INTRODUCTION

Scholarship has long agreed that the reign of Frederick Barbarossa marks a high point in the medieval Holy Roman Empire, and a high point in its ideological self-presentation as precisely that – an empire that was both holy and Roman. However, these terms should not in fact be accepted straightforwardly, nor should we assume that the aura of 'holiness' arose in any centrally designed fashion. The current understanding of the dynamics around this topic, proposing what we can usefully call the *sacrum imperium* theory (meaning not only the presence of the specific phrase but also the wider ideological programme), coalesced in the mid-twentieth century, as we shall see later, but now requires quite considerable revision. That revision is what this book aims to achieve.

The starting point is the tripartite theory of the sacralisation of the Empire as proposed in 1952 by Friedrich Heer, who believed that Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and Rainald of Dassel (imperial chancellor 1156–1159, archbishop of Cologne and archchancellor for Italy 1159–1167) worked together (1) to introduce *sacrum imperium* as the title of the Empire, but also (2) to translate the Three Kings, as the Biblical Magi are known, from Milan to Cologne, and (3) to make Charlemagne a saint. The formulation is by no means accidental, as it was based on the theories of the sacral nature of the medieval state as described by Percy Ernst Schramm and Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, whose works on sacral kingship are still dominant in the field, albeit agnosticism regarding their ideas is more common nowadays. The key change in Heer's work, however, was that he imbued the events he was describing with a Faustian character, that is, he saw that the German structures and accompanying domination of Europe were fundamentally broken after Barbarossa, while the European West, meaning England, France and Italy, was on the rise.

Heer's tripartite theory, favoured by historians, was quickly reinforced by a large number of art historical publications claiming to have discovered yet another piece of Frederick's *sacrum imperium* programme, most

Introduction

commonly in Aachen, but also elsewhere. There was a brachiary of Saint Charlemagne, where Frederick Barbarossa imitated the Byzantine emperors, and a reliquary shrine of Saint Charlemagne, where the German kings and emperors sat enthroned and saintlike beneath the arcades usually reserved for apostles. A huge crown chandelier, which depicted the same emperor's entry into heaven, was hanging right above either of the two reliquaries, which were located in the mid-point of Aachen's Marienkirche (the church of Saint Mary). There was also a bust of Frederick Barbarossa, where the current emperor was at the same time depicted as both Charlemagne and Constantine the Great, and which has been described as the earliest portrait in European history. There was a series of Romanesque stained-glass windows in Strasbourg Cathedral depicting the Holy Roman emperors as holy successors to the kings of Israel. The list could be expanded with many other examples; however, conclusive proof was lacking for each and every item on it.

While these may seem abstruse matters to historians not working on political history, at its heart this is a fundamental problem of European history, and one of the core parts of the *Sonderweg* theory, which claims that Germany had a special historical path and role as opposed to the so-called normal cases of France and England. Because imperial power waned quickly from the death of Henry VI in 1197 onwards, having seemed only to grow until then, explanations for the same were sought in the long reign of Henry's imperial father, Frederick, who had been a part of the national mythology since the Middle Ages. Nostalgia for the Redbeard reached its peak in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the German Empire paid tribute to him in speeches and monuments, while Nazi Germany staged the single largest military operation in human history under Frederick's name: Operation Barbarossa. In the sacralisation of the emperor and the Empire that scholars proposed, Hitler and his company found their own inspiration for a Germany restored to its rightful place in Europe and the world by an almost deified leader, who would occasionally flaunt the insignia of the emperors of old. Unfortunately, medievalists let their opinions of the past be informed by Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, the two World Wars and even the terminology of this period when determining what had happened a millennium ago. Other countries' historians did the same, but in the German case, that led to an especially strong stigma about the past, which, in turn, froze some avenues of research for many decades. Chief among these was the German identity of the medieval German people, and how it related to the Holy Roman Empire, which is now remembered through the quip that it was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire.

