PEASANT AGENCY AND THE SUPERNATURAL

La agencia campesina y lo sobrenatural

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ABSTRACT: Engaging with supernatural forces was a necessity for Carolingian peasants – Christian authorities expected this and the belief in the inevitability of these acts seems to have been widely shared by contemporaries who lived in a world far beyond their control. Miracle collections show that peasants (and others) made conscious decisions about the way in which they wanted to interact with supernatural forces. In doing this, they also took into account the networks of individuals and institutions who controlled the saints' resting places, which could provide invaluable support for those seeking help. Others chose practices beyond what contemporary elites regarded as legitimate, such as hiring weather-makers to prevent bad weather. In some cases, peasants actively sought to enter into a saint's dependency, either by giving themselves to the saint or by convincing their lords to hand them over to a saint and his or her shrine.

Keywords: Peasants; Miracles; Saints; Heresy; Legal status.

RESUMEN: Comprometerse con fuerzas sobrenaturales era una necesidad para los campesinos de época carolingia - las autoridades cristianas así lo esperaban y la creencia en la inevitabilidad de estos actos parece haber sido ampliamente compartida por los contemporáneos que vivían en un mundo que estaba mucho más allá de su control. Las colecciones de milagros muestran que los campesinos (y otros actores) tomaron decisiones conscientes sobre la forma en que querían interactuar con las fuerzas sobrenaturales. Al hacerlo así, también tomaron en cuenta las redes que ligaban a individuos e instituciones, las cuales controlaban los lugares donde reposaban los santos, que podían brindar un apoyo de gran valor para quienes buscan ayuda. Otros eligieron prácticas más allá de lo que las élites contemporáneas consideraban legítimas, como acudir a personas que decían poder evitar el mal tiempo. En algunos casos, los campesinos buscaron activamente entrar en la dependencia de un santo, ya sea entregándose o convenciendo a sus señores de que los entregaran a dicho santo y a su santuario.

Palabras clave: Campesinos; Milagros; Santos; Herejía; Estatus social.

SUMMARY: 0 Introduction: Peasant Agency and the supernatural – sources and concepts (9ᵗʰ c.). 1 Sources and methodological problems. 2 Appealing to the supernatural I – venerating saints. 3 Appealing to the supernatural II – questionable saints and weathermakers. 4 Status, saints and secular patronage. 5 Peasant agency and the supernatural. 6 References.

0   INTRODUCTION: PEASANT AGENCY AND THE SUPERNATURAL – SOURCES AND CONCEPTS (9ᵗʰ C.)

Traditional views of medieval society have depicted peasants as passive figures, their actions largely determined by demands placed on them by lords or by socio economic circumstances, and for the early medieval world, largely untraceable in the sparse source material. Recent studies have shown that peasants, understood here as members of households that gain their income mainly from agricultural work largely carried out by household members[1], are far from invisible in the sources and our knowledge about their lives has greatly improved[2]. It has also become increasingly clear that early medieval peasants enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy in several respects and attempted to resist or contest demands placed on them that they thought were illegitmate. In contrast to the later middle Ages, this did not happen through large scale peasant revolts, but there were several other forms of peasant resistance that are more visible in the sources[3].

One of the most important fields in which peasants might attempt to take charge of their own fortunes was their engagement with supernatural forces[4]. This is especially well documented for the Carolingian era, specifically the ninth century, when the kings, emperors and their counsellors were convinced that the fortune of the empire and the fate of their souls depended among other things on the moral comportment of the entire population and their correct exercise of Christianity[5]. All this generated new interest in

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[1]   To paraphrase ELLIS, Frank. *Peasant Economics: Farm Households in Agrarian Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 13. See also the the remarks by WICKHAM, Chris. *Framing the early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 386. I would like to thank the fellows of the Center for Advanced Studies 2496 «Migration and Mobility in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages» in Tübingen with whom I discussed several subjects of this paper, and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

[2]   There has been a surge of interest in early medieval local societies in recent years, cf. for a recent survey ZELLER, Bernhard; WEST, Charles; TINTI, Francesca et al. *Neighbours and strangers. Local societies in early medieval Europe*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020, p. 5-18.

[3]   WICKHAM, Chris. «Looking forward: peasant revolts in Europe, 600-1200». In: FIRNHABER-BAKER, Justine & SCHOENAERS, Dirk (eds.). *The Routledge history handbook of medieval revolt*. London, New York: Routledge, 2017, p. 155-167 and id., «Space and Society in Early Medieval Peasant Conflicts». In: *Uomo e spazio nell'alto medioevo* (Settimane di Studio 50). Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, 2003, p. 551-585.

[4]   See on the supernatural as a category BARTLETT, Robert. *The natural and the supernatural in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

[5]   VAN RHIJN, Carine. *Shepherds of the Lord. Priests and episcopal statutes in the Carolingian period*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2007; VAN RHIJN, Carine. «Royal Politics in Small Worlds. Local Priests and the Implementation of Carolingian correctio». In: KOHL, Thomas; PATZOLD, Steffen & ZELLER, Bernhard (eds.). *Kleine Welten. Ländliche Gesellschaften im Karolingerreich*. Ostfildern (coll. «Vorträge und Forschungen»), 2019, p.

local religious practices – both orthodox and deviant – which is reflected in the sources and allows us to study peasant forms of engagement with the supernatural – from visiting churches and venerating saints to paying local weathermakers for preventing storms.

In the eyes of contemporaries, supernatural entities regularly intervened in the early medieval countryside. Their interventions might be clear in their meaning or ambiguous, benign or evil, of divine origin and mediated through saints or caused by demons. They consisted of spectacular miracles or smaller, everyday occurrences, both guiding and protecting or endangering villagers and their property. It was therefore necessary to deal with these forces, and, crucially for this chapter, there were several different ways of doing this. None of these ways was certain to prove successful, and none was without dangers, for even attending a Sunday service in a local church could lead to punishment by a vengeful saint whose relics were housed in a different church[6].

