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DIE KAISER UND DIE SÄULEN IHRER MACHT

VON KARL DEM GROSSEN BIS
FRIEDRICH BARBAROSSA

State Exhibition

**THE EMPERORS
AND THE PILLARS
OF THEIR POWER**

**From Charlemagne
to Frederick Barbarossa**

**An exhibition of the Directorate-General of
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THE EMPERORS AND THE PILLARS OF THEIR POWER

For almost two thousand years, the monarchy, the rule of a single person, has been the predominant form of government in Europe. The emperor is the highest authority: The dignity conferred upon him by the pope elevates him above the other kings.

Nonetheless, medieval emperors were neither absolutist rulers nor heads of a modern civil service state. The nature of their power was fragile and needed to be renegotiated on a regular basis. To govern successfully, they required the support of their subjects. Bishops and princes, abbots and counts, knights and citizens were the pillars of their power. These factions supported the emperor in his role as ruler but were sometimes also his rivals and opponents.

The exhibition *The Emperors and the Pillars of Their Power* illuminates these “power games” in four sections. The stage upon which they strode was mainly centred around the Rhine area. This heartland of the empire incorporated Basel and Strasbourg, Worms and Speyer, Mainz and Frankfurt, Metz and Trier, Aachen and Cologne. This is where the emperors ruled, failed and triumphed.

The Throne. One rules over many

The throne is a traditional symbol of monarchical rule, a visual representation of power. Whoever sat here, ruled the realm. Whoever ascended the throne, rose above the others. Like God in heaven, here on earth sat his representative, the “anointed of the Lord”. The throne could consist of various materials and stood either permanently in one place or was taken wherever the ruler went. But it always served as a symbol of the power of its owner, demonstrating his grandness and symbolising his dominion.





1. CHARLEMAGNE

THE EMPIRE
IS REINVENTED

THE AGE OF CHARLEMAGNE

Origin and rise

Charlemagne came from a family on the rise: In 751, his father, Pippin, deposed the last of the Frankish Merovingian kings with the backing of the pope and the nobility; thus marking the start of the Carolingian dynasty. As a twenty-year-old, Charlemagne succeeded his father (768) together with his younger brother, Carloman. But Charlemagne wanted more and was unscrupulous: Following conflicts with his brother, he managed to gain authority over the entire realm after Carloman's sudden death. He captured his sister-in-law and two nephews, who were never seen or heard from again. The same fate befell his father-in-law, the King of the Lombards, and his cousin Tassilo III, the Duke of Bavaria: Both were deposed by him and imprisoned in a monastery along with their families.

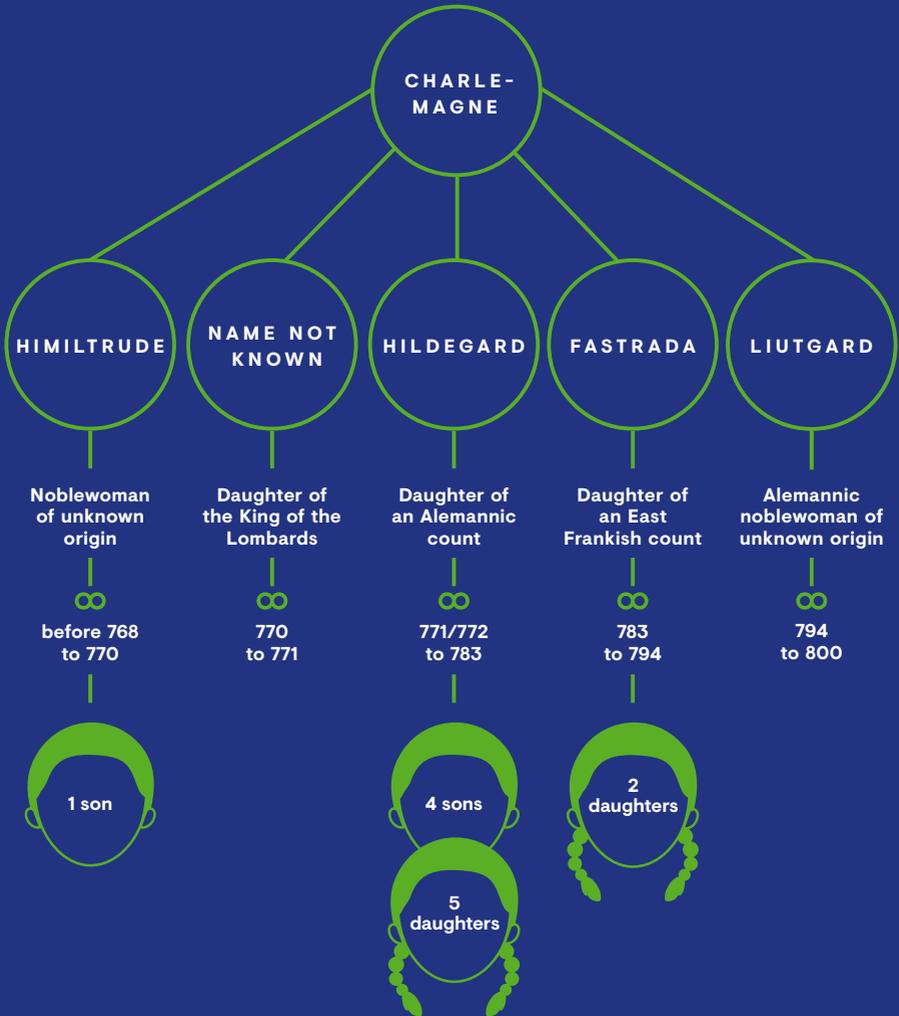
The reinvention of the empire

Before Charlemagne's reign, there were many kings in western Europe, but no emperor. At that time, the successors of the ancient Roman emperors ruled from Constantinople, now Istanbul. In 800, Charlemagne founded a new empire in western, Latin Europe. This involved forging an alliance with the pope, who then crowned him in Rome. The successor of the Apostle Peter therefore became the emperor-maker. Although the title of emperor did not result in the acquisition of new possessions, it did entitle the holder to claim superiority over the other kings. Charlemagne continued the tradition of the ancient emperors, thus securing the Frankish empire's rise to supremacy.

The wives of Charlemagne

Two divorces and at least four concubines – the Frankish ruler's marital life was not exactly in line with Church teaching. Politically calculated decisions directed him in the choice of his five wives. They allowed Charlemagne to enter into alliances with noble families, thereby

strengthening his grip on power. He soon repudiated his first two wives when his plans changed. He fathered at least ten daughters and eight sons. After his imperial coronation, he did not marry again, and his daughters also remained unmarried: This policy prevented noble families becoming potential rivals and grandsons challenging the rule of the emperor's sons.



Transport routes and communication

The Roman road network and rivers served as the fundamental transport routes. Charlemagne had a canal dug between the Main and the Danube and built a bridge over the Rhine in Mainz, which was destroyed soon after its completion. Under Charlemagne and his successors, the royal court and its retinue usually covered no more than 20 kilometres a day. Mounted messengers, who could travel up to 40–80 kilometres a day, depending on weather conditions and terrain, were employed to deliver urgent orders and messages. The language of the scholars, the Church and the administration was Latin. The emperor understood it but spoke one of the dialects just like the rural population. His Latin documents were written by clerks.

Military campaigns

Charlemagne's world was a world of war: Almost every year, Frankish troops engaged in battles with their enemies, usually under the personal command of the emperor. The spoils and conquered treasures were used by Charlemagne to reward his nobles and animate them for further battles. But not all military campaigns ended in success. Expansion across the Pyrenees proved to be a fleeting episode, and the Saxons continued to rise up against their new masters. Their conquest required more than 30 years of fighting, with thousands of lives lost.

Emperor on the move

Charlemagne's vast empire stretched from the North Sea to Rome and from the Pyrenees to the River Elbe. It covered about one million km² and boasted 180 dioceses, 700 abbeys and 150 royal palaces. It was home to roughly eight million people, the majority of which lived in rural areas; very few towns had more than 10,000 inhabitants. As a ruler on horseback, Charlemagne reigned from the saddle just as his successors would do: He moved around constantly together with his court, thereby ensuring it was well supplied with everything it needed. This allowed the emperor to always be present and accessible: He supervised his offi-

cials, administered justice and debated with the nobles of the realm at assemblies. In the last two decades of his life, he made Aachen his permanent seat of residence, at least during the winter months.

