INTRODUCTION

In 1049 the great reform pope, Leo IX (1049–54), embarked on an ambitious itinerary north of the Alps to root out simony and clerical corruption. In the midst of a pressing schedule of councils, this former bishop of Toul paid a visit to his homeland, to 'sweet Alsace' as his biographer called it. There, Alsace's famous son dispensed blessings, relics and papal privileges to a number of reformed monasteries throughout the region, among them Altdorf, Hesse and Woffenheim which, as Leo proudly recalled, had been founded by his own kin, the so-called lords of Dabo and Eguisheim.[1] In his grants to two other monasteries, Lure and Hohenburg, the pope was strangely oblivious to even deeper ancestral ties. For if Leo had emerged from the line of Dabo and Eguisheim, he and his near ancestors also were the direct descendants of a more ancient kin-group, the Etichonids, who had arisen in the seventh century, produced an illustrious line of dukes in the eighth century and been the patrons of Lure, Hohenburg and at least nine other Alsatian monasteries, but who had been transformed around the millennium into a new family, the lords of Dabo and Eguisheim.

Eclipsing Leo's view of his recent Etichonid heritage was a profound revision in his ancestors' lordship in the late tenth century, a revision which marked the transformation of a distinctive political order in early medieval Alsace stretching back to the seventh century. As kin-groups such as the Etichonids founded and patronized monasteries, whose unique burden it was to replicate the permanence of the divine order on earth, they had encouraged the growth of institutions whose proprietary endowments formed the material basis of stable and enduring networks of lordship. Indeed, the kin-groups that rose to prominence

---

[1] Hans Hummer, 'Reform and Lordship in Alsace at the Turn of the Millennium', in Warren Brown and Piotr Górecki eds., *Conflict in Medieval Europe: Changing Perspectives on Society and Culture* (Burlington, Ver., 2003), pp. 69–84, esp. pp. 69–70, 80–1.

I

during the early medieval period, whether their dominance was realized on the local, regional or supra–regional levels, were those that success–fully cultivated a local basis of power in this way. With the advent of radical monastic reform in the tenth century, the Etichonids' identity, which was closely bound up with their patronage of monasteries, was swept away.

As the pope's activities might indicate, the cultivation of lordly power in early medieval Alsace also was integrally connected to the larger story of power in early medieval Europe. Alsatian monks and lords never operated in a vacuum; their rights and privileges were inextricably tied to the legitimizing authority of popes, kings and emperors. These repre–sentatives of the political centre in turn sprang from families whose power and influence was based on the kinds of associative networks pervasive in Alsace, so that the extension of broader political authority was predicated on the possibilities inherent in monastery-based lordship. Thus, if the formation of the lineage of Dabo and Eguisheim was tied to the emer–gence of reformed cloisters, and if the fate of the Etichonids had been bound to an archipelago of earlier foundations in Alsace, the prestige of these ecclesiastical institutions likewise was dependent upon the grants dispensed by popes and kings, both of whom in 1049, it turns out, were kinsmen to one another and had arisen from families deeply implicated in the patronage of local monasteries.

Needless to say, the problem of power has long occupied the attention of early medieval historians. Some have devoted themselves to elucidat–ing the formal political, military, judicial, legal and ecclesiastical structures through which Frankish officials, especially those of the Carolingian Empire, the most ambitious and successful political unit of the early middle ages, attempted to rule.[2] Others have found this view incomplete, even unsatisfying. The notion of a system of governance directed from the political centre, they caution, can give off the impression that early medieval kings simply delegated authority to subordinates and exercised power through discrete public institutions. Attention to actual practice, as opposed to prescriptive exhortations, appears to reveal that early medieval kingdoms lacked the salient feature of a state: a routine administration coordinated by a ruler and his representatives. Thus, a countervailing

---

[2] Heinrich Brunner, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1887–92); Louis Halphen, *Charlemagne and the Carolingian Empire*, trans. Giselle de Nie (Amsterdam, New York, Oxford, 1977); François L. Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions under Charlemagne*, trans. Bryce and Mary Lyon (Providence, 1968); *Feudalism*, 3rd edn, trans. Philip Grierson (New York, 1964); and Pierre Riché, *The Carolingians: A Family Who Forged Europe*, trans. Michael I. Allen (Philadelphia, 1993); and Bernard Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare: Prelude to Empire* (Philadelphia, 2001).

