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*Ludger Körntgen,
Dominik Waßenhoven (Eds.)*

PATTERNS OF EPISCOPAL POWER

Bishops in Tenth and Eleventh Century
Western Europe



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Strukturen bischöflicher Herrschaftsgewalt
im westlichen Europa des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts
Patterns of Episcopal Power



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Preface

This volume has emerged from the workshop “Patterns of Episcopal Power in 10th and 11th century Western Europe”, hosted at the University of Bayreuth in April 2009, and from the session “A Europe of Bishops”, held at the International Medieval Congress at Leeds in July 2009; both events were funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. The idea for these two meetings emanated from reading Timothy Reuter’s pivotal article on “Ein Europa der Bischöfe” in which he argues that bishops and their dioceses throughout Europe had much more in common than kings and their reigns had. We are therefore very happy to present the English translation of this article, which is based on Reuter’s own English version, for the first time in print, and we would like to express our warm thanks to Georgina Reuter, Wilfried Hartmann, Katy Cubitt and Matthew Townend, who made this possible. We are also most grateful to the participants of the two events, not only for the lively discussions but also for their contributions to this volume.

Furthermore, we would like to thank the students of the course “Von der Tagung zur Publikation” who helped to prepare this volume for printing, namely Jakob Jurczyk-Bäumer, Andreas Gutknecht, Isabelle Chwalka, Frauke Placke, Katharina Polster and Jan Sommer. We are also grateful to Stephan Messinger for his help in compiling the bibliography; to Bettina Neuhoﬀ, Andreas Brandmair, Claudia Heyer and the team at de Gruyter for their assistance throughout the publishing process; and to Dieter J. Weiß and the Prince-Albert-Society for agreeing to include this volume in the series “Prinz-Albert-Forschungen”.

Ludger Körntgen
Dominik Waßenhoven

Bayreuth
July 2011

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Abkürzungsverzeichnis/List of Abbreviations

AKG	Archiv für Kulturgeschichte
ASC	The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A Collaborative Edition, general eds. David Dumville and Simon Keynes, Cambridge 1983ff.
ASE	Anglo-Saxon England
DA	Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters
EHR	English Historical Review
EME	Early Medieval Europe
FMST	Frühmittelalterliche Studien
GWU	Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht
HJb	Historisches Jahrbuch
HZ	Historische Zeitschrift
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
DD	Diplomata
SS	Scriptores (in Folio)
SSrG	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi
SSrG N. S.	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, Nova Series
MIÖG	Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung
N. F.	Neue Folge
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (http://www.oxforddnb.com)
QFIAB	Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken
S	Peter H. Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography (Royal Historical Society Guides and handbooks 8), London 1968. A revised, updated, and expanded version can be found at http://www.esawyer.org.uk .
ZBLG	Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte
ZfG	Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft
ZRG	Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte
Germ. Abt.	Germanistische Abteilung
Kan. Abt.	Kanonistische Abteilung

Ludger Körntgen

Introduction

Organizing conferences, inviting distinguished speakers to sometimes very distant places and publishing papers afterwards needs a legitimization. At first sight this volume and the workshops having taken place in 2009 in Bayreuth and Leeds do not seem to need any special legitimization, because in the dual perspective of both recent and long-standing research the value of studies concerning bishops and their impact on medieval society and politics may seem self-evident. Particularly German scholarship might evoke a long tradition of studying church history and ecclesiastical hierarchy and analysing the role of church and bishops within the political framework of the European kingdoms – especially within the framework of the Ottonian kingdom and empire. On the other hand, so much work has been done on this topic that it could encourage to ask if there are still any questions left concerning bishops. Recent German research reveals, however, that something has changed or – to say it in the words of Gerd Althoff and Hagen Keller – almost everything has changed during the last decades since scholars like Helmut Beumann, Josef Fleckenstein and Leo Santifaller had established a view of kingship, society and church in tenth and eleventh century Germany that could have been considered canonical.¹

In a simplified way we could characterise this view as static. Politics in the Ottonian and early Salian kingdom was regarded as a set of interactions between clearly defined protagonists: the king, the bishops, the abbots, the lay noblemen. Almost everyone seems to have acted as an agent of his office within the scope of the institutions that could be labeled as “state” and “church”. One of the main preconditions of this view was that scholars normally did not ask what the duty of a king or a bishop was, whereas everyone assumed to know what constituted a king or a bishop. This seems to be exactly the main feature of change concerning recent research on Ottonian kingship: we do not assume to know what a king was or what a bishop was, we rather ask what they did, how they acted. That implies we do not assume state, society and church as institutional settings of Ottonian politics but try to figure out what kind of state, society and church was constructed by the communication and interactions that constituted Ottonian politics. We do no

1 For an overview of older and recent research see Hagen Keller and Gerd Althoff, *Die Zeit der späten Karolinger und der Ottonen. Krisen und Konsolidierungen 888–1024* (Gebhardt. Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte 3), Stuttgart 2008.

