

**WAS FREDERICK BARBAROSSA
THE FIRST HOLY ROMAN EMPEROR?**

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Frederick Barbarossa (1152-90) was the first German emperor—later to be called the Holy Roman Emperor—who gave considerable attention to the three terms of the imperial title. His own registers and contemporary chronicles reveal frequent references to the three components of both his title and the Holy Roman Empire. I argue that Barbarossa was the first to attempt to integrate them into the German traditions of the empire, in particular the method of electing the king of the Romans, the historical ties with Charlemagne, and the concept of the empire as an amalgam of smaller principalities. He was the first to attach the three attributes and the Germanness of the empire to the concept of “honor,” a classical word which he based in the Germanic court culture of the time. Barbarossa can be said to be the first to assign full imperial powers to the elected king of the Romans (crowned at Aachen), and to the future direction of the Holy Roman Empire for the Hohenstaufen and afterwards.

Who was the first Holy Roman Emperor? According to many college-level world civilization textbooks, the honor goes to Charlemagne when Pope Leo III crowned him in St Peter’s on Christmas 800.¹ This attribution is universally accepted and is unlikely to change. Actually the choice of nomenclature is appropriate as long as its limitations are recognized. The honorific did after all have some connection to ancient Rome—the West had lacked an emperor since 476—and it was bestowed by a pope, who would retain close relations with the emperor for the next seven centuries. But the problem with the title, Holy Roman Emperor, is as follows: Charle-

1 Typical is “Charlemagne Crowned Holy Roman Emperor” Christianity.com; www.Historynet.com; Saylor.org.Ancient Civilizations of the World/Charlemagne and the Carolingian Empire; Wiki/Coronation_of_the_Holy_Roman_Emperor; “Inside the Medieval World” National Geographic 2014, p. 51 (with the inevitable portrait by Dürer of Charles as Holy Roman Emperor).

magne never used it, his empire included Western Europe (kingdom of the Franks), and the three terms of the title Holy Roman Emperor would later undergo considerable changes in meaning.

Another candidate for the designation of first Holy Roman Emperor would be Otto I the Great (936-73), who was crowned by a pontiff in 962. At this time the kingdom of the West Franks was excluded, making the empire more closely aligned geographically with the reality of the Holy Roman Empire [henceforth HRE] in subsequent centuries. Indeed medieval (and modern) historiography generally makes Otto I the first “German” emperor of the West, who recovered many of the lands lost by Charlemagne’s successors, including the Kingdom (or Duchy) of Burgundy.² Otto is associated with the custom of crowning German kings at Aachen, his own in 936. After 962 the king elected by the German princes (later fixed at seven at Frankfurt) was crowned king of the Romans (a later title) and then emperor of the Romans in St. Peter’s in Rome. While this electoral procedure was not always followed, it was considered the correct one.

The trouble with the choice of Otto I involves some backward reading of history, since the “holy” and the “Roman” components of the *titulus* were undeveloped, as indeed was the word “empire,” which was used rather casually. Also a “German” consciousness can just barely be discerned in the tenth century. And the cult of Otto did not really accelerate until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,³ when he became viewed as a sort of proto-nationalist figure and defender of the HRE, in which Germany was the heartland.

Interestingly Frederick II Hohenstaufen has never been a serious contender for the first Holy Roman Emperor despite his impact on Europe during 1212-50. Perhaps Frederick’s ambiguous standing

2 See Arnulf of Milan, *Liber gestorum recentium* 1.7, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* [henceforth MGH]; Devlin, “Otto I, the Great;” Jestic, “Otto I (912-973),” 586-87.

3 See Jank, “Die Darstellung Ottos des Grossen,” 69-101; Scales, *The Shaping of German Identity*, 114, 340-42.

in the history of the HRE—albeit he is fondly remembered in Italy, while his grandfather namesake is not—is due to his lack of acceptance by the papacy, his relative neglect of *Germania* and his German legacy, and his further weakening of the cohesiveness of the Empire. Frederick’s reign was remembered as the resurgence of the *Roman* element in the Empire, as is evident in Staufen iconography and propaganda.

The Emperor who certainly embodies all three sides of the imperial title is Charles IV of Bohemia (1347-78), who managed to integrate the sacred and the Carolingian traditions, while excluding a constitutional role for the pope.⁴ Yet the link with Germany and Germanness (he was Czech) remained ambivalent. Far from asserting the supremacy of the German center, he promoted cooperation and concord among the estates. When Voltaire ridiculed Charles IV’s title with his sarcastic “The Holy Roman Empire was neither Holy nor Roman nor an Empire,”⁵ referring to the election of Charles IV and the Golden Bull, he misunderstood how the three attributes were used in 1356 and when he wrote the celebrated line in mockery of Maria Theresa in 1756. In any case, Charles IV is too late in time to claim the title of Number One.

This question of who’s on first is not a quaint game of semantics. It has absorbed historians since the mid-nineteenth century because the issue of the origin of the HRE compels the scholar to define the HRE in its formative stages and describe its essential characteristics. After the creation of the nation of Germany in 1871, historians looked to the past for relevance and guidance; many were motivated less by a desire to understand Germany in the Middle Ages on its own terms, than by a search to determine specifically German antecedents. The question of national origins confronts historians with the larger problems of national identity, of Germany in

4 See the classic biography by Ferdinand Seibt, *Karl IV*.

5 From Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs de l’esprit des nations* 423. For context see Thomas Renna, “The Holy Roman Empire was neither Holy nor Roman nor an Empire,” (forthcoming).

the context of Europe, and of the historical ties between Germany and the HRE. (Much like modern Turks who still grapple with their relationship to the Ottomans.) In the historiography of the HRE after Frederick III (1440-93) there has been a conceptual revolution since the 1970s.⁶ The institutions of the post-1648 HRE are realized to be more effective than once thought. It is now time to do the same for the pre-Avignon Empire. There are plenty of modern discussions on the meaning of the three terms of the HRE taken separately. Pre-1300 sources seem little interested in constructing a comprehensive “theory” of the HRE. Actually the first use of the full title of the HRE was not until 1254, though the geographical reality can be traced back to Otto I.⁷ The profusion of treatises on the HRE after the passing of the Staufens was due to the confusion about its condition and fate. There were fears that the pope would give the Empire to a non-German, and that the Empire would break apart. The papacy after Innocent III often treated emperors with contempt.

Frederick I Barbarossa (1152-90) was the first Holy Roman Emperor. It will be argued here that he was the first to give considerable attention to the meaning of the three attributes of the HRE, which were widely alluded to in many kinds of sources in the second half of the twelfth century. I contend that Barbarossa joined the German heritage to the triple title, a connection which successor Emperors continued to develop. Building on this Staufens legacy, the identity of German *cum* empire would be given considerable examination by theorists after 1320, when the literature on the empire vastly expanded. While Frederick II the Wonder of the World may perhaps surpass all emperors in the number and diversity of anecdotes about him, his grandfather Frederick I clearly stands out

6 See Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire*; Evans et al., *The Holy Roman Empire*; Evans and Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire*; Coy et al., *The Holy Roman Empire Reconsidered*; Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire* 1: 1-57.

7 See Moraw, “Heiliges Reich,” 4: col. 2025-28. The term *sacrum imperium Romanum* was used henceforth (with variants), including “of the German nation.” The HRE of the German Nation appears officially in 1452, 1474, and 1512 (*Imperium Romanum Sacrum Nationis Germanicae*), which seemed more appropriate as the Hapsburgs relinquished territories in Burgundy and Italy. But even after 1512 the Hapsburgs seldom used the full title. Charles V often called himself simply the “emperor.”

as the ruler who embodies the ideals and the destiny of the Empire, and, later, modern Germany, save for Charlemagne himself. From the point of view of political ideology no one after Karl der Grosse had passed on more of the ingredients for the treatise-makers during the reigns of Louis of Bavaria and Charles IV.