Of course there were other fields in which peasant made choices that are evident in the Carolingian sources at least indirectly. Unfree peasants very often married in ways that clearly did not conform to their lords' wishes, building family ties across property lines. In this, they were aided by new ideas reinforcing the stability of marriage that were slowly developing in the ninth century. Secondly, even in an age that is marked by an increasing domination of the peasantry by the landowning elites, agricultural work was overwhelmingly done on units of land held by peasant families (*mansus*, *hoba*), either independently or within the framework of great domains[7]. Even in the latter case, this meant that a great deal of peasant work was done not at the direct order of the lords but determined by the peasants inhabiting and operating the unit. While specific rents in kind limited the choices that could be made here – if you had to give two measures of oats and a piglet, you presumably had to plant oats and breed pigs – it is still necessary to emphasize that a major part of agricultural work was done as a result of choices made by peasants and not determined by lords. And, while peasant revolts were largely absent from the Carolingian world, there was nevertheless resistance, for example when peasants protested – both successfully and unsuccessfully – against outside interference into their communities and resisted demands and obligations placed on them by lords[8]. Status, too, both within the peasant community and with regard to legal status was another field in which peasants

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237-252; Patzold, Steffen. *Presbyter. Moral, Mobilität und die Kirchenorganisation im Karolingerreich*. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann Verlag, 2020.

[6]   See below, p. 105.

[7]   See Wickhams chapter on «Managing the Land» (*Framing*, p. 259). For a recent discussion of the scholarship cf. Tedesco, Paolo. «Beyond the Manorial Economy. An Introduction to the Seminar». *Journal of European Economic History*, 2019, 3, p. 131-145. I allow myself to refer to Kohl, Thomas. «Peasants' Landholdings and Movement in the Frankish East (8th-9th Centuries)». *Journal of European Economic History*, 2019, 3, p. 147-166.

[8]   See for an example West, Charles. «Carolingian Kingship and the Peasants of Le Mans: the 'Capitulum in Cenomannico pago datum'». In: *Charlemagne. Les temps, les espaces, les hommes. Construction et déconstruction d'un règne*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2018, p. 227-244. A successful act of peasant resistance is recorded in a charter from Regensburg (Widemann, Josef (ed.). *Die Traditionen des Hochstiftes Regensburg und des Klosters St. Emmeram*. Munich: Beck 1943, 25, p. 32) from 829. Here, *servi* who had been traded for land and passed into the ownership of a new lord, complained to bishop Baturic of Regensburg, their former owner, about their treatment and subsequently reverted into his ownership.

exercised some autonomy. A peasant's legal status might change through an escape from dependency or by entering into a dependent status. Legal status was a complicated matter in the Frankish world: while in strictly normative terms, it had inherited the categorical distinction between free and unfree from the Roman Empire, this clearly did not adequately reflect social realities. In practice, some scribes used a great variety of words to describe status groups, attempting to reflect the manifold aspects of social life and legal status. Others, in contrast, attempted to subsume dependants into as few categories as possible. Either way of describing legal status creates pitfalls for historians working on the sources – the former leads to incompatible systems of designations, the latter lumps together very different groups under very general headings such as *servus* and *liber*, creating further problems[9]. Status was also changeable, both by force – even kidnapping and selling into slavery was common – and by choice. Voluntary changes of status could go in either direction: Apart from occasional manumissions, we know of several instances of unfree dependants attempting to escape their legal status either by fleeing or by arguing that they were not in fact unfree. This was made possible by the ambiguity and flexibility of status in the Carolingian world. As Alice Rio has shown, ambiguous terms for legal status such as *colonus* were in fact useful and flexible tools for dealing with these ambiguities, allowing distinction from both fully free and fully unfree[10]. In fact, sometimes problems were caused by the mere act of classification, when a written categorisation threatened to cement status in a way that was unacceptable to one party (usually the peasant). Some peasants appealed to courts to protect their legal status, others went to court as witnesses to deny their neighbours' claims that they were of the same status[11].

Questions of status were sometimes intricately interwoven with patronage by saints, both when free men and women gave themselves to a saint and his altar and when unfree peasants were manumitted in a church, placing them in the protection of its patron saint, and, crucially, also linking them to the saint's guardians in this world, very often powerful aristocrats. Before returning to this link between status and patronage in the final section of this paper, I will first briefly characterize some of the sources that allow us to gain insights into peasant agency and the methodological problems this presents in section two. Section three and four treat the ways in which peasants made religious choices, moving from the orthodox veneration of saints to behaviour that the Carolingian elites found deviant.

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[9]   See e.g. Rath, Gebhard & Reiter, Erich (ed.). *Das älteste Traditionsbuch des Klosters Mondsee*. Linz: Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv, 1989, 38, p. 137: Here Hildiroh gives two servile beekeepers, one of whom is free, the other unfree (*dono (…) cidlarios meos servos II, unus est liber et alter est servus*).

[10]   Rio, Alice. « 'Half-Free' Categories in the Early Middle Ages: Fine Status Distinctions before Professional Lawyers». In: Dresch, Paul & Scheel, Judith (eds.). *Legalism: Rules and Categories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 129-152.

[11]   Rio, Alice. *Slavery after Rome, 500-1100*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 194-198; Zeller, West, Tinti et al., *Neighbours or strangers?*, p. 100, p. 206.

1   SOURCES AND METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Attributing agency to peasants (or to anyone else, for that matter), does not mean that they had an absolute freedom to determine their actions. They are conditioned – among others – by norms, power relations and economic constraints. Importantly, we also cannot be certain that peasants interpreted what they did as a result of their choices, even when the sources depicted actions as results of conscious, self-determined acts. The sources for these deeds by peasants are few and diverse, and hardly any of them present it as positive when peasants thought and acted for themselves.

In charters, peasants mostly appear as passive dependents who are given to a recipient – although sometimes they are also free proprietors making donations. In polyptyques, their status appears as fixed and unchangeable, their duties as set, although both might be subject to change and debate – very often in the context of creating polyptyques. Both charters and polyptyques, however, contain ample indirect evidence for choices the peasants made or had to make – for example regarding marriage with dependents of other lords. In contrast, saint's lives and miracle collections directly mention voluntary acts by peasants, very often negatively, but sometimes also with a positive twist, describing a peasant's devotion to a saint or his turn for the better. In a different way, normative prescriptions issued in canons and capitularies make it clear that a degree of peasant autonomy was expected and real, if in need of close regulation.