Introduction

tradition has long called attention to the limitations of early medieval 'government'.[3]

Skepticism about maximalist views of governmental organization and the attractions of social history have combined to generate an alternative vision of the past that has emphasized less formal conduits of power. Over the last couple of decades, some historians have shifted the focus away from the agency of kings to the primacy of local context, from formal institutional and political history to custom, kinship, gift-exchange and compromise justice. Influential has been the work of the so-called Bucknell group in Britain[4] and of a group of American social historians dubbed with some exaggeration by French medievalists as the 'new school of American medieval history'.[5] According to this view, power was exercised most regularly at the local level, and it is there, social historians have argued, that we must look if we wish to grasp the essential stability of medieval society.

While this fruitful work has succeeded in evoking the vitality of medieval organization independent of formal politics, it in turn has raised additional issues for scrutiny. The close examination of the local social context has brought historians face to face with local institutions, local power brokers, their ties to one another and the relevance of royal authority for the perpetuation of political order. Consequently, the formal elements that social historians have been tempted to set aside as epiphenomenal have reasserted themselves as integral to the formulation of power. Governance in early medieval Europe might have been less abstract by comparison with bureaucratically ordered societies, but its political landscape included formal institutions (especially ecclesiastical ones),

---

[3] Heinrich Fichtenau, *The Carolingian Empire*, trans. Peter Munz (orig. pub. 1957; reprint: Toronto, 1978); J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West: The Early Middle Ages A. D. 400–1000* (New York, 1962); Timothy Reuter, 'Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th series, 35 (1985), pp. 75–94.

[4] Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre eds., *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1986); in particular, Ian Wood, 'Disputes in Late Fifth- and Sixth-Century Gaul: Some Problems', pp. 7–22; Paul Fouracre, '"Placita" and the Settlement of Disputes in Later Merovingian Francia', pp. 23–44; Janet L. Nelson, 'Dispute Settlement in Carolingian West Francia', pp. 45–64; Wendy Davies, 'People and Places in Dispute in Ninth-Century Brittany', pp. 65–84; Chris Wickham, 'Land Disputes and Their Social Framework in Lombard-Carolingian Italy, 700–900', pp. 105–24; and Patrick Wormald, 'Charters, Law and the Settlement of Disputes in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 149–68.

[5] Patrick J. Geary, 'Vivre en conflit dans une France sans état: Typologie des mécanismes de règlement des conflits (1050–1200)', *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 42 (1986), pp. 1107–33; Patrick J. Geary, 'L'humiliation des saints', *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 34 (1978), pp. 27–42; Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, 1992); William I. Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago, 1990); Barbara H. Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of St. Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca, 1989); and Stephen D. White, *Custom, Kinship, and Gifts to Saints: The Laudatio Parentum in Western France, 1050–1150* (Chapel Hill, 1988).

3

political offices and law codes; and its kingdoms possessed a central focus in the person of the king and his court. The authority wielded by kings might appear at times to have been weak and uneven, but it was active, it was both feared and revered, and it was exercised often enough with jarring ruthlessness to ensure a measure of compliance.

It is now less evident that social analysis of non-prescriptive sources, the so-called 'documents-of-practice', can recover the hard, as opposed to propagandistic, reality of medieval society. In these postmodern times not only have such sources turned out to be as rhetorically charged as prescriptive texts,[6] albeit in a different way, but when we examine the circumstances surrounding their production, we often discover that they appear to be the debris left over from struggles for power at the highest levels of early medieval society. This does not mean that documents of practice cannot be used to do traditional social history, but it is to say that the circumstances that provoked documentation often provide clues to the contact points between high politics and local affairs.

