Dynastic Change: Legitimacy and Gender in Medieval and Early Modern Monarchy examines the strategies for change and legitimacy in monarchies in the medieval and early modern eras.

Taking a broadly comparative approach, Dynastic Change explores the mechanisms employed as well as theoretical and practical approaches to monarchical legitimisation. The book answers the question of how monarchical families reacted, adjusted, or strategised when faced with dynastic crises of various kinds, such as a lack of a male heir or unfitness of a reigning monarch for rule, through the consideration of such themes as the role of royal women, the uses of the arts for representational and propaganda purposes, and the impact of religion or popular will. Broad in both chronological and geographical scope, chapters discuss examples from the 9th to the 18th centuries across such places as Morocco, Byzantium, Portugal, Russia, and Western Europe, showing readers how cultural, religious, and political differences across countries and time periods affected dynastic relations.

Bringing together gender, monarchy, and dynasticism, the book highlights parallels across time and place, encouraging a new approach to monarchy studies. It is the perfect collection for students and researchers of medieval and early modern monarchy and gender.

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This is a brand-new series which straddles both medieval and early modern worlds, encouraging readers to examine historical change over time as well as promoting understanding of the historical continuity between events in the past, and to challenge perceptions of periodisation. It aims to meet the demand for conceptual or thematic topics which cross a relatively wide chronological span (any period between c. 500–1750), including a broad geographical scope.

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DYNASTIC CHANGE

Legitimacy and Gender in Medieval and Early Modern Monarchy

Edited by Ana Maria S. A. Rodrigues, Manuela Santos Silva and Jonathan Spangler
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INTRODUCTION

Ana Maria S. A. Rodrigues, Manuela Santos Silva, and Jonathan Spangler

In the broad canvas of the history of monarchy, there is one constant: royal dynasties rise to power, they weaken and fall, and others replace them. Dynastic change must be legitimised to secure the new regime, but historically this has been done through a variety of means. This volume brings together scholars from across Europe and beyond to examine the strategies for change and legitimacy in monarchies in the medieval and early modern eras. Particular themes include the roles played by royal women in strengthening dynastic rule, the uses of the arts for representational and propaganda purposes, and the place of religion or popular will in determining the outcomes of dynastic change. Through a broadly comparative approach, this volume allows us to examine the mechanisms employed as well as both theoretical and practical approaches to monarchical legitimisation from a variety of perspectives.

The central question is: when faced with dynastic crises of various kinds, from lack of a male heir to unfitness for rule of a reigning monarch, how do monarchical families react, adjust, or strategise? Once a dynasty has obtained power, how do they then legitimise their rule? What methods are used? And what further hurdles could remain to be overcome, namely issues of gender, religion, or foreignness? The essays included in this volume have been selected from papers that were presented at a conference of the same name held in Lisbon in 2015. They represent a unique blend of new research currently being conducted by both emerging and seasoned scholars and ranging in focus across Europe and beyond, and from the tenth to the eighteenth centuries, from the Ottonian monarchy to regimes in the Age of Enlightenment.

Specialists of monarchy in the medieval and early modern periods would readily agree that the central-most concern of any monarch is dynasticism. Whether this concern is manifest as a desire for glory and conquest, expressing religious authority, or establishing a historical legacy, all monarchs focus a disproportionate amount
of their energies in ensuring the security of their family, their dynasty. Even the most “absolute” of monarchs, those who in theory ruled completely alone, are now seen as subject to the same drive, to preserve and pass on what they have to the next generation. In this light, recent scholarship has therefore focused on the means employed for transmitting dynastic power from generation to generation, including, notably, through the agency of royal women. This collection, then, aims to turn this investigation on its head to analyse situations in which normal patterns of succession were disrupted and dynasticism faced threats or even failed outright. The volume looks at periods of weakness—minorities, regencies, civil wars—to see how dynasties dealt with them (or did not), but also at succeeding periods when new dynasties sought to legitimise and consolidate their rule through various means. This final aspect of legitimacy, the legal tools used, brings in some very interesting questions on the relationship between monarchy, dynasty, and “the people”, in that many unstable dynasties turned to “election” of some form or another in order to consolidate their hold on power, as seen in the medieval Iberian monarchies—or in some cases, it was the reverse, and the wider elites maintained a practice of elective monarchy to prevent the consolidation of dynastic power, as in Poland-Lithuania.

