QUEENSHIP AND POWER

Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty

Women and Rule in Tenth-Century Germany

Phyllis G. Jestice

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Preface

This book is a study, above all, of the Ottonian empresses Adelheid and Theophanu. These women played a surprisingly visible role in the tenth-century *reich* ruled by the Saxon Ottonian dynasty (which, besides much of the territory of the modern Federal Republic of Germany also included northern Italy and parts of what is now eastern France). I first encountered these ladies, as most medievalists do, because they ruled as successive regents for the young king Otto III (983–1002), who came to the throne at the age of three. I began this project years ago intending to write a history of these regencies, fascinated at the thought of not one but two successive women successfully holding power in a warlike Germanic state of the central Middle Ages. However, extant evidence simply isn't sufficient to uncover most of what Adelheid and Theophanu did during their time as regents. Thus, a conventional history of Theophanu's and Adelheid's regencies (I use the modern term "regent" for convenience) based on a traditional reading of the existing sources would be very short.

The difficulties I encountered in uncovering Theophanu's and Adelheid's activities during their regencies made me aware of what perhaps is a more important question than what Theophanu and Adelheid did in the name of Otto III during his minority. Why were they in such a strong position that they were able to become successive regents in the first place, especially in light of the opposition they faced from Henry the Quarrelsome, an adult male relative who was so eager to take the reins of government and who actually for a time controlled the child king? For that matter, how were the Ottonian royal women more generally, whom the Quedlinburg annalist designates as "imperial ladies," able to play such

a visible role in their society? In other words, the central question became how they were able to act, and apparently act with a high degree of success, in this context at all. I reframed my question in those terms, focusing on the preconditions to regency instead of the regency period itself. The result was that I began to identify the factors that created and maintained an environment that empowered these women. This book is my attempt to answer this question, considering tenth-century attitudes toward women in general and females who shared in rule in particular in an effort to understand the dynamics of female rulership in tenth-century Germany.

This book has been many years in the making, and like all scholarly works has incurred many debts. I owe thanks to my last teaching appointment, the University of Southern Mississippi, whose grants enabled my research travel, and the collegiality I found there—above all that of my dear friends Lee Follett and Deanne Nuwer—which made my years in the Deep South both pleasant and productive, despite serving as department chair. I also wish to thank my new academic home, the College of Charleston, for bringing me to a city full of music and beauty, for sponsoring the writers' retreats at which most of this book was written, and for providing congenial colleagues—most notably Jason Coy, my writing partner.

This book has been shaped by many circles of collegiality, and it is above all that environment that I wish to acknowledge and thank here. Whether in the medievalist circle of Charleston or at the Southeastern Medieval Association's annual meetings or among colleagues at the International Congresses for Medieval Studies held each year in Kalamazoo, I have always found encouragement and help. Three current and former colleagues—Jason Coy, Jen Welsh, and Lee Follett—read and critiqued the manuscript of this book; many others gave feedback at conferences, over wine and cookies in my living room, and so on. It is to the ideal of academic collegiality that I dedicate this volume.

Charleston, SC
31 January 2018

Phyllis G. Jestice

Contents

1 Introduction: The Road to Regency 1

2 Women in Tenth-Century Germany 17

3 Prestige Marriage 43

4 The Wealth of Queens 71

5 The Lord's Anointed 103

6 Piety as Power 131

7 Connections 151

8 Partners in Rule 179

9 984 207

10 Regents 235

11 Epilogue: The Power of Royal Women? 265

Bibliography 271

Index 293

Abbreviations

Adalbert	Adalbert of Magdeburg, continuation of *Reginonis abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi*. Edited by Friedrich Kurze. MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 50 (1890)
Annales Quedlinburgenses	*Annales Quedlinburgenses*. Edited by Martina Giese. MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 72 (2004)
Briefe	*Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit*
Conc.	*Concilia*
DD	*Diplomata regum et imperatorum Germaniae*.
DHI	*Heinrici I. diploma*
DOI	*Ottonis I. diploma*
DOII	*Ottonis II. diploma*
DOIII	*Ottonis III. diploma*
FMSt	*Frühmittelalterliche Studien*
FS	Festschrift
Hrotsvit	*Gesta Ottonis*, in *Opera*. Edited by Paul von Winterfeld. MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 34 (1902)
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
SS	*Scriptores* (in folio)
SS rer. Germ. in us. schol.	*Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum*

Thietmar	Thietmar of Merseburg. *Chronicon*. Edited by Robert Holtzmann. MGH SS rer. Germ. nova series 9 (1935)
Vita Mathildis antiquior	*Vita Mathildis reginae antiquior*. Edited by Bernd Schütte. MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 66 (1994)
Vita Mathildis posterior	*Vita Mathildis reginae posterior*. Edited by Bernd Schütte. MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 66 (1994)
Widukind	Widukind of Corvey. *Rerum gestarum Saxonicarum libri tres*. Edited by Georg Waitz, et al. 5th ed. MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 60 (1935)

List of Figures

Fig. 2.1 Marriage at Cana, from *Codex Egberti*, c. 990, Stadtbibliothek Trier, Ms. 24. Source: ART Collection/Alamy Stock Photo 21

Fig. 4.1 Golden Madonna of Essen, gold leaf over wooden core, c. 980, Essen Cathedral Treasury. Source: Werner Otto/Alamy Stock Photo 92

Fig. 5.1 Otto II, Theophanu, and Otto III praying to Christ, with St. Mauritius and the Virgin Mary. Ivory book cover, c. 980, Castello Sforzesco, Milan. Source: INTERFOTO/Alamy Stock Photo 117

Fig. 5.2 Theophanu and the boy king Otto III, c. 990, detail of the front cover of the *Codex Aureus* of Echternach, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg. Source: INTERFOTO/Alamy Stock Photo 119

Fig. 5.3 Coronation of Otto II and Theophanu by Christ, Byzantine ivory relief, c.972, Musée de Cluny, Paris. Source: FALKENSTEINFOTO/Alamy Stock Photo 122

Fig. 5.4 Crown of Kunigunde, c. 1000, Residenz, Munich. Source: INTERFOTO/Alamy Stock Photo 123

Fig. 7.1 A charter of Otto II, 976. Source: Paul Fearn/Alamy Stock Photo 161

Fig. 9.1 Virgin Mary on a Donkey, detail from wooden doors, early eleventh century, S. Maria im Kapitol, Cologne. Source: Bildarchiv Monheim GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo 211

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The Road to Regency

On Christmas Day of the year 983 Otto III was crowned king of the East Franks at Aachen.[1] He was three years old. The child's father, Emperor Otto II, while occupied with affairs in Italy had arranged for his son's election and coronation as co-ruler, just as *his* father Otto I had secured the Ottonian dynasty's claim to the throne by making the same arrangements for Otto II several decades before. To judge from Otto II's experiences as junior king, it was not necessary for the king-in-waiting to do much of anything during his father's lifetime; indeed, to judge by a report in the monastic chronicle *Casus sancti Galli*, as he grew to adulthood Otto II had chafed at his honored but powerless position.[2] At most, a junior king, especially one as young as Otto III in 983, served as a sort of figurehead, an Ottonian presence in Germany. Such a royal presence may have been regarded as necessary since Otto II was making an extended stay in Italy, attempting to recover from his devastating defeat at the hands of the Saracens in southern Italy in the Battle of Cotrone the previous year. Such a figurehead status was nothing new; as early as Charlemagne, the Carolingians had installed underage subkings to serve the same function.[3] Certainly nobody expected a three-year-old to hold the reins of government.

But, unbeknownst to anyone in Aachen on that Christmas Day, they were anointing not a junior shadow king who could serve as his father's figurehead in Germany but rather the sole ruler of the extensive German *reich*, which in this period included northern Italy as well as much of the

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territory that constitutes modern Germany. Otto II, king of Germany and emperor of that greater German state, had died on December 7 in Rome, aged only twenty-eight.

The existence of a consecrated king who was a minor led to a crisis that threatened to tear the German empire to pieces. Otto III was manifestly unable to rule—he could not lead troops, sit in judgment, give largesse, or indeed undertake any of the tasks expected of a tenth-century ruler. Yet, since Archbishops Willigis of Mainz and John of Ravenna had anointed the child as king in a ceremony of profound religious significance, and he had received the fealty of Germany's nobles, Otto could not be set aside. Obviously there would have to be an extended regency, with more than a decade to wait before Otto III could rule for himself.[4] The situation was exacerbated by Otto II's recent defeat in southern Italy and the Slavic rebellion of 982, suggesting the need for a strong, adult ruler who could lead armies. Nonetheless, after a period of confusion in which Otto III's cousin Henry "the Quarrelsome" of Bavaria attempted to seize power for himself, the dust cleared to reveal Otto III's mother Theophanu firmly in charge as protector of the young king and helmswoman of the *reich*. When Theophanu died in 991, Otto III's grandmother, the empress Adelheid, assumed the same role, caring for Otto III and the state until her grandson attained his majority at age fourteen.

Historians have tended to treat the period of Otto III's minority lightly, then and now glossing over the distinct contribution of the regents. Part of the problem is that it can be difficult to discern how any ruler, male or female, actually ruled most of the time in this period.[5] But the difficulties of reconstructing the activities of rulers are exacerbated in a period of regency by the nature of our sources. By the conventions of the late tenth and eleventh centuries, Otto III ruled from the moment of his coronation, presented in documents both official and unofficial as a legal adult even though biologically he was still a child. As a result, charters were issued in Otto's name, it was Otto who engaged in warfare, and so on. The very idea of a "minority" was an expression of private law, implying incapacity, and was a contradiction in terms for a ruler—there was no legal concept of a minor king.[6] In other words, we *know* that adults must have acted for him in these affairs, but it is difficult to tease out the role of *de facto* regents in a society that did not even have a term for a regent or regency.[7]

In the tenth century both western and central Europe saw a high point in rulers' dependence on female members of their families as notions of proper rulership expanded but bureaucratic structures remained modest.

But this trend was emphasized to a particularly high degree in the German *reich*—the territories, whether German-, Slavic-, or Italian-speaking under Ottonian lordship. The tenth century was a pivotal era in European history, as institutions of government evolved that, for example, made it less necessary for a king to lead his troops in person. Certainly the Ottonians had some officials at their command and a chancery that almost certainly produced much written work besides the significant number of extant charters we have; still, the teams of clerks who created the English Domesday Book in the late eleventh century could scarcely be imagined yet.[8] In Germany, where a tradition of strong regional duchies always provided a pronounced centrifugal pull against rulers, kings clearly needed lieutenants who could be trusted through thick and thin. As is well known, the rulers of the Ottonian dynasty (919–1024) increasingly looked to bishops to provide a counterweight to the ambitions of the secular nobility, finally relying so heavily on the clergy that some historians dubbed the phenomenon a full-scale "imperial church system" (*Reichskirchensystem*) and regarded the rulers' empowerment of bishops (and to a lesser degree abbots) as a conscious tool of government.[9]

Less considered by historians is what a German historian might call a *Weibersystem*—a reliance on wives and other family members to help support the king/emperor in the work of rule. Yet, I argue in this book that in the tenth century the German rulers relied most heavily not on bishops but on their royal kinswomen, the "imperial ladies" whose loyalty was certain because their own lives were so fully intertwined with the success or failure of the dynasty. As Germany moved toward a system of primogeniture, kings often could not even trust their brothers—but they could trust their wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters. And, as I hope to show, the male rulers of the Ottonian dynasty carefully built up the status and resources of the *dominae imperiales* to the point that these women could, at need, wield extensive power and even wider-reaching authority in society at large.

The power of royal women was always contingent. First and foremost, a queen was expected to perform her biological duty and produce heirs for her husband. During exactly the period about which I am writing, in the 990s, King Robert of France repudiated his first wife, who had failed to bear a son. In 1003 he cast aside his second wife—in both cases citing the lack of a child to justify his action.[10] The German royal women at the center of this study were fecund. Queen Mechtild bore three sons and two daughters to Henry I. Otto I's first wife Edgitha had a son and a daughter

before her early death; Adelheid produced three sons and a daughter in rapid succession after his remarriage, although two of the sons soon died. Theophanu in her turn gave birth to five children in a five-year period, four of whom lived to adulthood (a daughter who was apparently the twin of Otto III died soon after birth).[11] The last Ottonian empress, Kunigunde, never produced a child, yet no effort was ever made to set her aside, suggesting that her political importance was so great that it trumped her reproductive role. For the others, however, pregnancy and childbirth played an important part in defining their role. One can also assume that they continued to play a role in the raising of their children, as we know Empress Gisela did with the education of the future Henry III, although contemporary writers paid little attention to this role.[12]

Some historians regard the period up to the late tenth century as a golden age for women, an epoch of potential equality, but I agree with their critics who argue that the "golden age" idea goes too far.[13] I do not wish to suggest that tenth-century German queens and empresses were their husbands' equals or that their relationships reached the "partnership marriage" ideal of modern times. This was a society in which men ruled, and women were expected to play a subsidiary role. But, as we will examine, contemporaries normally understood the gender difference enunciated in the extant primary sources as a difference of function rather than of capacity. In other words, people in the tenth century, at least those who wrote and whose works have survived to the present day, thought that women had the necessary intelligence and determination to take a leadership role if it were thrust upon them. Imperial women, *consortes imperii* as both narrative and diplomatic sources name them, were "sharers" in imperial rule. They were not equal partners, to be sure, but as junior partners they had a vital role to play. Perhaps sometimes they pushed too hard, leading their husbands to assert themselves in reminders as in a document detailing one of Henry II's gifts in the year 1017 that states bluntly that men are made to rule and women to be ruled. The historian Ingrid Baumgärtner interprets this extraordinary passage as a sign that Henry was not very willing to make the gift for which Empress Kunigunde intervened and perhaps resented his wife's advocacy for the recipient—although he made the requested grant.[14] In contrast, Wipo, the biographer of Emperor Conrad II, went so far as to call his hero's consort, Empress Gisela, his "necessary companion."[15] Certainly Gisela, like the empresses at the heart of this study, had the resources necessary for her to play a vital role in the government of the *reich*.

It was possible for Ottonian imperial women to play a role that was scarcely imaginable in earlier centuries. I do not mean to suggest that Germanic women in earlier centuries did not frequently attain and wield considerable power; examples of Merovingian queens like Brunnhild are numerous enough to show that women could be powerful. The root of their power did not change over time—it lay in the ability to exercise influence on their menfolk, most frequently their sons.[16] But, I would argue, Merovingian ruling women's power remained more contingent than that of their Ottonian counterparts, because they did not receive the means to exert independent influence, in strong contrast to the Ottonian royal women. While it remained true that no woman could really act as "ruler" apart from her husband or son,[17] women wielding power did in fact exist and were able to exist without doing violence to notions of rule in Ottonian society. Therefore, the Ottonians charted a different path from their Carolingian predecessors, for whom, as Janet Nelson has noted, *femineum imperium* was a contradiction in terms.[18] By the early decades of the eleventh century, the queen-empresses of Germany had more influence than they ever exercised either before or after that time.[19]

While this study focuses on Ottonian Germany, it is important to note that this openness to female rule also became more prominent in western and central Europe more generally in the tenth century, although not to such a high degree as in the German *reich*. Tenth-century England provides a particularly interesting example of the softening of attitudes. Pauline Stafford has examined the chronicler Goscelin's curious report that in the troubled 970s the nobles of England offered the throne to Edgitha, sister of King Edward the Martyr, despite the fact that she was a consecrated nun. They even offered their daughters to be consecrated as nuns in exchange for the princess. As Stafford points out, the account is very unlikely to be true, but it shows that Goscelin could imagine female rule; in fact he argues in his account of the event that many countries had been ruled by women.[20]

Pauline Stafford's point about the ways to read Goscelin's chronicle is a helpful reminder of the caution necessary when reading the primary sources for tenth-century Germany, but also highlights the usefulness even of ahistorical accounts. Most of our extant sources can be read from at least two vantage points. On the one hand, they tell of events and at that level need to be checked for veracity by every means available to the historian. On the other hand, however, they present to us a series of contemporary attitudes, views of women that the authors of the accounts considered at

least plausible, describing women acting in ways that were not alien to the thought world of the time. It is frequently the latter reading that gives us the greatest insight into women's lives in the tenth century, even when it is most difficult to piece together "how it really was" in the Rankian sense.

The most prosaic of the sources for this study are more than 1200 royal documents, the *diplomata* of the kings and emperors of Germany that have survived to the present day, products of the Ottonian chancery. These diplomas are overwhelmingly grants or confirmations of grants that the ruler made to recipients he wished to favor. At first sight they are very masculine documents; even during the minority of Otto III the royal diplomas were issued in his name, with only two exceptions. But on closer examination, women are woven throughout these rather dry documents. They are occasionally recipients, sometimes they are slaves being granted away along with their families, they endow religious houses, and frequently they have petitioned the ruler to make a grant.[21] The empresses Adelheid and Theophanu figure particularly prominently in these *diplomata*.

Next to the royal diplomas, the most immediate source is a number of letter collections. The most vital for our purposes are the letters of Gerbert of Aurillac (d. 1003), employed as an agent for the Ottonian court during the throne struggle of 984 and its aftermath. Gerbert was the most famous scholar of the tenth century, who started collecting his own letters during the years he served as abbot of Bobbio in northern Italy. He was also familiar with Germany, having spent years at the Ottonian court, and with eastern France where for some years he was archbishop of Rheims before crowning his career as Pope Sylvester II. Gerbert's letters present considerable challenges, especially as only one letter was dated, and scholars have had to work out the chronology of the rest based on internal evidence. Gerbert's high flights of rhetoric also can obscure his meaning. Nonetheless, he was well acquainted with many of our principal players and well positioned to understand the politics of the age.[22] Occasional use has also been made of the other letter collections of the age, most notably the letters of Rather of Verona (d. 974) and the Tegernsee letter collection (which includes the correspondence of several abbots of Tegernsee, starting in about 980).

Ottonian Germany produced several outstanding historians, both male and female, whose gendered perspectives help to give insight on our topic. The monk Widukind of Corvey wrote a "History of the Saxons" that encompasses the entire Ottonian *reich*; the work, completed in 967/968 but with additions in c. 973, was dedicated to Otto I's daughter Mechtild of Quedlinburg. Gerd Althoff has in fact argued that Widukind wrote

specifically to educate Mechtild, as the sole representative of the royal family in Germany for some years, in her duties as an Ottonian princess.[23] The rather later Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg did not start his chronicle until 1013 and relied heavily on Widukind as well as other sources. His work is nonetheless of unique importance especially since the garrulous bishop could never resist telling a good story. The pages of his extensive chronicle are full of impressions, tales that struck his fancy, and family history, in the course of which he provides a wonderful cross-section of information about women in the Ottonian world.[24] Other historians include Adalbert of Magdeburg, who penned a continuation of the chronicle of Regino of Prüm, the rather fanciful monk Ekkehard IV of St. Gall, whose *Casus s. Galli* is a highly entertaining read, and the Frenchmen Flodoard, Richer of Rheims, Raoul Glaber, and Adhémar of Chabannes. The Italian Liudprand of Cremona (d. c. 972), who traveled to Constantinople on an embassy for Otto I, also provided posterity with several historical works, including a sweeping indictment of the Italian rulers of northern Italy and Rome who fought the Ottonians, and whose women (if Liudprand can be believed) plumbed the depths of dissipation and malfeasance.[25]

All of the primary sources named so far have a distinctly masculine perspective on events, so we are indeed fortunate in having works by several female authors of the Ottonian period. The one we know by name is Hrotsvit, the canoness of Gandersheim most famous for her classicizing plays. But she also composed several historic works, most notably the "Deeds of Otto I," produced by 968. Historians have tended to be wary of Hrotsvit as historian; as Althoff has said, they have found the work "too panegyric, too little concrete, and too incorrect."[26] Such an assessment seems too hasty, however. As a canoness at Gandersheim under the rule of Gerberga, Otto I's niece, Hrotsvit would frequently have seen the royal court on their visits. Gandersheim, located in the heart of Saxony, was well situated to collect information. And, although the sole extant manuscript is incomplete, Hrotsvit provides us with much unique information about Queens Mechtild, Edgitha, and Adelheid.[27] Although we do not know her name, the author of the Quedlinburg annals was probably also a woman, a canoness at that greatest of Ottonian foundations. The *Annales Quedlinburgenses* is the work of a single author, started in c. 1000 and ended in 1030. The work provides especially extensive details about the two Mechtilds—the queen who founded the community and her granddaughter who served as its abbess—although there is also extensive treatment especially of Adelheid.[28]

Women were also probably responsible for two hagiographic works that give insight on Ottonian royal women, the earlier and later *vitae* of Queen Mechtild. With hagiography we move into more problematic historical territory, since the *topoi* of holiness helped create very stylized and not very lifelike images of the saintly queen. The nuns of Nordhausen responsible for these saints' *lives* also had political agenda that led the later author, for example, to emphasize the importance of Mechtild's younger son Henry of Bavaria, the grandfather of her own contemporary ruler. Nonetheless, the *vitae* provide useful information about queens' daily behavior and interactions with the populace.[29] More problematic is Abbot Odilo of Cluny's *Epitaphium Adelheidae*, a panegyric to Empress Adelheid's Christlike virtue that is so abstract that it is hard to discern a real woman behind the symbolism.[30]

Besides these major sources, a pastiche of references to women, both royal and common, appear in the annals of the tenth and early eleventh centuries. The presence of royal women often has to be inferred in the narrative sources but frequently becomes clear when adding in the charter evidence; for example, showing that the queen was in the king's company when he celebrated Christmas at Rome in 981. Like a number of the chronicles, the extensive Hildesheim annal only mentions Theophanu three times: her marriage to Otto II (although without naming her), her trip to Rome in 989, and her death. Such accounts, with their meager representation of women, help reinforce the sense that royal women were very frequently regarded as extensions of their spouses, rather than as players in their own right. It is only when the whole body of evidence is considered that their essential role becomes apparent.

The focus of this book is the two empresses who ruled for Otto III in the years between 984 and 995, Theophanu and Adelheid. But other women of the imperial house will also appear, including royal consorts both before and after the regency period, and I will also include comparisons to ruling women of other lands where appropriate. The structure of the book is not, however, strictly chronological, instead pulling in examples of royal women as appropriate to the subject at hand. Thus an introduction to our most important players seems in order, to avoid confusion.

The first queen of the Ottonian house was Mechtild (c. 894–968), daughter of an important and wealthy Saxon family who married Henry I shortly before his election to the kingship.[31] Her daughters Hadwig and Gerberga, wives of Duke Hugh the Great and King Louis IV of France respectively, also have a place in this story.

A number of women joined in the work of government alongside Mechtild's son Otto I. His first wife, Edgitha (d. 946), was an Anglo-Saxon princess, a sister of King Aethelstan. Their daughter Liutgard became duchess of Lotharingia in 947, cementing her father's ties to Duke Conrad. Liutgard is not, however, as well known as Otto's daughter by his second marriage, Mechtild (d. 999), who as abbess of the major dynastic foundation of Quedlinburg was an important political player in her own right.

This younger Mechtild was the child of Adelheid,[32] who was born in 931 to King Rudolf of Burgundy and his wife Bertha. Rudolf had a claim to the kingdom of Lombardy, and in a complex political deal Adelheid was married to Lothar, son of the other claimant to the title, while still a child. King Lothar died soon after inheriting the iron crown of the Lombards, however, leaving Adelheid a widow. As will be examined below, the question of whether Adelheid was regarded as Lothar's heiress is an important one, with direct bearing on what she brought to her second marriage. For Adelheid did indeed soon marry again. After a daring escape from her enemy Berengar, who seized the Lombard throne after Lothar's death and imprisoned the widowed queen, Adelheid found refuge with the German king Otto I (936–73). Otto, who had been a widower for some years, wed Adelheid on or about October 9, 951.[33] Adelheid already had a daughter (Emma) with Lothar; her vicissitudes as a widowed queen of France will be considered in the latter part of this book. Adelheid long outlived Otto, not dying until 999, and was later canonized as a saint.

Adelheid brings a number of distinctive features to our analysis. Already a mature woman of twenty at the time of her marriage into the Ottonian house, she brought with her at least some claim to the kingdom of the Lombards, a rich region that was also the gateway to Rome and southern Italy. She certainly retained (or Otto re-won for her) control of extensive dower lands in Lombardy, so she had her own resources going into the marriage. Adelheid also had a kinship network that stretched into the *reich*, most notably a brother who was king of Burgundy. Yet at the same time, Adelheid was a foreign bride, not connected to any noble faction within Germany. As a royal daughter, she had an inherited prestige comparable to Otto's own.

Theophanu[34] too was a foreign bride, but far more foreign than Adelheid. For years Otto I planned and plotted to gain a Byzantine princess as bride for his son Otto II. The importance of such an alliance in Otto's eyes is clear from the amount of effort he took to attain it, sending embassies and even engaging in a war with the Byzantines in southern Italy to pressure the

eastern emperor to agree to the alliance. The end result was that Theophanu, then about twelve years old, was sent in 972 to the West; she married Otto II and was crowned empress in Rome shortly after her arrival. Theophanu, as one chronicler points out, was not the *porphyrogenita*, the daughter of a ruling emperor, whom Otto I had wanted. Instead she was the niece of a usurper. Still, she came with an exotic and precious dowry, and most chroniclers and annalists seem unaware that she was not the "longed-for maiden." She was only about twenty-four years old when Otto II died in December 983. Theophanu herself died young, at age thirty-one or thirty-two, before her son came of age. Her daughters Sophia, Adelheid, and Mechtild long survived both their mother and their brother.

The common thread uniting Theophanu and Adelheid is that both are examples of the foreign prestige marriages that were becoming more common in western European royal houses in the tenth century. Both would have had to learn their husbands' language; while Adelheid may have known some German, at the time of her marriage she apparently normally spoke Romance.[35] Otherwise, though, they form many strong contrasts. Unlike Adelheid, Theophanu was a child bride. Adelheid was familiar with noble and royal customs in western Europe, a world that would have been very strange to a child raised in Constantinople. While Adelheid at least had kindred in nearby Burgundy, Theophanu had no relatives in the West at all, leaving her completely reliant on the family into which she married.

After these ladies' arrival in Ottonian lands, however, the Ottonian rulers into whose family they married took decisive steps to establish both in similar ways. The means included a magnificent endowment with lands and other incomes, an endowment that, as we will see, far surpassed the resources of even the greatest nobles. They received coronations in a religious ceremony that emphasized the status of each as "consort" or "sharer" in rule, not just as queens of Germany but as empresses of the revived western empire. This position as "consort" received firm emphasis in a variety of documents that repeatedly invoke the language of *consors imperialis* to explain these ladies' special position at the court and beyond (see Chap. 7). And their role as the most important advisors of their royal husbands was emphasized in document after document, in which the ruler made grants "at the intervention of" his beloved spouse. These steps made Adelheid and Theophanu not just the most powerful and influential women in the Ottonian *reich*, but the most important people overall after their husbands. Their wealth, their ability to advise and influence the king, their sacral position as anointed queens and empresses, all created an environment of respect around these women. Thus, although a woman

could not inherit the throne in tenth-century Germany, if conditions were right she could work as the lieutenant, viceroy, or regent for a king with surprisingly little question or opposition. And in 984, after Henry the Quarrelsome's threat to the stability of the kingdom had been suppressed, conditions were indeed right for women to rule in Germany.

This book will explore thematically the circumstances that made it possible for Theophanu and Adelheid to succeed in 984 and beyond. An important starting point is a consideration of women's value in tenth-century society more generally, demonstrating a lack of the misogyny that marred the later Middle Ages. The next section of the volume (Chaps. 3, 4, 5, and 6) examines key factors that gave the imperial ladies power and prestige, including the honor of royal foreign alliances, the wealth with which they were endowed, their unction as queens, and the careful construction of an image of the queen as particularly close to God. Chapters 7 and 8 will then examine how queen consorts could and did in fact exercise power during their husbands' lifetime. The events of the throne struggle of 984 are treated in their own Chap. 9, in which I argue that the special position of Theophanu and Adelheid made it possible to overcome enormous odds and claim control of the young Otto III and the regency. Finally, Chap. 10 details how Theophanu and then Adelheid undertook the tasks of holding the *reich* together until Otto III's majority.

The empresses did their self-appointed task well, as Otto III, chief beneficiary of their care, recognized. After Otto came of age he undertook his first expedition to Italy, and in 996 the pope crowned him emperor. Otto wrote to his grandmother, the venerable dowager empress Adelheid, on the occasion. The letter is a touching tribute from a ruler who had good cause to be grateful for the safe and secure kingdom that had been preserved for him:

> To the ever-august empress, the lady Adelheid, Otto by God's grace emperor august [sends greetings]. Since, in accordance with your wishes, God has with happy result granted us imperial authority, we praise God and truly render thanks to you. For we know and recognize the maternal affection, zeal, and piety for which we cannot fail to esteem you. Just as your honor is raised when we advance, we fervently pray and desire that the common weal be advanced through you and, thus promoted, shall be ruled happily. Farewell.[36]

The German empire had been passed on, intact and at peace. What greater tribute could a regent seek?

Notes

1. The eve of the tenth century saw the final division of the Carolingian empire into West and East Frankish kingdoms. The East Frankish kingdom is the main subject of this book. This land was roughly equivalent to present-day Germany and indeed was first called the "German kingdom" in the tenth century. Its people for the most part spoke German. In this work, I follow the practice of important surveys like Timothy Reuter's *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, 800–1056* (London: Longman, 1991) in unabashedly referring to the East Frankish kingdom as "Germany."
2. An anecdote Ekkehard IV of Saint-Gall reports illustrates Otto II's irritation at his secondary role during his father's lifetime: Otto I went into the abbey church and purposely let his staff fall to test the discipline of the monks. When his son heard of the event, according to Ekkehard, he marveled that the elder Otto let his staff fall when he held *imperium* so firmly that he refused even to share a part of it with his son. Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, ed. Hans Haefele (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), (146) 282–84.
3. Thilo Offergeld, *Reges pueri. Das Königtum Minderjähriger im frühen Mittelalter* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2001), 300ff.
4. Several tenth-century French kings also came to the throne at a young age, but since Louis IV was fifteen, Lothar thirteen, and Robert the Pious fourteen, the transition to personal rule was simpler and a placeholder was needed for only a short time. See Jean Verdon, "Les veuves des rois de France aux Xe et XIe siècles," in *Veuves et veuvage dans le haut Moyen Âge*, ed. Michel Parisse (Paris: Picard, 1993), 190.
5. Some scholars, most notably Gerd Althoff and Hagen Keller, have gone so far as to argue that the Ottonian *reich* lacked government organization. See Hagen Keller, "Zum Charakter der 'Staatlichkeit' zwischen karolingischer Reichsreform und hochmittelalterlichem Herrschaftsausbau," *FMSt* 23 (1989): 248–64 and Gerd Althoff, *Die Ottonen: Königsherrschaft ohne Staat* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000). Recently, however, above all David Bachrach has argued cogently that the Ottonian rulers retained important elements of Carolingian administration, including central record-keeping, *missi*, and the *inquisitio*. See Bachrach, "The Written Word in Carolingian-Style Fiscal Administration under King Henry I, 919–936," *German History* 28.4 (Dec. 2010): 399–423; "Exercise of Royal Power in Early Medieval Europe: The Case of Otto the Great, 936–73," *Early Medieval Europe* 17.4 (2009): 389–419; and "*Inquisitio* as a Tool of Royal Governance under the Carolingian and Ottonian Kings," *ZS der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Germ. Abteilung* 133 (2016): 1–80.
6. See Theo Kölzer, "Das Königtum Minderjähriger im fränkisch-deutschen Mittelalter: Eine Skizze," *Historische Zeitschrift* 251 (1990): 293; Offergeld,

Reges pueri, 37; Franz-Reiner Erkens, "…more Grecorum conregnantem instituere vultis? Zur Legitimation der Regentschaft Heinrichs des Zänkers im Thronstreit von 984," *FMSt* 27 (1993): 273–74.

7. The term "regent" first appears in western Europe in France in 1316. See Kölzer, "Königtum Minderjähriger," 314.
8. As Bachrach points out, rulers like Otto I did far too much not to have had an infrastructure supporting them. Bachrach, "Exercise," 393. Andreas Kränzle emphasizes that the Ottonian *reich* was far too large for a king to rule by personal presence. See Kränzle, "Der abwesende König. Überlegungen zur ottonischen Königsherrschaft," *FMSt* 31 (1997), esp. 124.
9. More recent scholarship has emphasized bishops' connections to family and friend networks, which made them much more complex figures than simple tools of the monarchy, as well as pointing out the inconsistency of royal appointments. For a critique of this earlier understanding, see Rudolf Schieffer, "Der Geschichtliche Ort der ottonisch-salischen Reichskirchenpolitik" (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998), 8–9; Stefan Weinfurter, "Die Zentralisierung der Herrschaftsgewalt im Reich unter Kaiser Heinrich II," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 106 (1986): 241.
10. In both cases, other factors were at work, but the failure to bear provided the necessary excuse. Penelope Adair, "Constance of Arles: A Study in Duty and Frustration," in *Capetian Women*, ed. Kathleen Nolan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 11.
11. Daniela Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern. Funktionen und Aufgabenfelder von Frauen in der ottonischen Herrscherfamilie (919–1024)* (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2003), 178 on Theophanu's offspring.
12. For Gisela's role in Henry III's education see Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke, *Notwendige Gefährtinnen. Königinnen der Salierzeit als Herrscherinnen und Ehefrauen im römisch-deutschen Reich des 11. und beginnenden 12. Jahrhunderts* (Saarbrücken: Verlag Rita Dadder, 1991), 49; on writers' neglect of queens' interaction with the royal children, see Matthäus Bernards, "Die Frau in der Welt und die Kirche während des 11. Jahrhunderts," *Sacris erudiri* 20 (1971): 55.
13. For example, Cristina La Rocca, "Pouvoirs des femmes, pouvoir de la loi dans l'Italie lombarde," in *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes à Byzance et en Occident (VIe–XIe siècles)*, ed. Stéphanie Lébecq, et al. (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Centre de recherche sur l'Histoire de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest, 1999), 38.
14. DHII 370 (July 10, 1017); Ingrid Baumgärtner, "Fürsprache, Rat und Tat, Erinnerung: Kunigundes Aufgaben als Herrscherin," in *Kunigunde—consors regni*, ed. Stefanie Dick, et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2004), 53.

15. Wipo, *Gesta Chuonradi II*, ed. Heinrich Bresslau, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 61, (4) 25.
16. For a classic formulation, see Suzanne Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500 to 900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 63.
17. See for example Franz-Reiner Erkens, "*Consortium regni—consecratio—sanctitas*: Aspekte des Königinnentums im ottonisch-salischen Reich," in *Kunigunde—consors regni*, ed. Dick, 79.
18. Janet L. Nelson, "Women at the Court of Charlemagne: A Case of Monstrous Regiment?" in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John C. Parsons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 49.
19. As Jäschke cogently argues in *Notwendige Gefährtinnen*, 1.
20. Pauline Stafford, "The Portrayal of Royal Women in England, Mid-Tenth to Mid-Twelfth Centuries," in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. Parsons, 155.
21. On issues related to royal diplomas, see especially Sean Gilsdorf, *The Favor of Friends: Intercession and Aristocratic Politics in Carolingian and Ottonian Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Geoffrey Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas: The West Frankish Kingdom (840–987)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).
22. Of the numerous studies of Gerbert, see especially H. Pratt Lattin, "The Letters of Gerbert," in *Gerberto: Scienza, storia e mito*, ed. Michele Tosi (Bobbio: Ed. degli A.S.B., 1985), 311–29 and Pierre Riché, *Gerbert d'Aurillac, le pape de l'an mil* (Paris: Fayard, 1987), *passim*.
23. See Gerd Althoff, "Widukind von Corvey: Kronzeuge und Herausforderung," *FMSt* 27 (1993): 253–72, esp. p. 267. Also useful are Johannes Laudage, "Widukind von Corvey und die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft," in *Von Fakten und Fiktionen*, ed. Johannes Laudage (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003), 193–224; Ernst Karpf, "Von Widukinds Sachsengeschichte bis zu Thietmars Chronicon: Zu den literarischen Folgen des politischen Aufschwungs im ottonischen Sachsen," in *Angli e sassoni al di qua e al di là del mare* (Settimane di studio 32, 1984) (Spoleto: Presso la Sede del Centro, 1986), 547–80; Karl Leyser, "Three Historians," in *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, ed. Timothy Reuter (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 19–28; Sverre Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography, c. 950–1150* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). For English-speaking readers, the introduction to the fine English translation of Widukind's history is very useful: Widukind of Corvey, *Deeds of the Saxons*, trans. and intro. Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), xiii–xxxvii.
24. David Warner provides an excellent overview of Thietmar's life and work in the introduction to his translation of the chronicle. Thietmar of Merseburg, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of* Merseburg,

trans. and intro. David A. Warner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001). See also Leyser, "Three Historians," 19–28; Helmut Lippelt, *Thietmar von Merseburg: Reichsbischof und Chronist* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1973), *passim*.

25. For an overview study of Liudprand, see Jon N. Sutherland, *Liudprand of Cremona, Bishop, Diplomat, Historian: Studies of the Man and his Age* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di studi sull' alto medioevo, 1988). Two particularly insightful articles about the acerbic bishop are Gerd Althoff, "Geschichtsschreibung in einer oralen Gesellschaft. Das Beispiel des 10. Jahrhunderts," in *Ottonische Neuanfänge*, ed. Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2001), 151–69; Philippe Buc, "Italian Hussies and German Matrons: Liutprand of Cremona on Dynastic Legitimacy," *FMSt* 29 (1995): 207–25. The outstanding English translation by Paolo Squatriti includes a good introduction. Liudprand of Cremona, *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, trans. Paolo Squatriti (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007).
26. Althoff, "Geschichtsschreibung," 158.
27. For Hrotsvit, see especially Stephen L. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Selinsgrove, Penn.: Susquehanna University Press, 2006); Wolfgang Kirsch, "Hrotsvit von Gandersheim als Epikerin," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 24/25 (1989/90): 215–24; Monique Goullet, "De Hrotsvita de Gandersheim à Odilon de Cluny: images d'Adélaïde autour de l'an Mille," in *Adélaïde de Bourgogne: Genèse et représentations d'une sainteté impériale*, ed. Patrick Corbet, et al. (Dijon: Ed. Universitaires de Dijon, 2002), 43–54. For a good overview of the issues of identifying women historians, see Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900–1200* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
28. For the *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, see Gerd Althoff, "Gandersheim und Quedlinburg. Ottonische Frauenklöster als Herrschafts- und Überlieferungszentren," *FMSt* 25 (1991): 123–44; Käthe Sonnleitner, "Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstverständnis der ottonischen Frauen im Spiegel der Historiographie des 10. Jahrhunderts," in *Geschichte und ihre Quellen*, ed. Reinhard Härtel (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1987), 111–19.
29. For the *vitae* of Mechtild, see the introduction to the English translation. Sean Gilsdorf, trans., *Queenship and Sanctity: The Lives of Mathilda and the Epitaph of Adelheid* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004). See also Bernd Schütte, *Untersuchungen zu den Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1994); Gerd Althoff, "Causa scribendi und Darstellungsabsicht: Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde und andere Beispiele," in

Litterae Medii Aevi, ed. Michael Borgolte and Herrad Spilling (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1988), 117–33.

30. For the *Epitaphium*, see Johannes Staub, "Odilos Adelheid-Epitaph und seine Verse auf Otto den Großen," in *Latin Culture in the Eleventh Century*, ed. Michael W. Herren, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 2: 400–409; Patrick Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1986), esp. 59–110.
31. Often Anglified as Matilda or Mathilda, use of the German form of her name—Mechtild—serves as a useful reminder of this queen's (and her granddaughter's) essential Germanness, as well as making confusion with the daughter of Henry I of England or the famous countess of Tuscany less likely.
32. Some scholars prefer the French form of her name, Adelaide, but I use the Germanic form under which she appears in German sources and German scholarship, since the most important parts of her career were spent in German lands.
33. Gunther Wolf, "Königinnen-Krönungen des frühen Mittelalters bis zum Beginn des Investiturstreits," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kan. Abt.* 76 (1990): 71.
34. "Theophanu" is the typical western European spelling of this Greek name (although Liudprand of Cremona employs the form "Theophana"). Both "Theophano" and "Theophanu" are correct in Greek usage. See Günther Henrich, "Theophanu oder Theophano? Zur Geschichte eines 'gespaltenen' griechischen Frauennamensuffixes," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Anton von Euw (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum, 1991), 2: 489.
35. The *Casus sancti Galli* reports that Otto I, shortly after his marriage, surprised his court by wishing them *bôn mân* one morning. Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, (132) 254.
36. Dominae A. imperatrici semper augustae O. gratia dei imperator augustus. Quia secundum vota et desideria vestra divinitas nobis iura imperii contulit felici successu, divinitatem quidem adoramus, vobis vero grates rependimus. Scimus enim et intelligimus maternum affectum studia pietatem quibus rebus obsequio vestro deesse non possumus. Proinde quia dum promovemur, vester honor attollitur, rem publicam per vos promoveri ac promotam feliciter in suo statu regi multum oramus et optamus. Valete. DDOIII 196.

CHAPTER 2

Women in Tenth-Century Germany

To understand the position the imperial women attained in the Ottonian *reich*, one must consider their society's attitude toward women more generally. The Ottonian wives Adelheid and Theophanu played significant roles in their society. So did the princesses Mechtild, Sophia, and the younger Adelheid, their daughters. But were they exceptional, granted some agency in a male world only because of their close relationship to the ruler? What were in fact typical gender relations? An examination of this question can help us understand the imperial ladies' relations with their husbands, sons, and the people around them. Much hinges on the question of how much women shared their lives with men, which can help us know such matters as when the imperial ladies were probably present. For example, if an annalist reports that Otto II spent Easter at a particular monastery, may we assume that his wife Theophanu was there as well? In short, when does the silence of the sources imply that a royal lady was present, and when does it imply her absence? Our assumptions depend very much on our understanding of societal norms regarding women's roles.

The central question of this chapter—whether the Ottonian queens were exceptional—can be summed up with an example that at first glance appears straightforward. In his chronicle, Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg is emphatic in his praise of Empress Theophanu. One passage in particular sums up his opinion of her:

P. G. Jestice, *Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty*, Queenship and Power, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77306-3_2

> Although of the fragile sex, her modesty, conviction, and manner of life were outstanding, which is rare in Greece. Preserving her son's rule with manly watchfulness, she was always benevolent to the just, but terrified and conquered rebels. From the fruit of her womb, she offered daughters to God as a tithe, the first, called Adelheid, at Quedlinburg, the second, called Sophia, at Gandersheim.[1]

On the face of it, Thietmar appears to be making an argument for the empress' exceptionality. *Despite* the impediment of her sex, she was a strong ruler. Her watchfulness was *manly* (although at least he acknowledges that she had a womb). Was Thietmar, though, making a case that Theophanu was separate from and superior to the norms of Ottonian womanhood? Some modern scholars, such as Sabine Reiter, have interpreted the tenth-century historians' understanding of women as creatures able to overcome their "natural weakness," to transcend the state to which they were born to display manly virtues like courage.[2] But was Thietmar really expressing a belief in weakness transcended under extraordinary circumstances, or simply following a literary stereotype in his description of Theophanu? This chapter argues that the latter was the case and that Thietmar, his contemporary chroniclers, and Ottonian society in general did in fact accept that, although they did not typically play a major role in public affairs, women had agency and were gifted with all of the abilities of males except physical strength.

Bishop Thietmar's chronicle is our most important narrative source for Ottonian Germany. It is long, and its rambling nature makes it particularly valuable for understanding the societal norms of Thietmar's time. While in general the chronicle provides a political history of the German *reich* (with particular emphasis on Otto II's grievous sin in dissolving the author's diocese of Merseburg), the bishop constantly interrupts his master narrative with tales from his own life or those of his friends, or anything else he thinks might interest his readers. An astonishing number of women—over eighty—appear in his chronicle, often at the heart of events, thanks to his love of good stories and lack of adherence to any "approved" classical model for writing history. Looking at *all* of Thietmar's women instead of just the royal ones provides a very different picture, more complex and nuanced than a simple portrait of unique royalty shaded with episcopal contempt for womankind. His is a rich landscape filled with strong women, often with real agency in events, spiritually advanced, and capable of true friendship with men—a landscape in which the imperial ladies are powerful exemplars rather than unique.

Of the other four great chroniclers of the Ottonian age—Widukind of Corvey, Liudprand of Cremona, Adalbert of Magdeburg, and Hrotsvit of Gandersheim—three provide us with significant evidence about non-royal women, although the monk Widukind, Adalbert, and the Italian bishop Liudprand focus more on a royal political narrative than Thietmar does. Hrotsvit's main historic work, the *Gesta Ottonis*, does not include non-royal women. But she provides us with a number of complex female characters in her dramatic productions, a series of plays modeled on the work of the Roman dramatist Terence. Between these sources as well as other small works, it is possible to construct a nuanced picture of what people in Ottonian society thought of their womenfolk.

Making Women Visible

Tenth-century chroniclers spoke a lot about women, and their appearances tend to be positive. While this is particularly true of Ottonian Germany, the same phenomenon can be seen throughout western Europe. A case in point is the chronicle of Adhémar of Chabannes, a southern French history from the early eleventh century. Adhémar aimed to provide a comprehensive history and to that end brought in material from a number of Merovingian and Carolingian annals. Therefore we can see in a single source what the "received wisdom" was about women from different historiographical periods. When he derives his material from Fredegar's seventh-century chronicle, Adhémar shows Merovingian women behaving badly. He provides a very full account of the rivalry between Fredegunde and Brunnhild, showing both of them manipulating their husbands and children into vicious and murderous rivalries.[3] His repeated refrain in the Merovingian section of the chronicle is that the royal women he describes gave bad counsel, as when Brunnhild advised her grandson Theoderic to claim the throne from his half-brother.[4] By contrast, it is striking how absent women are from the Carolingian-derived sections of his work, reflecting how rarely women appeared in his sources. As Adhémar begins drawing on his own memories and those of his living informants, however, many more women enter the account.

It is pleasant to have accounts written by women from the tenth century, which for the first time in the medieval centuries give us a significant "insider look" at what women thought of their own role. The Carolingian

Dhuoda, who wrote a manual for her son, provided such a conventional account that it is hard to see a human woman behind it. Far different is the tenth century, which provides us with the anonymous writers, almost certainly female, of the *vitae* of Queen Mechtild and the extensive annals of the great imperial convent of Quedlinburg. And of course the tenth century also produced Hrotsvit, canoness of Gandersheim, who has left us an extensive body of both fiction and non-fiction writing that presents a unique perspective on gender relations in the period. It is very likely that our imperial ladies were literate, and the same was true of a number of noblewomen. Thus, for example, we have a passing mention that the Italian Willa had a priest teach her daughters Gisla and Girberga their letters.[5] And we have a unique source, an interlinear psalter in Greek and Latin that, McKitterick has argued, may have been used to teach the youthful Theophanu Latin.[6]

Another interesting suggestion of a more general attitudinal shift comes from the realm of sacred art. Ottonian manuscript illuminations are replete with women; women are proportionally much more highly represented in Ottonian art than in that of the Carolingians.[7] Gospel scenes focus more than ever before on miracles involving women. Salome, Mary and Martha, Peter's mother-in-law, the woman suffering from a flow of blood … all figure prominently in Ottonian manuscripts. Above all, the Ottonian *reich* saw an artistic blossoming of representations of the Virgin Mary. She is depicted for the first time at many important scenes in the life and passion of Jesus.[8] Rosamund McKitterick suggests that such work was especially appropriate for women's piety, thus showing an unusual concern for female spirituality (Fig. 2.1).

In the Carolingian period, women appeared in manuscript illustrations as personifications of virtues or provinces. But the Ottonian period also saw what McKitterick has termed a "remarkable efflorescence of new kinds of representations in manuscript painting." Women appear in all sorts of new roles. Perhaps most notable are the ruler portraits depicting king and queen together.[9] An early example is the ivory depicting Otto II and Theophanu being crowned by Christ. The imperial couple appear as equals, of the same height and with similar crowns and other ornament; the only sign that Otto is superior is that he stands at Jesus' right side. Similarly, the gospel lectionary of Henry II (Munich ms 4452, fol. 2r) depicts Henry II and Kunigunde together.

Fig. 2.1 Marriage at Cana, from *Codex Egberti*, c. 990, Stadtbibliothek Trier, Ms. 24. Source: ART Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

Clerical Conceptions

All Ottonian chroniclers and annalists were members of the clergy, whether bishops, monks, or canonesses. Yet, despite the fact that they were just as immersed in Old Testament spirituality as their ninth-century forebears had been, they appear relatively unaffected by Carolingian gender stereotypes. Carolingian attitudes can be summed up well with the evidence provided by Theodulf of Orléans, one of the chief intellectuals in Charlemagne's court circle. Theodulf was highly critical of the rule of the Byzantine empress Eirene, comparing her to the wicked queen Athaliah of

the Old Testament who "with unfitting desire … had an appetite for command over men." Theodulf was shocked when Pope Hadrian accepted Eirene's role in the ecumenical council of 787, responding that "she must submit to a man's authority … It is one thing to sit at the feet of the Lord, quite another to organise synods, teach men in councils, [and] hand down perverse decrees…."[10] Indeed, Carolingian moralists were quick to condemn women they regarded as pretentious.

The Ottonian period by contrast has only a few traces of a blanket clerical admonition that women should keep their place. Churchmen recognized that consorting with women could lead to scandal. As the Council of Trier in 927 ordered, no priest should have a woman live with him, even his mother or sister, because others who might fall under suspicion would come to see them.[11] Similarly, Abbo of Fleury had a long conflict with his bishop, during which the saintly abbot fought to prevent the bishop from celebrating public masses in the monastery, which meant possible scandal since women were in proximity to the monks.[12] But on the positive side, the same Council of Trier ordered similar penances for men as for women who committed adultery, rather than regarding adultery as a "women's crime."[13] The assembled bishops also decreed that if a man with a concubine married, he ought to separate from the concubine.[14] Still, bishops could be waspish about women's sexual misconduct. For example, Thietmar, usually very positive about women, clearly thought that Margrave Ekkehard's daughter Oda got what she deserved when she became the fourth wife of Boleslav Chrobry, since "up to now, she has lived outside the law of matrimony in a manner worthy only of a marriage like this one."[15]

Perhaps the best extant example of "clerical misogynist mindset" from the tenth century is Rather of Verona's *Praeloquia*. Rather, a highly educated but troubled cleric, much of whose life was spent fighting for what he regarded as his right to be a bishop, provided in this rambling treatise an overview of attitudes toward women (along with much other material).

Women, says Rather, should study the virtue of obedience, which he clearly regards as a particularly appropriate moral goal for them. The reason, quite simply, is male superiority. Rather's explanation of his reasons why women should be obedient has more similarities to Aristotle than to any other probable source, although it should be noted that Aristotle's own writings on female inferiority were not available in the West for another two centuries. He tells the reader:

> Just as a man raises himself up through his mind and a woman through her flesh, so you should strive with steadfast vigor of mind to overcome the harmful blasts of vices and pleasures that rise up against the spirit….[16]

He also shows himself well acquainted especially with the pseudo-Pauline epistles of the New Testament and their interpretations. Thus Rather orders that the wife should serve more with deeds than with words, "as truly the creator God himself particularly commanded through the Apostle, saying you shall be under the man's power, and he shall dominate over you." Our author also draws readers' attention to I Peter 3:6: "As Sarah was obedient to Abraham, calling him lord…" as a model for emulation.[17] Rather is also well aware of the possibility of demons passing themselves off as women. As he says, a demon taking the form of Herodias, who arranged for the murder of John the Baptist, was only the first example of the phenomenon.[18]

Book II of the *Praeloquia*, however, suggests that Rather's views of women were more subtle. He avoids cheap and easy comparisons to the "bad" women of the Old Testament, instead providing an encyclopedia of biblical passages about women that stress the wonderful qualities of a good wife. Rather especially relied on Ecclesiasticus, pointing out how fortunate it is to be the husband of a good wife and how the worthy wife brings joy (Ecclus 26:1 and 26:2). While a drunken wife is bad (Ecclus 26:8–9), he does not imply that this is a common problem, instead following the biblical author's praise of modest and virtuous wives (Ecclus 26:11–19). When drawing on New Testament texts, Rather includes the passage from Ephesians urging the subordination of wives to their husbands, but also quotes the following command that husbands should love their wives (Eph. 5:22–32). He also includes the injunction of older women to teach proper behavior to younger females (Tit. 2:1). And twice he invokes I Corinthians to the effect that an unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife (7:14). The general tenor of this part of the treatise is deep appreciation and respect for good women.[19] This tone of appreciation makes it considerably less surprising that Rather should have written to beg Empress Adelheid for help at a low point in his career. In that letter, he alludes flatteringly to the empress' sagacity. He also refers in terms of strong approval to the influence that wives have over their husbands, hoping that Adelheid will exert that influence on his behalf.[20] In the context of his full *oeuvre*, this letter should probably be understood as reflective of Rather of Verona's true appreciation of Adelheid's role, rather than as self-serving opportunism.

Dealing with Stereotypes

A common difficulty in dealing with historical stereotypes is chronology. Attitudes toward women shifted significantly in the course of the eleventh century, and we must beware of imputing later beliefs to the Ottonians. A case in point is Sigebert of Gembloux, who reports in his chronicle that Theophanu had a "female and Greek levity"—clearly two strikes against the empress in a single phrase.[21] But Sigebert did not write until the turn of the twelfth century, so we would do well to treat his views both of Theophanu and of women in general with caution. Writers of the Ottonian era were more positive in their assessment. Yet even Thietmar is not above stereotype, as when he describes Hugh the Great of France waiting for a plot to develop "like an anxious woman."[22] Then as now, it was an insult to call a man "womanish," as when Thietmar calls King Rudolf of Burgundy "mild and effeminate" after Rudolf tried to renege on an agreement to make Henry II of Germany his heir. As Thietmar goes on to report, the Burgundian "has only a title and a crown" and is so weak-willed that he will give bishoprics to whoever his magnates propose.[23]

The bishop of Merseburg also knows that "the mind of woman is flexible"—his explanation for why the heiress Mechtild was willing to marry the future king Henry I despite her commitment to the conventual life. Thietmar goes on to say that Mechtild also knew Henry to be judicious, though, which suggests that what was involved in her decision included more reason and less weakness of mind than his initial statement suggests.[24] But on closer examination, the dig at female mutability is perhaps better understood as Thietmar showing off his erudition with an allusion to Virgil's *Aeneid*.[25] Virgil provided a handy stick with which to beat women as can be seen with another recurrence of the tag "variorum et mutabile semper est femina" in the *Casus sancti Galli*, when Ekkehard criticizes Duchess Hadwig of Swabia for changeability when she kept changing her mind on whether to give an estate to the monastery of Saint-Gall.[26] The lasting popularity of Virgilian misogyny can be seen still later, when Anselm in his *Gesta episcoporum Tungrensium* tells of a problem Count Baldwin of Flanders had in 1047 with his wife "from female instability of spirit," which refers back to the same passage of Virgil.[27] Still, prejudice did exist in the German lands and not just in the erudite quotes of its scholars: Thietmar finds it necessary to point out that the incantations of evil women do *not* cause solar eclipses, since apparently at least some people believed this to be the case.[28]

Occasionally the women who populate the chronicles commit murder (or are accused of doing so), and when they do, they tend to employ the "women's weapon" of poison, playing on the stereotype that women resort to devious and underhanded means to work their will. For example, Widukind tells that the Hungarians originated with some Gothic women poisoners who were banished for their crimes and went to live in the swamps like wild animals.[29] Adhémar of Chabannes reports that Count Boso's wife poisoned him.[30] Indeed Adhémar, who seems particularly fond of lurid accounts of female misconduct, also accuses Emma, Adelheid's daughter, of poisoning her husband King Louis V of France.[31]

Individual women could be evil in chroniclers' eyes, without necessarily implying a debility common to their whole sex. Alpertus of St. Symphorian, Metz, writing in 1021 or 1022, tells of the bad repute of a woman named Adala, "who was clamorous in voice, lascivious in words, affected in clothing, dissolute in spirit, and who, unstable of mind, followed where her eyes led her."[32] Similarly, Fulbert of Chartres clearly loathed Constance of Arles, wife of King Robert the Pious of France. In a letter of 1027 the bishop refuses to attend the coronation of the king's son Henry, saying he is "frightened away by the savagery of his mother."[33] Neither author, however, seems to have had anything against women in general.

Karl Morrison has argued that the monastic historian Widukind of Corvey "evaded the conventions of misogyny," suggesting that he transcended the norms of his time.[34] Certainly Widukind speaks positively of women. His history of the Saxons was dedicated to Otto I and Adelheid's daughter Mechtild, recently installed as abbess of Quedlinburg, and addresses her in terms of highest praise. Widukind calls both the abbess' mother Adelheid and her grandmother Mechtild "queen of singular prudence."[35] Widukind is also willing to give women credit as peacemakers. For example, the monk describes Otto I's reconciliation with his brother Henry as effected by Henry's marriage to Judith, accompanied by his installation as duke of Bavaria. But the marriage was not simply a means of conveying property. Instead, Widukind praises Judith as "a woman distinguished by her beauty, and exceptional for her intelligence."[36] Yet, while acknowledging Widukind's lack of bias, Morrison's interpretation is too quick to assume that there *was* a convention of misogyny in the German lands in the tenth century.

Modern scholars have perhaps been too ready to interpret other tenth-century accounts as misogyny. What, for example, should one make of Thangmar's account of the notorious "Gandersheim controversy"? This

account, found in Thangmar's *vita* of Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim, tells that when Theophanu's daughter Sophia was to be consecrated as a canoness, she insisted that the archbishop of Mainz perform the ceremony. When Bishop Bernward attempted to consecrate her, the members of the community at Sophia's instigation beat pans and made such a racket that they drove him away again. Sonnleitner has argued that Thangmar's complaints about Sophia's lack of humility were grounded on the Church Fathers' arguments that women should be subordinate by reason of Eve's sin.[37] Was his complaint against her because of her inappropriately unfeminine behavior, though, or because of the disrespect toward the diocesan bishop with control of Gandersheim, Thangmar's hero Bernward of Hildesheim? On close examination, Thangmar's condemnation appears not to be gendered at all, but is rather grounded in ecclesiastical rights. We have a report, relayed with admiring pride, that Sophia's aunt, Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg, was veiled "by all the bishops of the realm."[38] The implication in this earlier case is that an imperial daughter had the right to expect nothing but the very best. When Sophia's sister Adelheid was installed as abbess of Quedlinburg, their brother Otto III appeared at the event with a glittering array of dignitaries.[39] In other words, Sophia had every reason and precedent to resent the slight that was being done to her and wasn't just being an unreasonable woman.

Ottonian chroniclers had very negative things to say about some women, but they decried immoral men in their society as well. Thietmar decries the lack of loyalty among men in his own time as part of his diatribe about a general decline in contemporary virtue. When complaining about women's moral decline, though, it is not surprising that the judgment should be more private, indicative of women's normal role away from the public sphere. Thus, for Thietmar women's virtue has declined in a more sexually charged way than has that of men. For example, the bishop bemoans the prevalence of women's adultery in his age (clearly regarding adultery as a preeminently female vice).[40] Thietmar also gives himself the role of fashion police. His most scathing indictment of contemporary women appears in contrast to a countess named Christina, though, allowing us to see both what the bishop valued and what he condemned. He tells how Christina gave much property to the monastery of St. Mauritius, Magdeburg and at her death heaven rejoiced to receive her. But, Thietmar tells, she was not a typical woman:

> Concealing her good deeds in her heart, she differed from other modern women, most of whom clothe their bodies in an unseemly fashion and openly reveal to all their lovers whatever they have to offer. Although they are an abomination to God and the shame of our age, they shamelessly make themselves a spectacle before the whole populace.[41]

Clearly Thietmar, like many men before and after, equated female fashion with promiscuity, at least in this passage. But one should note several other points about this panegyric. First, a countess had property to give to St. Mauritius, property that was clearly hers to dispose of freely. Second, Thietmar specifies that Christina kept her good deeds secret, suggesting that other women in fact gave gifts to churches and so on, but were more likely to trumpet their generosity to the world. Third, Thietmar in his extensive chronicle only refers at one other point to female promiscuity, despite his propensity to gossip about anything and everything.[42] And only in a single instance does he in fact name a particular woman as lacking in virtue.

For Thietmar, most women were chaste, virtuous, and patient. In fact, he describes Otto I's daughter Liutgard, whose husband, Thietmar says, often despised her, as a woman who suffered troubles "with manly patience and tried to preserve her innate honor."[43] But in fact Thietmar's women are often patient—unlike the men he describes. In other words, Thietmar's use of the term "manly" begins to appear more as a flattering superlative and less as a specific gender designation at all.

For tenth-century chroniclers female virtue was to be guarded. Adalbert gives striking testimony to this need in his entry for the year 950. He tells that Otto I was at Worms when a very disturbing charge was made. Conrad, son of Count Gebehard, had boasted that he had enjoyed sexual relations with the king's niece. Otto offered his eternal friendship to any champion who would fight to defend the niece's honor. A Saxon named Burchard took up the challenge and defeated and killed Conrad in single combat.[44] Although Adalbert does not develop the story any further, Thietmar does. In Thietmar's version, it was not Otto I's niece but his daughter Liutgard who was publicly defamed. And in Thietmar's account, Liutgard was not merely a passive victim who had to wait for her kinsman to defend her honor; she was allowed to absolve herself by oath in a judicial procedure and it was only after her purgation that Otto avenged the family honor by arranging the duel.[45]

Other chroniclers have little to say on the subject of women of loose morals; the one significant exception is the often-scurrilous Bishop Liudprand of Cremona. According to Liudprand's *Antapodosis*, the ruling women of Italy were a thoroughly evil collection of greedy, manipulative whores. He reports that early tenth-century Rome was ruled by "Theodora the shameless harlot," whose daughters were even worse than she was. As he tells the tale, Marozia, the elder daughter, had an affair with Pope Sergius, and their son John later became pope.[46] Bertha, wife of Margrave Adalbert II of Tuscany, inspired her husband in his "nefarious schemes" to rebel against his lawful lord King Lambert.[47] Bertha and others, most notably Willa, wife of Margrave Boso, were guilty of every sort of sexual license. Liudprand even tells a scurrilous story of how Willa hid a valuable gold belt up her vagina to preserve it when King Hugh ordered her searched after Boso's arrest. It was only discovered when Willa was strip-searched and a servant pulled a string hanging from her buttocks whereupon the belt came out.[48] Some historians have seen Liudprand as a misogynist, glorying as he clearly does in lurid details of these Italian noblewomen's behavior. But Philippe Buc has cogently argued that this is not in fact the case. One should not forget that the *Antapodosis* is a work that in its very title proclaims its purpose—retribution against those Liudprand believes have harmed him. Liudprand describes, or perhaps invents, shocking behavior for the women of his enemies.

By contrast, Liudprand is very positive about the Ottonians Adelheid, Gerberga, Ida, and Mechtild. His story is less about women being "hussies" (as Buc puts it) as it is about Italians being bad and Germans being good.[49] Liudprand owed his bishopric and well-being to Ottonian patronage, so he certainly wasn't likely to insult imperial ladies. It should come as no surprise that, when discussing the future empress Adelheid's marriage to Lothar of Italy in 947, he should characterize her as "both most virtuous in form and gracious in the probity of her ways."[50] But, leaving aside for a moment the enemies Liudprand is at pains to vilify and the allies he lauds, the "neutral" women of his account appear positively. A good example is Rudolf of Burgundy's sister Waldrada, whom Liudprand describes as "a lady as honest in appearance as in wisdom."[51] And even Liudprand finds positive things to say of Italian women, as long as they weren't on his enemies list. Thus he reports that in a fight against the Greeks in Italy the commander Tedald, an official of King Hugh, ordered that captive soldiers be castrated. A woman saved her husband's virility with an impassioned argument that her husband's testicles belonged to

her, not to him and that to remove them would constitute war on women since it would deny her any hope of future children. The woman got a good laugh from Tedald and his men—and her husband got a reprieve. But Liudprand takes care to point out that what was involved was not lust; she was "wisely" pleading in a way most likely to get the result she wanted, and she won back her family's raided animals at the same time.[52]

Shifting Ground

By Ottonian times, women were allowed a larger legal role than in earlier centuries, including the ability to inherit and to bequeath their property. They were still under the legal authority of their husbands or the male head of the family.[53] But at least some personal rights were recognized and Church councils, for example at Frankfurt in 951, issued edicts against carrying women off by force to marry them.[54] Admittedly, the fact that the participants found it necessary to make such a pronouncement suggests that there was plenty of room for improvement. Nonetheless, such enactments suggest a shifting of the ground in marital relations.

Thietmar tells of an abduction his own cousin Margrave Werner carried out, so one can presume the chronicler knew the details well. Werner was inspired by the "machinations of evil women" (one of the few negative assessments of women Thietmar provides) to steal the heiress Reinhild, owner of the castle of Beichlingen. Reinhild had promised not to marry without the emperor's consent, so when her would-be husband came in force to take her away, Reinhild's men resisted Werner's attack. The invaders seized the heiress, but in the course of the attack the margrave was wounded and captured. He later died of his wounds, but his followers moved the woman from place to place to avoid returning her, although they were eventually forced to give in.[55]

The most famous example of abduction in this period comes from the 990s, when Otto III had come of age but was in Italy, leaving his aunt Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg as the sole Ottonian representative north of the Alps. The Quedlinburg annalist and Thietmar both report that a man stole an heiress from a convent against her will. A complaint was made to Abbess Mechtild, who convened an assembly of Saxon nobles and forced the woman's return. That Mechtild's efforts were successful suggests that at least the legal principle of freedom from abduction was recognized.[56]

Women's position in the family was also shifting, or at least had become for the first time a subject worthy of being committed to writing. The process began among intellectuals in the Carolingian period, when clerics proposed a model of family life based on Paul, Augustine, and Isidore. By this model, couples were defined as united by *caritas* and mutual affection.[57] This is not to suggest that couples never felt affection for each other before this time, but rather that the educated approach to describing familial life had changed significantly. Carolingian moralists came to use the institution of marriage as a model for society as a whole.[58] While this shift probably had more to do with ecclesiastical arguments against divorce than a changed attitude toward women, the existence of this literature probably helped shape the attitudes of tenth-century clerical authors.

But did this body of clerical writing affect actual behavior toward women, or the position women held in the family or in society more generally? A first point suggesting that this was indeed the case is that in the tenth century marriages were generally expected to be with a partner of equal birth.[59] Long gone were the days when Merovingian kings could elevate slave women to the throne. Indeed, by 987 Charles of Lotharingia's marriage to a mere noblewoman was considered a good reason for denying him the French throne when the direct Carolingian line died out. And not only was polygamy long gone; society even frowned on extramarital affairs. For example, Liudprand says King Hugh of Italy had three chief concubines (and several lesser mistresses) during his third marriage and numerous children—and that the situation shamed his wife.[60] No ruler of the Ottonian dynasty is known to have had a mistress after his marriage.

An even more fundamental shift occurred in the late ninth century: an increasing array of charters began listing wives along with their husbands in donations and other transactions, suggesting that the women were partners or co-owners. For example, the late ninth century saw the first instance of a wife appearing alongside her husband in a formal charter in the south of France.[61] In monastic donations of the eighth and ninth centuries, noblemen disposed of goods alone, but the formula shifted to include the wife's consent in the tenth century. The late ninth century also saw a change in the way aristocratic families were entered into *libri memoriales*, the commemorative books religious foundations kept with long lists of donors for whom they should pray. In the ninth century, as Le Jan has pointed out, wives are mentioned, but the lists tend to separate men from women. In the tenth century, by contrast, entries incorporate an entire family unit, both husband and wife of a couple together, along with

their children. The distinctive title "comitissa" for the wife of a count appeared at about the same time, which Le Jan takes as evidence of the transformation of structures of power and relationship in the late ninth and early tenth century.[62]

That women were recognized more clearly as partners is borne out in the formal charters, the *diplomata* of the Ottonian kings. For example, in a diploma of 981, Otto II confirmed an exchange of lands between the monastery of Prüm and the noble couple Nithard and Eversburga.[63] Perhaps this instance is unsurprising, since the exchange included the dotal land from Eversburga's first marriage. But in numerous other cases of couples making donations, no reason is given for the wife being included, leaving us to presume that as a partner in the marriage she was entitled to her share of prayers from grateful monks, as well as to a say in the transaction.[64] Indeed, in two of Otto II's documents, the wife explicitly gave her consent.[65]

Although in general noble families were increasingly defining themselves in terms of male descent lineage rather than broad kindreds in the tenth century, some chroniclers such as Thietmar are very careful to identify major players not just by their paternal but by their maternal lineage, as when he introduces the future Henry I as the child of Otto and Hadwig (Hadwig, according to the first *vita* of Mechtild, was a venerable matron with a character like her husband's).[66] Thietmar likes writing of his own relatives, describing the relationship in terms like "the son of my mother's uncle."[67] But what emerges is not just a sense that Thietmar was proud of his own kin. In fact, he nearly always names the mother as well as the father of his characters—much more often than the more classically-inspired chroniclers do. He clearly expects family relations to matter to his readers, and for people to have a strong sense of the obligations of kinship, whether agnatic or cognatic. Thus he considers it noteworthy that Henry II refused to make his brother-in-law Adalbero archbishop of Trier, despite his wife's pleas; Thietmar seems to agree with Empress Kunigunde's kin that such a failure in duty to a kinsman was very improper.[68]

Strong Women

The fictional characters in the works of canoness Hrotsvit of Gandersheim are particularly instructive about cultural stereotypes. Hrotsvit was a major author of the tenth-century *reich*. Besides a metrical history of Otto I, the *Gesta Ottonis*, she crafted a foundation history of her house and a number

of charming plays about early saints. These works describe recluses and other pious and/or reformed women. The plays were apparently intended for production at Gandersheim. Since Gandersheim was a major imperial convent, it had frequent and important visitors, including the royal court on Palm Sunday in many years. We do not know if the works were in fact performed, but the fact that Hrotsvit wrote several suggests that she received some sort of encouragement to keep going. If her depiction of women was unrealistic or out of tune with the mores of her time, she is unlikely to have pleased her audience.

Hrotsvit's women are strong characters. Hrotsvit may describe herself in the *Gesta Ottonis* as frail because she's a woman, but modern commentators read that as irony rather than a statement of her actual belief.[69] Like her characters, Hrotsvit would certainly have recognized that she was not as physically strong as a typical man. Her characters cannot defeat the evil men who threaten their virginity by physical means. In other displays of weakness, they are often subject to temptation, as when the hermit Abraham's daughter Mary runs away and becomes a prostitute, or when the same figure later squeamishly rejects life as a recluse when it is first offered to her on the grounds that the cell in which she is to be confined is dark and will soon smell bad.[70] Nonetheless, the women are strikingly empowered. They are eloquent, often engaging in vigorous defenses of their faith. And they display an inner strength that allows them to overcome the brute force of men.

We may chuckle at Liudprand's tale of a woman using her wits to save her husband from castration. Such tales, however, reinforce the sense that real women certainly could persuade or order men to do their bidding. Two instructive cases come from the pages of Thietmar's chronicle. In the first Emperor Henry II ordered a force to burn and destroy his enemy's stronghold at Schweinfurt. But the attackers were largely thwarted by a redoubtable old woman, Eila, "Margrave Henry's illustrious mother." Eila received the men the king had sent, and at her demand they informed her of their orders. Instead of taking the opportunity they gave her to evacuate the premises, though, Eila marched into the church, saying she would rather be burned herself than cooperate with the people burning it. The king's men could not shake her from this position and were unwilling to remove her by force. So they only pulled down the walls and outbuildings—and promised that they would return and restore everything as soon as the king allowed them to do so.[71]

Even more revealing about a mother's authority is Thietmar's account of his maternal uncles and the Vikings. Thietmar's uncles Henry and Siegfried were captured by pirates, who demanded both peace and an enormous ransom, holding the two men hostage until their demands were met. Thietmar tells that his mother's pain at her brothers' peril was so great "that she was willing to give whatever she had or could acquire in any way" to secure their release. The most important property she had under her control was her sons. Thietmar recognized his mother's right to dispose of her children without consulting their father or any male relatives. Her first effort to provide a son, the monk Siegfried, as security for one of his uncles was thwarted only because the young man's abbot refused to release him for the task. So Thietmar himself, still a boy, was packed off to the pirates. The uncle for whom he was intended to serve as surety escaped before the boy arrived. But the important point is that it was the mother of the family who took charge of providing hostages to secure her brothers' release.[72] In a similar maternal decision, Dietrich of Angers (b. 1007) started on his path to sainthood when his mother vowed to make him a monk if he survived after a serious boyhood accident. In Dietrich's case, the father eventually agreed to the vow, but it was the mother who had taken the initiative.[73]

Women's good character and ability to shape their children appear regularly in our other extant sources, not just in Thietmar's chronicle. Sometimes it is a passing mention, as when John the Deacon mentions in his account of the year 977 a woman who was "Felicia [happy] in name and merit."[74] A number of examples appear in the two *vitae* of Queen Mechtild, wife of Henry I and mother of Otto I. Mechtild's own strength of mind and goodness is of course the major theme of both accounts, but laudatory passing references are made to other good women. Thus, for example, Mechtild's mother Reinhild, a woman of mixed Danish and Frisian blood, appears to the hagiographer as a woman of "commendable character."[75] While Mechtild's "virtue is all the more praiseworthy because her sex is more fragile,"[76] I would argue again that what we see at work is pious phraseology rather than real belief that women were particularly weak.

