

Germany's Last Knight:

The Life and Times of
Franz von Sickingen

1



FRANZ von SICKINGEN

Geb. 1481 • gest. 7. Mai 1523

Nach dem von Herrn Professor Karl Kauer geschaffenen Denkmal Hutten
und Sickingen auf der Ebernburg

FRANCISCVS·VON·SICKINGEN



ALLEIN·GOT·DI·ER·LIEB
DEN·GE·MEINE·NVCZ·BESCH
IRM·DI·GERECHTIKEIT

(Nach H. Hopfer)
um 1520



Franz von Sickingen
(Medaille von Joachim Deichlers 1521)

Franz von Sickingen



Born	2 March 1481 Bad Münster am Stein-Ebernburg
Died	7 May 1523 (aged 42)
Noble family	von Sickingen
Religion	Lutheran (since 1518) <i>prev. Roman Catholic (until 1518)</i>
Occupation	Imperial Knight
Memorials	Ebernburg

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2/18/2020	1:24 PM	84178071	Franz von Sickingen.pdf
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8/24/2020	7:44 AM	560285	Recommended Readings for Germany's Last Knight.pdf

Germany's Last Knight: Franz von Sickingen and the Holy Roman Empire

COURSE SYLLABUS: 11-12:30 Tuesdays, Sept. 1—29, 2020

1 Introduction / Europe and the Holy Roman Empire in 1500

2 The Military Revolution / The Rise of Sickingen

3 The Knight's Revolt of 1522-23

4 Aftermath / The Great Peasant War and the Future of Germany

"Germany's Last Knight:" Recommended Readings

There is no English-language book-length biography of Franz von Sickingen. There is, however, a 93-page chapter in a 1977 Ph.D. dissertation which serves that purpose:

—Harold H. Kehr, "Franz von Sickingen," in The von Sickingen and the German Princes 1263—1523 (Boston University Graduate School, 1977), pp. 209—301. *Available on the OLLI website, or from the instructor.*

German-Language Works:

—Wolfgang Breul, ed., Ritter! Tod! Teufel? Franz von Sickingen und die Reformation (2015)....*lavishly illustrated book of essays, published as part of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.*

—Reinhard Scholzen, Franz von Sickingen: Ein adeliges Leben im Spannungsfeld zwischen Städten und Territorien (1996)....*good on S's feuds and economic activities, rather than his religious beliefs and role.*

—Klaus Eberhard Wild, Franz von Sickingen: Ein Ritter in unruhiger Zeit (2006)....*good short biography.*

German History, General Surveys:

—Hagen Schulze, Germany: A New History (1998)....*clear and concise.*

—Joachim Whaley, The Holy Roman Empire: A Very Short Introduction (2018)....*good brief survey.*

German History, Specific Topics:

—Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (1950; many reprints)....*classic older biography.*

—A. G. Dickens, The German Nation and Martin Luther (1974)

—Hajo Holborn, Ulrich von Hutten and the German Reformation (1937, repr. 1965)....*good biography of Sickingen's literary colleague.*

European History in the Reformation Era:

—Thomas Arnold, The Renaissance at War (2001)....*changing military developments in the transition from medieval to modern times.*

—G. R. Elton, Reformation Europe 1517—1559 (1963; second edition, unchanged but with updated afterword and bibliography, 1999)....*a classic, emphasizing personalities and ideas rather than social history.*

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

THE VON SICKINGEN AND THE GERMAN PRINCES
1262-1523,

by

Harold Henry Kehrler

B.S., Tufts University, 1968
M.S., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1969

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
1977

CHAPTER V

FRANZ VON SICKINGEN

In the late fourteenth century and in the course of the fifteenth, the von Sickingen family produced a number of individuals who left their mark on the politics of the Holy Roman Empire. In most cases these were men with close ties to the Electors Palatine, and they owed their prominence in whole or part to this association. This was certainly the case with Schwarz Reinhard von Sickingen, the imperial Landvogt at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and with Swicker VIII at its end. Even Reinhard von Sickingen, who as bishop of Worms was a prince of the empire in his own right, was most notable for his loyalty to Elector Palatine Frederick I and the role he played in Frederick's politics. The career of Franz von Sickingen, however, the son of Swicker VIII, was a dramatic departure from this tradition. Although he began in the footsteps of his forefathers, Franz soon took an independent course which finally put him at odds with the traditional lords of the family. In the course of the few years from 1515 to 1519, Franz rose to become one of the most powerful men in Germany and a factor in the international struggle between Habsburg and Valois. At the same time his



RITTER! TOD! TEUFEL?

FRANZ VON SICKINGEN UND DIE REFORMATION

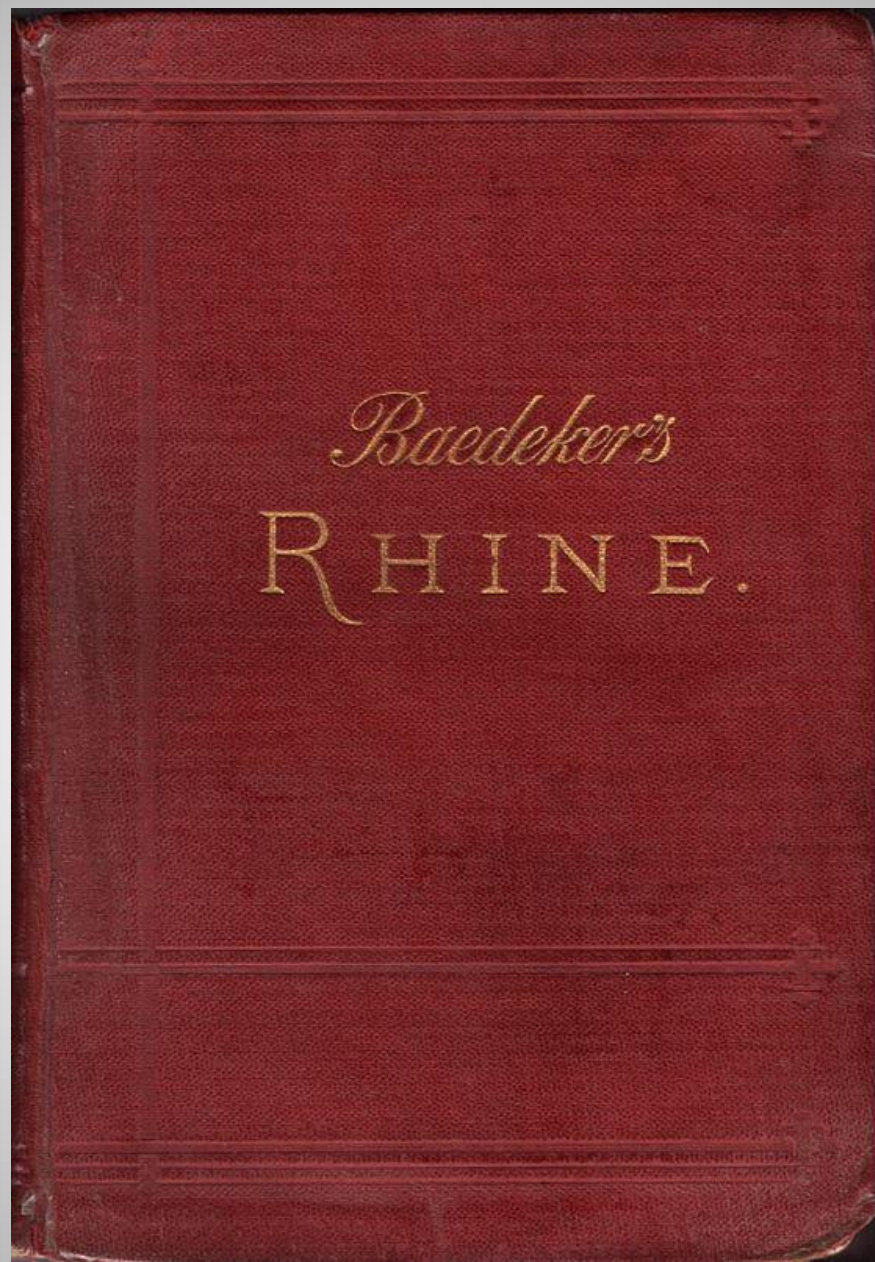


Klaus Eberhard Wild

Franz von Sickingen

*Ein Ritter in
unruhiger Zeit*





Baedeker's
RHINE.

39. From Landau to Zweibrücken. The Vosges of the Palatinate.

Comp. Map, p. 288.

FROM LANDAU TO ZWEIBRÜCKEN, 45 M., railway in $1\frac{3}{4}$ - $3\frac{3}{4}$ hrs. (fares, 2nd cl. 3 *M* 80, 3rd cl. 2 *M* 45 pf., express-fares 1st cl. 6 *M* 50, 2nd cl. 4 *M* 70 pf.). — The picturesque mountainous district to the S. of the *Queich*, which belongs to the *WASGAU*, is well worthy of a visit, and may be explored in 2-3 days. 1st Day: Railway to *Annweiler*, walk to the *Trifels* and the *Madenburg*, and thence by the *Rehberg* to the *Lindelbrunner Forsthaus* and the *Schloss*; about 6 hrs. in all. — 2nd Day: Walk viâ *Vorderweidenthal*, the *Drachenfels*, *Schloss Dahn*, and *Dahn* to *Kaltenbach*, or viâ *Rumbach* to *Schönau*, and *Rumbach*, 6 hrs. — 3rd Day: On foot to the *Wegelburg* and the *Hohenburg* and on to *Fleckenstein*, proceeding thence either viâ *Hirschtal*, *Schönau*, and the *Wasigenstein* to *Niederbrunn* (7 hrs.), or viâ *Lembach* to *Weissenburg* (6 hrs.) or *Wörth* ($5\frac{1}{2}$ hrs.).

Landau, see p. 285. The train stops at the W. station, and then ascends the valley of the *Queich*, which soon contracts. — $3\frac{3}{4}$ M. *Godramstein*. From (5 M.) *Sieboldingen* (Adler) a road leads viâ *Birkweiler*, *Ransbach*, and *Leinsweiler* to ($3\frac{1}{2}$ M.) *Eschbach*, at the foot of the *Madenburg* (p. 295). — $6\frac{1}{4}$ M. *Albersweiler*. About $3\frac{1}{2}$ M. to the N.W. is the village of *Eusserthal*, with a Romanesque Cistercian church dating from the middle of the 13th century. The *Orensberg* (1915 ft.), $3\frac{1}{2}$ M. to the N. (white way-marks), is a good point of view. — $9\frac{1}{2}$ M. *Annweiler*, see p. 295; the station lies on the left bank of the *Queich*, the town on the right. The narrow green valley of the *Queich*, at this point known as the '*Annweiler-Thal*', is enclosed by wooded hills, from which the variegated sandstone protrudes in picturesque and fantastic forms. — 12 M. *Rinntal*; $14\frac{1}{2}$ M. *Wilgartswiesen*, with a handsome church by *Voit*.

17 M. *Hauenstein*. — 21 M. *Hinterweidenthal-Kaltenbach* (**Gerstle*; **Rail. Restaurant*), a good centre for excursions. Diligence thrice daily from *Kaltenbach* to *Dahn* (5 M., p. 296). — $24\frac{1}{2}$ M. *Münchweiler*. — The line now crosses the watershed between the tributaries of the *Rhine* and of the *Nahe*. 28 M. *Rodalben*. — 30 M. *Biebertmühle*.

Branch-line to ($4\frac{1}{2}$ M., in 20 min.) *Pirmasens* (*Breith*, well spoken of; *Rail. Hotel*, R. $1\frac{1}{4}$ -2, D. 2 *M*), an industrial town with 25,000 inhab., named after *St. Pirmin*, who preached here in the 8th century. From 1764 to 1790 the landgrave *Ludwig IX.* of *Hesse-Darmstadt* had his residence in the town, which passed to *Bavaria* in 1815. The Protestant church contains the landgrave's monument.

Several unimportant stations. 42 M. *Tschifflick*, once a summer-residence of *Stanislaus Leszinski*, the last king of *Poland*.

45 M. *Zweibrücken* (730 ft.; **Zweibrücker Hof*; **Pfälzer Hof*), formerly the residence of the *Dukes of Zweibrücken*, and known to the literary world as the place where the *Editiones Bipontinae* of classical authors were published. It is now a town of 12,000 inhab., and contains the chief court of the *Bavarian Palatinate*, which occupies the old castle. When *Charles X. Gustavus* of the *Zweibrücken* family ascended the *Swedish throne*, the duchy became subject to

Sweden, which it continued to be till the death of *Charles XII.* (1719). The *Alexander-Kirche* contains the burial-vaults of the ducal house. The *Rom. Cath. Church* is a handsome building in the Gothic style.

FROM ZWEIBRÜCKEN TO SAARBRÜCKEN, 22 M., railway in $\frac{3}{4}$ - $1\frac{1}{4}$ hr. (fares 2 *M* 90, 1 *M* 95, 1 *M* 50 pf.), viâ (2 M.) *Einöd* (p. 289) and ($13\frac{1}{2}$ M.) *St. Ingbert*, an industrious town with 10,900 inhabitants. The other stations are unimportant. — *Saarbrücken*, see p. 171.

FROM ZWEIBRÜCKEN TO SAARGEMÜND, 23 M., railway in $\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$ hr. (fares 2 *M*, 1 *M* 30 pf.). Unimportant stations. — 23 M. *Saargemünd*, see p. 310.

Annweiler (590 ft.; *Schwan*, with garden, R. $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2, pens. 4-5 *M*), a small and ancient town of 3000 inhab. with a *Rathaus* by *Voit*, built in 1844, is a good centre for excursions among the mountains of the S. Palatinate. The *Krappenfels*, *Buchholzfels*, and other fine points in the neighbourhood have lately been made easily accessible by means of footpaths and finger-posts.

