

## Historical Crisis

### Charlemagne, the Papacy and the Byzantine Empire

#### World Politics in the 8th and 9th Century

*Study Guide for Zurich Model United Nations*

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## Introduction and Historical Background

### Introduction

Distinguished Delegates,  
we are delighted to welcome you to the ZuMUN 2016 Historical Crisis Committee.

We, Shuting and Michal, will be your chairs in this committee. Shuting is pursuing her Bachelor in Political Science and Michal is also a Bachelor student at the UZH. Together with the members of the Crisis Team Lea and Lucas, we have been preparing this exciting debate and hope it will be a special experience for you all.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact us anytime.  
We are looking forward to a vivid and creative debate and a great time with you in Zurich!

Shuting & Michal

### A General Assembly in the Middle Ages – Crisis in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Century

Charlemagne conquered Pavia in 774.

What seems like an minor event in world history – Pavia had already been conquered by the Romans, by the Ostrogoths and by the Lombards and will be conquered and besieged many more times in the following centuries – in fact, caused a major stir in European politics. In fact international politics and diplomacy perhaps were already as complicated and tangled affair as in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moreover, as will become clear, medieval leaders were guided by rational geopolitical interests similar to the interests of today and didn't take irrational decisions.

To demonstrate that, to dive into policy-making in the Middle Ages and to enable you to represent "countries" you've never represented before are the goals of this Study Guide and the Historical Crisis Committee.

We are aware of the fact that this is just a simulation and although we try to be as historically accurate as possible in the Study Guide, it is no simulation of any assembly that has ever really existed.

Diplomats were already a common thing in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and the rulers had diplomatic relations with each other. Also, "international conferences" (the word is inappropriate since the kingdoms and empires are no nations) for bishops, so-called ecumenical councils and other bi- or multilateral diplomatic meetings already took place, but there has never been a council where representatives of all the Kings and Dukes you are representing were present. Let us assume that in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century a body like the UN already existed and that every important ruler in the known world sent his diplomats to wherever this medieval UN might have met.

In this body, you are all representing a King, a Duke, an Emir or whatever position of power there is in Europe, Northern Africa and the Middle East in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century. Since it would have demanded a great deal of research on your part to find out about your respective ruler's



*14<sup>th</sup> century bust of Charlemagne*  
Illustration 1



position, we wrote some small texts about each delegation's allies, goals etc. Therefore, **position papers are not required**. You do not have to stick to the real course of events, you can do and say whatever you want, the only thing that you have to respect is the natural death of the ruler you represent, if it is for example 780 and the Emperor died, he will also die in our committee and be replaced by his heir or successor, as was the case in reality (The Metropolitan Museum in New York provides you with a good overview on who was ruling in Europe at which time. Try to represent the interests of your Monarch realistically and take the following texts as a basis. Further research is, nevertheless, highly appreciated. On page 26 there is a list with further reading suggestions that should be available at every bigger university library.

But now let's start our time travel and dive into the world of the Middle Ages!

As mentioned above, Pavia, the capital of the Kingdom of the Lombards, fell on 4<sup>th</sup> June 774. Charlemagne declared himself King of the Lombards the following day. These events are the starting point of our Crisis. The crisis begins in 775 and we will cover a certain period of time during our sessions and jump from one period to the other in between the sessions until the Crisis ends in 814 with Charlemagne's death. We will live through 30 of the most interesting and troubled years of the century. But what exactly happened on that summer day in Pavia and why was it so important?

## The situation before 774

To understand the political situation in 775, we have to begin with the division of the Roman Empire. As we all know, the Roman Emperors have been the rulers of a huge empire in Antiquity. Around 100 years after the birth of Christ, the Empire had reached its climax. From Mesopotamia in the East to Lusitania in the West, from Hadrian's Wall in the North and to the upper course of the Nile in the South the Roman Empire surrounded the whole Mediterranean.

In 330, Emperor Constantine the Great transferred his main residence from Rome to the town of Byzantium at the shores of the Bosphorus. He officially named this new capital New Rome, or in Greek Νέα Ρώμη. After Constantine's death the town remained capital and to honor Constantine it was named Constantinople, the town of Constantine.

In 395, after the death of Emperor Theodosius, the Empire was split into two parts and each one of his sons received one part. The Eastern Empire's capital remained in Constantinople and the Empire of the West returned to Rome.



*The two Roman Empires in 550 ad.*

Illustration 2

The Western Empire's power continuously diminished, while the Eastern Empire remained very stable. The reasons why the Western Roman Empire failed are still controversially debated. In the end, the Roman Officer of Germanic origin Odoacer declared himself King of Italy and removed the last Emperor of the Western

Empire in the late 5<sup>th</sup> Century, whose capital had been transferred to Ravenna by that point.

The following period is commonly known as the European Migration period. Historians do not fully agree on what exactly happened in this time. For a long time they believed that in this period Germanic peoples were wandering around in Europe in search for new areas for settlements. Nowadays, it is commonly believed to have been different, as Germanic tribes were no people in the modern, or in the Roman sense of the word. We know a lot about these Germanic tribes from Roman sources. Roman ethnographers describing a group of Germanic warriors as a people does not mean that the warriors actually perceived themselves to be a distinct people or even shared a common culture, history or language. Moreover, the Roman historians used to give such a "people" they observed outside their borders names of people they already knew, which further gives the impression of continuity and huge migration, which did not actually take place in the assumed dimensions. Germanic "people" were more likely to be loose groups of warriors who had spontaneously gathered around a military leader.<sup>1</sup>



Nevertheless, we do know that as a result of this period many Germanic Kingdoms emerged where the former Roman Empire used to be. The Germanic Kings began to identify themselves with the names they were given by Roman historians and ethnographers and started to perceive themselves as a people. Later, European scholars determined that around that time Antiquity had come to an end and Europe had stepped into the Middle Ages. For the Emperor in Constantinople the collapse of the Western Roman Empire did not mean that Italy and Western Europe did not belong to the Empire anymore. The Byzantine Emperors now claimed to be the rulers of the whole Empire again, but they had no actual control over the territories now ruled by Germanic Kings.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, the Kingdom established by Odoacer had come to an end and another Germanic tribe had invaded Italy, the Lombards, or Langobards, as they are also often referred to. In Constantinople, Emperor Justinian, who came to power in 527 (law students might know him because of the *corpus iuris civilis*), started a military campaign to reconquer the lost territories. Indeed, Justinian managed to restore a lot of the former greatness of the Empire, nevertheless, his military campaign resulted in a long, cruel and static battle against the Lombards in Italy. This battle transformed Northern Italy into a deserted place and resulted in a division of the area into two parts, a division still visible today, as the Northern Italian region held by the Romans is called Romagna nowadays, while the region defended by the Germanics is called Lombardy. This animosity between Romans and Lombards in Northern Italy has continued since Justinian's military campaign and is one reason why the region is such a trouble spot at the time of our crisis. The former Lombard King Desiderius, however, attempted the balancing act of not upsetting the Emperor too much and expanding his influence in Italy. This demanded a flexible and elastic policy.

In a totally different part of the world, the Prophet Mohammed died in 632. His successors, the Caliphs, conquered a huge swath of land at never before seen speed and the Roman Empire restored by Justinian shrank again. The Arab troops took over the Middle East (especially painful because of the loss of the holy city of Jerusalem), Northern Africa and the Iberian Peninsula, territories that had all belonged to Byzantium before. Muslim shock troops from Iberia even attacked the town of Tours in Northern France. However, Muslim expansion has come to an end by 775, perhaps because the Empire had been split into two parts, which dislike each other.

Another important power in Europe is the Kingdom of the Franks. Germanic leaders founded this kingdom during the chaos that accompanied the dawn of the Western Roman Empire. The core of the Frankish Kingdom is the region that will later be called l'Île de France, the ancient *Francia*. However, the residence of the Frankish King is in Aachen in 775. The Frankish Kings, especially Pippin and his son Charlemagne, have conquered large territories and now rule a Kingdom that includes what will later become France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, parts of Spain, Italy, Austria and other countries.

In sum, the Frankish King whose power grows dominated Western Europe. At the same time, the power of the Roman Empire in Constantinople was diminishing, not in the least because they were threatened by the powerful Caliphate in the East. This resulted in a power vacuum in Italy, which the Lombards tried to fill. But one "global player" of world politics in the 8<sup>th</sup> century has not yet been mentioned: the Pope. The Pope did not approve of the Lombard expansion at all, but was not strong enough to defend himself.<sup>3</sup>

## What happened in 774?

Once again, the third time in 34 years, the Lombards seize Rome. Pope Adrian, who does not have the military capacity to defend himself and cannot hope for help from the Emperor in Constantinople, as he is occupied with a war against the Bulgarians, calls on Charlemagne to help.



Charlemagne's father Pippin had already intervened when the Lombards had threatened Rome in the past.

Like his father, Charlemagne hears the call, assembles his troops in Geneva and marches across the Alps. The ensuing war is short and Pavia, the Lombard capital and financial centre, conquered afterwards. Desiderius, the King of the Lombards, is taken into detention and brought to a monastery in the Frankish Kingdom. His son Adalgis, however, manages to flee to Constantinople. After the fall of Pavia, Charlemagne does not give the territory back to the Emperor or the Pope like his father had done, but crowns himself the new King of the Lombards.

