



Introduction

This book is about power.¹ How could it legitimately be acquired? To what ends should it be used? What was the relationship between expediency and principle? It pursues these questions with reference to a particular place and time: Latin Europe between the later tenth and the early thirteenth centuries. And it does so with regard to a particular *type* of power: that held by kings.² The question of what rights and privileges a ruler can legitimately claim in relation to the people resonates partly because it is one that every political community has to ask itself, and that each generation has to ask itself anew. Men and women in the central Middle Ages were no exception. The ensuing debates over what abstract norms meant in practice, and over how conflicting ideals could – even whether they should – be reconciled, formed part of a political culture that transcended modern political geographies and medieval polities alike. They built on shared cultural legacies and unfolded within shared structural frameworks. Arguments were by no means always conducted peacefully, but a variety of different routes existed along which norms – what should be – could be aligned to practices – what actually was.

¹ The concept of power is here approached in the sense outlined by R. Stephen Humphreys, ‘Reflections on political culture in three spheres’, in Catherine Holmes, Jonathan Shepard, Jo Van Steenberg and Björn Weiler, eds., *Political Culture in the Latin West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, c. 700–c. 1500: A Framework for Comparing Three Spheres* (forthcoming). That is, it is the ability to get others to do one’s bidding. That can be accomplished through material superiority, the employment of symbolic power, the invocation of shared norms, etc. For the concept of ‘political culture’, see the definition proposed by the ‘Political Culture in Three Spheres’ project, out of which that volume emerged: <http://users.aber.ac.uk/bkw/rulership2008/polcult%20definition.htm> (accessed 18 February 2020). The short summary is: “Political culture” encompasses both the ideology and the practice of “hegemonial” groups. It involves the self-definition (expressed verbally, visually or symbolically), and the actual practices, customs and working assumptions of groups of individuals aspiring to large-scale, long-term hegemony, be it internally (within a given community) or externally (against its neighbours or rivals).’

² Here understood as the *de facto* or nominal secular figureheads of communities that viewed themselves as united by shared legal customs, a common past and a continuous line of rulers. See also Chapter 3 in particular for the role of quasi-regnal polities like Bohemia and, after 1079, Poland, and, of course, for the emergence of new polities.

The period c. 950–1200 was pivotal in the development of that political culture. Chapter 1 will offer a fuller discussion of why this was the case. A short outline may nonetheless prove helpful. First, these two centuries and a half witnessed a proliferation of polities whose rulers claimed or were awarded a royal title.³ This increase in regnal polities derived partly from political fragmentation, partly from the expansion of Latin Christendom by both conquest and conversion and partly from a growing economy that allowed and that sometimes forced princes to seek parity with neighbours or erstwhile overlords. Second, the emergence of new kingships frequently resulted in both external and internal challenges. Neighbours might dispute a royal title. Subjects would try to define their own status in relation to erstwhile peers who now had become their lords. Some even competed with each other to translate their role in the creation of kingship into greater power for themselves. Consequently, disputes over the meaning of common norms, and who would have a say in interpreting them, became common. Third, a growing economy coincided with the wider use of and with wider uses for literacy.⁴ The utility of writing manifested itself in a dramatically increased production of administrative documents, including the emergence of entirely new genres, which facilitated new ways of thinking about accountability and power.⁵

³ Nora Berend, ed., *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus', c.900–1200* (Cambridge, 2007); Björn Weiler, 'Crown-giving and king-making in the west, c. 1000 – c. 1250', *Viator* 41 (2010), 57–88; Benedict G. E. Wiedemann, 'The kingdom of Portugal, homage and papal "fiefdom" in the second half of the twelfth century', *JMedH* 41 (2015), 432–45; Simon John, 'The papacy and the establishment of the kingdoms of Jerusalem, Sicily and Portugal: twelfth-century papal political thought on incipient kingship', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 68 (2017), 223–59.

⁴ Eltjo Buringh, *Medieval Manuscript Production in the Latin West: Explorations with a Global Database* (Leiden, 2011); M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307*, 3rd edition (Oxford, 2012).