Frederick I never perished. He is sleeping under the Kyffhäuser Mountain in Thuringia, waiting for the right time to restore the German Reich.⁸ When the ravens stop flying around the mountain, he will awake and bring back the glory of the First Reich. Perhaps Emperor William I in 1896 thought he needed the help of Barbarossa for the Second Reich when he had built a colossal monument to himself and Frederick I on the Mountain.

For reasons known only to himself, Adolf Hitler on 18 Dec 1940 adopted the code name *Fall Barbarossa* (Operation Barbarossa) for the invasion of the Soviet Union. Perhaps Hitler's directive implied a justification for the conquest of the Slavic peoples in German *lebensraum*. Or it signified the rebirth of Frederick's Reich. Or the venerable name conjured up this famous name in "German" history. In 1990 the new German government issued a commemorative ten-mark coin with an image of Frederick Barbarossa as a world conqueror; on the reverse is an imperial eagle, with the Barbarossa-style single head as opposed to the double-headed eagle, which became the norm for the HRE after 1400, reminiscent of the Roman empire. This coin imagery is an odd symbol of German unification, since modern German historians have sometimes criticized him for devoting too much time to Italy and not enough to *Germania*. At any rate, the selection of Barbarossa reveals the strong historical link between contemporary Germany and the medieval HRE (which modern Austrians also continue to revere).

⁸ See Munz, *Frederick Barbarossa*, Chap. 1; Frotscher, *Der Kyffhäuser*. The dates of the First Reich depend on whom one considers the first Holy Roman Emperor. If Charlemagne is chosen, the time would be 800 to 1806. If Otto I, 962 to 1806, when the HRE was dissolved. The Second Reich lasted from 1871 to 1918.

HOLY

The appendage “holy” to the *imperium* was a long time in coming. Despite the attacks by Pope Gregory VII and subsequent popes on the priest-king designation of the German kings after the Saxon monarchs, the kings continued to affirm their sacred status and semi-sacerdotal functions. To counter papal claims to supremacy over the emperors who were crowned in Rome, the rulers emphasized their divinely-given authority.⁹ But after Henry IV (1056-1105) all this talk about the sacred status of the anointed king or emperor was getting harder to defend. The York Anonymous of 1100, a series of royalist treatises which elevate the king to near-priestly status, was already an anachronism. As the distinction between the *sacerdotium* and the laity became wider, the notion of the priest-king became outdated, although it never disappeared in subsequent German imperialist propaganda.¹⁰

The office of the *rex* or *imperator* was acknowledged to be sacred by virtue of its consecration and its functions. But in the end the monarch did not celebrate Mass, distribute the sacraments, or (usually) preach the Gospel. The imperial office was of course from God, who assigned special duties to his anointed surrogates on earth. It was safer to stress the *origin* of the imperial *potestas* than its sacerdotal status. The lingering residue of the Augustinian idea of temporal power born in sin presented a difficulty for imperialists, but more

9 See Heer, *The Holy Roman Empire*, Chap. 5; Krieg, *Herrscherdarstellung in der Stauferzeit*, Pt. 5, Chap. 9. In the later Hapsburg Empire the term “holy” often meant simply “Catholic” and that the sovereigns had the responsibility to protect the Catholic religion—from Protestants and Muslims. Following the Investiture Controversy, papalists sometimes refer to the king’s anointment as the bestowing of real power from the pope or the *sacerdotium*. Imperialists of course denied any transference of political authority, seeing in the act of anointing merely a confirmation of the king’s divine approval and his duties over the church throughout the Empire. Having said that, we should not exaggerate the political dimensions of the anointment, as if it were entirely an element of power politics. Most Catholic monarchs probably approached the rite with devotion and sincerity. Ceremonies in a solemn liturgical setting convey powerful symbolic meanings.

10 Barbarossa never tires of asserting his God-given right to rule the Empire in the interests of peace and the Christian faith. See his letter of Oct 1159, cited by Otto of Freising), *Deeds*, Bk. 3, 184. This semi-priest-king language was quite common even in the fourteenth century.

positive views of temporal powers were rapidly gaining momentum, long before the reception of Aristotle in the thirteenth century. The next obvious step—to make the “empire” holy, as opposed to the person or office of the sovereign—was not difficult, since *imperium* was a flexible term which could simply mean authority, or territories within the (ill-defined) boundaries of this unique empire in central Europe. The Roman empire in its present form (post-Carolingian and post-Otto I), after all, has a divine mission and is in a sense identical to Christendom, a vague notion of areas where Christians dwell. Did not an archbishop (of Cologne) crown him king of the Romans at Aachen?¹¹ The king continued to influence the election of prelates and the distributions of ecclesiastical benefices.¹²

Surely an anointed monarch was no mere layman, even if he were not in holy orders. Did not Bernard of Clairvaux include the anointing of kings among the sacraments? Surely his responsibilities to defend the church, including the Roman church, and the faith set him apart. God gave him the duty to spread the Catholic religion (particularly in eastern Europe), suppress lawbreakers, and check pagans, heretics, and infidels. Granted that the imperial title was in some sense holy, can the same be said of the empire? We must remind ourselves that in the twelfth century the term “empire” was not used exclusively as a territorial entity. With the revival of the Roman empire (in the view of Barbarossa) and Roman law at the time, many of the classical usages abounded. Indeed some definitions had never disappeared, such as the notion of *imperium* as a military command or as a right to *auctoritas* in a specific geographical area.¹³

11 In Frederick’s letter to the bishops of Germany and Pope Hadrian, cited by Otto of Freising, *Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa*, Bk. 3, 193. See Helmut Beumann, “Rex Romanorum,” 777–78.

12 See Opll, *Friedrich Barbarossa*, 213-24; “Amator ecclesiarum,” *Mitteilungen des Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 88 (1980): 70-93.

13 See Appelt, “Die Kaiseridee Friedrich Barbarossas,” 208-45. The articles in this collection are outstanding, based on the latest research to 1974. See also Opll, *Barbarossa*, Pt. 2, Chaps. 1, 5; Herkenrath, “Regnum und Imperium,” 323-59; Wolf, “Imperator und Caesar” in same volume, 360-79.

Although Frederick Barbarossa did not employ the term *imperium sacrum* until 1157, the official documents and chronicles often refer to the divine origin—directly from God without the intermediary of the Roman church—and the religious duties assigned to him.¹⁴ In his vigorous exchange with Pope Hadrian (1154-59) following the incident at Sutri (June 1155)—the different interpretations of whether the emperor received his empire or authority from the supreme pontiff as a fief, a gift, or simply as a *post-facto* blessing—Frederick affirmed that his imperial authority derived directly from God.¹⁵ The emperor did not require papal approval for his ecclesiastical appointments in Germany and Italy, whatever was decreed by the Concordat of Worms in 1122. He did not need the pope’s approbation for interference in church affairs anywhere in the empire. The holiness of the emperor’s functions did not come from the supreme priest, but from the traditional practices of the emperors, Roman law, and his unique position as the *elected* king of the Romans.¹⁶

It is this last-named attribute—the election by the German princes—that Barbarossa gives more attention to than his predeces-

14 See, e. g., MGH, *Diplomata regum et imperatorum Germaniae, Friderici I. Diplomata*, v. 10, part 2, D 358: p. 205, line 16 [henceforth in this format: 10: 2: D 358 (Apr 1162): 205, 16]; *Romanorum imperator a deo coronatus magnus et pacificus inclitus triumphator et semper augustus*. See also Otto of Freising *Deeds*, p. 185: “And since, through election by the princes, the kingdom and the empire are ours from God alone. Who at the time of the passion of His Son Christ subjected the world to dominion by the two swords.”; Georg Waitz and Von Simson, eds., *Ottonis et Rahewini Gesta Friedrich*, Bk. 3, Chap. 11, 179: *Cumque per electionem principum a solo Deo regnum et imperium nostrum sit, qui in passione Christ filii sui duobus gladius necessariis regendum orbem subiecit.* (page 143 in 1884 edition, Georg Waitz).

