MAGNIFICENCE

AND PRINCELY SPLENDOUR IN THE MIDDLE AGES

RICHARD BARBER

MAGNIFICENCE

AND PRINCELY SPLENDOUR IN THE MIDDLE AGES

THE BOYDELL PRESS

© Richard Barber 2020

All Rights Reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation
no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system,
published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast,
transmitted, recorded or reproduced in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission of the copyright owner

The rights of Richard Barber to be identified as
the author of this work have been asserted in accordance with
sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

First published 2020
The Boydell Press, Woodbridge

ISBN 9781783274710

The Boydell Press is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
and of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
668 Mt Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620–2731, USA
website: www.boydellandbrewer.com

Frontispiece
The month of January, from the calendar in *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry*.
Jean, duke of Berry, is shown welcoming guests. It has traditionally been interpreted
as the beginning of a feast, but in the light of recent work on New Year's gifts at
this period, it could well be that the visitors are bringing their offerings for the traditional
exchange of gifts on New Year's day.

Background to title page: design from fifteenth century textile in the Victoria and
Albert Museum, used by Liberty for a velvet material c.1890, and redesigned as wallpaper
in 1990. © Richard Barber

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

Designed by Simon Loxley
Printed by Gomer Press

CONTENTS

List of illustrations viii
Preface xiii
The rulers of Europe 1100–1500 xv
Names and coinage xxi
European kingdoms in the fourteenth century xxii

INTRODUCTION

1. Splendour and Magnificence 2

◆ *The coronation of king Arthur: an imagined festival* ◆ *The festival at Mainz, 1184* ◆ *Defining princely splendour*

PART ONE

PRINCELY SPLENDOUR

2. Dynasties, Kings and Courts 10

◆ *The status of a king* ◆ *'A substitute for long hair'* ◆ *The king in his court* ◆ *The ceremonies of kingship* ◆ *Crown-wearings* ◆ *Crowns*

3. The Culture of Kingship 23

◆ *Sicily: creating a royal culture* ◆ *Palermo as a royal capital* ◆ *Friedrich II: recreating the past, exploring the future* ◆ *The arch at Capua* ◆ *Friedrich as builder: Castel del Monte and Castello Maniace* ◆ *St Louis and Henry III* ◆ *Paris* ◆ *London* ◆ *Royal mausoleums*

PART TWO

MAGNIFICENCE

4. Defining Magnificence 50

◆ *Popes, emperors and kings* ◆ *Philip IV and the Church* ◆ *Aristotle and the* Nicomachean Ethics ◆ On the Government of Princes

5. The Image and Person of the Prince 58

◆ *The prince in person: appearances* ◆ *Coins and seals* ◆ *The prince's dress* ◆ *Materials* ◆ *Opulence: embroidery,* opus anglicanum ◆ *Fashion* ◆ *The prince's crowns* ◆ *The prince's jewels* ◆ *Gems and jewels* ◆ *The prince's armour* ◆ *The prince's portraits*

6. Queens and Princesses 91

◆ *The queen as monarch* ◆ *The queen as the king's consort* ◆ *Weddings and dowries* ◆ *Crowns for queens and princesses* ◆ *Dowries* ◆ *The inventory of a duchess* ◆ *The tragedy of Isabella of Aragon*

7. The Prince's Entourage 106

◆ *The court and court festivals* ◆ *Livery and membership of the court* ◆ *Livery badges and collars* ◆ *Orders of knighthood* ◆ *Artists and craftsmen: the prince's* valets de chambre

8. Magnificence and the Arts 122

◆ *Patronage* ◆ *Music* ◆ *Minstrels and musicians* ◆ *Royal chapels* ◆ *Composers* ◆ *Literature* ◆ *Manuscripts and libraries* ◆ *Writers* ◆ *The decorative arts* ◆ *Wall paintings* ◆ *Tapestries* ◆ *Heraldry* ◆ *Menageries*

9. Magnificent Architecture 154

◆ *Capital cities* ◆ *Paris: The Louvre* ◆ *London: St Stephen's Chapel* ◆ *Prague* ◆ *Karl IV and Prague* ◆ *Naples* ◆ *Castles for kings and emperors* ◆ *Castle residences* ◆ *Windsor* ◆ *Bellver* ◆ *Vincennes* ◆ *Karlstejn* ◆ *Churches, shrines and relics* ◆ *Collecting relics* ◆ *Relics as an aspect of magnificence*

10. Magnificence on Display 180

◆ *Civic Entries* ◆ *London* ◆ *Paris* ◆ *Entries in the French Provinces, Spain and the Empire* ◆ *State Visits* ◆ *Karl IV and Charles V, Paris 1378* ◆ *Charles the Bold and Friedrich III, Trier 1473* ◆ *Towards the Renaissance: Naples*

11. Magnificent Ceremonies and Festivals 200

◆ *The Feast of the Pheasant: taking the crusader vow* ◆ *The stages of a prince's life* ◆ *Knighting* ◆ *Three royal knighting ceremonies* ◆ *Coronation feasts* ◆ *Wedding feasts* ◆ *Seasonal festivals* ◆ *New Year* ◆ *Maying* ◆ *Tournaments*

PART THREE

THE MANAGEMENT OF MAGNIFICENCE

12. Magnificent Extravagances 234

◆ *Medieval cookery* ◆ *Cookery books and the* Viandier Taillevent ◆ *Subtleties and* entremets ◆ *Master Chiquart* ◆ *The feast* ◆ *The buffet: displaying wealth* ◆ *The reception of guests* ◆ *The serving of the meal*

13. Devising the Festival 253

◆ *The prince's household and the court* ◆ *Programmes for great events* ◆ *The master of ceremonies: Olivier de la Marche* ◆ *Housing the festival* ◆ *'Kings' of minstrels and heralds: gangmasters for great occasions* ◆ *Food for the feast: the cook* ◆ *Master Chiquart* ◆ *Entertainments and players* ◆ *Masks, disguises and scenery* ◆ *Acrobats, buffoons and tregetours* ◆ *Mechanical marvels* ◆ *Dances*

14. Financing, Organising and Creating Magnificence 279

◆ *The cost of magnificence* ◆ *Royal resources* ◆ *The bankers* ◆ *Organising and creating magnificence* ◆ *Buying and making clothes* ◆ *Buying gold and jewels*

EPILOGUE

15. The Spirit of Magnificence 290

◆ *The Twelve Magnificences of Charles the Bold* ◆ *Power* ◆ *Display* ◆ *Did magnificence work?* ◆ *The audience* ◆ *Magnificence and extravagance* ◆ *Magnificence and reality*

Appendix I: Giles of Rome and On the Government of Princes 306
Appendix II: Magnificence before Giles of Rome 311
Endnotes 312
Bibliography 323
Acknowledgements 338
Index 340

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Frontispiece: The month of January, from the calendar in *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry*. (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65 f.1v) (Photo Réunion Des Musées Nationaux, Paris) ii

1. The crown of the Holy Roman Empire (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. SK XIII.1). (KHM-Museumsverband) xxiv
2. The throne of Dagobert king of the Franks, seventh century (© Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris-Grand Palais/image BnF) 13
3. Sceptre of Charles V, called Charlemagne's sceptre (Paris, Musée du Louvre MV149) (© Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre)/Peter Willi) 13
4. Iron Crown of Lombardy, Monza Cathedral (De Agostini Picture Library/A. De Gregorio/ Bridgeman Images) 19
5. Crown of Saint Wenceslas, St Vitus Cathedral, Prague (VPC Photo/Alamy Stock Photo) 19
6. Crown of Sancho IV, Toledo Cathedral (AKG Images) 19
7. Throne niche in Cappella Palatina, Palermo (Beat Brenk) 27
8. Coronation of Roger II by Christ (Beat Brenk) 29
9. William II offers Monreale to the Virgin Mary, mosaic at Monreale Cathedral (De Agostini Picture Library/Bridgeman Images) 29
10. Castel del Monte (De Agostini Picture Library/A. De Gregorio/Bridgeman Images) 37
11. Henry III brings the relics of the Passion to Westminster, from Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora* (Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 16 f. 216r (detail): by kind permission of the Masters and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge) 37
12. The Crown of Thorns, Cathedral of Notre-Dame, Paris (Godong/Alamy Stock Photo) 37
13. The month of June, from the calendar in *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry* (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65 f.6v) (© Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris-Grand Palais) 39
14. Panteon de los Reyes, Basilica of San Isidoro, León (mauritius images GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo) 45
15. Tomb of the Holy Roman Emperor Friedrich II, Palermo Cathedral 45

Half-title illustration to Part Two: Magnificence: A French translation of *De Regimine Principum* is presented to Philip IV by Henri de Gauci: this copy, dated 1372, comes from the library of Charles V (Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon MS 434, f.103v) 48

16. Giles of Rome presents *On the Government of Princes* to Philip IV, c.1310 (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery MS W.144 f.2r) (Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore) 55
17. Magnificence: a miniature from *Li ars d'amour, de vertu et de boneurté* (Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique MS 9548, f.122 v.) (Photo KBR, Brussels) 55
18. Gold augustalis of Friedrich II (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum CM.PG.1121-2006) 59
19. Gold noble of Edward III (Private collection) 59
20. Gold franc à cheval of Jean II of France (Private collection) 59
21. Guyennois d'or of Edward duke of Aquitaine (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum CM1.104-1930) 59
22. Pavillon d'or of Edward duke of Aquitaine (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum CM 55-1956) 59
23. 'Samson' of Charles duke of Aquitaine (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum CM.552-1995) 59
24. The Coronation Mantle, made for Roger II (Imperial treasury, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, SK XIII.14) (Photo KHM-Museumsverband) 62-63
25. Star mantle of Heinrich II (Kunstsammlungen des Diözesanmuseums Bamberg) (Photo Diözesanmuseum Bamberg, Photographer: Uwe Gaasch) 65
26. The 'Eagle Dalmatic' (Imperial treasury, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, SK XIII.15) (Photo KHM-Museumsverband) 65
27. Henry II and Matilda, from the *Gospels of Henry the Lion* (Archive World/Alamy Stock Photo) 65
28. Butler Bowdon cope (Victoria and Albert Museum, London) 70
29. King Roboam from the Jesse cope, 1310–1325 (Victoria and Albert Museum, London) 70
30. Richard II presented to the Virgin: detail from the Wilton diptych (National Gallery, London, UK/ Bridgeman Images) 70
31. Mantle of Fernando de la Cerda, Museo de las Telas Medievales de Burgos (© Patrimonio Nacional) 73
32. Biretta of Fernando de la Cerda, Museo de las Telas Medievales de Burgos (© Patrimonio Nacional) 73

33. Belt of Fernando de la Cerda, Museo de las Telas Medievales de Burgos (© Patrimonio Nacional) 73
34. *Pellote* of Eleanor of Castile, Museo de las Telas Medievales de Burgos (© Patrimonio Nacional) 73
35. Throne of Martí I of Aragon at Barcelona (Author/John Roberts) 77
36. Parade helmet of Charles VI (Paris, Musée du Louvre MO111185) (© Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre)/Jean-Gilles Berizzi) 77
37. Portrait of Robert of Anjou by Simone Martini, from his altarpiece depicting St Louis of Toulouse (Museo Capodimonte, Naples. (detail) (Art Collection 2/Alamy Stock Photo) 84
38. Portrait of Jean II (Paris, Musée du Louvre) (© Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre)/Jean-Gilles Berizzi) 84
39. Charles V is presented with a bible by Jean Vaudetar, 1372. (Den Haag, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum MS 10 B 23), 1372 (Photo Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Den Haag) 84
40. Gothic statues of Margrave Eckard II and his wife Uta in Naumburg Cathedral (VPC Travel Photo/Alamy Stock Photo) 86
41. Richard II, from Westminster Abbey; oil on panel, 1390s (Westminster Abbey, London, UK/Bridgeman Images) 87
42. Tomb of king Robert of Anjou behind altar of Santa Chiara church, Naples (Ivan Vdovin/Alamy Stock Photo) 89
43. Coronation of Charles V and Jeanne of Bourbon, 1364 (Bibliothèque Municipale de Toulouse, MS 512, f.427r) (Photo © Bibliothèque de Toulouse) 94
44. Isabeau of Bavaria enters Paris (British Library MS Harley 4379 f.3) (British Library, London, UK © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images) 99
45. Christine de Pizan and Isabeau of Bavaria (British Library MS Harley 4431, f.3) (British Library, London, UK. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images) 101
46. English crown, possibly of Anne of Bohemia (Munich, Schatzkammer der Residenz) (Interfoto/Alamy Stock Photo) 101
47. Walter de Milemete – issue of livery (British Library MS Add 476680 f.17v) (British Library, London, UK. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images) 110
48. Devices of the royal dukes of France from Jean Petit's *Justification de Monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne sur le fait de la mort du duc d'Orleans* (Österreichisches Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Cod. Vind. 2657 f.1v) (Österreichisches Nationalbibliothek, Vienna) 115
49. King Charles VI and the French Dukes (Geneva, Bibliothèque publique et universitaire, MS fr.165, f.7) (Geneva, Bibliothèque publique et universitaire) 115
50. King Charles VI and the French Dukes. Pierre Salmon, *Dialogues* (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris MS Fr.23279 f.5) (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) 115
51. Court of Alfonso X (from a manuscript in the Library of the Escorial) (Biblioteca Monasterio del Escorial, Madrid/Bridgeman Images) 125
52. Queen and musicians (British Library MS Add 12228, f.222v) (British Library, London, UK © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images) 125
53. Arab and Christian musicians playing together (from a manuscript in the Library of the Escorial) (Biblioteca Monasterio del Escorial, Madrid/Bridgeman Images) 125
54. Musicians from *The Luttrell Psalter* (British Library MS Add 42130, f.176) (British Library, London, UK © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images) 129
55. Philip the Good is presented with the *Chronicles of Hainault*, miniature by Rogier van der Weyden (Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Brussels, MS 9242 f.1r) (Photo KBR, Brussels) 137
56. Dais of Charles VII (Paris, Musée du Louvre OA12281)(Photo © Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre)/Stéphane Maréchalle) 147
57. Matthew Paris: drawing of an elephant (British Library MS Cotton Nero D I) (British Library, London, UK © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images) 151
58. Frederick II's elephant at Cremona, from Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora* (Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge) MS 16 f.151v (By kind permission of the Masters and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge) 151
59. St Stephen's Chapel fresco (Society of Antiquaries of London) 157
60. Castelnuovo, Naples (Panther Media GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo) 157
61. Bellver Castle, Palma de Mallorca, inner court (Alexander Nikiforov/Alamy Stock Photo) 169
62. Vincennes, by Androuet du Cerceau (Androuet du Cerceau, *Les plus excellents batiments de France*, p.269) 169

63. Karlstejn castle 172
64. Karlstejn: Interior of St Catherine's chapel (Photo Radovan Bocek) 172
65. Karlstejn: Passage outside Holy Cross chapel (Photo Radovan Bocek) 172
66. Karlstejn: Holy Cross Chapel (Photo Radovan Bocek) 175
67. Karlstejn: Karl IV receives relics (Photo Radovan Bocek) 177
68. Karlstejn: St George (Photo Radovan Bocek) 177
69. Arthur enters Camelot (British Library MS Add 12228, f.221v) (British Library, London, UK © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images) 182
70. Charles V gives a feast for Karl IV (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS français 2813 f.473v a-b) (Photo Josse/Bridgeman Images) 182
71. The feast of Charles the Bold for the emperor Friedrich III, 1473. From Dietbold Schilling's Zürich Chronicle (Zürich, MS. A 5, p.121) (The Picture Art Collection/Alamy Stock Photo) 195
72. Al fresco dining from *Livre de chasse* (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS français 616 f.67) (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) 195
73. Encampment (British Library MS Add 12228, f.150r) (British Library, London, UK © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images) 207
74. Philip IV and his family (from Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS Lat. 8504 f.1v) (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) 207
75. Coronation of Henry the young king from *The Becket Leaves* (The Wormsley Library/ Bridgeman images) 209
76. Knighting ceremonies (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS Lat. 8504 3v) (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) 209
77. The Little Golden Horse of Altötting c.1400 (Treasure Vault of the Holy Chapel, Altötting, Bavaria/Bridgeman Images) 221
78. The month of May, from the calendar in *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry* (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65 f.5v) (© Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris-Grand Palais) 223
79. Heralds negotiate tournament from *Le livre de tournois du roi René* (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS français 2695, f.7r) (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) 231
80. The knights assembled in the lists from *Le livre de tournois du roi René* (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS français 2695, f.97v-98) (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) 231
81. Awarding the prizes from *Le livre de tournois du roi René* (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS français 2695, f.103v) (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) 231
82. Cooks from *The Luttrell Psalter* (British Library, MS Add 42130, f.207) (British Library, London, UK © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images) 242
83. Cooks from *The Luttrell Psalter* (British Library, MS Add 42130, f.207v) (British Library, London, UK © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images) 242
84. Burghley nef, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Victoria and Albert Museum, London) 242
85. Royal Gold Cup, c. 1370–80 (© Trustees of the British Museum) 247
86. The Huntsman Salt. English, early fifteenth century (© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford) 247
87. Copenhagen silver-gilt ewer, c.1330, Paris. National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen (By kind permission of the National Museum of Denmark) 247
88. Beaker enamelled with pattern of apes and foliage (The Cloisters, New York) 247
89. Winchester Round Table, Winchester Castle c.1280 (Photo W. Buss, Bridgeman Images) 250
90. Feast from *The Romance of Alexander*, c.1344 (Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS 264, f.181r) (Photo Bodleian Libraries) 250
91. Le Bal des Ardents (British Library MS Harley 4380, f.1r) (British Library, London, UK © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images) 257
92. A marriage feast from the *Histoire de Charles Martel*, a manuscript illuminated around 1450 (Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Brussels, MS 8, f.326) (Photo KBR, Brussels) 257
93. Castle of love: French fourteenth-century mirror case, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Victoria and Albert Museum, London) 257
94. Table fountain, fourteenth century, Cleveland Museum (Cleveland Museum) 269
95. 'Heart at the Magic Fountain' from René d'Anjou, *Livre du cuer d'amours espris* (Österreichisches Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Cod. Vind. 2597) f.15 (Österreichisches Nationalbibliothek, Vienna) 269
96. Men wearing vizors, from *The Romance of Alexander*, c.1344 (Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS 264, f.181r (Photo Bodleian Libraries) 271

97. Saracen dancing girls, from Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora* (Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 16 f.149) (By kind permission of the Masters and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge) 271
98. Hiltbold von Schwangau (Universitätsbibliothek, Heidelberg, MS pal. Germ. 848, f.141r) (Interfoto/Alamy Stock Photo) 271
99. Dancers from *The Romance of Alexander*, c.1344 (Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS 264, f.181r) (Photo Bodleian Libraries) 277
100. Tommaso Portinari (Metropolitan Museum of Art) (Metropolitan Museum of Art) 292
101. Charles the Bold issues an ordinance to his military commanders (British Library, MS Add 36619, f.5) (British Library, London, UK © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved/Bridgeman Images) 292
102. The booty seized by the Swiss from Charles the Bold's tent at Grandson, from Diebold Schilling's *Luzern Chronicle* (Luzern, Zentralbibliothek, MS S 23 p.202) 297
103. Catafalque of Anne of Brittany, 1514 from *Commémoration de la mort d'Anne de Bretagne*, by Pierre Choque (Bibliotheque de Rennes MS 0332, f.27r) (Image © Bibliothèque de Rennes – Les Champs Libres) 297
104. Catafalque of Karl V, 1555, from *La magnifique et sumtueuse pompe funèbre faite en la ville de Bruxelles, le XXIX. jour du mois de décembre, MDLVIII. aux obsèques de l'empereur Charles V. de tresdigne mémoire icy representee par ordre, et figures, selon les mysteres d'icelle*, Brussels 1559, p.3 (Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, collections Jacques Doucet, NUM 4 EST 252) (Image: Bibliothèque numérique de l'INHA) 297

LINE ILLUSTRATIONS IN TEXT

I. A reconstruction of Friedrich II's gateway in the classical style at Capua, built 1234–40. (From Hausherr, Die Zeit der Staufer, iii.159) 31
II. Crown of queen Irene at Bamberg; an eighteenth century engraving (From Johann Peter von Ludewig, *Scriptores Rerum Episcopatus Bambergensis*, Frankfurt 1718) 103
III. Windsor Castle: Wenceslas Hollar's 'birds' eye view' engraving, c.1658 167
IV. Frieze of Alfonso V's triumph in 1443, above the entrance to Castelnuovo in Naples (akg images/Album/Oronoz) 197
V. *Domus magnificencie*, from *The Household Book of Edward IV* (British Library, MS Harley 642, f.4a) 254
VI. *Domus providencie*, from *The Household Book of Edward IV* (British Library, MS Harley 642) 254

PREFACE

The word 'magnificence' has a good deal of history to it. We can trace it from its first appearance in Greek philosophy in about 320 BC to royal propaganda in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The idea behind it evolved over the centuries, but at the end of the thirteenth century, the rediscovery of Greek texts gave a new meaning to 'magnificence'. This made it into a personal virtue which all kings should possess. The central theme of this book is the part that this new idea of magnificence played in justifying or encouraging the behaviour of kings and princes in the middle ages.

The subject is enormously wide-ranging, across a range of languages and literatures, involving enough different princes to need a cast list (which follows), a wonderful variety of contemporary voices. It is a book about people: not just ambitious princes, but artists, craftsmen and musicians of all kinds and the personnel of the court, from cooks and showmen to scribes and clerks. Indeed there have been encounters with unexpected characters who scarcely figure in English histories of Europe.

It is also a book about the dazzling objects that were produced to promote magnificence, and the illustrations are an essential part of it. It was not uncommon for the king to restrict the right to wear rich silken and embroidered clothing to himself and his family. His jewellery, particularly his crowns, were the most dramatic pieces made by goldsmiths, and he surrounded himself with other opulent creations, culminating in the outstanding illuminated manuscripts of the late fifteenth century. The royal collections also included remarkable collections of relics, themselves enclosed in exquisite gold casings, and vast quantities of loose jewels, rings, badges and other ornaments. The king's rooms were hung with tapestries which proclaimed his lineage in their bright heraldic patterns. And the setting for the king and his court were palaces and castles which were the most imposing secular buildings in the realm.

MAGNIFICENCE WAS IN ESSENCE reliant on publicity, on the royal events or appearances being reported by chroniclers or letter-writers. We are so used to the ready availability of all types of news in the media that it is difficult to imagine a world where communications were slow and where news was shared with only a handful of people. For the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the sources are erratic and quite sparse, so that a great event which happens to come to the attention of a diligent and eloquent writer will assume an importance that it may not deserve. Furthermore, there is little in the way of official records to back up such descriptions. By the fifteenth century the opposite is true: for a major festival we may have two or three separate eyewitness accounts, full expenditure details from the treasury, and even a memoir from the man who organised it.

