Chapter 7

The Latin West: Pluralism in the shadow of the past

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Concepts, dates, landscapes

To set bounds to the regions comprising 'the west' is peculiarly difficult. The Sphere as a whole is characterised by an absence of hegemonic systems – political, institutional, or even doctrinal – with overriding force throughout the medieval period. It corresponded to no over-arching polity, like Byzantium, and neither did religion, for all its importance, infuse its political life in the manner of Islam. Because it was no single entity, this western Sphere lacks sharp chronological limits. It neither 'rose' in the manner of Islam nor 'fell' like the Byzantine empire.[1] Added to this, the group of territories which it makes sense to draw within it changed shape radically, and roughly doubled in over-all size, while many of the component elements attained a markedly different character, over the course of the middle ages. A degree of uncertainty, even of inner contradiction, is therefore integral to this chapter. Clear unities are not on offer, and to seek them is to chase shadows. There are indeed meaningful formations and contemporary terms and concepts, as well as useful later coinages, which can be applied to the Sphere as a whole, and which correspond to one another at least approximately. Nevertheless, they do not fully coincide, and their respective contents and foci are different. Taken together, they describe a reality that was itself plural. So a plurality of terms and concepts can justifiably be deployed here, and their overlaps and disjunctions highlighted rather than elided.

To begin with Europe.[2] On the tripartite world maps which were widely disseminated in the medieval west, Europe took its place with the other known continents, Africa and Asia, from which it was conventionally shown as divided by the Mediterranean and the rivers Nile and Don.[3] In these depictions, Europe was often ascribed a significance which went beyond

[1] For the medieval west in relation to Byzantium and Islam, see generally M. Borgolte, *Christen, Juden, Muselmanen: Die Erben der Antike und der Aufstieg des Abendlandes 300 bis 1400 n. Chr.* (Munich, 2006).
[2] The fullest account of the medieval idea of Europe is K. Oschema, *Bilder von Europa im Mittelalter* (Ostfildern, 2013). See also D. Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh, 1968); K. J. Leyser, 'Concepts of Europe in the early and high middle ages', *Past & Present* 137 (1992), 25–47; T. Reuter, 'Medieval ideas of Europe and their modern historians', *History Workshop* 33 (1992), 162–75; R. Balzaretti, 'The creation of Europe', *History Workshop* 33 (1992), 176–80; M. Rubin, 'The culture of Europe in the later middle ages', *History Workshop* 33 (1992), 181–96; P. den Boer, 'Europe to 1914: the making of an idea', in K. Wilson and J. van der Dussen (eds), *The History of the Idea of Europe* (London and New York, 1993), 13–38; (for the close of the middle ages) J. Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (London, 1993), 3–50.
[3] Den Boer, 'Europe to 1914', 22–9.

the merely geographic, as the habitation of the descendants of Noah's son Japheth (with his other two sons, Sem and the accursed Ham, located in Asia and Africa respectively).[4] The more detailed *mappae mundi* show Europe as densely packed with towns and, by contrast, largely devoid of the monstrous beings which were believed to crowd particularly into Africa beyond the Nile.[5] Medieval western scholars, following and adapting the geographers and ethnographers of antiquity, sometimes perceived in Europe a kind of golden mean: an ideal environment for human habitation.[6] It seemed to them far from the 'miserable backwater' of one recent polemic.[7]

Yet the 'Europe' of medieval imagination is both too large and too limited single-handedly to serve our ends. It in no way constituted a coherent zone of politics. Only fleetingly, and with much myopia and wishful thinking, did it sometimes seem possible to discern pan-European political formations: the empire of Charlemagne was sometimes described by his flatterers in this way.[8] Medieval Europe itself could not claim even the cultural and historical unities which might have supplied raw materials for a common political culture.[9] Europe's pasts were not just several but divergent. Our Sphere encompasses historic landscapes around the Mediterranean which had already been part of advanced, urban civilizations for thousands of years; but also regions which in the earlier middle ages were still entirely without towns and, over vast areas, largely without people: regions within which human life as urbane southerners knew it scarcely seemed liveable at all. While such regional disparities became less over the course of the middle ages, they were rarely obliterated altogether.[10] In 1500, many of the largest cities still lay close to the Mediterranean. The tide-line of antique culture remained visible, among other things, in the divide between a Europe which spoke languages derived from Latin – with correspondingly more direct access to Latinate culture itself – and another which did not.

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[4] See generally B. Braude, 'The sons of Noah and the construction of ethnic and geographical identities in the medieval and early modern periods', *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997), 103–41.
[5] J. B. Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 1981); P. D. A. Harvey, *Medieval Maps* (London, 1991).
[6] Den Boer, 'Europe to 1914', 18–19.
[7] N. Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (London, 2011), 4.
[8] Leyser, 'Concepts of Europe', 32–4.
[9] For a different view, seeking such unities, see T. Kaufmann, 'Die Einheit Europas zwischen Vormoderne und Moderne', in C. Jaser *et al.* (eds), *Alteuropa – Vormoderne – Neue Zeit: Epochen und Dynamiken der europäischen Geschichte (1200–1800)* (Berlin, 2012), 59–77.
[10] See generally P. Moraw, 'Über Entwicklungsunterschiede im deutschen und europäischen Mittelalter: Ein Versuch', in U. Bestmann *et al.* (eds), *Hochfinanz, Wirtschaftsräume, Innovation: Festschrift für Wolfgang von Stromer*, 2 vols (Trier, 1987), ii.583–622.

Europe's diversities were more numerous and less bipolar than that, however. The continent was a cocktail of language groups, languages and dialects. While medieval Europeans often proved remarkably adept at communicating with one another, the effort required should not be underestimated.[11] Even at the end of the middle ages, and among the more urbane type of traveller, to journey across the continent was to confront the unknown and the startlingly strange. We may discern the influence of classical *topoi* behind the humanist pope Pius II's images of a fifteenth-century Northumbria harsh and exotic enough to rival the steppes of Central Asia.[8] However, the culture-shock which the entourage of a contemporary Bohemian nobleman both experienced and induced as they made their way through the regions of western Europe seems to have been spontaneous enough.[9]

In many ways preferable is to speak, as medieval Europeans did, of 'Christendom'.[10] Insofar as we can observe efforts to impose a common culture throughout our Sphere, the intent and (to a very imperfect degree) achievement were those of the Catholic Church.[11] The geographical extension, over the millennium down to the fifteenth century, of the church's ambit mapped, and to a substantial degree impelled and legitimised, the growth and stabilisation of the political communities which our Sphere came to comprise. Where new realms were established in the wake of Crusade and Holy War, the church's part in their making was direct and inescapable. Catholic Christendom was a community of obligation for all baptised Christians living within its bounds.[12] It was a community resting on law and coercion, whose hierarchy could authorize the most drastic punishments. Its extent has a sharpness and substance unique among very large pre-modern communities: the church's capacity for setting boundaries, material and conceptual, was unrivalled. Its identity-forming potential was inseparable from the readiness with which it identified and branded 'the other': the church gathered in as it shut out.[13] For most of the middle ages, systematic thought and writing, including political writing, were a near-monopoly of clerics, whose medium, Latin,

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[11] P. Wolff, *Les origines linguistiques de l'Europe occidentale* (Paris, 1970).
[8] Pius II, *Commentaries*, ed. M. Meserve and M. Simonetta, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA, 2004–18), i.24–5.
[9] *The Travels of Leo of Rozmital through Germany, Flanders, England, France, Spain, Portugal and Italy, 1465–1467*, ed. and tr. M. Letts (Cambridge, 1957). On this work, see W. Paravicini, 'Leo von Rožmitál unterwegs zu den Höfen Europas (1465–66)', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 92 (2010), 253–307.
[10] N. Berend, 'The concept of Christendom: a rhetoric of integration or disintegration?', in M. Borgolte and B. Schneidmüller (eds), *Hybride Kulturen im mittelalterlichen Europa* (Berlin, 2009), 51–62.
[11] For introductions to the medieval western church, see J. H. Lynch and P. C. Adamo, *The Medieval Church: A Brief History*, 2nd edn (London, 2014); B. Hamilton, 'The western church', in his *Religion in the Medieval West* (London, 1986), 5–84.
[12] J. van Engen, 'The Christian middle ages as a historiographical problem', *American Historical Review* 91 (1986), 519–52 at 540–1.
[13] R. I. Moore, 'Medieval Europe in world history', in C. Lansing and E. D. English (eds), *A Companion to the Medieval World* (Chichester, 2009), 563–80 at 576–7.

was the universal language of the educated. To speak of 'Latin Christendom' (or 'Latin Europe', or the 'Latin West') is therefore to invoke the main sources both of the unity and the cultural distinctiveness of our Sphere. In the political arena, the Catholic Church almost everywhere became indispensable to the making, and on occasion un-making, of rulers and regimes. The supernatural authority to which it controlled access secured the oaths which at all points bound together the component elements of political society. Once tied, those bonds could be loosened only by the church.

The political map of Latin Europe as it developed over the course of the middle ages was profoundly shaped by the church and its heads, the bishops of Rome. The making of western peoples in the post-Roman period is inseparable from the emergence of an independent papacy with the power to confer legitimacy and identity on those peoples.[14] By instigating the conversion of the Germanic settlers in Britain, Pope Gregory I (590–604) bound the Anglo-Saxons and their rulers into a larger European political sphere, under papal headship.[15] The Visigothic kings in Spain, by abandoning their Arianism for Catholicism in 589, opted to join this growing community – and were duly rewarded with anointing as a badge of membership.[16] In the centuries before 1000, Rome – the city of the Apostles – itself became a common religious focus for the barbarians, to which remote northern kings made their way as pilgrims.[17] The recurrent and intensifying estrangements of the 'Latin' church and its heads from Byzantium were a further factor in sharpening the contours of a distinct western Christendom. At the close of the middle ages, after the loss of the Crusader principalities in the Levant, and after the downfall of Eastern Christian Byzantium itself, Catholic Christendom would briefly (before its extension into the New World) match with some precision a 'Latin' Europe.

Latin Christendom was repeatedly shaped by the papacy's own political choices – most momentously, in abandoning its old-established relationship with the *basileus* for a new one with the Carolingian Franks in the eighth century. Latin Christian mission advanced in step with, and underpinned, the territorial expansion of western realms and the accession of new convert-kings to the community.[18] The sphere of adherence to the Church of Rome continued to grow during the central medieval period, impelled by a complex amalgam of

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[14] R. Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe: From Paganism to Christianity, 371–1386 AD* (London, 1997), 97–129; C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (London, 2009), 170–202.
[15] See generally C. Leyser, 'The memory of Gregory the Great and the making of Latin Europe, 600–1000', in K. Cooper and C. Leyser (eds), *Making Early Medieval Societies* (Cambridge, 2016), 181–201.
[16] R. Collins, *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity, 400–1000*, 2nd edn (London, 1995), 32–57.
[17] J. M. H. Smith, *Europe after Rome: A New Cultural History, 500–1000* (Oxford, 2005), 253–92.
[18] Fletcher, *Conversion of Europe*, 417–50.

dynamic factors. At each stage it was the church itself that set down the most visible markers of that growth, and created the durable frameworks within which consolidation could proceed. As late as 1209 Pope Innocent III established the first Catholic bishopric in Finland.[19] This chapter therefore takes as its bounds the expanding community of realms and regions whose elites professed loyalty to some form of Catholic Christianity. There is a practical reason for this, too: however much the northern convert peoples may have owed to their pre-Christian pasts, it is only after their conversion that we seem to have written sources rendering them susceptible to historical, as against purely archaeological, study.

