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# THE VON SICKINGEN AND THE GERMAN PRINCES

# 1262-1523

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## Abstract

The von Sickingen were one of many families of the lower nobility residing in southwestern Germany during the late middle ages. The Sickingen name is best known for the dramatic career of Franz von Sickingen during the earliest stage of the Reformation. This dissertation presents a history of the von Sickingen from their first appearance toward the end of the thirteenth century as a case study of the political role of the late medieval nobility and concludes with an assessment of Franz's career.

Proceeding from the political position of the lower nobility in the early modern period, scholars have been led to postulate a long decline, setting in with the collapse of Hohenstaufen power in the thirteenth century and continuing into the modern period, as the class failed to adjust to new political, economic, and social realities. This assessment of

the lower nobility, however, is not accurate for the late medieval period in southwestern Germany. Through an analysis of the various types of ties between the von Sickingen and the princes, it is shown that the lower nobility was an integral part of the developing territorial state. Nobles remained important at the princely courts and in territorial administration through the early decades of the sixteenth century. Since no single territory was able to achieve hegemony in the German southwest, nobles served a variety of princes, and the princes competed for the services of the nobility.

Two major branches of the von Sickingen family are evident early in the fourteenth century. Whereas the one was never able to achieve a strong economic or political position, the main branch of the family, divided into three principal subbranches, flourished. The members of the main branch were most closely identified with the Rhine Palatinate, yet they also served other lords, such as the archbishops of Mainz, the bishops of Speyer, and the dukes of Württemberg. Through service to the Electors Palatine and other princes, the von Sickingen acquired property and important public offices, scattered over much of the Rhine area. Of particular significance were the extensive holdings acquired in pledge, which accounted for a major part of the Sickingen family's economic and political strength, and which suggest that the granting of pledges was an important development in the evolution of the territorial state out of the feudal environment. Despite their strong terri-

torial identification, however, the von Sickingen and other noble families like them retained their independence and never fell subject to territorial jurisdiction.

Franz von Sickingen was heir to the family's tradition of Palatine service, but within a few years, based on the strong economic and political position established by his immediate ancestors, Franz set an independent course. Through the combination of modern and traditional techniques of warfare, he was able to acquire a vastly disproportionate amount of power. With the advent of the Reformation, Franz was among the first individuals of political consequence to lend support to Luther and other reformers. Nevertheless, the attack on the archbishopric of Trier, Franz von Sickingen's final venture, was not undertaken primarily for religious reasons nor did it reflect broader currents within the nobility. Franz had sought to acquire the status of a prince by trying to appropriate the archbishop's territory. It was a serious challenge, which if successful would have set a dangerous precedent. This accounts for the ruthless determination of the three princes to suppress Franz. Although Sickingen's feud with Trier and his subsequent death were significant events, they cannot be interpreted as a sign of general hostility between the nobility and the princes, for the interests of both groups were still too closely intertwined.

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## Archives and Libraries

| | |
|---|---|
| ADBR Sb | Archives Départementales du Bas-Rhin, Strasbourg |
| ADHR Cm | Archives Départementales du Haut-Rhin, Colmar |
| AV Sb | Archives de la Ville de Strasbourg |
| GLA Kr | Generallandesarchiv, Karlsruhe |
| GStA Mü | Geheimes Staatsarchiv, München |
| HHStA Vn | Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna |
| HStA Mü | Hauptstaatsarchiv, München |
| HStA St | Hauptstaatsarchiv, Stuttgart |
| LA Sp | Landesarchiv, Speyer |
| LHA Ko | Landeshauptarchiv, Koblenz |
| OÖLA Li | Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv, Linz, Archiv Starhemberg |
| StA Ds | Staatsarchiv, Darmstadt |
| StA Mb | Staatsarchiv, Marburg |
| StA Wü | Staatsarchiv, Würzburg |
| StdA Ft | Stadtarchiv, Frankfurt a. M. |
| StdA Fb | Stadtarchiv, Freiburg i. B. |
| StdA Sp | Stadtarchiv, Speyer |
| StdA Wm | Stadtarchiv, Worms |
| WLB St | Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart |

## Periodicals and Other Printed Works

| | |
|---|---|
| AHG | Archiv für hessische Geschichte und Altertumskunde |
| BPKG | Blätter für pfälzische Kirchengeschichte und religiöse Volkskunde |
| Reg. Bad. | Regesten der Markgrafen von Baden und Hachberg, 1050-1515 |
| Reg. Mz. | Regesten der Erzbischöfe von Mainz |
| Reg. Pfgr. | Regesten der Pfalzgrafen am Rhein |
| WUB | Wirtembergisches Urkundenbuch |
| WVLG | Württembergische Vierteljahrshefte für Landesgeschichte |

## Other Abbreviations and Symbols used in Notes and Figures

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ab. | Archbishop | Ed. | Edelknecht |
| b. | born | Pfd. | Pfund |
| Bi. | Bishop | Ri. | Ritter |
| d. | died | v.S. | von Sickingen |
| db. | died before | = | married to |
| m. | marriage | † | extinct |

# INTRODUCTION

The existence of the nobility, an elite set apart from other levels of society by social and legal distinctions and responsibilities, has been described as the strongest element of continuity in the social and political life of western Europe from late Roman times through the middle ages and on into the modern period.[1] The function of the nobility, however, and indeed its definition have undergone a varied development over this long span of time. Whereas in France and England strong national monarchies eventually emerged from which all authority effectively flowed, in Germany the kings and emperors were unable to prevent the rise of territorial principalities which in the age of absolutism came to be recognized as fully sovereign states. The federal structure of the German constitution today is a reminder of this old dualism in German political life. The German princes, however, composed only the upper level of the nobility. At the bottom was the mass of the lower nobility which exercised a wide range of authority both in its own right and on behalf of the greater lords.

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[1] K. Bosl, Staat, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft im deutschen Mittelalter, (Gebhardt Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte, vol. 7; München: DTV, 1973), p. 32.

It is generally agreed that the German lower nobility of the late middle ages had its origins for the most part in the class of ministeriales, the servile dependents of the German emperors and territorial lords.[2] With the breakdown during the investiture struggle of their traditional sources of support which had been the lay and particularly the ecclesiastical fief holders, the German emperors came to rely increasingly on ministeriales to implement their policies. Ministeriales were placed in charge of the imperial castles; they oversaw the administration of crown lands; and they composed the major portion of the imperial armies. In a parallel development the great lords, particularly the ecclesiastical princes, raised their own ministeriales to administer their often extensive and usually scattered domains. An individual entered the class of ministeriales through designation by the lord. The receipt of a servile fief (Dienstlehen) established the relationship between the ministerialis and his lord. At an early date, however, the Dienstlehen like the free noble fief tended to become hereditary. Furthermore, ministeriales were not barred from receiving regular fiefs either from their lords or from third parties, nor were they prohibited from marrying into the nobility proper. Such conditions coupled with the

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[2]For the historiography of the nature of the ministeriales and the origins of the lower nobility, see K. Bosl, Die Reichsministerialität der Salier und Staufer, (Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae historica, vol. 10; Stuttgart, 1950-51), pp. 25-31.

considerable importance of many ministeriales in royal and princely administration tended to erase their originally servile status, a process which was essentially complete by 1300.[3] With the disintegration of Hohenstaufen power in the thirteenth century, a large portion of the imperial ministeriales came under the control of the princes, while others managed to achieve a precarious independence. Particularly in Franconia, Swabia and along the Rhine, the centers of Hohenstaufen power, imperial ministeriales were numerous, and since no single territorial power was able to dominate any of these areas, a relatively strong independent lower nobility was able to develop and maintain itself.

These conditions were nowhere more evident than in the Kraichgau which composed a small corner of southwestern Germany between the Neckar and Rhine Rivers.[4] With the extinction of

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[3] pp. 602-16.

[4] Originally the name Kraichgau was restricted to a relatively small area to either side of the Kraich stream east of Bruchsal. In time, however, it came to include the neighboring districts of the Elsenzgau, the Gartachgau, the Anglachgau, the Bruhrain, and parts of the Enzgau and Pfinzgau as well. According to Reinhard von Gemmingen in 1630, the Kraichgau was circumscribed by a line drawn from Mannheim along the Neckar River to the confluence of the Zaber, along the Zaber westward to its source, then due west to the Pfinz, along the Pfinz to the Rhine, and from there downstream to Mannheim. V. Press, "Die Ritterschaft im Kraichgau zwischen Reich und Territorium 1540-1620," Protokoll über die Arbeitssitzung der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für geschichtliche Landeskunde am Oberrhein, (1970). (Typewritten.)

the Carolingian ruling line in the eastern portion of the former empire of Charlemagne, the Kraichgau had come to form a part of the stem duchy of Franconia. Under Emperor Otto I Franconia was made a hereditary possession of the German king, and so the Kraichgau remained closely linked to imperial fortunes. In the twelfth century the name Kraichgau was used as a regional designation of rights and possessions connected with the empire.[5] Writing in the sixteenth century, Sebastian Münster described the Kraichgau in his Kosmographei as belonging almost entirely to the nobility,[6] and this was certainly even more the case during the preceding two centuries before many of the families had died out. Whether the nobility of the Kraichgau stemmed for the most part from the ministeriales of the empire, from those of the princes, or from older noble origins is difficult to say. In any case at the end of the thirteenth century, no prince enjoyed territorial lordship over the area. The nobles were not subject to princely jurisdiction, for their court was the imperial Hofgericht in Rottweil. Neither did any prince enjoy other prerogatives such as the right to levy taxes or establish markets. The latter remained an imperial right.[7]

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[5]W. Martin, "Umfang und Wesen des Kraichgaus im späten Mittelalter," Brettener Jahrbuch für Kultur und Geschichte IV (1967): 127.

[6]A.G. Kolb, "Die Kraichgauer Ritterschaft unter der Regierung des Kurfürsten Philipp von der Pfalz," WVLG, N.F. XIX (1910): 1.

[7]pp. 3-5.

In the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, however, the Kraichgau became a principal area of contention between the rulers of the developing princely territories which surrounded it: the margraviate of Baden, the bishopric of Speyer, the electorate of the Palatinate, and the county of Württemberg. Tensions and struggles among these and other princes and towns dominated the history of the upper Rhine region in the centuries after the Hohenstaufen collapse. In all such struggles the lower nobility played an indispensable part, not only as armed warriors, but as the instruments of territorial consolidation and administration. Although they did not become territorial dependents, the nobles of the Kraichgau developed close ties to the various neighboring principalities through a variety of feudal and nonfeudal bonds, and in so doing they became integral parts of territorial government.

The von Sickingen were one of the many noble families residing in the Kraichgau during the late middle ages, but the Sickingen name is best known from the dramatic career of Franz von Sickingen during the earliest stage of the Reformation. Franz's career was typical neither of his family nor of the lower nobility as a whole, yet his success was grounded on the economic, political, and social base established by his forefathers. This base, coupled with Franz's own audacity and skill in taking advantage of fortuitous circumstances, made possible the acquisition of a vastly disproportionate amount

of power, which contemporaries in 1523 judged to be as revolutionary as the teachings of Martin Luther. By studying the von Sickingen family, I hope to throw some light on the nature of the late medieval state, the place of the lower nobility in society, and the significance of Franz von Sickingen. It was in the two and a half centuries after the Hohenstaufen collapse that the feudal lordships of the high middle ages were transformed into modern territorial states. From the Sickingen example, it will become clear that the lower nobility of the middle and upper Rhine region played an important part in this process, being not simply a relic of the great age of the medieval empire, but a vital component of late medieval society. This dissertation will therefore analyze the history of a noble family in the late medieval period, particularly in regard to its relations with the political forces which surrounded it, and assess the emergence out of this context of one of its members, Franz von Sickingen, to European significance.

Franz von Sickingen has been a favorite topic of German writers, particularly since the awakening of national consciousness in the last century.[8] Very little of this literary output, however, is scholarly or has contributed to a better understanding of Franz. Nevertheless, the important histori-

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[8] K. Schottenloher, Bibliographie zur deutschen Geschichte im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung, 1517-1585, 7 vols., (2nd ed.; Stuttgart, 1956-66), II, nos. 20010-67; V, nos. 49329-39a; VII, nos. 58243-54.

ography of Franz von Sickingen extends back to the writings of his contemporaries shortly after his death. The "Flersheimer Chronik," by Franz's brother-in-law and bishop of Speyer, Philip von Flersheim, was written with a dual purpose of showing the loyal service which had always been performed to the Electors Palatine by the von Flersheim family, and of asserting that Franz von Sickingen died a good Catholic within the church. A different viewpoint colored the work of the Palatine counselor and secretary, Hubert Thomas Leodius. Leodius maintained that Franz owed his rise to Palatine favor which he repaid with hostility. The works of Flersheim and Leodius, together with various pamphlets, verses, and other accounts of specific episodes form the body of contemporary narrative sources.[9] Based on these, there appeared

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[9] O. Waltz, ed., Flersheimer Chronik, zur Geschichte des XV. und XVI. Jahrhunderts, (Leipzig, 1874); H.T. Leodius, De Gestis Francisci a Sickingen, in Rerum Germanicarum Scriptores, vol. 3, edited by M. Freher and Struve, (Strassburg, 1717), pp. 294-306. Contemporary accounts dealing with the feud with Trier include the Latin verse by the Trier humanist Bartholomäus Latomus (H.J. Mörschbacher, "Sickingens Raubzug gegen Trier 1522 von Bartholomäus Latomus aus dem lateinischen in deutsche Hexameter übertragen," Trierische Heimat II (1926): 72-74, 90-94, 100-103, 139-43, 154-57, 173-76, 189-91.), the "Chronicon Abbatie S. Maximini" by the Benedictine monk Johann Scheckmann (E.V. Munch, Franz von Sickingen: Thaten, Pläne, Freunde und Ausgang, 2 vols., (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1827-29), III, 275-90.), and the report of the Trier Stadtschreiber Johann Flade (K.H. Rendenbach, Die Fehde Franz von Sickingens gegen Trier, (Berlin, 1933), pp. 79-116.). The subsequent campaign of the three princes against Franz is dealt with by the imperial herald Caspar Sturm (W. Dotzauer, "Der 'warliche Bericht' des Reichsherolds Caspar Sturm über den Kriegszug der drei verbündeten Fürsten gegen Franz von Sickingen im Jahre 1523," BPKG XXXVII-XXXVIII (1970-71): 359-72.), and by Reinhard von Neuneck, another participant on the princely side (F.v.

(continued on next page)

in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a number of descriptions of Franz von Sickingen's career which have little use today.[10]

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9 (cont.)

Weech, "Berichte über Franz von Sickingens Ende und die darauf folgenden Ereignisse," Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte XVIII (1878): 649-56.). The Worms feud appeared in the chronicle of Friedrich Zorn (W. Arnold, ed., Wormser Chronik von Friedrich Zorn mit Zusätzen Franz Bertholds von Flersheim, (Bibliothek des literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, vol. 43; Stuttgart, 1857).) Further primary source material on Franz has been published in: Münch, Sickingen, vols. 2 and 3; T. Liebenau, "Franz von Sickingen und die Eidgenossen," Anzeiger für schweizerische Geschichte, Neue Folge VI (1890-93): 152-54; P. Tschackert, "Franz von Sickingens 'Gehülfen,' welche bei der Einnahme des Schlosses Landstuhl am 6. Mai 1523 gefangen wurden," Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte XII (1891): 210-11; U. Oelschläger, "Der Sendbrief Franz von Sickingens an seinen Verwandten Dieter von Handschuchsheim," BPKG XXXVII-XXXVIII (1970-71): 710-24; and J. Polke, "'Wiewohl es ein rühmlich und wohlgebaut Haus gewesen' Das Ende der Ebernburg 1523 im Spiegel hessischer Dokumente," BPKG XLI (1974): 133-97. Contemporary pamphlets and verses pertinent to Franz can be found in: K. Schottenloher, ed., Flugschriften der Ritterschafts Bewegung des Jahres 1523, (Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte, vol. 53; Münster, 1929); O. Schade, ed., Satiren und Pasquille aus der Reformationszeit, 3 vols., (Hanover, 1863); O. Clemen, ed., Flugschriften aus den ersten Jahren der Reformation, 4 vols., (Reprint ed.; Nieuwkoop, 1967); W. Braune, ed., Neudrucke deutscher Literaturwerke des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts, (Halle, 1877-1936); H. Boos, ed., Urkundenbuch der Stadt Worms, 3 vols., (Berlin, 1886-93), III, xvi-xvii; O.v. Heinemann, "Ein zeitgenössisches Gedicht auf Franz von Sickingen (Wer auff diese welt thut pawen)," Westdeutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst XIV (1895): 293-305; B. Schulze, "Zwei Lieder gegen Wilhelmus von Nassaue und Franz von Sickingen," Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie LIX (1935): 243-53; R.v. Liliencron, Die historischen Volkslieder der Deutschen vom 13. bis 16. Jahrhundert, 5 vols., (Leipzig, 1865-69), III, #366.

[10] Bellum Sickinganum. Das ist kurze doch umständliche Historische erzehlung deren von dem Edlen Teutschen Helden Frantzen von Sickingen vor hundert Jahren auf Teutsch und Welschen boden geführten Kriegen, (Strassburg, 1626) - based on Leodius and Sturm; S.A. Würdtwein, Kriege und Pfedschaften des Edlen Franz von Sickingen, (Mannheim, 1787); G.C.J. Buddeus, Franz von Sickingen. Eine Geschichte aus dem 16. Jahrhundert, (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1794).

Widespread popular interest in Franz was generated by Goethe's drama, "Götz von Berlichingen" (1773), and was heightened in the romantic period of the early nineteenth century.[11] It was at this time that the first modern biography appeared from the pen of Ernst Münch.[12] Known more for the quantity than the quality of his productions, Münch assembled numerous pertinent documents together with the narrative sources and appended them to a narrative account, all of which, however, remained marred by errors, oversights, superficiality, and by a general carelessness in presentation. Nevertheless, scholars had to content themselves for nearly fifty years with Münch's work. In the meantime, Franz von Sickingen was transformed in popular and scholarly literature into a sort of national hero. To the German Vormärz, the pre-1848'ers, Sickingen and his associate Hutten represented patriotism, liberty, democracy, and Protestantism: images which required only slight modification in the period after 1848/49.[13]

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[11] See the discussions by A. Becker ("Das Hutten-Sickingen Bild im Zeitenwandel," BPKG XI (1935): 116-17) and K. Baumann ("Franz von Sickingen (1481-1523)" , in Pfälzische Lebensbilder, vol. 1, (Veröffentlichungen der pfälzischen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften in Speyer, vol. 48; Speyer, 1964), p. 40).

[12] Münch, Sickingen.