The accumulation of research emanating from Germany has made it eminently clear that royal power cannot simply be marginalized as a contaminating artefact. Long preoccupied with issues of political constitution, German medievalists have investigated with ever greater subtlety the relationship between the long dominance of the aristocracy and the evolving manifestation of royal power. As a part of the effort to work out the composition of the aristocracy, they have developed the prosopographical methods and source-critical techniques that have made it possible to work out the connections that run from the highest levels of authority to the lowest.[7] This sophisticated work has established the crucial place of kingship in the maintenance of aristocratic power at all levels.

---

[6] Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages', *Speculum* 65 (1990), pp. 59–86; and Paul Freedman and Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'Medievalisms Old and New: The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American Medieval Studies', *American Historical Review* 103 (1998), pp. 677–704.

[7] Gerd Tellenbach, *Zur Bedeutung der Personenforschung für die Erkenntnis des früheren Mittelalters*, Freiburger Universitätsreden, Neue Folge, 25 (Freiburg, 1957); Karl Schmid, 'Der "Freiburger Arbeitskreis": Gerd Tellenbach zum 70. Geburtstag', *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 122 (1974), pp. 331–47; 'Programmatisches zur Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Personen und Personengruppen', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 8 (1974), pp. 116–30; Hagen Keller, 'Das Werk Gerd Tellenbachs in der Geschichtswissenschaft unseres Jahrhunderts', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 28 (1994), pp. 374–97, esp. pp. 389–92; Otto Gerhard Oexle, 'Gruppen in der Gesellschaft: Das wissenschaftliche Œuvre von Karl Schmid', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 28 (1994), pp. 410–35; Timothy Reuter ed. and trans., *The Medieval Nobility: Studies on the Ruling Classes of France and Germany from the Sixth to the Twelfth Century* (Amsterdam, 1978); John B. Freed, 'Reflections on the Medieval German Nobility', *American Historical Review* 91 (1986), pp. 553–75; and Stuart Airlie, 'The Aristocracy', in R. McKitterick ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. II, *c. 700–c. 900* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 431–50.

Introduction

Over the last decade some investigators have begun to confront anew the problem of political order in the Frankish world by integrating the rich work of social historians on kinship, property-holding and dispute resolution with the scholarship on the aristocracy.[8] In essence, these historians argue that the crux of the matter is in the details: because an abstract government did not exist, insights into the operation of politics in the early middle ages must be won from close analysis of local contexts. These studies demonstrate that the investigation of a particular locality can never simply be constituted as the study of a discrete region, disconnected from wider politics, but necessarily entails the investigation of power ecumenically. This approach has essentially revealed that the flow of royal power was both enabled and regulated by local networks of power.

I shall draw pragmatically from the wisdom of statists and processualists to delineate the outlines of political order in early medieval Europe, with Alsace as my focus. Although the Carolingian era looms large in the following pages, the study is not limited to that period.[9] The weight of scholarship has established the seventh and eleventh centuries as the proper termini for the early medieval era, both of which pre- and postdate the Carolingian period proper. The prodigious research on late antiquity has made it abundantly clear, implicitly or explicitly, that Henri Pirenne was right, if for the wrong reasons: the seventh century rather than the fifth marked the end of antiquity.[10] I will begin then not with a Roman

---

[8] Warren Brown, *Unjust Seizure: Conflict, Interest, and Authority in an Early Medieval Society* (Ithaca, 2001); and Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley, 400–1000* (Cambridge, 2000). See also, Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre eds., *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 1–16, 245–71; and individual articles there by David Ganz, 'The Ideology of Sharing: Apostolic Community and Ecclesiastical Property in the Early Middle Ages', pp. 17–30; Ian Wood, 'Teutsind, Witlaic and the History of Merovingian *precaria*', pp. 31–52; Paul Fouracre, 'Eternal Light and Earthly Needs: Practical Aspects of the Development of Frankish Immunities', pp. 53–81; Janet Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', pp. 82–113; Paul Wormald, 'Lordship and Justice in the Early English Kingdom: Oswaldslow Revisited', pp. 114–36; and Timothy Reuter, 'Property Transactions and Social Relations between Rulers, Bishops and Nobles in Early Eleventh-Century Saxony: The Evidence of the *Vita Meinwerci*', pp. 165–99.

