Sacred time, sacred space. History and identity in the monastery of Fulda (744-856)
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Introduction

A world of change

Few monasteries in early medieval times experienced the rapid and explosive growth of Fulda. Few monasteries passed through the conflicts and hardships that the community of Fulda underwent from the middle of the eighth till the late ninth century. Of the first nine abbots of the monastery seven were deposed, resigned voluntarily or spent some time in exile. Only two abbots stayed on without interruption until they died in the monastery as old men. The conflict that broke out in the 810s between the abbot of Fulda and a large faction of his monks was especially disruptive for the community. It is the purpose of this book to investigate how the monastic community, so often divided and discordant, tried to create continuity and cohesion using the past.

Fulda’s turbulent history started in 744, when the monastery was founded on the banks of the river Fulda in the woods of Buchonia, almost a hundred kilometres to the northeast of Frankfurt and Mainz. In a letter of Boniface (675-754) we can read that its first inhabitants were ‘men of strict abstinence, who keep from meat and wine and spirits, having no servants, but content with the labour of their own hands.’ Their aim was salvation through subordination to communal life and seclusion from the world.

Boniface, who had come to the Continent to work as a missionary, was closely involved in Fulda’s foundation. The Anglo-Saxon monk had spent most of his life on the Continent in the eastern periphery of the Frankish kingdoms, organising the church into a hierarchical institution and correcting what he considered to be doubtful Christian practices. To

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2 Namely, Eigil (818-822) and Hatto (842-856).
support his pastoral work and to provide it with an institutional basis. Boniface set up several religious communities. These were preaching centres and schools for future priests.

Figure 1: Fulda in the Carolingian realm


Besides Fulda Boniface founded Ohrdurf, Fritzlar and Amöneburg, Tauberbischofsheim, Kitzingen and Ochsenfurt.

Eigil, Vita Sturni, c. 2-4, p. 132.
Fulda probably started for similar purposes, though the community seems to have been more special to Boniface than the others he established. For one thing, Fulda was the only community for which Boniface acquired a papal exemption. This privilege, granted in the seventh and eighth centuries to only select religious communities\(^8\), placed the monastery under direct authority of the Apostolic See and offered the monks a means to counter the influence and claims of the bishops of Mainz and Würzburg.\(^9\) It was in Fulda that Boniface wanted to spend the last years of his life and to be buried after death, rather than at Mainz where he had been bishop since 751. Boniface never managed to retire to Fulda, but after his death by the sword of Frisian brigands in 754, his body was taken to the monastery, where it has been ever since.\(^10\)

What started as a very small community would, within half a century, become a major royal abbey, home to some three hundred and sixty monks by the end of the 770s and about six hundred monks in the 820s.\(^11\) In the same period Fulda became one of the biggest landowners in the Frankish Empire.\(^12\) By gifts, purchase and exchange the monastery

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\(^8\) For example Bobbio, Wearmouth-Jarrow, Malmesbury, Farfa, Saint-Denis. See Barbara Rosenwein, Negotiating Space. Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe (Manchester 1999).

\(^9\) The exemption for Bobbio was the first papal privilege ever issued. Fulda was the only monastery in the Frankish empire that held this privilege till the middle of the tenth century. Ulrich Hussong, 'Studien zur Geschichte der Reichsabtei Fulda bis zur Jahrtausendwende', Archiv für Diplomatik 31 (1985) pp. 61-85, here p. 85 (from now on I refer to this article as 'Studien 1' and to the continuation, published in Archiv für Diplomatik 32 in 1986 as 'Studien 2'); Rosenwein, Negotiating space, pp. 106-9; Ian Wood, 'Jonas, the Merovingians and Pope Honorius: Diplomata and the Vita Columbani' in: After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History, ed. A.C. Murray (Toronto/Buffalo/London 1998) pp. 99-120.

\(^10\) With regard to Boniface's cult see Petra Kehl, Kult und Nachleben des Heiligen Bonifatius im Mittelalter (754-1200) (QAGADF 26: Fulda 1993).