On an intellectual level, this is not surprising, given that human agency must necessarily be assumed according to the contemporary understanding of Christianity, which forcefully argued against predestination[12]. To be able to err was part of being human. However, following Augustine, unfree men and women were restricted in their ability to choose wrongly by their masters and thus to a certain extent protected from sin[13]. In any case, this means that servility was regarded as a status of reduced agency. However, even reduced agency meant that there was a certain latitude for decisions, specifically because even dependant Frankish peasants were far removed from the slaves in the Roman *latifundiae*. Certainly, chattel slavery continued to exist in and around the Frankish empire, and Frankish merchants were involved in the slave trade, but there is general agreement that this form of slavery was not relevant for Frankish agriculture[14]. And, of course, there were many peasants who were not unfree in any sense, but had free status and thus – in theory – enjoyed full agency within the boundaries defined by Carolingian society, existing power relations and economic circumstances.

Some difficulties arise from the fact that Carolingian scribes did not have a word that corresponds to our concept of peasants as outlined at the beginning of this chapter. From the wide variety of words used by scribes to describe peasants, only very few, such

[12]   See on the ninth century predestination controversy GILLIS, Matthew Bryan. *Heresy and Dissent in the Carolingian Empire: The Case of Gottschalk of Orbais*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017 and the chapters in: CHAMBERT-PROTAT, Pierre; DELMULLE, Jérémy; PEZÉ, Warren & THOMPSON, Jeremy C. (eds.). *La controverse carolingienne sur la prédestination: histoire, textes, manuscrits*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2018.

[13]   See on the theories of servitude in the early Middle Ages RIO, *Slavery after Rome,* p. 220-230.

[14]   *Ibid.*, p. 5-8 for a summary of the historiography.

as *colonus* and *rusticus*, might be argued to unequivocally refer to peasants. It is therefore necessary to determine from context if a person mentioned in a text was or might have been a peasant.

Our knowledge about peasant interaction with supernatural forces is largely derived from hagiography and from prohibitions of deviant religious practices in canons and capitularies. In the latter case, these prohibitions are usually not explicitly aimed at a specific group of people. There are exceptions, however, such as Regino of Prüm's early tenth century (906/13) handbook for episcopal visitations. In it, Regino lists questions that bishops were supposed to ask rural priests and their congregations. For most topics, he also supplied the underlying canons, drawing on an extensive range of canonical texts. These questions of course do not deal exclusively with peasant matters, but sometimes, certain groups are singled out as being especially prone to certain types of abuses. For example, Regino asks in question 44 whether any swineherd, cowherd, hunter or anyone else «of that kind» speaks devilish verses over bread, herbs or over other nefarious wreaths (*ligamenta*) that they hide in trees or throw on the ground where two or three roads meet «in order to protect their animals from plague and harm and for those of others to perish»[15]. This practice, of course, is idolatry that must be exterminated. In this question, Regino clearly singles out specific groups of people who spent most of their time out in the woods and the countryside alone, making deviant religious practices possible and leading to suspicion. Since this is one of the few instances in which Regino provides no support from the canons for his question we may assume that this was a concern that Regino himself felt necessary to include and thus might be based on actual events or at least real suspicion.

Nevertheless, there are a few further methodological problems: For example, miracle collections were always written down by clerical or monastic authors, whose aim it was to record and circulate a saint's deeds. This bears the danger that miracle collections – when treating rural life – were little more than fiction by clerical writers far removed from rural life. However, as Charles West has argued, some miracle stories probably originated in a local context, far from the monastery in which they were eventually written down[16]. In any case, miracle stories about any topic must have been both understandable and believable to the readers, who were admittedly very unlikely to be peasants, which makes it nevertheless likely that they reflected everyday life in some way, even when involving rural life and peasants.

Regarding peasants and deviant practices, there is a further problem inherent in our source transmission: Carolingian source routinely describe deviant religious practices, especially gatherings of crowds, as caused by «rusticity» or as linked to rustics (*rusticitas/*

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rustici)[17]. However, while we may not uncritically accept these descriptions as proof of peasant involvement, there is ample evidence in general to show that peasants actively structured their religious life, with or without the approval of elites.

2   Appealing to the supernatural I – venerating saints

One of the fields in which non-elite rural populations had choices and liberally exercised them was the choice of saintly patron when in need of aid. Saints' relics were widely dispersed in the Frankish countryside and available as destinations for intervention, and new relics were regularly brought across the Alps in attempts to create new foci of worship throughout the empire and gain patronage by powerful saints. Miracle collections were created to document successful visits to specific shrines and, at the same time, served to propagate the saints as effective addressees for pleas for help from anyone in need.

For example, a peasant (*rusticus*) whose ox had run away, made a candle and brought it to the monastery of Noirmoutier south of the Loire estuary. «In order not to be disappointed», he also presented a bar of silver worth 20 pennies (*denarii*) to the relics. When he left the church, the peasant found his ox waiting for him. The fact that the peasant gave not only a candle, a common votive offering, but also the substantial silver equivalent of 20 *denarii*, half the price of a full-grown pig, shows that miracles (and hope for miracles) brought material gain to the saints' shrines, even when peasants were involved[18]. Other offerings mentioned in miracle collections are beer, livestock, beehives and of course land[19]. From the perspective of the peasants, there were obvious economic constraints to giving gifts, since not everyone was able to give high value gifts such as land or silver. However, the authors of miracle collections made it very clear that small gifts, too, could lead to miracles.

In any case, both seeking out a specific saint's intercession and travelling around from relic to relic seem to have been widespread, common and eagerly needed by the saints' hosts, the religious communities of churches that housed the relics. Saints' shrines were not only visited in times of crisis. There is also ample evidence mentioning more casual visits to the shrines when passing through, indeed, saints routinely punished travellers

[17]   Bobrycki, Shane. «The flailing women of Dijon: Crowds in Ninth century Europe». *Past & Present*, 2019, 240, p. 3-46.

[18]   Candles as offerings e.g. in the «Historia translationis reliquiarum sanctorum martyrum Chrysanti et Dariae ex urbe Roma in Galliam», Floss, Heinrich Joseph (ed.). «Romreise des Abtes Markward von Prüm und Übertragung der hl. Chrysanthus und Daria nach Münstereifel im Jahre 844». *Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein*, 1869, 20, p. 96-217 (edition p. 172-183), at p. 175, p. 177 (a disfigured woman makes a candle in the shape of her head), p. 180.