Overall, in England and Burgundy both narratives and financial details are very full. In France the financial details are sparse; in Spain and Germany they are more erratic. For the intriguing period when French kings ruled in eastern Europe, there is very little detail, and I have in any case had to rely on secondary sources for material in Hungarian, Czech and Polish.

What may seem another bias is that the majority of the protagonists are male. The records for queen consorts are very variable, because they often had their own households

and finances, but records of these were not kept by the central administration, and have rarely survived. Only a handful of women were queens in their own right, or ruled in the name of their sons, usually in times of political turbulence.

AS TO THE SECOND PART of this book's title, what do we mean when we write of 'medieval Europe'? The term the 'Middle Ages' is first suggested by the fifteenth-century humanists, who saw a 'middle time' between the end of the Roman empire and their own revival of classical ideals; the phrase 'middle time' first appears in 1468, and 'Middle Ages' in 1518. *Medium aevum*, from which our word medieval derives, is first recorded in 1604, but became the standard phrase only in the late seventeenth century. The concept of a barbarian interval between the decline of classical civilization and its revival was central to the rationalist thinking of the eighteenth century, and the period was now precisely defined: Chambers' Encyclopaedia in 1753 equates the Middle Ages with the centuries between the reign of Constantine and the taking of Constantinople, and the accepted dates soon became from c.500 to c.1500 AD. 'Medieval', an invented word, is first found a century later. An invented word for an invented period? Most historians would agree. The 'fall' of the Roman empire took centuries; the Renaissance, the supposed rebirth of that same civilization, also took centuries. Many writers use the term for the period from the coronation of Charlemagne to the troubled time at the end of the fourteenth century when the whole of western Europe seemed subject to anarchy and sudden change, and which arguably represents the crucial moment of transition from the old idea of Europe and Christendom as an entity to the modem, narrower ideal of the nation-state.

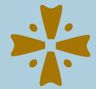
It is important to remember that for most of world history, there is no such thing as the 'Middle Ages', and that 'medieval' always implies Europe as the subject under discussion. Even then, it is Europe in a limited sense, best defined as Western Christendom, those countries that recognised the pope as the head of the church (with varying degrees of respect and obedience). Its border was defined to the east by the territories that owed allegiance to the Orthodox church, and to the north-east by the pagan lands around the Baltic. The Atlantic and the Mediterranean were its western and southern limits, except in Spain, where there was a Muslim presence until 1492. In secular terms, Western Christendom formed a relatively close cultural entity, particularly at the level of society which will principally concern us, that of the royal and princely courts.

1. The crown of the Holy Roman Empire, probably made in AD 962 or AD 967 for the coronation of the emperor Otto the Great or his son. The octagonal form is common to many medieval crowns, and the panels are linked by pins. The arch and cross were added in the eleventh century. There are four enamel plaques, showing Christ and three Old Testament kings, which are in the Byzantine style of the period.

INTRODUCTION

. . . aspects are within us; and who seems
Most kingly is the king.

THOMAS HARDY



1 SPLENDOUR AND MAGNIFICENCE

KINGS WERE NOT ALWAYS EXPECTED to be splendid or magnificent. When kingship, which had been the norm among the tribal societies which preceded the Roman Empire, emerged again when new tribes invaded and conquered the Roman territories, the king was leader of a warband. Such a king might take the lion's share of the plunder, and display his gold and treasure, but his own appearance was not of importance. By the sixth century, there are early forms of regalia which distinguish the king on ceremonial occasions, yet men remembered the days when the king was known by his long hair and by the ox-cart in which he travelled. Splendour came later, as the king became ruler of a settled people and trade began to revive. The idea of personal adornment of a special kind which distinguishes the king gradually extends to his family, his entourage and his surroundings.

Splendour

This first stage I would describe as 'splendour', and is covered in the three chapters that follow. The Norman kingdom in Sicily in the twelfth century, drawing on Greek and Arab culture as well as that of the Christian West, created monuments of remarkable originality and beauty. Friedrich II inherited Sicily and was at the same time ruler of Italy and Germany as Holy Roman Emperor. He is the first of the extraordinary personalities in this book, invoking the imagery of ancient Rome to show his authority, while at the same time corresponding in Arabic with the sultan of Egypt and investigating the new scientific discoveries of his time.

When Frederick died in 1250, the succession to the Empire was disputed. Soon afterwards the popes, who claimed authority over both the Empire and the kings of Europe, were driven out of Rome into exile at Avignon. It was at this moment that the French kings made their bid for independence from pope and emperor.

The word 'magnificence'

MAGNIFICENCE IS A WORD RARELY USED before the end of the thirteenth century. When Philip III of France commissioned a handbook on the 'government of princes' for his son, the future Philip IV. Giles of Rome, who wrote it, proclaimed that 'magnificence', an idea from Greek philosophy, was not an option but both a virtue and a royal duty. 'A king should be magnificent' as God's representative on earth, and he was bound to dress and to act in a way which was appropriate to his high office. Magnificence was to become the hallmark of royalty, and the visual expression of the king's right to rule over his subjects. Giles boldly applied this new idea to everything the king did. His appearance, above all, should be magnificent, and Alfonso the Learned, king of Castile agreed with him: 'Kings should wear garments of silk, adorned with gold and jewels', in order that men might know them as soon as they saw them.

Giles's book *On the Government of Princes* was endlessly copied and translated, and read by kings, or perhaps more frequently, by their tutors and advisers. The word magnificence itself is suddenly everywhere. Two centuries after Giles wrote, a courtier who wanted to celebrate Charles the Bold of Burgundy, who had just died in battle, recorded his

'magnificences' as his memorial. After 1300, the king's demonstration of magnificence projects the idea that he is the rightful king. Kings themselves had rejected the authorities which had vouched for their legitimacy in the past. They were no long elected (as the Holy Roman Emperor continued to be), they no longer looked to the pope as their superior who could vouch for them, and they no longer considered themselves under the emperor's jurisdiction. Instead, the kings and would-be kings of western Christendom employed an astonishing variety of means to persuade both their subjects and their enemies that they possessed the kingly virtue of 'magnificence'. Put succinctly, 'How is it that rulers, humans like the rest of us, are able to hold sway? What kind of fictions are in place to enable some to command the allegiance, even the worship, of others?'[1] The world that we are about to enter is one where material appearance is everything, both for ruler and subject. It is epitomised by the quotation from Thomas Hardy which is our epigraph. Indeed, we could define magnificence as the ultimate weapon in the effort to 'seem most kingly'.

Kingly virtue

Magnificence was applied to everything to do with the ruler: his person, his family, his entourage, his court, the artists, musicians and architects he employed. Above all, it was on show in his public appearances, his feasts and ceremonies. And it was also what inspired the great collections of jewels, manuscripts and holy relics, admission to which was limited to a handful of favoured visitors. Those visitors also had to be entertained, and royal feasts, with their elaborate etiquette, developed into an amazing form of performance art.

All this is explored in the pages which follow, covering the whole of western Europe, centring on France, the wealthiest of the kingdoms, members of whose extended royal family were at different times kings of Poland, Hungary, Naples, Jerusalem, England and, most spectacularly, dukes of Burgundy. The court of Burgundy was the most splendid in Europe in the mid fifteenth century, and when Charles the Bold tried to persuade the then Holy Roman Emperor to grant him a kingdom in 1473, he did so by arriving for the negotiations in a style so magnificent that onlookers were lost for words.

Patronage was a vital element of magnificence. We meet the artists, such as Barthélemy van Eyck, whose room was next to the chamber of René d'Anjou, his patron, so that they could work together on the marvellous illuminated manuscripts for which the king wrote the text. The musicians range from the 'kings of minstrels' who turn out to be gangmasters providing the required quantity of musicians for a feast to the great composers of the fifteenth century who moved from court to court. And there are the contractors, like John of Cologne, armourer and supplier of embroidery, costumes and disguises for English royal entertainments.

Patronage

Magnificence was also reflected by the royal castles and palaces, and the royal chapels and cathedrals. We watch Henry III of England and the Holy Roman Emperor Karl IV touring the wonders of Paris, and comparing them with their own buildings at Westminster and Prague. The great cities were the settings for royal processions, the formal entry of the sovereign into a city which could match him for wealth. Here display was everything: elaborate tableaux and theatrical effects were nothing new.

Architecture

By the fifteenth century, royal magnificence was imitated by those princes and dukes who aspired to rival the king. The dukes of Burgundy, whose revenues were as great as those of most kings, mounted a series of deliberately 'magnificent' occasions, particularly feasts, which seem to us today to have been sheer extravagance. In fact, there was a powerful political agenda behind this magnificence, which began after 1440. Burgundy was at peace with both France and England, and Philip the Good had reorganised the government of his territories into a single system. He was now free to enhance Burgundian prestige and influence by the use of magnificence, with the ultimate aim of transforming his duchy into a kingdom: and he spent royally in the pursuit of his objective.

Princes and dukes

All this is portrayed through contemporary, often eyewitness, descriptions, and in royal and princely accounts and inventories. The chroniclers may give us the overall picture, but the dry records fill in details which would otherwise have been lost. One of Edward III's clerks wrote a full description of the exotic embroidered gown that the king had worn at a royal entertainment, as a change from simply entering the amount paid for it. Inventories describe named jewels and the long-vanished masterpieces of the Parisian goldsmiths, melted down to pay bills or to create new works of art. The entries are often astonishing in what they reveal about techniques, materials and even working conditions: John of Cologne's workmen doing overtime by candlelight; Chinese dragon and cloud patterned silk being bought for Joan, daughter of Edward III; Kathelot producing hats with tiny figures on them for the French princes.

The evidence

As I worked through the colour and brilliance of the feasts and ceremonies, I grew increasingly interested in the logistics of all this: how did you organise a medieval feast or run a tournament or a civic entry? How did you plan such an occasion, and find the artists and performers? Apart from the artists and architects, there were the administrators at court. Olivier de la Marche in Burgundy sent a hundred pages of description of a wedding he had organised to his counterpart in the service of the duke of Brittany, as it would be a help to him for a similar occasion. Perhaps most unexpected of all is the cook Master Chiquart, whose employer, the duke of Savoy, ordered him to write down his skills. Chiquart, despite protesting that he did not know how to write a book, left us a wonderfully vivid picture of the challenges of ensuring the success of a great feast.

Organising magnificence

And finally, there is the dramatic end of the duchy of Burgundy, at a time when its magnificence reflected high political ambitions. The list of the twelve magnificences of the last duke made shortly before he died brings down the curtain on this highly theatrical world.

The Coronation of King Arthur: An Imagined Festival

MEDIEVAL FESTIVALS ARE THE HIGH POINTS of both splendour and magnificence; but what were they like? There are hundreds of descriptions of such occasions in the chronicles and memoirs of the period, and we begin with three samples. There was often a basis of established ritual, as at a coronation or a knighting, but beyond that lies a huge variety of creative approaches. Our first example, which predates almost all the historical descriptions of festivities, is from one of the most popular books of the period, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, and is a highly imaginative account of the coronation of king Arthur: even though it was written about 1135, when the ideas of courtly behaviour and courtly love were real novelties, and before tournaments were other than military exercises, it has all the elements that we shall find in court festivals for the next three centuries:

Geoffrey of Monmouth

> When they had all arrived at Caerleon, on the day of the festival the archbishops were led to the palace to place the royal diadem upon the king's head. Undertaking this duty because the court was being held in his diocese, Dubricius performed the act. After the coronation, the king was duly escorted to the metropolitan cathedral. He was flanked to right and left by two archbishops; four kings, of Scotland, Cornwall, Demetia and Venedotia, walked before him, bearing four golden swords, as was their right; a choir of clergy of all stations sang before him. From the other direction the archbishops and prelates led the queen, wearing her own regalia, to the convent church of the nuns; as

> was the custom, the queens of the four kings already mentioned bore four white doves before her; all the women attending followed her with great joy. After the parade there was such music and singing in both churches that the knights who were taking part were too captivated to decide which to enter first. They rushed in crowds from one to the other and would not have felt bored even if the ceremony had lasted all day. When at last the religious services in each church were over, the king and queen removed their crowns and put on lighter robes, and the king went with the men to dine at his palace, the queen to another with the women; for the Britons used to observe the old Trojan custom that men and women should celebrate feastdays separately. After they had all been seated according to their rank, Kaius the steward, dressed in ermine, and with him a thousand nobles similarly attired, served them courses. Opposite, a thousand men dressed in vair followed Beduerus the butler, similarly attired, offering various drinks of every sort in goblets. In the queen's palace numerous attendants in various liveries were also doing service and performing their roles; if I were to describe it all in detail, my history would become too wordy. So noble was Britain then that it surpassed other kingdoms in its stores of wealth, the ostentation of its dress and the sophistication of its inhabitants. All its doughty knights wore clothes and armour of a single colour. Its elegant ladies, similarly dressed, spurned the love of any man who had not proved himself three times in battle. So the ladies were chaste and better women, whilst the knights conducted themselves more virtuously for the sake of their love.
>
> When at last they had had their fill at the banquets, they separated to visit the fields outside the city and indulge in varied sports. The knights exercised on horseback, feigning battle. The ladies, watching from the battlements, playfully fanned the flames in the knights' hearts into furious passion. Then they peacefully passed the remainder of the day in various games, some contending with boxing gloves, some with spears, some in tossing heavy stones, some at chess, and others with dice. Arthur rewarded all those who had been victorious with liberal gifts.[2]

Geoffrey's account draws on an interesting range of sources. The separate churches for men and women existed in Byzantium at the time, while the games at the wedding are derived from the description of the funeral of Anchises, Aeneas' father in Virgil's *Aeneid*, which in turn goes back to Homer and the funeral of Patroclus in the *Iliad*. The rites of the coronation are an elaboration of contemporary ceremonies. Overall, however, his fictional celebration might almost be a template for the ideal medieval festival.

The Festival at Mainz, 1184

OUR NEXT EXAMPLE IS PROBABLY the first full description of princely splendour in action at this period. In the spring of 1184, Friedrich Barbarossa, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, the greatest state in Europe, sent out messengers to announce that he would hold an imperial council at Whitsun in Mainz, on the eastern border of his domains. It was an ancient city, once the Roman Moguntium, and lay on the river Rhine; it was well placed for Friedrich's magnates to answer the emperor's summons, and this was to be no ordinary event. The gathering at Mainz was to be in honour of the knighting of his sons Heinrich, later the emperor Heinrich VI, and Friedrich, who became duke of Swabia. Messengers went out to all the princes of the empire, whether 'French, German, Slav, Italian, from Illyria to Spain'.[3]

Mainz's crowded houses and streets did not have room to accommodate the anticipated

multitudes, and the citizens watched in astonishment as the imperial officers organised the building of a new 'city' on the level plain between the town and the Rhine. A palace with a very large chapel for the emperor's use was built of wood; around it there were numerous wooden houses for his men, all in a style befitting the imperial dignity. Seventy or more princes and lords arrived, bringing huge retinues with them, in such numbers that the medieval chroniclers were quite unable to tell how many there were. The best guess is that over 10,000 arrived. (For comparison, London, at the beginning of the twelfth century, had about 15,000 inhabitants.) Of those who came to Mainz, many were knights, each with their own attendants, who served in the retinues of the magnates of the empire. The duke of Bohemia appeared with the largest number, estimated at two thousand, while the emperor's brother Conrad and the landgrave of Thuringia both came with more than a thousand, Leopold of Austria with five hundred. Gilbert of Mons, who was with the retinue of Baldwin count of Hainault, claims that 'everyone in Bavaria, Saxony, Swabia, Franconia, Austria, Bohemia, Burgundy and Lorraine' had been invited, while another chronicler noted that there were visitors from many kingdoms outside the emperor's territories. The crowds that came to Mainz were on a scale that had not been seen since the days of the Roman Empire.

A new city

Each contingent brought its own tents, multi-coloured pavilions of painted canvas lined with silk and other rich fabrics, whose owners vied with each other to produce the most beautiful effects. Gilbert naturally claims that in the vivid panoply of the city of tents pitched round the imperial village those of the count of Hainault were the finest. The tents were carefully arranged by the emperor in a circle, so that there should be no question of precedence. There was the same rivalry in terms of arms and equipment, of lavish displays of table silver and of rich furnishings in exotic materials. Arnold of Lübeck, who was also an eyewitness, was so overwhelmed by what he saw that he could only attempt to give an idea of the scale of proceedings by taking a rather strange example:

The finest tents

> What shall I say of the abundance, indeed of the superfluity of victuals, which were gathered from every land, that it was inestimable, and could not be told by any man's tongue. There was copious wine beyond measure, brought from upstream and downstream along the Rhine, as in Ahasuerus' feast, that could be drawn for every possibility and wish. I quote just one small example, so that you can see how impossible it would be to describe the greater matters. There were two large and spacious houses built with perches everywhere, which were filled from top to bottom with cocks and hens, so that no-one could go in there suspiciously; many wondered at them, for they scarcely believed that so many hens existed in all that country.[4]

The festival began on the Sunday, with the crown-wearing. This was a ritual, enacted at the great feasts of the Church, Christmas, Easter and Whitsun, which was designed to impress the special status of the emperor on the assembled lords who were subject to him. After a service held in the wooden chapel, the emperor and empress processed in full imperial regalia to the hall where their thrones stood. They were preceded by the count of Hainault bearing the imperial sword, and were acclaimed by the assembled nobles. Heinrich, who as heir to the empire, was already consecrated king of the Romans, also appeared with crown and regalia.

On the Monday after the festival, the emperor's sons were ceremonially knighted, and Arnold noted that 'they and all the princes and other nobles gave poor knights and those who had taken vows to go on crusade, and to travelling players (male and female) ... horses, precious garments, gold and silver', in honour of the occasion and to enhance their own

reputation. This was followed by equestrian games over the next two days, which the writer describes as a tournament without arms, and which was part of the imperial tradition. On the Tuesday evening proceedings were disrupted by a sudden storm which destroyed several buildings, including the church, killing five men trapped in the ruins. This brought the festivities to an early end. There seem to have been plans for a real tournament, with full armour and weapons, at the nearby town of Ingelheim, but this was abandoned.

Knighting and games

This is the first recorded court festival to attract wide attention in terms of participants and of reactions to it. It is the earliest example of the kind of great gathering which was to be typical of European courts for the next three centuries. The Mainz festival made a considerable impression on contemporaries. Chroniclers could not find enough superlatives to describe it (as Arnold of Lübeck's attempt demonstrates), and poets used it as the exemplar for the most magnificent of all courts. Heinrich von Veldeke, in his German version of the *Aeneid*, declared that the feast was so splendid that stories would be told about it until Judgement Day, while Guiot de Provins, writing in northwest France, compared it to the courts of Arthur, Alexander and Julius Caesar, declaring that Friedrich's court had no rival.

Defining Princely Splendour

IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY PEOPLE expected a prince to be splendid, to appear with a great entourage which displayed his wealth and his special status. The best illustration of this is from the life of a king who was notorious for his dislike of grand occasions and rich garments, Henry II of England. In 1158, he was negotiating with Louis VII of France about a marriage between his son Henry and Louis's daughter Margaret. He sent Thomas Becket, who was then his chancellor, to open the talks that summer, and on Henry's instructions

Thomas Becket goes to France

> the Chancellor prepared to display and lavish the wealth and resources of England, so that in all things and before all men the person of his liege lord might be honoured in his envoy, and that of the envoy in himself. He had about two hundred of his own household mounted on horseback, including knights, clerks, stewards, serjeants, squires and sons of nobles bearing arms in his service, and all in fit array. These and all their train were resplendent in new and festive attire, each according to his rank. He himself had four-and-twenty changes of raiment, 'whose texture mocks the purple dyes of Tyre', many garments of silk – almost all of which were to be given away and left overseas – every kind of fur, miniver and skins, cloaks and carpets, too, like those which customarily adorn the chamber and bed of a bishop. He had with him hounds and birds of every kind, such as kings and rich men keep.
>
> In his equipage he had also eight waggons, each drawn by five horses, in size and strength like chargers. Each horse had its appointed groom, young and strong, girt in a new tunic and walking beside the waggon, and each waggon had its driver and guard. Two waggons bore nothing but beer, made by a decoction of water from the strength of corn and carried in iron-hooped barrels, to be given to the French, who admire liquor of this sort, for it is certainly a wholesome drink, clear, of the colour of wine and of superior flavour. One waggon was used for the furniture of the chancellor's chapel, one for his chamber, one for his bursary and another for his kitchen. Others carried different kinds of meat and drink, others cushions, bags containing nightgowns, bundles of clothes and baggage. Twelve pack-horses and eight chests carried the Chancellor's gold and silver plate, his cups, platters, goblets, pitchers, basins, saltcellars, salvers and dishes.

> Other coffers and packing-cases contained his money – more than enough for his daily expenses and presents – his clothes, some books and similar articles. One packhorse, in the van of the others, bore the sacred vessels of the chapel and the ornaments and books of the altar. Each pack-horse had its own groom fitly provided. Each waggon had a dog chained to it, large, fierce and terrible, capable, it seemed, of subduing a lion or a bear. And on the back of each horse was a monkey or 'ape that mocked the human face'. At his entry into the French villages and castles first came the footmen, 'born to eat up the land', about two hundred and fifty of them, proceeding six or ten or more abreast, singing something in their own tongue, after the fashion of their country. There followed at a short distance hounds in pairs and greyhounds in leash with their keepers and attendants. A little behind there rattled over the paved streets iron-bound waggons, covered in with great hides of animals sewn together, and yet further back the pack-horses ridden by their grooms with their knees pressing on the horses' flanks. Some Frenchmen rushed out of their houses when they heard the din, asking who it was and whose the equipage. They were told it was the Chancellor of the English king going on embassy to the king of France. Then said the French, 'What a marvellous man the king of England must be, if his Chancellor travels thus, in such great pomp!'[5]

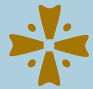
A lesson in propaganda

The expectation was of course that Becket's master would be even grander when he himself appeared. But Henry refused to play the 'marvellous man' whom the French expected, and thereby created an even greater impression. He himself followed in September, travelling in striking simplicity, with a modest retinue and even refusing the lavish feasts which were offered to him: all of which impressed the Parisians and the French court far more than another show of splendour would have done. The Parisians were said to have danced with joy at his arrival, and it was reported that he 'behaved magnificently and bountifully' to everyone, particularly to churches and to the poor.[6] Henry's careful calculation of the propaganda value of an unexpected subversion of the normal rituals only serves to emphasise the way in which the psychology of princely splendour worked. He was very conscious of his audience, and this understanding of the effect of display is a fundamental element of what follows.

