

*The Medieval History Journal*

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**The Medieval History Journal** was launched at the turn of the twenty-first century when the world of history was in a ferment, radically seeking a redefinition of the discipline. The **MHJ** is a peer reviewed journal and derives its distinctive profile from encompassing the entire medieval world in scope and its multi-disciplinary foci. For the **MHJ**, ‘Medieval History’ signifies open chronological and thematic boundaries to honour historical plurality. Its frequent special issues investigating a particular theme across regions have provided a space for comparative and transcultural conversations within scholarship.

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## Special issue

A World of Empires. Claiming and Assigning Imperial Authority in the High and Late Middle Ages

**Guest Editors:** Chris Jones, Christoph Mauntel and Klaus Oschema

## Contents

### ♦ Articles ♦

- Chris Jones, Christoph Mauntel and Klaus Oschema:**  
Controversial Terminology: Medieval Perspectives on  
Claiming and Assigning Imperial Status 233
- Filip Van Tricht:** Claiming the *Basileia ton Rhomaion*:  
A Latin Imperial Dynasty in Byzantium (1204–1261) 248
- Wolfram Drews:** Imperial Rule in Medieval Spain:  
Christian and Islamic Contexts 288
- Chris Jones:** Undefined Terms: Empires and  
Emperors in Late Medieval French Thought 319
- Christoph Mauntel:** The ‘Emperor of Persia’: ‘Empire’ as a  
Means of Describing and Structuring the World 354
- Maud Pérez-Simon:** The Khan as ‘Meta-Emperor’ in  
Marco Polo’s *Devisement du Monde* 385
- Klaus Oschema:** No ‘Emperor of Europe’: A Rare  
Title between Political Irrelevance, Anti-Ottoman  
Polemics and the Politics of National Diversity 411

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# Controversial Terminology: Medieval Perspectives on Claiming and Assigning Imperial Status

Chris Jones\*  
Christoph Mauntel\*\*  
Klaus Oschema\*\*\*

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*In recent years, research on the concept of 'empire' has seen an upswing of interest in both Political Science and History. Definitions of 'empire' abound, as they do for words such as 'discourse', 'performance' and 'culture'. Countless books and edited volumes concerning questions of 'empire' have been published since the turn of the century. On the most general level, however, the majority of studies on questions of 'empire' tend to neglect*

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*the European Middle Ages. Medievalists continue to associate the Latin terms imperium and imperator primarily with the (Holy) Roman Empire. A closer examination of the existing material in Latin and the vernacular languages reveals that many late medieval authors were far from limited in their use of imperial terminology. This introductory essay establishes the historiographical context for an exploration of this terminology as it was employed in the Latin West in two instances. The first is imperial self-designation, cases where rulers explicitly adopted or avoided the language of empire in referring to themselves or their realms. The second is the use of imperial terminology by authors from Latin Europe to describe and characterise distant and foreign regions of the world.*

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In 1533, the English Parliament declared the kingdom of England to be an ‘empire’.<sup>1</sup> This did not lead the contemporary Tudor ruler, Henry VIII, to change his personal title to ‘emperor’ nor did the historical argument put forward in the Act in Restraint of Appeals become a reference point for a new way of presenting the English kingdom. In fact, it was never repeated by Henry’s government.<sup>2</sup> For some, most notably the mid-twentieth century historian, G. R. Elton, the significance of the terminology could not be exaggerated: the use of ‘empire’ was an assertion of ‘national sovereignty’ and lay at the heart of a ‘Tudor revolution’ in government.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not Elton’s controversial argument is accepted, the act’s drafters doubtless viewed a claim to imperial status as a means of asserting their ruler’s independence: popes might claim authority over mere kingdoms; an empire was another matter. But what exactly was understood by the word

<sup>1</sup> Williams, *English Historical Documents 1485–1558*: 738 (n° 96: ‘An act in restraint of appeals’ (St. 24 Hen. VIII, c. 12, 1533)): ‘Where by divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an Empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one supreme head and king having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same [...]’.

<sup>2</sup> Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*: 315–16. But see the ‘Act of Supremacy’ (St. 26 Hen. VIII, c. 1, 1534) for an example of further reference to the ‘imperial crown’: Williams, *English Historical Documents 1485–1558*: 746 (n° 100).

<sup>3</sup> Elton, *England under the Tudors*: 160–62. More recent writers have downplayed the radical political agenda Elton identified in the preamble to this act. See, for example, Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*: 313–15. For the context in which Henry ‘made governmental actions—statutes, for example—into rhetorical performances’, Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*: particularly 68–70. See also, Bernard, *The King’s Reformation*: 70, where a connection between the act’s terminology and propaganda is highlighted.

‘empire’? This collection of essays seeks to explore how Europeans in the later centuries of the Middle Ages came to understand this particular term and the ideas associated with it.

The nature of Henry VIII’s ‘empire’ was clearly something of a pre-occupation for its ruler: in 1530, Henry had ordered his agents in Rome to scour the papal registers for references to his ‘authority imperial’.<sup>4</sup> It is possible that the origins of what J. J. Scarisbrick termed Henry’s ‘innocent delusions of imperial status’ lay in Tudor perceptions of ancient British history. They certainly seem to have enjoyed a long pedigree: two decades before the breach with Rome, in 1513, the King had named a ship *Henry Imperial* and in 1525, he commissioned a seal that depicted the English king wearing a crown in the style of the contemporary Holy Roman Emperors.<sup>5</sup> Significantly, Henry’s interest in the topic of empire was by no means anomalous. Throughout the preceding five centuries, Europeans had interpreted and re-interpreted the terminology of ‘empire’ in a wide variety of ways, many of which have been either overlooked or relegated to the status of mere curiosities.

In recent years, research on the concept of ‘empire’ has seen an upswing of interest in both Political Science and History. Responding to a changed world order since the end of the Cold War, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt published their widely read book *Empire* in 2000, which may be at least partly responsible for (re-)igniting the debate.<sup>6</sup> Negri and Hardt defined an ‘empire’ as a political system that was based on ‘a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule’.<sup>7</sup> This approach certainly has the merit of casting a wide net that allows us to understand and describe different sorts of organisations by using ‘imperial terminology’. At the same time, the very openness of Negri and Hardt’s definition risks a loss of precision. ‘Empire’ tends towards becoming yet another ‘umbrella term’ with all the associated problems of such terminology. Definitions of ‘empire’ abound, as they do for words such as ‘discourse’, ‘performance’ and ‘culture’. The problem is underlined

<sup>4</sup> Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*: 268–69.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: 270–73. See also: Koebner, ‘The Imperial Crown of this Realm’.

<sup>6</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Empire*. Earlier important contributions include: Doyle, *Empires*; Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires*. The importance of the topic in contemporary research is attested to by the publication of MacKenzie, *The Encyclopedia of Empire*.

<sup>7</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Empire*: xii.

by, amongst others, Karen Barkey who noted, ‘There have been so many definitions of empire that I am reluctant to add to the long list’.<sup>8</sup>

Countless books and edited volumes concerning questions of ‘empire’ have been published since the turn of the century. They cover a vast array of questions and approaches. A number of studies have focussed on characteristics of imperial rule on a theoretical level.<sup>9</sup> A theoretical approach, taken from either a sociological or political perspective, can tell us much about the characteristics of empires and how they function.<sup>10</sup> Other studies have considered concrete, expansive political entities from a historical perspective.<sup>11</sup> We currently possess numerous analyses of one or several political or economic entities each of which might be labelled an ‘empire’. They explore, for example, if and how the term ‘empire’ can contribute to a better understanding of the territories under Angevin rule in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, other authors apply the terminology to their descriptions of corporations active in contemporary global markets.<sup>13</sup> While these broad applications of the notion of ‘empire’ certainly attest to the heuristic fecundity of the concept, they also risk overstressing its analytical value, reducing the word to a simple metaphor.

While we consider both of the aforementioned approaches to be equally innovative and helpful, we feel that from a medievalist’s perspective each still has its blind spots. On the most general level, the majority of studies on questions of ‘empire’ tend to neglect the European Middle Ages. Where medieval examples are included in the analysis, they are usually limited to a discussion of the (Holy) Roman Empire, which, somewhat ironically,

<sup>8</sup> Barkey, *Empire of Difference*: 9.

<sup>9</sup> With a focus on multi-ethnicity: Leonhard and Hirschhausen, *Comparing Empires*; see also: Sandschneider, *Empire*. For an older work that focuses on the British Empire primarily: Koebner, *Empire*. On national states and imperialism in the nineteenth century: Leonhard and Hirschhausen, *Empires und Nationalstaaten im 19. Jahrhundert*. On theories of world order: Muldoon, *Empire and Order*. On concepts of imperial rule: Münkler, *Imperien*. With a focus on the Early Modern period: Armitage, *Theories of Empire 1450–1800*. On the building of empires: Kagan, *The Imperial Moment*.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Münkler, *Imperien*; Leitner, *Imperium*.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*; Gehler and Rollinger, *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte*; Demandt, *Das Ende der Weltreiche*; Doyle, *Empires*; Parsons, *The Rule of Empires*.

<sup>12</sup> Madeline, *Les Plantagenêts et leur empire*; Huscroft, *Tales from the Long Twelfth Century*.

<sup>13</sup> Kane, *Haunted Empire*.

is itself often dismissed as not actually being ‘imperial’. John Darwin’s study on the ‘rise and fall of global empires’, for example, only begins with the period around 1400 AD. Darwin deliberately sets aside all ancient and medieval phenomena, that is, everything that happened before the onset of ‘globalisation’ and ‘global “connectedness”’.<sup>14</sup> Even where authors include short references to the pre-modern, they often do so in order to rapidly dismiss its relevance: Burbank and Cooper, for example, called the renewal of the Roman Empire by Charlemagne in 800 ‘short lived’ and, echoing Voltaire’s famous witticism, qualified the realm of Otto I as ‘less than a formal empire, and its claims to being holy and Roman were weak as well’<sup>15</sup>. Seen from the point of view of ‘empire studies’, medieval ‘Europe was a relatively impoverished space for empire, once bereft of secure attachments to the economic assets of the Mediterranean or other distant sites’.<sup>16</sup> It is worth pausing to reconsider the tendency to dismiss the Middle Ages in this regard, and to establish why medieval Europe’s experience of ‘empire’ remains under-researched.

The main reason for neglect of Europe’s experience of empire in the Middle Ages is to be found in the methodological disconcertment that goes with a structural and ahistorical definition of ‘empire’, and the subsequent use of the notion according to such a definition. Summing up the debate about definitions in 2008, Stephen Howe stated that research on ‘empire’ is characterised by ‘diversity, imprecision, and ideological inflection’.<sup>17</sup> Despite the diversity of opinions, most experts agree on the following characteristics as being constitutive for an ‘empire’: hierarchical superiority over neighbouring states; the continuity of large spatial extent; internal heterogeneity; a marked contrast between centre and periphery; and finally, the conjunction of political, economic, military and cultural power.<sup>18</sup> If one accepts these characteristics to be constitutive requirements for the existence of an empire, the medieval *Imperium Romanum*, but also

<sup>14</sup> Darwin, *After Tamerlane*: 6.

<sup>15</sup> Burbank and Cooper, *Empires*: 87. It should, however, be noted that the medieval Roman Empire was described as ‘holy’ only in the year 1157: Weinfurter, ‘Um 1157: Wie das Reich heilig wurde’. For a comparative presentation of ‘imperial rule’ in the first millennium, one which includes China, Persia and Byzantium: Leppin, Schneidmüller and Weinfurter, *Kaisertum im ersten Jahrtausend*.

<sup>16</sup> Burbank and Cooper, *Empires*: 87.

<sup>17</sup> Howe, ‘Empire’: 575.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

further political units that claimed imperial rank and title might indeed be ruled out: they failed to attain the (centralised) power, extent and influence of entities such as Ming China or the modern British Empire. Yet a series of specialised publications that focus deliberately on pre-modern phenomena have shown the value of the analytical concept of empire for this period.<sup>19</sup> And, it is not without a touch of irony that most of the Early Modern European political entities that are now studied under the existing definition did not even adopt the title or self-description of ‘empire’ before the late eighteenth century. It was not until Napoleon’s coronation as *Empereur des Français* in 1804—and the simultaneous end of the Holy Roman Empire with its claim to a unique legitimacy founded in the Classical past—that imperial self-representation became more common in Europe.<sup>20</sup> This brings us to the question at the heart of this collection: Did medieval Europe possess its own, unique concept(s) of empire?

The medievalist cannot help but notice a certain tension between conceptual approaches and terminology: most analyses that belong to the disciplinary framework of either Political Science specifically or the Social Sciences more generally seek to determine if a given political entity fits the structural criteria that characterise an empire according to a modern definition. At the same time, they tend to ignore the question (and importance) of language: while the European Middle Ages might not have known a ‘real’ empire in the sense of the modern, normative definition, they most certainly knew and used the Latin terms *imperium* and *imperator*.

Medievalists primarily associate the Latin terms *imperium* and *imperator* with the (Holy) Roman Empire, a concrete, albeit vaguely defined, political entity re-established in the Latin West with the coronation of Charlemagne in Rome on Christmas Day in the year 800.<sup>21</sup> Yet beyond this Rome-centred tradition, it is frequently forgotten that the notion of ‘empire’ was applied in other contexts across the Latin West: in high medieval Spain and England, for example, several kings called themselves

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, De la Garza, *Mughal Empire at War*; Dale, *Muslim Empires*; Varlik, *Plague and Empire*; Davis, *Charlemagne’s Practice of Empire*.

<sup>20</sup> Following the events of the French Revolution, Napoleon did not want to reintroduce the title of king (*roi*) in France, as this would have been interpreted as a restoration of the monarchy; cf. Chanteranne, *Le sacre*: 26–45.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the concise synthesis by Schneidmüller, *Die Kaiser des Mittelalters*. See also Folz, *L’idée d’empire*. On the antique tradition of the term, see Suerbaum, *Staatsbegriff*.

‘emperors’ or were called so by others.<sup>22</sup> Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the use of imperial terminology became even more widespread: many travellers between the thirteenth and the fifteenth century used the term *imperator* to describe and identify foreign rulers. The Mongol Khan, who appears as *imperator Tartarorum*, is, as this collection illustrates, only one case in point. This Latin usage was mirrored in vernacular sources where it could be projected into the past to describe a plethora of emperors beyond Europe. For example, fifteenth-century French chronicle rolls spoke in terms of the ‘empire’ of the Persian ruler King Ahasuerus and, even more strikingly, of Alexander, who was crowned *empereur de tout le monde*.<sup>23</sup> The use of the highly significant terms *imperium* and/or *imperator* and their vernacular equivalents are far more widespread than the dominant focus on the Roman Empire might suggest.

A closer examination of the existing material in Latin and the vernacular languages reveals that many late medieval authors were far from limited in their use of imperial terminology. Notably, when they broadened their geographical horizons to include political entities beyond Europe, they freely employed the notion of ‘empire’ in order to designate realms whose rulers they considered to be particularly powerful. By way of example, one might refer to Ulrich Richental’s early fifteenth-century *Chronicle of the Council at Constance*, which enumerated the political entities that dominated the world. Asia, especially, became a continent of empires. Besides the *imperator Tartarorum*, whom Ulrich presented as the mightiest ruler with his realm in India, the chronicle referred to no less than six further empires in ‘Tartary’.<sup>24</sup> Its author also knew of two emperors in Africa, although he had to use a strange geographical ruse to establish this: He defined Africa as consisting primarily of Greece and consequently identified two ‘African’ emperors, one at Constantinople and another at Athens.<sup>25</sup>

While the notion of ‘empire’ and its equivalents in different languages could thus be widely used in a variety of contexts, this does not mean that

<sup>22</sup> Mauntel, ‘Ideas of Empire’.

<sup>23</sup> Davis, *La Chronique Anonyme Universelle*: 202 (col. b): ‘Le roy assuere regna en persie et tint toute la terre de iudee iusques en ethioppe. Et avoit a son empire vi vins et sept provinces.’ For Alexander, see *ibid.*: 206 (col. b).

<sup>24</sup> Ulrich Richental, *Chronik*: 194 (§ 475); see also *ibid.*: 142 (§ 336).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*: 143 (§ 337) and 195 (§ 476). On Ulrich’s unusual geography, see most recently: Rolker, ‘Richental-Chronik’: 87–92. For a more detailed analysis in our context, see Christoph Mauntel’s contribution to the present volume.

medieval authors were unanimous as to its meaning. Approaches varied, ranging from the conviction that the use of the title and actual authority should converge—the famous *nomen-res*-theory that Carolingian authors repeatedly referred to in order to legitimise their rulers' claim to imperial authority<sup>26</sup>—to arguments that reduced the contemporary Roman Empire to the status of a kingdom, and its ruler to little more than one king among many. The latter arguments were often aired by those keen to liberate their own rulers from the implications of potential imperial overlordship. The early fourteenth century witnessed, for example, the theologian John of Paris draw on Aristotle to establish the *de iure* independence of French kings<sup>27</sup>; simultaneously, Neapolitan jurists such as Andreas de Isernia employed an argument based on the *ius gentium* to arrive at what amounted to the same conclusion.<sup>28</sup> The enduring importance of this question can be seen on the occasion of the visit of the Emperor Charles IV to Paris in 1378: arrangements were made that sought assiduously to avoid any implication that the emperor enjoyed a superior status to the French king.<sup>29</sup> That the debates on this question were not limited to the rarefied atmosphere of the court or to the discourses of jurists and theologians can be seen in texts such as Noël de Fribois' mid-fifteenth century *Abrégé des Croniques de France*, where the author chose to include a series of systematic comments on political questions. He explicitly notes that 'the emperors are kings and they do not have any dignity, power or domination above and beyond that of the royal dignity'.<sup>30</sup>

The two extreme positions that are marked by the Carolingian discourse and the late medieval situation in France and Naples, should not, of course, be lumped together. Nevertheless, they may serve to indicate that there are discussions and developments on the question of empire and imperial

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Ertl, 'Byzantinischer Bilderstreit und fränkische Nomentheorie'.

<sup>27</sup> For John's argument that the diversity of men, their languages and the climates in which they lived recommend in favour of independent, local rule: John of Paris, *De regia potestate et papali*: 83 (c. 3). For analysis: Koch, 'Against Empire?': 49–74, and the contribution by Chris Jones to the present volume. For the development of political ideas in France in this period more generally, see the classic study by Krynen, *L'empire du roi*.

<sup>28</sup> Canning, 'Ideas of the State': 4–7.

<sup>29</sup> Kintzinger, 'Der weiße Reiter'; Schwedler, *Herrschartreffen des Spätmittelalters*: 297–317. See now also Jostkleigrewe, "'Rex imperator in regno suo"—an Ideology of Frenchness?'

<sup>30</sup> Noël de Fribois, *Abrégé des Croniques de France*: 190: 'Les empereurs sont roys, et n'est aucune dignité, puissance ou dominacion oultre ou par dessus la dignité royal'.

rule in the later Middle Ages that are well worth noticing and analysing. This is all the more so, since a series of arguments medieval authors exchanged in their discussions about the nature of imperial status seem to echo modern ideas: they concern the question of concrete power, of domination over several ‘peoples’ (or indeed, as Wolfram Drews argues in his contribution to this volume, several religious communities), of the continuation of imperial tradition, and so forth.

Against this background, our collection of articles builds on existing debates to offer a new approach: while we keep in mind the existing research traditions, we are particularly interested in the ways medieval authors employed imperial terminology in order to organise their descriptions of the world. As a consequence, the contributions to this volume focus strictly on the Latin notions of *imperium* and *imperator* and a sample of their vernacular derivatives. In so doing, our intention is to shift the focus from a structural, definition-driven analysis of empires to a lexical approach, concentrating on the use and connotations of imperial language. The varied contexts studied find common ground in a fixed set of questions focussing on the levels of meaning of specific key terms. Such a comparative analysis broadens the focus of existing research. It offers an innovative contribution to several fields by juxtaposing the study of political ideas, travelogues and medieval perceptions and descriptions of ‘foreign’ cultures.

Based on our onomasiological focus, we have employed a two-fold approach to exploring the question of how imperial ideas were understood beyond a strictly Roman context. Three articles scrutinise a range of imperial self-designations: cases in which rulers explicitly adopted or avoided the language of empire in referring to themselves or their realms. This first section explores which ideas of superiority or dominance respective rulers had in mind when using these terms and the claims to imperial authority connected with them. It considers which concrete interests and circumstances led to these choices. Although the sources and periods studied in these articles are quite different, our focus on the forms of usage of *imperium/imperator* and their vernacular derivations enable us to determine which political ideas—as well as ideals—were linked to the terms. This challenges, in particular, the commonplace assumption that the (Holy) Roman Empire was the exclusive ‘normative model’ for medieval imperial ideas.

The so-called ‘Latin Empire of Constantinople’, as examined by Filip van Tricht, might be the best test case for this assertion. Founded after the conquest of Constantinople in 1204 by an army of Latin crusaders,

this empire perpetuated the imperial tradition of Byzantium. At the same time, its rulers arranged for a mode of coexistence with the authority of the ‘Roman’ Emperor in the West. Between these two poles, both the Latin emperors themselves and those that addressed them had to cope with the difficulty of finding an appropriate title. A similar situation, although it developed under entirely different circumstances, can be witnessed in eleventh- and twelfth-century León-Castile. Wolfram Drews shows that in order to define their own position and rank, several kings of León-Castile experimented with imperial titles. Drews argues that these experiments can best be understood as a reaction to the neighbouring Muslim rulers and the vicissitudes of the latter’s own imperial ambitions. Indeed, imperial claims provoke reactions, as Chris Jones depicts in his analysis of the evolving use of imperial terminology in France in a period that witnessed the practical power of the Capetian-Valois kings eclipse that of their eastern neighbours, the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire. During the thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth century, the complex relationships between French kings, popes and contemporary German rulers, in conjunction with pan-European concerns such as the loss of the Latin East, led to the development of a complex, sophisticated and multi-layered understanding of the terminology of empire in French thought.

Our second section then partially inverts the perspective: three case studies explore the way in which imperial status and concepts were ascribed by Latin writers to political entities and their rulers, both within and beyond Europe. In order to describe and characterise distant and foreign regions of the world, medieval authors (be they travellers or chroniclers) repeatedly used the notions of *imperium* or *imperator*. In doing so, these writers chose a term they and their readers were familiar with and used it in order to characterise the political orders they saw or sought to describe. This is, in fact, not surprising: it is understandable that many travellers, missionaries or pilgrims would describe the world they experienced by drawing close analogies to the world they knew.<sup>31</sup> However, as there were other options available to name distant rulers (for example ‘king’, ‘ruler’ or even the use of foreign titles in their original form, such as ‘khan’ or ‘haliffe/galiffre’),<sup>32</sup> the application of imperial

<sup>31</sup> See the classic study by Esch, ‘Anschauung und Begriff’.

<sup>32</sup> See Davis, *La Chronique Universelle Anonyme*: 270 (col. d), for a fifteenth-century example of the use of *haliffe/galiffre* to refer to the Egyptian caliph.

terminology should be considered a deliberate choice and interpreted accordingly. Our analyses of these cases reveal a range of influences that determined the use of imperial terms—be they in Latin or the vernacular—and expose several common features in the construction of the concept. This is even more important, as chroniclers and travellers often outlined the ‘imperial’ nature of the political order they described in detail.

The consequences of a need to develop appropriate concepts and suitable descriptive terms are evident in Latin chronicles of the crusades. In order to describe the events around the 1099 conquest of Jerusalem adequately, as Christoph Mauntel demonstrates, the chroniclers had to identify and name their opponents. Confronted with a variety of Muslim political powers, the chroniclers chose to differentiate between ‘kings’ and ‘emperors’. In so doing, they sought to represent differences in authority and power among their Muslim opponents. The notion of ‘empire’ thus became a widespread means of describing distant societies. This, in turn, facilitated the later development of the European understanding that the world was divided into a series of empires; that it was, in fact, a ‘world of empires’. An analogous setting provides the point of departure for the contribution by Maud Pérez-Simon. Pérez-Simon focusses on the way in which the famous Venetian traveller Marco Polo depicts and names the Mongol Khan. Notably, although Polo clearly describes the Khan as a powerful ruler with universal claims to rule, he avoids the term ‘emperor’. An intimate of the Mongol court, Polo’s decision to use the original title *Kaan* in the vernacular may have been intended to hint at the uniqueness of the Mongol empire. Yet, in spite of its widespread use, the notion of ‘empire’ was by no means employed indiscriminately by late medieval authors. Klaus Oschema argues that while Charlemagne may have been lauded in a few instances as a ruler who dominated all of Europe, the very idea of an ‘Emperor of Europe’ took on profoundly negative connotations in later centuries. As Oschema demonstrates, Latin-Christian authors used this formula from the thirteenth century onwards to accuse non-Christian rulers, such as the Mongols or the Ottoman Turks, of seeking to subdue the entire continent: Europe as a whole, we are encouraged to deduce, was not meant to be ruled by one, hegemonic emperor.

By enlarging the scope of our enquiry and by focussing on the late medieval use of imperial terminology, these essays demonstrate that concepts of empire and imperial rule acquired a far broader meaning

during the High and Late Middle Ages than is generally accepted in current scholarship. Our approach does not seek to establish whether a particular political entity should ‘rightfully’, or even metaphorically, be classified as an empire. We are not, for example, interested in whether, by modern standards, the label the ‘Angevin Empire’ is ‘correct’ in the extent to which it conforms to a modern normative understanding of the term ‘empire’. Instead, by exploring which entities were described as ‘empires’ by late medieval authors, we are seeking to open up a discussion that has hitherto been overlooked or, at the very least, whose importance has been minimised. Our aim is, in particular, to stress the importance of sources and of contexts that are characterised by phenomena of what has been termed ‘transculturality’.<sup>33</sup> Our intention is to recognise and acknowledge, in particular, the importance and fertility of moments of contact and exchange. The significance of these is frequently underestimated as a result of the limited and narrow-minded focus on Latin Europe that continues to dominate ‘classical’ medieval studies. And yet, these moments provide a new way of exploring a multi-layered conceptual inheritance, one whose importance has until now been neglected.

By examining the richness of this inheritance we can, for example, begin to appreciate more fully why a Tudor king and his government would seek to stake their own claim to the terminology of ‘empire’ in the first half of the sixteenth century. Henry VIII’s argument that England was an empire was not mere insular eccentricity born of an idiosyncratic understanding of Britain’s past. Viewed in its proper context, it can be seen, instead, to be part of a dialogue with five centuries of European reflection on a powerful yet fluid concept. In 2016, popular comparisons between BREXIT, the British exit from the European Union, and Henry’s breach with Rome in the 1530s were not uncommon.<sup>34</sup> Yet, Henry’s imperial claims are, in a very real sense, a testament to the extent to which England was integrated into late medieval European culture. The language of empire formed part of the core of that culture.

<sup>33</sup> Herren, Rüesch and Sibille, *Transcultural History*; Welsch, ‘Transculturality’. For the use in studies on premodern phenomena, see most recently Netzwerk Transkulturelle Verflechtungen, *Transkulturelle Verflechtungen*, and Drews and Scholl, *Transkulturelle Verflechtungsprozesse*.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Robert Gavin writing in *The Financial Times* (22 June 2016); Alan Cowell in *The New York Times* (20 June 2016).

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# Claiming the *Basileia ton Rhomaion*: A Latin Imperial Dynasty in Byzantium (1204–1261)

Filip Van Tricht\*

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*In April 1204, the army of the Fourth Crusade captured Constantinople. For the leading princes, it was self-evident that they would install an emperor of their own in the Queen of Cities. Their choice fell on Baldwin IX/VI, count of Flanders/Hainault. In this contribution, we aim to analyse how Baldwin and his successors saw their emperors, and how they and their empire were seen by others in Byzantium and the West. The current historiographical term, 'Latin Empire of Constantinople', reflects the prevailing view that an entirely new political construct had been set up replacing the former Byzantine Empire. However, contemporaries, both the emperors themselves as well as outsiders, consistently referred to the empire using both Latin and Greek terms that, prior to 1204, had been commonly employed to refer to the Byzantine Empire. Yet eastern and western conceptions of the nature of the empire before 1204 differed greatly: it was 'Greek' in Latin eyes, 'Roman' in Byzantine eyes. The Constantinopolitan imperial crown having been placed on his head, Baldwin became heir to these conflicting traditions. Moreover, rival imperial claims soon arose within the Byzantine space in neighbouring Byzantine successor states. In the face of these challenges, the Latin emperors strove to formulate a political ideology legitimising their claim to imperial rule. We will argue that in essence the successive Latin emperors adopted, up to a point, the key tenets of Byzantine imperial theory (Roman character, universalism,*

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*emperors as vicars of Christ and autocracy). Their western background and their different relationship with the West led to certain changes, but whether these should be seen as fundamentally un-Byzantine is not self-evident. Conversely, the presence of the now Latin rulers on the Constantinopolitan throne also led to changes in the western perception of the eastern empire.*

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The present issue aims to study the medieval use of the concept of empire and the crucial terms *imperator* and *imperium* beyond the context of the Holy Roman Emperors and their empire, both of which remain, for most medievalists, the most familiar context for the use of imperial terminology. The present contribution focuses on the so-called ‘Latin Empire of Constantinople’ and its connection to the Roman imperial tradition. We will, however, not be addressing this Roman imperial legacy from an exclusively western perspective, but rather from a predominantly Byzantine one.

Our starting point is the Fourth Crusade (1202–04) and its geopolitical consequences, which, in the case of Byzantium, confronted Latin crusaders in a very direct and immediate way. At the start of the thirteenth century, the imperial character of the Byzantine state within the Mediterranean, western and Slavic worlds was still very much self-evident and largely unquestioned, in spite of the Western European *translatio imperii* theory, the related so-called *Zweikaiserproblem* and relatively recent substantial Byzantine territorial losses. The latter comprised the interior of Asia Minor, which had been lost to the Seljuk Turks in the late eleventh century, Cyprus to Latin crusaders (1190) and the regions that became independent, such as Bulgaria (1185) and Cilician Armenia (early thirteenth century). The Byzantines, or Romans (*Rhomaioi*) as they called themselves, saw their state quite simply as the natural continuation of the Roman Empire, the *basileia ton Rhomaion*, headed by the *basileus ton Rhomaion*.<sup>1</sup>

From a western perspective, which included the view of the influential papal court, the imperial status of the ruler based at Constantinople, usually designated as the *imperator Constantinopolitanus*, was taken mostly for granted. Important in this respect were the Empire’s still considerable territorial extent, its wide-ranging international diplomacy, a magnificent

<sup>1</sup> Bréhier, *Les institutions*: 49–54, 345–53; Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee*: 34–45; Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy*: 22–25; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*: 79–117.

capital with its many peerless secular and ecclesiastical monuments, many of which referred explicitly to the city's imperial past, and the emperor's and the city's supposedly immeasurable treasures, which included an unmatched collection of holy relics. But the specifically *Roman* character of this empire was in general not recognised in the West. This Roman identity became, following Charlemagne's imperial coronation by Pope Leo III in the year 800, the exclusive preserve of the western—Frankish and later Germanic—emperor and empire.<sup>2</sup> It is within this general context that in April 1204 the Fourth Crusade army captured the famed Byzantine capital.

### Latins and Change in Byzantium Before 1204

Following the stipulations of a pact they had concluded beforehand, in March 1204, the leading crusader princes installed an *imperator* or *basileus* from their own ranks in the Queen of Cities, Count Baldwin IX/VI of Flanders/Hainault. His heirs ruled with varying degrees of success from Constantinople until 1261, at which point the city was conquered by a rival state established in 1204 at Nicaea in Bithynia. Until the mid-1220s, the emperors held substantial territories in Asia Minor, the Balkans and Greece under their direct or indirect control, but from the early 1230s onward, following a number of crushing military defeats inflicted by both Nicaea and another rival state that had been set up in Epiros, in essence only a limited number of feudally dependent principalities and baronies in southern Greece and in the Aegean remained.<sup>3</sup>

In this contribution, we aim to investigate how Emperor Baldwin I and his successors, first from the comital lineage of Flanders–Hainault and later from a younger branch of the French royal family, saw their emperors and what identity they ascribed to their empire. In an epilogue, we will briefly invert the perspective and ask how they and their empire were seen by various external parties, both Byzantine and western. In current historiography, the *imperium* that these western dynasties ruled has commonly been referred to as the 'Latin Empire of Constantinople'.

<sup>2</sup> Ohnsorge, *Das Zweikaiserproblem*; Brezeanu, 'Das Zweikaiserproblem': 249–67; Burkhardt, *Mediterranes Kaisertum*: 70.

<sup>3</sup> A few essential references on the Fourth Crusade and Latin Romania: Queller and Madden, *Fourth Crusade*; Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade*; Longnon, *L'empire latin*; Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*.

This reflects the prevailing view that in 1204 an entirely new political construct—a new *imperium*—had been set up replacing the former so-called Byzantine Empire, a construct that should be characterised as western in nature. Indeed, while most authors admit that the so-called Latin emperors adopted a limited number of Byzantine imperial elements, including the imperial title and partially Byzantine-inspired court nomenclature, these aspects are at the same time dismissed as superficial: they were a thin veneer that should not detract from the Latin emperors' fundamentally western approach to their emperorship.

Most authors also stress the important 'un-Byzantine' government and other changes the Latin regime brought about, that is, the introduction of feudal political structures, the (partial) Latinisation of the patriarchate, the (partial) Latinisation of the ruling elite, a (supposed) sharp decline of traditional Byzantine artistic and intellectual life and so on.<sup>4</sup> But here we touch upon a crucial issue: what should be considered as Byzantine and what is un-Byzantine? This question is not as straightforward as it might seem at first, particularly in the light of an observation made by the late Alexander Kazhdan in one of his final contributions:

When scholars write about relations between the West and Byzantium in the Middle Ages, they naturally emphasise the contrasts between the two societies: Catholicism versus Orthodoxy, feudalism versus 'totalitarian' regime, predominantly oral culture versus consistent textuality, barter economy versus uninterrupted circulation of coins, poetisation of warfare versus the ideology of peace, a list of oppositions that could be continued almost to infinity. It is unclear whether these contrasts are in fact part of the reality of the medieval world or were spawned by the confessional intolerance of 19<sup>th</sup>-century historiography.<sup>5</sup>

Bearing this in mind, we could reformulate our question as follows: were Latin and western elements generally perceived or considered as incompatible with Byzantine politics, society and culture, or was there,

<sup>4</sup> Hendrickx, 'Les institutions': 135; Carile, 'La cancelleria': 52; Lock, 'The Latin Emperors': 295–304; Angold, 'Review': 865–67; Burkhardt, 'Court Ceremonies': 290. See also the latter author's recent monograph expressing the same view, Burkhardt, *Mediterranean Kaisertum*: 375. For a re-appraisal of cultural and intellectual life in Latin Constantinople, see Van Tricht, *The Horoscope*.

<sup>5</sup> Kazhdan, 'Latins and Franks': 83.

on the contrary, a place for them within Byzantium before 1204 and, if so, to what did this amount? This is not the place for an in-depth analysis, but when we once again turn to Kazhdan's study of the Latin element in Byzantium in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it would appear that by 1204 westerners and western elements, up to a point, were—or were in the process of becoming—an integral component of Byzantium. In the twelfth century, Latins indeed served as both generals/commanders and soldiers in the Byzantine army; they served as personal, even spiritual, advisers to the emperors; and they served in the imperial administration, conducting diplomacy. For a time, Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80) even considered making a Latin prince his successor: his eldest daughter, Mary, was betrothed to the man who would later, as Bela III, become king of Hungary.<sup>6</sup>

Other conspicuous 'Latin' features of twelfth-century Byzantium under the Komnenoi and Angeloi dynasties were, for example, the partial delegating of the empire's naval defence to the Italian city states of Venice, Genoa and Pisa, who, in exchange for military aid through generous commercial privileges, acquired a pivotal position in Byzantine international trade with extensive quarters in Constantinople and elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> There was also the reintegration of Antioch—presumed to be the empire's third city, after the capital and Thessaloniki—as a dependant feudal principality under a Latin dynasty.<sup>8</sup> As Paul Magdalino believes, the empire's second city, Thessaloniki, may also at one point have been granted as a fief to the western prince Renier of Montferrat, who *did* marry Manuel's daughter Mary.<sup>9</sup> Apart from this, although differences existed, there were also obvious similarities between western feudalism and the emerging Byzantine *pronoia* system.<sup>10</sup> Less well known is how in the 1160s and 1170s the same emperor, Manuel, showed himself prepared to recognise papal primacy and papal jurisdiction over the Byzantine Church in exchange for papal recognition of his emperorship as the only legitimate one.<sup>11</sup> And around the same time, jousting was introduced to Constantinople from Western Europe.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: 91–100; Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I*: 79–81.

<sup>7</sup> Lilie, *Handel*; Jacoby, 'Italian Privileges': 349–69.

<sup>8</sup> Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusader States*: 222–45.

<sup>9</sup> Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I*: 100–01

<sup>10</sup> Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium*: 170–72.

<sup>11</sup> Kahl, 'Römische Krönungspläne': 316–20.

<sup>12</sup> Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I*: 83–92.

These observations in themselves already demonstrate clearly that ‘Byzantium 330–1453’ was no monolith completely incapable of change. Yet it is still often represented in historiography as a mouldering fossil or fading relic from the classical era. To the contrary, both older and more recent authors have argued convincingly that Byzantium underwent profound changes through the ages in various areas, changes that ranged across the political, cultural, religious and economic spheres, to name but a few. These authors demonstrate that despite the simultaneous existence of conservative forces, Byzantine society was open to change and innovation that came from both within and from without.<sup>13</sup> Both these elements—the Latin element within Byzantium before 1204 and a certain measure of openness to change—should be taken into consideration when assessing and evaluating how the Latin emperors after 1204 viewed and construed their emperors and how they dealt with the pre-1204 Byzantine imperial legacy.

### 1204: Continuity and Innovation as Guiding Principles

The source material available for reconstructing the Latin emperors’ concept of empire can hardly be called abundant. Indeed, for some emperors—Peter of Courtenay (1217–18) and John of Brienne (1231–37)—we have practically no information at all at our disposal. For the other emperors we have to rely on a limited number of charters that are, without exception, addressed to western recipients, seals and a few interesting passages in various internal and external narrative sources. Sources explicitly focusing on political ideology, such as panegyrics, autobiographical introductions to imperial *typika* or mirrors for princes, are not at hand. But these limitations in the available source material should not be taken as proof of a disinterest in political ideology in Latin Constantinople: as we have argued elsewhere, the relatively short time-span of Latin rule (57 years) combined with its abrupt end in 1261, an event possibly accompanied by *damnatio memoriae* actions, may very well be responsible for the current situation. Indeed, the complete absence of imperial charters and documents in Greek relating to internal government

<sup>13</sup> Kazhdan and Cultler, ‘Continuity and Discontinuity’: 429–78; Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*; Simpson, ‘Change in Byzantine Historical Self-Awareness’: 63–38; Spanos, ‘Was Innovation Unwanted in Byzantium?’: 43–56.

is conspicuous. Furthermore, we do have traces that prove panegyric material must once have existed.<sup>14</sup>

This being said, a first observation must be that the new Latin rulers, even before Constantinople had been captured, intended to continue imperial rule there. The ‘constitutional’ treaty of March 1204 between the leading territorial princes and the Venetian doge, which was intended to serve as a blueprint for future western rule in the Byzantine region, lays down the principles for the election of a new emperor and patriarch from the ranks of the parties participating in the crusaders’ army. And although this remains only implicit, it is obvious that the *imperium*, which the new emperor was presumed to rule, was none other than the then existing Byzantine Empire. Indeed, no new political construct or fragmentation of the empire’s territories into independent states was envisioned.<sup>15</sup> This fundamental choice can be explained by the fact that, as stated at the outset of this contribution, around 1200 the imperial status of the ruler and state based at Constantinople were generally not in question in western eyes, and carried great prestige. Rather, it was self-evident for the crusaders that, in line with both Byzantine and western custom, they should continue to refer to the territories they took over as an *imperium* and to its ruler, now of Latin origin, as an *imperator*. Not to do so, which would have meant the abolishment of the Constantinopolitan emperor and empire, would have been the unexpected option. The *Zweikaiserproblem*, which in the later twelfth century continued to have currency in the diplomatic relations between the western Hohenstaufen, the Byzantine Komnenoi and Angeloi and the papacy, might, however, have provided a potential argument to do exactly that.<sup>16</sup>

While the crusade leaders thus planned to continue the Byzantine Empire, at the same time drastic changes were conceived in the March pact. These included a generalised western-style feudalisation, which was put into effect during the months following the conquest. But as we have seen, feudal practices and institutions were not unheard of in Byzantium. The Cistercian monk Gunther of Pairis, writing in his account of the Fourth

<sup>14</sup> Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 4–13; id., *The Horoscope*.

<sup>15</sup> Prevenier, *De oorkonden van de graven*: n° 267, 556. Peter Lock does not take this fundamental element of continuity into account, see Lock, *The Franks in the Aegean*: 35; Antonio Carile however does, see Carile, *Per una storia dell’impero*.

<sup>16</sup> Brezeanu, ‘Das Zweikaiserproblem’: 249–67.

Crusade on the basis of the eyewitness report of his abbot, Martin, one of the army's prominent clerics, eloquently sums up the crusade leaders' basic assumptions:

The laws, however, and rights and other institutions which of old were held to be praiseworthy in the city as well as in the provinces were allowed to be continued, while those which seemed to be blameworthy were either adjusted for the better or entirely changed.<sup>17</sup>

The western chronicler Robert of Auxerre, who had a personal interest in Latin Constantinople as an inhabitant of one of the home regions of the Latin emperors—Emperor Peter of Courtenay was also Count of Auxerre (1185–1218)—in the same vein pictured the Latin conquest of Constantinople as a *renovatio imperii*.<sup>18</sup> It is important to note here that the crusade leaders did not consider the *imperium* they conquered to be an unalterable construct of institutions, rights and laws: the heart of empire clearly lay elsewhere.

Now the question arises, how were these two elements—continuity (the Byzantine legacy) and innovation (derived from their western background)—reflected in the Latin emperors' concept of empire? In the first instance we should note that both Byzantine and western imperial ideology of course in essence went back to a common source, namely the classical and later Christianised Roman imperial tradition. In the West, the Byzantine imperial tradition was itself of course also a direct influence.<sup>19</sup> This implies that it is not always evident, or even meaningful, to try and distinguish Byzantine and western influences in Latin imperial ideology. Nevertheless, it is in our view clear that these Latin rulers from the outset opted for a fundamentally Byzantine interpretation of their emperorship and empire. This can be deduced from the Roman identity these emperors, from Baldwin I (1204–05) to the titular emperor Philip I of Courtenay (1273–81), ascribed to their Constantinopolitan emperorship and empire.

<sup>17</sup> Gunther of Pairis, *Hystoria*: 163–64: 'Leges autem et iura et cetera instituciones, que ab antiquo tam in urbe quam in provincia laudabiles habebantur, ita, ut prius fuerant, consistere permisse sunt, que vero reprobabiles videbantur, vel correcte in melius vel penitus inmutate.'

<sup>18</sup> Robertus Autissiodorensis, 'Chronologia': 272.

<sup>19</sup> Angelov and Herrin, 'Christian Imperial Tradition': 149–74.

## Latin Emperors as Roman Emperors?

The Roman character of Latin imperial rule in Constantinople is evident in the imperial style the Latin emperors adopted: not only in the short and long versions of their titles but also when they referred to their empire, they used the terms ‘Romans’ and ‘Roman’, both in Latin (*Romanorum/Romanum*) and Greek (*Rhomaion*). The latter is only preserved on seals, since no charters in Greek remain extant, although these did once exist as is evident from narrative sources. Such use is attested during the entire period 1204–61, and even afterwards under titular Latin emperors.<sup>20</sup> It is also attested for a number of imperial dignitaries, such as regents and court functionaries, of western descent. The famed chronicler and prominent baron at court, Geoffrey of Villehardouin, for example, styled himself *Romanorum marescaulus*.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, during the coronation ceremony the new Latin emperor was seated in the Great Palace (or *Boukoleon*) on the throne of Constantine the Great, implying direct continuity with this predecessor, whose identity as Roman emperor in both Byzantine and western eyes was self-evident.<sup>22</sup> Also, the Latin Constantinopolitan aristocracy, or at least part of it, seems, by the time of Baldwin II (1240–61/73), to have come to regard themselves as belonging to a senatorial class, who, for example, had a role to play in appointing a new emperor.

Such senatorship obviously also points to a Roman, and also Byzantine, frame of reference: in Western Europe at this time a comparable senate or senatorial class were not known.<sup>23</sup> This Roman self-ascription by the Latin emperors and their entourage was far from self-evident: from a western perspective in around 1200, the Constantinopolitan rulers were generally, though not universally, considered as emperors, but not as *Roman* emperors.

<sup>20</sup> Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 62–72.

<sup>21</sup> Longnon, *Documents*: xiii; Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 278.

<sup>22</sup> Robert de Clari, *La Conquête*: §§ 96–97; Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 90–91.

<sup>23</sup> Van Tricht, *The Horoscope*. To be sure, in mid-twelfth century Rome, the ancient senate had temporarily been revived in the context of the anti-papal rebellion that resulted in the Commune of Rome. However, by the later twelfth century, this senate had been reduced to a single, or at most, two senators, who were elected annually and headed the city administration. They were local dignitaries/functionaries: their competences, claimed or actual, did not include any matter related to the imperial election or the imperial government. See Benes, ‘What SPQR?’: 876–83.

Sometimes, they were even relegated to the status of regional king as *rex Grecorum* and the like. Since Charlemagne's imperial coronation in 800 by Pope Leo III, and by virtue of the accompanying *translatio imperii* theory, the Roman imperial title was reserved exclusively for the ruler of the Frankish and later Roman-German empire to the detriment of the Byzantine emperors.<sup>24</sup> The fact that Baldwin I and his successors chose to adopt a Byzantine perspective is thus quite remarkable and can be interpreted in various ways.

First of all, it should be seen as a sign of the influence the Byzantine aristocrats wielded at Baldwin's court. They must have introduced Baldwin and his western entourage to Byzantine imperial thinking and its, presumably appealing, key tenet that only the *basileus ton Rhomaion* or *imperator Romanorum* based at Constantinople was the legitimate universal emperor: true emperorship and 'Romanness' were inseparable. In part, the Latin emperors' choice to adopt the traditional Byzantine imperial title and perspective can also be explained by a pragmatic wish to legitimise their assumption of power vis-à-vis the Byzantine elite and population. Furthermore, the Latin emperors no doubt also realised that the Byzantine imperial ideology, with its strong focus on imperial authority and autocracy in the face of the strong feudalising and centrifugal tendencies of the March pact of 1204, could provide a powerful basis to bolster and propagate imperial authority. Another consideration may have been that Emperor Baldwin I and his successors were of Carolingian descent, a fact that was actively remembered at the comital court of Hainault and which may have facilitated their self-perception as Roman emperors.<sup>25</sup>

Apart from the Roman ascription, the Latin emperors also used other terms to refer to their emperorship and empire. From the outset, titles and terminology such as *imperator Constantinopolitanus*, *imperium Constantinopolitanum*, *autokrator kai despotes tis Konstantinopolou*, *imperator/imperium Romanie* and the latter's Old French equivalents were also used.<sup>26</sup> This was not true of the imperial style employed in charters under the first Latin emperors; these titles appeared only on seals. Yet by the time of Baldwin II's reign, this terminology, especially the

<sup>24</sup> Brezeanu, 'Translatio Imperii': 607–17.

<sup>25</sup> Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*: 70–71, 93.

<sup>26</sup> See in more detail Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 62–72. Burkhardt's less detailed analysis does not take into account all the available evidence, see Burkhardt, *Mediterranean Kaisertum*: 196–97.

term *Romanie*, was used frequently in the imperial style in chancery documents. And it is important to observe that all instances of such use relate to documents addressed to western recipients. Some authors have argued that the—sometimes simultaneous—use of these terms shows that the Latin emperors and their entourage did not really grasp, adopt or support the Roman identity the Byzantines attached to their state. Yet Robert Wolff has already shown, in an article published in 1948, that the Byzantine emperors themselves, from Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) onward, were using such terminology in official documents, especially in charters relating to western diplomatic contacts, if not in their imperial style.

Byzantine chroniclers likewise referred to the empire as *Romania*, which simply signified ‘land of the Romans’, in analogy to *Franci/Francia* or *Germani/Germania*.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the occasional introduction of the element ‘Constantinople’ in the imperial title, for example on seals or in references to their empire, also stressed the fact that the Latin emperors were in possession of the imperial capital, a crucial legitimising factor with regard to Byzantine emperors and one which their competitors in Nicaea or Thessaloniki manifestly lacked. The Latin emperors’ use of these terms thus both followed and expanded pre-existing Byzantine practice. The innovative use of these terms in the style used in imperial charters destined for the West should no doubt be seen in the context of the *Zweikaiserproblem*: it was a limited concession to western sensitivities. It was because of the fact that the emperors expected external aid for their regularly ailing empire, but should not be seen as an abandonment of their emperors’ Roman identity. As in earlier periods of the Byzantine Empire, terms such as *imperium Constantinopolitanum* and *imperium Romanum* were simply seen as equivalents and as perfectly interchangeable; this can be seen, for example, in a 1206 letter by Emperor Henry.<sup>28</sup>

But what did this ‘Roman identity’ then signify in the eyes of the Latin emperors and their court? From extant imperial letters that narrate the empire’s situation sent to various western recipients, ranging from

<sup>27</sup> Wolff, ‘Romania’: 5–11.

<sup>28</sup> Henry first states: ‘What honour and glory have the land of Flanders and Hainault and our progeny acquired with the capture of the Constantinopolitan empire’ (‘Quantum honorem quantamve gloriam terra Flandriae et Hainoniae totaque progenies nostra in aeternum in captione Constantinopolitani imperii sit adepti’). A few lines later, he adds: ‘God has miraculously surrendered to us the *Roman Empire*’ (‘Deus miraculose nobis tradiderit imperium Romanum’). Brial, *Recueil des Historiens*: 527.

popes to other ecclesiastical officials to secular rulers, family and friends, we can learn that the Latin emperors did not use the term ‘Romans’ in a narrow ethnic sense. No single specific ethnic group, whether it be Latins/Franks, Venetians and others or Greeks, Armenians, Bulgarians, Coumans or anyone else, is ever identified as ‘Roman’ or equated with ‘Romans’. The same holds true for local Latin chroniclers such as the previously mentioned Geoffrey of Villehardouin and the imperial cleric Henry of Valenciennes.<sup>29</sup> This indicates that the standard and exclusivist self-identification as ethnic Romans (*Rhomaioi*) by the Byzantine elite, which to be sure was well known to the western conquerors, was not accepted: the Byzantine Greeks were not deemed to possess any unique right or privilege to call themselves Roman.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, by the late twelfth century the idea that all Latins—and, as we shall see, especially Franks and Venetians—were in fact Romans (*Romani*), because of their shared language and Christian faith, was circulating in the West, as is witnessed, for example, by the decretalist Huguccio of Pisa’s commentary on the *Decretum Gratiani* (c.1187–90).<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, in the West the Byzantines’ Roman claims were usually denied, as the commonly employed term for the Constantinopolitan Empire’s inhabitants (*Graeci*) shows.<sup>32</sup> In Latin Romania, the crusaders and their descendants also appear to have replied to the Byzantine ‘Roman identity/ethnicity/descent claim’ with the shared mythological Trojan descent of both the Franks and the Romans, to which the Fourth Crusade chronicler and participant Robert of Clari explicitly referred in the context of legitimising Latin rule in Romania.<sup>33</sup> This myth made possible the identification of the Franks, the Romans and, for the Serenissima, the Venetians with the Trojans. Franks and Romans thus had common ancestors and were

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La conquête*; Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri*; Prinzing, ‘Der Brief Kaiser Heinrichs’: 414–18. In the Greek version of the *Chronicle of Morea*, the term *Rhomaioi* is used where the Old French employs the word *Grecs*, but this is not relevant for the question at hand since this late fourteenth-century chronicle cannot be considered to be an expression of the views of the Latin imperial court in the period 1204–1261, see Schmitt, *The Chronicle of Morea*.

<sup>30</sup> On this self-identification of the Byzantine elite as ethnic Romans, see Page, *Being Byzantine*: 47–50, 69–70.

<sup>31</sup> Huguccio Pisanus, *Summa Decretorum*: 55; Burkhardt, *Mediterranes Kaisertum*: 70.

<sup>32</sup> Ebels-Hoving, *Byzantium in Westerse Ogen*: 244–69.

<sup>33</sup> Robert de Clari, *La conquête*: § 106. See also Schneider, ‘The Making of Oriental Rome’: 76–128.

really two branches of one and the same people; they shared a common inheritance and were no newcomers or strangers in Romania.

