

Chapter 1

ROYAL CHILDHOOD AND CHILD KINGSHIP

An Introduction

In the spring of 1062, so Lampert of Hersfeld narrates, the eleven-year-old German king Henry IV, being in an especially jovial mood on account of the feast he had attended the day before, accompanied Anno, archbishop of Cologne (1056–75), to inspect a new ship on the Rhine.¹ After the unsuspecting Henry had boarded, Anno and his accomplices hurriedly pushed the craft away from the shore. They brought the king 40 miles by river to Cologne, accomplishing their plot to remove him from the care of his mother, Empress Agnes of Poitou (c. 1025–77), thereby taking the management of the kingdom into their own hands.² This event, often called the ‘Kaiserswerth coup’ (*Staatsstreich von Kaiserswerth*) after the palace from which Henry was kidnapped, is the most well-known incident of his early reign. Lampert’s narrative is unparalleled among other near-contemporary sources in its details of the planning and implementation of a sensational event centred around a boy king. Many centuries later, the dramatic centrepiece gained renewed political-ideological significance in nineteenth-century representations of the struggles between the unity of the German states and princely personal interests.³ More recent scholarly treatments have drawn attention, above all, to Anno’s actions, Agnes’s response (or lack thereof) and the subsequent damage to contemporary respect for royal majesty.⁴ The

¹ For consistency with the other cases, Henry is titled ‘German king’ or ‘king of the Germans’ throughout. For the anachronistic nature of this designation: H. Beumann, *Der deutsche König als ‘Romanorum rex’* (Wiesbaden, 1981); J. Gillingham, ‘Elective kingship and the unity of medieval Germany’, *German History*, 9 (1991), 124–35 (124).

² Lampert, *Annales*, 79–81 (trans. Robinson, *Annals*, 81–2).

³ T. Struve, ‘Lampert von Hersfeld, der Königsraub von Kaiserswerth im Jahre 1062 und die Erinnerungskultur des 19. Jahrhunderts’, *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 88 (2006), 251–78.

⁴ G. Jenal, *Erzbischof Anno II. von Köln (1056–75) und sein politisches Wirken*, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 1974–5), I, 175–95; I. S. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056–1106* (Cambridge, 1999), 43–5, 62; G. Althoff, *Heinrich IV.* (Darmstadt, 2006), 47–52; M. Black-Veldtrup, *Kaiserin Agnes (1043–1077): quellenkritische Studien* (Cologne, 1995), 347–52. For the injury to royal majesty see later in this chapter, 8.

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boy king himself has been secondary to modern concerns. Yet Henry was the fulcrum of this organised revolt, and his childhood was integral to the shift in political power. Was Henry entirely lacking agency? How had the boy's upbringing prepared him for the realities and challenges of rulership? In what ways did Henry's childhood shape the actions of the wider political community? As with other moments of intersection between childhood and kingship, it is vital to look beyond what has been described as the 'unsspoken hegemony' of adulthood to understand these events more fully.⁵

Adult male rulers were more typical, but we should not leap to the assumption that medieval societies exclusively and inflexibly conceived of kingship as a mature man's remit. Centring children and childhood refines our impressions of rulership between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Although situated within a grander political narrative, aspects of Lampert's account allow us to observe how children and ideas about childhood coincided with the practicalities and representations of royal rule. The author's insights are important because he makes no attempt to hide the king's incapacities, but never presents Henry's childhood as incompatible with the exercise of royal authority. Lampert was not indifferent to a concept of childhood. Instead, his perspective on Henry's kidnapping represents how interwoven childhood and kingship could be. This book adduces abundant attempts to include, acknowledge and engage young boys within the political sphere, stressing children's practical involvement in rule and also focusing on positive representations of their authority and power. Doing so underscores how childhood was valued politically – and, in certain cases, emphasises the distinct political value placed upon it – while simultaneously revealing fresh insights into what people thought about and expected of their rulers. Turning from a perspective which privileges adult authority establishes how fundamentally systems, practices and ideas of medieval rulership relied on children and childhood.

How did children's education and upbringing prepare them for rule? To what extent did the king's status as a child alter the realities of kingship, and how far did childhood underpin representations of rulership? What was the cultural and social significance of child kingship, and how was this shifting over the period? These research questions provide inspiration for my approach, drawing attention to two central concerns weaving throughout this examination of royal childhood and child kingship. The first is the interconnectedness of representation and reality.

