In Office and Dignity:
On the Idiosyncrasy of "Official" Positions in the Early Middle Ages

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[trans. by Katharina Friege and Courtney Booker, from Thomas Zotz, "In Amt und Würden: Zur Eigenart 'offizieller' Positionen im früheren Mittelalter," in *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 22 (1993): 1–23.]

One of the known challenges of exploring and describing the medieval past is the treatment of terms that were common then and remain so now, thus at first glance seeming to indicate a fixed definition. Without careful reflection, it is all too easy to run the risk of the misinterpretation and false association of such terms when they are applied within the context of modern academic vocabulary. In order to address this situation, Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck published the by now fundamental work *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* in 1972.[1] Alongside this work, the *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820*, produced by Rolf Reichardt and Eberhard Schmitt in 1985, is also significant, though more limited in temporal scope.[2] For the Middle Ages specifically, such a reference work is missing. However, this deficit is somewhat mitigated by the fact that antiquity and the Middle Ages are taken into consideration in the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, as well as the fact that within the important encyclopaedias addressing the medieval period, namely the

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[1] Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck (eds.). *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Vol. 1–6, Stuttgart 1972–1990.

[2] Rolf Reichardt, Eberhard Schmitt (ed.), *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820*, Book 1/2–11, München 1985–1991.

Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde[3] and the *Lexikon des Mittelalters*,[4] the era-specific terminology is accorded due consideration. Furthermore, the historian will find assistance in the philological contributions regarding conceptual history from Ruth Schmidt-Wiegand and her circle.[5] Explicitly historical investigations of a single term that is common in the Middle Ages, the need for which is justifiably and repeatedly expressed,[6] are also noteworthy contributions to the expansion of our understanding of the medieval conceptual world.[7]

The word "office" (Amt), which is derived from the old German *ambaht(i)*, is one of these terms that is linguistically at home in both the Middle Ages and the present day.[8] At

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[3] Heinrich Beck, Herbert Jankuhn, Hans Kuhn, Kurt Ranke, Reinhard Wenskus (ed.), *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, 2. Newly edited edition, Vol. 1–7, Berlin, New York 1973–1989.

[4] *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. 1–5. München, Zürich 1980–1991.

[5] Ruth Schmidt-Weigand (ed.), *Wörter und Sachen im Lichte der Bezeichnungsforschung, Arbeiten zur Frühmittelalterforschung*, Vol. 1, Berlin, New York 1981. Newest literature review on this academic field of research by Gabriele von Olberg, *Die Bezeichnungen für soziale Stände, Schichten und Gruppen in den Leges Barbarorum*, Arbeiten zur Frühmittelalterforschung, Vol. 11, Berlin, New York 1991, bibliography 247 ff.

[6] Z. Hans K. Schulze, "Mediävistik und Begriffsgeschichte," in: Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke, Reinhard Wenskus (ed.), *Festschrift für Helmut Beumann*, Sigmaringen 1977, 388–495; Johannes Fried, "Der karolingische Herrschaftsverband im 9. Jahrhundert zwischen 'Kirche' und 'Königshaus'," in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 235 (1982), 1–43, here 26, n. 99.

[7] Cf. from recent years Hans-Werner Goetz, "*Regnum:* Zum politischen Denken der Karolingerzeit," in: *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte Germanistische Abteilung* 104 (1987), 110–189; Udo Wolter, "Amt und Officium in mittelalterlichen Quellen vom 13. bis 15. Jahrhundert. Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung," in: *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte Kanonistische Abteilung* 74 (1988), 246–280; Thomas Zotz, "*Urbanitas.* Zur Bedeutung und Funktion einer antiken Wertvorstellung innerhalb der höfischen Kultur des hohen Mittelalters," in: Josef Fleckenstein (ed.), *Curialitas. Studien zu Grundfragen der höfisch-ritterlichen Kultur*, Publication by the Max-Planck-Institute for History, Vol. 100, Göttingen 1990, 392–451; Thomas Eichenberger, *Patria. Studien zur Bedeutung des Wortes im Mittelalter (6.–12. Jahrhundert)*, Nationes, Vol. 9, Sigmaringen 1991, and at a glance Gerd Althoff, "Huld. Überlegungen zu einem Zentralbegriff der mittelalterlichen Herrschaftsordnung," in: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 25 (1991), 259–282.

[8] *Althochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, Vol. 1, Berlin 1968, 313–318. Cf. also Hans Kuhn, Reinhard Wenskus, art. "Amt," in: *Reallexikon* (n. 3). Vol. 1, 257–264; art. "Amt," in: *Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte*, Vol. 1, Berlin 1971, 150–154, and Carl Heinz Ratscher, art. "Amt/Ämter/Amtsverständnis," in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Vol. 2, Berlin, New York 1978, 500–622.

first glance, it stands in parallel with the Latin word *officium*, which in the wide range of meanings it has carried since Roman antiquity also bore the connotations of "office" (Amt) and conveyed its vernacular equivalent.[9] This suggests it is likely that "office" (Amt) and *officium* are related to one another, as was presented in a recent article about office in the late Middle Ages.[10] If this present study attempts to elucidate the characteristics of the concept and understanding of office in the earlier Middle Ages, then it stands in part as a supplement to the above-mentioned article with regard to the beginnings and early history of the pertinent term *officium*. After all, for the Romans from the Republican period onwards, this term, analogous to the Greek term "praxis", comprehensively referred to both election-based official business and to prescribed activity such as military service (*officium militiaeque labor*). In late antiquity, we hear of offices at the imperial court (*officia palatina*) and at the same time there is mention of a church office (*officium ecclesiasticum*). In addition, the term *officium* (*divinum*), was established in reference to the practiced divine services of Christians, and is still a celebrated office (Amt) today. From the early Middle Ages onwards, *officium* also referred to worldly offices through the hierarchy up to the king. From the twelfth century onwards, one spoke of the *officia curiae*, court offices including especially those of the steward, cupbearer, chamberlain, and marshal. Yet there is still more! From the eleventh century onwards, and still more pronouncedly from the twelfth century, the term *officium* has also carried a spatial significance, namely in reference to a territorial or jurisdictional district. Moreover, it has also marked an urban craft and its corporate organization or, in a local sense, the house of a public official, the 'Amt'/office as we encounter it today, since the twelfth century.

It may seem as though every relevant point has already been made in this brief overview of the universal term office in the early Middle Ages. However, on closer

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[9] Cf. Jan F. Niermeyer, *Mediae latinitatis lexicon minus*, Leiden 1984, 737 f., and Franz Blatt, Yves Lefèvre (ed.), *Novum glossarium mediae latinitatis*, "O," Kopenhagen 1988, 397–415.

[10] Cf. Wolter, "Amt und Officium" (n. 7).

inspection, our survey of *officium*/*ambaht*(*i*)/office across time is in truth a narrow one, one which obscures nuances and subtle differences; because, as will be demonstrated, there exists an abundance of other Latin terms for office (Amt). The second, more urgent purpose of this article is to pay attention precisely to this diversity and the specified use of these words. The point here is to highlight several features and particularities and to raise questions regarding a concept that is, no doubt, central to understanding medieval social order and its contemporary representation.[11] So, mainly of interest here is whether we can speak of a standard definition of office for the period in question, as is often done in existing research, or whether we must differentiate between individual social and institutional realms, while taking into account how these realms may possibly have influenced one another. This ties into the specific question of medieval attitudes towards "office" in the church and in the world. Conceptual historical (*begriffsgeschichtliche*) analysis, the course chosen here, is a means of approaching such questions. It is incidentally almost superfluous to emphasize that this attempt, which is only broadly sketched, does not aspire to claim that it is a systematic and thorough treatment of the subject at hand.