Even before Charlemagne's troops defeat the Lombards in Pavia, Charlemagne travels to Rome. The Pope is shocked, he did not want Lombard dominion over Rome, but he does not want Frankish dominion either, as his main goal is to increase his own influence in Italy.

The Emperor in Constantinople is equally upset about the development, since he still considers the whole Italian peninsula to be part of the Byzantine Empire. By declaring himself King of the Lombards, Charlemagne has made himself one of the most powerful men in the world and surely the most powerful man in Europe. This new rival is far more dangerous than Desiderius, who was relatively weak compared to Charlemagne and had at least tried to please Constantinople in recent times. Moreover, the Franks are considered to be even more barbarian than the Lombards, who had become more and more Roman throughout the centuries. For all these reasons Constantinople suddenly supports his old enemy the former Lombard King and backs the fugitive prince Adalgis' claim to the Lombard throne.

Despite his worries, the Pope has to arrange himself with whoever rules in Lombardy and has already had good experiences with the Franks; in the end he gives the new King of the Lombards a reception in Rome and welcomes him to his holy town.

Pippin, Charlemagne's father, had also fought the Lombards to save the Pope. Unlike his son, he had not declared himself King of the Lombards, but had presented the territories he had conquered to the pontiff. Therefore, Pippin had attacked the Lombards because he sincerely wanted to help the Pope, but why did Charlemagne intervene in Italy?<sup>4</sup>

## **Why did Charlemagne attack the Lombards? – The History behind the Animosity**

When Pippin, King of the Franks, died, he divided his kingdom between his two sons: Charlemagne received the Northern part of the kingdom and his brother Carloman the Southern part. Bavaria, which was ruled by Pippin's nephew Duke Tassilo, was granted more independence and not given to any of the two sons.

Einhart, Charlemagne's biographer, tells us that Carloman repeatedly tried to destroy the peace between the two brothers Charlemagne wanted to uphold in the following period. We cannot tell for sure who was guilty of instigating the quarrel that broke out between the brothers, but Charlemagne must have wanted to control the whole Kingdom, too, which Carloman's presence was preventing.

In order to form an alliance between himself, the Bavarians and the Lombards against his brother Carloman, Charlemagne married a daughter of the Lombard King Desiderius, Desiderata. Through this marriage Desiderius grew extremely powerful: He was the father-in-law of Charlemagne, Tassilo of Bavaria and the powerful Duke of Benevento Aregis in Southern Italy.

The Pope was shocked by this development, not only because Desiderius was his archenemy who was constantly threatening Rome, but also because he feared that he had lost Frankish support in the fight against the Lombards. In a letter to Charlemagne the Pontiff lost all his temper and wrote the Lombards were not even a people but the *progenitors of all lepers*.

At one point Desiderius besieged Rome and a Roman official named Paulus Afiarta silenced the anti-Lombard voices within the city. Left with no other choice, the Pope formed an alliance with Desiderius and wrote a new letter to Charlemagne in which he praised his *son* Desiderius.

This was an affront against Carloman who up to this point had been an ally of the Pope, but



had felt isolated after the alliance was forged between his brother Charlemagne, Tassilo, Aregis and Desiderius. The Pope's sudden change of heart in favour of the Lombards made that isolation complete.

In order to regain the favour of the Pope, Carloman had planned a military campaign against both the Lombards and Romans, but this campaign never took place because Carloman died shortly after the plan was hatched. He was only 20 years old. Charlemagne immediately took control of the whole Frankish Kingdom.

*Without any reason*, as Einhard put it favourably, the remaining family of Carloman flees to Desiderius' court. Desiderius is not pleased at all by the death of Carloman and his ally Charlemagne's increase of power in Europe. The separation of the Frankish Kingdom between Charlemagne and Carloman had ensured he was the most powerful man in Europe. Desiderius wanted to restore his dominant position and began supporting the claim of Carloman's son Pippin to one part of the Frankish Kingdom.

Naturally, this betrayal upset Charlemagne, but since Carloman was already dead, he had no use for the alliance with Desiderius anymore, as he was now strong enough as sole ruler of the Frankish Kingdom. Charlemagne immediately expels his Lombard wife Desiderata and marries a woman called Hildegard. War has begun.<sup>5</sup>



## Questions that should be discussed

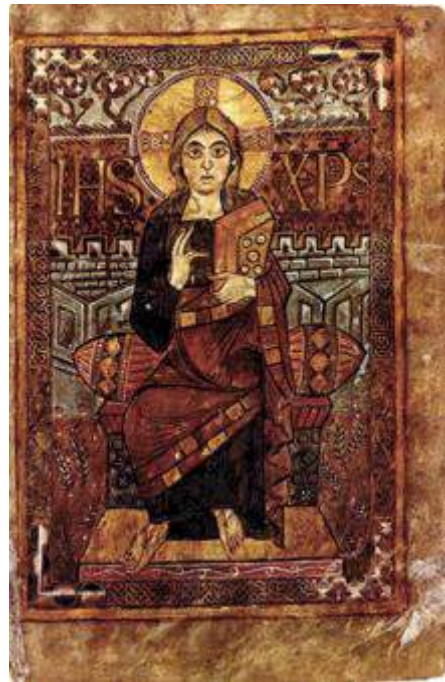
There are different questions that should be addressed by our fictional international body. First of all of course the questions concerning the throne of the Kingdom of the Lombards. Is Charlemagne the righteous king of the Lombards? This questions leads to the problem of Italy as a whole. Is Italy still a part of the Roman Empire? Moreover the status, territory and leadership of the Roman Empire should be discussed. Who can legitimately claim to rule the Roman Empire and to be a successor of the caesars of antiquity?

Keep in mind that religion is a vital aspect in medieval politics and Questions on what the correct belief is were subjects of intense discussions. Atheism was an unthinkable concept and the constellation of religious beliefs had a decisive role when forming alliances. During the lifetime of Charlemagne there were multiple religious conflicts such as between Catholic and Orthodox Christians, monotheists and pagans, iconodules and iconoclasts in Constantinople as well as many more. Also think about which profane power should be attributed to religious authorities such as the pope.

Also Charlemagne is gaining more and more power and rules over most of Western Europe. Is this beneficial for your kingdom, caliphate or duchy? Or do you think that his influence should be reduced?

In addition you are free to bring up another issue that especially bothers your delegation; examples are mentioned in the chapters about the delegations.

But in a medieval crisis action is more important than discussion. As in any crisis you may ask the crisis team for help to intervene militarily somewhere or to apply other measures. The Medieval setting of our crisis gives you some new opportunities. For specific, please consult the following paragraph.



*Depiction of Christ from around 780*  
Illustration 3



## Special measures of medieval diplomacy

There are some special measures, some of them very effective, which you can take in the Middle Ages in order to succeed. Besides the ones of “normal” diplomacy, they include the declaration of war and Military campaigns. You are also allowed to - should you be successful - conquer territories for yourself or another Monarch. Another very often-used measure in medieval diplomacy is arranged marriages. There are not many ways more effective to strengthen Alliances or to bind an ally than making him part of the family. Marrying the daughter of another Monarch or arranging marriage between your children was common in those days. Be aware of not respecting a call to arms when you have betrothed your heir to another dynasty, you might just break your royal ties!

Another measure tied to arranged marriages, is the personal union: If you have a royal marriage with another country and your heir to the throne is the same as theirs, at the death of their monarch, you will inherit their country. This only works if you provided the groom of the marriage and not the bride. When the other country has another legal heir, they can of course claim or usurp the throne, this is always a good start to a succession war.

You can also demand or pay tribute to another country in order to strengthen your alliance, the same can also be done to avoid war or provoke it.

Don't forget covert actions! Sabotage, espionage and supporting rebels are all possible, just be creative in the use of them or it might fail.

The Pope and the Caliph of Bagdad have some sort of religious authority, which is very helpful. The pope has the power to excommunicate people, which means excluding them from Christianity, maximum penalty in the middle Ages. Moreover he can place kingdoms, regions or groups of people under the interdict, which means they shall be excluded from certain rights of the Church including a prohibition of the celebration of the Holy Mass. This too was a major means of exerting pressure back then. If the pope wants to discuss important issues of faith he organizes an ecumenical Council or a Synod where these issues will be discussed by bishops from all over the known world (The Greek word οἰκουμένη means “the inhabited”). The pope also is sometimes responsible to crown kings or other monarchs, which can greatly increase the legitimacy of a monarch. Nevertheless religion is no obstacle to diplomatic relations or alliance, the Caliph has also welcomed Christian diplomats and the other way round. Speaking of religion, having religious unity can stabilize your country drastically, so don't forget to convert the people of annexed regions to your state religion. This has been done historically in many different ways: By building churches, sending missionaries or passing laws that make, for example, the refusal to be baptized punishable by death.

There are many other diplomatic, military and covert actions; embargoes, spread rumors or fabricate claims on territories. Feel free to contact the crisis team with your ideas! Use your phantasy or better do some research, in order to find new ways of achieving your goals.