⁵ Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century. Power, Lordship and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton, NJ, 2009). The book is too rich to be easily summarised. One of Bisson's central tenets is that, towards the end of the twelfth century, the spread of rules of accountancy and of bookkeeping replaced a system of accountability of virtue with one of accountability of office. A further key premise is that ethical norms held little sway before then, with violence the chief or even sole means of conducting politics. While Bisson's book remains a learned, sustained and thoughtful attempt to explore the emergence of administrative governance, and one that merits equally thoughtful engagement, some of these underlying premises nonetheless do not hold up in light of the evidence that will be presented here. For a thoughtful consideration of Bisson's book see Theo Riches' review of *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (review no. 754), www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/754 (accessed 31 August 2018). For a critique of the royalist perspective more generally, Timothy Reuter, 'Modern mentalities and medieval polities', in his *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities*, ed. Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge, 2006), 3–18. For an important case study: Ulla Kypta, *Die Autonomie der Routine. Wie im 12. Jahrhundert das englische Schatzamt entstand* (Göttingen, 2014).

Increasing literacy furthermore encouraged the rediscovery, the revising and copying afresh of foundational texts. Especially in the twelfth century, principles of power were assessed with renewed rigour in relation to the biblical, classical and patristic legacy discussed in Chapter 2. These engagements both created and reinforced a common cultural framework for thinking and writing about kingship and power.⁶ Fourth, new actors appeared on the scene, even though they were still part of a numerically small elite. Both among the aristocracy and within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, new movements and institutions laid claim to participation in the political process, such as mendicants, military orders and an increasingly assertive papal centre. The same applies to urban communities, who burst onto the political scene during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁷ As a result, disputes increased both in frequency and in the range and number of their participants. Finally, towards the end of the period, more formalised mechanisms were developed to channel and resolve the ensuing conflicts and debates. Most immediately, a greater emphasis was placed on written guarantees of established rights, and on formalising previously unwritten rules.⁸ We can observe an ever stronger emphasis on defining practices that previously had been determined rather more situationally and in a process that favoured consensus over adherence to clearly set out rules. This book covers the period roughly between the emergence of new polities in the generation either side of the year 1000, and the emergence of new actors and mechanisms around the year 1200.

Kingship provides an especially illuminating angle from which to approach these developments. As a concept, it was universal, even if, as a practice, it was by no means uniform. In the secular sphere, a community would ideally be presided over by a king, or at least by a ruler who performed king-like functions. Even the peasants of Iceland continued to be fascinated by and existed in a very complex relationship with the kings of Norway.⁹ In religious thinking, a hierarchical ordering of society, with God as a king-like figure, served to conceptualise the right order of the world.¹⁰ Kingship was representative of how things should be. Moreover, the actions of kings continuously touched upon the lives and

⁶ Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ, 1983).

⁷ Chris Wickham, *Sleepwalking into a New World: the Emergence of Italian City Communes in the Twelfth Century* (Princeton, NJ, 2015); Knut Schulz, 'Denn sie lieben die Freiheit so sehr . . . ' *Kommunale Aufstände und Entstehung des europäischen Bürgertums im Hochmittelalter* (Darmstadt, 1992).

⁸ See the case studies discussed in François Foronda and Jean-Philippe Genet, eds., *Des chartes aux constitutions. Autour de l'idée constitutionnelle en Europe (XIIe–XVIIe siècles)* (Paris, 2019).

⁹ Theodore M. Andersson, 'The king of Iceland', *Speculum* 74 (1999), 923–34.

¹⁰ John R. Fortin, 'Saint Anselm on the Kingdom of Heaven: a model of right order', *St Anselm Journal* 6 (2008), 1–10; Robert Deshman, "'Christus rex et magi reges". Kingship and christology in Ottonian and Anglo-Saxon art', *FmSt* 10 (1976), 367–405.

experiences of elite actors. Monarchs convened assemblies, conducted campaigns, appointed bishops, settled disputes, issued and confirmed grants or visited monasteries, castles and churches. Each activity involved nobles and prelates as recipients, participants, witnesses, petitioners or intercessors. Kings operated in a continuous dialogue with their leading subjects. They practised what the German medievalist Bernd Schneidmüller termed ‘rule by consensus’.¹¹ Secular and ecclesiastical elites functioned as representatives of their regional, dynastic and religious communities, but also as trustees of the people at large.