The pope

The pope was the Bishop of Rome, the successor of the Apostle Peter and Christ's representative on earth. Although, his pre-eminence as head of Christendom emerged only gradually. Under threat from various enemies, the popes sought protection and allied themselves with the Frankish kings. In return, the papacy reinforced their legitimacy. This cooperation culminated in the imperial coronation on Christmas Day in the year 800. In matters of faith, however, Charlemagne claimed absolute power of decision together with the bishops of his realm.

At the core: The court

The court formed the social and administrative core of the realm. At its head was the queen, who was also responsible for the royal treasure. Organisation was left in the hands of four royal-household officials: Treasurer (finances), steward (supplies, staff), marshal (horses, transport) and cupbearer (drinks). The count palatine administered justice, counsellors advised and guided the ruler in all aspects of governance. Letters and documents were prepared in the court chapel. Scholars from across Europe also gathered at Charlemagne's court. Educational, religious, liturgical, legal and handwriting reforms emanated from this centre of intellectual and cultural activity.

Local rule

The will of the ruler needed to be imposed at local level. The foundation for this was a general oath of loyalty sworn to the monarch by the population. Charlemagne used counts as his chief representatives in local areas: These agents collected dues, commanded the army and held courts of law. Administrative stewards organised the estates, thereby ensuring the court was always well stocked and supplied. Messengers of the king

were sent out to check on officials and make amendments where they deemed necessary. None of this would have been possible without the integration of the local nobility, who, however, also pursued their own interests. The emperor's plans could usually only be implemented to a limited extent.

Succession and prospects for the future

After being crowned emperor, Charlemagne arranged his succession. The empire was to be divided equally among his sons. It was not long, however, before only one of them, Louis, was still alive: One year before his own death, Charlemagne crowned him co-emperor in Aachen. Over the following generations, the empire was divided multiple times; independent kingdoms emerged: The West Francia, which would eventually become France, and the East Francia, Burgundy and Italy, which together would later be called the "Roman Empire". The epithets "Holy" and "German Nation" were added in the 12th and 15th century respectively. Crowning of the emperor was once again performed by the pope: His coronation transformed a mere king into an emperor.

Coins

Charlemagne's quest for unification also included the measurement and currency system. The minting of coins was again a monopoly of the ruler alone. The newly designed coins displayed the royal name, title and a cross on one side of the coin, and the name of the mint and the ruler's monogram (a motif made by combining the letters of the name) on the other. At that time, the standard coin was the silver pfennig, measuring about 20 mm in diameter and weighing between 1.5 g and 1.7 g. A half-pfennig (obolus), which was half the pfennig's size and weight, was also in circulation. Pound and shilling were units of account: 1 pound = 20 shillings = 240 pfennigs. This remained the dominant monetary system for many centuries.

THE LIVES OF THE MANY

The manorial system

The manorial system was based on dominion over land and people. Early medieval society was divided into the powerful and the poor, into superiors and inferiors. The highest rank was held by the nobility and the clergy. The vast majority of the people were farmers. They were the foundation of society, their work ensured the survival of everyone. Most of them depended on a landlord and were obliged to pay him dues and perform labour services. The biggest landowners were the emperor and the monasteries.

Prüm Abbey

Like his father before him, Charlemagne was very generous in his donations to Prüm Abbey. The imperial abbey located in the Eifel region was home to over 100 monks and owned extensive land and property: Roughly 2000 farms in more than 400 locations, mainly on the Maas, Upper Rhine and Lahn. Rebellious members of the ruling dynasty were often imprisoned in Prüm. Charlemagne's grandson, Emperor Lothar, chose the abbey as his burial site. At the end of the 9th century, raids by plundering Normans twice caused serious damage.

Manor house and dependent holding

The manor house (lord's farm) and the associated demesne (lord's land) were at the heart of manorial life and activities. There were large storage buildings and barns, but also production facilities such as a bakehouse, brewery and mill. This is where the farmers from the surrounding farmsteads (dependent holdings) were required to pay their dues and to perform their labour services several days a week. The yield was then transported to a monastery, a royal palace or where a bishop had his seat.

Not all farmers were equal

There were all manner of legal, social and economic differences among the millions of farmers. Free farmers who were obliged to provide military service to the emperor became fewer and fewer. Unfree tenant farmers were also subject to the legal restraints of the lord of the manor. They did not have the right to choose their own spouse and were bound to the land. If the land changed hands, they had a new master. The burden of dues as well as the labour services required varied greatly: The servants lived and worked at the lord's farm, the farmers of a dependent holding would have had their own farm and been expected to pay dues and to perform labour services, while the free tenant farmers only had to pay dues.

Gundald's dues

The farmer known as Gundald lived in Dienheim (between Mainz and Worms) in the year 893. As a non-freeman he was obliged to provide many dues and services to Prüm Abbey each year.



WITH CROSS AND SWORD

Christian faith and violence did not seem like a contradiction of terms to Charlemagne. In the long and bitter battle against the Saxons, the defeated pagans were forced to forsake their Germanic gods and accept baptism. Missionaries spread throughout Saxony, a church infrastructure was established. Charlemagne responded to repeated uprisings with mass executions and forced resettlement, but he also acknowledged the Saxon law. When undertaking a campaign against the pagan Avars in the south-east, however, conquest and missionary activities were not part of his plans: This tribe of people was almost completely annihilated.

THE RHINE AREA

The more the Frankish empire expanded, the more the Rhine area became the centre of power. This is where Charlemagne patronised monasteries and bishoprics, built royal palaces, held assemblies and gathered his troops for military campaigns. It is where large estates and fertile farmland ensured the court enjoyed an ample supply of provisions. Moreover, it was home to his favourite residence, Aachen, where he received envoys from far and distant lands. He appointed the archbishoprics of Mainz, Cologne and Trier to lead the newly structured Church, to which the other dioceses were subordinated.

Mainz. Rise to a centre of ecclesiastical power

The rise of Mainz to a centre of ecclesiastical power began with the mission of Boniface († 754). Under the rule of Charlemagne, Mainz became the largest archbishopric of Latin Christendom. It extended from the diocese of Verden in the north to Halberstadt and Eichstädt in the east and Constance and Chur in the south. There were numerous churches and monasteries in Mainz. The recently established Abbey of Saint Alban held important synods.

Lorsch Abbey. Advocate of educational reform

Bishop's sees and monasteries became the flourishing centres of new learning. Ancient Roman and early Christian writings were collected, corrected and reproduced there. Lorsch Abbey had a distinguished scriptorium and one of the most important libraries. The main focus in Lorsch was on the writings of the Church Fathers. The abbey was a key ally of the ruler in the local region. Its extensive possessions stretched from the mouth of the Rhine to Lake Constance.

Trier. Archbishopric and centre of book art

Under the rule of Charlemagne, Trier was erected into an archbishopric, to which the dioceses of Metz, Toul and Verdun were subordinated. However, the authority and power of the archbishops only grew under Charlemagne's successors. Trier and the nearby Imperial Abbey of Echternach became a centre of unique book art that served as an exemplary reference for centuries to come.

Metz. Family burial site

It all started in Metz: At the beginning of the 7th century, Arnulf, the progenitor of the Carolingians, became the Bishop of Metz and was buried there as a saint. Charlemagne had his third wife, Hildegard, and his sisters buried alongside his great-great-great-grandfather. Louis, his son and successor, as well as his illegitimate son, Bishop Drogo, were also laid to rest there. Precious manuscripts were produced at the influential scriptorium of Metz.

Ingelheim. Palace and place of assembly

Ingelheim palace was constructed on the royal estate located between Mainz and Bingen. The imposing residence had an underground water supply line. Due to its magnificent palace hall it became an important place of domicile and assembly. Duke Tassilo III of Bavaria was deposed there in 788 during a political show trial.

