



# **Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict under Louis the German, 817-876 (Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval Past)**

*Eric J. Goldberg*

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*Struggle for Empire* explores the contest for kingdoms and power among Charlemagne's descendants that shaped the formation of Europe. It examines this pivotal era through the reign of Charlemagne's grandson, Louis the German (826–876), one of the longest-ruling Carolingian kings. Eric J. Goldberg's book brings the enigmatic Louis to life and makes a vital contribution to recent reevaluations of the late Carolingian age.

In the Treaty of Verdun of 843, Louis inherited the eastern territories of the Carolingian empire, thereby laying the foundations for an east Frankish kingdom. But, as Goldberg emphasizes, Louis was never satisfied with his realm beyond the Rhine. Louis was a skilled and cultured ruler who modeled himself on Charlemagne, and he aspired to rebuild his grandfather's empire. This ambition to reunite Europe brought Louis into repeated conflict with other rulers: Carolingian kings, Byzantine emperors, Bulgar khans, Roman popes, and Slavic warlords. While Louis ultimately failed to reunify the empire, his fifty-year reign produced a period of remarkable political consolidation and cultural creativity in central Europe.

By highlighting the ways in which dynastic rivalries, aristocratic rebellions, diplomacy, and warfare shaped Louis's reign, *Struggle for Empire* uncovers the dynamism and innovation of ninth-century kingship. To trace Louis's evolving policies, Goldberg moves beyond the evidence traditionally used to study his reign—the *Annals of Fulda*—and exploits the visual arts, liturgy, archeology, and especially charters. The result is a remarkably comprehensive and colorful picture of Carolingian kingship in action.

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