The Myth of Charlemagne
From the Early Middle Ages to the Late Sixteenth Century

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This study focuses on the myth of the Emperor Charlemagne (d. 814) and its profound impact on medieval and early modern literature. Such a cultural-historical investigation is justified by a host of reasons, some of which are intimately associated with our most recent historical situation. In 2014 we celebrated the twelfth hundredth anniversary of the death of Charlemagne, the mighty ruler of the Frankish kingdom, the first Germanic emperor north of the Alps after the fall of the Roman empire in the late fifth century. Charlemagne is well known to us through numerous historical accounts, especially that of his biographer Einhard and Notker der Stammler's (the Stammerer's) anecdotal *Gesta Karoli Magni*;[1] a myth had quickly formed about him, and the epithet 'the Great' was early assigned to him. The corpus of relevant research literature and also more popular texts about him, his time, art, literature, religion, etc. is legion; as Karen Pratt has pointed out "Charlemagne studies are flourishing at present. . . . Since the various stories which circulated about Charlemagne, whilst fictional, were nevertheless presented as 'truthful' and were generally received as such by medieval audiences, the legend of Charlemagne analysed in these studies affords us rich insights into the mentalités of the Middle Ages."[2]

Irrespective of the fairly quick decline of the Frankish empire within a few generations,[3] Charlemagne's accomplishments in military, political,

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[1] Notker der Stammler, *Taten Kaiser Karls des Grossen*, ed. Hans F. Haefele. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum, Nova Series, XII (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1959). For an English translation, see *Two Lives of Charlemagne: Einhard, The Life of Charlemagne; Notker the Stammerer, Charlemagne*, trans. with an intro. by Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969).

[2] Karen Pratt, review of *The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages: Power, Faith, and Crusade*, ed. Matthew Gabriele and Jace Stuckey. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), in *The Medieval Review*, October 9, 2014, http://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/tmr/article/view/16879/22997. Pratt herself had already worked intensively on this topic. See her introduction to *Roland and Charlemagne in Europe: Essays on the Reception and Transformation of a Legend*, ed. Karen Pratt (London: King's College London, Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1996).

[3] Pierre Riché, *Die Karolinger: Eine Familie formt Europa*, trans. and ed. Cornelia and Ulf

cultural, and religious terms have always been regarded with greatest respect both among German-language scholars and those writing in other languages – Charlemagne was, of course, not a 'German' emperor, but rather a Germanic ruler, a small but decisive distinction, the ruler over the Frankish kingdom, so the modern French can claim him as much as a founding father as can the Catalans, the Italians, the Belgians, Germans, Dutch, or even Danish.[4] This great respect for him is not surprising considering his astounding ability in empire-building. The defeated and submitted peoples, such as the Saxons or the Frisians, must have seen it very differently, of course, unless they acknowledged, irrespective of their own losses, the king's enormous military prowess and leadership qualities. The Middle Ages perhaps knew only two other characters of similarly positive renown, Alexander the Great and King Arthur, the latter probably only of fictional origin, yet equally famous. The influence of the myths surrounding those three political and military individuals on medieval and modern European and other cultures cannot be overestimated.[5]

The fact that an individual such as Charlemagne has survived, in our memory, over the passage of time, and continues to impress us today in many different ways, irrespective of his actual, historically documented achievements as a political and military leader, deserves great respect, but we also need to examine closely what has made this survival possible and who the individual players have been in that process. That process might even be more important for our own concept of the past and our modern sense of historical identity than the actual facts in Charlemagne's life.

Already nineteenth-century research realized the central topic of this Frankish ruler in the history of medieval European literature, as demonstrated most impressively by Gaston Paris's comprehensive monograph, *Histoire*

Dirlmeier (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991), 179–327.

[4] See Johannes Laudage, Lars Hageneier, and Yvonne Leiverkus, *Die Zeit der Karolinger* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006). Recent studies include Charles Edward Russell, *Charlemagne: First of the Moderns* (Boston and New York: Hougthon Mifflin Company, 1930); Derek Wilson, *Charlemagne* (New York: Doubleday, 2006); Alessandro Barbero, *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent*, trans. Allan Cameron (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[5] See the contributions to *Väter Europas: Augustus und Karl der Große, eine Kabinettausstellung des Kunsthistorischen Museums, 27. Mai bis 21. September 2014 / Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien*, ed. Sabine Haag, prepared by Georg Plattner (Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 2014). See also the concise and comprehensive contributions to *Herrscher, Helden, Heilige*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich, prepared by Lotte Gaebel. Mittelalter Mythen, 1 (St. Gallen: UVK - Fachverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 1996).

Poétique de Charlemagne (1865).[6] Many other scholars have followed his model, and the need for ever new investigations, reflecting innovative theoretical and conceptual models and methods, does not seem to come to an end because we are dealing with a myth based on a historical narrative that has inspired all of European imagination throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. Charlemagne stands at the beginning of medieval European history, having been a founder of an empire and hence, deliberately or not, the creator of a myth, both in Germany and in France, and other countries on the continent.[7] As the evidence of the personal reflections and anecdotes in *De nugis curialum* (1181–1194) by the English courtier and intellectual, Walter Map (ca. 1130/1135–1209/1210) indicates, it was almost natural for all medieval historiographers and chroniclers to insert some references to Charlemagne, whenever they commented on the past.[8] Since the issue of charismatic leadership continues to be of central importance even today, irrespective of the democratic power structures in western societies, the medieval ruler with his mythical qualities deeply matters for us as well.

Myth-Making and Historiography
Let us first reflect in briefest terms on the relevance of history and memory, drawing on Jan Assmann's brilliant insights:

> Every culture formulates something that might be called a connective structure. It has a binding effect that works on two levels—social and temporal. It binds people together by providing a "symbolic universe" (Berger and Luckmann)— a common area of experience, expectation, and

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[6] Gaston Paris, *Histoire Poétique de Charlemagne* (Paris: Librairie A. Franck, 1865); Louis Halphen, *Études critiques sur l'histoire de Charlemagne* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1921); for more recent studies, see Barton Sholod, *Charlemagne in Spain: The Cultural Legacy of Roncesvalles*. Histoire des idées et critique littéraire (Geneva: Droz, 1966); the contributions to *Charlemagne et l'épopée romane: actes du VIIe Congrès international de la Société Rencesvals, Liège, 28 août–4 septembre 1976*, ed. Madeleine Tyssens and Claude Thiry. Bibliothèque de la Faculté de philosophie et lettres de l'Université de Liège, 225 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978); Dominique Boutet, *Charlemagne et Arthur ou le roi imaginaire*. Nouvelle bibliothèque du Moyen Âge, 20 (Paris: Champion; Geneva: Slatkine, 1992); *Roland and Charlemagne in Europe: Essays on the Reception and Transformation of a Legend*, ed. Karen Pratt. King's College London Medieval Studies, 12 (London: King's College London, Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1996); Isabelle Durand-Le Guern and Bernard Ribémont, *Charlemagne, empereur et mythe d'Occident*. Les Grandes figures du moyen âge, 3 (Paris: Klincksieck, 2009).
[7] Robert Morrissey, *Charlemagne & France: A Thousand Years of Mythology*, trans. Catherine Tihanyi. Laura Shannon Series in French Medieval Studies (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).
[8] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialum*, ed. Montague Rhodes James. Cambridge Library Collection (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 37, 95, 101, 203, and 225.

action whose connecting force provides them with trust and with orientation. Early texts refer to this aspect of culture as justice. However, it also links yesterday with today by giving form and presence to influential experiences and memories, incorporating images and tales from another time into the background of the onward moving present, and bringing with it hope and continuity. This connective structure is the aspect of culture that underlies myths and histories. Both the normative and the narrative elements of these, mixing instruction with storytelling, create a basis of belonging, of identity, so that the individual can then talk of "we". What binds him to this plural is the connective structure of common knowledge and characteristics—first through adherence to the same laws and values, and second through the memory of a shared past. The basic principle behind all connective structures is repetition. This guarantees that the lines of action will not branch out into infinite variations but instead will establish themselves in recognizable patterns immediately identifiable as elements of a shared culture.[9]

Without memory of the past, especially without cultural memory, we cannot fully cope in the present because our social structures and narratives derive from the old days; and therefore without a solid understanding of the past, we cannot approach the future. We all derive from past concepts that mould and shape us today, and on that basis we create the next layer of history and culture fundamental for the following generation. Understanding, the myth of Charlemagne thus does much more than maintain the memory of a huge and dominant figure who still looms very large on the horizon of our collective, European self-conception; it also allows us to grasp the very nature of European history and culture themselves and thus of the meaning of a European identity. As Assmann subsequently suggests: "It is through the written element of traditions that the dominance of repetition gradually gives way to that of re-presentation—ritual gives way to textual coherence. A new connective structure emerges out of this, which consists not of imitation and preservation but of interpretation and memory. Instead of liturgy we now have hermeneutics."[10] Moreover, to quote him one more time, "there can be no doubt that a study of early civilizations can shed a great deal of light on the nature, function, origin, communication, and transformation of culture . . ."[11]

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[9] Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2–3.
[10] Ibid., 4.
[11] Ibid., 5.

Even though there are many different definitions of 'myth,' we can probably most easily agree on the notion that it implies a tendency and deliberate strategy by individuals and groups to refer back to ancient founders of a dynasty or a country, to an event or an idea, be they fictional heroes or historically verified people, such as Charlemagne, be they tragedies or values from the past. Udo Friedrich and Bruno Quast, reflecting on the multiplicity of concepts pertaining to myth, suggest pursuing the following concept, more broadly defined:

> der Mythos lässt sich als das Andere der Vernunft verstehen, das sich einer vollständigen rationalen Auflösung entzieht. Mythostheorien konzeptionalisieren dieses andere der Vernunft auf je eigene Art.[12]

> [Myth can be understood as the opposite of reason which refuses its complete rational analysis. Theories of myths conceptualize this alternative to reason each in their own ways.]

