Karlburg am Main (Bavaria) and its role as a local centre in the late Merovingian and Ottonian periods

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The early medieval city of Karlburg, today part of the town of Karlstadt, is situated about 25 km from Würzburg on the left bank of the Main River Valley. The valley widens here to a shallow basin with mountain chains to the west and south (Figs 1.1 and 2.1). Karlburg belonged to the initial endowment of the episcopate of Würzburg, which was founded by Boniface in 741-42. There are two charters marking out donations to this foundation. In one charter, as the deed of donation of the episcopate of Würzburg describes, the Carolingian majordomo Carloman gave the cloister – monasterium St. Mariae in villa Karloburgo (cloister of St Mary in Karlburg) – to the episcopate. In 751-753 King Pippin granted the castle and the royal court (castellum cum fisco regali) of Karlburg to Burchard, the first archbishop of Würzburg, perhaps for his role in securing the pope’s approval of Pippin’s coronation.1

The topography of the castle of Karlburg on a hilltop with the settlement in the valley below is well-situated for traffic and trade in the Frankish settlement on the Main.2 The Main River offered connections to the south, north and west to the centres of the Carolingian empire. The Karlburg fortification, 25 km from the Würzburg episcopate, was founded in 741-742, the former residence of Duke Heden. Two river crossings, one below the castle and the other one in the settlement itself, connected the regions of Wern and Grabfeld, which had a high density of settlement since Merovingian times.

Our sources show that Karlburg was an important local centre in the early medieval history of Mainfranken. The excavations carried out during the 1970s and 1990s and again in 2002 and 2003 of the castle and the associated settlement in the valley with its

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1 The deed of donation of the episcopate Würzburg: Louis the Pious (MB 28a, 11), Louis the German (MGH DD Ludowici Germanici Nr. 41) and Arnulf (MGH DD Arnulfi Nr. 67) and the Vita Burkardi (F. J. Bendel/J. Schmitt, Vita sancti Burkardi Episcopi Wirziburgensis II. Würzburger Diözesan Geschichtsblätter 48, 1986, 19-89; Ettel 2001, 32-34; Daul 1961; Bosl 1969, 19-20; most recently, Rödel 2001).

Fig. 1. 1. Archaeological-historical topography of the surrounding area of Karlburg with castle and settlement in the valley (height over 250 m above sea-level: grey screen); 2. castellum Karlburg and villa Karlburg with cloister St Mary; 3. The former extension of the villa Karlburg can be seen on the map with the results of the surveys (pottery: hatching; metal finds: points)
cloister, together with surveys in the surrounding area, deepened our knowledge and provided us with information about its development from the eleventh century until its end in the thirteenth century (Figs 1.2 and 3).


According to the written sources, a royal castle existed in Karlburg in the time between 741-742 and 750-751; King Pippin gave it to Burchard, the first archbishop of Würzburg, in 751-753. It is unclear if the castle was only built in Carolingian times, perhaps in the reign of Charles Martel, or already in late Merovingian times, under the rule of the dukes of Hedene as is the case with Würzburg or Hammelburg. So far archaeological investigations have also failed to answer this question.

The suffix "-burg", which suggests the early existence of the castle, combined with the settlement in the valley with clear Frankish evidence, make it likely that the castle dates from the late Merovingian period. Up to now there have been no finds from the castle of Karlburg dating from this period, and therefore a late Merovingian fortification is hypothetical.

But we know of late Merovingian finds from a fortification on top of the Grainberg (Figs 1.1 and 2.1) on the other side of the river basin, about 1.6 km from the castle of Karlburg. These finds point towards the existence of a hillfort, perhaps a refuge for the inhabitants of the royal court of Karlburg in the valley. Karlburg itself was probably unfortified at this time, according to the evidence of the archaeological excavations at this site and at similar settlements in other regions.

