

“Not against the kingdom, but for the kingdom and my freedom”
Revisiting the Saxon War (1073-1075):
Opposition to the King or a Revolt for the Kingdom?*

Tul Israngura Na Ayudhya **

Abstract

In 1073, a group of local princes in Saxony took up arms against King Henry IV of Germany (1056-1105). The uprising has been widely interpreted in recent historiography as opposition to the king, especially his mischievous behaviour and grasping territorial policy which contributed to the Saxon repression, individual suffering, and loss of liberty embodied in forced payment of tithes. The following research article aims to revisit the Saxon war by paying attention to its argumentation. What allegations were brought by the Saxon noblemen to delegitimise Henry's kingship? Did they oppose the king's misconduct which, they believed, affected the welfare of the Saxons? Or, did they rebel to preserve the traditional order of the kingdom? In contrast to current historiography, this article argues that immediate individual suffering that the Saxons complained was of less importance than their intention to maintain the abstract notion of “freedom” (*libertas*) which was closely connected with the medieval concept of social rank (*ordo*). It was only in this “freedom” of Saxony that the correct political structure of the kingdom was embodied, a concept that has long been neglected by medievalists in making sense of the political structure of medieval Germany. Thus, exploring the Saxon war beyond the conflict between the Saxons and the king's personality can certainly broaden our understanding of the political relationship between the kingdom, the province and the king's subjects in the high Middle Ages.

Keywords: The Saxon War, Henry IV of Germany, freedom, imperial order

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** Tul Israngura Na Ayudhya, Ph.D. (European History), Lecturer in Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, email: tul.i@chula.ac.th.

Introduction

The kingship of the Salian Henry IV of Germany (1056-1105) was accompanied through a series of severe disputes. On the one hand, his reign was brought into the Investiture conflict with Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) in 1077. On the other hand, it was confronted with opposition by the nobility of the Holy Roman Empire itself, who reached its zenith when Rudolf of Rheinfelden (r.1057-1079), the duke of Swabia, was elected the anti-king in 1077 by a group of nobles. With these conflicts and challenges, the traditional world order of high-medieval politics based on what historians call “consensual government” (*konsensuale Herrschaft* in German) and fidelity was greatly shaken, particularly with regard to the question of royal sacrality and regal legitimacy (cf. Althoff, 2006; Robinson, 1999; Leyser, 1994). Thus, in modern historiography, the reign of Henry IV has usually been referred to as 'the crisis of medieval Germany' (Leyser, 1994).

Among the conflicts during the early decades of Henry's reign, the opposition of Saxon nobility, which formed in the summer of 1073 and lasted until their subjugation in Spier in 1075, stood in the foreground. The chronicler Berthold, the abbot of Reichenau monastery, recorded in his *Annales* that, in 1073:

Tota Thoringia et Saxonia regi Heinrico rebellant propter praedictas munitiones et alia multa, quae contra voluntatem eiusdem populi rex in eorum regione insolenter fecerat et inconsulte, et quae ipsi diutius aequanimiter pati et sustinere non poterant (Berthold, 1844: 276).

The whole of Thuringia and Saxony rebelled against King Henry because of the fortifications mentioned above and because of many other things that the king had done insolently and unadvisedly in their territory against the will of that people, which they could no longer suffer and support with equanimity (Robinson, 2008: 129).

This chronicle entry declares the reason of the Saxon rebellion against Henry IV that the Saxon war was primarily fought against the castles erected upon the king's commands throughout the region. Still, these “fortifications” (*munitiones*) were not the sole cause for the outbreak of the Saxon uprising. There were also “many other things” (*alia multa*) which the Saxons could no longer tolerate or endure. However, these “many other things” were not explicitly explained by Berthold. The chronicler only claimed that in the Saxons' opinion they were “intolerable injustice” (*intolerabiles iniustitiae*) against “the justice of their ancestors” (*iustitias maiorum suorum*) (Berthold, 1844: 276).

Like Berthold of Reichenau, whose records unmistakably testify his antagonism towards the king (Robinson, 2008: 20-41), the anonymous poet of *Life of Henry IV (Vita Heinrici IV)* reported the conflict between the king and the Saxons. However, there are differences between Berthold and the anonymous poet in terms of tone and explanations of the cause of war. The biographer argued:

Igitur Saxones, gens dura, bellis aspera, tam preceps ad arma quam audax, vendicans sibi praerogativam laudis ex incepto furoris, repente super regem armis ruebant (Vita Heinrici IV, 1899: 14-15).

Being a hardened people aspiring for wars as well as being audacious to take up arms, the Saxons, driven by their well-known fury, took revenge on [the king] to vindicate their prerogatives. With their arms, they suddenly stormed over him.

In contrast to Berthold's *Annales*, the author of *Life of Henry IV*, who was on the king's side, did not fail to see the cause of the rebellion in the character of the Saxons – “being a hardened people aspiring for wars” (*gens dura, bellis aspera*). Although these two narratives represent different points of view, we can discern that they agree on one aspect; that is, the Saxons waged war against the king in order to preserve the rights and honour of their ancestors. Thus began the Saxon uprising against the rule of Henry IV. It proved to be one of the critical crises challenging the legitimacy of the Salian kingship.

The Saxon rebellion is, therefore, an historical event that deserves scholarly investigation. Historians of the older generations, most notably Kern (1954: 168-173) and Giese (1979), worked on justification of the revolt to reconstruct a theory of resistance practiced among the Germanic kingdoms in the early and high Middle Ages. Using the Saxon uprising as an example, Kern (1954) argued that despite the oath of allegiance in feudal relationships, Germanic people reserved the right of resistance against lords who abused power and disrespected their vassals, whereas Kern saw the right of resistance as a crucial political instrument invented by Germanic peoples to counterbalance the arbitrary kingship functioning within the feudal society. However, this argument gradually lost its explanatory power in the last decades of the twentieth century, when the concept of feudalism was under attack. As the Oxford medievalist Reynolds has pointed out in her instructive work *Fiefs and Vassals* (1994), feudalism and its interpersonal structures may not have existed prior to the thirteenth and fourteenth century, and historians have too often misunderstood the meanings of some certain terminology used in primary sources. She calls for a conceptual historical examination of ambiguous terms such as '*beneficium*' (fief, land loan or benefaction) or '*miles*' (vassal,

follower or henchman), instead of premature interpretation in the sense of vassallite terminology (Reynolds, 2001). If there was no feudalism in the early and high Middle Ages, the Germanic right of resistance outlined by Kern proves to be of less significance in clarifying the conflict between the Saxons and Henry IV (for criticisms of Kern's thesis, consult Dendorfer, 2004: 43-46; Schlick, 2001).