⁵ R. Gowland, 'Ageing the past: examining age identity from funerary evidence', in R. Gowland and C. Knüsel (eds.), *The Social Archaeology of Funerary Remains* (Oxford, 2006), 143–54.

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This motif is especially pertinent to the study of children and childhood in view of conventional scholarly divides between children's lived experiences and more conceptual surveys of ideas about childhood.⁶ A strict demarcation is impossible, however, and it is more beneficial to unite two approaches that often 'reciprocally constitute each other'.⁷ Prominently centring children's experiences emphasises their significance as political actors and demonstrates how the life cycle's early stages shaped interactions with rulership (see Chapters 4, 8 and 10). Uniting this examination of children's encounters with political authority, with an understanding of how contemporaries received and portrayed ruling children (as in Chapters 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9), enhances the picture. Cultural representations of ideas about childhood and rulership confirm that royal children's actions, words and emotions conveyed rhetorical and ideological weight in addition to practical authority. Ignoring or downplaying children's incorporation within practices of rule and structures of authority overlooks considerable subtleties in the contemporary sources. Focusing more closely on representations and realities of childhood within a political context corroborates a central qualitative argument, namely that a period of child kingship did not automatically equate to a time of crisis and disorder.

The second concern is one of methodology and supplies the rationale for turning from a solitary boy king such as Henry IV to compare multiple case studies across four realms of north-western Europe over two centuries. Studying children and childhood concurrently and comparatively with an eye to changing cultures further refutes child kingship's automatic association with political unrest, while also advancing a distinctive argument for chronological change. My claim for change over time is twofold. The first facet of change is drawn out by a comparison between the central and early Middle Ages (see Chapter 2). Children's fundamental role in rulership was reinforced and safeguarded more consistently from the eleventh century in ways which deviated from the practices and ideas of earlier centuries. The second aspect of the chronological argument is that change over time in the dynamics of children's encounters with royal rule is more evident than cultural and political disparities between realms. This is especially obvious when

⁶ R. Aasgaard, C. B. Horn and O. M. Cojocaru (eds.), *Childhood in History: Perceptions of Children in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, online ePub edn (London, 2018), 33; A. Cohen, 'Introduction: childhood between past and present', in A. Cohen and J. B. Rutter (eds.), *Constructions of Childhood in Ancient Greece and Italy* (Princeton, 2007), 1–22.

⁷ N. Milanich, 'Comment on Sarah Maza's "The kids aren't all right"', *AHR*, 125 (2020), 1293–5 (1295). In the same issue, see also S. Maza, 'The kids aren't all right: historians and the problem of childhood', 1261–85 (1281, 1285).

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Henry IV's experiences in the 1060s are placed alongside those of his contemporary in France, the boy king Philip I. The way these two children encountered royal rule throughout the initial stages of their life cycle was remarkably similar (see especially Chapters 4, 8 and 10). Philip's early encounters with royal authority bore a far closer resemblance to those of his German counterpart in the 1060s than they did to his own great-great-great-grandson, Louis IX, nearly two centuries later. This comparative and diachronic analysis relies on a holistic approach to the evidence. Consulting a wider range of source materials than is customary within studies of kingship bridges traditional scholarly approaches to illustrate interconnected and interdependent aspects of childhood and rulership (see Chapters 3 and 5). Focused and comparative scrutiny of these sources then reinforces the importance of discriminating between near-contemporary evidence, later representations (see Chapter 6) and rhetorical set-pieces (see Chapter 9).

The evidence gathered for this study derives from six central cases where a boy succeeded as sole king of England, Scotland, France or Germany before the end of childhood, interpreted here as their fifteenth birthday.⁸ Henry IV of Germany (b. 1050, cor. 1054, r. 1056–1106), whose birth provides a rough starting date; Philip I of France (b. 1052, cor. 1059, r. 1060–1108); Malcolm IV, king of Scots (b. 1141, inaug. 1153, r. 1153–65); Henry III of England (b. 1207, cor. 1216, r. 1216–72); Louis IX of France (b. 1214, cor. 1226, r. 1226–70); and Alexander III, king of Scots (b. 1241, inaug. 1249, r. 1249–86), whose twenty-first birthday in 1262 functions as this study's practical terminus. Two additional examples complement these six. The first is Philip II of France (b. 1165, cor. 1179, r. 1180–1223) who, although he became sole ruler shortly after his fifteenth birthday, was crowned at the age of fourteen while his father was incapacitated. Philip's succession on the cusp of adolescence vividly illustrates the central role the male life cycle could play in perceptions of kingship; proud declarations of his youth constituted a prominent polemical topos early in his reign.⁹ The second, less typical case is Emperor Frederick II (b. 1194, cor. 1198/1212 [Sicily and Germany], d. 1250), whose Sicilian coronation as a three-year-old boy expands the geographical scope of the case studies into southern Europe. His claims to the German kingship are also of interest since these were

⁸ Three dates are given for each ruler: birth, first coronation/inauguration and regnal dates from the year they became sole ruler. The term inauguration is more suitable in a Scottish context, as discussed in Chapter 5.

