# *Regemque, quem in Francia pene perdidit, in patria magnifice recepit: Ottonian ruler representation in synchronic and diachronic comparison*[1)]

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For German-speakers, the word *Repräsentation* and its derivates have overtones absent from their relatives in the Anglo-Saxon world. From private citizens invited by advertising to purchase *repräsentative* items of consumption like furniture or kitchens, through to federal and state presidents, who dispose of substantial budgets for *Repräsentation*, contemporary Germany is linguistically soaked with a notion of representation implying a display of wealth, taste and solidity appropriate to one's rank in society and affirming that rank. Yet underlying this notion is a deeper sense that representation must imply the independent existence of something to be represented; it may well have a legitimate role of its own, but this cannot be sustained without real substance behind it, and indeed any attempt to ›represent‹ a substance which was not there would be met with ridicule and satire. A similar presupposition is evident in the distinction between the ›dignified‹ and ›efficient‹ parts of a constitution, familiar to English-speaking specialists in political science since it was first formulated as a daringly cynical observation on the role of the monarchy by Walter Bagehot some 130 years ago[2)]. Though the ›dignified‹ parts of a constitution (or indeed of any social system) may have a vital role to play in the functioning of the whole, they cannot exist on their own without an ›efficient‹ segment to give them meaning. Medievalists also tend to believe this. To talk of *Staatssymbolik* with Percy Ernst Schramm is precisely to imply that there is a state somewhere with a separate real existence which can be symbolised[3)]; and it is

1) Illness prevented me from attending the Reichenau conference and even completing my paper in 1994. As a result, I have for convenience written my contribution in English rather than German. My knowledge of what was said and discussed at the meeting is largely derived from the brief summaries in protocol no. 339 of the Konstanzer Arbeitskreis; if in what follows I seem to be offering a different account or evaluation of events and phenomena from that offered by others in this volume, this should not necessarily be taken as deliberate and conscious contradiction.

2) Walter Bagehot, The English Constitution, in: The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot, ed. Norman St-John Stevas, vol. 5, London 1974, p. 206.

3) Percy Ernst Schramm, Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik, 3 vols. (Schriften der MGH 13), Stuttgart 1954–1956; Idem, Das Grundproblem dieser Sammlung: Die ›Herrschaftszeichen‹, die ›Staatssymbolik‹ und die ›Staatspräsentation‹ des Mittelalters, in: Kaiser, Könige und Päpste. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 4 vols in 5, Stuttgart 1968–1971, vol. 1, pp. 30–60 and Grundbegriffe des Be-

probably to ignore or overlook the possibility of a state considered as a set of social relations which can be apprehended *only* (or at least primarily) in its symbolisation, both by those of us who observe it now and by those who participated in it at the time, a polity which exists largely if not completely by means of its symbols.

Such a view seems to me to be implicit in the quotation in my title, which is an epigram from Widukind's *Res gestae Saxonicae*. Describing the beginning of the rebellion against Otto I in 953 by his son Liudolf of Suabia and his son-in-law Conrad of Lotharingia, he relates how at Mainz Archbishop Frederick had only with reluctance provided the due *servitia* for Otto; how Otto, unwilling to celebrate Easter amongst his enemies at Ingelheim, had shifted to Aachen; how there too he had found that nothing had been prepared for him there (not surprisingly, since Aachen lay in Conrad's sphere of influence). Only when he had reached Dortmund could he recover his position: *regem, quem in Francia pene perdidit, in patria magnifice recepit*[4]. Otto had been in danger of ›losing the king‹, of losing his own identity as king, precisely because at a key point he would not have been able to behave and to be seen to behave in a manner which a modern German-speaker might term *repräsentativ*. The passage hovers on the edge of a Kantorowiczian separation of the ›King's Two Bodies‹. As the excerpt cited in the text is prefaced by the clause *maternis gaudiis et officiis decenter curatur* it is conceivable that the implied subject of the sentence is Mathilda, not Otto, which would of course make it less interesting; but Otto is the subject which a natural reading of the passage would understand, and it has been so understood.

To be a king is thus not simply a matter of status or action, but also of style. Action does not inherently require an audience; style does. Kingship, in other words, is a social construct. Isidore of Seville thought that if you acted like a king (that is, rightly and rightfully), then you were one[5]; but it would be equally true to say that if you were perceived as a king, then you were one, and if not, not, as the quotation in the title implies. For Widukind and his contemporaries, the exercise of rulership consisted to a large extent – how large an extent we shall have to discuss – in the public theatre of assemblies and church festivals. This theatre served to stress the differences between rulers and others: these differences were in some respects so fundamental that they ought never to be blurred, and in other respects so minimal that the danger of their being blurred was constantly present. Even when amongst

reichs: Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik, vol. 4/2, pp. 682–705; for commentary see Janos M. Bak, Medieval symbology of the state: Percy E. Schramm's contribution, Viator 4 (1973), pp. 33–63 and idem, Introduction: Coronation studies – past, present, and future, in Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual, ed. Janos M. Bak, Berkeley 1990, pp. 1–15.

4) Widukind of Corvey, Rerum gestarum Saxonicarum libri III, 14, edd. P. Hirsch/H.-E. Lohmann (MGH SRG 61, Hannover $^{3}$1935), p. 111; for the meeting at Dortmund see Adalbert of St. Maximin, in Reginonis abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi, ed. Friedrich Kurze (MGH SRG 50, Hannover 1891), p. 166; Böhmer-Ottenthal, no. 227d.

5) Isidore of Seville, Etymologiarum sive Originum libri XX, IX 4, ed. W. M. Lindsay, Oxford 1911; no pagination.

friends and neighbours in Merseburg, Henry I remained a *dominus*; all, including the king, might be drunk, but the king nevertheless remained in control of himself and his surroundings[6], and this in one of the most dangerous situations of early medieval political life, the aristocratic drinking-bout[7].

We are here in territory which has now become reasonably familiar. Its study began in the 1920s with a move away from the supposed realities of a timelessly understood politics towards the investigation of »signs of lordship and symbols of state«, to use Percy Ernst Schramm's phrase. These were by and large ›classical‹ forms of royal self-dramatization with a heavy emphasis on the great ecclesiastical and liturgical climaxes like coronations, crown-wearings, consecrations of bishops and churches, openings of councils, great church feasts. Linked with these was the study of images of the ruler and of rulership as found in coins, seals, paintings and sculpture[8]. In the last two decades this interest has come to be complemented by the study of more flexible, non-ecclesiastical forms of self-dramatization, notably in work by Heinrich Fichtenau, Karl Leyser and Gerd Althoff[9]. I do not want here simply to recapitulate their work on ritual and staging in Ottonian politics, though I shall draw on it and offer some fresh nuances. I want rather to try to determine the relationship of these kinds of studies to other views of the Ottonian polity. It seems to me that one of the most obvious characteristics of Ottonian scholarship during the last two generations has been its tendency to develop along parallel lines of enquiry, parallel in the sense

6) Widukind (as n. 4), I 39, p. 59: *Et licet in conviviis satis iocundus esset, tamen nichil regalis disciplinae minuebat. Tantum enim favorem pariter et timorem militibus infundebat, ut etiam ludenti non crederent ad aliquam lasciviam se dissolvendum.* In an as yet unpublished paper given at the Institute of Historical Research in May 1995 Philippe Buc (Stanford) noted the echoes in this passage of Gregory I's views on proper behaviour for bishops, which themselves owed much to notions current in late antiquity about the proper conduct for aristocrats.