The Diversity of Designations

      A Carolingian testimony, one of the few systematic commentaries on the nature of office to emerge from the Middle Ages, serves as the starting point for our contemplation of the subject. Around 840–842, Walahfrid Strabo,[12] the famous scholar, poet, and abbot, presented a comparison between secular and ecclesiastical offices at the end of his text "Libellus de exordiis et incrementis quarundam in observationibus ecclesiasticis rerum":

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[11] A broad bibliography is redundant. Cf. the lexicon article in n. 7 and further also Olberg, *Bezeichnungen* (n. 5), 204 ff.

[12] On his person and work, cf. Karl Langosch, Art. "Walahfrid Strabo," in: *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, Vol. 4. Berlin 1953, col. 734–769, and recently Arno Borst, *Mönche am Bodensee,* Bodensee-Bibliothek, Vol. 5, Sigmaringen 1978, 48–66.

...placet inserere quandam saecularium atque ecclesiasticarum comparationem dignitatum. "It pleases (us) to insert a certain comparison of the secular and the ecclesiastical dignities."[13] Walahfrid was well aware of the difficulty his endeavour represented, for, as he emphasizes, the order (*ordinationes*) of the *potestates* and *officia* differed so widely among peoples, places, and times that hardly anything determinate can be said about them. Yet he dared venture this comparison in order to demonstrate how the ranks of worldly wisdom had been transformed in the *res publica* of the church, much as the wood of Lebanese cedars had been used for the construction of the temple.[14]

Walahfrid follows this preface with an overview of worldwide offices in parallel. It begins at the top with the *augustus Romanorum*, that is to say the *summus pontifex in sede Romana vicem beati Petri gerens*, from there progresses, to name some stations, across the metropolitans, otherwise dukes; the bishops, otherwise counts; the level stationed above the *milites*, otherwise monks; the *athletae spiritales*; the superior abbots; across the palatine counts, otherwise *summi cappellani*; all the way to the doorkeepers, as they were found in both the houses of the *potentes* as well as in the house of God. For our purposes, what is interesting about Walahfrid's text is less the two series of distinct offices viewed in parallel[15] than the question of how the author approaches office as a topic of significance in the first place. If Isidore of Seville spoke of the *officiorum plurima genera*, the numerous types of office,[16] then it is tempting to view this statement as no less applicable to the very term itself in the context of Walahfrid's explanations. We read here of *dignitas* (dignity), of *potestas* ([Office]-force), of *officium* (Office-[business]). A further word for "office" that is of

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[13] Walahfrid Strabo, *De exordiis et incrementis quarundam in observationibus ecclesiasticis rerum*, in: Monumenta Germaniae Historica (henceforth: MGH) Capitularia regum Francorum, Vol. 2, Hannover 1960², 514, cap. 32.

[14] On this text cf. recently Fried, "Herrschaftsverband" (n. 6), 14 f., and Otto Gerhard Oexle, art. "Stand, Klasse," in: *Grundbegriffe* (n. 1), Vol. 6, 155–200, here 183 f.

[15] On its system, or rather non-system, cf. Fried, "Herrschaftsverband" (n. 6), 14 f.

[16] Cited from Heinemann, "Amt" (n. 8), 559.

the highest interest in the context of medieval discourse on society is *ordo*,[17] which we encounter in the chapter overview, apparently written by Walahfrid himself, which precedes the text.[18] Here, regarding the corresponding 32nd chapter, the cited text reads: *Comparatio ecclesiasticorum ordinum et saecularium*. "Comparison of the ecclesiastical and secular offices."

However, Walahfrid's accessible terms by no means exhaust the range of Latin terms commonly used in the Middle Ages for office (Amt). A look at the Old High German glosses (collections) shows the almost bewildering variety of Latin terms, of which the previously mentioned vernacular word *ambaht*, the predecessor of the New High German "Amt," constitutes an example. Among these were included: *administratio, functio, gradus, habitus, honor, magistratus, ministerium, negotium, obsequium, professio*.[19] Adding to this the fact that these words in part also had other meanings – *dignitas*, for example, was also defined as "honor" and "dignity" in medieval translation practice[20] – it becomes clear how rich in nuance the understanding of the term "office" was in the early Middle Ages, and that it was by no means a uniform concept.

On the contrary, it is striking to note that two of the early medieval terms for "office" Walahfrid placed in relation to each other, namely *ordo* and *potestas*, were not attached to *ambaht(i)*. The reason for this is probably the fact that in the antique tradition

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[17] On the breadth of definitions for this term, cf. Blatt, Lefèvre, *Glossarium* (n. 9), O, 731–771. Also, Josef Fleckenstein, art. "Ordo," in: *Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte*, Vol. 3, Berlin 1984, 1291–1296, Oexle, "Stand" (n. 14), passim, and idem., art. "Ordo I.," in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. 6, Lfg. 7, München, Zürich 1993, 1436f.

[18] As it appears in the oldest transmission in the *Codex Sangallensis* 446 (2nd half of the ninth century). For his friendly assistance, I thank Professor Dr. Peter Ochsenbein, Librarian in St. Gallen, Switzerland.

[19] A conveniently accessible list with cited sources in art. "Amt," in: *Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch*. Vol. 1, Weimar 1914–32, 544. The list of linguistic equations regarding *ambaht(i)* further contains a few terms to describe office, which are here not taken into consideration. Cf. also Gerhard Köbler, *Althochdeutsch-neuhochdeutsch-lateinisches Wörterbuch*, Gießen 1991/92³, Vol. 1, 22.

[20] Cf. here and to the further terms Gerhard Köbler, *Lateinisch-germanistisches Lexikon*, Göttingen, Gießen 1975, 124.

neither of these terms were originally associated with official stations. However, this is nonetheless strange, especially when it comes to *potestas*, a word that was attached to *(gi)walti, kraft, maht*.[21] Clearly it represented a concept of exercising power and acting freely that was too general for it to have found a regular use as a *terminus technicus* in an administrative context.[22] The Roman central concept *ordo*[23] seems to have been too general in a similar manner, not least because it expressed (military) order and social status (e.g., *ordo senatorius*). Nevertheless, both terms acquired significance in the conceptualization of office and offices in the language of the early Middle Ages.

Before providing a brief overview of the corresponding tradition in late antiquity, which is the background against which the early medieval understanding of office must be analysed, the vernacular word that may be regarded as the pivot of discourse, *ambaht(i)*, shall be highlighted. This Old High German word has Celtic origins, where it was both a *nomen agentis* and an *abstractum*. Our earliest encounter with it is likely with Caesar in the *Bellum Gallicum* VI.15, as *ambactus*. Philologically its meaning is explained as "he who moves (around the master)"[24]: *ut quisque genere copiisque amplissimus, ita plurimos circum se ambactos clientesque habet*. "Office" was therefore originally equivalent to "service" (Old High German *dionost*), which meant it expressed a personal relationship with a master that was characterized by submission.[25] Thus, it still lacked the institutionalized neutrality as well as the localized significance, both of which have since the high Middle Ages become increasingly important

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[21] Köbler, *Lexikon* (n. 20), 325.

[22] On *potestas*/violence cf. Peter Moraw, art. "Herrschaft II. 'Herrschaft' im Mittelalter," in: *Grundbegriffe* (n. 1), Vol. 3, Stuttgart 1982, 5–13, and Karl-Georg Faber, "Macht, Gewalt III. Die systemgebundene Funktion von 'Macht' und Gewalt' im Mittelalter," ibid., 835–847.

[23] On this see Oexle, "Stand" (n. 14), 166–169 alongside the pertinent literature.

[24] Albert L. Lloyd, Otto Springer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Althochdeutschen*, Vol. 1, Göttingen 1988, 195 f. The other option ("all-over-envoy") is also mentioned here, but believed to be unlikely.