It should come as no surprise that women's piety was highly regarded; throughout the early Middle Ages women provided a firm underpinning of prayers for their husbands and family; even clerics who simultaneously decried Eve as the reason for the loss of paradise lauded them as saints. As

we will see in Chap. 6, imperial women's piety was an important part of their job profile; they prayed their husbands out of purgatory, preserved the *reich*, and even gave alms to birds. Such behavior was not limited, however, to members of the royal family; Thietmar tells how well his own niece Liudgard had served her husband as "faithful guardian of his life and soul, devoting herself to the service of God more for his sake than her own." She even protected her husband from enemy plots with her fasting, prayer, and alms.[77] But what is notable, especially in Thietmar's work but in other chronicles as well, is the intelligence and valor his female role models display in their religiosity.

Women's piety could be merely steadfast, as in the case of Abbess Hathui of Gernrode. Thietmar tells that Hathui married at age thirteen, only to be widowed at twenty. She became a canoness and in time abbess and served God for fifty-five years until her death. Thietmar characterizes her as generous and abstinent, but also constant in her devotion. She was the bishop's cousin, and he apparently knew her well.[78] But sometimes women's ascetic practices could reach a high pitch of fervor. Perhaps the holiest figure in Thietmar's massive chronicle is the recluse Sisu, a woman whose depths of self-renunciation included picking up worms that fell out of the sores on her body and replacing them in her wounds. Thietmar's own mother had been close to Sisu and presumably was the source of the bishop's information.[79] Both cases reveal Thietmar's ongoing relationship with female members of his family, and indeed women are often the informants for his tales, suggesting that he listened to women with respect and attention. Thietmar's own early education had been at Quedlinburg, in the care of his maternal aunt Emnilde—who the bishop also regards as worthy of mention.[80]

Some of Thietmar's women were such great spiritual athletes that God rewarded their piety with miracles. Abbess Benedicta of Thorn miraculously replenished wine with her prayers.[81] Alfrad, one of two pious sisters, was blessed with a mystical experience on the day before her death. The Virgin Mary spiritually transported her *devotée* to heaven. There several saintly bishops absolved her, and she saw several people including Archbishop Gero's maternal aunts (one of whom had become a recluse in Rome).[82] An abbess named Gerberga experienced a vision too, one that tested her wisdom and strength of mind to the uttermost. The devil appeared to Gerberga one day and told her that her friend Archbishop Gero of Cologne would soon sicken and would die if he were not protected—he would fall into such a deep coma that he would

appear to be dead. But the clincher was that if Gerberga told anyone of what had been confided to her, the devil would kill her. Rather than being intimidated by the threat, Gerberga did in fact warn the archbishop, and the devil did indeed strike her down.[83]

Women could be wise. When a Swabian woman died, she rose from the bier at her own funeral, Thietmar tells us. Summoning her husband and others close to her, she gave each of them a special charge and comforted them before dying again.[84] But a woman did not have to be dead to be wise. Once when Thietmar saw a strange vision he told his niece Brigida, abbess of St. Lawrence. Brigida, he reports, responded by telling him wise things about the spirits of the dead.[85] It could be argued that Brigida's religious position gave her a special authority otherwise denied to women. Recluses were especially good at giving advice. For example, the recluse Wiborada at St. Gall gave advice to many through the window of her cell, including the future bishop Ulrich of Augsburg.[86] It is pleasant to note that, while Ulrich was the subject of the first papal canonization, his counselor Wiborada was the first woman to receive that honor. A rather later account tells of the recluse Bia, who was so famous for her sanctity that many came to her cell seeking help for their salvation.[87] But laywomen could be wise as well. As we have already seen, Liudprand describes Waldrada, sister of Rudolf of Burgundy, as "a lady as honest in appearance as in wisdom."[88] French sources from the late tenth and early eleventh centuries are also willing to credit women with wisdom. Thus Raoul Glaber describes Emma, the sister of Hugh the Great, as both beautiful and intelligent. The Capetian king-maker Hugh sent for his sister and asked for her advice on who he should put on the throne; on her advice, he chose her own husband Raoul (923–36).[89]

Most notable, however, is the evidence that women shared their lives with men. At the royal level, an example that stands out is Otto I's response to the death of his first wife, Edgitha, in 946. Adalbert notes movingly: "Lady Edgitha the queen died and with the greatest mourning of the king and all his people was buried at Magdeburg."[90] Otto did not remarry for several years after Edgitha's death. And it is clear that even a man like Thietmar, a presumably celibate member of the higher ecclesiastical order, well-schooled with an education that certainly stressed Church Fathers and the Bible, cared for and appreciated women. He describes Eila, the margrave's widow who thwarted an attempt to burn her out, as "my friend."[91] Eila was far from being the bishop's only friend among women. They were his informants, his teachers, at times his comforters. Thietmar

was especially moved by the death of his niece Liudgard, which, he tells, was foretold by the grunting of the dead in the cemetery. The first time she appears in the chronicle, Thietmar simply reports "she was close to me" without mentioning the relationship. But much later in the chronicle Thietmar returns to Liudgard's deathbed, which he attended at Liudgard's summons. At that point, Thietmar reports that "she was especially close to me"—and also joined by bonds of blood. It is interesting that he acknowledges the emotional closeness of their friendship before the kinship.[92]

Ottonian authors appreciated "womanly virtue," a quality Thietmar ascribes to Ida, wife of the king's son Liudolf.[93] To the mid-eleventh-century chronicler Hermann of Reichenau, Ida was a "laudable female," plain and simple.[94] Presumably what both authors meant by their characterization was chastity, self-control, and piety, the trifecta of female virtues for many centuries. Mildness was a virtue in women but a vice in men; thus, King Rudolf of Burgundy was "mild and effeminate" when he tried to renege on an agreement to make Henry II his heir.[95] Thietmar thought patience was a masculine virtue, but one that exemplary women could also enjoy, such as Otto I's daughter Liutgard, who suffered troubles "with manly patience and tried to preserve her innate honor." Thietmar notes approvingly that, on her death, Liutgard was buried at St. Alban's, Mainz and her silver spindle still hung there in her memory in his time.[96] Thus in a single image Thietmar showed the royal daughter as a model of both masculine and feminine virtue. Clearly a woman could be manly in virtue yet all woman in function; Thietmar was only offended when women took on masculine activities unnecessarily as well as their virtues. For example, he says of a Slavic woman named Beleknegini, who drank to excess, rode a horse like a warrior, and once killed a man in a rage, that her hands would have been better employed with a spindle.[97]

Conclusion

What then are we to make of Thietmar's characterization of Theophanu's "manly watchfulness" despite her disability as a member of the "fragile sex"? Are we in fact dealing with anything more than a literary convention? Women as early as the Merovingians Brunnhild and Balthild were depicted as having masculine traits, but without any negative connotation.[98] Reiter has suggested that for tenth-century historians, women were able to overcome their "natural weakness" to enjoy manly virtues like courage.[99] I would say that such a characterization was half right.

Rather than overcoming weakness, the chroniclers appear to show some women, just like some men, naturally endued with virtue. Most of Thietmar's many women were anything but fragile, even when they themselves said they were. As Stephen Wailes put it: "Whenever Hrotsvit excuses her actions by reference to her sex, she means something else entirely."[100] She, like the many women Thietmar loved and admired, like Theophanu whom he esteemed so highly, had an acknowledged and valued place in Ottonian society.

Notes

1. Thietmar, (IV.10) 142. I use here the excellent translation by David Warner in *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 158.
2. Sabine Reiter, "Weltliche Lebenformen von Frauen im zehnten Jh. Das Zeugnis der erzählenden Quellen," in *Frauen in der Geschichte* 7, ed. Werner Affeldt and Annette Kuhn (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1986), 215.
3. Adémar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, ed. Jules Chavanon (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1897), (I.30–33) 33–37.
4. Adémar, (I.37) 42.
5. Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, in *Opera*, ed. Joseph Becker, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 41 (1915), (V.32) 150.
6. Rosamond McKitterick, "Ottonian Intellectual Culture in the Tenth Century and the Role of Theophanu," *Early Medieval Europe* 2 (1993): 63.
7. Rosamond McKitterick, "Women in the Ottonian Church: An Iconographic Perspective," in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 79.
8. Ibid., 88–91.
9. Ibid., 86–87.
10. *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum (Libri Carolini)*, ed. Ann Freeman and Paul Meyvaert, MGH Conc. 2, supplement 1 (1998), 390. Translated and discussed in Janet L. Nelson, "Women at the Court of Charlemagne: A Case of Monstrous Regiment?" in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John C. Parsons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 48.
11. Council of Trier, 927, MGH Concilia 6, 1 (1987), canon 6, p. 81.
12. Aimo, *Vita sancti Abbonis*, PL 139: (12) 402.
13. Council of Trier, canon 24, p. 87.
14. Council of Trier, canon 27, p. 88.
15. Thietmar, (VIII.1) 492.
16. Rather of Verona, *Praeloquiorum libri VI*, ed. Peter D. Reid, CCCM 46, 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1984), (II.3) 47. "Vir itaque mente, mulier carne

insurgentes et tu aduersus spiritum insanos uitiorum uoluptatumque tumultus forti mentis uigore stude deuince…."

17. "uero per Apostolum tibi spetialiter ipse mandauit conditor Deus: sub uiri, inquiens, potestate eris, et ipse dominabitur tui." Rather, *Praeloquiorum*, (II.11) 54–55.
18. Rather, *Praeloquiorum*, (I.10) 14.
19. Ibid., (II.11) 55.
20. Rather, *Die Briefe des Bischofs Rather von Verona*, ed. Fritz Weigle, MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit, 1 (1949), Letter 31 (June 968), 179–80.
21. Sigebert of Gembloux, *Chronica*, MGH SS 6: (27) 352.
22. Thietmar, (II.23) 66.
23. Ibid., (VII.30) 434.
24. Ibid., (I.9) 14.
25. Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV, 569f. Where, it should be noted, Virgil speaks of women's changeability in the context of *Aeneas*' abandonment of Dido, rather than the other way around.
26. Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, ed. Hans F. Haefele (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), (120) 234.
27. Anselm of Liège, *Gesta episcoporum Tungrensium Traiectensium et Leodiensium*, ed. R. Koepke, MGH SS 7: (59) 224.
28. Thietmar, (IV.15) 148.
29. Widukind, (I.18) 28.
30. Adhémar, (III.45) 167.
31. Ibid., (III.30), 150.
32. Alpertus of Metz, *De diversitate temporum et fragmentum de Deoderico primo episcopo Mettensi*, ed. Hans van Rij and Anna Sapir Abulafia (Amsterdam: Verloren, 1980), (I.2), 10.
33. Penelope Ann Adair, "Constance of Arles: A Study in Duty and Frustration," in *Capetian Women*, ed. Kathleen Nolan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 9.
34. Karl F. Morrison, "Widukind's Mirror for a Princess—An Exercise in Self Knowledge," in *Forschungen zur Reichs-, Papst- und Landesgeschichte*, vol. 1, ed. Karl Borchardt and Enno Bünz (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1998), 50.
35. Widukind, (III.7) 108; (I.31) 43.
36. Ibid., (II.36) 95.
37. Käthe Sonnleitner, "Sophie von Gandersheim (975–1039). Ein Opfer der 'männlichen' Geschichtsforschung?" in *Geschichtsforschung in Graz*, ed. Herwig Ebner, et al. (Graz: Institut für Geschichte an der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, 1990), 375–76.
38. *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS 6, a. 966, p. 619.

39. Gerd Althoff, "Ottonische Frauengemeinschaften im Spannungsfeld von Kloster und Welt," in *Essen und die sächsischen Frauenstifter im Frühmittelalter*, ed. Jan Gerchow and Thomas Schilp (Essen: Klartext, 2003), 43.
40. Thietmar, (VIII.3) 494.
41. Ibid., (IV.63) 204.
42. In his description of Oda, the fourth wife of Boleslav Chrobry; Thietmar, (VIII.1) 492.
43. Thietmar, (II.39) 88.
44. Adalbert, a. 950, p. 164.
45. Thietmar, (II.39) 88.
46. Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, (II.48) 58–59. Note that the French Flodoard also comments on the power of Marozia, naming Pope John as her son, but without the strident accusations of whoredom that Liudprand provides. Indeed, Flodoard seems rather to admire Marozia, commenting that she successfully held Rome against King Hugh. Flodoard of Rheims, *Annales*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1905), a. 933, p. 54.
47. Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, (I.39) 28–29.
48. Ibid., (IV.12) 110.
49. Philippe Buc, "Italian Hussies and German Matrons: Liutprand of Cremona on Dynastic Legitimacy," *FMSt* 29 (1995): 207–25, cf. esp. 214–17.
50. Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, (IV.13) 111.
51. Ibid., (II.66) 67.
52. Ibid., (IV.10) 108–109.
53. Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Die Frau als Herrscherin in ottonisch-frühsalischer Zeit," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Anton von Euw (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum, 1991), 2: 245.
54. Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, 800–1056* (London: Longman, 1991), 225.
55. Thietmar, (VII.4) 402–404.
56. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 72 (2004), 501–502; Thietmar, (IV.41) 178.
57. Régine Le Jan, "L'épouse du comte du IXe au XIe siècle: transformation d'un modèle et idéologie du pouvoir," in *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes à Byzance et en Occident (VIe–XIe siècles)*, ed. Stéphanie Lébecq, et al. (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Centre de recherche sur l'Histoire de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest, 1999), 65.
58. Pierre Toubert, "La théorie du mariage chez les moralists carolingiens," in *Il matrimonio nella società altomedievale* (Spoleto: Pr. La Sede del Centro, 1977), 245.
59. Reiter, "Weltliche Lebensformen," 217.

60. Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, (IV.14) 111; see the analysis in Reiter, "Weltliche Lebensformen," 218. Flodoard also comments that "Hugh, the son of Bertha" copulated with other women, although his wife was living, suggesting his strong disapproval of the situation. Flodoard, *Annales*, a. 926, p. 35.
61. Jean Verdon, "Les femmes et la politique en France au Xe siècle," in *Economies et sociétés au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1973), 117.
62. Le Jan, "L'épouse du comte," 68–71.
63. DOII 252 (July 12, 981).
64. See for example DOI 114, DOII 119, DOII 283, DOIII 26, DOIII 32, and DOIII 68, all of which record the gift of a named couple to a religious house or make a gift to a married couple.
65. DOII 182 (January 15, 979) and DOII 190 (May 20, 979).
66. Thietmar, (I.3) 6; *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (1) 111. Timothy Reuter, "Introduction: Reading the Tenth Century," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, ed. Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 18 discusses the tenth century's turn toward patrilineality.
67. Thietmar, (V.22) 247.
68. Ibid., (VI.35) 316.
69. Dennis M. Kratz, "The *Gesta Ottonis* in its Context," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, rara avis in Saxonia?*, ed. Katherina M. Wilson (Ann Arbor: MARC, 1987), 204–205.
70. See especially Hrotsvit, *Abraham*, in *Opera*, ed. Paul von Winterfeld, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 34 (1902), (II.4), 159.
71. Thietmar, (V.38) 264.
72. Ibid., (IV.23) 158.
73. *Vita Theoderici abbatis Andaginensis*, ed. W. Wattenbach, MGH SS 12: (5) 40.
74. Giovanni Diacono, *Istoria Veneticorum*, ed. and trans. Luigi Berto (Milan: Zanichelli Editore, 1999), a. 977, p. 140.
75. *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (2) 149.
76. Ibid., (preface) 145.
77. Thietmar, (VI.85) 376.
78. Ibid., (VII.3) 400.
79. Ibid., (VIII.8) 502.
80. Ibid., (IV.16) 150.
81. Ibid., (IV.33) 171.
82. Ibid., (VII.55) 466–68.
83. Despite Gerberga's heroism, the story has an unhappy ending. Gero appointed a man to watch and make sure he wasn't buried by mistake when he was really still alive. But the man thought the bishop was indeed

dead and he was buried, a mistake compounded when the cathedral clergy failed to believe the man who said he had heard Gero calling from the tomb. But that was certainly not Gerberga's fault, who had done her duty by her friend at the cost of her own life. Thietmar, (III.3) 100.

84. Thietmar, (VII.32) 436–38.
85. Ibid., (I.12) 16–18.
86. Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, (3) 107; Gerhard of Augsburg, *Vita Sancti Uodalrici*, ed. and trans. Walter Berschin and Angelika Häse (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1993), (I.1) 90–92.
87. *Chronicon Hujesburgense*, ed. Ottokar Menzel, *Studien und Mitteilungen OSB* 52 (1934): 139.
88. Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, (II.66) 67.
89. Rodulfus Glaber, *Historiarum libri quinque*, ed. John France (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), (I.6) 14.
90. Adalbert, a. 947 [really was 946] p. 163.
91. Thietmar, (V.14) 236.
92. Ibid., (I.13) 20; (VI.84) 374.
93. Ibid., (II.4) 42.
94. Hermannus Augiensis, *Chronicon*, MGH SS 5, a. 947, p. 114.
95. Thietmar, (VII.30) 434.
96. Ibid., (II.39) 88.
97. Ibid., (VIII.4) 498.
98. Janet L. Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History," in *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 47.
99. Reiter, "Weltliche Lebensformen," 215.
100. Stephen L. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 209.

CHAPTER 3

Prestige Marriage

In the tenth century, it became clear as never before that a queen's pedigree was an essential component of royal honor. The importance of birth rank for royal women appears most unequivocally in the contest for the throne of France in 987. The contenders were the Carolingian Duke Charles of Lotharingia and the powerful duke of Francia, Hugh Capet. Given the prestige of the Carolingians, it should have been no contest—the Carolingian Charles, brother of the recently deceased King Lothar, was the only plausible choice. But Charles had married beneath himself; his wife was the daughter of a minor noble. And the historian Richer, a man very close to the events of 987, reports that the great nobles of France simply could not stomach the thought of serving a woman of such inferior rank.[1] It is interesting to note that this account implicitly states that even great nobles would be expected to interact with their queen in terms of signal respect, implying that they might even be expected to obey her commands. The 987 controversy reveals how important it was by the late tenth century for great men to have great wives, to contract marriages to women who were their peers or even of a superior pedigree in order to enhance their own prestige. Such was the case with the Ottonians. The German rulers of the tenth century engaged in prestige marriages to a degree hitherto unseen in western Europe. This chapter argues that their decision to wed the daughters of foreign rulers had a profound impact on the position of the imperial ladies of Ottonian Germany.

P. G. Jestice, *Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty*, Queenship and Power, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77306-3_3

The queen's birth rank had not always mattered. While the early Germanic kings of Francia, Italy, Spain, and England had often wed foreign princesses, they also routinely married noblewomen or even commoners. Indeed, from the later sixth century it became Merovingian royal practice for the king to marry low-born or even slave women. Such a marriage was not held to affect the status of the woman's children.[2] The women themselves, royal by marriage but not by blood, certainly received outward signs of respect—they wore crowns and dressed richly—whatever important nobles might have said about pretentious, jumped-up slave women behind their backs. Certainly a commoner raised to royal rank because she caught a king's eye was vulnerable. Merovingians casually repudiated wives of whom they tired; they had no protection even of a noble kin network, much less a foreign connection that could make diplomatic or military trouble if they were ill-used. It was unlikely that a slave woman could operate, at least at first, on an equal footing even with the noblewomen who came to form her entourage; she would not have had the training in the arts and graces expected of noble girls.

The Carolingians did not marry slaves; they wed noblewomen. One of Charlemagne's wives, Hildegard, may have been selected because she had Merovingian blood, and sometimes the Carolingians planned foreign royal marriages.[3] Nonetheless, typically Carolingians married reasonably noble women who caught their eye, probably with their ambitious kinsmen carefully positioning them in the king's line of sight. We even have a report that Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious chose Judith, his second wife, in the course of a "bride show," a formal inspection of noble daughters arranged so he could select a mate.[4] Choosing a noblewoman was, however, dangerous, since marrying her meant favoring her kinsmen. Already in the case of Louis the Pious and Judith, Judith's ambitious Welf family saw the marriage as a stepping stone in their long climb to power. The early Ottonians, before their rise to the throne, were themselves able to consolidate their position by marrying their daughters to members of the royal family. The future Henry I's aunt Liutgard married King Louis the Younger (d. 882), and in the late ninth century Henry's sister Oda married King Zwentibold of Lotharingia.[5]

Marriage and the First Ottonian Kings

When the first Ottonian, Henry I, came to the throne of the East Frankish kingdom in 919, he badly needed to find ways to enhance his prestige. He was not the son of a king, nor was he a Carolingian. Members of his family

had not even been dukes of Saxony for many generations. He refused royal unction, declaring himself rather to be merely the first among equals, probably fearing the nobles would find him too pretentious. Nonetheless, he sought less controversial means to display his superiority to the magnates of the *reich*. One of the means that lay ready to hand was marriage.

Henry's own marriage history before becoming king shows his long-term use of marital alliances to enhance his position. His first wife was a woman named Hatheburg. The match would have certainly been regarded as good when it was made; she was the daughter of a noble from the Merseburg area and brought a considerable inheritance to the marriage. To be sure, Henry was son of the duke of Saxony, but at the time he wed Hatheburg his two elder brothers were still alive, so it is very likely that this was the best match he could have hoped for. Hatheburg soon bore Henry a son, who received the Ottonian family name Thankmar.[6]

By the year 909, however, the situation had altered. Henry was now the heir of Otto the Illustrious, the powerful duke of Saxony. The political ground had also shifted. The king, Ludwig the Child, was proving unable to control the East Frankish state, and an ambitious noble could well have imagined the situation that did in fact come to pass in 911, when Ludwig died and the nobles elected one of their own number, a non-Carolingian, as king. Despite having a son and heir with Hatheburg, Henry needed a more prestigious wife who could bring greater influence to the marriage. And he emphatically did not need the ecclesiastical disapproval his marriage to Hatheburg had brought him, since Hatheburg had been a nun and left her convent to wed Henry. Although Henry had apparently ignored the bishop of Halberstadt's protests at the time, by 909 he was more interested in finding allies among the episcopate. So he separated from Hatheburg, consigning his son Thankmar to dubious status as a semi-bastard for the rest of his life. In Hatheburg's place Henry wed the heiress Mechtild.

Ottonian historians were careful to stress that the match with Mechtild was an alliance between equals. In fact, the later *vita* of Mechtild leaves out Henry's match with Hatheburg completely, also ignoring the fact that Henry was about thirty years old when he married for the second time. Instead, the author reports how "young" Henry's kin looked for a suitable wife for him, a woman of equal birth and equally generous nature.[7] While this should be read in the context of hagiographical panegyric, the stress on equality is striking. The Saxon historian Widukind takes a similar approach, carefully emphasizing Mechtild's elite bloodlines, telling readers that she

was the daughter of Count Dietrich and a descendant of Charlemagne's great Saxon opponent, Duke Widukind.[8] Since the historian Widukind was apparently part of the same family, this may just be evidence of pride in his family. But both *vitae* of the future queen also stress Mechtild's ancestry, suggesting that it was indeed a lineage that would inspire esteem.[9]

Still, when the nobleman Henry and noblewoman Mechtild became king and queen of Germany after Henry's election in 919, their non-royal antecedents were an impediment. Certainly Henry's decision not to be anointed and crowned as king suggests a series of wary maneuvers with the great nobles of the kingdom, who until the moment of election had been his peers. They faced another problem: the succession. Henry was the second king in a row who had been elected without being related to his predecessor; the ruler before Henry, Conrad I, had been the first non-Carolingian on the throne. While Conrad, according to admittedly pro-Ottonian historians, recognized on his deathbed that his own brother was not throne-worthy and nominated Henry of Saxony as his successor,[10] family structures in the tenth century dictated that Henry and Mechtild should do everything in their power to make sure that their son followed them on the throne.

Henry decided to find a bride for Otto, his eldest son with Mechtild, a bride who conveyed so much prestige that the marriage alliance would help assure Otto's succession to the crown. So the king looked to England, probably the strongest state in western Europe at the time. In the 920s the successors of Alfred the Great were consolidating their hold. What's more, King Edward the Elder (d. 924) had produced a large family with his three wives, including four daughters who reached adulthood. Thus, when Henry opened negotiations with the English court, King Aethelstan proved cooperative. Two of his sisters had already wed—Eadgifu married King Charles III the Simple of France in 919 or 920 and Eadhild became wife to the powerful Duke Hugh of Francia in 926.[11] That left two sisters available, Edgitha and Aelfgifu, so Aethelstan sent them both to Germany for Otto to choose the one he preferred. After Otto's choice fell on Edgitha, the spare sister Aelfgifu remained on the Continent and probably married the brother of King Rudolf II of Burgundy.[12]

The royal son Otto's marriage to Edgitha in 929 was a clear break from the Carolingian tradition of marrying noblewomen of one's own land. This was not just a marriage but an alliance between two ruling houses. The marriage sealed an alliance between Henry I and Aethelstan against the Danes. It also perhaps opened a conduit for England to import German

clerics to aid with the land's recovery from the Viking depredations of the late ninth and early tenth century. When Aethelstan's emissaries escorted his sisters to the *reich*, they also made a tour of German monasteries, most likely to recruit clerics for England.[13]

The Ottonian chroniclers were in no doubt of the significance of the marriage. It was always significant when somebody married the daughter of a king; thus the French chronicler Flodoard writing of the year 926 was careful to note that Duke Hugh's new bride was the daughter of King Edward of England (although he does not bother to name the woman).[14] The German accounts are also careful to record Edgitha's pedigree. For example the Quedlinburg annalist reports that in 929 Otto married Edgitha, "daughter of the king of the English," as does Adalbert of Magdeburg (although he mistakenly gives the year as 930).[15] Although they get details wrong, Liudprand of Cremona and Widukind of Corvey also stress that Edgitha was of English royal stock, Liudprand reporting that she was a niece rather than a sister of Aethelstan and Widukind mistakenly naming King Edmund of England (actually Edgitha's younger brother) as her father.[16]

The most detailed account of this marriage alliance appears in the pages of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim's *Gesta Ottonis*. The canoness reports that Henry I longed to find a worthy wife for his eldest son Otto. He did not want a daughter-in-law from his own realm, so he sent to England and asked King Aethelstan for his ward Edgitha. Admittedly Hrotsvit is rather confused on this point, believing that Edgitha was the daughter of an earlier king rather than of Edward the Elder. But she emphatically stresses that Edgitha was of the stock of King Oswald (d. 642), the martyr "whose praise the whole earth sings."[17] The Germans already knew and esteemed Oswald; the Venerable Bede tells that the martyr's cult already spread east of the Rhine in the first quarter of the eighth century. By the early decades of the tenth century the saint was widely commemorated in Saxony, for example at the convent of Essen.[18]

Widukind's final assessment of Edgitha, when he reports her death, is a good summation of what this Anglo-Saxon princess brought to the Ottonian dynasty. For Widukind she was distinguished by her piety, but in the same sentence he lauds her royal blood: she was the daughter of a family no less royal than it was powerful. The historian credits her with sharing the rule of the German *reich* with her spouse during her lifetime.[19]

The union of Edgitha and Otto, who became king in 936, produced a son and a daughter, who received the Ottonian family names Liudolf and

Liutgard. After so much stress on his own prestige marriage to a princess, it is surprising that Otto apparently did not attempt to arrange similarly prestigious matches for the children of this first marriage. His daughter Liutgard's marriage to Duke Conrad the Red of Lotharingia follows a typical pattern; after all, Otto I's own sister Gerberga had wed an earlier duke of Lotharingia, Gislebert. While she married Louis IV of France after she was widowed, this seems to have been in opposition to her brother's wishes. Marriage of a royal daughter to a duke would have honored the husband and thus presumably ensured his loyalty to the royal house; Henry I had used the marriage of his daughter Gerberga to gain control of Lotharingia.[20] One can see the honor involved in the way the match was announced in Adalbert's chronicle: "Duke Gislebert married Gerberga, daughter of King Henry."[21] Gerberga's match was being arranged at the same time as Otto's alliance with Edgitha.

In 940 Otto betrothed his son Liudolf to Ida, daughter of Duke Hermann of Swabia, and a marriage followed in 947. Why a duke's daughter instead of a foreign princess? Perhaps the reasons can be found in the repeated rebellions Otto faced and the strenuous efforts he had to make as a result to gain a measure of control over the highly independent dukes of Germany. It was Ottonian policy whenever possible to place relatives in control of the great territorial duchies; by the time of Liudolf's marriage, Otto had already established his younger brother Henry as duke of Bavaria. The easiest way for a "foreigner" to win acceptance as a territorial duke was to marry into the ducal family. Thus the younger Henry's marriage to Judith of Bavaria presumably eased his claim to the position of duke in the semi-independent Bavaria, even though he had to fight Judith's brothers to secure his title. Matters were simpler in Swabia, because Hermann's only surviving child was his daughter Ida. When Hermann died soon after the marriage, Liudolf was able to step into the duchy and claim all of Hermann's possessions. Still, it was not a brilliant match compared to the marriages of his father and brother (the future Otto II). The eleventh-century chronicler Hermann of Reichenau (which lies in Swabian territory) reports only that in 947 Liudolf, son of King Otto, married Ida, "a laudable woman" (*laudabilem feminam*). Widukind, writing much closer to events, tells that Otto married Liudolf to "an exceptionally noble and wealthy wife" and reports Liudolf's investiture as duke of Swabia.[22] Still, Ida was only noble, unlike Liudolf's own royal mother.

Liudolf died in his father Otto I's lifetime, and Otto eventually arranged a much more prestigious marriage for his son by his second marriage,

Otto II. But first, Otto had to consider his own second marriage. Edgitha died in 946 and according to contemporaries was sincerely mourned. Otto remained a widower for five years. But then came an opportunity for a prestige marriage with so many actual and potential benefits that in 951 he wed a second time.

The Italian Marriage

We know an extraordinary amount about Adelheid of Burgundy, Otto I's choice as his second wife. The reason is simple: not only was she very well born, but her marriages had deep political implications for western Europe. Adelheid, who was probably born in 931, was a daughter of King Rudolf II of Burgundy (912–37) and the Swabian noblewoman Bertha. She became involved, almost from birth, in the extraordinarily complicated struggle to control both Burgundy and Lombardy that was waged between a number of major families. To understand the prestige and power she came to assume as an Ottonian empress it is necessary to understand her life before her marriage to Otto I.

The kingdom of Burgundy was only created in 888; the first ruler was Adelheid's grandfather Rudolf I.[23] His son Rudolf II tried to take advantage of the chaotic political situation in northern Italy to make himself king of the Lombards. According to Liudprand, a noble faction whose members disliked the rule of King Berengar I invited Rudolf to intervene. Rudolf defeated Berengar in battle and claimed the throne, although only parts of Lombardy accepted him as king, even though his path was eased by Berengar's murder in 924.[24] Thus Adelheid (or at least her representatives) could later claim that she was the legitimate daughter of the true king of the Lombards.

However, discontented Lombard nobles soon called in the support of another ally in their war against their new king Rudolf in the form of Hugh of Arles (or of Provence). Hugh was on terms of long enmity with Rudolf; in 912 when Rudolf I died, Count Hugh had married the royal widow and unsuccessfully challenged Rudolf II for the Burgundian throne. But Hugh was more successful in Italy, where he was crowned king in 926, driving out Rudolf II (although apparently Rudolf did not give up his claim). Nonetheless, Hugh still longed to gain control of Upper Burgundy, and he saw another opportunity when Rudolf II died in 937 leaving an underage son named Conrad. Hugh tried to stake a claim a second time by marrying a Burgundian royal widow, this time Rudolf II's

widow Bertha of Swabia, and further consolidated his position by betrothing his son Lothar by an earlier marriage to Rudolf II's young daughter Adelheid. The importance Hugh placed on these alliances can be seen in the size of the *dos*, the gift the groom's family made to the bride, that he provided to both Bertha and Adelheid. Both were extensive, although Adelheid's was larger, perhaps reflecting her possible blood claim to Lombardy. It included the royal estates of Marengo, Grana, and Olona, as well as three Tuscan monasteries and considerable lands elsewhere, in all 4500 *mansi*.[25] Yet again, Hugh failed to make good his claim to Burgundy, but by linking Rudolf's daughter to his own family he at least consolidated his claim to Lombardy.[26] Bertha and Adelheid both moved to Pavia with Hugh upon his marriage. Bertha soon returned to Burgundy, but Adelheid was raised in Pavia.[27]

Lothar, Hugh's son, became co-king of Italy with his father.[28] The seventeen-year-old Adelheid duly married the young king in 947, probably about the time Hugh died. But the political situation in northern Italy remained complex and tumultuous, because a new political player, Margrave Berengar of Ivrea, had appeared on the scene and engaged in a long fight with King Hugh and his son for the throne of Italy. This contest, waged since at least 941, had tended to fall in favor of Berengar. Berengar fled into exile in 941 or 942 but was able to return in 945, after which Hugh found himself under such pressure that he withdrew to Provence, leaving his son to control Lombardy.[29] The situation had still not been resolved when Lothar died unexpectedly on November 22, 950.

Adelheid, a widow at age nineteen, was left in an extraordinarily difficult position. She had borne Lothar a daughter, but we can see no evidence of any political player trying to use the child Emma as a means to claim the throne. Adelheid herself, by contrast, was clearly recognized as having some claims in the wake of her husband's death. A number of historians have cited "Lombard traditional law" to argue that it was the custom from Lombard times for the king's widow to choose the next king, marrying him to provide continuity in succession.[30] The evidence for such a practice is in fact very slight and detached from Adelheid's time by nearly four centuries. Paul the Deacon reports in his *History of the Lombards* that when the Lombard king Authari died in 590, the Lombards demanded that the widow Theudelinda choose a new husband, whom they would accept as king. In this case, one should note that Paul specifically says the Lombards left the choice to Theudelinda because she had pleased them, not because of any inherent right.[31] Fredegar also tells of the Lombard

queen Gundeberga, who conveyed a right to the throne by her marriage.[32] These two early tales are a very shaky foundation upon which to build an edifice of Adelheid as king-maker. One should not forget, though, that through her father Adelheid had a claim in her own right to Lombardy, rather than just through her marriage.

If Adelheid had indeed hoped to rule Lombardy in her own right after Lothar's death, she was soon disillusioned. Margrave Berengar acted swiftly to secure his own claim to the iron crown of the Lombards. Only three weeks after Lothar's death, Berengar had himself and his son Adalbert elected and crowned kings of Italy in a ceremony that took place in Pavia on December 15, 950.[33] Or, as the German monk Hermann of Reichenau understood the matter, Berengar invaded and seized power.[34] Closer to the time of events, Hrotsvit writes in her *Gesta Ottonis* that some of the people of Lombardy "with perverse mind" rebelled against Adelheid, suggesting that Adelheid had indeed attempted to rule the kingdom in her own name.[35] Adelheid took refuge in the castle of Como near the Italian border, but Berengar attacked her there, seizing her in April 951 and holding her captive, probably at Garda Castle, from which she escaped four months later.[36]

Hrotsvit of Gandersheim provides the most detailed account of Adelheid's trials at this time, which culminated in her marriage to the German Otto I, so it is important to consider what the German canoness has to say and how far it can be trusted. The account is an important element of Hrotsvit's *Gesta Ottonis Magnis*, an epic poem that tells of Otto I's rise and eventual claim of the imperial title in 962. Of all issues in the poem, Hrotsvit pays the most attention to what might be called the "Tale of Adelheid," dedicating 120 of the 1300 extant lines to the events leading to Adelheid and Otto's marriage.

Hrotsvit was in an excellent position to know the true story of Adelheid's time in Italy and the events prior to her union with Otto I. Hrotsvit wrote the *Gesta Ottonis* at the end of 967 or early 968—not too long after events, at least by the standard of chroniclers of the central Middle Ages.[37] She was a canoness at Gandersheim, the first of the great Ottonian family religious foundations. Gerd Althoff points out that Gandersheim was going through a dry spell in royal donations in the 960s when Hrotsvit wrote, as the foundation of Quedlinburg siphoned off most available funds.[38] But Gandersheim was still clearly *connected*. The abbess was Gerberga, a niece of Otto I. Ida, Otto I's widowed daughter-in-law, had also perhaps already taken up residence at Gandersheim.[39] Gandersheim was powerful, virtually

an independent principality, as Rosamund McKitterick has it, with its own courts, mint, representative at royal assemblies, and papal protection.[40] It should also be stressed that Hrotsvit and her sisters in religion were canonesses, not nuns. They were well born and could travel to visit relatives besides frequently playing host to noble travelers.[41] Hrotsvit was admirably placed to hear about events, and in fact her *Gesta Ottonis* compares well on all points to the other contemporary chronicles, especially in the details she provides in her accounts of the royal women.

The account Hrotsvit gives of the events leading up to Adelheid's second marriage is both exciting and significant. Adelheid, "whose very name bespeaks highest nobility,"[42] was married to Lothar, and when he died he left his kingdom to her. But some perverse evil people sided with Berengar, the rival claimant to the throne. Berengar seized the young widow along with her gold, jewels, and the royal crown, which was in her possession. Adelheid was shut up in a dungeon with a single handmaid. But she escaped, just as St. Peter had escaped from Herod's chains, as Hrotsvit proclaims in a dramatic flourish. Bishop Adelard of Reggio got a secret message to the queen, apparently by hand of a priest, who then led Adelheid out of the castle by night, thanks to a convenient filthy secret subterranean passage. The queen fled through the night with her two companions, hiding by day in a forest and ditches as Berengar's men hunted her. Bishop Adelard arrived soon thereafter, conveying the refugees to a place of safety. Then King Otto I of Germany came to Adelheid's aid, she turned Pavia over to him, and he chose her as consort in his rule.

Hrotsvit tells a fine story—but can it be trusted, and if so, what does it mean for our understanding of the standing of the imperial ladies of Ottonian Germany? A first important point to note about this account is of course that it was written at all and that Hrotsvit considered it worth recounting in such detail. But it is disconcerting that the historian Liudprand, bishop of Cremona, doesn't mention the capture and escape at all. Liudprand was, like Hrotsvit, an exact contemporary to the events just described, dying in 972 (Hrotsvit died in 975). Liudprand was intimately familiar with the events of northern Italy, since he had in turn served Adelheid's first father-in-law, then Berengar of Ivrea, and then went over to Otto, perhaps as early as 951.[43] What's more, Liudprand had a grudge against Berengar, which he airs at great length in his vitriolic *Antapodosis.* But in fact, although the *Antapodosis* was probably written in 960, the narrative cuts off before Lothar, Adelheid's first husband, even came to the throne. There is simply no place for the tale of Adelheid's

escape, nor is there in Liudprand's *De Ottonis*, an account of Otto I's dealings with Pope John XII.

Adelheid's escape is also absent from the *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, one of the great annals of the Ottonian and early Salian period. Under the year 951, the annalist simply notes that the king went to Italy, where he married Lothar's widow Adelheid and then subjugated Berengar.[44] The omission seems surprising, since Quedlinburg was an imperial convent, and at the time the annalist was writing the abbess was Mechtild, the daughter of Adelheid and Otto. And the annalist was almost certainly a woman, showing particular interest in the lives of the imperial ladies throughout her narrative. But in fact, the annal was penned at least fifty years after Adelheid married Otto I, and entries as far back as 951 are brief. Moreover, the author focuses almost exclusively on events within Germany, showing little interest in Italian occurrences.

We know beyond any reasonable doubt that the imprisonment and escape actually occurred. The incontrovertible source is the Merseburg Necrology. Like all necrologies, the Merseburg book lists thousands of people for whom the members of the community ought to pray, usually listed on their death day. The Merseburg Necrology is extraordinary for including Adelheid's private "prayer book." It lists all of her relatives, as if they were copied over wholesale when the new bishopric (only founded after Otto's victory over the Magyars at Lechfeld in 955) was hunting around for donors for whom the clergy could offer prayer. Two entries are important in this context, each on its own day: "Empress Adelheid was captured at Como by King Berengar" and a further entry that commemorates her escape.[45]

The Ottonian accounts of Adelheid's vicissitudes and eventual marriage to Otto I are worth examination in detail because of the light they shed on what contemporaries thought about women's agency, what Adelheid brought to her second marriage, and the insight they can give us on Queen Adelheid's position in the German *reich*. Four major writers in fact discuss the capture and escape in detail—Hrotsvit, Odilo of Cluny, Widukind of Corvey, and Thietmar of Merseburg—but their accounts differ considerably. Widukind and Thietmar give essentially the same account, and it is clear that the later Thietmar (writing in c. 1020) drew on Widukind's *Saxon History* when composing his own chronicle. An oddity of both these accounts is that they do not name Adelheid, although both authors prove in other passages that they knew her well. Thus they project a sense of ahistorical timelessness, and in fact both accounts read more like a fairy

tale than a historical account. The way Widukind tells the story gives Adelheid a significantly smaller role. He tells that the "wild and greedy" Berengar ruled the Lombards. He "feared the virtue" of the exceptionally wise queen, widow of a king he mistakenly names Louis instead of Lothar. So Berengar afflicted Adelheid—in order to extinguish her splendor or at least obscure it. Meanwhile, in Germany King Otto heard about the queen's beauty and reputation and went to Italy under the pretext of a trip to Rome. He sent representatives to the queen after her escape, winning her love with gifts. And then of course Otto married her.[46]

Widukind's version of events raises more questions than it answers. The account is hyperbolic, drawing more on the language of romance than of politics, with its talk of beauty, reputation, and virtue, not to mention the "wild and greedy" Berengar. And Widukind (along with his later interpreter Thietmar) raises the suspicion that he does not really know the story very well, since he does not even know the name of Adelheid's first husband. Widukind, a monk of Corvey, was not in fact very well connected to royal circles. The Ottonian court is only known to have visited the Saxon monastery a single time (in 940), and no member of the royal family was a monk there.[47] Most fundamentally, Widukind and Thietmar suggest only the weakest of motives. Why would Berengar have opened himself to international condemnation, oppressing a queen, who had probably been anointed and crowned at the time of her marriage to Lothar,[48] with powerful relatives in the kingdom of Burgundy? Berengar was either incredibly inept or he must have had a reasonable fear of or desire to exploit Adelheid's influence or claims—these two chroniclers are just failing to tell us his reasons. The rest of Berengar's life makes it completely clear that he was a crafty political player. In other words, clues are present in these two accounts that Adelheid *was* important, either in herself or for what she could take with her to a second marriage.

The saintly Odilo, abbot of Cluny from 994 until his death in 1048, provides confirmation for the basic line of events that Hrotsvit narrated in her account. In the *Epitaphium Adelheide* he reports that Adelheid was widowed, left "bereft of marital counsel." Berengar captured her, imprisoning her in "loathsome captivity" with a single maid. The two escaped, and had a harrowing time of it until soldiers found her and took them to safety. It is very unlikely that Odilo, a French abbot, was familiar with the Saxon Hrotsvit's work, especially as Hrotsvit's *Gesta Ottonis* exists only in a single incomplete manuscript, suggesting that it was not widely distributed. But Odilo simply was not interested in the politics of the situation.

As he emphasizes instead, "the sting of persecution purified [Adelheid] like gold in the furnace." His imagery is drawn from hagiography, his focus is on Adelheid's Christlike humility and suffering. It is innately implausible that Berengar tortured Adelheid, as Odilo asserts, striking her and pulling her hair out.[49] Again, one has to remember that Berengar was a wily political dealer in a society that knew very well how to hold grudges. Physical harm to a woman of Adelheid's rank with her connections would have been a mortal insult. The very fact that Adelheid later forgave Berengar for his ill treatment suggests that he did not take it to such extremes—to forgive actual physical abuse of such a disparaging sort is unimaginable in the ritual world of the tenth century.[50] Anyway, Odilo likes exaggerating the tale of royal suffering, as when he relates how Adelheid and her maid spent four days in a swampy thicket with no food or drink, saved in their extremity only thanks to the appearance of a convenient fisherman who gave them a sturgeon and some fresh water.[51] One must also consider what the point would have been of such abuse. Berengar could not cement his claim to the throne by forcing the widowed queen to marry him, because he was already married to the notorious (at least in Liudprand's eyes) Willa. The suggestion has been made that he imprisoned the widowed queen to prevent her remarriage, again invoking the tired notion of a Lombard tradition that royal widows transmitted rights to the crown to a new husband.[52] Perhaps she was meant to sign rights over to him? Perhaps even, the most controversial point in Hrotsvit's account, Adelheid really did have a valid claim to the throne of northern Italy? Although that is definitely not his purpose, perhaps Odilo's hyperbole can in fact be taken as confirmation of Hrotsvit's tale.

Which brings us back to Hrotsvit. Two modern historians, one German and one Italian, have condemned her account as a literary construct that sacrifices historical veracity to her desire to tell a good story. Marco Giovini suggests that Hrotsvit's account of the imprisonment and flight was influenced by the ninth- or tenth-century epic *Waltharius*.[53] *Waltharius* does indeed tell of captive female royalty—the Burgundian princess Hiltgunt who was given as a hostage to Attila the Hun. She was treated well as a hostage, but fell in love, and her lover (the Walter of the title) helped her escape. They rode through the night, hiding in a forest during the day.[54] But the similarity between the two accounts goes no further than that—there is no common vocabulary or other signs of borrowing. And it seems impossible to doubt the historicity of Adelheid's captivity and escape, whatever the details. Similarly, Käthe Sonnleitner has argued that Hrotsvit

crafted her account of Adelheid's sufferings to show parallels to Otto I's own life, making herself worthy of God's help by suffering adversity well.[55] But it is difficult to sustain this argument. Adelheid's life is not in fact parallel to Otto's in the *Gesta Ottonis*, nor is there any particular stress on her suffering.

What seems to stick in the craw of historians, then and to some extent even now, is that Hrotsvit's account gives a large degree of agency to our widowed queen. In Hrotsvit's eyes, Adelheid had a claim to the throne of the Lombards, a claim that she passed on to her second husband Otto. If Hrotsvit was right, Adelheid did in fact bring a great deal to her Ottonian marriage, and if she brought her husband at least a legitimate claim to a crown she would have enjoyed prestige not just as a bride of royal blood—an equal—but as a great heiress, a real contributor not just to the honor but to the power of her new family.

At every point at which it can be checked, Hrotsvit's story of Adelheid's great escape bears up well to scrutiny. The fact of the capture and escape cannot be contested; even the maidservant appears in another account. And, most vitally, Hrotsvit provides the motive for Berengar's—and Otto's—actions, which are lacking in the other accounts. For that matter, why did Otto, an established widower of five years' standing, suddenly decide to marry again? The reason, Hrotsvit says, is because Adelheid gave the German king Pavia—and opened the gate wide that would lead to his imperial coronation in 962. Hrotsvit sees Otto's marriage to Adelheid as the key to *imperium*, which is why she gives the tale so much space in her poem.[56]

After her escape, Adelheid took refuge, probably at Canossa.[57] It was apparently from there that she opened communications with Otto I. But Thietmar of Merseburg was certainly over-romanticizing when he claimed that Otto's invasion of Italy was specifically to rescue the imprisoned widow, after he heard of her beauty and "laudable reputation."[58] In fact, Otto had been concerned with the affairs of Burgundy and Lombardy for years. The young Conrad of Burgundy almost certainly only survived Hugh of Arles' attempts to dominate the region thanks to Ottonian support.[59] In the 940s Italian exiles fleeing King Hugh had found refuge at the Ottonian court—including Margrave Berengar.[60] It is not surprising that Otto should have wished to take advantage of the power vacuum created by Lothar's death. Indeed, the German reaction was uncoordinated, beginning when Liudolf without his father's permission took a small force to Italy to try to exploit the situation.[61] Then, before Adelheid was captured,

an Easter assembly held at Aachen decided on an expedition to Italy, which crossed the Alps by the beginning of September at the latest.[62]

Otto's first Italian expedition of 951 was a major enterprise. The contemporary Niederaltaich annals report that his companions included his son Duke Liudolf, Duke Conrad, and Archbishop Frederick of Mainz, suggesting a large and prestigious force also crossed the Alps with him.[63] It seems very likely that Otto's goal from the beginning of the campaign was to make himself king of the Lombards. But how important was Adelheid in his plan to attain that goal? Or perhaps more appositely, how did Otto's and Adelheid's contemporaries interpret her role?

The varied sources that tell of the expedition simply cannot be reconciled. The Italian *Chronicon Novaliciense* reports that Otto (whom the chronicler calls "duke of the Bavarians") went to Italy, where he received a delegation of Lombards who offered him the throne. Then he married Adelheid, and the next point the monastic author brings up in the narrative is Berengar's flight and capture.[64] From that perspective, Adelheid played no essential role in Otto's obtaining the crown of Lombardy. Some German sources also omit any suggestion of Adelheid's role, for example the Weissenburg annalist, who simply reports that in 951 "King Otto journeyed to Italy and acquired Queen Adelheid."[65] The Hildesheim annalist is not much more forthcoming, although the event at least rated two sentences in that account—the first tells of the marriage of Otto *rex* to Adelheid *regina*; the second reports that Otto subjugated Berengar, king of the Lombards.[66] Although the defeat of Berengar follows the report of the marriage, the annalist establishes no causal link.

At issue is whether chroniclers believed that Otto claimed northern Italy on his own and only then established relations with Adelheid, or whether the two were working together. The French Flodoard clearly gives primacy to Otto's invasion, telling that when the German reached Italy Berengar fled his capital city of Pavia, allowing Otto to enter the city. Then, he reports, the German king married the "wife of the dead king Lothar son of Hugh, sister of Conrad king of Burgundy."[67] But that is not the way the German chroniclers saw the matter. Instead, they gave much greater agency to Adelheid. Thietmar reports that Otto wed Adelheid and then "together with her" laid claim to Pavia.[68] Widukind gives an even greater role to Adelheid as he reports that Otto traveled to Lombardy because he heard of the queen's virtues. Once there, he "tried to strengthen the queen's love for him with gifts of gold," determined that she was loyal, and married her. Only then did they capture Pavia.[69]

The Quedlinburg annalist went still further, telling that Otto wed Adelheid, and then "with her counsel" claimed the kingdom of the Lombards, subjecting the tyrant Berengar.[70] But the closest account to that of Hrotsvit is that of Adalbert, who wrote in the 960s and shows himself to have been well connected to events at the Ottonian court. Adalbert clearly thinks very highly of Adelheid, whom he calls "Lady Adelheid, the queen dear to God." He describes Otto's Italian expedition and marriage to Adelheid thus:

> King Otto, wishing to go to Italy, made many preparations for this expedition, because he planned to free Adelheid, the widow of King Lothar of Italy and daughter of King Rudolf, from the chains and prison in which Berengar held her, and to marry her and at the same time to acquire the kingdom of Italy.[71]

Like Widukind, Adalbert believed that Otto was responsible for freeing the ill-used queen. But, like Hrotsvit, he also believed that marriage to Adelheid gave Otto a claim to Italy. In short, whether it was true or not, German commentators believed that Adelheid was an ideal wife for an ambitious German king. As they repeatedly reiterate, she was the daughter of a king and the widow of a king. And she brought to her marriage a magnificent dowry—a legal justification to rule in northern Italy.

The reality was more prosaic. Otto certainly claimed the Lombard crown, although there is no record that he ever received a formal coronation; he is first named as *rex Francorum et Langobardorum* in a document dated October 10, 951—probably the day after his marriage to Adelheid. In the subsequent documents the notary who penned them opted for the title *rex Francorum et Italicorum*.[72] But in the short term, results must have been disappointing. Otto had to return to Germany in February 952, taking his bride with him. He left his son-in-law Duke Conrad of Lotharingia to prosecute the war against Berengar, but instead Berengar and Conrad reached an agreement, which Conrad promised he would convince Otto to accept. Otto reluctantly agreed to his deputy's undertakings, recognizing the margrave as King Berengar II of Italy, subking of a rather diminished territory, but still a practically independent political player.[73] Otto did not complete his takeover of northern Italy until 961–62, after the pope had called on him for assistance against Berengar (who was encroaching on papal territory). It was only at that time, in the campaign that culminated with Otto's coronation as emperor in Rome,

that he captured Berengar and his wife Willa and exiled them for the rest of their lives to Bavaria.[74]

Odilo of Cluny and Hrotsvit of Gandersheim both proclaim that it was Adelheid who opened the door to the imperial title for Otto I, an office he finally attained on February 2, 962. Modern historians, most notably Stefan Weinfurter, have agreed with that assessment, judging that Adelheid stood in a totally different category from her predecessors as queen, since she opened the Ottonian kingdom to "unimagined new dimensions and perspectives" and proved to be the key to the Roman world.[75] If that was Otto's plan in 951, he must have been amazingly far-sighted, and historians like Werner Maleczek have argued vigorously that Otto had no thought of becoming emperor until 960.[76] But even if Adelheid "merely" brought to her second marriage a connection with northern Italy, that was enough to send German history along a new and unexpected channel, a path with consequences that endured for many centuries. And when Otto was in fact able to secure his claim to northern Italy in the 960s, it is likely that Adelheid's position as former queen of the Lombards—and daughter of a king of the Lombards—made Otto's rule more palatable. As we will see in Chap. 7, she certainly played a much more active political role intervening in Ottonian documents during Otto's years in Italy than she did in Germany, suggesting that she did indeed share in rule in a different way south of the Alps.[77] Even in Germany, marriage to Adelheid would have enhanced Ottonian prestige. As the author of the later *vita* of Queen Mechtild had it, Adelheid brought three great advantages to the match: her conduct was upright (a point probably made with the advantage of hindsight, when Adelheid was already steeped in the odor of sanctity), she was prudent, and her ancestry was illustrious.[78] A good bloodline—in this case descent from Charlemagne—was a great desideratum for the still-young Ottonian dynasty, and helped win Adelheid respect as Otto's queen.

The Byzantine Bride

Perhaps it was Otto I's engagement in Italy that first made him consider a Byzantine bride for his heir Otto II, whom Adelheid bore in 955, shortly after the death of Liudolf, Otto's son by his marriage with Edgitha. After all, the Byzantine emperor still ruled considerable portions of southern Italy in the tenth century. But Otto had no need of proximity to know that a Byzantine marriage would be a highly prestigious coup for his dynasty,

since westerners had sought such matches for centuries. The first Carolingian king, Pepin III, included Byzantine marriage plans in his efforts to legitimate his new, usurping hold on the throne of the Franks. He negotiated to marry his daughter Gisela to Leo, a son of Emperor Constantine, but the plan fell through.[79] In the next generation, Charlemagne negotiated to wed his daughter Rotrud to the Byzantine emperor Constantine VI, and Rotrud even received instruction in Greek, but again the plan never came to fruition.[80] Charlemagne himself negotiated to wed Empress Eirene, a match that would have reunited the Roman Empire but fell through when Eirene was deposed in 802. Two generations later, Louis II tried to arrange a marriage alliance between his only child Ermengard and the son of a Byzantine emperor, but once again the plan came to nothing.[81] Clearly it was not easy for Franks to marry into the Byzantine imperial family, even when it was a matter of sending a daughter to Constantinople rather than expecting a Byzantine princess to start a new life in a foreign land.

Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–59) opened the door to possible marriage alliances, however. In his treatise *De administratione imperio* he forbade marriage of members of the imperial family to what he regarded as the more primitive tribes—Chazars, Turks, Russians, Pechenegs, or Slavs. But he made an exception in the case of the Frankish ruling families, because of the Franks' fame and nobility.[82] And indeed two such marriages were planned during Constantine's reign. The first was one of the conditions of a treaty between Hugh of Arles, king of Italy, and the Byzantines. They agreed to join forces against the Saracen raiders who were plaguing the Byzantine territory of southern Italy, and to seal the deal Bertha, Hugh's daughter by a concubine, was betrothed to the future Romanus II. Bertha was sent to Constantinople, where her name was changed to Eudokia, but she died before the marriage was consummated.[83]

It was Otto I himself who arranged the other match. Perhaps in connection with an effort to engage Byzantine support against the Magyars, in 949 the German king arranged for his niece Hadwig, Henry of Bavaria's daughter, to marry the future Romanus II, at that time newly a widower. Apparently a betrothal took place, and Greek eunuchs came to Germany to teach Hadwig Greek and Byzantine ways. She never went east, however, and eventually married the duke of Swabia instead.[84]

Despite this long series of failed Byzantine matches, Otto I, who had been crowned emperor on February 2, 962, decided that he wanted a

Byzantine bride for his son and heir.[85] As had been the case when the elder Otto had himself married the Anglo-Saxon princess Edgitha, prestige and legitimacy for both the son and the dynasty would have been at the heart of such a decision. As had been the case when Charlemagne first revived the western Roman Empire with his imperial coronation in 800, the Byzantines were loath to recognize any emperor but their own. The wedding of his son with a Byzantine would be a clear, visible sign that Otto I had entered the highly exclusive "emperor club" and that his son in turn would be accepted in that position. And of course, such a prestigious match would complete the process of raising the Saxon Ottonians far above the level of even the greatest nobles of their *reich*.

Constantinople meant grandeur, the luster of a Roman Empire that had never fallen. In a period when Ottonian palaces can be described legitimately as "big farmhouses"[86] the massive imperial palace complex in Constantinople must have been the subject of awed reports. The only detailed report we have of the glories of Constantinople from the tenth century is that of Liudprand of Cremona, who visited the city twice. The account of his second legation is a problematic source. The vitriolic bishop's embassy failed, he had been treated with what he certainly regarded as highly insulting lack of consideration, and Liudprand really does seem to have made a specialty of revenge writing. But reading through his anger, one can still get an impression of what Constantinople must have meant to an outsider, for example when he speaks of the named palaces he visited and tells of his dealings with a large and complex bureaucracy.[87]

Otto I wanted a Byzantine princess for Otto junior. He appears to have set his sights on the porphyrogenita Anna (b. c. 963). Westerners had a strong sense of the prestige of being "born to the purple"—a child who was born to a ruling emperor and his wife. In fact, writing in the early eleventh century Bruno of Querfurt calls Otto III "*purpura natus*," borrowing the term to flatter the western emperor.[88] And so the elder Otto set out to get his desired porphyrogenita, sending Bishop Liudprand, who was a rare western Greek-speaker, to Constantinople in 968 to negotiate. Matters went badly. Nikephoros Phokas was not interested in an alliance with Otto and certainly not inclined to give up Anna for marriage to a barbarian. Indeed, Otto's main opponent in northern Italy, Berengar II's son Adalbert, was arranging an alliance with Nikephoros at the same time, and his emissary was in fact in Constantinople at the same time as Liudprand.[89] Liudprand was soon sent packing, bearing with him a strong grudge against the Greeks but no princess.

Otto's persistence in the face of such a slight is the best evidence that he regarded a Byzantine marriage alliance of the very first order of importance. He next tried to intimidate the eastern emperor into agreement, besieging the Byzantine city of Bari in southern Italy. We have Otto's own views of the matter, thanks to a unique letter he sent to the Saxons from southern Italy that has been preserved among his charters, which Widukind of Corvey also considered important enough to copy into his history. The letter reports that Otto had threatened to seize Apulia and Calabria from the Greeks. But now ambassadors from Constantinople had arrived and he was negotiating peace with them. In reality, the siege of Bari was a failure, but may have been intended from the beginning as nothing more than a ploy to get the Byzantine emperor's attention.[90]

Even the intervention in southern Italy might not have been enough to induce Nikephoros to give up a princess, but fortunately for Ottonian dynastic plans Nikephoros was murdered in a palace coup in December 969. The new emperor, John Tzimiskes, proved much more amenable when in 971 Otto sent a new embassy headed by Archbishop Gero of Cologne. Probably as before, his aim was to acquire the porphyrogenita Anna.[91] But John would not give her up, and the negotiations finally concluded with the choice of another, less prestigious princess: Theophanu.

Theophanu, who was about twelve years old in 972 when she was sent west to marry Otto II, was John Tzimiskes' niece by marriage. She was, in other words, merely a Byzantine noblewoman of the third rank or so. It is unknown whether she had any exposure to the Byzantine court at all.[92] To that extent, Otto I's attempt to win a prestigious bride for his heir was a failure. And at least some Germans were well aware that they were being forced to make do with a second-rate princess. Thietmar reports that she was "not the longed-for maiden." He further tells that the Germans even debated sending her home again, although Otto I refused to do so.[93]

Although, as her marriage document recognizes, Theophanu was only the "illustrious niece" of the Byzantine emperor, the Ottonians celebrated her arrival with great fanfare, displayed not least in the marriage document itself, written in gold letters on purple parchment painted with elaborate medallions suggestive of Byzantine imperial silk.[94] In conjunction with her marriage, Theophanu was crowned empress in Rome. And most western sources appear ignorant of her inferior pedigree, instead choosing to emphasize that Otto II's empress came *from Constantinople* in 972.[95]

Perhaps the best evidence that Theophanu's marriage was regarded as conveying special prestige is that such matches continued to be attempted.

That a Byzantine princess could confer legitimacy on a shaky dynasty can be seen in a request by King Hugh of France to Basil II and Constantine VIII for a princess to wed his son Robert, a request composed by the learned monk Gerbert of Aurillac in January 988, only a few months after Hugh became the first Capetian king of France.[96] That effort failed. But when Otto III, the son of Theophanu and Otto II, reached adulthood, he sought a Byzantine bride, sending a high-level embassy to negotiate for her. They held out for a porphyrogenita, and in fact the requested princess arrived in Italy in 1002 at about the same time as Otto III's death.[97]

In the final analysis, Theophanu's marriage to Otto II accomplished its purpose, although, as we will see, Theophanu's cultural differences from the Germans among whom she lived left her open to some criticism. Besides the obvious biological duty of producing an heir, which she soon did, this Byzantine bride shed additional luster on the Ottonian house. Otto III was clearly proud of his Greek blood, to the extent of seeking a Byzantine princess as his own bride. Closer to home, the fact of a foreign prestige marriage also altered the dynamics between queen/empress and the people over whom she ruled. She had no natural allies, since she had no network of kinsmen in her adoptive land. She would not even have known the language at first. While this must have been a terrifying experience for the princess sent far from the world she knew, it had real advantages as well—since the queen had no natural friends, she also had no natural enemies. Entanglements and rivalries resulted for example when Kunigunde influenced her husband Henry II to favor her brothers and eventually a brother presumed so far on imperial favor that he usurped the bishopric of Metz. But similar complications could not happen in the case of Edgitha, Adelheid, or Theophanu.[98] Instead, they could forge their own alliances, and were given ample means to do so.

Notes

1. Richer of Saint-Rémi, *Histories*, ed. and trans. Justin Lake (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), IV.11; Janet L. Nelson, "Rulers and Government," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 125.
2. See Janet L. Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History," in Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 4; Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 66–67.

3. For example, in 790 Charlemagne planned to unite his son Charles with Offa of Mercia's daughter, but the scheme fell through. See Silvia Koneckny, *Die Frauen des karolingischen Königshauses* (Vienna: Verband der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1976), 78–79.
4. Georg Pertz and Friedrich Kurz, eds., *Annales regni Francorum*, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. (1895), a. 819, 150; Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. Ernst Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. (1995), (32) 392. Pauline Stafford suggests that the story, with its strong echoes of the biblical story of Esther, may have been a borrowing from Byzantine practice. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*, 56–57.
5. Thilo Offergeld, *Reges pueri. Das Königtum Minderjähriger im frühen Mittelalter* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2001), 523; Joachim Ehlers, "Die Königin aus England," *Sachsen und Anhalt* 22 (1999/2000): 36.
6. Daniela Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern. Funktionen und Aufgabenfelder von Frauen in der ottonischen Herrscherfamilie (919–1024)* (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2003), 47–48.
7. *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (1) 147–48.
8. Widukind, (I.31) 43–44.
9. Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern*, 45–46.
10. Widukind, (I.25) 38.
11. Ehlers, "Königin aus England," 33 for a full genealogy of Edgitha's family; see also Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern*, 56.
12. Winfrid Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen und Ihre Bedeutung in der Politik* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1989), 23; Karl Leyser, "The Ottonians and Wessex," in Leyser, *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, ed. Timothy Reuter (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 84.
13. Glocker, *Verwandten der Ottonen*, 23; Ehlers, "Die Königin aus England," 34. MacLean also stresses that the marriage demonstrates Henry I's desire to connect to French and Burgundian royal networks besides English ones. Simon MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 34–37.
14. Flodoard of Rheims, *Annales*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1905), 36.
15. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 72 (2004), a. 929, p. 457; Adalbert, a. 930, p. 158.
16. Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, in *Opera*, ed. Joseph Becker, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 41 (1915), (IV.17) 114; Widukind, (I.37) 54.
17. Hrotsvit, *Gesta Ottonis*, 206–207, esp. ll. 95–97.
18. Ehlers, "Die Königin aus England," 31–32; Leyser, "Ottonians and Wessex," 78–79. MacLean suggests that perhaps Hrotsvit invented the link between Edgitha and St. Oswald, *Ottonian Queenship*, 142–43; Nash stresses that the relationship was through the maternal line. Penelope

Nash, *Empress Adelheid and Countess Matilda* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 19.

19. Widukind, (II.41) 99–100.
20. See Karl F. Morrison, "Widukind's Mirror for a Princess—An Exercise in Self Knowledge," in *Forschungen zur Reichs-, Papst- und Landesgeschichte*, vol. 1, ed. Karl Borchardt and Enno Bünz (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1998), 61.
21. Adalbert, a. 929; p. 158; the event really took place in 928.
22. Hermannus Augiensis, *Chronicon*, MGH SS 5, a. 947, 114; Widukind, III.6. For details on the marriage, see Glocker, *Verwandten der Ottonen*, 70; Adelheid Krah, "Der aufständische Königssohn: ein Beispiel aus der Ottonenzeit," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 114 (2006): 48–64, esp. 48.
23. Thomas Zotz, "Die Ottonen und das Elsaß," in *Kaiserin Adelheid und ihre Klostergründung in Selz*, ed. Franz Staab and Thorsten Unger (Speyer: Verlag der pfälsischen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften, 2005), 53.
24. Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, (II.60) 64; Gina Fasoli, *I re d'Italia (888–962)* (Florence: Sansoni, 1949), 90–103 does a good job sorting out this complex story.
25. Fasoli, *I re d'Italia*, 140. See Chap. 4 for a discussion of the *dos* and its significance.
26. Flodoard, *Annales*, 35; Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, (III.20) 82; Constance Bouchard, "Burgundy and Provence, 879–1032," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. Reuter, 341.
27. Michel Parisse, "Adélaïde de Bourgogne, reine d'Italie et de Germanie, impératrice (931–999)," in *Adélaïde de Bourgogne: Genèse et representations d'une sainteté impériale*, ed. Patrick Corbet, et al. (Dijon: Ed. Universitaires de Dijon, 2002), 14.
28. Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, (IV.1) 104.
29. Gerd Althoff, *Die Ottonen: Königsherrschaft ohne Staat* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2000), 93.
30. For example, see Edith Ennen, *Frauen im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Beck, 1985), 63; Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Die Frau als Herrscherin in ottonisch-frühsalischer Zeit," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Anton von Euw (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum, 1991), 2: 248.
31. Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, MGH SS rer. Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. vi–ix (III.35) 113–14.
32. Fredegar, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations*, ed. and trans. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960), (70–71) 59–60.
33. Gerald Beyreuther, "Kaiserin Adelheid: 'Mutter der Königreiche,'" in *Herrscherinnen und Nonnen. Frauengestalten von der Ottonenzeit bis zu*

den Staufern, ed. Erika Uitz, et al. (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1996), 47; Werner Maleczek, "Otto I. und Johannes XII. Überlegungen zur Kaiserkrönung von 962," in *Mediaevalia Augiensia. Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*, ed. Jürgen Petersohn (Stuttgart: Torbecke, 2001), 186.

34. Hermannus Augiensis, *Chronicon*, a. 949, p. 114.
35. Hrotsvit, *Gesta Ottonis*, 218.
36. See Stefan Weinfurter, "Kaiserin Adelheid und das ottonische Kaisertum," *FMSt* 33 (1999): 7; Harald Zimmermann, "Canossa e il matrimonio di Adelaide," in *Canossa prima di Matilde* (Milan: Camunia, 1990), 144. Note that according to the chronicle of Novalese the queen was imprisoned in a chamber of the royal palace in Pavia; Donizo of Canossa is the source for Garda. *Chronicon Novaliciense*, MGH SS 7: (V.10) 68.
37. Monique Goullet, "De Hrotsvita de Gandersheim à Odilon de Cluny: images d'Adélaïde autour de l'an Mille," in *Adélaïde de Bourgogne*, ed. Corbet, et al., 43.
38. Gerd Althoff, "Gandersheim und Quedlinburg. Ottonische Frauenklöster als Herrschafts- und Überlieferungzentren," *FMSt* 25 (1991): 136–37.
39. Ibid., 124.
40. Rosamund McKitterick, "Women in the Ottonian Church: An Iconographic Perspective," in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 99.
41. Jan Gerchow, "Sächsische Frauenstifte im Frühmittelalter: Einführung in das Thema und Rückblick auf die Tagung," in *Essen und die Sächsischen Frauenstifte im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Gerchow (Essen: Klartext, 2003), 14–15; Michel Parisse, "Les chanoinesses dans l'Empire germanique (IXe–XIe siècles)," *Francia* 6 (1978): 114.
42. Hrotsvit, *Gesta Ottonis*, 217.
43. Philippe Buc, "Italian Hussies and German Matrons: Liutprand of Cremona on Dynastic Legitimacy," *FMSt* 29 (1995): 207.
44. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 951, pp. 465–66.
45. Zimmermann, "Canossa," 144.
46. Widukind, (III.7) 108.
47. Maleczek, "Otto I. und Johannes XII," 165.
48. Amalie Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000), 20.
49. Odilo of Cluny, *Epitaphium Adelheide*, ed. Herbert Paulhart (Graz: Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachf., 1962), (2) 31.
50. Widukind reports that, after his defeat, Berengar followed Otto to Germany, where he was made to wait three days for an audience. But then he was received into the good graces of both the king and the queen, promising to accept Ottonian overlordship. Widukind, (III.10) 110.

51. Odilo, *Epitaphium Adelheide*, (2) 31.
52. Patrick Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1986), 59. A number of authors, most recently Penelope Nash, have followed the tradition that Berengar was attempting to force Adelheid to marry his own son, which helps stress Adelheid's political significance (Nash, *Empress Adelheid*, 1). It is surprising, though, that no contemporary accounts suggest this as Berengar's motive.
53. Marco Giovini, "L'evasione e le peripazie di Adelaide di Borgogna, regina fuggiasca, nei *Gesta Ottonis* di Rosvita di Gandersheim," *Studi medievali*, 3rd series 45 (2004): 910–17.
54. Karl Strecker, ed., *Waltharius*, MGH Poetae 6.1 (1951), ll. 72, 330–45.
55. Käthe Sonnleitner, "Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstverständnis der ottonischen Frauen im Spiegel der Historiographie des 10. Jahrhunderts," in *Geschichte und ihre Quellen: Festschrift für Friedrich Hausmann zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Reinhard Härtel (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1987), 116.
56. MacLean argues that it took a number of years for the "myth" of Adelheid to begin, not until Otto I began real conquest of Italy in 961. See MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, 95–115, esp. 108–109.
57. See Weinfurter, "Kaiserin Adelheid," 7; Zimmermann, "Canossa," 146–47.
58. Thietmar, (II.5) 42.
59. See Parisse, "Adélaïde de Bourgogne," 13–14.
60. Herbert Zielinski, "Der Weg nach Rom. Otto der Große und die Anfänge der ottonischen Italienpolitik," in *Die Faszination der Papstgeschichte*, ed. Wilfried Hartmann and Klaus Herbers (Cologne: Böhlau, 2008), 101.
61. Hagen Keller, "Entscheidungssituationen und Lernprozesse in den 'Anfängen der deutschen Geschichte.' Die 'Italien- und Kaiserpolitik' Ottos des Großen," *FMSt* 33 (1999): 32; Adalbert, p. 165 tells how Liudolf's venture had offended Otto.
62. Maleczek, "Otto I. und Johannes XII," 187; Keller, "Entscheidungssituationen," 34.
63. *Annales Altahenses maiores*, ed. W. Giesebrecht and E. Oefele, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 4 (1891), 9; the same report is repeated in *Annales Hildesheimenses*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 8 (1878), 21.
64. *Chronicon Novaliciense*, (V.12) 69.
65. *Annales Weissemburgenses*, MGH SS 3, a. 951, p. 59.
66. *Annales Hildesheimenses*, 21.
67. Flodoard, *Annales*, 132.
68. Thietmar, (II.5) 44.
69. Widukind, (III.9) 109.

70. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 951, pp. 465–66.
71. Adalbert, a. 951, pp. 164–65. "Rex Otto in Italiam ire volens multo se ad hoc iter apparatu prestruxit, quoniam Adalheidam viduam Lotharii regis Italici, filiam Ruodolfi regis, a vinculis et custodia, qua a Berengario tenebatur, liberare sibique eam in matrimonium assumere regnumque cum ea simul Italicum adquirere deliberavit."
72. Weinfurter, "Kaiserin Adelheid," 9; Hermann Weisert, "War Otto der Große wirklich *rex Langobardorum*?," *Archiv für Diplomatik* 28 (1982): 23–24.
73. Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Fürstliche Opposition in ottonisch-salischer Zeit," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 64 (1982): 320; Zielinski, "Der Weg nach Rom," 102. Thietmar tells that Berengar placated Adelheid's anger against him with his humility. Thietmar, (II.5) 44.
74. Giuseppe Sergi, "The Kingdom of Italy," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. Reuter, 357.
75. Weinfurter, "Kaiserin Adelheid," 9–11.
76. Maleczek, "Otto I. und Johannes XII," 183–84.
77. See Gertrud Bäumer, *Otto I. und Adelheid* (Tübingen: Reiner Wunderlich Verlag, 1951), 67–68.
78. *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (15) 173–75.
79. Konecny, *Frauen des karolingischen Königshauses*, 79. Gisela was eight at the time. She was also betrothed to a Lombard when she was twelve, but that wedding never took place either; in time she became abbess of Chelles. See also Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*, 55.
80. Konecny, *Frauen des karolingischen Königshauses*, 79–80.
81. Ibid., 126.
82. Anna Muthesius, "The Role of Byzantine Silks in the Ottonian Empire," in *Byzanz und das Abendland im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert*, ed. Evangelos Konstantinou (Cologne: Böhlau, 1997), 304–305; Krijnie N. Ciggaar, *Western Travellers to Constantinople: The West and Byzantium, 962–1204* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 205.
83. Fasoli, *I re d'Italia*, 147–48; Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, (V.14) 137.
84. Ekkehard IV, *Casus s. Galli*, ed. Hans F. Haefele (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), (90), p. 184; Ciggaar, *Western Travellers*, 207–208; Gudrun Schmalzbauer, "Theophano als Kaiserin des Westens und ihren Verbindungen zu Byzanz und Armenien," *Armenisch-Deutsche Korrespondenz* 83 (1994): 25 on the theory that the wedding was planned as part of an alliance against the Magyars.
85. Otto apparently made the decision to seek a Byzantine match no later than 967; he tells of his plans in a letter of January 18, 968 to the margrave Hermann Billung, preserved in Widukind, (III.70) 146–47.

86. As Johannes Fried characterizes them in "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich," in *Köln—Stadt und Bistum in Kirche und Reich des Mittelalters*, ed. Hanna Vollrath and Stefan Weinfurter (Cologne: Böhlau, 1993), 144. Although Ottonian palaces were certainly much smaller than their Byzantine counterparts, Timothy Reuter points out that they were still impressive; a survey of Ottonian palaces in Saxony and Thuringia has demonstrated that they dominated the landscape and would have impressed contemporaries. Timothy Reuter, "*Regemque quem in Francia pene perdidit, in patria magnifice recepit*: Ottonian Ruler Representation in Synchronic and Diachronic Comparison," in *Herrschaftsrepräsentation in ottonischen Sachsen*, ed. Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1998), 376.
87. See Liudprand, *Legatio*, in *Opera*, ed. Joseph Becker, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 41 (1915), *passim*.
88. Gunther Wolf, "Theophanu und Adelheid," in *Kaiserin Theophanu. Prinzessin aus der Fremde—des Westreichs grosse Kaiserin*, ed. Wolf (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991),79; Bruno of Querfurt, *S. Adalberti Pragensis Episcopi et Martyris Vita Altera*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasinska, Monumenta Poloniae Historia, Series Nova, vol. 4.2 (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydownictwo Naukowe, 1969), (18) 23.
89. Tobias Hoffmann, "Diplomatie in der Krise. Liutprand von Cremona am Hofe Nikephoros II. Phokas," *FMSt* 43 (2009): 143.
90. DOI 355; Widukind, (III.70) 146–48; Ioannes G. Leontiades, "Die Westpolitik Basileios' II. (976–1025)," in *Byzanz und das Abendland*, ed. Konstantinou, 261–62.
91. Anna was finally given in 987 to Prince Vladimir of Kiev, in return for desperately needed military assistance. See Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 517–18; Johannes Irmscher, "Otto III. und Byzanz," in *Byzanz und das Abendland*, ed. Konstantinou, 221.
92. Gunther Wolf argues that Theophanu was raised in the imperial palace in Constantinople from a young age, basing his contention on the statement in the older *vita* of Queen Mechtild that Theophanu was "from the imperial palace." See Wolf, "Vom Kaiserpalast in Byzanz zum Valkhof in Nimwegen," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Wolf, 19. But it is unlikely that the author of the *vita* in fact knew anything about Theophanu's upbringing. If she did have exposure to the imperial palace in Constantinople, it would certainly only have been after the time her uncle John Tzimiskes became emperor. See Karl Leyser, "*Theophanu divina gratia imperatrix augusta*: Western and Eastern Emperorship in the Later Tenth Century," in Leyser, *Communications and Power*, 145.

93. Thietmar, (II.15) 54–56. Johannes Fried points out that sending Theophanu back home would have led to a major conflict with Archbishop Gero of Cologne, who had completed the negotiations and brought the princess west, and also with his powerful Saxon kin group, as well as difficulties with Bishop Dietrich of Metz, who had brought her to court after her landing at Benevento. Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich," 142.
94. For an insightful discussion of the wedding document, see Anthony Cutler and William North, "Word over Image: On the Making, Uses, and Dating of the Marriage Charter of Otto II and Theophanu," in *Interactions: Artistic Interchange between the Eastern and Western Worlds in the Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 167–87.
95. See for example *Annales Hildesheimenses*, 23.
96. Gerbert of Aurillac, *Die Briefsammlung Gerberts von Reims*, ed. Fritz Weigle, MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 2 (1966), Letter 111 (January 988), 139–40.
97. Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 78; Ciggaar, *Western Travellers*, 214.
98. For controversies involving Kunigunde's brothers, see Stefan Weinfurter, "Kunigunde, das Reich und Europa," in *Kunigunde—consors regni*, ed. Stefanie Dick, et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2004), 22; Ingrid Baumgärtner, "Kunigunde. Politische Handlungsspielräume einer Kaiserin," in *Kunigunde—eine Kaiserin an der Jahrtausendwende*, ed. Baumgärtner (Kassel: Furore Verlag, 1997), 18.

CHAPTER 4

The Wealth of Queens

By the time Otto I became emperor of a revived western empire in 962, the women of his family were rich. Adelheid and Theophanu both brought impressive wealth with them to their marriages, and both received extensive Ottonian royal property upon the occasion of their marriages. Their wealth provides a series of valuable clues to understand how the imperial ladies could have stepped so matter-of-factly into the first rank of power during the minority of Otto III. As I will argue in this chapter, beginning with Otto I's marriage to Adelheid in 951, the queen-empresses had resources far surpassing those of earlier royal women, pointing to a conscious policy on the part of royal men to build up the prestige of their consorts. The riches of these women would have been immensely impressive to contemporaries, setting them far above the ranks of the aristocracy. That the royal women were so richly endowed gives useful clues to the means the later Ottonian king-emperors had at their disposal to impress and overawe their subjects. But there are also valuable hints that their material possessions did much more for Adelheid and Theophanu than merely put them on pedestals as symbols of their husbands' wealth and power. Available evidence suggests that these imperial ladies were in fact able to use the wealth to which they had title, both independently and in conjunction with their husbands and later with their sons. They controlled lands, towns, mints, tolls, and of course the men and women who lived and worked in the territories they controlled. Although their physical resources were less than those of their husbands, their possessions far

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surpassed those of any noble in the tenth-century *reich*, giving the empresses the necessary resources both to act as partners of their husband in life and, when the premature death of Otto II demanded it, as caretakers of the empire.

Dowries and *Dos*

Even poor women of the central Middle Ages did not come to their marriages empty-handed. The first resource that tenth-century royal women had at least partly at their command was their dowries, the possessions they brought to the marriage. Well before they became kings, the Ottonians were canny in their choice of rich brides. Thietmar reports that both of the nuptials of the future Henry I were motivated by the bride's wealth as well as her beauty. Thus Henry, when still a third son, fell in love with the widow Hatheburg, attracted to her beauty—and to the usefulness of the wealth she had inherited.[1] After his brothers' deaths left him heir to Saxony, Henry fell out of love with Hatheburg, instead burning for the "beauty and wealth" of the heiress Mechtild.[2] The quest for good dowries was only intensified when the Ottonian dukes of Saxony ascended to the throne.

Throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, royal dowries were intended as a clear marker of the prestige and power of the bride's family; as Pauline Stafford has pointed out, royal marriage was one of the great opportunities for the exchange of treasure in medieval society.[3] Because the alliances with Adelheid and Theophanu were particularly prestigious, their dowries were correspondingly magnificent. Widukind, Thietmar, and the author of the earlier *vita* of Queen Mechtild all report that Theophanu came west with a great following and splendid treasures, although unfortunately they are not more precise in enumerating what precisely she brought.[4] It is likely, since the Byzantine Empire carefully controlled silk exports in the tenth century, that her dowry included many wonderful "imperial" silks, which could not be exported without the emperor's permission. It has been argued that many of the silks donated to the palatine chapel at Aachen toward the end of the tenth century were originally part of Theophanu's dowry.[5] Her dowry would also have contained significant religious capital in the form of relics, which could be passed on as gifts even more valuable than the finest silk. Several historians have also suggested that Theophanu's dowry included the Byzantine-held regions of Benevento and Capua in southern Italy, as Liudprand had proposed to the

eastern emperor in the failed legation of 968.[6] If parts of southern Italy were ever included in Theophanu's dowry agreement, however, her uncle the Byzantine emperor was unable or unwilling to deliver on his promises, although the claim of such a dowry may have legitimated Otto II's invasion of southern Italy in 980–81.

Dowry treasures were far less than half the story of royal women's resources in the later Ottonian period, however. No matter how much gold (or other precious things such as silk) a queen brought in her trousseau, it would eventually be exhausted in the rituals of display and gift-giving that marked the age, an important component of queenly behavior that we will examine below. Normally a woman would not have brought land to marriage, especially as the importation of foreign princesses became standard with Otto I's marriage to Edgitha. Only Adelheid brought substantial land, rights, and permanent income to her Ottonian wedding. Adelheid's marital alliance with Otto I in 951 was her second marriage. Her first husband Lothar endowed Adelheid with enormous tracts of land upon her marriage, which she then took intact with her when she wed Otto. Adelheid's *dos* from her first marriage became in effect the dowry of her second. The Germans were impressed, even if rather vague about the details: the author of the first *vita* of Queen Mechtild in fact states bluntly that Adelheid owned Italy as her dowry.[7] Adelheid's ability to control these lands even in her husband's lifetime suggests that she also had some control over other parts of her dowry.

That brings us to the second source of a queen's income, what for convenience I will refer to as the *dos*. Latin does not distinguish between the goods a woman brought to her marriage (dowry) and the goods with which a man endowed his bride, often called the reverse dowry. In Germanic lands, the woman also received a second gift on the morning after the marriage was consummated, the *Morgengabe*. It is these endowments I designate here with the term *dos*. Upon her marriage, a royal woman received an income from her new husband, in the form of lands, tolls, minting rights, mining rights—practically anything that would generate a regular income stream. Among the Franks, from the time of the Merovingians on, queens received part of the royal patrimony in this way. It was the constitutive sign that a full-fledged marriage had taken place and that the bride now had the status of wife rather than concubine. If the couple parted (a common occurrence in royal marriages before the intensive Christianization of marriage laws in the ninth century), the dismissed woman was entitled not only to the return of her dowry but to this *dos*, so

the gift provided some degree of security to wives. Le Jan has also argued that, since the Frankish queens received part of the royal patrimony, it constituted an investment with public power, establishing the new bride as queen as well as wife.[8] In the tenth and eleventh centuries, queens received goods as *dos* not just at the time of marriage but in the form of extensive later grants, the timing of which suggests that they celebrated the births of children.[9] Extant documents, for example, report three additions to Theophanu's *dos*, in 974 (perhaps to mark her coming of age; the diploma states that the gift is given in return for the value of her counsel), and in 978 and 979, shortly before the birth of two of her children. In all cases the gifts were substantial—royal estates with substantial revenue attached to them.[10] Similarly, when Henry II's spouse Kunigunde was crowned empress in 1002 her *dos* was increased.[11]

The *dos* moved to a different, much grander scale with Adelheid and then Theophanu. Both were granted thousands of manses of land (a manse is about ten hectares; it is useful to regard it as the amount of land a team could plow in a day), royal monasteries, villages, and even substantial towns, dispersed throughout the royal territory.[12] We are fortunate to possess the document that granted Theophanu's *dos* upon her marriage. Such a survival is rare; the only three extant *dos* documents from the tenth century are those of Theophanu, Bertha of Burgundy, and Adelheid upon her first marriage to Lothar.[13] In Theophanu's case, the document was deposited at Gandersheim in a small room in the south corner of the westwork. There it rested for nearly 800 years before its discovery. In other cases, we have to rely on mentions of a royal woman's *dos* in documents when some element of the *dos* was granted or re-granted or a later ruler confirmed their title. For example, we do not have a complete listing of the *dos* that Otto I granted to Adelheid in 951, but we do have documents recording two large subsequent gifts in 968 as well as a summary of a very rich widow's portion confirmed in a document of her son Otto II.[14]

The first Ottonian queens received only a modest *dos*, sufficient to generate revenue to maintain a household in comfort but not enough to mark them out as outstandingly wealthy. When Henry I was elected king of the Germans in 919 his spouse Mechtild does not appear to have had a separate income, at least none that is revealed in Henry's extant documents. Since Mechtild was the daughter of a prominent family it is very unlikely that she would have been completely without funds, but these would not have had the prestige of holdings from the royal patrimony. But the first Ottonian ruler was not in a very powerful position. He controlled the

personal estates he had held as duke of Saxony before his election, but it is unlikely that he could claim any of the former Carolingian royal fisc. As can be seen from his very circumscribed itinerary, he did not have estates he could visit outside of Saxony. He simply did not have the wherewithal to make a big show for himself or for his wife.[15] Mechtild only received an official income in Henry I's so-called "Hausordnung" of 929, a series of interlocking legal proceedings, as David Warner characterized it, that designated Henry's eldest son Otto as the next king, settled the marriage of Otto and Edgitha, and gave Mechtild resources. The *dos* was, however, modest, consisting mostly of five fortified royal residences in Saxony.[16]

The future Otto I's marriage to the Anglo-Saxon princess Edgitha in 929 marked a new departure for the Ottonians, but the increased prestige of the alliance did not immediately translate into a greater endowment for the new queen. The only significant grant to Edgitha was apparently the bustling trade town of Magdeburg—a valuable asset, but one of limited scope, since its population is unlikely to have surpassed about 1000 at the time.[17] As had been the case with Mechtild, the bridegroom (or, more accurately, the seventeen-year-old Otto's father) lacked the resources to give more. By 929 the Ottonian family controlled more estates in several duchies of the *reich*, but not enough to be particularly generous either to churches or to their own wives.

By the time Otto I, a widower of several years' standing, married Adelheid in 951 the status and wealth of the dynasty had been transformed. The Goslar silver mines were bringing hitherto unimagined wealth to the family. Even more important, a series of rebellions against Otto I had led to the confiscation of estates and nobles expediently swearing fealty to the victorious king. Otto I also enjoyed much greater control over Germany's resources than his father had, a control that reached into all the duchies but Bavaria, where Otto's brother Henry enjoyed a viceregal position that included use of what elsewhere would have been designated as royal estates. What is more, Otto greatly expanded the land under his rule with the seizure of the duchy of Lotharingia, victories against the Danes, a massive expansion into the Slavic lands, and finally, beginning in 951, the effective conquest of Lombardy. Otto I had resources to invest in his wife.[18]

Otto also had the will to provide Adelheid with an enormous income compared to what his first wife and mother had enjoyed. Perhaps the inspiration came from knowledge of the *dos* Adelheid had received with her first marriage. We are fortunate to have the document granting

Adelheid's *dos* in 937, extant only because she deposited it at the monastery of San Salvatore in Padua (which also preserved the marriage settlement of Adelheid's mother Bertha). Thus we know that upon Adelheid's betrothal to Lothar on December 12, 937 she received a massive grant amounting to some 4580 manses in northern Italy, lands that were part of the old Lombard royal estates. Her holdings were distributed widely, spreading southeast from Pavia to Lambro and southwest to the rivers Bormida and Orba. Beyond, she held land in the area of Reggio-Emilia, Odena, and Bologna, as well as around Populonia, Empoli, Pisa, Lucca, Pistoia, Luni, Siena, and Chiusi. When Adelheid's mother Bertha, who had taken King Hugh of Lombardy as her second husband, died in 966, Otto saw that Adelheid received her mother's dotal lands in northern Italy as well. All in all, the last Lombard kings, Hugh and Lothar, invested their wives with twenty-one royal centers, four monasteries, and an impressive total of 6640 manses of land (about 164,000 acres).[19] It is important to note that Adelheid's original grant of 4580 manses was four times the land needed to endow a new bishopric.[20] Such resources would have allowed the young queen Adelheid, once she married at age fifteen, to have maintained a very showy household and to have made very generous gifts. In the terms of the age, that generosity would have translated into loyalty and ability to influence political events.

When Otto married Adelheid she was about twenty years old. Adelheid and Otto seem to have arranged their marriage by means of emissaries communicating directly between them. At any rate, there is no hint that anyone consulted Adelheid's brother King Conrad of Burgundy, and events transpired so quickly between Adelheid's escape and her agreement to hand over Pavia and herself to Otto that it seems unlikely that Conrad could have played a role. It is possible that Adelheid valued herself highly and demanded a *dos* from Otto at least equal to what Lothar had given her and which she now brought into her second marriage as dowry. Maybe Otto, at age thirty-nine clearly the most powerful ruler in western Europe, would have been ashamed to display less generosity than had the ruler of what now became one of his sub-kingdoms, especially since it was a grant to a woman whose status as dowager queen of Lombardy helped assure Otto's conquest of the region. We simply have no way of knowing, since the sources are silent on the subject.

What we do know is that Adelheid received a large *dos* when she entered her second marriage, and that the estates she received lay in several regions, although the document making the grant has not survived. From Otto I's

extant charters we only have on record that he gave his second wife several estates in Alsace, especially concentrated in the north. Fortunately, her holdings were confirmed in the reign of her son and her grandson. While these later documents do not provide a comprehensive list comparable to Theophanu's marriage document, they do reveal that Adelheid held land in Franconia, Thuringia, Saxony, and the newly-conquered Slavic lands.[21]

By contrast, we are informed with great precision what Theophanu received when she married Otto II. When the imperial marriage took place on April 14, 972, the Ottonians, father and son, marked her arrival with splendor clearly intended to signal to the world that their dynasty had attained a great new honor with their Byzantine bride. Otto II, already anointed as king of Germany although his father held firmly to all real power, was married in Rome, with the pope officiating. Otto Junior and Theophanu were then crowned as emperor and empress. As part of the wedding celebration, Theophanu's marriage document was published with great fanfare.

This document, preserved at Gandersheim for centuries and now held at Wolfenbüttel, is an extraordinary work of self-presentation on behalf of the Ottonian dynasty. Walter Deeters has argued cogently that the Wolfenbüttel document is the actual parchment presented to Theophanu on her wedding day. It appears to have been prepared for public reading, with marks for rhythm and word divisions.[22] And indeed it is hard to imagine why such a magnificent document should have been created, if not to present it in a very public context to the new young empress. The parchment sheet is 144.5 centimeters long by 39.5 centimeters wide, suitable to unroll while reading. Much more impressively, the document was dyed purple. It is only the second purple document known in the West (the first is the Ottonianum, Otto I's February 13, 962 grant to the Roman Church). Purple was of course the imperial color, branding the document as a forceful statement of imperial rank and prestige.[23] After being dyed, the parchment was painted with rows of medallions containing griffons, lions, saints, the Virgin Mary, and Christ, rather in the style of fine silk of the period.[24] The text was written in letters of gold, an extravagance that would have been known to the German court from Emperor Nikephoros Phokas' 968 letter to Otto I.[25] This document declares in solemn language that Otto II takes Theophanu as wife with God's help, at the advice of his father and the magnates of the realm, with the favor of St. Peter and the blessing of Pope John XIII. It then proceeds to enumerate Theophanu's *dos*, and it becomes apparent why a piece of parchment more than a meter long was necessary.

As her *dos* Theophanu received land in five regions. In Italy her new estates were in the province of Istria and the county of Pescara, lands that bordered Byzantine territory in the south; their location is probably more a reflection of Otto I's successful recent campaigns in the region than of any desire to give Theophanu a stake close to her compatriots. She received substantial lands in northern Germany (now the Netherlands), including the island of Walcheren, Wicheln, and the monastery of Nivelles with 14,000 manses of land. The royal estates of Boppard and Tiel on the Rhine fell to her share, as did Herford in Westphalia, Tilleda, and Nordhausen. Unlike Adelheid, Theophanu received nothing in Franconia, eastern Saxony, the heartland of Italy, or land east of the Elbe, and very little in Saxony in general. She did, however receive, lands in Thuringia and Saxony in subsequent grants in 974, 978, and 979.[26]

The choice of Theophanu's dotal lands would certainly have depended first and foremost on what lands were available at the time of the marriage. By 972 the Ottonian kings possessed considerably less landed wealth in Saxony, especially as several key royal estates that had been granted to Queens Mechtild and Edgitha were then donated to religious foundations, most notably the archdiocese of Magdeburg and the royal convent of Quedlinburg. In the 970s the Slavic frontier was largely peaceful with no new conquests that could have provided a *dos*; earlier gains in that region had been distributed for the most part as they were acquired. One major property, Nordhausen, may even have been "recycled"—first granted to Queen Mechtild in Henry I's 929 grant, but with Mechtild's death in 968 it had reverted to the crown.[27] Many royal estates were of course still in Adelheid's hands and would remain in her possession in her widowhood. Beyond the question of availability, though, the distribution of estates shows evidence of conscious planning. Estates were clustered for easier administration, but care was taken to provide Theophanu with a foothold in every region of the *reich* possible. Theophanu, like Adelheid, thus had the means to exert influence on a magnificent scale through much of Germany and Italy.

Did Ownership Mean Control?

In many cultures, women have had title to property but their husbands have in fact served as the administrators of women's wealth. But Ottonian-era Germans regarded women as legally competent, able to inherit not just moveable wealth but real estate, and also able (with certain limitations) to dispose of it at will.

Thietmar of Merseburg provides several instructive examples of noblewomen inheriting and bequeathing. A first case involved Otto I's half-brother Thankmar. Thankmar was in an unenviable situation. His father, the future Henry I, had repudiated Thankmar's mother in order to wed the better-connected Mechtild and Thankmar found himself retroactively bastardized. It was not the succession of his younger brother Otto to the throne that drove Thankmar into revolt, though, but rather that he was denied his maternal inheritance.[28] Although Thietmar did not feel it necessary to elaborate on this point, his brief notice highlights that Thankmar's mother had property she would normally have been able to bequeath to her son but apparently his half-brother Otto blocked the bequest. We can supplement this passing reference with Thietmar's account of the aftermath when a count named Gero had been executed. The count's sister and widow established a monastery at Alsleben to bury and commemorate him, giving part of their hereditary property to endow it and then acquiring an imperial privilege to protect the new foundation.[29] The point Thietmar emphasizes is the foundation of the monastery; he reports the endowment's source matter-of-factly rather than as a rare novelty, clearly seeing nothing strange in women controlling property in this way. Later, Thietmar recounts that the dying Archbishop Walthard reminded his sister of her promise that if she were named his heir she would give one of the properties of the bequest to the church of St. Mauritius—a tale Thietmar heard from the sister herself.[30] One should note several important points in this account. First of course is the simple fact of a woman inheriting, in this case from a brother. As we can see, the bequest included real estate, rather than just money or goods. The archbishop (and Thietmar) both clearly acknowledge that the sister had the right to dispose of the property she inherited as she wished, otherwise Walthard would not have constrained his sister with an oath. Similarly, when the provost Rotman died, he divided his wealth between his brother "and beloved sister," and when Count Frederick died in 1017 he gave one fortress to his brother's son and the rest of his land to his three daughters.[31] Not least, we have the report that the dying Otto II divided his treasure in four parts, one of which went to his sister Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg.[32] Women could also inherit from their husbands. Thietmar's own mother Kunigunde inherited from her husband Count Siegfried when he died. Siegfried's brother tried to seize these possessions, but the emperor saw that everything was restored to the widow.[33]

Church law reinforces the impression from Thietmar. The Synod of Koblenz in 922 issued the following canon: "If any layperson or cleric or person of either sex wishes to give something from their own property…" bishops should take care to assure that the local church does not lose its tithes.[34] The issue is not whether or not women could hold property—the bishops assembled at Koblenz clearly assumed that they did. Nor was the issue whether women could make gifts from that property; again, we can see a simple assumption that they could. Apparently there was nothing particularly unusual about women making such gifts, or the clause about a person "of either sex" would not have been included. The synod's concern was with making sure the local church got what was owed to it.

The evidence of Ottonian charters reinforces Thietmar's anecdotes. While fewer women than men are involved in the gifts and confirmations that passed through the royal chancery, their numbers are nonetheless significant. Sometimes charters are issued directly to women, as in 928 when Henry I made a grant to a female ministerial named Williburga at the queen's request.[35] The grant Otto I made to the matron Leva and her son Conrad may in effect have been a grant to support an underage boy.[36] But Bia, the mother of one of Otto I's *fideles*, was granted some land directly rather than it being given to her son, which suggests she was given real control.[37] The rights of women were also reserved in cases of judicial confiscation, rather than lumping their property together with their husbands. Thus in 976 Otto II ordered the return of lands to the matron Biledrut, which her husband Duke Berchtold had given her but that were then judicially seized.[38]

Women could certainly bequeath land, for example the matron Aeddila who left Otto I lands that he then granted to the convent of Hilwartshausen.[39] But they could also alienate their lands in their lifetimes. Sometimes the women do not appear to have been married, as when a woman named Wicburga joined with her three brothers to found a convent,[40] or when two sisters joined in a monastic foundation.[41] Sometimes the donors were widows, such as the matron Helmburc, who established a convent to pray for the soul of her husband.[42] In other cases, we do not know if the woman was married or a widow, as when the matron Ida made a gift to the convent of Hilwartshausen, or the matron Wentilgart made a gift to Fulda out of her inheritance, as the document specifies.[43] At least sometimes, however, the woman's husband appears to have been still living, as when Countess Ildeburga, who made a grant to the convent of S. Zaccaria in Venice, is named as the wife (rather than the widow) of Count Adalbert.[44]

Chroniclers' brief mentions show that the Ottonian queens also had control over the lands they received in *dos*, but with some restrictions. Thus Queen Mechtild, after she was widowed, prayed ceaselessly for the soul of her husband Henry I, giving freely to paupers and even to the birds. And she alienated property, richly endowing the convent of Quedlinburg where Henry's remains were buried. But Thietmar's account has a significant addition that did not appear in his references to noblewomen's bequests: Mechtild gave Quedlinburg property "with her sons' agreement."[45]

What are we to make of such a statement? German scholars unanimously agree that German queens did not have absolute proprietorship over their lands but only usufruct. Only one document granting a queen's *dos* actually specifies such a condition, however. This is the document of the year 929 in which Henry I endows Mechtild, stating specifically that she will have free use of the goods enumerated "for her lifetime."[46] In other words, she was not to alienate lands although, as we have just seen, she did in fact give substantial lands to Quedlinburg.

Did Mechtild and her successor queens have to appeal to their royal husbands and sons to grant land because their *dos* remained in some significant way part of the royal domain? Althoff has argued that this was in fact the case. He argues that from the reign of Henry I to that of Henry IV with slight variations the queen's *dos* was granted "liberam … potestatem … obtirendi tradendi commutandi precariandi vel quicquid sibi placuerat inde faciendi" (with free power to exchange and to do whatever the queen wished with it)—but that such statements did not express reality. Instead, according to Althoff, the queen's right to alienate her *dos* was very limited, and the ruler had to give formal approval for such a gift to be valid.[47] But why, since the charters state in so many words (except in Mechtild's grant of the year 929) that queens have full power over their estates, should we doubt that this was in fact the case? The terminology employed is very similar to that in northern Italian grants made to Adelheid—the right to sell, give, or trade the land freely—and scholars do not question that Adelheid was in fact able to do so in Italy.[48] Other women received similar grants with full rights to alienate them, which makes it more difficult to sustain an argument that royal dower lands were an exceptional case.[49] There are, to be sure, a number of extant documents in which Ottonian rulers confirm the land grants of their womenfolk—but they also confirmed a great many grants by non-royal men and women of territories that had never comprised part of the royal fisc.[50] At the least,

such a royal guarantee was a confirmation of legal ownership of the land in question; once a diploma confirmed a gift, another noble could not come and claim the property.

In the case of Mechtild's gift to Quedlinburg, at least as Thietmar describes it, Mechtild did not seek the agreement of her son the king, but rather of her *sons*. Mechtild's younger son Duke Henry of Bavaria had no say in whether crown lands could be alienated—but he could well have expected to inherit lands that his mother held freely, especially as he was, according to the queen's two *vitae*, her favorite child. There are good reasons to win the agreement of one's children before giving away a large share of what they would otherwise expect as inheritance, whether in the tenth or the twenty-first century. Perhaps an analogy can again be found in the pages of Thietmar. The chronicler tells how his own widowed grandmother, also named Mechtild, completed her husband Liuthar's vow to endow the provostship of Walbeck "with the agreement of her sons."[51] In other words, a valuable resource was left in her possession. She had control of the resource, since she sought her sons' agreement rather than the other way around. And it was agreement she sought (*faventibus ad haec duobus suimet filiis*), rather than permission, a suggestion that she had the right to do what she wished but acted prudently in consulting all family interests before taking an important step.

Adelheid certainly had complete control over the *dos* of her Italian first marriage, both according to the letter of the grant and from the use we can see she made of it. Lothar's original grant of June 27, 947 gave to his "dear wife" the lands discussed above with all power to sell, give, trade, or alienate, in exactly the same terms as those of her mother Bertha's *dos*. A second document of March 31, 950 secured her paternal inheritance, again specifying that she should have full control.[52] After the death of her first husband, Adelheid did in fact make independent gifts of her Italian lands, especially generous grants to the monastery of San Salvator in Padua, even though she was married to Otto I at the time.[53] The pertinent question is whether the reality of control was different in Italy than in Germany, whether the oft-invoked but poorly attested "Lombard Law" gave northern Italian women a more independent position than their counterparts across the Alps.

The formal process of queenly land-giving was different in Germany. In Italy Adelheid was able to act completely independently in her grants to San Salvator. In Germany, she successfully granted land to her daughter, Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg, but the vehicle of the gift was not one

but two of Otto III's documents dated February 5, 985. These two documents, DOIII 7a and 7b, have been taken as evidence that Adelheid needed Otto III's consent (or at least that of the "crown," since Otto was still a young boy at the time) before alienating what was in fact royal land. The language of the two documents is puzzling. Althoff argues that in the first Adelheid tried to make her gift *juste et legaliter*, in other words of her own authority, but that apparently her right to do so was not accepted.[54] But not accepted by whom? Was there a rejection at the hands of the archchancellor, or of her daughter-in-law Theophanu, who may have assumed the regency at this time, but was probably still working closely with her mother-in-law to secure Otto III's hold on the throne?

The two versions of DOIII 7 are essentially the same, except that 7a has a paragraph in the middle not included in the final version. This paragraph tells how Adelheid came into possession of the lands she wishes to pass on to her daughter: they were part of the *dos* that Otto I had granted to her. Adelheid now wishes to pass them on "justly and legally." But this excided paragraph also suggests that such a gift must be made with the king's consent, as does of course the existence of the document at all. It seems clear from the existence of 7a that Adelheid sought from the beginning to work through proper forms, but that two scribes disagreed on the amount of detail to include in the document. The timing of this gift, however, suggests that what was at issue in this case was a matter of form, of propriety, rather than a limitation on Adelheid's right to make the gift. After all, the child Otto III was certainly not taking a stand for his rights. Rather, it seems likely that Adelheid was publicly "registering" the gift, as nobles sometimes sought a royal charter to confirm their own gifts or land exchanges.

One of the few hints that German queens did *not* enjoy full proprietary rights over their estates occurred with the convent of Nordhausen. As a widow, Queen Mechtild made several gifts to Nordhausen from the lands that constituted her *dos.* But then the crown re-granted Nordhausen to Mechtild's granddaughter-in-law, Theophanu. The first *vita* of Mechtild, composed at Nordhausen, includes pointed reminders to Otto II and Theophanu that they should keep matters the way their patroness had set them up.[55] This despite a confirmation of the grant in a document of Otto I.[56] That Nordhausen was part of the *dos* of both Mechtild and Theophanu has been taken as evidence that queens had the use rather than absolute ownership of royal lands they received. Other estates also served as part of the *dos* for several queens.[57]

Occasional overlap should not, however, constitute a blanket assumption that the same lands always provided for the queens of Germany. Understanding the dynamic is complicated by the fact that Theophanu's mother-in-law, Adelheid, was alive and well until a number of years after Theophanu's own death—a live queen would not have been stripped of her *dos* even if the custom were to provide for her son's wife. But, except for Nordhausen, Mechtild's dotal lands do not appear to have been passed on to the next generation, and indeed Mechtild's moderate *dos* seems to have lain exclusively in Saxony. Adelheid and Theophanu both received lands throughout much of the *reich*. Similarly, when Henry II came to the throne in 1002, his wife Kunigunde received some lands that had been Adelheid's or Theophanu's, but for the most part consisted of new grants. It is hardly plausible that Theophanu's dotal lands would have been frozen from the time of her death in 991 until a new queen needed them eleven years later. Instead, if they did indeed revert to the crown, they would have been granted to Otto III's followers or used for his own pious benefactions.

Perhaps the best evidence that Ottonian queens owned their dotal lands instead of just enjoying their profits is the number of cases in which they did in fact alienate lands. The nature of our evidence makes gifts to religious foundations much more visible than gifts to laymen or women; religious foundations carefully hoarded royal diplomas for centuries as proof of ownership. Charters to laypeople, by contrast, survive in much smaller numbers. The result is that the Ottonians, both male and female, appear in the diplomatic evidence as intensely, even monomaniacally, pious. We should, however, assume the existence of gifts to laypeople, even if we can rarely see details.

Queen Mechtild not only made gifts to Quedlinburg from her *dos*; she is credited as co-founder with her husband Henry I, or even as the main motive force behind the convent's construction. The Quedlinburg annalist, writing with the advantage of local knowledge at the great royal convent where Mechtild retired after being widowed, reports that after Otto I became king, it was Mechtild who began construction of the new foundation.[58]

Adelheid founded an impressive three religious houses. The first, Peterlingen in Burgundy, was created at the site of her mother Bertha's burial. San Salvator in Pavia was a refoundation. The last, Selz in the upper Rhineland, was founded in 991 and intended to serve as Adelheid's own necropolis.[59] Adelheid began contributing to the reconstruction of San

Salvator in 966, and after work was completed she even requested and received a papal bull from John XIII taking the house under papal protection. The papal privilege gives Adelheid full credit for the foundation "from the fervor of divine love."[60] The empress appears to have planned in this way for her own retirement; after Otto I died Adelheid resided for the most part in Pavia and became closely associated with the monastery she had so generously endowed.[61] The gifts to San Salvator were from the *dos* of Adelheid's first marriage and were emphatically her own gifts, granted in her own name, starting with the proclamation "I Adelheid the Empress." The deeds of gift declare that the donations were made for the spiritual well-being of all three Ottos, both living and dead, as well as for prayers for herself and her parents.[62] By contrast, Adelheid's gifts to Selz are known from a series of documents of Otto III, similar in form to the Quedlinburg grant discussed above. In other words, the public appearance is preserved that these gifts are royal grants, although from Adelheid's *dos*, bestowed at Adelheid's petition.[63]

Adelheid's lack of power over her estates is more apparent than real. Otto III's documents granting Adelheid's estates to Selz are all dated March 11, 992. In other words, they were issued before Otto came of age, in the period after Theophanu's death when Adelheid held the reins of power in Germany.[64] She would herself have been responsible for the issuance of these charters, and her role as humble "petitioner" is thus a façade of proper chancery format rather than evidence that she did not in fact control her lands.

It is beyond question that noblewomen could dispose freely of dotal lands, at least after their husbands' death. Otto I's sister Gerberga was first married to the duke of Lotharingia, then to the king of France. When she died in 968 or 969, her remains were buried at Saint-Remi, a community to which she had given rich gifts from the *dos* of her first marriage.[65] In another French example, Adelheid, the wife of Hugh Capet, was able to make a substantial gift to the monastery of Trinité in Poitiers; it is confirmed in a document of King Lothar, again apparently to add legitimacy or protection to the grant.[66] Closer to home, Otto I's daughter-in-law Ida, the wife of Prince Liudolf, gave the entire village of Rödlitz to the church of Merseburg, as Thietmar of Merseburg approvingly notes.[67] Similarly, a countess Christina gave a large part of what Thietmar calls *her* property to St. Mauritius in Magdeburg. Again, Thietmar does not find the gift itself extraordinary in any way, apparently accepting the female benefaction as too common for special comment. He only reports it

because Archbishop Giselher had a vision of the whole army of heaven greeting Christina's soul at her death, in thanks for the gift.[68] Similarly, Thietmar's aunt, Countess Eila, constructed the monastery of Schweinfurt and was buried there in 1015.[69]

Thietmar also tells of Empress Kunigunde's benefactions in terms that suggest her power to give freely from her *dos* even during her husband's lifetime. The first example comes from Henry II's establishment of the diocese of Bamberg. Thietmar reports that Henry spoke of his plans at a synod in 1007, complaining that the bishop of Würzburg was holding up the foundation. The words Thietmar puts into Henry's mouth are instructive: "In their kind generosity, my wife, who is present, and my only brother and co-heir, have favored the establishment of this bishopric and both may be certain that I will give them satisfactory compensation."[70] In other words, it was necessary to obtain Kunigunde's permission before alienating any of her dotal lands and to provide her with equivalent estates to make up for her loss. The second example is even more telling: Thietmar tells that Kunigunde fell ill at Kaufungen and promised to establish a monastery there (which in fact she later did).[71] If Kunigunde had no right to alienate her lands, she could never have made such a promise.

One of the oddest pieces of evidence of queenly independent use of their *dos* comes to us from Bohemia, but by analogy might help shed light on Ottonian royal women's use of their resources. This is the very large and mysterious run of coins with the inscription "Emma Regina" that we have from late tenth-century Bohemia. Emma, the wife of Boleslas II of Bohemia, had perhaps as many as 100,000 coins struck at her own mint in her own name. The mint was at Melnick, which formed part of her *dos*.[72] The only possible parallel in the lands of the *reich* is the series of coins issued in the joint name of Adelheid and one of the Ottos, but we know no details of the circumstances under which they were minted.[73]

Finally, it should be noted that the imperial ladies of the Ottonian dynasty had access, not only to their own wealth, but to that of their husbands; income from both sources could be distributed to win supporters and influence events. As Adalard of Corbie pointed out in his *De Ordine Palatii* (On the Organization of the Palace) of c. 820, the queen saw to the operation of royal residences, including the vital distribution of annual gifts to military retainers. The chamberlain and treasurer were to be under her command.[74] While Adalard's account describes the Carolingian court of Louis the Pious, there is no reason to think this arrangement would have changed significantly.

Women served as treasure-keepers and -distributors for their husbands as well as on their own account. Most tenth-century queens were specifically linked to the wealth of the crown, including Mechtild, Edgitha, Theophanu, Kunigunde, and Otto I's sister Gerberga.[75] Liudprand of Cremona in particular emphasizes women's role as treasurers. For example, he tells in the *Antapodosis* how King Hugh of Italy after uncovering a conspiracy executed several ringleaders, including a man named Walpert. Hugh then seized Walpert's wife Cristina and tortured her to make her hand over the treasure she had hidden.[76] In England in 1035 Queen Emma took control of her deceased husband Cnut's treasure during the succession dispute; similarly, Kunigunde possessed Germany's regalia when her husband Emperor Henry II died in 1024.[77] Among our own imperial ladies, when Berengar captured her, Adelheid possessed not only her husband's treasure but the Lombard crown.[78] Theophanu, when Otto II was suffering defeat in the Battle of Cotrone, was situated nearby with the royal coffers.[79] Royal women had access to resources.

A lack of clear distinction between the queen's *dos* and the crown's coffers may account for the financial difficulties Queen Mechtild suffered after Henry I died, as described in both *vitae* of the queen. The author of the earlier *vita* reports that bad people told Otto that his mother had more wealth than was appropriate, leading him to send out search parties to find hidden treasures and eventually forcing her to give up her *dos*, although Queen Edgitha intervened to have it restored. The later *vita* reports that the devil was behind it all, getting people to tell her sons that Mechtild had been hoarding wealth and had used up almost all of the royal revenues.[80] These accounts are, however, certainly exaggerated, as even their authors acknowledged that Mechtild continued to give liberally for the rest of her life.

The Queen's Entourage

Wealth meant influence. This influence could be either direct or indirect: queens maintained a significant number of followers who had to be rewarded, but also shared in the royal rituals of gift-giving. The nature of our extant sources does not make it easy to see queens sharing their wealth, especially before their widowhood. Similarly, no texts speak in detail about how many people were directly dependent on the queen for their livelihoods. Nonetheless, it is possible to tease some details from our available sources that can at least suggest how the queens of the Ottonian dynasty could use their wealth to enhance their prestige and authority.

First and most directly, queens were employers. They had their own entourage and their own household, a situation attested as early as Gregory of Tours.[81] Both Theophanu and Adelheid must have brought followers with them when they wed (although the only possible trace of Theophanu's Greek followers is two small streets near St. Pantaleon in Cologne named "small" and "large" Greek Market (*Griechenmarkt*). Occasionally a servant is mentioned, but only if the person did something extraordinary. For example, Flodoard tells how in 962 a demoniac who was a servant of Queen Gerberga of France ran naked through a church up to the altar, where he fell flat and died—the spectacular nature of the event being the only reason Flodoard thought it necessary to mention the man.[82] Queens had cupbearers, as we know because Kunigunde once sent hers on an errand that Thietmar found worthy of note.[83] They also had priests in their service; for example, Princess Liudgard requested a royal gift for her faithful priest Geroh.[84] William who became bishop of Strassburg in 1029 had previously served as Queen Gisela's archchaplain, as the Hildesheim annalist notes.[85]

But the case of Gisela's chaplain reminds us that a "servant" could be a person of considerable rank. Thus, Richburga, a servant of Queen Mechtild, was appointed abbess of the new convent of Nordhausen, so she was certainly a noblewoman.[86] Adelheid's entourage, even when she was in Germany, included an Italian judge.[87] She also had counts in her service. Adelheid was particularly close to Count Manegold of Zürichgau. He was a distant relative, a cousin of the empress' mother, and appears to have had a leading position in Adelheid's entourage, in which position he helped Adelheid with plans for the monastery of Selz. When he died in 991, the Quedlinburg annalist reports that because of his faithful service he was buried at Quedlinburg at Adelheid's wish, and Adelheid also came north to attend the funeral.[88] Thietmar also informs us that his own father Count Siegfried faithfully served Adelheid "in both military and domestic matters."[89] We could wish that he had provided more information about the nature of that service, but he must have found the matter too obvious to need comment. Such people would have expected rewards for their services. Most often they would have been provided for out of resources that were in the queen's gift. For example, Queen Gerberga gave an estate to the monastery of Blandigny in Ghent so the monks would pray for the soul of her faithful Count Arnulf.[90] But a queen could also use her influence to pressure nobles to give resources to her own faithful followers. We can see this from a rather plaintive letter from Gerbert of Aurillac to

Adelheid in 983. She has asked the abbot of Bobbio for land for her followers. He does not object to this expectation, instead just complaining that Adelheid has demanded more than he is able to provide.[91]

Probably much of the higher level of service involved the management of the queens' estates. There is no reason to suppose that basic administration of the royal fisc had changed, so the queen would have had her own *ministeriales* on her estates, just as she did in the Carolingian capitulary *de Villis*.[92] She may also have taken a personal interest in the stewardship of her lands; the first *vita* of Mechtild reports that the ailing, aging Mechtild continued to visit her homes and fortresses.[93] Certainly efforts were made to consolidate estates into administrative units, as we can see from the frequent confirmation of land exchanges in the *diplomata*. These estates provided an income; the later *vita* of Mechtild reports that whenever the dowager queen received "tribute" from her dependents, she gave a tithe of it to the poor and members of the clergy.[94]

The queen's estates also provided a sizeable contingent of fighting men. Philippe Buc has estimated that Adelheid's lands in Italy would have included about 20,000 people, enough to send about 1600 men to the army.[95] And queens appear to have had at least some authority over these men. Our evidence comes from Flodoard's annals. In his report of the events of 948, when Duke Hugh the Great was charged with holding King Louis IV of France prisoner, Flodoard tells that it was the queen's resources that won his release. Specifically, Gerberga had to give up to Hugh the *castrum* of Laon that she held, and with it the *fideles* who were gathered from *her* residences.[96] At need, it appears that queens could call on considerable armed support.

Sharing the Wealth

Bishop Thietmar reports that when Otto III's sister married the count palatine Ezzo, many believed the alliance shamed her. To save her honor, Otto gave her a rich enough dowry that her honor would not be lost.[97] Members of the royal family should live richly; an impoverished king—or queen—would have seemed a contradiction in terms. The might of a ruler, as Hagen Keller points out, was above all shown by the gifts they gave.[98] Gift-giving worked hand-in-hand with royal display. Especially after exploitation of the Goslar silver mines began in the reign of Otto I, the sheer wealth of the Ottonians enabled them to dominate their surroundings.[99] Thus wealth was very much a tool of government.

Royal life included public feasting, gifts, and other displays. When the author of the earlier *vita* of Mechtild describes the future queen's wedding feast, she is careful to emphasize that it was suitable for people of such high status.[100] Similarly, for Widukind, Adelheid's marriage with Otto I was celebrated "in magnificent royal style," while Theophanu's nuptials merited "imperial magnificence" according to the twelfth-century Sigebert of Gembloux.[101] A particularly lavish banquet could be taken as evidence of royal pretensions. Widukind is in no doubt that when Otto I's brother Henry celebrated a great "*convivium*" shortly after Otto ascended the throne and gave his guests very rich gifts, the reason was Henry's lust to be king. Widukind notes that the younger brother did indeed win over a majority of his guests.[102] Even more strikingly, Liudprand gives us an interesting insight on royal munificence when he tells the "real" reason why the Franks refused to accept Wido of Tuscany as their king in 888. Wido had sent a servant ahead to the bishop of Metz to prepare for his arrival. The bishop entertained the servant abundantly, which led the servant to suggest that, in return for a generous gift from the bishop, he would make sure that Wido was content with a third of such a feast. The bishop was indignant, Liudprand tells, and thought it highly improper "for such a king to rule over us, who prepares himself a cheap ten-coin meal."[103]

The same attitude applied to queens. Eleventh-century church writers emphasize that royal women should live worthily of their high rank (although at the same time they should not be too fine and should remember to be humble).[104] Even as a grieving widow, Queen Mechtild enjoyed three daily meals with delicacies of every kind.[105] After Adelheid's daughter Emma was widowed and then her son died, she suffered a serious reversal of her fortunes with the advent of a new dynasty to the French throne. She had Gerbert write to a priest complaining about her reduced circumstances, asking for support and help with a financial matter.[106] Such poverty in a queen must have been shocking to contemporaries. While the finery could be overdone—Thietmar considered Otto I the golden mean and his successors guilty of excess, while a generation later the monk Otloh of St. Emmeram's reported a vision of Theophanu consigned to damnation for her excessively rich jewelry and finicky manners—royal show was for almost all contemporaries merely part of the established order.[107]

Royal gifts should be splendid. Before Hugh the Great, the nearly-royal duke of Francia, visited Otto I in 951, he sent the German king two lions.[108] Such gifts were purposely intended to be showy. Thus gifts of land or confirmations of rights sometimes included something for display, as

when Otto II gave the archdiocese of Magdeburg the right to free election along with a book containing gold portraits of himself and Theophanu. Thietmar was clearly impressed, and reported that the tome could still be seen in Magdeburg.[109]

Rulers' generosity provided an important safety net for the poor. Kings gave rich presents to family monasteries when relatives died to enable massive distributions of alms to the poor on the anniversary.[110] We know, however, that queens as well as their spouses fed the poor in large numbers. Both *vitae* of Mechtild stress her many benefactions, telling for example that when she traveled she always kept a supply of food in her carriage for distribution along the way. As the author of the later *vita* sums up simply, "her hand was always open to the poor."[111] When Theophanu visited Rome in 989–90, she met with the self-exiled Bishop Adalbert of Prague and when she discovered that he intended a pilgrimage to Jerusalem she gave him as much silver as his young brother Gaudentius could carry.[112]

It was not just widows who were open-handed, however. Otto I's sister Gerberga had been generous in her gifts to the monastery of Saint-Remi, where she was eventually buried.[113] And when royal women gave, they were expected to give with queenly munificence. Saint-Gall did well from royal visits. When King Conrad I visited the monastery, he rewarded the children who read to him by sticking a gold piece in the mouth of each, and gave each of the monks a pound of silver for clothing besides bedecking the altar. Two generations later, Adelheid gave 60 pounds of silver from the royal treasury to the abbot and brothers of the community.[114] The church at Metz received many gifts not just from Otto I but from Adelheid, whom Sigebert of Gembloux lauds as a model of piety and chastity.[115] The annals of Augsburg also report that Adelheid contributed toward the rebuilding of the cathedral in that city.[116]

Few of the royal gifts of the Ottonian age are still extant. A number of these presents are still preserved in Essen, however, the gifts of the Ottonian abbess Mechtild of Essen, the granddaughter of Otto I, to her church. The extant gifts include three gold processional crosses with gems and enamels, a great seven-branch candelabrum, a gold and jeweled crown, and a gilded Madonna and child.[117] They still make an awe-inspiring impression in Essen Cathedral today and must have been objects of wonder when they were first given (Fig. 4.1).

Finally, one should not forget that queens received presents as well as giving them. We know that Queen Constance of France, wife of Robert

the Pious, received gifts from nobles, because Fulbert of Chartres reports the practice in one of his letters.[118] Their authority was displayed in a highly visible fashion both in giving and in receiving—both of which displayed to the world that these were significant women who should be honored and heeded.

Fig. 4.1 Golden Madonna of Essen, gold leaf over wooden core, c. 980, Essen Cathedral Treasury. Source: Werner Otto/Alamy Stock Photo

Notes

1. Thietmar, (I.5) 8.
2. Ibid., (I.9) 14.
3. Pauline Stafford, "Queens and Treasure in the Early Middle Ages," in *Treasure in the Medieval West*, ed. Elizabeth M. Tyler (York: York Medieval Press, 2000), 63–64.
4. Widukind, (III.73) 149–50; Thietmar, (II.15) 56; *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (15) 141; cf. Hiltrud Westermann-Angerhausen, "Spuren der Theophanu in der ottonischen Schatzkunst?" in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Anton von Euw (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum, 1991), 2: 193, n. 4.
5. Anna Muthesius, "The Role of Byzantine Silks in the Ottonian Empire," in *Byzanz und das Abendland im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert*, ed. Evangelos Konstantinou (Cologne: Böhlau, 1997), 311 and *passim* for the great value of Byzantine silks in western Europe in this period. For the difficulty of exporting silks, see Liudprand of Cremona's indignant account in his report of his legation to Constantinople. *Legatio*, in *Opera*, ed. Joseph Becker, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 41 (1915), (54–55) 204–205.
6. For example, see Odilo Engels, "Theophanu—die westliche Kaiserin aus dem Osten," in *Die Begegnung des Westens mit dem Osten*, ed. Engels (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1993), 18. Johannes Irmscher, "Otto III. und Byzanz," in *Byzanz und das Abendland*, ed. Konstantinou, 212 discusses Liudprand's negotiations in 968.
7. *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (11) 131. The Ottonian Gerberga also took the *dos* of her first marriage to her second marriage when she wed Louis IV of France.
8. Régine Le Jan, "Douaires et pouvoirs des reines en Francie et en Germanie (VIe–Xe siècle)," in *Dots et douaires dans le haut Moyen Âge*, ed. François Bougard, et al. (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2002), 468.
9. See Gerd Althoff, "Probleme um die dos der Königinnen im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert," in *Veuves et veuvage dans le haut Moyen Âge*, ed. Michel Parisse (Paris: Picard, 1993), 124.
10. Wolfgang Georgi, "Ottonianum und Heiratsurkunde 962/972," in *Theophanu*, ed. Euw, 2: 155; Amalie Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000), 67. See DOII 76 (April 29, 974), 171 (March 17, 978), 202 (probably 979).
11. Ingrid Baumgärtner, "Kunigunde. Politische Handlungsspielräume einer Kaiserin," in *Kunigunde—eine Kaiserin an der Jahrtausendwende*, ed. Baumgärtner (Kassel: Furore Verlag, 1997), 23.
12. Le Jan, "Douaires et pouvoirs des reines," 471.
13. Ingrid Heidrich, "Die Dotalausstattung der Kaiserin Adelheid im historischen Kontext," in *Kaiserin Adelheid und ihre Klostergründung in Selz*,

ed. Franz Staab and Thorsten Unger (Speyer: Verlag der pfälsischen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften, 2005), 119.

14. DOI 368; DOII 109; DOIII 36.
15. Although one should not overstate the weakness of the first Ottonian king. See Gerd Althoff and Hagen Keller, *Heinrich I. und Otto der Grosse: Neubeginn auf karolingischem Erbe*, 2 vols., 3rd ed. (Gleichen: Muster-Schmidt Verlag, 2006), who point out many of the ways in which Henry I could exercise power.
16. DHI 20 (September 16, 929); see also David Warner, "Introduction" to *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 28; Karl Leyser, "The Ottonians and Wessex," in *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, ed. Timothy Reuter (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 79. The five residences enumerated were Quedlinburg, Pöhlde, Nordhausen, Duderstadt, and Grone. Grone in particular was an important royal palace by the mid-960s, the site of several assemblies and even a synod. Winfrid Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen und Ihre Bedeutung in der Politik* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1989), 10; Thomas Zotz, "Königspfalz und Herrschaftspraxis im 10. und frühen 11. Jahrhundert," *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte* 120 (1984): 21.
17. The *Gesta archiepiscoporum Magdeburgensium*, ed. Wilhelm Schum, MGH SS 14: (1) 376 reports that Otto I in the second year of his reign founded a monastery at Magdeburg at the request of Queen Edith, whose *dos* it was. See also Le Jan, "Douaires et pouvoirs des reines," 470.
18. David Bachrach has estimated that the estates Otto I held would have produced a surplus of about 22,500 metric tons of grain each year, as well as more than 100,000 pigs and thousands of cartloads of wine. Bachrach, "Toward an Appraisal of the Wealth of the Ottonian Kings of Germany, 919–1024," *Viator* 44.2 (2013): 13.
19. Stefan Weinfurter, "Kaiserin Adelheid und das ottonische Kaisertum," *FMSt* 33 (1999): 6; see also Paolo Golinelli, *Adelaide: regina santa d'Europa* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2000), 45.
20. Daniela Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern. Funktionen und Aufgabenfelder von Frauen in der ottonischen Herrscherfamilie (919–1024)* (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2003), 65.
21. DOII 109; DOIII 36; see Fößel, *Königin*, 69. For Adelheid's possessions in Alsace, see Thomas Zotz, "Die Ottonen und das Elsaß," in *Kaiserin Adelheid*, ed. Staab and Unger, 51–52. Harriet Lattin estimates that Adelheid controlled more of the royal land of the kings of northern Italy than her son Otto II did. See Gerbert, *The Letters of Gerbert*, trans. Harriet Lattin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 52–53, n. 1.

22. Walter Deeters, "Zur Heiratsurkunde der Kaiserin Theophanu," *Braunschweigisches Jahrbuch* 54 (1973): 9. But see Georgi, "Ottonianum und Heiratsurkunde," 143 who argues that the manuscript is a fancy copy of a lost original that would have had the ruler's monogram and seal.
23. Carlrichard Brühl, "Purpururkunden," in *Festschrift für Helmut Beumann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke and Reinhard Wenskus (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1977), 12; Hartmut Hoffmann, *Buchkunst und Königtum im ottonischen und frühsalischen Reich*, Schriften der MGH 30 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986), 10. Empurpled documents remained rare. None are known from France, England, Spain, or Scandinavia, and only a total of nine from the German *reich*.
24. For a discussion of the iconography of the marriage document, see Anton von Euw, "Ikonologie der Heiratsurkunde der Kaiserin Theophanu," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Euw, 2: 175. The painting is of a high order and has been attributed to the Master of the Gregory Register. See Hoffmann, *Buchkunst*, 103ff.
25. Brühl, "Purpururkunden," 7.
26. For analysis of Theophanu's *dos*, see Johannes Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich," in *Köln—Stadt und Bistum in Kirche und Reich des Mittelalters*, ed. Hanna Vollrath and Stefan Weinfurter (Cologne: Böhlau, 1993), 149; Deeters, "Zur Heiratsurkunde," 19–20; Fößel, *Königin*, 70. DOII 76, 171, and 202. For an interesting appraisal of the document and full translation, see Anthony Cutler and William North, "Word over Image: On the Making, Uses, and Dating of the Marriage Charter of Otto II and Theophanu," in *Interactions: Artistic Interchange between the Eastern and Western Worlds in the Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 167–87.
27. See Gerd Althoff, "Causa scribendi und Darstellungsabsicht: Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde und andere Beispiele," in *Litterae Medii Aevi*, ed. Michael Borgolte and Herrad Spilling (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1988), 117–33. For the debate on whether Nordhausen was indeed re-granted to Theophanu, see the convenient overview by Sean Gilsdorf, "Introduction," in *Queenship and Sanctity: The Lives of Mathilda and the Epitaph of Adelheid* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 16.
28. Thietmar, (II.2) 40. Widukind, Thietmar's probable source for this story, also reports that the reason for Thankmar's revolt was deprivation of his maternal inheritance, even though he had already received a number of estates from his father. Widukind, (II.11) 76–77.
29. Thietmar, (III.10) 108.
30. Ibid., (VI.76) 364–66.

31. Ibid., (VII.35) 440; (VII.50) 460.
32. Ibid., (III.25) 128. It is interesting to note that the bequest was to Mechtild personally, not to Quedlinburg.
33. Thietmar, (IV.16) 150.
34. Canons of the Synod of Koblenz (922), MGH Conc. 6, 1, canon 8, p. 70.
35. DHI 18 (April 13, 928).
36. DOI 80 (probably 946).
37. DOI 17 (October 21, 937). Otto I also made gifts of land to the matrons Helmburc and Reginlind, in both cases with full rights to alienate the property if they wished. DOI 57 (May 1, 944); DOI 193 (April 29, 958).
38. DOII 141 (September 29, 976). In a related example, Otto II granted some confiscated land to the bishop of Brixen, but with the condition that the bishop could not take charge of the estate until after the convicted felon's mother had died. DOII 163 (September 8, 977).
39. DOI 206 (February 12, 960). Otto also passed on bequests from his aunt Uota in 952 and from his niece Uda in 960. DOI 159 (December 30, 952); DOI 216 (August 28, 960).
40. DOI 158 (October 26, 952).
41. As was the case with the sisters Berhthildis and Emma in 963 (DOII 6), Bertha and Hathwig in 974 (DOII 86), and Reingert and Wendila (DOIII 42).
42. DOI 174 (January 10, 955). Another widow-founder appears in DOII 110 (June 11, 975).
43. DOIII 59 (January 20, 990); DOII 105 (June 3, 975).
44. DOI 258 (August 26, 963).
45. Thietmar, (I.21) 26.
46. DHI 20 (September 16, 929), which states that Mechtild will have free and secure power over the enumerated lands for the period of her life, as long as she remains chaste in "holy widowhood." See Althoff, "Probleme um die dos der Königinnen," 124–25. Christian Lauranson-Rosaz, "Douaire et *sponsalicium* durant le haut Moyen Âge," in *Veuves et Veuvage*, ed. Parisse, 103 has gone so far as to argue that in the tenth century it became the rule that women only had the usufruct rather than absolute ownership of their *dos*, but without presenting substantiating evidence.
47. Althoff, "Probleme um die dos der Königinnen,"124–32. Nevertheless, see DOII 76, in which Otto II confirms Theophanu's *dos*, carefully expressing that she will have completely free disposition of the lands. See also Werner Ohnsorge, "Die Heirat Kaiser Ottos II. mit der Byzantinerin Theophano (972)," *Braunschweigisches Jahrbuch* 54 (1973): 46. For a grant to Adelheid, see DOI 368 (November 16, 968); confirmation of her possessions can be found in DOIII 36 (May 21, 987).

48. D Lothar 3, a grant of land made to Adelheid on June 27, 947. In Luigi Schiaparelli, ed., *I Diplomi di Ugo e di Lotario di Berengario II e di Adalberto*, Fonti per la storia d'Italia 38 (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1924). Documents 46 and 47 of Hugh and Lothar, granting the *dos* of Bertha and Adelheid, use similar language.
49. For example, Otto I made a grant to his niece Abbess Gerberga of Gandersheim (DOI 422), while Otto II similarly made a full and free grant to his sister Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg (DOII 77). Such grants with full rights were not limited to ecclesiastics, however; in 961 Otto I made a gift on similar terms to Duchess Judith of Bavaria (DOI 220).
50. See for example DOII 3 of 961 confirming Berchtild and Hemma's grant to Gernrode.
51. Thietmar, (VI.43) 328.
52. D Lothar 3; cf. D Hugh 47: "quatinus proprietario iure habeat, teneat firmiterque possideat, habeatque potestatem donandi, vendendi, commutandi, alienandi…"; D Lothar 14 (March 31, 950).
53. Mathilde Uhlirz, "Die rechtliche Stellung der Kaiserinwitwe Adelheid im Deutschen und im Italischen Reich," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, germ. Abt.* 74 (1957): 87; Althoff, "Probleme um die dos der Königinnen," 126; Weinfurter, "Kaiserin Adelheid," 6.
54. DOIII 7a and 7b; Althoff, "Probleme um die dos der Königinnen," 126.
55. See Althoff, "Probleme um die dos der Königinnen," 128–30; *Vita Mathildis Antiquior*, (11) 132–33.
56. DOI 393 (April 10, 970).
57. Althoff, "Probleme um die dos der Königinnen," 125. Janet L. Nelson, "Les douaires des reines anglo-saxonnes," in *Dots et douaires*, ed. Bougard, 530 points out that in England as well a number of queens could successively hold the same *dos* lands, arguing that some estates were traditionally set aside for just that purpose.
58. The "city" of Quedlinburg was part of Mechtild's *dos*; see DHI 20. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 937, p. 459; Thietmar, writing nearly a century later, simply reports that Henry I was buried at Quedlinburg, "which he himself had constructed from the foundations." Thietmar, (I.18) 24.
59. Fößel, *Königin*, 237–41.
60. Paolo Golinelli, "De Luitprand de Crémone à Donizon de Canossa. Le souvenir de la reine Adélaïde en Italie (X^{e}–XIIe siècles)," in *Adélaïde de Bourgogne: Genèse et representations d'une sainteté impériale*, ed. Patrick Corbet, et al. (Dijon: Ed. Universitaires de Dijon, 2002), 99; Harald Zimmermann, ed., *Papsturkunden, 896–1046*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1988), 220 (April 972), 219.

61. Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 178.
62. Uhlirz, "Rechtliche Stellung," 90.
63. See discussion in Althoff, "Probleme um die dos der Königinnen," 127.
64. DOII 86, 87, and 88.
65. Carsten Woll, "'Regina amatrix ecclesiarum et mater monachorum.' Zu kirchenpolitischem Engagement von Königinnen im Reich der späten westfränkischen Karolinger und früheren Kapetinger," in *Regionen Europas—Europa der Regionen*, ed. Peter Thorau, et al. (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003), 48. Gerberga had to enlist the support of her brother Archbishop Brun of Cologne in 956 to regain the possessions that Duke Gislebert had given her as *dos*. Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1905), 143.
66. D Lothar 48 (of 982), in *Recueil des actes de Lothaire et de Louis V rois de France (954–987)*, ed. Louis Halphen and Ferdinand Lot (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1908).
67. Thietmar, (VII.70) 484.
68. Ibid., (IV.63) 202–204.
69. Ibid., (VII.19) 420.
70. Ibid., (VI.31) 312. I have followed here David Warner's excellent translation, p. 258.
71. Thietmar, (VII.54) 466.
72. Peter Hilsch, "Zur Rolle von Herrscherinnen. Emma Regina in Frankreich und Böhmen," in *Westmitteleuropa—Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. Winfried Eberhard, et al. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1992), 83–84.
73. For the Otto–Adelheid coins, see Bernd Kluge, "ATHALHET, ATEAHLHT und ADELDEIDA. Das Rätsel der Otto-Adelheid-Pfennige," in *Kaiserin Adelheid und ihre Klostergründung*, ed. Staab and Unger, 91–114.
74. Janet L. Nelson, "Les reines carolingiennes," in *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes à Byzance et en Occident (VIe–XIe siècles)*, ed. Stéphanie Lébecq, et al. (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Centre de recherche sur l'Histoire de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest, 1999), 122, citing MGH Fontes iuris germanici, p. 74.
75. Stafford, "Queens and Treasure," 72, n. 43.
76. Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, in *Opera*, (III.41) 95.
77. Stafford, "Queens and Treasure," 73.
78. Hrotsvit, *Gesta Ottonis*, p. 218.
79. Thietmar, (III.21) 126.
80. *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (5) 122–23; *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (11) 167; Althoff, "Probleme um die dos der Königinnen," 129. The Cluniac Syrus tells that after Otto I's death enemies similarly accused Adelheid of trying to "squander" the kingdom. Syrus, *Vita sancti Maioli*, in *Agni immacu-*

lati: recherches sur les sources hagiographiques relatives à saint Maieul de Cluny (954–994), ed. Dominique Iogna-Prat (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1988), (3.11) 263.

81. Fößel, *Königin*, 82.
82. Flodoard, *Annales*, pp. 151–52.
83. Thietmar, (VI.74) 364.
84. DOI 151 (June 26, 952).
85. *Annales Hildesheimenses*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 8 (1878), a. 1029, p. 35. Noblewomen also had priests in their service. Thus St. Haimrad, who died in 1019, was in the service of a woman who had him made a priest and gave him his freedom. Ekkebertus, *Vita sancti Haimeradi*, ed. Rudolf Koepke, MGH SS 10, (2) 599. When Duchess Hadwig of Swabia sent a letter complaining about royal interference to Otto I, she did so by hand of her priest Huozo. Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, ed. Hans F. Haefele (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), (118) 230.
86. See Elisabeth Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900–1200* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 49.
87. Fößel, *Königin*, 83.
88. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 991, pp. 479–80. Manegold also remembered the empress in his will; Adelheid passed on the estate she received to the monastery of Selz. DOIII 86 (March 11, 992). See the discussion in Weinfurter, "Kaiserin Adelheid," 18.
89. Thietmar, (IV.16) 150.
90. DOI 317 (January 22, 966).
91. Gerbert, Letter 6 (late summer 983), 28–29.
92. Nelson, "Les reines carolingiennes," 121–22. Hagen Keller has argued in *Ottonische Königsherrschaft: Organisation und Legitimation königlicher Macht* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), 23 that we have no way of knowing how Ottonian estates were operated. But recently David Bachrach has made a strong case that Ottonians followed Carolingian models of estate management with extensive written records. David Bachrach, "The Written Word in Carolingian-Style Fiscal Administration under King Henry I, 919–936," *German History* 28.4 (December 2010): 399–423.
93. *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (12) 135.
94. *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (10) 166.
95. Philippe Buc, "Italian Hussies and German Matrons: Liutprand of Cremona on Dynastic Legitimacy," *FMSt* 29 (1995): 216.
96. Flodoard, *Annales*, a. 948.
97. Thietmar, (IV.60) 200.

98. Hagen Keller, "Grundlagen ottonischer Königsherrschaft," in *Reich und Kirche vor dem Investiturstreit. FS 80. Geburtstags Gerd Tellenbach*, ed. Karl Schmid (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1985), 20.
99. See Karl J. Leyser, "Ottonian Government," in *Medieval Germany and its Neighbors, 900–1250* (London: Hambledon Press, 1982), esp. 91 and 100.
100. *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (2) 116.
101. Widukind, (III.10) 109; Sigebert of Gembloux, *Vita Deoderici episcopi Mettensis*, MGH SS 4: (14) 470.
102. Widukind, (II.15) 79.
103. Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, (I.16) 18. Translation by Paolo Squatriti, *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), pp. 58–59.
104. Matthäus Bernards, "Die Frau in der Welt und die Kirche während des 11. Jahrhunderts," *Sacris erudiri* 20 (1971): 55–56.
105. *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (8) 128.
106. Gerbert, Letter 147 (December 988), 173–74.
107. Thietmar, (II.44) 92; Otloh of St. Emmeram, *Liber visionum*, ed. Paul Schmidt, MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 13 (1989), Visio 17, p. 91.
108. Joachim Ehlers, "Carolingiens, Robertiens, Ottoniens: politique familiale ou relations Franco-allemandes," in *Le Roi de France et son royaume autour de l'an mil*, ed. Michael Parisse and Xavier Burral i Altet (Paris: Picard, 1992), 42.
109. Thietmar, (III.1) 96. The Golden Gospels of Echternach, still preserved in Nürnberg, may have been commissioned for a similar purpose; the volume's very elaborate golden cover includes portraits of Theophanu and the young Otto III. See Henry Mayr-Harting, "Artists and Patrons," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 220.
110. Gerd Althoff, "Beobachtungen zum liudolfingisch-ottonischen Gedenkwesen," in *Memoria. Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens im Mittelalter*, ed. Karl Schmid and Joachim Wollasch (Munich: Fink, 1984), 652.
111. *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (9) 129–30; *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (5) 153–54.
112. *Sancti Adalberti Pragensis Episcopi et Martyris Vita Prior*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasinska (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1962), (14) 20. Adalbert, however, gave it all away to the poor.
113. Woll, "Regina amatrix ecclesiarum," 48.
114. Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, (14) 40; (119) 232.
115. Sigebert, *Vita Deoderici*, (5) 467.

116. *Annales Augustani*, MGH SS 3, a. 995, p. 124.
117. Mayr-Harting, "Artists and Patrons," 218–19.
118. Fulbert of Chartres, *The Letters and Poems of Fulbert of Chartres*, ed. and trans. Frederick Behrends (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), Letter 104 Fulk of Anjou to King Robert (mid-1025), 188, which offers the king 1000 pounds of pennies in return for assistance, and an additional 500 pounds of pennies to the queen. See also Stafford, "Queens and Treasure," 74.

CHAPTER 5

The Lord's Anointed

In his monumental study of underage kings in the early Middle Ages, the historian Thilo Offergeld asserts that "Theophanu and Adelheid as crowned empresses had sufficient rulership prestige to protect the continuity of the imperial house."[1] Coronation was an important ritual; throughout the Middle Ages and beyond coronations were celebrated in circumstances of profound religious significance. The lord's anointed, through the constitutive act of unction with holy oil, was placed into a new and significantly different relationship both to God and to the rest of humankind. However, the symbolic import that seems crystal clear in the case of kings and emperors is much more debated and ambiguous for queens and empresses. Were queens liminal figures in the same way kings were held to be? Was a queen really something more than a king's wife with a fancy gold circlet around her head? For that matter, what did the unction and crowning even of men really mean in the tenth century, a necessary comparative question if one is to consider the position and standing of the king's consort? As I hope to demonstrate, coronation did impart a special charisma, so potent that all members of the royal family shared in it. Even if they had not been crowned, the imperial ladies of this study would have enjoyed reflected glory from their anointed spouses. But Adelheid, Theophanu, and probably also Edgitha were themselves anointed and crowned. Coronation imparted a special standing upon royal women that, while lesser in nature than kings' coronation, did help elevate their position in Ottonian society and beyond.

P. G. Jestice, *Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty*, Queenship and Power, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77306-3_5

What's more, the special relationship to God conferred with coronation, once bestowed, was not contingent upon the imperial woman's husband. Like the priest-king Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4), the sacrament of unction for a ruler is forever.

