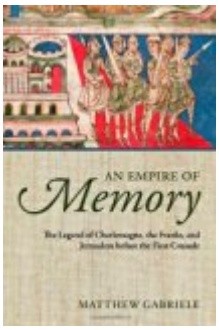
H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Matthew Gabriele. *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 256 pp. $99.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-959144-2.



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Published on H-HRE (June, 2012)

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Matthew Gabriele's *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* weaves together what appear to be disparate threads. It explores how the stature of Charlemagne grew from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, as his expanding legend engendered grandiose memories of a Golden Age and a united Christendom. During those same centuries, tales of the Frankish king were interlaced with the mythology of the Last Emperor, an apocalyptic figure who was prophesied to lead a (re)united Christian people to victory over the enemies of Christ and then to proceed to Jerusalem to relinquish earthly power to God. A mistake of translation rendered this Last Emperor capable of rising from the dead, and thus easily identifiable with Charlemagne, who was rumored to be merely slumbering in his tomb, and who was likewise misunderstood to have traveled to Jerusalem. As these narratives were woven into the fabric of Frankish identity, they closed the conceptual distance between East and West, past and present, and ultimately provided one of the explanations for the massive response to Urban II's call to crusade. So tightly bound were the threads that the crusaders collectively identified as Franks, and several of the primary sources for that expedition described the pilgrims as following "Charlemagne's road" to Constantinople. In this way, "Charlemagne's militant, Frankish, Christian empire prefigured the Last Emperor's; and in the eleventh century, past and future began to converge" (p. 128).

Gabriele's methodology is most original in refusing to discriminate between what modern historians have labeled "historical" sources, on the one hand, and "poetic" or literary sources, on the other (p. 2). By way of justification, he explains that medieval authors did not understand truth or divide genres as we do now: literary figures appeared in falsified charters, for example, and Hugh of Fleury and Albert of Aachen used epic poems as sources for their "historical" chronicles (p. 7). Gabriele's arguments are successful insofar as they enable him to consider a wider range of texts as historically significant (which is definitely

an advantage in a broad study of ideas such as this). Readers who feel that history and literary criticism are fundamentally different enterprises, however, might balk when he carries this point still further to assert that "Historical truth in the Middle Ages should simply be defined as that which was willingly believed" (p. 8). The book will undoubtedly be much more appealing to those who welcome the "linguistic turn" in historical studies than to those (if there are any left) who worry it has led the discipline astray.

An Empire of Memory begins with the birth of the idea of a Frankish Golden Age in the years following Charlemagne's death, as his empire disintegrated and his successors reminisced. Gabriele explains that local religious houses led the way in sanctifying the emperor (and so too the relics they increasingly claimed to have received from him) by commemorating Charlemagne liturgically and associating him with miracles and prophetic visions.

Chapter 2 explores the fable of Charlemagne's voyage to the East by surveying its three substantial pre-1100 narratives. The oldest is the chronicle of Benedict of Monte Soratte (c. 970), which was the first to claim that Charlemagne had made such a journey. Benedict's text appears to be an extended misreading of chapter 16 of Einhard's *Vita Karoli*, which describes Harun al-Rashid granting Charlemagne possession of the Holy Sepulchre. Gabriele intriguingly suggests that Benedict did not err: rather, he "consciously reshaped the narrative to conform with what he believed had 'actually' happened" (p. 69). The other two accounts of Charlemagne's expedition are the late-eleventh-century record of the foundation of Charroux (which, for ease of reference, Gabriele dubs the *Historia*), and the so-called *Descriptio qualiter*. In reaffirming Levillain's dating of the latter to c.1080, as well as in associating it with the chancellery of Philip I and denying that it was produced at Saint-Denis, Gabriele reiterates positions he advanced in a thought-provoking article in *Viator*. Here too, however, his arguments are sometimes more suggestive than conclusive, especially at the end of the chapter, when he tries to tie the three narratives together. Despite acknowledging the lack of any evidence of textual dependence or intermediaries shared amongst the three, Gabriele maintains that we should see them all as part of a "common tradition, linked by their common theme" (p. 66) and "participating in the same discussion" (p. 68). Similarly, Gabriele surmises that stories about Charlemagne's voyage could have been transmitted by guests at monastic houses, "even if we have no firm evidence that this happened" (pp. 65-66). This might be difficult to accept, especially after the author has critiqued another scholar's study of Charlemagne's journey because it "doesn't explain how ideas could travel" (p. 4).