The case studies presented here are not solely focused on Western Europe, as in many collections, but include chapters on Orthodox monarchy in Byzantium and Russia and on an Islamic regime in Morocco. Where Islamic and Christian cultures collided in the early medieval period was in Iberia, and there are a number of essays in this collection that focus on the kingdoms of Portugal, Castile, and Aragon, which, each in their way, struggled to determine the relationship between a warrior kingship developed in this region of conflict, family rule or dynasticism based on more clearly hereditary principals being developed elsewhere in Europe, and the popular will of those being governed. It is the latter group who were the intended audience for much of the material that is being discussed in the chapters in this volume: the artwork, the literary propaganda, the religious sanctification offered by the Church, or the legal arguments presented to public assemblies. And throughout each of these themes runs the important role of women, either as claimants to the throne or agents acting behind the throne for the interests of their husbands or sons. The volume is divided into two parts: the first includes chapters on dynastic change resulting from dethroning, delegitimising, or other succession crises; while the second examines methods for legitimising royal authority, from the visual and literary to religious and legal.

The idea of legitimacy

What is dynastic change? From a strictly definitional point of view it is the transition from one clan or kinship group (a “dynasty”) to another, or in more modern terms, the shift from one family surname to another, for example Tudor to Stuart, or Oldenburg to Vasa. But this may be too simplistic: sometimes these shifts could occur within one overarching patrilineal dynasty (for example, from Valois to
Bourbon, both descended in the male line from Hugh Capet) or, more complexly, a male taking on a dynastic claim from his mother, like King Henry VII of England, who presented himself not so much as head of a new dynasty (“Tudor”), but as the legitimate continuator of the House of Lancaster, the dynasty of his predecessors as kings of England, Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI, or indeed the re-unifier of the feuding houses of Lancaster and York. Legitimacy was then sought for his grab for power at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485, either through obscuring his descent from the houses of Tudor or Beaufort, or in highlighting historical continuities by means of the commissioned works of Polydore Vergil and other historical writers.6

Thinking in the broadest terms for the history of monarchy and dynasticism, legitimacy is sought by a royal dynasty for two things: (1) obtaining the throne (by conquest, usurpation, acclamation by soldiers or the populace, election or confirmation by peers or popular representatives, or by hereditary succession); and (2) keeping the throne (by staying the strongest, gaining the approval of the Church or public opinion, or by defaming predecessors and rivals). As the medieval and early modern eras gave way to the modern, there were two other distinctive scenarios for obtaining or keeping thrones, which are not covered in this volume but are certainly worthy of consideration in the history of the evolution of the institution of monarchy on their own: the idea of obtaining a throne through parliamentary agreement, as happened in Britain during the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688–89 (and adjusted through the Act of Settlement, 1701), or through treaty agreements between the Great Powers, as with the House of Lorraine in 1737, which was given the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and eventual rights of succession to the entire Habsburg patrimony, in exchange for its hereditary lands which became part of France.7

The concept of “dynastic legitimacy” has several connotations and varies from context to context, depending in particular on the period of history in which it is applied. A writer looking at political legitimacy in the Enlightenment era in Europe measures whether legitimate authority comes from a divinely sanctioned hereditary monarchy or from the will of a sovereign people. In earlier periods such a conversation would have been meaningless, as government based on monarchy, approved by God, was seen by most to be an assumed norm. The relevant question for jurists and philosophers of the earlier period, instead, was whether this form of government should be hereditary or not; why should power and authority be transmitted from father to son, rather than simply to the next most competent leader? And if it was hereditary, what kind of inheritance system should be used? Primogeniture, agnatic seniority, tanistry, or something else altogether?8 The pre-modern world was a dynastic world, and not only in Europe, as shown recently by global studies focused on this topic.9 Dynasties thus struggled to define their legitimate place as rulers of their individual societies. But often legitimacy implied something bigger, a divine sanction. What role did the official religion of a state play in the regulating of legitimacy of its rulers?

At the most basic level, legitimacy comes from the Latin lex, as something being done or measured according to a law—thus a child born within the legal
framework of marriage as established by the laws agreed upon by the society was therefore “legitimate”, and one who was not was “illegitimate”. This set of essays, however, looks beyond that definition, to the efforts of monarchs and monarchies in the medieval and early modern periods to justify their possession of power, and the continuation of their power within the dynasty, however defined. Legitimacy, therefore, was important for individuals as well as dynasties. These essays also explore the boundaries of what is understood as “dynastic law”—were these rules merely social contracts conceived by human beings, or were there greater laws that also needed to be respected: divine law, natural law? Monarchs and their supporters across time have sought to answer these questions in a variety of means, from the employment of brute force to the rationalisations of jurists and philosophers. Notable amongst these are the debates of the mid-seventeenth century between political thinkers like Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.