IN ALL THREE EXAMPLES, the king or emperor is the central figure around which the rituals and celebrations revolve. We take the king in history for granted, and forget that it is an office that evolved over centuries. To understand the background to the ideas of splendour and magnificence, we have to move back in time and look at the evolution of the central figure of the king.

PART ONE

PRINCELY SPLENDOUR



2 DYNASTIES, KINGS AND COURTS

◆ *The status of a king* ◆ *'A substitute for long hair'* ◆ *The king in his court*
◆ *The ceremonies of kingship* ◆ *Crown-wearings* ◆ *Crowns*

DYNASTIES WERE ALL-IMPORTANT in the medieval world. The first dynasty to dominate Europe after the fall of Rome was that of Charlemagne, who crowned himself emperor in AD 800. Charlemagne modelled his empire on that of Rome, although it was much smaller and centred on France, Germany and Italy. It fell apart shortly after his death in 814: France became a kingdom, while his German and Italian lands retained the title of empire, later known as the Holy Roman Empire. It was an empire where the ruler did not inherit his title: instead, from the thirteenth century onwards, he was chosen by seven electors, the great secular and religious princes of Germany. The realm of the Anglo-Norman kings, which at its greatest extent included England, Ireland, Normandy and Aquitaine, was a more ephemeral affair. Created in 1154 by the marriage of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine; it was largely reduced to the British Isles and parts of Gascony by 1216.

In Spain, the huge Muslim presence which had once threatened Charlemagne's empire was slowly reduced and replaced by a number of small kingdoms. These gradually merged until Castile and Aragon were united in 1479. The last Muslim kingdom, at Granada, was conquered in 1492. The spectacular success of the Norman rulers in Sicily and southern Italy, was also shortlived: the Norman duke Roger I was promoted to kingship by the pope in 1130, and the last king in the direct male line died in 1204. Aragon, the modern Catalonia, was the centre of a sea-borne empire which came to include Sicily and Naples.

The Empire and kingdoms

The most stable dynasties were in France, where the house of Capet and the house of Valois ruled for the entire period under discussion. In the Holy Roman Empire, a succession of dynasties was established, despite the fact that the office of emperor was never actually hereditary. Three families predominated between 1100 and 1450. These were the Hohenstaufens, the house of Luxembourg and the Habsburgs, with a chaotic interregnum from 1254 to 1347 when there were sometimes two rival emperors.

Succession

LEADERSHIP IN WAR was an essential function for a medieval king, and there was therefore a very strong prejudice against allowing a child or a woman to succeed. The 'Salic law' in France supposedly debarred women from the succession: in fact, it was a legal tradition rather than an actual statute. If no male candidate of full age from the ruling family was available, this often led to a change of dynasty. In France, there was a direct succession to the throne through the male line until 1316, at which point a general assembly of nobles and bishops declared that women could not inherit the throne. Philip V became king as a result, as a great-grandson of St Louis by male descent. In 1328, when the same problem recurred on the death of Philip V's brother and successor, the claim of Edward III of England, through his mother Isabella and grandfather Philip IV, was rejected by the French, though the question as to whether women could pass on the right of inheritance

without being able to exercise it themselves had never been formally debated. On both occasions, political practicalities were the real reason for the decision.

Each dynasty had as its base formal territorial units, a kingdom or principality. In addition, dynasties had links through marriage and through younger sons who became kings and founded their own dynasties, who retained links to their original family. A modest dynasty with modest origins might have widespread influence. Sometimes the family trees of medieval Europe seem to resemble the network of links produced by the marriages of the children of Queen Victoria in the nineteenth century. The most spectacular of these, probably unfamiliar to the English-speaking reader, is the house of Anjou. This clan is not to be confused with the first house of Anjou, Henry II and his sons, the Angevin rulers of Normandy and England. When the county of Anjou was conquered by the French in 1205, it was incorporated into the titles of the French king, but forty years later it was given by St Louis to his brother Charles, who was already count of Provence. His descendants established themselves around the boundaries of Western Christendom. In the mid fourteenth century there were Angevin rulers in Provence, Sicily, Naples, Hungary and Poland and nominally in Jerusalem.

Marriage alliances

See p. xviii

Furthermore, the Holy Roman emperors for most of the fourteenth century were French by origin. The emperor Heinrich VII, elected in 1308 as a compromise candidate to end the long interregnum since the death of Friedrich II in 1250, was the son of the count of Luxembourg. He had been brought up at the French court, as was his son Jean, king of Bohemia.* Jean's son Charles was also brought up at the French court. He was christened Wenceslaus, but took the name Charles when he was confirmed. He then became Holy Roman Emperor, and in what follows he appears as Karl IV, king of Bohemia and emperor.

If France predominates in this book, it is for two reasons: French kings were the wealthiest in this world for much of the period we are discussing, and dynasties closely linked with France ruled from England to Hungary and Poland. Each individual country had its own cultural variants, and the status of rulers ranged from the Holy Roman Emperor, whose title all too often was at odds with his real power, to the lords of Italian towns, where few dynasties maintained their prestige for as much as a century.

French dominance

The Status of a King

KINGS ARE THE CENTRAL FIGURES in this book, and we need to have some idea of what it meant to be a medieval king. The nature and status of kingship between the fifth and ninth centuries is, like so many things from that period, elusive and difficult to define. Nonetheless, there are certain factors which stand out as defining a king. A king is a military leader, and has an army at his command. He is supported and sometimes specifically chosen by the aristocracy. And he rules over one or more identifiable peoples. The boundaries of his power are fluid, and the authority by which he holds his office is far from clear. There is a degree of election or at least assent about his accession to the throne, and increasingly there is a view of kingship as something which is more than just a secular leadership.

The history of the Merovingian dynasty of kings in France is a good example of the conflicting ideas about kingship in the eighth century. The first of the Merovingians appears as a Frankish commander in the Roman army in Gaul in the fourth century AD.

The Merovingians

* Charles IV had married Elizabeth, the sister of king Jean of Bohemia.

His descendant Clovis was the real founder of the dynasty, leading his men against the Romans, and breaking their hold on northern France in 486. Twenty years later, he fought off the invading Visigoths and established a kingdom which his descendants ruled until 751. By this time, however, power had gradually ebbed away from the kings to their chief administrators, the 'mayors of the palace'. It was Charles Martel, as mayor of the palace, who led the Frankish troops at the pivotal battle of Tours in 732, which halted a Moorish invasion of France and prevented the extension of the Moslem kingdoms of Spain beyond the Pyrenees. When the Frankish king Theuderic IV died in 737, Charles did not trouble to appoint another king. Pepin, his son, succeeded him as mayor, and the historian Einhard, writing a century later, describes the last of the Merovingian kings as the merest puppets:

> All that was left to the King was that, content with his royal title, he should sit on the throne, with his hair long and his beard flowing, giving audience to the ambassadors who arrived from foreign parts ... Whenever he needed to travel, he went in a cart which was drawn in country style by yoked oxen, with a cowherd to drive them.[1]

Einhard may have mocked these rustic customs, but they were in fact echoes of a distant past. Both long hair and a carriage drawn by oxen had once been symbols of kingship.

'A substitute for long hair'[2]

THE CONFUSED AND VIOLENT HISTORY of the Merovingian kings of France is wonderfully recorded by Gregory, bishop of Tours, in his contemporary chronicle. He was an active participant in the political world in the last half of the sixth century, and had no illusions about the problems of kingship in this period. Writing of the assassination of the king of the Visigoths in Spain in 554, he notes drily that 'the Goths had adopted the reprehensible habit of killing out of hand any king who displeased them'.[3] In 584 King Guntram was involved in a quarrel with his rival Childebert. A peace conference was arranged: it ended with both sides hurling insults at each other, and Childebert's supporters warned Guntram that 'the axe is still ready and waiting which split open the heads of your brothers. One day it will split open your head, too.'[4]

The dangers of kingship

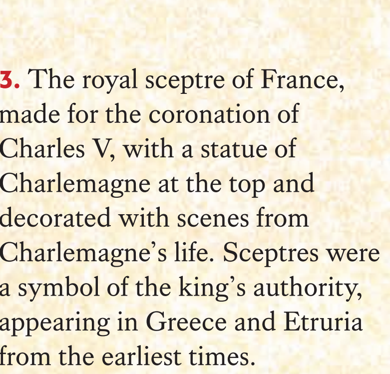
In 751, Pepin decided that since he exercised the royal power, he should become king. With the consent of the Frankish nobles, he went to the pope for approval. Once this was obtained he was 'elevated into the kingdom' by being elected by 'all the Franks', with the support of the bishops and lay magnates. Election to the kingship was also part of 'the rules of ancient tradition'. What was new was the role that the pope played in this ritual.

We know little of the religious involvement in the ceremonies surrounding the succession of a new king among the peoples who invaded the Roman empire in the West from the fourth century AD onwards. The genealogies of the Anglo-Saxon kings were traced back in some cases to Woden, implying that in pagan times there was a connection between royalty and divinity. As the gradual process of conversion to Christianity continued, the Church claimed its place in the appointment of a ruler. Initially, as with knighthood, this may have been no more than a blessing, but by Pepin's day the involvement was much closer. Three years after he became king, he, his wife Bertrada and their sons Charles (Charlemagne) and Carloman were anointed by the pope; the pope's letters on the occasion spoke of a royal priesthood, an idea which was later taken up by the kings themselves.

Kingship rituals

However, the idea that the king was in some way set apart and sacred took a long while to evolve, and it is only in the tenth century that the formal rituals for coronation and consecration begin to come into use. The two were originally quite separate: a ceremony

2. The throne of Dagobert king of the Franks, seventh century. The model for this is a Roman ceremonial chair. It may be genuine, or it may have been produced a century later under Charlemagne, when Roman architectural forms were being revived.



3. The royal sceptre of France, made for the coronation of Charles V, with a statue of Charlemagne at the top and decorated with scenes from Charlemagne's life. Sceptres were a symbol of the king's authority, appearing in Greece and Etruria from the earliest times.

of anointment with holy oil was used for bishops before it was used for kings, and the use of a crown in the inauguration of a new king appears about the same time in 838 in the French kingdom of Charlemagne's son Charles. This slow process of formalising the rituals of coronation resulted in the creation of an order of service for such occasions in both France and England, an order which is still reflected in English coronations today.

The intervention of the Church into kingship is paralleled by the development of services for the blessing of the newly made knight and indeed for humbler trades and vocations. These were general blessings, while the king's coronation was designed to make him a unique figure, and eventually led to the idea that he had special powers. For example, it was believed that a properly consecrated and rightful king had the ability to cure scrofula, known as the king's evil, by touching the sufferer: Guibert of Nogent, in the early years of the eleventh century, claims to have seen Louis VI of France heal a man with this disfiguring skin disease, by touching him on the affected area on his neck, adding that Philip I, Louis's father had lost his ability to effect such cures because of his sinful lifestyle. He also observed that no English king had, to his knowledge, carried out such a cure.[5]

The king's evil

Once this was established as a royal attribute, the ability to touch for scrofula becomes a test of true kingship. In a letter from around 1182, Peter of Blois, an important figure in the court of Henry II, took this idea a step further. He declared that 'there is something holy about serving the lord king, for the king is indeed holy and the anointed of the Lord. The sacrament of unction at his coronation was not an empty gift. Its virtue, if there is anyone who is unaware of it or calls it in question, will be most amply proved by the disappearance of the disease which attacks the groin and the cure of scrofulas.'[6]

Established dynasties

It was remarkably difficult to overthrow an established dynasty, or even a single king within that dynasty. The long struggle between France and England which stemmed from Henry II's creation of a power in France much greater than that of the king, Louis VII, is a good illustration of this. At first, the question was largely one of feudal law: the king of England was a vassal of the French king in respect of his French lands – an awkward situation, with its inevitable tensions. It was the feudal relationship which enabled French kings such as Philip Augustus in the early thirteenth century and Philip IV at the end of the century to erode English power by declaring their lands forfeit for infringements of feudal contracts. It is possible to see Edward III's pursuit of his claim to the French throne itself as a way to resolve this conflict; yet despite his military superiority and the very strong legal basis of his case, he was unable to enforce what he saw as his rights. The French kings were among the first to be anointed, and the sacred nature of kingship was part of their credo. Equally important was that in 1328, when the last of the Capetian dynasty died, Philip of Valois, Edward's rival for the throne, was seen as French at a time when national feeling was becoming important; Edward was only half-French. Moreover, Philip had been anointed king by the time Edward put forward his claim.

Identity of king and nation

The identity of king and nation, harking back to the old identity of the kings of the post-Roman period with their tribes, was even more sharply in evidence after 1422. By the treaty of Troyes, signed after the English victory at Agincourt in 1415, the succession was to pass to the heirs of Henry V, who had married Catherine, daughter of Charles VI of France. Henry VI was therefore, like Edward III, half-French; but even with the installation of Henry's government in Paris, the national support for Charles VII, son of the late king, was a latent force. Brought into focus by Joan of Arc, who emphatically declared Charles to be the 'true king', the change of dynasty failed, and the English were removed from all of France – bar Calais – within thirty years.

Even in Sicily and southern Italy attachment to the dynasty remained. Sicily changed

hands twice within twenty years after Manfred the last of the Hohenstaufen kings was killed in battle in 1266. Charles of Anjou, the victor, was crowned king by the pope. But resentment at the imposition of a French ruler led to the 'Sicilian Vespers' of 1282. This rebellion resulted in Charles's eviction from Sicily in favour of the king of Aragon, Peter III, nephew of Manfred. The Angevin kings continued to rule southern Italy, which became the kingdom of Naples, but when Queen Joanna II, who was childless, selected her heir in 1414, she promised it to Alfonso V of Aragon, thus reuniting the two parts of the old Sicilian kingdom. She later changed her mind, and reverted to one of her Angevin relations, René d'Anjou. He failed to make good his claim, and was ejected by Alfonso V. It is noticeable that throughout the extraordinarily tangled web of kings and would-be kings of Sicily and Naples, the descendants of the Hohenstaufen and the descendants of Charles of Anjou were the only contenders. Ironically, it was the pope who had originally granted the kingship in both cases.

Naples and Sicily

If we look at the deposition of rulers, the doubts and hesitations expressed by the agents of their downfall are revealing. The two outstanding cases in the later Middle Ages are both English, Edward II and Richard II.[7] In the case of Edward II, the strategy of a forced abdication of the throne was adopted, which respected his status as king, and allowed the transfer of power to Edward III. There was never a formal act of deposition. When it came to Richard II, there was nothing in Edward II's case which would serve as a precedent. There was, however, a papal example. In 1245 the pope had declared the deposition of Friedrich II as ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, over which the popes claimed a hotly-contested jurisdiction. The chronicler Adam of Usk tells us that the committee of legal advisers who deliberated on the matter in Richard II's case had a copy of the papal document of 1245, and as a result, as Richard's biographer Nigel Saul points out, 'the case against Richard was essentially one that had its basis in canon law'. After a week of increasing pressure, Richard finally agreed, though he insisted that his anointment with holy oil at his coronation had been a sacred act, and could not be cancelled. When he surrendered the crown, he placed it on the ground, saying that 'he resigned his right to God', thus maintaining his insistence that kingship was an office not of this world. In this he echoed the words of an anonymous Norman cleric two centuries earlier who, at the height of the dispute over the pope's authority over secular rulers, had written that the sacrament of coronation by which the king was 'dedicated to God' was unique. As 'the Lord's anointed', 'he is the supreme ruler, the chief shepherd, master, defender and instructor of holy Church, lord over his brethren'.[8] This was an extreme and deliberately provocative statement. Yet it is indicative of how powerful the idea of a divine element in kingship could be.

Deposing the king

The King in his Court

When Charlemagne inherited half the Frankish kingdom in 768, he spent the early years of his reign in an endless succession of military campaigns. The business of government was transacted wherever he happened to be, though he had inherited a number of palaces which formed a kind of network. These provided him with accommodation on his travels and had a small permanent staff of officials. This was in sharp contrast to Byzantium, the static capital of the eastern Empire. The medieval courts of western Europe were to remain peripatetic for centuries to come. Charlemagne himself ruled a much more extensive area than any of his medieval successors, and therefore spent a huge amount of time travelling. It was only in 794 that the palace at Aachen began

A king on the move

to develop into a kind of capital, from which his whole empire was administered. The emperor's cousin, Adalhard of Corbie was said to have written at the end of his reign that 'officials of sufficient number and type … should never be missing from the palace; at all times the palace was to be adorned with worthy councillors'.[9] In the past, such men would have been on the road with Charlemagne himself.

The court at Aachen

As Charlemagne's empire expanded, he needed to be able to communicate with, and assert his authority over, the medley of different peoples within it. Latin was to be the common language of his subjects; Latin teachers and education were essential. To this end he brought scholars from England and Ireland, from Spain and Italy, to join his own Frankish scholars, to ensure that a proper curriculum of teaching was established. Their students would serve not only the church, but also the emperor, for his officials were almost all clerics. A by-product of this emphasis on education was the emergence of a distinctive court culture at Aachen itself, where the scholars formed a group of surprising importance. The men who attended Charlemagne in person most of the time, and therefore formed what we would call his court, naturally included the heads of the various parts of his government and military establishment. The men in charge of his household offices, the seneschal, the constable and the marshal, were in effect his ministers. At a personal level, however, the emperor's chosen companions were the outstanding men of letters who were behind his educational programme. The chief among these was Alcuin, who had been in Charlemagne's entourage since the 780s, and had taught both the emperor and his children. Charlemagne himself loved learning, though he was never able to write properly. He studied Latin to good effect, and Alcuin taught him a little Greek as well, a rare accomplishment in the West. His interest in the past led him to collect old songs in German which told of the deeds of the German kings, and he even tried to produce a grammar of Frankish.

Defining the medieval court

'COURT', CONFUSINGLY, HAS A double meaning throughout the medieval period. It is both an occasion, a formal gathering when the ruler 'held court', often at the great religious festivals of the year; and it is also used of the group of people who attended the prince, his household, counsellors and close associates. These are the courtiers, and men judged the prince by their reputation and behaviour. When the troubadour Bertran de Born came to the court of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine in Normandy in the autumn of 1182, he was accustomed to the small courts of nobles in Aquitaine, where music and poetry predominated. In the intellectual world of Henry's courtiers, he was deeply disappointed by the atmosphere: 'A court is never complete without joking and laughter; a court without gifts is a mere mockery of barons! And the boredom and vulgarity of Argentan nearly killed me …'[10] We shall come to the question of courtly culture, and courtly literature, which was Bertran's natural habitat. But others praised Henry's court for its learning and serious discussions. It is the cultural and social aspect of the court, rather than its political and administrative side, with which we are concerned.

The English court

Henry's grandfather, Henry I, was famous for his learning, and Henry himself had been brought up in the entourage of his uncle, Robert of Gloucester, where scholars such as William of Malmesbury, historian of the English, Geoffrey of Monmouth, author of the legendary history of Britain, and Adelard of Bath, one of the first English scientists, were to be found. Because Henry's interests were largely in law and government, his companions were men such as John of Salisbury, Walter Map and Peter of Blois, all of whom have left accounts of the energetic, sometimes chaotic, nature of the royal court. If Henry relaxed, it was when he retreated to his chamber to read.

Essentially, the core of the prince's court in the twelfth century was a group of men,

trained by the church, who were the king's chief counsellors and servants. But their work for the king was not religious. Peter of Blois called the courtiers of Henry II's court *professores mundi*,[11] using profession in the medieval religious sense as when a monk made a public declaration of faith on entering a monastery. These were men who had declared for the world, with all the spiritual perils that entailed. Peter addressed a general letter to the courtiers, questioning whether the court is a proper place for men in holy orders, and paints a vivid picture of the miseries endured by the courtiers, very different from the leisured and cultured society reflected in courtly literature. And he concludes, having left the court himself, that 'even you, my dearest friends, will think over your life, which you have wasted at court, in bitterness of spirit'.[12] It is a splendid diatribe on the evils of court life; but Peter later returned to the court and offered a partial retraction, acknowledging that 'It is no slight praise to have pleased the princes of men.'

The profession of courtier

In the case of Henry, the court was not only the centre of royal government, but also the place where his ideas and policies were shaped in discussion. Henry was a formidable figure, both physically and intellectually. He was a natural linguist, said to know something of all the languages used in Christendom. He was widely read and 'he had a keen and enquiring mind: in his household, every day was like a school, and there was constant discussion of difficult questions', points of law or problems of administration: his passion was the establishment of peace and justice within his realms. He was the most learned of kings, yet he was always approachable, and people thronged round him: he would deal with them patiently, and when he had had enough would retire to his chamber, where no one dared to disturb him. He also had a formidable memory for faces and conversations, and never forgot anyone with whom he had been in close contact.

'School every day'

The court of the kings of Sicily is another example of this intellectual activity around the king. Peter of Blois was tutor to William I of Sicily, and there were other links between the English and Sicilian courts at this period: the gardens at Henry's palatial hunting-lodge at Woodstock seem to have been based on Sicilian ideas. Roger II, William's father, began a tradition of interest in learning similar to that in the Plantagenet court, but with access to far wider resources. He himself explored topics such as mathematics and geography. The Arab traveller and scholar al-Idrisi became Roger's close friend. And the books of the Greek philosophers, almost unobtainable in western Europe, were to be found here, in a court where French, Latin, Greek and Arabic were current languages. Artistically, this was the high point of the Sicilian kingdom, when the royal palace and its chapel were decorated with the mosaics which are the best records of the splendour of the Sicilian court. The court rituals and the titles of the court officials reflect the influence of Byzantium and the imperial style which the Norman kings sought to emulate: their officials were in many cases Greek.

Sicily: the learning of west and east

The Ceremonies of Kingship

Crown-wearings

CROWN-WEARING WAS AN OCCASION in most of western Europe, a vital ritual for reinforcing the king's claim to royal status. For example, when William I was anxious to establish his right to rule in England after the conquest, he instituted a formal court which took place at Christmas at Gloucester, Easter at Winchester and Whitsun at Westminster. At these courts, he was enthroned wearing his crown. It seems to have been observed more frequently towards the end of his reign, and only happened if William was in England: in Normandy he was only duke, and such a court would have been out of place. By the time he died, the anonymous writer of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle thought that it was always held on these dates, and at these places. But the idea of kingship was alien to the Norman barons, descended from the Vikings and already disrespectful of the French kings who were their overlords. This same ambivalent attitude is probably behind a story told in the biography of Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury in William's reign:

William I

> It was one of those three great festivals on which the king, wearing his crown, is accustomed to hold his court. On the day of the festival, when the king was seated at table adorned in crown and royal robes, and Lanfranc beside him, a certain jester, seeing the king resplendent in gold and jewels, cried out in the hall in great tones of adulation: 'Behold! I see God! Behold! I see God!' Lanfranc, turning to the king, said: 'Don't allow such things to be said of you ... Order that fellow to be severely flogged, so that he never dares to say such things again.'[13]

Lanfranc, a churchman for whom kingship was a divine office, failed to see the jester's point: that William, who as duke of Normandy was simply one of the great lords of that country, had now elevated himself to a higher status. Many of the barons would have laughed with the jester, and William might have joined in.