[19]   Beer: «Historia Translationis Chrysanti et Dariae», c. 28, the price of a pig: Einhard, *Translatio et Miracula Sanctorum Marcellini et Petri*, ed. Petra Lang, Dorothea Kies et al. Seligenstadt: Einhard-Gesellschaft, 2015, book 3, c. 3, p. 82, a beehive: *Wandalbert von Prüm. Vita et Miracula sancti Goaris*. ed. Hans-Erich Stiene. Frankfurt, Bern: Peter Lang, 1981, c. 33, p. 80, land: ibid., c. 13, p. 59-60, regarding a vineyard adjacent to the property of the monastery that was given by the peasant after he had tried to cross the frozen Rhine and was saved from drowning by Saint Goar.

who neglected to stop at their shrines[20]. The miracles of Saint Philibert, whose relics were transported to Noirmoutier in 837 and whose posthumous deeds were recorded at the same time, show that this also applied to people of lower status such as a man who had come a market held in front of the monastery. His trip to market apparently routinely included a visit to the saints there[21].

Collectors of miracles made it very clear that «their» saints offered help to everyone. One of the best known examples of this is the 'Translatio et Miracula Sanctorum Marcellini et Petri' written by Charlemagne's biographer Einhard in late 830 or early 831, recording the miracles of the Roman martyrs Marcellinus and Peter, whose relics had been transported to Einhard's monastery at Seligenstadt on the Main River near Frankfurt. In it, Einhard depicts «his» saints as the destination of many faithful from different strata of society and from near and far. Among the episodes recorded in the *Translatio* is the report about a woman from Oberursel (about 20 Kilometers from Seligenstadt), who dislocated her jaw while yawning one morning and could not close her mouth. According to the report, some women attempted to help her by administering herbs and reciting magical incantations. When all these efforts remained fruitless, the woman's brother in-law suggested going to Seligenstadt. When the church steeple of Seligenstadt came into sight, the woman lifted her eyes to see it, and was immediately and miraculously cured[22].

Incantations and useless magic or medicine were not the only alternatives to going to Seligenstadt: People hoping for a cure or other help seem to have travelled around before finding saints who were able and willing to convince God to provide a miracle. In the case of Einhard's *translatio*, predictably, Marcellinus and Peter showed their power to these people, as in the case of a deaf girl from Bourges, almost 600 km from Seligenstadt, whose brother and father had accompanied her to many shrines and who was finally cured in the saints' church[23]. Crucially, saints might prove attractive even to those dependant peasants who lived on another monastery's property and who were in fact other saints' property themselves. This is also reported by Einhard in a chapter of his Translatio treating a demon named Wiggo. Here, a girl from the village of Höchst was possessed by the demon, who introduced himself as the devil's assistant and helper and delivered a damning verdict on the empire's moral condition through the girl's mouth[24]. This diatribe was primarily directed at the elites close to the emperor's court, including Louis the Pious himself, but the backstory speaks of peasants actively deciding to seek the saintly

[20]   This even applies to Charlemagne and his family, as the mid-ninth century miracles of Saint Goar report (*Wandalbert. Miracula sancti Goaris,* c. 11, p. 55-58).
[21]   «Ermentarius, De translationibus et miraculis sancte Philiberti», POUPARDIN, René (ed.). *Monuments de l'histoire des Abbayes de Saint-Philibert (Noirmoutiuer, Grandlieu, Tournus)*. Paris: Picard, 1905, p. 19-70, c. 71, p. 49-50, cf. KUCHENBUCH, Ludolf. *Versilberte Verhältnisse: Der Denar in seiner ersten Epoche (700-1000)*. Göttingen: Wallerstein, 2016, p. 93-97.
[22]   EINHARD, *Translatio,* book 3, c. 16, p. 101.
[23]   *Ibid.*, book 3, c. 5, p. 84.
[24]   *Ibid.*, book 3, c. 14, p. 96. See on this famous episode de JONG, Mayke. *The penitential state. Authority and atonement in the age of Louis the Pious, 814-840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 162; PATZOLD, Steffen. *Ich und Karl der Große. Das Leben des Höflings Einhard*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2014, p. 183-184.

patronage they wanted. Höchst was, as Einhard – one might suspect gleefully – notes, property of the monastery of Lorsch, or more precisely Lorsch's patron saint Nazarius, but the girl's parents chose to take their daughter to Seligenstadt instead, shunning the saint who was their lord and – if they were unfree – their owner, for Einhard's saints Marcellinus and Peter. As is to be expected, the girl's exorcism was successful because of the saints' intercession. In a similar way, a member of the *familia* of Saint Maximin in Trier was healed by the intercession of Chrysanthus and Daria, whose relics had been carried to the monastery of Münstereifel in 844[25].

The miracles of Saint Genesius, whose relics were transported from Jerusalem to Schienen on Lake Constance in the early ninth century, clearly shows not only that peasants had some agency in deciding where to go to church, but also demonstrates that they were confronted with incompatible expectations in this respect, forcing them to make choices that might cause them harm. Saint Genesius' *miracula* include a report about three *rustici* who, while working on the field one Saturday, discussed where to attend church on the following day. One of them suggested going to Schienen to pay respects to the newly arrived relics, but another objected and wanted to visit a church nearer to their home[26]. He was immediately struck down and paralysed for this, but completely restored to his health on the following day, after his companions took him to Schienen on a cart. This case points to the disruption that the creation of new sacred places caused in the religious landscape, and shows the competition between old and new sites of worship. The crucial point here is that far from being irreverent, the man suggesting to visit the nearest church instead of the newly arrived saint's tomb, was very much in line with Carolingian orthodoxy which expected everyone to attend the proper parish church[27]. Still, the saint punished him for even suggesting to visit the nearest church. Clearly, not even the educated elites and authorities could be trusted to provide consistent and reliable guidance with respect to saintly patronage.

3 APPEALING TO THE SUPERNATURAL II – QUESTIONABLE SAINTS AND WEATHERMAKERS

Whatever the reason, the reputation of a certain holy place might fluctuate, attracting at times large crowds. Carolingian elites, especially bishops, sometimes worried

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[25] «Historia translationis Chrysanti et Dariae», c. 16, p. 177. In c. 17, the woman from a *familia sancti Petri* whose disfigured face was restored in c. 17, p. 177-178, may have belonged to the monastery of Münstereifel, but might have also been owned by the Cologne cathedral or the local church of Sinzig, where she lived, cf. the notes in the translation and edition by Klaus Herbers in idem.; JIROUŠKOVÁ, Lenka & VOGEL, Bernhard (eds.). *Mirakelberichte des frühen und hohen Mittelalters*. Darmstadt: WBG, 2005, p. 91-117.

