AGOBARD OF LYON, EMPIRE, AND ADOPTIONISM
REUSING HERESY TO PURIFY THE FAITH

Rutger Kramer
Institute for Medieval Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria

ABSTRACT — In the late eighth century, the heterodox movement Adoptionism emerged at the edge of the Carolingian realm. Initially, members of the Carolingian court considered it a threat to the ecclesiastical reforms they were spearheading, but they also used the debate against Adoptionism as an opportunity to extend their influence south of the Pyrenees. While they thought the movement had been eradicated around the turn of the ninth century, Archbishop Agobard of Lyon claimed to have found a remnant of this heresy in his diocese several decades later, and decided to alert the imperial court. This article explains some of his motives, and, in the process, reflects on how these early medieval rule-breakers (real or imagined) could be used in various ways by those making the rules: to maintain the purity of Christendom, to enhance the authority of the Empire, or simply to boost one’s career at the Carolingian court.

INTRODUCTION

If some rules are meant to be broken, others are only formulated once their existence satisfies a hitherto unrealized need. Unspoken rules are codified – and thereby become institutions – once they have been stretched to their breaking

point and their existence is considered morally right or advantageous to those in a position to impose them. Conversely, the idea that rules can be broken at all rests on the assumption that they reflect some kind of common interest; if unwanted rules are simply imposed on a group by an authority, conflict may ensue and be resolved along different mechanisms. Codified behaviour thus demonstrates the existence of an almost paradoxical interplay between societal norms, perceived popular needs, and pastoral power.

Regardless of whether regulations are created for conservative or progressive reasons, making or enforcing rules is a matter of social power, authority, and acknowledging them. Authority is derived as much from the ability to act as a guarantor of order as from the visibility of that act; as such, the acceptance or rejection of rules also strengthens the bond between rulers and their subjects, and between subjects themselves. Matters were no different during the Carolingian period. It was a time when cultural ideas were reinvented, when courtly and ecclesiastical ideologies recombined into a political structure that, though hierarchical, aimed at fostering a collective sense of responsibility for the whole of Christendom. Merely debating the limits of orthodoxy, thinking about the extent of certain rules, and attempting to enforce them, had become part of the pastoral duty of everybody in a position of authority.

One of these people was Archbishop Agobard of Lyon (r. 816-839, d. 840), a colourful character with an interest in the consideration and reconsideration of rules. After a short overview of his early career, this article highlights Agobard’s attempts to bring attention to a heterodox movement several decades after it ceased to be a threat to the Carolingian Church. By explaining what this supposed heresy was about, the archbishop could reiterate what its existence meant for the Frankish Empire and how it was everyone’s duty to ensure some rules remained unbroken. Thus, he participated in a context where debate was encouraged, and conflicts over orthodoxy were seen as part of a necessary discourse of authority, pastoral power, and imperial responsibilities.


AGOBARD AND THE CAROLINGIAN CHURCH REFORMS

Hailing from the south of Aquitaine, a melting pot of Roman, Visigothic, Frankish, and other local identities, Archbishop Agobard emerged at the Carolingian court from a provincial, if not peripheral background. Although Aquitaine was long seen as a region where Roman and early Christian traditions had persisted much more visibly than in other parts of the former Empire in the West, its integration into the Frankish sphere of influence, completed by 768, had resulted from hard-fought battles and skilful diplomatic manoeuvring, and occurred as the Carolingian frontiers were expanding both territorially and culturally. Especially from the 780s onwards, the court around Charlemagne became the cultural, social, and political centre par excellence, from whence ever greater efforts were poured into all-encompassing ecclesiastical reforms (correctio). Over the decades, liturgical and theological inconsistencies were debated, the behaviour of the clergy tested, and a grand endeavour to edit and explain the many books of the Bible undertaken. The goal of all this was nothing less than the salvation of all the realm’s subjects. According to fundamental texts such as the Admonitio generalis (789) or the Epistola de litteris colendis (c. 781), bishops, counts, abbots, as well as the lowest parishioners, should have the tools to live well and thereby attain heaven. Since ‘knowing comes before doing’, it stands to reason that education was key in achieving this.