Royal legitimacy as a historical construct has been analysed before. Examining the lists of secondary sources from one of the essays in this collection (for example, that of Lynsey Wood on the history of English succession laws), we can see a plethora of titles with the words “legitimacy” or “legitimisation” in them, covering the length of our period, from Eleanor Searle’s “Women and the Legitimization of Succession at the Norman Conquest” (1981) and Paul Strohm’s *England’s Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399–1422* (1998), to Mortimer Levine’s “Henry VIII’s Use of His Spiritual and Temporal Jurisdictions in His Great Causes of Matrimony, Legitimacy, and Succession” (1967) and Mary Hill Cole’s “The Half-Blood Princes: Mary I, Elizabeth I, and Their Strategies of Legitimation” (2016). But most previous studies are restricted to one nation, with the notable exception of an edited collection by Alfonso, Kennedy, and Escalona. Our collection here seeks to take this a step further and examine this issue across borders of both geography and time, believing that there are more continuities than differences between the medieval and early modern periods. Many of the fundamental ideas driving dynastic legitimacy remain all the way up to the age of revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century. In fact, it emerges that some ideas do not merely endure, but return in force, for example the idea of elective monarchy, or succession according to the will of the people.

**A history of legitimacy**

The intellectual debate between the importance of choosing a leader based on the needs of the people (based on social or rational thought), or of nature (embodied in physical brute strength), or on the will of the supernatural (represented on Earth by the institutional church) is truly ancient. One of the earliest places to look for a society’s need to justify or legitimise its royal form of government is in the Hebrew Bible, in the book of Samuel, when Jehovah relents to the demands of the people of Israel for a more robust form of government (modelled on those of their non-Hebrew neighbours, the Egyptians or the Assyrians), and chooses a member of the Tribe of Benjamin, Saul, to be their king. At first some of the people
reject the choice of Saul, but after he leads the army to a successful victory over their enemies, he is acclaimed and then crowned. This story, dated by scholars and archaeologists to the eleventh century BCE, contains the core elements that will re-appear in several of the case studies presented in this volume: legitimacy for much of the medieval and early modern period relied on a combination of religious affirmation, public acclaim, and military strength. The Bible also presents the idea that a legitimate king can become illegitimate, though losing divine or popular favour, as Saul was replaced by David (from the tribe of Judah), and even more germane to the medieval and early modern world, the Bible (in its New Testament) also presents an early use of dynastic continuity to legitimise the position of Jesus of Nazareth as the leader of his people, the “king of kings”, as the lineal blood descendant of King David, spelled out in genealogies presented in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Scholars believe these genealogies (which differ) were most likely fabrications to satisfy the needs of early Christian society, but they point to Jesus’s legitimisation as “the anointed one” (“messiah” in Hebrew or “Christ” in Greek), anointed by God to lead the chosen people.

In contrast, Roman imperial power was legitimised by a combination of hereditary right, military strength, and political pragmatism—as seen in the practice of adoption that generated many of the imperial dynasties. As the classical transitioned to the medieval, and monotheistic religion came to dominate, divine blessing and lineal descent became increasingly important to both Christian and Islamic ruling dynasties. The Greek emperors in Byzantium practised in varying degrees either the older Roman system of formal adoption of a successor or a more strictly hereditary system, but as the Empire was more intensely Christianised, the person of the emperor himself came to be considered as the divine representative on Earth, and as such the physical wholeness of his person was an essential complement to the perfection of Heaven. In the seventh century, therefore, some emperors who were deposed by their enemies were blinded or had their noses cut off (rhinokopia), as these permanent disfigurements disqualified them from ever reclaiming the throne (though at least one did: Justinian II, who was thereafter nicknamed Rhinotmetos, or “cut-nose”). In the newly emerging Islamic states of the Middle East, North Africa, and Andalusia, religious legitimacy took a different form, and descent from the Prophet was paramount, leading to the formation of a hereditary sharif class.

