



# Cultures of Power in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century

Edited by  
Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms

CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE

[www.cambridge.org/9780521842273](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521842273)

This page intentionally left blank

## Cultures of Power in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century

This original volume seeks to get behind the surface of political events and to identify the forces which shaped politics and culture from 1680 to 1840 in Germany, France and Great Britain. The contributors, all leading specialists in the field, explore critically how 'culture', defined in the widest sense, was exploited during the 'long eighteenth century' to buttress authority in all its forms and how politics infused culture. Individual essays explore topics ranging from the military culture of central Europe through the political culture of Germany, France and Great Britain, music, court intrigue and diplomatic practice, religious conflict and political ideas, the role of the Enlightenment, to the very new dispensations which prevailed during and after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic watershed. The book will be essential reading for all scholars of eighteenth-century European history.

HAMISH SCOTT is Wardlaw Professor of International History at the University of St Andrews. His recent publications include *The Emergence of the Eastern Powers, 1756–1775* (2001) and *The Birth of a Great Power System, 1740–1815* (2006).

BRENDAN SIMMS is Reader in the History of International Relations at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Peterhouse. His previous publications include *The Impact of Napoleon: Prussian High Politics, Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Executive, 1797–1806* (1997) and as an editor with Torsten Rott, *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History, 1714–1837* (2007).



# Cultures of Power in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century

---

*Edited by*

Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521842273](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521842273)

© Cambridge University Press 2007

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provision of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published in print format 2007

ISBN-13 978-0-511-28702-2 eBook (Adobe Reader)

ISBN-10 0-511-28702-X eBook (Adobe Reader)

ISBN-13 978-0-521-84227-3 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-84227-1 hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of urls for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

For Tim Blanning





# Contents

---

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>List of contributors</i>		<i>xi</i>
1 Introduction: culture and power during the long eighteenth century JAMES J. SHEEHAN		1
2 When culture meets power: the Prussian coronation of 1701 CHRISTOPHER CLARK		14
3 Military culture in the Reich, c. 1680–1806 PETER H. WILSON		36
4 Diplomatic culture in old regime Europe HAMISH SCOTT		58
5 Early eighteenth-century Britain as a confessional state ANDREW C. THOMPSON		86
6 ‘Ministers of Europe’: British strategic culture, 1714–1760 BRENDAN SIMMS		110
7 Confessional power and the power of confession: concealing and revealing the faith in Alpine Salzburg, 1730–1734 JAMES VAN HORN MELTON		133
8 The transformation of the <i>Aufklärung</i> : from the idea of power to the power of ideas JOACHIM WHALEY		158
9 Culture and <i>Bürgerlichkeit</i> in eighteenth-century Germany MAIKEN UMBACH		180

10	The politics of language and the languages of politics: Latin and the vernaculars in eighteenth-century Hungary R. J. W. EVANS	200
11	‘Silence, respect obedience’: political culture in Louis XV’s France JULIAN SWANN	225
12	Joseph II, petitions and the public sphere DEREK BEALES	249
13	The court nobility and the origins of the French Revolution MUNRO PRICE	269
14	The French Revolution and the abolition of nobility WILLIAM DOYLE	289
15	Foreign policy and political culture in later eighteenth-century France GARY SAVAGE	304
16	Power and patronage in Mozart’s <i>La clemenza di Tito</i> and <i>Die Zauberflöte</i> MARK BERRY	325
17	Between Louis and Ludwig: from the culture of French power to the power of German culture, c. 1789–1848 EMMA L. WINTER	348
	<i>Index</i>	369

## Preface

---

In April 2007, Professor T. C. W. Blanning – Tim to all his friends and now to the scholarly community as well – will celebrate his sixty-fifth birthday, improbable as this will seem. In order to mark this occasion, to celebrate his enormous contribution to the study of modern European history, and to convey a sense of the immense regard in which he is universally held, it was decided to publish a volume of essays dedicated to him and written by some of his many friends and admirers. It takes its cue and also its starting point from Tim's celebrated *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe, 1660–1789* (Oxford University Press, 2002). Contributors were asked to extend the perspectives of that seminal book, and to explore critically how 'culture' (defined in the widest sense) was exploited during the 'long eighteenth century' to buttress authority in all its forms and how politics infused culture. Coherence was also sought by a decision to concentrate on the period – the long eighteenth century – which has been the principal focus of Tim's own scholarship and on the areas which his work has particularly illuminated: the German-speaking lands, France and Britain. While this, together with the period selected for consideration, had the unfortunate effect of excluding some friends and colleagues who would have been obvious contributors, it was inevitable given the realities of present-day publishing. Tim's renowned openness to all subjects and all approaches encouraged us to produce a volume which fully reflected the various uses to which the concept of 'culture' has been put.

The essays published in this volume were first given as papers at a highly enjoyable conference held in Cambridge in September 2005, and were revised for publication in the light of discussions and comments at this gathering. We are grateful to the contributors for their willingness to revise their essays in the interests of the volume's overall coherence and for their remarkable ability to deliver their essays by the due date: a tribute, in many cases, to the good habits inculcated by Tim's doctoral supervision. The conference was funded by the German Historical Institute, London, and we are deeply indebted to its Director, Professor Hagen Schulze, for

this extraordinary generosity, which is only the latest example of the Institute's remarkable support of scholarship in the British academic world. Its Deputy, Dr Benedikt Stuchtey, very kindly attended the Cambridge conference. The Trevelyan Fund of the University of Cambridge also made a generous grant to cover the travel expenses of the participants. At the Press we are indebted to Bill Davies who did much to get the project off the ground and to his successor Michael Watson who smoothed the passage to publication. Nancy Bailey has applied her electronic wizardry to the production of a finished manuscript, while Christopher Riches made the Index: we are grateful to them both. In the planning stages, Derek Beales provided important advice, while Nicky Blanning furnished decisive, if for a time covert, assistance, and Tom, Lucy and Molly kept us all enchanted. We owe most to Tim, however, both for providing the excuse for this academic stock-taking on Blanning's eighteenth century, and for his scholarship and celebrated generosity, both professional and personal, from which all the contributors have frequently benefited. Celebration of his birthday is accompanied with our best wishes for many more years of personal happiness and scholarly productivity.

HAMISH SCOTT  
BRENDAN SIMMS  
April 2006

## Contributors

---

DEREK BEALES is Emeritus Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge, where he is a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College. A Fellow of the British Academy, he is the author of *England and Italy, 1859–60* (London, 1961), *From Castlereagh to Gladstone* (London, 1969), *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (London, 1971; 2nd edn, with Eugenio Biagini, 2003), *Joseph II, i: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa, 1741–1780* (Cambridge, 1987), *Prosperity and Plunder: European Catholic Monasteries in the Age of Revolution, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, 2003) and *Enlightenment and Reform in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (London, 2005). He is currently writing the second volume of his life of Joseph II.

MARK BERRY is a Fellow of Peterhouse, and British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow. He has written on various aspects of cultural, intellectual and musical history from the eighteenth century to the present day, and is the author of *Treacherous Bonds and Laughing Fire: Politics and Religion in Wagner's 'Ring'* (Aldershot and Burlington, 2006). For his work on Wagner he was awarded the Prince Consort Prize and the Seeley Medal. His present research concerns the relationship between aesthetics, politics and music drama after Wagner, focusing especially upon the writings of Adorno and the operas of Schoenberg, Berg and the post-war avant-garde.

CHRISTOPHER CLARK is Reader in Modern European History at the University of Cambridge, where he is a Fellow of St Catharine's College. He is the author of *The Politics of Conversion: Missionary Protestantism and the Jews in Prussia, 1728–1941* (Oxford, 1995), *Kaiser Wilhelm II* (London, 2000) and *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia* (London, 2006). He is currently working on a transnational study of European governmental responses to the mid-nineteenth-century revolutions, and a narrative history of the July Crisis of 1914.

WILLIAM DOYLE has been Professor of History at the University of Bristol since 1986. A Fellow of the British Academy, he is the author of *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1989), *Venality: The Sale of Offices in Eighteenth Century France* (Oxford, 1996), *Jansenism* (Basingstoke, 2000) and *The French Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2001). He is currently editing an Oxford History Handbook on the Ancien Régime, and writing a book on the 'Attack on Nobility in the Age of Revolutions'.

