CONTENTS

List of Maps, Tables and Illustrations  · ix
Acknowledgements  · xiii
Note on Style and Citations  · xv
Abbreviations  · xvii
Preface  · xxvii

INTRODUCTION  Forgery and Memory in an Age of Iron  1

CHAPTER 1  Forgery in the Chancery? Bishop Anno at Worms  21

CHAPTER 2  Forging Episcopal Identity: Pilgrim at Passau  61

CHAPTER 3  Forging Liberty: Abingdon and Æthelred  113

CHAPTER 4  Forging Exemption: Fleury from Abbo to William  153

CHAPTER 5  True Lies: Leo of Vercelli and the Struggle for Piedmont  193

CONCLUSIONS  256

Bibliography  · 273
General Index  · 307
Index of Royal and Papal Charters  · 323
Forgery was not particular to Europe or the Middle Ages. It was known in ancient Greece and Rome, where authors such as Galen and Martial railed against literary impersonation; it was also rife in early Christian society, with many of the biblical apocrypha—not to mention a number of now-canonical texts—being products of forgery.¹ Nor was falsification new then. Some Old Testament books bear the hallmarks of forgery (most notably, Daniel); and evidence of textual falsification can be traced even further back, to the very origins of Eurasian civilization in the Nile, Tigris and Euphrates valleys. These early fakes have much to teach the scholar of ancient and medieval forgery. Perhaps the oldest on record is a decree of the eighteenth-dynasty pharaoh Amenhotep III (c. 1391–c. 1353 BC) for his funerary temple in Thebes. This survives as an inscription exempting the temple from the normal demands of royal officers, save the local mayor of West Thebes. But while this may look perfectly pukka, there was no mayor of West Thebes in Amenhotep’s reign; and the hieroglyphs themselves are formed in a manner not seen before the twenty-first dynasty (c. 1169–c. 945 BC), some three to four hundred years later. Evidently this was an attempt, probably around the turn of the first millennium BC, to claim special rights for a once-important centre.² A similar situation is reflected in the Cruciform Monument, found at the Eabbar temple at Sippar (modern Tell Abu Habbah in Iraq) and now housed in the British Museum in London. This records the successes of the Akkadian ruler Maništušu (c. 2270–c. 2255 BC) and the gifts he made to the temple.³ The

inscription is written in the king’s voice; however, the form it takes can be no earlier than the Old Babylonian period (c. 2000–c. 1600 BC), and probably belongs to the Neo-Babylonian period (c. 626–c. 539 BC), over a millennium and a half later.

A final early example is offered by the Famine Stele, located on Sehel Island in the Nile. This records a severe seven-year famine and drought which struck Egypt under the third-dynasty pharaoh Djoser, in the mid-third millennium BC. Disaster is reported to have been averted only when the pharaoh’s leading adviser, Imhotep, suggested that Djoser appeal to Khnum, the god of the Nile based at Elephantine. This last roll of the dice succeeded and, as a consequence, Djoser granted the temple traditional pharaonic prerogatives in the region. Yet as in the previous cases, the story is too good to be true. As it survives, the Stele is clearly a product of the Ptolemaic period (c. 332–30 BC), over two millennia after its purported date. This was a time when myths and legends surrounding Imhotep—subsequently immortalized by Boris Karloff in the 1932 Hollywood blockbuster The Mummy (and more recently reprised by Arnold Vosloo in its 1999 remake)—were rife; it was also a time in which the priests of Elephantine lost many of their local rights to the temple of Isis at neighbouring Philae. Once more, we are dealing with creative anachronism. The defining feature of these early fakes—and doubtless many others, since lost (or as yet unidentified)—is a desire to use the past to cement current claims. It is no coincidence that they should all belong to religious houses.

In ancient Egypt and the Middle East, as in medieval Europe, the religious classes were specialists in literacy, some of the few capable of presenting and recording complex claims in written form. They also possessed a strong sense of corporate identity (like the later medieval clergy), which encouraged the creation of such false narratives.

Yet if the desire to deceive (and be deceived) is universal, the manner in which it is pursued is not. In the ancient Middle East, our best evidence comes (not surprisingly) from the epigraphic record, not least in the form of the monuments just mentioned. In ancient Greece and Rome, we begin to hear more of the falsification of ephemeral records, with forged wills figuring in the great codifications of Roman law by Theodosius (438) and Justinian (529–534). We can also observe the first vogue for authorial impersonation, reflecting the growing importance of named authors within the literary canon. Such literary falsification would later flourish among the Renaissance humanists of early modern Europe, who drew much of their inspiration from Classical antiquity. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, meanwhile, the Grand Tour sparked a similar boom in epigraphic forgery, as continental dealers sought to meet the new demand for antiquities in north-western Europe.

4. Ibid. On Imhotep, see Wildung, Egyptian Saints; on the loss of rights: Hölbl, Ptolemaic Empire, 167–68.
The nineteenth and early twentieth century then saw a similar spike in counterfeit Greek, Middle Eastern and (above all) Egyptian texts and artefacts, as growing scholarly expertise, improved transportation and the development of European and American museum collections combined to inspire successive waves of Graeco- and Egyptomania. In more recent times, artwork and currency have garnered the lion’s share of falsifiers’ attention (and with it, the public eye); nevertheless, the antiquities market has also seen a significant uptick in false wares, particularly since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 1960s.5

In the European Middle Ages, the most common form of forgery—at least so far as our records reveal (an important caveat)—was the manufacture of false documents. Indeed, the period has, with some justification, been seen as a golden age of documentary forgery, a time before modern means of criticism, when the counterfeit was king. Numbers bear this out. Well over half of the surviving diplomas in the names of the Merovingian Frankish rulers of mainland Europe (c. 481–752) are products of forgery; a third of the charters of the Lombard rulers of northern Italy (568–774) are suspect; and over a third of the documents from pre-Conquest England have been tampered with in some way.6 In almost all cases, these adjustments were made in the Middle Ages, sometimes within a lifetime or two of the documents’ purported dates. Not surprisingly, forgers were particularly drawn to famous figures. Just as the creators of the Famine Stele latched onto the legendary Imhotep, so in the Middle Ages falsifiers saddled their productions on well-known and authoritative individuals, such as the Merovingian ruler Dagobert I (623–39), the Carolingian emperor Charlemagne (768–814) and the last monarch of Anglo-Saxon England’s native line, Edward the Confessor (1042–66).7

**Medieval Forgery and Modern Scholarship**

As a general rule, the earlier one goes and the more famous the ruler, the higher the proportion of fakes. This was already known in the Middle Ages. But before the development of modern means of investigation—and before

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7. Brühl, *Studien zu den merowingischen Königsurkunden*; Hägermann, ‘Urkundenfälschungen’. The specific interest in Dagobert is being considered by Guy Halsall, who has kindly shared some of his preliminary thoughts with me.
the advent of print, allowing findings to be disseminated swiftly (and comparatively inexpensively)—charter criticism was always an uphill battle.\textsuperscript{8} The more that scholarly understanding of documentary traditions has developed, therefore, the higher estimations of forgery have become.

In fact, the formal study of medieval documents owes its existence to questions of forgery and authenticity. It was the claim of Daniel Papebroch (d. 1714), that no genuine document survived in the name of an early Merovingian king, which famously spurred the great French Maurist Jean Mabillon (d. 1707) to pen his pioneering treatise on the subject, \textit{De re diplomatica} (On matters relating to charters; 1681). In this, Mabillon established the first serious criteria for judging medieval documents, many of which are used to this day. These were not, however, ivory tower debates. Mabillon’s own sometime abbey of Saint-Denis possessed a large number of Merovingian charters (both forged and authentic) and Papebroch’s attacks had implications for the centre’s standing. Mabillon’s work, for all its undoubted learning, was therefore not the act of dispassionate reasoning modern historians have often imagined; it was, first and foremost, a means of defending his own turf.\textsuperscript{9}

Still, it was out of these and similar exchanges that the academic study of medieval documents (‘diplomatic’) was born, starting with Mabillon’s own \textit{De re diplomatica}—‘On Diplomatic’, as we might now call it. As a dedicated subject of study, however, diplomatic first came into its own with the professionalization of the historical profession in the second half of the nineteenth century. At this point, Theodor Sickel (d. 1908), Arthur Giry (d. 1899) and Carlo Cipolla (d. 1916)—to name but three of the most prominent practitioners—made an art of such criticism, turning diplomatic into its own distinctive subdiscipline, with chairs, schools and departments. The focus of these scholars’ work was largely editorial, and the attitude taken towards forgery contemptuous; false texts were a problem to be overcome, not a matter of interest in their own right. Once identified, counterfeits could be safely relegated to well-deserved obscurity, often in an appendix to the edition in question. Yet as diplomatic developed in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, opinions began to change. This was partly a product of the natural evolution of the discipline. As more and more documents came to be edited, scholars started to emphasize their role as interpreters as well as editors of these. Ascertaining forgery and authenticity was now just the first step; the next lay in appreciating what the texts had to say about their wider historical context.\textsuperscript{10} Important impetus also came from pioneering studies of a number of particularly large and important forgery complexes, including those at Reichenau, Monte Cassino

\textsuperscript{8} On medieval charter criticism: Bougard and Morelle, ‘Prévention’.

\textsuperscript{9} Brühl, ‘Entwicklung’.

\textsuperscript{10} Ghignoli, ‘Definizione dei principi’. See also Tessier, ‘Leçon d’ouverture’, esp. 262.
and Saint-Denis. These revealed just how subtle (and systematic) medieval forgers could be, and how important it was to study their work in isolation.\textsuperscript{11}

As ever more forgeries came to be identified (and associated with known figures), their value as sources in their own right became clearer. Such texts may tell us little about their purported point of origin, but they reveal much about the context in which they were confected—about the concerns of the forgers and the threats faced by their communities. Forgery was, moreover, far too widespread to be dismissed as the reserve of one or two recalcitrant rogues; it was practised by many of medieval Europe’s great and good, including leading bishops, abbots and intellectuals. This revelation posed the ‘problem of medieval forgery’: how was an age of faith also an age of falsification? This question famously drove T. F. Tout (d. 1929), one of England’s pioneers of diplomatic, in his study of ‘Mediæval Forgers and Forgery’ (1919). Tout emphasized that medieval sensibilities were very different from modern ones, noting that ‘it was almost the duty of the clerical class to forge’; by doing so, it served God and his earthly communities.\textsuperscript{12} Similar themes were later taken up by Horst Fuhrmann (d. 2011), Christopher Brooke (d. 2015), and Giles Constable (1929–), in the mid- to later years of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{13} The central contention of their work, like that of Tout, was that medieval attitudes toward truth and fiction were different from our own. In an era in which divine providence was felt to guide historical events, the study of the past possessed a pronounced moral dimension; true history was that which accorded with God’s plans, not necessarily that attested by prior documents. Medieval forgers may, therefore, have acted in the conviction that they were doing good. Most falsification was, on this view, pious fraud (or \textit{pia fraus}), intended to enlighten, not to deceive.

