Gandersheim and Quedlinburg, c. 852-1024: the development of royal female monasteries in Saxony

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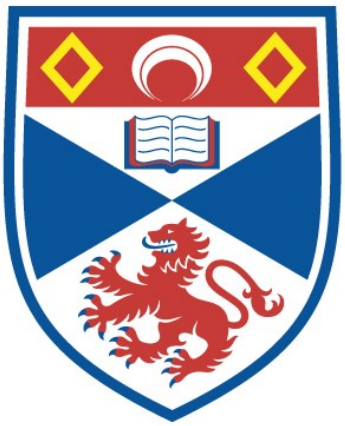
A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationships between royal convents and rulers in Saxony from 852 to 1024. The spate of female monasteries founded in Saxony in the ninth and tenth centuries, alongside the close relationships of major convents to the Ottonian dynasty, has led to Saxon female monasticism being described as unique. As such, Saxony's apparently peculiar experience has been used to make comparisons with other regions about the nature of female monasticism, commemoration and the role of women in early medieval societies. This thesis interrogates these ideas by tracking the development of two major royal convents: Gandersheim and Quedlinburg. By reassessing the origins of these convents, and their later rewriting in sources produced by these monasteries, we can consider how their relationships with the rulers of Saxony developed over time, and how their identity and function as royal monasteries evolved as the tenth century progressed. In doing so, this thesis challenges the dominant understanding of these convents as homes of the Ottonian *memoria* and provides a detailed view of how these institutions became so prominent in Saxony. The thesis is divided into four sections. After introducing the historiographical importance of this topic in the first chapter, in chapter two I assess the origins of the convent of Gandersheim in Carolingian Saxony. Chapter three turns to the rewriting of these origins by Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim in the 970s. Chapter four reconsiders the early history of the convent of Quedlinburg from 936 to 966. Chapter five tracks how the origins of Quedlinburg evolved into a new narrative across the tenth century, culminating in the version provided by the Quedlinburg Annals in 1008. Finally, the concluding section outlines the significance of this thesis for our understanding of early medieval female monasticism and the history of the Ottonian Empire.

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It is only right that I should provide my own list of *debitores*, without whose help this thesis could not have been finished.

I cannot overstate my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Simon MacLean. Through combining his incredible understanding of Carolingian and Ottonian history with generosity, excellent humour and patient encouragement, he has made the past three years not only intellectually rewarding, but great fun as well. I have benefited from his support and guidance more than I can adequately express. Simon, thank you.

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Special thanks go to Ian Morris, for tolerating my sense of humour and reminding me that I can do it.

Lastly, to my family on the other side of the world. My sister Rachel has combined encouragement with frequent reminders to keep my feet on the ground. Finally, the person to whom I owe the most is my mother, Jo-Anne. As this thesis is full of resilient and resourceful women, it is quite right that I dedicate it to her.

ABBREVIATIONS

AQ		*Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese, MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 7 (Hanover, 1841)
D(D)		Diploma(s) of ruler (see bibliography for full details):
	Arn	Arnulf
	HI	Henry I
	HII	Henry II
	KI	Conrad I
	KII	Conrad II
	KIII	Charles III the Fat
	LD	Louis the German
	LJ	Louis the Younger
	OI	Otto I
	OII	Otto II
	OIII	Otto III
MGH		Monumenta Germaniae Historica
	SRG	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum
	SRG NS	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, Nova Series
	SS	Scriptores
	SRM	Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum
	Conc.	Concilia
VMA		*Vita Mathildis reginae antiquior*, ed. Bernd Schütte, *Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde*, MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 66 (Hanover, 1994)
VMP		*Vita Mathildis reginae posterior* ed. Bernd Schütte, *Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde*, MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 66 (Hanover, 1994)

FIGURES

MAPS

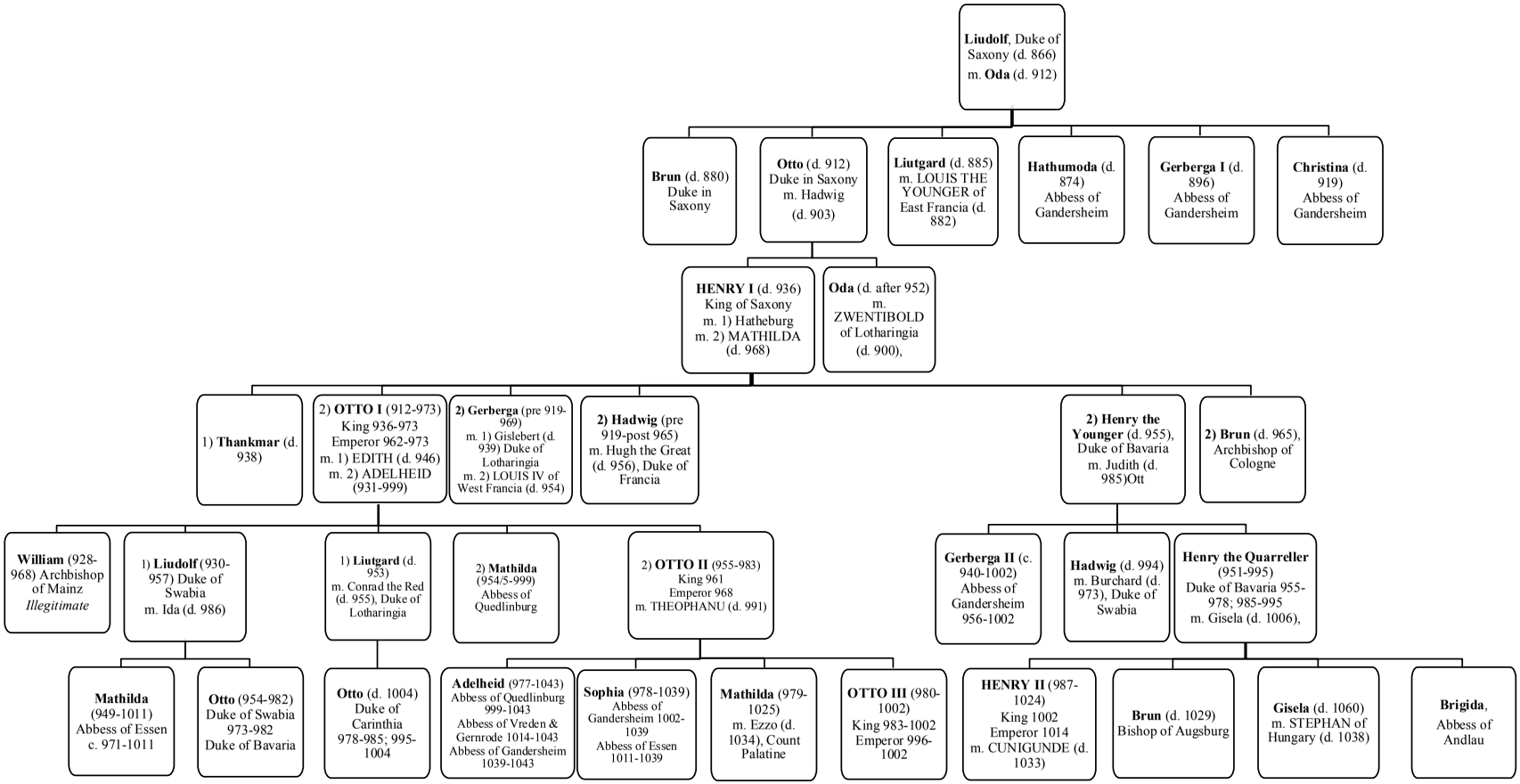
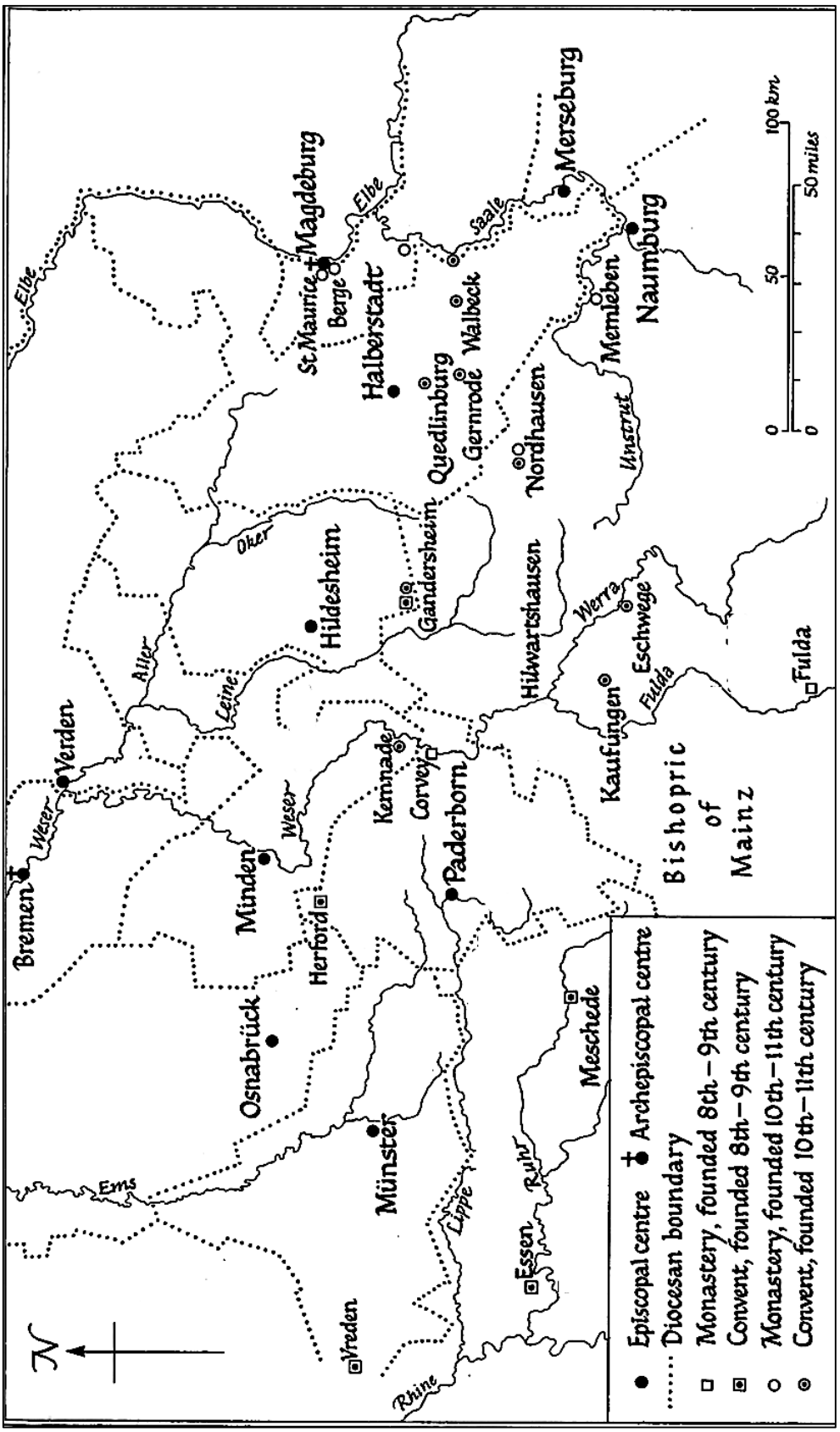


Fig. 1: The Ottonian family.
Adapted from Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London, 1971) and Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages 800-1056* (London, 1991), p. 337.



Map 1: Key monasteries in Saxony.
Map adapted from John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 319.

Chapter 1

SAXON FEMALE MONASTICISM c. 852-1024
AN INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the ninth century, a group of swineherds took shelter for the night in the forest that covered the banks of the river Gande. As they rested, the men were suddenly dazzled by a brilliant display of lights breaking through the trees surrounding their hut. The amazed swineherds reported the spectacle to their lord, Duke Liudolf, when they returned to him the next morning. Rumours of this astonishing event quickly spread, and, on the eve of All Saints' Day, the duke travelled out into the forest with his family and a crowd of followers. Once more, the clearing in the woods was illuminated, this time with miraculous lights even more spectacular than before. The awestruck Liudolf and his wife Oda immediately gave thanks to God, accepting the heavenly sign that this was the place where they were to build a monastery for their daughter, Hathumoda.

This is the story that, over a century later, Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim used to explain how Liudolf and Oda chose the location for her convent, which was now a wealthy royal monastery under the protection of Liudolf's descendants, the Ottonian emperors. Across the span of 150 years, Saxony was transformed from a recently Christianised region on the edge of the Carolingian empire, dotted with small convents set up by noble couples like Liudolf and Oda, into the centre of a new empire, filled with powerful imperial monasteries for women which were led by the daughters and sisters of emperors. The aim of this thesis is to examine the role of royal female monasteries in this process and therefore explain how and why this transformation was able to occur.

THE UNIQUE CASE OF SAXON CONVENTS

The history of female monasteries in Saxony is unusual. Admittedly, as one of the last regions to be conquered and converted by Charlemagne, with a host of social influences and practices that contrasted with the Christian, post-Roman *mores* of the rest of the Frankish empire, early

medieval Saxony has been considered somewhat unusual in general, by both modern historians and observers at the time.[1] The role of women in Saxon society, in particular, has attracted attention for its apparent dissimilarity to the rest of the Carolingian world.[2] The Ottonian Empire, led by a dynasty of kings and emperors born out of a Saxon aristocratic family, saw a series of powerful queens and empresses take a very active role in imperial politics, both before and after their husbands' deaths. Noble women too were able to engage on the political stage, with the wives of dukes and counts becoming formidable figures in their own right. But, amongst all the differences we can see in Saxony, the number of monastic foundations for women stands out.

Although Saxony only gained its first monastic foundations for women in the early ninth century, the nobles, bishops and royals in the region lost no time in setting up a spate of new houses for religious women. Based on the available diplomatic evidence, 22 new convents were founded in Saxony from c. 800 to 900, out of 32 convents founded in the whole of East Francia.[3] This trend did not peter out under the Ottonians: from 900-1025, Saxony was home to 26 out of the 54 convents established in the new *Reich*.[4] While the rapid growth of religious institutions for women would attract attention by itself, it is made even more remarkable in that the number of monasteries being set up for women exceeded the rate of male monastic foundations being established in Saxony, a trend which was not mirrored in any other region in the early medieval West.[5]

Some of these new female monasteries became very powerful places, particularly those which gained royal immunities and protection from the king and were led by abbesses drawn from the Ottonian family, such as Gandersheim, Essen and Quedlinburg. These royal convents were endowed with large estates by Ottonian rulers; acted as residences for kings and emperors; and possessed impressive libraries and treasuries. The surge of new female monasteries in Saxony,

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[1] Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 7, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 25 (Hanover, 1911), pp. 9-10.
[2] Janet L. Nelson, 'Women and the Word in the Earlier Middle Ages' in *eadem* (ed.), *The Frankish World 750-900* (London, 1996), pp. 201-2.
[3] Michel Parisse, 'Les Chanoinesses Dans l'Empire Germanique (IX^{e}-XI^{e} siècles)', *Francia* 6 (1978), p. 118; Michel Parisse, 'Die Frauenstifte und Frauenklöster in Sachsen vom 10. bis zur Mitte des 12. Jahrhunderts' in Stefan Weinfurter (ed.), *Die Salier und das Reich* (Sigmaringen, 1992), pp. 466-470.
[4] Parisse, 'Les Chanoinesses', p. 118.
[5] Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London, 1979), p. 63.

along with the social position that a number of these institutions were able to acquire, led Karl Leyser to describe this phenomenon as 'unique, singular in time and in extent,' and it is widely seen as an exceptional moment in the history of women in Western Europe.[6]

The Saxon experience of female monasticism appears even more peculiar when compared with the contemporary situations in West Francia and Anglo-Saxon England. Whereas royals, nobles and bishops were busily founding monasteries for women in Saxony, it seems their West Frankish counterparts did not share the same enthusiasm. Instead, it is generally agreed that the social position of religious women in the western half of the Carolingian world was in a state of decline. The place of women in the ninth-century West Frankish church was slowly being eroded, with convents becoming less important as religious and social institutions while reformed male monasteries became increasingly powerful as the tenth century progressed.[7]

The view of the decline of the role of female monasteries in Frankish society sits within the narrative of the history of religious women in France first outlined by scholars like Jo Ann McNamara, Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg and Suzanne Wemple in the 1970s and 1980s. After what they described as a 'Golden Age' for religious women in seventh-century Francia and England, when there was a wave of new double monasteries founded for women, the reform movements promoted by Carolingian rulers like Louis the Pious essentially repressed the earlier ability of religious women to create their own forms of religious life by strictly imposing the Benedictine Rule. The tenth-century Cluniac reform movement only increased this oppression, in their view, by reinforcing the misogynistic tendencies of reformed monastic men, stressing their greater spiritual effectiveness at the expense of religious women.[8]

The image of monastic reforms in West Francia edging out the role of women as liturgical commemorators in that region was further developed by Patrick Geary. In *Phantoms of*

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[6] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, p. 65; Parisse, 'Les Chanoinesses', p. 107; Claire Thiellet, *Femmes, Reines et Saints (V^e^-XI^e^ siècles)* (Paris, 2004), p. 14.
[7] Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes and Simon MacLean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 290.
[8] Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Sexism and the celestial gynaecium - from 500 to 1200', *Journal of Medieval History* 4:2 (1978), p. 127; Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure and its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (ca 500-1100)' in John A. Nichols, Lillian Thomas Shank (eds), *Medieval Religious Women, Volume One: Distant Echoes* (Kalamazoo, 1984), pp. 51-86; Suzanne Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500 to 900* (Philadelphia, 1984), pp. 165-174; Jo Ann McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Ann Arbor, 1998), pp. 148-175.

Remembrance, Geary asserted that the tenth and eleventh centuries saw tension and conflict increase between women, both secular and religious, and reformed monks over who was more effective in commemorating the dead. He suggested that a geographic divide opened up between the East and West Frankish kingdoms due to their different experiences of monastic reform. Women in the east, he argued, retained a more active role as observers of familial *memoria* because regions like Saxony were not especially influenced by monastic reform movements. In the west, he suggested, the growing power of male Cluniac houses led to women being pushed into passive, less significant roles.[9]

Geary pointed to the spate of texts coming from the convents in Saxony as further evidence for their memorial function. Authors like Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim clearly displayed an interest in the deeds of the Liudolfing/Ottonian family, the founders of her convent. In the tenth-century west, we have no comparable female-authored texts from convents to show the engagement of monastic women in creating a narrative record of the past.[10] There is undoubtedly a significant difference in the source base for female monasteries in West Francia and East Francia, and recent studies on the libraries, literary output and *scriptoria* in East Frankish convents reveal a widespread environment of religious female literacy east of the Rhine.[11] Of course, we need to bear in mind that our absence of evidence for West Frankish convents may well be down to later destructions of archives.[12] Using literary sources alone to assess memorial activities also

[9] Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrances: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 53-70.
[10] Ibid., p. 68. For a critique of Geary's argument relying on only written texts as proof of commemorative activity, see Matthew Innes, 'Keeping it in the family: women and aristocratic memory, 700-1200' in Elisabeth van Houts (ed.), *Medieval Memories: Men, Women and the Past, 700-1300* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 23-5.
[11] Katrinette Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae: Schriftlichkeit und Bildung in den ottonischen Frauenkommunitäten Gandersheim, Essen und Quedlinburg* (Münster, 2004); Hartmut Hoffman, *Schreibschulen und Buchmalerei: Handschriften und Texte des 9.-11. Jahrhunderts* (Hanover, 2012).
[12] The devastating impact of the French Revolution and the secularisation on the archives of convents is outlined in Katrinette Bodarwé, 'Gender and the Archive: The Preservation of Charters in Early Medieval Communities of Religious Women' in Mathilde van Dijk and Renée Nip (eds), *Saints, Scholars and Politicians: Gender as a Tool in Medieval Studies* (Turnhout, 2005), pp. 111-132. For examinations of the early medieval documentary and archival practices which may affect our evidence base, see Hans Hummer, 'The production and preservation of documents in Francia: the evidence of cartularies' in Warren Brown, Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes and Adam Kosto (eds), *Documentary Culture and the Laity in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 210; Matthew Innes, 'Archives, documents and landowners in Carolingian Francia' in Warren Brown, Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes and Adam Kosto (eds), *Documentary Culture and the Laity in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 155-164; Antonio Sennis, 'Destroying Documents in the Early Middle Ages' in Jonathan Jarrett and Allan Scott McKinley (eds), *Problems and Possibilities of Early Medieval Charters* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 152-8.

minimises our view of the other, non-textual ways in which commemoration took place.[13] However, the comparatively lower rate of new ninth- and tenth-century female monasteries in West Francia, along with the more visible role that female monasteries played on the political stage of East Francia does signal that convents in the east could and did occupy a different set of political and social roles than those in the west.

We can see a similar picture across the Channel in Anglo-Saxon England. After an initially enthusiastic period of new foundations for religious women in the seventh and eighth centuries, the ninth and tenth centuries saw a comparative drop in female monastic foundations.[14] While there are a handful of monasteries which enjoyed close relationships with royals, such as the royal convents of Wilton, Shaftesbury, and Nunnaminster in Winchester, none of them occupy quite the same political role as the powerful royal monasteries for women in Saxony. Pauline Stafford has suggested that the same trends in West Francia hold true for Anglo-Saxon England as well, with female involvement in monasticism being increasingly marginalised as the tenth and eleventh centuries progressed due to the influence of monastic reformers in English politics.[15] This same pessimistic image seems to be confirmed by the studies on later Anglo-Saxon monastic women by Sarah Foot, who argued that the tenth-century reformers restricted the ability of women to construct forms of religious life that suited them, forcing them into single-sex institutions, which led to the subsequent rise in status of male monastic institutions.[16]

Of course, the same source-based issues may well be affecting our view of tenth-century English monasticism. As Timothy Reuter pointed out, we have far fewer sources for tenth-century England than we do for Germany, and if we had more information from Anglo-Saxon

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[13] See Matthew Innes, 'Memory, Orality and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society', *Past and Present* 158 (1998), pp. 3-36; Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900-1200* (London, 1999).

[14] Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Women's Monastic Communities, 500-1100: Patterns of Expansion and Decline', *Signs*, 14:2 (1989), p. 266.

[15] Pauline Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries*, (London, 1989), p. 193.

[16] Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women: The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England*, *Volume I: The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 34. Pauline Stafford pointed out, however, that Foot's categorisation of Anglo-Saxon monastic women into nuns and vowesses was heavily based on the typology given by tenth-century reformist literature, and leads her to downplay the significance of institutions which did not fit the strict criteria for a monastery of nuns. Pauline Stafford, 'Review of *Veiled Women: I. The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England; II. Female Religious Communities in England, 871-1066*. By Sarah Foot. Ashgate: Aldershot and Burlington, Vermont. 2000', *Early Medieval Europe* 10:2 (2001), pp. 287-8.

sources then our picture of England may well look more like Germany than it currently does.[17] For example, the late ninth century saw the establishment and promotion of several new royal convents under King Alfred, though we do not have the same kinds of narrative records revealing these institutions' relationship with the ruler and their society as we see in Saxony.[18] There may well have been a concurrent increase in interest in founding and supporting monasteries for religious women in England, but they have left less of an imprint in the historical record than their German counterparts.

Even if we take a more generous view of the situation for religious women in West Francia and Anglo-Saxon England than some of the historiography represents, it is clear that Saxony is still unusual. Not only do more records survive which show new institutions for women being founded and supported by local elites, but we also see some royal houses being able to take on a political position which is not matched in England or in West Francia. Moreover, these major houses, all of which had close relationships with the Ottonian family, were able to create their own narrative sources, putting forward their own versions of the history of the Saxon kings and emperors and their institutions' relationships with the ruling dynasty.

EXPLANATIONS OF SAXONY'S DEVELOPMENT

So, what was it that prompted this different trajectory of development for Saxon female monasticism? The question of why Saxony has such an atypical history of female monasticism in the early Middle Ages has long been debated by historians. The work of Karl Heinrich Schäfer and Johanna Heineken in the first decade of the twentieth century is generally referred to as the origin point of modern historiography on the topic of Saxon *Frauenstifter*, but a more intensive focus on understanding the prominence of Saxon convents came in the 1970s and 1980s with a series of deeply influential works by several major historians in quick

[17] Timothy Reuter, 'The Making of England and Germany, 850-1050: points of comparison and difference' in Janet L. Nelson (ed.), *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 295-6. Julia Crick has also argued against Foot's view, noting that the lack of records for nunneries is not conclusive evidence that they did not exist at all. Julia Crick, 'The Wealth, Patronage, and Connections of Women's Houses in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Revue Bénédictine* 109 (1999), pp. 159-160.

[18] These include Amesbury, Barking, Romsey, Shaftesbury, Wherwell, Wilton and Nunnaminster at Winchester. Barbara Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003), p. 72.

succession.[19] In 1970, Josef Semmler explored the impact of Benedictine reform in ninth-century Saxon convents, as part of his work on the Saxon church. He was followed by Michel Parisse, who argued against Semmler's theories, stressing instead that foundations for women in Saxony were predominantly houses of canonesses.[20] At the same time that Semmler and Parisse were debating the rules which governed Saxon convents, the Germania Sacra project produced two in-depth histories of Saxon convents: one, by Hans Goetting, on Gandersheim; the other, by Wilhelm Kohl, on Freckenhorst, both of which agreed with Parisse that these institutions should be defined as houses of canonesses, rather than Benedictine nunneries.[21]

In 1979, however, Karl Leyser turned away from the debates on individual houses to look at a broader set of causes for the prominence of monasteries for women in Saxony in his seminal monograph, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Germany*. Rather than looking at the rules which these institutions followed, Leyser explored the wider social motivations that were behind this rise in female monasteries. After counting the number of women outliving their husbands, and sisters outliving their brothers in the Liudolfing family over six generations, Leyser argued that there was a demographic shift in Saxony that led to an abundance of elite Saxon women outliving their male relatives.[22] Due to their greater ability to inherit property under Saxon law, this meant that women could accumulate great amounts of land over their lifetime if their husbands and brothers died before them.

As a result, Leyser argued, these widowed women needed to find a way to secure their property against more distant male relatives who might seek to appropriate it.[23] Thus, he suggested, convents were an attractive and secure option for rich Saxon women accustomed to following

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[19] Karl Heinrich Schäfer, *Die Kanonissenstifter im deutschen Mittelalter. Ihre Entwicklung und innere Einrichtung im Zusammenhang mit dem altchristlichen Sanktimonialentum* (Stuttgart, 1907); Johanna Heineken*, Die Anfänge der sächsischen Frauenklöster*, PhD dissertation (Göttingen, 1909), both cited in Thomas Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit religiöser Frauengemeinschaften im Frühmittelalter: Die* Institutio sanctimonialium Aquisgranensis *des Jahres 816 und die Problematik der Verfassung von Frauenkommunitäten* (Göttigen, 1998), p. 8.

[20] Josef Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford in der benediktinischen Reformbewegung des 9. Jahrhundert', *Frühmittelalterlich Studien* 4 (1970), pp. 289-319; Parisse, 'Les Chanoinesses', pp. 107-126.

[21] Hans Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim Vol. 1: Das reichsunmittelbare Kanonissenstift Gandersheim* (Berlin, 1973); Wilhelm Kohl, *Das (freiweltliche) Damenstift Freckenhorst* (Berlin, 1975).

[22] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, p. 54.

[23] This view is further supported by Janet Nelson's insightful article on Carolingian widowhood. Janet L. Nelson, 'The Wary Widow' in Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (eds), *Property and Power in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 82-113.

an aristocratic lifestyle. The rest of their family benefited too, as the foundation of a religious house provided an aura of spiritual prestige that could extend to the other relatives of the founder. Moreover, the Saxon emphasis on the role of women as religious intercessors found expression through widows establishing convents where their husbands were buried and then residing in them during their widowhood.[24] It was for these socially-driven reasons, Leyser argued, that Saxony saw an increasing number of new, prestigious, monastic foundations for women over the tenth century.

While he thought that it was the need to provide a form of security for the land inherited by widows which prompted the growth of Saxon convents, Leyser also felt that it was this same phenomenon that led to this trend declining in the eleventh century. Although aristocratic and royal families were initially attracted to supporting their female relatives entering convents, as a way to prevent them marrying and setting up rival branches of the family, Leyser suggested that elite support faltered as the tenth century progressed due to concerns over property rights. In particular, he argued that the increasing royal grants of immunities and protection to convents distanced aristocratic families from these institutions, thus weakening their control of the lands they had given over to the monastery. As the power of the imperial church grew, noblemen became increasingly anxious at the alienation of their property to the church, removing it from the cycle of marriage and inheritance.[25] Accordingly, as the eleventh century began, the appeal of female monasteries was in sharp decline amongst the Saxon nobility.

Leyser's argument, that the unique experience of female monasticism in Saxony was driven primarily by demographic factors and brought to an end by conflict over land inheritance, was deeply influential for the historians who followed him. In particular, the idea of Saxon convents as a medium for aristocratic women to fulfil their role as spiritual intercessors for their families was developed even further by Gerd Althoff, in his *Habilitationschrift* on the role of *memoria* in the identity formation of Saxon elite families.[26] Althoff sought to understand how noble families in tenth-century Saxony were able to wield power through using monasteries which were charged with celebrating the *memoria* of the founding family and their friends and

[24] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, pp. 83-123. For more on the role of female sanctity in Saxon society, see Patrick Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens: Sainteté dynastique, sainteté royale et sainteté feminine autour de l'an Mil* (Sigmaringen, 1986), pp. 257-266.
[25] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, pp. 68-71.
[26] Gerd Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien im Spiegel ihrer Memorialuberlieferung Studien zum Totengedenken der Billunger und Ottonen* (Munich, 1984).

followers. He argued that in addition to being a permanent centre for commemoration of the family, these memorial foundations also allowed the family in question to solidify their bonds with the local society. By entering the names of their *debitores*, those for whom they had an obligation to pray, into the necrologies of these institutions, families could reinforce the links holding them and their followers together. The result of establishing monasteries like this, Althoff felt, was to crystallise a loosely-knit kin group into a structured family group, giving it the cohesion needed to secure political power and influence.[27]

The two groups that Althoff singled out as successful founders of memorial centres were the Liudolfing/Ottonian and Billung families, the two most powerful Saxon noble families in the ninth and tenth centuries. Althoff argued that these two families showed a particular interest in commemorative activities, with male members of the family providing the resources needed by the monasteries, and female relatives carrying out the commemorations themselves.[28] This apparent gender division in commemoration of the dead thus explains the prevalence of female monasteries in Saxony, where these two noble families were based. Althoff believed that we can only make sense of the spate of female monasteries in Saxony by understanding the prayer obligations of the Saxon nobility and the importance of aristocratic women in carrying out these duties.[29] As noble women took an active role in carrying out memorial activity for the family, through prayer and providing alms for the poor, it was a natural extension to set up convents as familial memory centres, with a series of female family members leading it as abbesses.

Althoff took the memorial centres of the Liudolfing/Ottonian family as a case study to illustrate this. He saw Gandersheim, the monastery established in 852 by Duke Liudolf and his wife Oda, the founders of the Liudolfing dynasty, as the first institution which housed their familial *memoria*, physically embodied in a necrology which listed the family members and friends that the Liudolfings needed to pray for. By setting up this commemorative foundation, the Liudolfings were able to reinforce their bonds to their followers, secure power in ninth-century

[27] Ibid., pp. 11-30.
[28] Althoff casts the men of the family as providing resources, represented by donations in charters, while the women provide the names, represented by necrology entries. For a critique of Althoff's views on memoria seen through diplomas, see Wolfgang Wagner, 'Das Gebetsgedenken der Liudolfinger im Spiegel der Königs- und Kaiserurkunden von Heinrich I. bis zu Otto III.', *Archiv für Diplomatik: Schriftsgeschichte, Siege, und Wappenkurde* 40 (1994), pp. 1-78.
[29] Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien*, pp. 166-7.

Saxon society and acquire ducal status. However, when the family gained the throne in 919, on the accession of Henry I, their previous memorial centre of Gandersheim was no longer suitable as their commemorative centre. Instead, Queen Mathilda, whom Althoff singled out as the perfect exemplar of an elite Saxon women in charge of the familial *memoria* responsibilities, set up a monastery at Quedlinburg which took over as the new, distinctively royal, memorial foundation for the Ottonian family.[30]

To support his argument, that the *memoria* of the Ottonians was transferred from Gandersheim to Quedlinburg, Althoff traced the groups of Liudolfing/Ottonian relatives listed in the necrologies of these institutions. He argued that we can see a list in the *Liber Memorialis* of St Gall as a copy of the now lost Gandersheim necrology, and that this list of friends and family members was then taken by Queen Mathilda to Quedlinburg in 936. Althoff points to the famous scene in the *Lives* of Mathilda where the queen passed on a *computarium* to her namesake granddaughter shortly before her death in 968 as evidence of the physical copy of Quedlinburg's necrology.[31] Althoff noted that this manuscript too (if it was a separate manuscript from the Gandersheim version) is now lost.

However, Althoff argued, an echo of this lost necrology's contents can be seen in a different necrology at Merseburg. Althoff argued that there is a distinct collection of names entered into this manuscript, which he thinks was added at a single point between 1016/1017, rather than being recorded in an *ad hoc* manner as people died. This layer of names, he felt, is a copy of the contents of the Gandersheim/Quedlinburg necrology, Mathilda's *computarium*. From this evidence, Althoff argued that Henry II must have transferred the Ottonian *memoria*, in the form of the necrology, from Quedlinburg to Merseburg in 1016/1017.[32]

Thus, although we have no extant manuscripts of necrologies from Gandersheim or from Quedlinburg, Althoff suggested that the St Gall and Merseburg necrologies allow us to trace the list of names of Ottonians and their followers, the embodiment of their *memoria*, being transferred from Gandersheim to Quedlinburg and then on to Merseburg. He further developed his idea of Gandersheim and then Quedlinburg as the successive homes of the Ottonian *memoria* in his 1991 article on the two convents, 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg: Ottonische

[30] Ibid., pp. 171, 242.
[31] Ibid., p. 169.
[32] Ibid., pp. 149-154, 188-9.

Frauenklöster als Herrschafts- und Überlieferungszentren'. In this article, Althoff focused on how this competitive relationship between the two institutions after 936 shaped their relationships with the Ottonian dynasty and their positions in Saxon society, viewing the textual output of the two communities as an attempt to justify and secure their memorial roles for the family.[33]

The argument that Leyser and Althoff constructed, of the preponderance of Saxon convents being due to their commemorative roles and their social functions, profoundly affected subsequent research on Saxon female monasticism. Two years after Althoff's *Adels- und Königsfamilien* was released, Patrick Corbet further stressed the gendered influence of commemorative activity in the Ottonian family with his book on the saints within the Ottonian family. In exploring the importance of sanctity, particularly female representations of sanctity, as a way of adding to the power of the dynasty, Corbet noted that this was particularly expressed through representations of Ottonian women as founders of female monasteries.[34] Käthe Sonnleitner then emphasised the gendered nature of these institutions, examining the representation of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg as female Ottonian institutions in the texts that were created within these monasteries. As a result, she argued that they were hubs of familial identity which foregrounded the role of women within the Ottonian family.[35] Michel Parisse echoed the new developments with new overview studies synthesising the Leyser-Althoff views on commemoration while also noting the sheer number of new houses for women.[36] The relationship that Saxon royal convents played in a more physical sense as institutions which hosted the king and his court was elaborated by John W. Bernhardt shortly afterwards.[37]

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[33] Gerd Althoff, 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg: Ottonische Frauenklöster als Herrschafts- und Überlieferungszentren', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 25 (1991), pp. 123-144.
[34] Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens*.
[35] Käthe Sonnleitner, 'Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstverständnis der ottonischen Frauen im Spiegel der Historiographie des 10. Jahrhunderts' in Reinhard Härtel (ed.), *Geschichte und ihre Quellen: Festschrift für Friedrich Hausmann zum 70 Geburtstag* (Graz, 1987), pp. 111-9; Käthe Sonnleitner, 'Die Annalistik der Ottonenzeit als Quelle für die Frauengeschichte', *Schriftenreihe des Institutes für Geschichte Darstellungen* 2 (1988), pp. 233-249; see also her later article on Gandersheim's foundation, Käthe Sonnleitner, 'Die Gründungslegende von Gandersheim', *Annali dell'Istituto Storico Italo-Germano in Trento* 26 (2000), pp. 427-435.
[36] Michel Parisse, 'Les Monastères de Femmes En Saxe X^{e}-XII^{e} Siècles', *Revue Mabillon* n.s. 2, 63 (1991), pp. 5-48; Parisse, 'Die Frauenstifte', pp. 465-501.
[37] John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge, 1993).

The impact of the arguments by Leyser and Althoff on Saxon convents as commemorative centres meant that the interest in the form of monastic life followed by these institutions was somewhat overshadowed. In 1995, Irene Crusius edited an important volume of essays through *Germania Sacra* on the nature of these institutions as houses of canonesses, and three years later Thomas Schilp further addressed the impact of the *Institutio Sanctimonialium*, the rule for canonesses promulgated by Louis the Pious in 816/7, on houses of canonesses in Saxony.[38] Schilp, while agreeing with the ideas of Leyser and Althoff on demography and commemoration as the explanation for Saxony's peculiar experience of female monasticism, also noted the strong appeal that houses of canonesses would have to nobles, as foundations which essentially enabled women to combine a religious and aristocratic lifestyle.[39]

RECONSIDERING THE LEYSER-ALTHOFF MODEL

Demographic trends and aristocratic motivations

The work that followed Leyser and Althoff on ninth- and tenth-century Saxon female monasticism has essentially stayed within the lines sketched out by these two historians. However, given the importance of their arguments to the historiography of not only female monasticism, but also the nature and function of Ottonian political power and authority, it is worth examining their ideas closely, to see if they do fully explain what made Saxony so different when it came to religious institutions for women.

For example, Leyser's assertion that Saxony had a higher number of widows, who were able to inherit land from their fathers and brothers and thus needed a way to secure their control over that land, has been widely accepted as a point of significant difference between Saxony and the rest of the former Carolingian empire. Leyser came to this conclusion by examining the Liudolfing family tree, counting the number of widows compared to widowers, and sisters surviving brothers in the six generations that descended from Oda and Liudolf, the founder of the Liudolfing dynasty (see fig. 2).[40] However, a closer look at this genealogical tree reveals

[38] Irene Crusius (ed.), *Studien zum weltlichen Kollegiatstift in Deutschland* (Göttigen, 1995); Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit*.
[39] Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit*, p. 193.
[40] He counts 34 wives surviving husbands and 13 husbands surviving wives from 852 down to 979; and 14 sisters surviving brothers compared to 9 brothers surviving sisters. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, p. 54.

that while the dynasty may have started in Saxony, it quickly spread branches across the rest of the empire, both east and west. Some of the individuals included in this family tree are: King Louis IV; King Lothar; King Louis V; Hugh the Great; Hugh Capet; King Robert the Pious; Richard of Normandy; Count Albert of Vermandois; Count Eudo of Chartres; Count Renier of Hainault; Count Lambert of Louvain; Count Albert of Naumur; Count Alberich of Macon; King Conrad of Burgundy; and King Stephen of Hungary.

It is undeniable that these individuals were part of the broader Liudolfing family through marriage. However, to characterise the entirety of this group as a Saxon family, and then to take the total number of widows and sisters as evidence of a distinctively Saxon phenomenon, which can be extrapolated out to the rest of the Saxon nobility, may not be the most accurate way of representing this group of relatives. The number of women surviving their male relatives in the Liudolfing family may indeed point to a wider demographic trend in the ninth and tenth centuries, but we should not see it as restricted to Saxony alone.

Leyser suggested that the tendency of Saxon aristocracy to violence and feud may be part of the reason behind why Saxon women lived longer than men; but he provides no evidence to conclusively demonstrate that Saxony was more violent or had longer-lived women than any other region in the rest of the empire.[41] Leyser's point, that a prevalence of wealthy widows looking to protect their inheritances likely had a positive impact on female monasticism in Saxony, is correct in my view. However, if this is what differentiated Saxony from the rest of the empire, then we need to prove that Saxony had demonstrably more widows with a longer lifespan than other regions, something which Leyser does not do.[42]

[41] Ibid., p. 58.

[42] For more on the life expectancy of medieval women, David Herlihy has observed that there was a general trend towards women outliving men across the whole of Europe which began in the early Middle Ages in 'Life Expectancies for Women in Medieval Society' in Rosemarie Thee Morewedge (ed.), *The Role of Woman in the Middle Ages: Papers of the Sixth Annual Conference of the Centre for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghampton, 6-7 May 1972* (Albany, 1975), p. 11; and Valerie Garver has also pointed out that we should not underestimate the number of older women outliving their husbands in the Carolingian world in 'Old Age and Women in the Carolingian World' in Albrecht Classen (ed.), *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to a Neglected Topic* (Berlin, 2007), p. 128. Paul Dutton also calculated that the average Carolingian male life span (once past infancy) was 39.6 years, whereas the average Carolingian female life span (once past infancy) was 40.5 years. Paul Edward Dutton, *Charlemagne's Mustache and Other Cultural Clusters of a Dark Age* (New York, 2004), pp. 195-8.

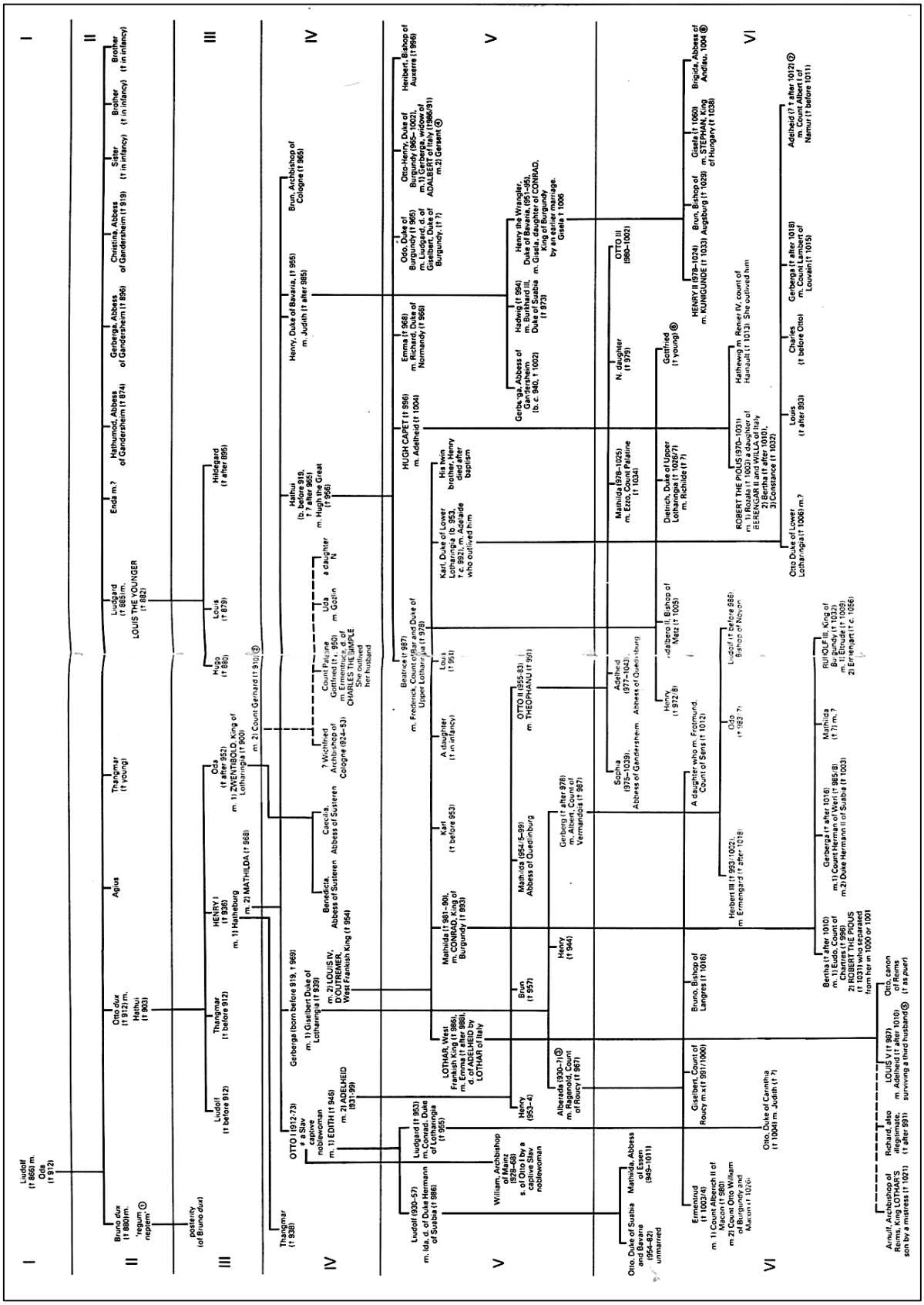

Fig. 2: The Liudolfing family

Figure from Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London, 1979), pages between 91-92.

On the other hand, there is something which marked out Saxon female monasticism as different from all the other regions of the Carolingian empire. The vast majority of convents founded in ninth- and tenth-century Saxony were not nunneries following the Benedictine rule, but rather were houses of canonesses. The importance of this as a contributing factor to Saxony's different experience of female monasticism has been somewhat downplayed in historiography; as Jean Verdon has noted, German historians have long quarrelled over the subject of canonesses, with some preferring to see a number of foundations as Benedictine nunneries, despite lacking conclusive evidence to prove this.[43] Indeed, there still remain a surprising number of passing references to the convents in Saxony as nunneries, rather than houses of canonesses. However, recent scholarship has pointed out that the later context of the Gregorian reforms misled some earlier historians into seeing houses of canons and canonesses as a corrupted form of strict Benedictine monasticism.[44] Consequently, it is now more widely accepted that Saxon convents were houses of canonesses, rather than Benedictine nunneries. Despite this new consensus, the historiography on Saxon monasticism has not fully outlined the wider implications that this form of female monasticism had for the social and political roles of these houses.[45]

If we compare a house of canonesses following the *Institutio Sanctimonialium*, the rule for canonesses promulgated under Louis the Pious, to a nunnery under the Benedictine rule, the

[43] Jean Verdon, *Les femmes en l'An Mille* (Paris, 1999), p. 148. For example, Josef Semmler, argued that most of Saxon convent were nunneries, not houses of canonesses in 'Corvey und Herford'. This, however, overlooks the references made by these communities themselves to the canonical life, such as Quedlinburg Annals explicitly praising the *vita canonicae* of the community: *AQ*, 937, p. 459; 995, p. 487; 1000, p. 512; 1023, p. 571; or the diploma recognising the right of the *sanctimoniales* of Frohse to 'have their own houses, to wear white clothing, to eat meat, cheese and other foods.' DOII 4.

[44] On the Rule of Chrodegang and the *Institutio Canonicorum*, see Julia Barrow, *The Clergy in the Early Medieval World: Secular Clerics, Their Families and Careers in North-Western Europe c.800-c.1200* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 75-83. For the view of canonical rule under the Gregorian reforms and its impact on scholarship, see Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 19-23.

[45] Michel Parisse provides a reasonably comprehensive overview of the differences between canonical and Benedictine institutions for women, and notes the appeal of the canonical life for noblewomen, but ultimately attributes the number of convents in Saxony to the imperial church system and the narrower and stricter social divisions in Saxony than in the rest of the empire: Parisse, 'Les Chanoinesses', p. 126 especially. Schilp also remarks on the appeal of canonical foundations to noble patrons, but essentially follows the arguments of Althoff and Leyser to explain why Saxony's experience of female monasticism differed from the rest of the Carolingian empire: Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichheit*, pp. 189-193.

two monasteries would look remarkably different.[46] While both would involve the community celebrating the divine office, with a community of monastic women under the command of an abbess, the rules governing the behaviour of canonesses allowed the formation of a very different kind of monastic lifestyle. The requirements around clothing and the monastic habit, which marked out nuns as distinctive from the rest of society, were much more loosely applied to canonesses. Some communities only required the wearing of a habit during the celebration of the office, so that canonesses were able to wear their own secular clothes at other times.[47] There was less strict enforcement of the ideal of enclosure, and canonesses were able, with the permission of their abbess, to meet frequently with their family.[48] Canonesses were not bound to the same strict diet seen in the Benedictine rule, and were allocated a remarkable amount of food, including meat, something strictly forbidden for nuns.[49] Although the ideal of communal meals and housing was outlined for canonical institutions, canonesses had permission to live in their own residences within the *claustrum*, and to possess their own servants within these houses if they so wished.[50] In a stark contrast with nunneries, canonesses could leave the community to be married, as long as they had not taken the veil or been given the title of *sanctimonialis*.[51] Finally, and most importantly, canonesses were not bound by the same rules of poverty as nuns. Women entering the community had to give over ownership of their property to the church, but they were able to retain the profits from the land in usufruct, effectively giving them precarial income which supported their life within the community.[52]

In essence, a monastery for women which followed a canonical way of life rather than a Benedictine rule allowed the women in the community to lead a lifestyle that must have been remarkably appealing to an aristocratic audience. Not only could the canonesses wear secular

[46] *Institutio Sanctimonialium Aquisgranensis*, in Albert Werminghoff (ed.), MGH Conc. 2.1 (Hanover, 1906), pp. 421-455. While the *Institutio Sanctimonialium* is the rule which was explicitly for early medieval canonesses, it is important to note that convents were able to combine these observances with other rules or practices. The practices recorded in the *Institutio Sanctimonialium*, as well as the *Institutio Canonicorum* and the Rule of Chrodegang sketch the broad outlines of the canonical life that female monasteries followed, but individual communities would likely have a set of precepts and customs tailored to their own needs.
[47] Rainer Kahsnitz, 'The Gospel Book of Abbess Swanhild of Essen in the John Rylands Library', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 53 (1970/1971), p. 126.
[48] *Institutio Sanctimonialium* 20, pp. 451-2.
[49] *Institutio Sanctimonialium* 12-13, pp. 446-8.
[50] *Institutio Sanctimonialium* 21, p. 452.
[51] Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 86-90; Parisse, 'Les Chanoinesses', p. 123.
[52] *Institutio Sanctimonialium* 9, pp. 444-5; Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 92-6. The same precept for retaining the usufruct of property is seen in the rules for male canons: Barrow, *The Clergy*, p. 78.

clothing, eat an aristocratic diet, live in their own residences and continue to take an active part in their families' affairs, including leaving the convent to marry if needed, but they also gained the benefits that came with a religious life: enhancing the spiritual qualifications of their family and receiving a comprehensive education to boot.[53] These canonical houses were perfectly attuned to the aristocratic lifestyle of the ninth- and tenth-century world, and historians have rightly noted that this must have formed part of their appeal.[54]

Evidently, convents of canonesses were attractive options for aristocrats; and if we consider this in conjunction with the timeline of Saxony's monastic development, we gain a more precise understanding of why there was such a wave of prestigious female monastic foundations in this region. Due to the comparatively late conversion of Saxony to Christianity, the majority of monasteries in the region were founded after the Aachen synod in 816/817, where the reforms promoted by Benedict of Aniane were recognised by Louis the Pious. In particular, this synod promoted the *Institutio Canonicorum* and the *Institutio Sanctimonialium*, the monastic rules governing canons and canonesses respectively. Monastic foundations were now given the choice whether to follow the Benedictine Rule or these new canonical *institutiones*.[55] As such, from the origins of Saxon monasticism, founders had the option, with the stamp of both imperial and ecclesiastical approval, of choosing whether they wanted to establish a canonical rather than Benedictine institution.

It is not a coincidence, therefore, that Saxony saw a wave of new foundations from the ninth century onwards which opted for the canonical life.[56] Indeed, setting up a new canonical institution had a useful political outcome for Saxon aristocrats as well, by sending a clear message about their support for their new Carolingian rulers. As Wilhelm Kohl has suggested, establishing monasteries was a way for Saxon nobles to visibly indicate their integration into

[53] The central role of houses of canonesses in the education of Saxon nobility has been pointed out by Parisse in 'Les Chanoinesses', pp. 107, 121.
[54] Ibid., p. 126; Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit*, p. 193; Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens GA, 1983), p. 182.
[55] Mayke de Jong, 'Carolingian Monasticism: The Power of Prayer' in Rosamond McKitterick (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume II c. 700 - c. 900* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 629-633; Barrow, *The Clergy*, pp. 81-4.
[56] It is also worth noting that Herford, which was one of the earliest monastic foundations in Saxony, established around 800, was refounded from Corbie as a house of secular canonesses as part of the Aniane reforms. Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians, 751-987* (Harlow, 1983), p. 118. For more on the reshaping of the ecclesiastical landscape of Saxony in the ninth century, see Caspar Ehlers, *Die Integration Sachsens in das fränkische Reich (751-1024)* (Göttingen, 2007), pp. 52-102.

the *Reichsaristokratie*. By setting up a Christian foundation, aristocrats could signal their political support for Louis the Pious, Louis the German or Louis the Younger, emphasising their membership in an empire-wide phenomenon of monastic patronage.[57] That these were canonical houses only strengthened the aristocratic nature of this display of allegiance, by increasing the social prestige of the institutions in question. The origins of Saxony's unique experience of female monasticism are firmly embedded in the context of Saxony's conversion and the wider development of Carolingian monasticism.

Saxony's experience of monastic reform also heightened the appeal of canonical institutions in the region in comparison with other areas of the empire. Whereas West Francia and certain areas of East Francia saw waves of different reform movements sweep across them through the tenth century, Saxony remained relatively unaffected by reformed monasticism. Aside from Empress Adelheid's support for Cluny in the 960s, due to the monastery's close relationship with the Burgundian kingdom of her birth, the Ottonian dynasty had little demonstrable interest in promoting monastic reform. The Gorze reforms were primarily concentrated in Lotharingia, and made little headway in the eastern duchies of the empire. While there was an increasing interest in reformed monasticism in Bavaria, this was mainly at the end of the tenth century under Henry II, who had a demonstrably different attitude towards monastic reform than his Ottonian predecessors.[58] However, there remained active opposition to these ideas of monastic reform in the early tenth century, with several prominent churchmen openly showing their anti-reform sentiments.[59] Moreover, Saxony remained particularly resilient to the influence of reformed monasticism, with only three male monasteries and one female monastery being reformed.[60]

[57] Wilhelm Kohl, 'Bemerkungen zur Typologie der Frauenklöster des 9. Jahrhunderts im westlichen Sachsen' in *Untersuchungen zu Kloster und Stift* 68 (Göttingen, 1980), pp. 112-139.
[58] On Adelheid, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Rhinocerous Bound: Cluny in the Tenth Century* (Philadelphia, 1982), pp. 51-3; On Bavaria, see Adam S. Cohen, 'The Art of Reform in a Bavarian Nunnery Around 1000', *Speculum* 74:4 (1999), pp. 1000-1. For more on the tenth-century reform movements, see Steven Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process: Realities and Representations in Medieval Flanders, 900-1100* (New York, 2013).
[59] These included Ekkehard of St Gall, Thietmar of Merseburg, and Lampert of Hersfeld. As the tenth century progressed, however, there was a growing reformist influence, particularly in Bavaria under Henry II. Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages: 800-1056* (London, 1991), p. 244.
[60] The male monasteries were Corvey, Memleben and Berge, and the female monastery was Herford. Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 244.

As such, with no real drive by reformers casting strict Benedictine institutions as being superior to canonical institutions, and less pervasive rhetoric around the superior value of male reformed monasteries as commemorative centres, houses for canonesses in Saxony were less likely to encounter the kinds of criticisms that their counterparts in other regions faced. The comparatively low number of Benedictine nunneries in Saxony must have also helped boost the credentials of houses of canonesses.[61] Whereas nunneries which had followed a monastic rule for centuries could be held up favourably against the newly established houses for canonesses in the rest of the empire, in Saxony the oldest and most venerable monastic foundations for women were for canonesses.