At the same time, as far as we know, none of the relatively few Latin imperial sources for the period 1204–61 ever explicitly denied the Byzantines their ‘Roman’ ethnic identity. It would thus seem that at the Latin imperial court the term ‘Roman(s)’ could have been used as a supranational umbrella term that covered a number of sub-nationalities which could all claim Roman descent in some way. By the mid-fourteenth century, Demetrios Kydones, *mesazon* (or chief minister) under several emperors († 1398), defended the concept of a shared Roman identity for both Byzantines and Latins/westerners, and earlier George Akropolites, in his tract on the procession of the Holy Spirit (1258–59), had done very much the same.<sup>34</sup> It is essential to note that an important implication of the Latin emperors’ supranational view on Roman identity was of course that any Occident-inspired, un-Byzantine changes they introduced in the Byzantine governmental system could still be represented as truly Roman.

### Latin Emperors as Universal Rulers?

Besides its ethnic-cultural sense, the term Roman also evidently carried a clear political meaning. Gill Page, in her study on Byzantine identity, has highlighted this double meaning of the term from a Byzantine perspective: the term *Rhomaioi* could also be used to refer to all the subjects of the *basileus ton Rhomaion*, whatever their ethnicity was. These subjects included the inhabitants of the regions under effective imperial control, but in theory potentially also all other rulers and the populations they governed within the ‘Byzantine space’, the sphere of the influence of the Byzantine Church in the Balkans, Russia and so on, the entire Christian sphere, including the Latin West and ultimately the whole world, since the emperor’s mission was to defend but also to expand, Christian frontiers.<sup>35</sup> In the West, the Holy Roman Emperor, who also styled himself ‘emperor of the Romans’ (*imperator Romanorum*), likewise saw all other rulers and peoples, at least, theoretically and in the first instance within the Christian

<sup>34</sup> Ryder, ‘Byzantium and the West in the 1360s’: 351–54; Simpson, ‘Change in Byzantine Historical Self-Awareness’: 65–66.

<sup>35</sup> On political Roman identity, see Page, *Being Byzantine*: 47–70. On Byzantine imperial universalism in the later twelfth century, see Fodac, ‘Manuel Komnenos (1143–1180) and the Universal Empire’: 123–40.

world, as subordinate to his authority. This medieval Roman imperial universalism in both Constantinople and in the West was of course inspired by, or went back to, classical Roman imperial universalism, which received a partially Christian imprint during Late Antiquity.

Constantinopolitan and western imperial universalism were obviously mutually exclusive, which was the essence of the so-called *Zweikaiserproblem*: the Byzantine *basileus* saw the Holy Roman Emperor as subordinate to his authority and vice versa.<sup>36</sup> Now how did the Latin emperors with their western background, and also as recipients of the Byzantine imperial legacy, deal with this issue? The use of the Roman imperial title by Baldwin I and his successors in itself already suggests that the Latin emperors adopted the Byzantine universalist perspective. From the reign of Baldwin II (1240–61/1273) we have evidence that confirms that the Latin emperors had indeed adopted the Byzantine view that there existed no higher authority or dignity on earth than theirs. The author of Baldwin's horoscope (written c. 1260), presumably a close collaborator and a member of his court, considered his emperor to be the 'highest lord that lives' and 'the greatest lord who in his time was born from a woman'.<sup>37</sup> This leaves little room for interpretation: since Baldwin was considered to be the highest lord on earth, it followed that all other rulers were deemed to be subordinate to the emperor based in Constantinople. This included the western emperor, with whom Baldwin maintained rather close diplomatic relations for some time in the mid-1240s.

Of course, this did not mean that all other rulers were considered to be directly subject to Baldwin's authority. It rather implied, in conformity with the Byzantine political theory of the hierarchy of rulers, that they necessarily held a lower rank in the hierarchy. Previously, Emperor Henry of Flanders/Hainault (1206–16) had already refused to recognise the German emperor's claim to superiority. When in 1208 Henry proposed a marriage alliance to the *rex Romanorum* Philip of Swabia, who was married to Irene Angelina, daughter of former Byzantine emperor Isaac II (1185–95 and 1203), he refused to submit to the German king's condition that he would recognise the latter as his lord.<sup>38</sup> Nor does the

<sup>36</sup> Brezeanu, 'Translatio Imperii': 607–10.

<sup>37</sup> Préaud, 'L'horoscope de Baudoïn de Courtenay': 29–31: 'Li plus haut segnor qui vive and li plus granz sires qui en son tens fust nez de fame.'

<sup>38</sup> Waitz, 'Chronicon universale Laudunensis': 453; Van Tricht, 'La gloire de l'empire': 227–28.

imperial marshal, Villehardouin, writing in his chronicle, identify Philip of Swabia—who is mentioned in the context of his relationship with Alexios IV Angelos—as king of the Romans, but only as *roi d’Alemaigne*. This latter, to be sure, was not that uncommon among contemporary western chroniclers. The imperial cleric Henry of Valenciennes, on the other hand, did refer to *l’empereour de Rome* (but not: *des Romains*) in his own chronicle.<sup>39</sup>

There are no indications that the Latin emperors would have taken a different stand vis-à-vis other western secular rulers, although some authors have interpreted the way the French king was addressed in a number of imperial letters as incompatible with truly universal aspirations.<sup>40</sup> Baldwin I and Baldwin II in their letters to Philip II Augustus and Saint Louis, respectively, addressed or described the French king as *dominus suus* or *dominus noster*.<sup>41</sup> But the implications of this formulation should not be exaggerated. In the letters to the French king, *dominus* should not be interpreted as ‘lord’ or ‘master’, but simply as a technical term referring to the fact that the aforementioned French kings were Baldwin I and Baldwin II’s suzerains, or feudal lords, for, respectively, the county of Flanders and the lordship of Courtenay. It should indeed not be neglected that in the same address both Baldwins identify themselves as emperors, crowned by God no less, and their addressees only as kings (merely ‘by the grace of God’, not crowned by Him). Although the feudal relationship between both rulers was mentioned, it was probably considered of only secondary importance and presumably referred to as a mere technical-juridical matter or as mark of courtesy (a *captatio benevolentiae*). The fundamental (theoretical) balance of power, though, remained clear: emperor (universal) versus king (regional).

In this context, attention should also be drawn to two little-noticed documents mentioned in a 1263 inventory of charters of the counts of Namur, described as two privileges that Baldwin II obtained ‘from the court’ (*empetra a court*) for the lands which he held in Germany (i.e. his county of Namur) and France (i.e., inter alia, his lordship of Courtenay), respectively, and for as long as he would be emperor. The content of these

<sup>39</sup> Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*: § 70; Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l’empereur Henri*: § 581.

<sup>40</sup> See, e.g., recently Burkhardt, *Mediterranes Kaisertum*: 196.

<sup>41</sup> Prevenier, *De oorkonden van de graven*: n° 281; Teulet, *Layettes du trésor des chartes*: n° 3125.

privileges is not mentioned, but it seems probable that they are identical with the papal protection Baldwin obtained for his Western European domains. Indeed, in 1238–39 Gregory IX had taken Baldwin’s lands in Germany (*imperium Alamanie*) and France (*regnum Francie*) under his protection, originally until he would have brought aid to his empire in the context of the Constantinopolitan crusade that was then being organised (‘donec ille ejusdem imperii subsidio institerit’). From a 1249 letter by Innocent IV—preserved in the said *chartrier de Namur* and discussing the conflict over the county of Namur between Baldwin on the one hand and John of Avesnes († 1257), heir to the county of Hainaut, and William II, count of Holland (1234–56) and Roman king (1248–56), on the other—it is, however, clear that by this time Baldwin’s lands were still under papal protection. Apparently, he had managed to extend the papal protection from 1238–39 to the duration of his imperial reign. This was perhaps not only done in order to preserve the integrity of his western lands but also to gain some measure of independence vis-à-vis his western suzerains. As emperor, Baldwin deemed it no doubt undesirable to be feudally tied to overlords, the king of France (for Courtenay) and the count of Hainaut (for Namur), who he regarded as his inferiors in rank.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, we have no knowledge of any source that mentions Baldwin doing homage for any of his western fiefs. An argument *ex silentio* is, of course, always problematic, but the description of such a ceremony would have had obvious propagandistic value for, for instance, a French royalist chronicler.

The references in the address to the Roman imperial legacy, whether through the use of the terms *Romanorum* or *Romanie*, and thus inevitably to supranational authority, as well as to the personal connection with the divine, made clear the difference in status between both rulers. Baldwin I and Baldwin II, emperors though they were, did not wield any greater actual power within or beyond their realm; nor had they any tangible authority over Philip II Augustus and Louis IX as kings (in accordance with the maxim *rex imperator in regno suo*, which gained currency from

<sup>42</sup> Dehove and Nieuw, ‘Aux origines’: 101–02, 140 (n° 82: ‘Item i sunt deus lettres d’un privilege ke li emperers de Constantinoble empetra a court es tieres k’il tenoit d’Alemagne et de France tant k’il i seroit empereres de Constantinoble’). Auvray, *Les registres de Grégoire IX*: n°s 4625, 4944–45, 4952–53, 5047. Reiffenberg, ‘Chartrier de Namur’: 141. Wolff, ‘Mortgage’: 62–63.

the late twelfth century onward).<sup>43</sup> Yet the Latin emperors nevertheless were hierarchically the French kings' superiors. The fact that the emperors were in the habit of sending circular letters or encyclicals to the West and to the entire Christian world can also be interpreted as a display of universal, supranational aspirations. Such letters, which employ forms of address such as *universis amicis*, announcing victories or disasters, whether including a request for aid or not, have been preserved from the reigns of Baldwin I, Henry and Baldwin II.<sup>44</sup> Even Baldwin II's extended tours of Europe, during which he hoped to gather aid for his empire (1236–39, 1247–49, after 1261), tours that were often conducted with the support of the papacy and its crusading machinery, may be considered from a universalist perspective: Baldwin clearly expected and saw himself as entitled to support from the western monarchs and princes, either in financial or some other form.<sup>45</sup>

The rulers of neighbouring states within the Byzantine space, on the other hand, were explicitly seen as directly subordinate to imperial authority; claims to imperial dignity by the rulers of Nicaea and the Doukai in Thessaloniki were not recognised by the Latin emperors. The chroniclers Villehardouin and Henry of Valenciennes, for example, attribute no princely title at all to Theodore I Laskaris of Nicaea, and only refer to him by stating his family name (*Li Ascres* or variants thereof), presenting him like some kind of rebel prince.<sup>46</sup> In his 1213 encyclical, Emperor Henry explicitly accused Theodore I of unlawfully usurping the imperial title ('pro imperatore se gerens').<sup>47</sup> Baldwin II's astrologer likewise did not recognise the Nicaean imperial claims: John III Vatatzes' reign (simply *Vatachez*) had come about *par accident*, while his own patron, Baldwin, ruled *par nature*.<sup>48</sup> At the outset, in 1204, Bulgarian independence or autonomy was also not recognised, although Bulgaria

<sup>43</sup> On the cited maxim, see for example Pennington, *The Prince and the Law*: 31–37, 95–101.

<sup>44</sup> Prevenier, *De oorkonden van de graven*: n° 272; Pokorny, 'Zwei unedierte Briefe': 188–92; Prinzing, 'Der Brief Kaiser Heinrichs': 414; Matthaues Parisiensis, *Chronica Majora*, vol. 4: 53.

<sup>45</sup> See extensively on Baldwin's western travels, Chrissis, *Crusading*: 120–26, 155–59.

<sup>46</sup> Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*: § 472; Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri*: § 551.

<sup>47</sup> Prinzing, 'Der Brief Kaiser Heinrichs': 414.

<sup>48</sup> Préaud, 'L'horoscope de Baudoïn de Courtenay': 45.

had successfully declared its independence from Constantinople in 1185, and Alexios III Angelos had more or less accepted this new state of affairs around 1202. According to the Fourth Crusade chronicler Robert of Clari, Kalojan, who had obtained a royal crown from Innocent III, but styled himself ‘emperor of the Bulgarians’, had asked the crusade leaders ‘if they wanted to crown him king in order to be lord of his land of Vlachia, which land and kingdom he would hold from them’.<sup>49</sup> The Latin princes had, however, rebuffed this offer of peace, whatever its exact terms may have been, and had threatened to invade Kalojan’s lands, which they obviously considered to still belong to the Byzantine realm. In Henry’s letter of 1213, the imperial claim of Kalojan’s successor, Boril, was also seen as usurpation. This being said, in the right geopolitical context and for the sake of diplomacy a compromise could be reached, as can be seen by the 1228 armistice agreement between Theodore I Doukas of Thessaloniki and imperial regent Narjot I of Toucy. In the extant Latin version, Theodore is styled *imperator Grecorum*, while Narjot is called *cesar potestas et ordinator et baiulus imperii Constantinopolis*.<sup>50</sup> The Roman identity, which both parties usually claimed for their empire, remained conspicuously absent. The 1214 peace treaties between Constantinople and, respectively, Bulgaria and Nicaea probably contained similar compromises. In the extant Latin version of a 1219 Venetian-Nicaean treaty, Theodore I Laskaris was styled both *imperator et moderator Romeorum* or *Grecorum*, and not *Romanorum*.<sup>51</sup>

To sum up, the Latin emperors certainly had universalist aspirations. These also become evident in other aspects of their foreign policies on which we will not elaborate here but one might, for instance, refer to the hegemonic role they tried to assume vis-à-vis the crusader states in Syria and Palestine at one point, and towards the Serbian and Russian principalities, in the case of the former by attempted invasion and marriage alliance and in the latter by distribution of Passion relics. In all cases, they were doubtless inspired by the pre-1204 Byzantine legacy.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Robert de Clari, *La conquête de Constantinople*: §§ 64–65: ‘se il le voloient coroner a roi a estre sires de se tere de Blakie, que il tenroit se tere et sen roiaume d’aus.’ On Latin-Bulgarian relations, see Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 387–96; Madgearu, *The Asanids*: 178–99.

<sup>50</sup> Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte*: n° 252.

<sup>51</sup> Cessi, *Deliberazioni del Maggior Consiglio*: n° 140.

<sup>52</sup> Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 351–431.

## Latin Emperors as Vicars of Christ on Earth?

The actual relationship between the emperor and the Church in the Latin period was in several ways quite different from the situation in Byzantium before 1204. First of all, the Latin emperors of course recognised papal authority with regard to the Constantinopolitan patriarchate, though they did not subject themselves to any kind of papal approbation. This is in contrast to what Burkhardt has claimed.<sup>53</sup> Papal jurisdiction was generally not in doubt, which resulted in clerics and ecclesiastical institutions, including Byzantine ones, turning to Rome to obtain settlements of conflicts. The Latin emperors themselves regularly requested and secured privileges or favours from the papacy, as did other secular lords and clerics. This practice did not, however, exclude papal-imperial conflicts with regard to particular issues, as was the case in most principalities and kingdoms in the West. The most important of these concerned the question of ecclesiastical properties within the empire: the 1204 March pact had stipulated that the secular leaders would provide the clergy with the necessary means and that all other pre-1204 ecclesiastical possessions would be secularised. This was of course unacceptable from a papal point of view and during the period 1204–23 successive compromises for various parts of the empire were eventually reached.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, it should be noted that evidently the emperors and other, feudally dependent rulers saw themselves to a certain degree entitled

<sup>53</sup> In 1204, Baldwin I, as newly crowned emperor, asked Innocent III to confirm the March pact, but this was not a question of submitting himself or his empire to papal confirmation. The intention was rather to get the Pope to accept the quite controversial stipulations regarding the Constantinopolitan Church and clergy, which Innocent III of course refused. In 1217, it was Peter of Courtenay and Yolande of Flanders/Hainault who pressured Honorius III into crowning them in Rome, and not the other way around. In 1229, the Constantinopolitan barons of their own accord chose to consult the pope regarding the imperial succession without any reference to some supposed papal prerogative. Also, a passage in Henry of Valenciennes' chronicle, where Emperor Henry suggests to his rebellious Lombard barons in Thessaloniki that he refer the conflict at hand to the judgement of either the pope, the king of France or *l'empereur de Rome*, should not be interpreted as an abandonment of imperial universalism: the offer was not made in earnest and was not regarded as such by the opposing party. See Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri*: § 581; Burkhardt, *Mediterranean Kaisertum*: 54–55; Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 82–85.

<sup>54</sup> Wolff, 'Politics in the Latin Patriarchate': 228–303; Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 196–204.

to decide what income was reasonable for the clergy, which was quite revolutionary. In the same vein, Emperor Henry issued a law that prohibited donations of land to the Church, possibly after an earlier Byzantine example under Manuel I Komnenos.<sup>55</sup> In 1214, the same Henry did not recoil from reopening the metropolitan Greek churches after the papal legate Pelagius, cardinal of St-Albano, had closed them down.<sup>56</sup> Baldwin I for his part had, unsuccessfully, in 1204 taken the initiative to propose the organisation of an oecumenical council in Constantinople to the pope in order to proclaim the restored union of the Christian Church.<sup>57</sup> Some of these examples may be interpreted as vaguely recalling the prerogatives of the Byzantine emperors concerning the organisation of the Constantinopolitan Church, but on the whole, the situation rather resembled the rights western rulers claimed vis-à-vis the Church and/or ecclesiastical institutions. It should, however, be remembered that papal jurisdiction over the Constantinopolitan patriarchate was not unthinkable either before 1204 or after 1261 from a Byzantine point of view.

Manuel I Komnenos, for example, had tinkered with the idea in the 1160s in exchange for papal recognition of the exclusivity of his (Roman) imperial title to the detriment of his then contemporary German colleague. Although these negotiations with Pope Alexander III never bore fruit, they do illustrate how the concept of the bishop of Rome as the effective head of the entire Christian Church, including the Byzantine Church, could be considered as acceptable by a Byzantine emperor.<sup>58</sup> In the context of the Fourth Crusade, Prince Alexios IV Angelos, as pretender to the throne, had also committed himself to subjecting the Byzantine Church to papal obedience. After he had been crowned, he wrote to Innocent III, proclaiming his personal obedience, while at the same time assuring the Pope that he was still committed to bringing the Byzantine Church to recognise papal authority. His fall from power and subsequent murder, however, meant that nothing came of this plan.<sup>59</sup> After 1261, Michael VIII Paleologos accepted papal authority over the Byzantine Church with the

<sup>55</sup> Migne, *Innocentii III Romani Pontificis Opera*: col. 1348; Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 194–96.

<sup>56</sup> Akropolites, *Historia*: § 17.

<sup>57</sup> Prevenier, *De oorkonden van de graven*: n° 271.

<sup>58</sup> Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I*: 83–92; Angold, *Church and Society*: 109–10.

<sup>59</sup> Queller and Madden, *The Fourth Crusade*: 154.

ecclesiastical union that was reached and proclaimed in 1274 at the Second Council of Lyon.<sup>60</sup> We must conclude then that, although the concept of papal jurisdiction was never a key tenet of Byzantine imperial thinking, in the right geopolitical context it could be considered, at least by some, to be not incompatible with Byzantine state ideology.

A second element, one that was markedly different from the period before 1204, was the relationship between emperor and patriarch. Byzantine emperors generally had a large say in the appointment of patriarchs, and could be instrumental in deposing and replacing them.<sup>61</sup> The Latin emperors' influence over patriarch and patriarchate, however, was much weaker than that of their predecessors, not only because of the involvement of the papacy that has been discussed above but also because the 1204 March pact assigned control over the patriarchal throne to that component of the crusader army, Venetian or non-Venetian, which did not obtain the imperial throne. This turned out to be Venice, which appointed Thomas Morosini as patriarch, who was not the first, but only the second Venetian to occupy the Constantinopolitan patriarchal throne. In the years from 1189 to 1191, Isaac II Angelos twice appointed the Venetian-born Dositheos (the son of a certain Viticlinus) as patriarch. Dositheos had previously entered the *Stoudios* monastery and adopted a clear anti-German stance during the Third Crusade in the context of the passage of Frederick I Barbarossa and his crusader army through Byzantine lands. Secular leaders thus deciding patriarchal appointments were of course out of the question for Innocent III, who refused to validate the pact. As a consequence, successive patriarchal elections in the years 1204–61 usually ended in a tug-of-war between the interested parties—the papacy, the emperor, Venice and non-Venetian clergy—with varying coalitions and results. At various points, emperors and patriarchs came into conflict with each other over issues such as ecclesiastical appointments and property, but there was room for cooperation as well, in particular in times of crisis in the form of financial aid and moral support and so on.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, just as in pre-1204 Byzantine times, the ideal relationship between emperor

<sup>60</sup> Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus*: 239–63; Chrissis, *Crusading in Frankish Greece*: 217–26.

<sup>61</sup> Bréhier, *Les institutions*: 381–82; Hussey, *The Orthodox Church*: 299–303.

<sup>62</sup> Wolff, 'Politics in the Latin Patriarchate': 228–303; Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 308–12.

and patriarch was seen in terms of harmony, solidarity and partnership, as several popes preached in their letters to Constantinopolitan secular and religious authorities.<sup>63</sup>

One might think that these limitations of actual imperial influence over Church affairs would have led the Latin emperors to abandon the typically Byzantine notion of the (Roman) emperor as Christ's direct representative on earth. But this was not the case, as is evident from the *a Deo coronatus*-formula and the Old French *coronez de Deu* equivalent under Baldwin II, which all Latin emperors adopted from their Byzantine predecessors (*Theostephes*) and incorporated into their imperial style. In the West, this formula had been introduced by Charlemagne at the time of his imperial coronation, also inspired by Byzantine tradition, but his son and successor Louis the Pious had not used it. The formula lived on, though, in various *laudes regiae* until the beginning of the twelfth century, and had visual counterparts under the Ottonian imperial dynasty and also in mid-twelfth century Sicily with the depiction of King Roger II of Sicily (1130–54) in Santa Maria dell' Ammiraglio in Palermo, the latter again following Byzantine models. By 1200, it had, however, been virtually abandoned.<sup>64</sup>

The doubtless very conscious adoption of the *a Deo coronatus*-formula had severe political ideological implications: the emperors' authority was derived directly from God himself, without mediation from any earthly secular or ecclesiastical power. Other princes according to their titles merely ruled by the grace of God (*Dei gratia*), and in this sense the Latin emperors had the edge over them, resulting in their claim to a universal emperorship. Indeed, we have already seen that Baldwin II's astrologer considered his emperor to be the 'highest lord that lives' and 'the greatest lord who in his time was born from a woman'. The author presumably meant this to include both secular and ecclesiastical rulers and lords, as in his work he employs the term *seignor* for both categories. However, the same author also acknowledged political reality when he stated in his *Introductoire d'Astronomie* that 'it was proper that he [the emperor] should receive the lordship over the realm from the hands of Christ and

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., Migne, *Innocentii III Romani Pontificis Opera*: col. 517; Pressutti, *Regesta*: n° 720. On Dositheos, see Choniates, *Historia*: 405; Angold, *Church and Society*: 121–23; Simpson, 'Perceptions and Interpretations': 16.

<sup>64</sup> Dale, 'Inauguration': 191–213; Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers*: 116–17; Houben, *Roger II*: 113–14, 135.

the senators and the high men', thereby recognising the role played by the imperial aristocracy in the appointment of an emperor.<sup>65</sup>

The *a Deo coronatus*-formula in the imperial title, which unambiguously proclaimed the Latin emperors' theoretical independence from any other earthly authority, also puts in perspective a series of statements that can be found in letters addressed to the papacy, which have been interpreted by a number of authors as incompatible with imperial universalism.<sup>66</sup> In a letter to Innocent III from 1208, Emperor Henry called himself *miles suus* and added that 'we want that the Roman church would have us as the executors of its orders as we are not its lord but its servant'. Yet such comments should be interpreted as a diplomatic mark of imperial modesty vis-à-vis the pope, who, it should be remembered, traditionally and in an act of Christian humility styled himself *servus servorum Dei* in spite of the papacy's own obvious claim to universalism.<sup>67</sup> It should also be noted that Henry pledged to serve the Roman Church to be understood as the Christian commonwealth and not the papacy. In Byzantine state ideology before 1204 Byzantine emperors were expected to serve and defend the interests of the Christian Church, as was the case in the West with the Holy Roman emperors. This was an element mirrored in the 1204 March pact by the stipulation that the emperor should rule *ad honorem Dei et sancte Romane Ecclesie et imperii*.<sup>68</sup>

As far as we know, the *a Deo coronatus*-formula had no visual counterparts in Latin Constantinople. The Latin emperors did not personally continue the Byzantine emperors' visual association between the emperor and Christ on seals, and although in Constantinople coins (*hyperpera*) continued to be minted that associated the emperor and

<sup>65</sup> See the forthcoming edition and analysis of this passage in Van Tricht, *The Horoscope*: '[...] il convenoit que la seignorie del reiaume il [the emperor] eust par mains de Christus et de senatours et de hanz homes'.

<sup>66</sup> Burkhardt, *Mediterranes Kaisertum*: 96.

<sup>67</sup> Brial, *Recueil des Historiens*: 514: 'volumus ut ecclesia Romana nos habeat mandatorum executores suorum qui nos non sumus eius domini sed ministri'. It should also be stressed that Henry in this letter was trying to convince Innocent III of the view that his ongoing war against the Bulgarian ruler Boril was a crusade. Boril was explicitly called a 'most unjust persecutor of God's church' ('iniquissimum persecutorem ecclesie Dei'), and the chronicler Henry of Valenciennes mentions that the imperial army's battle cry had been *Saint Sepulcre*, see Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri*: § 539. So actually Henry was trying to set the agenda here, but cleverly presented it as a service to the Church.

<sup>68</sup> Prevenier, *De oorkonden van de graven*: n° 267.

Christ (or the *Theotokos* or various saints), these were immobilised coin types and did not bear the Latin emperors' names, but those of pre-1204 Byzantine emperors. This was a policy that may have been motivated in part by economic considerations.<sup>69</sup> The general visual representation of the close relationship between the emperor and Christ remained present, however, in the many Byzantine churches and palaces in the capital and elsewhere, with their mosaics and frescoes. Imperial ceremonies that evoked a close association between the emperor and Christ, such as the *prokypsis* and *peripatos*, are not known to have been performed under the Latin emperors, but other religious ceremonies are attested in the meagre available sources.

These latter elements should, however, not be interpreted as evidence that the emperor-God/Christ association implied in the *a Deo coronatus*-formula was nothing more than pure formalism: in Baldwin II's horoscope, the anonymous author includes a number of passages that serve to create parallels between the life of Christ and the emperor's biography: three astrologers or wise men are present at his birth; there is death/sleep and resuscitation; and the crucial significance of a son-saviour to the father. There is also some evidence that Latin emperors, such as Henry and Baldwin II, consciously sought to associate themselves with the eschatological Last Emperor prophecies. Their ambitions vis-à-vis the Holy Land, which we mentioned earlier, could partially be seen within this context.<sup>70</sup> Finally, it should not be forgotten that the emperors, in relation to their Byzantine subjects at least, retained the traditional acclamation *hagios basileus* (used during the coronation), which underpinned the exceptional spiritual status of the emperor.<sup>71</sup>

### Latin Emperors as Autocrats?

A final element we should like to discuss succinctly in the context of this contribution concerns the idea of autocracy, which has often been considered to be an essential element of Byzantine imperial ideology. This concept of autocracy should be understood as the emperor's capacity

<sup>69</sup> Schlumberger, Chalandon and Blanchet, *Sigillographie de l'Orient latin*: 165–75; Stahl, 'Coinage and Money': 197–206.

<sup>70</sup> Préaud, 'L'horoscope de Baudouin de Courtenay': 27–33; see also Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 467–69; Van Tricht, *The Horoscope*.

<sup>71</sup> Robert de Clari, *La conquête de Constantinople*: §§ 96–97.

to rule at will, though preferably in the common interest, without, at least theoretically, being bound by either the law or by the need to consult with any other parties.<sup>72</sup> At first sight, one would be inclined to think that autocracy and the Latin emperorship would not go well together. The 1204 March pact limited the emperor's actual power from the outset in several ways. There was, of course, the introduction of a feudal system of government, which entailed a far-reaching decentralisation of public authority with the independent city of Venice as a sort of 'state within the state'. This was in opposition to the earlier, more centralised Byzantine system. In addition, every new emperor was obliged to swear an oath to Venice promising to uphold the March pact and other pacts derived from it.

All this gravely restricted the effective power the emperors could wield within the entirety of the imperial territories vis-à-vis their subjects, especially the dependent feudal princes and barons. The problem was particularly apparent after the area under the emperors' more direct control had been limited to the region surrounding Constantinople in the late 1220s and early 1230s.<sup>73</sup> As we have already mentioned, forms of feudalism, either western, such as in the principality of Antioch, or home-grown, such as the relatively small-scale, non-hereditary *pronoia*, were not entirely alien to twelfth-century Byzantine government. More importantly, a number of actions by the Latin emperors can be interpreted as having been inspired by the concept of imperial autocracy. First of all, the title of *autokrator* and its Latin equivalent *moderator*, the latter a translation adopted from the Byzantine pre-1204 chancery, were part of the imperial style used in charters and occasionally also appeared on seals. Even the titular emperor Philip of Courtenay (1273–80), although Constantinople had been lost by the time of his 'reign', called himself *basileus kai autokrator ton Romaion* on his seals.<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, various emperors saw themselves entitled to alter the feudal superstructure of the empire in spite of the so-called *Partitio terrarum imperii Romanie* (1204). This *Partitio* had been elaborated in

<sup>72</sup> Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee*: 43–45; Bréhier, *Les Institutions*: 49–54, 345–53; Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy*: 22–25; Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*: 70–164.

<sup>73</sup> Prevenier, *De oorkonden van de graven*: n° 267; for the designation of this area as the 'imperial quarter', see Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 41–60.

<sup>74</sup> Schlumberger, Chalandon and Blanchet, *Sigillographie de l'Orient latin*: 175.

execution of the ‘constitutional’ March pact and functioned as, theoretically, the definitive distribution of the empire’s territories between the emperor (who received a quarter), Venice (who received three eighths) and the non-Venetian component of the crusader army (who received the remaining three eighths). Nevertheless, various emperors adapted this distribution as they saw fit and without consulting any of the partners involved. Emperor Henry successively and completely disregarded Venetian rights with regard to Adrianople (1205), Epiros (1209), with the acceptance of the local ruler Michael Doukas as feudal prince, and Achaia (1209), with the recognition of the *de facto* conqueror of the region, Geoffrey I of Villehardouin, as a feudal prince. All Venice could do afterwards was to try and get its own feudal rights recognised by these rulers.<sup>75</sup>

Emperor Robert of Courtenay in the early 1220s settled a conflict with Venice over the *campi* (or quarters) of foreign nations in the capital by issuing a privilege, which recognised the rights the Venetians claimed. Earlier comparable settlements regarding property rights had, however, been decided by bilateral conventions between the emperor/regent and the Venetian *podestà*, the Serenissima’s representative in Constantinople.<sup>76</sup> Emperor Baldwin II for his part granted the rights over the kingdom of Thessaloniki in 1240, which had not been under Latin control for more than a decade, to Guglielmo da Verona, one of the lords (*tercierii*) of Euboia, who was married to Helena Angelos, a niece on his mother’s side of the former king of Thessaloniki, Demetrios of Montferrat. In doing so, Baldwin effectively disregarded the Montferrat claims to the principality in question.<sup>77</sup> The same Baldwin also granted, for example, the suzerainty over the island of Euboia, which had been awarded to Venice in the *Partitio*, to William II of Villehardouin, prince of Achaia, for life sometime between 1248 and 1255. This led to a prolonged armed conflict (1255–58) with Venice, the *tercieri* of Euboia and the duke of Athens, in which Prince William was ultimately victorious.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 157–68; Van Tricht, ‘The Byzantino-Latin Principality’: 326–31.

<sup>76</sup> Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte*: n° 269; Van Tricht, ‘Robert of Courtenay’: 1030–31.

<sup>77</sup> Loenertz, ‘Les seigneurs’: 268. On this Helena Angelos, who was a daughter of John Angelos, son of Emperor Isaac II Angelos and Margaret of Hungary, Demetrios’ mother, see McDaniel, ‘On Hungarian–Serbian Relations’: 43–50.

<sup>78</sup> Jacoby, *La féodalité en Grèce médiévale*: 21–23.

The concept of Byzantine autocracy may have helped inspire the above actions and decisions: the emperors saw themselves as not, or at least not necessarily, bound by any (written) pacts or the rights/claims of their (feudal) partners. This may also have been the background to some passages in the imperial cleric Henry of Valenciennes' chronicle, where Emperor Henry is portrayed in an autocratic fashion. One example is the description of Henry's reaction to a new Bulgarian attack in 1208: 'Thus the emperor ordered his armies to be summoned; and when these had been assembled, he ordered that all would go forth after him; and they executed his command.'<sup>79</sup> At the same time, however, it is clear that the Latin emperors in the policy-making process could not forgo consulting at least part of the feudal aristocracy.

This was recognised by, for example, the author of Baldwin II's horoscope in the previously cited passage: 'it was proper that he [the emperor] should receive the lordship over the realm from the hands of Christ and the senators and the high men'.<sup>80</sup> Various passages in the chronicles of both the imperial marshal and feudal magnate Geoffrey of Villehardouin and the imperial cleric Henry of Valenciennes show that the emperors regularly consulted their prominent barons. This is also clear from the emperors' own discourse in several imperial letters and charters.<sup>81</sup> Such a 'constitutional' role for the aristocracy in the appointment of a new emperor and this consultative decision-making process may be regarded as 'natural' given the western background of the emperors themselves, many of their entourage and of their feudally dependent princes and barons. It may also seem to be at odds with the concept of autocracy, but one should not forget that in Byzantine state ideology imperial autocracy was not the only guiding principle.

Indeed, Anthony Kaldellis has recently drawn attention to the importance of popular support, in particular in times of crisis, and other authors have highlighted the importance of collective consultation and the political role played by the senatorial elite, which included members of the landed aristocracy and civil bureaucracy, especially in the twelfth century

<sup>79</sup> Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri*: § 504: 'Dons fist erramment li empereres semondre ses os; et quant elles furent assablées, si commanda ke tout s'en ississent après lui; et il firent son commandement.'

<sup>80</sup> See Van Tricht, *The Horoscope*.

<sup>81</sup> See, e.g., Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*: §§ 466, 477, 488; Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri*: §§ 548, 560.

under the Komnenoi and Angeloi.<sup>82</sup> The new feudal crusader elite no doubt felt related to the Byzantine landed aristocracy, seeing them as their local counterparts, and this perceived parallelism probably contributed in part to these barons and knights with western roots seeing themselves—at least by the time of Baldwin II's reign—as Roman/Byzantine-style *senatours*. While the Latin emperors would and could not negate this social class's political prerogatives, as we have seen, at the same time, like feudal princes in the West, they enjoyed the freedom or prerogative to select a number of personal and close collaborators, both from within the established Latin and Byzantine—or, thanks to intermarriage, Latin-Byzantine—aristocracy as from beyond these elite groups.<sup>83</sup>

### Epilogue: Latin Emperors in the Eyes of Others

From our overview it would seem fair to conclude that the Latin emperors saw themselves as the legitimate successors to Constantine the Great and all Roman/Byzantine emperors who had come after him.<sup>84</sup> In line with this, and in spite of the fact the geopolitical situation steadily deteriorated from the 1220s onwards until only Constantinople and its immediate hinterland were under their direct control, the emperors adopted, at least to a certain degree, the key tenets of Byzantine imperial ideology: Roman identity, universal character, close association between God and the Christ-emperor and the concept of autocracy. But their western Latin background, with its imperial tradition, contemporary relationship between spiritual/ecclesiastical and secular authority, feudal political structures and so on, and some fundamental governmental changes that were introduced with the 1204 March pact made the quest for various compromises necessary, as well as the introduction of changes. But as we stated at the beginning of this contribution, change was also a feature of pre-Fourth Crusade Byzantine politics and society, and for a number of western-style innovations there were already precursors

<sup>82</sup> Kazhdan and Ronchey, *L'aristocrazia bizantina*; Kyritses, 'The Imperial Council': 57–70; Kyritses, 'Political and Constitutional Crisis': 97–111; Kaldellis, *Byzantine Republic*: 110–11 (see the critical review by Stouraitis, 'Review of Anthony Kaldellis').

<sup>83</sup> Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 272.

<sup>84</sup> Of their Byzantine predecessors, the new Latin rulers appear to have appreciated Manuel I Komnenos especially, whose rule was generally evaluated quite positively in the West, see Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 52, 83, 94–95.

before 1204. As to why the Latin emperors chose to take over, and adapt where necessary, Byzantine imperial ideology, we may hypothesise that this derived from several factors and considerations.

First of all, several members of the imperial entourage were Byzantines: for these individuals it would have been natural to assume that any new emperor, Latin or not, would conform to Byzantine imperial tradition. One example is the spontaneous *hagios basileus* acclamations during Baldwin I's coronation that were reported by Robert of Clari. Through these people, the emperors must have familiarised themselves with Byzantine imperial thought and customs; the Byzantine members of the imperial entourage must also have belonged to the group of people responsible for the partial continuation of imperial ceremonies and practices under Latin rule, amongst which one might mention the coronation ceremony, religious ceremonies such as the procession to the *Theotokos ton Blachernon* church on the feast of the *Purificatio* (2 February), the *proskynesis*, the title of *porphyrogennetos* carried by Baldwin II and his son Philip ('born in the Porphyra Palace', a title reserved for sons born to reigning emperors) and the court hierarchy, with the titles of *despotes*, *kaisar*, *sebastokrator* and *protovestiaros* that existed alongside western titles such as marshal, constable and seneschal.<sup>85</sup>

The Latin emperors must have realised that adopting Byzantine imperial thought and practices could be a valuable instrument to legitimise their position and claims vis-à-vis the Byzantine elite and people. Emperor Henry, for example, was very aware of the importance of having his rule accepted by the Byzantine populace. We have seen how he tried to establish some measure of dynastic continuity by trying to marry into the imperial Angelos family by, unsuccessfully, proposing Philip of Swabia marry one of his daughters by Irene Angelina, daughter of Isaac II Angelos.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Robert de Clari, *La conquête de Constantinople*: §§ 96–97. On court hierarchy in Latin Constantinople, see Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio*: 172–81.

<sup>86</sup> See note 38. Interestingly, by the time of Baldwin II's reign, the need to seek a connection with Byzantine imperial lineages had become less important and *Phlandras* ('of Flanders') was now explicitly propagated as the legitimate imperial *genos*, just as, for example, *Kommenos* had been before 1204. This is evident from one of this emperor's seals, see Schlumberger, Chalandon and Blanchet, *Sigillographie de l'Orient latin*: 170–72. This development could be interpreted as testimony to the enduring popularity of Henry of Flanders with the Byzantine populace; on this popularity, see Akropolites, *Historia*: §§ 16–17.

Second, as already stated, the Latin emperors must have realised that various aspects of Byzantine imperial ideology could provide an instrument by which to try and (re)build a strong imperial authority throughout the entire empire, in spite of the stipulations of the March pact and in particular the large-scale decentralisation through the introduction of feudalism as a dominant force.

Having said this, we may now look at the perception of the imperial title and the Byzantine Empire under Latin rule by western kings and observers, albeit without attempting a comprehensive treatment of the matter. We have already noted that the contemporary chronicler Robert of Auxerre saw the western takeover of Byzantium as a *renovatio imperii*, not as the creation of any new political construct. It would seem that this perception of continuity was generally held. When we look at the papacy, we find that successive popes, starting with Innocent III, addressed the Latin emperors in letters as *imperator Constantinopolitanus*, the exact same title they had used for the Byzantine emperors before 1204. At the same time, Innocent did not acknowledge the imperial status of the Byzantine rulers in Nicaea and later also Thessaloniki, who also claimed the Byzantine imperial legacy. He chose to address the latter simply as *dominus* and often viewed them as rebel vassals of the Latin emperor.

But the Constantinopolitan Empire's status *did* change in papal eyes. While before 1204 the popes had adhered to the *translatio imperii* theory, they switched to a *divisio imperii* theory after the Latin conquest: according to this theory, the Roman Empire and emperorship had not actually been transferred to the West through Charlemagne's imperial coronation in 800 after the Byzantine emperor had supposedly neglected the defence of the Church. Indeed, the originally unified empire had rather been divided into two parts. The fact that the Constantinopolitan Church, formally at least, had returned to papal obedience was fundamental in this respect. Some canonists, quite understandably from a modern perspective, even went as far as to consider the Constantinopolitan Empire as the only true Roman Empire.<sup>87</sup>

The Latin emperor's status was confirmed when, in 1245 at the Council of Lyon, where Frederick II of Hohenstaufen was excommunicated and deposed as emperor, Baldwin II was the only secular ruler seated to the

<sup>87</sup> Brezeanu, 'Translatio Imperii': 609–10.

right of, and at the same height as, Pope Innocent IV. The message was plain for every attendee to see, and many contemporary chroniclers explicitly noted the emperor's presence. The patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch and Aquileia also sat to the Pope's right, but were lower. Other secular princes were seated to the Pope's left.<sup>88</sup> From an imperial perspective, this seating arrangement could be interpreted as a symbolic confirmation of the Latin emperor's status as the pope's direct secular counterpart. In addition, the emperor also partly set the agenda as far as the subjects of debate were concerned: the plight of the Latin empire, expounded by both the patriarch of Constantinople, Nicolao della Porta, in his opening address of the first session, and Pope Innocent IV at the second session, was one of the council's main themes alongside the question of the Holy Land, the Mongol threat, Frederick II's deposition and the *deformatas* of the clergy. But of course, this was still a far cry from earlier Byzantine practices. Manuel I Komnenos, for example, managed to really dominate the Constantinopolitan synod concerning the 'The Father is greater than I' controversy in 1166.<sup>89</sup>

Western chroniclers in the thirteenth century generally, though not universally, accepted the Latin emperors' imperial title and claims as legitimate, while presenting the rulers in Nicaea and Thessaloniki as usurpers. This is demonstrated by the continuing use of the same terminology that they had applied to the earlier Byzantine emperors (mostly *imperator Constantinopolitanus* or the Old French equivalent), a technique that can for instance be found in Aubry of Trois-Fontaines (Champagne), Philippe Mouskes (Tournai) and Matthew Paris (England), to name but a few.<sup>90</sup> It is particularly interesting that a certain number of authors saw the Latin emperors' imperial claims as obviously more legitimate than the earlier Byzantine imperial claims. For example, the *Gesta episcoporum Halberstadensium*—the bishop of Halberstadt participated in the Fourth Crusade—called Isaac II Angelos *rex Grecorum*, but Baldwin I *imperator Grecorum*.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Weiland, 'Relatio de concilio Lugdunense': 513–14.

<sup>89</sup> Sidéris, 'Ces gens': 173–95.

<sup>90</sup> Scheffer-Boichorst, 'Chronica Albrici monachi Trium Fontium': 882–914; Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*: vv. 20370–30198; Matthaëus Parisiensis, *Historia Anglorum*: 102, 167–68, 396.

<sup>91</sup> Weiland, 'Gesta episcoporum Halberstadensium': 118.

The *Annales Stadenses* show an interesting progression: under the years 1195 and 1204, respectively, Isaac II and Baldwin I are both termed *rex Constantinopolitanus*, but by 1215 the ruler of Constantinople has transformed into the *imperator Constantinopolitanus* or *imperator Grecorum*.<sup>92</sup> The same progression is attested to in the *Chronicon Urspergensium*: the terms *rex* and *regnum* are used in the period 1202–06, but in 1215 it is again the *imperator Constantinopolitanus* who was represented at the Lateran Council.<sup>93</sup> The *Annales Sancti Jacobi Leodiensis* show a similar picture: although Baldwin I under the year 1204 is called *imperator*, at the same time it is stated that he is but a *rex*. The entry concerning the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, however, unequivocally attests to the presence of the ambassadors of the *imperator Constantinopolitanus*. It would seem then that the unambiguous papal acceptance of the Latin emperors' imperial status, which presumably was made somehow evident for all those attending the council, was instrumental in convincing observers who previously had doubts.

As far as geographical distribution is concerned, the above chronicles seem to imply that the Latin emperors' imperial title was at first not universally recognised in German-speaking lands. This is not surprising, since it was of course in these regions that the *Zweikaiserproblem* had been the most relevant before 1204. In the same sense, at the German imperial court, the accession of a Latin dynasty in Constantinople had not been greeted with much enthusiasm, quite the contrary. When in 1208 Emperor Henry proposed a marriage alliance to Philip of Swabia, according to the *Chronicon universale Laudunensis*, the latter replied to the Constantinopolitan messengers that their master, who was qualified as an *advena*, would have to recognise Philip, the *imperator Romanus*, as *dominus*.<sup>94</sup> That nothing ever came of the marriage plan indicates that this condition was unacceptable for Henry. Frederick II, within the broader context of his conflict with the papacy, which supported Latin Constantinople, took matters even further, at first by allying himself with the Latin emperors' rival at Nicaea, John III Vatatzes, and then by trying actively to obstruct the organisation of Baldwin II's crusade in 1239.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Albertus Stadensis, *Annales*: 354, 356, 358.

<sup>93</sup> Weiland, 'Burchardi et Cuonradi *Urspergensium Chronicon*': 369, 378.

<sup>94</sup> See references in n. 38.

<sup>95</sup> Chrissis, *Crusading in Frankish Greece*: 116–18.

Yet a few years later, when Baldwin II sought to mediate between Frederick and Innocent IV, he witnessed a number of his imperial colleague's own charters in which he was mentioned as *imperator Constantinopolitanus*.<sup>96</sup> The new relationship with Baldwin obviously led Frederick to recognise his imperial status explicitly. After Frederick's death, his natural son Manfred, ruler and ultimately king of Sicily, likewise appears to have recognised Baldwin's imperial dignity, judging from the honours the former bestowed upon the Emperor when he landed in Sicily after Constantinople had been lost in July 1261. Before this moment, Manfred had probably been Baldwin's ally in the context of the Pelagonia coalition (1258–59) and possibly even his vassal for the lands he controlled in Epiros. Manfred's support of Baldwin, both before and after 1261, should be seen within the context of his, ultimately unsuccessful, attempts to gain recognition from the papacy.<sup>97</sup> In both Frederick's and Manfred's case, (geo)political realities obviously overtook earlier ideological considerations and reactions.

Other western kings and princes appear to have accepted the Latin emperor's imperial status without reservations. The French king Philip II Augustus in 1206, in a letter concerning marquis Philip of Namur's homage for the county of Flanders, refers to the latter's brother Emperor Baldwin I as *imperator Constantinopolitanus*. Louis IX in letters patent concerning the mortgaging of Philip of Courtenay by his father (1259; Philip served as a surety for a loan), called Emperor Baldwin II *illustris imperator Constantinopolitanus*.<sup>98</sup> In 1246 the Castilian infante, and later king, Alfonso (X), in his acceptance of a pact of cooperation between the military order of Santiago and Baldwin II, likewise referred to the latter as emperor.<sup>99</sup> The English royal chancery rolls contain a number of entries referring to financial and other support in favour of the *imperator Constantinopolitanus* or his messengers from 1208 until the 1270s.<sup>100</sup> But Baldwin's unannounced visit to England in 1238, while the preparations for crusading expeditions in aid of Constantinople and the Holy Land were

<sup>96</sup> Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia diplomatica*: 195.

<sup>97</sup> Chrisis, *Crusading in Frankish Greece*: 182–95; Van Tricht, *The Horoscope*.

<sup>98</sup> Brunel et al., *Recueil des actes de Philippe Auguste*, vol. 2 : n° 952; Wolff, 'Mortgage and Redemption': 49.

<sup>99</sup> Benito Ruano, 'Balduino II de Constantinopla': 30.

<sup>100</sup> Stevenson, *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls*, vol. 1: 6, 327–28, 337; *ibid.*, vol. 2: 119; *ibid.*, vol. 3: 120.

firmly underway, appears to have caused some nervousness at the court of Henry III, himself a distant relative of the Emperor.<sup>101</sup>

According to Matthew Paris, the King accused Baldwin (*princeps tantae celsitudinis*) of *contemptus et superbia* for entering his realm ‘without permission’ (*absque licentia*).<sup>102</sup> Matthew relates Henry’s displeasure to the earlier visit in 1223 by the king of Jerusalem, John of Brienne, Baldwin’s father-in-law to be, who was rumoured to have conspired against England after his return to France.<sup>103</sup> But the specific accusations levelled against the Emperor—contempt and haughtiness—would seem to suggest that Henry and his court were more concerned about potential pretensions relating to Baldwin’s imperial rank. The English wanted to make clear that Baldwin, in spite of any political theories on imperial universalism, had no business whatsoever in England, unless he obtained the explicit approval of its king.<sup>104</sup> From this example, we may perhaps conclude that Baldwin’s imperial status may have induced crowned heads, who theoretically held a lower rank, and other princes to adopt a defensive stance on occasion in dealing with the Latin emperor. Nevertheless, after negotiations Baldwin *did* obtain access to the royal court and financial support from both Henry and his brother Richard of Cornwall, who himself was to depart for Syria.

Lastly, even the Latin emperors’ direct rivals in Nicaea and Thessaloniki recognised their imperial status to a certain degree. We have already seen that in the context of diplomatic bilateral pacts with both Nicaea and Thessaloniki compromises could be reached with regard to the imperial titles of both parties in the charters in question. But contemporary Nicaean chroniclers, unlike, for example, Geoffrey of Villehardouin and Henry of Valenciennes vis-à-vis the Nicaean rulers, also acknowledged the imperial status of the Latin rulers of Constantinople. The example of Niketas Choniates († after 1217) is quite remarkable: in his treatment of the Latin empire’s opening years (1204–06/07), which is often quite critical of the Byzantine elite, Niketas notes how Baldwin I was proclaimed *basileus*

<sup>101</sup> Chrissis, *Crusading in Frankish Greece*: 102–21.

<sup>102</sup> Matthaeus Parisiensis, *Chronica Majora*, vol. 3: 480–81.

<sup>103</sup> On this visit and these rumours, see Perry, *John of Brienne*: 131–33. A 1229 pact concerning the imperial succession between the new emperor-to-be John and the Constantinopolitan barons stipulated that the still underage Baldwin was to marry his daughter, Mary.

<sup>104</sup> In addition, Henry III maintained friendly relations with the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, who at this time was Baldwin II’s opponent, see Weiler, *Henry III of England*: 71–85.

*ton Rhomaion*, while his successor and brother Henry is designated as *basileus* without any further qualification. The chronicler also mentions Theodore I Laskaris' proclamation as *basileus ton Rhomaion*, but quite remarkably refrains from designating him as such in the rest of his work.

In his panegyrics directly addressed to Laskaris, and written in order to gain a position at his court, Choniates does of course recognise him as the only rightful emperor. Yet it is clear from his chronicle that he personally had his doubts whether after 1204 any of the claimants could be considered to be the legitimate 'emperor of the Romans'.<sup>105</sup> The later George Akropolites († 1282) likewise calls the Latin rulers *basileus* in his chronicle, but with the addition 'of Constantinople' or 'of the *Latinoi/Italoï*' to distinguish them from his patrons, the emperors of Nicaea, John III Vatatzes, Theodore II Laskaris and Michael VIII Paleologos, who in his eyes, without any doubt, were the rightful *basileis ton Rhomaion*, despite the fact that until 1261 they had to rule in exile from Nicaea.<sup>106</sup> Both Choniates and Akropolites obviously did not recognise the Roman character of the Latin rulers' emperorship, but the fact that they were in control of the imperial city—with, for example, the imperial throne of Constantine the Great, which remained in use during imperial coronations—seems to suggest that they could not deny them their imperial dignity entirely: though the Latin emperor was not the 'true and universal Roman emperor', he nevertheless was some kind of emperor.<sup>107</sup> The imperial city without an emperor was evidently unimaginable.

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<sup>105</sup> Choniates, *Historia*: 596–98, 614, 625, 642.

<sup>106</sup> Akropolites, *Historia*: §§ 8, 14, 17–18, 27, 30, 37.

<sup>107</sup> In earlier times and different circumstances the *basileus* title had, for example, also been granted to and employed for the tenth-century rulers of the Bulgarian empire, see Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*: 393–94.