Since the last two decades of the twentieth century, the Saxon war has received broad interest from German scholars, especially those who adopted the cultural history of politics approach to analysing patterns of symbolic communications in medieval conflict regulations (Althoff, 1997a; Hattori, 2014). By meticulously examining contemporary narratives of the event, Suchan (1997) found that the conflict was *extraordinarily* recounted *in detail* only in the works of Bruno and Lampert of Hersfeld, who were the king's enemies, while there is nothing comparable on the king's side. Thus, only the opinion of Henry's opponents has been delivered to posterity. Suchan, therefore, argued that Bruno's and Lampert's considerable accounts primarily served as argumentative effort to powerfully discredit the king's actions and motives. The credibility of both authors is therefore highly problematic, and their accounts may even need to be seen as fabrications done for political purposes. They are merely testimony to what the Saxons thought, and explain their reproachment of the king (for a similar argument, see Althoff and Coué, 1992).

Building on Suchan's research, historians have scrutinized the Saxons' accusations against the king as depicted in works composed at different monasteries across the entire region of Saxony, with special interest in the contents of the allegations. Althoff (2006: 88-106) has suggested that in contemporary writings, the Saxons were reported to have often criticised the king's personal life and administrative style. Althoff (2009: 255-268) has also pointed out that repeated themes of allegation against Henry IV generally were most often found in his opponents' writings: sexual wrongdoings (his attempted divorce from Bertha of Savoy in 1068 after two years of matrimony, and an endless series of illicit copulation with mistresses whom he illegally forced to have sexual relationships with him), disrespecting the traditional elite counselors of the kingdom in favour of his own privy council, who were of lesser origins, and, finally, the king's entitlement of revindication policy represented by his extensive castle buildings across the Saxon region. Most recently, research conducted by Becher (2009), Zey (2009) and Patzold (2009) has shown that, unlike reigns of other German kings, Henry's was uniquely reproached for *both* political *and* moral aspects. Arguably, the king's personal behaviour offered, in all most areas, a fertile ground for massive attack. In this body of

research, the plethora of accusation texts functioned as sufficient credible material against the personality of the king, from which his inability and indignity to sit on the throne would emerge.

However, it is to be remarked that the Saxons' accusations against Henry IV as analysed in this body of research are drawn from different events and conflicts from throughout his reign. In this regard, we must be sensitive to the fact that different criticisms were raised at different times. Each opposition had its own agenda and values to fight for. Henry's illicit sexuality, for example, was often mentioned in contemporary writings only in the first decades of his reign when the royal divorce was in question. On the other hand, his castle-building policy completely disappeared from primary sources after the end of the Saxon war in 1075, although the construction persisted (cf. Weinfurter, 1999: 119-122). As we shall see, the Saxons did not leave us a word criticising Henry's divorce when they took up arms in 1073. There is no evidence of how far Henry's illicit sexuality affected the Saxons' outrage during their upheaval, either. Therefore, to claim that the Saxon opposition was triggered by the king's inappropriate personality, or to argue that the Saxon rebellion was an opposition against *the* king seems problematic.

However, it is important to note that some of the pro-Saxon sources were written after the war ended, while others were composed right after his reign (Robinson, 2015: 1-48). The creation period may impart an impression that all of these sources, like others, were discursively constructed. Therefore, one might argue that all accusations in all chronicles are related to one another, contributing to the negative image of the king as framed by each chronicler. Indeed, this model of taking historical sources as constructed discourse is useful, as far as it allows us to appreciate how uniquely the oppositions perceived their ruler and his personality. And, it is correct that we need to be cognizant that recording of the Saxon complaints was conducted after the event itself, and, thus, might have been influenced by the king's other subsequent wrongdoings. Yet, this body of research is flawed insofar as taking the king's personality as the major cause of the Saxons' dissatisfaction may reduce, if not distort, our understanding of other important aspects of the uprising *per se*. Of course, reading extensive material is always welcomed in understanding the past, yet it may result in an anachronistic interpretation of what the Saxons thought of, and their reasons for reproaching the king *at the time* that they waged war against him.

Moreover, it is important to remember that this body of research overtly considers the allegations as targeted at the king as a person and his personality, both public and private life. In this historiography, the Saxon war has been understood as opposition of nobility against a particular king of the Salian dynasty. However, as Bagge (2002: 309-327) and Buc (2010: 62-93) have convincingly shown in their impressive studies of German historiography in the early and high Middle Ages, there was a concept of “*transpersonal state*” or “*regnum*” (kingdom) in the work of German chroniclers, ranging from Wipo in the tenth century to Otto of Freising in the twelfth century. It was an abstract notion of conceptualising the state of public affairs in which public interests overrode private ones (Bagge, 2002: 323-327; cf. Moos, 2004). Indeed, we need look no further than, according to the anonymous royalist poet of *Song of the Saxon War* (*Carmen de Bello Saxonico*), how the Saxon noblemen addressed the leaders of the royal army, counts, dukes and prelates as “those who watch over the kingdom, and the king’s followers” (*provisores regni regisque fideles*) (*Carmen*, 1889: 8). This is a clear testimony of the existing idea of the kingdom or “transpersonal state” which enabled even the royalist poet to put it in the mouths of the traitors. The abstract notion of the kingdom was evidently present in both conflict parties. In addition, the Saxons even pleaded with the imperial princes not to consider their upheaval as an “unprecedented operation against *the state*” (*in re publica inusitatum opus*) (Lampert, 1894: 165; Robinson, 2015: 196 [my emphasis]). It was not the personality of the king that stood at the forefront of their concern, but rather “the state” or “the kingdom” (*regnum, res publica*). Taking the abstract notion of the *regnum* into account, it might be of great advantage to re-visit the Saxon polemics *during* the Saxon war in search of their thinking about how they positioned themselves towards the kingdom, and ultimately how they contributed to constructing and maintaining the correct political order of the kingdom. It is this that sets this research apart from the precedent body of research conducted by German scholars, as outlined above.

The following research article is going to examine the Saxon arguments at the time of their uprising, between 1073 and 1075. What allegations were brought to light by the Saxon noblemen to delegitimise Henry’s kingship? How did the rebellion justify their actions? Did they ultimately oppose the king’s misconduct which affected the welfare of the Saxons? Or, did they rebel to preserve the traditional order of the *regnum*? To answer these questions, this article primarily analyses contemporary writings from both parties involved in the conflict. While the detailed *Annales* of Lampert of Hersfeld and Berthold of Reichenau were written in favour of the Saxon rebellion, *Life of Henry IV* and *Song of the Saxon War* (*Carmen de Bello*

Saxonico), written by anonymous poets, were composed to celebrate the king's heroic deeds and victory in the war (Robinson, 2015: 1-48). However, it is to be pointed out that, as Suchan (1997) shows, royalist writers delivered us only limited accounts of the Saxon war. This, unfortunately, affects the balance of sources used here. Yet, it does not hinder the investigation, for the following research is particularly interested in understanding the political mentality of the rebels. Furthermore, other sources by Saxon chroniclers – such as those of Wipo and Thietmar of Merseburg – written prior to the outbreak of the war, were also consulted to reconstruct how the Saxons perceived their structural relationships with the precedent kings in order to better understand how changes in the relationships between the Saxons and Henry IV contributed to the Saxons' dissatisfaction, causing their uprising.

