

# Conceptions of kingship in high-medieval Germany in historiographical perspective

## Abstract

Historians of medieval kingship have been influenced by a teleology that sees the development of the secular modern state as inevitable. Therefore the desacralization of kingship is considered a key moment on the path to modern state formation. In Germany, the moment of desacralization has traditionally been identified as 1077, when king Henry IV submitted to Pope Gregory VII at Canossa. Thereafter the spell of Ottonian sacral-kingship was punctured and Henry's twelfth-century successors were forced to look to Roman law and the support of the princes for legitimation. In this essay, we first examine the historiography of this traditional three-phase paradigm, before introducing some recent scholarship that challenges the paradigm and criticises the universal explanatory power of the demise of sacral kingship as a catch-all reason for change, at the expense of complex political, social and economic factors.

## Key words

sacral kingship, desacralization, secularisation, Canossa, Ottonian, Salian, Staufen

## Main text

Few historiographical threads are as tightly woven together as the study of monarchies and state formation. Historians of many western nations have sought the origins of modern states in the monarchies of medieval Christendom. The most famous expression of this evolution is perhaps found in the American Joseph Strayer's slender tome *On The Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Strayer, 1970). Strayer's thesis concentrated on the English and French realms, for he saw

the United States as the heir to an Anglo-French tradition. That Germany remained peripheral to Strayer's argument reflects historical as well as historiographical difference, yet as for England and France, the medieval past has been seen as key to understanding Germany's own special path, or *Sonderweg*, to modern statehood (Barracough 1947; Reuter 1993; Reuter 2002; Warner 2009).<sup>1</sup> It is unsurprising then to find that, in addition to the exercise of monarchical power in its economic, military, and judicial manifestations, conceptions of kingship have also tended to be examined through a teleological lens, with the assumption of an inevitable trend towards secular rulership. In Germany, as in England and France, the crown, that symbol of monarchy *par excellence*, became an abstraction that embodied the state (Hoffmann, 1963; Classen, 1964), while in addition in the Reich the religious aura of the monarchy was transferred to the state, which itself became holy (Koch, 1972; Petersohn, 1994; Weinfurter, 2005; Erkens, 2007): a medieval precursor to the later Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. This holiness, or sacrality, is central to the historiography of conceptions of kingship in high-medieval Germany and, while many of the debates appear at first glance to be far divorced from the development of the modern nation state, it is imperative to realise that they continue to be embedded in a grand narrative of modernisation and secularisation.

With this overarching teleology in mind we turn to the specific context of high-medieval Germany, which for our purposes encompasses the period between c. 900, when the East Frankish kingdom came into being and c. 1200 when, following the death of Henry VI (1190-8), the Empire descended into civil war.<sup>2</sup> These centuries witnessed, so the traditional interpretation, a fundamental shift in conceptions of kingship with the pivotal moment arriving in 1077, when Henry IV (1056-1105) came to the pope at Canossa and begged to be readmitted into the Roman Church. These developments, which can be summarised as falling into three phases, embody the broader modernisation and desacralisation paradigm in microcosm. Put simply, the sacral kingship of the Ottonians and early Salians is seen as losing much of its lustre in the crises of the later eleventh century before the Hohenstaufen were able to re-burnish the image of monarchy to some extent with recourse to Roman law. In this essay, we shall consider the three phases in turn, before concluding by considering some recent approaches that challenge the established narrative of desacralisation and, indeed, are critical of the very concept of 'sacral kingship'. However, before we

do so it is first necessary to understand the context in which conceptions of kingship came to be studied by historians of the medieval Reich.