In non-Mediterranean Europe, the election principle persisted, especially amongst Germanic peoples, though blood connections were important too. Amongst the Celtic peoples, a system known as tanistry developed whereby clans would elect their leaders from amongst a pool of eligible blood relations. In both cases, the system of selection from amongst a wider kin group was preferable in societies that were thinly spread across a large geographical region—rather than concentrated into cities—and relied on strength and experience to defend the community against persistent enemy attack. In the case of Germanic kings newly converted to Christianity, as in medieval Norway, the requirement of a healthy number of potential heirs meant resisting the teachings of the Church regarding
monogamy. The Irish system of tanistry ensured that kingship passed back and forth between lineages descended from a common ancestor, serving both to keep the segments of a lineage apart and also to maintain the solidarity of the dynasty within a dispersed group. Looking at another Germanic kingdom, the Franks during the Merovingian period chose their kings from within a single bloodline: the one grouping all the descendants of Clovis. But at each succession, the Kingdom was divided between all the sons of the deceased monarch and only the accidental death or the murder of those now sharing parts of the domain returned the whole into the hands of a single ruler. As the Pippinid family rose to power, the last Merovingian king was shaved to deprive him either of his charismatic power or his symbolic capital (his long hair), or simply to get rid of him for good by imprisoning him in a monastery. Pippin the Short had foresight enough to obtain formal recognition of his kingship from the Pope in 751, now fully independent from that of the Merovingians. Yet in the following century, Pippin’s descendants, the Carolingians, still felt the need to highlight the presence of a Merovingian princess in their ancestry to strengthen their legitimacy.

As the Middle Ages progressed, most of these northern kingdoms continued to vacillate between elective and hereditary systems. Several monarchies adopted a more rigid system by which thrones passed automatically to a king’s eldest son, not to the eldest or most capable male in the clan. This move secured many kingdoms from the trials of a contested succession and civil war, but also opened up questions about the position of women either as transmitters of royal status or occupiers of royal thrones themselves. The classic example of this debate is seen in the legal fineries concocted in fourteenth-century France to prove that the Salic Law, barring women from the throne, was in fact one of the ancient “fundamental laws” of the Kingdom.

But there were also those who disagreed that the Salic Law existed in France, and called for a change of dynasty—from Capetian to Plantagenet (though neither family would have used such names, applied later by historians). This disagreement thus sparked the conflict known as the Hundred Years’ War (1337–1453). But political change was not always considered a good thing; any dynastic change thus often involved simultaneously legitimising the change and demonstrating continuity with the past. A relevant example of this is given by Mark Cruse in his article about Charles V of France (r. 1364–80). Charles was the third king of the House of Valois, which took power when the senior line of the House of Capet failed in 1328. His Valois predecessors had suffered a major setback in legitimising their authority, however, with the defeat and capture of King Jean II by the English at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356. To demonstrate that his dynasty was indeed the legitimate ruling line for the throne of France—and not the English king who also claimed it—Jean’s son Charles needed to establish continuity with the past, the ancient House of Capet, the rulers of France since the tenth century, and demonstrate the strength of his rule in the present. He did this by rebuilding one of the main symbols of the Capetian monarchy, the Louvre in Paris, and linking himself to its heroic original constructor—and one of the leading builders of the
Kingdom—his ancestor King Philippe II Auguste (d. 1223). Charles V further demonstrated his strength as a ruler by renovating the palace as a splendid residence, not merely a fortification, and further improved it and intimated his new style of governance by creating the first genuine royal library of France and by the use of visual propaganda in a variety of forms, from statues to coins, to demonstrate that his authority reached far beyond the confines of his new palace: “A monument to his lineage, learning, and might, the Louvre was in effect an ‘architectural portrait’ of the monarch himself.”

Charles V’s reign pointed to a new style of rule: a combination of strength and intellect that would dominate the later medieval period and emergent Renaissance, but which was challenged in the era of reforms. A threat of religious disunity led to the return of ancient ideas of “divine right” of kings, which in turn led to the philosophical reaction and the development of notions of the social contract. This final idea leads to some of the most “modern” topics examined in this volume, that of the monarch as “first servant” of the state, as seen in the cases of Catherine II of Russia or eighteenth-century Polish kings; the importance of “public opinion” for the success of the regime, as it was for Hanoverians in Great Britain; or the growing power of international diplomacy in determining dynastic strategy, as seen for the Bourbons in southern Italy.

Gaining and keeping legitimacy

The chapters in this book range chronologically from ninth-century Byzantium (Karagianni) to late eighteenth-century Russia (Teibenbacher), and geographically from England and Morocco to Poland and Sweden. Several of the chapters presented here focus on kingdoms and dynasties of the Iberian peninsula (Portugal, Castile, Aragon), partly a reflection of the location of the original conference from which these papers stem, but also cultivated for comparative purposes as representative of a unique zone of confluence between the monarchical systems of Roman, Germanic, and Islamic traditions. It has been our aim to be as cross-cultural and non-Eurocentric as possible, but this is clearly an area that needs to be explored more—having only one non-European case study in our collection (Rhorchi on Morocco). These essays display a degree of inter-disciplinarity with the inclusion of individual pieces from the fields of theatre history, art history, visual and material culture, legal history, and so on.