[25] Recently with all evidence, cf. Olberg, *Bezeichnungen* (n. 5), 204–213.

for the notion of official service, side-lining the personal service relationship so as to dominate the concept almost entirely today.[26]

The Preconditions of Late Antiquity

The variety of terms that was notable in Walahfrid Strabo by no means originates from the Middle Ages, which is often mentally distended and blurred. Rather, its source is in Roman antiquity: here lie the roots of the selectively used term for office, *magistratus*, as well as of the word *officium*, likely the most noteworthy term in the history of office and offices, and which has already been mentioned. While this word, alongside *munus*, in actual fact accentuates the performance of public officials, the terms *honos* (*honor*) and *dignitas* both emphasize the reputation attached to positions of office in society. It is of great interest in this context that, as Henrik Löhken has pointed out, *dignitas* "(could be) a prerequisite for, accident of, and consequence of *honos*, or identical to it."[27] After all, *dignitas*, "dignity," was actually acquired at birth, and could be confirmed and reaffirmed by taking on a position of office, which came with social honor. Given the close functional interconnection, it is understandable that both words came to signify "office."

Nonetheless, a review of the *Codex Theodosianus*, the compilation of imperial laws that had been collected since Constantine in 438,[28] reveals that *dignitas* was usually employed

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[26] This line of development is also reflected in Karl Kroeschell, Karl F. Werner, in the art. "Amt" (n. 8), 546. On the *Trias* of the personal, institutional, and spatial connotations of middle Latin concepts, cf. Thomas Zotz, "*Palatium publicum, nostrum, regium*. Bemerkungen zur Königspfalz in der Karolingerzeit," in: Franz Staab (ed.), *Die Pfalz. Probleme einer Begriffsgeschichte vom Kaiserpalast auf dem Palatin bis zum heutigen Regierungsbezirk*, Veröffentlichung der Pfälzischen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften in Speyer, Vol. 81, 1990, 71–99, here 72. On the development during the late Middle Ages, cf. Inge-Maren Peters, Michel François, Kurt Schnith, Raoul Manselli, Ludwig Vones in the art. "Amt" (n. 8), 549–559, and Wolter, "Amt und Officium" (n. 7), passim.

[27] Henrik Löhken, *Ordines dignitatum. Untersuchungen zur formalen Konstituierung der spätantiken Führungsschicht*, Kölner Historische Abhandlungen, Vol. 30, Köln, Wien 1982, 13 f.

[28] Theodor Mommsen (ed.), *Theodosiani libri XVI cum constitutionibus sirmondianis*, Vol 1, Berlin 1904, reprint 1971. Henceforth: *Cod. Theod.*

in order to convey dignity of rank (*dignitas senatoria*) or class status (*dignitas senatoriae*[29]), but only rarely in order to convey an office, which is how the term is used in the *Notitia dignitatum tam militarium quam civilium* of 425–30.[30] That being said, *honor* occurs as a title of office comparatively often, although the term, like *dignitas*, was also used to indicate social rank (*honor perfectissimatus vel egregiatus*[31]).

However, what of the word *ordo*, which we encountered as a term of office with Walahfrid? The Roman term *ordo* famously had numerous definitions:[32] as file, especially military file in the context of combat order; as a sequence with resulting rankings; as a closed department, that is to say a corporation; as status; and finally, as profession or professional class. The last of these definitions is especially important in this context, because it paves the way for the functional use of the word as we encounter it in the Middle Ages. Thus, we hear of the *ordo militiae* (*palatinae*), to be successfully concluded (*implere*, *peragere*), in the *Codex Theodosianus*;[33] here, *ordo* can only be conceived of as functional. In his famous and momentous statement regarding the two powers, Pope Gelasius I (492–496) also used *ordo* in this sense. When the Pope made his plea to the Emperor Anastasius I, arguing for the fundamental separation of the highest spiritual and worldly powers (*Duo quippe sunt, imperator auguste, quibus principaliter mundus hic regitur: auctoritas sacrata pontificum et regalis potestas*) in the fourth of his treatises, he speaks of the *officia utriusque potestatis*, the duties of both (official) powers and soon thereafter the *uterque ordo*, in a summary fashion.[34] A particularly clear piece of evidence for the use of *ordo* in the sense of "office" in late

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[29] *Cod. Theod.* VI,2,26 (428).

[30] Otto Seeck (ed.), *Notitia dignitatum*, Frankfurt 1876, reprint 1962.

[31] *Cod. Theod.* XII,1,5 (317).

[32] Cf. Bernhard Kübler, Friedrich Lammert, art. "Ordo," in: *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft,* Vol. 35, Stuttgart 1939, 930–936.

[33] *Cod. Theod.* VI,30,5 (383), VIII,7,16 (385).

[34] Carl Mirbt, Kurt Ahland (ed.), *Quellen zur Geschichte des Papsttums und des römischen Katholizismus*, Tübingen 1967[6], 223 f. No. 462. Cf. to this Oexle, "Stand" (n. 14), 177 f., who understands *ordo* here as status.

antiquity is provided by one of Pope Leo the Great's letters, which deals with the resolution, *ut nec in presbyteratus gradu nec in diaconatus ordine nec in subsequenti officio clericorum ab ecclesia ad ecclesiam cuique transire sit liberum*.[35]

Let us briefly summarize: While the terms *dignitas* and *ordo* reveal something about the fundamental position of an individual or a group within society, and therefore did not at their core refer to the sectoral domain of "office" yet could nonetheless be defined as such, *honor* was already associated with this domain more strongly, insofar as the honor resulting from the position of office was itself being addressed here. At the same time, all three terms ought to be grouped together as a set of improper words for office, and be differentiated from specific terms such as *administratio, functio, officium, obsequium, ministerium*, which are all defined by accomplishment and service. Although internally systematising the linguistic use of the second group of terms for office during antiquity may be difficult, reading the *Codex Theodosianus* does at least bring to attention that the two first words were used for the public domain, whilst the last two referred to activities at the imperial court and *officium* was a comprehensive term in widespread use.[36]

Of all these proper terms for office, the term *ministerium* deserves our most explicit attention, as it acquired an important role in relation to the nature of office in the early Middle Ages. The aspects of dependency and subordination were undoubtedly encapsulated most aptly by this word. *Ministeria* could mean "slavery" outright,[37] however two other findings are more important and consequential: on the one hand, *ministerium*, and especially *minister*, was often used to delineate the activities of a subordinate, low-ranking civil servant, and, on the other hand, the word was also applied especially to services directly received by the emperor or performed at court. Thus, the *Codex Iustiniani* collectively speaks of court

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[35] Epistulae I/5, in: *Migne*, Patrologia Latina, Vol. 54, Paris 1846, 596.

[36] Cf. for example *Cod. Theod.* VI,35,5 (328) ad universos platinos: *Ab his qui post inpleta officia fidelis obsequii administrationes publicas meruerunt…*

[37] *Cod. Theod.* XVI,2,10.

attendants as *sacro ministerio nostro deputati*, and the *Codex Theodosianus* summarizes the *sacri palatii ministeria* in direct contrast to other offices. Similarly, *ministerium/minister* already acquired a central and future-oriented function as a standard designation for ecclesiastical offices and officers (*ministri dei, ministri ecclesiae*) in late antiquity.[38] The momentum of submissive subordination is clearly expressed by the fact that when we speak of high-ranking secular figures as *ministri*, this only happens in the improper sense.[39]

This overview of terminology regarding the nature of office in antiquity cannot conclude without referring to the central Roman concept of the *potestas*, which designated the comprehensive authority of office, not derived from any other source, as an exercise of power and a fascinating complementary addition to the prestige-based *auctoritas*.[40]

On Office and the Conceptualization of Office in the Merovingian Period

Having discussed the terminology of office from late antiquity, a suitable foundation has been created on which to investigate early medieval lines of development more clearly.[41] Paying attention to the specific terminologies of the ecclesiastical and secular realms seems pertinent in this regard. Of the numerous Roman terms for office, only a few are still present in the Merovingian period, and in a revealing distribution: the term *officium*, which seemed so dominant to us in antiquity, is still encountered, but only in an ecclesiastical and

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[38] Cf. with all substantiations by Walter Enßlin, art. "Minister/ministerium," in: *Real-Encyclopädie* (n. 32), Supplementary Vol. 6, Stuttgart 1935, 488–493.