Globally, they identify three types of mythologies prevalent in the Middle Ages, one interacting with antiquity, the second based on Old Norse concepts, and the third deriving its inspiration from the ancient Celtic world.[13] They also add, in passing, the idea of a historiographical myth, based on a dynastic thinking that wants to anchor the origin of one's own family or society in a world as far back as possible:

> Zwar existiert im Mittelalter kein homogener Zeitbegriff, konkurrieren lebensweltlich eine agrarische, ökonomische, feudale und religiöse Zeitauffassung, doch ist trotz alledem mittelalterliche Zeitvorstellung stark genealogisch geprägt. Wie sich christliche Heilsgeschichte auf einen Ursprung zurückführt, mittelalterliche Chronistik analog mit der Weltentstehung beginnt, so rekurrieren Adels-, Sippen- und Stammesgeschichten vielfach auf den Gründungsakt eines Spitzenahns, auf eine "primordiale Tat" (Hauck).[14]

> [Even though the Middle Ages did not know of a homogenous concept of time, and even though attitudes toward time in the ordinary life, in agriculture, economy, in the feudal system, and in religion competed with

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[12] Udo Friedrich and Bruno Quast, "Mediävistische Mythosforschung," *Präsenz des Mythos: Konfigurationen einer Denkform in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. id. Trends in Medieval Philology, 2 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), X..
[13] Friedrich and Quast, "Mediävistische Mythosforschung," XVI.
[14] Ibid., XXXII.

each other, the medieval understanding of time is mostly determined by genealogy. Just as the Christian history of salvation takes us back to an origin, and as medieval chronicles begin, in analogy, with the creation of the world, so histories of noble families, kinship, and tribes begin with the founding act of the original forefather, by way of a 'primordial act" (Hauck).]

Since the Enlightenment the prevalent view was that *logos* had overcome *myth*, but recent scholarship has moved away from such a radical binary opposition and now views *myth* much more as complementary to *logos*, connecting reason with its underground terrain, memory and feeling. As Marie Neumüllers comments, *logos* describes, and *myth* interprets our world. Myths created distance to our reality and thus now allow us to figure out where we as human beings stand in an ever confusing world vis-à-vis the past. Myths support us to make sense out of our existence, providing us with an orientation and framework for our rational interaction with reality by means of a wealth of historical images, narratives, and concepts, commonly focusing on major individuals from the Middle Ages or from Antiquity who were larger than life, at least according to the literary or fictionalized accounts.[15]

There are many other objects or creatures upon which a myth might have developed, such as the dragon, witches, the Grail, individual castles, magicians such as Merlin, rivers, towns, animals, or plants. But despite the variety of references to a myth, we can agree with Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich who define myth as follows:

Mythen . . . sind überlieferte oder neu aktualisierte Konkretisationen von Gestalten, Geschehen, Gegenständen und Gegenden, die erzählerisch – gewissermaßen modellhaft – ein Konzept bereitstellen für das Verhältnis des Menschen zu seinen Erfahrungen und zur Welt. Vorrationale Mythen bewahren fundamentale Wahrheiten und archaisches Wissen auf, derer sich Rationalität dann erinnert, wenn der wissenschaftlich-technische oder auch gesellschaftlich-ideologische Fortschritt ins Stolpern gerät und zu straucheln droht.[16]

[Myths are . . . traditional or newly created transformations of figures,

[15] Marie Neumüllers, "Einleitung," in *Mythos: Dokumentation*, ed. Stefan Rhein (Calbe: Biosphärenreservat Mittelelbe, et al., 2008), 6–13, at 9–10.
[16] Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich, "Mittelalter-Mythen: Zu Begriff, Gegenstand und Forschungsprojekt," *Herrscher, Helden, Heilige*, ed. id. Mitarbeit und Redaktion Lotte Gaebel (St. Gall: UVK Fachverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 1996), vol. 1, IX–XIV, at X.

events, objects, and regions into fiction which provides in a narrative framework – more or less like a model – a concept for people's relationship to their experiences and to the world. Pre-rational myths preserve fundamental truths and archaic knowledge, which the rational mind then remembers when scientific-technological or indeed social-ideological progress begins to stumble and is in danger of faltering.]

The discussion about the full meaning of myth is expansive and has occupied countless anthropologists, philologists, literary scholars, art historians, religious scholars, and others for a long time.[17] According to J. R. R. Tolkien, for instance, mythology is a "sub-creation, rather than either representation or symbolic interpretation of the beauties and terrors of the world."[18] Exposing oneself to a myth makes it possible to step outside of one's own time and to enter a different, mostly ancient time: "though only for a moment, we stand outside our own time."[19] Nevertheless, engaging with a myth does not mean distancing oneself from reality; on the contrary, it empowers the individual to experience a unique and highly significant alternative of coming to terms with reality.[20]

  Memory, as Allen Tilley reminds us, is the basis for our thoughts to develop: "Through memory we associate two and more events to make a story. Our experience of these associated events, linked in some meaningful way, constitutes a plot."[21] Life is a plot, we might say, but we do not simply write it ourselves, but draw from countless elements contained in living and learned memory, hence, in myth. In Tilley's words, "A myth as deeply embedded in the culture as the Christian myth of history must shape our consciousness as we live in that culture, whatever our explicit religion or our beliefs."[22] As to the workings of myth today he comments: "Primary Myth belongs to preliterate story-telling and to the occasional dream, though the outlines of Myth may often be discerned in human thought and action."

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[17] See the contributions to *Topographie der Erinnerung: Mythos im strukturellen Wandel*, ed. Bettina von Jagow (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000); the Middle Ages do not figure here specifically.

[18] J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins, 2006), 109–61 (122).

[19] Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," 129.

[20] Timo Rebschloe, *Der Drache in der mittelalterlichen Literatur Europas*. Beiträge zur älteren Literaturgeschichte (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2014), 18.

[21] Allen Tilley, *Plots of Time: An Inquiry into History, Myth, and Meaning* (Gainesville, Tallhassee, et al., FL: University Press of Florida, 1995), 3.

[22] Ibid., 25.

When we concern ourselves with the Charlemagne myth, we are no longer in the preliterate stage of western culture; on the very contrary. While many anthropologists associate myth with religion, we can also extend the concept to other dimensions, such as our historical heritage upon which we create our present and future.[23] Charlemagne's life and work deeply shaped, through his own workings and those of countless writers and artists posthumously, the cultural memory that we continue to live with and by.[24]

According to Richard Cornstock (1972), there are five major observations which are relevant in that regard: First, "Myth and ritual complexes provide 'assistance in the *symbolic articulation* of the social patterns and relationships themselves.'" Second, "The myth-and-ritual complex serves to *validate the society*: by relaying human social needs to divine or mythic prototypes, the organization of human society obtains consensus and justification." Third, "rituals may bring about social integration, making members known to one another, establishing social roles, and publicizing the benefits of living together harmoniously." Fourth, "Myths and rituals focus energy upon adaptive responses, upon ways of utilizing social and individual energies that have proved their efficacy over time." Fifth, myths solve "personal and social dilemmas" and reduce anxiety.[25]

William G. Doty concludes that as a result of those five points we can recognize myth as a "mechanism for enabling holistic interaction between individuals who otherwise might remain independent and disengaged. Hence myths and rituals mean culture, *mean* [sic] social structure and interaction, and a socio-functionalist view stresses the ways they bring about and sustain the social worlds of their performers."[26] Fundamentally, as Mircea Eliade already had posited in 1953, "Man is what he is today because a series of events took place *ab origine*. The myths tell him these events and, in so doing, explain to him how and why he was constituted in this particular way. . . . It is always sacred history, for the actors in it are Supernatural Beings and mythical

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[23] Ivan Strenski, "The Rise of Ritual and the Hegemony of Myth: Sylvain Lévi, The Durkheimians, and Max Müller," *Myth and Method*, ed. Laurie L. Patton and Wendy Doniger. Studies in Religion and Culture (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 52–81.

[24] Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 6: "This is the handing down of meaning. This is an area in which the other three aspects merge almost seamlessly. When mimetic routines take on the status of rituals, for example, when they assume a meaning and significance that go beyond their practical function, the borders of mimetic action memory are transcended. Rituals are part of cultural memory because they are the form through which cultural meaning is both handed down and brought to present life."

[25] William G. Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals*. Sec. ed. (Tuscaloosa , AL, and London: The University of Alabama Press, 2000), 135–7.

[26] Ibid., 137.

Ancestors."[27] With respect to history, he reaches the momentous insight: "In the traditional societies it is recollection of *mythical events*; in the modern West it is recollection of *all that took place in historical Time*."[28] Myths work so well even today—and indeed throughout history—because they "are the most general and effective means of awakening and maintaining consciousness of another world, a beyond, whether it be the divine world or the world of the Ancestors."[29]

Much of medieval literature can be identified as the result of a long-term process of coming to terms with myths, with ancient accounts of human lives, of suffering, struggling, battling, and also winning, of defeat and triumph, joy and sorry, life and death.[30] Mythical thinking, as defined by Ernst Cassirer already in the 1920s, is founded on the assumption that the physical, realistic existence is closely paralleled with the sacred and divine. The foundation for the concept of myth consists, as Cassirer remarked, of the observation of an

> Unterschied zweier Bereiche des Seins: eines gewöhnlichen, allgemein-zugänglichen und eines anderen, der, als heiliger Bezirk, aus seiner Umgebung herausgehoben, von ihr abgetrennt, gegen sie umhegt und beschützt erscheint.

> [difference between two realms of existence: one being ordinary, generally accessible, and the other being a sacred region, separated from its environment, separated from it, barricaded off and protected].[31]

The mythical aspect, however, can also be identified with respect to objects and individuals, and then finds its profound reflection in the modern literary history,

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[27] Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard R. Trask. Religious Traditions of the World (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1998), 92.

[28] Ibid., 138.

[29] Ibid., 139.

