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## CAPITULARE DE VILLIS AND THE BIBLE. ON THE ECONOMIC PROGRAMME OF CHARLEMAGNE\*

Already in the past copious literature dealing with *capitulare de villis* (CV)<sup>1</sup> drew attention to relations between economy and culture during the Carolingian era. While expanding the studies of his predecessors, Wolfgang Metz cast much light on the connections between certain fragments of CV and ancient lexicographic material<sup>2</sup>. He had in mind *cap.* 42 about the instruments that should be employed in each royal estate, as well as *cap.* 70 concerning plants to be cultivated in the gardens of the monarch. Apparently, both lists were based on Old Upper German glossaries, which, in turn, were patterned on Graeco-Latin glossaries from the third century, the so-called *hermeneumata*. Such *hermeneumata*, devised for practical purposes, were used extensively for preparing the estate inventories of the Carolingian dynasty. Klaus Verhein did not exclude the possibility that the editors of *cap.* 70 resorted to the writings of classical authors — Pliny the Younger, Galenus and Hippocrates<sup>3</sup>. In a summary of his

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<sup>1</sup>*Capitulare de villis*. Cod. Guelf. 254 Helmst. der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, ed. C. Brühl, Stuttgart 1971.

<sup>2</sup>W. Metz, *Zur Entstehung der Brevium Exempla*, "Deutsches Archiv", vol. X, 1954, p. 401 sqq.; *Idem*, *Das karolingische Reichsgut. Eine verfassungs- und verwaltungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Berlin 1960, p. 26 sqq.

<sup>3</sup>K. Verhein, *Studien zu den Quellen zum Reichsgut der Karolingerzeit*, "Deutsches Archiv", vol. X, 1954, p. 343 sqq.

investigations, W. Metz concluded: "It is possible to regard to a certain extent the resolutions of 70. *Capitulare de villis* as the implementation of an intention to realise ideals concurrent with classical education, without any prior examinations of the question whether something like that was at all feasible"<sup>4</sup>. Elsewhere, the same researcher noted: "The plants were selected in such a manner that they all could be, with certain difficulty, cultivated in particular royal estates, and the artisans [cf. *cap.* 45 — M. D.] were listed according to theory on par with praxis"<sup>5</sup>.

The following questions come to mind: whether, and which theoretical postulates concerning the structure and organisation of royal estates were applied in the editing of the CV? Was reference really made predominantly to Graeco-Latin models?

Let us return to the above cited *cap.* 45, which mentions the artisans (*artifices*) who should be included by every steward *in suo ministerio*, i.a. *fabros ferrarios, et aurifices (ve)l argentarios*. This passage is analogous to the *Old Testament 1 Chronicles*, which mentions the *artifices* of King David: *In auro et argento et aere et ferro* (I Paralip. XXII, 16)<sup>6</sup>. Having enumerated assorted *artifices*, *cap.* 45 ends with the declaration that the stewards should have *neqnon et reliquos ministeriales, quos ad numerandum longum est*. The quoted *1 Chronicles* contains a similar formulation, closing the sentence about David's artisans: *plurimos artifices [...] cujus non est numerus* (I Paralip. XXII, 15 sqq.). In accordance with *cap.* 45, the steward should also have good artisans (*bonos [...] artifices*), while the artisans of King David are described as: *artifices [...] ad faciendum opus prudentissimos* (I Paralip. XXII, 15).

*Cap.* 45 notes that stewards should be provided with *pistores, qui simila(m) ad opus n(ost)r(um) factant*; in turn, *cap.* 64, concerning carts used in war expeditions, proclaims that: *volum(us), ut farina [...] ad spensam n(ost)ram missa fiat* (cf. *cap.* 34). Let us draw attention to the fact that ordinary flour (*farina*) and superior white flour (*simila*) were also supplied to the court of King Solomon: *Erat autem cibus Salomonis per dies singulos triginta cori similiae, et sexaginta cori farinae* (III Reg. IV, 22). In addition,

<sup>4</sup>W. Metz, *Das karolingische Reichsgut*, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 85.

<sup>6</sup>We cite: *Biblia Sacra Latina ex Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis Sixti V. et Clementi VIII.* London 1970.