To ensure that correctio was properly orchestrated from the court, Charlemagne gathered a group of talented scholars and intellectuals from all over his realm and beyond, a practice continued by his son Louis the Pious (r. 814-840). Correctio was a collective effort, and these courtiers were its standard-bearers, responsible for its implementation. It was an honourable but heavy burden, and only the best and brightest were able to thrive in the court’s competitive environment as it developed around the palace in Aachen. For aspiring courtiers like Agobard of Lyon, it was of the utmost importance to show that he had what it took intellectually, and that he always had the Empire’s best interests at heart.
This drive to prove himself absorbed much of Agobard’s energy throughout his career. Peripheral or not, Agobard wanted his voice to be heard. In part, this was a matter of principle. It was important for all prelates to show their active participation in the Carolingian correctio movement, as they had, over the years, established themselves as the prophetic “watchmen over the house of Israel”, a phrase borrowed from Ezekiel 3:17, with Israel symbolically representing the Frankish Church. Bishops were to seek out any errant sheep and bring them back into the fold, so as to protect the ecclesiastical herd. In addition to fulfilling this pastoral calling, Agobard hit the ground running in 816 when he was appointed bishop by his still-living predecessor Leidrad rather than elected by his colleagues or the Emperor. This unconventional elevation to the prestigious See of Lyon prompted a debate about whether it should even be possible for a see to have two bishops. While the matter was ultimately resolved by Leidrad’s death later in 816, the circumstances regarding his rise to prominence may have made Agobard sensitive to the importance of correct ecclesiastical order, which influenced his sense of pastoral duty towards the Empire.

If anything, Agobard’s career demonstrates his tenacity and intellectual prowess. He knew his strengths, and was aware that the way to the Emperor’s ear was through his courtiers. Despite the occasional misstep, such as an ill-timed sermon on church property on the occasion of Louis the Pious’ first public penance at Attigny in 822, or backing the wrong horse during the ‘crisis years’ between Louis, his sons, and various groups of disgruntled aristocrats, the archbishop managed to create a niche by preaching ecclesiastical unity and purity to all who would hear it. In the process, he also framed his own place at the Carolingian court within the ecclesia it was building.

Given this emphasis on the idea that Christianity should form a unified whole, it is no surprise that Agobard was interested in rules, their application, and those breaking them. He was, for example, particularly bothered by anyone in his 9 For a biography of Agobard, see Egon Boshof, Erzbischof Agobard von Lyon: Leben und Werk (Cologne: Böhlau, 1969).


A similar rhetoric belied the treatises he produced against Jews. The continued existence of Jews in the so-called Christian Empire was a thorn in Agobard’s side, and he frequently pursued the Emperor and his entourage with advice on which privileges Jews should be allowed to retain, or more importantly why they should be baptized. It was on the first point especially that Agobard stood out. While a certain degree of anti-Jewish rhetoric is to be expected from early medieval ecclesiastical elites, it usually remained on a theological level. By and large, Jews were tolerated and enjoyed considerable freedom and status under the Carolingians. While converting to Judaism was generally frowned upon – as in the case of Bodo-Eleazar, a deacon who converted and moved to Spain – Jews were neither prosecuted, nor subjected to concerted conversion efforts. This rubbed Agobard the wrong way, and he spent many a quill decrying their errors. Much to his frustration, however, this often fell on deaf ears at court.