Thus, the ultimate goal of the Saxon opposition between 1073 and 1075 was not directed at the mischievous king, as has been widely understood in modern historiography. Instead, the uprising can be seen as a revolt to preserve the traditional legal and hierarchical relationships between the king, regional princes and kingdom. As it will emerge, immediate individual suffering that the Saxons delineated was of less importance than their intention to maintain the abstract notion of “freedom” (*libertas*) that was bestowed and guaranteed to them by Henry's predecessors. It was only *in* this “freedom” of Saxony that the correct political structure of the *regnum* was embodied, a category that has long been neglected by medievalists in making sense of the political structure of the Holy Roman Empire. Thus, exploring the Saxon war beyond the conflict between the Saxons and the king's personality can certainly broaden our knowledge of the imagined political relationship between the kingdom, the province and the king's subjects in the high Middle Ages.

“For the kingdom and for my freedom”: Argumentation of the Saxon Rebellion

Historians have long pointed out that the Saxon uprising in 1073 had much to do with the Saxons' struggle to preserve their privilege. That is, they had been guaranteed that they would not be required to pay tithes to the king, which had been granted to them since the time of Charlemagne in the ninth century as part of the reward for their conversion to Christianity (Leyser, 1994: 54-56; cf. Hartmann, 2007: 17-19). Hartmann (2007: 47-53) and Weinfurter (1999: 135-142) went even further when they argued that the king violated the time-honoured Saxon privilege, not simply because of his presumptuous and arbitrary lifestyle, but rather as part of the royal reactions to take advantage of the economic development burgeoning in Germany in the eleventh century thanks to the massive expansion of mixed

crop cultivation and animal husbandry. Yet, in his systematic investigation of the relationship between royal castles in lower Saxony and the amount of tithes collected from the Saxons in the region, Schubert (2005: 127-148) has convincingly shown that the Saxons paid only a small sum of tithes to the kings in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Their contributions rose significantly only from the twelfth century onwards due to the dramatic improvement of agricultural methods widely adopted by the Saxons. Thus, individual suffering associated with paying tribute proved to be of less significance in causing the Saxon opposition in 1073. What, then, could be the *causa resistendi*?

Threats to the Saxon Ancestral “Freedom”

According to Bruno's account of the rebellion, the reason for the Saxon war was the introduction of the intensive territorial policy of Henry IV carried out by royal castle-garrisons throughout the Saxon province. In modern historiography, these fortresses were perceived by the Saxons as a symbol of unjust royal oppression, for they were administered by lower-ranking ministers from Swabia personally appointed by the King himself and the Saxons were required to pay tithes, duties and services to an unprecedented degree (Keller, 1986: 172). However, this seems to be a simple interpretation of the event, based on a superficial cause/effect model. Instead of focusing on individual suffering as a motive for uprising, we need to re-consider the word choice of the available testimony to better understand the *mentalités* in which a medieval concept of correct political structure between the kingdom and the province was formed. Witness what Bruno wanted us to understand regarding the cause of the rebellion:

Postquam vero praesidia in ipsis castellis collocata coeperunt in circuitu ... agere, non suos labores in suos usus comportare, liberos homines ad opus servile compellere, ...: tunc primum, quid illa castella portenderent, intellexerunt, ... Nam ab agricolis ad militares, a terrae fructibus ad libertatem adimendam ascendit (Bruno, 1937: 23).

Afterwards, they [the king's ministers] started to place and reinforce the garrisons around their own castles ... They did not use their own labour to gain what is useful for them, but compelled free men to commit servile work, ...: for the first time did they [free men] understand what those castles portended, ... This is because they [the castles] ascend to take away what belonged to the farmers and fighters, from the fruit of their land to their freedom.

It is important to highlight that individual suffering deriving from paying tithes was not the sole reason for the Saxon uprising. Rather, the Saxon “free men” (*liberos homines*) became agitated because they came to realise that paying tithes could be equated to committing “servile work” (*opus servile*) which damaged their higher status of being “free men”. Indeed, Bruno warned of the fact that not only “the fruit of their land” (*terrae fructibus*) was taken away by the king's garrisons, but also – and perhaps most importantly to the Saxons' minds – their “freedom” (*libertatem*). In order to better understand the Saxon uprising, we need to examine what “freedom” meant for them, and how it shaped the relationship between the kingdom and the province Saxony.

In the Middle Ages, the term “*libertas*” had a very specific meaning which was different from the words *freedom* and *liberty* in modern language. The word “*libertas*” did not refer to “freedom” in the modern sense, but the ability to live one's life under the royal or state protection. Since medieval society was a hierarchical one, the degree of freedom depended on an individual's social station (*ordo*). This rather broad concept of “*libertas*” was closely associated with the preservation of legal order and the individual's social status (*ordo*) in order to ensure the individual's state-protected living experience (cf. Grundmann, 1957: 28-33; Leyser, 1994: 64-65). In this regard, *libertas* and *ordo* went absolutely hand in hand in medieval conception. The absence of the one meant the collapse of the other.

Therefore, it is highly likely that for Bruno, the castles and garrisons not only threatened the Saxons' property and material basis, but also violated the tradition order of *libertas* and *ordo*, on which the relationship between Saxony and the realm (*regnum*) rested. Like Bruno, Lampert did not hesitate to point out that “the king began to plan a great stratagem that had not been attempted by any of his ancestors in former times: namely to reduce all the Saxons and Thuringians to slavery and to add their estates to the public fisc.” (*magnum quidam et a nullo maiorum suorum antehac temptatum machinari cepit, videlicet ut omnes Saxones et Turingos in servitatem redigeret et predia eorum fisco publico adiceret*) (Lampert, 1894: 147; Robinson, 2015: 171). If being deprived of property meant loss of freedom, it is to be highlighted that, by the same token, loss of freedom ultimately led to being demoted from “freemen” (*homines liberi*) to “slavery” (*in servitatem*). It was the king's violation of medieval imperial constitution that formed the actual basis for the Saxon insurrection in 1073 (cf. *Carmen*, 1889: 2).