King Solomon was provided with fattened oxen — *boves pingues* (III Reg. IV, 23), while David received fattened calves — *pingues vitulos* (II Reg. XVII, 29). Consequently, attention is drawn to *cap.* 35, according to which each royal estate should include fattened oxen — *boves saginatos*.

Let us take into consideration *cap.* 70, analysed by W. Metz, which states, i.a.: *Volum(us), q(uo)d in horto om(ne)s herbas habeant: [...] cucumeres, pepones [...] cepas, alla [...]*. The two pairs of plants are analogous to those mentioned in *Numbers: Recordamur pisctum, quos comedebamus in Aegypto gratts: in mentem nobis ventunt cucumeres, et pepones, porri que, et caepe, et allia* (Num. XI, 5). A comparison of the sequence of the names in both texts leaves no doubt that in this case too the editors of the capitulary borrowed from the Biblical text<sup>7</sup>.

The outcome of heretofore analysis encourages towards a systematic survey of the contents of the capitulary from the viewpoint of possible Biblical references. As is known, the *Books of Kings* and the *Books of Chronicles* contain extremely numerous information about the estates of the rulers of Israel. Mention is made of the *agri* of King Solomon (I Reg. VII, 12); *substantia* or *possessions* of King David (I Paralip. XXVII, 31; XXIX, 6); *propria substantia* of King Ezechias (II Paralip. XXXI, 3) and *universa substantia* of King Josias (II Paralip. XXXV, 7) — the successors of Solomon. A description of a ceremonious Passover during the reign of Josias indicates clearly that the estate remained at the exclusive disposal of the ruler (II Paralip. XXV, 7; cf. XXXI, 3). This is concurrent with the view expressed by *Ecclesiastes (fili David, regis Jerusalem): Et omni homini, cui dedit Deus divitias, atque substantiam, potestatemque et tribuit ut comedat ex eis, et fruatur parte sua, et laetatur de labore suo: hoc est donum Dei* (Eccl. V, 18). The nouns *divitiae*, *substantia*, and *potestas* indicate unambiguously that the author had in mind the king. We cannot exclude the possibility that the stand expressed by *Ecclesiastes* was reflected in *cap.* 1: *Volumus ut villę nostrę [...] sub integritate partibus n(ost)ris deserviant et non aliis hominibus*. There is a striking similarity of formulations: *fruatur parte sua* (Eccl.) and

<sup>7</sup>Cf. G. Baist, *Zur Interpretation der Brevium Exempla und des Capitulare de Villis*, "Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte", vol. XII, 1914, p. 56: "[...] cucumeres, pepones, cucurbitas: all three Biblical, combined already in the dictionary".

*partibus nostris deserviant* (CV). Yet another noteworthy fragment of *cap.* 1 mentions royal estates *quas ad opus n(ost)r(um) servlendi institutas habemus*. K. Verhein devoted considerable attention to this fragment, but he was interested in the existence or non-existence of table estates<sup>8</sup>. On my part, I wish to propose the hypothesis that the expression: *ad opus n(ost)r(um)* refers to 1 Samuel: *Dixit itaque Samuel omnia verba Domini ad populum, qui petterat a se regem [...] Servos etiam vestros, et ancillas, et juvenes optimos, et asinos auferet, et ponet in opere suo* (I Reg. VIII, 10, 16; cf. I Paralip. IV, 23: *apud regem in operibus ejus*).

*Cap.* 2–4 as well as a number of further ones (*cap.* 52, 56) pertain to the administration of justice in relation to household servants and free people in royal estates, as well as the protection of the servants against the oppression of the stewards. Pertinent literature drew attention to this characteristic feature of the CV. Theodor Mayer explained it by referring to a transition of the estates “from a general demesne resource to the administration of table estates”<sup>9</sup>. Quite possibly, however, this configuration of the contents of the CV reflects the thought that the possession of the estates by the king is founded on his just verdict. Solomon asked God only for the capability of justly judging his people and distinguishing between good and evil (III Reg. III, 9 sqq.; cf. X, 6 sqq.; II Reg. VIII, 15; I Paralip. XVIII, 4). Not only did he receive this gift, but also that which he did not request: *divitias autem et substantiam et gloriam* (II Paralip. I, 9 sqq.; cf. III Reg. III, 9 sqq.; X, 6 sqq.). At this point, it is worth recalling *Psalm LXXII* (*In Salomonem*), which, on the one hand, mentions the king liberating the poor from iniquity and oppression, and, on the other hand, underlines the monarch’s wealth. Should the royal estate described in CV not be interpreted as *donum Dei*?