Instead of confirming the commonly held ideas on the Hohenstaufen court and its relations to Aachen, I will demonstrate that these top-down

2

Introduction

ideas of the past have obscured much (but not all) of the findings made in the past hundred or so years, and that important local elements and participation have been unwittingly downplayed time and time again, with the effect that many sources that deviate from the common pattern have been conceptually sidelined so that a more unified reading could be obtained. This book steps away from the (admittedly helpful) court- and ruled-focused lens systematised by Theodor Sickel, Harry Bresslau and their successors in the field of diplomatic, and returns to the complexity present in the sources. By doing so, I intend to return to the study of history *as it actually happened*, to quote the maxim of Leopold von Ranke, the most prominent exponent of the positivist school of history. Such principles, more consequently applied to the same material, will yield fundamentally different results.

The goal of the *Altmeister*, that is, the generations of Sickel, Bresslau, Waitz and others whose editorial work underpins much of medieval German history, was to understand the state through the functioning of the emperor and his court, of which the best evidenced component was the document-producing chancery. Simply put, they thought that the chancery was run on three levels: the honorific or top level represented by the archchaplains and archchancellors; the political or middle level occupied by the chancellors, capellars (an officer of the chapel during the High Middle Ages) and protonotaries; and the operative or bottom level, where one would find the notaries, scribes and chaplains. Furthermore, the chancery was seen as a part of the court chapel, so every member of the former was also a chaplain, while not every chaplain worked in the chancery. For the sake of establishing order in the documents they found, the *Altmeister* excluded transitory draftsmen and copyists from what they considered to be the court staff. They equally excluded the many courtiers, or visitors to the court, who did not otherwise read or write, from being considered a part of the production of documents. Moreover, the ruler's point of view has been presented as dominant in his documents, but also as entirely absent, for only the chancery staff would deal with the business of writing.

As exemplified by Joseph Fleckenstein's *magnum opus* on the chapel from Pepin the Short to Henry III (751–1056), and continued up to Barbarossa's accession in 1152 in works by Fleckenstein, Friedrich Hausmann and Wolfgang Petke, this imposing court chapel ran the Holy Roman Empire and comprised the core part of the state, the *Reichskirchensystem*, by and through which chaplains would be recruited from among the leading German (and sometimes Italian) families, and after a term in service they would ascend to provostships and bishoprics, through which they would, in turn, assist their own networks, but also

3

Introduction

further the causes of the emperor and his court. Most recently, Wolfgang Huschner challenged the dominant view by introducing a classification of notaries and disputing the essence of the three-tiered chancery, but his numerous palaeographic and diplomatic blunders have significantly slowed the spread of his corrections to the Sickel–Bresslau view, especially beyond 1056, where he stopped.[1]

Very few scholars deal with diplomatic proper, and even fewer discuss the theoretical side, as Bresslau's handbook is still held to be the northern star in an otherwise dark night. Yet the teacher himself, having seen the great variety of diplomatic sources, was not nearly as rigid as his successors. While his work, as well as those of Fleckenstein and Huschner, will have to wait a bit longer for a thorough revision, this book offers a glimpse into the Hohenstaufen era that is based on a different point of view, where no public document of the period is considered only as a product of the monarch, his inner circle and their subaltern staff, but rather as a collaborative effort between the issuer and the recipient, and their advisers and literate courtiers. Through so doing, this book attempts to hold to account the core tenet that has grown out of those presuppositions, the so-called *sacrum imperium* theory, or the theory of Frederick Barbarossa's and Rainald of Dassel's resacralisation of the state. Only once that is out of the way, and scholars return to constructing a new and more complex model of the court, chapel and chancery, can larger questions be addressed with more certainty. In order to deal with this difficult scholarly situation, I will first present the reader with a short genealogy of the current theories on the sanctity of the state under Barbarossa's reign, as their provenance and history are not inconsequential to the shape and form they take today.