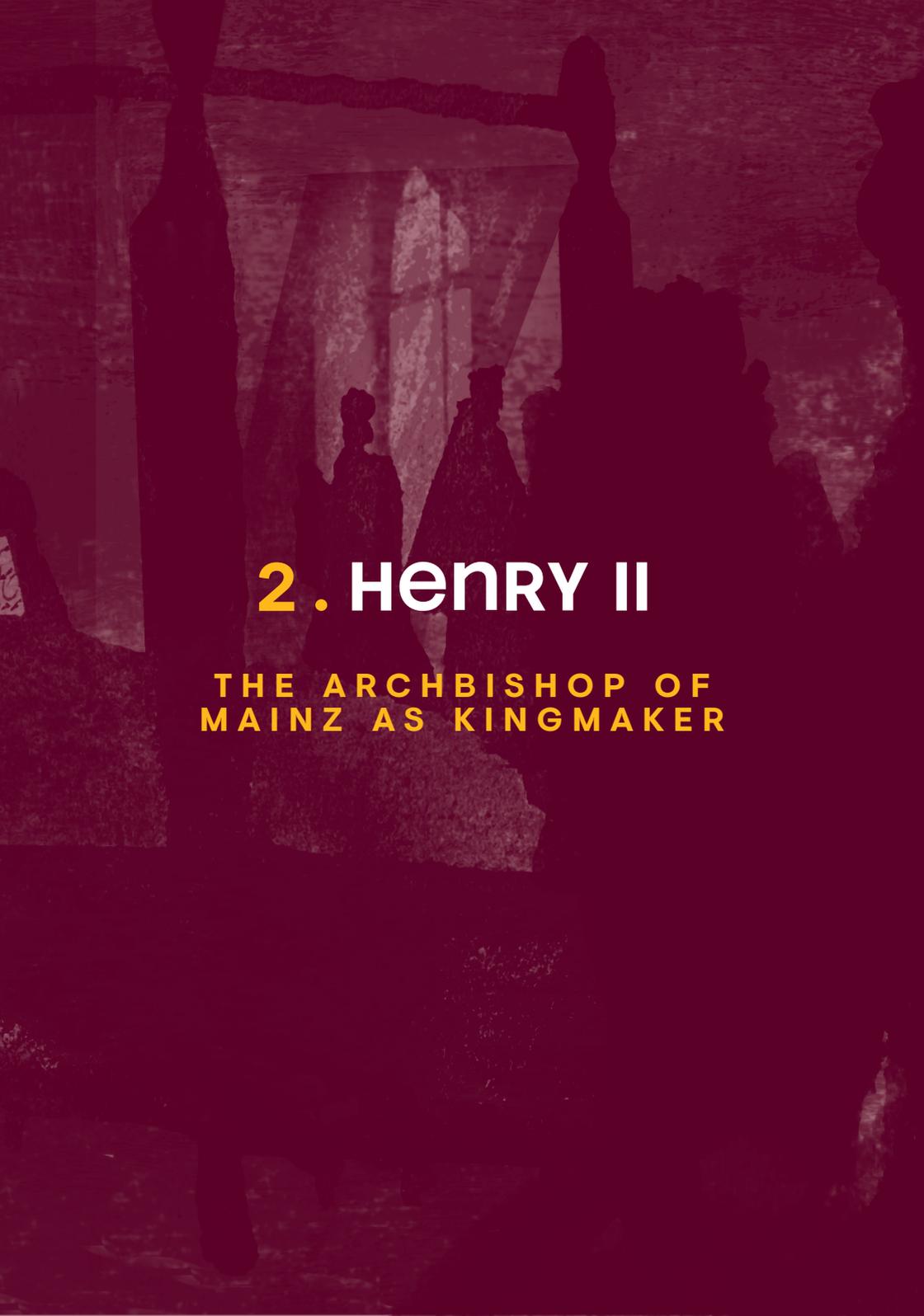
A VISION OF UNITY

The world Charlemagne inherited was diverse and unorganised. He, on the other hand, called for uniformity. This was, above all, intended to serve the faith: Accurate writings, standardised liturgy and calendar, well trained priests, and understandable sermons in the language of the people. The implemented programme of structural changes was ambitious. Educational reforms and the sciences were encouraged. Ancient knowledge was preserved and made available. A new writing style was developed, laws were recorded, and new coins minted.

THE FIRST WESTERN EMPEROR SINCE THE ANTIQUITY

The coronation of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III in 800 made him the first emperor in western Europe for more than three centuries. Twelve years later, the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople recognised Charlemagne's imperial title. Aachen became a magnificent residence, a second Rome. The palace included the octagonal chapel: Inspired by Byzantine architecture, decorated with ancient pillars and rich mosaics. It is where the throne of Charlemagne, upon which so many of his successors sat during their coronation, can be found and where the emperor was laid to rest.





2. HENRY II

THE ARCHBISHOP OF
MAINZ AS KINGMAKER

HENRY II AND HIS TIME

Archbishop Willigis of Mainz and his cathedral

The most important prelate in the empire was the Archbishop of Mainz. His main rivals were the Archbishops of Cologne and Trier. The right to consecrate the emperor became particularly contested. Archbishop Willigis (975–1011) proved to be a key supporter of the Ottonian emperors and benefited from their patronage. In Mainz, he embarked upon an ambitious programme of construction. The new cathedral was to become a symbol of his eminent position as the deputy of the pope. However, due to the long construction period and a devastating fire, the coronations in 1002 and 1024 had to take place in the old cathedral (St. Johannis).

Armoured horsemen for the emperor

Armoured horsemen equipped with a lance, shield and armour were the core of the army. The majority of the imperial troops were supplied by bishops and imperial monasteries. A list from the early 980s offers unique insights into the composition of the imperial army.

Origin

Henry II was the great-grandson of Henry I, the first king of the Ottonian dynasty, which succeeded the Carolingian dynasty in 919. Under the rule of Otto I (936–973), the kingdom of Italy and the western empire were permanently united with the East Frankish-German kings. The emperors more or less dictated who would be pope. Henry II descended from a minor line of the imperial family. His father of the same name, who was known as “Henry the Quarrelsome”, attempted, as the Duke of Bavaria, to secure the crown for himself – but to no avail. Henry II grew up in Hildesheim and Regensburg and succeeded his father as duke in 995.

Seizing the crown

Henry’s moment came in 1002, when Otto III died unexpectedly at the young age of just 21. Rival dukes also made a bid for

the throne. But Henry secured the imperial insignia and the backing of Archbishop Willigis of Mainz and was eventually crowned king in Mainz. His cortège initially consisted mainly of the Bavarian nobles and bishops as well as his wife’s family, the Luxembourgers. Only after spending several months on a king’s journey through the realm did he manage to gain authority over the entire kingdom.



Friend of the bishops, enemy of the nobility

Henry II saw himself as Christ's representative on earth. Like Moses, he wanted to teach God's commandments to the people. He patronised dioceses and monasteries and reorganised and regulated the life of the clergy. He concluded prayer associations, held synods and took action against marriages to close relatives. His influence on the appointment of the bishops, who were often from his closest circle, went a good deal further than his predecessors. Conversely, his reign was marked by numerous conflicts with the highest-ranking nobility, especially in the west of the empire and in Saxony. Henry even allied himself with pagan Slavic tribes against the Christian King of Poland.

The Church as the heir

Under the Ottonian dynasty, the empire was no longer divided between all sons, as it had been in the past: Now, only the eldest son could inherit land and title. But the marriage of Henry II and Kunigunde remained childless. They, therefore, founded the diocese of Bamberg, which they endowed with great riches. Both were laid to rest there. They were later canonised and thus became the only holy imperial couple of the Middle Ages. After the death of her husband, Kunigunde handed over the imperial insignia to the Salian ruler Conrad II, who, like his predecessor, was crowned in Mainz.