[26] Miracula S. Genesii (BHL 3314), c. 2, WATTENBACH, Wilhelm (ed.). «Die Übertragung der Reliquien des h.Genesius nach Schienen». *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins*, 1872, 24, c.3, p.13. See for this episode BOBRYCKI, «Flailing», p. 26.

[27] This thought is expressed in several bishops' capitularies and letters such as Amolo of Lyon's letter ordering the crowds gathered in Saint-Bénigne in Dijon to return home, stating that «each parish community (*plebs*) should remain quietly in the parishes and churches to which it is allocated». Cf. ZELLER, WEST, TINTI et al., *Neighbours and strangers*, p. 95, and see the following for the context of the letter.

about this aspect of religiosity. While clerical elites often worked hard on making their saintly patrons well-known to attract believers and donations, they were at the same time uneasy because of the difficulty of regulating and controlling their attraction, showing once again that believers even of lower social status were able to make choices in respect to the saints they worshipped. Specifically, there was unease about the veneration of relics whose origin was unclear. Archbishop Amolo of Lyon famously reports an episode in a letter in which bones that had been brought from Italy were placed in the church of Saint-Bénigne in Dijon and became the object of intense veneration. Although no-one knew the name of the saints whose remains they supposedly were – the men who had transported them across the Alps claimed to have forgotten the names – crowds gathered, and engaged in disturbing acts, flailing around and refusing to leave the church; some who tried were even physically unable to do so[28]. Amolo ordered the mysterious bones to be concealed; the crowds were to be dispersed and, if people refused to leave, they were to be flogged. We know nothing further about this episode, but apparently similar crowds gathered elsewhere at that time, for instance in Saulieu, more than 70 km from Dijon[29].

In this case, it becomes particularly clear that Carolingian authors such as Amolo linked deviant religious practices to low social status and specifically to women. Amolo describes the crowds as *populares turbae*, consisting of three to four hundred women, and sees the spread of the new cult as caused by *viles et nequam homunculi* («lowly and useless little people»), perhaps driven together by hunger[30]. The flailing, specifically, is attributed to «wretched little women». But while we certainly must not assume that all worshippers in Dijon were women or of low status, there is no reason to discount their presence and importance altogether.

While the case of the worshippers in Dijon was suspicious and unsettling to authorities such as the archbishop, their behaviour was not *a priori* deviant, because worshipping relics was of course a cornerstone of religiosity. Other practices however were clearly beyond what Carolingian authorities regarded as orthodox, such as the custom of tying and wreaths and hiding them at crossroads mentioned by Regino of Prüm. Nevertheless, several practices clerical writers and political authorities labelled as superstitious seem to have been common and helped peasants (and others) navigate their lives in a world populated by saints and demons. Among the well-attested forms of deviant behaviour are the *tempestarii*, men who said they were able to control the weather and who collected a fee known as *canonicum* in return for preventing storms that endangered the harvest. The most comprehensive treatment of this subject can be found in a treatise written by Amolo's predecessor Agobard of Lyon entitled «A book against irrational belief of the people

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[28]   Amolo of Lyon. AGOBARD DE LYON. *Oeuvres, I*, ed. Michel Rubellin. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2016, ep. 1, p. 363-368, cf. on this episode BOBRYCKI, «Flailing» and WEST, Charles. «Unauthorised miracles in mid-ninth-century Dijon and the Carolingian church reforms». *Journal of Medieval History*, 2010, 36, p. 295-311 who suggested that disorientation and fear caused by the civil wars of the 840s might be an important background for this episode. An English translation of the letter by Charles West is available at http://history.dept.shef.ac.uk/translations/medieval/amolo/#_edn6.

[29]   AMOLO, ep. 1, c. 3, ed. Rubellin, 364.

[30]   Cf. BOBRYCKI, «Flailing», p. 20.

about hail and thunder» (*Liber contra insulsam vulgi opinionem de grandine et tonitruis*)[31]. In it, Agobard attempts to disprove the belief that weather could be changed by human agency alone, first citing the popular belief that *tempestarii* caused bad weather and did so against payment by the inhabitants of the mythical region of Magonia, who sailed through the sky on air-ships and collected the crops that had been destroyed by hail and thunderstorms. Agobard claims he himself had saved three men and one woman captured because they were taken for Magonians and held in chains for several days. Later in his treatise, Agobard mentions other *tempestarii*, who did not claim to cause bad weather but who said they were able to prevent hail and thunderstorms. In return for this service, they collected a share of the crops supposedly saved by their actions, which they called the *canonicum*. This payment was of course criticized by Agobard who linked them to a failure to pay legitimate tithes. According to Agobard, the inhabitants of a settlement paid called the *canonicum* as part of a collective deal with a weathermaker.

It has been argued that the belief in *tempestarii* was a remnant of paganism, but in fact, there is very little evidence that those practicing weather control and those paying them for it did not think of themselves as Christians[32]. Furthermore, there is very little support for the idea that paganism – an ill-defined concept anyway – was relevant in any part of the Carolingian empire except the newly conquered regions of Saxony and the Avar territories. Indeed, «pagan» was mostly used to denounce religious practices beyond concepts of Christian orthodoxy, not unlike «superstition»[33].