[13] Becker, "Bild," pp. 114-15, 119-26; Baumann, "Sickingen"; Schottenloher, Bibliographie, II, nos. 20054-67. Of the literary productions dealing with Franz von Sickingen, Ferdinand Lasalle's drama, recently published by Reclam, deserves first place. F. Lasalle, Franz von Sickingen, (Berlin, 1859); Stuttgart, 1974. The controversy generated within the socialist community by this work and an analysis of that controversy has been published in W. Hinderer, ed., Sickingen-Debatte, ein Beitrag zur materialistischen Literaturtheorie (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1974).

A year after the unification of Germany, however, Heinrich Ulmann published a new biography of Franz von Sickingen.[14] Making use of all accessible material in German archives, Ulmann presented a balanced analysis, scrupulously gleaned from the sources, which stripped the idealized veneer from Sickingen's career and character. Unassailable from a scholarly standpoint -- indeed Ulmann's work remains to this day basic to Sickingen study -- this important biography ran counter to the climate of the day which on the whole tended to glorify Franz as a selfless champion of German freedom and unity.[15]

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[14] H. Ulmann, Franz von Sickingen, (Leipzig, 1872).

[15] So for example such works as: K. Grün, "Franz von Sickingen zum 400-jährigen Gedächtniss," Westermanns Jahrbuch L (1881): 709-24; C. Meyer, Ulrich von Hutten und Franz von Sickingen als Vorkämpfer unserer nationalen Einheit, (Hamburg, 1889); and F. Dürr, "Die Beziehungen des Ritters Franz von Sickingen zu der Reichsstadt Heilbronn," Bericht des historischen Vereins Heilbronn II (1912-15): 36-61. The most visible expression of this attitude can be seen in the erection in 1888 of the Hutten-Sickingen monument at Ebernburg, which bears the inscription: "Den Vorkämpfern deutscher Einheit und Grösse, Ulrich von Hutten, Franz von Sickingen." Even works like F.P. Bremer's Franz von Sickingens Fehde gegen Trier und ein Gutachten Claudius Cantinuculas über die Rechtsansprüche der Sickingenschen Erben, (Strassburg, 1885), which presented further important source material, tended to view Sickingen uncritically as the idealistic champion of the oppressed. The opposite viewpoint, that Sickingen was driven by selfish, destructive motives only, also found expression during this period in such writings as: J. Niemöller, Die Thaten Sickingens und die Pläne der Umsturzpartei seiner Zeit. Eine Denkschrift zu den diesjährigen Festlichkeiten auf der Ebernburg, (Frankfurter zeitgemässe Broschüren, Neue Folge, vol. 9; Frankfurt and Lucern, 1888); A. Jaeger, "An der Wiege des Protestantismus. Der Aufstand der Ritterschaft unter Sickingen und Hutten und deren Tod (1522-23)," Palatina (1910): 15-16, 22-24; and H. Boos, Geschichte der rheinischen Städtekultur mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Stadt Worms, 4 vols., (Berlin, 1897-1901). Although the last was an important scholarly contribution, all three reflected in their treatment of Sickingen the earlier hostile viewpoint of Johannes Janssen, Geschichte des deutschen Volkes seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters, 8 vols., (Freiburg, 1883-94).

The view that Sickingen was the carrier of noble political or religious ideals continued to characterize much of the work of scholars after World War I as well.[16] That Franz should be described as "eine erste lebendige Verkörperung des deutschen, volkhaften Gedankens"[17] in the National Socialist period should come as no surprise. During World War II another full-length biography of Franz von Sickingen was published by Ernst Kilb.[18] Based solely on the secondary sources and not strictly a scholarly work, Kilb's book attempted to link Sickingen to the imperial ideal, a tendency common to most Sickingen scholarship but rarely carried to this extreme.[19]

The postwar period has continued to see lively interest in Franz von Sickingen. Next to Kurt Baumann's reasoned essay in the series "Pfälzische Lebensbilder,"[20] there have appeared other works meant for popular consumption which unfortunately often follow in the tradition of earlier inspirational writing.[21]

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[16]See for example: W. Friedensburg, "Franz von Sickingen," in Morgenrot der Reformation, ed. by J. Pflugk-Hartung, (Hersfeld 1915), pp. 661-72; E. Gölter, "Franz von Sickingen und seine Beziehungen zur Reformation," BPKG II (1926): 36-46; and Rendenbach, Fehde.

[17]Becker, "Bild," p. 128.

[18]E. Kilb, Franz von Sickingen, das Reich als Schicksal, (Metz, 1943).

[19]Kilb, Sickingen, p. 390. "In dieser Mittagsstunde... in der der Ritter einsam stirbt, versinkt für Jahrhunderte der Traum von Reich, der Bundesstaat der Fürsten...erlebt seine Geburtsstunde."

[20]Baumann, "Sickingen."

[21]See for example H. Budenbender, Franz von Sickingen 1481-1523, (Landstuhl, 1965).

Topics such as Franz's physical remains, his funerary monument, and other graphic representations have been considered by various other recent investigators.[22] The presentation of annual papers in Reformation history and their inclusion in the "Ebernburg Hefte" of the Blätter für pfälzische Kirchengeschichte since 1967 have stimulated further interest, particularly in Sickingen's relationship to the Reformation, and have resulted in the publication of useful source material.[23] Most recently, Winfried Dotzauer has attempted to gain new insight into Franz von Sickingen's career by viewing his far-flung castles as a sort of "anti-territory."[24]

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[22]A. Bold, "Die Gebeine Franz von Sickingens. Was die neue Forschung darüber zu berichten weiss," Pfälzische Heimatblätter I (1952-53): 13; W. Medding, "Die Grabstätte Franz von Sickingens in Landstuhl und sein Grabepitaph von dem Bildhauer Jost Neipeck," Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Stadt und Landkreis Kaiserslautern IV (1966): 63-77; W. Weber, "Bildnisse und Denkmäler Franz von Sickingens im Wandel der Zeit," Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Stadt und Landkreis Kaiserslautern VIII-IX (1970-71): 147-81.

[23]W. Plümacher, "Die Bedeutung der humanistischen und reformatorischen Tradition der Ebernburg," BPKG XXXIV (1967): 346-51; H. Steitz, "Franz von Sickingen und die reformatorische Bewegung," BPKG XXXVI (1969): 146-55; W. Jung, "Von den Anfängen evangelischen Gottesdienstes im mittelrheinischen Raum," BPKG XL (1973): 210-32; id., "Kaspar Aquilas 'Predigt' auf der Ebernburg 1523," BPKG XLI (1974): 129-32; see note 9 above.

[24]W. Dotzauer, "Das 'Burgenterritorium' des Franz von Sickingen," BPKG XLII (1975): 166-92.

The only work in English to deal at any length with Franz von Sickingen remains that by William Hitchcock.[25] Based on inaccurate information on Sickingen and an insufficient understanding of the position of the nobility in general, Hitchcock places Franz and the Trier feud in the strait jacket of a class struggle. Although the book is useful where it deals with the attitudes of Hartmuth von Cronberg and Eberlin von Günzburg, two supporters of Sickingen, Hitchcock's thesis unfortunately detracts from an understanding of Sickingen himself and the so-called "Knights' Revolt."

Excepting Franz von Sickingen, the Sickingen family as a whole and the predecessors of Franz in particular have received very little attention from scholars over the centuries.[26] The earliest family history of sorts was written by Georg Helwich in 1629 and is extant in manuscript only.[27] Without reference to sources, Helwich presented a genealogy together with whatever information he could provide on individual members. Based in large part on Helwich's general work, Johann Humbracht

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[25]W.R. Hitchcock, The Background of the Knights' Revolt 1522-1523, (University of California Publications in History, vol. 61; Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1958).

[26]The Flersheimer Chronik, referred to above, contains some information concerning Franz's father only.

[27]G. Helwich, "Genealogia oder Geburts-Stamm dess uhralten adelichen und ritterlichen Geschlechts deren von Sickingen," 1629, OÖLA Li, Sch. 357, (manuscript).

published early in the following century an extensive collection of genealogies of the Rhenish nobility which included the von Sickingen.[28] For the period before 1500, however, both Helwich and Humbracht are highly unreliable. A scientifically constructed genealogy of the von Sickingen through the early sixteenth century finally appeared among Walter Möller's Stammtafeln in 1933.[29] To this day, however, there exists no history which attempts to trace the Sickingen family's development in any depth for the period prior to Franz von Sickingen.[30] A deterrent to such a study has been the fact that the family archive was dispersed after Franz von Sickingen's death, and most of it was forever lost in the following centuries, so that there exists today no Sickingen archive as such.[3]

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[28] J.M. Humbracht, Die höchste Zierde Teutsch-Landes und Vortrefflichkeit teutschen Adels vorgestellt in der reichsfreyen rheinischen Ritterschaft, (Frankfurt, 1707).

[29] W. Möller, Stammtafeln westdeutscher Adelsgeschlechter im Mittelalter, 4 vols., (Darmstadt, 1922-51). While basically correct, even Möller's genealogy contains a number of prominent errors not to mention the many oversights resulting from not being able to fit certain members of the family in.

[30] Dotzauer in his "Burgenterritorium" presents fragmentary information found in some of the published Urkunden- and Regesten-bücher without establishing any coherence. Franz von Sickingen's descendants have been considered in W. Schneegans, Ritter Franz von Sickingen, seine Nachkommen und der Untergang seines Geschlechts, (Kreuznach, 1867); and J. Hüll, Franz von Sickingens Nachkommen, (Ludwigshafen, 1887).

[31] See the discussion in A. Bold, "Die Sickinger Archivalien, Schicksale und heutiger Bestand," Mitteilungen des historischen Vereins der Pfalz LII (1954): 23-46.

Few of the self-contained noble archives which still exist, however, contain appreciable material prior to the sixteenth century, and thus the Sickingen situation in effect is fairly typical. Consequently material concerning the von Sickingen and other families must be sought for the most part in the archives of the principalities with which relations were maintained.[32]

Historiographically, then, this study must cover much new territory as it develops the history of the von Sickingen family from its beginnings: its service to the princes of southwest Germany, the rise of the immediate ancestors of Franz von Sickingen, as well as the career of Franz himself. It will proceed by first briefly outlining the basic genealogical data. Chapter II will investigate the various types of ties maintained between the von Sickingen and the territorial princes and conclude with a consideration of the family estate. The development of Sickingen relations with specific territorial princes and other political powers over the period of my investigation will be traced in Chapter III. Chapter IV will describe in depth the careers of Franz von Sickingen's father and grandfather as a prelude to an assessment of Franz von Sickingen himself in the final chapter of this dissertation. A discussion of the von Sickingen in the associations of the lower nobility up to the time of Franz von Sickingen and a

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[32]The archives consulted in this dissertation can be found on page

detailed catalogue of Sickingen property are included in appendices.

# CHAPTER V

## FRANZ VON SICKINGEN

In the late fourteenth century and in the course of the fifteenth, the von Sickingen family produced a number of individuals who left their mark on the politics of the Holy Roman Empire. In most cases these were men with close ties to the Electors Palatine, and they owed their prominence in whole or part to this association. This was certainly the case with Schwarz Reinhard von Sickingen, the imperial Landvogt at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and with Swicker VIII at its end. Even Reinhard von Sickingen, who as bishop of Worms was a prince of the empire in his own right, was most notable for his loyalty to Elector Palatine Frederick I and the role he played in Frederick's politics. The career of Franz von Sickingen, however, the son of Swicker VIII, was a dramatic departure from this tradition. Although he began in the footsteps of his forefathers, Franz soon took an independent course which finally put him at odds with the traditional lords of the family. In the course of the few years from 1515 to 1519, Franz rose to become one of the most powerful men in Germany and a factor in the international struggle between Habsburg and Valois. At the same time his

brief career was interwoven with the early stages of the religious Reformation and with the currents of unrest within the lower nobility. Before attempting to assess the relationship of Franz von Sickingen to these various elements, it is instructive to consider first his early career prior to 1515 from the dual aspects of the economic basis of his power and his relations to the various princes who surrounded him.

## Franz's Economic Base

Upon Swicker VIII's death in 1505, practically his entire estate, made up for the most part of the extensive holdings acquired by him and his father, passed to his only son Franz. Swicker and his wife had had five daughters, but the two eldest had become nuns. Two of the others were already married to sons of the nobility: Catharina to Orendel von Gemmingen, and Barbara to Dieter von Braunsberg. The fifth daughter, Agnes, was married the year after Swicker's death to Wolf Kämmerer von Dalberg. Each was provided with a dowry worth 1,600 Gulden, and after Swicker's death an agreement was reached whereby the married daughters or their heirs were each to receive a further 1,400 Gulden as their share of the parental patrimony.[1] In 1507 Margarete von Sickingen died, and it was up to her son Franz to see that his sisters now received their shares. This was accomplished with some difficulty in the years that followed

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[1] StA Mb, Sick. Copb.: 30 Sept. 1482; 10 Sept. 1487; 23 June 1506; GLA Kr, 67/227; Waltz, Flersheimer Chronik, p. 4.

through payments in cash, property, and pledges of income. In the end Franz's three sisters cost the estate, when dowries and inheritances were added, a total of 9,000 Gulden.[2] It was a considerable sum, but one which could be absorbed. Franz was still extremely well-to-do, compared to the average nobleman.

Franz himself had been married before 1500 to Hedwig von Flersheim, the daughter of Hans von Flersheim, the Palatine Amtmann of Kaiserslautern. In view of the important position also held by Franz's father in the Palatine administration, it is likely that the marriage was arranged at the Palatine court. The match served to expand Sickingen ties with the nobility west of the Rhine. Flersheim holdings lay in the same general area as Franz's, but the marriage did not bring the sort of spectacular acquisitions that those of Franz's father and grandfather had.[3] The parental inheritance remained the core of Franz von Sickingen's economic position to which he added a number of holdings of varying importance without, however, changing the basic pattern.

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[2] StA Mb, Sick. Copb.: 17 Feb. 1507; 30 Sept. 1514; 11 Dec. 1507; 24 June 1508; GLA Kr, 67/227; LHA Ko, 4/283: 18 June 1524; Münch, Sickingen, II, 268. See app. C, #34, 1523.

[3] T. Zink, "Pfälzische Frauen im Mittelalter," Pfälzische Geschichtsblätter VII (1911): 15-16. Franz did not gain possession of his wife's dowry until 1521 according to a settlement mediated by Conrad v.S. and Diether Kämmerer von Dalberg in 1519. LA Sp, Register to the former Wartenberg archive, #42: 24 Aug. 1521. See app. C, #71.

Following the deaths of his parents, Franz was invested with the fiefs which they had held from various lay and ecclesiastical princes and lesser lords of the upper and middle Rhine region, and he took possession of the family's allodial and pledge property.[4] Some of these holdings, such as the Speyer Burglehen, which had been in the Sickingen family for four generations, were shared with Franz's cousin-once-removed, Conrad von Sickingen. The fiefs held from the bishop of Strassburg, the count of Zweibrücken-Bitsch, and the emperor, together with a Strassburg pledge, were shared with Hans Hofwart von Kirchheim as coheir to a part of the former Hohenburg estate. The possessions shared with the Hofwart von Kirchheim included the castles of Hohenburg and Lützelburg, although Franz's portion of the latter was redeemed by the bishop of Strassburg in 1514. The lordship of Ebernburg and Franz's fourth of the lordship of Landstuhl were each held under very favorable terms as permanent pledges. Franz also succeeded his father as a Ganerbe in the various Ganerbschaften to which Swicker VIII belonged. These included the castles of Wartenberg and Steinkallenfels, and the property in Bechtolsheim. In addition to these, Franz also appeared as a Gemeiner of the castle of Drachenfels as early as 1504, when he purchased for 100 Gulden exemption from all dues customarily paid by the Gemeiner. From its location in the Wasgau not far from

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[4]For Franz's estate refer to app. C and map 7C.

the Hohenburg, it is probable that Franz's membership in Drachenfels stemmed through his mother from the von Hohenburg as in the case of the other Ganerbschaften.

A part of Franz's inheritance, however, had been diminished by the Bavarian Succession War. The castle of Sien along with the village of Merxheim had been plundered and burned by Count Palatine Alexander of Zweibrücken, such that Franz reckoned the damage at 4,000 Gulden.[5] Following the war Franz sought compensation, but it was not until 1516 that a settlement was brought about. At that time Franz renounced for his whole family all claims, stating that Count Palatine Alexander and his father had been fellow pilgrims and that the destruction of Sien and Merxheim had taken place without the count's knowledge. In return the Count Palatine was to pay Franz 2,500 Gulden in cash in a year and enfoeff him with the village of Köngernheim.[6]

Aside from Köngernheim, Franz added relatively little to his inherited holdings in the way of immovable property prior to 1518. Nevertheless, his purchases in Norheim and Hüffelsheim appear to have been a conscious effort to round off Sickingen possessions about Ebernburg.[7] Ebernburg remained

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[5]Münch, Sickingen, I, 280.

[6]GStA Mü, Pf.-Zweibr. Urk. #2554: 5 March 1516; #2555: 15 April 1517 with inserted document of 13 March 1516. At the same time that Franz renounced further claims to compensation for damages, he renounced all claims to the former Hohenburg holding of Kleeburg. See app. C, #30 and 67.

[7]See app. C, #9 and 29.

Franz von Sickingen's principal holding. Within three years of his father's death, however, Franz too became embroiled in controversy with his subjects there. Swicker VIII had already been involved in disputes with his subjects over their traditional privileges, and the cases had been brought before the Palatine Hofgericht, but a clear settlement does not appear to have been brought about. In 1507 the inhabitants of Ebernburg complained to Elector Palatine Philip about new infringements on their privileges. The elector thereupon set a date on which the case would be considered by his counselors. When informed of this, Franz replied plaintively that the elector was accepting the statements of his subjects and disregarding his family's long history of loyal service. Furthermore, he charged that Philip was trying to place Ebernburg under his protection and thus infringe upon Franz's own authority. Franz meanwhile resorted to force, arresting some of his subjects, confiscating their property, and forcing them to swear new oaths. It is not clear whether the dispute was ever brought before the elector's court. In any case the inhabitants of Ebernburg finally turned their written privileges over to Franz in 1508, and he granted them anew at that time. The privileges of 1414 were confirmed but with two important exceptions. The lord of Ebernburg's authority in the punishment of crimes was extended at the expense of the local court, and the homage of the subjects to the lord, which had formerly been dependent on the lord's prior

confirmation of the privileges, was now made automatic with the lord's guarantee to come thereafter. The inhabitants of Ebernburg further promised not to seek any new privileges nor to accept the aid or authority of any other lord.[8] This last guarantee undoubtedly had the Elector Palatine in mind, for it is clear that the elector had hoped to act as the judge in the dispute, much as he had done earlier. Franz, however, was intent on excluding Palatine influence. In this he was successful, and it enabled him to erode some of the traditional privileges of his subjects.

