House of Hohenstaufen

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The **House of Hohenstaufen** (or **the Staufer**) was a dynasty of German kings in the High Middle Ages, lasting from 1138 to 1254. Three of these kings were also crowned Holy Roman Emperor. In 1194 the Hohenstaufens also became Kings of Sicily. *Hohenstaufen* or *Staufen*, the adjective and plural of Staufer, is also the name of their castle in Swabia, located on an eponymous mountain near Göppingen, built by the first known member of the dynasty, Duke Frederick I. The dynasty is sometimes called **Swabian dynasty** after the family's ducal origin.

Staufer



Country	Holy Roman Empire Kingdom of Germany Kingdom of Sicily Duchy of Swabia
Titles	Holy Roman Emperor King of the Romans King of Sicily Duke of Swabia
Founder	Frederick I, Duke of Swabia
Final sovereign	Conradin
Founding	1079
Dissolution	1268

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Origins as dukes of Swabia

In 1079, the Salian king Henry IV of Germany appointed Count Frederick at Hohenstaufen Castle as Duke of Swabia. At the same time, Frederick was engaged to the king's approximately seven-year old daughter, Agnes. Nothing is known about Frederick's life before this event. He proved to be a close ally of Henry IV in his struggle against other Swabian lords, namely Rudolf of Rheinfelden (the previous duke), and the Zähringen and Welf lords. Frederick's brother Otto became bishop of Strasbourg in 1082.

Frederick I was succeeded by his son Duke Frederick II in 1105. Frederick II remained a close ally of the Salians, he and his younger brother Conrad were named the king's representatives in Germany when the king was in Italy. Around 1120, Frederick II married Judith of Bavaria from the rival House of Welf.

Coat of arms

Coat of arms of the Hohenstaufen emperors

Hohenstaufen emporer arms.svg

Details

Adopted	1196
Escutcheon	The Imperial Eagle of the Holy Roman Empire
Other elements	An inescutcheon of three léopards
Earlier versions	A single black lion on a gold background (*Or, a lion sable*) used until 1196

When Frederick I became Duke of Swabia in 1079, his coat of arms showed a black lion on a gold shield. Whilst members of the family reigned as German Kings and Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, the Hohenstaufen coat of arms was used as a breast shield on the empire's coat of arms. Philip of Swabia, elected German king in 1198, changed the coat of arms – the lion was replaced by three leopards,[1] probably derived form the arms of his Welf rival Otto IV.

Ruling in Germany

When the last male member of the Salian dynasty, Emperor Henry V, had died without heirs in 1125, a controversy arose about the succession. Duke Frederick II and Conrad, the two current male Staufer, by their mother Agnes were grandsons of late Emperor Henry IV and nephews of Henry V. Frederick ran for King of the Romans, but lost the election against the Saxon duke Lothair of Supplinburg. A civil war between the Staufer and King Lothair ended with Frederick's submission in 1134. After the Lothair's death in 1137, Conrad was elected King of the Romans. Frederick II died in 1147 and was succeeded as Swabian duke by his son Frederick III. When Conrad died without adult heir in 1152, Frederick III also succeeded him as King Frederick I of Germany.

Frederick Barbarossa

King Frederick I, known as Frederick Barbarossa because of his red beard, struggled throughout his reign to restore the power and prestige of the German monarchy against the dukes, who had grown stronger both during and after the Investiture Controversy under his Salian prdecessors. As royal access to the resources of the church in Germany was much reduced, Frederick was forced to go to Italy to find the finances needed to restore the king's power in Germany. He was soon crowned emperor in Italy, but decades of warfare on the peninsula yielded scant results. The Papacy and the prosperous city-states of the Lombard League in northern Italy were traditional enemies, but the fear of Imperial domination caused them to join ranks to fight Frederick. Under the skilled leadership of Pope Alexander III, the alliance suffered many defeats but ultimately was able to deny the emperor a complete victory in Italy. Frederick returned to Germany. He had vanquished one notable opponent, his Welf cousin, Duke Henry the Lion of Saxony and Bavaria in 1180, but his hopes of restoring the power and prestige of the monarchy seemed unlikely to be met by the end of his life.