⁹ E. J. Ward, 'Child kingship and notions of (im)maturity in north-western Europe, 1050–1262', *ANS*, 40 (2018), 197–211 (203); see Chapters 7 and 8.

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asserted, unsuccessfully, on Frederick's behalf during his infancy but then affirmed by the ruler himself with greater success later in his youth. These eight cases are only a tenth of the more than eighty *reges pueri* across Europe between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries.¹⁰ The number of child rulers (though not necessarily *kings*) in the same period increases as soon as we look beyond a European framework. To provide just three examples: Al-Mustansir Billah (1029–94) succeeded to the Fatimid Caliphate in 1036 aged six; Antoku (1178–85) became emperor of Japan as a two-year-old infant; and Lý Chiêu Hoàng (1218–78) was seven when she became empress of Đại Việt (modern-day Vietnam) in 1224.¹¹ Additional examples of royal children and boy kings are woven into my analysis to illustrate broader points or reinforce comparative remarks.

Surprise is often the first modern reaction to the extensive track record of medieval child monarchs, and several historians have drawn attention to the 'astonishing regularity' of boy kings.¹² It is worth unpacking why this revelation has the ability to shock, namely the underlying assumption that adult male kingship was the norm. Unquestionably, the succession of adult men was common practice, but exemplars of medieval kingship expanded to include women and children, and solutions existed to ensure the practicality of their succession and rule. Boy kings were a less frequent occurrence than adult rulers (and girl monarchs even rarer),¹³ but they were not considered abnormal as a result. Nor was a child's succession entirely unanticipated or ad hoc. Contemporary chroniclers sometimes note anxieties at a boy's succession, or draw attention to their new ruler's young age, but their accounts contain little surprise at a child on the throne. By contrast, in

¹⁰ Vogtherr, 'Könige', 293; A. Wolf, 'Königtum Minderjähriger und das Institut der Regentschaft', in *L'enfant, II, Europe médiévale et moderne* (Brussels, 1976), 97–106 (97–8); R. Bartlett, *Blood Royal: Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2020), appendix B. For earlier examples of child rulership see Chapter 2.

¹¹ P. E. Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and Its Sources* (London, 2002), 61, 143–7; C. Totman, *A History of Japan*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2005), 94; V. H. Lien and P. D. Sharrock, *Descending Dragon, Rising Tiger: A History of Vietnam* (London, 2014), 79–80.

¹² C. Beem (ed.), *The Royal Minorities of Medieval and Early Modern England* (New York, 2008), 2; M. Campbell, *Alexander III: King of Scots* (Isle of Colonsay, 1999), 15; Vogtherr, 'Könige', 293.

¹³ Few studies focus exclusively on child queens, but for a discussion of select girl rulers over our period see: W. C. Stalls, 'Queenship and the royal patrimony in twelfth-century Iberia: the example of Petronilla of Aragon', in T. M. Vann (ed.), *Queens, Regents and Potentates* (Cambridge, 1993), 49–61; A. Wolf, 'Reigning queens in medieval Europe: when, where and why?', in J. C. Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship* (Stroud, 1994), 169–88 (172–4). Childhood could be just as crucial a time for preparing girls to be queens as it was for preparing boys to be kings. See M. G. Büttner, 'The education of queens in the eleventh and twelfth centuries', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge (2003). For a rich variety of studies on queenship, many of which consider the upbringing of princesses and queens, see T. Earenfight, 'Medieval queenship', *History Compass*, 15 (2017), 1–9.

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1152, when the seven-year-old Frederick of Rothenburg's claim to the German kingship was rejected in favour of his thirty-year-old cousin Frederick Barbarossa, near-contemporary chroniclers appear more puzzled at the circumvention of the king's son in the line of succession than at the fact that he was a boy.¹⁴ Our understanding of child kingship between the fifth and eleventh centuries has benefited from Thilo Offergeld's prodigious contribution.¹⁵ When moving chronologically later, however, we cannot ignore the distinctive circumstances shaping the interrelationship between childhood and rulership over the central medieval period. Representations and realities of childhood fluctuated over time and between cultures. It is imperative both to account for these changes alongside shifting practices of medieval kingship and to broaden the evidence base when comparing children's encounters with royal authority. The rest of this introduction expands the thematic discussion of representation and reality before then turning to consider matters of methodology.