Introduction

acquired an extensive landed property from Frisia in the far north to the Bodensee in the south, and from Lotharingia in the west to the eastern frontier of the Frankish empire. From the burial of Boniface in the abbey church and his increasing popularity as patron saint of the monastery, Fulda’s property expanded considerably. Some important donations of Carolingian rulers also contributed to the monastery’s growing possessions. Their gifts, for example, of the fiscal estate of Hammelburg, made a Fulda large landowner – here, in the region between Saale, Elm and Main. This attracted even more donations from the local landholders.

The landed property of Fulda lay scattered over a wide area. For its administration the mother convent sent monks to these sometimes far away places. Perhaps they were also responsible for pastoral care in these regions, as Fulda owned several churches there. Thus, of the six hundred monks belonging to the monastery at the end of the first quarter of the ninth century, only some hundred and forty lived in the mother convent (mostly young oblates and old men), the rest lived at out postings (cellae).

The very rapid growth in persons and property of the community in the second half of the eighth and the first half of the ninth century transformed life considerably. The monastery, no longer a modest centre of prayer, contemplation and manual labour, became a powerful economic enterprise that included agriculture, cattle breeding, industry and trade, which employed large numbers of people. How did these changes affect the monastery and its identity? What happened to Boniface’s heritage and the monastic ideals of solitude, poverty and prayer? What assured that those who belonged to Fulda remained a community? As a result of this large and varied population of the monastery and the great geographical distance at which most monks lived from one another, face-to-face familiarity was no longer a matter of course. How then did Fulda assure the cohesion of the community?

Becoming a royal abbey had also great implications for the monastic community, its pursuits and its position in society. From its beginning the Carolingian royal family had played an important role in the existence of the monastery. In 743, or 744, Carloman, *maior domus* in Eastern Francia, fitted out Boniface with land in Buchonia where he and Sturmi, one of Boniface’s disciples and first abbot of Fulda, would found their monastery. In 765 Pippin, Carloman’s brother, and by then king of Francia, seized the opportunity of a struggle for power between the monks of Fulda and the archbishop of Mainz to further bind the monastery to the Carolingians, placing it under his immediate protection (*tuitio*) and thereby making Fulda a royal abbey. Being a royal abbey meant that in exchange for protection, wealth and status, the monks of Fulda had to pray for the salvation of the king, his wife, children and the people subordinate to him, and for the well-being of his kingdom. Likewise, the king not only leaned on the spiritual power of the monastery, but also had access to its material wealth. Everything that the monastery owned was part of the royal possessions (*proprietas dominicalis*). This did not imply that the Frankish ruler plundered the monastic resources whenever he felt the need. On the contrary, Fulda received some of its most important landholdings from the Carolingians.  

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18 *UBF* nr. 4, p. 1ff; Hussong, ‘Studien 1’ p. 30ff.

19 Pippin granted the monastery his defence (*defensio*), meaning that from now on Fulda should turn to him only, the king, in case of future claims of third parties and for protection and Fulda became a royal abbey. Eigil, *Vita Sturmi*, c. 20, p. 155. One could also argue that Fulda became a royal abbey in 774, when Charlemagne granted the monastery immunity. For this discussion, see Hussong, ‘Studien 1’, pp. 100-8.


22 *MGH Diplomata* I, nrs. 13, 21, 63, 106, 127, 139, 140 and 145, pp. 18-9, 30-1, 91-3, pp. 150-1, 176-8, 189-91 and 196-7.
Since Pippin III had settled the conflict between the monks and the archbishop of Mainz about who was to wield power over Fulda, there was, apart from some gifts, relatively little involvement on the part of the Carolingian king with affairs in Fulda.\(^{23}\) This changed when Charlemagne succeeded his father to the throne. The new king put much effort into checking the politics in the regions and tying the local centres of power, including the monasteries, to the royal court.\(^{24}\) As it was one of Charlemagne's aims to conquer and convert the Saxons, the king took especially great interest in the regions bordering on Saxony, namely Hesse and Thuringia. It was important for Charlemagne to hold a firm position in Eastern Francia as it was the place of departure of his military expeditions against the Saxons.\(^{25}\) By granting immunities to Fulda (774), Lorsch (772), Hersfeld (775), Fritzlar (at the latest in 782) and Amöneburg Charlemagne put all important monasteries in Hesse and Thuringia under his control.\(^{26}\) Only he was allowed entrance, prohibiting his agents and other outsiders from entering the monastery.\(^{27}\) The monks of Fulda were to appeal to him in case of conflicts. As we will see, the Carolingian rulers repeatedly were actively involved in life in the monastery.