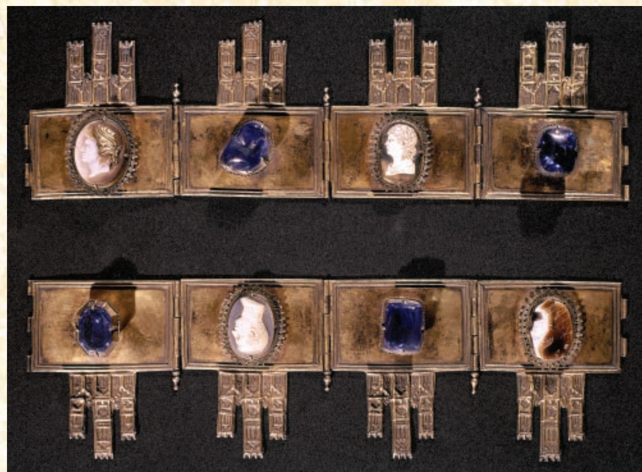
These were occasions when the great affairs of the realm were transacted, and foreign visitors were received: they were marked by sumptuous and magnificent feasts, and the king put on his royal regalia. The Anglo-Saxon kings had held courts on the same festival days, but they had not affirmed their kingship by using their regalia. And it is possible that at the Norman festivals, the king not only wore the regalia in the great hall, but also at mass on those days. He may have appeared in public as well: it has been suggested that a balcony on the west front of Winchester cathedral may have been used for this purpose, and that there was a procession from the cathedral to the hall.[14]

As time wore on, and the idea of kingship was generally accepted, the crown-wearing of the English kings both became accepted and far less frequent: it had served its purpose. At Worcester in 1158, Henry II and Eleanor laid their crowns on the altar and swore never to wear them again. This may well reflect Henry's dislike of ceremony, but the French kings were also abandoning crown-wearings at about the same time.[15] They were, however, used when a king's title to the throne had been undermined in some way, particularly if he had been in captivity. This was the case with Stephen in 1141, who was effectively recrowned when he was released following his capture at the battle of Lincoln. Likewise, when Richard I returned from crusade, he held a solemn crown-wearing which was evidently intended as a reaffirmation of his kingship after his imprisonment in Austria. In the fifteenth century, Edward IV, on regaining the throne in 1471, was both recrowned and wore his crown in public processions afterwards; the following Christmas he held a crown-wearing at the feast. When Richard III was crowned in 1483, he wore his crown in a procession at York shortly

Henry II

4. (above) Iron Crown of Lombardy. This is probably in part from the eleventh century, but cannot be dated precisely. It is made of six curved hinged panels, and contains an iron band said to be made of one of the nails used at the Crucifixion.

5. (left) Crown of Saint Wenceslas. This was made for the coronation of Karl IV of Bohemia in 1347, and is kept in a vault beneath St Vitus Cathedral in Prague. It was originally placed on the effigy of St Wenceslas in his chapel in the cathedral, and was only removed for the coronations of the Bohemian kings.



6. Crown of Sancho IV. Sancho IV reigned from 1284 to 1295. His crown is unusual in that the imagery is almost entirely secular, with castle towers and antique Roman cameos: the castles represent his kingdom of Castile.

afterwards. And it is arguable that the most extreme style of crown-wearing ceremonies, that of Richard II described below, also has to do with his insecurity about his position as king in the face of rebellious lords. The true king, it seems, expected to be recognised by the magnificence of his appearance as a crowned monarch.[16]

The Holy Roman Empire

Crown-wearings were also important in the Holy Roman Empire. The imperial government was very much an itinerant institution, and assemblies were held throughout the empire. As elsewhere, they were usually held on the major feasts of the Church – Easter in particular, but also at Whitsun and Christmas and occasionally on other feast days – and were hosted by a regular pattern of bishops or archbishops at the great religious centres of the empire. On these occasions, from the tenth century or earlier onwards, the bishop or archbishop would solemnly place the crown on the emperor's head (and similarly on that of his empress) in one of their churches.[17] Wearing their crowns, they would lead a solemn procession to the cathedral or church where Mass was to be celebrated, preceded by one of the imperial princes as sword-bearer; and from there, they would continue into the hall to begin the feast.[18]

Political gathering

Crown-wearing could mark important political gatherings. In 986, the emperor Otto III held a crown-wearing at Quedlinburg, the centre of his personal domains, as a demonstration of his power over the empire, with a feast at which he was attended by its great princes. He was served by Henry duke of Bavaria as seneschal, Conrad duke of Swabia as chamberlain, Henry duke of Carinthia as butler, and Bernard duke of Saxony as marshal, showing both their recognition of the emperor and their willingness to serve him in those functions in the future.[19] Friedrich Barbarossa is recorded as wearing his crown at Merseburg, which was one of his most important palaces with a large staff, in 1152, when he declared Sven the rightful king of Denmark and crowned him. During his 35 year reign, Friedrich held other crown-wearings in about sixty different places, both in Germany and northern Italy.[20]

A brilliant occasion

We began with the festival at Mainz in 1184, which was probably the greatest of the crown-wearing festivals. These events were essentially a public relations exercise for the ruler; it was not a required ritual, to be regularly observed at set intervals, but when it did take place it was often in a context where the splendour of the ceremony had political overtones and the brilliance of the occasion was therefore very important. In 1199 Philip of Swabia, second son of Friedrich Barbarossa and since 1198 king of the Romans, held a solemn crown-wearing at Christmas, with his wife Irene, the daughter of Emperor Isaac II of Byzantium. It was probably an assertion of Philip's title, as a rival king had been elected at about the same time. It was masterminded by his chancellor to ensure the maximum effect, with the duke of Saxony carrying the imperial sword ahead of the king, and an escort of nobles and their ladies, while the bishops walked on either side of the royal couple. Walther von der Vogelweide, the greatest poet of the age, was evidently at the ceremony, and was impressed by the appearance of the couple:

> King Philip strode out in all his splendour. There went an emperor's brother and an emperor's son, three persons in one costume. He bore the Empire's sceptre and its crown. He walked with measured pace, followed modestly by the noble queen, rose without thorn, dove without gall. Nowhere was there such a presence as his.[21]

The men of Saxony and Thuringia, too, were impressed: if we are to believe another eye-witness, they cheered and applauded, showing their pleasure in the occasion which they followed to the very end. The crown-wearing had achieved its object, and had made the king appear as an exceptional, powerful figure, worthy of loyalty and reverence.

Crowns

CROWNS TODAY ARE TAKEN AS THE ultimate symbol of kingship; but this was not always the case. Before the barbarian invasions, crowns were not specifically associated with royalty, and we shall see that they were used by high-ranking members of royal families as well as the king in the later Middle Ages. Rulers in classical Antiquity used a diadem rather than a crown as a sign of status. Early Christian royal crowns were little more than circlets of gold, embellished with inset jewels. The so-called Iron Crown of Lombardy, which was once believed to have been used by Charlemagne when he was crowned king of Lombardy, is the earliest surviving example, kept at the cathedral at Monza in northern Italy. Its date, despite intensive study, is uncertain: it may have elements from as early as the fourth century incorporated in it. Its name comes from the inner band which reinforces it, which recent chemical analysis has shown to be silver. The gold work is relatively unsophisticated, set against a green enamel ground with stylised flowers. Its form is that of the type of diadem adopted by the emperor Constantine in the early fourth century, and used by all later Byzantine emperors.[22] The Byzantine emperors themselves did not use crowns until the tenth century in their coronation ceremonies.

The Iron Crown of Lombardy

4, p.19

The crown of the Holy Roman Empire, used to crown the future emperor after he had been elected, but before his coronation by the pope, was much more elaborate than any of its predecessors.[23] It was made in the late tenth or eleventh century, and consists of eight plaques of heavily bejewelled 22-carat gold, originally fastened by pins, so the crown could be packed flat to avoid damage to the central hoop, which was obviously vulnerable. Enamelled scenes from Scripture alternate with the jewelled plates, which are much more intricate and with far more stones than the Iron Crown. The fine filigree work in which the jewels are mounted is the work of a skilful goldsmith, as are the patterns of pearls on the hoop. The hoop enhances the effect of the crown by making it much more prominent than the simple circlet. There is a tradition that the large sapphire at the top of the front panel is a replacement for a stone known as the 'orphan', which was regarded as unique, both in its beauty and in the light which it reflected. Such a stone, called 'orphanos' in Greek, was present in the Byzantine imperial crown, and it has been argued that the crown now in Vienna is not the crown described by medieval writers, including the poet Walther von der Vogelweide and the encyclopaedist Albertus Magnus. The latter describes it in about 1250 as being of the colour of a delicate red wine, and reflecting a brilliant white light. It may have been a garnet of exceptional quality or a rare red zircon, the stone called 'hyacinth' by Wolfram von Eschenbach. It was last recorded in 1350. Either it was replaced after that date, or the medieval descriptions apply to a different crown altogether. But the idea of a spectacular central jewel glowing above the emperor's forehead is an image that is entirely appropriate to magnificence.

The Imperial Crown

1, p.xxiv

The crown of Charlemagne himself does not survive. There is a drawing of it from before the French Revolution, when it was destroyed, which shows it as a 'lily crown', with four *fleurs-de-lis*. A crown of this form, dating from the end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century, is in the cathedral at Essen. It was once thought to be the crown used for the emperor Otto I when he was crowned as a child in 983, but its style is nearer to that of early eleventh-century crowns. Equally, the crown attributed to Charlemagne at the abbey of Saint-Denis in the eighteenth century was probably from that period, and it is a pattern which can be seen in many manuscript miniatures of kings.

The crown of Charlemagne

The Hungarian royal crown, known as the crown of St Stephen, who was the first king of Hungary, is very probably a late twelfth-century reworking of an eleventh-century

circlet. This simple form was used in Byzantium; here it is combined with a double hoop in the Latin style. It seems to have been made up from parts of one or more crowns in the mid twelfth century, and includes enamels which may have been given to King Geza I in the 1070s. Crowns were both ornaments and relics, and their antiquity was very important, giving extra legitimacy to the king who was crowned with them. On the other hand, we find designs which reflect the political situation at a given date. An example is the crown of Sancho IV of Castile, which is almost certainly that of his predecessor Alfonso VIII. It is made of eight plates, each of which is surmounted by a castle, and by Sancho's day Castile had been united with León. The absence of the arms of León would mean that it must be dated before 1217, and hence to Alfonso's reign. Around the crown, antique cameos alternate with sapphires on plain gold rectangles. It is the first crown with armorial bearings, a crown whose design makes it specific to one kingdom.

The crown of Castile

6, p.19

THE CULTURE OF KINGSHIP

3

◆ Sicily: Creating a royal culture ◆ Palermo as a royal capital ◆ Friedrich II: Recreating the past, exploring the future ◆ The arch at Capua ◆ Friedrich as builder: Castel del Monte and Castello Maniace ◆ St Louis and Henry III ◆ Paris ◆ London ◆ Royal mausoleums

A KING WAS DISTINGUISHED BY HIS status and title, and also by the context in which he lived and moved. Early medieval kings were constantly on the move, like Charlemagne, and even in the fourteenth century it was rare for them to spend more than a few weeks in the same place.

Until the middle of the twelfth century, the king had to live off his lands, because so much of his revenue was paid in kind, or was produced on his domains. Charlemagne created a network of twenty-five major and 125 minor royal palaces designed to receive him and his entourage as they travelled through his territories. In the tenth century, some palaces began to be fortified and were an important sign of the continuity of the empire: when the citizens of Pavia tore down the imperial palace there in 1024 on the death of the emperor Henry II, his successor Conrad II rounded on them, fiercely proclaiming that 'even if the king had died, the kingdom remained, just as the ship whose steersman falls remains. They were state, not private buildings; they were under another law, not yours.' In the increasingly troubled times after Charlemagne's death, fortifications became critical, and kings, princes and lords alike fortified the towns where their principal residences stood. Cash to pay for the workmen and materials was scarce until the middle of the twelfth century, when the gradual emergence of a sufficient store of coin made a cash economy possible. By the end of the century, 'money fiefs', where the dues from tenant to lord were paid in cash rather than produce, were to be found in France, the Low Countries, England and Germany. The growth of towns and the establishment of capital cities, where both the kings and great lords spent much of their cash, followed. The trading centres of the Low Countries, essential for the luxury goods which were needed for princely splendour, developed in the thirteenth century and moved on to the next stage of development with the emergence of a banking system which linked most of Europe.[1]

The rise of the castle

In these conditions, Paris and London became true capital cities, rather than the largest towns in the realm, and the king's peripatetic government gradually became fixed here as well. Sicily was a special case, and is in many ways the most interesting. The Norman conquerors of Sicily rapidly built a centralised administration in their relatively small island. Administration was a particular skill of the Norman peoples, and when the dukes of Sicily became kings, they were able to create a capital in a relatively short time. Palermo became a spectacular place, mixing the gardens of Arab cities with the panoply of Byzantine decorative skills, funded by a generally well organised government.

Capital cities

In each of these cities the dominant features are the king's palace and the royal church relating to that palace. The design and decoration of these buildings characterise them as royal property, and are a public statement of the king's wealth and power. New styles of architecture and the absence of restrictions that the need for a defensive residence imposed meant that the interiors of these royal palaces became spacious and well-lit, suitable for royal display of wealth and power. Great halls designed for public occasions appear: Westminster Hall,

built in the late eleventh century, remained one of the largest such spaces in Europe until the end of the fifteenth century.* Public audiences and receptions of ambassadors became possible, and new spaces for feasting and ceremonial were now available. Kings looked enviously at what their counterparts were doing, partly from curiosity and partly with a view to rivalry. At the beginning of the eleventh century, there was no very great difference – other than size – between the royal castles and those of his most powerful subjects. With the emergence of the capital and its new buildings, princely splendour begins to be a distinct and impressive style.

Great halls

Sicily: Creating a Royal Culture

THE NORMAN CONQUEST OF SOUTHERN Italy and Sicily in the last half of the eleventh century brought to power adventurers who had little cultural baggage of their own. The dukes, and later kings, of Sicily were the sons of lords in Normandy who had barely been in France for two generations: their great-grandfathers were effectively Vikings from Scandinavia. In many ways, the Normans were chameleons, taking on the hue of the peoples they conquered – French, English, Sicilian, and Arab. When they invaded Sicily in 1061, they found themselves in a multi-cultural society. The island had once been subject to Byzantium, but more recently had been fought over by Arab emirs nominally allied to a caliph in north Africa. The Byzantine presence and civilisation in Sicily had never been eradicated by the Arabs, and the Normans, tolerant in their treatment of the conquered Arabs and Greeks alike, created one of the most cultured and open societies in western Europe.

The Normans in Sicily

The Byzantine artistic legacy was strong, and it was curiously reinforced by the political situation, which brought about its adoption by the new rulers of the island. Robert Guiscard was duke of Sicily thanks to the pope; Nicholas II had invested him with the title in 1059, and when Roger, his nephew, became king, again by the pope's authority, in 1130, he was appointed papal legate at the same time. He was thus invested with the pope's power, which could not be used against him. The image of Roger being crowned by Christ at the church of La Martorana in Palermo shows him wearing priestly garments as legate. But other elements of the portrait tellingly echo the traditions of imperial costume and style at Byzantium.The long stole, or *loros*, is the hallmark of imperial Byzantine dress of the most exalted kind, restricted to the emperor's family and close associates, and the crown which Christ holds is equally Byzantine. Roger also used the Byzantine emperor's title of 'basileus'. The implication was that Roger's kingship was a divine appointment, merely confirmed by papal decree.

Byzantine art in Sicily

This shows how deeply the Byzantine world penetrated Norman Sicily. When the Normans took Palermo by storm in 1071, they were delighted to take possession of 'the palaces and the things that they found outside the city, ... the pleasure gardens full of fruit and water ... a terrestrial paradise'.[2] The new palaces created by the Sicilian kings were the work of native craftsmen, the most skilled of whom were Greek and Arab.

* Westminster Hall is longer than the Palais de la Cité in Paris, but narrower; there is little difference in the total area.

Palermo as a royal capital

AS KING, ROGER NEEDED TO CREATE a royal capital, with a palace and a cathedral on a suitably impressive scale. He chose to rebuild the castle which dominated the city, his existing residence. Its core was a castle built in the Grecian period in Sicily around 500 BC, as part of the walls of the fortified town. When Roger II decided to create his palace in the early twelfth century, one tower of this survived. Al-Idrisi, an Arab geographer who worked for eighteen years at Roger's court, describes how the king had recently built a palace of 'very hard cut stone, which was covered with inscriptions of surprising skill and admirable ornaments'.[3] Ibn Jubayr, a Muslim from Valencia who had been secretary to the governor of Granada, came to Palermo in December 1184, and was taken to the palace to be interviewed by the royal officials, as was the custom with such visitors.

The royal palace at Palermo

> Over esplanades, through doors and across royal courts they led us, gazing at the towering palaces, well-set piazzas and gardens ... Among other things we observed was a hall set in a large court enclosed by a garden and flanked by colonnades. The hall occupied the whole length of that court, and we marvelled at its length and the height of its colonnades. We understood that it was the dining-hall of the king and his companions ...[4]

By the time of their visit, Roger II's son William I had completed the decorative works inside the palace. Ibn Jubayr saw it at its most splendid moment. From then on its fate was linked entirely with the vagaries of Sicilian history, and most of the original decor has disappeared.

The marvels which so impressed twelfth-century visitors can only be seen today in the Cappella Palatina and in the so-called Sala del Ruggero, whose mosaics of leopards and palm trees have become a kind of visual shorthand for the glories of Norman Sicily. The Cappella Palatina survives largely intact, a measure of the awe that this dazzling interior arouses. It is embedded in the palace buildings and the exterior is no longer visible. By sheer good fortune, I happened to be in Sicily while the restoration of 2009 was in progress, and wanted to see it again. It was officially closed, but a friend who lived in Palermo told me that it was possible to tour the restoration work, with an English guide, by prior arrangement. The next day, four of us found ourselves standing on the scaffolding immediately below the carved ceiling of the chapel, so close to it that we had to remove the hard hats we were wearing to avoid touching it. The intricate work of the Muslim craftsmen had been almost impossible to decipher from ground level. Centuries of alternate damp and drying out had loosened the paint and removed much of the gilding. Seen at close quarters, the drinkers, dancers and musicians in the lively scenes from court life and the episodes from the bestiary, the Christian equivalent of Aesop's fables, were sharp and clear again. I remember a lively discussion with the guide about the bestiary scenes, standing in the cramped space with the images all around us on the forest of pendants which make up the ceiling.

The restoration of the Cappella Palatina

In any other building, the roof would be marvel enough. Here its intricate workmanship yields to the mosaics, almost perfectly preserved. These have been recognised since they were first created as the finest since classical times: the pope himself was among those who praised them.[5] The workmen were probably local artists; the designs have a strong Byzantine streak, and it is very likely that Greek masters were brought in to carry out the huge programme of mosaics of which the Cappella Palatina is, so to speak, the second instalment. The cathedral at Cefalù, along the coast from Palermo, was intended as a royal mausoleum and was the first of the buildings to be decorated in this style: the third is the cathedral at Monreale, to which we shall come next.

The décor of the Cappella Palatina

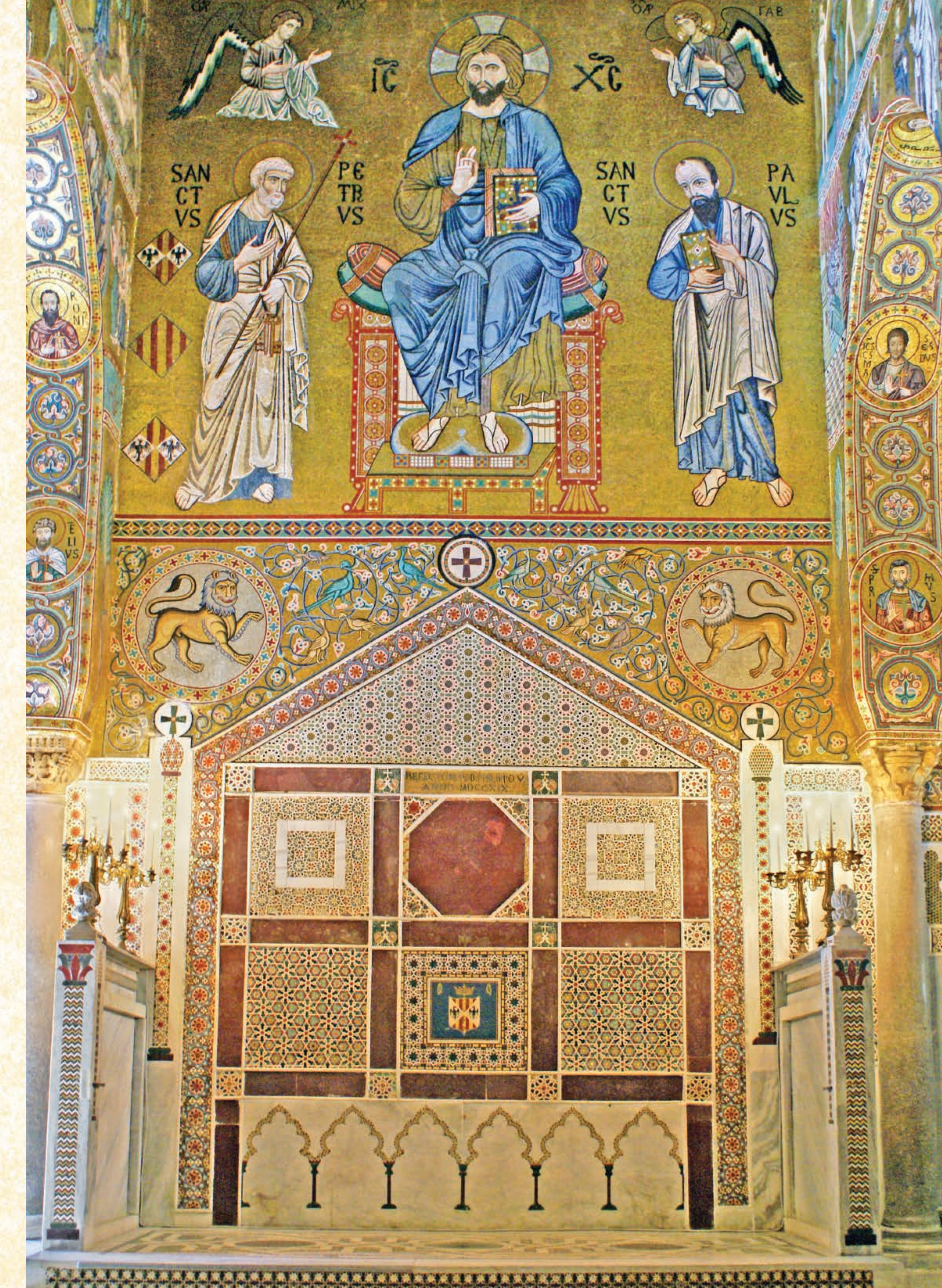
Medieval Sicily was the place where the cultural legacies of classical antiquity, filtered through the Byzantine empire, met with Arabic civilisation and the newly emerging art of Christian Europe. Its rulers were still in touch with France, partly because of the crusades. In 1149 a ship carrying Eleanor of Aquitaine, returning with her husband Louis VII from crusade, was blown off course almost to north Africa. It landed eventually in Palermo, and Roger II escorted her to Calabria where she was reunited with Louis.[6] Roger II had another important French contact, Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis, whom Louis had left in charge of the French kingdom during his absence. The ideas about kingship which underlie the imagery of the mosaics owe much to contemporary French attitudes: there are echoes of Saint-Denis at both Cefalù and the Cappella Palatina. The Sicilian kings studied the 'customs of other kings and peoples very diligently'[7] and adopted anything which they felt would be appropriate. Although the visual style is unquestionably Byzantine, the magnificence to which Roger II aspired is that of a western monarch.