7) For the social and sociological context of the drinking-bout in the high middle ages see Michael J. Enright, Lady with a mead-cup: ritual, group cohesion and hierarchy in the Germanic warband, Frühmittelalterliche Studien 22 (1988), pp. 170–203; Gerd Althoff, Der friedens-, bündnis- und gemeinschaftsstiftende Charakter des Mahles im früheren Mittelalter, in: Essen und Trinken in Mittelalter und Neuzeit, ed. Irmgard Bitsch and others, Sigmaringen 1987, pp. 13–26; idem, Fest und Bündnis, in: Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter: Paderborner Symposion des Mediävistenverbandes, ed. D. Altenburg/J. Jarnut/H.-H. Steinhoff, Sigmaringen 1991, pp. 29–38; Donald A. Bullough, Friends, neighbours and fellow-drinkers: aspects of community and conflict in the early medieval West, Cambridge 1991, pp. 12–16.

8) Most notably associated with the work of Percy Ernst Schramm; for fuller references see the works cited in n. 3.

9) Heinrich Fichtenau, Lebensordnungen des 10. Jahrhunderts (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 30/1–2), Stuttgart 1984 (English translation by Patrick Geary as Living in the Tenth Century, Chicago 1991); Karl Leyser, Communications and power in medieval Europe: the Carolingian and Ottonian centuries, ed. Timothy Reuter, London, 1994, especially pp. 189–215: Ritual, ceremony and gesture: Ottonian Germany (also in German in Frühmittelalterliche Studien 27 (1993), pp. 1–26); for Althoff's extensive work see the articles collected in his Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter. Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde, Darmstadt 1997, and the bibliography given there, pp. 314–315.

that they never meet and never need to meet. *Itinerar-* or *Pfalzenforschung* has proceeded largely without reference to Beumann's concern for contemporary historians' consciousnesses, or Schramm's for *Staatssymbolik*, or Althoff's for group activities and consciousnesses, and of course vice versa. As with the elephant touched and reported on by the blind men in the fable, all we seem to have are incomplete and possibly inconsistent reports of something which clearly exists but whose shape is in the last resort uncertain.

One way of getting closer to a shape for the elephant would undoubtedly be to compare across time and across cultures, and in what follows I shall be introducing a wide range of examples. I shall not confine myself to the Ottonians' immediate contemporaries and predecessors in western Europe, but also draw on polities much further afield, including precolonial kingdoms in Africa and Asia. The point of doing this is not to put Ottonian Saxony on some kind of level footing with, say, Renaissance Venice, or Elizabethan England, or T'ang China, or the kingdom of Bali before 1906, or the kingdom of the Buganda before the British takeover in the early twentieth century; the differences are so obvious that they scarcely need to be dwelt on. There is a clear danger in lumping together all pre-industrial polities into a kind of Gondwanaland, a single continent, so to speak, from which all polities are derived: we know the risks well enough from earlier generations of scholars, who thought that they could construct a view of the ›Germanic‹ from societies which were widely scattered in time and space and linked only by membership of a common linguistic family. What comparison can do is not fill in the blanks in our knowledge or offer direct parallels, but to suggest insights and ways of looking at things.

To begin with, it might be helpful to locate the position of Ottonian politics on a number of spectra. The first of these I can most easily define by offering two extreme examples taken from a range of polities with broadly comparable socio-economic infrastructures. At the one end we have, for example, the Angevin government of the Anglo-Norman realms in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, at least as conventionally perceived: hard-nosed, relying comparatively little on such things as assemblies and the rituals of the church year, and backed up by a deep substratum of what were by medieval standards pretty homogenous and bureaucratised institutions[10]. At the other end of the spectrum, we might take as an example the kingdom of Bali prior to the Dutch assumption of power in 1906, as described in a famous passage by the American cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz[11]:

10) See for example J. E. A. Jolliffe, Angevin Despotism, London ²1963; W. L. Warren, Henry II, London ²1977; Idem, The Governance of England, 1086–1272, London 1987.

11) Clifford Geertz, Politics past, politics present: some notes on the uses of anthropology in understanding the new states, in: The interpretation of cultures, New York 1973 (article first published 1967), pp. 327–341 at pp. 334–335; the passage is to be found verbatim in Idem, Negara: the theater-state in nineteenth-century Bali, Princeton 1980, p. 124.

> The expressive nature of the Balinese state, and of the political life it supported ... was always pointed, not towards tyranny, whose systematic concentration of power it was hopelessly incompetent to effect, not even very methodically towards government, which it pursued indifferently and even hesitantly, but rather towards spectacle, towards ceremony, towards the public dramatisation of the ruling obsessions of Balinese culture: social inequality and status pride. It was a theatre-state in which the kings and princes were the impresarios, the priests the directors, the peasantry the supporting cast, stage crew, and audience ... To govern was not so much to choose as to perform. Ceremony was not form but substance. Power served pomp, not pomp power.

Both these examples are, of course, challengeable. Angevin government looks the way it does to us at least as much because of the ruling obsessions of Anglolexic medievalists as because it *was* like that (or *only* like that)[12]; equally, Geertz's view of the Balinese polity just quoted is not the only one which can be and has been offered, even by Geertz himself[13]. But for our purposes the two examples will provide the colours on one notional piece of litmus-paper. Most of us would, I think, see the Ottonian world, inside and outside Saxony, as much closer to that of Geertz's Bali than to that of the colourless efficiency we associate with the Angevins, both in its inability and indeed unwillingness to achieve ›tyranny‹ – meaning an imbalance between the power of the ruler and the power of others within the polity – and in its ›indifferent and even hesitant‹ pursuit of government.

These considerations lead us to a second piece of litmus-paper, with a different colour-scale. Consider the important article published by Hagen Keller in 1989 on the nature of the ›state‹ in the era between »Carolingian imperial reform« and the »expansion of government in the high middle ages«[14]: here the Ottonian and Salian eras appear as a canyon dividing the high plateau of intensive and responsible government of the Carolingian era from that of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, though Keller shows a healthy scepticism as to how far present appearance corresponds to past reality, at least as far as the

12) For some first signs of interest in the ritual and expressive side of Angevin government, whose neglect by historians is matched only by the range of sources available for it, see Marie Therese Flanagan, Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship. Interactions in Ireland in the late twelfth century, Oxford 1989, pp. 169–207; Geoffrey Koziol, England, France, and the problem of sacrality in twelfth-century ritual, in: Cultures of power: lordship, status and process in twelfth-century Europe, ed. Thomas N. Bisson, Philadelphia 1995, pp. 127–148.