15 For *sacrum imperium* see MGH, *Diplomata*: 10: 2: D 254: 54, 28; D 267: 74, 21; D 342: 179, 10; D 342: 179, 11; D 369: 228, 24; D 405: 283, 35-7; D 406: 285, 10; D 409: 290, 15; D 410: 292, 33; D 413: 298, 36; D 445: 344, 33; D 500: 428, 42; D 516: 453, 30; D 530: 473, 20; D 532: 476, 27; D 536: 482, 31. Barbarossa rarely refers to the empire as German, but see *Diplomata* 10: 2: D 382: 251, 1; D 487: 406, 24; D 538: 486, 4. Imperial authority is directly from God: *Diplomata* 10: 4: D 1046 (Apr 1162): 363, 12 : *imperator a deo coronatus*.

16 *Diplomata* 10: 2: D 363: 213, 33; D 540: 488, 26; D 541: 489, 26; //10: 4: D 1040: 348, 29; Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, Bk. 3, Chap. 11, 193. Frederick’s theme that his power derives from the election by the German princes (eventually fixed at seven, and later expanded by the Hapsburgs) becomes fundamental to later German thought on the origin of imperial *potestas*. See Scales, *Shaping*, 77-8, 272-78; Ertl, “Alte Thesen und neue Theorien,” 619-42; Mitteis, “Die deutsche Königsgrundlagen:” Erkens, *Kurfürsten und Königswahlparagaphen*, 30.

sors, including Charlemagne and Otto I.¹⁷ The election by the princes, a venerable custom in Germany, is what gives him his special status in all of Christendom. The emperor's right to rule flows not from any papal benefice, but from the divine *beneficium*.¹⁸ Frederick reminds the German bishops that he holds his sacred position from the election of a *bishop*, noting that the archbishop of Mainz voted for him, and that the archbishop of Cologne anointed him king of Romans.¹⁹ Thus the *German* character—by election of the princes, both ecclesiastical and lay, and together representative of all Germans, and by unction at Aachen—is united to the sacred nature of the emperor and the empire. In a sense, the voting and the anointing by prelates signify for Barbarossa the approval of the entire church, since the archbishop stands for all the clergy. The German character of the sacredness of the *imperium* is what makes the HRE unique in Christian Europe.²⁰ As Frederick put it, “and since, through the election by the [German] princes, the kingdom and the empire are ours

17 See Schmidt, *Königswahl und Thronfolge*. The explosive issue of papal approval of the choice of the Electors—and also the *right* of the Electors to elect, and the pope's right to declare the suitability of the imperial candidate(s)—was intensely debated from the time of the Investiture Controversy to the 15th century. Part of the reason Barbarossa insisted on the election by the princes was to negate this papal claim to *approbatio*. See Unverhau, *Approbatio-Reprobatio*, Chap. 4 (Barbarossa). It is unlikely that the princes assigned any constitutional significance to the election of Otto I on 7 Aug 936, when he assumed the royal title from his father, Henry I. As the memory of Otto I intensified in the twelfth century and afterward, the importance of the election as king of the Romans and the role of the German princes grew steadily. In his *Deeds of the Saxons* Widukind of Corvey refers to Otto as the “elect of God” and the “chosen of our lord Henry,” subsequently acclaimed by the princes. The latter appear to merely approve the choice made by hereditary right. See *Widukindi*, Bk. 2, Chap. 3, page 65, lines 6-9: in illa basilica in rotundum facta—, quo ab omni populo cerni posset...adduco vobis a Deo electum et a domino Heinrico olim designatum, nunc vero a cunctis principibus regem factum Oddonem; si vobis ista electio placeat.... See Laudage, *Otto der Grosse*, 96-104 (Aachen), 180-94 (Rome); Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, 148-54. When Voltaire wrote his witty remark about the irrelevance of the HRE he seems unaware that the event he discusses—the election of Charles IV—was explicitly patterned after the election of Otto I; for Charles, the previous *electio* added legitimacy to his own election.

18 Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, Bk. 3, 193. See Schmidt, “A quo ergo habet, si a domino papa non habet imperium?,” 61-88; Heinemeyer, “Beneficium-non feudum, sed bonum factum,” 155-236.

19 Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, Bk. 3, 185, 193.

20 See Folz, *Le souvenir*, 191-213; Leuschner, *Germany in the Late Middle Ages*, xvi-xviii; Scales, *Shaping*, 262-78.

from God alone,”²¹ as Christ affirmed when he subjected the world to the dominion of the two swords, implying that the emperor wields the temporal sword on behalf of Christ.²²

But Barbarossa went beyond the dispute over the meaning of *beneficium* with Pope Hadrian. When he invaded Italy in Nov 1158 and assembled his court and the Bologna lawyer-teachers at Roncaglia, he presented his imposition of imperial rights over the Italian communes as his sacred duty commensurate with the restoration of peace in the Roman empire.²³ Although Frederick’s decrees proclaim the “recovery”²⁴ of lost imperial rights over the Lombard towns, he formulates his arguments in moral terms: to serve justice and bring concord to factious communities. His dictatorial pronouncements sound like a restoration of a providential order and a concern for the best interests of his “subjects.” (He seems oblivious to the events of the past century, when the towns had incorporated much non-Roman customary law.) He is carrying a divine mandate—which the communes have permitted to lapse—which he is obligated to enforce for the common good of northern Italy.²⁵

The conflicts with Popes Eugene III, Hadrian IV, and Alexander III, however, could not prepare Europe for what was arguably one of the most defining moments in the history of the medieval HRE: the canonization of Charlemagne. This extraordinary event in 1165 would forever connect the emperor and the *imperium* to the

21 Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, Bk. 3, 185; Waitz and Von Simson, eds., *Otonis et Rahewini Gesta Friedrich I. Imperatoris*, Bk 3, Chap. 11, 179: *Cumque per electionem principum a solo Deo regnum et imperium nostrum sit, qui in passione Christi filii sui duobus gladiis necessariis regendum orbem subiecit.*

22 Otto, *Deeds*, Bk. 3, 185-86.

23 See Laudage, *Fredrich Barbarossa (1152-1190)*, 124-34; Erler, “Die Roncalischen Gesetz,” 127-49; Koeppler, “Fredrick Barbarossa and the Schools of Bologna,” 577-607.

24 See Frederick’s speech to the Diet of Roncaglia in Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, Bk. 4, 234-37.

25 See Marcel Pacaut, *Frederick Barbarossa*, trans. Arnold Pomerans (NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970; orig. 1967), 86-8, 101-02, 130-31; James Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire* (NY: Macmillan, 1913, new ed.), Chap. 11.

sanctity of Saint Charlemagne and Aachen.²⁶ Over the next centuries the holy site of Charlemagne's tomb and the Marian/Passion relics became fused with the sanctification of the emperor of the Romans and his "German" ancestor, Karl der Grosse. The liturgy of the feast of Saint Charlemagne quickly spread to other places in Germany and France.²⁷ Interestingly Alexander III and subsequent pontiffs raised little objection to the canonization of Charles, even though Paschal III was an antipope.

While much has been written in modern times about the canonization, the relevance here is the bond between the emperor and the "German" Charlemagne, as opposed to the "French" Charlemagne.²⁸ Everything about the historical Charlemagne became intertwined with Barbarossa and his successors. The election, anointment, coronation-site, and physical proximity to the Marian (actually only one of the four relics is of Mary, the mantle at the birth of Jesus; two of Jesus (swaddling clothes, loin cloth on the cross), and the cloth which held the head of John the Baptist) Shrine,²⁹ relics, site of pilgrimage, Charles' tomb and relics, and the "relics" of Roman Caesars, such as the cameo of Augustus. The chandelier donated by Barbarossa—still in place—is reminiscent of the celestial Jerusalem. It would be hard to imagine a more compelling integration of the HRE and its emperors with the traditions of Saint Charlemagne, Jerusalem (earthly and heavenly, with possible intimations of the legend of the Last Emperor), and the lives of Jesus and Mary. That

26 See Folz, *Le souvenir*, Bk. 3, 203-37; Cardini, *Friedrich Barbarossa*, 184-90; Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*, 183-89.

