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## How to Become Emperor – John VIII and the Role of the Papacy in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century\*

Charlemagne's proclamation as emperor within the context of a papal ceremony performed on Christmas Day in the year 800 in Rome<sup>1</sup> significantly shaped, in retrospect, the relation between Frankish king and Roman pope in the Middle Ages, effectively putting the proclamation of the emperor in the hands of the pope in Rome. The fact that Charlemagne as well as his son, Louis the Pious, both passed their emperorship on to their sons in an independent ceremony held in Aix-la-Chapelle has been noted but rarely made the subject of a detailed discussion,<sup>2</sup> since these cases remained

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- 1 See Fried, Johannes: *Karl der Große. Gewalt und Glaube. Eine Biographie*. Beck: Munich 2013, pp. 433–495; Patzold, Steffen: “Die Kaiseridee Karls des Großen”. In: Pohle, Frank (ed.): *Karl der Grosse, Charlemagne. Orte der Macht. Essays*. Sandstein Kommunikation: Dresden 2014, S. 152–159. For a more recent publication on this topic, see Becher, Matthias: “Das Kaisertum Karls des Großen zwischen Rückbesinnung und Neuerung”. In: Leppin, Hartmut / Schneidmüller, Bernd / Weinfurter, Stefan (eds.): *Kaisertum im ersten Jahrtausend. Wissenschaftlicher Begleitband zur Landesausstellung “Otto der Große und das Römische Reich. Kaisertum von der Antike zum Mittelalter”*. Schnell & Steiner: Regensburg 2012, pp. 251–270; the older literature discusses Heldmann, Karl: *Das Kaisertum Karls des Großen. Theorien und Wirklichkeit*. (Quellen und Studien zur Verfassungsgeschichte des Deutschen Reiches in Mittelalter und Neuzeit 6,2). Böhlau: Weimar 1928.
- 2 In some works it has been subsumed as a so-called ‘Aachener Kaiseridee’; cf. Lintzel, Martin: “Das abendländische Kaisertum im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert. Der römische und der fränkisch-deutsche Kaisergedanke von Karl dem Großen bis auf Otto den Großen”. *Die Welt als Geschichte* 4, 1938, pp. 423–447, here p. 429; Erdmann, Carl: “Die nichtrömische Kaiseridee”. In: Friedrich Baethgen (ed.): *Carl Erdmann. Forschungen zur politischen Ideewelt des Frühmittelalters, aus dem Nachlass des Verfassers herausgegeben*. Akademie: Berlin 1951, pp. 1–51, here pp. 16–31; see also Schieffer, Rudolf: “Konzepte des Kaisertums”. In: Schneidmüller, Bernd / Weinfurter, Stefan (eds.): *Heilig • Römisch • Deutsch. Das Reich im mittelalterlichen Europa (Internationale Tagung zur 29. Aus-*

individual episodes and were overshadowed by the ensuing imperial coronations carried out by the pope. In the early days of Carolingian emperors, however, this procedure was far from universally accepted. The connection to the papacy as the authority bestowing the title of emperor as well as the connection to Rome can only be seen as a consolidation of power toward the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. On this account, the time between Lothair I and Otto the Great should be considered a separate period in the history of emperorship.<sup>3</sup> Against this background, this paper tries to comprehend how the papacy became the legitimising authority universally accepted in the Frankish Empire.<sup>4</sup> Here, Pope John VIII played a crucial role.<sup>5</sup>

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*stellung des Europarates und Landesausstellung Sachsen-Anhalt*). Sandstein: Dresden 2006, pp. 44–56, here p. 47–48; Schulze, Hans K.: *Grundstrukturen der Verfassung im Mittelalter, vol. 3: Kaiser und Reich*. Kohlhammer: Stuttgart / Berlin / Cologne 1998, pp. 256–260. For a brief account, see Mierau, Heike Johanna: *Kaiser und Papst im Mittelalter*. Böhlau: Cologne et al. 2010, pp. 48–49; Schneider, Reinhard: “Die Erben Karls des Großen im 9. Jahrhundert”. *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins* 104/105, 2002/03, pp. 51–67; Schneidmüller, Bernd: *Die Kaiser des Mittelalters. Von Karl dem Großen bis Maximilian I.* (Beck Wissen 2398). Beck: Munich 2012, pp. 31–37; Goetz, Elke: *Papsttum und Kaisertum im Mittelalter*. (Geschichte kompakt). WBG: Darmstadt 2009, pp. 25–26.

- 3 Cf. Groth, Simon: “Papsttum, italisches Königtum und Kaisertum. Zur Entwicklung eines Dreiecksverhältnisses von Ludwig II. bis Berengar I.”. *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 124, 2013, pp. 151–184.
- 4 In contrast to the Eastern Roman continuity of the Byzantine *basileus* (βασιλεύς), the empire in the West had been vacant since the deposition of Romulus Augustulus (476), despite a few attempts to overthrow the empire. See, for example, Classen, Peter: “Der erste Römerzug in der Weltgeschichte. Zur Geschichte des Kaisertums im Westen und der Kaiserkrönung in Rom zwischen Theodosius d. Gr. und Karl d. Gr.”. In: Beumann, Helmut (ed.): *Historische Forschungen für Walter Schlesinger*. Böhlau: Cologne / Vienna 1974, pp. 325–347; see also Anton, Hans Hubert: ““Solium imperii” und “Principatus sacerdotum” in Rom, fränkische Hegemonie über den Okziden / Hesperiden. Grundlagen, Entstehung und Wesen des karolingischen Kaisertums”. In: Erkens, Franz-Reiner / Wolff, Hartmut (eds.): *Von sacerdotium und regnum. Geistliche und weltliche Gewalt im frühen und hohen Mittelalter. Festschrift für Egon Boshof zum 65. Geburtstag*. (Passauer historische Forschungen 12). Böhlau: Cologne et al. 2002, pp. 203–274.
- 5 Cf. the general survey by Arnold, Dorothee: *Johannes VIII. Päpstliche Herrschaft in den karolingischen Reichreichen am Ende des 9. Jahrhunderts*. (Euro-

In affirmatively reinforcing the coronations of Louis the Pious (816)<sup>6</sup> and Lothair I (823),<sup>7</sup> the papacy upheld its claim of legitimising the emperor, which in Lothair's case probably resulted in an elevation of his status compared to his brothers.<sup>8</sup> However, their emperorships did not depend just on a papal ceremony. In this context, it is astonishing that Lothair I did not continue the practice his father and grandfather had established, but instead sent his son, Louis II, to Rome<sup>9</sup> in April 850 where he was appointed

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päische Hochschulschriften Reihe 23, Theologie 797). Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main et al. 2005. See also Ullmann, Walter: *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages. A Study in the Ideological Relation of Clerical to Lay Power*. Methuen: London <sup>3</sup>1970, pp. 219–225.

