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L'area tra il fiume Mosa e Aquisgrana fu una delle regioni centrali dell'impero franco. I Pipinidi avevano proprietà sostanziose nella regione di Liegi. Aquisgrana fu la *sedes prima Franciae* tra 806 e 822. Questi nuclei del potere carolingio erano associati a numerose proprietà fiscali, che rappresentavano la spina dorsale, dal punto di vista logistico, della politica imperiale. La storia di questi beni fiscali nell'alto e pieno Medioevo è stata ben studiata, in particolare per quanto riguarda la loro organizzazione istituzionale e la loro trasmissione nel corso del tempo. Lo scopo dell'articolo è avviare un'indagine sul loro apporto alla storia economica della regione, un aspetto che è stato studiato in modo meno sistematico. Questo studio unisce prospettive istituzionali, economiche e spaziali per analizzare il modo in cui le proprietà fiscali potrebbero aver preso parte agli andamenti economici della media valle della Mosa tra IX e XI secolo, come centri di produzione e consumo, nonché in quanto snodi logistici. Il principale risultato dell'indagine qui condotta è che dopo il periodo carolingio molte proprietà fiscali furono rifunzionalizzate – in una sorta di 'distruzione creatrice' – e utilizzate come mattoni di costruzione all'interno di diversi sotto-sistemi economici che si sarebbero mantenuti nel Medioevo centrale e tardo.

The area between the river Meuse and Aachen was one of the most central regions of the Frankish Empire. The Pippinids had important properties in the region of Liège. Aachen was the sedes prima Franciae between 806 and 822. These cores of Carolingian power were associated with numerous fiscal estates that were a logistical backbone of imperial policy. The history of these fiscal estates in early and high medieval periods is well studied, particularly concerning their institutional organization and transmission over time. The aim of the paper is to initiate an investigation of their contribution to the economic history of the region, an aspect that has been explored less systematically. This study combines institutional, economic, and spatial perspectives to analyse how fiscal estates might have participated in the economic trends of the middle Meuse area between the 9th and 11th centuries, as centers of production and consumption, as well as logistical nodes. The major finding of this inquiry is that after the Carolingian period, many fiscal estates were repurposed – in a sort of 'creative destruction' – and used as building blocks within different economic subsystems that were to last well into the high and later Middle Ages.

Medioevo, secoli IX-XI, Lotaringia, beni fiscali, storia economica medievale, crescita agraria medievale.

Middle Ages, 9th-11th centuries, Lotharingia, Fiscal estates, Medieval Economic history, Medieval Agrarian Growth.

The middle Meuse basin, which comprises the area around Liège, Aachen, the Ardennes, as well as the Hesbaye, Condroz and Pays de Herve, was un-

doubtedly one of the most central regions of the Frankish empire.[1] From very early on, the Pippinid family of Austrasian mayors of the palace had important property in the region of Liège, such as the estates of Herstal and Jupille.[2] Aachen was the *sedes prima Franciae* between 806 and 822.[3] These cores of Carolingian power were not isolated: numerous fiscal estates and other places of royal power were established in the surrounding regions such as the Ardennes and the area east of the Meuse and north of the river Vesdre.[4] They were a logistical backbone of Carolingian policy. The history of these fiscal estates in the early and high medieval period is well studied, particularly concerning their institutional organization and transmission over time.[5] An aspect which has been analysed less systematically is their contribution to the economic history of the middle Meuse basin.

For scholars such as Félix Rousseau (1887-1981), the early medieval economic development of the region was mainly driven by commercial exchange and urbanization.[6] Against this conception, Georges Despy (1926-2003) has observed that in the 9th and 10th centuries, the fairs and markets of the middle Meuse were above all centred on the exchange of agrarian surplus produced in the region's countryside.[7] This has opened the way to a series of publications that analyse aspects of the relationships between agrarian development, various craft productions, short and long-distance trade and urbanization.[8]

The contribution of fiscal estates to these dynamics is recognized, but it has not yet been studied systematically.[9] The aim of this paper is to initiate an investigation of this problem. It combines institutional, economic and spatial perspectives to analyse how fiscal estates might have participated in the economic trends of the middle Meuse area between the 9th and 11th century, as centres of production and consumption, as well as logistical nodes.