## The Delegations

The following pages are dedicated to the delegations that are represented in this crisis committee. The major part of the Study Guide consists of introductions to the different delegations, since it is challenging to represent a medieval ruler's interest.

The more of these introductions you read, the better you will understand the era the crisis takes place in, but pay special attention to your own delegation and read its text carefully. Moreover, it is crucial to read through the chapter about the "Global Players", since these are the delegations all of you are going to be dealing with, no matter who you are. Additionally, you should also peruse the chapters about the delegations mentioned in your text, even if they will not be directly represented in committee. If for example your delegation is an ally of delegation X, but the archenemy of Y, and your married to Z's daughter, you should probably also read the texts on X, Y and Z. Through the following content you will hopefully get a glimpse of the complicated political networks of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century.

There are three chapters in total, divided into several subchapters:

The first chapter is about what we would call Global Players today. This illustrious circle consists of the Frankish King Charlemagne, the key figure in our crisis, the Emperor in Constantinople, the Pope and the Caliph of Bagdad, head of most of the Muslims in the world at the time.

The second chapter, which we would suggest you read as well, deals with Italy. Our crisis begins after a game-changing war in Northern Italy; therefore, this peninsula is of utmost importance. The chapter introduces the old and the new King of the Lombards, several local Dukes and the Byzantine governor of Sicily.

In the next chapter, several monarchs whose territories can be found in Western Europe and who rule independently, despite the dominant position of Charlemagne, are listed. From the Emir of Córdoba and King Offa in the West, to Widukind in the East, six rulers were chosen to be present in the committee, providing other European voices.

The last chapter is about a phenomenon typical for the first Millennium: Khanates of equestrian Nomadic peoples from the Eastern steppes. Three of the Khans of History are represented in our crisis. Although their Empires did not usually survive very long, they were important in these days.

Please take note of the following: There might be repetition throughout the delegation descriptions. If something concerns two delegations it is mentioned in both texts. If something has already been mentioned in the introduction but is, nevertheless, of great importance to a delegate's position, it is mentioned again. Furthermore, as these chapters replace position papers, they are written in present tense, presuming it is the year 775, only in exceptional cases are events that will take place after 775 mentioned. In rare cases reality has already been slightly altered to add more tension to the crisis or avoid that you only represent a ruler for a few minutes. These changes are always explicitly mentioned and explained.

Finally, we wish you good luck and lots of fun with your research!

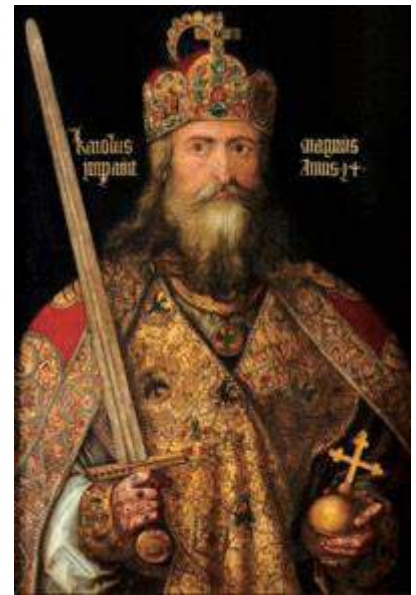
## The “Global Players”

Also in the middle Ages some powers and rulers could have been called *global players*, although their power was not *global*, since not the whole planet had yet entered the European horizon. In the time when our crisis takes place, there are actually three powers who claimed to be universal: The Roman Emperor, the Pope and the Caliph. As a fourth member of this illustrious circle of power, although he doesn't claim world domination, could be mentioned Charlemagne who rules great parts of Europe and whose power actually begins to go beyond the Emperor's in Constantinople...

### Charlemagne – King of the Franks

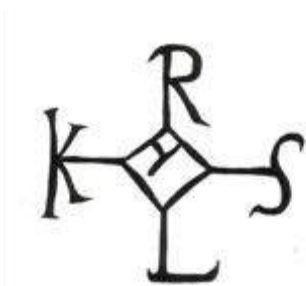
With his victory against Desiderius, Charlemagne has reached an incredible level of power. He now rules great parts of the European mainland and not many questions his righteousness anymore. With his intervention in Italy he has entered the stage in one of Europe's most complicated trouble spots at the time and definitely stepped into the field of vision of the Emperor in Constantinople. But who is this man of such great power?

Charlemagne was born into a wealthy and influential family of Frankish nobility. His father and grandfather used to be Mayor of the Palace at the court of the Merovingian Frankish kings. According to Einhard, Charlemagne's biographer, the influence and wealth of the Merovingian dynasty continuously diminished until their Mayors of Palace were technically ruling the kingdom. Shortly after Charlemagne's birth his father Pippin the Younger with support of pope Zachary, who said it is better to give the title of king to the one who is really in charge, removed king Childeric III. and became king himself.<sup>6</sup>



*Charlemagne as depicted by  
Albrecht Dürer*  
Illustration 4

Charlemagne's rivalry with his brother was already described in the introduction. But his rise to power was accompanied by various wars during which he managed to continue his father's policy of expansion. The first one of these, begun already by Pippin, and the only one before the Lombard war was the war in Aquitaine, which extended his empire to the south-west. Until his death Charlemagne will be engaged in different wars, sometimes various at a time. He'll fight against the Saxons, in Spain, in Bavaria, against the Slavs, against the Pannonian Avars and in Denmark and conquer Aquitaine, the Basque territories, the Pyrenean area, great parts of Italy, Saxony, Pannonia, Dacia, Istria, Liburnia and Dalmatia.<sup>7</sup>



*Charlemagne's monogram*  
Illustration 5

Because his biographer Einhard provides us with a detailed description of his physical appearance and his character, we also want to provide you with a quick overview about Charlemagne the man.

The Frankish king must have been an impressive appearance, he is seven feet tall in a time when most people just reached about 5 feet and was in good physical condition. He is said to have big eyes, a kind expression and a self-confident appearance. However he is also described as having a short neck, a round sticking out belly and an exceptionally long nose.<sup>8</sup> He enjoyed live and loved to swim in warm sources and eat, especially grilled meat.<sup>9</sup> Einhard describes his character as pious, very generous, extremely loyal (although his relationship of Desiderius seems to prove the opposite) and honest.<sup>10</sup> He adored his children and in fact never let go one of his daughters to marry someone, just to always have them next to himself.<sup>11</sup>

In his kingdom he promotes the arts and sciences and major scholars of the time live and work at his court, for example the Anglo-Saxon Alcuin of York who was extremely influential and a close advisor to the king. He also built a lot of churches, bridges and a war fleet.<sup>12</sup>

In this simulation, as well as in reality, Charlemagne's goal is it to extend his power, especially in Italy, without upsetting the Byzantine Emperor too much. Where he doesn't directly control an area, he has to ensure, that a ruler who is supportive towards him is in charge. Due to his tremendous power he doesn't have to be as cautious as other rulers in this situation, however it could be, that the Saxons, which are led by Widukind prove to be stronger than he initially believed. Charlemagne has just started a war against the pagan tribes of the Saxons in the East of his kingdom who have repeatedly caused troubles in the flat lands through which the Frankish Eastern border leads. The Saxons however couldn't be beaten that easily and an extremely long and costly war evolved, in fact the longest during Charlemagne's reign. Is it possible that the Saxons could play a role similar to the Bulgarians in the Black Sea region who force the Emperor to turn his attention to this area rather than to the Italian peninsula?



*Palatine Chapel in Aachen, where Charlemagne's throne is and where his remains will be buried*

Illustration 6

### **Leo IV. / Constantine VI. / Eirene of Athens – Roman Empire**

Constantinople, founded by St. Constantine, the first Christian Roman Emperor, the new Rome, at the very threshold of Europe and Asia, is the town where the almighty Emperor of the Roman Empire resides. The Western Roman Empire had collapsed long ago but Constantinople still upholds the tradition of the Roman Emperors like Gaius Julius Caesar, Augustus or Marcus Aurelius, although they also adopted Christianity by now and no longer worship the gods of the Roman pantheon. After Justinian's reconquest of Italy from the Germanic tribes, the Roman Empire again theoretically controls great parts of the Mediterranean. Nevertheless their Empire can't be compared to the Roman Empire in its heyday. The Levant, Northern Africa and the Iberian Peninsula have been lost to the Muslims and Germanic



*Coin depicting Leon IV. and his son Constantine VI.*

Illustration 7

peoples, or *barbarians*, as the Romans call them, control Europe north of the Alps and also part of Italy. Moreover the Roman rule over Italy is very fragile. Constantinople simply has no capacities to exert influence on far away Italy. Only Venice with its Byzantine culture and especially Sicily with its long Greek history have remained more or less under Constantinople's influence.

The Byzantine Emperor's number one priority isn't Italy anyway; he is too busy to defend his heartland against the Muslims to whom he had lost so much in the latest decades and against the Bulgarians, seminomadic equestrians in the region around the Black Sea. At the moment the Muslim expansion has come to an end but the Caliphate is still mighty and nobody knows for how long they remain saturated, moreover the Bulgarian's have recently gained strength since a new Khan ended a period of Interior feuds within the Bulgarian nobility.



