

## I. Chorbishops in the World of Pseudo-Isidore

Nowhere was Pseudo-Isidore more successful than in his total destruction of the Western chorepiscopate. In consequence, chorbishops remain a little-studied curiosity even for many early medieval historians, and some introductory remarks on the history of this clerical rank and their position in Pseudo-Isidore's world are in order.

Chorbishops originated in the Eastern church. We first hear of them in the decrees of fourth-century Greek councils; the canonical appendix to Ps.-Leo cites many of the *loci classici*<sup>5</sup>. Chorbishops appear in these canons as episcopal vicars, whose mission is to provide episcopal faculties in the countryside. They received a kind of subordinate episcopal consecration from their diocesan and they acted as his direct representatives. While a handful of Western chorbishops are attested from Late Antiquity, as an institution the chorepiscopate did not take root in Europe until the era of the Anglo-Saxon missions<sup>6</sup>. Chorbishops were particularly useful to missionaries, for they could attend to far-flung rural populations and consecrate distant churches beyond the reach of ordinary bishops. In later decades, chorbishops became an integral part of the Frankish church on both sides of the Rhine. Gradually they lost their association with missionary enterprises and began to serve in administrative roles, in some cases assuming the leadership of dioceses during protracted vacancies, while secular magnates attached the rev-

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5) The oldest canonical reference is the Council of Ancyra (314), c. 13: ed. Cuthbert Hamilton TURNER, *Ecclesiae Occidentalis Monumenta Iuris Antiquissima* (hereafter, EOMIA) 2, 1 (1907) p. 84f. On this difficult text, see Cyril C. RICHARDSON, *The Riddle of the 13th Canon of Ancyra*, *Church History* 16 (1947) p. 32–36. Thereafter, chorbishops are also attested in the acts of Neocaesarea (314–325), c. 13 (ed. TURNER, EOMIA 2, 1 p. 136–139); Antioch (341), c. 8, 10 (ed. *ibid.*, p. 254–257); Laodicea, c. 57 (ed. *ibid.*, p. 386f.).

6) The standard study on western chorbishops remains Theodor GOTTLOB, *Der abendländische Chorepiskopat* (*Kanonistische Studien und Texte* 1, 1928); on Western institutional origins, see p. 21–25, and for much of the rest of what follows, esp. p. 102–135. Newer assessments include Jörg MÜLLER, *Gedanken zum Institut der Chorbischöfe*, in: *Medieval Church Law and the Origins of the Western Legal Tradition. A Tribute to Kenneth Pennington*, ed. Wolfgang P. MÜLLER / Mary E. SOMMAR (2006) p. 77–94; and Rudolf POKORNY, *Ein übersehenes karolingisches Briefgutachten zugunsten der Chorbischöfe*, *ZRG Kan.* 99 (2013) p. 361–381. The first to consider ninth-century campaigns against the chorepiscopate in light of the Pseudo-Isidorian forgeries was Julius WEIZSÄCKER, *Der Kampf gegen den Chorepiskopat des fränkischen Reichs im neunten Jahrhundert. Eine historische Untersuchung* (1859).