An initial conclusion to be drawn out of this collection of case studies is that while the individual contexts varied widely, there was a common thread running through this period that monarchs and monarchies required strategies to legitimise their holding of power to keep themselves from losing it. This seemingly simplistic truism becomes more complex and more interesting once we see the great variety of these strategies taken depending on context. Legal arguments have been employed since the earliest periods (as seen in the chapters by Wood and Ruiz Domingo). There is also an interesting strand of the importance of females within dynastic strategy (for example, in the chapters by Nash and Wood); or indeed their
rejection (the chapters by Baleiras and Brady Carter). Entering into the Age of Enlightenment, we see a struggle to embed older ideas of monarchical legitimacy within emerging notions of popular sovereignty (see the chapter by Choińska-Mika and Kuras). And running through nearly all strategies of legitimacy is an involvement with religion; it is certainly interesting to see such similar approaches taken by both Christian and Islamic dynasties, in the case studies presented by Rhorchi and Mendes.

The chapters are divided into two groups: (1) dynastic change, and (2) legitimisation of rule. The first chapter, by Lynsey Wood, examines approaches taken in England over the longue durée to preserving stability while dynasties change—the patriline may change, but regulating the rights of women to pass on their claims to the throne preserved a sense of continuity. Wood explores shifts in attitudes towards female dynastic succession between the twelfth and the early seventeenth centuries, examining the development of a legal framework which culminated in the succession statutes introduced by Henry VIII (and revised by his children) which sought to legitimate the female contenders in sixteenth-century England. By then the unparalleled numbers of potential female heirs in England demonstrated the structural need for a female-inclusive rule of primogeniture in royal succession law. In a more focused case study, Isabel de Pina Baleiras looks at the transition between Portugal’s first and second royal dynasties in 1383–85, in which the legitimate heir to the throne (a woman) was rejected and the traditional pathway of succession altered. She asks whether the use of an electoral process in proclaiming a new king by the Cortes of Coimbra was a sign of a democratic monarchy, or merely the legitimisation of a coup d’état. This chapter also compares this activity with the similar and chronologically contiguous case of the kingdom next door, Castile, where another dynasty founded by an illegitimate royal son (Enrique de Trastámara) was similarly legitimised. The analysis focuses in particular on the role of writers of chronicles in legitimising the successful takeovers of the Avis and Trastámara dynasties. In a parallel case study, Lledó Ruiz Domingo looks at the consolidation of the new Trastámara dynasty in the Kingdom of Aragon. After the unusual accession, involving election, of this dynasty, it was deemed necessary to re-configure an integrated vision of royal ceremonial. In order to decipher the changes that were introduced into Aragonese ritual, this chapter scrutinises coronations and funerals connected to the reign of the first king of the new dynasty, King Ferdinand I of Aragon, and in particular the ceremonial symbols and gestures used to form the royal image. The King’s discourses before the Cortes also constitute a valuable source of information to uncover what kinds of propaganda manoeuvres were employed as part of his ideological programme for legitimising his dynasty.

