether resulted in an end-product that remained standing for much longer. This is not to say that this end-product was envisaged from the start; it marks the end of a developmental process. In this chapter, a single monastery, Fulda, will stand at the centre of attention. By focusing on only one community, it is possible to study this in more detail, taking into account several consecutive building phases of the abbey church and a larger selection of written sources. The case of Fulda will also make clear that the monastery’s architecture consisted of more than the abbey church and claustrum, and we will there-
fore also study a funerary chapel and several dependent churches. As in the first chapter, the role of individual abbots is once again highlighted. By studying four consecutive abbots (Baugulf, Ratger, Eigil and Hrabanus), whose contributions to the monastery’s built environment were shaped not only by their personal choices but also by the local, political, economic and devotional situation of that particular moment, we can gain a better understanding of the ways in which these factors interacted. Fulda is an ideal candidate for such an approach for two main reasons. For one, in Fulda a succession of abbots undertook construction works, each of them under different circumstances. Although these four abbots made conscious decisions of their own, based on their assessment of the contemporary situation, these decisions were also partly determined by the building works of their predecessors. Secondly, we have relatively much information to put these buildings into context. There are a number of narrative sources from the period, some of them explicitly commenting on the building works or reflecting on architecture, as well as documentary sources offering a wealth of information about the inhabitants of the monastery, its resources etc. From these, we can partly deduce the abbots’ motivations for building what and when they did. However, as will become clear, the case of Fulda also shows that early medieval buildings cannot be seen as the result of the creative process of a single person at a specific moment in time, but that they are rather the result of the convergence of various influences.

The eighth- and ninth-century building campaigns in Fulda are difficult to unravel. The abbots Baugulf, Ratger and Eigil consecutively oversaw work on the abbey church, and during the abbacy of their successor Hrabanus Maurus many of the sources that have shaped our view of the monastery and its church were written. In the following the focus will mostly be on Eigil and Hrabanus, yet their activities cannot be studied independently from the environment created by Baugulf and Ratger. I will therefore provide a short overview of the successive building campaigns, which functions as an introduction to the material which will be discussed in more detail later on.
In 744 Sturmi, a disciple of Boniface, founded the monastery on the bank of the river Fulda. Evidence of earlier settlements indicates that the area was not as remote and inhospitable as the *Vita Sturmi* would have us believe, and the proximity of the river made the site accessible. Archbishop Boniface convinced mayor of the palace Carloman to grant the monks the land on which the monastery was to stand, and decided together with the community that a stone church would be built. Along with this church, now referred to as the ‘Sturmi-kirche’, wooden living quarters were constructed. Boniface also laid an important foundation for the future of the monastery by securing a papal exemption for Fulda, which withdrew the monastery from the power of local bishops and established a lasting connection with Rome. This, along with its peripheral position, sets Fulda apart from most other Carolingian monasteries. From Boniface’s correspondence with Rome we also know that Fulda, unlike Boniface’s other foundations, followed the Rule of Benedict.

After Boniface’s death in 754, his body was eventually brought to Fulda, as he himself had requested. Upon his return after a brief exile, Sturmi built a ciborium over the martyr’s grave. He also ‘embellished the church [...]’, repaired the monastic buildings by adding new columns, great wooden beams, and new roofs’ and constructed a system of canals underneath the abbey workshops. All of this suggests that already in Sturmi’s time the monastery was what we would expect of

---

1 The monastery was founded on May 12, 744 by eight monks, led by Sturmi. Eigil, *Vita Sturmi* c.12, ed. Engelbert, *Die Vita Sturmi*, pp. 142-143.
3 References to the material evidence will be given below.
6 Eigil, *Vita Sturmi* c. 20, ed. Engelbert, *Die Vita Sturmi*, pp. 154-156; transl. Talbot, “The Life of Saint Sturm”, p. 183.Ciborium is Talbot’s translation; the original is ‘requiem’. About Sturmi’s exile, see Patzold, ”Konflikt”, pp. 73-91. Boniface was killed while on a mission to convert the Frisians.
7 Eigil, *Vita Sturmi* c. 20, ed. Engelbert, *Die Vita Sturmi*, pp. 154-156. The columns may be an indication of the presence of a cloister walk.
a royal abbey. It was a thriving economic unit with a rapid increase in the number of monks as well as in landed property, which started to write its own history. The Sturmi-church is commonly reconstructed as a single-naved church of over 30 m long with an eastern apse.

Baugulf (abbot 779-802), a well-connected aristocrat, succeeded Sturmi after his death in 779. Baugulf used his connections to the benefit of the monastery, and under his capable guidance the monastery established itself as an important landowner, closely connected with the other local players, as a centre of holiness and learning, and probably also as a provider of pastoral care and missionary activity. Although the Sturmi-church was very big, it apparently no longer totally suited the monastery’s magnitude and identity, and Baugulf initiated the construction of a (new) sanctuary in the east. The Baugulf-church has been reconstructed as an aisled columnar basilica, ca. 33 m wide, with a wide eastern apse. Baugulf retired in 802, and the building work was continued by the new abbot, Ratger, who had already been in charge of the constructions during Baugulf’s abbacy.

Ratger (abbot 802-817) connected the eastern sanctuary (the former Sturmi-church, adapted or rebuilt by Baugulf) with a western sanctuary and united them in one grand church, a basilica with a double choir and western transept. Since the Baugulf-church was already of a considerable size, the addition of a transept (which according to the reconstructions measured 77 x 17 m) resulted in an abbey church of a spectacular size. Although this enormous project disrupted

---


9 Oswald, Schaefer & Sennhauser, *Vorromanische Kirchenbauten*, pp. 84-85. An alternative reconstruction is that of an aisled basilica, e.g. McClendon, *Origins*, p. 158.

10 The *Gesta Abbatum* uses this phrase. As I will argue later, I have interpreted this as a rebuilding of the eastern end of the Sturmi-church. However, it is generally believed that Baugulf initiated the construction of an entirely new abbey church. *Gesta abbatum Fuldensium*, ed. Waitz, *MGH SS* 13, pp. 272.

11 Oswald, Schaefer & Sennhauser, *Vorromanische Kirchenbauten*, pp. 85-86.

12 Baugulf’s reasons to resign and move to the *cella* of Wolfsmünster are unknown. He certainly was suffering some illness, but perhaps this had also caused conflicts between the abbot and the monks. See Raaijmakers, *Monastic community*, pp. 96-98, and Patzold, *Konflikte*, pp. 91-104.
regular monastic life considerably, Ratger was occupied with more than just the building activities; the *Supplex Libellus* indicates that he also made changes to the liturgical observances. Moreover, he also oversaw construction work in dependencies of the monastery. Although most major monasteries were surrounded by a network of churches and dependent monasteries, this sacred topography is especially visible today in the environs of Fulda. There is an abundance of villages with names ending in -zell, and churches can still be seen on the peaks of the four hills surrounding the monastery: the Johannes-, Peters-, Frauen- or Bischofs- and Andreasberg. In these settlements, some within eyesight, others a day’s walking distance or more removed from the mother house, churches were also constructed in the course of the ninth century.

The early ninth century brought a period of misfortune, defined amongst others by the outbreak of a serious epidemic in 807. There was also growing opposition from the ranks of the monks to the way in which Ratger managed the monastery. In 812 a delegation travelled to Charlemagne, hoping for an imperial intervention. Their efforts were not in vain, but even the committee of bishops Charlemagne sent could not end the conflict. After another petition, Louis the Pious deposed Ratger in 817. For a short time, the monastery stood under the leadership of imperial *missi*, but in 818 the monks were again in the position of choosing an abbot. After extensive deliberation they decided on Eigil, a man probably almost in his seventies, who had been brought up in Fulda and had belonged to Sturmi’s inner circle. As has been mentioned at the start of this introduction, Eigil finished the abbey church, adding crypts and setting up altars. The church was

\[16\] Candidus, *Vita Eigil* b. 1, c. 3-8; ed. Becht-Jördens, *Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis*, p. 5-8. See also Semmler, ”Studien zum Supplex Libellus”.
\[17\] F. Rädle, “Eigil”, in *Lexikon des Mittelalters Online*.  

183
dedicated on 1 November 819. Furthermore, he added new living quarters for the monks and a central-plan funerary chapel: the church of St. Michael.

Eigil did not last long as abbot. He died in 822 and was succeeded by Hrabanus Maurus (abbot 822-842). His extensive literary legacy has brought Hrabanus so much fame that his more mundane abbatial activities sometimes seem to be forgotten. Foremost among these are his indexation and reorganization of the possessions of the monastery and the acquisition of a multitude of relics, mostly of Roman saints. Hrabanus’ activities as a patron of architecture seem at first sight to have been rather modest. He added a library and sacristy to the abbey church, and built up relatively small churches in the environs of the monastery. However, the number of churches Hrabanus built may have added up to thirty. He retired from the abbacy in 842, when it became clear that he had backed the wrong pretender to the throne, yet his quiet and peaceful stay on the Petersberg was cut short in 847, when he became archbishop of Mainz, a position he held until his death in 856.

Although much has been lost over the course of time, the enormous productivity of the monks of Fulda in the production of texts has resulted in a profusion of written sources for us to work with. I will only scrutinise those texts that have a direct relevance for our understanding of the architecture. A short introduction of the most important sources is nevertheless in order since they will frequently reappear in this chapter. The deeds of the individual abbots are known mostly through the *Gesta abbatum/Catalogus abbatum Fuldensium*, written in the early tenth century, and through their *vitae*. Eigil wrote a *Life of Sturmi* around 795, whereas both his own *vita* and that of Baugulf were written by Brun Candidus, respectively around 840 and soon after Baugulf’s death in 802. The *Life of Baugulf*, however, has been lost, as has the *Life of Ratger* which was presumably also written shortly after the abbot’s death. Brun’s *Life of Eigil* is an *opus geminatum*, consisting of both a prose and a verse text. Remarkably, Hrabanus does not

---

20 Berschin, “Biographie im karolingischen Fulda.”
seem to have received an official biography, yet his deeds have been recorded in Rudolf of Fulda’s *Miracula sanctorum in Fuldenses ecclesias translatorum*, henceforth the *Miracula*.$^{21}$ Not only the abbots were commemorated through *vita*; so were of course the saints whose relics rested in Fulda, some of them, like Lioba, of local origin.$^{22}$ We receive a glimpse of the less prominent members of the community through the *Annales necrologici* and the monastery’s membership lists, studied comprehensively by a research project led by Karl Schmid.$^{23}$

The most extraordinary source is perhaps the *Supplex Libellus*, an appeal addressed to the emperor written by a group of monks who opposed Ratger’s rule.$^{24}$ Like many other texts from Fulda, the *Supplex Libellus* is no longer extant in manuscript form but has survived thanks to the seventeenth-century Jesuit Christopher Brouwer. His *Fuldensium Antiquitatum Libri IIII* were published in 1612.$^{25}$ A translation of Brouwer’s work by Eduard Krieg, who also commented on it, appeared in the *Buchenblätter. Beilage der Fuldaer Zeitung für Heimatfreude* between 1987 and 1993.$^{26}$ Brouwer’s *Fuldensium Antiquitatum Libri IIII* also include an edition of a source that is, from an architectural standpoint, hugely important: Hrabanus Maurus’ altar *tituli*, through which we know of several churches how many altars there were, where they were placed and who they were dedicated to.$^{27}$ Charters from Fulda remain not in their original form, but in later collections, such as the cartulary that was composed during Hrabanus’ rule and the so-called *Codex*

---


$^{25}$ Brouwer, *Fuldensium Antiquitatum Libri III*. One of the reasons for the sustained losses was the evacuation of the Stiftsarchiv to Cologne in 1631.

$^{26}$ Krieg, in: *Buchenblätter* 59 (1987) – 66 (1993). This translation has, however, been criticised.

Eberhardi written in the middle of the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{28}

Due to amongst others the large amount of available sources and Fulda’s important role in the history of the Carolingian empire, scholars have shown a keen interest in the monastery almost since Brouwer’s days. It is thanks to this scholarship that I could cover a lot of ground, taking into account both a long period and a large variety of sources. In guiding me through this wealth of literature, the work of Janneke Raaijmakers has been especially important.\textsuperscript{29} With regard to the building history, the work of Eva Krause and Otfried Ellger has proved indispensable.\textsuperscript{30}

The brief (building) history given in the foregoing may have given the impression that the genesis and appearance of Fulda’s abbey church are quite well-known. This is the idea that is also disseminated by most literature on the subject. Reconstructions of the abbey church have been published over and over again, in various contexts, without reflection on the evidence on which they are based. It will be shown here that this evidence is in fact very limited, and that we know far less about Fulda’s abbey church than we have long believed. Moreover, this limited evidence also allows for reconstructions different from those we have grown used to. In the first part of this chapter I will briefly discuss the material evidence of the abbey church that has been uncovered. I will not enter at length into the turbulent history of archaeological research in Fulda, yet some background knowledge of the finds and historiography is necessary in order to understand how the current reconstructions came about, and how limited the evidence exactly is. Subsequently, the ways in which we can use this evidence to reconstruct the various phases of the abbey church will be discussed. Once we have gained some idea of the architecture of the abbey church, we can broaden our scope to include other building projects. As will become clear, ‘Fulda’ consisted of much more than just the abbey church, and its reconstruction will therefore be supplemented with reconstructions

\textsuperscript{28} Codex Eberhardi, ed. Meyer zu Ermgassen, Der Codex Eberhardi des Klosters Fulda. With regard to the cartulary, see Raaijmakers, Monastic community, pp. 202-213 and Hummer, “Family cartulary”.

\textsuperscript{29} Esp. Raaijmakers, Sacred time, Raaijmakers, Monastic community.

\textsuperscript{30} Ellger, Michaelskirche; Krause, Ratgerbasilika.
of other buildings, both directly adjacent to it and further away, such as the *claustrum*, the Michaelskirche and the churches on the hills surrounding the monastery. These reconstructed churches will be regarded in connection with each other and with the historical context in which they came into being. Each abbot’s architectural legacy and what he wanted this to express will emerge in this section, but it will also become clear how many correlations there were between the various phases, which is why it is important to study them together.

### 3.2 THE ABBEY CHURCH AND ITS MATERIAL EVIDENCE

Fulda’s building history is muddled and contentious. More than twelve excavation campaigns have taken place since the early twentieth century, but these have only covered a limited part of the terrain. The main focus of the excavations has always been the abbey church, although some of the terrain adjacent to it has also been laid bare. The reconstruction and interpretation of buildings other than the abbey church has luckily proved less complicated, and this section will therefore focus solely on the abbey church.

The main impediment to a comprehensive survey is the baroque church now standing over the grave of St. Boniface (figs. 3.1-3.2). The church that stood at
this site when Johann Dientzenhofer started planning the rebuilding in 1700 was at its core still the early medieval church. The sources do not refer to any earlier rebuildings, and mention only some additions and relatively minor alterations, such as the towers and the eastern atrium. The reconstruction work as a result of the accident of 1120, when the southern tower collapsed on the eastern sanctuary and crypt, was apparently the only intervention drastic enough to merit the re-dedication of the whole church. Some other calamities, fires for example, are mentioned in the sources, but never again was it necessary to dedicate the church anew.\textsuperscript{31} That the early medieval church survived more or less completely intact until the early eighteenth century is, however, a mixed blessing. Although we have many written and pictorial sources from Fulda, material evidence is scarce, primarily due to the baroque church’s reusing of (some of) the Carolingian foundations. This has only made it possible to recover vestiges of the early medieval church. Moreover, these were discovered at different moments in time, by various people, using a range of working methods, thus complicating any attempts to distil an overall picture from these finds. Problematic is also that the church was built on a rock plateau. Because of this solid underground on which different building phases rest, stratigraphy is of no use here and it is therefore almost impossible to determine the respective age of individual finds. This, along with the number of excavations, is one of the reasons for the lack of consensus about the interpretations of the finds.

Luckily, Manfred Fischer’s and Friedrich Oswald’s 1968 call for a reconsideration of the archaeological material has been answered in the early twenty-first

\textsuperscript{31} Krause, \textit{Ratgerbasilika}, p. 17-25.
century by Eva Krause. Yet although she has provided scholarship with a careful and detailed overview of the results of all the excavations, most importantly those conducted by Joseph Vonderau and Heinrich Hahn, even she could not reconcile the various campaigns. Many obscurities and inconsistencies remain.

As Fischer & Oswald and Krause have already indicated, the archaeologists working on Fulda were under the impression that they already knew what the abbey church essentially looked like. This was due to the reconstruction of the ground plan made by Friedrich Lange around 1850, based on documentary evidence and building historical research, which was published by Gregor Richter in 1905. The archaeologists’ primary line of approach was thus to find the ‘Baulinien’ presupposed by Lange (and Richter), which restricted their consideration of possible alternatives. To complicate matters, many finds and some entire campaigns have not been published. The reconstructed ground plan which is most often used in publications is still to a large extent based on the plan made by Vonderau in the 1920s. Vonderau’s plan in turn bears a remarkable resemblance to Lange’s plan, which already included the western transept and its extensions, the double apses, the eastern towers and atrium. Vonderau was, however, able to supplement Lange’s plan with exact measurements – or so he claimed. The lasting influence of Vonderau’s plan is remarkable considering the criticism which it has received since the 1960s. Eva Krause has collected all the available material on the excavations, published or not, numbered the individual finds again and combined

---

32 Fischer & Oswald, “Zur Baugeschichte der Fuldaer Klosterkirchen”; Krause, Ratgerbasilika (2002). Aside from offering and analysing an extensive ‘Befundkatalog’, Krause has made an important contribution to scholarship on the abbey church of Fulda by studying it in a backwards chronology, starting from the new baroque church. I will henceforth refer to Krause’s find numbers. Descriptions of the finds and references to previous publications on them to be found in Krause.

33 Richter, “Beiträge”, p. 68. Lange’s work was only published after his death and his sources are not all known. Some of his notes are however kept in the Staatsarchiv Marburg (StaM Handschriften 139/7) and could merit further investigation. See also Krause, Ratgerbasilika, pp. 32-33.

34 Krause, Ratgerbasilika.

35 See Vonderau, Die Ausgrabungen 1908-1913; Die Ausgrabungen 1919-1924; Die Ausgrabungen 1941.

them in one plan. The difficulties she encountered in doing so demonstrate how much documentation is lacking.

My approach in this case differs from that in the previous chapters and entails a very close look at the finds (see also fig. 3.3). This is necessary in order to show that at the basis of the reconstructions of Fulda that can be found in any overview of early medieval architecture is an extremely limited amount of evidence that is moreover highly contested. Since there is discussion about the building phases certain finds belong to, they will firstly be discussed per area instead of per stratigraphic layer. For now, I focus solely on the material evidence; written sources will be considered again in the next section. There, possible reconstructions based on the data presented here will also be discussed. It is important to take these steps one at a time. The material evidence for the abbey church is so complicated and contested that we need to look at it with an open mind, without immediately connecting it to possible reconstructions or to descriptions in texts.

TRACES

In the following, I will discuss several areas that are of importance for the reconstruction of one or more building phases: the eastern altar, apse and crypt, the grave of Boniface and the western apse, transept and crypt.

Eastern altar

According to Hrabanus’ Titulus, the first eastern altar was dedicated by Boniface. It probably always remained in more or less the same spot. As Eva Krause has pointed out, it is nowhere explicitly stated that the eastern altar remained where it was after Ratger’s rebuilding. Yet this does seem logical in the light of cultic

---

37 Krause’s plan has however also been criticised in details. Platz, “Die karolingischen Klosterkirchen”; “Fulda und Lorsch im archäologischen Vergleich”.

Fig. 3.3 Fulda, abbey church, overview of the archaeological finds. Krause, Ratgerbasilika, appendix.
However, no indications of the exact place of this altar could be found because it was undermined by a crypt twice, once by Eigil and again in the twelfth century.

Eastern apse
The only part of any eastern closing wall that has been uncovered is its apse. Vonderau found three foundations, the outermost of which (V/2/2), called the A-foundation by Vonderau, he interpreted as belonging to the Ratger-church. This A-apse has a diameter of 15 m. He further identified a B- and a C-apse, the latter being the innermost one. Embedded in this foundation, Vonderau also found a small absidiule (‘Konche’), which might have been part of the crypt (DIV/4). The diameter of the B- and C-apse is 12.7 and 11 m respectively. These finds do not suffice to determine which apse belongs to which building phase.

Nave
The eastern apse offers an important clue as to the dimensions of the nave. If we suppose that it was semi-circular, this allows us to infer the position of the eastern ending wall of the church, thereby allowing the calculation of the length of the church. Its width, however, is much more difficult to determine. The width of the nave has for a long time been reconstructed based on a corner foundation supposedly marking the corner of the southern aisle (DIV/16) and the column base (V/1/21) that was found when the grave for bishop Endert was dug in 1906. However, both finds are barely documented (no photographs, no clear original drawing, hardly any description) and are open to various interpretations. Eva Krause has further shown that the largest possible width the nave could have had in the church that was demolished in the eighteenth century was 12.9 m. It is very well possible that the nave demolished in the early eighteenth century was in fact still

---

40 Krause, *Ratgerbasilika*, p 139.
41 Krause, *Ratgerbasilika*, p. 120.
the Carolingian one and even if it was not, it is unlikely that a later rebuilding would be smaller than its predecessor.\textsuperscript{42} An even smaller reconstruction, based on what Vonderau interpreted as remains of the nave of the Sturmi-church (V/2/12), at 11 m, would also be possible. The position of the side-aisles could be indicated by the foundation trenches found by Hahn around 10 m from the middle axis (H/3/11, H/3/15), which would make the side-aisles about 3.5 m wide.\textsuperscript{43}

Eastern crypt
Eigil was the first to construct a crypt. He did this after Ratger’s church had been finished. The size and design of the crypt are unknown thanks to the accident of 1120, when the southern tower fell and destroyed the eastern choir and crypt,

\textsuperscript{42} See also Krause, \textit{Ratgerbasilika}, pp. 163, 171-172 and below.
\textsuperscript{43} Krause, \textit{Ratgerbasilika}, p 163.
and the subsequent reconstruction of a new crypt. The remains of this new ‘Marquard-crypt’ define the furthest northern and southern points to which Eigil’s crypt may have extended (V/2/16) and determine its maximal width at 8.66 m.\textsuperscript{44} V/2/17 marks the furthest western point to which the rock on which the church rests was dug out. The total length of Eigil’s crypt, then, cannot have been more than a little over 13 metres (measured from V/2/17 to the eastern end of the ‘Konche’). Since both of Eigil’s crypts had windows, it is likely that the eastern wall of the crypt followed the apse wall.\textsuperscript{45}

Grave of Boniface
Vonderau discovered what he called a ‘Grabkammer’ or burial chamber in 1931 (V/3/3). It consists of a hole cut out of the rock plateau, 72 cm deep, 60 cm wide and 247 cm long, almost empty by the time of its discovery. The find is consistent with descriptions of the grave in written sources: Boniface was buried in the western part of the old church, but his remains were moved to the new western part during the dedication ceremony in 819, and his original burial place was then marked by the altar of the Holy Cross, which according to later tradition was located in the middle of the nave.\textsuperscript{46} A little to the west of the grave Vonderau uncovered the remains of a foundation (V/3/1). This could mark the position of the altar of the Cross.