There is much to be said for this approach. It reminds us that attitudes towards truth and falsehood are culturally conditioned; it also explains why manifestly God-fearing men were willing to forge, sometimes on epic scales. But lingering doubts remain. If forgery was acceptable in the Middle Ages, why was it so often condemned by contemporaries, from the ninth-century Frankish archbishop Hincmar of Reims (d. 882) to Pope Innocent III (d. 1216)? And if the ends really justified the means, why is no medieval forger known to have excused his work on these grounds?\textsuperscript{14} The closest we come to a forger’s own perspective is the remarks of the late antique theologian Salvian (d. c. 450), who when (rightly) accused of appropriating the name of the

apostle Timothy for his tract on avarice (*Ad ecclesiam*), responded that he had done so only to ensure that his teachings received the widest possible audience. Here we do indeed see elements of an ‘ends justify the means’ morality. But significantly, Salvian does not deny the accusation of deception. By his own admission, he used Timothy’s name because it carried greater weight than his own. Salvian did not really think Timothy had written such words; he merely wished the apostle had.15

The key to cutting this Gordian knot lies in distinguishing motives from intentions.16 Intentions are our immediate goals, while motives are our grounds for seeking these. Viewed in these terms, the *motives* of medieval forgers, like many of their antique and biblical forbears, may indeed have been pure (to restore what once was or should have been), but their *intentions* remained duplicitous (they wanted their documents to pass for the purportedly lost originals). Like Salvian, they did wish to deceive their contemporaries (and perhaps themselves); otherwise there would have been no point in the exercise. What good was a diploma in the name of Charlemagne, if no one thought it his? Why project present claims onto the past, if this did not fool anyone? The answer is obvious: they did, and it did.

*Forgery, Rights and Charters in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries*

As Mabillon and Papebroch appreciated, we must understand how authentic documents were drawn up if we are to identify fakes. Forgeries were not produced in a vacuum; they are products of medieval documentary traditions, and typically offer hints as to the true context of their production. The difficulty lies in identifying the more subtle of these errors across the space of a millennium or more. In practice, this is best achieved by comparing suspect documents with authentic ones, and earlier texts with later ones from the house or region in question.

Since much hinges on these matters, it is worth setting out some of the general principles behind charter production. The focus here is on those documents issued in the names of rulers—what are known as royal charters or diplomas—from the tenth and eleventh centuries, though many of the same principles hold elsewhere (especially with regard to papal documents). Two matters concern us above all: who was responsible for these texts, and how they went about producing them. There has been considerable change in scholarly opinion on both fronts. Deeply influenced by the developing national


bureaucracies of the nineteenth century, early pioneers of diplomatic viewed charter production as a fundamentally top-down, bureaucratic affair: official documents were drawn up by a formal writing office (the chancery), operating in the name of the ruler. This was overseen by the chancellor—medieval middle management at its finest—and staffed by professional ‘chancery scribes’, whose chief responsibility lay in the production of public acts. Any individual responsible for more than two or three documents in a ruler’s name was generally identified as a chancery scribe and presumed to be in more or less permanent royal employ. The assumption was, therefore, of a high degree of centralization: documents were produced by professionals operating under close administrative oversight.\textsuperscript{17}

As even early diplomatists were aware, however, not all diplomas can be ascribed to a central writing office. Some were clearly drawn up locally, most often by the recipients of the grant in question. This was especially common in the case of important religious houses, which were well stocked with scribes, many of whom had experience of drafting and copying such texts. Yet recipient production presented—and continues to present—scholars with particular problems. By its nature, it tends to be limited to an individual house or region, leaving a similar archival footprint to forgery (which is also a localized affair, typically limited to a single centre). As a consequence, it can be hard to distinguish anomalies arising from authentic recipient production from those resulting from later local tampering. It is partly for this reason that nineteenth-century scholars were keen to downplay the role of the recipient in charter production—it presented major (at times insoluble) methodological challenges. Indeed, Sickel famously deemed only ‘chancery-form’ (\textit{kanzlei-gemäß}) diplomas to be above reproach; all others stood under a cloud.\textsuperscript{18}

Work over the last century has done much to challenge these presumptions.\textsuperscript{19} It is now clear that medieval governance was more informal than nineteenth-century scholars imagined. And nowhere are changing attitudes clearer than in the case of the ‘chancery’ (now firmly in inverted commas). Though some established royal (and papal) scribes can be identified in the early to central Middle Ages, no more than a handful were in court employ at any time—and even these figures were more independent than traditional wisdom holds. Most combined duties at court with responsibilities elsewhere, often at local religious houses; and even those in regular royal service did not sever ties to friends and associates in other parts of the realm. Charter scribes were not, therefore, members of a formal government bureau, but rather

\textsuperscript{17} Bresslau, \textit{Handbuch}, i, 41–43, 352–582; Giry, \textit{Manuel de diplomatique}, 661–822.
\textsuperscript{18} Sickel, ‘Beiträge zur Diplomatik VI.’, 360–62.
periodic associates of king and court. In this respect, ‘chancery’ and ‘recipient’ production are not alternatives, but either end of a sliding scale, with most documents falling somewhere between these poles. Typically, the person responsible for drawing up an act had a connection to both the issuer and recipient. And even when the recipients took the lead, they operated under royal fiat; the difference might be slight.

In terms of the mechanics, charters were normally drawn up shortly after the act of donation or confirmation they record. \(^{20}\) The final text represents a fair copy of earlier working drafts. And normally, the same individual would be responsible for both draft and copy—in the technical language of diplomatic, he (or less often she) was draftsman and scribe. When the contents of a document were known in advance (as in the case of confirmations), the text might be largely drafted and copied before the transaction and simply approved and completed on this occasion. In such cases, earlier charters relevant to the rights in question would normally be brought to court alongside the new privilege, which would itself be modelled on these precedents, often repeating their terms verbatim. With new grants, draftsmen and scribes were freer in their choice of models, but naturally followed prevailing styles. (This is how we catch our forgers; because they do not belong to the documentary world they wish to evoke, they frequently fall into anachronism.) In any case, the final charter would be subject to formal presentation at court, either on the same occasion as the transaction or at a later date. \(^{21}\) It was at this moment that it was sealed, authenticating its contents. In England, where royal charters bear witness-lists instead of seals, those present seem to have publicly signalled their assent at this point. Occasionally, a gap separated the grant and production of the requisite document. The final diploma would still be subject to approval and authentication at court, but this might take place months or even years after the transaction.

In terms of composition, scholars distinguish three distinct parts of a charter: the opening formulae (or protocol), main text (body) and closing formulae (eschatocol) (Table 1; see also Illustration 1.1 in the next chapter). \(^{22}\) Each of these is, in turn, divided into subsections, not all of which are present in every document; the ordering of specific elements might also vary. The first part of the opening formulae is typically a chrismon (a symbolic invocation of Christ), often in the form of a cross or a stylized C. This is followed by a verbal invocation, along the lines of ‘in the name of Our Lord’ (‘in nomine domini nostri’). Then comes the name and title of the issuing authority (superscription).

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22. For the following: Fichtenau, ‘Forschungen’; Guyotjeannin, Pycke and Tock, Diplomatique médiévale, 71–92.
Table 1. Constituent parts of a later tenth-century diploma (DOI 310)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>(CHRISMON) In nomine sanctae et indivicluae trinitatis.</th>
<th>Chrismon and verbal invocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main text/</td>
<td>Otto divina favente clementia imperator augustus.</td>
<td>Royal/imperial superscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body</td>
<td>Dignum igitur censens ut, quoniam exaltatio accedsiarum salus regum vel imperatorum et stabilitas creditur esse regnorum, sublirmitas imperialis in eo quod sui est officii, studere non recuset, quin potius decreta antecessorum suorum, regum videlicet aut imperatorum, eisdem dei accedsiis cultus amore omessa sua etiam auctoritate roboret et confirmet.</td>
<td>Preamble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unde notum esse volumus omnium fidelium nostrorum tam praesentium etiam futurum industiae qualifier vir venerabilis Anno sanctae Uuormaciensis vel Uuargionensis ecclesiae episcopus nostrum adit sublimitatem feros secum cartas seu praecepta regum vel imperatorum, Christianissimorum videlicet antecessorum nostrorum, in quibus continebatur, ipsam sedem cum accedsiis cellulis vicis ac villis vel rebus omnibus illuc aspicientibus plenisimma defensione et emunitatis eorum tutione semper fuisse munitam, petitque ut nos ob spem divinae remunerationis similia accedseremus et confirmatione nostrae auctoritatis impertiremus.</td>
<td>Publication clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nos vero divino tacti amore pro statu et incolomitate regni vel imperii nostri, pro sanitate etiam nostra dilectaeque coniugis Adelheidis filiique nostri carissimi Ottonis pię illius petitioni assensum praebuimus et in omnibus sicut petii obalivimus, ita sane ut eadem Uuargionensis sedes vel ecclesia sub perpetua rege vel imperatoriare emunitatis defensione cum accedsiis in Lobotonburg vel Uuargipha constructis consistat</td>
<td>Narrative section (narratio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nullusque iudex publicus vel quislibet ex iudicaria potestate vel aliquis ex nostris sanctae dei ecclesiae fidelibus presenceribus scilicet et futuris</td>
<td>Dispositio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in ecclesiis vel parochiis cellas aut loca vel agros seu reliquias possessiones praedictae salis vel ecclesiae Uuargionensis in honore santorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli constructae quas hactenus iuste et rationabiliter possadisse visa est in quibuslibet pagis vel territoriis sitas vel qui quick ibidem tam a nobis quam ab antecessoribus nostris seu ceteris fidelibus quoquo modo propter dictum amorem collatum est vel quae deinceps in iusi ipsius ecclesiae superna pietas addere vel amplificare voluerit, ad causas audiendo vel frede seu teloea exigenda aut mansiones vel paratus faciendas aut fideiussores tollendos aut utlas redibitiones inligitas requerendas aut ad homines ipsius ecclesiae tam ingenuos quam servos distingendis ingredi audieal vel quid exigere ullo umquam tempore praesumat, nec ab hominibus ipsius ecclesiae hostilis expeditio requiretur, nisi quando necessitas utilitati regum fuerit, simul cum suo episcope pergant.</td>
<td>Prohibition clause</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appurtenances (with military exemption)

