

**ASPECTS OF FRANCONIA**

**A Glimpse into the Lives of Heinrich II and his Wife Kunigunde**



Inextricably linked to the historical, cultural and religious development of Bamberg is the imperial couple, Heinrich II (973-1024) and his wife Kunigunde (980-1033).

Heinrich, son of the banished Heinrich der Zänker (Henry the Quarrelsome), became Duke of Bavaria in 995, was elected King of Germany in 1002, King of Italy in 1004 and crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1014. Bamberg, his favourite dwelling place, was a wedding gift to his wife Kunigunde and soon became the place from which he conducted his government business and organized his military campaigns. Being very pious, he also decided to establish a diocese in his kingdom and started work on his first cathedral in 1002.

After burning down twice, in 1081 and 1185, and each time being rebuilt, Bamberg Cathedral was finally consecrated in 1237. The tomb of Heinrich, canonized by Pope Benedikt XIII in 1146, and Kunigunde, canonized in 1201, was created 1499-1513, by sculptor Tilman Riemenschneider. The elaborate carvings on the top depict the Emperor and Empress lying side by side while those on the sides reflect the influence of Renaissance art and tell of various episodes in their lives. Heinrich was the last of the Ottonian Dynasty. As he and Kunigunde had no heirs, their marriage was deemed Josephite. One scene shows Kunigunde forced to walk over hot coals without being harmed as proof of her chastity. The Empress had been accused of committing adultery.

Since last October Bamberg has been celebrating the 1,000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Heinrich's death in 1024. One of the highlights of a series of events to mark the occasion is the exhibition "1,000 Years Ago", which invites guests to immerse themselves in the everyday life of an imperial palace. Rather than focusing on Heinrich and Kunigunde, the exhibition shows their rule, military campaigns and the court through the eyes of the general population and answers questions about how people lived back then., what was eaten, which clothes were worn, how people spent their day and who went to war with the Emperor.

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