longer perceive kings, lay noblemen or bishops as agents of their respective offices but ask what kind of office was formed by their respective actions.²

Against the background of this research talking about bishops has a new and specific meaning: examining the “Patterns of Episcopal Power in Tenth and Eleventh Century Western Europe” means examining patterns of power in general. In the Ottonian world power was not or not mainly generated and distributed according to law and constitution but according to wealth and nobility as much as along the bonds of personal relations and networking. In this world it would not be sufficient to define power corresponding to the power of kings as we do not exactly know the elements that constituted royal power. Ten years ago Timothy Reuter, who could be invoked as a patron saint of research on bishops, power and kingship in the tenth and eleventh centuries – if we were not sure that he would have been the first to argue against his sainthood immediately after canonisation –, demonstrated that we could depict Europe in the tenth and eleventh centuries as “A Europe of Bishops”.³ And with respect to the work of Timothy Reuter we should wonder whether traditional scholarship was right in shaping European politics according to the actions, needs and conceptions of kings and asking for the role of bishops within such a king-centered order. Instead, Reuter encourages us to shape the tenth and eleventh century world order according to function, conception and power of bishops as well as to the rules of canon law, and to ask for the role of kings within this bishop-centered framework. In any case, examining the activities and attitudes of powerful bishops will help us to understand the essence of power and of its exertion in the Ottonian world.

Focusing in this way on problems of rule and power in the Ottonian world leads to the question if it could be of any value to bring together work on bishops in Germany and in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom(s) as we propose in this volume. The importance of the church for German kingship and for the traditional view of this kingship, marked by the concept of ‘ottonisch-salisches Reichskirchensystem’, implicated a fundamental incompatibility between status and function of the German church and other churches in the very rest of Europe. It is more than a coincidence that this assumption has been challenged by a scholar who combined German and English traditions of historiography and historical research: again we have to mention Timothy

2 For a wider theoretical context and further reflections on the construction of episcopal power see Steffen Patzold, *Episcopus. Wissen über Bischöfe im Frankenreich des späten 8. bis frühen 10. Jahrhunderts* (Mittelalter-Forschungen 25), Ostfildern 2008.

3 In the context of papers and discussions during the conferences in Bayreuth and Leeds it became apparent that Reuter’s pioneering overview of function and importance of bishops around the year 1000 is still an encouraging reference for research on bishops in the high medieval period, so that we decided to publish an English version of the article, which had not yet been published in English, as opening paper of this volume.

Reuter.⁴ His challenge has been widely discussed but never resulted in a fundamental attempt to compare status and function of bishops within German and English politics. The reason for this might have been the great differences that emerge when comparing the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the Ottonian kingdom with respect to the power of kings, the very number of bishoprics in Germany and the wealth and power of many of them or, on the other side, with respect to the stability of the Ottonian dynasty and so many dynastic struggles in tenth and eleventh century England.

But also in this regard the conditions of questioning and comparison change as soon as we no longer assume Ottonian kingdom as a static institution but try to reconstruct a political system which we assume to have been dynamic and polycentric with regard to the managing of conflicts, the implicit rules of behaviour and interaction or the actual doings and attitudes of different powerful protagonists. Within this methodical framework we are not going to compare political systems or the respective role of different political agents within different systems, but we will rather attempt something else entirely: to reconstruct different orders of rule and power by comparing specific elements or structures.

In other words: we do not compare something given but we use the comparative approach in order to get something. We do not want to compare the political systems of the Ottonian and the Anglo-Saxon kingdom. Instead, we compare political situations, actions, communications, individual protagonists, specific resources, rules of behaviour and so on in order to get a better understanding of the practice and the construction of power in both kingdoms. In this regard it does make sense to compare bishops, their resources of power and their exertion of power as well as the conditions and restraints of episcopal power. In this regard it does make sense to compare the scope of action and power of bishops with the scope of action and power of queens, for example, without having to define something like a constitutional role or a political office of queens or bishops. In this regard it does make sense to ask for specific means and options of bishops as, for example, monition and spiritual advice. In this regard it does make sense to examine and compare crucial political situations such as the transitions between reigns. This is the focus of our research project "Der Handlungsspielraum von Bischöfen. Eine vergleichende Untersuchung am Beispiel der ottonisch-salischen und angelsächsischen Herrscherwechsel" funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, and this is also the focus of the core of this volume.

4 Timothy Reuter, The "imperial church system" of the Ottonian and Salian rulers. A reconsideration, in: JEH 33 (1982), pp. 347–374, reprinted in: Timothy Reuter, *Medieval politics and modern mentalities*, ed. Janet L. Nelson, Cambridge 2006, pp. 325–354. For a summary of the discussion see Rudolf Schieffer, *Der geschichtliche Ort der ottonisch-salischen Reichskirchenpolitik* (Nordrhein-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Geisteswissenschaften. Vorträge G 352), Opladen 1998.