Like his father, Franz took an active interest in mining. As early as 1498, relations with the Fugger family, probably through mining, led Franz together with the archbishop of Mainz, the bishop of Würzburg, and the duke of Saxony, to intercede on behalf of Lukas Fugger with the emperor. In 1505 Franz and his father were re-granted mining rights at Ebernburg, with Elector Palatine Philip reserving only one-half of the customary tithe for himself. In addition to the Ebernburg mines, Franz acquired rights to mines in two other localities as well. Mining, a regalian right, had provided an important source of revenue for the Elector Palatine from about 1470 to 1490. By the 1490s, however, mining had generally ceased to be a profitable enterprise in the Palatinate, once deposits near the surface had been exploited. In 1511 the Rheingrafenstein mines, in which Franz's father had once held a share,

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[8]StdA Ft, Ar. Häberlin 29: 13 Nov. 1507, Germersheim; LA Sp, A1/672: 20 Jan. 1508.

had all but ceased production, and the few remaining shareholders could no longer afford to carry on operations. At this time Franz von Sickingen bought their shares and took the former holders into his employ. Two months later Elector Louis V formally granted Franz the mining rights along with freedom from the tithe for one year. At the same time he granted him part of the Palatinate's principal quicksilver mines in Deimbach which had ceased production, but with the stipulation that Louis might grant the mines to another party should Franz fail to extract ore within a year.[9]

The importance of mining to Franz's career must be treated with caution. Too often scholars have tended to see in mining a major source of income for Franz, if not the very basis of his success.[10] Although mining profits could be spectacular, as the fortunes of the Fugger family at this time demonstrate, there is unfortunately no hard evidence of the profit derived by Franz. Whereas we are well informed of the mining boom in Saxony and Tyrol in the early decades of the sixteenth century, little is known of conditions in the Palatinate. That Franz appears to have always retained his interest in mining is indicated by a conversation which took place

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[9]G. von Pölnitz, Jakob Fugger, Quellen und Erläuterungen, (Tübingen), p. 707; LA Sp, A1/671: 10 Feb. 1505, Heidelberg; Cohn, Palatinate, pp. 96-97; StdA Ft, Ar. Häberlin 29: 7 Aug. 1511; GLA Kr, 67/828: 12 Oct. 1511, Heidelberg.

[10]For example: Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 16-17; Friedensburg, "Sickingen," p. 565; Hitchcock, Revolt, pp. 44-45; and Dotzauer, "Burgenterritorium," p. 172.

in Aachen in 1520 when Elector Frederick of Saxony asked Sickingen about the mining knowledge of a certain Filius. Only three years after acquiring the Rheingrafenstein mines, however, Franz found it impossible to continue working them himself, and he therefore sold the rights. The buyers were to pay him up to 3,200 Gulden out of money which they would make from leasing shares to other parties. Thereafter Franz was to receive regular dues from the mine.[11] What evidence there is suggests that Franz may well have engaged in an economic activity that was suffering a slump in the Palatinate at the time and one for which he did not possess the resources.

## Franz's Relations with the Princes

Given the important role played by Swicker VIII von Sickingen at the Palatine court, it was natural that Franz should also have had very close ties to the Electors Palatine at an early date. Franz's first documented appearance was in the year 1494 when, as a youth of thirteen years, he together with his father and Hans VI von Sickingen accompanied Elector Philip to a gathering of princes in Worms. The fol-

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[11] Silberschmidt, Bergwesens; Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 163. In selling the mining rights at Rheingrafenstein, Franz declared: "die weyll mir aber uss etlichen ehehafftenn zugefallen ursachenn solichs furan dermassen zu buwenn besorglich." StdA Ft, Häberlin 29: 3 Nov. 1514. This would seem to belie Ulmann's (ibid., p. 17 assertion that the Rheingrafenstein mines flourished under Franz. The statements of Leodius (Sickingen, pp. 294-306) concerning the richness of the Ebernburg mines are also unreliable in view of the author's general purpose of showing how Franz owed his rise to the Electors Palatine.

lowing year, Franz, his father, Hans VI and Conrad von Sickingen were part of Elector Philip's retinue at the important imperial diet of Worms. In the Bavarian Succession War Franz fought on the side of the Palatinate as did his father and other members of the family.[12] In 1505 when financial crisis threatened the Palatinate, he guaranteed two debts of the elector. That same year Franz appeared for the first time as Palatine Amtmann of Kreuznach. In this capacity he and the Count Palatine of Simmern's Amtmann helped bring about a number of settlements involving different dependents of the Amt and verified documents. As Amtmann he applied pressure to the abbot of Disibodenberg in 1511 to place the monastery under Palatine protection. Franz also appeared on several occasions as a Palatine member of the Kreuznach Hofgericht.[13]

While still Amtmann of Kreuznach, Franz was also named Amtmann of Böckelheim nearby. This appointment was the result of a 2,000 Gulden loan to the elector for which Franz would ordinarily have received an income of 100 Gulden. Instead,

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[12]Gärtner, Schlösser, I, 29; Hertzog, Alsatiae, pp. 145-47; Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 12-14.

[13]Franz guaranteed a further obligation of Elector Louis V in 1512. StdA Ft, Ar. Häberlin 29: 26 April 1505, Heidelberg; 14 Oct. 1512; LA Sp, A1/1714: 14 Aug. 1505, Bacharach; Münch, Sickingen, II, #6-8; C. von Stramberg and A.J. Weidenbach, Das Nahethal, (Rheinischer Antiquarius, ser. 2, vols. 16-20; Koblenz, 1869-71), XVI, 126; StA Ds, A2: 12 April 1508; Remling, Klöster, I, 41; W. Dotzauer, Die vordere Grafschaft Sponheim als pfälzisch-badisches Kondominium 1437-1707/08, die Entwicklung zum kurpfälzischen Oberamt Kreuznach unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des badischen Kondominatsfaktors, (Bad Kreuznach, 1963), pp. 235, 237.

however, he was made Amtmann, with the usual responsibilities of protecting the inhabitants, enforcing the elector's prerogatives in the Amt, and providing safe conduct. Of the regular dues of the Amt, he was to turn over to the elector 200 Gulden, while the rest was to be kept for the maintenance of the Amt and for his own purposes. Franz was not to be dismissed from the Amt until the 2,000 Gulden had been repaid, but he was required to agree to assume the Amt of Stromberg as well for no extra compensation should the elector wish to appoint a new Amtmann there.[14]

Franz probably gave up his position of Amtmann of Kreuznach sometime between August 1513 and the beginning of his feud with Worms in 1515. In holding this office he had followed in the footsteps of his father who had been Amtmann from 1478 to about 1484. His early career was thus similar to that of so many other members of the Sickingen family. It revolved around service to the Elector Palatine as a soldier in wartime, as an Amtmann in the territorial administration, and as a creditor, the latter function bringing him income and authority in pledge. Nevertheless, a certain tension between the Palatinate and Franz can be detected during these early years in Franz's relations to his subjects in Ebernburg, and it existed in the

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[14] StA Mb, P.A. 110: 3 Sept. 1509, Heidelberg. In 1511 Elector Louis V pledged to Franz a yearly income of 100 Gulden from the villages of the Amt of Böckelheim for 2,000 Gulden, which probably indicates that Franz's tenure as Amtmann there had been terminated by a new agreement. GStA Mü, Kurpf. Urk. #1980: 22 Feb. 1511, Heidelberg.

Burgfrieden at Hohenburg in which Franz promised to stand by Hans Hofwart von Kirchheim if the latter were attacked by the Elector Palatine.[15] In later years other elements would contribute eventually to a total estrangement between Franz and the Palatinate. In 1514 Franz took part as a Palatine counselor in the delegation which was sent by Elector Louis V to Tübingen to help bring about a settlement of the troubles between Duke Ulrich of Württemberg and the estates of his territory.[16] This is the last known occasion on which Franz appeared formally in the service of the Palatinate, but his relationship to the elector remained of utmost importance.

Unlike his father, who remained entirely committed to the Elector Palatine, Franz was engaged in the service of other lords as well, even during the earlier part of his career. In 1502 he was serving as Amtmann of Dhaun on behalf of the Rhinegraves. Nine years later Franz guaranteed an obligation on their behalf. In 1507 Franz acted as a guarantor of a debt of Count Palatine John of Simmern. Both the Rhinegraves and the Count Palatine of Simmern were overlords of Franz, and they mainted good relations with the Palatinate.[17]

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[15] OÖLA Li, Sch. 355/197, 1: 28 July 1505.

[16] Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 20.

[17] Stramberg and Weidenbach, Nahethal, XIX, 245; StdA Ft, Ar. Häberlin 29: 14 July 1511; 11 Nov. 1507, Strassburg; Cohn, Palatinate, pp. 167-68.

In 1509 Franz was taken into the service of Archbishop Uriel of Mainz as a Diener von Haus aus with six horses, to accommodate a page and four armed retainers. For this he was to be paid a yearly wage of 150 Gulden and be supplied with the customary uniform. He was to serve the archbishop against all potential enemies with the explicit exception of the Elector Palatine. Franz's service to the Palatinate was not to be jeopardized. In view of this clause and the fact that Archbishop Uriel had been Elector Philip's protégé, the contract was not likely to cause a conflict of loyalties. The employment of Franz by the archbishop of Mainz was similar to that of numerous other members of the Sickingen family in the middle of the fifteenth century, but the pay was considerably better, due probably to inflation as well as Franz's stature. Franz appears never to have given up this service contract.[18]

Franz's ties to the princes were thus more diversified than his father's had been, although this was quite typical of the Sickingen family as a whole. The relations with the Elector Palatine, the Rhinegraves, the Count Palatine of Simmern,

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[18] Münch, Sickingen, II, #9: 25 March 1509, Mainz. It is possible that Franz's appointment as a Mainz Diener was part of a settlement over jurisdiction in Sobernheim, for shortly before, Franz has been involved, both privately and in his capacity as Amtmann of Kreuznach, in a dispute over rights in the area with the archbishop's Hofmeister, Thomas Rüdt von Collenberg. About three weeks after being ordered by the Elector Palatine, whose counselors were in Mainz at the time, to release goods confiscated from Collenberg, Franz was taken on as a Diener by the archbishop of Mainz. StdA Ft, Ar. Häberlin 29: 7 Feb. 1508 - 5 March 1509; Cohn, Palatinate, p. 143; StA Wü, Mz. In. 62: Franz's receipts for the 150 Gulden for the years 1512-15 and 1521.

and the archbishop of Mainz are the only formal ties beyond feudal ones which Franz von Sickingen established with princes before 1515. There are indications, however, that his relations with a number of other lords were not the best. Prior to 1512, for example, Franz appears to have been involved in a feud with Hessen, for in that year he asked the regents of the territory not to take reprisals against him. In 1513 the Hessian regents paid Franz 100 Gulden on behalf of Johann von Morsheim. The Sickingen family had grievances against Hessen stemming from the Bavarian Succession War, and it may be that the incident was in some way related, but nothing more is known. For Franz, however, the settlement of accounts with Hessen was yet to come.[19]

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[19] Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 21; Demandt, Schriftgut, VI, #4398. Franz may also have been involved in a dispute with the archbishop of Köln about this same time. Waltz, Flersheimer Chronik, p. 54. The tension between Franz and the Count Palatine of Zweibrücken resulting from damages in the Bavarian Succession War was ended by the agreement of 1516 as discussed above. Traditionally (Münch, Sickingen, I, 15-16; Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 20) Franz's first feud is taken to have been one on behalf of one of his retainers against the count of Zweibrücken-Bitsch in 1508. The single source for this account (Hertzog, Alsatiae, V, 48-9), however, says only that Franz brought about the final settlement, which appears to have been favorable to the retainer. Rather than having participated actively in the feud against the count, it appears more likely that Franz used his dual role as vassal of the one party and lord of the other to mediate between the two.

## Franz's Feuds and Military Campaigns 1515-1521

There was nothing that particularly distinguished Franz's career before 1515 from that of other nobles. Although he possessed more extensive holdings, credit for their acquisition belonged to his immediate ancestors. In 1515, however, Franz began a feud with the city of Worms, which was the take-off point for his meteoric rise to national prominence and power.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Worms was troubled by serious conflicts between the municipal government and the bishop and other ecclesiastical groups in the city. As a result of the Bavarian Succession War in which the bishop had sided with the Palatinate, the emperor had conferred full authority in the city on the municipality. In the years that followed, the city naturally sought the continued protection of the emperor, while the bishop looked to the nearby Elector Palatine for support. With its possessions and prerogatives threatened by an assertive municipality, the nobility of the region also sided with the bishop. In 1507 sixty-five nobles meeting in Wimpfen declared feud on the city on behalf of the ecclesiastical establishments. Although Franz was not among them, three of his distant cousins, the brothers Martin, Georg, and Philip von Sickingen, and many of his later supporters were.[20]

Against this background of tension between the municipality of Worms on one hand, and the bishop, the Elector Palatine,

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[20] Boos, Urkundenbuch, III, 513-17.

and the nobility on the other, there occurred an uprising in the city which overthrew the council in 1513. Within a year, however, its members managed to regain power, and the participants in the uprising were punished with banishment and the confiscation of their property. Among those so dealt with was an episcopal notary named Balthasar Schlör. Schlör turned to Franz von Sickingen for assistance in regaining his lost property. Franz engaged Schlör as his secretary and took up his cause against the city by declaring feud.

Franz's feud with Worms immediately brings to mind comparisons with the war carried on by his father a quarter century earlier against the city of Köln. Indeed there were notable similarities. In both cases a pretext of questionable validity was adopted to give the undertakings legitimacy; the targets of both feuds were imperial cities with many enemies; Franz, like his father, was placed under the imperial ban with little effect; and finally the stand of the Elector Palatine, the prince in the best position to put a stop to the feuds, was crucial to both. The similarities, however, end here. Swicker VIII had had a personal grievance against Köln, while Franz had no real quarrel with Worms himself. Worms, surrounded by the Palatinate and a hostile nobility, was in an even more isolated position than Köln. With a population of perhaps 16,000, it was less than half Köln's size.[21] Franz's feud, although it had Elector Louis V's tacit approval, was a far more independent effort than his father's feud, which had been a

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[21] J.C. Russell, Medieval Regions and their Cities, (Indiana, 1972), p. 92.

part of Elector Philip's policy. It was in their scale, however, that the two feuds contrasted most dramatically. Swicker VIII's activities, though they attracted national attention, never went beyond the level of ambushes and harassment of merchants. Within a few months, on the other hand, Franz had gathered an army which according to the Flersheimer Chronik numbered 5,000 foot and 1,500 horse. With it he attempted an attack on the city itself which, however, proved unsuccessful, and his army eventually withdrew after ravishing the surrounding countryside.

Franz's success in fielding such numbers was due less to his own reputation than to the unfortunate situation in which Worms found itself. As events of 1507 had shown, it was easy to drum up support for a campaign against Worms among the nobility, when the interference of powerful princes was not to be feared. The emperor, occupied by the struggle with France, could give little support to the city. Other imperial estates, where they were not sympathetic to Franz, preferred not to risk opposing him. The imperial ban thus remained for the most part unenforced. Although Franz's campaign failed to force Worms into submission, it added greatly to his reputation. The feud dragged on for two more years as a series of attacks on Worms citizens and their property, and Franz emerged, as his father had from the feud with Koln, as a feared and respected warrior.[22]

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[22]Waltz, Flersheimer Chronik, p. 71; HHStA Vn, RRb. A: 17 Feb. 1516. For the Worms feud, see Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 31-46.

At the same time Franz entered into a sort of alliance with Count Robert II of Mark. The counts of Mark inhabited a part of the broad border region between France and Germany, an area in which they and other dynasts like them could play Habsburg and Valois off against each other to their own best advantage. They carried on intermittent feuding with the Habsburg government in the Netherlands, and thus were a natural ally for Franz who could use his relationship with them to pressure the emperor should Maximilian wish to take more aggressive action against him.[23] In view of the fact that Franz's own holdings lay in or near this border region, his ties to Mark and the Worms feud took Franz himself a step in the direction of becoming such a border dynast.

As the feud with Worms dragged on, Franz soon became involved in another war, this one against a fairly substantial prince, the duke of Lorraine. Duke Antoine was a partisan of France and therefore an antagonist of the emperor, though he was nominally a prince of the empire and at peace with Maximilian. He was in much the same position as Franz's ally, the count of Mark. In 1516 a German lord, Gangolf von Geroldseck, began an ostensibly private feud, but one which was in fact secretly instigated and supported by the emperor against Duke Antoine. When the operation bogged down, Franz von Sickingen joined the attack on Lorraine. His castle of Nanstein and holdings in lower Alsace provided convenient bases of operation. After

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[23]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 55-57.

capturing a border castle and proceeding to lay waste the countryside, Franz soon made the duke wish for peace. In return for payment of his expenses, Franz withdrew from Lorraine. At the same time he was made a Diener of Duke Antoine for a yearly pension.[24] This was probably less an effort to obtain Franz's service than to ensure his future neutrality, but it does indicate the degree of respect which Franz commanded.

The successful feud with Lorraine, even more than that with Worms, established Franz's reputation as a military commander. According to a contemporary chronicler, Hubert Thomas Leodius, the German nobility now raised Sickingen on a pedestal, praising him to the stars, urging him on to greater deeds, and even declaring him worthy of the imperial crown itself. While this may be an exaggeration, there can be little doubt that Franz's success, though relatively minor in the context of European affairs, was a brilliant contrast to the major failure of imperial arms in Italy.[25]

The war against Lorraine also brought Franz to the attention of the king of France. Through the mediation of the counts of Mark, Franz was invited to the French court and taken into the king's service for a sizeable pension of several thousand francs. He pledged to serve France against all enemies except-

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[24] pp. 48-54.

[25] p. 54.

ing only the counts of Mark. Here the seriousness of Franz's commitment is evident, for there is no mention of the Palatinate or the other lords to whom Franz was bound. Besides providing a handsome income and adding to his sense of self-importance, the tie to France could serve as further protection since Franz remained under the imperial ban.

Franz expected to be taken into the king's confidence and be entrusted with important missions. To King Francis, however, Sickingen was just another minor German ally who was to be used when the time was appropriate. Under these conditions, Franz grew dissatisfied. When his pension was not paid on time, and an attack by Franz on Milanese merchants under French protection threatened his relationship with the king, Franz left French service.[26]

While still bound to France, Sickingen also entered the service of Duke Ulrich of Württemberg, another antagonist of the Habsburgs, who like Franz had fallen under the imperial ban. This step too was an effort on Sickingen's part to gain powerful support should Worms bring about a concerted campaign against him.[27] For Emperor Maximilian, however, Duke Ulrich was a far more dangerous opponent, and he was soon persuaded that it would be advisable to win Franz over rather than continue to attempt to enforce the ban against him. A first step

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[26]pp. 57-61; Liebenau, "Sickingen," p. 152.