Moving to a later period, and to northern Europe, the next three chapters examine how dynasties or leading elites could modify the hereditary system to suit the political needs of the family or of the nation. Cathleen Sarti looks at the case of the Vasa dynasty in Sweden, whose dual role, as kings of Poland, brought them greater influence but also internal divisions. In this chapter, Sarti looks at the manipulation of the public image of one Vasa prince by another, leading to a
more specifically “Swedish” political culture. The deposition of King Sigismund of Sweden in 1599 was possible because his deposer, his uncle Duke Charles, had succeeded in making himself the champion of Swedish national culture while at the same time depicting Sigismund as alien. Making use of the religious conflict between Protestant Sweden and their Catholic king, as well as the practical problems brought by Sigismund’s simultaneous kingship of Sweden and Poland-Lithuania, Charles succeeded in ousting Sigismund and becoming the new ruler. Charles’ efforts to nationalise the Vasa dynasty and Swedish political culture was then in turn used to legitimise the change of ruler. Back across the Baltic, this deposition contributed to the ongoing debate about the usefulness of the elective process in selecting a monarch, and the pros and cons of selecting a foreign dynasty to rule over the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In their joint-authored chapter, Jolanta Choinski-Mika and Katarzyna Kuras trace the legal and theoretical arguments behind free election of kings from its start in the late sixteenth century to its last days in the eighteenth, when the practice weakened the Commonwealth to such an extent that it ultimately led to its dismemberment. In particular, the chapter examines the way Polish-Lithuanian eighteenth-century elective monarchs were regarded by their subjects due to a combination of factors, including the bald-faced military intervention in the election procedure by foreign powers and the attempts to introduce Enlightenment ideas into the notions of governance and monarchical rule. Looking in almost the opposite direction, the House of Hanover in the opening years of the eighteenth century were keen to stress that they were not a new dynasty, as they approached the succession to the throne of Great Britain, but had an ancient lineage and indeed ancient ties with England. In her chapter, Charlotte Backerra analyses the preparations laid down to ensure a smooth transition of dynasty from Stuart to Hanover. The first Hanoverians, the Electress Sophia, kings George I and George II, and the latter’s wife Caroline, adopted English traditions in their representation of themselves as defenders of the Protestant faith, in celebrating coronations and other ceremonies according to older examples, and bowed to national culture with their acceptance of political rules established in England and the prevalent concepts of the ancient liberties of the people. The new (old) dynasty accepting British national culture played a major part in its success in resisting forces of Jacobitism, isolationism, and the rejection of a foreign ruling family.

Back in southern Europe, the Italian Peninsula in the eighteenth century witnessed several changes of dynasty, as the Habsburgs and Bourbons struggled to maintain the balance of power in the Mediterranean following the dismemberment of the ascendancy of the Spanish Habsburgs after the War of Spanish Succession. In her chapter, Cinzia Recca looks in particular at the methods employed by the Spanish Bourbons to legitimise their rule in the Kingdom of Naples, at first successfully bringing Italy back into the orbit of Spanish influence at the expense of the Austrian Habsburgs, but facing dynastic reversal following the marriage of King Ferdinand IV of Naples with Archduchess Maria Carolina of Austria in 1768. In a curious blending of dynastic practice, Recca demonstrates how the legitimacy of
the Neapolitan Bourbons was ironically solidified through the rule of a Habsburg consort and the return of Naples into the sphere of Austrian influence. In the end, this chapter helps us see that often, though the dynasty may change in name, much remains the same in practice.

The second half of this collection of essays focuses less on change and more on “staying power”—how did monarchs maintain legitimacy in times of dynastic stress? These chapters examine this question by looking at a variety of tools of dynastic strategy: the uses of visual or literary culture, and the importance of gender and religion. The first chapter, by Alexandra Karagianni, looks at the interesting combination of visual means and religious feeling in erasing the memory of a violent takeover from one Byzantine dynasty to another. Karagianni examines six prophetic dreams connected to the accession of Emperor Basil I the Macedonian in the ninth century, as narrated in two key sources from later centuries: the *Vita Basilii* and the manuscript of *Ioannis Skylitzes*. The chapter investigates how a prophetic or symbolic dream (or *chrimatismos*) was used to legitimise the actions of the simple peasant Basil and gave him the extraordinary chance to usurp the imperial throne. In a similar way, English kings in the fifteenth century re-packaged brutal usurpations through honouring (or dishonouring) their predecessors in funeral rites. Anna M. Duch’s chapter looks at the manner in which King Edward IV, of the House of York, referred to Henry VI and his forebears of the House of Lancaster as “kings by fact, not by law” at his funeral in 1471. Subsequently, Richard III made an effort to reconcile himself with the legacy of his house’s former enemy, Henry VI, by reburying him at Windsor. And yet, in shifting back from the House of York to the House of Lancaster (aka Tudor), after his victory at Bosworth Field in 1485, Henry VII declared Richard III and his reign invalid, a status demotion confirmed in Richard’s rather un-kingly burial in a modest friary in Leicester. Because of these shifts in power, the reputations (and physical bodies) of Henry VI and Richard III underwent changes in status which affected their funerals and later reburials. To fully contextualise these changes in status, and their uses in legitimising newly established rulers, Duch compares these cases to other royal exequies in the House of Plantagenet, particularly those of Edward II and Richard II, two other humbled kings, later rehabilitated in death.

