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The Beginnings of the Salian Dynasty: Conrad II (1024–1039)

I. Introduction

In 1024, died the last king of the Ottonian dynasty, from the house of Liudolfinger, Henry II. The King died without leaving behind a successor. The election of the next king following his death brought Conrad II (1024-1039), a Salian, to the throne. This was the beginning of the Salian dynasty (1024-1125)* during which many moving events of the German history occurred: the secularization of king's authority, the Investiture Contest, the Concordat of Worms, the development of the German state, to name only few of them.

This paper seeks to examine the reign of the first king of the Salian dynasty, Conrad II. The interregnum which followed the death of childless Henry II is going to be taken as the point for departure (Chapter II). The goal of the paper is to show the transition of the imperial rule from the Liudolfingers to the Salians as well as to unveil the problems and challenges which the first King of the Salian dynasty had to overcome by attempting to strengthen his authority (Chapter III and IV). Thereby, I particularly want to analyze the emergence and development of transcendental understanding and interpretation of monarchical authority (Chapter V).

The reign of the first king of the Salian dynasty, Conrad II, was relatively poorly documented. The "Gesta Chuonradi II. Imperatoris", which was written by the court chaplain Wipo (died 1049), is the only informative depiction of the time of Conrad II. (5: Epistola) The scripture was

^{*} The Salian dynasty was also known as the Frankish dynasty after the family's origin and role as dukes of Frankonia. The four Salian kings of the dynasty – Conrad II, Henry III, Henry IV, and Henry V – ruled the Holy Roman Empire from 1027 to 1125. See the Salian family tree in the appendix.

originally written in 1045-1046. (8:1024) It was devoted to the son of Conrad II, Henry III. Wipo tried to explain his reasons for writing his work by stating:

"tibi, summe imperator, hoc opus devoveo, tibi Gesta patris repraesento, ut, quoties ipse res clarissimas agree mediteris, prius paternas virtutes velut in speculo imagineris..." (5: Epistola)

"This work is devoted to you, the great emperor. For the description of deeds and values of your father should guide you in your own rule." (My translation, S.B.)

The description of Conrad II's deeds masterfully depicted by Wipo should be thus the mirror of diligent reign and behavior for his son, Henry III. The work of Wipo contained, therefore, an ethical and educational claim. By attempting to teach and educate the young generation of rulers was not something new in the early Middle Ages. On the contrary, Wipo stood in the tradition of medieval historians who sought not only to communicate the history of the mankind to the next generations of monarchs "complete and without distortions" but also to educate them. (17: 4) This ethical and educational tendency of his own work Wipo tried to explain with the following words:

"...et in actis eorum, quos notat, vulganda sunt tam gesta quam omissa, prout facultas ingenii dederit, ex qua re boni ad virtutem incitantur, mali autem honesta invectione corriguntur. Illa igitur est causa scribendi..." (5: Prologus)

"...and the actions of those described here and which are widely known will encourage you to aspire to good things and correct your failures. This is what inspires me to write..." (My translation, S.B.)

Yet, not only educational intentions underlay the Wipo's historiography. That his historiography was not free of religious motives proves the next sentence:

"Si enim nostil catholici reges, verae fidei defensores, legem ac pacem Christi, quam nobis per euangelium suum tradidit, sine periculo erroris gubernant: qui eorum bene facta scriptis suis manifestabunt quid aliud quam euangelium Christi praedicabunt?" (5: Prologus)

"For those Catholic rulers who really defend the faith, surrender themselves to the law of Jesus Christ, bring us the Gospel and avoid dangerous mistakes. Do those who try to write about good deeds not preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ?" (My translation, S.B.)

Wipo sought with his "Gesta Chuonradi" thus to predict the Christ Gospel. (8: 1025) This fact and the circumstance that Wipo had the status of the court chaplain, caused many historians to doubt the accuracy of Wipo's historiography. Some historians even believe that Wipo was mainly going to praise his ruler, to make him appear sacred leaving thereby the historical truth under religious stylization. (1: 454)

One could find such stylization in many places. The scene of the election of the king or his coronation, to name only few, are very exemplary for it. However prejudiced the work of Wipo might appear, his biography of Conrad II remains the only informative source about the time of Conrad II.