[27]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 66-71. The emperor was able to occupy the castle of Hohenburg temporarily, but beyond this nothing further was achieved against Franz.

in this direction was taken in 1517 when Maximilian lifted the ban, and a truce in the Worms feud was agreed upon. In return Franz promised to serve the emperor should war with Württemberg break out. In the spring of 1518 a full reconciliation between Maximilian and Franz took place. Sickingen met the emperor in Innsbruck and was taken into his service for a yearly pension of 600 Gulden, with an additional 2,000 Gulden for the recruitment of troops. Franz was to break his ties with France, but he requested that the emperor also come to terms with his lord, the Elector Palatine.[28] Franz was thus once more in a secure position. The ending of the Worms feud called for no compensation for damages to either party, a decision which could only have been to Sickingen's advantage. Worms calculated its losses due to military expenditures and damages at 100,000 Gulden.[29]

For the first time in about a century, a member of the Sickingen family was once again in imperial service, but this condition did little to restrict Franz's activities. Having defied the highest authority in Germany for two years while carrying on two profitable wars only emboldened him to undertake further adventures. To avenge the murder of a certain

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[28] pp. 82-89. Issues stemming from the Bavarian Succession War more than a decade earlier had still not been settled. A few months after Franz's reconciliation with the emperor, a reconciliation between Elector Palatine Louis V and Maximilian finally took place.

[29] H. Boos, "Franz von Sickingen und die Stadt Worms," ZGO, N.F. III (1888): 420.

Pierre Soufroy in July 1518, Franz declared feud on the city of Metz and soon appeared with an army drawn from as far away as Lake Constance and numbering 10,000 men according to contemporaries. Before it could come to serious fighting, however, Metz bought Sickingen off for over 25,000 Gulden.[30] No sooner was the money pocketed than Franz and his army moved against his next objective, the landgraviate of Hessen.

It appears likely that Franz had been planning to strike at Hessen for some time, and it may well be that the army which first attacked Metz was actually recruited from the very beginning with Hessen in mind. During the Bavarian Succession War the landgrave of Hessen had confiscated property belonging to Franz's distant cousin, Hans VI von Sickingen, along the Bergstrasse. In 1517 Hans had ceded his claim to these holdings to Franz. In January 1518 Franz wrote Hessen asking that the property be returned, but received a negative reply. Franz thus had technical grounds of his own for taking hostile action against Hessen. General circumstances, moreover, made the landgraviate particularly vulnerable. Hessen was in a state of near anarchy occasioned by the death of Landgrave William and the long minority of his son Philip. The administration of the territory was torn apart by a struggle for the regency between William's widow and the greater part of the nobility. In an effort to bring the disorder to an end, Emperor Maximilian had

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[30]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 93-99.

declared the fourteen-year-old Philip of age early in 1518, but the hostility between the factions continued. Furthermore, most of Hessen's neighbors had been antagonized to one degree or another such that the young prince could expect very little support from without should a conflict arise. The Elector Palatine in particular continued to hold claims stemming from the Bavarian Succession War against Hessen, just as did Franz and many other nobles like him.

When a feud broke out between Hessen and another noble, Conrad von Hattstein, Franz saw it as an opportunity to take the offensive. While still encamped before Metz, Franz sent his declaration of feud, on his own behalf and as a supporter of Hattstein. Within two weeks Franz overran the territory, encircling most of the Hessian nobility in Darmstadt, and forcing them and the landgrave to come to terms. Resistance had been disorganized and half-hearted at best. By the peace treaty signed in Darmstadt, Franz was to receive the property which Hessen had confiscated from Hans VI von Sickingen, in addition to 35,000 Gulden for the costs of the campaign. This sum was to be guaranteed by eighty Hessian nobles and paid within three weeks. Beyond this, however, the landgrave was obliged to guarantee satisfaction in one form or another to a considerable number of individuals who had complaints of their own against Hessen, but who in some cases had not taken part in the feud. These ranged from Landgrave Philip's own mother and the counts of Henneberg and Hanau, to a whole series of lesser nobles.

The treaty was thus a very drastic humiliation of the landgrave, for its terms impinged on the internal affairs of his territory, in areas where Sickingen had no claim to speak whatsoever.[31]

The attack on Hessen was Franz's boldest move to date. He had defeated and humiliated the ruler of one of Germany's more important principalities, at a time when Franz was nominally at least in the emperor's service. None of the imperial estates gave aid to Hessen except to attempt to mediate, and the emperor issued a mandate which only forbade Sickingen the use of force to ensure Hessen's compliance with the treaty. While many princes had not been on the best terms with Hessen, the spectacular success and highhandedness of Franz's actions were disturbing to all of them, including the Elector Palatine. Understandably the young landgrave, who later emerged as one of the most dynamic princes of the Reformation period, bore a deep personal grudge against Sickingen.

No sooner had the Darmstadt treaty been concluded, than Franz moved against his next target. For several months he had been involved in a dispute with the city council of Frankfurt over goods he had originally confiscated from merchants. When Franz learned that Frankfurt had supplied the landgrave with some flour, even though other more vital military supplies had been withheld in an effort to maintain the city's neutrality,

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[31]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 103-22.

he declared feud. Frankfurt's captain, Jacob von Cronberg, refused to serve against Sickingen, and thus the city quickly gave in, fearing to oppose an army which was already assembled at its doorstep. Frankfurt was now obliged to pay Franz 4,000 Gulden. As in the treaty with Hessen, further provisions required the settlement of claims held against Frankfurt by a number of other nobles, including Franz's son-in-law, Oyer van Cleen.[32]

These activities do not appear to have tarnished Sickingen's relations with the emperor, for certainly they did not diminish his usefulness. Quite the contrary, the reputation that Franz was building made him all the more important to Habsburg policies. In December of 1518 it appears that Franz was planning on behalf of Maximilian to pressure Basel and Mülhausen to drop out of the Swiss Confederation.[33] The following month, however, the emperor died suddenly, and thus a problem of far greater concern had to be settled: the election of a new emperor. The principal candidates, King Charles of Spain, the former emperor's grandson, and King Francis of France, now worked to obtain the support of any individuals or groups who could in some way exert pressure on the electors. The military potential of Sickingen along with the financial power of the Fugger family was thus courted by both sides, and Franz, like Jacob Fugger, chose Charles. At the same time Franz was

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[32]pp. 123-25.

[33]Mossmann, Mulhouse, V, #2094-95.

induced to demonstrate his loyalty to the Habsburg cause by participating in a campaign against a former lord, the duke of Württemberg.

Following Maximilian's death, Duke Ulrich, an antagonist of the Habsburgs and the free cities and a friend of France, forcibly occupied the imperial town of Reutlingen. The powerful Swabian League supported by the emperor now assumed direction of a punitive expedition against the duke. Sickingen joined the league's army in April 1519 with between 7,000 and 8,000 men, and resistance essentially dissolved as Ulrich's Swiss allies abandoned him and the duke himself fled the territory. Although the campaign appears to have been profitable for him, Franz may have seriously miscalculated. Since the end of the Bavarian Succession War, Duke Ulrich and Elector Palatine Louis V had settled their differences and had in fact become close allies, related through marriage and similar interests. In the war of 1519 it would not have been inconceivable to find Elector Louis on the side of Württemberg. In fact in a later letter to the imperial cities, Franz claimed that he had prevented the Elector Palatine and the landgrave of Hessen from sending aid to Duke Ulrich, an act for which Elector Louis never forgave him. Although Franz may have exaggerated, there can be little doubt that his participation against Ulrich displeased the elector.[34]

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[34]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 138-47; Häusser, Pfalz, I, 507. See app. B, #170, 1519.

The Habsburgs and their agents were quick to realize that the army that had been assembled for the war against Württemberg would have its uses in the forthcoming imperial election. It was imperative that a show of military strength on behalf of King Charles be staged in view of the fact that a number of German princes appeared intent on raising troops in support of the king of France. Negotiations were thus resumed with Sickingen, and he and the Habsburg general, Georg von Frundsberg, were charged with leading 14,000 men to Frankfurt. Franz was given command of the cavalry. The army fulfilled its purpose. Encamped before Frankfurt, it not only intimidated German princes like the landgrave of Hessen who might have resorted to arms in favor of France, but also those electors, such as the archbishop of Trier and the Elector Palatine, who leaned toward King Francis. Charles of Spain, with the help of financial incentives and the implicit threat of force, was thus unanimously elected emperor in June 1519.[35]

Franz von Sickingen had now performed the most valuable service for the house of Habsburg. In October 1519 Franz was formally given the title of imperial "Rath, Khemmerling, Hauptmann und Diener" at a salary of 3,000 Brabantine Gulden. He was to maintain a troop of horse at all times, for which he was to receive another 7,200 Gulden a year. Franz promised to serve the emperor against all foes excepting only Count Robert of Mark,

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[35]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 148-61.

his brother the bishop of Liège, and the duke of Lorraine. No mention, however, was made of the Elector Palatine.[36] The scope and boldness of Sickingen's earlier freebooting had already removed him from the traditional role played by his ancestors and other nobles of the middle Rhine region. The imperial appointment made even a return to this independent style of operation more difficult. Franz was now committed to the wide-ranging policies of Charles V.

The disadvantages of Habsburg service soon became apparent. Toward the end of 1520 Franz extended a loan of 20,000 Gulden to the emperor with neither interest nor security. It is possible that Franz was to be compensated with property or authority in Württemberg, which since Duke Ulrich's expulsion had been in Habsburg hands, but nothing certain is known.[37] A few months later Franz received orders from Charles V to raise an army of 17,000 men for a war against France, the only problem being that the emperor could not pay for it at the moment, so that Franz would have to do so himself on credit. Charles wrote in his own hand that Franz should trust him for he would be suitably rewarded.

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[36] pp. 161-62; Münch, Sickingen, II, #71. For Franz's engagement as a Rat and Diener by the grandmaster of the Teutonic Order a month prior to the formal imperial appointment, see Münch, Sickingen, I, 140-46; II, #83.

[37] Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 163. Franz together with Conrad von Sickingen had already made a sizeable loan of 4,000 Gulden at 4 1/2% to the bishop of Speyer earlier in 1520. Krebs, Speyerer Domkapitels, II, #5495.

Franz accepted the commission and in August 1521 led an army westward to join with the imperial forces under the count of Nassau who was to retain the supreme command. After the capture of the fortress of Mouzon on the Meuse, it became clear that the two leaders had differing views as to the proper conduct of the campaign. Sickingen, who favored a bold strike into the heart of France, was forced to yield to the more cautious Nassau, who intended first to reduce the other French frontier fortifications. The imperial army thus moved on to Mezières, which was surrounded and subsequently subjected to siege, but as the weeks passed, the prospects of taking the town grew slim. Dissatisfaction among the soldiers who were not receiving their pay and dissension between Sickingen and Nassau finally led to a termination of the siege and to a complete abandonment of the campaign. Blame for the failure was placed principally on Franz von Sickingen.

The outcome of the Meuse campaign was a serious blow to Sickingen. Financially it was a disaster. In November 1521 Charles promised Franz 76,500 Gulden for his losses, but the payments, like those for the earlier 20,000 Gulden, failed to be made on time. In addition to the losses in money and in war materials, Franz's reputation as a military commander and his credibility as a leader, who could guarantee his followers good pay and spoils, were severely shaken. He remained nominally in the emperor's service, but took an active part in Habsburg policy no more.[38]

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[38]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 187-229.

While still before Mezières Franz had already decided on a new operation, one of his own choosing in which he would have a free hand as in his earlier ventures. It was to be directed against the archbishop of Trier. The Trier feud, which erupted the following year, was nevertheless quite different from Franz's earlier ventures, not only in its outcome, but also in the various elements that went into it, including Franz's own motivations. Indeed, it was the first military action of any kind to be tied in any way to the young Lutheran movement. It was also a war which has been interpreted as having been much more than just another of Sickingen's audacious projects, and rather as a "knights' revolt" occasioned by general social and political pressures on the lower nobility as a whole. Before considering these problems associated with the Trier feud, it is instructive to consider the participants in Sickingen's early adventures, for Franz intended to wage this new feud by the same methods. It is also pertinent to assess to what degree Franz translated the profits of the years 1515 to 1522 into the expansion or strengthening of his extensive holdings. Finally, it is necessary to analyze Franz's relationship to other more general unrest within his class as well as his involvement in the currents of humanism and religious reform prior to the feud.

## Sickingen's Basis of Military Support

Franz von Sickingen has been called one of the two "great exponents in the Holy Roman Empire of military entrepreneurship on the leader's own account and risk" at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The other, perhaps by no coincidence, was Sickingen's friend, Robert of Mark, who may well have served as a model for Franz.[39] In any case Sickingen brought new dimensions to the traditional noble feud in Germany. Sickingen's armies, in contrast to the relatively small mounted bands of earlier days, numbered in the thousands and were made up of cavalry, infantry, and artillery. They were thus quite modern and certainly a match for the troops which the territorial princes could field. Franz, however, though he might be a well-to-do nobleman, was of limited means, considering the expense of such operations. Indeed all lords, including Charles V, were finding it increasingly difficult to finance their wars. As long as campaigns were short and successful, however, troops could easily be paid from tribute and booty collected from the defeated enemy. Sickingen's early feuds were of this type, and thus as his reputation grew after each successful war, he had little difficulty attracting mercenaries to serve under him. He was further aided by what appears to have been a considerable increase

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[39] F. Redlich, The German Military Enterpriser and his Work Force, 2 vols., (Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, vols. 47 and 48; Wiesbaden, 1964-65), I, 35.

in population in southwestern Germany in the early decades of the sixteenth century. For many, soldiering was a necessity.[40]

Moreover, in his private feuds, Franz never had to worry about paying his entire army. For the attack on Worms, for example, Hans von Helmstadt and Hartmuth von Cronberg each brought at their own expense about 300 horse, while Götz von Berlichingen and Hans Thomas von Rosenberg contributed from seventy to eighty.[41] The support of Franz's fellow nobles was thus an important ingredient in his success. In addition to the active personal service of friendly nobles, Franz was also given the right to use for his own purposes many noble Ganerbenburgen to which he did not belong. In the final feud against Trier, it was said that twelve such castles had opened their gates to him.[42] These castles, in addition to those he held or in which he was a member, gave Franz widely spread strong points from which to attack his enemies.

The bonds of kinship and marriage probably induced men like Wirich von Gemmingen and Friedrich von Flersheim to join

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[40]K.F. Helleiner, "The Population of Europe from the Black Death to the Eve of the Vital Revolution," in The Economy of Expanding Europe in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, (The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, vol. 6, ed. by E.E. Rich and C.H. Wilson; Cambridge, 1967), pp. 24, 30.

[41]Münch, Sickingen, I, 28-29.

[42]Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 319.

Franz.[43] Men like Melchior von Rüdesheim and Conrad Kolb von Wartenberg were fellow Gemeiner with Franz in the Ganerben castles of Steinkallenfels and Wartenberg respectively. Such ties, however, did not automatically mean participation in Franz's ventures. Franz's nearest Sickingen relative, for example, Conrad von Sickingen, although he had close dealings with Franz, never joined in any of his feuds. This may have been a consequence either of his age or the fact that he was an important official of the bishop of Speyer. Some nobles joined Franz to satisfy grievances of their own, as was the case with many of the participants in the feud with Hessen. Most, however, were men like Gotz von Berlichingen, who though they might call Sickingen their brother-in-law (Schwager) in the loose parlance of the day, participated purely out of a hope for gain. Nor did greater lords like the counts of Solms, Zollern, and Fürstenberg hesitate to aid Sickingen for the same reason.

For his part Franz carefully cultivated ties to the members of his class in an effort to obtain their aid or ensure their continued support. In December 1515 after Götz von Berlichingen had participated in the initial attack on Worms, Franz acted as a mediator between him and the archbishop of Mainz. Several months later Franz again offered to mediate between

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[43] Gemmingen and Flersheim were later each fined 1,000 Gulden by the Elector Palatine for supporting Sickingen. GLA Kr, 67/830: 26 Dec. 1522; 15 Feb. 1523, Heidelberg.

Götz and Mainz in response to a plea from a relative of a Mainz counselor whom Götz had recently captured. In return Berlichingen was to serve Franz in a forthcoming operation and grant him Öffnung in his castle. In making this offer Franz was trying to pacify two of his supporters, for the relative of the Mainz counselor was Count Philip of Solms, who had aided Sickingen against Worms. Three years later when Götz von Berlichingen was imprisoned by the city of Heilbronn, Franz once again came to his assistance, obliging the city to release him from the dungeon, and finally in 1521 Franz wrote Heilbronn on Götz's behalf to remind the city of their agreement.[44] Mediation on behalf of friends or relatives was certainly a common practice, but for Franz it was an effective means of building support.

In the settlement of the feuds with Hessen and Frankfurt, Franz included express provisions for the satisfaction of grievances held by other nobles. In so doing he posed as their

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[44] H. Ulmschneider, Götz von Berlichingen, (Sigmaringen, 1974), pp. 85-87; Knupfer and von Rauch, Heilbronn, III, #2516a-ww Other examples of Franz mediating on behalf of close supporters or relatives, such as Peter Scher, Melchior von Rüdesheim, Wolf Eckenbrecht von Dürkheim, and Johann von Helfenstein-Sporkenburg, can be found in M. Krebs, ed., "Die Protokolle des Konstanzer Domkapitels, 1487-1526," 7 pts., ZGO, N.F. LXI (1952): 128-257; LXII (1953): 74-156; LXIII (1954): 274-318; LXIV-V (1955-56): Beihefte; LXVII-LXVIII (1958-59): Beihefte, pt. 6, #5481, #6002, #6225, #6279; Toepfer, Hunolstein, III, 261; H.W. Herrmann, ed., Geschichte der Grafschaft Saarwenden bis zum Jahre 1527, (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für saarländische Landesgeschichte und Volksforschung, vol. 1; Saarbrücken, 1957-62), p. 134; F. Michel, Die Herren von Helfenstein, (Trierisches Archiv, Ergänzungsheft VI; Trier, 1906), p. 83.

spokesman and thus helped create a reputation, whether deserved or not, as the champion of the oppressed. This reputation obtained particularly among the nobility, but it extended to other levels of society as well, for Franz did his best to nurture it by taking up private causes throughout Germany.[45] Such causes provided the pretexts in whole or part for the feuds against Worms, Metz, and Hessen. Usually, however, as in the case of Franz's aid to Götz von Berlichingen, it did not come to an open declaration of feud. Sickingen's intercession, with its implicit threat of force, was often sufficient incentive to a rapid settlement.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that Sickingen enjoyed the support of the nobility in its entirety. Certainly one major block of nobles found themselves in bitter opposition to Sickingen. The feud against Hessen with its humiliating peace terms was directed as much against the nobility of the territory as against the young landgrave. Only those nobles whose commitments to princes did not interfere and who could afford to take the risks participated actively in Franz's feuds. In Sickingen's early adventures, however, the approval or indifference of the Elector Palatine enabled nobles of the upper and middle Rhine to participate without excessive risk. Conditions for the Trier feud, however, would be quite different.

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[45] Intercession by Franz on behalf of various nonnoble parties from Alsace to East Prussia can be found in Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 125-27; Knupfer and von Rauch, Heilbronn, II, #1585; III, #2475; Keussen, Urkundenarchiv, #420; AV Sb, I5 (32), #4.