- 6 Cf. Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter den Karolingern 751–918, ed. by Johann Friedrich Böhmer, revised by Engelbert Mühlbacher and completed by Johann Lechner. Verlag der Wagner'schen Universitäts-Buchhandlung: Innsbruck <sup>2</sup>1908, no. 633a (cited in the following as RI,I,1).
- 7 Cf. RI,I,1, nos. 770a, 1018a.
- 8 Cf. Groth, Simon: "Kaisertum, Papsttum und italisches Königtum. Zur Entstehung eines schwierigen Dreiecksverhältnisses". *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 94, 2012, pp. 21–58, here pp. 50–52.
- 9 Some sources report that already his grandfather Louis the Pious pledged Italy to Louis II; cf. *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. Grat, Félix / Vielliard, Jeanne / Clémencet, Suzanne. Paris 1964, a. 856, p. 72: *Ludoicus rex Italiae, filius Lotharii [...]* *Italiam largitate avi Ludoici imperatoris se asserens assecutum*; Andreae Bergomatis historia, ed. Waitz, Georg. (MGH SS rer. Lang. 1). Hannover 1878, Rpt. 1988, c. 6, p. 225: *Habuit Lotharius filius Hludowicus [sic!] nomine, cui avius suus Hludowicus Italiam concessit*; Carmina de Ludovico II. imperatore, ed. Traube, Ludwig. (MGH Poetae III). Berlin 1886, Rpt. 2000, II., p. 405, l. 4. In 840 Louis entered the dominion in Italy (cf. Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter den Karolingern 751–918 [926], vol. 3: Die Regesten des Regnum Italiae und der burgundischen Regna, part 1: Die Karolinger im Regnum Italiae 840–887 [888], ed. by Herbert Zielinski. Böhlau: Cologne / Weimar / Vienna 1991, no. 1 [cited in the following as RI,I,3,1]) and in 844 his father, Lothair I, sent him with Archbishop Drogo of Metz and others to Rome in order to clarify the irregularities in the election of Pope Sergius II; cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 21–26; Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter den Karolingern 751–918 (926 / 962), vol. 4: Papstregesten, 800–911, part 2: 844–872, section 1: 844–858, ed. by Klaus Herbers. Böhlau: Cologne / Weimar / Vienna 1999; section 2: 858–872 (Nikolaus I), ed. by Klaus Herbers. Böhlau: Vienna / Cologne / Weimar 2012, nos. 30–32 (cited hereafter as RI,I,4,2). See also Zimmermann, Harald: *Papstabsetzungen des Mittelalters*. Böhlau: Graz et al. 1968, pp. 40–41; Hartmann, Ludo Moritz: *Geschichte Italiens im Mittelalter*, vol. 1–4. (Allgemeine Staatengeschichte 1/32, 1–4). Georg

emperor by Pope Leo IV.<sup>10</sup> As to Lothair I's reasons for doing so, we can only speculate. For instance, he might have hoped that the papal bestowal of the title would lead to a greater acceptance of his son's emperorship by his brothers, Louis the German and Charles the Bald; or perhaps he wanted to establish a direct connection between his son's emperorship and that of Charlemagne; or his own experiences with regard to his imperial succession were what prompted him to exercise these changes. An imperial coronation in which the reigning emperor crowned his own son never occurred again, and Lothair I abstained altogether from participating in the ceremony set to take place in Rome. For the first time since Charlamgne's coronation, the pope acted as a constituting actor in the decision process. The papal ceremony conducted by Paschal I (5 April 823) may have held a higher level of legitimation for Lothair I than that of his father. Perhaps his own experiences following the papal affirmation of his status as an emperor caused Lothair to modify the contemporary practice of 'Mitkaisererhebung'

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Olms Verlag; Gotha 1900–1915, III,1, pp. 196–197; Hees, Herbert: *Studien zur Geschichte Kaiser Ludwigs II.* Diss. phil. Regensburg 1973, pp. 29–30. In Rome Louis II was appointed *rex Langobardorum* (Liber Pontificalis), that is to say an Italic king; cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 27; RI,I,4,2, no. 33; RI,I,1, nos. 1115a, 1177d; Liber Pontificalis (Vita Sergii II.), ed. Duchesne, Louis, 3 vol. Paris <sup>2</sup>1955, p. 89; Hees 1973, pp. 32–37; Henggeler, Annemarie: *Die Salbungen und Krönungen des Königs und Kaisers Ludwigs II. (844, 850, 872).* Diss. phil. Freiburg i. Ue. 1934, pp. 28–35.

- 10 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 67; RI,I,4,2, no. 220; RI,I,1, nos. 1142a, 1179a; Herbers, Klaus: *Papst Leo IV. und das Papsttum in der Mitte des 9. Jahrhunderts. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen päpstlicher Herrschaft in der späten Karolingerzeit.* (Päpste und Papsttum 27). Hiersemann: Stuttgart 1996, pp. 210–213; Hees 1973, pp. 51–55. In the short message contained in the “Annales Bertiniani” (a. 850, p. 59) Prudentius writes that Lothair had sent his son (*mittere*). In the context of Charles the Bald having taken possession of Lothair II's kingdom in the year of 869, one reads that *imperator* [Lothair I] *constituerit imperatorem* [Louis II] (Hadriani II. papae epistolae, ed. Perels, Ernst. [MGH Epistolae 6]. Berlin 1925, Rpt. 1995, ep. 19, p. 722, l. 17–18). Since there are no sources either confirming or disconfirming an “act of elevation” (Erhebungsakt) on the part of the father (analogous to the cases of Louis the Pious and Lothair I), the status of this event should be treated with caution (cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 67: “ein weltlicher Erhebungsakt durch Lothar I. wird nicht erwähnt, er läßt sich allenfalls indirekt aus dem genannten Schreiben Hadrians II. von 869 erschließen” [Herbert Zielinski]). The “Liber Pontificalis” remains silent on this issue.

(elevation by the father, as it had occurred in the cases of Charlemagne/Louis I and Louis I/Lothair I),<sup>11</sup>

The fact that Lothair I sent his son to the pope and that the latter carried out the coronation without hesitation – Louis II became emperor virtually by fatherly will – ties in with the appointment of co-emperors by his father and grandfather, and shows that this process was subject to a constant dynamic development.<sup>12</sup> This act not only reanimated the pope as the legitimising authority, but also meant that the emperorship was once again proclaimed in Rome, for the first time since Charlemagne's imperial coronation.

Analogous to the co-emperorships of 812 and 817, there were again two emperors in the Frankish realm.<sup>13</sup> However, there are basically no reports or clues as to Louis II's activities outside of Italy.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to his prede-

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11 Cf. Groth 2012.

12 See also Giese, Wolfgang: "Die designativen Nachfolgeregelungen der Karolinger 714–979". *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 64, 2008, pp. 472–479: "hinter diesem Akt [stand] zum geringsten karolingisches, macht- und dynastieorientiertes Interesse, sondern in erster Linie päpstliche Schutzbedürftigkeit".

13 For a general treatment of the phenomenon of co-emperorship ('Mitkaisertum'), see Ohnsorge, Werner: "Das Mitkaisertum in der abendländischen Geschichte des früheren Mittelalter". *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Germanistische Abteilung* 67, 1950, pp. 309–335; cf. for the aspect of the coexistence of Western and Byzantine empires ('Zweikaiserproblem') Id.: *Das Zweikaiserproblem im frühen Mittelalter. Die Bedeutung des byzantinischen Reiches für die Entwicklung der Staatsidee in Europa*. Lax: Hildesheim 1947; Anton, Hans Hubert: "Art. Zweikaiserproblem". In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 9 (1998), col. 720–723; Hehl, Ernst-Dieter: "Zwei christliche Kaiser im mittelalterlichen Europa. Eine problematische Geschichte". In: Leppin, Hartmut / Schneidmüller, Bernd / Weinfurter, Stefan (eds.): *Kaisertum im ersten Jahrtausend. Wissenschaftlicher Begleitband zur Landesausstellung "Otto der Große und das Römische Reich. Kaisertum von der Antike zum Mittelalter"*. Schnell & Steiner: Regensburg 2012, pp. 271–295; cf. for the Latin empire of Constantinople: Burkhardt, Stefan: *Mediterranes Kaisertum und imperiale Ordnungen. Das lateinische Kaiserreich von Konstantinopel*. (Europa im Mittelalter 25). Akademie Verlag / De Gruyter: Berlin / Boston 2014.