27 See Folz, "La chancellerie de Frédéric Ier," 13-31, and his "Aspects du culte liturgique de Saint Charlemagne en France," in *Karl der Grosse*, vol. 4: 77-99; Vones, "La canonización de Carlomagno," 271-83.

28 On the Germanization of Charlemagne see Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*, 186-95; Petersohn, "Saint Denis—Westminster—Aachen," 420-54; Folz, *Le souvenir*, Bk. 3. The relative silence of the papacy on the canonization may have been the popes' reluctance to antagonize the prelates of Germany. Eventually the church compromised and accepted Charlemagne as in effect blessed, by Benedict XIV (1740-58), who acted as a "private theologian" not as pope.

29 See Ciresi, "The Aachen Karlsschrein and Marienschrein," Chap. 27, 753-85 [extensive biblio. in notes 1-12]; Herbers, "Die Aachener Marienschrein-Reliquien," 129-342; Lerman and Wynands, *Die Aachenfahrt*, 9-22.

is quite a lot of precious objects and reminders confined to a small space! The immediate presence of Barbarossa, Charlemagne, Jerusalem, Jesus, and Mary (and, later, images of other German emperors) must have overwhelmed the visitor, whether a pilgrim or someone else.

The other “emperor,” the vicar of Christ in Rome and sometime-rival, had close ties with only two apostles, Peter and Paul, if one includes the latter among the apostles.³⁰ As the pilgrimage to Aachen increased after 1120, the pilgrimage to Rome after the Jubilee of 1300 was less directed toward the tomb of Peter than it was to the shroud (*sudarium*) of Veronica. Aachen was easily the equal of Santiago de Compostela and Rome as a preeminent center of Christian pilgrimage.³¹ The newly crowned kings of the Romans in the octagon were reminded of Barbarossa in the chandelier overhead.

ROMAN

Barbarossa was the first German emperor to attempt an extensive application of Roman law to the empire, especially in northern Italy. Henry VI and Frederick II would continue to extend the reach of the Roman law, however sporadically. Frederick Barbarossa often refers to the Roman empire,³² a virtual identification with the HRE which would become a staple after his reign. It is not always easy

30 Although Boniface VIII was not the first pontiff to call himself the *verus imperator*, he used the title more frequently. Papalist writers, such as Henry of Cremona and Augustinus Triumphus, refer to it often.

31 Aquisgrani was a pagan site long before Charlemagne, who gave it greater Christian significance with the relics he supposedly brought back from the Holy Land, inaugurating a venerable tradition in German and French literature. Barbarossa added to the repute of these relics and the Charlemagne pilgrimage with the canonization and the promotion of the cult of the latter. The new reliquaries of Charlemagne and the Passion relics in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries solidified these associations between Charlemagne and the relics, and accelerated the popularity of Aachen as a pilgrimage site. See Moffitt, “Karlsgrab,” 28-55.

32 MGH Diplomata 10: 1: D 120 (1155): 203, 17; D 181 (1157): 304, 26; // 10: 2: D 345 (1161): 184, 4: *onus Romani imperii*; D 231 (1158): 20, 17; D 367 (June 1162): 221, 40: *gloriam et honorem Romani imperii*; D 433 (Apr 1164): 328, 15: *Ad hoc divina providentia totius Romani imperii coronam et sceptrum nobis gubernandum commisit*; D 516 (Aug 1166): 453, 27: *gloria Romani imperii*; D 533 (1167): 478, 31: *coronam imperii Romani*; D 367 (1162): 225, 8: *ad honorem dei et imperii Romani*.

for modern historians to disentangle the various short-hand terms for the empire. Many of Barbarossa's contemporaries equated the HRE with the Roman empire,³³ an identification which affected Staufen policies, such as: the Staufen obsession with Italy; the conflicts with the Byzantine emperor; the competition with the city of Rome (such as who had the authority to crown the emperor of the Romans); the disagreement with popes over claims to Rome, the Papal States, and other areas throughout Italy; the claims to *de iure* jurisdiction over lands outside the empire; the nomenclature, symbols (such as the Roman imperial eagle), art, architecture, studies, and literature at imperial courts and cities; the acquisition and rights of the titles of king of the Romans and emperor of the Romans;³⁴ the authority to use the Roman law (from the Justinian Code). It might be added that the *translatio studii* to the French was never well received by the Germans, who were not content solely with the Translation of Empire (from the Romans to the Greeks [Byzantines] to the Franks to the Germans, with German historiographers often preferring to merge these last two groups)³⁵ effectively making the German emperors descendants of the "German" son of Pippin.³⁶ The Germans of course would not concede that they were in any way culturally inferior to the French. By the time of Barbarossa the terms *Germani*, *Alamanni*, and *Theutonici* had become virtually synonymous, and did not suggest inferiority to the Romans.

33 Many viewed Barbarossa's empire as a continuation of the Roman Empire. See H. Appelt, "Friedrich Barbarossa und das Romische," *Friedrich Barbarossa*, G. Wolf, ed., 58-82; Deutinger, "Imperiale Konzepte," 25-39; also Burkhardt's article "Friedrich Barbarossa und die Weltherrschaft," 133-58; Schnell, ed., *Die Reichsidee*; Scales, *Shaping*, Chaps. 5 (esp. 208-14); Petersohn, "Friedrich Barbarossa und Rom," Pt. 1, Chap. 3. The notion of the *translatio imperii* (from the Romans to the Greeks to the Germans) is a major theme in Otto of Freising's *History of the Two Cities*.

34 Contemporary pro-Barbarossa sources typically give no constitutional significance to the crowning by the pope in Rome. A mere title is conferred, as the "custom" would have it. See Carson, *Barbarossa in Italy*, 3. Frederick in effect acts as an emperor by restoring good laws and establishing peace in northern Italy; Carson, 2-3, 17.

35 See also Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France*, 94-5. The bibliography on the *translatio imperii* is immense. Useful introductions: Pocock, *Barbarians and Religion*, v. 3, Chap. 7; Goetz, *Translatio Imperii*.

36 The Germans stopped using the term *rex Francorum* after Henry VI. See Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*, 152; Zeller, "Les rois de France," 273-311 at 277. The stereotype of beer-drinking, boorish Germans continued into the age of the humanists. See Mitchell, *The Laurels and the Tiara*, 89.

In the prophetic and apocalyptic literature of the era of Barbarossa, the Roman connection to the modern German emperor was strong. It was a commonplace that the fourth kingdom (or empire) of Daniel's prophecy of world empires was the Roman, which continued to the present in the form of the German empire.³⁷ (There were differences, however, in how the Germans related to the Romans, that is, whether the ancient Roman Empire survived intact or in an altered form under the Germans.) Also popular in the twelfth century was the legend of the Last Emperor, who would conquer the Holy Land and then lay down his weapons on Mount Moriah and usher in the End of Days. The Tiburtine Sibyl prophesied the union of East and West, a feat to be accomplished by Frederick Barbarossa.³⁸ Pseudo-Methodius makes the Last Emperor into a latter-day crusader who would vanquish the Muslims—a prophecy not forgotten when Barbarossa headed out on his much publicized crusade in 1189.³⁹ Adso of Montier-en-Der's *Antichrist* (after 950) places the Carolingians—the ancestors of Barbarossa—as the near end-point of Daniel's scheme of world empires.⁴⁰ The numerous *chansons de geste* that deal with Charlemagne and his epic journey to Jerusalem were widespread in Staufen Germany.⁴¹ The French *Descriptio* (1100) made its way into many German renditions of Charlemagne's

37 On Daniel see Otto of Freising, *The Two Cities*, 29-32, 91, 94, 167-68, 400-01; Myers., *The Book of Emperors*, 72-9; Gellinek, "Daniel's Vision," 5-24; Dunphy, "Historical Writing in the Old High German Period," 201-25, and "Daniel's Dream," *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, Brill Online Reference Works (2013); *Song of Bishop Anno of Cologne (Annolied)* in Dunphy, ed., *Opitz's Anno*.

