Colin Boon

Kingship in the Dark Ages: The Politics of Rule in Post-Carolingian

East Francia, 887-933

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies.

Central European University Private University

Vienna

May 2023

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by

Colin Boon

(United Kingdom)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

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requirements of the Master of Arts degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in

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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned, **Colin Boon**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

This study focuses on the political relationships between the kings and the nobility in the forty-six years after the fragmentation of the Carolingian Empire in 887. It was during this time the kingdom of East Francia experienced significant political upheaval that would see four different men, from three different families, claim the position of king across these decades. Running in conjunction with the reigns of these kings was an increase in regional factionalism within the kingdom that was a direct result of the retraction of centralized power wielded by the king at the turn of the tenth century.

This primary focus of this paper is to show how it was the individual nature and personalities of the kings in this period that created or exacerbated division amongst the territories. Chapter one looks at inheritance and how the manner in which a king was made could lead to a lack of acceptance. Chapter two explores how relationships between kings and the nobility changed as the tenth century progressed, from how they were received after being made king to how the dynamic changed to one of open rebellion. The third chapter is concerned with responses to invasion and the conduct of campaigns beyond East Frankish borders and how both contributed to the nobility's reception of the kings.

It concludes that the individual characters of the kings from 887-933 were the greatest contributing factor in promoting stability or causing further division within the noble sphere. Whether the king inherited naturally or was unanimously elected by his peers was irrelevant if the king could not maintain amicable relations with his vassals, and this is something that becomes more apparent as the tenth century progressed.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my friends and family. None of this would have been possible without their encouragement, kindness, patience, and support and I am indebted to them all beyond that of simple words. I would especially like to thank my supervisor Daniel Ziemann for his support and guidance in shaping this work. I should also mention that his tolerance of my erratic thought processes and chaotic nature with incredible patience has been more valuable than he knows, I could not have asked for a better mentor. To all of the teachers at CEU who have shown remarkable grace and tolerance to my reserved silence, I thank you all. To Chloe Peters and Joshua Duffield for reading this work at various stages and providing useful insights and guidance, thank you. Finally, I would like to thank both Dr Robert Houghton and Professor Ryan Lavelle from the University of Winchester for giving me the confidence and belief to push myself beyond undergraduate studies, this work would never have been written without that belief.

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Introduction

The post-Carolingian period in what would later be named Germany was an era of intense political upheaval whereby each of the rulers experienced political challenges of a similar nature but responded in a variety of ways. For example, in the case of Louis IV 'the Child' he came to the throne with little opposition as the natural successor of his father Arnulf, but this type of succession was not a guarantee of success. In Louis' case his lack of authority and the absence of a plan to deal with the Magyars led to the fragmentation of the Frankish political centre that would persist for the next few decades. This thesis will offer a comparative assessment of the monarchs in this region around the turn of the tenth century that has curiously been absent from the scholarship up until now, most likely due to the scarcity of contemporary evidence from the first two decades of the tenth century. It is this scarcity of contemporary documentation that has led to this period being coined as the dark age of German history.[1]

In the year 887 the Carolingian emperor Charles III 'the Fat' was removed as the ruler in East Francia in favour of his nephew Arnulf, lord of Carinthia, at the behest of many of the nobility, consequently ending over a century of continental hegemony by the Carolingian family and starting an almost fifty-year span of political instability. According to the former abbot Regino of Prüm, the lords turned against their emperor for various reasons, including his failing health.[2] Whilst the immediate situation in the East Frankish context saw an upturn in their fortunes after Arnulf became king, the long-term political ramifications were not quite as fortuitous for those that followed as a direct consequence of the style in which the Carinthian

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[1] Timothy Reuter, 'Introduction: Reading the Tenth Century', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History III, c.900-c.1024,* ed., Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1; Harald Zimmerman, *Das dunkle Jahrhundert. Ein historisches Portät* (Graz: Styria, 1971), 15-21.

[2] Regino, *Regionis Abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum Continuatione Treverensi,* ed., Frederik Kurze (MGH SS rer Germ., 50) (Hannover: Hahn, 1890), 127-128. Also see Hagen Keller, 'Zum Sturz Karls III. Uber die Rolle Liutwards von Vercelli und Liutberts von Mainz, Arnulfs von Kärnten und der ostfränkischen Großen bei der Absetzung des Kaisers'. *Deutsches Archiv 22* (Koln: 1966), 334.

king ruled. As has been alluded to elsewhere in twentieth century scholarship, Arnulf's reputation amongst his ninth century peers was as a warrior rather than a statesman or a negotiator.[3] The evidence for this view is plentiful and is seen through many of the 'political' decisions that Arnulf made during his tenure as king, perhaps most prominently through the lack of any cogent plan regarding the inheritance in the event of his death.

The practices involved with Carolingian inheritance traditions had long caused tensions within the greater empire. Even Charlemagne's and Louis the Pious' plans for the succession were not universally accepted with neither the *Divisio Regnorum* of 806, or the *Ordiantio Imperii* of 817 being successful in dealing with how the land was to be shared out amongst the sons equally,[4] despite Rosamond McKitterick's argument which suggests that the *Divisio Regnorum* had nothing to do with imperial unity.[5] What is clear is that these difficulties surrounding Carolingian inheritance practices persisted throughout the years of their rule. In the case of Charles III, the last legitimate East Frankish king, his attempts at promoting his son Bernhard as his successor in 885 failed for circumstances that were beyond anyone's control when the pope died before Bernhard could receive papal endorsement.[6] It was ultimately this failure to appoint his son and factor his nephew into the plan for inheritance that would lead to the Charles being removed as king in favour of the latter in 887. This is significant when it comes to our period as if the nobility of East Francia were to follow Carolingian precedent in the selection of a new king immediately after the deposition of Charles, then it is likely Arnulf

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[3] Eleanor Shipley Duckett, *Death and Life in the Tenth Century,* 2nd ed (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1968), 12.

[4] 'Divisio regnorum' [BK 45], in *Capitularia. Edition of the Frankish Capitularies*, ed., Karl Ubl and collaborators, Cologne: 2014, ff URL: https://capitularia.uni-koeln.de/en/capit/pre814/bk-nr-045/ (accessed on May 14, 2023); also see Alfred Boretius, Ed., *Capitularia regum Francorum*. 1 (MGH Capitularia regum Francorum 1), (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), 126-130; Matthias M. Tischler, 'Die "Divisio regnorum" von 806 zwischen handschriftlicher Überlieferung und historiographischer Rezeption', in Brigitte Kasten (Ed.), *Herrscher- und Fürstentestamente im westeuropäischen Mittelalter* (Norm und Struktur 29), (Cologne: Böhlau, 2008), p. 193-258.

[5] Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians 751-987* (London and New York: Longman Group, 1983), 72.

[6] Wolfgang Giese, 'Die designativen Nachfolgeregelungen der Karolinger 714-979', in *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* vol. 64 (2008): 499-503.

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may have been overlooked for someone of more legitimate Carolingian birth in one of the West Frankish Carolingians.

This may all seem unrelated at first glance; however, it is important to emphasise that after Charles' deposition, there was only one instance of a traditional succession from one king to his son in the East Frankish kingdom until around 930. On this occasion, it was from Arnulf to his infant son Louis.[7] It must be stated that this was by no means a conventional succession in the sense that Louis was the only choice due as Arnulf's sole legitimate son and a child. Louis' death at the age of 18 in 911 shifted the practice of king-making as the next two kings would be elected from amongst, and by, the lords of the kingdom. This should have proven to be a popular method of king-making; however, the reality is that it caused problems for both Conrad I and Henry I, more of which will be covered later.

This very brief introduction to the situation in East Francia at the end of the Carolingian period has served a purpose in that it has presented us with a picture of the instability present within the kingdom at the close of the Carolingian period, which only intensified as time progressed. Many of these political challenges hindered the ability of the kings to act in response to new challenges that arose in the tenth century. Additionally, we can speculate on the notion of difficulties surrounding inheritance and succession being a significant contributing factor in other issues surrounding the political nature of kingship in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. In the case of Conrad his troubles with various magnates began soon after his election to the East Frankish throne.[8] However, it was not his succession that was the source of

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[7] *Luduweius filius eius, qui uineius tunc parvalus de legali uxore natus illi erat, in regnum successit. Annales Fuldenses sive Annales Regni Francorum Orientalis,* eds., George Heinrich Pertz and Frederik Kurze (MGH SS rer Germ., 7) (Hannover: Hahn, 1891), 184.

[8] Eckhard Müller-Mertens, 'The Ottonians as Kings and Emperors', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History Volume III, c.900-c.1024,* ed., Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 239.

these difficulties, but rather the way that he conducted relationships with the established East Frankish aristocracy, as well as the looming threat of continuous invasion.[9]

It is at this stage that we must discuss the state and shape of the scholarship on matters covering East Francia during the post-Carolingian era. Despite certain views to the contrary, we do not consider Arnulf to have been the Holy Roman Emperor due to his lack of political control over Italy,[10] irrespective of whether he was crowned emperor by the pope or not.[11] Indeed, evidence for this lack of political control is demonstrable through the fact that Lambert was able to retake control of the country following Arnulf's stroke and consequent return to Bavaria in 896.[12]

This period of German history has benefitted from a surge in popularity during the twentieth century, with studies being undertaken in both English and German. However, scholarship of this post-Carolingian period is not as common now as it was during the latter stages of the last century, with fewer studies being produced.[13] Some of the late twentieth century anglophone monographs are particularly useful from this political perspective. Both Benjamin Arnold and Timothy Reuter have covered this topic and offer some insight into East Frankish political practices for differing reasons.[14] Arnold for his chronological analysis of the

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[9] Hans-Henning Kortüm, 'Konrad I. - Ein gescheiterter König?', in *Konrad I. - Auf dem Weg zum "Deutschen Reich"?*, ed., Hans-Werner Goetz (Bochum: Verlag Dr. Dieter Winkler, 2006), 43-56.
[10] Wolfgang R. O. Hahn, 'König Arnulf und das Regnum Italiae (888-896). Eine numismatische Spurensuche', in *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Numismatischen Gesellschaft* Bd. 37 (1997), 116-124.
[11] Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 51; Horace K Mann, *The Lives of the Popes Vols IV-V: The Popes in the Days of Feudal Anarchy* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1925), 77.
[12] Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society* (London and Basingstoke: The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1983), 170; Timothy Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda: Ninth Century Histories, Volume II*, trans. and ed., Timothy Reuter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 134n16.
[13] Roman Deutinger, *Königsherrschaft im Ostfränkischen Reich. Eine pragmatische Verfassungsgeschichte der späten Karolingerzeit* (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2006); Simon MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[14] Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages 800-1056* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1991), 1; Benjamin Arnold, *Medieval Germany, 500-1300: A Political Interpretation* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997), x.

German regions, and Reuter for a general overview of the period. However, both are overly broad, taking in spans of 800 and 256 years respectively. On the other hand, there are some more nuanced studies available that contribute to the wider scholarship with a greater deal of specificity. For instance, Karl Leyser has written extensively on the emergence of the Ottonians as a major European power in the tenth century.[15] Elsewhere, we are fortunate that we have scholarship by prominent German medievalists that have produced monographs in English. Johannes Fried's analysis of the relations between the kingdom of East Francia and the fluctuating loyalty of Lotharingia is particularly useful,[16] although similar limitations regarding the scope of the years covered in this work remain.

In addition to the anglophone scholarship, it is also important to consult the work published in German. The paucity of works in English on kings Arnulf, Louis, and Conrad I has naturally attained more attention amongst German medievalists. Helmut Beumann has covered Louis IV 'the Child's' reign with some scrutiny, offering significant value due to being one of the few pieces of scholarship that assesses Louis' rule.[17] Conrad I, by comparison, has been covered in greater detail in German historiography over the course of the middle decades of the twentieth century as well as more recently. There are several works of importance by scholars such as Irmgard Dietrich and Horst Fuhrmann who both focus on the rise of the Konradiner family to prominence within East Francia in the late ninth and early tenth centuries,

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[15] Karl J. Leyser, 'Henry I and the Beginnings of the Saxon Empire', in *Medieval Germany and Its Neighbours, 900-1250* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1982), 11; Karl J. Leyser, 'The German Aristocracy from the Ninth to the Early Twelfth Century: A Historical and Cultural Sketch', in *Medieval Germany and Its Neighbours, 900-1250* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1982), 161.

[16] Johannes Fried, 'The Frankish Kingdoms, 817-911: The East and Middle Kingdoms', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History II, c.700-c.900,* ed., Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 142.

[17] Helmut Beumann, 'Die Einheit des ostfränkischen Reichs und der Kaisergedanke bei der Königserhebung Ludwigs des Kindes', in *Ausgewählte Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1966-1986,* eds., Jürgen Petersohn and Roderich Schmidt (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1987), 44-65; Also see Klaus Herbers and Bernhard Vogel, eds., *Ludwig das Kind (900-911)*, (Forchheim: 2002).

or events that were pivotal to Conrad's reign as king.[18] Regardless of the increase in scholarly interest of Conrad over recent decades, the fact remains that Conrad has also suffered from a lack of attention in comparison to his successor.

It is difficult not to compare Conrad and his record as king of East Francia to that of Henry I 'the Fowler', his successor. There is little doubt that Henry has received more focus from medievalists which is the result of a combination of factors present for Henry,[19] but not his predecessors. The first of these reasons is that Henry and his rise to power are covered in greater detail amongst the chronicles of the tenth century like Widukind's *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum*. The importance of this for the scholarship cannot be overstated as there is precious little for Louis and Conrad by comparison, meaning that there are richer sources to work with when examining the tenth century political environment of Henry. The second reason is that Henry faced the exact same challenges, with invasion and poor relations with the nobles, as his predecessors but managed to overcome them. Both of these combined have allowed historians to analyse the actions of Henry with more nuance. Gerd Althoff's analysis of communication networks between crown and nobility is just one example of this.[20] Moreover, Althoff's work is invaluable when we try to understand the nature of rituals, ceremony and, notions of friendship when related to the practices of ninth- and tenth-century political kingship.[21] The third reason for Henry's popularity within more modern scholarship is due to

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[18] Irmgard Dietrich, 'Die Konradiner im fränkisch-sächsischen Grenzraum von Thüringen und Hessen', in *Hessisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* (Marburg: 1953), 57-95; Horst Fuhrmann, 'Die Synode von Hohenaltheim (916) - quellenkundlich betrachtet', *Deutches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 43 (1987): 440-468. Also see Hans-Werner Goetz, ed., *Konrad I. - Auf dem Weg zum „Deutschen Reich?"* (Bochum: Winkler, 2006).

[19] See Stephan Freund and Gabriele Koester, eds., *919 - Plötzlich König. Heinrich I. und Quedlinburg* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2019).

[20] Gerd Althoff, *Spiegelregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunication in Frieden und Fehde,* 2nd ed (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2014), 38.

[21] Gerd Althoff, *die Macht der Rituale Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2013); Gerd Althoff, *Amicitia und Pacta: Bündnis, Einung, Politik und Gebetsgendenken im Beginnenden 10. Jahrhundert* (Hannover: Hahn, 1992), 21-36; Gerd Althoff, 'Konrad I. Und Heinrich I. - Machtverzicht in den Anfängen der deutschen Geschichte', in *Fulda und Quedlinburg. Die königlichen Bestattungsorte* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2019), 127–41; Josef Fleckenstein, *Early Medieval Germany,*

the fact that he is considered the father of medieval Germany by being the monarch responsible for overseeing the development of a sense of national unity in the 920s. Indeed, during the early 1930s, Henry had attained something of a cult following within the Nazi party, with Heinrich Himmler accrediting him with the rebuilding of Germany.[22] It was also believed that the Nazis were Henry's natural heirs as they were willing to carry out unpopular policies and fight off the enemies that opposed them,[23] thus making him immensely popular in the early twentieth century.

It would be negligent to discuss the historiography of post-Carolingian East Francia without providing some commentary on the contemporary chronicles that we have from the period. The Carolingians were scrupulous recorders of events throughout their hegemony of Europe, and this altered little even during the decline of their dynasty. Indeed, we are fortunate to have access to several chronicles that contain the details of the political events of the Central, Eastern, and Western Frankish kingdoms during the late ninth century.[24] Both *Annales Fuldenses* and Regino's *Chronicon* offer considerable utility given that they were written at the time when events were transpiring, and both were written from positions of relative authority, with a close network to royal courts. The *Annales Bertiniani* on the other hand, is less useful from the perspective that it focuses on events prior to the usurpation of Charles in 887 and has a more West Frankish focus. Despite this, it provides necessary information on the nature of Carolingian transition in East Francia through a comparative lens.

trans., Bernard S. Smith (Oxford: North Holland Publishing Company, 1978), 113; see also Laura E. Wangerin, *Kingship and Justice in the Ottonian Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 28.