Thus, we can see the clear appeal of foundations for canonesses in Saxony for those aristocrats who were looking to support a monastic foundation. Monasteries provided a way for a widow to prevent family from wresting back control of the property that she had inherited, but this was by no means the only reason for aristocrats to establish or dedicate a daughter to a house of canonesses.[62] For example, the grants of property which were given to the church on the entrance of a girl or woman into the community were not alienated from her completely. This meant that families could ensure that their relative was well provided for, and able to lead an appropriately aristocratic lifestyle, as their grants would serve as a guaranteed precarial income during her time in the community.[63]

Consequently, by entering a daughter into convent of canonesses – and perhaps even founding one for that purpose – noble patrons could effectively hit two birds with one stone: they ensured the aristocratic upbringing of their daughter as well as gaining the spiritual benefits of a donation to the church. Moreover, entering a daughter into a convent of canonesses did not prevent her leaving the community later to continue a secular life. Whereas Benedictine

[61] Some of the Benedictine nunneries in Saxony were founded by major convents of canonesses themselves from the 970s onwards, around the same period that Memleben and Berge were being reformed: Gandersheim founded the nunnery at Seesen in 973 (DOII 35); Quedlinburg founded a nunnery in the town itself in 986 as well as the nunnery of St Andreas at Walbeck in 992 (DOIII 81).
[62] It is worth noting convents were not the only option that wealthy widows had if they wanted to use an ecclesiastical institution for financial security. Timothy Reuter noted that a number of lay women donated their property to the bishopric of Paderborn in return for guaranteed life rents. Timothy Reuter, 'Property transactions and social relations between rulers, bishops and nobles in early eleventh-century Saxony: the evidence of the *Vita Meinwerci*' in Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (eds), *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 179.
[63] The same principle is seen in the *Institutio Canonicorum*, with boys not being defined as oblates to the community or church, but rather *nutriti* (fosterlings). They retained their property in usufruct as financial support during their education. Barrow, *The Clergy*, p. 185.

nunneries did require a vow of celibacy, with stricter requirements on monastic enclosure, houses of canonesses provided a more flexible lifestyle for the women in the community, who were even able to leave to be married. During their childhood, the girls in the community had the added spiritual security of the church providing an extra level of protection against abduction, while their parents could arrange betrothals if they so wished.[64] If families did wish to have their daughters enter the community permanently, then they received the long-term benefit of liturgical commemoration by the canonesses. As these institutions had been approved by Louis the Pious himself under the reforms of Benedict of Aniane, and reformed Benedictine monasteries were not a major presence in the region, the liturgical ability of houses of canonesses to act as commemorative centres was not brought into question.

Unsurprisingly, when aristocratic Saxon families were considering which kind of monastic institution to establish or support, female monasteries had a large number of benefits to recommend them. While male monastic foundations, either following the Benedictine rule or the *Institutio Canonicorum*, were still attractive options, houses of canonesses were able to play a useful set of social functions for daughters who were destined for both religious and secular lives, demonstrably widening their appeal to a noble audience. It has already been noted that noble families dominated the list of founders of female monasteries in ninth- and tenth-century Saxony, with bishops apparently preferring to establish male foundations.[65] We also see repeated references to the proudly aristocratic nature of these communities, with the Quedlinburg Annals assuring the reader that the community was established with women that were not of low birth, but rather were selected from the highest ranks of Saxon society.[66] While it may be tempting to see convents as quiet retirement homes providing security for widows in their old age, this view obscures the multifaceted role these institutions played in Saxon society.[67] A community made up of elite women, who were still very much engaged in the

[64] An example of this where the exception demonstrates the rule is the abduction of Liutgard from Quedlinburg by her fiancé, and the severe reactions against this act by the abbess of Quedlinburg in Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon* 4.40-4.42, ed. Robert Holtzmann, MGH SRG NS 9 (Hanover, 1935), pp. 176-181. Translated in David A. Warner, *Ottonian Germany: The* Chronicon *of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester, 2001), pp. 180-1.
[65] Michel Parisse, *Religieux et religieuses en Empire du X^e au XII^e siècle* (Paris, 2011), p. 126.
[66] *AQ* 937, p. 460.
[67] For example, Hedwig Röckelein suggested that in the Early Middle Ages, 'aristocratic and royal widows found in convents a quiet, protected place for their old age'. Röckelein, 'Founders, Donors, and Saints: Patrons of Nuns' Convents' in Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Susan Marti (eds), *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism From the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, trans. Dietlinde Hamburger (New York, 2008), p. 215.

affairs of their families, made these institutions focal points in not just the social, but also the political landscape of Saxony.

Familial *memoria*

Of course, the religious activity of women was clearly a crucial motivation for founding a convent; and Leyser and Althoff's arguments that Saxon aristocrats held the commemorative actions of women in particularly high esteem are compelling. However, as with Leyser's views on the demographic and social causes for Saxony's wave of female monasteries, it is also worth re-examining Althoff's arguments on the competition for noble or royal *memoria* between institutions as an explanation for Saxon monastic development through the tenth century. The desire for liturgical commemoration for yourself, your family and your friends was undeniably a central motivation in establishing a monastic foundation in the early medieval world. The continued support of monasteries, both female and male, by the Liudolfing/Ottonian dynasty in the form of diplomas with prayer clauses and references to the *memoria* of the donor's family clearly signals the strong interest in providing funds to communities which would take on commemorative duties.

Althoff's view of a single *memoria*, however, which encompassed all the members of a family and was institutionalised within one monastic foundation at a time, does not quite mesh with the way that these relationships played out in the evidence we have. The Ottonian family, to take one prominent example, was constantly fighting amongst itself, with brothers pushing their own claims for power against each other; uncles trying to seize the throne from nephews; and mothers- and daughters-in-law often on hostile terms. To see this wider Ottonian 'house' as possessing some kind of institutional, formalised commemorative policy which was agreed on by all members of the dynasty and then implemented without change over 150 years is to see a level of co-operation and consensus amongst the Ottonians which is not reflected in the political developments of the same period.

The resulting image of the Ottonian dynasty's relationships with the convents they founded in Saxony can seem like a zero-sum game. The commemorative responsibilities of the Ottonians are seen as indivisible, with the gain of one monastery in celebrating the *memoria* of the family resulting in the loss of another in its own memorial role. As such, the relationships between these institutions are cast as fiercely competitive, with each monastery trying to emphasise its

own superior position at the expense of its rivals.[68] But this image overlooks the wealth of evidence that we have for the ability of the Ottonian rulers to charge multiple foundations with commemorative duties. The foundation of Quedlinburg in 936 did not erase the relationship that Gandersheim had with the Ottonian family, nor did the community at Gandersheim cease all commemoration for their previous founders and patrons. Indeed, the idea of a unified *memoria* of the Ottonians which could only be housed in one institution at a time seems a peculiar strategy to adopt. The spiritual benefits of commemoration would be surely increased for a family if they had multiple institutions praying for their souls. As Johannes Fried has pointed out, simply because a family was entered into a necrology for one institution does not mean that they cut all their ties to other commemorative centres and traditions.[69]

If we restrict ourselves to seeing a single *memoria* for the Ottonians then we cannot fully comprehend the grants that Ottonian rulers issued to numerous monastic institutions, both male and female, over the course of the tenth century.[70] Instead, we need to consider the possibility of multiple strands of *memoria* within a family, influenced by the individual needs of donors responding to their own political situations. Providing for the liturgical commemoration of one's ancestors, family and friends was undeniably a spiritual activity, but that does not prevent it from also being a political act. Accordingly, the specific contextual motivations behind each memorial donation need to be examined if we are to gain a clearer understanding of how *memoria* functioned in Saxon society.[71]

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[68] A striking expression of this idea of competition is seen in Althoff, 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg', pp. 123-144.

[69] Johannes Fried, 'Zur Methode der Nekrologauswertung. Bemerkung zu einem neuen Buch', *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 135 (1987), p. 98. See also Wagner, 'Das Gebetsgedenken', p. 17.

[70] See Wagner, 'Das Gebetsgedenken', pp. 4-7 on commemorative diplomas. Althoff notes the commemoration of the Ottonians/Billungs at other institutions, but he casts them as houses that were instructed by the homes of the *memoria*, and subordinate to them. Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien*, p. 241.

[71] On the performative nature of diplomas and commemoration, see Geoffrey Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas: The West Frankish Kingdom (840-987)* (Turnhout, 2012).

Thus, by paying close attention to the role of female houses in the political situation of Saxony, and how developments in this sphere affected the relationship between rulers and convents, this thesis will test the arguments which dominate current historiography on convents in tenth-century Saxony. In addition to this, the following study will consider a further element which affected the development of Saxon female monasticism, which has been somewhat overlooked in the scholarship on this topic. As the Ottonian dynasty consolidated their power over the course of the tenth century, the number of monasteries which were able to achieve the status of royal or imperial foundations in Saxony steadily increased as well. In Saxony in particular, we see an ever-growing number of female institutions which are designated as royal/imperial monasteries by historians based on their legal status. Those monasteries which received grants of royal protection, in that they were given over into the king's *defensio et tuitio* and were granted immunity from having royal agents enter into the monastery's lands, are considered to have thus achieved the legal status of a royal monastery, and consequently a closer bond with the king which led to greater security.[72]

While this is a category which is widely used in the study of monasticism in the Christian West to denote those institutions which had strong relationships with the rulers of various regions, the role of royal monasteries has been singled out as especially significant in the history of the Ottonian Empire. Royal monasteries play a central role in the concept of the *Reichskirche*, or imperial church system. As the Ottonian Empire showed a relative lack of formal state institutions, historians have instead suggested that the Ottonians governed their empire through the medium of church institutions, promoting their aristocratic supporters as bishops, abbots and abbesses, who then effectively governed the areas under their jurisdiction on the emperor's behalf.[73] The prominent royal convents of Gandersheim, Quedlinburg, Herford and Essen,

[72] For a comprehensive overview to the various kinds of proprietary monasteries, including royal institutions, see Susan Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West*, Oxford, 2006. For more on development of immunities, see Paul Fouracre, 'Eternal light and earthly needs: practical aspects of the development of Frankish immunities' in Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (eds), *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 53-81; Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Manchester, 1999).
[73] For a critique of the concept of a *Reichskirchensystem*, see Timothy Reuter, 'The 'imperial church system' of the Ottonian and Salian rulers: a reconsideration' in Janet L. Nelson (ed.), *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 325-354.

which Ottonian emperors used as models for certain sets of legal privileges in diplomas for other convents, are thus considered to be exemplars of this phenomenon.

However, for all the emphasis that has been placed on royal monasteries, particularly those for women in Saxony, as a way to explain how the Ottonian political system functioned, there has been comparatively little attention paid to how this relationship was expressed in reality. While we can point to a set of legal privileges as the marker of being a royal monastery, the question remains of how this affected the relationship that these institutions had with their rulers. How was the relationship between ruler and individual convent constructed, and how did it change over time? Did all the royal convents in Saxony enjoy the same kind of relationship with the ruler, or were there variations within this category that need further study?

GANDERSHEIM AND QUEDLINBURG

As such, in order to gain a better understanding of the path of female monastic development in Saxony; to reconsider the arguments that currently dominate the historiography on this topic; and to explore the question of what it meant to be a royal convent in ninth- and tenth-century Saxony, this thesis closely examines the history of two convents in order to see how their relationship with the rulers of Saxony evolved over time. The monasteries of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg both fit several criteria which make them useful subjects for this study. Both institutions were founded by the same family, with Gandersheim established by Duke Liudolf and Oda around 852, and Quedlinburg established under Otto I in 936. As such, both convents are considered to be Ottonian family houses, particularly as they were both led by daughters of Ottonian emperors through the tenth century. Consequently, Gandersheim and Quedlinburg are seen as model royal monasteries, possessing the closest possible relationship with the kings and emperors that ruled Saxony, and taking a central role on the Ottonian political stage.

Both institutions were also centres of textual production, producing their own works of history in the tenth and early eleventh centuries, namely, the *Gesta Ottonis* and *Primordia* of Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, and the anonymous Quedlinburg Annals. These texts, produced at the convents themselves, give us the ability to see these communities' representations of their relationship to the Ottonian dynasty and to the rulers. The texts that these convents produced have heavily influenced the ideas around the social role and commemorative function of Saxon

aristocratic women which feed into our current understanding of Ottonian monastic history. By subjecting these sources to a detailed examination, carefully considering their various aims, influences and contextual pressures, the following chapters will provide new insights into why these convents chose to represent their history, and the history of the Ottonian dynasty, in the manner that they did.

While Gandersheim and Quedlinburg are the focuses of this study, it should be noted that there are several other convents which are equally deserving subjects of similar attention. For example, the convent of Essen was led by an Ottonian daughter and had a prestigious literary and artistic reputation. Herford was the oldest convent in Saxony with strong links to both the Carolingian dynasty and the Ottonian family. Nordhausen was founded by Queen Mathilda and produced the two *vitae* of their founder. All are significant monastic institutions whose relationships with the rulers of Saxony merit closer attention. However, due to Gandersheim and Quedlinburg sharing all the elements of foundation by the Ottonian/Liudolfing family, abbesses from the Ottonian family, and the production of historical works, in addition to constraints of space, this thesis will focus on a comparison between these two convents.

Moreover, following Althoff's influential article on the two monasteries, it is not uncommon for historians to refer to Gandersheim and Quedlinburg as essentially identical institutions without assessing the differences between the two foundations. By considering the development of these two institutions separately in terms of their relationship with the rulers of Saxony, and their status as royal convents, we can thus gain a more accurate view of how similar Gandersheim and Quedlinburg truly were, and, indeed, what the limitations are for using broader labels of royal monasteries or *memoria* centres to describe institutions without considering the possible shades of variation within these categories.[74]

To track these institutions' development across the ninth and tenth centuries, we will concentrate on two points in each convent's history: the establishment of the institution and its acquisition of royal status; and the later decision to commission a historical work which recorded the origins of the monastery. The following chapter examines the foundation of Gandersheim in the mid-ninth century by the Liudolfing family, setting their decision to

[74] For example, Althoff treats *memoria* centres as effectively the same, which elides the differences between institutions like the bishopric of Merseburg and the convent of Gandersheim, which were two very dissimilar institutions. Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien*, p. 237.

establish a community for canonesses firmly in the context of late Carolingian Saxony. This is commonly seen as the moment at which the Liudolfings set out on the path to taking the royal and then imperial throne in East Francia. However, the early years of Gandersheim's history, and its relationship with the second generation of Liudolfings, the monasteries of Corvey and Herford, and the recently crowned King Louis the Younger in East Francia reveal that the path of the convent to acquiring royal protection in 877 was not as straight-forward as it may first appear.

The third chapter moves into the tenth century, considering the narrative of Gandersheim's foundation that was put forward by Hrotsvitha, the monastery's famous poet. Writing a century after the foundation of Gandersheim, Hrotsvitha put forward a new version of the convent's history, one which cast Liudolf's wife, Oda, as the central figure in the origin story. By considering the political developments of the mid- to late-tenth century, and the changing position of Gandersheim in the reign of Otto II, this chapter reassesses what Hrotsvitha's motivations were in creating this female-driven version of her convent's foundation story.

Of course, the tenth-century history of Gandersheim must be assessed in light of the foundation of Quedlinburg in 936, the convent which became one of the most prominent political centres under the Ottonian dynasty. Chapter four looks at the motivations behind Quedlinburg's establishment, and the relationship that the monastery had with Otto I before his daughter, Mathilda, was consecrated as abbess there in 966. This section pays particular attention to the political function of Quedlinburg, and how Otto utilised this new royal convent in the turbulent first decades of his reign.

The final chapter considers the commissioning of the Quedlinburg Annals by Abbess Adelheid, Otto II's daughter and Otto III's sister, soon after the accession of Henry II to the throne in 1002. As with Hrotsvitha, the Quedlinburg Annalist foregrounded the role of a woman, Queen Mathilda, in the foundation story for the convent. This chapter explores how the memory of Queen Mathilda's involvement in the establishment of Quedlinburg developed over the course of the tenth century, and why Adelheid and her Annalist used Mathilda to comment on the relationship of Quedlinburg to the Ottonian dynasty. Although each chapter focuses on these particular moments in each convent's history, assembling a set of snapshots of institutional development over time, the broader narrative of how female monasticism, and royal convents

in particular, evolved within the social and political context of late Carolingian and Ottonian Saxony will be traced across the whole thesis.

While this thesis centres on the history of two monasteries in Saxony, the approach taken here and the sources being considered means this study has wider implications for the history of Ottonian Germany and Western Europe in the tenth century. The example of Saxon female monasticism, based on the ideas of Leyser and Althoff, has been used to make comparisons with the development of monasticism in other areas.[75] In particular, the development of female monasteries in Ottonian Germany has been used as a reference point for Anglo-Saxon England. The relative wealth of information coming from Saxony has served as a contrast for those interested in the experience of religious women in England, to make sense of their own, more fragmentary, evidence base. As such, the ideas and historiography on Saxon convents has left a wider impression on early medieval scholarship. Of course, this approach is not restricted to the history of female monasticism alone, but has been applied more widely, with the German experience being used to make comparisons on a variety of subjects. The recent work of Levi Roach on assemblies in tenth-century England, for example, draws heavily on the historiography on contemporary Ottonian assemblies to work around the lack of attention to the subject in Anglo-Saxon scholarship.[76]

As such, by interrogating the model which dominates current historiography on Saxon female monasticism, this thesis fundamentally challenges current views of tenth-century monastic history more broadly. In addition, as the origin stories being reassessed are woven into the early history of the Ottonian family itself, their representations of kings, emperors, and royal/imperial women have been frequently used to comment on the nature of tenth-century

[75] For example, Saxon female monasticism has been compared to other regions in the following works: Phillipe Buc, 'Italian Hussies and German Matrons: Liutprand of Cremona on Dynastic Legitimacy', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 29 (1995), p. 217; Sarah Foot, 'Dynastic Strategies: The West Saxon Royal Family in Europe' in David Rollason, Conrad Leyser and Hannah Williams (eds), *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century: Studies in Honour of Wilhelm Levison (1876-1947)* (Turnhout, 2010), p. 238; Sean Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity: The* Lives *of Mathilda and the* Epitaph *of Adelheid* (Washington D.C., 2004), pp. 23-6; John Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform: Lotharingia c. 850-1000* (Oxford, 2001), p. 164; Michel Parisse, 'Des veuves au monastères' in *idem* (ed.), *Veuves et veuvage dans le haut Moyen Age* (Paris, 1993), pp. 255-6; Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Female Sanctity: Public and Private Roles, ca. 500-1100' in Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (eds), *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Athens GA, 1988), p. 120; Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, pp. 349-356; Yorke, *Nunneries*, p. 106.

[76] Levi Roach, *Kingship and Consent in Anglo-Saxon England, 871-978: Assemblies and the State in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 1-26.

kingship, queenship, royal power and familial identity. Consequently, the following study not only provides a new examination of the history of female monasticism in Saxony, and thus in Western Europe more broadly, but also adds to our understanding of the tumultuous period from the end of the Carolingian empire down to the eleventh-century and the origins of the high medieval polities that emerged thereafter.

And so, to begin, let us return to the banks of a river in Saxony in 852, where a small community of noble girls were brought together by Duke Liudolf and his wife Oda to become the new convent of Gandersheim.

Chapter 2

THE ORIGINS OF GANDERSHEIM

Soon after their marriage, the noble couple of Liudolf and Oda committed themselves to establishing a convent. They had a small monastic church near the river Gand in their possession, which would be a suitable home for the group of young noblewomen they had gathered together to form the new community. Their young daughter, Hathumoda, was given into the care of her maternal aunt, Addila, so that she could be instructed in how to lead this new convent. With the permission of King Louis the German, Liudolf and Oda set off to Rome to gain relics and a blessing for their new monastery from Pope Sergius II. Returning with the relics of Saints Innocent and Anastasius, as well as papal protection for their foundation, the couple began to build their new monastery at Gandersheim. Sadly, both Liudolf and Hathumoda died before the building was completed and the church consecrated on All Saints' Day, 881.[1] The community, however, continued on under the guidance of Oda, who lived inside the monastery's enclosure, and her daughters Gerberga and Christine succeeded as the second and third abbesses in turn. Oda convinced her children and grandchildren to continue to support the community and remained the maternal guiding figure of the community until her death in 919, the same year her grandson, Henry I, became king of East Francia. This, according to the *Primordia coenobiis Gandesheimensis*, is the narrative of Gandersheim's history before the rise of the Ottonian dynasty to royal status. The wealth of detail that the *Primordia* gives, and the value of an account coming from within the community itself, means our view of the foundation of the convent and its early relationship with the Liudolfing family is heavily based on this text.

The strong and continued interest of Liudolf, Oda and their descendants in supporting Gandersheim from 852 down to 919, which the *Primordia* clearly illustrates, means that the foundation of the monastery stands out as a crucial point in the history of the Liudolfing family.

[1] Liudolf died in 866; Hathumoda in 874. The day and year of the church's consecration is given in Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, *Primordia de coenobii Gandesheimensis*, 372, 375-398, in Walter Berschin (ed.), *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca Scriptorium Graecorum et Romanorum Teubeneriana (Munich, 2001), pp. 320-1. The day and year of Hathumoda's death is given in Agius of Corvey, *Vita Hathumodae* 29, in G. H. Pertz (ed.), MGH SS 4 (Hanover, 1941), p. 175.

The decision to establish a community of canonesses, who were charged with commemorating the ancestors and friends of the family, is generally understood as an attempt by the Liudolfings to solidfy their social and political influence in Saxony. The liturgical activities of the community at Gandersheim could centralise and coherently express Liudolfing familial identity. In turn, the Liudolfings were able to accrue a wider network of friends and followers, boosting their political power in Saxony, prompting their rise to ducal and then royal status.[2] The foundation of Gandersheim was therefore not just the establishment of a new monastery: it was the establishment of a familial memorial centre, the first step on the path that would eventually lead to the Liudolfings establishing the new German empire. Unsurprisingly, then, our understanding of the origins of Gandersheim has serious implications for our understanding of the way that local nobles were able to secure royal status for themselves following the disintegration of the Carolingian Empire.

However, looking at the foundation of Gandersheim as the origin point for the Saxon Empire means assessing the establishment of this community through the lens of the following 150 years of history. The later success of the Liudolfings in becoming kings and emperors should not colour our perception of what the first two generations of the family were aiming to do at Gandersheim, well before there was any hint that that Carolingian Empire would end. If we only think about Gandersheim's origins in an attempt to pinpoint the moment at which the Ottonian dynasty first became possible, then we run the risk of anachronism. For example, while we get a very detailed picture of Gandersheim's foundation from Hrotsvitha, with great emphasis laid on how the Liudolfings rose to the top of Saxon politics due to their support of the community, her account came 120 years after the events she was describing. By that point, Gandersheim had evolved dramatically from the small, rural institution of the 850s to a major imperial political centre, led by an abbess who was the niece of the first Ottonian emperor. Hrotsvitha and her abbess, Gerberga, had their own particular set of reasons to recount the origin story of their institution in the way that they did, which we will explore in chapter three. Simply because Hrotsvitha was a member of the convent does not mean that we can assume she is providing the most historically accurate account of the institution's foundation.[3]

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[2] Gerd Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien im Spiegel ihrer Memorialuberlieferung Studien zum Totengedenken der Billunger und Ottonen* (Munich, 1984), pp. 243-8; Ludger Körntgen, 'Gandersheim und die Ottonen' in Regine Marth (ed.), *Das Gandersheimer Runenkästchen. Internationales Kolloquium, Braunschweig, 24. – 26. Marz 1999* (Braunschweig, 2000), pp. 121-3.
[3] For example, see Körntgen, 'Gandersheim', p. 122.

As such, the object of the current chapter is to reconsider the establishment of Gandersheim from sources written at the time. In doing so, we can compare the account given in these texts with the image of Gandersheim as the focal point of Liudolfing identity and *memoria*. Fortunately, we have a source focused on Gandersheim and its history written shortly after the death of the first abbess, Hathumoda. Gandersheim's origins and early history forms the basis of the *Vita Hathumodae* and the *De obitu Hathumodae dialogus*, both written shortly after 874 by Agius, a monk at Corvey. Of course Agius, like Hrotsvitha, had his own agenda for representing Gandersheim and the Liudolfings in the manner that he did. However, by paying close attention to Agius's aims for the text, we can still use his works to consider the web of relationships in which the monastery was set in the 870s, well before Henry I became king. By assessing Gandersheim's relationships in sources from the ninth century, we can compare this picture with the one provided by Hrotsvitha a century later. This chapter provides a reassessment of the early history of Gandersheim firmly set in the context of late Carolingian Saxony, rather than seeing it as the dawn of the Ottonian era.

In particular, the following assessement emphasises that the relationship Gandersheim had with the Liudolfing family was not absolutely assured across the whole of the ninth century. While the monastery was founded by Liudolf and Oda, and led by their daughter, many noble *Eigenklöster* fell into obscurity after the death of the first generation of their founding family. Gandersheim's acquisition of a form of royal protection in 877 which emphasised the involvement of the second generation of the Liudolfings at the convent was by no means inevitable. Indeed, what this chapter will show is that Agius was able to make a strong case for Gandersheim being taken into royal protection which did not necessarily imply the continued involvement of the Liudolfing family at the monastery. However, the way in which royal politics unfolded in the late 870s meant that there were a specific set of reasons for Liudolf and Oda's children to reassert their association with Gandersheim. The provision of royal protection and status for Gandersheim in 877 ensured that this monastery retained its Liudolfing identity until the end of the ninth century, but this was less to do with the family having a set strategy to use the foundation as a memorial centre in the model that Althoff suggested, and more to do with the particular context in which its royal protection was granted. But first, let us return to Agius's texts, to track how and why this took place.

GANDERSHEIM'S RELATIONSHIPS IN THE *VITA HATHUMODAE*

The Liudolfings

Agius of Corvey's *Vita Hathumodae* is a valuable source for the early history of Gandersheim. Written in the mid to late 870s by Agius, a monk at the major Saxon monastery of Corvey, it narrated the life and death of Hathumoda, the first abbess of the community, giving a vivid hagiographical depiction of life inside the convent. It does not stand alone: Agius added a *Dialogus*, an imagined discussion between himself and the canonesses of Gandersheim, intended to console the grief-stricken community after their abbess's death. That Agius was the author of the two texts is beyond doubt, as he names himself in both. Though he does not name his monastery, we do know that there was a monk called Agius who had entered Corvey during Abbot Warin's leadership (826-856). On top of that, the discovery of another set of poems by an Agius in the same style as the dialogue, dedicated to Rimbert of Corvey has led to a consensus among historians that it was the same Agius and he was indeed from Corvey.[4]

Agius, in addition to naming himself, repeatedly recounted his own relationship with Gandersheim, and with Hathumoda especially, throughout the *Vita*. In the opening preface, Agius noted how he was 'unable to put into words either the kind of charity you have been accustomed to show me or of what sort and how great were the benefits I received from her in particular'. At her deathbed, Agius was present, holding a cross before her eyes as she exhaled her last breath.[5] Throughout the text, Agius was a constant presence in Hathumoda's life. This close relationship has led to the suggestion that he was somehow related to Hathumoda, either as her brother or her paternal uncle.[6]

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[4] Frederick Paxton, *Anchoress & Abbess in Ninth-Century Saxony: The* Lives *of Liutberga of Wendhausen and Hathumoda of Gandersheim* (Washington D.C., 2009), pp. 21-2.

[5] 'Dicere enim non possumus, vel qualem omnes vos communiter nobis caritatem exhibere consueveritis, vel qualia et quanta ab ipsa specialiter beneficia consecuti fuerimus.' Quote from Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 1, p. 166; see also Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 24, p. 174; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, pp. 119-120, 138-9.

[6] Pertz argued for Agius as Hathumoda's brother in MGH SS 4, p. 165, n. 5; Sabine Krüger also saw Agius as Hathumoda's brother; Reinhard Wenskus and Hans Goetting, on the other hand, suggested that he was her paternal uncle. Hans Goetting, *Die hildesheimer Bischöfe von 815 bis 1221 (1227)* (Berlin, 1984), pp. 85-6, citing Sabine Krüger, *Studien zur sächsichen Grafschaftverfassung* (Göttingen, 1950), p. 67 and Reinhard Wenskus, *Sächsicher Stammesadel und fränkischer Reichsadel* (Göttingen, 1976), pp. 71, 111.

While there has been no agreement about the exact relationship of Agius to the Liudolfings, he presents himself as undeniably close to Hathumoda in the *Vita*. At one point Hathumoda forbade Agius to leave the monastery after one of his visits, and begged him to travel to her immediately if he heard that she was ill; at another Agius recorded how much care she showed for him, 'with how much anxiety she asked for me if I stepped out of the cell for even a little while, with how much assiduousness, sighing my name, she tried to speak much with me, with what pain she sighed that I had come so late.'[7] According to him, Hathumoda was only tempted to eat food that Agius had prepared. It was only for his sake that would she try to remain cheerful in the face of her illness.[8] If the bond between Agius and his subject in the *Vita* reveals that he was a member of the Liudolfing family himself, then it further strengthens the idea of Gandersheim as a focal point for Liudolfing identity. The creation of a hagiography for the first abbess, the daughter of the founding couple, by her brother/uncle who depicts his repeated presence at the monastery, fits perfectly in the view that Gandersheim was a familial memorial centre, harnessing the power of female spiritual activity as a way to bolster the family's political influence.

Yet, the image of the Liudolfing family in the *Vita Hathumodae* is not uniformly glowing. Part of this can be attributed to the hagiographic nature of the *Vita Hathumodae* affecting the way in which Hathumoda and her family are presented. For example, while Agius presents a familiar narrative, that Hathumoda became the abbess of Gandersheim after her parents brought back relics from Rome and founded the convent on their family lands, Liudolf and Oda are not so much presented as pious monastic founders as a secular noble couple intent on their daughter behaving as a noblewoman should. Agius even noted from the outset of the *Vita* that he only introduced the pair, without naming them, in order to demonstrate Hathumoda's origins, to show where she had come from and what she had renounced in choosing the monastic life.[9] From the beginning of the *Vita*, Hathumoda's family appeared as a symbol of worldly glory in order to intensify the image of Hathumoda's holiness and piety in rejecting the secular world. In this vein, while Agius outlined her family members, including a 'brother married to the granddaughter of kings', 'her sister…joined to a king and son of a king', her

[7] Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 13, p. 171; 'cum quanta anxietate et parumper cellula egressos nos requisierit, cum quanta assiduitate nomen nostrum ingeminans plura nobiscum loqui temptaverit, cum quanto dolore nos tam tarde venisse ingemuerit.' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 19, p. 173; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 135.
[8] Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 19, p. 173.
[9] Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 1, pp. 166-7.

father, 'duke of the East Saxons' and her mother 'descending from the equally noble stock of the Franks', none is named in this passage, but all are instead left anonymous.[10] While his audience would have known exactly to whom Agius was referring, it is slightly less clear to us; the brother was either Otto or Brun, and the sister was Liutgard, who had married Louis the Younger of East Francia at some point after 866.[11] The name of her mother is revealed further on in the text, and Hathumoda's family later played a central role in Agius's *Dialogue*. Thus, their depiction here was not intended to establish them as key figures in the *Vita* itself, but rather acted to set up the noble background that Hathumoda needed to overcome.

A handful of other family members did reappear throughout the text. In particular, Gerberga and Christine, Hathumoda's sisters, were placed in the community as well and are shown lovingly tending to their sister during her illness before her death.[12] Their other sister, Queen Liutgard, did not appear directly in the *Vita*, but Agius referred to her in passing in the cries of the mourners at Hathumoda's funeral, when they bemoaned 'that her most glorious sister, our *domina* the queen, would be abandoned by such a sibling.'[13] Another very brief reference was made to an unnamed paternal aunt residing at Gandersheim, 'already quite old and feeble from age'.[14] However, the family member outwith Gandersheim to whom Agius paid the most attention was Hathumoda's mother Oda. Agius's allusions to Oda's absences from Gandersheim on several occasions imply that Oda was not a permanent resident of the monastic community during her widowhood.[15] Indeed, in chapter 18, Agius recorded 'with what great joy' Hathumoda went about her devotions when Oda 'in order to make her happy, and having realised that this was what her daughter wanted, pretended that she would henceforth not leave that spot.'[16] Her strong maternal relationship was further praised by Agius in Oda's anguish

[10] 'quod frater eius regum neptem in matrimonio habet, soror regis regi filio, digno digna iugalis coniugi iuncta est…Pater eius ex illustrissimo Saxonum genere oriundus, dux Orientalium Saxonum fuit; mater ex nobilissima aeque Francorum prosapia descendens' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 2, p. 167; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 120.
[11] Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 120, n. 2.
[12] Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 15-17, pp. 171-2.
[13] 'quam gloriosissimam sororem eius dominam nostram reginam tali germana desolatam fore dolebant.' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 26, p. 175; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 140.
[14] 'Primo omnium venerabilis amita eius, quamvis iam grandaeva et senio confecta', Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 20, p. 173; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 136.
[15] Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 17-18, p. 172. This can be contrasted with Hrotsvitha's representation of Oda, which is examined in chapter three.
[16] 'Quis autem digne explicet, quanto gaudio solita erga Deum devotione exultaverit, quod mater, cognita in hoc eius voluntate, ad eam laetificandam se iam ex illo loco non esse ituram simulaverit, Deo gratias agens, et matrem osculis demulcens, ac manibus complexans, atque sororibus, quid sibi

over Hathumoda's illness, when she was torn between tending her dying daughter on one hand and wanting to pray for her in the church so she would not have to see Hathumoda's suffering on the other, and he commended Oda for concealing her great grief on her daughter's death when she was in public.[17]

These are the only members of Hathumoda's family who appear directly in her *Vita*. Her father, Liudolf, is never named and only appears as a distant paternal figure in the early stages of the text, consenting to Hathumoda being placed in Herford, journeying to Rome 'in order to pray' and then bringing back relics for the new community. In fact, he was never explicitly given the title of founder of Gandersheim in the *Vita.* The closest Agius came to mentioning him as a founder was after they returned from Rome. 'Then summoned,' Agius said, 'Hathumoda was, by apostolic authority and with the blessing of her bishop, elected spiritual mother first of a few, and then of many sisters in a monastery established on her family's hereditary lands and given over to the Lord and to the aforesaid saints.'[18] This is not to say that Agius was implying that Liudolf was *not* the founder of the community, but rather to point out the strange reticence of Agius on actually recognising Liudolf's role as founder in the text.[19] Her brothers, Brun and Otto, who passed the community into the protection of Louis the Younger in 877, do not appear in the text aside from the brief nameless allusion to one of them in the opening section.

If Gandersheim was indeed considered to be an *Eigenklöster* of the Liudolfing family, then the lack of praise for, or indeed even attention to the pious patron men of the family is noticeable. Rather, the family members who were emphasised in the text were Hathumoda's sisters within Gandersheim, and her mother Oda. In Oda's case, however, Agius did not stress her role as a founder and patroness of Gandersheim, but instead focused on her maternal relationship with Hathumoda. Instead, he remained surprisingly quiet on the subject of the patronage bonds that the Liudolfings had with Gandersheim, especially given the suggestions that other scholars

promiserit, iterum iterumque revolvens.' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 18, p. 172; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, pp. 134-5.

[17] Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 21, 27, pp. 173. 175.

[18] 'denuo revocata, in monasterio, quod in propria hereditate fundatum, Domino et eisdem sanctis tradiderunt, cum apostolica auctoritate et episcopi sui benedictione, primo paucioribus, deinde pluribus sororibus est mater spiritalis et electa et constituta.' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 4, p. 168; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, pp. 122-3.

[19] The only source which did not cite Liudolf as the founder of Gandersheim was the 948 papal charter issued for Gandersheim by Agapit II, 115 in Harald Zimmermann (ed.), *Papsturkunden 896-1046*, Vol. 1 (Vienna, 1984), pp. 201-2. For more on this papal charter, see below, pp. 78-9, 83-9.

have made that he was a member of the family himself. The idea of Agius being either Liudolf's brother or son makes the lack of comment or praise for Liudolf, Brun and Otto difficult to reconcile.

Corvey and Herford

But if it was not a familial relationship which bound Agius and Hathumoda together, then how can we read the remarkably close link that existed between the two? Indeed, the extraordinary nature of this relationship between a monastic woman, a young abbess no less, and a monk from another community evidently sparked some contemporary concern. Agius alluded to murmurs of discontent amongst Agius's brothers and his abbot in Corvey that he had been away for so long, after Hathumoda had sent him back to his monastery, noting that they had both sinned through him remaining at Gandersheim for longer than usual.[20] Nonetheless, we see Agius at Hathumoda's deathbed, along with Bishop Marcwardus of Hildesheim and his attendants, taking a central role in the funerary rites, after his absence was excused on account of Hathumoda's illness.[21] While it is entirely likely that their relationship existed in reality, Agius left himself and Hathumoda open to serious criticism by recording a connection between a religious man and woman that could easily be misconstrued, as reference to rebukes by his abbot showed.

Consequently, we must wonder why he went to such lengths to unite himself and Hathumoda together in his text. One solution is to see Agius taking his relationship with Hathumoda as a symbolic argument for the close connection between his monastery of Corvey and the convent of Gandersheim. As others have already noted, Agius provided an initial description of Hathumoda in the *Vita* which is very reminiscent of the model of an abbess given in the Benedictine rule.[22] As Corvey itself had connections with West Frankish monastic centres which were strong proponents of the reforms introduced by Benedict of Aniane, Agius's depiction of Hathumoda as the embodiment of the monastic ideal could indicate a desire to link her, and Gandersheim through her, to the monastic influences emanating out of Corvey. By also showing the deep bonds of affection and care between Hathumoda and Agius, we can further see the *Vita* providing a metaphorical affirmation of the close relationship between the two monastic houses.

[20] Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 23, p. 174.
[21] Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 24, p. 174.
[22] Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 24.

In that vein, we should note that another monastic community occupied a central position in the *Vita Hathumodae*. Agius related that, with her parents' approval, Hathumoda was 'consecrated with the sacred veil and commended for a while to be raised under regular discipline at the monastery of Herford, which at that time was most famous for the renown of its *sanctimoniales*'.[23] Intriguingly, Agius does not mention that this was likely because the abbess of Herford at that time was Oda's aunt, Addila.[24] Despite passing over this familial connection, Agius did include a startling section where Hathumoda praised Herford effusively:

> She henceforth loved the place so much, and judged it worthy of so much reverence, that it is hard to put into words. For when, while speaking with her friends on many occasions, she made mention of the place, she would say that she would be happy if she were found worthy to be present once more with them under the *imperium* of the abbess, and even happier if she had never been forced to leave.[25]

The fulsome admiration that Agius put into Hathumoda's mouth for Herford, with the admission that she would like to place herself back under the *imperium* of the abbess of Herford, is remarkable sentiment to show coming from the abbess of another monastic community.

Herford, however, had very strong links with Agius's own monastery. Following the monastic reforms of Benedict of Aniane in 816/817, the monastery of Corbie had founded Corvey, the first successful male monastery in Saxony.[26] The establishment of this large, imperially protected monastery convinced the Saxon nobleman Waltger, who had founded Herford around 800, to transfer ownership of his convent to Louis the Pious.[27] Louis conferred privileges on Herford and passed its care over to Abbot Adalhard of Corbie, and his chosen successor, Wala

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[23] 'cum parentum voluntate sacro velamine consecrata, et Herifordensi monasterio, quod eo tempore in sanctimonialium nomine famosissimum erat, sub regulari disciplina nutrienda aliquamdiu commendata est.' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 3, pp. 167-8; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, pp. 121-2.
[24] Eric J. Goldberg, 'Popular Revolt, Dynastic Politics, and Aristocratic Factionalism in the Early Middle Ages: The Saxon Stellinga Reconsidered', *Speculum* (70:3) 1995, p. 489.
[25] 'Quem locum deinceps quanta caritate dilexerit, quanta reverentia dignum iudicaverit, non facile verbis explicare valemus. Nam cum plerumque cum familiaribus suis loquens, eius loci mentionem fecisset, felicem se fore dicebat, si iterum sub abbatissae imperio eis interesse mereretur, feliciorem, si numquam inde avelleretur.' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 3, p. 168; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 122.
[26] Corbie had founded Hethis, a small community of monks, prior to this but it had struggled due to lack of supplies. Adalhard of Corbie transferred the monks of Hethis into the new community of Corvey. Josef Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford in der benediktinischen Reformbewegung des 9. Jahrhundert', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 4 (1970), pp. 296-7.
[27] Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford', p. 298; Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians, 751-987* (Harlow, 1983), p. 118.

of Corbie. From that point onwards, Corbie, Corvey and Herford were intimately linked together. Adalhard turned to his sister, Theodrada, the abbess of Notre Dame de Soissons, and selected a new abbess for Herford, Tetta, to replace Waltger's daughter Suala. Consequently, in the 830s and 840s, Herford, Soissons, Corvey and Corbie had a set of relationships which were reinforced by familial connections between their monastic leaders, all of whom were first cousins of Charlemagne as well.[28] Agius, as a monk of Corvey, would have been strongly interested in the affairs of Herford as well.

With this in mind, we can see this section of the *Vita Hathumodae*, with Hathumoda's desire to once again submit to the *imperium* of Herford's abbess, as a way for Agius to represent the ideal relationship between the two convents. In the same way that Herford had been refounded with an abbess drawn from the community at Soissons, Hathumoda had been raised and instructed in the monastic life at Herford. Consequently, the community at Herford could feasibly claim that Gandersheim was founded from them in the same way that they had been founded from Soissons. This kind of mother-daughter institutional relationship had long antecedents in Frankish female monasticism, as a number of prestigious foundations had been established with an abbess and a starter community of nuns taken from a mother house, who provided a set of monastic customs for the daughter house as well.[29] By pointing to Hathumoda's education at Herford, her instruction in the proper observance of the monastic rule and her immediate placement at the head of the new community of Gandersheim, Agius could imply that a similar filial relationship was already in place between Herford and Gandersheim.

It is on this basis that Josef Semmler suggested that Gandersheim, under the influence of both Corvey and Herford, was actually a Benedictine nunnery rather than a house of canonesses. After all, Agius was clearly including elements from the Benedictine abbot/abbess in his depiction of Hathumoda, and Corvey and Herford were both at the forefront of the mission movement bringing monastic practice into the pagan wilderness of Saxony. Corbie and Soissons were Benedictine foundations, rather than houses of canons and canonesses, and they

[28] Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford', pp. 292, 299; McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, p. 118.
[29] For example, Chelles was founded from Jouarre, which itself was founded from Faremoutiers. *Vita Sanctae Balthildis*, 8, in Bruno Krusch (ed.), MGH SRM 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 491-3; Suzanne Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500 to 900* (Philadelphia, 1984), p. 161.

had provided abbots and abbesses for Corvey and Herford. Thus, Semmler argued, we can assume that both foundations were Benedictine houses, and he pointed to the reference in a charter from King Arnulf that Corvey and Herford followed ancient monastic discipline to prove this.[30] The references to Hathumoda being raised at Herford in Agius's *vita*, along with the Benedictine influences in the text allowed Semmler to raise the question of whether the community was in fact a daughter nunnery of Herford and thus a member of the larger Corbie-Soissons-Corvey-Herford group.[31]

Although Semmler thinks this proves that Gandersheim followed the Benedictine rule in the ninth century, the *Vita Hathumodae* gives an image of the life within the community that diverges significantly from what we would expect in a Benedictine nunnery. Although Agius stressed the piety of the life led by the canonesses, going further than what was required by a canonical rule, he still noted their ability to follow canonical, rather than Benedictine precepts. He said that the community, while not wearing the most elegant clothing, still did not wear the cheapest woolen clothing. Though they did not go outside the convent to visit their relatives or their property, they still were able to possess those properties. He noted that the women did not have servants, but this was only because Hathumoda had specifically decreed it.[32] While he stressed the holiness of Hathumoda and her community, Agius still represented Gandersheim as a house of canonesses. Moreover, while Hathumoda does look like a model Benedictine abbess, she also looks very much like the model of an abbess given in the *Institutio Sanctimonialium*.[33] Indeed, the idea that Herford was inevitably following the Benedictine rule is based on Semmler's assumption that canons and canonesses were seen as leading an inherently less worthy form of monastic life in the ninth century, a view which has now widely been reconsidered.[34] As we saw above, the 816/817 reforms provided a choice for either the Benedictine rule or the *Institutio Canonicorum/Sanctimonialium* for foundations, and Herford's association with these reforms, and with Soissons and Corbie, did not at all mean

[30] Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford', pp. 299-302.
[31] As he stated 'die Anfänge des Reichsstiftes Gandersheim standen im Zeichen der gleichen monastischen Lebensform, die Corbie und Notre-Dame de Soissons knapp vier Jahrzehnte zuvor nach Sachsen verpflanzt hatten und die Corvey und Herford im praktischen Vollzug realisierten.' Ibid., pp. 314-5. For Hathumoda as Benedictine abbess, see Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 5-10, pp. 168-170.
[32] Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 5-6, p. 168.
[33] *Institutio Sanctimonialium* 7, in Albert Werminghoff (ed.), MGH Conc. 2.1 (Hanover, 1906), pp. 442-4.
[34] Thomas Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit religiöser Frauengemeinschaften im Frühmittelalter: Die* Institutio sanctimonialium Aquisgranensis *des Jahres 816 und die Problematik der Verfassung von Frauenkommunitäten* (Göttingen, 1998), pp. 19-23.

that it was bound to follow the Benedictine rule. As for the references to 'ancient monastic discipline' in the charter of Arnulf: the *Institutio Sanctimonialium* began with excerpts from Jerome, Cyprian, Caesarius and Athanasius on how monastic women should live, all of which could claim to be equally ancient forms of monastic discipline as the Benedictine rule.[35]

Brunshausen and Fulda

Even if we did assume that Herford was a Benedictine institution, the idea that it was the mother house of Gandersheim raises a further set of issues. For example, although Agius was at pains to represent the close relationship that Herford and Corvey had with Gandersheim, his depiction of these relationships comes across more as an ideal than an assertion of fact. If Gandersheim was indeed a daughter convent of Herford, then why did Agius not state this clearly? And if Corvey had a tangible claim to direct the monastic observance of Gandersheim, then why express this through a personal relationship with a single monk, one which left both Hathumoda and Agius open to potential criticism? The answer may well lie in the equally strong ties that Gandersheim had to another powerful monastery. Although Agius never mentioned the name of the foundation where the women of Gandersheim were initially housed, we know from later sources that Hathumoda and her community resided at Brunshausen while their convent was being constructed.[36] As Hrotsvitha noted, the church of Gandersheim was consecrated in 881, meaning that Hathumoda lived and died at Brunshausen. This small monastic cell was initially built by Fulda on the family lands of the Liudolfings, in much the same way that Corbie had founded Corvey.[37] At the same time that Charlemagne had tasked Corbie with spreading Christianity into Saxony, he had also entrusted Fulda with the same assignment. However, whereas Corbie was able to eventually set up Corvey and Herford, the

[35] *Institutio Sanctimonialium* 1-6, pp. 423-442.
[36] Thankmar, *Vita Bernwardi episcopi Hildesheimensis* 12 in G. H. Pertz (ed.), MGH SS 4 (Hanover, 1841), pp. 762-3; Wolfherius, *Vita Prior Godehardii episcopi Hildesheimensis* 19 in G. H. Pertz (ed.), MGH SS 11 (Hanover, 1854), pp. 180-1. Both these sources come from Hildesheim, unsurprisingly: whereas the new foundation of Gandersheim was in the diocese of Mainz, the original foundation of Brunshausen was in Hildesheim. It was this which served as the basis for the later claim of the bishops of Hildesheim of episcopal authority over Gandersheim. Paxton, *Anchoress*, pp. 42-3.
[37] Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford', p. 313. On Gandersheim's origins at Brunshausen, see Hans Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim Vol. 1: Das reichsunmittelbare Kanonissenstift Gandersheim* (Berlin, 1973), pp. 76, 81, 289-290; Hans Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim Vol. 2*, *Das Benediktiner(innen)kloster Brunshausen, das Benediktinerinnenkloster St Marien vor Gandersheim, das Benediktinerkloster Clus, das Franziskanerkloster Gandersheim* (Berlin, 1974), pp. 22-8; Körntgen, 'Gandersheim', p. 124.

two most successful monastic foundations of the early ninth century, Brunshausen remained a small *cella*.[38]

Nonetheless, Brunshausen retained close ties to the original community at Fulda, which was itself a major force in the East Frankish kingdom.[39] Fulda's famous abbot, Hrabanus Maurus, was involved at the highest level of Carolingian politics under Louis the German, and was eventually elevated to become archbishop of Mainz after 847.[40] It was under Hrabanus's oversight that two major synods took place in the wake of the Stellinga revolt at Mainz in 847 and 852, and he was also one of the main organisers of Louis's procession through Saxony in 852.[41] Around 836, Hrabanus commissioned Rudolf, a monk at Fulda (and the author of the Fulda Annals between 835-863), to write the *Vita* of Leoba, a close companion of the missionary saint and founder of Fulda, Boniface.[42] In a later manuscript containing a selection of female saints' lives, Rudolf included a dedication of his *Vita Leobae* to 'Hadamout', a variant spelling of Hathumoda.[43] It is tempting to see the rededication of this work, which emphasised and glorified the bonds between Leoba, the abbess of Tauerbischofsheim, and Boniface, the abbot of Fulda, as an attempt by Hrabanus and Rudolf to emphasise Fulda's relationship with Gandersheim. After all, Hathumoda and her canonesses were living in a community with strong ties to Fulda. It is therefore possible that rather than the Herford and Corvey network having absolute dominance over Gandersheim and other new monasteries in the region, there was instead an atmosphere of competition for who would have the closest relationship with this new convent. This would explain why it is only in later sources, and not in the works of Agius, that we discover where it was that Hathumoda and her fellow monastic women were living. If Agius was asserting that the community of Gandersheim was closely

[38] Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford', p. 314, n. 229.
[39] For example, Brunshausen was recorded in the *Annales necrologici Fuldenses* after 875, in J. Heller and G. Waitz (eds), MGH SS 13 (Hanover, 1881), p. 218
[40] Though it should be noted that he was placed in exile at Petersburg, from 841-847 due to his inopportune support for Lothar II. Eric J. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict Under Louis the German, 817-876* (Ithaca, 2009), pp. 173-5.
[41] Ibid., pp. 164, 175.
[42] For more on the *Vita Leobae*, see James T. Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World, 690-900* (Turnhout, 2009), esp. pp. 205-211. Cf. Stephanie Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 271-300.
[43] Paxton, *Anchoress*, pp. 43-4, 74. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, p. 178. The manuscript is Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm 11321, with digital reproduction accessible online at http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0007/bsb00070306/images/index.html?fip=193.174.98.30&seite=205&pdfseitex = (accessed 22/10/2014).

associated with Herford and Corvey, he would not wish to point out that the community was currently housed in a foundation established by Fulda.

Agius was clearly crafting a history of Gandersheim which argued that it was, and should remain, closely connected to Corvey and Herford. However, he did so by eliding the equally important connections that Gandersheim had with Fulda, and minimising the involvement of the Liudolfing family, particularly Hathumoda's male relatives, at the monastery. This complicates the idea that Gandersheim was serving as a centre of familial identity and cohesion. If Agius was able to write a *vita* of Hathumoda which did not name Liudolf and cast Oda as simply the mother of the saint, then it seems that a contemporary observer was able to downplay the influence of the founding family over the direction of Gandersheim, undermining the role of this institution as the focal point of Liudolfing identity and *memoria*. We do not see in the *Vita Hathumodae* the same emphasis on Hathumoda's family as founders and supporters of the convent that Hrotsvitha later provided in the *Primordia*. Instead, Agius was more concerned with stressing the relationships that Corvey and Herford had with Gandersheim.

ROYAL PROTECTION IN THE *VITA HATHUMODAE*

There is one final party to whom Agius was appealing in the *Vita Hathumodae*. There are repeated references, both direct and indirect, by Agius to the need for Gandersheim to come under the protection of the king. Royal protection, or the monastery being given into the *tuitio* of the king, is often seen as a logical aim for any monastery.[44] By being under royal protection, monasteries could gain the support of the king as a patron, increasing the prestige of the institution and thereby gaining other patrons who wished to link themselves to the king by supporting his monastery. While it may seem somewhat of a paradox, noble founders of monasteries often sought out royal protection for their community as a way of securing not only the future of their foundation, but also their own involvement with it. Grants of royal protection would frequently include the intercession of these noble founders, enhancing their

[44] Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 62; Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an early medieval society: Ottonian Saxony* (London, 1979), pp. 68-9; Susan Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 356-364; Hedwig Röckelein, 'Founders, Donors, and Saints: Patrons of Nuns' Convents' in Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Susan Marti (eds), *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism From the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, trans. Dietlinde Hamburger (New York, 2008), p. 207; Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 24.

own *Königsnähe*, and founders could also ask for certain rights at the community, such as the right of having the abbot/abbess or advocate for the institution coming from their family.[45]

Indeed, a number of other convents in Saxony had already secured royal protection by 874. Herford had long had royal status, and its immunities were recognised again by Louis the German in a diploma from 868.[46] In 871 and 873, respectively, Louis also took the convents of Wunstorf and Lamspringe into his protection.[47] It seems that these monasteries' ability to gain royal status prompted questions about Gandersheim's need for royal protection as well. The ability of the Liudolfings to successfully place Gandersheim into the *tuitio* of Louis the Younger in 877 has been seen as a way for the family to use their monastery to secure a tangible recognition of their rising political importance in Saxony. However, if royal protection resulted in the reassertion of Liudolfing influence at Gandersheim, then Agius's comments on the need for royal protection for the convent sit awkwardly with his relative reticence on the role of the Liudolfing men at the monastery. What were Agius's motivations for making this appeal to the king in the *vita*? To solve this puzzle, we need to look more closely at how Agius made his case for Gandersheim's need for royal protection.

Agius made it no secret that Gandersheim was in need of royal protection. In the middle of the *vita,* Hathumoda explicitly outlined her desire for Gandersheim to be taken into royal *tuitio*. After lamenting the weak nature of her convent, Hathumoda said that 'its goodness lies in God's power and mercy … but it nevertheless displeases me deeply that the house has not yet been commended into royal protection.'[48] Naturally, this direct statement that Gandersheim wanted to become a royal monastery has attracted the attention of historians. That Agius said this was Hathumoda's wish raises the possibility this was indeed a reflection of her own desire. Alternatively, others have read this statement as Agius making the case for the Liudolfings to complete their roles as founders by passing the community into the *tuitio* of the king.[49] It is, of

[45] Körntgen, 'Gandersheim', p. 125; Josef Semmler, 'Traditio und Königsschutz: Studien zur Geschichte der königlichen monasteria', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Kanonistische Abteilung* 45 (1959), p. 15, though he argues that this is more seen in Saxony than anywhere else.
[46] DLD 128.
[47] DD LD 140, 150.
[48] 'de bonitate in Dei esse positum potestate et misericordia, respondit, sibi tamen hoc penitus displicere, quod necdum regiae tuitioni commendatus esset.' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 11, p. 170; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 128.
[49] Körntgen, 'Gandersheim', p. 125.

course, difficult to discern the motivations behind this short passage without any other commentary. Yet, this scene is framed by two passages where Agius related a set of peculiar dreams that Hathumoda and other members of the convent had experienced. Although they do not, at first glance, appear to relate to the idea of Gandersheim's relationship with the king, these dreams do in fact help us to contextualise Agius's desire for Gandersheim to be passed into royal protection.

Agius recorded four dreams experienced by various members of Gandersheim. The first two are loosely linked to a reference of Hathumoda's eventual sickness and death from the plague that swept through the community. Several sisters, Agius said, saw the large bell of the church fall down and shatter into pieces in their dreams. Others, at the same time, dreamed that the sarcophagus of the saints collapsed and eventually disintegrated.[50] This was followed by Hathumoda's complaint about the lack of royal protection for the convent, before she then related the dreams she herself had experienced, involving a 'waterwheel of wondrous size, whose paddles had various representations of animals inserted in them.' In her dream, Hathumoda saw herself and the other sisters of Gandersheim 'attached to the axle of the wheel above the hub and between the spokes as if with fetters of some kind', with the wheel itself spinning rapidly around from the water flowing below it.[51] Hathumoda was 'struck dumb with fear' of falling into the river below the wheel, but she fell instead onto the ground nearby, waking her and leaving her 'trembling in all her limbs as if she were about to die.'[52] Immediately after this section, Agius outlined the final dream of Hathumoda: she dreamed of being able to fly through the air, 'stripped of her body, yet still corporeal.'[53] While flying she was able to see the monastery with its roof removed, looking down and observing the activities

[50] 'Fuere namque ex sororibus, quae signum ecclesiae maximum cecidisse et confractum esse in somniis viderint; plerisque visum est sarcofagum sanctorum ruisse, et minutatim dissolutum fuisse.' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 10, p. 170; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 128.
[51] 'Dicebat enim, insomniis se quandam mirae magnitudinis rotam vidisse, cuius palae diversas animalium figuras insertas haberent; se vero cum plerisque consororibus suis simulque cum rota, ad axem supra modiolum rotae intra radiolos quasi quibusdam catenulis esse colligatam, simulque cum rota, quam fluvius subtercurrens mira velocitate circumegerat, circumvolvi;' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 11, p. 170; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, pp. 128-9.
[52] 'Cumque, ut sibi videbatur, stupida timeret, ne in fluvium subtercurrentem decideret, non in fluvium, quod verebatur, sed potius in terram contiguam se decidisse. Quo facto, se expergefactam fuisse, et iam vigilantem, iam ad se reversam, membris tamen omnibus praemortuis et adhuc tremebundis iacuisse.' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 11, p. 170; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 129.
[53] 'se levi volasse corpore, et corpore exutam, tamen corpoream, miro et ineffabili nobis modo coelestibus simul et terrestribus interfuisse.' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 12, p. 170; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 129.

that were being carried out within the buildings. In the middle of the church, she saw 'a large cleft', and was distressed until she heard a voice 'telling her not to fill it in, since it was to be her future home', before hearing a number of voices chanting a psalm. She joined in singing when they reached 'This is my rest for ever and ever, here I will live, because I chose it' before waking while still singing the verse.[54]

If we read all of these dreams together as a unified passage, framing the plea of Hathumoda for royal protection, we can see them acting as a two-pronged attempt to win over royal patronage for Gandersheim. Firstly, the visions of the bell of the church falling down and the tombs of the saints, most likely Sts. Anastasius and Innocent, crumbling into dust, evoked two related concerns for the community. The first, which Agius highlighted, was the sickness and death of Hathumoda, which would leave the community without its leader and spiritual protector. However, the second can be read more literally: in the future the bell of the church may fall down from disrepair and the tombs of the saints may be destroyed through a lack of support or the dissolution of the community.[55] While this may refer to the church at Brunshausen, where the community were currently residing, the reference to the tombs of the saints makes it more likely that Agius was describing the church at the new foundation of Gandersheim, which would not be completed until 881. Although Agius was clearly using the dream as a symbol for the uncertain future of Gandersheim in the text, we should also not underestimate how shocking this image, especially the destruction of saints' tombs, would have been to a contemporary audience.[56] Moreover, one half of this prophecy had already come to pass, with the death of Hathumoda. These dreams left open the strong potential for the physical destruction of the convent to follow as well.