*Cap.* 8 and 22 contain information about vineyards in the estates of the Carolingian ruler. The *Old Testament* monarchs also possessed vineyards: David had *cultores vinearum*, headed by *princeps* (I Paralip. XXVII, 27). In turn, *Ecclesiastes* declares: *Magnificavi opera mea [...] et plantavi vineae* (Eccl. II, 4). We learn about the vineyards of King Ozias (*vineas quoque habuit et vitutores in montibus, et in carmelo: erat quippe homo agricultuarae*

<sup>8</sup>K. Verhein, *Studien zu den Quellen*, p. 328.

<sup>9</sup>T. Mayer, *Zur Entstehung des Capitulare de villis*, “Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte”, vol. XVII, 1923, p. 116 and cf. p. 119.

*deditus* — II Paralip. XXVI, 10) and the wine cellars of King Ezechias (II Paralip. XXXII, 28). The cellars mentioned in *cap.* 8 are analogous to the *cella vinaria* in the estates of King David (I Paralip. XXVII,27; *cella vinaria* is also mentioned in Cant. II, 4).

*Cap.* 10 enumerates the numerous *ministeriales* serving in royal estates (*maiores [...], forestarii, poledrarii, cellerarii, decani, telonarii*). Together with the steward, they are counterparts of functionaries, *qui praeerant substantiae et possessionibus* of King David (I Paralip. XXVIII, 1). Those *Old Testament principes substantiae*, and *praepositi* were responsible for the work performed by the peasants cultivating the fields, the vineyard keepers, and the suppliers of wine, as well as the state of the olive groves, the olive storehouses, and the herds of cattle, camels and sheep (I Paralip. XXVII, 25 sqq.) There is no such exhaustive information about functionaries in the estates of King Solomon. A description of the construction of the Temple enables us to learn, however, that *erant [...] principes super omnia opera Salomonis praepositi quingenti quinquaginta, qui habebant subjectum populum, et statuta operibus imperabant* (III Reg. IX, 23).

*Cap.* 13–15 and 50 pertain to horse breeding, and *cap.* 23 — to other farm animals: *in unaqueque(vue) villa [...] habeant iudices vacca-porcaritias, berbicaritias, capraritias, hircaritias, quantu(m) plus potuerint, et nullatenus sine hoc e(ss)e debent*. The editors of the capitulary did not spare detailed resolutions concerning animal husbandry. For a long time now, researchers have drawn attention to the fact that the CV contain little data about land cultivation, in contrast to the extensive information about animal husbandry<sup>10</sup>. Is this features of the CV not associated with *Old Testament* stylisation? *Ecclesiastes* proclaims: *Possedi [...] armenta quoque, et magnos ovium greges ultra omnes qui fuerunt ante me in Jerusalem* (Eccl. II, 7). We read about the enormous herds belonging to Solomon, totalling tens of thousands of assorted animals (III Reg. IV, 26, 28; VIII, 5, 63). In turn, Ezechias, the King of Juda, was the owner of *praesapia omnium jumentorum, caulasque pecorum [...] greges ovium et armentorum innumerabiles, eo quod dedisset ei Dominus substantiam multam nimis* (II Paralip. XXXII, 28 sqq.). Immense herds belonged also to King Solomon (II Paralip. XXVI,10) and Josias (II Paralip. XXXV, 7).

<sup>10</sup>Cf. e. g. K. Verheijn, *Studien zu den Quellen*, p. 322.

Information about grain cultivation in the estates of the kings of Israel is scarce.