From the E. entrance of *Annweiler* a road ('*Burg-Strasse*') diverges to the S. from the *Landau* highroad, and from it a footpath (blue marks) ascends to the left through wood. The ancient imperial fortress of **Trifels* (1515 ft.; 1 hr.; refreshments) was founded as early as the 10th cent., but the present scanty ruins date from about the middle of the 12th century. *Trifels* was not unfrequently occupied by the German emperors. Its walls protected the unhappy *Henry IV.*, when excommunicated by *Pope Gregory VII.* in 1076, and deserted by his nobles. It was here that *Richard Cœur-de-Lion* is said to have been confined for more than a year (1193-94) by the *Emp. Henry VI.*, until his liberation was effected by the faithful *Blondel*. After the *Thirty Years' War* the castle fell to decay. The central tower, 33 ft. in height, and the chapel have recently been restored. In cleaning the castle-well, the spring, cut in the rock, was discovered at a depth of 270 ft. The view is similar to that from the *Madenburg*, but less extensive towards the E.

The hill occupied by the *Trifels* is the northernmost eminence of a range 1 M. in length, the other two summits of which bear the ruins of *Anebos* and *Scharfenberg*, the latter, with its square tower 66 ft. in height, being usually known as the *Münz*. A pleasant path (with blue marks) skirts the S.W. slope of this range, passing these ruins. Farther on it descends, but afterwards again ascends, leading through fragrant woods of beech and pine. The *Wetterberg* remains to the left. In $1\frac{1}{2}$ hr. we reach the **Madenburg* (locally *Eschbacher Schloss*; 1520 ft.; rfmts.), situated above the village of *Eschbach* to the S., the grandest ruin in the *Rhenish Palatinate*, formerly belonging to the counts of *Leiningen*, afterwards to the bishopric of *Speyer*, and burned down by the French general *Montclar* in 1689. The **View* from the *Madenburg* is one of the finest and most extensive in the *Palatinate*, comprising both plain and mountain. — From the *Madenburg* to *Eschbach*, 25 min.; to *Klingenmünster* (p. 295), viâ the *Kaisersbacher Mühle*, 1 hr.

transcepts, and two side-apses like chapels now remain. — 25 M. *Medard*;
26 M. *Odenbach*. — 30 M. *Meisenheim*, and thence to *Staudernheim*, see p. 168.

Beyond *Kaiserslautern* the line runs near the 'Kaiserstrasse', a road constructed by Napoleon, and skirts the *Landstuhler Bruch*, an extensive moor at the base of wooded hills. — 49 M. *Kindsbach*.

51 M. **Landstuhl** (**Goldener Engel*, in the town, R. $1\frac{1}{4}$ -2, D. $1\frac{1}{2}$ *M*, with large garden and the *Sickingen Hydropathic*, pens. 4-6 *M*; *Cur-Hôtel zum Schloss*, pens. $3\frac{1}{2}$ -4 *M*; *Burgard*, at the station), a small town with 3700 inhab., was once a seat of the *Sickingen* family, whose castle, with its huge walls, 25 ft. thick, lies in ruins above the town. *Franz von Sickingen* (p. 166) was besieged here by the Electors of the Palatinate and *Trèves* in 1523, and lost his life by the falling of a beam. His remains were interred in a vault under the church, but the monument erected to his memory was destroyed by the French. Another has recently been erected by *Freiherr von Stumm* of *Neunkirchen*, and the paths about the castle have been repaired. Keys at the forester's. Fine points in the environs are the *Fleischhacker's Loch*, *Kohlenberg* (view-tower), and *Bärenloch* (a round of $2\frac{1}{2}$ -3 hrs.).

FROM LANDSTUHL TO KUSEL, 18 M., branch-railway in $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 hrs. (fares 1 *M* 60, 1 *M* 10 pf.). The line intersects the *Landstuhler Bruch* (see above). 3 M. *Ramstein*; 5 M. *Steinwenden*; 7 M. *Niedermohr*. At ($8\frac{3}{4}$ M.) *Glan-Münchweiler* the attractive valley of the *Glan* is entered, and followed viâ *Rehweiler*, *Eisenbach-Matzenbach*, and *Theisbergstegen* to (15 M.) *Altenglan*. The line then turns in a sharp angle towards the W. and enters the *Kuseler Thal*.

100 paces beyond the small temple on the *Kuhberg* (1½ M. to the S. of the Bad Kreuznach Station; comp. Map) a path diverges to the right from the road, leading through vineyards and wood, and joining the road again beyond the (½ hr.) *Rheingrafensteiner Hof* (restaurant). About 5 min. farther on, near the *Rheingrafensteiner Schösschen*, a path ascends in ¼ hr. to the top of the *Gans (1060 ft.), an indented ridge of porphyry, commanding an extensive view, embracing the Nahe-Thal as far as Bingen and part of the Rheingau. — From the Gans a field-road (direction-post) runs towards the S. through the wood to the (25 min.) Rheingrafenstein. Descent to the Nahe through the Hutten-Thal (see above; ¼ hr.). — By passing to the left of the Rheingrafensteiner Hof we reach (35 min.) the *Schäferplacken*, where the boundaries of Prussia, Bavaria, and Hessen meet. Thence to the right to the Altenbaumburg (p. 167), ½ hr.

Opposite the Rheingrafenstein, to the W., about ½ hr. from the Münster am Stein station (bridge-toll 3 pf.), rises the ***Ebernburg**, once the stronghold of Franz von Sickingen (1481-1523), and at that time often an asylum for outlaws and fugitives, foremost among whom ranks Ulrich von Hutten, the reformer, who resided here in 1520-22. The castle was fortified by the French in 1689, but was again dismantled at the Peace of Ryswyck (1698). Out of the ruins rises a quaint, pinnacled building, fitted up as an *Inn*. Below the castle, a *Monument to Sickingen and Hutten*, by C. Cauer, was erected in 1889. Fine prospect of the grand environs. — At

Complete set, last editions before World War I—1914 ↓



↑ Complete set, German regional guides, 1920s-30s,
plus miscellaneous volumes from 1930s including four
Nazi-era guidebooks

Freier von Stumm of Neunkirchen, and the paths about the castle have been repaired. Keys at the forester's. Fine points in the environs are the *Fleischhacker's Loch*, *Kohlenberg* (view-tower), and *Bärenloch* (a round of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -3 hrs.).

FROM LANDSTUHL TO KUSEL 48 M. branch railway in 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. (Garsch)



tower 66 ft. in height, being usually known as the *Münz*. A pleasant path (with blue marks) skirts the S.W. slope of this range, passing these ruins. Farther on it descends, but afterwards again ascends, leading through fragrant woods of beech and pine. The *Wetterberg* remains to the left. In 1½ hr. we reach the **Madenburg* (locally *Eschbacher Schloss*; 1520 ft.; rfmts.), situated above the village of Eschbach to the S., the grandest ruin in the Rhenish Palatinate, formerly belonging to the counts of Leiningen, after-



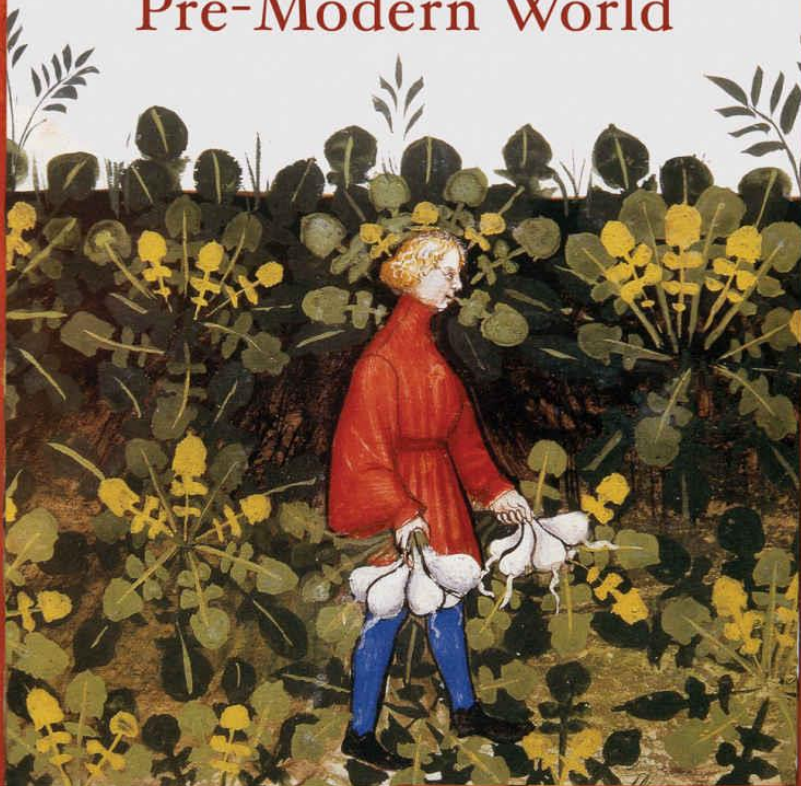
**THE PAST IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY; THEY DO
THINGS DIFFERENTLY THERE.**

- L. P. HARTLEY -

PATRICIA CRONE

Pre-Industrial Societies

Anatomy of the
Pre-Modern World



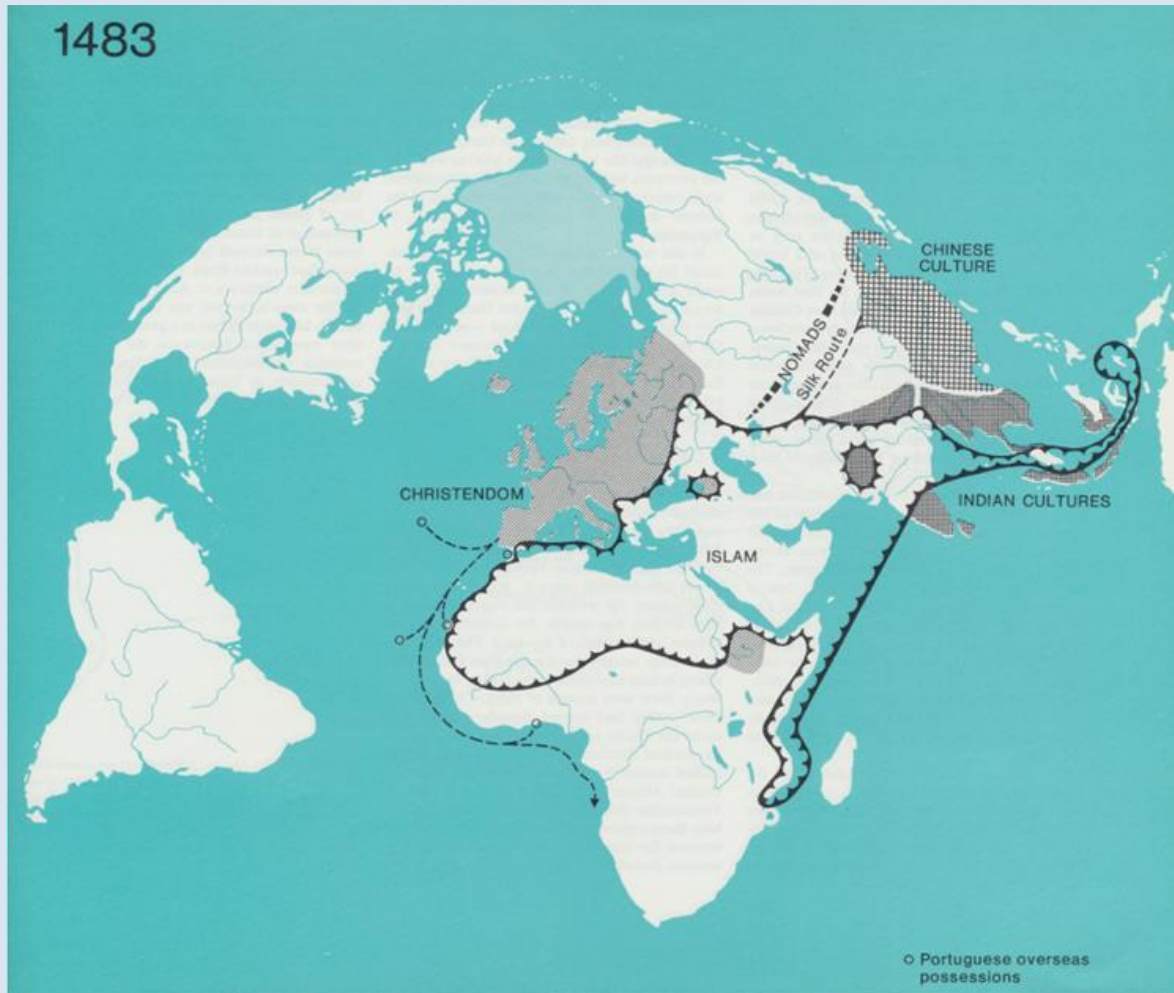
Most people, and certainly all members of Western civilization, are [...] born into a world which differs radically from that of their ancestors, with the result that most of human history is a closed book to them.