Yet to speak only of 'Christendom' brings its own problems. Some realms in our Sphere were more Latin-Christian than others. Particularly towards the geographical margins, a more complex picture prevailed. Medieval Hungary, for example, was home to pagans, Muslims and Jews, and to Orthodox as well as Catholic Christians.[20] Nor did rulers employ only adherents of the Latin Church as their servants. The twelfth- and thirteenth-century kings of Sicily appointed Orthodox Christians and Muslims to significant positions in their government.[21] Jews were widely employed by the Iberian monarchs.[22] In frontier regions, Catholic Christians themselves did not always wholly appear as such to disapproving co-religionists. To the twelfth-century English chronicler William of Newburgh, the Latin settlers in the Holy Land were 'a kind of neutral being between the Christian and the Saracen population'.[23] As late as the fifteenth century, visitors from central Europe were shocked to be received by King Henry IV of Castile and his queen sitting on the floor in the Moorish fashion. The king, noted the scandalised reporter, ate, dressed, and even worshipped like a Muslim.[24] In isolated cases, a prince might reject the doctrines of the church outright: in the early thirteenth century, the Cathar heretics of Languedoc were thought to enjoy the protection of the main regional power, the count of Toulouse.[25] Catholicism itself was in any case far from unified. There was never only one way of conceiving of the church as a system

[19] Fletcher, *Conversion of Europe*, 500.
[20] N. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c. 1301* (Cambridge, 2001).
[21] D. Matthew, *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Cambridge, 1992), 209–28.
[22] J. F. O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca, NY, 1975), 283–6, 464–6.
[23] William of Newburgh, 'Historia Rerum Anglicarum', III.15, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. R. Howlett, 4 vols, Rolls Series 82 (London, 1884–89), i. 254.
[24] *Travels of Leo of Rozmital*, ed. and tr. Letts, 91–2.
[25] M. Lambert, *The Cathars* (Oxford, 1998), 63, 99–105.

of Christian governance; and in the late middle ages there were radically different models on offer.[26]

A final objection is methodological. Particularly for a study of political culture, 'Christendom' carries the suggestion that the culture that counted emanated from the minds and pens of clerics. There is no doubt that the church did much to shape medieval thought and assumptions about politics, as well as instigating and staging some of the most powerful rituals through which these found expression. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to suppose either that clerks and monks were the only people who thought seriously about politics or that when others did so they invariably followed and agreed with the clergy. Such a view overlooks several things. It fails to acknowledge the substantial accommodations with pre-existing modes of thought and action that the western church had been forced to make in order to establish itself among the barbarian peoples at all.[31] It neglects the obvious fact that even the most cloistered thinkers had contacts with lay people, among whom they had usually spent formative early years. They therefore inevitably shared many of the commonplace political assumptions of their kin, lords and neighbours, often representing them in their writings in more abstract forms. And it treats the comparative scarcity of medieval evidence for the political ideas of lay people as indicating the relative absence of the ideas themselves. Such an assumption is unwarranted: where we do have materials for a distinctively (though not exclusively) lay culture – as in the literature of courtly chivalry – they reveal values partly independent of, and sometimes at odds with, those of pulpit and scriptorium.[32]

Names are therefore a problem. Even that enduring favourite, 'the west', despite the merit of vagueness, is undermined by significant Muslim polities occupying that most westerly of regions, Iberia, for much of the period under consideration. Pragmatism is called for, and recognition of the limited load-bearing capacity of single terms. A similarly flexible approach must be applied to dates – since, once again, we are dating not one phenomenon but several. There is much to be said for a study of western political culture beginning with Pirenne's axial eighth century.[33] Not only did the papacy then make its decisive westward turn; it is from this point that explicitly Christian models of rulership grew increasingly influential in western Europe. It is no coincidence that from around this time the political map

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[26] B. Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory: The Contribution of the Medieval Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism* (Cambridge, 1955).
[31] See W. A. Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England: The Transition from Paganism to Christianity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970).
[32] M. Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, CT, 1984), 18–43.
[33] For his thesis generally: A. F. Havighurst (ed.), *The Pirenne Thesis: Analysis, Criticism, and Revision*, rev. edn (Lexington, MA, 1969).

gradually gains firmer contours: in the centuries that follow, the outlines of distinct and enduring realms become discernible. Henceforth too, perceptions of what divided the west both from Byzantium and from the Islamic world became sharper. Yet it will be necessary to examine one of the most salient features of this Sphere, namely its political plurality; and the preconditions for *that* were to a large degree set already between the fourth and sixth centuries, with the establishment of multiple 'peoples', political groupings, and regimes on the soil of the Roman empire in the west.[34] Moreover, if it is accepted that one key to medieval western political culture lies in the particular relationships which developed between religion and ('temporal') rulership, it becomes necessary also to retain a remoter vision: of the conversion of Constantine and the establishment of Christianity as a basis for political legitimacy in the Roman empire.[35] Occasional backward glances from the Carolingian and post-Carolingian to the late Roman world are therefore necessary. Establishing a terminal point is more straightforward.[36] For this, the later fifteenth century, by which time the political forms and institutions that would endure until modernity were embedded in the west but had yet to be exported to the New World, will serve as well as any.

The western Sphere can also, finally, be understood as a series of distinct, interconnecting, physical environments, within which political activity took place and which helped to shape its character.[37] If western history and culture fostered division, European geography tended to favour interconnection and exchange. While medieval Europeans seldom travelled fast, the barriers which the landscape itself set in their way were relatively low. No major deserts separated populations, and the forests that had covered much of early medieval Europe north of the Alps retreated over the course of the period with the advance of settlement. European rivers were highways rather than hurdles, as witnessed by the fact that most major towns lay on navigable waterways. Mountains channelled rather than stifled movement. Most European ranges were, globally speaking, fairly low; and even the Alps, for all their fabled terrors, bore a heavy human traffic over their passes. Gottfried of Viterbo, courtier and chronicler under the twelfth-century emperor Frederick Barbarossa, claimed to

[34] See G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376–568* (Cambridge, 2007).
[35] For Constantine's exemplary role in the conversion of early medieval kings, see P. Sarris, *Empires of Faith: The Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam, 500–700* (Oxford, 2011), 205–25.
[36] It is not wholly without problems, however. For the difficulty of establishing when the middle ages can be said to end, see C. Jaser *et al*., 'Alteuropa – Vormoderne – Neue Zeit: Leistungen und Grenzen alternativer Periodisierungskonzepte für die europäische Geschichte', in Jaser *et al*. (eds), *Alteuropa – Vormoderne – Neue Zeit*, 9–24; G. Schwerhoff, 'Alteuropa: ein unverzichtbarer Anachronism', *ibid*., 27–45.
[37] For what follows, see generally N. Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford, 1996), 47–65.

have made the journey from Germany to Rome no fewer than forty times.[38] Europe was well shaped for communications.[39] Peninsulas and islands made up, compared to other continents, an unusually high proportion of the land area.[40] The sea, relatively-speaking seldom far away, was the broadest highway of all: medieval Europe's most extensive hegemonies were mainly seaborne.[41]

Of course, the lie of the land does help to explain a multi-speed, multi-track medieval Christendom.[42] Political formations and practices that would have looked archaic, indeed barbarous, to an English or Scots lowlander were able long to survive in the uplands of native Wales and Ireland. The high-medieval urban commune held out more tenaciously in the Tuscan hill country than on the Lombard plain. Marginal landscapes – Swiss Alpine pasture, Icelandic lava fields, the coastal marshes of Frisia – fostered distinct political arrangements, resistant to classic pyramidal lordship, inconceivable in the champion country of northern France.[43] Post-Roman decline added its part, with the decay of the road system, local efforts notwithstanding, in former imperial territories.[44] Yet there was never a time when medieval westerners did not feel impelled to wrestle with the limits of landscape, to build connections. Sometimes the inspiration was directly Roman, as with the bridge that Charlemagne threw across the Rhine at Mainz. More important were innumerable local and regional efforts at making and mending roads, bridges and waterways, and keeping them open and safe. After the eleventh century, these efforts seem to quicken: soon the Alps themselves were breached by new routes.[45] The 'optimal fragmentation' which one commentator has discerned in the pre-modern west could just as well be termed 'optimal connectivity'.[46] It was a flexible connectivity, however, impelled by shifting patterns of perceived common interest among a colourful array of participants, not by hegemonic systems or visions of ideal unity.

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38 G. Baaken, 'Zur Beurteilung Gottfrieds von Viterbo', in K. Hauck and H. Mordek (eds), *Geschichtsschreibung und geistiges Leben im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Heinz Löwe zum 65. Geburtstag* (Cologne and Vienna, 1978), 373–96 at 373.

39 For the importance of movement in 'making' medieval Europe, see W. C. Jordan, '"Europe" in the middle ages', in A. Pagden (ed.), *The Idea of Europe from Antiquity to the European Union* (Cambridge, 2002), 72–90 at 73.

40 N. Ohler, *The Medieval Traveller*, tr. C. Hillier (Woodbridge, 1989), 3.

41 J. R. S. Phillips, *The Medieval Expansion of Europe*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1998); F. Fernandez-Armesto, *Before Columbus: Exploration and Colonisation from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1229–1492* (Philadelphia, 1987).

42 For political fragmentation as topographically determined, see J. Diamond, 'How to get rich: a talk by Jared Diamond [6.6.99]', *Edge* 56 (1999), <https://www.edge.org/conversation/jared_diamond-how-to-get-rich> (accessed 17 August 2019); Ferguson, *Civilization*, 11–12.

43 For the independent and quasi-independent peasant polities of such regions, see P. Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford, CA, 1999), 177–203.

44 B. Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford, 2005).

45 P. Spufford, *Power and Profit: The Merchant in Medieval Europe* (London, 2002), 187–92.

46 For 'Optimal fragmentation', see Diamond, 'How to get rich'.

The shape of political development

Although western history across the middle ages displays clear elements of shape and pattern, it permits no Grand Narrative, such as can justifiably be offered for Byzantium or, with more qualification, the Islamic world. Instead, there are multiple parallel and interwoven strands, precluding brief summary.[47] That too illuminates the distinctiveness of the western Sphere. The course of political events begins with imperial breakup: the fragmentation of Rome's western provinces. While empire, both formal and less formal, was henceforth a recurrent factor in medieval western history, Latin Europe was never defined by imperial rule in the manner of Byzantium, or even by large quasi-imperial hegemonies like those recurrently found in the Islamic Sphere. Political pluralism was the keynote from the start. During the fifth and sixth centuries Germanic military elites – Goths, Franks, Burgundians, Lombards, Angles, Saxons, and others – established loosely-framed kingdoms within the western territories of the Roman empire. With the important exception of Spain, where Visigothic rule was extinguished in 711, the western Sphere, unlike Byzantium, was affected only fairly peripherally by the rise of Islam. It is true that access to the Mediterranean, with its connections to worlds beyond, was significantly – though never completely – impeded for a time.[48] But more momentous for the longer term was the growing acceptance among the new western rulers – some of them previously pagan, many Arian Christians – of Catholic Christianity under the spiritual headship of the bishop of Rome.

A significant new phase was entered with the accession of the Carolingian dynasty to power in Francia in 751, supplanting the Merovingian kings. The Carolingians, whose accession enjoyed papal support, went on to extend substantially both their own sphere of rule and the bounds of Catholic Christianity, particularly east of the Rhine. The revival of the Roman imperial title, through Charlemagne's coronation at Rome on Christmas Day 800, was one reflection of a newly ambitious conception of militant Christian mission under the

[47] Good introductions to the history of the medieval west can be found in C. Wickham, *Medieval Europe* (New Haven, CT, 2016); B. H. Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages* (Peterborough, ON, 2004). For more detail, the volumes of the *New Cambridge Medieval History* can be consulted. For an excellent historical atlas, see *Großer historischer Weltatlas*, 2: *Mittelalter*, ed. J. Engel (Munich, 1979). Introductions to medieval western political culture are provided by R. McKitterick, 'Politics', in R. McKitterick (ed.), *The Early Middle Ages: Europe 400–1000* (Oxford, 2001), 21–56; B. Weiler, 'Politics', in D. Power (ed.), *The Central Middle Ages: Europe 950–1320* (Oxford, 2006), 91–120; J. Watts, *The Making of Polities: Europe, 1300–1500* (Cambridge, 2009), 129–57.

[48] For changes in the Mediterranean and beyond, see J. Shepard, 'Europe and the wider world', in McKitterick (ed.), *Early Middle Ages*, 201–42.

monarch.[49] This proved to be transferable to the neighbouring polities and peoples with which the Carolingians had dealings, and which adopted elements of their style, practices and doctrines of rule. In England, where multiple regional kings held sway, the ninth century brought an expansion of the south-western kingdom of Wessex, to form the core of what over time would become a single English realm.[50]

The fragmentation of the Carolingian hegemony was followed in the tenth century by the emergence of a new power in eastern Francia, the Ottonian dynasty of Saxon kings. The coronation of Otto I at Rome in 962 revived again the western imperial title, which henceforth endured unbroken, in the hands of monarchs based in German-speaking Europe, to the end of the middle ages and far beyond.[51] In western Francia the Carolingians were succeeded in 987 by the Capetian dynasty, ruling over what later medieval centuries would come to call the kingdom of France.[52] The continuation by the Ottonians of the Carolingian traditions of missionary warfare and diplomacy on their frontiers, meanwhile, underlay further territorial extensions of the Latin-Christian Sphere in the tenth and early eleventh centuries. New Christian realms came into being in the east, in Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary.[53] During the same period, a broadly comparable mix of religious conversion and political consolidation under monarchs resulted in the emergence of more settled kingdoms to the Empire's north, in Denmark and Norway (and somewhat later in Sweden). On the coast of western Francia, the Scandinavian convert community settled there under the later Carolingians solidified by the eleventh century as the duchy of Normandy.[54]

In Italy, the fading of Byzantine power, military interventions by the Carolingians and their imperial successors, and the activities of Muslim raiders and colonists in the Mediterranean, all combined to produce a fragmented landscape.[55] The establishment of the papacy as a dominant territorial power in the centre of the peninsula would form a basis for the popes' increasingly comprehensive claims to the spiritual direction of western society after the eleventh century. As early as the ninth, Venice, though notionally a Byzantine dependency, had begun to emerge as an independent power in the north-east. Other urban

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[49] J. L. Nelson, 'Kingship and empire', in J. H. Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350–c. 1450* (Cambridge, 1988), 211–51; W. Ullmann, *The Carolingian Renaissance and the Idea of Kingship* (London, 1969).
[50] See the essays in J. Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000).
[51] P. H. Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire: A Thousand Years of Europe's History* (London, 2016).
[52] E. M. Hallam and J. Everard, *Capetian France, 987–1328* (Harlow, 2001).
[53] For what follows, see P. Heather, *Empires and Barbarians* (London, 2009).
[54] D. Bates, *Normandy before 1066* (London, 1982).
[55] For what follows, see C. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society, 400–1000* (London, 1981), esp. 168–93; D. Abulafia (ed.), *Italy in the Central Middle Ages 1000–1300* (Oxford, 2004).

centres developed with their own regional and wider importance, in a context of economic vitality, with Milan gaining early dominance in the Lombard plain. South of Rome, bands of Norman adventurers advanced during the eleventh century, with papal support, to establish new lordships at the expense of local powers and of Byzantium and Islam.