R. J. W. EVANS is Regius Professor of History at the University of Oxford, where he is a Fellow of Oriel College. A Fellow of the British Academy, he has published extensively on the history of the Habsburg Monarchy and its successor states from the sixteenth century to the twentieth, including studies of *Rudolf II and His World* (Oxford, 1975) and *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1550–1700* (Oxford, 1979). Relevant recent publications include 'Language and State-Building: The Case of the Habsburg Monarchy', *Austrian History Yearbook* 35 (2004) and some of the chapters in his *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs: Essays on Central Europe, c. 1683–1867* (Oxford, 2006). His main long-term research project is a history of modern Hungary.

JAMES VAN HORN MELTON is Professor of History at Emory University. His publications include *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001) and *Absolutism and the Eighteenth-Century Origins of Compulsory Schooling in Prussia and Austria* (Cambridge, 1988). He is also editor of *Cultures of Communication from Reformation to Enlightenment: Constructing Publics in the Early Modern German Lands* (Aldershot, 2002), joint editor (with Hartmut Lehmann) of *Paths of Continuity: Central European Historiography from the 1930s to the 1950s* (Cambridge, 1994) and editor and translator (with Howard Kaminisky) of Otto Brunner, 'Land' and Lordship: *Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria* (Philadelphia, 1992).

MUNRO PRICE is Professor of Modern European History at the University of Bradford. His publications include *Preserving the Monarchy: The Comte de Vergennes, 1774–1787* (Cambridge, 1995) and *The Fall of the French Monarchy: Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and the Baron de Breteuil* (Basingstoke, 2002). He is currently working on a study of the constitutional monarchy in France between 1814 and 1848.

GARY SAVAGE is currently Under Master (Deputy Head) at Westminster School, London. He was previously Head of History and Master-in-College at Eton College, Windsor. His publications include "Favier's Heirs": The French Revolution and the *secret du roi*,

*Historical Journal* 41 (1998) and 'Novel Narratives, New Research: The French Revolution after the Bicentennial', *Historical Journal* 40 (1997). He is currently preparing his Cambridge Ph.D. thesis (2005) on 'The French Revolution and the *secret du roi*: Diplomatic Tradition, Foreign Policy and Political Culture in Later Eighteenth-Century France (1756–1792)' for publication as a monograph.

HAMISH SCOTT is Wardlaw Professor of International History at the University of St Andrews. A Fellow of the British Academy, he is the author of *The Rise of the Great Powers, 1648–1815* (with Derek McKay; Harlow, 1983), *British Foreign Policy in the Age of the American Revolution* (Oxford, 1990), *The Emergence of the Eastern Powers, 1756–1775* (Cambridge, 2001) and *The Birth of a Great Power System, 1740–1815* (Harlow, 2006). He is currently writing a study of aristocracy in Europe c. 1400–1750.

JAMES J. SHEEHAN is Dickason Professor in the Humanities and Professor of History at Stanford University, where he has taught since 1979. He is the author and editor of several books on European history; his most recent book is *Museums in the German Art World* (Oxford, 2000). He has just completed a manuscript on 'The Eclipse of Violence: The Transformation of European Politics', which traces the changing relationship of states and war in twentieth-century Europe. A Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the American Philosophical Society, he served as president of the American Historical Association in 2005.

BRENDAN SIMMS is Reader in the History of International Relations at the Centre of International Studies, University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of Peterhouse. His publications include *The Impact of Napoleon: Prussian High Politics, Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Executive, 1797–1806* (Cambridge, 1997), *The Struggle for Mastery in Germany, 1779–1850* (Basingstoke, 1998), *Unfinest Hour: Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia* (London, 2001) and (as editor with Torsten Riotte) *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History, 1714–1837* (Cambridge, 2007). He is currently completing a study of British foreign policy in the eighteenth century.

JULIAN SWANN is Reader in Modern History at Birkbeck College, University of London. He is the author of *Politics and the Parlement of Paris under Louis XV, 1754–1774* (Cambridge, 1995) and of *Provincial Power and Absolute Monarchy: The Estates General of Burgundy, 1661–1790* (Cambridge, 2003) and (with Barry Coward) has edited *Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1800* (Aldershot,

2004). He is currently writing a history of political disgrace and internal exile in old regime France.

ANDREW C. THOMPSON is a College Lecturer in History at Queens' College, Cambridge. He is the author of several articles on British and European history, and a revised version of his Cambridge University Ph.D. thesis was recently published as *Britain, Hanover and the Protestant Interest, 1688–1756* (Woodbridge, 2006). He is currently writing a biography of George II for Yale University Press.

MAIKEN UMBACH is a Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at the University of Manchester. During the past few years she has held visiting appointments at the Australian National University, Harvard University, the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona and University College London. She is the author of *Federalism and Enlightenment in Germany, 1740–1806* (London, 2000), editor of *German Federalism: Past, Present and Future* (Basingstoke, 2002) and (with Bernd Hüppauf) *Vernacular Modernism: Heimat, Globalization and the Built Environment* (Stanford, 2005). She is currently completing a book on 'German Cities and the Genesis of Modernism, 1890–1930'.

JOACHIM WHALEY is a Fellow of Gonville and Caius College and Senior Lecturer in German at the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *Religious Toleration and Social Change in Hamburg, 1529–1819* (Cambridge, 1985) in addition to numerous articles, reviews and contributions to handbooks and lexicons of German history and literature. He is currently writing a history of the Holy Roman Empire 1495–1806, for the Oxford History of Early Modern Europe.

PETER H. WILSON is G. F. Grant Professor of History at the University of Hull. His publications include *War, State and Society in Württemberg, 1677–1793* (Cambridge, 1995), *German Armies: War and German Politics, 1648–1806* (London, 1998), *The Holy Roman Empire, 1495–1806* (Basingstoke, 1999; 2nd edn, Tokyo, 2005), *Absolutism in Central Europe* (London, 2000) and *From Reich to Revolution: German History, 1558–1806* (Basingstoke, 2004), and, as editor, *Warfare in Europe, 1815–1914* (Aldershot, 2006) and *1848: The Year of Revolutions* (Aldershot, 2006). He is currently writing a book on the Thirty Years' War for Penguin Press.

EMMA L. WINTER is Assistant Professor of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century British and European History at Columbia University. She was a Research Fellow at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, before moving to New York. Her publications include 'German Fresco



Painting and the New Houses of Parliament at Westminster, 1834–51’, *Historical Journal* 47 (2004) and ‘Prince Albert, Fresco Painting, and the New Houses of Parliament’, in J. Davis and F. Bosbach, eds., *Prinz Albert – ein Wettiner in Großbritannien/Prince Albert – a Wettin in Britain* (Munich, 2004). She is currently preparing her Cambridge doctoral thesis (2005), on the relationship between art and taste, state and nation in Germany and England between 1789–1858, for publication.



# 1 Introduction: culture and power during the long eighteenth century

---

*James J. Sheehan*

Stanford University

In December 1774, seventeen-year-old Carl August, Prince of Saxe Weimar, met the celebrated young author Johann Wolfgang Goethe in a Frankfurt hotel room. The meeting was cordial, indeed the two men got along together so splendidly that, less than a year later, Goethe accepted the prince's invitation to move to Weimar, where he would spend the rest of his long and incredibly productive life.

I begin with this familiar scene – so beautifully rendered and analysed in Nicholas Boyle's distinguished biography of the poet – because it neatly captures several of the motifs in the complex relationship between culture and power in the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> First and most obvious is the persistent significance of the court, whose seductive blend of artistic possibilities and political influence led Goethe to disregard his father's opposition and take up residence in Carl August's small Thuringian state. Second, there is the new significance of public culture, reflected here in Goethe's position as literary celebrity, which had caused a member of the prince's entourage to seek out the author of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and which would make Goethe such an attractive presence in Carl August's entourage. Both prince and poet needed one another, both acquired prestige and a kind of power from the other's presence. Court and public were not just alternative sites of cultural practice, they often worked together, each reinforcing the other.