CENTRING CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD: REPRESENTATION AND REALITY

Representation and reality comprise three overlapping layers of analysis: from the narrow, source-focused perspective to a wider historical framework and, finally, a much broader historiographical context. More focused consideration of Lampert's account of events at Kaiserswerth offers, in microcosm, an insight into the interconnected realities and interpretations of a boy's experiences of royal authority. Lampert may have heard about the kidnap first-hand when Henry and the royal court visited Hersfeld three months later.¹⁶ The monk assigns Henry a far more central role than modern historians have done, furnishing his account with details which accentuate the interrelationship between childhood and kingship. As noted, the boy king cheerfully participated in public royal ceremony. The kingdom's leading magnates sought his company, and he could socialise with them as he pleased.¹⁷ Lampert represents Henry as an 'artless boy' (*puer simplex*) whose innocence and naivety may have made him over-trusting and less attuned to danger than an

¹⁴ J. B. Freed, *Frederick Barbarossa: The Prince and the Myth* (New Haven and London, 2016), 62–3 and references therein.

¹⁵ T. Offergeld, *Reges pueri: das Königtum Minderjähriger im frühen Mittelalter* (Hanover, 2001); C. Hillen, 'T. Offergeld, *Reges pueri: das Königtum Minderjähriger im frühen Mittelalter*', *Concilium mediæ ævi*, 5 (2002), 1013–15 (1013).

¹⁶ *MGH DD H IV*, I, no. 88; Robinson, *Annals*, 82 n. 277.

¹⁷ Lampert, *Annales*, 80 (trans. Robinson, 81).

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adult ruler. Yet the author's assertion that the king threw himself into the river to attempt an escape implies a child raised in full awareness that he might become the target of 'violence and murder' (*vis et nex*) due to his royal position. Sentimentality concerning the boy's innocence is belied by the decisive action ascribed to him. Henry had been born in 1050 and, by age eleven, he was already unwilling to submit to political enemies without resisting. Lampert moves on to contrast the child's physical immaturity and inability to navigate the Rhine's strong currents with the strength of Count Ekbert, Henry's cousin, who jumps into the river; a magnate places himself in danger to rescue his young kinsman and king. Finally, after dragging Henry back into the boat, Anno and his accomplices soothe him with 'reassurances' (*blanditiae*). Here Lampert carefully selects evocative language associated with children and childhood, likely inspired by classical precedents. His choice also calls attention to the reality that child rulers compelled adaptations in adult speech and actions.¹⁸

Similar conflation of representations and realities regularly appear within the medieval evidence. A rhetoric of childhood sometimes furthered the personal purposes of magnates and prelates. When Bishop Bruno of Angers complained to Pope Alexander II (1061–73) about the count of Anjou's behaviour, the bishop urged the pope to exert his authority because the French king was a child.¹⁹ At first glance, this letter suggests a tangible lack of royal authority under a boy king, neatly fitting the narrative of political disruption and magnate violence when a boy was king. Yet its dating, between 1068 and 1073, places it within the years when Philip I, actually in his late teens, was ruling alone after the death of his former guardian, Baldwin V, count of Flanders (1035–67). Writers often had vested interests in how they later represented a period of child kingship. It was to a much older Henry IV, in his mid-thirties at the time, that Benzo, bishop of Alba, dedicated the *Libri ad Heinricum* in around 1085. Benzo presented an intimate view of Henry's kidnap which acknowledged Agnes's suffering and aspects of the ruler's boyhood.²⁰ The bishop may have been inspired by stories he heard at the royal court in the mid-1060s or early 1080s, but are these truly details of Henry's personal experience as a child, simply conventional platitudes and paradigms of childhood, or some combination of the two

¹⁸ H. Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton, 2015), 56, for *blanditiae* and childhood; Robinson, *Annals*, 4–9, for Lampert's familiarity with classical authors, including Ovid.

¹⁹ *Briefsammlungen der Zeit Heinrichs IV.*, ed. C. Erdmann and N. Fickermann, *MGH Briefe d. dt. Kaiserzeit* 5 (Weimar, 1950); see Chapter 8.