The standing of elites in relation to each other was established through their relationship with the monarch. Proximity signalled the ability to solicit gifts and influence actions. Rulers and ruled were tied to each other in a relationship of mutual, though by no means equal dependency. But there also was a moral dimension to the role of elites. Both the power and the authority of the king reflected upon his leading subjects, the men close to court, and the ones who had elevated him to the royal dignity. As representatives of the community of the realm, prelates and princes bore a responsibility to ensure that the ruler upheld common principles of royal lordship – that he be a good king, not a tyrant. Kingship symbolised the right order of the world, but it fell to a realm’s elites to ensure that someone was chosen as ruler who had the mindset and the means to maintain that order. As the political scientist Rodney Barker has argued, elites desired to be perceived and wanted to view themselves as legitimate. Nobody wished to be the bad guy. Demonstrating adherence to shared values therefore was not just a way of cloaking material concerns. It was essential for the conduct of power relations.¹² Moreover, the pragmatic and the normative were mutually reinforcing. Royal favours were of limited value if they came from a king perceived as weak or illegitimate. Such grants could easily be challenged or might simply be ignored by rivals and competitors. They might even be revoked once a new ruler took the throne. Making sure that kings were kings, not tyrants, was in everyone’s interest.

A king’s legitimacy was rooted in how he had come to the throne. Indeed, the manner of his elevation was so important that a first step towards formally dethroning a tyrant was to invalidate his accession. He was not deposed, but declared a usurper who had seized a dignity that was not his to hold.¹³

¹¹ Bernd Schneidmüller, ‘Konsensuale Herrschaft. Ein Essay über Formen und Konzepte politischer Ordnung im Mittelalter’, in *Reich, Regionen und Europa in Mittelalter und Neuzeit. Festschrift für Peter Moraw*, ed. Paul Joachim Heinig, Sigrid Jahns, Hans-Joachim Schmidt, Rainer Christoph Schwinges and Sabine Wefers (Berlin, 2000), 53–97 (shortened English version: ‘Rule by consensus. Forms and concepts of political order in the European Middle Ages’, *The Medieval History Journal* 16 (2013), 449–71).

¹² Rodney Barker, *Legitimizing Identities: the Self-Presentation of Rulers and Subjects* (Cambridge, 2001).

¹³ See above, Chapter 5 and, paradigmatically, Michaela Muylkens, *Reges geminati. Die Gegenkönige in der Zeit Heinrichs IV.* (Husum, 2011). See also Björn Weiler, ‘Kingship,

Moreover, his illegitimacy was rooted both in his actions and character, and in those of the men who had elected, supported or inaugurated him. Only bad people would knowingly choose bad kings. Succession was therefore a key moment for contemporaries. It determined the legitimacy not only of the monarch, but also of the leading men of the realm. To borrow a term from literary studies, it became a textual site. Narrating the process of king-making enabled contemporary and later observers to pass judgement on the events reported, and on those participating in them.

There was a shared framework of ideas and concepts about what kings should do, and what qualified someone to be a king. Chapter 2 will sketch the foundations on which it rested. But these ideals were inherently abstract: rulers were supposed to be pious, just, equitable and warlike. Norms had to be filled with meaning by those participating in the king-making process, and by those writing about it. Different views came to the fore, divergent readings and hierarchies of shared principles, and the inevitable clash between what was desirable and what was feasible. Yet it was precisely in such moments of uncertainty that practices were forged and ideals were defined, that efforts were made to align what was with what ought to be. Defining values extended to the practices of king-making and of being king. They involved not only the ruler, but also the nobles and bishops who chose, advised, and otherwise interacted with him. They touched on the role of the public, the conduct of war, the exercise of justice and patronage, on marriage and education, in short, on every aspect of royal behaviour and of the interaction between ruler and ruled. Attempts to give concrete meaning to abstract norms allow us to see how people in high medieval Europe tried to make ideals work in practice, how they envisaged the interplay between norm and necessity, between pragmatic needs and moral expectations.

I approach these efforts by tracing the several stages in which a king was made.¹⁴ First, kingship had to be established. A polity had to be recognised as sufficiently distinctive, and its rulers as of sufficient status to warrant so elevated a title. Chapters 3 and 4 explore how this could be accomplished. What distinguished a king from a mere duke or count? What did this mean for the relationship between the new monarch, his erstwhile peers, and those who made him king? Ideally, a royal title ought to be passed on to the next generation. Chapters 5 and 6 consider the moral framework within which a succession unfolded, and the practical steps in which it was organised. For reasons beyond the control of any of the actors involved, reconciling moral

usurpation and propaganda in twelfth-century Europe: the case of Stephen', *ANS* 31 (2000), 299–326.