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[54] 'Inter haec se in ecclesia quasi quendam magnum terrae hiatum vidisse. Cumque ad hanc visionem summopere doleret, et quomodo hoc evenisset, vel quomodo oppleretur, cogitaret, audisse se vocem dicentem sibi, non debere illum opplere, quoniam hoc habitaculum suum esset futurum. Quo dicto, audisse se multudinem psallentium, psalmum centesimum quadregesimum dicentem. Cumque perventum esset ad versum: *Haec est requies mea in seculum seculi, hic habitabo, quoniam elegi eam*, et illa, ut sibi videbatur, simul cum eis psalleret, expergefactam evigilasse se, et adhuc eundem versiculum vigilantem in ore habuisse.' Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 12, p. 170; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 129.

[55] A fate which many small familial convents likely experienced in this period: see Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Women's Monastic Communities, 500-1100: Patterns of Expansion and Decline', *Signs* 14:2 (1989), p. 274.

[56] For example, the ritual of relic humiliation was in part effective due to the shock factor of the treatment of relics of the saints in this manner. See Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, 1992), pp. 221-2.

These visions were followed by the peculiar dream that Hathumoda had of the waterwheel. Agius provided no commentary on this vision or its meaning. However, the strikingly visual image of a large wheel, with animal pictures on the outer edge and individuals bound to the inner sections of the wheel hint at a theme which was drawn out more explicitly in later artwork. As Ernst Kitzinger noted, two eleventh-century floors from the church of San Salvatore in Turin and the church of San Savino in Piacenza featured mosaic representations of the *rota Fortunae*, or Fortune's wheel.[57] In these images, the female personification of Fortune spins a wheel which features representations of individuals rising to power, reigning from the top of the wheel, falling from power, and lying prostrate without their crowns, a common motif in high and late medieval art.[58] However, the pertinent element of the Turin mosaic to the *Vita Hathumodae* is that Fortune's wheel, in this case, was edged with numerous circles containing depictions of animals.[59] According to Kitzinger, this mosaic was intended as a world map, edged by the ocean, with the animals themselves acting as disguised map symbols for different countries or regions.[60]

The source for this idea was Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae*, which updated the classical concept of the wheel of the goddess Fortuna.[61] The Boethian version of the wheel of Fortune outlined both the inevitability and the unaccountable nature of the whims of fortune in the lives of humans. As he described, Fortune turns her wheel, and 'savagely tramples dread kings / and she, deceptive, raises the lowly face of the conquered. / She does not hear the miserable, or attend the wailing / And moreover she laughs at the groans which she mercilessly made. / Thus she plays, thus she proves her powers / and shows a great display to her subjects, if someone / may be seen to be both prostrate and happy within an hour.'[62] Boethius then used this visual

[57] Ernst Kitzinger, 'World Map and Fortune's Wheel: A Medieval Mosaic Floor in Turin', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 117:5 (1973), pp. 353-6.
[58] It was also represented in rose windows with figures on the edge of the circle. Ibid., p. 363.
[59] Specifically, two birds, two lions, two griffins, a bull and an elephant, though some circles have been damaged beyond recognition. Ibid., p. 354.
[60] Ibid., p. 361
[61] Boethius's ideas were also elucidated through numerous ninth-century commentaries. For a list of these, see Jerold Frakes, *The Fate of Fortune in the Early Middle Ages: The Boethius Tradition* (Leiden, 1988), pp. 65-9.
[62] 'Haec cum superba verterit vices dextra / et aestuantis more fertur Euripi, / dudum tremendos saeva proterit reges / humilemque victi sublevat fallax vultum. / Non illa miseros audit aut curat fletus / ultroque gemitus, dura quos fecit, ridet. / Sic illa ludit, sic suas probat vires / magnumque su<aev>is monstrat ostentum, si quis / visatur una stratus ac felix hora.' Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae,* 2.1, in Claudio Moreschini (ed.), *Boethius: De consolatione philosophiae. Opuscula theologica* (2nd ed., Munich, 2005), pp. 30-1.

symbol to illustrate a further concept. Elaborating on the metaphor of a wheel, Boethius outlined a hierarchy with God at the centre of the wheel, the immoveable point around which the wheel itself revolved. The outer edge of the wheel represented those subject to the travails of fortune on earth. Those who were more involved with earthly, secular concerns were placed closer to the edge of the wheel, whereas those who dedicated themselves to spiritual concerns occupied positions closer to the centre.[63] In some ninth-century commentaries, the middle sections of the wheel, which separated the centre and the edge, were filled with the angels and saints, the mediating forces between God and those on earth.[64] Boethius's image of the *rota fortunae* could thus be seen as a metaphor for the world itself, a concept that appears to have been adopted in the Turin mosaic floor.

While Boethius's *rota Fortunae* took some time to be visually represented, with the earliest known illustrations seen in eleventh-century manuscripts, the metaphor of the wheel was illustrated in a number of schemata from ninth-century commentaries on Boethius.[65] Other ninth-century authors, such as Walafrid Strabo, also picked up on Boethius's wheel/world parallel in their own works.[66] Thus, while the *Vita Hathumodae* predated the mosaic floors of Turin and Piacenza, the concepts that lay behind the visual representation of the world as Fortune's wheel would have been familiar to a ninth-century audience.[67] It is tempting to see the arresting image of Hathumoda and the other canonesses of Gandersheim, bound by chains to a rapidly revolving wheel and fearing that they would fall to their destruction, as a symbolic allusion to the parallel concepts of Boethius. Hathumoda and her community were subject to the whims of fortune, and were at risk of being destroyed by the spin of the wheel. Yet, at the same time, Agius was careful to note that they were placed on this wheel 'above the hub', rather than close to the edge, with the representations of animals.[68] As virgins dedicated to the religious life, Hathumoda and the women of Gandersheim were prime examples of those closer

[63] Frakes, *The Fate of Fortune*, pp. 160-2.
[64] Alfred shifted this slightly, conceptualising the wheel as a wagon wheel, with individuals placed along the spokes of the wheel depending on their 'acceptance or rejection of the earthly world', Ibid., pp. 163, 165.
[65] Ibid., pp. 65-9, illustration plates.
[66] 'E tenebras fugiunt; volucri qui pendet in orbe / Nunc scandit, nunc descendit, rota sic trahit orbis', Walafrid Strabo, *Item ad Ipsum* 23 in G. H. Pertz (ed.), MGH SS 2 (Hanover 1829), p. 385; Kitzinger, 'World Map', p. 366.
[67] The likelihood of Corvey having a manuscript of the *Consolatio* in the ninth century is increased by the commentary for the text produced by Abbot Bovo of Corvey (died 916). P.G. Walsh, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (Oxford, 1999), pp. xliv-xlv. See also John Marenbon, *Early Medieval Philosophy 480-1150: An Introduction* (London, 1983), pp. 85-6.
[68] Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 11, p. 170.

to God, to the hub of the wheel, rather than the secular men and women who were relegated to the edge, amongst the other animal creatures of the earth. Although Agius never clarified the meaning behind Hathumoda's dream of the waterwheel, the symbols could have been decoded by anyone familiar with Boethius's work. The overall effect of this dream was to emphasise the vulnerability and danger that was threatening the community of Gandersheim at that point, while also reaffirming their praiseworthy status as being closer to God through their religious dedication, as intercessors for the secular men and women of their society.

The second aspect of the dream passages that should be noted is the subtle yet consistent set of appeals to a royal audience. Rulers were associated with Fortune's wheel by Boethius himself, with 'dread kings' being crushed by the turns of her wheel. As the later manuscript illustrations and the mosaic floors referenced above showed, the standard image of the *rota fortunae* was of three or four kings which was later translated into the *regnabo/regno/regnavi/sum sine regno* motif that was used in the *Carmina Burana*.[69] Rulers would be particularly aware of the threat that Fortune's wheel could play. In addition to this evocation of the perils Fortune could offer, the dream of Hathumoda flying over the buildings of the community ended with a reference to Psalm 131. This provided the final line which alluded to Hathumoda's death and eventual burial within the church, symbolically filling the cleft within the community that her death created by providing it with her body and, consequently, her relics.[70]

However, the rest of Psalm 131 provides another reading of this passage. The psalm in full recounts the promise of God to King David that his descendants would continue to occupy the throne as he had sworn a vow to find the tabernacle of the Lord and not to rest until he had worshipped God there. As the psalm reads:

> The Lord hath sworn truth to David, and he will not make it void: of the fruit of thy womb I will set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep thy covenant, and these my testimonies which I shall teach them: Their children also for evermore shall sit upon thy throne. For the Lord hath chosen Sion: he hath chosen it for

[69] Kitzinger notes that one figure in the Turin floor may possibly be a queen. Kitzinger, 'World Map', p. 353. For the poem on Fortune's Wheel in the *Carmina Burana*, with its illustration see Bayerische Staatsbibliotek Clm 4460, fol. 1.

[70] As Paxton suggested, the reference to a 'cleft in the rock' could also serve as an allusion to Song of Songs 2:14: 'My dove in the cleft of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall'. This would accord with the idea that this cleft was to be Hathumoda's burial place, and provide some further explanation for Hathumoda on her deathbed hearing a voice asking 'is the dove prepared?' Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 132, n. 27.

> his dwelling. This is my rest for ever and ever: here will I dwell, for I have chosen it.'[71]

Again, as with the waterwheel dream above, Agius carefully chose his allusions to read with two different, yet complementary meanings. On the one hand, the choice of Psalm 131 provided a foreshadowing of Hathumoda's death and burial in the church of Gandersheim. On the other hand, the reference to this verse would have inevitably prompted a Christian audience to think of the rest of the psalm, evoking a promise that any ruler would have been eager to hear: eternal divine approval and support for the dynasty of a king who had sworn an oath to protect a place of worship to God.

Undercurrents of concern about the future of Gandersheim clearly suffuse these dreams.[72] However, there is more to these visions than fear alone. The dream episodes that preceded Hathumoda's direct request for Gandersheim to be placed underneath royal protection reinforced her argument. They evoked an image of the community of Gandersheim as threatened, vulnerable and at danger of falling into complete ruin. Underneath this image, however, was a subtle set of appeals to potential royal patrons, emphasising the similar threats that Fortune's vicissitudes posed to rulers and highlighting the spiritual assistance that could be offered by a community of religious women. Yet, these visions do not seem to be targeted at the people who would eventually pass the convent into royal protection. Surely, if Agius was attempting to convince the founding family that they should secure the king's support for the community by giving it over into his *tuitio* then he could have made reference to the benefits that would result for the Liudolfings as well. Instead, Agius was crafting an argument targeted specifically at a royal audience, asking them to take the convent into their protection. This was not an appeal for Gandersheim's continued support by the Liudolfings, but rather a way of showcasing the benefits that were particularly available to royal patrons from supporting Gandersheim.

Still, the question of Agius's motives in arguing for royal protection, at what seems like the expense of the Liudolfings, remains unanswered. What was the incentive behind Agius going to such lengths to bind a small community of canonesses on the edge of Saxony, to Corvey, to Herford, and to potential Carolingian patrons? And why did he not look to the key members of

[71] Psalm 131:11-14. If Agius was concerned that the new foundation of Gandersheim would not be completed, then this passage would have had even greater resonance.
[72] Paxton, *Anchoress*, pp. 62-3.

Hathumoda's family, the increasingly powerful brother Brun and Otto, with a similar appeal for patronage? If it is true that Gandersheim served as an *Eigenklöster* for the Liudolfings, what was the motivation to remove it from their control and to try to gain a new set of patrons? In order to find answers for these questions, we need to re-examine the political context in which Hathumoda's convent was established, and in which Agius composed her *Vita*.

GANDERSHEIM IN CAROLINGIAN SAXONY

Louis the German

In the year that Hathumoda was consecrated as abbess over the community of canonesses at Brunshausen, Saxony was in the middle of a period of unusually direct royal presence. Louis the German, the Carolingian king of East Francia, undertook his first and only continuous progress throughout all of the regions of his kingdom in 852.[73] Saxony had not seen a great deal of Louis since his accession to the throne of East Francia. In fact, after violently quashing the *Stellinga* revolt after the Battle of Fontenoy in 841, Louis had only visited the region once, to hold an assembly at Paderborn in 845.[74] Instead, the king preferred to remain in the regions with a greater density of royal lands, such as his base at Regensburg in Bavaria. This lack of physical presence in Saxony, however, did not indicate that royal power was completely absent in the region.[75] Rather, Louis used intermediaries to express his control over the region, particularly through issuing diplomas in favour of the bishops of Saxony, as well as Corvey and Herford. Both these monasteries had received an exceptionally profitable deal from Louis in 841, when he allowed Cobbo, the brother of Abbot Warin of Corvey and Abbess Addila of Herford, to redirect the tithes for the bishopric of Ösnabruck to their monasteries instead.[76] In return, both Warin and Addila remained loyal supporters of Louis, and the two houses of Herford and Corvey acted as a focal point of Carolingian administration in the region.[77]

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[73] *Annales Fuldenses*, 852 in F. Kurze (ed.), MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 7 (Hanover, 1891), pp. 41-3. See Timothy Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda* (Manchester, 1992), p. 34, n. 11 for more on this itinerary.
[74] Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, pp. 112-3, 158. Louis had visited the region more often during his contest with Lothar over control of Saxony in 840: see Goldberg, 'Popular Revolt', p. 487.
[75] Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Middle Ages c. 800-1056* (London, 1991), pp. 86-7.
[76] Norbert, *Vita Bennonis II episcopi Osnabrugensis* 16, in Harry Bresslau (ed.), MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 56 (Hanover, 1902), p. 21; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, pp. 97-8; Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford', pp. 306-7.
[77] Goldberg, 'Popular Revolt', p. 490.

Accordingly, when Louis decided to travel through Saxony in 852, it is not surprising that we see the king stop at Herford and issue a diploma there confirming the lands and rights of the convent on December 8.[78]

The same year that Gandersheim was founded, then, was the first time in a decade that Saxony had seen Louis the German moving throughout the region, holding assemblies, issuing diplomas in person, judging disputes and in general directly exercising royal authority in the region as a Carolingian king. However, this period also marked the beginning of another, possibly related, new interest for Louis. From 853, Louis the German began to place his female relatives in charge of female monasteries throughout East Francia. Seven months after granting Herford its diploma in December 852, Louis established his first, and as far as we know, only monastic foundation of Sts.-Felix-and-Regula in Alemmania on July 21, 853. He gave the ownership of his foundation to his eldest daughter, Hildegard.[79] In addition to this brand new monastery, Louis gave Hildegard control of two other convents: Säckingen, which was also in Alemmania, and Schwarzach in Franconia, a monastery previously held by Theodrada, Charlemagne's daughter.[80] After Hildegard's death in 856, Louis briefly gave control of Sts.-Felix-and-Regula to Waldrada, Lothar II's concubine, before finally passing it, along with Hildegard's other monasteries, over to his youngest daughter Bertha.[81] His other daughter, Ermengard received the convents of Buchau in Alemannia and Chiemsee in Bavaria in 857 as well.[82] This was followed by a string of diplomas issued for convents in short succession. Louis gave two donations to Sts.-Felix-and-Regula, one in May 857 then another almost a year later, in April 858, which featured one of the few interventions of his wife, Emma.[83] He also turned his attention back to Herford, providing two donations in June 858 and April 859.[84] Clearly, between the years of 852 to 858, Louis was especially interested in setting up his daughters as

[78] DLD 61. I follow Goldberg in dating this charter to 852 rather than 851. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, p. 164, n. 67.
[79] 'dilectissima filiae nostrae Hildegardae (in proprietatem) concessimus, ut, quantum domino permittente valeat, familiam in eodem monasterio domino militantem suoque dominatui subiectam disciplinis regularibus et observantiae monasterialis institutione corrigat et nutriat locaque ipsa sibimet concessa'. DLD 67.
[80] DLD 79 (Schwarzach). Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, p. 197.
[81] Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, p. 197; Simon MacLean, 'Queenship, Nunneries and Royal Widowhood in Carolingian Europe', *Past and Present* 178 (2003), p. 21.
[82] DLD 81 (Buchau). Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, p. 197.
[83] DD LD 82, 91.
[84] DD LD 93, 95.

proprietors of female monasteries and in enlarging the property of his new foundation of Sts.-Felix-and-Regula and of his long-standing supporter Addila's monastery of Herford.

It is possible that this surge of interest in female monasteries by Louis was in some way related to his wife, Emma. Emma had a long relationship as a patron of the convent of Obermünster in Regensburg, and may have taken an active role as the convent's lay proprietor.[85] Goldberg has suggested that Emma may have taken a vow of chastity around 850, a date which matches up with the sudden attention of Louis towards convents.[86] It may well be possible that Louis and Emma made a vow of celibacy around 852, which increased their interest in female monasteries as objects of patronage. Moreover, the two of the three diplomas in which we see Emma intervening are for Sts.-Felix-and-Regula in 863, and for Herford in 868.[87] Emma had family members at both convents, with her daughters Hildegard and Bertha controlling Sts.-Felix-and-Regula and her Ecbertiner relative Hadwig succeeding Addila as abbess of Herford.[88]

While there may well have been a spiritual incentive behind this sudden decision to link his daughters with convents, there are other motivations that may also underpin Louis's actions in the 850s. Louis's apparent desire for his daughters to remain unmarried, which he shared with his grandfather Charlemagne, posed a problem given the criticism that Charlemagne's daughters had faced over their sexual relationships. It may be that Louis was anxious to safeguard his unmarried daughters through placing them over monastic institutions.[89] This had a further effect. Placing his daughters at the helm of monastic institutions provided a way for Louis to reinforce royal presence and control in specific areas. Goldberg has already proposed that Louis's establishment of Sts.-Felix-and-Regula was part of his 854 Aquitanian invasion strategy, as the establishment allowed him to set up a strategic royal centre in a border region.[90]

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[85] Goldberg bases this on the two forged charters of DLD 174 and DKIII 157, but argues that the information contained within them regarding Emma's relationship to Obermünster is essentially correct. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire* p. 198.
[86] Eric J. Goldberg, '*Regina nitens sanctissima Hemma*: Queen Emma (827-876), Bishop Witgar of Augsburg, and the Witgar-Belt' in Björn Weiler and Simon MacLean (eds), *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany: 800-1500* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 77-8.
[87] DLD 110; 128. Emma is mentioned in the foundation charter for Sts.-Felix-und-Regula (DLD 67) as a beneficiary of the prayers but she is referred to by Louis as his *coniugis* rather than by name. The same occurs in an 858 diploma for the convent (DLD 91).
[88] Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, pp. 97, 198.
[89] Goldberg, '*Regina nitens*', pp. 68-9.
[90] Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, p. 239.

The location of the other convents that Louis favoured with donations in this period were in Saxony and Alemannia, regions that he rarely visited and over which his control was less direct than in the heartlands of his kingdom.[91] His daughters were given control of a set of monasteries, three of which sat in Alemannia near the border with Burgundy. His queen took on a leadership role at a convent in the capital of Louis's favoured city of Regensburg, which was built upon the former ducal palace of the Agilolfings.[92] The benefits of this were manifold. Louis gained the benefit of an added aura of sanctity through the religious activities of his female relatives while also quelling anxiety about their unmarried status. He also gained the very practical benefits that came from establishing members of his family in prominent positions of power in strategic areas. The female monasteries under his wife and daughters' control served as hubs which combined royal and religious authority at a point when Louis was planning an expansion into the west.

Yet it was not just Louis and his family who were keen patrons of female monasteries. His close advisor, Bishop Altfrid of Hildesheim was directly involved with two convents in East Francia, namely Essen and Lamspringe in Saxony.[93] Altfrid founded Essen on his own familial lands, installed his sister Gersuit as abbess in 852, and was active in securing relics.[94] When he died in 874 he was buried in Essen according to his wishes. While he did not establish Lamspringe himself, he was related to its founder, Ricdag, and interceded on its behalf with Louis in 873.[95] By founding a convent and, in Lamspringe's case at least, intervening to gain royal protection and immunity, Altfrid not only demonstrated his piety, but also reaffirmed his connection to Louis the German through a form of patronage in which Louis had already shown his interest.

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[91] Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages: 800-1056* (London, 1991), p. 86.
[92] Adam S. Cohen, 'The Art of Reform in a Bavarian Nunnery Around 1000', *Speculum* 74:4 (1999), p. 1011; Adam S. Cohen, *The Uta Codex: Art, Philosophy, and Reform in Eleventh-Century Germany* (Pennsylvania, 2000), p. 10. Goldberg, '*Regina nitens*', p. 68.
[93] For Lamspringe see DLD 150; surprisingly there is no extant charter for Essen from Louis the German, but Altfrid is mentioned in DOI 85 from 947.
[94] Katrinette Bodarwé notes that he secured the relics of Cosmas and Damien for the new cathedral of Hildesheim, and argues he likely secured them for Essen too. Katrinette Bodarwé 'Roman martyrs and their veneration in Ottonian Saxony: the case of the *sanctimoniales* of Essen', *Early Medieval Europe* 9:3 (2000), p. 348; Karen Blough, 'The Princess-Abbesses of Essen and the Golden Virgin' in R. Bork (ed.), *De Re Metallica: The Uses of Metal in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 148; Steven Stofferahn, 'Changing views of Carolingian women's literary culture: the evidence from Essen', *Early Medieval Europe* 8 (1999), pp. 77-8.
[95] DLD 150; Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford', pp. 310-1.

But, according to sources coming from Hildesheim in the eleventh century, Altfrid was not interested in these two convents alone. Instead, they record his direct involvement in the foundation of Gandersheim. The *Chronicon Hildesheimense*, begun after 1079, outlined in detail that Altfrid had helped Liudolf to establish Gandersheim in 852, and had been the bishop in charge of ordaining both Hathumoda and Gerberga as abbesses, as well as consecrating the rest of the canonesses in the community. Not only that, but Altfrid had set up the new church for Gandersheim and bequeathed his own property to the foundation on his death. As he died in 874, it was Bishop Wigbert of Hildesheim who had consecrated that church and consecrated the third abbess, Christine.[96] From evidence given in the Hildesheim Chronicle, it is now generally accepted that Altfrid and the bishops of Hildesheim were strongly involved in the early history of Gandersheim.[97] However, there is little evidence for Altfrid's involvement at Gandersheim in contemporary sources. While we see Altfrid's immediate successor, Bishop Marcwardus, at Hathumoda's deathbed in the *Vita Hathumodae*, Agius makes no mention of Altfrid at all.[98]

If we assume that Agius was reflecting the point of view of Hathumoda and Gandersheim, or of the Liudolfings more broadly, it might be tempting to cast the omission of Altfrid in the *Vita Hathumodae* as a precursor of the late tenth-century struggle by Gandersheim against the attempts by the bishops of Hildesheim to assert their control over the convent. However, it is worth noting that the *Chronicon* was written *after* that conflict, in 1079, when the diocese of Hildesheim had finally achieved its aim and definitively claimed authority over Gandersheim. Surely the narrative given here was a way for Hildesheim to reassert their case for diocesan control of the convent in the eleventh century. The image of Altfrid helping to establish the church, consecrating the first two abbesses and the community of canonesses, then donating his own property to it on his death must have been a very helpful narrative for the later bishops of Hildesheim to emphasise.[99] While Hildesheim did indeed have a claim to Gandersheim in

[96] *Chronicon Hildesheimense* 4-6, in F. Kurze (ed.), MGH SS 7 (Hanover, 1891), p. 851.
[97] Goetting, *Das Reichsunmittelbare Kanonissenstift Gandersheim*, pp. 20, 82, 92; Goetting, *Hildesheimer Bischöfe*, pp. 84-110; Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford', pp. 310-2; Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 43; David A. Warner, 'Ritual and Memory in the Ottonian Reich: The Ceremony of Adventus', *Speculum* 76:2 (2001), p. 273; Körntgen, 'Gandersheim', p. 126.
[98] Agius, *Vita Hathumodae* 24, p. 174.
[99] Thomas Schauerte, 'Chronicon Hildesheimense' in Graeme Dunphy (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2213-2139_emc_EMCSIM_00585 [01 August 2016]; Herwig Wolfram, *Conrad II 990-1039: Emperor of Three Kingdoms*, trans. Denis A. Kaiser (University Park, 2006), p. 94.

that Brunshausen was within the diocese of Hildesheim, we need to be wary of assuming that the *Chronicon* from Hildesheim accurately reflected Altfrid's involvement with the community.

However, even if we see Altfrid as having a more distant relationship with Gandersheim than has thus far been assumed, he clearly shared his king's interest in establishing and supporting female monasteries. Through the 850s, Louis the German made a concerted effort to establish strong patronage relationships with a variety of convents across different regions in his kingdom. He achieved this either through linking them closely with the female members of his family or through supporting the dominant patronage networks that were already in a position of power over convents, as was the case at Herford, Neuenheerse, Wunstorf and Lamspringe. This, then, was the background to Liudolf and Oda's daughter being consecrated as abbess over a community of canonesses at Brunshausen. The pair would have been well aware of the benefits that could come from supporting a convent in which the king was particularly interested. Oda was a niece of the abbess of Herford, Addila, who had been well rewarded by Louis in 852 during his progress through Saxony.[100] From the 850s, the increased interest of Louis the German in monastic patronage, and particularly patronage of female monasteries, meant that a number of Saxon nobles were founding new monastic institutions and using them as sites to demonstrate their *Königsnähe*. The focus of Louis the German on female monasteries provided a royal precedent that local elites were seeking to emulate themselves in the ninth century, challenging the idea that this surge of female foundations was down to demographic change in noble Saxon families.

Louis the Younger

However, Louis the German was not the only royal presence in Saxony during this period. In 865, Louis laid out how his three sons would inherit his kingdom. His eldest, Carloman, would receive Bavaria and the South-East Marches; his youngest, Charles the Fat, would receive Alemannia and Chur-Rhaetia; and his middle son, Louis the Younger, would receive Franconia, Thuringia and Saxony.[101] Louis the German was clearly attempting to settle the question of his succession well in advance of his death, in the hope of preventing another brutal civil war like the one he and his brothers had fought in the 840s. However, by allocating kingdoms to his sons but forbidding them taking the title of king or acting in a royal manner, Louis put them in

[100] Goldberg, 'Popular Revolt', p. 489.
[101] Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, p. 276.

a difficult position. In order to establish their authority over these regions, Carloman, Louis and Charles needed to set up their own households and establish networks of followers in their new lands. However, they lacked the tools that were commonly used to accomplish this, namely the allocation of titles, lands, bishoprics and monastic institutions to their supporters. As such, from 865, Louis the Younger needed to find ways to implant himself in the aristocratic network of the territories under his control and begin to build his status as a future king.

The method which Louis chose to do this was to ally himself with the Liudolfings in Saxony. At first, Louis had angled to gain power and an extraordinary amount of land in Lotharingia by attempting to marry the daughter of the powerful Count Adalhard, but this was swiftly cancelled by his uncle, Charles the Bald.[102] In response, Louis turned back to Saxony. He crafted a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with Otto and Brun. The creation of this relationship in Saxony gave the future king a way to act in the manner of a ruler, and Louis's later emphasis on his role as king of Saxony in his titulature may well signal his own recognition that Saxony was central in the establishment of his kingly identity.[103]

Yet even though Louis the Younger was able to set up a strong power base in Saxony, he still was not able to fully lay claim to being king while his father was still alive. The strain that this put on the relationship between father and son was plainly expressed in Louis the Younger's repeated attempts to forcibly assert his role. After an abortive coup with Saxon nobles in 866, which probably included Brun and Otto, Louis allied with his younger brother Charles the Fat in a failed plot against their father in 873.[104] The brothers' rebellion indicates the rising impatience of both sons at their inability to fully carve out their roles as kings of their own regions. Indeed, Louis the German issued a series of diplomas for new convents established by Saxon nobles from 871 to 873, which would have visibly undermined Louis the Younger's claim to be the ruler of Saxony.[105] The ability of Louis the German to issue privileges of royal

[102] Ibid., p. 277.
[103] On Louis the Younger's emphasis on his role as king of Saxony, see Matthias Becher, *Rex, Dux und Gens: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des sächsischens Herzogtums im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert* (Husum, 1996), pp. 46, 132-158.
[104] On the aftermath of this plot, see Simon MacLean, 'Ritual, Misunderstanding, and the Contest for Meaning: Representations of the Disrupted Royal Assembly at Frankfurt (873)' in Björn Weiler and Simon MacLean (eds), *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany, 800-1500* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 97-119.
[105] Neuenheerse (DLD 137), founded and endowed by Waldburg, the sister of Bishop Liuthard of Paderborn; Wunstorf (DLD 140), established by Bishop Theoderic of Minden on his family lands;

protection and immunity to Neuenheerse, Wunstorf and Lamspringe must have provoked his son's frustration.

However, the wider issue of the Carolingian inheritance appears to have eclipsed the conflict between Louis the German and Louis the Younger. Following the death of Emperor Louis II of Italy in August 875, Charles the Bald and Louis the German, along with Carloman, Louis the Younger and Charles the Fat, were involved in an increasingly chaotic internecine conflict over who would take control of the kingdom of Italy.[106] When Louis the German was laid low by a serious illness, Charles the Bald had pushed his advantage, crowned himself emperor in Rome and invaded Lotharingia. Once he had taken control of Aachen, with Louis still on his sickbed, Charles proclaimed himself king of East Francia.[107] Finally, after a series of recurring serious illnesses, on August 28, 876, Louis the German died at Frankfurt. One month later, Louis the Younger defeated Charles in battle at Andernach and was confirmed as the ruler of Saxony.[108]

Royal protection and the *traditio* of 877

It is in this light that we need to read the subtle, yet consistent appeals for royal patronage in the *Vita Hathumodae*. While we cannot pin down the exact date by which Agius finished the *Vita Hathumodae*, he must have composed it between Hathumoda's death on November 29, 874, and the grant of royal immunity to Gandersheim by Louis the Younger on January 26, 877. Although we cannot be sure whether the *Vita Hathumodae* was written before or after the death of Louis the German in August 876, the instability of the political situation in East Francia across the period of its composition must have affected the choice of Agius to firmly target new *royal* patrons for Gandersheim. Agius was attempting to activate the latent potential for royal patronage that Gandersheim possessed. While he did praise Hathumoda's royal sister, and Louis the Younger's wife, Queen Liutgard, it is worth noting that Agius never explicitly mentioned Louis the Younger himself, nor directly addressed his plea for royal patronage to him. Instead, through his use of visions and dreams, Agius attested the ability of Gandersheim

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and Lamspringe (DLD 150), founded by Count Ricdag, were all given royal protection and immunity by Louis, along with various other privileges

[106] For a clear elaboration of this conflict, see Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, pp. 328-335 for Louis the German; and for Charles the Bald, see Janet L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992), pp. 230ff.

[107] *Annales Fuldenses* 875-6, pp. 83-9; trans. in Reuter, *Annals*, pp. 76-82; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, pp. 331-3.

[108] *Annales Fuldenses* 876-7, pp. 89-90; trans. in Reuter, *Annals*, pp. 78-84.

to aid kings in their quest for earthly glory and divine favour, without specifying exactly *which* king this would be. As such, his text can be read both as an advertisement of the power of this convent for royal patrons in general and a warning to those kings who failed to take advantage of it themselves.

But why did Agius want to secure royal protection for Gandersheim in particular? To understand this, we need to consider the wider ramifications of the events between 874 and 877. The illness and eventual death of Louis the German threw the patronage situation for monasteries in Saxony into question. Given the strong relationship that Louis had established with Herford and Corvey in particular, his sharp downward trajectory over 875-876 had serious implications for these institutions' roles as representatives of Carolingian royal power in the region. Although Louis the Younger was still technically his heir as ruler of Saxony, the rising power of Charles the Bald in Lotharingia, his steady push eastwards, and his crowning as king of East Francia opened up the strong possibility of a new ruler in the region.[109] However, the two monasteries still had options for securing royal favour. If Charles did succeed in taking over control of East Francia, Herford and Corvey could activate their connections with the long-established, prestigious West Frankish monasteries of Soissons and Corbie, which sat in the heartlands of Charles's kingdom. On the other hand, if Louis the Younger were able to defeat his uncle and affirm himself as his father's heir, Herford and Corvey could argue for the strong links they had always had with Louis the German and assert their own position as key power brokers in the border region of Saxony.

But Agius had a further way to try to shore up his monastery's position in the new political environment of Saxony. He asserted that the monastery of Gandersheim should be considered as an effective daughter house of Herford, and emphasised the strong involvement of Corvey in regulating the monastic life at the community. Having depicted the three monasteries as an effective group, Agius then advertised the ability of Gandersheim to provide spiritual aid to prospective royal patrons, most probably Louis the Younger, but potentially Charles the Bald if the situation deteriorated further. In order for Corvey and Herford to be the primary beneficiaries of this move, however, Agius needed to minimise the influence of the Liudolfings and Fulda at Gandersheim, as they could potentially subvert the ability of his monastery to claim authority over the convent. If Gandersheim remained under the control of Brun and Otto,

[109] Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, p. 276.

Herford and Corvey could not be sure that they would be able to lock out competing influences from other monastic institutions. Thus, Agius's reticence to describe the involvement of the male members of Hathumoda's family can be seen as his attempt to recast Gandersheim as an independent monastery rather than a noble *Eigenkloster*, securing this autonomy from any interference by the founding family with royal protection and immunity. After all, that was exactly what had happened at Herford in 822, when it had come under the influence of Corvey, Corbie and Soissons after its noble founder passed it into royal *tuitio*. Agius's appeal for royal protection for Gandersheim was a carefully crafted effort to try to reinforce his own institution's role as a monastic and political heavyweight in Saxony during the volatile political situation of the 870s.

However, Agius misjudged his appeal. From 866 onwards, Louis the Younger and the Liudolfing family had been engaged in an increasingly close relationship. Louis had attempted a coup in 866 with Saxon supporters, which likely included Otto and Brun.[110] Around the same period, Louis reinforced this bond with the brothers by marrying their sister Liutgard.[111] In turn, Otto married Hadwig, the daughter Louis the Younger's bodyguard, Henry, (who was also an accomplice of Louis in the 866 coup), and it is this Henry for which Otto's son, the future Henry I, was named.[112] These intermarriages united Louis with his most prominent supporters in Saxony, and acted as a way of visibly demonstrating his connection to the nobility of the region. The ability of monasteries to serve as places of visible interaction, where different individuals were able to bind themselves to each other through their mutual patronage of an institution, has been widely noted.[113] With that in mind, Gandersheim was an ideal place for Louis the Younger to further reinforce this network of relationships and to show himself as a model royal patron. Not only would taking the convent into his *tuitio* reinforce his relationships with his closest noble Saxon followers, but Louis the German had never been involved with Gandersheim and issued no diplomas for the convent. Unlike the other prominent monasteries

[110] *Annales Fuldenses* 866, pp. 64-5; trans. in Reuter, *Annals*, pp. 54-6; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, pp. 277-8. The rebellion was in the same year as Liudolf's death.
[111] Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, p. 278. This marriage may have taken place at any point between 865 and 874, but given that the brothers were most likely involved in the uprising of Louis in 866, it seems likely that the marriage, or at least the betrothal, sat in the earlier part of this timeframe.
[112] Ibid., p. 278.
[113] See Barbara Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbour of St Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909-1049* (Ithaca, 1989); Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley, 400-1000* (Cambridge, 2000); Hans J. Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600-1000* (Cambridge, 2005).

of Saxony, Corvey and Herford, which had functioned as representatives of the royal authority of the absent King Louis the German, Gandersheim was a blank slate upon which Louis the Younger could craft his image as the *rex Saxonum*, firmly connected into the aristocratic networks of the region.[114] When Agius composed the *Vita Hathumodae*, appealing to Louis the Younger to support Gandersheim, I suggest that he, unintentionally, provided the king, Brun and Otto with a perfect medium through which they could demonstrate their relationship.

The argument that Agius did not intend for Gandersheim's royal status to benefit the Liudolfings may seem puzzling at first glance. However, we must bear in mind that what we mean by 'royal status' or 'royal protection' could involve a number of different legal and political relationships. The study of royal immunities and privileges for monasteries is too large to cover in detail here, so a brief summary will suffice. A monastery could be given over (a *traditio*) by whoever currently held possession of it into the possession (*potestas*/*dominium*) of the king. Up until Louis the Pious, Carolingian rulers would generally extend their royal protection (*defensio*/*tuitio*) over those monasteries, essentially recognising their relationship as a proprietary lord for the institution.[115] By being placed under the protection of the king, the legal position of these monasteries was altered and the *libertas* of the institution was increased. In theory, this would involve protection from being placed under the *potestas* of another church institution; immunity from having royal agents enter onto the lands of the monastery; freedom of election for the abbot/abbess by the community; and the provision of an advocate for the community. In return, the monastery would be expected to fulfil certain royal duties, which could include provision of military forces, taxes, or the provision of hospitality for the king and his court (the *servitium regis*), unless the king provided an immunity for some of these duties as well.[116] The provision of royal protection, therefore, was essentially an immunity from the interference by any agency in the affairs of the institution, by emphasising the proprietary ownership of the king over the monastery.[117] However, this was the theoretical ideal of royal protection. In reality, as Susan Wood has noted, 'different royal monasteries had different packages of privilege, and privileges were not always observed.'[118] A monastery might be taken into royal protection in an attempt to prevent the claims of the founders' heirs

[114] Neither Herford nor Corvey received any diplomas from Louis the Younger during his reign.
[115] Susan Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, pp. 221-235.
[116] Semmler, 'Traditio und Königsschutz', pp. 25-33.
[117] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 109-111.
[118] Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, p. 259.

on the institution, but another king might then decide to pass it on as a benefice to someone else in the future.[119] Royal protection could be used to negate the claims of the founding family, but a sympathetic king might also include a provision that recognised and reinforced their continued influence over the monastery.

Thus, if we look at the two diplomas issued by Louis the Younger for Gandersheim, five months after Louis the German's death, we see that he not only took the convent into his royal protection from Brun and Otto, but also addressed the election of the abbess for the community. The abbess should be drawn from the Liudolfing family, provided that she had been instructed in the religious life and in scripture, was of good morals and the right character for an abbess. If no-one could be found in the family who filled these criteria, then the canonesses of Gandersheim could elect a new leader from within their own community.[120] This clause of election, and its affirmation of the Liudolfing family's influence over Gandersheim, has been cited as evidence that the monastery remained as a memorial centre for the family.[121] Yet, bearing in mind the claims made by Agius in the *Vita Hathumodae*, this clause gains a further resonance. One of the main ways in which a convent could be brought under the influence of another monastic institution was to replace its abbess with a new nun or canoness drawn from that house, as had happened with Soissons and Herford in 822. By introducing a clause that enshrined the right of the female members of the Liudolfing family to remain as abbesses of Gandersheim, this diploma effectively acted as insurance against Gandersheim being handed over into the control of another monastery without the approval of the Liudolfings.

Both Agius on the one hand and Brun and Otto on the other wanted Gandersheim to gain royal status by being handed over into the *tuitio* of a king. However, these two parties had very different ideas of what this royal status would involve. Agius, writing before the definitive

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[119] Ibid., pp. 340-1.

[120] 'et quamdiu in illorum progenie aliqua sanctimonialis femina, quam vitae religio et sanctarum scripturarum instructio et omnium bonorum morum commendet compositio, absque ullius personae contradictione sanctimonialibus feminis esset praelata, et si aliter, quod absit, eveniret, quod talis in illa progenie inventa non esset, quae praefatis scilicet virtutibus non ornata videretur, caeterae sanctimoniales feminae dignam dei servitio quamcumque vellent eligere inter illas potestam haberent.' DLJ 3.

[121] Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, p. 356; Scott Wells, 'The Politics of Gender and Ethnicity in East Francia: The Case of Gandersheim, ca. 850-950' in Katherine Allen Smith, Scott Wells (eds), *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe: Gender, Power, Patronage, and the Authority of Religion in Latin Christendom* (Leiden, 2009), p. 126; John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 149.

success of Louis the Younger, was likely hoping that royal protection and immunity for Gandersheim would help to lessen the dominance of the noble family of founders. In turn, that might allow Gandersheim to come under the influence of Corvey and Herford, which already enjoyed royal protection themselves. Once Louis the Younger had defeated Charles the Bald, however, Brun and Otto took the opportunity to transfer Gandersheim into the protection of their new king. This reaffirmed their family's control over the community that their father had founded, by asserting their previous ownership of the institution and ensuring that one of their family members would always remain as a leader of the community. Through this, the brothers would remain visibly connected with Louis the Younger, the newly victorious ruler of their region. The ability of royal protection for a monastic institution to open up two divergent paths for a community reminds us to avoid generalisations about the desire of monasteries to become royal foundations. Royal protection had many expressions which could be turned to many different ends, as the case of Gandersheim clearly demonstrates. The outcome that Agius most likely had in mind when he was constructing his case for Gandersheim to become a royal monastery was not the eventual outcome that he was faced with in 877.

GANDERSHEIM'S RELATIONSHIPS IN THE *DE OBITU HATHUMODAE DIALOGUS*

It is the context of the Liudolfings' newly reinforced relationship with Gandersheim that illuminates Agius's other work on the convent, his *Dialogue*. While others have argued that 'there is no question' that Agius composed both the *Vita Hathumodae* and the *Dialogue* at the same time, namely between November 874 and January 877, there are enough differences in tone and characterisation of various members of the Liudolfing family between the *Vita* and the *Dialogue* to suggest that it was written *after* the diplomas of January 877, and was instead responding to the changed patronage situation at the convent.[122] By early 877, Charles the Bald's attempt to gain control of East Francia had definitively failed, following Louis the Younger's decisive success at Andernach, and Louis had reaffirmed his royal power over Saxony. The Liudolfings had backed the right side in this conflict, and their firm support for Louis, visibly signalled by their transfer of Gandersheim into his protection, increased their

[122] Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 23, citing Wilhelm Wattenbach, Wilhelm Levison and Heinz Löwe (eds), *Deutschlands Geschichtquellen im Mittelalter, Vorzeit und Karolinger, Band 6, Die Karolinger vom Vertrag von Verdun bis zum Herrschafttseintritt der Herrscher aus dem sächsischen Hause: Das ostfränkische Reich* (Weimar, 1990), p. 874.

family's position of power and prestige. Gandersheim was now undeniably linked even more closely to their family, with Otto and Brun's sister Gerberga recognised as abbess of the community in the diploma of royal protection and immunity.

It is at this point in Agius's work that we see, for the first time, a thorough representation of the noble family of Hathumoda. Agius, in an attempt to console the women of Gandersheim after Hathumoda's death, noted that Oda and Queen Liutgard would be of aid to the community and support them in the future.[123] However, aid would not only come from the female members of the Liudolfings. Agius pointed out that 'Your brothers will not be absent either, nor their many faithful followers/ Whom your worth merits everywhere.'[124] While still reticent on naming Brun and Otto, or focusing on them more specifically, Agius still paid them more attention than in the *Vita*, not only recognising their political power through the mention of their many *fideles*, but also noting that the spiritual benefits of the women of Gandersheim were acting to their benefit. In addition to Brun and Otto, we now have a full outline of the various members of Hathumoda's family which Agius had not felt merited inclusion in her *Vita*, including references to one sister and three brothers who had died in their infancy, and a brief mention of 'Enda the sister, who had long ago been joined in marriage.'[125] However, the family member who is given the greatest attention in the *Dialogue*, aside from Hathumoda herself, is her father Liudolf.

Agius dedicated over 100 lines of his *Dialogue* to praising Liudolf and to recording two visions which Liudolf experienced, both of which emphasise how his act of founding Gandersheim had secured his salvation and had mitigated the harmful effects of his secular position in the world. After noting that Liudolf 'himself could not be without sin, / In as much as he possessed worldly office,' Agius went on to outline the various ways in which he tried to 'cleanse himself through pious acts', chief amongst which was his foundation and support of Gandersheim.[126] His pilgrimage to Rome in order to gain papal blessing and absolution, and his subsequent return with relics of the saints was praised, as was his action in dedicating five of his daughters

[123] Agius of Corvey, *De Obitu Hathumodae Dialogus* 429-434, in G. H. Pertz (ed.), MGH SS 4 (Hanover, 1841), p. 184.
[124] 'Non deerunt fratres, non tot tantique fideles, / Quos late vestrum promeruit meritum.' Agius, *Dialogus*, 435-6, p. 184.
[125] 'Enda soror, quae iam fuerat coniuncta marito,' Agius, *Dialogus*, 539-541, p. 186.
[126] 'Ipse pater quamvis sine sorde nequiverit esse, / Utpote mundano praeditus officio, / Quantis ipse bonis tamen emundare piacla / Curarit propria, vos bene nosse scio.' Agius, *Dialogus*, 543-6, p. 186.

to 'divine obedience' at Gandersheim.[127] In addition to this, he 'joined a young son to a house of monks', although there is no reference to who this son was, nor to which monastery he had been oblated.[128] Regardless, in Agius's mind it was Gandersheim which provided for Liudolf's spiritual salvation in a far more secure manner than other pious actions could do. As he argued, 'That place, which he consigned to the handmaids of God, / Who shed tears continually for him, remains.'[129] Given the lack of specific mention of Liudolf's role as founder of Gandersheim in the *Vita Hathumodae*, the presentation of Liudolf and the overt emphasis on the spiritual benefits he incurred in founding a convent are striking.

But Agius did not stop there. In order to further drive his point home, he introduced two visions of Liudolf about Gandersheim. The first saw Liudolf standing on an extremely high wall and feeling as though he was about to topple over.[130] A voice called out to him, telling him that he was about to fall and perish, and Liudolf responded that if God wished it, he would be able to descend safely.[131] Consequently, he was able to walk down the wall and safely land on the ground, and then 'with his face turned to the great choir of the place' he gave thanks to God.[132] His second vision was similar to the first, with Liudolf perched in a very tall tree, again fearing that he would fall. He heard another voice say that if he gripped and held tightly to the branch next to him then he would be protected from danger and would be able to climb down without danger. Again, he did so safely and praised God.[133]

Liudolf's visions, according to Agius, took place just before his final illness and eventual death, and in contrast to the unexplained visions and dreams in the *Vita*, he provided a commentary on their meaning. The wall symbolised 'the high power / From which he was inwardly

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[127] 'Illic divino dedidit obsequio.' Agius, *Dialogus*, 549-554, p. 186; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 166. There is some confusion over who all of these five sisters were. They must have included Hathumoda, Gerberga and Christine, but the remaining two are not named. Paxton in his commentary on the *Dialogue* suggests Enda may be included, but also argues that Hathumoda may not be included as he feels the *Dialogue* is directed to the sisters remaining in Gandersheim after her death. Regardless, it appears as though Liudolf and Oda had more children than the *Vita* implied. Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 166, n. 53.

[128] 'Filiolum quoque coenobio iunxit monachorum', Agius, *Dialogus*, 555, p. 186; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 166.

[129] 'Stat locus ille, Dei quem tradiderat famulabus, / Quae pro se iuges continuant lacrimas.' Agius, *Dialogus*, 563-4, p. 186; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 166.

[130] Agius, *Dialogus*, 568, p. 186.

[131] Agius, *Dialogus*, 567-574, p. 186.

[132] 'Hic coeum magnum, versis faciebus ad ortum, / Grates inde pio mox retulisse Deo.' Agius, *Dialogus*, 579-580, p. 186; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 167

[133] Agius, *Dialogus*, 581-592, pp. 186-7.

suffering' and he was at the highest point 'because one duke had been placed [over] many.'[134] His ability to climb down safely showed that his soul was assured safety, especially as he reached 'your monastery, which he founded/ To procure his salvation'.[135] The tree of the second vision, Agius stated, was a reflection of Liudolf's 'illustrious lineage and lofty offspring, / Both renowned in the world and pleasing to God'.[136] However, he 'clung hanging rather than standing' to the tree as he was near death, and the branch to which he held was that of Hathumoda.[137] Liudolf held onto her in particular because she had helped him and the rest of his family through her pious life in Gandersheim, and 'Her merit is clearly what delivered him both of the times / When he was on the brink of falling.'[138] These visions served to emphasise the spiritual salvation that Hathumoda and Gandersheim offered, in much the same way as the visions of the *Vita Hathumodae*. What is different here though is that this message was specifically addressed to Hathumoda's family, rather than to the royal audience that we saw in the *Vita*. Agius highlighted that the piety of the women of Gandersheim was specifically beneficial to the family of the founders of Gandersheim: 'whatever good that you do will return to them / Who gave this place to you through an act of piety'; a different message from the royal benefits he advertised in the earlier *Vita*.[139]

The final episode of the *Dialogue* featured a last dream, this time experienced by Agius himself, which again focused on another member of Hathumoda's family. While asleep, Agius saw Hathumoda speaking to him in much the same way as she did when she was alive, discussing the rule of the monastery. She mentioned that she no longer possessed 'the book' of the convent, but that instead it had passed to Gerberga. While he did not explain what the book contained, Agius noted that although he had considered it small when he had first seen it, it was 'well written and well put together, / And of which nothing ever could be more agreeable to the heart

[134] 'Ergo quid in muro renitet, nisi celsa potestas, / Qua tunc sublatus ipse fuit penitus? / Murus enim factus de saxis pluribus extat, / Sicut erat multis fultus hic asseculis. / Sed hic in summo murorum culmine stabat, / Quod multis unus dux fuerat positus', Agius, *Dialogus*, 593-602, p. 187; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 168.
[135] 'Et quia salvari meruit tunc spiritus eius, / Inde ruens rectis constiterat pedibus.' Agius, *Dialogus*, 603-606, p. 187; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 168.
[136] 'Ramis erectis, flore decora satis, / Inclita progenies eius propagoque celsa est, / Et mundo clara et Domino placita.' Agius, *Dialogus*, 610-612, p. 187; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 168.
[137] 'In huius summo non stans, sed pendulus haesit,' Agius, *Dialogus*, 615-622, p. 187; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, pp. 168-9.
[138] 'Hoc meritum, hoc est, quod eum iam iamque labantem / A casu plane eripuit duplici.' Agius, *Dialogus*, 625-8, p. 187; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 169.
[139] 'Quicquid namque boni facitis, hoc ad hos remeabit, / Qui vobis illum rite dedere locum.' Agius, *Dialogus*, 641-2, p. 187; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 169.

/ Or in itself certainly more beautiful to look at.'[140] Agius commented that through this dream Hathumoda had indicated that Gerberga should be her successor as abbess.[141] This is the first time that Agius mentioned Gerberga as the next abbess of Gandersheim. In the *Vita*, he noted the closeness of Gerberga's relationship with Hathumoda, but made no remark about her either being considered as Hathumoda's heir, or that she had already succeeded her as abbess at the time of the *Vita*'s composition. Given that the first mention of Gerberga as abbess occurred in the charter of royal protection and confirmation of the right of women from Liudolf's family to serve as abbess at Gandersheim, this dream of Agius perhaps served as a way for him to reconcile the failure to secure the freedom of election for the abbess of the monastery.

The *Dialogue* reveals Agius's need to reconcile the strengthened ties of Gandersheim to the noble family of the Liudolfings, after he had relegated them, especially their male members, to the side-lines in the *Vita Hathumodae*. While Agius emphasised the same kinds of benefits that he had stressed in the *Vita*, of Gandersheim´s spiritual salvific abilities for its patrons, he aimed these messages now at a new audience, the founding family which had asserted its renewed control over the community. Agius was aware that any attempt to activate the royal potential for patronage of Gandersheim would have to be mediated through its noble patrons first, and so responded with a new text that served to complement his original *Vita*. His success in achieving this aim, of bringing together his message to royal patrons in the *Vita* and to noble patrons in his *Dialogues* is shown by Karl Strecker arguing in 1933 that the *Vita* and the *Dialogue* should be seen as two halves of a single literary work, a view recently reasserted by Frederick Paxton.[142] However, doing so is to see these works in the way that Agius most likely hoped they would be seen after 877. Instead, in order to understand the motivations behind the two texts, we need to recognise that the *Vita Hathumodae* and the *Dialogue* were products of two different patronage situations at Gandersheim, even though they may well have only been separated by a matter of months.

[140] 'Qui mihi delatus, parvus fuerat mihi visus, / Sed bene conscriptus et bene compositus, / Et quo nil umquam vel cordi gratius esset / Aut ipso certe pulchrius intuitu.' Agius, *Dialogus*, 660-672, p. 188; trans. in Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 170.
[141] Agius, *Dialogus*, 676, p. 188.
[142] Paxton, *Anchoress*, p. 23, citing Karl Strecker, 'Agius von Korvey', *Die deutsch Litteratur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon* (Berlin, 1933), p. 21.

GANDERSHEIM AS A ROYAL MONASTERY, 877-919

The Liudolfings had secured their monastery's status as a royal institution. But, as ever, we might ask what happened next. Gandersheim's position of importance to the ruler of Saxony in the late 870s relied on a constellation of factors that were mutable, rather than fixed. Louis the Younger's power base lay in Saxony, in part thanks to his decisive alliance with Brun and Otto. The Liudolfings, in turn, had constructed a close relationship with Louis in particular, rather than with the entire Carolingian dynasty. Thus, when Louis died in 882, the political situation in Saxony was once again thrown into flux. Charles the Fat, Louis's successor, had his own power base in Alemannia and Italy, and paid little attention to Saxony in general. He provided only one diploma for a female monastery in Saxony during his reign, a donation and confirmation of the rights that his father had earlier granted to Neuenheerse.[143] Rather, it appears that Charles preferred to focus his attention on the areas closer to his own central zone, such as Sts.-Felix-and-Regula.[144] In this new reign, the *Königsnähe* which Saxony, and Gandersheim in particular, had enjoyed under Louis the Younger was suddenly in short supply.

Of course, the deposition and death of Charles in 888 provided another, even more substantial, upheaval in the political order of Saxony. Arnulf, the illegitimate son of Carloman, took over from his uncle as ruler of East Francia and was understandably keen to show himself acting in the same manner as the previous rulers of the region. Although Arnulf only visited Saxony once on campaign in 892, he seems to have taken care to support the same monasteries as his predecessors: he issued a confirmation of Herford and Corvey's rights of immunity and royal protection in 888; donated properties to Corvey in 889; reconfirmed Herford's rights again while in Saxony in 892; and gave a confirmation of Gandersheim's rights as well, most likely in 892.[145] In this last diploma, Arnulf explicitly mentioned the role of Liudolf and Oda in the foundation of the monastery, and noted that their daughter, Gerberga, was the current abbess.[146] By recognising the rights of the major monasteries in Saxony through diplomas which overtly placed Arnulf in the company of his Carolingian predecessors, the new king was reactivating

[143] DKIII 169, dated to June 13, 887.
[144] Charles placed Sts.-Felix-and-Regula and Säckingen under the control of his wife, Richgard after his sister Bertha died. DD KIII 7-8.
[145] DD Arn 3, 60, 105, 107a/b.
[146] DArn 107/107a. In addition to this, Arnulf also recognised the establishment of two new convents in Saxony - Ridigippi which was founded by Bishop Hildigrim of Halberstadt in 888 and Möllenbeck founded by the layman Hildburg in Minden in 896.

the old networks of monastic patronage in Saxony that had somewhat dimmed under Charles the Fat. As such, we see at the end of the ninth century another recognition of the Liudolfing influence at Gandersheim sparked by contemporary political motivations. Arnulf was using his diploma for Gandersheim as a medium to emphasise his positive relationship with the increasingly powerful Liudolfing family in Saxony.