Between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, although to varying degrees and following different chronologies in different regions, the lands of Latin Europe underwent far-reaching processes of social and economic change.[56] These in turn opened the way to new developments in political life.[57] Underpinning all was a sustained, long-term growth in population, particularly in the core lands of the Latin West – in France, the Low Countries, western Germany, Italy, and lowland Britain. The countryside and its inhabitants were subjected to more intensive and rigorous forms of exploitation.[58] Towns multiplied, even in regions which had hitherto known little of urban life: if cities are equated with civilisation, then Europe was a far more civilised place in 1350 than in 950.[59] Trade and industry flourished, and the use of money became commonplace among all sections of the populace, paving the way for the development of taxation by secular regimes. The combined effect of these transformations was to multiply political formations and to stimulate diverse forms of political life and more pronounced regional political cultures.

The fragmentation of Muslim power in Spain following the end of the caliphate of Cordoba in 1031 encouraged the consolidation and expansion of the northern Latin-Christian kingdoms of León, Castile, and Aragon, with the old Visigothic capital of Toledo falling to the Castilian king Alfonso VI in 1085.[60] The same aggressive dynamism – though temporarily checked by the interventions of Muslim invaders from North Africa – was reflected in the emergence in the twelfth century of a new kingdom, Portugal, and in a progressive southward shift of the Christian frontier. Doctrines of Christian Holy War, which played a part in expansion against the Muslim powers in twelfth-century Iberia, had a much more fundamental role in the establishment of new western settler-communities in the south-eastern Mediterranean, in Syria and Palestine, in the wake of the First Crusade (1095–99).[61]

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[56] N. J. G. Pounds, *An Economic History of Medieval Europe*, 2nd edn (London, 1994).
[57] For the difficulty of periodising expansion, however, see C. Wickham, 'Making Europes', *New Left Review* I/208 (November/December 1994), 133–43.
[58] Pounds, *Economic History*, 30–55.
[59] Cities as the measure of civilization: Ferguson, *Civilization*, 5; Moore, 'Medieval Europe', 568. As Moore emphasises, it was not only in Latin Europe that this period saw major urbanisation.
[60] For what follows, see O'Callaghan, *History of Medieval Spain*; A. McKay, *Spain in the Middle Ages: From Frontier to Empire, 1000–1500* (Basingstoke, 1977).
[61] M. Barber, *The Crusader States* (New Haven, CT, 2012).

The last of these Latin enclaves, which included a kingdom of Jerusalem, were only extinguished by their Muslim neighbours at the end of the thirteenth century.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries witnessed, by and large, the further expansion, institutional growth, and sharper definition of western polities.[62] In the British Isles, the French-speaking ruling elite that had seized the English kingdom in 1066 extended its control over much of southern and eastern Ireland in the following century.[63] From 1130 Sicily, another Norman acquisition, became a kingdom.[64] In the late thirteenth century the English king Edward I conquered neighbouring Wales and incorporated it into his realm, while to the north the kingdom of Scotland was reinforced in its independence through the process of resisting English aggression. The kingdom of France now attained an extent much closer to its modern frontiers, partly through conquest from the French king's Plantagenet neighbours, partly under the mantle of crusade against heresy in the south. The capture of Constantinople in 1204 by western crusading forces benefitted particularly the republic of Venice, which made major territorial gains in the eastern Mediterranean.[65] Also in this period, Iceland, self-governing and kingless since its settlement in the ninth and tenth centuries, submitted to the kings of Norway.

Different patterns are evident in the central European and Italian lands subject to the western emperors. Of crucial importance was the special relationship that existed between the German successors to the Carolingians in the empire and the bishops of Rome. In the late eleventh century that relationship turned sour, in a clash between the Salian emperor Henry IV and a newly-assertive papacy in the person of Gregory VII. Ostensibly centred on control of appointments to the church, the dispute (the 'Investiture Contest') also reflected the collision of imperial and papal spheres of interest in Italy. The following hundred and fifty years were marked by recurrent crises between popes and emperors (only two of whom avoided excommunication) and recurrent, burdensome and disruptive, imperial military campaigns in Italy.[66]

One result was to reinforce the regional and local powers already important in the Empire both north and south of the Alps. Increasingly the empire took on the character of a

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[62] For the political 'regionalisation' of Europe in the central and later middle ages, see Borgolte, *Christen, Juden, Muselmanen*, 473–516.
[63] For English imperialism in the British Isles, see R. Frame, *The Political Development of the British Isles, 1100–1400* (Oxford, 1995).
[64] Matthew, *Norman Kingdom of Sicily*, 33–68.
[65] F. C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore, MD, 1973), 30–43.
[66] See generally S. Weinfurter, *Das Reich im Mittelalter: Kleine deutsche Geschichte von 500 bis 1500* (Munich, 2008), 82–180.

loose (though surprisingly stable) federation under its monarchical heads, with day-to-day government lying mainly in the hands of variable combinations of secular and ecclesiastical princes, lesser nobles, and urban communities. Between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries in the empire's Alpine lands a league of towns and peasant communes, the Swiss Confederation, attained an increasingly independent constitutional life. During broadly the same period the Hansa, a far-flung alliance of mainly German trading towns along the Baltic and North Sea coasts and in their hinterlands, became a major independent actor in regional politics as well as economic affairs.[67] Traditional centres of political gravity shifted in the fourteenth century: the papacy northwards and westwards, to Avignon, the imperial monarchy eastwards, first to Bavaria, then Bohemia.[68]

In western continental Europe and the British Isles in the last two medieval centuries, the greater resources that regnal governments were now able to mobilise were applied in a series of protracted, interconnected wars. The largest of these was the misnamed Hundred Years War (1337–1453), in which the main, although by no means sole, protagonists were the kings of France and England.[69] Its source lay in the intractable rival claims of the two dynasties to lands and titles in France (including the French crown itself), exacerbated by social and economic crisis following the dramatic population falls resulting from the Black Death. A further factor was the protracted ('Great') schism in the papacy, which lasted from 1378 to 1417. During this period there were always at least two, and for a while three, rival popes competing for the allegiance of western princes and their subjects. These pressures and divisions contributed particularly to the fragmenting of the French kingdom, where a major new political actor, the Valois duchy of Burgundy, was able to emerge, ruled by a junior line of French royal princes. The strength of Burgundy (until the death of the last Valois duke in 1477) lay particularly in the rich revenues that its rulers drew from their dynamic and urbanised, though also turbulent, northern territories centred on Flanders.[70]

On the cultural frontiers of late medieval Europe, nativist movements pushed back, sometimes successfully, against the colonising practices of more powerful neighbours. English expansion in Ireland was checked and partially reversed. In Bohemia, where tensions between Czech-speakers and German settlers were exacerbated by religious controversy, in

[67] T. A. Brady, *Turning Swiss: Cities and Empire, 1450–1550* (Cambridge, 1985); P. Dollinger, *The German Hansa*, tr. and ed. D. S. Ault and S. H. Steinberg (London, 1970).
[68] G. Mollat, *The Popes at Avignon, 1305–1378* (London, 1963); J. K. Hoensch, *Die Luxemburger: Eine spätmittelalterliche Dynastie gesamteuropäischer Bedeutung 1308–1437* (Stuttgart, 2000), 51–192.
[69] A. Curry, *The Hundred Years War* (Basingstoke, 2003).
[70] See generally R. Vaughan, *Valois Burgundy* (London, 1975); R. Stein, *Magnanimous Dukes and Rising States: The Unification of the Burgundian Netherlands, 1380–1480* (Oxford, 2017).

the Hussite movement, an entire kingdom seceded for a time from the Catholic Church in the fifteenth century.[71] On the whole, however, the trend at the close of the middle ages was towards the stabilising and in some cases further growth of established realms and regimes. By the late fifteenth century the French kingdom was again strong and expanding, the English having been expelled from French soil with the sole exception of Calais.[72] After 1420 the popes were re-established in Rome, where their rule came increasingly to resemble that of other Italian princes.[73] At the margins of Christendom expansion might still be accompanied by the territorial extension of the Catholic faith. Marriage with neighbouring Poland in 1386 brought Lithuania, Europe's last major pagan polity, into the Latin-Christian fold, while in 1492 Granada, the final Muslim enclave in Iberia, fell to the forces of the 'Catholic monarchs' of recently-united Castile and Aragon.[74] A picture of complex, sometimes intricate, but relatively settled regnal pluralism prevailed across a now much-extended western Sphere.

Political formations

Characterising the political formations of Latin Europe across the span of the middle ages is not simple. Not only were they many and varied: their character, mix and variety changed considerably over time, as the societies and economies which sustained them were transformed. The Germanic kingdoms which succeeded to portions of the Roman empire were amorphous: warbands under dynastic heads, whose coherence was reaffirmed at annual military gatherings. These were not stable or enduring territorial entities, despite their rulers being able in varying degrees to draw upon Roman institutions, ideas and practices.[75] Public life in the Roman manner broke down after the empire's disintegration in the west, despite the efforts made particularly by bishops, with their seats in the decaying towns, to maintain the vestiges of civic infrastructure and amenities. In one respect, however, the Roman legacy was important: in the legitimacy which it bestowed upon the barbarian kingdoms as separate and multiple political formations. This was conveyed particularly through the written laws which their kings caused to have set down, generally in Latin, and through the Latin origin-

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[71] F. Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, tr. T. Krzenc, 3 vols (Hanover, 2002).
[72] D. Potter, *A History of France, 1460–1560* (Basingstoke, 1995), 251–83.
[73] D. Hay, *The Church in Italy in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1977).
[74] J. W. Sedlar, *East Central Europe in the Middle Ages, 1000–1500* (Seattle, 1994), 362–400; J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain, 1469–1716* (London, 1963), 45–76.
[75] P. D. King, 'The barbarian kingdoms', in Burns (ed.), *Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, 123–53. For the Roman legacy generally, see Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West* (Basingstoke, 2007).

stories, which furnished their composite warrior elites with myths of common blood and endeavour: for each its own *Aeneid*.[76] Henceforward in western history *Romanitas*, with its promise of political unity, became a dream – albeit a powerful, long-lasting and highly adaptable one: it was no longer a workable system.

Changes with great long-term importance occurred in the eighth and ninth centuries, following the accession of the Carolingians in Francia. Their rule was a new departure in two related fields: in their exalted view of monarchy, as a divine trust, its exercise an all-embracing Christian project; and in the high ambition which they brought to the material business of government.[77] Textual didacticism, accountability, and written records, stood at the heart of the Carolingian venture.[78] Even if Carolingian government inevitably often delivered less than it promised, the template was highly influential. It helped to shape the theory and practice of kingship in neighbouring realms like Anglo-Saxon England and, eventually, the understanding of monarchy across Christendom generally.[79] The central role in government that the Carolingian model allotted to churchmen was also destined for a large future. This is evident under their successors in eastern Francia, the Ottonians, who entrusted bishops and abbots with principalities to govern on the king-emperor's behalf.[80] Particularly in the lands of the empire, a pattern of quasi-independent territorial niches developed, in the hands of great prelates, protected by privileges of immunity and largely sealed off from outside interference.[81] Western society was becoming honeycombed with enclaves, down to the most local levels.

The late ninth and early tenth centuries saw western realms placed under strain by outside attacks from Latin Europe's non-Christian neighbours: pagan Norsemen along the coasts of continental Europe and the British Isles and Magyars in central Europe, as well as Muslims in the Mediterranean sphere. But while these incursions helped speed the break-up of the Carolingian patrimony, their effect was not only destructive. In those kingdoms which endured, or emerged from the ruins, defensive measures under the ruler – such as the proto-urban foundations (*burhs*) established in Wessex under Alfred the Great (871–99), and perhaps roughly comparable innovations in the Saxony of Henry I (912–36) – encouraged

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[76] Smith, *Europe after Rome*, 253–92; Sarris, *Empires of Faith*, 275–306; P. J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2002).

[77] M. Innes, 'Charlemagne's government', in J. Storey, *Charlemagne: Empire and Society* (Manchester, 2010), 71–89.

[78] See the essays in R. McKitterick (ed.), *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation* (Cambridge, 1994).

[79] For its influence on neighbours, see McKitterick, 'Politics', esp. 22–3.

[80] T. Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, 800–1056* (London, 1991), 236–46.

[81] J. Eldevik, *Episcopal Power and Ecclesiastical Reform in the German Empire: Tithes, Lordship and Community, 950–1150* (Cambridge, 2012).

consolidation.[82] In England, the earliest general taxation was a response to the Scandinavian incursions.