Cap. 20 and 24 mention the responsibility of stewards for supplying provisions for the royal table. It was decided that *Unusquisque(i) iudex fructa semp(er) habundanter faciat omni anno ad curtem* (cap. 20); furthermore: *Quicquid ad discu(m) n(ost)r(u)m dare debet unusqualit(er) bona et optima at(que) bene studiose et nitide omnia sint conposita, quicquid dederint* (cap. 24). Mention is made also of *annona pastos [...] ad mensam [regis — M. D.]* (cap. 24). Similar problems are discussed by the *Book of Kings* describing the reign of Solomon, who had special *praefectos [...] qui praebabent annonam regi et domui ejus* (III Reg. IV, 7). Elsewhere we read: *Nutriebantque eos supradicti regis praefecti: sed et necessaria mensae regis Salomonis cum ingenti cura praebabent in tempore suo* (III Reg. IV, 27 sqq.). Finally, it should be mentioned that Queen of Saba admired *cibos mensae* of Solomon (III Reg. X, 4 sqq.).

Cap. 34 and 44 list certain items of food with which the stewards were obligated to supply the royal court. If we additionally take into account information from cap. 18–19, 38–39, 45, 64 and 70 then we shall find that many of those provisions were to be found in the list of supplies for the tables of David and Solomon: *buttrum, faba, cicer, mel, boves pingues, pulli* (cf. II Reg. XVII, 28 sqq.; III Reg. IV, 22 sqq.).

Cap. 36 deals with forestry and recommends that the stewards care, i. a. for woodlands. It appears worth drawing attention to *Ecclesiastes: Magnificavi opera mea [...] Et extruxi mihi piscinas aquarum, ut irrigarem silvam lignorum germinantium* (Eccl. II, 4 sqq.). We know that King Ezechias also *fecerit piscinam, et aquaeductum* (IV Reg. XX, 20). Consequently, the other noteworthy capitularies are cap. 21 and 65, which resolve that royal estates should include fish ponds (*vivaria*).

The contents of cap. 46 and 47 refers to royal menageries (*brogilli*), hunters and falconers. This topic was discussed within a wider context by Karl H a u c k, who took into consideration the menagerie in Aix-la-Chapelle during the reign of Louis the Pious<sup>11</sup>. The David and Solomon motifs are absent in the analysis

<sup>11</sup>K. H a u c k, *Tiergarten im Pfalzbereich*, in: *Deutsche Königspfalzen. Beiträge zu ihrer historischen und archäologischen Erforschung*, vol. 1, Göttingen 1963, p. 32 sqq.

proposed by K. Hauck, who, interpreting the words of Walafrid Strabo, wrote: "The extent to which [...] this palatial and collegiate circle [...] indicates an earthly Paradise, for which the reign of Louis, similarly to the time of Moses and Christ, prepares the people, is explained by a description of the Aix-la-Chapelle menagerie as Paradise on Earth"<sup>12</sup>. This suggestion does not have to be equally apt for the time of Charlemagne, with whose person we are inclined to associate the CV<sup>13</sup>. It seems suitable to recall *Ecclesiastes: Feci hortos, et pomaria, et consevi ea cuncti generis arboribus, et extruxi mihi piscinas aquarum, ut irrigarem silvam lignorum germinantium* (Eccl. II, 5 sqq.). The mentioned *hortus* is probably not a fruit garden. It is also necessary to accentuate the fact that in 801 Charlemagne, thanks to efforts initiated in 797, received from Harun ar-Rashid, the Caliph of Baghdad, a number of exotic animals: an elephant, a Nubian bear, a lion and monkeys, in this way creating the foundation for the menagerie in Aix-la-Chapelle<sup>14</sup>. In connection with those additions we should draw attention to the information in the *Books of Kings* concerning Solomon: *classis regis per mare cum classe Hiram semel per tres annos ibat in Tharsis, deferens inde aurum, et argentum, et dentes elephantorum, et simias, et pavos* (III Reg. X, 22). The similarity between the menagerie of Charlemagne and Solomon is striking. We may enhance this effect by referring to *cap. 40*, which obligates the stewards to breed *pavones, fastanos, enecas, columbas, p(er)dicces, turtures p(ro) dignitatis causa*. A justified hypothesis maintains that the peacocks mentioned at the very outset were not accidental, but an intentional reference to the Biblical information about Solomon. Let us add that turtle, doves and pigeons are frequently mentioned in the *Song of Songs*, connected, after all, with Solomon (Cant. I, 9; I, 15; II, 10; II, 12.; II, 14; IV, 1; V, 2; V, 12; VI, 9). The contents of *cap. 40*, together