Just behind the surface of this meeting of poet and prince, court and public, we can see some of the difficulties involved in understanding the relationship between eighteenth-century culture and power. Consider, for example, how difficult it is to fit Goethe into any of the usual social categories – he remains a *Bürger* among courtiers, a courtier among *Bürger*, a civil servant, a 'favourite' and, most of all, a citizen of the republic of letters. Goethe's relationship to German nationalism is no

<sup>1</sup> Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age*. Vol. I. *The Poetry of Desire (1749–1790)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 194ff.

less perplexing. He is a great national poet, someone, in Friedrich Meinecke's phrase, who taught Germans who they were. But he was never comfortable with national rhetoric and often contemptuous of patriotic enthusiasts. And what about Goethe's political views? At once attracted and repelled by power, critical of both the old regime and its revolutionary opponents, insider and outsider, Goethe's politics, like so much else about him, remained elusive and unsettled. T. S. Eliot once commented that 'Goethe was about as unrepresentative of his age as a man of genius can be.'<sup>2</sup> But in one way Goethe was exemplary, and that is of the richness and complexity of the period with which the essays in this volume are concerned.

## I

The major source of inspiration for these essays is the work of T. C. W. Blanning. Let me begin with a few words about Tim Blanning's scholarly career, concluding with a discussion of his magisterial *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe, 1660–1789*, which was published by the Oxford University Press in 2002.

The first things to be noted is that Blanning is a *European* historian. This was apparent in his first book on Joseph II, but it was much more evident in the two books that established his reputation: *Reform and Revolution in Mainz* (published by Cambridge University Press in 1974) and *The French Revolution in Germany* (published by Oxford University Press in 1983). It is of great significance, I think, that Blanning began with the Rhineland. This is, after all, an intensely European place, not least because it has been the scene of so many conflicts over regional and national identity. By studying the Rhineland Blanning was able to approach German history from the west and French history from the east, confronting in the process some of the central problems of each without being the captive of either. (What French historian, for example, would have dared to begin a book entitled *The French Revolutionary Wars* with the battle of Rossbach, Frederick the Great's victory in 1757?) Blanning has contributed to both German and French historiography, but has never been just a 'German' or 'French' historian nor has he ever been confined by their conventional wisdoms.

Consider, for example, the quotation with which his Mainz book begins: 'The contrast between Germany and Western Europe in modern history has long been a subject of historical interpretation and research.'

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from *ibid.*, p. 7 in T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe, 1660–1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 98.

This sentence, from Hajo Holborn's influential essay on 'German Idealism in the Light of Social History', takes us directly to what is immediately recognizable as the *Sonderweg*, the historiographical conviction that Germany followed a 'special path' to modernity.<sup>3</sup> And yet Blanning travels this path to a destination quite different from most of its adherents: he finds not the usual failed German modernization, but rather 'the astonishing ability of the political and social establishment in Germany to absorb, adapt, and even utilize progressive and potentially disruptive forces'.<sup>4</sup> In a number of ways, Blanning cuts against the grain of scholarly orthodoxy: in contrast to German nationalist historians, he recognizes the value and viability of the Holy Roman Empire (he was, in fact, among the first modern scholars to insist on the empire's positive role as a source of order and stability in central Europe). In contrast to Protestant historians, he does not dismiss traditional Catholic piety or overlook the progressive elements within the Rhenish Church; and in contrast to a variety of democratic and Marxist historians, he did not magnify or distort the influence of the members of the Mainz Jacobin club. His comment on the latter issue is characteristic:

In view of this rejection of the Revolution by most of the inhabitants of the city, the disproportionate amount of attention lavished by historians on the Clubists is explicable only in terms of the ease with which they can be adapted to suit various historiographical schools.<sup>5</sup>

In *The French Revolution in Germany*, Blanning once again tries to drive a stake through the heart of German Jacobinism, which, vampire like, keeps struggling to emerge from the historiographical crypt. This book, while narrower chronologically than his study of Mainz, examines many of the same themes for the Rhineland as a whole. Deeply researched and vigorously written, it documents the wanton destruction of traditional institutions, the ruthlessness of the revolution's anti-clericalism and the increasingly despotic face of the revolution abroad. The revolution, Blanning argues, governed the Rhineland not through the power of its ideas or the promise of its programme, but with brute force. French rule rested on the army: 'without it, the revolutionary regime could not have lasted a week'.<sup>6</sup> Here we have that familiar figure in German historiography, 'the revolution from above', imposed not by Prussian autocrats but by French democrats. It is not a pretty picture.

<sup>3</sup> *Reform and Revolution in Mainz*, p. 1. Holborn's essay is available in *Germany and Europe: Historical Essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970).

<sup>4</sup> Blanning, *Reform and Revolution in Mainz*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295. <sup>6</sup> *The French Revolution in Germany*, p. 206.

The next phase of Blanning's scholarship was directly about the French Revolution and the Revolutionary Wars. In part this was a natural extension of his work on the Rhineland, in part he may have been irresistibly drawn into the historiographical vortex created by the bicentennial celebrations of 1789. Blanning wrote three books on various aspects of the revolution and edited one of the best collections of articles inspired by the bicentennial.<sup>7</sup> His books on the Revolutionary Wars are beautifully done, examples of his range as a scholar and his versatility as a writer. *The French Revolutionary Wars* is surely the best introduction to the subject in English. These works, like his earlier books on the French Revolution in Germany, reveal the repressive violence at the core of revolutionary expansionism.

Of particular interest for an understanding of the development of Blanning's ideas is his brief survey of the revolution, published in the *Studies in European History* series in 1987. Designed to introduce students to the literature on a major historical topic, the volume's theme is captured by the subtitle, *Aristocrats versus Bourgeois?* From the opening paragraph the abiding presence in the book is Alfred Cobban, whose inaugural lecture of 1954, 'The Myth of the French Revolution', began a long struggle to displace the Marxist framework which had, with varying degrees of orthodoxy, shaped historians' views of the revolution's origins and meaning. Blanning clearly shared Cobban's distrust of ideological retrospection, as well as his belief in the primacy of politics.<sup>8</sup>

A decade later, Blanning published a second edition of *The French Revolution*. Its new subtitle, *Class War or Culture Clash?*, pointed to the tectonic shift in historiographical interest from social to cultural analysis. The Cobbanite presence remains, but it now shares space with Habermas and, perhaps even more importantly, François Furet. In a new section on 'The Public Sphere and Public Opinion', Blanning casts 'a friendly but critical eye' on political culture as an explanation for the events of 1789.<sup>9</sup>

Blanning's adoption of the cultural approach was qualified in at least two ways, both important for establishing the link between his studies of the French Revolution and *The Culture of Power*. First, Blanning does

<sup>7</sup> *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars* (London: Longman, 1986); *The French Revolution: Aristocrats versus Bourgeois?* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1987); *The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787–1802* (London: Arnold, 1996). The edited volume is *The Rise and Fall of the French Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), a collection of seventeen articles on the revolution originally published in the *Journal of Modern History*.

<sup>8</sup> See Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (2nd edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> *The French Revolution: Class War or Culture Clash?* (2nd edn, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998), pp. 23ff.

not abandon qualitative distinctions in assigning historical significance to ideas and objects. Thus while he acknowledges the role of the underground literature examined by Robert Darnton, he is not prepared to replace the works of Rousseau, Voltaire and Diderot with those of some obscure pornographer or pamphleteer. Second, Blanning never loses sight of the abiding importance of power, especially military power, in shaping political events. Thus while he uses the work of historians like Lynn Hunt and Keith Baker, he does not let political discourse take on a life of its own. The hard realities of political violence and international conflict are always present. We can see, therefore, in Blanning's critical engagement with the rich historical literature on the French Revolution the origins of the themes that he will so brilliantly examine in *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture*.

*The Culture of Power* is divided into three parts: 'Representational Culture', 'The Rise of the Public Sphere' and 'Revolution'. There is a certain Hegelian quality about this triad: each stage at once replaces and sustains its antecedent, following the dialectical process that Hegel calls *Aufhebung*, a lifting up, which of course involves both retention and removal.