However, after Arnulf's death, we once again lose sight of Gandersheim in Saxon politics. Neither Louis the Child nor Conrad I provided any diplomas for Gandersheim, nor do we have any other information about the role of the Liudolfings at the convent until well into Otto I's reign. As the next chapter will outline, the period in which the Liudolfing family were steadily gaining political power coincided with the most obscure period of their convent's history. The acquisition of royal protection for Gandersheim in 877 led to heightened political importance in the reign of Louis the Younger, but the monastery's position under his successors fluctuated significantly depending on their own interests and agendas. While Agius might have made a plea for Gandersheim's need for royal status as a form of security against the whims of fortune, it seems that even this could not ensure that the monastery would remain in the foreground of royal interests.

CONCLUSION

The death of Hathumoda in late 874 served as a focal point for patronage concerns in the monastic landscape of ninth-century Saxony. Agius of Corvey took the opportunity that this suddenly leaderless community of noble canonesses offered to try to push forward his own monastery during a precarious political situation. While his attempt somewhat misfired, with the end result of strengthening the connection of the Liudolfings to Gandersheim, Agius's texts provide us with a valuable insight into the position that the monastery occupied in late Carolingian Saxony. Through his works we can see that Gandersheim, which was still a small community of noblewomen housed in temporary accommodation at Brunshausen, was nonetheless a nodal point which connected kings, noble families and monastic institutions together. The relationships that the community at Gandersheim had to different institutions meant that it was constantly in a state of negotiation, with different parties trying to gain ever-closer relationships with this group of monastic women.

Consequently, we need to remember that the eventual path that Gandersheim did take, with their reaffirmed ties to the noble family of the Liudolfings, was in no way assured throughout the ninth century. The unexpected death of Hathumoda provided a point of divergence for Gandersheim's future. It could have remained under the complete control of the Liudolfings, or it could have been brought more firmly under the influence of Herford and Corvey. Alternatively, the foundation could have been disbanded completely, a fate that likely befell many small female monasteries in the early Middle Ages. We should not dismiss the validity of the worry and anxiety that infused the visions and dreams of the *Vita*. Very few female monasteries, no matter how prestigious their founders, could be completely assured of their long-term continued existence. Instead, what we see through the lens of these texts is the confluence of factors which made Gandersheim becoming a royal convent through the intercession of the Liudolfings an attractive option at that specific point in time. Without taking into account the instability of the political situation of East Francia in the 870s, we cannot accurately understand the path that Gandersheim eventually followed in 877. Although the *Vita Hathumodae* and the *Dialogue* may, on the surface, give the impression that for the women of Gandersheim 'their world was the world of kin and cloister, not of politics and power,' it is in fact the political context which truly illuminates these sources.[147]

The competition over Gandersheim also reminds us of the variety of forms in which royal status for monasteries could be expressed in the early medieval period. The type of royal patronage that Agius was arguing for, with a reduction of noble interference at Gandersheim, stands in direct contrast with the type of royal patronage that it eventually received. Brun and Otto recognised Gandersheim's ability to link themselves even closer to Louis the Younger through the *traditio* of the monastery into royal protection. Passing over their father's monastery into the protection of Louis the Younger was a way for them to reassert their decisive alliance with the king following his success in the *melée* of Carolingian inheritance disputes in the 870s. The political shuffling and instability of the patronage situation in ninth-century Saxony made different expressions of royal protection and royal status attractive to different parties. Consequently, the case of Gandersheim emphasises the need for greater specificity in our understanding of what a royal convent or royal monastery was. Royal protection could be manifested in an variety of different forms. Simply arguing that all monasteries would want

[147] Julia Smith, 'The Problem of Female Sanctity in Carolingian Europe c. 780-920', *Past and Present* 146 (1995), p. 36.

royal status as a matter of course overlooks the valuable contextual information that we can gain from investigating the motivations behind kings and emperors taking a particular house into their protection or into their ownership.

It is also important to note that the interest for Gandersheim in the 870s by a number of different, politically significant individuals occurred in a period which has not traditionally been seen as a particularly positive era for female monasticism in general.[148] Ironically, the involvement of the Liudolfings at Gandersheim in the 870s has somewhat obscured our view of other ninth-century nobles and royals who were particularly interested in supporting female monasteries.[149] Historians have looked back at Liudolf, Brun and Otto's activities in the 850s to 870s and seen their relationship with Gandersheim as the origin point of the Ottonians' tenth-century monastic policy.[150] However, we need to see the actions of the Liudolfing brothers in the context of the 870s, without the shadow of their later imperial descendants distorting our view. Rather than Gandersheim having an inevitable position from its origins as the memorial house of the Liudolfing family, it was only in 877 that we really see Brun and Otto take the opportunity to turn patronage of a female community to their own benefit, in much the same way that other nobles and bishops were doing in the early 870s. In this light, Brun and Otto do not appear as remarkable exceptions for their support of Gandersheim, but instead as individuals who were capitalising on an wider environment in which patronage of a female convent allowed nobles to link themselves to the rulers of East Francia. It is difficult to find in Gandersheim's foundation and transfer into royal protection the elements that distinguished the Liudolfing family from the rest of the Saxon nobility, or a distinctive trajectory which Gandersheim was following towards its later imperial status. However, when we turn to

[148] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, pp. 50-72; Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, pp. 154, 170-1; Suzanne F. Wemple, 'Sanctity and Power: The Dual Pursuit of Early Medieval Women' in Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, Susan Stuard (eds), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston, 1987), pp. 139-147; Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns Through Two Millennia* (Cambridge MA, 1996), pp. 160-9.

[149] We might, for example, compare Liudolf and Oda to Count Ricdag and his wife Imhildis, who founded Lamspringe in the ninth century and then passed the convent into the protection of Louis the German in 873 while it was under the leadership of their daughter, Abbess Ricburga. DLD 150.

[150] See Gerd Althoff, 'Gandersheim Und Quedlinburg: Ottonische Frauenklöster Als Herrschafts- Und Überlieferungszentren', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 25 (1991), pp. 123-144; Wells, 'Politics of Gender', pp. 113-135; Käthe Sonnleitner, 'Die Gründungslegende von Gandersheim', *Annali dell'Istituto Storico Italo-Germano in Trento* 26 (2000), pp. 427-435; Karen Blough, 'The Abbatial Effigies at Quedlinburg: A Convent's Identity Reconfigured', *Gesta* 47:2 (2008), p. 148; Gerd Althoff, *Family, Friends, and Followers: Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe*, trans. Christopher Caroll (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 47-8.

Hrotsvitha's version of Gandersheim's origins written a century later, we gain a very different view of convent's role in securing the Liudolfings' eventual success.

Chapter 3

REWRITING THE ORIGINS OF GANDERSHEIM

The literary work of Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim is remarkable. Writing from the 960s down to the mid-970s, Hrotsvitha produced a startling array of texts. Her ability to turn her hand to a range of different writing styles, including hagiographical *vitae*, comedic plays, and historical *gesta* marks her out as one of the most prolific and creative authors of the tenth century. Unsurprisingly, her incredible production of texts has drawn scholarly attention. Her literary works, and, in particular, her ability to adapt the style of comedic plays written by Terence for a medieval Christian audience, have confirmed her reputation as a highly educated, sophisticated dramatist.

Amongst her many other works, Hrotsvitha also produced a history of her own convent's origins. The *Primordia de coenobiis Gandesheimensis*, which historians generally date to the early/mid 970s, recounts the events that led to Liudolf and Oda establishing the convent, then tracks the early history of the foundation down to Oda's death in 912.[1] The *Primordia*, however, was not simply a history of Gandersheim. Instead, Hrotsvitha provided one of the most comprehensive accounts of the Liudolfing family before the accession of Henry I to the throne. In contrast to Agius, who had a number of reasons not to focus on the Liudolfing family in his own works, the *Primordia* presents a history of Gandersheim where the origins and success of the convent and its founding family were inextricably tied together.

The level of detail that the *Primordia* offers on the early history of Gandersheim and the Liudolfings means that it has heavily shaped our view of this period in Saxony. Hrotsvitha's emphasis on the commemorative activity of Liudolfing women at Gandersheim as the key to the family's political success has bolstered the image of Gandersheim as the exemplar of a

[1] Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg argues for 973-982 in 'Female Piety and the Building and Decorating of Churches, Ca. 500-1150' in Therese Martin (ed.), *Reassessing the Roles of Women as "Makers" of Medieval Art and Architecture,* Volume One (Leiden, 2012), p. 265. Patrick Corbet proposed 970 in *Les saints ottoniens: Sainteté dynastique, sainteté royale et sainteté feminine autour de l'an Mil* (Sigmaringen, 1986), p. 114. Jean Verdon argued for after 973 in *Les femmes en l'An Mille* (Paris, 1999), p. 282. Peter Dronke suggests circa 973 in *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (†203) to Marguerite Porete (†1310)* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 80.

Saxon noble memorial centre. Moreover, Hrotsvitha's presence within the convent of Gandersheim itself means that her *Primordia* has been considered as a reflection of the community's own memory of their foundation.[2] Even though she was writing a century after the events she described, Hrotsvitha's narrative is commonly considered a more convincing representation of Gandersheim's foundation than the version offered by Agius.

For this reason, following the reconsideration of Gandersheim's foundation in the previous chapter, this chapter reassesses the narrative that Hrotsvitha provided for the convent's origins. The *Primordia* offers a great deal of new information about the Liudolfings at Gandersheim, and these details will be considered with close attention to the context in which Hrotsvitha was writing. The position of Gandersheim in Saxon society and politics had changed considerably in the century between Agius and Hrotsvitha. In particular, the events of the two decades leading up to the composition of the *Primordia* are central to understanding why this version of Gandersheim's foundation was written at this particular point in time.

THE ORIGIN OF GANDERSHEIM IN THE *PRIMORDIA*

The most striking difference between Hrotsvitha and Agius's account of Gandersheim's foundation is the role played by the Liudolfings. Whereas Liudolf was a shadowy figure in the *Vita Hathumodae*, and Oda was shown more as the mother of the saintly first abbess rather than as the convent's founder, in the *Primordia* we see for the first time a full and comprehensive narrative which foregrounds the Liudolfings as founders of Gandersheim. Hrotsvitha acknowledged the role of Liudolf from the beginning of her text. She began the *Primordia* by saying that 'Liudolf, duke of the Saxons, built it [Gandersheim] with reverence'.[3] This is followed by a brief, flattering, biography of the duke and his place in Saxony. In contrast to Agius's reticence on explicitly naming Liudolf as the founder of the convent, Hrotsvitha was clear about his relationship to the monastery.

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[2] Elisabeth van Houts, for example, argues that it was Abbess Gerberga and the other canonesses of Gandersheim who provided Hrotsvitha with her narrative. Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900-1200* (London, 1999), p. 69.

[3] 'Quod nam construxisse ducem reverenter eundem / Constat Saxonum, quem praedixi, Liudulfum.' Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, *Primordia de coenobiis Gandesheimensis* 5, in Walter Berschin (ed.), *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubeneriana (Munich, 2001), p. 306.

However, the figures who receive the most praise and attention from Hrotsvitha are Oda and her mother, Aeda. In the first narrative scene of the text, we are told by Hrotsvitha that on one night, Aeda lay prostrate in front of an altar dedicated to John the Baptist. Her piety was rewarded by the saint himself appearing to her in a vision. To the amazed woman, St John declared: 'as you have frequently honoured me, I announce that your famous offspring will establish a cloister for holy virgins and a triumphant peace for the kingdom, as long as their piety endures.'[4] Hrotsvitha clarified this revelation for her audience. It specifically referred to 'the famous progeny of the *domna* Oda', that is, her son Duke Otto, his son Henry I, and the line of Ottonian emperors who followed them.[5]

After introducing Oda as the key recipient of this divine blessing, Hrotsvitha elaborated how she fulfilled her side of the promise. Oda was the prime force behind the establishment of Gandersheim. She was the one who convinced Liudolf to build the monastery, through frequent application of persuasive speech.[6] Once she had brought Liudolf around to her plan, the couple journeyed to Rome in order to gain papal blessing, protection and relics for their new convent, with Oda, alongside Liudolf, kneeling in supplication before the Pope.[7] Although the holy revelation of the site for the new convent was granted to Liudolf and his swineherds, we see him turning to 'his beloved wife, Oda' for her approval before he ordered the woods to be cleared for the building.[8] Sadly, Hrotsvitha noted, Liudolf died before he could see his convent completed. Before his death, he entrusted the entire responsibility for the monastery to Oda and their sons, entreating them to finish building the convent.[9]

Indeed, following Liudolf's death, Hrotsvitha amplified her depiction of Oda as the model supporter of Gandersheim. She pointed out that Liudolf's death, while unfortunate, provided Oda with the perfect opportunity to devote herself entirely to her religious and spiritual support

[4] 'Quia nos crebro coluisti, / Nuntio, virginibus sacris tua clara propago / Instituet claustrum, pacem regnique triumphum, / Dum sua religio steterit bene firmo.' Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 57-60, p. 308.
[5] 'Huius magnifice decoris promissio grandis / Progeniem domnae claram specialiter Odae / Signavit: de qua natus dux inclitus Oddo / Sceptris Henricum regem genuit satis aptum.' Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 67-70, p. 309.
[6] 'Exhortabatur blandis nimium suadelis' Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 93, p. 310.
[7] Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 125-180, pp. 311-3.
[8] 'Consensusque suae dilectae coniugis Odae', Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 229, p. 315.
[9] Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 290-1, p. 317.

for Gandersheim.[10] It was Oda who was responsible for finishing the construction of the church and convent walls, which she achieved with the help of her son, Duke Otto.[11] Oda was presented by Hrotsvitha as the ideal lay patron, founding, supporting and protecting the canonesses throughout her life. Indeed, the final words of Hrotsvitha about Oda, on her death at the end of the text, remember her as 'the exceedingly blessed Oda, our hope and *dominatrix*', a sentiment which encapsulates her image throughout the *Primordia*.[12]

Hrotsvitha clearly portrayed Oda as the founding mother of Gandersheim. While Oda's maternal qualities were noted in Agius's *Vita Hathumodae*, this was shown purely in her relationship with Hathumoda, rather than over Gandersheim's community in general. Agius provided no mention of Oda as having a particularly prominent role in the convent, in part as it was Hathumoda, the saint-abbess, who dominated his texts. Indeed, he only mentioned Oda by name twice across the *vita*. Instead, as Patrick Corbet has noted, the *Primordia* is the first time that Oda appears in the model of a saint herself. However, there is no evidence for a cult for her at Gandersheim or at any other institution in Saxony, nor do we have any record of liturgical celebrations for her as a saint.[13] As such, the concern shown by Hrotsvitha to foreground the piety of Oda, as demonstrated through her involvement with Gandersheim, is striking.

The emphasis on Oda in the *Primordia* has not gone unnoticed. Käthe Sonnleitner in particular has suggested that the strong focus on the activities of Liudolfing women in the *Primordia* reflects the desire of Hrotsvitha, and her Ottonian abbess, Gerberga, to champion the role of women in securing the political and spiritual success of the family.[14] In this reading, the *Primordia* was intended by the women of Gandersheim to highlight the importance of female commemoration and spiritual activity in securing the success of the dynasty. Thus, Hrotsvitha could assert the suitability of Gandersheim as the best memorial centre for the Ottonian family.

[10] Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 296-300, pp. 317-8.
[11] Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 367-374, p. 320.
[12] 'Oda nimis felix, nostri spes et dominatrix', Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 574, p. 328.
[13] Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens*, p. 46.
[14] Käthe Sonnleitner, 'Die Gründungslegende von Gandersheim', *Annali dell'Istituto Storico Italo-Germano in Trento* 26 (2000), pp. 430-5. Also see Elisabeth van Houts, 'Women and the writing of history in the early Middle Ages: the case of Abbess Matilda of Essen and Aethelweard', *Early Medieval Europe* 1 (1992), pp. 55-7; Janet L. Nelson, 'Gender and Genre in Women Historians of the Early Middle Ages' in *eadem* (ed.), *The Frankish World 750-900* (London, 1996), pp. 186-9; Verdon, *Les femmes*, p. 282.

However, the idea that Hrotsvitha's main focus in the *Primordia* was to emphasise the spiritual activity of the Liudolfing women at Gandersheim in general is somewhat undermined by her comparative lack of attention to Hathumoda's role at the convent. As we saw in the previous chapter, Hathumoda was the subject of two hagiographic works by Agius, dedicated to the canonesses of Gandersheim and surely available for Hrotsvitha to read in the library of the monastery. Yet, Hrotsvitha made very little use of these texts, and did not cite the various miracles or stories from Hathumoda's life which Agius reported. Instead, her references to the first abbess of Gandersheim were relatively concise. The *Primordia* noted that Hathumoda had been placed in Herford when Liudolf and Oda travelled to Rome, and added a single miracle story where Hathumoda was led by a bird to a suitable source of stone for the construction of the new convent.[15] There is nothing in the *Primordia* on Hathumoda's commemoration for her relatives, or her role in securing the success of her family. Even her death, which was related in great detail in the *Vita Hathumodae*, was dealt with summarily by Hrotsvitha in a single sentence: 'the happy virgin of Christ, Hathumoda, after bearing the care of her flock for twenty-two years, died in Christ and passed swiftly to heaven.'[16]

Indeed, when viewed alongside the rest of her sisters in the *Primordia*, Hathumoda does not noticeably stand out. Hrotsvitha paid more attention to her successor, Gerberga, by recounting how she was able to miraculously preserve her virginity and escape her betrothal to the nobleman, Bernard.[17] Hrotsvitha praised Gerberga for her care of the canonesses, though she noted that this was done under the watchful eye of Oda, and she provided more fulsome praise for Gerberga in her obituary.[18] Liutgard, the daughter of Oda who had been married to King Louis the Younger of East Francia, also received Hrotsvitha's approval for her role as a generous patron of Gandersheim. The *Primordia* twice noted that she had brought prosperity to their monastery and her death was remembered, with a touch of pragmatism, as being 'to the great detriment of our interests.'[19] Finally, Christine, the last of the sisters to become abbess,

[15] Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 108-117, 235-280, pp. 310, 315-7. This miracle is not recounted in Agius's *Vita Hathumodae*.
[16] 'Interea Christi virgo felix Hathumoda, / Cum gregis undenos curam bis gesserat annos, / Ocius in Christo moriens transivit ad astra;' Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 315-317, p. 318.
[17] Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 320-360, pp. 318-320.
[18] Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 403-422, 473-485, pp. 322, 324-5.
[19] 'Quae regina quidem nobis ad prosperitatem', Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 311, p. 318; 'Liudgardis regina, sui dignissima regni / Consors, tantorum quae nobis causa bonorum / Extitit, e mundo discessit

was also commended by Hrotsvitha for her virtue, although again it was Oda who was portrayed as the guiding force during Christine's rule as abbess.[20] Consequently, the position of Hathumoda in the *Primordia*, when viewed alongside the rest of her female relatives, does not appear as exceptional.

Evidently Hrotsvitha made the conscious decision that a detailed account of Hathumoda, the first abbess of Gandersheim and the first consecrated spiritual leader of the Ottonian family, was not the prime focus of the *Primordia*. Given that Sonnleitner has stressed that this text was an argument for the success of the Liudolfing/Ottonian family coming through the spiritual activities of their female relatives within Gandersheim, the lack of attention to Hathumoda's role is surprising. Instead, the *Primordia* focuses on Oda as the central character, surpassing the attention paid to Hathumoda, or even to Liudolf. The image of Oda that Hrotsvitha provided in the *Primordia*, as the maternal founder of the convent who effectively held a leadership role over the community until her death, stands in sharp contrast to the image given by Agius and signals Hrotsvitha's attempts to reshape the narrative of her convent's early history.

Hrotsvitha was not, however, creating her version of Gandersheim's origin story from scratch. While the *Vita Hathumodae* may have been the most obvious narrative source to use for her *Primordia*, there were other sources which related the foundation story of the convent as well. Seven royal diplomas issued for Gandersheim, dating from 877 down to 975, recorded that Duke Liudolf of Saxony constructed the convent and endowed it with relics.[21] The first five of these made fairly brief references to this narrative, but DOI 180, issued in April 956, provided for the first time a full narrative account, beginning from what it termed the '*primordium*' of the monastery. This diploma outlined how both Liudolf and 'his venerable wife' Oda had founded the convent and donated land and a 'veiled daughter' to it. Then, following Liudolf's death, his sons Brun and Otto had transferred the monastery over to the protection of their brother-in-law, Louis the Younger.[22] This document was reissued by Otto II, almost verbatim,

(pro dolor) isto / Non sine nostrarum magno rerum detrimento.' Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 470-473, p. 324.

[20] Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 486-510, pp. 325-6.

[21] The following charters contain references to the involvement of Oda and Liudolf in the foundation of Gandersheim: DLJ 3 (877); DLJ 25 (877); DArn 107 (892); DOI 89 (947); DOI 180 (956); DOII 119 (975).

[22] 'cum venerabili eius coniuge Ota, primordium igitur eiusdem constructionis affirmans cum filia velo consecrata', DOI 180.

in a new version (DOII 119) on November 3, 975, which again asserted that Liudolf had constructed Gandersheim with his wife, the '*fundatrix*' Oda.

Here, in these documents, we can see the same narrative framework that Hrotsvitha related in her *Primordia*. Indeed, in one passage of the *Primordia*, from line 443 to line 457, Hrotsvitha used language that evokes these diplomas. In it, she noted that Oda transferred lands to Gandersheim which had been given to her by her son-in-law, Louis the Younger. In addition, Louis's wife, Liutgard, interceded with her husband on the convent's behalf, so that he would enlarge Gandersheim with 'many *praedia*', transferring them into the *ius* of the abbess, Gerberga. Louis's successor, Arnulf, also gave over vineyards to the convent, which 'he confirmed permanently through royal power with a written document.'[23] All of these actions have their roots in the same set of royal diplomas outlined above. DLJ 4 shows Liutgard interceding with Louis on Gandersheim's behalf in a diploma that donates several estates to the convent. DArn 107 records Arnulf agreeing to the request of 'a certain one of our *fideles*, established in the clothing of a *sanctimonialis*, named Oda', to transfer property over to Gandersheim and to confirm her own donation to the convent where her daughter Gerberga was abbess.[24] The contents of both of these charters were also summarised in the diplomas from 956 and 975, with similar language used.[25] Although Hrotsvitha did not quote directly from the documents or acknowledge that they are serving as her sources, the similarities of the content raise the possibility that she may have had these diplomas at hand while she was writing the *Primordia*, or at least that she was familiar enough with their content and language to evoke them in her poem.

Yet, this passage also alludes to another set of charters. Directly after outlining the donations by these kings to Gandersheim, Hrotsvitha added that the convent prospered in many ways

[23] 'Et loca, quae generi dono regis Hludowici / Possessura quidem proprium suscepit in usum, / Permittente sua pariter pietate benigna / Ecclesiae tradi faciebat Gandesheimensi. / Nec rex ipse locum sublimavit minus illum / Liudgardis pie reginae bonitate precante; / Sed tradens illo largitur praedia multa / In ius Gerbergae, nostrae rectricis amandae, / Ipsius illustris reginae namque sororis. / Quae rex Arnulfus, successor scilicet huius, / Posthac per scriptum regali iure statutum / Firmat vinetis eius dono superauctis.' Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 443-454, pp. 323-4.
[24] 'ob quorundam procerum nostrorum interventum cuidam fideli nostrae in sanctimoniali habitu constitutae nomine Odae', DArn 107. Intriguingly, Hrotsvitha says that Oda was given these properties by Louis the Younger rather than Arnulf.
[25] DOI 180; DOII 119.

through the intervention of popes.[26] These 'intercessions' by the papacy most likely refer to the two papal charters granted to Gandersheim, one in 948 and one in 968.[27] These charters placed Gandersheim under papal protection and confirmed the right of the community to elect their own abbess, rather than having one imposed by secular authorities, a right which was hinted at by Hrotsvitha in the speech she placed in Pope Sergius's mouth in the *Primordia*.[28] Intriguingly, the papal charter from 948 also elaborated briefly on the origins of Gandersheim. According to this document, issued to Abbess Wendelgard, the monastery had been constructed by Otto, *comes* of Saxony, with no mention of Liudolf or Oda at all.[29]

Thus, we see several conflicting versions of Gandersheim's origins already in existence in different texts when Hrotsvitha came to write the *Primordia*. The question remains, then, of why Hrotsvitha chose to narrate the particular version that she did, which emphasised the role of the Liudolfings in general, and of Oda in particular, at her convent. In order to explore her possible motivations for making Oda the protagonist of Gandersheim's foundation story, we need to move back from the *Primordia* itself to look at the wider political circumstances surrounding Gandersheim and its abbess when this text was written.

GANDERSHEIM UNDER THE OTTONIANS, 919-978

Henry I

The point at which Hrotsvitha's *Primordia* ends, the election of Henry I as king in 919, coincides with the most obscure period of Gandersheim's history. If we follow the *Primordia*'s dating, then Henry's accession came in the same year as the death of Christine, the youngest child of Liudolf and Oda and the last of the couple's daughters to serve at the convent.[30] For the period after Oda's death, we have no information from contemporary sources. Conrad I,

[26] 'Ac sic coenobio succedunt prospere plura / Summorum meritis intercedentibus almis / Pontificium, quorum constat sub honore dicatum.' Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 455-7, p. 324.
[27] Agapit II 115, January 2, 948; Johannes XIII 184, January 1, 968 in Harald Zimmermann, (ed.), *Papsturkunden 896-1046*, Vol. 1 (Vienna, 1984), pp. 200-1, 360-2.
[28] 'Hoc et apostolici iuris, sicut petiistis, / Coenobium nostri designamus ditioni, / Ut terrenorum sit securum dominorum.' Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 178-180, p. 313; 'Auctoritate nam beatorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli iubemus, ut nullus rex habeat licentiam, nostrum monasterium aliquibus hominibus in beneficium dare', Agapit II, 115.
[29] 'monasterii Canderesheim, constructi ab Ottone comite de Saxonia', Agapit II, 115.
[30] Hans Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim Vol. 1: Das reichsunmittelbare Kanonissenstift Gandersheim* (Berlin, 1973), p. 291.

the king of East Francia from 911 to 918, provided no diplomas for Gandersheim, or indeed for any other Saxon female monastery during his reign.[31] However, when Henry I, the grandson of Liudolf and son of Duke Otto, succeeded Conrad as king in 919, we might well expect that Gandersheim would attract his attention.

Surprisingly, however, Gandersheim's status as a royal monastery appears to have steadily declined during Henry's reign. While two later diplomas for the convent mention a property grant by Henry to Gandersheim, which are explored in more detail below, there is no extant document and we have no evidence that Henry ever stayed at the monastery while he was king. After the death of Christine in 919, there is no information from contemporary sources about who succeeded her as abbess of Gandersheim, despite the right granted to the Liudolfings by Louis the Younger.[32] Instead, the combination of Henry's apparent lack of interest for Gandersheim, plus the accession of an abbess who does not appear to be recognised as a Liudolfing at the time, seems to show that the convent no longer occupied the position of importance that it had for the family before they came to the throne.[33]

Otto I

Of course, the interest that Henry's successor, Otto I, showed in Quedlinburg has attracted the attention of historians, who have suggested that Gandersheim suffered a serious drop in royal support after the establishment of a new royal memorial centre in 936. Yet, from 948, we see a sudden surge in activity at the monastery by its patrons. To understand this, we first need to tackle the somewhat complicated chronology of Otto I's involvement at Gandersheim in this period by laying out the various pieces of evidence that we have.

Firstly, we have the first diploma that Otto granted to Gandersheim: DOI 89, issued at Werla and dated to May 4, 947. This document summarises the narrative of Gandersheim's

[31] The only extant diploma of Conrad for a convent is a confirmation of the rights of immunity and free election of the Lotharingian nunnery of Meschede in 913 (DKI 16).
[32] The information for Liudgard and Hrotsvitha, the purported fourth and fifth abbesses of Gandersheim, comes from the early thirteenth-century Eberhard of Gandersheim. See Goetting, *Das reichsunmittelbare Kanonissenstift Gandersheim* pp. 291-3.
[33] We can contrast this lack of attention for Gandersheim with the two diplomas that Henry granted to the convent of Herford in 927 and 935, with intercessions by Queen Mathilda, who had been raised at Herford. DD HI 13, 41; *VMA* 1, pp. 111-5; *VMP* 1, p. 148. The later life adds that the abbess of Herford was Mathilda's grandmother, though, as chapter five will show, we should treat the new information about Mathilda's life added in the later *vita* with caution.

foundation by Liudolf and Oda and confirms the various privileges and land grants made to the convent by the Liudolfings and the kings of East Francia. The diploma itself is a twelfth-century single-sheet copy. Secondly we have the papal charter offering immunity and protection for Gandersheim against secular authorities, issued by Pope Agapitus II on January 2, 948. The charter was issued to Abbess Wendelgard at the intercession of Abbot Hadamar of Fulda. As noted above, this document contains no mention of Liudolf and attributes the foundation of the convent to the *comes* Otto. Otto I does not appear as an intercessor in the charter. Thirdly, we have the second diploma of Otto to Gandersheim, DOI 180, which survives in its original form. This diploma was also issued at Werla and is dated to April 21, 956. DOI 180, like DOI 89, gives the narrative of Gandersheim's foundation by Liudolf and Oda, but this later diploma is much more detailed and lists all of the privileges and lands given to the monastery on behalf of a veritable crowd of Liudolfing and Carolingian patrons.

Finally, at some point after January 2, 948 and before March 968, Otto's niece, Gerberga, became the abbess of Gandersheim.[34] A number of scholars have taken the date of Gerberga's consecration as abbess as 949, based on her entry in the list of abbesses provided by Hans Goetting in *Das reichsunmittelbare Kanonissenstift Gandersheim*. However, Goetting noted in the commentary for this list that Gerberga was consecrated by Bishop Otwin (954-984) and suggested that if the death of Wendelgard had occurred before 954 then Gandersheim might have been led by temporary abbesses elected for year-long terms; though we have no evidence to prove this. Indeed, Goetting further suggested that the extensive diploma provided by Otto I for the convent in 956 may well be related to Gerberga's ordination as abbess.[35]

So, in short, we have a confirmation of rights and lands given by Otto in 947; a papal charter with no involvement of Otto which takes Gandersheim under the authority and protection of the pope and prohibits secular authorities from interfering in the convent; then a very lengthy diploma which lays out for the first time the full narrative history of Gandersheim's foundation by Liudolf and Oda, which also lists all the Carolingian royals and Liudolfing nobles who were linked to the convent. This chronology poses a set of questions. Why did Otto provide Gandersheim with a confirmation of its privileges and lands in 947? We have no evidence to

[34] The date range comes from the papal charter which mentions Abbess Wendelgard, and the mention of Hrotsvitha that she awaits the comments of Gerberga and William of Mainz on her *Gesta Ottonis*. As William died in March 968, Gerberga must have been abbess before this point.
[35] Goetting, *Das reichsunmittelbare Kanonissenstift Gandersheim*, pp. 293-4.

show any real interest by him in the convent around this period otherwise. If he was signalling his support for Gandersheim in 947, then why was he absent from the papal privilege for the monastery, which was issued only seven months later? Why did the foundation story of DOI 89 and the papal diploma differ if the documents were issued seven months apart? And why did Otto then provide another diploma for the convent that was almost identical in its contents, if not its style, in 956?

Although they look quite different when first compared to each other, there is a striking similarity in terms of factual content between DOI 89 and DOI 180. They list the same lands given to Gandersheim by the same people. In fact, there is a rather peculiar similarity. Both diplomas record the donation of the same piece of land by Otto to Gandersheim, but both record it as a new donation added at the time that the diploma is being issued. DOI 89 states that 'we give, in addition to all the above-mentioned properties, the property that we have at Mündelheim to provide for the *sanctimoniales*.'[36] DOI 180 states that 'not only do we recognise with royal authority all the properties that have been granted which are contained in this current document, but we also add the property that we have at Mündelheim.'[37] Why would Otto record the donation of Mündelheim in the present tense in 956 if he had already granted it to the convent in 947?

There is one solution which resolves all of these problems. The diploma of 947 only survives in a twelfth-century copy, which Theodor Sickel noted was intended by the copier to pass as an original document.[38] There was a history of this kind of production at Gandersheim from the mid-eleventh century onwards. Goetting has examined the *Stiftungsurkunden* of Gandersheim written in the mid-eleventh and thirteenth centuries, both of which were intended to pass as ninth-century documents.[39] Sickel, however, argued that DOI 89 was indeed based on an original diploma granted by Otto as it more or less matches the language and phrasing

[36] 'Tradimus insuper earundem victui sanctimonialium quicquid proprietatis actenus habuimus in villa Mundulingheim.' DOI 89.
[37] 'Haec igitur omnia quae praesenti scripto continentur concessa, non tantum auctoritate regali concedimus, sed cum his quae in Mundilincheim habuimus, augmentamus.' DOI 180.
[38] Theodor Sickel (ed.), *Die Urkunden Konrad I., Heinrich I. und Otto I.*, MGH Diplomatum regum et imperatorum Germaniae, vol. 1 (Hanover, 1879-1884), p. 171.
[39] Hans Goetting, 'Die gefälschten Gründungsurkunden für das Reichsstift Gandersheim' in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter: Internationaler Kongreß der Monumenta Germaniae Historica, München, 16.-19. September 1986. Teil III: Diplomatische Fälschungen (I)* (Hanover, 1988), pp. 327-371.

of diplomatic texts of the mid-tenth century; though he did note that the phrasing of the second half of the diploma is somewhat suspicious. I do not dispute that DOI 89 is based on a mid-tenth-century diploma for Gandersheim. However, I suggest that the diploma which was serving as the base for DOI 89 was DOI 180. On the basis of the strong similarities in the content of the two diplomas, the same place of issue and the granting of the same piece of land, I believe that it is not unfeasible to see DOI 89 as a twelfth-century condensation of the longer narrative diploma that Otto issued in 956, backdated so that it came before the papal charter of 948.

Why would Gandersheim care to create this backdated diploma in the twelfth-century? As Goetting has outlined, Gandersheim was a strong supporter of the emperor during the Investiture Controversy that ran through the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[40] If we remove the diploma of 947, then their papal privilege of immunity, which put the convent under the protection of the pope alone and prevented secular figures from having authority over the community, predated the diplomas and privileges issued by the Ottonians. This would surely have been a cause for concern for the community in an environment where the hierarchy of papal and imperial authority was being fiercely contested. As such, given the evidence for other forged diplomas in this period, it is not inconceivable to see the community of Gandersheim in the twelfth century wanting to minimise their papal connections by creating a summary of their first Ottonian diploma from 956, dated to just before the papal charter of 948.

Moreover, if we set aside the 947 diploma, the chronology for Otto's relationship with Gandersheim effectively resolves itself. The first new piece of evidence that we have for Gandersheim after the Liudolfings take the throne is the papal charter of 948. Agapitus II gave Gandersheim papal immunity, forbade any king 'from granting our monastery to anyone *in beneficium*', and ordered that when the abbess of the monastery died, no-one should be ordained as abbess unless she was already a member of the monastery. If no suitable woman was found, only then would the king have the right to appoint a woman as abbess.[41] It appears

[40] Ibid., pp. 327-371; Goetting, *Das reichsunmittelbare Kanonissenstift Gandersheim*, pp. 95-102, 301-4.
[41] 'ut nullus rex habeat licentiam, nostrum monasterium aliquibus hominibus in beneficium dare'; 'Quando autem abbatissa ipsius monasterii de hoc seculo migraverit, nulli sit licitum, aliquam ibidem ordinare abbatissam nisi ex ipsa congregatione, si talem invenerit, quae digna Deo sit, et si fortasse ibidem inventa non fuerit, tunc rex habeat potestatem talem ibidem ordinare abbatissam, quae digne Deo placere possit.' Agapit II 115.

that the right that Louis the Younger had granted to the Liudolfing family in 877, of choosing abbesses for the convent from their own family, was now overwritten by this papal charter. Moreover, the monastery was no longer under the protection of the king alone, but could claim papal protection against the interference of secular parties in its affairs.

In addition, while Gandersheim's relationship with the Liudolfing/Ottonian family seems to grow increasingly distant after 919, it looks like the influence of Fulda at the convent had survived. The intervention of Abbot Hadamar in Gandersheim's papal charter in 948 testifies to Fulda's success in retaining its links to the convent. On the other hand, the close relationship that Hadamar had with Otto I, as one of his trusted advisors, suggests that this was not intended as a challenge to the king's authority. Was Otto effectively rewarding Hadamar by allowing him to push forward his position of influence over Gandersheim? As we have no source specifying Hadamar's relationship with Gandersheim, we can only speculate on this subject. Nonetheless, his actions in 948 are certainly suggestive of a desire to link Gandersheim more closely to Fulda at this point.

However, in 956, the year that Hadamar died, we see Otto's attention turn back to Gandersheim.[42] Following his victory in both quelling his son and son-in-law's rebellion and defeating the Hungarian invaders at the battle of the Lech, Otto made the decision to place his infant daughter, Mathilda into Quedlinburg to eventually become its abbess.[43] I suggest that it was in this same year that he appointed his niece, Gerberga, as the abbess of the community. As far as we know, Gerberga was not a member of Gandersheim before her appointment as abbess.[44] As Goetting has pointed out, the elaborate nature of DOI 180 means that it was very likely intended to mark the occasion of Gerberga's consecration as abbess. The diploma laid out at length the history of Gandersheim's relationship, not just to Otto's family but also to his predecessors as ruler of East Francia, including Arnulf and Louis the Younger, with their donations on behalf of their ancestors, Carloman of Bavaria, Louis the German, Louis the Pious

[42] For Hadamar's death, see Adalbert of Magdeburg, *Regionis abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum continuation Treverensi* 956, in F. Kurze (ed.), MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 50 (Hanover, 1890), p. 169; trans. in Simon MacLean, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The* Chronicle *of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg* (Manchester, 2009), p. 258.
[43] This will be examined in more depth in chapter four.
[44] Dronke, *Women Writers*, p. 56.

and Charlemagne.[45] Given the recent papal affirmation that the abbess of Gandersheim should be selected from within the convent, DOI 180, the *primordium* diploma, reads as Otto's justification for his ability to install Gerberga as the community's new leader. By providing a diploma for the community which outlined every donation to the community by, or on behalf of, his Liudolfing and Carolingian predecessors, Otto was emphasising his own role as the royal protector and possessor of Gandersheim, as had been established in 877. This document was laying out the history of Gandersheim as a monastery inextricably linked to the Liudolfing dynasty and to the kings of East Francia.

It is worth noting here that passages from DOI 180 are shared with two other charters from eleventh/twelfth-century Gandersheim which are thought to represent an earlier period of the convent's history. There are two so-called 'foundation charters' for the community which are believed to be either copies or reworked versions of a now-lost charter that Liudolf provided for Gandersheim on its foundation in 852. Goetting has dated the first of these charters (Ga. 1) to the mid-eleventh century; and the second (Ga. 2) to the first decade of the thirteenth century. He argues that Ga. 1 follows, essentially verbatim, the now lost foundation charter of Liudolf, with a reworked letter from Pope Sergius II at the end.[46] He believes that the charter from Liudolf is a genuine copy, as it follows the wording of part of DOI 180 exactly. Thus, Goetting argued, both DOI 180 and Ga. 1 were based on the now-lost foundation charter of Liudolf. He went further to add that he believes the foundation charter was likely written by Agius of Corvey, who he describes as Hathumoda's brother.[47]

While we cannot rule out the possibility of Liudolf writing a foundation charter for the convent, Goetting's arguments on Ga. 1 and Ga. 2 raise a number of questions. Firstly, if there was an extant charter from Liudolf for Gandersheim which survived down to the eleventh century, we must ask why it is not cited or mentioned by Hrotsvitha in the *Primordia*, a work which clearly wanted to stress the role of the Liudolfings as founders. Secondly, if Ga. 1 quoted verbatim part of DOI 180, we must also consider the possibility that this is because DOI 180 was itself

[45] 'Huius igitur venerabili exemplo provocatus Arnolfus rex tradidit ad idem monasterium in beneficium per interventum coniugis sue Otae nec non et Hildigarde venerandae neptis eius in elemosinam divae memoriae avi suae Ludouuici regis genitorisque eius Karlomanni regis nec non pro beatissimorum regum, videlicet Ludouuici et Karoli patruorum eius, commemoratione animaeque eius remedio' DOI 180.
[46] Goetting, 'Die gefälschten Gründungsurkunden', pp. 327-344.
[47] Ibid., pp. 331-6.

the source for that quote. If my suggestion is correct, and DOI 89 is a twelfth-century reworking of DOI 180 – and if, as Goetting argues, the composer of Ga. 1 was combining and reworking other documents from the earlier part of Gandersheim's history – then surely we cannot exclude the possibility that they were using DOI 180 directly instead of drawing on a common, now-lost, document. Finally, to cast Agius as the man who composed Liudolf's charter again raises the issue considered in the first chapter, of why Agius was so reticent to discuss Liudolf's role at Gandersheim in the *Vita Hathumodae*. As such, while it is entirely possible that a foundation charter of Liudolf may have influenced DOI 180, we need more convincing evidence than has thus far been put forward to prove Goetting's theory that Ga. 1 is an accurate copy of that text.

Let us return to the tenth century. The attempt by Otto to reassert his own power over Gandersheim in 956 helps to explain why the monastery received a second papal charter, only twenty years after the first. One week after the imperial coronation of Otto II, on January 1, 968, the two *serenissimi imperatores augustii* interceded with Pope John XIII in order to gain the *tuitio* of the apostolic see for Gandersheim.[48] The pope, in return, noted that the convent was 'under the leadership of your descendants,' and declared that Gandersheim and its property were not to be held or alienated by any other individual, 'not a king, not a margrave, not a count, not a bishop, not by any leader whatsoever', unless it was for the purpose of defence, and even then could only occur with the permission of the emperor and the abbess.[49] The differences between the charters of 948 and 968 are notable. In the second document, the relationship between the newly crowned Ottonian emperors and Gandersheim was recognised and reaffirmed by the pope, rewriting the clauses in the 948 charter which protected the community from Otto I's interference. The 968 charter, coming so swiftly after Otto II's coronation, asserted that the monastery was firmly under the control of the Ottonian dynasty, as signalled by Gerberga's rule over the convent.[50]

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[48] The name of Gerberga was included in this document, written at the head of the charter in Greek letters. We can only guess at the motivation behind this - whether it was the possible influence of Gerberga's sister Hadwig, who had been instructed in Greek while a possible marriage alliance with the Byzantine emperor was being negotiated; or perhaps an attempt to signal the newly imperial nature of Otto and his family. Ibid., p. 347; Jane Stevenson, 'Hrotsvit in Context: Convents and Culture in Ottonian Germany' in Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (eds), *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches* (Leiden, 2013), p. 61.

[49] 'quod constat esse sub tuae filiacionis regimine…non rex, non marchio, non comes, non episcopus, nec quilibet princeps quacumque potestate preditus'. John XIII, 184. Perhaps pointedly, John did not include emperor in this list of secular leaders who were forbidden from interfering at Gandersheim.

[50] It is in this context that Gerberga commissioned Hrotsvitha to write the *Gesta Ottonis*, which recounts the history of the Ottonian dynasty from Otto's accession in 936.

Otto II

If we look at the actions of Otto II immediately after Otto I's death in 973, it appears that he shared his father's desire to enhance the newly imperial identity of Gandersheim. Two days after Otto I's funeral on June 5, 973, Otto II provided a generous donation for Gandersheim. This was to allow Gerberga to establish a Benedictine nunnery of 30 nuns at Seesen, which would be 'firmly under the hand' of the abbess of Gandersheim. The foundation of a proprietary nunnery suggests that Gerberga and her community were tangibly benefitting from the new emperor's support.[51] Indeed, Otto noted three times throughout the diploma that the various properties he was providing for the convent were for the benefit of his parents and ancestors' souls.[52] Moreover, he specified, this generous new donation was granted through the intercession of Otto's mother, 'our most beloved *genetrix* Adelheid, for the souls of our *genitor* and all our *debitores*, as well as for the stability of our empire.'[53] We might well see this a reflection of Otto's strong relationship with Gandersheim and Gerberga, recognising the commemorative benefits the community could offer to his family and to his realm.

However, despite this sign of Ottonian imperial support, all was not well at Gandersheim in 973. The appointment of Gerberga as abbess of the community in 956 had originally been intended to stabilise the monastery's relationship to the Ottonian family. However, her familial connections meant that Gandersheim was drawn into the internecine conflicts amongst the second generation of the Ottonians that were fought out across the 970s. Gerberga was the daughter of Henry the Younger, Otto I's younger brother. Henry the Younger had not been able to convert his own descent from Henry I into royal status himself, despite numerous attempts in the first decade of Otto I's reign.[54] His son, Henry the Quarreller, revived these claims in the 970s. Henry the Quarreller allied himself in 974 with Boleslav of Bohemia and

[51] 'sub manu abbatissae firmiter', DOII 35a/b. This monastery is believed to have been founded at Seesen, about 13 kilometres east of Gandersheim, which Otto restored to the convent in another diploma, DOII 36. There is however, some confusion around the dating of this document. One variation of DOII 35 mentions Seesen and one does not, and DOII 36, which grants Seesen to Gandersheim was issued, like DOII 35, at Grone but is dated exactly one year later, on June 7, 974. As it is an original document, Sickel has argued that Seesen was granted to Gandersheim in 973 when DOII 35 was issued, but they did not create the diploma until 974 for unknown reasons.

[52] 'ab animarum parentum nostrorum remedio ibidem quiescentium nec non omnium sanctimonialium illuc defunctarum vel deinceps futurarum requie eidem ecclesiae'; 'pro genitoris nostri omniumque debitorum animabus'; 'pro iam dictorum parentum nostrum requie'. DOII 35b.

[53] 'ob ammonitionem carissimae genetricis nostrae Adalheidae pro genitoris nostri omniumque debitorum nostrorum animabus nec non imperii nostri stabilitate' DOII 36.

[54] See below, pp. 112-3, 123-5.

Mieszko of Poland in an unsuccessful rebellion.[55] Otto II was able to quell this challenge to his authority, and stripped his cousin of his duchy of Bavaria. However, Henry, undaunted, launched a second revolt in the company of Henry of Carinthia and Bishop Henry of Augsburg. The failure of this rebellion against Otto II resulted in Henry the Quarreller's exile to Utrecht for the remainder of Otto II's reign at some point between 976-978.

While these rebellions had repercussions for the Ottonian political order more widely, they were particularly destructive for Gerberga of Gandersheim. As Henry the Quarreller's sister, Gerberga was in a difficult position. Her brother was actively asserting his own royal status in defiance of the emperor who controlled her convent. Otto II's decision to establish a new nunnery at Seesen under Gandersheim's control shortly after Otto I's death, pointedly mentioning that it was for his father's soul and the stability of the empire, was very probably influenced by his concern about the growing threat of Henry the Quarreller and a desire to dissuade Gerberga from following her brother's lead. In the same vein, we can understand why Otto II issued, almost verbatim, a copy of DOI 180 for Gandersheim in November 975.[56] The political nature of this document, with its long list of royal beneficiaries and benefactors, plus its association with Otto I and his reassertion of Ottonian control over the convent, would have sent a powerful message to Gerberga and to Henry the Quarreller. By effectively reissuing DOI 180, Otto II was forcefully reminding his cousin Gerberga, Gandersheim's abbess, of her proper relationship with the imperial branch of her family.

The downfall of Gerberga's immediate family is heightened when compared to the steady rise of another part of the Ottonian family at the same time. After the failed rebellion of Otto I's son, Liudolf, in 953, he had been stripped of his duchy of Swabia by his father. Otto I then passed the duchy over to Burchard, the husband of Henry the Younger's other daughter, Hadwig. Twenty years later, in 973, Burchard had died without a male heir. Otto II decided that rather than allowing Hadwig (and, by extension, her brother, Henry the Quarreller) to retain control of the duchy of Swabia, he would pass it back to the family of the now-dead Liudolf. Liudolf's son, Otto, had been raised by his grandfather, Otto I, after Liudolf's death, and was treated by Otto II as a foster brother. It was this Otto, Liudolf's son, who was named as the new duke of Swabia in 973, and Otto II's perceived slight against the family of Henry

[55] Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Middle Ages c. 800-1056* (London, 1991), pp. 175-6.
[56] DOII 119.

the Quarreller was the catalyst for his first rebellion in 974.[57] When Henry's duchy of Bavaria was confiscated from him, it too was given over to Otto of Swabia, a marker of his powerful position in Otto II's court. Thus, from the accession of Otto II in 973, the line of the family coming from Liudolf was in the ascendant, while the branch coming from Henry the Younger's saw their political position being steadily eroded.

At the time when Hrotsvitha was composing her history of Gandersheim's origins, her monastery was in a precarious position. The new imperial abbess of Gandersheim came from a branch of the Ottonian family that was facing increasing difficulties. The problems that Gerberga faced affected the political position of her convent and its relationship with Otto II. The decision to put out a new history of Gandersheim at this particular point in time was no coincidence. We have seen that the *Primordia* was telling a specific version of Gandersheim's origin story rather than just recording the official Ottonian family history. With the political context of the 970s firmly in mind, we can now explore a set of possible motivations for why Hrotsvitha, with Gerberga behind her, chose to put forward this version of Gandersheim's *primordia* at this particular point in time.

THE MOTIVATIONS OF THE *PRIMORDIA*

Thus far, the composition of the *Primordia* has been dated to the first half of the 970s, with most scholars opting for a date just after the death of Otto I in 973 on the grounds that the emperor was referred to in the past tense.[58] I suggest that, on the basis of the political events that affected Gerberga and her family in the 970s, the dating of the *Primordia* should be shifted slightly later, to the point immediately after the exile of Henry the Quarreller from Saxony in 976-978. The public rebellions, political disgrace and eventual exile of her brother from Saxony meant that Gerberga's political position was increasingly precarious. On top of her brother's humiliating downfall, Gerberga also faced the loss of her other key supporter, William, the archbishop of Mainz. William, who was an illegitimate son of Otto I, and thus Gerberga's cousin, was referred to by Hrotsvitha as the abbess's 'most intimate friend', and

[57] Reuter, *Germany in the Middle Ages*, pp. 175-6.
[58] Schulenburg, 'Female Piety', p. 265. Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens*, p. 114. Verdon, *Les femmes*, p. 282. Dronke, *Women Writers*, p. 80.

had been sent a copy of the *Gesta Ottonis* for his approval.[59] His death in 968 removed Gerberga's ally from the imperial court, and was shortly followed by the death of Queen Mathilda, Gerberga's grandmother. As such, the period leading up to 976 was filled with a series of setbacks for Gerberga, destabilising both her own and her convent's political position under Otto II. In response, I suggest she turned to her talented canoness, Hrotsvitha, to recast the way in which Gandersheim was connected to the Ottonian family.

Up until now, the *Primordia* has been read primarily as evidence for Ottonian women, like Gerberga, in maintaining the *memoria* of the dynasty.[60] In particular, the establishment of Quedlinburg in 936 has led Althoff and others to suggest that this text was Gandersheim's attempt to assert its connections to the Ottonian dynasty as a whole in a period where it was anxious about the growing power of another imperial female monastery.[61] Yet, an alternative way to read this text, which bears the political events of the 970s in mind, is to see it as a direct appeal to the family of Duke Liudolf of Swabia in particular. As the rising star on the political scene, Duke Otto and his family could help to shore up Ottonian support for the convent, if they could be persuaded to become its patrons.

Fortunately for Gerberga and Hrotsvitha, the repetitive naming patterns of the Ottonian family allowed them to make subtle, yet unmistakable, comparisons between the Ottonian forebears who founded Gandersheim and the current members of the family in the 970s. Of course, repetitive naming systems were common amongst noble and royal families in the early Middle Ages, providing a sense of familial identity.[62] Yet, they also provided a useful tool for

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[59] 'familiarissimi …archipresulis Wilhelmi', Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, *Liber Tertius Praefatio*, in Walter Berschin (ed.), *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Munich, 2001), p. 273; See also Widukind of Corvey, *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 3.74 in Paul Hirsch and Hans-Eberhard Lohmann (eds), MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 60 (Hanover, 1935), p. 150.

[60] Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens*, pp. 114-7; Scott Wells, 'The Politics of Gender and Ethnicity in East Francia: The Case of Gandersheim, ca. 850-950' in Katherine Allen Smith, Scott Wells (eds), *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe: Gender, Power, Patronage, and the Authority of Religion in Latin Christendom* (Leiden, 2009), p. 129; Ludger Körntgen, *Königsherrschaft und Gottes Gnade: Zu Kontext und Funktion sakraler Vorstellungen in Historiographie und Bildzeugnissen der ottonischen-frühsalischen Zeit* (Berlin, 2001), p. 74.

[61] Gerd Althoff, 'Gandersheim Und Quedlinburg: Ottonische Frauenklöster Als Herrschafts- Und Überlieferungszentren', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 25 (1991), pp. 137-9; Sonnleitner, 'Die Gründungslegende von Gandersheim', pp. 427-9.

[62] Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes and Simon MacLean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 304-6.

historiographical authors to make pointed comments about individuals in their own era.[63] When audiences read texts whose central figures bore the same names as prominent contemporary political actors, they would not have missed the clues to link them together. Thus, when the names of the central figures in the *Primordia* are compared with the contemporary family of Liudolf, we cannot miss the connections. The central pair of Liudolf and Oda in the text, the pious husband and wife who founded Gandersheim, bear striking resemblance to Duke Liudolf of Swabia and his widow Ida.[64] Moreover, Liudolf and Oda's son, 'the illustrious Duke Otto' of Saxony, future father of Henry I, shared his name with the son of Liudolf and Ida: Otto, Duke of Swabia and Bavaria.[65] The starring role that Hrotsvitha attributed to Oda, and the marked praise that she offered to Otto further suggests some form of contemporary *roman à clef* meaning.[66]

Beyond these striking coincidences of naming, the narrative connections between Liudolf and Oda and Duke Liudolf and Ida strengthen the case for reading Hrotsvitha's narrative as a pointed commentary on recent events. She recorded in detail the visit of Liudolf and Oda to Rome, 'with a not inconsiderable retinue', to seek papal blessing and support for their new convent, and to place it under apostolic authority.[67] Readers would have been reminded of the similar trip of Duke Liudolf of Swabia to Rome, which Hrotsvitha herself had argued brought him fame and renown, albeit militarily rather than spiritually.[68] Moreover, the early death of

[63] For example, Karl Ferdinand Werner argues that the tenth-century author of the *Vita sanctae Chrothildis* was using Clovis and Clothar in the text to refer to Louis IV and Lothar in 'Der Autor der Vita sanctae Chrothildis: ein Beitrag zur Idee der "heiligen Königin" und des "Römischen Reiches" im X. Jahrhundert', *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 24/25 (1989/1990), pp. 517-551; and Simon MacLean notes the ability of Notker the Stammerer to elide the differences between identically named figures in the *Gesta Karoli Magni* in *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 213-8.
[64] Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 4-5, p. 306.
[65] Hrotsvitha, *Primordia Prooemium* 6, p. 306; Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 69, 367, 507, pp. 309, 320, 326.
[66] Although they do not map as neatly onto the family tree, the Abbess Gerberga in the text must surely have summoned up the image of Hrotsvitha's Abbess Gerberga; and Queen Liutgard, praised for her generous support of the convent, would make for a flattering comparison with Liudolf of Swabia's daughter Liutgard. Finally, Aeda, Duke Liudolf's pious mother-in-law in the *Primordia*, may have called to mind Duke Liudolf's mother, the pious Edith: in the *Gesta Ottonis* Hrotsvitha spells Edith's name variously as Eaditha, Eadit and Aedit, the last of which reveals the similarity to Aeda.
[67] 'cum non modico comitatu' Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 120, 155-6, pp. 311-2.
[68] A favourable view of Liudolf's exploits in Italy is seen in Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, *Gesta Ottonis* 604-623, in Walter Berschin (ed.), *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Munich, 2001), pp. 296-7. Hrotsvitha argued he brought back a *clarum triumphum*. Adalbert of Magdeburg had a less flattering view on Liudolf's exploits in Italy, arguing

Liudolf in *Primordia* paralleled the premature death of Liudolf of Swabia in 957; Hrotsvitha lamented that 'God took him from this world when he had barely gained the fevers of middle age, so that the illustrious Domna Oda, with her mind intent upon God and with no further thought of earthly love at all, would be content with managing spiritual affairs.'[69] Hrotsvitha's decision to tell the origin story of Gandersheim at this particular point in time and in this particular manner must have evoked the contemporary figures of Duke Liudolf and Ida in the minds of her audience.

