

Introduction¹

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Since the inception of the RANK research project in 2007, it was always our intention to convene two conferences to frame the project's work. The first conference was scheduled for the early stages of the project. Its major purpose was to help prepare the ground for (comparative) work on late medieval aristocracies, in particular those of England and the Holy Roman Empire. The sources available for such an undertaking and the respective national historiographies were examined and discussed in detail in the hope of identifying past, present and potential approaches to the study of late medieval aristocracies and their increasing social differentiation. Case studies were then used to test the concept of rank.² The second conference was scheduled to take place towards the end of the project. Originally it was planned to widen the geographical scope of the group's theme and to look at processes of social differentiation across Europe in the late Middle Ages. But when it actually came to organizing the conference, this no longer seemed the most promising way to arrange it – indeed it would be rather surprising if a research project was to run precisely according to its original plan. As a result of the research carried out by the group and others since 2007, it was decided to widen the focus not geographically, but chronologically. The scholarly landscape for the examination of rank and indeed wider societal change in Europe across the Middle Ages seemed better than ever before. The project 'Les élites dans le haut Moyen Âge' directed by Régine Le Jan had brought together scholars from France, Germany, England and Italy in a series of conferences to study early medieval elites from a variety of perspectives. In particular, their interests in hierarchy and stratification, in the theory and practice of early medieval elites, and in the relationship of wealth and rank showed a strong overlap with the themes of the RANK-project.³ This is also true

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- 2 Thorsten HUTHWELKER/Jörg PELTZER/Maximilian WEMHÖNER (eds.), *Princely Rank in late Medieval Europe. Trodden Paths and Promising Avenues* (RANK. Politisch-soziale Ordnungen im mittelalterlichen Europa 1), Ostfildern 2011.
- 3 François BOUGARD/Dominique IOGNA-PRAT/Régine LE JAN (eds.), *Hiérarchie et stratification sociale dans l'Occident médiéval (400–1100)* (Collection Haut Moyen Âge 6), Turnhout 2008; Jean-Pierre DEVROEY/Laurent FELLER/Régine LE JAN (eds.), *Les élites et la richesse au haut Moyen Âge* (Collection Haut Moyen Âge 11), Turnhout 2010; François BOUGARD/Hans-Werner GOETZ/Régine LE JAN (eds.), *Théorie et pratiques des élites au haut Moyen Âge. Con-*

of Knut Görich's masterful biography of Frederick Barbarossa published in late 2011.⁴ In his analysis of the politics and polity of the Empire in the twelfth century, Görich shows how much the actions of Frederick and the magnates were determined by questions of rank. Against this backdrop of recent research into the formation of elites and their behaviour across the Middle Ages it seemed not only a good opportunity, but almost a necessity to draw together historians of the early, central and late Middle Ages and to discuss the development of rank between 500 and 1500.⁵

In general terms rank can be defined as creating the relation between an order, i.e. the common frame of reference, and the particular position of the individual in that order. Rank can be defined on two levels: firstly, as membership of a certain group and thus as a relationship of equality. Secondly, rank can be defined as a hierarchical relationship and consequently in terms of difference and inequality. This can be applied at the collective level, i.e. the difference between groups, but also, of course, at the individual level.⁶ The rank of the individual can be characterized by both the membership of a group and his/her particular position within that group. Depending on the size of the society and its degree of social differentiation both elements need not necessarily be present and it is possible for the rank of the individual to be indicated by just one of these features. Thus defined rank seems almost to be an anthropological constant as societies which show no sign of social differentiation at all have yet to be identified by social anthropologists and ethnologists.⁷

ception, perception et réalisation sociale. Theorie und Praxis frühmittelalterlicher Eliten. Konzepte, Wahrnehmung und soziale Umsetzung (Collection Haut Moyen Âge 13), Turnhout 2011.

- 4 Knut GÖRICH, *Friedrich Barbarossa. Eine Biographie*, Munich 2011.
- 5 The analysis of aristocratic rank overlaps, of course, with the study of aristocracy/nobility, without being, however, identical. The bibliography on aristocracy/nobility is vast. Good starting points are a number of relatively recent historiographical studies: Werner HECHBERGER, *Adel im fränkisch-deutschen Mittelalter. Zur Anatomie eines Forschungsproblems* (Mittelalter-Forschungen 17), Ostfildern 2005; <http://lamop.univ-paris1.fr/spip.php?article438#VC-1AldjWSo> (Régine LE JAN/Geneviève BÜHRER-THIERRY (eds.), *L'historiographie des élites du Haut Moyen Âge*) (last visit: 3/10/2014); David CROUCH, *The Birth of Nobility. Constructing Aristocracy in England and France, 900–1300*, Harlow 2005; Karl-Heinz SPIESS, 'Research on the Secular Princes of the Holy Roman Empire. State-of-the-Art and Perspectives', in HUTHWELKER/PELTZER/WEMHÖNER (eds.), *Princely Rank*, pp. 27–48; Andreas BIHRER, 'Research on Ecclesiastical Princes of the Holy Roman Empire. State-of-the-Art and Perspectives', in *ibid.*, pp. 49–70; cf. also Otto Gerhard OEXLE/Werner PARAVICINI (eds.), *Nobilitas. Funktion und Repräsentation des Adels in Alteuropa* (Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 133), Göttingen 1997.
- 6 For a detailed discussion of rank, see Jörg PELTZER, *Der Rang der Pfalzgrafen bei Rhein. Die Gestaltung der politisch-sozialen Ordnung des Reichs im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (RANK. Politisch-soziale Ordnungen im mittelalterlichen Europa 2), Ostfildern 2013, pp. 22–31.
- 7 Cf. Gerald D. BERREMAN, 'Social Inequality: A Cross Cultural Analysis', in Gerald D. BERREMAN (ed.), *Social Inequality. Comparative and Developmental Approaches* (Studies in An-

The degree to which societies were socially differentiated could, however, vary greatly – and so accordingly could the significance of rank. Moreover, the factors constituting rank were anything but set in stone. They and their relative importance, i.e. how the factors compared to each other in terms of their significance in establishing rank, could vary from society to society and they could change within a society over time. Thus, in order to understand rank and its importance for society, it needs to be historicised. As a consequence rank must not per se be equated with office, title, quality of ancestry or amount of landholding etc. or any combination of those elements, even though, of course, singularly or in association these may well have been crucial factors in a specific society at a certain point in its history.

The search for the factors of rank and their relative importance provides important insights into the value system of the society in question, to its perception of its political and social order and to its mechanisms for maintaining this order. With regards to medieval Europe, the significance of rank for most of its societies is beyond any doubt. Medieval societies were by and large what social anthropologists call hierarchically structured societies, i.e. societies in which pre-eminence is institutionalized and access to these positions is limited to a certain number of people.⁸ Moreover the societal order was rooted in transcendental origins. The hierarchical nature of society reflected divine will.⁹ Rank therefore occupied an important place in medieval minds, strongly influencing the actions of the individual, notably those of aristocrats.

thropology), New York 1981, pp. 3–40.

- 8 BERREMAN, 'Social Inequality', in BERREMAN (ed.), *Social Inequality*; a classic study is Morton FRIED, *The Evolution of Political Society. An Essay in Political Anthropology* (Studies in Anthropology AS 7), New York 1967. On the European Middle Ages, see the remarks by Wolfgang REINHARD, *Lebensformen Europas. Eine historische Kulturanthropologie*, Munich 2004, pp. 311–315.
- 9 Cf. Otto Gerhard OEXLE, Art. 'Stand, Klasse', in Otto BRUNNER/Werner CONZE/Reinhart KOSELLECK (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 1, Stuttgart 1972, pp. 155–200; Otto Gerhard OEXLE, 'Deutungsschemata der sozialen Wirklichkeit im frühen und hohen Mittelalter. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Wissens', in František GRAUS (ed.), *Mentalitäten im Mittelalter. Methodische und inhaltliche Probleme* (Vorträge und Forschungen 35), Sigmaringen 1987, pp. 65–117; Geneviève BÜHRER-THIERRY, 'Pensée hiérarchique et différenciation sociale: quelques réflexions sur l'ordonnement des sociétés du haut Moyen Âge', in BOUGARD/LOGNAPRAT/LE JAN (eds.), *Hiérarchie et stratification sociale dans l'occident médiéval*, pp. 363–371; David LUSCOMBE, 'Hierarchy in the late Middle Ages: criticism and change', in Joseph CANNING/Otto Gerhard OEXLE (eds.), *Political Thought and the Realities of Power in the Middle Ages. Politisches Denken und die Wirklichkeit der Macht im Mittelalter* (Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 147), Göttingen 1998, pp. 113–126; Albert ZIMMERMANN (ed.), *Soziale Ordnungen im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters* (Miscellanea medievalia 12/1–2), 2 vols., Berlin 1979–1980; Daniel ROCHE/C. ERNEST LABROUSSE (eds.), *Ordres et classes. Colloque d'histoire sociale, Saint-Cloud, 24–25 mai 1967* (Congrès et colloques 12), Paris 1973.