The opening section on 'Representational Culture' is a rare example of historical writing that is at once a splendid introduction for the novice and a source of surprise and delight for the expert. Blanning moves across Europe – with particular emphasis on France and the German lands – and across genres – with particular emphasis on music and the visual arts. He finds just the right balance between the general and the particular, the prominent and the forgotten, sacred and profane. Despite the richness of its material, the [first section](#) is also the most cohesive of the three. In part this is because representational culture was a European phenomenon, nourished by the powerful influence of Versailles, patronized by a multilingual aristocracy, and created by an international elite of artists who moved freely from court to court. But the cohesiveness of representational culture also comes from the court itself, which represents the fusion of political and cultural authority, personified by the prince, around whom the life of the court is supposed to revolve. 'The whole state', as Bossuet once wrote, 'is in the person of the prince.'<sup>10</sup>

Something extraordinarily important happens to European politics when this ceases to be true: when the state can no longer be represented in the prince's person, it must be imagined; that is to say, it becomes the projection of what we know on to what we don't, what we can see on to what we can't. In the modern world, all political communities are

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 225.

'imagined communities' because all of them extend beyond what we can see and apprehend. The site where the political imagination operates – and where a new kind of political culture is created – is the subject of Blanning's [second section](#), 'The Rise of the Public Sphere'.

As the section's title underscores, Jürgen Habermas – a powerful presence throughout the book – is especially important here. As far as I have been able to discover, Habermas's name appeared for the first time in Blanning's *The French Revolution in Germany* (published in 1983), when he is listed – along with Treitschke, Marx, Barrès, Lenin and Rosenberg (an odd assortment to say the least) – as a source of categories 'from another time and place' that Blanning does not intend to impose on his material.<sup>11</sup> As we have seen, by the second edition of his survey of the French Revolution, Blanning had accepted Habermas's value in understanding the problem of political culture. In *The Culture of Power*, the conceptual framework has been – as Blanning tells us – strongly influenced although not dictated by *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*.<sup>12</sup>

In order to be transformed into a useful historical category, Habermas's idea of *Öffentlichkeit* needs three revisions. First, the chronology of his argument must be changed: the process he describes certainly began much earlier than he suggests. Second, the normative element in Habermas's account needs to be reduced – socially *Öffentlichkeit* was not, as Habermas suggests, so closely associated with the bourgeoisie, nor was it ideologically as 'progressive' and consistently secular as he claimed. Finally – and this point is made less often than the first two – the institutional dimensions of Habermas's argument need to be emphasized and the epistemological correspondingly downplayed. Within the evolution of Habermas's own thought, *Öffentlichkeit* is a stage in the emergence of the communications theory with which he tried to resolve problems of truth and value. In Habermas's original account, therefore, the epistemological function of *Öffentlichkeit* is more important than its social or institutional character. The historians – like Blanning – who use Habermas reverse this emphasis: a reversal that is already apparent in the translation of the

<sup>11</sup> *The French Revolution in Germany*, p. 17. There follows a long quotation from Richard Cobb, whose distrust of methodological self-consciousness the Blanning of 1983 firmly endorsed.

<sup>12</sup> *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1962). It is significant that Habermas's book was not translated until 1989: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). There is a vast literature on the concept: for a good introduction, see the article by Dena Goodman in *History and Theory* 31:1 (1992) and the collection edited by Craig Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), which includes some retrospective reflections by Habermas himself.



key term. The rendering of *Öffentlichkeit* as ‘public sphere’ (or even more clearly in the French *l’espace public*) gives the notion of ‘publicity’ or, perhaps more accurately, ‘publicness’ greater institutional weight than the German term would suggest.

Habermas’s great service is to encourage us to remember that culture is not just a set of ideas or objects, but that it is an activity in which form and content have a complex relationship: the medium and the message are dynamically and creatively interrelated.<sup>13</sup> By making culture an activity, Habermas suggested a way to write a history of ideas that transcended both the abstractions of traditional intellectual history and the reductionist categories of Marxist analysis.

In Blanning’s capable hands, the concept of a ‘public sphere’ becomes a way of illuminating the subtle interplay of commerce and communications in eighteenth-century culture. The core of this process was the rise of a reading public, at once the subjects and consumers of the century’s great burst of literary innovation. But Blanning refuses to be trapped within his conceptual framework: he recognizes the continued importance of the court, the limits of social categories like ‘the bourgeoisie’ and the need to recognize the aesthetic merit of great works of literature, art and music. As in [section one](#), Blanning is a splendid guide: clear and concise enough for the beginner, unfailingly original and provocative enough for the more experienced reader.

Blanning’s [final section](#), tersely entitled ‘Revolution’, is the longest, most original, most interesting, but also the most problematic of the three. There is no doubt that this section has the most difficult story to tell. The title of the section, like the closing date – 1789 – in the title of the book, sets the trajectory of the analysis towards the revolution in France. But Blanning must continue to manage the differences among the three national experiences at the centre of his account – Prussia, Britain and France. He must also retain his focus on the relationship between culture and power – unified by the court in his [first section](#), refracted into public opinion in his second and now necessarily part of the revolutionary crisis that brought the old regime to an end.

The keystone in the interpretive arch that supports this section is nationalism. At the end of the [second section](#), Blanning provides this forecast of what is coming: ‘As the [next chapter](#) will show, this great upheaval [that is, the French Revolution], which affected every part of

<sup>13</sup> Much the same idea informed the work of Marshall McLuhan, whose *Gutenberg Galaxy* appeared in 1962, the same year as Habermas’s *Strukturwandel*. McLuhan, who was once so famous that he appeared in a Woody Allen movie, is now largely forgotten, at least by historians.

Europe, did not come like a clap of thunder in a clear sky, but was a specifically French reaction to a general European phenomenon – the emergence of nationalism.<sup>14</sup>

I am not sure that Blanning's concept of nationalism is sturdy enough to bear the structural weight he puts upon it. It seems to me that it works rather well in his discussion of Britain, where the monarch is able to capture the patriotic mood and create a political culture that will enable Britain to emerge triumphant from its long struggle against revolutionary France. It is also true that the French monarchy's inability to mobilize nationalism was one – but only one – of the most significant reasons for the disasters that engulfed it after 1789. Nationalism works least well in explaining the German case, where national consciousness within the public sphere has a much more complicated relationship with political authority. Throughout German-speaking Europe, the state remained more important than the nation until well into the nineteenth century.

Looking back over Tim Blanning's scholarly work beginning with his study of Joseph II in 1970 and by no means ending with his *Culture of Power* in 2002, one is struck by its variety, range and intellectual power. He writes with equal authority about operas and battles, ideas and events, social movements and great men. Throughout his work there are some recurrent themes, such as the importance of religion, the centrality of politics and the decisive significance of power, especially military power. There are recurring opinions, of which Professor Blanning has an abundant supply. And there is also a characteristic tone that is gently – and sometimes not so gently – ironic. Above all, Blanning's work is united by what William James once called 'temperament', those deeply rooted elements of character and conviction that nourish our intellectual life. Blanning's scholarship is animated by his temperament, which is – and again I take my terms from William James – tough minded enough to see the world as it is, but also tender minded enough to appreciate the importance of imagining how the world might be and, above all, sensible enough to know the difference between the two.

## II

In their range and variety, the essays in this volume reflect the breadth of Tim Blanning's scholarly interests. Like Blanning's teaching and research, the essays are European in scope, extending from Britain to the Hungarian lands of the Habsburg Monarchy. Chronologically, they span the 'long eighteenth century' from Christopher Clark's account of King Frederick's

<sup>14</sup> Blanning, *The Culture of Power*, p. 182.

coronation in 1701 to Emma Winter's examination of King Ludwig of Bavaria's reign that ended, unhappily, in 1848. The subjects covered include music and military institutions, court intrigue and diplomatic practice, religious conflict and political ideas. While the editors have made no effort to provide a comprehensive portrait of the century, the contributions convincingly demonstrate its richness and diversity.

The essays are joined by a common interest in culture.

Although historians – since Herodotus – have long written about culture, cultural history has been significantly revitalized in the past two decades. One of the primary examples of this new vitality is the historiography of the eighteenth century and especially the historiography of pre-revolutionary France. There are many reasons for this, but the most important is surely the collapse – at once political, ideological and historiographical – of Marxism and the social interpretations it sustained. Instead of trying to establish the social origins of politics, historians began to search for its cultural sources and manifestations. This search can take many forms, some inspired by the so-called 'linguistic turn', others by a renewal of interest in religious ideas and institutions, still others by work on the family, gender and sexuality.<sup>15</sup> Tim Blanning, as we have seen, was influenced by these developments when he prepared a new edition of his introductory survey on the French Revolution. Their impact can also be seen in many of the essays in this volume.