The King as *Christus Domini*

The second half of the tenth century and first half of the eleventh saw an enormous rise in the theocratic legitimation of kingship, enhancing the religious significance of coronation in the process.[2] Germanic kings were always more than simply leaders of the army, bearing a religious significance that the Carolingians took some pains to develop. Coming after the glory of the Carolingians, the first Ottonian, Henry I (919–37), trod carefully and in fact declined to be anointed and crowned. But from Otto I on, rulers and those who crafted their propaganda message emphasized the sacral nature of Ottonian kingship. The king was the vicar of Christ on earth, a man under God's special protection. Indeed, God chose rulers; Hrotsvit of Gandersheim says that the elevation of the Ottonian dynasty was at God's command.[3] As Ruotger remarked in his *vita* of Brun of Cologne (completed in 969), Otto I after his coronation was the *christus domini*.[4] The literal meaning of the term is simply "the lord's anointed," but of course the expression could not fail to evoke the most famous of all christs. As the anointed of the lord, the ruler had a place in the sacral sphere.[5] Ottonian rulers emphasized that sacrality with symbolism; Widukind for instance tells that Otto I fasted each time before he wore the crown.[6]

The sacred nature of rulership is a common theme in extant sources. The royal charters, with their opening invocation "in nomine sanctae et individue trinitatis" ("in the name of the holy and individuated Trinity") emphasize that rulers were performing a religious act with every grant. Liudprand of Cremona specifically calls Otto I a *sanctus rex* (holy king), even crediting him with the power to fight demons and battle against enemies both visible and invisible as he won his rightful place on the throne.[7] Similarly, Hrotsvit tells that as Otto I fought against rebels (including his own brothers) to establish himself as king in the period 936–41 he received the same divine protection that David had enjoyed. Otto was a tool in the battle between God and the devil, a *rex iustus* (just king), the *domini benedictus* (blessed of the lord), *rex fidelis* (faithful king), and *christus domini* (lord's anointed).[8] For Thietmar, Henry II was ruler

by divine predestination.[9] Indeed, the ruler is sometimes specifically "sacred," as when Liudprand speaks of plots against "the power of the sacred emperor."[10]

Kings lived in a world laden with symbolic acts and objects, demonstrating to their subjects that, while they were of course human, rulers also had one foot as it were in the heavenly kingdom. The most important relic of the Ottonian dynasty, the Holy Lance (believed to be the lance that had pierced Jesus' side at the crucifixion), was a gift of heaven, according to Liudprand, a means to link earthly with heavenly things.[11] Thietmar tells that when Otto I led his army against the Magyars at Lechfeld, he bore the Holy Lance in his hand.[12] The Ottonian kings wore crowns on special occasions and did so from a young age—the child's crown in the cathedral treasury at Essen was probably made for the young Otto III.[13] And the imperial crown, an oversized masterpiece probably constructed in the Cologne area in the 960s, is rife with symbolism.[14] In that constellation of symbolism and theological linkage, it is not surprising that the imperial insignia—crown, orb, and scepter—were held to be of enormous importance in making a claim to the throne. Thus the author of the *Casus sancti Galli* reports that King Conrad I on his deathbed ordered that his regalia be sent to Henry of Saxony as the only worthy successor to the throne.[15] The future Henry II seized the insignia from the imperial chancellor after Otto III's death.[16] Henry's widow Kunigunde more peaceably passed on the crown to Conrad II.[17]

A Sacred Family?

The Ottonian king was sacred because of his unction. The *arriviste* Ottonians could not claim a special sacrality of blood; not for them the Merovingian descent from a river god or the Anglo-Saxon kings' claim of descent from Woden. Nonetheless, blood counted. The entire Ottonian family shared at least to some extent in the king's sacrality, and in part the special treatment accorded to queens can be attributed simply to being part of the family. For example, the Quedlinburg annalist makes no distinction between the anointed Adelheid and Theophanu and Adelheid's daughter Abbess Mechtild—for the writer, they are all equally "imperial ladies."[18]

Nowhere is the special position of the whole royal family clearer than in the treatment accorded rebellious royal relatives. Otto I's kinsmen were particularly prone to revolt. Otto's reign started with the rising of his

semi-legitimate half-brother Thankmar. Otto's full brother Henry also thought he had special rights, according to Liudprand because Henry had been born when their father, Henry I, was already king, so that the younger Henry was, to borrow a Byzantine image, "born to the purple."[19] In the 950s Otto's son Liudolf also rebelled against him. And in the next reign Otto II's cousin Henry "the Quarrelsome" took arms against him several times. Looking at the Ottonian annals, it seems that members of the royal family rebelled more often than lesser folk, suggesting that they thought they were entitled to special privileges, above those of the other great nobles of Germany.

The rulers' reaction to these kin rebellions bears out the notion that all members of the Ottonian family enjoyed a special status that the society as a whole recognized. The royal response was extraordinarily mild. Otto I's brother Henry (father of Henry the Quarrelsome) was pardoned several times and eventually pacified by being granted much of what he wanted—a semi-independent subregal status as duke of largely autonomous Bavaria. His son Henry the Quarrelsome did indeed suffer confiscation of Bavaria and imprisonment for much of Otto II's reign, but only after he had rebelled several times and proven himself irreconcilable to his cousin's rule. Even the bastardized Ottonian, Thankmar, enjoyed special status. He was defeated in battle, and one of Otto's vassals ended the problem for his lord, killing the rebellious princeling by throwing a spear at him through a window. But, far from being grateful, Otto I had the man killed, his punishment for shedding Ottonian blood.[20]

Other sources suggest that members of the royal family at least occasionally regarded themselves as equals of the man who wore the crown. The image of Henry the Quarrelsome preserved in the rule book of Niedermünster (Bamberg Staatsbibliothek lit 142, fol. 4v) is a case in point. It depicts Henry regally, in fact with the square halo of a living saint.[21] A comparable example is an illustration preserved in Essen, depicting Abbess Mechtild of Essen and her brother Otto, the children of Otto I's son Liudolf and Ida, both standing before the cross. More curious is an account preserved in the *Translatio S. Servatii* of the late eleventh century. The author tells that, after Otto I's sister Gerberga married Duke Gislebert of Lotharingia, she encouraged her husband to rebel against Otto. According to this report, Gerberga proclaimed she was equal to her brother and just as suited for the throne as he was, and by means of this argument led Gislebert to conspire to become king. We have no way of knowing how trustworthy the account is, but at least it was plausible to

the anonymous author that a member of the royal family—a woman, no less!—might make such a claim.[22]

Children of the Ottonian dynasty could count on a high position in society. Otto I as a young man begat an illegitimate son, William. Although the non-Ottonian name he was given shows that from the beginning William was never regarded as a full Ottonian,[23] his father still looked out for his interests; at a young age he became archbishop of Mainz, the primate of the German church. And in documents, William often appears as Otto I's "most beloved son."[24] In fact, all sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons of Henry I who lived within the German *reich* ended up as kings, were dedicated to the Church, or became dukes.[25] Most daughters became abbesses of one of the great Ottonian convents. Otto I's daughter Mechtild was abbess of Quedlinburg. Abbess Mechtild of Essen was the child of Otto's eldest legitimate son, Liudolf. Otto III's sisters Sophia and Adelheid became abbesses respectively of Gandersheim and Quedlinburg. Few married, perhaps because, if the story of Gerberga and her husband Duke Gislebert has a basis in fact, they were regarded as possible claimants to the throne. Otto III's sister Theophanu did marry the count palatine of the Rhine, Ezzo, but such a lowly marriage for an imperial lady was regarded as so improbable that a later account tried to explain it by telling that Ezzo won the girl's hand from Otto in a board game, although providing the context that he had been a trusted counselor of the elder Theophanu.[26]

But these imperial daughters were far from being typical canonesses, or even typical wealthy abbesses. Both they and the people around them believed they had a special position. Indeed, it has been suggested that the younger Adelheid at least was a special royal sacrifice for the public good. She did not enter Quedlinburg until 995 when she had already reached the age of eighteen, so her consecration was probably not planned from birth (her sister Sophia had been one year old when she was given to Gandersheim for education, already preparing the way for her future role). Karl Leyser has speculated that Adelheid's late entry into religious life was intended as an offering to God to end the disasters of famine and Slavic attacks.[27] We can see the imperial daughters' standing in the historian Widukind's epistle dedicating his Saxon history to Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg. He proclaims that Mechtild is "illustrious for her imperial majesty and her singular wisdom." In the dedication to the second book he goes even further, praising Mechtild, "For you are recognized correctly as the mistress of all of Europe."[28] It should be noted that

Widukind was dedicating his account not to a venerated matron who had played a role in Saxon affairs for a generation but to a girl who had barely reached her teens.

In the throne struggle of 984, Henry the Quarrelsome seized Otto III's sister Adelheid, apparently believing she was at the least an important bargaining chip in his effort to gain control of the throne.[29] And clearly Adelheid's sister Sophia thought *she* had a special importance. As we have seen in Chap. 2, when she became a canoness at Gandersheim she absolutely refused to be consecrated by a mere bishop, instead demanding that Archbishop Willigis of Mainz perform the ceremony. The ceremony did in fact take place as she had demanded, in the presence of her mother Theophanu and the young Otto III at the hands of Archbishop Willigis.[30]

Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg traveled with her brother Otto II, as both Sophia and Adelheid the younger did with Otto III. All three spent considerable time at court.[31] Their interaction with brothers might simply be a sign of sibling love, but their special position is underlined by events after Otto III's death. Otto died in Rome in 1002, leaving no clear heir. One of the contenders, Margrave Ekkehard of Meißen, insulted Adelheid and Sophia by taking the king's place at a banquet held at Werla despite their protests, after which he was received as king. A group of his enemies murdered Ekkehard shortly after the event; his insult to the princesses was regarded as a good reason for the murder, since he had attacked their dignity and special status as imperial daughters.[32] The successful claimant to the throne, Duke Henry of Bavaria (son of Henry the Quarrelsome), showed much higher regard for the sisters' prestige. When he made his claim in 1002, Henry sent a messenger to the Saxon popular assembly, especially addressed to Abbesses Sophia of Gandersheim and Adelheid of Quedlinburg. The event provides interesting evidence that imperial abbesses would have been present at an assembly, besides showing how the future Henry II singled them out for respect.[33] When Henry II's most prized project, Bamberg Cathedral, was consecrated in 1012, Adelheid and Sophia were there, an event surely remarkable not just as sign of Henry's ongoing esteem for the imperial daughters but because a chronicler thought it worth singling their presence out for special mention.[34] Twenty-two years after their brother's death, Adelheid and Sophia still received signal respect. After his election in 1024, Conrad II went to Saxony, where the sister abbesses formally received him at Quedlinburg, an event that Timothy Reuter regarded as legitimizing Conrad's ascent to the throne.[35]

Unlike their daughters, though, queens were not just members of the Ottonian family. Nor was an Ottonian queen just the "king's wife"—able to influence her husband thanks solely to proximity, but with no official position separate from that of her husband. Instead, as Offergeld suggested in the quote with which I began this chapter, their coronation placed Theophanu and Adelheid—and Kunigunde, Gisela, Agnes, and perhaps Edgitha—in a separate and higher symbolic world that continued to have ramifications long after their husbands' deaths.

Sacring

Coronation is of course much more than merely sticking a crown on a person's head. Indeed, the constitutive element of creating a king—or queen—is not the bestowal of the crown, although crowns remain to this day of great symbolic import in marking the elevation to rulership. Instead, the key act in creating a ruler was and is unction, anointing with holy oil in a ceremony modeled on the anointing of David and Solomon described in the Hebrew scriptures. The ceremony of unction brought the recipient into a sacred plane of existence. Anointing was thus more than a declaration of kingship (or queenship)—it was a "sacring," a making sacred. Thus the Quedlinburg annalist notes that Otto III was anointed king on Christmas Day in Aachen; unction was noteworthy, and usually took place on days of particular religious significance.[36] Contemporaries clearly recognized that being "the anointed of the lord" (*christus domini*) put a person into a different relationship with both God and subjects. Thus the 916 synod of Hohenaltheim declared that revolt against the *christus domini* was sacrilege.[37]

A man could be called king without the ceremony of sacring, and a woman could similarly be called queen. For example, all three of Charlemagne's legitimate wives were called "*regina*" in extant sources, although it is improbable that there was a formal coronation for any of them.[38] By the tenth century, though, thoughtful authors made a distinction. Thus, in Anglo-Saxon England Alfred the Great's biographer Asser states that ninth-century kings of Wessex did not have queens but only wives, plainly suggesting that a constitutive act that would give the women higher standing was deliberately left out.[39] Similarly, the chronicler Flodoard of Rheims was loath to acknowledge that Henry I of Germany (919–36) was a king, most likely because the German ruler was never formally consecrated even though the German nobles had elected him. Instead of accepting Henry as a legitimate king,

except at one point Flodoard always speaks of Henry as *princeps* rather than as *rex*. This cannot be taken as a slight to the new, non-Carolingian dynasty ruling the eastern Franks, because Flodoard consistently calls Henry's son Otto I (who *was* anointed after his election) king.[40]

The unction of kings in western Europe became a frequent if not a constitutive ritual beginning in the seventh century.[41] The Carolingians began the practice in the kingdom of the Franks with Pepin III's unction in 751 and again at papal hands in 754. Indeed, in 754 Pepin's whole family was anointed, including his sons Charles (Charlemagne) and Carlomann and his wife Bertrada.[42]

The sacring of royal women was not yet the norm, however. Instead, as in Merovingian times, Carolingian women received the title "queen" without any particular constitutive act besides marriage to a king.[43] Except for Bertrada, the first certain anointing of a queen is that of Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald, in the year 856. Judith was being sent out of the Frankish kingdom as wife of the middle-aged king Aethelwulf of Wessex, who already had adult sons; the ceremony seems to have been performed to protect the new queen's standing under those trying circumstances.[44] The short coronation *ordo* is still extant. It consists of brief invocations to chastity and fidelity before offering a blessing, anointing with consecrated oil, and crowning.[45] After that time, it is easy to find examples of West Frankish queens being crowned, and reginal coronation appears to have become the norm. The wives of the last West Frankish Carolingians were all crowned.[46] Thus, for example, when Louis IV married Otto I's sister Gerberga in 939, the historian Richer reports that Louis "had her crowned with him as queen over the realm."[47]

The Eastern Frankish kingdom did not immediately follow suit, however, as far as we can see from extant sources. We have no evidence of an East Frankish king receiving unction and coronation until 911 when Conrad I, the first non-Carolingian ruler of what became Germany received the rite. But it was considered exceptional enough for chroniclers to comment when Conrad's successor Henry I, the first Ottonian, decided to forgo a ritual sacring, which suggests that coronation was indeed already the norm in the east as well as the west.

The Lady as the Lord's Anointed

Even more puzzling is German evidence for the consecration of queens. Henry I's consort Mechtild was certainly not anointed queen, since her husband was not. But what of Edgitha, first wife of Otto I? Historians are

strongly divided on this question. As we have seen, Edgitha was an Anglo-Saxon princess, brought to a foreign land to add prestige by her marriage to the heir to the throne. On the face of it, it seems strange that every step possible would not have been taken to add luster to the marriage. And in fact the chronicler Thietmar of Merseburg reports that after Otto I was raised to the throne in 936 he had his wife Edgitha crowned as well.[48] The fact that Thietmar mistakenly calls Edgitha the daughter of King Edmund of England, though, serves as a useful reminder that he was writing seventy years after the events he describes, and may simply have assumed that a coronation took place. Certainly Widukind never mentions a queen's coronation in his description of Otto I's own election and coronation, but that, as Gerd Althoff points out, may be a sign that the Corvey monk really did not know what happened at Aachen in 936—or that Widukind simply did not much care about the sacring of a queen.[49]

The first queen's coronation in Germany of which we have certain knowledge is that of Kunigunde in 1002. The event took place at Paderborn on St. Lawrence's Day, August 10, 1002, two months after Henry II's own sacring.[50] Similarly, Gisela was crowned queen in 1024 not long after her husband Conrad II, and the Danish Gunhild-Kunigunde was consecrated as queen *before* her marriage to Henry III in 1036, perhaps a protection demanded by her family.[51]

We have no evidence that either Adelheid or Theophanu was consecrated as queen of Germany, although Wolf has speculated that this was probably the case for Adelheid on the basis of her being named as *consors regni* (sharer in rule) soon after her marriage.[52] We do know, however, that they were crowned as empresses. Such a step was not unprecedented; as we have seen, it was the popes who led the way in unction of women in the Frankish kingdom in the eighth century. Only a pope could crown an emperor, and it appears to have been assumed that the emperor's consort should be consecrated in a formal ritual act as well. Thus Louis the Pious' first wife Irmingard was inaugurated into the imperial title along with Louis in 816 when Pope Stephen IV visited them at Rheims. Flodoard's account is quite precise, telling that Irmingard was acclaimed as *augusta* and crowned with a gold crown. Judith too, Louis' second wife, was crowned empress in c. 830, demonstrating that the wife did not just "tag along" when her husband received imperial sacring.[53] After that, wives of emperors were crowned frequently but inconsistently. Thus, for example, Lothar I and Louis II were crowned emperor without their wives, but in 877 Charles the Bald had his second wife Richildis crowned, and Charles III

and his wife Richgard shared an imperial coronation in 881. But then the track becomes fainter; five emperors received papal coronation in the period 891–915, but there is no evidence that the wives of the married ones received the same honor.[54]

The imperial office went temporarily defunct in the West in the tenth century, but was revived when Pope John XII anointed and crowned Otto I in Rome on February 2, 962. And in the same ceremony he crowned Adelheid as empress. Not all the contemporary chronicles mention the event. Several annals report Otto's coronation, but not that of Adelheid, while Widukind leaves out all mention even of Otto's imperial coronation.[55] But the first *vita* of Queen Mechtild reports that Otto I was crowned emperor along with his wife, as does Hrotsvit of Gandersheim in her *Gesta Ottonis*—perhaps it is not a coincidence that female writers were more likely to comment on the event than their male counterparts. The *Chronicon Salernitano* also preserves a memory of Adelheid's coronation, as does the later Thietmar, who was probably using the *vita* of Mechtild as a source.[56] If further confirmation were needed, one need only examine the Ottonian charters, which starting in February 962 dignify Adelheid with the title *imperatrix augusta*.

Otto II was crowned emperor in 967 when he was still a boy, long before the Byzantine Theophanu was sent west to marry him. But Theophanu received unction and coronation as empress in conjunction with her marriage on April 14, 972. Only two narrative sources attest it, but again charters firmly and persistently give her imperial honors.[57]

The framework for an empress' coronation was provided by the Roman-German pontifical, which may have been compiled in Mainz in 960 or 961. It employed as its basis West Frankish coronation *ordines*.[58] The coronation *ordo* for a woman differs in several regards from that of her husband. Most notably, the woman being consecrated was not asked to take any oath, unlike her male counterpart, who was expected upon his imperial coronation to swear to defend the Roman Church, and as king typically gave assurances that he would rule justly. By contrast, whether queen or empress, the woman's role in the ceremony remained passive.[59]

But the queen/empress' role in society was far from passive, as the coronation *ordines* make plain. Yes, her most important role may have been to be fruitful; the *ordo* for Judith's marriage to Aethelwulf emphasizes the woman's procreative duty, specifically referring to biblical passages praying for fruitfulness.[60] But the woman being consecrated was also linked to the biblical Judith, a heroine of the Jews who saved her people

by killing their chief oppressor. And in the Mainz coronation *ordo* the queen was also particularly conjoined with Esther, a figure who served as intermediary between her oppressed people and the king her husband. As we will see, the role of intercessor proved to be a very important function for our tenth-century queens.[61]

Occasional references make it plain that Ottonian queens held much the same highly ritualized, sacralized position in society that their husbands did. Like their husbands, access to queens was restricted to a favored few. And, as early as the uncrowned Queen Mechtild, queens sat while the people around them stood.[62] Casual mentions like this from Widukind's history make plain that queens were surrounded by a ritual space designed to demonstrate to the world that they were the superiors, not the equals, of the people around them.

The Carolingian *laudes regiae*, the ritual acclamations with which a royal visit was hailed, already associated the queen with the king in prayers. After the initial chant of "Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat" (Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ commands), the *laudes* had prayers for the salvation of the pope, bishops, the king, and the queen.[63] Queens also frequently appear in the "prayer clause" of Ottonian documents, when a gift is made in return for prayer. The 1226 Ottonian charters contain 156 such prayer clauses. Sometimes they name just the king, but the queen appears frequently as well, especially in combination with the royal children, making prayer for the entire imperial family an obligation.[64] Such a conjoining was often repeated in Ottonian ecclesiastical sources. Thus, for example, a Regensburg synod that met sometime between 938 and 968 committed each priest of the diocese to sing three masses for the king and queen.[65] We know that Ottonian men had festive crown-wearings on high holy days. While no source mentions the same for Ottonian women, we know they had crowns, and can surmise that they would have worn them on the same occasions.

We also have sources demonstrating that queens were formally received when they traveled, even being welcomed into monasteries where ordinarily no woman would have been allowed. In general, Benedictine monasteries were very much against the presence of laywomen in their churches and cloisters. In the early eleventh century, the chronicler Hugh of Flavigny was astonished that the monastic reformer Richard of St. Vanne's mother was allowed into the cloister at Cluny and even joined the monks' Sunday procession, which as he comments, no other woman had been allowed to do.[66] Except of course for queens. The ninth-century

commentaries on the Benedictine Rule by Hildemar and Smaragdus point out that even if women are not allowed in the monastery, the queen is. Unfortunately, these commentaries do not make it clear whether this was because of the queen's ruling authority, her consecration, or the sheer practicality of not wanting to annoy the king's wife. In any case, to welcome a king to the monastery, a monk was enjoined to kneel on both knees; for a queen, one-knee obeisance was appropriate.[67] An anecdote in Folcuin's *Deeds of the Abbots of St. Bertin*, written before 990, helps drive home this point. He tells that in the late 930s a countess named Attala fell ill and conceived a great desire to pray at the altar of St. Bertin in the monastic church. Two bishops argued that this indulgence should be allowed, and the monks finally gave in, despite the fact that, *except for queens*, no women had ever done this.[68] And it should not be forgotten that among the places the Ottonians visited most frequently were the great imperial convents of Saxony, endowed and ruled by women of the Ottonian house.

Once her spouse died, a king or emperor's wife was only a widow, with little claim to power unless she could influence a son. But an anointed queen or empress held that rank for life. An anecdote in the *vita* of St. Kunigunde helps drive home this lesson. Both Kunigunde and her husband Henry II won a reputation for holiness, based in part on the belief that they lived together in a life of sexual abstinence, but also owing to their generosity to churches, including their foundation of the diocese of Bamberg. One year after Henry's death, Kunigunde retired to the convent of Kaufungen, where she spent the rest of her days. There she lived a life of pious devotion and humility. Except that she would by no means accept an affront to her standing. The abbess of Kaufungen had the temerity to act as if she were Kunigunde's equal, and the affronted empress gave her such a slap that the red mark could be seen on the presumptuous woman's cheek for the rest of her life. What is most noteworthy about this anecdote is that the hagiographer speaks of the incident in tones of warm approval. It is clear that s/he thought that, although an abbess might rule the convent in which a retired empress resided, Kunigunde was doing exactly what she should in administering the slap.[69]

Did coronation, however, provide a claim to independent exercise of power? There are only a few hints that contemporaries regarded this to be the case. In a gift Kunigunde made to Paderborn Cathedral in October 1006 we find the enigmatic statement "regiae consecrationis inibi adinvenit dominium" ("with the queen's coronation she entered

into dominium"), implying that it was the queen's coronation at that location that conveyed *dominium*, a right to command.[70] More strikingly, as we will see in the final chapter, Theophanu as regent issued two charters in her own name, or rather a masculinized form of her name in which she appeared as "Theophanius imperator" instead of the proper feminine "imperatrix." Both documents are dated by *her* regnal year, reckoning the time from her own coronation as empress.

Picturing the Queen

Some of our most compelling sources demonstrating queens' special sacral status come from art rather than narrative sources. Many Ottonian ruler portraits are extant, and they display great variety in message and medium. The range of depictions is surprising, but not the fact that ruler portraits existed, since they were already common in the Carolingian period. What makes Ottonian portrayals of rulership distinctive is that the women of the ruling house were often included. In western Europe before Theophanu there are hardly any artistic representations of ruling women.[71] That situation was transformed in the latter years of the tenth century, however. Images of Theophanu were especially prevalent, but Adelheid and their successors Kunigunde, Gisela, and Agnes are also represented in art. Thus ruler portraits can provide valuable evidence of the queen's position relative to that of her spouse and her standing in society more generally.

When the king alone is represented in art, he appears in one of two guises: as humble intercessor or crowned and/or enthroned in glory. A good example of the intercessory style is a "portrait" of Otto I on a small ivory plaque now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This plaque is one of a collection of ivories, which perhaps at first ornamented a throne. Christ enthroned on what appears to be a victory wreath with his feet resting on a crescent moon dominates the scene. To his left stand three saints, with Peter brandishing his keys in the foreground. But Jesus turns his head to the right, where St. Mauritius (the patron saint of the Ottonian family) and another saint present a diminutive Otto I, who is clutching a model of Magdeburg Cathedral and presenting it to Christ. The bearded Otto is wearing the imperial crown, so the work must have been crafted after his imperial coronation on February 2, 962. The diminutive size of the figure, well under half the size of Jesus, is a striking demonstration of humility in the face of God—although the fact that Otto is depicted in the presence of Jesus and several saints at all suggests his importance.

This ivory of Otto I presenting Magdeburg Cathedral to God emphasizes several themes important in Ottonian ruler symbolism. The artist has presented Otto as a great patron and, by extension, protector of the Church, with the model of Magdeburg Cathedral, the center of an archdiocese that he called into being and richly endowed, standing for the whole of the Church in Germany. Hagen Keller has argued that Ottonian ruler images suggest that contemporaries regarded the ruler's greatest virtue to be humility, especially in the form of *humiliatio* before God.[72]

The Ottonian women were also included in this space as special, distinctive intercessors to God. A unique analogy to the Otto I Magdeburg plaque is an ivory tablet now in Milan. In it, a man and woman kneel before Christ, the woman holding a small child in her arms. All three human figures are wearing crowns. Along the base runs the inscription "Otto imperator." The kneeling humans are supported by St. Mauritius and the Virgin Mary (also conveniently labeled). Most scholars believe that the figures represent Otto II, Theophanu, and the young Otto III. Since the child is crowned, the image must have been created after his election as king, but before the death of his father, in other words sometime in the year 983.[73] The image is very revealing about Theophanu's representational position relative to her husband. Otto II receives superiority of place, positioned as he is at Christ's right hand and grasping Christ's right foot. But Jesus stares straight ahead, rather than favoring one member of the family over another. What is more, Theophanu and Otto II are equal in size; indeed, Theophanu's head is rather higher than her husband's. Their crowns are very similar in style. Most telling is the fact that Theophanu is there at all. The praying figures are an imperial *family*, not a ruler alone (Fig. 5.1).

A second artistic representation from about the year 1020 helps emphasize the point that empress as well as emperor had a role to play in very public, performative intercession. This work is the Golden Antependium of Basel, an altar frontal, now housed in the Musée de Cluny in Paris. While we do not know the circumstances under which the Ottonian family tablet just discussed was displayed, the Basel antependium was clearly produced for the awed admiration of the public at large. And the image is extraordinary. Christ stands at the center of an arcade, flanked by two saints on each side. One has to look closely for the ruler portrait: Henry II and Kunigunde are tiny figures, kneeling at the feet of Christ. They are symmetrical, Henry touching Jesus' right foot and Kunigunde his left. Both are crowned, and the figures are of equal size. Except for the fact that the male figure has the honor of placement at Christ's right side, the royal

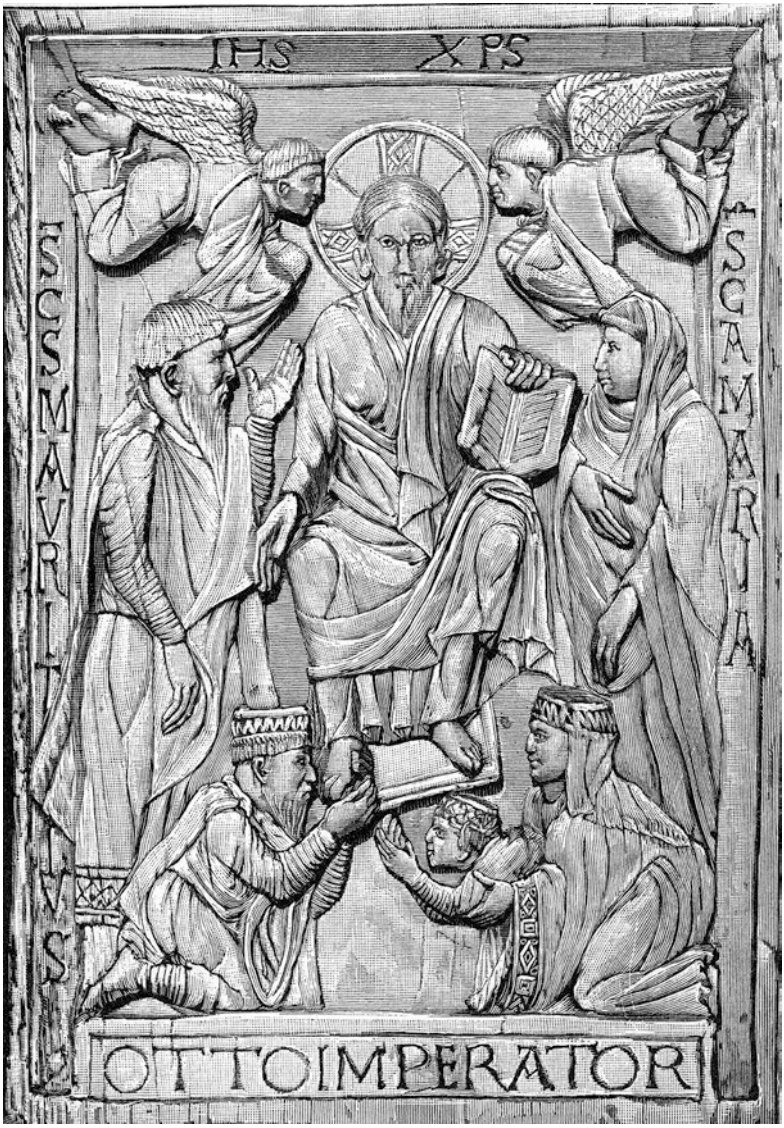

Fig. 5.1 Otto II, Theophanu, and Otto III praying to Christ, with St. Mauritius and the Virgin Mary. Ivory book cover, c. 980, Castello Sforzesco, Milan. Source: INTERFOTO/Alamy Stock Photo

pair are depicted as equal in every way.[74] They are presented as co-donors and co-intercessors. That both figures are again crowned suggests that emperor and empress at least sometimes appeared together in public in that guise; it is certainly how the goldsmith who created this magnificent work imagined the imperial couple.

Sometimes rulers were portrayed simply. Such may have been the case with a ruler portrait that Thietmar describes but that is no longer extant. The chronicler relates that Otto II granted the archdiocese of Magdeburg the right to elect their archbishop freely. He confirmed the gift with a book that included a golden portrait of himself—and also one of his wife Theophanu.[75] That Thietmar specifically reports that the gift of the ruler portrait was made to confirm a privilege provides important evidence of how such portraiture could be used politically. These portraits, certainly on the gold cover of the manuscript—in itself a magnificent display of royal prestige and importance—would have stared out at the cathedral clergy every time they used the manuscript, which was doubtless a liturgical text.[76] Again, it is striking that Theophanu was associated with the gift and thus with the privilege it commemorated. Her very visible presence emphasized the special position she held in society.

The Magdeburg golden ruler portraits may have been similar to the extant cover of the *Codex Aureus* of Echternach, now housed in the German National Museum in Nürnberg (Fig. 5.2). The ivory plaque at the center of this elaborate book cover dates from the eleventh century, but the gold work is a masterpiece probably produced in Trier during Theophanu's regency (984–91). It features symbols of the four evangelists and below them Theophanu and the boy-king Otto III. The only plausible explanation is that Theophanu was the donor of the precious book and chose to mark the event with ruler portraits.[77] Again, it is useful to step back and consider the significance of these presentation portraits. A first, obvious point is that they are on or in holy objects. In other words, the rulers are within holy space, looking out at their subjects. A second point is the plural—the rulers are depicted as a couple, a king and queen together, rather than one appearing alone. A third point to consider is that the queens represented in this way are indubitably special. We know they are anointed queens without needing the guidance of labels, as they are usually crowned and occupy space no ordinary subject would inhabit.[78]

Where we have "ordinary" portraits of Ottonian rulers, they are usually depicted with their wives rather than alone. Such is the case with the two fresco ruler portraits we have from the period. It is difficult to tell much from a fresco in San Salvatore Maggiore in Rieti, which is supposed to

Fig. 5.2 Theophanu and the boy king Otto III, c. 990, detail of the front cover of the *Codex Aureus* of Echternach, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg. Source: INTERFOTO/Alamy Stock Photo

have shown Theophanu and Otto II but is in such bad shape that it is impossible to tell its subject with any certainty. The most one can say is that it appears to depict a ruling couple.[79] Better-preserved is a fresco in the apse of Aquileia Cathedral, depicting Conrad II, Gisela, and the young Henry III before the Virgin Mary, which can be dated to the 1050s.[80]

More extraordinary (and much better-preserved) is the ciborium of San Ambrogio, Milan, which has been convincingly dated to late 971 or early 972. On the south side Otto I and Otto II are depicted with St. Ambrose. The north side displays two female figures, one with and one without a crown, accompanied by the Virgin Mary. Scholars are in agreement that the two women are Adelheid and Theophanu, although they disagree on which is which.[81] Again, several points are striking. The female and male members of the imperial house are depicted as nearly equal (although the men have the honor of the gospel side of the canopy over the altar, while the women are on the epistle side). They all appear in the public space of the church of San Ambrogio, where they stand to this day. It is a striking statement that the women and men are making an equal offering to the saints they approach in the scene. That lesson would have been considerably more obvious to contemporary audiences than it is today.

In short, the anointed queen enjoys a privileged place in Ottonian art, a position that emphasizes her importance and sacral status—to a degree. If one stopped at this point, queens would indeed appear as near-equals to their husbands. Being a "*christa domini*" had its limitations, and art suggests that women did not ascend to the same heights of the sacral ladder as their male counterparts. The evidence of inequality can be found in the most typical of Ottonian ruler portraits, the ruler "in majesty"—enthroned, dominating the scene. Such portraits are normally found in liturgical books. The Ottonians brought this image of the king/emperor in majesty to a much higher level of symbolic import than had the Carolingians. While Carolingians were normally depicted surrounded by their courtiers, the Ottonians raised the stakes to a much more otherworldly realm. Thus Ottonian rulers in portrait pages are frequently surrounded by saints, or raised above the earth into the heavenly sphere.[82] For example, in the Bamberg Apocalypse Otto III appears seated on a throne, his crown supported by Sts. Peter and Paul. Perhaps the most symbolically rich sample of this style is the portrait of Henry II in the Sacramentary of Henry II. The standing Henry is depicted against a flat background, rather than in an earthly scene. He is supported on either side by saints, while angels fly in above to hand the ruler a sword and the Holy Lance. Christ—enthroned above Henry—blesses the emperor with his right hand while with his left he gently sets the imperial crown on Henry's head. Such images are reserved to the king/emperor, rather than to his anointed wife.

There are no extant manuscript paintings of imperial women—or imperial couples—that are directly comparable to these portraits of the king/emperor in majesty. Yet we do have the step below this representation, a

number of coronations by Christ, or Christ providing special blessings. In such cases, the imperial lady never appears alone, but always with her husband. Still, the significant point to note is that she appears at all, in marked contrast to the iconography of earlier centuries.

Perhaps the earliest example of special favor shown to the royal couple is an image in a codex preserved at Einsiedeln (Einsiedeln Stiftsbibliothek Cod. 176, fol. 51v). In it Christ appears blessing two figures labeled as "Hetto" (Otto) and Adelheid. Much more striking is the famous ivory plaque that depicts Christ crowning Otto II and Theophanu. This work may have been commissioned by Johannes Philagathos, imperial chancellor for Italy; the ivory includes a tiny figure prostrate at Christ's feet and the Greek inscription between Christ and Otto II reads "Lord, help your servant Johannes, amen." The work must have been carved in southern Italy, since it is clearly Greek in language and general style, but its details (for example, the fact that Theophanu and Otto have empty hands) differ from work produced for the Byzantine court. It is also highly unlikely that a work originating in Constantinople would have given Otto the title "imperator Romanorum augustus," a style that Otto only adopted in 982 and that would have outraged Byzantine sensibilities (Fig. 5.3).[83]

In this ivory as in the presentational images examined above we see an imperial couple, similar in height and ornament, similarly singled out for signal honor by Christ. Even their crowns are practically identical. As in other cases we have seen, Theophanu is in the inferior position at Christ's left hand, but that is the only marker that she is less important than her spouse. Whether they are receiving the crowns of earthly rule or, as Kämpfer has suggested, Christ is bestowing the crown of eternal life on them, the message is the same: the imperial couple appear equally in a sacred sphere, enjoying an equal and special relationship to Christ. Nor is this work unique. The Gospel Lectionary of Henry II (Clm 4452 fol. 2r) includes an illumination of Christ crowning both Henry II and Kunigunde in a composition that is very similar in layout and in message.[84] By the year 1051, the artist of the Goslar Evangeliary (now in Uppsala) could imagine Empress Agnes as the equal of Henry II, one on each side of Christ, each bearing a scepter, with the explanatory text "Per me regnantes vivant Henricus et Agnes" (May Henry and Agnes live ruling through me).[85]

Does this mean that imperial women in fact "ruled" with their husbands? It must have increasingly appeared to be the case; by the end of the Salian period queens had their own seals and were depicted enthroned with crown and scepter, sometimes even an orb.[86] A crown was a potent

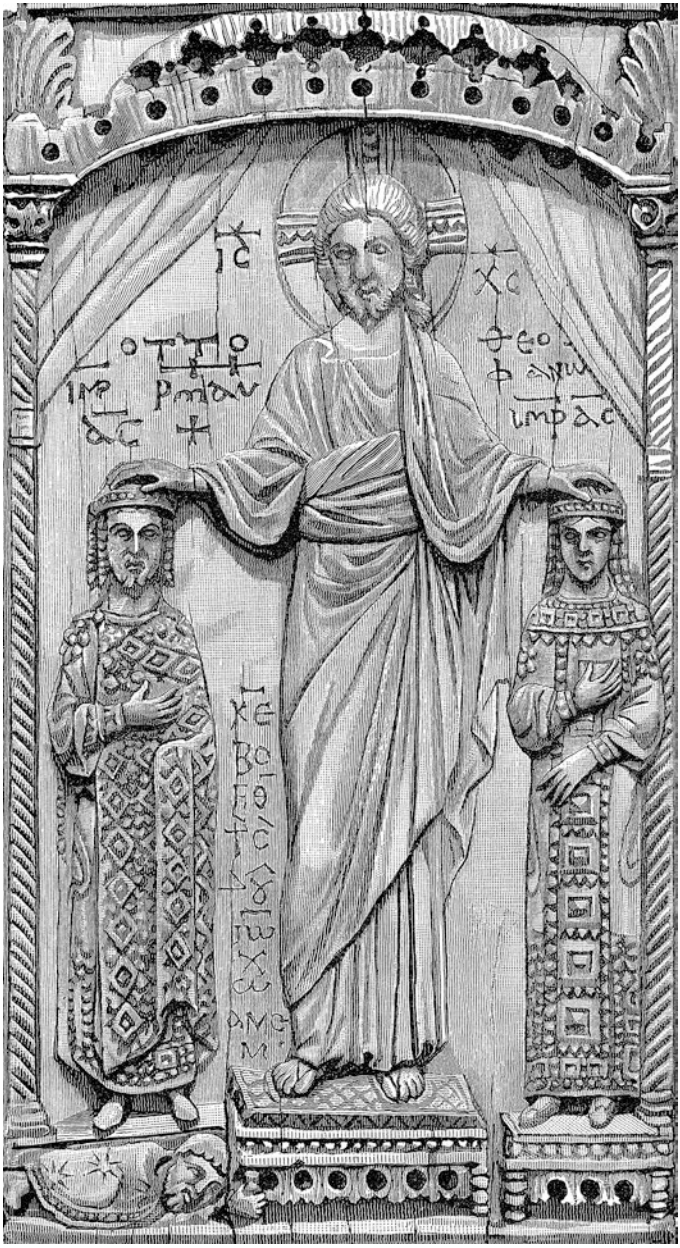

Fig. 5.3 Coronation of Otto II and Theophanu by Christ, Byzantine ivory relief, c.972, Musée de Cluny, Paris. Source: FALKENSTEINFOTO/Alamy Stock Photo

Fig. 5.4 Crown of Kunigunde, c. 1000, Residenz, Munich. Source: INTERFOTO/ Alamy Stock Photo

symbol, and certainly Theophanu and Adelheid wore crowns at least on occasion, even though the only extant female crown we have from this period is Kunigunde's, made in c. 1000 and now housed in the Residenz, Munich.[87] This crown is a wide gold circlet, ornamented with a number of large precious and semi-precious stones. It is not nearly as elaborate as the imperial crown, but is quite comparable to the child's crown preserved at Essen that probably belonged to the young Otto III while he was still only king of Germany. It would certainly have sufficed to single the queen/ empress out from all other women (Fig. 5.4).

Notes

1. Thilo Offergeld, *Reges pueri. Das Königtum Minderjähriger im frühen Mittelalter* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2001), 680.
2. There is a considerable scholarship on this issue. See for example Stefan Weinfurter, "Idee und Funktion des 'Sakralkönigtums' bei den ottonischen und salischen Herrschern (10. und 11. Jahrhundert)," in *Legitimation und Funktion des Herrschers*, ed. Rolf Gundlach and Hermann Weber (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1992), 99–127.
3. Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, *Gesta Ottonis*, in *Opera*, ed. Paul von Winterfeld, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 34 (1902), especially p. 204; cf. Ernst

Karpf, *Herrscherlegitimation und Reichsbegriff in der ottonischen Geschichtsschreibung des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), 120.

4. Ruotger, *Vita Brunonis archiepiscopi Coloniensis*, ed. Irene Ott, MGH SS rer. Germ. N.S. 10 (1951), (15) 14; cf. Karpf, *Herrscherlegitimation*, 70.
5. For an overarching study of this theme, see Hagen Keller, "Grundlagen ottonischer Königsherrschaft," in *Reich und Kirche vor dem Investiturstreit*, ed. Karl Schmid (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1985), 17–34, esp. 29–31; also Hagen Keller, *Ottonische Königsherrschaft: Organisation und Legitimation königlicher Macht* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), *passim*; Hagen Keller, "Herrscherbild und Herrschaftslegitimation. Zur Deutung der ottonischen Denkmäler," *FMSt* 19 (1985): 290–311.
6. Widukind, (II.36) 97.
7. Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, in *Opera*, ed. Joseph Becker, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 41 (1915), (IV.28) 124 for Otto as "holy king"; cf. Karpf, *Herrscherlegitimation*, 33–34.
8. Hrotsvit, *Gesta Ottonis*, 210 for just king and blessed of the lord; p. 226 for *rex fidelis*; p. 211 for *christus domini*; Karpf, *Herrscherlegitimation*, 124–26.
9. Thietmar, (V. 2) 222.
10. Liudprand, *Historia Ottonis*, in *Opera*, (4) 161.
11. Liudprand, *Antapodosis* (IV.25) 118–19; cf. Keller, "Herrscherbild," *passim*.
12. Thietmar, (II.10) 48.
13. Henry Mayr-Harting, "Herrschaftsrepräsentation der ottonischen Familie," in *Otto der Grosse, Magdeburg und Europe*, vol. 1, ed. Matthias Puhle (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2001), 144.
14. For a good discussion of the symbolism of the imperial crown, see Reinhart Staats, *Die Reichskrone. Geschichte und Bedeutung eines europäischen Symbols* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), *passim*.
15. Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, ed. Hans F. Haefele (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), (49) 110. This report also appears in Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, II.20.
16. Heribert Müller, *Heribert, Kanzler Ottos III. und Erzbischof von Köln* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Dr. H. Wamper, 1977), 144–45.
17. See Stefan Weinfurter, "Kunigunde, das Reich und Europa," in *Kunigunde—consors regni*, ed. Stefanie Dick, et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2004), 9.
18. As Sonnleitner points out, the Quedlinburg annalist used this term of all Ottonian women, whether they were crowned or not. Käthe Sonnleitner, "Sophie von Gandersheim (975–1039). Ein Opfer der 'männlichen'

Geschichtsforschung?" in *Geschichtsforschung in Graz*, ed. Herwig Ebner, et al. (Graz: Institut für Geschichte an der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, 1990), 375.

19. Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, (IV.18) 114.
20. Thietmar, (II.2) 40.
21. See discussion in Mayr-Harting, "Herrschaft," 138.
22. Iocundus, *Translatio s. Servatii*, ed. R. Koepke, MGH SS 12: (78) 124; see discussion in Gerd Althoff, "Die Rheinlande im 10. Jahrhundert—eine königsferne Landschaft?" in *Die Rheinlande und das Reich*, ed. Manfred Groten (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2007), 34.
23. See Winfrid Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen und Ihre Bedeutung in der Politik* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1989), 18.
24. E.g., DOI 323 (February 16, 966).
25. Hagen Keller, "Reichsstruktur und Herrschaftsauffassung in ottonisch-frühsalischer Zeit," *FMSt* 16 (1982): 109–10.
26. *Brunwilarensis monasterii fundatorum actus*, MGH SS 14: (6) 128; see discussion in Althoff, "Rheinlande," 42.
27. Karl J. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 89; for Sophia's education at Gandersheim, see Gunther Wolf, "Prinzessin Sophia (978–1039). Äbtissin von Gandersheim und Essen, Enkelin, Tochter und Schwester von Kaisern," *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 61 (1989): 107.
28. Widukind, (I. preface) 1–2; (II. preface) 61.
29. Gunther Wolf, "Nochmals zur Frage: Wer war Theophano," in *Kaiserin Theophanu. Prinzessin aus der Fremde—des Westreichs grosse Kaiserin*, ed. Wolf (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991), 72.
30. Thangmar, *Vita Bernwardi episcopi Hildesheimensis*, MGH SS 4: (14) 765; when she became abbess in 1002, Sophia again received consecration from the archbishop rather than the *ordinarius* of the diocese. See *Annales Hildesheimenses*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 8 (1878), a. 1002, p. 28.
31. See Gerd Althoff, "Gandersheim und Quedlinburg. Ottonische Frauenklöster als Herrschafts- und Überlieferungszentren," *FMSt* 25 (1991): 132; Wolf, "Prinzessin Sophia," 109.
32. See Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, 94; Gerd Althoff, "Das Bett des Königs in Magdeburg: zu Thietmar II, 28," in *Festschrift für Berent Schwineköper zu seinem 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Helmut Maurer and Hans Patze (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1982), 145–46.
33. Thietmar, (V.3) 222–24; discussion in Gerd Althoff, "Saxony and the Elbe Slavs in the Tenth Century," in *The New Cambridge Medieval* History, vol. 3, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 274.

34. Bernd Schneidmüller, "Otto III.—Heinrich II. Wende der Königsherrschaft oder Wende der Mediaevistik?" in *Otto III.—Heinrich II. Eine Wende?*, ed. Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1997), 41.
35. Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, 800–1056* (London: Longman, 1991), 188.
36. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 72 (2004), 470.
37. Synod of Hohenaltheim, 919, in MGH Concilia 6, 1 (1987), canon 23, p. 30; Andreas Amiet, "Die liturgische Gesetzgebung der deutschen Reichskirche in der Zeit der sächsischen Kaiser 922–1023," *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Kirchengeschichte* 70 (1976): 12.
38. Gunther Wolf, "Königinnen-Krönungen des frühen Mittelalters bis zum Beginn des Investiturstreits," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kan. Abt.* 76 (1990): 63–64.
39. Asser, *Life of Alfred*, in *Alfred the Great*, trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), section 13, p. 71. See Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 129.
40. Karpf, *Herrscherlegitimation*, 95.
41. See Arnold Angenendt, "*Rex et sacerdos*: zur Genese der Königssalbung," in *Tradition als historische Kraft*, ed. Norbert Kamp and Joachim Wollasch (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982), 100–18.
42. Fredegar, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations*, ed. and trans. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960), (33) 102.
43. Cf. Janet L. Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History," in *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 5.
44. Wolf, "Königinnen-Krönungen," 67.
45. *Coronatio Iudithae Karoli II. filiae*, MGH Capit. 2: 425–27.
46. Silvia Konecny, *Die Frauen des karolingischen Königshauses* (Vienna: Verband der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1976), 134–46 argues that from the time of Charles the Bald coronation was a constitutive act for full legal marriage.
47. Richer of Saint-Rémi, *Histories*, ed. and trans. Justin Lake (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), (II.19) 1: 205. Jean Verdon, "Les femmes et la politique en France au Xe siècle," in *Economies et sociétés au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1973), 108–19 provides numerous additional examples of West Frankish coronations of queens in the tenth century; see esp. p. 118.
48. Thietmar, (II.1) 38.

49. Gerd Althoff, *Die Ottonen: Königsherrschaft ohne Staat* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2000), 69. Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Die Frau als Herrscherin in ottonisch-frühsalischer Zeit," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Anton von Euw (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum, 1991), 2: 258; Amalie Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000), 31–35; and Karl J. Leyser, "The Ottonians and Wessex," in *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe*, ed. Timothy Reuter (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 87 all believe that Edgitha's coronation took place. Wolf, "Königinnen-Krönungen," 70–71 takes the opposite view.
50. Thietmar, (V.19) 243; *Annales Hildesheimenses*, a. 1002, p. 28. For discussion, see Weinfurter, "Kunigunde, das Reich und Europa," 16–18; Ingrid Baumgärtner, "Kunigunde. Politische Handlungsspielräume einer Kaiserin," in *Kunigunde—eine Kaiserin an der Jahrtausendwende*, ed. Baumgärtner (Kassel: Furore Verlag, 1997), 22; Wolf, "Königinnen-Krönungen," 73.
51. Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke, *Notwendige Gefährtinnen. Königinnen der Salierzeit als Herrscherinnen und Ehefrauen im römisch-deutschen Reich des 11. und beginnenden 12. Jahrhunderts* (Saarbrücken: Verlag Rita Dadder, 1991), 52, 88–89.
52. Wolf, "Königinnen-Krönungen," 71. It is also likely that Adelheid was crowned as queen of Italy during her marriage to Lothar. See Fößel, *Königin*, 20.
53. Wolf, "Königinnen-Krönungen," 64–65.
54. Claudia Zey, "Imperatrix, si venerit Romam … Zu den Krönungen von Kaiserinnen im Mittelalter," *Deutsches Archiv* 60 (2004): 9–14.
55. For example, the *Annales Altahenses maiores*, ed. W. Giesebrecht and E. Oefele, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 4 (1891), a. 962, p. 10 speaks of Otto's coronation alone, as does Adalbert of Magdeburg. The *Annales Hildesheimenses*, 22 give a detailed account without mentioning Adelheid, as does Liudprand in his *Gestis Ottonis*, section 3.
56. *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (11) 132; Hrotsvit, *Gesta Ottonis*, 227–28; Thietmar, (II.13) 52; Franz P. Wimmer, *Kaiserin Adelheid*, 2nd ed. (Regensburg: J. Habbel, 1897), 50 discusses this issue and cites the *Chronicon Salernitano*.
57. *Annales Lobienses*, MGH SS 13, a. 972, 234; Benedict of Monte Soracte, *Il Chronicon di Benedetto, Monaco di S. Andrea del Soratte*, ed. Giuseppe Zucchetti, Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, 55 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano, 1920), sect. 38; discussion in Wolf, "Königinnen-Krönungen," 72.
58. The most usable version of the *ordo* for coronation of empresses is *Ordo III*, edited in *Ordines Coronationis Imperialis*, ed. Reinhard Elze, MGH Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui in usum scholarum 9 (1960), 6–9. See Zey,

"Imperatrix, si venerit Romam," 25–28; Ludger Köntgen, "Starke Frauen: Edgith—Adelheid—Theophanu," in *Otto der Grosse*, ed. Puhle, 124. MacLean argues that *Ordo III* was first used for Kunigunde's coronation in 1002, not that of Adelheid. Simon MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 183ff.

59. See for example Thietmar, (VII.1) 396–98 for an account of the imperial coronation of Henry II and Kunigunde in 1014. See also Fößel, *Königin*, 45.
60. *Coronatio Iudithae*, 426–27; Jäschke, *Notwendige Gefährtinnen*, 18.
61. Amalie Fößel, "Politische Handlungsspielräume der Königin im hochmittelalterlichen Reich," in *Geschichte des Mittelalters für unsere Zeit*, ed. Rolf Ballof (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2003), 142; Paolo Delogu, "'Consors regni': un problema carolingio," *Bulletino dell'istituto storico Italiano per il medio evo e archivio Muratoriano* 76 (1964): 77–78; Lois L. Huneycutt, "Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen: The Esther Topos," in *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 130–31. See also Hrabanus Maurus' ninth-century commentary on Esther, the *Expositio in librum Esther*, PL 109: 635–70, especially section 11, p. 662.
62. Widukind, (III.74) 150.
63. Régine Le Jan, "L'épouse du comte du IXe au XIe siècle: transformation d'un modèle et idéologie du pouvoir," in *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes à Byzance et en Occident (VIe–XIe siècles)*, ed. Stéphanie Lébecq, et al. (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Centre de recherche sur l'Histoire de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest, 1999), 71; Hartmut Hoffmann, *Buchkunst und Königtum im ottonischen und frühsalischen Reich*, Schriften der MGH 30 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986), 33.
64. Wolfgang Wagner, "Das Gebetsgedenken der Liudolfinger im Spiegel der Königs- und Kaiserurkunden von Heinrich I. bis zu Otto III.," *Archiv für Diplomatik* 40 (1994): 17 and 23 n. 151.
65. Ibid., 8.
66. Hugh of Flavigny, *Chronicon*, MGH SS 8: (16) 391.
67. Janet L. Nelson, "Les reines carolingiennes," in *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes*, ed. Lébecq, 124.
68. Folcuinus, *Gesta abbatum S. Bertini Sithiensium*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SS 13: (106) 627. Peter Willmes, *Der Herrscher-"Adventus" im Kloster des Frühmittelalters* (Munich: Fink, 1976), 21ff. discusses the formal *adventus* ceremony for all members of the royal family at monasteries.
69. *Vita sanctae Cunegundis*, MGH SS 4: (7) 823; Gerd Althoff, "Ottonische Frauengemeinschaften im Spannungsfeld von Kloster und Welt," in *Essen und die sächsischen Frauenstifter im Frühmittelalter*, ed. Jan Gerchow and Thomas Schilp (Essen: Klartext, 2003), 29.
70. Weinfurter, "Kunigunde," 16.

71. Gunther Wolf, "Die bildlichen Darstellungen der Kaiserin Theophanu (ca. 959–991)," *Römische historische Mitteilungen* 41 (1999): 423.
72. Keller, "Herrscherbild," 311.
73. For discussion, see Ernst-Dieter Hehl, "Maria und das ottonisch-salische Königtum. Urkunden, Liturgie, Bilder," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 117 (1997): 290; Frank Kämpfer, "Der mittelalterliche Herrscher zwischen Christus und Untertan," in *Der Herrscher. Leitbild und Abbild in Mittelalter und Renaissance*, ed. Hans Hecker (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1990), 207.
74. For a good discussion of the issue, see Mayr-Harting, "Herrschaftsrepräsentation," 135.
75. Thietmar, (III.1) 96.
76. See Nikolaus Gussone, "Trauung und Krönung. Zur Hochzeit der byzantinischen Prinzessin Theophanu mit Kaiser Otto II.," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Euw, 2: 173; Wolf, "Bildlichen Darstellungen," 425.
77. See Henry Mayr-Harting's discussion in "Artists and Patrons," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, ed. Reuter, 220. Perhaps the small busts painted within medallions in the Gospel Book of St. Gereon served the same purpose. This codex (Cologne Historical Archive Cod. W312, fol. 22r), created in the 990s, has what appear to be ruler portraits on the "Liber generationis" page. To the right is a young man, to the left an old woman, while below a younger woman is depicted. These figures are thought to represent Adelheid, Theophanu, and Otto III. See Rainer Kahsnitz, "Ein Bildnis von Theophanu?" in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Euw, 2: 101; Köntgen, "Starke Frauen," 130.
78. The appearance of a non-royal individual in manuscripts is very rare, but examples can be found. For example, Archbishop Egbert of Trier is depicted on the presentation page of the *Codex Egberti*.
79. Wolf, "Bildlichen Darstellungen," 425.
80. Hehl, "Maria und das ottonisch-salische Königtum," 310.
81. Daniel Russo, "Sainte Adélaïde dans l'iconographie du XIe siècle: tradition hagiographique et formation d'une image," in *Adélaïde de Bourgogne: Genèse et representations d'une sainteté impériale*, ed. Patrick Corbet, et al. (Dijon: Ed. Universitaires de Dijon, 2002), 150–51; Patrick Corbet, "Les impératrices ottoniennes et le modèle marial: Autour de l'ivoire du château Sforza de Milan," in *Marie: Le culte de la vierge dans la société médiévale*, ed. Dominique Iogna-Prat, et al. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1996), 115–17; Wolf, "Bildlichen Darstellungen," 424.
82. See Keller, "Herrscherbild," *passim*.
83. Kämpfer, "Der mittelalterliche Herrscher," 214.
84. See Hoffmann, *Buchkunst*, 38–39.
85. Jäschke, *Notwendige Gefährtinnen*, 118.
86. Ibid., 1.
87. Wolf, "Königinnen-Krönungen," 62.

CHAPTER 6

Piety as Power

In the early eleventh century at the latest, a number of Marian hymns were composed at the great imperial monastery of Reichenau, including, probably, the *Salve Regina*:

> Hail, queen, mother of mercy
> Our life, sweetness, and hope.
> We sigh to you, groaning and weeping,
> In this vale of tears.
> Therefore, our advocate, turn your merciful eyes
> Toward us.
> And show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb
> after our exile.
> Oh clement, oh pious, oh sweet
> Virgin Mary.[1]

As this chapter will discuss, the text of the *Salve Regina* with its emphasis on a regal Virgin Mary helped accentuate the special piety of royal women. The Ottonians identified strongly with the Virgin Mary. Ottonian manuscripts include a large number of portrayals of Mary, showing her for the first time in art at many important scenes, highlighting her essential role in the story of Jesus. As Rosamond McKitterick has pointed out, such prominent portrayal "would appear to be reminding the reader not only of the humanity of Christ, but also of women's redemption through the Virgin Mary."[2] At the same time, new ways of depicting Mary would have been

P. G. Jestice, *Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty*, Queenship and Power, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77306-3_6

reminders of the queen on earth, just as images of Christ would have called the lord's anointed king to mind.

While it is unsurprising that women would identify with the greatest of female saints, the Ottonian identification went further, specifically identifying and conflating the images of the mother of Christ and the empress. By the time the *Salve Regina* had been written, Mary had become the *queen* of heaven. Corbet argues that the association of empresses with the Virgin Mary was only solidified in the early eleventh century,[3] but the roots of the association reach back well into the tenth century. Consider for a moment the attributes of Jesus' mother, according to the poet who penned the *Salve Regina*. She is a queen, of course. But her role is fundamentally that of merciful, clement, consoling *advocate*. In other words, she was indeed very much the ideal queen of the Ottonian period. Such an identification was reinforced by depictions of Mary, shown beginning in the 970s with the jewelry and insignia of an empress.[4]

An important item in the royal tool chest was piety. Kings and emperors carefully demonstrated piety in ritual acts, in benefactions to churches and the poor, in honor given to recognized saints. Failure to have done so would certainly have jarred the sensibilities of the age; because of their status as the lord's anointed, an impious king would have been regarded as a contradiction in terms. Yet men were imperfect. They killed (both judicially and in war), they indulged in animal lusts. The real experts in piety were the family's women. Our imperial ladies brought piety to a high art, both with their practices and their benefactions, never losing sight of their royal status in the process. Whether their piety was calculated or genuine, the result was the same: they improved both their own image and that of their family in the eyes of the world and presumably played an important role in bringing God's blessings to the Ottonian house. Piety was the one instrument of successful rule where the women had a distinct advantage over the male members of their family. Awe at their piety would have added to the luster that surrounded the imperial ladies of Ottonian Germany.

Queens on Earth and in Heaven

As we have seen in Chap. 5, imperial ladies of Ottonian Germany were often portrayed in close proximity to the Virgin Mary. Mary was to a high degree *their* saint; their husbands by contrast are most often supported by the family patron St. Mauritius, but other holy men are also associated

with them. A special relationship between empress and Mary was even invoked in the coronation *ordo* for empresses.[5] Indeed, it is impossible to see details, but very probably an important cross-pollination took place between the status of the Ottonian queens and that of Jesus' mother. The position of queens was ascendant; it was in the later tenth century that Mary first received the title "queen of heaven."[6] While it is the Anglo-Saxon Aethelwold's *Benedictional* that first shows Mary crowned as queen of heaven, the practice soon became standard on the Continent.[7] Moreover, in circles close to the late Ottonians Mary came to be not only queen but empress. Adelheid had a close relationship to Cluny, and in fact Abbot Odilo who wrote an epitaph of the saintly empress was also very close to the Virgin Mary, and in a sermon tells how she rules in heaven with her son and is worthy of the title *domina/dominatrix*. In 1014 Henry II gave Cluny his imperial scepter and orb, which the Cluniacs then displayed especially on feasts of the Virgin Mary, again linking her with the imperial house—especially the women, since Mary was of course a woman.[8] And according to Bruno of Querfurt, who composed his *vita* of the martyred Adalbert of Prague in the first decade of the eleventh century, the Virgin Mary was "imperatrix augusta" over the angels.[9]

Powerful Ottonian women attested to their devotion for Mary with their donations. Both Marian church foundations of which we know from the Ottonian period were women's foundations. In 979 Theophanu and Otto II jointly founded the Benedictine convent of Memleben, dedicating it to the Virgin Mary. And in 986 Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg founded a Benedictine monastery, similarly dedicated to Mary, on the Munzenberg facing her own convent.[10]

In the years around 1000 the cult of the Virgin Mary was moving to central prominence in western Europe. As people sought ways to honor her, they applied the highest titles they knew, naming her queen and empress in emulation of the royal women who were distant, sacral figures in their own lives. And surely the reverse was true. As people sang hymns hailing Mary as "queen of heaven," it must have impressed on them just what a high and indeed sacred office it was to be a queen.

A Rich and Regal Virtue

Tenth-century German society as a whole valued both rank and piety and tended to conflate the two, especially in the case of women. Nowhere is this conflation clearer than in the very large number of houses of canonesses

founded during the Ottonian period. The position of canonesses is very much bound up with the history of the Ottonian royal women. The imperial ladies were educated in these canoness houses. They gave birth there. They were given to these foundations as abbesses or retired there as widows, in both of which cases they devoted themselves to prayer for the well-being of the rulers of their lineage. Sometimes they founded them. And very often they died in these communities and found their final rest in the conventual church. These houses of canonesses were noble, and the women who controlled their wide-reaching resources were usually royal. They were first and foremost houses of prayer and worship of God. And that worship was distinctly feminine, showy, and rich.

Canonesses were not nuns. The rule they followed was the 816 *Institutio sanctimonialium*. Like nuns, canonesses were under the leadership of an abbess, but future canonesses did not serve a noviciate and took no perpetual vows. While they were expected to eat and pray together, they could have private property and servants. And, while separation from the world was encouraged, they were not cloistered like nuns.[11]

Saxony in particular, the Ottonian heartland, boasted a striking number of women's religious communities, especially houses of canonesses. Fifteen are attested in the Carolingian period; at least thirty-six more were founded under the Ottonians.[12] Some of the most important of these foundations were Ottonian family houses, starting with Gandersheim and Essen in the third quarter of the ninth century and including Quedlinburg and Nordhausen.[13] It is important not to oversimplify the reasons behind these foundations. Certainly the canoness houses provided a locale for the education of noble and royal girls. But throughout history, most girls have been educated in their own homes; clearly the Ottonians thought that canonesses could provide particular educational advantages. The women's religious houses also provided a place for widows to retire. But again, a nunnery could provide the same retreat from the world as a canonry, so why this particular spiritual option? The reason usually cited for the preponderance of canoness foundations in Ottonian Saxony is *memoria*—the prayerful remembrance of the dead of the family.[14] But again, that explanation alone does not satisfy as an explanation. Why canonesses and not nuns? For that matter, why not men's monasteries, chantries, or cathedral chapters, all options that other ages preferred when commemorating the dead?

The answer, I believe, lies in the distinctly Ottonian amalgamation of female piety and nobility/royalty. The founders and endowers of these canoness houses rejected the self-abnegation demanded by the Benedictine

Rule. Rather, they wanted firmly, even emphatically noble and royal women preserving the memory of their families, women with a personal bond to the families that would have been at least diluted with the ideal Benedictine loss of self. Otherwise, why would they have founded so many houses of canonesses? Why would those canonesses have been allowed to travel freely, and why would members of their families visit them so frequently, including the royal court in its frequent progresses through German territory? The standard form for these canonries was that the abbess should be a relative of the founder, as long as one could be found. This was not just a matter of maintaining power over lands and rights, but rather of preserving the *memoria* of the founding family in the hands of a person who could be trusted to do the job right.[15]

A later sensibility, inspired by the frankly misogynistic reform movement of the eleventh century, in 1059 condemned the *Institutio sanctimonialium* and the life of canonesses as "uncanonical."[16] But one should beware of imposing the standards of a later age on the tenth century. Gerd Althoff in particular has argued that the canoness houses, like nothing else, show the conflict between religiosity and rank, two basic pillars of medieval mentality.[17] The problem with such an interpretation is that hardly anyone in the tenth century even noticed a tension between the two, much less the conflict that Althoff posits. He draws a frightening picture of the danger canonesses faced from access to too much luxury, too much contact with relatives, privileges, and leaves of absence, pointing out that especially abbesses of royal blood "abused" these privileges.[18] Such an interpretation, I believe, is imposing an eleventh-century standard where it does not belong. Contemporaries did not regard the travel of abbesses as an abuse, nor did they speak disapprovingly of the standard of living in the great canonries.

In short, Ottonian society valued noble piety—and royal piety even more. This helps explain the number of Ottonian daughters who were made canonesses. But it also helps explain how a queen's public role was shaped. The image of the pious queen enhanced the authority of the royal family and of the queen herself. As with the canonesses of the great Saxon houses, this was not the piety of self-abnegation. Contemporary sources speak admiringly of queens who were pious while still being queens, with all that such a status entailed in terms of self-presentation, status, and generosity. For example, Queen Mechtild, when she retired to Quedlinburg in her widowhood, dressed more plainly—but still wore red garments and gold jewelry.[19] And, as we have seen, the saintly Kunigunde is singled out

for praise for a distinctly regal act after her retirement to Kaufungen, slapping the abbess for presuming to speak to the widowed empress as if she were an ordinary nun.

The Husband Saved Through the Wife

An odd dissonance emerges in the sources of the Ottonian period. On the one hand, authors (mostly male) were well aware of the Pauline injunctions to women to obey their menfolk, and classical literature had conditioned this educated elite to regard women as less able to control their emotions or think clearly than their male counterparts. Women were weak, easily inclined toward sin. On the other hand, though, the same authors often described the women of a family as the only hope for men's salvation. Indeed, if one takes out classical *topoi*, the theme of the pious woman serving her less pious male relatives through her prayers is dominant and clearly was highly valued. The woman's piety was an essential part of the family bond. For example, Thietmar tells of the death of his niece and close friend Liudgard in 1012. Her husband's grief, the chronicler tells, was indescribable. She had been, he reports, "the faithful guardian of his life and soul, devoting herself to the service of God more for his sake than for her own." Her life of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving had been her husband's salvation.[20] Similarly, Thietmar tells of Archbishop Walthard's chaste and noble mother Amalred that "As much as possible, she devoted herself entirely to her husband's salvation."[21]

Medieval society had long recognized and appreciated the role of women in bringing their husbands to Christianity. Adhémar of Chabannes, for example, remembers in his chronicle how in the late fifth century Clothild converted her Frankish husband Clovis.[22] The custom—and the credit—had not yet died out in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Thus, Hermann of Reichenau reports for the year 995 that the Ottonian Gisela of Bavaria (daughter of Henry the Quarrelsome and Gisela of Burgundy) married King Stephen of Hungary and converted him to the faith of Christ. Hermann also reports her great charity and other good works.[23]

Thietmar of Merseburg is especially fascinated by the phenomenon of royal women helping their husbands to a godly life. His prime example is Duke Mieszko of Poland, both of whose wives helped convert him and his people. Mieszko's first wife was Dobrawa, sister of Boleslav of Bohemia. She did everything she could to make her husband more Christian, even, Thietmar notes approvingly, breaking normal Christian rules to do so.

Thus he praises her for eating meat during Lent in an effort to be closer to her husband. Mieszko was duly won over and accepted baptism.[24] After Dobrawa died, the duke married Oda, daughter of Margrave Dietrich, even though she was a nun at Calbe. Again, Thietmar is clear that the end result was more important than the means, telling that although a nun marrying was a sin, Oda made Poland more Christian. He hopes that Christ will forgive her sins, since she served him very well.[25] Similarly, the bishop reports that Boleslav of Poland's third wife Emnilde succeeded in reforming him.[26]

Even good kings were improved by the prayers of a good woman. Thus Otto I in the trials of his early reign escaped, according to Thietmar, thanks to the "continual intercession of his most holy wife Edgitha."[27] But she did not pray alone, as Otto's widowed mother Mechtild also "ensured her son's prosperity through her faithful service to God."[28]

Women appear as more pious than men, especially royal women who could serve as role models to both women and men. A number of sources, including her two *vitae*, Widukind, and Thietmar, make much of Queen Mechtild's piety. The older *vita* reports that Mechtild would sneak away to pray during the night, leaving her husband Henry I snoring in bed.[29] But her behavior was very different from the model of royal piety of the later Middle Ages (as represented by saints like Elizabeth of Hungary, whose intensive ascetic regimen must have contributed to her early death). Mechtild's was a royal piety that embraced the power of her secular life, rather than denying it. The author of the first *vita* combines in a single thought that Mechtild was happily married to a king and had acquired temporal power, but was still mindful of God.[30] Marriage, power, and piety, in other words, were positioned to enhance each other rather than existing in an unbearable tension.[31] The author of the later *vita* of Mechtild, too, emphasizes the coexistence of piety and royal prestige. She praises Mechtild, telling: "No matter how great the power she received, she humbled herself even more intently." In other words, the author goes on to state, Mechtild was a rarity in bearing earthly honor without haughtiness. This does not mean she refused power (and it is interesting to note that the author specifically states that the queen *did* receive power) or the trappings of royalty. Instead, Mechtild wore jewels and silk in public; she just did not allow the outward display to puff her up.[32]

A peculiar tale of Thietmar's demonstrates well the intersection between women's piety and rank and the honor the combination could bestow upon them in the Ottonian world. According to the chronicler (who was

writing about a century after the events he describes), Henry I got drunk and forced his wife Mechtild to have sexual relations with him on Maundy Thursday. Satan revealed the sordid details to a venerable matron, who told the queen that the devil was behind Henry's breach of canon law. A child would be born, and the queen should be ready to have it baptized immediately to save it from the devil's clutches. The child was thus saved, but the disgruntled devil promised that discord would stay with the child and his offspring—a fine prophecy after the event, since the child was the future Duke Henry I of Bavaria, who grew up to be a notable rebel against his brother and to father Duke Henry the Quarrelsome.[33]

By one of his typical associations of ideas, in the next chapter Thietmar tells the story of a woman named Gelusa, whose husband forced her to have intercourse on the feast of the Holy Innocents. The resulting child was born prematurely with crippled toes, and died immediately after being baptized. The wife reproached her husband, to Thietmar's delight, who comments: "Eternally blessed is the man whose wife tirelessly prays for him in his absence and, heedless of her sex, beseeches him to guard his soul when he is present."[34]

Several interesting points about Ottonian attitudes can be drawn from these paired tales. Yes, Thietmar does imply a female weakness or disability with his invocation of how a woman should act "heedless of her sex." But in both cases, as at many other points in his chronicle, the women are in fact more pious than the men. The women involved were aware of ecclesiastical prohibitions against sexual acts in restricted periods, and in both cases, the women appear to have been overcome by brute force (in one case, specifically by a drunk husband). Both women knew how to deal with the ensuing crisis of demonic intervention, having clergy standing by ready to perform an emergency baptism to keep the devil away in one case and in the other to save a child from unbaptized death. In both cases, the woman served as the man's conscience.