Another approach to making use of religious ceremonial to erase the past and create a more positive reputation for a ruling dynasty is taken in the chapter by Paula Almeida Mendes. Against the backdrop of the context of the Portuguese Restoration of 1640 and the difficulties that the newly inaugurated dynasty of Bragança faced in obtaining legitimacy and recognition from the wider European community in the second half of the seventeenth century, this chapter draws attention to the way in which the dynasty promoted an exaltation of “holiness” in some of its members (Prince Teodósio, Princess Joana), or at least of their “virtues” (Queen Luísa de Gusmão; Princess Catarina, later queen of England; Princess Isabel Luisa Josefa). This policy was taken to such an extent as a strategy to defend the legitimacy of the dynasty that it created the impression of an “illustrious”
royal family, one that was able to “generate saints”. The parallel case is seen in the study by Fatima Rhorchi of a dynasty descended from and consisting of living saints, in the Alawi dynasty in the Sultanate of Morocco in the same century. This chapter demonstrates how Sultan Moulay Ismail, in the face of rebellion by disenfranchised relatives, legitimised his rule and imposed his authority through several means, both religious and political. He promoted Sharifism, the traditional right to rule based on descent from the Prophet. He also strengthened his alliances with some of the mountain tribes in the countryside, and strengthened the Abid Alboukhari, or Black Slaves Army. Nevertheless, his reliance on force proved unsustainable, and the death of Moulay Ismail resulted in a new period of internal strife in Morocco.

The problem of Alawi legitimacy would not be solved until the enthronement of his grandson, Sidi Mohamed Ibn Abdellah, who rebuilt Alawi dynastic power on new principles, based on religious ties plus economic power, not force.

As another alternative to force, the final three chapters look at the roles assumed by women in ruling dynasties from various aspects, successfully and unsuccessfully. By nature and social custom, royal women were discouraged from the use of force in maintaining order—they therefore looked for other means. Penelope Nash examines the role of Ottonian women in Germany across the tenth century, as they guided the dynasty through unstable times brought on by periods of minority. In 1024, 100 years after Henry I’s election as king, the fifth and last member of the Ottonian dynasty, Emperor Henry II, died without issue, and the succession passed to a new line, whose members came to be known as the Salians. Nash explains how historians have usually depicted the Ottonian dynasty as one that progressed from an uncertain beginning to one of relative stability, attributed primarily to the efforts of its male leaders, and proposes a different reason for this stability. She claims that the ruling women, as regents, mothers, wives, and sisters, maintained stability through political agency and as negotiators rather than warmongers, by looking in particular at three women: Empress Adelheid, Empress Theophanu, and Abbess Mathilda of Quedlinburg.

Several centuries later, another queen regent, Mariana of Austria, widow of Philip IV of Spain, faced similar problems. In her chapter, Caitlin Brady Carter considers the debate between male and female rule, and intellectual versus emotional leadership, as depicted in a work of theatre from the period. This chapter considers the struggle to control the Regency of King Carlos II between his mother, Mariana, and his illegitimate half-brother, Don Juan José, as it was manifested in court performances of a play by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, La estatua de Prometeo, written in the early 1670s. This play presents not only a parallel to the actual struggles for power in the Spanish court, but a critique of the young king’s weaknesses as well. Such theatrical performances as La estatua de Prometeo not only provide us with insight into court culture, but can be used as a way to approach and understand the politics surrounding Mariana and Don Juan José’s rival claims to legitimacy of their claims to hold power. Taking this debate one step further, the final chapter, by Elena Teibenbacher, looks at the justifications put forward by
Catherine II of Russia for her usurpation of the throne from her husband in 1762, notably by arguing that power should be legitimately held by those best suited to wield it. This chapter contrasts the actions of Catherine as a monarch with her (self-)portrayal as an enlightened thinker, exploring the discrepancies between the two by examining the importance of legitimacy in Catherine’s life and politics. Having overthrown her husband Peter III without any dynastic claim to the throne herself, she needed to prove her legitimacy in other ways. Catherine II did not want to enter history as a usurper but as a saviour. Yet contradictory positions remain: she is seen as ruling as an autocratic sovereign rather than an “enlightened” reformer, failing to introduce constitutional and democratic changes. Was this because she believed power to be her legitimate right as the most capable, as opposed to strictly hereditary, leader? Did she make use of the theories of the Enlightenment to defend her legitimacy while never really intending to actually apply them?