Still, as with the multitude of legal options available in the Frankish realm, one of Agobard’s primary concerns was the preservation of ecclesiastical unity. As unpleasant as his vitriolic diatribes are to modern audiences, they should be – at least partially – understood as a defence of a Christendom that, he felt, remained beleaguered on all sides. Agobard’s agenda was pastoral. His duty
was to educate people about the dangers of straying too far from the straight path, regardless of whether they were Jewish or Burgundian, proper sinners or simply ignorant of Christian teaching.\footnote{36}

To Agobard, Christian teaching on the proper way of life formed the basis of good behaviour, and the rules that emerged from the framework of imperial \textit{correctio} provided Christians with everything they needed to lead proper Christian lives as explained by their pastors.\footnote{37} To break the rules was to hold a mirror to the system, to show the dangers of walking a different path. To Agobard, rules existed so that Christians could show their ability to weather the tribulations of earthly life without flinching. Parishioners and princes alike shared this burden. “Let him heed divine judgement”, Agobard wrote in 833, reflecting on Louis the Pious’ political troubles, “for nothing on this earth happens without a reason”. “The Lord”, he continued, quoting Job 12:24, “changes the heart of the princes of the earth’s people, and deceives them that they walk in vain where there is no way’ [...]. Therefore the Lord is terrible, not only to the people of the earth but also to the princes of those people”.\footnote{38} According to Agobard, everyone ought to guard against worldly trouble, and rulers even more so, for their transgressions would have repercussions on an altogether grander, cosmological scale.\footnote{39}

It is in this context of \textit{correctio} that we should regard one of Agobard’s earlier works, which is the focus of the remainder of this article. It was written in or shortly after 818, two years after Agobard became Archbishop of Lyon, at a time when \textit{correctio} was in full swing. More importantly, he began its composition in the same year that the primary rule-breaker against whom Agobard directed his energy had died. This treatise is titled \textit{Adversum dogma Felicis} (Against the Teaching of Felix). The Felix in question had been the Bishop of Urgell, just south of the Pyrenees, who had spent his years from 799 until his death as an exile in Lyon in 818, accused of being that most heinous of transgressors: a heretic.\footnote{40}
ADOPTIONISM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Felix of Urgell was one of the main instigators of the Iberian variant of a heterodox movement more commonly known as Adoptionism, which emerged on the peninsula in the second half of the eighth century, right when the Carolingians were striving to consolidate their recently expanded frontiers and keep Umayyad incursions into their realm at bay. This is partly why the Carolingians took an interest in this particular movement; it added a theological and pastoral challenge to their more worldly preoccupations with expanding and safeguarding their territories.

This is not to say that the Carolingian intellectuals involved in this debate had a clear picture of what was going on. At the instigation of Pope Hadrian I (r. 772-795), through whom the Carolingian court first learned of this heterodoxy, it was thought that Adoptionism was a form of Nestorianism. Based on early Eastern Christian teachings, this heresy proclaimed that Christ’s nature was essentially bipartite: he was a ‘natural’ son of God and an ‘adopted’ one. That was how the intellectuals at the court in Aachen, chief among them Alcuin of York, understood it; modern reinterpretations have pointed out that the controversy may have been rooted in the differing roles of patristic discourse on each side of the Pyrenees. But the cat was out of the bag, and Felix, together with his colleague, Archbishop Elipandus of Toledo (c. 755-c. 808), was charged with misrepresenting the nature of the Trinity itself.

Even if this Hispanicus error was based on a misunderstanding, it was nonetheless worthy of attention. Such different views of Christ gnawed at the roots of their model Church, and should not be allowed to spread. Moreover, Carolingian interest in this presumed heterodoxy allowed them to exert their influence over territories with Christian communities beyond their control. If the court was where correct practice was shaped, this practice should be exported to all subjects of the Empire; such was the pastoral zeal of those living in the sacrum palatium of the Frankish rulers. Another problem was that these were
bishops propagating Adoptionist teachings, since this contravened the carefully cultivated self-image of the Carolingian episcopate, according to which there should be a divinely inspired and imperially formulated consensus about their responsibilities for the wellbeing of the Church both in this life and the next. As such, it should involve someone who was rex et sacerdos – king and priest – at the same time. Even Pope Hadrian acknowledged that his was a job for Charlemagne and his court. As important as it was to nip Adoptionism in the bud from a theological point of view, it was equally important to incorporate the Spanish bishops into the Frankish community while doing so, as this would also enhance the power and prestige of the Carolingian court itself. Taking the lead in combating heresy was not only about doctrinal uniformity, it was also a way to gain credibility as a Christian court, to show their subjects and neighbours alike that they had what it took to be good rulers.