Raymond Williams once wrote that 'culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.'<sup>16</sup> If 'power' is not one of the other two, then it certainly belongs on a list of the top ten. Both words have been used to refer to a bewildering variety of historical phenomena, whose importance no one would question, but whose precise meaning is persistently elusive. One is tempted to say about culture and power what St Augustine said about time: I know what they mean until someone asks me to explain them. But while no one would doubt the complexity of these concepts, we should not overlook the difficulties packed into that simple conjunction 'and', which raises the question of the relationship between the two, between the symbolic, moral and aesthetic realm of culture and the contentious, often violent world of power.

There is no simple, straightforward way to define the relationship between culture and power. Ideas, values and symbols are not merely reflections of deeper political realities, an ideological superstructure built

<sup>15</sup> For an early survey of this work, see Sarah Maza, 'Politics, Culture and the Origins of the French Revolution', *Journal of Modern History* 61 (December 1989), pp. 704–23.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in William Sewell, *Logics of History Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 156. Sewell's Chapter Five, 'The Concept(s) of Culture', is a brilliant discussion of the term and its uses.

to justify or conceal what really matters. Nor does culture constitute an autonomous reality of its own: the world may be many things, but it is not only a text. Beyond these extremes – in which, I suspect, few people have ever really believed – is to be found the question that recurs throughout this volume: how do people's struggles for influence and survival shape – and how are they shaped by – their language and rituals, art and ideas, symbols and ceremonies? As the essays collected here demonstrate, the best place to look for answers to this question is in those particular historical situations, where men and women struggle both to understand and to master the world around them. Understanding and mastery – culture and power – appear to be inseparable, each one enhancing or limiting the other. Our primary concern should be to see how this happens.

Although all of the essays treat some aspect of eighteenth-century culture, 'culture' turns out to be elastic enough to embrace an extremely diverse set of concerns. Roughly speaking, the authors' uses of the term can be divided into three groups:

In the first, culture is regarded as a particular sort of activity: the coronation rituals analysed by Christopher Clark, the ideas about power described by Joachim Whaley, the two Mozart operas discussed by Mark Berry and the artistic policies traced by Emma Winter. These activities do not, of course, float in the air: all of the authors link their subjects to individual ambitions, social institutions and political structures. Nevertheless, these forms of culture stand out from the institutional landscape, even as they are shaped and supported by it.

In the second group of essays, culture is used to mean a mentality, a set of deeply rooted notions about how institutions should and do work. Peter Wilson, for instance, defines 'military culture' as 'the values, norms, and assumptions that encourage people to make certain choices in given circumstances'. In this sense, culture is how particular organizations establish their goals and select alternative strategies to meet them. Hamish Scott's 'diplomatic culture' and Brendan Simms's 'strategic culture' belong in this category, as does the 'confessional conscience' manifested by the village choir in James Melton's microhistory of Hofgastein. This kind of culture often has explicit formulations – in training manuals or rules of conduct, for example – but it is most powerfully transmitted through the communal practices and intimate encounters on which every cohesive institution depends. These implicit, often routine forms of cultural communication teach people what it means to be a soldier, diplomat, British statesman or member of the Protestant minority in an Alpine market town.

The remainder of the essays use culture in a broader, more inclusive sense, that is, to refer to what some of the authors call 'political culture',

others, 'public culture' and a few, the 'public sphere'. This is the sort of culture that, as Andrew Thompson shows, sustained Britain as a 'confessional state', encouraged the crisis in the Parlement of Paris described by Julian Swann and prepared the way for the dramatic abolition of the nobility on 19 June 1790 that is the subject of William Doyle's contribution. The most prominent historical residues of this culture are the works of its most articulate representatives, works like Beaumarchais's *Marriage of Figaro*, whose subversive message was heard by nearly 100,000 people during its first run in Paris in 1784. But the influence of these individual books or plays, even extraordinarily popular ones like *Figaro*, depended on their relationship to a deeper, more pervasive, but also more elusive set of values and assumptions. Establishing the social dimensions and political implications of this relationship is perhaps the important challenge confronting students of political culture.

Several essays show the persistent importance of the court in the eighteenth century. 'Courts', Christopher Clark reminds us, 'are places where power and culture merge.' His analysis of the coronation of 1701 uncovers the rich symbolic meaning and practical significance of the Prussian Elector's efforts to mark his assumption of a royal crown and title. The courts were also, as Hamish Scott points out, the place where old regime statesmen learned their craft and established the connections on which their diplomacy depended. Munro Price looks carefully at the French upper nobility, whose attitudes were shaped by the microcosm of court intrigue as well as the larger realm of political ideas and values. Maiken Umbach emphasizes the significance of the court culture in the smaller German states for the creation of those values and ideas she calls *Bürgerlichkeit*, that form of moral sensibility that appealed to both princely patrons and the artists they supported. As we see in Emma Winter's essay, the complex interaction of court and public that Price found at Versailles and Umbach discovered at German courts like Dessau is even more strikingly apparent in Ludwig I's Munich, where the monarch lavished resources on art to glorify the dynasty and to promote German cultural values.

The court's political and cultural role depended on the ambitions and abilities of the ruler. Among the Hohenzollern, Frederick I was the first and also the last eighteenth-century king to be obsessed by dynastic ritual: neither Frederick's son nor his grandson cared much for the ceremonial dimensions of kingship. Personality also contributed to the toxic atmosphere at the French court on the eve of the revolution, where the weakness of the monarch and the deeply rooted unpopularity of his queen helped to alienate some of those closest to the throne.

Among eighteenth-century rulers, no one had a more remarkable personal style than the Emperor Joseph II. In contrast to Prussia's

Frederick I, who amplified his power with ceremonies and symbols, Joseph struggled to master the details of statecraft, including, as Derek Beales chronicles, the reception of tens of thousands of individual petitions, both in Vienna and during his travels around the Habsburgs' scattered domains. There was something medieval about this personal manifestation of royal power, but at the same time, the scale of Joseph's activity makes it a public act: if, as Beales writes, 'the public sphere is taken to embrace all interaction between government and people which involves exchanges of views, then, at least in the monarchy under Joseph II, petitioning was a major element in it'.

The persistent significance of the court is one reason why it is a mistake to associate the growth of the public too closely with the rise of some mythical 'bourgeoisie'. Another is the continued vitality of the aristocracy, which appears again and again in these essays. That aristocrats dominated the officer corps, the diplomatic service and the political elite is to be expected. But they were also important as patrons of the arts and as active participants in the public sphere. *Bürgerlichkeit* was a moral not a social category; its adherents included both noblemen and commoners. In fact, everywhere in Europe aristocrats were among the chief consumers of new political and literary works. It was, as William Doyle notes, the court nobility that persuaded Louis XVI to lift his ban on the production of Beaumarchais's play, which they and their fellow aristocrats then rushed to see. Surely when they applauded the denunciation of Count Almaviva's feckless immorality, they did not imagine that, just six years later, a revolutionary National Assembly would vote to abolish hereditary nobility forever.

Religion, which has always been an important theme in Tim Blanning's work, is a central theme in several essays. James Melton's painstaking re-creation of the Protestants' 'counterfactual inversion' of the Corpus Christi procession in an Alpine village shows us people's willingness to confront the power of both the community and the state. This challenge to what Melton calls 'the unity of creed and community' signalled the intensification of confessional animosity that would result in the expulsion of the region's Protestants just a few years later. If Melton follows religious divisions into the village community, Andrew Thompson shows how important religion remained in British public life. The eighteenth-century British state, he concludes, may not have been confessional, but it was most definitely Protestant, animated by a language of 'broad Protestant interest' shared by High Church Anglicans as well as dissenters.

In contrast to those who see the so-called 'Westphalian system' as composed of secular, sovereign states, Thompson shows the persistence of confessional issues in determining British foreign policy. In Britain, as

elsewhere, religious commitments and dynastic interests brought together international and domestic politics. This blend of religion and dynasty was part of the background to Frederick's coronation in 1701 and, as Brendan Simms argues, it remained a key to eighteenth-century Britain's strategic culture. Among the most significant effects of the French Revolution was to substitute ideology for religion in the linkage between domestic and foreign affairs, a point precociously made in Edmund Burke's 'Letters on the Proposals for Peace with the Regicide Directory of France' of 1796, which is cited with approval in Gary Savage's essay on political culture and French foreign policy.