[30] Ulrich Hoffmann, *Arbeit an der Literatur: Zur Mythizität der Artusromane Hartmanns von Aue*. Beiträge zu einer kulturwissenschaftlichen Mediävistik, 2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012), summarizes many different critical contributions to the concept of myth in medieval literature, see his introduction and the first three chapters, but he never exactly explains what he really means by myth and why it would be important to utilize this notion for the interpretation of literary texts. See my review in *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 74 (2015): 256–7.

[31] Ernst Cassirer, *Vom Mythos des Staates* (Zürich: Artemis, 1949), 106. See also Armin Schulz, *Erzähltheorie in mediävistischer Perspektive: Studienausgabe*. 2nd rev. ed. by Manuel Braun, Alexandra Dunkel, and Jan-Dirk Müller (2012; Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 306–8.

annals, encyclopaedias, lexica, histories of art, etc. Cultural historians do not only analyse the past, they also contribute in a significant manner to the way how we today view the past and hence reach a point of self-identity vis-à-vis that very past in its profound power to shape us all.[32]

Charlemagne as an Iconic Myth

A good indicator for the mythical status of Charlemagne is the important political prize given every year to a major politician in recognition of his or her contributions to the further development of the European Union, granted by the city of Aachen. This prize carries the name of Charlemagne because he created the first unified empire north of the Alps, an empire which the European Union is striving to imitate to some extent, though now within the framework of democracy and an open, social market basis.[33] On the official webpage for this award, we read: "The prize is named for Charlemagne, the Franconian king revered by his contemporaries as the 'Father of Europe'. The Town Hall, built on the foundations of the assembly hall of Charlemagne's palace, became the site of the award ceremony. In this way, the prize creates a bridge between the past and the present."[34] Indeed, the myth lives on in a way which leads us to analyse in detail how medieval poets contributed to this myth-making process.

Much of early medieval history, art history, and history of religion is the result of Charlemagne's efforts as a ruler, and we still can find numerous architectural artefacts from his time, whether in France, Spain, Belgium, or in Germany. The Christianization of early medieval Europe owes much to the king's/emperor's endeavours to bring Anglo-Saxon missionaries to the lands today comprising Germany. The education system developed profoundly after Charlemagne had called in the scholar Alcuin from York and subsequently a whole series of other intellectuals to serve in his administration.[35] This laid the foundation for what we call today the Carolingian Renaissance, since those individuals launched the

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[32] Albrecht Classen, "Memory as Cultural Identity: Literary Historians as Guardians of Culture and Intellectual Memory," *Studia Neophilologica* 87 (2015): 1–16.

[33] See, for instance, M. Pape, "The Worship of Charlemagne at Two Crucial Turning Points of the New German History," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 120 (2000): 138–81; *EU – quo vadis?: Verleihung des Internationalen Karlspreises zu Aachen 2013 an Dalia Grybauskaitè*, ed. Olaf Müller (Aachen: Einhard, 2013).

[34] http://www.karlspreis.de/en/home.html (last accessed on July 25, 2014).

[35] Albrecht Classen, "Alkuin und Hrabanus Maurus: Zwei Gelehrte der Karolingischen Renaissance," *Künstler, Dichter, Gelehrte*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich. Mittelalter-Mythen, 4 (St. Gall: UVK, 2005), 805–24; see also the contributions to *Karl der Große und seine Gelehrten: zum 1200. Todesjahr Alkuins († 804): Katalog zur Ausstellung in der Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen (22. Dezember 2003–14. November 2004)*, ed. Ernst Tremp, Karl Schmukl, and Theres Flury (St. Gallen: Verlag am Klosterhof, 2014).

establishment of monasteries, hence schools, hence literature, music, the visual arts, science, medicine, and theology.[36] The military accomplishments of this mighty ruler make up a very long list of triumphs, extending the Frankish empire to the far north in Frisia and to the far east in present-day Hungary where Charlemagne defeated the Avars, the predecessors of the Magyars who settled in the Carpathian Basin only in the late tenth century. He could even establish Frankish control over the Ebro valley in northern Spain, and he succeeded in resisting, or rather, pushing back the Arab forces who came north from the Iberian Peninsula.

Charlemagne's contemporaries were full of praise for the ruler, and subsequent centuries continued with that tradition, although in the late Middle Ages the king and later emperor could also be viewed in rather negative terms, when he was occasionally portrayed as a weak and indecisive personality. Nevertheless, throughout time his reputation could only grow, so it makes good sense to identify Charlemagne as a mythical figure, serving the next generations within his dynasty as an idealized role model of great influence.[37] If we want to understand the basic ingredients and the crucial framework that made possible the continuity of European traditions and cultures since the early Middle Ages, we need to engage as closely as possible with Charlemagne once again; not because we are in need of an identification figure or a glorious role model from the past, but because his impact on European cultural and political history is remains overarching.[38]

We still have to recognize him as a historical personality, and historians have examined all kinds of aspects determining his life and rule. Charlemagne also holds an important role in the history of art, especially if we think of the many buildings and art works created on his behalf;[39] later, most iconically, in

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[36] See, for instance, Robert Ralph Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries: From Carolingian Age to the End of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper, 1964); Madge M. Hildebrandt, *The External School in Carolingian Society*. Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, 1 (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: Brill, 1992); Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 67–87.

[37] See the contributions to *Karl der Große und das Erbe der Kulturen*, ed. Franz-Reiner Erkens. Akten des 8. Symposiums des Mediävistenverbandes leipzig 15.–18. März 1999 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001).

[38] See the contributions to *Praktiken europäischer Traditionsbildung im Mittelalter: Wissen – Literatur – Mythos*, ed. Manfred Eickelmann and Udo Friedrich (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013).

[39] Wolfgang Braunfels, *Die Welt der Karolinger und ihre Kunst*. Kulturgeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen (Munich: G. D. W. Callwey, 1968); Wilhelm Messerer, *Karolingische Kunst*. Dumont Dokumente. Reihe Kunstgeschichte/Wissenschaft (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1973); Rosamond McKitterick, *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*

the sixteenth century Albrecht Dürer was commissioned by the city council of Nuremberg in 1510 to create a portrait of this Frankish emperor, along with a portrait of Emperor Sigismund, for the hospital of the Holy Spirit in Nuremberg, which then was to serve as a tool in the propaganda war supporting the position of that imperial city against the efforts by Emperor Maximilian I to transfer the imperial jewels from Nuremberg to Vienna, the capital of the Habsburg dynasty.[40] Sigismund had stipulated in 1424 that the imperial jewels were to be deposited for good in Nuremberg, so Dürer's two portraits asserted that this city had an older and more authoritative claim on those jewels extending to the founder of the Carolingian Empire. Dürer represented Charlemagne as a thoughtful, considerate, and dignified personality, as a leader of his people who wears the imperial crown and holds the imperial sword and orb. This image is housed today in the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* in Berlin, while an earlier version is held in the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* in Nuremberg.[41]

A major exhibition in Aachen in 2014 documented the enormous impact which Charlemagne had on his people, his lands, the contemporary culture, and education.[42] Apart from Aachen, numerous other cities in Germany and Austria celebrated the twelve hundredth anniversary in 2014; similar commemorations were held in other countries since Charlemagne had, of course, a huge influence on France, Spain, Italy, and elsewhere. The same intensive interest in Charlemagne could be discovered in other European countries, as documented by the meeting of the *International Medieval Society* in Paris, June 26–28, 2014, dedicated to this monumental and mythical figure, "Charlemagne after Charlemagne."[43] But this is by far not everything happening today in historical

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(Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); *Siebenhundert-neunundneunzig, Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit: Karl der Grosse und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1999); Celia Martin Chazelle, The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era: Theology and Art of Christ's Passion (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Thomas F. X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

[40] For the court culture under Maximilian I, see the contributions to *Kaiser Maximilian I. (1459–1519) und die Hofkultur seiner Zeit*, ed. Sieglinde Hartmann and Freimut Löser. Jahrbuch der Oswald von Wolkenstein-Gesellschaft, 17 (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2009).

[41] Matthias Ehlert, "Unser Titelbild," *Weltkunst: Das Kunstmagazin der Zeit* 89 (July 2014): 2.

[42] Sebastian Preuss, "Hunger nach Kultur," *Weltkunst: Das Kunstmagazin der Zeit* 89 (July 2014): 22–31; Fedja Anzelewsky, *Dürer: Werk und Wirkung* (Suttgart: Electa/Klett-Cotta, 1980), 153.

[43] For the full program, see http://www.ims-paris.org/Symposium%202014/Program.pdf. For the abstracts, see http://www.ims-paris.org/Symposium%202014/Abstracts_R%E9sum%E9s%20de%20communication%20A4.pdf (both last accessed on Oct. 15, 2014).

and literary research with regards to this mighty ruler, a daunting character from the early Middle Ages who succeeded, almost single-handedly, to create a glorious history of himself which artists, poets, and chroniclers eagerly picked up and handed on to posterity.

The Medieval Creation of the Charlemagne Myth

Both Einhard, who composed his highly popular biography of Charlemagne shortly after the latter's death and Notker der Stammler, who completed his *Gesta Karoli Magni* in ca. 855 in St. Gall, laid the foundation for a predominantly positive image of this ruler, determined by many legendary anecdotes about the emperor's personal care of and dedication to the well-being of his country, which has basically survived until today despite some critical works produced by clerics who viewed Charlemagne more negatively.[44] Notker in particular pursued the strategy of compiling anecdotes and exemplary tales about this ruler, apparently deliberately regardless of chronology.[45] Emperor Otto III searched for Charlemagne's grave in the Palatine Chapel at Aix-la-Chapelle, or Aachen, and had it opened on the feast of Pentecost in the year 1000 in order to inspect the body of his predecessor and thus to improve his own political status through a personal association with the long deceased emperor.[46] According to the biographers Thietmar of Merseburg (975–1018), Otto of Lomello (fl. ca. 1020–1030), and Adémar de Chabannes (ca. 988–1034), the emperor was divinely directed to find the right spot (*anastasis*), which associated him with a by then saintly figure, the founder of the Carolingian empire, who was in turn associated with relics of Christ's Passion.[47]

If we were to pursue the goal of creating a broad canvas of all works that contributed to the dissemination of the myth surrounding Charlemagne, we would have to consult here also the *Pseudo-Turpin* from ca. 1130/40, the *Descriptio qualiter Karolus magnus clavum et Coronam domini a Constantinopoli Aquisgrani detulerit qualiterque Karlus calvus hec ad sanctum*

[44] Wolfram von den Steinen, *Notker der Dichter und seine geistige Welt* (Bern: Francke, 1948); Hans-Werner Goetz, *Strukturen der spätkarolingischen Epoche im Spiegel der Vorstellungen eines zeitgenössischen Mönchs: Eine Interpretation der "gesta Karoli" Notkers von Sankt Gallen* (Bonn: Habelt, 1981); Lars M. Hageneier, *Jenseits der Topik: die karolingische Herrscherbiographie*. Historische Studien, 483 (Husum: Matthiesen, 2003).