It is not surprising that women should have played this role, since our sources make it clear that royal women could be quite well educated. The great canoness foundations were educational centers. According to their rule, canonesses are supposed to read and study.[35] Although the quality of education would certainly have varied widely, books were certainly present in these houses, although mostly what have survived are gospel books, liturgical manuscripts, and lists of possessions.[36] Still, some canonesses, like Hrotsvit and the anonymous Quedlinburg annalist, were very highly educated. And many noble and royal girls were educated at these founda-

tions. For example, the early Ottonian Duke Liudolf had five daughters educated at Gandersheim; three became abbesses and the other two married, which exemplifies how common it was to send girls to convents for an education rather than for life.[37] As a child, Queen Mechtild lived at the convent of Herford, not to become a nun but to receive training in literature and handicrafts, a point that the author of the first *vita* thinks worth making twice.[38] Her son Otto I, by contrast, did not learn to read until after the death of his first wife.[39] Adelheid was literate; we have a record of her reading and translating a letter to Otto.[40] Theophanu too would have been literate, probably in several languages; an extant interlinear Greek/Latin psalter was likely produced to help her learn Latin.[41] When boys did receive a bookish education it was because they were intended for the clergy, and their instruction was often at the hands of canonesses. Bardo, future archbishop of Mainz, received his early education from the old canoness Benedicta in about the year 990, and the chronicler Thietmar's early education was at Quedlinburg under the tutelage of his maternal aunt Emnilde.[42]

This Ottonian image of peaceful fusion between royal and pious, glorious and humble, is significantly different from the picture of royal women developing in the Cluniac monasteries of France at the same time. Nowhere is this contrast more obvious than in Abbot Odilo of Cluny's *Epitaphium Adelheide*. This tribute to Empress Adelheid, written within a few years of her death in 999, has often been taken as an accurate record because of its chronological proximity to the events it describes. However, it reflects a model of idyllic and improbable holiness that bears closer resemblance to the Cluniac *vita* of Gerald of Aurillac (who supposedly secretly tonsured half his hair to be more like a monk and who wouldn't allow his soldiers to strike in battle with the sharp side of their weapons) than to the more down-to-earth representations of royal piety of the Ottonians. In the *Epitaph*, Odilo de-emphasizes Adelheid's power in favor of a model of Christlike persecution and humiliation. Odilo's Adelheid does not show any human characteristics, nor much that can be identified with actual German (or indeed French) royal women of the tenth century.[43]

Some women in tenth-century Germany lived lives of heroic virtue, but that was not the pious ideal Ottonian authors presented for the ladies of the imperial house (or indeed noblewomen at all). For example, I have only been able to find evidence of three noble recluses. The first, a maternal aunt of Archbishop Gero of Cologne, was a nun who went to Rome and became a recluse there.[44] The second, the canoness Adelheid of

Gandersheim, appears in the *Chronicon Hujesburgense*. The report is that she was very unhappy at Gandersheim, came to the Huysburg recluse Bia for advice, and ended up joining Bia in her reclusion.[45] But this did not happen until 1076 and the *Chronicon Hujesburgense* is the product of a reform current of thought very different from that in which the Ottonian women we are examining lived and operated. The third is the *Casus s. Galli*'s account of Countess Wendilgart told below, which sounds more like pious *exemplum* than history.

Prayer and *Memoria*

Women had played a vital role in preserving the memory of their families since the ancient world. A few written references still survive that tell of tapestries depicting the deeds of kings and nobles, tapestries that would have hung on the walls of castles and palaces.[46] But, except for a unique example, the Bayeux Tapestry from England of the next century, these works have not survived the test of time. Nonetheless, it is likely that they existed in considerable quantities and that women made them. Such a duty of *memoria* was not "merely" a matter of story-telling, vital as such stories were in providing a sense of family. Ottonians were also plainly very unsure about their salvation and believed firmly that most souls were consigned to Purgatory after death, rather than proceeding directly to heaven or hell. The pages of tenth- and eleventh-century *vitae* and histories—even formal charters—are generously dotted with accounts of souls appearing in dreams or visions and piteously begging for prayers from the living to save them from torment.

In such a thought world, it was vital to preserve the memory of the dead, so that prayers could be recited for the repose of their souls. Men especially lived in a rough world, and none more so than rulers, part of whose duty was to put down rebellions and mutilate or execute criminals, all while churchmen did their best to make them feel thoroughly guilty for such behavior. Ottonian rulers would not have known of the first Christian emperor Constantine's decision to put off baptism until his deathbed—when he could no longer sin. Delayed baptism was not an option by the tenth century. So, with increasing urgency, the Germanic peoples of the central Middle Ages sought other escapes from Purgatory. In the case especially of the Saxons, whose dukes the Ottonians had been, *memoria* was entrusted to the women of the family, who were honored for the vital service they provided. The duty of prayer for the dead fell first of all on

widows. As a result, in contemporary accounts we can see queens' piety most clearly after they had entered widowhood, although there is enough evidence to demonstrate that their behaviors in widowhood were an intensification of a life of representative piety, rather than a new departure.

Such prayer, whether for the living or the dead, was potent. A story reported in the eleventh-century *Casus s. Galli* helps illustrate the cultural norms of the time. Wendilgart, a niece of Otto I, was married to a Count Ulrich. Her husband Ulrich failed to return from an expedition against the Magyars and was presumed to be dead. So Wendilgart went to the monastery of Saint-Gall, where she became a recluse in a cell next to that of the saintly Wiborada, whom we have already seen giving sage advice to the future bishop Ulrich of Augsburg. There she lived for four years, giving generously to the monks of Saint-Gall and the poor for the sake of her husband's soul. The tale took an interesting turn on the fourth anniversary of what Wendilgart thought was her husband's death. She went on that day to distribute gifts to the poor, following her usual custom, as the chronicler tells us. Among the paupers gathered there was none other than her husband Ulrich himself. It turns out he had been captured rather than killed in the Magyar campaign, and he had now escaped from his captivity—his chains had fallen gradually from him thanks to Wendilgart's prayers. He called out to her and asked for clothing. When Wendilgart, thinking him a beggar, gave him a garment, Ulrich grabbed hold of her hand along with the cloth, hugged and kissed her, then proclaimed his identity. She was of course shocked, but soon recognized him from a scar on his hand and joyfully welcomed her returned lord. The account ends with a synod releasing Wendilgart from her vow of reclusion so she could lawfully return to married life.[47] Note that although the monk of Saint-Gall calls Wendilgart a recluse, her enclosure was far from absolute. She also continued to control resources, and a necessary part of her prayers for her husband consisted of acts of very public charity.

Rather of Verona suggests that widows would do best to "follow the rule of Anna," the gospel figure highlighted in the story of Jesus' presentation in the Temple who, after she was widowed, spent the rest of her life in the Temple (Luke 2:36–38). Rather throws in I Timothy 5's injunction to prayerful widowhood for good measure.[48] There was an absolute expectation that widows should spend much of their time praying for their deceased spouses.

Like Wendilgart of the Saint-Gall tale, many upper-class widows entered religious life in a convent or house of canonesses. Adalbert of Magdeburg

reports that Adelheid's old enemy Berengar of Ivrea died in exile in Bamberg in 966. Berengar's widow Willa was in Bamberg with him, and even before her husband was buried she assumed the veil of a nun.[49] Perhaps the perfect example is Abbess Hathui of Gernrode, a kinswoman of the chronicler Thietmar of Merseburg, whom he admired enough to feature in his account of the year 1014. Hathui was the widowed daughter-in-law of Margrave Gero, and had become abbess "for the love of God and the salvation of her poor husband" after her spouse had died at a young age. She served as abbess for fifty-five years, "as constant as Anna in her devotion to Christ, as generous as the widow of Sarepta, and similar in her abstinence to Judith."[50]

Unlike Hathui in Thietmar's account, although Mechtild typically resided at Quedlinburg in the decades of her widowhood, she did not become a canoness there (although, interestingly, Quedlinburg in its first thirty years did not have an abbess at all; Mechtild was the real leader of the community[51]). It was a good place to live in retirement, but she never forgot that she was a queen. As the author of the first *vita* of Mechtild points out, she was "exceedingly gentle to the good and harsh to the arrogant."[52] And although Adelheid became closely associated with the monastery of San Salvatore in Pavia and in her final years founded the monastery of Selz, she did not take vows; indeed, these were both foundations for men. The only Ottonian widow to take the veil was Kunigunde, who entered Kaufungen a year after Henry II's death.[53]

Mechtild, Adelheid, and Theophanu all played a highly visible role praying for their husbands in life and as permanent mourners for them after their deaths. Such a role was expected of them and contemporaries honored them for it; a failure to fulfill this role would have undermined their prestige and authority in society. Even when Theophanu as regent traveled to Rome, almost certainly to conduct necessary business, contemporaries saw the visit primarily as an occasion to weep at the tomb of her husband in the Eternal City.[54] Sometimes they sought by their prayers to atone for a particular sin of their husbands. This was strikingly necessary in the case of Duchess Judith, widow of Otto I's brother Henry of Bavaria. Thietmar reports that, in the course of a life riddled with confrontation and rebellion, Henry had committed two grave sins against churchmen—he had had the archbishop of Salzburg blinded and the patriarch of Aquileia castrated. Judith heard her husband's deathbed confession. After his death, she had his remains buried honorably, then prayed for Henry's soul, atoning for his sins with her tears and alms.[55] As is typical for these

high-born women, prayers and care for the poor went hand-in-hand.[56] In this case, Judith assumed leadership of the convent of Niedermünster in Regensburg, which she and her husband had founded and where Henry was buried, and maintained tight control over the community until her death in 986.[57] According to Thietmar at least, Theophanu also had a particular need to atone for her husband Otto II's grave sin: in 981 Otto had dissolved the diocese of Merseburg that his father had founded and God in his wrath had punished Otto with his great defeat at Cotrone, the Slav rebellion of 983, and presumably his early death.[58] This prayer duty even took her, despite her position as regent for their young son Otto II, on a journey to Rome to pray at her husband's tomb. Again, prayer was paired with almsgiving, in this case providing Adalbert of Prague with money for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (which he immediately redistributed to the poor).[59]

Theophanu was not in a position to retire to conventual life, but most royal widows spent at least part of their time living among religious, most often canonesses, but sometimes nuns or even monks, who could join in their prayers. Adelheid during her long widowhood spent much of her time at her foundation of San Salvatore, Pavia, and finally at her Benedictine community of Selz. But Adelheid's position was anomalous, since she was a second wife and her husband had chosen to be buried at the side of his first wife Edgitha in Magdeburg Cathedral. There was no place for Adelheid there, although the prayer obligation remained. Thietmar admiringly reports that Adelheid took such great care "for the liberation of the elder Otto's soul" until her own death that "it can scarcely be comprehended in words."[60]

The royal widow about whom we are best instructed, though, is Queen Mechtild, thanks to the two *vitae* written to promote her cult as a saint. These *vitae*, written in the reigns of Otto II and Henry II, present a model union of royal women's power and piety, as does Widukind's extensive account of the queen.[61] We have already seen Mechtild's piety at work, as she crept from her husband's bed to pray at night and did not let royal pomp corrupt her. It is in the descriptions of the queen's widowhood, though, that her distinctly royal piety comes to the fore.

When HenryI died in 936, Mechtild had his body buried at Quedlinburg. The site of a royal palace, the couple had already planned to create a canoness house on the site, and now Mechtild followed through, endowing it with her own property.[62] And there she remained, leading the community until her death (although never taking vows, an ambiguity possible

with canonesses, unlike nuns).[63] Above all, she prayed for her dead husband. As Thietmar admiringly cites II Maccabees, it is good to pray for the dead.[64] Liutprand, in one of his rare passages about an imperial lady, provides more detail, telling how Mechtild "never ceases offering a living sacrifice to God and the office of the dead in expiation of past sins, beyond the practice of all the matrons whom I have seen or heard about."[65] Again several themes are linked: that a man of power is inherently sinful, that women need to expiate his faults, and that they should be honored and praised for doing so. Also, Liudprand's account expresses a general expectation that widows should perform such rites—Mechtild was just more thorough than the average. And Mechtild clearly saw this duty as the last great work of her life. The author of the *vita posterior* even reports that Mechtild would have preferred to be buried at Nordhausen (a plug for the author's own house), but decided it was her duty to be at Quedlinburg beside Henry in anticipation of the final judgment.[66] The community aided in her task. Thus late in her life, when Mechtild knew that Archbishop William of Mainz (Otto I's illegitimate son) was dying, she called for the community to pray for him.[67]

Pious Benefactors

The way of royal piety and prayer for the dead was not, however, a process of self-denial and self-abnegation. This was *royal* piety, which could not be divorced from authority. We have already seen the approbation given to Kunigunde for walloping an abbess so presumptuous as to think she was the dowager empress' superior. Mechtild too lived a royal life at Quedlinburg, and contemporaries saw no reason why she should have done anything different, nor had they any sense that a regal lifestyle and holiness were incompatible.

Expending wealth was a prime means of displaying royal piety, and although Queen Mechtild did not command resources as great as those of her daughter- and granddaughter-in-law, she clearly had ample funds to make a great impression on contemporaries. Her beneficence began with the foundation of Quedlinburg, but did not end there. Instead, as Thietmar reports, she aided the dead Henry I's soul by feeding paupers and even birds. As usual, the reference to prayer is accompanied by an admiring mention of the queen's distribution of wealth.

Although giving alms to birds sounds very humble and sweet, it is clear that Mechtild did not forget that she was queen. She was high in birth and

office and continued to display rank-appropriate behaviors—and the author of the *vita antiquior* admired this regal piety. The author says little on the subject of miracles, but does report one action of Mechtild's as miraculous. As is often the case, the event involved almsgiving. She was distributing bread, apparently up on the acropolis where the Quedlinburg canonry was located. While there, Mechtild noticed a group of poor people sitting in the valley below. She was angry—a very royal response—when she discovered no bread had been distributed to them. So she took matters into her own hands, grabbing a loaf and throwing it down to the people below, where it "miraculously" landed in a pauper's lap.[68] It is easy to laugh off such an account, but the very fact that the author regarded the event as a miracle speaks volumes about the royal piety she is praising. The queen, according to the story, was anything but humble; but nor did the author expect her to be. Instead, Mechtild appears dynamic, short-tempered, and a problem-solver. In short, she was a woman of power, impatient when servants failed to carry out her wishes, but never forgetting she was a queen to the point of performing acts (like serving the poor directly) that were beneath her royal dignity.

Despite her conspicuous benefactions, when Mechtild died in 968 she still had resources to spare, suggesting that it was her annual income she had been distributing, rather than her principal. Widukind, an exact contemporary and fellow Saxon, reports that the dowager queen died "filled with good works and charity after distributing all of her royal wealth among the servants and maidens and paupers of God." Royal wealth certainly did not get in the way of beatitude, since (Widukind tells us) a hermit saw the queen's soul being carried up to heaven by a multitude of angels.[69] Indeed, Mechtild's reputation as a saint was certified within only a decade of her death.[70]

Mechtild and Adelheid's semi-monastic associations give an important clue to the regard in which they were held during their widowhood. Both women, especially Adelheid, were rich. The *vita posterior* of Mechtild tells that the dowager continued to dress royally, in a scarlet garment covered by an outer layer of clothing, and some gold jewelry, at least until her son Henry died, after which she set aside her royal dress in mourning.[71] And both *vitae* of Mechtild stress the retired queen's great generosity, the magnificent table she continued to keep, and the resources she pumped into monastic foundations. Similarly, Adelheid was singled out for praise for her generosity. The Marbach annalist reports that as a widow, Empress Adelheid lived a holy and religious life for many years, and "gave many things to

churches with regal munificence" before finally founding the monastery of Selz.[72] We have already seen the royal women giving funds from both their *dos* and their dowry to found religious houses (see Chap. 3). In short, their piety was highly visible and would have won them friends among churchmen and -women, besides relatives of those who lived in the religious houses they supported.

Holy Queens

Several ladies of the Ottonian family did in fact die in the odor of holiness. Thietmar reports that Edgitha, who died in 938, was a woman of great virtue, and signs after her death made heaven's approbation clear.[73] Queen Mechtild enjoyed the honor of not one but two saints' *lives*, bent on proving her credentials as a woman of singular virtue. And Adelheid, whom a verse epitaph of Otto I calls "blessed woman, holy wife" (*beata mulier, conjux sancta*), was formally canonized in 1097 after many miracles at her tomb that began shortly after her death in 999.[74] Only Theophanu failed to win a posthumous reputation for holiness, which probably had more to do with lack of anyone to promote a cult after her son's death than any failure in her lifetime.[75]

The official piety of the Ottonian royal women had an important impact on their society, not least in creating the mood of pious Christian monarchy in which kings could rule effectively. As we will see, the royal women were tireless in their support of both bishops and monastic houses, working to create the climate of good will and cooperation between monarchy and *ecclesia* that was an essential building block of what some scholars have called the "imperial church system" of the Ottonians. This took the form both of interventions to convince the king to make gifts and gifts from their own large resources. The esteem in which their piety would have been held would have made their requests that much more likely to receive a positive response. Traces of their patronage of arts and literature can also still be seen, ranging from Henry I's daughter Gerberga commissioning Adso of Montier en Der to write his treatise on the Antichrist (in the dedication he calls her "mother of monks and leader of holy virgins"[76]) to the Golden Madonna of Essen, commissioned by Otto I's granddaughter Mechtild. In a society that took the marks of holiness so seriously that once when Otto I received a surprise visit from Ulrich of Augsburg he rushed from his private chamber to greet the saint so quickly that he only had one shoe on,[77] piety was an essential component of rule indeed.

Notes

1. On the composition of the Marian hymns, see Henry Mayr-Harting, "Artists and Patrons," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 213.
2. Rosamond McKitterick, "Women in the Ottonian Church: An Iconographic Perspective," in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 88–90.
3. Patrick Corbet, "Les impératrices ottoniennes et le modèle marial: Autour de l'ivoire du château Sforza de Milan," in *Marie: Le culte de la vierge dans la société médiévale*, ed. Dominique Iogna-Prat, et al. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1996), 131.
4. See Jonathan Shepard, "Marriages Towards the Millennium," in *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. Paul Magdalino, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 20.
5. See discussion in Laura Wangerin, "Empress Theophanu, Sanctity, and Memory in Early Medieval Saxony," *Central European History* 47 (2014): 727. See also *Ordo III* in *Ordines Coronationis Imperialis*, ed. Reinhard Elze, MGH Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui in usum scholarum 9 (1960), 7–8.
6. Thilo Vogelsang, *Die Frau als Herrscherin im hohen Mittelalter: Studien zur "consors regni" Formel* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1954), 39.
7. Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 133.
8. Dominique Iogna-Prat, "Politische Aspekte der Marienverehrung in Cluny um das Jahr 1000," in *Maria in der Welt*, ed. Claudia Opitz, et al. (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 1993), 245–48, referring to PL 142: 1029.
9. Bruno of Querfurt, *S. Adalberti Pragensis Episcopi et Martyris Vita Altera*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasinska, Monumenta Poloniae Historia, Series Nova, vol. 4, 2 (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydownictwo Naukowe, 1969), (II) 4.
10. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 985, p. 476; Corbet, "Impératrices ottoniennes," 125.
11. See Jan Gerchow, "Sächsische Frauenstifte im Frühmittelalter: Einführung in das Thema und Rückblick auf die Tagung," in *Essen und die sächsischen Frauenstifte im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Gerchow and Thomas Schilp (Essen: Klartext, 2003), 14–15. The complete text of the *Institutio sanctimonialium Aquisgranensis* can be found in MGH Concilia 2.1 (1906), 421–56.
12. Katrinette Bodarwé, "Roman Martyrs and their Veneration in Ottonian Saxony: The Case of the *Sanctimoniales* of Essen," *Early Medieval Europe* 9.3 (2000): 347; see also Karl J. Leyser, *Medieval Germany and its Neighbors, 900–1250* (London: Hambledon Press, 1982), 63–64.
13. Elisabeth Van Houts, "Women and the Writing of History in the Early Middle Ages: The Case of Abbess Matilda of Essen and Aethelward," *Early Medieval Europe* 1 (1992): 54.

14. See for example Gerd Althoff, "Ottonische Frauengemeinschaften im Spannungsfeld von Kloster und Welt," in *Essen und die sächsischen Frauenstifte im Frühmittelalter*, ed. Gerchow and Schilp, 30–31.
15. See Gerd Althoff, "Zum Verhältnis von Norm und Realität in sächsischen Frauenklöstern der Ottonenzeit," *FMSt* 40 (2006): 128.
16. Gerchow, "Sächsische Frauenstifte," 12.
17. Althoff, "Ottonische Frauengemeinschaften," 29.
18. Ibid., 37.
19. *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (16) 178.
20. Thietmar, (VI.84) 374.
21. Ibid., (VI.75) 364.
22. Adémar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, ed. Jules Chavanon (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1897), (I.11) 13–14.
23. Hermannus Augiensis, *Chronicon*, MGH SS 5, a. 995, p. 117.
24. Thietmar, (IV.55) 194.
25. Ibid., (IV.57) 196.
26. Ibid., (IV.58) 198.
27. Ibid., (II.3) 40.
28. Ibid., (II.4) 42.
29. *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (3) 118.
30. Ibid., (3) 117–18.
31. As Bernd Schütte, *Untersuchungen zu den Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1994), 2 points out, the older *vita* of Mechtild presents an ideal of royal piety embodied in the queen's good deeds and holiness.
32. *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (5) 154.
33. Thietmar, (I.24) 30–32. According to the Council of Trier of 927, no sexual intercourse was permitted during Lent, Advent, feasts of the more important saints, when the wife was known to be pregnant, and for thirty days after birth. See Canons of the Council of Trier, 927, MGH Conc. 6, 1 (1987), canon 16, pp. 84–85.
34. Thietmar, (I.25) 32.
35. Katrinette Bodarwé, "Bibliotheken in sächsischen Frauenstiften," in *Essen und die sächsischen Frauenstifte im Frühmittelalter*, ed. Gerchow and Schilp, 88.
36. Ibid., 93–105.
37. Michel Parisse, "Les chanoinesses dans l'Empire germanique (IXe–XIe siècles)," *Francia* 6 (1978): 123.
38. *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (1) 112, (2) 115.
39. Widukind, (II.36) 96.
40. Ekkehard IV, *Casus s. Galli*, ed. Hans F. Haefele (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), (144–45) 278–80.

41. Rosamund McKitterick, "Ottonian Intellectual Culture in the Tenth Century and the Role of Theophanu," *Early Medieval Europe* 2 (1993): 63.
42. *Vita maior Bardonis archiepiscopi Moguntini*, ed. W. Wattenbach, MGH SS 11: (1) 323; Thietmar, (IV.16) 150.
43. See the discussion in Patrick Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1986), 96–102.
44. Thietmar, (VII.55) 466–68.
45. *Chronicon Hujesburgense*, ed. Ottokar Menzel, *Studien und Mitteilungen OSB* 52 (1934): 130–45.
46. Timothy Reuter, "Introduction: Reading the Tenth Century," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. Reuter, 8.
47. Ekkehard IV, *Casus s. Galli*, (82–84) 170–74. This seems to be the same tale as Thietmar, (I.21) 26, although Thietmar does not include the names of the wife and husband. David Warner in his translation of Thietmar's *Chronicon* points out that the tale originated in a dialogue of Gregory the Great. See David Warner, trans., *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 82, n. 61.
48. Rather of Verona, *Praeloquiorum libri VI*, ed. Peter D. Reid (Turnhout: Brepols, 1984), (II.17) 60.
49. Adalbert, a. 966, p. 177.
50. Thietmar, (VII.3) 400–402.
51. Althoff, "Zum Verhältnis von Norm und Realität," 134.
52. *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (5) 122.
53. Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke, "*Tamen virilis probitas in femina vicit.* Ein hochmittelalterlicher Hofkapellan und die Herrscherinnen—Wipos Äußerungen über Kaiserinnen und Königinnen seiner Zeit," in *Ex Ipsis rerum Documentis. Beiträge zur Mediävistik*, ed. Klaus Herbers, et al. (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1991), 433.
54. See Josef Fleckenstein, "Hofkapelle und Kanzlei unter der Kaiserin Theophanu," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Anton von Euw (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum, 1991), 2: 309.
55. Thietmar, (II.40) 88–90.
56. See for example Alpertus of Metz' description of the good abbess Liutgarda, whom paupers constantly besieged "like a mother." Alpertus of Metz, *De diversitate temporum et fragmentum de Deoderico primo episcopo Mettensi*, ed. Hans van Rij and Anna Sapir Abulafia (Amsterdam: Verloren, 1980), (I.3) 12.
57. Stefan Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024): Herrscher am Ende der Zeiten* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1999), 27.
58. Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 92 points out that it was not only Thietmar who regarded the dissolution of the diocese of Merseburg as a sin.

59. *Sancti Adalberti Pragensis Episcopi et Martyris Vita Prior*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasinska (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1962), (14) 20.
60. Thietmar, (II.44) 92.
61. For Widukind's interpretation of Mechtild, see Sverre Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography, c. 950–1150* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 62.
62. On the couple's joint plans for Quedlinburg, see *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (7) 158. The Quedlinburg annalist reports under the year 937 that Mechtild began construction of the community "as Henry had previously decreed" after Otto I became king. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 937, p. 459.
63. See Gerd Althoff, *Die Ottonen: Königsherrschaft ohne Staat* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2000), 87.
64. Thietmar, (I.21) 26, quoting II Macc. 12:46.
65. Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, in *Opera*, ed. Joseph Becker, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 41 (1915), (IV.15) 112–13.
66. *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (23) 194–95.
67. Thietmar, (II.18) 60.
68. *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (10) 130.
69. Widukind, (III.74) 150–51.
70. Corbet, *Saints ottoniens*, 35.
71. *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (16) 178.
72. *Annales Marbacenses*, ed. Hermann Bloch, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. (1907), a. 973, p. 26.
73. Thietmar, (II.3) 40. In (II.11) 50 Thietmar simply calls her "sancta Aedith."
74. See MGH Poet. Lat. 5, 282–83 for the epitaph; see also Corbet, *Saints ottoniens*, 60; Thietmar, (IV.43), 180.
75. Wangerin, "Theophanu," 729. Wangerin also points to disappointment at Theophanu's rank, distrust of Greeks, and her competing political ambitions with Adelheid as reasons why she did not win a reputation for sanctity. See esp. p. 718.
76. Adso Dervensis, *De Ortu et Tempore Antichristi*, ed. D. Verhelst (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), 20.
77. Odilo Engels, "Der Reichsbischof (10. und 11. Jahrhundert," in *Der Bischof in seiner Zeit*, ed. Peter Berglar and Odilo Engels (Cologne: Bachem, 1986), 160; cf. Gerhard of Augsburg, *Vita Sancti Uodalrici*, ed. and trans. Walter Berschin and Angelika Häse (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1993), (I.21) 244–46.

CHAPTER 7

Connections

Among the written survivals from the Ottonian era is a number of necrologies, lists religious foundations kept of people for whose souls they should pray. The most important surviving example is the Merseburg necrology. At some point what seems to have been Empress Adelheid's personal prayer list was added into it. The necrology as we have it includes a number of the empress' deceased relatives as well as her first husband Lothar and his father Hugh; it also includes people with personal connections to Adelheid, such as Doge Peter of Venice and Count Manegold, who otherwise had nothing to do with Merseburg, so their inclusion must have been Adelheid's doing.[1] Perhaps the most striking person to whom Adelheid proclaimed her connection in this way was Adalbert-Atto of Canossa, who had helped her escape when Berengar had imprisoned her after the death of her first husband.[2] These entries in the Merseburg necrology display the connections our royal women had with the ruling elite of their time. Taken alone, evidence like this can be misleading, because it suggests that all a ruling woman could do to help her friends and relatives was pray for them (although the service of prayer in the central Middle Ages should not be undervalued). Considered more closely, this list shows that Adelheid had sufficient influence to cause a third party—in this case the canons of Merseburg—to do the praying. But the benefits a royal woman could bestow on her familiars were often or even usually much more tangible as well. We know in the case of Adelheid's rescuer that Otto I, soon after he wed Adelheid, gave Adalbert-Atto the

P. G. Jestice, *Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty*, Queenship and Power, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77306-3_7

countships of both Reggio and Modena (areas where Adelheid held extensive estates) and her benefactor was later granted Mantua—none of which were likely to have fallen to him without Adelheid's very tangible gratitude.[3] Indeed, the *Chronicon Novaliciense* specifically states that the gift was made in thanks for Adalbert-Atto's support of Otto's wife.[4] In other words, friendship as well as kinship could often pave the way to power, and wise rulers built up a stockpile of obligation to assure loyalty in troubled times. The women of the Ottonian family, acting both with the ruler and independently, did the same.

Ottonian queens, since several of them were foreign princesses, largely lacked kindred networks, but they were increasingly connected over the course of the tenth century by the bonds of favors rendered and received, thanks to their enhanced position in the Ottonian state. As Hagen Keller has cogently argued, the Ottonian state remained a political organization based on personal connections (*Personenverbandsstaat*), in which the growing institutionalization of lordship served to reinforce rather than undermine the personal character of rule. Clan and family ties were becoming less central, but more voluntary social bonds based on obligation and friendship were omnipresent and very strong.[5] A magnate in Ottonian society would have held a place in a number of interlocking interest groups, the needs of which had to be balanced against each other; it was recognition of this dense web of interests that defeated the long-argued notion of an "imperial church system" in which churchmen, it was believed, gave their entire loyalty to the ruler in return for favors granted.[6] Favors weren't guaranteed to have the desired effect, but in most cases that we can see, they did indeed impose obligations on the recipient. A significant part of Ottonian government took the form of creating obligations, whether the other party involved was the ruler of another state, a churchman or -woman, or a secular noble. Rank and honor, often displayed by means of royal charters and closeness to the royal family in general, were vital markers in this society. As Gerd Althoff has pointed out, conflict between king and magnates was especially prevalent when a royal decision injured somebody's honor.[7] The corollary is that favors promoted friendship between the ruler and those under his—or her—authority. We can best see Ottonian rule in action when rulers were giving things to people, whether confirmation of rights or lands or sometimes precious objects.

How much were queens and other female members of the Ottonian dynasty significant players in the complex networks of kinship and patronage, so that they could expect loyalty in return? Such a question is at the

heart of any examination of royal women's power and authority. It is vital to note that imperial ladies of the tenth century played a highly visible role in the process of bestowing royal favor, a role made the more visible by alterations in the practices by which the royal chancery recorded royal gifts and marks of favor. Available evidence suggests that the Ottonian queens, and to a lesser extent their daughters, were indeed "connected."

Kin

Blood ties formed the innermost circle of connections in Ottonian society. Because a blood relationship was the strongest bond, the foreign princesses Edgitha and Theophanu were at a disadvantage in creating a web of loyalty compared to Queen Mechtild, Empress Kunigunde, and to a considerable extent Empress Adelheid (whose Burgundian kindred had close ties to the Ottonian high nobility). Relatives were expected to support their kinsmen and kinswomen, although other conflicting claims could sometimes lead to disloyalty, as in the rebellions of Otto I's brothers.[8] But nobody apparently expected unquestioning loyalty at the price of dishonor. For example, Otto I probably anticipated unstinting support from his illegitimate son William when he elevated the young man to the archbishopric of Mainz in 954. But if Otto expected William to acquiesce to his father's ambitious scheme to create a new archdiocese based on Magdeburg—for which some lands belonging to the church of Mainz were needed—he was sorely disappointed. As the archbishop wrote to the pope, he would rather be sent as a preacher to the heathen than see his church dishonored—which it would be if some of its territory were stolen from it for the new project.[9] Although Otto must have hoped for greater cooperation from his son, no contemporary writer expresses a belief that Wilhelm was being disloyal or acted improperly in his refusal.

Still, rulers supported family members in the hope of support in return, and so did their wives. We can often see the ruling women's direct support of members of their family, creating a first and closest circle of connectedness when they had kin in the *reich*. The first Ottonian queen, Mechtild, was a Saxon aristocrat with a large family, so we can see the potency of these kindred networks from the very dawn of the Ottonian era. Queen Mechtild's kinsman Adaldag became a royal chaplain in 927 and in 937 was named archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen.[10] Her brother Robert was archbishop of Trier from 931 to 956.[11] We do not know what role Mechtild played in their appointments, but it is unlikely they would have reached the

ecclesiastical heights they did without their blood tie to the royal house. It is similarly unlikely that Dietrich would have been appointed to the bishopric of Metz if his mother Amalrada had not been a sister of Queen Mechtild.[12] Sometimes the kinship was spelled out explicitly as the reason for a gift, as in 953 when Otto I granted the abbacy of Erstein to Adelheid's mother Bertha. In this case, Adalbert makes the connection explicit with the blunt statement that the king gave the gift to his mother-in-law.[13]

A ruler might even purposely arrange for a loyal supporter to marry one of his wife's kinswomen in order to create a bond of obligation. Widukind gives an interesting example of Duke Henry before he became King Henry I honoring in this way a soldier of limited means. The man, Count Burchard, was provided for by marrying him to Mechtild's sister, making him, as Widukind says, both comrade and friend. In other words, Henry accepted that marriage to his sister-in-law imposed obligations on him, obligations that he willingly accepted. The child of that marriage, named Henry in a clear gesture of honor to their patron, later became bishop of Augsburg thanks to royal patronage.[14]

The expectation that a royal woman would look out for her kin is clearest in the case of the last Ottonian empress, Kunigunde. She vigorously promoted her brothers' interests, and Henry II her husband usually cooperated, apparently accepting—as did his contemporaries—that he should care for his in-laws. Thietmar writes feelingly about how Kunigunde's Luxembourg relatives assumed that their relationship entitled them to royal favor. Henry installed one of Kunigunde's brothers in a bishopric, but circumstances were different in 1008 when Adalbero, a younger brother at that time serving as a royal chaplain, tried to intrude himself into the archdiocese of Trier. The cathedral chapter at Trier did in fact elect Adalbero, whom Thietmar describes as an "immature youth," doing so, the chronicler tells, "more from fear of the king than love of religion." In other words, the clergy of Trier assumed that what would be most pleasing to the emperor would be to elect his brother-in-law, and they must have been surprised when Henry II instead installed a rival candidate, proving in this case deaf to the "pleas of his beloved wife." The result was a major feud between the emperor and his outraged in-laws.[15] It was natural to support even distant relatives. The Fulda monk Bardo must have been delighted when Emperor Conrad II sought him out in June 1025, having heard that Bardo was related to Queen Gisela. Promotion was rapid, and the hagiographer Vulculdus proclaims that it was Gisela who arranged for her kinsman to become archbishop of Mainz.[16]

The Ottonians were committed to protecting the honor of their female relatives, which included honoring those who provided these women with support and services. In this context, it is useful to examine in greater detail the tale of a judicial duel to protect a woman's honor that was already mentioned in Chap. 2. The tale goes, according to Adalbert, that a German noble was disgruntled when Otto I's niece refused to perform an unspecified favor for him. So he slandered her, impugning her honor by publicly asserting that he had enjoyed sexual relations with her. Otto responded by offering his favor forever to anyone among his *familiares* who would defend her honor in a judicial duel. A man stepped forward, and the maligner was soon killed.[17] Besides the obvious lesson that Ottonian menfolk were deeply concerned with the honor of their womenfolk, this tale also sheds interesting light on how important granting favors was in Ottonian society. The starting point of the story is that a man had gone to an Ottonian royal woman and asked for a favor; in other words, he believed that she had the power to help him with something, and then was convinced that she refused the favor from ill will rather than from inability to perform the service he asked. The king's favor in support of a kinswoman's honor also plays a large role in the account, since it was the promise of royal favor that induced a champion to step forward.

Daughters and sisters expected that their family would support them at times of need, although usually only the support of male members of the family is visible in the extant sources. The most notable case of a family's support in the Ottonian period is that of Gerberga, sister of Otto I. She was first wed to Duke Gislebert of Lotharingia, and after his death rapidly married Louis IV of France without her brother's permission. Despite this strain on their relationship, when Normans acting in collusion with Hugh the Great of Francia captured and held Louis in 946, Gerberga was able to call on her brother for help. Otto entered the Carolingian lands with an army, but not to take advantage of the chaos to add to his own territories. He found that his brother-in-law had already secured his release, so the Germans joined with the forces of the French king to ravage the county of Normandy in revenge for their offense against Louis.[18] Some years later, Gerberga's younger brother Brun, archbishop of Cologne, rendered assistance twice during her troubled regency for her underage son Lothar.[19]

The marriages of royal children of course created new kinship ties; the value of marriages in cementing alliances is too familiar to dwell on here. Discussion of such dynastic marriages, both in contemporary sources and in modern scholarship, is usually framed in terms of "the king married his

daughter to X." But naturally the girl involved was the queen's daughter as much as she was the king's, and queen as much as king entered into new networks of connection and obligation with each royal wedding. The children and grandchildren of these marriage alliances, too, had every expectation of being nurtured in a network of favor and reciprocal loyalty. It is important to emphasize the reciprocal nature of these dealings. When Otto III installed as pope Brun, the grandson of Otto I's daughter Liudgard, in 996, he was of course doing Brun (who took the name Gregory V) a great favor, enhancing his honor by placing him on St. Peter's throne. But Otto was also establishing somebody he trusted in a precarious position of great responsibility, setting Brun up as a bulwark against the vicious noble factions of Rome. Similarly, when Otto I made his granddaughter Mechtild abbess of Essen, she received honor in the exchange, but Otto received loyal representation of the dynasty's interests in the region in return. The only times members of the extended royal family were *not* privileged and obligated in these ways was when the individual had indulged in rebellion (most notably Henry the Quarrelsome of Bavaria, whose duchy was confiscated and who was held in confinement for several years), or when a rival claimant was also royal. Thus for example, when Duke Burchard of Swabia died toward the end of 973, his widow Hadwig, who was the sister of Henry the Quarrelsome and thus a royal granddaughter, tried to claim possession of the duchy. But she was displaced because Otto II preferred to make the grant to his own nephew Otto, the son of Liudolf.[20]

From our perspective a millennium later, it is sometimes difficult to remember, much less to appreciate, the obligations of tenth-century kinship and the sheer consciousness of kindred groupings that appear to have been the norm. Thietmar of Merseburg filled his chronicle with references to kin groups, maternal as well as paternal, constantly re-emphasizing both that relatives were important and that this society was far from agnatic in its esteem of female lines. Family ties were reinforced in naming patterns, children often receiving the names of their mother's kin. This is particularly clear in the marriages of Otto I's sisters. One of the sons of Hadwig and Hugh the Great was named Otto, while Gerberga and Louis IV of France produced not only a Henry but a Matilde.[21]

To return to our Ottonian imperial ladies, as we will see in Chap. 9 Adelheid's kin played a vital role in ending the throne crisis of 984, showing how much thicker blood was than water in that highly charged political atmosphere. Adelheid had a threefold network of connections

that were of assistance when needed. First and foremost her brother Conrad was king of Burgundy (937–93), or as the author of the *Casus s. Galli* puts it with a finer eye to hierarchy, Conrad was the "brother of St. Adelheid."[22] Conrad (and one presumes, a sizeable military entourage) rode with the empresses to the meeting at Rohr that forced Henry the Quarrelsome to turn the young Otto III over to the care of his mother and grandmother. Also present at her mother Adelheid's side was Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg, adding her authority to that of the empresses in effecting a solution. And not least, it should be recalled that Henry the Quarrelsome's wife Gisela was Adelheid's niece, a daughter of the Burgundian Conrad.[23] The close kinship of the participants must have eased the process of reconciliation considerably.

Long-Distance Players in a Local and Regional World

The cream of German and Italian society was paraded before the Ottonian queens in constantly shifting array—or rather the queens paraded themselves before the magnates of the *reich*. No nobleman and certainly no noblewoman could possibly have encountered as many different people as the queens did, thanks to the peripatetic nature of Ottonian rule. Karl Leyser estimated that the Ottonians spent at least half of their time on the roads, constantly circulating through the territories under their sway.[24] Leyser's description of the process is deeply insightful:

> By their journeys they gave to the *Reich* the best cohesion possible. Their sacrality was displayed in ever-repeated solemn entries, festival coronations and crown-wearings and it had thus an indispensable role to play. It was a substitute for the bureaucracy Waitz found so painfully wanting.[25]

While recent assessments have created a more positive image of Ottonian bureaucracy than the nineteenth-century historian Georg Waitz credited, many royal orders were certainly issued verbally, often directly from the ruler's mouth on site. But, while the king would have done the lion's share of commanding, the queen had a highly visible role in royal representation. Except during military campaigns and when they took a brief respite from their travels to give birth, the queens were at their husbands' side. *Their* sacral position was constantly displayed, as well as that of their spouses. They were not just part of the royal entourage, but rather were

singled out for all due ceremony, treated with a pronounced ceremonial respect that was only slightly less than that accorded to the king.[26] During such royal receptions, the royal *adventus* as it is called, the magnates of the *reich* had demonstrated to them that they should value the queen as a possible source of favors both on her own account and thanks to her ability to intercede with the king on their behalf.

The queen was the king's most constant companion. While the chancellor or archchancellor would typically also have accompanied the ruler, his presence was not nearly as consistent as that of the queen, and since chancellors were bishops and archchancellors were usually archbishops, they did not have the queen's detachment (at least theoretical) from local politics. Most of the upper aristocracy occasionally spent time with the court on its travels, but would most typically join up when the court was in their neighborhood. Thus, besides the king, it was only the queen who had regular opportunities to make supra-regional connections. Even in her case, one should note certain limitations. The Ottonian court spent little time in Swabia or Bavaria, instead passing most of its time north of the Alps in the Harz region of Saxony, Lower Lotharingia, and in the Rhine-Main area.[27]

Beyond the formalities of royal *adventus*[28] we can only see traces of how members of the royal family spent their time during their constant wanderings. Certainly they dined with nobles, both secular and ecclesiastical, and conversed during their meals; Otto III's effort to impose a more Byzantine etiquette was a matter for adverse comment.[29] There were many opportunities to become acquainted with people and do them favors, weaving connections that would in turn impose obligations on grateful recipients. For example, the author of the *Casus s. Galli* reports that Duchess Hadwig of Swabia was responsible for introducing the monk Ekkehard to the Ottonian court, where he found favor and was made a chaplain and tutor of the younger Otto. Adelheid then favored this new member of the court, the author emphasizes. The king was responsible for giving Ekkehard the abbacy of Ellwangen, but it was the queen and the duchess who put their heads together and decided that their favored monk should receive a bishopric.[30] No wonder people angled for an invitation to court, as we can see in a 983 letter of Gerbert of Aurillac, addressed to a man named Hugo who was apparently a court chaplain.[31] Even Gerbert, despite a decade of dealings with the Ottonians, could not turn up at court without an invitation.

Gerbert frequently allows us to see the Ottonian court in more detail than would otherwise be possible, thanks both to his letters and to the

detailed account of his life in Richer's *History*. We know that Gerbert first met Otto I (and presumably Adelheid) in 970 or 971 through a chain of introductions—the learned monk traveled with the margrave of Barcelona to Rome where he met Pope John XIII and the pontiff then arranged the meeting with the emperor. Apparently at about that time Gerbert became prior of the great monastery of Bobbio; he is named as "*preposito*" in a document dated July 30, 972.[32] But the scholar appears to have spent the last two years of Otto I's life traveling with the imperial court, and must have had many opportunities to become acquainted with the rulers. Certainly they held him in high enough esteem that Otto II arranged for Gerbert to engage in a philosophical disputation against Ohtrich of Magdeburg in 981, which the emperor attended. In 982 or 983 Otto II gave Gerbert the abbacy of Bobbio, a valuable imperial monastery that was a glittering prize for a man of no great lineage like Gerbert. In 983 Gerbert dedicated his treatise on numbers to Otto and Theophanu.[33]

The empresses run through the narrative of Gerbert's contacts with the Ottonians. Otto I's charter of 972, a public confirmation of Bobbio's rights and possessions, is the only document he issued in favor of the monastery, so it is reasonable to suppose that he did so as a compliment to Gerbert, especially as the scholarly monk was specifically named in the document, highly unusual for a member of the community besides the abbot. The sole intervenor for the document was none other than Empress Adelheid, which, as we shall see, was a sign that she wished to honor or favor the recipient. The joint dedication of Gerbert's numerical treatise to Theophanu and Otto II also suggests a real acquaintance. Gerbert certainly felt a sense of obligation to the Ottonians that extended to the females of the house as well as the men. In a letter he sent from Bobbio in the late summer of 983, the abbot assures Adelheid that he has fulfilled her wishes, suggesting a specific commission.[34] And as we will see in Chap. 9, in the throne crisis of 984 Gerbert rendered the empresses important service, sending them information about the shifting alliances of the time and representing their interests in a number of eloquent letters.

Doing Favors

An imperial lady could create a network of obligation using either her own considerable personal resources or those of the crown more generally. We can usually see such transactions only when they alienated dower lands, however, and saw fit to have the gift confirmed with a royal charter. To use

Queen Mechtild as an example, we know that she gave some lands in Frisia to the convent of Gandersheim because Otto I confirmed the grant in a diploma of 947.[35] Mechtild also appears as intervenor in two documents in which her son confirms grants of land from her own *dos* to Quedlinburg.[36] In this context, the important point to emphasize is the obligation that such a gift would carry with it. To take just the case of Mechtild's gifts to Quedlinburg, of course the canonesses would have been expected to pray for their benefactor and her family. But Quedlinburg was not simply a place of prayer; it was also an economic and political powerhouse with significant influence in Saxony. Not just its abbess but the diocesan bishop would have been grateful for a gift that bestowed such honor and dignity. And the families of the canonesses themselves could also be counted on for at least some gratitude for the honor done their houses by assuring that their daughters live comfortably in an appropriately noble style.

More often, however, extant evidence allows us to see queens and other royal women of the tenth century as conduits of favor, conveying the needs of those beneath them to the ruler and interceding on their behalf. This evidence exists in two forms. On the one hand, a small number of references scattered through the narrative sources speak of a direct and usually successful role of the royal women as intercessors. On the other hand, we have a much larger but sometimes enigmatic body of evidence, the royal charters themselves. The more detailed information provided in the narrative sources can help in the interpretation of the larger body of charters in which royal women appear repeatedly as petitioners on behalf of a wide array of institutions and individuals.

Royal charters or diplomas have been the subject of several interesting studies in recent years. Geoffrey Koziol in his analysis of West Frankish *diplomata* makes several general points that are useful to bear in mind in the context of Ottonian royal women and their connections. The first is that the Ottonian charters that we see neatly edited and printed in the volumes of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* are only a pale reflection of the majesty of these royal documents. The originals are large, with oversized markings, more like a modern poster than a letter. They were meant for the public representation of kingship, not to be hidden away in a muniments drawer (Fig. 7.1).[37] A second key point Koziol makes is that the imbalances in diplomas, with certain groups much more highly represented than others, cannot simply be explained by losses of archives over time, since the disproportion varies within regions and there are radical variations in type and number of extant documents between regions. Koziol argues that this

Fig. 7.1 A charter of Otto II, 976. Source: Paul Fearn/Alamy Stock Photo

imbalance demonstrates that diplomas, many of which are confirmations of holdings rather than new grants, cannot have been valued merely as a proof of legal title to land or goods, but must have served other purposes.[38] Finally, speaking specifically about Charles the Bald's diplomas but making a point that holds true more broadly, Koziol argues that

> …what it took to get diplomas was power, standing, and friends at court. For that very reason, they were not common. On the contrary, they were as rare as the men and women around whom politics and patronage gravitated in the palace and who shaped the high aristocratic clienteles that framed Carolingian politics.[39]

In short, one had to be important or to know somebody important—somebody with the king's ear—to get a diploma. Royal women were particularly well placed to play that intercessory role.

We have only two Ottonian charters issued by a woman, both created during Theophanu's visit to Rome when she was regent. Issuing an independent document was the only way to accomplish business during that trip, since Theophanu was separated from the young Otto III, and thus could not publish charters in his name. During her regency she normally employed the same means Ottonian consorts had been using for some time to demonstrate authority—she had appeared in Otto III's diplomas as an "intervenor."[40]

An intervenor or intercessor was literally somebody who intervened on a person's behalf to get a charter issued. It was a status marker to be listed as an intervenor on a document, since such naming was a public statement that the intervenor was important enough to have the ruler's ear. Recorded interventions were not an Ottonian invention. Some interventions appear already in Merovingian documents, although they are rare.[41] They became much more common in the late ninth century, though, and starting with Conrad I (911–18) a named intervenor or intervenors became a regular feature of royal diplomas in the German *reich* for nearly two centuries.[42]

Intercession on somebody's behalf was a very public way to do a favor, one that imposed an obligation and demonstrated either friendship or social superiority.[43] In the case of the imperial ladies, there could be no question of social equality, except in the very rare cases when the current queen intervened in a confirmation of the dowager queen's holdings, or intervened to support a cause dear to the dowager (as for example Edgitha did when she intervened on behalf of people close to Queen Mechtild).[44]

The queens became more and more prominent as intervenors over the course of the tenth century, a trajectory that highlighted their political significance. With every public reading of a royal diploma that ceremoniously named the queen as the source from which a favor came, men and women would have known more clearly that if they could win the queen over to their cause they were likely to receive what they coveted. Over time an ever-wider array of petitioners came to impose on the queen, and queens increasingly embraced this opportunity to create networks of loyalty. At the beginning of the Ottonian century, Queen Mechtild is listed as intervenor in only seven of her husband's forty-two diplomas. Henry's own position as uncrowned king with no royal ancestors was tenuous outside of

Saxony, so opportunities to display royal authority were relatively rare. When Mechtild did intervene, it was for causes in Westphalia, the area where she herself held land and enjoyed the best connections. Thus she intervened twice on behalf of the convent of Herford, once for the convent of Neuernheerse, twice for monasteries, and once in favor of a female ministerial (it is interesting to note that when women receive diplomas, a royal woman nearly always served as intervenor). The final intervention Mechtild made during her husband's lifetime was in a confirmation of her own widow's portion.[45] During the reign of her son Otto I, Mechtild intervened seven additional times, four of them in grants to Quedlinburg (her chosen retirement residence and eventual burial place), twice for the diocese of Osnabrück, and once for the monastery of Engern.

Edgitha, Otto I's first wife, did not intervene often, appearing in only six of the seventy-four diplomas that her husband's chancery issued before her death in 945. This has been taken as a sign that she was not very politically active,[46] but the geographical range of the people for whom she intervened increased significantly compared to her mother-in-law. The younger queen interceded on behalf of the dioceses of Utrecht, Hamburg, and Halberstadt, for Herford and Corvey, and for two individuals. It is also interesting to note that in five cases a co-intervenor is attested alongside the queen, a practice that grew much more common in Otto I's reign. Thus Edgitha gives the appearance of adding her authority to somebody else's request, as in DOI 6 when Duke Gislebert of Lotharingia joined with her in a request for minting rights for the diocese of Utrecht.[47]

The charters give some hints of the process by which a queen could be brought to intercede for an individual or institution. Since diplomas name the site where they were issued, we can see comings and goings from the court. For example, Bishop Tuto of Paderborn must have made the journey from his diocese to Quedlinburg, where he convinced Edgitha to join him in intervening for a confirmation of Herford's rights.[48] Coming to court in order to make a petition was the norm, and there is no Ottonian parallel to the diploma of King Lothar of France of 963 that tells how Count Arnulf of Flanders had sent the request for a confirmation of his gift to the monastery of Nomblières rather than coming in person.[49] Ottonian diplomas frequently report that somebody, usually a bishop, "came and asked" for the document in question. But sometimes they enlisted the additional firepower of a royal woman, for example in a diploma issued in the name of the child Otto II from 961 that reports how Bishop Bernhard of Halberstadt came and asked for a grant, but still lists

both Queen Mechtild and Adelheid as intervenors.[50] We know that Adelheid played an active role in arranging the Ottonian pact made with Venice on December 2, 967, because the text of the pact says specifically that Doge Peter of Venice petitioned Otto I by means of Adelheid and two nuncios.[51]

More often, when an intervenor is named it is likely that the beneficiary of the grant being made did not have sufficient rank to approach the king directly and needed an intermediary at court, and very often that was the queen. Sometimes we can see the steps taken, for example in a diploma of 948 that tells how a priest named Paldmunt asked for a charter through the intervention of the king's brother Brun.[52] Sometimes too, a person unable to come to court would write to the queen asking for her intercession. The unfortunate Bishop Rather of Verona made quite a specialty of letters begging for help, as we know thanks to the survival of his letter collection. In 965 he wrote to Count Ernst, asking the count to speak on his behalf to the emperor, although at about the same time Rather was sure enough of himself to send a letter directly to Otto I as well.[53] At least one of the letters seems to have been effective, since in November 967 Otto confirmed the possessions and rights of the diocese of Verona and took Rather under his special protection.[54] Still embattled in his diocese, in the first half of 968 the bishop sent two letters to Adelheid asking for assistance, although Adelheid apparently did not intervene in his favor.[55] The letters of Rather and Gerbert are surely only the tip of an iceberg, chance survivals from a body of epistles that made their way to court from petitioners seeking the queen's help. We have one other extant example, a letter from Abbot Humbert of Echternach to Queen Gisela asking for her to help him recover some land that had been appropriated.[56]

The statements in so many diplomas that they were issued "by the intervention of" (*per interventu*) the ruler's wife, dear wife, dearest mother, and so on were far from being simply scribal flourishes. Occasionally an intervention was used as a symbolic status marker, publicly associating with a grant a person who could not in fact have made the petition. Examples include a charter of 935 when the king's young daughter Hadwig was named as co-intervenor in a confirmation issued to the canons of Paderborn and a diploma of 981 in which the future Otto III intervened along with his mother—although he was only one year old at the time.[57] Such instances of child intervention are a rarity in Ottonian *diplomata*, however, and seem to have played a limited role in establishing the child's connection to a particular place or person. But the available evidence demonstrates that

the queens really did intervene when the documents say they did. For example, Theophanu at first intervened only rarely in Otto II's diplomas; the thirteen-year-old bride not only did not have any connections when she first came to the *reich* but must have needed to learn the language. The first person who is listed as her co-intervenor is Henry the Quarrelsome of Bavaria, who as Otto I's nephew had an immediate connection to the Byzantine princess.[58]

It is clear that the queen had to be physically present at court to be named as an intervenor. There are breaks in the record when the queen of the time was recovering from childbirth rather than traveling with the king, and royal dowagers and siblings are only named as intervenors when actually present at court. Therefore Adelheid appears in few documents of the 950s, a decade during which she bore four children and thus of necessity could not be with her husband in his constant journeyings for extended periods.[59] The best evidence that the queens' appearance on diplomas was not merely symbolic, however, comes from narrative sources rather than charters. For example, the Gladbach Chronicle reports that Adelheid helped Abbot Sandrat after the archbishop of Cologne deposed him.[60] Adelheid intervened in the election of an abbot of Saint-Gall in 971, according to the *Casus s. Galli*.[61] The chronicler of Monte Cassino found it significant enough to report that in 964 Adelheid intervened to provide a confirmation charter for his monastery.[62] And Thietmar, when reporting a series of particularly generous gifts that Otto I made to St. Mauritius, Magdeburg in 973 also emphasizes Adelheid's role, telling that "written documents were issued in the presence and with the agreement of the empress and his son, and with all the faithful of Christ bearing witness."[63]

Sometimes the charters themselves attest to how the process of intervention would have worked, with details that add a human dimension to these dry accounts. Often the queen making the request is invoked as "consort in our reign," suggesting that the ruler (or at least the notary writing the document) believed the queen in question had the right to join in important decisions. At other times, the document uses the formula "with the consultation and intervention" especially of Adelheid, and then only in documents for Italian recipients.[64] In this case, the implication is that Adelheid did in fact have particular insight into or even the right to play a role in Italian affairs, thanks to her first marriage to the king of northern Italy. One can also see a firm statement of influence in the early charters of Otto II, in which he acted "at the command and advice" of his mother Adelheid.[65] Sometimes a diploma will take on a complaining

note suggesting that the ruler felt he had been nagged, as in a 945 diploma in which Otto I made a gift to two brothers because Edgitha and her son Liudolf "beat at our ears" (*nostras pulsaverunt aures*).[66] Most often, though, diplomas invoked affection, declaring that the grant was made from a desire to please the queen as an honored and beloved member of the family, such as the young Otto III's grant to Magdeburg "for love of our dear grandmother Adelheid and dearest mother Theophanu."[67]

The number of interventions by royal women skyrocketed after Adelheid wed Otto I. This cannot simply be accounted for as a continuation of a northern Italian practice, because we do not know of a single intervention Adelheid made during her first husband Lothar's reign, nor did her mother Bertha intervene in the documents of King Hugh.[68] Rather, what we see is an intensification of tenth-century German charter practice, an intensification that served to make Adelheid much more visible in much of the Ottonian *reich*.[69]

Adelheid is named as intervenor in ninety-two of Otto I's diplomas, nearly 32 per cent of the whole. In a little over half of these documents, Adelheid appears as co-intervenor with one or more other people. Thirty-one of these interventions were for Italian recipients, where she was more likely to be the sole intervenor.[70] By my calculations, Adelheid intervened twenty-seven times on behalf of dioceses or their bishops, forty times for monasteries, eleven times for convents, twelve times for individuals, and twice on behalf of the city of Venice.[71]

What can these interventions tell us about Adelheid's connections in the Ottonian *reich*? A first point is that they demonstrate her connection to a considerable number of co-intervenors. These are the people with whom one can postulate bonds of friendship (*amicitia*), since Adelheid is highly unlikely to have agreed to appear as co-intervenor with someone to whom she was not amicably connected in some way. Her most frequent co-intervenor was her own son Otto II; a number of these interventions appear when the junior Otto was a child and should be regarded as a public recognition of his position as heir. After her son, Adelheid's most common co-intervenors were Archbishop William of Mainz (eleven times) and Archbishop Brun of Cologne (three times); since William was Otto I's illegitimate son, Brun was his brother, and each served as archchancellor, it is not surprising that both were frequently at court.

As we have seen, the doge of Venice sent nuncios to enlist Adelheid's support for the treaty of 967, and those nuncios are listed as co-intervenors.[72] Abbot Richarius of S. Mauritius, Magdeburg appears to have sought out the

court at Memleben and enlisted Adelheid's assistance to secure a grant for his own monastery.[73] We don't know why Bishop Poppo was with the court at Dornburg and why he would have wanted Adelheid's support for a diploma in favor of S. Mauritius, which did not lie in his own diocese, but we know that he did.[74] Bishop Ulrich was apparently traveling in the imperial entourage in Italy in 963 when he approached Adelheid seeking confirmation of the privileges of the monastery of Kempten.[75] Probably more typical were the two co-interventions with Archbishop Dietrich of Trier in 966. The archbishop appears to have had little to do with Otto I's court; he does not appear at all as first intervenor in the extant *diplomata*. But in 966 the court was in the Rhineland, so Dietrich would have paid a short visit, joining the entourage for a few stops. In January in Cologne, with Adelheid's help the archbishop gained the gift of two estates for the monastery of S. Maximin, Trier. He was still with the court the next month in Nijmwegen, when his and Adelheid's joint intervention won a gift for the church of S. Gangolf, Mainz, which Dietrich had founded.[76]

Both Duke Burchard of Swabia and Margrave Gero in Saxony sought co-intervention with Adelheid, although both also intervened alone. Perhaps most interesting is Adelheid's visible connection with the duchy of Bavaria. She served as co-intervenor with Duke Henry, her husband's brother, only once. But Adelheid is also twice listed as co-intervenor with Henry's widow Judith, who in 973 came to Merseburg to solicit two significant gifts for Niedermünster in Regensburg.[77] On the same occasion, Judith herself received a grant of lands for which Adelheid served as sole intervenor.[78] Many of Adelheid's interventions in the German lands were in Saxony, which was after all the focal point of Ottonian power. But, besides nobles and monasteries, the archbishops of Trier and Magdeburg and bishops of Constance and Metz all had cause to regard Adelheid as a benefactor.

It is striking that, although Adelheid intervened in Italian diplomas thirty-one times, in only a single case was an Italian listed as her co-intervenor (in 967 when she played a role in Venice's treaty with Otto I). This suggests that the northern Italians newly under Ottonian rule saw a need for royal confirmations and, like everyone, sought royal grants, but were not in a position to make their requests directly to their ruler. The only person besides Adelheid to intervene significantly for Italian individuals and institutions was Bishop Hubert, who by 969 had become archchancellor for Italy. A wide array of petitioners made use of Adelheid in

this way. Most of them were from the territory Adelheid had already ruled once as Lothar's queen, and a number of diploma recipients were in regions where Adelheid held significant estates or other rights. Thus the city of Pavia is well represented among her interventions, as are several Venetians, and the dioceses of Chur, Modena, Lucca, Piacenza, and Asti. We can also see Adelheid's one firm connection to the French monastery of Cluny aside from Abbot Odilo's *Epitaphium Adelheidae*: she intervened in a diploma that granted Cluny estates in Italy.[79]

Adelheid's thirty-four additional interventions during the reign of her son Otto II followed the same patterns of alliance. On the one hand, they appear opportunistic; for example, we cannot know who was in Verona in 983 to encourage Adelheid to intercede on behalf of the German monastery of Peterlingen.[80] But she continued to interest herself in the Bavarian Judith and her family, to lend her voice in support of gifts to Magdeburg, Parma, Venice, and Padua, reinforcing ties of *amicitia* that in some cases went back for decades.

Theophanu followed her mother-in-law's lead in interventions, listed in that capacity in sixty-five of Otto II's diplomas, an even higher percentage than Adelheid. Theophanu, however, did not have as long to establish connections, since Otto II died after they had been married only a decade.[81] Some of the same people sought her support as had petitioned Adelheid; for instance, the archdiocese of Magdeburg, the diocese of Chur, and the diocese of Lucca. In all, Theophanu intervened in the affairs of eight Italian dioceses and nine German ones. But in general, it appears that fewer people approached Theophanu in Italy than Adelheid (who continued on occasion to intervene in Italian affairs), with only fourteen Italian interventions compared to fifty-one German ones, despite the fact that much of Otto II's reign was spent south of the Alps. This distribution suggests that the personal connections that underlay the imperial ladies' appearance in diplomas were more extensive for the elder empress in Italy.

In Germany, Theophanu, like Adelheid, intervened in most regions, with the notable exception of Bavaria (where, after Henry the Quarrelsome's deposition, a trusted nephew of Otto II became duke and could make his own requests for diplomas). Among her earlier interventions are three joint requests with Archbishop Gero of Cologne, the ambassador who had traveled to Constantinople and arranged her marriage. Otherwise, she did not share an intervention more than twice with anyone except Adelheid, with one notable exception: Theophanu, like her husband, showed signal favor to Giselher, in his position first as bishop of Merseburg and then

after his transfer to the archdiocese of Magdeburg had been arranged. Giselher received significant gifts from Otto II to build up his new and impoverished diocese before the decision was made to abolish the see of Merseburg, and Theophanu intervened five times for those gifts, twice side by side with Giselher himself. She also intervened in a gift made directly to the bishop in 979, and served as co-intervenor with him an additional four times after he had been elevated to the archiepiscopal dignity, where further gifts were showered upon his new see of Magdeburg. In short, Giselher had every reason to feel obligated to the Greek-born empress. But he still supported Henry the Quarrelsome in the throne struggle of 984, which shows that when obligation and self-interest conflicted, the latter often won the day. It is possible that Theophanu had opposed the dissolution of Merseburg, which had enabled Giselher's elevation to the archiepiscopate. Thietmar tells that a wounded St. Lawrence (the patron of the diocese of Merseburg) visited Theophanu in a dream, urging the re-establishment of his church. Certainly Thietmar believed that Theophanu as regent worked to restore Merseburg.[82]

A last notable point about Theophanu's interventions is that, as Rosamond McKitterick has pointed out, those that fall in the years 976–81 suggest that Theophanu felt a debt toward the nuns of Herzebrock, Nivelles, Gandersheim, Herford, and S. Maria in Cosmedin, all places where she had given birth or been cared for during pregnancy. Several of these convents were already closely connected with the royal house, which is probably why they were chosen in the first place. Now Theophanu reinforced their ties to the Ottonians with a new generation of gifts in return for a new generation of loyal service.[83]

Almost the only other women who intervened in Ottonian diplomas besides queens were their daughters; their interventions were much rarer and for causes especially dear to them. Liutgard intervened in three diplomas of Otto I, always as co-intervenor and always for matters that involved Swabia.[84] In the reign of Otto II, her much younger half-sister Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg makes several appearances, intervening twice, in a document confirming a gift she had made, and receiving a personal grant—again, all matters that affected her directly.[85] Theophanu and Otto's daughter Sophia is also named as intervenor in two grants made to Gandersheim in 979 and 980; she must still have been an infant at the time, so these diplomas mostly confirm that Sophia had been entrusted to the abbess of Gandersheim for her upbringing.[86] Liudolf's wife Ita, named as "beloved daughter," also intervened in two documents, once as a wife

and once as a widow.[87] *Her* daughter, Mechtild of Essen, also intervened one time, to effect the gift of an estate to her own convent.[88] In other words, except for royal spouses and their mothers, there does not appear to have been a perception that the ladies of the Ottonian house could win favors in the form of royal charters.

The royal ladies' petitions were also heeded outside of the Ottonian family. We can see this in papal diplomas. In 964 Pope Leo VIII confirmed the privileges of Einsiedeln at the bishop of Constance's request and "in the presence of our most beloved son Emperor Otto and Adelheid, his dear wife."[89] In 967 John XIII granted papal protection to Quedlinburg at the intervention of Otto I "and his most blessed mother Mechtild, the most serene Augusta."[90] It is unlikely that the elderly Mechtild had actually traveled to Rome—and she was not even a crowned queen, much less the empress the pope calls her in the diploma. Several years later, John XIII wrote to Theophanu, informing her that, at her request, the convent of San Martino, Pavia had been granted papal protection; four days later a papal notary informed Adelheid that her beloved monastery of San Salvatore, Pavia had received the same protection, also at her request.[91] Finally, in 995 John XV granted various rights to the monastery of Selz at the request of Adelheid, the house's founder.[92]

Conclusion

Discerning the connections that the ladies of the Ottonian dynasty were able to make and foster calls for interpretation of evidence that is spotty at best and that often fails to address the questions we would most like answered. In part the issue is survival of sources, but probably the more important issue is that the writers of the tenth century found issues that puzzle us too familiar and quotidian to need explication. Several points are, however, certain beyond reasonable doubt. First and foremost, it is obvious that it could be very useful to be acquainted with an Ottonian queen. Royal women were able to help their kindred, but also their friends and loyal servants. Such a finding is hardly surprising; the more significant issue here is that the queen's influence had been practically institutionalized by means of intercessions, which, upon publication, served to spread word of the power these royal women wielded. So frequently as to appear standard, petitioners turned to the queen, seeking her support for their causes. Queens in their turn as a matter of course did favors for many

people and institutions throughout the *reich*, especially by intervening on their behalf. Their power to help was thus contingent on the good will of their husbands, but was none the less real for that.

The other side of the coin is that this institutionalization of reginal favor created lasting networks of support for the queens. Those who received favors could well be called upon to perform favors in return, like Gerbert of Aurillac when Adelheid demanded that he find lands for some of her supporters. Most of all, these networks demonstrated the queen's engagement both in society and above it. For these networks, as far as the imperial ladies were involved, were not circles but rather pyramids, with the queen clearly occupying a position at the apex. Every time a queen did a favor she expanded the circle of people acknowledging her authority and power.

In return, the Ottonian ladies would certainly have hoped for loyalty and service when events warranted. But perhaps the greatest certainty lay in receiving the services beforehand, doing the favor only after the recipient had proved himself or herself. And certainly the Ottonian women arranged such payments for services rendered. Thus a diploma of Otto I confirms a gift to a priest named Geroh, the notary explaining that Liutgard had asked for the diploma because Geroh had served her so well.[93] Similarly, Thietmar reports that the priest Berner had served both Otto III and Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg well, and in return they gave him full possession of property that he had held from them.[94]

To give a final example, the author of the *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium* tells an interesting tale of friendship and favor at the hands of royal women. The see of Cambrai fell vacant in the year 991, and several likely candidates immediately started to line up female royal supporters. Erluin was a *familiaris*, a close connection to Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg, so Bishop Notker went to her to seek her support for Erluin's election. In the meantime, another candidate offered Sophia, the young Otto III's sister, money in return for her help in winning the bishopric. The ruler sided with his aunt Mechtild.[95] Or, actually, since Otto III was still underage at the time, the person who made the decision would have been Adelheid, Mechtild's mother. After all, blood was usually thicker than water. In any case, the story exemplifies the careful building up of networks in the hope of eventually being able to call in favors that exemplified the Ottonian world. And, as is so often the case when one looks closely enough, the women are close to the center of the story.

Notes

1. Franz Neiske, "La tradition nécrologique d'Adélaïde," in *Adélaïde de Bourgogne: Genèse et representations d'une sainteté impériale*, ed. Patrick Corbet, et al. (Dijon: Ed. Universitaires de Dijon, 2002), 83–84.
2. Knut Görich, "Mathilde—Edgith—Adelheid. Ottonische Königinnen als Fürsprecherinnen," in *Ottonische Neuanfänge*, ed. Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2001), 282.
3. Ibid.
4. *Chronicon Novaliciense*, MGH SS 7: (V.12) 69.
5. Hagen Keller, *Ottonische Königsherrschaft: Organisation und Legitimation königlicher Macht* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), 24–29. Brian McGuire makes the interesting point that in Gerbert's letters, *amicitia* (usually translated as "friendship") often means "alliance." Brian McGuire, "The Church and the Control of Violence in the Early Middle Ages: Friendship and Peace in the Letters of Gerbert, 982–97," in *War and Peace in the Middle Ages*, ed. McGuire (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1987), 37.
6. See for example Rosamond McKitterick, "The Church," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 134.
7. Gerd Althoff, "Königsherrschaft und Konfliktbewältigung im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert," *FMSt* 23 (1989): 267.
8. See especially Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Fürstliche Opposition in ottonisch-salischer Zeit," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 64 (1982): 307–70.
9. Walter Schlesinger, *Kirchengeschichte Sachsens im Mittelalter*, vol. 1 (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1962), 26.
10. Amalie Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000), 183. The *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (8) 159 gives as the reason for Mechtild getting Adaldag made a bishop that he had sung the first mass for the dead King Henry.
11. Bernard and David Bachrach make this observation in their translation of Widukind's *Saxon History*; Widukind of Corvey, *Deeds of the Saxons*, trans. Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 63, n. 10.
12. Sigebert of Gembloux, *Vita Deoderici episcopi Mettensis*, MGH SS 4: (1) 464.
13. Adalbert, a. 953, p. 166.
14. Widukind, (II.36) 97.
15. Thietmar, (VI.35) 316; Ingrid Baumgärtner, "Kunigunde. Politische Handlungsspielräume einer Kaiserin," in *Kunigunde—eine Kaiserin an der Jahrtausendwende*, ed. Baumgärtner (Kassel: Furore Verlag, 1997), 18–19.

16. *Vita maior Bardonis archiepiscopi Moguntini*, ed. W. Wattenbach, MGH SS 11: (7) 326; Vulculdus, *Vita Bardonis*, ed. W. Wattenbach, MGH SS 11: (5) 319.
17. Adalbert, a. 950, p. 164; Thietmar, (II.39) 86–88.
18. Flodoard of Rheims, *Annales*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1905), a. 946, 101–102. According to Richer, who wrote a generation later, Otto was responsible for winning Louis' release. See Richer of Saint-Rémi, *Histories*, ed. and trans. Justin Lake (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), (II.49) 2: 53.
19. Richer, *Histories*, (III.10–12) 14–16; Flodoard, *Annales*, a. 959, 146–47.
20. Hubertus Seibert, "Eines grossen Vaters glückloser Sohn? Die neue Politik Ottos II," in *Ottonische Neuanfänge*, ed. Schneidemüller and Weinfurter, 298.
21. Joachim Ehlers, "Carolingiens, Robertiens, Ottoniens: politique familiale ou relations Franco-allemandes," in *Le Roi de France et son royaume autour de l'an mil*, ed. Michael Parisse and Xavier Burral i Altet (Paris: Picard, 1992), 42.
22. Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, ed. Hans F. Haefele (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), (65) 138.
23. Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, 800–1056* (London: Longman, 1991), 266–67.
24. Karl J. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 103. For an interesting analysis of the mechanics of Ottonian travel, see Dirk Alvermann, *Königsherrschaft und Reichsintegration. Eine Untersuchung zur politischen Struktur von* regnum *und* imperium *zur Zeit Kaiser Ottos II. (967) 973–983* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1998), *passim*.
25. Karl J. Leyser, *Medieval Germany and its Neighbors, 900–1250* (London: Hambledon Press, 1982), 95–96.
26. See the discussion in Janet L. Nelson, "Les reines carolingiennes," in *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes à Byzance et en Occident (VIe–XIe siècles)*, ed. Stéphanie Lébecq, et al. (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Centre de recherche sur l'Histoire de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest, 1999), 124.
27. Hagen Keller, "Reichsstruktur und Herrschaftsauffassung in ottonisch-frühsalischer Zeit," *FMSt* 16 (1982): 77–78; Janet L. Nelson, "Rulers and Government," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. Reuter, 105.
28. Peter Willmes, *Der Herrscher- "Adventus" im Kloster des Frühmittelalters* (Munich: Fink, 1976), *passim*.
29. See Thietmar, (IV.47) 184.
30. Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, (98) 198–200.
31. Gerbert of Aurillac, *Die Briefsammlung Gerberts von Reims*, ed. Fritz Weigle, MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 2 (1966), Letter 12 (before December 7, 983), 34–35.
32. DOI 412 (July 30, 972).