Thus, we can glimpse some of Hrotsvitha's motivation for casting Oda as the central figure in the narrative of the *Primordia*. In her version of the origin story, Oda served as an ideal for contemporary Ottonian women, such as Ida, to imitate. Hrotsvitha portrayed Oda's continued support of Gandersheim as the guarantee of her family's political success, ensuring their rise through the ranks of the Saxon nobility to become the Ottonian kings and emperors. Ida's widowhood, her powerful familial connections, and her wealth must have made her a very attractive prospective patron for Gandersheim. Yet, Ida was not the only target for the *Primordia*'s appeal. The way in which Oda's son, Duke Otto, was depicted was clearly an attempt to convince Ida's son, Duke Otto of Swabia, to support Gandersheim as well.

Hrotsvitha characterised the first Duke Otto in the text as a kindly father figure at Gandersheim, who strove to provide for the community throughout his life. In return, Hrotsvitha said, he was still warmly remembered in Gandersheim to that day, even though the current canonesses did not know him. On Duke Otto's death, the sisters of Gandersheim had surrounded him on his deathbed, lamenting and praying for him, outdoing the grief of all the nobles and other laity present. Otto was then buried in the church of the convent, which, she says, he had built himself. From that point on, 'with the zeal of our sisters vying with each other in constant prayers, his beloved spirit was commended to the compassion of Him forever enthroned, that He in His mercy might grant him eternal rest.'[70] The description of Gandersheim's relationship to 'the illustrious Duke Otto' was a targeted advertisement to Duke Otto of Swabia of the

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that 'by offending his father by failing to consult him, he sowed the seeds of thorough-going rebellion and discord.' Adalbert, *Continuatio* 951, p. 165; trans. in MacLean, *History and Politics*, p. 251.

[69] 'Forsan ad hoc illum mundo deus abstulit isto, / Dum vix aetatis febres tetigit mediocris, / Illustris domnae post haec ut plenius Odae / Mens intenta deo posset tractare superna / Expers carnalis totius prosus amoris.' Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 296-300, pp. 317-8.

[70] 'Illic nostrarum studio certante sororum / Continuis precibus dilectus spiritus eius / Semper celsithroni commendatur pietati, / Quo det ei requiem clemens sine fine perennem.' Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 515-560, pp. 326-8.

benefits, in the form of unceasing liturgical commemoration and political glory, that could come to him if he chose to support Gandersheim.[71]

Hrotsvitha's promotion of Gandersheim to Duke Otto did not stop there. As others have noted, the *Primordia* emphasised the promise made by John the Baptist in his appearance to Aeda.[72] If her family had founded and continued to support Gandersheim in the future, her descendants 'will reach such a height of strength and esteem that no earthly king will be able to rival them in power.'[73] This promise would have struck its audience with contemporary meaning. If Oda and Aeda had founded Gandersheim, leading to their progeny becoming kings and emperors, then the same benefits could also be available to those who supported Gandersheim in the present. After all, Otto III was only born in 980, still a few years after the probable date of this text. Duke Otto of Swabia was, at this point, one of Otto II's closest male relatives, the descendant of Otto I's eldest son, and a strong contender for the throne if Otto II should die without a male heir. In an environment where the Ottonian succession was not yet assured, the *Primordia* was emphasising the spiritual advantages that came to those who supported Gandersheim's canonesses. It is thus not surprising to see Hrotsvitha recording the birth of Otto I directly after the section where she recounted Gandersheim's commemoration of Duke Otto, his grandfather.[74] In illustrating how the earliest members of the Ottonian dynasty had gained spiritual reward and eternal glory through supporting Gandersheim, all of whom had the same names as Otto and his parents, Hrotsvitha and Gerberga were making a calculated effort to sway an increasingly powerful section of the Ottonian family over to their convent's side.

With this in mind, the view of the Ottonian dynasty as a cohesive entity, with the female members of the dynasty preserving the memory of the unified family, becomes less stable.[75]

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[71] This goes against the idea that this was a criticism of Otto I, as has been suggested by Jay T. Lees, ''David *Rex Fidelis*'? Otto the Great, the *Gesta Ottonis* and the *Primordia Coenobii Gandeshemensis*' in Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (eds), *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches* (Leiden, 2013), p. 231.

[72] Althoff, 'Gandersheim Und Quedlinburg', pp. 137-9; Patrick McBrine, 'Thematic Focus in Hrotsvit's *Primordia Gandesheimensis*', *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 17 (2007), p. 281; Sonnleitner, 'Die Gründungslegende von Gandersheim', pp. 432-4.

[73] 'Hinc tua progenies saeclis quandoque futuris / Culmine pollentis tanto clarescet honoris, / Ut terrenorum nullus tunc tempore regum / Iure potentatus illi valeat similari.' Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 61-64, p. 308.

[74] Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 561-6, p. 328.

[75] For those arguing for a single Ottonian *memoria*, see Gerd Althoff, *Adels- Und Königsfamilien Im Spiegel Ihrer Memorialüberlieferung: Studien Zum Totengedenken Der Billunger Und Ottonen*

Although the *Primordia* was without doubt an appeal to members of the Ottonian family, stressing the long-standing relationship between Gandersheim and the Liudolfing/Ottonian family, this was not because they were trying to become the chief memorial centre for the whole Ottonian dynasty. The Ottonian *memoria* was not a crystallised, all-encompassing institution. Instead, the factionalism and rivalry between the different descendants of Henry I makes it much more likely that the commemorative activities of the family were housed in multiple institutions at the same time, with different centres of commemoration working on behalf of different parts of the family. Hrotsvitha and Gerberga not only recognised this plurality of memorialisation within the Ottonian family, but also made a politically savvy attempt to capitalise on it. When the branch of the family that they were closely associated with fell from power, and the favour of the emperor was in question, the women of Gandersheim attempted to bring in a glittering new strand of the family to secure their patronage base.

Of course, if the *Primordia* was indeed a plea for other members of the Ottonian family to support the convent, we must consider how they would come into contact with this text. If we track the manuscript tradition for the *Primordia*, we can form an impression of who could have had access to this new plea for Ottonian support for Gandersheim. In his edition of the works of Hrotsvitha, Walter Berschin noted the peculiar nature of the *Primordia*'s manuscript compared to the rest of her works. All of Hrotsvitha's texts, including her dramas, her hagiographies and the *Gesta Ottonis*, plus her prefaces to these texts, originated from a single manuscript (Staatsbibliothek München CLM 14485 - the M manuscript), which was sent to the monastery of St Emmeram in Regensburg circa 980-985.[76] However, the *Primordia* does not appear in this codex. Berschin himself noted the peculiarity of this, adding that the M manuscript had plenty of room for the *Primordia* to have been copied in at the end, and that it

(Munich, 1984), pp. 15-30; Althoff, 'Gandersheim Und Quedlinburg', pp. 123-144; Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens* pp. 246-250; Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 52-70; John W. Bernhardt, 'King Henry II of Germany: Royal Self-Representation and Historical Memory' in Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried and Patrick J. Geary (eds), *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 58-60; Wells, 'The Politics of Gender and Ethnicity', pp. 128-133.

[76] He bases this date on the cataloguing of a manuscript on *Ars metrica de nativitate sancte Marie* in 985 by Ramwold at St Emmeram, and suggests it was written at Gandersheim around 980. Walter Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Munich, 2001), pp. xiii-xiv; Walter Berschin, 'Hrotsvit and Her Works' in Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (eds), *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches* (Leiden, 2013), p. 27.

does not appear that any folios have been cut out or removed.[77] Instead, the first manuscripts of the *Primordia* come to us not from Bavaria, but from Saxony. Two copies were made in the seventeenth century, most likely from a manuscript held at Gandersheim itself, which is now no longer extant.[78] Thus, while the definitive manuscript collecting together all of Hrotsvitha's impressive literary output, plus her *Gesta Ottonis,* was sent to Bavaria, her final work appears to have remained within the library of her convent.

What was the motivation for keeping the *Primordia* at Gandersheim? Examining where her other works were sent can shed some light on this question. Berschin argues the M manuscript was likely already at the male monastery of St Emmeram by 985, suggesting it was sent there around 980 directly after having been copied out at Gandersheim's *scriptorium*.[79] Adam S. Cohen, on the other hand, argues that it could have possibly been sent first to the convent of Niedermünster before being transferred to St Emmeram, given that the two communities were only a short distance from each other in Regensburg and were closely connected through the patronage of Henry the Younger and his wife Judith.[80] Moreover, it was at Niedermünster that Henry constructed his own familial burial centre, and Regensburg was the political base of his family in their duchy of Bavaria. Whether it was Niedermünster or St Emmeram that was the intended recipient, it made perfect sense for Gerberga II to send the literary output of her convent back to Bavaria, reaffirming her links with her family and demonstrating the cultural value that Gandersheim could produce. Moreover, the *Gesta*, a text which presented Henry the Younger, who was interred at Niedermünster, in a very positive light, would likely have appealed to his family in Bavaria.

However, the *Primordia* was different. Rather than being a text tying Gandersheim back to the Bavarian branch of the Ottonian family, it was instead an appeal for patronage from the branches of the dynasty which were centred on the heartlands of Saxony around the convent itself. As such, it would have been a political misstep for Gerberga to send this text back to her family in Regensburg. Furthermore, the *Primordia* may well have been intended for the canonesses within Gandersheim as well. The version of their origin story that Hrotsvitha puts

[77] Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera* p. xii; Berschin, 'Hrotsvit and Her Works', p. 25. It also includes a short section from Bede's *De Virginitate*.
[78] Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera*, pp. xix-xx; Berschin, 'Hrotsvit and Her Works', p. 29.
[79] Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera*, pp. xiii-xiv; Berschin, 'Hrotsvit and Her Works', p. 29.
[80] Adam S. Cohen, *The Uta Codex: Art, Philosophy, and Reform in Eleventh-Century Germany* (Pennsylvania, 2000), pp. 173, 185-8.

forward contrasts significantly with the hints of a different narrative that we see emerging in the papal charter issued to Abbess Wendelgard in 948. The institution of Gerberga as abbess, marked by a diploma which firmly stressed the Liudolf/Oda foundation narrative, may signal tensions within the convent itself about its identity as a royal Ottonian foundation. By offering a definitive new narrative of the origins of the convent which emphasised the involvement of the founding family throughout the first 70 years of Gandersheim's history, Gerberga and Hrotsvitha might well have been trying to reaffirm Gerberga's authority over her monastery.[81] Consequently, the *Primordia*'s absence from the M manuscript, which was held in the Bavarian capital of Henry the Younger's family, may not have been an anomaly or the result of a later manuscript excision.[82] Instead, as a reshaping of Gandersheim's own history which included a strong appeal to Saxon-based members of the imperial family, it would have made more sense to keep it safely inside the library of Gandersheim itself, to be read to selected visitors to the convent.[83]

This is supported by the brief mention Berschin gives of two other texts by Hrotsvitha that may have also accompanied the *Primordia* in the now-lost original manuscript. He notes that Hrotsvitha also wrote two *vitae* that appeared alongside the *Primordia*, the Lives of Anastasius and Innocent.[84] These two saints were the spiritual patrons of Gandersheim, whose relics Duke Liudolf of Saxony had received from Rome for its foundation.[85] Referring to the content of these two *vitae*, Stephen L. Wailes has made the bold claim that, 'there is nothing of power politics or international affairs in this poem [*Primordia*], nor was there (we may be sure) in the lost lives of the patrons.'[86] His elision of the political aspects of the *Primordia* aside, Wailes's certainty that there was no political dimension to the *vitae* is unfounded. These lost Lives,

[81] It is most likely for this reason that Hrotsvitha never names Brunshausen or refers to Fulda in the *Primordia*, in an attempt to minimise the recent realignment of the convent's identity.
[82] For an example of the argument that the *Primordia* was cut out of the M Manuscript, see Stephen L. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Selinsgrove, 2006), p. 224.
[83] This may possibly explain the lack of dedicatory prefaces to the *Primordia*, as it was not addressed to a single person in particular but rather left open to appeal to the widest range of patrons possible. However, as Dronke observed, the lack of prefaces may simply be due to the lack of a fully extant manuscript and the original preface may not have been copied. Dronke, *Women Writers*, p. 80.
[84] Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera*, p. xx; Berschin, 'Hrotsvit and Her Works', pp. 29-30.
[85] As mentioned in DLJ 3; DLJ 25; in Hrotsvitha, *Primordia* 156-183, pp. 312-3; and in Agius of Corvey, *Vita Hathumodae* 4, in G. H. Pertz (ed.), MGH SS 4 (Hanover, 1841), p. 168.
[86] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics*, p. 224. His position derives in part from his narrow view of what constitutes political history, leading to his conclusion that 'Where the actions of men in worldly affairs lacked the informing spirituality of women, Hrotsvit took little interest in them.' pp. 225-7, quote p. 227.

which likely would have recounted the miracles these two saints worked on behalf of Gandersheim's community, would have added serious weight to any attempt to sway new patrons over to supporting the convent.[87] By presenting potential patrons with the *Primordia* and the *vitae* of the two key saints of the community, Gerberga would surely have been able to make a very strong case for the spiritual and political rewards that patronage of her convent could secure. Of course, without the manuscript and the text of the *vitae*, it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions. Other factors might have influenced the decision to keep the *Primordia* at Gandersheim, and other manuscripts may have disappeared from our records. However, given the evidence available to us, this theory behind why the *Primordia* does not appear alongside Hrotsvitha's other works is more satisfying than ascribing it to a chance (and unproven) separation from the M manuscript.

GANDERSHEIM AND THE OTTONIANS, 978-1002

If the *Primordia* was indeed an appeal for new Ottonian supporters of Gandersheim, was Gerberga's gambit successful? Did she succeed in securing her position after the volatile political developments from 973 to 978? By looking at the ways in which the relationship between Gandersheim and the Ottonians changed from 978 onwards, we can start to piece together an answer to these questions. And, indeed, the developments at Gandersheim from 978 onwards do signal a major shift in the way that the monastery was connected to the Ottonian family. In September 979, Otto II provided a significant grant of property to Gandersheim with the intercession of his wife Theophanu, noting that they had placed their infant daughter, Sophia, into the care of Gerberga at Gandersheim 'so that she might learn the words of the holy scripture and imitate the way of life and conduct worthy of the servants of God, the *sanctimoniales*, in that place.'[88] Six months later, Otto granted the abbess of

[87] *Vitae* were often written for monasteries to reaffirm the spiritual value added to the community by their relics. For more on this, see Katrien Heene, 'Merovingian and Carolingian Hagiography: Continuity or Change in Public and Aims?', *Analecta Bollandiana* 107 (1989), p. 421; Giorgia Vocino, 'Under the Aegis of the Saints. Hagiography and Power in Early Carolingian Northern Italy', *Early Medieval Europe* 22 (2014), pp. 34, 50.

[88] 'sacre scripturae literas ut ibi ediscat vitamque et conversationem dignam sanctimonialium deo ibi servientium imitetur, praefate abbatissae nutriendam commendavimus', DOII 201. Verdon also commented on this in *Les femmes*, p. 167. On same day, Otto issued DOII 202a which granted a property to Theophanu. A sixteenth-century copy of this document (202b) added that Theophanu had control of Gandersheim until her death, but this seems to be a later forgery.

Gandersheim the profitable privilege of *burgbann* over Seeburg and Greene as well as Gandersheim, giving Gerberga the ability to claim labour from the local population to secure the upkeep of the buildings of the monastery.[89] In a short period of time, Gandersheim had received not only a wealth of new properties and privileges, but the prestigious role of raising and educating the daughter of the emperor.

Otto and Theophanu's decision to place Sophia into Gandersheim was not inevitable. As this chapter has outlined, Gandersheim's relationship with the imperial family was more characterised by tension than stability during the 970s. Moreover, Otto and Theophanu had other institutions to which they could have turned, with the most obvious candidate being Quedlinburg. In 979, this monastery was ruled by Otto's sister Mathilda. Quedlinburg, led by an Ottonian imperial daughter itself, was already a wealthy and prestigious centre, positioned at the heart of Ottonian politics. As such, it would have been an obvious choice as the place to raise Sophia in 979. Instead, however, Otto and Theophanu opted for Gandersheim. Perhaps Otto II, much as his father Otto I had done in 956, was signalling his continued control over Gandersheim after the successful quashing of the 976-8 rebellion by placing a close female relative in the convent, reasserting his authority over the community.

It is tempting to speculate about the extent to which the imperial couple were influenced by Hrotsvitha's works. Did the incredible literary output of this canoness make Gandersheim a more appealing centre of education, given the emphasis on learning in Sophia's entrance diploma? Or, was it the *Primordia* in particular, with its catalogue of spiritual benefits for Ottonian patrons, which won Otto and Theophanu over? Other, more practical considerations might have influenced the pair as well. If we follow the dating suggested by Wolfgang Warner, Theophanu had given birth to three daughters in quick succession - Adelheid in 977, Sophia in 978 and Mathilda in 979.[90] Over the space of three years, the addition of three daughters

[89] DOII 214. Gandersheim evidently profited from this free labour: Bernhardt notes the special *Westwerk* present at Gandersheim with a dedicated suite of rooms for the king, a royal gallery and possibly a royal chapel, further boosting the prestige of the convent. John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, C. 936-1075* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 151-2.

[90] I take the later dating of Sophia's birth from Wolfgang Wagner, 'Das Gebetsgedenken der Liudolfinger im Spiegel der Königs- und Kaiserurkunden von Heinrich I. bis zu Otto III.', *Archiv für Diplomatik: Schriftsgeschichte, Siegel, und Wappenkunde* 40 (1994), pp. 22-7. This is further supported by Thietmar's description of the daughters of Theophanu. He noted that the empress offered her daughters to the church - 'the first, Adelheid, at Quedlinburg, the second, called Sophia, at

radically changed the configuration of the imperial family. In 979, Otto may well have been receptive to the idea of placing his second daughter into a royal convent under the care of his cousin, particularly after Gerberga's rebellious brother was safely exiled in Utrecht. Giving Sophia into the care of Gerberga further helped Otto counter the influence of his Bavarian relatives over this monastery, in a more tangible way than his reissuing of DOI 180 had done in 975. Of course, as Otto did not specify what had spurred him into placing Sophia into Gandersheim, we can only guess at his motivations. However, the sudden decision to entrust his daughter to a community which, prior to this, had a somewhat tumultuous relationship with the imperial family, hints at a possible political agenda as well.

While Gandersheim clearly benefitted from Sophia's entrance into the convent (in the short term, at least) this was perhaps not quite the result which Gerberga had envisaged when she commissioned the *Primordia*. After all, at the point when the *Primordia* was being written, Theophanu may well have not yet given birth to her first daughter. Moreover, the appeals to Duke Liudolf of Swabia's family appear to have gone unheeded. There is no evidence for Duke Otto or Ida taking a closer interest in Gandersheim after 978. Instead, they focused their attentions on Essen, where Liudolf and Ida's daughter, Mathilda, was abbess; and on setting up another memorial foundation at the church of St Peter in Aschaffenburg.[91] Again, a lack of evidence prevents us from fully explaining this decision. Was there no opportunity to show the *Primordia* to Duke Otto or to Ida? Or did Otto II and Theophanu decide that they wanted to restrict the benefits of the convent to their immediate family alone?

Either way, by looking closely at how Gandersheim interacted with the different parts of the Ottonian family in the period both before and after the *Primordia* was created we can see the changeable nature of the monastery's relationship with the dynasty. While Gandersheim eventually became the convent to which Otto II issued the most diplomas of his reign, we should not see this as evidence of the stable position of Gandersheim as an imperial monastery under Ottonian rule. Instead, I suggest that Gandersheim received so many diplomas from Otto II and was given the care of Sophia in part because it was caught between the different branches

Gandersheim.' Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon* 4.10, in Robert Holtzmann (ed.), MGH SRG NS 9 (Hanover, 1935), pp. 142-3.

[91] For Otto's involvement at Aschaffenburg, see DOII 84. The church had been founded by Duke Liudolf in 957 and completed by his son in 974. Before Duke Otto's death in 982, he and his sister Mathilda gave the church over to St Martin in Mainz with detailed requirements for how their *memoria* should be celebrated. Wagner, 'Das Gebetsgedenken', pp. 30, 47-8.

of the family. In the 970s, Gandersheim was effectively in crisis due to the wider upheavals within the Ottonian political order. The *Primordia* was written as a response to that crisis, and the placing of Sophia into Gandersheim signals that Gerberga had been able to successfully advertise the continued benefits of her community to the Ottonian family.

However, the arrival of Sophia at Gandersheim led to unforeseen ramifications for the community, which would seriously affect its political position well into the eleventh century. The presence of an imperial daughter at the community undoubtedly raised the profile and wealth of Gandersheim. However, the increased prestige of Gandersheim, and Sophia in particular, made the convent the catalyst for the growing tensions between the bishops of Hildesheim and archbishops of Mainz to become an open battle for precedence, generally referred to as the Gandersheim Conflict. Our only full account of this conflict comes from Hildesheim, in the hagiographical *vita* of Bishop Bernward, written by Thankmar in the eleventh century. The *vita*, naturally, is strongly biased in Hildesheim's favour, and depicts Sophia as the antagonist of the saintly bishop Bernward and the instigator of the conflict as a whole. Accordingly, the picture we get of Sophia is very distorted, and must be viewed with a critical eye.[92]

The conflict began, so Thankmar said, in 989 when Sophia reached the age of eleven and was consecrated as a canoness. Due to her pride, she wished for her veiling to be performed by an archbishop, rather than the lowly bishop of Hildesheim, and asked for Archbishop Willigis of Mainz to perform the ceremony. As the bishops of Hildesheim had customarily consecrated all the members of Gandersheim because the community had been founded within its diocese, this move challenged the authority of Bishop Osdag. Fearing that Willigis was encroaching on Hildesheim's customary right, Osdag countered this by bringing his episcopal throne to Gandersheim, setting it up by the altar of the church as a reminder of his control over the convent, and then engaging in a heated argument with Willigis in front of the canonesses and assembled audience, including Otto III and Theophanu. Eventually, as both men refused to

[92] Knut Görich, 'Der Gandersheimer Streit zur Zeit Ottos III. Ein Könflikt um die Metropolitanrechte des Erzbischofs Willigis von Mainz', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stifung für Rechtsgeschichte: Kanonistische Abteilung* 79 (1993), pp. 59.

cede their place in the ceremony, they reached a compromise. Osdag and Willigis both veiled Sophia together at the same time, while Osdag alone veiled the other canonesses.[93]

Although it is Sophia's pride and Willigis's arrogance which Thankmar blamed for the outrageous scene he reported, there was a more complicated agenda behind this dispute.[94] As we have seen, the community of Gandersheim was initially housed in the monastery of Brunshausen, which lay within the diocese of Hildesheim.[95] However, the new monastic complex of Gandersheim lay over the diocesan border in the territory of Mainz. While it seems that the archbishops of Mainz had allowed the bishops of Hildesheim to continue to consecrate the women of the community in recognition of this shift in diocese, the veiling of Sophia was a politically significant event. After the death of Otto II in 983, Henry the Quarreller had, once again, laid claim to the throne. On his return from exile, he had seized the young Otto III and attempted to supplant him as king. During this attempted coup, Willigis of Mainz had been one of the few episcopal supporters of Otto III.[96] Following the defeat of Henry, Willigis was a central figure during the regency of the young king, and was a strong ally of Empress Theophanu. It is entirely possible that Theophanu, keen to further demonstrate her support by the archbishop, chose to use her daughter's consecration as a way to reward Willigis. Gandersheim was within Willigis's diocese, and he had a strong claim to jurisdictional authority over the convent, even if Hildesheim had customary rights. The outraged response of Osdag, however, must have spoiled the intended effect of signalling the close relationship between Willigis and Theophanu.

Thus, it is no surprise to see Otto and Theophanu returning to Gandersheim a year after the dramatic events at Sophia's veiling, to try to patch up the damage done earlier. At the intercession of both Abbess Gerberga and Sophia, Otto granted a swathe of privileges to the convent. Gandersheim would now have the rights to hold a market, to mint money (an extremely profitable privilege considering the silver mines in the Harz mountains which were

[93] Thankmar, *Vita Bernwardi Episcopi Hildesheimensis* 13 in G. H. Pertz (ed.) MGH SS 4 (Hanover, 1841), p. 764.
[94] On pride and arrogance, see David A. Warner, 'Ritual and Memory in the Ottonian Reich: The Ceremony of Adventus', *Speculum* 76:2 (2001), p. 273. Gunther Wolf lays the blame for the 989 events firmly with Sophia. Gunther Wolf, 'Prinzessin Sophia (978-1039): Äbtissin von Gandersheim und Essen. Enkelin, Tochter und Schwester von Kaisern', *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch* 61 (1989), p. 108.
[95] Görich, 'Der Gandersheimer Streit', pp. 56, 59-60; Warner, 'Ritual and Memory', p. 273.
[96] Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages: 800-1056* (London, 1991), p. 185.

reaching peak production in the 980s), and to collect tolls.[97] In addition, the abbess was given the right of *regius bannus*, the ability to command and hold court which superseded that of any other judicial individual.[98] A week later, Otto issued a further diploma, this time granting his sister 60 *mansos* spread across 9 towns.[99] Despite the simmering tension between Mainz and Hildesheim over Gandersheim, Gerberga continued to be handsomely rewarded for her support of Otto and his father, even in the face of her brother's attempted coup. As DOIII 66 noted, Gerberga 'had frequently shown devoted service both to our father of blessed memory, the august Emperor Otto, and to us.'[100] Indeed, with Sophia joining her brother's court after the unexpected death of Theophanu in 991, Gerberga's control of Gandersheim was unquestioned. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that we see hints of the continued interest of the Bavarian branch of the Ottonian family in her convent, with the death of Henry the Quarreller during a visit to Gandersheim in 995 leading to his burial in the church there rather than at their family's burial centre of Niedermünster.[101]

It was only when Sophia was once again present at Gandersheim that we see the Gandersheim Conflict boil over into active aggression. In 993, Otto III's former tutor, Bernward, had been consecrated as Bishop of Hildesheim by Willigis himself.[102] In the intervening years, the absence of Willigis from Saxony meant that Bernward had unchallenged access to Gandersheim. However, after they had accompanied the young emperor on his first Italian campaign, Sophia and Willigis both remained behind in Saxony when Otto III departed for Italy again in 997. The return of the archbishop, along with Sophia, to Saxony seriously upset the power balance around Gandersheim and provoked the anger of Bernward. Indeed, Thankmar even insinuated that suspicions were raised about exactly how close Sophia and Willigis's relationship was.[103] After Otto III's triumphal itinerary around his German kingdom in 1000, and his subsequent return to Rome, the tension between Sophia, Willigis and

[97] Ibid., pp. 180, 236; Karl Leyser, 'Ottonian Government', *Medieval Germany and its Neighbours 900-1250* (London, 1982), p. 91; J. U. Nef, 'Mining and Metallurgy in Medieval Civilisation' in Edward Miller, Cynthia Postan, M. M. Postan (eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe from the Decline of the Roman Empire. Volume II: Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 1987), pp. 698-701.
[98] DOIII 66.
[99] DOIII 67.
[100] 'quae genitori nostro beatae memoriae Ottoni imperatori augusto et nobis saepius devotum servitium exhibuit', DOIII 66.
[101] Thietmar, *Chronicon* 4.20, pp. 154-5.
[102] Wolf, 'Prinzessin Sophia', p. 110.
[103] Thankmar, *Vita Bernwardi* 14, pp. 764-5.

Bernward finally came to a head. When the time came to consecrate the new church of Gandersheim in September 1000, Bernward was furious when Sophia turned again to Willigis to perform the ceremony. Bernward, looking to pre-empt Willigis's consecration of the church by arriving there a week before the ceremony, publicly angered the canonesses of Gandersheim, including Sophia, who suspected he was about to perform the ceremony himself. Whereas the earlier dispute over Sophia's veiling had been settled with a compromise, by 1000 neither side was willing to concede. Multiple synods were held to determine which diocese had jurisdictional authority over Gandersheim, some of which ended in violence. While Henry II eventually pushed Willigis to renounce his rights over the convent in 1007, Mainz's archbishops continued to actively pursue their claims of authority over Gandersheim until 1027.[104]

The ruptures that the Gandersheim Conflict left in the ecclesiastical fabric of the Ottonian empire were serious enough to attract the attention of three emperors, a pope and numerous synods of German bishops. Consequently, Hrotsvitha's work, and her *Primordia* in particular, has been seen as foreshadowing the convent's argument against the interference of the bishops of Hildesheim.[105] It is true that the position of Gandersheim, effectively straddling the border of the dioceses of Hildesheim and Mainz, must have led to a complex relationship between the three institutions. However, it is a mistake to see Hrotsvitha's work retrospectively through the lens of the later conflict. The Gandersheim Conflict was only able to have the force that it did because of the figure of Sophia. This is not to lay the blame for the whole dispute at her feet, as some other historians have done.[106] Rather, Sophia's arrival transformed Gandersheim into a newly imperial foundation, one which was visibly connected to the young emperor and his family, with the wealth and privileges that came along with that. The Gandersheim that the *Primordia* was created for in 976-978 was a different institution to the one that Osdag and Willigis were fighting over in 989. Gandersheim had succeeded in gaining the daughter of the emperor in 979 and assuring Ottonian support for their community. However, the ultimate

[104] Görich, 'Der Gandersheimer Streit', pp. 89-94.
[105] Käthe Sonnleitner, 'Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstverständnis der ottonischen Frauen im Spiegel der Historiographie des 10. Jahrhunderts' in Reinhard Härtel (ed.), *Geschichte und ihre Quellen: Festschrift für Friedrich Hausmann zum 70 Geburtstag* (Graz, 1987), p. 113; Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics*, p. 220; Lees, ''David *Rex Fidelis*?'', p. 208.
[106] For example, Wolf argues that Sophia was wilful and full of pride, with her imperial lineage contributing to her arrogance. 'Prinzessin Sophia', pp. 108, 120-3.

result of this was to make Gandersheim a bigger prize to compete for, raising the stakes in the conflict that would dominate the monastery's affairs for the next four decades.

CONCLUSION

This re-examination of the *Primordia* has emphasised that Hrotsvitha's text was no dispassionate record of the past or act of scripted familial *memoria*. Instead, the rewriting of Gandersheim's origin story in the tenth century was a political act. Hrotsvitha, at the request of Gerberga, deftly brought together a range of sources, not all of which agreed with the version of the past that she chose to highlight. By weaving together the elements that supported her case, alongside her own additions, Hrotsvitha formed a new memory of both the Ottonian family and her own monastic institution. Standing behind her throughout this process was her abbess, Gerberga. Through the literary talents of Hrotsvitha, Gerberga was able to take advantage of a period in which the Ottonian past was being renegotiated by a number of different authors. At the same time that Hrotsvitha was composing her *Gesta* and *Primordia*, Widukind was writing the *Res Gesta Saxonicae* and an anonymous canoness at Nordhausen was creating the first *vita* of Queen Mathilda.[107] In this environment where the dynasty's memory was being repeatedly retold, Gerberga seized the opportunity to put forward a version of the past that suited her needs. As such, she and Hrotsvitha remind us of the ability of early medieval women to engage successfully on the political stage of the Ottonian empire. To see either Gerberga or Hrotsvitha as passive bearers of the Ottonian *memoria* is to overlook the demonstrable ability of these women to actively shape records of the past for their own purposes.

The *Primordia* undeniably shows a deep interest in the role of Liudolfing women in Gandersheim's early history. However, in contrast to the idea that Hrotsvitha was promoting the spiritual power of all Liudolfing/Ottonian women, the various authorial choices she made reveal her political motivations. Hrotsvitha recognised the political divisions that existed within the wider Ottonian family, with which Gerberga must have been only too familiar. As a result,

[107] Sean Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity: The* Lives *of Mathilda and the* Epitaph *of Adelheid* (Washington D.C., 2004), pp. 15-6; Steven Robbie, 'Can silence speak volumes? Widukind's *Res Gestae Saxonicae* and the coronation of Otto I reconsidered', *Early Medieval Europe* 20:3 (2012), pp. 336-8.

she appealed to the different branches of the family that were most appropriate. The *Gesta Ottonis* with its rehabilitation of Henry the Younger's image, and its strong message of the unity of the different parts of the family would have been well received by the Bavarian descendants of Henry the Younger, whereas the *Primordia* used the figures of Duke Liudolf, Oda and Duke Otto to advertise Gandersheim's spiritual abilities to Liudolf of Swabia's family. The targeting of different works to different parts of the Ottonian family prompts us to reassess the idea of a unified Ottonian *memoria*, and that Hrotsvitha and Gerberga were campaigning due to the competition they faced from the new foundation of Quedlinburg.

Indeed, Gandersheim's history leading up to the creation of the *Primordia* illustrates the fluidity of the relationship that the convent had with the rulers of Saxony. Henry I seems remarkably uninterested in Gandersheim, considering that Althoff suggests it remained the commemorative centre of his family until 936. Moreover, it was well after Quedlinburg was established in 936 that we see Otto I turn his attention to the monastery, reasserting his control and position of authority over the community in 956. On the other hand, the apparent wealth of diplomas that Gandersheim received from Otto II did not, as one might assume, signal the stable position of the convent under the control of the emperor. Rather, Gandersheim was a focus for the struggles between the descendants of the different branches of the Ottonian family in the 970s and saw its position in Ottonian society threatened. The placing of Sophia into the convent in 979 was a significant event, and one which should not be seen as inevitable. It was Gerberga's ability to campaign for support and advertise her convent's spiritual and political benefits that allowed her to negotiate the troubled waters of Ottonian familial politics in the late tenth century. That her success in shoring up her convent's status as an imperial Ottonian convent ultimately led to the Gandersheim Conflict reminds us that imperial support and royal status for monasteries was not always a guarantee of stability and security. Increasing the social and political prestige of a monastery also increased the likelihood that it would attract unwanted attention. And, as we shall see in the second half of this thesis, the most powerful Ottonian royal convent of them all was the one which was the most vulnerable to those who wished to challenge the authority of Ottonian rulers.

Chapter 4

THE ORIGINS OF QUEDLINBURG

The establishment of the convent of canonesses at Quedlinburg in 936 is a landmark moment in the history of Saxon monasticism. The foundation of this convent not only reoriented the development of female monasticism in the region, but historians have also stressed the consequences of Quedlinburg's establishment on the *memoria* strategy of the Liudolfing/Ottonian family. Following Althoff's argument, it is generally agreed that once the Liudolfing family had attained the throne, they founded a new commemorative centre to reflect their recently attained royal status. As a result, their previous *memoria* centre of Gandersheim was eclipsed by the prestigious new royal house of Quedlinburg.[1] Drawing on the origin stories that sources from the later tenth and early eleventh century provide, the foundation of Quedlinburg is primarily attributed to Queen Mathilda, who, after the death of her husband, Henry I, carried out their plan to establish a new commemorative centre. Henry was buried in the church of Quedlinburg, and Mathilda is often held up as the model of female commemorative activity, spending the rest of her widowhood devoted to celebrating the *memoria* of her family at this new memorial centre.[2] In this view, it was under Mathilda's command that Quedlinburg took on the role of the Ottonian commemorative centre. The necrological record of the Ottonian family and followers, which had been housed at Gandersheim up until 936, was transferred to Quedlinburg by the widowed queen. On her deathbed it was passed on to her namesake granddaughter, Abbess Mathilda. Quedlinburg, according to this narrative, was the perfect familial commemorative centre.

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[1] Gerd Althoff, 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg: Ottonische Frauenklöster als Herrschafts- und Überlieferungszentren', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 25 (1991), pp. 123-144; Käthe Sonnleitner, 'Die Annalistik der Ottonenzeit als Quelle für die Frauengeschichte', *Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Geschichte Darstellungen* 2 (1988), pp. 233-4; Käthe Sonnleitner, 'Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstverständnis der ottonischen Frauen im Spiegel der Historiographie des 10. Jahrhunderts' in Reinhard Härtel (ed.), *Geschichte und ihre Quellen: Festschrift für Friedrich Hausmann zum 70 Geburtstag* (Graz, 1987), p. 112; Thomas Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit religiöser Frauengemeinschaften im Frühmittelalter: Die* Institutio sanctimonialium Aquisgranensis *des Jahres 816 und die Problematik der Verfassung von Frauenkommunitäten* (Göttigen, 1998), pp. 189-190; Joachim Ehlers, 'Heinrich I. in Quedlinburg' in Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert (eds), *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im Ottonischen Sachsen* (Sigmaringen, 1998), pp. 238-256.

[2] Gerd Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien im Spiegel ihrer Memorialuberlieferung Studien zum Totengedenken der Billunger und Ottonen* (Munich, 1984), pp. 166-171.

However, the image of Quedlinburg's early history and its relationship with its founding family, is not as straightforward as it appears. Much like Gandersheim, historians tend to view Quedlinburg's relationship with the Ottonian family and emperors through evidence that dates later, mainly from the end of the tenth century and early eleventh century. The sources used, such as the *Lives* of Queen Mathilda, the Quedlinburg Annals and Thietmar of Merseburg's *Chronicon*, were written well after the foundation of the convent, during or just after the rule of the very politically active Abbess Mathilda. A great deal of the literature on the motivations behind Quedlinburg's establishment concentrates on the commemorative focus of the foundation diploma that Otto provided for the convent in 936, before moving to the image presented of the community in these later sources under the rule of Abbess Mathilda. As a result, the period between the foundation of the convent in 936 and the consecration of Mathilda as abbess in 966 remains somewhat obscure in the historiography on the convent, with many suggesting that the community was led by Queen Mathilda as a kind of quasi-abbess. Indeed, the relationship that Otto himself constructed with this new community in the first decades after its foundation has not received a comprehensive amount of attention, which is surprising considering the importance of the Ottonian *memoria* policy advanced by Althoff in scholarship on the tenth-century German Empire.

Accordingly, this chapter will reassess the origins of Quedlinburg, exploring the possible motivations behind the establishment of this convent as one of the first major acts of Otto I's reign. The development of the origin story at Quedlinburg which cast Queen Mathilda as its founder, and the memory of her involvement and relationship with the convent will be explored more fully in the final chapter. For now, though, we will consider the origins of the new institution from the perspective of Otto himself. Through tracking how Otto's relationship with the community evolved over the first thirty years of his reign, up until his daughter was consecrated as abbess in 966, we can uncover the function of the monastery as a political and dynastic centre, and better understand why Quedlinburg was able to become such a central place in Saxony for Otto and his descendants. In particular, by setting the convent's origins back into the context of the turbulent early years of Otto I's reign, and comparing it to other new monastic foundations in the same era, we are able to gain a much clearer view of Quedlinburg's path to prominence in the second half of the tenth century.

In contrast to Agius's works for Gandersheim, we do not have the same kind of contemporary narrative source for Quedlinburg which lays out the history of the foundation's early years. Instead, the focus of this chapter will be on the numerous diplomas issued by Otto I for his new foundation, which not only reveal the repeated presence of Otto at Quedlinburg, but also hint at his intentions for the monastery. These diplomatic sources will be supplemented by the view of the convent that is presented just after Abbess Mathilda's consecration in the *Res Gestae Saxonicae* by Widukind of Corvey, who reveals the actions of Otto I there over the course of his reign. While Agius and Widukind's accounts have a very different set of aims and focuses, the composition of two texts, both written around twenty to thirty years after the origins of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg respectively, alongside their shared interest in the relationship between the Liudolfing/Ottonian family and the monasteries, raises an interesting set of comparisons across the two foundations.

THE FOUNDATION OF QUEDLINBURG

Before we explore Otto I's actions at Quedlinburg, we need to look back earlier to see how the site evolved under Henry I. As the first Saxon to take the throne, Henry was carefully considering how he could publicly affirm his legitimacy as ruler and express his royal power in a way that was both understandable and acceptable to his noble peers in Saxony. Part of the solution that Henry hit upon was to convert certain sites in his homeland into new royal residences.[3] One of these sites was the settlement at Quedlinburg. The topography of Quedlinburg made it a sensible choice. It was set at the heart of Henry's family's lands around the Harz mountain range and was marked out by the rocky peak, which overlooks the flat plains that stretch out to the Elbe river in the east.[4] The site may possibly have been acquired by Henry's father, Duke Otto: the monastery of Hersfeld established the mission church of St Wigbert on the hill 500 metres south-west of the burg in the ninth century, and Otto was the lay abbot of Hersfeld from 901 to 912.[5] Archaeological excavations have shown that the church

[3] Thomas Zotz, 'Carolingian Tradition and Ottonian-Salian Innovation: Comparative Observations on Palatine Policy in the Empire' in Anne Duggan (ed.), *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe* (London, 1993), p. 86.
[4] Gerhard Leopold, 'Archäologische Ausgrabungen an Stätten der ottonischen Herrscher (Quedlinburg, Memleben, Magdeburg)' in Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert (eds), *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im Ottonischen Sachsen* (Sigmaringen, 1998), p. 33.
[5] Karen Blough, 'The Abbatial Effigies at Quedlinburg: A Convent's Identity Reconfigured', *Gesta* 47:2 (2008), p. 150.

of St Wigbert was expanded greatly in the course of the tenth century, developing most probably under Henry I or Otto I into a building that fitted more into the model of a royal palace church, as opposed to a ninth-century mission church.[6]

There is more certainty, however, around the development of the site on top of the burg of the town. Henry I most likely began to develop the burg after 926, when he initiated a programme of increasing fortifications to help shore up the defences of the *regnum* against the Hungarians. He built a small (10x12.5m) three-nave church which adjoined a larger hall on the top of the burg. Gerhard Leopold has argued that this church, given its small dimensions, would not be large enough for a choir in addition to any kind of memorial activity, and suggests that it was instead more likely intended as a burial space with the larger adjoining hall serving as a chapel.[7] This building plan by Henry on the top of the burg supports Joachim Ehlers's suggestion that he chose Quedlinburg as a site for his royal *Repräsentation*, where he could physically construct a landscape that reflected the image of royal authority that he hoped to create.[8] It is certainly true that Henry did not just commission buildings at Quedlinburg, but also altered his itinerary to increase his number of visits there. He celebrated at least three Easters at the site between 922-931, and Quedlinburg was the origin and end point of his itinerary for the year of 929/930.[9] Most famously, of course, was Henry's decision to issue a dowry grant to his wife, Queen Mathilda, at Quedlinburg in 929. With their son Otto's approval, Mathilda was given the usufruct of the royal property at Quedlinburg for her widowhood, along with Pöhlde, Nordhausen, Grone and Duderstadt.[10] The occasion of this charter has understandably attracted attention, with scholars characterising it as Henry's attempt to make arrangements for the future of his family, his *Hausordnung*, following his victory over the Slavs. Around this point Otto

[6] Leopold, 'Archäeologische Ausgrabungen' pp. 33-4.
[7] Ibid., pp. 34-5.
[8] Ehlers, 'Heinrich I.', p. 241.
[9] Ibid., pp. 239-240, 254-5. Reuter observed that this iteration was partly to allow groups of magnates to give approval to Otto I as Henry I's heir. Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Middle Ages c.800-1056* (London, 1991), p. 145.
[10] DHI 20. Ehlers thinks that the wedding of Edith and Otto took place on September 16, the same day that this charter was issued: Ehlers, 'Heinrich I.', p. 240. Ernst Schubert has suggested that the marriage took place in Magdeburg in 929 instead, though he provides no evidence to support this claim: Ernst Schubert, 'Imperiale Spolien im Magdeburger Dom' in Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert (eds), *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im Ottonischen Sachsen* (Sigmaringen, 1998), p. 10. MacLean has questioned this idea of the wedding taking place at Quedlinburg at the same time as DHI 20, noting that there is no reference to it in the diploma itself, and that the *Hausordnung* spanned across 927-929: Simon MacLean, 'Cross-Channel Marriage and Royal Succession in the Age of Charles the Simple and Athelstan (c.916-936)', *Medieval Worlds* 2 (2015), p. 37.

was designated as Henry's heir, and shortly afterwards married Edith, an Anglo-Saxon princess.[11]

The clear interest of Henry in Quedlinburg, and his focus on the site in the same period of time that his *Hausordnung* was taking place, has led some historians to see Henry himself choosing Quedlinburg as his future burial place, perhaps at the same point in 929 that he awarded it to Mathilda as a dowry grant.[12] Later sources argued that Henry made plans to be buried at Quedlinburg, but as this claim only originated nearer the end of the tenth century, the accuracy of this report remains uncertain.[13] What is clear, however, is that Henry was very interested in using Quedlinburg as a location to communicate his new royal status, to reaffirm his position as king, and to visually demonstrate his power and wealth to the other nobles in his own region. It was not merely coincidence that the *Miracula S. Wigberti*, written at Hersfeld shortly after 936, referred to Quedlinburg as a *sublimis* and *famosus sedes regalis* in Saxony.[14] Ideas of royal identity had suffused the site of Quedlinburg well before the convent was founded on September 13, 936.

After Henry I's death, the royal presence at the burg intensified. Widukind outlined the events after Henry's death in detail: after Henry fell ill and then died at Memleben, Otto, with the agreement of Henry's other sons, decided to transport his father's body to Quedlinburg, a journey of almost 80 kilometres across the Harz mountains. There, most likely at the end of July, Henry was buried 'in the basilica of St Peter, in front of the altar.'[15] Otto then travelled

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[11] Régine Le Jan, 'Douaires et Pouvoirs des Reines en France et en Germanie (VI^{e}-X^{e} siècle)' in François Bougard, Laurent Feller and Régine Le Jan (eds), *Dots et Douaires dans le Haut Moyen Âge* (Rome, 2002), p. 467.

[12] For example, Ehlers thinks it was natural for Henry to choose Quedlinburg as his burial site, and suggests that his inclusion of Quedlinburg in Mathilda's dowry grant therefore tied her to the convent for the rest of her life. Ehlers, 'Heinrich I.', pp. 238, 241-7. Thomas Zotz noted that Henry I was buried in the monastery that he himself had founded in 'Kingship and Palaces in the Ottonian Realm and in the Kingdom of England' in David Rollason, Conrad Leyser and Hannah Williams (eds), *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century: Studies in Honour of Wilhelm Levison (1876-1947)* (Turnhout, 2010), p. 328.

[13] See chapter five for more on these claims, pp. 159-161.

[14] 'Est locus Quidiligonburch nominatus, nunc in Saxonum regno propter regalis sedis honorem sublimis et famosus'. *Ex Miraculis S. Wigberhti* 19 in G. H. Pertz (ed.), MGH SS 4 (Hanover, 1841), p. 227.

[15] 'Translatum est autem corpus eius a filiis suis in civitatem quae dicitur Quidilingaburg et sepultum in basilica sancti Petri ante altare cum planctu et lacrimis plurimarum gentium.' Widukind of Corvey, *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 1.41 in Paul Hirsch and Hans-Eberhard Lohmann (eds), MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 60 (Hanover, 1935), pp. 60-1; trans. in Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach, *Widukind of Corvey: Deeds of the Saxons* (Washington D.C., 2014), p. 59.

to Aachen for his coronation on August 7, and returned to Saxony immediately afterwards.[16] On September 13, Otto issued his first diploma in Saxony: the charter that marked the foundation of the convent at Quedlinburg. As the first major act of his reign, Otto returned to the site of his father's grave and founded a community of canonesses, who he tasked with celebrating the *memoria* of Otto, to pray for 'the benefit of our soul and for those of our *parentes* and *successores*.'[17] As his first act in Saxony after his coronation at Aachen, Otto's decision to found a new female monastery at Quedlinburg charged with commemorating his family on the site of Henry's grave was clearly steeped in symbolic significance.

It is worth noting the specificity in the directions that Otto provided for the canonesses' memorial activity. Rather than praying for the entire family of the Liudolfings, or even for all the descendants of the pair of Henry and Mathilda, DOI 1 outlined that it was Otto who was the focus of the commemoration at Quedlinburg. It was the *memoria* of his parents and his descendants that the canonesses were assigned to celebrate, not the broader *memoria* of the whole Ottonian family. From its origins, the monastery at Quedlinburg was tied to the specific line of rulers that would descend from Otto I. Otto even inserted a clause into the diploma to clarify this, declaring that:

> If one of our offspring (*generatio*) holds the seat of royal power in Francia and Saxony, the aforementioned monastery and *sanctimoniales* gathered there in the service of God shall be in his *potestas* and *defensio*; however, if someone else is elected king by the people, he shall hold royal power over this community, just as over other communities gathered in a similar fashion in obedience to the holy trinity, and whoever from our *cognatio* is the most powerful shall be the advocate of this place and of the community.[18]

While one of Otto's direct descendants remained on the throne, he alone would be completely responsible for Quedlinburg. If, however, the throne should pass to someone else outside of Otto's line of descent, then Quedlinburg's association with the ruler would continue, but the

[16] At the request of Duke Gislebert, Otto granted one diploma just after his coronation: a confirmation of the possessions of the convent of Alden-Eyck, in Lotharingia, DOI 466.
[17] 'pro remedio animae nostrae atque parentum successorumque nostrorum', DOI 1.
[18] 'Et si aliquis generationis nostrae in Francia ac Saxonia regalem potestativa manu possdeat sedem, in illius potestate sint ac defensione praenuncupatum monasterium et sanctimoniales inibi in dei servitio congregatae; si autem alter e populo eligatur rex, ipse in eis suam regalem teneat potestatem sicut in ceteris catervis in obsequium sanctae trinitatis simili modo congregatis, nostrae namque cognationis qui potentissimus sit, advocatus habeatur et loci praedicti et eiusdem catervae.' DOI 1. On this clause and the idea of Quedlinburg as a family monastery, see Susan Wood, *The Proprietary Church in Medieval West* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 283-4.

special tie to Otto's line would be acknowledged through the post of the advocate.[19] The monastery at Quedlinburg, rather than being intended as the new house for the *memoria* of the entire Liudolfing/Ottonian family, instead had a much more concentrated aim. Quedlinburg was firmly bound to Otto himself and his *direct* line of descent.[20] With the benefit of hindsight, we know that this included his son and grandson, Otto II and Otto III, the next two Ottonian emperors. In the aftermath of the 936 succession, however, this must have been a deeply aggressive move. Otto was effectively claiming that he was the only king-worthy son of Henry I, and was attempting to cut his brothers off from sharing in their father's legacy.

We still must ask why Otto chose, for the first major act of his reign, to found a new commemorative centre tied to himself and his line of descent. To see the establishment of Quedlinburg primarily as the next step in the long-term commemorative strategy of the entire Ottonian family after they had reached royal status does not quite fit the rhetoric that Otto was employing in the foundation charter. Instead, to get a clearer view of what prompted Otto to prioritise the establishment of a new community of canonesses at Quedlinburg, we need to look more broadly at the context in which this new foundation took place, that is, the immediate aftermath of Otto's succession as king.

Although he had been designated by his father as his heir well before Henry's death in 936, Otto's accession was by no means a smooth or settled affair. Rather, he was confronted by a number of crises in his reign's first years. On top of incursions into East Francia from neighbouring polities, Otto faced conflict within his own kingdom. As the first son to succeed his father to the throne in East Francia since Louis the Child succeeded Arnulf in 900, Otto's position as his father's successor was open to challenges both from rival nobles and from within his own family. From 936 down to 941, Otto faced repeated rebellions in Saxony that involved his brothers. In 938 Thankmar, Otto's half-brother, allied with the Saxon nobleman Wichmann Billung and Eberhard, the brother of King Conrad I, to attack the new king. After Thankmar and Wichmann were killed, Eberhard then formed an alliance with Henry the Younger, Otto's full brother, and Gislebert, Otto's powerful Lotharingian brother-in-law, in a second rebellion

[19] Karl Leyser defines *generatio* here as Otto's direct male line and *cognatio* as the broader family, which included both male and female lines of descent. Karl Leyser, 'Maternal Kin in Early Medieval Germany' in Timothy Reuter (ed.), *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries* (London, 1994), pp. 182-5.
[20] Sonnleitner has noted the special closeness of Quedlinburg to the emperor and his immediate family in 'Die Annalistik', p. 234.

in 939. Again, Otto was able to quell the challenge to his rule, aided by the deaths of Eberhard and Gislebert in battle, but the possibility of fraternal uprising remained. In 941, Henry the Younger resurfaced with a plot to assassinate Otto at Quedlinburg.[21] While new rulers generally faced an initial period of uncertainty where rivals would test the limits of the new king's power, it is worth noting that all of these rebellions within Saxony after Otto's accession involved at least one of his family members.[22]

On his rise to the throne, Otto faced a situation where his brothers were actively asserting that they too had rights to royal power, inherited through their father, Henry I. As such, Otto needed some way to neutralise his brothers' claims. As sons, or sons-in-law of the previous king, Otto, Henry the Younger, Thankmar and Gislebert were all competing for Henry I's royal legacy. Henry the Younger, as Otto's full brother, had a particularly strong case to make for sharing in his father's inheritance, and Flodoard of Reims noted that there was a conflict over the succession between the two brothers in 936.[23] Essentially, Otto needed to find a way to appropriate all of his father's royal legitimacy for himself in order to prevent his brothers from using it to bolster their claims for power at Otto's expense. The most effective way of doing this was to lay claim to Henry's body, which is precisely what Otto did. After being crowned king in Aachen, Otto returned straight away to Saxony in order to modify the burial site of his father, turning it into a monastic community that was dedicated to commemorating Otto's line of descent alone. Otto used the new foundation of Quedlinburg to assert his claim to the throne by commandeering his father's memory, and Quedlinburg's association with royal identity, in an attempt to cut off his male relatives' access to that very same source of legitimacy through Henry I. The establishment of Quedlinburg was a deliberate act by the newly crowned Otto to assert his own control over his father's legacy, through emphasising his control over his body.

Using the body of a recently deceased king to communicate messages about royal legitimacy during a succession conflict was not without precedent. As Nicole Marafioti has lucidly

[21] See the reports in Widukind, *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 2.11-2.31, pp. 74-93; and Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, *Gesta Ottonis* 155-360, in Walter Berschin (ed.), *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Munich, 2001), pp. 281-8. For more context on these rebellions, see Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages: 800-1056* (London, 1991), pp. 152-3.
[22] Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 153.
[23] Flodoard of Reims, *Annales* 936, in Philippe Lauer (ed.), *Les Annales de Flodoard* (Paris, 1905), p. 64; trans. in Steven Fanning and Bernard S. Bachrach, *The* Annals *of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966* (Toronto, 2004), p. 28.

outlined, Edward the Elder's decision to translate his father Alfred's body from Winchester's Old Minster to the newly constructed New Minster in 901/2, only a few years after the initial burial, was motivated by the same sets of concerns that Otto faced in 936. Edward, who was in the midst of a violent succession dispute with his cousin Æthelwold, was using the political significance of his father's body 'to communicate ideas of dynastic legitimacy, authority and exceptionality.'[24] Marafioti points out the similar tactics of Æthelwold in his seizure of Wimbourne, the burial site of his father, Æthelred, who was the elder brother and predecessor of Alfred as king. By claiming the city in which his royal father was buried, Æthelwold was able to assert his own claim to dynastic legitimacy over his newly crowned cousin. It is with this context that Marafioti glosses Edward's development of New Minster. In the face of a claim for the throne from a rival branch of his family, Edward attempted to set up his father as the first ruler of the cohesive Anglo-Saxon kingdom. Alfred's reburial allowed Edward to portray his father as the originator of a new dynasty, scuppering Æthelwold's claims to seniority. New Minster was intended as a focal point of dynastic legitimacy for Alfred's family, so much so that Marafioti suggests there was an 'initial lack of cultic focus' at the church, expressed through its apparently flexible dedication to various saints across the tenth century.[25] Edward needed to create a sense of legitimacy and authority to counteract his father's position as a younger son, and his careful relocation of his father's body helped him to construct a new image of Alfred, and of Edward himself, as part of a new dynasty ruling over all of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

By founding Quedlinburg on the site of his father's grave, Otto was laying claim to Henry's body in a very visible form, in much the same way that Edward the Elder had done with Alfred's body 35 years earlier. Moreover, by setting up the monastery on the burg at Quedlinburg, Otto was able to turn the site's association with royal legitimacy to his own ends. As Timothy Reuter has noted, rock spurs like Quedlinburg were perfect sites for the symbolic representation of rulership, 'dominating the landscape' below them.[26] Henry I's long association with the site had further emphasised the royal aura around the burg. Yet Henry the

[24] Nicole Marafioti, 'Seeking Alfred's body: royal tomb as political object in the reign of Edward the Elder', *Early Medieval Europe* 23:2 (2015), pp. 208-9, quote p. 208. See also Nicole Marafioti, *The King's Body: Burial and Succession in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto, 2014), pp. 25-32.
[25] Marafioti, 'Seeking Alfred's body', pp. 213-7, quote p. 216.
[26] Timothy Reuter, '*Regemque, quem in Francia perdidit, in patria magnifice recepit*: Ottonian ruler representation in synchronic and diachronic comparison' in Janet L. Nelson (ed.), *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 141.