¹⁴ I am grateful to Stephen Church, who first gave me the idea to structure the book in this fashion, but a similar approach had already been taken by Heinrich Mitteis, *Die deutsche Königswahl. Ihre Rechtsgrundlagen bis zur Goldenen Bulle* (Brünn, Munich and Vienna, 1944).

norms with practical needs could prove difficult. How could the resulting uncertainty be prevented from endangering not only the stability of the realm, but its very existence? Every succession involved an election, the subject of Chapters 7 and 8. How were kings chosen? Who did the choosing? The process of election was also when, in order to turn one set of norms into reality, another sometimes had to be violated. However, if adherence to norms was central to the legitimacy of the process, and that was integral to the legitimacy of the king, what measures could be taken to ensure that such contradictions did not invalidate the entire process? Once a king had been chosen, he still had to be inaugurated, a process explored in Chapters 9 and 10. In some respects, this was the moment of no return. At the same time, enthronement was not limited to just one event, such as a coronation. It involved a sequence of acts in which the new ruler asserted his right to the throne, during which a kingdom's elites could seek to steer the exercise of power into directions they deemed appropriate and necessary, and in response to which they could, if need be, revisit their earlier choice. How could king demonstrate adherence to norms, but also seize control of the reins of power? And how could the ruled respond?

By answering these questions, several gaps in our understanding of high medieval cultures of power can be filled, and several new perspectives emerge. This book is, for example, the first monograph to explore high medieval kingship as a transeuropean phenomenon.¹⁵ Most modern studies, by contrast, have focussed on the early Middle Ages, and in particular on the example of the empire of Charlemagne and its successors;¹⁶ they have offered case

¹⁵ The partial exceptions to the rule are edited collections that set studies of several kingdoms alongside each other, but which also do so across the whole of the Middle Ages. See, for particularly important examples, Anne Duggan, ed., *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe* (London, 1993); and Bernhard Jussen, ed., *Die Macht des Königs: Herrschaft in Europa vom Frühmittelalter bis in die Neuzeit* (Munich, 2005). Henry A. Myers, *Medieval Kingship* (Chicago, 1982) seeks to compress modes of royal lordship into a somewhat simplistic pattern that posits supposed Germanic notions of kingship as continuously battling with supposedly Roman (that is to say Christian) ones. See also, below, Chapter 10. Francis Oakley, *The Mortgage of the Past: Reshaping the Ancient Political Inheritance (1050–1300)* (New Haven, CT, 2012) is a wonderfully learned exercise in intellectual history, which is primarily concerned with tracing biblical and classical echoes in theoretical writings about power. Robert Bartlett's *Blood Royal: Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2020) was published when this book was already in peer review. His is the rare exception that nonetheless proves the rule. Bartlett is also concerned with rather different questions: the emergence of the concept and the practice of dynastic royal lordship.

¹⁶ Inevitably, any survey will fall short of being comprehensive. Key works include: Walter Ullmann, *The Carolingian Renaissance and the Idea of Kingship* (London, 1969); Simon MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century. Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge, 2003); Franz-Reiner Erkens, ed., *Das frühmittelalterliche Königtum. Ideelle und religiöse Grundlagen* (Berlin and New York, 2005); Roman Deutinger, *Königsherrschaft im ostfränkischen Reich* (Ostfildern, 2006);

studies of monarchical rule in particular kingdoms,¹⁷ or of learned discourses from the period after c. 1220.¹⁸ However, the Carolingians had a limited impact on tenth-century, let alone eleventh- or twelfth-century modes of governance.¹⁹ Ninth-century discourses cannot explain high medieval practices. And apparent borrowings are often nothing of the kind. Carolingian writers excelled at compiling materials drawn from the Bible, texts from classical antiquity and the works of early Christian theologians. High medieval authors drew on the same materials. But they did so independently.²⁰ In fact, with the exception of Einhard's *Life* of Charlemagne, few Carolingian texts were copied afresh before the second half of the twelfth century.²¹ The ninth mattered because of the importance attached to Charlemagne and his descendants. Legendary forebears, they lent legitimacy to dynastic and institutional claims, to practices and conventions, by offering a link with reputable founders

Ildar H. Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World* (Leiden, 2008); Paul Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings: Peace, Power and the Early Medieval Political Imagination* (Oxford, 2011); David R. Pratt, *The Political Thought of Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007); Jennifer R. Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire* (Cambridge, 2015).