Yet, where did the Saxon *libertas* come from, and how important was *libertas* for the Saxons? Was Henry IV the first ruler who violated the constitutional relationship between Saxony and the kingdom, given that the rebels claimed that the king's criminal deeds were unprecedented? To answer these questions, we need to delve into sources that date back as far as the ninth century. Einhard, Charlemagne's biographer, gave us a vivid account of how the Saxons were integrated into the *regnum* and their ancestral individual privileges were guaranteed by the emperor (Einhard, 1911: 10; cf. Becher, 2003: 59-79). Since then, the Saxons had been legally exempted from levies and services, as recorded in *Annales Quedlinburgenses* (1008-1030) which say that, in 803, at the assembly at Selz, "Charlemagne ... granted the Saxons their ancient liberty, ... and that they were free from all tribute except for the tithes which all of them had to pay Christ faithfully ... from the fruits of their fields and pastures." (*Carolus ... Saxones antiqua libertate donavit, eosque ... ab omni solvit tributo, excepto quod illos omnes, ... totius suae culturae ac nutriturae decimas Christo ... fideliter reddere iussit*) (*Annales Quedlinburgenses*, 1839: 40). This was the root of the so-called Saxon ancestral freedom, firmly established by the Carolingian king in the ninth century. The Selz resolution framed part of imperial constitution regulating the relationship between the kingdom and the province Saxony.

To appreciate how important *libertas* was for the Saxons, we need look no further than at how anxious the Saxons were when a dynasty change was imminent. This is reported by Thietmar of Merseburg (975-1018). Thietmar recalled a pivotal episode in Saxon history when their noblemen certainly knew in 936 that their current Saxon king, Henry I of the Ottonian dynasty, was about to die and left no legitimate heir from his first marriage with Liutgard. (Thankmar was the first-born son to this marriage, but the marriage itself was annulled when Liutgard's previous conjugal bond was detected.) Thietmar reported:

Ve populis, quibus regnandi spes in subsecutura dominorum sobole non relinquitur ... Si in consanguinitatis linea aliquis tali offitio dignus non inveniatur, saltem in alia bene morigeratus, omni odio procul remoto, assumatur; quia maxima perdicio est alienigenos regnare: hinc depressio et libertatis venit magna periclitatio (Thietmar, 1955: 24).

Woe to the people who have no more hope of the succession of a descendant of their rulers in kingship ... If there is no one worthy of a high office in the same dynasty, then, of course, a noble man from another house must be elevated with the restraint of all enmity. The rule of foreigners is the worst evil. It carries with it oppression and great danger for freedom [my emphasis].

It is clear from this passage that the Saxon noblemen were deeply concerned with the nature of political structure between Saxony and the kingdom after the death of Henry I. His demise would have resulted in a change of the kingdom's ruling dynasty, from the Saxon-Ottonians to someone else. Imperial rulers from a new dynasty would have neglected, and even disrespected, the time-honoured liberty which the Saxons had been enjoying since the reign of Charlemagne. Although Henry I was not succeeded by a foreigner, but by his son from his second marriage, Otto, the Saxon fear described in Thietmar's chronicle cannot be overlooked. It testifies how much the Saxon noblemen valued their ancestral freedom and considered it as a defining factor in regulating their political relationship with the Holy Roman Empire.

That the royal acceptance of the Saxon freedom played a key role in shaping imperial politics can be vividly discerned in the narrative of Wipo of Burgundy (955-1048), who was a chaplain to Conrad II (r.1024-1039), the first Salian king on the imperial throne. Wipo recalled how Conrad had to confirm the Saxon's laws in 1024, immediately after his enthronement:

Rex ... ad Saxoniam venit; ibi legem crudelissimam Saxonum secundum voluntatem eorum constanti auctoritate roboravit. Inde ... ad Alamanniam pervenit, quo transitu regna pacis foedere et regia tuitione fermissime cingebat (Wipo, 1915: 29).

The king ... came into Saxony. He exercised his regular power to strengthen the most cruel law of the Saxons according to their will. Then ... he came to Alemania. His tour across [the kingdom] bound parts of the kingdom in peace and brought almost all of them under royal protection.

With this passage, Wipo not only shows how Conrad's regal power was accepted by the Saxons, but also reveals how important the Saxon law was for them. In addition, according to Wipo, the same act was performed in other parts of the kingdom, too. As historians have argued, at the beginning of a new dynasty, if not at the onset of every reign, it was customary that the first king had to guarantee local privileges and tribal autonomy in order that the ruler would receive royal prestige from regional nobility in return. Through this practice, he could maintain his status as *primus inter pares*, the first among the equals (see, for example, Seibert, 2004: 27-33; Althoff, 1998: 37-42; 125-135). This suggests that through granting and confirming

the royal protection of ancestral rights, the correct relationship between the Crown and the provinces was structured. Mutual recognition between the king and the nobility formed the constitutional basis of the kingdom.

Not least, it is important to remember that, as Thoma (2001: 34-48) has shown, paying tithes was common practice that bound peasants to their immediate landlord in medieval manorial estate. Yet, it was not part of imperial political structure, for the king did not act as the landlord of any regional dukes and noblemen. In this medieval political framework, it is comprehensible that the Saxon noblemen would have felt that their customary freedom was unlawfully violated when Henry IV ordered his ministers to construct fortifications and castles in the region. Moreover, since these castles were mostly built in isolated locations, it was impossible for castle residents to have sufficient supplies of water, food and cattle available from the castles' nearby imperial properties. It was due to this condition that the castle garrisons were forced to claim levies and services from the surrounding Saxon population in order to survive their daily lives. The party-independent chronicler of the *Annales Altahenses maiores* (708-1073) recorded, in the years up to 1073, the cause of Saxon suffering, saying that “since the squadrons had few or no farmlands in their neighbourhood, those who guarded the fortresses always plundered the substances of the provincial inhabitants due to the want of victuals.” (*Sed quia in vicino ipsarum urbium praedia pauca vel nulla habebat, illi, qui civitates custodiebant, propter inopiam victualium praedas semper faciebant de substanciis provincialium*) (*Annales Altahenses maiores*, 1868: 824). Despite acknowledging the poor conditions under which the garrisons had to live, the chronicler disagreed with their method of obtaining provisions. His word choice – “plundered” (*praedas faciebant*) – provides a clear testimony; necessity of life did not justify the constitutional contravention.

In addition, the Saxons living in the neighbourhood of the Salian castles suffered from the increasingly aggressive behaviour of royal garrisons. Lampert of Hersfeld dramatised the Saxon wretchedness, as follows:

Interea hi qui in castellis supra memoratis erant graviter nimis imminebant populo Saxoniae et Turingiae. Omnia quae in villis et agris erant in dies eruptione facta diripiebant, tributa et vectigalia silvarum et camporum importabilia exigebant ... Ipsos provinciales et plerosque ex his honesto loco natos et re familiari florentissimos vilium mancipiorum ritu servire sibi cogebant. Filias eorum et uxores consocii et pene aspicientibus maritis violabant. Nonnullas etiam vi in castella sua raptas et, quanto tempore libido suggestisset, impudicissime habitas ad ultimum maritis cum ignominiosa exprobratione remittebant (Lampert, 1894: 146).