[39] Cf. the evidence in the *Thesaurus linguae latinae*, Vol. 8, Leipzig 1966, 999–1004, e.g. Sueton, *Claudius* 29, I: *non principem se, sed ministrum egit*.

[40] Cf. von Lübtow, art. "Potestas," in: *Real-Encyclopädie* (n. 32), Vol. 43, Stuttgart 1953, 1040–1046.

[41] For the following cf. Reinhard Wenskus, "Amt und Adel in der Merowingerzeit," in: *Mitteilungen des Marburger Universitätsbundes* 1959, book 1/2, 40–56, and ibid., Amt (n. 8), as well as Eugen Ewig, "Zum christlichen Königsgedanken im Frühmittelalter," in: *Das Königtum. Seine geistigen und rechtlichen Grundlagen*, Vorträge und Forschungen, Vol. 3, Sigmaringen 1973⁴, 7–73, again in: ibid., *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien*, printed supplement to *Francia*, Vol. 3/1, Zürich, München 1976, 3–71.

monastic context. For example, Gregory of Tours speaks of the *officium abbatis*[42] and the *Vita sanctae Radegundis* of the *officia monasterialia*.[43] In the domain of the royal and aristocratic houses,[44] official practice or service was characterized as *ministerium* and the local officeholders, who were in part also employed outside the houses, could be referred to as *ministri*. However, it is noteworthy that people so qualified were usually lower servants of the king, a *dux, comes*, or a royal *maior domus*; there is only one academically noted instance of a major-domo (Erchinoald) being referred to as *minister regis*, namely in the *Vita Balthildis*, which was written in the seventh century.[45] Yet, this isolated document should not be overestimated. It is clear that the author of the *Vita* intended to describe the major-domo, in whose service Balthild was and who futilely endeavoured to take her as his wife, as *minister* to the herein successful King Chlodwig II; however, the same person appears as *princeps (Francorum)* immediately beforehand.[46] In any case, sources contemporary to the Merovingian period tend to use the terms *honor* or *gradus honoris* for high-ranking house offices. If, for example, the *Vita Arnulfi*, written in the first half of the seventh century, states that he shone in *diversis in palacio honoribus et ministerio*, then no doubt the offices of *domesticus* and of *consiliarius regis* that Arnulf held are being addressed,[47] and *ministerium* plainly refers to his service. The so-called *Chronicle of Fredegar* (written around 658–60?)

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[42] Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* X.19, in: MGH Scriptores rer. Merov., Vol. 1, Hannover 1951, 513. Cf. also the reg. cit. "officium," ibid., 618 f.

[43] *Vita* I.23, in: MGH Scriptores rer. Merov., Vol. 2, Hannover 1888, 372.

[44] On the topic "houses in the Middle Ages" cf. in detail Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Haus und Ökonomie im früheren Mittelalter," in: Gerd Althoff, Dieter Geuenich, Otto Gerhard Oexle, Joachim Wollasch (ed.), *Person und Gemeinschaft im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Karl Schmid*, Sigmaringen 1988, 101–122.

[45] MGH Scriptores rer. Merov., Vol. 2, Hannover 1888, 485. Along with this, Ewig, "Königsgedanke" (n. 41), 62 n. 249, 60 n. 265.

[46] On the Merovingian Queen cf. Eugen Ewig, art. "Balthild," in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. 1, München, Zürich 1980, 1391 f.

[47] *Vita Arnulfi* cap. 5, in: MGH Scriptores rer. Merov., Vol. 2, Hannover 1888, 433.

consistently uses the phrase *gradus honoris* in connection with the major-domo,[48] while the *Fredegar Continuations*, originating from the eighth century, refers to the same office as *honor*.

Honor rings as the title of office commonly used for the highest "public" officials of the Merovingian period in the secular realm, the *dux*, the (Provençal and Burgundian) *patricius*, and the *comes*. We encounter this use of language in Gregory of Tours as well as in Fredegar and hagiographies contemporary to the time period.[49] In addition, *dignitas* (*iudiciaria*) is also encountered in the definition of "office," although less frequently.[50]

If one wished to evaluate and summarize this finding regarding Merovingian terminology related to office, one would say the following: the term *dignitas* was exclusively used to delineate "public" functionaries; *honor* was initially, i.e. in the sixth century, also limited to these persons; however, from the middle of the seventh century it was also applied to high functionaries within the royal house, meaning that it would not be accurate to speak of a comprehensive strict separation of the conceptualization of office within and outside of the house. Although this may accurately reflect the early Merovingian period, where there is no known evidence of an in-house conceptualization of office, it certainly no longer applies from the mid-seventh century onwards, when the major-domo in particular is known to have experienced increased significance in *regnum Francorum*;[51] this is impressively reflected in the broadened use of the term *honor* within the house.

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[48] Fredegar, *Chronica* IV.88, in: MGH Scriptores rer. Merov., Vol. 2, Hannover 1888, reg. cit. "honor," 563. On the text and its creation cf. Ulrich Nonn, art. "Fredegar (Fredegar-Chronik)," in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. 4, München, Zürich 1989, 884.

[49] Cf. Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* (n. 42), reg. cit. "honor," 606. Also, Niermeyer, *Lexicon* (n. 9), 495–498, s. v. honor (8).

[50] Cf. Fredegar IV.89 (n. 47), 166, where the Burgundian major-domo Flaochad assures all *duces* and *pontifices* in Burgundia of *gradum honoris et dignitarem*. Cf. also the "Carta de ducatu et patriciate et comitatu" with Marculf, *Formulae* I.8, in: MGH Forumulae merowingici et karolini aevi, Hannover 1886, 47.

[51] Cf. Josef Fleckenstein, art. "Hausmeier," in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. 4, München, Zürich 1989, 1974 f.

What, on the other hand, is the position of *ministerium*? In the Merovingian era, the word referred to the "house and court service of the king or nobility" (Eugen Ewig),[52] but not to a specific office, or a specific function within the house. The exception to this narrative as quoted by existing research proves to be void upon closer inspection: if in the *Passio Leudegarii* the wife of the Palatinate Count Chrodobert, who had been ordered by a *palatium* instigated by Ebroin to kill Leodegar, complains that such a cruel deed occurred *in viri sui ministerium* (!), the context speaks against an interpretation of this phrase as "within the (realm of) her husband's office."[53] After all, Chrodobert's wife is induced to make this complaint by information given her – that he had instructed two *famuli* to carry out the task, since he himself could not bear to look upon the death of the man of God. The statement in the *Vita* should therefore be understood differently: Chrodobert's wife complains that such a crime was committed in service (upon instruction) of her husband. It is not about the defilement of the status of the Palatinate Count. Rather, it is because Leodegar's murderers were not just anybody, but servants of her husband, who thus bore responsibility for them.

What is to be grasped, then, is that in the Merovingian era *ministerium* was defined as "service" and not "office"; the use of the term in the *Pactus legis Salicae* points in the same direction.[54] If a case of the theft or murder of a *puer* or a *puella de ministerio*, or of a *vassus ad ministerium, quod est horogauo* was being settled, then it revolved around unfree individuals tied to positions of service; the definition "office" can be eliminated here with certainty.[55] The terminology and understanding of office in the Carolingian era ought to be analysed with this semantic conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) in mind.

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[52] Ewig, "Königsgedanke" (n. 41), 61 (59).

[53] Understood in this way in Ewig ibid., 62 with n. 251 (60 with n. 267), and then Wenskus, Amt (n. 8), 261.