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# Imperial Rule in Medieval Spain: Christian and Islamic Contexts

Wolfram Drews\*

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*With the coronation of Alfonso VII of León and Castile as 'emperor of all Spain' in Toledo in 1135 the imperial aspirations of the Leonese kings reached a climax. Their origins, however, go back to the tenth century, when individual kings were called 'imperator' in charters.*

*This article traces the origins of this tradition within the context of political history and outlines the phenomenon of imperial self-ascriptions on the Iberian Peninsula. While modern research traditionally focused on the question of whether or not the kings of León pursued an 'imperial programme' and, if they did, what fundamental ideas lay behind such a programme, this article proposes a different approach: by focusing on the interdependencies between Christian and Muslim powers, it argues that the coronation of Alfonso VII could have been a direct response to the proclamation of 'Abd al-Mu'min as caliph of the Almohad Empire in 1132. A close analysis of the royal and imperial titles already used by Alfonso's grandfather Alfonso VI shows that he imitated the traditional caliphal title to be 'ruler of the faithful', although religious references were not a traditional part of Christian imperial titles. By examining Leonese and Almohad imperial self-ascriptions, the article offers a model by which we can explore the ways in which neighbouring imperial powers influenced each other and developed competing claims to power. The article establishes that Christian use of imperial titles on the Iberian Peninsula came to an abrupt end once competition with Muslim rivals became obsolete. It underlines the importance of the individual context*

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*in which a title was used, a point that stands in stark contrast to the received view that there was an unchanging ‘conceptual core’ to the notion of ‘empire’ as it was used by the peninsula’s kings. The article also highlights the hegemonic connotations of imperial notions in medieval Iberia and the importance of a motif of rulership that included subjects of both Christian and Muslim belief.*

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## The First and Only Imperial Coronation in Spain

On 26 May 1135, a solemn ceremony took place in the royal city of León:<sup>1</sup> King Alfonso VII of León and Castile was crowned emperor during mass.<sup>2</sup> The day before, exactly 50 years after the conquest of Toledo by his grandfather Alfonso VI, a synod had convened to decide on matters of the Spanish church.<sup>3</sup> One day later, the synod continued with debates about the secular affairs of the different realms that were ruled by the emperor and described by the chronicler as one comprehensive realm that included the whole of Spain: ‘tractaverunt ea, que pertinent ad salutem regni totius Hispanie’.<sup>4</sup> The *Chronica Adefonsi imperatoris* reports that the Counts of Barcelona and Toulouse as well as the Muslim ‘king’ Zafadola gave their obedience to the ruler of León; the chronicler also maintains that Alfonso’s realm stretched from the Atlantic Ocean near Santiago de Compostela to the river Rhône.<sup>5</sup> Alfonso’s claim to be overlord of this area was underlined by the participants at the imperial coronation: numerous princes from the Pyrenees and southern France are said to have attended the ceremony, which is, in all probability, an exaggeration. The king of Navarre, whose rule had been restored the year before, was the highest-ranking ruler; he guided the new emperor to the altar on his right arm. At the following coronation feast, counts, princes and dukes are said to have served at the royal table. According to the

<sup>1</sup> The following text constitutes a substantially refocused and updated version of Drews, ‘Imperiale Herrschaft an der Peripherie?’ I would like to thank Dr Christian Scholl (Münster) for providing an English translation of the original.

<sup>2</sup> Sánchez, ‘Chronica Adefonsi imperatoris’: 181–83 (I 67–70).

<sup>3</sup> See Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 310–19.

<sup>4</sup> Sánchez, ‘Chronica Adefonsi imperatoris’: 183 (I 71).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: 181 (I 68): ‘Et facti sunt termini regni Adefonsi regis Legionis a mari magno Oceano, quod est a Patrono Sancti Iacobis, usque ad fluium Rodani.’

chronicler, Alfonso's emperorship was characterised by his supremacy over different Christian and Islamic princes who owed obedience to him.<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that Alfonso was not crowned Roman Emperor, *imperator Romanorum*.<sup>7</sup> He did not use the titles *augustus* or *caesar*, either, but exclusively adopted the title *imperator*. It is also important to highlight that the pope was not involved in any way.

The case of the Iberian Peninsula thus warrants closer analysis: it provides an instructive example of imperial self-ascriptions that developed independently from the Roman tradition. It is important to note that the ceremony of 1135 was unique insofar as it constituted not only the first but also the only imperial *coronation* in Spain.<sup>8</sup> However, many Spanish kings had borne the title emperor before; even Alfonso VII himself had used it several years before 1135. In fact, the title *imperator Hispaniae* and its use demonstrate how imperial terminology could effectively be used as a political tool in order to express specific claims and to assert them. In order to achieve an adequate understanding of the practices and the ideas that determined the use of the title, it is crucial to take account of the specific historical situation on the Iberian Peninsula in the High Middle Ages.

Today, the imperial tradition of medieval Spain is almost forgotten; in the first half of the twentieth century, however, German researchers in particular paid much attention to the Spanish emperors.<sup>9</sup> Constitutional historians at that time tried to unearth the 'nature' of Spanish emperorship and to grasp its legal and conceptual 'core'. Earlier researchers considered the coronation of 1135 to be a formal act that legitimised the 'idea of emperorship', which allegedly had already existed before. This interpretation could be justified with the observation that the title 'emperor' was henceforth used in the *intitulatio* and *corroboratio* of charters,<sup>10</sup> which had not been the case before. In addition, between 1135 and 1145 charters were dated after the

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: 182 (I 70): [...] 'ut uocarent regem imperatorem pro eo quod rex Garsias et rex Zafadola Sarracenorum et comes Raymundus Barchinonensium et comes Adefonsus Tolosanus et multi comites et duces Gasconie et Francie in omniis essent obedientes ei.'

<sup>7</sup> On imperial titles detached from Roman ideology, see Stengel, 'Kaisertitel und Superanitätsidee'; Erdmann, 'Die nichtrömische Kaiseridee'.

<sup>8</sup> Gamba, *Alfonso VI*: 673, devalues this coronation for polemical reasons.

<sup>9</sup> Hüffer, 'Die leonesischen Hegemoniebestrebungen'; id., 'Die mittelalterliche spanische Kaiseridee'; id., 'Zum Ende der mittelalterlichen spanischen Kaiseridee'.

<sup>10</sup> On the formula of the *corroboratio*, see Rassow, 'Die Urkunden Kaiser Alfons' VII': 411; on the *intitulatio*, see Gamba, *Alfonso VI*: 191–96.

year of the imperial coronation.<sup>11</sup> Right after the coronation, the alternating use of the titles of ‘king’ and ‘emperor’ came to an end,<sup>12</sup> as did the use of kingly seals: in all probability, imperial seals were introduced by the chancellery in 1135.<sup>13</sup>

According to the prevalent opinion at the beginning of the twentieth century, one should have expected many more imperial coronations to have taken place in Spain after 1135, because the alleged constitutional core of emperorship had become institutionalised by then. The ideological background of this idea was the alleged supremacy of the kingdom of León, the oldest Christian realm in northern Spain, over all the other Christian dominions; in addition, the idea of emperorship was supposed to imply the fight against Muslims. In fact, Alfonso VII (1126–57) fought very successfully against the Muslims during his reign; his most important achievement during the so-called *Reconquista*<sup>14</sup> was his capture of Almería in 1147.

Alfonso’s royal successors equally won considerable victories against the Muslims in southern Spain: after the decisive battle at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212, the most important cities in al-Andalus were conquered by Christian kings—Córdoba in 1236, Valencia in 1238, Seville in 1248 and Murcia in 1265. During the thirteenth century, Castile’s predominance on the Iberian Peninsula was permanently secured. If we accept the assumptions of the earlier researchers mentioned above, we might expect the kings of Castile to have followed the tradition of their imperial predecessors after permanently securing their supremacy over the other Christian rulers through their victories over Islam.

This, however, was not the case: Spanish emperorship was not continued; to the contrary, it was virtually forgotten, as can be seen both in historiography as well as in vernacular literature. Only a few

<sup>11</sup> On the *annus imperii*, see Rassow, ‘Die Urkunden Kaiser Alfons’ VII’: 356–62; Hüffer, ‘Die leonesischen Hegemoniebestrebungen’: 378; Schramm, ‘Das kastilische Königtum’: 109; on the reorganisation of the chancellery after 1135, see Hüffer, ‘Die mittelalterliche spanische Kaiseridee’: 436. The most recent treatment of the evidence adduced by charters is Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*, who fails, however, to take notice of Rassow’s earlier work on Alfonsine charters. On the ‘veritable impérialisation du formulaire diplomatique’ in Alfonso’s chancellery see *ibid.*: 416, 319–28.

<sup>12</sup> Hüffer, ‘Die leonesischen Hegemoniebestrebungen’: 377.

<sup>13</sup> Menéndez Pidal de Navascués, ‘Los sellos de Alfonso VII’: 116.

<sup>14</sup> For a critical analysis, see Jaspert, ‘Reconquista’.

troubadours called Alfonso VIII of Castile, the victor of Las Navas de Tolosa, an emperor. A eulogy given by Alfonso X to his father Fernando III elaborates, in retrospect, on the fact that the latter had aspired to renew the emperorship after his military victories: ‘anhelando que su sennorio fuesse llamado Emperio et non regno, et él coronado por Emperador, segunt lo fueron otros de su linaje’.<sup>15</sup> The theory that Fernando might just not have been able to force the other Christian realms in Spain to recognise his claim<sup>16</sup> does not provide a satisfying argument: after all, it is hardly convincing that these realms should have accepted the superiority of an emperor in the twelfth century, but not in the thirteenth. Besides, there is no reason to believe that emperorship under Alonso X would have been ‘meaningless’.<sup>17</sup> And researchers like Hüffer, who believed that the idea of emperorship in León depended significantly on military success,<sup>18</sup> would have to explain why the title was forgotten precisely in the century that witnessed the greatest military success against the Muslims.

Two Spanish coronation *ordines* were composed, both modelled after the coronation *ordo* of the Roman-German Emperor.<sup>19</sup> While these may have been created in connection with Fernando III’s imperial ambitions, interestingly, neither was ever employed. After he conquered the allegedly imperial city of Seville, Fernando tried to expand to North Africa. Yet, by the time he did so, the idea of a Spanish emperor had become completely separated from the old centre, the city of León.

Even the union of Castile and Aragón in the fifteenth century did not occur under the aegis of an emperor nor did the subjugation of Portugal to the rule of Philip II in the sixteenth century. Although the Spanish branch of the Habsburg dynasty was ruling the whole of the Iberian Peninsula from 1580 to 1640, thus almost reaching the territorial extent of the former Visigothic kingdom, the kings of the *Casa de Austria* did not hark back to Spanish emperorship to underline their imperial rank. This is even more surprising when considering the fact that their Austrian relatives were simultaneously ruling Central Europe as emperors.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Libro del Septenario 9’, quoted after Hüffer, ‘Zum Ende der mittelalterlichen spanischen Kaiseridee’: 203. See also Pío Ballesteros, ‘Alfonso X de Castilla’: 472.

<sup>16</sup> Hüffer, ‘Die leonesischen Hegemoniebestrebungen’: 383–84.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*: 384.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*: 346, 358.

<sup>19</sup> Hüffer, ‘Zum Ende der mittelalterlichen spanischen Kaiseridee’: 203; Schramm, ‘Das kastilische Königtum’: 136–37.

Spanish emperorship thus suddenly disappeared in the second half of the twelfth century despite numerous political and military victories in the late medieval and Early Modern period. This requires an explanation. The reasons that were usually given by an earlier generation of researchers mostly refer either to the position of the pope, who allegedly held a monopoly on allocating emperorship in the West, or to Roman emperorship in Germany, which allegedly marginalised (and eventually replaced) the Spanish claim. Neither explanation is entirely convincing: first of all, Spanish rulers never asked for papal recognition. And concerning the second argument, we have to recall that Spanish emperorship was never conceptualised as being Roman; as a consequence, the possibility that it might have been driven out by Holy Roman emperorship seems quite unlikely. Until now scholarship, even the most recent treatment by Sirantoine,<sup>20</sup> has failed to provide a satisfying explanation for the disappearance of imperial titles, and more precisely to account for the failure to restore Spanish emperorship in the thirteenth century. This article tries to provide such an explanation by looking at the entanglement of Spanish imperial claims with both the Andalusian and the wider Mediterranean world.

### The Tradition of Imperial Rule in León

The imperial title of the kings of León appears for the first time at the beginning of the tenth century; for evidence, researchers are mainly dependent on charters. Although the authenticity of many of these was questioned in the past, there are no doubts that numerous kings called themselves *imperator* (alternatively *rex magnus*, *princeps magnus* or *basileus*) in the documents they issued.<sup>21</sup> It is striking, however, that they never did do so in the *intitulatio* or *subscriptio*, that is, the ceremonial parts of the charters, but only within the ‘text’ itself;<sup>22</sup> moreover, the titles *rex* and *imperator* can appear side by side. Often, late kings are referred to as *imperator* by their offspring. Charters from other Spanish realms describe the king of León as *imperator* as well. In a few cases, finally, we come

<sup>20</sup> See Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*.

<sup>21</sup> A collection of the oldest records can be found in Sánchez Candeira, *El ‘regnum-imperium’*: 63–70. See now Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 99–122.

<sup>22</sup> Sánchez Candeira, *El ‘regnum-imperium’*: 17, 53.

across the Byzantine title *basileus* and the name *Flavius*, which had been used by the Roman Emperors of Constantine's dynasty and afterwards by the Visigothic kings.<sup>23</sup>

In the ninth century, a second Christian kingdom emerged in Spain, Navarre, which was ruled by the dynasty of Sánchez from 905 onwards, whose members conducted a more expansionist policy than their predecessors, the kings of Pamplona, had done. Navarre's ruler was not only a rival to the king of León; he could also provide support in matters of foreign policy.<sup>24</sup> It seems probable that the kings of León wanted to draw a distinction between themselves and the new king of Navarre by occasionally using imperial titles (*rex magnus*, *basileus*), thus expressing their claims to supremacy.<sup>25</sup> This assumption might be supported by the fact that the bishop of Santiago de Compostela, residing in the kingdom of León, tried to assert the supremacy of his episcopal see at the same time.<sup>26</sup>

Ramón Menéndez Pidal postulated that Leonese emperorship was in fact a continuation of Visigothic kingship, and that by using the imperial title the kings demonstrated their claim to reconquer the whole of the Iberian Peninsula. According to Menéndez Pidal, Spanish emperorship was from its beginnings inseparably linked to the ideology of reconquest, which allegedly had existed all the time.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the imperial title of León was interpreted as being the result of a number of different phenomena: one could claim that it expressed the kings' opposition to the emperorship of the Carolingians or their self-perception as divinely ordained kings; other explanations include a possible Anglo-Saxon influence, and finally the Leonese kings' opposition to papal claims.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> On the royal title 'Flavius', see Wolfram, *Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*: 56–76; Menéndez Pidal, 'El imperio hispánico y los cinco reinos': 32; Sánchez Candeira, *El 'regnum-imperium'*: 16–17. For *basileus*, see Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 118–19. To occurrences in Isidore's 'Etymologies' and in evidence relating to Anglo-Saxon kings, one might add usage in biblical manuscripts for the Book of Kings.

<sup>24</sup> Sánchez Candeira, *El 'regnum-imperium'*: 46–47.

<sup>25</sup> Menéndez Pidal, *La España del Cid*: 67. See also Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 123–29.

<sup>26</sup> Hüffer, 'Die leonesischen Hegemoniebestrebungen': 347.

<sup>27</sup> Menéndez Pidal, 'El imperio hispánico y los cinco reinos': 15.

<sup>28</sup> The assertions of earlier researchers are summed up in García Gallo, 'El imperio medieval español': 199–228, and in Sánchez Candeira, *El 'regnum-imperium'*: 7–10.

However, the use of imperial titles in León remained inconsistent; in addition, Visigothic kings had never called themselves *imperator*.<sup>29</sup> It seems certain that the title did not allude to the personal qualities of kings of León (as, for example, successful military leaders) because underage kings without any military experience were also referred to as *imperator*.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, in charters and letters imperial titles were also bestowed on rulers from other realms, such as Sancho III of Navarre, called the Great,<sup>31</sup> who was able to extend the borders of his kingdom while acting as protector over other territories such as Castile for certain periods of time.<sup>32</sup> Navarrese terminology under Sancho III was similar to the terminology used in León, and equally inspired by a common ‘neo-Gothic’ orientation.<sup>33</sup>

Formerly, Sancho was believed to have minted coins showing the imperial title on the obverse next to the ruler’s portrait. These coins, which were often thought to provide the earliest archaeological evidence of Spanish emperorship,<sup>34</sup> were repeatedly dated between 1033 and 1035. More recent research, however, seems to imply that they were minted much later: there is no evidence for the minting of Navarrese coins at all before the reign of Sancho Ramírez (1063–94).<sup>35</sup>

With the exception of the Catalan counties, Sancho III was ruling (or at least exerting influence in) all important realms of northern Spain.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>29</sup> However, after the reign of king Liuvigild, Visigothic rulers minted gold coins in imitation of imperial types. Wolfram, *History of the Goths*: 245, concluded: ‘Liuvigild’s reign saw the conclusion of a development that turned the Visigothic *regnum* into a Spanish *imperium*.’

<sup>30</sup> Sánchez Candeira, *El ‘regnum-imperium’*: 38.

<sup>31</sup> Sancho III was referred to as *rex hispanorum regum, rex ibericus* or *rex Hesperidum populorum*, see Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 141–42.

<sup>32</sup> Menéndez Pidal, *La España del Cid*: 118; Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 136–38. According to Sirantoine, Sancho’s policies should be qualified as interventionist rather than as expansionist (*ibid.*: 138).

<sup>33</sup> Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 133–42.

<sup>34</sup> Menéndez Pidal, *La España del Cid*: 119–20.

<sup>35</sup> Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 136.

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*: 142:

Viser la récupération de l’*Hispania* suppose l’alliance préalable des puissances chrétiennes [...]. En donnant lieu par son interventionnisme à une sorte de protectorat sur les territoires avoisinant son royaume, il a en effet pu suggérer l’idée d’une formation supranationale à ses descendants, et il est possible de le considérer en ce sens comme l’“archétype idéal des rois et empereurs hispaniques”.

His eldest legitimate son inherited the kingdom of Navarre, an illegitimate son the ‘county’ of Aragón, and three other sons acquired territories by marriage.<sup>37</sup> Castile, for example, went to Fernando, who plays the most important role in this context: through his marriage with the hereditary daughter of León, Fernando was able to unite León and Castile. He not only founded an impressive sepulchre in the old capital city of León, but he also had the relics of the most important Visigothic saint, Isidore of Seville, transferred from Muslim Spain to the new capital. The sepulchre of the kings is situated directly below the rededicated Basilica of San Isidoro (formerly the monastery of Saint John the Baptist). Through the construction of the sepulchre and the acquisition of St Isidore’s relics, the king of León and Castile asserted a claim to power, which went far beyond the borders of his realm. By ostensibly referring to the symbolic capital of St Isidore, who had presided over the most important synod of the Visigothic era, the Fourth Council of Toledo (633), Fernando I expressed his claim to supremacy over all of the other Christian kingdoms on the peninsula as well as his intention to integrate the Visigothic traditions into his own kingdom.<sup>38</sup>

On the way to supremacy, Fernando’s son, Alfonso VI, took an important step forward: in 1085, he conquered the old Visigothic capital Toledo, thus reaching the apex of his prestige.<sup>39</sup> After this spectacular success, Alfonso VI emphasised the traditional imperial title of León in a particular way, since he called himself several times *Toletani imperii magnificus triumphator*.<sup>40</sup> According to Andrés Gamba, Alfonso’s emperorship was a new synthesis that combined the traditional Leonese *regnum-imperium* with the expansionist impetus of the Basque–Navarrese dynasty, which had been founded by Alfonso’s grandfather Sancho III.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Alfonso’s chancellery was the first to use the title *imperator* more or less systematically.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 138.

<sup>38</sup> Linage Conde, *Alfonso VI*: 57.

<sup>39</sup> María Mínguez, *Alfonso VI*: 128.

<sup>40</sup> This phrase was used in the years 1095, 1096, 1099, 1100 and 1107; see Hüffer, ‘Die leonesischen Hegemoniebestrebungen’: 366; Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 206–13.

<sup>41</sup> Gamba, *Alfonso VI*: 682, 700.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*: 712. On ‘Alphonse VI et la tentation d’un empire néogothique’, see Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 197–259 (*ibid.*: 202–05, on the role of the chancellery).

But Alfonso VI went even further: in letters that were sent in his name to king al-Mu'tamid b. 'Abbād of Seville in 1085, the king of Castile and León called himself the 'emperor of both religions' (*al-imbraṭūr ḡū-l-millatayn*).<sup>43</sup> By using this title, Alfonso claimed supremacy over both Christian and Muslim subjects. This may have extended to those of the king of Seville: he ordered the ruler of Seville to hand over his estates to Castilian envoys. Al-Mu'tamid recognised the new dimension of this claim immediately and rejected it outright in his reply.<sup>44</sup> This moment marks an important step in the history of Spanish emperorship: previously, the title *imperator* had been used in connection with a specific territory, notably the capital of the kingdom, León. Now, it was used not only with specific attributes but with regard to the whole of Spain. The latter happened for the first time in 1077, when Alfonso VI spoke of himself as *Ego Adefonsus imperator totius Hispaniae*,<sup>45</sup> thus becoming the first Spanish ruler to call himself *imperator*.<sup>46</sup> The Arabic title, which did not refer to location, but rather to groups of people, may have been coined after Alfonso's Latin title *imperator constitutus super omnes Hispaniae nationes*, which was used from 1087 onwards.<sup>47</sup>

Alfonso VI not only claimed to be the sovereign of the whole of Spain in his Latin titles, he also linked the imperial title to religion in the Arabic titlature, thereby claiming to rule over Christian and Muslim subjects.<sup>48</sup> The reference to religion was obviously a reflection of Muslim customs; after all, the title of the caliph was the 'Commander of the Faithful' (*amīr al-mu'minīn*). Accordingly, as far as his title is concerned, the caliph's rule is not linked to a specific territory or centre, but rather refers to a religious community he presided over as the successor of the Prophet. Alfonso VI used his Arabic title in a similar way, all the while avoiding the Arab term *amīr*—which, etymologically, is very similar to the Latin word *imperator*; both mean 'commander'—and rather using the Latin loan word *imperator*.

<sup>43</sup> MacKay and Benaboud, 'Alfonso VI': 95–102; MacKay and Benaboud, 'The Authenticity of Alfonso VI's Letter': 233–37.

<sup>44</sup> MacKay and Benaboud, 'Alfonso VI': 101.

<sup>45</sup> Gamba, *Alfonso VI*: 673, 695, 706; Menéndez Pidal, 'El imperio hispánico y los cinco reinos': 16.

<sup>46</sup> Gamba, *Alfonso VI*: 672. See Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 412: '[...] l'adoption du titre d'*imperator totius Hispaniae* en 1077 ou 1078 marque le premier temps du développement d'une véritable idéologie impériale.'

<sup>47</sup> Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 223.

<sup>48</sup> Gamba, *Alfonso VI*: 682, 700.

An Arab source of the twelfth or thirteenth century, the *Kitāb al-Iktifā'*, refers to Alfonso after the conquest of Toledo in the following way: 'He called himself *imperator*, which in their language means *amīr al-mu'minīn*.'<sup>49</sup>

The religious community that the king intends to rule is, on the one hand, not referred to as 'the faithful'; in its original meaning, on the other hand, *milla* means 'religion', or 'religious community'.<sup>50</sup> With his Arab imperial title, Alfonso VI claimed supremacy over two different religious communities; similarly, caliphs traditionally saw themselves as protectors not only of the Muslims but also of Christians and Jews, the 'protected peoples'. Therefore, Alfonso's Arab title is not linked 'to Muslim territory', as maintained by Stengel,<sup>51</sup> but, in conformity with Muslim custom, to adherents of different religions. Alfonso claimed power over people who lived either in his own territory or even beyond its borders.<sup>52</sup> Schramm was, therefore, right when he underlined that Alfonso's title was 'going beyond the hegemonic idea of emperorship'.<sup>53</sup> Another reason that might have contributed to the use of the title *imperator*, notably in a letter sent to the ruler of Seville, was because that particular city was erroneously considered to have been the former seat of Roman Emperors.<sup>54</sup>

The king of Castile imitated the usual practice of Islamic rulers, who styled themselves as having supreme authority over different religious communities. It is striking that Alfonso's Spanish imperial title did not imply a missionary claim (as had been the case at the time of the Ottonian dynasty's Roman emperorship regarding the mission to the Slavs). To the contrary, the formula 'emperor of both religions' implies that adherents of both religions have a right to remain with the religion of their forefathers; there is no question of one religion being replaced by the other. The apparent connection with the Arab title also demonstrates that it is vital

<sup>49</sup> Translation after MacKay and Benaboud, 'Alfonso VI': 97. See Roth, 'Again Alfonso VI': 165–69.

<sup>50</sup> Buhl and Bosworth, art. 'Milla'; Ursinus, art. 'Millet'.

<sup>51</sup> Stengel, 'Kaisertitel und Suveränitätsidee': 13: 'muselmanisches Gebiet'.

<sup>52</sup> Linage Conde, *Alfonso VI*: 95.

<sup>53</sup> Schramm, 'Das kastilische Königtum': 93, 109: 'Schritt über die hegemoniale Kaiseridee hinaus'. However, Sirantoine reverts to the former, narrower interpretation: 'Le titre (sc. d'*imperator totius Hispaniae*) est en effet cette fois clairement l'expression d'une hégémonie castillano-léonaise et chrétienne sur l'*Hispania*' (Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 412; see *ibid.*: 254).

<sup>54</sup> Schramm, 'Das kastilische Königtum': 134.

to take the Muslim world into account when examining the tradition of Spanish emperorship. In this context, Évariste Lévi-Provençal, the founder of French Oriental Studies, must be considered a crucial figure: he was the first to claim that the imperial title of the Christian kings of León might represent a reaction to the establishment of a separate caliphate in Spain, which, by remarkable chronological analogy, also occurred in the first half of the tenth century. According to Lévi-Provençal, the Christian kings tried to counter the claims of the rising caliphate with a similar title in order to increase their own prestige and thus to position themselves on equal footing with the Muslim ruler again, especially with a view to Christians living under Islamic rule.<sup>55</sup>

### **Imperial Rule in Muslim Spain and its Entanglement with Christian Claims**

From the second half of the eighth century onwards, members of the Umayyad dynasty had ruled Muslim Spain as emirs. They were scions of the first dynasty of caliphs that had been overthrown by the Abbasid revolution of 749. The Umayyads had previously ruled the Islamic empire from Damascus and it was under their rule that Muslim invaders conquered the Spanish Visigothic kingdom in 711. One member of the dynasty managed to escape the Abbasid massacre and to flee to Spain, where he began to rule as the Emir of Córdoba from 756 onwards. Formally, he and his successors were subordinated to the rule of the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad, since they were considered to be, according to the protocol, ‘sons of the caliph’. Thus, the notion of the unity of the caliphate was maintained.<sup>56</sup>

This notion was shattered, however, when, at the beginning of the tenth century, a second, rival caliphate was founded in North Africa. This seriously challenged the claim of the Sunni caliph in Baghdad to be the leader of the entire Muslim community. The Fatimids declared themselves to be descendants of Fāṭima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, and belonged to the *Ismāʿīlī Shīʿa*, whose beliefs they propagated extensively by sending missionaries throughout the entire Muslim world. In 909, the first Fatimid caliph was proclaimed in Ifriqiyya (Tunisia), thus in the western Muslim world and within the range of the Umayyad Emir

<sup>55</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, vol. 2: 51.

<sup>56</sup> Watt, *A History of Islamic Spain*: 46.

of Córdoba. As the latter felt challenged by the claims of the Fatimid imam-caliph, the emir ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III of Córdoba adopted the title of caliph in 929. As a consequence, there were now three caliphs in the Muslim world from this time onwards, two Sunni caliphs in Baghdad and Córdoba and one Shiite caliph in North Africa.

The Fatimids effectively tried to annihilate the caliphate of Baghdad, which they considered illegitimate and heretical. From their new capital at Cairo, they conquered all three holy cities of Islam (Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem), which they held at least for a short time. Through the conquest of these sites, the Fatimids impressively underlined their claim to imperial supremacy in the entire Muslim world, combining, as it were, aspects of claims to religious and secular hegemony.<sup>57</sup> The Spanish Umayyads, however, were content with claiming supremacy in the Islamic West, aiming to secure their hegemonic position in Spain and in the Maghreb.

On the one hand, the imperial, hegemonic claim of the Umayyad caliph was directed at the periphery of Muslim Spain, which is the three marches of the borderland to Christian Spain. The rulers of these marches had often acted independently from the emir in Córdoba; between 868 and 929, there had even been several rebellions against the emir.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, the new imperial claim of the Umayyads became evident in the way they organised foreign relations: the first caliph of Córdoba not only received envoys of the German emperor Otto the Great but also of Christian kings of northern Spain. He sent emissaries to their courts, among them the Jewish scholar Ḥasdāi ibn Šaprūt, who achieved a great success on his voyage of 958: the Jewish envoy actually convinced the Christian king of Navarre, his mother Toda as well as her grandson, the dethroned king Sancho I of León, to accompany him to the court of Córdoba, in order to conclude a peace treaty with the caliph. In return, the latter promised to protect them against their rivals in northern Spain.<sup>59</sup> Last but not least, there were also envoys from Byzantium who travelled to the court of Córdoba to form an alliance against mutual enemies, especially the aggressive Fatimid imam-caliphs.<sup>60</sup> Through these

<sup>57</sup> See Drews, ‘Universale Herrschaft aus muslimischer Perspektive’.

<sup>58</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l’Espagne musulmane*: 37; Menéndez Pidal, ‘El imperio hispánico y los cinco reinos’: 26.

<sup>59</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *L’Espagne musulmane au X<sup>e</sup> siècle*: 112; id., *Histoire de l’Espagne musulmane*: 69–74.

<sup>60</sup> Codera y Zaidín, ‘Embajadas de príncipes cristianos’: 460–61.

embassies, Christian rulers noticed the new, imperial splendour of the court at Córdoba. In addition, as a consequence of the military success of the first Umayyad caliph, Christian rulers of the north were obliged to pay tribute again.<sup>61</sup> Under the rule of the first caliph's son al-Ḥakam II (961–76), both Ordoño IV of León and Borrell I of Barcelona visited the court of Córdoba, where they received valuable gifts.<sup>62</sup>

The Umayyad caliphate lasted for little more than a century and finally collapsed in 1031. It was replaced by several small kingdoms, ruled by different parties and hence called 'party kingdoms' ('*taifas*'; *mulūk al-ṭawā'if*). When Sancho III of Navarre pursued his interventionist policies in northern Spain mentioned above, establishing hegemony over adjacent Christian territories, this occurred precisely at the time of the collapse of the caliphate of Córdoba. We are thus entitled to hypothesise that Sancho's claim to a sort of overlordship may have been linked to the ultimate goal of pursuing interventionist and perhaps also expansionist policies against the *taifa* kingdoms of al-Andalus, especially against Zaragoza.<sup>63</sup>

As has been mentioned above, this orientation became still more evident under the rule of Sancho's son Fernando I of León and Castile who—by means of the translation of the relics of St Isidore—transferred the symbolic capital of the Visigothic church (which had its centre in southern Spain) to the north (which had been of only minor importance in Visigothic times). Thus, in the eleventh century, northern Spain appropriated the traditions of the formerly (pre-711) Christian south.<sup>64</sup> This policy was continued by Fernando's son Alfonso VI: he used his imperial title in order to claim supremacy explicitly over Christians as well as Muslims in southern Spain, thereby trying to position himself as an imperial overlord of different Muslim *taifa* kingdoms.

The military success of the Castilian king provoked a Muslim response: the weakened rulers of southern Spain appealed to their Muslim brothers in North Africa, the Almoravids, for help against the Christians from northern Spain. The members of the Almoravid movement had only recently converted to Islam and were particularly zealous in the observance of their religion. They expanded their rule over the whole

<sup>61</sup> Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*: 76–77.

<sup>62</sup> Kinoshita, 'Almería Silk and the French Feudal Imaginary': 244.

<sup>63</sup> For Sancho's policies concerning Islam, see Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 139.

<sup>64</sup> Menéndez Pidal, 'El imperio hispánico y los cinco reinos': 11.

of North-western Africa, which remained the centre of their power even after the expansion to Spain.

Yūsuf ibn Tāšfīn, the leader of the Almoravids, defeated the troops of Alfonso VI at the battle of Sagrajas in 1086. In the following years, Yūsuf annexed all the *taifas* with the exception of Valencia and Zaragoza. In letters sent to the *taifa* rulers, the Almoravid leader refused to adopt a name in the tradition of the Abbasid and Umayyad caliphs, as the *taifa* kings had done before. Whereas *taifa* kings had wanted to express a special religious dimension of their rule by using such caliphal names, Yūsuf rejected this pretence because he considered *taifa* kings to be usurpers who had illegally used religious names of former caliphs.<sup>65</sup> In contrast to the *taifa* kings, Yūsuf had his title confirmed by the caliph in Baghdad, thereby reaffirming the traditional hierarchy within the *dār al-Islām*. It is striking that the Abbasid caliph granted Yūsuf the imperial title *amīr al-muslimīn wa-nāṣir al-dīn* ('Commander of the Muslims and Defender of the Faith') due to his conquests in Europe. This probably occurred in 1098. This title might in fact have been awarded to him in order to help him secure his hegemonic position in the western part of the Islamic world.<sup>66</sup>

The Almoravid title is quite close to that of a caliph: *amīr al-mu'minīn* ('Commander of the Faithful'). Thus, after his victories over Alfonso VI, the ruler of western Islam was granted a title that was very similar to that of the highest Islamic leader, and both rulers were to be mentioned in the *ḥuṭba* during congregational prayer on Fridays.<sup>67</sup> The leader of the Almoravids somehow became the caliph's deputy in the Islamic West. As such, the head of the Almoravids not only rejected the *taifa* kings' caliphal arrogations, he also countered the claim of the Christian king of Castile to rule over Muslims. Finally, it is also possible that the Muslims of the Maghreb actually wanted to assert themselves against the imperial ambitions of both the king of Castile and the Fatimid caliph. After all, the leader of the Almoravids had gained his legitimation from the Sunni caliph of Baghdad, the rival of the Shiite caliph of Cairo. The latter saw himself encircled by the Sunni caliph in the East and his Almoravid deputy in the West.

Soon, however, Almoravid rule was threatened by a new religious movement which had emerged among rival berbers. As their name

<sup>65</sup> van Berchem, 'Titres califiens d'Occident': 268–69.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*: 271.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*: 268.

suggests, the Almohads (derived from *waḥad*, ‘one’) were zealous ‘confessors of God’s unity’ who not only fought against the allegedly unfaithful Christians but also against Muslims who were believed to be lax in matters of religion, such as the Almoravids. Ibn Tūmart, the founder of the Almohads, died in 1130; he had claimed the position of the religious leader chosen by Allah (*mahdī*).<sup>68</sup> His successor ‘Abd al-Mu‘min was officially proclaimed caliph (*amīr al-mu‘minīn*). As a consequence, the leader of the Almohads was no longer the Abbasid caliph’s deputy in the West, as the Almoravid leaders had been, but rather his rival, challenging the Abbasid caliph’s claim to supremacy over the entire Islamic *umma*.<sup>69</sup> In 1146, the Almohads invaded Spain and won a decisive victory against the Almoravids the following year.<sup>70</sup>

The imperial coronation of Alfonso VII of Castile, which was the point of departure of this article, took place three years after the proclamation of the Almohad caliphate. Alfonso VII was the grandson of Alfonso VI, the ‘emperor of both religions’. After Alfonso VI’s death, his daughter Urraca had married king Alfonso I of Aragón, called ‘el Batallador’ (‘the Warrior’), who adopted the imperial title of his late father-in-law and scored significant victories against the Muslims, for example by conquering Zaragoza in 1117.<sup>71</sup> Urraca and the ‘Warrior’ did not, however, have a good relationship. They had no offspring, and, because they were too closely related to each other, the pope annulled their marriage in 1112. Urraca’s son by her first marriage to Count Raymond of Burgundy had not been considered a possible heir by his grandfather, who had sent him away to Galicia. As a consequence of the end of Urraca’s marriage to the ‘Warrior’, Alfonso Raimúndez, as he was originally called, now returned to prominence.

It was not until the failure of his mother’s second marriage that Alfonso Raimúndez—the later Alfonso VII—could claim his grandfather’s inheritance. But he increasingly used the title emperor, whereas his stepfather, who had borne this title during his marriage to Urraca, made less and less use of it in his charters.<sup>72</sup> Thus, Alfonso VII called himself

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*: 276; Watt, *A History of Islamic Spain*: 104.

<sup>69</sup> van Berchem, ‘Titres califiens d’Occident’: 278–79.

<sup>70</sup> Lagardère, *Les Almoravides*: 81–118, 299–309.

<sup>71</sup> According to Sirantoine, ‘le Batailleur se construit une idée impériale propre, dans laquelle la signification militaire contenue dans le terme *imperator* est, tout particulièrement, privilégiée’. See Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 413, 272–84.

<sup>72</sup> Menéndez Pidal, ‘El imperio hispánico y los cinco reinos’: 36–39.

*imperator* prior to his imperial coronation in 1135,<sup>73</sup> but waited for his stepfather's death in 1134 before he had himself solemnly proclaimed emperor in León. As early as December 1134, Alfonso started calling himself *imperator Hispaniarum*.<sup>74</sup> Unlike his predecessors, Alfonso VII made his imperial title public on several occasions, such as the coronation; he also promoted it, for example, by minting a multitude of coins that included the title in their inscriptions. On one specimen, *imperator* appears on one side, while the other shows a lion, the symbol of the city of León.<sup>75</sup>

It is possible to speculate that Alfonso VII wanted to compete with the hegemonic claims of the newly established Almohad caliphate. After all, his grandfather had called himself 'emperor of both religions', and the imperial title of the Almoravids could have been interpreted as a rejection of the Christian claim to rule over Muslims. The Almohads did basically the same: rejecting the claim of Christian rulers to rule over Muslims, they founded a new western caliphate, re-establishing that which had existed until 1031. As 'confessors of God's unity' the Almohads could not tolerate Muslims living under the rule of a Christian king-emperor, one who even claimed to be the *legitimate* ruler over both Christians and Muslims.

The imperial coronation of Alfonso VII was in fact intended to establish his claim to supremacy against several rivals,<sup>76</sup> such as the kingdom of Aragón, whose ruler, Alfonso 'the Warrior', had recently died. In this context, it is striking that the newly crowned emperor Alfonso VII confirmed a military brotherhood that had been initiated by his imperial stepfather. Alfonso 'the Warrior' had founded the *cofradía de Belchite* to fight against Islam;<sup>77</sup> Alfonso VII continued this tradition by proclaiming himself protector of the brotherhood, which he considered a means to exert hegemony over the rival kingdom of Aragón. As *princeps confrater* of the brotherhood, however, he was careful not to scare off the Aragonese nobility, but to reconcile it

<sup>73</sup> Hüffer, 'Die leonesischen Hegemoniebestrebungen': 370.

<sup>74</sup> Recuero Astray, *Alfonso VII*: 126; Rassow, 'Die Urkunden Kaiser Alfons VII.': 396.

<sup>75</sup> Engel and Serrure, *Traité de numismatique du moyen âge*: 818–19; Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 330–31.

<sup>76</sup> Unlike his predecessors, Alfonso VII gave a more feudal interpretation to his position of emperor, see Sirantoine, *Imperator Hispaniae*: 414: 'son sens est également conditionné par une nouveauté: son fondement vassalique, qui fait de l'empereur un suzerain plus qu'un souverain.' See also *ibid.*: 318, 345–49.

<sup>77</sup> Rassow, 'La confradía de Belchite': 200–26; Lourie, 'The confraternity of Belchite': 159–76.

with Castile's claims to supremacy. After his imperial coronation, Alfonso intensified his military activities against the Muslims, celebrating his most important success, the conquest of Almería in 1147, at precisely the moment when the Almohads began their offensive on Spanish soil.

After his death, the union of Castile and León was dissolved, which considerably weakened the united Christian front against the Almohads, particularly because the king of León often refused to support his Castilian rival against the Muslims. Due to their weak positions, it seems that none of the kings dared to bear the title 'emperor', since none of them was powerful enough to justify a claim to hegemony. While it had been possible for Alfonso VII of León to act as protector of a military brotherhood beyond the border in Aragón, León and Castile founded their own brotherhoods after the separation of the kingdoms. With the establishment of the orders of Calatrava and Alcántara, respectively, each kingdom had its own military force.

Regardless of all inter-Christian rivalries, the king of Castile celebrated a decisive success against the Almohad caliph in 1212 without the support of the king of León. After this defeat, the Muslims lost most of their territories in al-Andalus. The Almohad caliphate vanished a few decades later, and by 1235 the Almohads had lost their rule over Spain. In Morocco, they were able to maintain themselves against the Merinids until 1269. As a consequence, by the second half of the thirteenth century there existed neither a western Muslim caliph nor a Christian Spanish emperor.

### **Traditions of Historical Scholarship and New Perspectives**

Based on the previous findings, we can better understand that Spanish emperorship was in fact not based on a precise and unchangeable idea, the content of which can somehow be unearthed, as earlier researchers believed. Furthermore, it had no constitutional 'core' which can be determined with precision.<sup>78</sup> It was neither a continuation of Roman provincial barrack emperors of Late Antiquity, nor a 'Germanic imperial title' from the age of migrations.<sup>79</sup> The changing use of both Christian

<sup>78</sup> Hüffer, 'Die mittelalterliche spanische Kaiseridee': 425, 436; id., 'Die leonesischen Hegemoniebestrebungen': 376; Stengel, 'Kaisertitel und Suveränitätsidee': 47.

<sup>79</sup> Stengel, 'Kaisertitel und Suveränitätsidee': 20, 23.

and Muslim imperial titles rather reflects claims to regional hegemony at the periphery of the large oriental power blocks that existed in the Mediterranean until the twelfth century.

When historians look beyond the Christian-Latin world at the *dār al-Islām*, it is possible to discover similar developments in the use of a specific political language. Similarities between the two areas need not necessarily have the same origins. Nor is it always possible to identify one single point that allegedly explains everything, as Lévi-Provençal believed, when he linked Leonese emperorship to the foundation of the Caliphate of Córdoba, both of which occurred in the tenth century.<sup>80</sup>

Close relations between Christians and Muslims, which become evident in several diplomatic missions, the translation of relics, and the exchange of letters imply, however, that political changes, such as the varying use of imperial titles, may have been influenced by parallel developments on the other side. This conclusion becomes even more probable in cases when similar developments occur in a border area between two political systems during more or less the same period. Still further evidence may be derived from the fact that these developments come to an end on both sides after the period that witnessed the creation of parallel political entities and claims. This is true both of the western caliphate and of Christian Spanish emperorship, which—interestingly enough—was not revived when the expansion of Castile-León reached its climax in the thirteenth century. The fact that the western caliphate and Spanish emperorship ended at the same time clearly hints at intricate connections and interrelations, which can be underpinned by evidence derived from social, political and cultural exchange processes that will be discussed below.

Whereas the emergence of Leonese imperial traditions at the beginning of the tenth century was stimulated by the contemporaneous emergence of the Umayyad Caliphate of Córdoba, a decisive exterior stimulus for the continuation of Spanish emperorship was lacking after the Almohad caliphate collapsed in the thirteenth century. Several elements suggest that, in the preceding centuries, Christian and Muslim monarchs were not only reacting to rival rulers of their own religion when they adopted or

<sup>80</sup> Lévi-Provençal's conviction is problematic because imperial titles had been used in León before the foundation of the caliphate in 929, see Menéndez-Pidal, 'El imperio hispánico y los cinco reinos': 23; Sánchez Candeira, *El 'regnum-imperium'*: 49.

usurped imperial titles, but they were also looking at rulers of the other monotheistic religion.

Muslims and Christians shared the same political language: when the ruler of Castile styled himself as ‘emperor of both religions’, the Almoravids reacted by adopting an imperial title, which they had at once confirmed by the Sunni caliph in Baghdad, the rival of their Fatimid neighbours. By deriving their legitimacy from the Abbasids, they did more than preserve the unity of the Sunni Muslim world. In addition, they actively claimed that within the western Muslim world, it was their own leader—and not the Christian king—who had to be considered as ‘head of the Muslims and defender of the faith’. This claim is clearly expressed by their use of the title *nāṣir al-dīn*, which can doubtless be interpreted as a rejection of any Christian claim to rule over Muslims. Arab sources also support the assumption that the Almoravids did not adopt their specific title, which was similar to that of the caliph, before their victory over Alfonso VI at the battle of Sagradas in 1086.<sup>81</sup> Angus MacKay points to a second parallel: just as Alfonso VI used his Latin imperial titles to reject any claims of the papacy to rule over Spain without causing direct confrontation with the Roman Church, the Almoravid leader Yūsuf avoided any direct confrontation with the caliph in Baghdad.<sup>82</sup> This complex picture of external relations shows different rivalries overlapping across the Mediterranean, and it was in southern Spain that they found their most prominent expressions.

While the Christian kings of León were able to adopt titles from Antiquity to emphasise their hegemonic claim, the Almoravids did not have this option: the title of the highest ruler in the Islamic world was a new creation, not deduced from pre-Islamic times or adopted from neighbouring cultures. In early Islam, titles from the pre-Islamic period—for example the title of king—were only used for minor rulers, who had their power legitimised by the caliph. By creating a new title for themselves, the Almoravids pursued two aims: on the one hand, they avoided a connection to pre- and non-Islamic traditions; on the other hand, they were explicitly imitating the caliphal title. To legitimise their hegemonic claim, they did not resort

<sup>81</sup> Lévi-Provençal, ‘Le titre souverain’: 268.

<sup>82</sup> MacKay, ‘Yet again Alfonso VI’: 179.

to traditions of Antiquity, but to the theory of rightly-guided rule, as it had developed in Sunni Islam.<sup>83</sup>

Last but not least, the imperial coronation of Alfonso VII occurred shortly after the death of the new emperor's Aragonese rival and stepfather. At the same time, however, it took place immediately after the renewed establishment of a second caliphate in the Muslim West by the Almohads, which, in return, can be understood as an expression of the Almohads' fight for supremacy in western Islam against the Almoravids. From the thirteenth century onwards, no Islamic power in the West was able to establish a system of imperial rule that would have been comparable to that of the Umayyads, Almoravids or Almohads. Nor did Christian Spain continue the imperial tradition of León, which—at different times—had also been stimulated by the rivalry with Muslim competitors. Between the tenth and twelfth centuries, the varying use of different imperial titles by Christian and Muslim rulers was the expression of competitive political constellations, in which the entanglement of Christian and Muslim claims and territories became manifest. It is this situation that provides an answer to the question Edmund Stengel posed a century ago: 'Why was the imperialism of all of these 'emperors' so explicitly characterised by hegemonic traits?'<sup>84</sup>

In high medieval Spain, Christian and Muslim territories formed a shared political space, in which different rulers competed for hegemony. Since the political landscape, both on the Christian and on the Muslim side, became more and more differentiated in the tenth and eleventh centuries, political rivalry increased considerably, which became evident in the growing assertion of imperial claims. As shown above, this increase of claims occurred both within the Christian and the Muslim contexts, but it also went beyond the borders of the two 'cultural spheres'. Therefore, the climax of Christian Spanish imperial ambitions was not the imperial coronation of 1135, as claimed by constitutional historians in the early twentieth century, but rather Alfonso VI's claim to exert hegemony over Christians and Muslims even beyond the borders of his own realm. By making such claims, the Christian king followed the traditions of Islamic

<sup>83</sup> See recently Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat*.

<sup>84</sup> Stengel, 'Kaisertitel und Suveränitätsidee': 14: '[W]arum eigentlich [hat] der Imperialismus aller dieser "Kaiser" eine so ausgesprochen hegemoniale Färbung getragen?' See also Hüffer, 'Die mittelalterliche Kaiseridee': 438–39.

titles, claiming, along with supremacy, the role of arbiter between members of different religious communities.<sup>85</sup> According to modern political theory, this doubtlessly shows that Alfonso followed an imperial idea.<sup>86</sup>

When the Muslim king of Seville answered Alfonso VI in a letter, he clearly rejected Alfonso's claim to bear the title 'king of kings', which underlined the imperial, hegemonic claim of Castile.<sup>87</sup> The exchange of letters between the Christian and the Muslim ruler, both claiming an imperial title, each, in turn, rejected by the other, demonstrates that a shared space of political action had emerged, which went beyond the borders of each sphere of direct political control.<sup>88</sup>

The entanglement of the political systems in early and high medieval Spain was not solely a result of political relations; it was also grounded in social groups who lived together in the respective realms. Without polyglot envoys, such as the Jewish vizier Ḥasdāi ibn Šaprūt, knowledge about other rulers, their claims and titles could not have spread across political borders.<sup>89</sup> Repeatedly, envoys of Christian rulers from the north came to Córdoba to ask the caliph to renew treaties of peace and friendship, which had expired; in most cases, local Mozarab Christians acted as translators.<sup>90</sup> In the eleventh century, it was the aim of several diplomatic missions to demand or hand over tributes. At that time, even the reliquary box of St Emilianus, an important patron saint of Castile, was lined with red silk of Islamic production, decorated with lions,

<sup>85</sup> Hüffer, 'Die leonesischen Hegemoniebestrebungen': 360. On Count Sisnando Davidiz, a Mozarab nobleman, as "hinge-man" mediating between Christian and Muslim rulers"; see MacKay and Benaboud, 'Alfonso VI': 100.

<sup>86</sup> On the significance of the arbiter's role, see Triepel, *Die Hegemonie*: 495; on Spain *ibid.*: 506. In the early eleventh century, we even come across a Muslim arbiter from the Caliphate of Córdoba ('Abd al-Malik, Almansor's son) who had the task of appointing a legal guardian to govern the kingdom of León; however, he delegated the decision to the head of the Christian community of Córdoba. See Dozy, *Recherches sur l'histoire*: 102.

<sup>87</sup> MacKay, 'Yet again Alfonso VI': 171; Hüffer, 'Die leonesischen Hegemoniebestrebungen': 364; García Gallo, 'El imperio medieval español'; Dozy, *Recherches sur l'histoire*: 105.

<sup>88</sup> This field was created by political, economic and cultural agents; see Kinoshita, 'Almería Silk and the French Feudal Imaginary': 169: '[A] "permeable zone" crossed by soldiers of fortune, political exiles, high-ranking churchmen, merchants, and eccentric monks'.

<sup>89</sup> Alfonso VI is sometimes referred to as 'emperor of the three religions', see Linage Conde, *Alfonso VI*. In contrast to the formula 'emperor of both religions', however, this phrase is not based on medieval sources, but on a modern projection idealising medieval Spain as an example of a tolerant society. See Suárez Fernández, 'Toledo, 1085': 157–64.

<sup>90</sup> Codera y Zaidín, 'Embajadas de príncipes cristianos': 453–64.

griffins and plant ornaments.<sup>91</sup> Numerous other material sources show the intensity of exchange processes between Christian and Muslim territories in the High Middle Ages.<sup>92</sup>

Without the aid of subjects who could speak Arabic, it would have been impossible to write letters in the name of Alfonso VI in which he called himself emperor of both religions (a formula that had no obvious counterpart in Latin).<sup>93</sup> During the reign of Alfonso VIII, Castilian coins were minted with Arabic inscriptions from 1175 onwards. These coins, the *Marividis*, had text on both sides. While the one can be transliterated as: ‘the Commander of the Catholics (*amīr al-qaṭūliqīn*), Alfonso, Sancho’s son, God help him and make him victorious’, the other side says: ‘the imam of the Christian church (*imām al-bī’ati al-masṭihīyyati*), the pope of Rome’.<sup>94</sup>

These texts may have been composed by Mozarabic, that is Arabic-speaking, Christians. In this context, however, it is also important to mention the *Mudéjar* subjects of the ruler, Arabic-speaking Muslims, who had stayed as subjects of the Christian king after the end of Muslim rule. Cultural brokers and mediators such as these supplied their Christian and Muslim rulers with knowledge about the cultural and political world beyond their own horizon.<sup>95</sup> The (at least partial) entanglement of political cultures relied on these mediators, who have only recently come into focus for researchers. Historians should put more emphasis on the social processes that underlie the political competition mentioned above:<sup>96</sup> ‘Once we relinquish the *a priori* assumption of a civilizational standoff, there emerges a multifaceted history of interaction and exchange.’<sup>97</sup> Political competition took place in a ‘shared culture of objects’,<sup>98</sup> but also in a political dialogue that transcended the borders of religion, culture and language.

<sup>91</sup> Martínez Enamorado, ‘Relaciones entre omeyas’: 319.

<sup>92</sup> On ‘material histories of interconfessional contact and exchange’, see Kinoshita, ‘Almería Silk and the French Feudal Imaginary’: 167. In general, see Snyder, ‘Cloth from the Promised Land’: 147–64, especially on Muslim Spain as the ‘leading silk producer in the medieval period’ (*ibid.*: 155).

<sup>93</sup> MacKay and Benaboud, ‘Alfonso VI’: 98.