There were a number of occasions when contemporaries explicitly named what they considered to be important factors of rank. When, for instance, a new imperial prince was created in the Empire in the fourteenth century, the royal charter issued on that occasion could specify noble ancestry, loyal service to the king or the size of the lordship as reasons for the promotion.¹⁰ In the first half of the fifteenth century the statutes of the Order of the Golden Fleece decreed that except for the sovereign of the order, the duke of Burgundy, the founding members of the order were to be ranked by the date of their entry into knighthood. Knights who joined the order later were to be ranked by the date of their entry into the order. The nobility of their lineage, the size of their lordships, their offices, their titles, their wealth or their powers ought not to be considered when ranking them.¹¹ However, perhaps the richest sources to draw upon concerning factors of rank originated in the course of disputes over rank. They not only caused such factors to be named, but also provide us with clues to their relative importance. When, on the occasion of the great imperial diet at Mainz in 1184, the abbot of Fulda and the archbishop of Cologne fought over the right to sit on the right-hand side next to Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, the archbishop's line of argument made much of his service to Frederick, while the abbot referred to his customary right. In the end Frederick decided in favour of the archbishop. This was not based on a careful consideration of their arguments, but due to heavy political pressure, because the archbishop and his powerful allies threatened to leave the diet.¹² The dilemma of conflicting values of rank becomes very clear in the report of Peter of Zittau, abbot of Königsaal, on the diet held by King Henry VII in Speyer in 1310. At the festive meal the archbishops of Cologne and Mainz continued their long-standing conflict over the right to sit on the right of the king. Their dispute threatened to disrupt the meal and hence to damage King Henry's authority. But the king abstained from making a public decision in favour of one or the other. Instead he invited both to a private meal, where, according to Peter, questions of precedence were now irrelevant. When Peter, new to the court, asked those in close attendance for some background

10 PELTZER, *Rang*, pp. 91–93.

11 *Die Protokollbücher des Ordens vom Goldenen Vlies*, ed. Sonja DÜNNEBEIL (Instrumenta 9, 12, 19), 3 vols. to date, Ostfildern 2002–[2009], vol. 1, p. 204 [no. 17]; cf. Gert MELVILLE, 'Ritu-elle Ostentation und pragmatische Inquisition. Zur Institutionalität des Ordens vom Goldenen Vlies', in Heinz DUCHHARDT/Gert MELVILLE (eds.), *Im Spannungsfeld von Recht und Ritual. Soziale Kommunikation in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Norm und Struktur 7), Cologne 1997, pp. 215–271, at pp. 248–250.

12 *Arnoldi chronica Slavorum*, ed. Johann Martin LAPPENBERG/Georg Heinrich PERTZ (MGH SS rer. Germ. 14), Hanover 1868, pp. 88–90; Hans-Werner GOETZ, 'Der ‚rechte‘ Sitz. Die Symbolik von Rang und Herrschaft im Hohen Mittelalter im Spiegel der Sitzordnung', in Gertrud BLASCHITZ/Helmut HUNDSBICHLER/Gerhard JARITZ/Elisabeth VAVRA (eds.), *Symbole des Alltags – Alltag der Symbole. Festschrift für Harry Kühnel*, Graz 1992, pp. 11–47, at pp. 29–32.

information on the dispute, he was told the following: Roman emperors and kings had long ago decided that in Germany the archbishop of Mainz could justly claim to sit on the right of the king, that in Italy the archbishop of Cologne gained precedence, and in the French lands of the Empire the archbishop of Trier occupied this seat. But this had not settled the matter for good as each archbishop tried to defend the rights of his own see. Each of them had a good argument in his favour, for it was publicly known that the archbishop of Mainz had precedence in dignity (*dignitas*), the archbishop of Cologne in power (*potestas*) and the archbishop of Trier in antiquity (*antiquitas*).¹³

While King Henry wisely abstained from publicly judging the respective value of these three factors, advocates were employed in high profile disputes to do precisely that. This was the case, for example, on the occasion of the council of Basle, when, in a protracted dispute between late 1432 and 1434, the duke of Burgundy competed with the electors for the place next to the kings.¹⁴ The advocate of the duke of Burgundy, Jean Germain, bishop of Nevers, was to prevent any prejudice to, or diminishment of, the *status aut honor* of the duke.¹⁵ Bishop Germain was very clear about what constituted princely rank.¹⁶ He declared that the illustriousness of a prince was defined by his lineage and power as well as the prestige of his lands.¹⁷ At first he drew attention to the ancestry of Duke Philip. This is a very illuminating example for understanding what contemporaries considered to be elements of a first-class lineage: via the French royal house Philip was descended from the Trojans; via *Gondulfus*, king of the ancient Burgundians, that is King Gundobad (473–516), he was descended from Janus, son of Japhet, son of Noah; via his birth rights to the duchy of Lotharin-

13 Petra Žitavského Kronika Zbraslavská [= Königsaal Chronik von Peter von Zittau], ed. Josef EMLER, in *Fontes rerum Bohemicarum*, ed. Josef EMLER/Josef JIREČEK/Jan GEBAUER/Jaroslav GOLL/Josef V. ŠIMÁK/Václav NOVOTNÝ, 8 vols., Prague 1873–1932, vol. 4, pp. 1–337, at pp. 150–151; for an analysis of this dispute, see PELTZER, *Rang*, pp. 387–389.

14 On this dispute see Hermann HEIMPEL, 'Eine unbekannte Schrift über die Kurfürsten auf dem Basler Konzil', in Lutz FENSKE/Werner RÖSENER/Thomas ZOTZ (eds.), *Institution, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Josef Fleckenstein zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, Sigmaringen 1984, pp. 469–482; Gert MELVILLE, 'Vorfahren und Vorgänger. Spätmittelalterliche Genealogien als dynastische Legitimation zur Herrschaft', in Peter-Johannes SCHULER (ed.), *Die Familie als sozialer und historischer Verband. Untersuchungen zum Spätmittelalter und zur frühen Neuzeit*, Sigmaringen 1987, pp. 203–309, at pp. 204–206; Joseph TOUSSAINT, *Les relations diplomatiques de Philippe Le Bon avec le concile de Bâle (1431–1449)*, Louvain 1942, pp. 49–67; Heribert MÜLLER, *Théâtre de la préséance. Les ducs de Bourgogne face aux grandes assemblées dans le Saint-Empire* (Conférences annuelles de l'Institut historique allemand publiées par la Société des amis de l'Institut historique allemand 13), Ostfildern 2007.

15 *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. Giovanni D. MANSI, 53 vols., Paris 1901–1927, vol. 30, col. 206.

16 See the pertinent analysis by MELVILLE, 'Vorfahren', pp. 204–206.

17 *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. MANSI, vol. 30, col. 207: *Potentum sublimitas ex generositate, ex potentatu, et ex auctoritate domini communis accipitur.*

gia he belonged to the Carolingians; finally, and certainly the least distinguished, but placing Philipp directly on a par with the electors, Bishop Germain argued that via his mother Philip belonged to the house of Bavaria, which, the bishop stressed, had produced a number of emperors, kings and princes.¹⁸ The power of his lineage was such that he counted the kings of England, France, Castile, Portugal, Aragon, Navarra, Cyprus and Sicily among his closest relatives. Royal kinship was clearly an asset when it came to justify a rank almost concomitant to Europe's kings.¹⁹

The bishop then briefly expanded on the power of the ducal lands, which, he explained, resulted from the vastness of the duke's dominions, his four duchies and fifteen counties and further lands.²⁰ Then Germain turned in much greater length to the prestige of the ducal lands, especially Burgundy. Its *auctoritas* derived from its antiquity, its fidelity to the Christian faith and its defence of the church. The bishop sustained this argument with numerous examples.²¹

Finally, the bishop drew a straightforward comparison between the duke and the electors and, as a consequence, valued rank factors. He advocated the superiority of the *dominium* over the *officium*. A *dominium* was founded in natural law and ruled by undelegated authority, while an *officium* always depended on someone else's will. While the *dominus* naturally sought to preserve his *dominium*, the officer did not do so, because he was a mere mercenary.²² This was a straightforward attack on the electors. They had justified their claim to be ranked first among the European princes, primarily because of their special relationship to the emperor. They elected the emperor and as the emperor was ranked first among the kings, they were first among the princes.²³ To strengthen this argument the electors had also referred to the situation in the church: just as the cardinals were closest to the pope, because they elected him, so they, the electors, were closest to the emperor.²⁴ Jean Germain, however, knew that their electoral rights were linked to their arch-offices. Among other texts he explicitly referred to the Golden Bull issued by Emperor Charles IV in 1356/57,

18 This was probably a response to an argument put forward by the electors themselves: that they were sons of emperors and that some of them became emperors, HEIMPEL, 'Unbekannte Schrift', pp. 479–480.

