

Barbarossa

Frederick I Barbarossa was elected King of Germany at Frankfurt on 4 March 1152 and crowned in Aachen on 9 March. Before his royal election, he was by inheritance Duke of Swabia (1147–1152, as Frederick III). He was the son of Duke Frederick II of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. His mother was Judith, daughter of Henry IX, Duke of Bavaria, from the rival House of Welf, and Frederick therefore descended from Germany's two leading families, making him an acceptable choice for the Empire's prince-electors.

Frederick was born in 1122. In 1147, he became duke of Swabia and shortly afterwards made his first trip to the East, accompanying his uncle, the German king Conrad III, on the Second Crusade. The expedition proved to be a disaster, but Frederick distinguished himself and won the complete confidence of the king. When Conrad died in February 1152, only Frederick and the prince-bishop of Bamberg were at his deathbed. Both asserted afterwards that Conrad had, in full possession of his mental powers, handed the royal insignia to Frederick and indicated that Frederick, rather than Conrad's own six-year-old son, the future Frederick IV, Duke of Swabia, should succeed him as king. Frederick energetically pursued the crown and at Frankfurt on 4 March the kingdom's princely electors designated him as the next German king.

Upon becoming Holy Roman Emperor, Barbarossa was to have many conflicts with the Papacy. He even appointed a person to replace the Pope and his choice was quickly dubbed the Anti-Pope. To solidify the Holy Roman Empire, Barbarossa knew that he needed to squelch internal strife at home in Germany. He quickly set about working on placating the nobles.

After making his peace with the Pope, Barbarossa embarked on the Third Crusade (1189), which was a massive expedition in conjunction with the French King Philip Augustus, and the English, under Richard the Lionheart. Barbarossa organized a grand army of 100,000 to 150,000 men and set out on the overland route to the Holy Land.

The Crusaders passed through Hungary and Serbia and then entered Byzantine territory, arriving at Constantinople in the autumn of 1189. From there they pushed on through Anatolia (where they were victorious in two battles) and Cilician Armenia. The approach of the immense German army greatly concerned Saladin and the other Muslim leaders, who began to rally troops of their own and prepare to confront Barbarossa's forces.

However, on 10 June 1190, Frederick died while crossing the Saleph River (now known as Göksu) in Cilicia, south-eastern Anatolia. The exact circumstances are unknown to Western scholars however, Islamic scholars claim his death to be the will of God. Western scholars suggest that he was jumping in when the shock of the cold water caused him to have a heart attack at the age of 64. Weighed down by his armour, he drowned. Frederick's death plunged his army into chaos. Leaderless, panicked, and attacked on all sides by Turks, the German Crusaders were devastated. Only 5,000 soldiers, a tiny fraction of the original forces, returned to Acre. Barbarossa's son, Frederick VI of Swabia carried on with the remnants of the army, with the aim of burying the Emperor in Jerusalem, but efforts to conserve his body in vinegar failed. Hence, his flesh was

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interred in the Church of St. Peter in Antioch, his bones in the cathedral of Tyre, and his heart and inner organs in Tarsus.

Nonetheless, Kaiser Friedrich I, Babarossa, was instrumental in re-uniting the Holy Roman Empire in a time of great turmoil and strife. Also the city of Kaiserslautern, Germany, name was established by Babarossa as one of his favorite hunting spots. Today, Barbarossa is fondly remembered in Germany as a uniter of the German people.