[22] Robert Koehl, 'Feudal Aspects of National Socialism', *The American Political Science Review* 54 4 (1960): 923

[23] Felix Kersten, *The Kersten Memoirs, 1940-1945,* trans., Constantine Fitzgibbon and James Oliver (London: Hutchinson, 1956), 196.

[24] Regino, *Regionis Abbatis Prumiensis (*F. Kurze (Ed.), Reginonis abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi (MGH SS rer. Germ., 50), (Hannover: Hahn, 1890), 1-179*; Annales Fuldenses (*F. Kurze (Ed.), Annales Fuldenses sive Annales regni Francorum orientalis (MGH SS rer. Germ., 7), (Hannover: Hahn, 1891), 1-138; *Annales Bertiniani (*G. Waitz, Annales Bertiniani (MGH SS rer. Germ., 5), (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), 1-154.

Likewise, we are fortunate to have access to several East Frankish written 'histories' of late tenth-century provenance, specifically related to the emergence of the Ottonians as the major power in the kingdom. We can surmise that the recording of how the Ottonians came to become kings of East Frankia was important for the legitimacy of their rulership, as is demonstrated by the three main texts which focus on Saxon affairs in the tenth century. Of these three main contemporaneous texts only one author places value in the accuracy of how information was obtained. Widukind's *Rerum Guestarum Saxonicarum* is unique in the sense that he makes it clear that his understanding of the emergence of the Saxons should not be taken as explicit fact due to what he sees as a reliance on 'tradition'.[25] This is an unusual statement for the period in which he was writing and, as has been noted elsewhere, shows Widukind's disdain for oral accounts of history in comparison to written testimonies.[26]

The second text we must consider is Adalbert's *Continuatio* of Regino of Prüm's *Chronicon*, in which Adalbert charts the exploits of the East Frankish nobles over the course of the tenth century. Adalbert's interpretation of events has some value, despite his tendency to be much more brief than other writers of the time as shown through his entry covering the death of Conrad I.[27] There are some limitations to the *Continuatio*, especially for the entries covering the years prior to Ottonian rule. It is worth remembering that Adalbert was writing about the rise of the Ottonian dynasty, a task he was perfectly placed for in the Ottonian court in the mid tenth century and sources for the pre-Ottonian period were hard to come by. Moreover, we

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[25] Widukind, *Widukind Monachi Corbeiensis Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarun Libra Tres*, ed., Paul Hirsch (MGH SS rer Germ., 60) (Hannover: Hahn, 1935), 4.

[26] Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach, in Widukind of Corvey, *Deeds of the Saxons,* trans. and ed. Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), xvii; see also Helmut Beumann, *Widukind von Korvei: Untersuchungen zur Geschichtsschreibung und Ideengeschichte des 10. Jahrhunderts*, (Weimar: 1950); Gerd Althoff, *Widukind von Corvey. Kronzeuge und Herausforderung, Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 27 (1993): 253-272; Ernst Karpf, *Herrscherlegitimation und Reichsbegriff in der ottonischen Geschichtsschreibung des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Historische Forschungen, 10), (Stuttgart: 1985), 144-175.

[27] Adalbert, 'Continuatio Regionis', in *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum Continuatione Treverensi*, ed., Frederik Kurze, (MGH SS rer Germ., 50) (Hannover: Hahn, 1890), 156.

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should consider that Adalbert was not allegedly prone to acquiring his knowledge through written histories,[28] thus making his accounts susceptible to embellishment by participants or their descendants.

The final work of importance are the writings of the Italian bishop, Liudprand of Cremona. Like the previously mentioned Adalbert, Liudprand was a member of the courtly elite during the reign of Otto and was well placed to record his views and understandings of how the Ottonians came to dominate East Frankish affairs. Stylistically, Liudprand's writing is vastly different to both Adalbert and Widukind and it is far easier to spot his personal prejudices on the page than both of his peers. Perhaps the best example of this is his narratives of Arnulf's decision to employ the Magyar tribes as conscripts in his military campaigns.[29] Despite Liudprand's caustic views on certain topics, we should not discount his utility as a narrator of ninth- and tenth-century happenings. This is certainly the case when it comes to particular actions undertaken by Henry; for example, the idea of Arnulf of Bavaria believing that he was challenged to a duel by the king outside the city of Regensburg early into Henry's reign.[30] This story is unique to Liudprand's account and has been covered recently by Antoni Grabowski who suggests that this was a narrative tool Liudprand used to reflect positively on Henry through sparing both sides of casualties.[31]

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[28] Simon MacLean, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The Chronicle of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg*, trans. and ed., Simon MacLean (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 56; for more on Adalbert see Ernst Karpf, *Herrscherlegitimation und Reichsbegriff in der ottonischen Geschichtsschreibung des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Historische Forschungen, 10), (Stuttgart: 1985), 47-62; Michael Frase, *Friede und Königsherrschaft: Quellenkritik und Interpretation der Continuatio Reginonis* (Studia Irenica, 35), (Frankfurt: Peter Lang 1990).

[29] Liudprand, *Die Werke Liudprands von Cremona,* ed., Joseph Becker (MGH SS rer Germ., 41) (Hannover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1915), 15-16; for a more recent critical edition see Paolo Chiesa, *Liudprandi Cremonensis Opera Omnia* (Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 156), (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 1-150; see also Jon N. Sutherland, *Liudprand of Cremona, Bishop, Diplomat, Historian. Studies of the Man and His Age* (Biblioteca degli Studi medievali, 14), (Spoleto: 1988); Philippe Buc, 'Italian Hussies and German Matrons: Liutprand of Cremona on Dynastic Legitimacy', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 29 (1995): 207-225.

[30] Liudprand, *Die Werke*, 47-48.

[31] Antoni T. Grabowski, '"Duel" between Henry I and Arnulf of Bavaria According to Liudprand of Cremona', in *Konfliktbewältigung und Friedensstiftung im Mittelalter,* eds., Romana Czai, Eduarda Mühle, Andrzeja Radzimińskiego (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2012), 394.

The texts mentioned here represent the most important contemporary contributors towards our knowledge of ninth- and tenth-century East Francia. There are several other documents that can be used with less frequency as they are too far removed by either time or space.[32] One exception to this is Flodoard of Reims, the one early medieval chronicler who was writing during the period of Henry's reign. Flodoard also must be considered with scepticism due to his West Frankish heritage and his status as a member of the clergy on what was a contested border between the lands of the Eastern and Western Franks at this time, which influenced Flodoard's view of Henry and translates into his writing.[33] Moreover, it is likely that Flodoard's view of Henry was shaped by the fact that a non-Carolingian had won the East Frankish throne and was interfering in a land that still boasted a Carolingian monarch, thus giving him a motive for his negative perspective on Henry. However, this is the case for all early medieval authors, especially those with allegiance to the East Frankish kingdom: Liudprand and Adalbert are perhaps the most partisan of all in their support for the Ottonian family. Therefore, it is imperative that we remain mindful about the authorial intention when employing the early historiography due to the agendas present within the text.

This thesis explores three themes in relation to the concept of late ninth- and early tenth-century political kingship and each will be explored within individual chapters. The first will be titled 'Succession: Inheritance, Elections, and a Coup' and it is here that the difficulties in the way in which the kings came to become the rulers of East Francia will be analysed. The main argument of this chapter is that the way in which kings attained the throne could instigate dispute among the nobility, consequently giving rise to challenges related to legitimacy. To

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[32] Wilheim Wattenbach, Wilhelm Levison, Heinz Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter. 6: Die Karolinger vom Vertrag von Verdun bis zum Herrschaftsantritt der Herrscher aus dem Sächsischen Hause. Das Ostfränkische Reich* (Weimar: 1990), 819-820.

[33] Flodoard, *Les annales de Flodoard,* (Collection de textes pour servir à l'étude et à l'enseignement de l'histoire, 39) ed., Phillipe Lauer (Paris, 1906), 3; also see Walter Mohr, 'Die begriffliche Absonderung des ostfränkischen Gebietes in westfränkischen Quellen des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts', *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi* 24 (1954): 19-41.

help avoid confusion it will be further broken down into thematic sub-divisions that discuss the events that were unique to the experience of each individual king.

The second chapter is entitled 'Kings and Their Subjects: Relations between the Crown and the Nobility in Late Ninth and Early Tenth Century Germany'. All four of the kings of East Francia from 887 to 933 encountered resistance and rebellions from the recalcitrant nobility to certain extents, although it was more problematic for some than others. Conrad I, for example, spent most of his tenure locked in dispute with various powerful magnates, which consequently distracted the king from other problems within the tenth-century landscape. This chapter will also serve to explore how the lack of control over the landmass as a whole contributed towards the instability of the realm, especially through the context of the powerful stem-dukes contesting the authority of the crown. This, in turn, will demonstrate that the delicate political relationships that most of the kings had with the magnates shaped our understandings of their success as monarchs.

The final chapter is titled 'The Crown and the 'Periphery': Kingship, Invasion, and Conquest' and will analyse how Arnulf, Louis, Conrad, and Henry interacted with the polities and 'tribes' that enveloped East Francia. As is often the case with any appraisal of medieval rulership, success or failure tends to be judged based upon victory in warfare, territorial expansion, or the recruitment of allies and vassals. Indeed, as Reuter infers, there are views that perpetuate the idea that even Carolingian practices of rulership under Charlemagne can only be evaluated in relation to the acquisition of new territories and military conquest.[34] From our perspective, whilst Reuter's view has some relevance to evaluations of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, it is less relevant to the later ninth- and early tenth-centuries due to the reductive and overly simplistic way in which he ascribes success. This chapter will evaluate the conducting

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[34] Timothy Reuter, 'The End of Carolingian Military Expansion', in *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities,* ed., Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 252.

of relationships that each monarch had with the periphery from the context of invader or invaded to ascertain the extent to which foreign policy impacted relationships during their reigns.

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Succession: Inheritance, Election, and a Coup

In the year 887, the last of the Carolingian dynasty, Charles III 'the Fat' was removed from the throne of East Francia, consequently drawing an end to a century of Carolingian hegemony over Western Europe. Effectively, the decision by the lords of the kingdom to remove Charles by a *coup d'etat* for what was purportedly a failure to identify an heir apparent was the first instance of what would be nearly fifty years of troubled or contested rulership. Depending on the sources one reads, it is possible to see the *coup* as originating at the behest of different people. The *Annales Fuldenses,* for example, provide two different versions of the circumstances that led to the removal of Charles. The first was allegedly orchestrated by Arnulf of Carinthia and Liutward, the Bishop of Vercelli.[35] The second version has some similarity to the account found in the *Chronicle* of Regino of Prüm, which indicates that the lords simply arranged for the usurpation of Charles and the transfer of power to Arnulf.[36] What is clear is that the plan for succession should Charles have died was not well defined, having no natural heirs of his own that he could name to inherit the kingdom. Moreover, this was not a problem that was exclusive to Charles, the last legitimate East Frankish Carolingian. When Arnulf was taken ill in 899, he only had two possible heirs:[37] his firstborn but illegitimate son, Zwentibald, had been named king of Lotharingia but was struggling to assert his legitimacy within the kingdom of Lothar.[38] The second was his legitimate son who would be named king after Arnulf's death; however, Louis the Child suffered not through any fault of his own, but rather through inheriting the throne as a minor, and consequently being unable to assert his will. The phenomenon of being unable to name a natural heir existed beyond the last Carolingian East

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[35] *Annales Fuldenses,* ed., Frederik Kurze (Hannover: Hahn, 1891), 106.
[36] *Annales Fuldenses,* 115-116; Regino of Prüm, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum Continuatione Treverensi*, ed., Frederik Kurze (Hannover: Hahn, 1890) 127-128.
[37] Although there was at least one other son, Ratold, little is known about him by comparison.
[38] Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis*, 142.

Frankish kings or indeed, those that wished to portray Carolingian legitimacy despite questionable Carolingian credentials. Conrad I also suffered in this regard, despite popular support when made king through an alleged unanimous vote by the nobility after Louis' death,[39] he found himself in a position that was all too similar to the three kings that came before him when it came to securing his succession. This trend was eventually ended when Henry I designated his son Otto as his successor in response to his failing health.[40] Henry's own accession to the throne in 920, however, was anything but smooth.

This chapter will provide an overview on the various ways in which Arnulf, Louis, Conrad, and Henry would be made king. It will begin with a discussion about the process and practicalities of Carolingian style inheritance practices and will argue that the different Carolingian methods of either splitting the inheritance or not naming a successor at all were both as destabilising for the Carolingians as it was for the successor monarchs that followed them. Moreover, it will also argue that named succession was by no means a guarantee for a smooth transition of power. The second section of this chapter will explore the removal of Charles the Fat as king and emperor in 887 and the installation of Arnulf of Carinthia as king. The main argument presented in this section is that Arnulf's elevation to the throne was a c*oup d'état*. In the third section, this chapter will explore the topic of natural succession; although there was only one instance of this type of succession in this period, from Arnulf to Louis, it is worth exploration due to the unusual circumstances in which it occurred. Louis inherited the crown as the only legitimate son of Arnulf, but that is not to say that it was a smooth process. The main theme of this sub-chapter is that, whilst Louis inherited the crown, it was not an easy

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[39] Liudprand, *Die Werke Liudprands von Cremona,* ed., Joseph Becker (Hannover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1915), 45.
[40] Widukind, *Widukind Monachi Corbeiensis Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum Libra Tres*, ed., Paul Hirsch (Hannover: Hahn, 1935), 60; Otto was possibly named heir as early as 929, see Karl J. Leyser, 'Ottonian Government', in *Medieval Germany and Its Neighbours, 900-1250* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1982), 78; also see Christian Warnke, 'Die "Hausordnung" von 929 und die Thronfolge Ottos I', in *919 - Plötzlich König. Heinrich I. und Quedlinburg*, ed., Stephan Freund and Gabriele Köster (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2019), 117-144.

transition of power due to Zwentibald contesting what should have been a simple succession. The last sub-chapter will raise the topic of election, which was the most common method of naming a king in the early tenth century, with both Conrad I and Henry I being crowned in 911 and 919 respectively. From our own contemporary understanding of the process of election, it would seem that this was the fairest way of making a king, as a result of a popular vote. Whilst that may be the case for Conrad, who received strong support from the aristocracy it was not quite as unanimous for Henry. This section will contend that being the popular choice was not a guarantee for success, despite perceived Carolingian family ties, or through the application of Carolingian practices. Moreover, it will show that the process of election did not guarantee an unproblematic transition of power.

Carolingian Inheritance

In order to discuss the transfer of kingship and its processes in East Francia during the late ninth and early tenth centuries, we must first explore the practices of how inheritance was structured by Carolingian kings. By understanding the difficulties that lines of succession created for the Carolingians, we can discern both a continuation of the same challenges that an unclear path of succession created, but also the degree to which the succession was accepted by ambitious nobles or indeed covetous siblings. From this context, we can see that these issues were not only experienced by the Carolingians, but also set a precedent for the kings after 887. Even Charlemagne was not immune to his plans going awry despite his intention for equal inheritance reducing future strife. The notion of shared inheritance established by Charles in 806 was itself something that his own father bequeathed to him and his brother, Carloman, in the late eighth century by splitting the kingdom in two.[41] It was at this meeting of the nobility in 806, known as the *Divisio Regnorum,* where Charlemagne further implemented his father's

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[41] Einhard, *Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni*, ed., Georg Waitz (MGH SS rer Germ., 25) (Hannover: Hahn, 1911), 4.