*Interior view of the Hagia Sophia, the main church of Constantinople, which was turned into a Mosque*

Illustration 8

The result of the recent war in Northern Italy between the Franks and the Lombards has been an affront for Byzantium. Charlemagne is now officially in charge of Byzantine territories without being a vassal of the Emperor. His father Pippin who once also helped the Pope to repulse the Lombards had at least presented the conquered territories to the pope and then returned to his kingdom in the north. Although this had been unacceptable too, since he didn't give them back to the righteous owner, Byzantium, Charlemagne's kingdom of the Lombards is even worse. In addition Charlemagne's power and influence in Europe is constantly growing and begins to exceed the Emperor's who suddenly finds himself on the geographical outskirts of Christianity, an inconvenient position for a man who claims to be the worldly ruler of all Christianity per definition.

As if not enough, the Byzantine nobility, the army and church officials are divided, a veritable war is raging in Constantinople. On one side stand the Iconoclasts, who think that figurative depiction and holy images shall be destroyed. Maybe they were influenced by the Muslim culture, which Byzantium was forced to have a lot of intercourse with in the latest decades, where it is forbidden to depict Mohammed or to depict something figurative inside a Mosque. God and his creation can't be portrayed appropriately, a thought also common to Christians through the third Commandment: *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."* On the other side are the Iconodules who worship holy images and icons. The current emperor, who has just come to power in 775, is an iconodule, although his predecessors, his father and grandfather, maybe because of the oriental origin of their dynasty (they were from Syria), were iconoclasts. Great parts of the troops are in fact still iconoclasts.

Leo is married to Eirene of Athens, a woman that is said to have a huge influence on the Emperor's policy and decisions and to be a very strong personality. As it is tradition in Constantinople Leo will crown his son himself and make him his "co-emperor" during his lifetime. After an emperor's death there is usually no *interregnum* since the new emperor was already in charge alongside his father. Exceptionally we will give a little outlook to the future and write something about Leo's successors, since that is rather important in that case.

In 776 Leo will promote his son Constantine and crown him. Already in 780 Leo will die and Constantine VI. will take over. Constantine's reign will be troublesome years for Byzantium. Eirene will exert a lot of influence on her son as she did on her husband, but unlike his father Constantine is inconsistent and weak. He will be constantly torn between his iconodule mother and the iconoclast troops without having an own opinion. Moreover sycophants and various women will influence him. He will even throw out his wife and marry a lady of the court. Constantine will eventually ban Eirene from the court. Typically for the undecided emperor he will soon regret this decision and take his mother back to Constantinople. But



*Eirene, Empress of the  
Byzantine Empire*  
Illustration 9

Eirene's personality is a lot different than her son's: She will have had it with him, like many people in Constantinople. She'll dazzle her son and expel him. Nobody will help him. After Constantine will be expelled, in 797 Eirene will become the new Empress. These events will cause a lot of trouble in Europe. First of all, a female Empress is something never seen before and quite unimaginable, and secondly the European nobility will be shocked by the cruelty of dazzling and expelling her own son, especially because this was done by a woman.

But currently, in 775, Leo's reign is uncontested and the Domestic situation in Constantinople is, despite the quarrel between iconoclasts and iconodules and the Bulgarian threat, even relatively calm, at least compared to the following 25 years...

Byzantium's goals are to retain the upper hand on Italy and the Pope, defend its territory against Muslims and aggressive Khanates and make sure Charlemagne doesn't gain too much strength and endangers the Emperor's

position as head of Christianity and heir of the Roman Empire. There are in fact people who think that the Emperor doesn't even deserve his title anymore, because his power had declined so much. Or as the chronicle of the monastery of Lorsch will put it, *nomen* and *res*, title of Emperor and facts, don't correspond anymore. And in the middle Ages names aren't yet just smoke and mirrors.<sup>13</sup>

### **Pope Adrian I.**

The pope's role at the time is not as clearly defined, as it will be in the future. The successor of Saint Peter is constitutionally and juristically just a subject to the Emperor in Constantinople, the highest-ranking Bishop in the Byzantine Empire. But his power goes beyond this. His religious authority also makes his voice heard in Christian lands outside of the Empire. Especially the Anglo-Saxons, but also other political leaders like the Duke of

Bavaria are very true to the Holy See. The pope's goal is to get in charge of the highest jurisdiction within the church and of the definition of the true faith. These powers are in fact still in the hand of the Emperors of Byzantium, although the Emperors have factually stopped to impose their religious ideas on their pontifical subjects in Rome. Questions of what the true faith is are in fact still very important at the time. In Constantinople a veritable war is raging between the *Iconoclasts*, those who, like the Muslims, think that religious images and figurativeness shall be forbidden, and the *Iconodules* who worship holy images. Moreover, Christian Spanish bishops in the Christian and the Muslim part of Spain are teaching that Jesus was not the son of God but "only" a very faithful and compassionate man who was therefore adopted by God through his baptism in river Jordan. These



*Pope Adrian I. as depicted in Basilica San Paolo fuori le Mura*

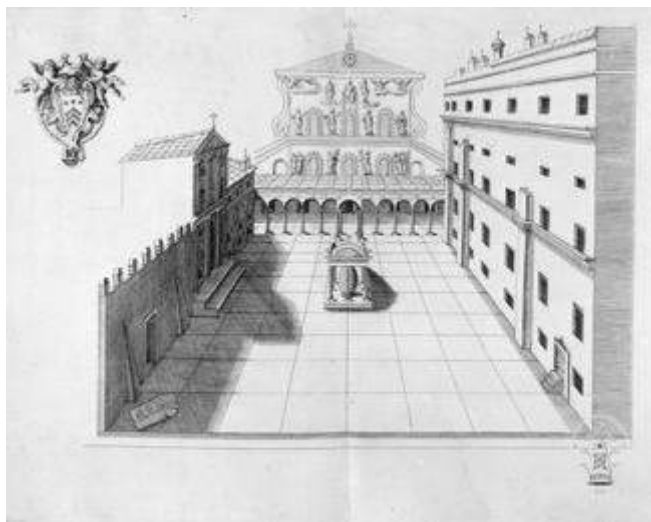
Illustration  
10

teachings are called *Adoptianism* and are not in accordance with the pope's ideas.

In addition, due to his religious authority the pope is technically also a political leader. Although Rome and the Papal state are part of the Byzantine Empire they are factually independent since the Byzantine influence over Italy continues to diminish. This is represented in the fact that the popes have ceased to date their documents in imperial years but started to date them with pontifical years. In the past, Rome was threatened by the Lombards various times, Desiderius even sieged the town, but they could not hope for imperial troops since Constantinople was busy fighting the Bulgarians. Therefore the pope is technically by himself.

In the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> a faked (It will only be found out in the 15<sup>th</sup> century that it was a fake) document called *Constitutum Constantini* appears which, is dated back to 317 and states that the holy Emperor Constantine had granted the Pope independence and a position equal to the one the Emperor has in the Eastern part of the Empire for the Western part. Through

this document the actual status quo is somehow codified and the pope's independence and worldly power are based on a document. Although no one knew it was fake, the *Constitutum* was always controversial.



*St. Peter's Basilica in the middle Ages*

Illustration 11

For the Roman and Byzantine eye peoples like the Lombards are Barbarians and Rome under Barbarian rule is simply not imaginable. The pope himself is too weak to defend himself, therefore he needs a new partner. In the past the Kings of the Franks have already



saved Rome more than once. Charlemagne's father Pippin himself heard the pope's call for help and intervened against the threatening Lombards. After having defeated them he presented the territories he conquered to the church. This upset Byzantium since for them it was Byzantine territory that the Lombards had stolen and therefore it would have been the only thing just to give it back to them. Therefore nobody in Rome actually even wanted Constantinople to intervene when the Lombards threatened Rome, since they were afraid, that they would lose the territories that were given to them by Pippin. Since 754 the popes call the Frankish kings *patricii Romanorum*, a traditional Roman courtesy title.

Pippin felt sincere love towards Saint Peter and therefore was always ready to help the pope. When recently Charlemagne intervened and defeated King Desiderius after he had attacked Rome, this happened because of other reasons.



*Constitutum Constantini, St. Constantine presents the pope with the Western part of his empire, depiction from the 13<sup>th</sup> century*

Illustration 12

Charlemagne was not driven by love for Saint Peter but by his opposition against Desiderius. In fact it would have been Charlemagne's deceased brother Carloman

who wanted to uphold Pippin's policy of loyalty towards the pope. The reason why Charlemagne attacked Desiderius was mainly the Lombard king's support for the sons of Carloman. After Carloman's death Charlemagne claimed to be king of all Franks, like his father used to be before he divided his kingdom between his two sons. Charlemagne neglected the claim to an inheritance of the deceased's children. Now with the Frankish king right north of his territory the pope needs his support more than ever and Charlemagne is the only power strong enough to secure the pope's position. However to convince Charlemagne of that is much more difficult, than it would have been to convince Carloman, or let alone Pippin.

Nevertheless, Pope Adrian is said to be a very strong personality and although Charlemagne doesn't share his father's commitment to the Vatican, he and Adrian have become personal friends - Adrian is the godfather of Charlemagne's son - and like each other besides politics.

