



The bishoprics of Saxony in the first century after Christianization

CHRISTOPHER CARROLL

The eighth and ninth centuries witnessed the foundation of many new bishoprics in the territories on the fringes of the Carolingian Empire. Saxony was one such region. This article seeks to understand the political status of these new bishoprics during the first century of their existence, from their foundation to the end of Carolingian rule in east Francia (805–911). The religious history of the Saxon province, and the Carolingians' lack of interest in this region after its forcible conversion, had a significant effect on the status of its bishoprics during the ninth and early tenth centuries. This study assesses the evidence for both the land-holdings of this new episcopal church and the activities of its bishops, and concludes by arguing for the distinctive position of the Saxon bishoprics within the Frankish and east Frankish churches of this period.

Although a great deal has been written on certain aspects of the Frankish Church and its history, the distinctive status and nature of its individual parts has not hitherto been fully appreciated. Most scholars of this period would probably agree, for example, that the east Frankish church was in many ways different from the churches of west Francia and Lotharingia, but one could not cite any existing literature which documented and explained many of these differences. There is also the question of how the Carolingian Empire was amassed and whether this effected such diversity. The present article seeks to examine this idea of diversity within the Carolingian Empire and Church with reference to the bishops of Saxony; a region which has been described as 'the least developed part of the Frankish Empire'.¹ Unfortunately, there is a dearth of reliable evidence for this period of Saxon ecclesiastical history – a fact which colours much of the existing scholarship. Hypotheses, therefore, have to be proffered carefully and governed by circumspec-

¹ K. Leyser, 'Ottonian Government', in *Medieval Germany and its Neighbours 900–1250* (London, 1982), p. 100.

tion. Although it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the ninth-century evidence, and consequently the provisional nature of any conclusions drawn from it, a contribution to our knowledge of this church and its bishops in the Carolingian period can still be made.

The ninth-century Saxon bishoprics have never really been considered as a whole and the question of whether the Saxon episcopate formed a distinct part of the east Frankish Carolingian church is an interesting one.² The Saxon church was a new church after all, the culmination of the most forceful, some would say brutal, military and missionary activity of the Carolingian period.³ After several short-lived campaigns by Charles Martel and Pippin III, as well as the limited,

² A number of aspects of ninth-century Saxon church history have excited interest from historians: the foundation dates of the bishoprics, the constitution of Saxon religious houses, and the history of the bishoprics of Hildesheim, Osnabrück and Hamburg-Bremen. To name the most significant and/or recent work: E. Müller, *Die Entstehungsgeschichte der sächsischen Bistümer [unter Karl der Grossen]* (Hildesheim-Leipzig, 1938); A. Cohausz, *La Translation de Saint Liboire (836) du diacre Erconrad* (Paderborn, 1967); 'Die Gründung des Bistums Paderborn beim Papstbesuch 799', *Westfälische Zeitschrift* 116 (1966), pp. 201–2; K. Honselmann, '[Die] Bistumsgründungen in Sachsen [unter Karl dem Grossen]', *Archiv für Diplomatik [AfD]* 30 (1984), pp. 1–51; 'Die Gründung der sächsischen Bistümer 799', *AfD* 34 (1988), pp. 1–2; W. Seegrün, 'Die Anfänge des Bistums Osnabrück in Lichte neuer Forschungen', *Osnabrücker Mitteilungen* 85 (1979), pp. 25–48; T. Ulbrich, 'Die Anfänge des Bistums Bardowick/Verden', *Niedersächsische Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 63 (1991), pp. 107–37; H. Jakobs, 'Die Verdener Abt-Bischofs der Gründungszeit, das Andreas-Patrozinium ihres Domklosters und das Bardowick Problem', *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für niedersächsische Kirchengeschichte* 86 (1988), pp. 109–25; J. Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford [in der benediktinischen Reformbewegung des 9. Jahrhunderts]', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 4 (1970), pp. 289–319; A. Spicker-Wendt, *Die Querimonia Egilmari episcopi [und die Responso Stephani V]* (Cologne, Vienna, 1980); T. Schieffer, 'Adnotationes [zur Germania Pontificia und zur Echtheitskritik überhaupt]', *AfD* 32 (1986), pp. 503–45; 'Adnotationes [zur Germania Pontificia und zur Echtheitskritik überhaupt]', *AfD* 34 (1988), pp. 231–77; R. Dröger, 'Ansgar: Missionsbischof, Bischof von Bremen, Missionserzbischof für Dänen und Schweden', *Jahrbuch der Geschichte für niedersächsische Kirchengeschichte* 73 (1975), pp. 9–45; 'Erzbistum Hamburg, Hamburg-Bremen oder Erzbistum Bremen?', *AfD* 21 (1975), pp. 136–230; B. Wavra, *Salzburg und Hamburg. [Erzbistumsgründung und Missionspolitik in karolingischer Zeit]* (Berlin, 1991); K. Reinicke, 'Bischofsumsetzung und Bistumsvereinigung. Ansgar und Hamburg-Bremen 745–64', *AfD* 33 (1987), pp. 1–53; W. Seegrün, *Das Erzbistum Hamburg in seinem älteren Papsturkunden* (Cologne, Vienna, 1976).

³ A contemporary acknowledgement of the scale of the Frankish efforts against the Saxons is provided by an oft-quoted passage from Einhard referring to 772: 'The war ... against the Saxons, which had been interrupted, was taken up again. No war ever undertaken by the Franks was more prolonged, more full of atrocities or more demanding of effort' (*Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *M[onumenta] G[ermaniae] H[istorica], S[criptores] R[erum] G[ermanicarum]* (Hanover, 1911), c. 7, pp. 9–10). On the military task and the missions which accompanied it: H. Beumann, 'Unterwerfung und Christianisierung der Sachsen durch Karl der Grossen', *Settimane [di Studio del Centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo]*, 28 i (1982), pp. 129–68; H. Mayr-Harting, 'Charlemagne, the Saxons and the Imperial Coronation [of 800]', *English Historical Review* 111 (1996), pp. 1113–33; K. Hauck, 'Paderborn, das Zentrum von Karls Sachsen Mission [777]', in *Adel und Kirche. Gerd Tellenbach zum 65. Geburtstag dargebracht von Freunden und Schülern* (Freiburg, Basel, Vienna, 1968), pp. 108–33; R. Schieffer, *Die Entstehung von Domkapiteln [in Deutschland]* (Bonn, 1976), pp. 205–31.

unsupported, and largely unsuccessful, missionary work of the Anglo-Saxon Lebuin, Saxony was almost forgotten by the Carolingians; their priorities lay elsewhere.⁴ It was Charlemagne who first decided to put an end to this troublesome neighbour once and for all, and in 772 launched the first of a systematic series of campaigns which were to last more than thirty years.⁵ Some military and missionary success was achieved in the period before 785, but all too often it was only temporary.⁶ Violent suppression and forced conversion were Charlemagne's policies; policies given their clearest expression in the *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae* of 782.⁷ In 785, however, Charlemagne stood as godfather at the baptism of the Saxon noble, Widukind, the leader of so many rebellions, and a period of peace ensued in which the Church worked to convert the aristocracy and the people south of the river Elbe.⁸ Some Saxons doubtless converted to Christianity in this period, but in the years 793–7 many resumed their opposition to Frankish lordship and everything that meant, including Christianity.⁹ Resistance

⁴ Principally in Aquitaine, and then Italy: K. Hauck, 'Die Ausbreitung des Glaubens [in Sachsen und die Verteidigung der Römischen Kirche als konkurrierende Herrscheraufgaben]', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 4 (1970), pp. 140–5.

⁵ See the Royal Frankish Annals: *Annales Regni Francorum*, ed. F. Kurze (Hanover, 1895), 772–804, pp. 33–119. For the reasons why Charlemagne wanted to conquer and integrate Saxony: Mayr-Harting, 'Charlemagne, the Saxons and the Imperial Coronation', pp. 1113–15. For an interesting assessment of a change in ideology towards Saxony during the period of mission: Hauck, 'Die Ausbreitung des Glaubens', pp. 138–72.

⁶ For example, Charlemagne had a 'multitude' of Saxons baptized in 777, but by 778 they were again in revolt. This was largely typical of the situation prevailing in Saxony during the missionary period as a whole. See *Chronicon Moissiacense*, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH, Scriptores*[SS] I (Hanover, 1826), 777–85, pp. 296–7; *Annales Regni Francorum*, 777–97, pp. 48–102.

⁷ The 782 *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae*, cc. 1–10, threatened harsh penalties for crimes against both clergy and the Christian religion: *MGH, Capitularia* I, ed. A. Boretius (Hanover, 1883), pp. 68–9. See M. Lintzel, 'Die Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae', in *Ausgewählte Schriften* I (Berlin, 1961), pp. 381–9. The successful submission of a major part of the province by 797 gave rise to a much more lenient capitulary: *Capitulare Saxonicum*, *MGH, Capitularia* I, pp. 71–2. The Saxons beyond the Elbe opposed both Frankish rule and Christianity up to the foundation of the bishoprics: *Annales Regni Francorum*, 804, p. 118–19.

⁸ *Annales Regni Francorum*, 785, p. 102.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 793–7, pp. 94–102. The presence of Saxons in Frankish armies, or their attendance at royal assemblies, in 787, 788, 789 and 791, may be a sign of their conversion to Christianity, although it is also necessary to recall that certain pagan Slavic tribes, such as the Abodrites, are recorded acting in this capacity in 789 and 798. It is also clear from the *Royal Frankish Annals* that the conflicts between 793 and 797 encompassed all Saxony, not just north of the Elbe. A large part of the Saxon nobility therefore probably remained effectively unconverted at this point. See E.J. Goldberg, 'Popular Revolt, [Dynastic Politics and Aristocratic Factionalism in the Early Middle Ages: the Saxon *Stellinga* reconsidered]', *Speculum* 70 (1995), pp. 473–9. In this otherwise excellent article, Goldberg's discussion of the chronology, scale and nature of the Christianization of the Saxon nobility is misleading. For example, his claim that, 'By 785 ... Charlemagne seems to have won over the majority of the Saxon *edhilingui* (aristocracy) to accepting Christianity and Carolingian lordship': *ibid.*, p. 476.

south of the Elbe was only completely crushed in 798;¹⁰ the Saxons beyond the Elbe continued to resist Carolingian authority until 804, when Charlemagne adopted a policy of forced resettlement of these Saxons within Francia itself.¹¹ From this point onwards, the province as a whole appears to have submitted to Frankish lordship. The question of how successful this period of mission was, in terms of conversions among the Saxon nobility, will be considered below: it is a vital part of understanding the status of the Saxon bishoprics during the ninth century.