Although this volume is self-consciously European in scope, it is worth noting how many of the authors are drawn into debates about the grand narratives of national histories. Clark, Wilson, Whaley and Umbach are all engaged with the German *Sonderweg*, about which they are all, to some degree, sceptical. Thompson and Simms both participate in the debate about eighteenth-century Britain that has been recently reinvigorated by the work of Jonathan Clark. And of course for all the authors on French subjects, the question of revolution's origins retains its magnetic power. On the basis of the essays by Swann, Price, Doyle and Savage, one can say that François Furet was only partially correct when he famously wrote that the French Revolution was over. It is perhaps significant that the essays that do not easily fit into national narratives – Melton, Evans, Beales and Berry – all have to do with the Habsburg Monarchy. Emma Winter's focus on Bavaria represents a clear break with conventional national categories, signalling a new interest in German states outside Prussia.

Taken together, these essays do not provide a grand narrative for the long eighteenth century. Indeed their overall impact is to undermine rather than advance any single interpretation of power and culture. There is more than enough material here to shake any overarching theory of change: class analysis, secularization or modernization in all its many guises. Habermas's 'public sphere' is used by some authors, but ignored or implicitly criticized by others. Even Tim Blanning's *Culture of Power* is sometimes called into question. This is, I think, an absolutely appropriate tribute to a scholar who has always celebrated the messy but fascinating specificity of historical experience.

## 2 When culture meets power: the Prussian coronation of 1701

---

*Christopher Clark*

St Catherine's College, Cambridge

### I

On 18 January 1701, Frederick III, Elector of Brandenburg and Duke of Prussia, was crowned 'King in Prussia' in the city of Königsberg. The splendour of the event was unprecedented in the history of the House of Hohenzollern. According to one contemporary report, 30,000 horses were required to relay the Electoral family, their retainers and their luggage, all packed into 1,800 carriages, along the road to the place of coronation. The ceremony itself began on the morning of 18 January in the audience chamber of the Elector, where a throne had been erected specially for the occasion. Dressed in a scarlet and gold coat glittering with diamond buttons and a crimson mantle with an ermine lining and attended by a small gathering of male family members, courtiers and senior local officials, the Elector placed the crown on his own head, took his sceptre in hand and received the homage of those present.

He then passed into the chambers of his wife, whom he crowned as his queen in the presence of their household. After representatives of the Estates had rendered homage, the royal couple processed to the castle chapel in order to be anointed. Here they were greeted at the entrance by two bishops, one Lutheran and one Reformed (Calvinist), both of whom had been appointed to their offices specifically for this purpose – in deference to the bi-confessional character of the Brandenburg-Prussian state (in which a Calvinist dynasty ruled over a population of Lutheran subjects). After some hymns and a sermon, a royal fanfare of drums and trumpets announced the highpoint of the service: the king rose from his throne and knelt at the altar, while the Calvinist Bishop Ursinus wet two fingers of his right hand in oil and anointed the forehead and the right and left wrists (above the pulse) of the king. The same ritual was then performed upon the queen. To the accompaniment of a musical acclamation, the clergymen involved in the service gathered before the throne and rendered homage. After further hymns and prayers, a senior court



official stood up to announce a general pardon for all offenders, excluding blasphemers, murderers, debtors and those guilty of *lèse-majesté*.<sup>1</sup>

Courts are places where power and culture merge. Nowhere is this convergence more splendidly enacted than in the dramatic performances of a royal coronation. But on what terms is the partnership between culture and power contracted? Is culture an essential, indeed an unconscious, substance that wells up through the ritual performances that embellish the court's public life? Or is it better understood as a repertoire of discrete symbolic instruments deployed by those who hold or lay claim to power, in order to achieve highly focused and intentional effects? Historical writing on royal ritual has generally been informed by two opposed points of view. The first, derived largely from the theoretical and interpretative writings of anthropologists, proceeds from the axiom that culture is best understood as 'a deeply sedimented essence attaching to, or adhering in, particular groups', or as the 'primordial values or traits' of a specific community.<sup>2</sup> Viewed in this light, the coronation ritual appears as a system of meanings that can be read synchronically and analysed like a text, a 'seamlessly coherent script or master narrative that actors follow'.<sup>3</sup> The second point of view arises from an acknowledgement of the artificiality of much royal ritual, its quality as a thing made at a specific time to meet a specific purpose. From this perspective, coronation rituals appear as exercises in propaganda, whose function is to project authority and win allegiance.<sup>4</sup> The focus is on manipulation, change and specificity

<sup>1</sup> For descriptions and analyses of the coronation, see Peter Baumgart, 'Die preußische Königskrönung von 1701, das Reich und die europäische Politik', in Oswald Hauser (ed.), *Preußen, Europa und das Reich* (Cologne and Vienna, 1987), pp. 65–86; Heinz Duchhardt, 'Das preußische Königtum von 1701 und der Kaiser', in Heinz Duchhardt and Manfred Schlenke (eds.), *Festschrift für Eberhard Kessel* (Munich, 1982), pp. 89–101; Heinz Duchhardt, 'Die preussische Königskrönung von 1701. Ein europäisches Modell?' in Heinz Duchhardt (ed.), *Herrscherweihe und Königskrönung im Frühneuzeitlichen Europa* (Wiesbaden, 1983), pp. 82–95; Iselin Gundermann, 'Die Salbung König Friedrichs I. in Königsberg', *Jahrbuch für Berlin-Brandenburgische Kirchengeschichte* 63 (2001), pp. 72–88; Iselin Gundermann (ed.), *Via Regia. Preußens Weg zur Krone. Katalog der Ausstellung des Geheimen Staatsarchivs Preußischer Kulturbesitz* (Berlin, 1998); Werner Schmidt, *Friedrich I. Kurfürst von Brandenburg, König in Preußen* (Munich, 1996), esp. pp. 103–41.

<sup>2</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, 'Introduction', *Representations* 59 (1997), pp. 1–13, here pp. 8–9.

<sup>3</sup> Lisa Wedeen, 'Conceptualising Culture: Possibilities for Political Science', *American Political Science Review* 96 (2002), pp. 713–28, here p. 716. In this passage, Wedeen is characterising the work of Clifford Geertz, esp. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, 1973), *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology* (New York, 1983) and *Negara: The Theater State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, 1980). On Geertz and historical practice, see William H. Sewell, Jr, 'Geertz, Cultural Systems, and History: From Synchrony to Transformation', *Representations* 59 (1997), pp. 35–55.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew D. Brown, 'Civic Ritual: Bruges and the Counts of Flanders in the Later Middle Ages', *English Historical Review* 11 (1997), pp. 277–99, here pp. 277, 280, 294.

rather than continuity and universality.<sup>5</sup> In contrast with the synchronic methodology of classical anthropology, this approach adopts a diachronic perspective in which each ritual performance is seen as one link in a chain of causes and consequences extending through time.<sup>6</sup> Ritual enactments are not the artefacts of a seamless and embedded tradition, but inventions that reflect processes of political change.<sup>7</sup> The appearance of antiquity and timelessness that marks much royal ritual is precisely that, an appearance contrived to shroud the artificiality of the proceedings in a mantle of continuity and thereby to assimilate the institution of monarchy to a transcendent order of things.<sup>8</sup>

These are clearly not mutually exclusive insights. Most significant ritual events can be profitably illuminated from both perspectives. The coronation rite of 1701 with which this chapter is concerned was a semiotically complex event superabundantly charged with the traditional attributes of royalty and it was certainly text-like, in that it explicitly invited metaphorical and allegorical readings. On the other hand, it was also a manifestly artificial, rootless thing that had to be manufactured in great haste to meet the needs of a particular moment. To a greater extent perhaps than any other major European coronation, it was fashioned to address the exigencies of a dynamic and threat-rich international environment.