38 See Latowsky, *Emperor*, 69-70, 236.

39 Latowsky, *Emperor*, 150, 234-35.

40 See Verhelst, *Adso of Montier*; Cardini, "Il 'Ludus de Antichristo' e la teologia imperiale di Federico I," 175-87; Latowsky, *Emperor*, 150-54.

41 See Morrissey, *Charlemagne*, Chap. 2; Folz, *Le souvenir*, 223, 318, *passim*; Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont, eds., *Charlemagne*, Chap. 2; Stuckey, *Charlemagne: The Making of an Image*, Chaps. 2, 3; Geith, *Carolus Magnus: Studien zur Darstellung Karls der Grossen*.

pilgrimage to the Holy City.⁴² It was assumed that Barbarossa the new Charlemagne could not fail to accomplish the same deed on his own crusade.⁴³

Modern historians continue to discuss the reasons for the Germanization of Charlemagne. Was the primary motive of the German writers to counter the French claims to make Charlemagne one of theirs (and the quasi-founder of the Capetian dynasty), or was it to adjust the Carolingian past to the new imperialist aims of Barbarossa?⁴⁴ Our concern here is with the attempt to deepen the ties with the ancient Roman empire. Barbarossa's defenders took offense at the papal jibe that the emperor was merely a king of the "Germans,"⁴⁵ and that the title of emperor of the Romans was a recent gift of the pope, suggesting that the title came with conditions and obligations to the Holy See; indeed the pontiff could withdraw the title if the recipient proved obdurate.⁴⁶ Far more than his predecessor emperors, Barbarossa fastened the imperial title and the Roman empire.⁴⁷ The office implied claims to govern "Roman" Italy

42 See Latowsky, *Emperor*, 75-98, 189-90; Folz, *Le souvenir*, 179-81, 215-16.

43 See Loud, *Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa*, 135, 152.

44 Folz has been influential in advancing the Germanizing of Charlemagne in the 12th century as a response to the French adherence to the tradition of Saint Denis. See Folz, *Le souvenir*, Bk. 3. Latowsky, however, stresses the ideological need for Barbarossa to develop a myth of Charlemagne firmly based on a German legacy; *Emperor*, Chap. 5. My own views lean toward the latter. The French apologists also sought other ancestors: ancient Trojans, Roman Gallic, "French" Franks.

45 See Heer, *Holy Roman Empire*, 56; Gregory VII refers to Henry IV as a mere king of the Germans. As can be seen in the vast outpouring of vernacular writing in the twelfth century, the German sense of national sentiment and identity had deep roots. For the next four centuries imperialist writers had little reticence in including the Germans or variant *Theutonici* or *Alamanni* in the royal title. Lupold of Bebenburg proudly refers to the imperial heartland as Germanic.

46 See Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, 180-84, 253-72; Görich, *Die Ehre Friedrich Barbarossas*, Chap. 3, 92-132.

47 See MGH *Diplomata* 10: 1: D 105 (May 1155): 178, 13: *quod antecessors nostri reges seu imperatores ecclesiis dei per Romanum imperium*; 10: 1: D 164 (1157): 281, 9. //10: 2: D 251 (1159): 49, 1: *ad honorem et imperii ordinandam in proprie persone nostre interemus*; D 367 (1162): 221, 40: *gloriam et honorem Romani imperii*; D 275 (1159): 85, 22; D 382: 249, 26; D 308 (1160): 125, 26; D 487 (1165): 406, 20: *ad protectionem et defensionem ecclesiarum dei, quae per imperium nostrum*; D 533: 478, 31: *coronam imperii Romani*.

(Charlemagne had “restored” the kingdom of Italy [Lombardy] to the “Roman empire”). It was associated with the *de iure* claims to other parts of Europe, an important distinction in the Two Laws, even if imperial sovereignty was not *de facto*; with the promulgation of the Roman law as needed;⁴⁸ with the right to the Translation of Empire, often but not always traced to Charlemagne; with the assertion to be equal to the other western “emperor,” the supreme pontiff, the lord of matters spiritual; with the right to act as a universal arbiter in European disputes, secular or ecclesiastical. After Barbarossa it was impossible not to think of the HRE as in some sense a continuation of the greatest of world empires, the Roman. The Roman Empire never experienced a “decline and fall;” it was alive and well in central Europe, as a result of the Translation of Empire from the Romans to the Greeks to the Franks to the Germans.

Which “German” elements were added to the empire of the ancient Caesars? There were four: (1) The “capital” was Aachen, not Rome. (2) The *imperium* was a territory which included several *regna*. (3) German princes—by means of designated Electors—elected the king of the Romans. (4) The German Charlemagne founded the empire, not Romulus and Remus or one of the Caesars. Charlemagne was the second Augustus, just as Barbarossa was the second Charlemagne. Without disparaging Otto I as the first German emperor, Frederick’s publicists were content to retain the ambiguous relationship among Charlemagne, Otto I, and Frederick Barbarossa. If there were no coherent “theory” of the HRE and its Roman past, the road from Aachen to Rome was straight; it could have been named the Via Barbarossa. The Aachen-Rome axis had become a mainstay of western political thought.

But whatever these German components in his new empire, Barbarossa was not able to bolster it with another ingredient: the crusade. Not for nothing did the Muslims call the crusaders “the Franks” and not the Germans. The poor performance of the Germans on the Second Crusade needed to be corrected. Barbarossa’s preoc-

48 Barbarossa’s insistence on *de iure* sovereignty at Roncaglia continued into the later Middle Ages. See Canning, *The Political Thought of Baldus de Ubaldis*, 64-8; Woolf, *Bartolus of Sassoferrato*, Chap. 2.

cupation with Italy, however, prevented any such ventures before 1189. Unlike St. Louis IX, Barbarossa's reputation as a crusader was short-lived. His crusade received little attention in contemporary and later histories, mainly because the German crusade ended in failure. Yet the main source for Frederick's expedition gives his motive as the desire to rescue the Christian lands from the Saracens, "who were afflicting the Christians."⁴⁹ Prior to his departure he had spent long years waging war against the enemies of the "Roman empire,"⁵⁰ which he largely restored (in Italy). Barbarossa as the emperor of the Romans received homage from the "rebels" for "the everlasting glory of the Roman empire."⁵¹ The rebels agreed to this homage out of love for him and the German kingdom. Reflecting a common German attitude at the time, the chronicler objects to the Byzantine emperor calling himself the Emperor of the Romans, who insultingly refers to Barbarossa as the "King of the Germans,"⁵² reminiscent of the slur of Pope Gregory VII. Frederick reminds his "brother" the Emperor of Constantinople that there is only one Roman emperor, and that is himself, who has been raised up by the imperial blessing of the supreme pontiff and the city of Rome.⁵³ Barbarossa's predecessors, the Roman emperors of the past 400 years, now rule through him, by virtue of the Translation of Empire from Constantinople and Rome, the original seat of the empire. In short, Frederick Barbarossa is the reigning Roman emperor.

EMPIRE

We moderns have become used to thinking of empires as large expanses of lands that include subject peoples and political entities in various states of relationships to the imperial center. The new discipline since the 1970s of the study of comparative empires illustrates how difficult it is to identify common elements in larger

49 Loud, *Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa*, 36.

50 Loud, *Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa*, 36.

51 Loud, *Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa*, 62.

52 Loud, *Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa*, 78.

53 Loud, *Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa*, 78. See Struve, "Renovatio imperii," 89.

empires. The great land-based empires prior to the Roman *imperium* reveal a wide diversity in how they were governed. These invite comparisons with the sea-borne empires (Spanish, Portuguese, British, French) of early modern Europe, and the later smaller land empires in the nineteenth century. Historians of Barbarossa have an additional problem when examining the large number of references to *imperium* in the sources: the ancient works they draw upon are themselves diverse in their use of the term. The empire of the Late Republic and the Early Roman Empire was in flux. Only gradually did *imperium* refer to an oversized-territory with many satellite political bodies, a core with peripheries.⁵⁴

At the time of Barbarossa the use of empire as a territorial entity was generally accepted. Certainly no one cared to specify what exactly the boundaries of the HRE were. Sometimes the emperor's possessions seem like an amalgam of political bodies, such as counties, duchies, and towns. The term "kingdom and empire"⁵⁵ was already heard, and would increase in usage. It has been argued that the Ottonians gave a specifically German meaning to the empire by defining it as a collection of kingdoms under various degrees of control.⁵⁶ Barbarossa joins the "kingdom and the empire" from God alone to the election by the princes.⁵⁷ Thus the *imperium* is German by virtue of these two attributes: *imperium cum regna* and the *electio* by the Theutonic *principes*.