This is the background to the foundation of bishoprics in Saxony, foundations which took place between 805 and 807.¹² Little is known about the actual circumstances of these foundations, or how and on what scale these new bishoprics were endowed, but a consideration of the years both before and after the foundations can provide some interesting insights. Indeed, the question of land is at the very heart of this study. Landed wealth furnished its holder with political status; the more extensive that wealth, the greater the political status bestowed upon its holder. By investigating the land-holdings of the ninth-century Saxon episcopal church we can make better sense of the evidence relating to its bishops' political ties and activities, and therefore also of its place within the east Frankish church as a whole. A comparison with other east Frankish bishops shall demonstrate the atypical nature of this region and its episcopal church.

The Saxon bishoprics dealt with in this paper are Hildesheim, Halberstadt, Paderborn, Verden, Minden, Münster, Osnabrück and Bremen/Hamburg-Bremen. There are only four charters extant which record grants of property to any of these eight Saxon sees: a charter of 862–87 describing a grant by the count Sidag to the church of Paderborn;¹³ a grant in 871–4 by Louis the German to the bishopric of Hildesheim, consisting of all royal property within the Hildesheim parochial boundaries;¹⁴ a grant in 876 by Louis the Younger of twelve manes of royal property in the Essen *pagus* to the church of Verden;¹⁵ and a grant in 889 by Arnulf of property in the *Gifaron* and *Reinidi* Gause which had previously been held in benefice by two royal vassals,

¹⁰ *Annales Regni Francorum*, 798, pp. 102, 103 and 105.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 804, pp. 118–19; *Chronicon Moissiacense*, 804, p. 305.

¹² E. Müller, *Die Entstehungsgeschichte der sächsischen Bistümer*, despite its flaws, remains the best published account of the foundations, but see also the literature in n. 2 above.

¹³ *Regesta Historiae Westfaliae, accedit Codex Diplomaticus I*, ed. H.A. Erhard (1847), no. 16.

¹⁴ *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Deutschen*, ed. P. Kehr, *MGH, Diplomata I* (Berlin, 1934), no. 143 (871–4) [hereafter DLD].

¹⁵ *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Jüngeren*, ed. P. Kehr, *MGH, Diplomata I* (Berlin, 1934), no. 1 (876) [hereafter DLJ].

and which was now to be held *'ad proprium'*, that is, with full rights, by the bishop of Münster.¹⁶ Even if one takes into account the inevitable loss of charters over time, particularly through fires at the sees of Hildesheim and Minden, there is still a remarkably small number of extant donation charters for this group of eight bishoprics.¹⁷ The Saxon episcopal church as a whole, therefore, in comparison with other east Frankish sees, either has a very low charter survival rate, or only had a small number of ninth-century charters to begin with.

There were certainly other grants of property to these sees. There are extant nine royal charters conferring and confirming the privilege of immunity for the episcopal churches of Bremen, Paderborn, Verden, Halberstadt and Hildesheim.¹⁸ The privilege of immunity ceded its holder, in this case the bishops, the right to deny royal officials access to their estates.¹⁹ Since this was a privilege linked directly to property, the above-named sees clearly possessed estates to which the privilege could apply. Such privileges are not known for Osnabrück, Minden or Münster, although Münster does possess other evidence documenting property-holdings.²⁰ Other charter evidence suggests that Liuthard of Paderborn and Theoderic of Minden granted property to the monasteries of Neuenheerse and Wunsdorf respectively, although I suspect that the property concerned was the bishops' personal lands rather than those of the see.²¹ Clearly many, if not all of these bishoprics possessed landed estates during the first century of their existence, but it is the extent of these land-holdings that is in question and we should

¹⁶ *Die Urkunden Arnulfs*, ed. P. Kehr, *MGH, Diplomata* III (Berlin, 1955), no. 54 (889) [hereafter DArn.].

¹⁷ *Urkundenbuch des Hochstifts Hildesheim [und seiner Bischöfe I]*, ed. K. Janicke (Leipzig, 1896), pp. v–vi. For Minden: R. Schieffer, *Die Entstehung von Domkapiteln*, p. 219, n. 525. On the absence of royal documents for the bishoprics: W. Metz, 'Probleme der fränkischen Reichsgutforschung [im sächsischen Stammesgebiet]', *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 31 (1959), p. 85.

¹⁸ Paderborn: *Die Kaiserurkunden der Provinz Westfalen 777–1313, I*, ed. R. Wilmans (Münster, 1867), no. 16 (822), DLD, no. 97 (859) and DLJ. no. 19 (881). Verden: DLD. no. 57 (849) and DLD. no. 153 (874). Hamburg-Bremen: DArn. no. 27 (888). Halberstadt: *Regesta Imperium I*, ed. J.F. Böhmer and E. Mühlbacher (Innsbruck, 1908), no. 535 (815) and *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Kindes*, ed. T. Schieffer, *MGH, Diplomata IV* (Berlin, 1960), no. 15 (902) [hereafter DLK.]. Hildesheim, *Urkundenbuch des Hochstifts Hildesheim I*, no. 60 (815). On the debated authenticity of the 815 charters of immunity for Hildesheim and Halberstadt: E. Müller, *Die Entstehungsgeschichte der sächsischen Bistümer*, pp. 75–92; R. Schieffer, *Die Entstehung von Domkapiteln*, pp. 225 n. 556 and 228 n. 572; Honselmann, 'Bistumsgründungen in Sachsen', pp. 24–6.

¹⁹ See F.L. Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions [under Charlemagne]*, trans. B. and M. Loyn (New York, 1968), pp. 45–50 and P. Fouracre, 'Eternal Light and Earthly Needs: Practical Aspects of the Development of Frankish Immunities', in W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds), *Power and Property in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 53–60.

²⁰ For Münster, see above, n. 16.

²¹ DLD. nos. 137 and 140 (871) and see Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford', pp. 316–17.

not assume, as some have done, that they were as substantial as those of other east Frankish bishoprics or of wealthy Saxon religious houses such as Corvey.²²

The Saxon bishoprics possessed several possible sources of endowment: the Carolingian kings, secular magnates and the clergy themselves.²³ There is no real evidence of clerical endowment and instances of noble patronage are very rare. The only known example of a Saxon secular magnate endowing a bishopric is the charter of Sidag for Paderborn mentioned above, while other possible generosity is alluded to in a 902 charter of Louis the Child for Halberstadt which made reference to 'whatever had been handed over to the church of Halberstadt by the munificence of our predecessors or contributed by *fideles*'.²⁴ It is unlikely, however, that the bishoprics would have received many grants of land from the Saxon nobility, especially in the decades before the later ninth century. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, there was the tortuous process of conversion. Many members of the Saxon nobility had been converted in the years immediately before 800, but clearly, even around the time of the foundations, some of its members were barely Christian.²⁵ In 815 a Saxon noble wrote to Louis the Pious seeking the emperor's aid in regaining his father's property. The letter's author explained how his father, Richart, and his uncle, Richolf, 'while in the service of Charlemagne, were deprived of their patrimonies by their relatives, who were still pagans, because of their hatred of

²² On Corvey's landed wealth: Metz, 'Probleme der fränkischen Reichsgutforschung', pp. 91–110. Eric Goldberg, Wolfgang Metz and Karl Hauck all make statements on the property granted to the Saxon episcopal church, and do not comment on the size of these land-holdings: Goldberg, 'Popular Revolt', p. 479; W. Metz, 'Mainzer, Fuldaer und Würzburger Einflüsse an der oberen Weser', p. 124, and K. Hauck, 'Die fränkische-deutsche Monarchie und der Weserraum', pp. 104–6, both in *Kunst und Kultur im Weserraum 800–1600*, I (Münster, 1966).

²³ According to Carolingian church law, personal property or patrimony acquired by a bishop after his elevation was, after his death, to become the property of the episcopal church: Aachen 816/29 c. 6 and Trosly 909 c. 14. See W. Hartmann, *Die Synoden der Karolingerzeit im Frankenreich und in Italien*. (Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, Zürich, 1989), pp. 172 and 376.

²⁴ DLK. no. 15 (901): 'Ut omnia, quae memoratae Halberstetensi ecclesiae a progenitoribus nostris regia munificentias sive aliorum fidelium collatione ... iusti tradita sunt'.

²⁵ K. Honselmann, 'Die Annahme des Christentums [durch die Sachsen im Lichte sächsischer Quellen des 9. Jahrhunderts]', *Westfälische Zeitschrift* 108 (1958), pp. 202–8; R. Drögereit, 'Die schriftliche Quellen zur Christianisierung der Sachsen und ihre Austa-gefähigkeit', in H.-W. Krumwiede (ed.), *Vorchristlich-christliche Frühgeschichte in Niedersachsen* (Blomberg-Lippe, 1966), pp. 7–20.

Christianity...'.²⁶ These events took place in the late 790s, only a few years before the foundation of the first Saxon bishoprics, and Richart's son was still trying to regain this property in 815.²⁷

The records from Saxon religious houses further demonstrate how slowly Saxony was christianized, including the nobility. The *Translatio Sancti Viti*, written in 837, described how Saxony's first major monastic foundation, Corvey, which was established by Louis the Pious in 822, was initially unsuccessful. It was not until later that, 'the number of monks from the dominant Saxon families daily increased', and while these first Saxon oblates were especially, 'poor in property, they were rich in religion'.²⁸ The extant records of Corvey attest to the comparatively small amount of land these aristocratic Saxon monks brought with them.²⁹ The *Translatio Sancti Pusinnae*, written at Herford between 860 and 877, echoed this initial reluctance among the Saxon aristocracy for Christianity, but 'when the holy zeal was stronger, they brought together their property in order to establish monasteries and they offered their sons to God'.³⁰

Once converted, the Saxon aristocracy, like many of their counterparts elsewhere, showed a greater interest in patronizing monastic rather than episcopal foundations. Herford was allegedly founded as early as 800 by Waltgar, son of Widukind, the first known Saxon noble to be baptized, and Saxon nobles with marital and regional connections with north Thuringia were granting land to Fulda as early as the first decade of the ninth century.³¹ For the majority of Saxon landowners,

²⁶ *MGH, Epistolae* V, ed. E. Dümmler (Berlin, 1899), p. 301, 4: 'Dum autem in servitio patris, felicitis memoriae domni Caroli imperatoris, extiterunt propinqui eorum atque pagenses, causa christianitatis furore se super eos turbantes, omnia quae in domibus propriae elaborationis habuerunt, cuncta raptim diripuerunt'. Another interesting example is provided by a letter from the Saxon Bennis to Charlemagne in 811, which recounted the similar loss of property belonging to Amalung (Bennis's father) in Saxony: E.F.J. Dronke, *Codex Diplomaticus Fuldensis* (Kassel, 1847), no. 261. The attempted conversion of a native aristocracy could be a very messy and divisive process.