Pre-Industrial
—Patricia Crone
SOCIETIES

Anatomy of the Pre-Modern World

The Premodern World

—Basic Elements of Life—



—Basic Elements of Life—

—Closeness to nature:

Weather and climate



—Basic Elements of Life—

—Closeness to nature:

Farm animals and crops



—Basic Elements of Life—

—Closeness to nature:

Disease microorganisms and mortality



—Basic Elements of Life—

—Peasants as the great majority of the population, supporting all the rest

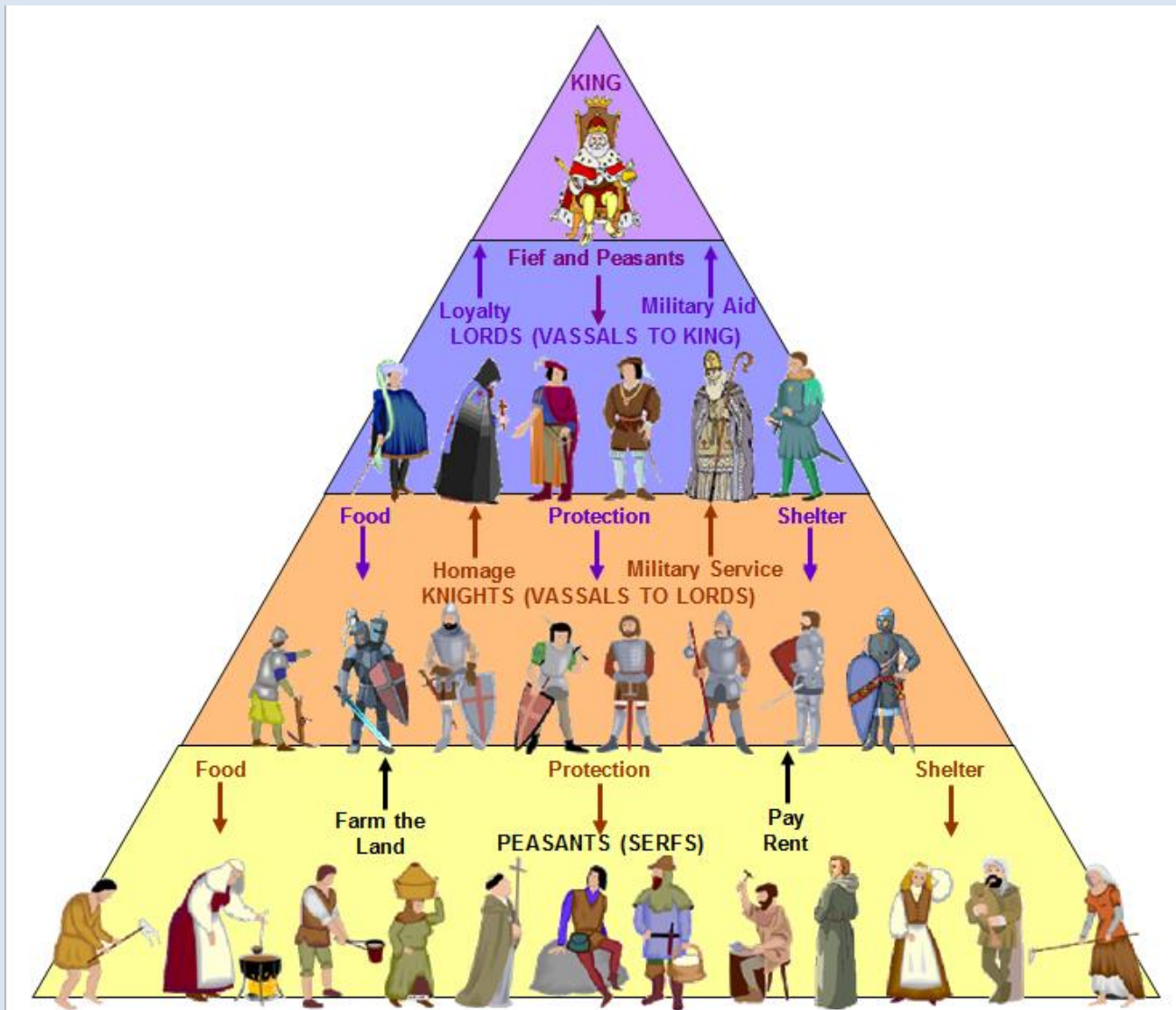




31-134. Above, left: PEASANTS DANCING. 1514. Copperplate engraving.—Above, right: THREE PEASANTS TALKING. About 1497-1500. Copperplate engraving. — Below, left: THE PIPER. 1514. Copperplate engraving. — Below, right: THE PEASANT AND HIS WIFE. About 1497-1500. Copperplate engraving.

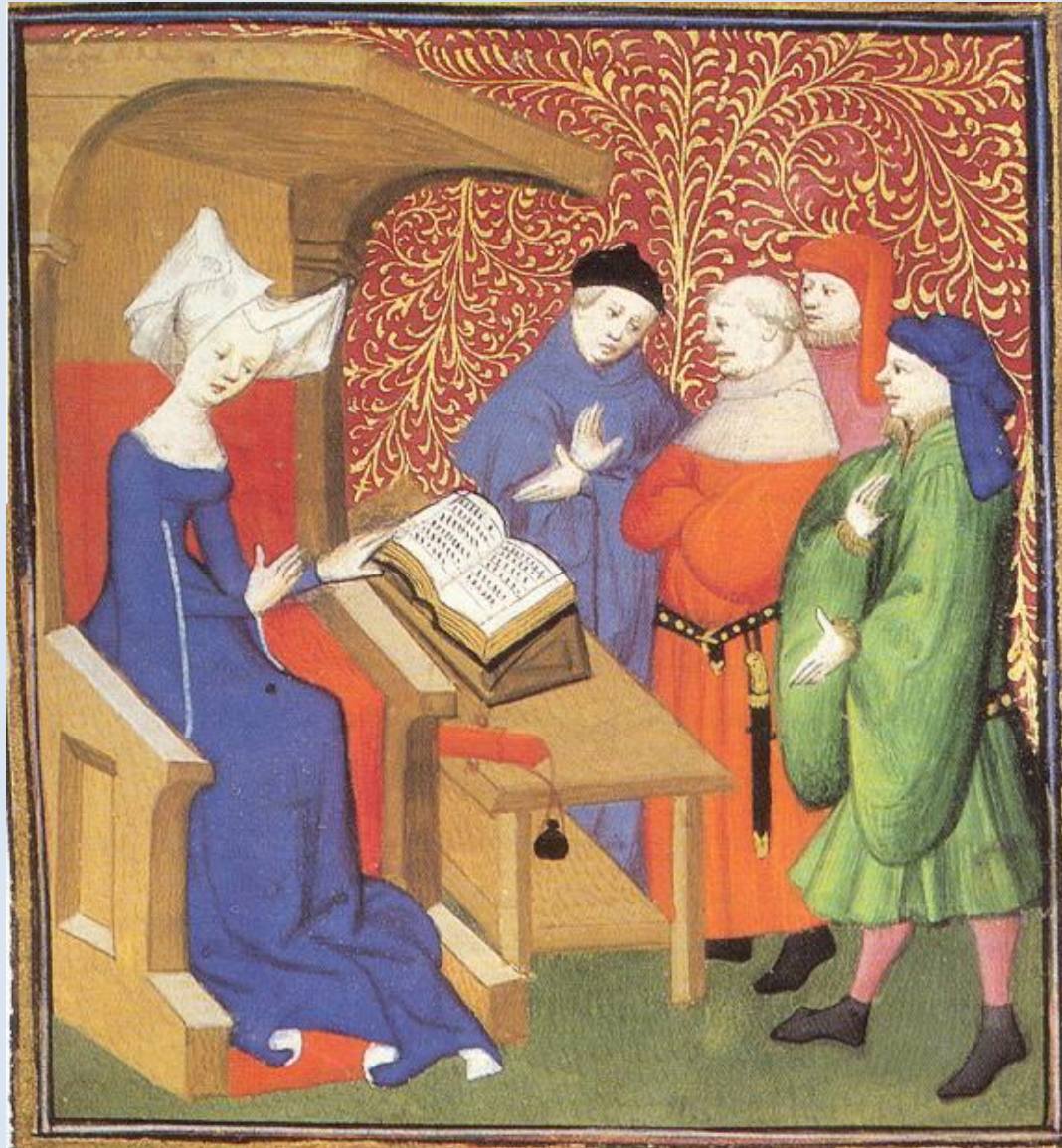
—Basic Elements of Life—

—Hierarchical society, dominated by elites



—Basic Elements of Life—

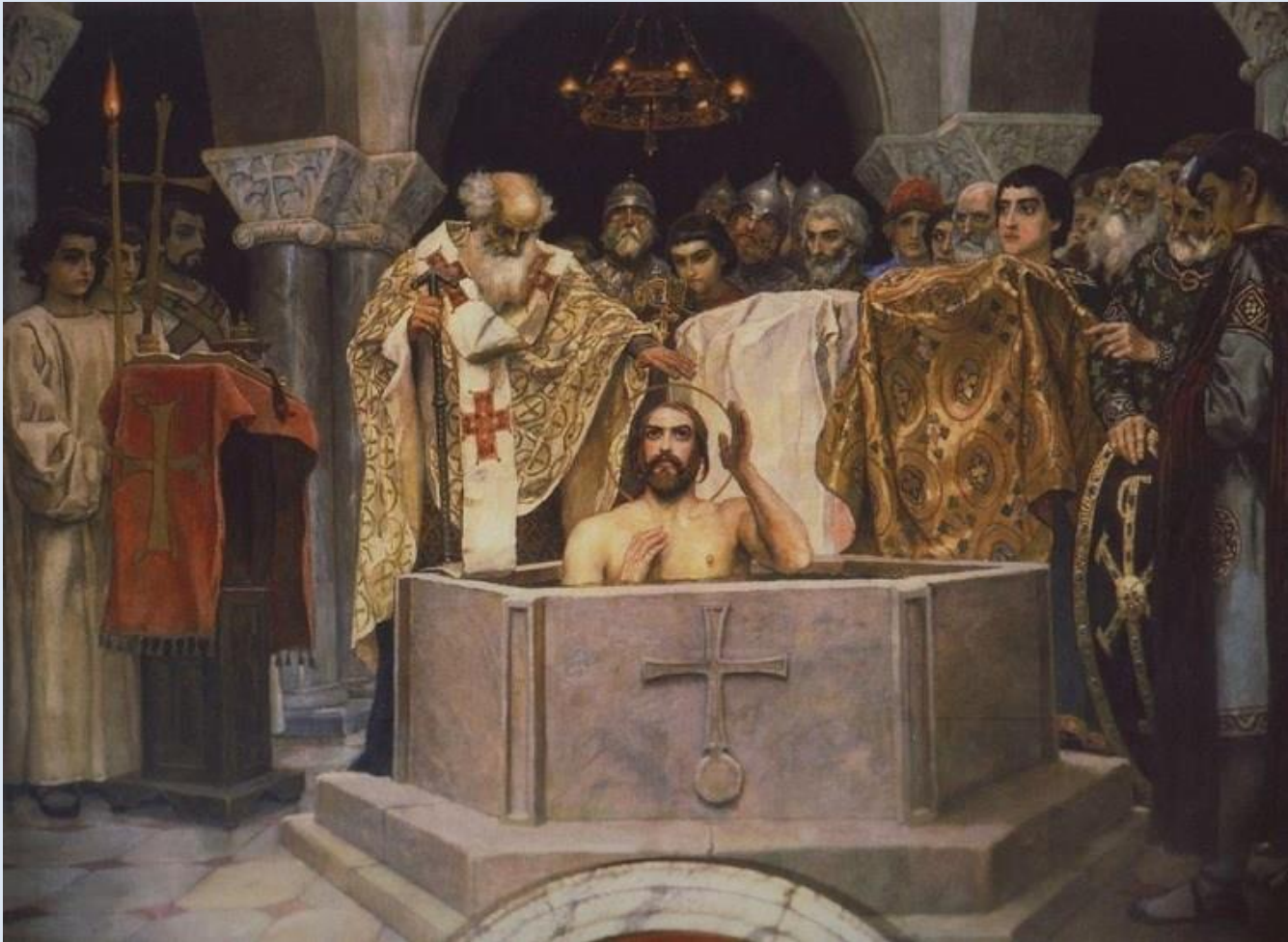
—Patriarchal society, dominated by men



—Basic Elements of Life—

—Prescientific world view:

Organized religion



—Basic Elements of Life—

Organized Religion:

In western Christendom, the Catholic Church was mandatory for all (with the single exception of the Jewish community).

It included everything from the deepest piety and desire for salvation to the most cynical and power-hungry officials, and from the crudest popular superstitions to the most sincere and devout beliefs and actions.

Within the Church, many loyal Catholics called for reform of the corrupt institutions they saw around them.

—Basic Elements of Life—

—Prescientific world view:

Folk beliefs



—Basic Elements of Life—

—Prescientific world view:

Astrology, alchemy and similar forms of belief



The Premodern World

—Basic Elements of Life—

No concept of worldly progress:

Christendom saw this world as a “vale of tears,”
framed by the Creation, Incarnation, and Last Judgment.



1483



○ Portuguese overseas possessions

1483



“The dear old Holy Roman Empire, What holds it all together?”

—Drinking song in Auerbach’s Cellar,
from Goethe’s “Faust Part One”



In 1756 Voltaire said—



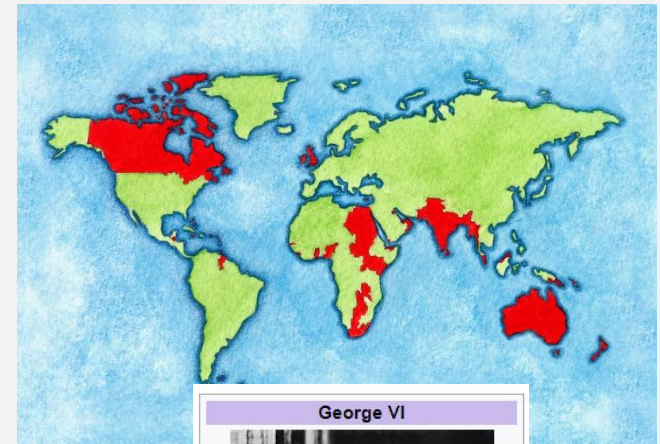
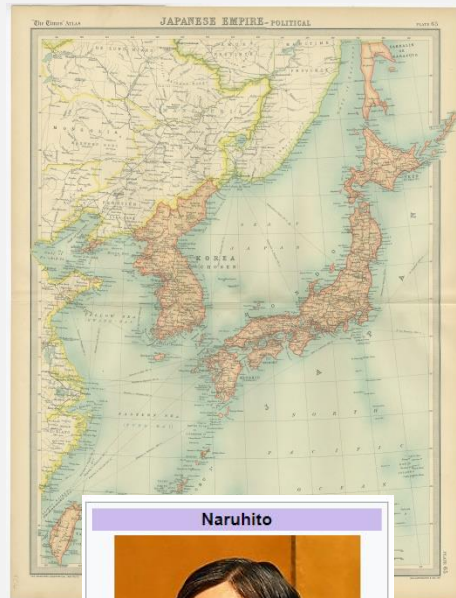
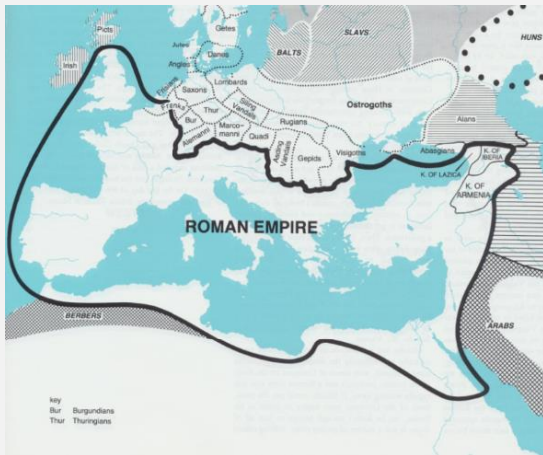
“This agglomeration which was called and which still calls itself the Holy Roman Empire was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire.”

