



CARRY ON THE FLAME

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The Golden Bull of 1356

In addition to buildings, documents can also be included in the World Heritage List. An example from Frankfurt is the Golden Bull. The term bull refers to the large golden seal on the document.

Prehistory

In the middle ages the princes of the territories have chosen the king candidate. Who got the majority of votes, became the king. The king's exercise was making the rival candidates his opinion. He did this with granting privileges.

After the Staufer's reign time was an interregnum, a time of transitional government, in which the king always lost more influence. That happened because there was a disagreement over the election of the king and unstable might structures. Aristocrats got unlawfully very rich by oppressing less powerful people with new established taxes and duties. That contributed to the lesser might of the Roman Empire. Gradually the people were of the opinion, the king's election had to be exactly regulated and the emperor should create law and justice.

The most important things in a nutshell:

- Imperial Code of the Roman Empire
- First formal Constitution in Germany
- Issued 1356 by emperor Karl IV during an imperial diet of the king in Nuremberg
- In the same year on a Hoftag (assembly of King of the Holy Roman Empire) in Metz it became extended and completed
- Valid (in modified form) until 1806
- Regulates the conditions of the election and coronation of kings and emperors of the Holy Roman Empire
- Returns to older provisions
- Most important document of the Constitution of the Holy Roman Empire
- Name comes from the golden seal, derived from bulla: Latin for seal



Golden Bull (Frankfurt Copy)

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Karl IV – the initiator

In 1346 Charles IV paved the way to the throne. First he was an anti-king, he was set up against Ludwig IV. After Ludwig's death Karl IV has been crowned and had to - like every king - grant special rights. When he had consolidated his position he wanted to rearrange the relationship to the prince-electors.



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The Golden Bull

An imperial diet to create the bull

In 1356 Karl IV organized an imperial diet in the city of Nuremberg. Together this bishops and princes he discussed the modalities of the future elections of the kings of the Holy Roman Empire. The Golden Bull should fix these election modalities by accessing to older regulations and modifying just a few things. The princes and Karl IV discussed for a long time, then they agreed. To clear up discrepancies Karl IV granted privileges but he still could not enforce all of his ideals, like to strengthen the (well – his) central power.

Essential regulations

In the Golden Bull has been set that 7 prince-electors, 3 spirituals and 4 seculars, are entitled for electing the king in Frankfurt. These had to take an oath making decisions without secret collusion or bribery payment. Every prince had a certain function like the chancellorship or representing the military. The chancellor of the German area had the most important function and was allowed to make the decisive final vote in a case of a tie. The pope did not have a voice in the king's election anymore. That was a sign of independence of the prince-electors of the Roman Empire.

As a compensation the princes were ascribed immunity and protection against prosecution, the inheritance of their titles also got regulated. The electoral rights were declared as heritable and indivisible. Furthermore, they got many special rights, like the coinage prerogative, the right to mint and issue coins and the customs law, with it they are allowed to raise taxes and duties in their own territories.



Seven electors decide: 3 spirituals (to the left) and 4 seculars (Electoral assembly in 1341, in Frankfurt)

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