Meanwhile those who were stationed in the castles mentioned above were an extremely serious threat to the people of Saxony and Thuringia. Every day they made incursions and seized everything that was in the villages and fields; they demanded insupportable tributes and taxes from the woods and the produce of the fields ... They forced the inhabitants of the province – very many of whom were of distinguished birth and very prosperous property-owners – to serve them in the manner of common slaves. They violated their daughters and wives with the knowledge of the husbands and virtually before their very eyes. They carried off some of these women by force into the castles and treated them in the most lewd fashion whenever their lust prompted them and finally sent them back to their husbands with shameful reproaches (Robinson, 2015: 170-171).

While complaints about food stuff and cattle rustled by greedy castle garrisons remind us of the Saxons' loss of inherited political liberty according to the medieval imperial constitution, Lampert's tragic description of the royal ministers' lustful behaviour should alert historians to the fact that the Saxons' freedom, guaranteed and protected by the state according to the medieval concept of *libertas*, was being significantly destroyed. As mentioned earlier, in the Middle Ages, the term "freedom" (German: *Freiheit*) carried with it the meanings of "friend" (German: *Freund*) and "peace" (German: *Friede*) as well as "being loved" (German: *geliebt*) and "being protected" (German: *geschützt*) (Schott, 1989: 896). Thus, the situation in 1073 could not be understood otherwise in the Saxon's eyes except as that of unbearable wrongdoings and injustice. According to Lampert, this led the Saxon noblemen to "secret meetings" (*clandestina conventicula*) among themselves, and they swore an oath that "they preferred to die and to undergo all extremes sooner than suffer the disgrace of losing the liberty that they had received from their ancestors." (*malle se mori atque extrema omnia prius experiri quam acceptam a parentibus libertatem per dedecus amittere*) (Lampert, 1894: 148; Robinson, 2015: 174; cf. *Annales Altahenses maiores*, 1868: 824). If the medieval concept of *libertas* had much

to do with warm sentiments concerning royal friendly protection, to view the Saxon uprising in 1073 as a rebellion against a king who brutally subjugated them is to offer too narrow an interpretation. Instead, the repetition of the term “freedom” in contemporary sources reveals the conventional notion the Saxons oriented themselves to; therefore, their opposition was aimed at preserving the traditional order of true “freedom” which constituted the correct relationship between their region and the kingdom.

Disregard for Traditional Legal Order and Imperial Hierarchy

Apart from the royal threats to Saxon *libertas*, the disregarded honour also played a key role in instigating the Saxon uprising in 1073. The Saxon princes must have felt greatly hurt in their honour when Henry IV gave his castles to his Swabian ministers of lesser origin instead of transferring them to the native princes as a royal fief. The chronicler Frutolf of Michelsberg (d. 1103) reflected on this issue, as follows:

Heinricus rex adolescentie usus libertate Saxoniam solam ... cepit incolere, principes despiciere, nobiles obprimere, inferiores sustollere, ... filias illustrium quibuslibet obscure natis coniugare, privata presidia nimirum potentibus regni non satis fidens instituere (Frutolf, 1972: 78).

Taking advantage of the freedom of youth, King Henry began to reside solely in Saxony ... to despise the princes, to oppress the nobles, to exalt inferiors (as it is alleged), ... to marry the daughters of the illustrious to all manner of those of obscure birth, and to install his own garrisons because he did not trust the magnates of the kingdom sufficiently (McCarthy, 2014: 108).

In this brief chronicle entry, Frutolf brought to light deviant behaviour of Henry IV for condemnation. As scholars (see, for example, Spieß, 2008: 59-67; Rösener, 2008: 9-23, 44-50) have argued, the royal court in the Middle Ages was characteristically a travelling court or itinerant kingship. The sovereign constantly journeyed from one region to another, from one major town to another, to both consecrate and celebrate the glory of places and their people. Moreover, the medieval travelling court offered an opportunity for the king to receive – and thereby honour – regional magnates. In effect, a royal reception would cement the healthy relationship between the king and powerful provincial nobility. Conversely, a long royal sojourn in one place would trigger dissatisfaction among the local magnates, since it was perceived to be a sign of state intervention into regional territorial politics (Hartmann, 2007: 47-53 delivers a useful explanation for this). Thus, that Henry IV would “reside solely in Saxony”

was nothing but an aberrant policy in the Saxons' eyes. Indeed, Frutolf supported his criticism towards the king by mentioning a series of his evil deeds committed towards the Saxon princes and their ladies. Thus, individual suffering brought about by the king's mischievous policies was only the tip of the iceberg. There is a danger that historians might be blinded by the chronicler's tragic description; instead, we must seek out the significance of his writing.

Perhaps pivotal to Frutolf's argument was the king's disregard for honour and social station of the local magnates, whereby the king was allegedly reported to "exalt inferiors" and was said to "not trust the magnates of the kingdom". In other words, the Saxons' *libertas* was disturbed not simply by physical harshness, but by the king's disrespect for the *ordo* which preserved, in turn, Saxon state-protected freedom in daily life. The co-existence of wretched freedom and subverted social hierarchy in primary sources proves the connection between *libertas* and *ordo* in medieval political thought.

Bestowing royal castles to garrisons and ministers of inferior origin was but the final straw that drove the hostility and detestation of the nobility towards the king to the point of no return. A number of the great and the good of the kingdom considered the king's favouring his ministers as a violation of their rank in the imperial hierarchy, for it was his Swabian ministers that the king brought almost exclusively into his court; the king confided in them and made them his advisors, as Berthold of Reichenau reported in his *Annales*:

Rudolfus dux Alemanniae, et Bertholdus dux Carantaniae, et Welf dux Baioariae a rege discesserunt, quia aliis subintroeuntibus consiliariis, suum consilium apud regem non valere perspexerunt (Berthold, 1844: 275).

Duke Rudolf of Swabia, Duke Berthold [I] of Carinthia and Duke Welf [IV] of Bavaria dissociated themselves from the king because they perceived that their advice carried no weight with him (Robinson, 2008: 127).

That the princes dissociated themselves from Henry IV suggests the situation in which the traditional relationship between monarchy and nobility had become unfairly disordered or even shattered. The neglect of the magnates by the king damaged the traditional legal order and imperial hierarchy in a way that would have caused so many of them to feel offended that they decidedly renounced the king, as the chronicler Berthold recounted. As Althoff (2016: 11-23, 142-169) has shown in his studies on the role of political counsellors in medieval politics, the participation of the secular and spiritual magnates in the imperial government was indispensable and of great importance. The council of the great and the good of the kingdom constituted the imperial constitution, and served the king for fashioning and perpetuating the

correct legal and hierarchical order of the kingdom. After all, by the end of the eleventh century, the council of the imperial magnates, together with the king, had begun to represent the Holy Roman Empire (Mayer, 1950: 220-221).