Coins

The Ottonian rulers promoted, in particular, bishops by granting them market, coin and customs privileges. The majority of the episcopal coins usually did not yet mention the bishop but bore the name or image of the emperor. More and more coins were struck each year and the number of mints increased to about 70. These coins were chiefly supplied by the imperial mints, the silver required for the coinage came from the mines of the Harz mountains. The Saxon pfennig and the Otto-Adelaide- pfennig were widely used in long-distance trade with the north and east.

POWERFUL WOMEN

The empress took an active part in ruling. She came from a royal or aristocratic background and was usually not older than 25 years of age when she married. An archbishop anointed and crowned her queen, while the pope made her empress. As the female sovereign she was expected to be by her husband's side and act as his advisor. She was a champion of churches and monasteries, assuming the role of a mediator with direct access to the ruler's ear. Moreover, she also acted as his proxy and kept the memory of dead family members alive. As a widow, she assumed the regency for her underage son.

Adelaide (c. 931-999)

Aged about 20, Adelaide married King Otto I, who was twice her age at the time. She was the widow of the King of Italy, where she owned extensive lands and estates. She had a substantial impact on politics for almost half a century and was held in high esteem by her contemporaries. For many years, she was her son's most influential advisor and also served as regent for her underage grandson. Adelaide survived all of her five children. She spent her final days at a monastery she had founded at Selz in Alsace. She was canonised a century after her death.

Theophanu (c. 960-991)

The niece of the Byzantine emperor was in fact only second choice, as Otto I had wanted his son to marry an emperor's daughter. Upon marrying Otto II (972), Theophanu received many territorial wedding gifts both south and north of the Alps. For Theophanu, the next five years meant giving birth to five children. The relationship with her mother-in-law, Adelaide, gravitated between conflict and close cooperation. With the help of Archbishop Willigis of Mainz and Bishop Hildebold of Worms, the two empresses managed to secure the crown for the underage monarch Otto III.

Kunigunde (c. 975-1023)

The daughter of the Count of Luxembourg was crowned queen in Paderborn, Saxony, two months after her husband, Henry II, succeeded to the throne. It was the first separate coronation of a queen in the post-Carolingian period. Like her predecessors, Kunigunde played a significant part in ruling the realm; in more than a quarter of the documents she appears as an advocate. During her husband's campaigns, she ruled in his name and secured the kingdom's borders through military force. As a widow, she oversaw an orderly transfer of power before retiring to the Convent of Kaufungen (near Kassel), which she had founded. She was canonised in 1200, 54 years after her husband.

Gisela (c. 990-1043)

Gisela had already been married twice and given birth to three children by the time she married the future Emperor Conrad II in 1016/17. Through her Burgundian mother, the daughter of the Duke of Swabia was a descendant of Charlemagne. Utilising her resources and family ties, she facilitated her husband's way to the throne in 1024. Gisela took an active role in government; more than every second document is a result of her advocacy. She exerted influence on who presided over dioceses and imperial monasteries and pressed for peace with the King of Poland. Through her mediation, the kingdom of Burgundy became part of the empire in 1032. Of her six children, she was only survived by her son Emperor Henry III. Gisela was interred at Speyer Cathedral alongside her husband.

ARCHBISHOP WILLIGIS AND THE GOLDEN MAINZ

The Saxon noble named Willigis grew up at the court of Otto I and was appointed his chancellor in 971. Four years later, Otto II made him head of the most important archbishopric in the empire – Mainz. Imperial and papal privileges and donations further increased his power. Willigis now returned the favour. He became the key supporter of the Ottonian emperors. In his archiepiscopal city of Mainz, he founded monasteries and had a huge cathedral built. This was to serve as the new coronation church. Unfortunately, the new cathedral burned to the ground on the day of its consecration in 1009.

HENRY II CROWNED KING IN MAINZ

Although Henry was a member of the Ottonian dynasty, his succession was anything but straightforward. One of his rivals, the Duke of Swabia, quickly moved against him militarily. But Henry made it to Mainz, to his most loyal ally, the Archbishop Willigis. In the old cathedral, today's St. Johannis Church, he was anointed and crowned king. Based on this sacral legitimation, he journeyed throughout the kingdom and obtained the homage of the nobility. His wife was crowned in Paderborn and he ascended the throne of Charlemagne in Aachen.

BISHOPS AS THE PILLARS OF POWER

The emperor and the bishops formed an alliance. He appointed them and then granted them privileges and donations. They served him as advisors and envoys, provided troops for his military campaigns and housed his court. Unlike his predecessors, Henry II celebrated the most revered observances of the Christian faith in cathedral cities rather than in a royal palace. He regularly held not only assemblies but also synods to discuss ecclesiastical issues with his “colleagues”, the bishops.

Cologne

The Archbishop of Cologne headed the imperial church along with his counterpart in Mainz. Their relationship to the emperor was close. Archbishop Bruno (953–965), Otto I's brother, was also the Duke of Lorraine and head of the court clergy. He founded the monastery of St. Pantaleon, where he and Empress Theophanu were buried. In contrast, Archbishop Heribert (999–1021) was an enemy of Henry II. After Heribert's death, the emperor had his close confidant Pilgrim sworn in as archbishop.

Trier

The emperors also appointed close confidants as archbishops in Trier. They were great patrons of canonries and monasteries. This led to increased active engagement in education and art, and important workshops for book illumination emerged. Years of discord were witnessed during the reign of Henry II, as the emperor was unwilling to accept the election of his brother-in-law as archbishop. Eventually, Poppo (1016–1047), the former provost of Bamberg Cathedral and the emperor's candidate, prevailed. After his victory, he focussed on a programme of renewing and extending the cathedral.

Worms

Cooperation between the emperor and the bishop was at its peak under Burchard (1000–1025). He was elevated to bishop on the recommendation of Archbishop Willigis of Mainz and supported Henry II from the beginning. In return, Henry helped strengthen Burchard's rule over the city against claims by the Salians. Burchard founded monasteries and built a new cathedral. He unified legal relationships within his diocese and created a comprehensive collection of ecclesiastical law.

THE EMPIRE AS THE “HOUSE OF GOD”

Henry II and his Ottonian predecessors saw themselves as the “anointed of the Lord”, who had a special relationship with God. They ensured observance of the divine commandments and ruled the realm in union with the bishops. They exerted influence on the papal election, while also securing the pope’s position in Rome and central Italy. They were responsible for consolidating and spreading the Christian faith, both inside and outside the empire. In this role, they were supported by their wives, who were also of royal or imperial rank by birth.

Henry III

Henry III (1039–1056) was the second Salian emperor. He adopted and intensified the style of rule of his predecessor of the same name. As lord over the Church, he deposed of three rival papal claimants in 1046. He put his trust in his hand-picked bishops, five of whom eventually became pope. This close relationship between the emperor and the clergy was in stark contrast to the fierce conflicts with the nobility. Henry III left a difficult legacy for his son of the same name.





3. HENRY IV and HENRY V

THE EMPERORS MUST BOW

CONFLICT-RIDDEN TIMES

HENRY IV (1056 – 1106)

Henry IV (* 1050) did not have an easy life – neither as a ruler nor as a child: He lost his father and three siblings in the first ten years of his life, and at the age of twelve he was torn from the care of his mother. His reign was blighted by many interwoven conflicts – with the Saxons, the princes, his wives, his sons and the popes. Acting out of a deep conviction of the immediacy of the Divine Presence in his sovereignty, he ruthlessly enforced his will and met with fierce resistance due to his stern attitude. He is viewed by some as a tyrant and a failure and by others as the anointed of the Lord and an energetic guardian of the imperial throne.

EMPERESSES

Bertha of Turin

The daughter (* c. 1053/1054) of the Count of Savoy and the Countess of Turin grew up at court together with her future husband. Three years after their marriage (1066), Henry tried unsuccessfully to divorce her. Instead, the couple had four children in four years. After their joint imperial coronation, she gave birth to another son, Henry V, in 1086. He lost his mother within one year of his birth.

Eupraxia

The marriage concluded in 1089 with the recently widowed daughter of a Prince of Kiev (* after 1067), sometimes referred to as Praxedis or Adelheid, lasted just a few years. After escaping imprisonment by her husband, she made serious accusations against the emperor at a council. She publicly accused him of arranging for her to be raped by other men. Separation was inescapable, and Eupraxia returned to her homeland and lived in a monastery until her death in 1109.