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policy by dividing the empire into kingdoms for each of his sons to rule should they survive their father, and it was purportedly ratified by all of the great and good of the empire.[42] It has been suggested that the *Divisio Regnorum* and the decisions of 806 was an attempt by Charlemagne to bring his sons closer together, to ensure unity through declarations of support for each other with the intention of preserving the empire.[43]

Despite Louis' smooth transition to power after Charlemagne's death in 814, the problem with inheritance began when Louis tried to establish his own succession plans. The response to Louis' attempt at securing a territorial inheritance for his youngest son by his second wife was not well received, particularly by Lothar who was the imperial heir.[44] So extreme was the reaction to his reduced inheritance, that Lothar and his brother Pippin managed to remove Louis as emperor for a while in 830 and once again in 833.[45] It is not clear why Louis insisted on giving land to the young Charles, and the existing scholarship on this topic is varied. One school of thought is that Louis was aware of the circumstances of his own accession as the last remaining son prompted him to guarantee Carolingian succession through having more heirs.[46] Another view is that by having more legitimate children, Louis wanted to keep his older sons

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[42] *Annales Regni Francorum Inde Ab A..741. Usque Ad A. 829 Qui Dicuntur Annales Laurissenses Maiores et Einhardi.* ed., Frederik Kurze (MGH SS rer Germ., 6) (Hannover: Hahn, 1895), 121; Divisio regnorum' [BK 45], in *Capitularia. Edition of the Frankish Capitularies*, ed., Karl Ubl and collaborators, Cologne: 2014, ff URL: https://capitularia.uni-koeln.de/en/capit/pre814/bk-nr-045/ (accessed on May 14, 2023); also see Alfred Boretius, Ed., *Capitularia regum Francorum*. 1 (MGH Capitularia regum Francorum 1), (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), 126-130; also see Peter Classen, 'Karl der Große und die Thronfolge im Frankenreich', in *Festschrift für Hermann Heimpel*, Band 3 (Göttingen: 1972), 109–134; Dieter Hägermann, 'Reichseinheit und Reichsteilung. Bemerkungen zur Divisio regnorum 806 und zur Ordinatio Imperii 817', in *Historisches Jahrbuch*. Bd. 95 (1975), 278–307.

[43] Classen, 'Karl der Große, 218; Janet L. Nelson, 'The Frankish Kingdoms, 814-898: The West', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History II, c.700-c.900,* ed., Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 112; Hywel Williams, *Emperor of the West: Charlemagne and the Carolingian Empire* (London: Quercus, 2010), 148.

[44] Nithard, *Nithardi Historiarum IIII,* ed., Ernest Müller (MGH SS rer Germ., 44) (Hannover: Hahn, 1907), 3; see also Steffen Patzold, 'Eine „loyale Palastrebellion" der „Reichseinheitspartei"?, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 40 (2006): 43-77.

[45] *Annales Bertiniani,* ed., Georg Waitz (MGH SS rer Germ., 5) (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), 1-10; See also Carsten Hindrichs, 'Zwischen Reichseinheit und adeligen Machtegoismen. Zu den Gründen des Aufstands von 830', *Concilium medii aevi* Bd. 13 (2010): 251-287; The removal of Louis the Pious as emperor in 833 was a concerted effort by all three of his sons from his first wife and conflict persisted for some time.

[46] Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 31.

uncertain of their positions within the succession framework.[47] For our purposes, the reasons behind why this occurred are not of great significance; what is, is that it did happen and came about as a result of the emperor's meddling with an already agreed upon plan for inheritance.

Carolingian inheritance practices and the lack of a clear line of succession had a destabilising effect not only on the monarchy, but on the nobility and the rest of Frankish society. Even clear paths of inheritance could cause unrest as we can see in 840 when Louis the German and Charles the Bald, along with their noble supporters, refused to accept the new emperor Lothar I's authority, consequently leading to war and the equal partitioning of the empire in to three territories.[48] Interestingly, Louis the German broke from tradition in the respect that he did not allow any of his sons to name themselves king while he lived, which suggests that he learned from his own father's experience.[49] Although this did not prevent Louis from facing rebellious sons, in fact, as almost all of them rebelled at some point for having their lands stripped away in favour of another brother. What these experiences suggest is that naming heirs – or in Louis the German's case, not naming heirs – and securing the inheritance for the sons was a major problem for the Carolingian kings. In almost every instance of planned succession there was revolt among sons, or indeed grandsons, which can go some way to explaining why there were real problems in the naming of successors between 887 and 933.[50] These revolts ultimately sowed division, not only among the children of the royal dynasty, but also throughout the lands which they ruled. That is not to say that all of the kings of East Francia were ignorant to the experiences of the Carolingians: Henry in particular seemed shrewd

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[47] Janet L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London: Routledge, 1992), 73.
48 *Annales Fuldenses*, 30-35.
49 Simon MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 85; Wilfried Hartmann, *Ludwig der Deutsche* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2002).
50 Wolfgang Giese, 'Die designativen Nachfolgeregelungen der Karolinger 714-979', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* vol 64 (2008): 437-511.

enough to realise that split inheritance was a recipe for civil unrest, which no doubt influenced his decision in naming Otto as his successor.

A Carolingian Coup?

Now that we have discussed the difficulties that arose in response to Carolingian inheritance methods, we must turn attention to the event that ended Carolingian hegemony: that of the removal of Charles III 'the Fat' as emperor and king of East Francia in favour of his nephew, Arnulf of Carinthia. There are several differing perspectives on what the cause of Charles' removal was. Some, like Guy Halsall attribute Charles' deposition to his failure to defend the city of Paris from the Viking siege in 885.[51] Another view is that Charles was removed due to his long declining health, which, in conjunction with paying the Vikings a considerable amount of silver to leave Paris, made his position untenable.[52] These are not unreasonable suggestions and there is some substance to both being motives for the decision to oust Charles from the throne, especially when we consider the perception that a 'good' medieval king was typically a heroic figure that led armies from the front and was at the peak of physical condition.[53] However, evidence exists for kings that were both sickly and prone to paying for peace being considered 'good' kings, which dispels the idea that either of these reasons for his removal are anything but a contributing factor. Instead, it is more plausible that Charles was removed in a *coup d'etat* because of his failure to name an heir.[54] This is another demonstration of the failures of Carolingian inheritance practices, albeit one with a greater tone of finality to it.

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[51] Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450-900* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 30.

[52] Eleanor Shipley Duckett, *Death and Life in the Tenth Century* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1971), 11.

[53] Vivian H. Galbraith, 'Good Kings and Bad Kings in Medieval English History', *History* 30 112 (1945): 124. Galbraith discusses English kings, but his metrics are transferable to continental monarchs.

[54] Hans Hagn, *Illegitimität und Thronfolge: zur Thronfolgeproblematik illegitimer Merowinger, Karolinger und Ottonen* (Neuried: Ars Una, 2006), 98-108.

There are various contemporary commentaries that recount the political environment in 887 and the preceding half decade. Of the potential motives suggested for Charles' deposition, only succession is obvious in its absence. The Frankish chronicles recorded during the Carolingian period regularly discussed inheritance and succession plans as has been mentioned. It is striking that no mention is made in contemporary documents of any plan for how power was to be divided in the event of Charles' death and precious little on Arnulf too. Indeed, the only mention in *Annales Fuldenses* of Arnulf prior to 887 is an entry for 879 where he is ruling Bavaria due to his father's illness.[55] Even less is mentioned in Regino's *Chronicle* with the first discussion of Arnulf appearing in 880 when Carloman's death and children are discussed. Moreover, Regino, writing retrospectively, knew of what was to transpire later that decade, thus using these pages as an opportunity to express a return to what he perceived as the glory days of the Frankish kings.[56] There is, however, one small reference to Charles' reluctance to implement any kind of division of power within his territories found in Notker the Stammerer's writings. Despite Notker's tendency toward metaphorical writing, we can see an inference that the Carolingian line was in decline and that Charles should use Arnulf in a more constructive manner in order to resist the threat of the Vikings.[57] This nod to Charles not including Arnulf in any official capacity in his succession is also a theme that has been seized upon in modern scholarship. Simon MacLean argues that various political moves including the adoption of Louis of Provence in 887 was a ploy to try and exclude Arnulf from the succession.[58] Elsewhere it is suggested that Arnulf, dissatisfied with his reduction in power under the auspices of Charles, ignored other more superior claims to take that which had been denied to him

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[55] *Annales Fuldenses,* 93.
[56] Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis*, 116-117.
[57] Notker the Stammerer, *Taten Kaiser Karls des Grossen,* ed., Hans F. Haefele (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchandlung, 1959), 78.
[58] MacLean, *Kingship and Politics,* 123.

previously.[59] Another view is that Arnulf, aware that he would be the greatest loser in the continuation of the struggle for power between the sons of Louis the German and consequently acted to avoid it.[60] Despite all three of these perspectives holding some degree of validity, it is more plausible to suggest that Arnulf, bitter at having been overlooked for the throne after the death of his father, had decided that it was his time to claim his birth right.

There are other reasons that have been speculated to have led to the deposition, which undoubtedly acted as motivation for Arnulf to take what he considered as his. Both Regino's *Chronicon* and *Annales Fuldenses* indicate mutinous intentions amongst sections of the East Frankish nobility that led to the usurpation of Charles in favour of Arnulf. The *Chronicon* suggests that it was the lords of the kingdom that wished to remove the king for reasons related to his health. However, given that Regino tells us the transfer of kingship took just three days, it appears that this was a plan that had been in place for some time and Charles' poor health was just a pretext for the coup.[61] This certainly acquires more relevance once we consider the relationships Arnulf made whilst acting as the *de facto* ruler of Bavaria during his father's poor health. By comparison, *Annales Fuldenses* present two different versions of events due to different information being included within different manuscripts: these are indicated to be the versions found in Vienna and the Bavarian *Continuation*, or groups two and three as Reuter refers to them.[62] In the first of the texts, Arnulf is a far more active participant in Liutward's plans to oust Charles from the throne and whilst it is not explicitly stated that Arnulf was to take over, it is implied by several nobles defecting to Arnulf at Tribur which is a significant

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[59] Johannes Fried, 'The Frankish Kingdoms, 817-911: The Eastern and Middle Kingdoms', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History II, c.700-900*, ed., Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), 160.
[60] Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages 800-1056* (London and New Work: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1991), 119-120.
[61] Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis*, 128.
[62] Timothy Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda: Ninth-Century Histories, Volume II*, trans. and ed., Timothy Reuter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 3-4. Reuter's translation is largely based on Kurze's nineteenth century version. The secondary account of events during the period from 882-887 is taken specifically from the Bavarian continuation.

indication that Arnulf was moving to retrieve what he perceived as his.[63] Version two follows a similar route as the one presented in Regino's *Chronicle*: it paints a picture of poor health and a loss of mental faculties in Charles, thus prompting nobles to turn to Arnulf.[64] Either way, it is naïve to believe that Arnulf was unaware of the plans of the nobility to install him as king once Charles had been removed as they would have needed someone to take on the mantle of monarch, which he likely believed should have been his anyway. Therefore, at the very least, Arnulf must have had some level of knowledge of what was to transpire at Tribur, but it is probable that his knowledge was detailed.

Given the ruthlessly efficient and rapid removal of Charles, it is important to ask how it was Arnulf who managed to attain such support from the lords of East Francia. The first, and perhaps most crucial factor, is that his father had planned for Arnulf to succeed him on the Bavarian throne.[65] This is vital as it gave Arnulf a sense of Carolingian legitimacy despite his illegitimate birth through the expectation of ruling after his father died and, as has been previously mentioned, was ruling in his stead.[66] Therefore, it is not unreasonable to surmise that Arnulf acquired the respect and loyalty of the Bavarian nobility. This, however, did not come to pass as Louis the Younger, Arnulf's uncle, intervened and made Carloman abdicate the throne in his favour. Why this happened is unclear, though the *Annales Fuldenses* indicate that it was the result of an oath that the brothers made to each other.[67] Whilst this may be true, to think that Arnulf's illegitimacy had no influence over his uncle's rejection of his claim to the throne is fanciful: after all, Louis respected Arnulf enough to keep him in a key position during his possession of Bavaria. Conversely, once Charles claimed Bavaria, Arnulf's position was

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[63] This is taken from the version found in the Nationalbibliohek, in Vienna and is suspected to be an eleventh century revision. Kurze tenuously speculated that its of Lotharingian provenance.
[64] *The Annals of Fulda,* 114. Taken from the Bavarian Continuation.
[65] Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda*, 86n5.
[66] MacLean, *History and Politics*, 183.
[67] *Annales Fuldenses,* 93.

reduced to such an extent that Notker lamented the lack of lands and wealth available to him,[68] and MacLean suggests this opened a front in which Carinthia could be invaded to stop Arnulf's war with the Moravians.[69] However, we postulate that Charles' motive in annexing Arnulf in Carinthia was to prevent him from laying claim to the throne over Charles' own illegitimate son; an outcome Charles must have feared, especially once his support amongst the Bavarian nobility is factored in. Moreover, Arnulf had already proved himself as a capable war leader with the siege of Asselt in 882 and the Wilhemeiner war which contrasts with Charles' own military failings. Furthermore, Charles must have shown signs of his ill health before Arnulf's *coup* came to fruition in 887 and given the speed in which Arnulf acquired support from every territory in East Francia, it shows Charles' fears were vindicated. Therefore, Arnulf was able to acquire the support from the nobility of East Francia for several different reasons, most notably for his earlier support within the Bavarian *ducatus* as well as his military prowess, which, after Charles' disaster at Paris, must have loomed large in East Frankish opinion.

Father to Son Inheritance

In 899, after twelve years of rule, Arnulf succumbed to the effects of the stroke he suffered while campaigning in Italy in 896,[70] leaving the future of the East Frankish polity in a precarious position. Arnulf, like Charles before him, appears to have given little thought to what would happen to the crown in the event of his death as there is precious little evidence of any planned succession. The closest we come to a formal declaration is Arnulf's attempt to make his illegitimate son Zwentibald the king of Lotharingia in 894.[71] Matthew Innes has argued that Arnulf's interest in Lotharingia began in 893 when a local magnate was murdered, consequently

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[68] Notker. *Taten Kaiser Karls des Grossen,* 78.
[69]MacLean, *Kingship and Politics,* 142.
[70] Suffering from strokes appears to be a theme for Louis the German's line. His wife Emma, as well as Carloman, and Arnulf all purportedly dying of complications of this condition. See Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda* p.78 for Emma's death.
[71] Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis*, 142.

gifting Zwentibald the abbacy of St. Maximan to ingratiate himself with the Lotharingian *ducatus* whose support he needed for his own stability. It was from this position that Lotharingia came under Arnulf's control when Zwentibald's position was confirmed in 895.[72] This view, whilst relevant in the process of securing Arnulf's political alliances, overlooks one significant factor: that of the process of securing major landholdings for the king's sons to ease periods of transition which, until Charles, had been normal for all Carolingian kings. From this perspective, it is plausible to suggest that Arnulf's installation of Zwentibald on the Lotharingian throne was a ploy to prepare East Francia for Zwentibald's inheritance should Arnulf die. This view takes on extra relevance when we consider that Arnulf too, was an illegitimate son.[73] Therefore, by granting a kingship to Zwentibald we see a symbolic legitimisation of his own usurpation of the kingship of East Francia; essentially, legitimising a bastard inheriting the throne if it continued the line. Another factor to consider as to why Zwentibald was chosen for this role is that the king had remarkably few options; his only other son, the legitimate Louis (the Child) was only born in 893 and could not have secured any political ties for his father if placed on a throne.[74]

Despite Zwentibald's established position in Lotharingia, Regino indicates that he also sought to influence the succession in his favour over that of Louis at the assembly of St. Goar in 899 when Arnulf lay dying.[75] At this time scepticism arose over the legitimacy of Louis' birth due to the purported adultery of his mother Uota, raising questions about his suitability as monarch regardless of his age. Pauline Stafford has presented a view on the origin of these accusations, suggesting they stemmed from archbishops Adelbero of Augsburg and Hatto of

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[72] Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley 400-1000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 227.

[73] Hans Hagn, *Illegitimität und Thronfolge: zur Thronfolgeproblematik illegitimer Merowinger, Karolinger und Ottonen* (Neuried: Ars Una, 2006), 159-163

[74] Martina Hartmann, 'Lotharingien in Arnolfs Reich: Das Königtum Zwentibolds', in *Kaiser Arnolf. Das ostfränkische Reich am Ende des 9. Jahrhunderts,* eds., Franz Fuchs and Peter Schmid (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2002), 122-142.

[75] Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis*, 146-147.