19 *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. MANSI, vol. 30, cols. 207–208.

20 *Ibid.*, col. 208.

21 *Ibid.*, cols. 208–210.

22 *Ibid.*, col. 211; Melville, 'Vorfahren', p. 206, Heimpel, 'Unbekannte Schrift', p. 482.

23 It should be noted that the argument of antiquity was also used by the electors to demonstrate the preeminence of the Empire and hence the emperor. At one point during the dispute they told the story of the *translatio imperii* beginning, as John of Segovia noted, with Nebuchadnezzar, see HEIMPEL, 'Unbekannte Schrift', p. 481.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 478–481.

which fixed this connection in writing.²⁵ Germain made this the Achilles heel of their argument: the electoral right was an office and hence added nothing to their princely dignity. As a consequence, as Gert Melville has pointed out, there were only their princely dignities to compare. On this basis, however, Germain was convinced that the quality of factors defining Philip's rank was superior to that of the electors.²⁶

The quarrel also informs us about perceptions of agents of rank. Jean Germain disputed the imperial claim to universal authority when he argued that Charles IV's decisions regarding the rank of the electors had only relevance for the Empire.²⁷ Later Emperor Sigismund thought along the same lines, when he was confronted with the claims of the duke of Burgundy. He replied that within France, the French king could rank his princes according to his wishes (and added wryly that he knew well that within France Burgundy did not come first, but only fifth or sixth).²⁸ Clearly, the ranking of princes was supposed to be dealt with on the regnal level by respective kings. At Basle, however, where kings and princes from across Europe were assembled, this principle could not be applied. The council itself had to decide on the respective ranking of the rulers and princes of Latin Christendom. In regards to the dispute between Burgundy and the electors, the bishop of Nevers could be quite content with the outcome. While the electors were seated around the emperor, the duke was placed next to the kings, just as the bishop claimed he should have been.²⁹ The duke's *status aut honor* had been maintained.

These examples, and plenty more of them will be cited throughout this volume, make clear that rank was not defined by any one factor. Law and cus-

25 In referring to the Golden Bull he tried to defeat the electors with their own arguments. They had claimed that their precedence was supported by canon and civil law. The reference point of the civil law was the Golden Bull, *ibid.*, p. 476. For the link between the arch-offices and electoral rights, see PELTZER, *Rang*, pp. 116–155.

26 MELVILLE, 'Vorfahren', p. 206. See also Jörg PELTZER, 'La dignité de l'office au Moyen Âge', in Agnes BERENGER/Frédérique LACHAUD (eds.), *Hiérarchie des pouvoirs, délégation de pouvoir et responsabilité des administrateurs dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen Âge. Actes du colloque de Metz, 16–18 juin 2011* (Centre de recherche universitaire lorrain d'histoire. Université de Lorraine – site de Metz 46), Metz 2012, pp. 271–289, at pp. 283–294, where, however, it is not made sufficiently clear that the purpose of Germain's argument was to take the electoral right out of the equation, so that the comparison of their rank depended on the quality of their princely dignities only. Germain did not imply that the electors were subordinate to the duke, because they held an office.

27 *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. MANSI, vol. 30, col. 609; HEIMPEL, 'Unbekannte Schrift', p. 482.

28 RTA, vol. 11, no. 181, p. 337; Gert MELVILLE, 'Die Bedeutung geschichtlicher Transzendenzräume und ihre Kritik. Zum Problem der Plausibilisierung dynastischer Geltungsbehauptungen', in Hans VORLÄNDER (ed.), *Transzendenz und die Konstitution von Ordnungen*, Berlin 2013, pp. 142–160, at p. 158.

29 HEIMPEL, 'Unbekannte Schrift', pp. 470–471.

tom, the power and prestige of one's lordship, ancient lineage and long-standing service to the ruler, political prerogatives and ties of kinship to the ruling family – all these arguments could be brought forward to sustain claims of rank and precedence. Contemporaries found it, however, extremely difficult, if not impossible, to establish a relative hierarchy among these potentially contrasting rank values. They relied increasingly on titles to reduce the complexity of rank, which stemmed from the great variety of competing factors of rank. The precedence of kings over princes was long established, but during the late Middle Ages titles became more and more important to mark difference in rank within the nobility as well. In England, for example, the titles of duke and marquis were deliberately introduced in the fourteenth century to distinguish degrees of rank among the higher aristocracy.³⁰ The Holy Roman Empire is another instructive case. At the royal diet of Worms in 1495 the dukes, the landgraves and the margraves were distinguished by different dress codes.³¹ The following incident from that diet shows just how strong this thinking in degrees marked by title had become. A royal official had assigned Friedrich, margrave of Brandenburg and younger half-brother of Johann, Elector of Brandenburg, to the group of margraves. When Friedrich protested, arguing that the margraviate was an electorate and that he himself was enfeoffed with four duchies and that therefore he was to be numbered among the dukes, King Maximilian immediately corrected this error and confirmed that he knew well that Brandenburg was an electorate and did not count among the ordinary margraviates. He duly gave permission to Friedrich to dress as a duke.³² The distinction between the titles of duke and margrave is, of course, much older: magnates appear to have been distinguishing between the two already in the twelfth century. When, in 1156, Emperor Frederick I separated the margraviate of Austria from the duchy of Bavaria and changed its status to a duchy held directly of the king, he did so to safeguard the ambitions of its ruler, Heinrich Jasomirgott.³³ But in the second half of the twelfth century, when the imperial princes were just about to emerge as the new princely elite, no clearly defined

30 Chris GIVEN-WILSON, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages. The Fourteenth-Century Political Community*, London 1987, pp. 29–55; Chris GIVEN-WILSON, 'Rank and Status among the English Nobility, c. 1300–1500', in HUTHWELKER/PELTZER/WEMHÖNER (eds.), *Princely Rank*, pp. 97–118.

31 RTA, Mittlere Reihe, vol. 5/2, no. 1744, pp. 1374–1376. The ecclesiastical imperial princes also had to wear different dress according to their rank. They, too, were divided into three layers: the archbishops, the bishops also holding a ducal title (Bamberg, Würzburg, Liège: bishops with 'fürstlich land und leut', p. 1375) and ordinary bishops.

32 Ibid., pp. 1375–1377.

33 *MGH DDF I*, vol. 1, no. 151; GÖRICH, *Friedrich*, pp. 127–134. The case was particularly sensitive as Heinrich Jasomirgott had been duke of Bavaria prior to this settlement.

layers of rank existed within this group. It was unthinkable for the king to distinguish his imperial princes by a dress code linked to their titles.³⁴

Yet, even with more finely defined layers of rank within the aristocracy, each one marked and communicated by a specific title, there remained a number of situations in which the justification of rank had to go beyond the title. This was, of course, the case for the ranking within a layer defined by a title, or if someone was elevated to a superior rank, so for example from earl to duke, or, as in the case of the dispute at the council of Basle, if members of two different regnal hierarchies, i.e. ranking systems, had to define their respective rank in order to fit into a newly created hierarchy.

Defining the rank of an aristocrat, therefore, was anything but straightforward. The purpose of the conference was to tackle this issue and thus to prepare the way for a more comprehensive (and hopefully more profound) understanding of contemporary values justifying the hierarchical order of society and in particular of the aristocracy. The diachronic view across the Middle Ages addressed first and foremost the question of whether these values and hence society underwent a fundamental change – a question, of course, that also touches upon our understanding of the Middle Ages as an entity. Placing, as the cover on the dust jacket does, the image of a Frankish magnate dating from around 800 (from the church of St Benedict in Mals, Vinschgau)³⁵ next to the image of Henry, duke of Lancaster (from William Bruges's Garter Book [c. 1440–1450])³⁶, we may ask to what extent their hierarchical societies differed from each other. How many factors of rank did they share? How did the stability of individual rank compare etc.?

In order to judge changes over time more appropriately it is sensible to keep the focus on a certain area. Here, the regional focus of RANK on England, the Holy Roman Empire and France provided the geographic framework. As a consequence the Frankish realms and their successor kingdoms in Western and Eastern Francia as well as pre-conquest England were included in the analysis. As well as offering a long-term perspective, such an approach aimed at identifying regional differences in western and central Europe, thus facilitating a view both diachronic and synchronic. In that way, not only would potential

34 On aristocratic dress in the Empire in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, cf. Jan KEUPP, *Die Wahl des Gewandes. Mode, Macht und Möglichkeitssinn in Gesellschaft und Politik des Mittelalters* (Mittelalter-Forschungen 33), Ostfildern 2010.