Continued on next page
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Continued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

```latex
Quiquid autem de rebus praefatae ecclesiae fiscus sperare poterat, totum nos pro nostrae merces incremento praedictae ecclesiae concedimus, ut perennibus terris in perpetuos usus ipsius ecclesiae deoque ibi famulantum proficiat, quatenus, pro nostra dilectæ coniugis nostrae nostraeque proles salute vel pro stabilitate regni vel imperii nostri illos iuger exorare delectet.

Et ut haec emunitatis nostrae confirmatio rata et probabilis existat, volumus et jurniter iubemus et antecessorurn nostrorum decreta sive statuta super eiusdem ecclesiae rebus nostrorum auctoritate probamus roboramus et confirmamus. Et ut hoc auctoritatis nostrae preceptum firmum et stabile permaneat, cartam hanc conscribi et anuli nostri impressione signari issimus, quam et manu propria subus firmavimus.

Signum domni Ottonis (MONOGRAM) magni et invictissimi imperatoris augusti.

Eschatocol Liudolfus cancellarius advicem Uuillihelmi archicappellani recognovi. (SEAL) (RECOGNITION SIGN)

Data v kal. decemb. anno dominicae inearnationis DCCCCLXV, indictione VIII, anno regni domini Ottonis XXXI, imperii vero III; actum Uualahuson; in dei nomine feliciter amen.
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Prayer clause (relatively unusual)
Corroboration clause
Subscription and royal/imperial monogram
Chancery recognition (with seal and recognition sign)
Dating clause
Together, these comprise the protocol, the first line of which is normally written in elongated letters (\textit{litterae elongatae}). Thereafter comes the body. This sometimes opens with a preamble, reflecting on the (generally pious) motives of the donor. In almost all cases, there follows a publication clause, addressing the kingdom’s great and good. Then we proceed to the donation proper, within which we find a narrative account of how the document came to be produced (\textit{a narratio}); a legal statement of donation or confirmation (the \textit{dispositio}); and a listing of any other associated rights (the appurtenances). A prohibition (or immunity) clause secures the new owner’s rights against interference; sometimes this is followed by a sanction threatening those who infringe the document’s terms with divine displeasure and/or monetary penalties. Finally, the main text is rounded off by a corroboration clause, in which the ruler asserts his desire to have the document authenticated. This prepares the way for the closing elements (eschatocol), which are separated from the body by a gap. Like the first line of the protocol, these are in elongated script, and their purpose is to authenticate the charter. They typically comprise a subscription by the ruler, formally consenting to the donation; a royal/imperial monogram, symbolically enacting this assent; and a recognition clause (or \textit{recognitio}) in the name of the chancellor responsible for overseeing the act. The latter is sometimes accompanied by a recognition sign—the chancellor’s equivalent to the royal monogram. Last but not least, at the very foot of the parchment—normally following a further gap—comes the dating clause (back in normal charter script), detailing where and when the document was issued. The seal is also found in this section, usually to the right of the subscription and recognition, though sometimes between these and the dating clause. (Note that hanging seals, attached to the bottom of the parchment by thread or a parchment strap, only become standard in later centuries.)

Most surviving charters, forged and authentic, concern lands and legal rights. And the rights most frequently claimed by religious houses are the institutional prerogatives of immunity, liberty and exemption. The medieval immunity was a descendent of a form of late Roman tax exemption. Originally, this granted the holder rights to dues otherwise owed to the monarch. But as taxation waned in the former Western Empire, immunity came to be defined by judicial independence—by the fact that the immunist did not have to answer to the local comital court and could receive the profits of justice on his or her lands. It also became closely associated with concepts of royal protection (\textit{defensio}, \textit{tuitio} or \textit{mundeburdium}), the support offered by monarchs to certain prized individuals and, above all, religious centres. Indeed, this new form of immunity was an exclusively (and distinctively) ecclesiastical prerogative, a defining feature of sacred space and religious status.\footnote{Rosenwein, \textit{Negotiating Space}, 25–96; Murray, ‘Merovingian Immunity’. Further work on the subject is anticipated from Guy Halsall.}
tion, on the other hand, was the ecclesiastical counterpart of immunity. Just as immunity removed a religious house from the interference of secular agents of the crown (particularly the count), so exemption took it—partially or fully—out of the control of its ecclesiastical superiors (generally the local diocesan bishop). In the seventh and eighth centuries, exemption was often granted by kings and bishops, but by the tenth it had become strongly associated with the pope. And just as immunity was often coupled with rights of royal lordship and influence, so exemption might involve a degree of dependence on Rome.24 Liberty was less tangible, but no less important. It designates the character of a religious house. A centre was free if it was able to run its own affairs, above all when it came to choosing its own leader (abbot, prior or bishop). Liberty also incorporated ideas about integrity of landholding—the essential basis for such institutional independence.25

In practice, all three of these rights bled into one another.26 Immunity and exemption were often a means of securing liberty, and grants and confirmations of both frequently mention the right of free abbatial election. Nor were immunity and exemption themselves hermetically sealed. The two are sometimes conferred in tandem; and popes might grant and confirm immunity (particularly in the tenth and eleventh centuries), just as kings might on occasion do with exemption. This overlap is reflected in contemporary linguistic usage, in which *immunitas* and *libertas* might be used for grants or confirmations of any (or all) of these rights. Still, it is useful to maintain a distinction between them, at least at a conceptual level. Liberty could exist without immunity or exemption, just as the latter two might be pursued independently. Moreover, none of these were themselves stable legal statuses; rather they represent constantly evolving socio-political relationships. What immunity, liberty and exemption constituted thus varied significantly across time and space. And in fact, one of the most common spurs to forgery was the need to update such texts to meet the legal and customary expectations of a later age.

Forgeries can be distinguished from authentic documents by the fact that they do not conform fully to contemporary conventions. The most common error here is anachronism, the transposing of ideas or formulation from later eras onto texts of earlier periods. If a charter includes turns of phrase not seen until decades or centuries after its purported date of issue, this is immediately suspicious; so too are grants or confirmations of rights we know to have later been under dispute. More subtle, but equally striking, is the reverse error, that of hyperarchaism. This is when forgers went too far in their efforts to mimic earlier documentary forms, applying older conventions to supposedly younger

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documents. Where the original (or pseudo-original) single sheet charters survive, we can also apply palaeographical (script-historical) criteria. The key point is that script changes subtly but significantly over time, and it is a rare forger indeed who can imitate the writing of an earlier age with complete mastery.27

What is Forgery?

With these parameters established, we may turn to the thorny issue of defining forgery. Much ink has been spilt on this, so we may restrict ourselves to the essentials. Conceptions of forgery and falsity are culturally conditioned and defined by their antitheses: originality and authenticity. Where the original is not valued above the copy, there is little space for a concept of the fake; in such a world, any image or text which evokes the forms of the original may pass for it.28 On the other hand, where the original is prized above the copy, forgery is often rife. Medieval documentary culture certainly qualifies here. Throughout the Middle Ages, original charters were accorded greater weight than copies. And considerable effort went into their authentication, by means of seals, subscriptions and monograms—devices all intended to prevent copies passing for originals. This is not to say that modern ideas about forgery and authenticity can be applied across the board, however. A helpful contrast is offered by the world of medieval art. Here the cult of the original had yet to establish itself, and forgery was indeed an alien concept; works of art were judged by the quality of their execution, not whether they had been produced by a specific artist or in a specific context.29

From a purely analytical standpoint, documentary forgery can be isolated easily enough: a document is forged if it claims to be something it is not. A diploma of the late tenth century pretending to be an original of Charlemagne is a fake; one of the same era claiming to be a copy of an earlier charter of Charlemagne is not (or at least, not necessarily). The question is, therefore, one of intentions (not motives): was the aim to deceive? A case in point is offered by the Donation of Constantine, perhaps the most famous forgery of the Middle Ages. In this, the late antique emperor Constantine I (306–37) is said to have conferred the entire Western Roman Empire on Pope Sylvester I (314–35) and his successors, including the Lateran Palace and many other specific (but still very extensive) rights in Rome and Italy. The anonymous eighth-century author of the Donation, who was inspired by the (largely fictional) late antique ‘Acts of Sylvester’ (Actus Silvestri), may well have believed that he was doing no more than recording the real actions of the historical Constantine I;

27. Crick, ‘Historical Literacy’, 169–70. See also T. J. Brown, ‘Detection’.
28. Han, Shanzai.
29. Lenain, Art Forgery, 46–147. See also C. S. Wood, Forgery.
nevertheless, he must have known that the words he used were not those of the emperor. At the same time, he knew that they would command greater respect if others believed this to be so. This was forgery, pious or not.30