The multifaceted nature of this debate explains why so many Carolingian intellectuals became involved. Between the first appearance of Adoptionism on the Frankish scene and its final suppression at the turn of the ninth century, practically everyone who was anyone at court weighed in on this matter, by preaching, composing treatises, writing letters, or being present at the councils devoted to this movement held in 792, 794, and 799. Important courtiers such as Alcuin, bishops and papal delegates including Paulinus of Aquileia, and monastic reformers such as Benedict of Aniane found increasingly interesting ways to convince their Iberian counterparts that they were errant sheep. They too seized the opportunity to fight for the greater good as much as they were out to strengthen their own position. These courtiers were vying for Königsnähe, a place close to the throne where their ideas and authority were heard and their involvement was visible. By combating Adoptionism and chastising the supposed rule-breakers, they showed that they were willing to play by the rules. They worked comfortably within the parameters set by the “most holy authority” of the court – personified by its ruler – through whose instruction, as Alcuin wrote, “the starving people who live in deserted places are sated with the catholic faith”.


22 Anna Beth Langenwalter, “Agobard of Lyon: An Exploration of Carolingian-Jewish Relations” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2009), 57-60.


On the other side, the Spanish bishops also engaged with their Frankish counterparts, in person and in writing, even though the outcome of the debate may have been pre-determined. It is tempting to think they saw some advantages to this, too: debating the fine fleur of Carolingian intellectual life would not only give them credibility at a local level, but also allowed them to have their voice heard on a grander scale. This they did with gusto. While defending their point of view, the Spanish bishops warned Alcuin against becoming a heretic and false advisor himself. They admonished Charlemagne not to abuse his power like Constantine the Great, who also had Christianity’s best interests at heart but ended up a sinner and heretic. Going beyond doctrinal matters, these bishops even seized the opportunity to dispense appropriate political advice. It was an acceptable strategy. Both in his rebuttal to the Spanish bishops, and as a general part of court policy, Charlemagne – and his successors – fostered a climate where courtiers were allowed to criticize and admonish their rulers as long as they avoided outright invective. Elipandus and Felix may have been accused of heresy, but they certainly were not breaking the rules of debate itself.

All things considered, the ensuing debates show the willingness of both parties to at least pretend to take their opponents seriously. The emergence of Adoptionism gave cause for Carolingian intellectual elites to defend their faith and establish consensus about the nature of the Trinity. It also enabled them to close their ranks and strengthen their own somewhat disparate community. By overstepping the boundaries of acceptable religious diversity, the Adoptionist bishops had handed the Carolingians a tool to build new religious norms that were previously unnecessary and unheard of. In the process, they too became part of the ever-growing Carolingian ecclesia.

THE LEGACY OF FELIX

Although the actual Adoptionist movement had run out of steam by the start of the ninth century, it had not completely disappeared from the agenda for...
decades. Shortly after ascending to the imperial throne in 814, Louis the Pious was confronted with a resurgence of the Adoptionism issue around 818, in the midst of his attempts to continue his father’s legacy. The instigator of this renewed confrontation was the newly appointed Archbishop of Lyon, Agobard.