The paper follows a chronological structure which is, to a large extent, defined by the history of the Frankish, Ottonian, and Salian rulers. Four periods

[1] This paper is the outcome of several research and teaching activities conducted at the Université libre de Bruxelles over the last few years. They build on already published collaborations between Jean-Pierre Devroey and myself – *e.g.* Devroey and Schroeder, "Empire en réseau." They are also based on research conducted with Jean-Pierre Devroey, Arnaud Knaepen, and students in two seminars, respectively about the market of Visé (2020-21) and the royal estate of Theux (2021-22). This paper owes much to their observations and input. I thank Lorenzo Tabarrini and Tiziana Lazzari for their comments on a draft version and their patience.
[2] Werner, *Lütticher Raum*; Dierkens, "Im Zentrum."
[3] Flach, *Untersuchungen*; Nelson, "Aachen;" Müller and Schaub, "Pfalzsiedlung;" Müller *et al.*, "Pfalz und *vicus*."
[4] See the maps in Rotthoff, *Studien* as well as Müller-Kehlen, *Ardennen*.
[5] See the classic studies by Rotthoff, *Studien*; Werner, *Lütticher Raum*; Müller-Kehlen, *Ardennen*.
[6] Rousseau, "Meuse."
[7] Despy, "Pays mosan."
[8] See, for example, Devroey and Zoller, "Villes et campagnes;" Lebecq, "Entre les invasions;" Verhulst, *Rise of Cities*, 26-33, 47-51 and 70-5; Wilkin, *Gestion*; Suttor, "Meuse."
[9] See, for example, Lebecq, "Entre les invasion."

are distinguished. Political aspects are presented first and economic organisation is discussed in the second part of each individual section.

1. *From Charlemagne to Lothar the Second: A Territory Organised Around Aachen (c. 800-70)*

The middle Meuse basin was undoubtedly one of the most central regions of the Frankish empire under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious. Estates such as Jupille or Herstal, which are located in the Meuse valley around what emerged as the episcopal city of Liège, were long-standing Pippinid family-property.[10] They were particularly important before the ascent of Aachen in the last decade of the 8th century.[11] Aachen's palace complex acted as the *sedes prima Franciae* between 806 and 822. These were central places of power, where assemblies were held and the Carolingian court stayed for extended periods of time.

Beyond these iconic places, there is also a large amount of less renowned estates (map 1).[12] Their number is substantial in the Ardennes and less high, but still remarkable, north of the river Vesdre and in the Hesbaye region, west of the river Meuse. These estates are not documented as well as the more important places mentioned first, but they could house the emperor and its court on occasion, *e.g.* for hunting trips.[13]

Recent research in the history, archaeology, and historical geography of these places provides us with important information about their economic functions and organization. The *De villis* Capitulary indicates that fiscal estates generally combined two functions: hosting the emperor and his court when they were travelling (this could, of course, happen less or more often, depending on the estate's location and infrastructure) and sending surplus production to the central places where the king stayed during winter.[14] In this light, it is very interesting to observe that, in the region discussed here, several fiscal estates were located on strategic communication nodes.

Through the *vicus* of Maastricht, the river Meuse ensured access to the very active commercial networks of the Rhine-Meuse delta. It has, however, been argued that before the 10th century long-distance commerce did not

[10] See note 2.
[11] Charlemagne spent Easter in Herstal in 770, 771, 772, 773, 779, 784 and Christmas in 772, 776, 777, 778, 779, 783. Thompson, *Dissolution*, 7.
[12] This map (at the end of this article) has been established using the existing literature and complementing it with my own research. It is not exhaustive, but it provides a starting point to assess the geography of imperial property in the region in the first half of the 9th century.
[13] This type of imperial presence is well attested for Theux and Longlier. Müller-Kehlen, *Ardennen*, 230. Also see Goldberg, *Manner of the Franks*, 106-8 and Hennebicque, "Espaces sauvages," 45-9.
[14] Devroey and Schroeder, "Empire en réseau," 360-7.

reach up the middle Meuse valley beyond Maastricht.[15] Aachen and Maastricht were, however, connected by a Roman road and the royal estate of Fouron-le-Comte was ideally located on this route (map 2). The royal estate of Visé and the hillfort of Chèvremont were both located on sites where the otherwise too steep eastern ridge of the Meuse valley could be crossed by oxcarts coming from the estates of the Liège area and going towards Aachen and the Rhine valley (map 2). The estate of Herve was located on the hilly ridge that leads towards Aachen from the south.[16] In a recently published paper, Jean-Louis Kupper has reconstructed part of the road-system between Aachen and the estates of Walhorn and Baelen (map 2).[17] This network made it possible to circulate between these locations and to transport agrarian or other produce towards Aachen.