In the works of many scholars, Franz's feuds are reduced to the level of ambitious plundering expeditions on the part of a robber-baron who achieves his ends by the use of force in defiance of established law.[46] While it is true that Sickingen's enterprises did in practice amount to plundering expeditions, to see them simply as an expression of an archaic and illegal Faustrecht is to misjudge the place of the feud in late medieval German society.[47] The feud was an accepted part of the legal process and was regulated by a set of rules to distinguish a just from an unjust feud. Only in the latter case was it possible to talk of a criminal act. The looting and destruction of property were not the end in a feud but the means. While it is true that the diet of Worms in 1495 outlawed the feud as a form of legal recourse, the institution was far too deeply ingrained not only within the lower nobility but in all levels of society. Men like Sickingen and those who brought their cases to him were not at all conscious that they were acting illegally. The degree to which this attitude prevailed is shown by the fact that the criminal code issued for the empire in 1532 by Charles V, the so-called "Carolina,"

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[46] See for example: Jaeger, "Aufstand," pp. 15-16, 22-24; Boos, Städtekultur, IV, 131; G.R. Elton, Reformation Europe 1517-1559, (History of Europe, ed. by J. Plumb; New York, 1963), pp. 25-26.

[47] For this discussion, see particularly O. Brunner, Land und Herrschaft: Grundfragen der territorialen Verfassungsgeschicht Österreichs im Mittelalter, (6th ed.; Darmstadt, 1970), pp. 14, 34, 83-4.

once again allowed the feud under certain conditions. What was needed in Germany was not only the machinery to enforce a ban against feuding, but a reform of the judicial system to provide an effective legal alternative.

Sickingen's motives are rightly to be questioned, however. It does not appear that Franz took any great pains to assure himself that the causes he supported warranted feuds. Even if Franz was in fact convinced that Balthasar Schlör had been unjustly dealt with as Ulmann believes,[48] it is clear that the feud with Worms aimed at more than simply just satisfaction for Schlör. In this undertaking as in Franz's other feuds, plunder and profit rather than the settlement of a claim were the principal ends. This of course was the abuse to which the feud was most commonly subjected, making it a very unsatisfactory form of legal procedure.

Franz's military campaigns, therefore, were a combination of traditional and modern methods. To the traditional feud in which relatives and friends participated, often at their own expense, Franz added the modern recruitment of infantry and the use of artillery. He assured himself of a sizeable noble following by his frequent intercession on behalf of individual nobles in disputes. Each successful military operation was then a good advertisement to attract further supporters, be they nobles or simple Landsknechte, who could expect plunder and profit.

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[48]Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 39.

## The Increase in Franz's Estate 1515-1522

After 1515 Franz's regular income was augmented by the profits of his freebooting military adventures. Whereas the costs of hiring mercenaries and retainers must have been considerable, there was nevertheless sufficient left over to enable him to make some significant acquisitions. The most important of these was the remainder of the lordship of Landstuhl. In 1518 Franz received a further fourth, in addition to the one he already held in pledge, as a Mannlehen from Count Palatine John II of Simmern. That same year an agreement was reached with Count Reinhard of Zweibrücken-Bitsch whereby Franz was enfoeffed with a further one-sixth of the lordship and given permission to redeem the remaining two-sixths from the Count Palatine of Zweibrücken and the count of Nassau-Saarbrücken to whom they had been pledged. These latter shares were acquired in the course of the next year such that Franz came to hold the entire lordship, partly in fief and the rest allodially. The full extent of the lordship of Landstuhl at this time is not known for certain, but it must have consisted of the castle, town, and a considerable number of nearby villages, and was an impressive holding which very few simple nobles could match.[49]

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[49] See app. C, #31.

Several years later Franz was also able to acquire full control over the castle of Hohenburg, to which the Hofwart von Kirchheim still had a claim. The disputes with that family were settled, at least temporarily, through the mediation of several nobles in 1522, such that Franz gained all of Hohenburg and a number of Zweibrücken-Bitsch fiefs in return for 1,200 Gulden, which the Hofwart von Kirchheim were to receive the following year. Undoubtedly, the reputation that Franz now had was conducive to bringing about this favorable settlement.[50]

In 1519 as a result of his participation in the war against Duke Ulrich of Württemberg, Franz was promised 13,000 Gulden which Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz undertook to pay on behalf of the Swabian League. Eight thousand Gulden of this appear to have been paid. For the remainder of his expenses, Franz received the Württemberg town and Amt of Neuenbürg in pledge. An indication of the actual value of this holding is provided by the fact that Franz's sons were eventually paid 24,000 Gulden in compensation after the Amt was taken away from the family in 1523.[51] The pledge of Neuenbürg, however, appears to have been the only possession acquired by Franz directly

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[50] GStA Mü, Pf.-Zweibr. Urk. #875: 29 July 1522. With the Trier feud and Franz's death, it appears that the Hofwart von Kirchheim never received their money so that the arrangement regarding the Zweibrücken-Bitsch fiefs was later revised. See app. C, #23 and 24.

[51] StA Wü, Mz. In. 52: 21 July 1519; Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 147; Beschreibung Oberämter, vol. 39: Neuenbürg, pp. 92-93.

through his military exploits.

Franz not only devoted his energy and resources to rounding out his possessions, he also expended considerable sums toward strengthening them militarily. Conscious of the power of artillery in particular, he improved the fortification of his three principal castles: Ebernburg, Nanstein, and Hohenburg. Construction at Ebernburg was begun early in Franz's career, for his wife Hedwig had directed such during Franz's absence prior to 1515. After acquiring full control of Landstuhl in 1518, Franz greatly expanded the defenses of Nanstein as well, and further work was carried out at Hohenburg. In all three castles Franz erected a heavy battery tower, housing cannon on several tiers to protect the most vulnerable sides and dominate the surrounding area. In 1523 the Ebernburg was protected by ten large cannon and twenty-eight pieces of smaller size.[52] Franz had invested a fortune in artillery alone. Franz's strongholds thus marked a transitional phase between the traditional medieval castle and the scientific fortifications of later days. Nevertheless, the unwarranted confidence Sickingen placed in them proved fatal.

## Franz's Relationship to Humanism and the Reformation

During the years that Franz von Sickingen was rising to become one of the most powerful and feared individuals in the

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[52]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 128-29; Polke, "Ende," pp. 168-69.

Holy Roman Empire, the religious world was being shaken by the challenge of Martin Luther. For a time the paths of the two men crossed. Franz became an open adherent of Luther, but the degree of his commitment has remained problematical. Was he convinced of the necessity of religious reform or was he simply searching for another pretext for feuds or for the means of gaining further supporters? Before attempting to answer these questions and the question of Sickingen's importance for the Reformation, it is useful to consider what is known about Franz's earlier attitudes toward religion and toward the humanistic movement.

Franz was raised amid the conventional religiosity of the late middle ages. His father had been a very pious man. He had gone on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and he and his wife had journeyed to the shrine of St. Philip in Zell to pray for a son. In Ebernburg Swicker VIII had built a castle chapel, which was to serve at the same time as the new parish church. He had also begun an ambitious project which always remained dearest to his heart, the reconstruction of the monastery of Trombach. Even on his military campaigns he carried a prayerbook. Finally in his will he left instructions that money be donated to several religious establishments and that Trombach be completed. Swicker also appears to have taken a lively interest in astrology. He was not a learned man, but he understood the value of books and knowledge, for in his will Swicker also specified that all his books and letters be

turned over to Franz that he might benefit from them.[53]

Swicker was also well acquainted with the leading representatives of German humanism. The court in Heidelberg was a center of the humanistic movement, where personalities such as Johann von Dalberg, Agricola, Wimpheling, Celtis and Reuchlin enjoyed the patronage of Elector Philip.[54] There can be no doubt that Swicker VIII had close contact with these men, particularly during the time that he was Palatine Hofmeister. Franz was later to state that Reuchlin had often performed valuable service to his parents and had been an inspiration to him. The mixing of traditional religious devotion with the new currents of thought in Swicker's mind can perhaps be seen best in the naming of his son. Instead of naming him Reinhard after the paternal grandfather as was the late medieval custom, he gave him the name of a popular saint but in a classicizing form: "Franciscus."[55]

Franciscus, or Franz as he is more popularly known, like his father received no literary education in his youth. In a letter of Abbot Johannes Trithemius of 1507, Franz too is described as being very much interested in astrology and the occult. To fill the vacant position of schoolmaster in Kreuznach, Franz, in his capacity as Amtmann, appointed a man known

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[53] StA Mb, P.A. 112; Waltz, Flersheimer Chronik, pp. 81-82.

[54] Häusser, Pfalz, I, 427-51; L.W. Spitz, Conrad Celtis, the German Arch-humanist, (Cambridge, MA; 1957), pp. 45-52.

[55] The name Franciscus rather than Franz appears in nearly all documents involving Sickingen.

for his claims to mystical powers.[56] Franz thus had intellectual interests that went beyond the day-to-day experience of the ordinary nobleman.

According to his father's wish, Franz completed the construction of the Trombach monastery and set aside property and income for its maintenance in 1510. There were to be places for not more than eight nuns, living according to the Franciscan rule, with the von Sickingen family retaining the right to fill two of these places. No doubt this was intended to provide a refuge for extra daughters of the family. Formal confirmation of Trombach finally came in May 1520, but by that time Franz's religious attitudes had changed.[57]

During the campaign against Ulrich of Württemberg in 1519, Sickingen became closely acquainted with Ulrich von Hutten, the fiery poet and humanist, and fellow member of the lower nobility. Ever on the lookout for a wealthy patron who would enable him to raise German letters to their rightful place, Hutten eagerly cultivated the tie to Sickingen. He seems to have viewed Franz as a sort of rough diamond whom he could polish into a champion of the new humanism, and it appears Franz was appropriately receptive. There thus began a close

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[56] Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 9, 18-19; E. Lind, "Franz von Sickingen, Doktor Faust und die Speyerer Faustbucher," Pfalz und Pfälzer II (1951): 3-4. It is highly improbable that Franz was given formal instruction by Reuchlin as his statement concerning Reuchlin's services has sometimes been taken to indicate.

[57] Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 19-20; Münch, Sickingen, II, #204.

association which was to place Franz in the forefront of the religious upheaval which was then brewing.

After reading to Sickingen from his own works, Hutten was soon able to persuade Franz to intercede on behalf of Reuchlin in the latter's bitter struggle with the Dominicans of Köln. In typical fashion Franz threatened the Dominicans with feud if they did not cease their proceedings against the learned doctor and pay him compensation. Not wishing to risk Sickingen's wrath, a settlement in Reuchlin's favor was arranged, but before long the Dominicans returned to the attack. Franz again tried to aid Reuchlin by appealing to the emperor and the elector of Saxony on his behalf and offering him the protection of the Ebernburg. Even after Hutten had broken with Reuchlin over the latter's condemnation of Luther, Sickingen continued to support him.[58]

Sickingen's intercession in the Reuchlin controversy won him admiration in the reform-minded community, including praise from Erasmus. Franz had entered the dispute with no prospects of material gain for himself. There were no useful partisans whom he could have hoped to win over. Although one could attribute his actions simply to a desire to further demonstrate his power and augment his reputation, it is difficult to dismiss the notion that Franz was convinced of the

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[58]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 165-71; H. Holborn, Ulrich von Hutten and the German Reformation, trans. by R.H. Bainton, (New York, 1965), pp. 109-13.

justice of Reuchlin's case and the importance of humanism in general.

By the end of 1519, Hutten had come to view Luther as an ally in his campaign against the Romanists, and he was soon able to convince Sickingen of the importance of exercising his influence on behalf of the former monk as well. Several times early in 1520, Franz extended to Luther, through Hutten, an invitation to come to the Ebernburg. There he might find a refuge in which to continue his work. A similar offer of protection was extended by the Franconian noble Silvester von Schaumburg. Luther declined the offers of both men, without, however, rejecting the possibility of accepting at some time in the future. The overtures of Sickingen, Hutten, and Schaumburg were hardly an embarrassment to Luther. They revealed to Luther and the rest of Germany that his message was being favorably received by the representatives of an important level of society, the lower nobility, and in particular by a man with considerable political persuasion, Franz von Sickingen. While it may be an exaggeration to suggest that Luther was thereby emboldened to publish his three crucial pamphlets of 1520, including his "Address to the German Nobility," there can be little doubt that Luther now felt more secure. As he was later to declare, Franz von Sickingen and Silvester von Schaumburg freed him from the fear of men.[59]

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[59] Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 171-73; Holborn, Hutten, pp. 122-23, 138-42; K.H. Roth von Schreckenstein, Geschichte der ehemalige freien Reichsritterschaft in Schwaben, Franken und am Rheinstrome, 2 vols. (Tübingen, 1859-71), II, 223.

The degree to which Franz was committed to Luther's cause in the spring of 1520, however, cannot be determined. Luther's own position was still not clear. By September Hutten had found it prudent to leave Mainz, where he had been serving Archbishop Albrecht, and that month he joined Sickingen at Ebernburg. Here he remained for the next two years, issuing vicious attacks against the church and doing his best to further Luther's cause. At the same time he thoroughly converted Sickingen.[60] There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Sickingen's conversion to Luther's cause, although it is unlikely that he really understood Luther's theological position or his aims, for his teacher Hutten was uninterested in theological finepoints himself. Nevertheless, Franz furthered the movement as best he could.

Sickingen, who was in good standing with the emperor at this time, urged the latter to read Luther's works, and although he could get no favorable response, Franz remained optimistic that Charles, too, could be won over to Luther. With the proclamation of the diet of Worms before which Luther was to appear, the imperial party attempted to neutralize the effect Sickingen and Hutten might have on the proceedings and at the same time prevent Luther from even appearing if possible. From Worms the papal nuncio Aleander, completely intimidated by Hutten's invective, issued near hysterical dispatches to the effect that Sickingen was the real king in Germany and that

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[60]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 173-74.

everyone else was terrified of him. The emperor's confessor Glapion thus traveled to Ebernburg to meet with Sickingen, Hutten, and Bucer. There he gave the impression that Charles was sympathetic to Luther and that it would be to Luther's advantage to meet privately at Ebernburg with imperial representatives rather than go to Worms. The plan certainly appealed to Sickingen, for it seemed to place in his hands the role of the great mediator. Through Bucer a renewed invitation to come to Ebernburg was therefore extended to Luther, who was already on his way to Worms. Luther, however, intent on receiving a public hearing, politely refused.[61]

The events in Worms were a disappointment to Sickingen and to all of Luther's supporters. When Luther disappeared it was widely suspected that he had taken refuge with Franz and was being hidden away in one of his castles. While in fact Luther was in the safe hands of the elector of Saxony in the Wartburg, Sickingen did make the Ebernburg available as a refuge in the months that followed to a number of other early reformers. Already in the months prior to the diet of Worms, Martin Bucer had come to the Ebernburg, and it was here that he had dropped his monastic vows. After spending some time at the court of the reform-minded Count Palatine Frederick, brother of the Elector Palatine, Bucer returned to Franz in

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[61] Deutsche Reichstagsakten, Jüngere Reihe, vol. 2: Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Karl V, (Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften; Göttingen, 1962-63), pp. 449-569; Holborn, Hutten, pp. 162-71; Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 176-81.

May 1522 to assume direction of the parish of Landstuhl. In 1521 the Augsburg patrician Caspar Aquila, who had served Sickingen as chaplain in the campaign against Württemberg but had then been imprisoned by the bishop of Augsburg for his reformed views, was appointed tutor to Franz's sons. In the spring of 1522, Johannes Oekolampadius came to Ebernburg as castle chaplain. With Oekolampadius at Ebernburg, the first fundamental changes in the mass were introduced. It was here that the first verifiable church service in German and communion in both kinds were conducted. Finally Johannes Schwebel, who had joined Sickingen in 1521 as a sort of theological counselor, introduced Oekolampadius's reforms to Landstuhl which then became the first Lutheran parish in Germany. In Hutten's words, Franz had turned his castles into "sanctuaries of justice."[62]

Franz thus used his position as an independent lord of great prestige to guarantee refuge to a number of reformers who in the years that followed were to become instrumental in the Reformation's spread. In his own household and where he enjoyed patronage rights, Franz saw to the implementation of changes in the liturgy which Luther had recommended but had not yet put into effect himself. The importance of these

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[62]Steitz, "Sickingen," pp. 152-54; Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 183-86; Jung, "Gottesdienstes," pp. 213-15. For Bucer, one of the most influential of the reformers, who was active in Strassburg, Hessen, and England, see G. Anrich, Martin Bucer, (Strassburg, 1414); for Oekolampadius, the future reformer of Basel, see E. Staehelin, Das theologische Werk Johann Oekolampads, (Leipzig, 1939). Schwebel was later the reformer of Zweibrücken.

activities for the early success of the Reformation cannot be dismissed. As in the case of Sickingen's defense of Reuchlin, it is difficult to reject the notion that Franz was sincere in his support of reform. He had no real prospect of material gain. It is unlikely that he could have laid his hands on any church property or income of significance other than the Trombach convent, which he himself had endowed. On the other hand, Sickingen demonstrated a willingness to go to considerable expense to support men like Bucer who in no way could really repay him. Franz had paid for the legal proceedings when Bucer renounced his vows; he had clothed him and offered to send him to study in Wittenberg. Indeed, if we are to believe Bucer, Franz was prepared to risk life and property in the defense of the word.[63]

Luther for his part always valued Sickingen's friendship. In 1521 he dedicated his pamphlet on confession to Franz as his "lord and protector" with "heartfelt thanks for much comfort and readiness to help." In March 1522 in a letter to Hartmuth von Cronberg, Luther sent his greeting to "our friends in the faith, Franz and Ulrich von Hutten and as many more as may be." In a letter to Hutten, most likely to be dated from the summer of 1520, Luther wrote that he had more hope in Franz than in any leader under heaven.[64]

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[63] Anrich, Bucer, p. 13.

[64] S. Skalweit, Reich und Reformation, (Berlin, 1967), p. 176; Holborn, Hutten, p. 178; O. Waltz, review of Ulmann's Sickingen, Historische Zeitschrift XXXI (1874): 189.