Younger could also lay equal claim to the symbolic power of Quedlinburg, and the burial of Henry I there provided Henry the Younger with a way to assert his right to access the site. Indeed, it has been suggested that Henry the Younger was born at Quedlinburg over Easter in either 921 or 922, which, if true, provided him with an even closer connection to the site than his elder brother.[27] Thus, by setting up a female monastery focused on the salvation of Otto's soul and those of his parents and successors, emphasising the direct line of descent passing from Henry I to Otto I and on to Otto's children, the new king was able to undermine his brothers' claims to Quedlinburg. As the founder, primary commemorative beneficiary, and royal protector of the female monastery at Quedlinburg, Otto could assert his control over access to the institution which contained his father's body.

The foundation of the convent at Quedlinburg was carried out by Otto as a visible, performative act designed to reinforce the legitimacy of his position within a new dynasty. Much like New Minster, Quedlinburg served more as a dynastic centre than as a cultic centre. Others have noted the strange absence of cultic or commemorative activity recorded in the Quedlinburg Annals; and the dedication of the church at Quedlinburg shows a similar kind of ambiguity around its patron saints as New Minster. In different sources throughout the tenth century, we see the church being dedicated to St Peter, Mary, St Servatius and St Dionysius.[28] With these ideas in mind, it appears that Quedlinburg was less intended to serve as the new memorial centre for the entire Ottonian family, than it was to embody the idea of the new Ottonian dynasty running from Henry through to Otto, providing an environment which proclaimed Otto to be his father's true heir and a pious monastic founder, imbuing him and his line with an aura of dynastic legitimacy. In 936, Otto could not simply take on the status of king. Instead, he needed to demonstrate his royal identity to an audience which would have been keenly aware of the challenges to his authority from rival members of his family. It was through Quedlinburg's foundation as a monastery that Otto could not just claim to be Henry's heir, but very clearly show it to be the case.

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[27] Althoff, 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg', p. 129.

[28] A dedication of the monastery's basilica appears for St Peter in Widukind, *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 1.41, p. 61 and in *AQ* 999, p. 504 alongside St Stephen, but DD OI 184-5 refer to Peter as a patron of the monastery itself. Dedication to Mary appears in: DD OI 18, 172; DOIII 178. Dedication to Servatius appears in: *AQ* 947, p. 464; *AQ* 997, p. 494; *AQ* 999, p. 504; DD OI 18, 172, 228; DOI 61; DD OIII 81, 155. Dedication to Dionysius appears in: *AQ* 999, p. 504. In 1021, the church and main altar at Quedlinburg was rededicated to Mary, John the Baptist, Peter, Stephen, Dionysius and Servatius: *AQ* 1021, p. 563. DOI 1 makes no reference to any dedication for Quedlinburg.

QUEDLINBURG AND MAGDEBURG

The new convent of canonesses at Quedlinburg, however, was not the only new memorial foundation that Otto established in the early years of his reign. Otto's establishment and continued interest in the male monastery of St Maurice at Magdeburg, which he converted into an archbishopric in 968, is well-known. Otto provided over 40 grants to the monastery of St Maurice during his reign, many of which were intended to provide a resource base for the new archbishopric, far outstripping the nine diplomas he granted to Quedlinburg.[29] But St Maurice was not founded as an archdiocese, and Otto's plans to convert it into one most likely postdate 955, following his victory against the Hungarians at the Battle of Lechfeld. Instead, St Maurice was established in 937 by Otto as a monastery, which was intended to celebrate the *memoria* of Henry I and to benefit the souls of Otto, his wife Edith, and his friends and followers.[30] The establishment of a monastery with a level of wealth and prestige which more than equalled Quedlinburg, along with the clear interest that Otto showed in St Maurice, means that the institution is generally seen as Otto's favoured monastic foundation.

The foundation of a wealthy new monastery by Otto for the commemoration of the Ottonian *memoria* in 937, only one year after the establishment of Quedlinburg, has somewhat perplexed those trying to untangle the Ottonian memorial strategy. Indeed, Althoff admitted that the motivation for setting up this second commemorative foundation remains unclear.[31] The establishment of St Maurice at Magdeburg seems, at first sight, to undermine the effect of establishing Quedlinburg. Setting up a new foundation with the same emphasis on prayer for Otto's father which had a larger endowment than Quedlinburg must surely have dulled the lustre of the Quedlinburg as a centre for Ottonian *memoria*, either for the whole family, as Althoff argues, or for Otto's line, as I suggest.

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[29] Otto provided the following grants to the monastery of St Maurice at Magdeburg: DD OI 14, 15, 16, 21, 37, 38, 41, 43, 46, 63, 74, 79, 97, 159, 165, 181, 187, 205, 214, 216, 222, 230-232, 278, 281, 282, 293, 295, 296, 298-301, 303-306, 312, 329, 331-333, 345. This list does not include the diplomas granted to St Maurice after it was converted into an archbishopric in 968. Otto provided the following grants to Quedlinburg: DD OI 1, 18, 61, 75, 172, 184, 185, 186, 228.
John W. Bernhardt comments that despite the later history of it as an archbishopric clouding our view of the earlier foundation as a monastery, the majority of Otto's visits to Magdeburg were before 955, when he first conceived of the plan to turn it into an archbishopric. John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 162.

[30] DOI 14.

[31] 'Ungeklärt ist bisher, warum binnen kürzester Frist nach dem Tode Heinrichs I. zwei geistliche Gemeinschaften von der Königsfamilie eingerichtet wurden, die das Gedenken an die *debitores* der Ottonen leisten sollten.' Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien*, p. 174.

However, if we move beyond seeing the two foundations as being in competition for the same commemorative responsibilities for the whole Ottonian family, and instead consider the possibility that Quedlinburg and St Maurice were intended to function together and complement each other as part of a broader monastic strategy by Otto I, then these puzzling inconsistencies begin to resolve themselves.[32] If we look at Otto's activities at the two monasteries, we can see a series of links connecting the two communities. The first can be seen in the events preceding the foundation of St Maurice in September 937. Directly after his visit to Quedlinburg in September 936, when he established the convent and issued the foundation charter, Otto travelled on to Magdeburg.[33] One year later, he repeated that same journey, stopping at Quedlinburg in July 937 to issue a charter there on the first anniversary of Henry's death, before travelling to Magdeburg via Wallhausen, the place where Otto's parents had been married.[34] It was on this visit to Magdeburg that Otto founded the new monastery of St Maurice. The connection between the two foundations was not just signalled by the itinerary of the king. The structure of the monastic churches in Quedlinburg and Magdeburg were almost identical in shape, both having a distinctive semi-circular structure at the eastern ends of the churches.[35] This similarity in structure has led those who have studied the architecture of the site to suggest that it was planned from the beginning of both monasteries.[36]

Moreover, the commemorative responsibilities of the two houses, while appearing at first to compete with each other, in fact reveal a careful delineation by Otto between the memorial emphasis at each house. Whereas the focus at Quedlinburg was on Otto, his parents and his children, the focus at Magdeburg was on Otto, his royal father, his queenly wife, Edith, and their friends and followers.[37] The site at Quedlinburg, as I outlined above, was intended to function as a source of dynastic legitimacy, tracing the transmission of royal authority from the

[32] Susan Wood accurately described Quedlinburg as the female counterpart of Magdeburg, in *The Proprietary Church*, p. 283.
[33] DD OI 1-2; J. F. Böhmer (ed.) *Regesta Imperii II: Sächsisches Haus 912-1024*, Vol. 1 (Innsbruck, 1893), pp. 35-6.
[34] DD OI 12-14. Böhmer, *Regesta Imperii II*, Vol. 1, pp. 39-40.
[35] Schubert, 'Imperiale Spolien', pp. 12, 44; Leopold, 'Archäeologische Ausgraben', p. 44.
[36] Schubert attributes this planning to Queen Mathilda. He argues she must have had some form of consulting role in the foundation of St Maurice, in part because the semi-circular *confessio* at Quedlinburg has been linked to her memorial activities at the convent. He is, however, puzzled by how Mathilda, who he sees being in conflict with Otto and Edith at the time, was able to fulfil this role. Schubert, 'Imperiale Spolien', p. 12. See also Karen Blough, 'The Abbatial Effigies', p. 151; Leopold, 'Archäologische Ausgrabungen', pp. 36-7; Ehlers, 'Heinrich I.', p. 251.
[37] DD OI 1, 14. Otto singled out King Rudolf of Burgundy in particular in this category.

founder of the dynasty, Henry, down through Otto and on to his children. On the other hand, Magdeburg appears to be targeted at enhancing the royal authority of Otto himself, by including the commemoration of his wife and his friends and followers. Indeed, it seems that there was a mirroring of the connections of Queen Mathilda to Quedlinburg and Queen Edith to Magdeburg. In much the same way that usufruct of Quedlinburg had been given to Mathilda, Edith had received Magdeburg as part of her *Morgengabe* and was closely linked to the monastery there for the rest of her life, and possibly gave birth to both Liudolf and Liutgard while at Magdeburg.[38] Moreover, Quedlinburg was the burial site for Henry and for Mathilda after her death in 968, while Magdeburg was the burial site for Edith after her death in 946, and eventually for Otto himself in 973. The placement of the graves of Henry and Mathilda in Quedlinburg, and Otto and Edith in Magdeburg are almost identical as well.[39] I suggest that rather than seeing the monasteries at Quedlinburg and Magdeburg as fighting over who had the greater claim to the same set of commemorative responsibilities, we should recognise that Otto carefully constructed two different institutions to serve different, but complementary functions. Quedlinburg was designed to serve as a centre of dynastic legitimacy, emphasising Henry and Mathilda as the founders of the dynasty which then ran through their son Otto alone. St Maurice, on the other hand, was centred on Otto himself, casting him as his father's equal through mirroring Quedlinburg, and emphasising his royal authority by highlighting his queenly wife and his royal and noble friends and followers. This view goes some way to explain why we do not see Mathilda making a large impression in the diplomas for St Maurice, nor Edith in the diplomas for Quedlinburg.[40] Rather than attributing this to a falling out between the two women, I suggest that it was due to the strong association of each queen with their specific monastery as part of Otto's broader symbolic programme for these two houses.

The links that Otto constructed between the two sites of Quedlinburg and Magdeburg were continually reaffirmed by his itinerary. The two monasteries were the most visited places during his reign, with Magdeburg hosting the king 22 times and Quedlinburg 17.[41] Otto also

[38] Patrick Corbet, *Les Saints Ottoniens: Sainteté dynastique, sainteté royale et sainteté feminine autour de l'an Mil* (Sigmaringen, 1986), p. 47. Indeed, Thietmar even suggested that it was at Edith's urging that Otto founded Magdeburg, mirroring the legend of Queen Mathilda as the founder of Quedlinburg. Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon* 2.3 in Robert Holtzmann (ed.), MGH SRG NS 9 (Hanover, 1935), pp. 40-3.
[39] Schubert, 'Imperiale Spolien', pp. 11-3.
[40] Ehlers, for example, thinks that the lack of reference to Mathilda in DOI 14 for St Maurice was due to the difficult relationship between the two queens. Ehlers, 'Heinrich I.', p. 252.
[41] See Zotz, 'Carolingian Tradition', p. 88.

repeatedly journeyed directly between Magdeburg and Quedlinburg at least six times. Three of these would have placed him at Magdeburg to celebrate Palm Sunday, before heading to Quedlinburg for Easter.[42] While we have no explanation from Otto himself for why he chose to visit these places for these celebrations, one possibility may be that Magdeburg, as a site intended to visibly demonstrate Otto's royal authority, would be ideally suited to the *adventus* of the king on Palm Sunday; whereas Quedlinburg, as a site housing the body of the founder of the dynasty, may well have been more appropriate for a feast which emphasised ideas of death and resurrection.[43] The repetition of this journey at this time of year has encouraged historians to suggest that this marks the beginning of an institutionalised pattern of Ottonian commemoration, with the celebration of Palm Sunday at Magdeburg and Easter at Quedlinburg.[44]

However, Otto also undertook this journey at other significant times of the year. In 952, he travelled from Magdeburg to Quedlinburg between July 1 and July 4, which covered the anniversary of Henry's death on July 2.[45] In August 956, Otto repeated the same journey just after celebrating the first anniversary of his victory at the Lech in Magdeburg. And, in 965, on his return to Saxony from Italy after being crowned emperor in Rome, Otto spent late June and early July at Magdeburg, commemorating the anniversary of Henry's death there and handing out a spectacular series of grants to St Maurice, before heading to Quedlinburg by July 15.[46] Otto's journeys from Magdeburg to Quedlinburg were not just associated with the celebration of major Christian feast days, but were also linked with significant personal and political anniversaries for Otto himself.

In amongst this narrative of repeated visits and diplomas issued to the two houses, it is worth pointing out two specific moments where Otto made a series of grants that seem to signal a symbolic intention. The first of these dates to January 29, 946, only three days after the death

[42] These journeys occurred in March-April 948; July 952; August 956; December 965; March-April 968; March 973.
[43] On Palm Sunday *adventus* ceremonies at Magdeburg, see Bernhardt, *Itinerant*, p. 167. Another site that was repeatedly visited by the Ottonians on a high feast day was Pöhlde, a monastery for canons, which was given to Queen Mathilda in her dowry grant of 929 and was recorded as one of her foundations in her *vitae* and the *AQ*. See Zotz, 'Kingship and Palaces', p. 327.
[44] Bernhardt, *Itinerant*, p. 168; Althoff, 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg', pp. 127-9; Zotz, 'Carolingian Tradition', p. 88.
[45] DD OI 153-154.
[46] DD OI 293-306.

of Edith, Otto's wife. While at St Maurice, the eventual burial place of the queen, Otto granted two diplomas: one to St Maurice itself, and one to Quedlinburg. Although the issuing of these two charters to these two institutions on the same day, shortly after the death of his wife, would be a significant link in itself, the wording of the two documents makes the association between Magdeburg and Quedlinburg even clearer. The charters are almost verbatim copies of each other, particularly in the proems, and differ on only a few significant points. The proems are striking: 'We believe unhesitatingly that because of the places dedicated to the name of God which we have brought together due to religious devotion, the eternal palm is guided to us and to those who are our *debitores* as a reward.'[47] The grants to the communities are then explicitly directed to the benefit of 'our lord and father, King Henry, as well as for the soul of our most beloved wife Edith', with the grant to Quedlinburg including 'our lady mother, Queen Mathilda' as a beneficiary as well. In addition to this, both charters are written (at least in part) by the same hand and the layout of the two charters is almost identical.[48] The links between DOI 74 and 75 are clear. These two diplomas were intended to complement each other, and they were awarded at a point of both personal and political uncertainty for Otto after the early death of his wife.

The second series of grants by Otto came ten years later, in 956, and lasted over a period of almost six months. Otto commemorated the twentieth anniversary of his father's death on July 2 by granting to St Maurice the property of Deventer and Tongern, where he was staying at the time.[49] He then travelled down to Magdeburg, arriving by August 13, which was both the first anniversary of his victory at the Battle of Lechfeld and the feast of St Lawrence. After celebrating this feast at St Maurice, Otto then travelled to Quedlinburg and issued at least one diploma to the community on August 24.[50] There is no record of any other diplomas granted by Otto until December, when he visited Memleben, where his father had died. On December 5, he granted another diploma to Quedlinburg, and a week later, on December 12, a diploma to

[47] 'Quae locis dei dedicatis nomini religionis gratia contulerimus, nobis nostrique pro quibus hoc agitur debitoribus aeterna reconpensari palma incunctanter confidimus.' DD OI 74/75.
[48] See comments on these diplomas in Theodor Sickel (ed.), *Die Urkunden Konrad I., Heinrich I. und Otto I.*, MGH Diplomatum regum et imperatorum Germaniae, vol. 1 (Hanover, 1879-1884), pp. 153-5.
[49] DOI 181. Sickel observed that the scribal hand seen on DOI 181 was first seen in the chancery copies of DOI 74.
[50] DOI 184.

St Maurice at Magdeburg.[51] This extended period of focus on grants and visits to Magdeburg and Quedlinburg, along with the granting of two diplomas to the two communities at the significant site of Memleben, was not coincidental. Instead, the timing of these events, centred on the anniversary of Henry I's death and Otto's victory over the Hungarians made Otto's activities even more noteworthy. 956 marked Otto's triumphant return from the Lech, with his new queen Adelheid. This period signals the moment at which Otto turned his head towards the imperial throne, and his choice to spend his time at Quedlinburg and Magdeburg in order to provide them with new properties reveals not just his favour for them individually, but his view of them collectively.

Rather than considering Quedlinburg and St Maurice at Magdeburg as rival memorial houses for the Ottonian family, the clear links that Otto established between them, particularly before his imperial coronation in 962, show that he did not intend Magdeburg to act as a rival of Quedlinburg. Instead, both monasteries were designed as centres to embody and reinforce Otto's political legitimacy. Magdeburg and Quedlinburg were to function as complements to each other, and both were intended to serve as bulwarks for Otto's authority as a ruler. The patron saint dedications of the two institutions further reflect the message that Otto was trying to send through the two houses. As noted above, Quedlinburg had a somewhat flexible dedication, with a variety of different saints being named as the patron of the monastery. However, the two with which the convent became most associated by the end of the tenth century were St Servatius and St Dionysius. These two saints were both particularly venerated by different regions of the Frankish empire: St Servatius, who was buried in Maastricht, was the saint most associated with Lotharingia; while Dionysius, or Denis, was famously the patron saint of the West Frankish kings. Otto also managed to secure relics of the two saints for the community. Widukind recorded that Charles the Simple had sent a legate to Henry I with the hand of Dionysius in a jewelled golden cover.[52] The *Translatio S. Servatii*, dated around 1088, noted that Henry gained the stole and staff of St Servatius which he gave to Quedlinburg, and

[51] DD OI 186-187. The grant to Quedlinburg is of a church built in honour of St Michael. David Warner has pointed out that St Michael had extremely close association with war and victory for Ottonians, with Ottonian kings fighting under a banner bearing his image. David Warner, 'Henry II at Magdeburg: kingship, ritual and the cult of the saints', *Early Medieval Europe* 3 (1994), p. 149.
[52] On the hand of Dionysius, see Widukind, *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 1.33, p. 46; see also Geoffrey Koziol, 'Charles the Simple, Robert of Neustria and the *vexilla* of Saint-Denis', *Early Medieval Europe* 14 (2006), pp. 355-390.

Otto himself translated the body of Servatius from Lotharingia into Quedlinburg.[53] While this story seems more to reflect the growth of later memories in Utrecht about the history of the city's relationship with St Servatius and his relics, we do have references to relics of Servatius in the Quedlinburg Annals, and an ivory casket of St Servatius from Quedlinburg.[54] It seems likely then, that Henry, or perhaps Otto himself, was able to gain relics of of the saint at some point prior to the first mention of Servatius as a patron saint of Quedlinburg in 937.[55]

The dedication of Quedlinburg to two saints who symbolised the regions of Lotharingia and West Francia, and the ability of Otto to provide the convent with relics of those same saints, sent signals about the nature of the royal authority housed in the convent: it did not just encompass East Francia, but stretched westwards as well. On the other hand, St Maurice was dedicated to yet another useful and politically important saint, whose cult, as David Warner has pointed out, was able to provide useful 'qualities of visibility and coherence' to ideas about Ottonian kingship.[56] Moreover, the cult of St Maurice was embedded into the concept of Burgundian kingship. The first king of Burgundy, Rudolf, had been lay abbot of Saint-Maurice D'Agaune prior to his accession to the throne, and the monastery remained a central place in his kingdom under his rule. Rudolf also acquired the Holy Lance, which he gave over to Henry around 926 in return for conceding part of his lands, according to Liudprand of Cremona.[57] Rudolf died on July 11, 937, and St Maurice at Magdeburg was founded just a few months afterwards, endowed with relics of the saint and the Holy Lance, and, the following year, Otto took Rudolf's young son, Conrad, into his court.[58] The decision to dedicate Magdeburg to St Maurice at a point when Otto was securing his hegemony over the Burgundian kingdom would have reinforced the message of the new king's control over this region, in the same way that

[53] Iocundus, *Translatio S. Servatii* 25-28 in G. H. Pertz (ed.), MGH SS 12 (Hanover, 1856), pp. 99-101.
[54] For the relics, see *AQ* 1021, pp. 563-6. The Servatius Casket was one of a pair of Carolingian ivory caskets. Its twin was given by Henry II to Bamberg. Cynthia Jean Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400-c.1024* (University Park, 2012), pp. 188-195.
[55] The first reference to Servatius is in DOI 18. It may be that Henry secured relics of Servatius from Gislebert on the marriage of Gislebert and Henry's daughter, Gerberga, though there is no evidence to confirm this for certain.
[56] Warner, 'Henry II at Magdeburg', p. 139.
[57] Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, 4.25, in P. Chiesa (ed.), *Liudprand Cremonensis Opera Omnia*, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 156 (Turnhout, 1998), pp. 111-3. Widukind of Corvey, described Conrad I sending Henry I his royal insignia, which included the Holy Lance, on his deathbed in *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 1.25, p. 38, though this must be an anachronism.
[58] Janet L. Nelson, 'Tenth-Century Kingship Comparatively' in David Rollason, Conrad Leyser and Hannah Williams (eds), *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century: Studies in Honour of Wilhelm Levison (1876-1947)* (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 295-9.

the dedications to Servatius and Dionysius at Quedlinburg signalled Ottonian claims of authority over Lotharingia and, perhaps more ambitiously, West Francia as well.[59] In a context where there was no set political vocabulary as such, the decision to set up two monasteries with dedications to these three saints would have further helped Otto to broadcast messages about the nature of his kingship and the scope of his authority as a ruler.[60]

CHALLENGES TO ROYAL AUTHORITY AT QUEDLINBURG

The value of these two new foundations as places imbued with royal dynastic legitimacy and authority was not recognised by Otto alone. Instead, the repeated political challenges to Ottonian kings and emperors at Quedlinburg and Magdeburg throughout the tenth century demonstrate that political figures, both inside and outside of Otto's family, also understood the symbolic nature of these sites and attempted to turn them to their own political gain. The history of the Ottonian dynasty is punctuated by other members of the king's family pushing their own claims to royal power at Quedlinburg, followed by reassertions of the authority of the Ottonian ruler at the same site once the challenge had been suppressed. The meanings that Otto had woven into Quedlinburg from its foundation made it equally effective and exposed on the political stage. It was a site inextricably linked to ideas of rulership and dynastic descent, yet it was also the scene of ruptures in the political order when rival members of the royal family tried to challenge the Ottonian line for the throne. Quedlinburg was a powerful site in the Ottonian world, but it could be a deeply problematic one.

The first of these challenges at Quedlinburg came from Otto's brother, Henry the Younger, in 941, after his first rebellion against Otto had failed. Henry had been a thorn in Otto's side since his accession to the throne; from 936 to 941, he was involved in three different attempted coups

[59] We can compare Otto's use of saints' relics and dedications to the careful decisions by Pippin the Short in the eighth century to link himself and his family to Sts Denis, Martin and Germanus. Julia Smith also notes that Otto I was keen to create a relic collection that 'epitomized his hegemony on both sides of the Alps and across the Rhine'. Julia M. H. Smith, 'Rulers and Relics *c*.750-*c*.950: Treasure on Earth, Treasure in Heaven', *Past and Present* 206, supplement 5 (2010), pp. 77-80, quote p. 82.

[60] David Warner, 'Saints and Politics in Ottonian Germany' in Nancy van Deusen (ed.), *Medieval Germany: Associations and Delineations* (Ottawa, 2000), pp. 8-9; Jörg Oberste, 'Heilige und ihre Reliquien in der politischen Kultur der früheren Ottonenzeit', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 37 (2003), pp. 75-6, 94-5, 97-8.

and plots to dethrone or kill Otto.[61] In this final attempt, Henry, 'burning with desire to rule', according to Widukind, plotted to assassinate his brother at Quedlinburg during the Easter celebrations, which would then allow his followers 'to place the royal crown on Henry's head.'[62] According to Hrotsvitha, the eventual reconciliation of the brothers also took place at Quedlinburg, when Henry the Younger begged Otto's forgiveness by coming into the church in the middle of winter, wearing simple clothes and with bare feet, throwing himself 'prostrate at the sacred altar, lying his noble body on the frost of the earth.'[63] The choice of Quedlinburg as the site of Otto's foiled assassination reflects Henry's attempt to push back against Otto's control of Henry I's legacy. By establishing Quedlinburg, Otto had undermined his brother's ability to access their father's body and to send his own set of political messages through using his tomb. If Otto had been assassinated, the coronation of Henry at that same site would allow him to tap into that same source of dynastic legitimacy, which he himself would sorely need in the aftermath of his brother's murder. Fortunately for Otto, the coup was discovered and averted. Otto was able to prevent Henry from seizing both Quedlinburg and the crown. Indeed, this final challenge and eventual reconciliation appears to have signalled the end of Henry's attempts to assert his own royal status at the expense of his brother.

It seems, however, that Otto remembered the way that Quedlinburg had been used against him. After his remarriage to Adelheid in 951, and the birth of his new son, Otto's relationship with his son, Liudolf, and his son-in-law, Conrad the Red, became increasingly tense. The two younger men allied together in 953, along with a swathe of the East Frankish elite, and rebelled against Otto and Henry the Younger. The civil war that this sparked raged on until December 954, when Liudolf was finally reconciled with his father. In contrast to the earlier rebellions against Otto's rule, though, the uprising in 953 was led by Otto's direct descendant, and

[61] Admittedly he was captured by Eberhard in the first rebellion before he joined him. See Widukind, *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 2.12-2.32, pp. 78-94; *AQ* 937-941, pp. 459-463; Reuter, *Germany*, pp. 148-153.

[62] 'Heinricus ardens cupiditate regnandi', Widukind, *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 2.15, p. 79 see also 2.31, pp. 92-3. It is also worth noting that directly after Widukind recounts this failed coup attempt that he reports a supernatural event at Quedlinburg: 'Mons quoque, ubi ipse rerum dominus sepultus est, fama prodidit, quia multis in locis flammas evomeret.' Widukind, *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 2.32, p. 93; 'The mountain where the lord of the world is buried emitted flames in many different places.' Trans. in Bachrach and Bachrach, *Deeds of the Saxons*, p. 90. See also Hrotsvitha, *Gesta Ottonis*, 220-227, p. 283. Both Thietmar and the *AQ* record that a *coniuratio* against the king had been discovered at Quedlinburg, but they do not specify that Henry the Younger was involved. Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 2.21, pp. 62-3; *AQ*, 941, p. 463.

[63] 'Sed prono sacram vultu prostratus ad aram / Corpus frigoree sociavit nobile terre', Hrotsvitha, *Gesta Ottonis* 359-360, p. 288.

formerly designated heir and successor, Liudolf. It is during the same period, from roughly 948 down to 955, that we see Otto increase the amount of time he spent at Quedlinburg.[64] Indeed, just before Liudolf and Conrad moved into open rebellion against Otto, the king travelled to Quedlinburg to commemorate the anniversary of Henry I's death at his tomb.[65] As the place where he had focused all of the dynastic legitimacy stemming from Henry I into his own direct line, Otto needed to prevent his own son from tapping into the symbolism of Quedlinburg in order to boost his own credentials as Henry and Otto's heir.[66] When Liudolf challenged his authority, Otto faced the possibility of Quedlinburg working against him, as the centre that had provided the royal authority which secured his own kingship could potentially be turned into a tool that his own descendants could turn to their advantage. Otto's frequent presence at Quedlinburg during the unrest with Liudolf was most likely not just coincidence but was rather a concerted effort to control access to the place in his kingdom that was most strongly imbued with ideas of dynastic legitimacy.

Just under 30 years later, the descendants of Otto and Henry the Younger played out the same challenge in the same place. After taking custody of the four-year-old Otto III following Otto II's sudden death, Henry the Quarreller, the son of Henry the Younger, used Quedlinburg as the venue to signal his intention to take the throne for himself. After spending Palm Sunday at the cathedral in Magdeburg, Henry then travelled to Quedlinburg for Easter Sunday. Although the nobles of Saxony had not recognised his claim to power in Magdeburg, by the time he arrived at Quedlinburg, Henry was able to conduct an *adventus* at the convent where his supporters 'openly greeted him as a king and he was honoured with divine *laudes*,' with the support of all the archbishops of the kingdom (aside from Willigis of Mainz), the majority of the bishops and a number of lay magnates.[67] In addition, Boleslav of Bohemia and Mieszko of Poland were both in attendance at Henry's Easter feast at Quedlinburg, and recognised his

[64] Bernhardt, *Itinerant*, p. 19.
[65] The charter that confirms Otto's presence at Quedlinburg is DOI 154 which gives the convent of Alden-Eyck over into the possession of the bishop of Liège on July 4, 952. This is the same convent for which Otto issued the first diploma in his reign, DOI 466.
[66] As Flodoard reported, the conflict began when Otto chose his new eponymous son with Adelheid as his heir in 953, having his magnates swear an oath of fidelity to the infant Otto. Flodoard, *Annales* 953, pp. 135-7; trans. in Fanning and Bachrach, *The* Annals *of Flodoard*, pp. 57-8.
[67] 'In hac festivitate idem a suis publice rex appellatur laudibusque divinis attollitur.' Thietmar, *Chronicon* 4.2, pp. 132-3; trans. in David Warner, *Ottonian Germany: The* Chronicon *of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester, 2001), p. 150; Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 185.

claim to the throne.[68] Althoff noted that Henry's decision to use Quedlinburg as the venue for this act was a continuation of the Ottonian 'royal custom' of treating Quedlinburg as an *Österpfalz*.[69] However, Henry's choice to follow the Magdeburg-Quedlinburg path and hold a royal *adventus* ceremony at the convent with the attendance of not only magnates from Saxony but from Bohemia and Poland as well had a deeper resonance. Reuter noted the signals that Henry was sending; his actions at Quedlinburg were 'no doubt a conscious imitation of Otto I's accession in 936'.[70]

The overwhelming associations between Quedlinburg and the dynastic legitimacy that enhanced the authority of the Ottonian emperors would have made the convent extremely attractive to Henry the Quarreller in his attempt to assert his own royal status. Henry was able to deploy all the political symbolism that Otto I had plugged into the foundation from 936. As a descendant of Henry I, Henry the Quarreller could use his grandfather's burial place to stress that he shared the same bloodline as Otto III. Moreover, the repeated associations that Otto I had made between Quedlinburg and legitimate royal power were exactly what Henry needed to strengthen his own claim to the throne. Appearing at Quedlinburg at Easter allowed Henry to evoke echoes of the past appearances of kings from his family at the convent over the past 50 years, not just at Easter, but at important family days, coronations, consecrations and assemblies. That Abbess Mathilda was not there to prevent her cousin from co-opting her convent, having accompanied her brother on his Italian campaign, was an added bonus. It is no accident that Henry was first able to be treated in a royal fashion at Quedlinburg after his more lukewarm reception at Magdeburg. The concept of the royal authority of Henry's family was so embedded within Quedlinburg that it was hard to deny his own share in that legacy.

However, Henry's bid for the throne eventually failed. After a long series of negotiations, Henry returned the young Otto III to the custody of his female relatives in June 984. His submission to Otto and his mother, Theophanu, took place a year later, at an assembly in Frankfurt in June 985. This final agreement was foreshadowed by what happened at Quedlinburg in the Easter celebrations of that year. After the liturgical celebrations at the

[68] *AQ* 984-5, pp. 470-5; Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 185; Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (University Park, 2003), p. 34.
[69] Althoff, *Otto III*, p. 34; On the *Österpfalz* tradition, see Althoff, 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg', pp. 128-9. See also Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, p. 150, n. 4.
[70] Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 185.

convent, Otto III had been acknowledged as king by Boleslav and Mieszko. Following this, the four leading dukes of his kingdom, namely Henry the Quarreller, Conrad of Swabia, Henry the Younger of Carinthia and Bernhard of Saxony, had symbolically served Otto at the feast in the convent.[71] Otto's position as king was recognised, and Henry the Quarreller's claim to the throne was finally put to rest. It comes as no surprise that the affirmation of Otto III's kingship and the symbolic resolution of the inheritance dispute between the different branches of Henry I's descendants were held at Quedlinburg. The challenge by Henry the Quarreller to Otto I's line of descendants had co-opted the ideas of dynastic legitimacy that Quedlinburg embodied, and Otto III needed to reassert his claim to the site, and to the royal authority that it symbolised. Otto III's feast, with the young king being served by the four major dukes of the German kingdom, purposely echoed Otto I's feast after being crowned at Aachen in 936, when he had been served by Dukes Gislebert, Eberhard, Hermann and Arnulf.[72] Evoking the memory of Otto I through having his grandson imitate his actions strengthened the ties that Otto had established between the convent and the direct line of descent that ran from Henry I through him alone. Henry the Quarreller had tried, and only narrowly failed, to broaden those ties to the rest of Henry I's family and use that to convert his royal inheritance into actual kingship. Quedlinburg was a powerful and useful tool for the Ottonians to deploy when they needed to assert their royal authority. However, as symbols are by their nature ambiguous, there was a constant risk of this association with royal legitimacy being subverted by those who wished to stake their own claim to the throne.[73]

These subversions of Quedlinburg's symbolic meaning highlight a central point about the motivation behind the convent's foundation and purpose for the Ottonian dynasty: Quedlinburg was not an institution that was open to all members of the broader Liudolfing family, but rather was restricted to direct descendants of Otto I himself. He outlined this explicitly in the foundation charter, with reference to his *parentes* and *successores* – but the ultimately unsuccessful attempts by others outside of that direct line to use Quedlinburg for their own benefit emphasise that this limitation of Henry I's legacy, symbolised by the monastery, remained controversial throughout the tenth century.

[71] *AQ* 985, pp. 473-5; Thietmar, *Chronicon* 4.9, pp. 140-3; Althoff, *Otto III*, pp. 39-40.
[72] Widukind, *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 2.2, pp. 66-7.
[73] Warner, 'Saints and Politics', p. 9.

Even if his line was not able to turn Quedlinburg to their own benefit, the attraction of this convent as a site of memorial and dynastic identity did not escape the family of Henry the Younger. Indeed, the female monastery of Niedermünster appears to have served as a replica of Quedlinburg for the benefit of Henry's family. Based in Regensburg, the capital of his Bavarian duchy, Niedermünster became Henry the Younger's favoured monastic house. He devoted a significant amount of resources into rebuilding the church of the monastery, which would eventually become his family's necropolis, housing the tombs of Henry himself, his wife, Judith, and his daughter-in-law, Gisela.[74] The community repaid the family's patronage through boosting their public image: the Bamberg Rule book (Staatsbibliothek Msc Lit 142) was made for Niedermünster circa 985 and features a full page illumination of Henry the Quarreller, complete with halo, where he is recorded as the 'the noble and serene duke who governs the Bavarian realms, highborn offspring of the *domna* Judith'.[75] The association of Judith with the community is particularly evocative. While the community had been in existence well before her birth, over the course of the tenth century a tradition arose which saw Judith as the founder of the convent.[76] The parallels here between Queen Mathilda's growing association with Quedlinburg as a founding figure, which is explored in the next chapter, and Judith's association with Niedermünster are striking. The Bavarian descendants of Henry I and Mathilda were attempting to use Niedermünster in the same way that Otto and his family used Quedlinburg, in order to harness a similar kind of prestige.

Of course, the attempts by those from the line that branched off from Henry the Younger to appropriate Quedlinburg for themselves signals that they did not forget the political importance of that convent. However, the Bavarian line of the family could only explicitly tie themselves to the site in moments of usurpation and defiance against the authority of the ruling branch of the family. Quedlinburg was not the home of a broad and all-encompassing Ottonian *memoria*, accessible to all the branches that descended from Henry I and Queen Mathilda. While the convent may have commemorated a wide number of relatives and followers of Otto, his foundation charter for the convent made it very clear that control of and access to the

[74] Adam S. Cohen, *The Uta Codex: Art, Philosophy, and Reform in Eleventh-century Germany* (Pennsylvania, 2000), p. 17.
[75] 'Conspicitur pictus dux nobilis atque serenus / Heinricus praestans Bawarica regna gubernans, / Progenies domnae venerabilis alta Iudittae,' *Regelbuch von Niedermünster*, in Norbert Fickermann and Karl Strecker (eds), MGH Poetae latini aevi Carolini 5 (Berlin, 1937-1939), p. 432; Adam S. Cohen, 'The Art of Reform in a Bavarian Nunnery Around 1000', *Speculum* 74:4 (1999), p. 1000; Cohen, *The Uta Codex*, p. 14.
[76] Cohen, *The Uta Codex*, p. 14.

community was for his direct line alone. Quedlinburg was indeed a commemorative centre for the Ottonian family, but it only conferred legitimacy on a select group of individuals within that family. Through establishing Quedlinburg and St Maurice at Magdeburg, Otto was attempting to prune the branches of his broader family tree down to a single line, which passed through him alone. Although he looked back to his parents for legitimacy, Otto did not intend to let their other descendants appropriate the royal status that his own immediate family possessed.

THE ABBESSES OF QUEDLINBURG

If we view Otto's establishment of Quedlinburg as a way to assert his royal legitimacy and appropriate the dynastic authority of Henry I, we still face the question of why Otto set up a *female* monastic community at Quedlinburg. Was there an earlier plan under Henry I and Mathilda to set up a convent at the site in order to provide young Saxon women with a suitable place to lead a religious life? Later sources raise this as a possibility, but there is no contemporary evidence from the 930s to further support this claim. Moreover, there were other convents that seemed to have served this role quite well already, Herford and Gandersheim chief amongst them. Was a female foundation a more attractive option in Otto's view, as he could install a young female relative as abbess, giving him even more control over the convent? Again, we have no evidence to prove this. We know very little about the women that resided in the convent of Quedlinburg for the first 30 years of its history. In fact, before Otto's daughter Mathilda became the abbess of Quedlinburg in 966, we have no information about who the abbess of the community was.

The absence of any evidence for the identity of the abbess of Quedlinburg before 966 has led a number of historians to cast Queen Mathilda as the leader of the convent. In this view, Queen Mathilda held a quasi-abbatial role at Quedlinburg until her eponymous granddaughter reached the age of eleven, when she would be able to be consecrated as abbess.[77] Michel Parisse has

[77] Gerd Althoff says Queen Mathilda 'leitete' the convent, 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg', p. 124; Corbet calls her the 'régente' of Quedlinburg, *Les saintes ottoniens*, p. 32; Karl F. Morrison suggested that Queen Mathilda herself 'designated the young Mathilda to succeed her as abbess of Quedlinburg' in 'Widukind's Mirror for a Princess – An Exercise in Self-Knowledge' in Karl Borchardt and Enno Bünz (eds), *Forschungen zur Reichs-, Papst- und Landesgeschichte. Peter Herde zum 65 Geburtstag* (Stuttgart, 1998), p. 66. Ehlers even argued that Abbess Dietmoet of Wendhausen had been chosen as

even argued that Mathilda had a hereditary right to lead Quedlinburg due to an institutionalised policy of abbatial succession at the convent which was restricted to Ottonian daughters alone.[78] However, this vision of the early leadership at Quedlinburg remains problematic. Firstly, the chronology is awkward. If the abbess of Quedlinburg needed to be an Ottonian daughter, then why was Liutgard, Otto's first daughter, who would have been around five or six years old in 936, not selected to become the first abbess?[79] Why did Otto wait until the birth of his second daughter by his second wife 30 years later to provide an abbess for his convent? Secondly, the foundation charter which Otto issued for the community makes explicit reference to the *abbatissa* of the convent, and Otto had taken care to set out the procedure for the election of the abbess.[80] While other historians have seen the right of free election of an abbess as a trope which was never enforced at Quedlinburg, it is worth pointing out that this does not undermine what the position of the *abbatissa* entailed.[81] The various monastic rules for women from the sixth century onwards had repeatedly defined the office of the abbess, meaning contemporary audiences had a very clear idea of what the duties and responsibilities of that position were. An *abbatissa* was a vowed religious woman, who was consecrated into the office by the diocesan bishop; this was a position which Queen Mathilda, as a lay widow, could not fulfil. DOI 1 clearly states that Otto was establishing Quedlinburg under the leadership of an *abbatissa* in 936.

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the first abbess by Henry I, but Queen Mathilda seized the role for herself against Otto I's wishes, in 'Heinrich I.', p. 244. Martina Giese says Quedlinburg was under the queen's leadership until 968 in *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 72 (Hanover, 2004), p. 46. Claire Thiellet argued that Queen Mathilda 'dirige elle-même le monastère de Quedlinburg pendant près de trente ans, sans en être abbess', in *Femmes, Reines et Saintes (V^e^-XI^e^ siècles)* (Paris, 2004), p. 280. Helene Scheck does not call Queen Mathilda an abbess, but argued that her granddaughter Mathilda was not appointed as abbess and must have acted as a 'quasi-prioress' until the queen's death, 'presumably because Queen Mathilda retained prominence.' However, the younger Mathilda was consecrated as abbess in April 966, two years before Queen Mathilda's death. Helene Scheck, 'Queen Mathilda of Saxony and the Founding of Quedlinburg: Women, Memory and Power', *Historical Reflections* 35:3 (2009), p. 23. See also Bernhardt, *Itinerant*, p. 143; Jay T. Lees, ''David *Rex Fidelis*'? Otto the Great, the *Gesta Ottonis* and the *Primordia Coenobii Gandesheimensis*' in Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (eds), *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretative Approaches* (Leiden, 2013), p. 207.

[78] Michel Parisse, 'Les Chanoinesses Dans l'Empire Germanique (IX^e^-XI^e^ siècles)', *Francia* 6 (1978), p. 120.

[79] Otto remarked in DOI 61 that his donation to Quedlinburg is in thanks for his daughter Liutgard recovering from illness.

[80] DOI 1.

[81] Althoff, 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg', p. 124; Giese, *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 46; Sonnleitner, 'Die Annalistik der Ottonenzeit', p. 240.

So, rather than seeing Quedlinburg in the very strange position of existing for its first 30 years without an abbess, I suggest it is more probable that there was a woman who was consecrated as the *abbatissa*, though we know effectively nothing about her. Otto did not mention the intercession of the abbess for any of the diplomas he issued for Quedlinburg before 966, meaning that we have no record of any name. The later tradition in the *Lives* of Queen Mathilda that Quedlinburg was founded with the *sanctimoniales* from Wendhausen, whose abbess, Dietmoet, fell out with the queen after the death of Henry I, raises the possibility that Dietmoet (or another of the Wendhausen canonesses) became the abbess of Quedlinburg, but the *Lives* do not explicitly say this.[82] Instead, it seems that the first abbess of Quedlinburg has left no definitive trace in the historical record.

That we do not know the name of the first abbess of Quedlinburg is less startling than it may first appear. If, for example, we went purely by the diplomatic sources for the convent of Nordhausen, we would not have the name of Abbess Richburga, as she is only identified in the hagiographic sources produced by the community itself. Perhaps more tellingly, Otto's diplomas never name the abbots of St Maurice at Magdeburg.[83] Rather, it is only from later sources, such as the *Chronicon* of Thietmar and the *Annales Magdeburgensis* that we know that Anno, the first abbot of St Maurice at Magdeburg, was a monk taken from the monastery of Trier, and that he became bishop of Worms in 950; that the second abbot, Othwin, was chosen by Otto from Reichenau; and that Adalbert, a monk of Trier, became archbishop when St Maurice was converted into an archbishopric in 968.[84] Unfortunately for us, the Quedlinburg Annals is silent on the name of the first abbess.[85] If we set the two foundations of Quedlinburg and St Maurice together, the missing information on the first abbess seems less due to the role

[82] Given the mention of Wendhausen in DOI 1, this may well have an element of truth, but it is far from conclusive. Ehlers has raised the possibility that Dietmoet, the abbess of Wendhausen, was originally intended as the first abbess of Quedlinburg, as the women at Wendhausen served as the basis for the new community at Quedlinburg in 936, but she fell out with Mathilda and Henry during the foundation process. Ehlers, 'Heinrich I.', p. 244.

[83] There is only one reference to *abbatus* in the diplomas for St Maurice, which appears in DOI 232b, issued in 961, and this discusses the office of *abbatus* generally, rather than referring specifically to an individual. In contrast, we can see DOI 97, where Hagano is specifically named as abbot at Hersfeld, in contrast to St Maurice, where he only refers to the *fratres*.

[84] Thietmar, *Chronicon* 2.22, pp. 64-5; *Annales Magdeburgenses* 938 in G. H. Pertz (ed.), MGH SS 16 (Hanover, 1859), p. 143. It is worth pointing out that Widukind makes no mention at all of the monastery of St Maurice in the *Res Gestae Saxonicae*, though there is a hint of an *adventus* ceremony in 3.10, pp. 109-110 for King Berengar at Magdeburg.

[85] The possible reasons for this will be explored in chapter five.

being vacant until 966, and more due to the apparent wish of Otto not to highlight their abbatial leaders in his diplomas for these monasteries.

This, of course, raises the question of why Otto was not interested in naming the abbot or abbess of the two monasteries that were his favoured foundations, which he himself had established as centres of royal authority. Other abbots and abbesses were named by Otto in his diplomas from the same period: why not for his favourite foundations?[86] The answer may well lie in his intentions for those monasteries. If, at the start of his reign, Otto was establishing institutions which were intended to be dynastic centres as much as cultic centres, then he needed to continually assert that they were under his control. His diplomas were not intended to show Otto in a responsive role, granting the petition of the abbot or abbess, but rather representing Otto's active intentions for the institutions that he had founded. The occasional appearance of other family members as intercessors helped reaffirmed the different messages that Otto was trying to convey with each diploma, but the overall image was of Otto as the controlling presence at both Quedlinburg and St Maurice. From the later narrative sources, we can see that the abbots of St Maurice were less marked out by their familial connections than by their monastic credentials. Given the parallels that we have seen between St Maurice and Quedlinburg, the same is likely to be true at Quedlinburg. Rather than choose a woman coming from an elite family, which would give her some amount of political influence herself, it may well be that Otto deliberately chose a woman whose social status was not so prominent that he needed to recognise her by name in the charters for the convent. The anonymity of the abbess was what made her useful for Otto to foreground his ownership and control over the community in his diplomas, in the same way that he chose monks from Trier and Reichenau to serve as abbots in Magdeburg.

Yet, with the consecration of his daughter Mathilda as abbess in 966, Otto's attitude towards the leadership of Quedlinburg had clearly changed. The institution of a royal, and soon to be

[86] For example, in the first 20 years of his reign, Otto named the abbot of Corvey in DD OI 3, 27, 73, 77, 153; the abbot of Einsiedeln in DOI 94; the abbess of Essen in DOI 85; the abbot of Fulda in DD OI 2, 55, 131, 132, 160; the abbot of Hersfeld in DD OI 4, 96, 97, 109; the abbot of Hornbach in DOI 117; the abbot of Lorsch in DD OI 95, 176, 177; the abbot of Pfävers in DOI 120; the abbot of Prüm in 111; the abbot of Reichenau in DOI 116; the abbot of S. Ambrogio at Mailand in DOI 138; the abbot of St Gall in DD OI 25, 90, 119; the abbot of S. Giovanni Domnarum at Pavia in DOI 144; the abbot of St Maximin at Trier in DD OI 31, 179; the abbot of St Remi at Reims in DOI 156; the abbess of S. Sisto at Piacenza in DOI 141; the abbot of Stablo-Malmedy in DD OI 118, 167; and the abbot of Werden in DOI 5.

imperial, daughter as the abbess of the community was a marked shift from the anonymous leadership of the convent in the first three decades of its history. So what, then, prompted this change in social status of the abbess at Quedlinburg? Was Otto indeed just waiting for another daughter to be born so that he could make her the abbess? A closer look at the events between the birth of Mathilda in 954/5 and her consecration in 966 suggest instead that her accession to the role of abbess was part of a much wider reorientation of Otto's relationship to the major Saxon royal convents under his control, tied to the broader political context of the aftermath of the Battle of Lechfeld and Otto's path towards taking the imperial title in 962.

The importance of the Battle of Lechfeld in Ottonian history is well understood, and has been examined at length by other historians, so a brief summary will suffice here. During the final stages of the rebellion by Otto's son, Liudolf, and son-in-law, Conrad the Red, the Hungarians used the unrest in Germany to launch a large raid across the eastern border of the kingdom in March 954.[87] This raid in part helped to seal the success of Otto in quelling his son's rebellion, but was followed in the summer of 955 by a large raid that swept through Bavaria and into Swabia, sacking the city of Augsburg, before Otto moved down from Saxony for a pitched battle at the Lech on August 10. Otto, leading from the front of his troops while carrying the Holy Lance, not only won the battle with a smaller army, but completely routed the Hungarians, pursuing them as they fled eastwards then hanging their leaders at Regensburg.[88] The Battle of Lechfeld became the turning point of Otto's reign, signalling the end of rebellions against him from within the Ottonian family, and decisively responding to the incursions on the eastern border of the kingdom as well. As Karl Leyser noted, after Otto's victory at the Lech, 'the way to empire lay wide open.'[89] For our purposes though, the actions of Otto in the year after the battle are particularly significant.

As I noted above, there were a handful of important grants that Otto made to Quedlinburg and St Maurice which demonstrated the connections that he had made between the two institutions. One of these series took place over six months in 956, as part of a particularly significant itinerary. After a grant to St Maurice on the anniversary of his father's death, Otto proceeded to Magdeburg, celebrated the feasts of both St Lawrence (also the first anniversary of the

[87] Karl Leyser, 'The Battle at the Lech, 955. A Study in Tenth-Century Warfare', *Medieval Germany and its Neighbours 900-1250* (London, 1982), p. 52.
[88] Ibid., pp. 53-63.
[89] Ibid., p. 43.

victory at the Lech) and St Maurice there, then travelled to Quedlinburg. Finally, in December, Otto travelled to Memleben and issued grants to both Quedlinburg and St Maurice. Clearly, Otto's two key monasteries were serving as venues for the celebration of his success over the Hungarians, hosting him and the royal family as well as receiving diplomas. The content of those diplomas further reinforced this message. For example, DOI 186, issued to Quedlinburg, included a donation of a church built in honour of St Michael, who had extremely close associations with victory and warfare for the Ottonians, and Ottonian kings fought under a banner bearing his image.[90] Most importantly though, two diplomas that Otto granted to Quedlinburg in August, namely DD OI 184 and 185, specifically mentioned Otto's infant daughter Mathilda.[91] The grants stipulated that the donations to Quedlinburg were given to provide food and clothing 'for our most beloved daughter, Mathilda,' who was placed into the convent.[92] Adelheid had given birth to Mathilda around the beginning of 955.[93] The timing of her birth, just before the victory at the Lech, plus the itinerary of Otto, with his new queen and their young children, which made repeated visits to Quedlinburg in the year his daughter was born in order to commemorate and give thanks for his triumph, all suggest that it was at this point that Otto decided to place Mathilda at Quedlinburg as its abbess.[94] As I mentioned earlier, Otto had already passed over the chance to have his daughter Liutgard become abbess of Quedlinburg, instead marrying her to Conrad the Red around 943/4, with somewhat adverse results. Instead of Otto always intending for Quedlinburg to be led by one of his daughters, I suggest it was the confluence of events in 954-955 that led him to adapt the political role of Quedlinburg by placing his daughter into the convent.

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[90] DOI 186; David Warner, 'Henry II at Magdeburg', p. 149. Bernard and David Bachrach argue Widukind's mention of 'coramque eo angelus, penes quem victoria, denso agmine circumseptus' at the Battle of the Lech in *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 3.44, p. 125 was a reference to a banner of St Michael. Bachrach and Bachrach, *Deeds of the Saxons*, p. 125, n. 130.

[91] I follow Sickel in seeing the undated DOI 185 being most likely issued on the same day as DOI 184. DOI 184 also contains a small sketch of Quedlinburg with the convent sitting atop a fortified structure on the *burg*. Matthias Puhle (ed.), *Otto der Große: Magdeburg und Europa*, Volume II (Mainz, 2001), pp. 115-6.

[92] 'pro karissimae filiae nostrae Mahtilde victu et vestitu perpetuo iure possidendas donamus.' DOI 184.

[93] Michel Parisse, 'Adélaïde de Bourgogne, reine d'Italie et de Germanie, impératrice (931-999)' in Patrick Corbet, Monique Goullet et Dominique Iogna-Prat (eds), *Adélaïde de Bourgogne: Genèse et répresentations d'une sainteté impériale. Actes du colloque international du Centre d'Études Médiévales - UMR 5594, Auxerre 10 et 11 décembre 1999* (Dijon, 2002), p. 14.

[94] Ibid. Adelheid gave birth to Henry around 952/953 and Brun in January 954, but both died by September 956. Mathilda was born between September 954 to March 955, and Otto II was born in December of the same year.

It is worth emphasising the significance of the decision to place the king's daughter into the convent with the intention of her becoming the abbess. In 955, no royal daughter had ever been an abbess of a Saxon convent. Even during the reign of Louis the German and Louis the Younger, royal daughters had held convents that lay outside Saxony, and their roles had been more as proprietors, not as consecrated abbesses. Despite the emphasis of historians on the involvement of the Liudolfings/Ottonians with female monasteries, their use of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg as centres of *memoria*, and the subsequent emphasis on these convents as part of their dynastic strategy, there had been no Liudolfing or Ottonian abbesses at any Saxon convent since the death of Christine circa 919, just over 40 years earlier.[95]

Instead, the entrance of Otto's daughter, Mathilda, into Quedlinburg in 956, signalled not just a renegotiation of Otto's relationship to this convent in particular, but also marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Saxon female monasticism, characterised by the institution of Ottonian women as abbesses of the major royal monasteries in the region. In fact, immediately before Otto began this six-month itinerary focused on Quedlinburg and St Maurice, he had turned his attention towards Gandersheim as well, issuing DOI 180 – the diploma which I argue marked the appointment of Gerberga, his niece, as the convent's new abbess.[96] At Essen, we see another Mathilda, Liudolf's daughter and Otto's granddaughter, entering the convent around this time as well, and she eventually was consecrated abbess at some point before 971.[97] Considering that there were no abbesses drawn from the Ottonian family at all before 956, within ten years every unmarried female descendant of Henry I had been placed into a convent as its future abbess.[98]

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[95] Our only source for Christine as an abbess at Gandersheim is Hrotsvitha's *Primordia de coenobiis Gandesheimensis* 480-485, in Walter Berschin (ed.), *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Munich, 2001), p. 325. The last Liudolfing abbess documented at Gandersheim in the diplomatic evidence was Gerberga. The abbesses at Essen during the early tenth century may have been related to the Liudolfings, but this was a distant connection at best. Bernhardt, *Itinerant*, p. 191.

[96] DOI 180 was issued on 21 April 956 at Werla.

[97] Mathilda was an intercessor in Otto's grant to Essen in 966 (DOI 325), though she is not given the title of *abbatissa*. Karen Blough has argued that Mathilda was abbess in 962: Karen Blough, 'The Princess-Abbesses of Essen and the Golden Virgin' in R. Bork (ed.), *De Re Metallica: The Uses of Metal in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 149. Elisabeth van Houts puts her consecration around 971 in 'Women and the writing of history in the early Middle Ages: the case of Abbess Matilda of Essen and Aethelweard', *Early Medieval Europe* 1 (1992), p. 60.

[98] Otto's step-daughter, Emma, was also married to Lothar in 966 at the age of 18. Simon MacLean, 'Reform, Queenship and the End of the World in Tenth-Century France: Adso's Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist Reconsidered', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 86 (2008), p. 648; Parisse, 'Adélaïde de Bourgogne', p. 18.

What lay behind the decision to place almost all of the unmarried women from Otto I's family into convents and ordain them as abbesses in such a short period of time? Perhaps Otto was seeking to boost the aura of sanctity around his family through using his female relatives, and there may have an association between women and commemorative activity on which he was hoping to capitalise. However, this does not explain the swiftness with which Otto moved from having no Ottonian abbesses at all, to having three instituted in the space of a decade.

To understand Otto's actions, we should consider the context in which he was acting. The period in question, from 956 to 966, falls at a point of notable political change in Otto's reign. The successful suppression of Liudolf and Conrad the Red's rebellion in 954, followed by the resounding victory at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955 meant that Otto's authority as ruler was effectively unchallenged in Germany from 955 onwards. He now had the chance to focus his attention on extending his power into new regions. After venturing into Italy in 951/2, returning with Adelheid as his new queen, Otto increasingly asserted his power on the other side of the Alps across the decade. Liudolf, newly-reconciled with his father, intervened against the growing power of Berengar II in Italy in 956 before his sudden death while still on campaign in 957. [99] In 961, Otto himself travelled down to Rome after an appeal from Pope John XII for aid. On February 2, 962, Otto was crowned as emperor by John in St Peter's Basilica. Almost six years later, on Christmas Day 967, Otto returned to Rome with his son and heir, Otto II, who was crowned as co-emperor by Pope John XIII.[100] In the space of a decade, Otto had been able to not only stamp out the challenges to his rule within his German kingdom, but also successfully claim the imperial title. As such, his actions in this same period should be viewed through the lens of his imperial ambitions.

