

**Knut Görich, Friedrich Barbarossa. Der erste Stauferkaiser, München (C. H. Beck) 2022, 128 S., 1 Abb. (C. H. Beck Wissen, 2931), ISBN 978-3-406-78197-1, EUR 9,95.**

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Knut Görich and Ferdinand Opll, the editor of the volumes on Frederick Barbarossa in the »Regesta imperii« and the author of studies about his itinerary and urban policy and a brief biography, are, respectively, the foremost German and Austrian experts on the monarch. Görich's first major work was »Ein Kartäuser im Dienst Friedrich Barbarossas. Dietrich von Silve-Bénite (c. 1145–1205)« (1987), who represented the emperor in negotiations with Alexander III and the Lombard League. Frederick probably chose a member of a contemplative order for this unlikely role because Dietrich was a Staufer scion, perhaps even the emperor's son. The Italian focus is also evident in Görich's *Habilitationsschrift*, »Die Ehre Friedrich Barbarossas. Kommunikation, Konflikt und politisches Handeln im 12. Jahrhundert« (2001), which, as the title suggests, is indebted to the work of Gerd Althoff on nonverbal communication and conflict resolution. Peter Rassow had examined the use of the term, *honor imperii*, in his 1940 study of the Treaty of Constance, which Herbert Grundmann had already critiqued in 1941 for its too limited legalistic definition of imperial honor as the pope's obligation to respect imperial rights and prerogatives. For Görich, *Ehre* is not an internalized, bourgeois moral imperative but a medieval nobleman's concern for his reputation and standing. Unlike today, it did not exclude the public display of emotions; Frederick erupted in rage and shed copious tears. Görich investigated from this perspective the emperor's conflicts with the archbishops of Salzburg, the pope, and the Lombard communes and the need to assuage insults to the Empire's and his own honor with elaborate ceremonies of submission, most notably Milan's in 1162. Görich focused on Germany in an influential 2009 article: »Jäger des Löwen oder Getriebener der Fürsten? Friedrich Barbarossa und die Entmachtung Heinrichs des Löwen«<sup>1</sup>. A reluctant Frederick did not pursue Henry because he wanted to break the power of his overmighty cousin, the ruler of two duchies, but was compelled by the Saxon princes and especially Archbishop Philip of Cologne to proceed against Henry. Barbarossa never forgave Philip.

This analysis provided the framework for Görich's well-written, often gripping 2011, 782-page biography of Frederick, »Friedrich Barbarossa. Eine Biographie«, which was intended for the



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<sup>1</sup> Werner Hechberger, Florian Schuller (ed.), *Staufer und Welfen: zwei rivalisierende Dynastien im Hochmittelalter*, Regensburg 2009, p. 98–117.

*gebildete Bürgertum* and which was also published by Beck. Görich's Frederick was not a medieval precursor of Bismarck with a plan to create a unified German state, but a man who responded immediately and often violently to any slight to his dignity. Indeed, the first sentence in the biography is: »Friedrich Barbarossa ist gewissermaßen eine Entdeckung des 19. Jahrhunderts – und zu einem guten Teil auch dessen Erfindung.« The endnotes are cryptic citations that refer the reader to the bibliography. In essence, the *Habilitationsschrift* is the scholarly apparatus for the biography.

Mittelalter – Moyen Âge (500–1500)

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The book under review is an abridged version of the earlier biography. There are occasional parenthetical references in the text to the secondary literature, consisting only of the scholar's last name, which must be tracked down in a topically arranged partial bibliography. This can be confusing in the case of Görich's own multiple publications. There is no indication what prompted the abridgement, but I suspect that the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Frederick's probable birth in December 1122 was the impetus. However, this biography also incorporates the most recent scholarship. The most important is the discussion of the famous Cappenberg Head with which Görich begins. I discussed in my biography the problematic identification of the head as Frederick <sup>2</sup>. Görich cites a 2021 examination of the reliquary which revealed that it cannot have been the silver bust of an emperor that Frederick gave Otto of Cappenberg because there is no evidence that the head was ever silver-plated and because the inscription that indicates that it contained relics of St. John the Evangelist is not a later engraving when the head was supposedly repurposed, but was applied when the bronze was cast (p. 9–11). The identification of the bust as Frederick is thus one more example of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century mythologizing of Barbarossa.

Second, Görich agrees with Jürgen Dendorfer and Roman Deutinger, »Das Lehnswesen im Hochmittelalter. Forschungskonstrukte – Quellenbefunde – Deutungsrelevanz« (2010) that the feudo-vassalic system was introduced into Germany only gradually in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and that Frederick did not have, therefore, a grand plan to reconfigure the German polity on a feudal basis (p. 17). Görich misses here an insight into the confrontation between Frederick and Cardinal Roland at Besançon in 1157. The imperial chancellery had employed for the first time the previous year *beneficium* in the »Privilegium minus« to describe the grant of a duchy. Rainald of Dassel's translation of *beneficium* as »fief« may thus have been unreflective rather than malicious.

Third, Görich devotes, relatively speaking, considerable space to Barbarossa's relations with Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary (p. 51–55), perhaps because he had just coedited a collection of articles that dealt with this topic: »Friedrich Barbarossa in den



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<sup>2</sup> Frederick Barbarossa: the Prince and the Myth, New Haven, Conn., London 2016, p. 21–28.

Nationalgeschichten Deutschlands und Ostmitteleuropas (19.–20. Jh.)« (2017).

Finally, I want to respond to two instances where Görich disagrees with my and other scholars' interpretation. He rejects the story that Henry the Lion refused at Chiavenna in 1176 to aid Frederick even after he had prostrated himself (p. 73 and 92). While the accounts were undeniably influenced by the double election of 1198, it is plausible that Barbarossa might have sought once again, at Chiavenna or elsewhere, his cousin's military assistance and that Henry, as was his right, declined. Even an emperor's prostration was not totally unprecedented. Second, the change in the composition of the imperial court after 1180, namely, the withdrawal of the princes and Frederick's greater reliance on his sons, kinsmen, and, above all, the ministerials, should not be interpreted, as I and others said, by his »diminished status« after his humiliation in Venice in 1177, but rather by the decline in opportunities for princely advancement after Frederick settled his differences with the pope and the Lombards (p. 97–98). Görich rightly points out that Frederick's absolution was carefully separated at Venice from the emperor's customary recognition of his spiritual subordination to the pope and was thus not a public humiliation. The princes were more than willing to display their rank at the festivities in Mainz in 1184 or on the Third Crusade. Still, the absence of the princes is indicative of a shift from consensual lordship to a more antagonistic relationship as would become abundantly clear after 1198. This book is thus an updated supplement to the earlier biography.

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