[54] MGH Leges nationum germanicarum, Vol. 4,1, Hannover 1962, Wortregister 308. Nothing indicates that *ministerium* ought to be understood as "office" in the passages in question.

[55] Cf. also Olberg, *Bezeichnungen* (n. 5), 213 ff.

New Means of Understanding Office in the Carolingian Era

Functional transformation of concepts as the expression of changed modes of thought: Approaching this topic can succeed if we examine the meaning of the term *ministerium*, which has been looked at more closely for the Merovingian era, and inquire into its significance within the terminology of office during the Carolingian era. As previous research has long demonstrated,[56] it is immediately striking that the term *ministerium*, hitherto defined solely in a domestic context – that is to say, within the manorial system – was turned "outward" in that it became linked to the activities of the high functionaries of the realm. Thus, from a global perspective, a reverse direction developed compared to the Merovingian era, wherein the highest of the house offices, first and foremost the major-domo, had been ennobled by the term *honor* since the seventh century, a word with a widespread use outside of the domestic sphere. The comparable use of the term *ministerium* in the Carolingian era, expanded beyond the domestic sphere of the house and manorial system, must now be traced more closely.

Around 775, a few years after the accession of Charlemagne to the throne, the first evidence of the word *ministerium* as a term to designate the district of a count or his deputy, as well as of a bishop or abbot, can be found in formularies and capitularies.[57] In 782 such noble *ministeria* were attested for the first time,[58] as they later often appeared in the documents of Louis the Pious. But *ministerium*, defined as the office or administrative district of a count, also appears in, for example, private deeds from St. Gallen from the late

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[56] Cf. Ewig, "Königsgedanke" (n. 41), 62 (60).

[57] Cf. on this and on the following the evidence in ibid., 62 n. 252 (60 n. 268), further Hans K. Schulze, *Die Grafschaftsverfassung der Karolingerzeit in den Gebieten östlich des Rheins*, Schriften zur Verfassungsgeschichte, Vol. 19, Berlin 1973, 326, and Thomas Zotz, "Grafschaftsverfassung und Personengeschichte," in: *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 136 (1988), 1–16, here 12.

[58] MGH Diplomata Karolinorum, Vol. 1 No. 142. See also Schulze, *Grafschaftsverfassung* (n. 57), 210 f., 327.

eighth century onwards[59] and in the Freising *Traditiones* from the years 814 and 823: when Count Orendil gifted possession to the Freising church in 814, he made it a condition that, in the event that one of his sons was worthy of the office of count (*ut ad ministerium comitis pervenerit*), then this son would acquire the ownership of Freising as a fiefdom.[60] This is not merely a revealing example of how a property title acquired as an allodium in a noble family of the early ninth century was interlinked with the office of count and its continuity within the family.[61] The fact that the noble deed of the "office" of count was, according to official usage, understood to be a *ministerium* alongside the aspect the suitability of the bearer is also worthy of explicit notice.

As often as the term *ministerium* was used to refer to the count's office or administrative district in the capitularies of Louis the Pious and other sources of his time, it quickly disappeared in the subsequent period. From Lothar I onwards, *ministerium* was widely replaced by *comitatus* to signify "county".[62] Thus, solely the function-related, instead of service-related, term was once again used, which had been the case until the early days of Charlemagne.

The broadened use of the word *ministerium* beyond the domestic sphere, limited as it was to the period between about 775 and 840, nonetheless clearly reflects the concept of a restructured social-political order stemming from the royal house in the Franconian realm.[63]

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[59] Cf. Hermann Wartmann (ed.), *Urkundenbuch der Abtei Sanct Gallen*, Vol. 2, Zürich 1866. Subject index 506, s. v. "ministerium." Additionally, Vol. 1, Zürich 1863, No. 147 of 797, which in records carries the phrase *in ministerio Ratolfi*. Cf. Michael Borgolte, *Kommentar zu Ausstellungsdaten, Actum- und Güterorten der älteren St. Galler Urkunden*, in: Subsidia Sangallensia, Vol. 1, St. Gallen 1986, 357.

[60] Theodor Bitterauf (ed.), *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Freising*, Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen und deutschen Geschichte, Neue Folge Vol. 4, Vol. 1, München 1905, No. 313.

[61] On Count Orendil cf. Wilhel Störmer, *Früher Adel*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, Vol. 6, 2, Stuttgart 1973, 458.

[62] In the capitularies, first made clear in 832 in Lothar's *Capitulare missorum* cap. 8. MGH Capitularia, Vol. 2, Hannover 1897, 64 No. 202.

[63] Cf. Fried, "Herrschaftsverband" (n. 6), passim.

It is a concept in which the ruler is himself conceived of as a *minister*, that is *adiutor/cooperator Dei*, and who must perform the *ministerium sibi commissum*, the *administration huius regni*, at the very top. The office-bearers in the realm, most prominently the bishops and counts, have a part *in suo loco et ordine* in this *ministerium*. Such an image is transmitted in capitularies from the time of Louis the Pious[64] as well as in council records.

In order to gauge how far-reaching this new understanding of *ministerium* was in the mid-Carolingian period, it is also advisable to pay attention to the use of *minister*, a term with abstract associations. For, as has already been stated above, the word was used to refer to low-level servants in the Merovingian period, but never, outside of an explanatory exception, to high officials, whether in- or outside of the house. The use of the word in the Carolingian era thus grows all the more interesting when the term *ministerium* is applied to high-ranking officials. If one studies the previously mentioned capitularies, as well as political writings, such as those by Bishop Jonas of Orléans, then the fact that the great spiritual and secular dignitaries almost never appear as *ministri*, and especially not as *ministri regis*, is revealed.[65] It is worthy of note that despite all the deliberate "ministerialization" of the entire conceptualization of office in the Carolingian period, which is reflected by political thinking with a domestic orientation,[66] the high "public" officials, whether bishops or counts, were not made into servants of an individual, here the king. Such nuances reveal the likely essential boundaries of this political conceptualization, boundaries drawn by the social position and self-understanding of the noble aristocracy.

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[64] Cf. Hubert Mordek, art. "Kapitularien," in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. 5, München, Zürich 1991, 943–946.

[65] Insofar as the statement in the art. "Amt" (n. 8), 548, that the term *minister* became the dominant one for office-bearer in the Carolingian era requires correction.

[66] On the political thought of the Carolingian era, cf. Fried, "Herrschaftsverband" (n. 5), passim. and Goetz, "*Regnum*" (n. 7).

When the term *minister regis* is used in Carolingian texts, it consistently refers to officials in the context of domicile or landlord rule (*ministry dominationis vestrae*).[67] However, the Council of Paris 829, and bishop Jonas of Orléans who stood behind it, spoke of *singuli qui sub eo* (scil. to the ruler) *constituti sunt ministri* when it came to the *duces* or *comites*.[68] The counts are considered to be *ministri* insofar as they have a stake in the royal *ministerium*, and not because they are considered servants of the ruler.[69] Accordingly, we hear of *ministri rei publicaei*, *ministri publici*, *ministri regni* or *ministri iudiciariae potestatis*, and here is meant, as clearly revealed by the terms' contexts, the counts, or still more often their subordinate officials (*iunuires* or the like).[70] It does not seem trivial to me here that the service in question is related not to a person but to an administrative body.[71]

The concept that the monarchy had of the relationship between the ruler and the "public dignitaries" is vividly depicted in the so-called *Admonitio ad omnes regni ordines* from

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[67] This was revealed by an investigation of identified evidence for *minister imperatoris* or *regis* in MGH Capitularia, Vol. 2, Hannover 1897, Index rerum et verborum 600.

[68] MGH Concilia aevi karolini, Vol. 2, Hannover, Leipzig, 1906, 654. See also Fried, "Herrschaftsverband" (n. 6), 37.