BUT—

In what ways was it “Holy,” “Roman” and an “Empire”?

Empire?

It comes in many different forms; there is no “one size fits all” definition. If a ruler is accepted as “emperor” (i.e. of higher rank or prestige than “king”) then he presides over an empire.



First to command
Augustus
16 January 27 BC – 19 August AD 14



Naruhito
The Emperor in 2019
Emperor of Japan



George VI
Emperor of India
Reign 11 December 1936 – 15 August 1947

Roman?

In western civilization, ancient Rome was unquestionably the most prestigious model for later states. The memory of the Roman Empire was extremely powerful.

—When Charlemagne was crowned “Emperor of the Romans” in AD 800 in Rome, he was reclaiming the title which had been lost in AD 476, and claiming continuity with that realm.

—When Otto the Great revived the title in AD 962, he was doing the same thing. He too was crowned in Rome by the Pope.

—The empire retained its “Roman” title throughout its existence, even when Rome itself passed out of imperial control.



Holy?

In the early Middle Ages, worldly power was regarded as divinely sanctioned. Empire and Papacy were equally holy, presiding over the realms of world and spirit respectively.



Holy?

—The “Investiture Struggle,” beginning in 1075, saw the Popes attempting to end this view and to draw a sharp line between spiritual and secular affairs. The spiritual power was to be supreme, they claimed.



Holy?

The Popes asserted that they were indeed “holier than thou.”
The Emperors responded by claiming to be “as holy as thou.”



It was in the 12th century that this imperial claim was asserted by adding the word “Holy” to the Empire’s official name. It lasted long after the “Investiture Struggle” was resolved.



Joachim Whaley

THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

A Very Short Introduction

OXFORD

THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE: KEY DATES AND EVENTS

- 800— **Charles the Great** (Charlemagne), King of the Franks, is crowned “**Roman Emperor**” by the Pope.
- 962— **Otto the Great**, German King, is crowned “**Roman Emperor**” by the Pope, reviving that title.
- 1077— the **Investiture Struggle**: Emp. Heinrich IV vs. Pope Gregory VII.... both lose.
- 1250— **death of Friedrich II** of Hohenstaufen, last of the powerful Emperors....his dynasty destroyed by its enemies.
- 1356— the “**Golden Bull**,” agreed on by Emperor, Electors and princes, provides the HRE with a fundamental law for the remainder of its existence.
- 1495— **reform movement** in the HRE provides it with basic institutions (the **Reichstag**, an **Imperial supreme court**, etc.) that renew its effectiveness for the next three centuries.
- 1555— the **Peace of Augsburg** confirms religious division and balance between Catholics and Lutherans.
- 1648— the **Treaty of Westphalia** ends the Thirty Years War, guarantees princely autonomy, electoral role, Emperor’s limited role.
- 1806— under threat of the French Revolution and Napoleon, the **Holy Roman Empire is abolished** by its last Emperor, who proclaims himself “**Emperor of Austria**” in his own lands.

THE SEVEN ELECTORS

The Empire was in theory an electoral monarchy, with seven senior princes meeting to choose each new emperor. This can be compared with Papal elections done by the College of Cardinals.

A strong or competent emperor could usually arrange for his heir to be elected after him, so the dynastic principle survived, blended with the electoral.

In 1356 the list of seven electors was confirmed by the Golden Bull (in Latin, “*bullā*,” for the golden seal affixed to the document).



Golden Bull of 1356



The golden seal that earned the decree its name

THE SEVEN ELECTORS

ARCHBISHOP OF MAINZ

ARCHBISHOP OF COLOGNE

ARCHBISHOP OF TRIER

COUNT PALATINE ON THE RHINE

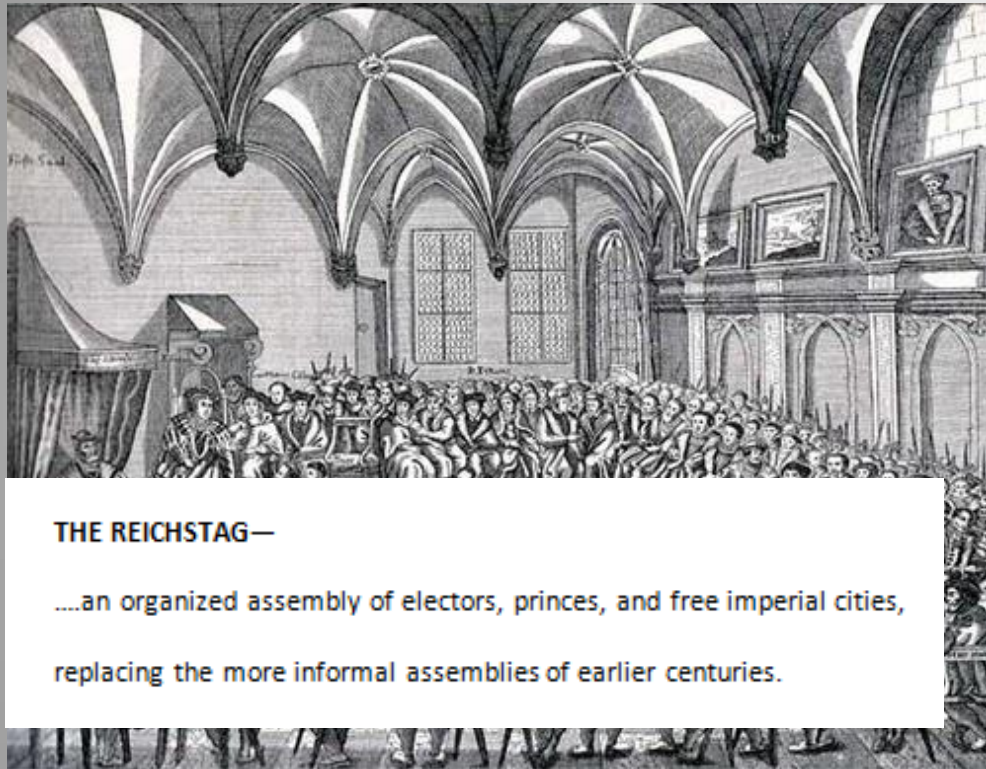
MARGRAVE OF BRANDENBURG

DUKE OF SAXONY

KING OF BOHEMIA



1495— reform movement in the HRE provides it with basic institutions (the Reichstag, an Imperial supreme court, etc.) that renew its effectiveness for the next three centuries.



THE REICHSTAG—

...an organized assembly of electors, princes, and free imperial cities, replacing the more informal assemblies of earlier centuries.



The KREISE (Imperial "CIRCLES:") — regional groupings of princes and cities, useful for organizing law enforcement and military mobilization at the regional level

The Reichstag (the assembly of the leading dignitaries of the Empire) had the Latin name of Diet. It met in various cities around the Empire.



The name “Diet of Worms” (1521) gave rise to bad jokes and puns in English long before Shakespeare’s time (he used it in “Hamlet”).

1495— reform movement in the HRE provides it with basic institutions (the Reichstag, an Imperial supreme court, etc.) that renew its effectiveness for the next three centuries.

The GEMEINE PFENNIG (“COMMON PENNY”) — an imperial tax, collected by the princes and the free cities, intended for military defense.



Reichskammergericht, unbekannter Künstler, um 1735

THE REICHSKAMMERGERICHT (Imperial Chamber Court)—

....a Supreme Court for the Empire, set up by the Reichstag and useful for conflict resolution.

A second “supreme court,” the REICHSHOFRAT (Imperial Court Council) was set up by the Emperor; cases could be pursued in either one.

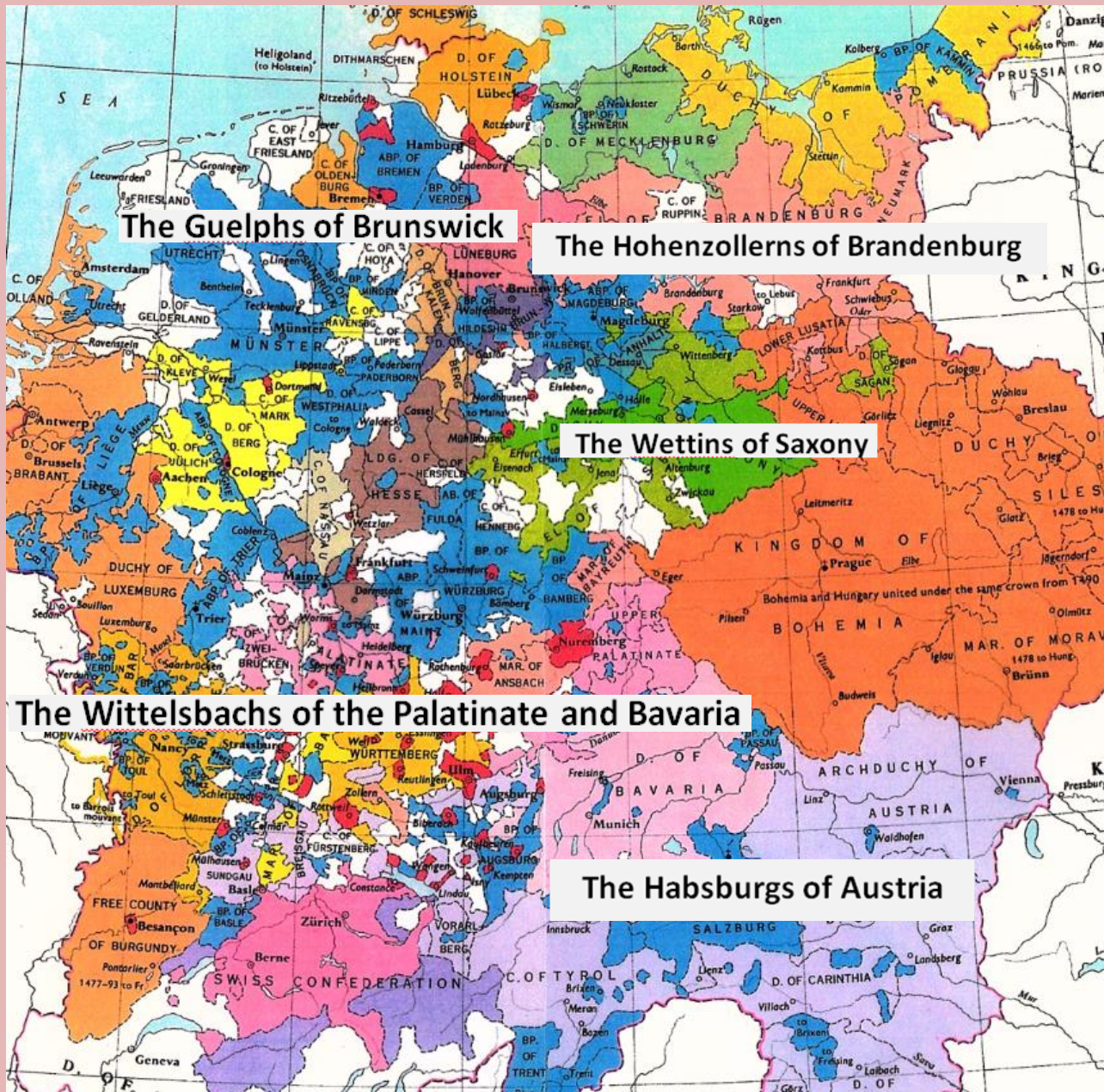
1495— reform movement in the HRE provides it with basic institutions (the Reichstag, an Imperial supreme court, etc.) that renew its effectiveness for the next three centuries.

The *Ewiger Landfriede* ("everlasting *Landfriede*", variously translated as "Perpetual Peace", "Eternal Peace", "Perpetual Public Peace") of 1495, passed by Maximilian I, German king and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, was the definitive and everlasting ban on the medieval right of vendetta (*Fehderecht*).

In fact, despite being officially outlawed, feuds continued in the territory of the empire until well into the 16th century.



DYNASTIES: THE MAJOR PRINCES OF GERMANY



—from the “Almanach de Gotha” website:

The Titles and Ranks of German Nobility

These titles were at one time used by various rulers. The titles Archduke, Duke, Prince, Margrave (and all other -graves), Count, Count Palatine and Lord were also used by non-sovereign members of some of these families or by noble non-reigning families.