For proof of this emerging self-consciousness of the imperial nobility, we need look no further than a well-known dialogue between Count Liuthar and his opponent, Margrave Ekkehard of Meißen, concerning problems with the succession of the dying Otto III in 1002, which is delivered to us in Thietmar's *Annales*. According to the chronicler, when Count Liuthar was notified of how ambitious Margrave Ekkehard wanted to be a candidate for the vacant throne, he called out the “better part of the magnates” (*meliozem procerum partem*) for a secret meeting at Frohse, and they swore not yet to elect anyone a king (Thietmar, 1955: 190). It was in this secret meeting that the controversy between the two counts culminated. Thietmar addressed it with the following dialogue: “What do you have against me, Count Liuthar?” He replied: ‘Don't you really get it? You miss the fourth wheel on the carriage.’ (“*O Liuthari comes,*” *inquiens, “quid adversaris?” Et ille: “Num,” inquit, “curru tuo quartam deesse non sentis rotam?”*) (Thietmar, 1955: 190). Historians still argue the meaning of the term “the fourth wheel” (*quartam rotam*). Did Liuthar mean that Ekkehard lacked the fourth cardinal virtue of kingship, temperance (*temperantia*)? Or, was he referring to Ekkehard's missing affinity with the deceased king? (Althoff, 1998: 44). Whatever it might be, it is nevertheless evident that Margrave Ekkehard was confronted by the “better part of the magnates” of the kingdom, who showed a clear sign that they would not politically support him. Without the great and the good on his side, his dream of the imperial throne could never be realised. By the beginning of the eleventh century, the privileged status of nobility in sharing imperial political power had become undeniable, and they formed an independent body whose advice and decisions the kings had to respect (Hartmann, 2007: 51-52; Keller, 1986: 152-174).

In addition, it is noteworthy that Henry's grasping territorial policy violated the traditional relationship between the kingdom and local nobility with regards to regional sphere of influence. Henry's territorial policy can be understood as a royal attempt at weakening the political sphere of influence of the Saxon magnates by bringing Saxony under his own control. This policy was essentially revolutionary, for it had been customary that the ruler was above the territorial policy of local princes, and neither supervised nor intervened in it. As Schlick (2001: 19) put it succinctly, the monarch was only a conciliator healing divisions in the *regnum*, but not a competitor himself. In this regard, Henry's territorial policy, together with the

unwonted social mobility in his reign, simultaneously affected both the Saxons' time-honoured *libertas* and the traditional order of social hierarchy of the princes in the kingdom.

Now, it is worth looking at a famous speech by the leader of the rebellion, Otto of Norheim (d. 1083). The speech was stylized and delivered to us by Bruno of Merseburg in his *De Bello Saxonico*. Otto was a Saxon prince, and was appointed Duke of Bavaria in 1061. Yet, in 1070 he was deposed by Henry IV, since the king preferred an entourage of Swabian ministers of lesser origins. Otto felt so humiliated that he accepted the leadership of the Saxon feud with the king in 1073. Standing in front of the great and the good as well as lesser peasants, Otto was reported to have concluded his speech at the meeting in Hoetensleben in Saxony by demanding that his entire estate remain untouched and proclaiming that he would not be enslaved by anyone:

Igitur expergiscimini et hereditatem vobis a parentibus vestris relictam liberis vestris relinquite; nec vestra socordia vel desidia vos et liberos vestros exulum hominum servos fieri permittite (Bruno, 1937: 29).

Well, awaken and keep the inheritance that you received from your fathers for your children. Do not let foreigners enslave you and your progeny just because of your negligence or sluggishness.

If Otto and other Saxon noblemen had let Henry and his entourage destroy their possessions, property and, ultimately, *libertas*, they would have risked losing their power, influence, and, in the end, their social status as Saxon princes. They would certainly have been deprived of their highborn status and would have virtually been demoted from the good and the great of the kingdom to unknown “slaves” (*servos*) – that is, royal servants, similar to the king's Swabian ministers of lesser origin. Since a nobleman's honour could not be overestimated, those who felt injured in their social rank felt compelled to lead the feud with the unjust king to preserve their honour and restore the *status quo ante* concerning their plundered and confiscated properties (cf. Althoff, 1997a: 28-37).

Moreover, the case of Otto of Norheim reveals another characteristic of political rule in the Middle Ages. That is, protection of power and property, which were closely linked with the traditional *libertas*, was, at the same time the safeguarding of *honor*, which was associated with one's social status in the kingdom. It is also important to remember that, as Seibert (2004: 33-40) has argued, in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the regional nobles started to enhance their power bases not only by occupying expansive territories, but also by structuring and organizing measures to consolidate and exercise power

in their own territories. Seibert has also shown that the success of aristocratic rule reinforced the sense of both social and self respect (*honor*) of the provincial princes, as in case of the Scheyern-Wittelsbach dynasty in Bavaria in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Thus, Seibert's findings prove to be greatly valuable for medievalists, for they remind us that, in the Middle Ages, the nobles derived their *honor* not only from family background and imperial titles, but also from power they exercised in their own estates, guaranteed by *libertas* which the king had to respect according to the imperial constitution.

In this regard, Seibert's argument is particularly useful for understanding Lampert's account of the year 1070, when Otto of Northeim was sentenced to death by Henry IV after he had been allegedly accused of royal assassination, though the king did not warrant him a safe conduct to come to answer the allegations (Lampert, 1894: 113; Robinson, 2015: 127-128). The chronicler recorded the prince's reaction to the sentence, as follows:

Nec tutum nec satis honestum eius rationibus visum est ... ut sic inflammatae adversum se regis iracundiae illudendum se vexandumque obiceret, cum sibi integris adhuc rebus et crimine necdum comprobato tuto coram venire non licuisset, quod tam iure caeli quam iure fori omnibus semper reis omnibus in causis licuisset. ... sacius putans, quoad posset, armis salutem tueri quam ad exsaturanda hostium suorum odia turpiter more pecudum iugulari (Lampert, 1894: 114).

It was neither safe nor honourable for him ... to expose himself to be abused and harassed by the anger of the king that was thus inflamed against him. For in a situation in which no decision had yet been made and no charge had yet been proved, the king had not granted him safe conduct to come there, although according both to divine law and to human law this had always been granted to all defendants in all cases. ... He thought it better to preserve his life by means of weapons, as long as he could, than to be shamefully killed, just as cattle are slaughtered, to satisfy the hatred of his enemies (Robinson, 2015: 129).