But the Foreign policy problems are not Pope Adrian's only problem also family feuds within Rome have caused a lot of stir in Rome in recent years. When Adrian's predecessor Paul I. died, in Rome was taken over control by a man called Toto. Only with Lombard help the pontifical officials managed to reconquer Rome. When Hadrian was appointed Pope, he tried to politicize independently of the interests of the mighty families in Rome and promoted members of both parties in the conflict around Paul's death. The power vacuum that was created by the declining influence of Byzantium on Italy caused such domestic policy troubles in many major cities like Naples or Venice. Rome is relatively stable because the institution of papacy is still very respected. Whoever wants to get hold of Rome needs to have the pope on his side.

The pope is in a difficult situation: Byzantium, which was his partner for centuries is not strong enough to defend him, additionally their intervention is not even desired since they could reclaim their territories. Moreover, Byzantium does not accept the pope's universal religious authority and sometimes doesn't even invite him to Ecumenical Councils. The Pope's closest allies are north of the Alps. Stronger collaboration with Charlemagne seems unavoidable; Desiderius' fate has shown what happens to Italian rulers who dare to oppose the King of the Franks. Another reason why Adrian starts to distrust the Emperor is latter's support for Adalgis. The Pope fears that Adalgis might plan to attack Rome via his allies, the Dukes of Spoleto and Benevento. The pope now tries to convince Charlemagne to start a military campaign against these Dukes. But will Charlemagne, who recently started a difficult and important war against the Saxons, agree with that and attack the Duchies? And how far can the Pope go without upsetting Constantinople? Will Charlemagne, who controls the church in his realm, accept the pope's claim for absolute religious authority or will latter end up just as another *Reichsbischof*, yet another bishop in Charlemagne's kingdom?<sup>14</sup>



*Al-Mansūr's successor  
Hārūn ar-Rašīd as depicted  
in "One Thousand and One  
Nights"*

Illustration 13

### **Caliph Abu Dscha'far al-Mansur – Abbasid Empire**

The Caliphate is perhaps really the most powerful political unit in the world at the time. Nevertheless Bagdad lays at the very horizon of the European rulers and they are not really that much involved in European politics at that time yet. Nevertheless diplomatic relations exist and Charlemagne's and other rulers' envoys and ambassadors are present at the court of Abū Dscha'far al-Mansūr and his successors. Caliph Hārūn ar-Rašīd, or Caliph *Aaron* as Einhard calls him, al-Mansūr's successor, will even present Charlemagne with a living elephant called *Abul Abbas* in 801.

The Caliph's power claims to be universal both religiously and politically. His official title is *chalīfat Allāh*, deputy of God. The first Caliph after the prophets dead in 632, Abu Bakr, used to call himself *chalīfat rasūl Allāh*, successor of God's envoy, but already the third Caliph took over the stronger title of *chalīfat Allāh*. The currently ruling dynasty, the Abbasids, isn't yet in charge of the Muslim world since a long time. They took over power in 756 when they overthrew the ruling Omayyad dynasty who had been Caliph since Mohammed's death.

Now the Abbasid Caliphate is both culturally and economically extremely flourishing. Bagdad is a scientific hub at the time, the influence of law scholars is growing and theology is rationalistic and cultivates a tradition of debating.

Since Mohammed's death, the Arabs have conquered a huge territory. In 632 the Muslims settled in an area that corresponds more or less to later Saudi-Arabia, Oman and Yemen, now they've conquered Persia, the Levant, parts of Central Asia, North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula. Especially the Byzantine Empire has lost important territories and battles against the Caliphs in the past. Especially the loss of Jerusalem was a hard lesson to the Emperors. Since more or less 20 years the Islamic expansion has come to an end and the Caliph is no longer an imminent threat.

Moreover, since 756 the Caliphate is divided, since an offspring of the Omayyad dynasty managed to take over the Caliph's territories in Spain and declared the independence of his *Emirate of Córdoba*. The biggest diplomatic interest of Christian rulers concerning the Caliph, is to guarantee access to Jerusalem for their pilgrims and to maintain their monasteries in the holy land.<sup>15</sup>



*Depiction of an elephant from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, The Caliphate presented Charlemagne with an elephant as a gift*

Illustration 14

### Regional Powers in Italy:

Italy is the very focal point of this crisis. Once the heartland of the Roman Empire the peninsula split up in small political units after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. After Germanic peoples had gained control of the former Western Roman Empire it was the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I. who managed to conquer Italy and restore great parts of the ancient united Roman Empire in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Theoretically, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, whole Italy is still under the rule of Constantinople but the Emperor is constantly losing influence. Only Sicily really remained under his control, the rest of Italy is ruled by dukes, kings and other rulers who act independently and don't care about the Emperor in far away Constantinople. With his conquest and occupation of the Kingdom of the Lombards also Charlemagne, the most powerful ruler in Western Europe, has entered the stage and provoked the wrath of Byzantium. Every ruler in Italy - including the pope - has to choose its side or to navigate between the two superpowers.<sup>16</sup>

### Adalgis – King of the Lombards

The Lombards were a Germanic people who established a kingdom in Northern Italy after the fall of the Roman Empire. But the kingdom cannot be called Germanic. When the Lombards



*Adalgis, from the 11<sup>th</sup> century Codex legum Langobardorum*

Illustration 15

occupied the territory and founded their kingdom they represented only 5-8% of the population and the local Roman elite and the occupying Germanic elite merged.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless the Lombard elite kept their pagan Germanic faith. Rome didn't appreciate these invaders and started to fight them in the sixth century. During the last 200 years of conflict and war between Rome and the Lombards, latter became more and more Roman. They converted to Christianity and adopted Roman styles in art and architecture. What started out as a war between two different worlds, the Barbarian and the Roman, had since become a quarrel between two highly cultural and developed states about territories. As we already know, this conflict came to an end when Charlemagne defeated the Lombard king Desiderius in 774.

Adalgis is the son of disempowered Lombard king Desiderius and heir to the Lombard throne. After the fall of Pavia, the Lombard capital, the prince fled to Constantinople where the Emperors granted him asylum. Adalgis still claims to be the righteous king of the Lombards, this claim is supported by Byzantium whose ally the prince happens to be. Moreover Adalgis, like his father, who finds himself in detention in the Frankish Kingdom, thinks that Charlemagne isn't the true king of the whole Frankish Kingdom, since he believes that the deceased King Carloman's sons deserved to be ruling over at least the territory once governed by their father. Are Carloman's sons the righteous heirs to their fathers throne? Who is the righteous king of the Lombards? Who will rule in Italy? All this has yet to be decided. Sure it is not only a conflict between Adalgis and Charlemagne's clan, but between Charlemagne and the Roman Emperors in Constantinople – and in-between the pope who searches to strengthen his position.

### Pippin – King of the Lombards

Adalgis' rival and current ruler of the Kingdom of the Lombards is Pippin. Pippin, who was actually called Carloman, is the son of Charlemagne and his third (or second) wife Hildegard. Charlemagne married Hildegard after having expelled his former wife Desiderata who was a daughter of king Desiderius of the Lombards. When Charlemagne subjugated the Lombard kingdom, the first culturally highly developed state he ever conquered, he declared his second son king of the Lombards (Technically he declared himself king of the Lombards and Pippin was only crowned in 781, but in order to let a delegate represent the Kingdom of the Lombards, let's assume he became king 7 years earlier). As already mentioned, the heir to the throne, Adalgis, son of Desiderius, does not agree with that at all and tries to get back his kingdom, eventually with Byzantine help.

Pippin surely can count on his mighty father's support. Pippin is somehow also Charlemagne's military arm in the region. If a military operation is not important enough to send own troops into the region Pippin can handle it.

### Aregis II. – Duke of Benevento

More less in the region of later Campania, as a buffer between still Byzantine Southern Italy and the Papal State lays the duchy of Benevento. In the third quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Aregis II. came to power in Benevento. In this time both the Lombard and the Byzantine influence on the region retreated. This created a power vacuum, which was filled by Aregis' duchy, which gained more and more strength. Originally an ally of king Desiderius (he is married to one of Desiderius' daughters), Aregis grew more and more independent. This is a very common phenomenon in Italy's duchies and earldoms those days since

Constantinople's power and influence continued to decline in Italy. Aregis is factually not subordinate to anyone, he doesn't belong to Charlemagne's empire, but neither Constantinople has power over him. Many such rulers exist in Italy but no one of them is as powerful as Aregis. The duke of Benevento is the only one who is able to act truly independent of the interests of the rulers in Rome, Aachen and Constantinople and is a regional power. Whoever wants to truly rule Italy has to have Aregis on his side or eliminate him.



*Duke Aregis of Benevento*  
Illustration 16



*Doge Maurizio Galbaio*  
Illustration 17

### Maurizio Galbaio – Doge of Venice

When Germanic peoples invaded Italy in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century, many refugees from Northern Italy settled on islands in the Venetian Lagoon, those settlements eventually grew and the city of Venice was founded. Although the mainland was occupied by Lombards, Goths or Franks, Venice remained culturally very Roman and was one of the last remaining Byzantine outstations in mainland Italy when Justinian reconquered peninsula. Until 751, when the Lombards conquered Ravenna, which ended Byzantium's



rule over Italy, Venice was dominated by the Byzantine Empire. In the late 8<sup>th</sup> century Venice still formally belongs, like the rest of Italy, to the Emperor's rule, but enjoys great independence. Culturally they are in fact still very Byzantine.