Title (English)	Title (German)	Territory (English)	Territory (German)
Emperor/Empress	Kaiser(in)	Empire	Kaiserreich, Kaisertum
King/Queen	König(in)	Kingdom	Königreich
Elector/Electress	Kurfürst(in)	Electorate	Kurfürstentum
Archduke/Archduchess	Erzherzog(in)	Archduchy	Erzherzogtum
Grand Duke/Grand Duchess	Großherzog(in)	Grand Duchy	Großherzogtum
Duke/Duchess	Herzog(in)	Duchy	Herzogtum
Count(ess)	Palatine Pfalzgraf/Pfalzgräfin	County Palatine	Pfalzgrafschaft
Margrave/Margravine	Markgraf/Markgräfin	Margraviate, March	Markgrafschaft
Landgrave/Landgravine	Landgraf/Landgräfin	Landgraviate	Landgrafschaft
Burgrave/Burgravine	Burggraf/Burggräfin	Burgraviate	Burggrafschaft
Prince(ss)	Fürst(in)	Principality	Fürstentum
Count(ess) of the Empire	Reichsgraf*/Reichsgräfin	County	Grafschaft
Altgrave/Altgravine	Altgraf/Altgräfin	Altgraviate	Altgrafschaft
Baron(ess)	Freiherr/Freifrau/Freiin*	(Allodial) Barony	Freiherrschaft
Lord Herr	Lordship	Herrschaft	
Knight	Reichsritter*		

Graf is a historical German noble title equal in rank to a count (derived from the Latin Comes, with a history of its own) or a British earl (an Anglo-Saxon title akin to the Viking title Jarl). A derivation ultimately from the Greek verb graphein 'to write' may be fanciful: Paul the Deacon wrote in Latin ca 790: "the count of the Bavarians that they call gravio who governed Bauzanum and other strongholds..." (Historia gentis Langobardorum, V. xxxvi); this may be read to make the term a Germanic one, but by then using Latin terms was quite common. Since August 1919, in Germany, Graf and all other titles are considered as a part of the name. The comital title Graf has of course also been used by German-speakers (as official or vernacular language), also in Austria and other Habsburg crown lands (mainly Slavic and Hungary), in Liechtenstein and much of Switzerland.

A Graf (Count) ruled over a territory known as a Grafschaft, literally 'countship' (also rendered as 'county'). The comital titles awarded in the Holy Roman Empire often related to the jurisdiction or domain of responsibility and represented special concessions of authority or rank. Only the more important titles remained in use until modern times. Many Counts were titled Graf without any additional qualification. For a list of the titles of the rank of Count etymologically related to Graf (and for other equivalents) see article Count.



The List of Nobiliary Titles containing the Term Graf

German English Comment/ etymology

Markgraf Margrave (only continental) and

(younger) Marquess or Marquis Mark: march (border province) + Graf

Landgraf Landgrave Land (country) + Graf

Reichsgraf Count of the Empire Reich i.e., (the Holy Roman) Empire + Graf

Gefürsteter Graf Princely Count German verb for "to make into a Reichsfürst" + Graf

Pfalzgraf Count Palatine

or Palsgrave (the latter is archaic in English) Pfalz (palatial estate, Palatinate) + Graf

Rheingraf Rhinegrave Rhein (river Rhine) + Graf

Burggraf Burgrave Burg (castle, burgh) + Graf

Altgraf Altgrave Alt (old) + Graf (very rare)

Freigraf Free Count Frei = free (allodial?) + Graf; both a feudal title of comital rank and a more technical office

Wildgraf Wildgrave Wild (game or wilderness) + Graf

Raugraf Raugrave Rau (raw, uninhabited, wilderness) + Graf

Vizegraf Viscount Vize = vice- (substitute) + Graf

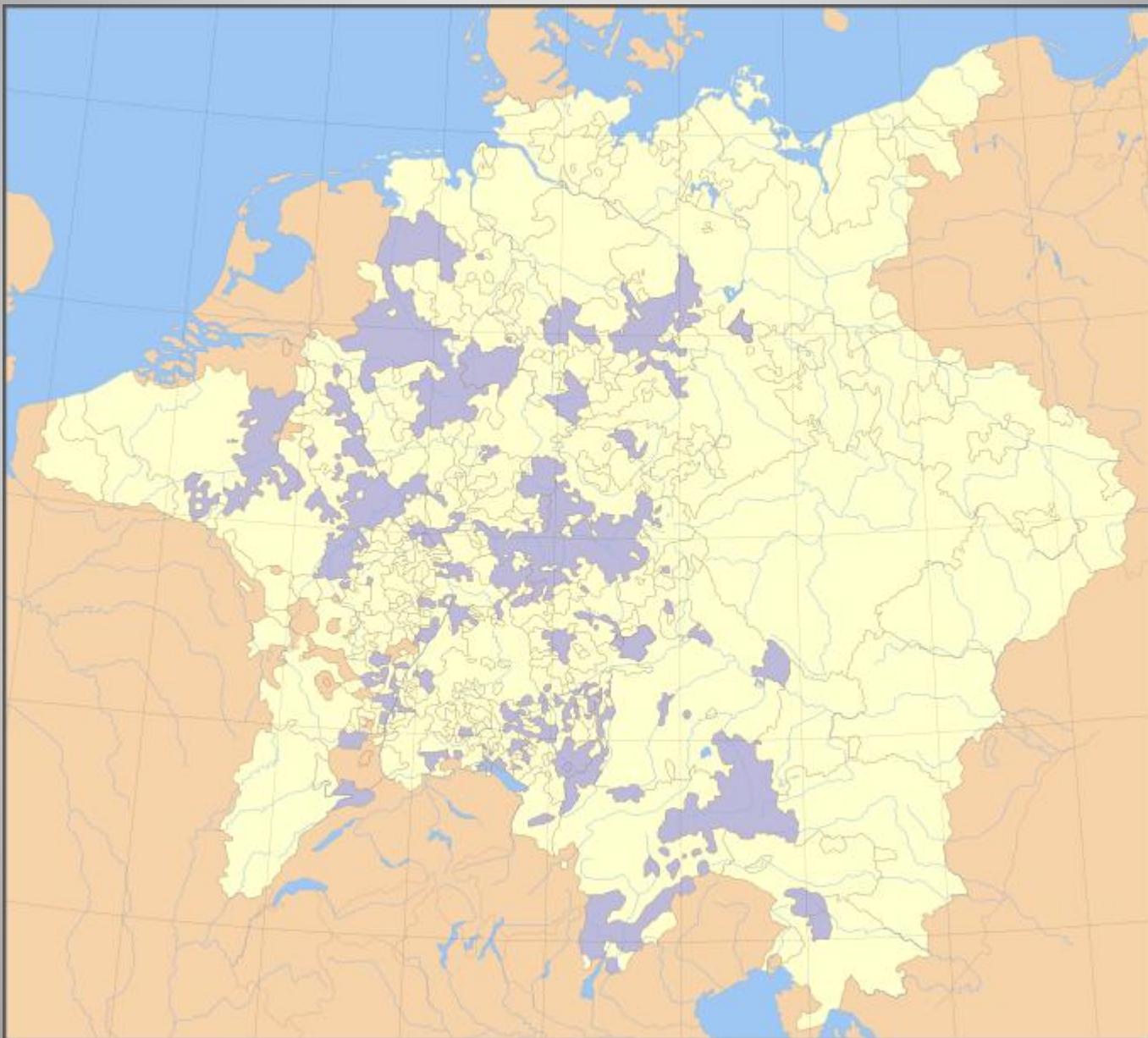
The Title of Reichsgraf, Gefürsteter Graf

A Reichsgraf was a nobleman whose title of count was conferred or confirmed by the Holy Roman Emperor, and literally meant "count of the (Holy Roman) Empire". Since the feudal era any count whose territory lay within the Empire, was under the immediate jurisdiction of the Emperor, and exercised a shared vote in the Reichstag came to be considered a member of the "upper nobility" (Hochadel) in Germany along with princes (Fürsten) dukes (Herzöge), electors, and the emperor himself. A count who was not a Reichsgraf was apt to possess only a "mediate" fief (Afterlehen) - he was subject to an immediate prince of the empire, such as a duke or elector.

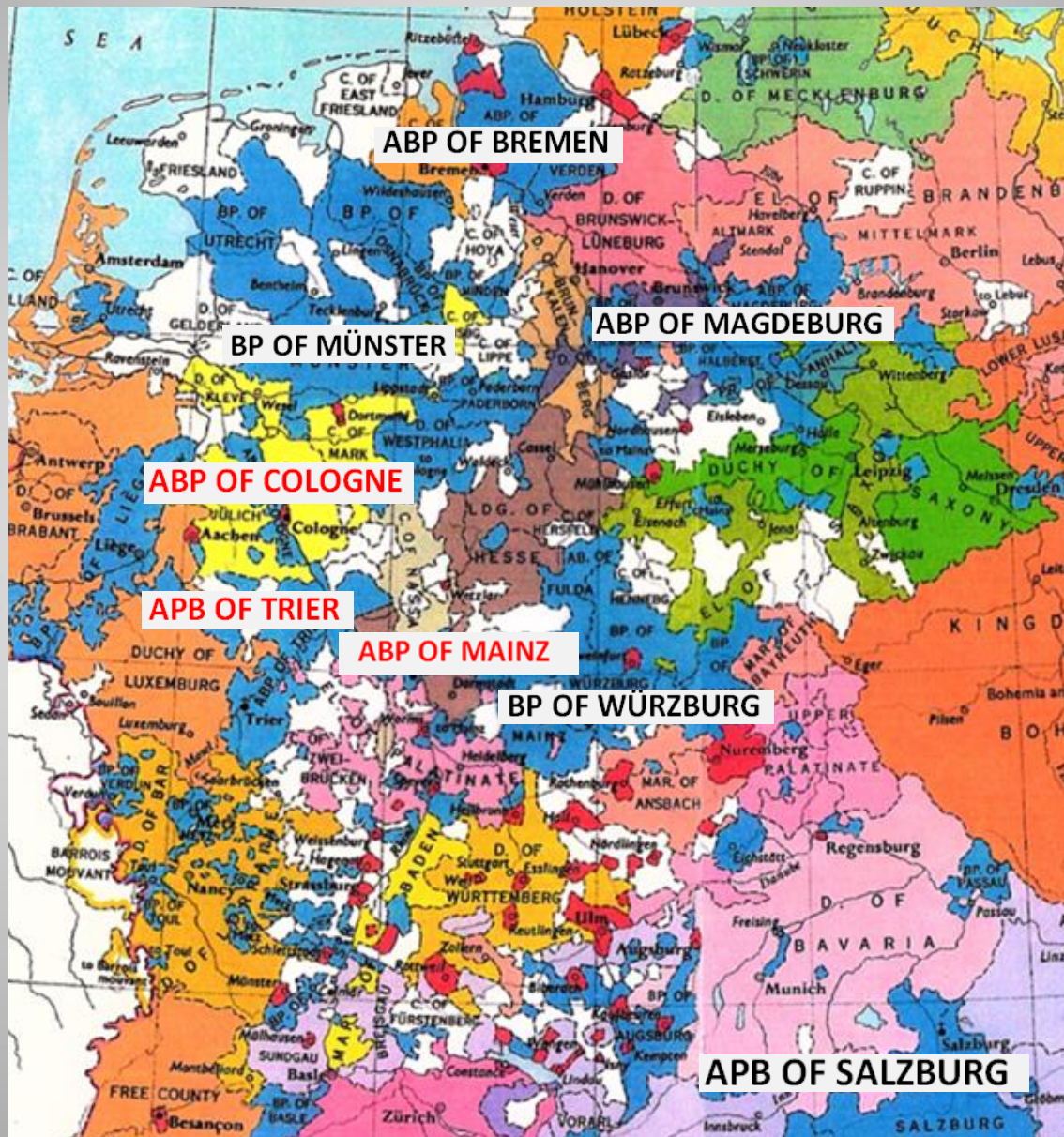
However, the Holy Roman Emperors also occasionally granted the title of Reichsgraf to subjects and foreigners who did not possess and were not granted immediate territories -- or, sometimes, any territory at all. Such titles were purely honorific. In English, Reichsgraf is usually translated simply as count and is combined with a territorial suffix (e.g. Count of Holland, Count Reuss, or a surname Count Fugger, Count von Browne. But even after the abolition of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, the Reichsgrafen retained precedence above other counts in Germany. Those who had been quasi-sovereign until German mediatisation retained, until 1918, status and privileges pertaining to members of reigning dynasties. A gefürsteter Graf (in English, princely count) is a Reichsgraf who has been made Reichsgraf by an act of the king, as opposed to one whose ancestors have held this privilege since the High Middle Ages.

German	English	Comment/ etymology
Markgraf	<i>Margrave</i> (only continental) or <i>Marquess</i>	<i>Mark</i> = march (border province) + <i>Graf</i> . Exercised authority over territory on the border of the Empire.
Landgraf	<i>Landgrave</i>	<i>Land</i> (country) + <i>Graf</i> . Exercised authority over an entire province.
Reichsgraf	<i>Imperial Count</i>	<i>Reich</i> , i.e., (the Holy Roman) Empire + <i>Graf</i> . Imperial count, whose title was granted or recognised by the Emperor.
Gefürsteter Graf	<i>Princely Count</i>	German verb for "made into a <i>Reichsfürst</i> " + <i>Graf</i> .
Pfalzgraf	<i>Count Palatine</i> or <i>Palsgrave</i> (the latter is archaic in English)	<i>Pfalz</i> (palatial estate, <i>Palatinate</i>) + <i>Graf</i> . Originally ruled "with the authority of the Imperial Palace"; later, ruler of the "Palace-land", i.e., the Palatinate.
Rheingraf	<i>Rhinegrave</i>	<i>Rhein</i> (river <i>Rhine</i>) + <i>Graf</i> . Ruled territory bordering the Rhine River.
Burggraf	<i>Burgrave</i>	<i>Burg</i> (castle, burgh) + <i>Graf</i> . Ruled territory surrounding or dominated by a fortified castle.
Altgraf	<i>Altgrave</i>	<i>Alt</i> (old) + <i>Graf</i> . A count whose title pre-dated Imperial grants of the comital title. Unique to the <i>Salm</i> family.
Freigraf	<i>Free Count</i>	<i>Frei</i> = free (<i>allodial</i> ?) + <i>Graf</i> . Both a feudal title of comital rank <i>and</i> a more technical office.
Wildgraf	<i>Wildgrave</i>	<i>Wild</i> (game or wilderness) + <i>Graf</i> . Ruled territory centered on a wilderness.
Raugraf	<i>Raugrave</i>	<i>Rau</i> (raw, uninhabited, wilderness) + <i>Graf</i> . Ruled territory centered on an undeveloped area of land.
Vizegraf	<i>Viscount</i>	<i>Vize</i> = vice- (substitute) + <i>Graf</i> .