We know more about the Carolingian fortification Karlburg Phase A from the early episcopate’s time, from aerial photographs and a trial section from 1994. The inside
The area of the castle was 125 by 120 m, about 1.3 ha and was defended by a bow-shaped ditch, which was 5 m wide and 2 m deep (Figs 3.2 and 2.2). The ditch existed for a long time, as the layers in the profile show. Many stones on the inner side of the ditch with mortar and charcoal fragments, as well as some Carolingian pot sherds, indicate the existence of a Carolingian mortar wall, which stood primarily behind the inner line of the ditch. Therefore the fortification of Karlburg belonged to the earliest castles with mortar walls in Mainfranken and in the whole of southern Germany. A comparable castle with mortar walls from the eighth century can be found further north – for example...
Fig. 3. 1. Decorated bone fragment from the castle Karlburg; phases of the development of the castle Karlburg in Carolingian (2) and Ottonian (3) times; 4. centre of the settlement Karlburg in the valley with the area of the cloister St Mary (cross-hatching), area for the harbour and fortification of the tenth century.
the well-known fortification of Büraburg in Hesse. The limited excavation inside the castle produced many postholes and pits, showing that this place was intensively used and covered with buildings. A decorated bone fragment, probably early medieval and perhaps from a casket (Fig. 3.1), indicates the presence of a group with a higher social status in the castle.

This fortification was abandoned, the ditch was filled in and leveled, when a new, bigger fortification was built in Phase B on previously unused land in front of the old fortification (Figs 3.3 and 2.2 top). This new fortification was 170 by 120 m, and covered about 1.7 ha. The new fortification is also bow-shaped. Inside, the excavation produced several features, such as fireplaces and postholes from the wooden buildings. Behind the wall stood a house – 6.4 m x 5-5.2 m – with 6 posts, a wooden floor, a stone foundation on the west side and a hearth made of stone in the northwest corner. Pit-houses and other significant indications of craft activities known from bigger castles like Roßtal, Büraburg, the Ottonian imperial palace Tilleda or Gebesee were not found in the castle of Karlburg in any phase. The castle of Roßtal near Fürth-Nürnberg covered an area of about 6 ha in Carolingian and Ottonian times and was excavated extensively in the 1970s and again in the 1990s, especially in the south-west area. In the central part there was a church, and a cemetery was found outside the fortification. The inside area shows several areas of activity – craftsmen’s quarters with pithouses and workshop pits (Arbeitsgruben) and areas with wooden houses. Fences divided the areas with wooden houses into three allotments with huts for hay-storage or dwellings, granaries and perhaps stables. In Roßtal the area for the craftsmen was situated in the castle, protected by the fortification. In the castle of Karlburg, which was smaller with 1.7 ha, the situation was different: here the craft areas were below the castle in the valley-settlement, the villa.

The castle of Karlburg was fortified with a rampart of 9 to 10 m in width, made of stones and earth behind a ditch without a berm. This kind of fortification with a rampart combined with further barriers of smaller walls and ditches is typical of the so-called Hungarian walls like those of St. Gall in Switzerland. With this information and with the finds inside the castle, we can therefore date Phase B to the time of the Hungarian invasions from the first half of the tenth century. About 100 m in front of the fortification, one can see a small, bow-shaped rampart with a ditch of about 150 m in length,

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16 About Phase C an D in Ettel 2001, 41-45. The last phase, Phase D, lasted until the sixteenth century; the castle was destroyed between 15 May and 3 June 1525 (Kübert 1991, 70-75.). For a description of the late medieval castle, see Piper 1912, 122-127.
which probably belonged to this phase of the fortification. The rampart is today 5.50 m wide and nearly 1 m high; the ditch is 5.50 m wide and 1.70 m deep. The construction is comparable to the big rampart with a ditch. Again 100 m in front of this line lies a further barrier with a rampart and ditch of about 40 m in length. Both barriers represent obstacles for horsemen in the area in front of the wall, like those known from other Hungarian walls like Schwanberg near Rödelsee, Weiherberg or Birg/Schäftlarn,\(^{17}\) where barriers with ramparts and ditches are common.

**Villa Karloburg**

Below the castle, less than 1000 m away, lies the adjacent valley-settlement, the *villa Karloburg*, dated by written sources to 741-742, with the St. Mary's cloister in Karlburg (Figs 1.2; 1.3 and 2.1). From aerial photographs and surveys we know that the *villa* stretched over at least 1 km in length and 200 m in width or about 20 ha. It was partly situated north of the present village of Karlburg but mainly south of the village on a small elevated area of land between the River Main and an old branch of the Main to the west, which was dry in the early Middle Ages and used for settlement. The surface finds of the surveys indicate that the whole area of the *villa* was in use from the seventh until the thirteenth century.