The instigator of interest in conceptions of kingship was Fritz Kern, whose *Gottesgnadentum und Widerstandsrecht im früheren Mittelalter*, published on the eve of the First World War, set the agenda for subsequent generations of historians to approach the topic of medieval kingship (Kern, 1914).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it provided the catalyst for a number of historians of the following generation to turn away from traditional constitutional history (*Verfassungsgeschichte*) towards the history of ideas (*Geistesgeschichte*). As liturgical rituals were one means through which ideas about kingship were made visible, coronation liturgies have understandably played a central role in the study of conceptions of medieval kingship (Bak, 1990). Firstly, Percy Ernst Schramm looked at medieval coronations in the context of the symbolism of kingship and also published extensively on royal regalia (e.g. Schramm, 1930, 1935, 1954-6), secondly, Walter Ullmann investigated political and legal theory (e.g. Ullmann, 1955; 1966), and thirdly, Ernst Kantorowicz developed the concept of 'political theology' and was heavily influenced, as was Schramm, by visual and material evidence (e.g. Kantorowicz, 1942; 1957). The rise of the National Socialists ensured these strands remained largely separate as only Schramm remained in an academic post in the German-speaking world by the end of the 1930s.<sup>3</sup> Kantorowicz, despite an initial enthusiasm for German nationalism, was forced from his post at Frankfurt and ended up at Berkeley after a short stint at Oxford.<sup>4</sup> Likewise of Jewish heritage, Ullmann left Austria for England in 1939 and after service in the Second World War became a lecturer at Cambridge. As a result of this the work, particularly of Kantorowicz and his adherents, but to some extent of Ullmann too, appears peripheral to German academic discourse on ideas of kingship. However, although Kantorowicz's 1957 opus *The King's Two Bodies* was not translated into German until 1990, his thesis that the high middle ages saw an evolution from Christ-centred to law-centred kingship is implicitly accepted, even if he is rarely cited (Fried 1997; Jussen, 2009). Ullmann's emphasis on law is also

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<sup>1</sup> Kern's work was translated into English by S. B. Chrimes in 1939 under the slightly misleading title *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*.

echoed in Germanophone debates, as is his interest in the relationship between papal and imperial power.

In *The King's Two Bodies* Kantorowicz discussed the famous frontispiece of the late-tenth-century Aachen Gospels, in which a ruler, presumed to be Otto III (983-1002), is presented in striking similarity to contemporary depictions of Christ in majesty. Kantorowicz is far from alone in identifying the purest expression of Christomimetic kingship in the lavish liturgical books of the Ottonian era (e.g. Hoffmann, 1986; Mayr-Harting, 1991; Weinfurter, 1995; Kuder, 1998). The image of the Ottonians has engendered much interest for two principal and interrelated reasons. The first is an issue of source material – the products of the scriptoria of the Ottonian Reich are undoubtedly dazzling and, along with historical narratives, provide the majority of surviving evidence for the period in the face of a relative paucity of administrative materials. This paucity of administrative documentation has traditionally been seen as reflecting a lack of bureaucratic sophistication on the part of royal government. Thus, we come to the second reason for a concentration on the image of Ottonian kingship: if there was only a rudimentary administrative machinery something else must have held the Ottonian polity together. In the absence of a state apparatus the rulers' sacral aura becomes the glue holding the realm together. This is made particularly apparent when considering the treatment of Ottonian diplomas, which following the pioneering work of Heinrich Fichtenau (Fichtenau, 1957), are studied more for the images and ideas contained in their preambles, for their visual impact and for their performative qualities, than for their actual administrative or legal content (e.g. Rück, 1991; Wolfram, 1995; Stieldorf 2009; on the historiography of the auxiliary discipline of diplomatic see Koziol, 2012, pp. 17-37). The administrative structure of the Ottonian realm has its own complicated historiography (Wangerin, 2017), which is beyond the scope of this essay, but it should be recognised that the debate around Ottonian governmental capabilities has a symbiotic relationship to historical approaches to Ottonian sacral kingship.