I.I THE *SACRUM IMPERIUM* THEORY

The titular protagonist of this book, Frederick Barbarossa, is a well-known medieval figure in scholarly historiography, and a lasting myth of the Middle Ages in German-speaking countries. And yet, almost no historians writing before the mid-twentieth century, even when they approach Frederick in adoration, mention a resacralisation of the state

---

[1] J. Fleckenstein, *Die Hofkapelle der deutschen Könige*, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 1959–1966); J. Fleckenstein, 'Hofkapelle und Reichsepiskopat unter Heinrich IV.', in J. Fleckenstein (ed.), *Investiturstreit und Reichsverfassung* (Thorbecke, 1973), 117–140; F. Hausmann, *Reichskanzlei und Hofkapelle unter Heinrich V. und Konrad III.* (Stuttgart, 1956); W. Petke, *Kanzlei, Kapelle und königliche Kurie unter Lothar III. (1125–1137)* (Cologne, 1985); W. Huschner, *Transalpine Kommunikation in Mittelalter: Diplomatische, kulturelle und politische Wechselwirkungen zwischen Italien und dem nordalpinen Reich (9.-11. Jahrhundert)*, 3 vols (Hanover, 2003).

I.1 The sacrum imperium Theory

happening under him. The shift in perspective was gradual, and a number of scholars contributed to the construction of a new, more medieval than medieval, Frederick. Moreover, this was not a chance occurrence, but was clearly linked to the history of the German people, their states and changing worldviews. In essence, the medievalist's Barbarossa as we know him now is like a twelfth-century painting in which restorers from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century inserted a few of their own flights of fancy. Because of that, it is important to stress the parallel development of Germany and its favourite emperor – bar the saintly Charlemagne, who played a role in this, too.

The first traces of a vivid memory of Frederick Barbarossa in the modern period appear in the immediate aftermath of the liberation of the former Holy Roman Empire from Napoleon's domination in 1814–1815, when German nationalism and a desire for unification began manifesting itself. Barbarossa had become immensely popular in Germany through Friedrich Ludwig Georg von Raumer's *Geschichte der Hohenstaufen und ihrer Zeit* (first edition 1823–1825, third and final edition 1857–1858), so that even Richard Wagner thought of writing a monumental cycle about the Hohenstaufen (called *Die Wibelungen* after the crucial Hohenstaufen dynasty castle of Waiblingen) before he chose to immortalise the Nibelungs.[2] Hans Prutz wrote the first scholarly biography of Frederick, who was now considered a great man, in 1871–1874, and Wilhelm von Giesebrecht completed his 1,800-page work on the subject in 1880–1895, the longest account of Frederick's life even now.[3] These two signalled the beginning of an intense period of research on every aspect of Frederick Barbarossa's person and rule. Scholars began actively searching for his presence in their sources, which mostly led to fortuitous discoveries. The adulatory approach never disappeared altogether, which led to the vast growth of a potentially Friderician corpus.

This period of research coincided not only with the Prussian-led unification of Germany (1866–1871), but also with the state-sponsored cult of Frederick Barbarossa, who was depicted as the medieval counterpart to the current emperor Wilhelm I (1861–1888), the aptly nicknamed *Barbablanca* (Whitebeard). An equestrian monument of Wilhelm (1890–1896) in the Kyffhäuser mountains comprises the Wilhelmine horseman on a tall pedestal, whereas Frederick's sleeping figure leans on its base. The message was clear: Barbablanca finished what Barbarossa started.[4]

---

[2] F. L. G. von Raumer, *Geschichte der Hohenstaufen und ihrer Zeit*, 3rd edn, 6 vols (Leipzig, 1857–1858); R. Wagner, *Die Wibelungen. Weltgeschichte aus der Sage* (Leipzig, 1850).

[3] H. Prutz, *Kaiser Friedrich I.*, 3 vols (Danzig, 1871–1874); W. von Giesebrecht, *Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserzeit*, 6 vols (Leipzig, 1855–1895).