HENRY V (1105/1106 – 1125)

Henry V (* 1086) not only bore his father's name, he also followed in his footsteps – but nevertheless trod a new path. After his elder brother had rebelled unsuccessfully, Henry became the new heir to the throne. He then allied himself with the nobility and dethroned his father. But it was not long before past conflicts re-emerged: With the pope about his right to invest bishops, with the princes about expansion of the imperial power base. However, it was not a military confrontation but peaceful negotiations that finally brought about the solution: In 1122, on the initiative of the princes, an end to the Investiture Controversy was secured in the Concordat of Worms. Three years later, the childless emperor and last ruler of the Salian dynasty died.

EMPRESS

Matilda of England

The daughter of the King of England (* 1102) came to Germany as a young child. She was crowned in Mainz (1110) and then raised in Trier. After her marriage (1114), she played a key role in government, and, in the absence of her spouse, also acted as regent. As a widow, she returned to England, where she fought for many years to claim her dead father's crown. Her son from her second marriage eventually succeeded to the English throne as Henry II.

1075 The Battle of Langensalza

The plundering of the imperial castle Harzburg by Saxon farmers united the king and the princes. They achieved a great victory. A few months later, the leaders of the Saxon rebels swore allegiance to the king.

1076 Worms

The king and the bishops renounced their obedience and called on Pope Gregory VII to abdicate.

1077 Canossa

The king refused to give up his right to invest bishops and was therefore excommunicated by the pope. Through the absolution of Canossa (northern Italy), he was reconciled with the Church.

1077 Forchheim

Despite the Pope's absolution of the king, the princes elected Duke Rudolf of Swabia ('of Rheinfelden') as the anti-king. A bloody civil war ensued.

1080 The Battle on the Elster

A battle fought in Saxony between Henry and the anti-king Rudolf. Henry's army suffered a military defeat, but Rudolf was fatally wounded during the battle and died of his injuries the next day.

1084 Rome

After having been excommunicated a second time (1080), Henry IV appointed an anti-pope, who crowned him and his wife, Bertha, as emperor and empress.

1098 Mainz

The emperor deposed his first-born son Conrad (*1074), who had switched his allegiance to the pope. Conrad spent almost his entire life separated from his father in Italy, where he died in 1101.

1105 Confrontations near Mainz and near Regensburg

The armies of the emperor and his rebellious son Henry V faced each other twice. However, a battle was prevented each time by the princes of both sides.

1105/1106 Ingelheim

Henry V captured his father and forced him to abdicate and hand over the imperial insignia.

1111/1122 Rome

March on Rome with a large army and imperial coronation of Henry V. The pope later revoked the concessions made under duress on the royal investiture of bishops and excommunicated the emperor.

1114 Mainz

The ceremonial wedding with Matilda of England was intended to bring an end to conflicts in the empire. However, through his actions against some of his opponents, the emperor provoked further resistance.

1114/1115 The Battle of Andernach and the Battle of Welfesholz near Eisleben

Henry V suffered severe defeats against the princes of the Lower Rhine and Saxony. His rule was then confined to Bavaria, Swabia and Italy.

1121 Confrontations near Mainz

The armies of the emperor and his greatest adversary, Archbishop Adalbert of Mainz, faced each other. Prudence prevailed, however, and it was proposed that an equal number of princes from each side should come together to agree on a compromise.

1121 Würzburg

The princes forced the emperor to recognise the pope, undertaking in return to mediate a settlement on investiture without damaging the honour of the empire.

1122 Worms

The decades-long Investiture Controversy between the emperor and the pope was brought to a close. The emperor agreed to the free election of bishops and imperial abbots. Using a sceptre, he then transferred worldly authority to them.

POWER STRUGGLE WITH THE POPE

The long and bitter dispute between the emperor and the pope, known as the “Investiture Controversy”, was about the role the emperor should play in the appointment of new bishops and abbots, as well as the relationship between the imperial power and the Church. The champions of church reform who proclaimed the independence of the Church from worldly influences prevailed. The unity of empire and papacy was broken, the rift between the religious and secular spheres began to widen. The pope and no longer the emperor now spoke and acted as Christ’s representative on earth.

POWER STRUGGLE WITH THE PRINCES

The expansion of imperial power met with growing resistance from the princes, which also had a religious aspect in view of the emperor’s excommunication. Opposition was particularly intense in Saxony; the emperor launched numerous military campaigns but had little success. This is also where the two anti-kings, Duke Rudolf of Swabia (1077–1080) and Hermann of Salm (1081–1088), the son of a count of Luxembourg, had their power bases. The Archbishops of Mainz changed from advocates to opponents, the emperors had to increasingly rely on the Staufers, who later rose to the top of the imperial hierarchy.

POWER STRUGGLE WITH THE SONS

Henry IV, like his predecessors, bestowed the title of co-ruler on his sons to ensure their succession to the throne. But first Conrad and then Henry V rebelled against their father. Conrad’s rule was confined to parts of northern Italy, and he died a few years later in Florence with little fanfare. Henry, on the other hand, with the support of rebel princes, forced his father to abdicate. A few years after Henry IV’s death, he

appealed to the pope to lift the excommunication decree, thus allowing the burial of his father's remains in Speyer cathedral.

A NEW ORDER

The Investiture Controversy escalated in Worms in 1076 when the king and bishops called on the pope to abdicate. Many battles and assemblies later, a settlement, brought about mainly by the princes, was secured in the same place in 1122. In the meantime, old certainties had crumbled: The emperor had lost most of his sacral aura, while the position of the princes was strengthened considerably. A new order was born – the emperor and the empire were seen as different entities, the princes became the “heads of state”.

COLOGNE. AMBITIOUS AND MILITANT

The merchants of this centre of trade and artisan activity, of which outstanding remains can still be seen, led an unsuccessful revolt against their archiepiscopal lord in 1074. In the conflict between Henry IV and Henry V, the city sided with the father and was initially besieged without success by his son. Finally, the city was, however, taken and had to pay a significant sum of money in return for mercy. The opportunity for revenge presented itself in 1114, when the people of Cologne pushed back their imperial besiegers and then contributed greatly to the victory of their archbishop at the Battle of Andernach.

MAINZ. BETWEEN EMPEROR AND ARCHBISHOP

During the Investiture Controversy, the emerging civil community sided with Henry IV. The city's splendid houses formed the backdrop to his numerous stays and assemblies. The Archbishops of Mainz, on the other hand, had always been part of the anti-imperial opposition; only under Henry V were they able to return to the city. After renewed conflicts,

the townsfolk stood resolutely behind their archbishop. The privileges of liberty granted to them in gratitude were engraved on the bronze door of the Market Portal of Mainz Cathedral.

SPEYER. RAPID RISE

Speyer rose rapidly under the Salian emperors. Henry IV completed the cathedral which his grandfather and father had been instrumental in constructing – the mightiest cathedral of Latin Christendom. It became the burial place of the emperors and empresses and routinely received gifts for their salvation. The emperors elevated the city's status by constructing the city walls, granting privileges to Jews (1090), exempting citizens from certain taxes and affirming its legal status (1111).

WORMS. THE EMPEROR AS THE LORD OF THE CITY

In appreciation of their loyalty, Henry IV granted economic privileges to the townsfolk and the Jews of Worms in 1074 – the first declaration issued by a ruler for a city north of the Alps. Worms subsequently became an important centre of imperial power. Henry V left the diocese without a bishop for many years and promoted citizen participation and construction of a new cathedral. An end to the Investiture Controversy was effectively secured here in 1122 and the emperor was welcomed back into the church.

RISE OF THE CITIES

The cities of Mainz, Worms and Speyer on the banks of the River Rhine date back to Roman times. Their cathedrals were the seat of an (arch) bishop, numerous collegiate churches existed within their walls (Mainz 100 hectares, Speyer 60, Worms 40). Mainz, followed by Worms and then Speyer, had been home to a Jewish community since the 10th century. During the first crusade in 1096, the Jews were persecuted severely, but the SchUM communities (Schpira, Warmaisa, Magenza) flourished again in the following years.