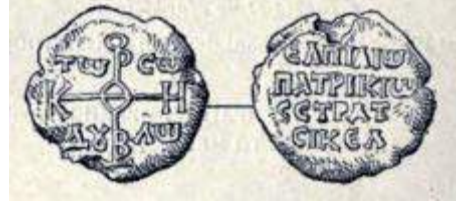
Since the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century Venice is a Republic, which is ruled by an elected *Doge*.

The current Doge Maurizio Galbaio determined the course for more independence for Venice, similar to Aregis in Southern Italy. Nevertheless, Galbaio is very Byzantium-friendly. However, 12 powerful families, the so-called apostolic families, who appoint the Doges and pay attention, that no other family gains too much power or influence, rule Venice. Many of these families in fact favour the King of the Franks to their old sovereign in Constantinople.

Actually the situation in the region is very unclear and it's not determined whether Venice and Istria, which geographically lay on the border of Byzantium and the kingdom of the Franks, belong to the bully pulpit of the Emperor or Charlemagne. Venice tries to find its place between the two global players and constantly switches alliances between them. Will their plan sum up and will they tip the scales and hold the balance of power, or will they go too far and end up alone with two superpowers turned against them?

### Elpidius – Strategos of Sicily

Although the Byzantine Empire lost more and more influence in Italy Sicily with its long Greek heritage remained a Byzantine stronghold. The *Theme of Sicily* was a province of the Roman Empire and ruled by a so-called *Strategos*, a deputy on the Emperor in Constantinople. As such the Strategos represents Byzantium's interests in Italy. Although merely a subject of the Emperor the Strategos not always agreed with his/her policy and pursued his own goals sometimes. The current Strategos Elpidius for example usurped in 781. Elpidius wants to uphold the reign of Constantinople in Italy at any price and is not willing to make any concessions to the King of the Franks who is in charge of great parts of Italy. The title of the Emperor of the Roman Empire is absolutely indivisible and universal to him.



*Seal of Elpidius*

Illustration 18

## Regional Powers in Europe:

Although Charlemagne controlled great parts of Western Europe, this part of the world not only consisted of a disputed Italy and an all-powerful Frankish Kingdom. Beneath Charlemagne or formally under his rule many kingdoms, duchies and other political unities flourished. Some of them will be represented in our crisis.<sup>18</sup>

### Tassilo III. – Duke of Bavaria

The Duchy of Bavaria exists since the 6<sup>th</sup> century more or less in the area of modern day Bavaria and Tyrol. It has ever since been a part of the kingdom of the Franks. When the Merovingian dynasty used to be king, the Bavarian dukes at their seat in Regensburg, like all the other dukes in the kingdom, were pretty independent.

This state continued during the reign of king Pippin and especially the following time when the kingdom was divided between Charlemagne and Carloman. Then the whole kingdom was split in two parts and each one given to one of the king's sons, Bavaria however wasn't included and neither Charlemagne nor Carloman were ruling the duchy. When the kingdom gained strength in the era of the Charlemagne, this period of relative independence ended. Tassilo, the current duke, is a cousin of Charlemagne.



*Duke Tassilo III.*

Illustration 19

Nevertheless, the relationship between the two rulers is not too good. Tassilo benefit from the separation of the kingdom. Moreover, he is married to a daughter of the former Lombard king Desiderius. Some people think that the duke's wife wants to take revenge for her father and convince her husband to form an alliance with the Awares against his cousin. This would be dangerous for the duke who is in fact a subject to the powerful king of the Franks. If Tassilo chooses independence and revenge for Desiderius and risks that his duchy will be split up into earldoms, or allegiance to the king and limited power is yet to be decided. One thing is sure: Tassilo still has the support of the pope. The ties between Rome and Regensburg are old and strong. But also the pope might change his opinion.

### Offa – King of Mercia



*King Offa of Mercia*

Illustration 20

England is not united yet at the time of the crisis but split into different little kingdoms. One of the most powerful is the kingdom of Mercia ruled by Offa. Offa used to be an ally of Charlemagne and in letters he called him his brother. Nevertheless, their relation became more difficult although they never became enemies. Also Offa had a difficult relationship with the pope. As Mercia gained strength and became a regional power in England he wants the pope to promote the bishop of Litchfield to an archbishop. The diocese of Litchfield lays within Mercia and an archdiocese in his kingdom would increase Offa's power in the region significantly. Up to now all English dioceses belong either to the Archdiocese of Canterbury or the Archdiocese of York. Pope Hadrian nevertheless seems not to dislike the idea of an Archdiocese in Litchfield. However, Offa's primary goal is

to become the king of England and to gain control over the other kingdoms on the island. Beneath the other kingdoms one of his problem were the Welsh, a Celtic people living in the West of the island towards which he remained defensive. He even built a wall called *Offa's dyke* around their territory.

### **Æthelberht – King of East Anglia**

One of Offa's rivals in England is Æthelberht (or Æpelbryht/Æðelbrihte) who is the king of a local kingdom in Eastern England. In fact little is known about Æthelberht's life despite the fact that he was later declared a saint. Nevertheless, he is included in this crisis for Offa to have an enemy next to him with which one can collaborate to harm Offa. East Anglia was one of seven bigger and longer-lasting kingdoms during a period called the heptarchy. England was divided into little kingdoms, the most important of them being Essex, Sussex, Wessex, Kent, East Anglia, Mercia and Northumbria. These kingdoms emerged when the Roman legions left the island and Germanic peoples like Saxons, Angles and Jutes, later called Anglo-Saxons colonized the island which was afore inhabited by Celtic tribes. East Anglia was already christianized in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. Æthelberht has no big influence on world politics in the 8<sup>th</sup> century nevertheless he can provide his opinion and find allies.



*Helmet of an Anglo-Saxon Prince*  
Illustration 21

### **Silo – King of Asturias**



*18<sup>th</sup> century illustration of King Silo of Asturias*  
Illustration 22

The kingdom of Asturias was the first Christian kingdom erected in Spain after the Muslim conquest of Spain. In 711 the Muslims completed their conquest of Spain and now ruled the whole peninsula. The local Christian elites came to an arrangement with the Muslim rulers. A local noblemen called Pelagius started the Christian resistance after a personal quarrel with the regional Muslim governor. After some time the Christians conquered more and more territory and eventually the Kingdom of Asturias was founded in Northern Spain. In the late 8<sup>th</sup> century Asturias and the Muslim Emirate of Córdoba coexist peacefully. In 774 king Silo came to power in Cangas de Onís, the Asturian capital. It's Silo's goal to uphold peace with the neighbouring Emirate, also because his mother comes from the Muslim territory. The relationship between Cangas de Onís and Aachen are good. According to Einhard Silo's successor Alfonso II. will call himself a vassal of Charlemagne, although he is formally an independent king.

### **Abd al-Rahman I. – Emir of Córdoba**

As already mentioned, the Muslims had completely conquered the Iberian Peninsula in 711. But back then the Muslim territories in Spain still belonged to the Caliphate and were under the rule of the Umayyads in Damascus. In 756 the Umayyads were overthrown by the





*Emir Abd al-Rahman I.*  
Illustration 23

Abbasids and the capital was transferred to Bagdad. The Umayyad nobility was massacred. The former Umayyad Caliph's grandson Abd al-Rahman managed to flee to the Maghreb and join the Berber tribe of his mother. With support of the Berbers he went to Spain and defeated the Caliph's governor Yusuf al-Fihri. He declared his independence of the Caliphate and founded the independent Emirate of Córdoba. Under Abd al-Rahman's rule Spain became increasingly more Arabic.

The clan of the Fihri will eventually become Charlemagne's allies. Therefore, Charlemagne and the Emir aren't the best friends. Nevertheless, the archenemy of Abd al-Rahman is the hated Caliph in Bagdad.

When he took over the Emirate the absolute Muslim domination of the Iberian Peninsula had already ended, at Spain's northern Shores an independent Christian kingdom, the Kingdom of Asturias had been founded. But the Emirate and the kingdom came to peaceful coexistence and Abd al-Rahman had no ambitions to conquer Asturias, he just wants to defend his Emirate from eventual Christian expansion. However, King Silo who is in charge of the northern kingdom has no ambitions to expand either.

### **Widukind – Leader of the Saxons**

In 772 Charlemagne destroyed the Irminsul, a holy pillar, one of the most important shrines of Saxon paganism. This incident started the Saxon Wars, Charlemagne's longest military campaign. The Saxons, a people (it is not sure if they really were a people or just a union of different military leaders, since they didn't call themselves Saxons, a word which stems from the Latin word *Sax* for short sword.) settling East of Charlemagne's territories, have ever since caused problems since the borders between the two territories run through flat land which led to constant arson, bloodshed and robbery on both sides. Charlemagne's goal is to christianize the Saxons and make the feudal lord of the Saxon leaders. They could serve as a buffer between the Kingdom of the Franks and the Slavic and Turkic peoples settling in the East of Europe. The war against the Saxons proved to be more difficult than expected and never seemed to end.