[69] This is misunderstood in Fried, "Herrschaftsverband" (n. 6), 37. In this regard Zotz, "Personengeschichte" (n. 57), I f., also needs to be corrected. The remarks by Jürgen Hannig, *Consensus fidelium. Frühfeudale Interpretationen des Verhältnisses von Königtum und Adel am Beispiel des Frankenreiches*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, Vol. 27, Stuttgart 1982, 258 ff., suffer, because the author does not sufficiently differentiate between *ministerium* and *minister* and, for example on p. 275, describes the nobles involved in ruling the realm as *ministri regis*.

[70] Cf. the substantiation in Capit. 2, 660, s. v.-minister. Ewig, "Königsgedanke" (n. 41), 62 with n. 254, noticed "that the term *minister* apparently did not appear at all for count or bishop in the oldest Carolingian capitularies and deeds."

[71] Fried, "Herrschaftsverband" (n. 6), 30 with n. 117, understands the *res publica* as royal sphere and not as a polity.

823–25,[72] which has just recently been the subject of a detailed analysis.[73] According to this text, the relationship is very different from a service relationship. All officials were connected by a joint *ministerium*, which had three main tasks to accomplish, namely the protection and exaltation of God's Church and its servants, the preservation of peace, and the maintenance of justice. The *summa* of this *ministerium* lies with the ruler, while members of the nobility also have their share. According to this image, the ruler bears the duty of advising all other members of the *ministerium*, and these are in turn required to provide him with assistance (*ego omnium vestrum admonitor esse debeo, et omnes vos nostri adiutores esse debetis*).[74]

This is not the place to delve more deeply into the conceptualizations of a "common functional body of the realm, in which the king and secular as well as spiritual leaders depend on each other in order to fulfil their *ministeria*" (Jürgen Hannig),[75] that appear in such formulations, interesting as it may be to classify this conceptualization within the political thought of the Carolingian and post-Carolingian era.[76] Let us mention only one aspect that emerges from this context and which sheds light on the development of the medieval understanding of office. In the episcopal report to Louis the Pious from 829, the emperor is called upon to improve all that requires correction *in vobis, id est in persona et*

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[72] MGH Capitularia, Vol. 1, Hannover 1883, 303–307. The title comes from modern publishers and obscures important characteristics of the text. Cf. Oliver Guillot, "Une *ordinatio* méconnue. Le Capitulaire de 823–825," in: Peter Godman, Roger Collins (ed.), *Charlemagne's Heir. New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840)*, Oxford 1990, 455–486, here 459.

[73] Guillot, "*Ordinatio*" (n. 72).

[74] Cf. Hannig, *Consensus* (n. 69), 268 ff. However, it is not possible to interpret the *adiutor*-thought in the sense of a partnership on equal footing between the nobility and the ruler, based on the finding that the ruler was in turn seen as *adiutor/cooperator Dei*.

[75] Hannig, *Consensus* (n. 69), 269.

[76] Cf. in general Janet Nelson, "Kingship and Empire," in: J.H. Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, Cambridge 1988, 211 ff.

ministerio vestro: "in you, that is to say in your person and in your office."[77] If the unified appearance of the ruler is, *per definitionem* as it were, here divided into a personal and an official-administrative side, then the question arises whether or not this is a first hint on the horizon of the idea of the king as *persona mixta*, something that was not to be set out in writing until much later, and which Ernst Kantorowicz described in his book *The King's Two Bodies*.[78] It is no less interesting to note the continuation of the 829 episcopal report to Louis: after having corrected himself, he should investigate whomever displeases God *in omnibus ordinibus imperii vestri*. Here we do not encounter the basic term *ministerium* in accordance with the imperial domain, but rather the highly significant term *ordo*. It may depend upon whether we understand it as "office" or "status" and, accordingly, whether we then translate the *ordinis nostri socii* mentioned by the bishops a bit later as "equals in rank" or as "fellows in office." What is decisive here is how the term *ordo* is used in relation to *ministerium*, and that our eye is once again directed to the conceptual variety that we originally started from.

Let us spend another moment on this relation between the terms, before addressing further aspects of the Carolingian understanding of office. In the famous *Oaths of Quierzy* between Charles the Bald and the *episcopi et ceteri fideles* from 858, we hear of the collective promise to the king that *secundum meum ministerium et secundum meam personam fidelis vohis adiutor*, so that each will in accordance with his office (named first!) and person be a faithful helper to the ruler. In return, Charles swore that he would *quemque vestrum secundum suum ordinem et personam*, so honor all in accordance with their office and person.[79] In this passage there is no doubt whatsoever as to the equivalence of meaning between *ordo* and *ministerium*.

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[77] MGH Capit. 2, 27.

[78] Cf. now with the preface in Josef Fleckenstein's German translation: Ernst Kantorowicz, *Die zwei Körper des Königs*, München 1990, 64 ff.

[79] MGH Capitularia, Vol. 2, Hannover 1897, 296. Cf. to this André Holenstein, *Die Huldigung der Untertanen. Rechtskultur und Herrschaftsordnung (800–1800)*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Agrargeschichte, Vol. 36, Stuttgart 1991, 139 f.

Now that we can observe the administrative term *ordo*, previously encountered with Walahfrid, in its different, Carolingian context, the use of the other terms for office, of which we have already noted their variety, remains to be investigated. It should here be of special interest whether a distinction was made between ecclesiastical and secular domains. In order to achieve this, we will look more closely at one example from the early, mid, and late phases of the Carolingian capitularies. In the so-called *Admonitio generalis* from 789, Charlemagne turned on the one hand to *omnes ecclesiasticae pietatis ordines* and on the other to *saecularis potentiae dignitates*.[80] Given its differentiated word choice, this address deserves closer attention. On the one hand, Charles addresses all offices, or rather bearers of office of ecclesiastical gentleness, on the other he addresses the dignitaries of secular power. It is noteworthy that here different terms of office have been used for the ecclesiastical and secular domains; just as with *pietas* or also *potentia*, the functional domains could not have been contrasted more sharply. Unlike in the case of *potestas*, the inherent nature of office falls even more into the background with *potentia*, which seems to have primarily denoted the exercise of power.[81]

In the following, too, the *Admonitio* demonstrates a certain imbalance with regard to the Church and the secular world: while Charles addresses the clergy as shepherds of the Church of Christ and as leaders of their flocks, thus revealing the office connection and function, he characterizes its secular counterpart as *clarissima mundi luminaria*, as brightly gleaming worldly lights, which is as indistinct as it is acclamatory. The following 82 clauses are directed primarily at the bishops, the clergy, the monks, and the nuns, while the *comites* and *iudices* receive parenthetical instruction in the exercise of their *potestas iudicandi*.

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[80] MGH Capitularia, Vol. I, Hannover 1883, 53. See on this also Josef Fleckenstein, art. "Admonitio generalis," in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. I, München, Zürich 1980, 156.

[81] A comparative investigation of the two terms is desirable. Cf. to *potens*, a term related to *potentia*, now Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Potens und pauper im Frühmittelalter," in: W. Harms, K. Speckenbach (ed.), *Bildhafte Rede in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, Tübingen 1992, 131–149.