13) The analysis of pre-colonial Balinese society offered by Geertz, Negara (as n. 11) itself offers a much more nuanced and highly-layered view than is implied simply by the quotation in the text. For critiques of Geertz's approach see the discussion and bibliography in Aletta Biersack, Local knowledge, local history: Geertz and beyond, in The new cultural history, ed. Lynn Hunt, Berkeley 1989, pp. 72–96, especially at pp. 80–81.

14) Hagen Keller, Zum Charakter der »Staatlichkeit« zwischen karolingischer Reichsreform und hochmittelalterlichem Herrschaftsausbau, Frühmittelalterliche Studien 23 (1989), pp. 248–264.

contrast with the Carolingians is concerned. The rule of the Ottonians' and Salians' contemporaries in west Francia could similarly be seen as a low point, a failure which has often provided a contrasting and legitimating episode in the Grand Narratives of state development offered by many French, English and American historians[15]. What we are talking about here is the intensity and consciousness of central government: how far does it appear to be seeking control and direction or at least supervision of political life in the localities? Again, it's fairly clear that the Ottonian polity can be located well towards the minimalist end of the scale, especially by comparison with the ›maximalist‹ view of the contemporary Old English state offered by James Campbell and Patrick Wormald[16], a comparison to which we shall have to return.

Note that these two pieces of litmus paper are in fact measuring different things, though they are superficially similar. There is no necessary correlation between a high degree of ritualisation or theatricality or use of symbolic language in public life and a low level of government, as the examples of Otto's contemporaries in Constantinople[17] and in Cordoba[18], or indeed of China throughout most if not all of the imperial era, make clear[19]. There is probably a higher degree of correlation between the level and intensity of government and its need for legitimation. Here we can invert a proposition advanced by Jürgen Habermas.

15) See Thomas N. Bisson, The »feudal revolution«, Past and Present, 142 (1994), pp. 6–42 and the subsequent debate with contributions by Dominique Barthélemy, Stephen White, Past and Present, 152 (1996), pp. 196–223, and by Timothy Reuter and Chris Wickham with a response by Bisson, Past and Present, 155 (1997), pp. 177–225.

16) James Campbell, Was it Infancy in England? Some Questions of Comparison, in: M. Jones and M. Vale (eds.), England and her Neighbours, 1066–1453. Essays in Honour of Pierre Chaplais, London 1990, pp. 1–17; Idem, The United Kingdom of England: The Anglo-Saxon Achievement, in: A. Grant/K.J. Stringer (eds.), Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History, London 1995, pp. 31–47; Idem, The Late Anglo-Saxon State: A Maximum View, Proceedings of the British Academy, 87 (1994), pp. 39–65; P. Wormald, *Engla Lond*: the making of an allegiance, Journal of Historical Sociology, 7 (1994), pp. 1–24.

17) See Constantine VII Porphyrogenits, *De cerimoniis aulae byzantinae*, I–II, ed. I. I. Reiske, Bonn 1829 (the French edition by J. Vogt, 2 vols, Paris 1937, is, regrettably, incomplete), and as commentary A. J. Toynbee, Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his World, Oxford 1973, pp. 575–605; A. Cameron, The Construction of Court Ritual: the Byzantine *Book of Ceremonies*, in D. Cannadine/S. Price (eds.), Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies, Cambridge 1987, pp. 106–136; P. Magdalino, The Bath of Leo the Wise and the »Macedonian Renaissance« revisited: Topography, Ceremonial, Ideology, Dumbarton Oaks Papers 42 (1988), pp. 97–118.

18) For Cordoba see the classic account of the embassy by John of St Arnulf, *Vita Iohannis Abbatis Gorziensis*, cc. 118–136, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz (MGH SS 4) pp. 371–377, and most recently D. Wasserstein, The Caliphate in the West, Oxford 1993.

19) On court ritual in the T'ang period see the remarkably suggestive studies by Howard G Wechsler, Offerings of jade and silk: ritual and symbol in the legitimation of the T'ang dynasty, New Haven 1985, and David McMullen, Bureaucrats and cosmology: the ritual code of T'ang China, in Cannadine and Price, Rituals of royalty (as n. 17), pp. 181–236. Both authors stress the political importance of ritual, but also its flexibility.

If a state power takes on increased areas of responsibility, it will, Habermas argues, need a greater degree of legitimation to meet these, or else must face a crisis of legitimacy. If this is plausible, then presumably the reverse holds: a state which reduces its areas of responsibiltiy could make do with *less* legitimation without suffering a legitimacy crisis. This is, perhaps, one of the factors which allowed Ottonian rulers to deal so leniently with rebels; their bank account of legitimacy was in less danger of becoming overdrawn than that of their Carolingian predecessors or of their Salian successors[20]. It may also be significant that whereas we have occasional references to Carolingian court jesters, figures who come to be mentioned again in Europe from the late eleventh-century onwards, we have none that I know of to Ottonian ones[21]. The safety-valve function of the licensed fool's inversive and transgressive behaviour was simply not needed. Equally, though visions played a not unimportant role in Ottonian historical and hagiographical writing, for example in Thietmar's *Chronicon*[22], ›political‹ visions as a vehicle for expressing opposition or dissent which could not easily be formulated more directly do not figure in the way they clearly did in the Carolingian era[23].

A third scale for measuring difference is given by the context or audience for political action. Again, examples may help us to understand and define it. At one end of a possible spectrum we have a significant episode in early Ottonian politics, the punishment of Eberhard of Franconia and his followers after their attack on a Saxon vassal of Eberhard's. As is well known, they were made to carry a dog publicly for a considerable dis-

20) See on this Gerd Althoff, Königsherrschaft und Konfliktbewältigung im 10. und 11. Jh., Frühmittelalterliche Studien 23 (1989), pp. 265–289 (repr. in: Idem, Spielregeln [as n. 9], pp. 21–56); Timothy Reuter, Unruhestiftung, Fehde, Rebellion, Widerstand: Gewalt und Frieden in der Salierzeit, in: Die Salier und das Reich, 3: Gesellschaftlicher und ideengeschichtlicher Wandel im Reich der Salier, ed. S. Weinfurter/H. Seibert, Sigmaringen 1991, pp. 297–325.

21) See for example Notker Balbulus, Gesta Karoli magni imperatoris I 13, ed. H.F. Haefele (MGH SRG NF 12, Munich 1980), p. 17, for Carolingian jesters, and for the eleventh century the anecdote about William the Conqueror discussed in: Janet Nelson, The rites of the Conqueror, in Eadem, Politics and ritual in the early middle ages, London 1986, pp. 400–401. The subject deserves further investigation; it should be noted here that the *ioculatores* banished from the wedding of Henry III with Agnes of Poitou belong in a different category.

22) E.g. Thietmar, Chronicon, II 16, ed. Robert Holtzmann (MGH SRG NS 9, Berlin 1935), pp. 56/8 (vision of Brun of Cologne being accused in heaven); III 5, pp. 100/2 (vision of Willigis of Mainz's mother), and for dreams and visions by kings see II 26, p. 70 and VI 91, p. 382. Thietmar's visions mostly announce deaths, however; of those mentioned here, only the one concerning Brun could be taken as a ›political‹ vision.