The excavations allow us to see the chronological position, importance, development and structure of the settlement in detail (Figs 1.3; 3.4 and 4.1). The excavations and the historical investigations revealed that the centre of the valley settlement was the area of the modern village of Karlburg, which is topographically situated in a higher position and near the ford of the Main. Some finds from excavations in the church of St. Johannes and St. Gertrud show that this area may have been used at the end of the sixth, and definitely in the seventh century. The northern and southern part beyond the modern village was also used in the seventh century. In the south, the excavations (Fig. 4.1) in the eastern part revealed an area with half-finished objects, tools, moulds, slag and pithouses. In the western part of the settlement, there are pits and postholes, which indicate stables, granaries or dwellings. Therefore the settlement seems to be divided into functional areas: an eastern part with a mainly craft function and a western

\(^{17}\) Schwanberg: Wamser 1986; Weiherberg: Frei/Krahe 1979, 234-239; Birg/Schäftlarn: Schwarz 1971, 222-238.
part with wooden buildings, especially dwellings. This division existed from the Merovingian to the Ottonian age.

In the Carolingian period, a cloister stood in the royal court from 741-742. According to the written sources, it was under the protection of Karlburg hillfort (Fig. 3.4). The evidence suggests that the cloister area measured 150 by 45 to 80 m, and stood between the church and the southeastern edge of the late medieval village of Karlburg. To the south there are finds pointing to life in a cloister and a school that belonged to it: a fragment of a porphyry slab of Mediterranean provenance, which probably belonged to a portable altar, a gilded bronze ornament (Zierstück) with a braided decoration and inlays of red glass as a part of a reliquary or Codex cover (Fig. 5.5) and a comb fragment with incised Latin letters.18 The present-day church, first mentioned in 1123, probably shows the continuity of the religious site since the existence of the Carolingian monastery. The date of the closing of the cloister is uncertain, but it must have existed in the first half of the ninth century.19 Immina, the daughter of duke Heden, lived and died in this cloister. She moved from the cloister on the Marienberg in Würzburg, the castle of Heden and the later residence of the archbishop Burchard, to the Marienkloster in Karlburg. There she stayed until her death in 750 and she was buried by Burchard in this church, which according to legend was built by St. Gertrude of Neville.20

In the Carolingian era the harbour area measuring 400 by 75 m probably existed on the eastern edge of the centre of the valley settlement.21 Among the finds we have imported pottery from Hesse and the Rhine area and especially fibulae from Frankish-Anglo-Saxon circles. Some types of fibulae can be seen in the context of missionary activities in the Saxon region at the Werra and the Weser near Paderborn. The cloisters of Amorbach and Neustadt am Main of the Würzburg episcopate played an important role in this missionary work.22 The local centre of Karlburg with its workshops, under the authority of the bishop since 741-742, may well have played an active role in this missionary work. The craft activities are represented by a late Merovingian mould for producing stamped tin pendants (Pressblechanhänger)23 and a Carolingian strap-ends (Riemenzunge), a only half-finished object (Figs 5.8 and 6). Riding equipment (Reitzubehör) and single finds, decorated in Tassilo style or a gilded bronze sword belt mount (Schwertgurtbeschlag), or a gilded coin fibula with a portrait of the emperor,24 demonstrate the presence of nobles in Karlburg in the Carolingian era. The presence of

18 Ettel/Wamser 1994, 141.
19 Bigelmair 1952/1953, 1-25, esp. 4-12.
20 After Vita Burkardi.
21 Ettel/Wamser 1994, 141-143.
22 Wamser 1992a, 331.
Fig. 5. Finds from villa Karloburg: 1-3 Brooches (scale 1:1); 4. coin fibula, dm. 2.35 cm; 5. gilded bronze ornament, l. 2.8 cm; 6. gilded bronze sword belt mount l. 2.7 cm; 7. half-finished object of a band, l. 9.2 cm; 8. mould for producing stamped tin pendants, dm. 3.35 cm
Immina, daughter of the last duke of Würzburg, Heden the Younger, also testifies to the existence of such a group.

From the Ottonian to the early Salian period, we have no historical reports of the villa. Archaeological sources show that living conditions changed little despite of the Hungarian invasions and the feuds of the nobility. However as a reaction to uncertain times, the 6 ha centre of the settlement was fortified with a ditch 7 to 8 m wide and 3 m deep and probably a simple earthen wall. This happened at the same time as the castle on the hilltop was fortified with the same kind of ditch and a stone-earth wall. The finds show furthermore the widespread connections of the local centre of Karlburg, although in the Ottonian and early Salian periods, the flow of imported goods slowed in comparison with the Carolingian era. This decline in trade is related both to the uncertain times and to the decline of the Carolingian pottery centres.