I mention only in passing the almost unchanged inclusion of the formulations of address into the records of the Tribur Council in 895 from the *Admonitio generalis*. It is here spoken of, that God deigned to place the new King Arnulf in front *omnibus ecclesiasticae sublimitatis ordinibus nec non et secularis potentiae dignitatibus*. As stated, it is almost unchanged. After all, on the side of the Church the term *pietas*, associated with the idea of monarchical virtues, was replaced by the word *sublimitas*, "sublimity", which denotes social position. Yet still more interesting here is an expression that comes from the records of the Council of Meaux (845). Ecclesiastical and secular persons who behave against the orders of the episcopal *auctoritas* and royal *maiestas* are distinguished from one another as follows. The person honored by an *ecclesiasticus ordo* is punished through the loss of their *gradus*, their office position, so they are degraded. However, if a person of worldly *habitus* has been raised by a *postestas* or *dignitas*, they are to be deprived (*privetur*) of the *honor* they enjoyed *in re publica*, and are moreover to be exiled.[82] The opposition of the ecclesiastical and secular loss of office reveals differences and nuances between the two that seem far from irrelevant to the question of the understanding of office in the early Middle Ages. Here, too, as in the address of the *Admonitio generalis*, *ordo* is used as an ecclesiastical term of office, while *potestas* and *dignitas* are applied in the secular domain. It is further notable, that the dismissal from office on the ecclesiastical side is denoted by the relatively neutral *amissio gradus*, whereas on the secular side it is considered in terms of deprivation (*privatio*).

Ordo, potestas, dignitas, honor, gradus, ministerium – a considerable number of the terms for office we saw in Walahfrid and in the Old High German translation comparisons at the beginning again cropped up with specific nuances in Carolingian documents, capitularies, and council records. Let us remember: In his overview of office, Walahfrid spoke of *dignitates* and *ordines* across the board, but unmistakably aligned *potestas* with the secular and *officium* with the ecclesiastical domain. Where then, does the term *officium* situate itself in

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[82] MGH Capitularia, Vol. 2, Hannover 1897, 420.

the Carolingian texts we are analysing here? At a glance,[83] we can see that the word is indeed primarily encountered in the ecclesiastical context, but also in the domestic (*officia domestica*) and in manorial sense (*officia ministerialium* in the *Capitulare de villis*), and not least in statements that concern the monarchy and its subordinate *ministri*, that is the counts and *iudices*, whereby one has the impression that *officium* was used more in the sense of duty or business when it came to these last-mentioned office-bearers. The close relation of ecclesiastical and royal-aristocratic uses of the term *officium* also applies to the administrative understanding of the term *ordo* and its derivatives *ordinare/ordinatio*, which designate the act of initiation.[84] Thus, in the *Capitulary of Quierzy* in 877, Charles the Bald settled how, after the death of a count, the ordination of his successor was to be carried out in accordance with various contingencies.[85] The connections between *ordo* and *officium* were made particularly clear in the highest secular office, the monarchy. The *officium ordinis regalis*, the duty of the royal office, is already mentioned in the *Libri Carolini* of the late eighth century,[86] and beyond the temporal horizon of the Carolingian era links are established by a charter of Otto I from 970: *Cum hoc sit... maximum ac saluberrimum nostri ordinis officium...* "As this is the greatest and most redeeming task of our office..."[87]

If with the charter of Otto I the subject of official language in written documents has been broached, then it seems appropriate to discuss the administrative use of language in Carolingian records of the late ninth century. These records confirm the impression that the word *ministerium* was only very rarely applied to counts or their spheres,[88] and that

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[83] MGH Capitularia, Vol. 2, Hannover 1897, Index 670 s. v. "officium."

[84] Cf. Blatt, Lefèvre, *Glossarium* (n. 9), 696–707, 714–730.

[85] MGH Capitularia, Vol. 2, Hannover 1897, 358.

[86] Quoted from Wenskus, Amt (n. 8), 262.

[87] MGH Diplomata regum et imperatorum Germaniae, Vol. 1, Hannover 1879–1884, 523 No. 382.

[88] One exception to this can be found in the 899 decree of Emperor Arnulf. MGH Diplomata regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum, Vol. 3, Berlin 1955², 262 No. 173 *quod ad ministerium Iringi comitis hactenus pertinebat*.

officium remained entirely confined to the ecclesiastical domain. Commonly used terms for office were *potestas* and *ordo*, which were often named together or even fused into *potestativus ordo*,[89] as well as *honor*,[90] whereas *dignitas*, in a secular framework, only appears in connection with the king or emperor. From this stems an important aspect of methodological insight: A term like *dignitas* could certainly be used for office in an indefinite, all-encompassing manner, such as by Walahfrid, but found its clear limitations when it came to qualifying specific offices.

Next, it is important and interesting to follow how offices and administrative functions were "conceptualized" outside of the royal household and closely related Church declarations during the Carolingian era. A few observations on this: Among the annalists of the ninth century, one term is noticeably used most commonly to refer to offices, namely *honor* (*publicus*). This can be verified in view of the numerous accounts of depositions that are now easily accessible.[91] There remains, however, the difficulty that the term *honores* might sometimes have referred to and signified fiefdoms.[92] Occasionally, multiple sources clarify the exact meaning: according to the report of the *Fulda Annals*, the *dux Thuringorum* Poppo was deprived of his *honores* in 892, while Regino of Prüm reported that same year that Poppo had lost his *dignitates*.[93] This, alongside other evidence of *dignitas* as a term designating the office of the count in narrative sources, stands out next to the more restrictive language of official written documents regarding the *dignitas regia* or *imperialis*, and reveals how contemporaries of the period used certain terms more freely in observation than can be drawn from the documents of the ruling institution. Yet the double meaning of

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[89] Ibid., 146 No. 100.

[90] Cf. the word indexes of the MGH Diplomata regum Germaniae from Louis the German to Louis the Child.

[91] Cf. the rich material analyzed by Adelheid Krah, *Absetzungsverfahren als Spiegelbild von Königsmacht*, Untersuchungen zur deutschen Staats- und Rechtsgeschichte, Neue Folge, Vol. 26, Aalen 1987.

[92] Cf. Schulze, *Grafschaftsverfassung* (n. 57), 326. Walther Kienast, *Die fränkische Vasallität*, Frankfurt 1990, 273, which however "sharply distinguishes between honores and fiefdoms."

[93] Cf. Krah, *Absetzungsverfahren* (n. 91), 211–214.

honor as both "office" and "fiefdom," one which became more and more common in the course of the ninth century, is illuminating for our question of the conceptualization of office from the less specifically formulated perspective of contemporaries involved at the time: in their eyes, what counted was the honor of the individual in question, the social rank he acquired through his appointment. It was not of central importance, in this sense, whether the official function being discussed was that of a bishop, count, or magistracy, or whether it was that of feudal tenure.

Looking into the High Middle Ages

By way of conclusion, if we take at least a brief look at the post-Carolingian era in order to complete the picture of early medieval ideas regarding the secular "office," then it soon becomes clear that the perspectives rooted in the late Carolingian era initially persisted: The high administrative functions in the realm – the county and, ever since the Ottonian period, the duchy – appear exclusively as *honores* or *dignitates* in the narrative sources,[94] two concepts that were also represented by *hertuom*, "nobility," in equivalent Old High German translations.[95] Based on this conceptual background of the period, the question arises whether or not the duchy and the county are to be understood as offices because the king appointed someone to this *honor*, or if he appointed this *honor*.[96] While the first occurrence is usually described in technical terms such as with *committere* or *promovere*, contemporaries observing the period often described "dismissal" with words like *privare* or *expulsare*. The legitimacy of dismissal from power does not seem to have been a matter of debate at all. Rather, it was the reduction of personal *honor*, of personal *dignitas*, of nobility,

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[94] Cf. ibid., passim, and Niermeyer, *Lexicon* (n. 9), s.vv.

[95] Cf. Karl Kroeschell, *Haus und Herrschaft im frühen deutschen Recht*, Göttinger rechtswissenschaftliche Studien, Vol. 70, Göttingen 1968, 18 ff.