I propose that Otto's decision to place all of the unmarried female relatives in his family into convents to become abbesses from 956 to 966 was not simply a coincidence, but rather was part of Otto's attempt to reshape his house into an imperial dynasty. Otto may well have been influenced by the example of Charlemagne, whose daughters famously remained unmarried to prevent Frankish noblemen from gaining entrance into the Carolingian family. In his effort to claim a newly imperial identity, Otto appears to have taken the same approach. The key role

[99] Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 170.
[100] Ibid., p. 174. Otto II had been elected and crowned as co-king in 961 before Otto I's imperial coronation.

of his only son-in-law in the rebellion of 953/4 must have also lessened the appeal of marrying off his young female relatives to potentially ambitious noblemen. However, the Carolingians had learned by experience the problems that unmarried daughters posed, with several men brazenly abducting Carolingian daughters over the ninth century as a way to claim membership in the family. [101]

In this context, the Carolingian precedent for royal/imperial daughters ruling royal convents offered a useful solution. Some of Charlemagne's daughters had become abbesses at major nunneries, such as Gisela at Chelles; and, as we saw above, Louis the German's unmarried daughters were placed over royal monasteries. By placing his daughter Mathilda, his niece Gerberga and his granddaughter Mathilda as abbesses at Quedlinburg, Gandersheim and Essen, Otto could reap multiple rewards. He prevented noblemen from marrying his relatives, thus proclaiming his family's superior political status; he tapped into a Carolingian precedent that further asserted his newly imperial status; and he was able to provide his female relatives with positions of social and political power themselves, setting them up as representatives of the imperial dynasty ruling over their own institutions in their family's heartland.

We also have documentary and material evidence which supports the idea that Otto's actions at Quedlinburg, Essen and Gandersheim were linked to his quest for the imperial title. Otto gave Essen a late antique porphyry column from Ravenna in 962, which he had transported back from Italy following his imperial coronation; the use of porphyry as the material of the column, plus its provenance, made it a gift with particularly imperial overtones for Essen.[102] At Quedlinburg, Mathilda's consecration as abbess gave the Ottonian dynasty a chance to display their magnificence, with the Saxon Annals recording that all the bishops and archbishops of the kingdom were in attendance at Quedlinburg in 966, along with the entire, now imperial, Ottonian family.[103] Mathilda's consecration occurred at Easter in 966, shortly

[101] See Janet L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992), pp. 148-9, 204 on the abduction of Lothar's daughter by Gislebert in 846 and Charles the Bald's daughter by Baldwin in 862. On the wider responses to abductions of Carolingian daughters see Sylvie Joye, 'Le Rapt de Judith par Baudoin de Flandre (862): Un "*Clinamen* Sociologique"?' in François Bougard, Laurent Feller and Régine Le Jan (eds), *Les Élites au Haut Moyen Âge: Crises et Renouvellements* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 361-379; and Rachel Stone, 'The Invention of a Theology of Abduction: Hincmar of Rheims on *Raptus*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60:3 (2009), pp. 433-448.
[102] Blough, 'The Princess-Abbesses of Essen', p. 149.
[103] For the *Annalista Saxo* account, see Giese, *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 319. Giese sees it as a *Familientag*, in *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, pp. 83-4. Blough, alternatively, thinks that the consecration at the age of 11 was because of Queen Mathilda's illness, which was 'threatening the

before the departure of Otto I and Otto II for Rome in order for Otto II's imperial coronation in 967. Given the apparent ostentation with which Mathilda's consecration was celebrated in the presence of Otto I's entire family, one may well see this act as a deliberate foreshadowing of the imperial coronation that her brother would soon receive in Rome. By having her ordained as an abbess, Mathilda was given a consecrated position of rulership in the heart of Saxony, a position that Widukind would later recognise in his dedications to her of the *Res Gestae Saxonicae*. Gandersheim, while not receiving any material gifts from the new emperors, did gain a new papal charter at the intercession of both Otto I and Otto II, on January 1, 968, one week after Otto II's imperial coronation.[104] To understand the sudden institution of Ottonian abbesses at major female religious houses in Saxony, we need to view this within Otto's *Hausordnung* after his victory at the Lech and the broader movement of the Ottonian family from a royal to an imperial dynasty.

It is undeniably true that daughters of Ottonian emperors held the position of abbess of Quedlinburg for almost 100 years. As such, it is understandably tempting to see a policy of imperial princesses ruling Quedlinburg as a fundamental expression of the convent's relationship with the Ottonian family. However, the first three decades of Quedlinburg's history show us that this view of the monastery's leadership is not entirely accurate. While hindsight allows us to see that the two abbesses of Quedlinburg from 966 to 1043 were the daughters of Otto I and Otto II, we should not then take this as a reflection of a clearly defined and unchangeable policy of only Ottonian princesses as Quedlinburg's abbesses. Instead, the leadership of the convent underwent a significant shift in the aftermath of Otto I's victory at the Lech, when he finally resolved the internal rebellions which marked his early reign, and moved his attention to a wider, imperial, set of ambitions. Quedlinburg had been founded in order to address these dynastic challenges and to emphasise the royal authority of Otto in the early, unstable years of his reign. As such, it was significantly affected by Otto's new imperial agenda in 955. The institution of Mathilda as abbess in 966 marked a new direction for the convent, one which would see its abbess become an increasingly powerful figure in Saxon politics. Otto replaced abbesses who had gained their political power from their institutional

stability of the fledgling imperial convent,' though whether we can call a very well-endowed royal convent a 'fledgling' institution at thirty years is open to debate. Blough, 'The Abbatial Effigies', p. 152.

[104] Johannes XIII 184 in Harald Zimmermann (ed.), *Papsturkunden 896-1046*, Vol. 1 (Vienna, 1984), pp. 360-2.

office with imperial women who were power players in their own right. In doing so, he shifted the trajectory of development of Saxon female monasticism in a new direction, one which was increasingly shaped by the power of individual abbesses, rather than the power of the institutions themselves.

CONCLUSION

The establishment of Quedlinburg, as Althoff rightly noted, marked the foundation of a significant new commemorative centre for the Ottonian family. However, as this chapter has shown, the commemorative duties which were entrusted to Quedlinburg were highly specific. The convent was not a foundation intended to replace Gandersheim as the *memoria* centre of the entire Liudolfing family now that they had achieved royal status. Rather, Quedlinburg was a new dynastic centre, established by Otto in the face of rival claims for the inheritance of Henry I from within his own family. By setting up a new monastic community on the site of his father's grave, and entrusting that community with praying for the line that ran from Henry through Otto and on to his descendants, Otto was aggressively trimming the branches of his family tree, ensuring that royal power was restricted to his line alone. By establishing St Maurice at Magdeburg only a year later, a foundation which mirrored Quedlinburg both physically and symbolically, the new king was enacting a two-part strategy. Otto was both consolidating his control over Henry I's legacy, as well as constructing places where he could present himself as a powerful royal ruler in his own right. The association of Quedlinburg and Magdeburg with royal power, which Otto continually reinforced through his reign, led to those sites also becoming venues for challenges to royal authority across the tenth century, with various other Ottonian relatives in particular seeking to subvert the symbolic potential of Quedlinburg to boost their own claim to royal or imperial legitimacy. The aura of dynastic legitimacy embedded in Quedlinburg, in particular, was a potent tool for the Ottonians, but it was one which could work both for and against them.

As the first part of this thesis noted, Gandersheim was a house which had been founded by the first members of the Liudolfing family, and it remained open to their descendants. On the other hand, Quedlinburg was firmly under the control of Otto alone, and was not a foundation that was accessible by all members of his family. This is a subtle adjustment to the image of Quedlinburg as an Ottonian commemoration centre which Althoff proposed, but an important

one. Without understanding the motivations behind its foundation, we cannot understand how Quedlinburg gained the symbolism which led it to become such a central place in Saxon politics, nor can we see how its relationship with the Ottonian rulers changed over the course of the tenth century. Quedlinburg did not usurp Gandersheim's commemorative function. Rather, the two houses had overlapping, but distinctively different, bases of *memoria*. This is a subtle point, but an important one. The term *memoria* incorporates many different elements: while *memoria* includes commemoration, it also includes the construction of legitimacy and ideas of inheritance and descent. These concepts are not identical, and we need to distinguish between them when describing the function of different memorial centres.

The foundation of Quedlinburg did not wipe out Gandersheim's relationship with the Ottonian rulers, and, as we have seen, Gandersheim continued to attract the attention of the Ottonians well after 936. The 'Ottonian *memoria*' was multifaceted and able to be housed at multiple institutions at the same time. Indeed, different branches of the family were able to set up their own commemorative institutions. This chapter stresses that the idea of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg competing to be the single commemorative centre for the Ottonian family does not help us understand the relationships that these convents had with the various members of that group. Quedlinburg was an exceptionally important place to Otto for a number of different reasons, but this did not prevent him from developing his own relationship with Gandersheim as well.

Otto's relationship with Quedlinburg developed significantly over the course of his reign. The convent that he established in 936 was oriented towards a specific set of aims that were shaped by the political context of the first years of his reign. As Otto's rule progressed, and he resolved the challenges posed by his brothers, and then his son and son-in-law, we see him reshaping his relationship with Quedlinburg to better suit his changing needs. When Otto finally was able to move towards Rome and the imperial crown, he fundamentally altered his relationship with the convent by placing his daughter over it as abbess, as part of a wider strategy of placing young Ottonian women as abbesses over the major Saxon convents.

As such, to suggest that the wider Ottonian family had a crystallised relationship with Quedlinburg overlooks the evolution that took place in that convent's political history, even within the reign of Otto I alone. Quedlinburg's position on the political stage in 936 was very different to its place in 966 when Mathilda became abbess, or in 999 when Adelheid became

abbess. The concept of Quedlinburg being inevitably led by Ottonian imperial daughters is an idea based on a retrospective view of Quedlinburg's history, rather than one which takes into account the context of each abbatial consecration. The decision for Mathilda to become abbess in 966 was one which was highly influenced by the interests and motivations of Otto at the time, rather than it being part of her hereditary birth right. Moreover, if we view Quedlinburg's leadership in the tenth century backwards from the perspective of the eleventh century, we run the risk of smoothing out the various ups and downs at the convent over the tenth century; overstating the position of security that the institution had in the Ottonian world; and understating the significance of Otto's realignment of Saxon convents under Ottonian women from 955 to 966. After all, the sources on Quedlinburg's early history which written in the early eleventh century were influenced by almost a century of shifting memories about the origins of the convent and its relationship with the Ottonian family. And, in the final chapter, we will turn to look at how and why these memories changed.

Chapter 5

REWRITING THE ORIGINS OF QUEDLINBURG

Shortly after the turn of the millennium, a new history of the Ottonian empire was written. The Quedlinburg Annals, a chronicle of world history created at Quedlinburg under the supervision of Abbess Adelheid, is one of the most important contemporary historiographical works for our understanding of the Ottonian dynasty. The Annals track the history of the world from creation, recording the spread and triumph of the Christian faith. Their main focus, however, is the rise of the Liudolfing dynasty and the intertwined history of the monastery of Quedlinburg with the Ottonian emperors who rose from that family.[1] From 852 onwards, the Annals begin to add new information to the narrative that they take from other sources, providing us with an increasingly detailed record of the political history of the Ottonian Empire.[2] Though there has been some disagreement about the date at which the Annals were begun, Martina Giese has persuasively argued that the increasingly contemporary tone and wealth of new information provided from 1008-1015 and 1020 onwards suggests that they were composed in these two periods.[3] The Quedlinburg Annals were not only a text intended for use within the convent either. Alongside their use in a variety of later historiographical texts, they were a source for Thietmar of Merseburg's *Chronicon*, written from 1012 onwards, possibly the most important historiographical account for our understanding of the Ottonian Empire.[4] The annalist writing at Quedlinburg in 1008 created a highly influential memory of the past, and, in particular, of Quedlinburg's place within the Ottonian Empire.

The question of who the author of the Quedlinburg Annals was remains open. The Annals are anonymous, and their composition over more than two decades means there is a possibility of

[1] Martina Giese (ed.), *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 72 (Hanover, 2004) pp. 66-9.
[2] Ibid., p. 47. Althoff says that the Annals have the 'truest claim to the 'Ottonian' historiography.' Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (University Park, 2003), p. 27.
[3] Giese, *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, pp. 47-57.
[4] On the medieval reception of the Annals, see Giese, *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, pp. 258-294. Later works which used the Annals as a source include Thietmar of Merseburg's *Chronicon*; the *Chronicon Wirziburgense*; the *Gesta episcoporum Halberstadensium*; the Nienburg/Berge Annals; the *Annalista Saxo*; the Magdeburg Annals; and the Magdeburg *Schöppenchronik*.

multiple authors.[5] However, both editors of the text, Robert Holtzmann and Martina Giese, have supported the idea of a single author due to the unified style and agenda running through the Annals as a whole.[6] While it was initially assumed that the author was male, possibly a cleric based in Quedlinburg writing at Adelheid's request, Käthe Sonnleitner has pointed out that there is no definitive evidence for the author's gender from the text itself.[7] The library and scriptorium at Quedlinburg;[8] the strong evidence for the education of the canonesses at Quedlinburg;[9] and the lost *Life* of Christopher written by Hazecha, the treasurer of Quedlinburg, in the tenth century all attest the considerable level of scholastic activity at Quedlinburg.[10] While we cannot definitively rule out that the annalist was male, the evidence for one of the women of Quedlinburg to have the resources, the education, and the ability to write the Annals herself means that it is perfectly reasonable to see the author as a canoness.

Indeed, Sonnleitner raised the possible implications of female authorship in the way that the text represents the women of the Ottonian family. In particular, she stressed that the Annals show us the attempt of the canonesses at Quedlinburg to improve the presentation of women in the Ottonian dynasty, by showing them as spiritual warriors for the stability of the empire.[11] In Sonnleitner's view, the Annals were an attempt to create a new, more positive image of female political activity, but that this was short-lived as it was not carried over into later texts written by male authors.[12] Following this reassessment of whether the Annals could be taken as a straight-forward *Hausüberlieferung*, a record of the Ottonian family's memory and

[5] R. Usinger and H. Pabst both argued for two authors due to the differing opinions about Henry II in the text: Giese, *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, pp. 58-9.
[6] Ibid., pp. 59-60; Robert Holtzmann, 'Die Quedlinburger Annalen', *Sachsen und Anhalt* 1 (1925), pp. 100-114.
[7] Käthe Sonnleitner, 'Die Annalistik der Ottonenzeit als Quelle für die Frauengeschichte' in *Schriftenerihe des Instituts für Geschichte Darstellung* 2 (1988), p. 246.
[8] Hartmut Hoffman, *Schreibschulen und Buchmalerei: Handschriften und Texte des 9.-11. Jahrhunderts* (Hanover, 2012), pp. 86-99.
[9] Thietmar of Merseburg records that he was sent to Quedlinburg at a young age to be educated by his aunt Emnilde and remained at the convent until he was around twelve years old. Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon* 4.16, in Robert Holtzmann (ed.), MGH SRG NS 9 (Hanover, 1935), pp. 150-1; David A. Warner, *Ottonian Germany: The* Chronicon *of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester, 2001), p. 45.
[10] Hoffman, *Schreibschulen*, p. 156; Herwig Wolfram, *Conrad II 990-1039: Emperor of Three Kingdoms*, trans. Denis A. Kaiser (University Park, 2006), p. 280.
[11] Käthe Sonnleitner, 'Die Annalistik', pp. 236-8, 242. See also Käthe Sonnleitner, 'Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstverständnis der ottonischen Frauen im Spiegel der Historiographie des 10. Jahrhunderts' in Reinhard Härtel (ed.), *Geschichte und ihre Quellen: Festschrift für Friedrich Hausmann zum 70 Geburtstag* (Graz, 1987), pp. 111-9 for her attempt to apply the image of women coming through the female-authored Quedlinburg Annals to other female-authored texts of Ottonian historiography.
[12] Sonnleitner, 'Die Annalistik', pp. 244-6.

conceptualisation of itself and its history, Althoff further broke down the idea that Quedlinburg was simply passing on the "house tradition" of the Ottonian dynasty. Rather seeing it as a house tradition, he pointed out the criticism that the Quedlinburg Annals aimed at Henry II for his apparent failure to maintain the convent's position under his reign. After all, Althoff argued, it was under Henry II that the Ottonian *memoria* was transferred from Quedlinburg to Merseburg in 1016/1017, with the necrology of Quedlinburg being copied into the necrology of Merseburg. In his view, Quedlinburg was facing a serious demotion from its position under the previous Ottonian emperors. As such, the Annals were not so much a reflection of the Ottonian dynasty's view of the past as much as they were a way for the women of Quedlinburg to send messages to the king, reminding him of the rightful place of their monastery as the Ottonian memorial centre.[13]

In my view, Althoff's argument that the Quedlinburg Annals were a political text, aimed at influencing the relationship between the new king and the convent, is correct and has rightly influenced the views of other scholars on the Annals. The composition of the Annals is embedded in the context of the early years of Henry II's reign. Quedlinburg's position under a new king from a different branch of the royal family was precarious indeed. However, Althoff has only gone part of the way in explaining how the Annals tried to influence Henry II. In a seminal article on this topic, Althoff focused primarily on the way that the Annals presented the institutional identity of Quedlinburg in the late tenth century and the way that they criticised Henry II for breaking with the memorial traditions and Easter traditions at the convent.[14] However, the Annalist was not just using recent events and representations of the new king to try to influence Henry. Instead, the Annalist was subtly reshaping another significant event in the history of both Quedlinburg and the Ottonian dynasty: the foundation of the community itself. In an echo of Hrotsvitha's recreation of the foundation of Gandersheim, the Quedlinburg Annalist was using the memory of her convent's origins to redefine the relationship between the institution and the new ruler of Saxony.

[13] Gerd Althoff, 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg: Ottonische Frauenklöster als Herrschafts- und Überlieferungszentren', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 25 (1991), pp. 125-6, 135-144; Gerd Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien im Spiegel ihrer Memorialuberlieferung Studien zum Totengedenken der Billunger und Ottonen* (Munich, 1984), pp. 149-154, 188-9.
[14] Althoff, 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg', pp. 127-131, 135-9.

Modern historians have not, on the whole, questioned the narrative of Quedlinburg's origins provided in the convent's Annals. The image of Queen Mathilda as the founder of the convent and the figure who effectively ran the community until her death is reflected in a number of different sources, such as her two *vitae* and Thietmar's *Chronicon*. In much the same way as Hrotsvitha's *Primordia* has been relied on for Gandersheim's early history, the origin story for Quedlinburg provided in the Annals is generally considered to be the most accurate version. However, other sources, particularly those from the first thirty years of Quedlinburg's history, point in a different direction, as the previous chapter outlined. The narrative that Queen Mathilda was the founder and leader of Quedlinburg poses a number of inconsistencies with these earlier sources. But how can we then reconcile the later sources, like the Quedlinburg Annals, that so clearly cast Mathilda as the founder of the monastery? This chapter argues that the Annals sat at the end of a long accretion of memories about Mathilda's involvment at Quedlinburg, which developed as the tenth century progressed. The image of Mathilda as Quedlinburg's founder became an increasingly useful one for different authors to emphasise for their own political purposes, meaning that by the time the Quedlinburg Annals were created under Abbess Adelheid, the convent was able to claim her as their founder and leader without hesitation. As we saw with the *Primordia*, the community at Quedlinburg were reacting to their current political situation under Henry II by reshaping the memory of their relationship with the Ottonian dynasty.

QUEEN MATHILDA IN THE QUEDLINBURG ANNALS

The origin story of Quedlinburg in the Annals is straightforward. The Annalist recorded that after the death of Henry I, Queen Mathilda 'began with holy devotion to construct the monastery on the mountain of Quedlinburg, as they had themselves earlier resolved. This *regnum* was wished for by all the *gens* and it was supported with all strength.' [15] The Annalist then further explained Mathilda's motivations, noting that the queen had heard that some women in the region, 'not base people, but those at the heights of good birth, novices rightly serving in canonical religion,' had been falling into difficulties, and so she brought them together at Quedlinburg. Her support did not end there, as 'all the way to the end of her fleeting

[15] Giese argues that *regnum* should be translated as 'beacon'. Giese, *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 460, n. 774.

life, she did not cease to nourish them in the manner of a mother by supplying both spiritual and earthly privileges.'[16] Later on in the Annals, the image of Mathilda and Henry as the founders of Quedlinburg was evoked again, when their granddaughter, Abbess Mathilda, rebuilt the convent's church. The Annalist noted that the church had first been built by 'her grandfather and grandmother, namely Henry and Mathilda', whose tombs it contained, confirming the royal couple's association with the origins of the monastery.[17] While the idea of founding Quedlinburg was attributed to both Henry and Mathilda, it was Mathilda in particular who was credited with the establishment of the monastery. In the entry that Martina Giese has reconstructed for 968, part of the now lost section of the Annals, the Annalist emphasised the multiple monasteries founded by Mathilda, the *monasterium constructrix,* which she nourished as a mother. Before mentioning the other houses she established at Nordhausen, Enger, Pöhlde and Sts Jacob and Wichbert in Quedlinburg, Mathilda was especially praised as the founder of the monastery of Sts Dionysius and Servatius on the burg in Quedlinburg.[18]

Thus, according to the Annalist, it was the pair of Henry and Mathilda who came up with the idea to found Quedlinburg and built the church on the site, but it was the widowed queen who actually set up the community of canonesses after Henry died in 936. This image is seen in other texts as well. The two *Lives* of Mathilda, the *Vita Mathildis Antiquior* and the *Vita Mathildis Posterior* both recount that Henry and Mathilda decided together to found Quedlinburg before Henry's death.[19] Thietmar's *Chronicon* recorded that while Henry had built Quedlinburg 'from the ground up', it was after the king had died that Mathilda

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[16] 'Mechthild, inclita regina, obeunte coniuge suo, praefato scilicet rege Heinrico, coenobium in monte Quedelingesi, ut ipse prius decreverat, sancta devotione construere coepit. Hoc regnum gentibus esse voluit, hoc totis viribus fovet. Ibi, quia bene nata raro ac difficilime degenerare noverat, non vilis personae, sed summae ingenuitatis tirunculas canonicae religioni rite deservituras collegit easque usque ad extrema vitae istius caducae materno more spiritalium nec non carnalium copiis commodorum enutrire non destitit.' *AQ* 937 in Martina Giese (ed.), *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 72 (Hanover, 2004), pp. 459-460.

[17] 'Quam cum ab avo aviaque, regibus scilicet Heinrico et Machtihlde, constructam arctiorem,' *AQ*, 997, 999, pp. 494, 501. Quote from 997, p. 494.

[18] Giese, *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, pp. 323-4. The entry is reconstructed from the Magdeburg Annals and the *Annalista Saxo*. The dedication to Dionysius was a further way to emphasise the involvement of Henry and Mathilda, as, according to Widukind, it was Henry who had gained the relics of Dionysius from Charles the Simple by 923. Widukind of Corvey, *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 1.33 in Paul Hirsch and Hans-Eberhard Lohmann (eds), MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 60 (Hanover, 1935), p. 46. See also Geoffrey Koziol, 'Charles the Simple, Robert of Neustria and the *vexilla* of Saint-Denis', *Early Medieval Europe* 14 (2006), p. 386.

[19] *VMA* 4, pp. 119-122; *VMP* 7, p. 158.

'established a convent of *sanctimoniales* on the thirtieth day, in the burg mentioned above', that is, Quedlinburg.[20] That Henry had given Mathilda the usufruct of Quedlinburg alongside several other properties as a provision for her widowhood in a diploma from 929 further strengthened the connection of the royal couple to the site.[21] On this basis, Mathilda's role in the establishment and early years of Quedlinburg's history has been commonly emphasised by historians.[22] The widowed queen is seen as the leader of a small monastic empire after Henry's death, centred on her female foundation at Quedlinburg, which housed her husband's tomb. Her position within the community of canonesses at Quedlinburg has been the subject of much speculation. Most commonly, Mathilda is seen as a kind of quasi-abbess, leading the community in commemoration of Henry and the Ottonian dynasty until her eponymous granddaughter was old enough to be consecrated as abbess in 966.[23] If we rely on this evidence alone, Mathilda's role as founder of Quedlinburg appears unquestionable.

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[20] Thietmar, *Chronicon* 1.18, 1.21, pp. 24-9; trans. in Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, pp. 80, 82-3. Burials usually took place 30 days after death, so Thietmar appears to be linking Henry I's burial with the foundation of the convent on the same day. Wolfgang Wagner, 'Das Gebetsgedenken der Liudolfinger im Spiegel der Königs- und Kaiserurkunden von Heinrich I. bis zu Otto III.', *Archiv für Diplomatik: Schriftsgeschichte, Siegel, und Wappenkunde* 40 (1994), p. 46.

[21] DHI 20.

[22] These include Althoff, *Adels- Und Königsfamilien*, pp. 167, 171; John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 143; Karen Blough, 'The Abbatial Effigies at Quedlinburg: A Convent's Identity Reconfigured', *Gesta* 47:2 (2008), p. 148; Patrick Corbet, *Les Saints Ottoniens: Sainteté dynastique, sainteté royale et sainteté feminine autour de l'an Mil* (Sigmaringen, 1986), pp. 32-3; Giese, *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, pp. 41, 87 (Giese further argues that Quedlinburg's claim to Ottonian power came from its foundation by Queen Mathilda); Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke, 'From Famous Empresses to Unspectacular Queens: The Romano-German Empire to Margaret of Brabant, Countess of Luxemburg and Queen of the Romans (d. 1311)' in Anne Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference Held at King's College London, April 1995* (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 82; Karl Leyser, 'The Ottonians and Wessex' in Timothy Reuter (ed.), *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries* (London, 1994), p. 87; Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an early medieval society: Ottonian Saxony* (London, 1979), p. 64; Michel Parisse, 'Les Monastères de Femmes En Saxe X^{e}-XII^{e} Siècles', *Revue Mabillon* 2:63 (1991), p. 12; Helene Scheck, 'Queen Mathilda of Saxony and the Founding of Quedlinburg: Women, Memory, and Power', *Historical Reflections* 35:3 (2009), pp. 21-36; Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Female Piety and the Building and Decorating of Churches, ca. 500-1150' in Therese Martin (ed.), *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture*, Vol. 1 (Leiden, 2012), pp. 266-7; Käthe Sonnleitner, 'Die Gründungslegende von Gandersheim', *Annali dell'Istituto Storico Italo-Germano in Trento* 26 (2000), p. 427.

[23] Althoff argues that it was led by Mathilda until her death in 968 in *Adels- Und Königsfamilien,* p. 188 and 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg', p. 124; Corbet describes her as a 'régente' of Quedlinburg in *Les saints ottoniens*, pp. 32-3. See also Bernhardt, *Itinerant*, p. 143; Joachim Ehlers, 'Heinrich I. in Quedlinburg' in Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert (eds), *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im Ottonischen Sachsen* (Sigmaringen, 1998), pp. 244, 252.

However, we run into problems with this narrative when we turn back to earlier sources. For example, if Mathilda was the undisputed founder and driving force behind Quedlinburg, then why does she made no appearance in Otto I's first diploma for the community, which was issued just after his coronation in 936? The answer offered to this question has been that the relationship between Mathilda on the one hand, and Otto and his wife Edith on the other, was particularly strained in the early years of his reign, based on the account given in the two *Lives* of Mathilda. According to Karl Leyser, the newly widowed Mathilda, feeling threatened by the rise of Edith, deliberately stayed away from their coronations in Aachen in 936 and founded Quedlinburg instead. In retaliation for this slight, Otto not only deprived his mother of her dowry lands, but excluded her from his first charter for Quedlinburg, even though, Leyser added 'she had the endowment and welfare of Quedlinburg at heart more than anyone else'.[24] It was only after Edith's death in January 946 that mother and son were reconciled, Leyser argued, as we see Mathilda appearing as a spiritual beneficiary in a diploma Otto granted to Quedlinburg on behalf of Edith's soul three days after her death.[25] Thus, the lack of reference to Mathilda's role as founder and leader of Quedlinburg in the early diplomatic evidence for the community is seen as the result of intrafamilial conflict. Mathilda's involvement at Quedlinburg was hidden by her resentful son deliberately not mentioning her as a founder in his early diplomas for the community. According to this view, it was only later that the memory of Mathilda as founder was able to break through the narrative imposed on Quedlinburg by Otto I.

However, Helene Scheck has gone even further, to blame the women of Quedlinburg as willing participants in writing the memory of Mathilda as their founder out of their history. Scheck considers the two *Lives* of Mathilda to be products of Quedlinburg, standing against the broader consensus of scholars who argue that they were written at Nordhausen. As such, she thinks that the lack of attention given to Mathilda's role in the intellectual life at Quedlinburg in the *Lives* means that not only were the canonesses complicit in eliding their own intellectual abilities, but they also 'do violence… to the image of Mathilda' by obliterating any part of her image that was not based on commemoration.[26] In her view, the canonesses of Quedlinburg joined

[24] Leyser, 'Ottonians and Wessex', pp. 86-8, quote pp. 87-8; Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens GA, 1983), p. 104. Ehlers echoes this narrative in 'Heinrich I.', p. 256.
[25] DOI 75; Leyser, 'Ottonians and Wessex', p. 88.
[26] Scheck, 'Queen Mathilda', pp. 23-32, quote p. 32.

together with the men outside their convent to minimise the active involvement of Mathilda in founding the convent, thus restricting her to the commemorative role deemed appropriate for an Ottonian queen, and effectively acting as enforcers of a male system of power that wished to erase the memory of women's active roles in the political and intellectual spheres.

Thus, we see the current view of Quedlinburg's foundation and Mathilda's involvement in the early history of the convent. The narrative provided by the Quedlinburg Annals is taken as an accurate account, with the lack of reference to Mathilda as a founder in Otto I's first diploma for the convent explained through the fraught relationship of the widowed queen with her son in the aftermath of Henry I's death. Yet, despite the explanation offered for DOI 1, the other early sources for Quedlinburg's history still pose problems for the idea that Queen Mathilda was the founder and effective leader of Quedlinburg from 936 to her death in 968. Indeed, when we look closely at all of the diplomatic evidence for Quedlinburg from this period, and the *Res Gestae Saxonicae* of Widukind, the image of Mathilda as the unambiguous founder of the convent is thrown into question. If we examine each of these sources in detail, we can see where these inconsistencies lie.

QUEEN MATHILDA AND QUEDLINBURG IN THE EARLY SOURCES

The earliest sources that we have for Quedlinburg, namely, the diplomas issued for the convent, mention Mathilda several times. Out of Otto I's nine diplomas for Quedlinburg, Mathilda appears in five documents, acting as an intercessor on behalf of the convent, being included in the prayer clauses, and granting her own land to the community.[27] As noted above, Mathilda is not mentioned by name in Otto's first diploma for the convent. Whereas Henry I was referred to in DOI 1 as 'our lord father of holy memory, Henry, the most serene king', Otto did not record Mathilda being involved with Quedlinburg's establishment even though he noted that the convent was for the benefit of his own, his parents' and his successors' souls.[28] He made no reference to either Henry or Mathilda being founders of the community in any way. The absence of Mathilda from DOI 1 was noted by Theodor Sickel, who suggested that this

[27] DD OI 18, 75, 172, 186, 228. It is worth noting that DOI 228 and DOII 10 are paired diplomas, issued by the two Ottonian rulers on the same day, and thus are likely evidence of Otto I's interest in affirming his, his son's and his mother's relationship with Quedlinburg soon after Otto II was elevated to the position of king.

[28] 'domino et genitori nostro beatae memoriae Heinrico serenissimo regi,' DOI 1.

document was part of a pair, accompanying one issued by Mathilda herself for the convent which has since been lost. Sickel used the reference of Thietmar to Mathilda endowing Quedlinburg from her own lands to provide for their food and clothing, which was 'conceded and confirmed by her in writing', to argue that Thietmar must have had access to the queen's missing charter.[29]

While Sickel's argument does provide a possible explanation for both Mathilda's absence from DOI 1 and Thietmar's mention of her written confirmation of her grants to Quedlinburg, based on the idea of Otto and Mathilda falling out in the early years of his reign, it is worth noting that Mathilda is not mentioned as a founder of Quedlinburg in any of the subsequent diplomas for the convent, from Otto I or any of his successors, even after the supposed reconciliation of the king and his mother after Edith's death in 946. Instead, Mathilda appears only as the mother or grandmother of the king interceding on behalf of Quedlinburg, a role which she also occupied in diplomas for several other monasteries. We can contrast this image of Mathilda in Quedlinburg's diplomas with the foundation narratives included in diplomas which were being issued by Otto I at the same time for Gandersheim. DOI 186, where Mathilda petitioned Otto to give Quedlinburg the cave of St Liutbirga and the church dedicated there to St Michael, was granted on December 5, 956. In this text, Mathilda is only referred to as 'our most beloved mother, Queen Mathilda' in her role as intercessor for the convent.[30] On April 21, 956, just eight months earlier, Otto had issued DOI 180 for Gandersheim, which provided the full narrative account of its foundation. In it, Gandersheim was said to have been 'built by our ancestor, Duke Liudolf of Saxony with his venerable wife Oda', who was later referred to as the *fundatrix* of the convent.[31] Clearly there was a very recent precedent for recording the foundation narrative of a convent founded by a husband and wife pair from the Ottonian/Liudolfing family, with an active role attributed to the woman. Yet, there is nothing in any of the charters for Quedlinburg which refers to Mathilda or Henry as founders.

If there was tension in the relationship between Otto and Mathilda in the first years of his reign, and we use this to explain the absence of Mathilda from DOI 1, then her presence in the second

[29] 'concessit et scriptis confirmavit', Thietmar, *Chronicon* 1.21, pp. 28-9; trans. in Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, pp. 82-3; Theodor Sickel (ed.), *Die Urkunden Konrad I., Heinrich I. und Otto I.,* MGH Diplomatum regum et imperatorum Germaniae, vol. 1 (Hanover, 1879-1884), p. 89.
[30] 'dilectissime matris nostre Mahthilde regine', DOI 186.
[31] 'quomodo Liutolfus proavus noster dux Saxonum quoddam monasterium in loco Ganderesheim noncupato construxit cum venerabili eius coniuge Ota', DOI 180.

diploma Otto issued for Quedlinburg in 937 is puzzling.[32] In this document, which bears a striking resemblance to the charter that Thietmar described, the widowed queen petitioned Otto to provide a grant of clothing for the convent and she herself gave the monastery one of her own properties. The language of the diploma does not suggest any coolness of feeling between Mathilda and Otto, nor any sense of rivalry over the control of Quedlinburg. Rather, Mathilda is called 'our venerable and beloved lady mother, Mathilda.'[33] There may well have been some difficulties in the transition from Henry's reign to Otto's reign, with repercussions on the relationship between Otto and Mathilda. However, it seems that the new king still wanted to record his mother's association with Quedlinburg, the burial place of his father's body, as a donor and patron, just before he founded St Maurice at Magdeburg. If we take the absence of Mathilda from DOI 1 as part of a strategy on Otto's part of covering over her role at Quedlinburg in the early years of his reign, then her positive appearance in DOI 18 needs further explanation.

One could, of course, argue that it is optimistic to expect the diplomatic texts for Quedlinburg to yield a comprehensive picture of Queen Mathilda's involvement in the foundation of the convent, given the nature of their genre. Fortunately, we have a narrative historiographical text written soon after Mathilda's death in 968, which we can use for a contemporary view of her involvement in Quedlinburg's foundation: the *Res Gestae Saxonicae* of Widukind of Corvey. Widukind helpfully provides us with a mini-*vita* of Mathilda at the end of his history. His extremely flattering account of her life emphasised the queen's religious devotions, her care of the sick, her generosity to the poor and her hospitality to travellers. He also took care to emphasise Mathilda's royal status, with special mention given to her education. As Widukind put it, 'if I wished to list all of her virtues, I would run out of time. Even if I had the eloquence of Homer or Maro, this would not be enough.'[34] Clearly Widukind was aiming to provide a portrait of Mathilda as a pious, well-educated, royal widow whose virtues reflected positively on her family. This flattering portrayal is not surprising, given that Widukind dedicated his

[32] Matthias Becher, 'Loyalität oder Opposition? Die Sachsen und die Thronfolge im Ostfrankenreich (929-939)' in Caspar Ehlers, Jörg Jarnut, Matthias Wemhoff (eds), *Zentren herrschaflicher Repräsentation im Hochmittelalter. Geschichte, Architektur und Zeremoniell* (Göttigen, 2007), pp. 84-6.
[33] 'venerandae ac dilectae domnae matrisque nostrae Mahthildae', DOI 18.
[34] 'Ergo si omnes virtutes eius velim narrare, hora deficeret; facundia Homeri vel Maronis michi si adesset, non sufficeret.' Widukind, *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 3.74, p. 151. Maro refers to Virgil. See Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach, *Widukind of Corvey: The Deeds of the Saxons* (Washington D.C., 2014), p. 150, n. 246.

work to Mathilda's granddaughter, the young Abbess Mathilda of Quedlinburg, to provide her with a history of the deeds of her family.[35]

Therefore, it is significant that Widukind made absolutely no mention of Queen Mathilda being linked in any way to Quedlinburg's origins. If Mathilda had founded Quedlinburg, there is no reason why Widukind should try to obscure this in his history. He provided a very positive image of Mathilda, the pious widow of Henry, which was specifically directed to her granddaughter, the current abbess of Quedlinburg. What could better demonstrate her piety and her devotion to God than to recount how she had founded the convent which her granddaughter now led?[36] We might expect this act to take pride of place in an account of her life explicitly written for Mathilda of Quedlinburg. If Queen Mathilda really was the founder and leader of the convent, and had chosen her granddaughter, the dedicatee of the *Res Gestae Saxonicae*, to succeed her in 966, then Widukind's silence on this is conspicuous.[37]

REWRITING QUEDLINBURG'S ORIGINS

The *Vita Mathildis Antiquior*

Instead, the first source which mentions Mathilda's involvement in the origins of Quedlinburg came almost 40 years after the foundation of the community. The *Vita Mathildis Antiquior* (*VMA*), written shortly after the death of Otto I in 973, was dedicated to Queen Mathilda's grandson Otto II. Although anonymous, some scholars have suggested that it was composed at Nordhausen, the convent founded by the queen around 961, due to the emphasis the text places

[35] On Widukind's dedications to Mathilda, see Karl F. Morrison, 'Widukind's Mirror for a Princess - An Exercise in Self-Knowledge' in Karl Borchardt and Enno Bünz (eds), *Forschungen zur Reichs-, Papst- und Landsgeschichte. Peter Herde zum 65 Geburtstag* (Stuttgart, 1998), pp. 49-70; Steven Robbie, 'Can silence speak volumes? Widukind's *Res Gestae Saxonicae* and the coronation of Otto I reconsidered', *Early Medieval Europe* 20:3 (2012), p. 337.

[36] Sverre Bagge has even argued that the dedication of the *Res Gestae Saxonicae* to Mathilda of Quedlinburg was a key motivation behind giving 'such a detailed portrait of a woman who is only mentioned twice in the narrative.' Sverre Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography C. 950-1150* (Leiden, 2002), p. 62.

[37] It is also worth noting that the sarcophagus lid of Queen Mathilda makes no reference to her as a founder of the community, simply 'II idus mar obiit regina Mahthild que et hic requiescit cui anima eterna optinebeat requie.' This stands in stark contrast to the more elaborate description on the sarcophagus of Abbess Mathilda. Blough, 'Abbatial Effigies', p. 152, n. 39; Edmund E. Stengel, 'Die Grabschrift der ersten Äbtissin von Quedlinburg', *Deutsches Archiv für Geschichte des Mittelalters* 3 (1939), pp. 361-370.

on Mathilda's care and concern for the monastery in the text, its representation of the community as her favourite foundation, and the close relationship between the queen and Nordhausen's abbess, Richburg.[38]

This view has been challenged by Bernd Schütte and Helene Scheck, for slightly different reasons. Both argue instead that the *VMA* and its later recension, the *Vita Mathildis Posterior* (*VMP*) were written at Quedlinburg. Schütte argues that the emphasis on Quedlinburg in the *Lives*, plus the similarities to Widukind's *Res Gestae Saxonicae*, which had been dedicated to Mathilda of Quedlinburg suggest that the two *Lives* were composed at Quedlinburg itself.[39] Scheck instead asserts that the texts' representation of Quedlinburg as 'the central nexus of Mathilda's widowhood', plus its impressive library, prove that the *VMA* and *VMP* were from the convent.[40] Sean Gilsdorf has already rebutted the claims of Schütte by noting that not only does he not explain why a text from Quedlinburg would feature another smaller convent in such a prominent role, but also it is equally likely that Widukind was using the *Life* of Mathilda as a source instead, or that both authors were drawing on broader traditions about the queen's life in Ottonian society.[41]

Both Schütte and Scheck construct their argument on the concept that Quedlinburg dominates the narrative of Queen Mathilda's *Lives*. Yet, Mathilda is only specifically mentioned as being present at Quedlinburg four times in total in the *VMA* and *VMP*. The *VMA* shows Mathilda at Quedlinburg for her two miracles, when she threw a loaf of bread from the convent down into the lap of a peasant in the town and when she convinced a deer to cough up a vial of oil, and for her death. The *VMP* added the scene of Mathilda hearing the news of the death of her son, Henry the Younger. [42] These four specified visits are outweighed by the number of references to her at other locations. Both the *VMA* and the *VMP* show Mathilda at Enger; Grone; Pöhlde;

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[38] Gerd Althoff argues that Nordhausen was the origin point of the *VMA* and *VMP* in 'Causa scribendi und Darstellungsabsicht: Die Lebensbescreibungen der Königin Mathilde und andere Beispiele' in Michael Borgolte and Herrad Spilling (eds), *Litterae Medii Aevi. Festschrifte für Johanne Autenrieth zu ihrem 65. Geburtstag* (Sigmaringen, 1988), pp. 64-6.
[39] Bernd Schütte, *Untersuchungen zu dem Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde* (Hanover, 1994), pp. 10-18.
[40] Scheck, 'Queen Mathilda', p. 29.
[41] Sean Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity: The* Lives *of Mathilda and the* Epitaph *of Adelheid* (Washington D.C., 2004), pp. 17-9.
[42] Namely, on the death of Henry the Younger in *VMP* 16, pp. 175-9; for her miracles of the loaf and the deer in *VMA* 10, pp. 130-1 and *VMP* 18, pp. 181-2; and for her death in *VMA* 12 onwards, pp. 134 ff. and *VMP* 23 onwards, pp. 193 ff.

Frohse; Cologne; and on three separate occasions at Nordhausen.[43] As such, while those sections which refer to Mathilda's religious activities have often been taken to mean that they were occuring at Quedlinburg, the seemingly itinerant nature of her widowhood in her *Lives* means that we cannot assume that any mention of an unnamed church indicates the church of St Servatius. Accordingly, the idea that Quedlinburg was Mathilda's 'nexus' in the *Lives*, providing evidence for their composition there rather than at Nordhausen, does not accurately reflect the image that the texts themselves are presenting.[44] Instead it is more probable that the texts were composed at Nordhausen.

So, taking the *VMA* to be a product of Nordhausen, written just after the death of Otto I, it is intriguing to see in this hagiography a full account of the foundation of Quedlinburg. The author praised the royal couple for their generous support of the church, noting that they 'heeded divine counsel and devoted themselves to the construction of monasteries.'[45] After consulting with other nobles, the king and queen decided to move the canonesses of Wendhausen to Quedlinburg in order to establish a new monastery there, summoning the abbess of Wendhausen to court to gain her consent. Sadly, Henry died before the plan came to fruition, and the abbess changed her mind when Mathilda tried to follow through with her husband's plans. With the help of Otto, Mathilda finally established the monastery.[46] It was only after the establishment of Quedlinburg, according to the *VMA*, that Otto fell out with his mother and she was forced to retreat to the male monastery she had founded on her own family's lands at Enger.[47]

The representation of the foundation of Quedlinburg in the *VMA* by the pious King Henry and Queen Mathilda is a significant step forward in the development of the convent's origin story. There are elements here which draw on themes mentioned in the earlier documentary evidence: Wendhausen is one of the properties mentioned in DOI 1 which was given over to Quedlinburg by Otto I, and the involvment of Otto in the foundation of the monastery is acknowledged, if

[43] Enger: *VMA* 5, pp. 123-4/*VMP* 11, p. 169; Grone: *VMA* 6, p. 124/*VMP* 12-14, pp. 170-2; Pöhlde: *VMP* 16, pp. 175-9; Frohse: *VMP* 20, pp. 183-6; Cologne: *VMA* 11, p. 133/*VMP* 21-2, pp. 187-193; Nordhausen: *VMA* 11-12, pp. 132-6; *VMP* 21-24, pp. 186-195.
[44] Scheck, 'Queen Mathilda', p. 29.
[45] 'Hec studiose peragentes, ipsis quoque cenobia construentibus divino animum indulgebant monitu.' *VMA* 4, p. 120; trans. Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, pp. 76-7.
[46] *VMA* 4, pp. 121-2.
[47] *VMA* 5, pp. 123-4.

somewhat overshadowed by his parents' actions.[48] The *VMA*, however, foregrounds the pair of Henry and Mathilda as the founders of the convent. Here, then, we see a new step in the development in Quedlinburg's origin story. Up until this point, there had been no reference to Henry or Mathilda as being involved in the establishment of the *convent* of Quedlinburg. Henry did demonstrate an interest in the site of Quedlinburg, as the previous chapter established, using the burg as a defence post and repeatedly visiting the site throughout his reign to issue several diplomas.[49] Henry also chose Quedlinburg as one of several properties whose usufruct was given over to Mathilda in 929.[50] However, turning the clear and documented association of Henry and his wife with the site of Quedlinburg into a narrative of the royal couple as the founders of the convent was a distinctive shift in the memory of Quedlinburg's origins.

How, then, we might ask, could the *VMA* claim that Henry and Mathilda were Quedlinburg's founders? It would be unlikely that the author of the *VMA* could make such a claim without some kind of broader association between the royal couple and the monastery. Instead, the *VMA* was drawing on a wider evolution of the memory of Quedlinburg's relationship with the Ottonian family. In the 35 years since the foundation of the convent, the links between Henry, Mathilda and Quedlinburg had steadily strengthened. As we saw earlier, the convent of Quedlinburg had gained its initial symbolic purpose as a dynastic centre for Otto I. The burial of Henry in the basilica of St Peter, which then became the church for the new convent founded by his son, solidified the legitimacy of Otto's claim to be Henry's successor. Otto returned several times to Quedlinburg to commemorate the anniversary of his father's death, invoking his memory at his tomb. As such, the memory of Henry was intrisically bound to the purpose of the monastery during Otto's reign. Otto had carefully cultivated his father's memory at Quedlinburg and it appears that this association diffused out into wider society.

It was not, however, just Henry's memory which was increasingly tied to the convent of Quedlinburg. Mathilda's association with the monastery had undeniably deepened during her widowhood. Her husband was, after all, buried in the monastery's church. Liudprand of Cremona remarked on Mathilda's devotions at Henry's tomb in the late 950s, comparing her favourably with her Italian contemporaries. Liudprand further noted that Quedlinburg had been

[48] DOI 1.
[49] Henry issued DD HI 3, 5-7, 20, 28 at Quedlinburg on April 22, 922; April 7, 923; April 8, 923; September 16, 929; April 14, 931.
[50] DHI 20.

established on Henry's land, recognising his link to the site, though he did not name either Henry or Mathilda as the founders of the monastery.[51] Aside from the four scenes given in Mathilda's *Lives*, we do see her present at Quedlinburg in other sources on specific occasions: for example, the consecration of Mathilda as abbess of Quedlinburg in 966 was marked by a *Familientag* at the monastery which included Queen Mathilda.[52] It is also possible that during Otto I's campaign to Italy in the 960s, when the only Ottonians north of the Alps were Queen Mathilda and Abbess Mathilda, that the queen resided for part of the time with her granddaughter at Quedlinburg.[53] While none of this indicates the permanent presence of Queen Mathilda at Quedlinburg during her widowhood, it is clear that Mathilda had ties to the site and to the convent at Quedlinburg which strengthened over time. Indeed, in 968, Mathilda's association with Quedlinburg was made permanent, when she was buried in the crypt next to her husband. By the time that the *VMA* was written, the memories of Henry and Mathilda had been firmly embedded in Quedlinburg's history. As such, seeing them as having some kind of role in the establishment of the monastery would not have been an unreasonable conclusion to draw in the 970s.

But the question still remains of why the author of the *VMA* emphasised the involvement of Henry and Mathilda in Quedlinburg's foundation to such an extent. We might expect some kind of reference to the narrative, if there is a steadily growing memory of the couple's involvement in Quedlinburg's establishment, but the *VMA* goes far beyond that. Instead, we see, for the first time, a full and detailed account of how and why Henry and Mathilda decided to establish Quedlinburg. What drove the author to write such a comprehensive version of this story? The location of the author may give us a hint. If we see the *vita* of Mathilda as either

[51] Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis* 4.15 in P. Chiesa (ed.), *Liudprand Cremonensis Opera Omnia*, Corpus Christanorum Continuatio Medievalis 156 (Turnhout, 1998), p. 105; trans. in Paolo Squatriti (ed.), *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona* (Washington D.C., 2007), p. 151; Phillipe Buc, 'Italian Hussies and German Matrons: Liutprand of Cremona on Dynastic Legitimacy', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 29 (1995), pp. 207-225. See also Simon MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, forthcoming.

[52] The *Annalista Saxo* specifically records that before Otto went on campaign to Italy, his only daughter, Mathilda, was elected as abbess in the presence of her father Otto, her mother, Adelheid, her grandmother, Mathilda and her brother, Otto, along with all the leading magnates, archbishops and bishops of the kingdom. Giese, *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, pp. 319-320.

[53] It is also worth noting that while *VMA* 7, p. 126 refers to the young Mathilda being given over by Otto I to be raised at Quedlinburg and that this fulfilled Queen Mathilda's wishes, there is no implication in the text that Mathilda was being raised by her grandmother at the convent. We can contrast this to the language in DOII 201, where Otto II specified that he had given Sophia into the care of Abbess Gerberga to be raised and educated.

written by, or commissioned for, the community of Nordhausen, then it needed to tackle a major problem for the community. Nordhausen, the *VMA* stressed, was Queen Mathilda's favourite monastery. It was her own special project and she had built it 'from the ground up'.[54] She had chosen the abbess herself and the *Life* shows Mathilda repeatedly visiting the convent, acting as a maternal figure for the canonesses. Yet, despite Nordhausen being the favourite convent of the queen, it lacked the most demonstrable sign of her favour: her body. Instead, Mathilda lay in the church of Quedlinburg, next to her husband. If the abbess and community of Nordhausen were using the *VMA* as a way to emphasise the relationship of the convent to Mathilda and the rest of the Ottonian family, they needed to explain why they did not house the body of their founder.

Bearing in mind this motivation, we can begin to see why the *VMA* made such a point to stress that Henry and Mathilda were the founders of Quedlinburg. If Mathilda had already made a commitment to her dying husband that she would take on the care of establishing Quedlinburg after his death, according to his wishes, then that provided a reason for why she was not buried in Nordhausen. Mathilda, as the exemplar of queenly piety, was duty-bound to be buried next to her husband. Indeed, the *VMA* explicitly points this out. In a scene where the queen is talking to Abbess Ricburg of Nordhausen, she states that 'I would prefer to be buried here, so that my children might take better care of you; I realise, however, that this will never be allowed, for our lord Henry is laid to rest in Quedlinburg.'[55] There may, of course, be an element of truth in this; the layout of the churches of Quedlinburg and of St Maurice at Magdeburg indicate the plan for both to house two royal tombs at their centre, with Henry and Mathilda at Quedlinburg and Otto and Edith at Magdeburg.[56] Even if Mathilda had wished to be buried in one of the monasteries that she had founded herself, her wishes may well have been overruled by her son. Nevertheless, it made sense for the author of the *VMA* to emphasise Henry and Mathilda as Quedlinburg's founders. In doing so, they could strengthen the case for why Mathilda could not have been buried at Nordhausen, without undermining the monastery's connection to the queen. Stressing Henry's desire to establish Quedlinburg also stressed the necessity for Mathilda to carry out his wishes and be buried next to him in their jointly founded convent.

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[54] *VMA* 11, p. 133.

[55] 'vellem hoc loco sepeliri, ut filii mei erga vos maior esset procuratio; sed scio hoc nullo modo consentiri, nam dominus noster Quidilingaburg requiscit Heinricus.' *VMA* 12, p. 135; trans. Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, p. 84.

[56] Ernst Schubert, 'Imperiale Spolien im Magdeburger Dom' in Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert (eds), *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im Ottonischen Sachsen* (Sigmaringen, 1998), pp. 11-3.

Fortunately for the author of the *VMA*, a series of recent events had increased the malleability of the late queen's memory, enabling her to be used to assist Nordhausen's case for royal patronage. Firstly, in 972, Otto II married Theophanu, a Byzantine princess, who was gifted a massive set of properties by Otto I as her dower. Her spectacular dower charter not only provided her with a vast amount of land in Germany and Italy, but also cast Theophanu in the image provided by Queen Mathilda. As part of her dower, Theophanu received some specific convents: Nivelles, Herford and Nordhausen.[57] The various properties that had been associated with the queenly dower were being reshuffled following the death of Mathilda and the arrival of a new Ottonian queen on the scene. Secondly, Otto I returned to Saxony from Italy and celebrated Easter at Quedlinburg in the last major assembly of his reign. This assembly not only had all of the Ottonian family in attendance but also 'Dukes Mieszko and Boleslav, and legates of the Greeks, Beneventans, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Danes and Slavs…along with all the leading men of the kingdom.'[58] The celebration at Quedlinburg, which Reuter described as the 'zenith' of Otto's reign, also served as an opportunity to show off the new Byzantine addition to the family, further adding to the imperial credentials of the Ottonian dynasty.[59] Finally, Otto I died in May 973, and was succeeded by Otto II and Theophanu, as the new imperial rulers of the German Empire.

While only one of these events has a direct connection to Mathilda herself, all three contributed to the late queen becoming an increasingly important figure in Ottonian political discourse after 973. The arrival of a new queen in Saxony, who had inherited parts of the royal dower possessed by Mathilda, was a notable shift in the Ottonian political world. Theophanu's elevation to *coimperatrix augusta* soon after her marriage, alongside the death of Otto I in 973 created further reverberations. For those who were concerned about the possible actions of the new foreign empress, who was still essentially an unknown quantity in 973, the late Queen

[57] DOII 21; Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*, p. 102.
[58] Thietmar, *Chronicon* 2.31, pp. 76-9; trans. in Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, p. 115. Widukind also recorded the 'great multitude of diverse people gathered there' for Easter in the *Res Gestae Saxonicae* 3.75, p. 152. For the reconstructed entry of the Quedlinburg Annals on this, see Giese, *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, pp. 331-2.
[59] Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages 800-1056* (London, 1991), p. 176; John W. Bernhardt, 'Concepts and Practice of Empire in Ottonian Germany (950-1024)' in Björn Weiler and Simon MacLean (eds), *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany, 800-1500* (Turnhout, 2006), p. 150; Karl Leyser, '*Theophanu divina gratia imperatrix augusta*: western and eastern emperorship in the later tenth century' in Adelbert Davis (ed.), *The empress Theophano: Byzantium and the West at the turn of the first millennium* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 18.

Mathilda was a useful figure to shape into a model of Ottonian queenly behaviour.[60] Althoff has already suggested that the rise of Theophanu was a major influence on the representation of Mathilda in the *VMA*, seeing the stress laid on the queen's care and concern for Nordhausen as the result of anxiety about the position of the convent under the new empress.[61] In the context of the early years of Otto II's reign, Mathilda was a potent figure in political discourse around queens and their relationships with the convents that were closely tied to the Ottonian dynasty. Consequently, the increasingly pliable nature of Mathilda's reputation allowed the author of the *VMA* to reshape her as a model queenly patron for Nordhausen, but also to give a coherent form to the growing memory of Mathilda and Henry as the founders of Quedlinburg.

The *VMP*

Written just after the accession of Henry II to the throne in 1002, the *Vita Mathildis Posterior* presents the same narrative of Mathilda as the pious co-founder of Quedlinburg. This is unsurprising, given that the *VMP* was heavily based on the earlier *VMA*. The *VMP*, however, subtly adjusts some of the points made in the earlier *Life*. After repeating the same narrative of Henry and Mathilda deciding that the women of Wendhausen should be transferred to a new monastery at Quedlinburg, the author of the *VMP* slightly altered the events after Henry's death. Whereas it was Mathilda and Otto together who had worked to establish Quedlinburg in the *VMA*, in the *VMP* this is rephrased so that it was Mathilda alone who brought the reluctant abbess of Wendhausen around to her plan.[62] Moreover, according to the *VMP*, it was Henry himself who had decreed before his death that he should be buried in Quedlinburg, a detail

[60] For another, Anglo-Saxon, example of the anxiety of female monasteries around a queen's properties affecting their memory of the past, see Pauline Stafford, 'Queens, Nunneries and Reforming Churchmen: Gender, Religious Status and Reform in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England', *Past and Present* 163 (1999), pp. 3-35.