With the breakdown of the Roman fiscal state in the early medieval west, land became the main basis of power.[83] The naturally centrifugal quality of this change was amplified by the fragmentation of the Carolingian empire and its aftermath.[84] Boundaries between different spheres of rule and administration were now increasingly sharply articulated.[85] Between the tenth and twelfth centuries parishes became established throughout Christendom as basic units of ecclesiastical government – often corresponding to village communities, which also now took on firmer contours. The house of the military lord was increasingly visibly distinct from the dwellings of those whose labours fed and armed him.[86] The process of laying closer hold upon the land was far from being one of straightforward ‘state-making’, and where the power of kings and princes was weak its result was an intense fragmentation of the landscape. This was the case in much of France in the tenth and eleventh centuries, where local warlords were able to employ powerful new technologies of domination, notably castles in conjunction with bands of armoured, mounted warriors, to carve up the land into a myriad of tiny, defensible parcels.[87]

The new kingdoms and principalities that were established at Christendom’s margins between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries drew their populations partly from the swelling human reservoirs of western continental Europe.[88] Ruling dynasties came especially from a mainly French-speaking western core. The balance of power between the new regimes and their subject populations varied markedly. In Sicily, where the Norman monarchy drew upon existing traditions of bureaucratic authoritarianism, the king’s hand weighed heavily upon the people. In the lands of the crown of Aragon, by contrast, or in the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, powerful military aristocracies gained a growing ascendancy over the monarch. Inter-ethnic relations in these colonial kingdoms showed no single course of development. In post-Conquest England, the Norman elite reinvented itself as English within a fairly short

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[82] F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1947), 518–30; Reuter, *Germany*, 142–4.
[83] Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, 76–108.
[84] The classic account remains M. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, tr. L. A. Manyon, 2 vols (London, 1961).
[85] Moore, ‘Medieval Europe’, 576–7.
[86] M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300–900: the Sword, the Plough and the Book* (London, 2007), 446–7.
[87] For the scholarly literature, see C. Wickham, ‘The “feudal revolution”’, *Past & Present* 155 (1997), 196–208; C. West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution: Political and Social Transformation between Marne and Moselle, c. 800–c. 1100* (Cambridge, 2013).
[88] R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (Harmondsworth, 1993), 5–23.

span of generations, despite the long persistence of linguistic and other divisions from the native populace.[89] In Sicily, by contrast, Normans (and after them Swabians, Angevins and Aragonese) domineered over populations, of Greeks, Muslims, and Lombards, with whom they cultivated only superficial and utilitarian affinities.[90] In Ireland, Anglo-Norman behaviour followed the Sicilian pattern.[91]

The proliferation of towns within Latin Europe brought new modes of political life to the fore.[92] While the principles of common responsibility and identification in which they were rooted are less novel than is sometimes thought, the position of towns within a world of feudal military hierarchies nevertheless led to conflicts and appeared to some as anomalous. The place of towns in their society varied from place to place and between towns, and often also changed over the course of time. In some regions, such as England or Sicily, townspeople had only fairly limited self-government, and were firmly subjected to royal law and oversight by royal officials. Elsewhere, towns enjoyed considerable autonomy, made their own laws, and were able with time to purchase privileges from their lords, or exact them through political and military pressure. Where urbanisation was heaviest and lordship most contested – in the Low Countries, in parts of southern and western Germany, and above all in Italy north of Rome – fully-formed city states emerged. Such communities were independent political actors, conducting their own external relations with urban and princely neighbours and in some cases extending their domination over other towns and far-flung rural hinterlands.[93] To outside eyes, this urban political landscape appeared strange and remarkable. The twelfth-century Jewish traveller Benjamin of Tudela remarked of the inhabitants of Pisa ('a very great city, with about 10,000 turreted houses') that 'they possess neither king nor prince to govern them, but only the judges appointed by themselves'.[94] In Italy, subdivision into ever-smaller units did not make pause even at the town gates. In a climate of intense competition between urban clans and factions, exacerbated in the thirteenth

[89] H. M. Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation, and Identity, 1066–c. 1220* (Oxford, 2003).
[90] D. Abulafia, 'The Italian other: Greeks, Muslims, and Jews', in Abulafia (ed.), *Italy in the Central Middle Ages*, 215–36.
[91] J. Gillingham, 'The beginnings of English imperialism', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 5 (1992), 392–409; repr. in J. Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge, 2000).
[92] D. Nicholas, *The Growth of the Medieval City: From Late Antiquity to the Early Fourteenth Century* (London, 1997), 141–68.
[93] P. Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria* (Oxford, 1997); D. Waley, *The Italian City-Republics*, 3rd edn (London, 1988); C. Dartmann, *Politische Interaktion in der italienischen Stadtkommune (11.–14. Jahrhundert)* (Ostfildern, 2012).
[94] *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. and tr. M. N. Adler (London, 1907; repr. New York, n.d.), 5.

century by mounting social tensions, overlapping and competing organs of government sought to assert themselves within individual communes.

The church developed its own distinctive forms of rule. In this it was able, particularly after the eleventh century, to benefit from the relative invulnerability of its properties to the dynastic divisions, alienations and failures of heirs which constantly threatened the material foundations of temporal lordship. The advanced literate and organisational skills which their members commanded made religious institutions particularly sharp-eyed governors of territory. It is little wonder, therefore, that churchmen also attained central importance in the government of secular rulers.[95] It was not, however, only in government that the church showed innovation, but in the forms of political life more generally. It was through the acts of churchmen that there came into being in the wake of the First Crusade a quite new political, as well as religious, formation: the order of fighting (and ruling) monks.[96] The military orders established a presence on more than one crusading frontier. However, their political importance was particularly great in the eastern Baltic, where the Teutonic Order, one of the later foundations, established its *Ordensstaat*: a closely-governed sphere of independent corporate rule, vast in size but sharply defined and voraciously extended by military and diplomatic action.[97]

While across much of Europe the population was subjected to forms of military-aristocratic lordship founded on the exploitation of arable land, the political superstructures built upon this agrarian base took various forms. Although constitutionally most territories were under a king, or a quasi-king such as the emperor or pope, the rule experienced by their populations was often that of a prince or magnate without royal title – generally exercising power via some form of investiture from above, but in practice largely independent. Kingship and royal government were by no means always close at hand. Throughout the medieval period rulers often exercised loose hegemonies over agglomerations of realms and lordships, held under all manner of titles. Such composite patrimonies possessed very varied levels of stability. Where the unity was merely personal, as in the rule exercised by Cnut (d. 1035) over England, Denmark and parts of Norway and Sweden, it could prove fleeting indeed.[98] Given more substantial infrastructures of rule, fragmentation might be less abrupt and the

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[95] Two specific examples: J. Mötsch and F. –J. Heyen (eds), *Balduin von Luxemburg, Erzbischof von Trier – Kurfürst des Reiches: Festschrift aus Anlaß des 700. Geburtsjahres* (Mainz, 1985); C. R. Cheney, *Hubert Walter* (London, 1967).
[96] A. Forey, *The Military Orders: From the Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Basingstoke, 1992).
[97] K. Militzer, *Die Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens* (Stuttgart, 2005), 95–142.
[98] Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 395–405.

memory of titles more durable.[99] When kingdoms were bound into a larger hegemony by ties of law, public ritual and political identity, as were the component realms of the western empire (Germany, Italy and Burgundy), the assemblage, despite all elements of weakness, might survive for centuries.

European kingdoms developed in different ways, reflecting their varied histories and circumstances. Some, like post-Conquest England or Norman Sicily, inherited pre-existing traditions of literate, centralised government, upon which they built. Others, such as Capetian France, acquired these elements over time. Each realm had its own chronological patterns. Poland, established as a duchy in the tenth century and ruled by kings in the eleventh, had fragmented into multiple principalities in the twelfth, only to be re-established as a single kingdom early in the fourteenth.[100] It was the differences even between close neighbours that sometimes struck contemporaries. To the French lawyer Pierre Dubois the elective crown, in the gift of seven great princes, which had developed in the German lands of the empire in the thirteenth century, contrasted sharply with his own dynastic realm.[101] It produced and reflected quite different – in his view less orderly – social relations than a kingdom transmitted by heredity.

The last two centuries of the middle ages were marked by acute political instability across much of Europe.[102] One general consequence was to stimulate the emergence of political formations which, if not altogether new, represented significant developments of, or deviations from, what had gone before. Rulership in various parts of Europe was afflicted by crises of legitimacy, which found expression in the ousting of reigning monarchs by various combinations of force and constitutional process, and the installation of new figures in their place. In the towns across much of northern Italy, the change of rule took a particular form, as the communal governments of the central middle ages gave way to one-man regimes – sometimes of violent and unstable character, and usually of constitutionally debatable origins. While both the oppressiveness of the *signori* and their lack of traditional legitimacy have been exaggerated, their style of rule and its ideological underpinnings remain in some ways distinctive.[103]

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[99] Thus, e.g., M. Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire, 1154–1224*, tr. D. Crouch (Harlow, 2007).
[100] A. Gieysztor, 'Medieval Poland', in A. Gieysztor *et al.*, *History of Poland*, tr. K. Cękalska, 2nd edn (Warsaw, 1979), esp. 47–137.
[101] *De Recuperatione Terre Sancte: Traité de politique générale par Pierre Dubois*, ch. 13, ed. C.-V. Langlois (Paris, 1891), 12.
[102] See generally Watts, *Making of Polities*.
[103] Famously by J. Burckhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien: ein Versuch* (Basel, 1860); tr. S. G. C. Middlemore, intro. P. Burke, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Harmondsworth, 1990). See J. Law,

One effect of the demographic, economic and political crises of the late middle ages was to increase the scope for new individuals and social groups to engage in politics. Their engagement was facilitated by the development of parliaments and estates, which now came to exercise a significant voice in the affairs of some realms and regions. In a less formalised development, new participants also forced a way into the political process, albeit often only fleetingly, via the numerous tumults and revolts, mostly highly localised but some more extensive, which mark the period.[104] Many of these late medieval extensions of the political community were to be undermined with the strengthening of regimes and the reassertion of hierarchies across much of Europe at the end of the middle ages. However, some changes – such as the growth of the English Parliament – left a more tenacious political legacy.[105]

Leagues, alliances and associations of various character and varying degrees of formality and durability are to be found at all levels of European society and in all regions – though most densely where political authority was most contested.[106] Their formation was favoured particularly in the later middle ages by processes of advancing social and cultural integration and the development of inter-regional ties.[107] Towns joined with other towns against regional princes and nobles, or with nobles against their neighbours, or engaged in a host of other forms of political association. Princes and nobles allied against towns, against their monarchs, or against other nobles. The Hansa and the Swiss Confederation are merely especially large, institutionalised, and long-lasting manifestations of a more general phenomenon.[108] Latin Europe's political formations and actors were naturally well suited to coming together in fleeting or longer-term marriages of convenience. Such conjunctions, often functioning at a local level and easily overlooked (since they are too numerous, protean and insubstantial to be depicted in historical atlases), are characteristic of Europe in the central and later middle ages.

The Lords of Renaissance Italy: The Signori, 1250–1500 (London, 1980); T. Dean, 'The rise of the *signori*', in Abulafia (ed.), *Italy in the Central Middle Ages*, 104–24.

[104] S. K. Cohn, *Lust for Liberty: The Politics of Social Revolt in Medieval Europe, 1200–1425* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

[105] J. R. Maddicott, *The Origins of the English Parliament, 924–1327* (Oxford, 2010).

[106] For the associative principle in peace-keeping in the late medieval empire, see D. Hardy, 'Between regional alliances and imperial assemblies: *Landfrieden* as a political concept and discursive strategy in the Holy Roman Empire *c*. 1350–1520', in H. Baumbach and H. Carl (eds), *Landfrieden – epochenübergreifend: Neue Perspektiven der Landfriedensforschung auf Verfassung, Recht, Konflikt* (Berlin, 2018), 85–120.

[107] P. Moraw, *Von offener Verfassung zu gestalteter Verdichtung: das Reich im späten Mittelalter 1250 bis 1490* (Berlin, 1985).

[108] A salient earlier example is the Lombard League, an alliance of north Italian towns which resisted the Hohenstaufen emperors in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries: G. Raccagni, *The Lombard League ,1167–1225* (Oxford, 2010).