As argued by Stéphane Lebecq and Adriaan Verhulst, there is good reason to consider that palaces and royal estates, as well as all the logistical structures that were built to cover the needs of the imperial court benefited from, and helped to shape, a first economic cycle in the middle Meuse region.[18] Royal estates probably contributed to expand agrarian production and craftwork, redirecting surplus to the imperial court in kind or in cash.[19] In this respect, recent research indicates that red marble quarried in Baelen might have been used to construct the imperial palace in Aachen.[20] Beyond such specific materials, the fiscal properties located in the region were certainly focussed on sustaining the emperor and his entourage with agrarian produce.[21] In this light, royal estates might well have been one of the major type of 'economic units' in the region in the Carolingian period, alongside other places of production, exchange, and consumption such as *vici*, the episcopal site of Liège, monasteries and their estates, rural markets and fairs.[22]

Alexis Wilkin has questioned whether agrarian and commercial growth occurred in the middle Meuse region before the decisive phase of economic expansion of the late 10th-11th century.[23] To my mind, his reservations do not exclude that a first phase of agrarian and economic expansion emerged sometimes between the late 8th and the middle of the 9th century, if we accept three caveats. First, this phase was certainly not as important as the one that was initiated in the last decades of the first Millennium. Secondly, it was centred on royal estates and infrastructures. Estates belonging to other landowners

[15] Devroey and Zoller, "Villes et campagnes," 234-6, 246 and 257.
[16] Schroeder, "Duché," 65-6.
[17] Kupper, "Goé-lez-Limbourg," 419-21.
[18] Lebecq, "Entre les invasions;" Verhulst, *Rise of Cities*, 42-3. Also see Devroey, "Réflexions," 486-7 and Devroey and Zoller, "Villes et campagnes."
[19] Devroey and Schroeder, "Empire en réseau," 366-7 and 369-70.
[20] Dreesen, Marion and Mottequin, "Red Marble," 187.
[21] Müller-Kehlen, *Ardennen*, 227.
[22] About the economic context of the region in general, see Despy, "Pays mosan" and Devroey and Zoller, "Villes et campagnes."
[23] Wilkin, *Gestion*, 495-8.

and subregions without fiscal property (such as some parts of the Hesbaye or Condroz) might not have been affected by these dynamics.[24] Finally, there is good reason to consider that they were limited in time. As we will see, a period of agrarian stagnation, or even contraction, might well have followed the successful rise of Aachen and its network of fiscal estates.

A common historiographic theme initially formulated by James Westfall Thompson in 1935 suggests that, as Louis the Pious faced political difficulties in the third decade of the 9th century, the dissolution of fiscal property was initiated.[25] It has been argued recently that after 822 Aachen was downgraded to the status of a simple "border town of the Lotharingian Middle Kingdom," as "perambulatory kingship and polycentric lordship" returned.[26] These statements might be slightly excessive. While it is true that Louis the Pious became more mobile in the second half of his reign, Aachen remained an important location in his itinerary.[27] The establishment of *Francia media* in the Verdun Treaty did not lead to the dissolution of the fiscal network around Aachen. It was maintained under command of a single ruler: Lothar the first († 855). Although this is not easily demonstrated, it is likely that Lothar relied much more on his estates of the middle Meuse area than Charlemagne or Louis the Pious, who disposed of many more resources in several regions.[28] Beyond Aachen, Lothar stayed in the royal estates of Theux, Longlier, and Thommen.[29] His son, Lothar the second († 869), also spent time in Aachen.[30] He granted the ninth of the yearly revenue of the demesne of forty-three royal estates located in the middle Meuse area to Our-Lady in Aachen.[31] It has been argued that this gesture indicates that these estates were still part of a logistic network centred on Aachen.[32] Lothar I and his son both stayed at the Chèvremont hillfort.[33] In the light of these observations, it appears that Aachen kept a special status and that the fiscal network of the middle Meuse continuously served the sovereign, even after the early 820s. This came to change in 870 with the Meersen Treaty.