- ¹⁷ John W. Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, CA, 1986); Sverre Bagge, *From Gang Leader to the Lord's Anointed: Kingship in Sverris Saga and Hákonar Saga Hákonarsonar* (Odense, 1996); Philip Line, *Kingship and State Formation in Sweden, 1130–1290* (Leiden and Boston, 2006); Hans Jacob Orning, *Unpredictability and Presence. Norwegian Kingship in the High Middle Ages*, transl. Alan Crozier (Leiden and Boston, 2008); Judith A. Green, *Forging the Kingdom. Power in English Society, 973–1189* (Cambridge, 2017).
- ¹⁸ M. S. Kempshall, *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought: Moral Goodness and Material Benefit* (Oxford, 1999). See also the classic study by Wolfgang Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Leipzig, 1938).
- ¹⁹ See in particular Simon MacLean, 'The Carolingian past in post-Carolingian Europe', in *'The Making of Europe': Essays in Honour of Robert Bartlett*, ed. Sally Crumplin and John G. H. Hudson (Leiden, 2016), 11–31; MacLean, 'Shadow kingdom: Lotharingia and the Frankish world, c.850–c.1050', *History Compass* 11 (2013), 443–57.
- ²⁰ At best, they might have consulted Bede, who proved to be considerably more popular than almost any Carolingian text bar Einhard: Benjamin Pohl, '(Re-)Framing Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* in twelfth-century Germany: John Rylands Library, MS Latin 182', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 93 (2017), 67–119.
- ²¹ Rudolf Schieffer, 'Mediator cleri et plebis. Zum geistlichen Einfluß auf Verständnis und Darstellung des ottonischen Königtums', in *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im ottonischen Sachsen*, ed. Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert (Sigmaringen, 1998), 345–61, at 347–9; Matthias M. Tischler, *Einhard's 'Vita Karoli'. Studien zur Entstehung, Überlieferung und Rezeption*, 2 vols. (Hanover, 2001); Weiler, 'Crown-giving and king-making in the west', 85–7. See, for instance, Hincmar of Rheims, *De cavendis vitiis et virtutibus exercendis*, ed. Doris Nachtmann, MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte (Munich, 1998), 42–7; Hincmar of Rheims, *De Ordine Palatii*, ed. and transl. Thomas Gross and Rudolf Schieffer, MGH Fontes Iuris sep. ed. (Hanover, 1980), 12; Hincmar of Rheims, *Collectio de ecclesiis et capellis*, ed. Martina Stratmann, MGH Fontes Iuris sep. ed. (Hanover, 1990), 31–5.

and an equally reputable past.²² But the claims and conventions themselves were almost entirely the making of later generations.

A focus on distinct polities, meanwhile, is misleading. Indeed, the preference for studying medieval kingship in relation to a distinct geographical area that happens to coincide with a modern nation state owes more to the concerns of nationalism from the nineteenth century to the present day than to any high medieval precedent. Almost any national historiographical tradition claims some kind of exceptionalism or *Sonderweg*, of its past being in profound ways different from something elusively referred to as ‘the norm’. However, if everything is exceptional, then nothing truly is. The problem is compounded by defining national or regional exceptionalism against an amorphous European norm. Yet that norm is rarely if ever defined. It exists as a kind of numinous entity that, like Bigfoot and the Loch Ness Monster, is believed to exist without anyone having ever set eyes on it. Unsurprisingly, therefore, when comparative studies are undertaken, they quickly dissolve or invert what was supposed to have been distinctive.²³

In fact, there was no single realm that somehow distilled the essence of high medieval royal lordship and that could therefore be studied in lieu of all the others. What one finds instead is a common framework, a set of values and practices that were universal without being uniform. It is this framework that this book sets out to sketch. To put this more pointedly, I am not interested in comparing individual trees, but in asking what they reveal about the larger forest of which they formed part.²⁴ This does not mean that all the trees were identical, but they did share a common environment, and responded to it in similar ways. In the same vein, the framework within which high medieval people thought and wrote about kingship was not a rigid template. It could be

²² Marianne Ailes, ‘Charlemagne “Father of Europe”: a European icon in the making’, *Reading Medieval Studies* 38 (2012), 59–76; William J. Purkis and Matthew Gabriele, eds., *The Charlemagne Legend in Medieval Latin Texts* (Woodbridge, 2016); Thomas R. Kraus and Klaus Pabst, eds., *Karl der Große und sein Nachleben in Geschichte, Kunst und Literatur* (Aachen, 2003); Matthew Gabriele and Jayce Stuckey, eds., *The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages: Power, Faith, and Crusade* (New York, 2008); Amy G. Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past. Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (Ithaca, NY, 1995).