Above this complex and shifting array of polities stood universal institutions asserting claims to rule throughout, and on some views far beyond, Latin Christendom: the papacy and the western empire. However, neither the papal nor the imperial monarchy was, in political affairs, as truly universal as might appear. Of the two, the papacy has the more substantial claim. During a fairly brief heyday, between the late eleventh and the early fourteenth centuries, popes asserted, and occasionally exercised, a power to discipline and even depose rulers judged to have deviated from their duty as Christian princes.[109] Yet already at the end of the thirteenth century, the open and successful defiance offered to Boniface VIII (d. 1303) by the kings of France and England made clear how blunt was the edge of papal coercion when faced with resistance from powerful monarchs.[110] Universal claims were in any case only one side of the papacy's historic dealings with the peoples and realms of western Europe. Far from being the enemy of political multiplicity, the papacy had from the earliest times had a central part in fostering and affirming a world of many polities. A fragmented map suited the territorially-vulnerable popes: it ensured there was always somewhere else to turn. It seemed, indeed, to reflect the hand of God: as Clement V declared, early in the fourteenth century, 'the king of glory formed different kingdoms for diverse peoples according to differences in language and race'.[111] Papal decretals were cited in defence of the sovereign independence of the late-medieval realm.[112]

The universalism of the empire, although loudly enunciated by its learned champions and embraced as an ideal by at least some of its rulers, had an importance that was mainly symbolic and discursive.[113] It never received more than fitful and formal acknowledgement outside the empire's territorial bounds. Even in western emperorship's twelfth-century heyday it was denied and openly derided by some opponents.[114] The imperial theme and the political legacy of Rome were also pressed into service by regimes far from universal in their

[109] C. Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford, 1989), 109–33, 182–204, 505–26.
[110] T. S. R. Boase, *Boniface VIII* (London, 1933).
[111] Quoted in J. R. Strayer, 'France: the Holy Land, the Chosen People, and the Most Christian King', in T. K. Rabb and J. E. Seigel (eds), *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of E. H. Harbison* (Princeton, 1969), 3–16, at 15.
[112] S. Tebbit, 'Papal pronouncements on legitimate lordship and the formulation of nationhood in early fourteenth-century Scotland', *Journal of Medieval History* 40 (2014), 44–62.
[113] The qualities of the western imperial idea are well summarised in B. Schneidmüller, 'Kaiser sein im spätmittelalterlichen Europa: Spielregeln zwischen Weltherrschaft und Gewöhnlichkeit', in C. Garnier and H. Kamp (eds), *Spielregeln der Mächtigen: Mittelalterliche Politik zwischen Gewohnheit und Konvention* (Darmstadt, 2010), 265–90.
[114] T. Reuter, 'John of Salisbury and the Germans', in M. Wilks (ed.), *The World of John of Salisbury* (Oxford, 1984), 415–25.

horizons – such as the late medieval king of France, 'emperor in his own kingdom'.[115] Even as aspiration, imperial universalism acknowledged a politically plural world.[116] Those who wrote in the emperor's defence commonly affirmed his duty to govern different peoples according to their own laws and customs, recognised the reality of multiple realms, and noted the historic independence of some from imperial jurisdiction.[117] By the late thirteenth century, moreover, regnal pluralism had its own learned champions, ready to argue against the imperial theme and, particularly under Aristotelian influence, to champion on principle a world of many and separate polities.[118] Towards the close of the middle ages the empire came to be perceived increasingly as a German realm.[119] In the same way the papacy, to some eyes a French institution for much of the fourteenth century, appeared as an Italian one in the fifteenth.

Participants

The range of social groups participating in political life in Latin Europe increased considerably over the course of our long medieval period. The proportion of the total population involved in politics probably also grew. These statements require a number of qualifications, however. Firstly, such growth was neither linear nor inexorable, did not everywhere follow the same pattern or attain the same extent, and in many parts of Europe had been reversed by the end of the period. Secondly, the impression of wider involvement over time may be partly an illusion produced by the nature and distribution of the sources, which permit a closer view of the workings of politics in the later than the earlier medieval centuries. Thirdly, our vision may be distorted by our own assumptions about what constitutes 'politics': for a number of reasons, a distinct political sphere becomes easier to define in the later middle ages. Finally, our conclusions will depend in part upon what we mean by 'participation'.

A number of general statements can be made about access to political power, valid for most regions and social formations in Latin Europe between the eighth and the fifteenth centuries. Political activity was strongly marked by the idea and reality of hierarchy: power

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[115] For France and the imperial tradition, see J. Krynen, *L'empire du roi: idées et croyances politiques en France XIIIe–XVe siècles* (Paris, 1993); C. Jones, *Eclipse of Empire? Perceptions of the Western Empire and its Rulers in Late-Medieval France* (Turnhout, 2007).
[116] M. Fuhrmann, *Alexander von Roes: ein Wegbereiter des Europagedankens?* (Heidelberg, 1994), 34.
[117] L. E. Scales, 'France and the Empire: the viewpoint of Alexander of Roes', *French History* 9 (1995), 394–416.
[118] Schneidmüller, 'Kaiser sein', 275–80.
[119] U. Nonn, 'Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation: zum Nationen-Begriff im 15. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 9 (1982), 129–42.

was very unequally distributed, with many people having effectively none, and decisive power nearly always lying in relatively few hands. The principle of hierarchical organisation was almost universally accepted, even while the actual distribution of power between individuals and groups was frequently contested. What distinguished many of those towards the top of local or larger power-hierarchies was enjoyment of the right, the means, and the readiness to bear arms (or at least, the ability plausibly to associate themselves with arms-bearing). Martial activity became linked from an early date with the idea of birth into a power-worthy kin-group, with enjoyment of substantial (particularly landed) property, and with adherence to legitimising norms of elite group behaviour. It almost invariably assumed maleness.

The group of politically-eligible arms-bearers was therefore always limited in size. With time, however, a further restriction developed: the form of military activity granting access to power came to be defined as that of the specialist mounted warrior. Already under the Carolingians, the secular magnates who shared power with the monarch went to war as armoured cavalrymen.[120] As the technologies of violence advanced in the centuries that followed, so too did both their cost and their capacity to concentrate power in the hands of those who wielded them or commanded their use. During the central middle ages, across much of Europe the qualities of such expensively-equipped warriors were crystallised in the title of knight.[121] This title eventually became hereditary, became linked to a distinctive ('chivalric') culture and style of life, and over time became synonymous with nobility.[122] Only at Latin Europe's colonial margins, where military manpower was at a premium and land for its support relatively abundant, did the rise of the armoured fighting man sometimes serve to facilitate upward social mobility and thus the enlargement of the political stratum. This was the case in Iberia between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, where even relatively poor men were able (as *caballeros villanos*) to enter the arms-bearing elite.[123]

By and large, however, as the cult of the chivalrous knight rose, so too did the social and political barriers. By the late middle ages knighthood had grown too costly even for many members of the elite to bear, so that formal knighting increasingly gave way to a more loosely-framed model of high-status equestrian arms-bearing: the 'man-at-arms'.[124]

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[120] F. L. Ganshof, 'Charlemagne's army', in his *Frankish Institutions under Charlemagne*, tr. B. and M. Lyon (Providence, RI, 1968), 57–68.
[121] J. Flori, *L'essor de la chevalerie: XIe–XIIe siècles* (Geneva, 1986).
[122] D. Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France, 900–1300* (Harlow, 2005).
[123] MacKay, *Spain in the Middle Ages*, 36– 57.
[124] P. Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, tr. M. Jones (Oxford, 1984), 119–72.

Nevertheless, the conceptual links between mounted warfare and political participation, forged during knighthood's medieval high summer, lived on – explicitly in the 'knights of the shire', petty noblemen who represented their county communities in the English Parliament.[125] In Valois Burgundy at the close of the middle ages, ducal chancellors were still knighted as a matter of course on taking up office.[126]

The character of social life in the west favoured the domination of politics by warrior-aristocrats. It was a hegemony built upon firm material foundations, which over time also acquired strong cultural and doctrinal underpinnings. Across much of Europe, to the end of the middle ages and beyond, a broad, middling agrarian nobility formed the bedrock of local and regional government (as well as, where government was weak, the main force for its further disruption).[127] Credible claims to power came to depend upon appropriating the material advantages and imitating the style of the landed elite. Wealthy urban families built fortified stone houses, both to symbolise and make real the power which they exercised or claimed within their communities.[128] They assumed armorials, cultivated horsemanship, tourneyed, and copied the dress, lifestyle and cultural patronage of the military aristocracy. Some intermarried with nobles. Those challenging for power from below behaved similarly. Guildsmen adopted quasi-military liveries and paraded behind banners, just as their archery and crossbow confraternities cultivated skill in arms, honed and displayed in inter-town competitions, and encouraged pride in martial attainment.[129]

Admittedly, not everyone who claimed or exercised power actually fought, and armed force was never the only justification for power. Kings often took up arms, and military symbols and imagery were central to their rule. But the royal office itself was in most places and at most times something different from, or more than, that of merely supreme warlord.[130] Some kings chose to take little or no personal part in military activity, resting their claim to rule instead upon quasi-religious attributes.[131] Those whom the king called to exercise power

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[125] G. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation: England 1360–1461* (Oxford, 2005), 66–74. Despite this term, not all county representatives were knights.

[126] W. Blockmans and E. Donckers, 'Self-representation of court and city in Flanders and Brabant in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries', in W. Blockmans and A. Janse (eds), *Showing Status: Representations of Social Positions in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 1999), p. 85.

[127] See generally Joseph Morsel, *L'aristocratie médiévale Ve–XVe siècle* (Paris, 2004).

[128] As an example: W. De Clercq *et al.* '"Vivre noblemen": material culture and elite identity in late medieval Flanders', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 38 (2007), 1–31.

[129] P. Arnade, *Realms of Ritual: Burgundian Ceremony and Civic Life in Late Medieval Ghent* (Ithaca, NY, 1996), 65–94.

[130] For varieties of kingship, see the essays in A. J. Duggan (ed.), *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe* (London, 1993).

[131] M. Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, tr. J. E. Anderson (London, 1973).

in his name might also remain outside the military hierarchy. For most of the middle ages the men appointed to senior administrative posts were experienced and often high-ranking clerics. Only in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries do we start to find laymen – commonly, of bourgeois background and university education – appointed to major governmental offices, such as that of chancellor.[132] Such figures, like the lay financiers and lawyers who also become increasingly prominent as royal counsellors in the later middle ages, derived their power from their offices, and from the wealth and expertise which had secured their appointment: they had no obvious need to appear in arms. Yet even among royal servants, and among those of clerical rank, the allure of an equestrian image might prove hard to resist. Thomas Hatfield, bishop of Durham (1345–81), a valued administrator under Edward III of England, appears on his great seal armed and armoured, astride a charging warhorse.[133]

By the eleventh century, the church's own teaching on the proper order of society appeared to affirm the place of a compact, self-conscious warrior elite at its head: there were those who worked, those who prayed – and those who fought (the 'Three Orders').[134] At no time in the middle ages was fighting easily distinguishable from ruling. Viewed in this way, the circle of those with a legitimate part in medieval politics appears small. Such thinking was combined, moreover, with highly negative judgements on the political capacities of those outside this circle. Lower-class rebels were portrayed as unreasoning brute beasts.[135] 'The madness of crowds' was a watchword among the educated and powerful.[136] The political aspirations of most people were held to count for nothing at all.

Yet whatever elite figures may have professed to think, the reality of medieval politics was always less rigidly exclusive: even in principle, hierarchy and subordination were elements in a more complex picture. Rulers did not rule alone. Consultation was an obligation of power at all levels: kings and princes were expected to consult with their magnates and great churchmen, nobles with their military retainers, before taking decisions which would affect others. For all the prominence which chroniclers gave to the deeds of outstanding

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[132] Two examples: J. Heers, *Jacques Coeur 1400–1456* (Paris, 1997); H. Heimpel, *Die Vener von Gmünd und Straßburg 1162–1447: Studien und Texte zur Geschichte einer Familie sowie des gelehrten Beamtentums in der Zeit der abendländischen Kirchenspaltung und der Konzilien von Pisa, Konstanz und Basel*, 3 vols (Göttingen, 1982).
[133] Illustrated in M. Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* (New Haven, CT, 1996), 170. Hatfield had exercised military command on Edward's expedition to Normandy in 1346.
[134] Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, tr. A. Goldhammer (Chicago, 1980).
[135] J. Dumolyn, '"Criers and shouters": the discourse on radical urban rebels in late medieval Flanders', *Journal of Social History* 42 (2008), 111–35.
[136] Pius II, *Commentaries*, ed. Meserve and Simonetta, i.92–3.

individuals, medieval assumptions about political activity were in an important sense collectivist.[137]

Medieval Europeans derived their sense of selfhood from membership of communities which were held to have compelling reality. ‘I am Pia; Siena made me’, says a character in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.[138] Collective groups, from the local to the regnal, were imagined as units of common history and even descent.[139] Everyone was included, at least in imagination: medieval origin myths, unlike some from later times, did not ascribe different and inferior roots to those of lower social status.[140] Communities were understood as units of common political endeavour. Perception was affirmed by everyday experience, since medieval people did indeed participate regularly in their own governance – albeit in vertically-ordered, highly unequal ways – at many levels.