14 Concerning his dominion in Italy, see Cariello, Nicola: *Stato e chiesa nel regno d'Italia al tempo di Ludovico II (844–875)*. (Collezione storica 9). Scienze e Lettere: Rome 2011; Bougard, François: "La cour et le gouvernement de Louis II, 840–875". In: Le Jan, Régine (ed.): *La royauté et les élites dans l'Europe carol-*

cessors, he actively tried to expand the Frankish sphere of influence into the South of Italy. In the course of his expansion efforts, he was taken prisoner by his vassal, Adelchis of Benevento, in August 871 and was released as a result of negotiations conducted by the bishop, Aio of Benevento, in September of the same year.<sup>15</sup> The following papal ceremony in May 872, during which Louis II was crowned emperor for a second time, can probably be seen in light of this loss of prestige; it meant a renewed recognition of the papal legitimising authority and was supposed to confirm Louis' imperial suitability, thus constituting an acclamatory act.<sup>16</sup> Ambitions tied to the expansion of Frankish rule into the South of Italy ended with his death on 12 August 875. Local powers, again, submitted themselves to Byzantine supremacy and Saracen influence increased.<sup>17</sup>

75 years after the coronation of Charlemagne, the emperorship was again vacant, and fell completely into the hands of the papacy. Louis II died without having sired a male heir, which enabled the papacy to once again expand its influence. Not only did it have the constituting power to proclaim the emperor, but it also gained the authority to select and decide over the emperorship. That things were already moving in this general direction became apparent shortly before Louis' death. Since the previous practice of passing on the emperorship from father to son was not possible in the case of Louis II, another authority had to be found that would comprehensively legitimise the rise of a Carolingian above his relatives. The papacy had already assumed this function prior to Louis II's death, a seemingly mutually satisfying solution. Given that one of the emperor's most fundamental duties was the protection of the Roman church, choosing an emperor was a significant decision for

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*ingienne (début IX<sup>e</sup> siècle aux environs de 920).* (Collection Histoire et littérature régionales 17). Villeneuve d'Ascq 1998, pp. 249–267; Hees 1973.

15 Cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 328, 330; RI,I,1, nos. 1251a, 1251b.

16 Cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 348, 349; RI,I,1, nos. 1253c, 1253d. Carlrichard Brühl thinks of this act in terms of a “corroborating coronation” (“Befestigungskrönung”) (Brühl, Carlrichard: “Fränkischer Krönungsbrauch und das Problem der “Festkrönungen””. *Historische Zeitschrift* 194, 1962, pp. 279–280 and p. 324 no. 22. See also Hees 1973, pp. 75–77.)

17 Cf. Hees 1973, pp. 95–101; Enzensberger, Horst: “Unteritalien seit 774”. In: Schieder, Theodor: *Handbuch der europäischen Geschichte, vol. 1: Europa im Wandel von der Antike zum Mittelalter*. Klett-Cotta: Stuttgart 1976, pp. 793–794; Hartmann, 3,1, pp. 297–301.

the pope. This meant that the agreements negotiated between the pope and the imperial candidate became a decisive criterion. Among all of the prospective Carolingian candidates for the emperorship, the pope was an authority generally accepted who could refer to a basic tradition and remained the legitimising authority in case of the discontinuation of the fatherly mandate.

Against this background, the Empress Angilberga<sup>18</sup> and Louis the German went to Trento in May 872 and met with two papal legates, while Charles the Bald, who had also been asked to join, refused to follow the invitation.<sup>19</sup> Two years later, a meeting took place near Verona between Emperor Louis II, King Louis the German of East Francia and Pope John VIII.<sup>20</sup> It can be reasonably assumed that both consultations focussed on the question of the succession in the Italic kingdom.<sup>21</sup> This view is supported by the fact that Carloman, Louis the German's son, referred to a designation of Louis II in his first charter for

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18 Cf. the short survey by Fösel, Amalie: "Politische Einflussnahme und Handlungsstrategien frühmittelalterlicher Königinnen. Das Beispiel der karolingischen Kaiserin Angilberga". In: Kunst, Christiane (ed.): *Matronage. Handlungsstrategien und soziale Netzwerke antiker Herrscherfrauen. Beiträge eines Kolloquiums an der Universität Osnabrück vom 22. bis 24. März 2012*. (Osnabrücker Forschungen zu Altertum und Antike-Rezeption 20). Leidorf: Rahden 2013, pp. 157–164.

19 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 351; RI,I,1, nos. 1254a, 1490 f. Subsequently, Angilberga submitted herself to the protection of John VIII (the exact date is unclear [July 874 till April 880]); cf. RI,I,4,3, no. 121; for more along these lines see: nos. 235, 236, 271, 320, 496, 586, 662, 670, 671.

20 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 391; RI,I,1, nos. 1263b, 1504b; RI,I,4,3, no. 115. John VIII had been consecrated as pope on 14 December 872 in the succession of Adrian II; cf. RI,I,4,3, no. 1.

21 Cf. Hartmann, 3,1, pp. 297–298; Hees 1973, pp. 11–15; Hartmann, Wilfried: *Ludwig der Deutsche*. WBG: Darmstadt 2002, p. 120; Bigott Boris: *Ludwig der Deutsche und die Reichskirche im Ostfränkischen Reich (826–876)*. (Historische Studien 470). Matthiesen: Husum 2002, pp. 155–156; Arnold 2005, p. 61; Goldberg, Eric Joseph: *Struggle for Empire. Kingship and Conflict under Louis the German, 817–876*. (Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval Past). Ithaca, NY et. al. 2006, pp. 324–326; MacLean, Simon: "'After his Death a Great Tribulation Came to Italy...'. Dynastic Politics and Aristocratic Factions after the Death of Louis II, c. 870–c. 890". *Millennium* 4, 2007, pp. 243–250; Scholz, Sebastian: *Politik – Selbstverständnis – Selbstdarstellung. Die Päpste in karolingischer und ottonischer Zeit*. (Historische Forschungen 26). Steiner: Stuttgart 2006, pp. 224–226.

Italy.<sup>22</sup> For his part, and regardless of Louis II's intentions of succession,<sup>23</sup> Charles the Bald had already contacted the pope quite early on, and Adrian II made it clear to him that he, i.e. Charles, could become emperor after Louis' death.<sup>24</sup> The papal motivation for such a constellation probably included that Carloman, as an intended Italic king, would exist beside the Emperor, Charles the Bald, as a second centre of power,<sup>25</sup> and that the papacy could play both sides against one another if there were any problems. Of course, all of the parties involved were looking to gain their own advantage in this situation and accepted different arrangements to this end.

On this occasion, the behaviour of the papacy is especially noteworthy: while Adrian II had sharply criticised the annexation of Lothair II's *regnum* by Charles the Bald in 869 and had written several letters regarding this situation,<sup>26</sup> he nevertheless offered the emperorship to him in another letter three years later.<sup>27</sup>

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22 Cf. Ludowici Germanici, Karlomanni, Ludowici Iunioris Diplomata, ed. Kehr, Paul. (MGH Diplomata regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum 1). Berlin 1934, Rpt. 1980, no. 4, pp. 289–290, here p. 290, l. 25: *Ludouuici [...], qui nobis regnum istud disposuerat*. See also Schneider, Reinhard: *Brüdergemeine und Schwurfreundschaft. Der Auflösungsprozeß des Karlingereiches im Spiegel der caritas-Terminologie in den Verträgen der karlingischen Teilkönige des 9. Jahrhunderts*. (Historische Studien 388). Matthiesen: Lübeck et. al. 1964, p. 14.