[24] The available evidence does, in fact, suggest that different landowners managed their estates in different ways in the middle Meuse area during the 9th century. Schroeder and Wilkin, "Documents," 26-8. I would argue that this might have resulted in a fragmented geography, and different patterns and trajectories, of agrarian development.
[25] Thompson, *Dissolution*, 19-32.
[26] Huffman, review.
[27] Müller *et al.*, "Pfalz und *vicus*," 402.
[28] Lothar II claims in a charter that his father had to take lands from the Church because his kingdom was too small. MGH DD LoII 9. Cf. MacLean, "Shadow Kingdom," 446.
[29] For Aachen, see Müller *et al.*, "Pfalz und *vicus*," 401 and for estates in the Ardennes, see Müller-Kehlen, *Ardennen*, 230. In general, see Pettiau, "Présences et déplacements."
[30] Müller *et al.*, "Pfalz und *vicus*," 401.
[31] MGH DD Arn 31.
[32] Müller-Kehlen, *Ardennen*, 227.
[33] Rotthoff, *Studien*, 57.

2. *From the Meersen Treaty to the death of Giselbert: Fragmentation and Turmoil (870-940)*

Fundamental changes can be observed after Lothar's demise in 869. The Meersen treaty, established in 870 between Louis the German and Charles the Bold, split up the territory initially acquired by their older brother.[34] The border cut straight through the region discussed here, following the river Meuse up from Maastricht to the eastern spring of the river Ourthe (map 1). This division had significant consequences. Aachen became one ruling place among others in the polycentric kingdom of Louis the German. It was rich of tradition, but also located on the Western border of the realm. Significantly, some of the estates that used to be part of Aachen's extensive supply network were now part of Western Francia.

For Charles the Bald and his successors, the fiscal estates in this region became crucial strongholds along the eastern border of their territory. They invested them in several ways: Charles hunted regularly in the part of the Ardennes that was under his control.[35] With the Capitulary of Quierzy (June 14, 877), he forbade his son Louis the Stammerer († 879) access to the Ardennes, with its palaces, royal estates, and hunting grounds, unless he had to cross the massif.[36] Coins were minted at the *fiscus* Bastogne and at the *vicus* Visé during the reign of Charles.[37] There are also coins from Visé from the reign of his successor.[38] Louis stayed in several fiscal estates: after having confirmed the Meersen Treaty in Fouron on the first of November 878, he spent Christmas in the palace of Longlier and signed a charter at the *fiscus* Orgeo on the first of January 879.[39] Other estates were transferred to locally active supporters: Louis granted Anthisnes and Heure-en-Famenne to his *fidelis* Ebroinus in April of the same year.[40]

The two parts of Lotharingia were reunited under the authority of Louis the Younger, king of Eastern Francia, through the treaty of Ribemont in 880. Shortly thereafter, new challenges emerged for the places we are discussing: in November and December 881, a group of vikings raided Maastricht, Aachen, Liège, Jülich, Zülpich, and the monasteries of Kornelimünster, Stavelot and Malmedy.[41] This probably led to some economic destabilisation in the region, but its extent remains debated as some scholars believe that

[34] *Annales*, 172-4. Gaillard, "Place des abbayes."
[35] Guizard-Duchamp, "Louis le Pieux," 526 and Guizard-Duchamp, "Le souverain chasseur," 224-5.
[36] "In quibus ex nostris palatiis filius noster, si necessitas non fuerit, morari vel in quibus forestibus venationem exercere non debeat: Arduenna penitus excipitur, nisi in transeundo; et villae ad servitium nostrum similiter". MGH Capit. 2, 361.
[37] Depeyrot, *Numéraire*, 159 and 455-6. Visé is located east of the river Meuse, but it was explicitly granted to Charles by the Meersen treaty. *Annales*, 172-4.
[38] Depeyrot, *Numéraire*, 455-6.
[39] Müller-Kehlen, *Ardennen*, 177 and 190.
[40] Despy, *Waulsort*, 322-3.
[41] D'Haenens, *Invasions*, 50.

it did not really impact trade and urban development in the long run.[42] One potential consequence of Viking raiding was the transfer of fiscal estates to ecclesiastical communities and institutions that had been damaged by viking raiding. Charles the Fat († 888) granted Blindef to Stavelot-Malmedy in 882 and Bastogne to Our-Lady in Aachen before 887.[43]

Under Arnulf of Carinthia – who had taken power in 887 – another series of viking attacks took place: in June 891, a group passed the Meuse river not far away from Liège and ambushed convoys in the swamps and woods around Aachen.[44] Arnulf defeated them in August, but in February 892, a new group was active in the region between the rivers Meuse and Rhine.[45]

In 895, Lotharingia was reestablished as a kingdom under the rule of Arnulf's son, Zwentibold († 900).[46] Consequently, the interest in the fiscal estates of the middle Meuse region was renewed: Zwentibold stayed in Amberloup on November 11th of 896 and in Paliseul on January 28th of the next year.[47] In 898, the fiscal estate of Theux was granted to the bishop Franco of Liège, who had helped defend the region against viking raiding in the previous decades.[48]