[4] K. Görich, *Friedrich Barbarossa: Eine Biographie* (Munich, 2011), 14–15.

Introduction

The new emperor's *Reichskanzler*, Otto von Bismarck, soon sanctioned an archaeological expedition to Tyre, where the body of one of the emperor's most famous predecessors lay. The amateur team found nothing, and only managed to mix up the cathedral's stratigraphy before returning home ignominiously.[5] But Frederick's grip on the German imagination was not loosened.

From this point on, two scholarly trends would develop parallel to each other, which were later united into the current *sacrum imperium* theory. On the one hand, art historians searched for portraits of Barbarossa, and sought to interpret his ideological outlook based on the elements they identified. On the other hand, diplomatists were doing the same thing, but on the basis of the large corpus of Frederick's documents.

Friedrich Philippi's identification of the Cappenberg head, a reliquary that supposedly depicted Frederick Barbarossa as emperor, with Frederick Barbarossa in 1886 was one of the most significant steps in preparing the ground for the later idea of Frederick's *sacrum imperium* ideology.[6] The Cappenberg head soon became famous as the *Barbarossakopf* (Barbarossa's head), and it appeared on the covers of dozens of historical and art historical works on medieval Germany and the twelfth century.[7] In 1909, Max Kemmerich interpreted four works as portraits of Frederick, which shows how quickly the search for the real Frederick Barbarossa accelerated.[8] Hagen Keller used the Cappenberg head as an early example of the portrait as a genre (as opposed to an image of a person) in the High Middle Ages.[9] Erich Meyer saw the Cappenberg head and the *Barbarossaleuchter* (Barbarossa's chandelier) as parts of Frederick Barbarossa's imperial and knightly worldview already in 1946, but it was Herbert Grundmann's 1959 comparison of the Cappenberg head with Rahewin's description of Frederick that prepared the ground for the extravagant imperial interpretations of the following six decades.[10] Since the 1960s, scholars focused on investigating the head's memorial functions and supposed imperial political symbolism.[11] It was only in 2017 that

---

[5] Görich, *Friedrich Barbarossa*, 649–651.

[6] F. Philippi, 'Die Cappenberger Porträtbüste Kaiser Friedrichs I.', *Zeitschrift für vaterländische Geschichte und Altertumskunde (Westfalen)*, 44 (1886), 150–161.

[7] K. Görich, 'Der Cappenberger Kopf – ein Barbarossakopf?', in K.-H. Rueß (ed.), *Friedrich Barbarossa* (Göppingen, 2017), 48–76, at 48–52.

[8] M. Kemmerich, *Die frühmittelalterliche Porträtplastik in Deutschland bis zum Ende des XIII. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1909), 171–192.

[9] H. Keller, 'Die Entstehung des Bildnisses am Ende des Hochmittelalters', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 3 (1939), 235.

[10] E. Meyer, *Bildnis und Kronleuchter Kaiser Friedrich Barbarossas* (Berlin, 1946); H. Grundmann, *Der Cappenberger Barbarossakopf und die Anfänge des Stiftes Cappenberg* (Cologne, 1959).

[11] H. Fillitz, 'Der Cappenberger Barbarossakopf', *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 3rd ser., 14 (1963), 39–50; H. Appuhn, 'Beobachtungen und Versuche zum Bildnis Kaiser Friedrichs

I.1 The sacrum imperium *Theory*

Knut Görich showed that the evidence did not unequivocally support the Friderician identification, thus essentially disproving most scholarship on the object.[12]

The imperial interpretation of the Cappenberg head, however, had already deeply influenced the scholarship on the Barbarossaleuchter and the Karlsschrein. Ernst Günther Grimme believed that the former became a huge floating crown of Saint Charlemagne and that it also imitated the walls of Rome on Frederick's golden bull. The similarity, he argued, could be noticed only when the emperor was underneath it; for example, during his coronation.[13] Grimme, accepting the ambiguous identification of the Cappenberg head, applied the same principle to the Karlsschrein, and concluded that it depicted Frederick and Charlemagne as one person.[14] Recently scholars working on Aachen began questioning these conclusions, but the *sacrum imperium* narrative did not lose its traction, as can be seen in the work of Lisa Victoria Ciresi, who integrated the Aquensian reliquary shrines and the Colognese Dreikönigenschrein into a unified story of Hohenstaufen and Welf sacral kingship on the lower Rhine.[15] But while the artworks of the twelfth century proved to be fertile soil for the growth of the new theory, its central thesis had always been in the realm of diplomatic.