Navigating life in an agricultural setting in which supernatural beings regularly intervened in both helpful and harmful ways, posed many challenges for the people living in a countryside. Demons endangered harvests and souls, saints protected them and offered help, but might also act vengeful if they felt wronged. Divine anger about the people's or the rulers' moral behaviour brought bad weather, floods, wars, famines and disease. Sometimes, the danger came from close to home, from mysterious strangers or well-known local figures, who might, too, be able to control the weather, in spite of what the priest preached on Sundays. There was no safe and certain way of protecting one's property and family. The rules and expectations of orthodoxy were not clear either: Was it right to go to your parish church on Sunday (as Amolo of Lyon and others argued), or was it better to visit the shrine of a powerful saint and to gain his patronage, as several clerical and monastic writers – such as the author of the *miracula sancti Genesii* – argued when «their» saints were concerned? There were different ways of dealing with these threats and dangers, as we have seen, ranging from casual visits to shrines when passing nearby to permanent devotion to a certain saint – perhaps one might even give up their legal freedom to become a member of the *familia* of this saint. Also, a peasant could

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[31]   AGOBARD DE LYON. *Liber contra insulsam vulgi opinionem de grandine et tonitruis*, ed. Lieven van Acker. Turnhout: Brepols, 1981, p. 3-15. Cf. the recent study by MEENS, Rob. «Thunder over Lyon: Agobard, the tempestarii and Christianity». In: STEEL, Carlos; MARENBON, John & VERBEKE, Werner (eds). *Paganism in the Middle Ages. Threat and fascination.* Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012, p. 157-166, and HARMENING, Dieter. *Superstitio. Überlieferungs- und theoriegeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur kirchlich-theologischen Aberglaubensliteratur des Mittelalters.* Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1979, p. 265-268.

[32]   MEENS, «Thunder».

[33]   HARMENING, *Superstitio*, p. 264-292.

engage in practices clearly beyond orthodoxy, such as paying weather makers or hiding magical wreaths at crossroads.

It is not surprising that violence was used in attempts to counter supernatural danger, as in the supposed Magonians saved by Agobard of Lyon. This was all the more likely to happen since measures by the proper religious authorities might fail, too. This is shown in the sobering case of the demon of Kempten, reported by the Annals of Fulda for the year 858[34]. In Kempten, a village near Bingen on the Rhine River a few kilometres west of Mainz, a demon first started throwing stones and banging on house walls, and then loudly betraying secrets about thefts in the village. The demon then directed suspicion to a villager by setting on fire every house that man had entered and burning down the entire harvest of the village after the suspect had brought in his harvest. The villagers therefore threatened to kill the man, who proposed to undergo an ordeal to prove his innocence, which was administered by priests and deacons sent from Mainz by the archbishop. Because the delegation from Mainz and the onlookers were also attacked with stones supposedly thrown by the demon, the clergy launched an exorcism. However, this remained unsuccessful since the demon was able to hide under the local priest's garments during the ceremony, because the priest had fornicated with the local estate manager's daughter. According to the report, the demon continued tormenting the village until almost all buildings had burned down. We know very little about the local dynamics at work behind this episode which is reported with no obvious moral in the Annals, but it is clear that there were pre-existing local tensions involving two of the most powerful men in the village – the local priest and the estate manager[35].

It is, however, obvious that in Kempten the strict adherence to orthodox practices failed to solve the local population's problem – although they did save the wrongly accused man from lynching. They failed because of the sins of a member of the clergy – the local priest's affair provided the devil with a hiding place and thus was the direct cause of the exorcism failure. We may assume that there were many other cases in which clerical attempts to solve problems failed, but that were never recorded in writing since they could not be worked into a narrative of a saint's successes.

4   STATUS, SAINTS AND SECULAR PATRONAGE

Proper religious exercise as attempted in Kempten or appeals to the saints might not have led to beneficial divine interventions in local matters in every case, but attempting to involve saints in a cause had other benefits. From the perspective of peasants, venerating saints was a way to gain access to elite networks, specifically those who controlled the saints' tombs. Miracle collections usually remain silent on this type of aid, but it is clear that the saints offered an entryway into the networks of patronage that

[34]   *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. Friedrich Kurze (MGH SS rer. Germ. 7). Hanover: Hahn, 1891, p. 51-52. See for a complete study of the episode INNES & WEST, « Saints», at p. 84-88.

[35]   For a case study on demons and social tensions in local societies in the Life of Theordore of Sykeon set in Byzantine Galatia, see WICKHAM, *Framing*, p. 408-411.

were a central feature of the Carolingian political system[36]. Einhard, man of letters and powerful courtier, regularly wrote letters for people of lower status, interceding on their behalf with those powerful men and women who might provide help in very different situations. In one case, Einhard urged a count named Poppo to spare two poor men he had found guilty of poaching. The men had fled to the tomb of Einhard's saints because they were unable to pay part of their fine, and Einhard pleaded with the count to waive the remaining part of the fine «for the love of Marcellinus and Peter»[37]. In the case of a murderer who belonged to a church of Saint Martin (perhaps the cathedral of Mainz), Einhard urged an estate manager to allow the murderer's family to pay the «Wergeld» to the victim's family instead of undergoing heavy corporeal punishment. In this case, the murderers' brothers had come to Seligenstadt to ask for the saints' and Einhard's intercession[38]. In the same way, Einhard's wife Imma asked a woman named Blihdrud to allow her serf Wenilo, who had likewise fled to Seligenstadt, to remain in wedlock with a free woman he had married without Blihdrud's approval, and also against the will of his lord Albuuin, probably Blihdrud's husband[39].

Given the low likelihood of survival of letters and the high degree of orality probable in these acts of intercessions, we must assume that there were many more cases in which people of lower status fled to saints' shrines not only for divine intercession but also for the secular influence of the saints' hosts, the abbots, bishops and lay lords wielded in the world. In this way, saintly and secular intercession went hand in hand and reinforced each other. Einhard pleaded with other lord and asked for their intercession on behalf of their friendship, but also for their love of his saints, Marcellinus and Peter. As these examples show, men and women of lower status understood this link and were capable of using it to their advantage (or at least attempting to do so). Also, it expressed an active choice on the part of the peasants who came to Seligenstadt presumably not only because it was close to where they lived, but because they knew that the saints and/or their host Einhard were well connected, in the visible as well as in the supernatural world.

Taking this into account, it is not surprising that men and women attempted to dedicate their entire lives to the saints and their holy place by becoming a member of the saint's *familia*, the group of dependants of a church. It is important to note that dependants are almost always described as being members of the saint's *familia*, that is as *homo de familia sancti Martini*, and not as being a member of the *familia* of a church dedicated

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[36]   INNES, Matthew. *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley, 400-1000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; HAACK, Christoph. *Die Krieger der Karolinger: Kriegsdienste als Prozesse gemeinschaftlicher Organisation um 800*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2020. The classical work on monastic patronage networks is of course ROSENWEIN, Barbara. *To be the Neighbor of Saint Peter. The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909-1049*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

[37]   EINHARD, *Translatio*, ep 7, GRABOWSKY, Annette et al. (eds.). *Einhards Briefe. Kommunikation und Mobilität im Frühmittelalter*. Seligenstadt: Einhard-Gesellschaft, 2018, p. 85-86. See on Einhard in general PATZOLD, *Ich und Karl der Große*.