The finds of the late Merovingian and Carolingian times demonstrate the predominance of Frankish goods. This can be seen not only in single finds of high quality pointing to a noble social class, but also in so-called simple mass-produced pottery (Massenware), which emerged in large quantities from the excavations in the settled area (Figs 6; 7.1 and 7.2). At first the picture is dominated by the imported pottery of the Rhine region – grey (unglazed) pottery with a rough texture and fired reduced, polished pottery from the late Merovingian period; and yellow, upper Rhineland wheel-thrown pottery from the Carolingian period from Southwestern Germany, red pottery from Hesse (especially from the Frankfurt-Region) and later Mayener pottery from the middle Rhine region (Fig. 7.1). And to these Tating ware can be added (Fig. 6.14 and 7.3), which reached the Baltic and beyond.

The same, and perhaps even more extensive network of trade connections is demonstrated by the metal finds, especially the fibulae, some of which were produced in Karlburg itself (Figs 5.1-3 and 7.3). Some fibulae came from the eastern Alpine region, and others show connections with the northern, Frisian-Anglo-Saxon circle. The latter make up the bulk of the fibulae found at Karlburg. Local, handmade pottery can be found in the central area, but in the early times it played an unimportant role. This changes in the Ottonian period, when imported pottery like Pingsdorf ware and its imitations decline and local pottery begins to be more prevalent in the pithouses and pits. Imported pottery from every period can be found in the Karlburg villa and also in the castle, with yellow, upper Rhineland wheel-thrown pottery from Southwestern Germany.

28 Haseloff 1990, 90-107 with maps 1-4; Clemens 1988; Frick 1992/93; Wamers 1994, the fibulae of Karlburg in the lists 2,4,5,7,8,11B,12,14,15,21-23,29,30,32b-c,34.
Fig. 6. Finds from *villa Karloburg*: 1-2. grey wheel-thrown pottery; 3-4. yellow, upper Rhineland wheel-thrown pottery; 5. red wheel-thrown pottery; 6-7. later Mayener pottery; 8. grey polished wheel-thrown pottery; 9-13. hand-crafted, secondary turned (nachgedrehte), wheel-tossed pottery; 9 and 11: ware 1a; 10. ware 1b; 12-13: ware 2a/b; 14. Tating ware. Scale 1:4.
Excavations in 1994 and 1996-1998 in the northern area of villa Karloburg

Since 1991 the surveys of the Archäologische Arbeitsgemeinschaft Karlstadt showed that the villa extended north of the present village of Karlburg. A rescue excavation in 1994 revealed several pitholes and one pithouse. In the northern part of the villa Karloburg aerial photographs showed several pithouses, making an excavation necessary in 1996-1997, because the village of Karlburg wanted to build new houses in this area (Figs 1.3 and 4.2). The topographical situation is the same as south of the village. The analysis of the animal bones was carried out by K. Kerth. The settlement began in the seventh century and lasted until the middle of the thirteenth century, when Karlburg was destroyed in the feud known as the Rienecker Fehde of 1236, which was described in the written sources. At the latest after this date the settlement areas in the north and south of the present village Karlburg were abandoned and the centre of the settlement was finally transferred to the other, right side of the Main River, where Konrad von Querfurt founded Karlstadt in 1200. The ceramic finds are composed of wheel-thrown pottery of different provenance. But the hand-crafted and secondary turned (nachgedrehte), wheel-thrown pottery played a more important role than in the area excavated in 1991-1992 in the centre of the villa, which was most likely the location of the monastery. Also the absence of metal finds of high quality, especially from Carolingian times, indicates that this area may have been of different significance in comparison to the centre of the villa.

On the other hand we have finds from the migration period in the northern and central area, which are important to chart the development of the settlement of Karlburg as a local centre. At this point in the research it is fair to ask whether the northern and central areas belong to the earliest age – that is, to the migration period. The northern part in particular seems to have developed in the early Middle Ages into an area characterised by regionalism. In contrast the southern part, which was excavated in 1991-1992, demonstrates Frankish influence from the beginning, and the site (including the castle) was most likely built in a time when the Franks were in power here. Excavations revealed nearly thirty pithouses in the eastern part, which were built in rows with rectangular fences and pits. The site density is very high.