Theory may be clear, but reality is messy. If, as sometimes happens, a scribe produces an imitative copy of a text—one which closely reproduces the appearance of the original—is this forgery? By our criteria, the answer must be: only if intended to pass for the original. The problem is, how do we know? And how do we know that, even if not originally intended to deceive, it did not later pass for the original?31 In practice there is, therefore, considerable middle ground between forged and authentic. The situation is further complicated by the tendency of copyists to update the documents they transmit. Much as we instinctively use modern registers to discuss the plays of Shakespeare, so medieval scribes often reverted to their own accustomed idioms when describing and transcribing earlier documents. An ancient formula might thus become a modern one, even if the contents are otherwise faithfully transmitted. These problems are particularly acute for documents from the earliest centuries of the Middle Ages. At most one royal diploma survives in its original format from Lombard Italy (568–774); the rest are all preserved in copies, often from much later. Some of these are quite faithful to their lost exemplars; but many show signs of updating, reflecting the legal, linguistic and cultural registers of subsequent centuries.32 Is this forgery? As before, the answer must be: only if intended to deceive. The difficulty, however, lies in determining where harmless intervention stops and active deception starts. If the updating consciously improves the terms of the original, this is forgery; but since we do not have the originals for comparison, it is frequently hard to be sure. Moreover, even the most blatant forgeries tend to draw on authentic materials, preserving elements of (authentic) earlier texts. Forged and authentic are, therefore, rough-and-ready labels, which can obscure as much as they inform.

Once dated and localized, forgeries reveal a great deal about the context in which they were produced. The most common types of text forged in the Middle Ages were, as noted above, charters conveying or confirming legal rights, particularly of liberty, immunity and exemption—texts not dissimilar from the ancient epigraphic forgeries with which we began. Like those, they provide precious glimpses into how, when and why the rights of individual religious houses were contested. Moreover, because they are fictional, they give their authors freer rein than authentic texts, furnishing privileged access to

what Karl Leyser memorably called the ‘ought world’ of the age—a vision of the world as it should be, not as it is.³³ In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that charters of the tenth and eleventh centuries were more than legal texts (though they were this too). As Hagen Keller and Geoffrey Koziol have shown, they were powerful ideological tools, capable of shaping social and political realities.³⁴ This is why they were so highly valued; it is also why they were so often forged. In this context, it is important to appreciate that forgery itself is a deeply historical act. Each falsified document is an attempt to rewrite the past or plug gaps in an existing narrative. Counterfeit charters therefore not only tell us about contemporary concerns, but also shed light on attitudes towards the past. Scholars of early modern Europe have long noted that forgery and antiquarianism go hand in hand: as scholarly knowledge of (and interest in) the ancient world grew, so too did attempts to falsify its records. It has been less frequently appreciated that the same holds true of the ancient and medieval worlds; here, too, forgery is often a sign of a heightened interest in the past.³⁵

Pilgrim’s era is of particular interest in this respect. Patrick Geary famously argued that the tenth and eleventh centuries saw a sea-change in attitudes toward the past in western Europe. These years saw new strategies of memorialization emerge, with a particular focus on local and institutional memory.³⁶ Geary’s work is now complemented by that of Theo Riches, who notes that in these years many religious houses began to write their own narrative histories in the form of the ‘deeds of bishops’ (gesta episcoporum) genre. Such centres were starting to conceive of themselves as corporate entities, with collective pasts of their own.³⁷ For most major houses, we can trace a continuous history from the tenth or eleventh centuries, but only rarely can we take this back much further. It is not simply that there were no earlier records (though in some places, this was so); it is that earlier historical and archival undertakings took forms which did not encourage their later transmission and preservation. What we are seeing is, therefore, the formation of new kinds of institutional memory and identity which were to prove remarkably resilient. These processes are reflected in the upsurge in forgery noted in the Preface. In some regions, particularly in France, there are important ninth-century antecedents; but across the board, the tenth and eleventh centuries saw the spread and diversification of documentary falsification. Viewed in these terms, this period, famously branded an iron, leaden and dark age (‘saeculum . . .

³⁶. Geary, Phantoms. For discussion and criticism: Morelle, ‘Histoire et archives’. See also Southern, ‘Sense of the Past’, to somewhat similar effect.
ferreum . . . plubeum, atque . . . obscurum’) by the great Counter-Reformation cardinal Cesare Baronio (d. 1607), emerges as an exciting and dynamic era. To extend Baronio’s own ferrous metaphor, it was in the crucible of these years that new identities and attitudes were forged, ones which would define the Ancien Régime.

Geary was alive to the potential of forgeries within this context, noting how at Saint-Denis, north of Paris, falsification was an important part of repackaging the Merovingian past in the 1060s. And Amy Remensnyder has similarly underlined the important memorial function of foundation charters—many of them forged—in the religious houses of southern France. Still, forgery remains largely (and strangely) absent from the many studies of medieval memory, in which manuscripts and narrative histories loom large. Such work provides a helpful framework for the present book. The essential point of departure is that memory is not simply an individual affair; it is a social phenomenon, reflecting wider socio-political trends. Especially important here are collective memories, which play a key part in group formation; these reflect (and inform) local, regional and national identities. They are of particular salience in periods of rupture and innovation, when new pasts are developed in response to a changing present, processes famously dubbed ‘the invention of tradition’ by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (with reference to the nineteenth century).

Particularly useful from the perspective of the present study is the work of the German couple Jan and Aleida Assmann. In his influential book of 1990, the former argued that collective memory can be subdivided into communicative and cultural memory (kommunikatives and kulturelles Gedächtnis). The former embodies lived oral tradition, stretching back two to three generations (or about eighty years); the latter, on the other hand, is constituted of distant origin myths and legends. Both are important, but it is cultural memory which typically defines group membership. If we were to take the example of the modern United States, the Bush (Sr) and Clinton presidencies belong firmly to the realm of communicative memory, while the Washington and Lincoln

38. Baronio, Annales Ecclesiastici, x, 647.
40. Among others, see Goetz, ‘Gegenwart der Vergangenheit’; Hen and Innes, eds, Uses of the Past; W. Pohl, Werkstätte der Erinnerung, and ‘History in Fragments’; McKitterick, History and Memory; Ugé, Creating the Monastic Past; B. Pohl, Dudo; Rembold, ‘History and (Selective) Memory’; Greer, Hicklin and Esders, eds, Using and Not Using the Past.
41. Fentress and Wickham, Social Memory; Wertsch, Voices; G. Cubitt, History and Memory, 118–74, 199–256.
42. Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds, Invention of Tradition.
eras have long since entered that of cultural memory. The former play comparatively little role in questions of national identity, whereas the latter are central to them. The Assmanns also identify a number of factors that go into creating and maintaining cultural memory. In literate societies, this is typically characterized by a recognizable (if often implicit) canon, excerpted from the larger body of the recorded past. To stick with the example of the United States, Washington and Lincoln belong to the country’s active cultural memory (the Assmanns’ canon), where they are kept alive by popular writings, sayings and cultural references. Other early presidents, however, such as James Monroe (d. 1831) and Martin Van Buren (d. 1862), are less frequently invoked; in Aleida Assmann’s terms, they belong to the dormant archive (or ‘storage cultural memory’) of the nation, which must be activated if it is to play a part in questions of identity. Viewed in these terms, forgery can certainly tell us much about the formation of cultural memory in the Middle Ages, especially within ecclesiastical institutions. To forge documents was to recreate the past, participating in a process of canonization; this is how certain iconic figures and moments came to dominate local and national memory.

Given this potential, it is perhaps surprising that there has not been more research into the memorial aspects of medieval forgery. As noted, Geary and Remensnyder have undertaken pioneering work here. And more recently, Robert F. Berkhofer III and Constance Bouchard have added important detail, noting the deeply historicizing nature of forgery. Along similar lines, Alfred Hiatt has underlined the narrative qualities of false documents, particularly in the later Middle Ages. Nevertheless, a connected story of the development of forgery, as reflected in attitudes towards institutional identity, remains to be told. Part of the problem lies the nature of forgery itself. It was undertaken locally, with a close eye to the history and interests of the religious house (or houses) in question. It therefore demands close contextual study of a kind which has discouraged generalization and synthesis. The most wide-ranging study to date—that of Hiatt—sensibly restricts itself to one country (England) and century (the fifteenth). Here, I have sought to range more widely, though similar limitations have had to be imposed.

The situation is further complicated by distinct national historiographical traditions, which begin to exert a strong pull on scholarship regarding these years. Because France, England and Germany can all trace a more (or less)
introduction

continuous history back to the tenth century, the history of these regions tends to be framed in terms of the birth and development of the medieval nation—and by proxy, the modern nation state. It is largely undertaken by historians of the country in question, with an eye to later developments, and connections and parallels are easily overlooked. Even in Italy, where no such simple continuity can be charted, the influence of national master-narratives is powerful; there, the tenth century is viewed in terms of the pre-history of the urban communes, which would dominate the politics of the peninsula well into (and beyond) the Renaissance. These historiographical traditions strongly colour the way we view these years. The story of Italy is one of regions and cities, of the foundations of the later communes; that of England, one of kings, courts and administration, of the pre-history of the impressive Angevin state of the later twelfth century. France and Germany sit somewhere between these poles. In the former, the tenth century is an age of regional magnates and monastic reform, a period of royal weakness before the later ascent of the Capetians; in the latter, it is a time of surprising (but ultimately abortive) royal success, soon to be overtaken by the centripetal forces of the locality. By the late tenth century it is, therefore, hard to tell a connected tale at the best of times; that it has not been attempted for forgery is perfectly understandable.