Zwentibold died in 900. This opened a period of tensions and dissent around royal successions, during which the high Lotharingian aristocracy openly defied royal power, shifting alliances between Eastern and Western kings.[49] During this period, much of the region's royal estates were controlled by duke Reginar († 915), a major figure of the Lotharingian aristocracy, and his son Giselbert († 939).[50] Richer of Reims reports that the famous fiscal estates of Jupille, Herstal, Chèvremont, and Meersen were in the duke's hands while Charles the Simple ruled over Lotharingia (911-23).[51] A sentence in Richer's *Historiae* suggests that Giselbert granted fiscal estates to his aristocratic followers.[52] This is not to say that royal control over fiscal estates was entirely lost: Charles the Simple stayed in Aachen and Herstal, for example.[53]

The economic consequences of the political troubles of the period 870-940 are unclear. It is generally accepted that Viking raiding did not disrupt the commercial and urban dynamics of the region in the long run.[54] However, there is not much evidence that informs us about the management and economic performances of fiscal estates during this period. We have seen that

[42] Compare Despy, "Pays mosan," 147 and Lebecq, "Entre les invasions."
[43] MGH DD Ka III 64 and 109. Müller-Kehlen, *Ardennen*, 130.
[44] D'Haenens, *Invasions*, 56.
[45] D'Haenens, 59-61.
[46] Margue, "Zwentibold."
[47] MGH DD Zw 12 and 13. Margue, "Zwentibold," 91 and Pettiau, "Présences de souverains," 197.
[48] MGH DD Arn 64.
[49] Le Jan, "L'aristocratie" and MacLean, "Shadow Kingdom," 450-1.
[50] About these figures, see Schumacher, "Giselbert," Margue, "Zwentibold," Kupper, "Portrait" and Wauters, "Gislebert."
[51] Richer, *Historiae*, 73; Rotthoff, *Studien*, 57.
[52] Richer, *Historiae*, 71.
[53] Rotthoff, *Studien*, 150.
[54] See above, n. 42.

coins were minted for the first time in Visé and Bastogne during the reign of Charles the Bald. The economic rationale and implications of this measure are, however, unclear. It might have been, above all, a way to symbolically affirm Western Frankish political presence and power on these sites and the region.[55]

It is beyond doubt that rulers maintained interest in fiscal estates and the resources they provided. However, with the Meersen treaty, the organisation of fiscal property was deeply transformed. The coherent network centred on Aachen and a handful of secondary places of power was split in two. This segmentation, political instability, Viking raiding, the transfer of individual estates to the Church and to followers of Lotharingia's duke necessarily weakened the general organisation of fiscal property. This does not exclude that individual estates were managed efficiently in the late ninth-early 10th century. It is, however, likely that with the fragmentation of the network of royal centres of power and estates, these units ceased to operate as a regional economic driver.

3. *Ottonian Rule: Imperial Continuities, Ecclesiastical Property and Growing Commerce (c. 940-1024)*

Giselbert faced the growing influence of the Ottonian family in Lotharingia. Henry the Fowler tried to rein in the duke's autonomous tendencies by organising his marriage with his daughter Gerberga and letting him keep some fiscal property.[56] However, Giselbert continued to assert his own and Lotharingia's autonomy. He finally died while fighting Otto the first at the Andernach battle in 939.[57] This episode initiated a reassertion of royal power and the dukes of Lotharingia were now seen as Ottonian appointees.[58] Several fiscal estates were taken over by the Crown and the sovereign was again visiting these places.[59] As early as 930, the Ottonians were regularly present in Aachen.[60] Otto the first stayed in Büllingen in 940 and in Visé in 942.[61]

As established by Guido Rotthoff, after this initial phase of demonstration of Ottonian power, royal authorities were able to keep control of fiscal property in the region, sometimes until the 12th century.[62] Estates such as Amel, Bütgenbach, Cherain, or Vaals remained under direct royal/imperial control. However, there are also estates that were willingly alienated by the Ottonian kings or emperors. In 946, Otto the first gave property located in the royal

[55] Devroey and Zoller, "Villes et campagnes," 251.
[56] Rotthoff, *Studien*, 152.
[57] Wauters, "Gislebert," 804.
[58] MacLean, "Shadow Kingdom," 451.
[59] Rotthoff, *Studien*, 151.
[60] Erkens, "Aachener Geschichte," 498.
[61] MGH DD OI 34; Flodoard, *Annales*, 85.
[62] See, for example, Müller-Kehlen, *Ardennen*, 140.

estate of Longlier to one Conrad and his wife Leva.[63] This was an exceptional case, as it concerns a lay aristocrat. Most permanent transfers of fiscal property benefited the Church.