We should say some few words about the personality of Wipo. He was the chaplain of Conrad II. The status of chaplain pertained at that time to the high religious estate. Since Otto III the chaplains had often been elected in the imperial dioceses. This underlied their importance within the imperial constitution. Being the chaplain of Conrad II, Wipo accompanied him very often personally on his many travels through the Holy Roman Empire. Thanks to them Wipo could record many important and interesting events and measures of King Conrad II down in writing. As a matter of fact, he did not want to become a history writer. Rather he wanted to become a preacher. That is why all his poetry, songs and works have a pedagogical

character. Being the court chaplain, Wipo was more devoted to the person of the Conrad II's son, Henry II, because he and the young prince shared the same religious standpoints. Wipo died shortly after 1046. (6: 509)

II. Interregnum and the election of the next king

The last king of the House of Liudolfinger, Henry II, died on July 13, 1024. The king died childless. According to the German succession law, which was the combination of a succession law and an election of a king by the great nobles of the Reich, the death of Henry II was to be followed by the election of the successor. The period between the death of the former king and the election of the next one was usually called interregnum. Wipo writes that during the interregnum the monarchical authority was laid in the hands of the king's widow, Kunigunde, who exercised it with the help of her two brothers, Bishop Dietrich II of Metz and the duke Henry of Bavaria. In general, Wipo looked at the time of interregnum with apprehension and feared that it could threaten the existence of the whole Roman Empire. Why the interregnum was viewed as a danger for the German state becomes clear if one bears in mind that the nascent German state was a state founded upon personal relationships rather than a Flächenstaat where the state administration is founded in political institutions. To speak with Theodor Mayer the early medieval German state was a "Personenverbandstaat", that is the state in which the power was exercised not primarily over a territory with peoples living therein and relying thereby on political institutions but over a group of powerful regional or local lords along with their soldiers. A tributary relationship existed between the king and these princes. (12: 462; 13: 97) The monarchical authority was thus of a very unstable nature because the whole state rested solely on the person of the king. Each change of authority could thus cause a heavy crisis with bad implications for the stability of the state itself.

There is a ground to believe that several talks took place between Kunigunde and her two brothers – the archbishop of Mainz, Aribo, had joined them too - ahead of the election focusing on a candidate for the throne as well as taking preparations for the election. It is still unknown whether such talks happened among the dukes and princes of the various stemlands of the Reich. Wipo at least had not mentioned them. However, according to Wipo there were only two candidates who could for their nearness to the Ottonians be elected: Conrad the Elder and Conrad the Younger, the sons of two brothers, Henry and Conrad, both dukes of Speyer and Corinth respectively. (14: 1)* The two candidates were through their great-grandmother Liutgard related to Otto the Great.

In his biography Wipo had not made a single reference to the circumstance that the both Conrads were "Salians". He wrote only that the both candidates were "high nobles from Frankonia (Deutschfranken, S.B.)". (5: 2) The students of history of the Middle Ages are still undecided about the origins of the name of Salians. In general it is believed that the family of the first king and the actual founder of the dynasty Conrad II was given this name in memory of the Salians who were the leading group within the confederation of the Frankish tribes. This was done to distinguish the family as the great nobles (primores) of the Frankish tribes. (4: 8; 20: 13)

^{*} According to Theodor Schieffer the election of the Salian Conrad II to the King's Throne had according to the German Gebluetsrecht (kinship rule) in no way broken off the dynastic continuity of the Ottonian house. I leave out a discussion of the relevance of the kinship rule.

The election of the king took place on September 24, 1024 at Kamba, a small town on the right side of the Rhine River. Wipo wrote that all archbishops, bishops, and princes of all the stemlands of the Reich assembled there to elect the successor to Henry II. The assembly was seemingly divided in several smaller assemblies. In general, Wipo depicts a picture of the Kur (election) which was free and open. After initial disagreement on question who of both cousins was the most entitled to step on the throne the choice finally fell on the elder Conrad. According to Wipo many factors favoured the elder Conrad: his sense for justice and hard work, his age and life experience. (11: 39-40) A very important fact that turned the decision of the assembly in favour of the elder Conrad* was that he already had a son. This was not unimportant as it promised the transition of king's authority after the death of Conrad II to appear less uncertain. (16: 30)

According to Wipo Conrad was elected a king almost unanimously. Only the archbishop of Cologne Pilgrim and the Lorraines had favoured the younger Conrad. After his defeat they left the assembly due to their disagreement. The election was followed by coronation on September 8, 1024. The coronation itself was not a constitutional act. It only took place to pass to the king a "divine legitimacy and transcendental connection". (17: 21) By contrast, its practical significance was very limited.