[9] On the problem of the Carolingian period as a distinct era, see the pessimistic view of Richard E. Sullivan, 'The Carolingian Age: Reflections on Its Place in the History of the Middle Ages', *Speculum* 64 (1989), pp. 267–306; and the more optimistic assessment of Janet L. Nelson, 'Presidential Address. England and the Continent in the Ninth Century I: Ends and Beginnings', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6th series, 12 (2002), pp. 1–22.

[10] Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, trans. Bernhard Miall (orig. pub. 1939; reprint: Totowa, 1980); Eugen Ewig, *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien: Gesammelte Schriften (1952–1973)*, 2 vols., ed. Hartmut Atsma, Beihefte der *Francia* 3/1–2 (Zurich, 1976–9); Patrick J. Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (New York, Oxford, 1988); Walter Goffart, 'From Roman Taxation to Mediaeval Seigneurie: Three Notes', *Speculum* 47 (1972), pp. 165–87, 373–94; Reinhold Kaiser, *Das römische Erbe und das Merowingerreich*,

order that had ceased to exist, but with a close treatment of the late
Merovingian period when a fundamentally different order based on net-
works of monasteries and kin-groups coalesced.

This early medieval order held sway until the eleventh century, when it
underwent profound transformation. The literature here is enormous and
sharply debated, but suffice it to say for the moment that although
historians disagree on the extent of change, a range of studies written
from a variety of perspectives has established that Europe experienced
deep and abiding change between Carolingian times and the emergence
of the high medieval monarchies and an autonomous Church by the
twelfth century.[11] It is important to stress that, although these changes
may not have been unconnected to the transformation of the Carolingian
world in the tenth century (at least in some areas),[12] they fit only uneasily
with the narrative of the collapse of the Carolingian Empire in others.[13] In
many areas, such as Alsace, the posited transformations noticeably post-
dated the end of the Carolingian era.

If the seventh and the eleventh centuries mark off the early middle ages
as a distinct epoch, then we should be able to account for its coherence
with positive evidence. That is, the early medieval period should not
simply present a convenient space to trace out the vestiges of a dying
Roman order or the emergence of monarchical government in the
twelfth century, as is often the case with those working on either side
of the period, and even by some working within it. The rulers, prelates

    Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte 26 (Munich, 1993); Michael McCormick, *Origins of the
European Economy: Communications and Commerce A. D. 300–900* (Cambridge, 2001); Pierre
Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West, Sixth through Eighth Centuries*, trans. John
J. Contreni (Columbia, S. C., 1976); Chris Wickham, 'The Other Transition: From the Ancient
World to Feudalism', *Past and Present* 103 (1984), pp. 3–36; and Ian Wood, *The Merovingian
Kingdoms 450–751* (London, New York, 1994).

[11] On the west, see Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 2 vols., trans. L. A. Manyon (Chicago, 1961); Richard
W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, London, 1953); Robert Fossier, *Enfance
de l'Europe, X^e–XIIe siècles: Aspects économiques et sociaux* (Paris, 1982); and Jean-Pierre Poly and
Eric Bournazel, *The Feudal Transformation 900–1200*, 2 vols., trans. Caroline Higgitt (New York,
1991). For Germany, see Gerd Tellenbach, *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the
Investiture Contest*, trans. R. F. Bennett (orig. pub. 1940; reprint: Toronto, 1991); Gerd Tellenbach,
The Church in Western Europe from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century, trans. Timothy Reuter
(Cambridge, 1993); Hagen Keller, *Zwischen regionaler Begrenzung und universalem Horizont:
Deutschland im Imperium der Salier und Staufer, 1024 bis 1250* (Berlin, 1986); and Stefan Weinfurter,
The Salian Century: Main Currents in an Age of Transition, trans. Barbara M. Bowlus (Philadelphia,
1999). On Europe in general, see Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and
Cultural Change 950–1350* (Princeton, 1993); and Robert I. Moore, *The First European Revolution,
c. 970–1215* (Oxford, 2000).