The extent to which the sacral kingship of the Ottonians was purely a Christian phenomenon has engendered debate. The East Frankish rulers were undoubtedly heirs to a Christian Carolingian tradition modelled on biblical, particularly Davidic, precedents (Ullmann, 1969; Nelson, 1986; Boshof, 2005; Erkens, 2006a). However,

in the past historians also saw the vestiges of a pagan Germanic warrior sacrality in the Ottonian image and, more recently, influenced by concepts drawn from anthropology, have considered blood ties and charisma to be essential components of Ottonian kingship. Neighbouring disciplines have exercised a large degree of influence on historical approaches to sacral kingship in medieval Europe. Accordingly, discussions of medieval sacral kingship have often taken place in interdisciplinary contexts (e.g. Erkens, 2002) and, while not denying the benefits gained from this engagement, more recent scholarship cautions against comparing medieval Christian kings with rulers of primitive societies. Putting aside this debate for the time being, although the idea of a rigid Ottonian church-system (*Reichskirchensystem*) no longer dominates (Reuter, 1982), historians are in broad agreement that a close bond with the church was essential to the propagation of the Ottonian image (e.g. Schieffer, 1998; Isabella, 2010). Anticipating the fracturing of this relationship, Tilman Struve described it as a 'structural weakness' in Ottonian theocratic rulership (Struve, 1999, p. 7). From the time of Otto I's imperial coronation at Rome on the Feast of the Purification in 962, the relationship with the papacy was also integral to the strengthening of a theocratic and Christo-centric vision of Ottonian power, which now had an additional Roman-imperial dimension (e.g. Schramm, 1929; Nelson, 1988; Görich, 1993).

Historians identify no conceptual break with the change from the Ottonian to Salian dynasty on the death of Henry II (1002-24). Rather the Ottonian Christo-centric concept of kingship was taken up enthusiastically by the Salians, who continued to use liturgical ceremonial to express an ideology of kingship founded firmly on biblical models. This has been seen, for example, in the fact that the Salians, as the Ottonians and Carolingians had before them, positioned important monarchical events on major liturgical feasts (Huschner, 1993; Sierck 1995), with the Salians displaying a particular affinity for Marian commemorations (Hehl, 1997). When, in December 1046 at the synod of Sutri, Henry III (1028-56) oversaw the deposition of three rival popes before his own candidate, Suidger of Bamberg, was raised to the papal throne a few days later, the ideological framework of German rulership appeared unassailable. Ruling by God's grace (*Dei gratia*), the claims of the German king-emperors to govern in Christ's image for the good of the whole Christian Church appeared to be no empty boast. This edifice was, however, so the

traditional interpretation, soon to come crashing down as the relationship between imperial and papal power, once so harmonious rapidly became hostile. Just three decades after Henry III had reigned supreme at Sutri, his son Henry IV was forced to wait barefoot in the snow to gain the forgiveness of Pope Gregory VII at Canossa. Facing opposition from the German princes, who justified their actions as being a response to his excommunication, Henry embarked on a perilous journey across the Alps to pressure Gregory into accepting him back into the Church. This meeting between emperor and pope, which took place at Matilda of Tuscany's hill-top castle in northern Italy, is a moment that has been seen as pivotal in German, if not European, history and looms large in discussions of later Salian kingship.

When, in 2006, Stefan Weinfurter subtitled his popular history of Canossa 'The Disenchantment of the World' (Weinfurter, 2006) he deliberately invoked Max Weber's modernisation paradigm, reminding us once again of the extent to which concepts of kingship have been viewed through the lens of an inevitable path to modernity and secular rulership.<sup>5</sup> In seeing Canossa as a turning point (*Wende*) in medieval German history Weinfurter is part of a long tradition, the classic statement being Anton Mayer-Pfannholz's essay: '*Die Wende von Canossa*' (Mayer-Pfannholz, 1933). Canossa excites both popular imagination and academic discourse in the German-speaking world. In addition to the publication of Weinfurter's book, 2006 also saw an exhibition held at Paderborn in which the events of 1077 were billed as 'shocking' or 'shaking' the established world order (Stiegemann & Wemhoff, 2006). It is important to emphasise this popular interest in order to make apparent the wider context in which academic debates surrounding Canossa must be understood.<sup>6</sup> To an historian from outside of the German tradition such an intense focus on Canossa can be hard to fathom, however, the events at Canossa have held a prominent place in German consciousness for several centuries (Reuter, 2006, p. 147; Hasberg, 2012). Scholarly debate, given fresh impetus by the provocative contributions of Johannes Fried, continues to rage concerning the precise significance of the events at Canossa (e.g. Hoffmann, 2010; Fried, 2008, 2012; Hasberg & Scheidgen, 2012; Althoff, 2014). However, the effect Henry IV's humiliation on concepts of kingship has, until relatively recently, been accepted without quarrel. For how could a German ruler claim to govern by God's grace and in the image of Christ the king having demonstrated so humiliatingly that his power was inferior to that of the pope?