Although they were the most significant, Franz von Sickingen and Ulrich von Hutten were by no means the only members of their class to come out in open support of Luther by 1522. In Franconia there were the von Egloffstein in addition to Silvester von Schaumburg, who like Sickingen had offered his protection to Luther in 1520. Many others, moreover, leaned toward the reform without, however, openly declaring themselves until a later date. From the Taunus area, Hartmuth von Cronberg, who had aided Franz in his early feuds, lent his pen to Luther's defense. In the vicinity of the Palatinate, particularly in the Kraichgau, Luther found numerous adherents among the nobility. The permissive attitude of Elector Louis V allowed even his closest counselors at court, men like the Grosshofmeister Ludwig von Fleckenstein, Dieter von Dalberg, and the chancellor Florenz von Venningen, to sympathize openly with Luther's teachings. In 1522 Hans Landschad von Steinach published an open letter to the elector admonishing him to take up the Lutheran cause.[65] It was thus an important group

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[65] L. Michel, Der Gang der Reformation in Franken, (Erlanger Abhandlungen zur mittleren und neueren Geschichte, vol. 4; Erlangen, 1930), p. 12; M. Spindler, ed., Handbuch der bayerischen Geschichte. 4 vols., (München, 1967-75), III, pt. 1, 199, 288; Hitchcock, Revolt, pp. 78-110; M. Brecht, "Die deutsche Ritterschaft und die Reformation," BPKG XXXVII-XXXVIII (1970-71): 302-12; id., "Die Bedeutung der Herren von Gemmingen für die Reformation im pfälzisch-fränkischen Bereich," Württembergisch Franken LVIII (1974): 109-19; Press, Calvinismus, pp. 173-78; G.A. Benrath, "Zwei Flugschriften des Reichsritters Hans Landschad von Steinach von 1522 und 1524," BPKG XL (1973): 257-87; E. Riedenauer, "Reichsritterschaft und Konfession," in Deutscher Adel 1555-1740, ed. by H. Rössler, (Darmstadt, 1965), pp. 1-63; Schottenloher, Flugschriften, pp. 4-10; M. Hannemann, The Diffusion of the Reformation in Southwestern Germany 1518-1534, (University of Chicago Department of Geography Research Paper, no. 167; Chicago, 1975), figs. 5-6.

of nobles which embraced the new teaching in these early years, but it was still only a collection of individuals. Although many more may have begun leaning in the direction, it is not possible to speak at this time of a movement within the nobility in favor of Luther. Neither Luther's appeal to the nobility of the German nation nor the influence of Sickingen and other enthusiastic nobles was able to bring this about. Balancing any spiritual appeal the reform might have along with the prospects of eliminating ecclesiastical jurisdiction and appropriating certain clerical benefices were a number of other factors which mitigated against the acceptance of reform. The importance of the cathedral chapters and religious orders in providing refuges for the offspring of large noble families, the numerous other ties to ecclesiastical princes, and the varied response of different secular lords ensured the impossibility of a uniform reaction from the nobility in any area during these early years.

While some supported Luther, there were other members of the nobility who actively condemned him. One such was the father of Franz von Sickingen's son-in-law, Dieter von Handschuchsheim. Handschuchsheim had condemned five points which he attributed to Luther. When Franz heard of this, he sent a letter to Handschuchsheim correcting him. The theological adroitness with which the accusations were countered reveals that the letter could not have been written by Sickingen alone. Though formulated in all probability by Schwebel, it neverthe-

less is a good indication of Sickingen's interest in the religious doctrine itself and his wish to promote it.[66]

Luther's enemies were certainly convinced that Sickingen had been converted to the cause of reform. During the imperial diet of Worms in 1521, it was widely believed that Franz might strike at Luther's principal enemies, and among the many rumors which the nuncio Aleander relayed, was one which indicated that Sickingen planned an attack on the archbishopric of Trier. Indeed, Hutten was openly preaching war against the Romanists and Hartmuth von Cronberg specifically warned Archbishop Richard of Trier to respect Luther's teachings. The idea of seizing the electorate of Trier may have been fully mature in Sickingen's mind at this time. In any case, such a project would have to be postponed, for in the late spring of 1521, Franz accepted the emperor's commission to participate in the war against France.

## Sickingen and the Corporate Movement in the Nobility

Sickingen really had little choice other than to obey the emperor's call in 1521. The 20,000 Gulden loan to Charles gave the emperor a sort of lever against him. There was, however, no reason to suspect that this undertaking, like Franz's preceding feuds, would be anything but a success. Franz stood to rise even higher in imperial favor. The campaign could

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[66] Oelschläger, "Sendbrief," pp. 710-24.

moreover provide Franz with the opportunity to raise troops under the imperial banner and then use them afterwards for his own purposes if in fact he had further plans. As discussed earlier, however, the war against France along the Meuse was a personal disaster to Franz, and he returned to Germany in semi-disgrace. What he clearly now needed was a successful feud to recoup his finances and restore his somewhat tarnished reputation. Thus in the months that followed Franz planned an attack on the archbishopric and electorate of Trier.

Before such a project could be undertaken, Sickingen had once again to assure himself of adequate backing within the nobility. The ties which he had developed during the feuds of past years were to be renewed. Considerable agitation moreover pervaded a significant portion of the nobility at this time, a situation which was of potential use to Sickingen. By the end of the fifteenth century, the lower nobility of southwestern Germany had formed loose regional associations to resist the increasing pressure of the territorial princes which threatened traditional noble freedoms. The imperial reforms decreed by the diet of Worms in 1495, moreover, had met with stubborn resistance from most of the South German nobility, and had stimulated further organization with increased contacts between the nobility of different regions. In Franconia, the area where opposition to imperial reform and princely authority was strongest, a cantonal organization of the lower nobility

had been established.[67] Although little is heard of the Franconian organization or gatherings of other groups of nobles after 1501, it appears that interest in them remained strong. In 1506, for example, the Elector Palatine was troubled by reports that the nobles of the Wasgau, the border region between the Palatinate and Lower Alsace, intended to join together in a union and wear similar colors.[68] Franz von Sickingen had important holdings in the Wasgau, but nothing more is heard of this union, and thus his participation is uncertain. In 1512 Franz did attend a gathering of the Rhenish nobility which met in Worms to discuss the problem of aid for the Teutonic Order in Prussia. It appears that Franz played a leading role in this meeting, for he and three others signed the final resolution that was sent to the grand master.[69] Even before he had built his great reputation, therefore, Franz enjoyed considerable standing among his fellow nobles. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that Franz made use of the noble organizations in his early feuds. Those who followed him did so as individuals for the reasons that have been discussed.

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[67]For a discussion of these developments, particularly in the Kraichgau, see app. D. For Franconia, see Fellner, Ritterschaft; and A. Kulenkampff, "Einungen und Reichsstandschaft fränkischer Grafen und Herren 1402-1641," Württembergisch Franken XLV (1971): 16-41.

[68]GLA Kr, 65/2229: 7 Dec. 1506, Heidelberg.

[69]Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 20.

After 1512 the renewal of the Swabian League was a spur to closer noble association. This powerful political force which represented a variety of interests, including the Habsburgs and the free cities, had contributed to the first political organization of the Kraichgau nobility in the 1480s by attempting to force those nobles to join. In the early sixteenth century, the league applied similar pressure to the Franconian nobility which also resisted. In Swabia a split developed as part of the nobility joined the league, part followed Duke Ulrich, and part took an independent course, attempting to maintain contact with the noble organizations of other areas.[70]

In 1517 Emperor Maximilian attempted to placate the nobility and at the same time draw it closer into the imperial orbit. To this end he formulated a special Ritterrecht for the settlement of disputes involving nobles. The whole plan disintegrated, however, in the face of opposition from the very group it was intended to accommodate. The Ritterrecht was viewed only as a further encroachment. The election of Charles V two years later was also of little comfort to the nobility. In the conditions for his election, the new emperor outlawed associations of the nobility which might be directed against princely authority.[71] Nevertheless, the nobility continued to associate in

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[70] E. Bock, Der Schwäbische Bund und seine Verfassung 1488-1534, (Untersuchungen zur deutschen Staats- und Rechtsgeschichte, vol. 137; Breslau, 1927), pp. 177-80.

[71] p. 177; Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 236-48.

the years that followed. In January 1522 more than a hundred nobles in the Wetterau and middle Rhine area joined together with Hartmuth von Cronberg in a league directed against Hessen. The following June a further union was founded in the same area.[72] Franz von Sickingen did not participate, but it is clear that many of his supporters from earlier feuds did. At the same time the Swabian League resolved to undertake a punitive expedition against a number of Franconian nobles, outlawed for brigandage. It was to be directed against Hans Thomas von Absberg and his supporters, but the news caused general alarm among the Franconian nobility and was disconcerting to nobles in other regions as well.

At the time when Sickingen was planning his feud against Trier, therefore, the South German nobility in general was grappling with a number of problems and attempting to organize politically in order to mitigate them. To Franz the time must have seemed opportune to win a sizeable portion of the nobility over to his own plans, for in return, a man of his standing could after all lend considerable weight to any organization. In August 1522 Sickingen called a meeting of the nobility of the upper Rhine to Landau. Six hundred nobles from the Hundsrück, Nahe, Rheingau, Westrich, Wasgau, Ortenau, and Kraichgau areas were said to have attended, but this is probably an exaggeration. Nothing is known about the gathering except for the

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[72] H. Gensicke, "Der Adel im Mittelrheingebiet," in Deutscher Adel 1430-1555, ed. by H. Rössler, (Darmstadt, 1965), pp. 150-51.

charter of a new Brotherly Union which the nobles published.[73] According to the provisions of the charter, the union was to insure that friction between members of the nobility would be minimized so that further cooperation might be possible. The authority of the princely courts was to be excluded as much as possible; disputes were to be settled through the mediation and arbitration of other nobles, with no appeals to any other courts permitted. The Landau union named Franz von Sickingen to be its captain. He was joined by twelve nobles from the seven different areas represented to form a sort of standing committee. Towns and princes were to be permitted to join provided they promised to uphold the terms, but prelates were specifically excluded. This last clause clearly reflected Sickingen's attitude and those of the other reform-minded nobles.

To what degree Franz's own plans dominated the assembly remains a matter of dispute. In the virulent pamphlet literature of the day, the Landau union was depicted as a Lutheran conspiracy, led by the bloodthirsty Sickingen, and intended to overthrow all legitimate authority. While such statements were clearly gross distortion, the relation of the Landau gathering to the feud against Trier seemed obvious to many more reasoned observers. To some of Franz's opponents, the formation of the Brotherly Union was simply a cover to mask the real purpose of

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[73]For the Landau meeting and the Brotherly Union see Münch, Sickingen, II, #114: 13 Aug. 1522, Landau; Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 149-59; Rendenbach, Fehde, p. 58.

the meeting: to make plans for the attack on Trier. The Landau gathering, however, made no open declaration of support for Sickingen, and most of the participants did not finally aid him in the Trier feud. Moreover, the problems dealt with in the charter of the Brotherly Union were current among the nobility. These facts led Heinrich Ulmann to conclude that the Landau meeting did not revolve around Franz's plans but was a serious attempt to mitigate general problems facing the nobility. This conclusion, however, ignores the fact that it was Franz who called the meeting, at a time when his own preparations for the Trier feud were well under way.[74] Within three weeks Franz had his forces in the field. From the very outset, the Landau assembly was dominated by Sickingen, as his nomination as captain demonstrates. If the Brotherly Union were intended solely to provide the basis for an effective organization, this position would hardly have been bestowed on a man like Sickingen who was about to undertake a serious feud which would compromise the organization from the very beginning.

The Brotherly Union was thus in all probability inextricably bound up with Franz's feud as most contemporaries believed. Franz needed noble support as in his earlier private feuds. The campaign against Trier, however, involved an element of risk which had been absent earlier. The feuds against Worms

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[74] See, for example, Knupfer and von Rauch, Heilbronn, III, #2679: 16 Aug. 1522, letter of Heilbronn to Ulrich Arzt.

and Hessen had had the tacit approval of the Elector Palatine; those against Lorraine, Metz, and Frankfurt had met only with his indifference. Whereas Franz's imperial service against Württemberg and France had not pleased Elector Louis V, it did not result in a confrontation. Since 1518, however, Archbishop Richard of Trier and Elector Palatine Louis V had been joined by a defensive treaty whereby each was obligated to come to the aid of the other if attacked by a third party. Franz was well aware of the danger. For his campaign against Trier to be a success it was of the utmost importance to prevent Louis from intervening. This might be accomplished by winning a quick decision over the archbishop before the Elector Palatine could act. It might also be achieved by creating the impression that the nobility closely associated with the Palatinate, the elector's principal military arm, was actually in sympathy with Sickingen and unreliable. Under such conditions Franz could then expect to negotiate from a position of strength to insure his gains.

Clearly the Brotherly Union was not a wholehearted demonstration of support for Sickingen, and Franz was probably aware that it never could be. Too many of those present were bound to the Palatinate and other powerful princes. One provision of the Brotherly Union therefore stated that in case of war, members of the union might still serve their lords and only try to avoid damaging fellow members as much as possible. This clause as no other reveals the dilemma of the nobility

of southwestern Germany. Any corporate organization necessarily cut across the feudal and nonfeudal ties which bound individual nobles to various princes. Only a small part of the nobility of the upper and middle Rhine area could ever commit itself to a course of action that was openly hostile to the leading princes of the region. For this same reason, the formal conclusion of the union was to be delayed. Some of those present in Landau were not able to swear to the terms of the union at that time. They were to be given two months to decide whether to join. Such nobles may have been vassals of Trier, but they may also have been those closely tied to the Palatinate. Even those who joined the union in Landau did not immediately affix their seals to the charter, but agreed to do so within the next two and a half months. These provisions seem to indicate that the Brotherly Union was largely dependent on the success of Sickingen's attack on Trier. Herein lies the true nature of the Landau meeting and the Brotherly Union. Within two months, Franz expected to have defeated Trier and to have reached a settlement which would avoid the interference by other powers, namely the Elector Palatine. Thereupon the door would be open for the formal conclusion of a great association of nobles along the Rhine headed by Franz. In the meantime the Landau proclamation with its noncommital terms was enough. It served to neutralize the Palatine nobles where they could not be won over, and at the same time it gave the impression of widespread general

support for Sickingen among the nobility.

The degree to which Franz himself was sincere in his commitment to furthering association in order to safeguard the rights of the nobility in general is not clear. Certainly there is no hard evidence to suggest that he really was. A position of leadership within the noble movement could strengthen Franz's position, and conversely Sickingen's prestige could add greater weight to that movement. Franz was motivated by other considerations, however. For him the position of the nobility in his forthcoming feud was what mattered, and it is doubtful that he was looking much beyond this in the summer of 1522.

## Sickingen's Feud with Trier

Franz's motives and the nature of the last of his feuds have been a matter of controversy since the day Sickingen first attacked Trier territory. The pamphlets and statements of contemporaries attributed the highest religious and socio-political ideals as well as the most revolutionary and self-serving goals to Sickingen. Those who applauded him in the documents that have survived were men like Hutten and Cronberg, nobles who sought religious and political reform. Those who deplored the act were for the most part staunch Catholic partisans or associates of the princes who opposed Sickingen. The latter portrayed Franz as seeking to overturn the entire religious and political order so as to place himself at the top.

He was ridiculed as the "would-be king on the Rhine and duke of Franconia," the "king of the Ebernburg empire." After his death, it was said that the pseudo-king was dead, and that the pseudo-pope would soon follow.[75] Such partisan utterances only clouded the problem for later historians who, often depending upon their own confessional persuasion, tended to assess Sickingen as the champion of the downtrodden against the tyrannical yoke of the church and the princes,[76] or as a greedy robber baron who, moved only by a desire for personal power and gain, was prepared to trample on all law and decency.[77] The problem could still arouse passions as late as 1888 when a monument was erected at Ebernburg to Hutten and Sickingen as champions of German freedom and unity. At that time J. Niemöller could well understand this being done by communards and anarchists, but he questioned the appropriateness of good Germans bestowing such an honor on common brigands.[78]

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[75]Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 167; for the various pro- and anti-Sickingen pamphlets see Schottenloher, Flugschriften, pp. 49-99; Strauss, Manifestations, pp. 170-79; Clemen, Flugschriften, II, 202-13; Schade, Satiren, II, 1-44.

[76]See, for example, T. Gümbel, Die Geschichte der protestantischen Kirche der Pfalz, (Kaiserslautern, 1885), p. 92; Gärtner, Schlösser, I, 53; Gölter, "Sickingen," p. 37.

[77]See, for example, Jaeger, "Aufstand," pp. 15-16, 22-24; Elton, Reformation, pp. 25-26; Boos, Städtekultur, IV, 131.

[78]Niemöller, Thaten, p. 56.

By analyzing the feud with Trier in its relation to Franz's earlier career and the general conditions of the time, it is possible to gain an impression of the balance among the various elements which determined Sickingen's actions. The notion that Franz attacked Trier in hopes of financial gain has much to recommend it. This had certainly been the principal goal of several of Franz's earlier feuds. By the end of the abortive campaign against France, Sickingen had extended the emperor credit to the value of 96,500 Gulden, but this money was neither being paid back on schedule nor apparently drawing interest. In 1522, 60,000 Gulden remained to be paid. Presumably Franz had had to borrow money himself from various sources to raise these sums in the first place, because at his death his debts amounted to several thousand Gulden.[79] It thus appears that Sickingen faced a financial crisis after 1521. The obvious method of relieving it was to undertake a successful feud.

If money was the principal or only goal of Franz's feud, however, an easier adversary could certainly have been chosen. The mere threat of violence had netted Franz 4,000 Gulden from Frankfurt four years earlier. While it might risk the emperor's displeasure, the same sort of blackmail might be used against other cities with far less risk than an open attack on an imperial elector. Such considerations suggest that there

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[79]Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 274; Polke, "Ende," p. 186.

must have been other more compelling reasons than just money for attacking Trier. To assess them requires first a look at the target of Sickingen's attack. Archbishop Richard of Trier appears to have been carefully chosen. There was an element of personal animosity; Richard had strongly condemned Franz at the imperial diet following the feud with Hessen in 1518. Although from a family of the lower nobility himself, the archbishop was generally unpopular with the nobility of his territory. He thus had enemies within the group from which Franz could hope for considerable support. He was furthermore a notorious partisan of France, having done his best to promote the imperial candidacy of King Francis in 1519. This fact encouraged Sickingen to hope that the emperor might close an eye to the venture. Finally, Elector Richard was a leading ecclesiastical prince and one of the most outspoken opponents of Luther.

The fact that Elector Richard was an archbishop suggests the problem of religious motivation: the degree to which the feud against Trier was intended to strike a blow at the Roman church on behalf of the struggling reform movement. As discussed earlier, Sickingen had done his best to further the reform where it was within his power, apparently without any ulterior motive. Characterization of the Trier feud as a religious crusade, however, was the work of the most fanatical of Sickingen's supporters, Hartmuth von Cronberg and the former Franciscan Heinrich von Kettenbach. In a letter to Spalatin, Cronberg wrote that

Franz wished "to make an opening for the gospel." Kettenbach, in a manifesto issued at the opening of the feud, declared that Sickingen was not fighting for personal gain but for God and the word against popes and bishops, the enemies of truth. To these pronouncements referring specifically to the Trier feud can be added the earlier publications of men who had been close to Sickingen: the virulent pamphlets of Hutten advocating a general war on the ecclesiastical establishment, and the Neukarsthans which likened Franz to a new Ziska.[80]

Such propaganda convinced many contemporaries that Sickingen was in league with Luther in an effort to overturn the established order, and it has led scholars since then to see Franz as a champion of the Reformation, or alternatively to accuse him of using the issue of religion to cloak his less idealistic ends. Neither assessment, however, is correct. While Franz may have harbored the sentiments expressed by his radical supporters, such goals did not form a part of his immediate plans. In his several published warnings and justifications, as for example his message to the imperial cities in March 1523, Franz in no way sought to link his feud with the Lutheran movement.[81] Although the conventional interpretation

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[80]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 265, 284-86; Holborn, Hutten, pp. 178-79; W. Müller, Die Stellung der Kurpfalz zur lutherischen Bewegung 1517-25, (Heidelberger Abhandlungen zur mittleren und neueren Geschichte, vol. 68; Heidelberg, 1937), pp. 51-52.