<sup>94</sup> Quoted after Schramm, ‘Das kastilische Königtum’: 130.

<sup>95</sup> See von der Höh, Jaspert and Oesterle, *Cultural Brokers*.

<sup>96</sup> Kinoshita, ‘Almería Silk and the French Feudal Imaginary’: 170: ‘Cross-confessional connections and entanglements’.

<sup>97</sup> Kinoshita, ‘Almería Silk and the French Feudal Imaginary’: 167.

<sup>98</sup> Oleg Grabar, quoted in Kinoshita, ‘Almería Silk and the French Feudal Imaginary’: 172.

Exchange and entanglement between the Christian and the Muslim spheres are exemplified by the integration of the history of the Muslims of al-Andalus into the Spanish history written by Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, the most important chronicler of the thirteenth century. Apart from his major work, the ‘History of the Goths’, which he continued until his own times, Rodrigo wrote five histories of other peoples who established realms on the Iberian Peninsula, and which were entangled with the history of the Goths and their successors. The fifth people Rodrigo describes are the Arabs. His *Historia Arabum* is considered to be the Latin presentation of the authentic perspective of Andalusian Muslims.<sup>99</sup> Interestingly, Rodrigo, archbishop of Toledo, adopts the perspective of Muslim authors without bringing this perspective into line with his own point of view. Thus, his account ‘castilianises’ the Arab tradition, integrating it into the Christians’ own history, which is even more striking if one considers the fact that Rodrigo wrote his history shortly after the greatest Christian victories.

Due to this presentation of history, Castile not only appears as the continuation of the Visigothic kingdom and all other Christian realms but also as that of the Caliphate of Córdoba. In accordance with the perspective of his (lost) Arabic sources, Rodrigo clearly separates the Muslims of al-Andalus, on the one hand, from their fellow-believers in North Africa, who are excluded from Spanish history for being foreigners. This is also true of the Almoravids and Almohads, who are not part of Rodrigo’s *Historia Arabum*. In the very same way that the archbishop of Toledo integrates into his account Andalusian Muslims as legitimate subjects of the Castilian king, an author of the fifteenth century, Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo, presents the Muslim kingdom of Granada as the fifth and last of the contemporary Spanish realms.<sup>100</sup>

The historiographical incorporation of Andalusian Muslims into the history of Castile is remarkable, because it shows that the cultural horizon had narrowed to European territory by the thirteenth century.<sup>101</sup> From this time on, only communities that live on the Iberian Peninsula are considered to be relevant for Spanish history; and, in turn, it is only the history of those peoples and rulers that is treated by historians.

<sup>99</sup> Maser, *Die Historia Arabum*.

<sup>100</sup> Menéndez Pidal, ‘El imperio hispánico y los cinco reinos’: 74.

<sup>101</sup> For the construction of ‘Europe’ and the creation of an asymmetric border between ‘Africa’ and ‘Spain’ in this context, see Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 234–37, 256–58.

From the thirteenth century onwards, Andalusian Muslims are the only ones that are relevant from a Castilian perspective. As a consequence, only the rulers of Muslim Spain are considered to be rivals of Christian Spanish kings. Therefore, the last Almohad caliphs and their successors in Africa do not receive any historiographic attention.

This also becomes evident in the use of titles: from the thirteenth century onwards, the king of Castile no longer competed for hegemony with the Muslim rulers of Africa. This competition had already been won; and it had been won on European, or more precisely, *Spanish* territory. The Castilian king's supremacy over the emir of Granada was institutionalised even without an imperial title.<sup>102</sup> As in the chronicle of Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, the political hegemony of Castile was established. The inclusion of the *Historia Arabum* into the Spanish historiographic tradition shows that Islam was no longer a matter of rivalry; instead, it had been appropriated and incorporated: the king of Castile had become much more important than all his former rivals, so that the *kingdom* of Castile appeared to be the heir of all former empires and competing traditions.

This period saw not only the historiographical but also the political horizon narrow. A period in which the scope of action of Christian and Muslim rulers had overlapped was replaced by a political constellation in which the territorial frame of *Hispania*—beside that of *christianitas*—seemed to be more plausible. In the later Middle Ages, the Muslims were either excluded because they lived outside the Christian horizon, in Africa, or they were incorporated into the Christian sphere as subjects of the Christian king. Effective political rivalry with Muslim powers had by and large come to an end on the Iberian Peninsula. Within the Christian sphere itself, perspectives changed as well: in the thirteenth century, the city of León, which had formerly been inseparably connected with imperial traditions, was increasingly marginalised: kings stopped residing there. Furthermore, the chronicle of Lucas de Tuy, written in the early thirteenth century, which had been orientated towards the centre of León, was replaced shortly afterwards by the chronicle of his rival Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada from Toledo. The new Castilian centre was no imperial city, but it was the old capital of the Visigoths. Its hegemonic rank could be secured without referring to imperial titles. Rodrigo's work centred on

<sup>102</sup> According to the *Crónica general*, the king of Granada was a vassal of the Castilian king, see Menéndez Pidal, *Primera Crónica General*: 746 (c. 1070).

*Hispania* and the royal tradition of the Visigoths; along with the city of León, the imperial tradition connected with it became marginalised, and was soon to be forgotten.<sup>103</sup>

In contrast to the view of earlier researchers, it is impossible to pinpoint one single source from which Spanish emperorship may have derived; there were always numerous reasons for the use of specific imperial titles.<sup>104</sup> The changing use of such titles should rather be understood as the expression of an open competition for hegemony in the western Mediterranean. This was a competition that could be fought inside one religious community but also across the boundaries that separated Christian and Muslim realms and communities. The fact that the claim to authority over both religious communities could play a prominent role is most revealing. In the later Middle Ages, this competition was no longer fought via titles, but by other means, among them feudal claims, military brotherhoods and diplomatic ceremonial. The latter offered new means of disputing questions of rank at, for example, political summits and synods.

An earlier generation of researchers approached Spanish emperorship mainly from the perspective of the history of ideas or that of constitutional and institutional history.<sup>105</sup> From this perspective, the imperial coronation of 1135 seemed to represent the climax of an ever increasing growth of institutional power. However, it seems reasonable to use new approaches from the field of cultural history, particularly when considering transcultural perspectives. These approaches show that medieval actors on no account considered Spanish emperorship to be based on an unchangeable ‘core’ that could be expressed in precise legal terms. They rather used specific imperial titles for different purposes at different times in order to, for example, distinguish themselves from other rulers or to make political claims. They were interested in the symbolic capital which could be provided by imperial titles that were used in an open political field in which rulers wanted to gain an advantage over several rivals. Before the thirteenth

<sup>103</sup> Menéndez Pidal, ‘El imperio hispánico y los cinco reinos’: 72. On the importance of local traditions for maintaining imperial claims see Schneidmüller, ‘Sehnsucht nach Karl dem Großen’: 298: ‘Wollte sich das aus frühmittelalterlichen Traditionen erwachsene kaiserliche Hegemonialsystem behaupten, so benötigte es Traditionen, Zentralorte, akzeptierte Rituale, erfahrbare Staatsakte zur Integration der eigenen Anhänger, auch politische Heilige aus der Vergangenheit als Bürgen für Gegenwart und Zukunft.’

<sup>104</sup> Gamba, *Alfonso VI*: 702.

<sup>105</sup> Mayer, *Historia de las instituciones sociales*; Stengel, ‘Kaisertitel und Suveränitätsidee’: 10.

century, the political and cultural worlds of Christians and Muslims were so deeply entangled that it seems more convincing to explain imperial titles by the complex rivalries in and outside Spain.

From this perspective, Alfonso VI's Arab correspondence is much more interesting than his grandson's coronation, which followed purely Christian traditions.<sup>106</sup> Alfonso VI's letters show the efforts of a Christian ruler to adapt Arab forms of imperial titles for his political aims, establishing a new form of imperial rule:

Alfonso VI claimed an imperial title over *Hispania*: he maintained it over Christian rulers within the peninsula and against 'theological' (that is, papal) claims from outside. What would be more logical, therefore, than that Alfonso VI should have rejected the pretensions of the *taifa* rulers while at the same time claiming a title that debarred Muslim claims from outside the peninsula? In effect, Alfonso VI did not claim a title over all Muslims, wherever they might be, but over Muslims and Christians within *Hispania*.<sup>107</sup>

It is striking that the Spanish imperial title is mentioned for the last time in a source from Muslim North Africa: in the correspondence between the chancellery of the Mamluk sultans in Cairo and the Castilian court, the name of the Christian king is not only adorned with powerful attributes, as protocol demands, but the Christian monarch is also referred to as *basileus* (*bāsil*). Byzantine influence may be responsible for the attribution of this title, which in Spain had only been used in the tenth century. Sometimes, the Castilian ruler is also addressed as 'son of the emperor' or as 'paladin of the earth and sea'.<sup>108</sup> These formulas clearly hint at the influence these former titles still exerted in the later Middle Ages. It is especially important to note that it was the Islamic world that remembered the Spanish imperial title for a particularly long time. This underlines the importance of examining the different imperial titles of the Early and High Middle Ages within more than a Christian context. When broadening the horizon beyond the Christian world, we may gain surprising new insights into processes of entanglement between various

<sup>106</sup> Gamba, *Alfonso VI*: 675.

<sup>107</sup> MacKay, 'Yet again Alfonso VI': 177.

<sup>108</sup> Hüffer, 'Zum Ende der mittelalterlichen spanischen Kaiseridee': 206; Lammens, 'Correspondances diplomatiques entre les Sultans Mamlouks d'Égypte': 165; 'descendant de Salam et de César [...] paladin de la terre et de la mer'.

cultures, religions and political entities. Going beyond conventional borders not only opens up new perspectives for transnational but also for transcultural history.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Transnational studies are mainly undertaken in modern history, see Kocka, 'Sozialgeschichte und Globalgeschichte': 98–99. For medieval transcultural history, see now Drews and Scholl, *Transkulturelle Verflechtungsprozesse*.

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# Undefined Terms: Empires and Emperors in Late Medieval French Thought

Chris Jones\*

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*Between 1200 and 1350, the meaning attributed to the terms 'emperor' and 'empire' evolved in France to reflect the growth in power of the Capetian-Valois kings and a concomitant decline in the authority exercised by contemporary Romano-German rulers. Both terms were ubiquitous in France in this period. The fact that neither was adopted to describe the expansion of royal power was because, as this article will demonstrate, its growth was considered a consolidation of existing rights and was limited by deep-seated concerns for legitimacy, neither of which fostered imperial comparisons. At the same time, a multi-layered understanding of imperial terminology developed in France. On one level, 'empire' and 'emperor' became interchangeable with 'kingdom' and 'king'. Yet imperial vocabulary remained highly malleable. Philip IV's conflict with the papacy led to the development of specific arguments intended to undermine any subordination*

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of French royal authority to external parties. However, far from becoming irrelevant, the terminology of empire became integral to contemporary French political discourse. It offered solutions to otherwise insoluble problems. The article establishes the way in which the office of emperor came to be understood as, simultaneously, a limited form of temporal kingship but one that encompassed a universal role disassociated from government. Imperial terms were transmuted in French thought from an association with the exercise of universal temporal authority to signify a specialised function. This function was usually, but not exclusively, understood as leadership of the crusade.

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The classical mathematician Euclid built his geometry on three key terms: the point, the line and the plane. Their common feature is that, while they can be described, each remains a ‘primitive’ or ‘undefined’ term.<sup>1</sup> An example of similarly undefined terms in modern logic would be *Principia mathematica*’s use of  $p|q$ . Alfred Whitehead and Bertrand Russell introduce the ‘stroke’ as a ‘primitive idea’ in order ‘to define disjunction, implication, and negation’.<sup>2</sup> This article will argue that during a century dominated by rapid political change, the terms ‘empire’ and ‘emperor’ came to exist in French thought in much the same manner as the undefined terms of Euclidean geometry or the *Principia mathematica*. From the mid-thirteenth century, the practical power of the German emperors, inheritors of the Frankish claim to the western Roman Empire, underwent dramatic change. By the mid-fourteenth century, power was exercised in strikingly different ways to the way in which it had been wielded by the Hohenstaufen emperors.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, from

<sup>1</sup> While Euclid’s *Elements* opens with a list of definitions,

[s]ome of these indicate little more than certain concepts will be discussed, such as Def.1.1, Def.1.2, and Def.1.5, which introduce the terms point, line, and surface [...]. Later definitions will define terms by means of terms defined before them, but the first few terms in the *Elements* are not defined by means of other terms; they’re *primitive* terms.

David Joyce’s online guide to book 1 of Euclid’s *Elements* (<http://aleph0.clarku.edu/~djoyce/java/elements/elements.html>).

<sup>2</sup> Whitehead and Russell, *Principia mathematica*: xvi. My considerable thanks to Distinguished Professor Jack Copeland who discussed this point with me and suggested this example. On the concept of undefined terms more generally, see Tarski, *Introduction to Logic*: 118.

<sup>3</sup> On this topic, see Scales, *The Shaping of German Identity*.

the early thirteenth century, the Capetian kings of France rose from near obscurity to become Europe's most powerful rulers. The terms 'emperor' and 'empire' were used in France in this period to describe specific individuals and particular political communities. Most notably, albeit not exclusively, they were applied to France's eastern neighbour. This article will argue, however, that, simultaneously, French audiences, including the Capetian kings themselves, associated both terms with varied and more complex meanings that were divorced from associations with contemporary polities. It will also suggest that, at an abstract level, while the meaning of 'empire' and 'emperor' remained highly malleable, both terms became integral to contemporary French political discourse.

The article will begin by establishing the ubiquity of imperial terminology in late medieval France before examining why the vocabulary of empire was not employed by the Capetians themselves or contemporary inhabitants of France to describe the growth of French royal power. That growth, it will be argued, was understood, particularly by France's rulers, as underpinned by a combination of two factors. The first was the goal that drove it, which, it will be suggested, was understood as recovering and consolidating what were perceived to be existing royal rights within a set of borders that, while they might have been neglected by earlier generations, continued to delimit the contemporary French kingdom. The second involved two limitations imposed on that goal: the need to ensure that extensions of royal power in no way subordinated French kings to the authority of external parties and that the assertion of royal power was demonstrably legitimate. Neither the broad goal nor the self-imposed limitations facilitated the use of imperial language. Yet although the way in which the Capetian kings and their contemporaries understood the growth of royal power left little room for the adoption of imperial terminology, this article will demonstrate that both 'empire' and 'emperor' came to play a significant, multi-layered role in French political thought from the second half of the thirteenth century. Elements of that role were defined by the contemporary political landscape and the concerns it generated. On one level the terms could be used interchangeably with 'kingdom' and 'king'; on another level, however, they implied something quite different. 'Emperor', in particular, was associated with a form of temporal authority that differed from kingship, even though it might, on occasion, incorporate aspects of it.

Threads drawn from a common understanding of the past roles played by emperors—particularly Charlemagne—helped create a common

understanding in Capetian France of the broad parameters within which the imperial office functioned. The precise nature of imperial authority remained, however, plastic. Aspects of the role were defined only as particular circumstances required. Yet the concept of the emperor *redux* was, it will be suggested, as significant in France as it came to be elsewhere in Europe in this period. The emperor came to exist in late medieval French thought as a panacea for otherwise insoluble problems. Most commonly, those problems were linked to a desire for new forms of crusade leadership.

### The Ubiquity of Empire

The terms ‘emperor’ and ‘empire’ saturated the mental landscape of late medieval France. This was not true simply of France, but of the whole of Western Europe in the later Middle Ages. Admittedly, the Bible in its most common form, Jerome’s Vulgate, tended to prefer *rex* and *regnum* to *imperator* and *imperium* when it described political communities. Nevertheless, to take just one example, the ‘kingdoms’ of the book of Daniel were often, as James Muldoon notes, transmuted into ‘empires’ by late medieval authors.<sup>4</sup> And those who consulted the *Legenda aurea*, a late thirteenth-century collection of saints’ lives whose manuscript tradition suggests a staggering popularity, would have found themselves tripping over references to one empire, its ruler and its officials in particular, the Roman Empire.<sup>5</sup> The account of St Dionysius, of particular interest to a French audience, offers only one example where references appear to both the emperors of Antiquity and their Byzantine successors.<sup>6</sup> It would have been difficult for a French reader to consult a legal text, read an historical account of either the distant past or near contemporary events, digest a

<sup>4</sup> Muldoon, *Empire and Order*: 176 n. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Concerning the *Legenda*’s popularity, see Reames, *The ‘Legenda aurea’*: 197–209. On this work more generally, see Le Goff, *A la recherche du temps sacré*; Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo da Varagine*: 66–164.

<sup>6</sup> James of Voragine, *Iacopo da Varazze*: 1041–50. For Antiquity, see, for example, *ibid.*: 1047: ‘[...] Domitianum imperatorem in tantam commouit seuitiam ut preceptum daret quod quicumque christianum aliquem reperiret, aut ipsum sacrificare cogeret aut diuersis suppliciis cruciaret’. And for a reference to early ninth-century Byzantium: *ibid.*: 1049: ‘Circa annos domini DCCXV tempore Ludouici legati Michelis imperatoris Constantinopolitani inter cetera munera detulerunt Ludouico filio Karoli magni libros Dionysii de ierarchia de Greco in Latinum translatos’.

hagiography or enter the equally fabulous world of the minstrels without encountering the language of empire at some point.

Writing in the early 1280s, Agnes of Harcourt, abbess of Longchamp, provides an innocuous example of the way in which imperial terminology inundated the quotidian. She noted in her hagiography of King Louis IX's sister, Isabelle, that her subject had been pledged to marry the son of the emperor of Rome, heir of the empire ('a prendre a mariage au flux de l'empereur de Romme quo devoit estre her de l'Empire').<sup>7</sup> Nowhere was imperial terminology more prominent than in references to the past, both when those accounts concerned relatively recent events, as was the case for Agnes, and when they involved taking a longer perspective. *Empereur* and *empire* permeate vernacular histories, whether it was the entertainingly inaccurate account of Frederick II's Italian adventures as told in the *récits* of a minstrel of Reims written in the 1260s, John of Joinville's swashbuckling account of Saint Louis's crusades finalised in the opening decades of the fourteenth century or the version of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* created at the abbey of Saint-Denis in the 1340s.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, *imperator* and *imperium* left an indelible mark on Latin histories: the words appear firmly stamped on the pages of the *Speculum historiale*, Vincent of Beauvais's influential encyclopaedic account circulating from the 1250s;<sup>9</sup> in the new universal history Geoffroi of Courlon compiled for

<sup>7</sup> Agnes of Harcourt, *The Life of Isabelle of France*: 54. Concerning the proposed marriage, see Field, *Isabelle of France*: 27–31.

<sup>8</sup> *Récits d'un ménestrel de Reims*: 112–28 (cc. xxii–xxiii). See, for example, Joinville, *Vie de saint Louis*: 158 (§ 321), 160 (§ 326), 217–18 (§ 443). The portion of the *Grandes Chroniques* for 1285–1340 (Viard, *Grandes Chroniques*: vols. 7–9) was probably translated under the supervision of Richard Lescot, see Guenée, 'Les *Grandes Chroniques*': 197–98. On this process, see Guyot-Bachy and Moeglin, 'Comment ont été continuées les *Grandes Chroniques*': 393–424.

<sup>9</sup> While by no means ideal, the edition prepared in the seventeenth century remains the most accessible version of the chronicle. One notable instance of Vincent's usage appears in the authorial comment that closes his fifth book: Vincent of Beauvais, 'Speculum historiale': 172 (bk. 5 c. 117): '[...] secundum chronicas continua Romanis nascuntur imperia, tenuitque praefatus Caesar imperium primus: cuius gestorum historiam ut plenius exequamur, etiam bella quae ante imperium gessit sequenti libro reservamus'. While neither *imperator* nor *imperium* was employed exclusively in relation to Rome, from its sixth book, the *Speculum historiale* was structured around the reigns of Rome's emperors and their medieval successors: Paulmier-Foucart and Duchenne, *Vincent de Beauvais*: 93–104. The searchable digitised version produced by the *Atelier Vincent de Beauvais* (<http://atilf.atilf.fr/bichard/>) indicates over a thousand instances of the root *imper-* occur throughout the text.

Sens in the 1290s;<sup>10</sup> or in the Parisian *Memoriale historiarum* of John of Saint-Victor written in the subsequent decade.<sup>11</sup> The symbolism of empire shaped the thought of more than simply the literate elite: it spilled out from the pages of history and hagiography into the visual culture of late medieval France.

Imperial concepts were at their most graphic in the ‘closed crown’ that came increasingly to distinguish emperors from kings. When Parisian illuminators of one early fourteenth-century manuscript were specifically instructed to present *le couronne empereale* they chose just such a crown.<sup>12</sup> Emperors stared down from stained glass windows just as they looked out from the pages of manuscripts. Roman persecutors wearing closed crowns bore down on congregations as they sent early Christian martyrs such as St Blaise to their fates while their Christian counterpart, Charlemagne, appeared similarly garbed acquiring and gifting relics.<sup>13</sup> Whether in glass or on the page, emperors—good and bad, heroes and villains—permeated

<sup>10</sup> For Geoffroi, recording the names and acts of Rome’s emperors was, as he explained in his prologue, an integral part of his project, see Geoffroi of Courlon, *Chronique de l’abbaye de Saint-Pierre-le-Vif de Sens*: 6: ‘Nomina vero per ordinem Romanorum pontificum et imperatorum necnon et regum Francorum, et quomodo contemporanei fuerunt archipresulibus Ecclesie Senonensis, et quorundam ipsorum actus, et ea que suis temporibus evenerunt, insimul, ordinate et subsequenter conscribere dignum duxi’. At present, there is no critical edition: Julliot’s nineteenth-century edition contains a transcription of a first recension manuscript; excerpts from the second recension appear in Geoffroi of Courlon, ‘Ex Gaufridi de Collone Chronico’. For an introduction to Geoffroi, his chronicle and the context in which it was written: Jones, ‘Geoffroi of Courlon’: 159–74.

<sup>11</sup> John, as will be discussed below, intentionally blurred the line between ‘kingdom’ and ‘empire’. This is clear in his comments summing up the history of the Roman state in his second prologue. See John of Saint-Victor, *Traité de la division des royaumes*: 144:

[...] et tunc, scilicet tempore Iulii, magis roboratum est imperium, durans abhinc usque ad deposicionem Frederici [II] annis MCCXCII, et in summa a principio regni, scilicet primo anno Iani, usque ad annum ultimum Frederici sub regibus Latinis, Albanis, Silviis, Romanis consulibus et imperatoribus cucurrit per annos circiter II<sup>M</sup>DLXXII.

Both versions of the prologue to the *Memoriale historiarum* are available in a modern critical edition. Excerpts from the chronicle itself for the period 1289 to 1322 were edited in the nineteenth century. See, John of Saint-Victor, ‘Excerpta e Memoriale historiarum’.

<sup>12</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS français 10132, fol. 147<sup>r</sup>. Concerning these instructions, see Rouse and Rouse, *Manuscripts and their Makers*: vol. 1: 180–81. For a transcription, Hedeman, *The Royal Image*: 250.

<sup>13</sup> For a thirteenth-century depiction of the condemnation of St Blaise under the fourth-century Roman Emperor, Licinius, possibly from the cathedral of Soissons, see Paris, Musée

late medieval French culture. It is, perhaps, because their appearance is so pervasive that it generally evokes little remark. The one aspect to catch the attention of modern historians, notably those of law and political thought, is the presence of imperial vocabulary in the works of French lawyers and polemicists. A good example is found in a dialogue written during King Philip's IV's first conflict with Pope Boniface VIII.

The *Disputatio inter clericum et militem* was penned, probably between 1296 and 1297, by an anonymous author, possibly a lawyer.<sup>14</sup> The dialogue between a Cleric and a Knight, a lightly veiled defence of royal rights, clearly favoured the arguments of the secular disputant. At its start, the Knight prefaced his argument against clerical interference in temporal matters by drawing a comparison intended to demonstrate that no one should attempt to make law in someone else's lordship. The French king, the Knight noted, had no power to make laws for the empire; nor could the emperor legislate in France: 'Sicut nec Francorum rex potest statuere super imperium, nec imperator super regnum Franciae.'<sup>15</sup> This simple comparison was included by the Knight as a prelude to establishing the separation of temporal and spiritual powers.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, it contributed to establishing that the idea that the pope might legislate for France was absurd. At the close of the dialogue, however, the Cleric is permitted to question the basic assumptions that underpin the Knight's opening argument: emperors are not, he argues, the same as kings, and the government of the laws belongs to the former and not to the latter.<sup>17</sup> The Knight, of course, is given the last word. The Cleric's argument is dismissed in a burst of bombast that asserts the king of France is quite within his rights to reject all imperial laws or change them as he wishes.

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Marmottan-Monet, Collection Jules Marmottan, nos 230–33; Lefuel, *Catalogue*: 32, nos 71bis, 72bis. For examples of Charlemagne and relics in the thirteenth-century glass of Chartres, see Lautier, 'Les vitraux': 34 (fig. 30), 35 (fig. 31). And for the debate concerning the sources for this latter depiction, see Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*: 242–44.

<sup>14</sup> Dyson, *Disputatio*: xvii–xviii. For an overview and the text's later influence, see Miethke, *De potestate papae*: 79–82; Canning, *Ideas of Power*: 20–23.

<sup>15</sup> *Disputatio*: 14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*: 14: 'Et quemadmodum terreni principes non possunt aliquid statuere de vestris spiritualibus, super quae non acceperunt potestatem, sic nec vos de temporalibus eorum, super quae non habetis auctoritatem'.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*: 40: 'Imperatores sanxerunt ista, non reges [...] imperatorum erit legum gubernacula moderari'.

The king might even abolish the entire legal corpus and promulgate new laws if he so chose.<sup>18</sup> The fictitious Knight could not have imagined his modern readership. He would presumably, however, have been gratified to know that, by and large, most historians of political thought have tended to regard his extreme response as more representative of contemporary views than that presented by the Cleric.

The Knight's argument and its contemporary echoes are often considered to contain the essence of an ideological shift away from 'trans-regnal' forms of temporal authority. Although complex definitions of sovereignty lay in the future, here was a stark demarcation of 'national' authority. The reality of growing royal power had, so it is argued, eroded the theoretical foundations on which any supra-regnal claims were based.<sup>19</sup> The Cleric's argument that emperors exercised superior authority was revealed to be hollow. 'Emperor', as the Knight demonstrated, was just another word for 'king'. As a consequence, historians interested in tracing the history of political ideas have tended to interpret this period as marking the beginning of the end for bodies with pretensions to 'universal' authority and the dawn of a new age of independent polities whose identities were linked to 'national', as opposed to trans-regnal, concepts.<sup>20</sup> Yet, if the author of the *Disputatio* really was a French lawyer, one of the most striking features of his tract is how much better the equally extreme view outlined by the Cleric accords with that of much of the legal profession in Philip IV's France.

The legal profession in France was not especially interested in the theoretical relationship between kings and emperors. Since the mid-thirteenth century, the primary concern of specialists in Roman law, such as John of Blanot, had been to assimilate the king to the role of the Roman *princeps* in order to maximise the practical value of the Roman legal

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*: 42:

[...] sic et rex Francorum possit omnes imperatorias leges repellere, aut quamlibet cum placuerit permutare, aut illis a toto regno suo proscriptis et abolitis, novas si placuerit promulgare. Alioquin si aliquid novi, ut saepe accidit, visum fuerit statuendum, si rex non posset hoc, qui est summus, tunc nullus poterit, quia ultra eum non est superior ullus.

<sup>19</sup> As Joseph Strayer put it: 'By 1300 it was evident that the dominant political form in Western Europe was going to be the sovereign state. The universal Empire had never been anything but a dream [...]'. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins*: 57. For other examples, see Wilks, *The Problem of Sovereignty*: 431; Allmand, *The Hundred Years War*: 141.

<sup>20</sup> For a clear overview of the 'general consensus', see Black, *Political Thought in Europe*: 85–116.

code. The tag John developed, *rex in regno suo princeps est*, was quickly popularised in legal circles.<sup>21</sup> Contrary to many modern assumptions, its circulation beyond the lawyers remained, as Georg Jostkleigrewe has ably demonstrated, distinctly limited.<sup>22</sup> By the time the tag found its way into popular historical works in the second half of the fourteenth century, *princeps* appears, though, to have become interchangeable with *imperator*.<sup>23</sup> Neither version, however, said anything about the power of emperors relative to kings; it was about what a king could do *within* his own kingdom.<sup>24</sup> It is notable that when legal specialists, even those close to the Capetian court, *did* consider the relationship between kings and emperors they came to an awkward conclusion. Despite a century of canon law that could be read to imply otherwise, Roman specialists somewhat reluctantly concluded that while the emperor's laws might not apply to France, they *ought* to. Men such as James of Révigny concluded that Capetian kings existed in, at best, a *de facto* state of independence.<sup>25</sup> The problem presented by the Roman law code's tendency to subordinate all temporal authority to the emperor was eventually resolved not in France but by fourteenth-century Neapolitan jurists.<sup>26</sup> The significant point, however, is that contemporary French understanding of the relationship between kings and emperors was not as straightforward as the Knight—or some modern historians—imply.

The *Disputatio* represents two distinct positions. For all the author's obvious lack of sympathy for his Cleric, the latter's view is a reminder that 'empire' and 'emperor' were terms that were read in multiple, indeed even contradictory, ways in the 1290s. The real importance of the Knight's

<sup>21</sup> Boulet-Sautel, 'Jean de Blanoit'.

<sup>22</sup> On the tag's reception in France, see the important new contribution by Jostkleigrewe, "'Rex imperator in regno suo"—an Ideology of Frenchness?', where it is noted that the few chronicles that include it were probably written by jurists. I am grateful to the author for allowing me to read a pre-publication copy.

<sup>23</sup> The precise point at which the terms became equivalent requires further investigation but this was certainly the case by the time the phrase appeared in post-1350 versions of the *Grandes Chroniques*, see 'Extrait d'une chronique anonyme finissant en M.CCC.LXXX': 127: '[...] le roy de France se disoit noble qu'il est empreur en son royaume de France'.

<sup>24</sup> Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 221–23. See also Krynen, *L'Empire du roi*: 79.

<sup>25</sup> For canon law arguments: Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 223–24. For those of French jurists, see *ibid.*: 224–25. For James's view specifically, see Bezemer, *What Jacques Saw*: 97, 100. For a contrasting assessment, see Post, *Studies in Medieval Legal Thought*: 473.

<sup>26</sup> Pennington, 'Henry VII'; Canning, 'Ideas of the State': 4–7.

view is that the author of the *Disputatio* felt it necessary to offer it at all: the nature of imperial authority was both contentious and open to debate. While ubiquitous, imperial terminology was also ambiguous. It was an indicator of the existence of a hierarchy, one that, as the Cleric argued, might potentially check growing Capetian power. On the other hand, simultaneously, as the Knight would have it, ‘king’ and ‘emperor’ were merely different ways of labelling the same thing. Given the Knight’s argument, it is all the more striking that the Capetians themselves made no effort to appropriate and define imperial vocabulary to describe their own growing authority. That they did not do so, as will be seen, reflects contemporary understanding of the imperial office: that understanding transcended descriptions linked to the exercise of temporal authority by contemporary western emperors. It is also the result, however, of the way in which the growth in Capetian power was conceptualised in late medieval France.

### Expansion and Consolidation

French rulers between Philip II and Philip VI can be described in most modern senses of the term as ‘empire builders’.<sup>27</sup> The Capetians drew together a diverse collection of lands in the century and a half preceding the outbreak of the Hundred Years War. Those lands varied in language, custom, law and, as the case of Navarre illustrates, were not even necessarily contiguous. Their efforts offer striking parallels with the achievements of the Angevin rulers of England in the second half of the twelfth century. Modern historians have not been slow to describe the Angevin world in terms of ‘empire’ even though Henry II and his descendants did not employ the terminology themselves.<sup>28</sup> Similar descriptions are not, however, regularly applied to describe the Capetian ‘empire’. The tendency is probably a reflection of deep-seated—albeit ahistorical—assumptions about the homogeneity of the lands within France’s modern borders when compared to the seemingly eclectic Angevin possessions. More surprising is that, with one notable exception, before 1350 neither French kings nor

<sup>27</sup> For the modern senses, see Howe, ‘Empire’: 575, and the discussion in the introduction to this collection.

<sup>28</sup> For example, Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire*; Madeline, *Les Plantagenêts et leur empire*. And for the most recent application of the terminology to the later Plantagenets, see Peter Crooks, David Green and W. Mark Ormrod (eds), *The Plantagenet Empire, 1259–1453*.

those they ruled employed imperial language and symbolism in accounting for or justifying the growth of Capetian power.

A Capetian-Valois disinclination to employ the vocabulary of empire is all the more striking when a comparison is drawn with an instance where such language *was* adopted. In early fifteenth-century England, the Lancastrian king Henry IV began a trend that associated the overtly imperial symbolism of a ‘closed’ crown with English kingship.<sup>29</sup> The tendency re-emerged as a full-blown claim that England was an empire, albeit a claim with minimal consequences, in the reign of Henry VIII.<sup>30</sup> The origins of this adopted imperial terminology remain unclear: as John Steane notes, its use under Henry V may have been prompted by the visit of the Roman and Hungarian king Sigismund to England and a concomitant desire to place Henry on an equal footing. Another possibility, also recognised by Steane, is that it may have had broader origins in the claims of English kings to rule over multiple polities within the British Isles.<sup>31</sup> The inclusion of an elaborate ‘closed’ crown to signify the establishment of Egbert’s hegemony over the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy on at least one genealogical roll in the early years of Henry VI’s reign certainly supports such an interpretation.<sup>32</sup> In comparison to the vague Lancastrian-Tudor justification, which was based, ultimately, on Geoffrey of Monmouth’s twelfth-century mythical account of early Britain, the kings of France appeared to have a much better case to claim an imperial connection.<sup>33</sup> At least three of their Carolingian predecessors—Charlemagne, Louis the Pious and Charles the Bald—were recognised as having held the imperial

<sup>29</sup> Steane, *The Archaeology of English Medieval Monarchy*: 35.

<sup>30</sup> Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*: 315–16. For discussion, see the introduction to this volume.

<sup>31</sup> Steane, *The Archaeology of English Medieval Monarchy*: 35. For a wider discussion of English attitudes towards the Empire and its contemporary rulers, see Scales, ‘The Empire in Translation’.

<sup>32</sup> Christchurch, University of Canterbury, MS 1 (c. 1429–33). For an image of the crown, see Chris Jones et al., ‘The Canterbury Roll—A Digital Facsimile, Edition and Translation’. While this manuscript has been relatively inaccessible for over a century, it is now being made available via a web-based project that includes a facsimile of the manuscript, a new Latin transcription by Maree Shiota and Thandiwe Parker and a new English translation by Elisabeth Rolston. For an older edition, which contains significant flaws, mis-readings and omissions, see Wall, *Handbook to the Maude Roll*. For an introduction to the manuscript, see Chris Jones, ‘The Canterbury Roll’.

<sup>33</sup> Concerning Geoffrey’s influence, see Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie*; Keeler, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*. For the Tudor period, see Anglo, ‘The British History’. For the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries, Spence, *Reimagining History*: 40–73.

title.<sup>34</sup> Yet despite a growing interest in these rulers, neither imperial language nor symbolism was adopted by the Capetian-Valois kings before the reign of Charles V. The latter was the first of the French kings to promote Charlemagne as a saint, a cult with strong imperial connections, and commissioned a sceptre laden with imperial imagery.<sup>35</sup> That little has been said concerning this apparent missed opportunity is a result of the tendency of historians to cast the growth of Capetian power in terms of a reaction to trends that had heavily marked political conceptions in the century before 1250. That reaction continues to be viewed as significant because it contributed to laying the foundations for political structures rooted in concepts of ‘national’ identity. That legacy is considered notable because those structures continue to shape modern debates concerning the relationship between polities.<sup>36</sup>

Fuelled by the revived study of Roman law, and driven by a need to establish practical control over northern Italy while simultaneously countering the papacy’s claims to superior authority, the court of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa developed a new conception of supra-regnal temporal authority in the second half of the twelfth century.<sup>37</sup> Under Frederick, his son and successor Henry VI and, most spectacularly, his grandson, Frederick II, the idea that emperors were the superiors of mere kings and possessed universal temporal authority seemed to find increasing echoes in reality: the Hohenstaufen empire came to dominate Europe. Yet almost as quickly as it rose, the sun appeared to set on the Staufer empire. The idea that medieval emperors might lay claim to authority that extended beyond the borders of their empire did not wholly disappear. Indeed, it strongly marked the thought of writers such as Dante and Marsilius of Padua.<sup>38</sup> Yet it ceased to find much reflection in reality,

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the use of the epithet *imperator* in the king-list provided by Geoffroi of Courlon, *Chronique de l’abbaye de Saint-Pierre-le-Vif de Sens*: 10. Other ‘French’ rulers could, however, be associated with the title, see Geoffroi’s application of the epithet *rex Francorum* in his emperor-list: *ibid.*: 22.

<sup>35</sup> Folz, ‘Aspects du culte liturgique’; Gaborit-Chopin, ‘Sceptre de Charles V’. See Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 163–64; Moeglin, *L’Empire et le Royaume*: 304. I have found no evidence to support Jim Bradbury’s assertion that Philip II employed an eagle on his seal, see Bradbury, *Philip Augustus*: 220.

<sup>36</sup> For a classic example, see Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins*.

<sup>37</sup> Benson, ‘Political *Renovatio*’: 360–69; Appelt, ‘Die Kaiseridee Friedrich Barbarossas’. And see now Freed, *Frederick Barbarossa*.

<sup>38</sup> For a summary of key pro-imperial treatises articulating a universalist perspective in the early fourteenth century, see Canning, ‘Introduction: Politics, Institutions and Ideas’:

despite the best efforts of later claimants to the imperial throne such as Henry VII or Ludwig of Bavaria.<sup>39</sup> It was a claim, in any case, that many had never accepted: John of Salisbury, most famously, had once asked who had made the Germans judges of the world.<sup>40</sup> As historians such as John Baldwin and Joseph Strayer have ably demonstrated, while German rulers were losing an empire that, with hindsight, appeared to have been erected on theoretical sand, the Capetians were building a kingdom on concrete administrative foundations.<sup>41</sup> Exploiting the French king's unique position in the feudal hierarchy, in conjunction with effective military action and the introduction of centralised administrative structures, took the Capetians from precarious minor lords in the Île-de-France to uniquely powerful rulers whose authority usurped that of the Angevins in the west and extended south to the Mediterranean.<sup>42</sup>

Capetian-Valois ideology developed organically. For much of the thirteenth century, it appeared ill-defined and considerably less-sophisticated when compared to that forged in Barbarossa's court.<sup>43</sup> The theoretical underpinnings of French royal power came to be founded, in part, on the personal sanctity of the Capetian family; in part, on an argument for the unique origins of France; and, in part, on strands that could be plucked from a new intellectual engagement with Aristotle at the University of Paris.<sup>44</sup> The comments of the *Disputatio's* Knight reveal that it was an ideology that had little place for empire if by 'imperial' one meant 'supra-regnal temporal authority' in the sense associated with the

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364. For an overview of the thought of several key pro-imperial writers from Engelbert of Admont to Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, see Black, *Political Thought in Europe*: 92–108.

<sup>39</sup> See, respectively, Bowsky, *Henry VII*; Heidemann, *Heinrich VII*; Thomas, *Ludwig der Bayer*; and Erkens, 'Herrscher- und Herrschaftsidee'.

<sup>40</sup> John of Salisbury, *The Letters*: 206 (no. 124): 'Quis Teutonicos constituit iudices nationum?' For the context, see Reuter, 'John of Salisbury'.

<sup>41</sup> The classic accounts remain Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*; Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair*. See also Favier, *Philippe le Bel*; and, more recently for Louis IX's reign, Dejoux, *Les enquêtes*.

<sup>42</sup> For recent accounts of this process, see Barthélemy, *Nouvelle histoire*: 244–322; Gauvard, *Les temps des Capétiens*: 89–90.

<sup>43</sup> Concerning the views developed at Barbarossa's court, which were more nuanced than they are sometimes portrayed, see Kirfel, *Weltherrschaftsidee und Bündnispolitik*.

<sup>44</sup> For familial sanctity the key study is now Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis*. For origins, see Beaune, *Naissance de la nation France*. For an overview of the importance of Aristotelian language, see Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought*: 125–34.

Staufer or, increasingly, the papacy. At the height of Philip IV's second, altogether more explosive, confrontation with the papacy, the Knight's point was placed on its firmest intellectual foundations by the Dominican John Quidort of Paris. A member of the Theology Faculty, John drew on Aristotle's newly re-discovered *Politics* to offer a striking condemnation of the concept of universal temporal rule: 'Neither man's natural tendencies nor divine law commands a single supreme temporal monarchy for everyone.'<sup>45</sup> There is no need for even the faithful to be united in one political community. In fact, the diversity of men, their languages and the climates in which they live recommend in favour of independent, local rule. Aristotle's *Politics* shows that rulership in individual cities or regions is natural; that of empire or world monarchy is not.<sup>46</sup>

The importance of John's argument for the history of political thought—it lays the framework for the idea of the independent, sovereign state—has cast a long shadow over both the preceding century and subsequent decades. John neatly addressed the lingering concerns that the scholars of Roman law in France had failed to dispel. In so doing he created the first comprehensive theoretical refutation of the claims that had so concerned his twelfth-century namesake.<sup>47</sup> Like John of Salisbury, John of Paris's argument was prompted by the specific political circumstances of his day. Part of Pope Boniface's political manoeuvring involved issuing an assertion of the authority of emperors over kings while at the

<sup>45</sup> John of Paris, *De regia potestate et papali*, c. 3: 82: 'Quod autem omnes ad unum supremum monarcham in temporalibus reducantur nec ex inclinatione naturali nec ex iure divino habent neque eis ita convenit sicut ministris ecclesiasticis'. English translation from Watt, *John of Paris*: 85. For a summary of John's arguments against universal temporal rule, see Tursi, 'El antiimperialismo', particularly 34–39 for the arguments in *De potestate*, c. 3; and see now Koch, 'Against Empire?' The classic overview remains Miethke, *De potestate papae*: 116–26.

<sup>46</sup> John of Paris, *De regia potestate et papali*, c. 3: 83:

Non sic autem fideles omnes necesse est convenire in aliqua una politia communi, sed possunt secundum diversitatem climatum et linguarum et condicionum hominum esse diversi modi vivendi et diversae politiae [...]. Unde Philosophus in *Politico* ostendit generationem regni naturalem esse in singulis civitatibus vel regionibus, non autem imperii vel monarchiae.

<sup>47</sup> His importance in this respect has been long recognised. See, for example, Ullmann, *A History of Political Thought*: 200–04. For a recent example, see Moeglin, *L'Empire et le Royaume*: 292–93.

same time confirming the candidature of the emperor-elect, Albrecht of Habsburg.<sup>48</sup> John's argument negated any papal claim that might be made on Albrecht's behalf. Yet the transitory tensions that prompted the responses of the Knight and John of Paris do not imply that inhabitants of France chose to eschew imperial terminology because they framed the rise of Capetian power in terms of a 'reaction' to the Staufer-papal ideology of universalism. John's own readership was particularly limited until the late fourteenth century: the importance of his ideas was determined with hindsight.<sup>49</sup> In fact, there is no evidence to suggest contemporaries envisioned the rise of Capetian power in terms of the triumph of the 'nation state' and the decline of universalism. There are quite different reasons why imperial vocabulary was not adopted in France, reasons that evolved in the course of the thirteenth century and reflected contemporary concerns.

The most dramatic increase in the expansion of royal authority took place in France between the annexation of Normandy in 1204 and the Treaty of Toulouse in 1229. The key reason why French kings did not co-opt imperial language during this quarter century or in its immediate aftermath was the Capetian-Staufer alliance. The alliance was nowhere more evident than at the battle of Bouvines, a Capetian victory that secured Staufer control of the Empire.<sup>50</sup> In the second half of the thirteenth century, Frederick II was painted in an increasingly negative light in French accounts. The emperor's poor relationship with the papacy offered Louis IX's hagiographers at the abbey of Saint-Denis, in particular, valuable opportunities.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, prior to the death of Frederick's son, Conrad, in 1254, the Capetians had been one of the Staufer family's most stalwart supporters: Philip II had fought Otto IV as Frederick's ally and, so one chronicler claimed, sent the latter the imperial eagle captured at Bouvines; Louis VIII, according to a letter sent by French barons, had taken the time to excuse his decision to besiege the imperial city of Avignon; Louis IX and his mother consistently maintained good diplomatic relations with Frederick and Conrad even following the

<sup>48</sup> For the confirmation, see Paravicini Bagliani, *Boniface VIII*: 340–42; and on Boniface's consistorial speech in particular, see Jostkleigrewe, "Rex imperator in regno suo"—An Ideology of Frenchness?. On the manner in which this was interpreted in France, see Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 231.

<sup>49</sup> Concerning the reception of John's *De potestate*: Jones, 'John of Paris': 11–12.

<sup>50</sup> For the classic account, see Duby, *Le dimanche de Bouvines*. And see now Foerster, 'Bouvines 1214' and the other essays edited in Monnet, *Bouvines, 1214–2014*.

<sup>51</sup> Jones, 'The Role of Frederick II'.

emperor's deposition.<sup>52</sup> French kings, as Louis IX was said to have stated, had always 'ame et honnoure la solemnel hautece de l'empire de Roume'.<sup>53</sup> Lingering traces of the alliance are to be found forty years after Frederick II's death in the universal chronicle of Geoffroi of Courlon, who envisioned that a properly ordered world was one in which the French king and the western emperor enjoyed a co-operative relationship.<sup>54</sup>

It might be argued that the above assessment ignores the most famous case of imperial language associated with the Capetians before 1350: Philip II's epithet 'Augustus'. Philip's contemporary, Rigord, recognised his choice of title for the work in which he originated the latter, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, might surprise his readers: 'sed forte miramini quod in prima fronte hujus operis, voco regem Augustum'. He provided a detailed explanation for his decision in the prologue: 'Augustos enim vocare consueverunt scriptores Cesares qui rem publicam augmentabant, ab augeo, auge dictos, unde iste merito dictus est Augustus ab aucta re publica'.<sup>55</sup> Here, Rigord drew a clear comparison between Philip's actions and those of emperors who had augmented the *res publica*. He undoubtedly imbued his subject with an 'imperial' quality. Yet, like John of Paris, Rigord has left a stronger impression on modern historians than he did on his contemporaries. Jim Bradbury and John Baldwin are only the most influential Anglophone historians to adopt 'Augustus' in the titles of their books. Indeed, the use of 'Philippe-Auguste' in French is so pervasive it obscures the fact the term was hardly ever employed by contemporaries.<sup>56</sup>

In the 1270s, Primat, Rigord's fellow monk at Saint-Denis, employed the *Gesta Philippi* in incorporating a vernacular history of Philip II's

<sup>52</sup> For the eagle, see William the Breton, *Philippide*: 350 (bk. 12, lines 47–49). The episode, at least as William presents it in the *Philippide*, owes more to literary invention than reality, see Kamp, 'Politik statt Triumph?': 98–99. For Avignon, see Teulet, *Layettes du Trésor des chartes*: 87–89 (no. 1789). For relations under Louis IX, see Fawtier, 'Saint Louis': 99; Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 106–07.

<sup>53</sup> William of Nangis, *Vie de Saint Louis*: 333. The comments are a loose translation from a genuine letter sent by Louis to Frederick in 1241 protesting the abduction of French clerics on their way to Rome, see Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia diplomatica*: vol. 6: 19.

<sup>54</sup> For Geoffroi's vision of co-operation, see Jones, 'Geoffroi of Courlon': 181–86.

<sup>55</sup> Rigord, *Histoire de Philippe Auguste*: 118. Rigord was the first to give Philip II this epithet, see Spiegel, *The Past as Text*: 132.

<sup>56</sup> Bradbury, *Philip Augustus*; Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus*. The editorial apparatus to Viard's edition of the *Grandes Chroniques* is a classic example of the assumption Philip II is Philippe-Auguste.

reign into his *Roman des rois*. The latter went on to form the basis of the most influential French vernacular chronicle, the *Grandes Chroniques*.<sup>57</sup> Primat's famous *traduction-adaptation*, as Isabelle Guyot-Bachy has aptly termed it, saw the epithet Rigord had repeatedly employed used only once.<sup>58</sup> And the latter's explanatory prologue was simply expunged. *Augustus*, in Primat's text, became an anomalous title without explanation or significance. Nor did Rigord's epithet leave a mark on Latin histories of the thirteenth century whether they were influential, like the *Speculum historiale* or William of Nangis's universal chronicle, or regional, such as that of Geoffroi of Courlon.<sup>59</sup> In short, Philip II owes his modern nomenclature more to its resonance with later interest in state formation, than to any particular enthusiasm for it in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century France.

That Rigord's usage was quietly dropped is illustrative of the fact that it did not reflect, as will become clear, the dominant understanding of imperial terminology in France. His explanation of precisely what Philip had done to justify such an enthusiastic appellation, however, remains significant. The prologue to the *Gesta* notes the precise way in which Philip had augmented the *res publica*: he had re-integrated Vermandois and other lands into the kingdom and had increased its revenues.<sup>60</sup> At the

<sup>57</sup> For the composition and dating of Primat's *Roman*, see Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition*: 78–89.

<sup>58</sup> Viard, *Les Grandes Chroniques*: vol. 6: 95. Guyot-Bachy, 'La diffusion': 90. *Augustus* re-appears twice in a short passage appended to the version that appears in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS français 2600: Viard, *Les Grandes Chroniques*: vol. 6: 375. This latter dates to the second quarter of the fourteenth century, see Guenée, 'Les *Grandes Chroniques*': 196.

<sup>59</sup> For Vincent's use of Rigord, see Paulmier-Foucart and Duchenne, *Vincent*: 82. The lack of a modern critical edition of the *Speculum historiale* makes it difficult to establish Vincent's usage with certainty. Nevertheless, while he associated *Augustus* with several Roman emperors, the term was not used in connection with Philip in the fourteenth-century manuscript, 'un témoin médiéval significatif', chosen for digitisation by the *Atelier Vincent de Beauvais*: <http://atilf.atilf.fr/bichard/>. William certainly employed his fellow Dionysian, see William of Nangis, *Chronique latine*: vol. 1: xiii; but he did not adopt Rigord's usage. The absence is less surprising in Geoffroi's chronicle as he chose not to employ Rigord. For the latter's sources and specifically for the exclusion of Dionysian material, see Jones, 'Geoffroi of Courlon': 164–67.

<sup>60</sup> Rigord, *Histoire de Philippe Auguste*: 118: 'Adjecit enim regno suo totam Viromandiam quam predecessores sui multo tempore amiserant et multas alias terras. Redditus etiam regum plurimum augmentavit'.

close of the century, Geoffroi of Courlon continued to remember Philip as the victorious king who had extended the kingdom's frontiers as far as possible: 'rex victoriosus [...] regni sui fines quam plurimum dilatavit'.<sup>61</sup> Both Rigord and Geoffroi point to the essence of Philip's achievement for contemporaries and in so doing highlight the way in which the expansion of Capetian France was understood in the thirteenth century: Philip had not conquered lands to which he had no prior claim; he had re-established existing rights within the French kingdom.

The actions of Capetian kings were governed by one key aim: to consolidate their control over what could generally be agreed—or at least reasonably argued—lay within their kingdom. This goal remained remarkably consistent whether the king was the bellicose Philip II, the ruthless Philip IV or even the saintly Louis IX, whose later reputation tends to obscure the fact that royal authority extended more in real terms during his reign than those of either his grandfather or grandson. Viviers, whose bishop claimed to be an imperial vassal, offers a case study in consolidation. Beginning with Louis IX, but only concluding with Philip IV and his sons, the bishop was slowly convinced that his bishopric was part of the French kingdom. With the conclusion of a *pariage* agreement that established shared jurisdiction and the replacement of the imperial eagle with the fleur-de-lys on the episcopal seal, the bishop could be left to his own devices.<sup>62</sup> The Capetians worked similarly hard to convert perceived independent allods within France into fiefs whose holders recognised their relationship with the king and their place within the kingdom. The most notable example is Gascony. For Louis IX, a key feature of the 1259 Treaty of Paris was the English king's acceptance of the conversion of his allod into a fief via the act of homage and Henry III's elevation to the status of a peer of France.<sup>63</sup>

Where expansion of French royal authority took place in border regions its most notable feature is how limited it was. Both the Lyonnais and the town of Valenciennes offer clear examples of this cautious policy from Philip IV's reign: authority was extended in both cases up to the 'French'

<sup>61</sup> Geoffroi of Courlon, *Chronique de l'abbaye de Saint-Pierre-le-Vif de Sens*: 512.