Depending on one's sympathies, Canossa was the high or low point of a broader struggle between the papacy and the German emperors 'for the right order in the world' (Tellenbach, 1936, p. 1). Other European monarchies also became embroiled in the so-called Investiture Controversy (Zey, 1998), but the German emperors' singular relationship with Rome inevitably meant that there was a proximity and bitterness to the struggle that was rarely present in the popes' arms'-length interactions with the Capetian monarchs of France or the Norman kings of England. The vehemence of the struggle between Gregory VII and Henry IV is reflected in the survival of a vast quantity of tracts, known collectively as *Streitschrifte*, in which the ideological basis of imperial and papal power has been seen as being deconstructed and defended (e.g. Leyser, 1965; Robinson, 1978; Schroll & Riversi, 2016). These tracts have understandably fascinated historians of both the papacy and the German empire and the arguments of Gregory and his acolytes and supporters have been seen as demolishing the very concept of Christian sacral kingship. Rather than as a mediator between clergy and people with his higher status apparent through unction, the German king was argued to be a layman under clerical authority. In response to this sustained and vigorous assault, Henry's supporters were, it has been argued, forced to develop a secularised justification of the emperor's position, thereby in effect conspiring in the dismantling of the emperor's sacral basis (Töpfer, 1982; Struve, 1991; 1999).

The struggle with the papacy was not the only factor in what Leyser termed the 'crisis of medieval Germany' (Leyser, 1983). Opposition from secular and ecclesiastical magnates within the Reich, many of whom, as we have seen, were quick to exploit Henry IV's troubles with the Roman pontiff, was equally threatening to Salian kingship. The election in succession of two anti-kings, Rudolf of Rheinfelden and Hermann of Salm, showed that a number of the German princes were only too happy to accept Gregory's judgement that, despite having been anointed, Henry IV could be deposed. This factor is crucial to understanding one of the pillars that historians have seen as forming a new ideological basis for German kingship as, following decades of turmoil, Frederick Barbarossa again breathed life into the German empire. Linked to the role of the princes in Barbarossa's rise to power, Stefan Weinfurter has argued that a new transpersonal idea of kingship

developed, as the *regnum* came to be understood as an abstract institution represented by the princes (Weinfurter, 2005, pp. 195-196). The increasing prominence of the princes as electors underscores their role in the rule of the empire and their participation in the selection of the king provided him with an alternative justification of his position.<sup>7</sup>

The second pillar holding up the edifice of Staufen kingship was the law, which, in the wider context of the twelfth-century renaissance, had a distinctly Roman flavour (Kuttner, 1991). The twelfth-century German monarchs continued to see themselves as heirs to the Roman tradition. Historians have seen the importance of Rome finding visual manifestation on the seals and *bullae* of the German rulers. During the reign of Frederick Barbarossa a *bullae* was created on which, for the first time, an actual Roman building can be identified. That the building in question, the Colosseum, is a monument of ancient rather than Christian Rome has led Jürgen Petersohn to stress the increasing importance of the classical Rome to the image of Staufen power (Petersohn, 2010, p. 344). Interest in the ancient past was hardly confined to the Empire, but as Reuter commented, it 'had a sharper political significance in the Reich' (Reuter, 1992, p. 19). This, in part, explains why the revival of Roman law, which also spread far beyond the border of the imperial territories, has been seen as such an important factor in the legitimization of Staufen rule.

