

HAUSPITIA CRUCI IN PONIT ET IN SUI INTER: LIGUNT AMBO DE



ARE TERRA: HICCA IN INTERCTVABEL ABSCHUT HMALY IN ANNUERA

Premodern Ecosystems:
Climate, Environment, People

CAROLINGIAN ECOLOGICAL SOVEREIGNTY

THEOLOGY, EMPIRE, AND NATURE

by
NOAH BLAN

ARC HUMANITIES PRESS



PREMODERN ECOSYSTEMS — CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT, PEOPLE

Further Information and Publications

www.arc-humanities.org/series/book-series/

CAROLINGIAN ECOLOGICAL SOVEREIGNTY

**THEOLOGY, EMPIRE,
AND NATURE**

by

NOAH BLAN

ARCHUMANITIES PRESS

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

© 2026, Arc Humanities Press, Leeds



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Licence.

The author(s) assert(s) their moral right to be identified as the author(s) of their part of this work.

Permission to use brief excerpts from this work in scholarly and educational works is hereby granted provided that the source is acknowledged. Any use of material in this work that is an exception or limitation covered by Article 5 of the European Union's Copyright Directive (2001/29/EC) or would be determined to be "fair use" under Section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Act September 2010 Page 2 or that satisfies the conditions specified in Section 108 of the U.S. Copyright Act (17 USC §108, as revised by P.L. 94-553) does not require the Publisher's permission.

ISBN (Hardback): 9781802702835

ISBN (Paperback): 9781802705218

e-ISBN (PDF): 9781802705195

e-ISBN (ePUB): 9781802705201

DOI: 10.17302/pqcs6367

www.arc-humanities.org

Printed and bound in the UK (by CPIGroup [UK] Ltd), USA (by Bookmasters), and elsewhere using print-on-demand technology.

Publisher (manufacturer) details: Arc Humanities Press, 14 Clifton Moor Business Village, James Nicolson Link, York YO30 4XG, United Kingdom.

EU Authorized Representative details (for GPRS purposes): Amsterdam University Press, Nieuwe Prinsengracht 89, 1018 VR Amsterdam, The Netherlands. www.aup.nl

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations.....	vii
Preface	ix
Abbreviations.....	xi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Royal Disaster.....	37
Chapter 2. Genesis and Carolingian Ecological Sovereignty	73
Chapter 3. Thinking Trees.....	101
Chapter 4. Jocund Rule, Fecund Nature.....	139
Conclusion.....	171
Bibliography	179
Index	199

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Depiction of an idealized garden in the Godescalc Evangelistary, ca. 781–783. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), MS n.a.l. 1203, fol. 3v.....	27
Figure 2. Depiction of an idealized garden in the Gospels of Saint- Médard of Soissons, early ninth century. BnF, MS latin 8850, fol. 6v. ...	28
Figure 3. Pen drawing accompanying Psalm 8 in the Utrecht Psalter, ca. 830. Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 32, fol. 4v.....	53
Figure 4. Crucifixion scene in Louis the German Psalter, first third of the ninth century. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin— Preußischer Kulturbesitz, MS Theol. Lat., fol. 58 (Rose 250).	115
Figure 5. Pen drawing accompanying Psalm 127 in the Utrecht Psalter, ca. 830. Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 32, fol. 73v.....	131
Figure 6. Genesis page from the Alcuin Bible, ca. 834–843. Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, Msc. Bibl. 1, fol. 7v.....	164

PREFACE

IN THE DECADE-PLUS research and writing of this monograph I thought a lot about trees, woodlands, forests, orchards, roots dug deep and intertwined, branches and ramifications, and the flowering fruits of long-suffering labour. As the forester and writer Peter Wohlleben has argued (see subsequent citations), a forest functions less like a collection of separate organisms and more like a single interconnected system, held together by ongoing exchanges of nutrients, signals, and long-term mutual support. What appears above ground as a set of discrete organisms is sustained by networks that bind the whole together. The work that follows has likewise depended on forms of intellectual and personal support that are often less visible than the finished product, but no less essential to it.