During Frederick's long stays in Italy, the German princes became stronger and began a successful colonization of Slavic lands. Offers of reduced taxes and manorial duties enticed many Germans to settle in the east in the course of the *Ostsiedlung*. In 1163 Frederick waged a successful campaign against the Kingdom of Poland in order to re-install the Silesian dukes of the Piast dynasty. With the German colonization, the Empire increased in size and came to include the Duchy of Pomerania as well as Bohemia and the March of Moravia. A quickening economic life in Germany increased the number of towns and Imperial cities, and gave them greater importance. It was also during this period that castles and courts replaced monasteries as centers of culture. Growing out of this courtly culture, Middle High German literature reached its peak in lyrical love poetry, the Minnesang, and in narrative epic poems such as *Tristan*, *Parzival*, and the *Nibelungenlied*.

Henry VI

Frederick died in 1190 while on the Third Crusade and was succeeded by his son, Henry VI. Elected king even before his father's death, Henry went to Rome to be crowned emperor. He married Queen Constance of Sicily, and a death in his wife's family in 1194 gave him possession of the Kingdom of Sicily, a source of vast wealth. Henry failed to make royal and Imperial succession hereditary, but in 1196 he succeeded in gaining a pledge that his infant son Frederick would receive the German crown. Faced with difficulties in Italy and confident that he would realize his wishes in Germany at a later date, Henry returned to the south, where it appeared he might unify the peninsula under the Hohenstaufen name. After a series of military victories, however, he fell ill and died of natural causes in Sicily in 1197. His underage son Frederick could only succeed him in Sicily, while in the Empire the struggle between the Hohenstaufen and the House of Welf erupted once again.



Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and his sons King Henry VI and Duke Frederick V of Swabia, *Welfenchronik*, 1167/79, Weingarten Abbey

Because the election of a three-year-old boy to be German king appeared likely to make orderly rule difficult, the boy's uncle, Duke Philip of Swabia, brother of late Henry VI, was designated to serve in his place. Other factions however favoured a Welf candidate. In 1198, two rival kings were chosen: the Hohenstaufen Philip of Swabia and the son of the deprived Duke Henry the Lion, the Welf Otto IV. A long civil war began; Philip was about to win when he was murdered by the Bavarian count palatine Otto of Wittelsbach in 1208. Pope Innocent III initially had supported the Welfs, but when Otto, now sole elected monarch, moved to appropriate Sicily, Innocent changed sides and accepted young Frederick II and his ally, King Philip II of France, who defeated Otto at the 1214 Battle of Bouvines. Frederick had returned to Germany in 1212 from Sicily, where he had grown up, and was elected king in 1215. When Otto died in 1218, Fredrick became the undisputed ruler, and in 1220 was crowned Holy Roman Emperor.

Decline

The conflict between the Hohenstaufen and the Welf had irrevocably weakened the Imperial authority and the Norman kingdom of Sicily became the base for Hohenstaufen rule.

Frederick II

Emperor Frederick II spent little time in Germany as his main concerns lay in Southern Italy. He founded the University of Naples in 1224 to train future state officials and reigned over Germany primarily through the allocation of royal prerogatives, leaving the sovereign authority and imperial estates to the ecclesiastical and secular princes. He made significant concessions to the German nobles, such as those put forth in an imperial statute of 1232, which made princes virtually independent rulers within their territories. These measures favoured the further fragmentation of the Empire.

By the 1226 Golden Bull of Rimini, Frederick had assigned the military order of the Teutonic Knights to complete the conquest and conversion of the Prussian lands. A reconciliation with the Welfs took place in 1235, whereby Otto the Child, grandson of the late Saxon duke Henry the Lion, was named Duke of Brunswick and Lüneburg. The power struggle with the popes continued and resulted in Fredrick's excommunication in 1227. In 1239, Pope Gregory IX excommunicated Fredrick again, and in 1245 he was condemned as a heretic by a church council. Although Frederick was one of the most energetic, imaginative, and capable rulers of the time, he was not concerned with drawing the disparate forces in Germany together. His legacy was thus that local rulers had more authority after his reign than before it. The clergy also had become more powerful.

Frederick II with his falcon, from *De arte venandi cum avibus*, c. 1240, Vatican Library

By the time of Frederick's death in 1250, little centralized power remained in Germany. The Great Interregnum, a period in which there were several elected rival kings non of whom was able to achieve any position of authority, followed the death of Frederick's son King Conrad IV of Germany in 1254. The German princes vied for individual advantage and managed to strip many powers away from the diminished monarchy. Rather than establish sovereign states however, many nobles tended to look after their families. Their many male heirs created more and smaller estates, and from a largely free class of officials previously formed, many of these assumed or acquired hereditary rights to administrative and legal offices. These trends compounded political fragmentation within Germany. The period was ended with the election of Rudolph of Habsburg in 1273.