Western transept
Now that we reach the western choir and crypt, we leave the earliest phases of church-building in Fulda behind us. All of the finds in this part of the church must be dated after Ratger became abbot in 802. This is not to say that there cannot have

\textsuperscript{44} Krause, \textit{Ratgerbasilika}, p. 138.
been an earlier western sanctuary, but any material evidence of it that might have
existed has been destroyed by these later constructions. I will return to this idea
later. The existence of a western apse is indicated by written sources as well as by
the ‘Absisumgang’ found by Vonderau (V/1/1, V/1/2, ST/1/4).\textsuperscript{47}

The western transept is the only part of the early medieval church of Fulda
that has partially survived above ground. Its western wall has been incorporated
in the baroque church (BU/WB/7, foundations DD/2/116). Not many other parts of
the transept have been retrieved. Vonderau claimed to have found its north-eastern
corner (V/2/34), but when drainage works were undertaken in 1933, no remains
of walls were found at this site.\textsuperscript{48} Both Krause and Platz suggest that an irregular-
ity in the plan of the baroque church is a clue about the depth of the old transept,
since the initial eighteenth-century plan was to renew the church only up until the
transept.\textsuperscript{49} On the basis of depictions of the church made in the later Middle Ages
and the dubitable find V/2/34, annexes, added to the northern and southern ends of
the transept arms, have become a customary part of reconstructions of the abbey
church. However, trustworthy material evidence is again lacking.

Western crypt
The eighteenth-century ‘Bonifatiusgruft’ was, according to the Dombauakte, bigger
than its predecessor, which was itself probably an extension of the crypt construct-
ed by Eigil.\textsuperscript{50} This rebuilding was undertaken in the early fifteenth century, when
Boniface’s head was also separated from his body.\textsuperscript{51} Despite these rebuildings,
some remains have been found that may date to Eigil’s time. Hahn has discovered
two foundations for supports, which were probably columns (H/3/25 and H/3/27),

\textsuperscript{47} Hrabanus Maurus, \textit{Carmina} 41.10, ed. Dümmler, \textit{MGH Poet. lat.} 2, p. 207-208; Brun Candidus, \textit{Vita
\textsuperscript{48} Krause, \textit{Ratgerbasilika}, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Bauakten-Domkirche, 1700-1720}, Archiv des Bischöflichen Generalvikariats Fulda; partially edited
\textsuperscript{51} Krause, \textit{Ratgerbasilika}, pp. 76-77.
and the baroque foundations incorporated a capital (DIV/1) that resembles that of the Michaelskirche (also built by Eigil). Hahn also discovered a confessio, which he believed to be Carolingian (H/3/32). However, this is unlikely since Boniface’s grave was at that time not located in the crypt, but on top of it.

Adjacent buildings
Some of the remains found in the area of the present Domkirche do not seem to have belonged to the abbey church itself, but to one of the directly adjacent buildings. To the west and south of the Sturmi-church (its western end being marked by V/3/2), the rock plateau was dug out to a floor level of about 1.3 – 1.1 m lower than that of the Sturmi-church.

Written evidence indicates that the southern area cut out of the bedrock housed Sturmi’s monastic precinct. Remains found by Vonderau outside the present church (V/2/29-32) and by Hahn in the southern aisle (H/3/14, 15) may have been part of these claustral structures. Hahn found two foundation channels, of which the northern one (H/3/14; 8.7 m from the axis of the church) was the deepest. This could mark the position of the southern wall of the church, or of the northern wall of an adjacent building, which could belong to the claustrum.

Yet the finds to the south of the church are not the only ones that could qualify as part of the Sturmi-setup. There is also material evidence of buildings on the terrain predating the Baugulf/Ratgerbasilika (V/2/3-6, DIV/23 etc.) that do not align with the orientation of the church. These have therefore long been interpreted as pre-monastic. This interpretation has recently been disproved: there are no

55 Hahn suggests the former, Krause the latter.
56 Vonderau, “Ausgrabungen Domplatz”, pp. 19-26; Hahn, Ausgrabungen Domplatz 1953, pp. 29-37; Krause, Ratgerbasilika, p. 35, n. 59. Other indications that the buildings dated from before the arrival of Sturmi were evidence of fire, interpreted as caused by a Saxon attack around 700, and a single find
conclusive indications that the building phase is earlier than the Sturmi-church, and the orientation might be explained if the buildings followed the course of the river instead of the axis of the church. Yet this brings us no closer to establishing when these buildings were erected or if they were still extant when Eigil decided to move the *claustrum*. Nor do we know if they belonged to the *claustrum* or if they housed other functions.

The design of the new *claustrum*, built by Eigil, is a mystery as well. Von-derau discovered foundations of a gallery surrounding the western apse (V/1/1, ST/1/4), which was later used for graves. This gallery has generally been interpreted as the western arcade of a cloister, around which the dormitory, refectory etc. would presumably be grouped. The *Vita Eigil* tells us that a new *claustrum* was constructed to the west of the church, and it is possible that Vonderau's find was part of this complex. However, even if there was a gallery to adjacent to the western wall of the transept, this does not necessarily prove the existence of a fully-fledged cloister with galleries on four sides.

As this discussion of the most important finds makes clear, the idea that the various phases of the abbey church of Fulda can be reconstructed quite well, an idea that can be found in many architectural textbooks and overviews of the Carolingian period, is incorrect. We therefore have to deconstruct the reconstructions of the abbey church that we have grown so used to seeing. In the following, I will try to rebuild an image of Fulda's various phases. This will be less clear-cut

---

57 Kind, "Das karolingerzeitliche Kloster", pp. 401-402. See also Kind, "Pfahlbauten und merowingerische curtis? ".
59 V/1/6-9. See also Krause, *Ratgerbasilika*, p. 155. As Krause has already observed, Vonderau’s interpretation of these foundations as Carolingian has never been questioned. In the light of the reevaluation of Vonderau’s other finds we might doubt the validity of this interpretation. Yet although the time of construction is not certain, the identification of the structure as an external addition to the apse is – especially since it has been re-excavated, cf. ST/1/5.
than previous reconstructions, as I believe this does more justice to the evidence at hand.

**SUGGESTED RECONSTRUCTIONS: THE (RE)BUILDING OF FULDA**

Sturmi’s first abbey church, built shortly after 744, remains mostly unknown (fig. 3.4). It stood in what is now the eastern part of the baroque cathedral and its interior length was at least 23.4 metres, but may have been more than 38. The grave of Boniface (V/3/3) was incorporated in the western end of the church, and the Saint was represented in the east by the altar he dedicated, which probably remained in use throughout the various early medieval building phases. Yet the archaeological evidence does not offer any clues as to the eastern end of the Sturmi-church beyond the western wall of the (eastern) twelfth-century crypt. The eastern altar may have stood in an apse, but there is no archaeological evidence for it. The church’s interior width was at least 15 metres, which makes it likely that it had aisles. But again, this cannot be proven without a doubt. The monks probably lived in the area to the south of Sturmi’s church. The indications of buildings to the west of the ‘Sturmikirche’ are difficult to read; the finds by Vonderau and Hahn in this area have been interpreted as the result of the terracing of the terrain, as a predecessor church, as a western crypt added to Sturmi’s church, as the remains of

---

63 This, however, seems to be overlooked by most scholars, who record Vonderau’s apses (V/2/10, V2/8 and V/2/2) in their reconstructions.
64 These are rough estimates based on Krause’s Gesamtplan. She calculates the width of the Sturmi-kirche based on the difference in level with the area to the south of the church that presumably housed Sturmi’s monastic precinct (south of H/3/14) and comes to a total width of 17.4 m of which she deducts 2 m for the wall thickness, making the interior width 15.4 m. Thomas Platz comes to a width of 18.5 m by combining H/3/14 and a northern find that was not recognized as such by Hahn but visible on his drawings, named P/1 by Platz.
Hrabanus’ 836 ‘Reliquienturm’ and as the inside of an atrium offering access to the Sturmi-church.\textsuperscript{65} I subscribe to Uwe Lobbedey’s view that the predecessor-scenario is quite unlikely; it does not make sense to dig one metre deep into a virginal rock plateau without any further incentives when one might as well build the church on top of the plateau. I would thus judge this to be a later intervention, added after the construction of Sturm’s first church.\textsuperscript{66} For lack of additional evidence I would opt for the most obvious solution from a functional perspective, i.e. some sort of entrance hall or atrium.\textsuperscript{67}

The Sturmi-church went through a conversion during the abbacy of Baugulf (779-802). The Gesta abbatum tell us that together with Ratger, Baugulf built an eastern church of miraculous artistry.\textsuperscript{68} In or around the year 791, several annals mention the foundation of the church of St. Boniface in Fulda.\textsuperscript{69} We do not know if these remarks refer to a single building phase, or to two separate projects. It is equally uncertain whether the ‘eastern church’ refers to a rebuilding of the entire Sturmi-church, or whether only its eastern part, i.e. the choir was replaced. This can also not be deduced from the material evidence. If the latter was the case, then the nave of the Sturmi-church was torn down in its entirety and replaced by a new one or extended further eastwards only during Ratger’s abbacy (802-817). In the late eighth century, Baugulf may have been the abbot and thus formally in charge of the building process (and the design of the church?), but the specific reference to Ratger, who is later in the Gesta called a ’sapiens architectus’, may lead us to...

\textsuperscript{65} Floor Sturmi-kirche: V/3/6, V/3/1, at ca. 254.74 + NN. Lower western part: H/3/2 at 253,43-253,38 and H/3/8 at 253,64-253,59. These interpretations have been offered by respectively Krause, Platz, Hahn, Lobbedey and Parsons.

\textsuperscript{66} Lobbedey, “Zu eingetieften Räumen”, pp. 403-4.

\textsuperscript{67} For this hypothesis, see Parsons, “Sites and Monuments”, pp. 302-303. But it could just as well be something else altogether.

\textsuperscript{68} Krause, Ratgerbasilika, p. 12. Gesta abbatum Fuldensium, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 13, pp. 272. See also below.

believe that he was in fact the decisive factor.\textsuperscript{70} Moreover, the material evidence shows no disjunction that could mark the transfer of power. I will therefore discuss the complete ‘Ratger-basilica’ as one building phase, which was started ca. 791 and was finished in 819. Towards the end of this chapter, more attention will be paid to the forces at play behind the realization of it various parts.

The length of the nave of the ‘Ratger-basilica’ can be deduced from combining the hypothetical position of the eastern wall (inferred from the supposed end of the eastern apse) with the western transept wall, incorporated into the baroque church (BU/WB/7), which results in the reconstruction of a church with an internal length of ca. 75 m.\textsuperscript{71} As has been brought to the fore above, the nave can be reconstructed at different widths, varying between ca. 17 and 11 m. Although this has until recently been the standard reconstruction, it seems to me highly unlikely that the middle aisle was indeed 17 metres wide. Not only are the finds upon which this reconstruction is based rather untrustworthy, it would also be very strange for a later rebuilding to be smaller than its predecessor, which would be the case here if Eva Krause is right to reconstruct the nave of the church that was demolished in the eighteenth century at 12,9 m.\textsuperscript{72} Moreover, as Werner Jacobsen has pointed out, such a middle aisle as wide as 17 m is unparalleled in Carolingian churches known to us. Although this of course does rule out the possibility of it existing here, I believe there are sufficient arguments to be made in favour of a reconstruction of the middle aisle of the Ratger-church as being 11 m wide, based on what Vonderau and Hahn interpreted as remains of the nave of the Sturmi-church

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Gesta abbatum Fuldensium}, ed. Waitz, \textit{MGH SS} 13, pp. 272.

\textsuperscript{71} This length thus excludes the apses but includes the transept. It is assumed the apses had the shape of a semi-circle. Krause, \textit{Ratgerbasilika}, p. 139.

\textsuperscript{72} Krause, \textit{Ratgerbasilika}, p. 120. I have not studied the evidence regarding later medieval construction activities in detail, but it seems to me that it is not unlikely that the nave demolished in the early 18th century was in fact still the Carolingian nave. Even if it was not, it is unlikely that a later rebuilding would be smaller than its predecessor. See also Krause, \textit{Ratgerbasilika}, pp. 163; 171-172. As Werner Jacobsen has already pointed out, the previously reconstructed width of 16.7 m (the only evidence for which was the column base (V/1/21) found when the grave for bishop Endert was dug in 1906) would be unparalleled in Carolingian architecture, "Die Abteikirche in Fulda", p. 114. A more moderate reconstruction of 11-12.9 m would be more reasonable.
(V/2/12 and H/3/16). In fact, there is no other early medieval material attesting to an arcade wall at any other position. This could mean that Ratger simply extended the old Sturmi-church or that he maintained some aspects of it in the new church. The inside width of the aisles on either side of the nave was probably ca. 3.5 m.\(^73\)

We know from Hrabanus’ *tituli* that the nave ended in an eastern apse and that altars were set up in the eastern parts of the side-aisles. Whether these ended in straight walls, apses or another solution is unknown. Vonderau found three foundations of apses in the eastern closing wall, the outermost of which (Vonderau’s ‘A’-apse) he interpreted as belonging to the Ratger-church. However, the ‘A’-apse has a diameter of 15 m. This would be very large in comparison to the width of the nave (11 m?) and crypt (max. 8.66 m), as Krause and Platz have already noted. They have therefore suggested that apses, ‘B’ or ‘C’, with diameters of 12.7 and 11 metres, in fact belong to the Baugulf/Ratger/Eigil-church.\(^74\) It is likely that the eastern wall of the crypt followed the apse wall, since the *Vita Aegil* informs us that the crypt had three windows, like its western equivalent.\(^75\) The small absidiole (‘Konche’) found by Vonderau embedded in the foundation of the ‘C’-apse might have constituted the eastern ending of the crypt (DIV/4). The crypt cannot have extended further westwards than V/2/17, and its maximum length is thus ca. 13 metres.

It has been common knowledge since at least Lange’s time that the western wall of the church predated the baroque rebuilding, since the so-called ‘Gravenegkkreuzgang’ (still extant today and older than the baroque church) is connected to it.\(^76\) Parts of it have been laid bare at various times, and it is quite difficult to judge if these parts all belong to the same wall, built during Ratger’s abbacy. Yet since everyone seems to assume this is in fact the case, I will acquiesce in this judgment. This would make the transept ca. 58 m wide in total (BU/WB/8

\(^73\) Krause, *Ratgerbasilika*, p. 163.

\(^74\) Krause, *Ratgerbasilika*, pp. 138-9, Platz p 77.


marking its northern end). The reconstruction of the depth of the transept is more fiercely debated. Vonderau suggested that it was 17 m deep (on the basis of V/2/34), but this idea has been rejected by almost all later scholarship.\(^77\) Alternatively, both Eva Krause and Thomas Platz have suggested that the dimensions of the transept can be deduced from the baroque church, and that it was ca. 13.5 - 14.5 m deep.\(^78\) There is no material evidence attesting to the connection between the nave and the transept. Hrabanus’ *tituli* tell us, however, that an arch connected the transept and the nave of the church.\(^79\) This arch may have been set in a continuous wall – that may or may not have been interrupted by openings towards the side-aisles – or it may have rested on two pillars.\(^80\)

In conclusion, the Ratger-church can be reconstructed as a large basilica with a western transept. The inside of the church measured about 90 m from apse to apse, the nave was ca. 11 m wide and flanked by aisles of ca. 3.5 m. The transept may have been up to 58 m wide (excluding the annexes) and its depth was probably around 13.5 m.

The *Vita Aegil* offers some clues as to the appearance of the western crypt. It was a vaulted space, resting on arches with columns in between, with three windows in the western wall, of which the outer two had been walled up.\(^81\) The *Life of Leoba* indicates that the crypt was accessible through northern and southern staircases.\(^82\) Both sources make it clear that the grave of Boniface was located above the crypt, not in it. This image is partially corroborated by physical evidence.

\(^{77}\) Platz even suggests the find did not exist, but was made up by Vonderau to confirm his claim that the nave was 17 m wide as well, Platz, "Fulda und Lorsch", p. 78. But he claims the same for DIV/16. I do not see any reason to suspect Vonderau of such falsification of history, but it may very well be possible that he saw what he wanted to see in this spot or that he accidentally registered the find in the wrong place, particularly since digs in the place where one would expect the southern counterpart of V/2/34 resulted in nothing.


\(^{80}\) Krause, *Ratgerbasilika*, p. 146.


Hahn’s discovery of two foundations of supports, columns presumably (H/3/25 and H/3/27), as well as the capital (DIV/1) that resembles that of the Michaelskirche, found in the baroque foundations, indicate that the crypt was indeed equipped with a vault resting on columns. The confessio found by Hahn (H/3/32) cannot have been Carolingian considering the position of Boniface’s grave on top of the crypt. The construction of the larger ‘Bonifatiusgruft’ has destroyed all other remains of Eigil’s western crypt. We do not know how far eastwards it extended, yet it must have protruded into the transept if it had a northern and a southern staircase. The exact dimensions and architectural type of the crypt remain unknown. The simultaneous construction of the eastern and western crypt, together with their comparable use, would suggest to me that they would have a similar shape and size. It is likely that both spaces were vaulted, based on the weight that was resting on them, the testified presence of columns and the fact that Eigil also constructed a vaulted crypt in the Michaelskirche (to be discussed below). We know furthermore that both crypts had windows, which may have been placed in small apses such as the ‘Konche’ which Vonderau discovered in the east. There is no evidence for a confessio or another direct connection between either of the crypts and the altars above.

The combined efforts of Baugulf, Ratger and Eigil culminated in the dedication of the finished church by Heistulf, the archbishop of Mainz on 1 November 819, followed by the dedication of the crypts on the next day. At that time there were eleven altars in the church. This is known to us thanks to Hrabanus Maurus’ tituli, which have been mentioned before. Like Roman tituli these were initially

---

83 The body of Boniface was probably translated from the main altar to the crypt around 1420, when his head was separated from the rest of his body. The body was then kept in a sarcophagus close to, but not in the altar. Krause, Ratgerbasilika, p. 153. The crypt altar was not dedicated to Boniface until the late seventeenth century. Krause, Ratgerbasilika, p. 76-77, with references. Either of these events may have been the occasion for building the confessio, but the fifteenth century seems the most likely.

84 Hahn’s 1984 reconstruction has been rejected: Krause, Ratgerbasilika, p. 154; Jacobsen & Schaefer, Vorromanische Kirchenbauten: Nachtragsband, p. 133, but it is so far unclear to me how his interpretation of H/3/29 and H/3/30 as belonging to Eigil’s crypt has been received.

85 Brun Candidus, Vita Eigil, b.1, c. 15, b.2, c. 16-17, ed. Becht-Jördens, Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis, pp. 15, 55-60.
inscriptions, used to identify something or someone, which were written down in one collection only later.\textsuperscript{86} In this case, each \textit{titulus} referred to an altar and the saints whose relics (bodily or secondary) were kept in it. Although they seem at first glance to be mostly lists of names, the name of the author has been transmitted for good reason. For Hrabanus Maurus, already a highly esteemed scholar and poet, managed to turn these lists into meaningful poems encouraging the visitor to pause and pray and to see the coherence in the programme as a whole. Hrabanus wrote many \textit{tituli} for various types of churches in the course of his life, not only while in Fulda, but also as archbishop of Mainz. We will delve deeper into these \textit{tituli} and their value for architectural history in the last section of this chapter. The \textit{tituli} for the abbey church are important for its interpretation because they not only indicate where altars stood and who they were dedicated to, but also how architecture was invested with meaning both during and after its construction.

A final point of discussion with regard to the abbey church is the existence of annexes, added to the northern and southern ends of the transept arms. These are usually reconstructed, like the \textit{exedrae} of St. Peter’s, as spaces with a lower roof than that of the transept itself, separated from it by a row of columns. The \textit{exedrae} have figured in most reconstructions of the Ratger-church since Krautheimer’s 1942 article, but proof for them is thin on the ground.\textsuperscript{87} Even if we accept that these annexes existed in the ninth century, they might be the work of Hrabanus instead of part of Ratger’s original plan. In that case, they did not really function as a part of the church, but as the library and ‘sacarium’ (sacristy) that are mentioned in the \textit{Gesta abbatum}. The \textit{Gesta} record among Hrabanus’ achievements that he built (‘fecit’) a ‘sacarium’, which he filled with gold and silver vessels, as well as a library, which he enriched with such a multitude of books that they could hardly


\textsuperscript{87} Krause mentions the existence of such rooms at the time of the demolition of the old church in the eighteenth century and refers to V/2/34 and to ‘einer möglichen, ungefähren Orientierung der Grundrißgliederung des westlich anschließenden Konventbaus’, \textit{Ratgerbasilika}, pp. 149 and 101. This is a bit too circumstantial for my taste. Krautheimer, “Introduction to an ‘iconography of architecture’”.

204
be counted.\textsuperscript{88} Judging by the description, the ‘sacrarium’ functioned as a sacristy. Eva Krause has argued, based on later sources and circumstantial evidence, that Hrabanus may have built annexes to the transept arms to house these functions.\textsuperscript{89} It would be practical if both of these rooms were close to the abbey church and within easy reach from the \textit{clastrum}. They are similarly positioned on the Plan of St. Gall.

As for the position of the \textit{clastrum}, there are sufficient indications to suppose it was first located to the south of the abbey church and then to its west. According to the \textit{Life of Eigil} he asked the brethren what the most appropriate place for a new \textit{clastrum} would be.\textsuperscript{90} Some of them advised in favour of the area to the south of the church, ‘iuxta morem prioris’, whereas others preferred the western side of the church, ‘romano more’, because of its proximity to the grave of Boniface. The position of the \textit{clastrum} to the south of the church ‘according to the custom of the forefathers’ presumably refers to its placement there since Sturmi’s time. However, considering the monastery’s growth in the seventy years that passed between Sturmi and Eigil, it seems obvious that the monks’ living quarters as well as the ‘Wirtschaftsgebäude’ and other structures one might expect had been extended or renewed before.\textsuperscript{91} It cannot be determined on the basis of the available physical evidence if this was in fact the case, or how these buildings should be reconstructed.

The same holds true for the new \textit{clastrum} built by Eigil. The \textit{Gesta} and Rudolf’s \textit{Miracula} speak of domibus apertis’ and ‘porticos inferiores’, which may indicate that there were porticos or galleries.\textsuperscript{92} On the basis of these remarks and

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Gesta abbatum Fuldensium}, ed. Waitz, \textit{MGH SS} 13, p. 273.
\textsuperscript{89} Krause, \textit{Ratgerbasilika}, pp. 148, 150-150. Cf. pp. 80-81, for much later references to the position of the sacristy and ‘Heiltumshaus’ – the latter is also described as the ‘sacrarium’, but Krause does not seem not to connect this with the earlier ‘sacrarium’.
\textsuperscript{91} See also Schmid, Klostergemeinschaft, “Auf der Suche nach den Mönchen”, p. 154: the Recheo-list indicates that 134 monks lived in the mother house when Hrabanus became abbot.
\textsuperscript{92} Rudolf of Fulda, \textit{Miracula Sanctorum}, ed. Waitz, \textit{MGH SS} 15, p. 330; \textit{Gesta abbatum Fuldensium},
Vonderau’s claim that the foundations of a gallery surrounding the western apse he found belonged to Eigil’s time, a *claustrum* looking like the western atrium from Cologne or the Plan of St. Gall has been reconstructed.\textsuperscript{93} Not just the lack of evidence is a problem here; so is the equation of such functionally diverse units. As Lex Bosman has shown, early medieval ambulatories around apses can be divided into two groups: one in which the ambulatory functioned as part of the church and one where the ambulatory functioned as an entrance from outside. In the former case, the apse and the ambulatory stood in open connection to each other; in the latter, the ambulatory encircled a closed apse.\textsuperscript{94} The latter is more common in Western Europe, although the few examples we have (Cologne, Plan of St. Gall, Farfa, San Vincenzo al Volturno, San Giovanni in Laterano) can hardly be classified as a group.\textsuperscript{95} Yet a common feature is the ambulatories’ deployment for the accessibility of the church, which is different from the function of a cloister, even if it also offered the monks direct access to the church. The decision to move the *claustrum* to the west of the abbey church was probably at least partially motivated by the desire to be close to the grave of Boniface. This is also indicated by the presence of graves in the gallery found by Vonderau. The primary function of this space was thus not, as was that of an atrium, to provide large crowds with easy access to the church. All the same, that we need to distinguish atria from cloisters functionally is of course not to say that they cannot have a similar design. To draw further conclusions about the appearance of the *claustrum* in Fulda however more material evidence is needed.