This book is written in the belief that a more connected story can and should be told, even if it must be assembled from fragments. As Heinrich Fichtenau demonstrated, similar social practices and mentalities can be traced across the Latin West in these years, particularly in those regions which had once been part of the Carolingian empire. And much of the most exciting recent work spans national historiographical traditions in this fashion, revealing how subjects as diverse as ecclesiastical reform and queenship can benefit from a wider perspective. In this respect, the differing historiographies sketched above can inform as much as they obscure. By engaging with studies of Italian urban history side by side with ones of English administration, French monastic reform and German regional history, we may hope to achieve a more rounded picture of all regions.

Yet historiographical comparison is only truly meaningful when underpinned by detailed source criticism. And here charters (and forgeries) offer a promising point of entry, since they survive in substantial numbers from across these regions. The aim cannot, however, be to write a history of every falsified document of the later tenth century. Partly, this is a matter of pragmatism. By the final decades of the century, forgery was so widespread that

45. On France and Germany: Brühl, Deutschland—Frankreich, esp. 7–82; and on Italy: Wickham, Sleepwalking, esp. 8–11.

46. Fichtenau, Lebensordnungen, available in English (without footnotes) as Living in the Tenth Century. For subsequent studies in this vein: Hamilton, Church and People; MacLean, Ottonian Queenship.
anything approaching systematic treatment would be impossible. Nor, in any case, would it be desirable. The disparate nature of falsification means that comprehensive investigation risks getting lost in the detail: as examples are multiplied, it becomes harder to keep the big picture in focus. The attempt here, therefore, is to balance the benefits of the bird’s and worm’s eye view. Five forgery complexes—those of Worms, Passau, Abingdon, Fleury and Vercelli, mentioned in the Preface—are used to combine close contextual analysis with wider discussion and synthesis. Each case requires considerable contextualization, both historical and historiographical. But the result of taking them together is, I sincerely hope, greater than the sum of the constituent parts, a picture which allows for local variation alongside pan-European trends.

The case studies have been selected so as to span as much of the Latin West as possible, without overburdening an already heavily laden author (and critical apparatus). They take in all of the realms which had once been part of the Carolingian empire, as well as England, where the Carolingian legacy was strong (if indirect). East to west, they stretch from the Danube to the Loire (by way of the Rhine); north to south, they span the Thames Valley to the Piedmontese Sesia. They have also been chosen to take in different types of religious house, with two monasteries and three bishoprics represented. Finally, in each case forgery has been dated closely to the half century or so spanning the turn of the first millennium (c. 970–1020). This allows us to paint as detailed a picture as possible, one chronologically tight but geographically diverse (though, as we shall see, some of these dates have shifted under scrutiny). In most of these cases, forgery can also be associated with known individuals, enabling us to bring much ancillary evidence to bear.

What follows is thus an exercise in serial microhistory, the first—but hopefully not the last—attempt to study the documentary traditions of tenth- and eleventh-century Europe side by side. The overarching argument, to the extent that there is one, is that forgery tells us a great deal about changing attitudes towards past and present. In this respect, the later tenth century emerges as a significant turning-point: a time when mentalities changed alongside other elements of the socio-political order. Here, forgery speaks not of the blind anachronism earlier scholars saw as characteristic of the Middle Ages, but rather of a budding antiquarianism which would not have been out of place in Quattrocento Florence. Indeed, like later Renaissance counterfeits, these fakes were often intended for local consumption, giving voice to new regional and institutional identities. Karl Leyser once spoke of the ‘ascent of Latin Europe’ in these years, of how writers of the early eleventh century began to express a new-found confidence in the social and political order of the West.47 The texts surveyed here flesh out Leyser’s picture, illustrating how such processes played

out on the ground. The forgers examined may be somewhat humbler than Leyser’s historical narrators, but their voices are no less worthy of attention.

As an exercise in microhistory, this book makes no claim to comprehensiveness. In order to make the material manageable, I have focused on royal and papal documents at five centres, leaving local (‘private’) documentary traditions largely to one side. I likewise only touch on narrative history in passing. This is not because the subject is uninteresting or unimportant, but rather because it deserves treatment on its own terms. Points of contact between narrative history and forgery are, in any case, taken up in the Conclusions. Other absences weigh more heavily. Some will understandably baulk at my reticence regarding the Iberian Peninsula, a region rich in documentary records of these years (including forgeries), but regarding which I have little competence and no formal training. Others will, with equal justification, regret the absence of a female religious house among my examples. More still will find further matters wanting. All I can hope is that these dissatisfied readers will take my oversights as a challenge, and set about rectifying them. When they do, perhaps they will see further for being perched on these diminutive shoulders.
GENERAL INDEX

Aachen, 168, 236, 246

'Ächenn rule', 217, 219

Abbey(s), royal/imperial, 22–23, 49, 153, 158, 160, 163, 192, 199, 234, 237

Abbo of Fleury, 153–54, 156, 158–77, 180, 182–92, 210, 234, 266, 269–70, 272;
Collectio canonum of, 166–67, 189–90; Italian trips of, 169–72, 180–81; Liber apologeticus of, 165–67, 183; Quaestiones grammaticales of, 180; sojourn in England of, 159, 188–89; youth and education of, 159


Abū l-Qāsim, emir of Sicily, 196–97

Actus Silvestri, 13

Adalbero, archbishop of Reims, 154–58

Adalbero, archbishop of Laon, 157, 191

Adalbert, bishop of Bergamo, 254

Adalbert I, bishop of Passau, 71–72, 96

Adalbert, bishop of Vercelli, 203

Adalbert II, son and co-ruler of Berengar II, 195–97, 212–13, 221, 227

Adalwin, archbishop of Salzburg, 77

Adam, first man 114–15, 125

Adelheid, empress, 26, 66, 106, 195–96, 212–15

Adémair of Chabannes, 190

Adrevald of Fleury, 160, 191–92

Advent, 165–66

Advocate, legal, 214–16

Ælfgar, son of Ælfric of Hampshire, 120, 148

Ælfric, ealdorman of Hampshire, 114–15, 119–20, 148, 150, 270

Ælfstan, bishop of Rochester, 147, 189

Ælfrith, queen, 113, 116, 118–19, 137

Ælfgwine, charter recipient, 128

Ælfwine, despoiler of Glastonbury, 150

Ælfwine, bishop of Crediton, 134

Ælfwine, bishop of Sherborne, 134

Ælfgar, son of Ælfric of Hampshire, 120, 148

Ælfric, bishop of Rochester, 147, 189

Ælfrith, queen, 113, 116, 118–19, 137

Ælfgwine, charter recipient, 128

Ælfwine, despoiler of Glastonbury, 150

Ælfwine, bishop of Crediton, 134

Ælfwine, bishop of Sherborne, 134

ÆEthelbald, Mercian ruler, 130–31, 142, 144–45

Æthelmar, founder of Eynsham, 136

Æthelred II ('the Unready'), English ruler, 113–21, 123–24, 126–27, 130, 133, 135–38, 140, 146–48, 150–51, 188, 256

Æthelsige, Kentish magnate, 147

Æthelstan, English ruler, 130–31, 138, 144, 147, 150

Æthelstan C, draftsman-scribe, 130

Æthelwold, bishop of Winchester, 113–21, 123, 131, 137, 140–42, 146, 148, 152, 160, 188, 229; Life of, 119

Æthelwulf, West Saxon ruler, 126

Agapit II, pope, 73, 78–80, 93, 107, 108, 142

Agapit II, pope, 73, 78–80, 93, 107, 108, 142

Aimoin of Fleury, 160–61, 169, 171–74, 178, 183–84, 189–91; Gesta Francorum of, 179, 192

Alberic, judge, 215

Alderic, bishop of Le Mans, 263

Aleram, Italian margrave, 194–95

Alexander II, pope, 175, 177, 183–85

Alexandria, 196

Alice, 196, 221

‘Alliterative Charters’, 130 n. 46

Allstedt, 97

Aimoin of Fleury, 160–61, 169, 171–74, 178, 183–84, 189–91; Gesta Francorum of, 179, 192

Albert, Peter, 49

Albert of Vermandois, count, 156

Amandus, bishop of Maastricht, 41

Amandus, bishop of Worms, 32, 41

Amenhotep III, pharaoh, 1

Amenotting, 89

Aimoin of Fleury, 160–61, 169, 171–74, 178, 183–84, 189–91; Gesta Francorum of, 179, 192

Aimoin of Fleury, 160–61, 169, 171–74, 178, 183–84, 189–91; Gesta Francorum of, 179, 192

Albert, Peter, 49

Albert of Vermandois, count, 156

Alderic, bishop of Le Mans, 263

Aleram, Italian margrave, 194–95

Alexander II, pope, 175, 177, 183–85

Alexandria, 196

Alice, 196, 221

‘Alliterative Charters’, 130 n. 46

Allstedt, 97

Alpha-omega, 114, 136, 138–39. See also chrismon

Alps, 66–67, 91, 107, 168, 194–95, 197, 236, 238, 240, 243, 247–48. See also Great St Bernard pass; Little St Bernard pass; Mont Cenis pass

Aric, bishop of Asti, 254

Aldéric, judge, 215

Albert, Peter, 49

Albert of Vermandois, count, 156

Alderic, bishop of Le Mans, 263

Aleram, Italian margrave, 194–95

Alexander II, pope, 175, 177, 183–85

Alexandria, 196

Alice, 196, 221

‘Alliterative Charters’, 130 n. 46

Allstedt, 97

Alpha-omega, 114, 136, 138–39. See also chrismon

Alps, 66–67, 91, 107, 168, 194–95, 197, 236, 238, 240, 243, 247–48. See also Great St Bernard pass; Little St Bernard pass; Mont Cenis pass

Aric, bishop of Asti, 254

Altdötting, 89

Amandus, bishop of Maastricht, 41

Amandus, bishop of Worms, 32, 41

Amenhotep III, pharaoh, 1, 256

Amesbury, 136
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index Term</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anathema</td>
<td>173, 201</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See also</td>
<td>excommunication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancien Régime</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andorno</td>
<td>221, 227–28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew, bishop of Lodi</td>
<td>242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew of Fleury</td>
<td>184–85, 191</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annalista Saxo</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anscar, margrave of Ivrea</td>
<td>194</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anscarid(s)</td>
<td>194–95, 197–98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anselmo dedicata</td>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'anti-monastic reaction'</td>
<td>120, 146, 151</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anachronism</td>
<td>2, 8, 12, 33, 77, 138, 142, 152, 257, 260, 264</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ananias</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annunciation</td>
<td>242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ansgar, bishop of Bremen</td>
<td>263</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antiquarianism</td>
<td>15, 55–56, 152, 261, 264</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antiquities</td>
<td>2–3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antiquity, Classical</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apocrypha, biblical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>archaism</td>
<td>35–7, 48, 55, 163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See also</td>
<td>hyperarchaism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>archchancellor</td>
<td>204, 238, 241–42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>archdeacon</td>