[45] Lars Hageneier, *Jenseits der Topik: Die karolingische Herrscherbiographie*. Historische Studien, 483 (Husum: Matthiesen, 2004); Wilfried Hartmann, "Das Bild Karls des Großen bei Notker," *Karlsbilder in Kunst, Literatur und Wissenschaft* (2015), 15–28.

[46] Robert Folz, *Le souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l'empire germanique médiévale*. Publications de l'Université de Dijon, VII (Geneva: Slatkine, 1973).

[47] Stephen G. Nichols, Jr., *Romanesque Signs: Early Medieval Narrative and Iconography* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 66–94.

Dionysium retulerit (second half of the eleventh century), and the *De sanctitate meritorum et gloria miraculorum beati Karoli Magni ad honorem et laudem nominis dei* (that is, the Aachen Vita; composed shortly after Charlemagne's canonization in 1169).[48]

Little wonder that this mythic veneration of Charlemagne in the Latin, clerical literature also transferred into late medieval legal literature, where he was commonly identified as the originator of the earliest and hence best laws, as specified by the authors of the *Sachsenspiegel* (ca. 1235; Saxons' Mirror) and the *Schwabenspiegel* (ca. 1275; Swabians' Mirror). In the second prologue of the former law book we read about the laws given first by the prophets, then by "the Christian kings, Constantine and Charlemagne . . ."[49] In Book I we also learn of the differences between the laws established by Charlemagne and the laws followed by the Saxons (74), but this only underscores how much the Carolingian ruler was admired as a major lawmaker.

The anonymous author of the *Schwabenspiegel* similarly refers to Charlemagne as the prime law giver, as a leader of his people who knew how to judge fairly based on divine laws. The judicial rules and regulations listed here are said to derive from the Carolingian law.[50] The formula, in Low German, clearly spells it out: "vnde van Karles rechte her komen sint" (and which [referring to the laws] have come down from Charles's laws).[51] This reference then motivates the writer to recount the basic historical events surrounding Charles who brought his law to the Swabians after he had defeated the Romans. The latter had attacked his brother, Pope Leo and had blinded him in both eyes, whereupon Charles defeated them militarily and assumed the throne. We also hear of the honour which Charles had bestowed upon the Swabians by granting them the privilege of fighting in the front row of any of the emperor's campaigns.[52] The author also specifies that Charlemagne had created a political system according to which the German princes (Electors) were entitled to elect

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[48] Karl-Ernst Geith, "Karl der Große," *Herrscher, Helden, Heilige*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich. Mittelalter Mythen, 1 (St. Gall: UVK. Fachverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 1996), 87–100, at 90–91.

[49] *The Saxon Mirror: A Sachsenspiegel of the Fourteenth* Century, trans. by Maria Dobozy. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 67.

[50] *Der Schwabenspiegel*, übertragen in heutiges Deutsch mit Illustrationen aus alten Handschriften by Harald Rainer Derschka (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002), Ib, 24.

[51] *Schwabenspiegel: Kurzform. Mitteldeutsch-niederdeutsche Handschriften*, ed. Rudolf Grosse. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Fontes Iuris Germanici Antiqui, NS, V (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1964), 100v, 45.

[52] *Schwabenspiegel: Kurzform*, 109r–109v, 63. See also *Schwabenspiegel: Kurzform. I. Landrecht, II. Lehnrecht*, ed. Karl August Eckhardt. 2nd rev. ed. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Fontes Iuris Germanici Antiqui, NS, IV, I and II (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1981), 32, 80–81.

the king, who then would sit on the throne in Aachen. Once he had been anointed by the pope, he would enjoy the rank of emperor: "so hat her des riches gewalt vnde keyserlichen namen" (138r, p. 117; then he wields authority over the empire and bears the name of emperor).[53]

These historical references, idealizing the founder of the Carolingian empire, find rich parallels even in poetic texts in which legal and historical aspects matter, such as in Konrad von Würzburg's *Schwanritter* (late thirteenth century) and the song in the tradition of the *Meistersinger*, "Von keiser Karls recht (printed in 1493).[54] Each time Charlemagne is identified as the avenger of injustice and violence, especially when it was committed against defenceless courtly ladies. Konrad in particular describes how the ruler arrives to help the Duchess of Brabant, widow of Gottfried the Conqueror of Jerusalem (Godfrey), against the attacks by her brother-in-law, the Duke of Saxony.

The narrator characterizes Charlemagne as a kind of Roman ruler: "rœmscher voget" (43; Roman governor). He is not, however, concerned with the military operation; rather he identifies Charlemagne as the universal judge who performs his task as every good ruler is supposed to do (49), inviting everyone to come to his court in Nijmegen and raise their issues, if necessary.[55] Indeed, the duchess identifies him as a model of just ruler: "sît iu nie keiser wart gelîch / ûf erden an gerehtekeit" (304–05; since there has never been an emperor here on earth equal to you in terms of justice).

Emperor Charles IV (1346–1378), who had originally carried the name 'Wenzel' or 'Wenceslas,' directly associated himself with Charlemagne and had his own chronicler Johannes von Marignola create an immediate dynastic connection with the Carolingians. In fact, Johannes identified Charles IV as the resurrected Charlemagne: "in solio romani imperii resurgeret serenissimus Karolus imperator" (The most worthy Emperor Charles rose to power in the whole Roman Empire).[56]

Translatio imperii and Charlemagne

To illustrate how the myth-making process worked and to embark on our first investigation, let us reflect on the verse novella *Mauritius von Craûn* where we

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[53] Not all subsequent copies or adaptations of the *Schwabenspiegel* include references to Charlemagne; see, for instance, *Der Schwabenspiegel aus Kaschau*, ed. Jörg Meier and Ilpo Tapani Piirainen. Beiträge zur Editionsphilologie, Editionen und Materialien, 1 (Berlin: Weidler Buchverlag, 2000).

[54] Geith, "Karl der Große," 96–7.

[55] Konrad von Würzburg, *Kleinere Dichtungen*, ed. Edward Schröder, vol. II (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1925); Hartmut Kokott, *Konrad von Würzburg: Ein Autor zwischen Auftrag und Autonomie* (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 1989), 17–31.

[56] Geith, "Karl der Große," 100.

discover a brief but significant reference to Charlemagne as the founder of European knighthood and chivalry. It might not be possible to trace the specific source used by the anonymous poet, since the myth of Charlemagne was already so well known all over Europe and in particular in Germany.[57] The message contained in this novella proves to be so symptomatic of the universal phenomenon that is going into some details here.

The narrative has survived only in one manuscript, the Ambraser Heldenbuch (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vind. Ser. nov. 2663, fol. 2va–5vc), which the Bozen (today in Italian: Bolzano) toll officer Hans Ried copied on behalf of Emperor Maximilian I between 1504 and 1515. However, the original text dates to the first half of the thirteenth century and was specifically predicated on a historical perspective involving Charlemagne as a glorious icon of the past.[58]

The central plot of this narrative has little to do with the prologue in which we hear about the historical development of knighthood from ancient times to the author's present. However, there are good reasons to interpret the failed love story of Mauritius in light of the message contained in the prologue, since the poet reflected rather sarcastically on the decline of courtly culture.[59]

The poet emphasizes right from the start that knighthood had its origin in the ancient Greek world but was then destroyed in its ethical foundation due to the Trojan War (12–48, et passim). Once Hector had fallen, his leadership was sorely missed, which then led to the drastic decline of knighthood altogether. Cowardice and lack of honour set in, which both accelerated the disappearance of this ideal (77ff.). Subsequently, in world-historical terms, Rome rose in power and resumed the principles of knighthood, primarily promoted by Julius Cesar, who welcomed it with open arms (116ff.). However, history is not necessarily progressive, and every empire at one point seems to collapse again, as it also happened in Rome once the Emperor Nero had

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[57] Ruth Harvey, *Moriz von Craûn and the Chivalric World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 71–2, et passim.

[58] *Mauritius von Craûn*, ed. Heimo Reinitzer. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 113 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000); see also *Mariz von Craûn: Mittelhochdeutsche / Neuhochdeutsch*. Mittelhochdeutscher Text nach der Ausgabe von Ulrich Pretzel. Übersetzung, Kommentar und Nachwort von Albrecht Classen (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. 1992); *Mauricius von Craûn: Mittelhochdeutsche / Neuhochdeutsch*. Nach dem Text von Edward Schröder herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert von Dorothea Klein (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1999).