23 Referred to the Libellus de Imperatoria Potestate in Urbe Roma, ed. Zucchetti, Giuseppe. (Fonti per la storia d'Italia 55). Rome 1920, pp. 205–206, shortly before his death, Louis II had declared that “Carolum magnum” should succeed him in the empire. Moreover, Empress Angilberga has sent a delegation to him after the death of her husband (pp. 207–208). Giuseppe Zucchetti (p. 206 note 1) and Herbert Zielinski (cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 474) suppose that the author of the “Libellus” meant Carloman.

24 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 359.

25 Both the presence of John VIII at the meeting near Verona (see note 20), where the succession of Carloman had been discussed, and Charles the Bald's subsequent resignation of the Italic kingdom (see note 55), can be offered as evidence supporting this thesis.

26 Scholz 2006, pp. 214–218 has paraphrased the relevant letters. Even pope Nicholas I warned Charles the Bald in a letter to keep peace with Louis II (cf. RI,I,4,2, no. 737) and, subsequently, appealed to the episcopate in his kingdom (cf. no. 740).

27 Cf. Hadriani II. papae epistolae, ep. 36, pp. 743–746.

John III, too, had been prompted by Louis II to write a letter shortly after his ordination in 872, in which he criticised Charles.<sup>28</sup> For as long as emperor Louis II was alive and ruling the Italian kingdom as Emperor, the papacy had been willing to support him, i.e. Louis II, in case of Lothair's death,<sup>29</sup> because at this point Louis was the only one to guarantee the papal safety in Italy. With regard to the unsettled question of succession, the pope pursued his own aims, which becomes quite evident in Adrian II's letter.<sup>30</sup> Regardless of the historical context in which the origin of this letter must be seen,<sup>31</sup> the contours of the papal conception of the emperorship had already taken form and became clearly visible under John VIII: the duty of the emperor, who is appointed by the pope, is the protection of the church.<sup>32</sup>

28 Cf. *Fragmenta registri Iohannis VIII. papae*, ed. Caspar, Erich. (MGH *Epistolae* 7). Berlin 1928, Rpt. 1993, no. 6, pp. 276–277; RI,I,4,3, no. 49.

29 Cf. Hadriani II. *papae epistolae*, epp. 18 and 19, pp. 720–723. Even John VIII had pressured Charles the Bald (cf. note 27) and Louis the German's sons to accept Louis II's claims concerning the realm of his deceased brother Lothair II (cf. RI,I,4,3, no. 106).

30 Cf. note 27.

31 Adrian II's letter preceded that of Charles (cf. Migne PL 124, 881–896), where, on the one hand, he assured his worship of St. Peter, but, on the other, pointed out that he felt deeply offended by Adrian's previous letters. He reminded Adrian of the story of Pope Vigilius, who had been seized by Emperor Justinian I and brought to Constantinople, where he had to renounce his previous position against Monophysitism before a public congregation in 553. In addition, Charles was on his way to Italy, because he thought that Louis II had died. However, in Besançon, he was told that this was only a rumour (cf. *Annales Bertiniani*, a. 871, pp. 182–183).

32 Cf. Hadriani II. *papae epistolae*, ep. 36, p. 745, l. 22–24: *Igitur ergo integra fide et sincera mente devotaque voluntate – ut sermo sit secretior et litterae clandestinae nullique nisi Melissimis publicandae – vobis confitemur devovendo et notescimus affirmando, salva fidelitate imperatoris nostri, quia, si superstes ei fuerit vestra nobilitas, vita nobis comite, si dederit nobis quislibet multorum modiorum auri cumulum, numquam adquiescemus, exposcemus aut sponte suscipiemus alium in regnum et imperium Romanum nisi te ipsum. Quem, quia praedicaris sapientia et iustitia, religione et virtute, nobilitate et forma, videlicet prudentia, temperantia, fortitudine atque pietate refertus, si contigerit te imperatorem nostrum vivendo supergredi, te optamus omnis clerus et plebs et nobilitas totius orbis et Urbis non solum ducem et regem, patricium et imperatorem, sed in praesenti ecclesiae defensorem et in aeterna cum omnibus sanctis participem fore.* Even Nicholas I had addressed the issue of defending the Church;

King Charles the Bald of West Francia was considered<sup>33</sup> a protective authority by the Roman church (in view of the Saracen danger).<sup>34</sup> After the death of Louis II, John VIII articulated the papal self-conception in a short message to Charles the Bald in which he emphasized the aspect of Charles' selection (*eligere*).<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, however, the pope assumed the crucial role of deciding the question of the succession given that the emperor died.<sup>36</sup> Other letters also discuss this aspect,<sup>37</sup> and shortly after the imperial coronation of Charles, John VIII hinted at the fact that Louis the German would also have been a definite candidate for the emperorship.<sup>38</sup>

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cf. Nicolai I. papae epistolae, ed. Perels, Ernst. (MGH Epistolae 6). Berlin 1925, Rpt. 1995, ep. 35, pp. 303–305, here p. 305, l. 5–6. Eduard Eichmann concluded from this part of the letter (*machaerae usum, quem [Louis II] a Petri principis apostolorum vicario contra infideles accepi*) that Louis II was handed a sword at his elevation in 850 (cf. Eichmann, Eduard: *Die Kaiserkrönung im Abendland. Ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des kirchlichen Rechts, der Liturgie und der Kirchenpolitik, Erster Band: Gesamtbild*. Echter Verlag: Würzburg 1942, p. 49).

- 33 Already in a secret letter written by Adrian to Charles the Bald, the protective function is mentioned and Adrian furthermore writes that he had heard Charles had always been an advocate for the affairs of the Church (cf. Hadriani II. papae epistolae, ep. 36, p. 743); in addition, see *Fragmenta registri Iohannis VIII. papae*, no. 59, p. 311, l. 13–16: *Cuius et nos non solum nostris diebus, set etiam beati papę Nicolai tempore reminiscentes excellentiam tuam ad honorem et exaltationem sanctę R[omane] eccliesię et ad securitatem populi Christiani eligendam esse speravimus*. See also RI,I,4,3, no. 138.
- 34 Cf. Nicolai I. papae epistolae, epp. 33 and 34, pp. 301–305; Hadriani II. papae epistolae, ep. 19, pp. 721–723; see also Scholz 2006, pp. 202–203 and pp. 214–216.
- 35 Cf. *Fragmenta registri Iohannis VIII. papae*, no. 59, p. 311, l. 16.
- 36 Cf. *Fragmenta registri Iohannis VIII. papae*, no. 59, p. 311, l. 10–13: *Igitur quia, sicut Domino placuit, Hludouuicus gloriosus imperator defunctus est, cum nos, quis in loco eius propitia divinitate succedere debuisset, cum fratribus nostris et inclito a R[omano] senatu concorditer tractaremus, devotione et fide tua ad medium deducta, hanc multi dignis preconiiis efferre ceperunt*.
- 37 See for a compiling of the sources Schramm, Percy Ernst: *Der König von Frankreich. Das Wesen der Monarchie vom 9. Bis zum 16. Jahrhundert. Ein Kapitel aus der Geschichte des abendländischen Staates, Band II: Anhänge, Anmerkungen, Register*. WBG: Darmstadt <sup>2</sup>1960, p. 47 note 1.
- 38 Cf. *Registrum Iohannis VIII. papae*, ed. Caspar, Erich. (MGH Epistolae 7). Berlin 1912, Rpt. 1993, ep. 22, pp. 19–21, here p. 20, l. 33: [S]preto magno

With regard to the conflict with Byzantium, Louis II's view was basically in line<sup>39</sup> with this papal self-conception.<sup>40</sup>

When Louis II died on 12 August 875, both the emperorship as well as the Italic kingship remained vacant despite efforts towards a regulation of succession. Using this constellation, Charles the Bald immediately went to Italy upon receiving the news of his nephew's death.<sup>41</sup> En route, a delegation