Mainz, who allegedly both wished to discredit Louis in favour of Arnulf's other illegitimate children.[76] However, it cannot be coincidence that these allegations emerged at the same time as Zwentibald was making his own play to inherit his father's kingdom, thus making him more likely to be the origin of these accusations as he had more to gain from it. Moreover, we must consider the positions of Adelbero and Hatto in relation to Stafford's beliefs. Both archbishops are reported to have represented Louis' interests at this assembly; furthermore, Hatto had found a place at the young prince's side to act as a guardian, whilst Adelbero had baptised him in 893 and formed two of the triumvirate that would advise him when he became king.[77] So, to think that either, or both of them orchestrated these accusations is fanciful at best. In addition, we should also factor in the likelihood of either of these prominent magnates championing the cause of Zwentibald. As Helmet Beumann has pointed out, Hatto had 'passed his political judgement on him even before Arnulf's death'.[78] Zwentibald's repeated transgressions against both episcopal lands, as well as his assault upon clergymen clearly did not endear him to senior members of the church. Thus, making it unlikely that he would attain their support, and, more importantly, led to speculation that this assembly resulted in an order for Zwentibald's death.[79] It cannot be coincidental that Zwentibald was killed by his formerly loyal men a short time after Louis was consecrated as king in 900, consequently ending any dispute regarding inheritance as well as providing the only father to son inheritance until 936.

Elections

Following the pattern of late ninth- and early tenth-century East Frankish kingship, when Louis died at just seventeen or eighteen years old in 911, he left no natural heirs to whom

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[76] Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The Kings Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1983), 75.
[77] Simon Maclean, 'Insinuation, Censorship and the Struggle for Late Carolingian Lotharingia in Regino of Prüm's Chronicle', *The English Historical Review* 124 506 (2009): 20.
[78] Helmut Beumann, 'Die Einheit des ostfränkischen Reichs und der Kaisergedanke bei der Königserhebung Ludwigs des Kindes', *Archiv für Diplomatik* 23 (1977): 61.
[79] MacLean, 'Insinuation, Censorship', 20.

the mantle of king could be bequeathed. For the first time in over a century, the kingdom of East Francia faced the prospect of a monarch either with no Carolingian heritage, or the most tenuous familial links to the great dynasty. As a result, the next two kings to follow Louis were elected by peers from amongst the nobility beginning with the coronation of Conrad I shortly after Louis' death in what Liudprand describes as a unanimous decision by all the people of the land. [80] The second elected king was Henry I, but neither of these accessions were straightforward despite what we would assume was a popular vote. Despite what Liudprand tells us about Conrad's election to the throne, a different version is given by the Saxon monk Widukind of Corvey. According to Widukind, the rise of Conrad to prominence was not as simple as Liudprand portrays. Instead, Widukind suggests that 'all the Franks and Saxons sought to give the Royal Crown to Otto'. [81] Furthermore, Widukind plays on Otto's magnanimity by suggesting that the burden of kingship was too great for him and that it was his suggestion to anoint Conrad.[82] However, we do need to question the truthfulness of this information that Widukind provides, especially as it is not reported in any other documents that cover this period; which is not to say that it is a work of his imagination, but it makes it unlikely due to it being the only contemporaneous report of such actions taking place. As a Saxon monk writing a Saxon history it makes sense for Widukind to glamourise the actions of certain prominent Saxon lords, especially the patriarch of the Ottonian dynasty, from the understanding that *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum* was written specifically for Mathilde to gain knowledge of her illustrious ancestors while she was the only royal Ottonian at the court.[83]

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[80] *Die Werke,* 45.
[81] Otto, lord of Saxony and father of Henry I.
[82] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum,* 26-27.
[83] Mathilde was the granddaughter of Henry I and was left in Saxony when her father was on campaign; Gerd Alhoff, 'Widukind von Corvey. Kronzeuge und Herausforderung', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* Bd. 27 (1993): 253-272.

Why then was Conrad elected as the best fit for the role of king from within a group of nobles in which he was just an equal in terms of political power during the early tenth century? Donald Jackson argues that Conrad found himself elected to the East Frankish throne due to his maternal familial links to the Carolingians. In particular, he points to contemporary documents referring to the Konradiner family as a *nepos* which he suggests indicates some distant family connection, potentially that of cousins.[84] This notion of kinship is also inferred by Conrad himself when he refers to Louis IV as c*onsanguineus* in a royal document dated to 912.[85] This view carries little substance due to the prolific spread of Carolingians in the early ninth century. Many noble families could claim relations to the Carolingians, some with a more legitimate tie than the Konradiners themselves. So, the idea that Conrad was elected because of his vague Carolingian family ties is unlikely as we can see a renunciation of Conrad's claims of Carolingian heritage through his efforts to reassimilate Lotharingia. If his Carolingian links were worth anything he would have received more support from Lotharingians when he attempted to grasp back control of the duchy from Charles the Simple. On the other hand, there are suggestions that Conrad attained the crown through being a son of the Franconian Konradiner family, who during the reign of Louis and Arnulf, were among the most present and powerful members of the royal court. Indeed, Ingrid Heidrich indicates as much through the frequency that the Konradiners interceded in the business of the court during Louis' tenure,[86] thus showing that their influence and power extended over royal circles. The third possibility for why Conrad became king is provided by Liudprand who reports that the Franconian duke was elected through 'his knowledge in the ways of war',[87] which seems to be

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[84] Donald C. Jackson, 'König Konrad, ie letzten Karolinger und ihre sächsischen Verwandten', in *Konrad I. – Auf dem Weg zum „Deutsches Reich''?*, ed., Hans- Werner Goetz (Bochum: Verlag Winkler, 2006), 81.
[85] Ingrid Heidrich, 'Das Adelsgeschlecht der Konradiner vor und während der Regierungszeit Konrads I', in *Konrad I. – Auf dem Weg zum „Deutsches Reich''?*, ed., Hans- Werner Goetz (Bochum: Verlag Winkler, 2006), 69.
[86] Heidrich, *Konrad I,* 72.
[87] Liudprand, *Die Werke,* 45.

an exaggeration of his abilities as the only record of a victory in combat in the chronicles comes in 906.[88] Of these three possible reasons for Conrad's promotion, the second is most feasible to believe. By being present in the court and taking an active hand in the governance during Louis' minority, the Konradiners would likely have built a reputation as a rising power.[89] When we consider that they also controlled the centre of the East Frankish kingdom in the region of Franconia, it makes him the logical choice.

Problems with an unclear plan for succession continued in 918 when Conrad received a mortal wound in battle against Arnulf of Bavaria and had no clear successor, beyond that of his brother Eberhard. If we trust the view of Widukind once again, we would believe that Conrad overlooked his brother in favour of promoting the Saxon duke Henry as the only man capable of leading the East Frankish people forward as king.[90] What becomes clear through Widukind's narrative here is that he is using the same method with regard to the suitability of potential monarchs as he did earlier with Otto and Conrad to establish continuity through a magnanimous abdication that is likely a fictitious version of events. Considering this, it is once again crucial to understand why and how Henry became the next king. However, due to an absence of source material, any definitive conclusion strays into the realm of speculation. It is our belief that Conrad actually named Eberhard as his heir due to the importance that medieval kings placed on legacy and a continuation of the Konradiner royal line would have guaranteed that. Matthias Becher, in his analysis of the shifting of dynasties in the Middle Ages, has suggested that Eberhard was much closer to the throne in 918 than Conrad was in 911.[91] This is undoubtedly true, and would have made sense given that he was the king's brother. But given that Eberhard

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[88] Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis,* 150-151.

[89] For more on Conrad see Donald C. Jackman, *The Konradiner. A Study in Genealogical Methodology* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1990).

[90] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum,* 38.

[91] Matthias Becher, 'Von den Karolingern zu den Ottonen. Die Königserhebungen von 911 und 919 als Marksteine Dynatiewechsels im Ostfrankenreich', in *Konrad I. – Auf dem Weg zum „Deutschen Reich''?*, ed., Hans-Werner Goetz (Bochum: Verlag Winkler, 2006), 260.

is known to have lost an engagement with Henry during the conflict between Saxony and Franconia in 915, it is not impossible to believe that Eberhard refused the crown knowing that would have put him in conflict with Henry again. Indeed, Becher himself speculated that Eberhard may have had a hand in Henry's selection due to the five-month gap between Conrad's death and Henry's succession being suggestive of negotiations between the two.[92] There are two convincing arguments for this theory. The first is that Eberhard had suffered politically after his defeat to Henry leading to Liudolfinger expansion into Thuringia at the expense of Konradiner power as Reuter describes it,[93] consequently making him reluctant to lose any more land to the Saxons. The second is that considering Henry and Eberhard's former enmity, the latter enjoyed a largely prominent position within the court of the Saxon king, which can only have emerged through a negotiation between the two where Eberhard promised Henry the support of Franconia and its lords in an election.[94]

Despite the support of the brother of the former king, Henry's acceptance was not a foregone conclusion by any stretch of the imagination. Indeed, it was during the process of Henry becoming king where the evidence for the regression of the authority and power of the East Frankish monarchy was felt most keenly. After all, it is possible to see a trend in the slow shift in the nobility away from the perception of the absolute authority wielded by the monarch from the 890s.[95] This phenomenon would only intensify with the coming of each new king, ultimately reaching its zenith during the first half of Henry's reign. Whilst this could be

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[92] Becher, *Konrad I,* 261.

[93] Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages 800-1056* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1991), 136.

[94] Johannes Fried, Die Königserhebung Heinrichs I. Erinnerung, Mündlichkeit und Traditionsbildung im 10. Jahrhundert, in *Mittelalterforschung nach der Wende 1989*, ed., Michael Borgolte (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995), 267-318.

[95] Gerd Althoff, *Amicitia und Pacta: Bündnis, Einung, Politik und Gebetsgendenken im Beginnenden 10. Jahrhundert* (Hannover: Hahn, 1992), 21-36.

discussed here, it is more appropriate to discuss in the next chapter, which specifically deals with relationships between kings and lords.

Kings and Their Subjects: Relations between the Crown and the Nobility in Late Ninth- and Early Tenth-Century Germany

With Charles III 'the Fat's' removal as king in 887, it was imperative that the usurper, Arnulf of Carinthia, established himself as king with the backing of the stem-duchies. It is necessary at this stage to explain what the stem-duchies were, and why they were crucial for late ninth- and early tenth-century East Frankish kings. The *jüngere Stammesherzogtümer* have been described as 'tribal duchies' in recent historiography in reference to the way in they organised themselves prior to Charlemagne's conquest, although this view has been challenged by Herwig Wolfram.[96] The stem-duchies, for our purposes, will be considered as the lands assigned to Louis the German's sons as territories in the mid-860s: for Carloman this was Bavaria, Louis the Younger received the Frankish heartlands including Saxony, whilst Charles got Alemannia.[97] Lotharingia at this point was absent from the lands of East Francia, but was nevertheless obtained by Louis the Younger after the Treaty of Ribemont in 880 where he acquired control of Lothar's kingdom.[98] From this point the lords of the stem-regions had an increasing influence across the kingdom, ultimately reaching its peak in the tenth century when they attained a level of royal independence. The independent power of the stem duchies would evolve throughout the post-Carolingian period, often putting magnates into conflict with kings which could be destabilising for some. That is not to say that the nobility alone were at fault for

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[96] Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 44. Although it should be noted that Geary is referring to the 'more recent tribal duchies'; see also Hans-Werner Goetz, „Dux" und „Ducatus". *Begriffs- und verfassungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des sogenannten „jüngeren" Stammesherzogtums*, (Bochum: 1977); however, Herwig Wolfram refutes any acknowledgement of the younger duchies due to them all being part of the 'Frankish institution'. Herwig Wolfram, 'The Shaping of the Early Medieval Principality as a Type of Non-royal Rulership', *Viator* 2 (1971): 41

[97] Timothy Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda: Ninth Century Histories, Volume II,* trans. and ed., Timothy Reuter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 54n1.

[98] Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, 800-1056* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd, 1991), 317.

creating difficulties as kings were also culpable for the souring of relationships, especially in the case of Conrad I. This chapter will examine two themes to show how the relationship between crown and nobility contributed to instability. The first will discuss how the circumstances surrounding each individual king's inheritance was a cause of division with increasing regularity from the turn of the tenth century. The second will explore how the differing styles of individual rulership influenced internal division, exacerbating the issues that East Francia faced during this period until 925 when Henry managed to unify the kingdom for the first time since 911.

The Noble's Reception of the King-Making Process

The way a potential monarch established his right to rule amongst supporters prior to becoming king was important in late ninth-century East Francia, especially in the context of removing an established king from office in favour of one with the slimmest of ties to the established royal dynasty. In the case of usurpation, the likelihood of success without significant support from the nobility was remote. In Regino of Prüm's *Chroncion,* this strategy of gaining support from the nobles is evident in the usurpation of Charles III by his nephew, Arnulf of Carinthia. Regino's account of events around Charles' removal attributes a not inconsequential level of support for the lord of Carinthia amongst East Frankish lords.[99] Like all lords of powerful territories Arnulf had a local powerbase who were likely to support him when contesting the leadership of Charles. More surprising, however, is that Arnulf purportedly acquired support from noble families all over East Francia rather than just the nobles who paid him fealty within his own dominions in Carinthia. Regino shows this by saying the 'leading men of the kingdom' initiated the removal of Charles at an assembly due to his failing health,[100]

[99] Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum Continuatione Treverensi*, ed., Frederik Kurze (Hannover: Hahn, 1890), 127-128.
[100] *Optimates Regni;* Regino, *Regionis Abbatis Prumiensis*, 128.

but the speed with which Charles was deposed is indicative of a level of premeditation from the lords of the stem-duchies especially when we consider that Arnulf was present at court despite his prolonged enmity with Charles, thus suggesting a plan.[101]

Louis IV, on the other hand, appears to have had close to unanimous support amongst the magnates of the realm, which can only be explained by his inheritance coming through dynastic father to son succession. However, due to the scarce nature of contemporary documents covering Louis' reign in any detail, there is a reflective absence of scholarship on the young king which renders much of any analysis as speculative. Despite this there are some minor entries in some documents which, whilst not rich in information, can assist in some understanding of how Louis was perceived by the nobility upon his accession. The first conclusion is that Louis was the preferred choice amongst the nobles rather than his illegitimate half-brother Zwentibald due to the latter's behaviour after he was made king of Lotharingia in 895, although it is worth mentioning that Zwentibald succession was considered before Louis' birth in 893. Both *Annales Fuldenses* and Regino's *Chronicon* report that Zwentibald was a troublesome figure, prone to attacking the lands of the Church and neighbouring estates.[102] Of these two sources, the *Chronicon* is the more partisan and it is no surprise that Regino offers a scathing narrative of Zwentibald's actions in the unrest following Arnulf's illness as he attributes Zwentibald and his followers as the orchestrators of his removal as abbot of Prüm in 899.[103] The second insight to be found is the influence that Louis' age had over the loss of cohesion of the kingdom as a unified entity, especially from a defensive perspective in response

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[101] Simon MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 195.

[102] *Annales Fuldenses,* eds., George Heinrich Pertz and Frederik Kurze (Hannover: Hahn, 1891), 134; *Regino, Regionis Abbatis Prumiensis*, 148; also see Martina Hartmann, 'Lotharingien in Arnolfs Reich: Das Königtum Zwentibolds', in *Kaiser Arnolf. Das ostfränkische Reich am Ende des 9. Jahrhunderts,* eds., Franz Fuchs and Peter Schmid (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2002), 122-142.

[103] Simon Maclean, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Early Ottonian Europe: The Chronicle of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg*, trans. and ed., Simon MacLean (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 6.

to the Magyar invasions during the early tenth century. The consequence was the devolution of the central power of the king to the lords of the stem-duchies who tended to their own defences, or as Benjamin Arnold stated, the re-emergence of ducal power.[104]

This return of ducal power should, in theory, have ended with the accession of Conrad I due to his unanimous election by the lords of the stem-duchies after Louis' death in 911. However, Ingrid Heidrich has suggested that Conrad was not the only magnate considered for elevation to the position of king with Otto of Saxony and Liutpold of Bavaria both being contemplated.[105] Heidrich's perspective does gain support from contemporary evidence found in *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum* where the crown was offered to Otto prior to Conrad.[106] Widukind writing retrospectively, had a significant motive in creating a precedent where the Saxon Liudolfinger house was selected as the best fit for rule close to a decade before their rise to supremacy. That Widukind's version, where Otto is responsible for Conrad's election, is not found anywhere else in contemporary records suggests that he bent the truth to prove a type of destiny where the Saxon's ruled. This takes on greater meaning when we consider that *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum* was written for Mathilde as means of helping her run the kingdom in the absence of her father, Otto I.[107] It is unlikely that Otto's nomination of Conrad, whether true or not, led to Conrad becoming king; instead it is more plausible to believe that Conrad had proven himself to be an important member of the king's court and that his visibility in this setting contributed to his elevation.