This is observable in the most intimate, face-to-face forms of organisation. The village communities which proliferated between the tenth and twelfth centuries generally took collective responsibility, under the leadership of their wealthier, more senior or more commanding members, for their own affairs.[141] Village assemblies formulated and enforced local bye-laws. Assemblies, indeed, were fundamental to political activity at all levels from the earliest times: some of the first evidence to survive for organised political life in Europe concerns meeting sites.[142] When the first regnal and provincial parliaments and estates took shape in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with formalised proceedings and membership, this marked no new principle in European politics but an extension of ancient ones.[143]

The character of assemblies varied greatly, both between different times and different places at the same time.[144] While the Icelandic *althing*, as a gathering of free landowners, met

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[137] See generally, J. Quillet, ‘Community, counsel and representation’ in Burns (ed.), *Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, 520–72.
[138] *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: II Purgatorio*, tr. J. D. Sinclair (London, 1971), canto 5, ll. 133–4. I follow the translation of J. M. Najemy, ‘Introduction’, in John M. Najemy (ed.), *Italy in the Age of the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2004), 4.
[139] See generally S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900–1300*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1997).
[140] S. Reynolds, ‘Medieval *origines gentium* and the community of the realm’, *History* 68 (1983), 375–90.
[141] P. Blickle (ed.), *Resistance, Representation and Community* (Oxford, 1997).
[142] See A. Pantos and S. Semple (eds), *Assembly Places and Practices in Medieval Europe* (Dublin, 2004).
[143] That is not to propose continuity in the character of the assemblies themselves between pre-history and the middle ages. For the early medieval period see P. S. Barnwell, ‘Political assemblies: introduction’, in P. S. Barnwell and M. Mostert (eds), *Political Assemblies in the Earlier Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2003), 1–10.
[144] A. R. Myers, *Parliaments and Estates in Europe to 1789* (London, 1975); W. Blockmans, ‘A typology of representative institutions in late medieval Europe’, *Journal of Medieval History* 4 (1978), 189–215; W. Blockmans, ‘Representation’, in C. Allmand (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, VII: *c. 1415–c. 1500* (Cambridge, 1998), 29–64; B. Guenée, *States and Rulers in Later Medieval Europe*, tr. J. Vale (Oxford, 1985), 171–87.

without a monarch as head (though not without hierarchies), other meetings – exemplified by the French estates-general of 1302, summoned by Philip IV at the height of his clash with the pope – served mainly as mouthpieces for rulers.[145] Nevertheless, it is the social breadth of the groups that by the late middle ages had attained at least a limited and formal voice in political affairs that deserves emphasis. In the estates of the Tirol, by the fourteenth century the peasantry too enjoyed legal representation, alongside nobles and clergy.[146] Lordship and inequality were fused in medieval thought and life with assumptions of mutuality.

These tended to legitimise political participation. The military-vassalic tie, which bound the vassal only so long as his lord gave him the benefits of good lordship, provided a template for the relations of other free men and groups with their superiors. Urban communities came to petition kings and princes for the guarantee and extension of their privileges in return for fealty and the promise of service.[147] Mutuality was implicit in the idea of the Three Orders itself, raising the possibility that when the noble 'protector'-order failed in its obligations, others might act – and act *politically* – to exact them by force. Precisely this was alleged at the time to have motivated the peasant instigators of the violent revolt known as the Jacquerie, which flared briefly in the Paris basin in 1358, in the aftermath of French military disaster.[148] The rebels, it was said, had turned against lords who, through failure on the battlefield, had shown themselves no more mindful of their protective duties, and therefore no more deserving of loyalty, than the invading English.

In the late middle ages the complex, seemingly contradictory pattern of collective activity and extended participation combined with enduring elite domination is observable especially in the towns. The constitution of fourteenth-century Florence granted access to civic power through the guilds, whose members had to be over the age of thirty and free of debt in order to qualify for office.[149] This still left an estimated one in five of the male population of the city eligible to take part in some form of political activity.[150] Yet real power always lay with a much smaller group, the wealthy members of the greater guilds (*arti*

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[145] J. Byock, 'The Icelandic *Althing*: dawn of parliamentary democracy', in J. M. Fladmark and T. Heyerdahl (eds), *Heritage and Identity: Shaping the Nations of the North* (London, 2002), 1–18; for the French estates-general, J. R. Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair* (Princeton, 1980), 271–5.
[146] W. Köfler, *Land, Landschaft, Landtag: Geschichte der Tiroler Landtage von den Anfängen bis zur Aufhebung der landständischen Verfassung 1808* (Innsbruck, 1985).
[147] Blockmans and Donckers, 'Self-representation', 85.
[148] In the chronicle attributed to Jean de Venette: for the relevant passage, see *Popular Protest in Late Medieval Europe: Italy, France and Flanders*, ed., tr. and comm. S. K. Cohn (Manchester, 2004), 170–2 at 171; and see J. Firnhaber-Baker, 'The eponymous Jacquerie: making revolt mean some things', in J. Firnhaber-Baker and D. Schoenaers (eds), *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt* (Abingdon, 2016), 55–75.
[149] J. M. Najemy, *A History of Florence, 1200–1575* (Oxford, 2006), 124–55.
[150] J. Larner, *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch, 1216–1380* (London, 1980), 122.

maggiori), who were guaranteed disproportionate representation on the main governing council, the *Signoria*.

Constitutional structures, once established, could be extended to encompass new, previously unrepresented groups, and the economic and political crises of the late middle ages generated pressure for such extensions. Both the extent and the limits of what might be achieved are again well illustrated in Florence, where in 1378 in the *Ciompi* uprising hitherto-unrepresented textile workers forced the creation of new guilds, thereby securing at least a nominal voice in government.[151] However, the power of the elite remained fundamentally unshaken, and within just a few years the city's richest families had acted not only to recoup but to entrench and extend the power in their own hands.

Nevertheless, the evidence from this same period of established regimes yielding to pressure from those previously outside the political sphere remains too substantial to ignore. It has a number of explanations. As rulers extended the burdens upon their subjects in an age of war, they found it necessary to secure both more regular and more broadly-based assent to their demands.[152] As government and its needs grew, those whose skills and resources served the prince's (or republic's) rule and wars – merchant-financiers, lawyers, and a new breed of military commander – made their presence felt at the centres of power. Allowing the voices of new groups to be heard seemed in any case a matter of prudence in an age which saw plebeian infantry armies on several occasions inflict savage defeats on aristocratic cavalry forces.[153] By the fourteenth century the armoured, mounted nobleman no longer sat quite so firmly in his saddle – or on his seat of rule.

Regimes learned both to fear the power of public opinion and to exploit it, at a time when the channels of political communication were growing more varied and pervasive. The late middle ages saw the birth of a new vernacular politics, as princes felt themselves impelled to adopt the language of key groups of their subjects, even when it was not their own.[154] At the close of the middle ages the social limits of those with at least an indirect role in shaping political decisions cease to be clearly definable. This is true particularly in the urban sphere, where public gatherings, processions and cries, but also anonymous bills and

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[151] Najemy, *History of Florence*, 156–87.
[152] For the pressures of late medieval war on government, see R. W. Kaeuper, *War, Justice, and Public Order: England and France in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1988).
[153] K. DeVries, *Infantry Warfare in the Early Fourteenth Century: Discipline, Tactics, and Technology* (Woodbridge, 1996).
[154] For England, see C. Allmand, *Henry V* (London, 1992), 419–25; for Burgundy, C. A. J. Armstrong, 'The language question in the Low Countries: the use of French and Dutch by the dukes of Burgundy and their administration', repr. in his, *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1983), 189–212.

libels, graffiti and calculated acts of nocturnal vandalism might all help to set the mood in which councils and princes sat down to take decisions.[155]

If low-status men found a political voice through collective action, women mostly feature in medieval politics as lone actors. This points to the scarcity of formal channels open to them: when they acted, it was usually when established structures had broken down or within the unstructured spaces of life. Opportunity, and the ability and will to seize it, were all. Throughout the long medieval period, queens and queen-mothers came to the fore when the male heir was a minor, absent or incapacitated.[156] The court offered them opportunities to exercise informal power, but the route was high-risk, as is signalled by the interlinked charges of plotting, sexual impropriety and even black magic to which powerful royal women were vulnerable. The figure of Joan of Arc (d. 1431) offers a unique example of the unexpected access to power that radical political failure could afford a charismatic woman, but also her extreme vulnerability once the tide turned.[157] The career of St Catherine of Siena (d. 1380), an artisan's daughter whose political advice was heeded by the pope, highlights new routes open to an exceptional woman in the relatively fluid world of the late-medieval town.[158]

For a sphere which throughout the middle ages (although less completely towards their close) remained dominated by agrarian-military elites, Latin Europe displays considerable social breadth of participation in politics – albeit in varied ways and to very different degrees. This reflected a range of factors. Deep-rooted assumptions and social and legal practices long favoured certain kinds of involvement, while social, economic and political change drew in new groups over the course of time. The church had a special role in political mobilisation. In particular, the fragmented and contested nature of the political landscape ensured a vibrant market for allies, supporters and factions, for material and ideological manpower.

Trans-European patterns of political participation should not, however, be drawn too boldly, since differences between broad regions and types of society are also evident, which were not superficial, but deep-rooted and enduring. At the margins of the Latin West regimes

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[155] D. Hay and J. Law, *Italy in the Age of the Renaissance, 1380–1530* (London, 1989), 77–81; V. Groebner, *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages*, tr. P. Selwyn (New York, 2004), 37–65; W. Scase, '"Strange and wonderful bills": bill-casting in late medieval England', in R. Copeland *et al.* (eds), *New Medieval Literatures* (Oxford, 1997), 225–47.
[156] T. Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Basingstoke, 2013); A. J. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge, 1997).
[157] H. Castor, *Joan of Arc: A History* (London, 2014).
[158] F. T. Luongo, *The Saintly Politics of Catherine of Siena* (Ithaca, NY, 2006).

were established, especially during the growth-period of the central middle ages, which in varying degrees limited legitimate political activity to settler-elites from the European 'core'. Arguments from religion, perceived level of development, and even purportedly inherent racial characteristics, were drawn upon to justify substantially or completely excluding some native populations from power.[159] In the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, formal participation in government lay exclusively with the immigrant 'Franks'.[160]

Other inter-regional contrasts were of more ancient origin and less deliberately contrived. In some realms, particularly in the western European heartlands, public political discourse was conducted via well-understood and highly formalised vocabularies of ritual, which served particularly to highlight hierarchical structures and relationships.[161] Elsewhere, however, in Scandinavia and in parts of east-central Europe and the British Isles (though less so in England), the articulation of hierarchies took different forms, or was less pronounced. It is tempting to draw a broad distinction between regions that had lain within and those that remained outside the Roman and Carolingian empires and their immediate spheres of influence. There are some indications that in these latter zones monarchy was, on the whole, less exalted and the persons of monarchs less elaborately respected. Not everywhere quickly embraced the Frankish-clerical vision of the king as the Lord's anointed.[162] There are signs that beyond Roman and Carolingian Europe speech acts in the presence of the powerful may have been less constrained (or differently constrained) by ritual. This in turn was probably linked to the persistence in some areas of ancient cultures of public assembly, less susceptible than the Frankish heartlands to monarchical stage-management.[163]

Tensions and paradoxes

It is not only the rich inner diversity of Latin Europe that often frustrates general statements about its political culture(s). The self-professed ideals of medieval Europeans sometimes appear at odds with their habitual and characteristic practices. The ends which they claimed

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[159] Bartlett, *Making of Europe*, 197–242; L. Scales, *The Shaping of German Identity: Authority and Crisis, 1245–1414* (Cambridge, 2012), 383–446.
[160] H. E. Mayer, 'Latins, Muslims and Greeks in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem', *History* 63 (1978), 175–92.
[161] G. Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale: Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 2003).
[162] For some evidence, see E. Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades: The Baltic and the Catholic Frontier, 1100–1525* (London, 1980), 6–47.
[163] See S. Brink, 'Legal assemblies and judicial structure in early Scandinavia', in Barnwell and Mostert (eds), *Political Assemblies*, 61–72; J. M. Bak with P. Lukin, 'Consensus and assemblies in early medieval central and eastern Europe', *ibid.*, 95–113. Although the evidence for early assemblies is less strong for east-central Europe, medieval historiographers – notably Cosmas of Prague – looked back to idealised pasts in which rule derived from popular consensus rather than the will of a monarch.

to seek were often rather different from their attainments. The political landscape which they affected to see bore in important respects little relation to what was actually there – although what was there might itself change over time to reflect imagination. The elements of vitality in western political culture, moreover, are often most discernible where crises and conflicts also appear greatest: where fragmentation and contestation are most endemic. It is in the niches and uncertain spots which endured between and within seemingly orderly political structures that significant developments and sophisticated forms of life are found.

Medieval Europeans championed peace and harmony as supreme political goods; yet they evolved forms of political action and discourse that were notably contentious. Peace-keeping, as we have seen, lay predominantly in the hands of elites for whom violence was no mere profession but a source of identity. Not only to embrace bloodshed but actively to seek out opportunities to practise it was a virtue emphasised by those who, to the end of the middle ages, wrote to guide the development of young noblemen.[164] That, despite the proliferation of judicial institutions, feuding so long retained its prominence as a mode of dispute-settlement among the powerful is scarcely cause for wonder.[165]

However, western Europeans also proved capable of imagining harmony, while simultaneously contriving bitter and pervasive contention, on a more cosmic scale. An illustration in a manuscript of the thirteenth-century German law-code known as the *Sachsenspiegel* ('Mirror of the Saxons') shows a prelate and a king (or emperor) with the symbols of their rule.[166] They sit together on a single throne, embracing in a gesture of concord. The accompanying text concerns the collaboration owed by spiritual and secular powers. The image gives graphic form to a widely repeated and universally acknowledged principle of medieval political theology.