Mainz

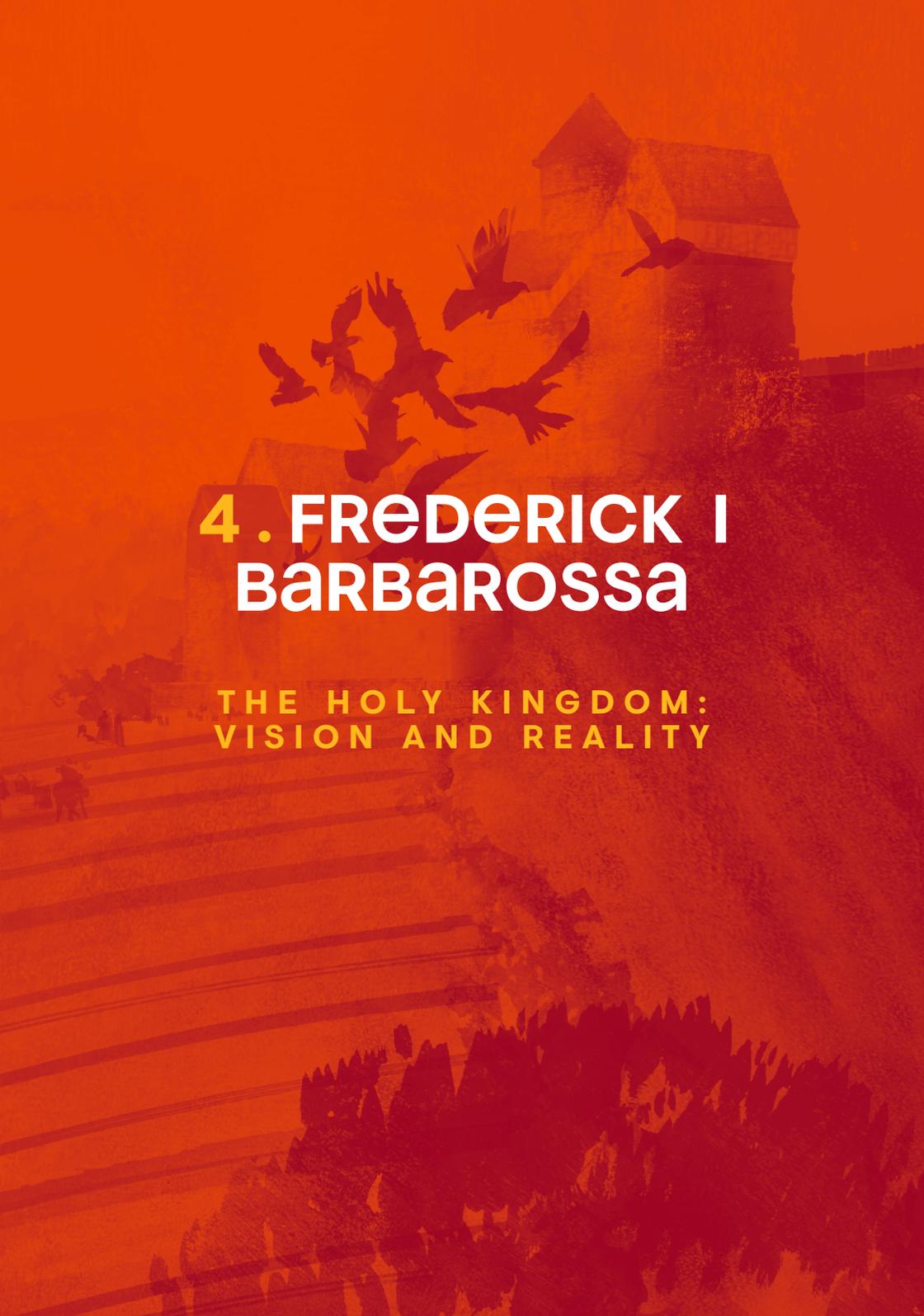
The ecclesiastical centre and the emerging commercial town vied with Cologne to become the most important city on the Rhine. One example of this rivalry was the construction of a gigantic new cathedral. Mighty city walls were built on the foundations of the Roman city fortifications and people from surrounding areas were involved in their upkeep. In 1163, they were destroyed to an undeterminable extent by the emperor as punishment, and then rebuilt a few decades later.

Speyer

Symbolic for the rise and gain in stature of the bishop's city are two terms, between which lie roughly one hundred years: Through the ambitions of the Salian emperors, the 'cowtown', as it was referred to by its own bishop at the beginning of the 11th century, became the 'capital of Germania' (1125). This distinction was bestowed on the city mainly because the Marienkirche became the burial place of the emperors.

Worms

The Salian counts, whose tombs are located in the cathedral, were persuaded to abandon their castle at the beginning of the 11th century. A church was then erected on its foundations. In conjunction with the construction of the new cathedral, this marked the bishop's rise to Lord of the City. After becoming kings, the Salians continued to maintain relations with the townspeople, empowering them through privileges granted.



4 . FREDERICK I BARBAROSSA

THE HOLY KINGDOM:
VISION AND REALITY

BETWEEN TRIUMPH AND FAILURE

The rise to kingship

Frederick rose from duke to king in an incredibly short space of time: His election took place in Frankfurt am Main just two weeks after the death of his predecessor and he was crowned barely four days later in Aachen. The princes decided in favour of the deceased king's nephew and against his underage son. Frederick rewarded them with a multitude of privileges, therefore laying the foundations for his successful reign. After decades of internal conflict, it was hoped that peace would now return to the realm.

Frederick I Barbarossa

Frederick I Barbarossa ("red beard") of the Staufer dynasty succeeded his uncle to the throne in 1152. With the support of the princes, he took the empire to new heights, but also dragged it into protracted conflicts. Decades of wars with ambitious cities in northern Italy followed. The initial good relations with the papacy soon began to sour; Frederick finally made peace with the pope in 1177. In the course of his reign, the emperor began to increasingly rely on ministerials. Thus began the golden age of knighthood. Frederick embarked on a crusade at the age of almost 70. However, before reaching the Holy Land, he drowned while bathing in the River Saleph, in what is now south-east Turkey, in the summer of 1190.

Adelaide of Vohburg

The daughter of a Bavarian margrave married Frederick at the end of the 1140s, when he was still the Duke of Swabia. The two divorced one year after his rise to kingship. The reasons are unknown. Officially, the marriage was annulled on grounds of consanguinity. Some accused Adelaide of infidelity, others suspected political intentions of the new king. The fact that the couple remained childless may also have been a reason. Just

like Frederick, Adelaide also had children in her second marriage to an unfree person below her rank.

Beatrice of Burgundy

When Beatrice married Frederick in 1156, she was about 14 years old and had been an orphan for eight years. Through the marriage, Frederick, who was twice her age at the time, gained control of the County of Burgundy. She held the title of empress from the start. She accompanied Frederick on all of his campaigns in Italy and often acted as a mediator in conflicts. Her advocacy for churches and monasteries focused on her inherited homeland of Burgundy. It was also where she acted as an independent regent at times. During her 28 years as empress, she gave birth to eleven children. Beatrice died a few months after the knighting of her sons at the Diet of Mainz in 1184. She was laid to rest in Speyer.

The pope as an adversary

At the start of Frederick's reign, the king and the pope affirmed their mutual support. But it was not long before the cordial relations between the two powers soured. When two popes were elected in 1159, Frederick decided to take sides. The princes also pledged allegiance to "his" pope. But his adversary, Pope Alexander III, found much support from the northern Italian cities. Many European rulers also recognised him and not the imperial antipope. Frederick was compelled to acknowledge defeat in the Peace of Venice (1177).

Holy Empire

Against the pretensions of the papacy, Frederick claimed the independence and equal status of the empire. He had the relics of the three Magi brought from Milan to Cologne and supported the canonisation of Charlemagne. It was also the first time that the empire was referred as the "Holy Roman Empire". The emperor also claimed superiority over the other kingdoms. But France and England had long since gone their own ways.