33. Gian Andri Bezzola, *Das Ottonische Kaisertum in der französischen Geschichtsschreibung des 10. und beginnenden 11. Jahrhunderts* (Graz: Böhlau, 1956), 71–73; Harald Zimmermann, "Gerbert als kaiserlicher Rat," in *Gerberto: Scienza, storia e mito*, ed. Michele Tosi (Bobbio: Ed. degli A.S.B., 1985), 235; Flavio G. Nuvolone, "Gerbert d'Aurillac et la politique impériale ottonienne en 983: une affair de chiffres censurées par les moines?" in *Faire l'événement au Moyen Âge*, ed. Claude Carozzi and Huguette Taviani-Carozzi (Aix-en-Provence: Publ. de l'Univ. de Provence, 2007), 236; Richer, *Histories*, (III.57) 90–91.
34. Gerbert, Letter 6 (late summer 983), 29.
35. DOI 89 (May 4, 947).
36. DOI 172 (May 25, 954) and DOI 228 (July 15, 961).
37. Geoffrey Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas: The West Frankish Kingdom (840–987)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 34. Ian Robinson makes the point that the recipient of a diploma customarily "published" it with public reading, often at a church service. Ian S. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056–1106* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 12.
38. Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, 55–56.
39. Ibid., 211.
40. Kunigunde was also responsible for four diplomas issued in the period immediately following Henry II's death, but these documents are not in the form of royal charters. See Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke, *Notwendige Gefährtinnen. Königinnen der Salierzeit als Herrscherinnen und Ehefrauen im römisch-deutschen Reich des 11. und beginnenden 12. Jahrhunderts* (Saarbrücken: Verlag Rita Dadder, 1991), 31.
41. Rudolf Schetter, *Die Intervenienz der weltlichen und geistlichen Fürsten in den deutschen Königsurkunden von 911–1056* (Bottrop: Wilhelm Postberg, 1935), 1.
42. Sean Gilsdorf, *The Favor of Friends: Intercession and Aristocratic Politics in Carolingian and Ottonian Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 23.
43. See Gilsdorf, *Favor of Friends*, 39 for a discussion of the purposes of intercession.
44. Görich, "Mathilde—Edgith—Adelheid," 267. The example Görich gives is DOI 6, a grant of minting rights to Bishop Baldrich of Utrecht, who was raising Mechtild's youngest son Brun.
45. DHI 3 (for Corvey), 13, 40, and 41 (for Herford), 24 (St. Maximin, Trier), and 38 (for Neuenheerse). The intervention for a ministerial is DHI 18 and confirmation of Mechtild's widow's portion is DHI 20. See also the discussion in Schetter, *Die Intervenienz der weltlichen und geistlichen Fürsten*, 4.

46. See for example Schetter, *Die Intervenienz der weltlichen und geislichen Fürsten*, 5.
47. DOI 6, perhaps dating to 936. Edgitha's other interventions are DOI 7 (February 4, 937), DOI 13 (August 8, 937), DOI 24 (April 2, 940), DOI 27 (April 19, 940), and DOI 69 (June 11, 945). For Edgitha's interventions, see especially Daniela Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern. Funktionen und Aufgabenfelder von Frauen in der ottonischen Herrscherfamilie (919–1024)* (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2003), 177.
48. DOI 24 (April 2, 940).
49. D Lothar 18 (January 6, 963) in *Recueil des actes de Lothaire et de Louis V rois de France (954–987)*, ed. Louis Halphen and Ferdinand Lot (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1908). Arnulf intervenes in the normal way in D Lothar 22.
50. DOII 2 (961).
51. DOI 350 (December 2, 967).
52. DOI 106 (December 26, 948).
53. Rather of Verona, *Die Briefe des Bischofs Rather von Verona*, ed. Fritz Weigle, MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit, 1 (1949), Letter 18 (965), 107–108; Letter 22 (August–September 965), 115–18.
54. DOI 348 (November 5, 967).
55. See especially Rather Letter 31 (June 968), 179–80. The other letter is Letter 33 (early July 968), 183–88. Paolo Golinelli, "De Luitprand de Crémone à Donizon de Canossa. Le souvenir de la reine Adélaïde en Italie (X^{e}–XIIe siècles)," in *Adélaïde de Bourgogne*, ed. Corbet, 96.
56. Walther Bulst, ed., *Die Ältere Wormser Briefsammlung*, MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit, 3 (1949), 7.
57. DHI 37 (May 9, 935); DOII 265 (November 981).
58. DOII 66 (November 23, 973).
59. Tilman Struve, "Die Interventionen Heinrichs IV. in den Diplomen seines Vaters. Instrument der Herrschaftssicherung des salischen Hauses," *Archiv für Diplomatik* 28 (1982): 207; Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern*, 178. MacLean argues that Adelheid's greater presence as intervenor beginning in 960 was rather a political decision, the chancery enhancing her status when Otto I began his real conquest of northern Italy. See Simon MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 108–109.
60. *Chronicon Gladbacense*, MGH SS 4: (14) 76.
61. Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, c. 129; cf. Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern*, 155.
62. Leo, *Chronicon monasterii Casinensis*, MGH SS 7: (II.4) 631. The diploma in question is DOI 262 (February 18, 964).
63. Thietmar, (II.30) 76.

64. For example, see DOI 251, a grant of two estates that was made in Pavia in 962.
65. E.g., DOII 43 (June 27, 973).
66. DOI 69 (June 11, 945).
67. DOIII 34 (May 20, 987).
68. The northern Italian charters can be found in Luigi Schiaparelli, ed., *I Diplomi di Ugo e di Lotario di Berengario II e di Adalberto*, Fonti per la storia d'Italia 38 (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1924).
69. For useful tables comparing the interventions of a number of royal women as well as calculations of the percentage of sole versus joint interventions and a breakdown of recipients, see Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich*, 126–31. See also Amalie Fößel, "Politische Handlungsspielräume der Königin im hochmittelalterlichen Reich," in *Geschichte des Mittelalters für unsere* Zeit, ed. Rolf Ballof (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2003), 138–54, esp. 143.
70. Schetter, *Die Intervenienz der weltlichen und geistlichen Fürsten*, 6.
71. No standard database of Ottonian *diplomata* exists, so interventions can only be found by reading very large amounts of notarial Latin, often in very small print, as the editors of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* laid out the text in a hierarchy of font sizes based on what they deemed important. Thus it is hardly surprising that Fößel, Schetter, Müller-Wiegand, Görich, and I all differ slightly in our accounting.
72. DOI 351 (December 2, 967).
73. DOI 187 (December 12, 956).
74. DOI 293 (June 17, 965).
75. DOI 255 (June 14, 963).
76. DOI 315 (January 8, 966) and DOI 321 (February 6, 966).
77. DOI 432 and DOI 433, both dated April 27, 973.
78. DOI 431 (April 27, 973).
79. DOI 415, which perhaps dates to the year 972.
80. DOII 307 (June 15, 983).
81. As with Adelheid, accounting varies. For example, Fößel credits Theophanu with sixty-seven interventions; Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich*, 131. Vogelsang counted sixty-three, while Schetter reached the number sixty-six. See Thilo Vogelsang, *Die Frau als Herrscherin im hohen Mittelalter: Studien zur "consors regni" Formel* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1954), 24–25; Schetter, *Die Intervenienz der weltlichen und geistlichen Fürsten*, 11. Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern*, 163 agrees with me in a count of sixty-five.
82. Thietmar, (IV.10) 142.
83. See Rosamond McKitterick, "Ottonian Intellectual Culture in the Tenth Century and the Role of Theophanu," *Early Medieval Europe* 2 (1993): 67.
84. DOI 115, 121, and 151.

85. DOII 115 and 170; DOII 116; DOII 77.
86. DOII 201 and 214.
87. DOI 99 (April 7, 948); DOI 192 (April 4, 958).
88. DOI 325 (March 1, 966).
89. Harald Zimmermann, ed., *Papsturkunden, 896–1046*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1988), 169 (November 11, 964).
90. Ibid., 178 (April 22, 967).
91. Ibid., 215 (April 20, 972); 219 (April 24, 972).
92. Ibid., 324 (April 4, 995).
93. DOI 151 (June 26, 952).
94. Thietmar, (VIII.10) 504.
95. *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium*, ed. L. C. Bethmann, MGH SS 7: (110) 448–49.

CHAPTER 8

Partners in Rule

As I have argued, the Ottonian rulers of Germany consciously built up both the power and the authority of their wives, a process that to some extent also included their sisters and daughters as well. This process of enhancing the position of the imperial ladies was dialectical in nature: rulers relied more on their womenfolk and thus gave them more power; the increased power in turn gave the imperial ladies greater scope to play an active political role in support of their husbands, brothers, or sons. We have seen ample evidence of these women's prestige and wealth; the time has now come to examine the extant evidence for the greater political role of these tenth-century royal women. As we will see, the imperial ladies of this study were surprisingly visible in the political life of the German *reich*, playing an institutionalized role that few queens of earlier centuries could have imagined.

The evidence to support such a contention is fragmentary, in large part because evidence for Ottonian rule as a whole is fragmentary. It is very difficult to discern the institutions of government anywhere in tenth-century western Europe. It is probable that some Carolingian governmental structures survived, although the evidentiary track is faint.[1] Ottonian monarchs can be discerned in a judicial function only very rarely, and only seem to have summoned formal assemblies when they felt like it. And it is striking that, in this era that began lasting German involvement in the affairs of Italy, Ottonians could absent themselves for years at a time to deal with affairs south of the Alps without anyone in Germany being much

P. G. Jestice, *Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty*, Queenship and Power, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77306-3_8

bothered.[2] An odd result is that sometimes we are able to discern what the male rulers were doing only through the actions of the women of their family—when we can see government in action at all.

As a final note, one must always be careful to bear in mind that the ability of Ottonian queens to act on the political stage was always contingent rather than absolute. It depended on their husbands or sons and ultimately on their ability to fulfill the one essential duty of a queen—the duty to produce an heir. All but one of the queens of this study—Mechtild, Edgitha, Adelheid, and Theophanu (the exception being Kunigunde)—produced both sons and daughters, assuring themselves a position of influence not just in their husband's lifetime but in that of their offspring. Other queens were not so fortunate; four French queens of the tenth and eleventh century suffered repudiation from their husbands at least in part because of their failure to produce an heir.[3] With repudiation they were stripped of the lands and much of the wealth they had received, lost most of their ability to demonstrate piety, and found themselves disowned by most of the political players with whom they had formed alliances.

From Wife to Consort

The spouses of the earlier Carolingian rulers of Francia are for the most part shadowy figures, perhaps better regarded as "king's wife" rather than using the term "queen," which of course implies a greater and more public role. Only one of Charlemagne's four wives, Fastrada, can be seen to have acted on the broader political stage.[4] Nonetheless, even "just" being a wife and mother cannot be contained completely in the women's sphere when one's children are heirs to the throne and valuable political pawns who must be educated for their future roles. Still less can one be regarded as a housewife when the house is a palace, or rather a complex of palaces and a constantly moving palace on the hoof as the royal court journeyed constantly from place to place. In such a household writ large, technically every member of the court was the king's servant, but hardly in the menial capacity that would have been true of most servants under a noblewoman's control. A Carolingian queen would have been responsible for managing a household numbering in the hundreds and including nobles both secular and ecclesiastical as well as a constant flow of gifts both in and out of the royal coffers.

Hincmar of Rheims gave voice to the centrality of the queen in palace administration as early as c. 820 in his treatise *de Ordine Palatii* (On the

Organization of the Palace). According to Hincmar, it was above all the queen's task to deal with the comfort and needs of the royal family, guests, and servants. In Hincmar's depiction, the queen commands the man who combines the offices of chamberlain and treasurer; it is the queen who bestows annual gifts on the fighting men who serve the king.[5] His fellow Carolingian intellectual Agobard of Lyons goes still further, arguing that the queen should be "helper in regulating and governing the palace and the kingdom" (*adiutrix in regimine et gubernacione palacii et regni*).[6] Such a characterization suggests that it was impossible to make a clear distinction between palace and kingdom. In short, she was "the lady with the mead cup" of heroic poems like *Beowulf*, only to a greater degree. A capitulary of Charlemagne suggests that the queen's authority over the household even extended to the royal demesne.[7] This is a role that the Ottonian royal women continued to play. For example, we can see Theophanu as keeper of the treasury at the time of the Battle of Cotrone in 982. During the battle, she stayed at Rossano and clearly had treasure in her keeping, because when Otto II fled the battle he promised a reward to his rescuer and then had to send ahead to Theophanu, asking her to meet him with the promised wealth.[8]

As pressures on the Carolingians mounted over the course of the ninth century, the role of their womenfolk as advisors and supporters became increasingly visible. In part, this development can be laid at the door of the betrayals, noble centrifugal forces, and external attacks that characterized the Carolingian Empire beginning in Louis the Pious' (814–40) reign. However, the shift in family values toward greater recognition of parternership, discussed in Chap. 2, must also have played a part.

It is in this context of Carolingians increasingly turning to their partners as the only people they could trust implicitly that we see the revival and development of the title *consors regni* (sharer in rule) for queens. The title itself goes back to the Vulgate translation of the Bible, where in Esther 16:13 the queen is called *consors regni*.[9] The seventh-century historian Fredegar uses the term *consortio regni* (sharing in rule), but in his case the reference is to fathers associating sons with their crown, both the Roman Marcus Aurelius and the Frankish Chlothar in 622.[10] The concept, although not the term, was also applied to several late Roman empresses, most notably Flaccilla, the wife of Theodosius, who was named Augusta and depicted on coinage with the full insignia and diadem of an emperor.[11] In the eastern empire, the chronicler John the Lydian called Empress Theodora "co-sharer of the empire" with her husband Justinian.[12]

In the West, however, the idea of *consortium* only developed among the later Carolingians. It grew at least in part from the Carolingian moralists' new emphasis on the conjugal bond between husband and wife. It is likely that Hrabanus Maurus popularized the term itself around the year 834 in his commentaries on the biblical books of Judith and Esther, which were dedicated to the empress Judith, second wife of Louis the Pious.[13] To be sure, Hrabanus' interpretation is highly allegorized. He presents Esther's long preparation for the royal chamber as the human soul being made worthy for *consortio* with the True Bridegroom (i.e., Christ).[14] Nonetheless, the idea had been introduced of a queen as partner to her husband, the Persian Ahasuerus, as well as Jesus.

The title *consors regni* was never used of Judith, although her great influence over her husband is credited as a reason for the rebellions that broke out against Louis the Pious.[15] That honor had to wait for Louis' daughter-in-law Ermengard, wife of Emperor Lothar, who was first designated with that title in the year 848. In part it was a spiritualized description—the poet Sedulius Scottus compares the union between Lothar and Ermengard to that between Christ and the Church—but it also reflected political reality, since Ermengard played a visible role in political matters.[16] The diploma of March 16, 848 that first calls Ermengard *consors* tells that the title is appropriate because the couple are bound together "by the chains of marriage."[17] In other words, since they are a couple, of necessity they are also a team in the regard of contemporaries.

A particularly strong example of a later Carolingian queen who was her husband's true ally in the work of government is Ermengard's own daughter-in-law Engelberga, wife of Louis II, who ruled northern Italy as emperor 855–75. She repeatedly appears as *consors* in the documents of Louis' reign beginning in 863 and even once in a papal letter. A skillful political player, she had many opportunities to hone her skills in the vicissitudes of her husband's reign.[18] Engelberga was the first Carolingian woman to take a fully public role in government, as far as we can discern from extant histories and documents. She collaborated with her husband in rule, serving as Louis' deputy in parts of Italy. Engelberga presided over an imperial assembly at Ravenna in 871 in her husband's name and may have led troops in battle. Not least, Engelberga presided over the assembly of Italian magnates that decided Louis II's successor. Her name even appeared on the reverse side of her husband's coins.[19]

But after Engelberga, the link between the *consors* title and political activity becomes more tenuous. Several ninth-century Italian queens were

given the title, for example Alda, the second wife of King Hugh, who in a document is called "our dearest spouse and sharer in our rule."[20] But we are left in ignorance how Alda did in fact share significantly in the process of ruling. Similarly, when the future empress Adelheid married her first husband Lothar in 947, she was given the title *consors regni*.[21] But was the fifteen-year-old girl politically active, especially as her young husband never succeeded in exerting real authority in his realm? In fact, we find a male *consors* existing simultaneously in Italy, as Lothar's rival Berengar demanded and received the title *summus consors regni* (highest sharer in rule), which he appears to have exercised as a *de facto* prime minister.[22] While Adelheid's position as *consors regni* in her first marriage helps explain how the title came to be used in Germany after she wed Otto I, it does not bring us much further in understanding the extent to which ruling women actually shared in rule in the tenth century.

Partnership Marriage?

By the time the first Ottonian came to the throne in 918, the notion of marriage as a true partnership appears to have sunk deeply into society, as we have seen in Chap. 2. Moralists, again despite traces of a clerical bias to keep women in their place, emphasized that marriage was a special and profound bond between wife and husband. The most developed statements from the Ottonian Empire can be found in Rather of Verona's *Praeloquia*. For Rather, marriage is a matter of mutual support; he points out a number of points in the Hebrew scriptures at which God has "miraculously" given women strength when men are weak. He also emphasizes at considerable length how in marriage husband and wife are one flesh, concluding: "It should rather be understood that they are two in one flesh, one flesh in law, affection, and faith, one in the bonds of the flesh, one in the pact of the flesh…."[23]

The Ottonian rulers were astonishingly chaste in their marital behavior; none of them are known to have had a mistress when married. Otto didn't even have a known concubine in the years between the death of Edgitha and his marriage to Adelheid.[24] Of course, the reason for Otto's abstinence may not have been so much his obedience to Church law as that he had dearly loved his first wife and sincerely mourned her early death. At least the chroniclers emphasized that grief more than with any other female character. Annalists who otherwise never mentioned a queen worked in a reference to Edgitha's death.[25] Widukind speaks of how deeply

the king was affected and of the love he then transferred to his son Liudulf.[26] Even the Quedlinburg annalist, writing under the rule of an abbess who was the daughter of Otto's second wife Adelheid, speaks of the bitterness of Edgitha's demise.[27] The rather later Thietmar of Merseburg painted a moving picture of Otto I's unspeakable sorrow at his wife's death and also reports the king's wish to be buried beside Edgitha in Magdeburg Cathedral.[28]

Although they date to the early eleventh century rather than being contemporary, we also have two accounts of the deep love between Henry I and Queen Mechtild. The later *vita* of the queen tells how the royal couple went even further than the union of flesh envisaged by Rather—they shared a single soul, a single spirit, and a single sense of goodness.[29] Thietmar continues the story up to Mechtild's death, many years after that of her husband, and tells how she was finally buried beside Henry in the abbey church of Quedlinburg. As the bishop reports, "As long as she lived, it had been her desire to be joined in death to the one she had so loved while living."[30] In general, tenth- and eleventh-century chroniclers were astonishingly willing to delve into the subject of conjugal love, a striking contrast from the silence on the subject of earlier centuries. Even in dry notarial documents, the affection the king felt for his wife was allowed to shine through. To give just one of many possible examples, in DOI 214 Otto I made a gift to St. Mauritius, Magdeburg, for the sake of his own soul and that of his father Henry and for "our most lovable wife Adelheid" (*amabilissimae coniugis nostra Adalheidae*).[31]

One can even see the identification of a wife with her husband's interests in the way chroniclers depict revenge. A number of accounts relate that when Otto I finally defeated Berengar of Ivrea, not just Berengar but his wife Willa were exiled to Bamberg, where Willa eventually became a nun after her husband's death (a strange end to a woman whom Liudprand portrays as a scarlet-dyed virago). When the southern French chronicler Adhémar of Chabannes reworked material from Fredegar's chronicle in the early parts of his own work, he took special delight in telling how early Frankish kings were careful to kill the wives of their rivals to complete their revenge. Thus King Gundobad of Burgundy killed his brother and had his sister-in-law thrown in a body of water with a stone tied around her neck. Similarly, when Chlodomir invaded Burgundy he killed King Sigismund and also his wife; a few pages later King Childeric and his pregnant queen also fell victim to the early Franks' internecine squabbles.[32] Not all these tales were of the distant past, however. Thietmar reports a Saracen attack

on Lombardy in 1016. Pope Benedict rallied a defense force and a bloody battle ensued, at the end of which the Muslim "king" (doubtless a northern African emir) escaped, but his "queen" was captured. She was beheaded, and the pope sent her crown to Henry II.[33] In other words, the wife was associated with her husband's unprovoked attack and paid the price for it.

The Ottonian *Consors*

The Ottonians began formal use of the *consors* title in a document of March 15, 962, in which Adelheid, by that time the wife of Otto I, is named as *consors regni*. The Italian inspiration of the term seems clear. This particular diploma was granted in favor of Lucca, and twelve of the seventeen documents of Otto I that designate Adelheid as *consors* are products of the Italian chancery.[34] Soon after the imperial coronation of February 2, 962, Adelheid was upgraded to the status of imperial partnership.[35] Theophanu also received this grander title immediately when she arrived as a juvenile bride: in her marriage document she is already named as *consors imperii*—a sharer in imperial rather than merely royal rule.[36] In Theophanu's case, use of the term was no longer mostly restricted to south of the Alps, and soon her title was even further elevated; in late April 974 she appears for the first time as *coimperatrix* (co-empress), enhanced in 979 and 981 as *coimperatrix augusta*.[37]

The German queen's position as *consors* was not just a matter for the chancery, however, since three of our earliest historians also emphasized this title for queens. Liudprand of Cremona, who probably was writing in about the year 964, only two years after the first chancery use of the term, refers to Queen Mechtild as *consors regni*.[38] Hrotsvit of Gandersheim is rather more specific in her *Gesta Ottonis*, speaking of Mechtild as *conregnans* (co-ruling) with her husband.[39] The monk Widukind of Corvey went even further in his depiction of Queen Edgitha. In his account of her death in 946, he pronounces that "for ten years she shared in the rule of the kingdom" (*decem annorum regni consortia tenuit*).[40] The only difficulty with the historians' evidence is that we can't see clearly what any of them meant by "sharing in rule," since neither Mechtild nor Edgitha has left discernible footprints attesting to a political role. By contrast, the *consors regni* formula was used relatively rarely for Empress Kunigunde, although a striking example can be seen in the dedication picture of the Reichenau gospel lectionary crafted for Henry II, which shows Kunigunde

and Henry II being crowned by Christ. The accompanying dedicatory poem speaks of "King Henry … with Kunigunde ruling with him" (*Rex Heinricus … cum Cunigunda sibi conregnante*). Nonetheless, Kunigunde's continuous political engagement is clear.[41]

Should one, then, simply disregard the *consors regni* formula as an empty title, a mere honorific? I would argue that this was certainly not the case. In the first place, honorifics are seldom "mere" in medieval formulations. This was, as Gerd Althoff has so brilliantly developed the theme, an age in which show had real substance, with rulers consciously employing formal acts and symbolism as a tool of government.[42] The fact that not just notaries but also contemporary historians used the term suggests that it had meaning to educated society in the *reich*. The title may have been largely symbolic, but it was a symbolism that helped enable its bearer to play an active public role.

It is instructive to compare the role of the other German *consortes* of the tenth century, the sons of Otto I who were crowned and/or designated as heirs in their father's lifetime. Thietmar of Merseburg reports that Otto arranged to have Liudulf, the son of his first marriage, elected as *honoris consortem* (sharer in honors) and declared heir before Liudulf's marriage to Ida.[43] Liudulf in fact then acted as, at the very least, a royal deputy, even if not as a full partner in the governance of the realm. For example, he campaigned on his father's behalf in northern Italy.

Otto II was not only elected but crowned both king and emperor during his father's lifetime. The royal coronation took place in 961, when the younger Otto had reached the ripe age of five; he become co-emperor six years later, and documents soon called the adolescent both *consors* and *coimperator*.[44] It strains credulity to think that Otto II actually engaged personally in sharing the work of government at either age, any more than Otto III could have been an effective hands-on ruler after his coronation at age three. Nonetheless, both could represent "the crown," providing a physical presence in a territory when the adult king had to be away. Similar to the probable rationale behind the early coronation of Otto III, Otto II was left in Germany while his father was occupied in Italy. William of Mainz was really the person who dealt with necessary political tasks north of the Alps; the young Otto did not have his own chancery.[45] By the time Otto I left for Germany in 966 again, however, his son appears to have enjoyed a greater role as deputy; the emperor mostly refrained from issuing charters north of the Alps, leaving that task to his son. In all, there are twenty-seven authentic charters of Otto II from before the death of his

father. It is not a large number, certainly not suggesting that Otto II was able to act independently, but it does hint at a significant role as royal deputy.[46] Admittedly, Otto II may have chafed at his continued dependence on the older Otto. The author of the *Casus s. Galli* tells a peculiar tale in this regard. Otto I, the story goes, visited the monastery of Saint-Gall and decided to test the discipline of the monks. So he went into the church and let his staff fall; he was gratified that not a single monk was distracted from the service by his noisy act. When Otto II heard of the story, however, he marveled that the senior emperor should have let his staff fall at all since he held his *imperium* so firmly, not even sharing a part of it with his son.[47]

But the younger Otto was a crowned king and emperor, rather than a queen. He had received unction, sworn oaths to defend his people and govern justly, all in ceremonies that were probably identical to those that marked his father as ruler. It is not surprising that a young man would have chafed at being formally made ruler of his people but then relegated to the role of assistant to an authoritarian and battle-hardened dad. A queen's position was different. As we have seen, her coronation did not involve oaths and emphasized fruitfulness rather than governance. And of course she was a woman. Despite the tenth century's new emphasis on conjugal partnership, it is very unlikely that anyone imagined the partnership as one between equals except perhaps in the spiritual sense. The queen would certainly have been the junior partner, while the lion's share of "sharing in rule" remained with her husband. Nonetheless, our tenth-century royal women could certainly play a role in the governance of the *reich*, one large enough to justify the notion that they were true *consortes regni*, even if the male Otto II was discontented with the reality behind that title.

Royal Deputies

As we saw in Chap. 6, in a sermon Abbot Odilo of Cluny described how the Virgin Mary rules with her son, a position that makes her worthy of the title *domina* (lady) and *dominatrix*.[48] The choice of language is interesting. In the language of the central Middle Ages, many women could be a "lady" and it need not necessarily mean anything more than "wife of a lord." A *dominatrix*, by contrast (despite its unfortunate modern connotations) is the feminine form of "someone who lords over." Such a term implies the active wielding of power.

Non-royal women could exercise direct power at least on occasion and chroniclers seem to have accepted this role as a matter of course. It is well to recall, for example, that Thietmar of Merseburg's own mother decided to send her son as hostage to a group of Vikings to secure the release of her brother who had been captured.[49] The later *vita* of Queen Mechtild also tells of a very independent abbess, the later queen's like-named grandmother. The young Mechtild was being raised in her convent, and the future king Henry came and asked Abbess Mechtild for her granddaughter's hand in marriage. The abbess responded that she ought to send the girl back to her family, but then changed her mind and consented to the betrothal on her own authority.[50]

We also have interesting evidence of an imperial daughter being prepared for an active political role. When Widukind completed his history in 967 or 968 he dedicated it to Otto I's daughter Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg. Mechtild had been made abbess at Quedlinburg in April 966 by a glittering assembly of all the archbishops and bishops of the *reich*—at the age of eleven. After the death of Archbishop William of Mainz on March 14, 968, Mechtild was the only member of the royal family north of the Alps, and remained the sole representative of the family until the end of 972. Thus, although too young to be a political player, Mechtild still represented royal rule at least in Saxony. But she could have "represented" royal rule even as an infant; mere representation does not explain why Widukind wrote his extensive account for the youthful abbess. The work was clearly intended to be educative. His history contains a great deal of insight on Saxon self-perception, on the deeds of the Ottonian kings, and on the many conflicts between Otto I and the nobles who were still active in Saxony at the time. Mechtild actually had to deal with the men Widukind describes, and she could also have benefited from the lessons in diplomatic propriety that Widukind was careful to stress. As several modern historians have pointed out, Widukind's work had a function, and that function was above all to teach Mechtild what she needed to know about the ways of political power.[51]

Although there are hints that Otto II regarded his sister as representative of family possessions in Saxony,[52] we can see Mechtild acting as a royal deputy most clearly at the end of the century, after her nephew Otto III had already attained his majority. Indeed, the activities of Abbess Mechtild provide some of our best evidence for the political role of the imperial ladies in general. Thietmar reports that while the emperor was in Italy, "the care of the kingdom had been committed to the venerable abbess, Mechtild."[53]

The lengthy debate whether Mechtild should be included on the lists of "regents" for Otto III or whether she simply acted as royal deputy in Saxony need not concern us here, largely because it is by no means clear what either position would have involved. Certainly she did something important, because, as the Hildesheim annalist reports, Mechtild's nephew delegated "the highest of matters" (*summa rerum*) to her.[54]

Thietmar does report, however, one specific instance in which the abbess acted. A noble girl named Liudgard was being educated at Mechtild's own convent of Quedlinburg. But in 998, while Otto III was away from Germany, a count named Werner and his friends seized the girl (who was in fact already betrothed to him, but Werner feared that Liudgard's father intended to break the betrothal). Thietmar tells that Mechtild was already holding an assembly at Derenburg at the time—a rare instance when we can see an Ottonian act of ruling in progress. When word was brought to her of the abduction, she called on the leading men present to capture or kill the lawbreakers. But Werner and his accomplices made it safely to a secure fortress. Mechtild then solicited advice, after which she summoned both Liudgard and Werner to a second assembly. When this second assembly met at Magdeburg it was massively attended, including by the "guilty" couple, and Werner was forced to return the girl to Quedlinburg and pay compensation.[55]

Several points should be stressed about this account. The first is of course that the Ottonian daughter Mechtild summoned not just one but two assemblies. This was not simply an abbess behaving extraordinarily because of an affront to her convent and trading on her prestige as the daughter of Otto I to generate outrage, since, according to Thietmar, Mechtild was already running a perfectly ordinary assembly when news broke of the abduction. In other words, acting as Otto III's deputy, this woman of his family had had the authority to summon a large number of Saxon nobles—as Thietmar reports, "all the nobility convened as one" at this first meeting. When news came of Werner's act, she was able to raise the hue and cry for the malefactors, and the nobles present did in fact obey her command. When that didn't work, Mechtild sought advice (just as any medieval king would have done) and then convened a second assembly, also very well attended, again suggesting that the nobles of Saxony believed she had the right to call them together. That Werner and Liudgard also appeared at the event suggests that the abbess had the power to command and could summon them under pain of serious punishment. Lastly, Werner

handed over both Liudgard and a fine because the assembly over which Mechtild presided ordered him to do so.

According to the Quedlinburg annalist, Otto III himself lauded his aunt Mechtild as *matricia*, a feminized form of the word "patricius." Unfortunately we don't know the precise meaning of such a term in the tenth century. Rulers of Rome were occasionally known as "patrician," and following classical usage the term could be used of anyone with great power and influence. Thus, that Mechtild was a *matricia* at least hints at a similar position. The inscription on the abbess' tomb reinforces this sense of real authority, telling that when her nephew Emperor Otto went to Italy "Saxonie preposuit matriciam" ("She held *matricia* over Saxony").[56] The term has been taken by both Stengel and Althoff to mean "regent," although that seems rather a stretch of translation.

The Byzantines believed it was indecent for women to appear at an assembly of men,[57] but that was clearly not the prevailing sentiment in western Europe. A royal assembly was the single most important occasion for ruler representation. The events were highly staged and were intended to be demonstrative rather than legislative.[58] That Mechtild could fill in for the ruler on such an occasion was very telling. We also have one case in which it is certain that queen as well as king took part together in an assembly. Thietmar reports a synod held at Dortmund in 1005 whose decrees were issued not just in the name of Henry II but also of Kunigunde, three archbishops, and twelve bishops.[59]

Sometimes, however, assemblies were convened specifically for judicial purposes, as in the case of Abbess Mechtild's second assembly at Magdeburg. Ottonian rulers appear in our sources only very rarely as judges, and Hagen Keller has argued cogently that the administration of justice was normally delegated. It was the counts who held judicial assemblies (*placita*) and rendered decisions, with dukes and bishops providing most of what oversight existed in the process.[60] Such a finding is logical, since after all counts in this period maintained much of their original status as royal administrators (although their offices had already become hereditary). We can even see this process of delegation in practice during Theophanu's regency when in 990 she was asked for a decision and delegated the court to her confidant Johannes Philagathos and Bishop Hugo of Würzburg.[61] But if kings were in fact largely inactive in the administration of justice, an important question remains: who could sit in judgment over evildoers who were equal or superior in rank to the counts? Clearly somebody more important than a count would have to be deputized to

perform the task, just as Mechtild presided over the assembly that sat in judgment on Count Werner. And there is in fact evidence that sometimes the deputy in question was a royal woman.

The earliest example I have been able to find of a tenth-century queen playing a role in a judicial assembly is a French case. In 958 Queen Gerberga presided over a judicial assembly with her son, judging a complaint made against Count William of Poitou.[62] In this instance, Gerberga was regent for her underage son Lothar, but it is still useful to note first the need for somebody more important than a count to handle the trial of a count and that a woman could be involved in a judicial matter.

Empress Adelheid presided over at least two judicial assemblies. Both were in Italy, which has led some scholars to suggest that she played such an active role because of her unique position as heiress of the kingdom of Italy. The first was in the reign of her son Otto II, on October 25, 976 and held in Piacenza (a locale that was not particularly connected to Adelheid). A whole panel of judges was involved, including Adelheid herself, the count palatine Giselbert, and two men listed as emissaries of Emperor Otto. The case was important: Doge Peter IV of Venice had been murdered, and his widow Waldrada was seeking financial redress. In the second case, examined during the regency of Theophanu, Adelheid and again the count palatine Giselbert presided over a discussion on July 18, 985 about the union of the diocese of Alba (which had been impoverished by Saracen raids) with Asti. In this case, the court met in Adelheid's city of Pavia, but her position on the bench remains striking. Why include a dowager empress in a judicial inquiry if not to add *gravitas* to the occasion? In both cases, one can presume that the count palatine was already accustomed to judicial matters. But it is unlikely that Adelheid was just a figurehead, since she is listed equally with the other members of the panel in both cases as a judge.[63] Similarly, in 1021 Kunigunde presided alongside her brother Henry to settle a dispute between the monastery of St. Emmeram and Bishop Bruno of Augsburg.[64]

Royal women could be useful, although for specific stories we have to look to the chattiest chroniclers of our period, the French Flodoard and the insatiable gossip Thietmar. At the beginning of our period, the German-born Queen Gerberga of France provides a compendium of active royal womanhood. She had occasion to do so, because her husband Louis IV of Outremer suffered serious challenges to his power. In 941 Gerberga was entrusted with the defense of Laon. Then in 945 when the Normans captured the king and Duke Hugh the Great tried to assure that Louis would

never be released, Gerberga served as effective head of state. She refused to give up her young son to Hugh for use as a political pawn. More importantly, she negotiated with her brother Otto I, who came with an army and began ravaging both Hugh's and the Normans' territory to force them to terms with Louis. Gerberga then mediated a peace between her husband and Duke Hugh.[65] When hostilities broke out again in 948 and Hugh attacked Laon, it was Gerberga who led the defense.[66]

In the generation before, the West Frankish queen Emma led troops in battle several times, as did Aethelflaed of Mercia, so Gerberga's defense is not as unusual as it might sound.[67] Women rarely took part in battle (Thietmar tells of an occasion when a small force under Polish attack was exhausted, so the leader asked the women to help by throwing stones from the walls and putting out fires[68]). Nonetheless, a royal woman could command fighting men when necessary. Thus Queen Willa, wife of Berengar of Italy, led her own defense against the forces of Otto I in the early 960s, successfully holding her fortress on an island in Lago Maggiore for two months.[69] Queen Emma of France was given the defense of Verdun by her husband Lothar in 985.[70]

As is so often the case, however, Thietmar provides our best insight into royal women taking an active role, whether on their husbands' behalf or on their own account. Kunigunde acted as Henry II's deputy to secure the Saxon border in both 1012 and 1016. Her quick action probably saved the situation when Archbishop Walthard of Magdeburg, who had been in charge of the royal forces in Saxony, died. The Germans had suffered a defeat at the hands of Boleslav Chrobry's army at a time when the emperor was on the other side of the *reich* besieging Metz. So Kunigunde, in Merseburg at the time, immediately mobilized, ordering our chronicler to take up position with his men at the bank of the Mulde. Similarly, in 1016, Henry was waging war in Burgundy and Kunigunde was left to defend the east.[71] Thietmar even tells a rather garbled story of how the Norman Queen Emma of England defended London during a six-month siege by Cnut after her husband's death in 1016, only yielding after she had secured the escape of her young sons.[72]

It is late for our study but worth mentioning to show the trend toward giving queens more power that Agnes, wife of Henry III, was invested as duke of Bavaria. This seems like a logical culmination of the process of relying more and more on royal wives that we have seen with the Ottonians. In Agnes' case, yet again the queen was used as a stopgap to handle an unstable situation. In April 1053 Duke Conrad I of Bavaria was deposed

and Henry then gave the position to his three-year-old son Henry (IV), later replacing him with Henry's even younger brother. But Agnes held the *de facto* position of duke, and after the younger son Conrad died in 1055, Agnes ruled the duchy without even the legitimation of an underage male figurehead.[73]

A last case perhaps sums up best how a king might employ a royal woman. In 1022 scandal erupted in Orléans, as heresy was uncovered among the canons of the cathedral. King Robert the Pious was soon called in to deal with the situation, as was his queen Constance of Arles. Constance clearly felt strongly about the matter; she struck her heretic chaplain in the face with her staff so hard that she knocked his eye out. But it is to the next step that I wish to draw attention: when the canons were convicted, King Robert told the queen to stand outside the church doors to keep the commoners from breaking in and killing them.[74] Doughty as she obviously was with her staff, it was not physical force that kept the mob at bay. Rather it was the fact that Constance was queen: her royal authority deterred the would-be lynch mob. This homely example perhaps sums up best how kings employed the women of their family to help with the work of government—queens (and princesses) set their hands to whatever was needed, because their innate authority commanded respect.

Peace-Weavers

One of the most visible roles of royal women was mediation and negotiation, especially to promote peace. They were usually connected by blood to one or more of the parties involved in disputes, especially thanks to the international nature of royal marriage in the tenth century. Additionally, they usually had, as we have seen, a dense web of connections in both the secular and the ecclesiastical world. Above all, however, it was very difficult to refuse a direct request from a queen, just as it was practically impossible to evade a direct request from a king.[75]

Chroniclers (and the contemporaries about whom they wrote) seem to have regarded women as "natural" peacemakers and the task of resolving disputes as highly proper for a good woman. Both *vitae* of Mechtild stress that Queen Edgitha mediated peace between Otto I and his mother (and probably exaggerated the tensions between them to make the point).[76] Since this mediation took place fully within the family, it gives us no insight into royal women's public role, but only into how the role of peacemaker was valued. But queens could also mediate disputes that involved their

spouses. For example, in 953 Duke Hugh the Great of Francia sent emissaries seeking peace with King Louis IV of France. Instead of dealing directly with the king, the emissaries approached Queen Gerberga, asking her to intercede and arrange a parlay—which she did.[77] This instance fits into a long historiographical stereotype of a king's wrath assuaged by the queen's mild pleas, perhaps the most famous case of which is Philippa of Hainault's much later intercession to save the lives of the Burghers of Calais early in the Hundred Years War. This scene of reginal intercession was played out so many times that one can imagine kings and queens putting their heads together beforehand and deciding how to stage the scene: "Okay, I'm going to start by scowling and stamping around and threatening to chop off their heads. Then you come in … be sure to cry … and beg me to calm down and listen."

Sometimes family matters and international affairs intersected, as was almost certainly the case of the great Ottonian family meeting held in Cologne in 965. According to the hagiographer Ruotger, the emperor came in that year to celebrate Pentecost with his brother, Archbishop Brun. Otto's mother Mechtild also came for the event, and one can presume that Adelheid was present. Otto's sister Queen Gerberga and her sons King Lothar of France and his younger brother Charles met them there. But the French Flodoard describes the event as a great assembly, suggesting more complex motives than a mere family get-together. The event seems to have had considerable significance, rating a description not only in Ruotger's *vita* of Brun and Flodoard's *Annals* but also in Adalbert of Magdeburg's chronicle and the first *vita* of Queen Mechtild.[78] It is very likely that once again Gerberga was seeking her brothers' help in dealing with the forces arrayed against her.

Examples of royal females negotiating can be found in a number of other contexts. An example from early in Theophanu's regency provides some valuable detail. Gerbert reports in a letter that in 988 King Hugh of France sent his wife Adelheid to negotiate on his behalf with Theophanu and that Hugh agreed in advance to accept the decision the two women reached.[79] Other women were sent (or went on their own accord) considerable distances to broker peace. In fact, the aging Empress Adelheid's final journey was to mediate peace between her nephew King Rudolf III of Upper Burgundy and his rebellious vassals, a task that she brought to a successful conclusion shortly before her death.[80] After Henry II came to the throne, it was his queen who intervened and restored his rival Duke Hermann of Alamannia to royal favor, according to the Hildesheim

annalist.[81] As a final example, Kunigunde in 1020 made peace between her husband Henry II and the rebellious Bernhard Billung.[82] A generation later, the dowager empress Agnes served as a legate for two reforming popes, Alexander II and Gregory VII, going twice to Germany to negotiate between her son Henry IV and the papacy.[83]

Counselor in Chief

Medieval kings were expected to seek and act upon advice. Most often, modern scholars speak of a kingdom's magnates in this regard, stressing the catastrophic consequences if kings failed to heed the counsel of their greatest nobles. Gerd Althoff in particular has argued that the political power of these helpers in the work of government—both secular and ecclesiastical—rose significantly in the ninth and tenth centuries, to the point that magnates regarded themselves as partners in rule.[84] But women as well, especially wives, were also expected to give counsel. There was a long tradition of respect for women's advice; as early the second century Tacitus in his *Germania* praises women for their wise counsel and men for having the sense to take their advice.[85] Women's roles in converting the men of their families were also long recognized, as the eleventh-century chronicler Adhémar still remembered of Clovis' queen Clothild, who advised her husband before his decisive battle with the Goths to build a church in honor of St. Peter to win the saint's aid in battle.[86] Carolingian moralists, such as Jonas of Orléans, stressed the importance of sagacity in a wife, so she could give advice to her husband. Indeed, they spoke of the wife's absolute duty to give counsel to her spouse, just as a magnate owes his advice to the king.[87]

In the tenth century, the royal wife was uniquely placed to advise her husband. Above all, she was *there*. Since there was no fixed capital, the court was constantly on the move, rarely spending more than a fortnight in one place. Access to the king was limited for most people, but the queen always had his ear. She could even join in conversations between the king and his magnates, as we can see in the *Casus s. Galli* and Gerhard's *vita* of Ulrich of Augsburg.[88] Hrotsvit gives as a reason for Liudolf's rebellion in 953–54 that his supporters were afraid that Otto I's new wife Adelheid and his brother Henry were working together to monopolize counsel to the king, apparently a very real worry.[89]

Interventions in documents provide visible evidence of the queen's influence. As we have seen, great lords and occasionally great ladies were

frequently listed in documents as interceding for a gift to be made. They provide valuable evidence for who was present at court, since interventions could only be made in person. Sometimes these interventions move beyond the merely formulaic, as for example in a series of documents between 962 and 967 in which Otto I is said to have acted "having consulted" with Adelheid. Similarly, Otto II sometimes specifically acted with the "counsel" of Theophanu and not just at her intervention.[90] Still, as Glocker points out, it would be silly to credit Adelheid with more political influence than a woman like Queen Mechtild just because the younger woman intervened in more documents.[91] Style in intervention changed over time—but the wife's presence at her husband's side remained constant.

No fewer than four narrative sources tell of Queen Mechtild's profound influence over her husband. Widukind calls the queen "distinguished, most noble, and singularly wise,"[92] implying that her wisdom had some practical application. The *vitae* of Mechtild do not lay similar stress on her wisdom, but rather emphasize how the queen constantly counseled Henry I in goodness. Thus, according to the *vita antiquior*, Mechtild would intercede with the king to keep criminals from being executed, assuaging Henry's wrath through her gentle requests. The later *vita* adds that, if Henry couldn't satisfy Mechtild's wishes because of an assembly's decision, he "would lament inwardly that he had upset her."[93] Both *vitae* stress the constancy of Mechtild's advice, the *vita posterior* author reporting that on his deathbed Henry thanked God for his ever-faithful queen, expressing his gratitude for the way she calmed his anger and gave him good advice.[94] Thietmar, for once less flowery than his contemporaries, says only that as Henry I's wife Mechtild "was useful to him in both divine and human matters."[95]

Edgitha, Otto I's first wife, did not intervene in many documents, perhaps because of the birth of her two children and of course her early death. Nonetheless, she too appears in narrative sources as her husband's counselor. Thietmar of Merseburg in particular notes that Edgitha urged Otto to establish an archdiocese at Magdeburg (which in fact constituted part of her *dos*). As Otto founded the monastery of St. Mauritius, which later grew into the archdiocese, according to Thietmar Edgitha helped "as much as she could."[96] But it is the garrulous Saint-Gall chronicler who gives the best insight into the queen's role, in a story he tells of Edgitha. According to his account, Otto I made a man named Burchard abbot of Saint-Gall. Otto took the newly-designated abbot into the church and

presented him to Edgitha, asking for her favor, and only then invested Burchard with the abbot's pastoral staff. The queen then sat the new abbot beside her, whereupon he matter-of-factly performed a bit of simony upon which later generations would have frowned. Burchard offered Edgitha a precious gold chalice as a gift if she could arrange that the monastery of Pfäfers also be given to him. In the account, Edgitha promised to bring up the matter with her husband, although noting that it would be better to wait for a while instead of making the request right away.[97] The author, Ekkehard IV of Saint-Gall, was writing a considerable time after Edgitha's death, and he is not noted for his great accuracy. But his assumptions about how relations with a queen worked are ultimately more important than whether Edgitha really took bribes. The Saint-Gall monk took as absolutely routine that a queen could influence her mate in this way.

The *Casus s. Galli* also provides several examples of Adelheid's influence over Otto I. The author actually puts into Adelheid's mouth that she is giving Otto counsel.[98] The way the monk imagines this advice is particularly charming and sheds light on the way contemporaries imagined gender relations in the royal family at work. Adelheid favored a particular candidate as the next abbot of Saint-Gall. So, after everyone else was sent out of the room, she set about persuading her husband, starting "Look here, my ever-loving lord…." She got what she wanted.[99] And this power of persuasion was not just an imaginative *tour de force* by the chronicler. We even have a letter sent to Adelheid, begging for her support. The beleaguered bishop Rather of Verona needed help against his enemy Count Nanno. But instead of writing directly to his ruler, Rather chose to try the path of intercession. As he says in his letter, the wife has influence on her husband, and thus he is trying to enlist Adelheid's help on his behalf.[100]

The flip side of the coin, however, was a tendency to blame the queen when things went wrong. Thus as early as Charlemagne's time, his wife Fastrada was both influential and cruel according to contemporaries, and Einhard blames her for rebellions in 785 and 792.[101] Certainly some gender prejudice is present in such accounts: where men are firm women are often savage; men rebel and women scheme. But for the most part, in the tenth century it was other people's queens who were evil purveyors of bad advice, not the virtuous Ottonian ladies. Good Germans like Widukind were shocked by the Byzantine empress who schemed against her own husband and arranged his assassination.[102] Nonetheless, the really vitriolic accounts were written by non-Germans, above all Liudprand of Cremona

and Raoul Glaber. Liudprand's *Antapodosis* has as its chief target the royal women of Italy. Although his descriptions of their behavior are painted as luridly as possible, these women's partnership in rule with their husbands shines through his pages. Bertha, the mother of King Hugh, won her husband Adalbert II of Tuscany over to "nefarious schemes" and later convinced Adalbert to capture and blind Louis of Provence.[103] Liudprand's main target, however, was Willa, wife of Berengar, "who is properly called a second Jezebel on account of her immense despotism and a child-eating witch on account of her insatiable longing for robbery."[104] The monk Raoul Glaber cannot compete with Liudprand in witty smears, but nonetheless condemns Constance, the wife of Robert the Pious of France, in no uncertain terms. She was, according to Raoul, avaricious and domineering, and ruled her husband. Constance introduced indecent fashions to France and even sowed discord between her own sons.[105] Neither Liudprand nor Raoul appear to have doubted for a moment that royal women had influence; their only complaint was the way in which they exercised the power it was assumed that they could wield. Indeed, Liudprand gave equal credit to Willa for the troubles of Italy in the year 960, speaking of "the savagery of Berengar and Adalbert and also Willa."[106]

Of the imperial ladies of the German house, it was only Theophanu who was accused of giving *bad* advice. The context is Otto II's intervention in southern Italy, which culminated in his crushing defeat at the hands of a Muslim army at the Battle of Cotrone in July 982. Bruno of Querfurt, in his *vita* of Adalbert of Prague (written in c. 1004), blames Theophanu. He reports that Otto II was ashamed that he had listened to his wife and followed her childish advice, mocking the sounder counsel of their elders; only too late did he see where her advice got him.[107] Some modern scholars have taken Bruno's account as evidence that, at Theophanu's advice, Otto II was pursuing a misguided policy to claim the inheritance of Byzantine rule in southern Italy and had thus become embroiled in battle with a powerful Muslim force. But the whole trajectory of Ottonian expansion made it likely that Otto would intervene in the south. Otto I had already gained northern Italy and influence over Rome; indeed, he had already campaigned in the south. And Pope Benedict VII had appealed directly to Otto II for help against Muslim attacks in 980.[108] It is unlikely whether Theophanu's advice, whether childish or not, would have done anything more than help support a decision made on the basis of Ottonian long-term plans and sense of obligation to the papacy. But then Theophanu was a Greek, and some western historians never forgot that she remained essentially foreign.

That one example aside, writers of the tenth and eleventh century in the *reich* were very consistent about the role of the queen. Yes, she was supposed to be fruitful and multiply. But she should also be an intelligent and trustworthy advisor to her husband. Certainly she ought to influence her husband to pursue godly virtues, but her counsel was also recognized as having more directly political elements than that. In short, as Wipo said of Empress Gisela, wife of Conrad II, the queen was the king's "necessary companion."[109] Although much of her power dissipated with her husband's death, her carefully nurtured political savvy could serve an imperial lady well in the uncertainties of a new reign as well.

Notes

1. Recently, scholars have challenged the notion of Ottonian "statelessness." See for example Andreas Kränzle, "Der abwesende König: Überlegungen zur ottonischen Königsherrschaft," *FMSt* 31 (1997): 120–57, who makes the straightforward argument that the Ottonian *reich* was too large for the king to rule by personal presence (p. 124). Bachrach develops this argument, pointing out how much Otto I in particular accomplished and rejecting an "either/or" approach that has assumed that because the Ottonians worked hard on sacral presentation they must not have had well-developed administrative structures. David Bachrach, "Exercise of Royal Power in Early Medieval Europe: The Case of Otto the Great, 936–73," *Early Medieval Europe* 17.4 (2009): 389–419. More traditional understandings of limited Ottonian government can be found in Hagen Keller, "Reichsorganisation, Herrschaftsformen und Gesellschaftsstrukturen im Regnum Teutonicum," in *Il secolo di ferro: Mitto e realtà del secolo 10* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull' Alto Medioevo, 1991), 172–73 on the vanishing of royal offices. See also Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 16–17.
2. Gerd Althoff, "Das Bett des Königs in Magdeburg: zu Thietmar II,28," in *Festschrift für Berent Schwineköper zu seinem 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Helmut Maurer and Hans Patze (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1982), 141–53 gives a striking example of a noble finally protesting Otto I's many years in Italy.
3. Jean Verdon, "Les veuves des rois de France aux Xe et XIe siècles," in *Veuves et veuvage dans le haut Moyen Âge*, ed. Michel Parisse (Paris: Picard, 1993), 187. The best overview study of the French queens of this period is Carsten Woll, *Die Königinnen des hochmittelalterlichen Frankreich, 987–1237/38* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002).

4. See Silvia Konecny, *Die Frauen des karolingischen Königshauses* (Vienna: Verband der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1976), 65–70.
5. Hincmar of Rheims, *De ordine palatii*, ed. Thomas Gross and Rudolf Schieffer, MGH Fontes iuris germanici, 3 (1980), 72–74. See the discussion in Janet L. Nelson, "Les reines carolingiennes," in *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes à Byzance et en Occident (VIe–XIe siècles)*, ed. Stéphanie Lébecq, et al. (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Centre de recherche sur l'Histoire de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest, 1999), 122.
6. Agobard of Lyons, *Libri duo pro filiis et contra Iudith uxorem Ludovici pii*, MGH SS 15, 1: (2) 277. It is interesting that such a positive statement about what a king's wife ought to be should be found in a treatise aimed against Empress Judith, second wife of Louis the Pious, but Agobard objected to Judith in particular rather than to strong queens in general.
7. See Franz-Reiner Erkens, "'Sicut Esther regina'. Die westfränkische Königin als consors regni," *Francia* 20.1 (1993): 16. Erkens' source for this argument is Charlemagne's capitulary *de villis*. See *Capitulare de villis*, MGH Capitularia regum Francorum 1 (1883): 83–91, esp. c. 16 (p. 84) and c. 47 (p. 87). Michael J. Enright, "Lady with a Mead-Cup: Ritual, Group Cohesion and Hierarchy in the Germanic Warband," *FMSt* 22 (1988): 170–203 provides a classic appreciation of early medieval queenship.
8. Thietmar, (III.21–22) 124–26.
9. Paolo Delogu, "'Consors regni': un problema carolingio," *Bulletino dell' istituto storico Italiano per il medio evo e archivio Muratoriano* 76 (1964): 80.
10. Ibid., 57; Fredegar, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its Continuations*, ed. and trans. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1960), (47) 39 for Chlothar.
11. Kenneth G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 33–34.
12. Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 49.
13. Delogu, "'Consors regni,'" 77–78.
14. Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositio in librum Esther*, PL 109: (4) 657.
15. See Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 93.
16. Delogu, "'Consors regni,'" 86–9, who notes that Ermengard's sister-in-law Ermentrude (wife of Charles the Bald) also received the title.
17. D Lothar I 101 (March 16, 848); Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Die Frau als Herrscherin in ottonisch-frühsalischer Zeit," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Anton von Euw (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum, 1991), 2: 249.
18. Earenfight, *Queenship*, 4.

19. Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke, *Notwendige Gefährtinnen. Königinnen der Salierzeit als Herrscherinnen und Ehefrauen im römisch-deutschen Reich des 11. und beginnenden 12. Jahrhunderts* (Saarbrücken: Verlag Rita Dadder, 1991), 2.
20. D Hugh 9, in *I Diplomi di Ugo e di Lotario di Berengario II e di Adalberto*, ed. Luigi Schiaparelli, Fonti per la storia d'Italia, 38 (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1924).
21. Gina Fasoli, *I re d'Italia (888–962)* (Florence: Sansoni, 1949), 163–65. Adelheid is given the title "consorti regni nostri" in D. Lothar 14 (March 31, 950), in *I Diplomi*, ed. Schiaparelli.
22. Fasoli, *I re d'Italia*, 165.
23. Rather of Verona, *Praeloquiorum libri VI*, ed. Peter D. Reid (Turnhout: Brepols, 1984), (II.3) 47; (II.8) 52–53.
24. Johannes Laudage, *Otto der Grosse (912–973): Eine Biographie* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2001), 24.
25. For example, the Hohenaltheim annalist includes Edgitha's death: *Annales Altahenses maiores*, ed. W. Giesebrecht and E. Oefele, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 4 (1891), a. 947, p. 8. Edgitha's demise is the only entry for 947 in the *Annales Hildesheimenses*, ed. George Waitz, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 8 (1878), 20. Adalbert tells of Edgitha's death and how she was buried at Magdeburg with the greatest mourning of the king and all his people. Adalbert, a. 947, p. 163.
26. Widukind, (III.1) 104.
27. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 72 (2004), a. 946, p. 463.
28. Thietmar, (II.4) 42, (II.11) 50. Thietmar also reports how deeply her husband mourned his own niece Liutgard in (VI.85) 376.
29. *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (6) 155–56. Patrick Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1986), 184–200 demonstrates how the *Vita posterior* develops the theme of the couple's matrimonial bond.
30. Thietmar, (II.18) 60, following here David Warner's translation in *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 105.
31. DOI 214 (August 21, 960).
32. Adémar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, ed. Jules Chavanon (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1897), (I.10) 11; (I.19) 24; (I.44) 47.
33. Thietmar, (VII.45) 452.
34. DOI 238; Thilo Vogelsang, *Die Frau als Herrscherin im hohen Mittelalter: Studien zur "consors regni" Formel* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1954), 20–22; Amalie Fößel, "Politische Handlungsspielräume der Königin im hochmittelalterlichen Reich," in *Geschichte des Mittelalters für unsere Zeit*, ed. Rolf Ballof (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2003), 139.
35. For example, DOI 240 (April 2, 962), where Adelheid is named as "our dear wife and sharer in our imperium and rule" (*dilectam coniugem nostram*

imperatricem regnique nostri consortem). There exist a number of variants; for example, Adelheid is "companion (*comes*) in our imperium" in DOI 407 (January 8, 972). In a diploma of 967 that was issued in Ravenna, she is "participant in our imperium." DOI 339 (March 23, 967).

36. DOII 21 (April 14, 972); Walter Deeters, "Zur Heiratsurkunde der Kaiserin Theophanu," *Braunschweigisches Jahrbuch* 54 (1973): 18.
37. DOII 76 (April 29, 974); Amalie Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000), 51–52.
38. Ernst Karpf, *Herrscherlegitimation und Reichsbegriff in der ottonischen Geschichtsschreibung des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), 203; Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, in *Opera*, ed. Joseph Becker, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 41 (1915), (IV.15) 112.
39. Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, *Gesta Ottonis*, in *Opera*, ed. Paul von Winterfeld, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 34 (1902), (1) 205.
40. Widukind, (II.41) 100. See the discussion of this passage in Käthe Sonnleitner, "Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstverständnis der ottonischen Frauen im Spiegel der Historiographie des 10. Jahrhunderts," in *Geschichte und ihre Quellen: FS für Friedrich Hausmann zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Reinhard Härtel (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1987), 118.
41. Ingrid Baumgärtner, "Fürsprache, Rat und Tat, Erinnerung: Kunigundes Aufgaben als Herrscherin," in *Kunigunde—consors regni*, ed. Stefanie Dick, et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2004), 50; Baumgärtner, "Kunigunde. Politische Handlungsspielräume einer Kaiserin," in *Kunigunde—eine Kaiserin an der Jahrtausendwende*, ed. Baumgärtner (Kassel: Furore Verlag, 1997), 22.
42. See above all Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt: Primus, 1997), *passim*. Philip Buc cautions against over-interpreting the evidence of medieval ritual life in *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
43. Thietmar, (II.4) 42.
44. Thilo Offergeld, *Reges pueri. Das Königtum Minderjähriger im frühen Mittelalter* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2001), 653; Hans H. Klein, "Theophanu Coimperatrix," *Der Staat: Zeitschrift für Staatslehre, öffentliches Recht und Verfassungsgeschichte* 32 (1993): 229–30.
45. Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 653.
46. Rudolf Schieffer, "Otto II. und sein Vater," *FMSt* 36 (2002): 256, 262.
47. Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, ed. Hans F. Haefele (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), (146) 282–84.
48. Dominique Iogna-Prat, "Politische Aspekte der Marienverehrung in Cluny um das Jahr 1000," in *Maria in der Welt*, ed. Claudia Opitz, et al. (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 1993), 246–47.

49. Thietmar, (IV.23) 158.
50. *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (3) 151–52.
51. See especially the analysis in Gerd Althoff, "Widukind von Corvey: Kronzeuge und Herausforderung," *FMSt* 27 (1993): 253–72 and Karl F. Morrison, "Widukind's Mirror for a Princess—An Exercise in Self Knowledge," in *Forschungen zur Reichs-, Papst- und Landesgeschichte*, vol. 1, ed. Karl Borchardt and Enno Bünz (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1998), 49–71.
52. Vogelsang, *Die Frau als Herrscherin*, 27.
53. Thietmar, (IV.41) 178.
54. *Annales Hildesheimenses*, a. 997, p. 27.
55. Thietmar, (IV.41–42) 178–80.
56. Edmund Stengel, "Die Grabinschrift der ersten Äbtissin von Quedlinburg," *Deutsches Archiv* 3 (1939): 362; Gerd Althoff, "Ottonische Frauengemeinschaften im Spannungsfeld von Kloster und Welt," in *Essen und die sächsischen Frauenstifte im Frühmittelalter*, ed. Jan Gerchow and Thomas Schilp (Essen: Klartext, 2003), 42.
57. Joëlle Beaucamp, "Incapacité feminine et role public à Byzance," in *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes*, ed. Lébecq, 31.
58. Timothy Reuter, "*Regemque quem in Francia pene perdidit, in patria magnifice recepit*: Ottonian Ruler Representation in Synchronic and Diachronic Comparison," in *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im ottonischen Sachsen*, ed. Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1998), 378.
59. Thietmar, (VI.18) 294–96.
60. Hagen Keller, *Ottonische Königsherrschaft: Organisation und Legitimation königlicher Macht* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), 40–41.
61. Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich*, 156–58.
62. *Annales Nivernenses*, MGH SS 13: a. 958, p. 89; Jean Verdon, "Les femmes et la politique en France au Xe siècle," in *Economies et sociétés au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1973), 111.
63. Cesare Manaresi, ed., *I Placiti del "Regnum Italiae"*, vol. 2 (Rome: Istituto storico italiano, 1960), #181, 169–75; #206, 240–52; cf. Daniela Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern. Funktionen und Aufgabenfelder von Frauen in der ottonischen Herrscherfamilie (919–1024)* (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2003), 115; Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich*, 156–58.
64. Baumgärtner, "Kunigunde," 26.
65. Flodoard of Rheims, *Annales*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1905), a. 945–46, pp. 96–100; see also Verdon, "Les femmes et la politique," 109.

66. Flodoard, a. 948, 112. Simon MacLean provides a thorough analysis and appreciation of Gerberga's role in *Ottonian Queenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), esp. 74–94.
67. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*, 117–18.
68. Thietmar, (VII.23) 424.
69. Adalbert, a. 962, pp. 171–72.
70. Peter Hilsch, "Zur Rolle von Herrscherinnen. Emma Regina in Frankreich und Böhmen," in *Westmitteleuropa—Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. Winfried Eberhard, et al. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1992), 86.
71. Thietmar, (VI.81) 370; Baumgärtner, "Kunigunde," 24.
72. Thietmar, (VII.40) 446–48.
73. Jäschke, *Notwendige Gefährtinnen*, 108.
74. Penelope Ann Adair, "Constance of Arles: A Study in Duty and Frustration," in *Capetian Women*, ed. Kathleen Nolan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 15.
75. A good example is when Henry II could not proceed with his beloved project of establishing the diocese of Bamberg because the bishop of Würzburg refused to alienate land for the new diocese. The emperor resolved the impasse by kneeling to the bishop, a "request" that had the force of an absolute demand. Ernst-Dieter Hehl, "Der widerspenstige Bischof. Bischöfliche Zustimmung und bischöflicher Protest in der ottonischen Reichskirche," in *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im ottonischen Sachsen*, ed. Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1998), 295–96.
76. Karl J. Leyser, "The Ottonians and Wessex," in *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, ed. Timothy Reuter (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 90.
77. Flodoard, *Annales*, a. 953, 135.
78. Ruotger, *Vita Brunonis archiepiscopi Coloniensis*, ed. Irene Ott, MGH SS rer. Germ. N.S. 10 (1951), (42) 44; Flodoard, *Annales*, a. 965, p. 157; Adalbert, p. 175, *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (11) 133.
79. Gerbert of Aurillac, *Die Briefsammlung Gerberts von Reims*, ed. Fritz Weigle, MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 2 (1966), Letter 120 (July 988), 147–48.
80. Constance Bouchard, "Burgundy and Provence, 879–1032," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 342; Karl Josef Benz, "À propos du dernier voyage de l'impératrice Adelaïde en 999," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 67 (1972): 87.
81. *Annales Hildesheimenses*, a. 1003, p. 29.
82. Baumgärtner, "Fürsprache, Rat und Tat, Erinnerung," 55.

83. Mechthild Black-Veldtrup, *Kaiserin Agnes (1043–1077): Quellenkritische Studien* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995), 1.
84. See for example Gerd Althoff, "Otto der Große und die neue europäische Identität," in *Der Hoftag in Quedlinburg 973*, ed. Andreas Ranft (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), 13. Thietmar especially stresses the frequency with which kings acted upon the advice of their leading men, for example at 2: 8.
85. See background discussion in Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, 67.
86. Adémar of Chabannes, *Chronique*, (I.16) 19.
87. Régine Le Jan, "L'épouse du comte du IXe au XIe siècle: transformation d'un modèle et idéologie du pouvoir," in *Femmes et pouvoirs*, ed. Lébecq, 68, citing Jonas of Orléans' *De inst. laicali* (PL 106).
88. Knut Görich, "Mathilde—Edgith—Adelheid. Ottonische Königinnen als Fürsprecherinnen," in *Ottonische Neuanfänge*, ed. Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2001), 260–61; Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, 119; Gerhard of Augsburg, *Vita Sancti Uodalrici*, ed. and trans. Walter Berschin and Angelika Häse (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1993), (I.21) 246.
89. Hrotsvit, *Gesta Ottonis*, 225.
90. Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich*, 136–37; e.g., DOII 179 (June 27, 978).
91. Winfrid Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen und Ihre Bedeutung in der Politik* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1989), 88.
92. Widukind, (I.31) 43.
93. *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, (3) 118; *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (5) 154–55.
94. *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (8) 159.
95. Thietmar, (I.9) 14.
96. Ibid., (II.3) 40.
97. Ekkehard IV, *Casus sancti Galli*, (86) 176–78.
98. Ibid., (145) 282.
99. "Vide, domine semper amande…." Ibid., (129) 250.
100. Rather of Verona, *Die Briefe des Bischofs Rather von Verona*, ed. Fritz Weigle, MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit, 1 (1949), Letter 31, p. 179; Görich, "Mathilde—Edgith—Adelheid," 260.
101. Janet L. Nelson, "Women at the Court of Charlemagne: A Case of Monstrous Regiment?" in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John C. Parsons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 53–54.
102. Widukind, (III.73) 149.
103. Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, (I.39) 28–29, (II.39) 54–55.
104. Ibid., (III.1) 74.
105. Rodulfus Glaber, *Historiarum libri quinque*, ed. and trans. John France, et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), (III. 32) 152; (III.34) 156; (III.40) 164–66.

106. Liudprand, *Historia Ottonis*, in *Opera*, ed. Becker, (1) 159.
107. Bruno of Querfurt, *S. Adalberti Pragensis Episcopi et Martyris Vita Altera*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasinska (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydownictwo Naukowe, 1969), (10) 9; Johannes Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich," in *Köln—Stadt und Bistum in Kirche und Reich des Mittelalters*, ed. Hanna Vollrath and Stefan Weinfurter (Cologne: Böhlau, 1993), 158.
108. Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, 800–1056* (London: Longman, 1991), 177.
109. Matthäus Bernards, "Die Frau in der Welt und die Kirche während des 11. Jahrhunderts," *Sacris erudiri* 20 (1971): 50–54; Wipo, *Gesta Chuonradi*, in *Opera*, ed. Harry Bresslau, 3rd ed., MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 61 (1915), (4) 25.

CHAPTER 9

984

Despite all of the empresses' experience and their high position in Ottonian Germany, conditions did not appear favorable for a female regency when Otto II died prematurely on December 7, 983. It was certainly unusual for a child as young as the three-year-old Otto III to assume the throne, but he had already been crowned as junior king before word crossed the Alps of his father's death. The existence of a king—physically present in Germany but unable because of his age to rule—created a much more dangerous situation than simply having a king who was absent in Italy for long periods. Germany had experienced absentee kings without any significant sense of crisis, including the departure of Otto II for Italy in late fall of 980, never to return. A royal *presence* was considered desirable, to be sure, as can be seen from the decision to send the toddler Otto III to be crowned at Aachen on Christmas Day 983. But the kingdom continued to function with governmental decision-making only taking place outside of Germany.

A child king was a different matter. Absentee kings retained legal control over the royal fisc and of course their power to command the services of both ecclesiastical and lay magnates, as can be seen in Otto II's call for additional troops from Germany's bishops and abbots shortly before the Battle of Cotrone. By contrast, whoever controlled a child king would become master of royal resources both material and immaterial by acting in the king's name. Competition for control of a child king was a real possibility, leading even to the specter of civil war. Therefore the question of who would control Otto III and the *reich* was vital and pressing.

P. G. Jestice, *Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty*, Queenship and Power, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77306-3_9

It is in the events of the year 984 and their aftermath that the true extent of the empresses' authority and position can be seen most clearly. Especially Theophanu, as the young Otto III's mother, might have been thought to have a natural right to serve as the child's *de facto* regent. The regency of women was in fact quite normal, including in the extended Ottonian family: Otto I's sister Gerberga had served as regent for her son Louis V of France; Duchess Judith of Bavaria controlled the duchy on behalf of her son when her husband Duke Henry died at a young age. But the situation in 984 was not "normal" and several points militated against a female regency at the time. The first and most obvious strike against Theophanu as regent was military. The cream of the Ottonian army had been cut down in the disastrous Battle of Cotrone in southern Italy in July 982. Hard on the heels of that calamity had followed a major Slav rebellion in 983 that at a stroke had erased decades of Ottonian advances into Slavic lands. Although the Abodrite and Liutizi "rebels" seemed content with cleansing their own lands of the German presence rather than overrunning the *reich*'s eastern border, the military situation was far from stable when Otto II died. Under such circumstances, it would hardly have been surprising if many looked for leadership to a strong warrior.

A second strike against Theophanu that would have made her regency less desirable was that she apparently remained too foreign to suit at least some people in positions of power. After only a decade in the *reich*, Theophanu was still identified as a Greek and probably still had some cultural baggage that, as we will see, made her seem alien to a society that on the whole was ready to believe the worst of the Greeks.

What must have seemed like the final, irrefutable strike against Theophanu as regent, though, was that she did not have physical control of her son at the time of her husband's death. When Otto II died on December 7, 983, his family was widely dispersed. Otto's wife Theophanu was with him in Rome. His mother the dowager empress Adelheid was at her usual home in Pavia. His sister, Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg, was also in Italy. Otto and Theophanu's young daughters were with caregivers in Germany. And the child Otto was in Germany, en route to Aachen for his royal coronation. Only one adult member of the family was in Germany when the news arrived of Otto II's death. And therein lay the problem that caused the throne crisis of 984. That Theophanu was able to become regent under those circumstances, rule successfully, and then pass control of the young Otto III on to Empress Adelheid is an extraordinary tribute to the power and position of the women of the Ottonian family.

The Threat

Henry "the Quarrelsome" was the son of Otto I's brother Henry of Bavaria; the nickname was not contemporary, but suits him well.[1] He clearly had an axe to grind with his cousin Otto II. As the author of the *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium* understood the original tension between the two, its origins went back to the time of the junior Otto's succession. When Otto I died in 973 and Otto II succeeded him, Henry was already duke of Bavaria and resented seeing his younger cousin on the throne. Thus Henry tried to control the inexperienced king and rebelled when he failed.[2] It is unlikely that Henry was trying to claim the throne (after all, Otto II had been a crowned and anointed king and emperor already for a number of years), but he certainly may have demanded major concessions, trying to take advantage of the junior Otto's perceived weakness. Henry rebelled in 974, but when he was summoned to imperial judgment he obeyed the summons, as a result of which he and his confederates were imprisoned. Henry raised the flag of rebellion again in 976, and yet again in August 977. When Henry was forced to submit a final time in 978 his duchy of Bavaria was confiscated, and he was imprisoned yet again. There he remained, in the custody of Bishop Folkmar of Utrecht, at the time of Otto II's death at the end of 983.[3]

Henry had good reason to feel aggrieved by the beginning of 984. The imperial assembly at Verona the previous Pentecost that had elected Otto III king had also seen the appointment of a new duke of Bavaria, so Henry must have despaired of ever regaining his position.[4] A five-year imprisonment was a long time for a ruler to harbor resentment against a magnate, especially one so closely related to him. Henry may even have thought he had a better right to the throne than Otto II, since Henry's father had rebelled against his brother the first Otto apparently on the grounds that, as he was born after Henry I had become king, he had a better right to the crown.[5] In 984, the fact that the new king after Otto II's death was a toddler opened up much greater possibilities, although the fact that Otto III had already been anointed and acclaimed as king complicated matters.