35 Elisabeth RÜBER, *St. Benedikt in Mals* (Europäische Hochschulschriften Reihe 28: Kunstgeschichte 130), Frankfurt am Main 1991, pp. 243–256; a summary of her research is provided in Elisabeth RÜBER-SCHÜTTE, 'Neue Forschungen zu Sankt Benedikt in Mals', in Rainer LOOSE (ed.), *Der Vinschgau und seine Nachbarräume. Vorträge des landeskundlichen Symposiums veranstaltet vom Südtiroler Kulturinstitut in Verbindung mit dem Bildungshaus Schloß Goldrain*, Bozen 1993, pp. 73–74.

36 London, British Library, Stowe Ms. 594, fol. 8r.

changes in defining rank over time be detected, but also potentially different, but co-existing value systems.

A third major line of enquiry pursued by the conference was the communication of rank. The reasoning behind this line of enquiry was simple: without communication there is no rank.³⁷ The rank of the individual is the result of its public negotiation. Abbot Peter's story on the conflict of the archbishops of Mainz and Cologne reveals this very nicely: the archbishops argued about their precedence on public occasions only; in private, however, this was a matter of secondary importance. The public negotiation of rank has two major consequences: firstly, the individual needs to communicate publicly and consistently his or her rank or what (s)he perceived to be his/her proper rank. But, secondly, the individual cannot create his or her rank entirely by his or her own doing. The creation of individual rank mainly depends on the reaction of others, most notably future members of the same rank. It is their public recognition that propels one's rank from the sphere of ambition into actual being. If such recognition is withheld, individual claims, even those that may have been accepted in the past, are bound to fail.

These conditions for the creation of rank should make clear why different expressions and forums of communications shape and determine rank in different degrees. While all such expressions and forums mattered, some had a more direct effect than others on a magnate's overall position. The architecture of a magnate's castle, the landscape, the layout of his seigneurial estates and hunting grounds, the splendour of his court, the size of his retinue – these and more were important markers of a magnate's rank and crucial to maintaining the regional hierarchy with him at its helm. Moreover, such indicators could also be used to express higher ambitions. But they could not in themselves create a specific rank. For this purpose public occasions were needed, occasions when the socio-political order of the realm could be communicated in an environment that provided immediate recognition or disapproval of individual claims by the king and peers. This is why, for instance, royal assemblies bring-

37 See the groundbreaking work by the Collaborative Research Centre 496 'Symbolische Kommunikation und gesellschaftliche Wertesysteme vom Mittelalter bis zur französischen Revolution', in particular by Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, Marian Füssel and Thomas Weller on the Empire in the Early Modern Times. See, for example, Barbara STOLLBERG-RILINGER, *Des Kaisers alte Kleider. Verfassungsgeschichte und Symbolsprache des Alten Reichs*, Munich 2008; Marian FÜSSEL, *Gelehrtenkultur als symbolische Praxis. Rang, Ritual und Konflikt an der Universität der frühen Neuzeit* (Symbolische Kommunikation in der Vormoderne), Darmstadt 2006; Marian FÜSSEL/Thomas WELER, 'Einleitung', in Marian FÜSSEL/Thomas WELER (eds.), *Ordnung und Distinktion. Praktiken sozialer Distinktion in der ständischen Gesellschaft* (Symbolische Kommunikation und gesellschaftliche Wertesysteme 8), Münster 2005, pp. 9–22; Thomas WELER, *Theatrum praecedentiae. Zeremonieller Rang und gesellschaftliche Ordnung in der frühneuzeitlichen Stadt: Leipzig 1500–1800* (Symbolische Kommunikation in der Vormoderne), Darmstadt 2006.

ing together the king and, ideally, a great number of magnates were so crucial in the making of rank. The formal seating arrangements and the order of processions, for example, epitomized and made visible the socio-political order of the realm and the rank of the individual within it. Importantly, this visualisation did not simply represent the socio-political order, but played a vital role in creating it.³⁸ It is for this reason that the seating arrangement at royal feasts mattered so much for the archbishops mentioned above and why it was the subject of repeated conflict.

How the communication of rank developed during the Middle Ages was thus a central question of the conference. Which means were deployed to signify rank? Did sign systems exist? How do we read these signs and what can they tell us about the foundations of rank? If we return once more to the image of the Frankish magnate and Henry of Lancaster, the difference in their representation is more than obvious. But is Henry's portrait simply a more elaborated and nuanced version of that of the Frank? Or does it convey fundamentally different values in what constituted rank? Can we, for instance, interpret the prominent position of coats of arms and titles in Henry's image and the focus on the sword in the depiction of the Frank as signifiers of very different aristocratic worlds? Is it possible to see Henry's rank firmly resting upon his (in part at least inherited) titles and lordships, while the position of the Frank was based principally on his sword?

A further aim of the conference was to direct the attention towards source material that so far has not been at the core of studies on rank. This, for instance, is true for the epigraphic and numismatic material. While both occupy an important place in the study of the Ancient World, they are largely the preserve of a few specialists when it comes to the Middle Ages. That they deserve, however, much broader attention is demonstrated by the studies of Verena Epp and Andrea Stieldorf in this volume. Rolls of arms also remain an untapped resource for the student of rank. Outside the field of heraldry they play only a very limited role in historical studies. This is partly due to the very complicated nature of their survival and composition. With many of them unedited and often surviving as later copies only, they do not lend themselves to a straightforward analysis. Thorsten Huthwelker has undertaken the brave step

38 Cf. Karl-Heinz SPIESS, 'Rangdenken und Rangstreit im Mittelalter', in Werner PARAVICINI (ed.), *Zeremoniell und Raum. 4. Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen veranstaltet gemeinsam mit dem Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris und dem Historischen Institut der Universität Potsdam, Potsdam, 25. bis 27. September 1994* (Residenzenforschung 6), Sigmaringen 1997, pp. 39–61; Barbara STOLLBERG-RILINGER, 'Symbolische Kommunikation in der Vormoderne. Begriffe – Thesen – Forschungsperspektiven', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 31 (2004), pp. 489–527; Jörg PELTZER/Gerald SCHWEDLER/Paul TÖBELMANN (eds.), *Politische Versammlungen und ihre Rituale. Repräsentationsformen und Entscheidungsprozesse des Reichs und der Kirche im späten Mittelalter* (Mittelalter-Forschungen 27), Ostfildern 2009; Peltzer, *Rang*, pp. 336–417.

of making them the subject of a book-length study.³⁹ Looking at material from England and the Empire in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, he analysed how they ranked the respective aristocracies. His contribution to this volume presents some of his significant findings. As he points out a lot of work remains to be done to analyse in depth the great variety of ways in which the rolls ordered society. It still takes some courage to do, but the rolls themselves are now more accessible than they have ever been.

The working plan of the conference required an interdisciplinary approach. Historians can deal with written sources, they can deal with epigraphic material, coins and seals, but when it comes to interpreting buildings or their remains their level of competence tends to diminish. This is the field of architectural historians, art historians and archaeologists. They duly feature prominently in this volume. The close collaboration between these disciplines was a distinctive feature of the research programme of RANK. The conference deliberately attempted to widen the spectrum of participating disciplines even further. The musicologist Silke Leopold demonstrated how dance at the fifteenth-century court of the Burgundian dukes was used to enact rank, but also to provide an opportunity, at which, for a brief moment at least, one could literally jump ahead of a competitor. Instead of delivering a traditional evening lecture she had the participants of the conference perform the dance to contemporary Burgundian music. While this was most instructive in understanding the ordering and disciplining effect of rhythm and step sequence, the performance itself was clearly not suitable for public dissemination, either in print or indeed any other type of record.⁴⁰ Readers should be grateful.

Another key element was the inclusion of the ethnological point of view. The study of hierarchical societies is a major field for ethnologists and social anthropologists. Indeed their research has heavily influenced my own thinking about rank. It was high time, therefore, to actually start working together. The ethnologist Guido Sprenger took on the task providing not only important insights into current trends of research but also pointing to a number of areas for future collaboration between ethnologists/social anthropologists and historians, in particular medieval historians.

His rich discussion of rank addresses three points of particular significance for further research. There is, first, the tricky question of terminology, a problem hard to solve for one language and, as the participants of the conference experienced, almost impossible for three (English, German and French).