<sup>12</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. R. Michałowski, *Problem języka w zachodnioeuropejskiej ideologii władzy królewskiej (VIII–XI wiek)* (*Problem of Language in West European Ideology of Royal Power/ Eighth–Eleventh Century*), in: *Gospodarka — Ludzie — Władza* (*Economy — People — Power*), Warszawa 1998, p. 35 sqq. — here an analysis of the transformations of views concerning the nature of royal power in the period between Charlemagne and Louis the Pious.

<sup>14</sup>K. Hauck, *Tiergarten im Pfalzgebiet*, p. 45 sqq.; cf. U. Knefelkamp, *Die Beziehungen Karls des Großen zum Kalifen Harun ar-Raschid nach den Reichsanalen des Einhard (801–810)*, in: *Die mittelalterlichen Ursprünge der europäischen Expansion*, ed. E. Schmitt, München 1986, p. 81 sqq.

with the information concerning the beginnings of the Carolingian menagerie, make it possible to place the CV in the 790s, and to associate them with Charlemagne.

*Cap. 55* expects the stewards to conduct a register of expenses and revenues, while *cap. 62* resolves: *Ut unusquisque iudex p(er) singulos annos ex omni conlaboratione n(ost)ra [...] nobis notu(m) faciant, ut scire valeamus, quid (ve)l quantu(m) de singulis rebus habeam(us)*. The *Book of Kings* contains information about King Solomon's income in gold from various sources *per annos singulos* (III Reg. X, 14 sqq.), implying the existence of some sort of a register of the revenues of this ruler.

*Cap. 64* discusses carts (*carra*) used in wartime expeditions — their construction features, supplies of flour and wine, and equipment: a shield, a spear, a bow and a quiver. This fragment of the CV has magnificent *Old Testament* analogies: already Samuel *constituit sibi[...]fabros armorum et currum suorum* (I Reg. VIII, 12), while Solomon built *civitates curruum* and established special *praefecti currum* (III Reg. IX, 19 sqq., 22 sqq.).

Food for thought is offered by *cap. 69* dealing with the extermination of wolves, and specially the following fragment: *in mense Maio[...]lupellos p(er)quirant et conp(rae)hendunt tam cu(m) pulvere et hamis qua(m)q(ue) cu(m) fossis et canib(us)*. Was this resolution inspired by a passage in the *Song of Songs* about the young foxes: *capite nobis vulpes parvulas, quae demoliuntur vineas: nam vinea nostra floruit* (Cant. II, 15)? Our attention is drawn to the similarity of the nouns: *vulpus* and *lupus* as well as the fact that the methods of exterminating the young wolves recommended by the CV are more suitable for eliminating the population of foxes.

Finally, in a supplementation of remarks about *cap. 70*, mentioned at the beginning of our contribution, let us stress that many of the plants listed therein are known from the Bible, mainly the *Old Testament*. Alongside *cucumer*, *pepo*, *cepa*, and *allium* they include also *menta*, *anetum*, *ciminum*, *ruta*, *coriandrum*, *nux*, *ficus*, *malum*, *faba*, *cicer*, *coloquentida*, *git*, *lilium*, *rosa* and *porrum* (Exod. XVI, 31; XXV, 33; XXXVII, 19 sqq.; II Reg. XVII, 28 sqq.; III Reg. IV, 25; IV Reg. IV, 39; I Paralip. XXVII, 28; Numeri XI, 5; Deut. VIII, 8 sqq.; Isaias XXVIII, 25; Cant. II, 3; II, 12; VI, 10 and *passim*; Matthew XXIII, 23; Luke XI, 42). Yet another striking feature is that the list of plants in *cap. 70* begins with



*lillum*, a plant associated with King Solomon. In the first place, the chapters of the Temple of Solomon were in the shape of a flower, which the *Vulgate* describes as *lillum* (III Reg. VII, 19; XXII, 26)<sup>15</sup>. Second, the lily is mentioned frequently in the *Song of Songs*.