According to Lampert, Otto's decision to conduct a feud with the king was not arbitrary. Rather, it was brought about by the ruler's lack of justice, which was referred to in the source as “the anger of the king that was thus inflamed” (*inflammatae adversum se regis iracundiae*). It is also remarkable that Lampert reveals here vivid testimony of the connection between *libertas* and *honor*. Losing the one meant, at the same time, losing the other. Otto's decision to take up arms against the king was driven by his will to preserve his honour, so that his life would not be terminated like that of cattle. As noted earlier, the medieval concept of *libertas* included not only freedom from paying tithes, but also rights for enjoying state protection

according to one's social station in the imperial hierarchy. Considering how Henry IV did not warrant Otto a safe conduct, we can clearly understand that Otto's feud with the king served a greater purpose than merely re-claiming his property and imperial title. Rather, it served to protect the political ideal of the kingdom; that is, the abstract notion of freedom, honour and, ultimately, the traditional political structure of the realm.

Royal Indignity and Legitimacy Loss of Kingship

It is not for nothing that the majority of primary sources produced by pro-Saxons chroniclers imparted an impression of undignified kingship of Henry IV to their contemporary readers and posterity. Bruno of Merseburg, for example, defined Henry's reign as tyranny. He bluntly proclaimed that "if anyone neglected to assist the injured victims, they contributed to the power of tyranny themselves." (*dum laesis auxilium ferre negligebant, tyrannidi vires in se ipsos tribuebant*) (Bruno, 1937: 23). Now, it is important to ask what values medieval kingship was based upon. Bishop Isidore of Seville (c.560-636), whose work was influential among his contemporaries until the fifteenth century (Barney *et al.*, 2006: 24-26), gave a definition of king (*rex*) and kingship (*regnum*) in his monumental work, *Etymologiae* (*The Etymologies*). It reads:

Recte igitur faciendo regis nomen tenetur, peccando amittitur. Unde et apud veteres tale erat proverbium: 'Rex eris, si recte facias: si non facias, non eris'. Regiae virtutes praecipuae duae: iustitia et pietas. Plus autem in regibus laudatur pietas; nam iustitia per se severa est (Isidore, 1911: n.p.).

Therefore the name of king is held by one behaving rightly (recte), and lost by one doing wrong. Hence among the ancients such was the proverb: "You will be king (rex) if you behave rightly (recte); if you do not, you will not." The royal virtues are these two especially: justice and mercy – but mercy is more praised in kings, because in itself is harsh (Barney *et al.*, 2006: 200).

If justice and mercy were the two watchwords of royal legitimacy, it is no great stretch to understand that, in the Saxon view, Henry "had dishonoured the very majesty of the title of king with unheard-of crimes" (*inauditis criminibus ipsam regii nominis maiestatem polluisset*) (Lampert, 1894: 165; Robinson, 2015: 196), for, as we have seen, the Saxons attacked the king's image by reiterating that his castle-building policy ruined their freedom and subverted their social rank in the imperial hierarchy. In other words, they implied that justice and mercy had disappeared from Henry's kingship, rendering his reign equal to that of a tyrant. As Isidore put it pointedly, "those who were called tyrants" were "kings who enact[ed] upon their people their

lust for luxurious domination and the cruelest lordship.” (*tyrannos vocari pessimos atque improbos reges, luxuriosae dominationis cupiditatem et crudelissimam dominationem in populis exercentes*) (Isidore, 1911: n.p.; Barney *et al.*, 2006: 201). Thus, the Saxons' accusations regarding Henry's reign were not simply based on individual suffering; rather, they were grounded in the medieval concept of kingship.

It is to be noted that the Saxon recourse to the abstract notion of medieval kingship as opposed to that of tyranny was, it seems, purposive, not arbitrary or random. It was deployed by the Saxon magnates in order to detach themselves from the oath of fealty that they swore to the king. To illuminate this aspect, it is worth considering Otto of Norheim's speech delivered at Hoetensleben in 1073:

Fortasse quia christiani estis, sacramenta regi facta violare timetis. Optime, sed regi. Dum michi rex erat et ea, quae sunt regis, faciebat, fidelitatem, quam ei iuravi, integram et impollutam servavi; postquam vero rex esse desivit, cui fidem deberem servare, non fuit. Itaque non contra regem, sed contra iniustum meae libertatis ereptorem, non contra patriam, sed pro patria et pro libertate mea (Bruno, 1937: 29).

Perhaps you are too ashamed as Christians to breach the oath that you swore to the king. Good, but you did swear the oath to the king. As long as he is for me a king and behaves himself as a king, I shall remain loyal to him as I swore my loyalty, I shall keep my loyalty clean and unviolated; yet after he ceased to be a king, he is no more the one to whom I must remain loyal. Therefore, not against the king, but against the unjust robber of my freedom, not against the kingdom, but for the kingdom and for my freedom.

According to Otto, since Henry IV had forfeited his claim to his position as a king because of his injustice and cruelty, the Saxons no longer need regard him as their king, but as tyrant. The oath of fealty made to him was, consequently, no longer binding. An important aspect of the oath of allegiance was brought to light in this speech. As Schlick (2001: 22) has reminded us, in the oath of fidelity came the dignity of the position, but not the person who assumed it. Similarly, the chronicler Bruno argued that “as long as [the king] is not in a spirit of hostility, nor does he aspire to civil war, [his subjects] shall remain there together; and if he wishes to be a king, his reign needs the service from all fealty.” (*se non hostili animo, nec ut civile bellum vellent incipere, ibi esse congregatos*) (Bruno, 1937: 31). This suggests that if the ruler failed in his duty, he lost his dignity, and his subjects were absolved of the oath. If one follows this view, the Saxon war was by no means a breach of fidelity, for it was directed against an

unjust ruler or tyrant.

However, the theory of fidelity as reflected in Otto of Northeim's speech, was not the only version of appropriate form of the relationship between the king and his subjects in the high Middle Ages. The controversial reign of Henry IV offers us a perfect glimpse of a variety of political writings concerning the legitimacy of kingship. Wenrich of Trier, a German ecclesiastico-political writer of the eleventh century, presented the idea of divine legitimate kingship. Reflecting on the situation of the kingdom amidst the Investiture Conflict in 1077, when a group of imperial princes led by Duke Rudolf of Rheinfelden forced Henry IV to abdicate, Wenrich argued that the king could not be dismissed easily, for “the royal title had been created at the beginning of the world and later established by God. ... The party striving to eliminate ... as well as change the realm shall be commanded to leave the kingdom of their ancestors; if they do not change their mind immediately, they shall be condemned by anathema.” (*Nomen regum, inter ipsa mundi initia repertum, a Deo postea stabilitum, ... repentina factione elidere, ... sicut villicos mutare, regno patrum suorum decedere iussos, nisi confestim adquieverint, anathemate damnare*) (Wenrich, 1891: 289). Wenrich noted the divine acceptance of royal power, and emphasised the royal role in holding the kingdom together. Of course, this principle of eternal legitimacy and sacrality of monarchy was not present in the Saxon justifications of their resistance.