**THE WORLDLY POWER OF THE CHURCH:
PRINCE-ARCHBISHOPS AND PRINCE-BISHOPS**

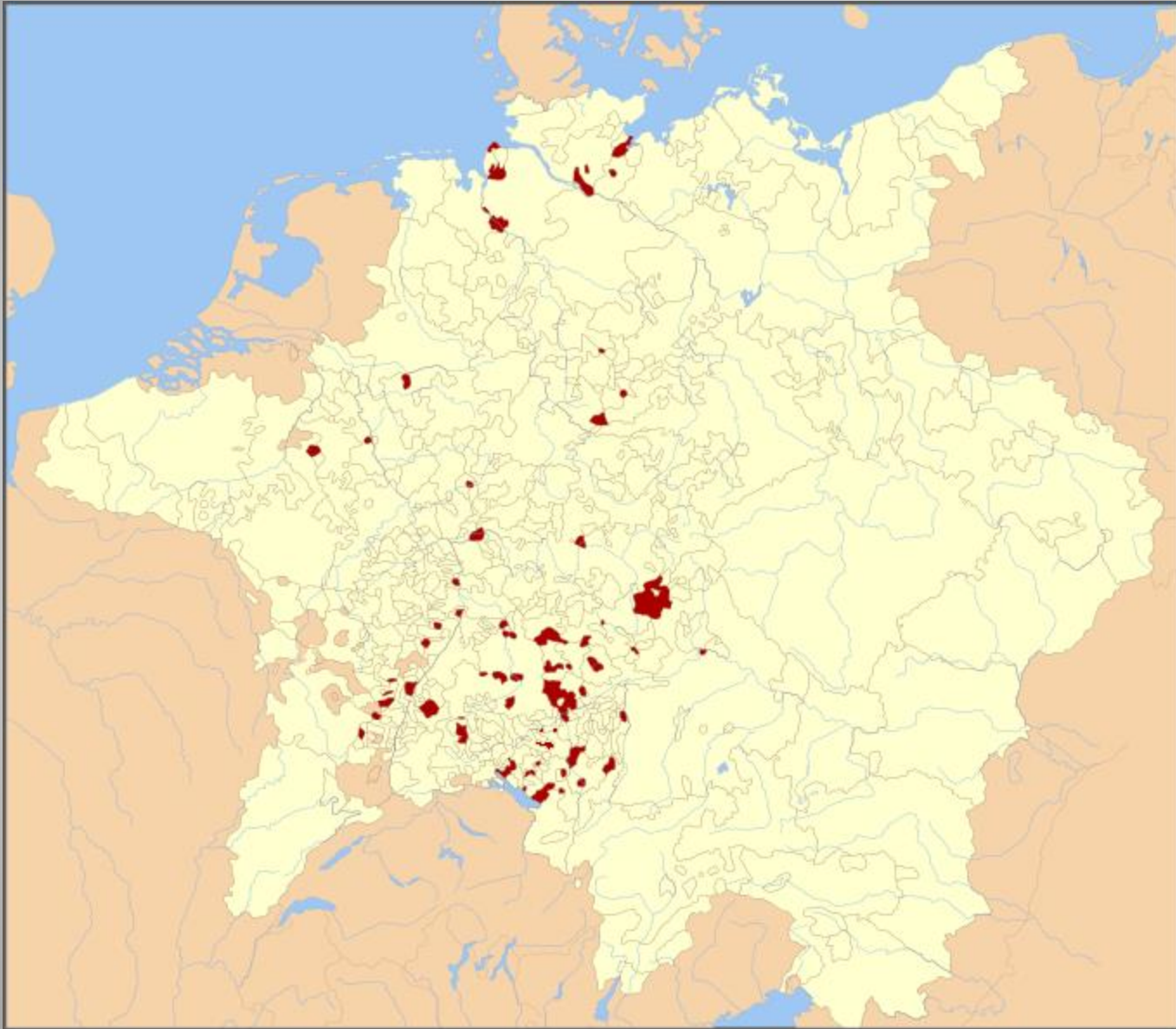


THE WORLDLY POWER OF THE CHURCH: PRINCE-ARCHBISHOPS AND PRINCE-BISHOPS



In Red: Three Prince-Archbishops were Electors of the Empire

THE FREE IMPERIAL CITIES (shown in red)





THE FREE IMPERIAL CITIES (shown in red)

Most had become self-governing in late medieval times, by ousting their ruling Bishop or Archbishop and getting a charter from the Emperor.

They were ruled by wealthy oligarchies of merchants and craftsmen, and their taxes paid to the Emperor were a significant part of his income.

Trade flourishing in the North Sea and over the Alps to Italy made this the last era of wealth and influence for the German cities.

THE FREE IMPERIAL KNIGHTS

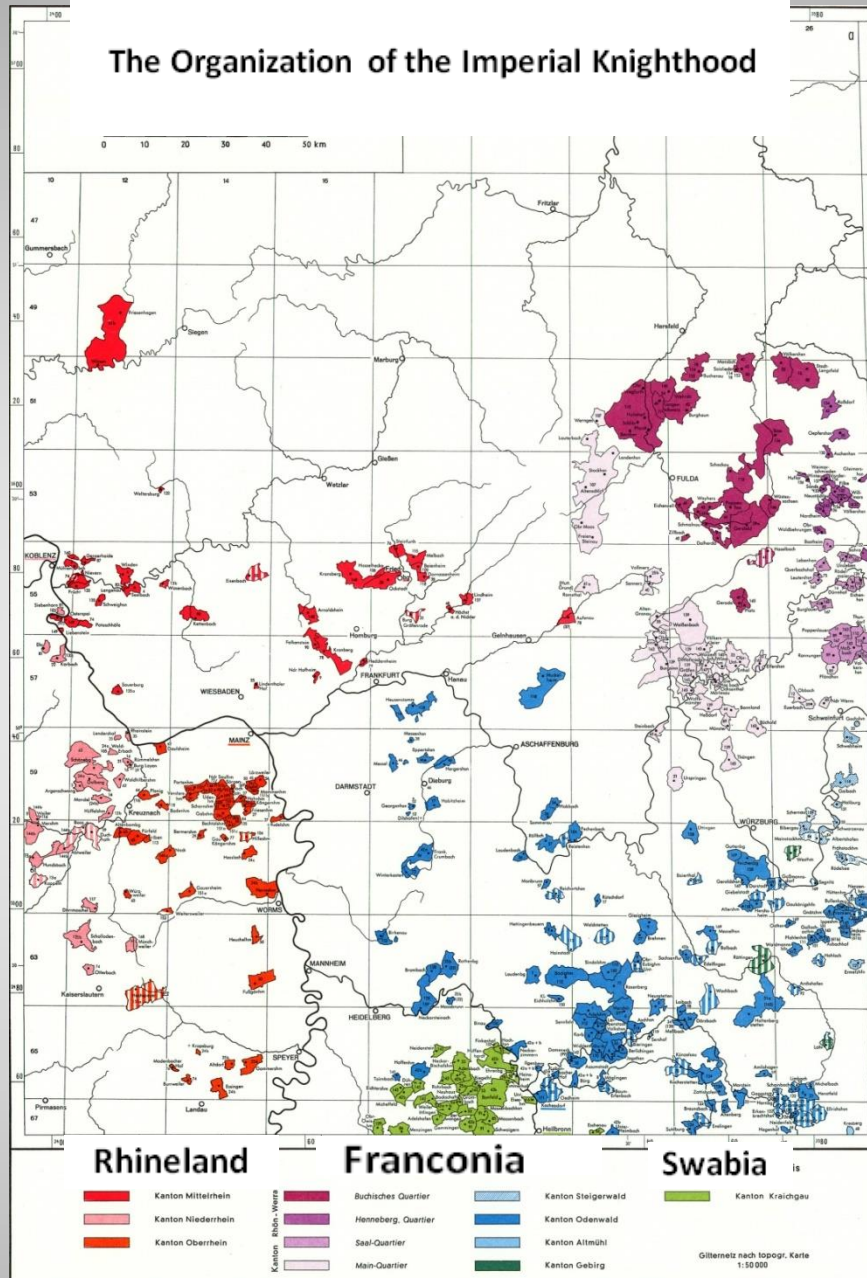
(Reichsritter)

Part of the lowest level of the nobility, the Imperial Knights owed allegiance only to the Emperor and were not vassals of any other prince like other knights.

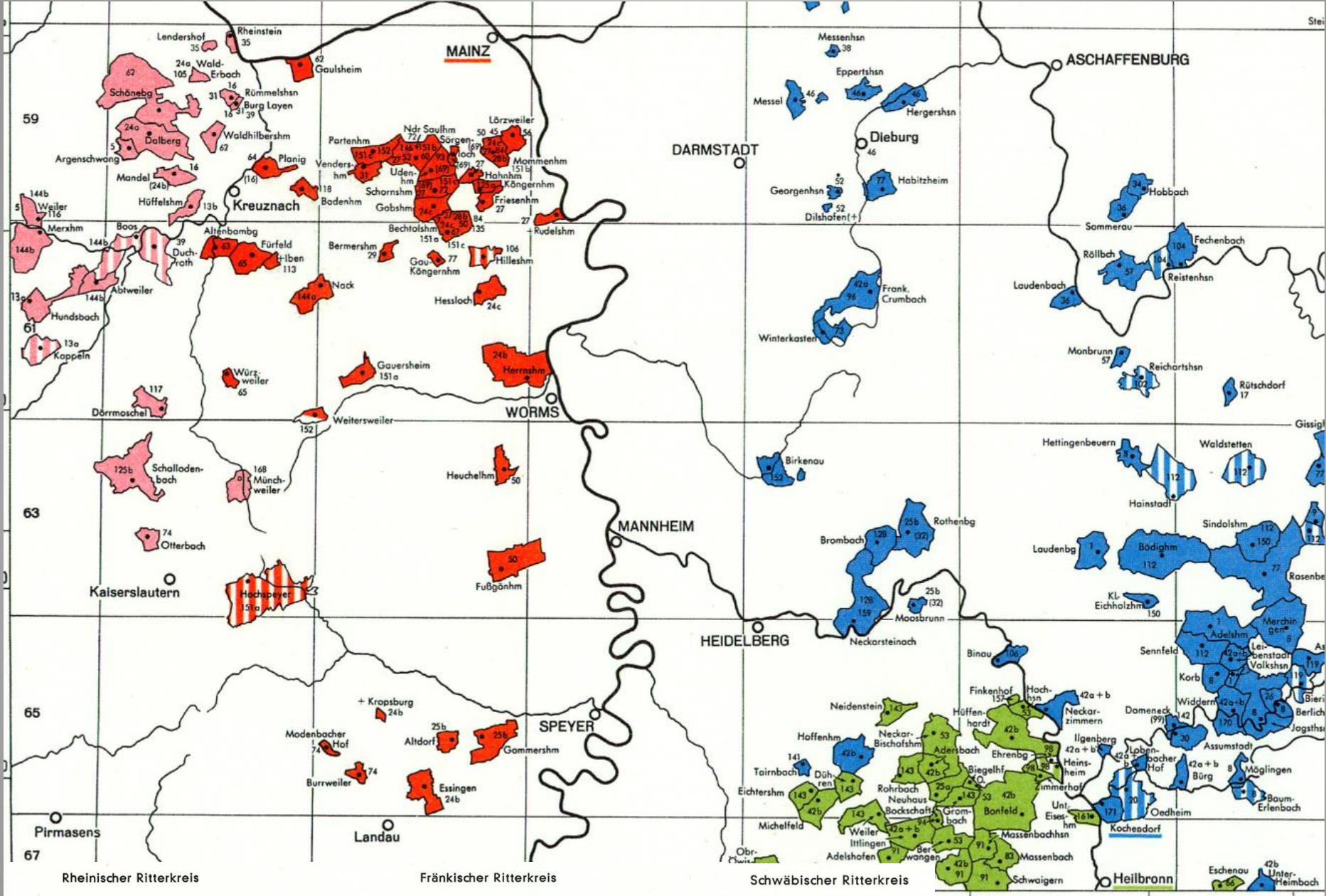
There were 400 to 500 of these families, located in southwest and south central Germany. Each ruled over a small territory of a few square miles, often with one castle and one or two peasant villages.