The importance of the phrase *sacrum imperium* was recognised already by the legal historian Karl Friedrich Eichhorn in 1812, though it became frequently used only in the 1860s.[16] The learned Theodor Sickel

---

I. Barbarossa in Cappenberg', *Aachener Kunstblätter*, 44 (1973), 129–192; M. Hütt, *Aquamanilien: Gebrauch und Form: 'Quem lavat unda foris'* (Mainz, 1993), 138–222; W. C. Schneider, 'Die Kaiserapotheose Friedrich Barbarossas im "Cappenberger Kopf": ein Zeugnis staufischer Antikenerneuerung', *Castrum peregrini*, 44 (1995): 7–53; U. Nilgen, 'Staufische Bildpropaganda: Legitimation und Selbstverständnis im Wandel', in A. Wieczorek, B. Schneidmüller and S. Weinfurter (eds), *Die Staufer und Italien: Drei Innovationsregionen im mittelalterlichen Europa*, 1 (Stuttgart, 2010), 87–90; E. Balzer, 'Der Cappenberger Barbarossakopf: Vorgeschichte, Geschenkanlass und Funktionen', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 46 (2012), 241–299; C. Horch, '*Nach dem Bild des Kaisers:*' *Funktionen und Bedeutungen des Cappenberger Barbarossakopfes* (Cologne, 2013).

[12] Görich, 'Der Cappenberger Kopf – ein Barbarossakopf?'

[13] E. G. Grimme, *Der Dom zu Aachen: Architektur und Ausstattung* (Aachen, 1994), 146; E. G. Grimme, 'Das Bildprogramm des Aachener Karlsschreins', in H. Müllejans (ed.), *Karl der Große und sein Schrein in Aachen: Eine Festschrift* (Aachen, 1988), 124–135, at 133.

[14] E. G. Grimme, *Goldschmiedekunst im Mittelalter. Form und Bedeutung des Reliquiars von 800 bis 1500* (Cologne, 1972), 66.

[15] L. V. Ciresi, 'Manifestations of the holy as instruments of propaganda: The Cologne Dreikönigenschrein and the Aachen Karlsschrein and Marienschrein in late medieval ritual', unpublished PhD thesis, Rutgers University (2003).

[16] J. Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1864); K. Zeumer, *Heiliges römisches Reich deutscher Nation: eine Studie über den Reichstitel* (Weimar, 1910), 1–4, 30.

Introduction

perceived it as one Romanising phrase among many,[17] and the supreme
Monumentalist, Georg Waitz, saw in it a relic of the pagan Roman past.[18]
But the quest for the sanctity of the Empire would be undertaken by
other, now less well-known names. In 1897, Paul Scheffer-Boichorst, an
expert in Hohenstaufen-era Germany from the late nineteenth century,
mentioned in a footnote that the phrase *sacratissimum imperium* first
appeared in January 1159, and he believed that this was the *sacrum
imperium*'s first occurrence.[19] He died in 1902, but not before he
requested of Karl Zeumer to continue his search. The latter reviewed
the history of the title Holy Roman Empire in 1910. His conclusion was
that *sacrum imperium*, the Latin phrase that would later be adopted as the
imperial title and undergo further development, was introduced in
Frederick's imperial chancery in late March 1157 in a letter/mandate to
Bishop Otto of Freising. Zeumer added that Rainald of Dassel (chancel-
lor 1156–1159, archbishop of Cologne 1159–1167), who caused a scandal
at the Diet of Besançon in October 1157 when he interpreted a letter of
Pope Hadrian IV (1154–1159) as an attempt to force the emperor to
acknowledge the pope as his overlord, was the intellectual author of this
phrase.[20]