23) From the extensive literature on this subject I cite only Wilhelm Levison, Die Politik in den Jenseitsvisionen des frühen Mittelalters, in Idem, Aus rheinischer und fränkischer Frühzeit, Düsseldorf 1948, pp. 229–246; Peter Dinzelbacher, Visionen und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 23,) Stuttgart 1981; Paul E. Dutton, The politics of dreaming in the Carolingian empire, Lincoln, Nebraska 1994. An exception to the generalisation in the text above is the vision discussed by Gerd Althoff, Magdeburg – Halberstadt – Merseburg. Bischöfliche Repräsentation und Interessenvertretung im ottonischen Sachsen, in the present volume.

tance[24]. At the other end of a possible spectrum, consider an example from a quite different time and place: Kenilworth, the estate of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, where in 1575 a masque was put on for the entertainment of the visiting Queen Elisabeth I of England, in which a contemporary debate about whether and whom the queen should marry was given literary (and therefore ›safer‹) expression in the form of a stage performance full of allusions to classical literature[25].

The contrast is readily apparent, though not as easy as it might seem to define. It is not a matter of a contrast between simple unambiguous symbols on the one hand and complex polyvalent symbols drawing on context and intertext on the other, for in a society fairly recently Christianised like Ottonian Saxony the dog would also have carried a range of symbolic values. The difference is rather that the whole of this range would not necessarily have been accessible to most of the participants in the spectacle. Ultimately, we are dealing with a function of the level of written learning and culture prevailing among the political élite. In Elisabethan England, as also in Renaissance Venice or Florence, or in Constantine Porphyrogenitos's Constantinople, or indeed the imperial court of T'ang China, the ritual and public symbolism which made up and defined ruler representation were embedded in a knowledge of history, of religion, and of a literary canon which was not confined to circles of specialists. There might indeed be specialists in formal public ritual, but they were working and composing for an informed audience. This backdrop of common understanding empowered a symbolism which could be understood on many levels, and an allusiveness which could reach high levels of sophistication. It is a characteristic of a society marked by a certain kind of learning rather than simply of one with a high degree of literacy. We ourselves, for example, inhabit highly literate societies, but we no longer possess as a matter of course the range of knowledge which enables us to interpret with ease symbolic action and spectacle in our own or other societies; we need ›interpreters‹, as can be seen from the role of Kremlinologists (until recently, at least), Sinologists or indeed experts on Vatican politics in our world.

The Ottonian political elite undoubtedly lacked such a common dimension of learning in its shared culture, and this may help to explain one very marked trait of Ottonian ruler

24) Widukind, Res gestae Saxonicae (as n. 4) II 6, p. 72. See G. Waitz, Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte, 6: Die Deutsche Reichsverfassung von der Mitte des neunten bis zur Mitte des 12. Jahrhunderts, 3rd edn. by G. Seeliger (Berlin, 1896), p. 605 with nn. 5 and 6; Bernd Schwenk, Das Hundetragen. Ein Rechtsbrauch im Mittelalter, HJb 110 (1990), pp. 289–308; Leyser, Ritual, ceremony and gesture (as n. 9), p. 197. On related punishments such as harmiscara see Mayke deJong, Power and humility in Carolingian society: the public penance of Louis the Pious, Early Medieval Europe 1 (1992), pp. 46–47 and Jessica Hemming, Sellam gestare: saddlebearing punishments of medieval Europe and the case of Rhiannon, Viator 28 (1997, forthcoming).

25) Susan Fry, Elisabeth I: the competition for representation, Oxford 1995, pp. 56–96; Fry also offers a convenient bibliographical entry-point to the huge and growing literature produced by early modern historians and literary critics on the representation and self-representation of power in the early modern era.

representation: its lack of historical content. Many of the societies I have just mentioned not only had annual cycles of festivals and rituals, as the Ottonians did: many of the feasts and rituals which figured in the annual cycles were references to a singular event located in historic time: the late-medieval festival celebrating the marriage of Venice with the sea is one kind of example[26], the celebrations of rulers' birth- and accession days found across a very wide range of societies another. Benjamin Ray, writing about the political symbolism of the east African kingdom of the Buganda, has pointed to the importance of the »ritual enactment of founding deeds«[27], In so far as Ottonian political culture did have a historical referent, it was the history recorded in the New Testament: the royal and not only the ecclesiastical year was punctuated by the festivals of Christmas, Palm Sunday, Easter and Whitsun. The Great Events of Liudolfing/Ottonian history were not reenacted in this way. To refer to the victory at the Lechfeld by giving additional stress to the feast of St Lawrence, even to the point of allowing archbishops to wear their pallia on that day, was a much more indirect and ›translated‹ way of memorialising it[28]. The same applies to ruler-representation as found in Ottonian art: Henry Mayr-Harting may be right in arguing that Ottonian ›court‹ artists rediscovered the New Testament and developed narrative techniques for depicting the history of Christ, but their depictions of rulers are in general timeless and hieratic[29]. A sharp contrast is provided here by some contemporary Byzantine representations of Romanus Lecapenus and Basil II, both of which set the ruler they depicted in a historical context which compared him explicitly with earlier rulers[30].

This ahistoricity links, to my mind, with the absence in Ottonian culture of a historically-grounded view of what kingship was or should be. Whatever kingship actually meant or could have meant to the Saxons, it does not seem to have been strongly defined by past practice. It is a commonplace to say that the east Frankish Carolingians had not visited Saxony since 852. It is not quite true, since there were visits in transit to campaign

26) On this see Edward Muir, Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice, Princeton 1981, pp. 119–134, and more generally on historical festivals pp. 75–92, 135–181.

27) Benjamin C. Ray, Myth, Ritual and Kingship in Buganda, New York and Oxford 1991, pp. 14–20; the quotation in the text is from p. 19.

28) Helmut Beumann, Laurentius und Mauritius: Zu den missonsgeschichtlichen Folgen des Ungarnsieges Ottos des Großen, in: Festschrift Walter Schlesinger, ed. Helmut Beumann, Bd. 2 (Mitteldeutsche Forschungen 74/2), Köln/Wien 1974, pp. 238–275; and in: Idem, Ausgewählte Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1966–1986, Sigmaringen 1987, pp. 139–176; Hagen Keller, Machabaeorum pugnae. Zum Stellenwert eines biblischen Vorbilds in Widukinds Deutung der ottonischen Königsherrschaft, in: Iconologia sacra. Mythos, Bildkunst und Dichtung in der Religions- und Sozialgeschichte Alteuropas, Festschrift Karl Hauck, eds. Hagen Keller/Nikolaus Staubach, Berlin/New York 1994, pp. 417–437; Thomas Zotz, Pallium et alia quaedam archiepiscopatus insignia, in: Festschrift Berent Schwineköper, eds. Helmut Maurer/Hans Patze, Sigmaringen 1982, pp. 155–175.