Agobard claimed that he had found a remnant of Adoptionist teachings among writings left by Felix after his death in 818, written in a “document of the genre of questions and answers”. Apparently, the Spanish bishop formally recanted his teachings, but had never given up his beliefs and, worse yet, may have convinced others with his arguments. Notably, Felix had managed to do this by leading an impeccable life, following the rules, and thereby deceiving his friends and admirers. This was cause for alarm, “for”, as Agobard wrote, “they do not realize that faith is not measured by the life of a man, but that life is demonstrated through faith”. No matter how much people played by the rules, they needed to internalize their faith in order to be open to correctio: “nobody will be saved who believes badly but lives well”. It was now Agobard’s responsibility to aid those who had misinterpreted Felix’s words “with which he went beyond the true faith”, and to “oppose [these words] with the sentences of the Holy Fathers, so that whomever would deign to read this may realize that the surety of catholic truth is followed with the purest senses”. This is pastoral duty and Carolingian correctio at its finest: Agobard protecting those who do not know better, and teaching them “so that they may subtly correct their faith”. It is everyone’s duty to help and teach each other, he writes, whereas those who are too proud of their own unblemished record to aid others in their struggles “will find fault with everybody in the community” and therefore “cannot please him, who said ‘learn from me; I am gentle and humble of heart’” [Matt. 11:29].

What follows is a systematic takedown of Felix’s arguments, reconstructed from the booklet found by Agobard, combined with what he had been told. Still assuming he was dealing with a kind of Nestorianism, Agobard presented a dossier of quotations from a large group of Greek and Latin Church Fathers. Although
it is unclear to what extent he based his arguments on earlier anti-Adoptionist
treatises rather than his own research, he was sure to follow common Carolingian
rules of debate. Among many other things, the Frankish bishops accused their
Spanish colleagues of having gone beyond the teachings of the Fathers, as if
they were not good enough. Agobard avoided this mistake by carefully teaching
only those venerable certainties which had been proven by age. 72 He even
went one step further: for him, the “sentences of the Holy Fathers” that should
help his readers purify their faith were like a *regula* (rule), rather than mere
guidelines. 73 Concluding this passage with an admonitory quotation from the
Athanasiian Creed that those who do not follow the catholic faith “shall doubtless
perish everlastingly”, 74 Agobard thus steered a course between persuasion and
admonition, between what his intended audience should know, and what ought
to be self-explanatory. He essentially reinforced religious normativity in the face
of a supposedly heterodox movement, but he presented his argument as the
confirmation of a rule and demonstration of the truth. For “it is the truth that is
loved, not words”, he writes, and that is why it was necessary to compose this
work and to send it to the court. 75

It is here that we see an ulterior motive to the *Adversum dogma Felicis*. This
composition was not a sermon for the instruction of his diocese, nor was it
intended for potential ‘victims’ of Felix. Agobard’s refutation of Adoptionism was
instead dedicated to Emperor Louis the Pious, who, as the intended recipient
of the work, also appears as the model reader. While it was not unusual for the
imperial court to patronize of this type of work, it also demonstrates Agobard’s
adherence to the Carolingian system, within which the ruler bore the greatest
responsibility for teaching his Empire. 76 As explicated in its prologue, Louis
the Pious was called upon to correct and approve of the *opusculum* Agobard
composed against this “heresy, reused from the ancients”. 77 The threat still
lurked, and it was up to the Emperor to “recommend [Agobard’s book] to those
for whom it may be advantageous to read”, that is, those who may have been
affected by subversive teaching. 78 It is unclear whether those who had been

31 Bernard S. Bachrach, *Early
Medieval Jewish Policy in
Western Europe* (Minneapolis:
University of Minnesota Press,
1977), 66-105.

32 Frank Riess, “From Aachen
to al-Andalus: The Journey of
Deacon Bodo (823–76),” *Early
Medieval Europe* 13 (2005),
131-57.

33 Bat-Sheva Albert, “Christians
and Jews,” in *The Cambridge
History of Christianity Volume
3: Early Medieval Christianities,
c.600-c.1100*, eds. Thomas
F. X. Noble and Julia M. H.
Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2008), 175, even
assumes this was why Louis and
Agobard “despised” each other.