²⁷ On the timing of these events: Honselmann, 'Die Annahme des Christentums', pp. 207–8.

²⁸ *Translatio Sancti Viti*, ed. P. Haffé, *Monumenta Corbeiensia. Bibliotheca rerum Germanicarum I* (Berlin, 1864), p. 10: 'Augebatur tamen quotidie numerus monachorum ex nobilissimo Saxonum genere ... et licet opibus essent pauperes, religione tamen sancta pollebant'.

²⁹ *Traditiones Corbeiensis*, ed. P. Wigand (Leipzig, 1843).

³⁰ *Ex Translatione Sancti Pusinnae*, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH, SS II* (Hanover, 1829), p. 681: 'Denique pullulant devotione sancta, rebus suis ad monasteria constituenda collatis, divino suos filios cultui offerentes...'

³¹ For Herford: Semmler, 'Corvey and Herford', p. 292; Marital ties and the Saxon nobility of the Hessengau: W. Berges, 'Ein Kommentar zur, "Gründung der Hildesheimer Kirche"', in *Historische Forschungen für Walter Schlesinger II*, H. Beumann (ed.) (Cologne, Vienna, 174), pp. 93–100; K. Heinemeyer, 'Adel, Kirche und Königtum an der oberen Weser im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert', in *Historische Forschungen für Walter Schlesinger II*, pp. 19–21.

however, ecclesiastical patronage was clearly not viewed as a viable use of resources during these early years. The only other monastic foundations in Saxony before the 830s were the house of Werden, established by the Frisian Liudger, the first bishop of Münster, and the Carolingian house of Corvey.³² The count Bernhard was involved in the arrangements for the royal foundation of Corvey, and also founded the nunnery of Wendhausen in the 830s, but the vast majority of Saxon religious houses were not established by Saxon nobles until the mid-ninth century and later.³³ These years saw the Liudolfing foundations of Essen and Gandersheim-Braunshausen; and the foundations of Wildeshausen, and possible Vreden, by Waltbraht, the grandson of Widukind.³⁴ The foundation and endowment of 'family monasteries' such as these were public acts of piety which did not require any real alienation of a family's estates: a typical charter issued by Louis the Younger for Gandersheim recorded that only a Liudolfing was to be elected abbess of this house.³⁵ Members of the secular nobility were therefore clearly more inclined to patronize their own monastic communities than bishoprics and this pattern continued throughout the remainder of the ninth century: Freckenhorst was founded between 855 and 860 by the noble Eberward;³⁶ Lammespring was founded sometime before 871 by the Saxon count Ricdag and his wife Imhild, who also later founded Meschede;³⁷ Liesborn was established by the Liudolfing Boso in 874;³⁸ and the nunnery of Möllenbeck was founded by the Saxon noble woman Hildburg in 896.³⁹ Patronage therefore appears to have been directed principally towards family foundations.⁴⁰ Bishops from Saxon families also established monastic communities in this period, foundations which were also to be largely under familial control: Liuthard of Paderborn founded Neuenheerse; Theoderic of

³² For Werden: *Altfredi Vita Liudgeri*, II iii, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH*, SS II (Hanover, 1829), p. 412–13. For Corvey: Semmler, 'Corvey and Herford', p. 296–7.

³³ Semmler, 'Corvey and Herford', p. 308.

³⁴ H. Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim*. [*Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe von 815 bis 1221*. *Germania Sacra NF 20*] (Berlin, New York, 1984), pp. 88–9 and 93. For Essen: E. Wisplinghoff, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte des Damenstifts Essen', *AfD* 13 (1967), pp. 110–13. For Wildeshausen and the questions surrounding its initial constitution: K. Schmid, 'Die Nachfahren Widukinds', *Deutsches Archiv* 20 (1964), pp. 4–7. For Vreden: Semmler, 'Corvey and Herford', pp. 309–10.

³⁵ DLJ. no. 3 (877).

³⁶ Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford', p. 316.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, and Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim*, pp. 17–8.

³⁸ Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim*, p. 18, n. 170.

³⁹ DArn. no. 147 (896).

⁴⁰ The secular nobility elsewhere are known to have endowed non-monastic churches attached to bishoprics. For example, SS. Cassius and Florientius, Bonn (under the archbishop of Cologne): *Rheinisches Urkundenbuch. Älteres Urkunden bis 100*, ed. E. Wisplinghoff (Bonn, 1972), nos. 50, 54, 55–62, 64, 65, 66, 69, 72, 74, 76, 78 and 79.

Minden, Wunsdorf, and Hildigrim II of Halberstadt, *Ridigippi* and Metelen.⁴¹ The Saxon bishops were to have little or no control over these houses beyond their diocesan rights or the definition of their rights contained within particular charters.⁴² Control of these houses remained largely in the hands of the founding families during this period.

The idea of Saxon noble endowment of the bishoprics does not sit comfortably against this background. The Saxon aristocracy had only recently been converted to Christianity and, with a few exceptions, many of its members arguably did not possess the means of endowing the church on a large scale: there was a very small number of wealthy families within Saxony.⁴³ There was patronage for monastic foundations, but this involved only a few kin-groups and was almost exclusively directed to small family houses. What is more, even this type of patronage did not really begin until almost half a century after the very first foundations. This is not to say that Saxon nobles did not endow the bishoprics at all, just that the possibility of any significant local endowment of episcopal churches before the second half of the ninth century at the earliest must be viewed as really quite remote.⁴⁴ It can be no coincidence that the one extant noble grant to an episcopal church comes from the later ninth century. The real extent of noble patronage of the Saxon bishoprics is unclear, but one certainly cannot assume numerous and extensive grants.

The failure of the nobility to patronize the bishoprics was significant. Saxony was not the only region to receive new bishoprics in the eighth and early ninth centuries. After a missionary period and the organizational work of Boniface, bishoprics were established in Bavaria, Hesse

⁴¹ For Neuenheerse: *Mainzer Urkundenbuch I*, ed. M. Stimming (Darmstadt, 1932), no. 149 (868) and DLD. no. 137 (871). For Wunsdorf: DLD. no. 140 (871). For *Ridigippi* and Metelen: DArn. nos. 41 (888) and 59 (889).

⁴² The relationship between the bishops and these houses, as defined in many of the charters listed in nn. 34, 35 and 41 above, is of a bishop and *Eigenklöster* within his diocese. None of these houses were episcopal monasteries; they were not integrated into the bishoprics' property.

⁴³ K. Leyser, 'Henry I [and the Beginnings of the Saxon Empire]', in *Medieval Germany and its Neighbours 900–1250* (London, 1982), pp. 40–1 and nn. 3–4.

⁴⁴ Klemens Ortmann's claim that the bishopric of Minden received 'significant grants' from the nobility in the early ninth century is completely baseless: K. Ortmanns, *Das Bistum Minden [in seiner Beziehungen zu König, Papst und Herzog bis zum Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts]* (Bensberg, 1972), p. 11. Wigbert, the son of Widukind, granted land to the church of Utrecht in 834, but he was closely connected to the court of Lothar I at this point: Schmid, 'Die Nachfahren Widukinds', p. 3.

and Thuringia in the 730s and 740s.⁴⁵ The bishoprics in these areas rapidly acquired landed wealth – partly through the patronage of the local nobility – and by 800 many of them had acquired a great deal of property and had achieved substantial political importance. The bishoprics of Freising, Regensburg, Passau and Würzburg are the most notable examples.⁴⁶ This raises the question of why the Saxon bishoprics did not enjoy the fortune of their more southern counterparts. The answer can be found in the religious pre-history of Bavaria and the other regions. Members of the Bavarian and Thuringian nobility had been subject to Frankish influences for some time and many had been Christian for a good number of years before the establishment of a structured episcopal hierarchy. In fact, many churches and religious houses were already present in these areas.⁴⁷ The nobility had therefore been Christian for perhaps as long as several generations when the bishoprics were founded and were accustomed to endowing the church. The fact that the Bavarian bishoprics, in particular, were attached to existing well-endowed monasteries, such as St Emmeram at Regensburg, also contributed significantly to the viability and status of these new sees.

The contrast with Saxony could hardly be more stark. The Saxon bishoprics were founded less than thirty years after the first organized missions in 777; missions which were undertaken to an almost completely pagan region and which experienced a number of significant set-

⁴⁵ For the best discussion of these events and the related historiography: K. Heinemeyer, 'Die Gründung des Klosters Fulda [im Rahmen der bonifatianischen Kirchenorganisation]', *Hessisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 30 (1980), pp. 10–29; S. Weinfurter, 'Das Bistum Willibalds [im Dienste des Königs. Eichstätt im früheren Mittelalters]', *Zeitschrift für Bayerischen Landesgeschichte* 50 (1987), pp. 12–21; I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms [450–751]* (London, 1994), pp. 307–11; R. Schieffer, *Die Entstehung von Domkapiteln*, pp. 180–9, and R. Kaiser, 'Bistumsgründung und Kirchenorganisation im 8. Jahrhundert', *Eichstätter Studien* 30 (1990), pp. 58–62.

⁴⁶ For noble patronage of some of these churches shortly after their foundation: Freising: *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Freising I*, ed. T. Bitterauf (Munich, 1967), nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14 etc; Regensburg: *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Regensburg und des Klosters S. Emmeram*, ed. J. Widemann (Munich, 1969), nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 etc.; Passau: *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Passau*, ed. M. Heuweiser (Munich, 1969), nos. 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22 etc.