Moving westward, there are fewer traces of settlement activities: There are no pithouses at all and the plan shows only pits and especially postholes, which indicate a settlement with stables, granaries and dwellings. This confirms the results of the

30 Ettel 2001, 352.
31 Idem 1998b.
33 Obst 1998.
34 Neubauer 1998.
35 Ettel/Hoppe/Watzlawik 1997; Mündel 2002.
excavation of 1991-1992 in the southern part of the settlement, in which one could also see a functional division of the settlement into an eastern part with pithouses and crafts and a western part with postholes and dwellings. This functional division was maintained throughout the history of the settlement and this confirms the systematic character of a large settlement of 20 ha, probably founded by Frankish colonists.

The western parts with the posthouses were used from the seventh century on, but they were given up before the eastern areas were abandoned. This can be seen
in the southern area excavated in 1991-1992 and probably also in the northern areas, excavated until 1998. This means a reduction of the settlement area, either in the eleventh or the twelfth century at the latest. The reason for this development is an old branch of the Main, which runs parallel to the Main and was dried up in the early Middle Ages; it obviously supplied the settlement. The branch, filled with erosion material, was about 2 m deep and 40-50 m wide according to the excavations of 1991-1992 and the investigations of B. Sponholz. Changes in the landscape, perhaps the lack of trees in the higher parts as a result of the dense population and high tides played an important role, too, so that the branch was flooded again. Historical sources show several extremely high tides of the Main since 1000, which probably caused the branch to be activated again. Therefore the settlement history has to be seen as varied – at first the settlers used a less favorable ground to build up their houses, and later they gave this site up, because the conditions became worse.

Excavations in 2002-2003 at the southern edge of villa Karloburg

The construction of a bridge at the southern edge of Karlburg made it necessary to carry out a rescue excavation in this area. The plan (Figs 3.3 and 4.3) shows the results of the excavation of 2002-2003. In the eastern parts, near the Main River, the excavations produced about ten pithouses of varying construction, most of them built facing north. In the spaces between the pithouses one can see pits and postholes of wooden dwellings, probably farm buildings, stables or dwellings. Several pits and postholes cut through pithouses and confirm that the settlement has multiple phases. In the western part of the section there are only some loam pits, which mark the edge of the villa Karloburg. This find confirms the results of the surveys from the 1990s. At first sight the finds are quite similar to those of the excavations from 1991-1992 in the centre and southern part. The ceramics show a varied provenance, with a high percentage of imported wheel-thrown pottery. This high percentage indicates a strong Frankish influence in the southern part and southern edge of the villa Karloburg, especially in late Merovingian and early Carolingian times – for example, pithouse no. 17 with two ridge pits and a size from 3.7 m x 3.1 m and a depth of 0.5-0.7 m. In the filling of this pithouse lay several fragments of metal and bone – among them a decorated comb, bone awls, an iron buckle/clasp, iron knives, an arrow head of iron and an iron key. Beads of glass and also some pitholes confirm the results of former survey finds, which suggested that this area was used in the late Latène period as well. On the other side some more recent pithouses from the late Carolingian and Ottonian times produced more hand-crafted

38 Ettel 2003.
and secondary turned (nachgedrehte), wheel-tossed pottery than imported pottery from the Rhine region. The composition of the ceramics seems to be comparable in quality and quantity to the area in the north – both areas with less Frankish influence than in the centre of the villa lay on the edge of the villa, perhaps typically.

The finds attest once again that the southern part of the settlement was in use from the seventh century. The thorough conservation and analysis of all pithouses and pits at the University of Jena will provide us with more details.

**Conclusion**

In the region of Karlburg, the centre of the settlement with its castellum and associated villa Karloburg with its cloister are situated on the left side of the Main River in Merovingian, Carolingian and Ottonian periods. The castle and the valley settlement belong together and can be seen as a single entity, as it is described in the historical sources. The extension of the villa alone shows the importance of the early medieval settlement and allows comparisons with early urban sites or developments, whether in the area of West Frankish monasteries or in the surroundings of royal courts or imperial palaces in the Carolingian and in particular the Ottonian age.39

The castle is situated at the Main, which was one of the most important travel and trading routes in the early Middle Ages and formed a powerful political background. Under its protection the settlement in the valley with its cloister could develop, first in royal hands, and then from 741-742, under the control of the bishop. On the other hand, the settlement in the valley was surely important for the supply of the castle with food, and craft products – i.e. textiles, metal products and so on.

Excavations made it possible for the first time to investigate elements of a settlement structure with a royal yard and cloister in Franken, the northern part of Bavaria.40 With the methods available to archaeology the excavations proved that the Karlburg settlement in the valley was an important local centre with postholes of dwellings, stables, granaries and pithouses and pits used for craft activities, which are documented by the production of textiles, bone tools, by farming, fishing and above all, metallurgy of various kinds. The importance of the settlement can be seen in the investigations by archaeobotanists41 and archaeozoologists42.