34 See Cullen J. Chandler, “A
New View of a Catalanian *Gesta
contra Iudaeos*: Ripoll 106 and
the Jews of the Spanish March,”
in Chandler and Stofferahn,
*Discovery and Distinction*, 187-
204, for similar ideas underlying
another text corpus.

35 Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters
of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in
Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley:
University of California Press,
1999), 136.
exposed to Felix’s teachings were meant, or simply those whose faith needed to be refreshed. Agobard seized the occasion to explain, referencing Paul’s letter to Titus, that “those who would want to be a priest ‘must hold firmly to the truths which have tradition for their warrant; able, therefore, to encourage sound doctrine, and to show the wayward their error’” [1 Tim 1:9].

The statement is a double-edged sword: Agobard is reflecting on his own position as bishop, and emphasizes the expectation that he advise and help the Emperor run his realm, while also evoking Louis’ own position as rex et sacerdos at the secular and ecclesiastical centre of the Empire. Presenting Louis with the tools to teach others about “the Son of God, who supports [his] imperium”, Agobard subtly implied that by teaching others about Christ’s true nature he would also strengthen his own position.

It is unclear if Adoptionism remained a threat in 818. Although the appearance of the Adversum dogma Felicis so shortly after the death of Felix can hardly have been a coincidence, and despite persistant memories of the heterodoxy, it seems likely that Agobard oversold the importance of Felix’s legacy, and used the memory of Adoptionism as a pretext for writing an educational text to the Emperor. This makes sense from his perspective: he was a young prelate, out to make a name for himself, to demonstrate that his appointment to the archiepiscopacy had been deserved, and that he was part of the admonitory tradition of his predecessors.

CONCLUSION

The debate about Adoptionism was not a matter of us versus them, or about a Church falling apart under the pressure of those unwilling to play by the rules. The issue even brought the conflicting parties closer together, as the willingness to debate and the ability to communicate took precedence over conservatism and persecution. The spectre of Adoptionism was used to strengthen the internal structure of the Carolingian Empire and to consolidate the authority


38 Agobard, “Liber apologeticus II,” 12: “Cedat diuinis iudiciis, quia nihil in terra sine causa”; “‘Qui inmutat cor principum populi terrę et decipit eos, ut frustra incedant per inuium.’[...] Ideo ergo terribilis Dominus, non tantum populis terrę, sed et ipsis principibus populi.”


40 See John C. Cavadini, The Last Christology of the West: Adoptionism in Spain and Gaul, 785-820 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993) for a comprehensive overview of this debate. For Agobard’s role in all this see Boshof, Agobard, 55-74.


45 Cavadini, *Last Christology*, 103-106.


47 Alcuin, “Epistola 137,” in *MGH Epistolae 4: Epistolae Karolini aevi II*, ed. Ernst of the Emperor as an educator of his people. Charlemagne involved himself because he had to meet an existing challenge to his *ecclesia*. Louis was called to arms to educate his people about potential dangers. As far as Agobard was concerned, this heterodoxy presented him with a prime opportunity to reinforce the rules he thought were worth reinforcing, to the benefit of the Emperor, his subjects, and himself. 

85
Rutger Kramer


56 Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, 276.

57 Leidulf Melve, *Inventing the Public Sphere: The Public Debate During the Investiture Contest (c. 1030-1122)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 50-56.


60 Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus*, 14-27.


Dümmler (Berlin: Weidmann, 1899), 211; and “Epistola 200,” 331. See Close, *Uniformiser la foi*, 164-68.


67 Ibid., 3, 75: “absque dubio in aeternum peribit”.

68 Ibid., 1, 74: “in quibus a uritate fidei exessit”;
   “sanctorum patrum sententias opponere, ut quisis dignatus fuerit legere, agnoscat, qua cautela catholicae ureritatis purissimum sensum sequatur”.

69 Ibid., 1, 74: “ut fidem suam subtilissime corrigrant.”

70 Ibid., 2, 74-75: “omnibus tamen in commune de trahunt”;
   “non possunt illi placere, qui dixit: ‘Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde'”.