29) Henry Mayr-Harting, Ottonian Book-Illumination, 2 vols., London 1991.

30) Jonathan Shepard, Byzantium restored, in: The New Cambridge Medieval History, 3: c. 900–c. 1024, ed. Timothy Reuter, Cambridge, in the press.

against the Slavs in 862, 869 and 892; but it is true enough. The pattern of Carolingian diplomata-issuing for Saxon recipients may also suggest a reduced level of contact between the Carolingian east Frankish kings and the Saxons, though the early Liudolfings clearly derived some of their power-base from the marriages between Liudolfing women and Carolingian men[31]. The important point is that by the early tenth century there were no longer any *accurate* memories of the Carolingians; indeed, what from our point of view is a historical muddle is characteristic, for good reasons, of tenth-century historians, as Patrick Geary has recently pointed out[32]. This is not merely a matter of technical inaccuracy; it implies ceasing to have a real feel for the past. The process of mythologising the Carolingians began, of course, in the ninth century itself, as we can see from Einhard and Notker; but what we find in most tenth-century writers is not so much mythologising and ideologising – I don't think Notker was much read in the tenth century, for example – as mis-remembering. We know that Widukind read Einhard carefully – where Einhard stated that the Saxons had become one people with the Franks, Widukind when citing Einhard deliberately added *quasi* (›as if‹); but it is clear that he didn't draw on him for a model of kingship, though he occasionally borrowed appropriate motifs, as when he echoed aspects of Einhard's account of Charles' treatment of rebels in his own description of how Otto dealt with the rebels of the 941 plot[33]. It's also clear that he no longer had a clear idea of the course of later ninth-century Carolingian history (and nor if it comes to that did Liudprand or Richer)[34]. Whatever the overtones implied by the choice of Aachen as a coronation site in 936, 961 and 983, they were not primarily dictated by a living memory of ninth-century Carolingian rulership[35].

We thus are faced with a polity with no centre, little government, and little historical depth. Before going on to look at the practicalities of how Ottonian rulers represented

31) Karl Leyser, Rule and conflict in an early medieval society: Ottonian Saxony, London 1979, pp. 4–5.

32) Patrick Geary, Phantoms of Remembrance, Princeton 1995, especially pp. 134–57; see also Amy. S. Remensnyder, Remembrance of Kings Past. Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France, Ithaca 1995, though she is dealing with a region where Carolingians had rarely been a real presence even when they were alive.

33) Widukind, Res gestae Saxonicae (as n. 4) I 15, p. 25 and II 31, p. 92 (with which passage compare Einhard, Gesta Karoli, c. 20, ed. O. Holder-Egger [MGH SRG 25, Hannover 1911], p. 25–6). For Widukind's relationship to Einhard see Helmut Beumann, Widukind von Korvei, Weimar 1950, p. 45, 141–144 and elsewhere.

34) See Widukind, Res gestae Saxonicae (as n. 4) I 16 and 28, pp. 25-6, 40-1; for similar confusions about late ninth century rulers see Liudprand of Cremona, Antapodosis I 5 and 14, ed. Joseph Becker (MGH SRG 41, Hannover 1915), pp. 7, 16; Richer, Historiae I 4, ed. Robert Latouche, Paris 1930–1937, vol. 1, p. 10.

35) On this see Karl Hauck, Die Ottonen und Aachen, 876 bis 936, in: Karl der Große, Lebenswerk und Nachleben, IV: Das Nachleben, ed. Wolfgang Braunfels/Percy Ernst Schramm, Düsseldorf 1967, pp. 39–53. It is really only after the disappearance of real live ruling Carolingians in 987 that Otto III could fully appropriate the Charles the Great-Aachen tradition: see Knut Görich, Otto III. Romanus Saxonicus et Italicus, Sigmaringen 1993, pp. 265–266, with further literature.

themselves, I want to make a fourth general point and add a rider about its implications for our source-criticism. It is important to realise that although certain words and phrases in the vocabulary of representation were reserved for rulers, it is not in general true that the language of ritually or symbolically coloured self-portrayal was confined exclusively to them. A few examples, mostly well-known, will serve to illustrate this point. Hermann Billung's usurpation of Otto I's rightful reception, place at table and bed in Magdeburg in 972 has been much discussed in recent years[36], but, whether we see in it a demonstrative assertion of ducal status within Saxony or a coded commentary on Otto I's long absence in Italy, its message was clearly intended for Otto I. Yet such a political instrumentalisation of the Goldilocks motif need not entail a royal audience or victim. The anonymous author of the *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium*, whose main theme is the tensions and rivalries between the bishops of Cambrai and the secular lords in and around the town, offers two parallel stories[37]. In the first, Charles of Lorraine invades the bishopric in the course of the political manoeuvrings of the late 970s, and sleeps with his wife in the bishop's bed[38]. In the second, a local opponent of the bishops, the current castellan, invades the episcopal palace on the death of bishop Gerard and again demonstratively occupies the bishop's table and bed. Here too we have the demonstrative occupation of another's bedchamber as an act charged with protest and opposition, though this time it is opposition to a bishop, not a ruler[39]. Equally, bishops might, as Ottonian kings did, insist on a ritual submission of their lay opponents following a conflict, with bare feet and penitential mien: I have collected a number of examples of this, though I haven't yet found one prior to Henry II's reign[40].

If these parallels are perhaps explicable in terms of the reciprocal relations of imitatio regni and imitatio sacerdotii between bishops and rulers[41], we can in fact find at least traces of a similar reciprocal imitation when we look at the behaviour of lay magnates. We

36) Thietmar, Chronicon (as n. 22), II 28, pp. 72–74; Leyser, Rule and Conflict (as n. 31), pp. 25, 94; Gerd Althoff, Das Bett des Königs in Magdeburg. Zu Thietmar II, 28, in: Festschrift Berent Schwineköper, eds. Helmut Maurer/Hans Patze, Sigmaringen 1982, pp. 141–153; Leyser, Ritual, ceremony and gesture (as n. 9), pp. 198–201.

37) Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium, I 101 and 118–119, ed. L. Bethmann (MGH SS 7), pp. 442–443, 453–454; for a similar piece of behaviour, cf. the actions of John, the castellan of Cambrai, on Gerards' death, Gesta Lietberti episcopi, c. 5 (MGH SS 7), p. 492.

38) See Karl Leyser, 987: the Ottonian connection, in Communications and Power (as n. 9), pp. 165–179, here pp. 174–175.

39) For a later example of an invasion of a bishop's sphere of intimacy by a count see the incident at Nevers in 1182 described in Mary Mansfield, The Humiliation of Sinners, Ithaca/London 1995, p. 10.

40) See Timothy Reuter, Filii matris nostrae pugnant adversum nos: bonds and tensions between prelates and their milites in the German high middle ages, in: Chiesa e mondo feudale nei secoli X-XI, ed. Giorgio Picasso, Milan 1995, pp. 247–274, here p. 252.

