

RANK

Politisch-soziale Ordnungen im mittelalterlichen Europa
Herausgegeben von Jörg Peltzer

BAND 4

Jörg Peltzer (ed.)

Rank and Order

*The Formation of
Aristocratic Elites in Western and
Central Europe, 500–1500*



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Abbreviations

Abb.	Abbildung
AN	Archives Nationales
Anm.	Anmerkung
Bd./Bde.	Band/Bände
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France
bzw.	beziehungsweise
Cod.	Codex
col./cols.	column/columns
d.	died
esp.	especially
f./fol.	folio
fig.	figure
HRG	Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte, 5 vols., Berlin ¹ 1971–1998, 2 vols. to date Berlin ² 2004–[2015]
Kat.-Nr.	Katalog-Nummer
LexMA	Lexikon des Mittelalters, 9 vols., Zürich/Munich 1980–1998.
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
MGH Auct. Ant.	Auctores Antiquissimi, 15 vols., Hannover 1877–1919.
MGH SS	Scriptores, 39 vols. to date, Hannover 1826–[2009].
MGH SS rer. Germ.	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum seperatim editi, 80 vols. to date Hannover 1871–[2013].

MGH SS rer. Merov.	Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, 7 vols., Hannover 1885–1951.
MGH Fontes iuris	Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui in usum scholarum separatim editi, 15 vols., Hannover 1909–2000.
MGH D H V	http://www.mgh.de/ddhv/ (Die Urkunden Heinrichs V. und der Königin Mathilde, ed. Matthias THIEL/Alfred GAWLIK (MGH Die Urkunden der deutschen Könige und Kaiser 7) (6 May 2015)
MGH DD K III	Die Urkunden Konrads III. und seines Sohnes Heinrich, ed. Friedrich HAUSMANN (MGH Die Urkunden der deutschen Könige und Kaiser 14), 3 vols. to date, Hannover 2002–[2010].
MGH DD FI	Die Urkunden Friedrichs I., ed. Heinrich APPELT (MGH Die Urkunden der deutschen Könige und Kaiser 10), 5 vols., Hannover 1975–1990.
Ms./ms.	Manuscript/Manuskript/manuscrit
NF	Neue Folge
nouv. sér.	nouvelle série
o. O.	ohne Ort
r.	<i>recto</i>
RAC	Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum, 25 vols., Stuttgart 1950–2013.
RS	Rolls Series
RTA	Deutsche Reichstagsakten. Mittlere Reihe, ed. Ernst BOCK/Heinz GOLLWITZER/Heinz ANGERMEIER/Reinhard SEYBOTH/Dietmar HEIL, 9 vols. to date, Göttingen/Munich 1972–[2014].
t.	tome(s)
Taf.	Tafel
u. a.	unter anderem
usw	und so weiter

v.	vers/ <i>verso</i> /voir
vol. /vols.	volume(s)
z. B.	zum Beispiel

Illustrations

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Lorsch, "Tor-/Königshalle": © Roman von Götz, 2006

Kenilworth Castle: © Maximilian Wemhöner

Henry, duke of Lancaster: © The British Library Board, Ms. Stowe 594, fol. 8r

Frankish magnate, St Benedict in Mals: © Scala, Istituto Fotografico Editoriale, Antella (Florence)

Verena Epp, Frühmittelalterliche Grabinschriften als ‚Statussymbole‘

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Thorsten Huthwelker, Die Darstellung fürstlichen Rangs in Wappenrollen des späten Mittelalters

Figs. 1–4: © Thorsten Huthwelker

Annie Renoux, Résidences et lieux de pouvoir des élites aristocratiques en Gaule franque du VII^e au début du XI^e siècle : les signes distinctifs

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Géraldine Victoir, Les châteaux de Louis II de Bourbon (1337–1410) : résidence et prestige

Fig. 1–6: © Géraldine Victoir

Introduction¹

Jörg Peltzer

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

- 1 The research leading to this article has received funding from the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013) under grant agreement no. 204905 (RANK). I am grateful to John Bell, Dr Johanna Dale, and Dr Hugh Doherty for having read the text.
- 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 mediævalia 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 Vließ', 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 *au-toritas* 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 DD FI*, 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 prominent 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 MARMURSZTEJN, '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 VI^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.