²⁰ Benzo, *AH*, 236.

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extremes?²¹ Undoubtedly, Benzo's representation of these events served multifaceted rhetorical and political purposes in the mid-1080s. His claim that Archbishop Anno and Godfrey 'the Bearded' of Verdun (d. 1069) together 'seized the position of royal supremacy' recalls other reports of aristocratic and episcopal concerns that the king's abduction constituted a dangerous affront to royal honour and majesty.²² Yet the context of imperial-papal disputes in the 1070s is as crucial to interpreting such comments as the realities of Henry's early reign. It would be an understatement to say that the status of royal dignity was of great concern in the Empire after Henry's excommunication by Pope Gregory VII, the king's penitence in the snow at Canossa in 1077 and Rudolf of Rheinfelden's election as a royal opponent. It is no wonder, then, that later representations of Henry's kidnapping placed notions of his majesty at the forefront.²³

Conceptual interpretations of the life cycle provide a historical context to aspects of representation and reality. These were often fundamental to how writers framed a ruler's childhood, but they could also have a real impact on the lives of royal children. The end of infancy, for example, was decisive in shaping one boy's experience of royal inauguration in mid-eleventh-century France (see Chapter 5). Similarly, Benzo drew prominent attention to *pueritia*, one of the life cycle's theoretical stages in medieval thought, in a rare reference to a boy king playing.²⁴ Immediately after Henry's abduction, Anno and his co-conspirators 'seized the position of royal dignity, leaving the child to play with the children (...*cum pueris puerum ludere*)'.²⁵ Such comments provoke further questions regarding children as social and political actors but they also place royal protagonists within a framework of idealised representations of the life cycle.

A variety of illustrative schemes divided the progression of life into three, four, six or seven phases.²⁶ It was relatively common practice for the first fourteen years of a boy's life to be split into infancy (*infantia*),

²¹ I. S. Robinson, *Authority and Resistance in the Investiture Contest: The Polemical Literature of the Late Eleventh Century* (Manchester, 1978), 71–2. For the possibly imaginary nature of Benzo's relationship with Henry: *PREC*, 83–4; A. A. Latowsky, *Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800–1229* (Ithaca, 2013), 102–3.

²² 'arripiunt locum regalis prioratus', Benzo, *AH*, 238.

²³ See Lampert, *Annales*, 80, for the deliberate prefiguration of Henry's deposition in 1076. As discussed in Robinson, *Annals*, 32.

²⁴ For a comparable reference to royal children playing in the palace see William the Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, ed. H.-F. Delaborde, in *Œuvres*, 2 vols (Paris, 1882–5), I, 168–333 (179–80).

²⁵ Benzo, *AH*, 238.

²⁶ What follows is a simplification of several different schemes which existed in medieval Europe: J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford, 1986), esp. 5–54; I. Cochelin, 'Introduction: pre-thirteenth-century definitions of the life cycle', in I. Cochelin and K. Smyth (eds.), *Medieval Life Cycles: Continuity and Change* (Turnhout, 2013), 1–54.

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from birth to age seven, and childhood (*pueritia*), between seven and fourteen.²⁷ Notions of meaningful consent and command of language could mark the end of *infantia*, which was also associated with the commencement of schooling and spiritual education.²⁸ Isidore of Seville, tracing the etymological foundations of *infans* in the seventh century, noted ‘it is called an infant, because it does not yet know how to speak (*in-*, “not”; *fari*, present participle *fans*, “speaking”), that is, it cannot talk. Not yet having its full complement of teeth, it has less ability to articulate words’.²⁹ Similar perceptions of infantile inability and lack of legal capacity in the twelfth century lay behind the *Decretum Gratiani*’s definition of the age of consent as seven.³⁰ After infancy and childhood followed adolescence (*adolescentia*) and youth (*iuventus*), with adolescence lasting in many cases until the late twenties.³¹ Then came manhood (*uirilitas*), old age (*senectus*) and finally senility (*senium*) or decrepitude (*decrepitas*). Age is, of course, far more equivocal than these rigid schemata suggest. Some of this ambiguity and flexibility around age identity in the eleventh century can be inferred from Lampert’s and Benzo’s narratives, which draw attention to aspects of physical strength and biological development (with reference to Henry’s swimming capability), social and cultural roles (by linking children and play), and intellectual or physiological capacity (in emphasising the boy’s *simplicitas*).

