

Sub-project C08

East Frankish Manuscripts Containing Collections of *formulae*

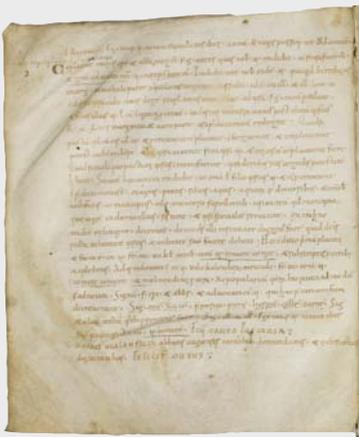
Prof. Dr. Philippe Depreux

Till Hennings, M.A.

Description of the Project

Formulae are sample letters and sample documents dating from between the Merovingian period and the early 10th century. They generally survive as collections within manuscripts, themselves dating from the 8th to the 11th centuries, with no distinction being made between them and literary texts and documents intended for correspondence. *Formulae* partly consist of sample documents that have otherwise not survived in archival form. They are of great importance for our understanding of the contemporary culture because they provide insights into the way in which scholars of the Early Medieval period sought to organise and disseminate their knowledge. The manuscripts analysed as part of this sub-project were produced in the eastern area of the Frankish Empire, primarily in the region

around Lake Constance and Bavaria. East Frankish manuscripts containing collections of *formulae* appear to have been more closely associated with educational instruction or with the training of scribes than was the case in the west. The aim of this sub-project is to analyse these manuscripts as textual evidence of the monastic culture of the time.



This manuscript dating from the 10th century almost exclusively comprises sample letters and sample documents from the era of Solomon III of St Gall (890-920). It includes a prearial deed, followed by an extract of a treatise in which Walahfrid Strabo († 849) compares ecclesiastical and secular offices. Paris, BnF, lat. 10757, fol. 1v.

Aims of the Project

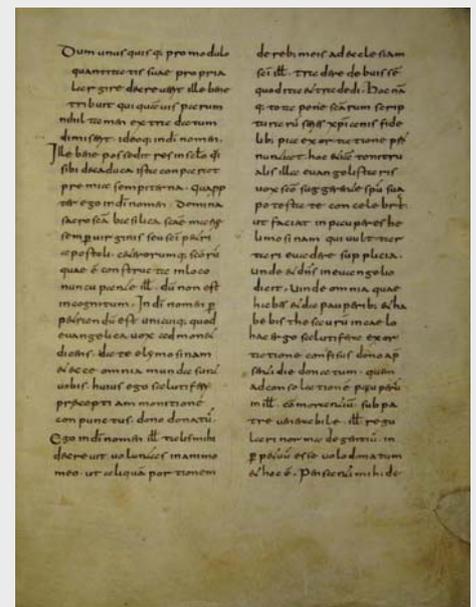
Twelve manuscripts will be analysed with the goal of reconstructing their histories in detail. What is the provenance of the copied texts they contain? How were the manuscripts produced? Do the copied texts belong together? Is it possible to ascertain the intention of the scribe or scribes? How was each collection of texts used? Collaborating with the project area 'Z' will be very important in answering these questions, whether it is a matter of reading erased text, analysing ink employed in parts of the same manuscript, or carrying out digital analyses of drawn characters. The intention is not only to assign manuscripts to a specific scriptorium, to date them more precisely, and to give an account of how they were compiled. Rather, the ultimate aim is to gain a better understanding of the contact that existed between Early Medieval scriptoria and to comprehend the written culture of the scribes and scholars of the period.

Collections of *formulae* within the Context of Early Medieval Manuscript Culture

Manuscripts are some of the most important types of evidence reflecting the culture of the Middle Ages. The people who wrote and used them were merely a very small percentage of the contemporary population, however – they belonged to the ruling elite. The most beautiful, richly illustrated manuscripts were costly gifts, primarily used for liturgical purposes. Coarser sheets of parchment and simple, brown ink were employed for manuscripts intended for daily use, some initial letters and rubrics being highlighted in orange ink. Manuscripts also differed markedly from one another in terms of their formats. This was a matter of prestige or utility. Four of the manuscripts analysed as part of the sub-project are true 'pocket books'. The largest East Frankish manuscripts containing *formulae* barely exceed today's letter format. None of them are of a magnificent order; these compilations of knowledge were to be put to educative and administrative use.



This pocket-book-sized codex dating from the late 9th century not only contains sample letters and sample documents, but also liturgical and medical texts. It includes the conclusion of a sample exchange charter and the text of an anonymised purchase charter from the monastery in Reichenau. St. Gall, Switzerland, Abbey Library Cod. Sang. 550, p. 96.



This manuscript from Reichenau dating from the early 9th century contains texts with very varied subject matter, including, for instance, excerpts from the writings of the etymologist Isidore of Seville († 636) and grammatical tractates. The folio illustrated here comprises short sample texts for the opening passage of a document. Karlsruhe, Germany, Baden State Library, Aug. Perg. 112, fol. 112r.