[12] Chris Wickham, 'Society', in Rosamond McKitterick ed., *The Early Middle Ages: Europe 400–1000*,
The Short Oxford History of Europe (Oxford, 2001), pp. 90–4.

[13] See now Simon MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End
of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge, 2003).

Introduction

and aristocrats of the early middle ages created and perpetuated a coherent
political order which – whether they realized it or not, but which we,
who have the advantage of hindsight, can nonetheless see – was neither
merely a survival of late classical forms nor a prelude to bureaucratization
in the high middle ages. In early medieval Alsace, this order flowed from a
distinctive symbiosis of familial, ecclesiastical and royal interests.

Aspects of early medieval society that we might conceive of as sociological –
custom, networks of kinship and friendship and gift-exchange – are crucial
for understanding the formulation of this political order. Nonetheless, it
is important to emphasize that these 'informal' processes were not neces-
sarily more fundamental than other factors, because the networks that bound
people to one another, so far as we can access them, were often mediated
by formally constituted institutions. Any treatment of associative networks
should blend what we retrospectively distinguish as formal and informal
modes of organization. Although I shall use such terms as 'local' and 'central',
'political' and 'social', and 'family' and 'monastery', I do not use them
to represent oppositions whose dialectical interaction somehow can be
seen to drive historical change. They are merely analytical, meaningful for
differentiating the larger Frankish polity from its constituent parts and for
identifying patterns of activity in terms that we as outside observers might
recognize. Indeed, they are useful for helping us to understand that the
distinctions we reflexively draw between local and central power, social
and political history, and formal and informal processes are difficult to sustain
in an early medieval context. Under the pressure of analysis, general and
local order often turn out to be two sides of a coin, political and social life
are often indistinguishable, and the relationships between families and the
monasteries they patronized were extraordinarily fluid and in any case
mutually reinforcing.

I also will de-emphasize the distinction between lay and ecclesiastical
interests, as many early medievalists have been doing more systemically.[14]
Scholars long have pointed out that almost all the sources that survive
from the period were preserved by ecclesiastical institutions and so reflect
'church' interests. A typical strategy for overcoming this bias has been to
abstract from the sources the (lay) society that must have existed beyond
the monastery.[15] While there is some justification for trying to fill out the
wider world encoded in the sources, at least for understanding the

---

[14] Mayke De Jong, 'Introduction: Rethinking Early Medieval Christianity: A View from the
Netherlands', *Early Medieval Europe* 7, 3 (1998), pp. 261–75.

[15] Chris Wickham, *The Mountains and the City: The Tuscan Appennines in the Early Middle Ages*
(Oxford, 1988); and Wendy Davies, *Small Worlds: The Village Community in Early Medieval Brittany*
(Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1988). On the tendency to overlook the ecclesiastical agency behind the
documentation, see David Herlihy's review of Wickham's *Mountains and the City*, *Journal of*

7

contingencies of power, it is by no means clear that one can understand
the long continuity of aristocratic power without moving ecclesiastical
institutions, which were responsible for our sources, into the centre of the
story, not simply as objects of aristocratic activity but as something
integral to the structuring of power. In the early middle ages, lay and
ecclesiastical spheres were coordinating, rather than subordinating, enti-
ties, populated by the same class of aristocrats linked together by networks
of friendship and kinship. Monasteries were founded by families who sent
their sons and daughters to staff their foundations as monks and nuns and
even to administer them as abbots and abbesses, so that the webs of
kinship that formed the matrix of this society encompassed both religious
and lay persons. Monasteries never simply advanced their own interests;
they remained wealthy and vibrant only so long as they attended the
interests of their lay and royal patrons.[16]

   Finally, because a central bureaucracy did not exist in the early med-
ieval period, any investigation of political order needs to be approached
from the local context. This strategy is not to be confused with the
regional monographs pioneered by Georges Duby in France or by the
practitioners of *Landesgeschichte* in Germany, many of whom have pursued
detailed analysis quite consciously at the expense of broader political
history.[17] The popularity of both types of regional history may have its
origins in anxieties about political centralization in the modern period, in
the search for intimacy and belonging in an increasingly impersonal and
bureaucratized world.[18] Nor is it to be confused with centre–periphery
studies. These can be useful for investigating the relationship between the
Frankish empire and its marches[19] but are less helpful for understanding a
system of internal order mediated by local frameworks. Rather, the local
arena is simply the place where one is best able to view the interplay of
Frankish politics at all levels.