Under Otto the first, in 972, part of the hillfort of Chèvremont was given to Our Lady in Aachen; under Otto II († 983), the bishop of Liège was granted a toll on the annual fair of Visé; under Otto III († 1002), Our Lady in Aachen was granted rights in both Jupille and Herstal; under Henry II († 1022), rights in Jupille were granted to the bishop of Verdun.[64] This type of transfer of property and rights to the Church follows several logics. First, it did of course provide these institutions with economic means to subsist. Secondly, making such gifts to the Church was part of the political strategy of the Ottonian *Reichskirche*: granting land and revenues to ecclesiastical actors such as the bishops of Liège or Verdun was a way to reduce the influence of the local and regional aristocracy.[65] In the long run, this policy created the conditions for the reinforcement of large ecclesiastical estates which contributed to a second economic cycle in the region.

Indeed, by granting fiscal estates to the Church, the Ottonian sovereigns effectively helped to transfer land to institutions that organized the production of agrarian surplus in the countryside and its centralization in the episcopal city of Liège, rural towns and other central places.[66] Importantly, transfers of fiscal property to the church came with the obligation, for bishops and abbots, to host the court on occasion and send surplus produce to it.[67] In this light, these new arrangements might also have triggered an increase in production, as former fiscal estates now had to sustain both their ecclesiastical lord and, indirectly, the imperial court.

Beyond agrarian production, the transfer of coinage rights as well as rights over markets, fairs and tolls to the Church was significant. The study of the circulation of coins and attestations of merchants in textual evidence suggest that in the late 10th and 11th centuries, the middle Meuse area became increasingly integrated in 'international' trading networks with Cologne and the middle Rhine valley, the British Isles and the Baltic area.[68] The transfer of fiscal and market rights to the bishop of Liège allowed him to indirectly benefit from this commercial expansion.[69]

[63] MGH DD OI 80.
[64] MGH DD OI 417; MGH DD OII 308; Wisplinghoff, *Urkundenbuch*, 47; *Gesta*, 47.
[65] Kupper, "Exposé inaugural," 11.
[66] The main place that benefited from this dynamic was, of course, Liège. Verhulst, *Rise of Cities*, 70-2 and Wilkin, *Gestion*, 496-7.
[67] Rotthoff, *Studien*, 162.
[68] Lebecq, "Entre les invasions;" Devroey and Zoller, "Villes et campagnes," 247-9 and 252; Suttor, "Meuse," 30-3.
[69] Bruand, "Organisation économique," 58-63.

4. *The Reign of Henri III (1039-56): Towards a "Feudal" Landscape?*

Until the 11th century, permanent donations of royal estates to lay aristocrats were relatively rare. Of course, some fiscal land and revenues were granted to aristocrats who represented central power in the function of duke or count. We know, for example, that before being given to the bishop of Liège in 983, the market rights in Visé were under control of Beatrix, duchess of Higher Lotharingia († after 1000).[70] Count Gozelo held the fiscal estate of Amberloup in the early 11th century.[71] The crucial point about these forms of control of fiscal land by aristocrats is that these individuals were—at least in theory—appointed by the king or emperor. Consequently, the sovereign had the right to seize and take back the fiscal land and rights that they controlled.

A major shift occurred under Henry III († 1056). As pointed out recently by Jean-Louis Kupper, grave tensions emerged around the succession of duke Gozelo of Higher and Lower Lotharingia († 1044).[72] His son Godfrey the Bearded († 1069) intended to take back control over both Higher and Lower Lotharingia, but the sovereign wanted to reduce his power. This led to major conflicts, including the destruction of Verdun and the imperial palace of Nijmegen, as well as the siege of Liège.[73] Eventually, Godfrey renounced his claims in 1049. During this conflict, Henry doubled down on the *Reichskirche* strategy: he granted rights and land to various monastic institutions and to the bishop of Liège (the fiscal estates of Gemmenich and Aachen were granted out to St-Adalbert in Aachen and other ecclesiastical institutions during this period).[74]