The leader of the Saxons is called Widukind. Widukind is not actually a king but just a military leader. He participated in the Saxon Wars from the beginning on. Although Charlemagne's troops are by far strong enough to fight different wars at once the Saxon Wars constantly contains a part of his troops. Whoever strengthens the Saxons weakens Charlemagne.



*20<sup>th</sup> century monument of  
Widukind*  
Illustration 24

## The Khanates:

In the first Millennium Europe was haunted by various invasions of Turcic steppes peoples. Their rulers were often called *Khan* or *Khagan* a Mongolian title, meaning leader or ruler. They started out as huge armies coming from the East but they were polyethnic and everyone was able to join them. When the Khanate of the Huns was facing the Roman empire in the battle of the Catalaunian Plains in 451 the two armies weren't so much different from each other as one might think. There were Roman, Frank, Gothic and Burgundian warriors fighting on both sides. Also it was possible for everyone to have a prestigious career in a Khanate, Orestes the father of the last West Roman Emperor Romulus Augustulus was a high official in Attila's (Khan of the Huns) court.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless the states erected by the peoples didn't last long in most cases. The invaders consisted mainly of a huge army, which was able to expand its territory quickly but not to hold it. Nevertheless, there were some exceptions who became local powers in Eastern Europe.<sup>20</sup>

### Khan Kardam – Ruler of Bulgaria



*9<sup>th</sup> century Bulgarian warriors as depicted in an 11<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine chronicle*

Illustration 25

The Bulgarians and their Ruler Khan Kardam are one of the biggest sorrows of the Emperors in Constantinople at that time. The main reason why the Emperors didn't intervene in the West although they constantly lost their power in Italy, a region, which they still claimed to rule but practically had lost control of, was the Bulgarian expansion who threatened the Empire's heartland in today's Greece and Turkey. The protection of this region was Byzantium's top priority and retained great parts of its army. The Bulgarians recently even gained strength. Khan Kardam's recent seizure of power ended a period when the Bulgarian Khanate was weakened by frequent changes of government and weak rulers (Technically this period is not over in 775 since Kardam comes to power in 777, but for the sake of more tension in our crisis, let's assume once again that he became Khan 2 years earlier). As long as the Bulgarians continue to threaten Constantinople the Emperor cannot risk a hot conflict in Italy and needs to solve eventual problems as quick as possible. This makes this people and Khan Kardam extremely important in geopolitical issues not only in the region but for all parties involved. But who are these people who settle at the shores of the Black Sea? Originally a seminomadic Turcic people but like the other nomadic equestrian invaders mentioned above they incorporated the local peoples and their culture is comparable to the Huns or other Khanates.

## Khan of the Pannonian Awares



*“Sieg Karls des Grossen über die Awaren bei Regensburg” by Albrecht Altdorfer*

Illustration  
26

Another similar power in the region are the Awares. The Awares are no people but like abovementioned a conglomerate of people of different ethnic groups where the term Aware is not the name of an ethnos but something like a title.<sup>21</sup> The Awares are pagans. The sphere of influence of the Awares is in later Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and parts of Austria and Poland, their heartland was the former Roman province of Pannonia. In the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century, especially under Khan Bayan their power reached its climax and even the Frankish kingdom and Byzantium had to pay tribute to them. Their power declined in the following century but they're still an important power. The fall of Pavia and the detention of Desiderius meant for them the loss of their most important ally. They have a good relationship with the Duchy of Bavaria. The Aware nobility is rumoured to be incredibly rich of gold.

## Khagan Bek Obadiah - Ruler of the Khazars

Another Khanate in the region was the one of the Khazars. Like other Khanates or peoples at the time, the Khazars were actually polyethnic and multiconfessional.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless the elite of the Khazarian Khanate converted to Judaism in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. The Khazars lived seminomadic and played an important role in Eastern European trade in the centuries of our crisis. The Khazars are allies of the Byzantine Empire, although during the last century there had been some troubles between the two empires on the peninsula of Crimea. Impressed by the Khazars' victory against the Arabs in Ardabil in 730 Emperor Leo III. even married his son Constantine to the Khazarian princess Tzitzak. Leo IV., the currently ruling Emperor, is Tzitzak's and Constantine's son and therefore called *Leo the Khazar*. Nevertheless, the Khazars later also had good relations to the Caliphate. All this makes the Khazars a very important regional power in the Black Sea area.

We don't know for sure who the leader of the Khazars was at the time, but probably it was Obadiah. Obadiah was the successor of Bulan, which is one of the most famous Khazarian rulers. The reason why he is famous, is that he is said to have converted the Khazars to Judaism. The legend goes, that Bulan wanted to find a new religion for the Khazars, therefore he invited religious authorities from all three major Abrahamic faiths and after this meeting chose Judaism.



*Gold coin from the treasure of Nagyszentmiklós presumably showing a Khazarian warrior*

Illustration 27



## Historical Geography

Unfortunately, we didn't find any map showing Europe exactly in 775 and Europe's borders were constantly changing and not exactly defined those days. The following two maps should provide you with the necessary information (who borders on who etc.) and give you an idea of Europe in the 770s. Unfortunately, the Kingdom of the Lombards, which is kind of important, isn't marked in any of the maps. It lays in Northern Italy between Rome and the Frankish Kingdom.

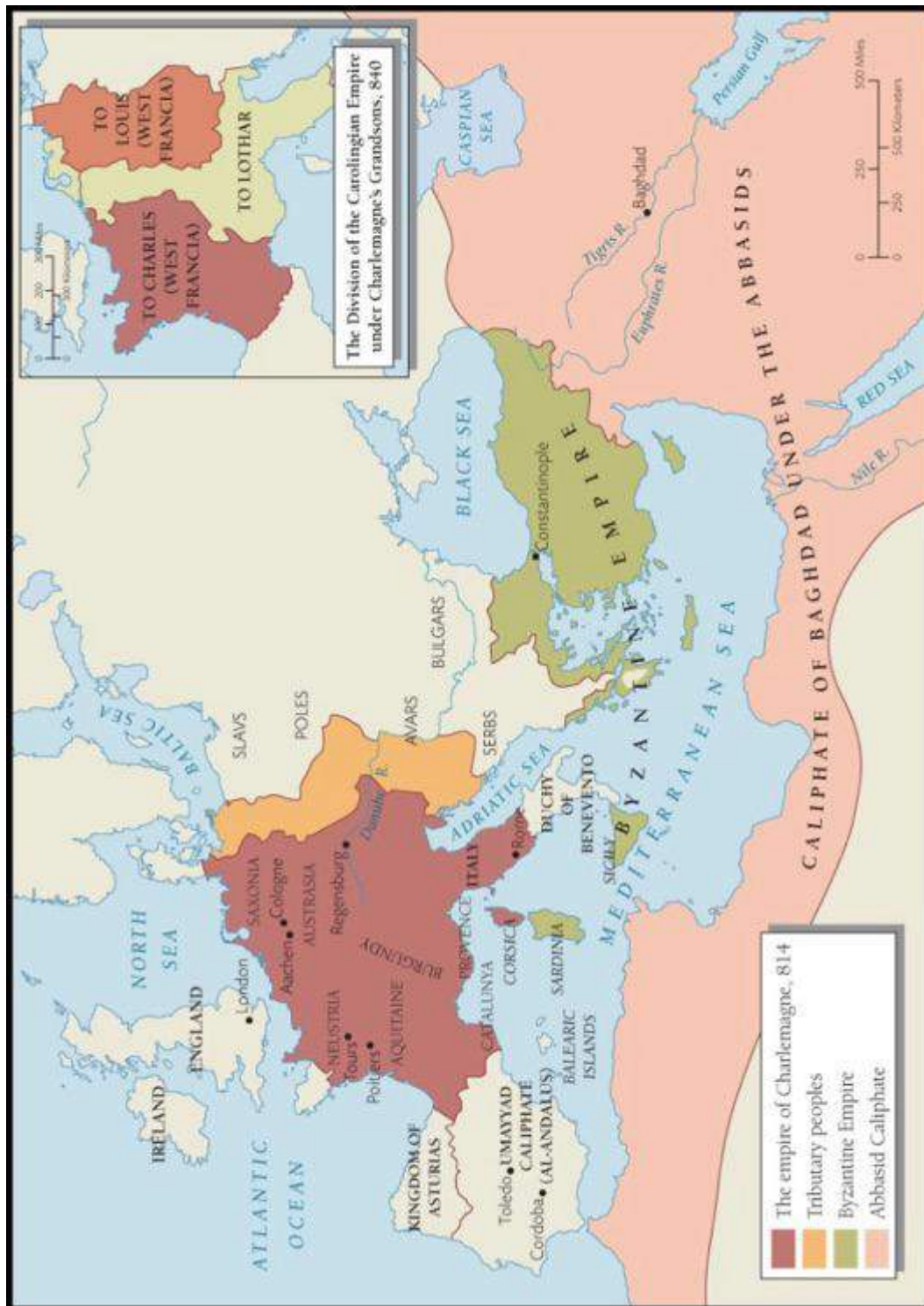


Illustration 28



Illustration 29



## Appendix to the ZuMUN Rules of Procedure<sup>23</sup>

Specific Rules applicable to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century Crisis Session