[38]   EINHARD, *Translatio*, ep. 18, p. 108-109; a similar issue is treated in ep. 25, p. 122-123.

[39]   EINHARD, *Translatio*, ep. 15, p. 102-103. In letter 16, p. 104-105, Einhard similarly asked count Hatto to approve of a marriage between two unfree dependents belonging to him on behalf Hunno, the husband who had fled to Seligenstadt.

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to that saint (such as the church of Tours or Mainz), which reflects the idea that the saints were the real owners of church property.

For free men and women, the entry into the *familia* of a church was fairly straight-forward: They entered the church and gave themselves to the altar and the relics of the saints contained in them. Usually, their new status is described as *censualis* or *tributalis*. This means that they had no other duties than to pay a yearly *census* of money or of wax to the church, but were otherwise free to earn their living where and in which way they wanted to, under the protection of the saints and the saints' earthly representatives[40]. We have numerous charters attesting to the practice, especially from eastern Francia and Lotharingia in the tenth and eleventh century, but the practice existed already in the ninth century. The first known case concerned the «matron» Richildis who gave herself to the church of Saint Severin in Cologne together with her sons, «encouraged by divine inspiration and the counsel of wise men» in 794/800[41]. The expressed purpose of this act was to benefit their souls, but we may assume that there were other motives, too. Richildis was probably a widow, because no husband is mentioned in the charter, and was perhaps in need of protection for herself and her sons who appear to have been minors. In return for their membership in the *familia sancti Severini,* Richildis and her descendants once they reached maturity had to give wax worth two pennies each year. Six *denarii* each were to be paid in case of death and when entering marriage, sums that are entirely typical for this type of censuality.

Sometimes, we find more specific reasons for giving up oneself to a saint and a church. Perahart, for example, gave all his property, consisting of half of a farmstead and one serf, to the house of Saint Mary, the cathedral of Freising in 818, «so that I may have food and clothing in that house» (*ut victum et vestimentum in hac domo habuissem*)[42]. In return for his body and his property, Perahart received secure provisions for the rest of his life. There are no reasons given for this act, but Perahart might have been driven to hand over himself and his property by debt and poverty, disease, or old age.

We do know, however, that autotradition – the act of handing over oneself into someone else's hands – to an altar was sometimes the result of oppression. Either directly through the representatives of the churches, or indirectly by others, leading the peasants to seek protection by choosing another, hopefully more benign, lord. Carolingian legislation addressed both of these problems, attempting to prevent office holders from

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[40]   Esders, Stefan. *Die Formierung der Zensualität. Zur kirchlichen Transformation des spätrömischen Patronatswesens im früheren Mittelalter*. Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2014, p. 11-18 for a survey of scholarship.

[41]   Franz, Günther (ed.). *Quellen zur Geschichte des deutschen Bauernstandes im Mittelalter*. Darmstadt: WBG, 1967, 23, p. 60. The case is briefly treated by Barthélemy, Dominique. *The Serf, the Knight, and the Historian*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2009, p. 133 and by *Ibid.*, p. 19-20 with other early cases.

[42]   Bitterauf, Theodor (ed.). *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Freising vol. 1*. Munich: Beck, 1905, 404, p. 358-359 Perhart gives a half *curtis* with half of a house and a half of all other buildings, livestock and 12 yokes of plowland as well as meadows yielding 30 cartloads of hay. These figures are consistent with half of the typical agricultural land associated with a peasant unit in Bavaria at the time, cf. Kohl, «Peasants», p. 152-155.

pressuring *pauperes* to hand over their land and their freedom[43]. While this applied to both secular and clerical elites, others rulings were specifically directed toward clerics, who were accused of driving the *pauperes* into crime by laying pressure on them to give their goods to a church[44]. Of course, peasants also had the option of fleeing, but displacement and distance from ones social surrounding only increased the danger of enslavement – both falling into the hands slave traders and being forcefully included into a lord's dependency were real threats. As for the former, we know very little about small scale slave capture within the Frankish Empire from the eighth and the ninth centuries, but we do know it existed[45]. Here, too, saints were able to provide help: Saint Emmeram of Regensburg encouraged a man who had been captured and sold to Thuringians to flee back to Bavaria in a miracle recorded in late eighth century[46]. Other free men and women fell into dependency when they were forced to flee from their homes by raids and warfare.-In the Capitulary of Servais that records rulings from a council held in 853 by Lothar I and Charles the Bald in Valencienne, it was prohibited to enslave those who had fled to their realms from the incursions of the Bretons and Normans by those in whose household they lived and worked for subsistence. Charles the Bald issued a similar ruling in the capitulary of Pîtres in 864[47].

At the same time, unfree individuals and families were often handed over by their lords to the saint of a church. This, of course, did not necessarily entail a change of status: When owners handed over entire estates, only the peasants' lord changed, not their status. However, there was also a widespread practice of manumission into censuality. Here, unfree men and women were handed over to a saint, too, but as *censuales* had an elevated status henceforth[48]. While it was by no means necessary that the people being handed over approved of this act[49] – since handing over people to a church was a pious act that benefitted the donor's soul – we do know that lords sometimes followed their dependants' wishes when handing them over to a saint as *censuales*. Lords also used this

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[43] «Capitula de rebus exercitalibus in placito tractanda», ed. Viktor Boretius and Alfred Krause in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Capitularia 1*, Hanover: Hahn, 1883, Nr. 72, p. 163, c. 2-3, p. 165, cf. ZELLER, WEST, TINTI et al., *Neighbours and strangers*, p. 176.

[44] «Capitula de causis cum episcopis et abbatibus tractandis», ed. Viktor Boretius and Alfred Krause in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Capitularia 1*, Hanover: Hahn, 1883, Nr. 72, p. 163, c. 5.

[45] RIO, *Slavery after Rome*, p. 19-21, cf. REGINO OF PRÜM. *Libri duo de synodalibus causis et disciplinis ecclesiasticis*, ed. Wilfried Hartmann. Darmstadt, 2004, book 2, question 41, p. 244.