However, he also choose to directly support Frederick, duke of Lower Lotharingia, an aristocrat who was opposed to Godfrey and more loyal to the imperial cause. In this context, crucial elements of fiscal property in the region were transferred to Frederick: the royal estates of Amberloup, Baelen, Ortho, and Sprimont ended up in his hands.[75] These transfers of fiscal property turned out to be decisive. Two castles—the Limburg and La Roche—had been built on hilltops located in the fiscal estates of Baelen and Ortho. In the decade of regency after Henry iii's death in 1056 and during the Investiture Controversy, the Lotharingian aristocracy gradually developed a stronger sense of its autonomy. The generation after Frederick started to use castles in a new way to affirm its authority and identity. In the last decades of the 11th century, the names "La Roche" and "Limbourg" started to be used to designate the lineages of counts who controlled them.[76]

[70] MGH DD OII 308.
[71] Müller-Kehlen, *Ardennen*, 114.
[72] Kupper, "Henri III."
[73] Kupper, 505.
[74] Kupper, 517.
[75] Kupper, "Henri III," 518-9; Müller-Kehlen, *Ardennen*, 206.
[76] Margue, "Pouvoirs et espaces," 524-30; Kupper, "Origines du duché;" Schroeder, "Macht und Herrschaft," 250-1.

These castles became new centres of power, but also economic hubs. They had to be supported logistically; they attracted surplus production, craftsmanship, luxury production and commercial exchanges.[77] This process did not mark the end of all fiscal property in the region: some royal estates remained under control of the sovereign in the 12th century.[78] Moreover, the growing importance of castles did not override earlier economic networks and dynamics. The development of the region was still largely carried by the few urban centres and numerous rural towns, estates or markets under the authority of the bishop of Liège, canons, monasteries and less or more powerful lay landlords. The emergence of a new political geography centred on castles is nevertheless relevant because it can be seen as the final step in the long reconfiguration of the network of fiscal estates centred on Aachen inherited from the 9th century.

5. *Conclusion*

In the 9th century, the numerous fiscal estates of the middle Meuse region were part of an economic network that supported the imperial court around the Liège-area and Aachen. A first early medieval phase of agrarian development can be identified in this period, which was essentially caused by the political success of the Carolingians and the centrality of Aachen and its hinterland. Royal estates were important centres of production and consumption, as well as logistical nodes.

The functions of the region's network of fiscal estates were not changed in structural terms until 870, despite the division of the Frankish realm. Then, with the Meersen treaty, the area under study was politically divided between Eastern and Western Francia. Accordingly, some fiscal estates remained focussed on Aachen, while others became centres of royal power on the border of Western Francia. Viking raiding in the late 9th century, followed by the affirmation of powerful aristocrats until *c.* 940 led to a reduction of royal influence on fiscal estates. Aachen was temporarily occupied, fiscal estates were in the hands of Reginar and his son Giselbert, who used them to build powerful clienteles. This succession of events certainly led to the disorganisation of the network of fiscal estates in the middle Meuse. However, this period is not very well documented. In the current state of knowledge, the economic consequences of these events remain largely unclear, both regarding individual estates and in macro-economic terms. However, it appears that, from then on, fiscal estates controlled by the king were not a major driver of economic dynamics anymore. Somewhat ironically, their contribution to economic

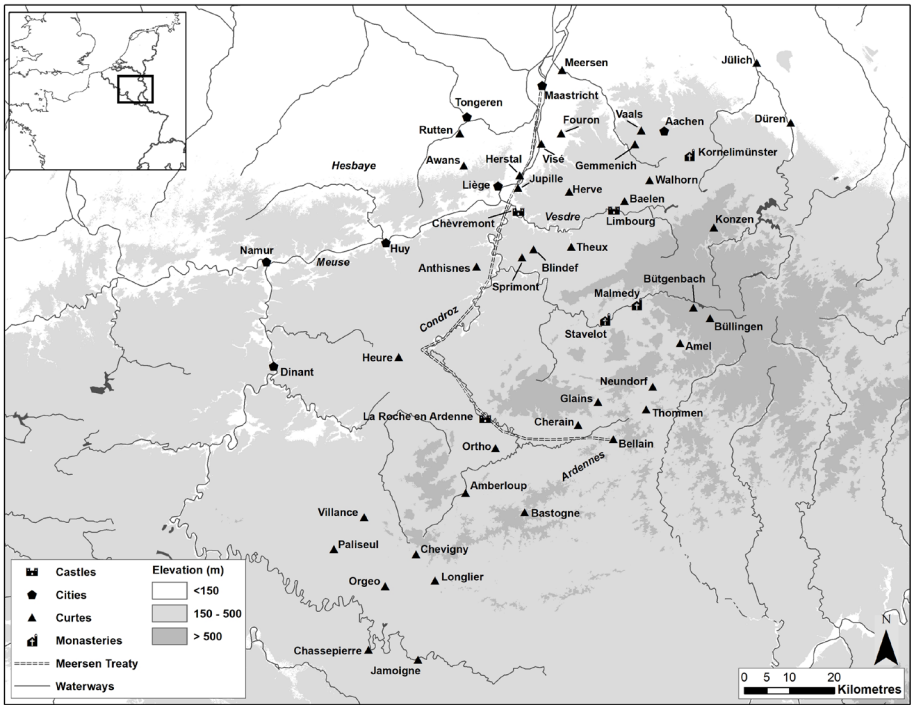
[77] Schroeder, "Duché."
[78] Note 55.