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*et bono fratre, vos more Dei gratuita voluntate tanquam alterum regem David elegit et prelegit atque ad imperialia sceptrata provexit.*

39 From a Byzantine point of view, Louis II's attempts to extend his rule to southern Italy were seen as an affront to their own southern Italic ambitions. For this reason, Basil I began a correspondence with Louis II in which the fundamental questions concerning a mutual understanding of empire were discussed. The letter from Basil I is not recorded; its contents have been derived from Louis II's response. A reconstruction, for example, is given by Dölger, Franz: "Europas Gestaltung im Spiegel der fränkisch-byzantinischen Auseinandersetzung des 9. Jahrhunderts". In Mayer, Theodor (ed.): *Der Vertrag von Verdun 843. 9 Aufsätze zur Begründung der europäischen Völker- und Staatenwelt.* (Das Reich und Europa). Koehler und Amelung: Leipzig 1943, pp. 230–231. See also: RI,I,3,1, nos. 324–326; RI,I,1, no. 1247; Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches von 565–1453, part 1, vol. 2: Regesten 867–1025, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition ed. by Andreas E. Müller in collaboration with Alexander Beihammer. Munich 2003, no. 487. In addition to the extensive literature referred to in the Regest, see Sickel, Wilhelm: "Die Kaiserkrönungen von Karl bis Berengar". *Historische Zeitschrift* 82, 1899, pp. 21–23; Hees 1973, pp. 65–74; Pfeil und Klein-Ellguth, Sigurd Graf von: *Die Titel der fränkischen Könige und Kaiser bis 911.* Universität Göttingen: ms. Diss. phil. Göttingen 1958, pp. 185–195; Hehl 2012, pp. 277–281. In the letter Louis protested against the Byzantine point of view concerning the permission for his imperial title, and argued that he owed his imperial dignity, which went beyond a Frankish imperial title, to the papal anointing and the paternal inheritance; cf. *Chronicon Salernitanum*, ed. Westerbergh, Ulla. (Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 3). Stockholm 1965, c. 107, p. 112, l. 21–24: *Nam Francorum principes primo reges, deinde vero imperatores dicti sunt, hii dumtaxat qui a Romano pontifice ad hoc oleo sancto perfusi sunt* and c. 107, p. 110, l. 33 to p. 111, l. 4: *[Q]uantum ad lineam generis pertinet, non sit novum vel recens, quod iam ab abavo nostro non usurpatum est, ut perhibes, sed Dei nutu et ecclesie iudicio summi per presulis impositionem et uncionem manus optinuit, sicut in codicibus tuis invenire facile poteris.*

40 Cf. Scholz 2006, p. 202 and pp. 214–218.

41 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 475.

of Italic magnates reached him. Having already consulted with Empress Angilberga in September and disagreeing about how to proceed further, delegations were sent to both of Charlemagne's living grandsons.<sup>42</sup> By this time at the very latest, the pope had finally decided the matter of imperial succession and also sent a delegation to Charles the Bald, inviting him to the imperial coronation ceremonies in Rome.<sup>43</sup> At this point, Charles had already assumed the governing duties and issued charters accordingly. On this occasion, and to further substantiate his claim, he twice referred to Louis II's succession.<sup>44</sup>

On 25 December 875, Charles the Bald was proclaimed emperor in Rome by John VIII.<sup>45</sup> Subsequently, emperor and pope negotiated the renewal of the *Pactum* in detail, which primarily focused on the ruling rights with regard to the Patrimonium Petri and, once more, on the question of the imperial protection of the papacy.<sup>46</sup> For the first time, the papal position regarding the appointment of the imperial candidate for the purpose of imperial protection had been decisive; a point emphasised by John VIII, who declared that he was carrying out the divine will.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, the

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42 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 474; RI,I,1, no. 1512a.

43 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 477; RI,I,4,3, no. 139; Arnold 2005, pp. 80–81.

44 Cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 478, 479.

45 Cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 485, 486; RI,I,4,3, nos. 144, 145; Arnold 2005, pp. 69–76 and pp. 80–87; Boshof, Egon: “Karl der Kahle: Novus Karolus magnus?”. In: Erkens, Franz-Reiner (ed.): *Karl der Große und das Erbe der Kulturen (Akten des 8. Symposiums des Mediävistenverbandes Leipzig 15.-18. März 1999)*. Akademie-Verlag: Berlin 2001, pp. 135–152, here p. 138 and p. 152; Arnaldi, Girolamo: *Natale 875. Politica, ecclesiologia, cultura del papato altomedievale*. (Nuovi studi storico 9). Istituto Storico Italiano per il medio evo: Rome 1990.

46 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 492; RI,I,4,3, no. 148; Stengel, Edmund Ernst: “Die Entwicklung des Kaiserprivilegs für die Römische Kirche 817–962. Ein Beitrag zur ältesten Geschichte des Kirchenstaats”. *Historische Zeitschrift* 134, 1926, pp. 235–238; Drabek, Anna Maria: *Die Verträge der fränkischen und deutschen Herrscher mit dem Papsttum von 754 bis 1020*. Böhlau: Vienna / Cologne / Graz 1976, pp. 50–52 and pp. 83–85; Maleczek, Werner: “Otto I. und Johannes XII. Überlegungen zur Kaiserkrönung von 962”. In: Petersohn, Jürgen (ed.): *Mediaevalia Augiensia. Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*. Thorbecke: Stuttgart 2001, pp. 176–177; Arnold 2005, pp. 84–85.

47 Cf. Arnold 2005, p. 82 note 59.

new emperor tried to enforce his newly acquired claim by virtue of papal authority throughout the Frankish Empire.<sup>48</sup>

Even if Louis II had envisioned Carloman as his successor in Italy<sup>49</sup> (probably in agreement with John VIII), Charles the Bald was able to assert himself in Italy through his quick intervention upon Louis II's death. Because Louis the Younger, the youngest son of Louis the German, having been sent to Italy in September, was unable to enforce his authority over his uncle's,<sup>50</sup> shortly thereafter, Carloman intervened in the Italic relations.<sup>51</sup> However, having already circumvented the defensive positions of his opponent and having crossed the Alps, Carloman almost immediately agreed to a truce with Charles at the river Brenta and withdrew to Bavaria.<sup>52</sup> One of the reasons for his actions was probably that Charles the Bald enjoyed

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48 At the pan-Frankish synod held in June 876, which the East Frankish bishops (despite papal charge) did not attend, John VIII confirmed the imperial dignity of Charles the Bald in a letter read aloud by two papal legates. He also urged the West Frankish bishops, who stood by the East Frankish king during Louis the German's invasion, to recognize the empire of Charles (see also Scholz 2006, pp. 227–228). Toward the end of the year 875, John VIII had already admonished Louis the German, his sons, the archbishops, bishops, abbots, and other great men of the East Frankish Empire to refrain from an invasion of Charles the Bald's kingdom and subsequently reprimanded the archbishops and counts in February 876 for their behaviour; cf. RI,I,4,3, nos. 141, 164, 165. In two other letters, he blamed, on the one hand, the bishops of the West Frankish realm, who supported the invasion, and, on the other, praised bishops and counts who remained faithful to Charles the Bald. In both cases he refrained from using names; cf. RI,I,4,3, nos. 166, 167. See also RI,I,4,3, no. 169 (admonition of Louis the German by two legates) and no. 187 (John VIII's reply to Louis the German, in which he exhorts Louis to preserve peace).

49 In addition to the message of the "Libellus de Imperatoria potestate" (cf. note 23), the meetings between Angilberga and Louis the German in Trento (872) and between Louis II, Louis the German and John VIII in Verona (874) are of particular interest because it would seem unreasonable to assume that Louis II's succession was not a topic during these gatherings. Since John VIII was present at the second meeting, we can also assume that he was informed about the Louis II's plans. Perhaps Louis II and Louis the German aspired to win over the papacy as a further assurance (as legitimising authority) for their plans.