Towards the end of Catherine of Russia’s reign, all of these questions, and all of those examined across this collection of chapters, would be re-examined in the wake of the French Revolution. Was monarchy intended to lead and serve the people, or to serve the dynasty which occupied its throne? Questions of elective monarchy, religious legitimacy, the position of women, and the uses of history and the arts in maintaining the image of monarchy, all returned to the floor of debate, and would do so repeatedly across the nineteenth century, as monarchies were removed then restored, or modified by constitutional reforms (also made and unmade), until the final curtain fell on many European monarchies altogether following the end of the First World War. Yet still today, those monarchies that survive make use of strategies of legitimisation to connect themselves with the past—whether through the change of dynastic name (for example, from Saxe-Coburg to Windsor in the United Kingdom), the maintenance of a dynastic name despite female succession (as in the Netherlands or in Luxembourg), or through the close identification of a dynasty with a historical continuity (as in Japan) or with religious faith (as in Saudi Arabia). Debates about gender are central in discussions about the relevance—a new word to indicate legitimacy—of monarchy in the modern era: most twenty-first-century European monarchies have now changed succession laws to allow for a monarch to be succeeded by an eldest child, regardless of gender (“absolute primogeniture”)—led by the liberal Scandinavian countries, but now also poised to be changed in more conservative Catholic countries like Spain. Narrative histories and plays continue to be written and performed that maintain the legitimacy of past dynasties, even in countries like France where the monarchy is long abolished, notably in cultivating the memory of Napoleon as emperor of the French, or Austria, where the cult of “Sisi”, the Empress Elizabeth, is a mainstay of tourism. Religious revivals continue to stress the legitimacy of monarchical rule in the eyes of God, as in contemporary Russia, where the recently canonised Nicholas II and his family attracts increasing devotion, or in Serbia, where the current royal family in waiting represents for many a living link to a more spiritual past.
Notes

1 Kings and Queens 4, “Dynastic Change and Legitimacy”, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon, 23–27 June 2015.
2 Some useful examples in English include Paula Sutter Fichtner, The Habsburg Empire: From Dynasticism to Multinationalism (Malabar: Krieger, 1997); Pamela Ritchie, Dynasticism and Diplomacy: The Political Career of Marie de Guise in Scotland, 1548–1560 (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2002); Matthew Vester, Renaissance Dynasticism and Apanage Politics: Jacques de Savoie-Nemours 1531–1585 (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2012); or, more recently, Catriona Murray, Imaging Stuart Family Politics: Dynastic Crisis and Continuity (Burlington: Ashgate, 2016). At a broader level, inclusive of the aristocracy as well as royalty, see Liesbeth Geevers and Mirella Marini, eds, Dynastic Identity in Early Modern Europe: Rulers, Aristocrats and the Formation of Identities (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).
5 See chapters in this volume by Isabel de Pina Baleiras and Lledó Ruiz Domingo for Iberia, and that of Jolanta Choińska-Mika and Katarzyna Kuras for Poland-Lithuania.
12 See Chapter 1 by Lynsey Wood in this volume for full citations.
13 Isabel Alfonso, Hugh Kennedy, and Julio Escalona, eds, Building Legitimacy: Political Discourses and Forms of Legitimation in Medieval Societies (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
14 Many of these themes are pursued in the recent volume of essays, The Routledge History of Monarchy, edited by Elena Woodacre, Lucinda H. S. Dean, Chris Jones, Zita Rohr, and Russell Martin (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).
15 1 Samuel 8.
16 1 Samuel 11.
14 Introduction

18 1 Samuel 13 to 2 Samuel 5.
19 A term first used in 1 Timothy 6:14–15.
22 Hugh Lindsay, Adoption in the Roman World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), especially chapter 16, “Political Adoption in the Early Empire at Rome, Pompeii and Ostia: The Imperial Family”. Notable artificially constructed imperial dynasties include the Julio-Claudians or the Nerva-Antonines.
27 Paul Fouracre, “Conflict, Power and Legitimation in Francia in the Late Seventh and Eighth Centuries”, in Alfonso, Kennedy, and Escalona, eds, Building Legitimacy, 3–26 (esp. 4–5).
39 See chapters in this volume by Teibenbacher, Choińska-Mika/Kuras, Backerra, and Recca.
40 This theme is ripe for comparative study. In a random sampling of academic databases for relevant articles with the words “royal” and “legitimacy” in their titles, a number of intriguing titles emerged; for example: Joanna Wolfarth, “Lineage and Legitimacy: Exploring Royal-Familial Visual Configurations in Cambodia”, Trans-Asia Photography Review 8, 1 (2017); or Ernest Tucker, “Explaining Nadir Shah: Kingship and Royal Legitimacy in Muhammad Kazim Marvi’s Tārikh-i ‘Alam-ān-yi Nadiri”, Iranian Studies 26, 1–2 (1993): 95–117.

**Bibliography**


PART I
Dynastic change