⁴⁷ H. Büttner, 'Mission und Kirchenorganisation', pp. 454–63; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 37–11; R. Schieffer, *Die Entstehung von Domkapiteln*, pp. 180–4 and 192–9, 'Über Bischofssitz und Fiskalgut [im 8. Jahrhundert]', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 95 (1975), pp. 18–25; Weinfurter, 'Das Bistum Willibalds', pp. 5–10. Würzburg's patron saint, Kilian, had successfully conducted missions in this area during the 680s: *Passio Kiliani martyris Wirziburgensis*, ed. W. Levison, *MGH, S[criptores] R[erum] M[erovingi-carum]* V (Hanover and Leipzig), pp. 722–8. There is also evidence to suggest his work here was consolidatory rather than novel: Büttner, 'Mission und Kirchenorganisation', pp. 457–8. This was some sixty years before the foundation of the bishopric. For Bavaria see also *Vita Sanctorum Haimbranni et Corbiniani, Arbeonis episcopi Frisingensis*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH, SRG* (Hanover, 1920).

backs.⁴⁸ As outlined above, there were no pre-existing wealthy monastic foundations to which the Saxon bishoprics could be attached; the Saxon nobility were at best only very recent converts; and even the progression to family religious houses was slow. The transition from paganism to Christianity consisted of more than simply a change of religion; social and political structures were affected too. Conversion took time.⁴⁹ What is more, the social organization of pre-conquest Saxony created further problems in terms of converting the nobility. There was no king or absolute leader of the Saxons whom the missionaries could convert in the hope that the native aristocracy would follow suit – the most frequently used tactic of conversion.⁵⁰ This meant that conversions among the nobility either had to be forced or completed piecemeal. Given all of these factors, and the incredibly short period of mission to Saxony before the establishment of a diocesan structure, it is actually no surprise that it was almost two generations after the foundation of the bishoprics before any Saxon nobles began to patronize ecclesiastical institutions on any scale. Saxony did not possess the partly Christian history of other Frankish border regions and the initial penury of its episcopal church was the result.

Finally, there are the Carolingians themselves. It is generally accepted that Charlemagne confiscated lands from rebellious Saxon nobles during the period of conquest. However, we do not know how

⁴⁸ See above, p. 199–200. There were also anti-Christian elements to the *Stellinga* uprising in the early 840s, but this did not involve the nobility: Goldberg, 'Popular Revolt', pp. 467–501. Goldberg's paper provides an excellent summary of the literature on the *Stellinga*, and also a convincing reinterpretation of the dynamics of this revolt.

⁴⁹ Literature on the Christianization of Scandinavia has emphasized the importance of the missionary period and the opportunity it provided for increased familiarity with Christianity, the Church and its ideas. See P. Foote, 'Historical Studies: Conversion Moment and Conversion Period', in A. Faulkes & R. Perkins (eds.), *Viking Re-evaluations* (London, 1993), pp. 137–44; B. Sawyer, P. Sawyer and I. Wood (eds.), *The Christianization of Scandinavia* (Alingsås, 1987); G. Steinsland, 'The Change of Religion in the Nordic Countries – a Confrontation between Two Living Religions', *Collegium Medievale* 3 (1990–2), pp. 123–35. There are, of course, significant differences between the history of missions to Scandinavia and Saxony, but many of the basic dynamics of conversion are the same.

⁵⁰ On the Saxon socio-political structure before the province's conquest by the Franks: Mayr-Harting, 'Charlemagne, the Saxons and the Imperial Coronation of 800', pp. 1115–16; Goldberg, 'Popular Revolt', pp. 470–3. A fine near-contemporary example of the conversion of a king and, subsequently, his aristocracy and people, is provided by Khan Boris and the Bulgars in the 860s: *The Annals of St. Bertin: Ninth-Century Histories I* trans. and annotated J.L. Nelson (Manchester, 1991), 864, p. 118 and 866, pp. 137–8; *The Annals of Fulda: Ninth-Century Histories II*, trans. and annotated T. Reuter (Manchester, 1992), 866–7, p. 56 and nn. 11 and 1. See also A.P. Vlasto, *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 155–65 and J. Shepard, 'Slavs and Bulgars', in R. McKitterick (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History II* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 239–47.

much was taken.⁵¹ The evidence suggests that there was very little in the way of fisc land in Saxony during the ninth century, so any land Charlemagne had acquired was clearly redistributed quite quickly.⁵² Wolfgang Metz has shown how Charlemagne and his successors distributed this land among loyal Saxon nobles and Carolingian *Eigenkirchen*.⁵³ Furthermore, during the course of the ninth century, the small number of genuinely wealthy Carolingian *Eigenkirchen*, the *cellulae iuris nostri*, such as Meppen, Visbeck, Eresburg and Rheine, became the property of the Carolingians' own religious houses at Herford and Corvey.⁵⁴

Some of the confiscated land must have also come to the bishoprics. In 887 Charles III issued a charter for Bisio, bishop of Paderborn, ordering that lands previously held *in beneficium* by the Paderborn church were now to be held without restriction.⁵⁵ Paderborn was not to enjoy these new rights, however, because the charter also demanded that Bisio grant these lands to the foundation at Neuenheerse. In 890 Arnulf issued a similar charter for Wigbert, bishop of Verden, ceding to him with full rights (*in proprium*), 'certain things from our law (*nostris iuris*) in the places of Weineswald, Balve, Muckhorst, Kneten and Herbrum which, for a long time now, he has held in benefice'.⁵⁶ Other estates which the bishop had held in benefice were also granted as 'free

⁵¹ A sizeable amount of land was doubtless taken by Charlemagne, but, once again, we should guard against making too many assumptions about the real scale of such confiscations. For example, the letter to Louis and Pious described above concerning the successors of Richart; relatives who were both pagan and hostile to Frankish lordship c. 800 were still holding their lands later, as well as those estates which they had taken from kin who had earlier converted to Christianity. The most important question here, of course, is how much of this confiscated land went to the bishoprics.

⁵² Metz, 'Probleme der fränkischen Reichsgutforschung', pp. 77–126, *Karolingische Reichsgut* (Berlin, 1960), pp. 18, 41–2 and 140–1. The lack of royal estates and property in Saxony is often used to explain the infrequency with which this region appears in the east Frankish Carolingians' itinerary during the ninth century. The 852 entry in the contemporary *Annals of Fulda* highlights the difficulties Louis the German experienced trying to retain control of even this small amount of fisc land: *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. R. Rau, in *Quellen zur karolingische Reichsgeschichte* (Berlin, 1960) [hereafter AF], 842, pp. 42–4: 'then (Louis) set out for Saxony, mainly to judge cases which, so they say, had been neglected by bad and unfaithful judges ... there were also matters which concerned him especially: lands which had come to him by hereditary right from his father and grandfather, which he needed to restore to their rightful owner through lawful claim against wicked usurpers'; translation from Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda*, p. 33. See also Metz, *Karolingische Reichsgut*, pp. 139 and 213.

⁵³ Metz, 'Probleme der fränkischen Reichsgutforschung', pp. 84–98.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 91–8. Meppen: *Die Kaiserurkunden der Provinz Westfalens I*, no. 16. Visbeck: DLD. no. 73 (855).

⁵⁵ DKarIII. no. 169 (887).

⁵⁶ DArn. no. 78 (890): 'Quasdam res iuris nostri, quas usque huc in beneficio tenuit, in locis ... diebus vitae suae in proprium concederemus...'. It is interesting to note that Louis the Child's 902 charter for Halberstadt, mentioned above, also makes reference to land held by that see 'per precarium'. See above p. 4, n. 25.

property'. The grants of *in beneficium* property may well have reached back to the time of the bishoprics' foundation. Such grants to the Saxon church of royal property *in beneficium* released revenues to the church, such as tithe and rents, while allowing the king to retain control of the land and, particularly, of its associated military obligations.⁵⁷ The granting of land in benefice to churches in newly conquered or occupied territories had been done in Italy and southern Raetia by Charlemagne in the late eighth century, enabling him to establish and control royal vassals in these sensitive areas.⁵⁸ That such a system was adopted in recently subjugated Saxony too, at the beginning of the ninth century, is quite plausible.

The Saxon episcopal church therefore doubtless received some land from Charlemagne during the first years of the ninth century, but the scale of such grants is unknown. However, we should not assume that the Saxon bishops had benefited greatly from these donations and we should remember that their control of these estates would have been extremely limited. What is more, given the small amount of fisc land left in Saxony after the initial distribution of confiscated property, the Carolingians did not possess the wherewithal to endow the bishoprics on any real scale later. Finally, it is also necessary to acknowledge at this point that the Carolingians and the nobility may have endowed the bishoprics with property outside Saxony. Such donations were certainly made to the Saxon religious houses of Werden and Gandersheim, but there is no evidence of similar non-Saxon land grants to the bishoprics.⁵⁹ This does not of course mean that such endowment of the bishoprics did not take place, but I suggest, again, that assumptions should not be made about the scale of any such grants.

The evidence relating to tithe further suggests a poorly endowed episcopal church in Saxony. In 834, as a result of his support for the rebellious Lothar, Gebwin, bishop of Osnabrück, had his bishopric's rights to a portion of its tithe confiscated by the newly restored Louis

⁵⁷ S. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 84–105, provides an excellent summary and convincing revision of the historiography relating to the problems of Carolingian benefices. That the king did retain control of vassals on such lands: P. McKeon, *Hincmar of Laon and Carolingian Politics* (Urbana, Chicago, London, 1978), pp. 179–85; J.L. Nelson, 'Charles the Bald and the Church in Town and Countryside', pp. 78, 88 and 'The Church's Military Service in the Ninth Century: [a Contemporary Comparative view?]', pp. 123–4, both in *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986). Secularized church land held in benefice also ceded the compensatory payment of ninths: G. Constable, 'Nona et Decima', *Speculum* 25 (1960), pp. 224–50.

⁵⁸ Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, pp. 90 and 100, and Metz, 'Probleme der fränkischen Reichsgutforschung', pp. 86–8.