7. West end of the Cappella Palatina in the Norman royal castle in Palermo. This space at the west end of the chapel would have held the throne of Roger II, below the mosaic of Christ in Majesty. The whole programme of mosaics commemorates his coronation as first king of Sicily.

The entrance to the Cappella Palatina is through two doorways in the west wall, which flank the royal dais on which Roger's throne was placed, and the programme of the mosaics is subtly adapted to his viewpoint. From where he sat, he would have seen Biblical episodes and texts echoing his kingly position. It is also a reminder that this is a dynastic foundation. The charter dated 1140 establishing the chapel says that it is a thanksgiving for the creation of the Sicilian kingdom. Royalty, and the splendour of royalty, is the driving force behind it. As a private royal chapel, it is the place where the king would most frequently appear in the midst of his court, and to which only privileged visitors would be admitted. The west end was also designed to act as an audience hall, and forms a separate section within the church. This arrangement was also used in imperial chapels in Byzantium.

All three of the Sicilian royal churches have the same dominant image on the curved roof of the apse, that of Christ 'Pantocrator', 'ruler of all'. At the Capella Palatina, the image of the king is placed in exact counterpoise to the divine ruler, at the west end, as a mosaic above the throne. Around the walls, the overwhelming impression is of a glittering surface on which the symbolic figures and biblical narratives are placed. The use of gold and silver glass tesserae to reflect light in a space which is inherently dark, with small windows, and the refusal to leave undecorated an inch of the surface above the level of the pillars, gives a rich depth to the whole of the mosaic work, with its proliferation of images. Below the line of the pillars, which are reused classical columns, the style is totally different: for the most part, it consists of large marble panels with patterned borders. And there are inscriptions everywhere, drawn from both Greek and Latin litanies: this is a chapel for a literate and sophisticated congregation. It has been argued that behind all this lie the ideas attributed to St Denis, who was believed to have written a treatise entitled *On the Celestial Hierarchy*, much discussed by scholars at just this time. Hence the numerous angels, and the emphasis on light: 'evidently Roger, like [Abbot] Suger, believed that material brilliance "should brighten the minds so that they may travel, through the true lights, to the True Light, where Christ is the door".'[8] Suger had used stained glass extensively for the first time when he rebuilt St Denis to provide colour and light; here, the reflections of the tesserae are the source of that light.

The French writer Guy de Maupassant called the Cappella Palatina 'the most surprising jewel ever imagined by human thought'.[9] This complex, glorious space, despite the unfamiliarity of its imagery and the welter of inscriptions in Greek and Latin, is one of the best surviving examples of medieval splendour, surrounding the prince and assuring him of his position on earth, and hopefully in heaven as well.


IC
XC
SAN
CT
VS
PE
TR
VS
SAN
CT
VS
PA
VL
VS

MONREALE IS THE SEQUEL TO the Cappella Palatina, spacious where the Cappella is confined, and set on the hills above Palermo because the king had – to say the least – an uneasy relationship with the archbishop of Palermo, an Englishman named Walter Offamilo. This had led William II, grandson of Roger II, to decide to build a new royal abbey with a cathedral church 13 kilometres outside the city, which would serve as the dynastic mausoleum. This arrangement is paralleled at Westminster and at Saint-Denis, so was by no means unusual. What was unusual was that, due to the way in which the Sicilian kingdom had been created by the papacy, William II was also the pope's legate in Sicily, and able to grant himself permission to create the abbey. Equally remarkable was the speed with which it was built, beginning in 1174 and completed in a mere four years.

The founding of Monreale

Monreale is therefore no ordinary abbey church. It was designed from the start as a place for royal ceremonial, and that accounts for the huge space within, 40 metres by 102 metres. The monks of the abbey were Cluniac, and all their services were conducted in the sanctuary. The interior is totally at odds with the Cluniac condemnation of ornament in churches, and is entirely devoted to creating a magnificent backdrop for royal pomp and circumstance. The richness of the mosaics, which are Byzantine in general style but quite unlike any contemporary work in Byzantium itself, would seem to be the work of local craftsmen, or at least craftsmen who had worked in the south of Italy. The subjects that cover walls and ceiling are on a grand scale: they tell the story of the Bible from Genesis to the Resurrection and Pentecost, and the royal imagery is a very small element in the whole. But it is present, and carefully positioned. The royal throne is at the entrance to the sanctuary: looking towards the altar, the scene is dominated by a figure of Christ Pantocrator in the apse as at the Cappella Palatina and the old royal cathedral at Cefalù. This is not simply the largest, but is the most sophisticated and striking of the three. William II's throne would have been 'at the right hand of God', facing that of the abbot-archbishop.

Mosaics at Monreale

Above the throne, Christ is shown crowning William, in a grander version of the other mosaic on this theme: the crowning of Roger II in the church of La Martorana in the heart of Palermo. The Martorana mosaic is a much simpler composition, with the majestic standing figure of Christ and the king inclining his head towards him as the crown is placed on it. The earlier image is less grand and more powerful: Roger's kingship was not acknowledged by much of Europe, as the pope who granted it was not recognised either in the Holy Roman Empire or in France. Roger seems to stand alone, while William II at Monreale is surrounded by angels and is crowned by a magnificently enthroned Christ. On the facing wall, William II presents the church to the Virgin Mary, in a pictorial theme familiar throughout western Christendom; it is repeated on a capital at the entrance to the cloister.

The Sicilian kings stand slightly apart from the other European princes. Their history is a microcosm of princely concerns, the struggle to establish and maintain a dynasty, the reconciliation of different traditions and influences, and the rise and fall of the house of Hauteville in the space of less than a century. Yet they were linked in one way or another to France, England and the Holy Roman Empire: they had come from France, one of them had married an English princess, and Englishmen were often at their court, and their inheritance eventually passed to the German emperor Friedrich II, William's first cousin. Their style was one of the few real links between that of the Byzantine court and the West. The trappings of Sicilian magnificence are reflected in the inheritance of Friedrich II.

8. Coronation of Roger II by Christ. Roger was crowned before any of the royal churches in Palermo had been completed. This mosaic is in the small church of the Martorana, built by his chief minister George of Antioch and finished in 1151.

9. William II offers his new cathedral of Monreale to the Virgin Mary. Dedication images of this kind are not uncommon, though this is on a much larger scale than usual. It is part of a huge cycle of mosaics which are of exceptional quality, executed by Greek workmen from Sicily who had seen contemporary Byzantine work.

Friedrich II: Recreating the Past, Exploring the Future

FRIEDRICH II, HOLY ROMAN EMPEROR from 1220 to 1250, is one of the most intriguing figures that we shall encounter in this book. Endlessly energetic, he is an elusive character. Each new biographer seems to find a new interpretation, and despite monumental tomes devoted to him, it seems that he is too protean to be contained within the covers of a single volume. He inherited both Sicily and the Holy Roman Empire from his parents: his mother Constance was the great-granddaughter of Roger II, and the emperor Heinrich VI his father. He saw himself as successor to the Roman emperors, looking back beyond Charlemagne and taking them directly as his models. But he was also in touch with the latest developments in philosophy and science, including the rediscovery of works of Aristotle. His own famous treatise on falconry, *On the art of hunting with birds*, is based on his own skill as a falconer; it also relies on the value of observation of the natural world which shaped Aristotle's books on zoology. He corresponded with the sultan of Egypt, and was deeply interested in the civilisation of the Arab world. To the pope, he was a dangerous heretic, supporter of the radical Franciscan order, and dabbling in unorthodox philosophy, as well as a political opponent to the papacy's worldly ambitions. The moment in his career which encapsulates these contradictions is his success in regaining Jerusalem for the Christian world in 1229, while he was under sentence of excommunication by the pope.

Friedrich II had a very keen sense of the past and of his position as the modern heir to the Roman emperors. He deliberately attempted to reinvent himself as a Roman emperor, and there are three monuments which speak to us directly of his vision. All survive only as fragments, chiefly of the statues and inscriptions. The earliest, the castle at Foggia northwest of Bari, begun in 1223, in an area which is peppered with Friedrich's buildings, was one of his favourite residences. He was only in his thirties when he put up the proud inscription above the arch of the doorway, which begins:

Friedrich II: Foggia

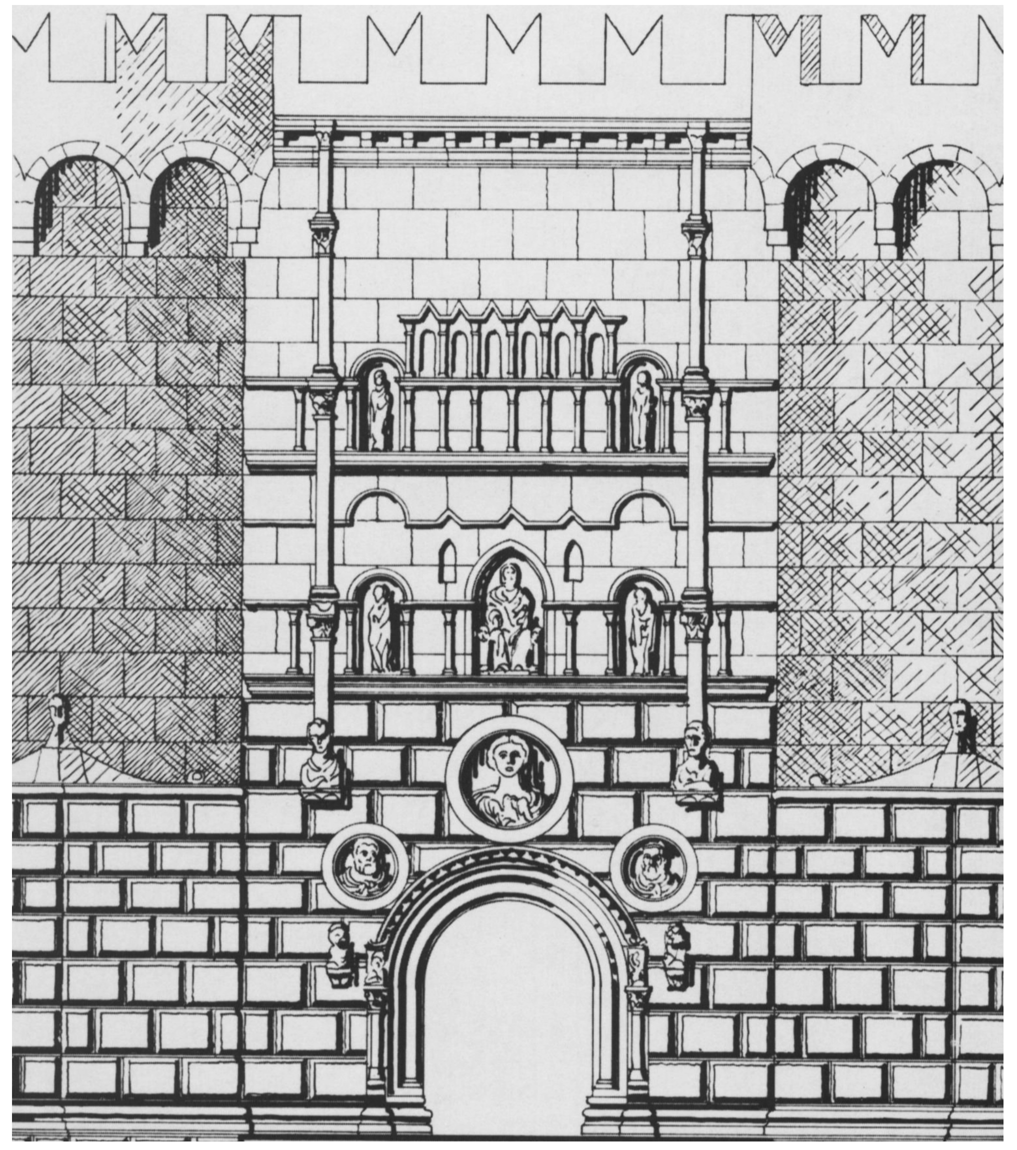
THUS CAESAR ORDERED THIS WORK TO BE MADE
THUS BARTHOLOMEW BUILT THAT WORK

In the text which follows, the emphasis is on his imperial titles – 'emperor of the Romans', 'Caesar', and, most tellingly, '*Semper Augustus*', the official title used by the Roman emperors.

Foggia was the nearest that Friedrich, the most peripatetic of all rulers of the Holy Roman Empire, came to having as his capital residence. He spent several months each year there, usually in the winter, except for the years 1236–1239 when he was occupied with the struggle for Lombardy. After his victory over the rebellious city of Milan at Cortenuova in 1237, he ordered that some of the captives should be taken to see Foggia, to witness his imperial power.[10]

The arch at Capua

THE MOST IMPOSING of these classical monuments was the triumphal gateway Friedrich created at Capua, north of Naples, in 1234. This was a project in which he took a close personal interest, and he may even have had a hand in the design.[11] It stands at the end of a bridge, and consists of two massive towers, of which only the bases remain. Above the arch which spans the roadway between the towers, a screen wall was decorated with antique pillars and with a central statue of Friedrich himself, clad in a toga. Around him



1. A reconstruction of Friedrich II's gateway in the classical style at Capua, built 1234–40.

were busts, both antique and modern, all in the classical style, a number of them *spolia*, originals from the Roman period incorporated into the new work. It was a deliberate echo of the ancient gates of Rome itself, very similar to the Porta Appia (now the Porta San Sebastiano). When Capua was besieged thirty years later after the defeat of Friedrich's son Manfred, one of the besiegers, Andrew of Hungary, was awe-struck by the massive monument, estimating that it must have cost 'twenty thousand ounces of pure gold'. He called the statue of Friedrich 'an eternal and imperishable memorial', and describes the figure as stretching out its arms and pointing towards the onlooker, as if to warn him, in the words of the inscription below, that only the just may enter in safety; the wicked will be punished, and the infidels imprisoned.[12]

Friedrich II: Capua

An even more intriguing witness to Friedrich's adoption of the mantle of the Roman emperors is now no more than a handful of fragments. In 1237 Friedrich had been faced by a serious revolt among the cities of Lombardy, led by the Milanese, and at the end of November he lured them out of a very strong fortified position outside the city of Brescia by pretending that he was retreating to his winter quarters at Cremona. The ruse worked,

and the Milanese army was annihilated, its leaders captured. The precious standard-chariot or *carroccio* of Milan, surmounted by a cross with a sacred relic, fell into Friderich's hands. It was a major victory, and he celebrated it with a triumph in the antique Roman style. One of his highest officials, Piero della Vigna, published an account of the occasion in a letter addressed to the faithful of the Empire. This described how the *carroccio*, with the Milanese leader chained to the front of it and the standard trailing in the dust, was tied behind the emperor's elephant and hauled through the streets of Cremona.[13] Friedrich later presented the *carroccio* to the senate of Rome, a pointed gesture aimed both at the pope, who had supported the Milanese, and at echoing his imperial forebears. It was mounted on the Capitol, with an inscription which the rulers of classical Rome would have instantly recognised:[14]

The Milanese carroccio

FROM THE AUGUST CAESAR FRIDERICUS THE SECOND
RECEIVE, O ROME, THIS CARROCCIO, ETERNAL ORNAMENT OF THE CITY
CAPTURED AT THE DEFEAT OF MILAN, TROPHY OF CAESAR'S TRIUMPH,
IT COMES AS A NOBLE PRIZE.
IT WILL STAND TO SHAME THE ENEMY AND HONOUR THE CITY
REVERENCE FOR THE CITY IMPELLED HIM TO SEND IT.

Even Roman art, rarely prized by Christian monarchs, was precious to Friedrich.[15] In 1240, and again in 1242, he ordered classical statues to be taken to his castle at Lucera, 154 kilometres northwest of Bari. Here he had created a Moslem town: faced with religious rebellion in Sicily, he had moved the insurgents out of the island and had offered them special privileges to ensure their future loyalty. (There was admittedly a certain irony in decorating the castle with statues which the inhabitants would have found sacrilegious.) We have Friedrich's instructions for transporting two stone figures from the castle at Naples, which were to be carried very carefully on the porters' shoulders. Friedrich also prized Roman jewellery in the form of cameos, both original and contemporary work in the classical style. His successor Conrad IV sold no less than 987 pieces of jewellery to a Genoese merchant, among which were seventy-seven unmounted and fifty gold-mounted cameos. And we can add to this list the design of his gold coinage of 1231 struck in Sicily, which shows him with the traditional laurel wreath of the emperors rather than with a crown, in profile. Finally, there is the massive sarcophagus made of imperial porphyry in which he was buried at Palermo in 1250.[16]

Arnolfo di Cambio

FRIEDRICH'S SUCCESSORS IN THE KINGDOM of Naples, the Angevin dynasty of the late thirteenth century, continued to look to Rome as a model. There is a striking series of statues in a pose similar to that of Friedrich on the Capuan gate, beginning with Arnolfo di Cambio's figure of Charles I of Anjou. This shows the king as a Roman senator, rather than as an emperor. Charles was elected to the senate in 1263, and the statue was carved from a huge block of antique marble in 1277, just before he had to retire from the post. He became a senator again in 1281, and its creation may have had something to do with these manoeuvres. Charles is shown in traditional senatorial robes, holding a scroll, rather than in the commanding gesture of Friedrich's image. The tombs of later Angevin kings have figures in royal regalia in a similar fashion, as part of massive cenotaphs which stand behind the high altars of Neapolitan churches. But it is not until the mid fifteenth century under Alfonso V of Aragon that Roman triumphs on the scale of that of Friedrich II are seen again in Naples.

Friedrich as Builder: Castel del Monte and Castello Maniace

THE CHRONICLER OF THE ABBEY of Santa Giustina in Padua wrote eloquently of Friedrich II as a builder of both palaces and castles.[17] The emperor, he recorded, 'had palaces built with incomparable fervor and of such beauty and proportions as though he was going to be able to live forever'. Not content with this, he 'raised fortresses and towers on the tops of the mountains and in the cities as though he was afraid of being besieged by his enemies from one moment to the other'. As to Friedrich's purpose, he declared, 'All this he made to demonstrate his power, by inciting fear and admiration, and thus impressing his name so profoundly in the memory of men that nothing would ever be able to cancel it.'[18] Two examples of his activity will have to suffice.

'to demonstrate his power'

CASTEL DEL MONTE IN APULIA is the most famous of Friedrich's Italian castles. It stands in a relatively sparsely populated landscape on the eastern side of a ridge of hills some 50 kilometres west of Bari. When I first caught a glimpse of it in the distance, I mistook it for a massive modern building in a totally incongruous setting. To the medieval traveller it would have seemed even more gigantic, lowering and hostile, partly screened by forest. However, when at close quarters, it is a subtle and elegant building of extraordinary symmetry and beauty. That symmetry is the essence of the architecture. Seen from the air, the plan of Castel del Monte is remarkable. It is a perfect octagon, and around the octagonal centre are eight smaller, equally perfect octagons, mounted at its angles. At its heart, there is an octagonal courtyard. Given the tools available to a medieval builder, the basic structure of the building is in itself a major feat.[19] Computer analysis reveals that the design has a highly complex mathematical origin. It has the beauty inherent in so many complex geometric patterns, enhanced by the play of light and shade in the dazzling Italian sunlight. It was almost certainly achieved, together with other aspects of the castle, by means of geometrical skills derived from Arabic scientists.

Castel del Monte

10, p.37

What we see today are the bare bones of the building. The outer façade is weathered, and apart from the loss of the tops of the octagonal towers, little altered. Within, however, there are the merest traces of the original appearance. Just as with medieval churches, a riot of colour has vanished. The one place where we can see something of the original is the main outer doorway, with its classical pediment and surround in coralline breccia, which is similar to marble; the same stone was used to frame the window openings. Inside, however, it was used to face the walls of the rooms on the ground floor. The lower floor is dark, and the imperial rooms on the first floor, including what was probably a throne room, have distinctive windows which admit much more light. One particularly elaborate window looks down towards the city of Andria, which had a very personal significance for Friedrich. His second wife, Isabella of Brienne, heiress to the kingdom of Jerusalem, was buried at Andria in 1228 to be followed by his third wife, Isabella of England, whom he married in 1234, and who died in 1241.

Castel del Monte: symmetry

It is not only the wall facings that are missing, of course. Many of the marble columns have gone, and there are only traces of sculptural decoration. In one room there are the remains of an elaborate octagonal mosaic. We need to imagine an interior with a play of light and shade, with plants in the courtyard, and with rich furnishings. There are no traces of wall mosaics like those in the Sicilian palaces at Palermo, though the Cistercian vaulting of the ground floor might imply a rather more ascetic northern approach to decoration. There is no doubt, however, that this was a building designed to overawe the visitor from the moment they approached it.

Castel del Monte: décor

Another feature is highly personal, and relates to Friedrich's skill in falconry. In one of the towers there is a carefully constructed eyrie above the vaulting, accessible only by a ladder from the room below, with a staircase leading to the roof. Falconry, too, was a symbol of royal prestige. The eyrie would have contained hawks appropriate to Friedrich's imperial rank, probably both peregrines from the Mediterranean and the much-prized gerfalcons from the Nordic world. The emperor's enthusiasm for astronomy and astrology may explain the octagonal shape of the castle. But first a word of warning. What we have here is a castle that was never completed, and which Friedrich II may never have inhabited. There is a still unresolved scholarly debate about fundamental points, such as the planning and building of the castle, let alone its undocumented purposes, so what follows needs to be treated with caution. Having waded through the vast literature on it in Italian and German, I can only say that what follows seems to make sense to me.