50 Cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 476, 480.

51 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 481.

52 Cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 482, 528.

greater support from the political community in Italy, thus Carloman accepted a postponement of the decision.<sup>53</sup> Charles, however, exploited the situation and took the East Frankish side by surprise on his way to Rome and the imperial coronation.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, he wanted an unspecified high position in Italy. On his homeward journey, in Pavia, the centre of the former Lombard realm, he was elected *protector, dominus* and *defensor* of the Italic kingdom (*eligimus*),<sup>55</sup> while his brother-in-law, Boso of Vienne,<sup>56</sup> was elevated<sup>57</sup> to *dux*<sup>58</sup> of Italy. In February 876, after the election meeting in Pavia, Charles the Bald – now emperor – issued a capitular for Italy with the approval of the Italic magnates, in which the protection of the papacy was emphasised once again.<sup>59</sup> In December 875, he transferred this duty to the brothers Lambert I and Guy III of Spoleto,<sup>60</sup> two powerful Italian magnates residing in the proximity of Rome so that they could rapidly intervene there; but the behaviour of the two brothers was unsatisfactory, and the pope complained to Charles about them just a year later.<sup>61</sup> While Charles claimed an unspecific supremacy for himself (including an oath

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53 See Hlawitschka, Eduard: *Franken, Alemannen, Bayern und Burgunder in Oberitalien (774–962). Zum Verständnis der Fränkischen Königsherrschaft in Italien*. (Forschungen zur oberrheinischen Landesgeschichte 8). E. Albert: Freiburg im Breisgau 1960, pp. 68–69.

54 Cf. *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. Friedrich Kurze. (MGH SS rer. Germ. 7). Hannover 1891 (Rpt. 1993), a. 875, pp. 84–85.

55 Cf. MGH *Capitularia regum Francorum* 2, ed. Boretius, Alfred / Krause, Viktor. (MGH Capit. 2). Hannover 1897, Rpt. 2001, no. 220, p. 99, l. 20–21; *Konzilien der karolingischen Teilreiche 875–911*, ed. Hartmann, Wilfried / Schröder, Isolde / Schmitz, Gerhard. (MGH Conc. 5). Hannover 2012, no. 3, p. 19, l. 10.

56 See also Airlie, Stuart: “The nearly Men. Boso of Vienne and Arnulf of Bavaria”. In: Duggan, Anne J. (ed.): *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe. Concepts, Origins, Transformations*. Boydell & Brewer: Woodbridge 2000, pp. 25–41.

57 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 496.

58 Cf. *Annales Bertiniani*, a. 876, p. 200: [D]uce ipsius terrae constituto.

59 Cf. MGH Capit. 2, no. 221, pp. 100–104; RI,I,3,1, no. 497. The advice and consent of the elites is, thereby, prominently emphasised: *Capitula, quae dominus imperator Karolus [...] una cum consensu et suggestione venerabilium episcoporum et illustrium optimatum [...] fecit* (p. 101, l. 6–11).

60 Cf. RI,I,3,2, nos. 802, 804.

61 Cf. RI,I,3,2, no. 806.

of fidelity by the Italic elites), he neither demanded the Italic kingship for himself (according to the papacy), nor did he stay in Italy for very long.<sup>62</sup>

This separation between emperorship and reign over the Italic kingship can be seen as a reaction to the papal experiences under Louis II's rule.<sup>63</sup> However, in the long run, this situation could not satisfy the needs of the pope. Contrary to his predecessors, John VIII operated more independently from the current emperor. Because the latter, in the eyes of the pope, did not live up to his protective obligations (whether due to a lack of will or inability), the pope repeatedly contacted the emperor (as well as his spouse Richilde) and Bosso of Vienne, requesting protection against the Saracens.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, it was not until August 877 that Charles, once more, went to Italy.<sup>65</sup> Ostentatiously, and prior to his trip to Rome, he had John VIII summon a synod in the antique imperial city of Ravenna, where his position as emperor was re-affirmed. However, John VIII also used this synod as an occasion to press his own claim and explicitly referred to his legitimising as well as executing authority at Charles' imperial coronation.<sup>66</sup> From this

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62 Only on his two campaigns from September 875 (RI,I,3,1, no. 475) to March 876 (no. 501) and from August 877 (no. 517) to September 877 (no. 525) was he present in Italy. See also Groth 2013, pp. 166–175.

63 During this time, the papacy was subjected to a greater control by the emperor (due to the geographic proximity) and was affected by various acts of violence at the hands of Frankish warriors. Already in the context of Louis II's first visit to Rome in 844, the "Liber Pontificalis" reports excesses by the Franks (cf. Liber Pontificalis [Vita Sergii II.], c. 8–11, pp. 87–88). In various sources concerning the papal election, Nicholas I's (858) imperial influence in the election is discussed, while the "Liber Pontificalis" remained silence (cf. RI,I,4,2, no. 421). In 864, Nicholas I, in conjunction with a rumour about Louis II intending to capture him, fled from the Lateran Palace (cf. RI,I,4,2, nos. 688–691). Concerning the relationship between Louis II and the papacy, see Hees 1973, pp. 78–94; Hartmann, 3,1, pp. 196–199, pp. 221–225, pp. 235–241, pp. 244–246, pp. 251–265 and pp. 269–276.

64 Cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 504, 505, 509, 511, 515; RI,I,4,3, nos. 163, 188, 192, 209, 212, 214, 227, 228, 229, 261.

65 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 517.

66 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 516; RI,I,4,3, no. 271; Hartmann, Wilfried: *Die Synoden der Karolingerzeit im Frankenreich und in Italien*. (Konziliengeschichte Reihe A: Darstellungen). Schöningh: Paderborn et al. 1989, pp. 347–350; Eckhardt, Wilhelm Alfred: "Das Protokoll von Ravenna 877 über die Kaiserkrönung Karls des Kahlen". *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 23, 1967,

point forward, the papacy was the only legitimising authority regarding the western emperorship.<sup>67</sup> This authoritative role was reinforced in the proclamation of Charles' spouse, Richildis, as empress in Tortona<sup>68</sup> – an act that Charles the Bald could have understood in terms of a dynastic emperorship and thus as an act directed against the competition of the East Frankish ruling elite. An imperial coronation of the spouse was neither

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pp. 295–311; Arnold 2005, pp. 90–100: “Indem Johannes VIII. die göttliche Bestimmung bekannt gibt und als Mittler in der Kaiserkrönung vollzieht, wird die bisherige konsolidierende und konstituierende Bedeutung nun auf den Papst bezogen und in ihm überhaupt erst motiviert” (p. 95); Scholz 2006, pp. 228–229. The reason for this synod might have been Charles the Bald's defeat at the hands of Louis the Younger at Andernach on 8 October 876. After this loss of prestige, Charles would have tried to improve his imperial position through papal mediation (a strategy that Louis II had already pursued after his brief captivity in southern Italy). The pope's claim becomes quite clear in a sermon before the present bishops; cf. RI,I,4,3, no. 273; Konzilien (MGH Conc. 5), no. 8, pp. 64–66: *Neque enim sibi honorem presumptuose adsumpsit ut imperator fieret, sed tamquam desideratus, optatus, postulatus a nobis et a deo vocatus et honorificatus ad defendendam religionem et Christi ubique servos tuendos humiliter atque oboedienter accessit operaturus et roboraturus in imperio summam pacem et tranquillitatem, et in ecclesia dei iustitiam et exaltationem* (p. 65, l. 34–39). The papal ‘Kaisererhebung’ had been completed *secundum priscam consuetudinem* (p. 65, l. 25). The enhancement of the papal ceremony is articulated in almost all documents referring to the imperial context. See also Eichmann 1942, p. 53: “Es ist von Interesse, wie die Rollen hier verteilt sind: neben der göttlichen Vorwahl ist es der von der römischen Kirche und dem römischen Volk einhellig gebilligte Entschluß des Papstes, der zum Imperium beruft”. The aims John VIII pursued also become clear in two letters (February and May 877) addressed to Charles the Bald, in which he begins his calls for protection indicating that ‘he had chosen him over another’ (*quasi non vos specialiter ex omnibus et pre omnibus amaverit [...] vel quasi nos non vos [...] in imperium coronaverimus*; Registrum Iohannis VIII. papae, ep. 32, p. 31, l. 27 f.) respectively over the rest (*vestram per ceteris elegit*; ep. 56, p. 51, l. 1–2) and made him emperor (with regard to the two letters see also RI,I,4,3, nos. 229, 261).