⁵⁹ For Werden's lands in Lotharingia: *Die Urkunden Zwentibolds*, ed. T. Schieffer, *MGH, Diplomata* (Berlin, 1960), no. 19 (898) [hereafter DZwent]. Gandersheim possessed land in south Thuringia: DLJ. no. 4 (877).

the Pious.⁶⁰ The confiscation of tithe, rather than property, may indicate that there was little in the way of estates which could have been forfeit.⁶¹ Throughout the remainder of the ninth century Gebwin's successors at Osnabrück all attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to have their church's rights to this tithe restored.⁶² The obvious importance of these tithes to the church of Osnabrück may imply the absence of a significant alternative source of revenue, a point noted by Walter Seegrün who has also remarked that there is no evidence whatsoever for Osnabrück's possession of any landed wealth.⁶³ Egilmar, bishop of Osnabrück (885–916), also wrote about the first years of the Saxon bishoprics. He stated that Charlemagne 'established each bishopric in that province with stipends from the tithe because the pastors and bishops there were without other donations'.⁶⁴ This statement supports all the above arguments for the initial penury of the Saxon sees and the Osnabrück evidence as a whole suggests that the bishoprics' economic status changed but little during the remainder of the ninth century.

It is impossible to prove that the land-holdings of the Saxon episcopal churches were small, but the indirect evidence certainly suggests that they very probably were. The substantial endowment of these bishoprics by the secular nobility is unlikely and therefore the burden of patronage would have fallen on the ruling family. Given that the Carolingians' own land-holdings in Saxony were not at all extensive and could not withstand substantial alienations, the Saxon bishoprics are unlikely to have secured possession of significant amounts of property, and when estates were acquired some were doubtless held in benefice.

Evidence relating to the Saxon bishops' political ties and activities may help to clarify the Saxon church's proprietary status. In what follows I will only compare the Saxon bishops with other east Frankish suffragans; metropolitan sees such as Salzburg and Mainz necessarily had a much higher status. The study will also only consider Saxon bishops elected after 815 because the bishoprics of Hildesheim and

⁶⁰ *Querimonia Egilmaris episcopi*, ed. E. Caspar & G. Laehr, *MGH, Epistolae VII* (Berlin, 1928), pp. 359–60. That this document is genuine: A Spicker-Wendt, *Die Querimonia Egilmaris episcopi und die Responsio Stephani V* (Cologne, Vienna, 1980); T. Schieffer, 'Adnotationes', (1986), pp. 503–45.

⁶¹ The bishops of Toul, Arnulf (847–71) and Arnald (871–94), both suffered confiscations of their church's property as a result of their opposition to the kings Lothar II (855–69) and Arnulf (887–99): *Gesta Episcoporum Tullensium*, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH, SS VIII* (Hanover, 1848), pp. 637–8 and DArn. no. 112 (893).

⁶² *MGH, Epistolae VII*, pp. 359–62.

⁶³ W. Seegrün, 'Zur Klageschrift des Osnabrücker Bischofs Egilmar aus dem Jahr 890', *Osnabrücker Mitteilungen* 91 (1985), p. 36.

⁶⁴ *MGH, Epistolae VII*, p. 360, 15–17: '...eiusdem provinciae episcopatus ex decimarum stipendiis constituisset, quia aliis ibi pastores et episcopi donariis carebant...'

Halberstadt were not founded until that date and, for most of the Saxon bishoprics, the only bishops previously elected had been the original Anglo-Saxon and Frankish missionary bishops. I will begin by considering the evidence relating to episcopal elections.

Johann Simon and Walter Pelster have investigated the status and origin of bishops from the church provinces of Mainz and Cologne, including the Saxon bishops.⁶⁵ In many cases little can be said about these bishops prior to their elevation. In some instances their regional and familial origins can be documented quite precisely, in others less so, while conclusions concerning the rest are largely speculative, relying on the proof of 'name-types' and their regional occurrences – a form of evidence which can be very difficult to interpret. However, where a level of certainty can be enjoyed, there appears to have been a significant number of Saxon bishops between 815 and 911 who were of Saxon origin: Altfrid (851–74), Liudolf (874), Marcward (874–80), Wigbert (880–908) and Waltbert (908/9–19) of Hildesheim; Anskar (832–65), Rimbart (865–88), Adalgar (888–909) and Hrotger (909–16/17) of Hamburg-Bremen; Liuthard (862–87) and Biso (887–909) of Paderborn; Egilbert (806–85) and Egilmar (885–918) of Osnabrück; Theoderic (853–80) and Drogo (887–902) of Minden; Wolfhelm of Münster (887–95/921); and Wigbert of Verden (874–908).⁶⁶ Some of these bishops came from the Saxon monastery of Corvey, which had been a missionary station to the archbishopric of Hamburg and had links with Hildesheim.⁶⁷ Many bishops at Saxon sees also continued to come from the churches and religious houses which had been the bishoprics' original missionary centres: Gunther of Hildesheim (815–34) from Rheims, Spatto of Verden (?–849?) from Amorbach, Badurad of Paderborn (815–62) from Würzburg, Altfrid of Münster (839–49) from Werden and Haduard of Minden (832–53) from Fulda.⁶⁸ Appointments were therefore largely governed by either regional or traditional ecclesiastical links. Only Liudbert of Münster (850/1–70) and Wolfher of Minden (880–86) had origins which were unquestionably neither Saxon nor linked to an original missionary centre of the Saxon church.⁶⁹ Clearly, the Saxon church was, in the words of

⁶⁵ W. Pelster, *Stand und Herkunft der Bischöfe der Kölner Kirchenprovinz* (Weimar, 1909); J. Simon, *Stand und Herkunft der Bischöfe der Mainzer Kirchenprovinz* (Weimar, 1908).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* For Hildesheim see also: Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim*, pp. 46–136. For Hamburg-Bremen: *Series Episcoporum Ecclesiae Catholicae Occidentalis. Series V. Germania II. Archiepiscopatus Hammaburgensis sive Bremensis*, ed. S. Weinfurter and O. Engels (Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 4–20.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ For the original missionary centres of the Saxon bishoprics and their links to these churches: R. Schieffer, *Die Entstehung von Domkapiteln* pp. 205–31.

⁶⁹ For Liudbert: *ibid.*, p. 209 and n. 461. For Wolfher: Ortmanns, *Das Bistum Minden* p. 14.

Heinrich Büttner and Irmgard Dietrich, 'self-sufficient'.⁷⁰ In contrast to this, many of the men elected to other east Frankish sees did not possess local or ecclesiastical ties with the church to which they were elevated. For example, Waldo of Freising (883–903) and Aspert of Regensburg (891–4) were Swabians, while Baltram of Strasbourg (888–906) was a Bavarian.⁷¹ This fact has prompted Timothy Reuter to remark that, 'Unlike counts and margraves, who generally had local roots, the east Frankish episcopate was genuinely regnal and not provincial in its composition'.⁷² Elections to bishoprics in Saxony were clearly quite different.

This large number of appointees with regional or ecclesiastical links to the Saxon bishoprics may indicate a certain level of electoral freedom. The Carolingian period possesses few well-documented examples of royal intervention in specific episcopal elections; possibly the best recorded instances are the failed attempts of Lothar II to appoint to Cambrai and Cologne in the 860s, and the cases of Noyon and Beauvais in 879–80 and 881–2.⁷³ Royal influence in episcopal elections is therefore rarely recorded and often has to be inferred. This is necessarily a tentative process, but evidence of an individual's links to the court prior to his elevation, especially if he possessed no apparent previous connections with the see to which he was elected, can be a relatively sure sign of royal preference or at least influence. Significantly, for the Saxon bishoprics, such connections with the court can only be documented for Ebo of Hildesheim (845–51), Liudbert of Münster (850/1–70), Wigbert of Verden (874–908) and Wolfher of Minden (880–6), two of whom, as mentioned above, are known to have possessed no links with Saxony, its church or any of the original missionary centres. Ebo was the deposed archbishop of Rheims who

⁷⁰ H. Büttner and I. Dietrich, 'Weserland und Hessen im Kräftespiel der karolingischen und frühen ottonischen Politik', *Westfalen* 30 (1952), p. 138.

⁷¹ J. Fleckenstein, [*Die Hofkapelle der deutschen Könige, I:*] *Die karolingische Hofkapelle* (Stuttgart, 1959), pp. 190, 199 and 207.

⁷² T. Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages* [c. 800–1056] (London, 1991), p. 107.

⁷³ Cambrai 862: Letters of Hincmar of Rheims; *MGH, Epistolae* VIII, ed. E. Perels (Berlin, 1939), p. 119 nos. 151 and 154; a letter of Pope Nicholas I, *MGH, Epistolae* VI, ed. E. Perels (Berlin, 1925), p. 279; *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium*, G. Pertz (ed.), *MGH, SS* VII (Hanover, 1846), p. 418. Cologne 865–66: *Annales Xantenses*, ed. B. von Simson (Hanover and Leipzig, 1909), p. 232; *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, ed. F. Grat, J. Vielliard and S. Clémencet (Paris, 1964) [hereafter AB], 864, p. 111. See also *The Annals of St. Bertin: Ninth-Century Histories I*, trans. and annotated, J.L. Nelson (Manchester, 1991), pp. 113, n. 7 and 117, n. 13. For the cases of Noyon and Beauvais: H.G.J. Beck, 'The Selection of Bishops Suffragan to Hincmar of Rheims, 845–882', *Catholic Historical Review* 45 (1959/60), pp. 209–306 and D. Yeandle, 'The Ludwigsleid: King, Church and Context', in J.L. Flood and D. Yeandle (eds.), 'mit regulu biithungan'. *Neue Arbeiten zur althochdeutschen Poesie und Sprache* (Göppingen, 1989), pp. 25–66.

sought refuge with Louis the German after the 843 treaty of Verdun.⁷⁴ Liudbert was a cleric from Cologne, and had been archbishop-elect of that see; he was ousted by Lothar I for supporting Louis the German in 841 and appears to have fled to Louis shortly afterwards.⁷⁵ Wigbert, a chaplain of Louis the German and the first Saxon cleric to hold a position at court, was elected to the see of Verden in 874.⁷⁶ Wolfher, elected to Minden in 880, was a Lotharingian and the chancellor of Louis the Younger between 876 and 880.⁷⁷ Examples of probable royal influence in elections to Saxon sees are therefore rare.