The princes as supporters and rivals

At the beginning of his reign, Frederick sought relations with the most important nobles of the realm, the Guelphs, the Babenbergs and the Zähringers. He cleverly agreed to a compromise. The secular and spiritual princes accompanied him on his many military campaigns. This led to over-indebtedness and difficulties for the subordinates. A devastating epidemic in the imperial army led to the death of many of his troops in 1167. When Duke Henry the Lion eventually withdrew his support for the emperor, he was stripped of his duchies of Bavaria and Saxony in 1180. It was not the emperor but the other princes who profited from his fall from grace.

The cities of northern Italy as adversaries

Frederick wanted to reaffirm the position of the empire in northern Italy. This was met with resistance from certain cities, predominantly Milan. The emperor led his army across the Alps on several occasions. Ultimately, the battles and destruction did not achieve the desired success against the Lombard League. The Peace of Constance (1183) saw the emperor grant extensive autonomy to Lombard cities. In return, they recognised his ultimate sovereignty and agreed to pay annual dues.

Coins

Under the Staufer dynasty, emperors, bishops, abbots and, increasingly, secular nobles minted coins. The number of mints increased to more than 200, and even exceeded 400 in the 13th century. The actual value of the various pfennigs began to vary greatly. They were, therefore, mostly only used regionally. Quite often the thin coins were only struck on one side (“bracteate”). Frederick I established numerous new mints to strengthen his economic powers. Heller coins soon enjoyed widespread use in southern and central Germany.

HIGH IDEALS – KNIGHTS AND CRUSADES

Knights on the Rhine

A knight was a heavily-armoured soldier on horseback. He was bound to a system of virtues and seen as a defender of the weak and the faith. The idea of Christian knighthood united high-ranking nobles, free lords and ministerials. The latter in particular, as specialists in combat, administration and diplomacy, became important pillars of the emperors. Hill-side castles dominated the landscape and were a constant reminder of the owner's importance.

The Diet of Mainz (1184)

The great men of the empire gathered on the Rhine island known as Maaraue, near Mainz, at Pentecost in the year 1184. It was a splendid festival of unprecedented scale and a highlight of courtly-chivalric culture. A wooden church was even built in the middle of the huge city of tents. This magnificent courtly feast was a political festival – an assembly and family celebration in one. The centrepiece of this gathering was the knighting of the emperor's two sons. Not just princes but also more than ten thousand knights travelled to Mainz to witness this special occasion. Together they celebrated the divine service, sat together at the banquet, listened to the players and competed in various tournaments.

Food for the king

A source from the 12th century lists the royal courts by region and mentions the annual dues ("services") they had to pay to the king: "These are the courts in Frankish Rhineland: Tiel 2 royal services; Nijmegen 8; Aachen 8; Konzen 2; Düren 2; Remagen 2; Sinzig 2; Hammerstein 2; Andernach 2; Boppard 3; Ingelheim 3; Lautern 8; Brier Castle 8; Thionville 3; Florange 7; Soleuvre 7; Sierck-les-Bains 7; Haßloch 1; Nierstein 1; Trebur 4; Frankfurt 3. These are the courts in Franconia. They are to provide the following [per service]: 40 pigs, 7 suckling piglets,

50 chickens, 5 cows, 500 eggs, 10 geese, 5 pounds of pepper, 90 wheels of cheese, 10 pounds of wax, 4 large tuns of wine.”

Crusades

A crusade is a war initiated by the pope which is fought against those of a different faith. Knights who participated in these bitter struggles were promised forgiveness of their sins. The first crusade ended in 1099 with the capture of Jerusalem. The retaking of the Holy City in 1187 rallied Christian forces. Frederick I raised a large army and marched through Hungary and Byzantium to Asia Minor. But the emperor drowned before the army reached Palestine. Many of the crusaders turned back, a reduced number continued onwards with Frederick’s son. The kings of France and England, who travelled to the Holy Land by sea, achieved military success, but failed to recapture Jerusalem.



“Court of Jesus Christ” in Mainz (1188)

The prelude to Frederick’s crusade was an assembly in Mainz. The emperor humbly renounced his role as presider, as this was due only to Jesus Christ himself. The emperor, princes and knights listened to the sermon together: They were all called upon to utilise their weapons at the service of Christ. As a sign of their solemn promise, they attached crosses to their tunics. The crusade was set to begin the following year on the feast day of Saint George, the patron saint of knights. Only those who were able to support themselves for at least one year were allowed to participate.

THE FLOWERING OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN SPEYER, WORMS AND MAINZ

The SchUM communities: From the Rhine to Europe

Since their foundation, the three Jewish communities in Speyer, Worms and Mainz had been interlinked in an exceptional personal and religious way. They were known as the SchUM communities, an acronym made up of the initial letters of the cities as spelt in Hebrew (Schpira, Warmaisa, Magenza). Their Talmud schools were held in high esteem throughout Europe and were visited by scholars and students from far and wide. The common statutes adopted in 1220 and the structural design of new synagogues, mikvehs, women's prayer rooms as well as the culture of burial in the three cities had a decisive impact on the ritual buildings, culture and identity of Judaism north of the Alps (Ashkenazi Judaism).

The Rhine area as a centre of Judaism

Jewish merchants from Italy and southern France who were involved in long-distance trade began to settle in Rhenish cities along important trade routes in the early Middle Ages. Jewish communities had been resident there since the 10th century, making a significant contribution to the social and economic development of the Rhenish cathedral cities. Emperors and bishops encouraged the settlement of Jews by granting them special privileges and issuing letters of protection. The communities in Speyer, Worms and Mainz (SchUM) had a decisive impact on the religious and cultural development of Ashkenazi Judaism. Periods of peaceful coexistence between the Christian majority and the Jewish minority were replaced on several occasions by anti-Jewish pogroms, which repeatedly endangered the existence of these communities.

The great value of education

Education played a key role in Judaism. Every child was expected to learn to read and write so as to understand religious texts. Due to their trading activities, many Jews were also able to speak several languages. Rabbi Gershom ben Jehuda (died 1028/40) is recognised as the principal founder of Ashkenazi Judaism. He lived and taught in Mainz and his decisions on Jewish law were accepted as legally binding. Raschi (died 1105), the famous Bible and the Talmud commentator, studied in Mainz and Worms. He dealt intensively with the relations between Christians and Jews as well as various controversial issues of everyday Jewish life. To this day, his commentaries are included in many Talmud editions.

The strong role of women

Jewish women held a particularly high status within the family and business life and were themselves active as money lenders. Leading rabbis were concerned from an early stage with the rights of women, without whose consent divorce was impossible. In the Rhenish cities, elaborately designed monumental mikvehs were constructed in the 12th century, which were mainly used by women, and in the 13th century separate women's prayer rooms appeared at synagogues ("women's shuls"). A particular feature of Jewish cemeteries compared to Christian ones is that roughly the same number of gravestones were dedicated to men and women.

Everyday life and work

Jews almost always lived together in a Jewish quarter centrally located in the city in close proximity to the Christian majority. The synagogue represented the social centre of their community. Besides a synagogue, a Jewish community also required a mikveh (a place for ritual cleansing), a community house, a kosher slaughtering table and bakery, as well as a cemetery that offered eternal rest, which was often shared with outlying settlements. At first, Jews worked predominantly as local traders and long-distance merchants. However, when the Church prohibited all Christians from lending money with interest in 1179, the Jews assumed this role.

1074

Customs privilege granted by Henry IV
“to Jews and other citizens of Worms”

1084

Expulsion of Jews from Mainz and
their admission in Speyer

1090

Privileges granted by Henry IV
to the communities in Speyer and Worms

1096

Pogroms during the first crusade

1146/1147

Pogroms during the second crusade

1174/1175

Reconstruction of the synagogue in Worms

1190/1196

Pogroms in Mainz and Worms

1213

Construction of the first women's shul in Worms

1220

Joint statutes of the SchUM communities
Speyer, Worms and Mainz

1236

Frederick II extended the privileges of Worms to all Jews

“THE EMPIRE’S PRINCIPAL STRENGTH”

Bishop Otto of Freising, Frederick Barbarossa’s uncle, claimed the empire’s principal strength lay between Basel and Mainz. The region boasted economically important royal domains, flourishing trade networks in emerging cities and imposing castles of the ministerials. Frederick had existing royal palaces extended and new ones built. The foundation and promotion of cities boosted economic growth. The dues paid by the royal cities and the Jewish communities became an important source of imperial income.