  Zeumer noted that *sacrum imperium* was the first sign of the new course
of imperial politics that Rainald inaugurated, but in doing so he read the
role of the twelfth-century chancellor as identical to the chancellor's role
in his own times. Yet Zeumer was not thinking of just any chancellor: he
was comparing Rainald to the orator Otto von Bismarck. On
14 May 1872, Bismarck delivered a speech on the relationship between
the Catholic Church and the German state in the Reichstag. He criticised
the pope's new policy as antithetical to all secular government, and
proclaimed that the Germans would not go to Canossa – in body or in
spirit.[21] This was not the opening act of the *Kulturkampf*, but it remained
its most memorable moment. Rainald was the ideal candidate for
a medieval Bismarck because he was seen not only as competent and
efficient, but also as a decided opponent of papal authority who even

[17] T. Sickel, 'Waitz, Georg, Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte. Sechster Band: = Die Deutsche
Reichsvefassung von der Mitte des neunten bis zur Mitte des zwölften Jahrhunderts. Zweiter
Band. Zweite Auflage bearbeitet von Gerhard Seeliger. Berlin. Weidmannsche Buchhandlung
1896. XIV, 625 S.' (Review), *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, 163, 1 (1901), 387–390.

[18] G. Waitz, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte*, VI, *Die Deutsche Reichsvefassung von der Mitte des neunten bis
zur Mitte des zwölften Jahrhunderts*, part 2, ed. G. Seeliger (Berlin, 1896), 154–155.

[19] P. Scheffer-Boichorst, 'Vezzano und Quattro Castella', in *Zur Geschichte des XII. und XIII.
Jahrhunderts. Diplomatische Forschungen* (Berlin, 1897), 139, footnote 1.

[20] Zeumer, *Heiliges römisches Reich deutscher Nation*, 10–13.

[21] O. von Bismarck, *Die politischen Reden des Fürsten Bismarck*, V, *1871–1873*, ed. H. Kohl (Stuttgart,
1892–1905), 337–338.

I.1 The sacrum imperium Theory

elected his own (anti)papal candidate, Paschal III (1164–1168), after Antipope Victor IV (1159–1164) died in April 1164.

This connection between the rise of the German Empire and the nationalist line espoused by its medievalists can hardly be more obvious than in this case. Karl Zeumer, the discoverer of the chronology of the phrase *sacrum imperium*, was born in 1849 and died in 1914, so he reached adulthood just as Bismarck masterminded the unification of the German Empire in 1871. As a young political historian, he must have been aware of the 1866 pamphlet *Das preußische Reich deutscher Nation* ('The Prussian Empire of the German Nation')[22] and of the other new ideas of German statehood, which were often formulated as concepts inherited from the Holy Roman Empire. For example, Frederick Barbarossa's mythical return from the dead was presented as the symbol of the German nation that was now coming back to life. Heinrich Heine may have mocked this fable in his *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen*, but even he had to concede that a restoration of Barbarossa's rule did not seem like a bad idea.[23] Naturally, Bismarck's 1872 Canossa speech explicitly referenced the Investiture Controversy, thus inviting comparisons between the past and the present.[24] Zeumer's ideas instantly became a part of the canon of German historiography, but it would take a few more steps before the current version of the theory was formulated.