This evidence of royal influence in elections again contrasts sharply with what is known for the other east Frankish bishoprics during the ninth and early tenth centuries. Between 815 and 911/12 many other east Frankish suffragan sees had several men elected who are known to have had connections with the court prior to their elevation. For example, at Eichstätt, Erchanbald (882–912) and Odalfrid (912–33);⁷⁸ at Würzburg, Gozbald (842–55) and Rudolf (892–908);⁷⁹ at Strasbourg, Bernold (820–40), and Baltram (888–906);⁸⁰ at Augsburg, Lanto (833–60), Witgar (861–87) and Adalbero (887–909);⁸¹ at Regensburg, Erchanfred (848–63) and Aspert (891–4);⁸² at Passau, Ermanrich (866–74) and Egilmar (874–97);⁸³ and at Worms, Adelhelm (872–6).⁸⁴ It is also interesting to note that while the nobility in the late ninth and early tenth centuries attempted to take control of certain bishoprics elsewhere in east Francia and the Rhineland, such as Constance and Liège, no initial efforts were made by the rising Ottonian family, the successors to the Carolingians, to take control of any of the sees in

⁷⁴ Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim* pp. 57–9 and 71–6.

⁷⁵ F.W. Oediger, *Die Geschichte des Erzbistums Köln* (Bonn, 1972), p. 88.

⁷⁶ Fleckenstein, *Die karolingische Hofkapelle*, pp. 181–2 and 184.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 186. Ortmanns, *Das Bistum Minden* pp. 13–14.

⁷⁸ F. Heidingsfelder, *Die Regesten der Bischöfe von Eichstätt [bis zum Ende der Regierung des Bischofs Marquard von Hagel 1324]* (Erlangen, 1938), pp. 29 and 41; Fleckenstein, *Die karolingische Hofkapelle* pp. 205 and 211 for Erchanbald, and pp. 192 and 210 for Odalfrid.

⁷⁹ A. Wendehorst, *Das Bistum Würzburg*, pp. 43 and 51. For Gozbald see also Fleckenstein, *Die karolingische Hofkapelle*, pp. 167–71.

⁸⁰ H. Bloch, *Die Regesten der Bischöfe von Staßburg I* (Innsbruck, 1908), pp. 232, 234 and 239.

⁸¹ F. Zoepfl, *Geschichte des Bistums Augsburg und seiner Bischöfe I* (Munich, 1955), pp. 22 and 55; For Witgar see also: Fleckenstein, *Die karolingische Hofkapelle* p. 174–5 and 189–91. For Adalbero: F. Knöpp, 'Adalbero, Bischof von Augsburg', in *Die Reichsabtei Lorsch. Festschrift zum Gedenken an ihre Stiftung 764 I* (Darmstadt, 1973), pp. 157–8.

⁸² For Erchanfred: Fleckenstein, *Die karolingische Hofkapelle* pp. 168, 179 and 184. For Aspert: *ibid.*, pp. 196, 199 and 202–4.

⁸³ For Egilmar: *ibid.*, pp. 196 and 205. For Ermanrich: *ibid.*, pp. 179–80 and 183–4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 172, 181 and 184. There are also examples from other east Frankish sees, for example, Gerhard (847–77) and Einhard (899–913/18) at Speyer: F. Haffner, 'Die Bischöfe von Speyer bis zum Jahre 913 (918)', *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 74 (1965), pp. 341–2 and 352 n. 595.

their homeland of Saxony, with the sole exception of Hildesheim.⁸⁵ Josef Fleckenstein has remarked on this apparent lack of interest shown in elections to Saxon sees during the late ninth century. He commented that, 'Arnulf, unlike Louis the German whose chaplain Wigbert became bishop of Verden, seems not even to have *attempted* to intervene in appointments to the Saxon bishoprics'.⁸⁶ With the exception of the four bishops named above, however, there is little evidence that either Louis the Pious, Louis the German, Louis the Younger, Charles III, or the government of Louis the Child, showed any more concern than Arnulf. All this evidence suggests that there was little interest in influencing elections to the Saxon bishoprics; those elected were largely either local men, or possessed some other link with the church to which they were elevated. Few men from outside Saxony, or with royal connections, were elected to Saxon sees. A bishopric that lacked land lacked political status and the low political status of the Saxon bishoprics is reflected in the lack of outside interest in their elections.

The non-ecclesiastical activity of the Saxon bishops in the Carolingian period further supports this view of political isolation. Instances of Saxon bishops holding office at court, acting as envoys or accompanying their king to important assemblies, are few in number. Badurad of Paderborn was a *missus* under Louis the Pious;⁸⁷ Theoderic of Minden accompanied Louis the German to diplomatic meetings at Worms in 859, Koblenz in 860 and Aachen in 870;⁸⁸ in 881 Liuthard, bishop of Paderborn, was given jurisdictional authority over the Saxons of the Hörst Mark, a role which may have been akin to that of a special *missus*; and Biso of Paderborn and Wigbert of Verden appeared alongside Count Conrad as interveners on an 892 charter issued by Arnulf.⁸⁹ However, it was Altfrid of Hildesheim who was the most politically active Saxon bishop of the ninth century. He is recorded as being at Koblenz with Theoderic of Minden in 860;⁹⁰ as an envoy, together with Salomon II of Constance, to the west Frankish king,

⁸⁵ For the tenth-century bishops of Hildesheim: Sehard (919–28), Thiehard (928–54) and Othwin (954–84): Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim*, pp. 137, 141–2 and 147–9. The Ottonian preference for this bishopric may have been due to the number of Liudolfing religious houses within the Hildesheim diocese. Things were different by the second half of the tenth century; for probable royal appointments to Münster, Osnabrück and Minden during these years: Pelster, *Stand and Herkunft der Bischöfe der Kölner Kirchenprovinz* pp. 66–7, 78–9 and 90, and to Halberstadt and Paderborn: Simon, *Stand and Herkunft der Bischöfe der Mainzer Kirchenprovinz*, pp. 72–3 and 83–4.

⁸⁶ Fleckenstein, *Die Hofkapelle* p. 207 (my italics).

⁸⁷ *Patrologiae cursus completus series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1851), 104: 1316.

⁸⁸ Ortmanns, *Das Bistums Minden*, pp. 11–14.

⁸⁹ For Liuthard: DLJ: no. 19 (881), and on the 'special' *missus*: Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions*, p. 24. For Biso and Wigbert: DArn. no. 105 (892).

⁹⁰ *MGH, Capitularia* II, ed. A. Boretius (Hanover, 1883), no. 242, p. 154.

Charles the Bald, at Savonnières in 862;⁹¹ with Liutbert of Mainz as Louis the German's representative at Pîtres in 864;⁹² and again with Liutbert for the treaties between Louis the German and Charles the Bald in 865, 867 and 870.⁹³ Altfrid possibly also possessed sufficient influence to affect the restoration by Louis the German of Rheims' Thuringian properties shortly after Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, had appealed for his aid in this matter.⁹⁴ However, Altfrid was clearly exceptional. Neither Altfrid's predecessors at Hildesheim, nor his immediate successors, performed so active a role. No similar activities are known at all for the ninth-century bishops of Münster, Osnabrück, Halberstadt and Bremen. The only known official role of the bishops of Hamburg-Bremen was their missions to the Danes and Swedes.⁹⁵ By contrast, successive bishops of Augsburg, Strasbourg, Constance, Würzburg, Eichstätt, Regensburg, Freising and Passau all enjoyed a far greater degree of *Königsnähe* than their Saxon counterparts, instances of which are far too numerous to list here.⁹⁶ It is also interesting to note that the Saxon bishops are by far the most poorly represented group in the charters of Louis the Child. Wigbert of Hildesheim appears once as an intervener in these charters, while the rest of the Saxon episcopate are notable only by their absence.⁹⁷ The bishops of every other east Frankish see, with the exception of Strasbourg, appear as interveners.⁹⁸ Only the bishops of Worms, Speyer and Chur appear less than three times, while many of the other suffragans, for instance Erchanbald of Eichstätt, Adalbero of Augsburg, Salomon III of

⁹¹ J. Prinz, 'Ein unbekanntes Aktenstück zum Ehestreit König Lothars II', *Deutsches Archiv* 21 (1965), pp. 251–60.

⁹² *MGH, Concilia* IV, ed. W. Hartmann (Hanover, 1998), p. 174.

⁹³ Tusey 865: *MGH, Capitularia* II, no. 244, p. 165. Metz 867: *ibid.*, no. 245, p. 167. Meersen 870: *ibid.*, no. 250, p. 192. Regino von Prüm, *Chronik*, ed. R. Rau, in *Quellen zur karolingische Reichsgeschichte* (Berlin, 1960), 869, p. 230 and AB, 870, p. 169. For Altfrid's activities see also Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim*, pp. 97–106.

⁹⁴ DLD. no. 120 (866). Hincmar's request: *Flodoardi Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, III, xxiii, ed. G. Waitz and J. Heller, *MGH, SS* XIII (Hanover, 1881), p. 528. For the political context of these events: Goeting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim*, pp. 100–1.

⁹⁵ T. Schieffer, 'Adnotationes' (1988), pp. 231–77; Wavra, *Salzburg und Hamburg. Erzbis-tumsgründung und Missionspolitik in karolingischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1991).

⁹⁶ See Bloch, *Regesten der Bischöfe von Straßburg*, pp. 231–42; P. Ladewig and T. Müller, *Regesta Episcoporum Constantiensium, Regesten zur Geschichte der Bischöfe von Constanz von Bubulcus bis Thomas Berlower I, 517–1293* (Innsbruck, 1895), pp. 15–42; A. Wendehorst, *Das Bistum Würzburg*, pp. 35–55; F. Heidingsfelder, *Regesten der Bischöfe von Eichstätt*, pp. 18–41; Fleckenstein, *Die karolingische Hofkapelle*, pp. 165–213.

⁹⁷ DLK. no. 15 (902).

⁹⁸ For events at Strasbourg during these years: Bloch, *Regesten der Bischöfe von Straßburg* pp. 241–2.

Constance and Tuto of Regensberg, appear on numerous occasions.⁹⁹ It is also significant to note that Otto, duke of Saxony, appeared as an intervener on charters of Arnulf, Zwentibald and Louis the Child.¹⁰⁰ All parts of Louis the Child's kingdom and church were therefore clearly represented, with the exception of the Saxon bishops. This political isolation of the Saxon episcopal church is only really understandable if one accepts the weakness of its proprietary, and therefore also of its political, position. Indeed, if one needed convincing of the link between land and power, one need only compare the bishoprics with Corvey, the monastery which has been described as 'the spiritual and administrative centre of Saxony'.¹⁰¹ The house was incredibly wealthy; its abbot occupied the position of a permanent *missus* in Saxony, and maintained arguably the largest personal military contingent of any Saxon church or individual aristocrat.¹⁰² It is clear where wealth and power lay in Saxony, and it certainly did not lie with the bishops.