Friedrich II and science

Friedrich was deeply involved with the emerging scientific world of his time, which prized observation of natural phenomena as equal or even superior to Christian tradition, to the Church's dismay. He used this close observation in his book on falconry, but his knowledge of science derived in large part from contact with the Arab intellectual world. The result is visible in the mathematical and geometrical plan of the building. The philosopher Michael Scot was at Friedrich's court from about 1220 until 1236, the year of his death. He was renowned for his learning, and particularly his knowledge of Arabic science including astronomy, and, indivisible from it in the medieval period, astrology, subjects which he certainly discussed with the emperor. Friedrich also owned a planetarium given to him by the sultan of Damascus, with 'figures of the sun and moon, indicating the hours of the day and night in their determined movements', and he himself corresponded with an Arab scholar about astronomy.[20] Furthermore he had met the sultan of Egypt in 1229 and corresponded with him about astrology.

The main entrance of the castle is placed precisely east, which was the only easily calculated compass point before the magnetic compass was refined enough to give an accurate reading. The octagon is therefore a perfect compass rose, with the towers marking the cardinal points. For the astrologer, who needed to observe the sky with the greatest precision possible, this meant that, on the roof, the central octagon could be used to give exact positions. The size of the opening is such that one degree of the compass is represented by a space of roughly 10 cm. Given the accurate construction of the building, the whole castle could act as an excellent observatory. Because there were no common standards of time, an almanac for any given place depended on recording the basic data over a period of a year or more to establish the necessary tables. And Arabic astronomers aimed to record the data they needed for astrology, rather than to investigate the theoretical side.

Castello Maniace

CASTELLO MANIACE AT SYRACUSE guards the superb harbour which gave the city its importance from classical times onwards. It lies at the eastern end of the island of Ortigia, behind fortifications which have grown more massive with each century. It was rebuilt by Friedrich II between 1232 and 1240, and here the palatial interior survives, at least in part. The ground floor consisted of a massive hall, 50 metres by 50 metres, with five rows of five columns supporting vaults which rise to at least twice the height of the columns themselves. The impression is of an immense roof, dwarfing the human beings below. The castle was heavily damaged when it was still an important fort – an earthquake in 1693 and an explosion in the powder magazine in 1704 – and over half the central structure has virtually disappeared. Only two rows of the columns have been restored, but they are enough to allow us to imagine the effect of the original.

The central vault of the hall was open to the sky, and formed a small inner courtyard flanked by four triple columns; there was almost certainly a fountain there. Apart from this, the light was from just two windows and the main door, giving a strong contrast between the cool darkness inside and the brilliant sunlight reflected from the sea outside.

The visitor would have entered by the portal flanked by two bronze rams in the classical style, one of which survives. The arcade leading to the doorway itself uses a combination of black and grey marble and a stone which appears almost gilded when set against these colours. This is almost all that we have of the décor, which has almost entirely vanished. Castello Maniace is in a sense a palace built within massive outer fortifications which were already in place.

'immutator mundi'

These were the works of a man who, in the eyes of the chronicler, intended to inspire 'fear and admiration'.[21] His contemporaries called him '*immutator mundi*' and '*stupor mundi*', both a transformer of the world and its wonder. The transformation, a permanent establishment of a new Roman empire, eluded him, and all we are left with is the wonder, a precursor of the 'magnificence' that Giles of Rome defined thirty years after his death.

St Louis and Henry III

Paris

Henry III visits Paris

IN 1254 HENRY III CAME TO PARIS to visit St Louis, almost as a tourist. Matthew Paris, whose monastery at St Albans was in close contact with the royal court, and who knew Henry personally, says that he was eager to see 'the cities, churches, manners and clothes of the French, and the most noble chapel of the kings of France which is in Paris, as well as the incomparable relics which were in it'.[22] Henry had just overseen the reburial of his mother Queen Isabella at Fontevraud, where Henry II, Eleanor and Richard were buried. He came by way of Orléans to meet Louis at Chartres. Louis ordered that all towns through which Henry was to pass should be cleansed and decorated with cloths, branches and flowers and other ornaments, and that the royal visitor should be reverently and joyfully received with suitable music and ceremonial. The kings went on to Paris, where the other members of the French royal family greeted Henry. The English scholars studying at the university appeared in festive robes, with musicians, for a celebration which lasted throughout the night and the following day. Henry lodged outside the walls in the headquarters of the Templars, because his retinue was so large, before visiting the Sainte-Chapelle the next day.

Henry gave a banquet at the Templar establishment in Paris. Here the hall was hung with shields, 'as is the fashion abroad', among them that of Richard I. Henry's jester said to the king, 'Are you inviting the French here? If they see that shield they will be too frightened to eat!' Matthew Paris gives a full list of the guests, including not only the great clerics and nobles, but also the oldest inhabitants of the city. The kings spent eight days together; Henry admired the elegant plastered houses of Paris with many rooms, followed by crowds of the citizens eager to catch sight of him. The kings, according to Matthew Paris, had very friendly conversations – their wives were sisters – and got on very well at a personal level. Matthew claims that Louis told Henry that 'if only the twelve peers of France and my barons would agree to it, we would be inseparable friends', a neat reminder that the personal warmth of the meeting was unlikely to produce political results.[23]

PALAIS DE LA CITÉ

After the banquet at the Temple, Henry went for the night to Louis's main palace in Paris, on the Ile de la Cité. This site was a natural stronghold, and had been fortified since the fourth century AD. Under the first Capetian kings of France, descendants of Hugh Capet who had been elected king of the Franks in 987, Paris became their power base and the effective capital city of the kingdom. The buildings there were gradually remodelled as the Palais de la Cité over the next two centuries. Under Louis VII in the twelfth century the palace was enlarged by the great royal hall, a massive defensive tower, royal lodgings and a chapel, the essential elements of a medieval palace. Here his son Philip Augustus, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, established the new administrative offices of the kingdom, including a law court and the king's chamber. Furthermore, he built a new city wall round Paris, so that the defensive aspect of the Palais became less important.

The Ile de la Cité

Philip's successor, St Louis, added further government offices to the Palais, including the repository of royal charters and the accounting chamber. His most spectacular creation was the Sainte-Chapelle at the heart of the palace. From the detailed chronicles of his reign we learn a good deal about the rooms and buildings and who occupied them, including the king's private chambers and dining room to the west of the old fortified area, and the Sainte-Chapelle and the residences of its clergy to the south. Within the enclosed space, there were still gardens, notably that next to the royal law court, where St Louis famously dispensed justice in the open air. On the north side, a smaller ceremonial hall, the Salle sur l'Eau, was added: it was intended for those royal occasions when crowds would not be present.

The creation of the Sainte-Chapelle

By 1285, when Philip IV came to the throne, the royal law court had been moved elsewhere. During the next decade, Philip's centralisation of the government departments changed the nature of the Palais de la Cité. From 1298 until his death in 1314, he and his architect, Enguerrand de Marigny, rebuilt it accordingly. The semi-official chronicle written at the abbey of Saint-Denis called it 'a new palace of marvellous and costly work, more beautiful than anyone in France had ever seen'.[24] A new entrance, the Great Staircase, was created, with a steep flight of steps leading to an ante-chamber giving access to the main rooms of the palace. This was placed so that when the king came to a ceremonial occasion in the most impressive of the new rooms, the platform at the head of the staircase became the point where spectators gathered in the main court would see him, before he crossed the courtyard into the Grand'Salle.[25] This hall was one of the largest in Europe, 63 metres long and 27 metres wide, with a barrel vaulted wooden roof above. At the west end a huge black marble table, made of nine slabs, took up almost the whole width of the hall. There was a massive row of central pillars which, with the corresponding arch pillars on the walls, carried polychrome statues of the French kings, reputedly very lifelike. These were the forerunners of the dynastic portraits at the Karlstejn in Prague, intended to reinforce the idea that the Capetian kings were the true heirs of Charlemagne rather than newcomers in the tenth century. Hence the series of statues began with the mythical king Pharamond and his shadowy semi-historical successors before going on to Charlemagne and the supposed Capetian connection to him.

'a new palace of costly work'

13, p.39

This remarkable space was at once a dining hall and a space for theatrical and spectacular performance. It was destroyed in a fire in 1618; only the lower hall survives, which served as a refectory for the palace staff, numbering almost two thousand. It was slightly larger in area, though shorter in length than Westminster Hall in London, at 1,785 square metres. The Grand'Salle could probably have seated nearly a thousand for a feast. It will appear in later chapters as the scene of some of the greatest displays of the period. It also served as the place where the king's justice was administered, as was the case with Westminster Hall.

10. Castel del Monte in Apulia, near Bari. Considered the most remarkable of Friedrich II's multitude of castles, it dominates the surrounding landscape. Its octagonal form, with octagonal towers, is built to a remarkable degree of geometric accuracy. Friedrich never stayed there, as the castle remained unfinished at his death.

11. Henry III brings the relics of the Passion to Westminster, a contemporary drawing by Matthew Paris, artist and chronicler.

12. The Crown of Thorns. Originally the focal point of the Sainte-Chapelle, it was transferred to Notre-Dame. The gold casing is modern, but it has always been encrusted with gold and jewels. It is displayed on Good Friday each year.

THE SAINTE-CHAPELLE

The modern aspect of the Palais de la Cité in Paris from the street is that of a fairly ordinary nineteenth-century office building. Only a spire soaring behind the façade gives any hint of the extraordinary reliquary in its inner court. For the Sainte-Chapelle is exactly that, built by St Louis to house one of the greatest relics in Christendom, the crown of thorns reputed to have been worn by Christ at the crucifixion.[26] The building itself is in the form of the jewelled chests in which such relics were often kept, and was originally as brilliantly coloured as any goldsmith's work. It was created and decorated in a mere five years, from 1243 to 1248, and although the painting has been much restored, the contemporary effect of highly coloured surfaces contrasting with the light shed by the superb, soaring windows is still a stunning experience. The ceiling was deep blue, spangled with stars, an effect often copied in later churches in the apse; here it ran through the whole length of the nave as well. There is very little wall space, simply the narrow pillars that support the roof and frame the windows, and their base, a wall which is perhaps a sixth of their height. Here carved and gilded sculpted arcading surrounded spaces decorated with glass inset into a silver ground, reflecting the shafts of coloured light from above. In London, the buildings which corresponded to the Palais de la Cité and Saint-Denis were on the same site, outside the city walls in the village of Westminster. Here the royal burial place was Westminster Abbey, flanked by the centre of royal administration at the palace of Westminster. This is how it struck a medieval observer, Jean de Jandun, writing seventy-five years after its completion:

13. The month of June, from the calendar in *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry*. In the background is the Palais de la Cité, on an island in the Seine. There are gardens within its walls with bowers and pergolas, and a great staircase behind. The Sainte-Chapelle, without its spire, is inside the first line of roofs.

> But also that most beautiful of chapels, the chapel of the king, most fittingly situated within the walls of the king's house, enjoys a complete and indissoluble structure of most solid stone. The most select colors of the pictures, the precious gilding of the images, the beautiful transparency of the gleaming windows on all sides, the most beautiful cloths of the altars, the wondrous merits of the sanctuaries, the figured work on the reliquaries externally adorned with dazzling gems, bestow such a hyperbolic beauty on that house of prayer, that, in going into it from below, one understandably believes one self, as if rapt to heaven, to be entering one of the best chambers of Paradise.[27]

London

IN LONDON, THE BUILDINGS which corresponded to the Palais de la Cité and Saint-Denis were both on one site, outside the city walls in the village of Westminster. Here the royal burial place was Westminster Abbey, flanked by the centre of royal adminstration at the palace of Westminster.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

The reasons for Edward the Confessor's decision to build a monumental new church at the relatively obscure monastery of Westminster at an unknown date, probably not long after he came to the throne in 1042, are quite simply unknown. He had spent twenty-four years in exile in Normandy, and the building he commissioned seems to have been on the lines of the abbey at Jumièges, with its massive twin towers at the west end. But in size 'it far exceeded any of the eleventh century churches of Normandy which have survived'.[28] The church, largely completed, was consecrated on 28 December 1065. A week later, Edward was the first king to be buried there. His ill-fated successor Harold was the first king to be crowned there, on the same day.

Edward was canonised in 1161, and his body was translated to a new shrine in 1163. Westminster remained important as the place of coronation. Henry III had been crowned

at Gloucester as a matter of urgency after the death of his father John in 1216, but this was regarded as a temporary measure. He was crowned again at Westminster in 1220. Yet just as Edward's original decision to create a monumental church at the abbey is obscure, so is the reason for Henry III's decision to tear down that church and rebuild it in the latest French style. One of his motives may well have been rivalry with his brother-in-law St Louis of France, who had not yet begun the Sainte-Chapelle in his palace in Paris when Henry began to spend money at Westminster. Matthew Paris attributes the choice of Westminster to a personal enthusiasm on Henry's part for St Edward, and this seems persuasive.[29] As to the style, Edward the Confessor would have known the Norman Romanesque churches from his years of exile, whereas in 1225 Henry III had never been to Paris and its surrounding cathedral towns, the scene of the latest fashion in Gothic architecture which he now adopted for Westminster Abbey. However, his architect, Henri de Reyns, was a Frenchman who had trained at Reims. This was the coronation church of the French kings and had recently been rebuilt. He was therefore well placed to offer Henry ideas which related to the latest grand style in French architecture, and there is undoubtedly a link at some level between the buildings at Reims and Westminster.[30] Equally, Henry was too far advanced with his work on the Abbey for there to be any question of reshaping St Stephen's Chapel in the Palace of Westminster, technically the equivalent of the Sainte-Chapelle. When he saw the latter in 1254, Henry is said to have been so enthusiastic that if he could have put it on a handcart and taken it home with him, he would have done so.[31]

Henry III and Westminster

One very distinctive feature at Westminster Abbey may be due to the long shadow of the Roman empire. This is Henry's choice of Italian artists to embellish his new church. The mosaic floors created by the Cosmati family from Rome are in the tradition of imperial splendour, using scarce porphyry, semi-precious stones and glass to create a depth of colour and form unrivalled in Europe. They worked extensively in their home town, and to a lesser extent in other central Italian towns, but nothing like this was to be seen in Paris or northern France. The Cosmati team was led by a man who is named in the inscriptions as Odoricus, and the design of the pavement in the sanctuary is to be found in contemporary work by the Cosmati in Rome, though not on this scale. The layout of the east end of the church allows this floor to be much more extensive, and the coronation ritual which is performed there more spacious and impressive.[32]

The Cosmati pavement

The shrine of the Confessor himself was also the work of the Cosmati, who were only just beginning to undertake such commissions in their Italian homeland. Its actual design is not Italian, but typical of English pilgrim shrines, with spaces below for pilgrims to get as close as they could to the magical relics within. This type of mosaic, by flickering candlelight, has a life of its own which modern lighting does not evoke: the tomb would have been a glittering focal point within the church. The saint's remains were housed in a rich iron feretory demolished at the Reformation; our knowledge of this comes from the document by which Henry III, crucially short of funds in the late 1260s, had to pawn the statues on it, a dozen or so in all including St Peter holding a model of the church and a Virgin and Child.

Henry III, as a devout prince, collected relics, and received gifts of them with enthusiasm. As nephew of Richard I, the only king to have campaigned successfully in the East since the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, he was a particular target for such blandishments. It is only through the chance survival of a list of gifts he received in 1234/5 that we know that the Knights Hospitaller had sent him a choice selection of relics from the Holy Land.

In 1247, Henry III acquired his own special relic of the Passion, a phial of the Holy Blood sent to him by the emperor Heraclius, which had been authenticated by the patriarch

of Jerusalem and the Knights Templar. Relics of the Holy Blood were far from uncommon – one scholar has listed over 220 in all – but the provenance of this, and the fact that the patriarch had sent it, made it especially precious to Henry. It also gave him the chance to promote Westminster to an equal standing with the Sainte-Chapelle. The relic was therefore presented to the world at large in the most dramatic way possible.

Henry III and the Passion relic

Henry concealed the fact that it was being sent to him until the day of the ceremony, and then announced the arrival of the precious gift in the presence of Matthew Paris. Matthew Paris not only describes the event, having been ordered by the king 'to write a plain and full account of all these events', but also provides a drawing of the procession from St Paul's to Westminster, with the king walking under a canopy as if going to his coronation. He confirms the suspicion that rivalry with France was one aspect of the celebration, claiming that the bishop of Norwich had preached a sermon in which he said that the Crown of Thorns was made holy by its contact with the body of Christ, and declared that 'more holy is the blood of Christ' because it is the blood which sanctifies the other relics. It is sometimes claimed that Henry was trying to make Westminster a place of pilgrimage. However Edward the Confessor was nothing like such a draw as Thomas Becket at Canterbury. Henry did amass a considerable collection of remains of saints here, but a series of indulgences for separate activities at the abbey issued by the pope are not necessarily evidence for this. We shall find similar indulgences* issued at Karlstejn near Prague, again in connection with a royal collection of relics, and this was probably the true character of Henry's efforts. The Westminster chronicler confirms this, claiming that 'the church of Westminster was richer in royal treasure than all the churches north of the Alps, and indeed than those beyond the Alps as well'.[33]

11, p.37

THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER

It was under Henry III that Westminster was established both as the centre of the administration and as a true royal palace. Work on the palace began in the 1220s, and continued during the rebuilding of the abbey, in tandem with the latter, but on a smaller scale. Edward the Confessor had built a palace next to Westminster Abbey in the years before the Norman Conquest, and this continued to be used under William I, though we know little about it. In 1097 his son William Rufus started to rebuild it on a massive scale, and held his Whitsun crown-wearing there two years later. It was the precursor of a series of such great halls. We have noted the Grand'Salle in Paris, but these two remained the prime examples. Even the huge Vladislav Hall in the palace at Prague, a late Gothic creation from the beginning of the sixteenth century, is slightly shorter, and only two thirds of the width. The hall of the royal palace of Aragon in Barcelona was rebuilt by Peter the Ceremonious in 1359 and is visually more dramatic, though smaller, with a perspective of round arches, 18 metres in width, which are the largest of their type in the Middle Ages.

Westminster Hall

What there was apart from the hall at Westminster is not clear, as the kings seem to have been there only for ceremonial purposes or for sizeable assemblies: it was certainly not a major residence until Henry II's reign, and even then we know very little about it, apart from the holding of royal crown-wearings there. Thomas Becket as chancellor was responsible for restoring it rapidly from a half-ruined state, and there were by his time chambers for the king and queen and offices for the royal exchequer, which is recorded as meeting here in 1165.[34] By 1167 a new hall had been added. The main royal treasury, which had been at

* Indulgences were issued to pilgrims and promised that they would be spared time in purgatory after they died in return for their pilgrimage.

Winchester since Anglo-Saxon times, was moved here at some time in the early thirteenth century, during John's reign.

The Painted Chamber

The palace's most remarkable feature, the Painted Chamber, and the other wall paintings are discussed in chapter 7 below. These were only part of the décor: the floors were of glazed tiles. It is possible that there were resplendent Cosmati pavements within the palace like the 'Great Pavement' before the high altar in the Abbey, but no trace or record of them survives. English tiles of the period are quite sophisticated, and surviving examples from Clarendon Palace near Salisbury and Chertsey Abbey show the kinds of patterns and pictorial scenes that would have been used. Indeed, the Chertsey tiles with their illustrations of Richard I jousting against Saladin are more secular than religious. The mouldings of the windows were gilded and coloured, and plaster with coloured glass embedded in it used on wall spaces not occupied by paintings. Westminster Hall was at some point before 1253 provided with a massive marble table at the south end, and a marble throne with the traditional lions supporting it was added soon afterwards.

Edward I continued to have work done on the buildings of the palace. Builders and painters were still at work in 1297 when finances ran out. This was followed by a fire which caused considerable damage in 1298, and the palace was temporarily abandoned. When Edward II came to the throne in July 1307, he had urgent reasons to repair the damage, as his coronation was planned for the following February, after his wedding in Paris to Isabella of France in January. The wedding would obviously be a splendid affair, given the wealth of the French monarchy, and to present his new bride with a ruinous palace would be a serious loss of face. By spending about £3000, the buildings were made presentable, and temporary buildings for the coronation itself were erected. Thereafter the palace was simply maintained, and annual expenditure dropped to almost nothing.

Richard II remodels Westminster Hall

In 1393 Richard II set in train the remodelling of Westminster Hall, which despite its huge size compared unfavourably with the Grand'Salle in the French king's Palais de la Cité in Paris, with its much greater height. Hugh Herland, the king's master carpenter, devised a roof of the latest design, a startling and striking 'double hammerbeam', which, combined with work to raise the walls, produced a height in proportion to the width of the building. This space was now lit by Gothic windows in the new Perpendicular style along the walls, with a window worthy of a cathedral façade at the north end.* All that remained of the old hall were the original Norman walls, as the base of the new structure. A set of statues of the kings of England from Edward the Confessor to Richard II were ordered, evidently in imitation of those of the French kings in the Palais de la Cité and the royal dynasty in the Karlstejn. Only six were placed in the hall, the rest seemed to have been stored pending a decision as to where to put them. Ironically, the hall was still incomplete in 1399 when Richard was deposed. The first major ceremony to take place in a setting designed to fit in with the grandiose idea of kingship which Richard favoured in the last years of his reign was the assembly which recognised his nemesis, Henry IV, as king.[35]

* This is now overshadowed by Charles Barry's Victorian buildings.

Royal Mausoleums

DYNASTY WAS A CRITICAL CONCEPT for a medieval prince. The panoply of his ancestors vouched for his legitimacy as a ruler, and added glory to his own person as the descendant of great men. If those forebears could include a royal saint, so much the better. The royal mausoleum was usually in an abbey with close royal links, or, less usually, in the cathedral of the capital city. The presence of a royal saint was also a factor, even if the genealogical link was tenuous: in England it was Edward the Confessor at Westminster. In France, the situation was different, because Saint-Denis was the dynastic mausoleum before St Louis was canonised. In the fourteenth century Karl IV established the royal burial place at St Vitus' cathedral because of the presence of the tomb of St Wenceslas.

THE KINGDOM OF LEÓN BECAME A separate state when the kingdom of Galicia was divided among the sons of Alfonso III in 910. The church of St Isidore, patron saint of the kingdom, became a royal monastery for both men and women, under the jurisdiction of an abbess who was always a princess of León. The church itself was built in brick on the ruins of a building destroyed in a Moorish raid in 998, and rebuilt in stone after 1050 by King Fernando and his queen, Sancha. San Isidoro was dedicated in 1063, when the body of St Isidore, exacted as tribute from the Moorish ruler of Seville by Fernando, was brought here.