41) Percy Ernst Schramm, Sacerdotium und Regnum im Austausch ihrer Vorrechte, in: Kaiser, Könige und Päpste (as n. 3), vol. 4/1, pp. 57–102.

know comparatively little about how counts and dukes took up or exercised their offices in the Ottonian Reich; but it would be a mistake to suppose that whereas kings had elaborate initiation rites in the form of coronation and Umritt, followed by a whole series of demonstrative rituals to punctuate their year's ruling, counts and dukes merely existed in a pragmatic world devoid of all symbolic meaning. We can find Hermann of Meißen forgiving his enemies on becoming margrave, much like a king[42]. Another anecdote of Thietmar's tells of a count who had been proceeding to take up office in Suabia, when his opponents stole the banner which symbolised both his office and his legitimate claim to it from the camp he had pitched overnight. As a result of this, he was forced to abandon his claims. The story has been frequently cited as the earliest evidence for banner fiefs in the Reich; but it is perhaps more interesting as showing that a count (and by analogy presumably also a margrave or duke) might need *Herrschaftszeichen* in order to exercise office legitimately[43]. Widukind's epigrammatic remark that Otto »nearly lost the king[ship] in Francia« comes into sharper focus when we contemplate Thietmar's account of how a Suabian count appointed by the king did indeed lose his countship once he had lost the ability to symbolize it.

It appears, then, that in Ottonian Saxony and more generally in the Ottonian *Reich*, indeed in post-Carolingian Francia, kings and the members of the political community over which they ruled directly shared a common language of power. This would be quite unsurprising to political anthropologists, several of whom have made the point that royal ritual is an assertion of difference within similarity: Maurice Bloch, for example, has shown how the ritual of the royal bath in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Madagascar made use of a symbolism universally prevalent within that society to make a specific point[44]. Yet when we try to explore this language we are confronted by a problem of representation, using the word in a rather different sense. How far are we looking at past reality, and how far at a common set of conventions for describing that reality familiar to historians and hagiographers in the tenth and early eleventh centuries?[45] Another example may illustrate the point. At a crucial moment during the rebellion of Henry, Eberhard and Giselbert in 939 Otto angrily refused the demand of a count that the monastery of Lorsch should be given to him in benefice, citing the well-known words of Matthew 7:6 that holy things should not be given to dogs. As Karl Leyser has pointed out, the request and its re-

42) Thietmar, Chronicon (as n. 22), VI 55, p. 342.

43) Thietmar, Chronicon (as n. 22), V 21, pp. 245–247.

44) Maurice Bloch, The ritual of the royal bath in Madagascar: the dissolution of death, birth and fertility into authority, in Cannadine, Rituals of Royalty (as n. 17), pp. 271–274, and note also p. 296: »On the one hand the ritual of the royal bath is the same as the ordinary rituals of blessing by which each and every Merina assures and represents the reproduction of his family and himself. ... On the other hand the ritual of the royal bath is a ritual of the pre-eminence of the king, represented in the ritual as the violent conqueror and absorber of cattle ...«

45) Timothy Reuter, Pre-Gregorian mentalities, Journal of Ecclesiastical History 45 (1994), pp. 465–474.

jection were given added force by the fact that Otto's queen Edith had taken refuge in the monastery during the crisis[46]. A generation later we have Adam of Bremen's equally well-known account of the origins of the Slav uprising of 983. A niece of Hermann Billung's was to have been given in marriage to the Abodrite prince Mistui, but the marriage was frustrated by a publicly delivered insult by Margrave Dietrich: the duke's kinswoman is not to be given to a dog[47]. Here too we probably have an allusion to Matthew 7:6. These two examples may show one of a number of things. They may be evidence for a common vocabulary of political debate, in which both rulers and other highly-placed Saxon nobles could refer to their close female kin in biblically coloured terms. They may on the other hand merely be evidence for a common vocabulary of literary description, in which authors could use similar biblical topoi to point up the attitudes of both kings and other highly-placed Saxon nobles towards their close female kin. The problem here is probably irreducible, as David Warner has recently noted[48]; but the fact that it can't easily be dealt with doesn't mean that it isn't there.

Another problem facing any kind of global assessment of how the Ottonian rulers represented themselves to and were perceived by their nobility is the gaps in our knowledge. Take hunting, for example. We have enough anecdotal evidence for the tenth and early eleventh centuries to say with confidence that hunting was important for the rulers of Wessex and of west and east Francia: rulers of Wessex from Alfred through to Cnut engage in hunting (references in Asser, in the *Vita Dunstani*, in one of Cnut's law-codes), as do the Ottonians (Otto I was hunting when Edith died in 946 and at a crucial point during the rebellion of 953–954) and the west Frankish rulers. But only for the west Frankish rulers do we get a sense that hunting-parties were used quite deliberately to reinforce relations between rulers and princes (as between Odo and the count bishop of Nîmes in 889, and again in the 980s)[49]. Are we dealing with a real difference here? Janet Nelson has noted the importance of hunting for bonding between kings and nobles in the Carolingian era: is this a contrast between west Frankish traditionalism and a different style of Ottonian rulership? Or is it just a matter of the fortuitous distribution of the anecdotal references which have survived?[50] Even these need not be complete in all details: do we know, for example, whether it was a live or a dead dog which Eberhard of Franconia's followers were expected to carry as punishment?

46) Karl Leyser, The Ottonians and Wessex, in: Communications and Power (as n. 9), pp. 73–104, here pp. 90–91.

47) Adam of Bremen, Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum II 42, ed. Bernhard Schmeidler (MGH SRG 2, Hannover 1917), pp. 101–103.

48) David Warner, Thietmar of Merseburg on rituals of kingship, Viator 25 (1994), pp. 53–76, here p. 75.

49) Michel Zimmermann, West Francia: the southern principalities, in: New Cambridge Medieval History (as n. 30).

50) Janet Nelson, The Lord's anointed and the people's choice: Carolingian royal ritual, in: Rituals of royalty (as n. 17), pp. 137–180, especially pp. 166–172.

If we now turn to the actual forms and effects of Ottonian ruler-representation, the first point to be made is that it is important to distinguish between the forms used in the ruler's absence, and the way he chooses to present himself (or his entourage chooses to present him) when on view. The means of representation when absent are inevitably symbolic in nature. Undoubtedly the most important, though they are still incompletely catalogued for *all* west European kingdoms in this era, were royal palaces. Many of these, in Ottonian Saxony and Thuringia at least, were more than the mere pieces of logistic support for the royal iter to which *Pfalzen-* and *Itinerarforschung* has tended to reduce them; they were also objects of high visibility, dominating the landscape, as a glance through the only regional section of the catalogue of German royal palaces which has been completed, that for Thuringia, will show: Allstedt, Dornberg, Rohr, Saalfeld are all located on hills or spurs of rock[51]. Together with the great episcopal and monastic churches – in Saxony of course frequently built or rebuilt thanks to royal largesse – they made up a ›representative landscape‹, one in which the ruler was symbolically omnipresent in a way which marked him off from even the most powerful of his magnates: a large-scale counterpart to the *Sakrallandschaft* which German historians have found so characteristic of the architectural policies of tenth- and eleventh-century bishops[52].