<sup>62</sup> For the *pariage*, see Gallet, *Les traités*: 109–10. For the seals, see Vaivre, 'Le changement d'armes'. For discussion, see Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 1–2, 276–77; Resmini, *Das Arelat*: 307–18.

<sup>63</sup> Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 275; Jones, 'Paris (Paris, France), Treaty (1259)'.

side of river boundaries but conspicuously no further.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the Capetians gave up claims—and even rolled back royal authority—in areas that seemed, incontestably, to lie *beyond* the French kingdom. The most notable example was the imperial territory known as the Comtat-Venaissin.

The holdings of the former Saint-Gilles counts of Toulouse had fallen to a member of the Capetian dynasty, Alphonse of Poitiers, with the death of Count Raymond VII. The Comtat escheated to Philip III in 1271 following Alphonse's own death.<sup>65</sup> Yet between the 27 January and the 16 February 1274 virtually all Philip's claims to one of the largest single territorial acquisitions made by a French king before the late fifteenth century were given up.<sup>66</sup> If the Capetians did not divest themselves of other lands in the Franco-imperial border region with quite such haste, they certainly displayed a tendency to avoid any attempt to integrate such regions into their kingdom.

French kings seemed content to see imperial counties pass into the hands of members of the Capetian family. The county of Provence, acquired by Louis IX's brother, Charles of Anjou, offers just one example. However, there remained a clear recognition that there was a separation between these territories and France. For example, the decision to expel the Jews from France in 1306 was not extended to the imperial county of Burgundy after it passed into the hands of Philip IV's son.<sup>67</sup> And while the king consistently attempted to delay his son doing homage to the county's German overlords, he was equally consistent in his recognition that such homage was owed.<sup>68</sup> Most striking of all is that once he took the throne as Philip V, while taking steps to retain practical control, the new king renounced the country in favour of his wife stating explicitly that his reasons for doing so were a desire not to do homage for it to anyone.<sup>69</sup>

Rigord's enthusiasm for Philip II's staggering success in extending royal power had led him to propose an imperial comparison. However, more generally, the way in which expansion was conceptualised as the

<sup>64</sup> For the Lyonnais, see Jones, *Eclipse of Empire: 277–79*; and see now Jostkleigrewe, "Rex imperator in regno suo"—An Ideology of Frenchness? For Valenciennes, see Jones, *Eclipse of Empire: 280–82*.

<sup>65</sup> Jones, '...mais tot por le servise Deu?': 220.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*: 216–17.

<sup>67</sup> Redoutey, 'Philippe le Bel': 228 n. 80.

<sup>68</sup> Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair: 355–56*.

<sup>69</sup> Lehugeur, *Histoire de Philippe le Long*: vol. 1: 220–22. For analysis, see Jones, *Eclipse of Empire: 299*.

re-assertion of existing rights *within* France tended to militate against the use of such language. That approach was itself the product of a deep-seated Capetian concern with legitimacy. This concern, in turn, shaped attitudes towards a figure with his own close associations with imperial terminology, the emperor Charlemagne.

### *Quo Warranto*

In 1246, a group of discontented French barons, in a complaint to the pope, argued that their ancestors had acquired the kingdom of France not via the Church or any legal mechanisms, but by force.<sup>70</sup> Yet few rusty swords seem to have been proffered in France akin to that supposedly waved by the Earl Warenne to justify similar claims to rights at Edward I's late-thirteenth century *Quo Warranto* enquiries.<sup>71</sup> One of the most conspicuous features of later Capetian-Valois France is that neither the Capetians themselves nor the historians of their kingdom offered explanations as blunt as the eleventh-century chronicler William of Poitiers's argument that his namesake, the duke of Normandy, had acquired England by right of conquest.<sup>72</sup> An increasing unease with such arguments is exemplified by the way in which successive generations of chroniclers at the abbey of Saint-Denis modified their accounts of Charles of Anjou's conquest of the southern Italian *regno*. Unease concerning the disinheritance of Frederick II's legitimate grandson, Conradin, led to concerted efforts to deflect blame for his execution away from Charles himself. The Dionysian re-drafting was a reflection of Capetian France's near obsession with the idea that existing rights should not be usurped.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia diplomatica*: vol. 6(1): 467–68: '[...] quod regnum non per jus scriptum nec per clericorum arrogantiam, sed per sudores bellicos fuerit acquisitum [...]']

<sup>71</sup> Prestwich, *Edward I*: 259.

<sup>72</sup> Chroniclers writing at the time of Philip II might be interpreted as an exception, although, more generally, the evidence contradicts Spiegel's claim that 'Chroniclers insistently spoke of Philip's confiscations as conquests [...]. Throughout the Middle Ages the most common surname given Philip Augustus was "the Conqueror".' Spiegel, *The Past as Text*: 132. Even William of Poitiers had nuanced his point about William the Conqueror, see William of Poitiers, *The Gesta Guillelmi*: 150: '[...] quam et hereditaria delegatione sacramentis Anglorum firmata, et iure belli ipse possedit'. I am grateful to my doctoral student, Madi Williams, who drew William's account to my attention.

<sup>73</sup> Jones, 'Perspectives from the Periphery': 71–72.

To be considered legitimate, expansion needed to be one of two things: either a re-assertion of existing rights or expansion undertaken with the consent of all the parties involved. Some attempt at the latter was made in Philip IV's 1299 negotiations with Albrecht of Habsburg. But when agreement could not be reached it is notable that, despite imperial weakness, territory in the border region was not simply annexed in the coming decades.<sup>74</sup> It is a similar concern with legitimacy that explains growing Capetian interest in the figure most closely associated with the empire in late medieval France, Charlemagne.

The promotion of Charlemagne as an imperial saint had been another of the stratagems pursued by Frederick Barbarossa's court. From a Stauffer perspective, Charlemagne's significance lay, increasingly, in the fact he had been an emperor.<sup>75</sup> The growing Capetian interest in Charlemagne from the thirteenth century is often understood today primarily in terms that were first outlined by Robert Folz in the 1950s: Charlemagne's imperial connection inspired and justified Capetian ambitions to expand the French kingdom eastwards.<sup>76</sup> Yet what is remarkable about Capetian interest in Charlemagne is how little the Carolingian emperor was associated with the contemporary western empire in France in this period. Even his title of 'emperor' was frequently ignored. What *did* interest the French, and particularly their kings, was the fact that Charlemagne could be counted amongst the 'holy kings' of France.<sup>77</sup>

Fascination with Charlemagne was fuelled by a considerable and growing unease with the status of France's ruling dynasty. The way in which Hugh Capet had come to power in 987 was of little concern to the earliest Capetians. However, as Elizabeth Brown has established, Hugh's perceived usurpation became of increasing concern in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Capetians became keen to demonstrate either

<sup>74</sup> Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 301–06.

<sup>75</sup> For the process by which Charlemagne emerged as a key figure in Stauffer propaganda, see Folz, *L'idée d'Empire*: 113–15; Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*: 183–214. See also Moeglin, *L'Empire et le Royaume*: 303.

<sup>76</sup> Folz, *Le souvenir*: 279, 298, 306; Folz, *L'idée d'Empire*: 148–49; Folz, *Le couronnement impérial*: 256–58. For recent examples, see Krynen, *L'Empire du roi*: 385–86; Spiegel, *The Past as Text*: 132–37.

<sup>77</sup> Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 169–82. See, for example, Peter of Beauvais's early thirteenth-century discussion of Charlemagne's supposed journey to the east, Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*: 237–39. And more generally, Jostkleigrewe, *Das Bild des Anderen*: 157–70.

that their line had returned to that of the Carolingians or that such a genealogical link already existed, no matter how convoluted it might be.<sup>78</sup> Capetian interest in Charlemagne was about Capetian legitimacy. That Charlemagne had been an emperor was, for such purposes, irrelevant.

The absence of imperial terminology is, to some extent, a reflection of the fact that such terms could do little to assuage Capetian concerns relating to legitimacy. Indeed, if such terminology was interpreted to imply rights or lands had been acquired by ‘conquest’, it might even have been counter-productive. This may explain why later writers at Saint-Denis quietly expunged the slightly embarrassing epithet Rigord had bestowed on Philip II from their histories. The language and symbols of empire could not explain the expansion of Capetian authority satisfactorily. This did not, however, mean there was a lack of interest in the imperial in France. Between 1270 and 1330 Capetian kings made repeated attempts, none of which succeeded, to have themselves elected to the office of western emperor. Traditional explanations of these candidatures tend to cast them, much like the growing interest in Charlemagne, in terms of an attempt to exploit imperial weakness.<sup>79</sup> A more accurate explanation lies in the undefined nature of the terms ‘empire’ and ‘emperor’ in France and, in particular, in a new and evolving understanding of the imperial office.

### The Emperor *Redux*

Imperial terminology in late medieval France was imbued with a ‘layered’ quality. One layer, ably represented by the *Disputatio*’s Knight, equated empires and their rulers with kings and their kingdoms. Such empires might involve universal temporal rule. Indeed, it was recognised that world rulership may even have been necessary at one point in the history of salvation. The early fourteenth-century chronicler and theologian John

<sup>78</sup> For the *reditus* concept, see Lewis, *Royal Succession*: 107–22. See also Brown, ‘Burying and Unburying’; Brown, ‘La généalogie capétienne’; Werner, ‘Die Legitimität der Kapetinger’.

<sup>79</sup> For the candidatures themselves, see Zeller, ‘Les rois de France candidats à l’Empire’; Roscheck, ‘Französische Kandidaturen’. For an example of the traditional interpretation, see Spiegel, *The Past as Text*: 134. For analysis, see Jones ‘Understanding Political Conceptions’. See also Moeglin, *L’Empire et le Royaume*: 295, where it is rightly noted that it would be anachronistic to consider proposals to obtain the empire ‘des manifestations d’expansionnisme chauvin’.

of Saint-Victor echoed a long-standing idea, that the Roman Empire had established a universal peace at the time of Christ that had been essential to spreading the Christian message.<sup>80</sup> This reflected the tendency of Christian histories since Late Antiquity to assign a unique role to the Roman Empire.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, any such role in the history of salvation was fleeting.

The Roman Empire, having fulfilled its function, became subject to the same laws that governed all kingdoms: it could rise, fall and divide. Writing in a Paris marked by Philip IV's momentous struggle with Boniface VIII, and at a time when more than half a century had passed since any imperial claimant had been crowned, John of Saint-Victor stated bluntly that the Roman Empire had in fact ceased to exist; a 'kingdom of Germany' had taken its place, whose rulers were not emperors.<sup>82</sup> By the time John of Saint-Victor wrote, John of Paris had already presented a vision of a Roman Empire that could be divided.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the idea was not a novelty generated by the immediate concerns of the Franco-papal dispute. In the early 1290s at Sens, Geoffroi of Courlon presented his readers with a similar picture of division: not only had the Roman Empire been split between East and West at the time of Charlemagne, it had been further divided at the time of Louis III: 'Imperium dividitur: regnaverunt quidam in Ytaliam, et quidam in Alemanniam'.<sup>84</sup> As long ago as the 1230s the Dominican theologian Hugh of Saint-Cher had described supreme rulership (*monarchia*) as like a ball. It passed from people to people until the Romans received it; yet in the present day the ball was divided.<sup>85</sup> At this level, John, Hugh and Geoffroi understood empires as

<sup>80</sup> Chazan, *L'Empire et l'histoire universelle*: 694.

<sup>81</sup> Allen, 'Universal History': 27–31.

<sup>82</sup> John of Saint-Victor, *Traité de la division des royaumes*: 236: 'De regno autem Alemannie seu Germanie sciendum quod eius originem vel finem non legi nisi cum Romanorum regno. Postquam tamen imperium Romanorum defecit deposito Frederico, fuerunt Alemannie reges, sed non imperatores Romani [...]'. For John's context, see Guyot-Bachy, *Le Memoriale historiarum*: 91–128.

<sup>83</sup> John of Paris, *De regia potestate et papali*, c. 15: 150–51; *ibid.*, c. 21: 185–86. For the possibility John of Saint-Victor was influenced by *De potestate*, see Guyot-Bachy, *Le Memoriale historiarum*: 411. But for an important caveat see Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 251.

<sup>84</sup> Geoffroi of Courlon, *Chronique de l'abbaye de Saint-Pierre-le-Vif de Sens*: 308. For the East–West divide, see *ibid.*: 260: 'Post imperavit Constantinopolim Melchiades, et multi alii, qui super Romanos non regnabant'.

<sup>85</sup> Cited in Smalley, 'Some Thirteenth-century Commentaries': 345–46: 'Primus fuit monarchia apud Assyrios, postea quasi pila proiecta venit ad Persas et Medos, postea ad Grecos, postea ad Romanos. Modo divisa est pila'.

transitory institutions distinguished from kingdoms only by nomenclature. Considered from another perspective, however, empires and their rulers remained distinct.

John of Paris drew attention to the dissimilar ways in which kings and emperors were created: while the ‘people’ played some role in the creation of both, the role of the ‘army’ in the creation of the latter established a striking difference: ‘nam populus facit regem et exercitus imperatorem’.<sup>86</sup> John was probably drawing on the *Decretum* when he aired this view, although the idea had its roots in historical practice and Roman law.<sup>87</sup> More significantly, emperors were distinguished by unique claims to a form of trans-regnal authority. And this was despite John’s strong argument that universal temporal rulership was ill-suited to man’s nature.

For John of Paris, the emperor should not, even if he was able to, exercise universal temporal rule. John argued, instead, that the emperor was the figure responsible for disciplining popes who prove wayward in temporal affairs and also, in cooperation with the cardinals, in spiritual affairs if necessary. It was not that other rulers could not do this but simply that the emperor possessed the ‘primary right’ (*primum ius*).<sup>88</sup> This coercive function sat alongside an additional role, that of the defence of the people against pagans and infidels in cases where there is no possibility of another defender being found. John highlights the elevation of Charlemagne as an example of just such a case.<sup>89</sup> For John, specifically, a continued subscription to the uniqueness of the imperial function probably reflects an attempt to reconcile Aristotle with assumptions that underpinned the broader view of history adopted by his order, the Dominicans.<sup>90</sup> The idea that the office of emperor was associated with roles detached from temporal government was not, however, unique to John of Paris.

Three decades before the Franco-papal conflict that prompted John’s arguments, Charles of Anjou had outlined a distinction between kings and emperors that assumed the latter possessed a wide-ranging authority that stretched beyond the borders of the contemporary western empire.

<sup>86</sup> John of Paris, *De regia potestate et papali*, c. 15: 151. See also *ibid.*, c. 10: 111: ‘praecipue quia imperio non succedunt ut heredes, sed ab exercitu et populo rite eliguntur’. *Ibid.*, c. 19: 172; *ibid.*, c. 19: 173.

<sup>87</sup> Leclercq, *Jean de Paris*: 95 n. 1.

<sup>88</sup> John of Paris, *De regia potestate et papali*, c. 13: 139.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 15: 150–51.

<sup>90</sup> Jones, ‘Historical Understanding’: 102–10.

When he had sought to convince his nephew, Philip III, to pursue the first French imperial candidature, Charles had argued that, as emperor, Philip could gather together knights from the whole world: ‘Mais se il estoit anpereres, il porroit coeillir chevaliere de par tot le monde.’<sup>91</sup> The idea that it was the special prerogative of emperors to lead crusades lay at the heart of Charles’s arguments. It was this interpretation that inspired Capetian kings to pursue the imperial title, not any suggestion, absent from Charles’s arguments, that the French king’s reach would extend eastwards should he become emperor. Indeed, quite the opposite was true: Philip III handed the Comtat-Venaissin over to the papacy in the expectation that Gregory X would name him emperor-elect.<sup>92</sup> The link Charles drew between crusade leadership and the imperial office was a powerful one. It originates in two factors: contemporary perceptions of Charlemagne’s career and the repeated failure of thirteenth-century crusading ventures led by Capetian kings.

While Charlemagne did not offer the Capetians a model that would have encouraged them to expand beyond the perceived borders of the French kingdom, he certainly offered an exemplar of a different sort. Whether it was in *chansons de geste* or historical accounts, the Capetians and their contemporaries found Charlemagne presented as a proto-crusader. More significantly, the Carolingian ruler’s supposed crusading activities, whether they took place in Spain or the Holy Land, were often presented as having taken place not while he was a mere king, but during his relatively short reign as emperor. This was amply apparent in two of the most influential contemporary histories, Vincent’s Latin *Speculum* and Primat’s vernacular *Roman des rois*.<sup>93</sup> The association between Charlemagne, the imperial title and successful leadership of the crusade coincided with a strong

<sup>91</sup> MGH *Const.* III: 588 (no. 618, para. 6, arg. 9). This document, written in French, is a detailed report of negotiations with the pope and was sent to Philip III by a royal official, Master Nicholas. Charles’s arguments are appended to it. See Jones, ‘...mais tot por le servise Deu?’: 210–12.

<sup>92</sup> Jones, ‘...mais tot por le servise Deu?’: 217–23.

<sup>93</sup> The imperial coronation in Vincent of Beauvais, ‘*Speculum historiale*’: 962 (bk. 24 c. 1) is followed by Charlemagne’s expedition to the Holy Land (*ibid.*: 963–64 (bk. 24 c. 4)) and Spain (*ibid.*: 964–70 (bk. 24 cc. 6–21)). The imperial coronation in Primat’s *Roman* (Viard, *Grandes Chroniques*: vol. 3: 90) is followed by the recovery of Jerusalem (*ibid.*: vol. 3: 172–73) and the Spanish expedition (*ibid.*: vol. 3: 199–287). For the origins of this pattern and other examples: Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 348–49. For Charlemagne’s image before the First Crusade: Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory*. Concerning his image as a proto-Crusader

belief in the course of the thirteenth century that the crusade was itself a peculiarly Capetian activity. Or, as Charles of Anjou put it to his nephew: ‘Vois sun pere [Louis IX], qui fu li predu con seut, qui fu II fois otremer. Li rois Loys [VIII] mes peres fu an Aubigois et an revenant fu mors croises d’outremer. Li rois Philippes [II] fu avec le roi Richart.’<sup>94</sup> It was a belief to which the later Capetians remained committed.<sup>95</sup>

If the Capetians had a unique contribution to make to crusading, it was difficult to overlook the fact that their efforts were not particularly successful. Louis IX’s ventures contributed to his reputation for sanctity but they were also military disasters. From a Capetian perspective, Charlemagne provided an example of what might be accomplished by a French king who obtained the imperial title. The fact that by Philip IV’s reign writers such as Pierre Dubois could hold up Frederick Barbarossa as a model, contrary to reality, of a successful crusader alongside Charlemagne no doubt bolstered the connection between crusade and the imperial title.<sup>96</sup> In the absence of an actual emperor after 1250, the imperial office underwent a strange transition in France. Long associated with the defence of the Church, echoes of which appeared in John of Paris’s arguments, it was transmuted into a specific function: leadership of the crusade. In this light it is unsurprising that the first thing that the ecclesiastical councils that met in France in the wake of the fall of Acre called for, including the council of Sens which met in Paris, was the selection of a new imperial candidate.<sup>97</sup>

Writing in the early twentieth century, the authors of *Principia mathematica* began by establishing the foundations on which they were to build. Whitehead

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in several twelfth-century epic poems, see Stuckey, ‘The Legend of Charlemagne’; Stuckey, ‘Charlemagne as Crusader?’ See also Jaspert, ‘Von Karl dem Großen bis Kaiser Wilhelm’: 141–46. An alternative perspective in which a connection between peace and Charlemagne’s assumption of the imperial office was emphasised appeared in the early thirteenth-century *Karolinus* of Giles of Paris, see Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*: 230–31. Giles’s conception does not seem to have been adopted by later writers in France.

<sup>94</sup> MGH Const. III: 587 (no. 618, para. 6, arg. 3).

<sup>95</sup> Schein, *Fideles crucis*: 266–68.

<sup>96</sup> Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione terre sancte*, c. 104: 88; Pierre Dubois, ‘Pro facto Terre Sancte’: 209. Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 344–45.

<sup>97</sup> See Digard, *Philippe le Bel*: vol. 2: 282, for the Sens council’s deliberations, which note: ‘Rursus visum foret expediens quod regno Alemannie, per illos ad quos spectat regis Romanorum electio, de tali provideatur celeriter qui Romane sit devotus Ecclesie et Francie Sicilieque reges inclitos diligit et aspiret ad deffensionem fidei Christianitatis’. For the councils of 1291–92 more generally, see Schein, *Fideles crucis*: 135–38.

and Russell explicitly invoked the idea of ‘primitive’ terms, recognising that such starting points rely on establishing a common understanding and remain, in essence, undefined. Geometry’s original textbook, the *Elements*, does not use such language but assumes that its readers will understand, intuitively, what each of Euclid’s undefined terms means. The terms ‘emperor’ and ‘empire’—like ‘king’ and ‘kingdom’—were understood similarly intuitively in late medieval France. This accounts for the frequency with which they were used but the relatively minimal discussion of what they meant. Their ‘undefined’ nature frustrates any attempt to write the history of political thought with the neatness of some Linnaean-like taxonomy. Yet both terms came to represent concepts that were central to the vocabulary from which the political ‘geometry’ of late medieval French thought was constructed. The undefined nature of imperial terminology created a space within which ‘empires’ existed that often differed little from kingdoms but where ‘emperors’ themselves could be ‘kings’ while simultaneously being associated with a form of universal authority divorced from rulership but tailored to the perceived needs of the time.

While Capetian France followed its own unique pathway, it was part of a pattern in Western Europe that continued to attribute importance to the emperor. From the 1270s, a series of imposters emerged in the German lands of the empire each of whom claimed to be Frederick II. For some, the ‘return’ of a Staufer emperor held out the promise of peace and a world restored to its proper order.<sup>98</sup> In Capetian-Valois France, an emperor offered no lesser promise. Uniquely, however, the imperial office came to be, necessarily, divorced from its traditional German incumbents. The most significant temporal office could only be effective when filled by a suitable candidate; and from a French perspective, the most suitable candidate was necessarily a Capetian.

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<sup>98</sup> For the Pseudo-Fredericks, see Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*: 113–16; Schwinges, ‘Verfassung und Kollektives Verhalten’; Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*: 229–39. The fundamental study of imposters is now Lecuppre, *L’imposture politique*. On the restoration of peace and order, in particular, see *ibid.*: 362–66.

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# The 'Emperor of Persia': 'Empire' as a Means of Describing and Structuring the World

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*From the late eleventh century onwards, the crusades brought Latin Christianity into direct contact with Muslim powers in the Near East. For the chroniclers of these events, the task of coping with the diversity of different Muslim actors the Christians faced was extremely challenging. Basically, they had two options to describe their respective political order: they could either use the rulers' titles in the version supplied by the original language (i.e., sultan or caliph) or they could refer to them by using Latin terms (i.e., rex or imperator). An analysis of the way in which different crusade chroniclers described the political landscape of Islam in the Near East reveals interesting insights: ethnic denominations such as 'Turks' or 'Saracens' alternated with classical terms such as 'Babylonians' and 'Persians' thereby evoking ancient empires that were part of the medieval theory of translatio imperii. The Seljuk Sultan, for example, was frequently presented as the 'emperor of Persia'. Thus, the Muslim states of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were at least to some extent presented as being part of the historical process of evolving and declining empires.*

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*The present article asks first how different chroniclers coped with the difficulty of naming and defining foreign political orders and thus developed distinctive interpretations of the history of these empires. Second, the article traces the way in which these models could be adopted by 'non-crusade' historiography: the example of William of Malmesbury shows that the English chronicler used the account by Fulcher of Chartres, but developed a remarkably distinctive version. Underlying his accounts is an overall theory of a continuing presence of eastern empires against the changing nature of politics in Christian Europe.*

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Between 1414 and 1418, the Council of Constance brought clerics and princes from all over the world to the imperial city in southern Germany.<sup>1</sup> In numerous sessions, the Council tried to reform the Church and to resolve the schism that had divided Latin Christianity since 1378. The best known chronicler of the event was Ulrich Richental, a citizen of Constance, who described the proceedings in minute detail as well as the ceremonies of the Council. In order to demonstrate the global importance of the assembly, he tried to list all the attendees.<sup>2</sup> While the clerical participants were listed according to their respective nation (*natio*), Ulrich also offered an alternative geopolitical order. Based on the geographic notion of continents, he differentiated between Asia, Africa and Europe, continued enumerating the different provinces and then changed to the political notion of emperors. According to Ulrich, there were seven emperors in Asia alone;<sup>3</sup> for Africa, he noted the existence of two empires, namely, Constantinople and Athens, which is irritating in terms of geography.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Frenken, *Das Konstanzer Konzil*.

<sup>2</sup> Buck, 'Und wie vil Herren dar koment'; Riegel, *Die Teilnehmerlisten des Konstanzer Konzils*.

<sup>3</sup> Ulrich Richental, *Chronik*: 142:

Ee das nun diß angefangen werd, so ist ze wissen, das aller umbkraiß der weit in drü getailt ist. Der erst haibet Asia, der ander Affrica, der dritt Europa. Asia. In dem tail lit Jherusalem, Babilonia, Allexandria, die groß Tartarie, da sind vij kayser inn, die zway India, Idumia, Arabia, Persorum, Medorum, Ninife, die groß statt Karthago, die groß statt Antiochia.

See also *ibid.*: 198: 'In der Tartarye sind siben kaiserthümb.' *Ibid.*: 36: 'da wonet in aller Tartarye. Darinn sind siben kaysers thümb.'

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*: 143: 'Affrica ist Kriechenland und hett zwen kaiserthümb under im, Constantinopel und Athen.' To date, there is still no satisfying explanation of this curious presentation, see Rolker, 'Die Richental-Chronik': 89–90.

Europe, at last, was presented as ‘the land, that we are in’; at the time of the Council, it lacked an emperor.<sup>5</sup> In this regard, Ulrich Richental was quite accurate: the Roman King and host of the Council, Sigismund, was crowned emperor only in 1433. For Ulrich, there seemed to be no empire without an actual emperor, and hence, the Holy Roman Empire remained unlisted.

In Ulrich’s description, two things stand out. First, the notion of ‘empire’ served as a means of ordering the world. In addition to the ecclesiastical structure, he devised a global political hierarchy that began with a series of emperors and continued with kings, dukes and so forth. This approach is far from being self-evident. Ulrich used the concept of empire as a descriptive model that could be applied on a global scale, and that could thus also be used to describe political entities such as the Mongol Khanate.<sup>6</sup> In doing so, Ulrich used the term ‘empire’ as a comprehensive designation for realms, which were characterised, we can suppose, by their great influence or hegemonic ambitions. It goes without saying that the notion of ‘empire’ is often associated with a certain entitlement to superiority, if not universalism. For Ulrich, however, several empires coexisted; if one includes the Holy Roman Empire, Ulrich’s world contained no less than a total of ten empires.

The second observation concerning Ulrich’s account is based on geography: Ulrich linked the empires to the three parts of the world; according to his description, seven out of the nine empires he mentioned could be found in Asia. Since he also conveyed the widespread idea that Asia was as large as Europe and Africa combined,<sup>7</sup> and commonly also imagined as much richer and more powerful, we may ask if the presence of a vast majority of empires in Asia also implied that the eastern part of the world was considered more distinguished and powerful than Europe and Africa? In sum, we can deduce that the notion of ‘empire’ had become a universally applicable category that enabled Ulrich to describe the entire known world, all the while conveying implicit political or cultural messages.

<sup>5</sup> Ulrich Richental, *Chronik*: 143: ‘Europa, daz ist daz land, da wir inn sind.’

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: 194: ‘Primus imperator Tartarorum, qui confinis est Indie, et est sibi nomen impositum magnus canis, daz ist der groß can oder hund.’

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*: 143: ‘Och maint man, das daz tail Asia größer sy dann die andern zway tail, Affrica und Europa.’ See Rolker, ‘Die Richental-Chronik’: 80–81, 87–92; Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 212.

Based on these preliminary observations, this article will analyse the Latin term *imperator* not as a self-ascribed category, that is when a ruler used the title of 'emperor' as a self-designation, but as a concept of political order that could be used in a more universal way, including its application to label foreign rulers and describe and explain foreign political entities. This approach consciously sets aside the question of whether a specific realm actually followed an imperial policy in a modern analytical sense<sup>8</sup> or if it was 'correctly' identified as an empire by Christian chroniclers. Instead, I am interested in another question: in which contexts did Latin-Christian authors choose to ascribe or assign imperial authority to foreign rulers and how did they explain their choice? Furthermore, this article will also establish the extent to which the concept of 'empire' was used to describe the political order of the world on a global level.

As a first step, I will focus on a specific historical context, namely, the time of the crusades. Starting in 1095, the crusades brought Latin Christianity into direct contact with Muslim powers in the Near East. For the chroniclers of these events, the task of coping with the diversity of different Muslim actors was challenging: they not only had to distinguish between several political entities that played an influential role in the Near East, but they also had to name them, based on the premises of their own world view, in political as well as ethnic terms.<sup>9</sup> In this context, the ruler of the Seljuk Sultanate was often referred to as the 'emperor of Persia', and thus may serve as a guiding example. In the second part of the article, I will analyse the reception and effects of new information about political and cultural aspects of the Near East, as expressed in several crusade chronicles, in the work of authors who were not actively involved in the crusades. Here, the early twelfth-century English chronicler William of Malmesbury will be my main example. In a final part, I will explore a representative selection of material, including Ulrich Richental and medieval world maps, in order to analyse the role the notion of 'empire' played for a global perspective on political entities in a broader context.

<sup>8</sup> For an overview, see Howe, 'Empire'.

<sup>9</sup> For the Middle Ages, the genealogical lines in Genesis 10 formed the basic pattern of understanding human groups as *gentes*, see Fried, 'Gens und Regnum': 78. More generally, see Borst, *Der Turmbau. Völk, Muslime*: 226, claims that the crusaders most commonly adopted the original Arabic and Turkish titles for foreign rulers.

## Describing Foreign Political Structures in the Levant

During the twelfth century, the political structure of the Near East was dominated by three different Muslim powers: the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum, situated in modern day Turkey; the Sultanate of the Seljuk Empire, occupying Palestine, Mesopotamia with the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, as well as most of modern day Iran and Turkmenistan; and the Fatimid Caliphate that mainly ruled over Egypt. While the former two realms, which were independent from one another, were both Sunni, the Fatimid Caliphate was Shiite.<sup>10</sup>

When it came to describing these foreign political entities, crusade chroniclers had two possibilities: they could either use notions they were familiar with and adapt them or describe the foreign political order in its own terminology and try to explain these titles or institutions by comparison, analogy or translation.<sup>11</sup> Even in the latter case, the categories that served to interpret and translate the foreign people remained deeply rooted in the chroniclers' own, culturally determined patterns of perception.

A telling example is furnished by the anonymous chronicle known as the 'Deeds of the Franks' (*Gesta Francorum*): written around 1100, it is believed to be the earliest chronicle to describe the events of the First Crusade. In this work, the author mostly followed what I described as the first option—he transferred familiar notions in order to explain the political situation. This can easily be demonstrated by a choice of examples. On one occasion, the author called the Seljuq Sultan of Rum, Kilij Arslan, the 'duke of the Turks'<sup>12</sup> whereas the Fatimid Caliph is described as the 'pope' of the Muslims.<sup>13</sup> Only the Seljuq Sultan appears (twice) as *soldanus Persiae*,<sup>14</sup> thus evoking the Arabic title of Sultan, albeit in a corrupted translation. When the *Gesta Francorum* cites a letter that had allegedly

<sup>10</sup> On the Muslim states during the crusades, see Brett, 'The Near East'.

<sup>11</sup> For general remarks on the perception and description of 'the Other', see Esch, 'Anschauung und Begriff'. For the question of how the Muslim realms were judged from a moral perspective, see Völkl, *Muslime*: 167–214.

<sup>12</sup> Hill, *Gesta Francorum*: 22 (IV 10): 'Solimanus dux illorum'.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*: 52 (IX 21): 'Uidelicet Caliphae nostro apostolico, ac nostri regi domino Soldano militia fortissimo.' In the text, the citation is part of a letter from *Kerbogha*, governor of Mosul, see Völkl, *Muslime*: 230–31; Meserve, *Empires of Islam*: 56–57.

<sup>14</sup> Hill, *Gesta Francorum*: 48 (IX 21): 'Curbaram princeps militiae soldani Persiae'. Similar *ibid.*: 66 (IX 28): 'Curbaram princeps militae soldani Persidis'.

been sent by Kerbogha, the governor of Mosul, however, the same Sultan is referred to by the Latin term *rex*.<sup>15</sup> Apart from these examples, the anonymous author does not elaborate further on the opponents of the Christian troops. It is beyond our knowledge to know if he chose to omit explanations because he considered this kind of information to not be important enough, or because he had no further information at his disposal.

Many of the later accounts of the expedition that has come to be known as the First Crusade relied more or less heavily on the *Gesta Francorum*. This is also true for the *Historia Iherosolimitana* of Robert the Monk (finished c. 1110).<sup>16</sup> Robert collectively described the opponents of the Christians as 'Turks', a *gens Persarum* as he said,<sup>17</sup> although he stressed several times that their armies consisted of different peoples.<sup>18</sup> Like in the *Gesta Francorum*, Kilij Arslan is called *dux*,<sup>19</sup> whereas the Seljuq Sultan appears as *rex Persarum*.<sup>20</sup> The Fatimid ruler is simply called *rex Babilonie*.<sup>21</sup> The title *imperator*, however, is reserved exclusively for the Byzantine Emperor.<sup>22</sup>

While the 'Persians' and the 'Babilonians' were ancient and probably well-known terms for peoples, the word *turci* was used only rarely before

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*: 52 (IX 21): 'nostri regi domino Soldano'.

<sup>16</sup> On the chronicle and author, see Kempf and Bull, 'Introduction'; Sweetenham, 'Introduction'.

<sup>17</sup> Kempf and Bull, *The Historia Iherosolimitana of Robert the Monk*: 5 (I): 'Quod videlicet gens regni Persarum, gens extranea, gens prorsus a Deo aliena.' See also *ibid.*: 8 (I), 9 (I), et passim. [English translation, Sweetenham, *Robert the Monk's Historia Iherosolimitana*: 79.]

<sup>18</sup> Kempf and Bull, *The Historia Iherosolimitana of Robert the Monk*: 27 (III): 'Sed ut asserebant qui se melius scire arbitrabantur, Perse, Publicani, Medi, Syri, Candeï, Sarraceni, Agulani, Arabes et Turci ibi convenerant, et superficiem terre cooperuerant.' See also *ibid.*: 37 (IV), 58 (VI): 'Corbanim, princeps militia regis Persarum, qui ex longo tempore collegerat sibi illud agmen diversarum gentium. Erant quidem ibi Perse et Medi, Arabes et Turci, Azimite et Sarraceni, Curti et Publicani, et diversarum nationum alii multi.' Völkl, *Muslims*: 215–16, 223–24, interpreted this as a rhetorical device that served to underline the enemies' power.

<sup>19</sup> Kempf and Bull, *The Historia Iherosolimitana of Robert the Monk*: 29 (III): 'Solimannus dux illorum [...]. Erat autem Solimannus filius Solimanni veteris, qui totam Romaniam absulit imperatori.'

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*: 47 (V), 58 (VI), 60 (VI) and 61 (VI).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*: 46 (IV): 'XII admiraldi regis Babilonie'. See also *ibid.*: 47 (V) ('Nuncios principis Babilonie') and 103 (IX). Raymond d'Aguilers called him *Caleph* as well as *rex Babiloniorum*, see Hill and Hill, *Le 'Liber' de Raymond d'Aguilers*: 56 (7) and 58 (7).

<sup>22</sup> Kempf and Bull, *The Historia Iherosolimitana of Robert the Monk*: 9 (I), 12 (I), 16 (II), 18 (II), et passim.

the Crusades. Historically, the Turks came from Mongolia and the Altai region; different groups soon spread westwards and at least partly adopted Islam. Among these were the Seljuqs.<sup>23</sup> In Latin Europe, the so-called *Chronicle of Fredegar* referred to *Turchi* already in the seventh century.<sup>24</sup> However, concrete knowledge about the origins and culture of the different groups of Turks was limited. In fact, the Latin term *turci* was basically used as a collective name for a new political power that was thought to have assumed the role that the Persians had once played as the ancient eastern opponent of the Roman Empire.<sup>25</sup>

By the early twelfth century, the ‘Turks’ seem to have become quite well known, as can be seen in the chronicle of Guibert of Nogent. Writing at roughly the same time as Robert the Monk, the Benedictine Guibert also used the anonymous *Gesta Francorum* as a basis for his own account of the crusades, called *The Deeds of God through the Franks (Dei gesta per Francos)*, finished c. 1107–09). In the preface to his work, Guibert addressed the difficulties he found himself confronted with ‘when we are describing things done in a foreign land’.<sup>26</sup> In his eyes, it was not only complicated to collect the raw materials, let alone to describe the intentions of specific persons, but he also notes that ‘the names of men, provinces and cities presented me with considerable difficulties’,<sup>27</sup> because they have

<sup>23</sup> Findley, *The Turks*: 66–77; Golden, *An Introduction to the History*: 216–25.

<sup>24</sup> Krusch, ‘Chronicarum Fredegarii libri IV’: 93. Fredegar explained that the Franks and Turks shared the same origins; the Turks split from the Franks as they wandered throughout Asia. See Meserve, *Empires of Islam*: 47–52.

<sup>25</sup> On the notion of *turci*, see Golden, *Introduction*: 115–17; on the relation to Persians, see Meserve, *Empires of Islam*: 155–202.

<sup>26</sup> Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*: 82 (praefatio):

Quid enim mirum si fallimur dum aliena facta referimus, cum nos ne nostra ipsorum quidem cogitationes ac opera non dico verbis exprimere, sed ne colligere tacita saltem mente possumus? Quid de intentionibus loquar, quae adeo latere plerumque probantur, ut vix ab ipso interioris hominis acumine discernantur?

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*: 82–83 (praefatio):

Porro de nominibus hominum, provinciarum et urbium multa michi est difficultas ingenita: dum enim quaedam, quorum attigerim notionem, male ab illo auctore expressa cognosco, remota quaelibet eoque magis, incognita eadem pravitae enuntiata non dubito. Verbi gratia, Turcos cotidiano increpitu, ubi, vocabulorum vestitas quoniam pene prorsus oblitterata delituit, antiquitate omni, etiam si ad integrum patuisset, amota nichil nisi quod publice cantantur dicere libuit.

been partly corrupted by the text of the chronicle he used as basis for his own narration. Many old names, Guibert went on, have been forgotten or changed into new ones:

I have chosen to use no word unless it were in common use. Had I used 'Parthians' instead of 'Turks', as some have suggested, 'Caucasus' and not 'Khorasan', in the pursuit of authenticity, I might be misunderstood and leave myself open to the attacks of those who argue about the proper names of provinces.<sup>28</sup>

For these reasons, Guibert explained, he would stick to the use of common names. This reasoning clearly demonstrates that Guibert was well aware of the problem he faced when it came to describing and naming persons, places and institutions properly. His primary goal was not to be as correct as possible in his use of foreign names.

In his work, Guibert diligently differentiated between the Seljuqs, whom he called *turci*,<sup>29</sup> and the Fatimid Caliphate, which he addressed as 'Babylonian Empire'.<sup>30</sup> This practice might have resulted from a conscious choice, expressing the author's endeavour to reflect the different hierarchic positions of the Turkish Sultans and the Caliphate within the Islamic world: at least in theory, the Caliph occupied the supreme rank. Furthermore, we learn from Guibert, that the Turks acted under the authority of the king of Persia,<sup>31</sup> whom, as the author explains, 'they were accustomed to call "Sultan", after the name of the old King Sogdianus of Persia, just as the Romans are accustomed to call their leaders "Caesars"'.<sup>32</sup> While Guibert explicitly identified the Caliph with the Latin term *imperator Babilonicus*, he thus also introduced the Arabic title of 'Sultan' in his account. In doing so, he probably followed the example of the *Gesta Francorum*, but he also explained the meaning of the title in a twofold way. First, he referred to

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*: 83 (praefatio): '[...] amota nihil nisi quod publice cantatur dicere libuit: si enim Parthos, ut aliqui sentiunt, non Turcos, Caucasum, non Corozaniam, ponerem, quasi sectando autentica obscurus fierem meque illis, qui de propriis regionum nominibus certant, carpendum exponerem'.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*: 100 (I 5): 'Parthorum regnum, quos Turcos corrupto nomine vocitamus.'

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*: 189 (IV 13); 193 (IV 14); 268 (VII 1), et passim: 'Babilonicus imperator'. *Ibid.*: 100 (I 5); 189 (IV 13), et passim: 'Babilonicum imperium'.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*: 271 (VII 3): '[...] sub regis ditone Persarum [...]'].

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*: 208 (V 8): 'Igitur Curburan, quidam dictus, regis Persarum quem veteri "Sogdianum" nomine, ut Romani "Cesares", vocare solent, maior dimus vel potius militae princeps.' Sogdianus of Persia lived in the fifth century bc.

the alleged etymology of the word. Second, he gave an analogous example from Roman history, where the title of the supreme ruler also derived from a sort of founding father, in this case Julius Caesar.<sup>33</sup>

A name such as the ‘Babylonian Empire’, of course, resonated with ideas about ancient Babylonia, but Guibert himself indicated that there was yet another Babylon that was situated in Egypt.<sup>34</sup> In fact, the question of the ‘two Babylons’ was a topic that many chroniclers commented upon.<sup>35</sup> Commonly, the Egyptian Babylon was identified with a Byzantine military base of the same name (Arabic: Fustat), which was conquered by the Arabs in 641 and then, in the tenth century, incorporated into the newly founded city of Cairo. Regardless of his own statement on the two Babylons, Guibert linked the Babylonian empire of his time to the one from Antiquity and contrasted it with the now powerful Turks, whom he linked in turn to the antique kingdom of the Parthians:

Among all the eastern kingdoms, the Babylonian empire was from ancient times the most powerful, and ruled over many kingdoms. However, the kingdom of the Parthians, whom we, because of changes in the language, call the Turks, is pre-eminent in military matters, in horsemanship and in courage, although it is a very small country. And so the Babylonian emperor occupied the areas we just mentioned with a large army but in the course of time, he lost them, as the Turks grew in number, and the Assyrians were defeated. More energetic, and in command of an astute boldness, they attacked the empire of Constantinople.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> See Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*: IX 3, 12.

<sup>34</sup> Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*: 83 (praefatio): ‘Ut asserunt plane quidam, ipsa quondam Memphis Egyptia Babilonia nunc dicitur.’

<sup>35</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, vol. 1: 650–52 (IV 371), with comment in *ibid.*, vol. 2: 328. See also Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*: 83 (praefatio); Hagenmeyer, *Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia*: 311, n. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*: 100 (I 5):

Inter omnia Orientis regna Babilonicum imperium ab antiquo prepotissimum fuit et regnis quam pluribus imperavit. At tamen Parthorum regnum, quos Turcos corrupto nomine vacitamus, in re militari et equestri elegantia, animi etiam virtute prepollet, sed terrarum amplitudine minus patet. Imperator itaque Babilonicus eas quas premisimus provincias magno exercitu occuparat, sed temporis processu Turcorum emergente copia, Asisiriis evictis amserat. Hi igitur, armis vivaciores et consultius utentes audacia, dum Constantinopolitanum urgerent imperium et eidem urbi pene obsidendae viderentur irrumperere [...].

Also *ibid.*: 189 (IV 13). See Meserve, *Empires of Islam*: 160–61.

In this passage, Guibert tried to embed the Muslim realms in a broader historical overview. By referring to the Babylonians, the Parthians and the Assyrians, he linked the Muslims of the eleventh and twelfth centuries to ancient historical realms, which were probably quite familiar to his Christian audience. In fact, all of the names Guibert used can be found, for example, in the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville, to name but the most influential source of pertinent knowledge.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, Guibert's historical explanation of the changing predominance of different kingdoms also evoked the concept of *translatio imperii*, a theory that enabled him to explain the weakness of Babylon (that is the Fatimid Caliphate) as well as the rising power of the Turks (i.e., the Seljuqs).<sup>38</sup> The origins of this theory are not entirely clear, but the idea that a series of realms succeeded and replaced each other can be traced back to pre-Christian historiography. In the seventh century, it was picked up by Isidore of Seville, who explained that 'every nation has had its own reign in its own times—like the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, the Egyptians, the Greeks— and fate has so rolled over their allotments of time that each successive one would dissolve the former'.<sup>39</sup> As is shown by the example of Isidore, the theory of *translatio imperii* describes the history of the world as a linear succession of transfers of power from one realm to another. Linked with a biblical prophecy according to the book of Daniel 2,21, the number of historical empires was soon limited to four, namely, Assyria (or Babylonia), Persia, Greece and Rome.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*: IX 2,3: 'Filii Sem quinque singulariter gentes singulas procreaverunt. Quorum primus Elam, a quo Elamitae principes Persidis: secundus Assur, a quo Assyriorum pullulavit imperium.' *Ibid.*: IX 2,47: 'Persae a Perseo rege sunt vocati, qui e Graecia Asiam transiens, ibi barbaras gentes gravi diuturnoque bello perdomuit, novissime victor nomen subiectae genti dedit. Persae autem ante Cyrum ignobiles fuerunt, et nullius inter gentes loci habebantur. Medi semper potentissimi fuerunt.' *Ibid.*: XV 1,63: *Imperio Persarum*.

<sup>38</sup> See Peacock, *Early Seljūq History*: 128–63.

<sup>39</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*: IX 3, 2:

Regnum universae nationes suis quaeque temporibus habuerunt, ut Assyrii, Medi, Persae, Aegyptii, Graeci, quorum vices sors temporum ita volutavit ut alterum ab altero solveretur. Inter omnia autem regna terrarum duo regna ceteris gloriosa traduntur: Assyriorum primum, deinde Romanorum, ut temporibus, et locis inter se ordinata atque distincta.

[English translation from Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies*: 201.]

<sup>40</sup> See Goetz, *Translatio Imperii*.

With the decline of the Babylonian Empire, that is the Caliphate in Egypt, as described by Guibert of Nogent, new actors could rise. The *translatio* theory would suggest that the imperial power passed on to another dominant kingdom. Hence the Turks, whom Guibert depicted as strong and warlike, gained predominance over the weakened Babylonians. However, Guibert only alluded to this theory; he did not elaborate further on it. The *imperium* stayed with the Caliph and the Persians remained a kingdom, quite in contrast to the picture developed by Fulcher of Chartres, as we shall see later.

Guibert of Nogent picked up the traces laid out by the *Gesta Francorum*, but painted a more detailed and consistent picture. He not only described the imbalance in power and rank between the Caliphate and the Sultanate by ascribing the Latin terms *imperator* and *rex* to their leaders, he also included all Muslim powers of the Near East in a theoretical model of world history, that was already well known to his readers. Although it remained only implicit, the theory of *translatio imperii* served Guibert as a background to make his readers understand that the Seljuq Sultanate was becoming more powerful than the higher-ranking Caliphate.

While the ‘Deeds of the Franks’ deployed familiar notions in order to explain the political situation in the Near East, it also integrated the Muslim powers into a traditional and well-known model of evolving and succeeding empires. Thereby the political system of the Muslim world was understood as governed by the same developments that determined the history of the ‘classical’ historical realms, which lead up to the Holy Roman Empire. Against this background, the political order of the Muslims was not interpreted as an autonomous system of its own, but in close analogy to Christian powers and institutions.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, it remains noteworthy that the Muslim powers, which were thus being measured by the standards that determined the Christian–European political hierarchy, remained in a position of second rank: the Seljuqs ranked as the kingdom of Persia and the Fatimids only governed an empire in decline.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> See Köhler, *Allianzen und Verträge*: 36–37; Seitz, *Das lange Ende*: 202–03.

<sup>42</sup> This motif might have a longer tradition: many Latin sources were quite reluctant to call non-Christian rulers ‘emperor’; hence the *Annals of the Franks*, for example, referred to the Caliph Harun al-Rashid as the ‘king of the Persians’ when they described the embassy of Charlemagne to the Caliph [ad a. 806], thereby implying the superior position of the Roman emperor, see Dmitriev and Oschema, ‘The Exchange’. Isidore of Seville also only knew a *rex Persarum*. Only once does Isidore mention an *imperium Persarum*, but in the antique tradition this merely refers to ‘government’, see Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*: XV 1,63.

In the following years, this line of argument was repeated or adopted by many authors. Siebert of Gembloux, for example, a Benedictine monk who finished his universal chronicle *c.* 1111, described how the Saracens had overthrown the 'Persian Kingdom', which is why their realm should be called the 'Saracen Kingdom'.<sup>43</sup> Surprisingly, Siebert was thus in favour of adapting the nomenclature to more recent developments instead of using the traditional names.

Guibert of Nogent was already writing his chronicle when he got to know an early version (now lost) of the work of his contemporary Fulcher of Chartres (the *Historia Hierosolymitana*), who had himself taken part in the First Crusade.<sup>44</sup> In his description, Fulcher picked up the ethnic attributions of the older Crusade chronicles and called the Seljuqs *Turci* and a *gens Persica*<sup>45</sup> and the Fatimids *babyloni*.<sup>46</sup> Mostly, however, he used the collective name 'Saracens'.<sup>47</sup> The way in which Fulcher described the political landscape is worth a closer look. In his description of the siege of Antioch in 1097, for example, he presented the Seljuq Sultan as the 'Emperor of Persia',<sup>48</sup> while in another passage the Caliph was reduced to

Other chroniclers picked up the motive of the 'kingdom of Persia': Frutolf of Michaelsberg wrote that Alexander gained the rule over the Orient and then over the whole world; the kingdom of the Persians, however, was transferred to Alexandria, according to Frutolf, see Krämer, *Translatio Imperii et Studii*: 66–67.

<sup>43</sup> Bethmann, 'Sieberti Gemblacensis Chronica': 323 (ad a. 632): 'Saraceni, qui hactenus fuerant sub Persarum regno, eos bellos victos versa vice sub suo redigunt dominio. Abhinc pro regno Persarum titulandum est regnum Saracenorum.' See Meserve, *Empire*: 159.

<sup>44</sup> Rubenstein, 'Guibert of Nogent'.

<sup>45</sup> Hagenmeyer, *Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia*: 133 (I 3, 3): *Turci*, *Gens Persica*. Similar *ibid.*: 549 (II 45,1); see also *ibid.*: 192–93 (I 11,4): *Paganis Persicis*. See Völkl, *Muslime*: 216–17.

<sup>46</sup> Hagenmeyer, *Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia*: 311 (I 31,1), 318 (I 31,12), 406 (II 10,1), 427 (II 15,4), et passim.

<sup>47</sup> See Daniel, *Islam and the West*: 100–01, Völkl, *Muslime*: 218–20.

<sup>48</sup> Hagenmeyer, *Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia*: 220 (I 15, 7): 'Inito invicem consilio, misit Aoxianus [a Turkish Slave of the Seljuq Sultan Malik Shah I], Antiochiaie princeps et admiratus, filium suum, nomine Sanxadonem [Atabeg of Mosul], ad Soltanum [Sultan Berkyaruq], scilicet imperatorem Persidis, ut eis citissime succurreret.' See also Waitz, 'Ekkehardi Uraugiensis Chronica': 212, who describes the Caliphs of Baghdad as superior of the Sultans only in theory: 'prescriptuorum paganorum copiae multae [i.e. the Seljuqs], quae sub quatuor sultanis divisae—sic enim satrapas suos nominare solent—uni tantum Persico imperatori pene divini cultus more subiecti, per Armeniam, indeque Capadociam totamque Romaniam atque Siriam diffusi sunt'. Otto of Freising hints at the fact that the king of Egypt is often mistaken for the king of Babylon, see, for example, Hofmeister, *Ottonis*

being the ‘king of Babylon’.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Fulcher seems to have followed a similar reasoning as Guibert: but while Guibert did not change the political designations of the Muslim powers (Babylonian Empire, Persian kingdom), Fulcher literally inverted the power structure of the Muslim world. Since the power of the Caliphate had faded, why should the imperial title itself not be transferred to the actual political power that was the Seljuqs?