Rye was found most frequently and played therefore an important role in the agriculture and in the nutrition of the inhabitants of the villa and probably of the castle on

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40 We know archaeologically investigated royal yards in Hallstadt (Losert 1981, 21-26.), imperial palaces in Forchheim (Sage 1989/1990), Rottweil (Klappauf 1982) and Helfta (Donat 1988).
the hilltop as well. The analysis of the animal bones of the excavations in the castle and the settlement in the valley revealed that game was present in the settlement with only 0.9% of the total animal bones found, but in the castle with 10.7% of the total animal bones found. This shows as at other places\(^\text{43}\) that a group of elevated social status or noble rank who lived at the castle had the privilege of hunting bison and red deer. We can see a difference between castle and the settlement in the valley in the composition of the domestic animals. In the castle "luxury" animals were consumed such as fowls, goose and above all chicken; this group also included pigs. The inhabitants of the castle ate animals up to three years of age, while in the settlement in the valley older animals were also consumed. From the analysis of age and sex of the pigs one can see, that pigs were bred in the settlement, which provided the castle with animals. The composition of the finds, the age and sex of the animals, give significant indications that a close social-economic relation existed between castle and settlement in the valley of Karlburg. The inhabitants of the castle were provided with meat and probably vegetable food, produced in the settlement in the valley. Altogether the investigations allow us an insight into the menu of the settlement in the valley and the castle of the early Middle Ages and the Middle Ages in general and provide us also with an idea of the livestock in a royal-episcopal estate as described in the capitulare de villis.\(^\text{44}\)

Karlburg already existed in the seventh century. The late Merovingian and Carolingian times in particular are distinguished by finds mostly of Frankish character. The prominent situation of Karlburg is shown by comparing it with so-called “simple” sites such as for example Dettelbach/Ostheim, about 30 km east of Karlburg and also situated at the Main.\(^\text{45}\) The excavation of this settlement produced 31 pithouses and postholes from several wooden houses in an area of 5000 m\(^2\). The settlement began in the seventh century and was abandoned in the fifteenth century. The pottery is composed of a few sherds of Merovingian grey ware, but imported ceramics from the Carolingian and Ottonian times are completely absent and most finds belong to the local pottery, which was hand-crafted and secondary turned (nachgedreht), wheel-tossed.

One must also consider in Karlburg the presence of a group of elevated social status or noble rank and the structure of the valley settlement including craft areas, dwellings and the centre with its cloister and the harbour area for the landing of ships. The castle or castles as powerful military and political strongholds complete this unified area and indicate a planned foundation by Frankish colonists. Local centres of this kind with their military, economic, cultural and social backgrounds were surely very important at the time of the administrative, religious and political development and structural organization of the eastern Frankish parts of the kingdom. At other

\(^\text{43}\) Janssen 1990.
\(^\text{44}\) MGH LL Cap. 1, Nr. 32; Metz 1954; Dette 1996.
\(^\text{45}\) Vychitil 1991.
places, i.e. Würzburg, Forchheim, Bamberg, Hallstadt, one can see first signs of a comparable development.\textsuperscript{46} In the area surrounding Karlburg, there appears to have existed the royal march – \textit{fiscus regalis} – whose extent cannot be determined exactly, but with good reason can be thought as having been situated on the left and right side of the Main River in the old “Ortsgemarkung”, as described in the written sources\textsuperscript{47}. In this region the number of sites increases enormously from late Merovingian to early and late Carolingian periods.\textsuperscript{48} Once more this development highlights the significance of this political, administrative, religious and economic local centre on the River Main, which played without doubt an important role in the development of the eastern Frankish parts of the kingdom, organized by the king and the Church.

In the eleventh and twelfth century, the centre in the development of the settlement moved more and more to the right side of the Main River, which showed relatively few traces of settlements in former times. When Conrad of Querfurt founded the town of Karlstadt in 1200, the removal of the settlement centre was sealed. In the development of the regional settlement area the castle, which belonged according to the written sources to the earliest castles in south Germany, was the cardinal point. The castle offered protection to the settlement of Karlburg in the valley with its central early medieval royal court and cloister, and later to Karlstadt on the opposite side of the Main.

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\textsuperscript{47} Rödel 2001, 291.

\textsuperscript{48} Ettel 2001, 94-99.
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