Charlemagne drew the monastery into his policy of expansion and consolidation of the Carolingian rule in the Frankish Empire. Monasteries like Fulda especially played a role in his program of correction and emendation of the Frankish church, orchestrated by the royal court. The Carolingians, who ideologically liked to see themselves as descendants of the kings of the Old Testament, felt a strong responsibility for the salvation of the people subordinate to them and the condition of the Christian church in Francia. Anointed by the grace of God they should see to it that the laws of their Lord were observed within their kingdom.

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\(^{24}\) Innes, State and society, pp. 180-8.

\(^{25}\) The immunity implied that no lay officials (apart from missi, inspectors and the king himself) were allowed to set foot in the monastery or the villae, subordinate to Fulda in the present and future, or to appeal to them for hospitality or stocks. Any claims that might be brought against the monastery were to be judged by the royal court. With the immunity the monastery also got the right of free election of abbot. This meant that after the death of the abbot the monks could appoint a member of their own community as his successor, as long as the person in question obeyed the Rule of Benedict and was loyal to the king. UBF, nr. 68; Hussong, 'Studien 1' p. 111.


\(^{27}\) Rosenwein, Negotiating Space, pp. 99-34.
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Charlemagne pleaded amongst others for instruction of the Frankish people in the Christian faith, for education of the clergy, for correction of the abuses within the Frankish church and for the establishment of a clear ecclesiastical hierarchy.28

To effectuate his plans the Carolingian king used monasteries. Monasteries were the ideal suppliers of staff to teach the Frankish people and a rich source of learning for the instruction of the clerics.29 Charlemagne expected of the monasteries and bishoprics entrusted to him that the monks, nuns and clergy were not only zealous in their duty to observe the religious life, to which they had vowed, but that they also applied themselves to learning and literacy.30 Monasteries should provide all those able to learn instruction in the study of letters. 'The ideal monk is the learned monk who speaks well'.31 To the king it was important that apart from living an exemplary life of holiness monks also mastered the language of the Holy Scripture, for God turned a deaf ear to prayers said in incorrect Latin. Badly copied texts not only displeased God but could also encourage doctrinal errors. Under the patronage of the Frankish ruler who created a climate in which learning could prosper and thanks to the efforts of the abbots of the monastery (most of all Hrabanus Maurus) Fulda became an important centre of intellectual activity and cultural productivity.32

Royal service deeply affected internal life of the religious communities.33 Monasteries like Fulda were drawn into the world that...

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30 Epistola de litteris colendis, MGH Cap. I nr. 29, pp. 78-9. (p. 79); Admonitio Generalis, MGH Cap. I, nr. 22, pp. 52-62.
they had ideally renounced. The integrity of the abbeys was threatened by their worldly pursuits. Prominent guests entered the cloister, the sons of the nobility were educated within monastic walls without being professed, pilgrims of both sexes visited the cult sites of the saints in the monastic churches, monks managed estates sometimes far away from their monastery and abbots acted as worldly lords. This was not only the result of the monasteries' participation in Charlemagne's reform program, but also of their positions as social, economical and religious centres for the people living in the regions.

Abbots, bishops and also the king worried about these developments, even though the politics of the Frankish ruler had partly encouraged the blurring of the boundaries between the cloister and the world outside. The Carolingians, who depended on the prayers of the monks and nuns in their realm for the well-being of their empire and the salvation of their people, were keen to safeguard the monastery's liturgical duties and to protect the inner world of prayer from worldly pollution. Therefore both the Carolingian king and church leaders called for a thorough reform of the religious communities in the Frankish realm. The wish to renew the distance between monastic life and the world outside and to distinguish the order of monks and nuns from the secular clergy and the laity was not new. Already the councils organised by Boniface in the 740s had attempted to redraw the monasteries' boundaries by bringing all monks and nuns under one rule (the Rule of Benedict). But the efforts to bind all the monks and nuns to the Rule of Benedict and to separate the cloister from the world outside were intensified from 800 onward. Especially Louis the Pious and his advisor Benedict of Aniane exerted themselves to correct and emend monastic discipline.