[81]Münch, Sickingen, II. Franz's charge that Archbishop Richard was guilty of actions contrary to God, the emperor and the imperial order, and the slogan "Oh Lord, they will be done,"

(continued on next page)

emphasizes the aloofness of Luther and the other reformers, it may well have been that Franz himself feared that the religious issue would be more a liability than an asset to his project. Contrary to general opinion, Franz did not use religion as a cover for his own plans. Neither did those who supported him, with the exception of a vocal few, nor the princes who opposed him, do so out of religious considerations. The division between those who wished to take stern action against Franz and those who favored a more conciliatory approach was not along religious lines, although several individual princes were in sympathy with the reform.[82]

The commonly attributed labels of "knights' war" or "knights' revolt" give the impression that the Trier feud was a desperate effort on the part of the lower nobility to break the power of the princes who threatened their traditional unconstrained way of life, and indeed this is one of the most prevalent modern interpretations.[83] The basic argument is as follows: the lower nobility of Germany was in the terminal stages of a long decline brought about by economic and social forces which robbed it of its former place in society. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the efforts of the princes to consolidate their territories and the attempt to enforce

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81 (cont.)

worn on the sleeves of his horsemen, were the only religion-related references that can be traced directly to Franz in the Trier feud.

[82]Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 360; Müller, Stellung, p. 54.

[83]See, for example, Hitchcock, Revolt; Strauss, Manifestations, pp. 179-81.

the imperial peace were being felt acutely. The response of the nobles was to lash out in an attempt to overthrow the hated princes, and the Sickingen feud was one expression of this.

This interpretation has some serious weaknesses. Perhaps the most glaring is that it ignores the fact that the Trier feud in its conception and execution was basically the work of one man, Franz von Sickingen. In his power and influence, Franz stood high above the other members of his class and his interests hardly reflected the concerns of his fellow nobles. Where a connection between Sickingen and general currents within the nobility appears, as at the Landau assembly and at Schweinfurt the following year, Franz tried to use those currents to gain support for his own cause.

The inappropriateness of the label "knights' revolt" is evident when the participants in the Trier feud are examined.[84] The most reliable estimates of the size of the army that Franz led against Trier range from 600 to 2,000 horse and from 5,000 to 10,000 foot, or probably roughly the same as in the earlier feuds. From the "knights' revolt" viewpoint, Sickingen's army should have been composed of large numbers of nobles from Swabia, Franconia, and the middle and upper Rhine area, for these were the regions of the independent nobility. This, how-

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[84] K. Baumann ("Sickingen," p. 36) and R. Friedenthal (Luther, his Life and Times, trans. by J. Nowell, (New York, 1970), p. 364) make similar observations.

ever, does not appear to have been the case. In Swabia only a small part of the nobility not tied to the Swabian League or the territorial government responded. Foremost were a number of counts, who, although they shared many of the complaints against the greater princes, held seats in the imperial diet and were clearly of higher status than the lower nobility. These men, such as the counts of Zollern, Fürstenberg, Laufen, Eberstein, and Löwenstein, joined Sickingen strictly as helpers in the tradition of earlier feuds in hopes of profit. These Swabian counts were joined by Count Reinhard of Zweibrücken-Bitsch, one of Franz's overlords. From Franconia, the area where general unrest within the nobility was most prevalent, Franz received very little aid. The nobles of Franconia were occupied with the impending campaign of the Swabian League against the Franconian robber barons. From the upper and middle Rhine, support for Sickingen was limited by the degree of association of a significant portion of the nobility with the Elector Palatine, who was allied with Trier. The calling of the Landau assembly as discussed above was Franz's attempt to deal with this problem. Under these conditions, it comes as no surprise that Sickingen counted on aid from more distant areas. The lord of Renneberg was empowered to recruit in the Netherlands, Friedrich von Sombref in the vicinity of Köln, and Franz Boss in Liège and Limburg. In Braunschweig Nickel von Minkwitz gathered troops who had been recently involved in the Hildesheim feud. Other aid was expected from Lorraine, Alsace, and France.

Such participants were hardly desperate rebels against princely authority.[85]

Neither financial, religious, nor class considerations supplied the motive force behind Sickingen's feud against Trier, although each was an ingredient in that undertaking. The true motivation, as Ulmann suggested, was Franz's desire to achieve for himself the status of a prince of the empire. Fantastic and outrageous as such a plan appeared to contemporaries and to historians in the light of later events, it had a certain plausibility. Franz had begun his career in the footsteps of his father in the service of the Electors Palatine, but within a few years he had departed from this course. In a series of private feuds in which Franz revealed himself a master in the modern recruitment of troops, he had been able to build a considerable fortune and a great reputation. For a time he was the most feared man in Germany, courted by both the emperor and the king of France. Politically, his importance outweighed that of all but the most important of the territorial princes, yet he was not a prince.[86] He suffered from a serious status inconsistency. Perhaps the reason that

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[85]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 273-87; Rendenbach, Fehde, p. 59; Bock, Bund, p. 181; Schnepp, "Erwiderung," p. 182.

[86]Georg Widman, a contemporary chronicler from Schwäbisch Hall, for example, wrote of Franz: "In summa er war nicht geringer dann der fürnehmbsten fürsten einer geachtet." C. Kolb, ed., Widmans Chronica, (Geschichtsquellen der Stadt Hall, vol. 2; Württembergische Geschichtsquellen, vol. 6; Stuttgart, 1904), p. 47.

Franz did not remarry after his wife's death in 1515 was not, as he told his brother-in-law Philip von Flersheim, out of consideration for his children, but because he looked forward to the day when he might marry a lady of higher standing.

To Franz, rising to princely status might be achieved by forcibly taking over a principality and founding his own dynasty. An ecclesiastical territory suggested itself as the most likely candidate. Here there would be no need to attempt to disinherit heirs, and there was less likelihood of strong ties to other princes. With the clamor for religious reform to which Franz himself was committed, it would be possible to carry through a secularization. The choice fell on the archbishopric and electorate of Trier. In addition to the personal animosity he felt toward the archbishop, Sickingen believed Richard to be vulnerable due to his association with France. He doubted therefore that the emperor would attempt to protect Trier; Charles might even applaud Sickingen's project. Indeed, Franz tried to give the impression that he was acting on behalf of the emperor against Trier, for he carried the imperial banner and cross of Burgundy before him.[87] Strategically and geographically, Trier was the obvious choice, for the castles of Landstuhl, Ebernburg and Steinkallenfels were close at hand. Franz's holdings in this area could easily be appended to the new territory he hoped to acquire.

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[87]Ulmann, Sickingen, p. 279.

Evidence that this was indeed Sickingen's objective comes from reliable statements attributed to him and from the correspondence of his associates. Many of those closest to Franz, including his loyal secretary Balthasar Schlör, warned against the undertaking. Schlör carefully enumerated the many points which he felt made the venture too dangerous. Among them was the observation that should Franz be fortunate enough to capture the city of Trier, the imperial estates would never let him keep it. Franz, of course, ignored the warning and proceeded with his plans.

Before moving against Trier itself, his army first captured the town of St. Wendel. There in the first flush of victory, Franz addressed thirty captured nobles who later swore to the accuracy of the following quotation:

> "You nobles have been captured; horses and armor are lost. But you have an elector, who, as long as he remains one, will be rich enough to free you. But should Franz become elector of Trier, which he can and intends to do, he will not only compensate you for your present losses, but will see that you receive still greater rewards."

The day after Sickingen arrived before the walls of Trier, he was met by an envoy of the imperial regency council and ordered to withdraw and seek a peaceful resolution. Franz replied that he intended to punish the archbishop for receiving French money, and he went on to say, "Since the bishop would be a horseman, I would be bishop and thus spend peaceful days while letting the bishop become a horseman. I have come here in order to accomplish this." He further indicated that

he would demonstrate how the emperor could increase his realm--a less than subtle suggestion for the secularization of further church property. Sickingen's words were reported to the regency council in Nurnberg, where they understandably caused considerable alarm. There was no reason for Franz to pretend such radical intentions if they were not serious, for he must have been well aware of their effect. Confident of an easy victory, he did not shrink from revealing his true objectives, in fact he seems to have reveled in their disclosure.[88]

Archbishop Richard, however, proved to be a much more able and determined opponent than Franz had expected. Taking personal command of the city's defense, he brought Sickingen's campaign to a standstill. Meanwhile, Elector Palatine Louis V and Landgrave Philip of Hessen, the allies of the archbishop, sent relief columns toward Trier. In the face of these and the fact that his own reinforcements from the north and west were either intercepted or simply failed to materialize, Franz was forced to give up the siege after less than a week. He still hoped, however, to salvage what he could from the venture. While still before Trier, he sent a letter to the Habsburg regent in the Netherlands, demanding payment of the outstanding 60,000 Gulden from the emperor's debt. If refused, he threatened to attack Luxemburg. At the same time he offered to place himself

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[88]pp. 274, 287, 297-99.

and his assembled army at the disposal of the emperor for a war against France. The regent was able to obtain a reprieve from Sickingen, and his offer was treated quite seriously, with the emperor and even the English minister being informed. Charles V, however, had no use for an army against France at this moment, and thus Sickingen's army dissolved, and he retired to Ebernburg toward the end of September 1522.

Franz appears to have been content to await developments from the security of his castles, perhaps hoping for the emperor's return from Spain. His continued refusal to cooperate with the imperial regency council, however, led to the proclamation of the imperial ban against him in October. This was all his opponents needed. Although no other imperial estates moved to take action in compliance with the imperial mandate, the princes of Trier, Hessen, and the Palatinate were determined to insure Sickingen's permanent degradation. Such an attitude was not surprising from Archbishop Richard or Landgrave Philip in view of past experience, but for Elector Louis V, it requires some explanation. The von Sickingen family, including Franz, had after all performed valuable service for the Palatinate. This, however, was now in the past. The former Palatine Amtmann had become an imperial captain and a power within the empire. Franz attributed the elector's hostility toward him to the campaign against Württemberg in 1519 when Franz had served against Louis's ally, but it appears more probable that it was simply a distrust of Sickingen's growing

power. Franz appeared to be indiscriminate in his choice of allies as well as of enemies. No doubt Louis also feared Franz's influence over the Palatine nobility, and in view of the Landau assembly, that fear was well founded. While Elector Louis may not have borne the same personal animosity toward Sickingen as did the other two princes, he was nevertheless equally determined to reduce Franz's power. Even before the Landau meeting, Elector Louis had observed Sickingen's preparations and had called a meeting with his two princely allies to plan their strategy in case of an attack. The initiative for the firm resistance to Sickingen had actually come from the Palatinate.[89]

In the months following Sickingen's withdrawl from Trier, the three princes worked to isolate him from possible outside aid. Some of his principal supporters, like Hartmuth von Cronberg, and even those just suspected of giving aid, were first dealt with. Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz, whose leading counselors had been involved with Sickingen and who harbored sympathies himself, was also called to account. In so doing the three princes acted contrary to imperial law just as Sickingen had, but the imperial regency council could do little more than vainly protest and attempt to mediate. Meanwhile Sickingen remained determined not to yield. In Bohemia, Alsace and the Breisgau, his supporters attempted to raise troops, and it appears that an appeal was even made to France.

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[89] pp. 287-304.

Sickingen also approached the nobility of Franconia which had generally remained apart from his feud. The climate there was tense, for the punitive expedition of the Swabian League was expected in the spring, and it was feared that little distinction would be made between certain acknowledged brigands and the nobility in general. In October 1522 Franz wrote some of the leading Franconian nobles asking that a gathering of the nobility be called, and such a meeting did in fact take place in Schweinfurt the following month. Unable to attend himself, Sickingen sent a statement in which he described the illegal fines and confiscations imposed by the three princes against his supporters and asserted that if such were allowed to continue it would lead to the destruction of the nobility as a whole. The gathering in Schweinfurt, however, was too poorly attended, and it was agreed to meet once more in January 1523. In the meantime, the Franconian nobles sent a list of grievances to the imperial diet. In addition to general complaints against the territorial princes, commercial monopolies, the Swabian League, and the imperial constitution, a protest was also raised against the unjust use of force by the princes against those associated with Sickingen.[90]

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[90] Reichstagsakten, J.R., III, 697-709, partially reproduced in Strauss, Manifestations, pp. 179-92.

About the same time, Franz published a general appeal and justification for his position. He asserted that the princes, not he, had acted contrary to the law, and therefore he called on the nobility not to serve the princes against him. It would be to the detriment of the class as a whole if they did. He further denied the rumor that he intended to instigate a Bundschuh, or peasant uprising. The specter of agrarian revolt had haunted southern Germany since the beginning of the century, and it was an accusation which came easily to the lips of those who were troubled by the scope of Sickingen's activities or who simply wished to discredit him. Nothing, however, could have been further from Sickingen's mind. for although he might portray himself as the persecuted noble and champion of the downtrodden, he was nevertheless a part of the ruling establishment himself. Duke George of Saxony assessed the situation correctly when he wrote: "It is suggested that Franz intends to instigate a Bundschuh, but to that we cannot give credence; he writes that what he does is for the preservation of the freedom of the nobility. The Bundschuh is against the nobility, for where the peasants rule, there will the nobility and all government be crushed."[91]

The second Schweinfurt assembly was well attended. Just prior to it, the nobility of the Wetterau, Eichsfeld, and Westerwald had gathered in Koln. Representatives from these areas

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[91]Ulmann, Sickingen, pp. 332-34.

appeared in Schweinfurt as well, to add to the large-scale participation of the nobility of Franconia organized in its six cantons. The ruthless measures of the three princes against Sickingen's supporters had indeed caused general alarm. Nevertheless, the Schweinfurt assembly was more concerned with the threat from the Swabian League and feared that involvement with Sickingen could only weaken its cause. It was therefore decided not to come out in support of Sickingen.[92]

Franz had been invited to attend the second Schweinfurt assembly, and he had been charged with inviting the rest of the nobility west of the Rhine as well. This indicates that he was still considered their captain, as the Landau meeting had determined. Franz, however, had once again feared to take the risk of attending, and he had therefore empowered three of his associates to represent him. He further wrote the Franconian nobles that notice of the gathering had been too short and that the Rhenish nobility feared offending the princes who were Sickingen's enemies and would therefore not attend. It was clear then that Franz could hope for little further support from the nobility as a whole, along the Rhine as well as in Franconia.[93]

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[92] pp. 328-31; Bock, Bund, pp. 183-84.

[93] StA Wü, Miscell. 5967: 14 Jan. 1523; StA Sp, Findbuch StdALandstuhl, U2: 17 Jan. 1523, Nanstein.

In the end the expected aid from other quarters failed to materialize, and Franz was left with only a small circle of followers who manned his several castles. The efforts of the regency council to bring about a peaceful settlement were blocked by the three princes. The imperial government was unable to prevent their attack on Sickingen's strongholds in the spring of 1523, just as it failed to halt the systematic destruction of twenty-three noble castles in Franconia by the Swabian League shortly thereafter. These two operations were carried out in concert to prevent the possibility of Sickingen and the Franconian nobility aiding each other. In April, Archbishop Richard of Trier, Landgrave Philip of Hessen, and Elector Palatine Louis V arrived before Landstuhl at the head of their armies. In the bombardment that followed, the castle walls in which Franz had placed his trust were quickly demolished. Franz himself was mortally wounded, and seeing further resistance to be futile, he surrendered. He died within a few hours after confronting his three adversaries one last time. From Landstuhl the princes went on to capture and raze the Ganerbenburgen of Drachenfels and Lützelburg, the castle of Neudahn, and Sickingen's own castles of Hohenburg and Ebernburg. Only the last offered any appreciable resistance. Before Ebernburg the three princes divided the spoils. The three sons of Franz were to be deprived of their entire inheritance save some of the movable property.[94]

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[94]Dotzauer, "Caspar Sturm."

No member of the Sickingen family was ever again to attain the political importance of Franz; indeed his position is unique in the history of the German nobility. The Sickingen family, however, did not sink into anonymity nor poverty after Franz's death, despite the harsh terms imposed by the victorious princes. After roughly twenty years, Franz's three sons, Schweickard, Hans, and Franz Conrad, were reinstated in the family patrimony. With the deaths of his brothers without male heirs and the extinction of other family branches, Franz Conrad was able to unite the entire Sickingen estate. Following in his father's footsteps, Franz Conrad was a staunch Lutheran. In a long career that included extensive travel, imperial and Palatine service, and leadership in the organization of the Kraichgau Reichsritterschaft, he acquired a reputation for great wisdom, such that contemporaries lauded him as the outstanding member of his line. With Franz Conrad's sons, the Sickingen family once again split into several branches. Ironically, though not surprisingly, in the seventeenth century, the von Sickingen returned to the Catholic faith. Through the very favorable marriage of one of Franz Conrad's sons, they acquired extensive property in the vicinity of Freiburg i.B., but when this area was incorporated into the state of Baden early in the nineteenth century, this family branch moved to Austria. Not long thereafter the last of the other Sickingen branches in the Rhine area died out, and in 1932 the last male member of the family as a whole passed away in Vienna as a commercial

agent of meager means.[95]

To contemporaries, Franz von Sickingen's death was an event of tremendous magnitude, reflecting the great personal stature of Franz and the seriousness of the Trier feud. As might be expected, the news caused rejoicing in some circles, sadness in others. Pope Hadrian sent his congratuations to Archbishop Richard; Luther solemnly declared that the Lord was a just but inscrutable judge. Although Luther had no desire to be linked with the Trier feud, he was always grateful for the very real service Franz had performed by his protection of the reformers and his introduction of a revised service. Perhaps Luther even owed in part to Sickingen the courage to take the decisive steps of 1520. A recent study of the early diffusion of the Reformation in southwestern Germany has found a sharp decline in the growth process in 1523, after three years of particularly rapid expansion. This drop is attributed to various urban uprisings and to a decline in the number of students attending universities at this time.[96] The campaign of the princes against Franz von Sickingen, resulting in the latter's death in 1523, however, may well have been an additional factor in this slowing of the Reformation's spread. Nevertheless, the Lutheran movement easily survived Sickingen's death, for it came to be promoted by some of the same princes

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[95] L. Munzinger, "Der wirklich letzte Sickingen," Familiengeschichtliche Blätter XXXIV (1936): 55-58.