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[104] Benjamin Arnold, *Medieval Germany, 500-1300: A Political Interpretation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997), 48.
[105] Ingrid Heidrich, 'Das Adelsgeschlecht der Konradiner vor und während der Regierungszeit Konrads I', in *Konrad I. Auf dem Weg zum „Deutschen Reich''?*, ed., Hans-Werner Goetz (Bochum: Verlag Winkler, 2006), 72.
[106] Widukind, *Widukind Monachi Corbeiensis Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum Libra Tres*, ed., by Paul Hirsch (Hannover: Hahn, 1935), 26-27.
[107] For more on this see Gerd Althoff, 'Widukind von Corvey. Kronzeuge und Herausforderung', in *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* Bd. 27 (Berlin: De Gruyte, 1993), 262-272.

Henry I was the second elected king from within the East Frankish nobility, but with some significant differences that made the beginning of his reign more problematic than his predecessor. It is beyond doubt that the most crucial of these differences was that unlike Conrad, who enjoyed total support from the nobility,[108] Henry only had the support of lords from Franconia and Saxony, who were, as Widukind alleges, present at Henry's accession in 920.[109] If Widukind's narrative of the ceremony occurring in this fashion is accurate, it leads us to two plausible conclusions: the first is that Henry and his supporters were keen to avoid the succession being challenged, and by not waiting for Bavarian and Suabian delegates they avoided potential opposition to Henry's claim. Secondly, by not including the lords of Bavaria and Suabia in the process, they encouraged the lords of both regions to challenge the authority of the new king. As it happens, this is exactly what transpired in the early years of Henry's rule, and this will be discussed in greater depth later in the chapter. There is also one other important aspect to be considered in Henry's elevation: that he was allegedly named heir by Conrad on his death bed. All three of the most prominent Ottonian chroniclers report this, but it is Adalbert of Magdeburg who describes a situation where Conrad implores his followers to accept Henry as there should be no more division in the kingdom (*Discidium Regni*).[110] Adalbert here is referring to the division caused by Conrad's style of rule which Henry inherited when he succeeded. If we take Adalbert's account at face value, then it is plausible to suggest that the reason that Bavarian and Suabian delegates were missing from Henry's coronation is due to their conflict with Conrad and they were consequently unwilling to accept his suggestion of new monarch.

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[108] Liudprand, *Die Werke Liudprands von Cremona,* ed., Joseph Becker (Hannover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1915), 45-47. For a more recent critical edition see Paolo Chiesa, ed. Liudprandi Cremonensis, *Opera Omnia* (Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 156), (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998).

[109] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum,* 39.

[110] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum*, 37-38; Liudprand, *Die Werke*, 46-47; Adalbert, 'Continuatio Regionis', in *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum Continuatione Treverensi*, ed., Frederik Kurze (Hannover: Hahn, 1890), 156.

The Fluctuating State of Royal/Noble Relations, 887-933

The relationships between each king and the magnates of the stem-duchies over this period were markedly different, and to a certain degree these relationships soured with the appointment of each king so that by the time Henry acceded he found himself in a more precarious position than Arnulf did in 887. Unlike Henry, Arnulf could at least lay claim to a tenuous Carolingian legitimacy that had a sense of dynastic authority, which Stuart Airlie describes as the essential task of all Carolingian kings: 'to convince the aristocracy that their [Carolingian] domination was natural'.[111] This does not mean that Arnulf was without his challenges in the relationships he had with the nobility, especially those who had peripheral territories in the kingdom. A convincing argument has been made by Matthew Innes regarding the declining authority of Charles III in the 880s due to an absence of royal power from the territories,[112] and it is feasible to suggest that this bled into Arnulf's rule. To combat this retreat of royal power, Arnulf sought to increase the sense of *Königsnähe* that these distant lords felt by giving land to his loyal followers, and the church.[113] One example is Arnulf's gifting of Lotharingia to Zwentibald, whom we see employing a similar policy by placing people loyal to him and Arnulf into important positions, as shown with Regino being ousted by the Matfridings in Prüm.[114] Beyond a dynastic challenge to his rule, this strategy was successful as Arnulf managed to avoid any prolonged periods of instability through a 'carrot and stick approach', but this had long-term implications due to a further reduction of central power.[115]

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[111] Stuart Airlie, 'Semper Fideles? Loyauté envers les Carolingiens comme constituant de l'identité aristocratique', in *Power and Its Problems in Carolingian Europe* (London and New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 130.

[112] Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley, 400-1000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 223.

[113] Rudolf Scheiffer, 'Karls III. und Arnolf', in *Festschrift für Eduard Hlawitschka zum 65*, eds., Karl. R. Schnith and Roland Pauler (Kallmünz: Laßleben, 1993), 140.

[114] Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis*, 139.

[115] Anton Scharer, 'Alfred the Great and Arnulf of Carinthia: A Comparison', in *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences,* ed., Timothy Reuter (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016), 319.

The reduction in the central power of the king was also inherited by Louis IV in 900 when he succeeded his father. Louis' experience during this period was unique as his elevation was the only occurrence of direct father to son inheritance. One would expect this to create fewer issues within the nobility due to the process of natural succession. However, the reality was that Louis oversaw a further decrease in the king's power during his reign through no fault of his own. The first challenge that Louis had to contend with was his youth; as a child of seven years old he was incapable of governing the realm for himself, instead relying on archbishops Hatto of Mainz, Adelbero of Augsburg, and Soloman of Constance for the daily running of the kingdom.[116] Louis' youth, in isolation from other factors, did not necessarily contribute to the political instability present during the first decade of the tenth century. However, when we consider that Louis' reign coincided with the onset of the Magyar raids of East Francia,[117] we can see a motive behind the increasing political independence of the stem-duchies in the absence of a unified defensive strategy.

The emergence of the Magyars had a destabilising effect on East Francia and was undoubtedly the catalyst for a shift away from central governance, with the territorial magnates returning to their own lands to lead their individual defences. Neither Louis nor Hatto or Adalbero were capable military leaders and the absence of a unified military response to the new threat hastened the political crisis as the more experienced military leaders like Otto of Saxony or Burchard of Suabia stayed in their own lands.[118] These individual defences would ultimately plunge the kingdom into deeper trouble with the attrition of the nobility through the

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[116] Eckhard Müller-Mertens, 'The Ottonians as Kings and Emperors', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History III, c.900-c.1024*, ed., Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 237.

[117] The raids started in Bavaria in 900. *Annales Fuldenses,* 134; Charles R. Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars: The Struggle for the Middle Danube, 788-907* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 245.

[118] Gerd Althoff and Hagen Keller, , *Die Zeit der späten Karolinger und der Ottonen: Krisen und Konsolidierungen 888 – 1024* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2008), 200-208; Geoffey Barraclough, *The Origins of Modern Germany* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), 19.

Magyar tactics of targeting the Frankish leaders,[119] most notable of which was the death of Luitpold of Bavaria in 907.[120] Liutpold's death can be seen as something of a turning point as it was his son that would play a significant role for Louis' successor.

Given Conrad's accession by popular consent, it would be logical to expect his relationships with the regional magnates to have been more successful based on him being widely supported. That Conrad attained his position through election had little impact on the way that his relationships developed with the stem-lords, who had become increasingly independent under the rule of Louis. In fact, under Conrad's stewardship relations between the crown and the duchies deteriorated to such an extent that the king spent a large proportion of his reign in conflict with his vassals, ultimately ending with his death. Given that contemporary evidence is scarce for Conrad's reign there are three possibilities, outside of extraneous influences, that can be speculated upon for why Conrad's kingship was one of such internal unrest. The first relates to circumstances outside of his reign with the death of Luitpold of Bavaria at the battle of Preßburg during Louis' rule. Until this point, Luitpold was Louis' main ally and his death left Bavaria open to sustained invasions from the Magyars. As a result, the young king had to move his powerbase from Regensberg to Frankfurt, in the heart of Konradiner territory.[121] This is significant as it gave Conrad and his followers more influence over the king as he was conducting affairs from the heart of Franconian power, demonstrated by the number of Konradiner interventions present in royal court documents increasing from 909 onwards as Hans-Werner Goetz has shown.[122] Thus, this suggests a level of influence that was deemed inappropriate by the other magnates.

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[119] Antonio Santosuosso, *Barbarians, Marauders, and Infidels: The Ways of Medieval Warfare* (New York: MJF Books, 2004), 148.
[120] Herwig Wolfram, 'Bavaria in the Tenth and Early Eleventh Centuries', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History III, c.900-c.1024*, ed., Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 295.
[121] Wolfram, 'Bavaria', 295.
[122] Hans-Werner Goetz, 'Der letzte „Karolinger''? Die Regierung Konrads I. Im Spiegel seiner Urkunden', *Archiv für Diplomatik* 26 (1980): 53.

It is prudent to consider the way the Konradiner family achieved their position as the preeminent family within the duchy of Franconia to understand a possible cause for why Conrad was treated with such contempt by his vassals. The Konradiners spent much of the early tenth century in conflict with the Babenberger family over the control of Franconia. To understand why this happened, we must turn our attention to the reigns of Arnulf and Louis. Regino of Prüm describes this feud as *ex parvis minimisque rebus*,[123] but given that Hatto of Mainz was both a supporter of the Konradiner family and a confidante of Regino's patron, Ratbod of Trier, it is logical that he too was a supportive of the Konradiners. Thus, a degree of scepticism is required to understand whether this is an accurate representation. There is a view that the Konradiner family were encouraged by Arnulf in the 890s to exert their presence beyond their traditional sphere of influence from Thuringia into Babenberg territory in Franconia.[124] Inevitably, such a move developed into a violent conflict between the two factions in 902 when both families engaged in battle with losses on both sides.[125] Interestingly, this was only resolved upon the intervention of Louis the Child in 906 which resulted in the end of Babenberg power; and as Bernhard Schmeidler indicates, at no other time had an East Frankish king or his advisors interceded with such finality.[126] This alone would be enough to cause distrust amongst the established East Frankish nobility, but when considered in conjunction with the Konradiner acquisition of Lotharingia in 903 when confiscated lands were given to Conrad's family by the Crown, it is reasonable to understand a level of distrust emerging within noble factions.[127] There

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[123] Regino, *Regionis Abbatis Prumiensis,* 145.
[124] Wilhelm Störmer, 'Die Konradinisch-Babenbergische Fehde um 900. Ursachen, Anlass, Folgen', in *Konrad I. - Auf dem Weg zum „Deutshcen Reich''?,* ed., Hans-Werner Goetz (Bochum: Verlag Winkler, 2006), 177.
[125] For more information on the Konradiner and Bebanberger feud see Matthias Becher, *Rex, Dux und Gens. Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des sächsischen Herzogtums im 9. Und 10. Jahrhundert* (Husum: Matthiesen, 1996), 173-81.
[126] Bernhard Schmeidler, 'Franconia's Place in the Structure of Medieval Germany', in *Medieval Germany, 911-1250: Essays by German Historians*, trans., Geoffrey Barraclough (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), 79-80.
[127] Simon MacLean, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Early Ottonian Europe: The Chronicle of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg*, trans. and ed., Simon MacLean (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 227n479; David Bachrach, 'The Rise of the Ottonians: Origins of the German Empire', *Medieval Warfare* 8 3 (2018): 18.

is one thing in common for much, if not all, of the unrest experienced by Conrad and his family during his reign which is that the Konradiners generally profiteered from the fall of other families.

It is possible that the favouritism that Conrad and his family received from the crown during Arnulf's and Louis' reigns had a lasting negative influence amongst the other prominent families when Conrad became king, thus providing them with a motive to resist the new king's authority. This, however, does not explain why Conrad encountered so much conflict throughout his tenure. Instead, we must look at Conrad's actions during his kingship to ascertain how his style of rule contributed to the resistance that he faced. Indeed, Conrad's desire to increase his power as king is seen as early as 912 when he attempted to seize Saxon controlled Hersfeld after the death of duke Otto.[128] This started a sustained period of conflict with Henry of Saxony in which Conrad attempted to assert his authority over the Saxon magnates, partly through fear if Widukind is to be believed.[129] Fear of Henry is certainly a possible explanation for the feud especially once we consider the failed plot devised by archbishop Hatto of Mainz and Conrad to have Henry assassinated in 913.[130] Despite what was a fraught beginning, Conrad and Henry were able to reach a truce following Henry's defeat of Conrad's brother Eberhard near Eresburg in 915.[131]

If this feud happened in isolation, we may draw the conclusion that the issues rested solely with Henry and the Saxon contingents. However, Conrad also experienced significant conflicts with the Suabian and Bavarian nobility during his reign, consequently making him the common denominator in these disputes. The hostile relations that Conrad had with Bavaria and

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[128] Karl J. Leyser, 'Henry I and the Beginnings of the Saxon Empire', in *Medieval Germany and Its Neighbours, 900-1250* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1982), 37.

[129] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum,* 31-35.

[130] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum*, 30; Thietmar, *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseberg und Ihre Korveier Überarbeitung,* ed., Robert Holtzman (MGH SRG NS., 9) (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchandlung, 1935), 10-11.

[131] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum,* 35-37; Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages,* 136.

Suabia were perhaps more significant in relation to the stability of his kingship. Conrad had a tense relationship with his Suabian brothers in law Berthold and Erchanger who had risen to prominence around 910 with the decline of the Hunfridings. However, tension turned into conflict when they seized bishop Soloman, Conrad's ally, after he had reduced their income and power. Conrad responded by having Erchanger seized and exiled in 914 which spectacularly failed as Erchanger was able to return to Suabia in 915, create an alliance with his former political adversaries, defeat Conrad at the Battle of Wahlwies and declared himself *dux* on the field.[132] It is ironic that Conrad had a problem with this, especially as his families activities in procuring more power in Franconia and Lotharingia were not dissimilar during the reign of Louis, making this persecution somewhat hypocritical.[133] However, unlike his predecessors, Conrad dealt with Berthold and Eberhard with finality having them executed in 917, thus ending Suabian resistance to his authority.

Likewise, the conflict between Conrad and Arnulf of Bavaria bears many resemblances to both previously mentioned disputes in that Conrad, being insecure in his position, sought to secure his role by forcing the stem-lords to recognise his authority to 'the detriment' of their own power.[134] In Arnulf's case, Conrad's actions were inflammatory for two reasons: the first was that Conrad had married Arnulf's mother, Kunigunde, presumably with the intention of drawing the two regions together.[135] The second was that Bavaria was the main victim of Magyar attacks for over a decade and Conrad's sorties into Bavaria would have weakened their defences against the raiders. It has been suggested that the cause of the dispute stemmed from Arnulf liquidating church land to pay for Bavarian defences, which justified the church siding

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[132] Thomas Zotz, 'König Konrad I. und die Genese des Herzogtums Schwaben', in *Konrad I. - Auf dem Weg zum „Deutschen Reich''?*, ed., Hans-Werner Goetz (Bochum: Verlag Winkler, 2006), 191-197.

[133] Helmut Maurer, *Der Herzog von Schwaben: Grundlagen, Wirkungen und Wesen seiner Herrschaft in ottonischer, salischer und staufischer Zeit* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1978), 40.

[134] Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Origins,* 21-22.

[135] Hans-Werner Goetz, 'Einführung: Konrad I. – ein König in seiner Zeit und die Bedeutung von Gechictsbildern', in *Konrad I. - Auf dem Weg zum „Deutschen Reich''?,* ed., Hans-Werner Goetz (Bochum: Verlag Winkler, 2006), 25 Simon MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 26.

with the king to reclaim their lost power.[136] Ultimately, it was this conflict that proved both pivotal and disastrous for Conrad as he was mortally wounded in battle with Arnulf in 918.

With Conrad's death and Henry's election in May 919, there was no decrease in the tension between the Crown and the duchies of Bavaria and Suabia, as shown by the absence of magnates from both factions from the ceremony when Henry was named king. That Widukind acknowledges that Henry was accepted with only the Franconian and Saxon nobility present is telling.[137] The possibility of Burchard and Arnulf and their duchies not recognising Henry's kingship by not taking part in the proceedings is plausible. The fact that these two key magnates were absent from the ceremony created an immediate issue for the Saxon king in that they did not accept him. This makes sense from Arnulf's perspective, especially since it was Conrad that allegedly specified Henry as the man most capable of leading the East Frankish people in the circumstances of the time.[138] Therefore, Arnulf had no reason to expect that the man his enemy chose to succeed would be any improvement on what came before. Despite this, Henry was able to gain the support of Burchard of Suabia swiftly after being named king, but how he achieved this is not clear due to no account surviving. What we do know, thanks to Widukind, is that Henry arrived in Suabia with an army, and that Burchard may not have been keen on battle with Henry due to already being engaged in conflict with king Rudolf of Burgundy.[139] From here, Henry's position in Suabia was secure enough that following the death of Burchard in 926, he was able to install Hermann, a member of the Konradiner family, as duke with little opposition.[140]

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[136] Wolfram, 'Bavaria', 299.