III. The coronation as the sign of Christ-centered interpretation of king's authority

The whole process of coronation was carried out by the archbishop of Mainz, Aribo. The sermon delivered during the coronation deserves a particular attention here. (5: ch. 3) According to Egon Boshof it had outlined the power ideology of the Salian dynasty that Conrad II tried to follow during his whole reign. (4: 37)

In his homily Aribo put Conrad II in the succession of Jesus Christ on earth putting him on thus intentionally a sacred function. He proclaimed the Salian king vicarius Christi (representative of Christ), who was to rule on earth in favor of the poor, priests, widows, and orphans. The king had to return peace and justice to his country. These were the primary tasks of the Salian king, and Conrad II was obliged to fulfill them during his reign.

The interpretation of the king's authority, which put Jesus Christ in its center, and the speech that Wipo placed in Aribo's mouth during the coronation scene was not something new during the Salian dynasty. The Christ-centric interpretation of the kingship was passed on to the Salians from the Ottonians. (4: 37)**

^{*} The younger Conrad was 24 years old.

^{**} That the Salians had stepped in the Ottonian heritage with regard to their understanding of the monarchical authority one can recognize by looking at the miniature of Aachen (see the copy of the miniature in the appendix). It depicts the scene of coronation of King Otto III. The king is handing down a crown on his head from the sky by the God's hand. The scene had to demonstrate the divine origin of the earth's authority. The king was the God's representative on earth who rules in his name. The body of the king is wrapped in a white mandorla which is held up by four biblical animals on each side. This white mandorla divides the king's body in two halves, of which the upper half is placed in heaven, while the lower half is put on earth. The king thus had embodied two natures: human by nature and divine by providence. An excellent analysis of the miniature of Aachen is given by Ernst Kantorowicz, in: Ernst Kantorowicz, Die zwei Körper des Königs. Eine Studie zur politischen Theologie des Mittelalters (orig.: The King's Two Bodies), 2nd Ed., München 1994, p. 50ff.

The passing of the imperial crown of the Holy Roman Emperor to Conrad II followed three years later, at Easter of 1027 in Rome. The coronation was conducted this time by Pope Johannes XIX. The imperial crown was put on King Conrad II, which meant that he had succeeded the ancient Western Roman emperors. The imperial crown had through its form and decoration also to remind its owner of his sacred function. To this end, on the three side plates of the imperial crown there were images of the three kings from the Old Testament: David, who was the symbol of justice, Solomon, who was the symbol of wisdom and fear for God, and Hiskiya, who was the symbol of trust in God seen as the only source of all authority on earth. Supposedly, the newly elected king had to use them as the examples of diligent and wise rule during his own kingship.

The posing of the imperial crown elevated Conrad II not only above the great nobles of his own kingdom but also above all European monarchs. The inscription carved into the imperial crown, CHUONRADUS DEI GRATIA ROMANORUM IMPERATOR AUGUSTUS, had also to remind of this high position of the king. Wipo mentioned this new title of Conrad II in his biography, too. (5: ch. 16)* The wife of Conrad II was called the empress.

IV. The ruling style of Conrad II

In his ruling style Conrad II differed little from his predecessor Henry II. Theodor Schieffer has even claimed that the whole policy of Conrad II was a conscious continuation of the rule pattern set by Henry II. (14:4)

The rule of Conrad II began with the inspection ride through the Reich. The praxis of inspection rides through the territory of the kingdom after the coronation and while in throne was first set up by Henry II. (10: 90) The inspection rides of the king differed from his plain travels through their thorough planning. (10:90) They served mainly the purpose of receiving the oath of allegiance from the great nobles of the Reich as well as receiving obedience and recognition from the vassals. However, since Henry II the inspection rides also served the goal of strengthening the integration of the Reich. To this end, since about 1000 the monarchical Palatinates were built up in several places. They were thought to be the bases of monarchical authority. (10:100) In comparison with the praxis widely used by Henry II's predecessors when the great nobles of the Reich had to appear before the king in his usual residence the new praxis of inspection rides through the Reich was with respect to visibility of monarchical power as well as the stability and integrity of the kingdom much more effective. (10: 100) However, taking into account a huge territory of the Reich as well as the distance between the individual places this was next to impossible to hold together such a big territory under the monarchical control. Though many contemporaries had often described Conrad II as a tough and resolute person and ruler (20:50), this fact was also one of the biggest challenges for him. In particular, this had demonstrated the case with the envoys from the Italian town of Pavia whom Conrad II met during his inspection ride from his Palatinate in Constance in 1025. The conversation which took place between Conrad II and the Pavians revealed the problems that the king faced in the remote Italy, which – to make the things worse - was separated from the core of the kingdom by the Alps.