[61] Althoff, 'Causa scribendi', pp. 112-126; Gerd Althoff, 'Saxony and the Elbe Slavs in the Tenth Century' in Timothy Reuter (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Volume III c. 900 – c. 1024* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 289. See also Simon MacLean on the representations of Mathilda in the *VMA* as part of the discourses on Ottonian queens in the tenth century in his forthcoming *Ottonian Queenship*. He suggests that there was also concern about the possible withdrawal of Adelheid from her patronage role at Nordhausen too. Elisabeth van Houts thinks it is motivated by Otto taking away some property donated by Mathilda to Nordhausen, building on Althoff's theory. Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900-1200* (London, 1999), p. 49. David Warner also notes that both Quedlinburg and Nordhausen could see their relationship to the Ottonian rulers 'with a mixture of pride and anxiety'. David Warner, 'Ritual and Memory in the Ottonian Reich: The Ceremony of Adventus', *Speculum* 76:2 (2001), p. 269.

[62] 'Quod abbatissa primo rennuit, sed postmodum imperante eius filio Ottone consensit.' *VMP* 8, p. 161; 'At first the abbess refused, but later, during the reign of her son Otto, she consented'. Trans. in Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, p. 99.

which was not present in the *VMA*.[63] The need for Mathilda to be buried at Quedlinburg, despite her real desire to be buried at Nordhausen, was amplified as well. 'If we happen to die here,' she says to Abbess Ricburg in the text, 'your soul will be tormented even more, and scorn will be heaped upon you if the dead body is taken from you against your will.'[64] The new recension of the *Life* of Mathilda, likely also written at Nordhausen, was explaining to a new audience why the founder of Nordhausen was not buried in their monastery. Instead, she had not only asked, but indeed was obliged to be buried at Quedlinburg, due to Henry's burial there and their involvement in the foundation of the convent.

However, the origin story of Quedlinburg had evolved over the 30 years between the *VMA* and the *VMP*. The involvement of Otto in the establishment of Quedlinburg had now been written over completely by the actions of Henry and Mathilda. According to the *VMP*, it was Henry himself who had made the decision that the convent would be his burial site, and it was Mathilda alone who had carried out her husband's plans after his death. As I noted in the previous chapter, we cannot exclude the possibility that Henry I had designated the basilica of St Peter on the burg of Quedlinburg as his burial site. However, the convent itself was only founded by Otto after his coronation, as a way to lay claim to his father's grave and to restrict access to the site from the other descendants of Henry. None of the earlier sources on Henry's death and Quedlinburg's foundation mention that Henry had chosen the convent as his burial place. As such, although this addition by the *VMP* is a subtle update of the origin story in the *VMA*, it is one worth emphasising. In this new memory of Quedlinburg's foundation, written shortly after the accession of Henry II, we see Otto I's role in the foundation of Quedlinburg be completely erased and replaced by his parents for the first time.

The context in which the *VMP* was created helps to explain this development. As we saw in the previous chapter, Otto had established Quedlinburg to emphasise that his was the only line of descent imbued with the royal legitimacy that came from Henry I. However, after the abrupt end of Otto's line in 1001, and the accession of a king from the line of Henry the Younger, this

[63] 'Post hec rite paratis omnibus, que necessaria erant ad funus, maximo cum honore corpus in Quitilingoburc transportabant, ubi ipse requiscere decreverat ibique honorifice tradiderunt sepulture.' *VMP* 8, pp. 160-1; 'The body was conveyed with the utmost honor to Quedlinburg, where Henry had ordered that he be buried, and was carried in state to the tomb.' Trans. in Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, p. 99.

[64] 'Nunc autem, si in hoc loco eveniret obitus noster, gravius coangustabitur vester animus et inferetur vobis calumpnia despectionis, si mortuum corpus vobis auferetur invitis.' *VMP* 23, p. 195; trans. in Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, pp. 121-2.

was not a helpful concept to stress. As a result, the representations of Mathilda and Henry's relationships with their sons evolved to reflect the new political context. The *VMP* heavily emphasises the bond between Mathilda and Henry the Younger, clearly stating that 'she loved him more than her other children and desired that he should receive the kingdom after the illustrious King Henry's death'.[65] This sentiment would have been unthinkable for the author of the *VMA* to express in the 970s, particularly considering the rebellion of Henry the Quarreller against Otto II. The emphasis that the author of the *VMP* laid on Mathilda's support for Henry the Younger as her husband's successor, plus the discord between the two brothers in the early years of Otto's reign, makes the elision of Otto's role in Quedlinburg's foundation understandable. The story of Mathilda and Henry as the sole founders of Quedlinburg was a much more palatable narrative to evoke than the memory of Otto's aggressive attempt to deny Henry the Younger's access to royal authority.

In the 70 years that lay between the foundation of Quedlinburg and the composition of the Quedlinburg Annals, the story of the origins of the monastery had been steadily developing in response to the political developments across the tenth century. The association of King Henry and Queen Mathilda with the convent, reified by their burials in the monastery's church, slowly overwrote the memory of their son, Otto, as the central figure behind Quedlinburg's establishment. The idea that Henry and Mathilda, and then Mathilda alone after Henry's death, were responsible for the foundation of Quedlinburg was not one that was invented by the authors of the *Lives* of Mathilda, but was an understandable conclusion to draw in the face of the evidence presented after Mathilda's death in 968. Moreover, as Mathilda was becoming an increasingly useful figure to deploy in the political discourse of the empire after her death, the memories of her life seem to be particularly flexible. Mathilda and Henry had potency in the debates around the roles of later kings and queens, and the stories recorded in the *VMA* and *VMP* reflect the evolution of their reputations in Ottonian society more broadly. Given that there was a growing association between the two and the memory of Quedlinburg's foundation, it is eminently understandable that authors would take up these narratives and use them if it helped them make their desired political points.

[65] 'quasi esset unicus illius, confovens eum omnibus deliciis ceteris in amore praeposuit filiis atque desideravit ipsum regno potiri post obitum incliti regis Heinrici', *VMP* 6, p. 156; trans. Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, p. 96.

The Quedlinburg Annals

Here, then, we can see the basis for the version of Quedlinburg's origins given in the Quedlinburg Annals: the plan for the foundation conceived by both Henry and Mathilda, followed by Mathilda taking on the responsiblity for actually establishing the monastery. However, while the structure of this narrative roughly matches the shape of the account given in the Annals, the Annalist did not simply take on the story presented in Mathilda's *Lives* verbatim. Instead, we see the final iteration of Mathilda as founder of Quedlinburg. The Annals foregrounded Mathilda's role as the key figure in Quedlinburg's origin and early history. In comparison to the strong emphasis on Henry's participation in previous versions of the narrative, the Quedlinburg Annals lays a much greater weight on Mathilda as the active force behind the monastery's foundation. Henry is mentioned in the entry for the foundation of the community more as an additional figure to his wife, rather than the central role he played in the *VMA* or *VMP*. In addition, Mathilda's involvement with the community at Quedlinburg after its foundation was given greater weight in the Annals. Whereas the sources from Nordhausen presented Mathilda as founding the convent before moving on with the rest of the narrative, the Quedlinburg Annals described the ongoing role of the queen as a mother to the canonesses at Quedlinburg, making sure that they were provided with both spiritual and temporal resources so that the convent could flourish.[66] As the reconstructed entry for her death stated, Mathilda strove to provide care and support for the monasteries that she founded throughout her life.[67] In the Annals' account, it was Mathilda who was the main force behind Quedlinburg, from its foundation to her death in 968. Otto I does not appear at all in the origin story, and Henry I only merits a passing mention. As such, by 1008, the canonesses of Quedlinburg were able to claim that their monastery had been founded by Queen Mathilda.

THE CONTEXT OF THE QUEDLINBURG ANNALS

Thus far we have established how the origin story of Quedlinburg was presented in the Quedlinburg Annals, and the antecedents for this narrative, but we still need to examine why

[66] *AQ* 937, pp. 459-460.

[67] 'Et licet omnium status aecclesiarum, quas vel nunciis invisere vel per se ipsam poterat adire, totis viribus opibusque curaret sustentare, haec tamen quae praediximus monasteria quasi propriori quodam affectu sibi suoque nomini singulariter asscripta, fovere non destitit omnigenis commodis.' Giese, *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, pp. 324-5. Quote drawn from Magdeburg Annals, though the version in the *Annalista Saxo* is identical aside from the spelling of certain words.

it was that the Annalist chose to represent it in this particular way. As we have seen, the idea of Queen Mathilda as the main founder of the convent was not the only version of the origin story, although by the early eleventh century it was a key element in the dominant memory of Quedlinburg's foundation.[68] However, the decision to foreground Mathilda's role over Henry's one was an progression from the narrative that was transmitted in the *Lives* of Mathilda. Moreover, given that the Quedlinburg Annals allude in passing to a handful of charters for the foundation issued by the Ottonian emperors, the author most likely would have been aware of the charter evidence which narrated the early history of the foundation, including the first charter issued by Otto I in 936, which effectively marked his foundation of the convent. The decision to write this particular version of Quedlinburg's origin story in the Annals was a distinct choice which was heavily shaped by Quedlinburg's current political context in 1008.

In the decade that led up to 1008, a series of events had seriously affected the political position of Quedlinburg in the Ottonian Empire. Abbess Mathilda had unexpectedly died in 999, at the age of 44. She was succeeded by Adelheid, the sister of Otto III, in the same year, though her ordination was performed without the emperor's presence.[69] The new abbess only hosted her brother once, when Otto returned to Saxony in 1000 as part of his itinerary through the German regions of his empire. While it seemed as though Adelheid would be able to continue the trajectory of increasing social and political influence that her predecessor, Abbess Mathilda, had begun, the sudden death of Otto at the age of just 21 put Adelheid and Quedlinburg's position into jeopardy. As the emperor was unmarried and had no immediate male relatives to succeed him, the empire was suddenly enveloped in a succession conflict which had serious implications for Quedlinburg's future. The eventual accession of Henry II broke the line of descent from Otto I, and the repercussions of a different branch of the family gaining the royal and imperial title unsurprisingly led to a reshuffle of the patronage arrangements in the empire. In contrast to the Saxon heartlands that Otto I and his descendants had favoured, Henry II's power base lay in Bavaria, and he had strong connections with Lotharingia through his wife Cunigund.[70] Moreover, while Saxony remained an important focal point for expressions of

[68] Patrick Corbet observed that the Ottonian authors around the year 1000 essentially chose to rely on the portraits of royal women that had been created by an earlier generation in the 960s-970s. Patrick Corbet, '*Pro anima senioris sui*: La pastorale ottonienne du veuvage' in Michel Parisse (ed.), *Veuves et Veuvage Dans le Haut Moyen Age* (Courtry, 1993), pp. 233-253.
[69] *AQ* 999, pp. 506-7; Thietmar, *Chronicon* 4.43, pp. 180-1.
[70] On Cunigund's Lotharingian origins, see Markus Schütz, 'Kunigunde' in Amalie Fößel (ed.), *Die Kaiserinnen des Mittelalters* (Regensburg, 2011), pp. 78-80. Reuter notes that the Bavarian focus of

royal power, Henry II had a very different agenda from the three emperors who preceded him when it came to monastic patronage in the region. As such, Quedlinburg was in a position of considerable uncertainty when Henry II took the throne.

For the first time, Quedlinburg faced the prospect of a ruler who was not part of the direct line descending from Otto I. In response, Adelheid needed to recast her convent's relationship with the rulers of Saxony. Rather than relying primarily on the strong ties that linked the monastery to Otto I and his descendants, it was necessary to reframe Quedlinburg's connections with Henry II, essentially advertising the convent to a new royal audience. The ideal way to do this was to emphasise the familial connection that linked Henry II into the Ottonian family: namely Henry and Adelheid's mutual great-grandparents, King Henry and Queen Mathilda. Not only were these the figures through whom Henry was claiming royal descent, but Quedlinburg also had the good fortune to control access to their tombs. On the back of the new version of Mathilda's *Life* which stressed that the queen had favoured Henry the Younger and his line, emphasising the connections between the pair of Henry and Mathilda and Quedlinburg was a logical way for Adelheid to sell the convent's continued importance to the new king.

However, there was a potential problem for Adelheid and the Annalist in pursuing the narrative of Mathilda and Henry as co-founders of the community. While they could point to the growing traditions that supported this idea, if the Annals were to demonstrate that Mathilda had taken up the care and direction of the monastery, 'nourishing them in the manner of a mother by supplying both spiritual and earthly privileges,' the question of the diplomatic evidence needed to be addressed.[71] Not only were Mathilda and Henry not mentioned as the founders of the community in any of the diplomas for the convent, but Mathilda did not appear by name in the first diploma for the community which established its prayer duties and its relationship to the descendants of Otto I's family. Instead, Quedlinburg's foundation charter emphasised much more the monastery's connection with the branch of the family that came from Otto himself, specifying that the prayer of the community would be for Otto's *parentes* and *successores* – that is, his direct ancestors and his children rather than the broader Liudolfing family which encompassed Henry the Younger, Henry the Quarreller, and Henry II.

Henry II led to Saxon discontent with the king throughout his reign, *Germany in the Middle Ages*, p. 200.

[71] *AQ* 937, p. 460.

If the Annalist cast Mathilda as a founder, then how did she reconcile the problematic foundation charter with this narrative? A possible clue lies in the peculiar misdating of the foundation in the Annals. The Annalist strangely gives the wrong date for both the death of Henry I and the establishment of the convent, recording it in the entry for 937 rather than that for 936. Instead of seeing this mis-dating as a careless error on the part of the Annalist, we can see it revealing a subtle reorganisation of the history of Quedlinburg to better fit the narrative given of the convent's origins. By shifting the date of the foundation of the convent to 937, the year in which Mathilda first makes an appearance in a diploma for the convent, granting her own property to Quedlinburg, the problematic charter evidence form 936 could be neatly side-stepped. After all, by 1008 the community of Quedlinburg may well have genuinely believed that Mathilda and Henry were both involved in the foundation of their monastery. If that was the case, then the author of the Annals could have been trying to reconcile the problematic sources she faced to try to reflect what she thought was the most accurate version of Quedlinburg's origins.

This strategy may also resolve the question of Mathilda's missing charter which Thietmar mentioned. He noted that Mathilda provided for Quedlinburg an endowment 'out of her own property with whatever was necessary for sustenance and clothing. This was conceded and confirmed by her in writing.'[72] Thietmar's reference to her provisions for sustenance and clothing match nicely with the charter of 937, in which Mathilda interceded 'for the nourishment of the *sanctimoniales*' and asked Otto to grant the community a yearly allowance of clothing and to confirm her grant of property.[73] Given that Thietmar had a very close relationship with Quedlinburg and was in possession of a copy of the Annals as a source for his *Chronicon*, it seems that the Annalist's efforts to rewrite the foundation of the community, stressing Mathilda as the founder and pointing to DOI 18 as evidence, were, at least in part, successful. There was no missing charter of Mathilda that served as a counterpart to DOI 1, as Sickel argued. Instead, Thietmar's account reflects the end result of almost 70 years of retelling and rewriting the history of Quedlinburg's origins, which saw the queen linked ever more closely to the foundation of the convent.[74]

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[72] 'et huic, quantum ad victus et sui vestitus necessaria suppetebat, ex sui proprietate, laudantibus hoc suimet filiis, concessit et scriptis confirmavit.' Thietmar, *Chronicon* 1.21, pp. 26-9; trans. in Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, pp. 82-3.

[73] 'ad nutrimen sanctimonialium', DOI 18.

[74] Indeed, Roman Deutinger and Mark Mersiowsky have both pointed out that it would be unthinkable for an East Frankish queen in the Carolingian period to issue a charter themselves without their

However, the rise of Henry II to the throne still does not fully explain why we see the Quedlinburg Annals cast *Mathilda* as the main force behind the foundation of Quedlinburg. Surely, if the Annals were an attempt to win over Henry II to supporting the convent, it would have been natural to stress the involvement of Henry I in the foundation as well. By providing a narrative which figured Henry strongly, the Annalist could have constructed a model for the new King Henry to follow, stressing the benefits that could come to him if he imitated his great-grandfather. So why, instead, do we see Queen Mathilda become the focus of the origin story of Quedlinburg in the Annals? A solution might be found in the timing of Henry I's death. Although the different versions of Quedlinburg's foundation narrative vary, they all agree that the community itself was established *after* Henry's death. He may well have had the idea to set up the community, and been involved in constructing the church on the site, but there was no way around the memory that the community post-dated his death in 936. As such, his usefulness as a model for Henry II to follow was somewhat limited. If the Quedlinburg Annals were intended to convince the new king to provide continuous support for the community throughout his reign, then Mathilda was a better model to emphasise. In contrast to the narratives coming from Nordhausen, which argued that the queen had founded Quedlinburg but much preferred Nordhausen, the Annalist showed Mathilda's long-term care and concern for Quedlinburg. Not only was she the founder of the community, but Mathilda was a maternal figure for the canonesses, making sure they were provided with enough resources to carry out their spiritual duties. While Henry was evoked alongside his wife, it was Mathilda who stood out as the model royal patron of Quedlinburg.

Moreover, it is likely that the Annals were not just directed at the new king, but also at his new queen. As we saw with the composition of the *VMA*, the introduction of a new queen into Ottonian politics sparked concern about her possible political actions. In addition, the death or disappearance of former queens also prompted unease about the possible reshuffle of the queenly dower lands and the political implications of these moves for the monasteries involved. Whereas in 973 there had at least been a more gradual process of transition, with the death of

husbands. The concept of a queen issuing a charter may well have been more believable by the early eleventh century, given the political activities of Empresses Adelheid and Theophanu during the minority of Otto III. Mark Mersiowsky, *Die Urkunde in der Karolingerzeit: Originale, Urkundenpraxis und politische Kommunikation*, Vol. 1 (Wiesbaden, 2015), pp. 231-4, citing Roman Deutinger, *Königsherrschaft im ostfränkischen Reich. Eine pragmatische Verfassungsgeschichte der späten Karolingerzeit* (Ostfildern, 2006), pp. 274-286.

Mathilda in 968, the marriage of Theophanu in 972 and the continued presence of Empress Adelheid down to 999, in 1002 there was no queenly figure at all in the Ottonian court. Theophanu had died in 991, Adelheid in 999 and Otto III had not married before his death.

Cunigund acceded as the sole queen of the German Empire, and the abrupt introduction of a new royal woman, whose interest in Saxon houses of canonesses like Quedlinburg may well be less ardent than her predecessors, must have provoked serious concern for Adelheid and her convent. Given the reformist inclinations of both Henry II and Cunigund as well, it may also have been more appealing to depict Quedlinburg, a female monastery, being founded by a queen rather than a king. The clear delineation between the care of queens for female monasteries and kings for male monasteries had been elaborated on the other side of the Channel in the *Regularis Concordia*, produced for King Edgar and Queen Ælfthryth in the 970s.[75] As such, the representation of Mathilda as the pious spiritual mother of Quedlinburg may well have been intended as an appealing exemplar for Cunigund to follow.

If, however, the Quedlinburg Annals were intended as a way to convince the new king and queen to support the convent, then there is one aspect of its depiction of Mathilda and her relationship with Quedlinburg that is puzzling. If contemporary historiography, building on the work of Althoff in particular, has stressed the role of Quedlinburg as the centre of the Ottonian *memoria*, with Queen Mathilda as the model of commemoration by Ottonian royal women, then why is there no representation of this commemorative activity in the Annals?[76] Mathilda's commemorative activities are presented in detail in the *Lives* that came out of Nordhausen, but the text that came from Quedlinburg itself, at precisely the point at which the convent might be expected to advertise the spiritual qualifications of the community, is curiously silent on the topic. There are no specific dates given for the deaths of members of the Ottonian family, which were necessary for liturgical commemoration, nor do we see the famous scene of Queen Mathilda passing the *computarium* to Abbess Mathilda which was recorded in her *Lives*,

[75] Simon MacLean, 'Monastic Reform and Royal Ideology in the Late Tenth Century: Ælfthryth and Edgar in Continental Perspective' in David Rollason, Conrad Leyser and Hannah Williams (eds), *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century: Studies in Honour of Wilhelm Levison (1876-1947)* (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 257-8.

[76] This question was raised by Felice Lifshitz in 'Review of Martina Giese, ed., *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Germanicum In Usum Scholarum Separtim Editi, vol. 72, Hanover, 2004', *The Medieval Review*, 6 January 2013, <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/tmr/article/view/16073/22191> [22 August 2016].

despite a fulsome mini-*vita* of Abbess Mathilda being given in the entry for 999.[77] If Quedlinburg prided itself on being the home of the Ottonian *memoria*, it is strange that there is no real picture of this activity given in the text they were creating, especially if they were trying to justify their position of prominence in Ottonian society. Why did the Quedlinburg Annals not deploy the narrative of commemorative activity by Mathilda at the convent, one which had recently been reactivated in another text, if it was indeed the centre of Ottonian commemoration?

It appears instead that the author of the Annals, and Adelheid behind her, felt that they had a better chance of winning over Henry and Cunigund through making a more direct argument about the dynastic benefits of supporting Quedlinburg. Rather than advertising the convent as a commemorative centre, the Annals reassert that Quedlinburg was inextricably linked, from its foundation, to the royal pair of Henry and Mathilda. Moreover, the descendants of the royal couple had repeatedly demonstrated their regal and then imperial splendour at the site, which the Annalist laid out for her audience in detail. The Annals illustrate how the pair of Henry and Mathilda were embedded in Quedlinburg, both metaphorically and literally. The convent was the physical embodiment of the royal legitimacy that the pair possessed as the founders of their dynasty of kings and emperors. Rather than focusing on the abilities of the convent as a commemorative centre, or as the home of Ottonian *memoria*, securing the entry of the members of the family into heaven, the Annals were stressing the *Realpolitik* benefits of supporting the convent in the present. If Henry and Cunigund followed the exemplar of Henry and Mathilda, then they too would have access to the source and site of royal authority that Quedlinburg possessed. By supporting Quedlinburg, Henry II would be able to emulate his namesake great-grandfather.

By 1008 it must have been evident to Adelheid that Henry was not especially keen to use Quedlinburg as a focal point for his monastic patronage, not only from the lack of diplomas issued by the new king to the convent, but also from his establishment of Bamberg, which has been described as more like a family mausoleum built on a kingly scale rather than a typical bishopric.[78] Adelheid may well have decided that advertising the commemorative role of

[77] It seems there was textual exchange between Quedlinburg and Nordhausen, which makes this failure to record the *computarium* scene even more peculiar. See *VMA* 13, p. 138/*VMP* 26, p. 199; *AQ* 999, pp. 499-506; Hoffman, *Schreibschulen*, p. 157.
[78] Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 240.

Quedlinburg, which had for the last 70 years been focused on excluding the branch of the family that included Henry II, and was performed by a non-Benedictine house of canonesses to boot, would not have been an especially effective strategy to win over the new, reform-minded king. Instead, highlighting the opportunity for Henry to imitate his royal ancestors who were buried in the foundation may well have seemed like a more successful strategy.

CONCLUSION

By tracing the chronological development of the origin story of Quedlinburg, it is clear that the memory of Queen Mathilda as the founder of the community slowly evolved over the course of the tenth and early eleventh centuries. From her first charter intervention for Quedlinburg in 937, down to Thietmar's assertion that she was the convent's sole founder in 1018, there was a steady accretion of new memories around Mathilda's relationship with Quedlinburg's origins. Each development in the origin story served ideological purposes, motivated by the needs of their particular authors in their particular contexts. As such, the memory of Quedlinburg's origins, and in turn Mathilda's role at the monastery, was by no means a stable memory throughout the tenth century, slowly being revealed to us in more detail. Rather, the narrative was reshaped by each writer in turn. Mathilda was an increasingly useful figure to deploy in the political debates of the later tenth and early eleventh centuries. Through her, authors could make ideological points and to try to influence the current Ottonian rulers. As such, by the time that the community of Quedlinburg came to create their own version of their institution's origin, they were able to reshape this evolving memory of the past themselves to better suit their own political needs. Just as much as Hrotsvitha and Gerberga in the 970s, Adelheid and her anonymous Annalist were at pains to secure their institution's future on the shifting political stage of Henry II's reign. Adelheid and the Annalist did not just send signals to Henry II through their descriptions of him in the Annals, but also readjusted the past of their convent and its relationship with the Ottonian dynasty in order to better advertise the benefits available to the new king and queen if they supported Quedlinburg.

The suggestion that Adelheid and the author of the Annals consciously prioritised the value of Quedlinburg as a source of dynastic legitimacy to Henry II is not intended as a rejection of Quedlinburg's role as a commemorative centre under the Ottonian dynasty. As the previous chapter emphasised, the foundation charter of Otto I for the convent, DOI 1, specifically

outlines the commemorations that the *sanctimoniales* should carry out for him, his *parentes* and his *successores*. It was that very commemoration which enhanced the aura of dynastic legitimacy that characterised Quedlinburg. In addition, I do not intend to imply that Queen Mathilda took no part in the commemoration of the Ottonian family at Quedlinburg. The burial of Henry I's body in the church; the programmatic intent that Otto I had for the site as an embodiment of royal authority; the repeated involvement of Mathilda in the diplomatic sources for the institution; the eventual accession of her granddaughter as abbess of the community; the mentions of her presence at Quedlinburg on important family days; and her death and burial there all point to the widowed queen having a positive relationship with the community. However, we must not overlook that the Quedlinburg Annals pay little attention to Mathilda's commemorative activity. There is no way to definitively tell what Adelheid and the Annalist's motivations were for passing over the commemoration of the Ottonian family at Quedlinburg. Moreover, we cannot rule out the possibility that there was some kind of reference to Mathilda's commemoration at the convent amongst the now-lost sections of the text. On the other hand, both Thietmar of Merseburg and the *Annalista Saxo* used the Annals as a source and were particularly interested in the pious acts of Queen Mathilda; the idea that both of these authors purposefully excluded information about Mathilda's commemorative activity is not especially convincing.[79] We can only draw conclusions based on the evidence that we possess. As such, the information that we have complicates the influential image that Althoff presented of Quedlinburg as the home of the Ottonian *memoria*, engaged in a competition with other monasteries to continue to serve as the sole commemorators of the dynasty.[80]

The view of Queen Mathilda, the founder and resident leader of Quedlinburg, as the exemplar of the commemorative role of Ottonian women has deeply influenced contemporary scholarship. The idea that Mathilda established Quedlinburg as a new commemorative centre for the Ottonian dynasty has been used as a window to look into how *memoria* functioned in Ottonian politics and society in the tenth century. Yet, as we have seen, this view of Queen Mathilda's involvement in the origins of Quedlinburg was primarily developed in the later tenth and early eleventh century. When we try to reconstruct the relationship that Mathilda had with Quedlinburg from 936 down to 968, we need to be aware of how the representations of

[79] On Thietmar, see Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens*, pp. 37, 84; On the *Annalista Saxo*, see Schütte, *Lebenbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde* p. 49.
[80] Althoff, *Adels- Und Königsfamilien*, pp. 166-189; Althoff, 'Gandersheim und Quedlinburg', pp. 123-144.

her role at the convent evolved over time. If we cast Mathilda as the founder and, indeed, effective abbess of Quedlinburg until her death in 968, then we misrepresent the early history of Quedlinburg.[81] Moreover, we overlook how Ottonian authors, including those working on behalf of convents of monastic women, were able to reshape the memory of Mathilda for their own needs. The development of Queen Mathilda into Quedlinburg's founding figure was, much like the history of Quedlinburg itself, shaped in response to the political changes of the empire across the tenth century.

[81] The repercussions of this do not just affect our view of Quedlinburg's history: the pervasiveness of Queen Mathilda's association with the foundation of Quedlinburg has even led Elisabeth van Houts to suggest that 'the queen founded Nordhausen as a daughter house of Quedlinburg' in *Memory and Gender*, p. 49.

CONCLUSION

What, then, does this study of two female monasteries in Saxony contribute to our understanding of Carolingian and Ottonian history? Firstly, in contrast to the view given in current historiography, we can see that neither Gandersheim nor Quedlinburg had a steady, stable relationship with the kings and emperors of Saxony across the period covered by this thesis. Instead, these institutions were engaged in a constant process of negotiating their relationship with their rulers. Each king or emperor constructed his own particular relationship with these institutions in response to a wide variety of factors. This was not just determined by the ruler and the convent; the ways in which kings and emperors interacted with these monasteries were of great concern to a number of other parties who sought to alter these relationships for their own benefit. This thesis has shown the interest of popes, archbishops, bishops, abbots, abbesses, empresses, queens, royal sons and daughters, noblemen and women, and other monastic men and women in influencing how the king or emperor was connected to Gandersheim and Quedlinburg. While these houses might be considered to be the model Ottonian royal convents, the ways that they were connected to the ruling family were repeatedly reshaped and reasserted. The relationships between these royal/imperial monasteries and the rulers of Saxony were constantly being adjusted.

Indeed, we can see that even over the course of a single ruler's reign, his relationship with a royal monastery could alter significantly. The fluctuations of political realities meant that kings needed to reshape their connections to these institutions. A threat from a rival family member could lead to a king reasserting his control over a convent, preventing his challenger from co-opting the symbolic potential of the site. The desire to enhance his claim to imperial power could spur a king to redefine his relationship to royal monasteries. If, for example, we contrast the relationships that Otto I had with Gandersheim and Quedlinburg in 936, compared to the ways in which he was using those convents in 956, we can see the impact that the events of 955 had on his connections to these institutions. The broad movement from Gandersheim to Quedlinburg to Merseburg as focal points for the Ottonian *memoria*, sketched out by Althoff and generally taken up by historians thereafter, creates an illusion of stability in these relationships which does not accurately reflect the path of development of these institutions.

Indeed, that Gandersheim and Quedlinburg, the exemplar Ottonian imperial monasteries, experienced such a range of relationships with the rulers of Saxony from 852 down to 1024 reminds us that 'royal monastery' is a term which encompassed a wide array of experiences. This is not to say that this is not a useful term for describing monastic institutions; monasteries which were taken into royal protection and defence did have a different kind of legal relationship with the ruler. However, we must remember that there were innumerable ways that this connection could be expressed and that it changed over time. The label of royal monastery should not be read as a sign that these institutions had achieved some kind of unchallenged state of stability or security. Nor should we assume that all royal monasteries had a uniform experience of their relationship with the king.

Instead, what this study has demonstrated is that becoming a royal monastery was far from a guarantor of security for an institution. With increased *Königsnähe* came increased visibility and increased symbolic potential. Ottonian rulers used monasteries as a form of political expression, by carefully choosing when and where they asserted their relationship with a monastery, its patron saints, its founders and the bodies buried within its church. This symbolism was part of the appeal that drew rulers towards stressing their relationships with certain monasteries. While the attention of the king undeniably benefitted the monastery in question through increased donations and prestige, there were also drawbacks. By becoming more politically visible, favoured royal monasteries also became targets for conflict and confrontation. Rivals to the ruler could try to subvert the symbolic meanings of royal monasteries. Challenges could be enacted through attempts to gain control over a favourite monastic site. If an institution gained royal status this did not mean that it gained stability, but rather that it gained a closer relationship to the king. Arguing that monasteries were inevitably inclined to seek royal status to strengthen their security misreads the range of motivations that lay behind the desire to gain increased *Königsnähe* and royal protection or ownership. Effectively, royal monasteries entered into a political game whose stakes could be very high indeed. The rewards could be great, but they were matched by the risks.

The idea that these two exemplars of Ottonian royal monasteries could see their relationship with the Ottonian rulers change over time is, of course, a fundamental part of Althoff's thesis on the Ottonian *memoria*. He recognised that the position of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg was not forever assured under the dynasty, and argued that the creation of a new memorial

centre could fundamentally threaten the prestige of these houses as spiritual focal points for the Ottonian dynasty. However, what this thesis has shown is that while Gandersheim and Quedlinburg did see their connections with the Ottonian dynasty shift over time, this did not follow a simple 'rise then fall' dynamic based on competition for the Ottonian *memoria*. Gandersheim's relationship with the Liudolfings/Ottonians fluctuated well before the establishment of Quedlinburg in 936, with one of the most obscure periods of its history coinciding with the point at which the Liudolfings were rising to prominence. Moreover, Gandersheim did not drop into obscurity after 936, but instead shared Otto I's keen attention in 956. Arguing that Gandersheim and Quedlinburg were essentially competing for the Ottonian *memoria* overlooks that these institutions were not identical. They had different histories, different associations, and different resonances that affected how the Ottonian rulers interacted with them across the tenth century. While both of them were commemorative centres, that was not the only factor that influenced their relationships with the members of the Ottonian dynasty.

We need to readjust our view of what we mean when we discuss Ottonian commemoration. Thinking about the *memoria* of the whole family as a crystallised institution, housed in a single monastery at a time, obscures our view of how commemoration functioned in Saxon society. The liturgical commemoration of the Liudolfings and Ottonians at Gandersheim did not stop in 936 because Quedlinburg was founded. In 1017, the canonesses at Quedlinburg did not stop praying for the souls of the dead rulers and their family, friends and followers. Nor were these houses the only ones who celebrated the *memoria* of the dynasty across the tenth century. Instead of thinking about a singular Ottonian *memoria*, we should rather consider the idea that *memoria* was inherently plural, with different strands associated with different family units and lines which formed the larger fabric of the family's *memoria*. Each of these strands could be tied to individual institutions, or several institutions at the same time, providing focal points for different branches of the wider family. This plurality of *memoria* better fits the dynamic of the Ottonian family, with its internecine feuding and rival claims to powers. To see the whole Ottonian family acting together to shift the single memorial centre from Gandersheim to Quedlinburg in 936 because the dynasty had gained royal status is to see a level of widespread consensus amongst the Ottonians which is strikingly absent from the rest of their political activities.

Part of the reason that this narrative about the development of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg across the tenth century has been so popular is that it is based on the evidence coming from the end of the Ottonian period. When we look back at the tenth century and see that these two institutions had close connections to the various emperors of the dynasty and were led by a succession of imperial daughters, it is tempting to describe this as a policy put in place by the dynasty. To have daughters of emperors lead Gandersheim and Quedlinburg from 966 down to 1043 does seem to indicate that this role was reserved for this category of women alone. However, the idea of some kind of hereditary right of Mathilda, Sophia and Adelheid to lead their convents overlooks the specific factors that led to their consecrations. Otto I, as we have seen, had a clear set of political and spiritual reasons to put his one-year-old daughter into Quedlinburg to become the next abbess in 956, fundamentally changing his relationship with the community. At the same time, he placed his niece Gerberga, already sixteen, into Gandersheim to take over as abbess in a move that required a clear statement of his royal authority to do so. In 979, Otto II and Theophanu entrusted Sophia into the care of Gerberga to educate her, but her path to becoming abbess was fraught with difficulty due to the efforts of Bernward of Hildesheim to undermine her and William of Mainz's influence over Gandersheim. It was only after she backed Henry II in his bid to succeed her brother as king that Sophia was able to be consecrated as abbess. Her sister Adelheid, on the other hand, only entered Quedlinburg in 995, when she was around the age of eighteen. The motivations behind her entry into Quedlinburg remains opaque. Her aunt Mathilda may have wanted to reinforce her convent's Ottonian credentials after the coup attempt of Henry the Quarreller in 985 and to assure the continued support of Otto III for Quedlinburg. Either way, the late entry of Adelheid into the convent signals that she had not been destined for her eventual career as abbess since she was born.[1]

Each of these women became abbesses at specific points for specific reasons. Their accession to the rule of Gandersheim or Quedlinburg was not inevitable. Moreover, a number of other women served as abbesses of these convents in the period covered by this thesis, who stand in the shadow cast by the brilliance of these imperial women. We do not know the names of some

[1] Sophia and Adelheid's third sister, Mathilda, was placed into the care of Mathilda of Essen. She left the community in 993 to marry Ezzo, the count palatine of Lotharingia, in a development which Thietmar reported 'displeased many', apparently due to Ezzo's lower social status. Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon* 4.60 in Robert Holtzmann (ed.), MGH SRG NS 9 (Hanover, 1935), pp. 200-1; trans in David A. Warner, *Ottonian Germany: The* Chronicon *of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester, 2001), p. 194.

of them, while for others their names are the only thing we do know about them. Overlooking their presence as leaders of these convents to argue that only Liudolfing/Ottonian women could become abbesses of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg misunderstands the way that these institutions functioned in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Indeed, this thesis has tracked the origin and development of a new kind of abbess at Gandersheim and Quedlinburg. We began with Hathumoda in 852, the eleven-year-old daughter of a noble couple who had brought together a handful of young noble girls to live as canonesses at a monastic church on their family lands. While her representation in Agius's *Vita Hathumodae* bears the imprint of the hagiographic genre, Hathumoda very much fits with the kind of abbess we would expect at a noble *Eigenkloster*, as does her succession by her sisters. However, from the death of Christine in 919 down to the accession of Gerberga in 956, we see a series of abbesses at both Gandersheim and the new foundation of Quedlinburg who are more anonymous. We only have contemporary evidence for the name of Wendelgard at Gandersheim in 949, and the argument that these other monastic leaders were drawn from the Liudolfing family is mainly conjecture. It seems that following the period in which Gandersheim served as an *Eigenkloster* for the Liudolfings, the first half of the tenth century saw women elected to the abbatial position at these royal monasteries who were not important political figures in their own right. While they led royal monasteries, they did not seem to have the familial connections to merit their named involvement in the documents relating to their monasteries. However, the events of 955-6 led Otto I to significantly reorient his relationship with these convents as part of his movement towards the imperial title. In the space of a decade, Otto placed all of the unmarried daughters of his family in royal convents to become their abbesses.

Otto's decision marks a significant change in the history of Ottonian female monasticism. Up until 956, the political power of these monasteries had been based in the collective institution itself, as we can see from the way that Otto used Quedlinburg in the early years of his reign. However, by placing women who were prominent political figures in their own rights at the helm of Gandersheim, Quedlinburg and Essen, Otto added a further dimension to the political significance of these monasteries. The imperial abbesses that Otto instituted in 956-966 were now connected to the rulers of Saxony through two different relationships: one based on their institutional role as abbess and one based on their personal connections. We can see, as the tenth century progressed, the long-term repercussions of this new dual identity of imperial

abbesses in Saxony. The struggles of Gandersheim in the 970s were in part sparked by the problematic position of Gerberga in the middle of the warring branches of the Ottonian family. In addition, while Otto II had a close relationship with his sister, Mathilda, his apparent preference to give grants of land to her rather than to her convent made his relationship with Quedlinburg itself more distant. His decision to bring Mathilda on his campaign to Italy in the 980s also left her community without its abbess in 985, which helped Henry the Quarreller use the convent as part of his attempted coup. The personal relationships of these abbesses and the Ottonian emperors could be leveraged for different effects, which were not necessarily always to the advantage of their institutions.

The Gandersheim Conflict is perhaps the most blatant example of the problems that this movement towards imperial abbesses could cause. While the placement of Sophia into Gandersheim did help secure the support of the dynasty for the convent, at the same time it sparked off the open dispute between the dioceses of Mainz and Hildesheim for control of the monastery. On top of this growing tension, we see Sophia take on an even greater position of political influence than her predecessors, acting as an intercessor in a remarkable number of diplomas for her brother and joining his court when he travelled down to Italy. This political career allowed Sophia to forge her own political bonds with the different magnates of Saxony, long before she took on any kind of institutional role at Gandersheim as an abbess. Without the security that came from being a consecrated abbess, it is unsurprising that we see Sophia lean on her other personal connections at the imperial court to support her position in the Gandersheim Conflict. In a similar, although less controversial, way, we see Mathilda of Quedlinburg take on increasing positions of political authority in the 980s, when she acted as a central figure in the regency of her nephew, and in the 990s when Otto appointed her as the effective ruler of Saxony while he was on campaign in Italy.

As such, it is unsurprising that the pair of Sophia and Adelheid were deeply involved in the succession contest of 1002 after the death of Otto III. The increasing tendency for abbesses to rely on their personal connections with the emperor meant that the death of their brother and the accession of a new ruler seriously destabilised their political positions and their ability to ensure the continued imperial support of their institutions. Their eventual decision to support their distant cousin, Henry II, was in part motivated by their concern to establish the most secure connection possible to the new ruler, through leveraging their familial relationship. However, despite the best efforts of both Sophia and Adelheid to gain Henry II's support for

them and their convents, he had his own set of interests when it came to monasticism. In contrast to the diplomas that Otto II and Otto III issued for both communities close to their accessions to the throne, it took Henry five years to issue a diploma to Gandersheim, in the form of an exchange of property, and an astonishing nineteen years to grant a diploma to Quedlinburg.[2] Instead, Henry and his wife Cunigund favoured new places to celebrate the major liturgical feasts, such as Walbeck and Merseburg. Most significantly, Cunigund and Henry founded a proprietary Benedictine nunnery of Kaufungen, which quickly became their favourite monastic house.[3]

It was during the reign of Henry II, whose monastic and memorial interests diverged from those of his predecessors, that the move towards the political roles of the major abbesses in Saxony overtaking their institutional identities reached its end point. Henry II was clearly not as concerned with supporting Gandersheim and Quedlinburg as his predecessors. His interest in reformed Benedictine monasticism and his concern to establish his own preferred monastic and episcopal centres resulted in him being fairly disinterested in the major Ottonian convents of canonesses. While he may not have felt their institutions offered attractive spiritual benefits, however, Henry was interested in keeping Sophia and Adelheid as his political supporters, particularly while he shored up his legitimacy as Otto III's successor. Thus, we see Sophia consecrated as abbess of Gandersheim in the same ceremony that Henry's wife Cunigund was crowned as queen, likely as a reward for Sophia's public approval of him in the succession contest.[4] And, after the death of Mathilda of Essen in 1011, Sophia received a further recognition of her support for the king. Despite having confirmed Essen's royal protection and right of free election in 1003, Henry allowed Sophia to become abbess of both Gandersheim and Essen in 1011.[5]

The ability of Sophia to be abbess of both Essen and Gandersheim in 1011 marks the beginning of a new era in Saxon female monasticism. By the turn of the eleventh century, the Ottonian imperial abbesses had increasingly gained their political authority from their own

[2] Essen received a recognition of its privileges in 1003: DHII 39a/b. For Gandersheim: DHII 205. For Quedlinburg: DHII 448

[3] Henry lavished this convent with attention, granting it ten diplomas in the space of six years which included market and toll rights. DD HII 411, 375, 394, 412, 406, 407, 420, 487.

[4] Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 5.19, p. 243.

[5] *AQ* 1011-2 in Martina Giese (ed.), *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, MGH SRG In Usum Scholarum Separatim Editi 72 (Hanover, 2004), pp. 531-3.

constellations of family members and friends, rather than from their institutional positions. The decision of Henry II to not only ignore Essen's privilege of free election, but also to grant it to a woman who was already abbess of another community is striking. Essen was no minor institution, but had been founded at the same time as Gandersheim, had been led by Otto I's granddaughter, and was a wealthy and prestigious foundation in its own right. The concentration of both Gandersheim and Essen's resources in Sophia's control far outweighed the power that had been given to any Ottonian abbess previously. However, her position was not unmatched for long: in 1014, the year of Henry II's imperial coronation, Adelheid became the abbess of the convents of Vreden and Gernrode. While they were not quite in the same league as Essen, both of these convents were still significant foundations. Vreden had been established in the ninth century, predating Gandersheim; and Gernrode was established by the powerful Count Gero in 961, and had received his entire *hereditas*.[6] By the time of Henry's coronation, both Adelheid and Sophia had emerged as a new kind of imperial abbess, whose political identity was so dominant that she was able to occupy multiple abbatial roles at a number of separate monastic institutions. The decision of Otto I to put his daughter, niece and granddaughter in charge of Quedlinburg, Gandersheim and Essen had, over the course of the tenth century, irrevocably changed the nature of Saxon female monasticism.

Of course, while we can discuss the changing nature of Ottonian abbesses in terms of paths of development, we should not fall into the trap of thinking that the events of 1011/1014 were inevitably destined to happen as a result of Otto I's actions in 956. The various abbesses of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg in the tenth century were not passive figures, automatically drawn to emphasising their personal political identities over their institutional ones. Nor did they simply acquiesce if a ruler showed less interest in them and their convent. Instead, what this thesis has shown is that the abbesses of these communities were not only keenly aware of the fluidity of their relationship with the kings and emperors of Saxony, but they took action to shape these relationships for their own benefit. Through creating new texts which intertwined the histories of their institutions with that of the ruling family, and through deploying memories of the past to make targeted appeals to different individuals, these communities made concerted efforts to determine their institutions' future.

[6] DOI 230.

When we discuss these foundations of Ottonian women as being responsible for remembering the past of the dynasty, we should not see this as a passive activity, as the transmission of an official family history. Instead, the origin stories that Gandersheim and Quedlinburg produced in the tenth century were calculated retellings of the past intended to reinforce their current political positions. Sometimes these efforts worked, albeit in unexpected ways, and sometimes they did not. This, however, is beside the point. The critical detail is that these texts were designed for specific reasons which cannot be understood if we alienate them from their immediate contexts. To read Hrotsvitha's *Primordia* as evidence for the role of Oda at Gandersheim in the ninth century is to misunderstand the purpose of the text. To use the Quedlinburg Annals to argue that Queen Mathilda was the central figure in the foundation of the convent overlooks the ability of the women of Quedlinburg to reframe their own past for their present needs. The history of the Ottonian dynasty has been written by modern historians on the basis of narratives given in these texts. We must not forget that these monastic women told these particular origin stories for their own specific reasons.

The insights that this thesis offers into the development of royal female monasteries are not restricted to the German empire alone. As I pointed out at the beginning of this thesis, the concepts and ideas that have been developed in historiography on Saxon convents have been applied as a way to understand the more fragmentary evidence base in Anglo-Saxon England and West Francia. Thus, by destabilising the paradigm used to explain Ottonian female monasticism, this thesis has implications for the historiography on these other areas as well. The examples given here of how and why Gandersheim and Quedlinburg evolved over the tenth century help us to reassess female monasticism in the areas outside of Saxony. In England, we can see convents like Nunnaminster, which is reputed to have been founded by Alfred the Great's widow Ealhswith after his death. The monastery lay adjacent to New Minster, where Alfred and Ealhswith were buried by their son Edward the Elder, whose daughter Eadburh entered Nunnaminster as a nun.[7] The parallels here to Quedlinburg, in terms of the narrative of a widowed queen as founder, the burial site of a royal couple who established

[7] Sarah Foot, 'Dynastic Strategies: The West Saxon Royal Family in Europe' in David Rollason, Conrad Leyser and Hannah Williams (eds), *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century: Studies in Honour of Wilhelm Levison (1876-1947)* (Turnhout, 2010), p. 243; Simon MacLean, 'Making a difference in tenth-century politics: King Athelstan's sisters and Frankish queenship' in Paul Fouracre and David Ganz (eds), *Frankland: The Franks and the World of the Early Middle Ages* (Manchester, 2008), p. 177; Nicole Marafioti*, The King's Body: Burial and Succession in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto, 2014), p. 26.

a dynasty, and the entrance of their granddaughter into the community are striking. We might also consider the convent of Wimbourne, where king Æthelred was buried, which was seized by his son Æthelwold during his rebellion against his cousin Edward the Elder. Æthelwold's appropriation of his royal father's burial site was his way of stressing his own claim to royal power against Edward, who made a point of translating Alfred's body into New Minster to enhance his own aura of dynastic legitimacy.[8] The monastery of Wilton under the leadership of Abbess Edith in the late tenth century has already been described as a counterpart of Quedlinburg in England.[9] However, after being established in the early ninth century, Wilton had longstanding relationships with the royal and aristocratic families of the region throughout the ninth and tenth centuries, well before the entrance of Edith into the community. Indeed, the lengthy history of the community, its connections with different royals and aristocratic families, and the apparent links that Wilton had to the two rival wives of King Edgar in the 970s would be better illuminated by a comparison with Gandersheim's experience in the same period.[10] It may be helpful to consider Edith's political role in the late tenth century, with her seal which describes her as the 'royal sister' (*regalis adelpha*) and her apparent role in the political manoeuvring after her brother Edward's death, in light of Sophia and Adelheid's positions in 1002.[11]

In West Francia we do not have the same clarity of view as in East Francia, or even Anglo-Saxon England, for the role of royal female monasteries in the tenth century. Yet, we still see hints of the same themes that this thesis has covered. The convent of Chelles was a powerful monastery from its foundation by the Merovingian Queen Balthild in the seventh century, with an influential *scriptorium*.[12] Under the Carolingians it reached even greater heights, with

[8] Marafioti, *The King's Body*, pp. 74-6; Nicole Marafioti, 'Seeking Alfred's body: royal tomb as political object in the reign of Edward the Elder', *Early Medieval Europe* 23:2 (2015), pp. 211-4.
[9] Pauline Stafford remarked that 'Eleventh-century Wilton must have resembled tenth-century Quedlinburg.' Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford, 1997), p. 258. See also Barbara Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003), pp. 151-2.
[10] Foot notes that Wilton had received two daughters of Edward the Elder at the same time that he placed Eadburh in Nunnaminster at Winchester. Pauline Stafford also points out that Wilton had an abundance of royal graves, with royal daughters, wives, sons and grandsons all buried there by the end of the tenth century: Foot, *Dynastic Strategies*, p. 243; Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*, p. 90. See also Yorke, *Nunneries*, pp. 76-7, 83-4; Pauline Stafford, 'Queens, Nunneries and Reforming Churchmen: Gender, Religious Status and Reform in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England', *Past and Present* 163 (1999), p. 25.
[11] Yorke, *Nunneries*, pp. 168-70.
[12] Rosamond McKitterick, 'Nuns' Scriptoria in England and Francia in the Eighth Century', *Francia* 19:1 (1999), pp. 2-14.

Charlemagne's sister and daughter, both named Gisela, becoming abbesses in turn, followed by Louis the Pious's mother-in-law, Hadwig.[13] Charlemagne commended a significant relic collection to Chelles, it has been mooted as the place where the *Annales Mettenses Priores* was composed, and it received minting rights as well in the ninth century.[14] In the tenth century we have far less information about the convent. Hints, however, do remain. We know that Quedlinburg possessed a copy of Jerome's letters which came from the *scriptorium* of Chelles.[15] The monastery appears to still retain its political importance as well: the breakdown of the relationship between Robert of Neustria and Charles the Simple in 922 was prompted by a dispute over who controlled the convent.[16] Moreover, when Otto II raided into West Francia in retaliation for Lothar's attack on Aachen in 978, he punished some of his men who had attacked Chelles.[17] All of this seems to allude to Chelles' continued political role in the tenth century, though as the library of the convent was seriously damaged in French Revolution we can only gain glimpses of what this might have been.[18]

By providing a reassessment of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg's growth and function in Ottonian society during the tenth century, this thesis provides us with more accurate resources to make comparisons with the development of female monasticism in other areas of tenth-century western Europe. It is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis to make those comparisons in full. In addition, we can turn the conclusions of this study to consider the

[13] Pierre Riché has argued from this that control of Chelles was 'reserved for the sisters and daughters of kings'. Pierre Riché, *The Carolingians: A Family Who Forged Europe*, trans. Michael Idomir Allen (Philadelphia, 1993), p. 290.
[14] Janet L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992), pp. 32-3, 82; David Ganz and Walter Goffart, 'Charters Earlier than 800 from French Collections', *Speculum* 65:4 (1990), pp. 907-931; Yitzhak Hen, 'The Annals of Metz and the Merovingian Past' in Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (eds), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 177; Janet L. Nelson, 'Gender and Genre in Women Historians of the Early Middle Ages' in *eadem* (ed.), *The Frankish World: 750-900* (London, 1996), pp. 191-2.
[15] Helene Scheck, 'Queen Mathilda of Saxony and the Founding of Quedlinburg: Women, Memory, and Power', *Historical Reflections* 35:3 (2009), p. 27.
[16] Flodoard of Reims, *Annales* 922, in Philipe Lauer (ed.), *Les Annales de Flodoard* (Paris, 1905), p. 8; trans. in Steven Fanning and Bernard S. Bachrach, *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966* (Peterborough, 2004), p. 6; Geoffrey Koziol, 'Charles the Simple, Robert of Neustria and the *vexilla* of Saint-Denis', *Early Medieval Europe* 14 (2006), p. 358.
[17] Richer of Saint-Rémi, *Historia* 3.74, in Hartmut Hoffman (ed.), MGH SS 38 (Munich, 2000), p. 210; trans. in Justin Lake (ed.), *Histories, Volume II. Books 3-4: Richer of Saint-Rémi* (Cambridge MA, 2011), pp. 122-3.
[18] For the impact of the French Revolution on the archives of French convents, see Katrinette Bodarwé, 'Gender and the Archive: The Preservation of Charters in Early Medieval Communities of Religious Women' in Mathilde van Dijk and Renée Nip (eds), *Saints, Scholars and Politicians: Gender as a Tool in Medieval Studies* (Turnhout, 2005), pp. 111-132.

development of Saxon monasticism after the end point of this thesis. How did the new Saxon abbesses, as heads of multiple monasteries, navigate the new political environment of the Salian dynasty? What impact did the Gregorian reforms and the Investiture Controversy have on the balance of the political and institutional identities of these women? In particular, with the clamp-down on canonical foundations under Gregory VII, how did the environment of Saxon female monasticism, whose emphasis on noble canonical foundations had proved so successful, adapt to these new prevailing trends? These questions offer exciting paths for future scholarship to take.

Finally, work remains to be done on the other Saxon female monasteries in the ninth and tenth centuries. Gandersheim and Quedlinburg do not provide a representative view of all the other houses of canonesses in Saxony, nor of the handful of Benedictine nunneries that began to spring up in the region near the end of the tenth century. By focusing on Gandersheim and Quedlinburg, this study has provided a close look at the development and function of two major royal houses of the Ottonian Empire. However, not all Saxon female monasteries had the same experience. We might contrast the experience of Gernrode, for example, a monastery established by Count Gero in 960, which received royal protection from Otto I and Otto II.[19] Schildesche provides another interesting case, a monastery which received grants from all the Ottonian emperors, but was only taken into the protection of the king under Otto III before being given to the bishopric of Paderborn by Henry II.[20] Or we could examine Neuenheerse, founded by the sister of the Bishop of Padersborn under the reign of Louis the German, which had then gained grants from Charles the Fat, Henry I and Otto I as well before seemingly falling out of favour under Otto II and his successors.[21] There are elements of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg's histories that may well seem to map on to the paths that these other monasteries followed. However, as I have emphasised, taking the history of one institution to represent another elides the individual experience of these monasteries. Gandersheim and Quedlinburg cannot and should not stand in for all Saxon convents or Ottonian convents, but this study can provide us with tools to rethink the histories of these other institutions in more detail.

It was a long journey to get from Hathumoda in 852 to Adelheid and Sophia in 1024. The move from an eleven-year-old noble daughter placed by her parents over their family monastery to

[19] DOI 229; DOII 3.
[20] DOI 35; DD OII 74, 75; DOIII 13; DHII 101, 403.
[21] DLD 137; DKIII 169; DHI 38; DOI 36.

imperial women who were able to command their own miniature empires of monasteries signals the striking evolution in female monasticism that took place in tenth-century Saxony. What I have underlined across this thesis is that this path of development was not inevitable. Saxony was not destined to see the growth of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg, or to have female monasteries become such prominent institutions. Rather, a confluence of specific factors led to Saxony being an environment that was especially conducive for houses of canonesses to grow and to take on important social and political roles for the noble families of the region. While this study has focused on the history of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg, the two convents founded by the Liudolfing/Ottonian family, we need to consider their development in this broader environment to fully understand how these institutions functioned. Saxon female monasticism was not peculiar because the Liudolfing/Ottonian family was peculiarly interested in it. Instead, their interest in female monasteries was very much shared by the other noble families throughout the region. It was not so much the foundation of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg that allowed the Liudolfings to become a ducal, royal, and then imperial family, as it was that the family's rise to power pulled the institutions they were linked with into the spotlight.

The evolution of these two convents into imperial centres led by daughters of emperors at the end of the tenth century came through a series of decisions by the rulers of Saxony made for specific reasons at specific points in time. Gandersheim and Quedlinburg are undeniably remarkable examples of female monastic institutions acting at the highest level of tenth and eleventh-century politics in the German Empire. However, when Liudolf and Oda made the decision to bring together a handful of canonesses in their church with their daughter as an abbess in the mid-ninth century, they would not have been able to imagine that their descendants would reach the positions that they did. Through tracking the development of these institutions across the tenth century, and recognising the involvement of the communities of canonesses themselves, this thesis offers us a better view of how that evolution took place.

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