As has been recognised, Frederick Barbarossa's interest in Roman law was not entirely novel, although the depth of his engagement with it was new (Appelt, 1962; Fried, 1974, pp. 46-56; Fuhrmann, 1986, p. 147; Struve, 2007). The adherents of Henry V, for example, had used Roman law to argue that emperors had the right to install popes. This proof had been provided by Irnerius, a lawyer from the Bolognese school, and Barbarossa significantly strengthened the link between the imperial court and law school at Bologna with the grant of a privilege, known as the *Authentica Habita*, in 1155 (Stelzer, 1978). A few years later in November 1158 four Bolognese masters played a prominent role in an assembly at Roncaglia, which aimed at the reorganisation of regalian rights in Italy, and has been seen as epitomising Barbarossa's close relationship with Roman law. The ancient Roman emperor as law-giver thus provided an alternative basis for the image of Staufen power, which



was not contingent on papal cooperation. Scholars have also seen the Byzantine model of emperorship as influencing the Staufer development of a *papstfrei* imperial ideology (Koch, 1972, pp. 215-229). The relationship between the Eastern emperor and the head of the Greek Church, in which the patriarch was subordinate to the monarch, offered an alternative archetype for the connection between church and state. Barbarossa's was a Roman Empire of the classical type, not contingent upon his coronation by the pope, and he promulgated 'holy laws' in imitation of ancient rulers such as Justinian (Ullmann, 1975, pp. 92-6). The sacral and 'Christ-centred' kingship of the Ottonians, devalued in the long and bitter struggles of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, had been replaced by a more secular, 'law-centred', conception of imperial rule.

Although isolated denunciations of this traditional desacralisation paradigm can be found earlier, it is really only since the turn of the century that it has come under more sustained attack (e.g. Erkens, 2002; 2006a; 2006b; Hoffmann, 2010; Körntgen 2009; 2013; 2014; Angenendt 2012; Dale, 2016). Interestingly historians who have also worked on the earlier middle ages have been most critical of the paradigm. This undoubtedly reflects increasingly nuanced approaches to Ottonian kingship. David Warner wrote of what he called the 'Presumption of Ottonian Success' (Warner, 2009, pp. 95-101), which, in the context of the medieval German *Sonderweg* assumed that the Ottonian rulers had begun the construction of a coherent and integrated German state before the later Salian and Staufer rulers reduced the edifice to rubble. Once again, the problem of a teleological approach that explains the development of modern states as being related to the loss of the sacral resources of the monarch rears its head. As sacral kingship has been seen as such an important element in Ottonian success it is inevitable that its weakening becomes a major explanation for the later failure of Salian and Staufer power (Körntgen, 2009). However, hand-in-hand with anthropologically inspired approaches to the reality of Ottonian rule, associated above all with Gerd Althoff (e.g. Althoff, 1997), the image of Ottonian sacral kingship has been re-examined. This exploration has stripped the image of Ottonian kingship of some of its mystique and, as a result, the later Salian and Staufer rulers now appear less overshadowed by the comparison.

This qualitative relativization is most evident in the work of Franz-Reiner Erkens, who produced a flurry of publications early this century dealing with sacral kingship, which he considers to be a world-wide phenomenon evident across many eras, almost an anthropological constant (Erkens, 2002; 2006a; 2006b).<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, his monograph on ruler sacrality in the middle ages actually begins with a discussion of ancient Egyptian and Roman kingship, he then traces the development of sacral kingship through the Irish, Visigoths, Merovingians, Carolingians and Ottonians before he concludes with a discussion of the extent to which Canossa precipitated a fundamental change in sacral kingship (Erkens, 2006a). He argues that rather than marking a moment of profound change, the late eleventh century saw a more modest modification of the concept of sacral kingship within the Reich and that many of the elements of sacral kingship found pre-1077 are evident in the twelfth century too. For example, the later Salians and Staufer continued to stress that they were chosen by God, that they ruled as his vicar, and that, through unction, they possessed sacerdotal attributes that set them apart from other laymen. Erkens also points out that there was no monopoly on claiming to be God's deputy even before the Investiture Controversy and that, moreover, the emperors still seemed to be considered as having received their power from God even by those who thought the pope was higher up the food chain (Erkens, 2006b).