²³ See, above all, the work of Timothy Reuter, with his most important articles collected in his *Medieval Politics*. Nicholas Vincent, ‘Conclusion’, in *Noblesse de l’espace Plantagenet (1154–1224). Table ronde tenue à Poitiers le 13 mai 2000*, ed. Martin Aurell (Poitiers, 2001), 207–14; Vincent, ‘Sources and methods: some Anglo-German comparisons’, in *Princely Rank in Late Medieval Europe: Trodden Paths and Promising Avenues*, ed. T. Huthwelker, J. Peltzer and M. Wernhöner (Ostfildern, 2011), 119–38.

²⁴ It is worth stressing that a book like this could not have been written without the hard work of those who – to stick with the arboreal imagery – explored individual trees, or even just their branches. The extent of my debt will become apparent in subsequent discussions and references. I do, however, hope that the broader sketch offered here will offer ways of placing the specific within a broader context.

amended, adapted and revised to accommodate specific needs – a moment of political crisis, for instance, external challenges and so on. It could also be interpreted differently. Communities might at different times postulate different hierarchies of norms. The attitude of the thirteenth-century Danish chronicler Saxo Grammaticus towards succession practices will prove a case in point (Chapters 5 and 6). In some kingdoms, elites might attach greater importance to some features than others – with the role of elections in Germany an especially striking example (Chapters 7 and 8). But they would still refer back to a shared corpus of foundational principles, and they would employ a shared set of tools. A useful parallel would be the concept of musical variation. There, a theme is subjected to changes in timbre, rhythm, harmony, pitch, counterpoint and so on. While each version is distinctive, highlighting some features, adding or omitting others, responding to the needs of different instruments, etc., the underlying structure remains nonetheless recognisable as the original theme.²⁵ The same principle applies to high medieval kingship.

Furthermore, I am interested in the interplay between norm and practice. The problem is that, on the surface, most high medieval writers engaged with questions of power solely in the abstract. The genre of king's mirrors – abstract treatises on the principles that ought to guide royal governance – petered out in the ninth century. It was not to be revived again until the decades around c. 1200. This does not mean that people did not discuss these issues.²⁶ They just did so in texts that are unfamiliar vehicles for discussing political ideas, such as

²⁵ Those of a hardened disposition are invited to seek out the Klezmer, disco, Mongolian throat singing, Bluegrass, and Konzertlied versions of Rammstein's 'Du hast'. For more genteel minds, listening to any available recording of BMV 988 or Beethoven's Op. 120 will prove just as illuminating, and perhaps a bit closer to what I had in mind when referring to variations on a theme: what at first listening may seem wholly different will reveal itself to employ the basic structure of the initial theme.

²⁶ This is contrary to most modern studies on medieval political thought, which largely skip these centuries, or reduce them to the writings of just one man (John of Salisbury): Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Political Thought* (Harmondsworth, 1975); Anthony J. Black, *Political Thought in Europe, 1250–1450* (Cambridge, 1992); Michel Senellart, *Les arts de Gouverneur. Du regimen médiéval au concept de gouvernement* (Paris, 1996); *Fürstenspiegel des frühen und hohen Mittelalters*, ed. and transl. Hans Hubert Anton (Darmstadt, 2006) includes only two late twelfth-century texts, that is, excerpts from John of Salisbury and Godfrey of Viterbo; Frédérique Lachaud and Lydwine Scordia, eds., *Le Prince au miroir de la littérature politique de l'Antiquité aux Lumières* (Rouen 2007), an otherwise splendid collection, also deals with only one high medieval example (John of Salisbury). See, likewise, Cary J. Nederman, *Lineages of European Political Thought: Explorations Along the Medieval/Modern Divide from John of Salisbury to Hegel* (Washington, DC, 2009). For important exceptions, see Jehangir Malegam, *The Sleep of Behemoth. Disputing Peace and Violence in Medieval Europe, 1000–1200* (Ithaca, NY, 2013); Philippe Buc, *Holy War, Martyrdom, and Terror: Christianity, Violence, and the West* (Philadelphia, PA, 2015).