[59] Albrecht Classen, "*Mauritius von Craûn* and Otto von Freising's *The Two Cities*: 12th- and 13th-Century Scepticism about Historical Progress and the Metaphor of the Ship," *German Quarterly* 79.1 (2006): 28–49; idem, "Irony in Medieval and Early Modern German Literature (Nibelungenlied, Mauritius von Craûn, Johannes von Tepl's Ackermann): The Encounter of the Menschlich-Allzumenschlich in a Medieval Context," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 113.2 (2014): 184–205.

assumed the throne (133ff.). The poet drastically lambasts Nero, who had, indeed, a very negative reputation throughout the Middle Ages, since he demonstrated, as the poet remarks, signs of perversity, homosexuality, and insanity. As soon as Rome had burned down and countless good people had been killed, knighthood had to leave and look for a new home, which it then found in the Carolingian empire. However, even there things did not look too good for this institution until Charlemagne himself surfaced: "biz aber Karl sider mit kraft / begunde betwingen diu lant" (240–41; until Charles with his power began to conquer the land). The two famous figures, Olivier and Roland, well known from the *Rolandslied* by the Priest Konrad (ca. 1170), chose knighthood as their companions (242–3). Once the other warriors observed how much honour these two gained thereby, they followed their model, which increased their reputation altogether (247–9).

Finally, the narrator comments that every country where the value system of knighthood was adopted strongly improved: "wan diu ir ritterschaft ist guot" (254; since its knighthood is good). Even though Charlemagne and his accomplishments are not specifically discussed here, he is identified as the ideal figure who understood the true value of knighthood as much as did Julius Cesar. The subsequent events involving Mauritius take place in the Carolingian empire, or rather, as we may assume, based on some historical background, somewhere in northwestern France, but the narrative itself uses the reference to Charlemagne and his country as the critical basis upon which the protagonist's behaviour and destiny has to be judged.

The poet does not return to his historical references, but the prologue itself sets a clear tone reflecting on the same tradition, idealizing Charlemagne as a glorious ruler of highest ethical standards. Only when a country is headed by such an ideal leader, can there be hope for progress and power, prosperity and happiness. True knighthood, as personified especially by Charlemagne and his paladins, is characterized by extreme generosity, the willingness to risk one's life for others in need, a drive to pursue the highest ideals in human existence (*gloria* and *honor*), and strict respect for the other gender, which also involves the concept of service in love.[60] When we investigate later verse romances, such as Rudolf von Ems's *Der guote Gêrhart* (ca. 1220–1240), which is only loosely based on a historical framework predicated on the time of Emperor Otto I (936–973), we are also told of Charlemagne as a crucial role model.[61] Otto's efforts to be a good Christian are not as well received by God

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[60] Hubertus Fischer, *Ritter, Schiff und Dame: Mauritius von Craûn: Text und Kontext*. Beiträge zur älteren Literaturgeschichte (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2006), 45–51.
[61] Rudolf von Ems, *Der quote Gêrhart*, ed. John A. Asher. 2nd rev. ed. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 56 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1971); cf. Xenia von Ertzdorff, *Rudolf von Ems:*

as those of Gerhard, although he tries as much as he can to be loved by God and the people, aiming for the highest royal virtues. So he tries to model his life after the rules and examples set by Charlemagne: "begunde minnen sêre / nâch der gerlêrten lêre / die Karlen hôhiu wîsheit / ûf daz gerihte hât geleit" (101–04; he strongly endeavoured to follow the learned teachings which Charles in his deep wisdom had formulated for the court). Of course, the Good Gerhard proves to be a superior individual, as we learn through his life story which he relates to the emperor, that is, to us, but for our purposes it still matters critically how much for Otto the model set up by the Frankish ruler proves to be the ultimate benchmark for the best possible kingship.

The Historical Figure as an Icon

Literary historians and historians have consistently confirmed the greatness of Charlemagne and hence also the myth surrounding Charlemagne. In his reign of nearly forty-six years, he almost doubled the expanse of the empire as he had inherited it; he pushed further and consolidated the Christianization of western and central Europe; he established a solid and comprehensive bureaucratic and administrative structure, and he supported and promoted the development of an advanced and sophisticated literature and of outstanding art works. Charlemagne, therefore, left a deep and lasting impression on Europe both in political and in cultural terms since he unified many different countries under his autocratic rule and launched many governmental organizations and movements that had a lasting impact. Still today, every seventh year, streams of pilgrims travel to Aachen to admire and pray to the reliquary in the St. Mary's church there. But despite countless official documents and Einhard's biography of Charlemagne, his true personality remains very elusive. Little wonder that poets had much freedom throughout the centuries to manipulate the ever-growing myth of this Frankish ruler.[62] Even today fantasies filled with fragmentary but mostly shining features of this great person's life and accomplishments can be found all over Europe.[63]

Untersuchungen zum höfischen Roman im 13. Jahrhundert (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1967), 160–92.

[62] Karin Schneider-Ferber, *Karl der Grosse: Der mächtigste Herrscher des Mittelalters* (Darmstadt: Konrad Theiss/Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2013), 6–13.

[63] For a very curious example of how Charles's memory lives on, see Fabienne Loodts and Saskia Petermann, *Karl der Große: Die ganze Wahrheit* (Aachen: wesentlich. verlag, 2014). This is a somewhat puzzling combination of historical reflections and straightforward biographical information in comics and yet at the same time published in the form of a regular book.

Einhard's Biography

Einhard's biography certainly set the tone and determined the framework of all later writings about Charlemagne.[64] Einhard insists he was an eye-witness and that it was important for him to record everything he knew about: "rather than to allow the illustrious life of the greatest king of the age and his famous deeds, unmatched by his contemporaries, to disappear forever into forgetfulness."[65] He traces his life from his ancestors to the time when he was crowned king, which then was followed by decades of fighting wars against various peoples all over Europe. Einhard subsequently outlines Charles's conquests, his foreign relations, his public works, his private life, conspiracies against him, dress, habits, studies, piety, generosity, his coronation as emperor, his reforms, and finally his death.

Beginning with remarks about his rise to the rank of king, Einhard plainly states that following King Pepin, "In solemn assembly the Franks appointed them [Charles and Carloman] kings on condition that they share the realm equally, Charles ruling the part which had belonged to their father Pepin" (39). Soon enough, however, conflicts erupted between the two brothers, until Carloman died and Charles rose to become the sole king over the Franks (41). Then Charles first waged a war in Aquitaine, then in Lombardy, each time triumphing over his opponents and taking over their lands as the suzerain. The war with the Saxons was one of the most difficult for Charles, since though he managed to subdue them, they only rose up against him soon enough. Einhard spends considerable time on discussing those wars, but the one that will later matter the most for us, against the Basques, ended in a failure for the king:

> In this encounter the Basques had the advantage of light weapons and a
> favourable terrain; the Franks on the hand were hampered by their heavy

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[64] Matthias M. Tischler, *Einharts "Vita Karoli": Studien zur Entstehung, Überlieferung und Rezeption*. Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 48 (Hanover: Hahn, 2001).

[65] Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*. With a new English trans., intro., and notes by Evelyn Scherabon Firchow and Edwin H. Zeydel (Coral Gables, Fl: University of Miami Press, 1972), 31. For an online version of the Latin original, see http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/ein.html (last accessed Sept. 28, 2014). Ironically, the translators included as a frontispiece the sculpture of a king on horseback who was traditionally associated with Charlemagne; that is no longer accepted; see above. For a print version of the Latin original, see *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. G. H. Pertz, ed. Georg Waitz. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum ex Monumentis Germaniae historicis separatim recusi (1911; Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1965). For an older, but still valuable English translation, online, see http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/einhard.asp (last accessed Sept. 28, 2014). For the rich manuscript tradition from the late ninth through the sixteenth century, see Matthias M. Tischler, *Einharts "Vita Karoli": Studien zur Entstehung, Überlieferung und Rezeption*. Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 48.1–2 (Hanover: Hahn, 2001).

equipment and the unevenness of the battle ground. Ekkehard, the royal steward, Anshelm, the count of the Palace, and Roland, the margrave of Brittany, as well as many others were killed in the engagement. Unfortunately, the incident could not be avenged since the enemies disappeared without a trace after the attack and there were no signs where they might be found. (55)

Apart from portraying Charles as a master war general with extraordinary logistic skills, Einhard also emphasizes the king's outstanding diplomacy through which he extended his friendship with other kings from far and wide, such as Galicia and Asturias, Scotland, and even Persia (69).[66] We even hear that the "three emperors of Constantinople, Nicephorus, Michael, and Leo, also sought Charles' friendship and alliance and sent numerous legations to his court" (71). When Einhard turns to Charles's private life, he lists many details and names, goes into a fairly meticulous description of the king's physical appearance, habits, and preferences, and thus allows us to comprehend fairly well who this famous person really was; for instance: "he rode and hunted a great deal. . . . Charles was also fond of the steam of natural hot springs. He swam a great deal and it so well that no one could compete with him. This is why he built the palace in Aachen and spent there the last years of his life without interruption until he died" (87).

We note that the author simply provides the bare-bone features of an ordinary biography of an early medieval king, who achieved, however, the most extraordinary in his life of establishing a whole empire covering major parts of continental Europe. There is little reason to question the essential aspects, though there might be some embellishment here and there, given the overarching tendency to glorify the ruler and to create a biographical memorial for all of posterity. But Einhard's account gains more relevance for us when he turns to the time when Charles was crowned emperor. The later poets obviously picked up much material from those events, as we read, for instance:

The Romans had forced Pope Leo, on whom they had inflicted various injuries, like tearing out his eyes and cutting out his tongue, to beg for the king's assistance. Charles therefore went to Rome to put order into the confused situation and reestablish the status of the Church. This took the whole winter. It was on this occasion that he accepted the titles of Emperor and Augustus, which at first he disliked so much that he said he

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[66] Richard Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent: Christianity and Islam from Mohamad to the Reformation* (London: Penguin, 2002), chap. 2; Achim Thomas Hack, *Abul Abaz: zur Biographie eines Elefanten* (Badenweiler: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Bachmann, 2011).

> would never have entered the church even on this highest of holy days if
> he had beforehand realized the intentions of the Pope. (99)

But beyond those few elements the discrepancy between Einhard's biography and the poetic works proves to be remarkable.[67] Medieval German poets pursued their own, very particular perspectives in their presentation of Charlemagne and thereby set up a literary tradition that was to last for hundreds of years.