Finally, in the sphere of political activity, there is the military service of the Saxon bishops. Many bishops had possessed military followings during the late Merovingian period and used them in disputes with local rivals.¹⁰³ It was the early Carolingians, however, especially Charles Martel and Pippin III, who first took control of the Frankish bishops, eroding their regional and independent base and making them an integral part of royal government.¹⁰⁴ Bishops now acted only in the service of their king, and this included the employment of their vassals. A military obligation was therefore imposed on the episcopate, an

⁹⁹ For Theotulf of Chur: DLK. no. 20; Einhard of Speyer: no. 20; Deotolohus of Worms: nos. 44 and 48; Erchanbald of Eichstätt: nos. 1, 12, 19, 20, 23, 26, 39, 44, 53 and 60; Salomon III of Constance: nos. 13, 20, 23, 33, 59, 64, 65, 66 and 67; Adalbero of Augsburg: nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 12, 19, 20, 23, 38, 44, 46, 58, 59, 64, 65 and 66; and Tuto of Regensberg: nos. 12, 20, 23, 28, 31, 39, 40 and 53. Many of these bishops also received grants of property and rights under Louis the Child.

¹⁰⁰ DArn. nos. 51 (888) and 149 (897); DZwent. no. 19 (898); DLK. nos. 15 (902) and 44 (906).

¹⁰¹ Goldberg, 'Popular Revolts', pp. 490–1. See also above, n. 22, and below, n. 102.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 490–2 and see also DKarIII. no. 158 (887): In this charter Charles III confirmed Corvey's exemption from the *servitium regis*, but did so on the condition that only thirty of the abbot's vassals should remain in the abbatial retinue, while the remainder were to join the king's army. This limitation was imposed by Charles because, 'necessity demands it should be reduced for a short time on account of the present and imminent danger ... because of the immense barbarian infestation and because the defence of all the Christian people and church has been committed to us'.

¹⁰³ F. Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg [im früheren Mittelalter]* (Stuttgart, 1971), pp. 57–64; J. Semmler, 'Episcopi Potestas and karolingische Klosterpolitik', in A. Borst (ed.) *Mönchtum, Episkopat und Adel zur Gründungszeit des Klosters Reichenau* (Sigmaringen, 1974), pp. 305–95.

¹⁰⁴ Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg*, pp. 64–9 and P. Fouracre, 'Frankish Gaul to 814', *New Cambridge Medieval History II* pp. 90–2.

obligation which was institutionalized through the legislation of the late eighth and early ninth centuries. The numerous references in ninth-century sources to bishops' military followings and their performance of military service on behalf of their kings is a testament to the Carolingians' success in affecting this change.¹⁰⁵ Most vassals of the church were beneficed on church land and the Carolingians secularized much church property in order to grant land to their own fighting men. Although vassals could be unbeneficed, the possession of land was important if substantial military contingents were to be supported.¹⁰⁶

In contrast to other east Frankish bishops, however, there are few references to the military followings or service of the Saxon episcopate. A charter of Louis the German recorded the existence of vassals belonging to the church of Hildesheim under Altfrid, and exempt them from military service;¹⁰⁷ Adam of Bremen's eleventh-century history of his church alludes to Adalgar taking over the leadership of Archbishop Rimbert's military contingent in the 880s;¹⁰⁸ Theoderic of Minden and Marcward of Hildesheim were killed during a battle with the Danes in 880, and Wolfher of Minden was killed by the Slavs in 886.¹⁰⁹ The bishops of Hildesheim, Minden, Hamburg-Bremen and Verden therefore clearly possessed sufficient land and resources by the end of the ninth century to support military contingents and the other Saxon bishops doubtless had military followings too. However, this paucity of evidence for the military activity of Saxon bishops is perhaps significant. The major set of contemporary annals for the east Frankish kingdom, the so-called *Annals of Fulda*, often refer to the military activities of other east Frankish bishops, especially those of Mainz, Würzburg, Eichstätt and the Bavarian episcopate.¹¹⁰ These annals also make fairly frequent allusion to events in Saxony, so their silence on the military activities of the Saxon episcopate is not simply an accident of recording or the historiography.¹¹¹ It should be noted further that bishops tended to take part in campaigns across their own nearest borders. For example, the Bavarian bishops generally only performed military service against the Moravians, the Bohemians and, later, the Hungarians;¹¹² while the archbishop of Mainz and the bishops of

¹⁰⁵ Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg* pp. 73–145.

¹⁰⁶ For unbeneficed vassals: Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, p. 92; Nelson, 'The Church's Military Service in the Ninth Century', pp. 123–7.

¹⁰⁷ DLD, no. 143 (871–4).

¹⁰⁸ *Magistri Adam Bremensis. Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesia Pontificum*, ed. W. Trillmich, in *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte des Hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches* (Darmstadt, 1961), I, 44, p. 216.

¹⁰⁹ AF, 880, p. 112; *Annales Hildesheimenses*, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH, SS III* (Hanover, 1839), p. 50.

¹¹⁰ AF 849, 857, 866, 871, 872, 874, 884, 885, 892 and 900.

¹¹¹ AF 839, 840, 841, 842, 845, 850, 853, 866, 872, 873, 874, 880, 882, 884, 885 and 887.

Würzburg and Eichstätt were involved in campaigns principally against the Bohemian Slavs and, to an extent, the Sorbs.¹¹³ The Saxon bishops, by contrast, are not recorded as participating in any campaigns against their neighbours, the Sorbs and Abodrites, a role which was in fact undertaken by the Carolingians themselves, the archbishops of Mainz and certain secular magnates.¹¹⁴ The three instances given above of Saxon bishops dying in battle all occurred in Saxony itself and the evidence suggests that even the defence of Saxony fell principally on the shoulders of Liutbert of Mainz, Arn of Würzburg, and the Thuringian count Henry, rather than the Saxon bishops themselves.¹¹⁵ There is therefore no reason why we should consider the military activities of the Saxon bishops to have been greatly more than is at first apparent from the references.¹¹⁶

This is not to say that the Saxon bishops did not possess beneficed or unbeneficed vassals, clearly they did, but it is obvious that these contingents were neither individually nor collectively significant.¹¹⁷ Without substantial landed wealth the Saxon bishops did not possess the wherewithal to find benefices for large numbers of vassals, nor the revenue to maintain unbeneficed retainers. If much of the land they did possess had been held in benefice from the Carolingians, as suggested by the charters of 887 and 890 for Paderborn and Verden described above, then the military service of any vassals holding land 'in benefice' on this property would have been in the hands of the king and his territorial officials; the counts or duke.¹¹⁸ The Saxon bishops lacked the material resources to provide any significant military service and this was typical of those factors which combined to produce the low political status of the Saxon bishoprics.

I have now considered, and documented, the evidence for the Saxon episcopal church and argued for its lack of landed wealth and its resulting lack of political import. However, this is only part of the

¹¹² AF 866, 871, 872 and 900. For the deaths of three Bavarian bishops at the battle of Pressburg against the Hungarians in 907: Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg*, p. 143.

¹¹³ AF 857, 866, 872 and 874.

¹¹⁴ Campaigns against the Abodrites and/or Sorbs: AF 844, 845, 858, 862, 869, 875 and 889.

¹¹⁵ AF 884: Arn and Henry; AF 885 Liutbert and Henry. See also Büttner and Dietrich, 'Weserland und Hessen', p. 141. The *Annales Alemannici* record that Rudolf, bishop of Würzburg, died fighting the Hungarians in Saxony in 908: *Annales Alemannici*, ed. G. Pertz *MGH, SS I* (Hanover, 1826), p. 54.

¹¹⁶ It is also interesting to note that in 937 Otto I granted the armed followings of four monasteries to Adaldag, archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen to bolster its militarily weak position: *MGH Diplomata Germaniae I. Die Urkunden Otto I*, ed. T. Sickel *MGH, Diplomata Germaniae I* (Hanover, 1879–84), no. 11 (937).

¹¹⁷ Compare to Corvey, above, nn. 22 and 102.

¹¹⁸ Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, pp. 90–2. For the Verden charter, DArn, no. 78 (890), see above pp. 208–9.

picture. The unenviable political position of the Saxon bishoprics may have been quite unusual in the east Frankish church, but was arguably typical of the status of many other groups in the Saxon province. An example of this is provided by the subject of military service which has just been considered. This military weakness was not limited to the bishoprics. There is evidence to suggest that Saxony as a whole did not possess the material resources to support a substantial army. Firstly, it is noteworthy that east Frankish armies were rarely made up of Saxon contingents alone: the only known example is the defeat by the Danes in 880. On all other occasions major contingents were brought from the east Frankish heartlands.¹¹⁹ Even when the Carolingians were succeeded in Saxony by the Ottonians, the fundamental military weaknesses of the region remained and between 924 and 933 Henry I was forced to pay tribute to the invading Hungarians.¹²⁰ It was not until the 930s and later, after Henry and his son Otto I had built new fortifications of the eastern borders and reformed the military system within Saxony, that an independent Saxon army was capable of mounting successful campaigns.¹²¹ The Saxon kings were more able, or perhaps more willing, to exploit the military capacities of their province than the Carolingians had been.

Ninth-century Saxon nobles also suffered political problems similar to the bishops. The Saxon nobility were neither particularly powerful nor influential individuals and their role in the government of east Francia was minimal. Very few enjoyed anything like *Königsnähe*. The Ekbertiners and Liudolfings, as well as the Hessi and Widukind families, all gained offices, but it was the Liudolfings who eventually established themselves as the foremost family in Saxony.¹²² Liutgard, the daughter of the Saxon duke Liudolf, married Louis the Younger in the 860s and Otto, duke of Saxony from the 890s, accompanied Arnulf to his imperial coronation in 896, was on good terms with Arnulf's sons, Zwentibold and Louis the Child, and was the first lay-abbot of the royal monastery of Hersfeld.¹²³ The estates of most Saxon nobles were widely scattered

¹¹⁹ See above nn. 114 and 115.