67 See also a letter by John VIII to the episcopate in the realm of Louis the German: [P]er apostolicae sedis privilegium cunctorum favoribus approbatum sceptris imperialibus sublimavit (Iohannis VIII. papae epistolae passim collectae, ep. 7, p. 321, l. 34–35).

68 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 523; RI,I,4,3, no. 283. Previously, John VIII had prepared an honourable arrival for Charles the Bald (RI,I,4,3, no. 279) and moved with him across Pavia (no. 280) to Tortona (no. 282).

completely new in the history of the Carolingian empire, nor was it subject to any special regulations.<sup>69</sup>

If Charles' position against the East Frankish kings had been more apparent during his first campaign in Italy, it most certainly would have prevented the protracted conflict he had with the sons of Louis the German. However, the situation was different now. Threatened by Carloman, who advanced into Italy with his military forces, Charles – together with John VIII – withdrew to Tortona.<sup>70</sup> Since the military assistance Charles requested from the West Frankish and Burgundian elites went unfulfilled for political reasons, Charles decided to return across the Alps. Charles died on the way back on 6 September 877.<sup>71</sup> Despite being a papal favourite, Charles' son, Louis the Stammerer, limited his rule to the West Frankish Empire because he lacked the power base and therefore neither sought the Italic kingship, nor pursued the emperorship.<sup>72</sup>

In Italy, Carloman was able to assert his authority after an obeisance of the Italic magnates in Pavia;<sup>73</sup> however, on account of his illness, he could not maintain this position for long.<sup>74</sup> Despite having already informed the pope of his plans to come to Rome and having received the pope's request to commence with negotiations about renewing the papal-imperial pact, Carloman's poor health prevented him from pursuing the imperial coronation.<sup>75</sup>

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69 See Zey, Claudia: “‘Imperatrix, si venerit Romam...’. Zu den Krönungen von Kaiserinnen im Mittelalter”. *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 60, 2004, pp. 3–51.

70 Cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 519, 522, 523, 530.

71 Cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 524, 525; Hack, Achim Thomas: *Alter, Krankheit, Tod und Herrschaft im frühen Mittelalter. Das Beispiel der Karolinger*. (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 56). Hiersemann: Stuttgart 2009, pp. 198–206.

72 Cf. Fried, Johannes: “Boso von Vienne oder Ludwig der Stammler? Der Kaiserkandidat Johanns VIII.”. *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 32, 1976, pp. 193–208; Brühl, Carlrichard: “Karolingische Miszellen”. *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 44, 1988, pp. 33–35; Id.: *Deutschland – Frankreich. Die Geburt zweier Völker*. Böhlau: Cologne / Vienna 1990, p. 370 and p. 512–513; Arnold 2005, pp. 103–104; Scholz 2006, p. 230 note 1068; RI,I,4,3, no. 491.

73 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 531.

74 Cf. Hack 2009, pp. 212–214.

75 Cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 531, 537, 543, 544, 545, 550, 551, 553, 567, 569, 575; RI,I,4,3, nos. 285, 289, 878. Carloman had promised protection to the Roman church; cf. RI,I,4,3, no. 305, 345.

Due to Carloman's illness, John VIII wrote to the Melanese bishop, Anspert, in the spring of 879, stating that no king could be consecrated without his approval. Anspert was forbidden to undertake any unauthorized actions because it was the papacy alone that could appoint a candidate and bestow the emperorship.<sup>76</sup> In addition to coronating the emperor, the papacy further claimed its selective authority with regard to the Italic king. With this in mind, the pope planned a meeting in Rome.<sup>77</sup> This request, which implicitly signalled that the Italic king was to become emperor,<sup>78</sup> may also be interpreted as a reaction to Charles the Bald's two-year-reign. Along these lines, the papacy may have wanted an Italic king to become emperor; the close proximity of the emperor to Rome would offer obvious and immediate advantages concerning matters of protection. Thus, with his request, John VIII re-established the situation which had been prevalent under Louis II, when the emperor was also the Italic king.

Nevertheless, the emperorship remained vacant from October 877 to February 881. During this time, Charles the Fat, the last son of Louis the German, benefited from the death of his brother, Carloman, and became heir of the Italic kingship.<sup>79</sup> Having been invited by John VIII,<sup>80</sup> he was able to move to Italy and assume the dominion over it in January 880, in the presence of the

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76 Cf. Registrum Iohannis VIII. papae, ep. 163, p. 133, l. 32–34: *Et ideo antea nullum absque nostro consensu regem debetis recipere, nam ipse, qui a nobis est ordinandus in imperium, a nobis primum atque potissimum debet esse vocatus atque electus*. See also RI,I,4,3, no. 495. The idea that Carloman was unable to exercise the dominion within the Italic realm can also be found in the “Annals of Fulda”, which report that John VIII had attempted to transfer this realm to Boson (cf. *Annales Fuldenses*, a. 878, pp. 91–92).

77 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 558; RI,I,1, no. 1538a.

78 See also Arnold 2005, p. 191–192.

79 Initially, Carloman had – at least by papal tradition – prompted John VIII to take over the responsibility for the Italic kingdom (cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 575; RI,I,4,3, no. 557), but then designated his brother Charles shortly before his death (no. 586). Aside from this, Louis the Younger was intended for the succession in Bavaria (no. 557); see also Hack 2009, pp. 260–266.

80 During Carloman's lifetime (spring of 879), John VIII got in touch with Charles the Fat and awaited his arrival (cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 559, 562, see also no. 569; RI,I,4,3, nos. 501, 524). Likewise, he was in contact with Carloman and Louis the Younger (no. 517).

pope in Ravenna.<sup>81</sup> Afterwards, Charles returned across the Alps to meet his brother, Louis the Younger.<sup>82</sup> In a letter addressed to Charles, John VIII communicated his surprise regarding Charles' idleness and reiterated the church's need for protection. In return, the pope promised to grant Charles "honour and fame" (*honor et gloria*). This is commonly understood by scholars to be a promise of the emperorship.<sup>83</sup>

Only on his second journey to Italy in February 881 was Charles the Fat (possibly together with his wife, Richgard) proclaimed emperor by John VIII in Rome.<sup>84</sup> Because the protection and recognition of the papal rights were of utmost importance to the pope on this occasion, the pope initially prohibited Charles from entering Rome until the matters were settled.<sup>85</sup> This measure can be interpreted as a sign of papal strength towards the Frankish king. The letters previously sent to Charles also focussed on these issues.<sup>86</sup> A few years later, pope Stephen V made it once again clear

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81 Cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 591, 598, 600, 601; RI,I,4,3, no. 613. Charles the Fat probably moved to Italy without informing John VIII; the pope expressed his astonishment about this development in a letter; cf. RI,I,4,3, no. 606.