Indeed, it may be that we can only make sense of the coronation ritual of 1701 if we move away altogether from an essentialist notion of culture as connoting fixed group traits. The drawback of this approach, as the political scientist Lisa Wedeen has observed, is that it does not allow for agency; participant actors are captives of a script ordained by culture. Wedeen advocates a dynamic analysis of 'semiotic practices' that would focus on 'processes of meaning-making' in which the intentions and strategies of actors interact with language, ritual and other symbolic systems.<sup>9</sup> Her open-ended, pragmatically oriented approach seems especially well fitted to an event that drew deeply on the symbols and logic of

<sup>5</sup> See Dougal Shaw, 'The Coronation and Monarchical Culture in Stuart Britain and Ireland, 1603–1661' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 2002), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Sewell, 'Geertz, Cultural Systems, and History', p. 40.

<sup>7</sup> David Cannadine, 'Introduction', in David Cannadine and Simon Prince (eds.), *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 1–19, here p. 4; on the inventedness of certain modern British rituals of royalty, see David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition", c. 1820–1977', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, Canto edn, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> Clifford Geertz, 'Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power', in Joseph Ben-David and Terry Nichols Clark (eds.), *Culture and Its Creators: Essays in Honor of Edward Shils* (Chicago, 1977), pp. 150–71, here p. 153.

<sup>9</sup> Wedeen, 'Conceptualizing Culture', pp. 713, 716.

traditional European kingship, but was at the same time highly purposive and manipulative.

This chapter aims to make sense of the Prussian coronation of 1701 by tracing in it the fault-lines where the demands of power met the imperatives of culture. In doing so, it seeks to relate the insights generated by historical analyses of the coronation to the larger issues addressed by this book. The first half of the chapter focuses on the genesis of the coronation as a politico-cultural artefact designed to convey a specific set of meanings. The second part examines the functionality of the coronation in diachronic perspective. This was a ceremonial without precedent and without a direct successor in the territory in which it was enacted. And yet, as I argue below, the afterlife of the coronation of 1701 within the political culture of the Brandenburg-Prussian monarchy was more vibrant than its historical singularity would suggest.

## II

In terms of the proportion of territorial wealth consumed, the coronation of 1701 must surely be the most expensive single event in the history of Brandenburg-Prussia. Even by the standards of an age that revelled in courtly ceremonial, the Prussian coronation was unusually splendid. The government levied a special crown tax to cover its expenditures, but this brought in a total of only 500,000 talers – three-fifths of this amount were paid out for the queen's crown alone, and the royal crown, a helmet of precious metal studded over its entire surface with diamonds, accounted for the rest and more besides. Reconstructing the total cost of the festivities is difficult, since no integrated account survives, but it has been estimated that around six million talers were spent in all for the ceremony and attendant festivities, about twice the annual revenues of the Hohenzollern administration.

The coronation was singular in another sense too. It was entirely custom-made: an invention designed to serve the purposes of a specific historical moment. The designer was Frederick I himself, who was responsible for every detail, not only of the new royal insignia, the secular rituals and the liturgy in the castle church, but also for the style and colour of the garments worn by the chief participants, the dramaturgy of the processions, the decoration of the thrones and their canopies. There were experts to advise on monarchical ceremonial. Foremost among these was the poet Johann von Besser who served as master of ceremonies at the Brandenburg court from 1690 until the end of the reign and possessed a wide-ranging knowledge of English, French, German, Italian and Scandinavian courtly tradition and custom. But the key decisions always fell

to the Elector. 'To tell the truth', a friend of the monarch observed in his memoirs, 'these gentlemen [the senior courtiers and state secretaries and master of ceremonies] were only involved as a formality, since the king himself saw to almost everything.'<sup>10</sup>

The ceremony that resulted was a unique and highly self-conscious amalgam of borrowings from historical European coronations, some recent, others of older vintage. From the English coronation ritual he borrowed, among other things, the practice of dedicating the eve of the ceremony to the induction of new members into a semi-clerical 'knightly order'. For the Order of the Bath, whose Knights gathered in the Tower on the evening before the coronation, Frederick substituted the Order of the Black Eagle, whose members were men distinguished by their services to the Prussian throne. The practice of presenting the king crowned and in full regalia for the rite of anointment had been the rule in Denmark since 1665 and the decision to have the king crown himself was probably made in emulation of the Swedish coronation ceremony of 1697.<sup>11</sup>

Frederick designed his coronation not only with a view to its aesthetic impact, but also in order to broadcast what he regarded as the defining features of his kingly status. The form of the crown, which was not an open band, but a metal helmet closed at the top, symbolised the 'all-embracing power' of a monarch who encompassed in his own person both secular and spiritual sovereignty. The fact, moreover, that the king, in contrast to the prevailing European practice, crowned himself in a separate ceremony before being acclaimed by his Estates, pointed up the autonomous character of his office, its independence from any worldly or spiritual authority (save that of God himself). A description of the coronation by Johann Christian Lünig, a renowned contemporary expert on the courtly 'science of ceremony', explained the significance of this step. 'Kings who accept their kingdom and sovereignty from the Estates usually only . . . mount the throne *after* they have been anointed: . . . but His Majesty [Frederick I], who has not received His Kingdom through the assistance of the Estates or of any other [party], had no need whatever of such a handing-over, but rather received his crown after the manner of the ancient kings from his own foundation.'<sup>12</sup>

The arrangements for the royal anointment were also highly distinctive. Above all, it was separated entirely from the formal act of coronation, which was performed by the king upon his own person in his own

<sup>10</sup> Rudolf Grieser (ed.), *Die Denkwürdigkeiten des Burggrafen und Grafen Christoph zu Dohna (1665–1733)* (Göttingen, 1974), p. 212.

<sup>11</sup> Duchhardt, 'Die preußische Königskrönung', p. 88.

<sup>12</sup> Johann Christian Lünig, *Theatrum ceremoniale historico-politicum oder historisch- und politischer Schau-Platz aller Ceremonien etc.* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1719–20), vol. II, pp. 100, 96.

chambers some time before the ecclesiastical part of the ceremony began, so when the king and his wife arrived at the Königsberg Schloßkirche, they were already crowned monarchs. Those involved in planning the ceremony were all agreed that the anointment must be administered by a bishop, but there were no serving bishops in Prussia, except for the court chaplain Jablonski, who ministered to the community of the Moravian Brothers in Berlin. Frederick could simply have ordered that bishops be ordained in time for the coronation, but he chose instead simply to appoint the two bishops out of the fullness of his sovereign power. Indeed his initial stipulation was that these elevations would be temporary, the episcopal titles lapsing after completion of the coronation formalities. Even the act of anointment itself was custom-designed to meet the new king's needs. It was the king, not his bishops, who gave the order to proceed with the anointment, so that one can speak without exaggeration of an act of 'self-unction' by the monarch.<sup>13</sup>

Given the recent history of Brandenburg and Ducal Prussia, the importance of these symbolic gestures is obvious enough. The Great Elector's struggle with the Prussian Estates and particularly the city of Königsberg was still a memory with the power to disturb – it is a telling detail that the Prussian Estates were never consulted over the coronation and were only informed of the forthcoming festivities in December 1700. As for the curious arrangements surrounding the unction, these too were charged with political meaning. The appointment of two bishops – one Lutheran and one Reformed – specifically for the coronation gave graphic expression to the monarch's claim to sovereign authority over both 'official' Protestant confessions: at a time when Lutheran hostility to the Calvinist court was still a problem, especially in a deeply Lutheran city like Königsberg, this was an important signal. By leaving the rite of anointment until after the coronation was an accomplished fact, moreover, Frederick reinforced the autonomy of the new foundation: had the unction been administered before or during the coronation, this might have been construed as signifying the dependence of the king upon the assent of the Estates, as represented in the persons of the two bishops and their clerical assistants.