^{*} In Wipo's biography the new name of Conrad II since his coronation was Caesar Augustus.

V. The policy toward Italy. The beginnings of transpersonal interpretation of monarchical authority

Throughout the centuries Pavia had developed - mostly thanks to its good connections to France and Burgundy – in a lively market town with upper class of very affluent merchants, which wished more autonomy from the German Reich for commercial and political reasons. (19: 145)

After the residents of Pavia had received the information about the death of Henry II, they revolted and destroyed the imperial palace in their town. This palace had been for centuries an important administrative center of the German kings in Lombardy and served them simultaneously as judicial court, ammunition depot, and storage for food and taxes. (19: 145) When Conrad II went there to punish the Pavians for the revolt, the Pavians pleaded that they were not guilty. They tried to justify their actions by saying that as King Henry II died there was subsequently no legal ground for him to claim his goods:

"Quem offendimis? Imperatori nostro fidem et honorem usque ad terminum vitae suae servavimus; quo defuncto cum nullum regem haberemus regis nostril domum destruxisse non jure accusabimur." (5: ch. 7)

Whom have we offended? We served the late emperor with fidelity and honor until his death. Now that he is dead, how shall we be accused of having destroyed his castle?" (My translation, S.B.)

The Pavians touched during this conversation on the core problem of the German state that I briefly analyzed earlier, namely that it was founded in personal relationships rather than political institutions. (3: 79) Conrad II's reply to the Pavians was the notable one:

"Scio inquit, quod domum regis vestri non destruxistis, cum eo tempore nullum haberetis; sed domum regalem scidisse, non valetis inficiari. Si rex periit, regnum remansit, sicut navis remanet cujus gubernator cadit. Aedes publicae fuerant, non private; iuris errant alieni, non vestry." (5: ch. 7)*

"I know that you have not destroyed the palace of the king since at the time it was destroyed there was no king. But if the king dies the kingdom yet remains, just as a ship endures whose captain has been lost. They were public buildings, not private. They were subjects of a foreign law, not of yours." (My translation, S.B.)

"If the king dies the kingdom yet remains." This was the reply of King Conrad II. The words which Wipo placed in the mouth of his master in his biography sought to justify king's actions by using legal terms adopted from the Roman law. The buildings were *publicae*, that is *public*. At that time public goods were for example the market place which was open to everyone. Consequently, if the crown buildings, which the residents of Pavia had destroyed, were "public", there was no ground for the king to punish them. Hence, the word *publicae / public* means here something which is different from what we are used to term public nowadays.

Further, the king argued that the buildings were *alieni iuris / belonging to a foreign law*. If the phrase *publicae aedes* has really meant public here, they could not be *alius / alien* then. Consequently, by referring to the royal buildings as *publicae aedes* Conrad II had meant nothing but "royal buildings". Thus, according to Conrad II the royal buildings could never be left without their owner even if the king dies and there is no king at all. The royal property

^{*} For more inquiry into the formal situation of the crown lands in the feudal Germany see: James Westfall Thompson, The Crown Lands in Feudal Germany, in: The Journal of Political Economy, Vol. 31, No. 3 / 1923, pp. 360 – 379.

endures the person of the king because he is nothing but only the holder of the king's office. The argumentation of Conrad II could be interpreted in this way. (15: 137)*

This spot in Wipo's biography of Conrad II has become the locus classicus in the history of the German state-building process. That King Conrad II placed the office of the king over the person of the king has marked the important beginning of secular, transpersonal (read: institutional) understanding of the state and state authority. (2: 185)

Of course, one might raise the question whether the recapitulation of the conversation between Conrad II and the residents of Pavia by Wipo had not been his own deliberations on the state and the royal authority. Such question is warranted. Apart from the question, however, whether Wipo had exactly recorded the own words of the king or had put his own interpretation of the power and the state inside his text, the ruling style of Conrad II itself had delivered enough clues to the historical fact that during his reign a transformation began from the state, which was founded on personal relationships, to the state, which was founded on political institutions. During his whole reign, Conrad II had restlessly tried to expand the power of his royal house beyond his person. For example, in 1025 he ordered to convert an old monastery in Speyer to a magnificent cathedral where in future the bodies of the Salian kings should have been buried. In 1028, that is during his reign, he already let his son Henry III be crowned as a king in Aachen. Through this action he had provided for the stability and continuation of the royal power of the Salian dynasty.