¹²⁰ K. Leyser, 'Henry I', pp. 13–14. The tenth-century chronicler, Widukind of Corvey, bemoaned the fact that, even during the 920s, Saxony still possessed neither the fortresses nor the army to combat these invaders: *Widukindi res gestae Saxoniae*, ed. A. Bauer and R. Rau in *Quellen zur Geschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit* (Darmstadt, 1971), I, 32, p. 62.

¹²¹ On these reforms, such as the 'money fief' and the increase in the 'milites armatus' warrior class: Leyser, 'Henry I', pp. 15–26.

¹²² The Ekbertiner: G. Tellenbach, *Königtum und Stämme in der Werdezeit der Deutschen Reiches* (Weimar, 1939), p. 54, Liudolfings, *ibid.*, pp. 55 and 73, and Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 123 and 130–2. Hessi-sippe; Berges, 'Ein Kommentar zur "Gründung der Hildesheimer Kirche" '; pp. 93–100. Widukinds: Schmid, 'Die Nachfahren Widukinds', pp. 1–40.

and, with the possible exception of the descendants of the Saxon rebel Widukind, there was no family in Saxony to rival the Liudolfings, the kin-group from which Henry I and his successors came.¹²⁴ Under the Carolingians, however, the vast majority of the Saxon nobility lacked high office and power and achieved neither until the tenth century.¹²⁵ In their non-ecclesiastical activities the Saxon bishops were therefore not greatly different from their local secular counterparts. Whether the tenth century brought a change of fortunes for these bishops as radical as for their lay equivalents has yet to be assessed, although given that the rise of the Saxon nobility was partly occasioned by the increased number of border offices and the opportunities of campaigning, there is no reason why the Saxon bishops should have also enjoyed such a rapid alteration in their status.¹²⁶ After all, as noted above, the Ottonians initially showed little more interest in Saxon episcopal elections than their Carolingian predecessors.

This article has concentrated on the landed wealth of the Saxon episcopal church, but this was obviously not the only factor which determined a bishopric's political status; its location could also play an important role. This can be seen most clearly from the examples of Eichstätt, Constance and Strasbourg. The Carolingian history of Eichstätt has many parallels with the Saxon bishoprics. Eichstätt was a poor see from the time of its inception. Almost fifty years after the foundation of the bishopric in 747/8, Gerhoh of Eichstätt secularized property belonging to the episcopal convent of Heidenheim in order to increase his bishopric's meagre land-holdings.¹²⁷ Bishops of Eichstätt were fairly anonymous figures: there are only two known royal grants

¹²³ DZwent. no. 19 (898); DLK. nos. 15 (902), 44 (906) and 63 (908). See also Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim*, pp. 125–9.

¹²⁴ The Widukinds: Schmid, 'Die Nachfahren Widukinds', pp. 118, 123–4 and 133.

¹²⁵ The Saxon nobility: Leyser, 'Henry I', pp. 40–1 and nn. 3–4, 'The German Aristocracy from the Ninth to the Early Twelfth Century: an Historical and Cultural Sketch', in *Medieval Germany* p. 176 and n. 35.

¹²⁶ Leyser, 'Henry I', pp. 15–26. There is even evidence to suggest that the Saxon episcopal church remained comparatively poor in the early eleventh century: when Henry II appointed Meinwerk to Paderborn in 1009, he ordered him to endow the church with his own property. This was necessary because of the 'inopia' of the bishopric: *Vita Meinwerci episcopi Patherbrunnensis*, ed. F. Tenckhoff, *MGH, SRG* (Hanover, 1921), pp. 17–18. The same conditions of appointment existed in the case of Thietmar's elevation to Merseburg the same year. J. Fleckenstein, *Die Hofkapelle der deutschen Könige, II: Die Hofkapelle im Rahmen der Ottonisch-Salischen Reichskirche* (Stuttgart, 1966), pp. 212 and 215. I am indebted to Professor Timothy Reuter for this point.

¹²⁷ Heidingsfelder, *Die Regesten der Bischöfe von Eichstätt*, no. 26. The actual date of Eichstätt's foundation as a bishopric is disputed: Weinfurter, 'Das Bistum Willibalds', pp. 12–21; Bigelmair, 'Die Gründung der mitteldeutschen Bistümer', pp. 282–7; R. Schieffer, *Entstehung von Domkapiteln* pp. 187–9; G. Pfeiffer, 'Erfurt oder Eichstätt?', in H. Beumann (ed.), *Zur Biographie des Bischofs Willibald, Festschrift für W. Schlesinger II* (Cologne, Vienna, 1974), pp. 137–61 at pp. 149–60.

to Eichstätt between 747 and 881 and, with the exception of bishop Otgar's participation in an 857 campaign against the Bohemians, there is no earlier evidence of bishops of Eichstätt acting in the service of the Carolingians.¹²⁸ There is also no evidence of royal influence in any elections to Eichstätt until the elevation of Erchanbald in 882. Erchanbald was appointed by Charles III – one of a number of Alemannian clergy he preferred to Frankish and Bavarian bishoprics.¹²⁹ Between 887 and 895 Eichstätt held a strategic importance for Charles' successor, Arnulf, because it was on the border with Bavaria, a region from which Arnulf faced potential opposition from Count Engildeo.¹³⁰ Arnulf therefore lavished a number of substantial grants on the bishopric in order to bolster its previously weak proprietary, and thus military position.¹³¹ Erchanbald consequently achieved an important position in the east Frankish episcopate and was influential under both Arnulf and Louis the Child.¹³² It can further be no coincidence that when Erchanbald died in 912 his successor was a member of the *Hofkapelle*; the first known example at Eichstätt.¹³³ The bishopric of Eichstätt had benefited from a temporary strategic importance and, on account of its increased land-holdings, had become a more important see.

Eichstätt may have been the only east Frankish bishopric to experience such a radical change in its status during this period, but it was certainly not the only bishopric to perform a domestically strategic and political function. The bishoprics of Constance and Strasbourg, already important sees, acquired specific regional and political roles under Arnulf too: Arnulf used Constance to counter opposition in Alemannia, and Strasbourg to secure the border with Burgundy.¹³⁴ These bishoprics received significant grants of both property and privileges.¹³⁵ Arnulf also appointed the Conradines Hatto (891–913) to Mainz, and Rudolf to Würzburg (892–908), in order to support this family in their conflicts with the Poppo in Hesse and Thuringia – regions covered by the Mainz and Würzburg dioceses.¹³⁶ It is interesting to note further that a number of east Frankish bishops were

¹²⁸ Heidingsfelder, *Die Regesten der Bischöfe von Eichstätt* nos. 56 and 61. See also AF, 857, p. 50.

¹²⁹ Weinfurter, 'Das Bistum Willibalds', pp. 29–31, n. 121.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 32–3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 31–6.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 31–2 and 35.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹³⁴ E.M. Eibl, 'Zur Stellung Bayerns and Rheinfrankens [im Reiche Arnulfs von Kärnten]', *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte des Feudalismus* 8 (1984), p. 92.

¹³⁵ For Eichstätt, see above. Salomon III of Constance: DArn. nos. 129 (894) and 151 (897); Strasbourg: DArn. no. 88 (891).

¹³⁶ Büttner and Dietrich, 'Westerland und Hessen', pp. 124–45.

beginning to receive property from Arnulf in strategically important areas; including lands confiscated from rebels.¹³⁷

None of the Saxon bishoprics ever acquired such strategic importance during the Carolingian period. Once Saxony had been subjugated, and an awkward and hostile neighbour removed, Charlemagne and his successors gradually lost interest in this region.¹³⁸ After the sack of Hamburg in 845, and a subsequent peace treaty, the Viking threat disappeared from this region for almost forty years, and the power of the east Frankish kings meant that the threat of Slavic invasions was minimal.¹³⁹ With the exception of a period during the 880s, the borderlands of the east Frankish kingdom, including Saxony, were relatively secure.¹⁴⁰ The problems really began with the Hungarian invasions after 900.¹⁴¹ There was therefore no need for the ninth-century Carolingian kings to concern themselves with this region. At various times, the attention of east Frankish kings was drawn either to the south-east or to the west, but rarely to the north. Saxony was not a particularly important province during these years. The power of the east Frankish Carolingians centred on – and relied on – the Rhineland and Bavaria, hence the evidence relating to Eichstätt, Strasbourg and Constance discussed above.¹⁴²

Carolingian bishops were often royal advisers, officials and diplomats. Many possessed great landed wealth and their elections generated deep interest and concern. However, such descriptions cannot justly be applied to the entire Frankish episcopate. The ninth-century Saxon bishops were clearly quite different. They possessed neither vast tracts of land nor held any strategically important position, very few enjoyed *Königsnähe*, they were rarely involved in government, diplomacy, campaigning or defence, and elections to their sees attracted little outside interest or influence. Their proprietary position was weak and their political status was affected accordingly. The shortness of the preceding missionary period was a heavy legacy for the Saxon episcopal church. Unlike elsewhere, there had not been sufficient time for Christianity to achieve a strong foot-hold in the lives and mentality of the

¹³⁷ DArn. nos. 48 (889), 72, 81 (890), 88 (891), 120 (893) and 175 (898).

¹³⁸ Although the region, and possibly some of its bishops, did play some part in the brothers' war of 840–3: Goldberg, 'Popular Revolt', pp. 485–97.

¹³⁹ AF, 845, p. 32. See also *Annales Xantenses*, 845, pp. 14–15 and Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda*, pp. 23– and n. 3.

¹⁴⁰ For the incursions of the Danes and Slavs during these years: AF, 880, 884, 885 and *Annales Hildesheimenses*, 886, p. 50.

¹⁴¹ Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 127–32; Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg*, pp. 142–4; Leyser, 'Henry I', pp. 11–42.

¹⁴² Eibl, 'Zur Stellung Bayerns und Rheinfrankens', pp. 73–77 and nn. 1–21 for a summary and discussion of the historiography on this issue.

Saxon aristocracy and the bishoprics suffered as a result: endowments were not initially forthcoming and, consequently, the bishops found it difficult to establish themselves within the east Frankish *Reichskirche* system. The Saxon bishoprics may not, however, be the only example of such an inherently weak provincial church under the Carolingians. Statements about the Carolingian church and its hierarchy should therefore always be qualified. The bishops of the province of Saxony should not be ignored simply because the evidence relating to them and their sees is meagre and awkward.

London