commentaries on the Bible,²⁷ letters of advice²⁸ and works of history.²⁹ Those, in turn, centre on basic principles – what rulers ought to do – rather than on concrete guidance about particular issues and problems. In this sense, thinking about kingship appears as largely divorced from its practice. That can make it difficult to trace how ideas influenced actions. We will be disappointed by the lack of definition of many of the concepts espoused, and by the contradictions between the readings on offer. In the case of historical writing, for example, we might be able to explore the views of a particular author or group of authors, but cannot be certain about how widely these were held, or whether they even circulated beyond a relatively narrow group of literate elites.³⁰ To avoid these issues, many studies of kingship tend to focus on practices, on *how* rulers ruled. Values and norms are treated only summarily, if at all.³¹ Even Gerd Althoff,

²⁷ Philippe Buc, *L'Ambiguïté du livre. Prince, pouvoir, et peuple dans les commentaires de la Bible au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1994); Renate Pletl, *Irdisches Regnum in der mittelalterlichen Exegese. Ein Beitrag zur exegetischen Lexikographie und ihren Herrschaftsvorstellungen, 7.–13. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/Main, 2000); Julie Barrau, *Bible, lettres et politique: l'écriture au service des hommes à l'époque de Thomas Becket* (Paris, 2013); Werner Affeldt, *Die weltliche Gewalt in der Paulus-Exegese. Röm. 13,1–7 in den Römerbriefkommentaren der lateinischen Kirche bis zum Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1969).

²⁸ John Van Engen, 'Letters, schools and written culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries', in *Dialektik und Rhetorik im früheren und hohen Mittelalter. Rezeption, Überlieferung und gesellschaftliche Wirkung antiker Gelehrsamkeit vornehmlich im 9. und 12. Jahrhundert*, ed. Johannes Fried (Munich, 1997), 97–132; *Briefsteller und Formelbücher des elften bis vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Ludwig Rockinger, 2 vols. (Munich, 1863–4).

²⁹ Foundational: Helmut Beumann, 'Die Historiographie des Mittelalters als Quelle für die Ideengeschichte des Königtums', *HZ* 180 (1955), 449–88; František Graus, 'Die Herrschersagen des Mittelalters als Geschichtsquelle', in *Ausgewählte Aufsätze von František Graus (1959–1989)*, ed. Hans-Jörg Gilomen, Peter Moraw and Rainer C. Schwinges (Stuttgart, 2002), 3–28.

³⁰ See, though, Martin Aurell, 'Political culture and medieval historiography: the revolt against King Henry II, 1173–1174', *History* 102 (2017), 752–71; Jacek Banaszkiwicz, 'Slavonic *origines regni*: hero the law-giver and founder of monarchy (introductory survey of problems)', *Acta Poloniae Historica* 69 (1989), 97–131; Giovanni Maniscalco Basile, 'The Christian prince through the mirror of the Rus' chronicles', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 12:13 (1988–9), 672–88; Anette Güntzel, 'Godfrey of Bouillon: the stylization of an ideal ruler in universal chronicles of the 12th and 13th centuries', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 70 (2013), 209–22; Ármann Jakobsson, 'The individual and the ideal: the representation of royalty in *Morkinskinna*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 99 (2000), 71–86; Gábor Klaniczay, 'Representations of the evil ruler in the Middle Ages', in *European Monarchy. Its Evolution and Practice from Roman Antiquity to Modern Times*, ed. Heinz Duchhardt, Richard A. Jackson and David J. Sturdy (Stuttgart, 1992), 69–79; Michael Staunton, *The Historians of Angevin England* (Oxford, 2017), 153–84; Kevin J. Wanner, 'At Smyrja Konung Til veldis: royal legitimation in Snorri Sturluson's *Magnús Saga Erlingsonar*', *Saga-Book* 30 (2006), 5–38.

³¹ See, for instance, Line, *Kingship*; Green, *Forging the Kingdom*.