39 Thorsten HUTHWELKER, *Die Darstellung des Rangs in Wappen und Wappenrollen des späten Mittelalters* (RANK. Politisch-soziale Ordnungen im mittelalterlichen Europa 3), Ostfildern 2013.

40 See instead her study 'Der politische Ton. Musik in der öffentlichen Repräsentation' in Martin KINTZINGER/Bernd SCHNEIDMÜLLER (eds.), *Politische Öffentlichkeit im Spätmittelalter* (Vorträge und Forschungen 75), Ostfildern 2011, pp. 21–40.

The respective use of rank and status was one issue that created insecurity. Sprenger points to a distinction which, if carefully applied, can help to nuance the discussion of rank. Status describes a much more malleable situation of social difference between individuals than rank and it is particularly useful for describing social differences among members of the same peer group which are very fluid and not of permanent character.⁴¹ At the same time, I think, it would be unwise to insist on a clear-cut distinction between the terms rank and status. It is precisely in the context of social differences within a peer group that status can be used, in part at least, as synonymous with rank. This usage takes into account the processes of individual rank formation within peer groups, that is the hardening of differences in status into more or less stable ranks (e.g. among the earls, the electors, or the imperial princes). Given the fluid nature of these processes it is often impossible to make a reasonable distinction between status and rank. If, however, a strict distinction between the terms of rank and status was applied here, the historian would be forced to make a decision on the basis of insufficient evidence. Instead of lending nuance to the discussion, the distinction of the terms would be misleading.

A second important aspect of Sprenger's contribution is his emphasis on the role of objects in defining rank. Of course, just like the rank of humans, the rank of objects was man-made. But crucially, just as medieval thought rooted the existence of different ranks ultimately in divine will and thus outside human control, the rank of objects could also be ascribed to transcendental or at least non-human origins. As a consequence their rank was of an almost fixed and unnegotiable nature. They thus played a crucial, even 'objective', role in conferring rank to humans.

41 The medieval terminology of rank is very diverse and the same term could mean different things in different contexts, PELTZER, *Rang*, pp. 24–25. For various meanings of *status* see, for instance, Helmuth STAHLER, 'Zum Ständebegriff im Mittelalter', *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte*, 35 (1972), pp. 523–570; Howard KAMINSKY, 'Estate, Nobility, and the Exhibition of Estate in the Later Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), pp. 684–709. For Aquinas *status* was the state one was born into and hence unchangeable. *Gradus* in turn was the place one occupied within one's status and this was changeable, *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis doctoris angelici opera omnia iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, so far 50 vols., Rome 1882–[1992], vol. 10/2/2 (Secunda secundae summae theologiae a quaestione 123 ad quaestionem 189), q. 183, especially a. 1 and 3. In German, the distinction between *Stand* and *Rang* requires careful consideration. One possibility is to use *Stand* for the aristocracy, i.e. a group of society that was functionally and socio-politically distinct from other groups, such as the clergy. *Rang/Rangstufe* can be used instead for layers within the aristocracy (e.g. the *Rangstufe* of the imperial princes instead of the traditional *Reichsfürstenstand*), PELTZER, *Rang*, pp. 25–26. This distinction between *Stand* and *Rang/Rangstufe* was communicated to the participants of the conference in advance. It was, of course, left to them to decide whether they adopted this usage in their presentations or not.

Thirdly Sprenger makes very clear the significance of competing rank values for the dynamics of society. The co-existence of various factors for the determination of rank created the potential of conflict between them. It was precisely the friction – at varying levels –, between these values that created societal dynamics and thus contributed to a constant renewal of society. One may even be so provocative as to argue that the constant competition between these different factors, and hence the continuous possibility of their reconfiguration, was a major stabilizing factor of a hierarchically structured society in the long-term. Competing values of rank drove the dynamics of societal renewal and hence potentially minor changes in the make-up of its hierarchy. This reduced the danger of a sudden, explosive and radical reaction against the entire hierarchical system and their agents.

At the time of the long and slow transition from the late Roman world to the early Middle Ages there were not only various factors of rank in place, but as Verena Epp suggests, the existence of entire systems of rank in competition with each other: imperial and senatorial networks, pagan and Christian value systems or the emerging hierarchy of the Christian church. The epigraphs composed for bishops and secular aristocrats reflect this by emphasising, in part, different sets of values. Lineage, offices, fighting skills and, to a lesser extent, wealth were important markers of an aristocrat, while a high degree of personal education, care for the weak, the construction and renewal of churches and personal piety were emphasised in relation to a bishop. But the distinction is not as sharp as it may seem at first sight. Both sets of values, for instance, are strongly founded on the idea of personal competency. Furthermore, the most evident rival virtue to personal competency, lineage⁴², was by no means restricted to the secular world. Bishop Sidonius Apollinaris (c. 430/33–479/86), a member of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy, attributed a key role to his family in defining his social identity; they were even more important than his episcopal office. This balance was to change, but it took about another hundred years until the praise of bishops on their tomb stones was dominated by deeds in the service of God.

Turning to the Carolingians, Philippe Depreux first discusses a *locus classicus*, Hincmar's *De ordine palatii*. Hincmar numbers age, experience, continu-

42 There were, of course, attempts, to resolve the antagonism between personal competency and lineage by arguing that personal competency was a quality that could be inherited. For the late medieval discussion of this in the context of elective and inherited kingship, see Elsa MARMURSZEJN, 'Élections et légitimité politique dans la pensée scolastique au tournant du XIII^e et du XIV^e siècle', in Corinne PENEAU (ed.), *Élections et pouvoirs politiques du VII^e au XVII^e siècle. Actes du colloque réuni à Paris 12, du 30 novembre au 2 décembre 2006*, Paris 2008, pp. 143–162, at pp. 153–157; Jörg PELTZER, 'Idoneität: eine Ordnungskategorie oder eine Frage des Rangs?', in Cristina ANDENNA/Gert MELVILLE/Kai HERING (eds.), *Idoneität – Genealogie – Legitimation: Begründung und Akzeptanz von dynastischer Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Norm und Struktur 43), Köln 2015, pp. 23–37.

ance of service or faithfulness to tradition among his criteria defining rank. Although designed as a meta-text, Hincmar also used it to advance his own claims at the Carolingian court. This is not the only thing to be kept in mind when reading Hincmar. Depreux points to a certain discrepancy between Hincmar's list and his own findings when looking at aristocratic careers. He demonstrates that some major factors defining rank or status among the lay aristocracy did not differ that much from late Roman ideals: lineage, personal skills and wealth. He further adds royal service to the list.⁴³ This points to a significant development: the Carolingian kings aimed at making themselves and their court the centre of the ranking system for the lay aristocracy. The emphasis on personal skills and royal service created a relatively flexible hierarchy in which people could improve their standing, but also lose their positions including associated titles and possessions.⁴⁴ It is indicative that the designation *amicus regis* appears to have been more important than a comital title, for instance, to indicate one's status. For this purpose Frankish aristocrats used signs, too. At the royal court, for example, the most important men indicated their status by wearing golden bands in their hair. But it is probably not due to the lack of sources that we are incapable of systematizing these signs. If historians and art historians are unsure about the identity of the Frankish magnate of St Benedict in Mals⁴⁵ this is not due to a shortcoming of this particular portrait, but more likely to the lack of a specific system of signs. Just like the aristocratic hierarchy itself, its signs seem to have been very much in flux.

Carolingian ideas and ideals are supposed to have exercised a considerable influence on Anglo-Saxon England. David Crouch challenges this thesis in regards to the emergence of the aristocracy in England. He argues for a much more insular development instead. Early medieval Britain experienced a multitude of kings and a number of terms to describe them. Following a model developed by Steven Basset, Crouch suggests that early English kingdoms slowly amalgamated tribal areas whose leaders were no longer considered kings, but were subordinate to the kings of the English kingdoms. Out of these 'demoted lesser kings' (p. 119) emerged the rank of ealdorman; a term which had lost any allusion to royal dignity, but nonetheless signified high status. Crouch considers this 'demoted royalty' (p. 120) to be at the root of aristocracy in Britain.

43 In conjunction with his contribution to this volume consult Philippe DEPREUX, 'Hiérarchie et ordre au sein du palais: l'accès au prince', in BOUGARD/LOGNA-PRAT/LE JAN (eds.), *Hiérarchie et stratification sociale*, pp. 305–323.

44 On careers under the Carolingians, see for example Philippe DEPREUX, 'Le comte Matfrid d'Orléans sous le règne de Louis le Pieux', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 152 (1994), pp. 331–374; Philippe DEPREUX, *Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux (781–840)* (Instrumenta 1), Sigmaringen 1997; Sophie GLANSDORF (ed.), *Comites in regno Hludouici regis constituti. Prosopographie des détenteurs d'offices séculiers en France orientale, de Louis le Germanique à Charles le Gros, 826–887* (Instrumenta 20), Ostfildern 2011.