RULING LIKE AN ANCIENT EMPEROR

Frederick demanded universal rule, as had the emperors of ancient Rome. The canonisation of Charlemagne provided him with additional legitimacy. The pope, just like the other kings of Europe and the Lombard cities, should be subordinate to his authority. Defending the honour of the empire became a political objective. The emperor relentlessly attempted to assert his overarching claim to power. Nevertheless, resistance remained strong even after decades of warfare and he was, ultimately, forced to back down.

THE VOICE OF THE ABBESS: HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

Hildegard, a noblewoman born in 1098, entered a women’s convent at Disibodenberg at a young age. As its abbess, she later founded a new monastery at Rupertsberg near Bingen. She became known for her visions and prophecies. Hildegard undertook several preaching tours and corresponded with the powerful of her era. Her good relationship with Frederick I broke down due to his discordance with Pope Alexander III. The abbess used forceful language when calling for the emperor to repent.

CHRISTIAN KNIGHTHOOD

The crusades gave rise to the ideal of the Christian knight fighting for the faith. Knighthood covered all social classes, stretching from the emperor down to the ministerials. A courtly culture all of its own developed within this community of rank. This was expressed in songs and literature, precious clothing, hunting and tournaments. Courtly love and the adoration of women became a central theme. The warrior on horseback transformed into a knight, adhering to a canon of virtue: Loyalty, moderation, generosity, honour and good behaviour.





5. THE PRINCE- ELECTORS and THE GOLDEN BULL

MAINZ. BUILDING IN A PROUD CITY

An atmosphere of change and progress prevailed in Mainz in the first half of the 13th century. The west end of the cathedral was completed, the city wall renewed and a large hospital constructed. Archbishop Siegfried II of Eppstein (1200–1230) and his nephew, Siegfried III (1230–1249), established a close relationship with Emperor Frederick II. In 1235, an imperial land peace was announced in Mainz; it was the first document of its kind in German. However, this relationship broke down in 1241. The archbishop secured the support of his city by granting its citizens various rights. Officially, he remained head of the city, despite Mainz becoming a free city.

FREDERICK II THE MEDITERRANEAN EMPEROR

Frederick II was the grandson of Emperor Frederick I and inherited the Sicilian crown from his parents. In the empire north of the Alps, he battled for succession to his father's throne in the period from 1212 to 1218. Nevertheless, after being crowned emperor in 1220, he remained almost exclusively in the Mediterranean region. His son, Henry (VII), ruled in Germany. After a rebellious uprising, he was deposed in 1235 and his brother, Conrad IV, succeeded him. Like his grandfather before him, Frederick II waged a bitter campaign against the Lombard cities and the papacy. During his crusade, he was able to negotiate the peaceful handover of Jerusalem.

THE PRINCE-ELECTORS AND THE GOLDEN BULL

The prince-electors and the Golden Bull

After the death of Frederick II, there was a succession of monarchs from various dynasties (Habsburg, Luxembourg, Wittelsbach). The decision on who became king was now left to a small group of princes, the seven prince-electors. These prince-electors, however, disagreed on several occasions about who should hold the throne. This resulted in double elections or the installation of anti-kings. To guarantee unity among the prince-electors, Emperor Charles IV promulgated the Golden Bull in 1356. For centuries it became the most important document for political order, a kind of “basic constitutional law” of the old Empire. The Golden Bull marked the end of a long development: Changing players in the game of power became permanent members of the political order, the “pillars of the empire”.

The prince-electors as “pillars of the empire”

The seven prince-electors, three spiritual and four secular, were the highest-ranking noblemen of the empire. They alone elected the king and took responsibility for the realm. Four of the prince-electors came from the Rhine area: The Archbishops of Mainz, Cologne and Trier and the Count Palatine of the Rhine. The east of the empire was represented by the King of Bohemia, the Duke of Saxony and the Margrave of Brandenburg. Depictions of the prince-electors were popular for centuries. At the beginning of the 14th century, the citizens of Mainz had life-size figures of St. Martin, the seven prince-electors and the king installed on the gable end of the merchant’s hall. When the merchant’s hall was demolished at the beginning of the 19th century, the figures exhibited here became part of the collections of the City of Mainz.

The realm as a living image

The Golden Bull regulated the positions and precedence of the prince-electors. The monarch was at the centre of the seating and procession order. The hierarchy followed two basic principles: The closer

you were to the emperor the better, while right was better than left. But creative solutions were also necessary: The rivalry between Mainz and Cologne was solved by giving precedence to the Archbishop of Cologne within his own church province, but otherwise to the Archbishop of Mainz. In processions, the Archbishop of Trier was, as the third spiritual elector, to walk at the head of the procession. The Duke of Saxony was to bear the emperor's sword and to march directly in front of the ruler. The Count Palatine marched to the right of him, bearing the imperial orb, and the Margrave of Brandenburg proceeded on the left, bearing the sceptre. The King of Bohemia marched immediately behind the emperor.

The king's election and the order of eight men

The Golden Bull can also be described as a script of power. Nothing should be left to chance when appointing a new monarch. Everything was regulated down to the last detail: The convocation to the election, the escort to Frankfurt am Main, the exclusion of absentees, the oath, the



voting order, the principle of majority voting. If the prince-electors were unable to agree on a new king within the space of 30 days, they were only fed bread and water. The spiritual electors were at the top of the hierarchy. They were the ones closest to the ruler during assemblies and processions. The secular electors bore the secular symbols of power, the insignia, and performed ceremonial duties at banquets.

The Golden Bull as the basic order of the empire

In 1356, Emperor Charles IV and the prince-electors agreed on a comprehensive code of law written in Latin. Its name, the “Golden Bull”, is derived from the golden seal with which it was authenticated. In 31 chapters, it sets out the basic constitutional structure of the empire. It was thus intended to prevent conflicts between the “closest members of the holy empire”. The prince-electors received various special rights and ruled like kings within their respective territories. These provisions remained in force until the end of the old Empire in 1806.

Rituals of power

Woodcuts from the first illustrated print of the Golden Bull, dated 1485, show the arch-offices of the secular electors. These ceremonial duties were performed at a banquet. The actual work at the court offices was performed by lower nobility.

The path to the crown: Frankfurt, Aachen, Rome

The Archbishop of Mainz played the decisive role in the election of the king in Frankfurt am Main by the seven prince-electors. He saw himself as the kingmaker, even though the coronation in Aachen was now performed by the Archbishop of Cologne. Crowning of the emperor was still performed by the pope in Rome. The successors of Frederick II, however, initially focused on the realm north of the Alps. In fact, in 1312, Henry VII became the first king to be crowned emperor since Frederick II. His grandson, Charles IV, promulgated the Golden Bull in 1356.

THE GOLDEN BULL – THE BASIC LAW OF THE EMPIRE

The Golden Bull regulated the conduct of imperial elections and the position of the prince-electors. It was promulgated in 1356 to prevent conflicts between the leading princes within the empire. Today, the seven existing copies are listed in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. They originate from five of the seven prince-electors (apart from Saxony and Brandenburg) and from two imperial cities (Frankfurt am Main and Nuremberg). There were also numerous transcripts, thereby allowing the legal document to be distributed far and wide. As the central constitutional document, it lasted beyond the Middle Ages until 1806.

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Cover Frederick I Barbarossa with his sons. Weingarten Guelph Chronicle, 1185-1191. University and State Library Fulda, D 11.

Pg. 50/51 South façade of the merchant's hall in Mainz. Painting by Johann Ludwig Ernst Schulz, c. 1807. GDKE, Directorate of the Mainz State Museum (Ursula Rudischer).

LAYOUT