Zeumer also noted his own debt to tradition, and more specifically, to Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon* (1731–1754), volume 31, where an anonymous contributor, who penned the article 'Reich', said that Frederick Barbarossa introduced *sacrum imperium* to oppose the Papacy, which obstructed him. He attributed this view to some unnamed scholars, and these have so far remained unidentified.[25] As Zedler was a very Protestant publisher, having edited the collected works of Martin Luther (1729–1734/1740) and dedicated his volumes to notable Protestant princes, one can appreciate that his anonymous contributors subscribed to a somewhat confessionally biased view of German history.[26] This also serves to underscore the point that Zeumer's identification of the twelfth-century emperor and chancellor duo with their recent counterparts was not coincidental, as it would have been relatively easy for

---

[22] Anonymous, *Das preußische Reich deutscher Nation. Ein Beitrag zum Aufbau* (Brunswick, 1866).

[23] H. Heine, *Deutschland: Ein Wintermährchen* (Hamburg, 1844).

[24] O. von Bismarck, *Die politischen Reden*, 337–338.

[25] 'Reich', in C. G. Ludovici (ed.), *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschafften und Künste*, XXXI, *Rei-Ri* (Halle and Leipzig, 1742), 8–17, at 8–10.

[26] Martin Luther, *Des theuren Mannes Gottes, Martin Luthers sämtliche theils von ihm selbst deutsch verfertigte, theils aus dessen lateinischen ins Deutsche übersetzte Schrifften und Wercke welche aus allen vorhin ausgegangenen Sammlungen zusammen getragen*, ed. C. F. Börner, 12 vols (Leipzig, 1729–1740).

Introduction

another historian of his age to have come to the same conclusion, had he been informed by Zedler's view that *sacrum imperium* was an instrument used to counter papal claims. Thus, the early eighteenth-century Protestant point of view prepared the way for and informed Zeumer's identification of the past with the present. This revisionist view still forms the foundations upon which the whole theory of the (re)sacralisation of the state under Frederick Barbarossa is built. As I will show in this book, once that dogma is set aside, and the evidence considered on its own merit, a very different reality is brought to light.

The interwar period elaborated on Zeumer's views. In 1929, Alois Dempf wrote the sizeable *Sacrum imperium. Geschichts- und Staatsphilosophie des Mittelalters und der politischen Renaissance*, where he described what he felt was the essence of the sanctity of the Empire in the Middle Ages.[27] Dempf did not mention Frederick even once, but his work influenced Anton Mayer-Pfannholz to write his 1933 article *Die Wende von Canossa. Eine Studie zum Sacrum Imperium* about the meeting at Canossa as a turning point in the history of the Empire. He argued that Gregory VII (1073–1085) desacralised not only the emperor, but also the Empire itself, and that Frederick Barbarossa and Rainald of Dassel reforged the same sanctity, though not as a consequence of the royal unction, but as a result of the sanctity and inviolability of Roman law, and the connection between the Roman emperors of old and the German–Roman emperors of the present.[28]

Mayer-Pfannholz' article is also important in German medieval studies in general, because it offered a new, widely popular theory on the holy element of the Holy Roman Empire, which was deemed fundamental by scholars from the Empire's successor states. Unsurprisingly, Mayer-Pfannholz' views of the past bear some similarity to those of his more extreme contemporaries, even though he was certainly not a Nazi and was heckled by the regime. This can be explained as a part of the general German view that outsiders, such as the Papacy in the medieval period or the Allies in modern times, treated Germany unjustly. Moreover, just as Barbarossa restored the first empire to its former glory, and Wilhelm I created the second, a leader was sought now who would build a third empire in their stead. The connection can be easily proven.

---

[27] A. Dempf, *Sacrum imperium. Geschichts- und Staatsphilosophie des Mittelalters und der politischen Renaissance*, 3rd edn (Munich, 1962).

[28] A. Mayer-Pfannholz, 'Die Wende von Canossa. Eine Studie zum Sacrum Imperium (1932)', in H. Kämpf (ed.), *Canossa als Wende. Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur neueren Forschung* (Darmstadt, 1963), esp. 20–26. Originally published as A. Mayer-Pfannholz, 'Die Wende von Canossa. Eine Studie zum Sacrum Imperium', *Hochland*, 30 (1933), esp. 400–404.