Periods of child kingship provide sustained episodes which underscore the mutability of childhood experience, affirming the historical reality that some boys were neither silent nor peripheral. Children were often seen as ‘a mute and marginal group’ who infrequently appear in literary and historical texts.³² Royal children, however, benefit from far greater visibility than their non-royal peers and were of the utmost

²⁷ In 1374, for example, the age of majority for kings of France was fixed at fourteen. See, now, B. Grévin, *La Première Loi du royaume: l’acte de fixation de la majorité des rois de France (1374)* (Paris, 2021).

²⁸ S. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London, 1990; 2nd edn, 1992), 4, 22–3, 174; N. Orme, *Medieval Children* (London, 2001), 68.

²⁹ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, 11.2.9 (ed. W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols [Oxford, 1911], II, 22; ed. and trans. S. A. Barney et al., *The Etymologies* [Cambridge, 2006], 241).

³⁰ *Decretum magistri Gratiani*, ed. E. Friedberg, *Corpus iuris canonici* 1 (Leipzig, 1879), C. 30, q. 2 and see C. 22, q. 5, c. 14; J. Goldberg, ‘The legal persona of the child in Gratian’s *Decretum*’, *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law*, 24 (2000), 10–53 (esp. 33–4, 48–9).

³¹ H.-W. Goetz, ‘*Adolescentia* in abendländischen Quellen des frühen Mittelalters zwischen Kindheit und Erwachsensein? Ein begriffsgeschichtlicher Zugang’, in D. Ariantzi (ed.), *Coming of Age in Byzantium: Adolescence and Society* (Berlin, 2017), 251–94 (esp. 251–8).

³² D. G. Angelov, ‘Emperors and patriarchs as ideal children and adolescents: literary conventions and cultural expectations’, in A. Papaconstantinou and A.-M. Talbot (eds.), *Becoming Byzantine: Children and Childhood in Byzantium* (Washington, DC, 2009), 85–125 (85). Similarly, see D. Herlihy and C. Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles: une étude du catasto florentin de 1427* (Paris, 1978), esp. 552–5.

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importance to political communities. Their words and deeds conveyed authoritative weight and their lives were of interest to commentators on a wider, international stage. Throughout the book I identify moments where children were significant catalysts for change, sometimes altering the behaviour and actions of adults (see Chapter 5), at other moments stimulating administrative or political developments (see Chapter 8), or inspiring cultural production (see Chapter 3). Boy kings' experiences are by no means universally representative of childhood. For this reason, they have tended to feature in broad overviews of childhood and family sporadically, often only to illustrate wider points.³³ A recent study on young Byzantine emperors and patriarchs contritely apologises that: 'Neither their childhoods nor their relationship with their parents were representative of the experiences of common people'.³⁴ Boy emperors and kings did not live like 'common people', but assuming homogeneity in childhood and familial experiences lower down the social scale is also problematic. The notion of a truly 'representative' experience seems chimerical. Examining the lives of royal children informs a broader appreciation of the relevance of status to childhood experience, revealing, for example, how royal parents attempted to differentiate their young sons' experiences from aristocratic norms (see Chapter 6) or how kingship added further flexibility to notions of age identity (see Chapter 10).

Within the broader historiographical framework, the experiences of royal children and ideas about child kingship have largely been treated separately (or not at all) in the different provinces of social, cultural, political and legal history. There has been little reference on the part of scholars to each other's findings. It is important to re-think the way political history, in particular, has engaged with social-historical ideas and with children's roles as social actors. Medievalists began focusing on representations and realities of childhood more acutely following the publication of Philippe Ariès's theory of a *longue durée* of the historical development of childhood.³⁵ Since then, scholars of art, medicine, law, literature, history and hagiography alike have firmly cemented

³³ L. J. Wilkinson (ed.), *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family in the Middle Ages* (London, 2010); Orme, *Medieval Children*.

³⁴ Angelov, 'Emperors', 85.

³⁵ P. Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1960) (trans. R. Baldick, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* [New York, 1962]); L. Haas and J. T. Rosenthal, 'Historiographical reflections and the revolt of the medievalists', in J. T. Rosenthal (ed.), *Essays on Medieval Childhood: Responses to Recent Debates* (Donington, 2007), 12–26 (esp. 14–15). For Ariès's earlier concern with ideas about childhood, see his *Histoire des populations françaises et de leurs attitudes devant la vie depuis le XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1948). For the important role of folklorists in studying children's oral culture and everyday lives see J. C. Bishop, 'The lives and legacies of Iona and Peter Opie', *International Journal of Play*, 3 (2014), 205–23 (esp. 209–10).