

Public Abstract

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This thesis examines the development and breakdown of Carolingian imperial authority from the reign of Pepin the Short (751-768) to the death of Lothar I in 855. This work incorporates a variety of source materials, including narrative, diplomatic, numismatic, and visual evidence. While most scholarship has focused on the figures of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, this thesis attempts to shed light on the strength of the imperial authority by examining the much neglected figure of Lothar, Louis the Pious' eldest son and coemperor. Lothar has been a controversial figure in Carolingian history. His seizure of power in 833 has colored him as an ungrateful, troublesome son, and the failure of his kingdom, Middle Francia, has made him out to be an ineffective ruler. Though Middle Francia existed for such a short period of time (843-870/5), its ruler should not be overlooked as a critical player in the Carolingian disintegration both before the Treaty of Verdun (843) and after. The tendency in modern scholarship, however, has been to focus on Louis the Pious and his struggle with rebellious magnates or the subsequent reigns of Charles the Bald and Louis the German, as the early beginnings of European state formation. Lothar has only been a matter of concern when discussing the general narrative of events between 828 and 843, primarily focusing on the Frankish Civil War (840-843).