The idea that Barbarossa stood in a direct line of the ancient Caesars is a major theme of the *Kaiserchronik* (c. 1152–c. 1165),

54 John Richardson, *The Language of Empire*, Chaps. 3, 4. The Romans, at least until the time of Hadrian, had no concept of a "boundary" in the modern sense. The demarcation line, often a sort of temporary stopping point along the way of expanding Roman control, could simply mean the limit where Roman *auctoritas* was in force. Words like *terminus* or *finis* (or even the later *limes*, a fortified border) were flexible.

55 See, e.g., MGH, *Diplomata* 10: 2: D 356 (1162): 199, 32; D 477 (1165): 391, 10. Cf. D 284 (1159): 96, 20: *imperium et alia regna*. The use of "kingdom and empire" was common among imperialists in the fourteenth century. See Lupold of Bebenburg, *De iuribus regni et imperii*, Chap. 8, 124, *passim*.

56 See Folz, *Le souvenir*, 56-64.

57 Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, 185.

one of the most popular works of world history in the German Middle Ages, rivaled only by Otto of Freising's *Two Cities* (to 1146). The leitmotif of the *Book of Emperors* is that the Roman Empire proceeds down to the present day. The lineage of the Roman emperors from Julius Caesar to Charlemagne, when Pope Leo III (Charlemagne's "brother"!)⁵⁸ crowned him, thereby transferring the Roman Empire to the "Germans."⁵⁹ The princes crowned Otto "the Roman ruler" at Aachen.⁶⁰ The princes surrendered their lands to Otto I, who held the "Roman empire."⁶¹ Barbarossa's predecessor, Conrad III (1138-52, and also Conrad I, 911-18) was never consecrated by a pope, yet he functioned as the *de facto* emperor. While the author of the *Kaiserchronik* often refers to German rulers as "kings" before they were crowned emperors by the popes,⁶² he clearly thinks of the monarchs as having imperial powers prior to any papal action. Barbarossa is a true Roman emperor in the descent of the Roman Caesars, with no constitutional need of papal coronation. Since the time of Charlemagne, the "Roman" *imperator* is fully German.

Although Barbarossa himself probably never gave it a thought, there was a small theoretical matter which would concern imperialist writers for the next two centuries: the right of the German princes to elect the king of the Romans was alleged to be a "gift" from the pope (usually Gregory V). One of the earliest references to this bizarre tradition came from one of Barbarossa's most famous and prolific historians, Godfrey of Viterbo (d. 1196).⁶³ who

58 Myers, *Book of Emperors*, Chap. 38, 321-22. See Matthews, Chap. 3 (Charlemagne).

59 *Book of Emperors*, 329.

60 *Book of Emperors*, 353. See Matthews, *Kaiserchronik*, Chap. 4 (Otto I).

61 *Book of Emperors*, 356.

62 *Book of Emperors*, 57.

63 Godfrey of Viterbo, *Martini Chronicon*. Imperatores, 466 [7 Electors]. Many references to Barbarossa: 94, 97, 98, 100, 102, 106, 126, 128, 134, 139, 146, 150, 159, 260-71, 298-300, 339-41, 362-68, etc. Whatever the origins of this tradition, the inclusion of a work by the influential Godfrey ensured its longevity in late medieval sources. Godfrey often alludes to Charlemagne as the ancestor of Barbarossa. See also Abraham de Wicquefort, John Digby tr., *The Ambassador and his Functions*, Chap. 4, 443; Folz, *Le souvenir*, 386-92.

later fell from imperial grace. One of the most original historians of the Staufen era, Godfrey attempted to connect Barbarossa with numerous bloodlines and historical legacies: German (and many families), Frankish, Trojan, Carolingian, Roman, Greek, and myriad genealogies.⁶⁴ He attributes the German electoral custom of choosing the king of the Romans from a grant of Gregory V (996-99), which implies that imperial power derived from the bishop of Rome.⁶⁵ Godfrey seems not to have seen in this practice any threat to imperial *potestas*. His motive in telling the tale may simply have been to foster cooperation between the emperor and popes following the schism at the time of Alexander III (1159-81). Later imperialists rarely challenged the accuracy of the story, preferring to see in the papal grant merely a confirmation of the right the German princes already possessed. The gift in itself gave no constitutional authority to the prince-Electors or the emperor-elect.

Thus the three elements of the imperial *titulus*—Holy, Roman, Empire—were integrated into the *imperium* of Barbarossa. While the three spokes of the imperial wheel were forged into a notion of the history, extent, powers, and purpose of the empire, they were after 1152 intrinsic to the Staufen vocabulary of fundamental concepts of governmental rule. All three aspects were related to the German character of the HRE, particularly with reference to Charlemagne, the German past, the method of electing the king of the Romans, and the empire as a network of sub-kingdoms and principalities. But there was another side to the HRE: *honor*. A number of recent studies on Barbarossa's use of the "honor of the empire" have been made since the seminal analyses of H. Appelt⁶⁶ and P. Rassow.⁶⁷

64 See Latowsky, *Emperor*, 198-215.

65 See Weber, "The Historical Importance of Godfrey of Viterbo," 153-96; Engels, "Gottfried von Viterbo," 327-47.

66 See Appelt, "Der Kaiseridee Friedrich Barbarossas," 208-45; Appelt, "Die Erhebung zum Herzogtum," 206-19.

67 See, e. g., Rassow, *Honor imperii: De neue Politik Friedrich Barbarossas 1152-1159* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche, 1961; orig. 1940); reviewed by Herbert Grundmann in Wolf, *Friedrich Barbarossa*, 26-32.

But this new field of research⁶⁸ is only slowly catching up with the more synthetic approaches to the era of Barbarossa. A single biography⁶⁹ attempts to integrate some of this promising study. We limit ourselves here to some ways the notion of honor relates Barbarossa to the imperial culture at the time.

The term honor is used frequently in Barbarossian sources.⁷⁰ While the word often has juridical and legal overtones, it had broader meanings. When the pope impinged upon the king's sacred prerogatives as the defender of the church and of the faith, the honor of God was denigrated.⁷¹ If the pope was the vicar of Christ, the emperor was God's chosen representative to ensure that the temporals of this earth be put to heaven-directed use. It is blasphemous to interfere with the king's duties to perform his sacred responsibilities. God appointed him to defend the honor and dignity of the empire.⁷²

The *honor imperii* of Barbarossa's realm was synonymous with the honor of the Roman empire.⁷³ When he sets out to quell rebels, Barbarossa seeks to exalt the glory and honor of the em-

68 See, e. g., Görich, "Geld und Honor. Friedrich Barbarossa in der Lombardei," 177-200; "Die 'Ehre des Reiches' (*honor imperii*)," 36-74; *Die Ehre Friedrich Barbarossas*; Haubrichs, "Ehre und Konflikt," 35-58; Hagenmeier and Schrör, *Friedrich Barbarossa*, 147-51.

69 Görich, *Friedrich Barbarossa*. This monumental work is a masterful synthesis of the author's many studies and the work of others on the German court-culture in the twelfth century. Görich reexamines the main events in Barbarossa's reign from the perspective of honor.

70 There are some 138, by my count, references to honor and its variants in MGH Diplomata 10:2 (1158-1167) alone! And over 110 allusions to honor in 10: 1 (1152-58). In the following footnotes I limit myself to usages I consider representative of multiple examples.