The respective contributions by Ernst-Dieter Hehl, Dominik Waßenhoven, Pauline Stafford and Catherine Cubitt agree in stating that succession crises are dangerous. What could be mentioned as more a commonplace than a result of research in a comparative perspective in fact gives some impressive insights as *Ernst-Dieter Hehl* makes the point that such crises are most dangerous for bishops who had to act and make decisions without knowing which candidate would succeed, while *Catherine Cubitt* explains how bishops themselves could be dangerous when their bonds to kings and leading groups of lay magnates had been cut and their involvement in political affairs did no longer lead to peace but caused trouble and division. Anglo-Saxon bishops, however, normally did not risk their position or lives, as *Pauline Stafford* argues, being stabilised by their office, while Queens seem to have acted more within an atmosphere of personal bonds and family functions. Without strong support by qualities resembling an office even an anointed queen like Emma risked to lose her position according to the course of a queen's lifetime from princess to queen and finally widow, but on the other hand could challenge political order and deepen succession crises on a higher scale than any bishop could. This seems to suggest a role of queens exactly opposite to the German situation concerning Theophanu and Adelheid acting as a factor of calm and stability within the brief crisis after the death of their husband and son Otto II. But the solution of this crisis also seems to result rather from networking between leading groups of magnates and noble or royal families than from anything like an 'office' of queenship that could have functioned as an institutional safeguard of the realm. Ottonian bishops might have been able to play an important role in negotiating those networks, but we have to decide whether to understand this as a manifestation of episcopal 'Handlungsspielraum' or to qualify the bishops' activities with Ernst-Dieter Hehl as opportunities emerging from a situation of peril and threat. In any case, as *Dominik Waßenhoven* is arguing, it is not possible to suppose that bishops opted as a distinctive group or within fixed frontiers of ecclesiastical or political defined regional divisions. Instead, we have to look for bishops acting as respective members of their families or their noble peer-groups, but for every single case it has to be asked why they opted as they did and why their interventions were accepted.

Looking back at Timothy Reuter's initial questioning of a stereotype of German research, a "Reichskirchensystem" – as a system controlled by a ruler who recruits his ecclesiastical staff for political tasks – might seem to be more applicable to an Anglo-Saxon framework, as Catherine Cubitt is suggesting not without caution, than to the Ottonian and Salian framework for which it had been claimed primarily. However, focusing on the problems of the German and Anglo-Saxon bishops' involvement in transition crises might provoke complex and different questions for further research, but also involves the danger to exclude so many different aspects of function, interest

and self-consciousness of bishops, who have to be regarded as complex figures in a world of deeper complexity than the common view of the tenth and eleventh centuries as a world of simple structures and simple structured mentalities might suggest. Therefore we have to open the framework of our research in at least two directions: in a diachronic perspective we should ask for the tradition and changes of the role and concepts of being a bishop, and in a synchronic perspective we should take a look at the wider context of bishops' activities. Within this volume, *Monika Suchan* takes the first perspective and explains admonition and advice as a specific concept of spiritual leadership based on the role model of the shepherd and shared by Carolingian bishops and kings, but not by their successors in the tenth and eleventh centuries. *Theo Riches* introduces another element of change in political culture in that he depicts the changing focus of *Gesta episcoporum* which lost the given frame of Carolingian politics and institutions at the end of the Carolingian period and instead focused on bishops and their provinces as bishop-centered communities giving a new frame for politics and regional identities. In the second perspective, *Joyce Hill* not only dwells on the ambitious work of bishops who despite of being prominent political actors were focusing on the life and scholarship of the clergy, but also gives a fascinating insight into the importance of canon law and the value of studying manuscript tradition, including such a prominent manuscript as Cambridge CCC 190. Her research on this manuscript also demonstrates the need for and the value of collaboration between scholars of Anglo-Saxon literature and history and scholars of canon law and continental Latin traditions.

Regarding their engagement both in the fields of political affairs and canon law as well as pastoral care, Wulfstan and Leofric are to be compared with Burchard of Worms, compiler and redactor of the most important pre-Gregorian collection of canon law,⁵ or even so important a player in the field of Ottonian politics as the archbishop Willigis of Mainz, who shared the interest in church-building with colleagues like Bernward of Hildesheim, former chancellor of the emperor Otto III. and one of the most important patrons of Ottonian art and architecture. In general, involvement in political affairs and especially in crucial moments like succession crises appears to be only one feature more or less common to those figures who might be the most authorised patrons for a European commonwealth of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries – a commonwealth which should be appreciated, above all, not as a patchwork of realms dominated by kings and magnates but as a common world of bishops.

5 This has been the subject of Dominik Waßenhoven's paper at the workshop in Bayreuth, "Legislation and Episcopal Power – Burchard and Wulfstan compared", which will be published in another context.