Yet Fulcher did not apply these titles consistently, except for the Caliph, whom he consequently called *rex Babylonis*.<sup>50</sup> The ruler of the Seljuqs, on the other hand, is only once called *Soltanus, scilicet imperator Persidis*, and in another passage *Soltanus, rex scilicet Persarum*.<sup>51</sup> Fulcher’s aim was obviously not to attribute consistent titles to the Muslim rulers. Either he was not particularly interested in elaborating on the political structure of the Muslim realms, or he consciously tried to avoid doing so. As a consequence, he mostly used the term *Turci* without any particular title. The Seljuq Sultan of Rum, Kiliç Arslan, is only once addressed as *princeps*,<sup>52</sup> a title that relegates the Sultan to a vague position of authority. In addition, Fulcher was extremely cautious about using the title *imperator*: Apart from the one passage already cited, he applied this title only to the Roman and the Byzantine emperors.<sup>53</sup>

For the three chroniclers of the crusades that have been analysed so far, there was no doubt that the Muslim states the Christians were confronted with formed part of a traditional set of political powers: the Turks were seen as a *gens Persica* and the Fatimid Caliphate was associated with the Babylonian empire. Contemporary realms thus inevitably were seen as being linked to historical kingdoms. The argument for historical continuity was of primary importance: the ‘Empire of Persia’, for example, was imagined as enduring in spite of its being conquered or dominated by different peoples. In this case, the concept of the transfer of power (*translatio imperii*) applied

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*Episcopi Frisingensis Chronica*: 312 (VII 3). Furthermore, he lessens the religious rank of the caliph to *summus sacerdos* (*ibid.*). See Kunitzsch, ‘Die Arabica’: 16.

<sup>49</sup> Hagenmeyer, *Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia*: 311 (I 31,1): *Rex autem Babylonis*.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*: 311 (I 31,1), 425 (II 15,1), 489 (II 31,1), 548 (II 44,5), 709 (III 30,5).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*: 220 (I 15,7; see n. 48), 242 (I 19,1).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*: 192 (I 11,4): ‘quorum et admiratus et princeps erat Soliman’. On another occasion, Fulcher speaks of the ‘many princes of the Turks’, see *ibid.*: 249 (I 21,5).

<sup>53</sup> For the Roman Emperor, see *ibid.*: 119 (I 1, 1: ‘regnante in Alemannia Henrico imperatore dicto’), 145 (I 5, 1: ‘imperatoris praefati Baioariorum’), 147 (I 5, 3: ‘imperatoris praedicti’). For the Byzantine emperor, see *ibid.*: 155 (I 6,3: ‘imperatorem Constantinopolitanum’), 175 (I 8,9), 176 (I 8,9), 178 (I 9,3), 179 (I 9,3), et passim.

not only to the Holy Roman Empire, but also to the Muslim states, which were described by using Latin political terminology. By ascribing to the Muslim realms political structures and titles similar to those that were being used for the realms in Europe, the chroniclers seem to have accepted them as legitimate opponents. This practice was far from being obvious, as can be seen in the first descriptions of the Mongols: when they rushed into Eastern Europe in the mid-thirteenth century, they were described as wild and unorganised hordes mainly because they could at first not be linked to any known traditional political power.<sup>54</sup>

As I have explained earlier, the use of Latin political terminology was not the only way in which foreign rulers could be described. In fact, the account of the crusades by William of Tyre (written from 1170) demonstrates that the second possibility, that is, the use of the original titles in a foreign language, was more than just a theoretical option. William actually presented the Fatimid caliph as the *calipha Egyptio*,<sup>55</sup> thus using the Arabic title. Moreover, he did not even deem it necessary to explain this term when he first introduced it. Only later in his work he described the Caliph (of Bagdad) as the 'greatest of all Saracens rulers, he who far excels all others and is recognised as the supreme monarch over all'.<sup>56</sup> In contrast to other chronicles of the crusades, in William's work the Fatimids appear consequently under the designation of 'Egyptians'. The only reference to a *rex Babyloniorum* alludes to the (biblical) king Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>57</sup>

William took a similar approach to describing the Seljuqs, using the Arabic title 'Sultan' (*soldanus*) without explaining it.<sup>58</sup> The Seljuq Sultan of Rum, Kilij Arslan, is referred to as 'a very powerful Turkish satrap,

<sup>54</sup> See Jackson, *The Mongols and the West*: 136–47.

<sup>55</sup> William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, vol. 1: 367 (VII 19), 110 (I 4), 114 (I 6), 249 (IV 11), 267 (IV 24), 367 (VII 19), 271 (VII 21), 592 (XIII 5) and 596 (XIII 9); *ibid.*, vol. 2: 792 (XVII 22), 793 (XVII 24). On the characterisation of Muslim rulers in William's chronicle, see Möhring: 'Zu der Geschichte'.

<sup>56</sup> William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, vol. 2: 882 (XIX 13): 'Adierat enim illum maximum Saracenorum principem, qui quasi singularis monarcha cunctis excellentior omnibus praeesse intelligitur, calipham, videlicet de Baldac.' See also *ibid.*: 772 (XVII 10): 'ad maximum Sarracenorum principem et monarcham, calipham videlicet Baldacensem'. [English translation: William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds*, vol. 2: 313 (XIX 13).]

<sup>57</sup> William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, vol. 1: 244 (IV 9): 'Nabuchodonosor Babyloniorum regem'. See also *ibid.*: 386 (VIII 3).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*: 198 (III 1): 'Belfetofh nomine, maximus Persarum soldanus tempore Romani'. See also *ibid.*: 249 (IV 11), 267 (IV 24).

called Shah, which in the Persian tongue is interpreted as “king”.<sup>59</sup> While the Persian title ‘Shah’ is mentioned only once, the leaders of the Seljuqs are frequently identified as *satrapa Turcorum* or, sometimes, *satrapa Persarum*.<sup>60</sup> But even this old Persian title was not used consistently: various rulers of the Seljuqs appear as *rex* or *princeps Persarum*, or as *princeps, dominator* or *dux Turcorum*.<sup>61</sup>

William’s use of titles thus seems inconsistent; however, in a longer passage on the history of the *gens Turcorum*, his reasoning becomes more systematic. According to William, the Turks had come from the north, where they had lived as nomads, until parts of them settled in the Persian Empire, to which they paid tributes. However, as they got into conflict with the Persians, they elected themselves a king (*rex*) from the family of the Seljuqs (*familiae Selducorum*) with the name *Selduc*. Under this king, they started expanding, until they finally subdued Persia as well as parts of Arabia, before starting a campaign against Egypt and Syria.<sup>62</sup> In this excursus, William showed considerable knowledge of the early history and the mythical origins of the Seljuqs; moreover, he did not associate them with any classical name.<sup>63</sup> This sort of knowledge was not unusual for an inhabitant of the crusader states; Fulcher of Chartres famously stated that Latin Christians and Muslims

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*: 198 (III 2(1)): ‘Hujus urbis, sicut et regionis totius, et adjacentium simul provinciarum dominus erat quidam Turcorum potentissimus satrapa, Solimannus nomine, cognomento Schah, quod Persarum lingua rex interpretatur.’ [English translation (altered): William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds*, vol. 1: 153 (III 1).] See Völk, *Muslims*: 228–29. William obviously confuses the old Persian title *shah* with the name of the Seljuq Sultan Malik Shah. The title *shah* was not applied to Kilij Arslan.

<sup>60</sup> William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, vol. 1: 239 (IV 6), 598 (XIII 11); *ibid.*, vol. 2: 638 (XIV 6), 723 (XVI 8), 746 (XVI 22), et passim. *Ibid.*, vol. 1: 327 (VI 15): ‘Persarum satrapam’.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1: 386 (VIII 3: ‘Cyro rege Persarum’), 320 (VI 11: ‘Corbagath Persarum princeps potentissimus’), 503 (XI 6: ‘Solimannum potentissimum Turcorum principem’), 623 (XIII 27: ‘Halapiae princeps, Turcorum dominator potentissimus’), 623 (XIII 27: ‘Turcorum potentissimum ducem, nomine Sanguinum’), 150 (I 24: ‘Solimannus vero illius regionis dux et moderator’).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*: 114–17 (I 7). [English translation, William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds*, vol. 1: 71–74 (I 7).]

<sup>63</sup> See Peacock, *Early Seljūq History*: esp. 16–35; Murray, ‘William of Tyre’, underlines that William’s account was primarily based on western and classical sources. See also Meserve, *Empire*: 161–62.

<sup>64</sup> Hagenmeyer, *Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia*: 748 (III 37): ‘Diversarum linguarum coutitur alternatim eloquio et obsequio alteruter. Lingua diversa iam communis facta utrique nationi fit nota iungit fides quibus est ignota progenies.’

quickly learned each other's languages.<sup>64</sup> William's choice to use the Muslim rulers' titles in the foreign language might be explained with his knowledge and deep involvement in the events of the crusades. As a result, he consequently called the Muslim rulers by their Arabic titles, whereas he used the Latin term *imperator* exclusively for the Byzantine as well as the Roman emperors.<sup>65</sup>

## Establishing Order from a European Perspective

The news of the First Crusade and of the capture of Jerusalem soon spread throughout Europe. However, chroniclers who wanted to include an account of the crusades in their own works faced the same problem as their colleagues in the Near East: they had to describe the political order of the foreign Muslim realms. In the second part of this article, I want to focus on these chroniclers in Europe and analyse how they adapted and reworked the recently acquired information in their own accounts. For this approach, the 'Deeds of the Kings of the English' (*Gesta regum Anglorum*) of William of Malmesbury may serve as an example. William (c. 1095–1143) was a monk at the Benedictine monastery at Malmesbury and finished his chronicle c. 1125.<sup>66</sup>

William's chronicle provides an excellent example of the adaption and transformation of information, as he was quite interested in incorporating an account of the crusades into his chronicle. In order to do this, William used, among other sources, the account of Fulcher of Chartres, which he described as being not very elegant in style, but reliable.<sup>67</sup> But William did not simply copy Fulcher's account. Instead, he elaborately revised it. He wrote that during the siege of Antioch in 1097–98, the besieged sent messengers to the Sultan for help, that is to 'the Emperor [of Persia]'.<sup>68</sup> While he borrowed the sentence in question directly from Fulcher, William added the following explanation: "Soldan" is among the Persians the

<sup>65</sup> In a historical perspective, see William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, vol. 1: 105–07 (I 1–2); Charlemagne: 108 (I 3); 'imperator Constantinopolitanus': 113 (I 6), 198 (III 2(1)), 343 (VII 1), 368 (VII 20), 443 (IX 17), 503 (XI 6), 512 (XI 11), et passim. 'Romanorum imperator': 127–28 (I 13), 130 (I 14), 611 (XIII 19); *ibid.*, vol. 2: 632 (XIV 1), 741 (XVI 18), 760 (XVII 1), et passim.

<sup>66</sup> On William, see Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*.

<sup>67</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, vol. 1: 660 (IV 374).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*: 632 (IV 360): 'Sansadolen filium ad Soldanum imperatorem [reading: Persidis] misit.'

equivalent of “Augustus” among the Romans; he is ruler of the whole East and of all the Saracens.<sup>69</sup>

By comparing the Sultanate with the position and title of Augustus, William provided his readers with an analogy between the foreign and the familiar, as Guibert of Nogent had also done.<sup>70</sup> But while Guibert only hinted that the name of ‘Caesar’ was analogous to ‘Sultan’, William added another layer of explanation: he presented the titles of Sultan and Augustus as being geographically as well as religiously circumscribed, and both were characterised by a certain imperial touch. If one followed William’s analogy, ‘Augustus’ would actually be the title for the ‘ruler of the West and over all Christians’.<sup>71</sup> All in all, it seems plausible that a monk in south-west England needed to present his readers with more information on foreign rulers than a chronicler who resided in Palestine, although he was in a less well-informed position when doing so.<sup>72</sup>

William of Malmesbury discussed the subject of imperial authority in more detail and continued his account with a theoretical and historical reflection on the durability of empires, and thus put the account of Fulcher completely behind him:

This empire [i.e., the Seljuq respectively the Persian Empire], in my opinion, owes its great duration and still increasing extent to the unwarlike nature of the Persians, already referred to, who being short of active blood cannot unlearn the servile habit they have once acquired [...]. The western peoples [*gens occidentalis*], on the other hand, are bold and fierce, and reject the long-continued lordship of any one nation; often freeing themselves from servitude, they change from one to another. Thus the Roman rule passed first to the Franks and later to the Teutons, while in the East the Persian Empire goes on forever.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*: ‘Soldanus apud Persas qui apud Romanos Augustus, totius Orientis et omnium Saracenorum rector.’ For the citation of Fulcher, see n. 48. This sentence was adopted verbatim by Helinand of Froidmont in his chronicle, compiled c. 1211–23, Helinand of Froidmont, ‘Chronicon’: 987: ‘Soldanus autem apud Persas est, qui apud Romanos Augustus, totius Orientis et omnium Sarracenorum rector.’ See Seitz, *Das lange Ende*: 201. On Helinand, see Saak, ‘The Limits of Knowledge’.

<sup>70</sup> See n. 32.

<sup>71</sup> See the definition of Isidore, who underlines the fact that ‘Augustus’ means ‘increaser’, Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*: IX 3,16.

<sup>72</sup> It is quite revealing that William of Tyre used, for example, the title of ‘Sultan’ without ever explaining it, see William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, vol. 1: 198 (III 2(1)).

<sup>73</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, vol. 1: 632–34 (IV 360):

Quod ideo ut estimo, tam diu manet et propagatur imperium, quod gens illa, param, ut dixi, bellicosa et uiuacis sanguinis inops, semel acceptum nescit dediscere seruitium,

In this passage, William included an entire bundle of different ideas and concepts. Like Guibert of Nogent, he highlighted the potential durability of empires, in this case the Persian Empire, now under Seljuq dominance. At the same time, he contrasted the historical continuity of the Persian Empire with the vicissitudes that had beset the *Imperium Romanum*. Although William did not use the word *translatio* itself, the process he described fits quite well in the theory of *translatio imperii*. In this case, however, the theory of succeeding realms would only apply to 'western' kingdoms. In fact, William interprets the *translatio* itself as a result of the mentality of the 'western people', who loved their freedom, as opposed to the servile nature of the 'eastern people', that is, the Persians. Seen from this perspective, an enduring empire could become a sign of effective oppression, rather than political strength. The very notion of 'empire' has thus acquired negative connotations in this case.

The second idea that William alludes to in the quoted passage is the conviction that different peoples were marked by specific mentalities or collective characteristics. He describes the Seljuqs/Turks as submissive and weak, whereas the transfer of imperial power in the West is interpreted as a result of the striving for freedom of the western people. In order to explain the geopolitical difference between east and west, William refers to his own account ('already referred to') of the speech Urban II gave at Clermont in 1095 and that set off the First Crusade. In this passage, Urban describes the Muslims as masters over both Asia and Africa, who would now seek to conquer Europe.<sup>74</sup> William thus evoked an atmosphere of

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ignorantque, ut Lucanus ait, ideo 'datos ne quisquam seruiat enses'. At uero gens occidentalis, audax et effera, diuturnam unius populi dedignatur dominationem, sepe se seruitio euens, et de uno in aliud transferens. Denique Romanum imperium prius ad Francos, post ad Teutones declinauit, orientale apud Persas semper durat.

Compare the comment in *ibid.*, vol. 2: 317: 'William's comments on the role of the "Soldan", developed from Fulcher I.15.7, are a muddle of information on Sassanid emperors and on the office of caliph.'

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1: 600 (IV 347):

Tertium mundi clima restat Europa, cuius quantulam partem inhabitamus Christiani! Nam omnem illam barbariem quae in remotis insulis glatiale frequenter oceanum, quia more beluino uicitat, Christianam quis dixerit? Hanc igitur nostri mundi portiunculam Turchi et Saraceni bello premunt, iamque, a trecentis annis Hispania et Balearibus insulis subiugatis, quod reliquum est spe deuorant, homines inertissimi et qui, comminus pugnandi fidutiam non habentes, fugax bellum diligunt.

threat in order to explain the motivation of the crusaders. The notion of Europe being the last remaining Christian part of the world, however, is not mentioned in the more reliable sources of Urban's speech, and must thus be considered to be William's own invention.<sup>75</sup>

In William's account, Urban went on to explain the cowardly character of the Turks with reference to the eastern climate: because of the heat of the sun, they have less blood than their northern counterparts, who thus fight more willingly and fiercely, which is why the western people could easily defeat the Turks.<sup>76</sup> In this passage, William refers to the medieval theory of different climatic zones, which he might have adopted from Bede or Isidore.<sup>77</sup> William focussed on the 'known world' that was imagined as being divided in zones with differing climates, influencing or even determining the character of the people who lived in a particular zone.<sup>78</sup> Hence, William described the 'eastern people' as being affected by a hot climate, as opposed to the people who were born in the 'cold of the north'.

Based on William's account, empires seem to prosper because of servile subjects, favoured by a hot climate. All in all, the concept of 'empire' seemed to have a negative connotation for William. With his

<sup>75</sup> Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 267–71.

<sup>76</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, vol. 1: 600–02 (IV 347):

Numquam enim Turchus pede conserto martem audet, sed pulsus loco longe tendit neruos et permittit uulnera uentis; et quoniam habet tela mortifero suco ebria, in homine quem percutit non uirtus sed uirus mortem facit. Quidquid igitur agit, fortunae, non fortitudini attribuerim, quod pugnat fuga et ueneno. Constat profecto quod omnis natio quae in ea plaga nascitur, nimio solis ardore siccata, amplius quidem sapit sed minus habet sanguinis; ideoque uicinam pugnam fugiunt, quia parum sanguinis se habere norunt. Contra, populus qui oritur in Arcto is pruinis, et remotus est a solis ardoribus, inconsultior quidem sed largo et luxuriant superbus sanguine promptissime pugnat. Vos estis gens quae intemperatioribus mundi prouintiis oriunda, qui sitis et prodigi sanguinis ad mortis uulnerumque contemptum et non careatis prudentia; namque et modestiam seruatis in castris et in dimicatione utimini consiliis.

<sup>77</sup> Von den Brincken, *Fines Terrae*: 55; on Isidore, *ibid.*: 47–48. The Franciscan encyclopaedist Bartholomäus Anglicus conveyed similar ideas in mid-thirteenth century: Bartholomäus Anglicus, *De rerum proprietatibus*: 648 (XV 50).

<sup>78</sup> The idea that the climatic zones influence or even determine the character of the inhabitants is of antique origin. According to Ps-Hippocrates [*On Airs, Waters and Places*; fifth century BC], the mild and constant climate of the orient made its inhabitants lazy and weak, whereas the changing seasons of the north and west would make the people from these regions brave and valorous. See Cobet, 'Europa und Asien': 413.

excursus on the durability of empires, based on the theory of climatic zones, William offered an overall perspective that suggested history was determined by nature. In his account, like in many of the crusade chronicles analysed above, the Muslim powers in the Near East appear as the successors of enduring empires from Antiquity. In fact, William even associated the Orient itself with the existence of long-lasting imperial powers, which contrasted with the changing nature of politics and political organisation in Europe. A closer look at his work reveals that William described both the Seljuq<sup>79</sup> and the Fatimid<sup>80</sup> rulers as emperors, just as he did with the Roman and the Byzantine emperors.<sup>81</sup> In the world he depicts, two Muslim empires have thus joined the two traditional Christian empires.

A comparison with another chronicler who sought to write history with a global outlook demonstrates how difficult it was to explain the political situation in the Near East. Otto, bishop of Freising (c. 1114–58) and uncle of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, tried hard to bring together both the names of ancient empires as well as of new political players. In Otto's chronicle (finished in 1146 and reworked in 1157), the Fatimid ruler appeared as the 'king of the Egyptians', who, as Otto tells us, was often believed to be the 'king of the Babylonians'.<sup>82</sup> However, Otto writes, the Persians had long since overtaken the empire, but 'kept nothing of the Babylonians except for their name'.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, Otto seems to have believed that the Persian king had transferred the eastern part of his empire to the Egyptians under the authority of their

<sup>79</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, vol. 1: 636 (IV 364): *Ab imperatore Persidis.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*: 650–52 (IV 370): 'At uero Babilonis imperator, non illius quae a Nembroth facta, a Semiramide aucta, nunc asseritur deserta, sed illius quam Cambises Ciri edificauit in Egipto, in loco ubi quondam fuerat Taphnis.'

<sup>81</sup> The Byzantine emperor is mostly referred to as *imperator Constantinopolitanus*, see *ibid.*: 100 (I 68), 102 (I 68), 134 (I 92), 412 (II 225), 481 (III 260), 484 (III 262), 736 (V 407). Once, he appears as *imperator Grecorum*, see *ibid.*: 467 (III 251). The Roman emperors, on the other hand, are named rather inconsistently: *imperator Francorum*: 134 (I 92); *imperator Alemannorum*: 200 (II 126), 338 (II 188), 467 (III 251), 484 (III 262), 490 (III 265), 598 (IV 345); *imperator Italie*: 284 (II 168); only twice *imperator Romanorum*: 216 (II 135), 412 (II 225). Very often, both emperors are just called *imperator*.

<sup>82</sup> Hofmeister, *Ottonis episcopi Frisingensis Chronica*: 313: 'Egyptiorum regis, qui vulgo Babyloniorum putatur.'

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*: 313–14: 'Ipsi uero Persarum reges [...] nichil sibi de Babylone preter nomen imperii reservantes.'

‘highest priest, whom they call Caliph’.<sup>84</sup> To make things easier, Otto mostly referred to the Seljuqs as *Turci* or *Sarraceni*.<sup>85</sup> Otto of Freising was in fact very well informed about the events of the crusade; he even visited Palestine himself during the crusade of Conrad III in 1147–48, but he had difficulties explaining who exactly the Muslim opponents were. However, as a chronicler who strongly defended the position of the Roman emperors (in their struggle against the papacy), he did not attribute the precious title of *imperator* to any foreign ruler. More than the chroniclers of the crusades who lived in Palestine, authors based in Europe such as William of Malmesbury and Otto of Freising tried to find a balance between the task to label foreign rulers and the need to respect the traditional rank of their contemporary Roman Empire. The concept of empire was relevant for both, William and Otto, even if their works clearly show that they adopted quite different perspectives.

### A Global View on Empires

For European chroniclers as well as for their colleagues who were based in the Latin East, the world seemed to become larger following the crusades. Political terms such as *rex* or *imperator* were frequently (if not always consistently) attributed to foreign rulers in order to identify them. Since the expansion of the Mongols in the thirteenth century, the Latins turned their attention more and more to the East. A comparative look into the travelogues of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries shows that the title *imperator* was commonly used to describe the Mongol Khan or the ruler of China. Still, individual authors chose to stick to the original foreign-language titles, thereby expressing the fact that this option remained attractive. While John of Plano Carpini, a Franciscan friar who travelled to the Mongol court in 1246–47, referred to the Khan as the *imperator Tartarorum*, another Franciscan traveller, William Rubruk, always used the Mongol title *chan* for this ruler and reserved the title of *imperator* for Christian rulers.<sup>86</sup> As is shown by this latter example, it would be misleading to think that the travelogues of the thirteenth and fourteenth century used the notion of ‘empire’ with the

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*: 313: ‘Ipsa autem, quae inhabitatur et Baldach vocatur, maxima est et populosa et, cum de imperio debeat esse Persarum, summo sacerdoti suo, quem ipsi Caliph dicunt, a regibus Persarum concessa.’

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*: 312–14. See Völkl, *Muslims*: 217.

<sup>86</sup> See Mauntel, ‘Beyond Rome’.

negative connotation it acquired in the work of William of Malmesbury. Most travellers described the power and wealth of Asian emperors (be it the *imperator Dehli*, the *imperator Kytaorum* or the *imperator Tartarorum in Perside*)<sup>87</sup> rather favourably. Their power impressed and surpassed that of every Christian ruler. Around 1307, the expatriate Armenian prince Hayton (Het'um) of Gorigos even referred to the Seljuq as the *empereor d'Aise* because of the extent of his realm.<sup>88</sup>

Growing knowledge about, not only, but primarily, Asia influenced the way in which the world was depicted and described. In this regard, a genre of sources that literally offers a global perspective on the notion of empire is of especial interest: world maps. While traditional medieval world maps did not seek to offer an up-to-date view of the world, this gradually changed in the later Middle Ages. Nevertheless, it took some time before cartographers incorporated recent information about distant regions provided by travellers, into the rather conservative genre of *mappaemundi*.<sup>89</sup> As far as empires are concerned, two world maps are particularly worth a closer look: the map of Andrea Bianco (1436) and the map of Fra Mauro (1459), both Venetian cartographers.

In 1436, Andrea Bianco, a Venetian merchant and cartographer, published an atlas, which included several portolan charts as well as a round *mappamundi*.<sup>90</sup> Bianco's world map, orientated towards the east,

<sup>87</sup> Citations: Odoricus de Portu Naonis, 'Relatio': 435 (VIII 20); Giovanni di Pian di Carpine, *Storia dei Mongoli*: 255 (V 7). See also *ibid.*: 256 (V 9), 257 (V 9); Riccoldo de Monte Croce, *Pèrègrination*: 112.

<sup>88</sup> Hayton, 'La flor des estoires': 142 (II 6):

En l'an Nostre Seignor MLI comencierent premierement les Turquemans aver seignorie en Aise, en ceste maniere. Quant les Turquemans furent multeplies [en Perse] d'avoir e de persones, e ils virent la descorde grant qui entre les Sarazins estoit, tantost penserent de relevement; dont il s'assemblerent et eslurent un roi sur eaus, qui ot nom Salioc; ne onques avant il n'avoient eü seigneur de leur lignee. Quant il orent ce fait, il s'assemblerent e envaierent vigoroisement les Sarazins, e en breu temps ecuperent la seignorie d'Aise. Au calif de Baldac ne firent point de grevance, ains li porterent honor. Dont il avint que li calif, plus por doute que por amor, ordena Salioc, le seignor des Turquemans, empereor d'Aise por fere plaisir as Turqemans.

See also *ibid.*: 129 (I 10); 136 (prologue II) and 145 (II 9).

<sup>89</sup> Baumgärtner, 'Reiseberichte und Karten'.

<sup>90</sup> Hamann, 'Fra Mauro': 360–61. The *Atlas* of Andrea Bianco is preserved in Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, MS. Fondo Ant.It. Z.76. For a facsimile see Bianco, *Atlante Nautico*.

depicts towns (with small, stylised castles) as well as rulers (seated figures with standing attendants). The names of the respective realms are noted in red ink. According to Bianco, Egypt was (still) ruled by the *soldanus babelonie*, who can be identified in the mid-fifteenth century with the Mamluk Sultan, the realms of the Fatimids (969–1171) as well as of their successors, the Ayyubids (1171–1252), having perished a long time ago. In the later Middle Ages, the powerless Abbasid Caliphs only served to legitimise Mamluk rule (1252–1517). If we follow Bianco's map, the Latin concept of enduring realms thus remained stable at least until the fifteenth century. Notwithstanding political changes, the nomenclature of political entities followed established patterns. On the other hand, the world had grown larger in the eyes of European scholars: Bianco listed empires all over the world, counting a total of eleven. If one categorises them according to the traditional boundaries of the three parts of the earth,<sup>91</sup> two of these empires existed in Europe,<sup>92</sup> none in Africa and nine in Asia.<sup>93</sup> It is interesting to note that, while Asia seemed to have become the continent of empires per se, Africa was regarded as a region with less powerful political realms, as it was ruled only by kings.<sup>94</sup> This might, of course, just reflect the fact that Latin-Christian travellers, merchants and authors were more fascinated by the wealth and wonders of the Orient, than by those of Africa.<sup>95</sup>

A closer look on another map, the *mappamundi* of the Venetian Camaldolese friar Fra Mauro, reveals similar results, even though the cartographer used the notion of empire rather cautiously. In fact, the map of Fra Mauro only contains one empire: the *imperio chataio*,<sup>96</sup> located in the furthest east of Asia. With one single exception, every mention of the word family *imperio*, referring for example to imperial cities or tombs, is related to the Chinese empire, whose ruler is called *excellentissimo e potentissimo*

<sup>91</sup> Asia was traditionally separated from Europe by the Don and from Africa by the Nile, whereas the Mediterranean constituted the border between Europe and Africa. Andrea Bianco, however, does not name the continents on his map.

<sup>92</sup> Miller, *Mappae Mundi*, vol. 3: 144–45: 'inperium romanorum', 'inperion romania'.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*: 'inperium catai', 'inperion de termaxo', 'inperion de medio', 'inperion rosie magna', 'inperion tartaroron', 'inperion basera', 'inperium prete janis', 'inperium emibar', 'inperion morati'.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*: 'Rex de Termixen', 'Rex Belmarin', 'Rex de Maroco'.

<sup>95</sup> On the Latin-Christian image of Africa, see Relaño, *The Shaping of Africa*.

<sup>96</sup> Falchetta, *Fra Mauro's World Map*: 603 (\*2330): 'IMPERIO e triumpho nobilissimo del chataio'. *Ibid.*: 675 (\*2715): 'Imperio'; near the inscription: 'Chataio'.

*imperator*.<sup>97</sup> Only once is the Turco-Mongol Timur, who conquered large parts of western Asia, mentioned as *Tamberlan lo imperador tartaro*.<sup>98</sup>

A third source that tried to describe the entire world with the help of the political category of 'empire' has already been mentioned: the work of Ulrich Richental, chronicler of the Council of Constance. With the exception of the Holy Roman Empire, Richental listed nine empires, seven in Asia and two in Africa. But Africa is, to him, identical with Greece, and the two 'African' empires were Constantinople and Athens.<sup>99</sup> The outlines of this geography obviously contradict the traditional and widely spread model of the parts of the earth, according to which the Mediterranean divided Europe and Africa. It is a deviation that is difficult to explain.<sup>100</sup> It may be possible that the chronicler wanted to stylise Europe as a coherently Catholic continent that contrasted with 'Africa', where Greek Orthodox Christians, Jews and Muslims lived.<sup>101</sup>

Of the seven 'Asian' emperors, the *imperator Tartarorum* was the most powerful in Richental's eyes: the emperor allegedly called himself *magnus canis*, which is translated by the chronicler as 'great chan or dog'; more important, the emperor of the Tartars was presented as the supreme ruler over six other emperors.<sup>102</sup> While other emperors normally had several

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*: 597 (\*2299).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*: 633 (\*2465).

<sup>99</sup> See n. 4. In another passage, Ulrich also speaks of a *kayser ze Schiltach* (Ulrich Richental, *Chronik des Konstanzer*: 196), whom he locates in Africa. The Athenian emperor is called *kayßer Allexander zû Athen* and closely associated with the 'archbishop of Kiev', Grigorij Camblak. Ulrich Richental, *Chronik*: 195. See Rolker, 'Die Richental-Chronik': 92–93. Riegel, *Die Teilnehmerlisten des Konstanzer Konzils*: 52, assumed that the name *Allexander* referred to the widely known story of Alexander the Great.

<sup>100</sup> See n. 91. His view is mirrored by the thirteenth-century French encyclopaedia of Gossuin of Metz, see Prior, *L'image du monde de maître Gossouin*: 129–30 (II 4), who declared the Alps to be the border between Europe and Africa. See Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 212; Jostkleigrewe, 'L'espace entre tradition et innovation'; id., 'Zwischen symbolischer Weltdeutung'; Connochie-Bourgne, 'Limites et diversités de l'Europe'.

<sup>101</sup> Ulrich Richental, *Chronik*: 143: '[...] und ist der mertal in dem tail [i.e., Africa, cm] kriechischer glob und och vil haidiseher glob und Machometi. [...] Europa, daz ist daz land, da wir inn sind [...] die daz mertail cristan sind und och vil nit cristan globen haltend'. See Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 212–13. In an illustrated manuscript, Ulrich depicted the coat of arms of the Latin Patriarch of Constantinople in the part where European coats of arms appear, whereas the Greek Patriarch was listed under Africa, see Rolker, 'Richental-Chronik': 89–91.

<sup>102</sup> Ulrich Richental, *Chronik*: 194: 'Primus imperator Tartarorum, qui confinis est Indie, et est sibi nomen impositum magnus canis, daz ist der groß can oder hund, der ist herr

kings (or patriarchs) under their authority, the Khan thus ruled over emperors. It would be difficult, though, to identify the different empires that are listed by Ulrich.<sup>103</sup> In addition, it was possibly not his foremost aim to develop a consistent overview, since the titles he used vary (*imperator*, *kayser*, *cesar*, *soldan*). The list of participants of the Council, which he adds to his chronicle, can thus be understood as a compilation of different sources and traditions of knowledge. What is important for the subject at hand is the fact that he not only used imperial terminology in order to describe distant rulers, but that he located most of them in Asia.

The sources that I have discussed here, of course, neither offer a comprehensive survey of how the title of *imperator* was ascribed to foreign political rulers, nor of how ‘empires’ were located geographically on a global scale. They demonstrate, however, that Asia was indeed more strongly associated with powerful rulers than Europe, reflecting perhaps the enthusiastic depictions of eastern rulers by many travelogues.<sup>104</sup>

## Conclusion

The widespread claim that chroniclers of the early twelfth century were not interested in political structures is hardly true.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, crusader chronicles as well as English or continental chronicles often referred to well-known as well as to distant rulers, and some of the chroniclers took pains to name them properly. Guibert of Nogent explicitly elaborated on the difficulties in doing so.<sup>106</sup> As a matter of fact, this analysis has shown

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mit gewalt über die sechs kayserthumb in der Tartarye.’ The translation of *can* with ‘dog’ (German ‘Hund’) also occurs in the German translation of Odoric of Pordenone’s travelogue (Latin version 1330, German translation by Konrad Steckel c. 1359), see Strasmann, *Konrad Steckels deutsche Übertragung*: 67 (‘der grozz hunt von Cathai’), 89 (‘den grossn hunt’), 91 (‘zu dem grossn hunt’), et passim.

<sup>103</sup> Ulrich Richental, *Chronik*, lists the following for Asia: ‘Kayser von Bulgari’ (194), ‘Cesar de Ethyopia’ (195), ‘kayser von Argie’ (195), ‘kayserthumb Anthiochia’ (195), ‘kayserthum Ydumea’ (195), ‘kayser von der großen und der hindern Ormania’ (195). Furthermore, he once calls the ‘soldan von Babiloni’ an emperor, ‘kayser soldan’ (*ibid.*: 194). This list differs from another enumeration Ulrich gives, see n. 3. In 1916, Joseph Riegel, ‘Teilnehmerlisten’: 59, simply qualified these enumerations as ‘nonsense’ [‘Unsinn’].

<sup>104</sup> See for example on palaces: Phillips, *Before Orientalism*: 163–70; Reichert, ‘Chinas Beitrag’: 36–37, 47; Melville, ‘Herrschaft und Residenzen’.

<sup>105</sup> Meserve, *Empires of Islam*: 157.

<sup>106</sup> See n. 26.

that the authors in question did indeed employ both of the two strategies that were theoretically possible: while a text such as the *Gesta Francorum* adapted well-known (Latin) titles, William of Tyre used foreign language titles extensively. The most commonly used Latin titles were *rex* and *imperator*. As the title of *imperator* implied a higher rank as well as a form of hegemonic rule, its use by the chroniclers is of higher significance than the attribution of any royal title. Chroniclers such as Guibert and Fulcher of Chartres used this distinction to illustrate the (changing) balance in power and rank between different Muslim realms. Authors who used the original titles in their foreign form sometimes tried to explain them to their Christian readers by way of comparison, analogy or translation (as did, for example, Guibert and William of Malmesbury). By using Latinised foreign titles, some chroniclers may have tried to make sure that the Latin title *imperator* was reserved for Christian rulers. This was probably the case for Fulcher of Chartres and William of Tyre.

Apart from these specific observations, it is clear that hardly any chronicler applied his model of naming consistently. In this regard, the description of the political order of the Muslim states was not a priority of the crusader chronicles. Many chroniclers seem to have been occupied more with the ethnic description of foreign political entities than with their ruler's rank. The Muslim powers of the Near East were generally linked to ancient and thus well-known realms: the Seljuqs frequently appeared as Persians, the Fatimids as Babylonians. The crusade chroniclers thus decided to stick to well-known ethnic divisions. However, during the crusades, the term 'Turks' became ever more popular in Latin historiography as an ethnic ascription for the Seljuqs, who were still linked to ancient predecessors, as can, for example, be seen in Fulcher of Chartres' formula of the *Turci* as a *gens Persica*.<sup>107</sup> Against this background, it is interesting to note that lordship was mostly seen as linked to ethnicity, rather than to territory.<sup>108</sup>

Several chroniclers made more or less explicit attempts to include individual political entities in more complex schemes of historical or cultural processes. In these cases, the fundamental idea of a *translatio imperii* was used (especially by Guibert of Nogent) to explain the change in name or nature of different realms. For this task, the idea of *translatio imperii* proved to be a fitting motif of universal history. Seen before

<sup>107</sup> See n. 45; see also Völkl, *Muslims*: 218.

<sup>108</sup> Völkl, *Muslims*: 215–16; Meserve, *Empires of Islam*: 19–21, 26–27.

this background, the mere change of name did not affect the historical continuity of a given empire. Indeed, durability seems to have been one of the most important political values for crusade chroniclers as well as for their counterparts who wrote in the Latin West. A thirteenth-century chronicle from a Friar Minor from Erfurt even linked the Fatimid ruler (*soldanus Babylonie*) of Egypt to the ancient pharaohs.<sup>109</sup> The political system of the Muslim world was described as being determined by developments of crisis and renewal that followed similar rules to those that applied to European kingdoms or empires. In this regard, the chroniclers did not primarily try to delegitimise their Muslim counterparts.<sup>110</sup>

Another model for an overarching schema that was applied to explain cultural and political settings in the Near East was the idea of different climatic zones and their influence on a people's mentality. William of Malmesbury contrasted the western with the eastern people and presented the latter as weak and unwarlike for climatic reasons. Due to their servile habit, William wrote, the people of the East willingly submitted to any imperial rule. In William's eyes, the existence of a long-lasting empire thus effectively became a sign of enduring political oppression, which he contrasted with the tendency of the western peoples to strive for freedom. William of Malmesbury presented an overarching pattern of explanation that was based upon an elaborate theory of climatologic determinism from which he drew geopolitical conclusions. To him, a long-lasting empire was the result of the weak nature of its subjects, characteristic of the Orient.

In such a perspective, imperial rule as such was geographically bound to the East. While William of Malmesbury offered climatic reasons as an explanation, many travellers' accounts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries shared his observations, even though they offered different explanations. Describing the court, land and resources of the Mongol Khan, several European travellers indicated that the eastern emperors' power exceeded those of European rulers by far.

Late medieval sources that develop a global perspective, such as, world maps or the chronicle of Ulrich Richental, seem to support this observation: the majority of empires were located in Asia. The political landscape in Europe, by contrast, was increasingly depicted as consisting of a plurality of kingdoms.

<sup>109</sup> Holder-Egger, 'Cronica minor minoritae Erphordensis': 665.

<sup>110</sup> See for a contrasting view: Völkl, *Muslimen*: 268.

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# The Khan as 'Meta-Emperor' in Marco Polo's *Devisement du Monde*

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*Marco Polo's Le Devisement du Monde (end of the thirteenth century) is one of the earliest, longest and more detailed travelogues of the Middle Ages. Widely read, the text not only describes the travels of its protagonist, but equally furnishes a comprehensive overview of Mongolian culture, society and territories. This article analyses the categories Marco Polo uses in order to describe the Khan's realm and his exercise of power. The author rarely uses the notion of emperor in his narrative, although he clearly recognises the Khan's claim to universal rule. The reasons behind this reluctance can be explained in several ways. First, Marco Polo became acquainted with the main languages in the regions under Mongolian rule; it might thus have seemed natural to him to use the 'correct' titles. Second, the French vernacular word 'empire' might have been reserved, in his mind, for the rulers of the 'Roman Empire' (in the Latin West and/or the Greek East). Finally, it seems that Marco Polo sought to ascribe to the Khans a kind of power and authority that surpassed even the might of the emperors in Europe, and this specificity could best be expressed by using a Mongolian title that, finally, was not entirely synonymous with the notion of emperor. All in all, these observations imply that the Devisement du Monde can be read not only as a travel narrative, but also as a treatise on the understanding of imperial power.*

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Marco Polo was 17 years old in 1271 when he travelled with his father and uncle, both merchant traders, to Khan Kubilaï's court in Mongolia.<sup>1</sup> It took them three and a half years of rough travel from Venice—through Acre, Armenia and Persia—to reach Chang-Tou, the summer palace of the Khan. In the person of Kubilaï Khan, Marco Polo discovered a monarch of unparalleled power. In Polo's *Le Devisement du Monde*—a book devoted to the description of the peoples he encountered and the territories he visited during his voyage—82 out of nearly 200 chapters are devoted to the Great Khan, his power and his rule.<sup>2</sup> It is clear, therefore, that the potentate is a central part of the book, of which he comprises almost half. In his narrative, Marco Polo describes at length the efficiency of the grid layout the Khan had introduced in order to structure his empire, the number of people he can mobilise, the numerous manifestations of his authority and his control over the population. Though the author effectively assigns the characteristics of an empire to the Khan's realm, he never actually refers to it using the word 'empire'; even though he does call the Khan 'empereur' on occasion, he does not do so consistently. A study of the vocabulary used by Marco Polo in *Le Devisement du Monde* will allow us to offer several hypotheses to explain his terminological choices, and from these we will explore Marco Polo's understanding of the stratification of power in the Mongolian Kingdom.

As a 'European', Marco Polo certainly stood out at the court of the Khan but, as his stay in Mongolia became near permanent, he seems to have blended in quite well, learning Tartar customs and even the language.<sup>3</sup> Because the Khan found him loyal, wise and prudent—according to the *Devisement*—he even made the young Marco Polo one of his ambassadors. Most of all, Kubilaï valued the fact that Marco Polo was the only one among his envoys to understand the importance of recording stories about the lands he crossed and the people he met. He actively collected details and oddities about his travels to tell the Khan; that is why Marco

<sup>1</sup> On Marco Polo's life, see, for example, Münkler, *Marco Polo*; the classical study remains Olschki, *Marco Polo's Asia*. For the question if he actually had travelled in China, see most recently Vogel, *Marco Polo Was in China*.

<sup>2</sup> Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*: vols. 3–5 (Chapters 75–156).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i: 129 (Chapter 15).

Polo received a growing number of honours and gained ever-expanding responsibilities at court. This brief account, which is located near the end of the prologue, creates the image of Marco Polo as a keen observer who also had a good command of the local language.<sup>4</sup> In fact, it seems plausible that as a travelling merchant, he mastered various languages beyond Italian, including French.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, it was in French that *Le Devisement du Monde* was written in 1298 by Marco Polo and Rustichello da Pisa, his cellmate during the Venice–Genoa war.<sup>6</sup>

Why Rustichello wrote the text in Old French when both Marco Polo and he were Italians has not been definitively established.<sup>7</sup> However, what is key for us is to remember that the choice of writing in the vernacular at this time contrasts markedly with the long tradition of writing in Latin. Giovanni di Piano Carpini, the Franciscan monk sent in 1245 by Pope Innocent IV to make contact with Ögödei, the Great Khan, in order to seek peace with him, wrote a *Historia Mongalorum* which describes the manners and habits of the Mongols with great precision.<sup>8</sup> The book is written in Latin. Only a few years later, in 1252–55, William of Rubruck, a Franciscan monk close to King (Saint) Louis IX, went to Karakorum, the capital of the Mongol empire with fact finding and evangelistic purposes. His *Itinerarium* takes the form of a letter to Saint Louis in

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i: 130–31 (Chapter 15–16).

<sup>5</sup> On language proficiency amongst late-medieval merchants, see, for example, Fouquet, 'Kaufleute auf Reisen'.

<sup>6</sup> Their mode of collaboration is still the subject of controversy: One hypothesis holds that Marco Polo dictated the story; alternatively, Rustichello might have written down their conversations later on, since the language and style of the narrative retain a sense of orality. The inclusion of meticulous details, names and numbers in the text might argue in favour of the fact that Marco Polo recounted his story from notes. The text's chronological order, interrupted only by occasional flashbacks, makes ulterior changes and editing unlikely. The widespread scholarly consensus seems to hold that Marco Polo played an important part in the drafting and writing of this book, and that Rustichello faithfully transcribed what the Italian traveller narrated. Given that the polyglot Venetian merchant was very likely to read, verify and amend Rustichello's French manuscript, I have thus chosen here—as most critics do—to consider Marco Polo as the author of the text.

<sup>7</sup> On this question, see Gaunt, *Marco Polo's 'Le Devisement du Monde'*.

<sup>8</sup> Giovanni di Pian di Carpine, *Storia dei Mongoli*. On thirteenth-century (and later) travelogues and their representation of the Mongols see, for example, Reichert, *Begegnungen mit China*; Schmieder, *Europa und die Fremden*.

Latin.<sup>9</sup> Odorico of Pordenone<sup>10</sup> and Giovanni di Marignolli<sup>11</sup> travelled in Mongolia, respectively, between 1318–30 and 1342–46 (i.e., after Marco Polo's journey); they also wrote their travel stories in Latin. In all of these cases, the choice of language can be explained by the fact that Latin was the language of learning and of government of the time. Furthermore, it also reflects the status of the authors (all clerics: Franciscans, Carmelites, Dominicans and Augustinians) and of their official functions whilst travelling: Giovanni di Marignolli was, for example, a papal legate.<sup>12</sup>

Marco Polo's choice of French thus distinguishes his work within a tradition of travelogues that was becoming denser at that time.<sup>13</sup> As mentioned above, this choice might be explained in large measure by his status as a member of the middle-class bourgeoisie and a merchant. For his part, Rustichello da Pisa—though a cleric—had already written books in the vernacular, mostly compilations of fiction related to the Arthurian tradition.<sup>14</sup> Later, in 1356, when Jean de Mandeville (or rather the mysterious compiler of the book that went by his name) wrote his *Livre des merveilles du Monde*, he justified his choice of the French vernacular with the argument that this helped to guarantee the veracity of his narrative, since any reader could verify what he had written was true.<sup>15</sup> And even though Marco Polo did not directly comment on the choice of language for his text, we will see below that he attached importance to the language in which he expresses himself: it will become clear that he is able to use Mongolian words with exactitude, and that he is concerned that his readers understand that these words are important and need to be expressed in their original form before they are translated. In fact, it is because he attached such importance to his choice of language and to certain words that we can look more closely at his choice of terminology around the concepts of 'empire', 'imperial' and

<sup>9</sup> William of Rubruck, 'Itinerarium'; English translation in Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*: 87–220.

<sup>10</sup> Odorico da Pordenone, 'Relatio'.

<sup>11</sup> Johannes de Marignola, 'Relatio'.

<sup>12</sup> On his life and career, see briefly Muldoon, 'John of Marignolli'.

<sup>13</sup> The choice of language can also be considered an important factor in the extraordinary success of a book that became accessible to a wide public (noblemen, merchants and lower classes). On the reception of the work in the European Middle Ages, see now Gadrat-Ouerfelli, *Lire Marco Polo*; Guéret-Laferté, *Sur les routes de l'Empire Mongol*.

<sup>14</sup> See Bogdanow, 'A New Manuscript'.

<sup>15</sup> Jean de Mandeville, *Le Livre des merveilles du Monde*: 6: 'Sachez que je voulais écrire ce petit livre en latin, pour m'exprimer avec concision. Mais beaucoup comprennent mieux

'emperor'. However, before examining Marco Polo's choice of words in his qualification and description of the territory dominated by the Khan, we will first analyse the latter's general characteristics.

When Marco Polo first encountered and subsequently described it, the Mongolian empire was at its political and economic zenith under the reign of Kubilāi. Its territory stretched from Eastern Europe (the borders of Poland) to Far East Asia, from Novgorod to southern Iran or even Tibet.<sup>16</sup> Kubilāi's realm thus included extremely diverse lands and peoples with different skin colours, religions, social customs, dietary habits (allegedly even including cannibals), sexual traditions, etc. This realm represented as diverse a kingdom under one ruler as the world has ever known. It is under the reign of Kubilāi Khan that the empire reached its apex as far as its territorial extent and the Khan's power are concerned.<sup>17</sup>

The basis for this development was laid by Temüjin, Kubilāi's ancestor, who converted the nomadic Mongolian peoples into an organised state in the first decade of the thirteenth century. He had a clear idea of the state he wanted to build: he gathered the chiefs of different tribes in 1206 at a *diet* and founded what he called the *mongol ulus* (the Mongol State), at the same time taking the title of 'Genghis Khan' (*Cinggis-qan*)—literally meaning 'oceanic ruler' or, by extension, 'universal ruler'. In the following years, Mongolian rule enjoyed a period of strong economic growth, political and military power and cultural development during Genghis Khan's rule; after his death, however, it went into decline.<sup>18</sup>

## The 'Reality' of Kubilāi Khan's Empire

From the outset, as can be inferred from the name 'Genghis Khan', the Khans' claim to rule was meant to be universal, encompassing the whole

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le roman que le latin, j'ai donc écrit en roman, pour que chacun le comprenne et que les seigneurs, les chevaliers et les autres nobles personnes qui ne savent que peu ou pas le latin et qui ont été outre-mer vérifient si je dis vrai ou non, et si je me trompe dans mon propos, par défaut de mémoire ou pour toute autre raison, qu'ils puissent me redresser et corriger.'

<sup>16</sup> Buell, *Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire*: xlili.

<sup>17</sup> Rossabi, 'Vision in the Dream': 216. See in the same volume the illustrations: 164 (Fig. 22.2), 204 (Fig. 27.2).

<sup>18</sup> Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*: 206–31 (Chapter 8: Decline of an Emperor). See also Jackson, *The Mongols*: 31–57.

world. Genghis Khan himself extended the *güre'en* system (a traditional mode of encampment and, later, of temporary fortified camps) to the entire Mongolian society, which was in turn organised into *mingan* or 'thousands', tribal units, each of which was capable of fielding approximately a thousand warriors.<sup>19</sup>

Once Cinggis-qan had united the steppe under his banner, expansion was inevitable. The new empire required booty to continue to exist. The *qan* had now become the chief figure in a sophisticated system for enriching his family and rewarding an ever-expanding number of followers through booty distribution.<sup>20</sup>

Marco Polo does not dwell on the expansionism of the Khan he knows, Kubilāi, except in reference to the war he waged against Caïdou. Here the Venetian mentions that Kubilāi could 'only' assemble 360,000 horsemen and 100,000 infantrymen, since his armies 'which were innumerable, out of all proportions, [had been sent] on his orders to conquer different territories and foreign lands'.<sup>21</sup> Although raiding smaller communities must be considered a traditional feature of Mongolian culture, other practices were novel in Kubilāi's realm, like the 'conversion of the Mongolian steppe empire into one that embraced sedentary societies as well. Also new was the attempt to govern, not just exploit these new subjects and territories.'<sup>22</sup> Indeed, according to Marco Polo, the Mongol 'empire' encompassed many fortified towns with layouts that included bridges, cobblestone streets and bathhouses.<sup>23</sup>

These developments raise the question of the way in which we characterise Mongolian rule in this period: was it, from a modern perspective, 'imperial' and did Kubilāi rule an 'empire'? The fact that Mongolian expansionism during Genghis Khan's rule was accompanied by a complementary strategy of inculcating sedentariness among nomad

<sup>19</sup> Buell, *Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire*: 12–13.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*: 17.

<sup>21</sup> Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. iii: 60 (Chapter 77): 'Il fist si poi de gent pour ce qu'il estoient en son ost qui li estoient entour, car de ses autres granz [osts] qui estoient si loins ne les peüst il pas avoir eus si tost, qu'i estoient genz sans nombre et sanz fin qui estoient alé en estranges cretres et provinces conquerer par son commandement.'

<sup>22</sup> Buell, *Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire*: 17.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, the extensive description of the city of *Quynsay* (today Hangzhou) in Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. v: 114–21 (Chapter 151).

communities aligns with one of the key characteristics Jean Tulard regards as defining an 'empire'.<sup>24</sup> Although modern definitions of 'empire' are not our primary concern, Tulard's definition provides a useful framework within which to consider the pertinent characteristics of the Mongol world in this period. He opens his synthesis on occidental empires by establishing a picture of modern research on the notion of 'empire', highlighting five characteristics in particular: the (territorial) extent of the rule, a common policy and fiscal framework, a centrally organised state, the conviction of superiority and the fact that every empire actually has a date of birth and an end that can be clearly identified. The last of these characteristics certainly poses the least problem in our case, since the beginning of organised Mongolian rule can clearly be identified, as does its end (or at least descent) after the reign of Kubilāi. Tulard's third criterion for the definition of 'empire' is the centrally organised state. To what extent can this be said to have existed?

In fact, the system of legal and military centralisation already established by Genghis Khan saw its fullest expansion under Kubilāi: during his reign, the Khan divided military command in a strict order. Those in command of a hundred men were to obey those who commanded a thousand, and who themselves took orders from those who commanded 10,000 men. The most important leaders controlled no less than 100,000 men.<sup>25</sup> In recognition of their merit and authority, the latter were awarded command plaques that were made from precious metal and whose weight and complexity were commensurate with their rank.<sup>26</sup> The Khan himself benefited from a particularly well-organised contingent of bodyguards: the 12,000 riders that made up the guard took turns protecting the palace in groups of 3,000 men for four days and four nights.<sup>27</sup> These soldiers were offered very rich uniforms of a particular colour that matched the Khan's during each of the 13 feasts that structured the year.<sup>28</sup>

The organisation of the army was even reflected in the way hunting parties were structured, since hunting was one of the Khan's favourite

<sup>24</sup> Tulard, *Les Empires Occidentaux*: 11–12.