71 Ibid., 6, 77.

72 “Epistola episcoporum Franciae”: “Et quare aliquid confirmare audemus, quod in illorum non inveniatur scribis?”, Werminghoff, *MGH Conc.* 2.1, 143.

73 Agobard, “Adversum dogma Felicis,” 3, 75: “sanctorum patrum sententias”.

74 Ibid., 3, 75: “absque dubio in aeternum peribit”.

75 Ibid., 3, 75: “ueritas amanda est, non uerba”.

76 Rosamond McKitterick, “Royal Patronage of Culture in the Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians: Motives and Consequences,” in Centro italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, *Committenti e produzione artistico-letteraria nell’alto medioevo occidentale* (Spoleto: Presso La sede del Centro, 1992), 93-129.

77 Agobard, “Adversum dogma Felicis,” Prologue, 73: “ex ueteri rediuiuam heresim”.

78 Ibid., Prologue, 73: “Quia, si probatur, illis, quibus profuturum est, ad legendum commendatur; si autem improbatur, auctor eius per vos emendatur”. See also Van Renswoude, “License to Speak,” 299-303.

79 Ibid., Prologue, 73: “Sacerdotem quoque esse uult ‘amplectentem eum, qui secundum doctrinam est, fidelem sermonem, ut potens sit exhortari in doctrina sana, et eos, qui contradicunt, arguere’”.

80 Ibid., Prologue, 73: “Filii Dei, qui uestrum iuuat imperium”.

81 For example in Ardo Anianensis, “Vita sancti Benedicti Abbatis Anianensis,” c. 8, ed. and trans. Gerhard Schmitz et al., www.rotula.de/ianiane/.

Rutger Kramer received his PhD from the Freie Universität Berlin in 2014. He is currently a post-doctoral researcher at the Institut für Mittelalterforschung of the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Vienna. In addition to his research on the intersection between Carolingian religious reforms and imperial policies in the eighth to tenth centuries, he works as a coordinator of the SFB Visions of Community: Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Region and Empire in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism (400-1600 CE) (www.viscom.ac.at).


85 This article has benefitted greatly from input of the participants and organizers of the LUCAS International Graduate Conference Breaking the Rules (January 2015), as well as from helpful remarks by Graeme Ward, Jelle Wassenaar, Veronika Wieser, and, above all, Irene van Renswoude. Research for this article has been funded through the SFB Visions of Community, sponsored by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF F42).
The *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* was founded in 2013 to publish a selection of the best papers presented at the biennial LUCAS Graduate Conference, an international and interdisciplinary humanities conference organized by the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS). The peer reviewed journal aims to publish papers that combine an innovative approach with fresh ideas and solid research and engage with the key theme of the LUCAS, the relationship and dynamics between the arts and society.

SERIES EDITOR
Jenneka Janzen

EDITORS IN CHIEF
Karine Laporte
Fleur Praal

EDITORIAL BOARD
Haohao Lu
Thijs Porck
Lieke Smits
Agnieszka Anna Wołodźko
Tessa de Zeeuw

SPECIAL THANKS
Gerlov van Engelenhoven
Leonor Veiga

The *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference*, **ISSN 2214-191X**, is published once a year, on 1 February, by Leiden University Library (Witte Singel 27, 2311 BG Leiden, the Netherlands).

COPYRIGHT
© *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference*, 2016. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior and written consent of the Series Editor.

DISCLAIMER
Statements of fact and opinion in the articles in the *Journal of the LUCAS Graduate Conference* are those of the respective authors and not necessarily of the editors, the LUCAS or Leiden University Library. Neither Leiden University Library nor the LUCAS nor the editors of this journal make any representation, explicit or implied, in respect of the accuracy of the material in this journal and cannot accept any responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions that may be made.

WEBSITE
For more information about the journal, please see our website at http://hum.leiden.edu/lucas/jlgc