37 Bonifatius, Epistolae, Reinhold Rau, AQ 4b (Darmstadt 1968) pp. 24-356.

**Introduction**

In short, the rapid growth of both the number of monks and of Fulda’s possessions, the new responsibilities of the monastery resulting from being a social, economical and religious centre in the region and being royal abbey, the politics of the Carolingians and the monastic reforms all affected life inside the monastery and caused frictions within the community. These developments gave rise to discussions about the goals of the monastery and the way the monks wanted to achieve them. What happened to the ideals of Fulda’s founders? How did the monks combine the monastic ideals with secular preoccupations? How did they manage the tensions between separation and integration?

The purpose and scope of this study

This doctoral dissertation sets out to analyse how the monks of Fulda dealt with the changes just mentioned, with the tensions between old ideals and new responsibilities, between the teachings of Fulda’s founders and the attempts of the Carolingian rulers to reform the monasteries according to their standards and with the difficulties of balancing seclusion from the world and openness. How did the monks create permanence amidst this world of change? What did they consider to be their monastic identity and how did the answers to the question who they were, as members of Fulda, change in the course of time?

A lot has been written on the subject of identity. To understand identity to be a dynamic, ongoing process in which a group tries to answer the question ‘who are we?’ In this thesis I have focussed on identity as a means to create coherence and continuity within the monastic community

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40 Or an individual tries to answer the question ‘who am I?’. Yet, in my thesis I am concerned with group identity.
of Fulda. The monastic community was not homogeneous and often not harmonious, being divided between for example those who had entered as child oblates and those who had come to monastic life as adults, into the seniors and the juniors, into monks who had achieved the clerical orders and those who had not. How did the monks generate unity in this heterogeneous community of which on top of that most members lived outside monastic walls?

With regard to this process of creating continuity and coherence my research is mostly concerned with Fulda’s use of the past and the creation of a shared social memory, backed by the consensus of the monastic community. By establishing an agreed version of their history the monks tried to create permanence and to define their identity, transmitting the community’s values, traditions and their memory from generation to generation. Especially in times when prevailing customs were called into question and were no longer self-evident, the necessity to validate the present with the aid of the past became urgent. As this study demonstrates, the monks of Fulda turned at these breaking-points in their history to their recent past, the past of Boniface and Sturmi and the time of the foundation of Fulda, or to the more distant past of the early Christian Church, of which the monks considered themselves a part through the bodies of martyrs and their connection with Rome. But of course, besides the fact that the monks used the past to explain, legitimise and value the present, they also considered the past to be the mysterious expression of divine will.

By transforming, recreating and suppressing collective memories, Fulda’s monastic authors determined the community’s understanding of

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43 Fentress and Wickam, Social Memory. For more information about schools as centres of permanent education see Demyttenaere, Claustralization; Cubitt, ‘Monastic memory and identity’, pp. 253-76.
44 See also Geary, Phantoms of Remembrance who describes this process of creating new continuity in times of change, dealing with the north of France, the Mediterranean and southern Germany in the eleventh century.
45 Since the pope had granted the monastery the privilege of exemption, their had been a close connection between the monastery and the Apostolic See. See Chapter Three.
their community’s history, as well as ours. The stories about Fulda’s early days were for example written more than seventy years after its foundation, in a time in which the Rule of Benedict became the focus of monastic life. Presenting Fulda’s early history in terms of contemporary needs, monastic life in the days of Sturm was characterised as a close adherence to this monastic Rule. Some have even argued that Boniface had founded Fulda to be a model of Benedictine monasticism for all other religious communities in the eastern parts of the Frankish Empire to imitate. But reading through Boniface’s letters we do not find any trace of a conscientious policy on the part of Boniface to turn Fulda into an exemplar of ‘Benedictinism’, nor do we find clear evidence that Boniface propagated the Rule of Benedict in any of his religious foundations as a matter of course. Because of the selectivity of Fulda’s collective memory it has become almost impossible to detect what monastic life in Fulda must have looked like in those beginning years.