Yet it was notably elusive in practice. Conflicts over the proper limits of spiritual and secular power, and over the terms on which princes and prelates should work together, were among the most prominent and intractable of the middle ages. The most celebrated, longest-running, and most catastrophically disruptive of these contentions were those between the papacy and the rulers of the western empire.[167] During the most intense phase, in the reign of the last Hohenstaufen emperor, Frederick II (1212–50), papal and imperial partisans scaled

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[164] Keen, *Chivalry*, 179–99; R. W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 1999).
[165] H. Kaminsky, 'The noble feud in the late middle ages', *Past & Present* 177 (2002), 55–83.
[166] Cod. Pal. germ. 164, Eike [von Repgow], *Heidelberger Sachsenspiegel* <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg164/0057> (accessed 6 May 2019).
[167] See generally H. J. Mierau, *Kaiser und Papst im Mittelalter* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2010); U.-R. Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia, 1988).

new rhetorical heights, with each party discerning in the leader of the other the apocalyptic Antichrist.[168] The contests of Christendom's self-proclaimed temporal and spiritual heads proved highly divisive, particularly within the territories of the empire itself. Communities and even families were split apart, and the excommunications and interdicts, imposed as instruments of political coercion and not always quickly lifted when conflict died down, left a bitter legacy. In Italy, the papal and imperial factions in the towns, Guelfs and Ghibellines, hardened into institutionalised blocs which endured, as a further element of division in an acutely divided landscape, well into the late middle ages.[169]

The two elements in the political firmament which were claimed to stand pre-eminently for unity and harmony therefore presented medieval Europeans with a lurid spectacle of contention. The entrenched disunity of the supreme spiritual and secular heads of Christian society is a distinctive feature of Latin Europe as a sphere of political culture. Division was symbolised, as it is partially explained, by physical location. Whereas in Byzantium, the imperial and patriarchal seats were located side by side in the capital, for the western emperor to visit the pope, or vice versa, meant a long and often punishing journey. From an early date, moreover, the rival claims of papal and imperial partisans came to be encased in Latin treatises, which sought justification in the Bible and other fundamental authorities. Learned polemic became a habit.[170] Medieval Europeans were provided with a stark demonstration that, whatever the theorists might pretend, the rightful political order was not self-evident, but a matter for debate. There was no single answer – and, indeed, no universally-acknowledged order. Latin Christendom was, in its political aspect, an ongoing argument.

'Rule by strangers is the worst evil', wrote the chronicler Thietmar of Merseburg in the eleventh century.[171] In this he was voicing a commonplace of medieval political assumption: that political communities were naturally coherent and organic, manifestations of common history and descent.[172] 'Foreign' lordship was unnatural: an aberration. Here is a mode of thinking which, in Latin Europe, is traceable back to Roman ethnographers of late antiquity, who portrayed the barbarian peoples within the empire as distinct communities of

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[168] W. Stürner, *Friedrich II. 1194–1250* (Darmstadt, 2009), 458–592; B. McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1979), 168–79.
[169] J. K. Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy: The Evolution of the Civil Life, 1000–1350* (London, 1973), 132–41.
[170] L. Melve, *Inventing the Public Sphere: The Public Debate during the Investiture Contest*, 2 vols (Leiden, 2007).
[171] Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, I.19, ed. R. Holtzmann, rev. and German tr. W. Trillmich (Darmstadt, 2002), 22–3.
[172] Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, 250.

blood and law.[173] Such ideas were transmitted to later centuries via widely-consulted encyclopaedic works synthesising late-Roman learning, notably the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville, as well as by the writings of Roman-influenced historians. Latin Europeans came to imagine their world as composed of separate, natural political units, each different from its neighbours but organically one in itself.

Such a vision was always illusory. Royal and aristocratic kindreds intermarried across frontiers in ways that made a nonsense of any idea of discrete ethno-territorial blocs. After the eleventh century, as population expanded, kingdoms grew in size, and new regimes came to power both within Latin Europe and at its margins, it was falsified by the briefest view of the political landscape. Far from being anomalous, the rule of alien princes was closer to a norm, in a world in which the foreign in any case seldom began far from home. Yet it did not as a result come to seem less unnatural or objectionable. In 1070, as the Normans advanced, ravaging, through the north of England, Bishop Aethelwine of Durham took flight to the court of Malcolm III, king of Scots, ‘fearing the severe lordship of a foreign people whose language and customs he did not know’.[174] It was a time when, throughout Europe, large numbers of people who lacked a bishop’s freedom of movement were reconciling themselves to the rule of newcomers. This in any case doubtless looked rather different, and less obviously distinct from what had gone before, when viewed from the villages and common fields rather than the court of a literate and politically-engaged prelate. Nevertheless, those who left a record might still write dynastic change as ethnic oppression: the image of the English people’s subjugation to a vexatious alien yoke in 1066 is of medieval manufacture.[175]

The rhetoric of ‘us’-ness, however delusional and self-serving, ran deep and possessed considerable mobilising power. Rulers throughout the middle ages maintained cosmopolitan courts as a source of prestige; but as kingdoms grew in inner coherence, some came under pressure to banish outsiders from their presence and to appoint ‘true-born’, natives in their place.[176] Over time, there was a tendency for European realms to be forcibly re-made to resemble more closely the enduring fiction of the organically coherent polity. Particularly at Latin Europe’s polyethnic margins, in the later middle ages, steps were taken to enforce a new homogeneity. In the kingdom of Sicily, the island’s Muslim population was

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[173] Geary, *Myth of Nations*, 41–92.
[174] Simeon of Durham, ‘Historia Regum, ch. 155, in *Symeonis monachi opera omnia*, ed. T. Arnold, 2 vols, Rolls Series 75 (London, 1882–5), ii.190.
[175] C. Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London, 2004), 153–214.
[176] For some extreme examples, see L. Scales, ‘Bread, cheese and genocide: imagining the destruction of peoples in medieval western Europe’, *History* 92 (2007), 284–300.

banished to a mainland colony in the thirteenth century, whence it was sold into slavery and eliminated altogether at the century's close.[177] But comparable impulses found expression in Europe's heartlands too. In France, where the common identity promoted by the kings made much of the Christian faith which they shared with their subjects, pursuit of an ideal imagined oneness opened the way to (even if it does not wholly explain) the expulsion of the kingdom's Jews early in the fourteenth century.[178]

By the close of the middle ages, princes commanded the means to fabricate seemingly cohesive political bodies out of the most varied and multi-coloured materials. Such a goal was most readily attained (and most urgent) among the circle of elite figures who met face-to-face in the ruler's presence, and to whose integration the wealthiest princes could now devote a dazzling array of resources. The Valois dukes of Burgundy, whose patchwork patrimony straddled the Franco-imperial border, employed their rich court to this end. The chivalric Order of the Golden Fleece, founded in 1430, brought together nobles from across the ducal domains, in a glittering and myth-laden common life, whose central theme was the unity established by shared loyalty to the duke.[179] By an assortment of means and down diverse routes, the mirage of common identity was conjured into being within realms across much of Europe.

Even while medieval Europeans were convincing themselves of their difference from neighbours beyond the frontier, the political communities which they inhabited, seen objectively, tended in the long term to grow broadly more alike. By the close of the middle ages the general trend is unmistakable. Rulers and regimes took over principles and techniques of rule (and particularly in the late middle ages, specialised personnel) from one another. Important differences naturally remained, and in some ways became more entrenched; but they did so within an increasingly interconnected world of European powers, where comparisons were readily drawn and methods shared. Even in shape and size, European polities tended to become more similar. In Italy, the high medieval picture of hundreds of contending urban micro-states had simplified by the fifteenth century to just five regional powers – Milan, Venice, Florence, the papacy, and Naples – and their satellites.

[177] J. A. Taylor, 'Lucera Sarracenorum: a Muslim colony in medieval Christian Europe', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 43 (1999), 110–25.
[178] W. C. Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the last Capetians* (Philadelphia, 1989).
[179] D'A. J. D. Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown: The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Later Medieval Europe 1325–1520* (Woodbridge, 1987), 356–96.

Across much of Europe, both very small political formations and very large and loose hegemonies were becoming increasingly unsustainable.

Yet the familiar story of the rise of the sovereign state leaves too much out of account. Modern scholarship on the middle ages grew to maturity in the shadow of the modern nation state, and was fed by its resources. It is understandable that it has always made much of the medieval growth of proto-modern forms of government. At the time, however, such growth was rarely welcomed by its putative beneficiaries. Princely projects to codify the customary laws of their subjects sometimes had to be abandoned, and the offending texts destroyed.[180] The proliferation of university-trained lawyers in the service of rulers was perceived on occasion as oppression severe enough to warrant outright revolt.[181] Nor is it clear that the opponents of princely state-building were altogether wrong in their judgements. It is striking that the regions which, particularly in their towns, developed the most sophisticated political and economic practices and boasted the most impressive cultural attainments tended to be found where territorial rule was most fragmented or contested. Its growth, by contrast, could curtail the development of more local spheres. In Brandenburg in north-eastern Germany, vigorous urban communities developed in the fourteenth century in a climate of acute political division, only to find their liberties suppressed in the fifteenth under the ambitious Hohenzollern margraves.[182] Nothing sucked the vitality from civic life like the firm rule of princes and bishops.

Latin Europe was a world of enclaves, into which the controlling hand of higher secular or spiritual power intruded itself hesitantly and with difficulty. Even during those high-medieval centuries in which western Christendom was ostensibly most united, the local proliferation of heretical sects offers an instructive contrast with the Eastern Christian sphere of Byzantium.[183] At the end of the middle ages, the bolt-holes from over-arching power remained many and sometimes surprisingly secure. Even when a group or movement was forced out of public life it might still prove able, as did the English Lollards, to find niches within which to continue an underground existence.[184] Not least among Europe's semi-

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[180] As an example of such a codification, see *Maiestas Carolina: Der Kodifikationsentwurf Karls IV. für das Königreich Böhmen von 1355*, ed. B.-U. Hergemöller (Munich, 1995).
[181] Thus in the 'Poor Konrad' revolt in Württemberg (1514): *Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation*, ed. and tr. G. Strauss (Bloomington, IN, 1971), 150–3.
[182] F. L. Carsten, 'Medieval democracy in the Brandenburg towns and its defeat in the fifteenth century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th series 25 (1943), 73–91.
[183] For the durability of western heresy, see A. P. Roach, *The Devil's World: Heresy and Society, 1100–1300* (Harlow, 2005).
[184] J. A. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards, 1414–1520* (London, 1965). Some sects, it is true, were extirpated remarkably completely – the Cathars being a notable example.

autonomous spaces were universities: it is no coincidence that the major heretical movements of the later middle ages centred on the teachings of professional academics.[185]

Not everywhere adhered to a broad pattern of consolidation. Northern Europe's vast, mainly German-speaking, centre became over time more, not less, politically fragmented, despite the intensification of territorial government in many regions where princely dynasties held sway. The picture at the close of the fifteenth century is of bewildering complexity. Here was a landscape behind whose many frontiers subversive ideas and their authors might shelter, particularly when they enjoyed the protection of regional men of power – as the Church's most formidable doctrinal adversary, Dr Martin Luther, was to show to startling effect.[186] Yet, as the case of Luther also shows, those same frontiers were not so formidable as to inhibit the rapid dissemination of dangerous new ideas within a Europe of many encounters and exchanges.[187]

Religion and Church

No institution did as much as the Catholic Church to shape the landscape and influence the style of politics in the west. If political life in Europe is distinguished by multi-polarity, comparative social breadth, and endemic contentiousness, for each of these qualities it owed much to the Church's involvement. Catholic Christianity, as a religion of place, was readily supportive of a politics of place. Both in northern and southern Europe it had followed pre-existing pagan cults in investing supernatural power in locality by means of holy sites and objects. These served as reservoirs of sacred legitimacy which might be tapped for political ends. Saints guarded territories and provided a rallying point for their defence. The shrine of St Aethelthryth at Ely seemingly acted as a focus for native resistance to the Normans in England after 1066.[188] Holy objects set a seal on political boundaries. Processed annually round the walls of a jealously independent town, like the Holy Blood of Bruges, relics offered talismanic guarantees of security.[189] The great pan-European cults of the later middle ages were no less capable of bestowing their protection on particular places than were more obviously local saints and relics. The 'universal mother' Mary was thus able to become the

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[185] Drs John Wyclif, Jan Hus and Martin Luther.
[186] B. Scribner, 'Germany', in B. Scribner *et al.* (eds), *The Reformation in National Context* (Cambridge, 1994), 4–29.
[187] For the power of cultural exchange, see Rubin, 'Culture of Europe', 167.
[188] See S. J. Ridyard, '*Condigna veneratio*: post-Conquest attitudes to the saints of the Anglo-Saxons', *Anglo Norman Studies* 9 (1986), 181–2.
[189] A. Brown, *Civic Ceremony and Religion in Medieval Bruges, c. 1300–1520* (Cambridge, 2011), 37–72.

special defender of, for example, the liberties of the commune of Siena.[190] The unity and integrity of many lesser urban communities were enacted each summer as the mayor took up his place beside the Host in the Corpus Christi procession.[191]

The Church, as has been noted already, possessed an unequalled capacity for establishing boundaries: for translating multiplicity into difference and division. This potential was as readily unlocked on a regnal as a local stage. A number of Latin writers, invariably clerics, working particularly between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, produced influential chronicles purporting to give account of the distinct origins and histories of various European peoples.[192] By the late middle ages the crosses of martyrs and holy warriors were adorning the banners and surcoats of royal armies: from the sacred stuff of Christendom was sewn the national flag.[193] Rulership and the sacred were linked directly in the cults of holy monarchs which the Church instituted.[194] Here is a striking instance of the divine sanction which the Church could bestow upon a politically plural world: just as there were many separate realms, so there were many saint-kings. Living and reigning monarchs were strengthened by the honour thus granted to their forebears: the claims of the kings of France, including their claims over the Church within their realm, drew strength from the canonization of Louis IX (r. 1226-1270), within three decades of his death.[195] The memory of holy kings and its ideological potential were kept alive at sometimes (like that of St Louis) much-visited pilgrimage shrines.