   Interdisciplinary History 19 (1989), pp. 662–4. The tendency is also evident in the research on
   memorial sources, a primary goal of which has been to elucidate (lay) aristocratic groups, see
   Gerd Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien im Spiegel ihrer Memorialüberlieferung* (Munich, 1984); and
   more recently Uwe Ludwig, *Transalpine Beziehungen der Karolingerzeit im Spiegel der
   Memorialüberlieferung*, MGH Studien und Texte 25 (Hanover, 1999).
[16] Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 77–134;
   and John Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform: Lotharingia c. 850–1000* (Oxford,
   2001).
[17] Georges Duby, *La société aux XIe–XIIe siècles dans la région mâconnaise*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1971);
   Pankraz Fried ed., *Probleme und Methoden der Landesgeschichte* (Darmstadt, 1978); and John B. Freed,
   'Medieval German Social History: Generalizations and Particularism', *Central European History*
   25 (1992), pp. 1–26.
[18] Howard Kaminsky and James Van Horn Melton, introduction to Otto Brunner, *Land and
   Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria* (Philadelphia, 1992), trans. Howard
   Kaminsky and James Van Horn Melton, pp. xvii–xxvii, xxxix–xliv.
[19] See for example, Julia Smith, *Province and Empire: Brittany and the Carolingians* (Cambridge, 1992).

Introduction

ALSACE AND THE VOSGES

The unique political geography of Alsace lends itself to a fruitful analysis of the issues of centre and locality posed in this book. The region was advantageously located in the middle of Frankish Europe and open to influence from the surrounding centres of power: to the north lay the Frankish heartlands of the mid-Rhine and Ardennes regions, to the east, the powerful dukedom of Alemannia, to the southwest, the Merovingian kingdom of Burgundy, and to the west the Meuse-Moselle basin, which formed the heart of the ninth-century kingdom of Lotharingia (see map 1). Consequently, the Alsatian territories stood at the nexus of several critical frontiers within early medieval Europe whose frequent ruptures have exposed the inner workings of the Frankish order to the inquiring eyes of investigators.[20] We shall examine these divisions more closely as they present themselves but, briefly, during the seventh century they ran along the frontier between the Merovingian kingdoms of Austrasia and Burgundy, and along the upper-Rhine frontier between Austrasia and Alemannia, a subordinate but frequently rebellious dukedom. In the Carolingian period, Alsace hosted the revolt of Charlemagne's grandsons against their father Louis the Pious (814–40) and subsequently became a bone of contention along the frontier between the eastern and western Frankish kingdoms. On the other hand, Alsace was at various stages either left largely to its own devices, as was the case during the late Merovingian period; free from disturbance and fully integrated into the Carolingian Empire, as was the situation during the long reign of Charlemagne (768–814); or open to direct royal control, as happened during the late Carolingian and Ottonian periods. In sum, the area is ideal for investigating the interactivity of local networks, royal power and episodic centralization throughout the early medieval period from a variety of perspectives.

The *pagus Alsatiae*, the 'district of Alsace', first emerged in the immediate post-Roman period, probably in the sixth century. The term 'Alsace' derives, as best as philologists can decipher, from an old Germanic phrase, *ali-land-sat-ja*, which meant 'one who sits in another land'.[21] It