trends in the 10th and 11th centuries was predicated on their transfer to the *Reichskirche* and, later, the duke of Lower Lotharingia.

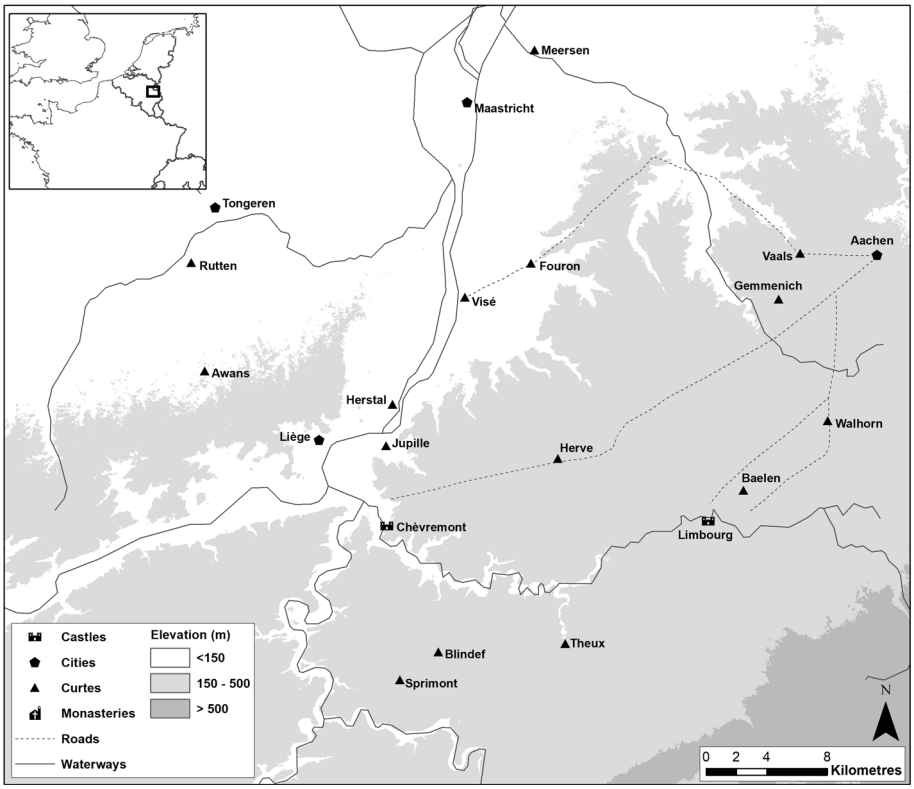
Within the framework of the *Reichskirche*, an increasing number of royal estates were granted to powerful ecclesiastical lords such as the bishop of Liège or the canons of Our Lady in Aachen. This was a crucial step in the long-term redefinition of the economic logic of fiscal estates: they were increasingly absorbed in the economic networks of ecclesiastic institutions. This played a major role in agrarian and commercial development, as these institutions centralised production surplus and participated, directly or indirectly, in trading activities.

This transfer of fiscal property was accelerated and redefined under Henry the third: as he was engaged in his conflict with Godfrey the Bearded, Henry transferred further possessions to the *Reichskirche*, but also to Frederik of Lower Lotharingia. These estates – and the castles they were associated with – were central in the construction of a new political and economic landscape of principalities. Castles now came to attract surplus production and commercial networks.

A fascinating aspect of these dynamics is that fiscal estates were – in a sort of "creative destruction"– repurposed and used as building blocks within different economic subsystems that were to last well into the high and later Middle Ages.



Map 1. Places mentioned in the article and border of the Meersen Treaty (870).



Map 2. Places mentioned in the article and roads between Aachen and the river.

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