[96] M. Hannemann, Diffusion, pp. 216-17.

who had opposed him. In the feud with Trier, the religious issue was only secondary in Franz's plans. His important early contributions to the reform are thus too often forgotten amid the turmoil of his final defeat.

The vain attempts of the imperial regency council to mediate between Sickingen and the determined princes revealed once more the inadequacies of the empire's central governing institutions. As for the emperor himself, Franz's death robbed him of a potentially useful captain. Nevertheless, Charles was probably relieved to be rid of this ambitious and unpredictable creditor. Sickingen's death was hardly a blow to the idea of a unified German empire, as has often been maintained. Franz's own feuds and service contracts indicate that such considerations never played a role in his dealings. Franz served the various kings and princes out of self-interest alone.

Franz was not representative of the nobility as a whole, nor did he ever attempt to set himself up as a spokesman except when he needed support for his own projects. These projects were hardly carried out with the long-range interests of the nobility in mind. Just as Franz could act the part of a loyal supporter of the emperor when it suited his purpose, so too could he show concern for the problems of broad segments of his class. The school of thought which tends to view the feud against Trier as a "knights' revolt" characteristically concludes that Sickingen's defeat meant the end of the revolu-

tionary movement within the nobility to attain political power in the empire and was thus an irreparable blow to the nobility's aspirations. This, however, is a distortion. Certainly it was a blow of sorts. It was a blow to those families, and their number was considerable, who suffered the retribution of the victorious princes. The ruthlessness of the princes who flaunted imperial law tended moreover to intimidate the nobility as a whole and make it more compliant. Sickingen's death, however, did not put an end to the corporate movement within the nobility, nor did it change its basic goals or methods. The feud against Trier had not been a part of this movement, which had never been revolutionary--the nobility as a whole was still too much an integral part of the territorial system.

Franz's death, however, was of considerable significance as contemporaries believed it to be. Franz's career as a whole demonstrated the disproportionate amount of power that an individual of the lower nobility under favorable circumstances might acquire. Franz's success was based on the waging of feud on a large scale. Such methods could well be employed by others, even if they did not possess Sickingen's resources. Had the attack on Trier succeeded, it would not have signaled a general revolt of the nobility against the princes, but it would have set a precedent which might well have encouraged others to attempt to carve out territories of their own.

# CONCLUSION

The disintegration of imperial authority during the thirteenth century resulted in the fragmentation of political power in the middle and upper Rhine region among a vast collection of lay and ecclesiastical lords. In the upper rank were the princes, the former imperial fief holders whose domains were gradually forged into territorial states, while at the bottom was the lower nobility, a large group formed by the amalgamation of the servile ministeriales and the knightly class of the high middle ages. Since the lower nobility of southwestern Germany was derived largely from imperial ministeriales and because no single territorial prince was able to dominate major portions of this area, the lower nobility was able to maintain an independence from territorial control which was finally given formal recognition in the sixteenth century. Independence from territorial control, on the other hand, did not imply aloofness from territorial affairs, let alone a hostility toward the territorial state. The lower nobility of southwestern Germany had close ties to the many lords of this area to the extent that a strong identification with some of the territories existed. In fact the nobility was in a sense a partner of the prince,

sharing in the building of the territorial state.

As a leading family of the Kraichgau nobility, the von Sickingen played an integral part in the political development of the middle and upper Rhine area, particularly in the affairs of the Rhine Palatinate. Through ties to the Electors Palatine and to other princes, the von Sickingen came to hold property and exercise authority in a broad region covering much of southwestern Germany. Fief holding remained important throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but the personal obligations of lord and vassal which defined the feudal bond were largely superseded by contractual arrangements guaranteeing various forms of service. Only through such contracts could the military and administrative needs of the developing territorial state be met. The von Sickingen and other nobles like them were thus hired as armed retainers, but more importantly, they were entrusted by various princes with the conduct of local administration as territorial officials.

Partly to attract the services of nobles who exercised authority in their own right and partly to obtain cash or credit as financial requirements multiplied, princes pledged extensive territorial holdings to members of the lower nobility. This practice was particularly widespread in the middle and upper Rhine region, and the von Sickingen were beneficiaries of it. From the later fourteenth century into the first decades of the sixteenth, territorial pledges constituted the major

portion and the most important of the possessions acquired by the von Sickingen. Such territorial pledges generally placed far more authority and income in the hands of nobles than did traditional fiefs and allods. The periods when the granting of pledges was particularly prominent were thus times when the lower nobility held considerable economic and political power. In view of the prevalence of pledge holding, therefore, the late medieval period should not be viewed primarily as a time of economic decline for the lower nobility. Clearly the nobility must have suffered from the agrarian depression, but this was in part mitigated by the political and financial requirements of the princes which placed a large share of territorial administration and revenues in noble hands. In the middle and upper Rhine region, the late fourteenth and first half of the fifteenth century may well have been a high point in the nobility's fortunes. Moreover, it should also be kept in mind that the high rate of extinction of noble families in the late medieval period tended to concentrate wealth in the hands of those surviving families which were related by marriage.[1] The strong economic position of Franz von Sickingen was owed in large part to inheritance from two well-to-do noble families.

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[1]For the high mortality of late medieval noble families in the middle Rhine region, see Gensicke, "Adel," p. 129; for Baden, see Schulte, Adel, pp. 48-49.

An economic and political position based on pledge holding and the exercise of authority as territorial officials, however, could not provide a permanent power base for the lower nobility, because it was entirely dependent on the needs of the princes. As the direct exploitation of territorial revenues improved, the need to extend pledges to the lower nobility disappeared. Nevertheless, even at the beginning of the sixteenth century, times of particular financial distress continued to see the pledging of territorial holdings. The place of the nobility in the territorial administration, moreover, remained similar to what it had been at the end of the fourteenth century. Nobles like the von Sickingen, therefore, exercised extensive public authority either in their own right or on behalf of princes throughout the late medieval period. The assertion that the nobility had outlived its social and political usefulness[2] is clearly unjustified. Certainly the nobility no longer had a monopoly of the means of warfare, but the nobility's employment in war was no less at the beginning of the sixteenth century than it had been centuries earlier.[3] War, however, was not the most significant area of noble activity, for nobles were far more important as administrators

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[2]See, for example, Hitchcock, Revolt, and Strauss, Manifestations.

[3]For the continued importance of the nobility in warfare, see Rainer Wohlfeil, "Adel und neues Heerwesen," in Deutscher Adel 1430-1555, ed. Hellmuth Rössler, (Darmstadt, 1965), pp. 218-26.

The von Sickingen family maintained ties to many different princes simultaneously throughout the late medieval centuries. Such ties were not primarily the result of economic necessity on the Sickingen part, they represented opportunities to acquire fiefs and pledges, to exercise authority, and to influence territorial decisions. Such ties provided the princes with officials and counselors to implement territorial policy, and with a source of credit in addition to military support. Consequently one aspect of the territorial rivalry among the princes of the middle and upper Rhine region was a competition for the services of the lower nobility. With the von Sickingen as with most of the Kraichgau nobility, ties to the Electors Palatine far outweighed relations with other princes from the end of the fourteenth century on. The von Sickingen were one of a number of families which generation after generation provided the most important officials at the Palatine court and in the territorial administration.

Franz von Sickingen was heir not only to the vast estate accumulated by his father and grandfather, but to this long tradition of Palatine service. His father, who had enjoyed a considerable reputation himself, had been one of the most important officials of the elector. That Franz should have been ambitious is not surprising. That his efforts led to his spectacular rise to national prominence, however, was due to various political circumstances, not the least of which was the fact that the Palatinate was only slowly emerging from a

financial crisis occasioned by defeat and was ruled by a very cautious prince who was willing to allow Franz free rein as long as Palatine interests were not threatened. From a strong economic base, Franz was quickly able to establish a reputation for being able to raise large numbers of troops. The new methods of warfare, which placed greater emphasis on cheaper foot soldiers and which are usually viewed as an irreparable blow to the nobility, were in fact advantageous to Franz. One success led to the next until Franz was the most feared military leader in Germany.

Franz von Sickingen's conversion to the Lutheran cause appears to have been sincere with no evidence of ulterior motives at least prior to the feud against Trier. He furthered the reform in its earliest stages in concrete ways to the extent that it was in his power. The religious issue was probably a factor in the choice of Franz's opponent in his last venture, but it did not provide the motive force. The feud with Trier was not an attempt to spread the gospel, and Franz did not try to disguise his intentions under that cloak, although the propaganda of his supporters tended to suggest this. Nor was the Trier feud the expression of general social unrest within the nobility, for it was the work of one man alone aided by others who expected profit in his service. Franz von Sickingen was hardly an example of an individual whose place in society had been eroded by economic and political forces beyond his understanding; on the contrary,

Franz had achieved a stature surpassing that which was consistent with the traditional role of the lower nobility. The only way that stature could be given form and permanence was for Franz to rise to the rank of a territorial prince. This was the objective of the feud against Trier as Franz himself stated. Disregarding the many factors which made success unlikely, the project even had a certain logic. If the ecclesiastical principalities were to be secularized, as the religious reformers were suggesting, who would rule them? Would not certain members of the lower nobility be likely candidates, since many of the bishops came from this class anyway? The justification for a secularization was provided by Luther's teachings, and in this regard it is clear that Franz intended to use the Reformation for his own political ends.

The widely used label of "knights' revolt" to describe the feud with Trier tends to distort both the nature of Franz von Sickingen's final crisis and that of the contemporaneous movement within the nobility. The Trier feud was not intended to be the beginning of a general attack on princely authority in favor of the lower nobility, for instead of suppressing the princes, Sickingen hoped to become one himself. In its aims and conduct, the campaign was simply not a part of any broader class movement, though Franz clearly hoped to take advantage of general noble apprehensions. That such apprehensions were widespread and that a class consciousness existed within

the lower nobility is demonstrated by the politically motivated regional associations which formed in different parts of southern Germany from the 1480s on. On the basis of such, it is possible to speak of a visible noble reaction to the expansion of princely authority at this time. The various assemblies and organizations, while intent on preserving noble rights against territorial encroachments, however, were not likely to result in massive armed confrontation between nobles and princes, for the interests of the two were still too closely intertwined. The corporate movement within the nobility was basically conservative and hardly an expression of bitter social conflict.

In view of these considerations, it seems hardly appropriate to view Sickingen's death as a symbol of the ultimate collapse of the lower nobility in its struggle for independence from the territorial princes.[4] To be sure, no member of the lower nobility thereafter ever attained Sickingen's power, but then none ever had before. Franz was simply not representative. After 1523, the nobility of southwestern Germany did not succumb to the princes; on the contrary, it was in the

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[4]This is the view taken by Baumann, "Sickingen " (p. 39), who writes: "Mit dem Scheitern des 'Ritteraufstandes' war auch das letzte Wort über die Selbständigkeitsbestrebungen des ritterlichen Adels gesprochen." Hitchcock (Revolt, pp. 5, 51) goes even farther by maintaining that the nobility and the princes were locked in "a violent and bitter social conflict" in which Sickingen's death symbolized "the ultimate victory of the territorial princes in the fight for the control of Germany."

decades following Franz's death that the formal organization of the Reichsritterschaft in Swabia, Franconia, and the Rhineland was concluded. Its members were far more conscious of their independence from territorial control in 1560 than the same families had been a hundred years earlier. Nevertheless, the real political importance of the lower nobility declined in these hundred years as the territorial state was increasingly able to dispense with the nobility's services.

While not symptomatic of broad political and social currents within the lower nobility, Franz von Sickingen's final crisis was significant. Franz was without a doubt the most prominent member of his class, and while his grandiose plans did not reflect general noble aspirations, his career had demonstrated the possibility of acquiring great political power which might lead to a dramatic rise in social standing. A rise from the ranks of the lower nobility to the class of princes had been impossible in the lay society of western Germany for several centuries, but there were precedents from Italy during this period. That Sickingen might serve as a model for other ambitious nobles was not lost on the princes; hence the determination of the Elector Palatine, whose forefathers had always maintained good relations with the von Sickingen and the nobility in general, to bring about Franz's total degradation. The fate of Franz and his heirs was to serve as a warning that such ambitions would not be tolerated.

Franz's end was a blow to the Reformation in two respects. In the first place, the movement lost one of its earliest supporters of political consequence. Secondly, the fact that many contemporaries linked the feud with Trier directly to the Lutheran movement tended to alienate those who might have been drawn to the reform but feared its violent, revolutionary potential. This at the same time tended to strengthen the resolve of those who opposed reform. These effects may well have contributed to the slowing of the Reformation's spread, which is evident in southwestern Germany in 1523.

To many contemporaries, Sickingen's fall was the inevitable consequence of attempting to upset the social order. In a verse allegedly dictated shortly after Sickingen's death by a powerful lord of the empire, Sickingen, Fugger, and Luther were named together as three revolutionary figures.[5] With

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[5]GLA Kr, 65/1866: appended to a list of nobles called before the Swabian League in 1523 to clear themselves of involvement with Hans Thomas von Absberg. The verse, which to my knowledge has never appeared in print, reads as follows:

Ain Spruch Dictiert von Aynem mechtigen herren des Hayligen Reychs

Sich hatt Empört, Ist nie erhört,
Teutsch Nacion, mit dryen person,
Des Adels glantz, Sigking der Frantz,
Ain Burger so geschickt, Fugger trybts glick,
Die klinget harpff, ain Munich so scharpff,
Ain grosser strawss, was noch darauss,
Werden will, steckt noch im spill,

(continued on next page)

Sickingen's end, the verse observes, the fate of the capitalist and the monk still hung in the balance, but there was little doubt that their downfall too was simply a matter of time. The author of the verse clearly underestimated the potential for economic and religious change, but his assessment of Sickingen's fall was basically correct, if simplistic. In fact Franz had striven to upset the social and political order specifically as it pertained to his own person, but he had done this not because the traditional lifestyle of his own class was moribund and doomed by economic and political circumstances--the nobility was still a vital component of society--but because he had attained a position which in many ways already transcended his class.

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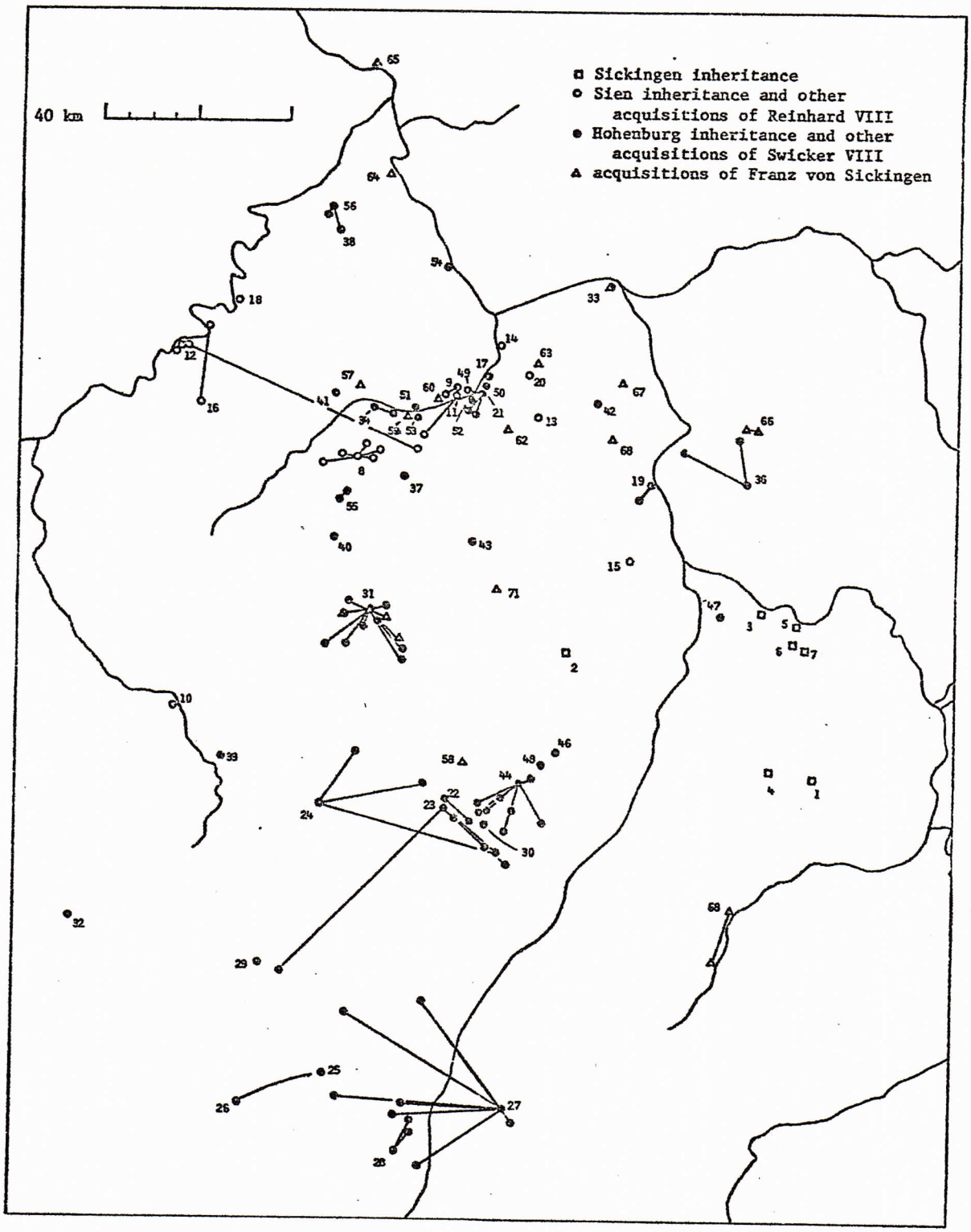
5 (cont.)

Der ain ist hin, mit klainem gewin,
Schuff ubermut wie lang das gutt,
Bym fugger blybt, und lutter trybt,
Sein neidig leer, wais ich nit wer
Das Rechnen kan, Bevilchs dem mann
Ders gluck Regiert, wohin ders fiert,
Da, blybts ain weyl, in schneller eyl,
Ers wider wendt, durch heffart gschendt,
Wirdt mancher man, der mit nachtail von seynem bracht muss lan.




Map 7C. Property and authority held by Franz von Sickingen, his father, and grandfather

## Vita

I was born August 12, 1946 in Deggingen, Germany, the son of Henry Kehrer and Babette Schlecht. After coming to this country in 1948, I attended East High School in Rochester, New York. From 1964 to 1968, I studied at Tufts University where I majored in geology and mathematics and received a B.S. degree in 1968. I went on to study geophysics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and received a M.S. in 1969. From 1969 through 1971, I worked in the Division of Sponsored Research of M.I.T. as a researcher in seismology. I began my graduate studies in history at Boston University in 1971. During the academic year 1973-74, I was a senior teaching fellow in the history department of Boston University.