Chapter 3 gauges the attraction of Jerusalem as a pilgrimage destination down to the time of the First Crusade. In the eleventh century, more churches were dedicated to the Holy Sepulchre--some even built according to its precise measurements--and liturgy renewed interest in the terrestrial Jerusalem (p. 81). With relics arriving in ever greater numbers, "the West palpably longed for the city" (p. 73). Yet Gabriele does not see Jerusalem alone as a sufficient explanation for the unprecedented response to Urban's call, and some of his statements suggest the eleventh century did not see much change in pilgrimage at all. He clearly rejects the standard, evolutionary account of pilgrimage, which portrays it steadily rising in popularity amongst all social classes until the eruption of 1095; Gabriele argues instead that elites remained the "vast, vast majority" of those who undertook the journey before the First Crusade (pp. 89-90). He further maintains that "What distinguishes pilgrimages of the eleventh century from those that came before was not that the poor began to go, nor that eleventh-century elites ... practiced it more often, but simply that ***groups of elites began to travel together***" (p. 92; the italics are Gabriele's). This seems difficult to reconcile

with his statement, on the same page, that in the eleventh century, "Pilgrimage to the East increased," as well as with his earlier claim that "By c.1030, pilgrimage to the Holy Land had become more popular than it ever had been before" (p. 86). The chapter may be trying to thread too fine a needle between acknowledging the rising attachment to Jerusalem and denying that it had much practical impact until it was linked to the concepts of Charlemagne, the Franks, and an Eastern empire.

Chapter 4 examines how, from the eighth to the eleventh centuries, the dominion of the Franks was imagined and reimagined as a universal Christian empire stretching to Jerusalem. Gabriele ties this memorializing to the evolution of the fascinating "Last Emperor" legend, which by the eighth century had spread to the West from its origins in the anti-Islamic rhetoric of Byzantine apocalypticism. The story of this figure not only offered Latin Christians assurance of future unity and triumph, but strengthened associations between the Franks and Jerusalem, since Charlemagne quickly took on some of the characteristics of this Last Emperor. Here as well, Gabriele exhibits a tendency to "dream on" his sources in a manner that some readers might find disconcerting. For example, he begins the chapter by unpacking a great deal from one eleventh-century annalist's entry for the year 771, which identifies Charlemagne as "the emperor … who acquired territory all the way to Jerusalem" (p. 97). This suggests to Gabriele that the chronicler associated the imperial title with Frankish power in the East, rather than with Rome or the papacy, because this was "the first time the Saint-Amand annalist used the title *imperator* to describe a ruler and the only time he used it to describe Charlemagne" (p. 97). This argument would seem to require further explanation, given that the edition of the text that Gabriele cites contains an entry for the year 565 that notes the deaths of "Iustinus minor imperator et ... Iustinianus imperator," and its entry for 812 describes Charlemagne's son as "filius imperatoris Caroli Magni." The chapter is much more effective, however, when it turns to revealing how Benzo of Alba deployed the Last Emperor ideology to aggrandize the Salian monarchs (pp. 113-115).