\textsuperscript{93} As Krause has already observed, Vonderau’s interpretation of these foundations (V/1/6-9) as Carolingian has never been questioned. In the light of the re-evaluation of Vonderau’s other finds we might doubt the validity of this interpretation. Yet although the time of construction is not certain, the identification of the structure as an external addition to the apse is – especially since it has been re-excavated, cf. ST/1/5. Krause and Jacobsen e.g. point towards these two examples; Krause even calls it “eine "gängige" Bauform des 9. Jahrhunderts”, *Ratgerbasilika*, p. 155.

\textsuperscript{94} Bosman, *Architectuur en geschiedenis*.

\textsuperscript{95} Some of these will be discussed in chapter 5.
3.3 TO EACH ABBOT HIS OWN

It has by now become clear that the architectural patronage of Baugulf, Ratger, Eigil and Hrabanus can be separated only with difficulty. It is nevertheless enlightening to place the building phases in chronological order again, and see what the contributions of each abbot were and how these are connected to the situation in which they found themselves.

BAUGULF, HIS 364 MONKS AND BONIFACE

Baugulf took over the abbacy directly from Sturmi in 779 and reigned until 802. He and his brother Erkanbert, who later became bishop of Minden, were scions of a local aristocratic family and both grew up in Fulda. The second abbot of Fulda was thus very much a local product, someone who had witnessed the growth of the monastery under the leadership of its founder Sturmi from nearby. The monastery continued to flourish and grow under Baugulf’s rule. The primary reason for the construction of a new abbey church in the late eighth century has therefore often been said to be the limited capacity of the Sturmi-church. As we have seen, however, this church measured ca. 23 x 15 metres, which was a respectable size in comparison to other eight-century monastic churches. Even in our day an average of 0.5 m² per person in places used for assembly is experienced as comfortable by most, and I would presuppose a greater need for personal space in modern-day than early medieval society.⁹⁶ Bearing in mind that only about two-thirds of the church could be used to accommodate a (monastic) audience, this would still leave

---

⁹⁶ Hahn even allows for three people per square metre, Hahn, "Eihloha", p. 70. As mentioned above, 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. is a reasonable estimation.
enough space for over 400 people. According to the ‘Baugulf-list’, 364 monks were
attached to the monastery around the turn of the year 782. If necessary, these could
probably all attend mass in the abbey church together. The likelihood of all the
monks being in Fulda at the same time is very small withal. Moreover, the Romans
managed to celebrate the stationary liturgy that attracted large crowds in smaller
churches, such as S. Prassede. Baugulf’s main reason for rebuilding the abbey
church therefore does not seem to have been the desire for a bigger church.

There are of course other functional demands that the Sturmi-church may
not have met anymore, regardless of its size. The main impediment to finding out
what these were is that we know very little about Baugulf’s building plans apart
from the remark in the tenth-century Gesta abbatum that Baugulf ‘built a sanct-
ury in the east that admirably was constructed through the efforts of the very
energetic man Ratger’ and the Annals’ recording of the foundation (‘initium’/’fund-
datum’) of a ‘templum’ or basilica of Boniface around 791.97 These pieces of in-
formation have always been connected and taken to mean that Baugulf initiated
the construction of the so-called ‘Ratgerbasilika’, which replaced the entire Stur-
mi-church. Against this interpretation several arguments can be deployed. To start
with, the Gesta abbatum speaks only of an ‘orientale templum’. There may have
been more far-reaching plans from the start, but Baugulf may have started by add-
ing an eastern sanctuary to the existing church or by rebuilding its eastern part.98
It is possible that the nave and possible aisles of the Sturmi-church continued to be
in use. This would make the impetus for the building activities not so much a gen-
eral lack of space, but the wish for a different or larger choir area. Since we know
neither what the Sturmi-church looked like nor what the rebuilding of its eastern
part, if that was indeed what happened, entailed, it is impossible to determine in
what ways the new choir differed from the old one.

97 Gesta abbatum Fuldensium, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 13, p. 272; transl. Raaijmakers, Monastic community,
p. 84. Annales Fuldenses antiquissimi, ed. Kurze, MGH SS rer. Germ. 7, p. 138; Lambert of Hersfeld,
Annales, ed. Holder-Egger, MGH SS rer. Germ. 38, p. 18; Mariani Scotti chronicon, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 5,
98 See Krause, Ratgerbasilika, p. 162.
Since the eastern main altar was in fact not dedicated to Boniface, the Annals’ remark about the church of St. Boniface does not necessarily refer to the ‘orientale templum’ of the *Gesta*. It is possible, in my opinion, that the sources refer to two different building projects undertaken by Baugulf, especially since the replacement or alteration of the Sturmi-church would not constitute a new foundation. A novel foundation is however implied by the use of phrases such as ‘initium ecclesiae’ and ‘basilica fundatur’ in the Annals. We may hypothesise that the Annals and the *Gesta* refer to two separate churches, one in the west, one in the east.

The existence of a second chapel in the monastery in addition to the abbey church would not be altogether surprising. In 789 Charlemagne instructed his *missi* that all monasteries with saintly remains should have a chapel, where the monks could pray privately. As the *Vita Bonifatii* attests, pilgrims did indeed come to Fulda and ‘the spot in which the sacred body was interred became the scene of many divine blessings through the prayers of the saint’. Having a separate chapel for lay people, the ‘church of Boniface’ founded in the early 790s, would help respect the integrity of the *claustrum*. As the example of the 867 ‘Otmarskirche’ in St. Gallen shows, Fulda would not be the only ninth-century example of an arrangement of this kind, with a consecution of chapel, atrium and abbey church on the west-east axis. If there was in fact a secondary chapel to the west of the Sturmi-church, the question remaining is whether this was used by the monks or by lay people. Both user groups presumably wanted to have access to the grave of Boniface, which was located in the western end of the Sturmi-church. Unfortunately, any remains of a western sanctuary in the area of the later transept would probably have been disturbed beyond recognition by the construction of the baroque church.


101 Descriptions of the translation of his remains when the Ratger-church was finished make clear that he was at that time still resting in his original grave.
and the ‘Bonifatiusgruft’.\textsuperscript{102} For this reason there have been very few digs in this part of the church.\textsuperscript{103}

Whether or not Baugulf also built a secondary western chapel, it should not surprise us that he rebuilt or added an eastern choir, the distinguishing feature of which was its large apse. As we have seen before, the first century of a monastery’s existence often witnessed several building phases which went hand in hand with the development of the monastery on other fronts. Baugulf laid the foundation for much of what the monastery would later become – a powerful landholder and a centre of prayer and learning. Ever since the arrival of Boniface’s remains in 754, the monastery had increasingly cast its eyes towards the outside world, and Baugulf had excellent contacts at the royal court – he sent his promising pupil Einhard there, for example.\textsuperscript{104} He may also have secured royal support for his building project.\textsuperscript{105} In any case, the monastery now had more means at its disposal than at the time the Sturmi-church was built and it would only be fitting if its main church reflected this.

Baugulf resigned as abbot in 802 and retreated to Wolfsmünster. In the light of the later Ratger-crisis, his resignation has been interpreted as the result of political struggles, mainly on the basis of a letter by Alcuin, in which he reminds the monks of their oboedientia to their abbot, even if he himself can no longer fulfil all the demands of monastic life.\textsuperscript{106} More recent scholarship has however argued that Alcuin’s exhortations to the monks of Fulda are no different from those to

\textsuperscript{102} Hahn, “Von der Benediktuskrypta zur Bonifatiusgruft”. Dientzenhofer’s new crypt, called the ‘Bonifatiusgruft’, was cruciform and oriented. The grave of Boniface remained in its late-medieval, eastern position.

\textsuperscript{103} Hahn has argued for the existence of a pre-Bonifation church to the west of the Sturmi-church. Although, as has been mentioned before, I would rather interpret these remains as an atrium, Hahn does give some arguments for the existence of two churches on one axis. Hahn, Eihloha

\textsuperscript{104} Patzold, ”Konflikte”, pp. 79-81, 91-92.

\textsuperscript{105} There is a charter in which Charlemagne grants Fulda tithes to be used to bring about and restore buildings and church furnishings, which is however dated to the reign of Ratger. \textit{Codex diplomaticus Fuldensis} no. 247, ed. Dronke, pp. 127-128; Richter, ”Beiträge”, p. IV-V.

other communities, and that Baugulf’s ill health, also mentioned by Alcuin, may be the real reason for his resignation.\textsuperscript{107} The building activities were continued by his successor Ratger, who had already been in charge of them.

**RATGER: MORE ACTIVE, LESS EVIL**

That Ratger is already mentioned in the *Gesta* before he assumed the abbacy – Baugulf constructed the eastern sanctuary ‘studio Ratgeres strenuissimi viri’ – may be with the hindsight that Ratger went on to become abbot. Yet there is another source from Fulda that mentions another ‘Bauherr’, Rachulf, who worked under Eigil.\textsuperscript{108} Bearing in mind Günter Bandmann’s statement about ‘dem gerade für die mittelalterliche Baukunst bezeichnenden Faktum […], daß nicht so sehr der Künstler, sondern der Auftraggeber wichtig ist’, this seems remarkable indeed.\textsuperscript{109} Was this a more honourable job in Fulda than elsewhere? Or does the fact that both names have been recorded, as well as Ratger’s later promotion, indicate that the job referred to is not that of a designer, architect or construction site manager, but a less practical and more prestigious one? Our inability to answer this question can serve as a painful reminder of how little we know of early medieval building practices. Let us therefore continue with what we do know of Ratger and his dealings with architecture.

Ratger, born of East-Frankish nobility, entered the monastery in 781 and became abbot in 802. Whatever it was that he and Baugulf built together – a new eastern (or western) sanctuary, a renovated choir area, an entirely new church – no source mentions a dedication before 802, when Baugulf resigned and Ratger took over. Construction was apparently on-going, or the changes were not drastic enough yet to call for a re-dedication. Ratger continued work and in the tenth cen-

\textsuperscript{107} Patzold, “Konflikte”, pp. 91-104; Raaijmakers, *Monastic community*, pp. 96-98.
Tury, the above-quoted *Gesta abbatum* summarizes his work thus:

Tertius abbas Ratger, sapiens architectus, occidentale templum, iam accepta potestate, mira arte et immensa magnitudine alteri copulans, unam fecit aecclesiam.¹¹⁰

Shortly after having accepted the position the third abbot, Ratger, the wise architect, has connected the western sanctuary with the other and has made one church [that was] of miraculous artistry and immense magnitude.¹¹¹

Although there are many more texts informing us about Ratger’s abbacy, some of which – the *Supplex Libellus* and *Vita Aegil* – also mention his building activities, the *Gesta abbatum* is the only one with some sort of a description instead of a value judgement. This description does not discord with the reconstruction of the abbey church established in the first part of this chapter. As we have seen, this ‘magnificent church’ was a basilica with a nave of ca. 11 metres wide, flanked by aisles of around 3.5 metres. In front of the eastern apse, the main altar was located. About 60 metres westwards of the eastern façade, after passing the grave of Boniface, one encountered a western transept, ca. 58 m wide and also crowned by an apse.

It is generally assumed that this church was the outcome of one building process, started under Baugulf and continued into the reign of Eigil. Whether it was planned as such from the start, or whether the initial plan was to build a simple basilica with an eastern choir to which the western transept was added only after Ratger took office has been debated, as has the share of both abbots in the design process. On the basis of the *Gesta abbatum*, the western transept is always

¹¹¹ Krautheimer cleverly makes it appear as if the Gesta say that Ratger added a western church and connected both, but in fact this is not what is said. "Carolingian revival", p. 9.
attributed to Ratger. I see no reason to doubt this, yet what exactly this ‘occidentale templum’ refers to and if Ratger was the first to build one, could be up for discussion. For the *Gesta abbatum* does not say Ratger *built* a western sanctuary; it merely records that he combined both sanctuaries in one magnificent church. The way the *Gesta abbatum* lists the abbots’ achievements generally does not differ much from other such sources reminiscent of the *Liber Pontificalis*, although a larger than average interest in architecture can be detected, for example where the two single stones starting and ending the Michaelskirche are mentioned. It therefore seems to me that we should take the ‘occidentale templum […] alteri copulans, unam fecit aecclesiam’ seriously.

The existence of an older western chapel could also serve as an explanation for the extraordinary length of the church. The ‘Ratger-church’ is, along with St. Denis and Aachen, probably one of the Carolingian churches that appears most in textbooks partly because it is one of the largest churches north of the Alps, with dimensions unseen before Charlemagne’s day. Although many details of its reconstruction have been called into question, one aspect of it has never been proved wrong or explained: the length of the church. The inner distance between the eastern and the western apse is about 90 metres, making the church far larger than for example the Constantinian basilica in Trier (67 m including its apse) or the abbey church of St. Denis dedicated in 775 (ca. 56 m). After Krause’s readjustment of the width of the nave and side-aisles and the resulting (unusual) length:width proportions, an explanation for the extreme length of the nave is needed all the more. Why did Ratger extend the church so far beyond the western end of the Sturmi-kirche, even beyond the structure that stood to the West of it, tentatively identified above as an atrium? Was he simply trying to build an extremely large and impressive church, did he have some functional considerations in mind, or were there other motivations? In the previous section, I have argued that the main reason for rebuilding the Sturmi-church cannot have been that it had become too small for the expanding community. It could nevertheless have been functional considerations which instigated the construction of a new church; the practicality
of a space is of course determined by more than how many people can be packed into it. The increasing number of priest-monks could lead to a wish for a larger number of altars, or there might be a desire for the staging of more elaborate processions, all of which could lead to a demand for a more spacious church. As Hrabanus’ tituli show, there was indeed an increase in the number of altars, and processions were held between them. But the space offered by the extended nave was hardly put to use for these purposes; the altars were placed predominantly in the eastern and western choirs, in the transept and the crypts. In view of the proportions and use of other churches that were presumably used in more or less the same way, I am struggling to find any other functional considerations that could have led to a long yet narrow undivided nave. As far as representation goes, the sources show us time and again that size did not matter all that much. The significance of the design and the use of precious materials mattered more. Although the decision to build a (western) transept may indeed have been influenced by the desire to impress an audience, or to convey a certain message, this does not explain why the transept was placed at the end of such an elongated nave.

Since functional considerations alone do not explain the proportions of the church, let us look at other possible motivations. As noted above, the sources referring to Baugulf’s building activities may be seen to refer to two separate buildings: the rebuilding of the eastern part of the abbey church and the foundation of a church of St. Boniface. This fits in well with the passage from the Gesta abbatum that was just discussed, which says that Ratger connected an eastern and a western sanctuary and welded them into one magnificent church. Although this text is always quoted when it comes to the Ratger-church, the conclusion that there may have been a western sanctuary before Ratger started his construction work is never drawn from it. This is unfortunate because it may offer the key to understand-

---

112 Jacobsen is of the opinion that the location of the western wall was determined by its distance from the grave of Boniface. He suggests that Ratger intended to make the place where his head was resting the centre of the church. Jacobsen, “Die Abteikirche in Fulda”, p. 116.

113 Material evidence that could substantiate this theory is not available since the area has been gravely disturbed by later building activities.
ing the unusual proportions of Ratger’s church: the existence of an older western chapel might explain why he extended the nave so far beyond that of the Sturmi-Church. As has become clear in the foregoing, it is possible that a western chapel already existed during Baugulf’s abbacy. This theory might also shed new light on the interpretation of the western transept, which we will get back to below.\textsuperscript{114}

Although still an imposing church, the length of the nave is, after Krause’s re-adjustment of the measures of the transept and of the width of the nave, all that remains truly extraordinary about the dimensions of the Ratger-Church. It remains to be seen if this recalibration forces us to reconsider the image of the building as a megalomaniac project that was the main cause for the dissent between Ratger and his monks and the crisis that occurred during Ratger’s reign.

Ratger’s abbacy seems to have started off well: according to the Life of Eigil, Ratger was chosen ‘mira concordia fratrum’, but soon the bad started to overshadow whatever was good.\textsuperscript{115} In the Fulda recension of the Chronicon Laurissense breve only misery is recorded for the years leading up to Ratger’s dismissal: the epidemics of 807 and 810 and the visits of officials sent to mediate in the conflicts between the abbot and the monks.\textsuperscript{116} This conflict culminated in the monks petitioning Charlemagne and later Louis the Pious to reproach their abbot and support the monks on certain matters. The emperor Charlemagne responded in 812 by sending four bishops to Fulda, in order to ‘cure the commotion’.\textsuperscript{117} Apparently even such a select company could not suppress the monks’ hostility towards Ratger, for in 816 they appealed to the imperial court again. The complaints of the monks that were presented to the emperors are listed in the Supplex Libellus, a petition con-

\textsuperscript{114} The lack of archaeological evidence however does not make it possible at the moment to further substantiate this theory.

\textsuperscript{115} Brun Candidus, Vita Eigil, b. 1, c.3, ed. Becht-Jördens, Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{116} Chronicon Laurissense breve, ed. Schnorr von Carolsfeld, "Das Chronicon Laurissense breve", p. 37-38.

sisting of twenty chapters, ordered by subject. Issues that are discussed include changes to the liturgical observances made by Ratger, the care for the sick and elderly (that had apparently declined in recent years), and ‘the immense and superfluous buildings and other useless projects’ that the abbot had sponsored. Louis the Pious was perhaps more inclined to comply than his father, or felt that all other solutions had been exhausted, and deposed Ratger in 817. The monastery was then reformed by two imperial envoys and a delegation of West-Frankish monks. After a while, the situation was apparently under control again and the emperor gave the monks permission to choose a new abbot.

Chapter twelve of the *Supplex Libellus* has played an extraordinarily important role in the interpretation of the crisis, of Ratger’s work on the abbey church and of the *Supplex Libellus* itself. It refers directly to his construction works:

> ut aedificia immensa atque superflua et cetera inutilia opera omittantur, quibus fratres ultra modum fatigantur et familiae foris dispereunt, sed omnia iuxta mensuram et discretionem fiant. Fratribus quoque secundum regulam certis horis vacare lectioni liceat et item certis operari.

that immense and superfluous buildings and other useless works should be omitted, through which the monks are

---

119 *Supplex Libellus* c. 12, ed. Semmler, *CCM* 1, p. 324.
120 Ratger was subsequently exiled. *Chronicon Laurissense breve*, ed. Schnorr von Carolsfeld, "Das Chronicon Laurissense breve", p. 89; *Annales Fuldensis sive Annales Regni Francorum orientalis*, ed. Kurze, *MGH SS rer. Germ.* 7, pp. 20-21. That Ratger held on to the abbacy for so long despite the protests may have been due to his contacts at court. Becht-Jördens "Die Vita Aegil als Quelle", p. 22.
121 Brun Candidus, *Vita Eigil*, b. 1, c.3, ed. Becht-Jördens, *Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis*, p. 5. The extent of these reforms and the community’s reaction to them is unknown. See Semmler, "Studien zum Supplex Libellus".
122 *Supplex Libellus* c. 12, ed. Semmler, *CCM* 1, p. 324.
worn out beyond measure, and the *familia foris* is ruined; but all should happen according to measure and with discretion. It should also be allowed to the monks, according to the Rule, to have certain free hours to read, and also some to work.\(^{123}\)

Alphons Semmler especially has ardently argued that the crisis reflected in the *Supplex Libellus* was caused by Ratger’s building zeal, for which everything had to make way. Semmler interprets the entire SL from this perspective: liturgical changes are caused by Ratger’s need for manpower, as is his replacement of monks in certain positions by laymen. That the elderly were badly taken care of and that changes to the management of landed property were made, was, according to Semmler, caused by the lack of resources with which Ratger was faced.\(^{124}\)

Support for this theory may be looked for in Brun Candidus’ *Life of Eigil*, the twin work in verse and prose written around 840. Ratger’s reputation has suffered especially from this text; Ratger is portrayed so negatively, especially in the prose version of the *Life*, that Christopher Brouwer even pitied him and felt the need to note that he cannot really have been this evil.\(^{125}\) Candidus uses Ratger as the anti-type of Eigil, the just and forgiving abbot. In word and image, he portrays Ratger as a unicorn, charging at his helpless flock.\(^{126}\) Candidus’ text may reminds us of the *Supplex Libellus*’ twelfth chapter when he has Louis the Pious say to Eigil near the end of a long speech:

\(^{123}\) Krieg: "Gewaltige Kunstwerke und sonstige überflüssige Unternehmungen sollen aufgegeben werden; denn dadurch werden die Brüder nur übermäßig belastet, und die Mönchsamilien draußen (auf den Zellen) gehen zugrunde. Dagegen soll alles nach Maß und genauem Gewicht (Weisheit) geschehen. Den Brüdern soll es gestattet sein, gemäß der Ordensregel zu bestimmten Stunden frei zu sein für die Lesung (Studium) und desgleichen zu bestimmten Zeiten zur Arbeit. " Krautheimer’s translation: "enormous and superfluous buidings and all that other nonsense", “Carolingian revival”, p. 8.


\(^{125}\) Brouwer, *Fuldensium Antiquitatum Libri III* b. I, ch. 21, p. 89 and in passing.

\(^{126}\) The images are unfortunately known only from copies in Brouwer’s *Fuldensium Antiquitatum Libri III*. 

217
Behold, they who build martyria and decorate churches seem to do good work, but only when they also guard the other justice of God [...]. Know that they build for the glory of God. If however they do not serve the other justice of God, if the poor do not rejoice in their goods [...], who then be so unwise as not to understand that they do not build these buildings for the glory of God, but because of esteem among people? [...] People live in buildings and God lives in holy people.\(^{127}\)

This remark again might imply that it was Ratger’s building fury which caused the monks to rebel, but we must bear in mind that this is Brun Candidus in the 840s putting words in Louis the Pious’ mouth in retroaction. Moreover, Candidus had other intentions with this text than describing the situation around Ratger’s deposition, such as providing monks and abbot with a shining example: Eigil.\(^{128}\) Louis’ entire speech is an admonition to the monks of Fulda to improve their way of life and come together as one community again. To focus solely on this remark is distortive; moreover, it may serve more as a reminder to the abbot to spend the monastery’s wealth and energy on the right things and not to let this cause discord among the community again than as a condemnation of elaborate building works. That extensive building activities as such were not a bad thing becomes apparent from Eigil’s and Hrabanus’ continued contributions to the monastery’s built en-


\(^{128}\) Raaijmakers, *Monastic community*, pp. 237-256. Raaijmakers claims that Louis the Pious did indeed value most of the issues Candidus lets him address in the speech highly. Even though this may be the case, I would say it is very difficult to judge if any aspect of the speech was in fact inspired by Louis, or if Candidus composed it entirely in the light of his own day. The matter of the lay abbots mentioned by Raaijmakers corroborates that Candidus was apparently entirely free to make Louis say things he would never have said in reality.
vironment, as well as from the *Life of Eigil* itself, which elaborates on Eigil’s and Hrabanus’ work on the abbey church and the chapel of St. Michael.