[46] ARBEO OF FREISING. *Vita Haimhrammi*, ed. Bernhard Bischoff. *Leben und Leiden des heiligen Emmeram*. Munich: Erich Heimeran, 1953, c. 37-42, p. 66-76.

[47] «Capitulary of Servais», ed. Alfred Boretius and Viktor Krause, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Capitularia 2*. Hanover 1897, c. 9, p. 273; «Capitulary of Pîtres», ed. Alfred Boretius and Viktor Krause, in *ibid.*, c. 31, p. 323-324. Both rulings were taken up by REGINO OF PRÜM, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis et disciplinis ecclesiasticis*, book 2, question 77, p. 250 and c. 433, 434, p. 454.

[48] Rio, *Slavery After Rome*, p. 47-51; ESDERS, *Formierung*.

[49] The «Historia translationis Chrysanti et Dariae», p. 174 contains the story of an unfree woman (*ancillula*) who became paralysed in church. The author of the miracle collection reports that some thought that this had happened because the maid had refused to serve the saints when her former owner attempted to give her to saints Chrysanthus and Daria.

type of manumission as a means of ensuring an elevated status and protection for their children from unfree women[50].

That men and women at the local level had an acute knowledge of the implications and chances of the various legal statuses is shown by several arrangements that lay out different paths for children of different gender. A woman named Tota, for example, gave a farmstead to the bishop of Freising in 835, because her children were owned by the episcopal church (presumably because their father had been a serf of that church)[51]. In return for the gift, her daughter was elevated to the status of *censualis* and had to pay a yearly sum of four denarii, while her son was to remain in the full service of the episcopal church, working in the land his mother had given to the church. While legally remaining a *servus* of Freising, he also received a horse to serve his masters, indicating an elevated status of another kind. This reflects a conscious choice on the part of Tota and her children, who suspected that the childrens' chances in life would be better that way – offering a chance to rise in the service of the bishop for the boy and perhaps opening up chances of an advantageous marriage for the girl[52].

But apart from strategic thinking about their children's future, some unfree women and men clearly wanted to dedicate their lives to a saint and convinced their lords to grant them their wish, especially when the saints provided support for this through miracles. Examples of this are quite common in some miracle collections, such as the mid-ninth century miracles of Saint Goar. A serf, for example, who had been paralysed and was cured by saint Goar, gave himself into the saint's service with the permission of his lord, Wido. A while later, he became a priest, indicating that he was no longer a serf[53]. Not every lord was as responsive as Wido: A man named Hadebald sent his maid, who was blind and mute, to Goar's cell, where she was miraculously cured. Hadebald immediately recalled her into his service, but her symptoms returned soon. Because of this miracle, the woman's master freed her and sent her back to St. Goar, where she was cured again and where she remained for the rest of her life – together with her sister, who apparently was allowed to stay with her[54]. Both therefore legally became part of a saint's *familia*, as the saint had demanded through his miraculous action. In a more general sense, this shows that dedicated engagement with a saint could lead to an advantageous change in ownership and in status for a dependant, especially when it took the external form of strict obedience to the saint. This also meant that cooperation by the former lord could be hoped for, since lords, too, were expected to obey the saints. In this way status and saintly patronage were often intricately linked.

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[50]   Rio, *Slavery after Rome*, p. 103-105.

[51]   *Traditionen Freising 1*, 608, p. 521-522.

[52]   We find the same pattern in cases from the tenth century: Bitterauf, Theodor (ed.). *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Freising vol. 2*. Munich: Beck, 1908, 1226, 1244, p.136-137, 149.

[53]   *Vita et Miracula Goaris*, c. 4, p. 49.

[54]   *Vita et Miracula Goaris*, c. 17, p. 63-64.

5   PEASANT AGENCY AND THE SUPERNATURAL

Engaging with supernatural forces was an inevitability in peasant life in which radical changes in fortune were a normal part of the peasant life cycle[55]: bad weather, disease, injury and unexpected deaths had potentially catastrophic consequences for individuals and families. It made sense to interact with the saints and demons who populated the landscape and whose actions were seen as linked to disastrous and beneficial events. In doing so, however, peasants – even those who were dependant or unfree – exercised a certain degree of autonomy, as they did in other fields of their life. The agency of peasants lay not so much in fact that they attempted to engage with supernatural forces *per se* by praying, visiting shrines and making offerings. Christian authorities expected this and the belief in the necessity of these acts seems to have been widely shared by contemporaries living in a world far beyond control. Still, peasants made conscious decisions about the way in which they wanted to interact with supernatural forces – which saint they venerated, which shrines they visited in times of crisis, which offerings they made to them. In doing this, they also took into account the people and institutions who were linked to the saints, because they controlled the saints' resting places. Their patronage – if they were willing to offer it – might prove valuable by allowing access to aristocratic networks, as we have seen in Einhard's letters. Dependant peasants living on land belonging to a saint (i.e. a monastery or other church) visited other shrines if they hoped that help might be found there. Other choices were offered by practices beyond what contemporary elites regarded as legitimate: some placed votive wreaths in trees and others even hired weather-makers to prevent bad weather.

All of this seems to have taken place within a largely Christian world view, since we find very little evidence for remnants of proper paganism. Pagan or not, Bishops, Abbots and kings were opposed to these practices that they labelled as «superstitious» or «rustic», but eliminating them was not easy, since the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate practices was hard to draw, especially when the veneration of saints was concerned, as the letter of Amolo of Lyon demonstrates. And even within the realm of orthodoxy, there were contradictions between what was expected from the believers. Should they visit their proper parish church, as was typically expected in capitularies and council acts, or should they rather go and venerate specific saints, as miracle collections suggested? There was no secure answer to this question, and peasant and other believers had to make choices. This exposed them to danger, since religious practices were not without risk: venerating a false saint could have disastrous consequences, and even an approved, 'real' saint might prove as vengeful as a demon when wronged. Here, once again, freedom to make choices brought with it risks and dangers.

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[55]   DEVROEY, Jean-Pierre & SCHROEDER, Nicolas. «Land, Oxen, and Brooches. Local societies, inequality, and large estates in the early medieval Ardennes (c. 850-950)». In: QUIRÓS CASTILLO, Juan Antonio (ed.). *Social inequality in Early Medieval Europe: Local Societies and Beyond*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2019, p. 177-202.

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