I am profoundly grateful to my editor Anna Henderson, who saw the potential in this manuscript and patiently guided me in its iterations; to production manager Tania Colwell for expert support and guidance; to Danna Messer for such meticulous copyediting; and to everyone else at Arc Humanities Press who has made the process a genuine pleasure from start to finish. To Emily Morgan Harless, who undertook the index with care and enthusiasm, I offer my sincere thanks. I thank also the reviewers whose constructive feedback shaped this book at multiple stages of its development. Any faults are of course my own.

Deepest thanks also go to Paolo Squatriti and Ray Van Dam, two scholars, mentors, and friends whose insights, encouragement, and enthusiasm helped me see that it is not just the humans of the past we should be searching for but life wherever it leaves its mark, in soils, systems, and the more-than-human worlds people inhabited. Equal in learning and in friendship, Valerie L. Garver first introduced me to the Carolingians and, in doing so, set me on the path that made this book possible.

There are many others whose support has sustained me along the way. At the University of Michigan, special thanks goes to Diane Owen Hughes, Peggy McCracken, Valerie Kivelson, Christian de Pee, the faculty, staff, and graduate students of the Medieval and Early Modern Studies program, Hussein Fancy, Kit French, Deborah Dash Moore, Ian Moyer, Betsy Sears, and Department of History staff members (past and present) Lorna Altstetter,

Sheila Coley, Diana Denney, Sue Douglas, Terre Fisher, Kathleen King, and Greg Parker. At Lake Forest College, I am deeply grateful to the colleagues who teach me, every day, how to teach and think historically more effectively—especially Rudi Batzell, Tina Groeger, Anna Trumbore Jones (who generously and most helpfully read this entire manuscript), Courtney Joseph, Dan LeMahieu, and Ben Zeller. For their mentoring and friendship, I thank Mary Ellen Carroll and Fran Pease.

Many scholars, colleagues, and friends have read portions of the manuscript or contributed to its progress in other ways. Foremost among these are Jacqueline Antonovich and Paula R. Curtis whose balanced attention and expertise helped shape the work throughout. I would be remiss not to call special attention to Lynda Coon for her encouragement and criticism; to Paul Dutton for writing about “Charlemagne, King of Beasts,” which helped shape the questions that animate this book; and to Tom Noble, who introduced me to Alcuin’s Genesis captions. I also thank Ellen Arnold, Courtney Booker, Scott Bruce, Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, Abigail Firey, Robin Fleming, Matthew Bryan Gillis, Eric Goldberg, Thomas Greene, Joachim Henning, Richard Hoffmann, Rutger Kramer, Tim Newfield, Owen Phelan, Martha Rampton, Andrew Romig, Barbara Rosenwein, and John Terry, for their generosity and expertise.

This book is based on my doctoral work, and special thanks goes to Andrew Rabin and the Wallace Johnson First Book Program, which helped me move beyond the dissertation and rethink the project as a monograph. Close collaboration with Michael E. Moore and the other fellows in the program helped me refine the project and sharpen its central arguments. My original research was made possible by funding from the University of Michigan’s Department of History, Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies, and Rackham Graduate School, as well as a postdoctoral fellowship at the university’s Institute for the Humanities and a finishing fellowship from the Doris G. Quinn Foundation. At Lake Forest College, Krebs Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Tara Natarajan generously provided a subvention that made the reproduction of colour images in this book possible.

Finally, this book would not have been completed without the support of my partner, Rachel Schwimmer, and the boundless curiosity of my daughter Matilda, whose inspiration has stayed with me throughout. I dedicate the book to Matilda.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AG</i>	<i>Admonitio generalis</i>
<i>BnF</i>	Bibliothèque nationale de France
<i>Carm.</i>	<i>Carmina</i>
<i>DGAL</i>	<i>De Genesi ad litteram</i>
<i>EDLC</i>	<i>Epistola de litteris colendis</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistola</i>
<i>Ep. var.</i>	<i>Epistolae variorum Carolo Magno regnante scriptae</i>
<i>Epp.</i>	<i>Epistolae Karolini aevi</i>
<i>ESD</i>	<i>Explanatio sex dierum</i>
<i>KMLP</i>	<i>Karolus Magnus et Leo Papa</i>
<i>VK</i>	<i>Vita Karoli Magni</i>