Once entered, these buildings became miniature representative landscapes. The royal palaces we must envisage as symbolically inhabited by the king even in his absence: cycles of wall-pictures and tapestries set him in a historical context, as we know from the description of Henry I's palace at Merseburg[53]. Here too we should probably envisage aristocratic residences as slowly coming to be like this, though on a smaller scale: the family castle replaces the *Fluchtburg* east of the Rhine at about the same time as it does in west Francia, and we have just about enough anecdotal evidence – in the account of the *Vita Meinwerci* for example of Meinwerk's mother, the notorious Adela, who had woven a tapestry depicting the deeds of her husband Balderich – to suggest to us that such visualisations of family history were not confined to rulers[54].

Other buildings besides palaces enjoyed the king's symbolic presence as well. The Ottonians did not replicate east Frankish Carolingian practice in establishing royal chapels (such as those at Aachen, Frankfurt and Ötting) across their *Land*, but major churches, both inside and outside Saxony, were royal sites in a number of ways. Kings were often present, first of

51) Die Deutschen Königspfalzen, ed. Thomas Zotz and others, Göttingen 1984–1991, pp. 1–38 (Allstedt), pp. 83–102 (Dornburg), 420–64 (Rohr), pp. 465–96 (Saalfeld).

52) Erich Herzog, Die ottonische Stadt, Berlin 1964; Helmut Maurer, Konstanz als ottonischer Bischofssitz, Göttingen 1973.

53) Thietmar, Chronicon (as n. 22), I 18, pp. 24–25. Deutsche Königspfalzen, Bd. 1, Göttingen 1963, pp. 158–206 (Merseburg), here p. 174.

54) Vita Meinwerci episcopi Paderbornensis, c. 138, ed. Franz Tenckhoff (MGH SRG 59), Hannover 1920, p. 71.

all, at dedications and rededications of churches[55]. Once built, cathedral and abbey churches ›contained‹ the king, through the books which he had given them[56], and, perhaps even more significantly, through the diplomata which he had issued for them[57]. It is important to note that Ottonian diplomata were symbolic expressions of the king's presence. In their size, in their ornate script, in their huge seals depicting the king in majesty, they proclaimed royalty, and we should not assume that they were always kept locked away just because that is how modern archives treat them[58]. As Heinrich Fichtenau has shown, charters were often written to be recited, and when recited they were presumably displayed[59].

It is also important to realize that this is a form of representation which doesn't simply apply to the king's relations with his ecclesiastical magnates. It is easy to fall into the belief that there was one set of relations between the king and his clerics, expressed in a set of Christian symbols, in churches and illuminated manuscripts and biblically-inspired discourse on the nature of rulership, and quite a different one between the king and his lay magnates, inhabiting a ›Germanic‹ world governed by the norms of the *Gefolgschaft* and little troubled by clerical notions. In fact, by the time we get to Thietmar's age, at least, and to judge by texts like Ruotger's Vita Brunonis and Gerhard's Vita Uodalrici probably earlier, most major secular magnates spent at least a part of their lives in the orbit of one or more prelates: not necessarily subordinate to them, but sharing in local cycles of festival and assembly which replicated the grand Ottonian cycle at a local level, and so at the receiving end of the transmission of ruler representation through the major churches. I don't think anything else in contemporary Europe really corresponds to this: it may again be a source problem, but the triangular relationship between bishops and ealdormanic families in Anglo-Saxon England doesn't look like this, and nor do the often tense relations between bishops, kings and local magnates in west Francia.

55) See Karl Josef Benz, Untersuchungen zur politischen Bedeutung der Kirchweihe unter Teilnahme der deutschen Herrscher im hohen Mittelalter. Ein Beitrag zum Studium des Verhältnisses zwischen weltlicher Macht und kirchlicher Wirklichkeit unter Otto III. und Heinrich II. (Regensburger historische Forschungen 4), Kallmünz 1975 and Reiner Hausherr, Dombauten und Reichsepiskopat im Zeitalter der Staufer (Abh. Mainz 1991/5), pp. 42–51.

56) Hagen Keller, Herrscherbild und Herrschaftslegitimation. Zur Deutung der ottonischen Denkmäler, Frühmittelalterliche Studien 19 (1985), pp. 290–311; Hartmut Hoffmann, Buchkunst und Königtum in ottonischer und frühsalischer Zeit (Schriften der MGH 30/1 und 2), Stuttgart 1986, pp. 7–24; Mayr-Harting, Ottonian Book-Illumination (as n. 29).

57) See Thietmar, Chronicon (as n. 22), III 1, p. 96, and as commentary Norbert Fickermann, Thietmar von Merseburg in der lateinischen Sprachtradition, in: Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands 6 (1957) 21–76, pp. 33–43, for the fluid boundaries between books and diplomata.

58) Carlrichard Brühl, Purpururkunden, in: Idem, Aus Mittelalter und Diplomatik: Gesammelte Aufsätze, 1 (Hildesheim, 1989), pp. 601–619, and most recently Geoffrey Koziol, Begging pardon and favor: Ritual and political order in early medieval France, Ithaca 1992, pp. 87–90.

59) Heinrich Fichtenau, Bemerkungen zur rezitativischen Prosa des Hochmittelalters, in: Idem, Beiträge zur Mediävistik: Ausgewählte Aufsätze, 1, Stuttgart 1975, pp. 145–162.

But the major occasion for ruler representation was the assembly. Assembly politics are the determining feature of western European polities, from the seventh century if not before, through to the twelfth century if not after. I don't think their importance has really been grasped by historians – English historians in particular, but others as well. This is partly because we learned early on – in a sense rightly, in another sense wrongly – to dismiss an older view of them which saw them as proto-parliamentary representative institutions. Clearly they weren't that, but they were of crucial importance, particularly when, as in the Ottonian Reich in general and Ottonian Saxony in particular, there was little else. Unlike their Carolingian predecessors, and their Anglo-Saxon and Byzantine contemporaries, Ottonian rulers were not present-in-absence through their legislative activity; equally, they did not dispose of a network of homogenous local administrative units in the form of themes or shires which could be addressed by the ruler through the written word[60].

We have comparatively few detailed accounts of Ottonian assemblies, and those we do possess occur largely as stylized set-pieces within the accounts of the great historians, especially of Widukind and Thietmar. But we know enough to be able to characterise them. They were in general highly staged events, whose ritual and symbolism were rarely if ever subverted (or at least are rarely if ever presented by their depicters as being subverted). They bear little resemblance to the Carolingian assemblies depicted by Hincmar of Rheims – in an equally stylized manner, of course: their time was taken up with processions, liturgical events and prayers, and the reception of ambassadors from abroad, as Carolingian ones of course also were, but not with discussions on legislation and matters of public policy. They do not normally appear as moments when discussions could take place: as Gerd Althoff has shown, it was a culture which found it extraordinarily difficult to formulate criticism or dissent without moving straight to feud and hostility[61].