A careful reading of the *Supplex Libellus* yields a similar picture: not all of the issues listed here are, directly or indirectly, related to Ratger’s building works. Although the building activities must indeed have been disruptive of daily life and resources may have run out towards the end, this was not the cause of all dissent between the monks and the abbot. For example, as Steffen Patzold has pointed out, construction is not hampered by elderly monks leaning on a cane, which Ratger, according to the *Supplex Libellus*, would no longer allow them.\textsuperscript{129} And although we know from the *Life of Eigil* that the monks did indeed partake actively in the building works, it seems unlikely that *ministeria* such as cooking, baking and gardening were taken from the monks and given to lay people in order to free the monks to work on the building of the abbey church.\textsuperscript{130}

Ratger’s megalomaniac building project, then, was in any case not the sole cause of the problems leading up to the *Supplex Libellus* and Ratger’s deposition. Which other factors were at play, and what was their effect on the building works? Scholarship has often assumed the presence within the monastery of two factions, one led by Ratger, the other possibly by Eigil. The parties have been characterised as the ‘Beter’, representative of an inward-looking type of monasticism that saw the celebration of the liturgy as the monks’ most important task, and the ‘Gelehrten’, those in favour of a more open monastery where learning was cultivated and shared with others.\textsuperscript{131} Whether there really were two well-delineated groups is questionable, but in the light of later events such as Ratger’s return to the monastery and the care Eigil took to consult the community before taking any important decisions such as the relocation of the monastery, it seems that Ratger was not just

\textsuperscript{129} Patzold, ”Konflikte”, pp. 113-115.
\textsuperscript{130} Brun relates how the monks unanimously dug out the foundations for the *claustrum*. Brun Candidus, *Vita Eigil*, b.1, c. 19, ed. Becht-Jördens, *Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis*, p. 17. *Supplex Libellus* c. 16, ed. Semmler, CCM 1, p. 325.
an evil genius acting in isolation.132

The crisis seems more a reflection of a number of multi-faceted problems facing the community. We see the monks of Fulda trying to cope with conflicting traditions, which were valued differently by various members of the community. For some, the Rule of Benedict stood above all else, whereas others valued the traditions of Sturmi and Boniface more. Ratger had evidently not been able to reconcile the factions and to (re)create a feeling of unity. This may be held against him considering an abbot’s duty – according to the Rule of Benedict – to have equal charity for all and to approach each in his own manner, but it does not mean that Ratger was a bad abbot per se or that he had lost touch with the entire community. Moreover, in the course of his abbacy the circumstances changed drastically, the number of monks grew exponentially, and so did the potential for trouble. Ratger responded to these changes by implementing reforms, but these were clearly not favourably received by the entire community.

The question that should concern us here is whether Ratger’s building craze was really one of the causes of the crisis and, conversely, how relevant was the crisis for the architecture that came about under Ratger’s leadership. The Supplex Libellus and the Life of Eigil both seem to object mostly, not to building per se, but to the building of large and luxurious buildings meant to impress people, not God. The scale of Ratger’s main commission, the abbey church, has indeed not been met by his successors. Yet one could argue that there was no need for them to build such a large church, since they already had Ratger’s abbey church at their disposal. As we will see, Hrabanus certainly did not decorate his churches modestly, and even Eigil, working directly after the crisis, happily took on several new building projects. Moreover, even Ratger himself, even though he may have realised that he bit off more than he could chew with the abbey church, continued the construction of other churches throughout the crisis: in 809 and 812 the churches on the Frauen- and Johannesberg were dedicated. Unlike his successors, the sources in fact never mention Ratger commissioning lavish interior decorations, or buy-

132 See also Becht-Jördens, “Die Vita Aegil als Quelle”, p. 22.
ing relics or luxurious liturgical objects. The emperor’s speech in the *Life of Eigil* may therefore have been meant more as a reminder for Hrabanus and his successors than to blacken Ratger’s reputation.

Ratger’s enlargement of the abbey church in itself was not the cause of the crisis. He may have been too enthusiastic in taking on a project that was bigger than the monastery could handle, the main problem being not so much a lack of means, but a lack of support from within the community. The underlying problem eventually leading to the escalation was that Ratger was no longer in sync with the needs and views of his community. When they chose him as abbot, he had already been overseeing the building project, so at first he must have done a good job. Yet the combination of the addition of the western transept, the long period of time it took to finish the project and the changed circumstances decreased the support for Ratger’s ideas, especially since the rebuilding of the abbey church disrupted life in the monastery and hampered the proper celebration of the liturgy.

Conversely, the crisis clearly had an impact on the headway made on the abbey church. Its construction took almost three decades (from 792 until 819), a long time compared to other Carolingian projects.\(^\text{133}\) Was this a matter of bad management? Ratger was apparently unable to organise a dedication and translation ceremony before his deposition, or he assessed his chances of surviving the monks’ petition too optimistically. In comparison, Eigil was able to do much more, including finishing and dedication the abbey church quickly, in the mere four years his abbacy lasted.

So far, we have focused on the size of the church and the relation between the crisis and the church building. The design of Ratger’s church has until now received little attention. The addition of the western transept to the eastern Bau- gulf-church has often been seen as the most significant part of Ratger’s legacy. It has been argued above that the position of the western transept may be explained by the existence of an older western chapel. If that is in fact the case, the magnitude of the church and its double choir is only partially a conscious decision on

Ratger’s part. The choice to build or rebuild a western sanctuary could also have
had something to do with Boniface’s requested burial place in the west of the
church: due to the extension of the nave, Boniface no longer lay at the western
end of the church, but at its centre. Moreover, ‘Doppelchoranlagen’ were slowly
becoming more current, so Ratger’s decision to add a western sanctuary to the
existing church or to connect the two should not in itself be seen as remarkable.\textsuperscript{134}
Especially when two functions as divergent as the veneration of a saint and the
celebration of a monastic liturgy had to be combined in one building, it was quite
practical to have two ‘main’ altars at some distance from one another. However,
the choice for a transept was less obvious. At the time, very few existed in the
West, among them Saint-Maurice d’Agaune and Fulrad of St. Denis’ eastern tran-
sept.

Fulda played an important part in Krautheimer’s theory about the Caro-
ingian revival of early Christian architecture in the Carolingian period. He stated:
‘The addition in this particular form shows the revolutionary character of Ratger’s
project: by adding this long continuous transept he transformed the church of
Fulda into a regular basilica of the “Roman” type.’\textsuperscript{135} Krautheimer goes on to list
the other aspects of the building that are reminiscent of the great fourth-century
Roman basilicas and most of all of St. Peter’s. Yet in the light of the evidence pre-
sented above, most of these details must be called into question. The eastern apse
(its large diameter directly derived from the Roman ‘prototype’ according to Krau-
theimer) was not as large as Krautheimer thought and was built during Baugulf’s
abbacy, not Ratger’s; the presence of columns and an architrave is not without
question; the proportions of the transept are no longer reconstructed as 1:5 and the
existence of \textit{exedrae} is highly dubious, and even if they existed, they could have
been built by Hrabanus, not Ratger. For now, they can therefore not be helpful in
the interpretation of the transept. Although all of this weakens Krautheimer’s the-

\textsuperscript{134} Günther Binding mentions for the first half of the 9th century e.g. St. Willibord in Echternacht, St.
Jean in Besançon, the cathedral of Paderborn, St. Rémi in Reims and the episcopal church of Le Mans,
“Doppelchoranlagen”, in \textit{Lexikon des Mittelalters Online}.

\textsuperscript{135} Krautheimer, “Carolingian revival”, p. 10
ory, the fact remains that Ratger was one of the first to build a western transept in the Carolingian age. However, none of the sources available to us give any hint that this was perceived as remarkable, and perhaps it simply was not. This building type was not common North of the Alps, but it became more so soon: we have already encountered transepts of different shapes in Seligenstadt and Reichenau. Carolingian intellectuals, many of whom visited Rome at some point, apparently did not perceive it as odd to use such a ‘Roman’ type in the Frankish realm. The details of Ratger’s transept such as the proportions, the absence of a crypt and of the grave of a saint connected to the altar and the locations of the altars (to be discussed in the next section) diverge too much from St. Peter’s to suggest that Ratger indeed intended to create a new St. Peter’s in Fulda, as Krautheimer has argued. Moreover, the sources mention nothing of the sort, whereas they do comment extensively on the meaning behind Eigil’s design for the Michaelskirche.\textsuperscript{136} Although there are cases in which a clear and intended relationship between buildings can be attested without any written evidence, it is unlikely that in the case of Fulda, where many high-quality texts were written and vigorous debates were held, no one would comment on such a meaningful architectural citation.

It does seem likely that a rather general association between the transept type and Rome was present in the minds of higher-educated beholders, especially people who had been to Rome themselves. Yet we can hypothesize that an early medieval builder who wanted to refer specifically and visibly to St. Peter’s could do so by using a number of other options in addition to the transept. Among these were the positioning of the transept in the west, the ring crypt, the placement of a grave underneath an altar in front of the apse in the transept and the \textit{exedrae} at the end of the transept arms. We should ask ourselves why Ratger did not use any of these other possibilities, if he did indeed intend to make a specific reference to St. Peter’s and liken Boniface to the Prince of the Apostles. I believe it likely that if this was the case, he would have quoted other aspects of the church as well, such

\textsuperscript{136} It is true that early medieval sources hardly ever comment on the design of buildings. Yet Fulda’s high scholarly level as well as the reflections on amongst others the Michaelskirche set it apart from other cases, especially if Ratger’s design was in fact as revolutionary as Krautheimer claims.
as the position of the grave and the ring crypt.

The significance of the transept can only be assessed after exploring what other options were available to Ratger. Simply adding a western apse to the nave was of course one possibility; this is depicted for example on the Plan of St. Gall, but it already occurs in early Christian basilicas. Another was to construct separate churches for the monks and the pilgrims, but in that case only one of them had direct access to the saint. If an older western sanctuary did indeed exist and its continued existence as well as the burial of Boniface in the west was desired, this precludes the option of combining both functions through for example an eastern ring crypt. Lastly, a western altar could be placed above a western narthex or entrance hall, in an ‘Empore’ or gallery. That way, the western entrance could be maintained while an additional sanctuary was created. However, a western apse or gallery could not have functioned the same way the transept did: additional altars were placed there, and it served as the monks’ access route from the *claustrum* to the church and vice versa. More importantly, it was not a current position to place a saint’s grave since it was neither easily accessible nor imposing enough.

There were thus no options available that had the same advantages as the addition of a western transept. That it was in fact an addition to the existing church instead of a complete transformation is attested by the fact that the eastern altar continued to function as the main altar. The ‘liturgische Umpolung’ did not happen until much later, which is the final indication that Ratger’s intention was not to build a copy of St. Peter’s in Fulda. Instead, he attempted to create a church that both did justice to the abbey’s traditions and fulfilled new demands.

**EIGIL: ACTIVE SENIOR**

The period between Ratger’s and Eigil’s abbacy was bridged by *missi* sent by the

---

138 Jacobsen, "Die Abteikirche in Fulda", p. 122 does claim that a ‘liturgische Umpolung’ happened.
emperor.\textsuperscript{139} The task that Aaron and Adalfrid, along with other monks from the west, were assigned was to support and correct.\textsuperscript{140} Although it is difficult to establish which practices they ‘corrected’ exactly, some of the missi’s reforms must partially have overlapped with those initiated by Ratger, for example with regard to the position of the praepositus and the deans.\textsuperscript{141} Perhaps the monks found it easier to accept change now that it was advocated (or enforced) by outsiders with an imperial mandate, or perhaps the previous opposition was directed more towards Ratger than towards his reforms.

We know nothing of the progress of the building activities during the presence of the missi. It is possible that the work came to a complete halt, but it is more likely that construction continued. Considering that before Ratger’s dismissal the church was apparently not yet finished enough to be dedicated, Eigil would have had to let his men work extremely fast to be able to dedicate the church about a year after he took office, especially since he also added crypts.\textsuperscript{142} Moreover, the monks were probably eager to finish the project after three decades of construction works, which must have hampered the celebration of the liturgy.

Once the missi were sufficiently satisfied with the reform of the monastery, more than a year after their arrival, they appealed to the emperor for permission to let the community elect a new abbot. After weeks of deliberations, the winner was the almost seventy-year-old Eigil. He had made a monastic career for himself in Fulda after entering the monastery as a young boy in the 750s, when Sturmi was

\textsuperscript{139} This period lasted from the summer of 817 to the end of 818, cf. Semmler, “Studien zum Supplex Libellus”, p. 295.


\textsuperscript{142} The dedication of a church did not always coincide with the end of building work on it. Yet it would have been difficult to dedicate the crypts unless they were more or less finished, at least structurally.
still alive. He became a priest around 775 and had held a number of offices before he became abbot in his old age.\textsuperscript{143} The \textit{Vita Aegil} relates Eigil’s contribution to the abbey church and says that he cleaned the interior of the church, put in pavements, erected (fixed) altars covered with polished slabs and established two crypts.\textsuperscript{144} Whereas the transition between Baugulf’s and Ratger’s abbacy went, at least as far as the building activities were concerned, probably rather smoothly since Ratger had already been in charge of the construction site during the reign of his predecessor, Eigil’s engagement with Ratger’s church had to be well-considered. The church was not yet dedicated, but it was finished enough to be forever connected with Ratger and the problems the monks faced during his leadership. Ratger still had supporters in the monastery, and even those who had objected to his management style probably would not want to see the destruction of an edifice for which so many sacrifices had been made. At the same time, the church constantly reminded each monk of the recent crisis and dissent among the monks, which did not make it any easier to come together as one community again. So it was up to Eigil to finish the abbey church quickly and in such a way that it answered to the functional demands posed, while simultaneously transforming this symbol of crisis into a symbol of unity, an expression of what the monastery of Fulda stood for. He achieved this transformation mostly by means of the altars and crypts.

As has been established above, both of the crypts that Eigil inserted into Ratger’s church have largely been destroyed by later interventions. What we know about them is based mainly on written sources, which inform us that they both had windows through which the rays of the rising and setting sun could enter, and that

\textsuperscript{143} Brun Candidus, \textit{Vita Eigil}, b. 1, c. 4-7; b. 2, c. 7-13, ed. Becht-Jördens, \textit{Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis}, pp. 6-8, 40-49; Semmler, "Studien zum Supplex Libellus", p. 295; Raaijmakers, \textit{Monastic community}, pp. 132-133.

\textsuperscript{144} Brun Candidus, \textit{Vita Eigil}, b.1, c. 14, ed. Becht-Jördens, \textit{Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis}, p. 15: "Non multo igitur post haec temporis interuallo coepit hic uenerabilis uir magno Dei cultus amore ecclesie mundare loca; pauimenta refundi constituit; altaria nihilominus locis congruis fieri demandauit, in summo lapidibus cooperta politis. In eadem uero ecclesia duas cryptas magnifico opere conlocauit; unam, quae respicit solis ortum; alteram, quae solis occasum intendit."
they rested on columns and arches. The western crypt was accessible through two staircases; a similar arrangement may be expected for the eastern crypt. Since both crypts were excavated after the construction of the church, it is to be expected that they did not extend past the foundations of the church, because this might jeopardize the stability of the construction.

Most of what we know regards the western crypt. The altar was located at its eastern end, judging from the description in the *Vita Eigil* which says the windows were located ‘post terga’, ‘behind the back’. This leads to the liturgical disposition that was customary in the Frankish realm: the altar is located at the eastern end of the space, and the officiating priest stands to the west of it. The community faces east along with the priest who turns towards them for certain parts of the liturgy such as the salutation.

The location of the altar above the crypt is more problematic. Brun Candidus informs us in the *Life of Eigil* that the altar stands beneath an ‘ingens’ (huge, momentous) apse in which he himself painted a mural. This would suggest that the altar is not located at the eastern end of the altar platform, but more towards the west. Taking into account that the priest would have to face east during the celebration of the mass, he would have to stand in the apse, to the west of the altar, as does the pope in St. Peter’s and other Roman churches with a western choir. Assuming the community celebrated mass together in this part of the church, we

---

145 Brun Candidus, *Vita Eigil*, b. 2, c. 15, ed. Becht-Jördens, *Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis*, p. 54. The eastern crypt had three windows, the western one originally five although the outer two were blocked off soon after their construction, perhaps because of the western living quarters/claustrum that was added shortly afterwards. Krause, *Ratgerbasilika*, p. 145.
147 This is corroborated by the lack of finds behind the apses.
are left wondering where the monks stood (or sat?) and in which direction they faced. The possibility that they faced east along with the officiating priest can be dismissed immediately, not only because it would be disrespectful to turn their backs on the altar, but also because it would go against the message the architecture was conveying to look through an arch into the dark nave instead of looking at the magnificent painted apse on the other side.¹⁵²

Despite the growing importance of the western altar, in whose proximity the remains of Boniface were placed, the main altar was still in the east. It was dedicated by Boniface, to the Saviour, his mother and the apostles.¹⁵³ Our knowledge of the range of altars that Eigil set up, intricately linked to each other and to the history and identity of the monastery by their dedications, is based on Hrabanus Maurus’ *tituli*. Through these, we know how many altars there were, where they stood and to whom they were dedicated. Although a very valuable source, the *tituli* do unfortunately only inform us about the interior arrangement and use of the abbey church from Eigil’s abbacy onwards. This makes it difficult to distinguish between Baugulf’s, Ratger’s and Eigil’s plans for the interior of the church and the ways in which the building was used before the dedication in 819. However, certain traditions were cherished throughout the years and the sacred topography of the church shows continuities.

One of the places that has always occupied a special place in the church’s topography is the spot where Boniface was first interred. As we have seen, this was discovered by Vonderau, who could also provide material evidence for a later structure that marked this site after Boniface’s remains were moved further west in 819, possibly the altar of the Holy Cross.¹⁵⁴ The eastern altar probably never changed position because this exact place was closely connected to Boniface, who dedicated the first altar here.¹⁵⁵ This respect for tradition and treatment of

¹⁵⁴ Vonderau’s finds were V/3/3 and V/3/1, respectively.
the building as a sort of relic is visible up until the construction of Dietzenhofer’s church, which incorporates several pieces of its predecessor.

Before looking at the altars in more detail, perhaps the transmission of the *tituli* merits a closer look. The texts have been transmitted in two redactions, one in the *Vita Aegil*, the other in an edition of a now lost manuscript by Brouwer. The former is the oldest and lists the *tituli*, along with a description of the place where the respective altar stood, in a fairly straightforward order: a hypothetical procession would start in the eastern crypt, pass the northern side-altar, turn back towards the altar in the eastern apse, pass along the southern side-altar and head towards the middle of the church to the altar of the Holy Cross where Boniface used to be interred. Then it was off to the side-altars in the transept arms (four in total), past the altar in the western apse and the procession would end in the western crypt.

In the version of the text that is conveyed by Brouwer, several altars have been added. These were not finished when the church was dedicated on 1 November 819 and probably received *tituli* in the course of the next year. Some of the already extant *tituli* also received additional verses at that time. The order in which the poems are conveyed is different and more complex in this version. Since the authorship, time of composition and use of this later version is problematic I would not want to draw too many conclusions from it. Gereon Becht-Jördens has ar-

---

156 Becht-Jördens, “Sturmi oder Bonifatius”. See there for a detailed analysis of the two redactions. Although Brun Candidus wrote his *Vita Eigil* around 840, he took care to record the *Tituli* as they were in 819, not later. Brun Candidus, *Vita Eigil* b. 1, c.15; b. 2, c. 16, 17; ed. Becht-Jördens, *Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis*, p. 15, 55-60. Becht-Jördens, “Text, Bild und Architektur”, p. 75; “Sturmi oder Bonifatius”.

157 Gereon Becht-Jördens ascribes the ordering to Hrabanus and dates it to around 820; “Sturmi oder Bonifatius”, p. 144. One of the problems is that the first *tituli* are missing from this version. Becht-Jördens has argued that there were four: those for the Salvatoraltar in the eastern apse, the Holy Cross altar, the altar dedicated to Boniface in the eastern apse and the altar for Philip and Jacob in the northern side-aisle. This version also lacks designations of place, so we cannot be sure where the eastern altars for the female saints and for Timothy were located exactly. Raaijmakers is less outspoken about the compiler and the date of the second redaction, *Monastic community*, pp. 141-146.
guessed that this version reflects a new view on the programme of the entire church: ‘Anstelle des Prozessionsweges von Krypta zu Krypta trat nunmehr ein statisches Ordnungschema, das durch die Einteilung der Altäre in vier Gruppen ein Bestreben nach Hierarchisierung, Symmetrie und Axialität erkennen lässt’. Of the four groups Becht-Jördens mentions, one goes along the axis of the church and is centered around Boniface (the altar in the eastern apse which he dedicated, the Holy Cross altar where the saint used to be buried and the western altar with his new grave), a transverse one focuses on Sturmi (in the northern aisle the altar for Philip and Jacob, of which the titulus is lost, and in the southern aisle the altar for Ignatius where Sturmi was interred), and then there are an eastern and a western group. Although the focus on Boniface and Sturmi is well-attested from other sources, especially the evidence for the Sturmi-thread as presented by Becht-Jördens is not very strong. There is no reason to assume any special connection between Sturmi and the altar for Philip and Jacob, and the existence of a ‘Sturmi-group’ is in fact not even attested in the ordering of the tituli as these two altars are not presented together. Nevertheless, Becht-Jördens convincingly argues that there was a very intricate system of meaning behind the tituli, making it possible to form different links each time by visiting the altars in a different order. This could be done individually or in regular processions. Through the saints commemorated in them, the altars connected the present with the past (e.g. by linking Boniface to early Christian martyrs) and placed Fulda in a wider context (e.g. through the remains of saints venerated in the region, such as Nazarius of Lorsch or through the remains of popes that linked Fulda to Rome). The church became a visual representation of the past, present and future of the monastery by referring to its founders and traditions, the liturgical year (most of these saints were also commemorated in the Sanctorale) and prayer associations with other religious communities.

161 Raaijmakers, Monastic community, pp. 137-150; Coon, Dark age bodies, p. 51: “The Abbey basilica also offers architectural testimony for the monks’ expertise at producing material histories of the evolution of the church, from its evangelical origins through its Frankish present.” I do not understand
The distribution of the original eleven altars at the time of the dedication in 819 seems quite even and straightforward: one in each crypt, three in the east, five in the transept and one in the middle of the nave. It is striking that the crypts have only one altar and that hardly any use is made in this respect of the sizable nave. This changed when more altars were added, for these are all located in the nave and its side-aisles. In the middle of the nave the Holy Cross altar could only be dedicated after the translation of the remains of Boniface and to its north and south altars were placed in the aisles, dedicated respectively to Jacob and Philip (titulus now lost) and Ignatius. Westwards of the eastern triumphal arch, altars were added dedicated to female saints (towards the northern aisle) and Timothy (towards the south). Even after the installation of these additional altars, the distribution is remarkably even. Around each altar, there is sufficient room for a small crowd to gather. The altars with the least space are those in the aisles, yet this would probably not be too bothersome since what little space there is, is at least clearly delineated.