Ludger Körntgen pushes the argument further. Throughout his important book on sacral conceptions of kingship found in Ottonian and early Salian art and historiography, he argues for the need to fully contextualise the evidence (Körntgen, 2001). In doing so he draws attention to how nebulous the concept 'sacral kingship' is and how imprecisely it has been used by historians of medieval Germany. He is not the first to recognise the problem: Karl Leyser, for example, expressed his misgivings at using the word 'sacral' to describe the kingship of the Ottonians in 1979, though for Leyser the very imprecision of the word was beneficial as he felt anointing alone could not explain the numinous aura of the Ottonian emperors and that the word 'sacral' encapsulated both ecclesiastical/liturgical aspects and more mystical attributes (Leyser, 1979, p.75). However, if the concept of sacral kingship is so amorphous, does it not lose its explanatory power? This is the argument of Jens Engels, an historian of the French Revolution (the key moment of 'desacralization' in French history), who has criticised the use of the concept of 'sacral kingship' by

historians (Engels, 1999). He points out that the concept is employed in a variety of ways by ethnologists, sociologists, historians and anthropologists so that there is no consensus as to what 'sacral kingship' actually entails. The term has become a meaningless catch-all phrase to encompass all the aspects of old-style monarchy that do not make sense to the modern rational mind (Engels, 1999, p.8). Building on Engels' work, Körntgen writes of the 'universal explanatory power' (*universale Erklärungs-potenz*) of the demise of sacral kingship as a key feature in the development of modern states, so that complex political, social and economic factors pale into insignificance (Körntgen, 2009, p.133).

In keeping with his belief that the evidence for sacral kingship and desacralisation should be fully contextualised, Körntgen has published two important essays on two different source types. Firstly, he has looked at the so-called *Streitschri-fte* and argued that the polemical tracts associated with Henry IV should not be understood as some kind of coherent defence of royal sacrality, but rather as specific responses to specific papal attacks (Körntgen, 2009). He argues that the Investiture Controversy precipitated such a huge outpouring of texts that it is easy to gain the misguided impression that the key issue in the conflict was the religious legitimisation of kingship, whereas in fact it was much more about the concrete issue of Henry IV's ability to rule and the justness of Gregory VII's actions against him (Körntgen, 2009, pp.137-155). Körntgen does not deny that Henry's acceptance of Gregory's right to excommunicate him, as the king acknowledged by seeking forgiveness at Canossa in 1077, impacted concepts of kingship. However, he sees this reality as setting boundaries for the sacrality of the monarch, rather than stripping him of sacrality entirely. For Körntgen the Investiture Controversy is thus a moment of discontinuity rather than a turning point or moment of desacralisation (Körntgen, 2009, p.159). In a second contribution Körntgen questions whether a change in the way rulers were depicted in art can be seen as a manifestation of changes in conceptions of kingship (Körntgen, 2014). Specifically, he considers the disappearance of images of rulers from liturgical manuscripts and the development of the more historical ruler imagery associated with the later Salians and Staufer. He argues that this change cannot simply be attributed to the demise of sacral kingship, but needs to be considered in far broader cultural-historical horizons, particularly taking into account changes in aesthetics and commemorative practices across the high middle ages. Moreover,

as he points out, it is modern viewers who have seen Ottonian ruler portraits as solely being concerned with projecting royal ideology, when in actual fact they were at least as much about providing a permanent presence for the ruler in a liturgical setting.

Rejection of the desacralization paradigm does not imply a conviction that conceptions of kingship remained static, but that other facets of royal ideology could complement rather than compete with sacral elements of kingship. Thus, Roman law, for example, rather than providing an alternative secular basis for Staufan kingship, in fact strengthened ruler sacrality (Erkens, 2006b, pp.92-7). This argument echoes a wider point made by Janet L. Nelson, a student of Walter Ullmann's, who has argued that it is a mistake to see liturgy and law as mutually exclusive alternatives and has pointed out that throughout the Middle Ages, 'liturgy as a form of political communication...coexisted with law rather than competing with it' (Nelson, 2009, p. 441). The king was Christ's deputy *and* the deliverer of the law – there was no contradiction in this. Likewise, the increasingly prominent role of the princes does not have to be interpreted as undermining ruler sacrality, rather election by the princes becomes the instrument through which God's will is enacted.