71 Some representative examples: MGH Diplomata 10: 2: D 233 (Nov 1158): 23, 11: ad honorem dei; D 251 (1159): 49, 4; D 270 (1159): 78, 28; D 275: 86, 5; D 285: 97, 9; D 285: 98, 3; D 292: 106, 18; D 335: 167, 8; D 349: 188, 15; D 375: 240, 43; D 505 (1166): 438, 21.

72 Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, 185, 193. MGH Diplomata 10: 4: D 935 (1186): 203, 2: dignitas imperialis corona; 203, 11: dignitas imperialis honoris et iustitie. //10: 2: D 344 (1161): 183, 11; D 372 (1162): 234, 31; D 480 (1165): 397, 20; D 503: 434, 24.

73 See MGH Diplomata 10: 1: D 181 (1157): 304, 26. // 10: 2: D 224: 8, 21 and 9, 26; D 265: 72, 17; D 272: 192, 33; D 356: 199, 27; D 357: 204, 21; D 358: 205, 19; D 359: 206, 31; D 363: 216, 32; D 367: 219, 32; D 368: 227, 9; D 242: 35, 15; D 380: 247, 11; D 421: 308, 5; D 367: 221, 40: gloriam et honorem Romani imperii; D 382: 249, 26; D 425: 315, 13; D 431: 326, 32; D 431: 327, 35; D 435: 331, 6; D 436: 332, 13; D 442: 341, 11; D 444: 344, 9; D 451: 352, 35; D 482: 400, 32; D 485: 401, 40; D 496: 422, 34; D 508: 442, 34.

pire.⁷⁴ The *honor imperii* refers not only to the ancient Roman empire, but also to the Carolingian heritage and the crown (*imperator Romanorum*).⁷⁵ In his defense of his actions at Besançon (1157)—or rather, his response to the indignities the papal legates inflicted on the honor of the empire—Barbarossa suggests the pope attempted to upset the balance between the honor of the papacy and the honor of the empire.⁷⁶ God granted him the honor of the empire, not the pope. Significantly Barbarossa justifies his decrees at Roncaglia and his attacks on the “rebel” Lombard communes as affronts to the “expansive” aspect of the *honor imperii*. In other words the imperial honor refers not just to the Roman empire in itself, but to the extension of its authority.⁷⁷ Barbarossa often juxtaposes “glory” and “dignity” with honor as the object of pursuing the honor of the empire.⁷⁸

It has been persuasively argued that this was based in the aristocratic court milieu with its concept of social rank.⁷⁹ Barbarossa’s vision of the HRE—and he is the first German emperor who may be said to have had a “vision” of the empire—was nothing less than a hierarchy of authority, with the emperor ultimately being in charge of temporals (and *de iure* for all of Christendom) and the Vicar of Christ in spirituals. He is “restoring” the Roman Empire in

74 See MGH Diplomata 10: 2: D 327: 154, 25; D 356: 199, 19; D 367: 221, 40; D 382: 249, 26; D 421: 308, 5; D 503: 435, 27; D 539: 487, 1.

75 MGH Diplomata 10: 2: D 253: 54, 4; D 257: 58, 18; D 308: 125, 21; D 355: 196, 41; D 348: 187, 13; D 362: 212, 31; D 367: 223, 40; D 375: 240, 1-3; D 433: 328, 16; ad hoc divina providentia tocius Romani imperii coronam et sceptrum nobis gubernandum comisit; D 463: 372, 20.

76 Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, 185.

77 Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, 185.

78 MGH Diplomata 10: 1: D 111 (1155): 188, 36; Transitorii regni dignitas et imperialis potestas. // 10: 2: D 236 (Nov 1158): 26, 28; D 267: 75, 22; nostre imperialis dignitatis honore; D 322: 146, 21; D 324: 149, 19; D 372 (1162): 234, 22; dignitas ... Romani imperii; D 382 (1162): 249, 15; D 401: 279, 10; D 412: 295, 27; D 442: 341: 7; D 466: 376, 36; D 477: 390, 40; D 496: 422, 30; D 523: 464, 13; D 534: 479, 42. // 10: 4: D 935 (1186): 203, 2. 11.

79 This is the thesis of Knut Görich’s *Barbarossa*, esp. Chaps. 1, 5. Some studies of the court setting of honor: Kölzer, “Der Hof Barbarossas,” 3-47; Laudage, “Der Hof Friedrich Barbarossas,” 75-92; Ganz, “Friedrich Barbarossa: Hof und Kultur,” 623-50.

Italy in the interests of the public good. (Likely the Italians who had to submit to the regalia did not see it that way.) Frederick's refrain about the honor of the empire can be called a plan, however vague, for the recovery of the Roman Empire, with its affiliations to Saint Charlemagne, German elections, and with the territorial core called *Germania*.

While pre-WWII historians generally saw Barbarossa's policies as deficiencies because of his weakening of the bonds with German princes and his setbacks in Italy, the historiographical trends since the 1960s are more aware of his successes. Doubtless Barbarossa's own criteria for success would have been the standing of the *honor imperii*, with its unwieldy mix of Holy, Roman, Imperial, and Germanic.⁸⁰ Who can say? Frederick explicitly bases his imperial power on the election of the German princes;⁸¹ the papal coronation is merely a confirmation of the *honor imperii*.

Barbarossa's authority is "holy" because (German) archbishops have crowned him king of the Romans at Aachen. The honor of God is virtually synonymous with the Roman Empire.⁸² The honor of the church is the honor of the empire.⁸³ The glory of God is the

80 Barbarossa refers to the German church: MGH Diplomata 10: 1: D 91 (1154): 153, 7: in Italia quam in Alamannia. // 10: 2: D 296 (1160): 109, 15; D 490 (1165): 411, 18; D 487: 406, 25: Theutonicum imperium; D 538: 486, 3. 81. MGH Diplomata: 10: 1: D 186 (1157): 315, 8: per electionem principum a solo deo regnum et imperium nostrum...honorem imperii (315, 17); //10: 4: D 1049 (1162): 363, 12: imperator a deo cononatus. Cf. Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, 185, 193. For practical reasons (Frederick needs the support of Pope Hadrian) and ideological correctness (imperial power comes from God, without intermediary) he emphatically rejects the offer by the citizens of Rome to offer him the crown of the emperor. See Otto of Freising, *Deeds*, 146-49. Long after the demise of Arnold of Brescia, this tradition of the right of the citizens of the Eternal City to be independent and to crown the German emperor was deeply rooted. Witness the coronation of Louis of Bavaria in 1328 and the episode of Cola di Rienzo.

81 MGH Diplomata: 10: 1: D 186 (1157): 315, 8: per electionem principum a solo deo tegnum et imperium nostrum...honorem imperii (315, 17); //10: 4: D 1049 (1162): 363, 12: imperator a deo coronabus:

82 MGH Diplomata 10: 2: D 251 (1159): 49, 1: ad honorem dei et imperii; D 233 (1158): 23, 11; D 275 (1159): 86, 5; D 285: 98, 3; D 342: 179, 21; D 375: 240, 43: ad honorem dei et servitum domini imperatoris Frederici; D 505: 438, 21.

83 Diplomata 10: 2: D 437: 334, 10; D 480: 397, 8: honorem ecclesie dei et imperii; D 481: 399, 12; D 292: 106, 18.

glory of the empire.⁸⁴ The salvation of the church is the honor of the empire;⁸⁵ The honor of God is the utility of the church and the empire.⁸⁶ To serve the church is to serve the honor of the empire.⁸⁷

The honor of the holy empire is the honor of the Roman empire, which Frederick never tires of repeating.⁸⁸ Barbarossa's *crown* is that of the Roman empire.⁸⁹ God crowned the Roman emperor.⁹⁰ Pope Leo crowned Charlemagne "augustus," an appendage Barbarossa often adopts.⁹¹ The honor of the empire is also its *onus*.⁹² It should be emphasized that the "crown" Barbarossa receives as king of the Romans bestows on him not only a sort of sacred office, but also full imperial authority and the prerogatives of the Roman emperor. He implies that the papal coronation in Rome simply added a blessing to his constitutional authority—a theme which would preoccupy imperialists in the early fourteenth century. His power comes from God through the *electio* of the German Electors, and not from the supreme priest.