The Organization of the Imperial Knighthood



—Three regional groupings (“Kreise,” Circles)—



Rheinischer Ritterkreis

Fränkischer Ritterkreis

Schwäbischer Ritterkreis

- Kanton Mittelrhein
- Kanton Niederrhein
- Kanton Oberrhein

Kanton Rhön-Werra

- Buchisches Quartier
- Henneberg, Quartier
- Saal-Quartier
- Main-Quartier

- Kanton Steigerwald
- Kanton Odenwald
- Kanton Allmühl
- Kanton Gebirg

- Kanton Kraichgau

Gitternetz nach topogr. Karte
1:50 000

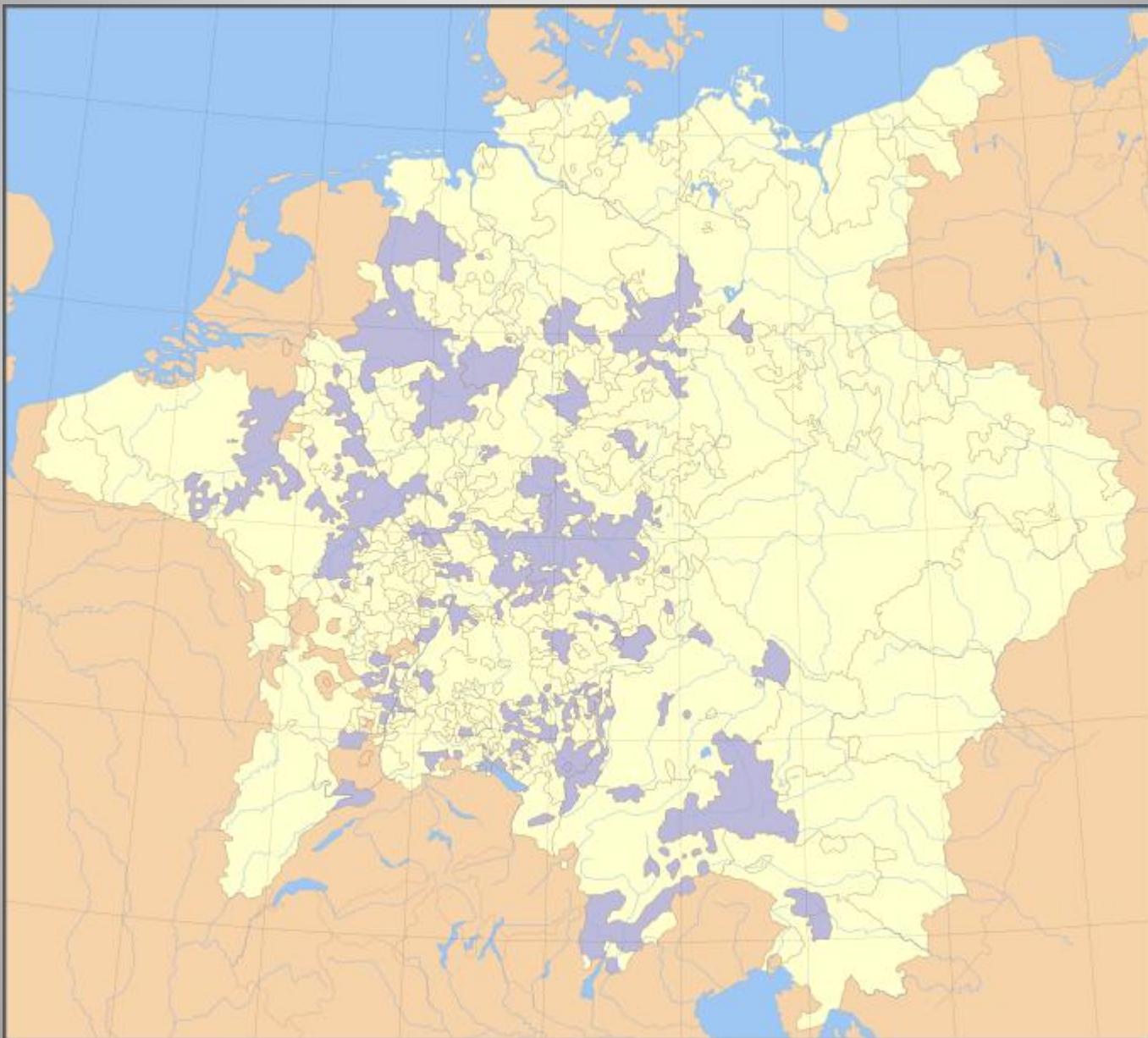
THE FREE IMPERIAL KNIGHTS

In an age of rising prices, the traditional taxes paid by their peasants were not enough to maintain a noble style of life. Other ways of increasing income had to be found:

- taking service under a nearby prince, often as Amtmann (district governor).
- raising and leading mercenary soldiers for the armies of the Emperor or others.
- banditry, robbery, kidnapping for ransom (“robber barons”).
- declaring feud (*Fehde*), private warfare, purportedly to right a wrong done to someone whose cause would be adopted (but often just an excuse for profitable banditry or kidnapping!).
- a lucky few would take service in the ecclesiastical states, sometimes rising to be Bishop or Archbishop.



**THE WORLDLY POWER OF THE CHURCH:
PRINCE-ARCHBISHOPS AND PRINCE-BISHOPS**



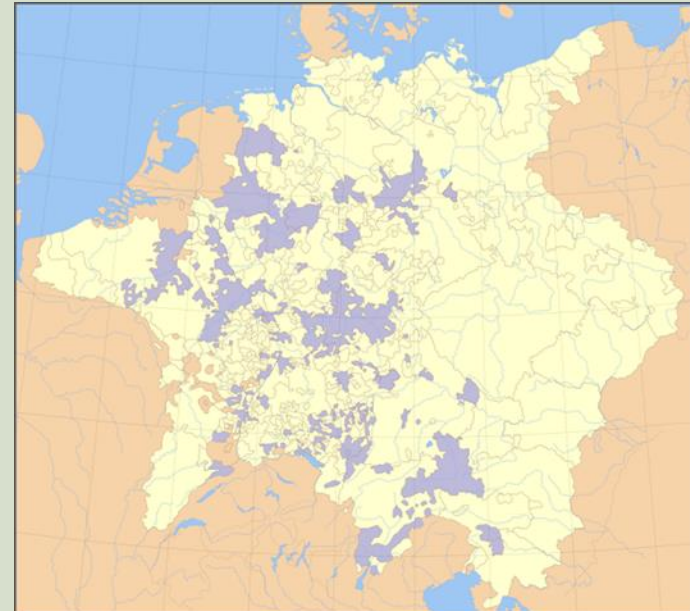
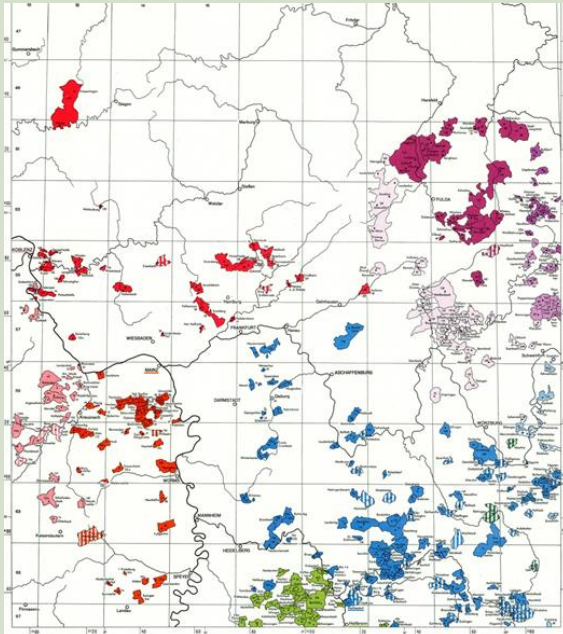
CLOSE TIES BETWEEN WEAK POWERS:

THE IMPERIAL KNIGHTS AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH PRINCIPALITIES

One-fifth of Germany was ruled by archbishoprics, bishoprics, abbeys or monasteries of the Catholic Church. Each of these had a “Cathedral Chapter” or other group of religious officials, who assisted in governing them and who elected the next ruler when one died (subject to Papal approval).

Many of these officials were from families of Imperial Knights. This meant that these two elements of the Empire’s political system, quite weak in terms of power politics and military might, were joined as key supporters of the Emperor and the existing balance of power. The Emperors were able to give legitimacy to this system, and to keep the German princes from taking over these weak neighbors.

So the Empire had “just enough” power to maintain its diversity, down to the early 19th century!



Lawlessness and Violence

The late medieval world experienced and endured more violence than we are used to today. Maybe it can be compared with America's 19th-century "Wild West" in that regard. Both had peacekeeping laws and institutions that were inadequate to the problem, until later generations strengthened them.



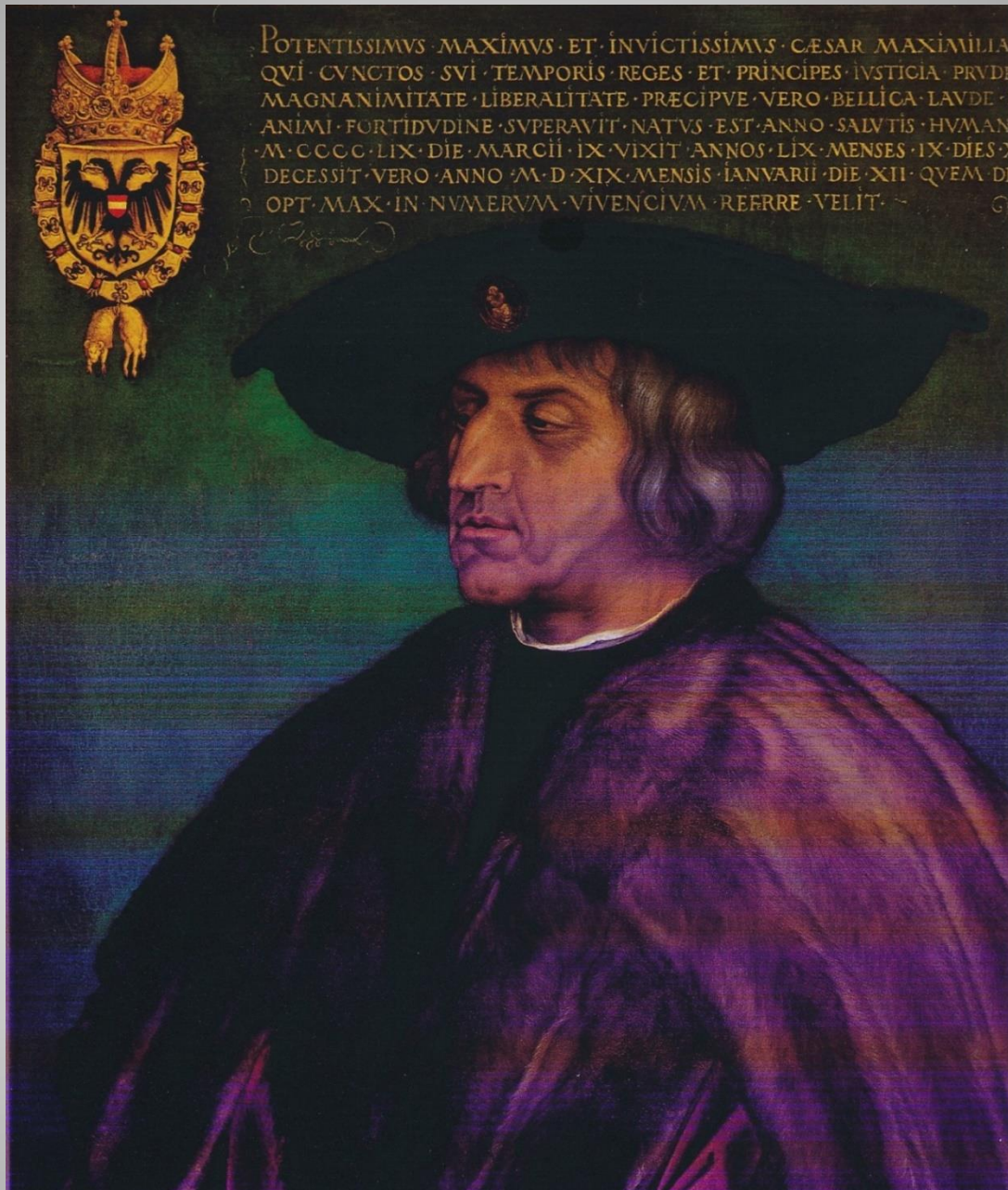
- In Germany, sources of violence included—
- Regional wars between principalities or cities.
 - Formally declared Feuds (Fehden), private warfare by individuals or small groups, theoretically to right a wrong, actually often for selfish purposes.
 - Banditry and robbery, including hostage-taking for ransom.





1483





POTENTISSIMVS · MAXIMVS · ET · INVICTISSIMVS · CÆSAR · MAXIMILIANVS ·
QVI · CVNCTOS · SVI · TEMPORIS · REGES · ET · PRINCIPES · IVSTICIA · PVDE ·
MAGNANIMITATE · LIBERALITATE · PRECIPVE · VERO · BELLICA · LAVDE ·
ANIMI · FORTITVDINE · SVPERAVIT · NATVS · EST · ANNO · SALVTIS · HVMANE ·
M · CCCC · LIX · DIE · MARCII · IX · VIXIT · ANNOS · LIX · MENSES · IX · DIES ·
DECESSIT · VERO · ANNO · M · D · XIX · MENSIS · IANVARIJ · DIE · XII · QVEM · DE ·
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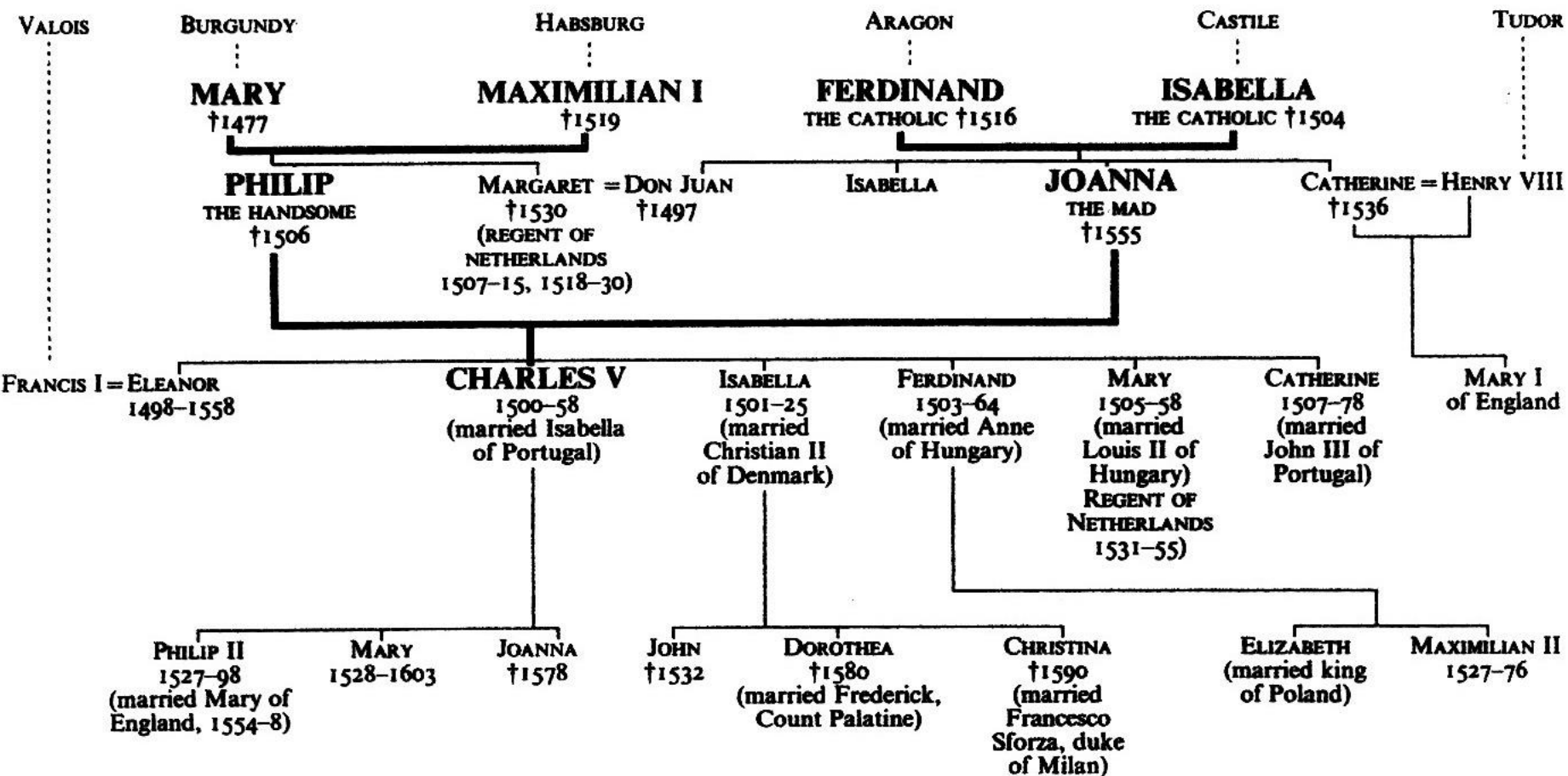
Emperor Maximilian I