Debates about the ideological basis of royal rule in the German Empire and the significance of Canossa are sure to continue. Going forwards it is apparent that further work to clarify what modern historians mean by 'sacral kingship' and 'desacralization' is required. More attention also needs to be devoted to the ecclesiastical dimension of 'sacral kingship' and to the role of churchmen and institutions in the construction of a sacral image for the king. It is apparent that sacral conceptions of kingship did not simply originate with the monarch himself, and that the sacral legitimacy of the ruler could serve the needs of ambitious bishops and of religious foundations too. Furthermore, as Körntgen's contributions have shown, the evidence for royal ideology must also be more firmly contextualised and factors other than royal sacrality considered when examining changing concepts and practices of kingship. Even Stefan Weinfurter has conceded that Canossa has come to stand for a whole process of change at the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the alleged desacralization of monarchy cannot explain all these changes (Weinfurter, 2012).

It would also be beneficial to consider these issues in a broader context. In her recent essay on medieval queenship in this journal, Theresa Earenfight argued that ‘the idea of *nation* as a framework is not useful for studying queenship’ as queens were part of an international family and bearers of political and cultural ideas (Earenfight, 2017). The nation also has its limitations for the study of kingship. High medieval kings interacted with the dynasties of neighbouring realms on numerous levels, interactions that only intensified in the twelfth century, not least through the participation of monarchs on the crusades, a phenomenon that surely must be more thoroughly considered in exploring concepts of kingship in this period. As Reuter highlighted, ‘people in the Reich were, as elsewhere in Europe, very much aware of what was happening in Other Countries’ (Reuter, 1993, pp. 210-211). This is not to suggest that there were no regional differences, but that a pan-European approach better reflects the transmission of cultural and political ideas in the twelfth century. It also offers the opportunity to escape from national historiographies, which have created the strange, and scarcely credible, juxtaposition that German kingship was desacralized in the twelfth century and French kingship not until the eighteenth.

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<sup>1</sup> As Reuter has explained, the term *Sonderweg* was originally coined to describe the course of modern German history after the Enlightenment and to contrast the German experience with that of England, France and the United States. It has been understood both positively to mean that Germany developed in a manner appropriate to its own history and also, given the events of the early twentieth century, as a regrettable deviation from a western norm (Reuter, 1993, p. 179).

<sup>2</sup> For an excellent short introduction to the history of medieval Germany in these centuries see Gillingham, 1971. Other English overviews include Fuhrmann, 1986; Reuter, 1991; Arnold, 1997. Some of the German kings of this period have been the subject of English-language biographies, which are included in the bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the emigration of a number of German and Austrian medieval historians during the Nazi period see Petersohn, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Schramm and Kantorowicz were famously caricatured as 'Nazi Twins' in Cantor, 1991. Partly in response to this, the study of Kantorowicz himself has become practically a field in its own right (e.g. Landauer, 1995; Benson & Fried 1997; Ruehl, 2000; Lerner, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> A discussion of Weber's theory of rationalization, complicated as it is by the complex editorial history of his *oeuvre*, lies beyond the scope of this essay, but, broadly, Weber used the concept of disenchantment to describe modernised, bureaucratised and secularised western society.

<sup>6</sup> An academic volume of essays was also published in conjunction with the exhibition: (Jarnut & Wemhoff, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> The elective nature of German monarchy is seen as a key element in the medieval *Sonderweg*. For a recent introduction in German see Rogge, 2006. The best treatment of the phenomenon in English remains Gillingham, 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Erkens is hardly alone in viewing 'sacral kingship' in this way. See, for example, Francis Oakley's short book on the subject (Oakley, 2006) and his recent three-volume study, which provides an elegant, though rather old-fashioned, grand narrative of the development of western political thought (Oakley, 2010; 2012; 2015).