[137] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum,* 39. Geoffrey Barraclough, *Medieval Germany 911-1250, Essays by German Historians: Volume I, Introduction,* trans,. Geoffrey Barraclough (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), 32.

[138] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum,* 38-39.

[139] Maurer, *Der Herzog von Schwaben,* 57; David S. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), 18.

[140] Arnold, *Medieval Germany,* 30.

Arnulf and Bavaria were also a problem that Henry had to contend with early in his reign. With the death of Conrad, Arnulf returned from Hungary after his exile and felt secure enough in his position to have himself named king in Bavaria,[141] although the record in *Annales Luvavenses Maximi* indicate that it was the will of the people.[142] However, there is confusion over the extent of Arnulf's claimed land. Patrick Geary acknowledges that the confines of what Arnulf laid claim to as king are lost.[143] Moreover, the scholarship on the topic of Arnulf's domain is confused due to a lack of evidence. On one hand, there are some who suggest that Arnulf's claim incorporated the whole of East Francia because of the regal tone found in charters that describe him.[144] On the other hand, some suggest that Arnulf's promotion to king included only Bavarian lands.[145] It is difficult to say which is more likely, and both arguments have merits. However, the latter of these two views has more validity mainly because of Arnulf consistently fleeing from conflict with Conrad in Bavaria. If Arnulf intended to take the East Frankish throne in its entirety, he would have met Henry in open battle. However, given Henry's martial success we can speculate that maybe he thought it was not worth the risk. As it turned out a battle nearly came to pass between Arnulf and Henry in 921 when the Saxon king marched on Regensburg to gain Arnulf's submission which he achieved when Arnulf realised that he could not hold the city.[146] What is most striking about these peaceful settlements is how they were conducted. Unlike Conrad, Henry did not want to force the magnates into submission, instead he established cordial relationships with the stem-dukes which explains his success in swaying the formerly hostile lords to his side.

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[141] Liudprand, *Die Werke,* 47.

[142] *Annales Luvavenses Maximi*, ed., Harry Bresslau (MGH SS 30 2) (Leipzig: 1834), 742.

[143] Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millenium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 44.

[144] Stuart Airlie, 'The Nearly Men: Boso of Vienne and Arnulf of Bavaria', in *Power and Its Problems in Carolingian Europe* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 18; Laura E. Wangerin, *Kingship and Justice in the Ottonian Empire* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2019), 38.

[145] John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany c.936-1075* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 11.

[146] Bachrach, *Warfare,* 20.

There is little doubt that Henry's ability to use diplomacy was a powerful weapon in gaining the acknowledgement of his kingship from the rebellious dukes. This marked a shift away from Conrad's authoritarian style of leadership where he ostracised political opponents and rebels that did not submit. By contrast, Henry's implementation of the policy of *Amicitia* promoted cooperation and closer ties,[147] even with the lords who he was willing to engage in battle with. The contemporary evidence hints that Henry may have planned this path from the very beginning, going as far as to refuse unction from archbishop Herigar at his ceremony.[148] Widukind's commentary on this is interesting, particularly from a symbolic perspective, as by refusing unction Henry is signalling to those present that he does not see himself as above others.[149] It has been suggested that this was a performance designed to show the lords that Henry understood kingship differently to his predecessors, that the position of king was best conducted from a first among equals position to achieve unity and peace.[150] This would explain Henry's tendency for leniency towards the dukes that were openly opposed to his election. Indeed, unlike Conrad who punished rebellion with death, Henry chose to empower his opponents by giving them quasi-regal status, allowing them to make their own episcopal appointments.[151] In return, they acknowledged Henry as king and provided military support should it be needed.[152] Therefore, it is not impossible that Henry, having experienced the negatives of Conrad's rule, was determined to do the exact opposite of his predecessor to succeed.

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[147] For more on *Amicitia* see Gerd Althoff, *Amicitia und Pacta: Bündnis, Einung, Politik und Gebetsgendenken im Beginnenden 10. Jahrhundert* (Hannover: Hahn, 1992).

[148] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum,* 39.

[149] '*Satis', inquiens, michi est, ut pre maioribus meis rex dicar et designer, divina annuente gracia ac vestra pietate; penes meliores vero nobis unctio et diadema sit: tanto honore nos indignos arbitramur'. Ibid.*

[150] Gerd Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2013), 86-87. For an opposing view regarding the lack of a crowning ceremony see Johannes Fried, "Die Konigserhebung Heinrichs I.", in *Mittelalterforschung nach der Wende 1989*, ed. Michael Borgolte (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995), 267-318.

[151] Müller-Mertens, 'The Ottonians', 240; David A. Warner, *The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg,* trans. and ed., David A Warner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 86n77.

[152] Bachrach, *Warfare,* 21.

Lotharingia is a perfect example of how the approaches of Conrad and Henry differed when dealing with recalcitrant nobility. The kingdom of Lothar alone of the East Frankish stem-duchies is unique as it successfully shifted its allegiance from East to West Francia during the reign of Louis IV. Both Arnulf and Louis had struggled to control Lotharingia, with the former only managing a semblance of order after having his illegitimate son named king in 895.[153] Under Louis, Lotharingia was a source of a long running conflict between the Konradiner and Matfriding families which the Konradiner faction won and established a presence there from 906,[154] thus showing the Lotharingian lords that Louis had no control over the Konradiners. This could explain why Lotharingia submitted to the West Frankish kingdom with the accession of Conrad in 911 as the nobles had been used as a tool for him to achieve power. Consequently, Conrad attempted to reintegrate the duchy three times between 911 and 913, all ending in failure.[155] Like Conrad, Henry also 'intervened' there three times: the first in 920 where Flodoard of Reims reports Henry being in dispute with the West Frankish king Charles the Simple.[156] The second instance, Flodoard tells us, took place in 923 when Henry was invited into the duchy at the behest of duke Gislebert and archbishop Roger of Trier. This time, however, violence is reported with Henry conducting a scorched earth policy and gaining the fealty of some Lotharingian magnates.[157] Henry's final venture for control of Lotharingia came in 925 when Gislebert is alleged to have switched his allegiance to West Francia. Henry acted swiftly by marching on the fortification of Saverne and taking it by storm.[158] We can only speculate, but it is likely that in similar circumstances Conrad would have had Gislebert

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[153] Regino, *Regionis Abbatis Prumiensis,* 143.

[154] Innes, *State and Society,* 230.

[155] Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages,* 135. Although it is unclear whether these attempts included military action, given Conrad's tendency to fight with other duchies it is not beyond the realms of possibility that there was battle in Lotharingia too.

[156] Flodoard, *Flodoardus Remensis Historia Remensis Ecclesiae,* ed., Martina Stratmann (MGH rer Germ., 36) (Hannover: Hannsche Buchhandlung, 1998), 408. Henry's presence in Lotharingia here is not clear. Bachrach contends it was in support of a rebellion. Bachrach, *Warfare,* 19. For more on Henry's policies see Heinrich Büttner, *Heinrichs I. Südwest- und Westpolitik* (Stuttgart: 1964), 6-42.

[157] Flodoard, *Les annales de Flodoard,* ed., Phillipe Lauer (Paris: 1906), 18.

[158] Flodoard, *Les annales,* 31-33.

executed for his fickle loyalties. Henry, on the other hand, extended the same policy of *amicitia* as he had to other lords by granting him full ducal power. Moreover, he bound the two of them even closer by allowing Gislebert to marry his daughter Gerberga.[159] As such, it is the actions of both kings in Lotharingia that show how their different approaches led to their acceptance or rejection. Conrad, in his quest for authority and power, alienated the magnates. Henry, by comparison, used diplomacy and friendship in a way that resulted in no significant decrease in power for the magnates, which is why he succeeded where Conrad did not.

There is no doubt that the relationships the kings of East Francia had with the nobility between 887 and 933 were instrumental in defining the success of their respective reigns and shaping the way relations would unfold with the kings that followed them.[160] It is also fair to say that neither name nor popularity before accession were a guarantee of unanimous acceptance across the land as time progressed. For example, in Arnulf's case, he had his tenuous Carolingian heritage as well as alleged support from all over the kingdom in removing Charles the Fat. Throughout Arnulf's reign we can generally see peaceful cohabitation amongst the duchies and his gifts of land obviously had influence as we see no evidence of internal uprisings against his rule. Louis, by comparison, had a different experience before being crowned due to his half-brother contesting his claim which he overcame with support from key members of the Frankish nobility. However, Louis lost control of the dukes in the kingdom due to both his age and the appearance of the Magyars as a threat to East Frankish security. The result was a return to a type of ducal independence for the sake of territorial defence. Conrad came to the throne in what the chronicles claim was a strong position with the full backing of the dukes, except Lotharingia. But Conrad's years of his rule saw continual internal conflict as his authoritarian

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[159] Michel Parisse, 'Lotharingia', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History III, c.900-c.1024*, ed., Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 315.
[160] Gerd Althoff and Hagen Keller, *Die Zeit der späten Karolinger und der Ottonen: Krisen und Konsolidierungen 888 – 1024* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2008), 85-95.

style of leadership proved to be divisive, thus driving a wedge between the king and his vassals at a time where unity was essential. His death saw Henry raised to the position of king in almost the opposite of the circumstances in which Conrad was raised as he was elected by only two of the duchies. Consequently, this led to Henry's authority being challenged immediately. But unlike Conrad, Henry was able to use negotiation and reduce his own personal authority in order to achieve unity for the benefit of all. What this shows us is that the popularity of a monarch at the time of their accession accounted for little if they were unable to keep or get the nobility on their side. What mattered most was the way they wielded power over the course of their reign, as the ability to draw on the power of the polity as a whole was imperative during a period of crisis.

The Crown and the 'Periphery': Kingship, Invasion, and Conquest

The way that individual kings interacted with the political entities from beyond their borders was of crucial importance to the way they established and maintained their own power and stability during the post-Carolingian period. The increasing importance of how each king dealt with external factions can undoubtedly be traced to the stagnation of the Carolingian Empire in the mid ninth century. An argument has been made by Reuter which espouses the view that the decline of tribute payments and foreign plunder had contributed to the reduction of East Frankish wealth and power long before Charles III acceded the throne.[161] It is, therefore, prudent to ask why the periphery became so important in the wake of Charles' deposition in 887, especially given that the early Carolingian method of the crown distributing peripheral wealth amongst noble followers had halted by the time the empire disintegrated.[162] Moreover, we must also consider the impact of the crown and country passing out of legitimate Carolingian rule and the effect this must have had on those on the fringes of Carolingian power that had suffered under their expansion.

In the context of the post-Carolingian landscape, the policy decisions made by each king regarding external factions played a significant part in shaping and defining their respective reigns, particularly in the way which relationships would develop between the crown and the nobility in the years following 887. To a certain extent, all four of the kings from 887 to 933 suffered challenges of a similar nature with their experiences in dealing with external factions, but to varying extents. Invasion is something that Arnulf, Louis, Conrad, and Henry all

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[161] Timothy Reuter, 'The End of Carolingian Military Expansion', in *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities,* ed., Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 266-267; Benno Teschke, 'Geopolitical Relations in the European Middle Ages: History and Theory', *International Organisation* 52 2 (1998): 334.
[162] Timothy Reuter, 'Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 35 (1985): 80-81.

contended with at certain points over the course of their reigns. Expansion, on the other hand was not something that all four were able to pursue. Both Louis and Conrad found themselves in a position where they were hard-pressed to not only repel invasive forces, but also to establish any kind of stability within the realm that was necessary to launch their own policies of expansion beyond their borders. This chapter will focus on both of these activities in an effort to shed some light on the individual nature of rulership. As such, it will be split into two sections: firstly, it will examine how responses to invasion contributed to positive or negative perceptions of the kings, and secondly, it will assess the extent to which new territorial acquisitions, or lack of them, played in cementing the contemporary reputation of a king.

Invasions of East Francia in the Late Ninth- and Early Tenth-Century

The act of hostile invasive forces entering Frankish lands was not a new phenomenon, exclusive to the monarchs of late ninth- and early tenth-century Francia. Indeed, raiders from various regions had posed a threat to Frankish borders for almost as long as the Empire of Charlemagne had existed. Of these threats, the Vikings were the most consistent menace to Frankish stability by either attacking Frankish allies or raiding coastal ports as they had during the reign of Louis the Pious in 820.[163] As the ninth century progressed, the Vikings played an increasingly more active role in destabilising the Frankish Empire, particularly along the border between the kingdoms of West Francia and Lotharingia in the 882.[164] On the surface, we may think that the Viking activities in the middle and western Frankish kingdoms had little to do with kingship in the East Frankish post-Carolingian political landscape, but this is not the case.

[163] *Annales Regni Francorum 741-829 qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi,* ed., Frederik Kurze (Hannover: Hahn, 1885), 153-154; see Simon Coupland, 'The Vikings on the Continent in Myth and History', *History* 88 2 (2003): 186-203; *Les Vikings dans l'Empire Franc: impact, héritage, imaginair*e, ed., Élisabeth Ridel (Bayeux: OREP Editions, 2014).
[164] *Annales Bertiniani,* ed., Georg Waitz (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), 153.

It was during 882 that Charles had to abandon his siege of the Viking controlled town of Asselt in Lotharingia and, according to *Annales Fuldenses,* agreed to pay a tribute of 2,412 pounds of silver to the Viking chieftain for him to leave.[165] If this occurrence of submission and the agreement to pay tribute for a vastly outnumbered enemy to leave the territory happened in isolation, then Charles' reign may not have ended in the dramatic fashion that it did soon after. Obviously, the Vikings viewed the Frankish emperor as an easy way of acquiring wealth as they returned to Paris in 885-886 and made him pay another significant sum in silver to leave after having been unable to remove them through force.[166] Whist this may not have been the most important reason for the removal of Charles by the East Frankish nobility as some scholars have claimed,[167] it was undoubtedly a significant contributing factor in his usurpation.

This brief summary of the Viking impact on Charles' reign is necessary as it frames the political environment shaped by an external faction that Arnulf inherited when he usurped his uncle's position. It is plausible to speculate that the transition of power in East Francia from Charles to the more militarily successful Arnulf acted as a brief deterrent. It was Arnulf that had allegedly commanded the Bavarian forces that besieged Asselt so successfully in 882 that the Viking occupants were all but ready to give up before Charles arrived and offered them terms.[168] The reality, however, was that the Vikings were still a raiding into and around Lotharingia, with the *Annales Vedastini* indicating that they had established a camp somewhere in the region of *Bracbantum* in 891.[169] This is corroborated somewhat by *The Chronicon* of

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[165] *Annales* Fuldenses, ed., Frederik Kurze (Hannover: Hahn, 1891), 97-99.

[166] Abbo of Fleury in Anthony Adams and A. G. Rigg, 'A Verse Translation of Abbo of St. Germain's "*Bella Parisiacae urbis*", *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 14 (2004): 9. 1-68.

[167] Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450-900* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 30; Simon MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[168] *Annales Fuldenses,* 107; Timothy Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda: Ninth-Century Histories, Volume II,* trans. and ed., Timothy Reuter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 3. Reuter notes that the manuscript detailing the events beyond 882 where Arnulf plays a more prominent role in the siege of Asselt is the Bavarian Continuation, thus making it more likely to be positive about Arnulf's involvement. For more on the siege of Asselt see MacLean, *Kingship and Politics,* 30-37.

[169] Today's Brabant; *Annales Xantenses et Annales Vedastini*, ed., Bernhard von Simson (MGH SS rer Germ., 12) (Hannover: Hahn, 1909), 69.

Regino of Prüm who also reports that the Viking army was in the middle kingdom near the river Meuse,[170] which was under Arnulf's royal control. If Arnulf allowed the Vikings to raid uncontested it would have undermined his power in a manner like that experienced by Charles after Paris. Although at this time, Arnulf was locked in conflict with the Moravians to the southeast meaning that if he were to react in person, he would need to travel across the breadth of his territory to do so. Arnulf did just this, marching back across the country to meet the invaders in battle in the autumn of 891 around the town of Louvain, which allegedly resulted in a crushing defeat for the Vikings and ended their raiding.[171] Conversely, *The Annales Vedastini* suggest the Battle of the Dyle was not the cause of the Viking's flight from Francia, rather suggesting that their departure came in 892 and was related to a shortage of food.[172] Whether famine was the reason for the Viking flight is open for debate, however, given that defeat is the reason mooted in several contemporary documents, including Anglo-Saxon records,[173] it is hard to ignore. Either way, the Vikings ceased to be a consistent menace to Frankish security for the immediate future.