84 Diplomata 10: 2: D 327: 154, 26; D 367: 221, 40; D 382: 249, 26; D 516: 453, 27; // 10: 3: D 629: 124, 2: ad gloriam et honorem Romani principatus, 85. Diplomata 10: 2: D 313: 134: 2. 16.

85 Diplomata 10: 2: D 313: 134: 2. 16.

86 Diplomata 10: 2: D 322: 146, 39; D 326: 153, 22; D 437: 334, 40; D 437: 335, 1; //10: 3: D 640: 140, 41: honorem et utilitas imperii et civitates; D 348: 151, 18; D 665: 174, 10; D 650: 155, 6: ad honorem imperii et utilitatem Lombardie et Marche et Romanie.

87 Diplomata 10: 2: D 233: 23, 4: devotio et sancte ecclesie dei et imperii nostri subserevit honori.

88 Diplomata 10: 2: D 356: 199, 27.

89 Diplomata 10: 2: D 433: 328, 16; D 533: 478, 31; //10: 3 D 634 (1174): 131, 13: honorem imperii et corone nostre gloriam. See n. 75 above. Roman emperors were of course never crowned, as Lorenzo Valla would later note in his refutation of the Donation of Constantine, a document already well known in imperial and papal *curiae*.

90 Diplomata 10: 2: D 358: 205, 16.

91 Diplomata 10: 2: D 230: 18, 24; D 230: 19, 18; D 253: 53, 16; D 358: 205, 16; D 534: 480, 20.

92 Diplomata 10: 2: D 345: 184, 4: in honorem et onus Romani imperii.

Barbarossa's exceedingly large number of allusions to his *imperium* often lacks precision. Obviously the territorial boundaries of the Roman Empire during any period of its history never coincided with those of the HRE at the time of Frederick I. The distinction in his documents between empire as *auctoritas* and as *imperium* is fluid. This hyper-active Staufer had little time for clear distinctions or legal niceties. The driving force behind his foreign policy was the subjugation of Italy. His allies and enemies could, if they wished, establish some clarity in the definitions of empire and honor. Barbarossa's historical significance is that he left a legacy for his successors to provide just such clarity, even as the HRE changed in territory and direction.

It has been argued that Barbarossa's honor of the empire was in effect an ideology of his empire.⁹³ Certainly this concept of honor in the context of the imperial court and the aristocratic *curiae* helps to explain his penchant to refer to it in so many contexts. But two points must be emphasized: A) the notion of honor was the product of conflict, in particular the clashes with popes. This is not the stuff of abstract political philosophy. The empire provided its own source of power and function irrespective of the papacy; B) the idea of honor was in part the result of his attempts to subdue Italy, the northern communes as well as the South—and perhaps the Papal States—and also his disputes with Sicily and Emperor Manuel.⁹⁴ While the idea of the honor of the empire preceded Barbarossa, he expanded it in ways that deepened the layers of meaning of the triple designation of the HRE. More than his imperial predecessors, he attached it to the tradition of the German election of the king of the Romans. The *rex Romanorum* became in effect the *de facto imperator Romanus* with full imperial powers even before he was crowned by the pope in St Peter's. While Barbarossa spent much of his reign in Italy, the "core" (to use the modern parlance) remained *Germania*.

93 Certainly Görich comes closest to viewing Barbarossa's *honor imperii* as the principal component in his political outlook. See esp. his *Die Ehre Friedrich Barbarossas*, Chap. 1 and 364-77, and *Barbarossa*, Chap. 5.

94 See Görich, *Barbarossa*, 83-88, 540, *passim*.

CONCLUSION

Frederick Barbarossa considerably extended the uses of the Holy, the Roman, and the Empire in the HRE. He left behind a HRE firmly tied to German traditions of rulership in the empire of Otto I the Great. Many of the problems Barbarossa confronted during the first two decades of his reign would be intensely examined during the golden age of political thought in the HRE of 1320-60. As the HRE experienced a demise after the passing of the Staufen in 1254, the emperors went through a crisis of confidence and self-identity. Conflict in the empire and the loss of Italy stimulated a flurry of literature which attempted to assess the nature and the future of the empire. In the sense that the direction and to some extent policies of the empire were set out, Barbarossa can be said to be the first Holy Roman Emperor.

There was nothing inevitable about the direction the empire would take after the Staufen. But their concern for Italy, Roman law, and the German church would influence the historical course of the *imperium*. It would serve no purpose today to attempt to remove Charlemagne from the status of being the first Holy Roman Emperor, as the received tradition would have it. The name of Charles the Great and the coronation of the emperor (later called the emperor of the Romans) would be sufficient to entrench the heritage. As the “German” consciousness within parts of central Europe later evolved, so too would the German character of the HRE. Otto the Great certainly deserves the appellation as the founder, perhaps re-founder, of the German “transfer” of the empire to the *Alamanni*.⁹⁵

95 Barbarossa often refers to Charlemagne and Otto I, and also to the ancient Roman Caesars, as his predecessors or ancestors. See MGH Diplomata: 10: 1 D 210 (1158): 353, 2; D 214 (1158): 358, 27 (Charlemagne and the Roman emperors); //10: 2: D 320 (1160): 144, 20; D 328 (1161): 156, 16; D 344 (1161): 182, 33; D 492 (1165): 416, 7; D 524 (1167): 466, 35; D 534 (1167): 480, 10; //10: 3: D 578: 51, 41 (Otto); D 697 (1177): 224, 28 (our predecessors Charlemagne, Louis the Pious, three Ottos); D 754: 305, 2.11.27 (Karolus); D 774 (1178): 329,1 (augustus); //10: 4: D 892 (1185): 141, 36 (Charlemagne, Otto, Henry); D 578: 52, 39 (our predecessors Charlemagne, Otto, etc.); D 1032 (1153): 323, 31 frater Karolus; D 1079: 424, 40: antecessors nostri divi Romanorum imperatores.

An amiable compromise to who should merit the designation of the “first,” would be to establish a trinity of creators of the HRE: Charlemagne, Otto I, and Frederick I Barbarossa.

Historians of the medieval HRE need to examine continuously—since the three parts of the title were themselves evolving—the various components of the empire, in terms of actual policies and perceptions. The steady appearance today of documents and editions—and new methodologies—necessitates constant reexamination of the sources. A big problem for Barbarossa was the geographical areas of the empire that had their own traditions and special relationships with the imperial crown, such as the Kingdom of Arles. Although the term Holy Roman Empire was never used in the twelfth century, all three aspects appear frequently in the official and unofficial sources at the time of the first Hohenstaufen emperor, Frederick Barbarossa. Although the three components were only loosely delineated and should not be elevated to the dignity of a self-consistent theory of empire, they were juxtaposed in ways that give a semblance of identity, in distinction to, say, the kingdom of the (West) Franks. Lupold of Bebenburg in the fourteenth century would have recognized the need to clarify Frederick Barbarossa’s Germany in the context of the larger HRE.

When Frederick Barbarossa awakes from his slumber beneath the Kyffhäuser Mountain, his first task will be to dictate a letter to his detractor, Voltaire, who famously quipped: *Ce corps, qui s’appelait et qui s’appelle encore le saint empire romain, n’était en aucune manière ni saint, ni romain, ni empire.* [This body which is called, and is still called (in 1756), the Holy Roman Empire is in fact neither holy nor Roman nor an empire.] Frederick will erase this age-old misconception with his own reply and restore the empire to its former glory. He will answer back: *Das Heilige Römische Reich war voll heiligen römischen voll und ganz ein Imperium.* [The Holy Roman Empire is fully Holy, fully Roman, and fully an Empire!]

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***Golden bust of Frederick I, given to his godfather Count Otto of Cappenberg in 1171.
It was used as a reliquary in Cappenberg Abbey and is said in the deed of the gift to
have been made to be "in the likeness of the emperor".***