Henry was Otto III's closest male relative within Germany (King Lothar of France was also a cousin, since Otto I's sister Gerberga was his mother), which placed the Bavarian in a strangely ambiguous position. According to Germanic custom, the nearest male relative should properly serve as guardian for an underage child.[6] But, as Thilo Offergeld cogently argues, the situation in early 984 was not a legal matter but rather essentially political, as Otto III did not need a guardian but rather a *de facto* regent.[7]

When the news of Otto II's death reached Utrecht, Bishop Folkmar immediately freed his illustrious captive, who after all had been Otto II's personal prisoner and thus his imprisonment was invalidated by Otto's death.[8] Henry then proceeded to Cologne, where Otto III was living in the charge of Archbishop Warin. Contemporaries recognized that Henry had a claim to serve as protector of the child. Thietmar says in so many words that the duke received custody of young Otto "as his lawful guardian."[9] The Quedlinburg annalist is rather more detailed in her account. She reports that Henry the Quarrelsome at first *pretended* that by the law of propinquity he was the infant king's proper guardian.[10] For the French chronicler Richer of Rheims (who based his portrait of Henry the Quarrelsome on Sallust's description of Catiline, the famous conspirator of the late Roman Republic), Henry simply stole the young Otto III away.[11] Certainly Archbishop Warin cooperated, turning his young charge over perhaps not so much because of Henry's legal position as the boy's guardian, but because the archbishop was Henry's ally. It is possible that Warin had already sided with Henry in 977; Warin was certainly not particularly close to Otto II and it is unclear why he had been given custody of the child in the first place.[12]

To this point, the empresses could not have played a role in the events that were unfolding so rapidly even if they had wished to do so. Both Adelheid and Theophanu were on the far side of the Alps, in Pavia. Thietmar opens his fourth book with a moving account of how after Otto II's burial in Rome Theophanu had joined her mother-in-law, who had retired to Pavia, for comfort after the terrible loss of her husband.[13] It would have taken time for word to reach Italy that Henry had taken charge of young Otto, and that news by itself need not have caused particular alarm. But even if the dowager empresses had decided to return to Germany as soon as possible, it is likely that the Alps presented an insuperable barrier to aristocratic women's travel until the winter snow melted. When essential, men could usually make their way through the passes, but men had two great advantages—greater physical strength and saddles that would hold them in position and allow them to control their horses. The difficulties of women's travel are underlined by an account Liudprand of Cremona provides about Willa, wife of Adelheid's nemesis Berengar. When the future queen Willa had to flee Italy through the Alps on foot early in her career, she barely survived the experience.[14] Even on a horse, a lady would have enjoyed anything but a safe ride, essentially sitting sideways on a chair slung across her mount's back, as can be seen depicted on

the eleventh-century wooden doors preserved at St. Maria im Kapitol in Cologne, which include a panel of the Holy Family's flight to Egypt with Mary perched on such a contraption (Fig. 9.1). In an age long before the invention of the sidesaddle, it would have been impractical for a woman to ride at any pace faster than a walk and on any surface that was not nearly level, with someone leading her steed. The empresses probably usually traveled in a litter slung between two horses, but such an equipage would have been hazardous until the passes were clear.

Meanwhile, a clear, visible person in charge of the *reich* was needed without delay. Germany's Slavic frontier had been unstable since the great Liutizi revolt of 983. King Lothar of France would have been delighted to move into German-held Lotharingia, over which German and French kings had fought so frequently in the course of the century. Moreover, northern Italy proved restive, as so often on the demise of its German overlord. On this point, we have first-hand information thanks to the collected letters of Gerbert of Aurillac. Gerbert had been made abbot of Bobbio thanks to Ottonian support. But with the death of Otto II the

Fig. 9.1 Virgin Mary on a Donkey, detail from wooden doors, early eleventh century, S. Maria im Kapitol, Cologne. Source: Bildarchiv Monheim GmbH/ Alamy Stock Photo

learned monk found his position untenable, as he explains in a letter to Pope John XIV that he penned in Pavia in December 983. This letter, which was written within a few weeks of Otto's demise, gives a clear sense of how precarious the political situation was. Gerbert was on his way back to Rheims, and promised to keep the pope apprised of the political situation through letters to Lady Imiza, the pope's confidante.[15] It is noteworthy that the letter was written in Pavia. Gerbert, well known at the Ottonian court, would certainly have paid his respects to the empresses, which makes plausible the idea that once he had completed his journey he would work on their behalf. Gerbert, by the way, made it to Rheims by the end of January or early February (when his letter no. 16 was written), demonstrating that at least an able-bodied man could make it through the Alps that winter. In letter 16, addressed to Abbot Gerald of Aurillac, Gerbert expands on the attack he suffered in Bobbio, telling of the pillaging of churches and attacks on people since the emperor's untimely death. He describes his renewed residence in Rheims as a return to his studies.[16]

A *de facto* ruler was a necessity; the vital questions were who that ruler was to be and, it soon became apparent, what the nature of that person's authority would be. It soon became obvious that Henry the Quarrelsome had some ideas on that subject. But did he want to seize the regency, or did he want to become king himself? Some contemporaries are certain that Henry's goal was not honorable and that he did in fact wish to sit on the throne. Richer of Rheims reports that Henry the Quarrelsome stole away (*rapuit*) the young Otto III, then tried to displace him as king. It has been argued that Richer was not well-informed on the events of 984, but there is no reason why he should not have been. Richer was a monk of Saint-Rémi, and Rheims itself had close Ottonian connections in the tenth century. Richer was an exact contemporary of events; his chronicle extends to the year 995, which was probably about the time he died. Archbishop Adalbero of Rheims was in the thick of the controversy over the German throne, as was Gerbert, who as we have seen was present in Rheims at the time. The objections to Richer's account center on the idea that Richer was claiming that Henry wanted to *invalidate* Otto III's coronation. But displacement and invalidation are certainly not the same thing. What Richer in fact reports is that the German princes fought over who should rule—not who should be king—since Otto was of insufficient age. In other words, Richer's account could have meant no more than a debate over who would do the work of government, while his description of Henry's attempt to displace the child could be an allusion to Henry's desire to make himself *de facto* or perhaps senior king.[17]

Franz-Reiner Erkens' argument that Henry the Quarrelsome's goal was to be joint ruler with Otto III has considerable merit.[18] As we have seen, two rulers—a senior one who did the work of government and a junior figurehead—were well-known in the *reich*, since Otto II had spent most of his childhood and young adulthood as just such a junior co-ruler, and that was also his own intention in having Otto III crowned at such a tender age. Even closer parallels can be seen in the contemporary Byzantine Empire. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus was sidelined as a child by the powerful general Romanos Lekapenos who made himself senior emperor; Constantine only established himself as ruler in fact as well as name in 944 after Romanos' death. Similarly, Nikephoros Phokas married the dowager empress in 963 and had himself crowned as senior emperor to the young Basil II and Constantine VIII, controlling the government until his death. Western Europeans were well aware of this Byzantine practice, Gerbert in a letter even suggesting that Henry was aspiring to joint rule "in the Greek fashion."[19] Certainly Byzantine-style "shared" kingship, if Henry had been able to win acceptance for the idea, would have been an elegant solution to the problem of supplying a ruler who could stabilize the *reich*. There was no precedent at all for "invalidating" a coronation, and both Church teaching and a weight of anecdote from across the Middle Ages testify that the sacrament of unction is permanent. The great nobles had sworn oaths of loyalty to little Otto on the occasion of his coronation, and invalidating such oaths would have been impossible. The child, if he had been allowed to live, would have been the figurehead for every rebellion for decades to come; if Henry had his cousin quietly killed it would have been regarded as an infamous and indeed sacrilegious act. Shared rule would have made those issues moot. But there were two impediments to success: Henry was willing to give away too much to bring his dream to fruition, and the western model was not of a strong man seizing power under the pretext of shared rule, but rather of a "safe" person safeguarding the throne for a child. Such a safe person had to be someone who could not aspire to the crown personally, in other words a churchman … or a mother.

Whether his goal was the crown or the regency, Henry had acted swiftly, gaining control of young Otto. He then took a series of steps to win support, making alliances where he could. But his choices certainly would not have endeared him to many Germans. Richer reports that Henry tried to make a deal with King Lothar—offering him Lotharingia in return for his aid.[20] According to Richer, Lothar refused (perhaps because those around

Lothar, including Gerbert, soon convinced him to change his mind), but the author of the *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium* reports that the two reached an agreement that allowed Lothar to seize the cities of Verdun and Liège.[21] But many Lotharingian nobles preferred German rule and quickly moved to block Lothar's annexation. At the head of this anti-Lothar coalition was Beatrice, widow of Duke Frederick of Upper Lotharingia, at the time serving as regent for her minor son Dietrich. A forceful woman whom Gerbert calls "lady duke" (*domina dux*), Beatrice could muster considerable support, as could Count Gottfried of Verdun.[22] Lothar was soon convinced that he could make little headway in what had become conquest rather than peaceful annexation and threw his support instead to Otto III.[23]

Henry's choice of allies on the eastern border of the *reich* must have been born of necessity, because they were also unlikely to be popular. He created alliances with a number of Slavic princes. Boleslas of Bohemia and Mieszko of Poland, whose lands bordered on the massive duchy of Bavaria, had long been Henry's allies, supporting him as early as his 974 conspiracy against Otto II.[24] They rallied to Henry's banner again in 984, Henry ignoring the fact that Boleslas had used the political uncertainty after Otto II's death as an opportunity to reoccupy Meißen and drive out its German bishop. Alliance with a westernized, Christian Slav like Boleslas was bad enough, but in 984 Henry also allied with the polytheistic Abodrites, who had participated in the great Slav rising of 983. The Saxons, whose lands bordered on Abodrite territory and whose approbation was essential in any claim to power, cannot have regarded such an alliance with equanimity.[25]

Enter the Empresses

From an early stage of the throne crisis, the empresses had supporters who wished to see one or both of them—rather than Henry—in control of the *reich*. The people who came together to resist Henry are often characterized as "pro-Otto III" elements, but since the issue was who would rule for the underage child it is better to regard them as forces for a more traditional, western-style regency rather than the joint monarchy that Henry appears to have had in mind. But who would that regent be? As mentioned, the only precedents in western Europe were for either the dowager queen or a bishop to serve in that capacity. Of those two options, the episcopal choice was the less common. To be sure, Archbishop Hatto of Mainz had governed during the minority of Ludwig the Child, but he had taken

charge at a time when Louis' mother Uota was openly suspected of adultery.[26] To find another example of episcopal regency, one must look forward rather than back, when in 1062 Archbishop Anno of Cologne kidnapped the young King Henry IV and thus seized the regency from the child's mother Agnes.[27] In 984 the archbishop in the strongest position was Willigis of Mainz, primate of Germany and controller of considerable resources. He was also archchancellor and a close confidant of the royal family who may have served as Otto II's tutor for a time. Willigis' birth was relatively low, but only Thietmar saw fit to comment on that.[28] Indeed, Willigis had been left as regent of Germany in both 978 and 980 when Otto II and Theophanu were in Italy.[29] Yet, after a brief period of fence-sitting, Willigis came down in favor of the empresses rather than attempting to stake his own claim. So the "traditional regency" party must have been defined almost from the beginning as a party that wanted Theophanu or Adelheid (or perhaps the two of them together) to serve as regent.

What is surprising, at least from our perspective a millennium later, is that the imperial ladies had the wherewithal to put up a fight for control of the child king and the *reich*, in strong contrast to Uota, the mother of Louis the Child in the ninth century or Agnes, the mother of Henry IV in the eleventh. But the imperial women of the Ottonian dynasty did indeed have extraordinary resources, resources of prestige, of manpower, and of loyalty that could continue to work in their favor even after Otto II's death and even without control of young Otto III as a front for their activities.

The best witness we have for the empresses' ability to act in the charged atmosphere of 984 is a man I like to think of as their "special agent"—Gerbert of Aurillac. Gerbert owed not just the Ottonians but as we have seen the Ottonian women a lot of favors. He demonstrated his loyalty beyond question in the first months of 984. Gerbert of Aurillac had characterized his return to Rheims as a decision made for the sake of his studies, but perhaps in the pertinent letter he was being disingenuous, since after all the addressee was his abbot, who might well have had reservations about Gerbert's uncloistered existence after his expulsion from Bobbio. Certainly by the end of January we can see Gerbert deeply involved in the political affray. The question remains of whether Gerbert was acting on his own behalf, on behalf of Theophanu or Adelheid, or in the service of yet another player on the political stage. Gerbert's letters, although a treasure trove of information on the 984 throne crisis, can be difficult to interpret in part because some of them were written on other people's

behalf, especially for Archbishop Adalbero of Rheims. Gunther Wolf has suggested that Theophanu sent Gerbert purposely to Rheims to garner support for her son, but there is no specific evidence to support this assertion.[30] There is, however, the fact that Gerbert passed through Pavia—and the empresses' court—on his way north. To this should be added the evidence of his letters.

Soon after his arrival in Rheims, either January or February 984, Gerbert wrote to Adelheid. His letter includes a very personal avowal of the monk's fidelity to the dowager empress. As he proclaims, "many are my sins before God"—but he won't sin against "my lady" by rejecting her service. He insists that he has never violated fidelity that he has promised, whether to her or to her son (Otto II), and he promises his services.[31] It is a powerful letter, and the question that immediately arises is why it was written. It is not a begging letter or a quest for aid as Gerbert worked to re-establish himself after his Italian setback. Rather it is a promise of Gerbert's own support in a time of crisis, a crisis that can only have been Henry the Quarrelsome's eruption onto the political scene. At the same time, Gerbert sent a note to the monk Ecemann who was at Adelheid's court, asking the man to explain Gerbert's letters to the empress and to support Gerbert's plans.[32]

These two letters suggest that Gerbert had thrown his support behind Adelheid as the proper protector of the child king, but Gerbert also sent a report to Theophanu. This appeared in an epistle to Lady Imiza, the pope's confidante, a woman who was also clearly connected to the younger empress. Gerbert asks Imiza to tell "my lady Empress Theophanu" that the kings of France will not support the "tyrant" Henry the Quarrelsome.[33] In other words, Gerbert had been collecting information for Theophanu, perhaps at her behest, perhaps out of a desire to be helpful. And there is a warning: Theophanu should quash Henry the Quarrelsome's scheme, because he wants to make himself king under the pretext of guardianship. This letter to Imiza is interesting on several counts. It demonstrates that Gerbert (or Archbishop Adalbero) was working actively to thwart Henry's plans. It suggests that public uncertainty about the propriety of Henry's actions—or even what he was trying to do—may have extended as far as the empresses' court in Pavia. And above all, it states plainly Gerbert's belief that Theophanu *could* quash Henry's pretensions by taking prompt action.

By the end of February or early March it was clear that Archbishop Adalbero and Gerbert were acting together to win the regency for Theophanu. At that time, Gerbert composed a letter on behalf of Adalbero

to Archbishop Egbert of Trier, who was leaning toward Henry's cause. In the letter, Egbert is encouraged to leave the party of men who are characterized as Otto III's enemies. It is in this letter that Gerbert famously asks if perhaps Egbert wants a co-king in the Greek fashion: "Perhaps because he [Otto III] is a Greek, as you say, you wish to institute a co-rule in the Greek fashion," suggesting that indeed the issue at least in Egbert's mind was not whether to be for or against young Otto but who would control the child and kingdom during a long minority. Gerbert engages in a high rhetorical flight, demanding to know what has become of Egbert's oath of fidelity and his memory of all the benefits he had received from the Ottonians. In other words, Gerbert and Adalbero believed that Henry taking charge would ultimately prove to be bad for the child king. Adalbero did, however, recognize that if Egbert turned against Henry he would be put in an awkward if not dangerous position, so he offers Rheims as a refuge in case of persecution.[34]

In letter 27, Gerbert raises the specter of kin-slaughter in the near future if Henry the Quarrelsome is allowed to have his way. In a letter to Archbishop Willigis of Mainz that Gerbert wrote for Adalbero in March 984, Adalbero is clearly uncertain of Willigis' continued fidelity to the child king. In the letter, Gerbert urges Willigis to remember his loyalty and the benefits he has received from the Ottonian kings, quoting Cicero on the foolishness of breaking one's faith. He warns that Henry the Quarrelsome has already sought to kill two Ottos (an overdrawn allusion to his rebellions)—in other words, don't believe him when he says he simply wants to rule on the child's behalf. Adalbero announces that he has entered the lists of the throne crisis in favor of Otto III and has urged the French king to support his young relative.[35] It hardly sounds from this letter that Willigis was the constant supporter of Otto III, the savior of Otto III's throne, as has often been depicted. But again, the letter exposes the ambiguity of the situation. *Was* support of Henry the Quarrelsome really a breach of faith owed to Otto III? Or was it just support for a regency (or co-rulership) plan that could keep a Greek mother from exercising too much power?

Anti-Greek Agitation

To judge from the tone of Gerbert's letters and in light of the authority of the empresses that has been discussed throughout this volume, it is hard to see why anyone supported Henry's claims. Yet he found supporters,

including at least the tentative agreement of a number of bishops including Egbert of Trier, Warin of Cologne, and Giselher of Magdeburg. By contrast, none of Germany's dukes threw in their lot with Henry. The extant histories suggest that Henry faced an uphill battle—but they were all written after the fact with the knowledge that Henry had been defeated. Certainly it would have been a significant issue that the nobles of Germany had already sworn oaths of fealty to the young Otto III and may have suspected Henry of excessive ambition. But there was also a weight of tradition that favored a mother's regency, and a further weight of both authority and power that rested in Theophanu's and Adelheid's hands. It is hard to imagine that Duke Henry would have enjoyed even temporary success if he had not gained physical possession of the child king and if the empresses had not been in Italy at the key moment of his bid for power. Theophanu and Adelheid were both highly public figures, consecrated to rule, in command of considerable resources and moral authority. One must ask why a figure like Archbishop Egbert of Trier would have at least flirted with the idea of a King Henry the Quarrelsome.

One phrase of Gerbert's letter to Egbert has not received sufficient attention. This is Gerbert's sarcastic quip: "Perhaps [you dislike Otto] because he is a Greek, as you say." It certainly sounds as though Egbert had made a public statement of distrust for somebody of Greek heritage. Theophanu was of course Greek. It would have been extraordinary to call the child of a German father a non-German, no matter what his mother's point of origin was. Therefore it is possible that this phrase is a reference not to Otto but to Theophanu, and perhaps provides a valuable clue to why somebody like Egbert would have supported Henry the Quarrelsome's bid for power. Alpertus, the hagiographer of Bishop Dietrich of Metz, states specifically in an account written before 1017 that Theophanu mocked the German army after its defeat at Cotrone and it was that mockery that justified Dietrich in siding with Henry in 984.[36] Taken together, they provide interesting evidence that the issue was indeed not whether magnates were for or against Otto III, but rather were in favor of or opposed Theophanu's regency.[37]

In the tenth century western Europeans did not love the Greeks, even as they recognized the imperial court in Constantinople as a source of prestige. Some of that dislike came to be focused on Theophanu and appears as a thread running through a surprising number of contemporary accounts. Theophanu, to start with, wasn't a porphyrogenita, a daughter born to a ruling emperor. She was the niece of the usurper

John Tzimiskes, a mere Byzantine noblewoman of the third rank or so. This clearly rankled with some. As Thietmar reports, she was "not the longed-for maiden," and the Germans even debated whether they should send her home again.

More important were cultural assumptions about the Greeks, who were frequently branded as treacherous in their dealings with the West and with each other. Both Thietmar and the exactly contemporary Widukind reports that Byzantine authorities were deceitful in their dealings with Otto I. Widukind's critique is especially important because it reflects what westerners thought of Greeks already in the 970s, in the decade before the throne crisis of 984. Widukind tells that Otto I's earlier wife-hunting embassy was at first an apparent success. But then the Greeks "turned back to their traditional guile" and in a surprise attack killed many of Otto's men.[38] Widukind, as can be seen at several points of his chronicle, thought the Greeks were "congenitally deceptive" (as Karl Morrison aptly describes it[39]). The West only eventually got Theophanu (not the longed-for porphyrogenita) thanks to treachery in Constantinople, where the treacherous empress (again Widukind's words) arranged the murder of her husband, working in cahoots with her lover, who then took the imperial throne. A single western chronicler, Marianus Scottus, attributes a better motivation to the empress—it was her first husband, Nikephoros Phokas, who was treacherous, planning to castrate his wife's sons by her first marriage, and she then acted as she did to protect her children.[40] However one looks at it, the verdict is that Greeks are treacherous.

Already in the 970s, a Greek bride might be prestigious, but, because she was Greek, her moral sense was always suspect to western writers. Chroniclers were willing to believe the worst of Theophanu, the more so because the great riches she brought with her from Constantinople were … well … foreign. Thietmar reports that Otto II (and Theophanu's) court was luxury-loving, unlike Otto I's "golden mean."[41] Was this an allusion to Byzantine *haute couture*? It seems quite probable. Already in the 960s Liudprand of Cremona vented his spleen against the Byzantine court with an account, at times hilarious, of Constantinopolitan pretensions, which included ridiculous sleeves and gossamer-thin fabrics (which he describes as full of holes).[42] Such criticism continued unabated. In the mid-eleventh century Peter Damian singled out for mockery a Greek woman married to the doge of Venice who was so finicky that she would not even eat with her fingers but needed a special utensil to lift food to her lips (a fork). God punished her for her overly dainty ways with an early death.[43]

If there were statements in so many words that Theophanu was unsuited because of her Greek blood to serve as regent for her son, they have not survived. The closest we come to such a condemnation is the view Dietrich of Metz apparently held that Theophanu had insulted the defeated army after Cotrone. But it would have been very difficult to make a public statement insulting an Ottonian empress. The habit of respect for members of the ruling family had grown strong, as we have seen. The sacramental nature of the queen's office would have given a taint of sacrilege to any overt attack on either Theophanu or Adelheid. Nonetheless, Theophanu, still in her twenties, had only been in the West for a decade, and although of course she would have learned the language by then, would still have appeared foreign and exotic. This is the flip side of the Ottonian policy to bring in foreign brides for the prestige the alliances would bring them. The women could be *too* foreign, and that could be a reason to exclude them from rule. An interesting analogous case is that of Anne of Kiev, who wed King Henry I of France in 1051. When her husband died in 1060, Anne was excluded from the regency (although her second husband was granted a role on a regency council, so Anne was not completely shunted to the side).[44]

The Most Important Ally

Two generations of German scholars have postulated a great quarrel between Adelheid and her son Otto II, a quarrel caused by Theophanu's supposed persecution of her mother-in-law. A number of historians have marveled that Adelheid and Theophanu managed to set aside their quarrel and work together to protect the child king in 984. However, the evidence for a quarrel is in fact weak and the sources for the throne struggle of 984 make it plain that Theophanu's most important ally in the fight for control of her son was in fact the dowager empress Adelheid.

Adelheid had spent some time at court after her husband Otto I died on May 7, 973. After all, the new king Otto II was barely eighteen and his wife Theophanu was only about thirteen years old; neither had played a meaningful political role during Otto I's lifetime. We can see Adelheid's presence in the number of interventions she made in Otto II's early documents.[45] But over time the younger Otto gained greater confidence, and of course Theophanu grew up. There was simply no place for the widowed Adelheid as a permanent member of the court—a court needed only one queen. Odilo of Cluny's *Epitaphium Adelheide* serves as foundation

for a saga of mother–son alienation. The picture Odilo presents in this highly charged hagiographical work is that the reason for the dowager empress' departure from court was a quarrel so serious that she felt compelled to "flee" to the protection of her brother in Burgundy in 978.[46] At the heart of the problem between mother and son was a supposed hatred that Theophanu felt toward her mother-in-law. But how far should we trust Odilo?

Abbot Odilo of Cluny, writing within a few years of Adelheid's death in 999, tells that after Otto I died in 973, "the empress [Adelheid] together with her son long and auspiciously oversaw the rule of the Roman empire." But discord rose between them, and "the emperor withdrew his affection from his mother." Adelheid in sorrow withdrew from the court. Theophanu is not named as party to this rupture, but she appears soon thereafter, although Odilo always refers to her as "a Greek woman" or "that Greek empress" rather than by name (yet another of the West's frequent jabs against Greeks). It is hard to avoid the impression that the venerable abbot of Cluny, at least, was not fond of Greeks. Odilo says in almost so many words that Theophanu was determined to strip her venerable, saintly mother-in-law of her proper authority.[47] Historians have in general accepted this account, describing Adelheid's decision to go to her brother King Conrad of Burgundy as a "flight."[48]

Odilo's work needs to be taken for what it is, however, a panegyric of a saint and propaganda piece for a very Cluniac image of lay virtue that is hardly distinguishable from that of monks. The proper point of comparison is not historical works but Cluniac hagiography, most notably Odo of Cluny's *vita* of Gerald of Aurillac. Gerald's efforts to live a life of Christlike self-abnegation while still in the world, as Odo presents them, sometimes verge on the ridiculous, as when the earnest count tonsures half his head but keeps the monastic sign hidden under a cap. The whole is simply not very biographical.[49] Similarly, is very hard to find a living, breathing empress in the *Epitaphium Adelheide*. Patrick Corbet points out in *Les saints Ottoniens* that Odilo's life is completely abstract, and that Odilo seems to have barely known the empress.[50] Certainly the text was written well after her death in 999, in fact after the death of her grandson Otto III. The text is a rather maudlin web of biblical citations about suffering and generosity—the theme is beyond doubt Christlike suffering, and the main character seems to bear little resemblance to the historic Adelheid as seen in other primary sources. It seems to be a case of hagiography run wild and should be used with caution.

Other sources that speak of a rift between Otto II and his widowed mother are late.[51] More contemporary narrative and diplomatic sources suggest that Adelheid's presence at court ebbed over time, but without a rupture. Because she was not there she intervened less frequently and therefore her son appeared to do fewer favors for her. The picture that emerges is that Adelheid's gradual withdrawal from affairs was a long and never complete process. Important connections between Adelheid and her son continued in place until his dying day.

Adelheid left Otto II's court in the summer of 978, traveling either to her brother in Burgundy (as Odilo reports in the *Epitaphium*—a destination that reinforces his portrait of an injured woman taking refuge with her family) or to Pavia (according to the *Annales Magdaburgenses*—which makes better sense, since Adelheid in fact spent most of her latter years in Pavia, where she held widespread estates and had founded a major monastery).[52] She had finally retired, although she returned to court for visits. Her good relationship with her daughter-in-law can be seen in Theophanu's immediate turn to the elder empress in Pavia after Otto II's death.

The Coming of the Empresses

While the empresses began their plans to gain control of Otto III, Duke Henry's own schemes ripened. He took control of another Ottonian royal child, the younger Adelheid. It is important to emphasize how essential possession was to Henry's claims. Physical control of the royal children would have been held to neutralize the mother's and grandmother's claims on their behalf. Indeed, in the mid-eleventh century when young Henry IV was kidnapped away from his mother Agnes' control, she was instantly a spent force. But, while much of Theophanu's and Adelheid's power derived from husband or son, they also enjoyed the great number of resources we have explored in this volume. Perhaps Henry the Quarrelsome's most important miscalculation was in thinking the empresses were in fact powerless. After taking charge of Otto III's sister, Henry sought to consolidate his gains by moving toward Saxony, the heartland of Ottonian power. As the Quedlinburg annalist expresses it, Henry's avarice grew, and he tyrannically invaded the kingdom and desired to be consecrated as king.[53] To that end, he made his way to Quedlinburg, the spiritual core of the Ottonian dynasty, the burial place of Henry I and Queen Mechtild. The Ottonian court typically celebrated Palm Sunday at Quedlinburg, and Henry did the same in clear emulation of Otto I and

Otto II. Palm Sunday fell on March 16 in the year 984, so obviously Henry had not wasted any time since he had been released from Utrecht in January. Certainly Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg had not yet had time to reach her home; by Palm Sunday it is likely that the empresses' court had made it as far as Burgundy, working its way toward Germany. Henry enjoyed a positive reception at Quedlinburg, where he was festively received with the royal *laudes*, the ritual acclamations with which a king was hailed. But he was not king, and Quedlinburg was not an appropriate place for royal coronation, which by hallowed tradition could only be performed in Aachen, far to the west.[54]

It was clear by Quedlinburg that Henry was angling at the least to become joint king with Otto III. Two points are particularly telling. The first is that not a single royal document was issued in Otto III's name while Duke Henry controlled him; in other words, Henry declined to act *for* the young king rather than on his own account (which he could not do, since Henry was not yet elected king).[55] The second is that by the time Henry was in Saxony, Otto III was no longer with him, but apparently was being kept at some secure location. It was impossible to act as regent without the presence of the king, so regency was clearly not Henry's intention.[56]

Henry demanded at the Quedlinburg Palm Sunday assembly that the nobles who had gathered elect him king. He gained the support of a number of magnates, including the Slavs Mieszko, Mistui, and Boleslas. But most of those present demurred, saying they would need the permission of the lord to whom they had already sworn oaths—Otto III—before they could serve a new king. They then withdrew, and many of them came together at Asselburg and determined to resist Henry's pretensions.[57]

Was it only at this point that one or both of the empresses was "sent for" to come from Italy? It appears highly unlikely. The Quedlinburg annalist gives a rather ambiguous account. The report tells that Henry tried to take over and, "in the meantime," those true to the king (and by extension to the imperial ladies) sent word to his grandmother Adelheid in Lombardy, asking her to come quickly and help. The word choice of the passage is telling; we are not told what sort of help the empresses could provide, there is just the assumption that their presence would be helpful in some way. The annalist proceeds to comment that the dowager did as requested, returning rapidly "with her daughter-in-law Empress Theophanu, mother of the king," and also her daughter Abbess Mechtild.[58] It is not clear from this account when in the chain of events the formal

message was sent south. Johannes Fried has taken the statement that the message was sent to Adelheid rather than Theophanu as a clear declaration of mistrust of the young Greek empress,[59] although the appearance of the younger empress in the very next sentence of the annal weakens the force of that argument. In other words, whether the people who sent the message desired it or not, Adelheid chose to ally herself with her daughter-in-law. And the annalist leaves open the question of who sent the message. Archbishop Willigis is sometimes hailed as the savior of Otto III's reign, but the Quedlinburg annalist does not mention him in this regard. And it should be noted that perhaps as late as the middle of June Archbishop Adalbero still found it necessary to send a letter to Willigis urging him to support the claim of Otto III's mother to the regency.[60]

The empresses were not yet present in Germany as events continued to unfold in Saxony. Thietmar reports that Henry the Quarrelsome, doubtless discouraged by events in Quedlinburg, sent away the lords who had supported him with generous gifts and then dispatched his close confidant Bishop Folkmar of Utrecht to try to pacify the magnates who had stormed from the assembly. But the bishop found Henry's opponents assembled and ready to fight; he was barely able to arrange a truce.[61] The leader of this group of counter-conspirators was the Billung margrave Bernard I, who had succeeded to his father Hermann Billung's great powers in Saxony in 973. Bernard is not well attested at court; he is only listed as an intervenor in a single extant document (DOII 308). But, like Adelheid, he held lands that ranged especially along the eastern frontier of Saxony and must also have interacted with the royal court during its very frequent visits to Saxony. The nobles who had united in opposition to Henry at Asselburg included only a single cleric, Bernward, who is named as "count and cleric."[62] This was probably the future bishop of Hildesheim, who may have had earlier connections to the Ottonian court (his grandfather was count palatine) and who became Otto III's tutor within a few years.[63] Soon after Bishop Folkmar left them, Henry's opponents seized the fortress of Ala, which was being held by Henry's supporter Ekbert the One-Eyed, where they recovered the child Adelheid as well as considerable treasure.[64]

Henry had still not given up hope. He moved on from Saxony to his own former duchy of Bavaria, where at an assembly near Bürstadt in the second week of May he won over the Bavarian bishops and some of the counts to his cause. Thietmar reports that Archbishop Willigis, Duke Conrad of Swabia, and other great men also attended the event, however,

and threatened Henry with battle if he did not withdraw his claims to the throne. The corollary of that demand was that the empresses should take possession of the boy king and with him the regency. Willigis would have been very familiar with both empresses. Conrad of Swabia, by contrast, was a newcomer among the magnates—Otto II had appointed him duke of Swabia after his predecessor died during the Italian campaign of 982. If either of them ever considered himself as a possible regent in place of Henry the Quarrelsome, extant sources reveal no trace of it. Instead, they threw their lot in with the empresses. Soon after the nobles' ultimatum, the anti-Henry coalition besieged Henry's close friend Count William II of Weimar. Henry sent Archbishop Giselher of Magdeburg (who is thus revealed as his supporter) to try again to arrange a truce. Henry, lacking military support by this time, agreed to turn Otto over to other protectors.[65]

Where were the imperial ladies, and was it possible that they had not set out from Pavia until a message reached them after the Quedlinburg assembly? Gerd Althoff has asserted that the empresses essentially "left the field" to Henry the Quarrelsome, spending half a year in Italy before their return to Germany and were clearly not in a hurry when they did return. Such a characterization is clearly an exaggeration.[66] As we will see, it is likely that the empresses were in Germany by sometime in May, which would make it physically improbable in the extreme that they only set out from Pavia after a German messenger had reached them who only left Quedlinburg after Palm Sunday. The Ottonians did not have an organized system of dispatch riders with stations to change horses, so it is unlikely that a messenger could have covered more than about twenty miles a day, which means he would not have arrived in Pavia for a month. The empresses would then have had quite a journey ahead of them. When they reached Germany, they had King Conrad of Burgundy with them, so their likely route was through the Great St. Bernard Pass, which would have taken them into Burgundian territory at Aosta. The first place in Germany where their presence is clearly attested is Rohr in Bavaria, making for a total distance from Pavia of rather over 700 miles. Even if they and their entourage pushed the pace as much as possible, they are unlikely to have managed more than fifteen miles a day, meaning a total journey of nearly fifty days even if they did not pause at all on the road.[67] They must have set out well before a German messenger reached them. In other words, they cannot have been passive figures, waiting to be presented as figure-heads for Otto III's cause, but rather have taken action of their own accord to resolve the crisis.

A court of necessity traveled much more slowly than an individual messenger or small band, and the empresses' public position would have demanded a suitable entourage, one that numbered in the hundreds. It would have been necessary to prepare the way for such a large party, sending advance notice so their stops along the way could be adequately provisioned. It is instructive to compare the length of time it took Otto I and Otto II to cross the Alps. When Otto I went to Italy for the first time in 951, there is a lacuna in his charters from the last time he is attested in Germany on July 28 to the first evidence of his presence in Pavia on September 23. In 961, Otto vanishes from the diplomatic record for nearly four months while traveling before he resurfaces in northern Italy. He did make the trek from northern Italy to the extreme south of his German dominions (Reichenau) in twenty days in January 965, and the journey from Pavia was accomplished in eighteen days in 972, but that was in August. Otto II seems to have spent two and a half months on the road from Constance to Ravenna in the fall of 980. Such evidence reinforces the argument that the empresses did not wait until they were summoned after Palm Sunday, but rather made their plans and set out as early as possible in the spring.

By the end of May the intensity of Gerbert's diplomatic dealings increased in a way that suggests the presence or at least proximity of the empresses, with Gerbert actively employed as their agent. At that time, there were still some holdouts in Henry's camp, most notably Bishop Dietrich of Metz. Thanks to Gerbert's services as letter-writer, we are treated to a highly heated exchange between Duke Charles of Lower Lotharingia and Bishop Dietrich. When Dietrich reproached Charles for his seizure of the town of Laon (letter 31), Charles responded by hurling a charge of hypocrisy in Dietrich's face, calling him unfaithful to the emperors, another Judas, since he would deprive his own king of his inheritance. Dietrich, says the letter, is an enemy of the state who has perjured himself publicly (letter 32). In letter 33, which he wrote on his own account, Gerbert apologizes for the tone of the preceding epistle, which he had composed in accordance with Charles' wishes. In this last letter, Gerbert was still trying to convince Dietrich to return his allegiance to Otto III.[68]

Sometime between late May and the middle of June Gerbert also wrote on his own account to Archbishop Willigis of Mainz. He asks for a response to a letter from Adalbero of Rheims. But Gerbert also took the opportunity to ask if Willigis could get the empresses (he uses the plural) to recall him to court from what Gerbert characterizes as his exile in France.[69] Why

would he have done so if Willigis had not been somewhere near the empresses at the time? Willigis had certainly not left Germany; he is attested in Bavaria in May. Instead, the letter suggests that the imperial ladies had reached Germany. In the same letter, Gerbert urged that "the lamb" (Otto III) should be committed to his mother rather than a wolf for care.

It seems that by this time discussions were taking place about the form a traditional mother's regency should take, even though Otto III remained in Henry's care, his only bargaining chip to get anything out of the fiasco of his bid for the throne. That circumstance explains Gerbert's urging in his letter to Willigis that Theophanu become little Otto's guardian (and thus *de facto* regent). There was apparently a conference on the subject, although we do not know what success it had. Shortly before the middle of June, Gerbert wrote a letter for Adalbero in which the archbishop promised Bishop Notker of Liège that he would support Otto III's interests in accordance with Notker's wishes.[70] By this point, clearly Notker had gone over to Theophanu. It is very tempting to see the sumptuous gift that Theophanu made to Notker shortly after she secured the regency—the entire county of Huy at the heart of his diocese—as a reward for his support.[71] By this point, it seems that the issue was who the regent would be, not whether there should be a traditional regency.

But truly, who could the regent have been except Theophanu? Of Otto III's male relatives, Henry the Quarrelsome had proven himself clearly untrustworthy. The only other male option was King Lothar of France, who took advantage of the continued uncertainty in June 984 to conquer Verdun.[72] It is conceivable that Bishop Dietrich of Metz, also a kinsman (a nephew of Queen Mechtild), was angling for the regency for himself, but if that was the case he never won any support that is still visible to us today and was perhaps unwell (he died in September 984). More likely, the negotiations in May and June 984 focused on appropriate rewards for support and a smooth transition, rather than a debate over who would rule for the underage king. Most importantly, Henry had to be neutralized in some way, and it is clear that he wanted the restoration of his duchy of Bavaria as a consolation prize (which meant that the current incumbent had to be compensated).

A meeting finally took place between Henry and the empresses at Rohr in Bavaria on June 29, 984. King Conrad of Burgundy was present; since he was both Adelheid's brother and Henry the Quarrelsome's father-in-law, Conrad was ideally placed to serve as mediator. The meeting was

peaceful. Henry turned young Otto over to his mother Theophanu and grandmother Adelheid and renounced his claim to rule. In return, Henry was re-invested as duke of Bavaria (although without Carinthia, which was the consolation prize to the duke who had now been displaced). The final touch was a miraculous star that beamed down from heaven to bless the event.[73] The imperial ladies proceeded in peace to Saxony, and the true beginning of Otto III's reign was soon marked by the issuance of his first royal charters—or rather the first charters of Empress Theophanu acting on her son's behalf.

The struggle for control of child and *reich* was not quite at an end. Apparently early in 985 Duke Henry attempted one last alliance with Lothar of France. A spate of Gerbert's correspondence from April 985 bears witness to ongoing plotting. In short order, the political monk wrote to Bishop Notker of Liège, two Lotharingian counts, and a Lotharingian countess urging them to remain faithful to "Lady Theophanu and to her son." He also wrote to Theophanu, reporting on the infidelity of many of her followers.[74] Henry's plans were once again thwarted, this time apparently by Hugh Capet of France (who was Beatrice of Lotharingia's brother).[75] Final submission came in June 985 at an assembly held in Frankfurt, when Henry formally humbled himself to his young king "in the presence of the imperial ladies who had care for the kingdom, the mother and grandmother of the royal child." In return, yet again the imperial ladies accorded Henry honorable treatment.[76] Even after that point, Henry's erstwhile ally Duke Boleslas of Bohemia continued his attempt to withdraw his allegiance from Otto III, and Otto's minority was punctuated with campaigns on the frontier.

Conclusion

The imperial ladies—Adelheid, Theophanu, and Mechtild—were not physically present during most of the throne crisis of 984. They couldn't be, as the difficulties of winter travel for women and of any travel for the cumbersome royal court kept them south of the Alps as events unfolded. Yet their shadow had a profound effect on the political climate as Henry the Quarrelsome tried to gain control of the *reich*. They (especially the young Otto III's mother Theophanu) were the alternative to Henry's domination. What Henry was trying to do, whether it was an attempt effectively to depose the toddler king or to set himself up as co-ruler in the Greek fashion, was outlandish and unheard of in western Europe.

That there was temporarily effective opposition to Theophanu becoming regent at all can be traced in part to simple geography—that Theophanu was in Italy while her son the new king was in Germany under Henry's control. Theophanu's foreignness—the flip side of the Ottonian rulers' turn to foreign alliances—did give some ammunition to enemies who tried to keep her from the regency. Ultimately, however, neither worries about a Greek regent nor even the fact that the deck was stacked against the empresses from the moment Henry the Quarrelsome took possession of the young king were enough to keep Theophanu from assuming power. The empresses—and the imperial daughter Mechtild—were well connected. They had loyal followers who would represent their cause, among whom Gerbert only stands out because of the survival of his letter collection. Once they had possession of the young king, the dowagers were well positioned to rule effectively.

Notes

1. For the nickname "quarrelsome" or "rixosus" see Friedrich Prinz, *Grundlagen und Anfänge. Deutschland bis 1056* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1985), 161, arguing against Holtzmann's older assertion that the name was contemporary. Robert Holtzmann, *Geschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit (900–1024)* (Munich: Verlag Georg D. W. Callway, 1941), 254–55.
2. *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium*, ed. L. C. Bethmann, MGH SS 7: (I.94) 439. "Sed quia iunior erat, Henricus dux Baioriorum eum totis sed presumptis renisibus contra se cervicem erexit, dedignatus scilicet eius imperio subiugari."
3. Winfrid Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen und Ihre Bedeutung in der Politik* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1989), 175–78; Egan Boshof, *Königtum und Königsherrschaft im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993), 17; Eckhard Müller-Mertens, "The Ottonians as Kings and Emperors," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 254.
4. *Annales Hildesheimenses*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 8 (1878), a. 983, 64.
5. *Vita Mathildis posterior*, (9) 161.
6. Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Die Frau als Herrscherin in ottonisch-frühsalischer Zeit," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Anton von Euw, 2 vols. (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum, 1991), 2: 253; Johannes Laudage, "Das Problem der Vormundschaft über Otto III," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Euw, 263.

7. Thilo Offergeld, *Reges pueri. Das Königtum Minderjähriger im frühen Mittelalter* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2001), 662.
8. See Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 39 for analysis of Henry's position as prisoner. Odilo Engels, "Theophano, the Western Empress from the East," in *The Empress Theophano*, ed. Adelbert Davids (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 35–37 makes the peculiar argument that Henry owed his release to the influence of Empress Adelheid. Chronology makes this extremely improbable; it is hard to see how Adelheid in Pavia could have arranged for Henry's release so quickly. The case that Adelheid was friendly with Henry the Quarrelsome also rests on extremely shaky foundations; for example, she only intervened in a single document along with Henry the Quarrelsome, as long ago as 970. See also the discussion in Ingrid Heidrich, "Die Dotalausstattung der Kaiserin Adelheid im historischen Kontext," in *Kaiserin Adelheid und ihre Klostergründung in* Selz, ed. Franz Staab and Thorsten Unger (Speyer: Verlag der pfälsischen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften, 2005), 123.
9. "patronus legalis." Thietmar, (IV.1) 132.
10. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 72 (2004), 470–71.
11. Richer of Saint-Rémi, *Histories*, ed. and trans. Justin Lake (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), (III.97) 628.
12. Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 661; Rolf Grosse, *Das Bistum Utrecht und seine Bischöfe im 10. und frühen 11. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1987), 109–10.
13. Thietmar, (IV.1) 130.
14. Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, in *Opera*, ed. Joseph Becker, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 41 (1915), (V.10) 135.
15. Gerbert of Aurillac, *Die Briefsammlung Gerberts von Reims*, ed. Fritz Weigle, MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 2 (1966), Letter 14 (Pavia, December 983), 36–37.
16. Gerbert, Letter 16 (Rheims, January–February 984), 38–39.
17. Against Richer's account, see Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 670. Richer, *Histories*, (III.97) 628.
18. Franz-Reiner Erkens, "…more Grecorum conregnantem instituere vultis? Zur Legitimation der Regentschaft Heinrichs des Zänkers im Thronstreit von 984," *FMSt* 27 (1993): 273–89; Werner Ohnsorge, "Das Mitkaisertum in der abendländischen Geschichte des früheren Mittelalters," in *Abendland und Byzanz* (Darmstadt: Hermann Gentrer Verlag, 1958), 271.
19. Gerbert, Letter 26 (Rheims, February–March 984), 49.
20. Richer, *Histories*, (III.97) 628.

21. *Gesta epp. Cameracensium*, (I.105) 444.
22. See Gerbert, Letter 32 (May or June 984), 58.
23. Helmut Beumann, *Die Ottonen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1987), 127–28.
24. Hubertus Seibert, "Eines grossen Vaters glückloser Sohn? Die neue Politik Ottos II," in *Ottonische Neuanfänge*, ed. Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2001), 298–99.
25. Max Spindler, ed., *Handbuch der bayerischen Geschichte*, vol. 1: *Das alte Bayern* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 223–24; Beumann, *Die Ottonen*, 128.
26. Amalie Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000), 319–20.
27. Ian S. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056–1106* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 43–44.
28. See Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 679 for the view that Willigis' birth would have disqualified him for the regency. For Willigis' early career, see especially Heinrich Böhmer, *Willigis von Mainz* (Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1895), 5–15; Werner Goez, "Leben und Werk des heiligen Willigis," in *1000 Jahre St. Stephan in Mainz*, ed. Helmut Hinkel (Mainz: Verlag der Gesellschaft für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte, 1990), 15–32.
29. Gerd Althoff, *Die Ottonen: Königsherrschaft ohne Staat* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2000), 143; Beumann, *Die Ottonen*, 117.
30. Gunther Wolf, "Theophanu und Adelheid," in *Kaiserin Theophanu. Prinzessin aus der Fremde—des Westreichs grosse Kaiserin*, ed. Wolf (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991), 88.
31. Gerbert, Letter 20 (Rheims January–February 984), 40–41.
32. Gerbert, Letter 21 (Rheims January–February 984), 43–44.
33. Gerbert, Letter 22 to Lady Imiza (January–February 984), 44–45.
34. Gerbert, Letter 26, Adalbero to Egbert of Trier (February–March 984), 48–49.
35. Gerbert, Letter 27, Adalbero to Willigis (March 984), 49–50.
36. Alpertus of Metz, *Fragmentum de Deoderico primo episcopo Mettensi*, ed. and trans. Hans van Rij and Anna Sapir Abulafia (Amsterdam: Verloren, 1980), (2) 110; see the discussion in Daniela Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern. Funktionen und Aufgabenfelder von Frauen in der ottonischen Herrscherfamilie (919–1024)* (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2003), 151.
37. For an excellent discussion of the 984 crisis as primarily an issue of guardianship, see Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Fürstliche Opposition in ottonisch-salischer Zeit," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 64 (1982): 307–70, esp. 345.
38. Widukind, (III.71) 148.

39. Karl F. Morrison, "Widukind's Mirror for a Princess: An Exercise in Self Knowledge," in *Forschungen zur Reichs-, Papst- und Landesgeschichte*, vol. 1, ed. Karl Borchardt and Enno Bünz (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1998), 59.
40. Marianus Scottus, *Chronicon*, MGH SS 5: (33) 554–55.
41. Johannes Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich," in *Köln—Stadt und Bistum in Kirche und Reich des Mittelalters*, ed. Hanna Vollrath and Stefan Weinfurter (Cologne: Böhlau, 1993), 156.
42. Liutprand, *Legatio*, in *Opera*, (9) 181, (40) 196–97.
43. Peter Damian, *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, ed. Kurt Reindel, MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 4 (1983), Letter 66 (1059–60), 2: 270.
44. André Poulet, "Capetian Women and the Regency: The Genesis of a Vocation," in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John C. Parsons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 106–107.
45. See Wolf, "Theophanu und Adelheid," 81.
46. Odilo of Cluny, *Epitaphium Adelheide*, ed. Herbert Paulhart (Graz: Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachf., 1962), (7) 35.
47. Ibid.
48. For example, Giuseppe Sergi, "The Kingdom of Italy," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, ed. Reuter, 360.
49. Odo of Cluny, *Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac*, in *St. Odo of Cluny*, trans. Gerard Sitwell (London: Sheed & Ward, 1958).
50. Patrick Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1986), 81–110.
51. *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS 6: 627 and *Annales Magdeburgenses*, MGH SS 16: 154 both report that in 978 Adelheid went to Italy because of discord with her son. Both are, however, twelfth-century works.
52. *Annales Magdeburgenses*, a. 978, p. 154.
53. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, 470–71.
54. On the Quedlinburg *laudes* see Thietmar, (IV.2) 132; Erkens, "…more Grecorum," 288; Gerd Althoff, "Das Bett des Königs in Magdeburg: zu Thietmar II,28," in *Festschrift für Berent Schwineköper zu seinem 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Helmut Maurer and Hans Patze (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1982), 145.
55. Laudage, "Das Problem der Vormundschaft," 266.
56. Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 668.
57. Thietmar asserts that the attempted election occurred at Magdeburg on Easter, but I prefer to follow the evidence of the *Annales Hildesheimensis* in this regard, which speaks of a single assembly at Quedlinburg "in proximo pascha." It seems unlikely that there would have been two formal assemblies separated by a single week. See *Annales Hildesheimenses*, a. 984, p. 24; Thietmar, (IV.1–2) 132.

58. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 984, p. 472.
59. Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich," 168.
60. Gerbert, Letter 34 (late May–mid-June 984), 61–62. The main proponents of the theory that Willigis was the hero of the story are Fleckenstein (who even asserts that it was Willigis who summoned Adelheid and Theophanu) and Beumann. See Beumann, *Die Ottonen*, 129–31; Josef Fleckenstein, "Hofkapelle und Kanzlei unter der Kaiserin Theophanu," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Euw, 2: 307.
61. Thietmar, (IV.3) 134.
62. Gerd Althoff, "Saxony and the Elbe Slavs in the Tenth Century," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, ed. Reuter, 270; Karl Kroeschell, "Theophanu und Adelheid: Zum Problem der Vormundschaft über Otto III," in *Rechtsbegriffe im Mittelalter*, ed. Albrecht Cordes and Bernd Kannowski (Frankfurt a. Main: Lang, 2002), 64.
63. Thangmar, *Vita Bernwardi eipscopi Hildesheimensis*, MGH SS 4: (2) 759.
64. Thietmar, (IV.3) 134.
65. Ibid., (IV.4) 134–36; (IV.7) 138.
66. Althoff, *Die Ottonen*, 154; Althoff, *Otto III*, 36.
67. Dirk Alvermann has calculated the average speed of Otto II and his entourage on their travels as about 20 km per day. *Königsherrschaft und Reichsintegration. Eine Untersuchung zur politischen Struktur von* regnum *und* imperium *zur Zeit Kaiser Ottos II. (967) 973–983* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1998), 166.
68. Gerbert, Letter 31 Dietrich of Metz to Charles (April/May 984), 55–57; Letter 32 Charles to Dietrich (May/June 984), 57–59; Letter 33 Gerbert to Dietrich (May/June 984), 60–61.
69. Gerbert, Letter #34 to Willigis (late May–mid-June 984), 61–62.
70. Gerbert, Letter 30 Adalbero to Notker (before June 11, 984), 53–54.
71. Jean-Louis Kupper, "Notger de Liège. Un évêque lotharingien aux alentours de l'an Mil," in *Lotharingia: Eine europäische Kernlandschaft um das Jahr 1000*, ed. Hans-Walter Herrmann and Reinhard Schneider (Saarbrücken: Kommissionsverlag, 1995), 148. This was the first time a German bishop received the administration of an entire county.
72. Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 682–83.
73. Thietmar, (IV.4) 134–36 and (IV.8) 140; *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 984, p. 473.
74. Gerbert, Letter #56–59 (April 6, 985).
75. Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 683.
76. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 985, pp. 474–75.

CHAPTER 10

Regents

After the throne struggle of 984 was settled, Otto III was able to begin his reign as uncontested king. In the eyes of contemporary writers, the four-year-old boy immediately began to rule. As had been the case in the Germanic world since the Merovingian era, documents were issued in Otto's name, he sent embassies, he even led armies.[1] Only occasionally did chroniclers hint at any sort of debility, as when the Quedlinburg annalist speaks of *rex puerulus*—the boy king—leading a campaign against the Slavs.[2] Even more rarely do Ottonian chroniclers give a hint at who was really performing the tasks of rule as Otto III grew up. Most monastic annals do not even mention that the dowager empresses Theophanu and Adelheid controlled the government in turn for the child ruler. Thietmar's praise of Theophanu for her custodianship of her son's kingdom is extraordinary,[3] as is the Quedlinburg annalist's report that Theophanu brought affairs of state back under control after the disasters of the Battle of Cotrone and the Slav rebellion.[4] More typical is the French chronicler Raoul Glaber's mistaken report that Otto III was already twelve years old when Otto II died and his complete omission of a regency period.[5]

This assumption of competency from the boy ruler makes it difficult and sometimes impossible to discern what Otto III's *de facto* regents actually did in the period before his majority. Nonetheless, it is possible to piece together at least a fragmentary picture of events in the Ottonian *reich* in the period 984–94, enough to trace in broad outline that Theophanu's

P. G. Jestice, *Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty*, Queenship and Power, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77306-3_10

and then Adelheid's role as unnamed regent for the son of their house was a natural next step from the roles they had already occupied in the reigns of Otto I and Otto II. Through examination of extant documents, scattered references in chronicles, and especially thanks to Gerbert of Aurillac's letters, the empress regents emerge at least in outline. Of these sources, the charters are the most voluminous and can shed considerable light on the role of the regents. The reason is that, although the documents were issued in the name of a legally adult Otto III (except for two documents that Theophanu issued in Italy, as will be addressed), the empresses were present. Just as in the reigns of Otto I and Otto II, the empresses are listed as intercessors, humbly requesting that the ruler grant gifts and favors.[6] But the percentage of interventions increases in the documents of the minority, so for example in the seventy documents of Otto III issued in Theophanu's lifetime, she is listed as an intervenor in all but twenty-one.[7] The scope of intervention also broadened during the regency, as Theophanu intervened in all parts of the *reich*, and for all sorts of people and institutions. The people beside whom she appears as intervenor give valuable clues to her alliances.[8]

The same is true of Adelheid's regency, during which more documents were issued and she appeared as intervenor in forty out of the seventy-three. Apparently on two occasions she did not travel with the adolescent king's court; that she could let Otto out of her sight testifies to the stability of the regency. In Adelheid's case, the number of intervenors in typical documents was higher, suggesting that she was more concerned to associate nobles with her rule than Theophanu had been.[9] Nonetheless, Adelheid gives the impression of equal or even less activity overall, since eleven of the forty-four documents in which she intervened were for her own monastic foundation of Selz.[10]

The very act of intervention in documents stressed the continuity of Ottonian lordship, disguising the fact that the ruling lord was a lady. The most usual formula was for the document, speaking in the voice of Otto III, to make a grant "at the petition of our dear mother Theophanu, empress augusta, and at the intervention of X." Sometimes, however, Theophanu's greater role was hinted at, as in a document of 989 in which Otto III (i.e., the scribe writing for him) hails Theophanu as "sharer of our rule" (*consors regnorum nostrorum*).[11]

It is likely that at least Theophanu received oaths of fidelity from the magnates when she gained possession of young Otto III and thus effective control of the government at Werla in 984. While no source says so

directly, the most obvious argument that such was the case is that the nobles did as they were told, for example joining the army at her summons or manning the frontier fortresses.[12] And we know thanks to a letter of Gerbert that Theophanu's contemporary, Queen Emma of France, received such an oath when her husband Lothar died and she was left as effective regent for her underage son.[13]

Like their male counterparts, Theophanu and Adelheid as regents had advisors on whom they relied. Unfortunately, for women in positions of power male counselors were a two- if not a three-edged sword. A strong male advisor—a duke, archbishop, count, or bishop—could draw upon his own network of alliances to assist the regent. But he might try to claim too much power, on the grounds that a woman should not be in a position to rule over men (as happened in the coup when Archbishop Anno of Cologne and his fellow conspirators seized the young Henry IV and thus the regency from Empress Agnes in 1062[14]). And a ruling woman consorting closely and perhaps even privately with a man laid herself open to accusations of adultery, such a common theme in accounts of powerful women that Pauline Stafford is surely accurate in her assessment that such adultery accusations should be regarded as *topos* rather than fact.[15] Such accusations were dangerous and reveal the inherently precarious situation of women in power. At the end of the ninth century, Ludwig the Child's mother Uota lost the regency at least in part because of an adultery accusation.[16] But she did not have the resources of honor and power that her Ottonian counterparts enjoyed, which would certainly have provided some protection.

Adelheid escaped any accusation of adultery, but suspicion focused, probably already in her lifetime, on the favor Theophanu gave to her Greek advisor Johannes Philagathos. The Corvey version of Thietmar's chronicle rather mildly calls Philagathos "Theophanu's beloved companion."[17] Two decades later, Peter Damian bluntly reported that the two had been lovers.[18] Nor was Theophanu unique among the Ottonians in suffering such accusations. Duchess Judith, the widow of Henry of Bavaria, was chaste, according to Thietmar. But she esteemed Bishop Abraham of Freising highly, apparently leaning on his support when she controlled Bavaria for her underage son Henry the Quarrelsome. Rumors of an illicit relationship spread and were not finally laid to rest until the duchess' funeral, when Bishop Abraham cleared her name (and his own) by submitting himself to an ordeal by Eucharist.[19] Emma, daughter of Empress

Adelheid by her first marriage and widowed queen of France, was not so fortunate. Her own brother-in-law accused her of adultery.[20]

When adultery was suggested, the male respondent was almost always a churchman. The simple fact was that all rulers, both male and female, relied heavily on clerics both to spread royal influence and to help in the work of government. The archchancellor of Germany was more often than not the archbishop of Mainz, primate of the German Church; the chancellor was also a bishop. Members of the court chapel were well-educated men of good family who could hope to become bishops themselves one day. Sometimes Archbishop Willigis of Mainz is even given credit for ending the throne struggle of 984 and indeed for holding together a coalition of forces, to the point of suggesting that Theophanu was merely the figurehead while Willigis was the true regent during the minority. Theophanu and Willigis certainly worked closely together. For a whole year after the settlement at Rohr he did not leave the empress' side, to judge from the evidence of document interventions.[21] Indeed, the archbishop intervened in many documents during Theophanu's regime.[22] But rather than evidence of extraordinary circumstances during the minority, Willigis' role, like that of the chancellor, Bishop Hildebold of Worms, should be seen as business as usual. Willigis had been archchancellor since 975. He had already intervened in six documents of Otto II (twice along with Theophanu) and thus during Theophanu's regency Willigis was just carrying out the normal duties of his position rather than exercising some sort of special influence. The court chapel and chancery made the transition from the reign of Otto II to that of Otto III/Theophanu without changes, assuring continuity in the way the work of the monarchy was conducted.[23] That continuity meant that Theophanu worked with people she knew and who knew her, with whom she had presumably built up a relationship of trust.

This chapter examines what we know about the regencies of Theophanu and Adelheid, focusing particularly on the means by which they exerted power or influence. In the process, I hope to shed light on how rulership in general functioned in Ottonian Germany. Because the simple truth is that, first, the men of the Ottonian house appear to have exerted power and authority in essentially the same ways as the women. And second, we really have little idea how people in the tenth century understood the nature of "rule." As the sources reveal Ottonian government, it appears above all a matter of winning friends and influencing people, occasionally intervening to make peace between squabbling nobles, trying malefactors,

or providing some religious potency in the form of relics or church buildings. The ruler also provided for defense of the realm and occasional conquest, military activities of which the most essential part was to summon troops to where they were needed with reasonable expectation that the summons would be obeyed. Male rulers personally led troops as well, but with the establishment of a system of marches on the German frontiers under Otto I this role had become less essential. With the exception of commanding troops, Theophanu and Adelheid were well prepared for all the tasks of government that fell on them with the premature death of Otto II.

Winning Friends and Influencing People

The most vital function of an Ottonian ruler after providing for defense against foreign invasion was to prevent or if necessary suppress internal rebellion. When Theophanu became effective head of the Ottonian *reich* at the end of the throne struggle, she had a rich recent history of internal rebellion to teach her the need to get along with the magnates of the realm. Henry the Quarrelsome's feud with Otto II had been too harshly punished, with confiscation of the duchy of Bavaria and years of imprisonment; it is small wonder that Henry took the opportunity to seize young Otto III in a bid to regain his lands and rights. Rebels in the reign of Otto I had not been driven to such desperate measures. The senior Otto had made peace with his rebellious brother Henry, with his rebellious son Liudolf, and with a number of other nobles. In each case, the rebellion against the Ottonians clearly started with a sense of grievance, and a perception that a show of force was necessary to win royal cooperation. Clearly the trick was to keep nobles reconciled to rule by giving them what they wanted—but to draw a careful line that maintained necessary royal prerogatives.

Theophanu must have worried about the loyalty of her nobles. Two letters of Gerbert of Aurillac, one addressed directly to Theophanu and the other to Count Siegfried, report that at the empress' request Gerbert had been collecting information on the fidelity of some of her nobles.[24] These letters date from April 985, right at the time of Henry the Quarrelsome's final submission, so her concern is unsurprising. The tantalizing question for all of Gerbert's letters is whether his role was unique or the letter is only the tip of an iceberg of similar activities by other men and women who also acted at least occasionally as imperial agents. Gerbert's

letters are a chance survival, thanks to his great reputation as a scholar. But in 985 he was not particularly important, just a cleric on the make hoping to win a lucrative ecclesiastical position by serving the Ottonians. Where one man was reporting on the loyalty of magnates, it is not hard to imagine a number of people in various regions doing the same.

Theophanu agreed to a compromise with Henry the Quarrelsome in return for his peaceable submission. His duchy of Bavaria was restored, apparently with control of the Bavarian Church and the royal demesne in Bavaria as well.[25] But conferring such a viceregal status should not be understood as Theophanu paying too heavy a price for peace. Bavaria had been largely independent of royal control for most of the century, and Henry the Quarrelsome's father had enjoyed the same sort of position as vice-king. It is only when Henry the Quarrelsome's son became King/Emperor Henry II that Bavaria was more closely integrated into the affairs of the *reich*.

The main point at which any ruler, male or female, could insert the royal will into the great secular principalities was when they fell vacant. Repeatedly, Ottonians had appointed relatives and their closest supporters as dukes. But none of the duchies fell vacant during Otto III's minority.[26] The closest Theophanu came to such an opportunity was in 985 with the death of Dietrich, one of the margraves who held sway on Saxony's eastern border. The empress did not name a replacement, perhaps because she was unwilling to consolidate so much power in a single pair of hands on the volatile Slavic frontier. Instead, Duke Mieszko of Poland took on a number of the functions of control of the mark, as we will see apparently as part of Theophanu's Slavic policy.[27]

There is little to support the notion that the great lords of the *reich* were restive under Theophanu's regency. Adam of Bremen reports that the regents had to put up with many things from the nobles,[28] but his account is late and he gives no specifics to substantiate his report. On a more positive note, nobles did not receive significantly more royal grants during the regency, so it is unlikely that Theophanu resorted to bribery to keep them in line. And nobles appeared at court, as attested by interventions in documents, with about the same frequency as they had during the reign of Otto II. Perhaps the most important evidence that the nobles accepted Theophanu is that they failed to rebel. Both people and institutions stood behind the king during his minority—and thus behind his *de facto* regent—not just during the crisis period but in more general support of Ottonian lordship.[29]

The failure of any of Germany's great secular lords to die during Theophanu's regency limited her ability to distribute favors, but also avoided potential new conflicts when two or more men each thought they had a right to a title or lands. The situation was more favorable in the case of the *reich*'s bishops, since they could not pass on rights of inheritance and the great noble families had not yet established proprietary rights over any of Germany's dioceses. Because bishops were almost always men in their middle age or even older when selected for office, there was also a quicker turnover.

A first task was to cooperate as well as possible with existing bishops. In the throne struggle the archbishops were a particular challenge, because only Willigis of Mainz had supported the empresses unequivocally. Egbert of Trier had wavered, as can be seen in a letter of Gerbert of Aurillac exhorting him to consider both loyalty and self-interest and support the imperial ladies.[30] His loyalty was secured by means of a grant made to his father Count Dietrich II of Holland, who received his property as a freehold rather than as a fief.[31] Bishop Adalbero in December 986 promised his fidelity, but also asked for Theophanu's help in recovering some monastic lands.[32] Clearly it was in Theophanu's interest to give all the assistance she could. Theophanu was plainly able to reconcile with Archbishop Giselher of Magdeburg, since Thietmar reports that Giselher obeyed her in matters of border defense.[33] And Archbishop Warin of Cologne, a noted supporter of Henry the Quarrelsome, died in September 984.[34]

The death of Warin gave Theophanu an opportunity to make one of her own supporters, Everger, the new archbishop of Cologne. We do not know the details of how this worked. Certainly the norm in tenth-century Germany was for the ruler to "recommend" a candidate for bishop and the cathedral chapter then to elect the ruler's choice in a "free" election. In the 1050s Empress Agnes simply named a bishop without going through the formality of election, drawing criticism upon herself for failing to follow the proper forms, rather than for making the choice.[35] There is no reason to doubt that Theophanu, doubtless with the help of advisors like the archchancellor, selected bishops just as the Ottos had and as Agnes was to do seventy years later. Little Otto would, of course, have been called into service for the formal investiture of the new bishop with ring and staff. Certainly Theophanu would have been behind the choice of Everger as archbishop of Cologne. Everger appears in two of Gerbert's letters as a confidant of Theophanu. Their continued closeness is clear

from the fact that Theophanu and Otto III stayed at Cologne several times during Everger's episcopate.[36]

One of the ruler's most important tasks was the appointment of bishops, a role that the Ottonian rulers jealously guarded against local interests. During the combined regencies of Theophanu and Adelheid (summer 984–September 994) there were twenty-seven vacancies in twenty-two of Germany's dioceses.[37] In the few cases where we can see details, the role of the empresses in choosing the new bishop is clear. For example, two successive bishops of Würzburg, Hugo (984–90) and Bernward (990–95), came from the royal chapel. Both appear to have been close to the dynasty. Hugo accompanied Theophanu to Italy in 990, and Bernward of Würzburg is attested at the Ottonian court every year.[38] Similarly, Bernward of Hildesheim (993–1002) had been a court chaplain and especially close to the Ottonian house since he had been Otto III's teacher.[39] Even when, as in the case of Adelheid's appointee Bernhar of Verden (994–1014) the awardee had been provost of the cathedral before his election, the appointment was sure to have pleased a significant noble family.[40]

There were other debts to be paid. Duchess Beatrice of Upper Lotharingia had proven a staunch supporter of the empresses in their fight with Henry the Quarrelsome. Beatrice, at that time serving as regent for her minor son Dietrich, also had an older son, a consecrated cleric, who needed provision. In 984 he became bishop of Verdun, much to the dudgeon of the local populace. As the author of the *Gesta episcoporum Virdunensium* reports, they received Adalbero, "son of the most noble duchess Beatrice," without the king's gift.[41] But what did the author mean by "without the king's gift"? It is possible that Beatrice simply took advantage of the chaos to intrude her son into the diocese. But Verdun was a poor see, and when the much richer bishopric of Metz fell vacant later the same year an opportunity presented itself. Again, a contemporary chronicler, this time Constantine in his *vita* of Bishop Adalbero, gives Beatrice chief credit for the election, but adds that it was "with the favor of the lady Adelheid Augusta."[42] This is the only unequivocal statement we have of the empresses creating a bishop. It comes from a period when Theophanu and Adelheid were still acting together, before the final settlement at Rohr and Adelheid's return to retirement in Italy. But it is uncommon to find an unambiguous statement that a king had chosen a bishop either, even though it is quite clear that everyone knew that was how the system worked. It made good political sense for the imperial ladies to support the pretensions of Beatrice and Adalbero. Beatrice was a sister of Hugh Capet

and thus the first cousin of Otto II. She played an important role in the negotiations for peace between France, Germany, and Lotharingia at the end of the throne struggle, so clearly a few favors were in order.

Other services rendered and loyalty displayed in 984 had to be repaid. Beatrice was closely connected to Bishop Notker of Liège, interceding for him in 983.[43] Notker too had been a loyal supporter of the empresses from the first weeks of the throne fight. In 985 he received his reward from Theophanu, in the form of countship rights, the first time the comital office had been given to a bishop.[44] Clearly bishops received their rewards as part of the normal give and take of the royal court.

Thanks to Gerbert's letters, we have a vivid picture of one candidate for high ecclesiastical office standing with hat in hand—Gerbert himself. As Gerbert points out several times in his letters, he had served the Ottonian house for years. In Otto II's reign he had received a fitting reward—the great monastery of Bobbio—but a rebellion of his own monks had forced him out of the abbacy. In the 980s he was reduced to teaching at the cathedral school of Rheims, writing letters for dignitaries, and engaging in occasional diplomacy or spying for the empresses and others on the side. Gerbert knew he deserved a bishopric, and knew that Theophanu had bishoprics in her gift. In a letter that perhaps dates to the summer of 988, Gerbert wrote on behalf of Adalbero of Rheims to Theophanu, a letter recommending Gerbert himself as candidate for the next vacant border bishopric.[45] This epistle did not have the desired effect, so he tried again in the latter part of 989. In a letter perhaps addressed to Theophanu, Gerbert implores that the true service he had given the empress and her son be remembered. The situation was precarious: Gerbert's immediate patron Archbishop Adalbero of Rheims had died, and Gerbert needed security, preferably in the form of the vacant archiepiscopal throne of Rheims.[46] In a letter whose probable recipient was Bishop Notker of Liège written at about the same time, Gerbert again reminds the recipient of his faithfulness to Otto II, Theophanu, and her son, complaining that this fidelity has still not been remunerated since the loss of Bobbio.[47] Clearly, Gerbert thought Theophanu could do something to ameliorate his situation. He was in fact elected archbishop of Rheims, but not until June 991 at almost exactly the same time as Theophanu's death; it is quite possible that Theophanu played a role, since she was in the northwest of the *reich* at the time, within convenient reach of Rheims. But Rheims was not under direct Ottonian control, and Hugh, the new French king, soon worked to engineer Gerbert's removal. The embattled archbishop soon found himself

in the position of begging Adelheid, the new regent, to help him in his beleaguered political situation.