Interestingly, the crypts were not used to accommodate and make accessible to pilgrims the remains of Boniface, Sturmi or Leoba. After the dedication of the church, Boniface was translated to the western apse. The exact location of Sturmi’s grave is unknown, but it was in the vicinity of the altar of Ignatius in the southern aisle, with which Sturmi’s commemoration was paired. The body of Leoba was transferred from a place to the north of the eastern altar to a space close

---

where Coon’s hypothetical floor plan of the crypt (fig. 2.4, p. 5), combining the eastern and western crypts into one, comes from. Especially since she does not refer to this unusual reconstruction at all in the text.

Although it is very interesting to look at the selection of saints and the Tituli themselves in more detail, I will not do that here since they have already been analyzed by Janneke Raaijmakers and Gereon Becht-Jördens.

162 The date of the younger redaction of the Tituli is debated. Becht-Jördens holds that it was probably written before Eigil’s death, whereas Raaijmakers holds to a more loose dating in Hrabanus’ lifetime. Becht-Jördens, "Sturmi und Bonifatius", pp. 144-146; Raaijmakers, Monastic community, p. 143.

163 Raaijmakers, Monastic community, p. 147.
to Sturmi’s grave, and later to the church on the Petersberg. The crypts were thus not intended for the veneration of these saints; as the dedications of the altars show, these spaces were meant specifically for a monastic audience. The eastern crypt commemorated the founders of monasticism in the East such as the desert father Anthony, whereas the altar in the western crypt was dedicated to the western founders of monasticism: Benedict, Honoratus and Columbanus. Through these dedications Eigil gave off a clear signal that under his rule the monastery would not lose sight of the traditions that shaped it. While Ratger’s project was a step towards the outside world, Eigil claimed back the abbey church for the monks. The parts that he added were meant in the first place for the Fulda community. The miracle in the *Life of Leoba*, relating the healing of a Spanish pilgrim, which tells us about the existence of a northern and southern entrance to the crypt seems to suggest, however, that the crypt was nevertheless accessible to lay people.

Eigil’s construction of the *claustrum* to the west of the abbey church also turned the transept into a distinctly monastic space, reserved for members of the community. As we have seen above, along the side of the transept, a covered gallery was constructed, which was presumably connected directly to the living quarters and thereby offered easy access to the church. The northern and southern additions to the transept arms cannot be dated (or in fact reconstructed) with certainty but could be the library and sacristy that Hrabanus is said to have established. This would make the transept the access route to the altar for liturgical books and vessels. It would certainly have been practical for these rooms, as well as the choir itself, to be accessible from within the *claustrum* through a covered walkway, especially for the nightly services (cf. Reichenau). Perhaps these functions had already been housed here before Hrabanus commissioned the purpose-built structures.

164 Rudolf of Fulda, *Vita Leobae* c. 21, ed. Waitz, *MGH SS* 15, p. 130.
166 Werner Jacobsen believes otherwise, apparently because he thinks all crypts were meant to for the ‘Organisation des Pilgerverkehrs’. Jacobsen, ”Die Abteikirche in Fulda”, p. 140.
The altars in the transept are placed against the eastern walls of the transept arms and against the piers dividing the nave and side-aisles. As in the crypt, the celebrant may have stood to the west of these altars but according to Frankish use, the altar was placed in the eastern part of the space. The only possibility for people attending the celebration was therefore to stand behind the priest, facing east as well. This disposition is different from the one that was usual for oratoria in Rome, such as those in St. Peter’s and the Lateran Basilica. There, the altars were placed detached from the wall in demarcated spaces against the western wall. That way, the priest could stand to the west of the altar, facing east, whereas any attendants stood to the east of the altar, facing west. The situation in Fulda resembled the one depicted on the Plan of St. Gall, where all secondary altars are placed in the east of the area demarcated for them.

An atrium was later built to the east of the abbey church, perhaps in already in the ninth century. This is another indication that the focus of the monks had shifted to the western part of the abbey church whereas its eastern part now welcomed others. Lay people – men only, if we believe the Life of Leoba – from that moment on accessed the church through the eastern ends of the side-aisles. It is difficult to establish which parts of the church were accessible to them, but the narrative sources show that they could at least approach the graves of Sturmi and Leoba and the western crypt. The altar of the Holy Cross that was set up in the middle of the nave may have been more than a marker of the former position of Boniface’s grave and could have functioned as a lay altar. Although this reading is not unequivocal, it is notable that many Carolingian monastic churches, including Reichenau, Centula, the church depicted on the Plan of St. Gall and the nearby churches of Hersfeld, Holzkirchen and Zell, for which Hrabanus even wrote tituli, were also equipped with a Cross-altar in the nave. Considering that lay people

---

\[168\] De Blaauw, *Cultus et decor*.
\[169\] Written sources are only available for the late tenth century, when Werinheri was abbot (968-982). Krause, *Ratgerbasilika*, pp. 16, 18.
\[170\] Hrabanus Maurus, *Carmina* 49, 77, 80, ed. Dümmler, *MGH Poet. lat.* 2, p. 214, 228-230, 232-234, Braun, *Der christliche Altar* 1, pp. 401-406. As Oswald has shown, the phrase “in medio ecclesiae” does
were not allowed to enter either of the choir areas, it does indeed seem plausible
that there was an altar specifically geared towards this user group in the nave.\footnote{Braun, \textit{Der christliche Altar}, pp. 401-406; Bandmann, "Früh- und hochmittelalterliche Altaranordnung als Darstellung", pp. 398-399, 406-407. Bandmann accords the altar of the Cross a little too much importance, in my opinion. At least in Fulda, I do not think it becomes the centre point of the entire 'Altaranordnung'.}

After dedicating the abbey church and building a new \textit{claustrum}, Eigil
turned towards his last project: the foundation of the church of St. Michael on the
monks’ cemetery.\footnote{Hrabanus Maurus, \textit{Carmina} 42, ed. Dümmel, \textit{MGH Poet. lat.} 2, p. 209.} This project is even more telling with regard to the intentions
behind Eigil’s building projects than the first two. As we shall see, all of Eigil’s
building works share a certain inward focus: they are mainly geared towards the
monastic community itself.

**MICHAELSKIRCHE**

On 15 January 815, a chapel was dedicated to Michael the archangel, John the
Evangelist, the martyr Abundius and the confessor Amandus as well as many oth-
describes the building – a small, round church resting on a crypt circumventing
a single column, supporting the eight columns of the church proper, which was
closed by a single stone – only to continue with an extensive exegesis of the edif-
ifice, which he interprets as a figure of Christ and the church.\footnote{Oswald, "In medio ecclesiae". Werner Jacobsen has proposed the demarcation of a monks’ choir in
the east, extending until the middle of the grave of Boniface. The Holy Cross altar to the West of the
grave was, in his opinion, meant for pilgrims and lay people. Jacobsen, "Die Abteikirche in Fulda", p.
116. Gereon Becht-Jördens apparently agrees and also assumes this altar was indeed meant for lay
people, "Sturmi oder Bonifatius", p. 140. As far as I am aware, no written sources from Fulda specifi-
cally demonstrate this.} Eigil and Hrabanus,
the latter at the time leader of the monastic school, are credited with the making (‘fingentes’) of the church, and it happened ‘cum consilio et fratrum consensu’. Hrabanus, the future abbot, was thus involved in one of his predecessor’s building projects much as Ratger was associated with Baugulf’s abbey church.

The Michaelskirche will be quite extensively discussed here for several reasons. Firstly, the design is so unusual that it indicates its founders’ willingness to think about and experiment with architecture. This makes it a highly interesting case for studying the motives the abbots of Fulda may have had for their building projects. Secondly, the doubts that have rightly been voiced over two decades ago about the traditional interpretation of the chapel – as a quotation of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem – do not seem to have penetrated the debates about both the chapel in Fulda and about copies of the Holy Sepulchre in the medieval West. Another attempt at getting this message across is in order because believing that a quotation of the Anastasis Rotunda existed in this place and time distorts our image both of the architecture of the period and of the history of Sepulchrum Domini chapels.

The church was built on the cemetery where the bodies of the deceased brothers were laid to rest, located on top of a terrace slightly higher than the rest of the monastic terrain, to the north-east of the abbey church. It still exists, yet

---

175 Brun Candidus, *Vita Eigil*, b. 1, c.17, ed. Becht-Jördens, *Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis*, p. 16: “Hoc siquidem aedificium pater iste uenerandus ac supra commemoratus magister cum sociis nescio quid magni fingentes, diuino magisterio docti, quod tamen ipse salua fide Christi et ecclesiae puto praesignari posse figuram”. I will discuss Brun’s exegesis in more detail below.

The monk Rachulf may also have been closely involved; Brun Candidus mentions him as the one building the crypts in the abbey church. Brun Candidus, *Vita Eigil*, b. 2, c. 15, ed. Becht-Jördens, *Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis*, pp. 53-54.

176 The most extensive publication about the church is Otfried Ellger’s 1988 dissertation. Ellger,
in a form quite different from the ninth-century one (figs. 3.5-3.7). At several moments in time changes and additions were made to the church, most fundamentally in the eleventh and early eighteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{177} In 1854 Friedrich Lange – whose legacy we have already encountered with regard to the abbey church – led a restoration project that strived to restore the church to an older state.\textsuperscript{178} Later on, a second attempt was made to restore the church to its original, or at least eleventh-century, state, and for this occasion the building was scrutinized and some excavations took place. The outcome of this research, done by Josef Schalkenbach in the 1930s, was that only the crypt and the lower parts of some of the walls of the first floor are Carolingian. All other parts that are visible now – the rest of the rotunda, the nave, the western tower – were added later.\textsuperscript{179} Schalkenbach’s observations are only published summarily and it is thus difficult to scrutinize his conclusions. In the 1990s the building was again subjected to a series of investigations, instigated by the need for restorations as well as for a new heating system. A brief survey of these works has been published by Gisela Fürle-Schamberger, who also undertook a thorough archival study of earlier renovation works, which unfortunately remains unpublished.\textsuperscript{180} As far as I am aware, no attempts were undertaken to re-examine Schalkenbach’s observations, and the crypt was not studied in detail. Excavations did however bring to light several graves belonging to the early medieval cemetery as well as the presumably original southern entrance to the crypt.

The church built by Eigil was a centrally planned, round building of at least two stories: a crypt built directly on the rock, without foundations, and a first floor. The single column supporting the entire church mentioned by Candidus is still visible.

\textsuperscript{177} Schalkenbach, "Die Wiederherstellung", p. 35.
\textsuperscript{178} Lange, \textit{Die St.-Michaelskirche zu Fulda}; Pralle, \textit{Die Michaelskirche}, p. 8
\textsuperscript{179} Ellger, \textit{Michaelskirche}, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{180} Fürle-Schamberger in Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte. The 'Archivrecherche' and other reports regarding the Michaelskirche are kept by the building department of the Bischöfliches Generalvikariat Fulda. I am very thankful to Ms. Kiel for making these accessible to me.
ible in the crypt of the Michaelskirche. The ionic column is surrounded by a round barrel vault in four parts which is, according to Schalkenbach, Carolingian.\textsuperscript{181} The central room around the column, about 5.5 m in diameter, opened on four sides to the surrounding ambulatory, which had an inner width of a little more than 2 m.\textsuperscript{182} Two graves were found in the eastern part of the ambulatory, one of which may have belonged to Eigil.\textsuperscript{183} The crypt had at least nine windows, five of which are blocked now. There may have been more windows, for example in the western part of the crypt which is now blocked by the nave that was added later, or in its eastern end. Like the crypts of the abbey church, the crypt of the Michaelskirche was only partially subterranean. It had windows which were positioned relatively high and only allowed light to enter the crypt through a diagonal opening. The crypt was directly accessible from the outside through a southern corridor ca. 6 m long, which ended in a staircase. The remains of wall-paintings on the sides of the staircase suggest that it was covered by a roof.

The first floor essentially followed the ground plan of the crypt, with a central space and a surrounding ambulatory. Yet this time, eight columns – resting on the central circular wall of the crypt – instead of one supported the roof.\textsuperscript{184} Although it seems possible that these columns supported only the vaulted ceiling, it is more likely that there was a lantern between the columns and the roof, allowing

\textsuperscript{181} Schalkenbach, "Die Wiederherstellung", p. 37. About the column, see Jacobsen, "Frühe Kapitellkunst" p. 293.

\textsuperscript{182} The subdivisions of the crypt ambulatory are later additions. Schalkenbach, "Die Wiederherstellung", p. 37.


\textsuperscript{184} The columns now standing are not the Carolingian ones; they are also in a slightly different position. See plan. Opinions on the dating of the capitals vary. Cf. Schalkenbach, "Die Wiederherstellung", p. 38, \textit{Die Michaelskirche zu Fulda}; Meyer-Barkhausen,"Die Westarkadenwand von St. Maria im Kapitol", pp. 18-20.
Moreover, Candidus speaks of a keystone ‘in summitate’ (in the highest part, the summit\textsuperscript{186}), thus suggesting that the vault was raised up to quite a high position. The ambulatory, however, was single-storied. In the east, an apse protruded from the ambulatory. At least according to Schalkenbach, whose view has been adopted by Ellger and others, the apse is Carolingian\textsuperscript{187}. In my opinion, however, the lack of verifiable evidence remains a problem. It is unclear to me if Schalkenbach, or anyone else, has actually been able to see with his own eyes that the foundation and lower part of the apse wall are contemporary with the other Carolingian walls. For submitting Schalkenbach’s plan to close scrutiny, the foundation of the apse at least seems very odd. According to the plan, it consists of a rectangular structure with a semicircular opening that is closed off by the eastern wall of the crypt. Only the wall of the first floor opens to reveal the apse. Another indication that the apse may not yet have existed in Eigil’s time is to be found in Hrabanus’ tituli, which will be discussed in more detail below.\textsuperscript{188} A copy of the Holy Sepulchre is known to have stood in the middle of the church before 1715, which has given rise to the theory that this was a tradition that had existed since the foundation of the Michaelskirche by Eigil.\textsuperscript{189} This theory will be discussed more extensively below, but it can be said in anticipation that there is no direct evidence for the existence

\textsuperscript{185} See also Ellger, Michaelskirche, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{186} Lewis & Short, Latin dictionary.
\textsuperscript{187} Schalkenbach, ”Die Wiederherstellung”, p. 38, 47, Ellger, Michaelskirche, p. 19, Raaijmakers, Monastic community, p. 169.
\textsuperscript{188} Hrabanus Maurus, Carmina 42, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Poet. lat. 2, p. 209.
\textsuperscript{189} Lange, Die St.-Michaelskirche zu Fulda; Dalman, Das Grab Christi in Deutschland, pp. 27-28. According to Dalman, we know of the existence of a model of the grave prior to 1715 because it was replaced by a new one, which in turn disappeared in the middle of the nineteenth century, in that year.
of a model of the Holy Sepulchre in the early medieval church. The only possible physical foundation is Schalkenbach’s observation in the middle of the rotunda of ‘reste eines Kalkestrichs, der an den karolingische Säulenplinthen angetragen war und wohl noch vom Bau des Eigil herrührt. Eine elliptische rauhe Erhöhung dieses Fußbodens ist wohl als Fundamentrest der Nachbildung des heiligen Grabes anzusprechen [...].’190 This comment is all we have – there is no drawing or more detailed description, and the raised screed alone is insufficient indication of the presence of a model of the tomb on it. Moreover, as has been noted above, we cannot be entirely sure that the screed is in fact Carolingian, and the raised layer may even be later than the lowest layer.191

A more thorough study of the Michaelskirche, using current building archaeological methods, might fill in gaps about the Carolingian state of the chapel of St. Michael, for example producing additional information about the construction of the apse or the accessibility of the chapel.192 Moreover, it may provide insights about the Carolingian building activities in Fulda in general, for example supplying information about crypt-building techniques.

Several interpretations of the design of this church have been suggested. The oldest is of course Brun Candidus’ reading of the building in the Life of Eigil. Only certain aspects of the building, which occur in both the verse and the prose version of the vita, seem to be of importance to Candidus: its circularity, the crypt resting on a single column, the eight columns on the ground floor and the keystone marking Christ as the beginning and end of everything.193 Candidus’ exegesis has been discussed in detail by Gereon Becht-Jördens and it seems unnecessary to reiterate this here, in part because Candidus’ explanation – although clearly inspired by the thinking of Hrabanus Maurus – has been formulated post-factum and

191 Ellger, Michaelskirche, p. 27.
192 The external entrance to the crypt seems rather unusual. I wonder what other entrances to the chapel existed.
193 Brun Candidus, Vita Eigil, b. 1, c.17; b. 2, c. 21, ed. Becht-Jördens, Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis, pp. 16, 69-70.
Candidus did not have anything to do with the realization of the building itself. Nevertheless, Brun’s interpretation may reflect contemporary discussion and it is possible that Eigil and Hrabanus did indeed choose some of the aspects that Brun highlights as basic principles of the design.

It is no wonder Brun Candidus says the building was made with a ‘profound flight of the imagination’, for the design is indeed remarkable. Modern attempts to explain it have focused either on the church’s dedication to the archangel Michael or on the possibility of a connection with the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, or on a combination of both. I will start with the role the dedication played in the interpretation of the design and continue thereafter with possible similarities between the chapel in Fulda and the Holy Sepulchre.

Although the church has many dedications, it soon became known as the ‘Michaelskirche’. Several sources, among them Hrabanus’s Martyrology, single out Michael by referring to the church of St. Michael in the cemetery. The main altar was, according to Hrabanus, dedicated primarily to Christ. It incorporated a piece of mount Sinai as well as Christ’s native soil. Besides Michael and the apostle John, a number of other saints is mentioned. To the left of the main altar stood one dedicated to martyrs, to its right stood an altar for confessors.

The number of churches dedicated to Michael throughout the earlier Middle Ages was relatively low. This may partly be due to some hesitancy on the part of the Church to encourage the veneration of angels. This changed to a certain

---

194 Becht-Jördens, "Text, Bild und Architektur". See also Raaijmakers, Monastic community, pp. 169-170; Untermann, Zentralbau, p. 50.
195 Brun Candidus, Vita Eigil, b. 2, c. 21, ed. Becht-Jördens, Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis, p. 69: "iaciunt alto sinuamine mentis".
196 E.g. Richter, "Nachrichten".
198 Hrabanus Maurus, Carmina 42, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Poet. lat. 2, p. 209. Ellger, Michaelskirche, pp. 86-87. See also Kloft, "Hrabanus Maurus".
199 Especially in early Christianity it was feared that the veneration of angels would lead to idolatry. Moreover, since angels are not of this world, they have not led a worldly life that may offer believers
extent after Michael’s miraculous appearances in a cave on the Italian Monte Gargano, an important impetus for the veneration of the archangel.\textsuperscript{200} Here, two tangible remnants of Michael’s apparitions could be seen: his footprints in a rock and an altar cloth that was discovered in the cave he was thought to inhabit. A part of this altar cloth was kept in the main altar in St. Michael’s chapel in Fulda, thereby providing us with the simplest possible explanation for the dedication.\textsuperscript{201}

However, especially for monastic cemetery churches this was not an entirely unusual dedication. The archangel’s association with death and the afterlife is due to his role in the Apocalypse as well as to the idea that Michael was the leader of the angels in their battle with demons over the souls of the deceased.\textsuperscript{202} Like Michael, monks were also engaged in a continuous struggle with the forces of evil.\textsuperscript{203} Presumably they were also better suited to deal with the veneration of angels in the proper way than lay people. The incidence of dedications to St. Michael in monastic and funerary contexts can be seen for example in the monasteries of Elnone (Saint-Amand-les-Eaux) and Saint-Mihiel.\textsuperscript{204} As in St-Mihiel, the dedication

\begin{itemize}
\item an example to imitate, they have not left behind relics and there is no dying day to commemorate.
\item This matter was also debated in Judaism, especially in the first centuries BC and AD. See e.g. Stückenbruck, \textit{Angel veneration}.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{200} According to the \textit{Liber de apparition Sancti Michaelis in monte Gargano}, written around the turn of the ninth century, these occurred from the fifth to the seventh century, ed. Waitz, \textit{MGH SS rer. Lang.} 1. There may have been an earlier predecessor to the Apparitio. See Schaller, \textit{Der Erzengel Michael}, p. 120.

\textsuperscript{201} Another piece of the altar cloth was kept in what later became the most famous Michael-sanctuary: the Mont St. Michel off the coast of Normandy, founded in the eighth century. A major difference with Fulda was that St. Michael appeared in Normandy, and that his veneration there was a conscious Nachahmung of Monte Gargano. However, there are some parallels too, mostly the description of the church at Mont St. Michel as round and cryptlike. This could, however, not be confirmed by excavations, for which reason I will not investigate these parallels further. Schaller, \textit{Der Erzengel Michael}, p. 134-7.

\textsuperscript{202} Schaller, \textit{Der Erzengel Michael}, pp. 217ff., p. 263.

\textsuperscript{203} Schaller, \textit{Der Erzengel Michael}, pp. 214-7. Moreover, the monks were seen as the (aspiring) worldly equivalent of the angels.

\textsuperscript{204} Elnone: chapel for Amandus and Michael built before 785 by abbot Arn, designated burial place for the monks. In St-Mihiel, the monks continued to be buried in the old church of St. Michael despite the relocation of the monastery in 815. Schaller, \textit{Der Erzengel Michael}, pp. 267-269.
to Michael often coincides with an elevated location, either on a hill or mountain
or on the first floor of a church (in the shape of an ‘Empore’) or gate.205 The ‘Mi-
chaelskirche’ in Fulda was also located on a hillock and the main altar was elevated
over the ground level by the crypt that was only partially subterranean. A final im-
petus for the dedication of this chapel to Michael may have been the official inclu-
sion of the feast of St. Michael on 29 September in the Frankish liturgical calendar
which took place in 813, after a steady increase in the veneration of the archangel
in the late eighth century.206

In conclusion, Eigil’s choice to dedicate this chapel to St. Michael (among
others), need not surprise us. It is fitting on many levels: the chapel’s monastic and
funerary character and its elevated position made a dedication to Michael quite
appropriate, and relics of his were present in Fulda. Moreover, the recent admission
of his feast day in the Frankish calendar may have led to an increase of the venera-
tion of St. Michael. Moreover, this is not a dedication solely to St. Michael – as was
the case for the abbey church, the chapel has a whole dedication programme.

The dedication of the chapel to Michael may to some extent have influ-
enced its design, mostly its tower-like quality which fits in with other elevated
St. Michael chapels. The combination of the hill and the grotto-like crypt (which
Brun calls an *antrum*, ‘cave’) may moreover remind us of Monte Gargano. Yet it
is hard to say whether the design or the dedication came first. A more common
explanation for the design of the ‘Michaelskirche’ is that it stems from the church
of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Our familiarity with later medieval central-
ly-planned (cemetery) churches that refer explicitly to the *Anastasis* church makes

205 This is partly due to Michael’s choice for an elevated dwelling on earth on the Monte Gargano,
but it can also be explained through the belief that St. Michael functioned as a protector for the area
around the hill. Examples are the Castel Sant’Angelo built on top of Hadrian’s mausoleum in Rome,
the ninth-century cathedrals of Metz and Rheims, both of which had a chapel for Michael located on
a higher floor of the church and in Fulda itself the church on the Frauenberg.

Although this may have been inspired by Charlemagne’s conquest of the Lombards, who saw – as did
the Normans – St. Michael as their patron saint, it was by no means intended that Michael become
the ‘Nationalheilige der Franken’.

242
it seem almost obvious that it was also the intention of the founders of this centrally-planned grave church to invoke the Holy Sepulchre. However, Western copies of Christ’s grave were made mainly after the Anastasis was destroyed in 1009, and this link is thus not as manifest as it may seem.