The first witness to the creation of continuity and of an enduring existence by use of monastic memory are the annales necrologici, lists in which the monks recorded the names of their dead according to the year in which they had died. The monks started to keep these lists at the end of the 770s, at a time in which Fulda’s first abbot was close to death and in which the future of the relatively young monastic community was to be reconsidered. In this period monastic scribes also began to write down important events relating to their monastery and the Carolingian family in the margins of manuscripts containing Easter Tables. Both attempts to fix history and thereby creating continuity between present, past, and an eschatological future, are the first expressions of and contributions to the creation of a collective identity in Fulda, as I hope to show in Chapter One.

In the period central to this dissertation Fulda also suffered a crisis, caused by a bitter conflict between the abbot and a group of monks, which disrupted its monastic life severely. This is the subject of Chapter Two. The conflict provoked the production of some texts that focused on Fulda’s identity. Some monks had listed their complaints in the Supplex Libellus, a petition, offered to the emperor. The issues that the Supplex

46 Geary, Phantoms of Remembrance, pp. 7-9.
48 In his letters Boniface, who himself had been educated in a world of mixed rules and of rather great mobility and freedom of monks and nuns, talked of the norma monasterialis vitae, but what he meant with this, is not entirely clear. The question then is how should we interpret the prescription of the Concilium Germanicum (742), organised by Boniface, that monasteries were to live according to the Rule of Benedict. Concerning Boniface’s own training as monk see for example Christopher Holdsworth, ‘Saint Boniface the monk’ in: The Greatest Englishman, p. 57; Josef Semmler, ‘Instituta sancti Bonifatii. Fulda im Widerstreit der Observanzen’ in: Kloster Fulda, pp. 89-90.
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*Libellus* raised were all related to the identity of the monastery, balancing seclusion from the world and openness. The authors of the *Supplex Libellus* turned to the past of the founders of the monastery (*nostri maiores*) to validate their vision of Fulda's monastic identity, while their opponent, the abbot, seems to have legitimised the way he governed the monastery by referring to reform councils organised by Louis the Pious and his monastic advisers.

The catalyst of the conflict in the 810s was the new abbey church of Fulda, which had been constructed between 791 and 819. It is the topic of Chapter Three. The new abbey church was an enormous edifice, which took the monks of Fulda some thirty years to build. Apart from the fact that its construction gave cause for a conflict about monastic identity, the church itself was also an expression of the identity of Fulda. The point of departure of this chapter will be the architecture of the church, in comparison with other churches built in the same period. It shows that with the abbey church the builders wanted to point out, both to the monks of Fulda themselves and the outside world, that Fulda was no ordinary monastery, but a place of exemplary holiness, prestige and authority. The architecture reflected the royal status of the abbey and its connection with the Carolingians, its holiness and the link with the Apostolic See. Furthermore, the church was a monument of Fulda's past.

Yet, due to the crisis the new abbey church also became a symbol of tyranny and conflict. When Eigil became abbot of Fulda in 818, he was confronted with the heritage, including an almost finished and despised church, of almost a decade of conflict. The new abbot mainly had two things on his mind: how to restore peace in a community that was severely disrupted by the recent crisis and how to safeguard its continuity. Chapter Four shows how Eigil attempted to construct an enduring identity that was based on the consensus of the monks, to reinforce the cohesion of the community and to legitimise and shape Fulda's continued existence.49 It concentrates particularly on the creation of a succession of office holders: the abbots' *vitae*, which Eigil initiated.

Hrabanus Maurus, Eigil's successor elaborated on the former abbot's initiatives.50 Chapter Five focuses especially on one aspect of Hrabanus Maurus' strategy to extend the glory of the monastery, namely the translations of the relics of Roman martyrs to Fulda in the second half

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49 And partly also Chapters Two and Three. Eigil wrote the *vita* of Fulda's first abbot himself, but as the topic of this *vita* fits in well with the subject of Chapter Two, I have decided to discuss it there. For similar reasons I have chosen to examine Eigil's contributions to the abbey church, both to its architecture and to its meaning for the community, in Chapter Three, which discusses the architecture of the early medieval abbey church.