Another point at which we can see evidence of Theophanu rewarding faithful followers with bishoprics is also the most controversial. Johannes Philagathos, the empress' confidant and possible lover, was a Calabrian Greek who could thus speak with Theophanu in her native tongue. Johannes was at the Ottonian court from 983 to 988, despite the fact that Otto II had made him abbot of Nonantola, and he appears to have been one of Otto III's teachers.[48] Arnulf of Milan tells that "while Otto III was reigning with his Greek mother a certain Greek chaplain from Greece was made bishop of Piacenza."[49] In Arnulf's mind at least the connection between Theophanu and Johannes was clear and again we can see westerners' negative views about Greeks at work. This was Theophanu's "beloved companion," as Thietmar has it. He would have had no connection with Piacenza except for the Ottonians' light control of Lombardy and the fact that he had acted as chancellor for Italy from 980 on. The diocese of Piacenza would have been a fitting reward for service. But that was not enough. Instead, Johannes won the special privilege of the title "archbishop" of Piacenza, a title that was in the pope's gift, and the archbishop of Ravenna had to be placated before he would tolerate such an extraordinary grant. This would have been a matter for royal clout; a local Piacenzan election could not have produced this result. As Wolfgang Huschner has pointed out, the precedents for this act are Byzantine, so would have derived from Constantinople or southern Italy and may thus have found greater favor with Theophanu.[50] Although Johannes was clearly ambitious, he was also unpopular. When he overstepped after the death of his patroness by attempting to seize the papacy in 997, Otto III reacted violently. Johannes lost his eyes and tongue and was imprisoned—and on the whole the chroniclers thought he had gotten what was coming to him.[51]

One should never forget that connections remained important and favors could still be given and received even posthumously. Thus a final case of the empresses' intervention in the case of a bishop is worthy of mention, although the bishop concerned was Ulrich of Augsburg, who had been dead since 973. In 993, during the time of Adelheid's regency, Pope John XV declared Ulrich to be a saint in the first formal papal canonization on record. Such an extraordinary step must have been undertaken at royal initiative. In January 993 Bishop Liudolf of Augsburg was in Rome on that business, but would certainly not have had the clout by himself to

gain such an extraordinary favor.[52] Adelheid, by contrast, had known Ulrich well and was indeed related to him, and the request for such a spiritual favor as canonization could be evidence of the Ottonian court's ongoing dealings with the pope. Certainly contact continued; in October 994 Pope John confirmed the privileges of Fulda at the petition of Otto III and Adelheid.[53]

Maintaining peace within the *reich* was itself defined as a matter of doing favors, rather than a more impartial concept of justice. We have a unique witness to how this might have worked for the regents in a letter the monks of Feuchtwangen addressed to Adelheid. The composition date is unknown, but the modern editor makes a cogent argument in favor of the period between 991 and 993, when the dowager empress' influence was greatest. The monks wrote to Adelheid in highly flattering (and masculine) terms as "empress forever unconquered." They sought protection "under the shadow of your domination" and assured the empress that they never ceased praying day or night for the stability of her rule.[54] In other words, they did not assume a right to protection under the law, but rather asked for Adelheid's help as a personal favor. The Tegernsee letter collection also includes an epistle from Bishop Liutold of Augsburg to Adelheid reporting a breach of the peace.[55]

Staying on good terms with the Church was useful. Bishops and abbots controlled extensive resources and could sway significant kin networks of their own. Contented clerics could also demonstrate the validity of the regents' rule in a highly public and political context. Thus an important moment of imperial presentation during Adelheid's regency was the consecration of Halberstadt Cathedral on October 16, 992. It was an Ottonian family event: Otto III, Adelheid, Mechtild of Quedlinburg, and Abbess Hadwig of Gernrode all attended. So did all the Saxon counts, Duke Bernard, Prince Landulf of Capua, three archbishops and sixteen bishops. The event included a festive crown-wearing by Otto.[56]

Theophanu and the Crown of France

Theophanu's regency occurred during a highly unsettled period of West Frankish history, as the Carolingian dynasty reached its final dissolution and the Capetians claimed the throne. What happened in France was an important issue for the *reich* at two levels. At the most basic level, it was a family affair. Hugh Capet was an Ottonian cousin, as was his rival Charles of Lotharingia. Moreover, the wife and mother of Lothar and Louis V, the

last two Carolingians, was Adelheid's daughter Emma by her first marriage. But the more pressing issue was who should control Lotharingia—France or Germany. Lotharingia was wealthy, incorporating as it did the Rhine Valley and its prosperous towns. It was also the Carolingian heartland, containing Aachen, site of Charlemagne's palace and coronation place of German kings. Lotharingia started the tenth century largely independent, but Otto I successfully brought the duchy into the Ottonian orbit.[57] In Otto II's reign, however, war had broken out between King Lothar and Otto over control of Lotharingia, notably after 977 when Otto II gave the duchy of Lower Lotharingia to Lothar's brother and rival Charles.

Lotharingia was thus one of the crisis points in the throne struggle of 984. As we have seen, Lothar toyed with the idea of supporting Henry the Quarrelsome and took advantage of unsettled conditions in 985 to attack Verdun.[58] When Theophanu assumed the regency, making peace in Lotharingia must have been a high priority. A first meeting took place in Metz in mid-July 985, a gathering of Theophanu, Adelheid, Queen Emma of France, and Duchess Beatrice of Lotharingia, the so-called "colloquium dominarum."[59] Again earlier connections were important, allowing the empresses to insert themselves into the situation as it unfolded. But then King Lothar died in 986, leaving the throne to his nineteen-year-old son Louis V. In the second half of 986 Theophanu was involved in negotiations with Louis; we know because Gerbert's letter 85 from that period asks for news of the peace negotiations taking place.[60] The situation was complicated in late 986 or early 987 when the dowager queen Emma was accused of adultery with Bishop Adalbero of Laon; indeed, Adhémar of Chabannes reports that Lothar's adulterous queen had poisoned him.[61] And then Louis V died in May 987.

Even before Louis V's death, probably in late April 987, peace talks had been arranged to calm the political chaos of France. Louis V had turned violently against Archbishop Adalbero of Rheims, probably because of the archbishop's active support of Theophanu, an interpretation borne out in Gerbert's letters.[62] Beatrice of Lotharingia had arranged the conference, and her position as a vassal of the Ottonians underlines German involvement in the process. Gerbert explains the details of the conference in a letter to Archbishop Everger of Cologne, telling that the scheduled participants included King Louis and his rival Hugh Capet, but also Louis' mother Emma, Hugh Capet's wife Adelheid, and Duke Conrad of Swabia. Gerbert explains that he wants to be sure that Theophanu is informed of

the course of events, assuming she had a vital interest in the matter.[63] But the conference, scheduled for May 25, never took place because of the king's unexpected death after a fall while hunting.

Theophanu carefully steered a middle course through the ensuing crisis. The contenders for the throne were Duke Charles of Lotharingia, Louis V's uncle, and Duke Hugh Capet of Francia. Charles was of course a Carolingian, but had proven disloyal to his brother Lothar and moreover had married a woman of low birth, the daughter of a mere knight. Hugh, like his father Hugh the Great, had long been the power behind the throne. Both claimants had Ottonian blood in their veins. Charles of Lotharingia might have appeared the preferable choice for Theophanu. After all, Otto II had invested him as duke of Lower Lotharingia and supported him as a rival to his brother in the French–German struggles for control of Lotharingia. But it was one thing to have a duke whose loyalty to the Ottonians was assured because he was effectively an exile from his own land, and quite another thing to have the sitting duke of Lotharingia also become king of France. Germany's hold on Lotharingia, still tenuous, would likely be lost under those circumstances. Moreover, Charles had committed a direct affront by the end of 987: he had captured and imprisoned the widowed queen Emma, Empress Adelheid's daughter.

Emma does not appear to have trusted in her own abilities to win Theophanu's support; already in the winter of 986–87 the beleaguered queen wrote to her mother Adelheid, asking the elder empress to appeal on her behalf to Theophanu.[64] But certainly Theophanu was taking some active steps. In a letter of late June 987, Adalbero of Rheims reports that his brother Count Gottfried of Verdun had been freed thanks to her help. He also warned that two counts planned to attack Theophanu if she took part in the siege of Chèvremont—suggesting that Theophanu was actively involved in the developing military situation.[65]

Theophanu's chief concern must have been to assure continued Ottonian control of Lotharingia. Several modern historians have accused Theophanu of attempting to play off the rivalry between Hugh Capet and Charles as a way to destabilize the new regime, arguing that she "turned a deaf ear to appeals by Hugh that they unite against the duke."[66] But in fact Theophanu initiated contact. Gerbert penned a letter from King Hugh to the empress in July 988. Hugh opens the letter by reporting on his efforts to comply with a request Theophanu had made of him. At Theophanu's urging, Hugh had asked Duke Charles to release Emma and Adalbero of Laon from captivity if they would give hostages, but Charles had refused.

Thanks to Gerbert, we have a rare piece of evidence that wives could play a role as diplomats, and indeed that Theophanu might have welcomed such contacts as a way to achieve her political ends. In his letter to Theophanu, Hugh went on to suggest that his wife Adelheid meet with Theophanu on August 22, agreeing to abide by whatever they decided.[67] Leyser has suggested that Theophanu did not comply or even answer, arguing that a response would have denoted equality between them,[68] but the point is moot since Theophanu had already sought Hugh's help in freeing Emma. Indeed, in the state of knowledge we have of these years, it is impossible to know if the meeting took place or not. Hugh wrote another friendly letter to Theophanu in mid-December 988 through Gerbert, congratulating her on recovering from a recent illness. He suggests a meeting wherever she might choose in the French/Burgundian/Lotharingian border area sometime in the first half of February.[69] Again, we do not know whether the meeting took place. We do, however, know that Hugh Capet restored Verdun to the *reich* and foreswore his interest in Lotharingia, suggesting that the empress and the new king had reached agreement.[70] Relations remained unsettled, however. In the spring of 990 Hugh appears to have been seeking an ally, perhaps Henry the Quarrelsome, to make relations between Germany and France friendlier.[71] And Theophanu was on her way to Lotharingia in 991 when she died, perhaps working yet again to stabilize the western border.[72]

Lotharingia remained a high priority for Adelheid, and Otto III and his grandmother made an appearance at Aachen for Easter 992, the royal center to which Theophanu had never returned after she and Otto II had been ignominiously driven out by a French army in 978. Adelheid's pretext was the brewing fight over the archbishopric of Rheims between the Ottonian protégé Gerbert and Charles of Lotharingia's choice Arnulf. In 991 King Hugh had deposed Arnulf on a charge of treason. The Germans claimed a say in the matter, perhaps taking advantage of Hugh's weakness as new king of a new dynasty. Adelheid hosted a synod of bishops drawn from both eastern and western Frankish territory to resolve the issue. King Hugh tried to prevent his bishops from taking part, and the synod failed to reach a settlement. Still, soon after the synod Hugh and Adelheid met at the border.[73]

The complex web of meetings, negotiations, requests, and letter exchanges in which both Theophanu and Adelheid engaged on the *reich*'s western border shed a surprisingly clear light not just on how their regencies operated but on how Ottonian government in general functioned. There

is no reason to doubt that Otto I and Otto II had resorted to similar means to deal with their rivals in France. In all cases, kinship played an important role, as did favors that had been given and received in the past. The connections of kinship and friendship eased the process of arranging occasional meetings; the border meetings of Theophanu and Adelheid are exactly parallel to examples from the reign of Otto I in particular. In this context, both regents can be regarded as very typical tenth-century "kings" of the Germans.

Military Threats

The only way in which the regents differed from their male counterparts in their dealings with France is that they appear to have been less willing to employ military means to gain their ends. While concern over Lotharingia did involve some military engagements, the regents mostly dealt with the crisis of the French monarchy diplomatically. They also found a diplomatic solution to Danish aggression. In 983 the Danes had overrun a number of fortresses on the German mark and declared themselves free of vassalage to the Ottonians. Theophanu contained the situation by means of an alliance with Harald Bluetooth of Denmark's chief rival, King Eric VII of Sweden. This agreement also opened Sweden to missionary endeavors, and three documents of March 988 recognize the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen's role as a missionary center for the north.[74] Danes also attacked the coast late in 991 and in 994 pillaged far inland, but in this case the attackers appear to have been Vikings rather than connected with the ruler of Denmark.[75]

The Danes must have been emboldened by the great Slavic revolt against Otto II in 983, which had undone much of the Ottonians' eastern policy of the past fifty years. News of Otto's defeat at Cotrone in 982, as well as Otto's continued presence south of the Alps, provided an opportunity for the Slavs who were under direct German overlordship and especially resentful of Margrave Dietrich's heavy-handedness.[76] They formed a confederation, and came to be known collectively as the "Liutizi" (a word that may mean "wild" and that first appears in the Hildesheim Annals for the year 991).[77] This confederation, predominantly of four tribes, was above all religious in nature, coalescing around the Redarii's holy place Rathra.[78] They rose in a revolt that apparently caught the Germans by surprise, destroying Havelberg on June 29, 983 and Brandenburg three days later. In the course of the summer the Saxon

mark and church organization was destroyed, including also the destruction of Zeitz and the sack of Hamburg.[79] A force led by Archbishop Giselher and Margrave Dietrich contained the threat, annihilating a number of the war bands that were ravaging the region. Otto II probably received word of the great rising, but died before anything could be done to recover from such grave losses. Boleslas of Bohemia seized the opportunity the revolt presented to him, allying with the Liutizi and seizing control of Meißen, which he held until 987. He also supported Henry the Quarrelsome in the latter's bid for the throne.[80]

After the dust of the throne struggle had settled, the Slavic situation was by far the most urgent problem facing the German *reich*. Theophanu had to concern herself with Slavic campaigns nearly every year. In the years after Theophanu's death in 991, Adelheid dealt with the challenge of the east in a variety of ways, including alliances, religious gestures, delegations, and a series of military campaigns that run as a thread through the regency period and beyond. Their challenge, first of all, was to stabilize the frontier by preventing further Slavic incursions and neutralizing the threat posed by Boleslas II of Bohemia. Beyond that, they doubtless hoped for eventual reconquest of lands that had been lost, although that goal for the most part eluded them.

The imperial ladies' most important allies in stabilizing the frontier were the great lords of the marcher region, including the margraves and the archbishop of Magdeburg. These men had been endowed with lands and rights capable of supporting a large military force precisely because they were intended to secure the frontier; thus, the fact that Giselher and Dietrich stopped the 983 Slavic advance should be taken as evidence that the Ottonians' Slavic policy was working, rather than as any failure of rule.[81]

The empresses' most reliable ally on the Slavic border, however, was Duke Mieszko of Poland. Mieszko, who died in 992, had since his conversion in 966 worked closely with the Ottonians, although he had been forced to send a son to Otto I as a hostage.[82] His connection to the Germans became closer in 979/980 when he married Oda, daughter of Margrave Dietrich of the northern mark.[83] The German connection was further cemented in c. 984 when Mieszko's son Boleslav married Rikdag, a daughter of the margrave of Meißen.[84] Mieszko also got along badly with Boleslas of Bohemia, who had sided so prominently with Henry the Quarrelsome in 984.

When Margrave Dietrich died in 985, the margravate did not go to his son, but rather to his Polish son-in-law.[85] Theophanu must have played a

role in this. Certainly Mieszko did not take this position by force, since he joined in the German campaign against the Liutizi in the same year. It is very likely that Theophanu was responsible in 984 for the appointment of Abbot Unger of Memleben as bishop of Poznán, since she had founded and endowed Memleben along with Otto II and Unger was allowed to retain the abbacy as bishop, probably to give his efforts in Polish territory greater financial security.[86]

In 986 Mieszko made his full submission to Ottonian authority or, to be more precise, to the king, since the oath of fealty of a great noble had to be made to the actual ruler, not a female surrogate. The occasion especially caught the fancy of the Hildesheim annalist, who reports for the year 986: "King Otto, at that time a small boy, went with a great Saxon army to Slavia." Mieszko came to him with a large force and many gifts, including a camel, to make his formal submission.[87] In 986 Otto III was six years old. Obviously he was not leading the army himself, although like the boy Louis the Pious in 781, it is probable that he was dressed in child-sized armor and perched on a horse for the occasion.[88] Theophanu is not mentioned in this account, although probably she was at least nearby if not actually in the camp. It is unlikely that she led troops herself; if she did, this highly unusual female activity has left no trace in the extant records. Who led the German force? We do not know, nor does it really matter. This was a royal army, called into being by the empress and stage-managed so Mieszko could join the campaign with honor.

The question remains of how much of the ongoing Slavic campaign was really Theophanu's doing. Johannes Fried has characterized Theophanu's eastern policy as "passive," arguing that the troops that faced both the Liutizi and the Bohemians were not "imperial" but rather Saxon noble contingents.[89] There is, however, no reason why a campaign could not have been both imperial and predominantly Saxon in nature. Most of the Ottonian lands lay in Saxony, where Henry I had been duke before his royal election. Therefore, the troops Theophanu had at her personal disposal were highly likely to be Saxon. Also, except in massive campaigns, such as the fight against the Magyars that culminated at Lechfeld on August 10, 955, most fighting men would have been drawn from the nearest province to the conflict. Thus, Lotharingians and Swabians would have seen the lion's share of fighting against the French, and naturally Saxons would have been called up—whether by their local lords or by imperial writ—to campaign against Slavs on the Saxon border. The Hildesheim and Quedlinburg annalists both seem to confirm this, reporting on campaigns

in the 980s that the "Saxons" invaded and devastated Slavic territory.[90] But one should note that tenth-century writers often used the term "Saxon" to refer to the Germans in general, as can be seen repeatedly in Widukind of Corvey's "Saxon history," which is in reality a history of the entire *reich*. Theophanu and the royal court were certainly frequently in Saxony during the campaigning season during her regency.

Two confirmations survive that Theophanu played a significant role in shaping the conflicts with the Slavs during her regency, rather than leaving matters in the hands of the margraves. The first is a letter of Gerbert, written to Abbot Raimund of Aurillac sometime between September 986 and the end of January 987. Gerbert reports on the success of Otto III's recently-completed eastern expedition, showing himself well informed despite the fact that he was writing from Rheims. Otto, he tells, had led his troops against the Wends (one of the members of the Liutizi confederation) in the summer, suggesting that the boy king stayed with the troops in the summer after receiving Mieszko's submission. During the expedition, "Otto" had destroyed forty-six fortified settlements "by his presence and by the strength of his soldiery." Gerbert then goes on to inform his former abbot that a new expedition is planned, and that Theophanu (whom he names) has ordered Gerbert to report to Saxony in March. His role was to command troops from the monastic lands of Bobbio on the expedition.[91] Here we see striking and incontrovertible evidence that Theophanu was raising troops to mount an expedition into Slavic territory. And the military force did not include only Saxons, since a summons had been issued to Bobbio in northern Italy.

Theophanu sent an army against either the Elbe Slavs or Bohemia nearly every year of her regency. Mieszko of Poland cooperated in 985, 986, 987, and 990.[92] In the last case, Mieszko and Boleslas had gone to war, Boleslas allying with the Liutizi against his Polish rival. Theophanu supported Mieszko; the gravity of the situation can be seen in the fact that, although she was in Rome until March 990, by the time conflict broke out the empress had made her way to Magdeburg, near the Slavic frontier. Thietmar provides direct evidence of the empress' involvement. He tells that Mieszko asked Theophanu for help. She responded by sending Archbishop Giselher of Magdeburg, Margrave Ekkehard of Meißen, and two Saxon counts with what Thietmar describes as "four weak bands" of warriors. Thus the account tells of Theophanu's dynamic role in the process—but it also tells of the limits of her authority. Archbishop Giselher, never particularly the empress' friend, made a deal with Duke Boleslas instead of engaging him in battle. The Germans agreed to help make

peace between the duke and Mieszko, although their efforts ultimately failed.[93] During Adelheid's regency, Boleslas continued to waver in his loyalty toward the Ottonian house. War broke out again in 992 between Bohemia and Poland, and again the Ottonians took the part of Poland.[94]

Did the regents' efforts in Slavic lands succeed? Christianity was not re-established in the land of the Liutizi during their lifetimes.[95] But there were territorial gains, and by 987 it was possible to begin rebuilding destroyed fortresses along the Elbe.[96] A Saxon army accompanied by the king took Brandenburg in September 991, and the Hildesheim annalist tells of another expedition in 992.[97] By 995 Otto III, now legally adult, was able to conquer Mecklenburg.[98] In all of these engagements, the Poles proved to be staunch allies. While Theophanu's death in 991 may have provoked Mieszko of Poland's move to protect himself and his lands by making a formal gift of Poland to the pope, his fears were certainly not realized.[99] Theophanu even sent an embassy to Kiev in 990, bearing relics for the Byzantine princess Anna who married Vladimir of Kiev.[100] Clearly she was vitally concerned with the unfolding of events in the Slavic world.

The Regents and Italy

It is difficult to decipher the fragmentary record of the regents' role in Italy, for the simple reason that it is hard to interpret the Ottonians' role in Italy in general. Northern Italy "belonged" to Otto I, as we have seen, after the intervention that led to his marriage with Adelheid. In reality, however, the rule of Italy appears more frequently in the sources as a vague overlordship than as actual governance. By the end of Otto II's reign, an imperial chancery had been established for Italy, but its business is far from clear. Documents for Italian beneficiaries were normally only issued when the ruler was actually present in Italy. And Otto III was the only Ottonian elected by his Italian subjects as well as the Germans, and crowned by the archbishop of Ravenna as well as Willigis of Mainz.[101]

Older scholarship and a number of more recent accounts that follow their lead have attempted to make the case that, beginning in 985, Theophanu and Adelheid shared the regency, with Theophanu taking charge of Germany and Adelheid, having returned to Pavia, running things for the young Otto III south of the Alps.[102] Such a shared regency is, however, as implausible as the theory that Adelheid withdrew from Germany because of Theophanu's animosity.[103] The facts in the matter are few. On the positive side of the notion of Adelheid as regent for Italy is first and foremost that, beginning in the middle of 985, she lived for the

most part in Pavia. But she had lived in Pavia during the reign of Otto II as well, without any suggestion that she was acting for her son then. The only visible difference in her behavior is that shortly after her arrival back in the city, on July 18, 985, Adelheid took part in a legal hearing at Pavia. The issue was the incorporation of the bishopric of Alba into that of Asti. The report of the hearing gives the impression that Adelheid was acting as Otto III's representative.[104] This is a slim thread on which to hang an entire regency. No documents were issued in Italy in Adelheid's name; she only rarely appears as intervenor in any document of Otto III before the death of Theophanu forced her to take a more active role. Indeed, it is hard to see how Adelheid *could* have acted on Otto III's behalf in Italy, since the child was not present and, as we have seen, documents could only be issued in his name if he were actually on the spot.

Who then ruled northern Italy? The most straightforward answer is that nobody at all did, and that Otto I and Otto II had not done much more than that either except when they crossed the Alps in person. There were means for Ottonians to exert influence, thanks to the appointment of bishops favorable to the dynasty and well-disposed and influential great nobles, including of course Adelheid herself. At least some Italians certainly believed that, if there was no emperor, they owed no allegiance (and Otto III was still only king rather than emperor). For example, when Henry II died in 1024 the imperial palace at Pavia was looted. One can also see the attitude by means of episcopal charters. Roland Pauler provides two cases that are particularly instructive. Bishop Aupold of Novara (964–93) issued numerous charters. Until the death of Otto II they were dated by Otto II's regnal year, but after that until the bishop's death did not include a regnal year. Even more illuminating is the charter collection of Bishop Teuzo of Reggio (979–1029). He, too, stopped including regnal years on documents after the death of Otto II, but resumed the practice as soon as Otto III was crowned emperor.[105]

To exert direct influence in Italy, a German ruler had to be physically present on the peninsula. It has been suggested that Theophanu already planned a trip to Italy in 986, with the placement of her confidant Johannes Philagathos as archbishop of Piacenza preparing her way for an Italian intervention.[106] Her plans did not come to fruition at that time, perhaps because of the Slavic campaign discussed above. Again in the fall of 988, the regent seems to have planned a trip across the Alps. In that summer, Theophanu created an Italian chancery with Bishop Petrus of Como, who was active at the German court, as chancellor.[107] Her long residence at Lake Constance in the fall of 988 also suggests that Theophanu was on her

way to Italy, but had to change her plans because of a lengthy illness.[108] It is from this time that we can see the first evidence of contact between Theophanu and Pope John XV, perhaps via an emissary she sent to prepare the way for her Italian journey. It was at this time that John XV separated the diocese of Piacenza from Ravenna and made it an independent archbishopric in favor of Theophanu's close advisor Johannes Philagathos. As Schulze points out, such a massive attack on the structure of the archdiocese of Ravenna must have been undertaken at Theophanu's direct intervention, and also demonstrates the pope's great desire to be on good terms with the Ottonians.[109]

In fall 989 Bishop Notker of Liège was dispatched to Rome to prepare for Theophanu's long-planned visit. One can probably see his arrival in the charter John XV issued on October 19, confirming the rights of Abbot Salmann of Lorsch, at the intercession of Otto III, Theophanu, and Adelheid.[110] Since none of the named intervenors were present in Rome at the time, their wishes must have been transmitted by emissary. Theophanu herself arrived shortly before Christmas, having left her son behind in Germany, perhaps in the care of Abbess Mechtild of Quedlinburg. Thus she left behind her the regency, which appears to have been entrusted to Archbishop Willigis, who was responsible for the issuance of four charters during her absence.[111] Unlike every other German royal visit to Italy of the Middle Ages, Theophanu did not have an army with her. Instead, she brought only a small entourage. Gerbert was apparently invited; he sent a letter of apology, perhaps addressed to Notker of Liège, explaining that Archbishop Arnulf of Rheims had refused him permission to make the journey.[112] Theophanu did have several clerics in her train, though, including Notker of Liège, Hugo of Würzburg, Gebhard of Constance, and Abbot Heriger of Lobbes.[113] Again, a papal document helps sort out who was involved, as on February 1, 990 John XV confirmed papal protection for the monastery of Lobbes, at the request of Theophanu and Bishop Hugo of Würzburg.[114]

It is important to note that Theophanu made her visit specifically to Rome. She cannot have wasted much time in northern Italy, as she is attested in Frankfurt on October 1 and was already in Rome before Christmas. Her most important purpose would have been to pray at Otto II's tomb in St. Peter's basilica. Her conspicuous almsgiving, described by John Canaparius in his *vita* of Adalbert of Prague, drives home the importance of her prayer mission. When she discovered that Adalbert was going on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, she gave him as much silver as his young companion Gaudentius could carry.[115]

While in Italy, Theophanu issued two charters, which have been the subject of much comment. These documents are at first sight typical chancery productions, one confirming a grant to the monastery of Saint Vincenzo in Volturno and the other making a grant to the abbot of Farfa. But Theophanu issued them in her own name, or to be precise the first as empress and the other as "Theophanius, by God's grace emperor augustus."[116] Neither grant is particularly significant in itself, but they shed a fascinating light on Theophanu's authority in the period of regency. She had left her son in Germany, and obviously could not issue documents in his name without his presence. But she—and her court officials—believed she did in fact have the legal right to issue imperial charters in her own name. Since she was generally with her son, circumstances did not usually warrant such an unusual step. But she could act in this independent way when she thought it was necessary.

Theophanu's mission was also political, however, and she was received in Rome as what in fact she was—an anointed empress. Apparently the *de facto* ruler of Rome, Crescentius, gave her no trouble.[117] Even the southern Italian princes, over whom the Ottonians had never held more than nominal sway, sent emissaries to greet the empress in Rome.[118] The annalists of both Hildesheim and Niederaltaich found Theophanu's Rome journey worthy of note. As the entry appears in the *Annales Hildesheimenses*: "Empress Theophanu, mother of the king, went to Rome where she celebrated Christmas, and subjected the whole region to the king."[119] Clearly at least the German clerics who composed these entries believed that something important happened during Theophanu's four months on the Italian peninsula. Without an army, she could not force the submission of independence-minded nobles. More likely, her visit served as a reminder to the nobles especially of northern Italy that yes, she was an empress and that yes, her son was their king. Only a single "imperial" event is visible in the sources. After her time in Rome, Theophanu spent several weeks in Ravenna before returning to Germany. While there, Johannes Philagathos and Hugo of Würzburg convened a judicial assembly in her name.[120] Bishop Liudolf of Augsburg wrote to Adelheid (who was visiting her brother in Burgundy at the time) reporting that Theophanu's innovation had little success.[121] But the definition of success depends entirely on what the dowager empress' goals had been.

Adelheid's lack of royal power in Italy becomes even clearer after Theophanu's death. During the period of Adelheid's regency, only four charters were issued for Italian recipients,[122] suggesting that Italians were not looking toward the court over the Alps as a source of profit and influence.

Adelheid did not return to Italy until after Otto III came of age. One of the few matters in which she played a clear role was in the renewal of a treaty with Venice. In July of 992 the doge of Venice sent ambassadors to Adelheid, and the response appears in the form of a charter confirming the treaty Otto II had made with Doge Peter II Orseolo. This document, dated July 19, 992, includes Adelheid as the sole intervenor, so her role in negotiations with the Venetians seems clear.[123] However, imperial power in Italy as a whole seems to have weakened, and Theophanu's officials, including Johannes Philagathos, were driven out.[124]

Conclusion

On the whole, it is difficult to see that Ottonian rule weakened in any significant way under the empresses, and their stabilization of the Slavic frontier should be regarded as a positive gain. Indeed, other than the restructuring of the Slavic borderlands, it is difficult to see the period of the regents as an entity discrete from the rule of Otto II. Like Otto II and for that matter Otto I, Theophanu and Adelheid were opportunists. They worked with the nobles of the *reich* as and when they could. They garnered whatever advantage they were able from their control over episcopal appointments and the papacy's need for allies. They took what advantage they could of the ascension of a new dynasty in France, but earlier Ottonians, beginning with Henry I marrying his daughter to the duke of Lotharingia, had similarly tried to engineer the western border to their advantage. The only thing that could not happen during the regency was for the ruler to lead troops in battle, but Theophanu and probably Adelheid dealt with that situation by sending or taking Otto III to the army where he could serve as a figurehead.

Most important is the argument from silence: we have no record of significant complaints or restiveness from the nobles of the *reich* during Theophanu's and Adelheid's regencies. Nobles continued to bring their troops for frontier duty when commanded, continued to frequent the court, and apparently did not take advantage of a period of weak leadership to indulge in private wars with each other. And there were no revolts in the period 984–94, one of the longest periods without rebellion in the history of the Ottonians.

In short, when put to the test both Adelheid and Theophanu had the necessary capital—influence, loyal servants, and sacred charisma—both to preserve the *reich* Otto II had left to them and to strengthen it so that when Otto III came of age he could peacefully assume power.

Notes

1. See Theo Kölzer, "Das Königtum Minderjähriger im fränkisch-deutschen Mittelalter: Eine Skizze," *Historische Zeitschrift* 251 (1990): 309 on the alien nature of the concept of regency to the Germanic kingdoms.
2. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 72 (2004), a. 986, p. 476.
3. Thietmar, (IV.10) 142.
4. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 991, p. 478; See Gunther Wolf, ed., *Kaiserin Theophanu. Prinzessin aus der Fremde—des Westreichs grosse Kaiserin* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991), 3.
5. Rodulfus Glaber, *Historiarum libri quinque*, ed. and trans. John France, et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), (I.11), 24.
6. Sometimes the tone was rather less humble. For example, in DOIII 31 (January 14, 987) the king made a grant to Lorsch "with the consent of" Theophanu and at the intervention of the chancellor.
7. See Heinrich Böhmer, *Willigis von Mainz* (Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1895), 54.
8. Daniela Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern. Funktionen und Aufgabenfelder von Frauen in der ottonischen Herrscherfamilie (919–1024)* (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2003), 195–96.
9. Thilo Offergeld, *Reges pueri. Das Königtum Minderjähriger im frühen Mittelalter* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2001), 723–24. Offergeld suggests that the larger number of documents during Adelheid's regency may be evidence that more of the great nobles accepted her rule than they had that of Theophanu.
10. Böhmer, *Willigis von Mainz*, 53.
11. DOIII 53 (April 5, 989). See also Johannes Laudage, "Das Problem der Vormundschaft über Otto III," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Anton von Euw (Cologne: Schnütgen-Museum, 1991), 2: 270.
12. See e.g., for Giselher of Magdeburg manning the fort Thietmar, (IV.11) 144.
13. Gerbert of Aurillac, *Die Briefsammlung Gerberts von Reims*, ed. Fritz Weigle, MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 2 (1966), Letter 74, Emma to Adelheid (March 986); Jean Verdon, "Les veuves des rois de France aux Xe et XIe siècles," in *Veuves et veuvage dans le haut Moyen Âge*, ed. Michel Parisse (Paris: Picard, 1993), 190.
14. Bertholdus, *Annales*, MGH SS 5, a. 1062, p. 272; Ian S. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056–1106* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 47–48.
15. Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 94–98.

16. Amalie Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000), 319–20.
17. Thietmar, (IV.30) 167.
18. Peter Damian, *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, ed. Kurt Reindel, MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 4 (1983), Letter 89 (April 1062), 2: 539.
19. Thietmar, (II.41) 90.
20. Michel Parisse, "Adélaïde de Bourgogne, reine d'Italie et de Germanie, impératrice (931–999)," in *Adélaïde de Bourgogne: Genèse et representations d'une sainteté impériale*, ed. Patrick Corbet, et al. (Dijon: Ed. Universitaires de Dijon, 2002), 20.
21. Böhmer, *Willigis von Mainz*, 40.
22. Ibid., 38.
23. Josef Fleckenstein, "Hofkapelle und Kanzlei unter der Kaiserin Theophanu," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Euw, 2: 307–308.
24. Gerbert, Letter 58, Adalbero of Rheims to Adalbero of Metz (May–June 985), 89; Letter 59, Gerbert to Willigis (June 985), 90–91.
25. Herwig Wolfram, "Bavaria in the Tenth and Early Eleventh Centuries," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 306.
26. See Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich*, 173.
27. Christian Lübke, "Zwischen Polen und dem Reich. Elbslawen und Gentilreligion," in *Polen und Deutschland vor 1000 Jahren*, ed. Michael Borgolte (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 101.
28. Böhmer, *Willigis von Mainz*, 68, citing Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, 3rd ed., ed. Bernhard Schmeidler, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. (1917), (II.21) 76–77.
29. Müller-Wiegand, *Vermitteln—Beraten—Erinnern*, 9.
30. Gerbert, Letter 26, Adalbero to Egbert (February–March 984), 48–49.
31. DOIII 19 (August 25, 985); Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 697.
32. Gerbert, Letter 89 (February 987), 117–18.
33. Thietmar, (IV.11) 144.
34. Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 688 n. 117 reports that Warin was forced to abdicate and retire to a monastery.
35. Odilo Engels, "Der Reichsbischof (10. und 11. Jahrhundert)," in *Der Bischof in seiner Zeit*, ed. Peter Berglar and Odilo Engels (Cologne: Bachem, 1986), 71.
36. Heribert Müller, "Die kölner Erzbischöfe von Bruno I. bis Hermann II. (953–1056)," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Euw, 1: 24.
37. Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich*, 191.
38. Ibid., 192.
39. Ibid., 193.
40. See Thietmar, (IV.19) 154 on appointments during Adelheid's regency.

41. *Gesta episcoporum Virdunensium*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS 4, a. 984, p. 47. See the discussion in Robert Parisot, *Les origines de la haute-Lorraine et sa première maison ducale (959–1033)* (Paris: Librairie Alphonse Picard & Fils, 1909), 338–40.
42. Constantine, *Vita Adalberonis II. Mettensis episcopi*, MGH SS 4: (2) 660.
43. Parisot, *Les origines de la haute-Lorraine*, 324.
44. Johannes Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich," in *Köln—Stadt und Bistum in Kirche und Reich des Mittelalters*, ed. Hanna Vollrath and Stefan Weinfurter (Cologne: Böhlau, 1993), 177; DOIII 16 (July 7, 985).
45. Gerbert, Letter 117, pp. 144–45.
46. Gerbert, Letter 158 (August/September 989), 186–87.
47. Gerbert, Letter 159 (September–October 989), 187–88.
48. On Nonantola as a reward for service, see Wolfgang Huschner, "Erzbischof Johannes von Ravenna (983–998), Otto II. und Theophanu," *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 83 (2003): 13–18; on his role as Otto III's teacher and at the Ottonian court, see Gerd Althoff, "Vormundschaft, Erzieher, Lehrer—Einflüsse auf Otto III," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Euw, 2: 284. See also Ekkehard Eickhoff, "Basilianer und Ottonen," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 114 (1994): 10–46 on his role as point of contact between Theophanu and the holy circles of southern Italy.
49. Arnulf of Milan, *Liber gestorum recentium*, ed. Claudia Zey, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 67 (1994), (I.11) 133.
50. Huschner, "Erzbischof Johannes von Ravenna," 23–24.
51. Althoff, "Vormundschaft, Erzieher, Lehrer," 285. The Quedlinburg annalist is particularly vitriolic, calling Johannes a "minister of Satan." *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 998, p. 498.
52. *Papsturkunden, 896–1046*, ed. Harald Zimmermann, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1988), #315 (February 3, 993); Sebastian Scholz, *Politik—Selbstverständnis–Selbstdarstellung. Die Päpste in karolingischer und ottonischer Zeit* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006), 329.
53. Scholz, *Politik—Selbstverständnis—Selbstdarstellung*, 329.
54. Karl Strecker, ed., *Die Tegernseer Briefsammlung (Froumond)*, MGH Epistolae Selectae 3 (1925), #1, pp. 2–3.
55. Ibid., #99, p. 103.
56. Thietmar, (IV.18) 152; *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 992, pp. 480–82; Winfrid Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen und Ihre Bedeutung in der Politik* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1989), 95. Hadwig was probably the daughter of Queen Mechtild's sister.

57. See Bernd Schneidmüller, "Regnum und Ducatus. Identität und Integration in der lothringischen Geschichte des 9. bis 11. Jhs.," *Rheinische Vierteljahrblätter* 51 (1987): 107.
58. Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, 800–1056* (London: Longman, 1991), 265.
59. Gerbert, Letter 66 (July 985), 97.
60. Gerbert, Letter 85 (June–December 986), 113.
61. Jean Dufour, "Emma II, femme de Lothaire, roi de France," in *Kaiserin Adelheid und ihre Klostergründung in Selz*, ed. Franz Staab and Thorsten Unger (Speyer: Verlag der pfälsischen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften, 2005), 221; Adémar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, ed. Jules Chavanon (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1897), (III.30) 167.
62. Gerbert, Letter 89 (February 987), 117–18.
63. Gerbert, Letter 101 (April 987), 130–32.
64. Gerbert, Letter 97 (October 986–February 987), 127.
65. Gerbert, Letter 103 (June 987), 133–34.
66. Jason Glenn, *Politics and History in the Tenth Century: The Work and World of Richer of Reims* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 90–91.
67. Gerbert, Letter 120 (July 988), 147–48.
68. Karl J. Leyser, "987: The Ottonian Connection," in *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, ed. Timothy Reuter (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 178.
69. Gerbert, Letter 138 (December 988), 165.
70. Gunther Wolf, "Kaiserin Theophanu und Europa," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Wolf, 103; Eckhard Müller-Mertens, "The Ottonians as Kings and Emperors," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3, ed. Reuter, 256.
71. Gerbert, Letter 174 (April–May 990), 201–202; Letter 175 (May 990), 202–203.
72. Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, "Theophanu (959–991). Christin—Kaiserin—Europäerin," in *St. Pantaleon, Theophanu und Köln—Ausgewählte Vorträge* (Cologne: Freundeskreis St. Pantaleon, 2002), 63.
73. Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 728. The Rheims dispute was not settled until 995, when a council held at Rheims itself deposed Gerbert. Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, 265–66.
74. DOIII 40, 41, and 42. See the discussion in Wolf, "Kaiserin Theophanu und Europa," 101; see also János Gulya, "Der Hoftag in Quedlinburg 973," in *Der Hoftag in Quedlinburg 973*, ed. Andreas Ranft (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), 22.
75. Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 729. Adam of Bremen, (II.31) 92 describes the last round of Danish raids in gruesome detail.

76. For Dietrich's role and the best near-contemporary account of the rising, see Thietmar, III.17–19. On Dietrich's gruesome rule, see also Gerd Althoff, "Otto der Große und die neue europäische Identität," in *Der Hoftag in Quedlinburg 973*, ed. Ranft, 18.
77. *Annales Hildesheimenses*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 8 (1878), a. 991, p. 25; Lübke, "Zwischen Polen und dem Reich," 107.
78. Christian Lübke, "Die Ausdehnung ottonischer Herrschaft über die slawische Bevölkerung zwischen Elbe/Saale und Oder," in *Otto der Grosse, Magdeburg und Europe*, ed. Matthias Puhle, vol. 1 (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2001), 73.
79. Wolfgang H. Fritze, "Der slawische Aufstand von 983: Eine Schicksalswende in der Geschichte Mitteleuropas," in *FS der Landesgeschichtlichen Vereinigung für die Mark Brandenburg zu ihrem hundertjährigen Bestehen 1884–1984* (Berlin: Landesgeschichtliche Vereinigung für die Mark Brandenburg, 1984), 30; Müller-Mertens, "The Ottonians as Kings and Emperors," 205; Francis Dvornik, *The Making of Central and Eastern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1974), 85.
80. Knut Görich, "Eine Wende im Osten: Heinrich II. und Boleslaw Chrobry," in *Otto III.—Heinrich II. Eine Wende?*, ed. Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1997), 104; Vera Hrochová, "Der hl. Adalbert und Theophano," in *Byzanz und das Abendland im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert*, ed Evangelos Konstantinou (Cologne: Böhlau, 1997), 184; Odilo Engels, "Theophanu—die westliche Kaiserin aus dem Osten," in *Die Begegnung des Westens mit dem Osten*, ed. Engels (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1993), 28.
81. Gerd Althoff, *Die Ottonen: Königsherrschaft ohne Staat* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2000), 46 argues that it was only the Saxon bishops and margraves who kept the situation from being worse in 983.
82. Althoff, "Otto der Große und die neue europäische Identität," 5.
83. Alexis P. Vlasto, *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 121.
84. Lübke, "Zwischen Polen und dem Reich," 101.
85. Görich, "Eine Wende im Osten," 104; Knut Görich, "Die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen im 10. Jahrhundert aus der Sicht sächsischer Quellen," *FMSt* 43 (2009): 318.
86. See Engels, "Theophanu—die westliche Kaiserin," 28, who points out that when Adelheid became regent Unger had to give up the abbacy, which might be a sign of differing missionary policies or simply of Unger's ability to establish himself securely in his new diocese by that time.
87. *Annales Hildesheimenses*, a. 986, p. 24.

88. Kölzer, "Das Königtum Minderjähriger," 310.
89. Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich," 176.
90. For example, see *Annales Hildesheimenses*, 24; *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, 66.
91. Gerbert, Letter 91 (September 986–January 987), 118–20.
92. Müller-Mertens, "Ottonians as Kings and Emperors," 256; Johannes Fried, "Theophanu und die Slawen. Bemerkungen zur Ostpolitik der Kaiserin," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Euw, 2: 367–68.
93. Thietmar, (IV.11) 144; see Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 48 and Fried, "Theophanu und die Slawen," 368 for analysis.
94. Friedrich Prinz, *Böhmen im mittelalterlichen Europa* (Munich: Beck, 1984), 81–82.
95. Wolfgang Brüske, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Lutizenbundes: Deutsch-wendische Beziehungen des 10.–12. Jahrhunderts* (Münster: Böhlau, 1955), 53.
96. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a. 987, pp. 476–77.
97. *Annales Hildesheimenses*, a. 992, p. 68.
98. Ibid., a. 995, p. 91; Lübke, "Zwischen Polen und dem Reich," 97.
99. The document of donation, called "Dagome iudex," is only known through its title in a register. The donation was made sometime between 990 and 992, although a date after the death of Theophanu is most probable, as Odilo Engels argues in "Die europäische Geisteslage vor 1000 Jahren—ein Rundblick," in *Adalbert von Prag: Brückenbauer zwischen dem Osten und Westen Europas*, ed. Hans Hermann Henrix (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 1997), 37. For details on Dagome iudex, see also Charlotte Warnke, "Ursachen und Voraussetzungen der Schenkung Polens an den heiligen Petrus," in *Europa Slavica—Europa Orientalis. FS für Herbert Ludat zum 70. Geburtstag* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1980), 127–42.
100. As attested in Nestor's Chronicle. See Gunther Wolf, "Spätkarolingische und ottonische Beziehungen zum Kiever Reich der Rus," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Wolf, 148.
101. See Hagen Keller, *Ottonische Königsherrschaft: Organisation und Legitimation königlicher Macht* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), 74.
102. This argument had its start with Matilde Uhlirz, and in recent decades has been followed by Odilo Engels, "Theophano, the Western Empress from the East," in *The Empress Theophano*, ed. Adelbert Davids (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 40; Helmut Beumann, *Die Ottonen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1987), 131; and Gunther Wolf, "Theophanu und Adelheid," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Wolf, 90 among others.

103. Fleckenstein, "Hofkapelle und Kanzlei unter der Kaiserin Theophanu," 307 argues that the reason for Adelheid's return to Italy was tension with Theophanu.
104. Fößel, *Die Königin im mittelalterlichen Reich*, 355.
105. Roland Pauler, *Das Regnum Italiae in ottonischer Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1982), 23, 63.
106. Huschner, "Erzbischof Johannes von Ravenna," 23.
107. Fleckenstein, "Hofkapelle und Kanzlei unter der Kaiserin Theophanu," 310; Huschner, "Erzbischof Johannes von Ravenna," 24.
108. Keller, *Ottonische Königsherrschaft*, 55.
109. Scholz, *Politik—Selbstverständnis—Selbstdarstellung*, 313.
110. Ibid., 314.
111. Böhmer, *Willigis von Mainz*, 49–50.
112. Gerbert, Letter 160 (November 989), 188–89.
113. Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich," 176, n. 132.
114. *Papsturkunden*, #305 (February 1, 990).
115. *Sancti Adalberti Pragensis Episcopi et Martyris Vita Prior*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasinska (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1962), (14) 586–87.
116. These documents are included at the end of the MGH volume of the *diplomata* of Otto II and Otto III, labeled Theophanu 1 and 2. Rudolf Hiestand, "Eirene Basileus—Die Frau als Herrscherin im Mittelalter," in *Der Herrscher. Leitbild und Abbild in Mittelalter und Renaissance*, ed. Hans Hecker (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1990), 268–69 probably best sums up current thinking on the "Theophanius" masculinization of the empress' name with the view that the chancellor probably used this form because he found it too strange to issue an imperial document in the name of an *imperatrix augusta* instead of an *imperator augustus*.
117. Scholz, *Politik—Selbstverständnis—Selbstdarstellung*, 315.
118. Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich," 182.
119. *Annales Hildesheimenses*, a. 989, p. 25; see also *Annales Altahenses maiores*, ed. W. Giesebrecht and E. Oefele, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 4 (1891), a. 989, p. 15.
120. Huschner, "Erzbischof Johannes von Ravenna," 25; Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich," 181.
121. Althoff, *Otto III*, 50.
122. See Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 729.
123. *Praeceptum confirmationis Venetis datum*, MGH Constitutiones 1, 45; DOIII 100 (July 19, 992).
124. Offergeld, *Reges pueri*, 729.

CHAPTER 11

Epilogue: The Power of Royal Women?

Theophanu died at Nijmegen on June 15, 991. She was probably only thirty-one years old. Contemporaries noticed her death with an intensity of interest accorded to few royal women. The *Annales Altahenses* makes only one mention of the empress—her death.[1] Sixty years later, when Hermann of Reichenau composed his chronicle, he remembered under the year 991 that "Theophanu the Greek empress, mother of King Otto, died in the ninth year of her widowhood."[2] It was Hermann's first mention of Theophanu by name, or of the death of any woman from the year 900 on. The Quedlinburg annalist gives a moving account, mourning that Theophanu had died so prematurely after a life of good works.[3] Thietmar even reports that an eclipse of the sun foretold the empress' death.[4] Clearly Theophanu had been more than just a king's wife.

However, Theophanu's actual deeds remained for the most part unrecorded, and, except in Thietmar's tribute to the manly way in which she had governed the *reich* for her son, the chroniclers left Theophanu's role as regent unrecognized. Nor did they really acknowledge that the long-retired empress Adelheid immediately came to take Theophanu's place at the boy-king's side after his mother's death. She was already in Saxony at the time; her presence is attested at the funeral of Count Manegold at Quedlinburg on June 12, 991.[5] Still, the ever-gregarious Thietmar is the only author to tell that after Theophanu died, Adelheid came to console Otto and act in place of his mother, staying with him until Otto, following

P. G. Jestice, *Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty*, Queenship and Power, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77306-3_11

bad advice (according to Thietmar), sent her away.[6] She had certainly taken up residence at Otto's court no later than October 991, and Offergeld has suggested that two large assemblies held in January 992 at Grone and Frankfurt were a recognition of the transfer of *de facto* power to the older empress.[7]

Similarly, there was never a clear ceremony ending the regency. It must have taken place at about the beginning of July 994; the first document issued that shows Otto III being of age was issued on July 6, 994. It is a gift from the king to his sister Sophia in response to an intervention by Theophanu on the day of her death. The implication is that Adelheid had not seen fit to make the grant, so Otto had to wait until he was free of his grandmother's tutelage before he could do so.[8] Thietmar's statement that the young king sent his grandmother away in 994 cannot be supported from other sources. Adelheid did soon leave court, retiring for her third and final time, but continued to be on good terms with her grandson. Yet the notion that sending Adelheid away was due to bad advice suggests that Thietmar, for one, appreciated the firm hand the senior stateswoman had kept on the helm of state, preferring Adelheid's regime to the excesses of a new, untested monarch.

The whole period from the demise of Otto II to Otto III assuming personal rule lacks clear lines of demarcation, rather like a watercolor painting that's been left out in the rain. Most strikingly, when we can see the empresses Theophanu or Adelheid in the period when all evidence makes clear they were *de facto* rulers of the *reich*, they seem to be behaving in basically the same ways that they had acted while their husbands were alive. We can see traces of their followings, an essential element of rule, for example in the bishops who accompanied Theophanu to Rome in 989–90. As we have seen, the empresses would have had cup-bearers, fighting men … all the trappings of the royal office typical of the tenth century. When they summoned people, those concerned came (or like Gerbert presented eloquent excuses for noncompliance). Troops assembled at their command, even if at times the leaders of those warriors exceeded their writ (as was the case with Giselher and Dietrich in 990)—but male Ottonians also frequently had to cope with overly independent nobles. People begged for the empresses' help, and they traded assistance for support and loyalty.

This study has focused on the women of the Ottonian house, in particular on Theophanu and Adelheid because of the unexpected circumstance of their regencies. But how different, ultimately, were Ottonian women from Ottonian men? For Theophanu and Adelheid, just as for

male rulers, what was at issue was more a matter of authority and influence than it was power. Just like the men of the dynasty, our imperial ladies had the resources we have seen—influence, loyal servants, and the sacred charisma of unction. To be sure, what the women could command in terms of a direct following and the ability to manipulate events was less than what their husbands controlled—but it was not that much less. The wealth of the Ottonian dynasty, thanks to Otto I's Saxon and Italian conquests and the discovery of silver at Goslar, allowed the rulers to enhance the position of their wives to the point that they really could help in the work of government.

And govern they did, as we can see during the period of Otto III's minority. The empress-regents were able to preserve peace, stabilize the frontiers, make gifts, and so on because people assumed they had the right to do so. Their influence was wide, and its boundaries were ill-defined. Thus Adelheid even felt justified in asking Gerbert to excommunicate a knight in 995, although in this particular case Gerbert expressed scruples about doing so. He did not, however, deny the empress' right to intervene in what was surely an ecclesiastical matter; he only expressed preference for a stepwise imposition of punishments, hoping to bring the man to repentance before imposing the awful penalty of excommunication.[9]

Of the two, Adelheid and Theophanu, it was most likely Adelheid who played the greater role in stabilizing the state after Otto II's death. Her regency is rather less visible than that of Theophanu—but would Theophanu have had a regency at all without the assistance of her mother-in-law? It seems unlikely. In 984 Adelheid had more resources to bring to the table. Like Theophanu she had the prestige of foreign, royal blood (in fact more royal than that of Theophanu, as at least some contemporaries recognized). But Adelheid wasn't *too* foreign. She had kin in Burgundy, Germany, and France who, as we have seen, played a central role in winning possession of Otto III from his cousin Duke Henry. While both empresses had been very public in the favors they had rendered, Adelheid had more lands and connections in Saxony, which became the heartland of resistance to Henry the Quarrelsome's claims. Adelheid's reputation for piety was also so great that in the next century she was canonized as a saint. Together, in 984 the dowager empresses made a formidable pair. To be sure, though, Theophanu's weakness relative to Adelheid was certainly only relative. The large number of extant charters from the younger woman's regency certainly attests to her political influence among the great lords of the Ottonian *reich*.[10]

The eleventh century saw many changes that had an impact on the royal women of the German *reich*. Well before the civil war that accompanied the Investiture Contest stripped the rulers of Germany of much of their power, the women of the royal house were already being relegated to a role more reminiscent of Charlemagne's wives than to what we have seen for the tenth century. While still figures of prestige with considerable disposable wealth, by the middle of the eleventh century the queen-empresses of Germany were once again taking a back seat in government.

We are fortunate enough to know as much as we do about the Ottonian empresses because of the blossoming of literacy in the second half of the tenth century, the first stages of the so-called "twelfth-century renaissance." Literacy rates increased, and, notably, the number of professional bureaucrats who worked for rulers began to multiply exponentially. With the growing bureaucratization of government, rulers no longer needed to rely as much on family members to protect and preserve their rule as they did in the brief golden age for royal women that we have seen in this book.[11]

As the conventions of courtly love became popular and the perverse gender theories of Aristotle gained currency in the twelfth century, the esteem in which women in general were held also experienced a significant decline. But we should never forget that the people of the Ottonian century had not yet discovered Aristotle's "truth" that women are fundamentally flawed, incapable of reason, and prey to their emotions. Women in the tenth century were valued for their wisdom, contemporary men assumed that an adult woman was capable of making rational decisions about her own property, and men turned to their womenfolk—including our imperial ladies—for counsel and help in times of need. Adelheid, Theophanu, and Mechtild existed within that social landscape, rather than holding a position almost as honorary men only because of their membership in the royal family.

We also have no evidence that Theophanu and Adelheid—or Queen Mechtild or the imperial daughters and other royal women who have filled the pages of this study—were extraordinarily gifted, able to transcend the norms of their society through strength of personality, although they may have been. The tenth century was full of strong female personalities; the imperial ladies simply had a larger backdrop against which to act than the other women of their age. They stepped in to play a critical role in the German *reich* when they believed their services were needed, a role that

contemporary men also accepted. But the empresses' position in the *reich* was established long before Otto II's premature death, imported when the brides themselves came to their new homes, confirmed with public pomp in hundreds of charters, anointed in religious ceremonies filled with solemnity and grandeur, and dispensed in thousands of pious gifts.

In the end, the imperial ladies' piety proved to be their most durable legacy, safeguarded by grateful recipients who assured that Queen Mechtild wafted the odor of sanctity in two *vitae* and who arranged for Adelheid's canonization as a saint in 1097. Theophanu was less fortunate, her Greek blood assuring that her benefactions especially to Greek holy men in Italy were forgotten in the *reich* and her foreign ways even giving rise to a later story that Theophanu was damned for her overly luxurious life. She was also unfortunate in not having a champion to argue the cause of her sanctity to the next generation.[12]

Although Handel wrote an opera about Otto II and Theophanu, and Rossini's *Adelaide de Bourgogne* enjoyed brief popularity when it first appeared in 1817, uncovering and appreciating the role the Ottonian imperial ladies played has largely been a work of the twentieth century, especially after new generations of scholars after the Second World War have demonstrated ever-growing interest in women's and gender history.

This study has been an effort to understand what really happened in a distant time when sources are often maddeningly opaque about what we most want to know and that has been deeply cluttered by a century of scholarship that often has made unfounded leaps of the imagination rather than staying focused on the sources. In it, I have focused on the women of the imperial house, because their story seemed to me to have many more unanswered questions than that of their male counterparts. But is this study a "women's history"? Only in the limited sense that its main characters are women. I never set out to write conventional women's history, but rather to explore how the German *reich* functioned in the Ottonian century. That voyage of discovery led me to Theophanu and Adelheid above all, but beyond them to the nature of Ottonian rule itself. The imperial ladies of this study were not just kings' wives, and while their function included the biological imperative of producing heirs, they were so much more that contemporaries hardly remember to mention them as childbearers and -rearers. They were, rather, partners in rule, sharers in the work of government, and, ultimately, preservers of Ottonian rule.

Notes

1. *Annales Altahenses maiores*, ed. W. Giesebrecht and E. Oefele, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. 4 (1891), a. 992, p. 15.
2. Hermannus Augiensis, *Chronicon*, MGH SS 5, a. 991, p. 117.
3. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, 68.
4. Thietmar, (IV.15) 150.
5. Gunther Wolf, "Theophanu und Adelheid," in *Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Wolf (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991), 92.
6. Thietmar, IV.15.
7. Thilo Offergeld, *Reges pueri. Das Königtum Minderjähriger im frühen Mittelalter* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2001), 722–23.
8. DOIII 146 (July 6, 994); see Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 52.
9. Gerbert of Aurillac, *Die Briefsammlung Gerberts von Reims*, ed. Fritz Weigle, MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 2 (1966), Letter 208, pp. 249–50. This letter was probably written in summer or fall of 995, about the time Adelheid's regency ended.
10. As argued by Laura Wangerin in "Empress Theophanu, Sanctity, and Memory in Early Medieval Saxony," *Central European History* 47 (2014): 716–36, esp. 733.
11. For a now-classic formulation of what changed with the twelfth-century renaissance, see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).
12. Wangerin argues that three chief factors kept Theophanu from sainthood: that she was too widely recognized as an inferior dynastic bride, western distrust of Greeks, and her competing political ambitions with Adelheid. See Wangerin, "Empress Theophanu," 718.

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Index

A
Abbo of Fleury, 22
Abodrites, 208, 214
Abraham, bishop of Freising, 237
Adalard of Corbie, 86
Adalbero, archbishop of Rheims, 212, 216, 217, 242–244, 246
Adalbero, bishop of Laon, 246, 247
Adalbero, bishop of Verdun and Metz, 242
Adalbero, brother of Kunigunde, 154
Adalbert-Atto of Canossa, 151, 152
Adalbert of Prague, 91, 143, 255
Adaldag, archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, 153
Adelard, bishop of Reggio, 52
Adelheid, abbess of Quedlinburg, 26, 107–109, 221, 222, 224
Adelheid, empress, 9–10
  assumption of regency, 265, 266
  benefactions of, 91
  canonization, 146, 269
  captivity, 51–56
  claim to North Italy, 59
  and Cluny, 168
  and counsel, 195–197
  dos of, 49–50, 74–76, 82
  dowry of, 73
  episcopal appointments of, 242
  imperial coronation of, 112
  interventions, 164–168, 170
  and judicial assemblies, 191, 256
  marriage to Lothar, 47–51
  marriage to Otto I, 9, 10, 75–77
  as peacemaker, 194
  persecution by Theophanu, 220–222
  portraits of, 118
  and prayer, 143, 151
  relations with Otto III, 266
  retirement of, 253, 254
  widowhood, 142, 145, 222
Adelheid, queen of France, 85, 194
Adelheid/Otto coins, 86
Adhémar of Chabannes, as historian, 19
Adso of Montier en Der, 146
Adultery accusations, 237, 238
Adventus, 158
Advisors, 237

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Aethelflaed of Mercia, 192
Aethelstan, king of England, 46–47
Aethelwulf, king of Wessex, 110
Agnes, empress, 195, 215, 237
  as duke of Bavaria, 192
Agobard, bishop of Lyons, 181
Alda, queen, 183
Alfrad, 34
Amalred, 136
Anna, porphyrogenita, 61, 62, 220, 221, 253
Anne of Kiev, 220
Anno, archbishop of Cologne, 215, 237
Aristotle, 268
Arnulf, archbishop of Rheims, 248
Art, 91, 106, 115–121, 185, 186
Attala, countess, 114
Aupold, bishop of Novara, 254

B
Bamberg, 108
Bardo, archbishop of Mainz, 139, 154
Basil II, 213
Beatrice, duchess of Lotharingia, 214, 242, 246
Beleknegini, 36
Benedicta of Thorn, 34–35
Berengar of Ivrea, 9, 50–55, 57–59, 142, 184
Bernard I Billung, margrave, 224
Bernhar, bishop of Verden, 242
Bernward, bishop of Hildesheim, 224, 242
Bernward, bishop of Würzburg, 242
Bertha of Swabia, mother of Adelheid, 48, 76, 154
  dos of, 49–50
Bertha of Tuscany, 28
Bia, recluse, 35, 140
Bobbio, 159, 252
Boleslas of Bohemia, 214, 228, 250, 253
Boleslav Chrobry, 22, 192, 250
Boso, margrave of Tuscany, 28
Brigida, abbess of St. Lawrence, 35
Brun, archbishop of Cologne, 155, 166
Brunnhild, 5, 19
Burchard, abbot of Saint-Gall, 196, 197
Burchard, duke of Swabia, 156
Bürstadt, assembly of, 224, 225
Byzantine marriages
  with westerners, 59–63

C
Canonesses, 133–136, 138–139
Charlemagne, marriages, 44
Charles of Lotharingia, 30, 43, 226, 245, 247
Charters, 160–162
Chèvremont, siege of, 247
Childbirth, 4
Christina, countess, 26–27, 85
Christus domini, king as, 104
Clothild, 136, 195
Clovis, 136
Cluny, 133
Codex Aureus of Echternach, 118
Colloquium dominarum, 246
Cologne colloquy (965), 194
Concubines, 30, 183
Conrad, duke of Lotharingia, 58
Conrad, duke of Swabia, 225
Conrad, king of Burgundy, 56–57, 157, 225, 227
Conrad I, king, 46, 91, 105, 110
Conrad II, emperor, 105, 108
Consors regni, 111, 181–183, 185
  defined, 181

Constance of Arles, queen of France, 25, 91, 193, 198
Constantine, 140
Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, 60, 213
Constantine VIII, emperor, 213
Constantinople, 219, 220
Co-rulership, *see* King, junior
Cotrone, Battle of, 1, 87, 143, 181, 198, 208
Crescentius, 256
Crowns, 105, 121, 123
Crown-wearing, 113

D
Damian, Peter, 219
Danes, 249
Dhuoda, 20
Dietrich, bishop of Metz, 154, 218, 226, 227
Dietrich, margrave, 240, 249, 250
Dietrich II of Holland, count, 241
Dietrich of Angers, 33
Dobrawa, 136
Dortmund, synod of (1005), 190
Dos, defined, 73–74
Dowry, 72

E
Edgitha, queen, 9
  coronation of, 111
  and counsel, 196
  death of, 35
  interventions, 163
  marriage to Otto I, 46–47, 75
  as peacemaker, 193
  and prayer, 137
  saintliness of, 146
  tomb of, 143
Egbert, archbishop of Trier, 217, 218, 241
Eila, countess, 32, 35, 86
Ekbert the One-Eyed, 224
Ekkehard, margrave of Meißen, 108, 252
Ekkehard, monk of Saint-Gall, 158
Elizabeth of Hungary, 137
Emma, queen of England, 87, 192
Emma, queen of France, 25, 90, 192, 237, 247
  adultery accusation against, 246
Emma, sister of Hugh the Great, 35
Emma, wife of Boleslas II, 86
Engelberga, empress, 182
Epitaphium Adelheide, 139, 220, 221
Eric VII, king of Sweden, 249
Ermengard, empress, 182
Essen, 134
Esther, 113, 181, 182
Everger, archbishop of Cologne, 241, 242
Ezzo, count palatine, 89, 107

F
Fastrada, 180, 197
Flaccilla, 181
Folkmar, bishop of Utrecht, 209, 210, 224
Frankfurt, Council of (951), 29
Frankfurt assembly, 228

G
Gandersheim, 51, 134, 139, 140, 160
  controversy, 25–26
Gebhard, bishop of Constance, 255
Gelusa, 138
Gerald of Aurillac, 139, 221
Gerberga, abbess, vision of, 34

Gerberga, abbess of Gandersheim, 51
Gerberga, queen of France, 8, 85–86, 88, 89, 91, 110, 146, 155, 156, 191, 192, 194, 208
  marriage to Gislebert, 48, 106
  marriage to Louis IV, 48
Gerbert of Aurillac, 6, 158, 159, 243, 244
  as archbishop of Rheims, 243
  military service of, 252
  as special agent, 211, 212, 215, 216, 226, 239
Gero, archbishop of Cologne, 34, 62, 168
Gisela, duchess of Bavaria, 157
Gisela, empress, 4, 111, 199
Gisela, queen of Hungary, 136
Giselbert, count palatine, 191
Giselbert, duke of Lotharingia, 48, 106, 155
Giselher, archbishop of Magdeburg, 86, 168, 169, 218, 225, 241, 250, 252
Golden Madonna of Essen, 146
Goscelin, 5
Goslar silver mines, 75
Gottfried of Verdun, count, 214, 247
Greeks, attitudes toward, 208, 218, 219, 221
Gregory V, pope, 156
Gunhild-Kunigunde, empress, 111

H

Hadwig, duchess of Saxony, 24, 31, 60, 156, 158
Hadwig, wife of Hugh the Great, 8, 156
Halberstadt Cathedral, consecration of, 245
Handel, 269
Harald Bluetooth, 249
Hatheburg, 45, 72
Hathui, abbess of Gernrode, 34, 142
Hatto, archbishop of Mainz, 214
Hausordnung (929), 75
Henry I, duke of Bavaria, 75, 84, 87, 106, 137–138, 143, 209, 239
Henry I, king, 104, 110, 137
  love for Mechtild, 184
  marriages, 45–46
  as patron, 154
  tomb of, 143
Henry II, emperor, 31, 87, 104, 108
Henry II "the Quarrelsome," duke of Bavaria, 2, 156
  attempted coup, 212, 222–224
  image of, 106
  rebellions against Otto II, 106, 209, 239
  reinstatement as duke, 227, 237
Henry IV, emperor, 215, 237
Heretics, 193
Herford, 139, 163
Heriger, abbot of Lobbes, 255
Hildebold, bishop of Worms, 238
Hincmar of Rheims, 180
Hohenaltheim, synod of (916), 109
Holy Lance, 105
Hrabanus Maurus, 182
Hrotsvit of Gandersheim,
  as historian, 7, 51
  plays, 19, 31–32
Hugh, king of Italy, 151
Hugh Capet, king of France, 43, 228, 245–248
Hugh of Arles, 49
Hugh the Great, duke of Francia, 24, 90, 155, 194
Hugo, bishop of Würzburg, 190, 242, 255, 256

I
Ida, 36, 48, 51, 85
Imperial church system, 3, 146
Institutio sanctimonialium, 134, 135
Intervenor, defined, 161, 236, 237
Irmingard, coronation of, 111–112
Ita, 169

J
Johannes Philagathos, 121, 190, 237, 244, 254, 256
John, archbishop of Ravenna, 2
John Tzimiskes, emperor, 62, 219
John XIII, pope, 159, 170
John XV, pope, 170, 244, 255
Judicial assemblies, 190, 191
Judith (bibl.), 112
Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald, 110, 112
Judith, duchess of Bavari, 48, 142, 167, 208, 237
Judith, empress, 44, 111, 182

K
Kaufungen, 86, 114, 136
King, junior, 1, 186, 187, 213
Koblenz, synod of (922), 80
Kunigunde, 86, 105, 114, 115
  control of regalia, 87
  coronation of, 111
  dos of, 84
  and family, 31, 63, 154
  and judicial assemblies, 191
  as peacemaker, 194, 195
  as royal deputy, 192
  widowhood of, 114, 135, 142

L
Laon, 191, 192
Laudes regiae, 113
Lechfeld, Battle of, 105, 251
Leo VIII, pope, 170
Libri memoriales, see Necrologies
Literacy, 268
Liudgard, niece of Thietmar, 34, 36, 136
Liudolf, bishop of Augsburg, 244
Liudolf, duke of Saxony, 139
Liudolf, son of Otto I, 106, 195, 239
  invasion of Italy, 56
  marriage, 47–49
Liudprand, bishop of Cremona, 7, 61
Liutgard, daughter of Otto I, 9, 27, 36, 48, 169
Liutizi, 208, 211, 249–253
Lothar, king of France, 209, 211, 213, 227, 228, 245
Lothar, king of Italy, 9, 151
Lotharingia, 211, 213, 245–248
Louis IV, king of France, 110, 155, 194
Louis the Pious, 44
Louis V, king of France, 25, 208, 245–247
Ludwig the Child, king, 45, 214, 237

M
Magdeburg, 75, 78, 85, 91, 115, 116, 153, 165, 166, 196
Magyars, 141
Manegold of Zürichgau, count, 88, 151, 265
Marozia, 28
Mary, Virgin, 131–133
Mauritius, St., 115

Mechtild, abbess of Essen, 91, 106, 107, 146, 156, 169
Mechtild, abbess of Herford, 188
Mechtild, abbess of Quedlinburg, 8, 25, 26, 79, 82, 107–108, 133, 157, 170, 171
  and judicial assemblies, 29, 188, 189
  as matricia, 188–190
  as regent, 189
  Widukind's dedication, 188
Mechtild, queen, 9
  ancestry, 153
  and counsel, 196
  dos, 74
  dowry, 72
  education of, 139
  endowment of Quedlinburg, 81, 82, 160
  interventions, 161, 170
  marriage to Henry I, 45, 188
  persecution of, 87
  and prayer, 137–138, 143
  saintliness, 145, 269
  widowhood, 135–136, 142
Meißen, 250
Memleben, 133, 251
Memoria, 134, 135, 140–144
Merovingian marriage, 44
Merovingian queens, 5
Merseburg, dissolution of, 143, 169
Mieszko, duke of Poland, 136, 214, 240, 250–253
Minority, 2
Morgengabe, 73
Munzenberg, 133

N

Necrologies
  of Merseburg, 53, 151
Niedermünster, Regensburg, 143
Nikephoros Phokas, emperor, 61, 213, 219
Nordhausen, 78, 83, 88, 134, 144
Notker, bishop of Liège, 227, 243, 255

O

Oda, duchess of Poland, 22, 137
Odilo, abbot of Cluny, 8, 54–55, 133, 139, 221
Ohtrich of Magdeburg, 159
Orléans, 193
Oswald, St., 47
Otto, duke of Swabia, 156
Otto I, emperor
  appointment of relatives, 156
  death of, 221
  first Italian expedition, 57–59
  grief for Edgitha, 184
  imperial coronation, 61, 112
  intervention in France, 155
  and Lotharingia, 246
  marriage to Adelheid, 52, 54, 57–59
  marriage to Edgitha, 47
  and Magdeburg, 153
  portraits of, 115
Otto II, emperor
  appointment of relatives, 156
  death, 2, 207
  and Gerbert, 159
  imperial coronation of, 112
  Italian expedition, 207
  as junior king, 186, 187
  and Lotharingia, 246
  marriage to Theophanu, 62–63
Otto III
  and Byzantine etiquette, 158
  coronation, 1, 207
  election of, 209
  imperial coronation, 11
  as junior king, 207

majority of, 266
military activity as boy, 251
minority of, 2
and Rome, 156
rule of, 235

P
Peter II Orseolo, doge of Venice, 151, 164, 191, 257
Peterlingen, 84
Poison, as women's tool, 25
Purgatory, 140
Purple documents, 77

Q
Quedlinburg, 78, 84, 134, 143–144, 163, 222, 223
Quedlinburg Annals, authorship of, 7
Queens
coronation *ordo*, 110, 112, 113
and counsel, 195–199
display by, 89–91
entourage of, 87–89
fighting force of, 89
as mothers, 180
and palace administration, 181
as peacemakers, 193, 194
and prayer, 137
and treasure, 181
reception of, 113–114
unction of, 110–112

R
Rather, bishop of Verona, 22–23, 164, 183, 197
Rathra, 249
Rebellion, 239
Recluses, 139, 141
Regency, difficulty defining, 235
Regensburg, synod of, 113
Reichenau, 131
Reinhild, 29, 33
Relics, 72–73
Reverse dowry, *see* Dos, defined
Richburga, 88
Richer as historian, 212
Richgard, 112
Richildis, 111
Rikdag, 250
Robert, archbishop of Trier, 153
Robert the Pious, king of France, 3, 193
Rohr meeting, 227
Romanos Lekapenos, 213
Rossini, 269
Rudolf II, king of Burgundy, 49–50
Rudolf III, king of Burgundy, 24, 194
Ruler portraits, 115–123, 185, 186

S
Saint-Gall, 141, 187
Salve Regina, 131, 132
San Salvator, Pavia, 82, 84, 85, 142, 170
Selz, 84, 85, 88, 142, 170
Siegfried, count, 88
Silk, 72
Sisu, recluse, 34
Slavic revolt, 2, 143, 249
Sophia, abbess of Gandersheim, 26, 107, 108, 169, 171
Stephen, king of Hungary, 136

T
Teuzo, bishop of Reggio, 254
Thankmar, 45, 79, 106
Theodora, empress, 181
Theodulf of Orléans, 21, 22
Theophanius charters, 115, 161, 255, 256

Theophanu, empress
ancestry, 62
and counsel, 196, 198, 199
death of, 265
dos of, 77–78
dowry of, 72–73
episcopal appointments, 242
imperial coronation of, 112
interventions, 165, 168–170
journey to Rome, 91, 142–143, 255, 256
marriage, 9, 62, 63, 76–77
marriage charter, 62, 63, 74, 76–77
persecution of Adelheid, 220–222
portraits of, 116, 118–119, 121
Theophanu, sister of Otto III, 107
Thietmar, bishop of Merseburg, 7, 18
Travel, 157, 158, 210, 211, 225, 226
Treasure, female control of, 87
Trier, Council of (927), 22
Twelfth-century renaissance, 268

U
Ulrich, bishop of Augsburg, 35, 146
canonization, 244
Ulrich, count, 141
Unction, 109, 110
Unger, bishop of Poznán, 250, 251
Uota, 215, 237

V
Verdun, 227
Verona, imperial assembly, 209
Vikings, 249
Virgil, 24

W
Waldrada of Burgundy, 28
Walthard, archbishop of Magdeburg, 192
Waltharius, 55
Warin, archbishop of Cologne, 210, 218, 241
Wendilgart, 141
Wends, 252
Werner, Margrave, 29
Wiborada, 35, 141
Wido of Tuscany, 90
Widukind of Corvey, 6, 25
Willa, margravine of Tuscany, 28, 142, 184, 192, 198, 210
William, archbishop of Mainz, 107, 144, 153, 166, 186, 188
William II of Weimar, count, 225
Willigis, archbishop of Mainz, 108, 215, 217, 223–227, 238, 241, 255
Women in art, 20