Urraca, queen of León

The pantheon was added afterwards towards the end of the eleventh century by Urraca, daughter of Alfonso VI who ruled as queen from 1109 until 1126.[36] The succession and continuation of the dynasty were seriously in question at this point. Her predecessors, the kings of Asturias, had a similar pantheon at Oviedo, in the beautiful temple-like church of Santa Maria on the edge of the city, founded early in the ninth century, where there were numerous royal graves.[37] In 911, the capital was moved to León, and the kingdom acquired its new name.

The pantheon of San Isidoro

The pantheon at León is a free-standing chapel, in the precincts of the basilica of San Isidoro, and is small by contrast with most of the princely buildings we have looked at: only three bays wide, it measures 8 metres square. Immediately after it was built, the bodies of four kings were exhumed and brought here for burial in the pantheon. In all, eleven kings, twelve queens and nine of their children are buried here. The tombs were destroyed in the war of independence in 1808, and for the most part only the epitaphs remain.[38]

14, p.45

The interior has been called 'the Sistine Chapel of Romanesque art', in the sense that it is the most complete Romanesque interior to survive, almost untouched and never 'restored'. It shows what passed for splendour in the mid twelfth century. There is a frescoed cycle of New Testament pictures on the life of Christ, painted by an unknown master. There is a crucifixion on the end wall, and the figure of Christ and the makers of the four gospels over the central vault.[39] These were completed by 1160, and were in the local Leónese style, perhaps with some Byzantine influences. The kings of León claimed the title 'Emperor of Spain', and although the Pantheon is very small, the quality of the paintings is exceptional. A portion of the library, including books produced by the scribes here dating as far back as 940, is still in place. A richly jewelled chalice given by queen Urraca is a reminder of the treasures which the monastery contained.[40] Ironically, the pantheon itself probably survived because the imperial ambitions of the kings came to nothing: León was merged with Castile in 1301, and the city ceased to be the capital. Castile had nothing to rival this concentration of royal burials: even the monastery of Las Huelgas at Burgos has only the tombs of two kings and five queens.

Imperial tombs at Speyer

CONRAD II WAS THE FOUNDER OF the dynasty of Salian rulers of the Holy Roman Empire, and one of his first acts was to order the rebuilding of the cathedral at Speyer. Emperors were elected and although in practice dynastic succession was the norm, there was never a single imperial city. The only major group of imperial tombs are here, at the centre of Conrad's own rather modest territory as count of Speyer. Work began in 1030 and the scale of the project was highly ambitious, ranking alongside the cathedrals at Santiago de Compostela and Durham and the abbey church at Cluny. Conrad himself was buried there before the work was completed; by 1041 the imperial mausoleum in the crypt was consecrated, and his successor, Heinrich III, the first of the Salian emperors, was buried there.[41] Heinrich III found their simple gravestones 'far too small and narrow', and although he is said to have had them altered, he too was given a simple slab. The graves of all the Salian emperors, ending with Heinrich V, were reshaped as a monumental block, with the names of those buried there on six marble plaques. Subsequent graves were placed outside the block, and in 1291 the first effigy was placed, on the grave of Rudolf of Habsburg. A second set of burials ended with Albert of Austria in 1308. In 1689, the graves were destroyed by invading French troops and the grave goods plundered, and it was only between 1900 and 1906 that the bodies were exhumed again, sorted and separated, and the present layout established.

The cathedral itself, rather than the imperial tombs, is the monument to the aspirations of the early emperors. It was altered to its present form with an entirely vaulted roof and a semi-circular apse by Heinrich IV at the end of the eleventh century, and the architectural ornamentation was made more elaborate with arcading and galleries. The vault itself, with a span of fourteen metres, and a height of over thirty metres, was the largest of its kind in Europe. Classical-style sculptural details were added, which derive directly from Roman originals, particularly the Corinthian capitals and the acanthus foliage. At its zenith in 1310, when Elizabeth, daughter of the emperor Heinrich VII married Jean of Luxembourg, later king of Bohemia, here, it was a monumental visual representation of the emperors' power.

The abbey of Saint-Denis

SAINT-DENIS IS NOW A SUBURB of Paris, but it was once a proud independent abbey obedient only to the king lying outside its walls. Before the French Revolution the abbey contained the greatest surviving collection of royal tombs anywhere in Europe. It was built on the site where St Denis, the first bishop of Paris, was said to have been buried after his martyrdom in AD 250. It had been patronised by the Merovingian kings of France. When Charles Martel, Charlemagne's grandfather, decided to be buried there in 741, it was partly out of personal devotion to the cult of St Denis, and partly for political reasons. The Carolingian mayors of the palace were on the point of displacing the last of the Merovingian puppet kings whom they supposedly served, and burial there linked him to the last true Merovingian ruler, Dagobert. Charlemagne clearly expressed his wish to be buried there, although his new capital was at Aachen: his wishes were ignored, and his tomb is at Aachen. When the last Carolingians were replaced by a new dynasty, the first king, Eudes, was again buried at St Denis. With the accession of the Capetian kings in 987, the abbey regained its status. After Hugh, the first of the dynasty, was interred there in 996, only three French kings were not buried there until the Revolution, a span of eight hundred years.[42]

Abbot Suger

Suger, who was abbot of Saint-Denis from 1122 until 1151, found that the anniversary services for the kings buried there were seriously neglected, and ensured that these were revived. He embarked on a complete rebuilding of the abbey church in the latest style. It was a precursor of the new Gothic fashion for light and spacious buildings rather than the

14. (above) The rich ceiling paintings of the Panteon de los Reyes at the Basilica of San Isidoro, León. The tombs of the kings of León were assembled here by queen Urraca in the early twelfth century, and the decoration dates from the same period.

15. Tomb of the Holy Roman Emperor Friedrich II in the cathedral at Palermo. Porphyry was associated with the Roman and Byzantine emperors. By the time this monument was built, it was no longer available from any source, and was obtained by reusing the small stock of available Roman materials.

earlier monumental and dimly lit Romanesque interior. It might have been expected that he would emphasise the abbey's royal connections by also rearranging the royal tombs and replacing plain slabs with the kind of sepulchres which were just becoming the custom for such burials. However, when Louis VI wished to be buried in a place where earlier tombs would have to be moved, Suger responded that it was 'neither proper nor customary to exhume the bodies of kings'.[43]

St Louis reburies the kings

Nonetheless, Saint-Denis was so intimately connected with the kings that a thirteenth-century monk forged a charter showing that Charlemagne had given the kingdom of France to the abbey as a fief, and that the king himself was its vassal. Naturally, it was not accepted, even by St Louis, who might have been expected to be sympathetic to such a claim. St Louis's attitude to reburials was the opposite of Suger's a century earlier and he was determined to establish the abbey visibly as the royal burial place. The monks made a search for all such burials that had already taken place in the church, presumably with his encouragement. The earliest was that of Clovis II, dating from 664, and fourteen were discovered in all. The tombs were adorned with rather routine standard effigies in thirteenth-century clothing. Their layout was designed to emphasise the continuity of the succession to the French throne. Hugh Capet had been elected to the throne in 987 in somewhat doubtful circumstances, and had succeeded in getting his son Robert crowned in his lifetime to ensure that the kingship would remain in the family for the next generation.[44] This manoeuvre unexpectedly established a dynasty which was to last for three and a half centuries, the envy of all other European monarchs of the period.

Les Grandes Chroniques

When St Louis died in 1270, he was buried at Saint-Denis. However, on his canonisation in 1298, his grandson Philip IV wanted to transfer his remains to the Sainte-Chapelle. This was resisted by the monks of Saint-Denis, who by now regarded themselves as guardians of the royal traditions. Around the time of the reburial of the kings at their monastery, the monks had also become the official recorders of French history for the royal court. *Les Grandes Chroniques* was compiled from earlier histories kept by monks of Saint-Denis, and originally ended in 1223. It was soon extended up to the death of St Louis in 1270, and continued to be revised until the end of the fourteenth century, bridging the painful transition from the Capetian dynasty, after the death of all Philip IV's sons without male heirs, to the new Valois kings in 1328. The final version of the chronicle ended with the death of Charles V in 1380.

Westminster Abbey as royal mausoleum

IN ENGLAND, A SIMILAR PROCESS OF proclaiming dynastic magnificence through the establishment of a splendid royal burial place took place at Westminster Abbey, where Henry III rebuilt the church and made its focal point the cult of Edward the Confessor, canonised in 1161, to whom the king was particularly devoted. In 1246, he decided to be buried next to the resplendent shrine he had built for the saint, rather than in the Temple Church, 'on account of reverence for the most glorious king Edward'. There was no fixed burial place for the English kings: since the Conquest, their graves had been as far afield as Fontévrault in Anjou, Gloucester, Caen and Worcester, despite Henry I's plans for Reading Abbey as a possible royal necropolis. As at Saint-Denis, there was a desire for continuity. Henry III was imitating Edward the Confessor himself, whose refounding and rebuilding at Westminster had begun some time after 1040. By doing so he was linking himself with the Anglo-Saxon rulers of England, as their legitimate successor, and indeed as their descendant, through Henry I's wife, granddaughter of the Anglo-Saxon prince Edward the Aetheling.

Westminster was intended by Henry III to be the royal mausoleum, and he himself

was buried there. All the Plantagenet kings except Edward II followed him. It was only in the fifteenth century that Windsor became an alternative, and the Tudors returned to Westminster in the sixteenth century. Ironically, Richard II was an ardent patron of the cult of Edward the Confessor. At the critical moment of the rebellion of 1381, he went with his supporters, the nobles and the citizens of London 'to supplicate at the shrine of the sainted king for divine aid where human counsel was altogether wanting'.[45] He commissioned the double tomb for himself and his first wife, Anne of Bohemia, soon after her death in 1394, modelling the effigies on that of his grandfather Edward III which had been installed at the beginning of his reign. The tombs of Henry III's successors filled the spaces between the pillars surrounding the high altar, and the burial of Henry VI at Windsor may in part have been due to the fact that there was no appropriate place for him. Henry VII solved the problem by building the superlative chapel which bears his name, and which enabled Westminster to continue as a royal mausoleum until the Civil War in the seventeenth century.

THE NORMAN KINGS OF SICILY and their five tombs of imperial porphyry present a different case. The royal burial place was never properly established, although Friedrich II deliberately reassembled the tombs of his ancestors, and Palermo Cathedral would have filled that role if the dynasty had not failed after Friedrich's death in 1250.

Over a century earlier, in imitation of the Greek emperors, Roger II acquired two sarcophagi made of porphyry, a rare stone, which, like lapis lazuli, is only found in one remote place, in this case in the eastern Egyptian desert. Working at the quarry seems to have ended in the early fourth century, and all the porphyry used since then has been recycled from classical buildings. There are stones similar to the imperial porphyry, but these are prone to weathering and lack its dense grain. In Byzantium, porphyry was a symbol of empire, used in special places in the imperial palaces. The Frankish emperor Charles the Bald had been buried at Saint-Denis in an antique porphyry sarcophagus.

Imperial porphyry

Roger sent these two impressive sarcophagi to Cefalù, at that point the royal burial place, but in the end he himself was buried at Palermo Cathedral, in a tomb made of thin slabs of porphyry, probably because nothing better could be obtained. William II tried to establish his new cathedral at Monreale as the royal burial place, and planned unsuccessfully to have Roger's tomb moved there. He did, however, move the body of his father, William I, from the Cappella Palatina to Monreale, and a new porphyry tomb was made from such blocks of antique porphyry as could be found, to create something resembling the two original sarcophagi. Similarly the last of the tombs to be made, that of Friedrich's mother the empress Constance, had to be cobbled together from fourteen separate pieces of porphyry, indicating how difficult it was becoming to find the precious material.

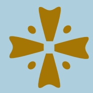
When Friedrich II became king of Sicily, he transferred the sarcophagi from Cefalù to Palermo as the tombs of his father, Heinrich VI, and himself. Above each tomb he placed a canopy supported on porphyry pillars, creating four miniature temples. These canopies were a novelty, derived from surviving Christian tombs in Rome; they were generally used above altars rather than graves. Here they emphasise the status of the royal burials, as another sacred place within the church. The effect is massive, simple and deeply moving: there are no images, no sweeping triumphal ornaments, and only the briefest of inscriptions, yet they convey all Friedrich's imperial and dynastic ambition. That ambition was never to be fulfilled, as his son Conrad died four years after his father, having lost Sicily to a papal army. It was the pope, as overlord of Sicily, who invited the French prince, Charles of Anjou, to be the new ruler of the island.

15, p.45

Miniature showing Henri de Gauchi presenting his French translation of *De regimine principum* to Philip IV of France. The text is one of a group of nine moral and philosophical treatises copied for the library of Charles V in 1372. It was lost from the royal library at some time between 1413 and 1424, but evidently remained in France.

PART TWO

MAGNIFICENCE



4 DEFINING MAGNIFICENCE

◆ *Popes, emperors and kings* ◆ *Philip IV and the Church* ◆ *Aristotle and the* Nicomachean Ethics ◆ On the Government of Princes

Popes, Emperors and Kings

THE TWO GREAT POWERS OF EARLY medieval Europe, the Church and the Holy Roman Empire, both claimed that national kings were under their authority. In the pope's view, he was also the emperor's overlord, and there had been bitter quarrels over the papal attempts to enforce the Church's authority. The pope's power of excommunicating his enemies was a hugely powerful weapon, as it excluded them from all contact with Christian society. The emperor's view was that he and the pope represented the secular and spiritual realms, and were effectively equal in status. The pope had created the kingdom of Sicily for Roger II in 1130, and was his overlord. Pope Innocent III used the most formidable of all papal weapons in 1208. During a quarrel with King John he issued an interdict forbidding all church services in England: John himself was excommunicated the following year. This forced King John to submit and become the pope's vassal. But papal use of these powers did not always work: Friedrich II defied the pope and recovered Jerusalem for Christianity while excommunicated.

Church and Empire

The power of church and empire began to be challenged in the early thirteenth century, at a time when the title to the Holy Roman Empire was disputed by rival claimants. Lawyers were faced with the reality that the emperor no longer had any authority over kingdoms such as France. At first they invented a new category of kingdom, which was exempt from the emperor's overlordship in real terms though theoretically subject to the empire. There was never any question of the emperor having spiritual authority over kings: 'in temporal matters all peoples and all kinds are subject to the emperor, just as they are in spiritual matters to the pope'.[1]

French claims to independence

THE FRENCH KINGS HAD BEEN THE FIRST to explore the idea that there was justification in canon law and theology for the idea of 'kings not recognising a superior'.[2] In 1254, St Louis declared that Roman law was to be applied in France as he did not want to change the existing customary use of it. However, he made it clear that this edict excluded the idea in Roman law that kings were subject to the emperor, as France was an exception to this rule. A little later, a French writer who discussed the issue claimed that the kings of France 'for more than a hundred years had recognised no superior save God'.[3] No emperor ever directly challenged the French claim to independence. However, when in 1312 the emperor Heinrich VII tried to claim that the kingdom of Naples was subject to him, its ruler, Robert of Anjou, the great-nephew of St Louis, was able to defy the condemnation for treason which resulted from his resistance to the emperor's claim. This was all part of a series of disasters for the claims of both pope and emperor to have jurisdiction over the kingdoms of western Christendom.

The political tide therefore favoured the kings towards the end of the thirteenth century. Their economic position was also increasingly strong, with a sharp rise in purchasing power in the previous hundred years.[4] In addition, the transition to a cash economy which had

underpinned the creation of capital cities had also enabled kings to raise taxes in money. Now the bankers of the Italian towns would lend against this revenue. Sovereign debt, as we would now call it, was a risky business, but it was the bankers, not the king, who shouldered this risk. The English kings alone were responsible for the collapse of at least two Florentine banks. But the confidence of kings in their new-found wealth and status coincided with the possibility of claiming independence from higher authority.

Philip IV and the Church

PHILIP IV, GRANDSON OF ST LOUIS, came to the French throne in 1285. His reign was marked by an aggressive policy towards his vassals, and he attacked both the count of Flanders and Edward I as duke of Aquitaine in order to strengthen his hold over their territories. In the course of a quarrel which originated in an argument about the status of clergy and the question of whether the pope had jurisdiction over monarchs, Philip convened a council at Paris in 1297 to condemn the pope, Boniface VIII. This was at the instigation of two cardinals from the powerful Roman family of the Colonnas. The Colonnas had been antagonised by the pope's attempts to promote his own family, the Caetani, who were less powerful than the Colonna clan, at the expense of the latter. The dispute between Philip and Boniface led to a French invasion of Rome during which Boniface was severely beaten when the French tried to arrest him. He died a month later. The outcome was that, far from the pope gaining authority over kings, the papacy left Rome and moved to Avignon, where the French kings were able to exert influence over it.

Philip IV and the papacy

The idea of magnificence as a particular virtue of kings has its origin in the French court, in exactly this context of identifying the ruler as set apart from ordinary mortals. When Philip III wanted a set of secular guidelines for the education of his son, he turned to the University of Paris. Giles of Rome,* who wrote *On the Government of Princes* for the future Philip of France at some time between 1281 and 1285, belonged to the Augustinian order. He had been a teacher in Paris since 1260. He had a great reputation, was immensely well read, and indeed was hailed as 'the founder of learning'.[5]

Philip III commissions Giles of Rome

Giles's treatise was written at a time of intellectual and political turbulence in the church. Much of the intellectual ferment arose from the rediscovery of the works of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, and particularly from the recently completed translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Greek culture lies at the heart of European civilisation, particularly secular thought and secular institutions. Many ideas that we simply take for granted can be traced back to the great Athenian thinkers, and of these Aristotle was – and is – the most influential. His ideas derive from the work of the extraordinary generations of philosophers who taught in Athens during the fourth century BC. His master Plato was a visionary who dealt with the wide philosophical concepts which he had in turn learnt from Socrates. Plato looked upwards, to the ultimate questions of the mind or soul and its place in the eternal order of things. Aristotle, by contrast, wrote for the rulers of Athens about the practical virtues which they need in order to govern well, and presented them with a 'philosophy of human affairs'.

The rediscovery of Aristotle

Greece had been incorporated into the Roman empire after the battle of Corinth in 146 BC, and the Romans adopted the values of the Athenian philosophers into their culture.

* He is also known as Aegidio Colonna; the connection with the Colonna family in Rome is doubtful. See Appendix.

Latin authors found the pragmatic approach of Aristotle more congenial than Plato's more spiritual ideas, and, given the absence of any real code of conduct other than that of their laws, seized on Aristotle as a guide to ethics and read what we would call his scientific works with enthusiasm. Where Plato was interested in speculation, Aristotle loved observation, and wrote the first scientific accounts of the natural world. He was concerned with the perception of tangible objects, and even his discussion of abstract ideas continually invokes images from the real world. The surviving texts by Aristotle can be divided into those about the presentation of ideas (logic and rhetoric), about concepts (metaphysics and ethics), about practical affairs (politics and economics) and about what we would now call science (broadly speaking, physics and zoology, biology and psychology).

Aristotle and the *Nicomachean Ethics*

IT IS IN ONE OF ARISTOTLE'S WORKS entitled *Nicomachean Ethics* that we encounter his views on magnificence. Here it is one of the four cardinal virtues, concerned with the getting and giving of large sums of money. This is how he defines it:

Magnificence defined

> [Magnificence] ... seems to be a certain virtue pertaining to money ... a fitting expenditure on a great thing. ... The magnificent person ... is able to contemplate what is fitting and to spend great amounts in a suitable way ...
>
> Of expenditures, we say that some kinds are honorable, such as those that concern the gods – votive offerings, sacred buildings, and sacrifices – and similarly those that concern the entire divine realm and are proper objects of ambition in common affairs: for example, if people should suppose that they ought to endow a chorus splendidly or outfit a trireme or even provide a feast for the city. But in *all* cases ... the expenditure must be fitting ... not only to the work but also to the person producing it. Hence a poor man could not be magnificent.[6]

We have to remember that Aristotle was writing for the Athenians, and was outlining the virtues which the rulers of Athens should possess. The city was governed by an elected body of five hundred men, who served in rotation on the council which met daily, and Aristotle sees magnificence as an ideal which the leaders of this council – if they could afford it – should pursue.

Cicero on magnificence

When the Romans came to study Aristotle, rather different conditions applied from those in Aristotle's native Athens. Politics at Rome in the time of the Roman republic, which lasted from around 509 BC to 27 BC, focussed much more on personalities. The Roman orator and statesman Cicero, in his essay *On invention*, begins by echoing Aristotle, and defining magnificence as an element in the virtue of fortitude. However, he describes fortitude in much more general terms, while at the same time making magnificence a question of an individual's character:

> [Fortitude is] ... a deliberate encountering of danger and enduring of labour. Its parts are magnificence, confidence, patience, and perseverance. Magnificence is the consideration and management of important and sublime matters with a certain wide seeing and splendid determination of mind.[7]

Magnificence has become an active virtue, the undertaking of great enterprises of any kind, whereas Aristotle seems to have had in mind the specific activity of public works for the good of citizens. And the meaning of the word shifted further in Roman times.

'Magnificentia' was used as a formal mode of address in the *Codex Theodosianus*, the great compilation of the laws of the Christian emperors from 312 to 439, which was in force in the Byzantine territories in Italy. For example, an edict dated AD 389 from the three ruling emperors addresses the count of the privy purse as 'Your Magnificence',[8] and this usage for officials and others lasts into the twelfth century. In western Europe, the pope addressed kings in this way.

THE LONG SHADOW OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE lies over western Christendom in the millennium after its fall. Roman rule was a remembered time of stability and prosperity, embodying Virgil's concept of the golden age; a possible model for ambitious rulers; a ruined legacy of monumental buildings which the Anglo-Saxons saw as the work of giants; and, more immediately, the root of medieval learning in the shape of the continuing use of Latin. The heritage of Latin literature was not just the famous classics translated and retold today. Alongside Virgil, Ovid and Horace, there was a vast array of books on all kinds of topics, some of which survived and were far better known than the Roman literature which we revere today. Because medieval teaching in cathedrals and in monasteries was so firmly based in the classical tradition, texts in Latin were preserved as exemplars irrespective of their content. Ancient manuscripts were kept because they were rare, even if their contents were beyond the ability of the teachers or pupils to read them. As a result, at the end of the first millennium, secular texts in Latin survived in monasteries, as specimens of the language, or as models for the different scripts in which they were written. Greek manuscripts survived in much smaller quantities, because only a very small number of scholars could read them. The shelves of a large monastic library might contain works which their guardians would have found immoral, heretical and downright dangerous if they had known what was in them.

The survival of Latin and Greek learning

By the twelfth century, there were a number of cathedral schools throughout Europe which existed to train the clergy. At Paris, which was the foremost intellectual centre in Europe, there were three schools, one at the cathedral, and others at the church of Ste Geneviève and at the monastery of St Victor. At the same time, in Italy, there were municipal schools run by laymen entirely outside the framework of church discipline: these were for the study of Roman law, also an inheritance of the classical past.