Agriculturally and liturgically, the year moved continuously, if at varying pace, around its cycle; politically, time froze except on campaigns and at assemblies. It was here, for the most part, that movement and interaction were possible at all[62]. Assemblies were not merely occasions when the ruler could represent himself as a ruler in the flesh; they were

60) For a comparison of the two polities see Timothy Reuter, The making of England and Germany, 850–1050: Points of Comparison and Difference, in: Medieval Europeans: studies in ethnic identity and national perspectives in medieval Europe, ed. Alfred P. Smyth, London forthcoming (to appear early 1998); see now Hagen Keller, Karolingische und Ottonische Siegel. »Hoheitszeichen« in der Kommunikation des Herrschers mit seinen Getreuen, Frühmittelalterliche Studien 32 (1998) (forthcoming).

61) Gerd Althoff, Colloquium familiare – colloquium secretum – colloquium publicum. Beratung im politischen Leben des früheren Mittelalters, Frühmittelalterliche Studien 24 (1990), pp. 145–167, and in: Spielregeln (as n. 9), pp. 157–184.

62) I summarize here work which will be developed at greater length in a chapter entitled ›Assembly politics, 700–1200‹, to appear in Medieval Europe, eds. Janet L. Nelson/Peter Linehan, London forthcoming (1999); see also Thomas L. Bisson, Celebration and persuasion: reflections on the cultural evolution of medieval consultation, Legislative Studies Quarterly 7 (1982), pp. 181–204.

almost the only occasions when the polity could represent itself to itself. Outside the assembly there were the local politics of feud and *convivium*; but only at the assembly could this centreless polity define itself, and it did so in terms of the ruler. This in the last resort was how the secular magnates within the Reich saw themselves. The contrast between this kind of polity and that of Anglo-Saxon England, very different in spite of obvious similarities, is encapsulated in two letters contrasting respectable native customs with reprehensible foreign ones. In the first, written in Old English, the anonymous author criticizes the recipient, Edward, for deserting *English* custom and going around ›Danish fashion‹, with open neck and a long fringe. We can't date this more closely than the early eleventh century – it could have been written under any ruler. In the second, Abbot Siegfried of Gorze wrote to Abbot Poppo of Stavelot about Henry III's proposed marriage to Agnes of Poitou, which took place in 1043. He was against the marriage not only because the two parties to it were too closely related, but also because Agnes could be expected to bring foreign customs with her such as would not have been allowed ›by the Ottos and the Henrys‹. The English had laws, customs, language; the Germans had no way of defining a common identity and inheritance except in terms of the kings who ruled them[63].

Yet self-definition in terms of the ruler did not mean that everyone else in the polity was defined out of existence, as in a sense it did in contemporary Cordoba or Constantinople. Rulers might not take part in forms of collective action in the same way as other participants, but the other participants did take part, and the polity defined collectively in terms of its rulers also legitimised its other members. When kings were presented for acceptance to their ›people‹, meaning in practice the great magnates, this act legitimised not only rulership but also those who were to be ruled. We can see this in Widukind's account of the 936 king-making at Aachen, and more particularly in Thietmar's account of the ›subsidiary election‹ of Henry II at Merseburg in 1002. We can see it equally in the well-known state banquets of 936 and 986 (the latter presumably an echo of the former), at which the dukes served by filling the offices of state. Whether they merely directed affairs or acted themselves as butler, steward and so forth is not easy to decide and of subordinate importance here; what is more significant is that such acts expressed not only the subordination of their power to that of the king, but also enhanced the legitimacy of their own position. Indeed, rulership as a one-man show is difficult to conceive of; the theatre of rulership required others to play their part as well. The focus may be on the charisma of rulership as expressed in ceremonies which, to quote Clifford Geertz once again, »mark the center as center and give what goes on there its aura of being not merely important but in some odd fashion connected with the way the world is built«[64]; but this does not merely draw power from those displaying their subordination, it transmits it back to them as well.

63) See Reuter, Making (as n. 60).

64) Clifford Geertz, Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symobolics of Power, in: Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual and Politics since the Middle Ages, ed. Sean Wilentz, Philadelphia 1984, pp. 13–40, here p. 24.

This brings me to my final point. In the passage on Bali quoted earlier, Geertz referred to the role of the peasantry in Bali's state theatricality: »supporting cast, stage crew, and audience«[65]. One of the major gaps, it seems to me, in the recent historiography of Ottonian Saxony, has been the absence of any attempt to show how the elaborate structures of logistics, ritual and consciousness impinged on the great bulk of the population, on whom the producers of these things in the last resort depended. There are obvious reasons for this: both the traditional division of labour between economic and social history on the one hand and other kinds of history on the other and also the virtual silence of Ottonian sources on these social groups as on so much else together conspire to produce the omission. When Widukind, describing Otto I's deathbed, says *missarum deinde officiis celebratis, pauperibus iuxta morem manus porrexit*, he is clearly offering a conventional picture of royal piety, and as we know, the *pauperes* are not necessarily the ›poor‹ in our sense[66]. But this is at least a rare moment in Ottonian historical writing when people outside the political community enter on stage at all.

This shortage of reference shouldn't be taken to mean that the Ottonian elite felt so secure that they had no need to be conscious of their lordship over others: in the worries of the *Casus s. Galli* about the yuppification of estate bailiffs, in Thietmar's reference to an urban riot in Straßburg (*plebeius furor*), in Alpert of Metz's hate-filled account of the merchant guild at Thiel, in the Ottonian ecclesiastical establishment's treatment of the lower-class and egalitarian saint Haimerad with his lower-class followers, we can see considerable insecurities[67]. Most significant of all are the frequent anecdotes in Ottonian hagiography telling how, when saints appeared in visions to servants instructing them to take messages to their masters or mistresses, they had to do so repeatedly, and sometimes even to use physical violence on them, before the servants would act. For the saints themselves to use intermediaries in this way was courteous aristocratic behaviour; it would often have seemed ill-bred (and might no doubt have risked evoking a response appropriate to ill-breeding) to appear directly in the dreams of the intended recipient[68]. But the terror of those who were expected to take the messages says something about how effectively the Ottonian political élite's collective self-representation centred on the king maintained a distance between them and everyone else. It doesn't say everything about it, but to go further would be to embark on a paper which I have yet to write.

65) Geertz, Negara (as n. 11), p. 124.

66) Widukind, Res gestae Saxonicae (as n. 4) III 75, p. 152.

67) On these examples see Karl Leyser, The German aristocracy from the ninth to the early twelfth centuries: a historical and cultural sketch, in: Idem, Medieval Germany and its Neighbours, 900–1250, London 1982, pp. 161–164; Idem, Communications and Power in the Middle Ages: The Gregorian Revolution and Beyond, ed. Timothy Reuter, London 1994, pp. 10–11.

68) On this aspect of aristocratic behaviour see William I. Miller, Bloodtaking and Peacemaking, Chicago 1990, p. 86.