50 Hrabanus for example commissioned Candidus to write the *Vita Aegil* and thus to continue the succession of abbots' *vitae*. See Chapter Four.
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of the 830s. It explores how Hrabanus created a place of exemplary and authoritative holiness and connected the monastery to the omnipresent, spiritual entity of the *ecclesia* by using architecture, ornaments and the remains of the holy dead. In this chapter, as in Chapter Three, the importance of Rome, being a source of authority and of holiness, and especially of St Peter’s, for Fulda’s identity comes to the fore. In addition to this, we get another glimpse of the continuous efforts of the monks to link their past to salvation history (as in Chapter One). This chapter is not only about Hrabanus Maurus, but also about the *Miracula sanctorum in ecclesias Fuldenses translatorum*. In the *Miracula sanctorum* Rudolf of Fulda, one of Hrabanus Maurus’ students, recorded the abbot’s relic translations. This text was part of the process of integrating the new saints into Fulda’s holy landscape of shrines and churches, and written to honour Hrabanus; it can therefore be linked to the succession of abbots’ *vitae* discussed in Chapter Four.

My research covers the period from Fulda’s foundation in 744 till the 850s, for this period is richly documented in the sources. As said above, the last decades of the eighth century and the first half of the ninth century the monastery experienced a lively literary productivity and saw the building of an enormous abbey church with adjacent *claustrum* that has served the monks till the eighteenth century. During the abbacy of Hrabanus Maurus, the monastery seems to have been at the very height of Fulda’s wealth and power, having a flourishing monastic school and a productive scriptorium. Around the middle of the ninth century this period of progress and prosperity came to a halt; the number of monks declined and so did the number of gifts to the monastery.51 The production of the monastic *scriptorium* decreased. Fulda no longer was the centre of learning it had been under Hrabanus Maurus, leaving us hardly any sources dating from this period.52

From the middle of the ninth century onward the organisation of the monastery changed, signalling possibly a decline of Fulda’s power, though not necessarily. The monks started to dispose of property in far away places as Frisia and Italy, reducing their possessions to estates in Hesse and East-Francia that because of the relatively closeness to Fulda were easier to control and manage. In addition to this, the monastery’s dependencies seem to have been gaining independence.53

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52 The only exceptions are the *Conventio* of 863, the *Gesta abbatum* (early tenth century) and perhaps the *Vita Liutberga*. Fried, ‘Fulda in der Bildungs- und Geistesgeschichte’, p. 35.
Furthermore, the balance of power in the Carolingian realm started to change, and, as we have seen, the history of Fulda was closely bound up with the history of the Carolingian rulers. From being a small religious community at the eastern periphery of the Frankish empire in the 740s, Fulda’s position had shifted with the conquest of the Carolingians and the consolidation of their power to the heartlands of what would become the East Frankish Empire. With the gradual breakdown of Carolingian rule in the last decades of the ninth century the monks became more and more dependant on local aristocratic families for patronage and protection, although in this period the Fulda’s abbots did still good service to their lords, the Carolingian rulers, travelling to Rome as their envoys and marching in the king’s army against the Moravians and later the Magyars.54

As we are not as well informed about this period as we are about the late eighth and the first half of the ninth century, this is were this research ends. It would have been very interesting to extend the research to this period of new change and to study how the monks of Fulda responded, but lack of sources prevents this.

The sources

The sources that this study is based on consist of texts and monastic architecture. Fulda’s violent history seems to be one of the main reasons why we know comparatively much about this monastery. Conflict was of course not the only reason for the monks to start writing. Yet, in times of inner crisis or outer threats, the questions about who they were what they stood for and how they needed to present themselves did become more urgent. These moments could boost cultural productivity.55 In the course of time a corpus of authoritative texts was created to which the others. Some of these texts formulate the attitudes of the authors towards the discussions in the monastery, others were written to restore peace and harmony in Fulda. All these works were not only expressions of identity, but also contributed to its formation.