45 RÜBER-SCHÜTTE, 'Neue Forschungen', p. 73.

Anglo-Saxon kings exercised great control over the ealdormen, as they were able to appoint them to supervise one or more provinces and to move their regional responsibilities as they wished. These shifting responsibilities may also have been a major reason why titles referring to a place or a region did not develop with respect to the ealdormen. The Danish conquest of England at the beginning of the eleventh century did little to change this situation, except for the fact that the term ealdorman was replaced by eorl. The real break came with the conquest of 1066. Thus Crouch's emphasis on British insularity before 1066 serves to strengthen one of the central points of his work on the English aristocracy: the key role played by the Norman Conquest. This, according to Crouch, led to the first true collision between continental and insular ideas about aristocracy and ended in a profound transformation or, as he terms it, 'francisation' of the English aristocracy. This became most visible in the change of the Latin title attributed to the earls. Up until 1066 they had been termed *duces*, now they were to be called *comites*, and furthermore the associated title of *comitissa* was introduced. And while the public powers of the new earls were greatly reduced, they were to keep their titles for the duration of their life. The title of an earl had not lost its meaning as an office granted by the king and one he could take away – in fact, as Nicholas Vincent shows, the authority of the English king over his earls was considerably stronger than the authority of the French king over 'his' counts. However, compared to the Anglo-Saxon period, the title had increasingly become a dignity conferring high rank not for a certain, if unspecified, period of time, but ideally for life and for one's descendants.

What William the Conqueror was careful to preserve and to extend even further, however, was the central position and great authority which the king had enjoyed in Anglo-Saxon England. The degree to which the king was the focal point of the socio-political configuration in England in the middle of the eleventh century was something which his French counterpart could only dream of. While he was still the only king in and of France, he wielded little concrete authority over the dukes and counts of his kingdom. Indeed it would be interesting to know more about the aristocracy's perception of the socio-political configurations around the year 1000. To what extent did they feel part of the socio-political order of the French kingdom? Did they consider their regional socio-political orders to be part of the order of the realm or rather as separate orders existing side by side? Was there any need to create compatibility between the two?

Taking the story from the 1050s onwards Vincent seems at first just to recount the familiar tale of the Capetians' consolidation of royal power in the twelfth century, in particular under Philip Augustus. But there is more to it. By focussing on the relationship between the king and the dukes/counts, Vincent shows that the French king's hold over his counts was rather limited. It is true that he could summon them for the defence of the realm and sometimes he

could intervene in succession disputes or take action against a count accused of tyranny, but there was nothing like an investiture ritual to indicate that the counts held their dignity from the king. Only if they held other lands directly from him could he expect their homage. This was to change gradually in the course of the twelfth century. The Capetians increasingly imposed their view that the great principalities were held as a fief from the crown for which homage was due. While this had relatively little impact on the relationship between king and count during the reigns of Louis VI and Louis VII, this changed under Philip Augustus from the 1180s onwards. Philip was the first to use the feudal bond to manipulate radically the relationship with his vassal. And here, Vincent argues, Philip took his lessons from his great rivals, the Angevin kings. It was the practice of disinheritance in particular that Philip seems to have adopted from his neighbours. Disinheritance had not been unknown in the French kingdom, but in relation to counts and dukes this had previously been, as Vincent outlines, an unheard of and tyrannical practice. This was not the case in Normandy and England, where counts could be disinherited by their king- duke. Ironically, it was at the cost of an Angevin king that Philip introduced the legal novelty of disinheriting a great vassal to French royal politics. When in 1202 the court convened by Philip found King John guilty of not fulfilling his duties as a vassal and, as a consequence, stripped him of Anjou and Normandy, the court turned one of John's sharpest legal weapons against him. Philip's subsequent victories on the battlefield ensured that this decision established a much-followed precedent. The punishment of disinheritance became a powerful tool for the French kings in dealing with their aristocracy.

Vincent's argument is, of course, a powerful challenge to the current view that Angevin or, more specifically, Anglo-Norman governmental practice did not greatly influence the development of Capetian government; a view which in turn had challenged the older doctrine that the Capetians had in fact learnt a great deal from their Angevin neighbours. While it will be interesting to see the reaction to Vincent's thesis, his findings should be placed in a context reaching far beyond the world of Anglo-French politics and its scholarship. Philip's action against King John can be seen as part, if clearly the most spectacular and risky element, of his general desire to create a clearly defined hierarchical relationship between the king and the dukes and counts of his kingdom. This difference was to be signified by the homage they all owed to the king and the obligations thereby incurred. The hierarchy of the realm was to be centred on the king and his court. He was to be the primary agent of the socio-political order of the realm. In this Philip may have been inspired by the example of the English kingdom and the Angevin court, but he may also have been encouraged by developments to the east of his kingdom, for, if we turn to the Empire, we find some striking parallels in the second half of the twelfth centu-

ry.⁴⁶ Here, too, great efforts were made by the imperial court to define the hierarchical relationship between king and magnates more clearly and even to structure the aristocratic hierarchy. The imperial chancery was mainly responsible for the spread of the term *princeps imperii* to denote a magnate who held his principality from the king. With the slow, but steady emergence of these *principes* as the new elite group among the German aristocracy, the term became the marker of a new layer of rank.⁴⁷ To mark the subordination of the *princeps* to the emperor a key role was assigned to the public visualisation of their feudal relationship: the emperor invested the future imperial prince with his principality.⁴⁸

A further striking parallel between France and the Empire is the significance of court cases to shape the feudal and hence hierarchical relations between the king and his magnates. Two decades before John was tried in Paris, his brother-in-law, Henry the Lion, had faced judgement in a court composed of other magnates and presided over by Frederick Barbarossa. Henry, much like John, was accused of having violated his duties as a vassal of the king (as well as a number of other serious allegations). And, as in the case of the Angevin, there was no escape for Henry. He was found guilty and lost his principalities of Saxony and Bavaria and thus his rank of an imperial prince.⁴⁹ He left the Em-

46 On the development in the Empire, see Jürgen Dendorfer's contribution to this volume.

47 Julius FICKER, *Vom Reichsfürstenstande. Forschungen zur Geschichte der Reichsverfassung zunächst im 12. und 13. Jahrhunderte*, 2 vols., Innsbruck/Graz 1861–1923, reprint Aalen 1961, vol. 1, pp. 147–155; Heinrich KOLLER, 'Die Bedeutung des Titels „princeps“ in der Reichskanzlei unter den Saliern und Staufern', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 68 (1960), pp. 63–80. It should be noted that in France, too, the royal chancery altered the way in which the vassals of the king were addressed in the second half of the twelfth century. Regardless of their individual titles they were addressed as *barones* and thus characterized as members of a specific group, the king's vassals, Éric BOURNAZEL, *Le gouvernement capétien au XII^e siècle, 1108–1180. Structures sociales et mutations institutionnelles* (Publications de la faculté de droit et des sciences économiques de Limoges 2), Limoges 1975, pp. 152–157.

48 Karl-Heinz SPIESS, 'Kommunikationsformen im Hochadel und am Königshof im Spätmittelalter', in Gerd ALTHOFF (ed.), *Formen und Funktionen öffentlicher Kommunikation im Mittelalter* (Vorträge und Forschungen 51), Stuttgart 2001, pp. 261–290, at pp. 277–285; PELTZER, *Rang*, pp. 78–103.

49 MGH *DD F I*, vol. 3, no. 795; Stefan WEINFURTER, 'Erzbischof Philipp von Köln und der Sturz Heinrichs des Löwen', in Helmuth KLUGER/Hubertus SEIBERT/Werner BOMM (eds.), *Gelebte Ordnung – Gedachte Ordnung. Ausgewählte Beiträge zu König, Kirche und Reich. Festgabe aus Anlaß des 60. Geburtstages von Stefan Weinfurter*, Ostfildern 2005, pp. 335–359; Joachim EHLERS, *Heinrich der Löwe. Eine Biographie*, Munich 2008, pp. 330–337; Knut GÖRICH, 'Jäger des Löwen oder Getriebener der Fürsten? Friedrich Barbarossa und die Entmachtung Heinrichs des Löwen', in Werner HECHBERGER/Florian SCHULLER (eds.), *Staufer und Welfen. Zwei rivalisierende Dynastien im Hochmittelalter* (Themen der Katholischen Akademie in Bayern), Regensburg 2009, S. 98–117; GÖRICH, *Friedrich*, pp. 461–485. For some comparative remarks on the reigns of Frederick and Philip emphasising the differences, see Hanna VOLLRATH, 'Politische Ordnungsvorstellungen und politisches Han-

pire for the Angevin court where he may have told the young John his version of the story.