Indeed, one of the most striking things about the coronation ceremony was what one might call its semiotic density. Every detail of every event was designed to broadcast a specific reading of the ceremony. The crown itself was packed with symbolic devices signifying power, glory and fullness of sovereignty. The throne canopies were decorated with a redundant profusion of royal attributes. A recurring figure was the eagle,

<sup>13</sup> Hans Liermann, 'Sakralrecht des protestantischen Herrschers', *Zeitschrift der Savignystiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* 61 (1941), pp. 311–83, here pp. 333–69.

the king of birds, surmounted by a crown, and bearing in its right claw a wreath of laurels signifying the power of royal justice and in its left claw a brace of thunderbolts signifying the justice of royal punishment. Even the prodigious fireworks orchestrated outside the city walls on 26 January combined mass entertainment with heavy-handed symbolism. The show began with three ascending rockets, the 'sign that a king is arriving'. There followed a sequence of fiery 'machines': in the first, the king was seen sitting on his throne with two floating angels holding the crown above his head; the second revealed Atlas bearing a globe of the world with floating sword and sceptre, and so on.<sup>14</sup>

Many details of the ceremony derived from the traditional representative culture of European royalty. Trumpets and drums, whose fanfares were heard in the chapel, were the traditional heralds of royalty. Images of two persons or angels placing a crown or garland on the head of a third person seated between them can be traced back into antiquity and had been used to represent the bestowal of royal dignity since the Middle Ages. The greeting of the royal procession at the door of the church likewise invoked a practice of great antiquity as did the unction itself and the alternation of sung texts and prayers throughout the service.<sup>15</sup> Yet it would be going too far to say that the authors of this festivity were working within an inherited tradition, for the design of the coronation ritual and its accoutrements was in fact an extravagant exercise in bricolage. The know-how that informed the ceremony was not rooted in a 'common knowledge' implicitly shared by all the participants; it derived rather from the printed canon of 'Ceremonialwissenschaft', the highly mediated and rationalised 'science of ceremony' that was enjoying a boom in the last decades of the seventeenth century. In works of this kind, the spectrum of European ceremonial usages was presented in encyclopaedic compass and detail.<sup>16</sup> From this resource, fragments of diverse 'traditions' were assembled, modified and recombined in such a manner as to achieve a

<sup>14</sup> Anon., *Völkomenes Diarium des gantzen Verlauffs, was von dem 23 Decembr. Anno 1700, bis auff den 31 Januarii 1701 vorgegangen, wie auch das zur Krönung verfertigtes Feuerwerk, so den 26. Januarii Anno 1701 . . . in Königsberg angezündet worden* (Königsberg?, 1701), p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Joachim Ott, *Krone und Krönung. Die Verheißung und Verleihung von Kronen in der Kunst von der Spätantike bis um 1200 und die geistige Auslegung der Krone* (Mainz, 1998), pp. 120, 212.

<sup>16</sup> See Milos Vec, *Zeremonialwissenschaft im Fürstenstaat. Studien zur juristischen und politischen Theorie absolutistischer Herrschaftsrepräsentation* (Frankfurt/Main, 1998); Jörg Jochen Berns, 'Der nackte Monarch und die nackte Wahrheit. Auskünfte der deutschen Zeitungs- und Zeremoniellschriften des späten 17. und frühen 18. Jahrhunderts zum Verhältnis von Hof und Öffentlichkeit', *Daphnis* 11 (1982), pp. 315–45; Berns, 'Die Festkultur der deutschen Höfe zwischen 1580 und 1730. Eine Problemskizze in typologischer Absicht', *Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift* 65 (1984), pp. 295–311.

highly focused array of effects. This was not the deeply anchored 'cultural system' that Geertz discerned in the rituals of the Javanese theatre-state. The coronation of 1701 did not grow out of or cohere into a homogeneous cultural fabric, nor did it express the collective unconscious of an ethnic or political community. It was a highly instrumental act, designed and executed by the late seventeenth-century's equivalent of a modern event-management agency. It was, to borrow Ernst Cassirer's characterisation of twentieth-century myth, 'an artificial thing fabricated by very skilful and cunning artisans'.<sup>17</sup>

Interestingly enough, the makers of the coronation were proud to acknowledge this aspect of the spectacle. It has often been observed that coronation rituals falsely assert their continuity with an ancient past in order to adorn themselves with an authority that transcends time. The illusion is created that it is the rituals that are speaking through the actors, not the other way around. But the designers of the Prussian coronation adopted an openly instrumental approach to their task. It was essential, the Prussian envoy in Warsaw wrote in June 1700, that a bishop be engaged to oversee the ecclesiastical part of the proceedings and that these include an anointment of some kind, since omitting these features might jeopardise the Elector's future claim to the coveted title *Sacra Regia Majestas*.<sup>18</sup> The use of a bishop along the lines seen in the recent Swedish coronation, another advisor suggested, 'will give a great effect' (*donnera un grand lustre*).<sup>19</sup> Publicists and councillors alike were quick to point out that the function of the anointment was purely symbolic. This was not a sacrament, but merely an edifying spectacle designed to elevate the spirits of those present.<sup>20</sup>

The publicity surrounding the Prussian coronation of 1701 stressed precisely the newness and artificiality of the royal foundation. To be sure, there was some talk in the summer of 1700 of the 'discovery' in the works of the sixteenth-century geographer Abraham Ortelius, that Prussia (meaning the Baltic principality of Prussia) had been a 'kingdom' in ancient times, but no one seems to have taken this seriously.<sup>21</sup> Even

<sup>17</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth and the State* (New Haven, 1950), pp. 281–2.

<sup>18</sup> Werner, Brandenburg Resident in Warsaw, Report of 10 June 1700, in Max Lehmann, *Preussen und die katholische Kirche seit 1640* (9 vols., Leipzig, 1878–1902), vol. I, p. 465.

<sup>19</sup> Father Vota to the Elector of Brandenburg, in *ibid.*, p. 468.

<sup>20</sup> Johann von Besser, *Preußische Krönungsgeschichte oder Verlauf der Ceremonien auf welchen Der Allerdurchlauchtigste Großmächtigste Fürst und Herr Friderich der Dritte – die königliche Würde des von Ihm gestifteten Königreichs preußen angenommen und sich und seine Gemahlin . . . durch die Salbung als König und Königin einweihen lassen* (Cölln/Spree, 1702), p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> The discovery was said to have been made by Werner, the Prussian representative in Warsaw, see Father Vota to the Elector of Brandenburg, Warsaw, 15 May 1700, in Lehmann, *Preussen und die katholische Kirche*, vol. I, p. 463.



Johann von Besser's effusive coronation chronicle stated only that this was 'a belief held by some'. Instead of submerging the new king in an imagined continuity, the publicists celebrated him as a self-made monarch. There was no talk of blood or ancient title. The remarkable thing about the new king, Besser observed in a foreword addressed to Frederick I, was that 'Your Majesty came to His Throne entirely through His own agency and in His own land.' It was a matter of pride that the Prussian monarch had acquired his throne 'neither by inheritance nor by succession, nor through elevation, but rather in an entirely new way, through his own virtue and establishment'.<sup>22</sup> We find the same theme in more private contexts: in a memorandum of 1704 retrospectively assessing the acquisition of the royal title, the trusted councillor Heinrich Rüdiger von Ilgen, whose attitude to the project had initially been ambivalent, praised the king for the 'industry', 'care' and 'zeal' he had shown in pursuing his goal, despite the scepticism of his councillors and the resistance he had encountered abroad.<sup>23</sup>

The publicists found a model for this self-made monarchy in the kingly foundations of the Hebrew Bible. The coronation liturgy included a sermon on a text from the Book of Samuel, the prophet and anointer of kings, and the prayer of anointment stated expressly that the Prussian king received this sign as the 'divine mark', by which God had shown the kings of His people that it was He who had established them.<sup>24</sup> An analogous argument resonated in the essays of the Halle jurist Johann Peter von Ludewig, a zealous advocate of the new crown, who observed that 'the supreme power of sovereigns comes from God: and the right to the royal throne falls . . . to those princes who submit themselves to the laws of the Lord of heaven and earth. These are the words of the spirit of truth: that God establishes kings.'<sup>25</sup> The crown, in other words, was legitimated in terms of a Prussian variation on the divine right of kings.

It would be mistaken to see these declarations as inaugurating a new approach to government in Brandenburg-Prussia founded upon a principled commitment to absolutism. This emphasis on the unmediated, divinely instituted character of the new monarchy was a tactical device focused on the international environment. It was essential to the

<sup>22</sup> Johann von Besser, *Preußische Krönungsgeschichte*, pp. 3, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Memorandum by Ilgen to Frederick I, 1704 in Lehmann, *Preussen und die katholische Kirche*, vol. I, pp. 548–59, here pp. 548–9.

<sup>24</sup> Anon., *Völkommunes Diarium*, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Johann Peter von Ludewig, 'Cron-würdiger Preußischer Adler', in Cassander Thücelius, *Des Heiligen Römischen Reichs Staats Acta* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1715), pp. 753–4, cited in Liermann, 'Sakralrecht', p. 366.