Whilst Arnulf may have ended the Viking raids in the west in the late ninth century, another threat emerged within the next decade that would reduce the long-term stability of the realm. Unfortunately, this came about as a direct consequence Arnulf's policies, more of which will be covered later in this chapter. Just one year after Arnulf's death in 899, the Magyars emerged as a new faction that would create problems for East Francia. Like the Vikings, the Magyars were a mobile and nomadic force, more concerned with raiding and plunder than they were with establishing a new colony in East Francia. There is little evidence for them intending to occupy Frankish lands, but rather used their annual incursions as an opportunity to increase

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[170] Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum Continuatione Treverensi*, ed., Frederik Kurze, (Hannover: Hahn, 1890), 136.

[171] *Annales Fuldenses,* 119-121; Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis,* 136-138.

[172] *Annales Vedastini*, 72.

[173] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles,* trans. and ed., Michael Swanton (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 82.

their wealth and return to the Carpathian basin that they had recently conquered.[174] It is more than coincidental that these invasions began shortly after the death of Arnulf,[175] and it is likely that they knew the throne would be in a weak position due to the heir being a minor, thus reducing the likelihood of sustained centralised resistance.[176] Accordingly, we must factor in the impact that this must have had on both Louis and the nobility to understand how this changed the relationship between the king and his vassals. Josef Fleckenstein has suggested that Louis' reign was the beginning of a period of impotence for the East Frankish kingdom as not only did the prominent families exploit the king in order to achieve more power, but the lords of the 'tribal duchies' had to increasingly rely on themselves to survive the Hungarian invasions.[177] On the other hand, this view is contradicted by Charles Bowlus who reveals that prominent estates were handed over to various Bavarian magnates to shore up defences in response to these invasions,[178] although it is unclear whether other duchies received the same kind of support. We must also consider the high death rate among the noble leaders of forces engaging Magyars in combat and the impact this had on morale and political relationships. Indeed, the number of nobles killed in battle indicates that this was an intentional strategy designed to further destabilise the country.[179] The strategy ultimately worked as, after the mysterious death of Louis soon after leading East Frankish forces to defeat in the Battle of Augsburg in 910, Frankish defences were seldom successful.

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[174] Adalbert, 'Continuatio Regionis', *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum Continuatione Treverensi*, ed., Frederik Kurze, (Hannover: Hahn, 1890), 154-155; Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895-1526*, trans., Tamás Pálosfalvi, ed., Andrew Ayton (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2001), 11; also see Maximilian Georg Kellner, *Die Ungarneinfälle im Bild der Quellen bis 1150. Von der „Gens detestanda" zur „Gens ad fidem Christi conversa"* (Studia Hungarica 46) (München: Verlag Ungarisches Institut, 1997).

[175] Tim Pleschka, *Die Wahrnehmung und Deutung der Ungarneinfälle im Karolinger- und Ottonenreich: das Ungarnbild in den Quellen zwischen 862 und 955* (Hamburg: Universität Hamburg, 2015).

[176] Louis the Child was named king in 900.

[177] Josef Fleckenstein, *Grundlagen und Beginn der deutschen Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 102-104.

[178] Charles R. Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars: The Struggle for the Middle Danube, 788-907* (Philadelphia: The University of Philadelphia Press, 1995), 251.

[179] Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the High Middle Ages, 900-1056* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1991), 129; Kornél Bakay, 'Hungary', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History III, c.900-c.1024*, ed., Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 542.

Louis' loss of control over the duchies due to the Magyar invasions was also felt by his successor. On the face of it, Conrad seemed a capable choice based on Liudprand's description of him. The Italian bishop described Conrad's prowess as a warrior with the following statement: 'Conrad, born of the Frankish race, was a vigorous man and trained in war'.[180] It is not clear what Liudprand based this description on, especially when we consider that he was writing retrospectively and would have some idea of how things developed during his reign. Maybe it was the successes that Conrad and his family enjoyed in their feuds with the Babenburgers and Matfridings that gave Conrad this reputation,[181] although it is hard to agree with this theory because of the support the Konradiners received from the crown as discussed earlier.[182] However Conrad acquired this reputation, we must base our assessments of his response to the Magyars upon what can be gleaned from the contemporary chronicles, which is little. Adalbert's *Continuatio* of Regino's *Chronicon* is a useful source for our knowledge of the Hungarian activities in East Francia during this period, but he appears to have attained his information from the scant recordings found in documents such as the *Annales Augienses*.[183] As has been suggested elsewhere, what this reveals is that the Magyars were able to rampage throughout the country without any kind of centralised resistance from the beginning of Conrad's rule.[184] Therefore, it is easy to see a reason for why Conrad was so poorly received by his peers. Instead of defending the country as was expected, he opted to try to assert his authority and fight against those whom he was elected by, to the detriment of all.

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[180] Liudprand, *Die Werke Liudprands von Cremona*, ed., Joseph Becker (Hannover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1915), 45. *'Chunradus Francorum ex genere oriundus, vir strenuus bellorumque exercitio.'*

[181] Ingrid Heidrich, Das Adelsgeschlecht der Konradiner vor und während der Regierungszeit Konrads I', in *Konrad I. - Auf dem Weg zum „Deutschen Reich"?*, ed., Hans-Werner Goetz (Bochum: Verlag Winkler, 2006), 70.

[182] See chapter two, on Conrad's relations with lords.

[183] Adalbert, 'Continuatio Regionis', 154-156; Annales Augienses*, Monvmenta Germaniae Historica*, ed., Georgius Henricus Pertz (MGH SS 1), (Hannover: Hahn, 1826), 52; see Simon MacLean, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Early Ottonian Europe: The Chronicle of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg*, trans. and ed., Simon MacLean (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 232-235n1-16.

[184] Daniel Ziemann, 'From the Eurasian Steppes to Christian Europe: Bulgarians and Magyars in the Early Middle Ages', in *Empires to be Remembered: Ancient Worlds Through Modern Times,* eds., Michael Gehler and Robert Rollinger (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2022), 180.

The raids continued to cause tensions for the king and the nobility of East Francia in the 920s when Henry succeeded Conrad. Although this environment was not created by Henry's actions, he still had to mend the broken relationships between the crown and stem-dukes. Moreover, he also had to win their trust to succeed in enacting his own policies in response to the Hungarian's raids. Unfortunately, this proved to be problematic as his predecessor had alienated specific East Frankish regions to the extent that they were effectively closed. Indeed, in the words of John Gillingham, 'the duchies of Bavaria, Suabia, and Lotharingia were all beyond the reach of the king' which needed addressing in the early years of Henry's reign.[185] The importance of establishing a kingdom that was at peace internally must have been at the forefront of Henry's long-term strategy if they were to put a stop to the Magyar's regular incursions. Widukind tells us this in *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum* where he stresses the importance of a pacified and united kingdom that had been afflicted by both internal conflict and external invasion.[186] Here he refers to the rebellions of Burchard of Suabia and Arnulf of Bavaria that had created problems for Conrad and continued to cause issues at the start of the 920s. To bring these stem-duchies and their lords into line, Henry created pacts of friendship with them by surrendering his power to grant vice-regal positions for the previously hostile dukes, essentially ruling through a first amongst equals policy.[187] Lotharingia also posed a challenge for Henry, but to a lesser extent due mainly to the fact that the three kings before him had struggled to assert control of the territory. By the time Henry was appointed king, the Lotharingians had switched their allegiance to West Francia,[188] thus making it hard to rebel

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[185] John B. Gillingham, 'The Kingdom of Germany in the High Middle Ages', *The Historical Association* 77 (1971): 8.

[186] Widukind, *Widukind Monachi Corbeiensis Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarun Libra Tres*, ed., Paul Hirsch (Hannover: Hahn, 1935), 40.

[187] Gerd Althoff, *Amicitia und Pacta: Bündis, Einung, Politik und Gebetsgedenken im beginnenden 10. Jahrhundert* (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung. 1992), 29; Laura E. Wangerin, *Kingship and Justice in the Ottonian Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 41.

[188] Hans-Werner Goetz, 'Einführung: Konrad I. ein König in seiner Zeit und die Bedeutung von Geschichtsbildern', in *Konrad I. - Auf dem Weg zum „Deutschen Reich''*, ed., Hans-Werner Goetz (Bochum: Verlag Winkler, 2006), 17.

against a king that they did not recognise as their monarch especially when the nobility were thinking of moving for their own independence.[189] As it transpired, Henry did get embroiled in Lotharingian affairs anyway, and it was eventually reintegrated before Henry moved on to his own expansionist policies to the east. By choosing this path, Henry avoided the distraction of having to worry about the loyalty of his own vassals when trying to end the invasions as well as increase East Frankish territory.

Territorial Expansion and its Political Utility

It was a common practice in the Middle Ages for kings and lords to look outside of their own territories with the goal of expanding their own personal power bases and the East Frankish elites were no exception. One does not need to look too far to find a political motive in acts of medieval conquest and Bernard and David Bachrach have stressed that these often came with heavy ideological components.[190] Despite this vague phrasing, we must assume that these territorial conquests were justified to meet a specific purpose in relation to the political developments at the time, just as they had been for ensuring political stability during Charlemagne rule.[191] For the post-Carolingian period of East Frankish kingship, these motives had an increased importance in light of the challenges that arose for different individuals. It is difficult to provide a definitive motive for Arnulf's foreign policy as there is little documentary evidence detailing his activities beyond East Frankish borders outside that of warfare. In Regino's *Chronicon* it is indicated that the Moravian Slavs under the command of Zwentibald had been an ally of Arnulf from before his accession to the throne, and he claims that Zwentibald retracted his fidelity from Arnulf for unknown reasons.[192] *The Annales Fuldenses,*

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[189] Matthew Innes. *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley, 400-1000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 234.

[190] Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach, *Warfare in Medieval Europe, c.400-*1453 (Oxon and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2017), 336.

[191] Otis C. Mitchell, *Two German Crowns: Monarchy and Empire in Medieval Germany* (Bristol: Wyndham Hall Press, 1985), 12-18.

[192] Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis,* 134.

on the other hand, depict a relationship of tension existing between Arnulf and Zwentibald from as early as 884 when the latter invaded Pannonia, which was part of Arnulf's landholdings as lord of Carinthia.[193] The absence of this information in Regino's account is as curious as it is revealing. We know that Regino was writing with a specific audience in mind as his work was dedicated to bishop Adalbero of Augsburg, who was conveniently positioned as an advisor to the young king Louis. We must also consider whether Regino felt indebted towards Arnulf for his promotion to abbot in Prüm in 892 after having sought the king's approval for his elevation.[194] Therefore, we can see a justification of Arnulf's invasion of Moravia from Regino's perspective due to the apparent betrayal of the king. However, Regino's version is unconvincing due to the alliance Zwentibald made with Charles III when Arnulf was effectively boxed inside Carinthia by his uncle and the Moravian duke.[195] Therefore, it is plausible to suggest that Arnulf's almost immediate campaign against the Moravians after becoming king was a retaliation against a vital cog in his earlier hardships.

A discussion of Arnulf's activities outside of East Francia would not be complete without the inclusion of his desires over the Italian kingdom. Arnulf's coveting of the Italian crown was obvious from the early days of his reign as his affairs in the Kingdom of Italy show. This is demonstrated by Arnulf marching into Italy soon after his coronation to acquire the supplication of Berengar, who had managed to have himself elected as king.[196] Despite this, claiming the crown of Italy was not as straightforward as it was for Arnulf in East Francia. Guido of Spoleto also desired the crown with the support of West Francia and a significant

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[193] *Annales Fuldenses,* 110-113; Timothy Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda: Ninth-Century Histories, Vol II,* trans. and ed., Timothy Reuter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 111n6.
[194] Simon MacLean, *History and Politics,* 4..
[195] Simon MacLean, Kingship and Politics, 139-142.
[196] *Annales Fuldenses,* 117; also see RI I, 3, 2, n. 859, Online, http://www.regesta-imperii.de/id/0888-01-15_1_0_1_3_2_860_859 with further literature; Ernst Dümmler, *Geschicte des Ostfränkischen Reich (Jahrbücher der Deutschen Geschichte), III* (1888); Paul Hirsch, Die Erhebung Berengars I. von Friaul zum König in Italien, Phil. Diss. Straßburg. (1910).

proportion of the Italian nobility behind him.[197] This is important for Arnulf's foreign policy as Berengar fled to East Francia for protection after his defeat at the Battle of Trebbia in 888,[198] which is a clear indication of Arnulf's suzerainty over Berengar and the Italian kingdom. Indeed, Italy was prominent in Arnulf's plans with him spending more time there on campaign than anywhere else. It is certainly likely that he desired the imperial crown for himself as has been suggested,[199] which would explain the frequency of these military interventions in Italy. Furthermore, it is implied in the chronicles that pope Formosus appealed to Arnulf to intervene in Italian affairs in 893 and 895 to free them from the tyranny of Guido and Lambert, with an imperial title the hinted reward.[200] Given that we are told that Guido claimed imperial rights in 891, then a motive for Arnulf's consistent military activity in Italy is provided, if his imperial desires were true.[201] This explanation would also make sense for why it took so long to pacify Italy. The fact that he was locked in conflicts with the Vikings and the Moravians when, and immediately after, Guido is purported to have taken the title of emperor in 891 serves as reason for why it took Arnulf so long to begin campaigning in Italy to remove Guido from the position that Arnulf saw as his. However, being named emperor did not end Arnulf's interference in Italy as it is believed that he was the architect of the Magyar invasion of northern Italy in 899 where Berengar was dealt a crushing defeat.[202] Either way, it is clear that this Italian campaign was important to both Arnulf and the nobles that supported his deposition of Charles. The

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[197] Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis,* 129; Paolo Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History II, c.700-c.900,* ed., Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 316-318; see also Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'The Family Politics of Berengar I, King of Italy (888-924)', *Speculum* 71. 2 (1996): 247-289.

[198] Regino, *Reginonis Abbatis Prumiensis,* 129.

[199] Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society 400-1000* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1981), 170.

[200] *Annales Fuldenses,* 122-127; RI I, 3, 2, n. 942

[201] Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy,* 170; RI I, 3, 2, n. 899.

[202] Liudprand, *Die Werke,* 27. Whilst Liudprand does not state that Arnulf was to blame, it is heavily implied. Also see Bowlus, *Franks Moravians, and Magyars,* 244; András Rona-Tás, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages: An Introduction to Early Hungarian History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1996), 261.

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claiming of an imperial title would legitimise those actions in 887 and show a dramatic turn away from the failures of Charles.

In terms of campaigns outside of East Francia with the goal of territorial additions, Henry I was the only other king between 887-933 who succeeded in invading lands and added to the East Frankish kingdom as subordinate political units. Due to various factors, some of which have been discussed in a previous chapter, both Louis and Conrad struggled to assert their authority in their homelands, rendering a successful campaign beyond the borders of East Francia as unlikely. That said, it is necessary to stress that Conrad did make several attempts at retaking Lotharingia in the early years after being named king.[203] It may be a little controversial to cast Lotharingia in the bracket of external policy as it had recently been part of the East Frankish kingdom. Nevertheless, it was considered an essential part of the kingdom by Conrad to the extent that he led three failed campaigns to reintegrate it soon after his election, which was undoubtedly influenced by his family's historic involvement there. However, the decision made by the Lotharingian nobility to defect to the West Frankish kingdom in 911 placed their loyalties outside the confines of East Frankish political jurisdiction,[204] which makes any East Frankish interventions there an act of aggressive territorial expansion. From this context, Lotharingia should be considered a foreign entity as they had ceded political authority to another polity, unlike Bavaria and Suabia. Additionally, we should also consider the likelihood of West Francia responding to Conrad's advances on their new acquisition with the despatching of military forces to repel the hostiles, as they would with any kind of invasion. Whilst contemporary evidence of this may be scarce, we do have knowledge of this occurring in

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[203] Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Origins of Modern Germany* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), 21; Matthias Becher, 'Von den Karolingern zu den Ottonen. Die Königserhebungen von 911 und 919 als Marksteine des Dynastiewechsels im Ostfrankenreich', in *Konrad I. - Auf dem Weg zum „Deutschen Reich''?,* ed., Hans-Werner Goetz ((Bochum: Verlag Winkler, 2006), 255.
[204] Simon MacLean, 'Shadow Kingdom: Lotharingia and the Frankish World, c.850-c.1050', *History Compass* 11 6 (2013): 447.

response to Henry's actions in Lotharingia in the 920s.[205] As such, we must assume that the West Frankish response to the activities of Conrad must have equated to the responses shown to Henry's ventures there.