For Friedrich Lange however it apparently was evident, and he therefore judged it unnecessary to formulate arguments supporting his claim that the model of the Holy Sepulchre standing in the middle of the church until the early eighteenth century had an early medieval predecessor. Only as his theory was adopted by later scholars, arguments supporting Lange’s claim started to be formulated. There are, however, indications that a model of the Holy Sepulchre stood at the centre of the chapel at a later time. The presence of such a model has been viewed as an argument in support of the idea that the chapel itself was also meant as a quotation of the Holy Sepulchre.

Two pieces of evidence supposedly prove the presence of a model of the Holy Grave in the chapel in the Middle Ages. One is the layer of raised floor screed found by Schalkenbach. As has been argued above, we cannot be sure that it was in fact Carolingian, nor that it was meant as a foundation for an object placed in the centre of the chapel. The second argument is the presence of a copy of the Aedicule in the middle of the church in a later period. Lange notes that such a model existed before 1715, but there might also be a much earlier reference. In the record of the church’s dedication of 1092/93, mention is made of a ‘sepulchrum’ containing relics of the Holy Grave. The ‘sepulchrum’ is mentioned after three altars, one

207 Lange, Die St.-Michaelskirche zu Fulda. Krautheimer is more or less of the same opinion. He discusses the church of St. Michael among examples based on the ‘prototype’ of the Holy Sepulchre, whereby he substantiates the existence of a link between the two buildings by merely noting in passing that: “The "titulus" of the main altar leaves no doubt that the original structure was already linked to the Holy Sepulchre. "Introduction to an Iconography of medieval architecture”, p. 4.

‘in superiori parte eiusdem ecclesiae ... anterius altare’, dedicated to the Salvator and St. Michael, followed by an ‘alter posterius...’ and one ‘inferius autem altare anterius’. All of the relics contained in the Carolingian main altar were, in the eleventh century, transferred to the new first-floor altar, not to the ‘sepulchrum’. Moreover, this altar is mentioned first, and continued the original dedication, which must mean that the main altar was – interestingly – located on the upper floor of the church. Right after the ‘sepulchrum’, an altar for the Holy Cross is also mentioned. As we have seen above, the most obvious place for an altar of the Holy Cross was the nave, and a nave was in fact added to the rotunda before this dedication. The dedication of the crypt occurred the next day, so the lower altar (as well as the *sepulchrum*) must have been located on the ground floor of the eleventh-century church, not in the crypt.

The relocation of the main altar and the addition of a Cross-altar indicate that the eleventh-century constellation is not a continuation of the Carolingian programme, but the outcome of an entirely new concept. The same has been argued by Ellger on the basis of the altar dedications. Unlike the three ninth-century altars, focusing for a large part on martyrdom, the five new altars are concentrated almost solely on the death of Christ, not only through the dedication of each altar to either the Saviour or the Cross, but also through the relics of the Cross and of the sites of the passion and the dedications to the Marys. The *sepulchrum* fits perfectly into this scheme and not so much in the Carolingian programme. The ‘Michaelskirche’ changed drastically in the eleventh century: it was swept away almost to the ground and then rebuilt over the old foundations and the crypt; a story was added to the rotunda, as were a western nave and tower as well as northern and southern annexes. It is more likely that the *sepulchrum*, was also an innovation added at this time, instead of a continuation of an older tradition. An

---

eleventh-century *Sepulchrum Domini* in Fulda would also fit in with the popularity of the Holy Sepulchre in that period, and it would also explain the addition of northern and southern annexes.\(^{213}\)

Among the written sources quoted most often in support of Lange’s theory is Hrabanus’ *titulus*, which we encountered earlier, for the main altar of the Michaelskirche stands foremost. It starts thus:

Hoc altare deo dedicatum est maxime Christo,  
Cuius hic tumulus nostra sepulcra iuvat\(^{214}\)

In the second line, which is of greater significance in this context, a double ambiguity is present. ‘Iuvat’, contrary to the more often-used ‘adiuvat’, does not only designate help offered by Christ to the monks but also the monks’ delight in Christ.\(^{215}\) The adverb ‘hic’, which can have either a spatial (‘here’) or temporal (‘now, at this time’) meaning, is more problematic.\(^{216}\) It has often been interpreted as referring to a physical representation of the grave of Christ present in the chapel: ‘this tomb of his here’.\(^{217}\) However, in so far as the spatial connotation has to be taken literally, it may also refer to the altar, which is in every church a representation of the death and resurrection of Christ.\(^{218}\) Alternatively, it could refer to a relic of the Holy Grave kept in the altar, although the existence of such an important relic could have been stressed more.\(^{219}\) Another possibility is to connect ‘hic’ to the monks’ graves. Finally, a remarkable aspect of the line is the difference between ‘tumulus’ and ‘sepulchra’, which seems to me to be intentional. ‘Sepulchra’ clearly

\(^{215}\) Lewis & Short, *Latin dictionary*.  
\(^{216}\) Lewis & Short, *Latin dictionary*.  
\(^{217}\) For example by Dalman, *Das Grab Christi in Deutschland*.  
\(^{218}\) Many thanks to Evina Steinova for her help with interpreting this text.  
\(^{219}\) Ellger, *Michaelskirche*, p. 29. This is not the most convincing part of Ellger’s work. A relic of the grave does appear in the description of the eleventh-century main altar just mentioned.
refers to actual graves: those of the monks, surrounding the chapel. ‘Tumulus’ can
be a tomb, a sepulchral mound, or even death itself, or being dead – thus referring
to Christ’s death, which is beneficial for the monks.220 The difference can, of course,
also simply be explained by the poet’s wish to avoid repetition. I would, all things
considered, translate the passage thus:

This altar is dedicated above all to Christ, the God,
And this very tomb (or: death) of his provides help to our burials221

As was the case for the abbey church, Friedrich Lange’s views on the Michaelskirche have had a long-lasting effect. He was the first to suggest that a copy of the aedicula that was placed over the Sepulchrum Domini in Jerusalem was placed in the centre of the Michaelskirche, and that, consequently, the church itself was meant to evoke the church of the Holy Sepulchre. Lange’s theory has for a long time been accepted almost unquestioningly. Otfried Ellger however has already voiced criticism on it that I have happily pursued here.222 In my opinion, ‘cuius hic tumulus’ does not necessarily allude to a model of Christ’s grave in the church, nor does it mean that the church as a whole is supposed to evoke the basilica Anastasis.223 More problematic than the interpretation of this passage is however the complete lack of any textual evidence indicating that Eigil and Hrabanus wanted to make any reference to Jerusalem. It seems especially odd that Hrabanus did not

220 Lewis & Short, Latin dictionary. Gregory of Tours seems to use the word as ‘death’, although it could be argued that Gregory does actually refer to a grave, for bishop Eusebius of Vercelli was alive ‘post tumulos’. Glory of the Confessors 3, MGH SS rer. Merov. 1,2, p. 300.
For Hrabanus’ use of the word, including as a reference to the container in which relics were kept (functioning as the ‘grave’ of the saint) in Carmina 47, see Ellger, Michaelskirche, p. 28.
222 Ellger’s refutation of Läg’s theory has not been favorably received by all; cf. Becht-Jördens, “Text, Bild und Architektur”, p. 90.
223 Untermann, Zentralbau p. 58, also does not see enough evidence to assume a model of the Holy Sepulchre in the middle of the church, yet this leads him, contrary to me, to the conclusion that the sentence in the Titulus must indicate that the building as a whole was a quotation of Jerusalem.
write a titulus for the Holy Grave, if one did indeed exist, and it is also not mentioned by Brun Candidus or in the Gesta abbatum.

Despite the lack of external evidence, the building itself could of course offer sufficient grounds to suppose that its builders found their inspiration in the church of the Holy Grave. To know what the similarities between the two were, we may take a brief look at the Anastasis church in Jerusalem. The tomb of Christ on Mount Calvary was recognized as such by Constantine in 325 and a monumental complex arose around it soon afterwards. It consisted of a grave chamber dug out of a rock wall over which a grave monument was erected in the fourth century. Now known as the Aedicule, this was a little circular shrine of only one story with a conical roof resting on marble columns. Around it arose the Rotunda, a much larger round structure with a diameter of 12 metres, resting on twelve columns and six piers, with an eastern entrance. About three-quarters of the rotunda were surrounded by an ambulatory with three apses. To its east stood a porticus, which was preceded by a large basilica, in turn preceded by an atrium. Constantine’s Martyrium was severely damaged during the Persian and Muslim conquests of the city from the seventh century onwards, yet travellers from the West continued to visit the holy sites. Relics from the Holy Land reached the West: not only Hrabanus but also Angilbert of St-Riquier managed to lay his hands on them.

224 It is obviously difficult to bridge the gap of three centuries during which we have no idea about what happened to Christ’s tomb. However, as Colin Morris has argued, Constantine had good reasons to support its veneration at this exact site. Morris, Sepulchre of Christ, pp. 1-31.

225 Morris, Sepulchre of Christ, pp. 31-38. See also Biddle, Tomb of Christ.

226 Charlemagne himself maintained diplomatic relations with both the patriarch of Jerusalem and the Abbasid Caliph. Borgolte’s work shows that very little is known about the content of the messenger’s messages. However, there was certainly a political component to the contacts between Charlemagne and the patriarch of Jerusalem; they were more than just an exchange of gifts. Gesandtenaustausch, esp. pp. 67-76. Charlemagne did send capital meant for the assistance of Christians living in the Holy Land as well as pilgrims travelling there and for the renovation of churches and monasteries. The frequency with which envoys were exchanged decreased during Louis the Pious’ reign, yet contacts with the Holy Land remain visible in the sources. Gesandtenaustausch, pp. 93-101, 107-119. Cf. Einhard, Life of Charlemagne c. 16, ed. Holder-Egger, MGH SS rer. Germ. 25, pp. 19-20.

The most influential accounts of the Sepulchre circulating in the West are those of the Arculf/Adomnan/Bede-tradition, some manuscripts of which include illustrations depicting the circular ‘sepulchrum’ (the Aedicule) itself and the surrounding rotunda. The basilica and atria receive much less attention. The distinctive characteristic of the site of Christ’s resurrection, architecturally speaking, was apparently its circularity. This calls to mind Brun Candidus’ depiction of the Michaelskirche. These descriptions of the Lord’s Sepulchre, focusing on the grave itself and the monumentum (the Aedicule) over it, were widely available and reproduced by amongst others Walahfrid and Hrabanus. Yet there is a marked difference between the ninth- and, for example, twelfth-century stance towards the Anastasis sanctuary. The need to physically recreate it in the West was only really felt after the Fatimid Caliph’s attempt to completely destroy the Sepulchre in 1009. Earlier architectural quotations of the Holy Sepulchre are rare; one example is the Rotunda in Reichenau built to house the relic of the Holy Blood, dedicated in 946.

So what are the actual points of similarity between the two? Obviously, both are circular, and consist of a central rotunda resting on columns (supplemented with piers, in the case of Jerusalem), surrounded by an ambulatory. Their differences, on the other hand, are manifold: their orientation and dimensions, the presence of one or more apses, oculus vs. crown stone, the number of columns and the presence or absence of a crypt. The basilica Anastasis was decorated with marble and mosaics, whereas the decoration of the Michaelskirche was probably a lot less grand.

It seems that the ‘Michaelskirche’ is the only Carolingian building that has been interpreted as referring directly to the Holy Sepulchre, which would make it

---

231 Zettler, *Die frühen Klosterbauten der Reichenau*, pp. 180-181. See also Dalman, *Das Grab Christi in Deutschland*.
the earliest Western ‘copy’ of the church in Jerusalem. Although it is certainly possible that St. Michael is a unique early example or the only one that withstanded the ravages of time, the lack of references to Jerusalem in sources connected to the church of St. Michael heightens my questioning of Eigil’s intention to create a grave chapel reminiscent of the *Anastasis*.

Both churches did their funerary aspect, and the (hope of) Resurrection. Yet the association between circular buildings and death already existed long before Constantine chose to build a round church over the Lord’s Grave. In fact, the emperor himself was buried in a round mausoleum, which was, like the *Rotunda* over the grave of Christ, a descendant of the Roman tradition of mausolea. This tradition also made itself felt in the early Christian inclination to build round or octagonal *baptisteria*. The number eight, moreover, also referred to Christ’s resurrection on the eighth day. Round structures with a domed center room and colonnaded ambulatory were thus constructed as funerary chapels, *martyria* (as in the Holy Land) and baptisteries. This tradition was, however, restricted mostly to Italy and Gaul. Freestanding baptisteries were very rare in the early medieval West, as were centrally-planned churches. This is in fact no wonder considering the relative expense of such a building as well as the fact that the plan was not extraordinarily practical for the celebration of the liturgy. For if the altar were placed in the cen-

---

232 It is certainly mentioned very frequently; e.g. in Dalman, *Das Grab Christi in Deutschland*, pp. 26-30; Kroesen, *Sepulchrum Domini*, pp. 16-17; Untermann, *Zentralbau*, pp. 54-58. A case has also been made for a few late antique Italian churches such as St. Stefano Rotondo in Rome and St. Stefano in Bologna, but it is doubtful if these are meant to evoke Jerusalem or are simply heirs of the same tradition that inspired the fourth-century *Anastasis* church, which I will pursue below. Morris, *Sepulchre of Christ*, pp. 67, 124.

There are many representations of the Sepulchre in other art forms, however. Morris, *Sepulchre of Christ*, pp. 58-77

233 Mango, “Constantine’s mausoleum”. See also Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine architecture*, p. 133.

234 This type of building was deemed suitable for baptism on the basis of the apostle Paul’s statement: "For we are buried together with him by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.” Rom 6:4.

235 Kirschbaum, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* I, pp. 40-41, which also shows that the number eight was already deemed highly symbolical before the advent of Christianity.
tre of the church, the number of people attending a service would be very limited, since they all needed to stand on one side of the altar. And space was already limited due to the maximum span of the vault.

Despite these practical considerations, there were several centrally planned buildings in the West, the most appealing of which was perhaps the Palatine chapel in Aachen. Although very different in design, dimensions and functions, the ‘Michaelskirche’ had some similarities with the Palatine chapel, such as the eight central columns surrounded by an ambulatory and the presence of graves in both churches. The association with death was also present through its similarities with the architecture of mausolea and martyria; the crypt with its corridors and burial function could refer to the Roman catacombs. The design of the Michaelskirche was the outcome of a variety of influences and sources of inspiration, all brought together in a unique way in a specific situation. There were many reasons for Eigil and Hrabanus to choose a central-plan building, and many buildings that may have inspired them. Although their main goal was certainly not to quote the Holy Sepulchre, this may nevertheless have been one of the associations that a visitor to the church of St. Michael had.

By way of closing, let us cast another quick glance at the contemporary vision on the chapel that we have: Brun Candidus’ interpretation of the building. In the light of Brun’s juxtaposition of Eigil and Ratger, it need not surprise us that he stresses how this church came about after deliberation among the monks and with the consent of all. More remarkable in this respect is that a few lines later, he claims not to know exactly which meaning Eigil and Hrabanus attached to the church. If there had in fact been an open discussion about the building project, then Brun would certainly have been present. Does this mean that the comment about the monks’ unanimity was merely a topos, or that there was less discussion about the deeper or hidden meanings of architecture than we sometimes tend to assume? In the metric Life, however, Brun does imply a profound intellectual effort on the part of the patrons, which is interesting: apparently this was in fact perceived by contemporaries as a remarkable design that came about thanks to a
Eigil’s motive for building such a special funerary chapel has been sought in his wish to be buried here, and it has been suggested that he intended to create an abbatial mausoleum. The idea that Eigil was buried in the crypt of the Michaelskirche, not in the cemetery, stems mostly from his two epitaphs. The one written by Hrabanus starts by directly addressing the reader who enters the crypt, which implies that Eigil rested inside when Hrabanus wrote the text. In the epitaph that Eigil wrote for his own grave, he speaks of a small grave which he himself had built (construere). This has been interpreted as referring to the church as a whole. This image of Eigil building, or digging, his own grave, can also be found in his Life. Here, it is said that when he felt death approaching Eigil asked to be led to the cemetery to pray, after which he proceeded to dig in its eastern part. Eigil’s wish to be taken to the cemetery to pray leads Ellger to believe that cimiterium alludes to the Michaelskirche, not to the cemetery itself. Although this is very well possible, it seems difficult to imagine a frail old man digging into the rock upon which the crypt was built. According to Becht-Jördens, the passage in the Vita was inspired by Benedict of Nursia (who ordered his tomb to be opened when his final hour was near), so perhaps we need not take it literally. Two graves were in fact found in the crypt, but their dating is problematic. We cannot rule out the possibility

---


240 Richter, ”Nachrichten“, *Fuldaer Geschichtsblätter* 16 (1922), p. 109; Schalkenbach, ”Die Wiederher-stellung“, p. 47; Ellger, *Michaelskirche*, p. 15. The graves may also stem from a much later period, and may be connected e.g. with the eleventh-century recluses Amnichad and Marianus, who were buried next to each other somewhere in Fulda. *Mariani Scotti chronicon*, ed. Waitz, *MGH SS* 5, pp. 481-568, at p. 557. Ellger, along with Pralle, dismisses this as a local myth and points out that the recluses did not necessarily live in the Michaelskirche. Ellger, *Michaelskirche*, p. 116; Pralle, *Michaelskirche*, p. 19.
that Eigil wanted to be buried on the cemetery, not in the church itself, even if his successor may have moved his remains inside, which would explain Hrabanus’ epitaph. And even if Eigil was buried in the Michaelskirche, this is not sufficient proof that he wished his successors to follow this example, as has been argued by Otfried Ellger and Janneke Raaijmakers. They have put forward that the chapel was too small to hold the graves of all monks and referred to the Council of Mainz’ permission for church burial only for men of high rank. The hypothesis that Eigil intended to turn the chapel into an abbatial burial place, representing the ‘lineage’ of Fulda abbots, is however opposed by the fact that this idea evidently did not catch on.241 Most later abbots were buried in a semi-circle around the western apse of the abbey church.242

Nevertheless, the ‘Michaelskirche’ does visibly represent the care Eigil took to restore the commemoration of the dead, which had suffered from the years of crisis and disruption. Its three altars most probably were used to celebrate private masses, and their dedications as well as the relics present in them show a great interest in salvation and the afterlife.243 St. Michael played an important part on the day of judgement, and the martyrs and confessors were powerful intercessors. As the titulus for the main altar says, Christ’s incarnation (represented here by the relic of his burial ground) is the reason that salvation is at all possible. The celebration of the liturgy of the dead here moreover established and maintained a connection between the living and the dead members of the community. This ties in with the Life’s reference to the church of living stones: its members are vital parts of a church (or monastery). Since the abbey church offered more than enough space for monks, pilgrims and the celebration of the liturgy in all its forms, the

---

241 This idea is most ardently argued by Janneke Raaijmakers, Monastic community, pp. 170-174. Also Ellger, Michaelskirche, pp. 104-110.
243 About the celebration of the liturgy in the Michaelskirche, see Ellger, Michaelskirche, pp. 91-104.
chapel of St. Michael did not need to be practical in the first place. Its purpose was to reunite the community, both its living and deceased members, and to provide a space that was exclusively geared towards helping the members of the community achieve salvation. This is done through the altars and *tituli* focusing on St. Michael, martyrdom and Christ’s sacrifice, which is also present in the relics from the Holy Land, as well as through the design of the chapel, reminiscent of mausolea, martyrria and baptisteries and overflowing with symbolism, e.g. in the eight columns and its beginning with a single column and ending in one keystone. The construction of the chapel was closely connected with Eigil’s efforts to revitalize the liturgical commemoration of the deceased members of the community, as the construction of the crypts in the abbey church tied in with his efforts to promote Sturm as the monastery’s real founder and to draw attention to the traditions Fulda was founded on. In these spaces, primarily meant for the monks themselves, they could dwell on the ways in which they wanted to combine all of these traditions and reconcile the various opinions.

That the possibility to undertake all of these works existed directly after the disasters of the 810s makes clear that building itself was not the cause of Ratger’s downfall; nor did it necessarily cause resistance from within the community. Although the means for these projects probably came partly from gifts from new benefactors secured by Eigil, they also show that the monastery was not completely bankrupt after the crisis.²⁴⁴ And despite the allegations of the *Supplex Libellus* and the emperor’s speech in the *Life of Eigil*, there was no antipathy against luxury, as the erection of a sumptuous gold and silver monument over the tomb of Boniface makes clear.²⁴⁵ The added value of the building projects was apparently greater than its cost in terms of means, energy and disquiet.

Eigil’s rebuilding of the *claustrum* to the west of the abbey church, although primarily a utilitarian project, can also be seen as a new beginning. Casting


253
aside the ghosts of the past, the monks came together again around Boniface. A commonality in all of his undertakings is his focus on the mother house in its past, present and future. Eigil strived to strengthen the foundation of the monastery, on which his successors could build. Thanks to Eigil’s introverted outlook, Hrabanus could cast his eye further and look beyond the mother house.

**Hrabanus’ pragmatism**

Hrabanus, nicknamed Maurus by Alcuin after Benedict of Nursia’s favourite pupil, presided over the community of Fulda between 822 and 842. He had started his monastic career in Fulda, perhaps in 788 but certainly by 791, when he was given as an oblate by his parents, who resided in nearby Mainz and were members of the local aristocracy. His education was complemented by stays at the imperial court and with Alcuin in Tours, yet by 804 he had returned to Fulda in order to teach and later lead the monastic school. Meanwhile, he wrote several commentaries on the Bible as well as other theological works and *De laudibus sanctae crucis*, for which he is – at least in art-historical circles – most famous. Between 814 and 817 Hrabanus left Fulda, perhaps due to a conflict with Ratger, to return there upon Eigil’s election.

In contrast with what Hrabanus’ wide spread fame might lead one to expect, he remained very closely connected with the Fulda/Mainz area his entire life, and did not play an important part in empire-wide politics. Despite his dedication to the monastery, Hrabanus kept in close contact with his family of important local aristocrats and even inherited the usufruct of their town house in Mainz.

---


247 Bigott, “Politische und ideologische Positionen”.

248 Innes, *State and society*, pp. 66-68; Hummer, ”Family cartulary?”. 

254
Hrabanus’ case demonstrates how many connections existed between a monastery and its local supporters, and how varied and complex these were. Both within and without the monastery various factions existed, that all had their own – sometimes corresponding or colliding – interests.

When Hrabanus took over the abbacy from Eigil, peace had returned. Unlike Eigil, he could afford to look beyond the confines of the monastery and focus on reorganising the monastery’s possessions and their administration as well as invest in the churches of the *cellae* populated with Fulda monks.\(^{249}\) His interest in the architecture of the monastery is a continuation of the activities of his predecessors, which he experienced at first hand. In the same way as Ratger was involved in the building of Baugulf’s abbey church, Hrabanus had already been working on a building project during the abbacy of Eigil: the Michaelskirche. He continued Eigil’s work after his death, but shifted the focus to the external parts of the monastery.

Hrabanus was not the first abbot of Fulda who left his mark on the surrounding area; his predecessors were also responsible for the property of the monastery and the churches that stood on it. In discussing their contributions to Fulda’s built environment, I have focused on the mother house since this is where Baugulf, Ratger and Eigil made their greatest impact and this is where we can best trace their building works. Now, in the final section of this chapter, I will look beyond the abbey itself. This is necessary because dependent churches not only belonged to the monastery, they were also an integral part of it. Monks from Fulda spent a large part of their time there, and these churches represented the monastery to the people in the countryside. Hrabanus contributed to the architecture of Fulda in other ways than his predecessors – which is not to say they did not build outside the mother house – yet his contributions are equally essential for our understanding of the possibilities and choices of ninth-century abbots as patrons of architecture.