[96] Along these lines, Hans-Werner Goetz, art. "Herzog, Herzogtum," in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. 4, München, Zürich 1989, 2189–93.

which was regarded as a deprivation and which left such deep marks that, as Gerd Althoff has rightfully emphasized, we must wonder whether the rank and dignity of the person affected was permanently damaged, even after they had been graciously reinstituted into their former position.[97] According to this view, the contemporary understanding of high "public" functions in the High Middle Ages had in fact distanced itself from the idea of service through which the conceptualization of *ministerium* and *ministri* had been developed in the Carolingian era. By the second half of the ninth century, the royal chancery had already abandoned this conceptual lens and spoke of offices in connection with *honor*, *potestas*, and *ordo*. The word *officium* was primarily reserved for the ecclesiastical domain. If, by way of conclusion, we continue to follow the history of this term's use, then, after a long gap, we can observe a new "official" application of the word in the secular domain around the year 1000. The *Capitulare* on the struggle for freedom by the *servi*, issued by Emperor Otto III (996–1002), begins by briefly naming the top positions in his empire: *nostri imperii principes publici offitii et ecclesiastici ordinis, divites et paupers, maiores et minores*.[98] As far as I can see, the (former) secular and spiritual leaders are clearly "officialized" in the language for the first time since the Carolingian era, and they are thereby perceived in a certain manner that is subordinate to the emperor: On the one hand, the *principes* find legitimacy through the point of reference that is the *publicum officium*, the office based on the *res publica*, and on the other hand through the *ecclesiasticus ordo*, the ecclesiastical office. Considering the emphasis placed on the official role, and by extension on subordination, as well as on the first reference to the secular *principes* in this *Capitulare*, it could also be understood as a textual counterpart to the image-based representation in the Liuthar Gospels of the proportional

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[97] Gerd Althoff, "Königsherrschaft und Konfliktbewältigung im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert," in: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 23 (1989), 265–290, here 276.

[98] MGH Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum, Vol. 1, Hannover 1893, 47 No. 21.

relationship between the emperor and the nobility in power, which has recently been analysed in detail by Johannes Fried.[99]

What was here expressed in the *Capitulare* from the perspective of Otto III extended, to some extent, into the period of Heinrich II and perhaps still further; in a document of Henry II, the *comes officio nomine Adalbero* is spoken of.[100] Yet – unlike *dignitas* or *ordo* – the term *officium* for office ultimately had no future within the sphere of "public" functions. Rather, this understanding of the term *officium* developed in the context of domestic and manorial administration, an aspect that can here only be pointed towards with reference to the early evidence of *officia* replacing the traditional *ministeria*. When Conrad III confirmed the judgement of the Corvey ministries concerning the independent monastic steward Rabano in the year 1150, it was discovered that the stewards, cupbearers, and others who held service positions (*locum ministerii*) in the house of the Corvey abbey had made themselves condemnable for certain abuses.[101] Commenting on these service positions, the document includes the following commentary: *quam dignitatem vulgari nomine officia appellant,* "a position of honor commonly (in their own language) called office." However one wishes to understand this somewhat peculiar formulation, it still shows that a new quality of "office" was communicated by the term *officium* at the time. The same impression is given by the *Historia Welforum*, which was written around 1170 and in which there is talk of the *officia curiae*, the "court offices," in the truest sense of the word for the

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[99] Johannes Fried, "Otto III. and Boleslaw Chrobry. Das Widmungsbild des Aachener Evangeliars, der 'Akt von Gnesen' und das frühe polnische und ungarische Königtum," in: *Frankfurter Historische Abhandlungen* 30 (1989), 29, 36 f. Fried speaks of the position of the spiritual figures in the depiction as "violating protocol," in 36 n. 67 he further refers to the *Capitulare de servis* and sees, in accordance with Percy Ernst Schramm, the reason for this positioning in an appeal on the part of Otto III to the old Roman protocol as it is expressed in the *Ravenna Mosaics*.

[100] MGH Diplomata regum et imperatorum Germaniae, Vol. 3, Berlin 1957², 266 No. 230.

[101] MGH Diplomata regum et imperatorum Germaniae, Vol. 9, Wien, Köln, Graz 1969, 391 f. No. 221. For context, Franz-Josef Jakobi, "Ministerialität und 'ius ministerialium' in Reichsabteien der frühen Stauferzeit," in: Karl Hauck (ed.), *Sprache und Recht. Festschrift für Ruth Schmidt-Wiegand*, Berlin 1986, Vol. 1, 321–352.

first time.[102] Once again, the author provides commentary on the new term, as he clearly cannot count on its being generally understood: *id est ministeria dapiferi, pincernae, marscalci, camerarii, signiferi*. However, this topic of court offices, which has recently received more focused attention in research,[103] requires its own conceptual (*begriffsgeschichtliche*) historical analysis. In terms of our central question, however, the solidification of the term *officium* that we observed in the twelfth century provides a good background against which the diversity and nuanced richness of the understanding of office in the early Middle Ages can distinguish itself.

In summary: The diversity of Latin terms for "office," already evident in antiquity, was applied to the three central domains of church, monarchy, and *res publica* with nuanced variety in the early Middle Ages, and this variety provides insight into respective conceptualizations of office.[104] Thereby – in a manner conspicuously analogous to late Roman usage – the early medieval vocabulary related to office also consisted of a wide array of terms. These range from the aspect of social classification (*ordo*, *dignitas*), to personal appreciation (*honor*), to duty and/or impact (*officium*, *potestas*), to service and subordination (*ministerium*). These very different perspectives definitely seem to have played a role in defining "official" positions in the early Middle Ages. Thus, the history of their use, as well as of the transformation and development of terms for office, offer a fascinating opportunity to retrace contemporary conceptualizations and occasionally conflicting views. As we have seen, a semantic history so rooted in the conceptual reflects, for example, the

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[102] Erich König (ed.), *Historia Welforum*, Schwäbische Chroniken der Stauferzeit, Vol. 1, Sigmaringen 1978², 4 cap. 1.

[103] Cf. Werner Rösener, "Hofämter an mittelalterlichen Fürstenhöfen," in: *Deutsches Archiv* 45 (1989), 485–550; ibid., art. "Hofämter" in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol. 5, München, Zürich 1991, 67 f., and Kurt Andermann, "Die Hofämter der Bischöfe von Speyer," in: *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 140 (1992), 127–187.

[104] In response to Fried, "Herrschaftsverband" (n. 6), passim, I would also accord the "overall coherency of the political order of the people," mentioned by Fried, 2, more significance regarding the "state thought" of the early Middle Ages in addition to "Church" and "monarchy."

late Merovingian ascent of the major-domo, now "conceptualized" as *honor*, as well as the notion of a ministerialization of offices at the hands of the monarchy. Or stated more neutrally: Duties in the *res publica*, as has been demonstrated, pushed the limits of servitude for the nobility, who understood their function in the *res publica* under the aspects of *dignitas* and *honor*. It was not least these two socially oriented terms, as opposed to the subordinate, service-related ones, that predominated in the broad scope of the early medieval conceptualization of office, which seems in and of itself instructive.[105] One might pointedly say that of the three fundamental aspects of "office" here discussed – oriented according to society, service, and function as made discernible by their Latin equivalencies – the first two are based precisely on the models of the "Rank Society"[106] and the "Domestic Society,"[107] whereby it is interesting to note how the borders grew occasionally and tentatively fluid. However, the third aspect with a function-oriented perspective, as observed in the heightened use of *officium* from the twelfth century onwards, may be understood as a path towards objective institutionalization alongside and in between the personalized view of "office" in the early Middle Ages.

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[105] In the address of ecclesiastical and secular office-bearers as "Reverend" and "Your Honour," notably only the two aspects of *dignitas* and *honor* are expressed.

[106] Cf. here the recently published Reinhard Wenskus, "Die neuere Diskussion um Gefolgschaft und Herrschaft in Tacitus' *Germania*," in: Günter Neumann, Henning Seemann (ed.), *Beiträge zum Verständnis der Germania des Tacitus*, Teil 2, Göttingen 1992, 311–331, here 312.

[107] Cf. Michael M. Sheehan, Jacqueline Murray, *Domestic Society in Medieval Europe. A Select Bibliography*, Toronto 1992.