Neither in 1180 nor in 1202 were there established rules in place to guide the course of the juridical proceedings. Both trials stepped into unchartered legal territory and shaped their own precedent-setting procedures. In so doing they also contributed to defining the hierarchical relationship between the king and even the greatest of his magnates. Both cases may also have raised the awareness of layers of rank among the aristocracy itself. In the Empire this was certainly the case. We know that the judgement of Henry by his princely peers and his demotion from the rank of an imperial prince significantly increased the visibility of this group as an emerging aristocratic elite.⁵⁰ As to France, the impact of the process against John on the definition and self-perception of the peers of France evidently deserves a fresh investigation. This 'juridicisation' of the feudal relationship clearly reflects the increasing engagement with and systematisation of law at the nascent universities and local centres of learning in the second half of the twelfth century. Law thus became an important ally of kings in their attempts to (re)configure the socio-political order of their realms and to establish what can be termed a monarchical order.

Philip Augustus laid the foundations for the French royal court to become the centre for the negotiation of rank among the higher French aristocracy in the later Middle Ages. Jean-Marie Moeglin looks at its development in the subsequent centuries. His analysis of Louis IX's assembly with his magnates in Acre after their liberation from Egypt underscores very neatly that the order of seating was no meaningless formality but corresponded with seniority. When the king asked his barons whether he should return to France or continue the crusade, the opinion of those sitting next to him counted more than that of those seated further away. But the individual ranking of magnates in thirteenth-century France was not yet firmly fixed. According to Moeglin, the factors of rank such as blood relationship with the king, the importance of one's title and age were still largely informal. As a consequence fluctuation in the pecking order of the magnates was possible.

In this context, it would be interesting to see what rolls of arms have to say on the order of the French aristocracy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Looking at the English and Imperial aristocracy, Thorsten Huthwelker shows that rolls of arms may not always have arranged the earls or the electors/imperial princes in the same order, but they do demonstrate a clear tendency to group certain magnates at the top and others at the bottom. The significance of the title in defining rank differed between England and the Empire. In England

deln im Vergleich. Philipp II. August von Frankreich und Friedrich Barbarossa im Konflikt mit ihren mächtigen Fürsten', in CANNING/OEXLE (ed.), *Political Thought and the Realities of Power in the Middle Ages*, pp. 33–51.

50 See previous note.

the title grouped its bearer unmistakably into a certain layer of rank: a duke was a duke, an earl was an earl. In the Empire it was not that straightforward. There existed dukes who were not imperial princes, for instance. Within a certain layer rank/status was defined by a bundle of criteria: family, antiquity, a blood relationship with the king and political activity. In the Empire it was probably the two former criteria which counted most, while in England it was the latter two.

In general, layers of rank within the aristocracy became increasingly well defined in England, France and the Empire in the course of the late Middle Ages. Moreover, and this is a major structural difference from the early Middle Ages, aristocratic rank was much more stable. Clearly, it remained possible to move up and down the social ladder. A failed rebellion against the king put one's rank at risk while royal service bore the chance of promotion, but in the normal course of events a noble could expect to die bearing the title and holding the lands and rights which he had inherited. This growing detachment of a noble's rank from his personal abilities and the hardening of aristocratic ranking may well have contributed to increased theoretical discussion and justification of the existing socio-political order. In the thirteenth century the rediscovery of Aristotle at the universities stimulated thought on what constituted an aristocracy.⁵¹ There were numerous new additions to the genre of mirrors for princes and the advice set out in these texts on the behaviour of a *princeps* was widely diffused.⁵² Courtesy books addressed in particular, although not exclusively, correct conduct at court.⁵³ This emphasis on personal behaviour can perhaps in part be seen as a reaction to the establishment of the hereditary principle. Precisely because aristocratic and in most cases royal rank was inherited and thus largely divorced from personal abilities, their bearers had to show proper aristocratic virtue by their behaviour (so as to reduce any criticism of the hereditary principle and hence of the existing socio-political order). By found-

51 On the reception of Aristotle see, for instance, Jean DUNBABIN, 'The Reception and Interpretation of Aristotle's Politics', in Norman KREZMANN/Anthony KENNY/Jean PINBORG (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy. From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism 1100–1600*, Cambridge 1982, pp. 723–737.

52 See, for example, the particularly popular *De regimine principum* written by Giles of Rome around 1280 with heavy recourse to Aristotle, Egidio Colonna (*Aegidius Romanus*), *De regimine principum libri iii*, ed. Hieronymus SAMARITANIUS, Rome 1607, rep. Aalen 1967. On the wide diffusion of Giles' work in England, see Charles F. BRIGGS, *Giles of Rome's De Regimine Principum. Reading and Writing Politics at Court and University, c. 1275–c. 1525* (Cambridge Studies in Palaeography and Codicology), Cambridge 1999.

53 Current scholarship places their origin in the twelfth century. Courtesy books could also concern urban elites, among whom the display of correct behaviour also served to strengthen their prominent position. On courtesy books, see Jonathan NICHOLLS, *The Matter of Courtesy. Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet*, Woodbridge 1985, and the recent overview by Klaus OSCEMA, 'Courtesy Books', in Albrecht CLASSEN (ed.), *Handbook of Medieval Studies. Terms – Methods – Trends*, 3 vols., Berlin 2010, vol. 3, pp. 1728–1734.

ing chivalric orders from the fourteenth century onwards, rulers even created institutions explicitly dedicated to fostering personal virtue. It is for this reason that the Order of the Golden Fleece declared that factors of rank were not to play a role in deciding the precedence of its members.⁵⁴

Looking at France in the early fifteenth century, Moeglin points to two texts written to justify the existing socio-political order. These texts did not dwell on individual aristocratic virtues but defended the principle of well-ordered hierarchical society. The first text, by Christine de Pizan, characterized the court of Charles V as being ordered by ranks. The king at its helm maintained and guaranteed that order. For Christine de Pizan this served as a model for society at large, for an ideal society was one in which each performed his/her office according to his/her rank. A theological justification for the hierarchical nature of society was provided by Jean Gerson, in a tractate very likely written in 1423. He reasoned that all society, be it in heaven or on earth, was divided into ranks according to nobility, that is according to the degree to which the members of society shared the divine essence: the most noble was God, who embodied divine essence; the most ignoble was the devil who rejected it.

In practice, however, it was not that easy to order the upper echelons of the French aristocracy without contrasting values of rank causing tensions. The blood relationship with the king had risen notably in significance in defining rank. Since the early fourteenth century the relatives of the king were considered a group apart; Moeglin likens their place in the socio-political order of the realm to those of the electors in the Empire. Indeed, the significance of royal blood was so great that a potential conflict between rank as defined by proximity to the king and rank as defined by title was reduced in the course of the fourteenth century by an attempt to align the order of dignities with the order of blood relationship. None the less, there remained enough potential for conflict and insecurity. For instance, while it may have been obvious how to differentiate between a brother and a cousin of the king, how the numerous cousins should be ranked in relation to each other was rather less clear. Here, factors beyond the exact degree of kinship had to come into play. Moreover, royal kinship was not the overriding factor rendering all other values secondary in importance. There were still other factors competing with royal kinship for primary significance in defining precedence. Most prominent of these was

54 For further chivalric orders with similar rules and the importance of knightly behaviour, see Maurice KEEN, *Chivalry*, Yale 2005, pp. 196–199. For a more detailed discussion on the definition of princely idoneity and the significance of personal performance in defining rank, see Jörg PELTZER, 'Idoneität', in ANDENNA/MELVILLE (eds.), *Idoneität – Genealogie – Legitimation*; Jörg PELTZER, 'Rang und Performanz. Die Signifikanz des Tuns und Lassens für den eigenen Rang', in Klaus OSCEMA/Cristina ANDENNA/Gert MELVILLE/Jörg PELTZER (eds.), *Die Performanz der Mächtigen. Rangordnung und Idoneität in höfischen Gesellschaften des späten Mittelalters* (RANK. Politisch-soziale Ordnungen im mittelalterlichen Europa 5), Ostfildern 2015, pp. 53–70, in addition to the other articles in that volume.

seniority among the *pairs de France* based on the dignity of the dean's office. On the occasion of the coronation of Charles VI in 1380, the dean of the *pairs*, the duke of Burgundy, prevailed in his struggle with the duke of Anjou, the future king's closest relative, for the most prominent place. As a consequence of such contrasting values of rank and in the absence of a coherent ruling on their relative value (the disputes themselves could not serve as precedent-setting as their solutions did not follow a coherent pattern), it proved impossible to create an uncontested hierarchy among the French aristocracy. If we follow Sprenger's thesis, this failure, however, can only have been beneficial for French aristocratic society, as contrasting values of rank were at the root of societal dynamics. In other words, a lack of a wholly fixed and undisputed order was a sign that everything was in good order.