\(^{249}\) Hrabanus’ occupation with the possessions of the monastery is reflected in the Güterverzeichnis and the cartulary. See, amongst others, Patrick, *Phantoms of remembrance*, pp. 88-98 and Raaijmakers, *Monastic community*, pp. 198-213 with references to sources and further literature.
In the present-day city of Fulda and its surroundings the monastic past is still extraordinarily visible. Many place-names still end in -zell, -münster or -kirchen, and on the summits of the four hills surrounding the city, four churches can still be seen. This may partly be due to chance survival, but the fact remains that Fulda was a stronger force of colonization than many of its contemporaries, partly because of the monastery’s extensive landholdings. The monastery was surrounded by a network of cellae, ranging from very modest rural churches looked after by one or two monks to full-fledged monasteries housing dozens of monks and students. Alongside these churches cared for by monks, the monastery also owned churches that were entrusted to secular priests doing pastoral work.

The ninth-century sources as well as present-day scholars use a number of partly overlapping terms such as cella, monasteriola, monasterio, cenobio, Propstei Filialkloster and Nebenkloster for these institutions. Judging by the sources’ irregular use of this terminology its importance seems to me limited. Some cellae, such as Solnhofen, Hameln, Rasdorf and Großburschla, were however markedly bigger and more important than others, and we might call these Propsteien. Praepositi are in fact mentioned, and considering the number of monks present in these places, someone must have been in charge, deputizing for the abbot.

Especially in Baugulf’s and Ratger’s time the monastic property grew rap-
idly as a result of private donations, and the monastery’s possessions eventually stretched from Frisia in the north to Italy in the south, although they were concentrated in several areas closer by. The revenue from these estates – measuring up to 8000 Hufen 253 – allowed the monastery to function: they provided the raw materials for food, clothing, books etc., and it was thus of crucial importance that they were managed well. The exploitation of these lands was however not organized uniformly, depending on the system that was in use when the monastery acquired a certain piece of land and on its distance from the monastery. 254

It must have been a daunting task to survey and organize Fulda’s property and to make sure that none of it fell in the wrong hands, for example when the death of donors and witnesses led a donor’s heirs to dispute the monastery’s right to a piece of land or when a competitor (e.g. the abbey of Hersfeld) attempted to confiscate it. To simplify this task, Hrabanus carried out an administrative reorganization when he took office, ordering the drawing up of lists of monks and monastic property. One of these lists is a cartulary, a collection of charters recording private donations to the monastery. 255 The cartulary consisted of twelve volumes, most of which focused on the monastery’s possessions in a specific county. It records the names of all of those involved in a transaction, most importantly the names of the donors and the abbot, but also those of the farmers tilling the land in question. This gives the cartulary not only an administrative, but also a commemorative function. The amount of land owned by Fulda was, even in comparison to other large (royal) monasteries, enormous. Ulrich Weidinger estimates Fulda’s early ninth-century property as including six- to seven thousand hides and mansi, each ca. 10 hectares, as well as plots of arable land that were organized differently,

254 Hussong, "Die Geschichte des Klosters Fulda", p. 153; Rösener, "Die Grundherrschaft des Klosters Fulda".
255 Stengel, Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda; Codex diplomaticus Fuldensis, ed. Dronke. In fact the cartulary is of course more than just an ‘objective’ collection of all charters. About the problematic nature of these sources, see Geary, Phantoms of remembrance.
as well as pasture- and woodland. 256

As the cartulary (although no longer complete) shows, Fulda’s landowners-

ship was concentrated in several areas, such as Thuringia, the Grabfeld, Ostfranken and the Wetterau. 257 Most important was of course the land belonging to the so-called Carloman donation immediately surrounding the monastery. 258 Here, three satellite churches arose: St. Mary on the Frauenberg (also known as the Bischofsberg as a result of Boniface’s fondness of this place) to the north of the monastery, a church for John the Baptist on the Johannesberg in the southwest and St. Peter on the Ugesberg, known at present as the ‘Liobakirche’ on the Petersberg, in the east. Fulda’s ‘Kirchenkreuz’ was completed in the eleventh century with the addition of the Andreaskirche on the Neuenberg.

Soon after their foundation, these three churches became the centres of satellite monasteries, all within eyesight of the mother house. It is difficult to estab-

lish how these functioned. Monks from Fulda were certainly positioned there semi-permanently, as witness Ratger’s and Hrabanus’ stays on the Frauen- and Petersberg respectively, so presumably the daily monastic routine was followed there more or less as it was in the mother house. However, as the descriptions of relic translations in Rudolf’s Miracula show, the churches on the hills were more easily accessible to lay people than the abbey church itself. Considering the number of lay people residing in the settlement next to the monastery, one can imagine that these churches functioned to a certain extent as parish churches.

The picture becomes more blurred as we venture further away from the mother house and it is difficult, if not impossible, to draw any general conclusions. Many churches already had a history of their own before they came into the pos-

256 Weidinger, Untersuchungen zur Wirtschaftsstruktur, p. 119. The definition of mansus has been vehemently debated, see pp. 23-57. Although the amount of land belonging to one hide could vary, a generally accepted estimate is 30 Morgen. From a brief reference in Weidinger I have inferred that three Morgen are about 1 hectare. Untersuchungen zur Wirtschaftsstruktur, pp. 63-66, esp. p. 64, note 156.

257 Hussong, “Die Geschichte des Klosters Fulda”.

258 Hussong, “Die Geschichte des Klosters Fulda”, p. 155: “Fulda war eine Reichsabtei von der wirt-

schaftlichen Ausstattung her, nicht bloß aufgrund seines Rechtsstatus".
session of the monastery, for example as an ‘Eigenkirche’ founded by local aristocracy. Others were founded especially as satellites of Fulda in a region where the monastery owned a large amount of land. Most problematic is that these churches were seen as part of the mother house and they are thus hardly spoken of individually in the sources. The monks’ lists mentioned before thus generally record either all of the monks, or only those in the mother house.

What we know about the size of the community and the monks’ whereabouts stems mostly from the lists of monks’ names compiled at various moments. The most valuable source for present purposes is the ‘Hraban-list’ compiled ca. 825/826, which records a total of 603 names. It has been transmitted in the confraternity book of Reichenau and more names may have been listed on the missing fourth page. Almost all of the names on the list can be retraced in the Totenanalen, which record (almost) only members of the community of Fulda. Many of them occur only once, an indication that the list is not a copy of various other overlapping lists. The Hraban-list has therefore been interpreted as a collection of all of Fulda’s monks, both those living in the mother convent and without. A comparison with the so-called ‘Recheo-list’, compiled in the 820s and enumerating only the inhabitants of the main monastery, shows that the majority of monks – over two-thirds – lived in the outposts. This may be the result of practical considerations. To feed 600-odd monks in a central location for example was more difficult than keeping them closer to the sources of food production.

The exact whereabouts and tasks of the Fulda monks who were not in the mother house are unfortunately hard to trace. Judging from the lists of dependencies written ca. 870/880, monks resided in there more or less permanently.

260 Schmid, “Mönchslisten und Klosterkonvent”, pp 588-590. The list is not a random collection of names; it is carefully organised according to orders and time of profession.
261 The ‘Recheo-list’ is transmitted in the manuscript with Fulda’s Totenanalen. It is not headed by the name of an abbot, which renders it difficult to date. Schmid argues that it was written at the start of Hrabanus’ abbacy, although it is also possible that Eigil ordered the list to be written. 
262 See Sandmann, “Wirkungsbereiche fuldischer Mönche”.

259
presumably following a steady monastic routine, similar to the one in Fulda itself. The mother house was certainly in many cases too far away for these communities not to function independently. Considering the large number of students present in these communities, close contact with lay people seems inadvisable. However, the rationale of many of the cellae was their presence in an area where the monastery had extensive landholdings, which could be more closely managed or controlled through the monks present here. This might suggest closer contact with the lay population. On the one hand, the monks who were sent away from the mother house remained closely connected to it, amongst others through their responsibilities towards those who stayed behind: Candidus relates how Eigil decided they should send, of their own volition but as ordered by their praepositus or deacon, weekly supplies of food and drink and other necessities to Fulda. Estates needed to be managed well, for their revenue allowed the monastery to function. Moreover, the construction of richly decorated buildings, both in the mother house and elsewhere, would not be possible without the income from the landholdings. On the other hand, with the increase in the number of priest-monks, the dependencies were also able to provide pastoral care to lay people in the region, and the liturgical services provided in rural churches also generated spiritual revenue. What we see here is that the division between the monastery and the world is not as clear-cut as sources from within the claustrum would have us believe. Even though some of the dependencies were situated at a considerable distance from the monastery, there must have been regular contact between them. From 823 onwards the Annals of the dead were for example again kept meticulously, and even the monks who died in the dependencies were entered into the list.

It is exactly this liminal position of the dependencies between the monas-

---

263 Most of the names mentioned under scholastici in the lists of dependencies recur in the Annals of the dead. At least the majority of students was therefore destined to become a monk.

264 Brun Candidus, Vita Eigil, b. 1, c. 21, ed. Becht-Jördens, Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis, p. 18.

265 Constable, "Monasteries, rural churches and the cura animarum”. About the role of local priests in general, see van Rhijn, Shepherds of the Lord.

tery and the world that makes them interesting for this study. On the one hand, they represented the monastery to an audience that might never get to see the genuine article. Through the rural churches owned by Fulda, it was physically present in the surrounding countryside. For the monks living there, on the other hand, the architecture of the cellae themselves was more important than that of the abbey itself: this was their daily living environment.

The physical manifestation of most of the churches scattered through the countryside remains unknown. Because these churches were seen as part of the mother house, they are not always individually present in the written sources. The monks residing there had other things on their mind, such as the management of the monastery’s property, whereas those residing in the abbey itself may have considered the dependencies of only marginal importance. In many cases, we therefore do not even know when or by whom a church was built or rebuilt; we simply know that it existed. And just as contemporary writers may not have paid these buildings much attention, so have archaeologists and architectural historians nowadays. Perhaps this is due to the assumption that they were all very basic, single-naved churches of little interest for the architectural historian; or that the lack of material remains makes it impossible to say anything of value about this kind of architecture. In the following I will challenge this assumption. Although indeed little is known about the architecture of the dependencies, the combination of material and textual sources does make it possible to shed at least some light on the architecture of the cellae and Propsteien. The two most important texts in this respect are Rudolf of Fulda’s *Miracula sanctorum in Fuldenses ecclesias translatorum* and Hrabanus Maurus’ altar *Tituli*, which have already been discussed in plenty of detail above. The *Miracula sanctorum* was written in the middle of the 840s to promote the Italian Saints whose relics were brought to Fulda and distributed among the churches connected to the monastery by Hrabanus between 835 and 838. The text provided Rudolf’s fellow brethren with descriptions of the places where the relics were taken and the miracles the Saints performed. Although Rudolf had in

---

267 They did not have a history-writing of their own.
his life been assigned a number of tasks outside of the monastery, his perspective in the *Miracula santorum* is distinctly monastic: the mother house stands at the centre of his world.\footnote{Raaijmakers, *Monastic community*, pp. 232-237; Appleby, "Rudolf, Hrabanus and the Ark of the Covenant Reliquary" pp. 425-426.}

THE CHURCHES ON THE HILLS

The *Life of Sturmi* describes how, two months after Sturmi and his brethren had arrived at the place where the abbey of Fulda would be constructed, Boniface came to inspect the site. As his men helped Sturmi to clear the forest, Boniface retreated to a hill, hence forth known as the *Mons episcopi* or Bischofsberg.\footnote{Eigil, *Vita Sturmi*, c. 13, ed. Engelbert, *Die Vita Sturmi*, p. 144-145.} According to the *Codex Eberhardi* Boniface dedicated the altar of a small church on the hill (which may or may not have been Fulda’s first parish church) and, more startlingly, pitched a tent there.\footnote{Codex Eberhardi, ed. Meyer zu Ermgassen, *Der Codex Eberhardi des Klosters Fulda* 1, p. 330; see also Lübeck, "Vom Frauenberge bei Fulda" and Burckardt, "Fulda, Frauenberg", p. 435.} The same source mentions the replacement of this small wooden church by one made of stone, initiated by Ratger, as well as the foundation of a small monastery.\footnote{Eberhard’s comment on the replacement of canons by monks by abbot Egbert (1048-1058) has led scholars to doubt if Ratger’s initial settlement consisted of monks. However, Hrabanus’ dedication of an altar to St. Benedict would lead us to believe so. Burckardt, "Fulda, Frauenberg", pp. 435-6.} This is confirmed by the *Annales Laurissenses minores*, which record the dedication of an ‘ecclesia Sanctae Mariae in monte’ in 809.\footnote{Chronicon Laurissense breve a. 809, ed. Schnorr von Carolsfeld, "Das Chronicon Laurissense breve", p. 37.}

In all probability Ratger’s church was an aisled basilica. Hrabanus’ *tituli* for the church at least indicate that in addition to the main altar the church had two side-altars and an altar in a tower. There may also have been a crypt, although it is not entirely certain if the *titulus* headed ‘ad Fuldam vero ecclesia Sanctae Mariae, quae in monte sita est, in crypta orientali has reliquias continet’ refers...
to the church on the Bishofsberg. Hrabanus himself later translated the relics of the martyrs Alexander and Fabian to Ratger’s church. Hrabanus had received the relics, amongst others, from Deusdona and his brother who had come to Fulda in 835 after celebrating Marcellinus and Peter’s feast day in Seligenstadt. The abbot deposited the relics ‘in arca saxea’, in a stone chest, east of the altar. No mention is made of a crypt, which seems telling in the light of the uncertainty about the \textit{titulus} for a crypt altar.

To the best of my knowledge no excavations have ever been conducted at Bishofsberg, so there is no material evidence shedding light on the appearance of the ninth-century church and monastery, and the presence or absence of a crypt. The monastery was completely destroyed in the ‘Bauernkrieg’, and built anew shortly afterwards, in the early seventeenth century. What we can conclude so far is that both the dedication of an altar to St. Benedict and the number of altars indicate that this church was used by a monastic community. We cannot, however, rule out the possibility that it also functioned as a parish church.

South of the monastery, close to the river Giesel, another church was consecrated in 811 or 812. The \textit{Annales Laurissenses minores} state that it was dedicated to St. John the Baptist – the hill would therefore later become known as

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{273} Something odd has happened in the transmission of these \textit{tituli}. Dümmler’s edition in the MGH, based on the edition by Brouwer in \textit{Fuldensium antiquitatum}, starts not with the \textit{titulus} for the main altar (which is lacking), but for the one ‘in dextrae altare’, dedicated to Boniface. It proceeds with the left altar, dedicated to St. Benedict, which is followed by the altar for St. Michael in the (western?) tower. The heading for this altar repeats its location: ‘in monte qui vocatur episcopi in turre ecclesiae Sanctae Mariae’, which is repeated again in the heading of the next \textit{titulus} ‘ad Fuldam vero ecclesia Sanctae Mariae, quae in monte sita est, in crypta orientali has reliquias continet’. In his 1612 edition Brouwer voices doubts as to whether this \textit{titulus} is to be ascribed to the same church as the previous ones, the church on the Frauenberg, yet this uncertainty seems to disappear in later editions. Brouwer, \textit{Fuldensium antiquitatum}, p. 140. In Brouwer, \textit{Hrabani Poemata de Diversis}, 1624 (which I have not seen), this doubt is gone according to Meyer-Barkhausen, “Die Versinschriften”, p. 71.


    \item \textsuperscript{275} The presence of a crypt is however often taken for granted. Cf. e.g. Großmann, “Kloster Fulda”, p. 363.

    \item \textsuperscript{276} Burckhardt, “Fulda, Frauenberg”, p. 441.
\end{itemize}
the ‘Johannesberg’. Judging from the date, this church would have been built by Ratger. About 25 years later Hrabanus sent the relics of the martyrs Venantius and Quirinus and pope Urban here, where they were deposited in the eastern apse. Shortly afterwards a monastery was founded at this site to look after the pilgrims who came here to venerate Venantius. This is at least claimed by a forged but possibly nevertheless ninth-century charter recorded in the *Codex Eberhardi*. That there would in fact be an onrush of pilgrims, attracted by the relics of Venantius, is supported by something Rudolf mentions in the *Translatio*. On their way to Fulda, the relics were briefly deposed in Solnhofen. The *praepositus* of the *cella* then sent notice to Hrabanus, informing him that the relics of Venantius had been brought to the cell by a priest of Hrabanus’, Addo, and asking if he wanted the relics to come to Fulda or stay in Solnhofen, as was strongly desired by the people in the region who had already noticed the martyr’s power. Once the message reached Hrabanus, he answered immediately that the relics were to come to Fulda as soon as possible, because Venantius enjoyed such fame in the entire region. We may therefore assume that the relics did indeed attract a lot of pilgrims.

The design of the early ninth-century church is unknown despite excavations undertaken in the 1970s. As has just been mentioned, written sources tell us that the church had an eastern apse, in which the relics were deposited. Although not much of the church built by Ratger could be recovered, the excavations have provided information about a slightly later western extension, possibly

---

281 Leinweber, Josef, "Zur Geschichte des Klosters".

264
an atrium, and a tower which stood to the west of the atrium. These have been dated to the Carolingian period and are believed to have been added shortly after the construction of the church, perhaps on the occasion of the foundation of the monastery or the translation of the relics, or after these had proven to draw large crowds.\footnote{Stein, "Gebäude und Gartenanlage", pp. 90-91. The excavations took place in 1986.} The addition of the atrium and the western tower would thus be the work of Hrabanus. In a later campaign a 14 metre-long wall was found, that may have belonged to Hrabanus’ monastery.\footnote{Burckardt, "Fulda, Johannesberg, pp. 445-446, 450. Leinweber, "Zur Geschichte des Klosters bzw. der Propstei Johannesberg", p. 105.}

Despite its location in close proximity to the abbey and under its direct supervision, the Johannesberger monastery seems to have been granted property of its own from its foundation by Hrabanus.\footnote{Burckardt, "Fulda, Johannesberg, p. 448.} It was thus at once both part of mother house (as the annals of Lorsch say: ‘in australi parte monasterii’) and separate from it.

The last of the three churches surrounding the monastery is that on the Ugesberg. A church may have existed here since Sturmi’s time, but the one which still partially exists was built by Hrabanus and dedicated in 836 (figs. 3.8-3.9).\footnote{Rudolf of Fulda, Miracula sanctorum c. 14, ed. Waitz, MGH SS 15, p. 339. The existence of an earlier church is based on the one hand on the 12th-century Codex Eberhardi, ed. Meyer zu Ermgassen, Der Codex Eberhardi 1, p. 331, on the other on Vonderau’s discovery of an apse preceding the Hrabanus-church. Vonderau, ”Zum Grundriss”. The existence of such an apse, however, has been denied by recent excavations. Vocal communication from Martin Matl. See also Preusler, “Liobakirche”, p. 244.} It was dedicated to All Saints, which, it has been claimed, was a novelty introduced by Hrabanus.\footnote{Raaijmakers, Monastic community, p. 220. Similar dedications are however also found elsewhere in this period, as we have seen in Saint-Denis.} Yet eventually, St. Peter and Leoba, Boniface’s cousin, gained the upper hand and the church is therefore now known as the ’Liobakirche’ on the Petersberg. Nowadays, it is part of the Cella St. Lioba, a small convent of Benedictine nuns.

Research by Hans Michael Hangleiter undertaken between 2004 and 2006
has shown that a considerable part of the ninth-century fabric has been preserved in the present church, which is a hall church with an eastern choir resting on a crypt. Its square choir and altar room are flanked by aisles, the southern of which is extended towards the south.\textsuperscript{287} The central and northern part of the crypt are in essence, according to Hangleiter, Carolingian, as are significant parts of the western nave wall and of the choir, preserved almost until the height of the present roof. In size and overall lay out, the church seems not to have transformed significantly in the course of twelve centuries.

The ninth-century church can thus be reconstructed as having a total inner length of ca. 25 m and being ca. 11 m wide. The interior lay out of the church remains for a large part unknown, although considering comparable churches a basilical nave would seem most likely to me. Following Hangleiter’s analysis, the choir was similar to the present situation: the square eastern choir ended in a slightly narrower altar room and was flanked by aisles, accessible from the choir through arches. This situation was reflected in the crypt, which consisted of three barrel-vaulted eastern recesses (‘Stollen’), the middlemost of which was larger and extended further towards the east, connected by a western corridor with a transverse barrel vault. To the west of the transverse corridor, which could be accessed through the nave aisles, were much shallower recesses. In the westernmost wall of the crypt a horizontal wood-lined niche over 2.5 m wide has been discovered, which has been identified as a container for relics.\textsuperscript{288} Dendrochronology has dated the wood to 834 -2/+2, and it is undeniable that the niche was created simultaneously with the construction of the wall.\textsuperscript{289}

The often coarsely cut large sandstone blocks from which the walls were hewn were completely plastered both inside and out, and remnants of the original mural paintings – although severely faded since their rediscovery in the early

\textsuperscript{287} Unpublished; Hangleiter, “Restauratorische Befunduntersuchung”. See also Preusler, “Liobakirche”.

\textsuperscript{288} Despite similarities in shape and purpose, this was not a sarcophagus – the wood used had not been used before, and it was inserted before the relics were translated. Moreover, the niche was divided in four sections. Claussen, “Reliquiennische”, pp. 253-4. Also Preusler, “Liobakirche”, p. 246.

\textsuperscript{289} Hollstein, \textit{Mitteleuropäische Eichenchronologie}, pp. 109-110; Claussen, “Reliquiennische”. 

266
Fig. 3.8 Fulda, Liobakirche St. Peter’s, ground-floor plan by Hans-Michael Hangleiter. Bischöfliches Generalvikariat at Fulda.

Fig. 3.9 Fulda, Liobakirche St. Peter’s, crypt plan by Hans-Michael Hangleiter. Bischöfliches Generalvikariat at Fulda.
twentieth century – are still visible in the crypt. The figurative paintings are closely connected to the altar dedications chosen by Hrabanus and retained in his *tituli*. The central recess of the crypt is decorated for example with a depiction of the Virgin in majesty, which corresponds to the altar placed here that was dedicated to Mary and other virgins. According to the *tituli*, the Liobakirche had six altars, three in the recesses in the crypt and three above them. The main altar was dedicated to the Saviour, and flanked by altars for martyrs and confessors. Of the three altars in the crypt, one honoured Mary and the virgins, another John the Baptist, the patriarchs and the prophets and another St. Michael and the angels. Three altar slabs bearing inscriptions different from those by Hrabanus yet presumably also ninth-century, belonging to the main altar and two of the crypt altars, have been found in the church.