<td>203–4, 215, 240, 243, 246</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archembald, abbot of Fleury</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archembald, archbishop of Tours</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>archive, papal</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>archpriest</td>
<td>204, 215–16, 238</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardric, bishop of Vercelli</td>
<td>218–19, 225–26, 228, 230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardician, son of Arduin of Ivrea</td>
<td>207–8, 236</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardon, river</td>
<td>156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arduin Glaber, margrave of Turin</td>
<td>194–95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrian heresy</td>
<td>115, 205</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arpiert II, Lombard ruler</td>
<td>211, 225–26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arles</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armbruster, J. V.</td>
<td>28–29, 56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arno, archbishop of Salzburg</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnulf, archbishop of Reims</td>
<td>156–58, 170–71, 200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnulf, bishop of Metz</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnulf, bishop of Orléans</td>
<td>153–54, 156–63, 166–68, 173–74, 184, 189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnulf (II), archbishop of Milan</td>
<td>246</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnulf of Milan</td>
<td>242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnulf of Yèvre, castellan</td>
<td>163–64, 168, 175, 189, 270</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arona</td>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arras</td>
<td>268</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>art, medieval</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aruna</td>
<td>227, 229</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascension</td>
<td>198, 230, 232</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assmann, Aleida</td>
<td>16–17, 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assmann, Jan</td>
<td>16–17, 57, 60, 266</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asti</td>
<td>254</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athelney</td>
<td>134</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atto, bishop of Vercelli</td>
<td>196, 205, 210, 217–19, 221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augsburg</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augustine, archbishop of Canterbury</td>
<td>73, 78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>63; Lower, 94; Upper, 104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authenticity</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxerre</td>
<td>158, 160</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avaria</td>
<td>75–76, 81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avars</td>
<td>71, 75–76, 79, 86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aventine Hill</td>
<td>168</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baden-Württemberg</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldred, south-west Midlands ruler</td>
<td>146, 150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamberg</td>
<td>95, 240, 248</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baptism</td>
<td>77, 79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartholomew, abbot of Marmoutier</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bastard</td>
<td>157</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath</td>
<td>134</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bazas</td>
<td>187</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beddington</td>
<td>148</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bede</td>
<td>73–74, 78, 80, 171</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedwyn</td>
<td>131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benedict III, pope</td>
<td>263</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benedict VI, pope</td>
<td>72–73, 80–81, 108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benedict VII, pope, xxviii</td>
<td>72–73, 80–81, 108, 177, 186–87, 189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Benedict VIII, pope, 247
Benedictine Rule, 23–24, 116–18, 121, 134, 137, 150, 174
Benedict of Nursia, 23–24, 116–17, 119, 121, 159, 161, 165, 173, 184, 187, 190–92, 266; feast day of (11 July), 184; feast of the reburial of (4 December), 165.
See also Benedictine Rule

bene val(ete), 107, 128
bishop: diocesan, 12, 23, 114, 134, 159, 168, 188, 242; auxiliary, 78. See also office: episcopal
Berengar I, Italian ruler, 193–94, 218 n. 59, 223, 225
Berengar of Ivrea (alias Berengar II), Italian ruler, 194–97, 212–13, 221, 227
Berkhofer, Robert F. III, 17
Berkshire, historic county of, 127, 131, 141, 143–44
Berlin, 61–62
Baronio, Cesare, 15–16
Bergamo, 213, 254, 261
Bertha, wife of Robert the Pious, 167, 170–71
Bessels Leigh, 123, 141–42
Bielia, 221–22, 223 n. 71
Biscioni cartulary. See Liber Biscioni
Bisson, Thomas, 270
Blankett, 95, 99, 102, 106 n. 105
Blessed Virgin. See Mary, Virgin
blessing-sanction, 206–7
Bloch, Marc, 272
blood relic, 24, 68
Bobbio, 199–200, 210, 234–35, 268
Bohemia, 70, 72, 104
Bologna, 213
Boniface, saint, 70, 76–77
Bononio, saint, 197, 214, 226; Life of, 197, 226
bookland, 121–22, 136, 143–44
Bosonid(s), 194
Bouchard, Constance, 17
boundary clause(s), 128–29, 135, 138, 147
Brandenburg, 70
Bratislava, battle of (907), 69
Breme, 223, 247
Bremen, 262–63
Britain, 57, 142
British Library, 114
British Museum, 1
Brixen, 69, 77, 94
Bromley, 147–48, 152
Brooke, Christopher, 5
Brown, Peter, 260
Bruning, son-in-law of Liuprand, 217
Brunner, Karl, 110
Bruno, archbishop of Cologne, 26
Bruno of Carinthia. See Gregory V
Brusasco, 224
Buonconvento, 57
Burchard, bishop of Passau, 89
Burchard, bishop of Worms, 26–27, 59
Burgundy, 194, 235
Burton, 124
Bush, George (Sr), 16
Büttner, Heinrich, 110
Cambray, 187
Canava, 222, 227
canon law, 166, 175, 183, 186, 189, 227, 234, 262
Canterbury, 146, 151–52
Capetian dynasty, 18, 155, 160
capitularies, 264–65
Capo Colonna, battle of (982). See Crotone, battle of (982)
Caresana, 197–98, 212–20, 223, 226, 238, 245
Carinthia, 27, 31, 59; march of, 66–67
Carinthians, 71, 86
Carloman of Bavaria, East Frankish ruler, 89
Caroline minuscule, 179
Carolingian dynasty, xxviii, 26, 33, 63, 84, 153–55, 157, 161, 193, 264
Carolingian empire, 18–19
cartulary, 97, 149. See also Codex Lonsdorfanus; Eynsham: cartulary of; Liber Biscioni; Muchelney: cartulary of; Worms: cartulary of cartulary-chronicle, genre, 127–28, 258.
See also Abingdon: cartulary-chronicle of; Folcuin of Saint-Bertin
Casanovas, 229
Catalonia, 265
Catholicism, 61–62, 261
Cavaglià, 196, 221, 227–28
Cenwahl, West Saxon ruler, 149
Cerroto, 229
Cervo, river, 221, 230
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cumnor</td>
<td>131, 141, 143–45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunibert, archpriest of Vercelli</td>
<td>204, 215–16, 238, 245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curial script</td>
<td>107, 172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>customary, monastic</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dado, father of Arduin of Ivrea</td>
<td>195, 204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagobert I, Frankish ruler, 3</td>
<td>32–33, 40–41, 42, 56–57, 60, 261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagobert III, Frankish ruler, 41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel, Book of 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danube, river, 19, 61, 66, 93, 94, 271</td>
<td>219, 231, 245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deacon, 145, 223, 239</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead Sea Scrolls, 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Della Chiesa, Francesco Agostino</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denchworth, 141, 144–45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Déols, 175</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De re diplomatica, 4. See also Mabillon, Jean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desana, 238</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deutschlandsberg, 67</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dexter, Flavius</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diocesan boundaries, 268</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diplomas. See charters: royal/imperial diplomatic, 4–5, 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diplomatic minuscule, 66, 83, 163, 231, 245</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See also rustic capitals; square capitals; uncial(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissolution (of the Monasteries), 150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>districtus, 203–4, 206–7, 210, 229, 236, 238, 254</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djoser, pharaoh, 2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domesday Book, 143–44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donation of Constantine, 13–14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downton, 148–50, 152</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry Sandford, 141</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duby, Georges, 269</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dümmler, Ernst, 61–62, 72, 81–82, 107</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury, 152, 188–89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Esztergom, 111
Etterzhausen, 104–5
Eugenius II, pope, 72, 74–77
Euphrates, river, 1
Eurasia, 269
Europe, 120, 199, 261, 265; 'of bishops', 266–67; continental/mainland, 57, 116, 121; early modern, 15, 260; western, 161, 256
Eusebius, bishop of Vercelli, 205–7, 218, 226, 231, 268; Life of, 205
exchequer, 135
Eynsham, 136–37; cartulary of, 130 n. 48
Fall of Man, 114–15, 118
Famine Stele, 2, 256
Farfa, 199, 203, 208, 243
Fater, abbot of Kremsmünster, 82
Fatimid dynasty, 197
Fawkham, 148
Fécamp, 186, 188
'Feudal Revolution', 164, 269–71
Fichtenauf, Heinrich, 18, 53, 62, 65, 89, 100, 108–9, 112
fictio, rhetorical, 259
Fleury (Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire), xxviii–xxix, 19, 121, 153, 158–92, 243, 261, 264, 266, 269–70, 272; sack of (1562), 165
Flodoard of Reims, 258
Florence, 19
Florentine calendar, 242
Florian, saint, 72
Folcuin of Saint-Bertin, 258
Folwich, bishop of Worms, 32
forgery, passim; and antiquarianism, 15; definition of, 13–14. See also anachronism; antiquarianism; hyperarchaisms
Formigliana, 226–27
foundation charter, 16, 136, 146, 151, 240, 265
Francia, region in France, 155
Frankfurt, 212
Freda, 40, 52
Frederick, archbishop of Ravenna, 237
Frederick, archbishop of Salzburg, 63, 65–66, 68, 100–102, 103, 108, 267, 270
Frederick Barbarossa, emperor, 29, 254
Freising, 69
Fried, Johannes, 53
Fuhrmann, Horst, 5
Fulbert of Chartres, 184
Fulda, 22, 70, 80
Fulgentius, saint, 161
Fulk, bishop of Orléans, 184–85, 191
Gabotto, Ferdinando, 208, 247
Galen, 1
Gaul, 80, 173
Gauzbert, abbot of Saint-Julien, 166
Gauzlin, abbot of Fleury, 179–80, 184, 187, 191; Life of, 184
Geary, Patrick, 15–17
Gerbert of Aurillac, 157–59, 167–71, 184, 199–200, 202, 234–35, 238. See also Sylvester II
Gerhard, (arch)bishop of Lorch/Passau, 72–73, 77–80
German, 66
Germanus, abbot of Ramsey, 188
Germany, 17–18, 22, 70, 76, 80, 154–55, 193, 206, 219, 248, 264–65, 268. See also East Francia
gesta episcoporum, genre, 15, 263–64, 267
Gezo, bishop of Turin, 246
Genge, 123, 131, 141–45
