

Zbigniew Dalewski

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9382-8146>
Faculty of History, University of Warsaw

Hans Jacob Orning

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6231-0077>
Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History, University of Oslo

MAKING CHRISTIAN RULERSHIP ON THE PERIPHERIES OF THE LATIN WORLD*

Abstract: This article explores the introduction and consolidation of Christian rulership ideology in medieval Poland and Norway. Both realms started to be integrated into the Christian European culture around the turn of the first millennium, marked by the introduction of Christianity and the establishment of a kingdom with a Christian rulership ideology imported from Latin Europe. However, the adoption of this ideology and its repercussions were substantially different in the two realms. In both countries, introducing the new ideology increased political tensions, as its notion of undivided power made sharing power a more delicate issue. However, the way that these tensions played out in the two realms differed substantially. In Poland, the new ideology acquired a specific, non-royal dimension, and the result was that Poland was divided into several political entities. In Norway, the new rulership ideology became focused at the rank of kings and promoted sole kingship, which resulted in intense political and ideological struggles. In the long run, however, the ideology of Christian rulership led to consolidated kingdoms in both realms, albeit earlier in Norway (1240) than in Poland (1320).

Keywords: ideology, shared rule, kingship, conflict, coronation

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INTRODUCTION

Poland and Norway started to be integrated into the Christian European culture around the turn of the first millennium, marked by the introduction of Christianity and the establishment of a kingdom. In both areas, this process of forming a rudimentary polity was closely intertwined with the reception of a Christian rulership ideology imported from Latin Europe. However, whereas this ideology played a crucial role in transforming Poland and Norway into European-style monarchies, its adoption and repercussions were substantially different in the two realms. This article sets out to explain how and why this ideological development played out so differently in medieval Poland and Norway. To do so, it will employ a comparative method to describe and explain how a roughly similar starting point in two polities resulted in different trajectories. In this introduction, we will first present the main features of the new ideology of Christian rulership that was imported from the core areas of Europe before briefly describing the different developments in the two realms. After that, we will set out some hypotheses to explain these differences. Finally, the comparative method employed in this study will be presented and discussed.

Ideology is a crucial concept in this article, and though it can be defined in various ways, we focus on two aspects of ideology for the purposes of this article. First, to qualify as an ideology, a set of thoughts has to be explicitly formulated as a coherent system of ideas, contrasting with mentalities consisting of ideas that are not clearly defined as a political programme.¹ Second, an ideology is deeply ingrained with issues of power in that it aims to legitimise and naturalise social relations – in short, to transform power into authority.² The ideology of Christian rulership that forms the central theme of this article is understood as a set of concepts and ideas that define the

¹ On 'ideology' vs 'mentality', see Jacques Le Goff, 'Les mentalités: Une histoire ambiguë', in Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora (eds), *Faire de l'histoire* (Paris, 1974). See also Robert S. Stuart, 'Ideology, Theory, and Mentality: Some Issues in the Historical Study of Ideology', *Labour history*, 50 (1986), <https://doi.org/10.2307/27508783> [Accessed: 20 Apr. 2024].

² See Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature* (London, 2013), 20; Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in John G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York, 1986), 241–58. See also the general introduction on the naturalness and deservedness of elites to rule.

role of a ruler in the social, political and religious order of polity he ruled; this ideology was shaped in the Carolingian era and was later on reshaped and developed in the Ottonian times. It placed an anointed king in the sacral sphere and emphasised the essentially religious nature of royal power. The king was perceived as a ruler appointed to the throne by God Himself, and the scope of his authority extended beyond worldly matters. As a ruler who wielded power by the grace of God, the king was obliged not only to follow God's Commandments, to ensure compliance with justice, and to strive for the well-being of his subjects, but also, and perhaps above all, to take care of their salvation, supporting the Church and its bishops. Hence, this concept of kingship emphasised its sacral basis and presented monarchical authority as a religious mission, a *ministerium* assumed by the ruler through the act of royal anointing.³ The ideology also promoted sole rulership as a basic feature. The Ottonian epoch witnessed the abandonment of the Carolingian practice of dividing the kingdom among many kings. There is no need to discuss in detail here all the reasons that lay behind this change.⁴ There is no doubt, however, that when Poland and Norway became a part of the Christian world, the concept of the sole, undivided and unshared rule was already fully integrated into the Christian royal ideology, and a division of power was regarded as a source of discord and could potentially lead to devastating civil wars.⁵ In medieval Norway, this Christian royal ideology differed