82 Cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 618, 619, 621.

83 Cf. Registrum Iohannis VIII. papae, ep. 224, p. 199, l. 22. In addition, John VIII called on Charles to send a legation to Rome whose task it was to conclude the negotiation process of the contracts (cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 610; RI,I,4,3, nos. 619, 622). See also Registrum Iohannis VIII. papae, ep. 251, p. 219–220: *Et quia pro exaltatione atque utilitate sedis apostolice totiusque terre sancti Petri defensione vos prompta mente desudare velle cognoscimus, in quo scilicet vestri desiderii affectu piissimo et divinam circa regiam gloriam vestram habebitis adiutricem et placabilem maiestatem et dignam non solum in hoc seculo, sed etiam in celesti postmodum regione retributionem procul dubio recipietis* (concerning this, see also RI,I,4,3, no. 636).

84 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 646; RI,I,4,3, no. 660; RI,I,1, no. 1679; Arnold 2005, pp. 76–87. For the first time, an emperor and an empress were crowned simultaneously (see Zey 2004, p. 13).

85 Cf. RI,I,3,1, no. 646; RI,I,4,3, no. 658. Whether a *Pactum* was completed, must remain open because of the lack of tradition. The importance that John VIII attributed to the papal protection is also evident in this case. The same applies to the run-up to the imperial coronation ('Kaisererhebung') of Charles the Bald as well as in correspondence with Carloman. (cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 610, 622, 623, 625, 626, 629, 631, 646).

86 Cf. note 79 as well as RI,I,4,3, no. 646.

to Charles the Fat that he owed his emperorship to the Roman church.<sup>87</sup> The papacy had established itself as an inevitable legitimising authority.

After his initial journey to Italy in November 879, Charles paid five extended visits south of the Alps.<sup>88</sup> During this time, he issued a significant number of charters for Italic receivers. Nonetheless, he, too, had not been able to satisfy the protective needs of the papacy.<sup>89</sup> Eventually, once he was removed by the East Frankish magnates in November 887 – a removal that had been primarily enforced by Arnulf of Carinthia – Francia disintegrated into several kingdoms.<sup>90</sup> The first reaction within the Frankish realm after the removal of Charles the Fat was visible in Italy. With neither the consent of the pope, nor having contacted Arnulf, Berengar I of Italy took over the Italic kingship in Pavia.<sup>91</sup> The emperorship remained vacant until 891.

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87 Cf. *Fragmenta Registri Stephani V. papae*, ed. Caspar, Erich. (MGH Epistolae 7). Berlin 1912, Rpt. 1993, no. 14, p. 341, l. 2–4: *Novimus itaque vestram gloriam ad huius ecclesiae decentiam et exaltationem summopere anhelare, prout talis filius tantae matris honorificentia, a qua totius imperii diadema suscepit.*

88 November 879 (RI,I,3,1, no. 591) to April / May 880 (no. 621); October / November 880 (no. 632) to May 881 (no. 667); October / November 881 (no. 670) to the end of March 882 (no. 696), April 883 (no. 702) to November 883 (no. 731), early November 884 (no. 736) to the end of April / early May 885 (no. 748) and February / March 886 (no. 753) to April / May 886 (no. 760).

89 Both John VIII and Stephan V repeatedly requested protection from Charles the Fat, yet they did not receive any reaction (cf. RI,I,3,1, nos. 658, 671, 680, 690, 693; RI,I,4,3, nos. 666, 674, 695, 714).

90 Cf. Keller, Hagen / Althoff, Gerd: *Die Zeit der späten Karolinger und Ottonen. Krisen und Konsolidierungen, 888–1024.* (Gebhardt. Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte 3). Klett-Cotta: Stuttgart 2008, pp. 45–53; Kortüm, Hans-Henning: “Multi reguli in Europa ... excrevere”. Das ostfränkische Reich und seine Nachbarn”. In: Fuchs, Franz / Schmid, Peter (eds.): *Kaiser Arnolf. Das ostfränkische Reich am Ende des 9. Jahrhunderts (Regensburger Kolloquium, 9–11. 12. 1999).* (Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte Beiheft 19 Reihe B). Beck: Munich 2002, pp. 68–88; MacLean, Simon: *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire.* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought. Fourth Series). Cambridge University Press: New York et al. 2003, pp. 169–185; Brühl 1990, pp. 368–389; see also Hack 2009, pp. 172–183 and pp. 266–274.

91 Cf. *Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter den Karolingern 751–918 (926 / 962), vol. 3: Die Regesten des Regnum Italiae und der burgundischen Regna, part 2: Das Regnum Italiae in der Zeit der Thronkämpfe und Reichsteilungen 888*

With Louis II, who was proclaimed emperor half a century after the foundation of the Western empire in the Middle Ages, as well as with Charles the Bald and Charles the Fat, the understanding of the emperorship changed decisively compared to that of Louis I and Lothair I: the papacy regained its influence regarding the bestowal of the emperorship. For the first time since the proclamation of Charlemagne, the pope acted as the constituting and legitimising authority in the coronation of Louis II. Although this by no means showed an irreversible break with the previous practice, the successive development paved the way for Charles the Bald and Charles the Fat (due to the papal advantage resulting from Louis II's death without male offspring).

From this point onwards, there was no alternative to the papal ceremony as the constituting element of the emperorship, even if Wido tried to cut the papal power of disposition and selection by means of dynastic succession, i.e. by having Pope Formosus make Guy's son co-emperor. In this sense, the papacy had become the sole legitimising authority. Louis II's lack of male heirs meant that, for the first time since Charlemagne, the emperorship in Francia was vacant; the tradition of passing on the emperorship from father to son effectively came to an end. Although the emperorship initially remained within the Carolingian family, the papacy now had leverage to enforce its own interests – at first still limited to the Carolingian family, but later extending the proclamation of the emperor beyond the Carolingians. Only Otto the Great, with the imperial coronation of his son Otto II, was able to restore the initial situation. For the fifth<sup>92</sup> (and the last) time in the history of the Western emperorship, a son was elevated to the role of em-

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(850)-926, ed. by Herbert Zielinski. Böhlau: Cologne / Weimar / Vienna 1998, nos. 858, 859; RI,I,3,1, no. 793. A singular source reports a designation of Berengar by Charles the Fat (cf. *Gesta Berengarii imperatoris*, ed. Winterfeld, Paul von. [MGH Poeta Latini aevi Carolini 4,1]. Berlin 1899, Rpt. 2000, I, p. 359 (cf. to this information RI,I,3,1, no. 793; RI,I,3,2, no. 858; Giese, Wolfgang: "Designative Nachfolgeregelungen im Regnum Italiae (891–950)". *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 68, 2012, pp. 506–508: "Die Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass Regest Nr. 858 den historischen Tatsachen entspricht, ist mehr als gering"). Berengar was a grandson of Louis the Pious on his mother Gisela's side.

92 Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, Louis the Pious and Lothair I, Lothair I and Louis II, Guy and Lambert of Spoleto, Otto I and Otto II.

peror within the lifetime of his imperial father.<sup>93</sup> But, in contrast to the first and second co-emperors in the Frankish empire, Otto II was made emperor by a pope. The development of the papacy into the sole, generally accepted legitimising authority, as outlined here, had lasting effects.

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93 In addition, Henry VI was appointed by his father to Caesar in 1186 in Milan; cf. Böhmer, J. F., *Regesta Imperii IV. Lothar III. und ältere Staufer 1125–1197*, part 3: *Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter Heinrich VI. 1165 (1190)-1197*, ed. by Johann Friedrich Böhmer and revised by Gerhard Baaken. Böhlau: Cologne / Vienna 1972, no. 5c.