Giovanni Nanni (alias Annius of Viterbo), 261
Giry, Arthur, 4
Gisela, wife of Adalbert I of Ivrea, 194
Giselbert, archdeacon of Vercelli, 203–4
Giselbert, archbishop of Magdeburg, 24, 58
Giso, bishop of Wells, 134
Gisulf, bishop of Vercelli, 219–20, 230, 254
Glastonbury, 120, 134, 146, 150, 188, 261
Godehard, bishop of Hildesheim, 63–65, 266; Life of, 63–65
Godfrey, brother of William of Volpiano, 236, 246
gold mining, 208, 210–11
gold rush, American, 112
Goosey, 123, 131, 141–42, 144
Gotefred, chancellor of Arduin, 245
Graecomania, 3
Gran, 111
Grand Tour, 2
Grafton, Anthony, xxviii
Great St Bernard pass, 194
Greece, ancient, 1, 2
Gregory II, pope, 172
Gregory IV, pope, 173, 177, 179–83, 185–87, 189, 191, 263
Gregory of Tours, 63
Gregory the Great (I), pope, 78, 80, 168, 170, 173–4, 183, 187, 189, 198; Register of, 183
Guibert, brother of Arduin of Ivrea, 235
Gumbert, Rhineland magnate, 46–48, 51
Gunthard, archdeacon of Turin, 246
Guy, bishop of Pavia, 246
Guy, margrave of Ivrea, 195–96, 213
Guy of Spoleto, Italian ruler, 194
Hadamar, abbot of Fulda, 79, 80
Hadwig, wife of Hugh the Great, 155
Halberstadt, 70
half-uncial, 148
Hamburg-Bremen, archbishopric of, 78, 94. See also Bremen
Hatto, bishop of Worms, 32, 35
Havelberg, 70
Helgaud of Fleury, 171, 179, 184, 192.
   See also Robert the Piou: Life of
Henry I, East Frankish ruler, 24, 170
Henry III, emperor, 177–79, 218, 228, 230
Henry IV, emperor, 229, 254
Henry VII, emperor, 57
Henry I of Bavaria, duke, 69, 80, 96
Henry II (the Quarrelsome) of Bavaria, duke, 66, 80, 94–98, 102, 104, 106
heresy, 115, 166, 206. See also Arian heresy; Sabellian heresy
Heribert, archbishop of Cologne, 206
‘hermeneutic style’, 135
Herold, archbishop of Salzburg, 79–80
Herveus, treasurer of Saint-Martin, 172
Hiatt, Alfred, 17
Higuera, Jerónimo Román de la, 261
Hildibald, bishop of Worms, 30–31, 40, 48, 53, 59
Hincmar of Laon, 63, 109
Hincmar of Reims, 5, 167, 262–63
history: institutional, 15–16, 263–64, 267; narrative, 16, 20, 257–59. See also memory
Hobsbawm, Eric, 16
Holy Spirit, 79, 113, 166
Hraban Maur, 219
Hubert ‘the Red’, count (of Pombia), 212, 229, 248–50
Hugh, abbot of Farfa, 234
Hugh, archbishop of Reims, 160
Hugh, margrave of Tuscany, 206, 212, 214, 218–19
Hugh Capet, West Frankish/French ruler, 153–58, 160–61, 163–64, 166–69, 171, 191
Hugh of Arles (alias Hugh of Provence), Italian ruler, 23, 194–96, 214, 217, 221–22, 230
Hugh of Fleury, 187
Hugh of S. Lorenzo, papal legate, 230
Hugh the Great, duke of Francia, 157, 160
Humanists, Renaissance, 2
Hungarian frontier. See Bavaria: Hungarian frontier of
Hungarians, 63–65, 69, 71, 79, 80–81, 104, 193, 211
Hungary, 70–72, 75, 86, 93, 109
Hunibert, bishop of Cologne, 41
Huns, 76, 79
hunting, 154, 194
Huschner, Wolfgang, 53
hyperarchaism, 12–13, 91
Iberia, 20. See also Catalonia; Spain
Âl-de-France, 157
Ilminster, 135
Ilvesheim, 41
Imhotep, adviser to Djoser, 2, 3
imitative script. See script imitation
incastellamento, 210
incest, 167, 171–72
Indiculus loricatorum, 69
Ingelheim, 24, 71, 94, 168
Ingo, bishop of Vercelli, 196, 207, 221
ink, colour of, 38, 43, 114, 216
Innocent III, pope, 5
Insular minuscule, 148
interdict, 174–75, 186–87, 190
Investiture Contest, 243, 254
invocation, 8–9, 36, 206
Ireland, 57
Isidore of Seville, 171, 250; Etymologies of, 250
Isigrim, bishop of Regensburg, 72–73, 77
Italian C, draftsman-scribe, 66, 97
Itter, river, 45
John, archbishop of Ravenna, 235, 237
John, bishop of Belluno, 197
John VIII, pope, 168, 174, 181–82, 186, 191
John XV, pope, 150, 169–70, 173, 197
John XVIII, pope, 184
John XIX, pope, 182, 247 n. 141
John of Auxerre, scholar, 158
John Philagathos, (anti)pope, 198, 234
John the Baptist, saint, 204, 227
Justinian, emperor, 2
Kalbid dynasty, 196
Karloff, Boris, 2
Karlsruhe, Generallandesarchiv, 49
Kehr, PaulFrédéric, 90–91
Keller, Hagen, 15
Kelly, Susan, 122–23, 133, 141
Kempshall, Matthew, 259
Kent, 147, 262
Khnun, god of the Nile, 2
Kohl, Thomas, 54
Kölder, Theo, 28
Konzept, 37
Kozioł, Geoffrey, 15, 109, 263
Kremsmünster, 82–86, 89, 91, 93–94, 97–99, 111–12, 170
Kulturkampf, 61–62
Ladenburg, 24, 27, 32–34, 37, 40–42, 45–46, 49, 52, 54, 59; Roman ruins at, 57
Lanefranc, archbishop of Canterbury, 185
Lantbert, bishop of Freising, 73, 77
Laon, 156–57
La Réole, 177, 186–87
Latin, 135, 204, 208, 238
Latin West, 18, 19, 262, 271–72
Laurence, (anti)pope, 74
Laurence, saint, 71, 77, 94–95, 97–99, 103, 106
Lechfeld, battle of (955), 80, 95
Lechner, Johann, 30–32, 35, 37, 42–44, 46, 48–53
Leckhamestead, 141
Lehr, Waldemar, 82
Leitha, 86
Le Mans, 160; forgeries of, 262–64
Lent, 248
Leo, abbot of SS Bonifacio ed Alessio, 168–72, 203 n. 25, 234–35
Leo, archbishop of Ravenna (=Leo of SS Bonifacio ed Alessio?), 234
appointment of, 203; hand of, 250–51;
Latin style of, 205–6, 208, 238–39, 252, 259; Versus de Gregorio papa et Ottone
augusto of, 234; Versus de Ottone et
Heinrico of, 238
Leo III, pope, 75, 116, 123, 140
Leo VII, pope, 72–73, 77–79, 174, 177
Leo IX, pope, 172–73, 185
Leotheric, archbishop of Sens,
184–85
Leyser, Karl, 14–15, 19–20
libellus, 199
Liber Biscioni, 231, 233
Liber diurnus, 73–74, 168
Liber pontificalis, 74, 177, 191–92
liberty, ecclesiastical, 11–12, 14, 54, 114,
116–23, 125–26, 132–38, 150–51, 168,
242–43, 259, 265–66, 270, 272
Liguria, 194
Lincoln, 150
Lincoln, Abraham, 16–17
Linz, 94
Litaha, 86–87
literacy, 2, 66, 152, 205, 210, 229, 255,
264–65
litterae elongatae, 11, 25, 35, 42, 47, 49,
163, 231, 245
Little St Bernard pass, 194
Liudolf, son of Otto I, 23, 24, 27, 80
Liudolf F, draftsman-scribe, 66
Liudolf H, draftsman-scribe, 44, 53
Liudolf I, draftsman-scribe, 58
Liudolf K, draftsman-scribe, 53
Liudolfings. See Ottonian (Liudolfing) dynasty
Liupram, archbishop of Salzburg, 77
Liuprand, judge and advocate, 216–17
Liutgard, daughter of Otto I, 26, 28
Liutprand, Lombard ruler, 204
Liutward, bishop of Vercelli, 204–5
Lobdengau, 32, 40–45, 59
Locarno, 240
Loire, river, 19, 155, 159–60, 267
Lombard League, 254
Lombard rulers (of Italy), 3, 14, 262.
See also Italy: Lombard
Lombardy, 68, 254
Lomellina, 247
London, 113, 148
Longworth, 123, 131, 141, 143
Lorch, xxvii–xxviii, 71–82, 85, 87–89,
93–94, 97–99, 103–7, 110–11; late
antique remains at, 72
Lorsch, 22–23, 41–45, 59, 68, 257
Lot, Ferdinand, 175
Lothar I, Frankish ruler, 34–35, 37, 39,
40–41, 45, 55, 205, 225
Lothar II, Italian ruler, 23, 194–96, 213–14,
217, 221–22, 230
Lothar III, West Frankish ruler, 154–55,
157, 160
Lotharingia, 26, 80, 155–56, 190; Lower,
154, 157, 246; Upper, 155
Louis IV, West Frankish ruler, 156–57
Louis V, West Frankish ruler, 154–55, 160
Louis the Blind, Italian ruler, 193–94, 222
Louis the Child, East Frankish ruler, 63,
68–69, 89–90, 94
Louis the German, East Frankish ruler,
32–35, 37–38, 42, 45–46, 52, 54–55, 57,
60, 86–87, 91, 98
Louis the Pious, Frankish ruler, 28–30,
32–35, 37–39, 40–42, 45, 51–52, 55–57,
60, 83, 86–89, 112, 181–82, 191, 256,
258, 261, 263
Lowenthal, David, 271
Lucedio, 197, 204–5, 207–8, 224–27, 235
Luitpold, duke of Bavaria, 69
Luitpoldings, Bavarian ducal family, 69
Mabillon, Jean, 4, 6
Madalwin, auxiliary bishop, 71
Magdeburg, 21, 24, 30, 42–44, 53, 58,
67–68, 70–71, 78, 95, 107–8, 261, 266
Maggiore, Lake, 227
Magnia Carta, 114
Mainz, 22–24, 58, 69–70, 76, 78, 237
Maiolus, abbot of Cluny, 243–45
Maldon, 120
Malmesbury, 135
Manaresi, Cesare, 208–11, 225
Manfred, son of Count Aimo, 221, 227
manicule, 218
Manitušu, Akkadian ruler, 1–2
Manuta, 68
Marcham, 145
Marinianus, bishop of Ravenna, 189
Marmoutier, 172, 186
marriage, 77–78; clerical, 219
Martial, 1
Martin of Tours, 119
martyrdom, 75
martyrology, 219, 238. See also Vercelli: martyrrology-necrology of
Mary, Virgin, 114–15, 118, 128, 131, 141–42
Mathilda, East Frankish queen, 170
Mattsee, 91
Maurice, saint, 71, 95
Maurus, saint, 161
Meißen, 70
memory: collective, 16; communicative, 16–17; cultural, 16–17, 57, 59–60; institutional, 15–16, 259–60, 263–64; local, 15, 258–60; social, 16
mentalities, literate. See literacy
merchants, Frisian, 35, 37
Merovingian dynasty, 3, 4, 16, 262
Merseburg, 22, 58, 70, 95
Methodius, Greek missionary saint, 76
Methodius ‘of Speculiuliensi’, 76
Metz, 22
Meuse, river, 155
microhistory, 19–20
Middle Rhine, 24, 26–27, 30, 57, 112
Milan, 195, 205, 227, 253–54
Miracles of Saint Benedict, 160, 191–92
Modena, 213
modius regis, 34–35, 38
Moirav, Moravian leader, 76
Molinaria, 221
monastery, royal. See abbey(s), royal/imperial
monogram, royal/imperial, 11, 13, 28, 37–38, 40, 47, 83–84, 86, 89–90, 97, 99–100, 128, 231–33, 250
Mnroe, James, 16
Mont Cenis pass, 194
Mont, 222–23
Monte Casino, 4–5, 23–24, 116, 159, 259, 266
Montier-en-Der, 188
Moore, R. I., 269
Moravia, 70, 75–76, 80–81, 109
Mosbach, 49–50, 51
Mostert, Marco, 172, 175–77, 180–83, 186
Mount Cisidola. See Cisidola
Mouzon, 169
Michałowski, Roman, 75
Micy, 161, 187–89
Middle East, 1
mint(ing), rights of, 34–35, 38, 54
mission, eastern, 65, 70–71, 75–81, 86–88, 93–95, 97–98, 106, 111, 256
money laundering, 246
Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 62
Morelle, Laurent, 187
Muchelney, 133–35; cartulary of, 134–35
Mühlbach, Engelbert, 30
Mummy, The, 2
murrain, 115
mutation féodale. See ‘Feudal Revolution’
Neckar, river, 24, 32, 45, 49
Neckarhausen, 41
necrology, 219. See also Vercelli: martyrrology-necrology of
Neuhausen, 46
Neunkirchen, 24
New Minster, Winchester, 117–18; refoundation charter of, 117–18, 121
Nibelungenlied, 61
Nicholas I, pope, 263
Nidrinhof, 66
Niederaltach, 63–65, 70, 89, 266
Niedernburg, 99–103, 109
Nierstein, 94–95
Nile, river, 1, 2, 196
Nithard, brother of William of Volpiano, 236, 246
Nordgau, 95
Nonantola, 234–35
Noricum, xxvii, 71, 75, 79, 108
notaries, communal, 230–31
notice(s): judicial, 214, 226, 241, 265; tradition, 70; transaction, 163, 265
Notitia Galliarum, 190
Novara, 194, 196, 206, 225–27, 236, 248
Noyon, 154, 156
Nunna, South Saxon ruler, 146
Oda, archbishop of Canterbury, 127
Odelric, bishop of Cremona, 242
Odenwald, 32–33, 39, 40–46, 51–53, 59
Odilo, abbot of Cluny, 245
Odilo, Bavarian duke, 63, 93, 99
Odo, abbot of Cluny, 159–60, 168, 175, 182–83, 186, 192
Odo, bishop of Chartres, 163
Odoric, bishop of Orléans, 185
Odo of Blois, count, 156, 163, 167
Odo of Paris, West Frankish ruler, 155
Offa, Mercian ruler, 146, 150–51
office: comital, 30, 34, 45, 270; episcopal, 266–67
Oise, river, 155–56
Olderic-Manfred, margrave of Turin, 248, 254
Old Minster, Winchester, 116–20, 124, 136, 146–51
Old Testament, 1
Orco, estate (alias Regio), 218 n. 59, 223–24, 226–27, 229, 239, 247
Orco, river, 222, 236, 240, 247
ordination, 77. See also consecration: sacerdotal
Orléanais, 153, 159–61, 167
Orléans, 153, 156–61, 165, 174, 184–85, 188, 192, 270; canons of, 165–66
Orthodoxorum charters, 122–27, 131–33, 135–43, 145, 209–10, 256
Osbert de Clare, 259
Osgar, abbot of Abingdon, 119, 160, 188
Ossola, 194, 206
ostensio cartae, 214–15, 265. See also notice(s): judicial
Oswald, archbishop of York (and Worcester), 123, 152, 160, 188
Otbert, Italian margrave, 194–95
Ötting, 89–91
Otto I, emperor, 21, 26, 31–33, 35–37, 39–40, 42, 46–48, 50, 55, 63, 66, 80, 94–95, 107–8, 155, 213, 222; conquest of Italy of, 23, 194–96, 213, 221; missionary plans of, 67–68, 70
Otto (I), duke of Swabia and Bavaria, 99, 102
Ottonian (Liudlolfing) dynasty, 26, 63, 69, 80, 264–65, 271
Otto of Worms, duke of Carinthia, 27–31, 45, 58, 197, 240
Otto-William, count of Burgundy, 223–4
Oxfordshire, 141, 143–44
Oybold, abbot of Fleury, 159, 161
pallium, 72–81, 108, 110, 272
pancartes(s), 140–41, 231
Panero, Francesco, 209, 228–29
Pannonia, 75–76, 79, 81, 108
Papebroch, Daniel, 4, 6
papyrus, 107
Paris, 16, 156, 159–60, 165, 188
Parma, 254
Paschasius, Roman deacon, 74
past, sense of the, xxviii–xxix, 256–61
Patzold, Steffen, 266
Pavia, 44, 199, 201, 207, 212, 229, 240–41, 248, 253