- 1) Delegates represent a King, Khan, Duke, Pope or Emperor directly.
  - a) Delegates have total power over the decisions of their respective kingdoms etc. This applies especially to declaring war or similar offensive actions. The Crisis Team represents Charlemagne and all players not present in committee.
  - b) Delegates may communicate with the Crisis Team to request certain actions, via the communication platform. The Crisis Team shall subsequently communicate back to the delegates with updates or decisions on the requested actions.
  - c) The Crisis Team reserves the right to take actions (representing any player not present in committee) which may impact present delegations without their prior consent or knowledge
- 2) As the crisis progresses, updates on the current situation will be presented to the committee by the chair or members of the Crisis Team.
  - a) Some news may only be made available to specific delegates through the communication platform. Those delegates may then choose how to treat this information.
- 3) The Crisis Session will work towards „resolutions“, statements by Monarchs or any other form of suitable communication.
- 4) The Rules of Procedure, including this extension, may be adjusted by the chairs of the Historical Crisis Committee with prior notification of the delegates.
- 5) Although Latin or Greek were the *lingua franca* at the time, the Session will be held in English. English language did not yet exist at the time, since the British Isles were still inhabited by the Germanic tribes of Angles and Saxons and not yet conquered by the Norman King William in 1066. They were speaking Anglo-Saxon or Old English (*Ænglisc*), which was different from modern day English, which is itself a result of the merging of Old English and the French language of the Conquerors.



## Further Reading

The study-guide is in most parts based on the following books. All unreferenced quotations are taken from these sources. In these books you'll find additional information about your people or ruler. If you got time to read one of them, it's really worth doing so. We just mentioned books that provide you with overall insight on the era and the geopolitical situation and not books (in case you do not represent Charlemagne) that cover a certain state. Nevertheless, we encourage you to read further specifically about your state, especially if you, for example represent Byzantium, a state that is highly important in our crisis, highly interesting but tends to be neglected a little in history classes in Grammar school outside of Greece.

### **Peter Classen - Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum und Byzanz. Die Begründung des Karolingischen Kaisertums**

This is the one book you have to read if you really want to shine during this crisis. You may not find the time to read through it (although it's only about 100 pages), but you could for example just take a quick look at the chapters that concern your "country". Classen re-examines the whole course of events between Charlemagne's coronation as king of the Franks and his death. He pays special attention to the difficult relationship between pope, emperor and Charlemagne. Reading this book is like reading the New York Times of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The book is classical political history and covers all geopolitical issues of the time.

Classen, Peter: Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum und Byzanz. Die Begründung des karolingischen Kaisertums, hrsg. von Horst Fuhrmann [et al.] nach dem Handexemplar des Verfassers, Sigmaringen 1988 (2. Auflage) (Beiträge zur Geschichte und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters 9).

### **Einhard - Vita Karoli Magni**

Although not always perfectly reliable, this biography, written by the scholar Einhard, is the most famous source about the life of Charlemagne or *Karolus Magnus*. The reason why the text which nowadays fits into an 40 pages Reclam-booklet is so important is, that Einhard is the only biographer of Charlemagne who personally knew the king. Einhard lived at the royal court and was one of Charlemagne's teachers. As he recounts the king's life he not only talks about Frankish affairs but also about European politics, especially a lot about the wars against the Saxons and the Pannonian Avars, but also about Charlemagne's diplomatic relationships all over from the British Isles to Bagdad.

Einhard: Vita Karoli Magni. Das Leben Karls des Grossen, lateinisch-deutsche Ausgabe, Stuttgart 2014.

### **Patrick J. Geary - The Myth of Nations, The Medieval Origins of Europe**

Or in German translation: *Europäische Völker im Frühen Mittelalter. Zur Legende vom Werden der Nationen*. This book is about the European Migration period and its perception in later times. The Migration period, or Völkerwanderung (the German term is sometimes used in English), precedes the period in which our crisis takes place; therefore, the book has no direct connection to our topic. Nevertheless, it helps us understand how people in those days



were thinking about citizenship, nationality or ethnicity, which was in fact radically different from how we think about it now. The book is really well written and worth reading anyways since it changes the way one thinks about nationality and ethnicity and questions principles that seem natural to most people. The theories of Patrick J. Geary are still disputed and not every historian agrees with his views. Especially nationalist politicians in Europe who sometimes derive political claims from incidents in the middle Ages or during the Migration period disagree with Geary's book who states that today's peoples have nothing in common with medieval peoples although they might share a name. However, we chose this book as a basis of this study guide since it represents the opinion of most historians and is an official textbook at the University of Zurich.

Geary, Patrick J.: *The Myth of Nations. The Medieval Origins of Europe*, Princeton 2002.

### **Almut Höfert – Kaisertum und Kalifat. Der imperiale Monotheismus im Früh- und Hochmittelalter**

One of the most important subjects in this crisis is the dealing of the "international community" with a ruler that claims his power to be universal and God-given, or rather, if more than one ruler does so. Both, the institutions of the Roman empire(s) and the Caliphate, claim to be the superior ruler in the world and both derive this power from a direct commission by their monotheistic God. Despite these similarities the two institutions have not been compared a lot by science.

Almut Höfert, a professor of history at University of Zurich who studied both history and Islamic studies, last August published a book in which she fills this gap. For a long time Charlemagne has been seen as something radically new and different from antiquity, an early father of a unified Europe and by some people even a forefather of the European Union. Höfert offers a different perspective. For her Charlemagne's reign has to be seen in the tradition of late antiquity. She emphasizes that despite the differences between the Caliphate and the two empires, all three were based on the same concept of Imperial Monotheism of late antiquity. Moreover, Many authors have supported the idea of a Western tradition of separation between politics and religion on one side and the Oriental unity of church and state on the other, Höfert in her book challenges this view and proposes an alternative.

This book is worth reading especially for those delegates who represent either the Caliphate, the Byzantine Emperor or of course Charlemagne. However, it may offer interesting insights for every delegate since Höfert also writes about the applicability of our modern concept of religion to those times.

Höfert, Almut: *Kaisertum und Kalifat. Der imperiale Monotheismus im Früh- und Hochmittelalter*, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2015 (Globalgeschichte 22).





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Einhard: Vita Karoli Magni. Das Leben Karls des Grossen, lateinisch-deutsche Ausgabe, Stuttgart 2014.

Geary, Patrick J.: The Myth of Nations. The Medieval Origins of Europe, Princeton 2002.



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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> This paragraph is based on the theories of Patrick J. Geary and his book *The Myth of Nations, the Medieval Origins of Europe* other historians may have different opinions.

<sup>2</sup> This paragraph is based on the book *The Myth of Nations, the Medieval Origins of Europe* by Patrick J. Geary.

<sup>3</sup> This paragraph is based on the book *Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum und Byzanz, die Begründung des karolingischen Kaisertums* by Peter Classen.

<sup>4</sup> This chapter is based on the book *Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum und Byzanz, die Begründung des karolingischen Kaisertums* by Peter Classen.

<sup>5</sup> This chapter is based on the book *Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum und Byzanz, die Begründung des karolingischen Kaisertums* by Peter Classen.

<sup>6</sup> This paragraph is based on the book *Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum und Byzanz, die Begründung des karolingischen Kaisertums* by Peter Classen, as well as on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Charlemagne's biography *Vita Karoli Magni* by Einhard.

<sup>7</sup> This paragraph is based on chapters 5 to 15 of Charlemagne's biography *Vita Karoli Magni* by Einhard.

<sup>8</sup> This paragraph is based on the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Charlemagne's biography *Vita Karoli Magni* by Einhard.

<sup>9</sup> This paragraph is based on the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Charlemagne's biography *Vita Karoli Magni* by Einhard.

<sup>10</sup> This paragraph is based on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> chapter of Charlemagne's biography *Vita Karoli Magni* by Einhard.

<sup>11</sup> This paragraph is based on the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of Charlemagne's biography *Vita Karoli Magni* by Einhard.

<sup>12</sup> This paragraph is based on the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of Charlemagne's biography *Vita Karoli Magni* by Einhard.

<sup>13</sup> This chapter is largely based on the book *Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum und Byzanz, die Begründung des karolingischen Kaisertums* by Peter Classen.

<sup>14</sup> This chapter is largely based on the book *Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum und Byzanz, die Begründung des karolingischen Kaisertums* by Peter Classen.

<sup>15</sup> This chapter is largely based on the book *Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum und Byzanz, die Begründung des karolingischen Kaisertums* by Peter Classen.



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<sup>16</sup> If not indicated differently the chapters in this part of the study-guide are largely based on the book *Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum und Byzanz, die Begründung des karolingischen Kaisertums* by Peter Classen.

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<sup>22</sup> This paragraph is based on the theories of Patrick J. Geary and his book *The Myth of Nations, the Medieval Origins of Europe* other historians may have different opinions.

<sup>23</sup> The *appendix to the ZuMUN rules of procedure* is based on the *appendix to the ZuMUN rules of procedure* of 2015 ZuMUN's Historical Security Council on the Cuban Revolution.