---

[20] On early medieval Alsace, see Heinrich Büttner, *Geschichte des Elsaß I: Politische Geschichte des Landes von der Landnahmezeit bis zum Tode Ottos III. und Ausgewählte Beiträge zur Geschichte des Elsaß in Früh- und Hochmittelalter*, ed. Traute Endemann (Sigmaringen, 1991); Christian Pfister, *Le duché mérovingien d'Alsace et la légende de sainte Odile* (Paris, Nancy, 1892); Fritz Langenbeck, 'Probleme der elsässischen Geschichte in fränkischer Zeit', *Alemannisches Jahrbuch* (Lahr, 1957), pp. 1–132; Michael Borgolte, 'Die Geschichte der Grafengewalt im Elsaß von Dagobert I. bis Otto dem Großen', *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 131 (1983), pp. 3–54; and Dieter Geuenich, Edward Sangmeister, Heiko Steuer and Béatrice Weis, 'Elsaß', in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, 2nd edn, vol. VII (Berlin, New York, 1989), pp. 175–88.

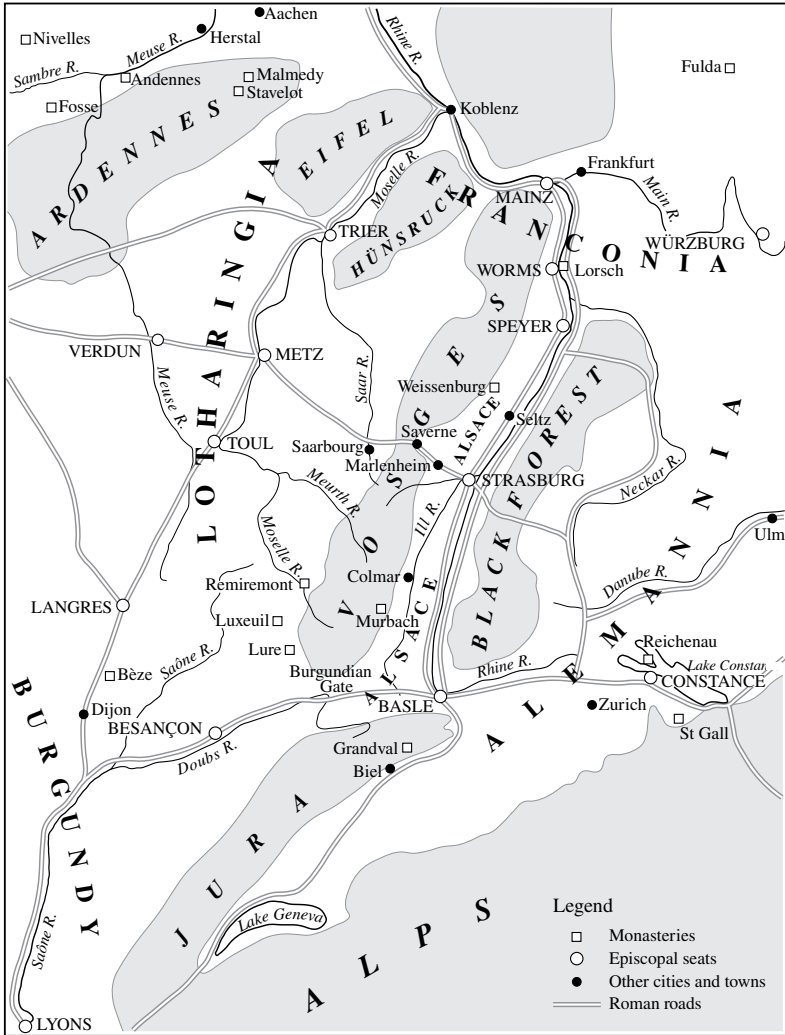[21] Béatrice Weis, 'Elsaß: Namenkundliches', in Geuenich et al., 'Elsaß', pp. 175–7.

9

Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe

Map 1   Alsace and the surrounding territories

presumably referred to the Alemanni who lived on the left bank of the
Rhine, but the term appears first only in the seventh century, in
Fredegar's chronicle.[22] The *pagus* extended from just south of
Weissenburg in the north to the Burgundian Gate in the south, and

[22] Fredegar, *Chronicarum Quae Dicuntur Fredegarii Scholastici Libri IV cum Continuationibus*, ed. Bruno
Krusch, *MGH SRM* 2 (Hanover, 1888), bk 4, c. 37, p. 138.