penance, 77; public, 202
Pennard, 150
Pentecost, 68, 113, 248
Perrecy, 186
Pershore, 123–24, 138–40, 151
Peter, advocate of Empress Adelheid, 214
Peter, bishop of Asti, 242
Peter, bishop of Como, 238–42, 245
Peter, bishop of Novara, 236, 238, 248, 251–52, 255
Peter, papal legate, 184
Peter, saint, 26, 118, 130, 141–42, 170, 192
Peter the Deacon, 258–59, 261
Pfister, Christian, 173
Philae, 2
Piedmont, 19, 194–95, 197, 199–200, 208, 222, 236, 238, 241–42, 246–48, 254
pious fraud (pia fraus), 5
Pippin I (alias Pippin III), Frankish ruler, 32–35, 37, 41, 52, 57
Pippin (I), mayor of the palace, 41
Pirmin, saint, 65, 70, 71
Pisa, Archivio storico diocesano, 57
plague, 120
Po, river, 194, 208, 212, 222–22, 224, 237–38, 240
Pombia, 195
Prague, 70
prayer clauses, 25, 116
preaching, 77
prebend, 135
Prešburg, battle of (907). See Bratislava, battle of (907)
primacy, 175, 184, 190–91, 268–69
print, advent of, 3–4
priories, rights of, 187
private charters. See charters: 'private'
prohibition (immunity) clause, 11, 33–34, 41, 206
protection: papal, 153, 168, 185, 192; royal, 11, 54, 121, 192, 246–47
Protestantism, 61–62
protocol, 8–9, 11, 34, 42–43 n. 54, 45–46, 78 n. 46, 181, 231
protogothic minuscule, 128, 179
Prou, Maurice, 175, 177, 186
Prussia, 61–62
Prussian Academy of Sciences (Berlin), 61–62
Pseudo-Isidore, 166, 190, 262–63, 268
pseudo-original(s), 56–57, 82, 89, 91, 93, 145, 147, 150
publication (clause), 39, 84, 206
‘Quadrata’, 205, 224
Quattrocento, 19, 260
Quellenkritik, 61
Radulf, archbishop of Tours, 172
Raginfred, bishop of Bergamo, 203, 215, 254
Rainier, abbot (of Fleury), 180
Ramackers, Johannes, 175–76
Ramsey, 159–60, 188
Ranger, Terrence, 16
Ranke, Leopold von, 61
Raoul Glaber, 235
Raoul of Burgundy, West Frankish ruler, 157
Rathsack, Mogens, 175–77
Ravenna, 42, 67, 197, 200, 208–9, 234, 237
recognition (clause), 11, 35, 49, 91, 99, 101, 105, 245
recognition sign, 11, 25, 35, 48, 84
referendarius, 107
reform: ecclesiastical, 233–34, 260;
monastic, 23–25, 64–65, 113–14, 116–20, 137, 146, 152, 159–60, 265, 266; papal, 270–71
Regensburg, 69–70, 73, 77, 91, 96, 98, 100, 104, 247
Reggio, 213
Reinhart, bishop of Passau, 87
Regio. See Orco, estate
Regularis concordia, 121–22, 134, 137, 150, 188
Reichenau, 4–5, 29–30, 260
Reims, 22, 154–60, 168–69, 171–73, 175, 185, 189–90, 263, 268
Remensnyder, Amy, 16–17
Remigius, saint, 259
Reut, 91
Reuter, Timothy, 266–67, 271
Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhineland-Palatinate), 22
rhetor, antique, 259
Rhine, river, 19, 21–22, 26, 32, 76, 94, 154, 190–91, 264, 266
Rhineland, 26, 35, 76, 271–72
Rhine-Main-District, 22–23
Richard, bishop of Passau, 69
Richard, count (?of Ossola), 212
Riché, Pierre, 169
Richer of Saint-Remi, 154–55
Riches, Theo, 15, 267
Richgowo, bishop of Worms, 32
Rimbert, (arch)bishop of (Hamburg-) Bremen, 262–63
Ring cycle, 61
Robert I, West Frankish ruler, 155
Robertians, 154–58, 160. See also Capetian dynasty
Robert of Volpiano, 235
Robert the Pious (II), West Frankish/French ruler, 156–58, 160, 166–72, 175,
179, 184, 191–92, 258; *Life* of, 171, 179, 184, 192
Rochester, 116, 124, 146–48, 151–52, 189; canons of, 147, 151, 189
Romagnano, 227–28
Romance speech, 66
Roman Empire, 21; Western, xxvii; Fall of, xxviii, 71
Rome, 13, 67, 80, 126, 153, 158, 167–70, 172–74, 182, 185, 192, 197–200, 202–3, 207, 209, 234, 240, 248; ancient, 1, 2, 121
Romunulf, abbot (?of Senones), 158
Romsey, 123–24, 138
Rosenberg, Marc, 49
rota(e), papal, 128–29
rotulus, 110
Rovasenda, 207
Rozala (Susana), wife of Robert the Pious, 167
Rozo, bishop of Treviso, 197
rubrication, 128, 135
Rudolf, count of Rimini, 197
Rudolf I, Burgundian ruler, 193–94
Rumble, Alex, 149
Rupert, bishop of Salzburg, 70
rustic capitals, 114, 128
Sabellian heresy, 115
Säben(-Brixen). *See Brixen*
Sabina, 234
Sacierges, 186
Saint-Aignan, 184
Saint-Basle-de-Verzy, council of (991), 156–59, 165–66, 168, 184, 190–91
Saint-Bénigne, Dijon, 246
Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire. *See Fleury*
Saint-Calais, 263
Saint-Denis, 4–5, 16, 107, 165, 167, 188, 261–62; council of (993/4), 167, 174, 184, 191; forgeries of, 107, 186, 188, 190–91
Saint-Martial, Limoges, 190
Saint-Martin, Tours, 161, 172
Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, 262
Saint-Remi, 154, 160, 190
Saint-Vaast, 187, 189, 191
Salian dynasty, 23, 26–27, 58–59, 170; castle of the (in Worms), 26–27, 59
Salvian of Marseilles, 5–6
Salzach, river, xxviii, 109
Salzburg, xxvii, 63, 65, 68–72, 74–81, 86–87, 91, 94, 98, 100, 102, 105–11, 264; forgeries of, 68, 105–6, 109, 264
Samuel, bishop of Worms, 32–33, 45
sanction, 11, 79, 88, 91, 125–26, 141–43, 145, 205–7; spiritual, 88; secular, 91.
*See also* blessing-sanction
Santhià, 196, 204, 207, 210, 230, 233, 248, 249 n. 150; county of 206–7, 208–11, 231
Saphphira, 79
Savaria, bishop of Bath, 134–35
Saxony, 97, 250, 268; East, 22, 70
Schiaparelli, Luigi, 225–26
Schieffer, Theodor, 89
schoolmaster, 159
script imitation, xxviii–xxix, 13, 129, 147–48, 150, 152, 264. *See also* charters: imitative copies of seal(s), 11, 13, 25, 28, 40, 47, 49, 86, 95, 99, 102, 222 n. 70, 230–31; false/forged, 84, 87, 89. *See also* charters: sealing of ‘Second Decimation’ charters, 126
Seguin, archbishop of Sens, 156–57, 161–62
Sehel Island, 1
Seine, river, 155–57, 261
Selsey, 146
Senlis, 154, 156
Sens, 156
Sesia, river, 19, 198, 212, 221, 230
Severin, saint, xvii, 71, 74; *Life* of, xxvii, 71, 74
Shaftesbury, 124
Shakespeare, 14
Shapbach, 49
shell company, 246
Sherborne, 134, 136
Sickel, Theodor, 4, 7, 30–32, 35, 37, 42, 46, 48, 50–51, 62
Sigehard, count of the Chiemgau, 63
Sigehardinger clan, 63
Sigismund, emperor, 56–57
simony, 115, 242
sin, 114–15, 118
*sinthama* charters, 149–50
Sippar, 1
Slavic (language), 66, 76. *See also* Elbe
Slavs
Slovakia, 76
Snodland, 147, 151
Sohlingen, 250
Southern, Richard, 151, 261
Spain, 261, 265
Sparone, 247
Speyer, 22
Spoleto, 171
square capitals, 130, 231
square minuscule, 138
S. Ambrogio, 210, 222–23
S. Benigno Canavese. See Fruttuaria
S. Diogini, Milan, 242
S. Eusebio, Vercelli, 193, 202, 204, 218–19, 224, 230, 236
S. Evasio, Casale Monferrato, 229
S. Maria, Pomposa, 237
S. Maria Maggiore, Vercelli, 218–19, 230
S. Maria del Senator, Pavia, 221, 227
S. Michele, Pavia, 237, 240
S. Michele di Lucedio. See Lucedio
S. Michele in Marturi, 214
S. Pietro in Ciel d’Oro, 199–200, 210, 234;
ordinances of, 199–200, 234
S. Salvatore, Lucca, 248
S. Salvatore, Pavia, 237–38, 248
S. Siro, Pavia, 241
SS Bonifacio ed Alessio, 168, 235. See also Leo, abbot of SS Bonifacio ed Alessio
St Albans, 124, 150–51, 261
St Florian, 98
St Gall, 196; Annals of, 196–97
St Germans, 124–25, 130, 137–38
St Maurice, Magdeburg. See Magdeburg
St Maximin, Trier, 23–25, 58, 261, 266
St Peter’s, Ghent, 121
St Pölten, 98
staff, abbatial, 243
Starzer, Albert, 183
Stephen, saint, 77, 89, 94, 103, 111
Stephen I, Hungarian ruler, 111
Stephen II, pope, 187
subdeacon, 204
subscription: papal, 128; royal/imperial,
11, 13, 36, 48–49, 84, 86, 91, 99, 101,
105, 145, 232, 245
Suger of Saint-Denis, 258, 261
Sunningwell, 141
Susana, wife of Robert the Pious. See Rozala
(Susana), wife of Robert the Pious
Swabia, 23, 29, 99
Switzerland, 240
Sylvester I, pope, 13
Sylvester II, pope, 202–3, 206, 209–10, 234. See also Gerbert of Aurillac
Symmachus, pope, xxviii, 72–75, 77, 80
Syrus, bishop of Pavia, 251–52
Talbot, Robert, 128, 130 n. 46, 144
Tassilo (III), Bavarian duke, 82–83, 93, 99
Taunton, 150
Tavistock, 133, 135–36, 151
Tedevert, deacon of Ivrea, 223–24, 239–40, 247
Tell Abu Habbah, 1
territorialisation, 54. See also immunity:
‘ban’/territorial
Thames, river, 19, 147
Thebes, 1
Theodore, archbishop of Lorch, 74
Theodore of Tarsus, archbishop of Canterbury, 74
Theodoric, bishop of Metz, 94–95
Theodosius II, emperor, 2
Theodulf, bishop of Orléans, 161
Theophanu, empress, 106, 195, 236
Thierry of Amorbach, 165 n. 25
Thietmar of Merseburg, 248, 258
three orders, the, 166
Thurstan, abbot of Glastonbury, 134
Tigris, river, 1
Timothy, apostle, 5–6
tithes, 165–66
Tours, 160
Tout, T. F., 5
trade, 21–22, 34
tradition: invention of, 16; missionary, 70;
oral, 16
Trecate, 227, 229
Trier, 25, 58, 76, 78, 190, 261
tudun, Avar office, 76
Turin, 224, 238, 240, 243
‘Tutund’, 76
Tyburn, 146
Uhlirz, Karl, 31–32, 43–44, 62, 82, 89
uncial(s), 227, 231
United States, 16–17
Urolf, (arch)bishop of Lorch, 72, 75–76, 89
Vajk I, Hungarian ruler, 111
Van Buren, Martin, 17
vassals, episcopal, 253
Veneto, 197
Venice, 197
Vercelli, xxviii–xxix, 19, 193–255, 264,
  266–68; Archivio Capitolare in, 215;
canons of, 197–98, 203, 210, 214–21,
  226, 230, 238; cathedral chapter of,
  217–18, 254–55; cathedral library of,
  240; Commune of, 231, 233, 254;
martyrology-necrology of, 219–20,
  238; sack of by the Hungarians (899),
  211
Verona, 248
Vesle, river, 155
Viale Giacomo Matteotti, 199
vicar, papal, 76–79, 108, 110, 268, 270
Vidier, Alexandre, 175, 177, 185
vidimus. See inspection (of charters)
Vienna, 62, 86, 94
Vignodelli, Giacomo, 215–16
vikings, 115, 120, 135, 155
violence, 164
Virgin Mary. See Mary, Virgin
Vittorio Emanuele II, Italian king, 247
Vivulo, bishop of Passau, 93
Volpiano: brothers, 236, 240, 246, 250;
estate, 236
Vosloo, Arnold, 2
Vulpara/Vuplaria, 229

Wachau, 94, 98
Wagner, Richard, 61
Walderich, bishop of Passau, 82–83, 85
Walsham, Alexandra, 260
Walter, archbishop of Sens, 156
Warmund, bishop of Ivrea, 200, 235–36,
  238, 243, 246–48
Wars of Religion, French, 165
Washington, George, 16–17
Watchet, 120
Watling Street, 261
Wattenbach, Wilhelm, 61
Weingarteiba, 59
Weißenburg, 22
Werner, Karl Ferdinand, 171
Wessex, 116
West, Charles, 270
West Francia, 26, 153–54, 262. See also
  France
Westminster, 146, 150, 259
Wherwell, 136
Whitsun. See Pentecost
Wibald of Stavelot, 53
Wiching, bishop of Passau, 93
Widukind of Corvey, 26–27
Willa, wife of Berengar of Ivrea, 194
William, abbot of Fleury, 185, 189–90
William of Malmesbury, 135, 150
William of Volpiano, 226, 235–36, 240,
  243–47, 272; Life of, 226. See also
  Volpiano: brothers
William the Conqueror, 138
Willigis, archbishop of Mainz, 76–77
Willigis C, draftsman-scribe, 53, 62, 65,
  83–84, 89–91, 106
Wiltshire, 131
Wimpfen, 27, 32–33, 37, 42, 45–46, 49,
  52, 54: 59
Winchester, 113–14, 120; council of (c.
  960), 114, 121; council of (Pentecost
  993), 113–16. See also New Minster,
  Winchester; Old Minster, Winchester
  wine, 21
Wisund, bishop of (Säben-)Brixen, 73, 77
witness-list(s), 8, 114, 120, 125–31, 134 n.
  57, 135, 138, 142, 144–45, 147–48
Wolfhere of Hildesheim, 63–65
Wolfram, Herwig, 112
Worcester, 123–24, 130 n. 46, 138, 146, 150
Worms, xxviii–xxix, 19, 21–60, 62, 68–70,
  82, 95, 107, 111–12, 121, 145–46, 170, 211,
  264, 266–67; canons of, 59; cartulary
  of, 35, 40, 41–42, 46, 49, 56; dissolution
  of bishopric of (1803), 56; mint at,
  34–35; Roman ruins at, 58; royal/
  imperial palace at, 21, 26; sack of
  (1689), 56
Wormsau, 46
Wulfgar, abbot of Abingdon, 113–14, 116,
  140–41, 145, 261, 272
Wulfgar, bishop of Ramsbury, 114–15
Wulfhere, Mercian ruler, 146
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wulfred, archbishop of Canterbury</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wulfric Cufing, Berkshire magnate</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Würzburg</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yèvre-la-Châtel, 163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yèvre-la-Ville, 163, 167–68, 185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yonne, river</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeiselmauer</td>
<td>86–87, 89, 94, 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeitz</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimmermann, Harald</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>