

ITINERANT KINGSHIP
AND ROYAL MONASTERIES
IN EARLY MEDIEVAL
GERMANY,
c. 936–1075

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INTRODUCTION

This book explores and analyses the political, economic and religious relations between the royal monastic institutions in tenth- and eleventh-century Germany and the Ottonian and early Salian monarchs. In its broadest sense, it examines the structures of power, the problems of rulership and the realities of power and control in a pre-modern society. Specifically, the study focuses on practical aspects of itinerant kingship – that is, governing while constantly in motion – and on the *servitium regis* – those payments and services that churches and monasteries specially allied with the king were obliged to provide to him in return for royal patronage and protection – as a crucial economic underpinning of the German kings' itinerary. In regard to itinerant kingship and the *servitium regis*, far less research has been devoted to the role of royal monasteries and convents than to the role of the bishoprics and the royal residences or *Pfalzen*. Consequently, I investigated royal-monastic relations in this context to determine how this relationship functioned in actual practice. In the process, I re-evaluated the economic support that the royal monasteries provided to the king and his itinerant court, and examined how the demands of this support affected both the monastic ideal and the institutional development of monasticism in Germany.

I argue that the size and the political structure of the realm over which the Ottonian and Salian kings came to rule forced them to govern in a highly itinerant mode. The itinerant governance of the Ottonian and early Salian monarchs, in turn, necessitated that strategically placed royal monasteries were called upon to play a substantial role in accommodating, feeding and supplying the royal court while under way, as well as in securing and maintaining crucial corridors of transit. Consequently, a much closer and more important relationship existed between the royal monasteries and the early German kings than previous scholarship has acknowledged. I show how this relationship functioned in the realm of

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practical politics: that is, it varied widely in the specific relationship between individual institutions and monarchs, yet overall a coherent set of responses to problems and situations emerged – in sum, a royal monastic policy.

Before discussing the royal *iter* and its importance, the structure of the German realm and the *servitium regis* in detail, however, it is necessary to provide the historical context of the study and outline the methods and structure of Ottonian government.