Beside the written sources, architecture has a prominent place in this thesis, for it too can be used to analyse the process of creating identity, being an expression of the community’s beliefs and hopes, and a means to create continuity between past, present and future.56 Not all Fulda’s

55 See also Patzold, Konflikte im Kloster, pp. 239-51 and 348-56; Rosenwein, Head and Farmer, ‘Monks and their enemies’, pp. 764-96; Remensnyder, Remembering Kings’ Past.
monastic architecture is studied in this dissertation, merely that of its abbey church, as we know relatively much about this edifice. Furthermore, the abbey church represented the most important pursuit of the monks and the key to their existence and identity: worship and *memoria*. The church was the centre of the cloister, physically, but also idealistically. It defined the origin of the monastic community, also in relation to social world around it.

Since the late 1950s scholars from different disciplines have made large contributions to the accessibility of Fulda’s early medieval sources, from which I have benefited greatly during my research. All extant abbots’ vitae have now appeared in good editions.\(^57\) In 1958 Edmund Stengel published the first volume of a critical edition of Fulda’s charters.\(^58\) In the 1970s a group of scholars, gathered in Münster under the research project *Societas et Fraternitas*, made an edition of all the texts transmitted concerning the *memoria* of Fulda.\(^59\) Useful parallel registers, comparing the names of the monks derived from different sources, and thorough studies of the material accompany their edition. Richard Corradini’s careful analyses of the *Annales Fuldenses antiquissimi* and the *Chronicon Laurissense breve*, important sources about the crisis of the 810s, include facsimiles and text editions.\(^60\)

Fulda’s material history has been made available for further analysis by the articles published in the *Veröffentlichungen der Fuldaer Geschichtsvereins* and the *Fuldaer Geschichtsblätter*, of Joseph Vonderau and Heinrich Hahn, who between the 1900s and the 1970s successively have excavated parts of Fulda’s monastic buildings. Parts of both the church built under Sturmi (744-765) and the new abbey church (791/2-819) have been excavated (Figure 2), namely the eastern apses; the western walls of both churches; the cloister built by Sturmi, and a burial chamber hewed


\(^{58}\) *Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda*, ed. Stengel. The *Urkundenbuch von Fulda* contains all the charters written during the abbacies of Sturmi and Baugulf. Unfortunately Stengel was not able to finish his work. For the charter material of the ninth century we have to rely on Ernst F.J. Dronke’s nineteenth-century edition, *Codex Diplomaticus Fuldensis*, (Kassel 1850). Meanwhile Heinrich Meyer zu Ermgassen has published the *Codex Eberhardi*, the twelfth century codex that comprises a lot of also the early medieval charter material of Fulda. *Der Codex Eberhardi des Klosters Fulda*, ed. Meyer zum Ermgassen (VHKH 58: Marburg 1995).


out of rock.\textsuperscript{61} Presumably this is where Boniface was originally buried in 754.\textsuperscript{62} In addition to this, the crypts of the new abbey church and the

\textsuperscript{61} Vonderau, 'Die Ausgrabungen am Dom zu Fulda 1908-13', \textit{16. VFG} (1919); idem, 'Die Ausgrabungen am Dom zu Fulda 1919-24', \textit{17. VFG} (1924).

remains of a pre-Bonifatian church have been uncovered. Even though it is not possible to study the early medieval abbey church of Fulda in its entirety on the basis of Vonderau's and Hahn's findings, the changes and expansions of its architecture, of great interest for my research, can nevertheless be reconstructed.

Uses of the past

Fulda, das ehrwürdigsten und angesehensten Kloster des deutschen Mittelalters is much studied; for its turbulent history, its monastic school and library, its famous teachers, most of all Hrabanus Maurus, its manuscript production and illumination, its political history, its cartulary, its enormous abbey church and its exceptional form of commemoration. This dissertation is much indebted to the books and articles resulting from these various interests, of which many can be found in for example the Fuldaer Studien, Fuldaer Hochschulschriften and the Fuldaer Geschichtsblätter, or in for example the volume Kloster Fulda in der Zeit der Karolinger und Ottonen. Yet, no one to my knowledge has attempted to bring the varied source material of this monastery together, to analyse how the community of Fulda tried to create permanence and cohesion by use of the past.