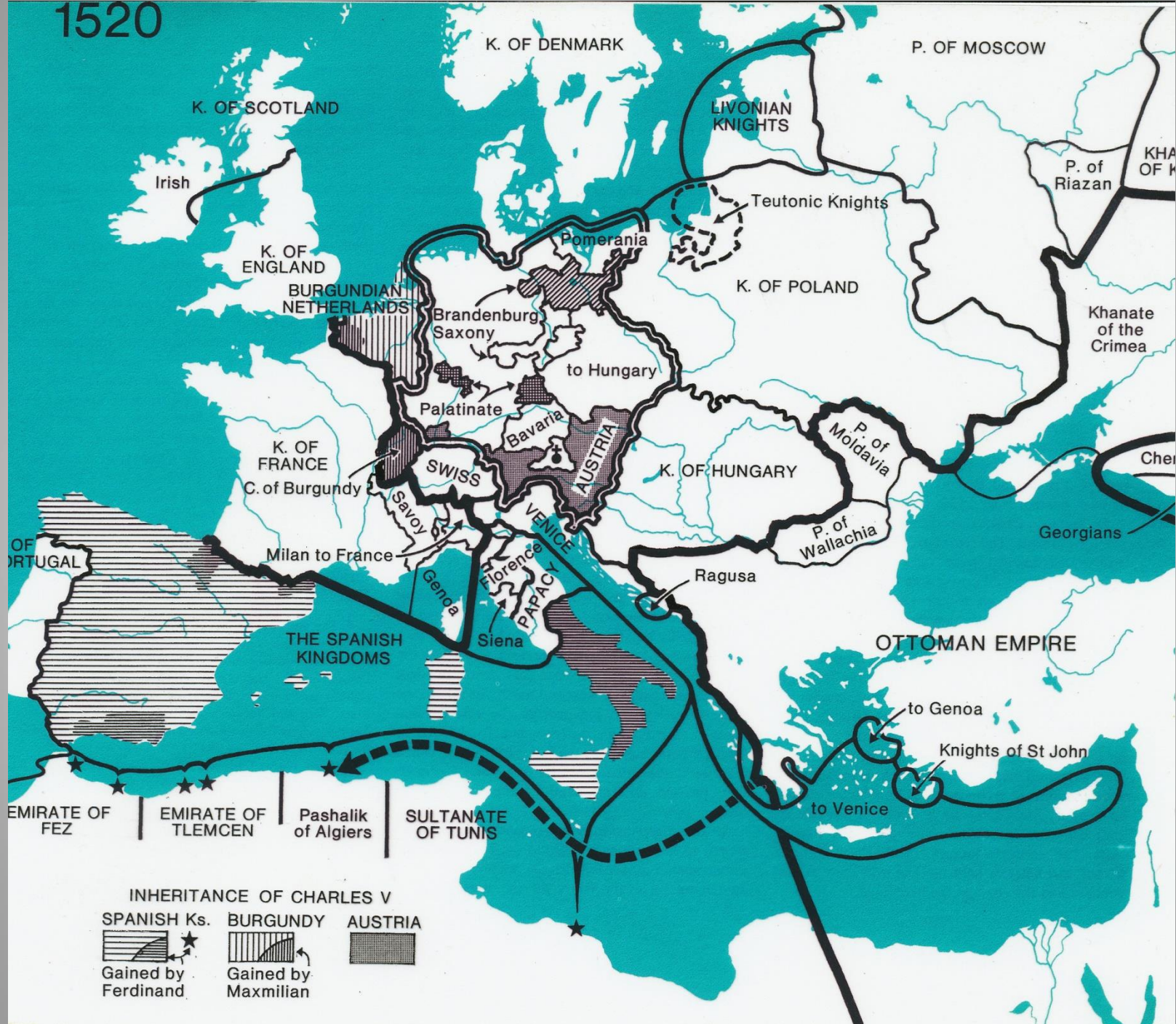
**Maximilian's grandson, the future Emperor Charles V,
who inherited four empires**



The Family of Charles V

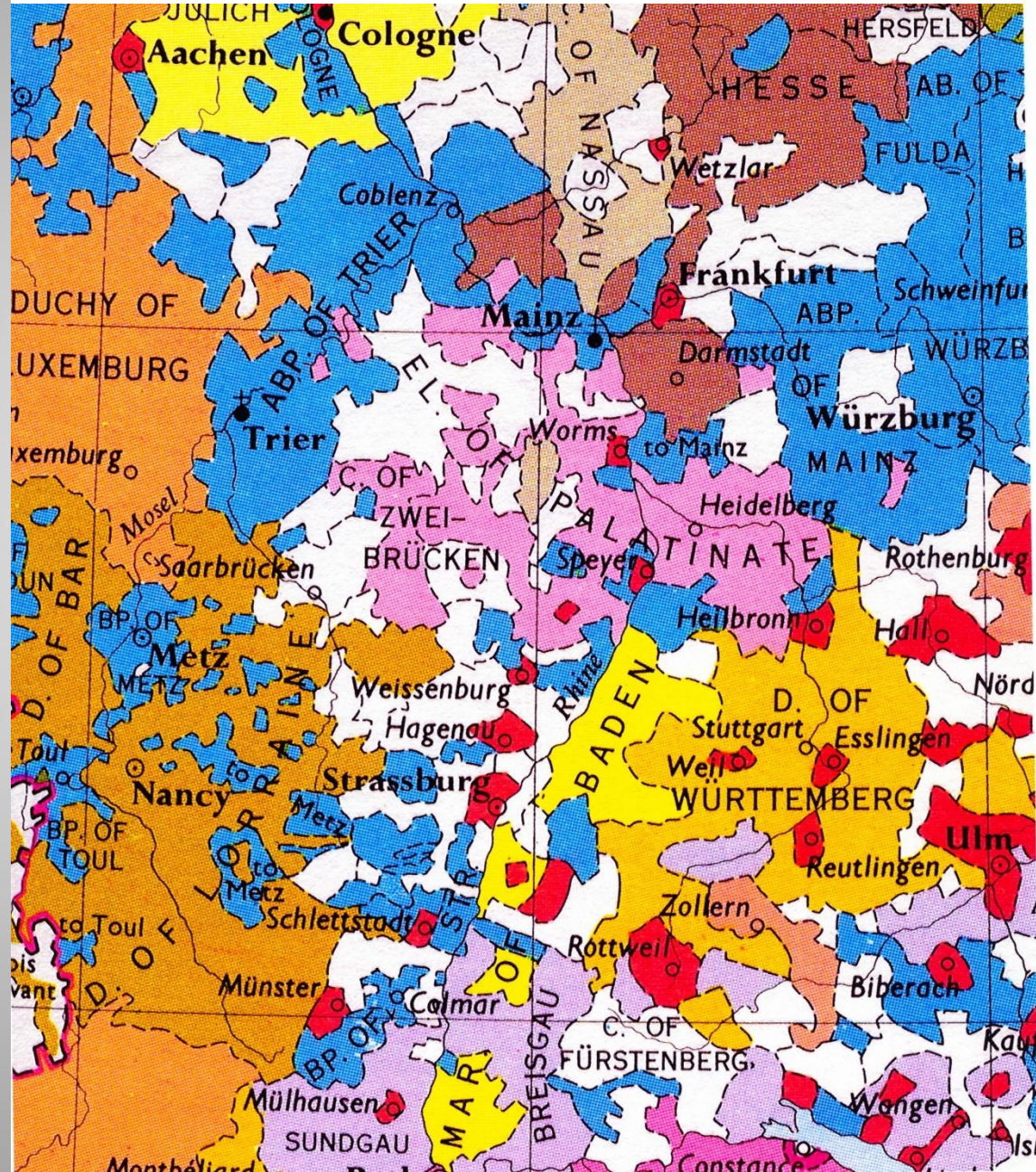


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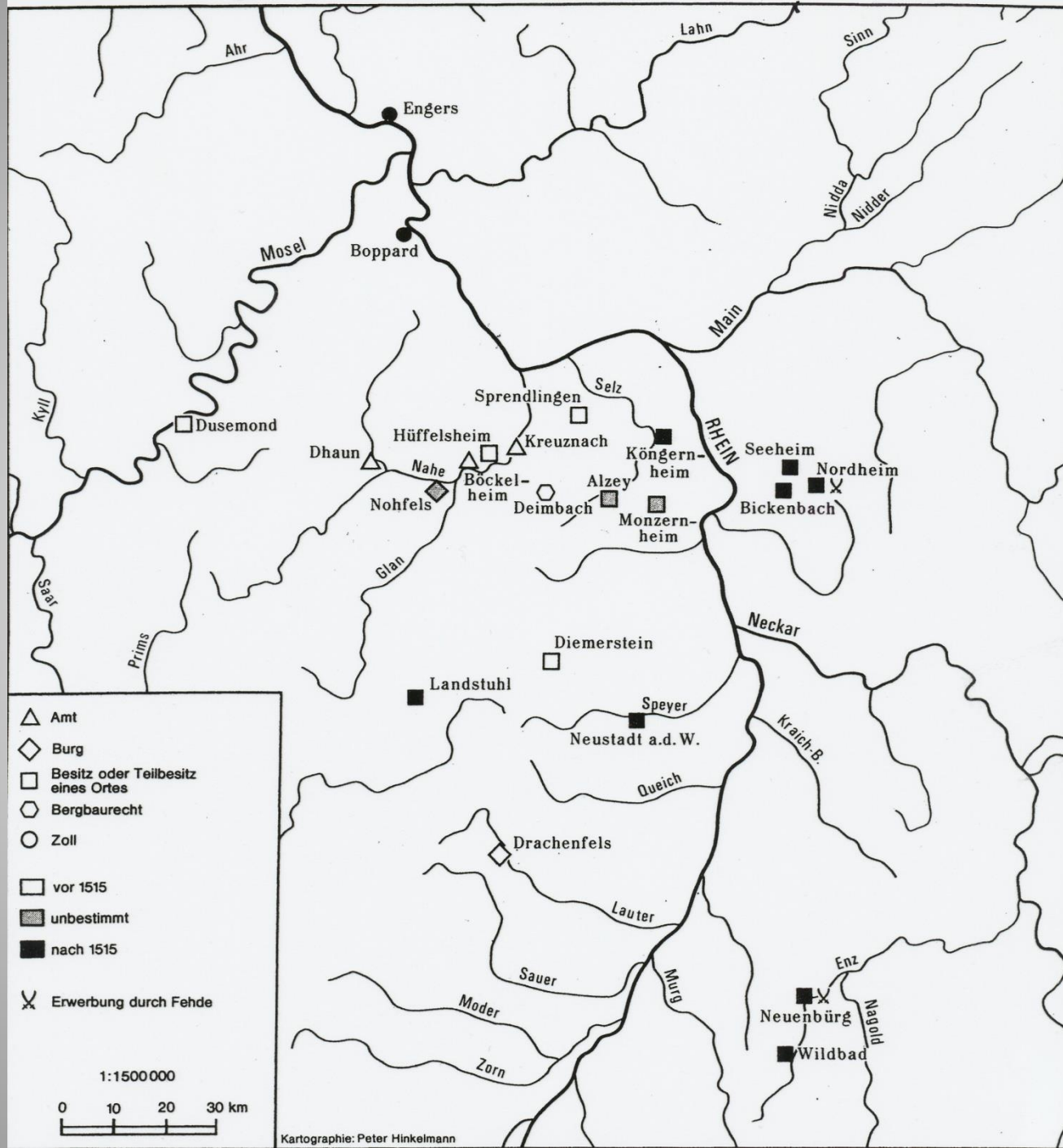




The Rhineland in 1500



Besitzerwerbungen durch Franz von Sickingen



Die Ebernburg, Holzschnitt, 1523





Eltz Castle