<sup>25</sup> Buell, *Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire*: 14–15.

<sup>26</sup> Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. iii: 66–67 (Chapter 80).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*: 76 (Chapter 85).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*: 82–83 (Chapter 88).

pastimes. According to Marco Polo, two officers would each have 10,000 men under their command; each group wore a different colour and was equipped with no less than 5,000 dogs. These large hunting parties would then proceed in a coordinated manner, one group going to the right and the other to the left. In the end, all of the men would walk together to drive the game ‘so as to fully occupy an entire field so that no beast would escape capture’.<sup>29</sup> When the Khan hunted with falcons, he would surround himself with 10,000 men, divided into groups of two. They would then criss-cross the surrounding land and thus find all of the fowl therein. The most emblematic element of the centralised hunting system, the *boulargouci* (literally the guardian who has no master) would be in the middle of the hunting area, usually on a hill, holding an easily identifiable flag. It was to him that others would report—under penalty of death—any bird, horse or lost object; in addition, the *boulargouci* was also central to the retrieval of anything that had gone astray.<sup>30</sup>

As already indicated, the administrative and legal organisation was based on a similar system: every province had several clerks, gathered under the authority of a judge, who himself had to render account to 12 ministers chosen by the Khan. These ministers constituted a high court called the ‘Cheng’. They had complete authority over 34 provinces, though ultimately their decisions had to be ratified by the Khan.<sup>31</sup> As we can see, the courts—much like the kingdom itself—were organised and operated under a strict and centralised organisation that were part of a clear and stratified hierarchy, which could ultimately be supervised by one person: the Khan himself.

The fourth criterion in Tulard’s model consists in a common policy and fiscal framework: in fact, all the peoples conquered by the Khan were submitted to a general legal code that followed the model of the first system of laws enacted by Genghis Khan, called the ‘Great *Jasagh*’.<sup>32</sup> In order to strengthen his position in China, Kubilai later on

commissioned Chinese and Mongolian legal scholars to fashion a legal code for China that, at least on paper, would appear more flexible and lenient than

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*: 86 (Chapter 91): ‘Il vont tuit l’un dejouste l’autre, si que il tiennent bien unne [sic] journée de terre touz ensemble comme je vous ai dit et ne treuvent nulle beste qui ne soit prise.’

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*: 88 (Chapter 92).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*: 99 (Chapter 96).

<sup>32</sup> Rossabi, ‘Genghis Khan’: 106; Jean de Plancarpin, *Dans l’Empire Mongol*: 97 n. 47.

traditional Chinese laws while incorporating Mongol practices such as allowing criminals to pay a fine in order to avoid a prison sentence.<sup>33</sup>

The Khans also unified the country economically and geographically. Marco Polo described in quite some detail the monetary system, a fiduciary currency based on notes made from the bark of the mulberry tree, and how the size of banknotes was proportional to their value.<sup>34</sup> His description underlined that it was forbidden to refuse this currency, or to use any other, in the territories that were under the authority of the Khan—once again under penalty of death. Upon arrival in the empire, all traders had to exchange their material wealth for these notes.<sup>35</sup> The extent of the monetary system's efficiency is reflected throughout the *Devisement du Monde*: when Marco Polo describes the customs of a people, he often points out that 'they use the currency of the Great Khan, their lord'.<sup>36</sup> Being a merchant himself, Marco Polo seems to have been quite overwhelmed by a currency that weighed almost nothing, provided universality of trade throughout the empire and did so at guaranteed exchange rates. He also recognised the Khan's astuteness, which produced and forced the use of a currency that cost him nothing, and for which he received all of the riches of the empire and neighbouring countries in return.<sup>37</sup>

Marco Polo also points out how the unification of the kingdom was achieved by the construction of reliable, tree-lined roads that kept travellers from getting lost.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, he observed how rapid communication was ensured by the establishment of a horse relay network, with well-outfitted stations every 25 miles, even in the most remote locations.<sup>39</sup> There were also villages every 3 miles, where riders would be at the ready to relay a message—they would wear belts covered in bells so that, as they approached a village, the next rider would ready himself to relay his colleague as quickly as possible. Marco Polo underlined that 'they race the equivalent of a hundred days travel in just ten days, which is a quite

<sup>33</sup> Rossabi, 'Vision in the Dream': 212.

<sup>34</sup> Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. iii: 96–97 (Chapter 95).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iii: 97 (Chapter 95).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iv: 100 (Chapter 129): 'Et ont monnoie du Grant Caan leur seigneur'.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iii: 96–98 (Chapter 95); see Buenger Robbert, 'Il Sistema Monetario'.

<sup>38</sup> Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. iii: 96, 98 (Chapter 95).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*: 105 (Chapter 99).

an accomplishment!<sup>40</sup> With this system, the Khan could quickly receive information from all of his territories and react with remarkable speed and efficiency. It is important to note that the Venetian's comments were by no means idiosyncratic, but are actually corroborated by the descriptions of other travellers of his time.<sup>41</sup>

Lastly, the Khan's desire to unify his realm through the establishment of a common language should be emphasised, although the actual attempt failed.

Kubilāi, who conceived of himself as a universal ruler, commissioned the *Phags-pa lama* to devise a script that could be used with the languages found throughout the Mongol domains [... the] *Phags-pa* script experiment failed, but it revealed Kubilāi's aspiration to be a Great Khan who ruled the vast Mongol domains, not simply China.<sup>42</sup>

Marco Polo did not mention this particular detail. His silence might be explained with different reasons: either he omitted the attempt because it failed, or because he simply did not learn about it during his travels. In any case, all of these initiatives attest to the Khan's wish to unify his people through unified and centralised power and communication structures as well as shared cultural practices. The last element of Tulard's definition is the belief in his own superiority. Put simply, the Mongol view of the world entailed the conviction that the world and the Mongol empire were identical, a belief that can be derived in its clearest form from a letter sent by the Khan Güyüg to Pope Innocent IV through Giovanni di Piano Carpini (1247).<sup>43</sup> According to Giovanni

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*: 102 (Chapter 97): 'Car aussi bien vont il courant la nuit comme le jour si que, quant il a besoing, il viennent de. C. journees en. X. jours, qui est. I. grant fait.'

<sup>41</sup> See Gazagnadou, 'Les postes à relais de chevaux chinoises'.

<sup>42</sup> Rossabi, 'Vision in the Dream': 212–13.

<sup>43</sup> Morgan, 'John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck': 150–51; the letter is reproduced *ibid.*: Figure 20.2. For French translation, see Jean de Plan Carpin, *Dans l'Empire Mongol*, 211–12. The preamble of this letter ('Par la force de Dieu, l'empereur de tous les hommes au grand pape, ce message authentique et digne de foi' resp. 'By the Strength of God, the Emperor of all men to the Pope, this authentic and credible message') was written in Turkish, while the rest of the letter was in Persian. Thomas Tanase, the editor, underlines the significance of Turkish as the medium in which the Mongols' ideology of imperial domination was conceived and developed.

di Piano Carpini, who put it in his own words: 'Intentio Tartarorum est sibi subicere totum mundum si possunt, et de hoc a Chingiscan habent mandatum, sicut superius dictum est.'<sup>44</sup> This conviction is equally echoed in Riccold de Monte Croce's travel writings, which date from the end of the thirteenth century:

They [i.e. the Tartars] claim to be the true masters of the earth. God had created the earth merely for their sake so that they should exercise their rule and enjoy it. According to the Mongols even the birds of the air report that they are the masters of the world and that the whole earth pays them tribute perforce. They maintain that even the birds of the air and the wild animals in the desert eat and drink only by the grace of their emperor.<sup>45</sup>

The ideological position of the Mongols seemed relatively complex: while they felt that the world was theirs to conquer and to rule, this very idea did not necessarily seem to have resulted in a contempt for foreign peoples. Quite the contrary, they proved able to enrich their own culture by integrating the contributions of conquered territories and peoples. On a very practical level, for example, Genghis Khan forbade his troops to kill artisan prisoners, and thus put more than 30,000 of them at the service of his own kingdom.<sup>46</sup>

Quite early on, the Khan surrounded himself with advisors of multiple cultural and religious backgrounds.<sup>47</sup> But, as has been underlined by Rossabi:

[...] perhaps Genghis's most audacious, yet positive, legacy was recruitment of foreigners. Early in his career, he recognized that the Mongols lacked expertise in various fields. For example, they initially had no experience in besieging cities and did not have the proper equipment to do so.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Giovanni di Pian di Carpine, *Storia dei Mongoli*: 293.

<sup>45</sup> Riccold de Monte Croce, *Pérégrination en Terre Sainte*: 78–80: 'Dicunt enim se esse ueros dominos mundi; dicunt etiam quod Deus fecit mundum solum propter eos ut ipsi dominantur et gaudeant. Dicunt etiam quod aues celi nuntiant hominibus de eis quod ipsi sunt domini mundi et quod totus mundus debet eis facere tributum, et portare exenia; dicunt etiam quod aues celi et bestie deserti comedunt et bibunt de gratia imperatoris canis.' See also Spuler, *History of the Mongols*: 26–27.

<sup>46</sup> Rossabi, 'Genghis Khan': 108.

<sup>47</sup> Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*: 14–17.

<sup>48</sup> Rossabi, 'Genghis Khan': 108.

It has to be noted, though, that this openness towards foreigners—which included Buddhists as well as Christians from Europe—did not extend to the Chinese.

Kublai divided the population into four classes and allocated positions and privileges commensurately. Mongols comprised the first-class; non-Chinese Muslims and a few other foreigners constituted the second class; northern Chinese were the third tier; and southern Chinese the fourth. The lower two classes could not reach the highest levels in the military or some of the leading posts in government.<sup>49</sup>

In Marco Polo's text, no allusions to any Mongol claim to fundamental superiority can be found; however, our author insists on the fact that the Khan is worshipped as a god,<sup>50</sup> to the point that even a lion that is given to him bows, as if recognising his overwhelming power.<sup>51</sup>

Based on the descriptions of the Mongols and Mongol rule furnished by Marco Polo and other sources (historical and otherwise), it appears that there did indeed exist a Mongolian 'empire', at least if we apply the criteria put forward by Jean Tulard. Yet we have to realise that Marco Polo rarely uses the word 'empire' when he refers to the vast Mongol territory under the Khan's dominance. Does this force us to conclude that Marco Polo did not recognise the Mongolian realm to be an empire by the standards of his own time? Or did he himself hold a more restrictive definition of empire? In the following pages, we want to explore these two alternatives.

### Was the Khan an Emperor?

Our focus lies on the actual use of the terms 'emperor' to designate the Khan and of 'empire' to designate the territory under Mongol rule. This lexicographical study will allow us to develop a more nuanced approach to these concepts as they were applied by Marco Polo and other travellers of his time who visited Mongolian territory. To start with, we know that

<sup>49</sup> Rossabi, 'Vision in a Dream': 210.

<sup>50</sup> Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. iii: 81 (Chapter 87): 'il enclinent tout maintenant et meitent leurs testes en terre et font leur oroison vers le Seigneur et l'aourent aussi comme se il fust dieu, et en telle maniere l'aourent par. IIII. fois.'

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*: 83 (Chapter 88).

the term 'emperor' was used very early on by Latin-speaking travellers in their descriptions of Genghis Khan and his immediate successor. In fact, it is this very word they used to translate the Mongolian notion 'Khan', as indicated in Giovanni di Plano Carpini's text: 'ubi elegerunt Cuyuccan Imperatorem in presencia nostra, qui in lingua eorum dicitur Chan.'<sup>52</sup> In addition to this direct translation, the term was often qualified by an extension: Benedict of Poland, for example, called the Khan the *Imperator Thartarorum*.<sup>53</sup> We also find the phrase 'emperor of the Tartars' both in Giovanni di Marignolli<sup>54</sup> and Marco Polo.<sup>55</sup> In using the notion of emperor, both authors insist, primarily, on the sovereign nature of his authority, stressing how it extends over a people before spreading over a territory. Moreover, later travellers from Latin Europe mention that the word *Imperator* equally figured in the legend of the Khan's seal and on official documents.<sup>56</sup> The word was doubtlessly written in Mongolian and the writers in question provide us with a translation.

The notion of 'translation' is of particular significance in this context, since the travellers in question were confronted with a large number of

<sup>52</sup> Giovanni di Pian di Carpine, *Storia dei Mongoli*: 93–94: 'Unde noverint universi quod, nobis existentibus in terra Tartarorum, in solempni curia, que iam ex pluribus annis indicta erat fuimus, ubi elegerunt Cuyuccan Imperatorem in presencia nostra, qui in lingua eorum dicitur Chan. Qui Cuyuccan predictus erexit cum omnibus principibus vexillum contra Ecclesiam Dei et romanum imperium, et contra omnia regna christianorum et populos occidentis, nisi forsitan facerent ea que mandat domino Pape et potentioribus ac omnibus christianorum populis occidentis.' (my underlining)

<sup>53</sup> Benedict of Poland, 'Relatio': 141: 'Ipsi autem fratres ad occidentem progrediebantur et apud Coloniam transito Rehno reversi sunt ad dominum Papam Lugdunum, litteras Imperatoris Thartarorum eidem presentantes quorum tenor per interpretationem factam talis est' (my underlining).

<sup>54</sup> Johannes de Marignola, 'Relatio': 526: 'Kaam, summum omnium Thartarorum Imperatorem.'

<sup>55</sup> The very term 'Tartar' was in fact the result of a double misconception on the part of European travellers: first, they confused the Mongols and the Tatars (who were actually a people subjected to the ruling Mongols); second, they identified the Tatars and the Tartarus, the underworld abyss from Greek mythology. This shift towards a semantic field related to the underworld must be understood in the context of the Mongol incursions into Eastern Europe in the first half of the thirteenth century, which caused considerable devastation; cf. Schmidt, *Trauma und Erinnerung*. However, already Klopprogge, *Ursprung*: 158, raised doubts on this theory. On the confusion between the Tatars and the Mongols, see Jean de Plancarpin, *Dans l'Empire Mongol*: 15, 225–26.

<sup>56</sup> Giovanni di Pian di Carpine, *Storia dei Mongoli*: 293: 'Iccirco eorum imperator sic in litteris suis scribit: "Dei fortitude, omnium hominum imperator", et in superscriptione

languages they had to practice in order to make themselves understood and to understand their interlocutors. In the letter addressed by Khan Güyük to Pope Innocent IV, for example, the Khan is called ‘the emperor of all men’.<sup>57</sup> But this letter was first written in Mongolian, then translated in ‘Saracen language’, that is, Persian. In fact, the Persian letter is still conserved in the Vatican archives.<sup>58</sup> As we know today, the process of translation involved two high-ranking Nestorian dignitaries of Güyük’s chancellery, Qadaq and Chinqai: the two of them read the Mongolian version to Giovanni de Plano Carpini and Benedict of Poland, his travelling companion, translated it into Russian for Giovanni, who took notes in Latin.<sup>59</sup> It seems only natural that in the course of such a complex process many nuances of the vocabulary have been lost. European travellers would have been inclined to use the word that seemed the most accurate and adequate to convey an idea of the Khan’s status and power that they observed. Now how did Marco Polo, who lived more than 15 years in Mongolia, proceed? The name ‘Khan’ represents in fact the highest title in the Mongolian social hierarchy: the Khan is the person who commands all the other lords, as Marco Polo already indicated in the basic definition that he gives of the word. He also indicates that the name can be used as a direct translation of ‘emperor’:

Now, I want to begin to tell in our book the great deeds and the great marvels of the great Khan who reigns nowadays, who is called *Cublay Khan*, which

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sigilli sui est hoc: “Deus in celo et Cuyuccan super terram, Dei fortitudo omnium hominum imperatoris sigillum”. This seal is also mentioned at the beginning of the fifteenth century by Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán*: 247: ‘E las qu’el Tamurbeque tiene son tres letras redondas, asi como oes, fechos d’esta guisa: oes, que quiere dezir que significava que era señor de las tres partes del mundo. E esta devisa mandava fazer en su moneda e en todas sus cosas que él fazia.’ According to Marco Polo, the word ‘emperor’ was also carved on the precious metal tag that soldiers received as safe conduct, see Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. iii: 67 (Chapter 80): ‘Par la force du grand Dieu et de la grande grâce qu’il a faite à notre empereur que le nom du Khan soit béni! Et que tous ceux qui ne lui obéiront pas meurent anéantis!’

<sup>57</sup> Jean de Plancarpin, *Dans l’Empire Mongol*: 211.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*: 7, 211–12 (translation of the letter); for a transcription of this document, see Pelliot, ‘Les Mongols et la Papauté’. A Latin translation was also included in Salimbene de Adam, *Cronica*, vol. i: 313–14.

<sup>59</sup> Jean de Plancarpin, *Dans l’Empire Mongol*: 20–21.

would be in French the equivalent of the great Lord of Lords, and Emperor of the Lords.<sup>60</sup>

Marco Polo, who actually spoke Mongolian by the time he dictated his text, thus translated the word 'Khan' by the means of two equivalents: the hyperbolic term 'lord of lords' and the word 'emperor'. But after this initial definition and translation of the title, the author consistently uses the Mongol word, when he refers to Kubilāi, throughout the remainder of the book—with the sole exception of the designation as 'seigneur' (lord).

In *Le Devisement*, the word 'Khan' is in fact mostly used as the political title, while the notion 'seigneur' tends to identify the social function of the same person. In the description of the rivalry between Kubilāi and his uncle Naian, for example, the notion 'seigneur' actually refers to three of the protagonists: Kubilāi's rebellious uncle—and subject—is designated as a 'great Tartar Lord (*seigneur*) whose name was Naian and who was uncle to the aforementioned Lord Kubilāi Khan and who was lord over many lands and many provinces'.<sup>61</sup> In the same paragraph, the word is also used for Naian's accomplice, 'the great Tartar lord who was called Caïdou—who was a great Lord (*seigneur*), powerful [...]';<sup>62</sup> and for Kubilāi himself: 'he [i.e. Caïdou] was a rebel and he wished failure upon his lord (*seigneur*) the Great Khan whose uncle he was'.<sup>63</sup> All three protagonists are thus referred to according to their social function: they are 'lords' (*seigneurs*) who rule over people and territories. This usage of the word *seigneur* can indeed be observed throughout the entire book. Even if Kubilāi is sometimes called 'Grand seigneur', in order to distinguish him from the other lords, the word still primarily targets his social function and should not be interpreted as a political title. Only when Kubilāi is called the *seigneur des seigneurs* (lord of lords) this hyperbolic address can be understood as a title, since it openly underscores his political influence over other rulers and their peoples and

<sup>60</sup> Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. iii: 57 (Chapter 75): 'Or vous veul commencer a compter en nostre livre a conter les granz faiz et toutes les granz merveilles du Grant Caan qui ore regne, qui Cublai Caan est appelez, qui vaut a dire en françois comme le grant seigneur des seigneurs, et des seignours empereour.'

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iii: 59 (Chapter 76): 'un grant sires tartars qui avoit a non Naian et estoit oncles au dit seigneur Cublai Caan et estoit seigneur de maintes terres et de maintes provinces.'

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Grant Seignour tartar qui se nommoit Caydu—qui estoit grant sires et poissant.'

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Il estoit revelez et vouloit grant mal a son seigneur le Grant Caan qui son oncle estoit.'

territories. One of these occurrences can be seen in a passage that offers no less than a complete description of Kubilāi as a sociocultural and historical character: it includes his appearance, his family and his political court.<sup>64</sup> It seems consistent that Marco Polo would use this term in the specific context of a passage that introduces and presents the Khan to his readers. In fact, the Khan is explicitly defined by our authors, French and Latin alike, as a ruler who has complete power over all other lords, as the one who has no peer. The distinction that Marco Polo makes between *seigneur* and ‘Khan’ moreover perfectly reflects the distinction in use in the Mongolian court between *qan* and *qa’an*.

The Mongolian chancellery doubtless used the two titles at the same time—the current and usual title of the tribal *qan*, in order to indicate the unity of the peoples of the Mongolian steppe around the Khan, and the title of *qa’an*, reserved to more solemn occasions, in order to designate the sovereign of a universal empire that consisted of numerous vassal peoples.<sup>65</sup>

The author’s use of the titles and names therefore demonstrates his clear understanding of the different titles that can be given to the same person and of the importance of the context of use.

Seen in an overall perspective, in *Le Devisement du Monde*, Marco Polo chooses to refer to Kubilāi as ‘Khan’ or *seigneur* rather than as ‘emperor’. In order to explain this choice, I would like to propose three reasons: Marco Polo’s own personal history, the connotation of the word ‘emperor’ in its common use in the Latin Middle Ages and lastly Marco Polo’s ideological convictions.

## Conceptualising Emperor and Empire: Marco Polo’s Perspective

The first reason why Marco Polo might have preferred to use the word ‘Khan’ is cultural: as we have seen, our author had spent many years in Mongolia

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*: 68–69 (Chapter 81).

<sup>65</sup> Jean de Plan Carpin, *Dans l’Empire Mongol*: 18 n. 10: ‘La chancellerie mongole devait sans doute utiliser les deux titres à la fois, le titre courant et habituel de *qan* tribal, pour indiquer l’unité des peuples de la steppe mongole autour du khan et le titre de *qa’an*, reserve à des occasions plus solennelles, pour designer le souverain d’un empire universel constitué de nombreux peuples vassaux.’ See also Rachewiltz, *Secret History of the Mongols*, vol. iii: 130–31.

and to the best of our knowledge had become quite fluent in their main languages. From his own perspective, it is thus hardly surprising that he would use a Mongolian word that probably sounded more accurate to him than any equivalent or translation in Latin or the vernacular. Furthermore, by the time he narrated his experiences to Rustichello, Marco Polo had lived half of his life in the East, and his perspective on the Mongolian court was far from typically 'occidental'.<sup>66</sup> he understood all the connotations of the word 'Khan' and very likely made a conscious choice to use one term over another, specifically for meaning's sake. In fact, it should be noted that in many other occasions in his book, Marco Polo chose to use a Mongolian term to refer to a reality far from his experiences in the East, followed by its translation. When he described the close guard, for example, he explains: 'You ought to know that the Great Khan is, for his prestige, guarded by 12,000 horsemen, called *quesitan*, which means in French "knights loyal to their lord"'.<sup>67</sup> The fact that Marco Polo offered a translation from Mongol to French demonstrates that he paid close attention to terminology in general. His subsequent use of mainly the Mongolian word expressed his intent. In the most recent and authoritative edition of the *Devisement du Monde*, the editors underline that 'it appears that all the names provided by Marco Polo (*bulargusi*, *toscaor*, *cunicy*, ...), as distorted as they might have been by successive copyists, are all to be taken very seriously and have all been confirmed'.<sup>68</sup> By using Mongolian terms, Marco Polo was also responding—consciously or not—to the expectations of a readership in search of exoticism.

The second reason that can be given for Marco Polo's choice can be derived from linguistic practices in contemporary Europe: in Latin as well as in most of the vernaculars of that time, the word 'emperor' was mostly used to refer to the ruling heirs of the Roman Empire. Marco Polo himself uses the word twice in that sense: the prologue of the *Devisement*

<sup>66</sup> On this, see, for example, Larner, *Marco Polo*: 85.

<sup>67</sup> Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. iii: 76 (Chapter 85): 'Or sachiez que le Grant Caan se fait par sa grandescce garder a. XII.<sup>M</sup> hommes a cheval et s'appellent "quesitan", qui vallent a dire en françois "chevalier feal au seigneur".'

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*: 48 (Introduction): '[...] il apparaît que tous les noms fournis par Marco Polo (*bulargusi*, *toscaor*, *cunicy*...), tous déformés qu'ils puissent avoir été par les copistes successifs, sont à prendre très au sérieux et se trouvent tous confirmés.' The word *quesitan* can also be found in Oderic of Pordenone and in the Mongolian Chronicle, see *ibid.*: 125 n. 85, 3 and Chavannes, 'Inscriptions et pièces de chancellerie': 429 n. 3.

*du Monde* states that the first manuscript was offered to ‘His Lordship of Valois, Charles, Son of the King of France and heir to the throne of Constantinople through his wife’.<sup>69</sup> In this dedication, Marco Polo also used the word *empereris* (Empress) for Catherine de Courtenay and the word *empire* for Constantinople.<sup>70</sup> This very standard use of the term in order to designate Constantinople relied on the idea that this realm was considered to be a continuation of the Roman Empire, but also a powerful economic, cultural and military force.

In the *Devisement du Monde*, the word ‘empire’ appears for a second time, somewhat later in the text, in the chapter that describes how Marco Polo’s father and uncle arrive for the first time at the court of the Great Khan. Temüjin, who was Khan at that time, interrogates them quite intensively about the political organisation of their world:

When they arrived at the court of the Great Khan, he received them with honour, welcomed them warmly, seemed very happy at their arrival and asked them many questions: first about the emperors, how they ruled their empire and their lands, how they made war, etc.<sup>71</sup>

Well aware of the existence of large sedentary societies in the West, the Khan sought more information about them, possibly in order to organise his own territories according to these models. If Marco Polo used the plural (*empereurs*) in this passage, this might rely on the existence of two empires in Europe at that time—the Eastern Roman Empire and the Roman–German Empire in the West. This argument can actually build on the text itself, since the quoted passage continued: ‘And

<sup>69</sup> Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. i: 115–16: ‘[...] pour l’onneur et reverence de tres excellent et puissant prince monseigneur Charles, filz du roy de France et conte de Valois, bailla et donna au dessusdit seigneur de Cepoy la premiere coppie de son dit livre [...] pour Monseigneur de Valoiz et pour madame l’empereris sa fame [...]’. The passage refers to Thibaut de Cepoy, who had been sent to Greece as governor for Charles of Valois and his wife; the authorship of this brief prologue is unclear.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*: 116. On the interior and exterior perception of the Latin empire of Constantinople in the thirteenth century, see the contribution by Filip van Tricht in this volume.

<sup>71</sup> Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. i: 121 (Chapter 5): ‘Quant il furent venu au Grant Caam, il les reçut a grant hounour et leur fist moult grant feste et moult grant joie de lor venue et lor demanda de maintes choses: premierement des empereres et comment il maintiennent lor seignourie et lor terre en justice et comment il vont en bataille et de tout leur affaire et après leur demanda des roys et des princes et des autres barons.’

afterwards, he asked them questions about the kings, the princes and other barons',<sup>72</sup> thereby implying that the Khan actually was clearly conscious of the difference and the hierarchy between emperor, kings, princes and barons.

Even though we cannot ascertain the exact words used by the Khan (or whether the narrator took any liberties in translating them), the overall construction of this passage clearly expresses Marco Polo's knowledge of the existence of two Christian empires in the Greek East and the Latin West. This very knowledge, we might hypothesise, could largely have contributed to Marco Polo's apparent reluctance to use the word 'emperor' when he talks about the Khan, aside from its use as translation, when it serves to furnish an explanatory equivalent.

Finally, we can deduce that calling Kubilāi 'Khan' and not 'emperor' allowed Marco Polo to invest the term 'Khan' with a superior, more complex and nuanced meaning than emperor ever could: the text of the *Devisement du Monde* clearly expresses its author's great admiration for the Mongol people in general, and the Khan in particular. It celebrates their physical resilience and their cultural ascent alike:

And they are the people in the world who have endured the most difficulties, who spend the least and who are best fit to conquer other lands and kingdoms. And it is so true as you have heard, and as your will hear in this book, that from slaves they have now become lords of the world.<sup>73</sup>

In this sense, it is quite telling that, when he first introduces the Khan by using the word 'emperor', Marco Polo explains that

[I]t is right that he has this name [i.e. emperor], for everyone must truly understand that he is the most powerful man who has ever existed in our world, from the time of Adam, our first father, to our own day, as far as people, land and treasure are concerned.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. ii: 33 (Chapter 69): 'Et sont la gent du monde qui endurent plus grant mesaises et qui mains veulent de despens et qui miex sont pour conquerer terres et regnes. Et il leur pert bien, si comme vous avez oï et orrez en ce livre, que des sers sont ore seigneurs du monde.'

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iii: 57 (Chapter 75): 'Et il a bien ce non a droit pour ce que chascuns sache en verité que c'est le plus puissant homme de gens et de terre et de tresor qui oncques fust au monde ne qui orendroit soit du temps d'Adam nostre premier pere jusques au jour d'ui.'

Through descriptions like this, the author crafted an image of the Khan that celebrated the richness of his personality and the superior administration of his territory and people, often by alluding to his superiority over his Western counterparts: when Marco Polo praised the road network and the system of inns that allowed messengers to cross the entire country quickly, he concluded: ‘surely, it is the most fitting source of pride that a king or an emperor can ever have’,<sup>75</sup> thereby implying that—in this respect—the Khan’s control and achievements clearly surpassed those in Europe. He is even more explicit later on:

The sixth [Khan] is Kubilāi, who is greater and more powerful than the five others who came before him; if these five could come together, they would not be as powerful as him. Moreover, I tell you that *if all the Christians of the world, emperors and kings, got together, and the Saracens with them, they would not be as powerful as him* and could not do as much as Kubilāi, the Great Khan could.<sup>76</sup>

These and other examples tentatively establish a contrast between the terms ‘Khan’ and ‘emperor’ that ultimately qualify the former term.<sup>77</sup> We might thus hypothesise that, for Marco Polo, Kubilāi deserved the exalted name ‘Khan’, because he claims and actually exercises a kind of truly universal authority. In this perspective, the editors of the *Devisement du Monde* rightfully speak of Kubilāi Khan’s ‘amazing sovereignty over the cosmic order’.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iii: 101 (Chapter 97): ‘Et certes, ce est bien la greigneur haultesce que oncques eust roy ne empereres.’

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii: 29–30 (Chapter 68): ‘Le sixte est Cublay Caan, qui est le plus grant et le plus poissant des autres. V. qui furent devant lui, car se tuit li autres. V. fussent ensamble, n’avroient il tant de pooir comme cestui a. Encore vous di plus que se tuit li Crestien du monde, empereours et roys, fussent touz ensamble et li Sarrazin n’aroient pooir a lui ne tant ne porroient faire comme cestui Cublay le Grant Caan porroit, lequel est seigneur de touz les Tartars du monde et de ceulz du Levant et de ceulz de Ponent car touz sont si homme et souget a lui. Et son grant pooir vous mosterrai en cest livre apertement’ (my underlining).

<sup>77</sup> Even if Marco Polo does not mention this explicitly, one should not forget that Kubilāi was the first Mongol leader to become ‘Emperor of China’ (*Tien Tse* or Son of Heaven) and founder of the Yuan dynasty, see Prawdin, *The Mongolian Empire*: 325.

<sup>78</sup> Marco Polo, *Le Devisement du Monde*, vol. iii: 46: ‘L’étonnante souveraineté d’ordre cosmique du Grand Khan.’

## Empire and Lineage

After this all too brief discussion of the connotations of the term 'emperor' in its intrinsic relation to the idea of one or several Christian empires, but also in its relation to the notion of 'Khan', we want to conclude with a brief examination of the word 'empire' in Marco Polo's work: this more abstract term is most often used as part of a set phrase, namely either as an adjective (imperial) or a genitive (of empire). In both cases, the terms are systematically associated with the idea of lineage and serves to designate the family of the Khan. Both aspects distinguish it from analogous notions, all the while delimiting its very nature. In order to illustrate these effects, one can refer to a choice of exemplary passages: during banquets, for example, the Khan's table is said to be so high that even the people of 'imperial lineage are seated beneath the great lord's feet',<sup>79</sup> and when his extended family comes to pay homage to the Khan for the festivities to celebrate the New Year, they enter his court in a ceremonial order: first come the sons, nephews and further people of the *lignage imperial*, then the rest of the nobility in hierarchical order.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, in his description of Genghis Khan's struggle to conquer the Mongolian throne, Marco Polo explicitly states: 'His brothers and relatives wanted to keep him from it, but he earned it thanks to his great prowess, and because by law and by reason, he ought to have it as rightful heir from the imperial lineage.'<sup>81</sup> This statement illustrates both Temüjin's noble parentage and his primacy among his peers, thus focusing attention on the overwhelming authority invested into the newly established title of Khan. Additionally, when Kubilāi defeats his uncle Naian—and thus establishes his claim to the Mongolian dynasty—he has his adversary strangled, so as 'not to shed blood from the imperial lineage'.<sup>82</sup> Finally, Marco Polo unequivocally states that 'this Kubilāi is

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*: 76 (Chapter 85): 'Et de la destre partie, auques plus bas, sieent ses filz et ses neveux et ses parens, tous de l'imperial lignie, et sont si bas que leurs chief viennent auques prez des piez du Grant Sire.'

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*: 81 (Chapter 87): 'Et sont tuit ordené en tel maniere: tout premierement sont ses filz et ses neveux et ceulz de son lignage imperial. Après sont les rois, et puis les dus, et puis chascun l'un après l'autre selonc son degré qui lui est couvenable.'

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*: 58 (Chapter 76): 'Et ses freres et si parens li deffendoient, mais il l'ot par sa grant prouesce et grant vasselage et pour ce que par droit et par raison il la devoit avoir si comme il qui drois hoirs estoit de l'imperial lignie.'

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*: 64 (Chapter 79): 'il ne vouloit que li sans [i.e. of the lineage] de son empire fust expandus.'

from the straight lineage of the emperor Genghis Khan, the first Lord'.<sup>83</sup> The meaning of this formula seems to be clear: through his foundational act, Genghis Khan created nothing less than an imperial lineage.

Ultimately, it becomes clear that the notion of empire, whenever it is used in the *Devisement du Monde*, is always employed in relation to the family of the emperor, and not to designate his territory; for the latter, Marco Polo consistently used the words *regne* or *seigneurie*. One might deduce from this practice that the author was actually more concerned with the nature of the Khan's imperial power than with the materiality of his imperial rule.

More specifically, in the author's eyes, the use of the term 'empire' in the text seems to have been justified exclusively when he referred to the royal lineage of Kubilāi—as if the Mongol empire should primarily be understood neither as an aggregate of peoples or of territories, nor as a centralised organisation of government, but first and foremost as the promise of lineal transmission of power and of a cohesive familial community around a ruler. Given the rareness of the use of the word 'empire' in Marco Polo's text, two very specific instances in the *Devisement du Monde* can help confirm our hypothesis. In a first example, the notion refers to the legacy that the eldest son of Kubilāi will receive upon the death of his father;<sup>84</sup> the second example, which can be found in the chapter that immediately follows, is part of a short passage about the other sons of the Khan. The text gives a very laudatory description of Kubilāi:

You should know that their father, the Great Khan, is the wisest man and the man who is equipped with most things and the best chief of an army and the best leader of people and of empire and of the greatest valiance who ever existed in all the generations of the Tartars.<sup>85</sup>

This laudatory description is part of a section in which the Khan is actually presented as a father who transmits both a material and a moral legacy to

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*: 58 (Chapter 76): 'Vours est que cil Cublay est de la *droite lignie des emperiaus* de Chingins Chaan, le premier seigneur, quar de cele lignie doivent issir [les seigneurs de] touz les Tartars du monde' (my underlining).

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*: 68 (Chapter 81): 'Et le greingneur fil que il a [...] doit estre par raison seingnour de l'empire quant le pere est mort.'

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*: 70 (Chapter 82): 'Sachiez que leur pere, le Grant Caan, est le plus sage homme et le plus pourveu de toutes choses et le meilleur cheivetainne d'ost et le melleur meneeur de gens et d'empire et de greingneur vaillance qui onques fust en toutes les generacions des Tartars.'

his children. And it is in this context that the term 'empire' is mentioned. It denotes the idea of a hereditary rule, related to a family, which should be rational and absolute. Only to a second degree does it refer to the territory that is governed.

## Conclusion

As we have seen in the *Devisement du Monde*, Marco Polo scarcely used the word 'emperor', preferring instead the word 'Khan'. I demonstrated that this can be explained with a range of arguments. In all cases, we have to remember that Marco Polo did, on the one hand, come from the Latin West, but, on the other, became a proficient speaker of Mongolian. As a consequence, we can surmise that he had certain inclinations to use the 'correct' titles, all the while being conscious of the implications of the word 'emperor' when describing a foreign ruler. I have demonstrated that Marco Polo's underlying intent was to imply that the Khan was a superior ruler, even when compared to the emperors who existed in the West.

As to the word 'empire', Marco Polo used it in two distinct types of contexts: to identify historical European empires and as a set phrase that referred to the lineage of Kubilāi. He never used it, though, to designate the territory or the peoples ruled by the Khan, unless he mentioned his empire as a heritage—material, legal and moral.

These observations force us to underline the distinction between the notions of 'empire' and of 'emperor', since the first seems to convey stronger historical–political connotations. However, when he used these words, Marco Polo participated in a long tradition of traveller–explorers who visited the Far East and who slowly—though subconsciously—assigned imperial authority to both the Mongol kingdom and its rulers in a time when the use of the notion of empire seems to have been very specific in Latin–Western contexts. Finally, we should be aware that even though I am proposing that Marco Polo consciously used the concept of imperial/empire in a specific way and within a specific context, the wide diffusion of his text throughout Europe resulted in the 'opening up' of the idea behind this practice beyond the long-established context of the Roman–German Empire.

By establishing both a distinction and a complementarity between the terms Khan and emperor within a differentiated notion of imperial power,

the Venetian traveller and Mongolian ambassador sought to approximate the idea of imperial authority that he had become familiar with in the West to the ruler of the Mongol court—thus making the latter comprehensible to his readers—only to transcend astutely its very conventionality. *Le Devisement du Monde* can thus be read less as a travel narrative of empire than a treatise on the understanding of the nature of imperial power.

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# No 'Emperor of Europe': A Rare Title between Political Irrelevance, Anti-Ottoman Polemics and the Politics of National Diversity

Klaus Oschema\*

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*Recent research on the use of the notion of Europe during the Middle Ages has confirmed that the name of the continent only rarely acquired a political meaning, if at all, in this period. What is particularly surprising is the observation that several authors in the Latin world used expressions such as regnum Europae or regna Europae, especially in the Carolingian period, without elaboration. Hence, although Charlemagne has been praised as 'father of Europe' by one contemporary author, the idea of an 'Emperor of Europe' was never developed, with the exception of two brief notices in early medieval Irish annalistic compilations. Even during the High Middle Ages, when the name of the continent came to be more widely used in different*

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contexts, only a small set of figures, historical as well as fictitious, were ascribed with the aspiration or quality of ruling all of Europe.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, however, the notion of an 'Emperor of Europe' became more common in a particular context: Christian authors accused non-Christian rulers of Asian origin (Mongols, Turks) of seeking to subdue the entire continent. Latin authors, in turn, started to perceive Europe as being the home of Christendom.

This article demonstrates how those Christian authors accept a pluralistic order for their own continent (on a political level), and contrasts this with the quest for hegemonic rule that becomes a motive of polemic, which they ascribe to non-Christian rulers. Although their arguments do not lead to the explicit presentation of Europe as the 'continent of freedom', they do recognise and value the existence of a multitude of political entities which they contrast with a hegemonic and homogenous political role of 'Asian tyrants'. In a broader perspective, these findings open insights into late medieval political thought that go beyond what we can learn from contemporary 'political discussion' in a more limited sense.

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'Charles, the King of the Franks, the Emperor of all of Europe, died in peace.'<sup>1</sup> When the anonymous compilers of the *Annals of Ulster* and of the *Chronicum Scotorum* duly noted the death of Charlemagne—erroneously in the year 813<sup>2</sup>—they (probably) inadvertently used a near unique formula<sup>3</sup> in order to designate the realm of his imperial rule: although at least one author

<sup>1</sup> Hennessy, *Chronicum Scotorum*: 129 (ad a. 813): 'Carolus ri Fraince et impir Eorpa, Quievit'. Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill, *The Annals of Ulster*: 268 (ad a. 813): 'Karalus, rex Francorum, immo totius Europe imperator, in pace dormiuit'. On the *Chronicum Scotorum*, see McCarthy, *The Irish Annals*: 24–25.

<sup>2</sup> For the particularities of the Irish annalistic works' chronology, as far as earlier periods are concerned, see McCarthy, 'Chronology of the Irish Annals': 229–31; McCarthy, *Irish Annals*: 344–49. On the relations between the cited works, see Evans, *The Present and the Past*: 50–57.

<sup>3</sup> This is the case, as far as medieval sources are concerned. Quite a number of modern authors seem to be willing, however, to attribute the title posthumously to the Frankish king and Roman emperor, see Block, *A Fatal Addiction*: 70. Although Block is not a specialist in medieval studies, his example is significant insofar as it demonstrates the successful 'Europeanisation' of Charlemagne. For an example from medieval scholarship where Charlemagne is qualified as 'Emperor of Europe', see Ailes, 'Charlemagne': 59. Ailes does not discuss the Irish material and mostly infers the European character of her protagonist's image metaphorically. For the Early Modern period, see McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France*: 37, where it is stated that 'the Hapsburg Charles V became emperor of Europe'.

who worked shortly after Charles's imperial coronation on Christmas Day of the year 800 had actually called his protagonist the 'father of Europe' (*pater Europae*),<sup>4</sup> no further medieval instances of this latter, extravagant formula are currently known. And while this formula enjoys an excellent reputation amongst readers—historians and a broader public alike—a critical re-evaluation forces us to concede that the Carolingian author's perspective did not in fact coincide with modern sensitivities concerning the existence and historical development of a 'European culture'.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of these sceptical remarks, closer scrutiny reveals that a limited number of sources from medieval Latin Europe actually talk about claims to 'European Emperorship'. The purpose of this article is to give an overview of the chronological distribution of the relevant material and to analyse the conditions under which individual authors chose to attribute either effective authority over Europe to an individual ruler, or (more often) to suggest that a ruler strove to obtain authority over the continent, which was in fact never united in a unified political entity. As will be shown, the rareness of the notion of an 'Emperor of Europe' and the specific conditions under which the formula appeared, especially towards the end of the Middle Ages, opens new perspectives on the self-perception and political ideas of late medieval political thinkers in the Latin-Christian world.

In order to convey an initial idea of the importance of this subject, it seems helpful to consider Charlemagne's 'European career' briefly. To begin with, modern historians' repeated assertion that his 'contemporaries', often referred to in the plural, already styled their ruler as the father of the continent, must at least partly be considered to be erroneous: in fact, the anonymous author of the epic that describes the encounter between the King and Pope Leo III, who had fled to Paderborn in 799, did not find any followers. Not only did his poem not enjoy much success—it is conserved in only one fragmentary manuscript—but even the quite extraordinary formula *pater Europae* itself remained a *hapax* for the rest of the Middle Ages.<sup>6</sup> More than a millennium after the text was composed, modern

<sup>4</sup> See Oschema, 'Ein Karl für alle Fälle'.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: 48–49. For the text, see Brunhölzl, 'Karolus Magnus et Leo Papa'; on the manuscript, see Stork, 'Sammelhandschrift Zürich'. One might note, however, that the continent itself appears at least once in a personification as 'mother Europe' (*mater Europa*), in Giese, *Annales Quedlinburgenses*: 569 (ad a. 1022).

historians finally became more interested in questions concerning the idea and history of Europe in the middle of the twentieth century, due to the experience they had had with two World Wars. In order to overcome the endless series of conflicts between the different realms and nation states of modern Europe, politicians as well as historians saw fit to write a new history that could contribute to the creation of a more peaceful European identity through the demonstration that this common identity had already existed for a long time.<sup>7</sup>

Seen against this background, it is hardly surprising that specialists in medieval studies gladly picked up a rare formula that could be made into an argument. After all, so the reasoning ran, Charlemagne had already ruled what was to be considered a kind of ‘Europe’ and what his contemporaries explicitly named accordingly (at least sometimes).<sup>8</sup> If the modern project of creating an association of European states began in the very heart of the continent, the unification of the modern nation states that occupied the territories that had once been part of Charlemagne’s realm did not mean the creation of something entirely new: rather, it meant the reunification of what had once been part of a whole and had been driven apart by a history of centuries-long divisions and conflicts.

From a historian’s point of view, this approach is characterised by two problematic, if not ironic traits. On the one hand, the argument of ‘reunification’ is not entirely without difficulties, since the recreation of what once existed can amount to a negation of historical processes. On the other hand, post-1945 historians and politicians were not the first to envisage a reunification of Charlemagne’s empire: not only had they been preceded by Napoleon’s aspiration to hegemonic rule in Europe, but also by National-Socialist propaganda in the early 1940s.<sup>9</sup> The latter can neatly be demonstrated by a small porcelain plate (more of an ashtray actually) that had been produced at Sèvres in 1943 on the orders of Nazi officials for the commemoration of the 1100th anniversary of the Treaty of Verdun. According to the Latin inscription on the plate’s back, Adolf Hitler had

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed presentation, see Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 41–60. Examples include Barker, Clark and Vaucher, *The European Inheritance*, vol. 1: v; Bowle, *The Unity of European History*: 10; also see Woolf, ‘Europa und seine Historiker’: 56.

<sup>8</sup> See on this and the following sentence, Oschema, ‘Ein Karl für alle Fälle’: 44, 54–60.

<sup>9</sup> On Napoleon, see Kerner, *Karl der Große*: 181–91; Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont, *Charlemagne*: 248–49. On the National-Socialists in this context, see Fried, *Karl der Große*: 617–24, and Oschema, ‘Once and Future European’: 47–48.

actually managed, with the help of 'the peoples of all of Europe' to defend the 'Empire of Charlemagne' that had been split up by the Emperor's grandsons at Verdun.<sup>10</sup>

Although it might be tempting to connect the dots by drawing a direct line between the use of the notion of Europe in the period of Charlemagne and his immediate aftermath on the one hand, and the modern use of a 'European' Charlemagne on the other, we would do well to refrain from such an enterprise. Not only was the Carolingian peak in the use of European terminology far less prominent than is usually argued, but the identification of the Emperor's realm with Europe in several panegyrics and historiographical texts is moreover characterised by a certain nostalgic streak: most of the relevant passages were written after the ruler's death and they mainly served to remind his successors of his exalted rank and the extent of his authority. While the first appearances of this motif might well have served as positive examples in the sense of panegyric praise, this approach rapidly gave way to descriptions that showed quite clearly that the unity of Charlemagne's realm had been lost.<sup>11</sup>

The later identification of the Emperor and his realm with Europe brings me to the core of my topic, since it virtually disappeared in the period between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> This diagnosis is actually not very surprising: although the images of the Emperor were quite malleable and could be adapted to suit different interests, they usually kept some core characteristics that were distributed in a discrete fashion (in the technical sense of the notion), leaving no place for a continental identification. While Charlemagne could be integrated into quasi-national narratives that made him either a French or German ruler, he could also become the paradigm of a universal authority, an ideal Christian Emperor, whose frame of reference could only be the entire world.<sup>13</sup> Writing in the early eleventh century, the French chronicler Adémar of Chabannes

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed presentation of this plate, see Oschema, 'Once and Future European': 47–48; Fried, *Karl der Große*: 622–24; Gudian, 'Karel de Grote'; Gaspin, 'De "asbak" Karel de Grote'.

<sup>11</sup> Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 133–60.

<sup>12</sup> For the use of the Emperor as 'motif' until the late eleventh century, see Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory*; for later practices, see Schneidmüller, 'Sehnsucht nach Karl dem Großen'. For a critical discussion of the European dimension, see Oschema, 'Ein Karl für alle Fälle', and id., 'Once and Future European'.

<sup>13</sup> See Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 133–60; Gabriele and Stuckey, *Legend of Charlemagne*; Jaspert, 'Von Karl dem Großen bis Kaiser Wilhelm'; Bastert, *Karl der Große*;

furnishes a quite telling example: in analogy to the ‘Paderborn epic’ he described Charlemagne as a ‘father’, not of Europe, but of the entire world: ‘even amongst the pagans he was bemoaned like a father of the world’.<sup>14</sup> European identifications of Charlemagne, on the other hand, remained rare before the Napoleonic period.<sup>15</sup>

In the context of the present collection, this phenomenon is of particular interest, since it helps to explain yet another absence: the formula and idea of an ‘Emperor of Europe’. In this article, I will demonstrate that the cited formula surfaces in the Carolingian period only to virtually disappear again for long periods of the Middle Ages, while only a limited number of quasi-historic or mythical figures are ascribed the desire to dominate the entire continent. My first part presents material that provides an ‘inside’ perspective in the sense that either effective imperial rule or the cultivation of plans to achieve hegemony are attributed to rulers who allegedly tried to dominate the entire continent more or less from within. I thus focus on rulers of realms that can be situated inside Europe, and that were described as having aspired to extend their authority over the entire continent. A second section will then discuss the reappearance of the formula of imperial rule over Europe in a very particular constellation towards the end of the Middle Ages, namely the attribution of imperial desires to ‘Asian’ rulers, particularly the Ottoman sultans.

### Traces and Disappearance of a ‘European Emperor’

It should have become clear from the introductory remarks, that the notion or formula of an ‘Emperor of Europe’, as it can be found in the Irish chronicles, remained exceptional for the rest of the Middle Ages. At first glance, this observation might appear relatively unsurprising: First of all, most medievalists would probably agree that the notion of Europe does not figure amongst the most prominent terms in the context of quasi-political reasoning of medieval authors anyway. Even though the widely held opinion

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Fuchs and Klein, *Karlsbilder*. For late medieval presentations of Charlemagne as ‘French king’ and ‘Roman Emperor’, see Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 169–81.

<sup>14</sup> Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*: 111 (II 25): ‘Nemo autem referre potest quantus planctus et luctus pro eo fuerit per universam terram, etiam et inter paganos plangebatur quasi pater orbis.’

<sup>15</sup> Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont, *Charlemagne*; Oschema, ‘Once and Future European’: 46–47.

that Europe had been a rare and purely geographic notion for most of the Middle Ages has to be nuanced, it remains true that its absence from the early and high medieval political vocabulary does not necessitate very elaborate explanation: although the name of the continent could take on a considerable range of connotations and appear in a broad range of discursive contexts, no political entity made the continent an essential element in its self-description and claims to authority.<sup>16</sup> Second, a large number of modern historians, but also of early and high medieval thinkers, tended to identify the very idea of 'Empire' with the imperial rule of Rome.<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, the notion of 'Emperor' or 'Empire' did not seem to necessitate any further qualification. Whoever chose to define it more precisely, however, primarily referred, implicitly or explicitly, to the Roman Empire, the *Imperium Romanum*, even though the notions of an 'Emperor of Germany' or 'of France' are by no means unknown in late medieval texts.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, the Irish formulas invite us to take a closer look. Although they refer to the year 813 (i.e., 814), the cited works have been compiled and reworked considerably later. And if we go as far as the period around 1000, the Irish material holds yet another surprise for the historian familiar with continental customs. An entry in the *Book of Armagh* that dates to 1005 mentions Brian Ború, who had successfully established himself as the most powerful ruler on the island, before he was killed in the battle of Clontarf in 1014. The short passage not only attests to Brian's extraordinary ascent, but it actually presents him as the 'Emperor of the Irish'.<sup>19</sup> The influences behind this singular title and its possible implications have been intensively discussed and their analysis would exceed the limits of this article.<sup>20</sup> In the present context, however, the *Book of Armagh* demonstrates

<sup>16</sup> Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*.

<sup>17</sup> See Dunbabin, 'The Distinctive Elements': 39 (on Godfrey of Viterbo). However, the present collection of essays tries to nuance this widespread idea, see also the introduction.

<sup>18</sup> See for French examples, Jostkleigrew, *Das Bild des Anderen*: 280–88, 295–96, 312; Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 317–18, 324.

<sup>19</sup> Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*: 32: 'ego scripsi id est caluus perennis in conspectu briain imperatoris scotorum'. See Duffy, 'Brian Bóruma': 535–36; on the singular use of the formula *imperator scotorum*, see Duffy, *Brian Boru and the Battle of Clontarf*: 138–44; Ní Mhaonaigh, *Brian Boru*. The doctoral thesis of Viron, *De la société clanique*, is unfortunately not yet published.

<sup>20</sup> For a short overview (with further bibliography), see Oschema, 'An Irish Making of Europe'.

that Irish authors could indeed use the notion of *imperator* in a more flexible manner than most of their contemporaries on the continent, with the exception perhaps of the Iberian Peninsula:<sup>21</sup> a twelfth-century entry to the *Book of Lecan* mentions an ‘Emperor of Germany’, who is cited as an example for an elected ruler. The author actually proposes to establish the kingship of Munster as an elective monarchy following the German model.<sup>22</sup> While analogous formulas can equally be found in late medieval material from the continent, the insular texts furnish particularly early examples for the use of imperial terminology that does not refer to Rome.