Hrabanus’ altar dedications and relic translations all formed part of a carefully constructed programme in which an important part was played by Boniface’s cousin Lioba, who had followed her relative to the continent and subsequently made an ecclesiastical career herself. Lioba had originally been buried in the abbey church, as Boniface, with whom she had been very close, had requested. In fact, his wish had been that they be buried together, but after Lioba’s death in 782 the monks did not dare to open Boniface’s grave and decided instead to bury Lioba elsewhere. The Liobakirche was dedicated on the anniversary of her death, 28 September, and her remains, along with those of seven or eight female Roman mar-

---

293 Richter, “Alterraumsfunde auf dem Petersberg”, pp. 132-135. Schwarz, *St. Peter*, p. 12. Claussen, “Reliquiennische”, p. 256. All authors seem to be quite certain about the mensa’s early medieval date, but it strikes me as odd that the texts are quite different from Hrabanus’ *Tituli*.
294 For the rest of the programme, see Raaijmakers, *Monastic community*, pp. 219-221.
295 Rudolf of Fulda, *Vita Leobae*, c. 21, ed. Waitz, *MGH SS* 15, p. 130. Her remains were at first placed next to the main altar (‘ad plagam septentrionalem altaris’), and then relocated in australi portici iuxta memoriam sancti Ignatii martyr. The close relationship between Boniface and Leoba was not accepted easily. See also Raaijmakers, *Fulda, eine heilige Stadt*, p. 230.
tyrs, were then placed in the crypt behind the Marian altar. Hrabanus’ decision to translate Lioba’s remains to the Ugesberg can be understood in two ways: either as an attempt to stimulate veneration or as a way to unburden the abbey from Lioba. As Rudolf’s *Vita Leobae* shows, the presence of a woman, dead or alive, saintly or not, in the middle of a community of monks could be the cause of trouble. Not only would this be avoided if the woman in question was relocated to another place, the accessibility of this place to laypeople, especially women, could even lead to positive things such as donations. It is difficult to deduce Hrabanus’ motivations from what little sources we have regarding this church. Although including Lioba in the hierarchy of saints to which Hrabanus dedicated the church in a way sanctifies her, he did not put her in the centre of attention. If his objective was to encourage the development of a Lioba-cult, this does not emerge clearly from the church on the Petersberg, unless we view the construction of the crypt in which her relics were placed as such. However, Hrabanus did undertake other attempts to stimulate the veneration of Lioba. A *vita* was in the making since ca. 830, eventually resulting in Rudolf’s *Vita Leobae*, completed around 836, and Hrabanus included the saint in his *Martyrologium*. While in function as archbishop of Mainz Hrabanus redistributed some of Lioba’s relics to other churches.

In conclusion, the churches on the hills directly surrounding the monastery should be viewed as being the outcome of a gradual development. To attribute them solely to a specific time or individual negates a part of their meaning. The Liobakirche has been viewed as the product of Hrabanus’ intellect, a highly meaningful de-

297 Rudolf of Fulda, *Vita Leobae*, ed. Waitz, *MGH SS* 15. Then again, Rudolf is preoccupied with the protection the sanctity of the *claustrum* and may describe an ideal situation rather than reality.
298 There is of course a possibility that special attention was paid to Lioba though paintings.
300 Kehl, “Die Verehrung der hl. Lioba”.

269
Ratger’s contributions to the Johannes- and Frauenberg churches on the other hand are mostly glossed over because he is associated primarily with the abbey church. The discussion of the Frauenberg church has shown however that this was already quite an elaborate church, with a tower and probably three aisles. If we include these churches in Ratger’s architectural legacy, his supposed fixation on the abbey church may be downplayed. Moreover, Hrabanus used both churches built by his predecessor to house important relics without feeling the need for a rebuilding. We will see Hrabanus take a comparable, practical approach when looking at some of Fulda’s churches further away from the mother house.

Less than twenty kilometres north-east of Fulda lay the ‘campo qui dicitur Unofelt’, donated to the monastery by Charlemagne in 781. More or less simultaneously with Hünfeld, Fulda acquired the marca Rasdorf as a private donation, later confirmed by Charlemagne. Its development went hand in hand with that of Hünfeld and in the first quarter of the ninth century, both settlements are referred to as monasteria. The Hünfeld property was directly connected to the ‘Carloman donation’ in the south and bordered on land of Hersfeld abbey in the north. Together with Rasdorf it constituted a belt of land preventing the continued advance of Hersfeld. Baugulf therefore may have expressly requested this property. The monastery in Hünfeld was founded on the right bank of the river Haune, right at the spot where the ‘Antsvia’, one of the most important trade routes in the region, crossed the river. The economic importance of the Hünfelde property for Fulda

---

301 Again, we see ourselves faced with a lack of archaeological research as well as the silence of the written sources. For this reason I will only discuss a limited selection of churches.  
302 Diplomata Karolinorum 139, ed. Mühlbacher, MGH DD Karol. I, no. 139 pp. 189-190; Stengel, Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda 1, no. 146, pp. 205-208.  
303 Stengel, Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda 1, no. 145a, pp. 203-205.  
304 In 815 mention is made of a cella in Hünfeld, and a decade later it is even called a monastery. Dronke, Codex diplomaticus Fuldensis, no. 323, pp. 156-157 (the same document referring to a monastery in Rasdorf); Codex Eberhardi, ed. Meyer zu Ermgassen, Der Codex Eberhardi des Klosters Fulda 2, p. 231.  
305 Lübeck, ”Das Benediktinerkloster Hünfeld”, pp. 83-84.  
306 Lübeck, ”Das Benediktinerkloster Hünstorf”, p. 86; Burckardt, ”Hünstorf”, pp. 653-654.
is beyond dispute, and the main responsibility of the monks stationed therefore seems to have been to take care of the economic interests of the monastery, besides providing pastoral care. In the light of the importance of the site and its accessibility it is remarkable both that we know hardly anything of the monastery in Hünfeld and that Hrabanus does not seem to have translated relics here.307

We know a little more about Rasdorf, whose church, nowadays the ‘Evangelische Pfarrkirche’, has received a reasonable amount of attention in art-historical circles due to its capitals, which are some of the earliest known sculptures from the region. It has even been suggested that they originate from the church that Hrabanus built in 831, as a replacement for the old wooden church.308 As Rudolf says, reminiscent of Einhard’s remark about Steinbach, it was a ‘pulchram et divinis officiis congruentem [...] ecclesiam, quam picturis et diversorum varietate metallorum decenter ornavit, altaribus et crucibus auro argentoque paratis vasisque diversi generis, quae divinus cultus exposcit’.309 Seven years later the relics of the Roman saints Cecilia, Valerius and Tiburtius were sent there and Hrabanus erected, as was his custom, a wooden ‘tomb’ over the stone sarcophagus in which the relics were placed, behind the altar. Even Rudolf may have become dulled by summing up Hrabanus’ deeds over and over again. The course of events is always the same: he builds a stone church, decorates it with precious materials and liturgi-

307 The campus does not, remarkably, appear in Rudolf’s Miracula sanctorum.

308 The capitals are placed, in secondary use, in the nave and below the western ‘Empore’ of the present church. The latter two bear figurative decoration, unlike the other six which are Corinthian, and it is thus not self-evident that the entire group belongs together and came into being at the same time. Dates ranging from the ninth to the thirteenth century have been suggested. This is not the place to enter into this discussion, so suffice it to say that an early ninth-century dating seems to me highly unlikely, if only considering the lack of comparable contemporary architectural sculpture from the region. If sculpture of this quality was available in Hrabanus’ time, it strikes me as odd that no fragments of anything comparable have been found in the abbey church itself, and that Eigil reused old parts for the crypt column of the Michaelskirche. But there are other arguments in favour of a later dating. See Jacobsen, “Frühe Kapitellkunst”. In favour of a Carolingian dating is Walther, Die Rasdorfer Figurenkapitelle. However, Walther’s analysis of the iconography of the figurative capitals (as representations of state and monastery) is so unconvincing that I hesitate to trust her judgement on other matters.

309 Rudolf of Fulda, Miracula c. 13; ed. Waitz, MGH SS 1, p. 338.
cal necessities and then translates some relics, which are placed in a stone sarcophagus covered with a reliquary made of wood and precious metals.

The thirteenth-century successor of Hrabanus’ church is a small basilica with a transept and a slightly elongated polygonal choir. There is no documentary evidence suggesting intervening building activity, although the transition from monastery to Kollegiatstift in the tenth century could have instigated a remodelling of the church, which may have suffered from the Hungarian attacks of 920. Apart from the capitals, no sources – archaeological, material, visual, documentary – besides the ones just mentioned are able to shed any light on the pre-thirteenth-century church(es) of Rasdorf. Again, this is striking considering the economic and political importance of the area for the monastery of Fulda and considering the investment made by Hrabanus. Considering Hrabanus’ other foundations and the centrality of the site, it does not seem unreasonable to expect a basilica similar to the Liobakirche, with or without a crypt, at this site.310

Whereas the church in Rasdorf received only a single Titulus from Hrabanus (for the reliquary which he placed there), another of Fulda’s dependencies received a whole series of them. Holzkirchen was founded as an ‘Eigenkloster’ in the middle of the eighth century, but was granted to Fulda in 775.311 It was located about a hundred kilometres south of Fulda. Rudolf’s Miracula as well as Hrabanus’ tituli indicate that Hrabanus sent relics to Holzkirchen, but we do not know who built or dedicated the church there.312 It seems to have been, like Ratger’s church on the Frauenberg, quite a complex structure, judging by the number of tituli passed down to us: one close to the entrance, one for the altar of Mary (in an apse),

310 Other suggestions have also been made; none other than Joseph Vonderau is e.g. said to have suggested that the Carolingian church was an octagonal central-plan church. I have been unable to find references to this statement. See Walther, *Die Rasdorfer Figurenkapitelle*, pp. 23-24.

311 3 November 775; *Codex diplomaticus Fuldensis*, no. 51. The church and monastery are also mentioned in charter no. 323, ed. Dronke, p. 156-157.

312 Also Rudolf of Fulda, *Miracula* c. 5, 10, 11; ed. Waitz, *MGH SS* 15, pp. 334, 336-337. Rudolf also informs us that the church was accessible to both men and women, at least for the occasion of the arrival of relics, and that the resident priests provided pastoral care. See also Amrhein, “Das fuldische Propsteikloster Holzkirchen” and Meyer-Barkhausen, “Die Versinschriften”, pp. 73-74.
one for an altar dedicated to the Apostles and one to Boniface; one at the Holy Cross, one in the crypt, honouring amongst others Anthony the abbot, and a final one for a chapel. The dedications of the altars to a varied company of saints, including Roman saints such as Praxede and Pudentiana, but also monastic and local saints such as Anthony and Boniface, also indicate the amount of attention that was paid to the church. The tituli again refer to mural paintings illustrating the saints commemorated in the poems.

About other cellae belonging to Fulda, even less is known than about the examples discussed in the foregoing. Wolfsmünster, where Baugulf retreated after his resignation from the abbacy and was buried in 815, for example, is only mentioned in passing by Rudolf who tells us of its monks coming to greet the relics of Venantius. To my knowledge no remains of the cella have ever been found (or actively looked for). The same is true for most other cellae. Although their historical background has occasionally received some attention from local historians, little to nothing is generally known of the ninth-century architecture of these modest settlements.

There is one exception, which will serve as a final example of the architecture that arose during Hrabanus’ abbacy: Solnhofen, a dependent monastery located ca. 250 km south of Fulda, on the eastern bank of the river Altmühl. This case is different than the foregoing, however, since this time, Hrabanus himself was probably not the instigator of the rebuilding. This is not all that sets Solnhofen apart from other dependencies. For one, upon its foundation, it was meant to be independent. Solnhofen was not founded from Fulda. Its founder Sola, however, had during his lifetime been closely connected to the monastery where he received his dedications, and he therefore left his foundation to Fulda. Another reason setting it apart from the other dependencies is that relatively much is known about

---

315 However, it may be argued that Solnhofen was more independent than other Propsteien. Not only was it founded independently, Solnhofen also had possessions of its own. Ermenrich of Ellwangen, *De vita S. Sualonis dicti Soli*, ed. Holder-Egger in *MGH SS* 15.
Solnhofen’s building history. Many subsequent building phases can be traced quite precisely, starting before Sola’s arrival, when it was still a proprietary church. Especially interesting are the adjustments continuously made to the interior of the church, determining its liturgical uses, and the light that Solnhofen can shed on the economic activity of small monasteries, producing amongst others metalwork and glass.

Unlike the other dependencies, the ninth-century monks of Solnhofen did not wait for the abbot of Fulda to instigate the building of a new church for them. Instead, they acted on their own initiative (fig. 3.10). In the middle of the ninth century, the existing church went through an extensive remodelling. The nave was extended towards the east as was the old northern annex, which was turned into a side-aisle by opening it up towards the nave. Another side-aisle was probably added to the south and the old wall separating the nave from the room to its west was torn down. The most fundamental innovation was the extension of the eastern altar room and the addition of a ‘Winkelgangkrypta’ accessible from the side-aisles. It is to be expected that the relics of Sola were placed in or above the crypt.

The rebuilding of the church with a prominent place for Sola, the monastery’s founder, has been viewed as part of Hrabanus’ efforts of building churches.

Later’s reconstructions suggest more certainty than we actually have: most of the exterior walls have not been found. A rough indication of their position is however offered by a layer of screed that continues past the walls of the nave and into the side-aisles and former western space. Later, *Die Propstei Solnhofen*, pp. 126-128.

The eastern alterations have been labelled phase Vc, the others together constitute phase Vb. Archaeologically, their contemporaneity cannot be attested, but Later believes they belong to the same building period. Later, *Die Propstei Solnhofen*, pp. 128-139. The reconstruction of the crypt is still tentative.

In the description of the elevation of Sola’s relics in the Life of Sola the relics are said to have been replaced at the same spot: “non tamen in alio, quam pene in eodem loco”. This is slightly problematic, but not insuperable. Later suggests we read ‘in the same place’ as ‘in the same church, *Die Propstei Solnhofen*, p. 142. It is also possible that the crypt was built or finished after the elevation of the relics, which were then moved from their original burial place, where they had previously been elevated. This actually fits in better with Later’s dating of Phase Vb/c. See also Later, *Die Propstei Solnhofen*, p. 354.
and redistributing relics. The abbot’s activities may certainly have served as an inspiration, yet Solnhofen’s praepositus or provost Gundhram (838-847?), Hrabanus’ nephew, may have played a more important role. No mention is made of a local cult for Sola in the account of a relic transport from Italy passing by Solnhofen in 836. In fact, the monks desperately tried to convince Hrabanus to allow the relics that were passing by to stay in Solnhofen. Yet the abbot did not let them persuade him; he did not want the relics of St. Venantius to remain in such a far-away dependency.\textsuperscript{319}

Two years later, Gundhram, formerly a court chaplain, was appointed provost. Almost immediately, the relics of Sola were elevated and the \textit{Vita Sualonis} was commissioned, both indicating an attempt to encourage the cult of Sola.\textsuperscript{320} Moreover, the absence of \textit{tituli} by Hrabanus also seems to indicate that he did not have a close involvement with this building project, even though it was initiated by one of his close relatives. Nevertheless, the church was decorated with mural paintings and valuable liturgical objects.\textsuperscript{321} The funding for this project may have come not from the mother house but from Solnhofen’s own means. In any case, Gundhram (and his monks) enthusiastically promoted the interests of their cell, to a degree independently from Fulda. The church they built, provided with a \textit{confessio}, seems to be mostly geared towards the

\textsuperscript{319} Rudolf of Fulda, \textit{Miracula sanctorum} c. 4, ed. Waitz, \textit{MGH SS} 15, p. 333.
veneration of a saint by (a large group of) lay pilgrims. It shows that it was also possible for the dependencies to act on their own initiative, and that this sometimes resulted in different architectural solutions. Solnhofen’s phase Vb/c does not immediately recall Hrabanus’ foundations such as the Liobakirche with its multiple altar spaces, but is rather the outcome of the transformation of the church that previously stood on the site combined with new functional demands.

From the written and material evidence presented here we can firstly conclude that the churches of Fulda’s dependencies were more intricate and rich than we would perhaps assume. They had crypts, towers, chapels, several altars and many relics, and they were richly decorated. The example of Hrabanus has shown that he was very much involved in building activities, but that there was no leading formula that dictated the outcome of these projects. Hrabanus had no problems whatsoever with placing relics in a church that was built for other purposes. He wrote Tituli for Ratger’s church on the Frauenberg, and founded a monastery on the Johannesberg after the deposition of the relics of Venantius without feeling the need to renew the church there; both are clear signs of his pragmatism.322

We may also conclude that in these examples rich furnishings seem to have been more important than the design of a church. Contrary to what we might have expected, there are no signs that an attempt was made to refer to the architecture of the abbey church in any of its outposts. Only in Solnhofen did we encounter the type of crypt we would expect in a church built specifically for the veneration of relics. Apparently, various types of users – monks, farmers, aristocrats – could be accommodated and appealed to without problems in various types of churches.

According to the Miracula sanctorum, the Liobakirche was only one of thirty churches built by Hrabanus during his abbacy. Rudolf however does not list them by name, and he may have exaggerated. But even then it is undeniable that...
Hrabanus was credited with building a large number of churches. Interestingly, other sources hardly mention this and although scholars have always noted Hrabanus’ translation of relics to Fulda, he has hardly been viewed as an active patron of architecture. Besides building himself, Hrabanus also appropriated churches built by others by translating relics and adding decorations.

We may also conclude that in these examples rich furnishings seem to have been more important than the design of a church. Contrary to what we might have expected, there are no signs that an attempt was made to refer to the architecture of the abbey church in any of its outposts. Only in Solnhofen did we encounter the type of crypt we would expect in a church built specifically for the veneration of relics. Apparently, various types of users – monks, farmers, aristocrats – could be accommodated and appealed to without problems in various types of churches.

Even though the varying amount of evidence we have for the individual churches makes it difficult to draw comparisons, some remarkable differences are visible between Solnhofen and Hrabanus’ own projects. For one, this crypt, provided with a confessio, seems to be exclusively geared towards the veneration of a saint by a large group of lay pilgrims. This example shows that it was also possible for the dependencies to act on their own initiative, and that this sometimes is sometime reflected by different architectural solutions.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The built history of Fulda is, if anything, complicated. There is far less unequivocal evidence for the abbey church than we have long believed. Nevertheless a thorough re-examination of the evidence, material as well as textual, has yielded new insights into its building history and the way this should be interpreted. Thanks to Eva Krause’s recalibration of the dimensions of the abbey church, we know that the only aspect of it that was exceptional, at least with respect to the
dimensions, was the length of nave. This may have been caused not by the wish
to build an extraordinarily big church but by the wish to incorporate an older
western sanctuary, the existence of which I have argued in the foregoing, in the
abbey church. Ratger’s addition of the western transept added both a space and a
layer of meaning to the church, but the Baugulf-church continued to exist and to
communicate the monastic history it incorporated. The eastern altar, dedicated by
Boniface, continued to function as the main altar, and the altar of the Holy Cross
in the centre of the nave was a reminder of Boniface’s original burial place but also
of the old church that used to end there. The addition of the transept did not take
away these older meanings and replace them by entirely new connotations. They
could exist side by side. Whether the choice of a western transept betrays that Rat-
ger was inspired by St. Peter’s in Rome remains debatable. There could certainly
have been reasons for the community of Fulda to create a visible connection with
Rome in the architecture of its abbey church: this could stage Boniface as a martyr,
underline the connection Fulda had with the papacy through its papal privilege or
connect Fulda with Carolingian political ideology. However, in the course of this
investigation we have had to dismiss most of the arguments used by Krautheimer
to prove a connection between Ratger’s church in Fulda and St. Peters’s. We can no
longer say that ‘the aspect of the Carolingian structure [...] [has] been established
beyond doubt through excavations’ – we are now faced with more insecurities
than Krautheimer was. ³²³ Nevertheless, we can establish that some components of
the church, the eastern apse and the exedrae – if they existed – were probably not
built during Ratger’s abbacy. His design was not a radical departure from previous
buildings, as Krautheimer claims, but firmly embedded in them. The dimensions
and proportions of the apses and the transept are no longer reconstructed akin to
those of St. Peter’s, and the presence of an architrave remains questionable. The
only remaining similarity between Fulda’s abbey church and St. Peter’s, then, is
the western transept. Ratger did not choose to construct a ring crypt, arguably the
most defining feature of St. Peter’s, or to follow any of its other characteristics.

If we look at Ratger as well as the abbots before and after him, we notice that they were all local products: they came from local families, were educated in Fulda and rose through the ranks to the highest position. The abbey of Fulda was their home as well as their frame of reference. The abbots spent their community’s resources primarily to optimise the environment for their fellow brethren and the monks to come. Getting across a certain message, such as the abbey’s bonds with Rome, or impressing visitors were of secondary importance. In order to create the best possible built environment for the community, it was important to take into account local traditions and the wishes of the monks. In their building activities, none of the abbots innovated at the expense of tradition. Architecturally, Eigil was the one to make the most radical changes by repositioning the claustral buildings, digging out crypts underneath the church and adding a remarkable funerary chapel, but at the same time he cherished the monastery’s past through the revival of the commemoration of the deceased and the dedications of the crypt altars to the fathers of monasticism.

Eigil’s building projects were probably as expensive and invasive as Ratger’s, yet it is the latter who is remembered as the ‘sapiens architectus’. Although this phrase originates from contemporary sources, it is us who have put so much stress on it. If we compare Ratger, Eigil and Hrabanus, and perhaps even Baugulf, they have all contributed substantially to the buildings of the monastery; some projects are just more visible than others. This is especially true of Hrabanus, who has mainly built outside of the mother house since his predecessors had left him a monastery that fulfilled almost all requirements. There was simply no need for him to build another abbey church and he could therefore focus on beautifying it with books and precious liturgical vessels as well as paying attention to the churches at some distance from the mother house. His predecessor Eigil, on the other hand, needed to spend his energies and resources on solidifying the heart of the monastery. Through architecture and altar dedications, Eigil propagated, most of all to his own community, what the monastery stood for.

Hrabanus constructed churches and living quarters outside of the monas-
tery itself, but only where necessary. Although we know less about the architecture of the dependencies than we would like, we can tentatively conclude that they looked like monasteries with churches that, although moderately sized, were more than simple village churches. They disposed of several altars, towers, crypts and in the case of Holzkirchen, even a separate chapel in addition to the main church. They were also richly decorated. Through the ringing of bells in the towers, the cella proclaimed its presence and appropriated the surrounding area. By adding churches on the hills around the monastery, within eye-sight, the abbots of Fulda colonised its surroundings and added to the visibility of the monastery.

There does not seem to be an evident difference between those churches built by Hrabanus and for example Ratger, and there are no indications that churches were (re)built twice in the time-frame under scrutiny. All of our abbots’ projects were built for eternity. As the case of Solnhofen makes clear, the inhabitants of the dependencies could to a certain extent exercise an influence on what their living environment looked like. Solnhofen is also a reminder of the difference it makes when a site has been extensively excavated and studied in the recent past: the evidence shows that building phases do not exist independently from each other; rather, the rebuilding constituted a remodelling of the old church, during which the old annex was converted into a nave aisle, the nave was extended and another aisle added.

The advantage of the diachronic approach that I have chosen for this chapter is that it allows us to see how subsequent building phases were interconnected and how one grew from the other. Now that we have seen what each abbot contributed to the architecture of the monastery, it is no longer possible to speak of ‘the’ abbey church of Fulda. During the half decade scrutinised here, the church evolved. There were a few breaking points, when the design changed considerably: when the decision to add a western transept was taken, and when the crypts were added. We may wonder, however, if these moments coincided with changes in the perception of the church. Arguably, the image of the abbey church in the minds of the monks was more forcibly altered by Eigil’s success at turning it into a positive
symbol rather than a remnant of the crisis years than by his architectonic interventions.

Throughout all of these changes, Boniface continued to occupy a central position: through his sepulchre, but also by means of the altars he dedicated. There were also, however, a number of other Saints who were important for the monastery, and they all received a suitable place in the abbey church without being overshadowed by Boniface.