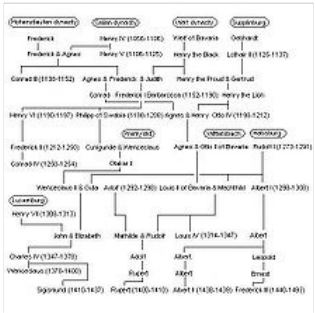
End of the Hohenstaufen

Conrad IV was succeeded as duke of Swabia by his only son, two-year old Conradin. By this time, the office of duke of Swabia had been fully subsumed into the office of the king, and without royal authority had become meaningless. In 1261, attempts to elect young Conradin king were unsuccessful. He also had to defend Sicily against an invasion by Charles of Anjou, a brother of the French king. Conradin's campaign to retake control ended with his defeat in 1268 at the Battle of Tagliacozzo after which he was handed over to Charles, who had him publicly executed at Naples. With Conradin, the line of the Dukes of Swabia finally ceased to exist. Most of the later emperors were descended from the Hohenstaufen.

During the political decentralization of the late Hohenstaufen period, the population had grown from an estimated 8 million in 1200 to about 14 million in 1300, and the number of towns increased tenfold. The most heavily urbanized areas of Germany were located in the south and the west. Towns often developed a degree of independence, but many were subordinate to local rulers if not immediate to the emperor. Colonization of the east also continued in the thirteenth century, most notably through the efforts of the Teutonic Knights. German merchants also began trading extensively on the Baltic.

Members of the Hohenstaufen family

Holy Roman Emperors and Kings of Germany



Family tree of the Hohenstaufen emperors including their relation to succeeding dynasties

- Conrad III, king 1138-1152
- Frederick I Barbarossa, king 1152-1190, Emperor after 1155
- Henry VI, king 1190-1197, Emperor after 1191
- Philip of Swabia, king 1198-1208
- Frederick II, king 1208-1250, Emperor after 1220
- Henry (VII), king 1220 - 1235 (under his father Frederick II)
- Conrad IV, king 1237-1254 (until 1250 under his father Frederick II)

Like the first ruling Hohenstaufen, Conrad III, also the last one, Conrad IV, was never crowned emperor. After a 20 year period (Interregnum 1254-1273) the first Habsburg was elected king.

Kings of Sicily

Note: Some of the following kings are already listed above as German Kings



Arms of the Hohenstaufen Sicily

- Henry VI 1194-1197
- Frederick 1198-1250
  - Henry (VII) 1212–1217 (nominal king under his father)
- Conrad 1250-1254
- (Conradin 1254-1258/1268)
- Manfred 1258-1266

Dukes of Swabia

Note: Some of the following dukes are already listed above as German Kings

- Frederick I, Duke of Swabia (*Friedrich*) (r. 1079 - 1105)
- Frederick II, Duke of Swabia (r. 1105 - 1147)
- Frederick I, Holy Roman Emperor (Frederick III of Swabia)(r. 1147 - 1152) *King in 1152 and Holy Roman Emperor in 1155*
- Frederick IV, Duke of Swabia (r. 1152 - 1167)
- Frederick V, Duke of Swabia (r. 1167 - 1170)
- Frederick VI, Duke of Swabia (r. 1170 - 1191)
- Conrad II, Duke of Swabia (r. 1191 - 1196)
- Philip of Swabia (r. 1196 - 1208) *King in 1198*
- Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor (r. 1212 - 1216) *King in 1212 and Holy Roman Emperor in 1220*
- Henry (VII) of Germany (r. 1216 - 1235), *King 1220 - 1235*
- Conrad IV (r. 1235 - 1254) *King in 1237*
- Conrad V (Conradin) (r. 1254 - 1268)

See also

- Kings of Germany family tree. The Hohenstaufen were the 6th dynasty to rule Germany and were related by marriage to all the earlier dynasties.
- Dukes of Swabia family tree
- List of monarchs of Sicily. Hohenstaufen kings ruled in Sicily from 1194 till Manfred of Sicily was killed in the Battle of Benevento in 1266.
- During the Third Reich, the Waffen-SS named an SS Panzer division "Hohenstaufen".
- Coat of arms of Baden-Württemberg

References

1. ^ Stälin, Paul Friedrich (1882.). *Geschichte Württembergs Erster Band Erste Hälfte (bis 1268)*. Gotha,. pp. 389–393.

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