Some scholars studying Fulda have touched upon the subject of identity. They have pointed at the importance of Fulda’s patron Boniface for the self-awareness of the monks; they have mentioned the disruptive effect of the early ninth century crisis for the identity of the monastery; they have hinted at the importance of the abbey church for the self-
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consciousness of Fulda, they have considered the memoria of the monastery to sometimes express feelings of solidarity. But their observations about Fulda's identity have always been secondary to the main subjects of their studies, be it the development of the cult of saint Boniface from his death to 1200, the vita of Egil, annalistic historiography in Fulda in the early Middle Ages, the crisis of the 810s, the architecture of the abbey church, or Fulda's social history.

In addition to this, students of early medieval Fulda have often concentrated solely on one specific aspect of Fulda's past, for example its library, its political history, or its commemoration of the dead, remaining within the confines of their disciplines. In this way, scholars such as Gangolf Schrimpf, Ulrich Hussong, Karl Schmid and Otto Oexle have made great contributions to our understanding of Fulda in early medieval times, providing their audience with detailed analyses of the content of Fulda's library in the Middle Ages, of the monastery's institutional development as royal abbey until the year thousand and of its personnel changes from the Carolingian until the Salian period. Only few have combined the monastery's wide-ranging sources in one study, while leaning on other disciplines. I hope to present another contribution to our understanding of Fulda by offering an in-depth analysis of the use of the past in the monastery's sources and by bringing together hagiography, historiography, commemoration, liturgy and architecture.

This dissertation does of course not only build upon what has been written on the monastery of Fulda. Also in studying the use of the past in the creation of social memories and identities it benefits from an established tradition. The past decades group identities have become a popular field of study, most of all in relation to ethnicity and the creation of nations, but recently also to for example kinship, gender and emotions. Additionally, some have studied how groups expressed feelings of solidarity, most of all in relation to 'the other', be it the clergy,

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69 Schmid, 'Mönchslisten', p. 632.
72 For example Remensnyder, Remembering Kings' Past; Geary, Phantoms of Remembrance. A volume that has recently appeared on this subject: The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages, eds. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge 2000). Further: The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages.
73 See for example Social Identity: The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages; Pohl, 'Aux origines d'une Europe ethnique'; idem, 'History in fragments: Montecassino's politics of memory', EME 10:3 (2001) pp. 343-473; Rosenwein, 'Worrying about emotions' pp. 821-45; idem 'Identity and emotions'.
the laity or other social orders. Also the subjects of collective or social memory and the use of the past have become increasingly popular in medieval scholarship. Some, for example Patrick Geary, have investigated the complex process of transmitting, suppressing and recreating memories, showing the power of those who had access to the means of memory. Janet Coleman has studied on the importance of texts, most of all monastic rules, in the transmission of memory, while Catherine Cubitt has counterbalanced this by demonstrating that monastic memory was transmitted in all aspects of monastic life, not only through texts, as for example in liturgy and the personal example of the seniors.

This study hopes to contribute to the discussion about group identity from the perspective of a major royal abbey in the early medieval period, the example par excellence to study the process of collective identity in its full complexity, as the ideals that underlie monastic existence asked for a continuous awareness of the boundaries of the community.


75 Geary, Phantoms of Remembrance.


77 See for example Albrecht Diem, Keusch und Rein. Eine Untersuchung zu den Ursprüngen des Frühmittelalterlichen Klosterwesens und Seinen Quellen (PhD Utrecht 2000);
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Contrary to studies that have based their analyses on texts (often historiography), this enquiry also includes architecture, liturgy, relics, saints' shrines and paintings in the hope that it extends our understanding of how a monastery like Fulda built an enduring existence. It analyses the group identity of the monastery as it was strengthened from within the community. Additionally, it studies Fulda within its landscape of social, cultural, religious and political relationships. It is within this landscape that the monastery defined itself; it is within this landscape that the points of identification took on their meanings.