The cathedral schools

As these schools developed, adventurous scholars began to look at the obscurer books on their shelves, and, dangerously, began to think for themselves. I learnt about this intriguing time from one of the most charismatic teachers I have ever had the good fortune to encounter, David Knowles. He was theoretically a member of the Benedictine enclosed order at Downside, but had by then become professor of medieval history at Cambridge. A slight, quizzical figure, he lectured in his Benedictine habit, and it seemed as he talked that we inhabited for a while another world.

What he conveyed vividly was the sheer excitement of the eleventh and twelfth century, when the classical writings were being rediscovered, and new ideas – so often anathema to the medieval church authorities – were being proposed in the most daring fashion. He explained how the schools gradually focussed on grammar and rhetoric alone, and by the tenth century created an entirely secular syllabus based on literature, ostensibly so that the language of the church should be as eloquent as possible.

The new learning

What changed in the revival of learning in the eleventh century was that scholars regained their confidence in the capacity of the human mind, and began to explore again the powers of logic. For instance, at the beginning of the twelfth century, St Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, proposed a definition of God which depended on entirely logical reasoning,

rather than invoking belief. For traditional churchmen, this was a bombshell. Reason was a creature of God, and could not be used to define its maker. Anselm's argument still resonates today in the debate between science and religion.

The numerous works of Aristotle were largely unknown, and only his books on logic were available in Latin. Scholars now began to explore what else he had written, because the Greek texts had survived, unread for centuries. It was not until the mid thirteenth century, once all Aristotle's scientific works had been translated, that Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln, tackled Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. This offered a secular system of ethics, and was almost a direct challenge to the church's monopoly of moral judgements. St Thomas Aquinas reconciled Christian and Aristotelian logic and ethics in his masterpiece, the *Summa Theologica*, of which David Knowles wrote that its 'design, the symmetry, the sublimity and the beauty flow from the genius of Aquinas; the basis upon which the soaring structure rests is in the main the work of Aristotle'.[9] Aquinas had worked in the faculty of arts at the University of Paris, which came under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier. Tempier was conservative in his views, and in 1270 issued the first of a series of condemnations of doctrines which derived from Aquinas's teachings. The most sweeping of these was in 1277, when 219 propositions were listed as unacceptable and condemned as heretical.

Translating Aristotle

Among these propositions were many put forward by Giles of Rome, who had been a pupil of Aquinas. He was forced to leave the university when his works were banned, and we do not know where he went; the next known record of him is in Italy in 1281. In 1285, the condemnations were reviewed and quashed, and he returned to teaching. What we do know, however, is that at some time during this exile, Giles wrote *On the Government of Princes*.

On the Government of Princes

GILES'S WORK IS ONE OF THE SO-CALLED 'mirrors for princes', a genre extraordinarily neglected – because somewhat dull! – by all but a handful of specialists. Yet it was a prodigious success: it survives in no less than 326 surviving manuscripts.[10] This success was at least due in part because it offered rulers a secular code of conduct, not always in line with the Church's teachings. More importantly, Giles portrayed the princes as they may have wished to be seen. There is no modern edition of the original; the sheer number of copies has proved an obstacle to producing a definitive text, and only preliminary studies of the manuscripts have appeared. Anyone wishing to tackle this erstwhile bestseller has to use one of the printed editions of the sixteenth century, the first of which appeared at Augsburg in 1473.

Mirrors for princes

Giles of Rome advises Philip that 'magnificence is principally concerned with works for God and for the common good – and therefore with worthy persons and with oneself'. He is not an easy writer to read, as I discovered when wrestling with the passage below. I was reassured to find that I was by no means the first to find Giles difficult. In March 1403, Jacobinus, an Italian scribe working at Chioggia, ended his copy of Giles of Rome as follows:

> Here ends Brother Giles's book On the Rule of Princes, clearer and briefer than its exemplar, but in no way mutilated. Herein are all the chapters and all the arguments, with not a little of the chaff removed.

16. Giles of Rome presents *On the Government of Princes* to Philip IV, from a French translation of his book, possibly copied in England around 1310.

17. This illustration of a feast is headed 'Magnificentia', and is from a fourteenth century version of Aristotle. It shows how royal display of all kinds was now classed as magnificence.

I have done my best to abbreviate his wonderfully prolix and leisurely repetitions, but have reluctantly put the full text into an appendix.[11] Here are Giles's most important arguments:

> Since therefore the king is head of the kingdom and a person of honour, revered and a public figure, and it is his task to distribute the goods of the kingdom, it is absolutely fitting for the king himself to be a magnificent man.
>
> For because the king is head of the kingdom, and in this treads in the footsteps of God who is head and chief of the universe, it is absolutely necessary for the king to show himself to be a person of magnificence in respect of holy temples and in preparations of the things of God.
>
> Because the king is a public person under whom the whole community and the whole kingdom is ordered, it is crucial for him to show magnificence in works for the common good which affect the whole kingdom. Further, because he has the chief responsibility for distributing the kingdoms' goods, it is completely fitting for him to show magnificence towards worthy persons, to whom good things worthily belong. Moreover (as we said above), the king's person should be revered and worthy of honour, and it is the king's task to show magnificence towards his own person and towards the persons close to him such as his wife and sons, finding them honourable dwellings, making good marriages for them, and training them for the top army posts.
>
> ... it is right for kings themselves to have all the qualities of the magnificent man but more fully and more perfectly. And so the Philosopher in Ethics book 4 wants to say that not everybody is able to be magnificent, because not everybody is capable of great expenditure. But, as is said in the same place, such people have to be noble and famous. Therefore the nobler a man is than others, the more it behoves him to exhibit magnificent things and to have the qualities of the magnificent man.[12]

The king and magnificence

The immense popularity of *On the Government of Princes* meant that this praise of magnificence must have reached a very wide potential audience. Even if kings themselves did not read it, their advisers very probably did. There are translations into Latin, French and English. Robert, the Angevin king of Naples, had a copy made in 1310;[13] Richard II's tutor and close adviser Simon Burley owned a French copy, and seven copies can be traced in Oxford alone in the late fourteenth century.[14] Charles V and the dukes of France all probably had their copies, though there were many imitations, and a book noted in a medieval library catalogue as 'On the government of princes' is not necessarily by Giles of Rome. Its influence was everywhere. In the 1470s, the manual for the household of Edward IV, known as The Black Book, opens with a grand preamble on the history of the royal establishment, and includes a section on 'the magnificence of the king's house' which is taken from Giles of Rome.[15]

The popularity of On the Government of Princes

Giles writes in a stiff and rather repetitive style. He eschews the citations from classical authors and the anecdotes illustrating the argument which other writers use. This approach seems to derive from Aristotle himself. He is following the principles laid down in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, on which he had written a commentary at about the same time. Rhetoric, in his view, was the best way of actually influencing the person who was being addressed, and achieving a practical result. 'His was a work which would confine itself to the general and the typical in an attempt to persuade both ruler and populace of the benefits of leading a life of virtue.'[16]

The crucial difference between Aristotle's definition of magnificence as a virtue and Giles of Rome's text is that the objective of magnificence is transferred from the *impersonal*, performing magnificent deeds, to the *personal*, being magnificent. Aristotle sees magnificence

as the action of a virtuous man, the correct spending of wealth in honour of the gods and for the benefit of the public. Instead, Giles focusses immediately on the *person* of the ruler himself, his appearance and his entourage. In his view, this is where magnificence should start, whereas Aristotle offers no encouragement for personal splendour. The magnificent man, for the Greek philosopher, is known by his actions. For Giles, he is known firstly for his person, and secondly for his actions.

17, p.55

By a curious reversal, Giles's ideas influenced the reading of Aristotle's *Ethics* by the early fourteenth century. Another work that uses Aristotle as its basis, delightfully entitled *The Art of Love, Virtue and Good Living*, is in many places a close version of his original text. It is heavily illustrated, and at least two copies of it hold a real surprise. The chapter on magnificence is headed by a miniature portraying a feast, immediately below the rubric 'This chapter is on magnificence'.[17]

How to be magnificent

'IT IS ABSOLUTELY FITTING FOR THE KING himself to be a magnificent man', according to Giles. We use the word magnificence freely, but to Giles's readers this would have been something strange and new. Magnificence to us means splendour and wealth which everyone admires. We have seen – of course – that princes and kings were splendid and wealthy before Giles's day. The difference is this: Giles defines magnificence as a virtue, while splendour and wealth are open to accusations of extravagance and pride. What might be seen as a negative and selfish display becomes a prerequisite of kingly behaviour.

Rulers – princes as well as kings – nonetheless needed reassurance that they ruled legitimately. Election by acclamation had been one of the original ways by which kings were chosen. Now there was no such interaction between the king and his people, and the king needed to show that he and his dynasty were the rightful lords. When Giles wrote his book *On the Government of Princes*, he was telling the future Philip IV what he wanted to hear: that kings were a race apart, and that this new idea of magnificence was a natural virtue of kingship, which kings should demonstrate.

For example, Giles recommended that in order to be magnificent, the king must dress in the finest garments. This was by no means a novelty: in the twelfth century Henry II had been criticised for preferring the practical clothing of a man of action to royal robes. Henry was one of those rare kings able to project a royal image without adopting the style expected of the ruler of a kingdom. Lesser men needed reassurance, a means of showing that they were the legitimate king, the true representative of the royal dynasty, should it be called in question. Giles provides the theoretical justification for royal splendour, at the same time rechristening it as the virtue of magnificence.

It is a staging point in the gradual changes of approach which mean that by the end of the fifteenth century a great occasion or a great building sends a different kind of message to a different kind of audience. That audience will understand magnificence as a vital part of what is presented to them.

5 THE IMAGE AND PERSON OF THE PRINCE

◆ *The prince in person: appearances* ◆ *Coins and seals* ◆ *The prince's dress* ◆ *Materials* ◆ *Opulence: embroidery,* opus anglicanum ◆ *Fashion* ◆ *The prince's crowns* ◆ *The prince's jewels* ◆ *Gems and jewels* ◆ *The prince's armour* ◆ *The prince's portraits*

The Prince in Person: Appearances

'WHAT DOES YOUR PRINCE LOOK LIKE?' That is a question that few people before the sixteenth century would have been able to answer. Magnificence is essentially a visual concept, centring on the image of the prince himself, and that image was only familiar to a handful of people, the close associates of the prince, who had seen him in person. For most of the population, their ruler would have been a remote figure, irrelevant to their daily lives: even the world of castle and court was a mystery to them. If their prince had suddenly appeared to them in full state, their reaction might well have been that of Perceval in Chrétien de Troyes's French romance of that name, written in around 1180. Perceval, brought up in remote surroundings, reacts to his first encounter with a fully armed and mounted knight by falling to his knees, and saying to the knight 'Are you God?'. The world of castle and court scarcely existed for most people.

Coins and seals

THE PORTRAIT OF THE PRINCE MOST VISIBLE to his subjects was of course that on his coinage. Until the fourteenth century the silver penny or its equivalent was almost the only coin in general circulation, and the crude crowned head roughly engraved in a die and struck into silver with a hammer was hardly a likeness. Gold coins, which would only be seen by the wealthiest and most influential of the king's subjects, were a different matter. In 1231, Friedrich II issued a gold coin in Sicily, showing him as a Roman emperor, with a stylish profile head probably taken from the antique. His successor as king of Sicily two decades later, Charles of Anjou, has a recognisable portrait, again in profile, on a much cruder coin minted on his accession in 1266. In France, England and Flanders there was fierce competition to issue the largest and most valuable coin. Philip IV's coinage of 1296 began the series, and established the model for subsequent coinages until the end of the fourteenth century. On the largest coin the king is shown enthroned with regalia and royal robes against an architectural background, with the French lilies on a shield or as an overall pattern. This pattern was repeated by Philip VI and Charles V of France, and when Edward III introduced the first English gold coinage in 1344, he too used an image of himself enthroned, inscribing it 'Edward king of England and France' in accordance with his claim to the French title. But his florin was noticeably larger than the French example, weighing half as much again. Partly because of this, and a miscalculation of the ratio between the new English gold coins and the existing silver coins, the issue was not a success. However,

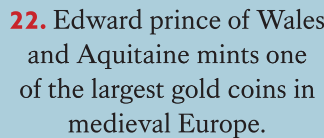
The war of the coins

18. The emperor as successor to imperial Rome: gold augustalis of Friedrich II.

19. Edward III commemorates his victory over the French fleet at Sluys in 1340.

20. Jean II portrays himself as a knight on horseback.

21. Edward prince of Wales and Aquitaine marks his victory at Poitiers, where he fought on foot.



22. Edward prince of Wales and Aquitaine mints one of the largest gold coins in medieval Europe.

23. Charles VII as duke of Aquitaine portrays himself as Samson, slaying the English lion.

its replacement, a gold 'noble', was larger still, and bore a defiant portrait of the king armed and on board ship, a stark reminder of the English domination of the seas since Edward's destruction of the French fleet at Sluys in 1340.

The war of the coins continued in the duchy of Aquitaine, where Edward issued an almost exact imitation of the French 'enthroned' coins, also in 1344. These were replaced with a warlike image of the king, marching in full armour, in 1361, a riposte to Jean II's gold 'franc' showing him armed and on horseback issued the previous year: the English had won the battle of Poitiers by fighting dismounted. However, when Edward conferred the duchy of Aquitaine on his son, the Black Prince, in 1362 the prince reverted to the 'enthroned' image, on coins heavier than those of the French kings. Charles, dauphin of France, produced a new propaganda image when he became duke of Aquitaine after the English had been defeated, in the shape of a gold coin issued in 1469, on which he was shown as Samson fighting a lion and forcing its jaws apart.[1]

These pieces were largely 'money of account', handled only by great merchants, bankers and of course the royal exchequers. Of all the pieces, the noble of Edward III probably had the widest circulation because of the extensive English trading connections with Scotland, Flanders and the Hanse towns in Germany and the Baltic.[2] The gold noble in England was minted in large quantities from 1351 onwards; the triumphant image of the king on shipboard would have struck a chord with merchants and the nobility who followed eagerly the newsletters which reported the English victories at Crécy – possibly the most widely reported battle in the medieval period – and Poitiers.

PRINCELY SEALS WERE ONLY SEEN BY a very limited audience, far smaller than even the relatively select group who handled gold coins. Seals had been used to authenticate documents since Roman times, and the idea of closing a letter with a piece of wax impressed with the writer's fingerprint can be traced back to China in the fourth century BC. The Romans used seals with a personal emblem, but medieval seals use heraldry as a means of identification. Small seals were used to close letters, but major legal enactments and charters were public documents – 'letters patent' is the technical term – and the document would be sealed at the foot, with the seal on a ribbon attached to the parchment. They might be displayed in certain circumstances, such as civic ceremonies, but they were largely kept carefully in private or civic archives, and only produced if required by a lawsuit. Nonetheless, they had to be of suitable appearance to match the status of the person using them.

Types of seal

Lead seals were more durable than wax, which had to be protected by a wooden case or by a silk or cloth bag, sometimes embroidered. Lead seals first appear in Charlemagne's time, in the ninth century, and by the late eleventh century the German emperors were using gold seals. The golden seal of Karl IV was affixed to a decree in 1356 which set out the regulations for imperial elections, which remained in force with minor amendments until the end of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. These spectacular objects were exclusive to the emperors; even the popes used lead seals on their documents. Red wax was the most common medium, as in the impressive seal of Rudolf IV of Habsburg, which is simply a very large and beautifully executed example of a knightly seal, showing him on horseback, fully armed, with a display of heraldic shields around the border. Green wax was used by French kings as a symbol of acts which were to be permanently valid. In England both red and green wax were used; red came to be reserved for the king's personal seals in the fourteenth century. Within the small circle of high ranking officials and nobles who were concerned with such matters, the prince's seal was a special aspect of his image. Rulers

often had more than one seal during their reign, reflecting changing circumstances and ambitions. The most dramatic of these changes is the alteration in Edward III's seals (and, in this case, coinage) when he claimed the throne of France in 1338, and added 'king of France' to his titles.

In the mid fourteenth century, the most important documents which were sent out under the great seal sometimes included elaborate initials in which there were miniature portraits of the ruler. One of the finest likenesses of Charles V is a pen drawing on a charter of 1366 relating to a grant to his uncle, the duke of Orléans, a small but striking sketch evidently from the life.[3] Similarly, the best contemporary depiction of Edward III and his son prince Edward is on the massive parchment which records the king's grant of the duchy of Aquitaine to Prince Edward in 1361.

Portrait initials

Portraits, coins and seals were the official representations of the prince, seen by many people who would never encounter him in person. His appearance and manner, however, would be remarked on and recorded by the chroniclers who came in contact with the court, either directly or through courtiers who attended it. Even in an age of limited communications, this was probably the most vital element in the establishment of his reputation.

The Prince's Dress

IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY ALFONSO X of Castile, called 'the Wise', declared in his great law code known as the *Siete Partidas*, which is a kind of encyclopaedia of medieval life in Spain, that 'a king should dress with great elegance'. The reasons he gave were these:

> Dress has much to do with causing men to be recognized either as noble, or servile. The ancient sages established the rule that kings should wear garments of silk, adorned with gold and jewels, in order that men might know them as soon as they saw them, without inquiring for them; and the bridles and saddles with which they ride, should be ornamented with gold, silver and precious stones. Moreover, on grand holidays, when they assemble their court, they should wear crowns of gold, richly ornamented with gold, silver and precious stones.[4]

This was to be done 'in order to indicate the splendour of Our Lord God, whose position they occupy on earth'. The king's attire, as described by Alfonso X, has nothing to do with fashion. It is simply a richer, more elaborate version of the dress of the period, using the public display of treasure to underline the king's prestige. Alfonso and his successors ensured that this display remained unique to the king and his family by a series of regulations forbidding the wearing of such materials in public by anyone else. In 1348, Alfonso XI collected and confirmed these laws in a single ordinance.[5]

Early medieval costume was essentially simple, with relatively little distinction between rich and poor other than in the quality of the materials used. In 808 Charlemagne, in one of the many ordinances issued for his imperial estates, specified the material from which the peasants' clothing should be made, and a gradual difference according to rank begins to appear. Nobles wore a short cloak pinned at the neck over a tunic ending above the knee, and linen hose. This was the costume preferred by Charlemagne. It was modified in the tenth and eleventh century, when both the cloak and tunic became longer, with an undergarment of linen. Short tunics were still worn, with the addition of leggings. These garments were

Early medieval costume

24. The Coronation Mantle, made for Roger II. The two lions are attacking camels, symbolic of the Norman conquest of Arab Sicily. At the top the enamel stars of the clasp are Byzantine in style, with cosmogram patterns symbolising the relationship of heaven and earth from near Eastern art. It is a reminder that Sicily still had a large Arab population: the cloak was made and signed by Arab embroiderers in the service of the king.

25. (top) Star mantle of Heinrich II given to Bamberg cathedral soon after 1020. Based on a contemporary poem on the constellations, it has inscriptions praising the emperor.

26. (bottom right) The 'Eagle Dalmatic' c.1330–1340. Probably made for the emperor Ludwig IV, it is covered with imperial eagle badges, and medallions with kings and emperors on the hem. It seems to be a secular garment rather than an ecclesiastical one.

27. (bottom left) Henry II and Matilda from the *Gospels of Henry the Lion*, written for St Blaise's Abbey, Brunswick, around 1188. Henry is shown in the style fashionable in Germany, standing behind Matilda who is being crowned. Henry is unlikely to have worn anything of this kind, but the artist imagines him as he thinks a king should be.

modest, since cloth was mostly locally produced, and there was little international trade in more luxurious materials at this time.

The exception to this simplicity was in the ecclesiastical world, where liturgical dress, colour-coded for festivals, emerged by the twelfth century, and grew increasingly elaborate. Vestments also reflected the rank of the wearer, and we learn from critics of the luxury of these items that silk robes were in use by the fifth century AD. Even after the schism between Byzantium and Rome, papal and episcopal vestments were probably the richest that were to be seen in the West. Most of the fragments of clothing that we possess dating from before 1300 come from religious sources, such as the vestments found in the tomb of St Cuthbert, placed there after the original burial in 698, but certainly no later than 1104, which are imports from Byzantium or the Muslim world.

The splendour of church vestments undoubtedly influenced princely dress; the religious aspects of lordship linked the prince to the church hierarchy. At their coronations and on state occasions rulers wore garments which were essentially ecclesiastical in style: in the fifteenth century, at the coronation of Henry VI of England, the king was robed as a bishop during the ceremony. In 1149 the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire were granted by the pope the privilege of actually wearing full liturgical vestments, as used by priests in holy orders, on the occasion of their crowning:[6] one of these vestments was the *pluviale*, the mantle worn over the shoulders. Several of these royal and imperial mantles survive in treasuries, some in a remarkable state of preservation. The earliest date from the eleventh century and, like so many of the objects we shall discuss, come from the art of the Arab world.

The treasury at Bamberg contains three eleventh-century royal mantles, of which the most famous is that known as the star mantle of the emperor Heinrich II. This has been heavily restored, and the blue silk which makes it so striking is not original: the pieces of gold embroidery have been cut out and mounted onto it. It was given to the emperor by a certain 'Ishmahel', who was created duke of Apulia in 1020, and the presentation probably took place at that time. Heinrich then presented it to the cathedral, and an inscription to that effect was added; but it was originally designed as a secular and imperial garment. Laid flat, its impact is reduced. When it is draped on the wearer's body the effect is of a kind of vertical reflection of the heavens, appropriate to the status of the Holy Roman Emperor.[7]

The mantle of Roger II of Sicily, now in the imperial treasury at Vienna, is the most famous example of these ecclesiastical trappings of royalty, a cape of scarlet silk embroidered with the pair of facing lions which appears frequently in twelfth century Sicilian art. It is the most precious and spectacular of all surviving medieval costumes. He was crowned in 1130, and this is often described as his coronation mantle. It was actually made for a later occasion, since there is an Arabic inscription dated 1133–4 on the curved edge. This reads:

> This work was carried out in the flourishing royal workshop, with happiness and honour, zeal and perfection, power and efficiency, approval and good fortune, generosity and exaltation, glory and beauty, completing desires and hopes, propitious days and nights, without pausing or intervals, with honour and care, watchfulness and safeguard, prosperity and integrity, triumph and skill, in the capital of Sicily.[8]

Sewn within the inner lining of the mantle was a strip of linen, first discovered in 1980, with another Arabic inscription, which named those who had undertaken the work: Marzuq, Ali and Mahmud had embroidered it, under the supervision of Damyan, and Tumas, probably a tailor, had assembled it. The design is remarkable, and has a strong political message; it