The book's fifth and final chapter contains a somewhat problematic section (pp. 143-145) on Gregory VII's attempts to mount an expedition to help Christians in the East. Here ***An Empire of Memory*** cites but in some ways takes a step backwards from the achievements of H. E. J. Cowdrey's seminal narrative of the pope's botched "crusading" plans of 1074. Gabriele implies that it was only towards the end of that year that the papal expedition took shape and that Gregory decided to lead the army personally, and he hangs a considerable amount of weight on a rather precarious reading of papal actions and rhetoric. Cowdrey long ago noted that the pope's use of the first person plural in his letter to Count William of Upper Burgundy indicates that Gregory was planning to go as early as February. [1] Furthermore, Gabriele neglects to mention the sources that prove that the pope indeed left Rome for a mustering of troops in June. These include two papal letters (I.84 and 85) that were "Data in expeditione," in one of which Gregory compares Countesses Beatrice and Matilda of Tuscany (who brought a sizeable contingent to the assembly) to the women who sought the sepulcher of the Lord. ***An Empire of Memory*** also ignores the two most detailed accounts of this operation, namely the ***Historia Normannorum*** of Amatus of Montecassino and the ***Liber ad amicum*** of Bonizo of Sutri. Awareness of Bonizo's work in particular might lead to a tempering of Gabriele's earlier claim that nothing in the eleventh century "seems to have been leading us towards a peculiar brand of Christian religious violence that would erupt in 1095" (p. 97). ***An Empire of Memory*** certainly cannot be faulted for reiterating what is now the orthodoxy that the pope's efforts atrophied when he redirected his ire towards enemies in the West (above all King Henry IV). What can be ques-

tioned is Gabriele's inference that Gregory's plans ultimately failed because they could not appeal to the Frankish identity, whereas Urban's call succeeded because it tied East and West together via the themes of the past and future conquests of a universal Frankish imperium (pp. 141, 143-145). While there may be some truth to his theory (and the fact that Henry IV was a Salian would tend to support it), readers need to be informed that Gregory's efforts actually collapsed most spectacularly in the spring of 1074, and for reasons Amatus and Bonizo tell us were more prosaic: logistical problems; a flare up of old rivalries; and a distracting rebellion in Lombardy.

The remainder of the fifth chapter is more compelling. Gabriele gets back onto firmer ground when he suggests that another reason for the differing responses to the appeals of 1074 and 1095 was that Urban left the task of conducting the operation to the crusaders themselves (pp. 153-154). This concluding chapter also quite deftly weaves together the book's major themes, providing more evidence for his thesis that the appeal of Urban's message was enhanced by the conjunction of the growing memories of Charlemagne, his invincible Franks, and Christian rule over Jerusalem. Here *An Empire of Memory* takes its leave of historians (most notably Jonathan Riley-Smith) who have questioned whether the legend of Charlemagne or dreams of a Frankish imperium played much of a role in motivating crusaders (p. 140). Gabriele argues that Latin Christians answered Urban's call because they heard in it a language that they understood. This language was above all the language of Frankishness. Gabriele is fluent in this tongue, and his examination of how the Franks came to represent a larger European identity enables him to explain what may seem otherwise inexplicable, such as how a descendant of Alemannian nobility such as Notker could consider himself a Frank (p. 23). Gabriele believes the real reason that pilgrims from regions as diverse as Normandy, Poitou, Provence, Lombardy, and southern Italy were termed *Franci* by the Latin chroniclers was not the third-person usage of the term by Muslims and Byzantines, as is often asserted, but rather the Latins' own awareness of this wider identity. The extent to which this Frankishness actually factored into individual decisions to crusade is more debatable, but may be worth considering. Gabriele admits that Urban never used the words *Frank* or *Charlemagne* in any of his letters related to the First Crusade (p. 154), but he argues that the ubiquity of the term *Franci*, as well as the fact that recruitment clustered around areas with a particular devotion to the Charlemagne legend, show that the pope's audience read these ideas into his message anyway (pp. 154-157). Gabriele concludes that these were the sorts of ideas that could make people do things (p. 159).

An Empire of Memory is a stimulating book written by a promising young scholar. It is sweeping in scope, consults an impressive range of diverse sources, and asks many provocative questions. If its answers cannot be wholeheartedly endorsed, then at least one can say that readers more inclined to see forests than trees will undoubtedly find its conclusions more convincing than the present reviewer has.

Note

[1] H. E. J. Cowdrey, "Pope Gregory VII's 'Crusading' Plans of 1074," in *Outremer: Studies in the History of the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem Presented to Joshua Prawer*, eds. B. Z. Kedar, H. E. Mayer, and R. C. Smail (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Institute, 1982), 30.

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Citation: David Hay. Review of Gabriele, Matthew. *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade.* H-HRE, H-Net Reviews. June, 2012.

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