Of all the kings of East Francia in the post-Carolingian period, the political motives of Henry the Fowler's foreign enterprises are the easiest to discern. During the 920s, Henry set his sights on pushing east, beyond the River Elbe, and securing the submission and assimilation of the territories of several Slavic tribes residing in this region into his kingdom. There are couple of different reasons for this eastward expansion that have been expressed in the scholarship. The first is provided by Francis Dvornik who asserts that Henry was able to move east in 928 only after the Magyar invasions had been dealt with in what he describes as 'a continuation of the Carolingian tradition', but with the aim of depriving Arnulf of Bavaria of his close connections in Bohemia.[206] Although Dvornik's position on the genesis of Henry's invasion is accurate, it is a stretch to consider the Magyars as defeated at this time. It is true that Henry had struck an accord with the Magyars after capturing one of their leaders and ransoming him back to them along with a promise to pay them tribute, but they were in no way defeated.[207] Meanwhile, others have suggested that Henry's Slavic invasion served as the perfect testing ground for his newly trained mounted soldiers.[208] However, the majority of battles recorded in

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[205] Flodoard, *Les annales de Flodoard,* ed., Phillipe Lauer (Paris: 1906), 3-18.

[206] Francis Dvornik, 'The First Wave of Drang Nach Osten', *The Cambridge Historical Journal* 7 3 (1943): 133-136; Jerzy Strzelczyk, 'Bohemia and Poland: Two Example of Successful Western Slavonic State-Formation', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History III, c.900-c.1024,* ed., Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 518; see also Wolfgang Giese, *Heinrich I.: Begründer der ottonischen Herrschaft* (Darmstadt: 2008); Gerd Althoff and Hagen Keller, *Die Zeit der späten Karolinger und der Ottonen: Krisen und Konsolidierungen 888 – 1024* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2008), 124-37.

[207] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum,* 45. Although Widukind does not explicitly mention tribute, it is implied through giving gifts.

[208] Charles R. Bowlus, *The Battle of Lechfeld and Its Aftermath, August 955: The End of the Age of Migrations in the Latin West* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2006), 51; Gerd Althoff, 'Saxony and the Elbe Slavs in the Tenth Century', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History III, c.900-c.1024,* ed., Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 278; Karl J. Leyser, 'Early Medieval Warfare', in *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, ed., Timothy Reuter (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1994), 30; For more on the East Frankish 'cavalry' see Karl J. Leyser, 'Henry I and the Beginnings of the Saxon Empire', in *Medieval Germany and Its Neighbours, 900-1250* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1982), 11-42.

Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum are sieges against fortified towns,[209] in which mounted troops play little part, thus undermining this view. Another view is provided by Bernard and David Bachrach who identify the Saxon expansion into Slavic lands as both offensive and defensive in nature, the former for launching campaigns into Bohemia and the latter for helping to create a defence in depth system that was necessary against the Magyars.[210] This has some merit as the construction and manning of fortresses that were either built or captured in Slavic lands would attest to, especially when we factor in the migration of Franks to these *Burgen* that had been newly won.[211] Widukind provides more evidence for the credibility of the theory on eastern expansion through Henry effectively closing off Magyar supply lanes. In his chronicle, Widukind suggests that the Daleminzi tribe had assisted the raids of the Magyars, describing them as 'old friends'. However, on this occasion after having been subjugated by Henry,[212] they provide no assistance to the invaders thus showing the wisdom of his eastern strategy. There is one further reason for the East Frankish expansion beyond the Elbe in the 920s: the fiscal rewards that this would provide in the event of a successful campaign. As Reuter notes, the wealth generated because of plunder and tribute would have been a handsome reward for Henry's followers,[213] but it also would have gone some way to alleviating the vast expenditure borne by the crown and the nobility in financing such a campaign of conquest.

In summary, the way that the kings of East Francia interacted with peripheral entities in the wake of the Carolingian collapse in 887 was complex, often influenced and defined by the individual styles of rulership implemented by each respective king. During this period, foreign policy was governed either by a king's reaction and responses at being the victim of invasive

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[209] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum*, 48-50

[210] Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach, 'Early Saxon Frontier Warfare: Henry I, Otto I, and Carolingian Military Institutions', *Journal of Medieval Military History*, Volume X (2012): 49; David S. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, 25.

[211] Edward J. Schoenfeld, 'Anglo-Saxon "*Burhs*" and Continental "*Burgen*": Early Medieval Fortifications in Continental Perspective', *Haskins Society Journal* 6 (1994): 56-57.

[212] Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum*, 55-56.

[213] Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages,* 144.

forces, or conversely, the success or failure of a king's attempt at conquering and assimilating a new region into the Frankish powerbase. As we have seen, each of our kings experienced the impact of invasion, but to vastly different degrees. For Arnulf, the Viking presence in Lotharingia and along its eastern border was problematic enough for him to march from one end of his landholdings to the other and confront them at the Battle of the Dyle. It was also the single largest incursion that he had to face. Louis and Conrad, however, experienced a far greater frequency of attacks into Frankish territories by the Magyars on a regular basis. But, unlike Arnulf their responses were few and far between. In Louis' defence, his age was an important factor to consider in the lack of a unified response. Conrad, on the other hand, turned a blind eye to the attacks of the Magyars, instead choosing to fight with those that should have been his allies. Henry, whilst initially struggling with the same issue, was able to decisively alter his fortunes when dealing with the raids by getting the nobles on his side which mitigated the challenges of his predecessor and, in turn, facilitated the ability to look beyond his own borders. In addition, we must also consider the impact that foreign ventures had on the reception of these kings. Arnulf was particularly active in this respect as the documents show his eagerness for campaigning beyond the confines of his own realm either in Moravia to settle old scores or in Italy in pursuit of the imperial title. Conrad by comparison did not fare well in his military endeavours beyond the borders of East Francia with his only recorded attempts at expansion coming in the guise of three failed attempts in Lotharingia. By contrast, Henry's own attempts at conquest were a success by almost every measure. Indeed, it was his acquisition of Slavic lands that stand out for the simple fact that they were crucially important to stopping the Magyar invasions. Therefore, as shown through the reigns of these four kings, the successes and failures regarding foreign policy were a crucial factor in either stabilising a regime or damaging it beyond repair.

Conclusion

It is beyond doubt that the collapse and consequent disintegration of the Carolingian Empire in 887 would fundamentally challenge the idea and practice of kingship in East Francia moving forward, despite the absence of a power vacuum with the end of Carolingian hegemony. From this moment on, the individual nature and personalities of the four kings of East Francia took on extra importance, especially given the questionable leadership shown by Charles III during his reign. The nature of personal styles of rulership are always important within the political sphere and a leader's actions can either assist in stabilising the political environment or weaken it by throwing it into chaos, both of which are demonstrated amongst the four kings in the period between 887-933. In the post-Carolingian context, this emerges through stability in cordial, or at least neutral relationships, or a dynamic of turmoil as a result of conflict between the nobility and the crown. All three of the themes discussed in this paper had a distinct influence on the manner in which the kings interacted with the nobility, and in some circumstances the tone was set for how these relationships would develop over a reign from the moment of elevation.

The royal inheritance which had long proved to be problematic for the Carolingian kings and emperors continued to create tensions into the tenth century, more than a decade after their dominance had ended. In the case of Charles' deposition, it certainly helped that there was a ready-made successor in Arnulf who could at least claim a Carolingian heritage of sorts, irrespective of the fact that he was an illegitimate son. As has been argued, it was likely that Arnulf's lack of inclusion in Charles' inheritance and his belief that he should have inherited his father's kingdom led him to overthrow his uncle and have himself crowned king. However, without a significant level of backing from the East Frankish magnates, Arnulf's usurpation of Charles would likely never have happened as the chronicles in some circumstances tell us that Arnulf acted at the lord's behest.

It seems as if Arnulf himself was determined to avoid the scenario encountered by Charles by paving the way for a successor to inherit after his death, and this was clearly the thinking behind having Zwentibald named king in Lotharingia in 893 shortly before his legitimate son Louis was born. When Louis inherited the crown at the turn of the tenth century, he did so as the only king to linearly succeed his father during this period. Whether Louis was positively received by the nobility is not known, however, we do know that his succession was not supported by his half-brother Zwentibald who had spent a significant amount of time and effort in trying to discredit the legitimacy of his brothers' birth through the alleged adultery of Louis' mother in the late 890s.

The issue of no heir left the throne in a perilous position when Louis died without siring children in 911 and to fill the void the next king would be elected by the lords from within their ranks. It has been argued that Conrad was selected due to some tenuous familial relationship to the Carolingians. However, in our view it would be harder to find a powerful family that could not claim Carolingian kinship of some kind. Regardless, that Conrad was nominated and indeed identified as the best fit for the next ruler from amongst his peers speaks volumes for the esteem in which the lord of Franconia was held prior to his elevation, this view would quickly change when Conrad became king though due to the way that he conducted himself.

 Conrad, however, is alleged to have identified the man that would succeed him on his deathbed, naming Henry over his own brother as the most capable leader. This is extremely unlikely, considering the time span between Conrad's death and Henry's succession lasted months, and it is more plausible to suggest that this time was spent cementing alliances between Franconia and Saxony. However, it is fair to say that East Francia was divided at this point as other stem-lords did not accept Henry, thus making his interactions with them over the early years more important.

On the other hand, there were factions present within the kingdom that were increasingly unhappy with the way that each king inherited his mantle. Of course, we are told that Arnulf inherited it with support from all over the kingdom, which explains the rapidity of Charles removal. Likewise, Louis was likely to have enjoyed widespread support on the basis of him being the son of the last king. Conrad too is reported as having a lot of backing, not least from duke Otto of Saxony who is purported to have been the man responsible for his election. It is for Henry, however, where we see some real antipathy towards his appointment. Because it was only the Franks and the Saxons who chose Henry as their king it gave them a greater motive to resist his appointment.

In spite of the reception a king received at the time of his elevation, it was how the kings interacted with the lords that had the greatest bearing on the way their tenures developed and also contributed to how relationships changed for their successors, certainly during the early tenth century. The one exception to this trend is Arnulf, who largely avoided any sustained periods of internal resistance by East Frankish factions during his reign, although he did encounter one dynastic rebellion that was swiftly ended. The same can be said for Louis, who did not encounter any prolonged periods of internal division or resistance to his authority, beyond that of Zwentibald's resistance soon after Louis' reign began. Despite what seems like a relationship of neutrality between Louis and the lords, it is during his rule where we see a distance emerge between the crown and the stem-regions. It would be unfair to lay the blame for this on Louis' policy making, or indeed his age. But it is hard to overlook the latter of these as an influence for why this occurred. Indeed, it is likely that the lords trusted neither Louis nor his advisors to succeed in responding to the extraneous threats they face, consequently, leading to the increase in regional independence.

The ramifications of this regional independence would linger on beyond Louis' span, creating division and causing conflict for the next two monarchs that followed him. Despite

widespread support of his election as king, it would not take long for his style of rule to degenerate from support to outright hostility. All of the evidence indicates that Conrad practiced an authoritarian style of leadership in the early days of his kingship as shown by him trying to reduce the personal power of Henry. What is more, the entirety of Conrad's tenure was spent trying to quell rebellions in Bavaria, Saxony, and Suabia, with varying levels of success. Whilst Conrad did manage to subdue Saxony and Suabia, to do so came with a reduction of his own personal powerbase. However, Bavaria was never pacified, and it was this conflict that ultimately led to him losing his life.

This environment of rebellion and resistance created by Conrad was also inherited by Henry when he accepted the kingship in 919. Although Henry is reported as having a good relationship with Franconia despite former enmity, it was again the duchies of Bavaria and Suabia that were resistant to his appointment as indicated by their absence from the assembly where he was elected as the ruler. As such it is feasible to suggest that both duchies did not recognise Henry as their ruler, and in the Bavarian case this is demonstrated by Arnulf's claim of the Bavarian crown at roughly the same time as Henry was named king. In a direct contrast to Conrad, Henry was able to achieve peace with the fractious stem-duchies by surrendering a proportion of his own personal power to the magnates. Indeed, the two different experiences for both kings in Lotharingia is perhaps the best demonstration of the contrast between the two king's approaches.

The final influential factor on the development of internal relationships during the post-Carolingian period is the interaction of the kings with the periphery, either in response to invasion or as the invader to acquire new land, and it was success or failure in these activities that often contributed to the increase or decrease in political stability. East Francia was the victim of invasions for all four of the kings between 887-933 and the impact of invasion would have severe implications for three of them. In the 890s, Arnulf put an end to the Viking raids in

Lotharingia, ensuring stability in the northwest. But Louis, Conrad, and Henry all faced the ravages of the Magyar invasions to varying degrees. Both Louis and Conrad's reign suffered in the political sphere as a result of their decisions, or lack of action in Conrad's case. For Louis, this was felt with the independent responses enacted by the stem-lords, while for Conrad it was the total inaction against the invasive forces that dealt the political damage. Whilst Henry did suffer at the hands of the Magyars, he was able to temporarily end their raids after enacting a different type of foreign policy.

It is also prudent to mention East Francia's own instances of external expansion during this post-Carolingian era. Even though attempts at East Frankish territorial expansion were nowhere near as frequently conducted in comparison to the amount they were invaded, it is still worth mentioning due to impact that foreign wars or conquest had on the political sphere. In Arnulf's reign there were at least two protracted campaigns led against peripheral polities. The first was Arnulf's frequent invasions of Moravia in the early 890s. However, these campaigns seem to be less about conquest than they were about dealing out vengeance to Zwentibald and his people for betraying Arnulf. The second place that Arnulf spent a deal of time campaigning in was Italy. Arnulf's motives for intervening in the south are clear: by assimilating Italy into his landholdings, he would acquire the title of emperor, which would have been a real legitimisation for his *coup* in both his view and that of the people who facilitated his rise to kingship. That this was the case is demonstrable by him entering Italy in the early days of his rule and gaining the supplication of the Italian king. This is all important as it marked a dramatic shift away from the time of Charles' reign.

Henry was the only other monarch who successfully conducted military actions beyond East Frankish borders and added new territories and peoples to his existing dominions in the early tenth century, but he could only do so once the Magyar incursions had been dealt with. The peace treaty he agreed with them was a vital component in enabling Henry to absorb new

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territories which served a number of long-term purposes for his kingdom, of which the most important was reducing the assistance the invaders would receive from their former allies as they were travelling to attack Henry's lands. The added benefit of the conquest of the lands beyond the Elbe was that it created wealth and solidified the entirety of East Frankish defences, thus proving to be useful to all.

In summary, in the wake of the collapse of the Carolingian empire, the politics of rule in East Francia between the years of 887-933 was always going to be challenging, not least because of the way the Carolingian hegemony was ended. During this period, we see four different kings with very different personalities ruling in a short span of time. The individual characters of the men who led the kingdom at this point was of fundamental importance to how events would develop, not least with the relationships with the nobles who could either make or break a tenure. We see that the way these monarchs came to their position was important, but not a guarantee of success nor was it a guarantee of blind loyalty. Arnulf, despite overthrowing the regime, managed to rule with success. Louis, who succeeded his father was accepted but saw a regression in his power. Conrad and Henry, who were both elected, had mixed fortunes, with the former struggling throughout and the latter facing earlier challenges but overcoming them. Likewise, the personal style of leadership was crucial in the way that the relationships developed between the crown and the magnates, demonstrated most clearly through the juxtaposition between Conrad, who alienated some in the desire to have his will obeyed, and Henry, who had the nous to surrender elements of his own power to get the former rebels onside. Finally, we see the same pattern emerge through the interaction with peripheral factions. The ability to be able to defend the country from an invader was of great importance to the perception of the king. Arnulf and Henry, who were both successful at this, experienced more stability, whilst Conrad and Louis, who both failed to defend the realm saw a regression in their authority. The same pattern also emerges with regard to successful military campaigns

beyond Frankish borders. Both Arnulf and Henry were successful in extensive campaigns outside of their territory, whilst Louis and Conrad were so beset within that it would have been impossible to launch a campaign beyond their borders. Ultimately, what this shows us about the politics of rule in post-Carolingian East Francia is that the individual natures of the kings were the most important aspect in promoting unity or causing division.

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