Laurent Hablot's analysis of signs deployed by aristocrats in the late Middle Ages fits nicely into the picture developed by Moeglin. The increasing differentiation of noble ranks was accompanied by a growing repertoire of signs. The development of the heraldic system is sufficient to demonstrate this: in the course of the fourteenth century the design of coats of arms became more complex: supporters, helmets, caps or crowns, and devices could be added. In general, it seems that this multiplication of signs was due to the initiative of the upper echelons of society seeking to distinguish themselves from those lower down the hierarchy. As they could do little to prevent the diffusion of signs, signs tended to lose their social exclusivity. This, however, did not affect all markers of rank at the same speed and to the same extent. In France, for instance, the crown remained an exclusively royal symbol until the fifteenth century. Shields with multiple divisions seem to have remained almost exclusively the preserve of the upper aristocracy and, in the Empire, as Andrea Stieldorf emphasises, the lance with a banner remained, by and large, a sign particular to the imperial princes. Again, it was during the fifteenth century that, in line with the attempts to clarify aristocratic ranking, greater efforts were undertaken to systemize the deployment of signs. Unsurprisingly, the theoreticians attributed to the king a key role in this, and in some cases rulers did in fact try to impose their authority on the use of signs.

Seals and coins look at first sight like very similar mediums to express ambitions of rank. Yet, as Andrea Stieldorf shows, they could be used to portray very different things. In the Empire, at least, practice regulated the appearance of a seal much more than that of coins. In the thirteenth century, most great seals of members of the aristocracy portrayed a mounted knight brandishing a sword or, if he was an imperial prince, holding a lance bearing a banner at its top. Pointing to the practice of members of the lower aristocracy employing armorial seals rather than equestrian ones, Stieldorf argues that chivalric values cannot have been the primary objective served by the image of the mounted knight. Otherwise there would have been no reason why the lower aristocracy

should not have made extensive use of this image too. Instead, she proposes that the mounted knight stood first and foremost for seigniorial rights of a certain quality and the power to enforce them.

In contrast to seals, coins show a greater variety of motifs. They could portray husband and wife and thereby allude to marriage by consent or to courtly love, but they could also be used to refer to specific political events. That, however, did not mean that coins were devoid of reference to seigniorial rights; advocacy in particular seems to have been a popular motif. In terms of rank, however, it may be added that the most important message may well have been the issue of the coin itself. While use of a seal was open to a considerable number of people, issuing coins remained the preserve of a privileged few. This limitation to a specific group may have reduced the need to standardize design. But this is a hypothesis that can only be answered by further, systematic investigation. Indeed, a major message inherent in the contributions of Stieldorf and Hablot is the need to analyse seals and coins across Europe in greater depth and precision in order to gain a much better understanding of the issues discussed here and of regional variation. Such an enterprise, however, requires a systematic evaluation of the archival collections – a huge undertaking, no doubt, but one which would pay dividends.

Perhaps the most obvious expression of aristocratic lifestyle in the central and late Middle Ages was the castle. Indeed, the emergence of castles, the process by which lords moved away from the settlements to more isolated or prominent places in the landscape is perhaps one of the most significant shifts from the early to the central Middle Ages. Its detailed investigation requires further major concerted efforts by archaeologists and historians. Here, Annie Renoux points to some intrinsic difficulties in interpreting (archaeological) remains of this period. Due to the lack of written or other sources clearly identifying the owners of buildings there is a great danger of a circular argument based on the assumption that aristocrats had larger buildings constructed than others. Clearly, in some cases it can be shown that they did so, but it does not follow that all greater structures were built by aristocrats or, indeed, that they only built big.

Looking at evidence mostly from Western Francia Renoux identifies two major shifts in the construction of buildings associated with powerful aristocrats: the use of stone instead of wood and the construction of towers. It would certainly be far too narrow a judgement to attribute this change only to military needs; these buildings were primarily markers of territory and lordship. Furthermore, in them the power and resourcefulness of their owners were visualised: they were able to build such places, while others were not. In the later Middle Ages stone in itself was no longer sufficient to denote the building of a magnate. It had to be a particular type of stone, as Géraldine Victoir shows in her analysis of the building activities of Louis II, duke of Bourbon (d. 1410). Lou-

is brought in bright limestone from far afield to Moulins to give his castle an appearance typical for buildings of the French king and his relatives. In Louis's case Victoir's meticulous study of the materials, the architecture and the organisation of space within the castle, in particular the central role of the great stairs in staging the superior rank of the lord, demonstrates that Louis wished to be seen above all as a member of the royal family. For Louis, clearly, the point of reference for his rank was the king, not his duchy.

In his study of thirteenth-century castle building in England, Oliver Creighton also focused on one magnate: Richard of Cornwall. In showing that he was responsible for a great variety of buildings he underscores a point already made by Renoux: there is no reason to assume that a magnate would always build the same way. On the contrary, we should assume that he built different types of buildings to meet different needs. In general, Creighton identifies a number of strategies deployed to communicate rank through the architecture of a castle. One way was to make something look older than it actually was. What Creighton calls 'anachronism' (p. 338) corresponds to the importance of *antiquitas*, antiquity, stressed again and again in contemporary disputes about rank. Another way to use a castle to communicate rank was to make it appear stronger and more defensible than it actually was. This greater defensibility underscored and demonstrated the possession of *potestas* and of personal military prowess. Creighton argues that the projection of the lord's rank did not begin with the great stairs inside the castle, but with the shaping of its surroundings. The magnate wished to control who saw the castle and in which ways it was seen. By stressing the importance of including the surrounding landscape in his investigation Creighton makes a point vital for all analysis, be it historical or archaeological: to take the broader view.

From the outset of the conference it was clear that the questions outlined above could not possibly be fully answered by the individual contributions. Neither the conference nor its proceedings can tell the complete story of aristocratic rank across the Middle Ages. Towards the end of the funding period of RANK the aim was neither to attempt the impossible nor to claim that the project had solved all questions of rank and hence settled the subject for good. On the contrary, as a result of our work, it had become clear that the potential of rank to better understand the Middle Ages reached far beyond the scope of RANK itself. The aim, therefore, was not to close the subject, but to provide methodological foundations and thematic lines upon and along which future research could develop. Together with the other publications of the RANK-project, this volume hopes to lead the way for such undertakings. To some extent the work on, and about, rank has only just begun.

Many contributed to the realisation of the conference and this volume. The re-shaping of the original theme of the second conference was the work of the re-

search group RANK in the heyday of its manpower: the input of Thorsten Huthwelker, Géraldine Victoir and Maximilian Wemhöner greatly improved the programme. Most of the actual organisation of the conference was carried out with great diligence and efficiency by Maximilian Wemhöner with the support of Max Wetterauer. I am very grateful to both of them. The conference was held at the *Internationale Wissenschaftsforum Heidelberg* between 12 and 14 September 2013, where the friendly support of the staff and the wonderful weather made the stay very pleasant. Thanks are also due to the numerous conference participants who did not present a paper, but who took up the invitation to chair sessions, to comment on the papers of a session or to lead the discussions: Stefan Burkhardt, Hugh Doherty, Jean Dunbabin, Jörg Feuchter, Hans-Werner Goetz, Lindy Grant, Frédérique Lachaud, Annette Kehnel, Martin Kintzinger, Heinz Krieg, Klaus Oschema, Benjamin Scheller, Markus Späth, Karl-Heinz Spieß and Matthias Untermann. Their input greatly improved our exchange and is neatly reflected in the papers edited here. Integral parts of the conference were visits to the exhibition 'Die Wittelsbacher am Rhein. Die Kurpfalz und Europa', shown at the *Reiss-Engelhorn Museen* in Mannheim between September 2013 and March 2014, and to the exhibition 'Die Grablegen der Wittelsbacher in Heidelberg. Tod und Gedächtnis im späten Mittelalter', shown at the *Kurpfälzische Museum* in Heidelberg during the same period. Both exhibitions laid a heavy emphasis on the visualisation of rank in the Empire in the late Middle Ages and thus provided the conference participants with almost first-hand experience of the issues under discussion. I am very grateful to Alfried Wiczorek, director-general of the *Reiss-Engelhorn Museen*, Alexander Schubert, then responsible for 'The Wittelsbacher am Rhein' and now director of the *Historische Museum der Pfalz* in Speyer, and Frieder Hepp, director of the *Kurpfälzische Museum* for having given RANK the opportunity to contribute to both of these undertakings as an official partner.

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