Nevertheless, the Saxon argumentation was neither singular nor arbitrary. Indeed, as the evidence shows, even the imperial princes sent by the king himself to negotiate with the Saxons in 1073 approved the cause of war. Lampert of Hersfeld dramatised the conversation during their meeting, as follows:

Obstupuerunt principes qui a rege venerant, et pre immanitate scelerum secundum prophetam tinniebant aures omnium, nec eos, quod pro libertate sua, pro coniugibus, pro liberis arma sumpsissent, sed quod intollerabiles contumelias muliebri patientia tamdiu supportassent, culpandos censebant (Lampert, 1894: 165).

The princes who had come from the king were astounded and (in the words of the prophet) all men's ears tingled because of the enormity of the evil-doing and they judged the Saxons to be blameworthy not because they had taken up arms for their freedom, for their wives and for their children, but because they had for so long borne with intolerance insults with the patience of women (Robinson, 2015: 196).

Needless to say, we cannot take Lampert's record for granted, especially his wording. Yet, the scene is highly likely to be true, insofar as it reflects the self-consciousness of the imperial

princes in maintaining the good order of the political realm. As historians (Keller, 1986: 147-150; Althoff, 1997b; Suchan, 1997: 64-65; Schlick, 2001: 21-42) have pointed out, during the crises of the reigns of Henry IV and his successor, Henry V, the imperial nobility enthusiastically took responsibility for preserving the *honor et ordo imperii*, honour and the social order/hierarchy of the kingdom, by not allowing the *regnum* to fall into chaos. As such, the imperial princes were willing to assume the role of mediators between the two opposing parties. Some of them showed either or both of the parties unmistakable signs of their disapproval (Althoff, 2016: 169-187; Althoff, 1998: 9-15). This could be seen during the Saxon war, too. The anonymous party-independent chronicler of *Annales Althahenses maiores* highlighted an unpleasant situation resulting from “many disorderly things” (*multa inordinate*) that happened in Henry's reign, wherein “bishops, dukes and other princes of the kingdom withdrew themselves from the royal throne.” (*et quia multa inordinate fiebant, episcopi, duces aliique regni primores de regalibus se subtrahebant*) (*Annales Althahenses maiores*, 1868: 824). The imperial princes' departure from Henry IV can be interpreted as their disapproval of “many disorderly things” in his reign that might cause “the beginning of all evils that follow” to the kingdom (*principium omnium, quae sequuntur, malorum*) (Bruno, 1937: 28). Both Lampert's *Annales* and *Annales Althahenses* testify to one of the characteristics of the Saxons' upheaval; that is, the fact that the rebels succeeded in convincing “other princes of the kingdom” to agree with their justification and argumentation concerning Henry's loss of legitimate kingship, which was reflected in the imperial princes' withdrawal from the royal circle.

Conclusion

This article has examined the argumentation of the Saxon rebellion against King Henry IV and tried to make sense of the political concept that they valued and considered inviolable. Based on testimony produced from the Saxon party itself, the uprising, which began in the summer of 1073, was triggered by the king's aggressive territorial policy in Saxony and Thuringia. The Saxons' time-honoured *libertas* was endangered by the policy. With it, the traditional legal relationship between the kingdom and regional power was brought into jeopardy, for the king was elected lord of the empire, but had no right to appropriate the property of the kingdom. Moreover, the *ordo* of the princes was largely shattered, not least because of the preference for the Swabian ministers of lesser origin and the neglect of their role at the court by the king. Of course, individual suffering was an inevitable outcome of

Henry's grasping territorial policy. Yet, as has been shown, these comprised only the tip of the iceberg. In fact, the Saxon argumentation rather referred to the injured legal and social order of the kingdom, the opposite of which the rebellion struggled to uphold. Thus, it is my argument that the upheaval that initially seemed to be clear opposition to *the* king and his aberrant politics and lifestyle, indeed, proved to be a revolt for preserving the traditional order of the Holy Roman Empire.

In considering the justifications of the Saxon war, which were primarily derived from the self-understanding of the insurrection, three concluding remarks appear to be of great significance. Firstly, the Saxons' struggle against the threat to their freedom coincided with emphasis on their historical consciousness of the conventional inherited *libertas*, in which the terms “ancestral freedom” (*a parentibus libertas*), “the kingdom's laws” (*leges patriae*) and “native rights” (*iura patriae*) played a key role. Secondly, the rebellion buttressed their argumentation by emphasising the medieval concept of the imperial *ordo*. They successfully expanded their argumentative discourse from regional calamity to imperial calamity, as evidenced by the participation of the other imperial princes to protect the commonwealth from being endangered by the king. In other words, it was the Saxons' cause for war that was shared and approved of by the magnates of the kingdom, not their individual suffering, as historians have long argued. Lastly, the Saxon uprising offered a prime opportunity for the imperial princes to reflect on their role as “the protectors of the kingdom” (*provisores regni*) when its traditional structure was in imminent danger of being shattered, the term coined by the royalist author of *Carmen de Bello Saxonico*. This princely political consciousness is highly significant for my argument here, for it reminds us that the Saxon rebels had transcended the individual level of politics and gone to the transpersonal concept of the kingdom. Thus, it was not for nothing when Otto of Norheim announced that the rebellion was “not against the kingdom, but for the kingdom and my freedom” (*non contra patria, sed pro patria et pro libertate mea*). With this, the Saxon war happened to be an uprising in which the rebels firmly based their argumentation on medieval conception of politics, and was at the same time a revolt to preserve the abstract notion of and the traditional order of the kingdom.

As the closing remark, it is perhaps not an exaggeration to claim that this examination of the Saxons' arguments is bringing to light an important and useful category for analysing medieval politics. That is “*libertas*”. Although some certain scholars have recognised the nuance of its meanings, others were perhaps satisfied with considering it similar to “modern liberty”. This resulted in misinterpreting the Saxon war as a mere opposition against

the king whose repressive policy and mischievous behaviour threatened to destroy the Saxons' freedom. Within this framework, the uprising has been understood as an interpersonal conflict between the aberrant king and the freedom-loving rebels. However, as has been described in this essay, the medieval concept of *libertas* embraced a series of meanings that were different from our modern usage of the term "liberty". Also, the concept itself was closely linked with the concept of *ordo*, the social station of an individual prince in the imperial hierarchy, whereby one's *libertas* was guaranteed by one's *ordo*. Loss of the one meant loss of the other. Only in this framework can we truly understand the genuine mentality and meaning of the rebellion when war was waged against the king in 1073. Perhaps, *libertas* was more important to medieval politics than historians have been apt to admit.

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