The Church not only made kings, and marked them out at coronation as exalted and worthy of obedience; it continued to glorify them throughout their reigns. Church bells rang to mark the ruler's victories and his passing. Not only did the Church bless the standards that

[190] K. Schreiner, '*Maria patrona*: la sainte vierge comme figure symbolique des villes, territoires et nations à la fin du Moyen Âge et au début des temps modernes', in R. Babel and J.-M. Moeglin (eds), *Identité régionale et conscience nationale en France et en Allemagne du Moyen Age à l'epoque moderne* (Sigmaringen, 1997), 133–53; D. Norman, *Siena and the Virgin: Art and Politics in a Late Medieval City State* (New Haven, CT, 1999).
[191] C. Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen: the communal year at Coventry 1450–1550', in P. Clark and P. Slack (eds), *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500–1700* (London, 1972), 57–85; and generally, M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991).
[192] N. Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der 'nationes': nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 1995).
[193] S. Riches, *St George: Hero, Myth and Martyr* (Stroud, 2000), 101–39; D'A. J. D. Boulton, 'The Order of the Golden Fleece and the creation of Burgundian national identity', in D'A. J. D. Boulton and J. R. Veenstra (eds), *The Ideology of Burgundy: The Promotion of National Consciousness ,1364–1565* (Leiden and Boston, 2006), 68–71. For the proliferation of the cross device in late medieval armies, see also C. Sieber-Lehmann, *Spätmittelalterlicher Nationalismus: die Burgunderkriege am Oberrhein und in der Eidgenossenschaft* (Göttingen, 1995), 131–6.
[194] G. Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge, 2002).
[195] For his post-mortem importance, see A. Rathmann-Lutz, *'Images' Ludwigs des Heiligen im Kontext dynastischer Konflikte des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 2010).

he bore into battle; it might send forth its own in his aid: the banner of St Cuthbert, for example, went north from Durham with English forces against the Scots.[196] If the king returned triumphant, the Church choreographed his homecoming.[197] The papacy, whose historic rise coincided with and was inseparable from the emergence of a Europe of diverse realms and peoples, repeatedly acted to affirm a multi-regnal world.

Churchmen had been at the heart of government since the time of Constantine and, in the northern lands, the earliest convert-kings – though their ideological and administrative roles were much expanded under the Carolingians and their successors. Little wonder then that, when called on to choose between loyalty to ecclesiastical and royal masters, it was often the latter that prevailed. As a French treatise-writer from the time of Philip IV put it, kings were there first.[198] Rulers therefore felt able at times to handle the Church in their realms fairly roughly. In times of crisis in the later middle ages, the demands that clerical wealth and property be placed at the king's disposal became louder and more radical. Kings began to claim generous powers to intervene in the ecclesiastical affairs of their kingdoms. The papacy's own inner rifts, above all the protracted late-medieval schism (1378-1417), reinforced rulers in control of 'their' clergy, as well as entrenching divisions between realms.[199]

Yet the Church always insisted that its message was for all, not for rulers alone: kings were not the only political actors who laid claim to the supernatural favour which it mediated. Rebellious peasants placed the Virgin Mary and the saints on their banners; English rebels in 1381 mustered like a royal army behind the standard of St George.[200] When their cause prevailed, plebeian forces too might turn to the religious sphere to offer thanks and gain affirmation. It was in the church of Notre Dame in Courtrai that the artisans of Bruges hung up the gilt spurs struck from the heels of the French noblemen whom they slaughtered in battle there in 1302.[201] Yet the Church did not only supply a framework for making sense of

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[196] A. C. King and A. J. Pollard, '"Northumbria" in the later middle ages', in R. Colls (ed.), *Northumbria: History and Identity, 547–2000* (Chichester, 2007), 72.
[197] For some English examples, see A. K. McHardy, 'Religion, court culture and propaganda: the chapel royal in the reign of Henry V', in G. Dodd (ed.), *Henry V: New Interpretations* (Woodbridge, 2013), 131–56.
[198] *Three Royalist Tracts 1296–1302: Antequam essent clerici; Disputatio inter clericum et militem; Quaestio in utramque partem*, ed. and tr. R. W. Dyson (Bristol, 1999).
[199] See generally J. A. F. Thomson, *Popes and Princes 1417–1517: Politics and Polity in the Late Medieval Church* (London, 1980).
[200] T. Scott, *Freiburg and the Breisgau: Town-Country Relations in the Age of Reformation and Peasants' War* (Oxford, 1986), 179; *The St Albans Chronicle: The* Chronica Maiora *of Thomas Walsingham*, ed. and tr. J. Taylor *et al*., 2 vols (Oxford, 2003–11), i:452–3.
[201] J. F. Verbruggen, *The Battle of the Golden Spurs (Courtrai, 11 July 1302): A Contribution to the History of Flanders' War of Liberation, 1297–1305*, ed. K. DeVries, tr. D. R. Ferguson (Woodbridge, 2002), 242. The spurs, along with many banners and pennons, were still there in 1382.

conflict, but also promoted peaceful interactions and integration – notably, through religious confraternities, particularly in the towns, cementing communities of rich and poor which also had a political aspect.[202]

The Church played a central part in bringing politics to a socially broader public and encouraging and legitimizing wider participation. The Church was the great communicator of the western middle ages. Because Catholic Christianity was a proselytizing salvation religion with universal claims, the Church at times felt itself not merely empowered but impelled to harness all means to get its message across. Showmanship was a Christian duty, an act of charity: to do less was to endanger souls. The Church could deliver a political message directly to non-elite audiences. The Mendicant orders in particular, after their establishment in the thirteenth century, drew on examples from both history and contemporary affairs in their sermons, which reached a broad public, especially in the towns.[203] Here were lessons in ideological self-presentation from which secular regimes too could profit.

Perhaps even more significant was the Church's role in empowering a wide spectrum of people to think about fundamental issues of public authority for themselves and to act on their convictions under the Church's guidance. The Peace movement of the late tenth and eleventh centuries had drawn participation from outside the established political strata.[204] In urging people to boycott the masses of married priests, some of the more radical eleventh-century Church reformers highlighted the agency of a mass movement to effect radical change.[205] The same period saw such a movement not only arise but take up arms and march against the infidel. The call to Crusade in 1095, which drew a response of far greater social breadth than the pope can have anticipated, gave graphic illustration of popular receptivity.[206] Mobilization of diverse groups took an especially pronounced political slant in the papacy's preaching campaigns north and south of the Alps against its rivals in the Empire – which naturally encouraged supporters of the emperors to cast their own net wide.[207]

In these ways the Church encouraged significant numbers of people not only to act politically but to argue and take sides. There was little that was reasonable about the process,

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[202] A. Brown, 'Bruges and the "Burgundian theatre state": Charles the Bold and Our Lady of the Snows', *History* 84 (1999), 573–89.
[203] M. Menzel, *Predigt und Geschichte: historische Exempel in der geistlichen Rhetorik des Mittelalters* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 1998).
[204] T. Head and R. Landes (eds), *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response around the Year 1000* (Ithaca, NY, 1992).
[205] For both the opportunities for lay action and its limits, see S. Hamilton, *Church and People in the Medieval West, 900–1200* (Harlow, 2013), 78–83.
[206] C. Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (London, 2006), 58–89.
[207] J. B. Freed, *The Friars and German Society in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), 135–67.

accompanied as it was by spiritual sanctions and threats of damnation. It was significant nonetheless. Literate western Europeans (nearly always clerics), meanwhile, learned in the course of the same disputes to argue on a more complex level. Their contending texts can be viewed – albeit with some qualification, in view of their almost invariable composition in demanding Latin – as constituting Europe's earliest political propaganda campaigns.[208] More generally, the Church provided Latin Europe with a more sophisticated conceptual vocabulary with which to analyse political acts, institutions and personalities, and with ethical and even eschatological frameworks within which to judge them.

Ultimately of great significance is that, despite many points of contact, and despite its own exercise of temporal rule, Church and clergy remained distinct from secular hierarchies. To speak of 'two powers', 'spiritual and secular' spheres, or even, at least by the later middle ages, 'Church and State', can by justified in the west as it cannot for the Byzantine or Islamic worlds. Among Latin Europe's many borders, topographical and conceptual, this was perhaps the most historically important of all. With time the idea, already foreshadowed in the fourteenth century in the thought of Marsilius of Padua, would gain ground that politics was enacted within a distinct secular space, with its own ends and justifications, free from clerical sanction.[209]

Conclusions

Such resilience as the western sphere possessed was at least as much a product of its many and manifest weaknesses as of any putative inner strengths. Weaknesses stand out to the hastiest comparative view. The list of things that, even by pre-industrial standards, medieval Europeans did not do especially well is strikingly long. Their rulers, viewed on a world stage, were neither particularly mighty nor notably learned. Their systems of government were fairly limited: the student of pre-modern bureaucracies must look elsewhere for the most sophisticated and potent examples of the administrator's art.[210] The world's greatest cities also lay elsewhere. In a host of capabilities fundamental to sustaining a sophisticated common life – science, technology, commerce, communications – medieval Europeans were learners, not leaders. Even when set beside the achievements of their own ancient pasts, their capabilities appear small: developments often seem to run in reverse.

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[208] M. Suchan, 'Publizistik im Zeitalter Heinrichs IV. – Anfänge päpstlicher und kaiserlicher Propaganda im "Investiturstreit"?', in K. Hruza (ed.), *Propaganda, Kommunikation und Öffentlichkeit (11.–16. Jahrhundert)* (Vienna, 2002), 29–45.
[209] Marsilius of Padua, *The Defender of the Peace*, ed. and tr. A. Brett (Cambridge, 2005).
[210] For a comparison, see E. Kamenka, *Bureaucracy* (Oxford, 1989).

It was in negotiating the limitations of their world that the inhabitants of Latin Europe stumbled upon what were to become characteristic elements of their political sphere. Limited forms of government, subject to a range of checks from below, reflected weakness, not design: where rulers could domineer and oppress, they commonly did. The coercive powers of monarchs varied widely between times and places; but mostly their resources were too small and their rivals too many to permit sustained or thoroughgoing tyranny. Western rulers governed by consent, and built consensus, when they had few other options. Into the vacuum of organization left by the withdrawal of late-antique imperial government, and within the extended western zones where it had never penetrated, there intruded over time the lineaments of an unplanned and ad-hoc 'civil society'. Its elements were untidily various: local churches, village communities, guilds, confraternities, leagues, and an array of other bodies suited to discharging tasks of everyday governance and organization. Overarching systems of rule, as these developed, often chose to work with, co-opt, or simply ignore, these many and diverse local arrangements, rather than repress them in the name of uniformity. Frontiers were numerous but seldom formidable, and because they were so many westerners gained rich experience of their negotiation and transgression.

Medieval Europeans were less aware of the limitations of their world than is the modern observer – or indeed, than were their neighbours in Byzantium and the lands of Islam. Nevertheless, their modes of life in practice paid realistic regard to them. On the whole, westerners proved receptive to the ideas and methods which seeped across their porous and ill-defined and -defended frontiers from wider worlds beyond. The systems which they put in place to transcend the endemic fragmentation of their political life and allay its no less endemic contentiousness and violence were characteristically limited, flexible and pragmatic. Grand ideological visions shaped the political dream-world of medieval Europeans more than their daily experience. The landscape remained irremediably plural. While the distinctiveness of the west in this regard can doubtless be overstated, the foundations of political diversity in Europe were deeper and more substantial than is sometimes thought.[211] They were laid with the disintegration of Rome's western territories and reinforced by the collapse in the west – in contrast to Byzantium and the Islamic sphere – of the antique fiscal state and its replacement by a politics of land. In the centuries that followed, we can trace a dialectical relationship between elements of unity – the Latin-Christian Church and faith, the Carolingian template of government, Latinate learning, the

[211] For a recent account of this multiplicity entirely disregarding its medieval roots, see Ferguson, *Civilization*.

natural connectivity of a temperate and relatively compact zone of life – and the gravitational pulls of many different centres.[212] In political life, plurality won out. The Carolingian model proved well suited to miniaturization and replication, while the Church fitted itself to, and lent its endorsement to, many and diverse modes of common life. The claim to Chosen-Peoplehood, it soon became clear, was no Frankish monopoly, and by the later middle ages, building 'heaven in one country' seemed an attractive project to some western princes and their advisors. To present the 'big picture' of medieval western political culture means capturing the shifting, multiform, multi-coloured patterns of a kaleidoscope.

[212] Some of the tensions between centrifugal and centripetal elements in medieval European history are explored in M. Borgolte, *Europa entdeckt seine Vielfalt 1050–1250* (Stuttgart, 2002), esp. 356–92.