An interpretation of *cap.* 70 should keep in mind the words of *Ecclesiastes*: *Magnificavi opera mea [...] feci hortos, et pomaria* (Eccl. II, 4 sqq.). The *Old Testament* mentions the royal gardens in Jerusalem upon numerous occasions (IV Reg. XXV, 4; cf. Jeremias XXXIX, 4; LII, 7; Nahum III, 15). Ahab, the King of Israel (Samaria) intended to establish *hortum olerum* next to his palace (III Reg. XXI, 2) while Manasses, the King of Juda, *sepultus est in horto domus suae* (IV Reg. XXI, 18) similarly to his son Amon (IV Reg. XXI, 26).

Finally, the question whether the inclusion in the *CV* of a lavish catalogue of plants, animals and birds was to testify to the wisdom of the king. In this way, Charlemagne emulated Solomon, who *disputavit super lignis a cedro, quae est in Libano, usque ad hyssopum, quae egreditur de partete: et disseruit de jumentis, et volucribus, et reptilibus, et piscibus* (III Reg. IV, 33).

The presented material entitles us to propose the conclusion that the authors of the *CV* sought in the *Old Testament* models of an economic profile, an organisational structure, and ideological foundations for the existence of a royal estate. Apparently, the *Old Testament* model of the royal power of the Carolingian dynasty, particularly developed during the reign of Charlemagne<sup>16</sup>, was reflected in the character of economic bases for monarchic rule.

<sup>15</sup>On the symbolics of the lily flower, see G. Heinz-Mohr, *Lexicon der Symbole, Bilder und Zeichen der christlichen Kunst*, 8 ed., Darmstadt 1984, p. 188-189.

<sup>16</sup>From the copious literature we cite, by way of example: J. J. Nelson, *Kingship, Law and Liturgy in the Political Thought of Hincmar of Rheims*, "English Historical Review", vol. XCII, 1977, p. 241 sqq.; P. Riché, *La Bible et la vie politique dans le haut Moyen Age*, in: *Le Moyen Age et la Bible*, Paris 1981, p. 388 sqq.; H. A. Myers, *Medieval Kingship*, Chicago 1982, p. 137 sqq.; J. Fleckenstein, *Karl der Grosse und sein Hof*, in: *idem, Ordnungen und formende Kräfte des Mittelalters. Ausgewählte Beiträge*, Göttingen 1989, p. 52 sqq.; J. J. Contreni, *Carolingian Biblical Studies*, in: *Carolingian Essays*, ed. U.-R. Blumenthal, Washington 1993, p. 71 sqq. Currently, R. Michałowski is pursuing this topic.

The above yields a directive for the interpretation of the *CV*: this programme text captures the very essence of the monarchy of Charlemagne. The view expounded by Alfons Dopsch, and sustained in newest literature on the subject<sup>17</sup>, does not appear to be convincing; it claims that the *CV* resolutions did not contain anything new, and that their only intention was to restore original relations in royal estates. Moreover, there are no bases for distinguishing decisions of practical significance or deprived of such rank<sup>18</sup>, nor to link the origin of the *CV* with incidental events such as the famine in 792–793<sup>19</sup>. At the basis of such reasoning there lies the premise that Charlemagne had at his disposal certain theoretical variants of choosing the economic foundations of his power and, to put it differently, that he opted for the most rational model: large, autarchic landed estates. Meanwhile, more speaks in favour of the hypothesis that Charlemagne was deprived of such a choice: in order to guarantee divine protection for his state, he acted in the same manner as the *Old Testament Kings* of Israel in the religious, social and economic domains. From this viewpoint, the assessment of the value of the *CV* as a source for the economic history of the Carolingian epoch remains open.

(Translated by Aleksandra Rodzińska-Chojnowska)

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<sup>17</sup>A. Verhulst, *Capitulare de villis*, in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. II, München 1983, col. 1482.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibidem*, col. 1483.

<sup>19</sup>A. Verhulst, *Karolingische Agrarpolitik. Das Capitulare de villis und die Hungersnöte von 792/793 und 805/806*, "Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie", vol. XIII, 1965, p. 175 sqq.