Charlemagne in the Medieval Context: The Art-Historical Evidence
Once the myth of this emperor had been created it could be used for political identification, the idealization of the past, and nostalgia all over medieval Europe; the figure of Charlemagne became rather malleable and could be appropriated for many different purposes. Charlemagne also transformed into an iconic metaphor for many different purposes. Albrecht Dürer's famous painting from 1510, for instance, though created almost seven hundred years after the ruler's death, was only one of countless other visual representation of this famous Frankish emperor. Another is the sculpture of Charlemagne and the seven Imperial Electors (Cologne, Trier, Mainz, the Palatinate, Brandenburg, Saxony, and Bohemia) on the facade of the city hall of Bremen from 1405–1410, which was dramatically renovated and rebuilt between 1608 and 1612.[68] Charles is holding the imperial sword in his right hand and the imperial orb in his left, while the imperial crown rests on his head. His face is marked by a long and wavy beard. His long tunic is held together with a belt with a heavy buckle. The city council, under the leadership of the mayor Johann Hemeling the Younger, was obviously strongly concerned with demonstrating its pronounced position as a city within the empire and as a fairly new member of the Hanseatic League since 1385. The authors of the Bremen chronicle,

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[67] Here the specific interests of the historians deviate from those of literary scholars. See, for instance, Elke Goez, *Papsttum und Kaisertum im Mittelalter*. Geschichte kompakt (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009); Roland Pauler, *Karl der Große: Der Weg zur Kaiserkrönung* (Darmstadt: Primus-Verlag, 2009); Kay Peter Jankrift, *Artus ohne Tafelrunde: Herrscher des Mittelalters – Legenden und Wahrheit* (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2008); Max Kerner, *Karl der Große, Entschleierung eines Mythos* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2000).

[68] Konrad Elmshäuser, Hans-Christoph Hoffmann, and Hans-Joachim Manske, *Das Rathaus und der Roland auf dem Marktplatz in Bremen* (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 2002); Rolf Gramatzki, *Das Rathaus in Bremen: Versuch zu seiner Ikonologie* (Bremen: Hauschild, 1994), 40–43; Kristina Domanski and Doerte Friese, "Roland und Karl der Große am Rathaus in Bremen: Legitimation einer städtischen Oberschicht," *Karl der Große als vielberufener Vorfahr: Sein Bild in der Kunst der Fürsten, Kirchen und Städten*, ed. Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch. Schriften des Historischen Museums, 19 (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1994), 113–37.

Historia archiepiscoporum Bremensium, first Gerd Rinesberch (d. 1406) and Herbord Schene (d. 1414/1415), later Hemeling himself, refer to Charlemagne as the founder of the city of Bremen and emphasize that citizens of Bremen had participated in the First Crusade from 1096 to 1099 (a clear falsification). The model for this iconographic program was the assembly room for the city council, the "Lange Saal," today called "Hansasaal," which in the 1360s was decorated with sculptures depicting the electors and the biblical prophets—but not Charlemagne.[69]

In Nuremberg, busts of the four Evangelists, the seven electors, the allegorical figures of philosophy and the seven liberal arts, the four Church Fathers, the Nine Worthies, Moses and the seven prophets decorate the so-called "Schöne Brunnen" (Beautiful Fountain), built by Heinrich Beheim between 1385 and 1396 and located in the market square next to the Church of Saint Sebaldus. Charlemagne, as one of the Worthies, is portrayed here, facing the southeast, and standing next to King Arthur.[70] In his left hand he is holding the imperial orb, with the right hand he is holding a banner. The latter is decorated with three lilies and the imperial eagle. This is one of many such pictorial or sculptural representations of the Nine Worthies in Germany, such as in the City Hall in Cologne from ca. 1330.

In Bremen the cult surrounding this emperor almost knew no bounds. He was admired and worshipped as a saint from early on, as reflected by the *Regula Capituli S. Willehadi* (The Chapter Rules for Saint Willehadi) from the early fourteenth century. The calendar contained in the *Regula* marked especially the dates of January 28, the anniversary of Charles's death, and December 29, the anniversary of the canonization of Charles as a saint in 1165; this canonization was accepted by the Antipope Paschal III, but not by Pope Alexander III; since 1176 his designation as a blessed person has been tolerated, but Charles was never included into the *Martyrologium Romanum*.[71]

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[69] Domanski and Friese, "Roland und Karl der Große," 118.

[70] Johann Christoph Jakob Wilder, *Der schöne Brunnen zu Nürnberg: Andeutungen über seinen Kunstwerth, sowie über seine Geschichte*. 2nd ed. (Nuremberg: Riegel und Wießner, 1824); Ludwig Zintl, *Der Schöne Brunnen in Nürnberg und seine Figuren: Geschichte und Bedeutung eines Kunstwerkes* (Nuremberg: Hofmann, 1993); Ludwig Zintl, *Der Schöne Brunnen in Nürnberg und seine Figuren* (Nuremberg: Hofmann, 1993), 48–49. See also online at http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sch%C3%B6ner_Brunnen_%28N%C3%BCrnberg%29 (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2014).

[71] Ann Austin Latowsky, *The Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800–1229* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 183–214; Jace Stuckey, *Charlemagne: The Making of an Image, 1100–1300* ([Gainesville, FL]: University Press of Florida, 2006); idem, "Charlemagne as Crusader? Memory, Propaganda, and the Many Uses of Charlemagne's Legendary Expedition to Spain," *The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages: Power, Faith, and Crusade*, ed. Matthew Gabriel and Jace Stuckey. The New

In subsequent calendars for church festivals the same tradition continued: Charlemagne is identified as the founder of Bremen, and is praised for having granted important relics to the city, especially Charles's own silver cross, his coat, a bottle made of silver, and his gloves. This Frankish emperor was thus transformed into an integral component of the liturgy, treated as a saint. This has a long tradition, since the cult of Charlemagne began rapidly after his death, which was promoted by his biographer Einhard and others and later turned into a powerful political strategy to surround the future German kings and emperors with the desired aura, by their association with their great role model.[72]

In Bremen, Charlemagne also appears, next to Bishop Willehad, on the front panel of the shrine with relics dedicated to the saints Cosmas and Damian. He is shown wearing his crown and the imperial orb, symbolizing his role as the secular ruler. Below the crown we see a mitre, which represents his spiritual function as a bishop, while the long coat and the sword identify him as the general of his armies. Moreover, Charlemagne also appears as a wooden sculpture in the choir of the city council, completed in 1410, this time as a courtly ruler dressed according to the fashion of his time.

We must also not forget the huge figure of Roland, located in the market square of Bremen, erected in stone in 1404, replacing a wooden figure, portraying a young crusader knight, displaying his mighty sword Durendart, which an angel had brought to him to fight against the heathens on behalf of Charlemagne.[73] "Roland is shown as protector of the city: his legendary sword . . . is unsheathed, and his shield is emblazoned with the two-headed Imperial eagle."[74] His symbolic function consisted of publicizing the desire by the city to gain imperial freedom. Roland sculptures can be found in numerous other cities, such as Brandenburg, Halberstadt, Stendal, Quedlinburg, and Zerbst, all reflecting the same desire by late medieval cities to gain independence from local or territorial princes and to be subject only under the imperial government, enjoying the freedom to hold open markets and paying taxes only to the emperor; the one in Bremen seems to have been the oldest, and it was the first

Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 137–52.

[72] Scott B. Montgomery, "The Saint and the King. Relics, Reliquaries and Late Medieval Coronation in Aachen and Székesfehérvár," *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. by James Robinson and Lloyd de Beer with Anna Harnden. British Museum Research Publications, 195 (London: The British Museum Press 2014), 32–9. See also the contributions to *The Charlemagne Legend in Medieval Latin Texts*, ed. William J. Purkis and Matthew Gabriele (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming).

[73] Domanski and Friese, "Roland und Karl der Große," 127–30.

[74] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bremen_Roland (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2014).

free-standing sculpture in the entire Middle Ages.[75] Most of those sculptures, fifty-five of them known or recorded, of which twenty have survived, can be found east of the Elbe, in the lands of Brandenburg and Sachsen-Anhalt. Even though Roland is regularly presented alone, his role as paladin directly connected him with Charlemagne, who thus was a ubiquitous figure of greatest significance for the urban culture in the late Middle Ages, whether directly as a sculpture or painting or through an indirect representation.[76]

We can find many other traces of the universal admiration which Charlemagne enjoyed in many different social circles, countries, and cities. In Frankfurt a. M., for instance, the Vicar Heinrich von Wolkenburg, established a religious endowment dedicated to this emperor, insofar as he stipulated that candles were to be lit on January 28 in the Bartholomew Convent. The city received a great *Passional* (a collection of narratives talking about Christ's suffering and tortures), written in 1356, in which Charlemagne was praised above all, and since then the anniversary of Charlemagne's death has been celebrated every year. Frankfurt had found itself in a difficult political situation, having affiliated itself for too long with the Wittelsbach Emperor Louis the Bavarian and his unsuccessful successor, Count Günther von Schwarzburg, which had caused severe tensions with the newly elected Emperor Charles IV who had been crowned in 1346. Various attempts were made to amend the conflict, and by the mid-1350s a number of documents were produced that emphasized the close connection of the city or its ecclesiastic institutions with Charlemagne, which Charles IV openly honoured. The latter, in his famous Golden Bull of 1356, granted the privilege to the Bartholomew Cathedral that it would serve from then on as the site for the reading of the first mass for the newly elected king and for the swearing of the loyalty oaths by the electors. This privilege was granted in the memory of Charlemagne, and this reference to the Frankish ruler from then on became a standard strategy in countless political actions.