The apparent ease with which Irish authors used imperial terminology might thus explain, at least partially, the extravagant designation of Charlemagne as ‘Emperor of Europe’, especially since Irish authors cultivated a certain predilection for the notion of Europe. Their insular perspective allowed them to apply the name in order to refer to the continent more easily than their continental contemporaries,<sup>23</sup> who tended to use more restricted geographical notions. The choice of the *Chronicum Scotorum* and the *Annals of Ulster* is thus situated at the intersection of two phenomena. In addition, their use of the title is mirrored at least once in the *Historia Brittonum*, another text of insular origin, which uses the formula in order to describe a ruler of a remote era: the text, which is notoriously hard to date, explains that the Roman Emperor Septimus ‘held the rule (*imperium*) over all of Europe’.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See the contribution by Wolfram Drews to this volume; on the use of imperial titles in Anglo-Saxon England, see Kleinschmidt, ‘Die Titulaturen englischer Könige’: 115; Flanagan, *Irish Society*: 42–45.

<sup>22</sup> Ó Raithbheartaigh, *Genealogical Tracts*: 182:

IS amlaid seo dlegur rig Muman do rigad .i. na ceathra hardchomairlich fiched is ferr  
beas an nda cuiced Muman da thoga amail doniter an tImper Almanach , a breth co  
leic Cot[h]raidi , tempoll mor Cromaic , a gairm rig do thobairt uirri , a breth co Lis  
na nUrland i Caisiul , a gairm rig do thobairt.

See Ó Riain-Raedel, ‘Cashel and Germany’: 176.

<sup>23</sup> See Oschema, ‘An Irish Making of Europe’.

<sup>24</sup> Mommsen, ‘Historia Brittonum’: 166: ‘Septimus imperator regnavit in Britannia Maximianus. [...] et imperium tenuit totius Europae et noluit dimittere milites, [...]’. While the version that has been ascribed traditionally to Nennius abridges ‘tenuit imperium Europae’ (*ibid.*), the ‘Vatican’-version reads ‘imperium obtinuit Europae’, see Dumville, *The Historia Brittonum*: 78 (§ 15). On authorship and date see Dumville, ‘“Nennius” and the Historia Brittonum’, and Kennedy, ‘Historia Brittonum’.

Despite the rare appearances of the idea of European emperorship, the general picture is characterised by the absence of references to any kind of such hegemonic rule. In fact, one might even go so far as to speak of a widespread absence of any references to European rulership at all. Only a few well-known exceptions to this rule can be found in the context of Charlemagne,<sup>25</sup> mostly in panegyrics and historiographical texts that referred to him after his death. However, an early example is furnished by a letter written to the young Frankish ruler in 775: the English priest Cathwulf congratulates the king and invites him to praise God for having elevated him to the glory of the 'realm of Europe'.<sup>26</sup> A few years later, in 790, Alcuin explained in one of his letters to an insular recipient that the Church enjoyed peace and grew 'in the regions of Europe', thanks to Charlemagne's rule.<sup>27</sup> The famous formula *pater Europae*, that I have discussed above, could thus be considered to be part of a practice of associating Charlemagne with the notion of Europe, one that had already started in his lifetime.

While this approximation became stronger after Charlemagne's death in 814, it has to be noted that poets and historiographers alike nearly unanimously refrained from using explicitly European imperial terminology in their works. It was not simply that the 'realm of Europe' that had been evoked by Cathwulf had been quite rapidly replaced by the plurality of the 'realms of Europe' over which Louis the Pious ruled according to his panegyrist Theodulf of Orléans (writing in 814).<sup>28</sup> In addition, the notion of Europe, or more precisely of a unitary 'realm of Europe' that had once been ruled by Charlemagne, acquired a nostalgic overtone.

<sup>25</sup> The Carolingian material has already been collected by Serejski, *Idea jedności karolinskiej*; see also Leyser, 'Concepts of Europe'.

<sup>26</sup> Dümmler, *Epistolae Karolini*: 501–05, here 502–03: 'Nunc igitur, domine mi rex, [...] da gloriam Deo regi regnorum et gratiarum acciones com omni regno tuo: quod ipse te exaltavit in honorem glorie regni Europe.' See Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 138–39; Leyser, 'Concepts of Europe': 32.

<sup>27</sup> Dümmler, *Epistolae Karolini*: 32 (Alcuin, Ep. 7: *Colcu magistro*, 790): '[...] miserante Deo sancta eius ecclesia in partibus Europae pacem habet, proficit et crescit. Nam antiqui Saxones et omnes Frisonum populi, instante rege Karolo, alios premiis et alios minis sollicitante, ad fidem Christi conversi sunt.' See Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 139; Fuhrmann, *Europa*: 10.

<sup>28</sup> Dümmler, *Poetarum latinorum*: 531 (Theodulf of Orléans, *Valedictio ad Hluduucum*): 'Sub tua iura deus dedit Europeia regna, / totum orbem inclinet sub tua iura deus'. See Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 140–41; Fischer, *Oriens*: 83–84.

Hence, Sedulius Scottus explained in c. 850 in a panegyric addressed to the West Frankish king Charles the Bold: ‘Charles was the radiant Caesar of the entire world / ruler of Europe, an ornament of the Empire.’<sup>29</sup> But this ‘Charles’ the text referred to was not the addressee of the poem: it was his grandfather, whose fame the poet wanted to underline. Later in the ninth century, the so-called Poeta Saxo mentioned that the ‘people of Europe’ had subjected themselves to Charlemagne, and Notker’s *Gesta Karoli Magni* underlined the presence of peoples of nearly all of Europe during the abundant feasts of the Emperor.<sup>30</sup>

While these texts express an approximation between Charlemagne’s rule and Europe, the Emperor himself was apparently quite reluctant to use the continent’s name, which cannot be found in any of his diplomas. This is, admittedly, not very surprising. More significantly, even some central authors in his immediate environment and at his court seem to have avoided it, and the word thus plays no role in either the *Frankish Annals* or in Einhard’s *Vita Karoli*. In addition, and more important in the present context, even when individual authors evoked a link between Charles and Europe, they never went so far as to invest the ruler with a corresponding formal title: he did not become the *rex* or the *imperator Europae*, although at least Sedulius Scottus, who might have been influenced by his insular origins, called Charles the *Europae princeps*.<sup>31</sup> Besides this exception, however, most of the authors merely explained that Charlemagne ruled either the ‘realm’ or, in a later stage, the ‘realms of Europe’.

This kind of less formal attribution of authority over the entire continent can, for example, still be found in Saxo Grammaticus’ *Gesta Danorum* (c. 1200), where the Emperor’s claim is at once restricted in a significant manner: Saxo exalts Charlemagne’s position and might when he describes him as the ‘indefatigable tamer (*domitor*) of nearly all of Europe’.<sup>32</sup> In the

<sup>29</sup> Sedulius Scottus, *Carmina*: 51 (*carm.* 28): ‘Caesar erat Karolus toto clarissimus orbe / Europae princeps, imperiale decus.’ See Fischer, *Oriens*: 89–91.

<sup>30</sup> Winterfeld, *Poetae latini*: 70 (Poeta Saxo, *Annales de Gestis Caroli Magni Imperatoris*); Notker, *Gesta Karoli*: 21 (*cuncta pene Europa*), 40–41 (*tota Europa*), 60.

<sup>31</sup> Dümmler, *Poetarum latinorum*.

<sup>32</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. 1: 642–44 (IX 4, 16): ‘Qua in Regnerum habitata non similiter, ut discriminis cautelam hausit, belli actum impleuit. Itaque infatigabilis ille totius pene Europe domitor serenissimis amplissimisque uictoriis tantam terrarum partem emensus tot ciuitatum, tot gentium uictorem exercitum auersis bello pectoribus unius prouinciae paruula manu profligatum aspexit.’ On the author, see Mortensen, ‘Saxo Grammaticus’.

author's narrative strategy, however, this praise mainly serves to underline the success of the Danish leader Ragnar, who subsequently succeeds in overcoming the mighty Frank. At the same time, Saxo's text attests to the sustained importance of the notion of Europe, which appears several times in his *Gesta*. Amongst other uses, the word could serve to circumscribe the (spatial) sphere in which the Christians lived, to whom the Roman pope sent letters with the aim of uniting them in the fight against so-called enemies of the faith.<sup>33</sup>

William of Malmesbury, who wrote in the early twelfth century, also used the notion of Europe with remarkable frequency, and a curious example is furnished by a passage in which he described the difficult contacts between the Mercian king Offa and Charlemagne. In his narration, William inserts parts of one of Alcuin's letters, in which the author praises Charlemagne's efforts to the benefit of Christendom. Taking up Alcuin's short comments on the enduring power of the Saracens in Africa and Asia, William continues with a description of the Saracen menace: already in Charlemagne's time, he tells us, they would have conquered Europe as well, had the Emperor not prevented this. In his own days, William goes on to explain, the contraction of Christian territory had been inverted and the Normans, the Franks and other 'Christians from Europe' (*ex Europa Christianos*) had actually reconquered a large part of Asia and the city of Jerusalem. After this short excursus, the author finally comes back to the story about Offa and Charlemagne, and it is noteworthy that, although the digression about the wars against the Saracens contains two explicit references to Europe, William does not seize the occasion to invest Charlemagne with European authority.<sup>34</sup> To the contrary, it seems that he mostly reserved the continent's name for the description of phenomena

<sup>33</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, vol. 2: 1000 (XIV 3, 5): 'Per eadem tempora Romanus antistes barbarice tempestatis procella rem diuinam pene obrutam euersamque conspiciens, datis per Europam epistolis uniuersos Christiane credulitatis hostes ab eius cultoribus oppugnari precepit.' Further passages in which the author mentions 'Europe' are *ibid.*, vol. 1: 52 (I 7, 1), and *ibid.*, vol. 2: 992 (XIV 2, 11). On the motif of Europe as a 'space of communication', see Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 331–32.

<sup>34</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, vol. 1: 132–36 (I 90–92). On the author, see Ruch, 'William of Malmesbury'; Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*. A broad range of aspects of William's work have been discussed at the congress 'William of Malmesbury and his Legacy' (Oxford, 3–5 July 2015). On the historical contacts between Offa and Charlemagne, see Nelson, 'Carolingian Contacts'.

that have to do with religion and saintliness. Hence, he underlines that the sanctity of Æthelstan had been praised in all of Europe, and he repeatedly combines the motif of the crusades with the idea of a Christianity that had found its last refuge in the small part of the world that is Europe, while being menaced by the Turks from Asia.<sup>35</sup>

On the whole, the idea of unified rule over Europe became rarer after the end of the Carolingian dynasty and only very remote parallels for the Irish formulas can be detected on the continent. One example is the Saxon historiographer Widukind's decision to present King Henry I in the tenth century as the 'ruler of the world and the greatest of the kings of Europe'.<sup>36</sup> It would be interesting to analyse the possible relations and transfers of motifs between the Saxon sphere and the Irish world in more detail, since the *Annals of Tigernach* described each of Henry's later successors, Henry II and Conrad II, as 'king of the world' (*ri in domain*),<sup>37</sup> while other Irish texts show a certain tendency to identify Ireland with the 'West' or 'North-West of Europe'.<sup>38</sup> It is quite obvious, however, that neither these expressions nor Widukind's choice are supposed to convey the idea of a unitary kingship that held authority over the 'realm of Europe'. Especially in Widukind's case, the text rather evokes the image of a plurality of kings who ruled inside the borders of this part of the world. As a consequence, the name of the continent circumscribed a more or less geographical entity, even though the latter obviously represents a unit that had meaning to the author.

During the centuries that followed things changed very little. A careful review of our sources can, however, reveal a small set of figures that

<sup>35</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, vol. 1: 216 (II 135): 'Propter haec [i.e., Æthelstan's death] tota Europa laudes eius predicabat, uirtutem in caelum ferebat; [...]'. William uses the name of Europe no less than 13 times in his *Gesta*, see Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 268–69; on the use of the notion in the context of the crusades, see *ibid.*: 269–70, and more generally Oschema, 'L'idée d'Europe et les croisades'. See also Thomson, 'William of Malmesbury, Historian of Crusade': 132: 'In a word, William believed that Urban had galvanized the European knighthood of his day in a mighty enterprise by which Latin Christendom had at last partially gained its rightful place in the world.'

<sup>36</sup> Widukind of Corvey, *Res gestae Saxonicae*: 60 (I 41): 'rerum dominus et regum maximus Europae'. See Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 155–56; Fischer, *Oriens*: 99.

<sup>37</sup> Tristram, 'Das Europabild in der mittellirischen Literatur': 705; see Stokes, 'Annals of Tigernach', vol. 17: 363.

<sup>38</sup> Hennessy, *The Annals of Loch Cé*, vol. 1: 10 (Irish) and 11 (English): '[Brian Boru as] 'August iarthair tuaiscert Eorpa uile'.

were presented by high medieval authors as the most powerful princes of Europe because they had, allegedly, subjected either the largest part or even the entire continent to their rule. Nevertheless, the vocabulary used in this context did not become formalised in a clear-cut manner: from the eleventh and twelfth centuries onwards, for example, several authors explained that Alexander the Great had not only ruled over all of Asia, but also most of Africa and even Europe.<sup>39</sup> As a consequence, Alexander soon became a kind of prototype for the universal ruler who had in fact subjected the entire world by stretching the borders of his realm so far as to include all parts of the world. This tendency to aggrandise Alexander's rule appears, amongst others, in Richard Rolle's early fourteenth-century *Pricke of conscience*, where the author referred to 'Alexander the gret kyng / þat conquerd Affryk, Europe and Asy, / þat contened alle þe world halely'.<sup>40</sup>

Just like Alexander, whose presentation in the romance-tradition has become highly fictionalised, yet another (and entirely fictitious) ruler is accredited with the desire to rule over the entire continent: King Arthur. The motif appears already in Geoffrey of Monmouth, who explained that Arthur wanted to 'subject all of Europe'.<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that this idea, which also surfaces in Matthew Paris's *Flores historiarum* and in Robert of Gloucester's *Metrical chronicle*,<sup>42</sup> was soon presented as problematic, if not outright dangerous. In fact, the so-called 'First Variant

<sup>39</sup> The rich scholarship on the Alexander-romance cannot be summarised here; important recent contributions include Gaullier-Bougassas, *Historiographie médiévale d'Alexandre le Grand*; id., *Fascination pour Alexandre le Grand*. For early reflections on the role of the continents, see, for example, Ekkehard of Aura, *Chronicon*: 75–76 [Frutolf of Michelsberg, quoting Orosius, *Historiae*, vol. 1: 178–79 (III 23, 3)]: 'per totum Macedoniae regnum, hoc est per universam Asiam et plurimam Europae partem vel maximam Lybiae'. In an earlier passage, the text conveys an ironic question Alexander asks his father Philip, see *ibid.*: 63: 'Qui subiugasti Asiam et Europam, quare super pedes tuos non stas?' See also the Anglo-Norman version by Thomas of Kent, *Alexander*, vol. 1: 238: 'De Asie e Europe ad il la seignorie, / E d'Aufrique la grant une bele partie'.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Rolle de Hampole, *The pricke of conscience*: 241, vv. 8967–69.

<sup>41</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*: 205 (IX, 154): 'Cumque id Arturo notificatum esset, extollens se quia cunctis timori erat, totam Europam sibi subdere affectat.'

<sup>42</sup> Matthew Paris, *Flores Historiarum*, vol. 1: 265: 'Eodem tempore, rex Arthurus, totam Europam subjugare affectans, parato navigio, Norewegiam adivit.' Robert of Gloucester, *The Metrical Chronicle*, vol. 1: 265, vv. 3759–62: 'He þoʒte come bi hom · & bringe some to lure · / & to winne al europe · ʒif he miʒte dure · / þe þridde del of al þe world · europe icluped is · / þat tylþ ver fram biʒonde rome · to þe west worles ende ywis.' On Matthew's authorship of the *Flores* (until 1259), see Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, vol. 1: 257,

Version' of Geoffrey's *Historia regum Britannie*, produced between 1138 and 1155 and conserved in eight manuscripts, had already introduced the notion that several other rulers perceived Arthur's European ambitions with ambivalence, and felt endangered by them.<sup>43</sup> In the late Middle Ages, finally, the Burgundian chronicler Jean de Wavrin presented the domination of Europe as only Arthur's first step on his quest for global rule.<sup>44</sup>

The results of this first part of my survey can be summed up as follows: first, during the Carolingian and Ottonian period, individual rulers could sometimes be presented as governing parts or the whole of Europe. Nevertheless, these rulers are nearly never formally described as 'Emperor of Europe', with the extraordinary exception of Charlemagne's appearance in the Irish annals. Second, during the High Middle Ages only the two literary stylised kings Alexander and Arthur are described as either having subjected all (or large parts) of Europe, or having cultivated the plan to do so. Both of these figures are, however, part of a more or less distant and largely fictitious past. Once the authors' narratives come closer to their own day, the motif of Europe being under a formalised and unified rule disappears.

### The Desire to Rule a Continent: 'External' Threats

Since the title 'Emperor of Europe' was never in practical use, and there are of course good reasons for this, not least the absence of an overarching political structure that would have efficiently extended over the entire continent, it is all the more astonishing to see it surface in a number of late medieval texts. One manuscript of Adam Murimuth's *Continuatio Chronicarum*, for example, contains a description of the battle of Salado which lifted the siege of Tarifa (1340). The text is presented in the form of a letter addressed to the English king Edward III, which includes yet

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and Ruch, 'Matthew Paris': 1094; on Robert of Gloucester, see Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, vol. 1: 432–38.

<sup>43</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia regum Britannie*: 146 (c. 154): 'Fama quoque largitatis eius omnes terre principes superabat unde quibusdam amori, quibusdam timori erat, metuentes ne regna terrarum Europe probitate sua et donorum largitate sibi subiugaret.' On the date of this version and the manuscript tradition, see *ibid.*: lxx, lxxv–lxxviii.

<sup>44</sup> Jean de Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques*, vol. 1: 372–73: 'Comme lon notiffiait ces choses au roy Artus, soy eslevant en son ceur pour ce que tout le monde le doubtoit, prins lors premierement desir de voloir conquerre Europe et mettre en sa subjection, [...]'. On the author, who wrote in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, see Oschema, 'Jean de Wavrin'.

another letter that had allegedly been sent by the 'Sultan of Babylon' (*soudan de Babiloyne*; this would refer to the Mamluk Sultan Muḥammad I b. Qalāwūn) to the 'King of Belmarin' (i.e., the Marinid Sultan of Morocco, Abu 'l-Ḥasan).<sup>45</sup> According to the description, the Arabic original was first translated into Latin, then into Spanish and finally into French.<sup>46</sup> In the fictitious message, whose main intention was to illustrate the threat that the Saracen presence in the Mediterranean constituted for the Christians in 'Europe', the Sultan explicitly claims to be the 'Lord of the realms of the entire creation and of the parts of Asia, Africa and Europe'.<sup>47</sup> The content of the letter then continues to spell out the message that is already implicit in this title, invented by the western author: the Sultan sought to conquer and destroy all of Christendom in order to bring to fruition a rule that he already formally claimed in his title. The fact that the Muslim ruler had not only ordered the invasion and destruction of the Christian lands in Spain, but also all kinds of cruel procedures that were to be applied in this context, ranging from the desecration of churches to the killing of children and the mutilation and killing of women, makes the polemical character of this text unmistakably clear.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> For the identification of the two rulers, see Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*: 76, 41. On the battle, see Agraït, 'Battle of Salado'.

<sup>46</sup> Adam Murimuth, 'Continuatio Chronicarum': 263–67, here 264: '[...] si fist un des Sarazins translater la dite bille en Latin, et puis fuit ele translate en Espaignolf, et despaignolf en Fraunceys; [...]'. The letter seems to have been included in only one of the manuscripts of Murimuth's chronicle (BM Claudius E. viii.); the editor notes the existence of a mutilated copy in BM Harley MS 1808, fol. 70, see *ibid.*: 263, n. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Adam Murimuth, 'Continuatio Chronicarum': 264–65: '[...] seigneur des roialmes de tout le mond de creatour en aval, et des parties Dasia, Daffrica, et Deuropa, et vencour des bateilles et des hostes des Crestiens et des toutz roialmes du mounde: [...]'].

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*: 265–67:

Et pur ceo te comandons, sour la peine de nostre ley, qe ne reposez jesques tote la Crestienete soit honie et destruite; [...] Et jeo te comand, noble roi, pastour des herbes et bevour des eawes de la mier et de cea la mer, et destrouer des Crestiens, qe tu te mues tantost a tout le poer qe jeo tay comande, et qe tu te vois par Gilbalbar, nostre joye aventure, ovesqe Aclier, chastel de mult grant vertu, et passez la mier contre le roi Despaigne et contre les autres Crestiens, qe neiez deux nul merci ne pete, mes qe tote la Crestiente soit destruite. Et faites en tele manere qe toutz les esglises qils averent, soyent tantost destruitz; et en facez estables pur les bestes, et en leurs auteres facez manjours, et des croys facez estaches pur lier les bestes. Les petitz enfauntz faites gette au mur; les femmes engrocez faites overir les ventres; les autres femmes faites tailler les mameles, les bras, le niez, et les piees; et tot ceo facez pur deshonor de la

It is interesting to note that analogous narrative devices—the projection of an aspiration to universal rule onto non-Christian and ‘extra-European’ rulers—can be found in a number of other texts, which all play on the contrast or enmity between menacing exterior tyrants and the community of Christian kings and realms. In fact, from the thirteenth century onwards a series of records can be found in Latin Europe that ascribed the desire to establish hegemonic rule over the continent to powerful external rulers, a continent that the very same authors slowly came to describe as a kind of homeland (or refuge) of the Christian Church in their own day. The Hungarian king Bela IV, for example, tried to motivate Pope Innocent IV to help him defend his kingdom against the attacking Mongols by stressing the latter’s desire to fight against ‘all of Europe’ (1250/1254).<sup>49</sup> The characteristics of the adversaries also reflect the contrast between internal and external: while Bela depicts the Mongol ruler as a hegemonic authority, he decries that none of the ‘Christian princes of Europe’ had come to his aid.<sup>50</sup> Seen from a more analytical point of view, Europe represents political plurality in this argument, while its adversaries menace the continent as tyrannical hegemons.

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Crestiente; et si ne te partez de illoeqes, si la qe tote la Crestiente eyez conquise et destruyte [de] mier a mier.

The author might have drawn on material that described the violent acts during the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, see Kedar, ‘The Jerusalem massacre’: 21–22. The quoted letter uses motifs that are particularly close to Albert of Aachen: *Historia Ierosolimitana*: 430–32 (vi 23), where the atrocities are executed by the Christian conquerors of Jerusalem in 1099. Elm, ‘Die Eroberung Jerusalems’: 51, underlines the long tradition of some of the motifs, which already appear in Flavius Josephus; see also Vökl, *Muslimen—Märtyrer—Militia Christi*: 178–89.

<sup>49</sup> Densușianu, *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor*: 259–62 (n° 199), here 260: ‘[...] firmiter in brevi proposuerint contra totam Europam suum innumerabilem exercitum destinare’. The editor dates the letter to ‘1254?’. According to Göckenjan and Sweeney, *Mongolensturm*: 297–314, who give a German translation, the letter can be dated 11 November 1250. Bela’s use of the notion of Europe consequently appears about 10 years after the most important attack of the Mongols on his realm (that actually entailed his flight), see briefly Weiers, *Geschichte der Mongolen*: 101; Schmidt, *Trauma und Erinnerung*: 82–101, 203–16. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*: 163–71, underlines the creation of a ‘frontier ideology’ during the 1240s.

<sup>50</sup> Densușianu, *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor*: 261: ‘[...] quod in tot rerum angariis a nullo christianorum Europe principe, seu gente alicuius iuvaminis emolumentum recepimus [...]’.

Only a few decades later, we can find at least one example in which the claim to hegemonic rule over Europe acquires, at least potentially, positive value: the German cleric Alexander of Roes, who witnessed the consequences of what might be called proto-national conflicts in late thirteenth-century Rome about the Papacy,<sup>51</sup> wrote amply about the role and rights of the emperors, insisting on the German claim to the *imperium*. Alexander drew on several pre-existing traditions that distinguished a triad of functions or offices,<sup>52</sup> which he then distributed amongst the prevalent kingdoms of Europe. According to his *Noticia seculi*, the continent was home to four preeminent realms: Greece, Spain, Rome and the kingdom of the Franks, each of which the author identified with one cardinal direction.<sup>53</sup> Amongst these four realms, however, Alexander attributed a particular role to Rome and the Frankish kingdom.<sup>54</sup> By leaving Greece aside, he finally arrived at the triad of Germany, France and Italy, amongst which he distributed the functional tasks of the *imperium*, the *studium* and the *sacerdotium*.<sup>55</sup>

Although the abstract task of the *imperium*, which logically goes hand in hand with the office of the emperor, is thus attributed to the single nation of the Germans, the model's structure implies that this emperor should in turn be responsible for the secular authority over all of Europe. Traces of this logical consequence can be found in Alexander's *Memoriale*, written in 1281, when the author reports a prophecy that predicted the arrival of an 'Emperor called Charles', who would be the 'prince and monarch of all of Europe'.<sup>56</sup> Although the exact formula of an 'Emperor of Europe' still does not figure in this text, the cited phrase explicitly evokes the notion of a ruler whose authority would include all of Europe; it also creates a close link between this ruler and Charlemagne, since the former is prophesied to

<sup>51</sup> On Alexander, a canon at Cologne, most recently, see Pasquetti, 'Papato, impero e università'; see also Scales, 'France and the Empire'; Grundmann, 'Schriften des Alexander von Roes'.

<sup>52</sup> Grundmann, 'Sacerdotium—Regnum—Studium': 19.

<sup>53</sup> Alexander of Roes, 'Noticia seculi': 155–56 (c. 9): 'Europa igitur quatuor habet regna principalia, videlicet regnum Grecorum in oriente et regnum Hispanorum in occidente, regnum Romanorum in meridie et regnum Francorum in aquilone, aliis tamen regnis in sua sublimitate permanentibus.'

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*: 156 (c. 9): 'Sed inter quatuor hec regna principalia duo sunt principaliora, videlicet regnum Romanorum et Francorum.'

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*: 159 (c. 12); see Grundmann, 'Sacerdotium—Regnum—Studium'.

<sup>56</sup> Alexander of Roes, 'Memoriale': 136–38 (c. 30): '[...] imperator [...] Karolus nomine, qui erit princeps et monarcha totius Europe'.

be a descendant of the latter's family. However, the author underlines that this prophecy does not reflect his own beliefs,<sup>57</sup> and the brief passage thus remains difficult to interpret: Alexander might have sympathised with the idea of a hegemonic European ruler while rejecting the genre of the prophecy. Yet he might actually have wanted to distance himself from the concept. In any case, the idea of the emperor, who was to rule the entire continent (and finally the world), was characterised by apocalyptic traits, as can also be seen in the works of Jean de Roquetaillade. Writing in the mid-fourteenth century, Jean predicted that 'a (sixth) Antichrist, a horrible tyrant' was to 'arise in the Orient, subjecting Asia at the time when the future Antichrist Louis is going to subject Europe and Africa'.<sup>58</sup>

From a general perspective, it thus seems that most authors in the Latin world came to regard a universal emperor or an 'Emperor of Europe' as not very desirable: while Dante, in the early fourteenth century, certainly invested much hope in Henry VII and his attempts to re-establish the rule of the Empire,<sup>59</sup> other authors held quite different ideas. Writing shortly after Alexander of Roes, John of Paris explicitly recognised the existence of diversity in social and political organisation.<sup>60</sup> According to John, this diversity was not only a factual reality, but he even fashioned it into a theoretical argument: on the one hand, local customs were divergent, which made the practical establishment of universal secular rule nearly impossible. On the other hand, the practical consequences of this diversity actually led John to conclude that the establishment of any kind of universal secular rule would in fact be undesirable. This was, in contrast, of course, to spiritual authority, which culminated in the Pope.<sup>61</sup> At more or less

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*: 'Qui huiusmodi vaticiniis et incertis prophetiis vult fidem adhibere, adhibeat.'

<sup>58</sup> Jean de Roquetaillade, *Liber Secretorum Eventuum*: 141 (c. 10): '[...] sextus [Antichristus] erit quidam horrendus tyrannus qui apparebit in Oriente, subiugans Asiam tempore quo Ludovicus Antichristus futurus Europam et Africam subiugabit'. On Jean and his work see the contributions in Vauchez, *Textes prophétiques*; on the apocalyptic traits of the *Endkaiser* see Möhring, *Weltkaiser der Endzeit*.

<sup>59</sup> See Dante Alighieri, *Monarchia*. Cassell, *Monarchia Controversy*: 23–24, underlines that the text of the *Monarchia* deliberately avoids any reference to contemporary events (in contrast to Dante's letters). On Henry VII and his imperial ideas, see Heidemann, *Heinrich VII.*

<sup>60</sup> On John and his works, see now the contributions in Jones, *John of Paris*.

<sup>61</sup> Jean Quidort of Paris, *De Regia Potestate et Papali*: 83 (c. 3):

Primo quidem quia sicut in hominibus est diversitas magna ex parte corporum, non autem ex parte animarum, quae omnes sunt in eodem gradu essentiali constitutae propter

the same time, the possible negative effects of an attempt to establish a hegemonic position were identified by Pierre Dubois in his treatise *De recuperatione terre sancte*: if any one man strove to acquire universal authority in secular matters, the multitude of peoples and their divergent manners, but also the human inclination to dissent, would inevitably lead to war and an infinite number of conflicts.<sup>62</sup>

These arguments remained quite concise and cannot be compared with the detailed presentation by Niccolò Machiavelli who argued in the early sixteenth century that the very character of European culture was defined by its fragmentary nature. In his *Arte della guerra* (1519/20), the Florentine exile explained in detail that the multitude of political units, especially republics, and rulers in Europe contributed decisively to the military excellence of the continent's inhabitants. In Africa and Asia, on the other hand, large realms existed under hegemonic rule, which resulted in the non-belligose nature of their inhabitants.<sup>63</sup> By contrast, John of Paris was interested in the general argument and did not mention Europe at all. But even though he did not go so far as Machiavelli, his text bears witness to the fact that Latin authors came to prefer a plurality of political entities to uniform and hegemonic rule.<sup>64</sup>

While the example of Alexander remained ambivalent in this regard, we can posit that even if it actually had been meant to express purely positive connotations, it did not represent a general consensus in the late thirteenth century. On the contrary, the conflation of the idea of

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unitatem speciei humanae, ita saecularis potestas plus habet diversitatis secundum climatam et complexionum diversitatem quam spiritualis quae minus in talibus variatur. Unde non oportet tantam diversitatem esse in una sicut in alia.

<sup>62</sup> Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione terre sancte*: 54 (c. 63):

Modo non est homo sane mentis, ut credo, qui estimari verisimiliter posset in hoc fine seculorum fieri posse quod esset totius mundi, quoad temporalia, solus unus monarcha qui omnia regeret, cui tanquam superiori omnes obedirent; quia si ad hoc tenderetur, essent guerre, seditiones et dissensiones infinite; nec esset qui posset eas sedare propter multitudinem populorum, remotionem et diversitatem locorum, naturalem inclinationem hominum ad dissenciendum; [...].

See Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 245.

<sup>63</sup> Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 431, 446–47; see Niccolò Machiavelli, *L'Arte della guerra*: 119–23 (II 284–309).

<sup>64</sup> See also Scales, 'Purposeful Pasts': 121.

imperial rule and the name of Europe took on a very particular flavour from this moment on in the wake of the intensified contacts between Latin Christians, Mongol rulers and the Ottomans, which slowly led to a more marked presence of the ‘Emperor of Europe’ motif. In contrast to the sparse traces in texts from the Carolingian period, however, the new evidence expresses a profoundly modified perspective. While the rare early passages that have been described above usually evoked the motif of a hegemonic ruler of the continent who came from the inside, late medieval authors tended to project the desire to establish hegemonic rule over Europe onto those rulers who presented, in their eyes, an external threat to the continent and its Christian inhabitants.

The general idea that Christianity was menaced from the outside by the expanding Saracens and other ‘unbelievers’ was, of course, not new: the first traces of the motif, which has been described as ‘angular syndrome’ by the German historian Johannes Helmuth, appear already in the wake of the First Crusade.<sup>65</sup> Over the course of the following centuries, this image of an external menace slowly led to the idea that Europe was not so much the cradle of Christianity, but rather its last refuge or safe harbour.<sup>66</sup> The resulting factual identification of the continent with the spatial extent of the Latin Church’s authority entailed a series of consequences for the arguments that were used in the context of polemics against the ‘infidel’, the ‘Saracens’ or the ‘Turks’ in the late Middle Ages.<sup>67</sup> On a most practical level we can see, for example, that the border of Europe was repeatedly described as indicating the line to which a war against the expanding Ottomans should first push back the adversary.<sup>68</sup> Often enough, this aim

<sup>65</sup> See Helmuth, ‘Pius II. und die Türken’: 89, 97; Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 304.

<sup>66</sup> This aspect becomes quite clear in Humbert of Romans, ‘Opus tripartitum’: 188 (I 6), where the author describes the reduction of ‘Christian space’ to parts of Europe in order to justify the crusade. Humbert of Romans, *De Predicatione Crucis*, c. 14, underlines that the Incarnation took place in the Holy Land, not in Europe or Africa.

<sup>67</sup> On the polemic depictions see, Tolan, *Saracens*.

<sup>68</sup> See Philippe de Mézières, *Une épître lamentable*: 208: ‘[...] et de recouvrer tout ce qu’il a conquis sur la cristienté de la region de Europe et noz prisonniers et la region de Turquie, et de la en Arménie et en Surie [...]’. On Philippe de Mézières, see most recently Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Petkov, *Philippe de Mézières*, and Blanchard and Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Philippe de Mézières et l’Europe*. In a letter from 1438, Pope Eugenius IV exhorts King Albrecht II to ‘liberate Europe from the infidel’, see Beckmann, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*: 236–37 (n° 148: Ferrara, shortly before 30 March 1438), here 236: ‘procul dubio speramus te eum esse futurum, qui partes Europe liberes ab infidelium dominatu, [...]’. A number of

was only presented as a first objective that should then be superseded by further expansion, which would finally lead to the Christians' conquering the entire world in the name of their religion.<sup>69</sup>

In the context of this article, however, another observation is even more interesting: several late medieval authors projected the desire to obtain universal rule onto non-Christian rulers from outside the continent. The first traces of this notion can be found in the context of the early contacts with the Mongol rulers. John of Plano Carpini, for example, explicitly declared that the aim of the 'Tartars' was to conquer the entire world and that their 'Emperor' (John actually uses this term) called himself 'the strength of God and the emperor of all men'.<sup>70</sup> This idea, which largely seems to have coincided with the Mongol rulers' self-perception,<sup>71</sup> proved to be quite long-lived. Over a century and a half later, it is still present in the description Ruy Gonzalo de Clavijo gave of his voyage to

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further instances can be found in Weigel and Grüneisen, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*; Helmroth, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*; Annas, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*, index, s.v. Europa. As to the definition of the European border towards Asia, late medieval authors mainly perpetuated the traditional identification with the Bosphorus, the Black Sea and the Don, see Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 209–18. Intensive controversial discussions did not arise before the eighteenth century, see Schultz, *Europa als geographisches Konstrukt*: 23–29.

<sup>69</sup> For a telling example, see Pius II's crusade bull 'Ezechielis prophete' from 1463, edited in Guillaume Fillastre [the Younger], *Ausgewählte Werke*: 158–205, here 204 (§ 90): 'Da nobis victoriam de tuis hostibus, ut tandem recuperata Gretia, per totam Europam dignas tibi cantemus laudes tibi que perpetuo serviamus et omnis terra te adoret et nomini tuo psallat "in secula seculorum".' See Oschema, 'L'idée d'Europe et les Croisades': 78–79.

<sup>70</sup> Johannes de Plano Carpini, 'Historia Mongalorum': 293 (c. 8):

Intentio Tartarorum est sibi subicere totum mundum si possunt, et de hoc a Chingiscan habent mandatum, sicut superius dictum est. Iccirco eorum imperator sic in litteris suis scribit: 'Dei fortitudo, omnium hominum imperator', et in superscriptione sigilli sui est hoc: 'Deus in celo et Cuyuccan super terram, Dei fortitudo omnium hominum imperatoris sigillum'.

See Mauntel, 'Beyond Rome'; on the use of imperial terminology in the descriptions of extra-European rulers and their authority see also the contributions by Maud Simon and Christoph Mauntel in this volume.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Rachewiltz, *The Secret History of the Mongols*, vol. 1: 215–16 ('Universal Ruler', i.e., the *Qa'an*); *ibid.*, vol. 2: 1029–30. *Ibid.*, vol. 3: 130–31, underlines the 'symbolic assumption of the "imperial" title of *qa'an*' by Ögödei, the third son of Chinggis Khan. On the formative phase of the Mongol Empire, see Jackson, 'From Ulus to Khanate'; on the persistence of imperial ideals, see Amitai-Preiss, 'Mongol Imperial Ideology'.

Tamerlane's court at the beginning of the fifteenth century. According to Ruy Gonzalo, the Khan's seal contained three letters ('oes'), which expressed Tamerlane's desire to rule over the entire world.<sup>72</sup>

The motif and its application were not limited to the Mongols. Not least due to the practical experience of the Ottomans' successful expansion and final conquest of Constantinople,<sup>73</sup> the idea that their sultans strove to become 'Emperors of Europe' surfaced in the mid-fifteenth century. This idea actually reflected a certain reality on the part of the Ottomans, who showed a strong interest in the myth of the common Trojan origin of Franks and Turks.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, from the time of Mehmet II and his successful conquest of the imperial city of Constantinople in 1453, the sultans claimed to have inherited the imperial rank by way of possession of this place,<sup>75</sup> an effect that can be shown, for example, in the letters Mehmet II addressed to Latin Christian rulers, where he used the title 'Emperor of Turkey and Greece' (*turchie et grecie Imperator*). His successor Bayazid II went even further, claiming the title 'by the Grace of God the greatest Emperor of Asia and Europe' in several variations.<sup>76</sup>

While these self-confident formulas were self-attributed, Latin Christian authors who used similar expressions did so in order to project a negative image onto the non-Christian rulers. Hence, the chronicler Erhard of

<sup>72</sup> Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán*: 247: 'E las [i.e., the seal] qu'el Tamurbeque tiene son tres letras redondas, así como oes, fechos d'esta guisa: oes, que quiere dezir que significava que era señor de las tres partes del mundo.' On the author and his voyage, see Surdich, 'Il viaggio a Samarcanda'; on Tamerlane, see Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*.

<sup>73</sup> For a brief overview, see Kiel, 'The Incorporation of the Balkans'.

<sup>74</sup> Borgolte, 'Europas Geschichten und Troia': 202–03, underlines the progressive tendency of European humanists to exclude the Turks from these genealogical constructions, and thus from the common heritage. On the Turkish claims, see Koder, 'Romaioi und Teukroi': 5–7. Wigen, 'Ottoman Concepts of Empire': 44–45, notes the lack of a genuine Ottoman concept (and notion) of 'empire'. On the importance of imperial ideas in the Ottoman world, see Yılmaz, 'Imperial Ideology', and Barkey, *Empire of Difference*. For the narrative strategies in the period of Süleyman, see Şahin, *Empire and Power*.

<sup>75</sup> On the importance of Constantinople as 'imperial city', see also the contribution by Van Tricht to the present volume.

<sup>76</sup> Ménage, 'Seven Ottoman Documents': 82, 85 (Mehmet); *ibid.*: 92, n° 4: 'Sultan Paiasit chan dei gra[tia] Imperator Maximus Asie Europeq[ue]'. For Bayazid's repeated use of references to the rule over Asia and Europe, see Kołodziejczyk, 'Khan, Caliph, Tsar and Emperor': 187. On Mehmet II and his perception, see the contributions in Asutay-Effenberger and Rehm, *Sultan Mehmet II*.

Appenweiler from Basel, for example, included in his work a letter that had allegedly been sent by a certain 'Morbisanus' to the pope after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. In this text the Muslim ruler described in a very detailed manner the common history of the Franks and the Turks, whom he declared to be both of Trojan origin.<sup>77</sup> Following in the footsteps of figures such as Priamus, Antenor and Eneas, the author explains, he had the desire to restore the glory of Troy, which was why he intended to 'take over the "Empire" [or: the "rule", kpo] in the parts of Europe'.<sup>78</sup> In reality, this letter circulated in different versions and languages from the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>79</sup> Its form and content lent itself, however, to be adapted to the situation in and after 1453. A telling example is furnished by the version that the Franco-Burgundian soldier-chronicler Jean de Wavrin included in his work: he explicitly introduces the text as a letter from the 'Great Turk called Mahomet Bey' and addressed to 'Pope Nicolas', although the date he gives according to the Islamic era does not correspond to 1453.<sup>80</sup>

While the letters in Erhard and Jean de Wavrin's chronicles represent a fictitious tradition that could be updated, other authors, especially of Byzantine and Venetian origin, attest to Mehmet's very real interest in an historical justification for his conquest as well as in the idea and the motif of rule over Europe.<sup>81</sup> Aside from references in historiographical texts and in polemical treatises, the titles Mehmet chose equally express this desire: not only did he call himself *Kayser-i Rum* ('Caesar of the Romans'), thereby claiming the Roman imperial tradition as his inheritance, but he also used the title *Hakan* or *Sultān al-barrayn wa-l-baḥrayn* ('Lord', or 'Sultan of the two continents and the two seas').<sup>82</sup> Even though the reference to the continents in this formula was inspired by old Greek traditions, which

<sup>77</sup> On this motif in high and late medieval literature, see Wolf, *Troja*.

<sup>78</sup> Erhard von Appenweiler, 'Chronik': 313: 'in cuius locum adepturi sumus imperium in partibus Europe [...]'. In Erhard's chronicle the letter is introduced as having been sent in 1453, i.e., after the conquest of Constantinople; the actual dating in the Islamic era, however, points to 1348 (*ibid.*: 315): 'Datum anno Machumeti septingentesimo quadragesimo quinto.'

<sup>79</sup> See most recently, Meserve, *Empires of Islam*: 34–37; see *ibid.*: 272, n. 61: Doni, *Prose antiche di Dante*: 15–16, prints an Italian version dated to 1346 (without source).

<sup>80</sup> Jean de Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques*, vol. 5: 359–61: 'le Grant Turcq nomme Machomet Bay', 'pape Nicollas' (both 359), and 'en lan de Machomet huit cent et quarante en Juing' (361).

<sup>81</sup> See the detailed analysis by Koder, 'Romaioi and Teukroi'.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*: 18. See Kramers and Bosworth, 'Sultān'; Wigen, 'Ottoman Concepts of Empire': 49; Kołodziejczyk, 'Khan, Caliph, Tsar and Emperor': 176–78.

implies that the underlying concept of ‘continent’ was not identical with the late medieval notion of the *pars mundi*, contemporary readers probably interpreted this title as a claim to effective rule over what they understood to be Europe and Asia. In addition to the apparent attraction of a claim to rule over several continents, it has to be noted that the use of Graeco-Roman imperial designations might also have accommodated the Ottoman rulers’ need to integrate several religious communities under their rapidly expanding rule, a motive that echoes the situation in high medieval Spain.<sup>83</sup>

In view of the predilection of Mehmet II and his successors for these motifs and the claims they expressed, it is hardly surprising that Latin authors equally resorted to a motif that they already knew. All in all, they reacted quite nervously to the idea that the Ottomans could actually establish a kind of universal rule that included Europe: Enea Silvio Piccolomini, for example, a fervent advocate of a new crusade, noted in his *Commentarii*, that Mehmet II, who had been encouraged by his victory over Constantinople, had begun to ‘aspire to the Empire of Europe’.<sup>84</sup>

At more or less the same time, and shortly after his accession to the Hungarian throne in 1458, Matthew Corvinus wrote to the Emperor Frederick III inviting him to join forces against the expanding Turks. Amongst his arguments appears the allegation that the Ottomans pursued the aim of subjecting the ‘Empire of Europe’.<sup>85</sup> The extent to which this projection—apparently, at least in part, grounded in fact—haunted the Latin Christians’ minds can be seen in the details of contemporary plans for combined efforts against the Turks: after the fall of Constantinople in May 1453, the princes of the Empire discussed possible reactions at several Imperial diets, amongst others at Regensburg in 1454.<sup>86</sup> Even though nothing came of it in the end, we should take the fact seriously

<sup>83</sup> Kołodziejczyk, ‘Khan, Caliph, Tsar and Imperator’: 177, 183–84; see the contribution by Drews to the present collection.

<sup>84</sup> Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Commentaries*, vol. 1: 210 (II 1, 4): ‘Qua victoria elatus ad Europae imperium aspirare coepit [...]’.

<sup>85</sup> Nagy and Nyáry, *Mátyás Király Korából*, vol. 1: 13–14: *imperium Europe*. On the context, see briefly Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 309.

<sup>86</sup> The rich material is published in Weigel and Grüneisen, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*. On this diet and the central role of Duke Philip, the Good of Burgundy, see Müller, *Kreuzzugspläne*; on Enea Silvio Piccolomini and his anti-Turkish engagement, see Helmroth, ‘Pius II. und die Türken’.

that the *Conclusio* of the assembly notes the decision to organise a war against the Turks: the princes and envoys present declared their intention to organise an imperial army which should 'expulse the Turks from Europe'.<sup>87</sup> In the polemic and agitated context of Ottoman expansion and Latin Christian reactions,<sup>88</sup> Europe clearly took on a significance that had hitherto been, if not unknown, certainly less prominent.

As a consequence, the idea that a potentate from 'outside' might seek hegemonic rule in Europe acquired a somewhat ambivalent status. On the one hand, the motif could be used in order to underline the external threat when it came to the organisation of collective military and political efforts;<sup>89</sup> in fact, interior divisions and conflicts could be identified as the central reason for the military failures of Christians against the expanding Muslim forces.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, Latin Christians hesitated to use the formula 'Emperor of Europe' in contexts in which it risked acquiring a positive, laudatory character. Even in the face of external threats the calls for a hegemonic ruler remained discrete, and they virtually never referred to the unity of the continent.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Weigel and Grüneisen, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*: 307–23 (n° 38: *Conclusio*, 21 May 1454), here 307 (article 1): 'Primo quod exercitus congregandus sit magnus et talis, qui non solum resistere Thurcis, sed etiam eos invadere possit et fugare extra Europam.' It has to be noted, however, that the phrasing of the *Conclusio* was probably heavily influenced by Enea Silvio Piccolomini, who acted as imperial representative, see Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 303–04. On the debates about crusades at the Imperial diets see Helmuth, 'The German Reichstage and the Crusade'.

<sup>88</sup> For a broader analysis of the polemical discourse, see Höfert, *Den Feind beschreiben*; Topkaya, *Augen-Blicke sichtbarer Gewalt?*

<sup>89</sup> On the famous plan of the Bohemian king Georg of Podiebrad to unite the Christian realms against the Turks, see Monnet, 'Der böhmische König Georg von Podiebrad'; Smahel, 'Antoine Marini de Grenoble et son Mémorandum'; Boubín, 'Der Versuch einer Neuordnung Europas'.

<sup>90</sup> An example from a compilation of apocalyptic texts has been published recently by van Duzer and Dines, *Apocalyptic Cartography*: 152: 'In nulla parte mundi est tanta dominorum contraria diversitas sicut in hac quarta. Europa ut sic seipsam debilitet et gladio machometi citius subdatur sicut reliquae partes iam sunt subjectae ut cernis.' See also the contributions in n. 89 and Kéry, 'Pierre Dubois und der Völkerbund'.

<sup>91</sup> This does not mean, though, that individual rulers and their counsellors did not cultivate aspirations to a hegemonic position, see, for example, for the French case Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*: 245–47, 350; Kéry, 'Pierre Dubois und der Völkerbund': 9–10. But even Dubois left room for a separation of authorities, when he proposed to concede the imperial dignity to the 'German king' (*rex Alemanniae*), see *ibid.*: 10.

Analogous effects can be observed in the reaction towards expanding rulers from outside the continent. When the Florentine artist Bertoldo di Giovanni produced a medal with a portrait of Mehmet II shortly after 1478, he recognised the imperial rank of the Ottoman ruler, without, however, connecting it with Europe: the medal's legend thus reads 'Mehmet, Emperor of Asia, Trebizond and Greater Greece'.<sup>92</sup> This presentation also harmonises well with the motifs than can be found in the famous *Epistula ad Mahumetem* by Pius II: in this astonishing text, the author alludes to the possibility that 'all of Greece, all of Italy, all of Europe' would admire the Sultan if he chose to join the ranks of Christian rulers.<sup>93</sup> But Pius does not go so far as to refer to potential rule over Europe, instead he raises the prospect that 'we will call you the Emperor of the Greek and the Orient'.<sup>94</sup>

## Conclusion

Summing up the results of my analysis, it has first to be underlined, that the notion of an 'Emperor of Europe', or at least of a ruler over the 'Empire of Europe', was by no means entirely absent from medieval texts. In fact, it became quite prominent in some textual genres towards the end of the period as a reaction to the intensified contacts with the outside world and the resulting feeling of being menaced, especially by the expansion of Ottoman rule. It should be stressed, though, that the late medieval allusions to imperial rule over Europe virtually never acquired positive value. To the contrary, it seems that the authors who used it, for better or for worse, perceived the plurality of political entities, most of which were, of course, organised as monarchies, more or less as a characteristic trait of the continent.<sup>95</sup> Before 1500, however, explicit reflections of this idea appear only timidly, for example in the work of John of Paris. The analysis of the rarely used formula of the 'Emperor of Europe' thus allows us to identify an idea 'in the making' that remains

<sup>92</sup> See Rehm, 'Westliche Reaktionen': 161–62, here 162 (quote): 'Mavmhet Asiae ac Trapesvntzidis magneque Gretie imperat[or]'.

<sup>93</sup> Enea Silvio Piccolomini [Pius II], *Epistola ad Mahumetem*: 324 (c. 148, 1): '[...] sic te omnis Graecia, omnis Italia, omnis Europa demirabitur [...]'.  
<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*: 142 (c. 8, 2): 'Nos te Graecorum et Orientis Imperatorem appellabimus, [...]'.  
<sup>95</sup> For similar conclusions that are based on a different approach, see Martínez-Gros, *Brève histoire des empires*: 187–95.

otherwise largely indiscernible before 1500, but that already determines political attitudes and actions.<sup>96</sup>

The progressive interpretation of Europe as the home of the Latin Christian Church in turn led to the juxtaposition of a continent of 'mixed' character, politically diverse, but united in the faith, with the hegemonic rulers from outside, mainly from Asia, who allegedly strove to conquer it. The very idea of an 'Emperor of Europe' thus became an instrumental motif in the polemical discourse against political and religious adversaries. Exceptions to this general situation seem to be quite rare: Dante and Alexander of Roes argued in favour of a functionally structured Europe in which the Germans were to exercise imperial rule,<sup>97</sup> but many thinkers rather thought in terms of 'proto-national' realms as far as secular authority was concerned. In the end, the acceptance of this fragmented political structure could even be considered a kind of cultural value and advantage in comparison with Asia and Africa: while Europe was organised as a community of more or less sovereign kingdoms, the impressive political entities outside of the continent were perceived as hegemonic and even despotic.<sup>98</sup>

Seen from this perspective, an 'Emperor of Europe' was hard to imagine, even though the motif appeared here and there in the wake of Charlemagne's rule. From the twelfth century onwards the idea primarily represented a notion of menace, sometimes from the inside, but mostly from the exterior. This interpretation can actually be corroborated by further late medieval vocabulary and linguistic practices: towards the end of the fifteenth century, the collective noun 'Europeans' slowly came into use;<sup>99</sup> usually, however, Latin and vernacular authors preferred to use more precise appellations, such as 'the French', 'the Germans' and 'the English' and so on. Such proto-national designations opposed asymmetrically constructed collectives: 'Asians' or 'Africans'. In a broader perspective, the notion of an 'Emperor of Europe', although only infrequently used and mostly in polemic contexts,

<sup>96</sup> In this sense, Scales, 'France and the Empire': 399, underlines that 'Alexander [of Roes] saw the imperium not in terms of material powers over territory, but rather as an office instituted by God for particular and unique purposes.'

<sup>97</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Though it has to be acknowledged that the explicit identification of Europe as a 'continent of freedom' remains nearly unknown in medieval texts, see Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*: 348–50, 360.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*: 439–43.

thus reveals a lot about European self-perception and dominant political and cultural ideas in the late Middle Ages. It also tells us about the relative ease with which medieval authors used the notions of ‘Empire’ and ‘Emperor’ to order the world they lived in. In the case of the ‘Emperor of Europe’, the problem was not that the imperial idea was connected with Rome; rather, it was perceived to be inadequate for the political structure of the Latin Christian world. To put it bluntly: there was simply no room for an ‘Emperor of Europe’ in Europe.

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