VI. The acquisition of Burgundy

Another important event during the reign of Conrad II deserves a description here because it demonstrates clearly the ruling style of the first Salian king. This was the acquisition of Burgundy. The Kingdom of Burgundy, which was situated to the West of the German Empire, had for many years been ruled by the House of Rudolfinger. The last king from this dynasty, Rudolf III of Burgundy, used to be a very weak ruler. He could resist the great nobles within his kingdom only with the support of a German king. That is why during the reign of Henry II several treaties were concluded between the German king and the king of Burgundy (Treaty of Strasbourg, 1016; Treaty of Mainz, 1018). These treaties recognized the inheritance of the German king and his sovereignty over Burgundy. However, Henry II could inherit the land of Burgundy only if he had survived the king of Burgundy. Thus, the death of Henry II on July 13, 1024 had created a completely different situation. The king of Burgundy, Rudolf III, recalled all past treaties and began to look for another successor. Seemingly, the king of Burgundy thought of the state defined in personal relationships. The parallel to the case of the residents of Pavia discussed above was revealed here.

What was the reaction of Conrad II this time? First of all, he could hardly come in question as the heir to Henry II. The newly elected king declared, however, that he was entitled to make a claim to Burgundy because he was the legitimate successor to Henry II and as such he also was the legitimate successor to all treaties and agreements concluded during his reign. Consequently, Conrad II acted toward the king of Burgundy as the representative of the Reich. Conrad II proved again the fact that a remarkable change went on in the German Reich at that

^{*} In his extensive analysis of the semantic meaning of different expressions for the word "power" in the Middle Ages Walter Schlesinger has come to the conclusion that the Latin word "publicus" meant "something which stands in relation to the king".

time with regard to understanding of the king's authority. When Rudolf III of Burgundy died on September 5, 1032, Conrad II succeeded him as the legitimate heir of Burgundy. (5: ch. 29)

VII. Conclusion

Conrad II died in 1039. According to Wipo after his death "almost everything in the Reich went on after his desire". (5: ch. 39) The king could at least leave this world unconcerned about the continuity of the power of the Salian dynasty. As his son, Henry III, was already crowned the king in 1028, the continuity of power, at least from the father to the son, was guaranteed.

I tried to address here only few features of the reign of Conrad II. However, even these few cases can demonstrate how tense and excited at the same time the ruling time of Conrad II was. In the art and style of his ruling Conrad II did not differ from the ruling pattern set by the Ottonians. The usage of liturgical traditions as exemplified earlier during the coronation scene of Conrad II can be taken up as the conclusive proof that the Salians followed in Ottonian's footsteps.

Yet inside the inherited traditions the Salians had developed contours of a new time. The vague appearance of secularized interpretation of the state and the state authority during the reign of Conrad II had turned his reign into the turning point of the European history in the early Middle Ages. On the one side, the European nations took leave of the old times; on the other side, they turned themselves to the new ones.

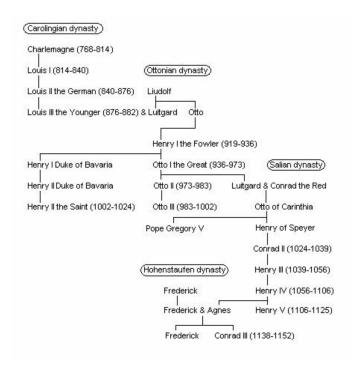
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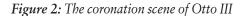
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Appendix:

Figure 1: The family tree of the Salians



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salian





Source: Robert Deshman, Otto III and the Warmund Sacramentary: A Study in Political Theology, in: Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, 34 Bd., H. 1, (1971), pp. 1-20, here: p. 15.

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К вопросу о сравнительно-правовом анализе оценки преступлений против здоровья (на примере России и Кыргызстана)

Любое явление может быть правильно понято и оценено лишь при условии его рассмотрения в процессе развития, т. е. в совокупности исторических связей, зависимостей и закономерностей, следующих друг за другом во времени. Именно поэтому историзм – основополагающий принцип научного подхода к исследованию и оценке изменяющейся, развивающейся действительности (11, с. 170).

Исследование преступлений против здоровья как социально-правового явления должно учитывать условия его формирования, чтобы в ходе сравнительно-правового анализа проследить развитие уголовно-правовых норм и оценить их современное состояние.