Many later confirmations of royal privileges were formulated with

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[75] Ad Storck, *Ansichten der Freien Hansestadt Bremen und ihrer Umgebungen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Wilmans 1822 (Facsimile edition: Bremen: Schünemann, 1977), 178–87; see also http://194.95.254.61/cgi-denk/getdoc.pl?DEF=/home/schwartz/daten/bremen&DATEN=/home/schwartz/daten/daten&THE=/home/schwartz/daten/idx&DOK_TPL=lfd_bremen_doc2.tpl&KEY=obj%2000000067 (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2014). Cf. also *Stadtrecht, Roland und Pranger: zur Rechtsgeschichte von Halberstadt, Goslar, Bremen und Städten der Mark Brandenburg*, ed. Dieter Pötschke. Harz-Forschungen: Forschungen und Quellen zur Geschichte des Harzgebietes, 14 (Berlin: Lukas-Verlag, 1999).
[76] Dietlinde Munzel-Everling, *Rolande: die europäischen Rolanddarstellungen und Rolandfiguren* (Dößel: Stekovics, 2005); http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_%28Statue%29 (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2014).

references to the saints Bartholomew and Charles. We also find a sculpture of Charlemagne in the portal to the south transept from ca. 1353, on the same level as Christ on the Cross, but outside of the tympanum. He holds a model of the church in his left hand and is thus identified as the founder and patron, matched with Bartholomew. Charlemagne was also presented in another sculpture attached to the so-called Galgentor (Gallows' Tower) on the west side of the city, now showing him as the founder of the Salvator Convent and as the city's patron, especially in the wake of the decision by Charles IV to select Frankfurt a. M. as the perennial site for all future elections of German kings, as formulated in the Golden Bull from 1356.[77]

Charlemagne was also often depicted in manuscript illustrations accompanying major poems dealing with the events surrounding Roland and his battle against the Muslims in the Valle de Roncesvalles, such as the Priest Konrad's *Rolandslied* or The Stricker's *Karl der Große*. At the same time, numerous world illustrated chronicles, such as that by Heinrich von München (Henry of Munich) and law books, such as Eike von Repgow's *Sachsenspiegel* (Saxons' Mirror) followed this model,[78] regularly including scenes with Charlemagne as a judge and ruler. But the iconographical presentation of the Frankish ruler in sculptures for public display underscores even further how much he was regarded as the most important historical authority to grant independence and freedom to cities and convents. We find art-historical references to the Charlemagne myth in numerous scenes showing Roland as his favourite paladin, such as at the portal of San Zeno in Verona and at the portal of the cathedral of Verona (all between 1120 and 1140), and in many medieval manuscript illustrations.[79] Images of Charlemagne can be found, especially in Frankfurt a. M., on coins (the gold guilder from 1429–1431), church bells (Carolus Bell, 1440, Bartholomew Bell, 1467)), monstrances (St. Bartholomew, 1498), stained glass windows (Refectorium, Carmelite Monastery, 1499), frescoes (1519), and elsewhere. He was obviously of timeless value for political purposes at many different sites throughout Germany, France, and elsewhere.[80]

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[77] Hans-Joachim Jacobs, "Das Bild Karls des Großen in der Stadt Frankfurt im 14. Jahrhundert," *Karl der Große als vielberufener Vorfahr: Sein Bild in der Kunst der Fürsten, Kirchen und Städten*, ed. Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch. Schriften des Historischen Museums, 19 (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1994), 63–86.

[78] Norbert H. Ott, "Reich und Stadt: Karl der Große in deutschsprachigen Bilderhandschriften," *Karl der Große als vielberufener Vorfahr: Sein Bild in der Kunst der Fürsten, Kirchen und Städten*, ed. Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch. Schriften des Historischen Museums, 19 (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1994), 87–111.

[79] Marianne Ott-Meimberg, "Karl, Roland, Guillaume," *Epische Stoffe des Mittelalters*, ed. Volker Mertens and Ulrich Müller. Kröners Taschenausgabe, 483 (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1984), 81–110; (105).

[80] Carmen Schenk and Burkhard Kling, "Karl der Große und Frankfurt: Der Aufbau einer

All these efforts were not simply the result of new political manoeuvres to utilize images of this mighty emperor for new purposes. Charlemagne himself had launched a massive building program all over his empire and left countless traces of himself everywhere, which indirectly but highly effectively laid the foundation for a timeless reception process resulting in the creation of a hugely mythical figure.[81] The reliquary in the form of a bust depicting the emperor, made before 1350 for Aachen Cathedral, probably commissioned by Emperor Charles IV on the occasion of his own coronation there on June 25, 1349, certainly a most auratic object, is another splendid example of the ways the myth surrounding the Frankish ruler extended far into the Middle Ages and beyond, since Charlemagne as a reference and authority figure bestowing new charisma on subsequent rulers far into the early modern age served so well for many different political and cultural purposes.[82]

At first sight rather curiously, Charlemagne does not figure at all in the row of royal and mythical figures surrounding the cenotaph of Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519) in the *Hofkirche* (Court Church) in Innsbruck, which he had originally commissioned for St. George's chapel in the Castle of Wiener Neustadt and which his nephew Emperor Ferdinand I (1503–1564), urged on by Wilhelm Schurff, the notary public in charge of Maximilian's last will, later transferred to the Hofkirche, which in turn had been erected on his behalf for this explicit purpose.[83] Maximilian had requested that both of his grandchildren, Ferdinand and Charles, ensure that the cenotaph would be completed, but Charles (as Charles V) never had time for or interest in it, so it

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Tradition und die Bildwerke vom Spätmittelalter bis zum 19. Jahrhundert," *Karl der Große als vielberufener Vorfahr: Sein Bild in der Kunst der Fürsten, Kirchen und Städten*, ed. Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch. Schriften des Historischen Museums, 19 (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1994), 139–73.

[81] Michael Imhof and Christoph Winterer, *Karl der Große*. See also the contributions to *Carlo Magno a Roma* (Rome: Direzione Generale dei Monumenti Musei e Gallerie Pontificie, Retablo Cultura Arte Immagine, 2001).

[82] Birgitta Falk, "Bildnisreliquiare: Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung der metallenen Kopf-, Büsten- und Halbfigurenreliquiare im Mittelalter," *Aachener Kunstblätter* 59 (1991–1993): 99–238; Georg Minkenberg, "Die Karlsbüste im Aachener Domschatz," *Aachen und Prag – Krönungsstädte Europas: Beiträge des Kulturvereins Aachen – Prag*, ed. Vera Blažek and Werner Gugat, vol. 1 (Prague: Libri Aquenses, 2004), 89–98; see also the contributions to and illustrations in *Kaiser Karl IV.: Staatsmann und Mäzen*, ed. Ferdinand Seibt (Munich: Prestel, 1978), 11, 34, 73, et passim. The online information in *Wikipedia* proves to be reliable and solid: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bust_of_Charlemagne (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2014).

[83] Erich Egg, *Die Hofkirche in Innsbruck: Das Grabdenkmal Kaiser Maximilians I. u. die Silberne Kapelle* (Innsbruck, Vienna, and Munich: Tyrolia Verlag, 1974); see also the contributions to *Hofkirche in Innsbruck: Grabmal Kaiser Maximilians I.*, ed. Erich Egg and Michael Oberer (Innsbruck: Kunstverlag Hofstetter, 1993).

was up to Ferdinand to assume the responsibility.[84]

As impressive as the entire ensemble proves to be – Emperor Maximilian is here presented standing on top of his tomb, while his most famous predecessors and family members surround this cenotaph – it was certainly not completed, not even after ten years of work because of high costs, difficult working conditions for the artists, and complicated negotiations between the various craftsmen and the government. Altogether, as we may conclude, the project had been too ambitious and went beyond all means and resources available, even at the royal court. Perhaps for that reason one of the central figures in this sombre cenotaph, initially scheduled to be constructed early on, is missing, Charlemagne.

The extant and completed sculptures represent members of Maximilian's family, then the famous crusader Godfrey of Bouillon, the Ostrogoth King Theoderic the Great, the first king of the Frankish kingdom, Clovis I, Charles the Bold and Philip the Good of Burgundy, Ferdinand II of Aragon, Joanna of Spain, and even the mythical King Arthur, but Charlemagne is, as mentioned, conspicuously absent.[85] Since there is elsewhere a shield standing in for him, like for other noteworthy royalties, we may assume that he also had been scheduled to be sculpted, as is evident if we consider the surviving documents regarding the creation process of that huge art project.[86]

There were supposed to be forty sculptures, thirty-four busts of Roman emperors, and one hundred and one smaller sculptures of so-called 'Habsburg saints' altogether, a most ambitious goal which was never realized.[87] Considering the importance of this Frankish emperor, also for the Habsburg Emperors ca. seven hundred years after his death in 814, one might expect Charlemagne to have been included from early on as one of the first figures to be cast in bronze. This, however, is not the case at all, although Maximilian had diligently searched for historical models for portraits of his earlier family

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[84] Oberhammer, *Die Bronzestandbilder* (1935), 31–2.

[85] Ursula Schulze, "Dietrich von Bern und König Artus – Maximilian / Theuerdank: Ein verändertes Heldenbild und die intermediale Kohärenz des Buches," *Kaiser Maximilian I. (1459–1519)* (see note 33), 23–33; she does not engage with the role of Charlemagne for Maximilian, however.

[86] Larry Silver, *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); for a very helpful overview and images, see online at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hofkirche,_Innsbruck; or the German version: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grabmal_Kaiser_Maximilians_I. (last accessed on Aug. 28, 2015).

[87] Christopher S. Wood, "Maximilian I. als Archäologe," *Maximilians Ruhmeswerk: Künste und Wissenschaften im Umkreis Kaiser Maximilians I.*, ed. Jan-Dirk Müller and Hans-Joachim Ziegeler. Frühe Neuzeit, 190 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 131–84; here 162–3. See esp. note 119 with the relevant research literature on this cenotaph.

members. [88] In fact, his own original design had certainly included Charlemagne since he had stipulated explicitly in his final written arrangements regarding the positioning of the future sculpture that the one for Charlemagne was to be placed centrally in the front.[89] After all, he regarded all the historical and mythical figures from the past as his own predecessors within his dynasty which could allegedly be traced back to Roman times.[90]

In fact, as Anuschka Tischer now observes, the reference to Charlemagne served Maximilian exceedingly well to strengthen the support of the imperial estates against France, especially when the French King Charles VIII had staged a military campaign in Italy in 1494 which seemed to threaten the traditional form of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire. Maximilian feared, or at least argued publicly, that Charles VIII might claim the imperial throne since he had a direct family line back to Charlemagne. The French king, however, though he went to Rome, never asked for the imperial crown, despite the suggestion of the Florentine poet Ugolino Verino in a panegyric epic poem; Charles VIII only tried to claim his inheritance of the kingdom of Naples, and organize a military campaign against the Turks. Charles VIII was not successful at all and had to return to France quickly, but Maximilian's fear was real, hence his insistent emphasis on his own family ties with Charlemagne.[91]

As the archival documents confirm, the entire effort to create this huge cenotaph was badly hampered especially by personal problems in the life of the main artist and craftsman, Gilg Sesselschreiber, and his family, all working for this autodidact in the art of bronze sculptures.[92] Both Maximilian and Sesselschreiber collaborated in projecting the general plan for the ensemble, and they worked out together the details regarding the historical figures and fictional individuals from the early Middle Ages, with a focus on the family of the Habsburgs.

Records from April 2, 1549 tell us that there had been very specific plans to create a sculpture of Charlemagne right after the one depicting Clovis, the first Christian king of the Franks. A draft image had already been created and was included in the "Statuenzeichnungen," today kept in the

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[88] Wood, "Maximilian I als Archäologe" (2015), 163.

[89] Vinzenz Oberhammer, *Die Bronzestandbilder am Grabmal Maximilians I.* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia Verlag, 1935), 28.

[90] Oberhammer, *Die Bronzestandbilder* (1935), 15. Charlemagne was also included in the designs drawn by the Augusburg painter Christoph Amberger, today in the *Wiener Nationalbibliothek*, codex 8027, fol. 7; here as ill. 102. The emperor is shown in his youthful stage, facing the viewer but looking to his right. His splendid shield is resting on his left.

[91] Anuschka Tischer, "Karl der Große als politisches Argument in der Frühen Neuzeit," *Karlsbilder in Kunst, Literatur und Wissenschaft* (2015), 211–23.

[92] Egg, *Die Hofkirche in Innsbruck*, 22–31.

Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna,[93] but the bronze artist Gregor Löffler in Augsburg needed more time, and only in 1550 had he finally completed the sculpture of Clovis. Then in early 1551 Löffler's woodcutter, or carver, Veit Arnberger died, slowing down the process even further. Apparently, however, Arnberger had already completed his mould. There was some dispute among the government officials as to whether the sculpture of Charlemagne really should be poured in bronze and hence be included in the design, since Maximilian's family was really a bit too far away from that Frankish ruler, but in September 1560 Emperor Ferdinand issued the order to cast the image of Charlemagne after all, whereupon Löffler received the necessary metal from Innsbruck. However, Löffler died in 1565, and was followed by his son Hans Christoph, who made several comments in his letter to the government in December 1568 that indicate that the sculpture of Charlemagne was ready, but that it had not yet been transported to Innsbruck.

Vinzenz Oberhammer speculates that possibly the sculpture might have been damaged, or that it did not conform to the desired quality; at any rate, Charlemagne never figured in the Innsbruck court church; it is clear, however, that this was not due to any disinclination to have him included in this famous ensemble.[94]

For our purposes this proves to be rather unfortunate because this monumental art project can be located stylistically between the late Gothic period and the Renaissance, especially as there are no obvious efforts to idealize any of the figures aesthetically; these often seem to be rather earth-bound and do not correspond to classical models in antiquity.[95] While Charlemagne appears depicted in Maximilian's *Triumphbogen* printed 1526,[96] six years after the emperor's death, it was apparently only due to unfortunate circumstances during the reign of Maximilian's successor, Emperor Ferdinand that the Carolingian ruler did not make it into the ensemble of sculptures.

Pilgrimage Writers and Charlemagne
Charlemagne was also well known among the wider population throughout the

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[93] Oberhammer, *Die Bronzestandbilder*, 45, ill. 13. We see Charles standing in a similar pose as most other rulers, holding his sword in the left hand, the scepter in the right hand. He is crowned and has a heavy armor on. His helmet is placed on the floor between his feet.

[94] Oberhammer, *Die Bronzestandbilder*, 128–33.

[95] Egg, *Die Hofkirche in Innsbruck*, 30–31.

[96] Sven Lüken, "Kaiser Maximilian I. und seine Ehrenpforte," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 61 (1998): 449–90; Mathias F. Müller, "Der Ehrenbogen Kaiser Maximilians I.: Stil und Inhalt," *Unser Neustadt (Blätter des Wiener Neustädter Denkmalschutzvereines)* 55.1–2 (2011): 1–11. Oberhammer, *Die Bronzestandbilder*, 16, offers a black and white photo of the relevant passage in the *Triumphbogen*, today kept in the *Albertina* in Vienna.

Middle Ages, as the intriguing travelogue, or pilgrimage account by the Halle Alderman Hans von Waltheym (ca. 1422–ca. 1479) confirms. He travelled in 1474 from Halle to Provence in order to visit numerous religious sites, especially Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume with its relics of Maria Magdalena, and returned the next year.[97] Waltheym took his time to enjoy the various visits, baths, social contacts, and excursions to touristic sites, but his focus rested on the goal of his pilgrimage. Nevertheless, when he visited the monastery (Abbey) of Reichenau on an island in the Lake Constance, he was deeply impressed by a huge emerald which the Arab ruler Harun-ar-Rashid (d. 809) had sent as a gift to Charlemagne, who then deposited it in this monastery. In this context we are told that the Frankish king had brought Christianity to the Saxons and that his nephew was called Roland (60).

At a later point, reflecting on the special relics and holy sites which a pilgrim can find in the city of Zürich in Switzerland, Waltheym repeats the same comments about Charlemagne, but adds a legendary account about a deer that escaped from the hunters and found refuge at a special spot. Once the emperor had prayed to God, it was revealed to him that this was the location where the martyrs St. Exuperantius, St. Felix and his sister St. Regula, all members of the Theban legion under Saint Maurice, were buried. Charlemagne immediately ordered his people to exhume their bones, and once this was all confirmed, he had a cathedral built, the Grossmünster.[98] Paying particular respect to the emperor, Waltheym emphasizes: "Es ist zu mergkin, das keyser Karl alzo vile thüme gestifft hat alzo vile buchstabin yn deme alphabet sint. Und her hüp an dem A an unde stiffte zcum ersten Ache. Und alzo noch allen buchstaben noch eynander, alzo das noch deme Z Zcurch der leczste thüm was" (216; Note that Emperor Charles founded as many cathedrals as there are letters in the alphabet. He began with the first letter, A, and founded the cathedral of Aachen. Then he followed through with all other letters until the letter Z, so the cathedral in Zürich was the last one).[99]

Moreover, a local legend about Charlemagne is also mentioned here. Waltheym noted a sculpture showing the sitting emperor, holding a sword on

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[97] *Ich, Hans von Waltheym: Bericht über eine Pilgerreise im Jahr 1474 von Halle in die Provinz*, ed. Birte Krüger and Klaus Krüger. Forschungen zur hallischen Stadtgeschichte, 21 (Halle a. d. S.: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2014).

[98] Hildegard L. Keller, *Reclams Lexikon der Heiligen und der biblischen Gestalten: Legende und Darstellung in der bildenden Kunst* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1991), 225; Waltheym confuses the relationship, assuming that Exuperantius and Felix were brothers, when the former was only a servant.

[99] Albrecht Classen, "A Slow Paradigm Shift: Late Fifteenth-Century Travel Literature and the Perception of the World: The Case of Hans von Waltheym (ca. 1422–1479)," to appear in *Mediaevalia et Humanistica*.

his lap half pulled out of the scabbard. One of the cathedral canons, a Dithelm Sturm, informed the traveller/pilgrim that the reason for this curious arrangement was that Charlemagne once had an evil opponent whom he had expelled from the country. After the emperor's death, the latter returned and stood in front of a wooden sculpture showing the ruler sitting on a chair, holding a sword in each hand. The rogue then said to the figure that he would have to tolerate his presence now after his death. At that moment the sculpture moved and pulled out a sword, which then forced the rogue to flee immediately (216–18). Waltheym thus reflected the great popularity which the emperor continued to enjoy, even at the end of the Middle Ages, since he was regarded as the protector of justice and of the Church. The very same accounts, which must have circulated widely in oral and written form, were included in the *Zürcher Buch vom Heiligen Karl* (prior to 1471).[100]

Considering how much Charlemagne as a mythical figure experienced revival and continuous reception throughout many centuries, it comes as little surprise that he was also immortalized in many literary texts. His charisma transcended all attempts throughout time to undermine his status.[101] Irrespective of how we might view his actual political, economic, military, religious, or artistic-literary accomplishments, Charlemagne continues to deserve our greatest attention because he has filled people's minds throughout time and has thus triggered a flood of works reflecting upon him both in positive and negative terms. Because his life translated into a myth, he exerts a deep influence on our imagination until today.

Studying the literary manifestations of that myth during the European Middle Ages thus proves to be a most significant critical analysis that takes us deeply into medieval history of ideology, mentality, religion, and literary history. All those aspects continue to impact us profoundly and alert us to the continuous need to turn to the pre-modern age for a more thorough analysis of

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[100] *Deutsche Volksbücher: aus einer Zürcher Handschrift des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Albert Bachmann. Bibliothek des Literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart,185. Rpt. (Hildesheim: Olms, 1973).

[101] See, more globally, C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), and the contributions to *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics: Art, Architecture, Literature, Music*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). As to the great influence which the early medieval history has exerted on the formation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideology of selfhood and nation, see Ian Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). As to Napoleon and the Grand Empire, for instance, Woods notes, "Charlemagne was perhaps Napoleon's greatest predecessor and his Empire was a model to be emulated" (79).

modern conditions, concepts, ideals, and our value system.

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