³ On this ideology in medieval Europe, see for instance Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought: 300–1450* (London–New York, 2005); J.H. Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350 – c. 1450* (Cambridge, 1988); Franz-Reiner Erkens, *Herrschersakralität im Mittelalter. Von den Anfängen bis zum Investiturstreit* (Stuttgart, 2006).

⁴ See e.g. Karl Schmid, 'Das Problem der "Unteilbarkeit des Reiches"', in *id.* (ed.), *Reich und Kirche vor den Investiturstreit. Vorträge beim wissenschaftlichen Kolloquium aus Anlaß des achtzigsten Geburtstag von Gerd Tellenbach* (Sigmaringen, 1985), 1–15; Franz-Reiner Erkens, 'Einheit und Unteilbarkeit. Bemerkungen zu einem vielerörterten Problem der frühmittelalterlichen Geschichte', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 80 (1998), 269–95; Thomas Zotz, 'Wie der Typ des Allein-Herrschers (monarchus) durchgesetzt wurde', in Bernhard Jussen (ed.), *Die Macht des Königs. Herrschaft in Europa vom Frühmittelalter bis in die Neuzeit* (Munich, 2005), 90–105; Zbigniew Dalewski, 'Patterns of Dynastic Identity in the Earlier Middle Ages', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 107 (2013), 5–43.

⁵ The issue of sole rule was tightly integrated into the Christian royal ideology in Norway, see Sverre Bagge, *The Political Thought of The King's Mirror* (Odens, 1987);

substantially from what we can term an “indigenous” royal ideology that focused on royal charisma, gift-giving, and warrior-like, heroic capacities – what has often been shorthanded as a *primus inter pares* type of king.⁶ In medieval Poland, we know less about what ideas concerning royalty were present before the ideology of Christian rulership gained ascendancy, but it is fairly safe to assume that related ideas about rulership were prevalent in Poland before Christianisation and probably also after that.⁷

A central hypothesis in the first part of this article is that the ideology of Christian rulership gained a much earlier acceptance and foothold in Poland than in Norway. In Poland, the ideology was introduced in the late tenth century, culminating already with the coronation of Bolesław I the Brave (Chrobry) and his son Mieszko II in 1025. Norway became Christianized only a short time after Poland – in 1030, but the full impact of the new royal ideology did not come until a century and a half later with the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson in 1163/64. We first describe these processes of adopting the royal ideology in the two realms before trying to explain the differences. Our assumption is that the faster introduction and implementation of the Christian royal ideology in Poland than in Norway can partially be explained by external causes relating to influence from abroad and partially by internal factors concerned with the position of the royal dynasties and what we term ‘indigenous’ royal ideologies.

In the second part of the article, we follow the ramifications of establishing the new ideology of Christian rulership in the two realms. In both places, introducing the new ideology led to increased political tensions. We relate this development to the notion of undivided power inherent in the new ideology, which probably made the sharing of power a more delicate issue than previously when the typical pattern both in Poland and Norway had been that rulers shared

Torfinn Tobiassen, ‘Tronfølgelov og privilegiebrev’, in Andreas Holmsen and Jarle Simensen (eds), *Samfunnsmaktene brytes* (Oslo, 1969).

⁶ On this ideology, see Sverre Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson’s Heimskringla* (Berkeley, 1991); Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Viking Friendship: The Social Bond in Iceland and Norway, c. 900–1300* (Ithaca, NY, 2017).

⁷ Zbigniew Dalewski, ‘The Piast Rulership’, in Grischa Vercamer and Dušan Zupka (eds), *Rulership in Medieval East Central Europe: Power, Ritual and Legitimacy in Bohemia, Hungary and Poland* (Leiden, 2022), 111–32.

power – formally or informally.⁸ However, the way that these tensions played out in the two realms differed substantially. In Poland, the new ideology acquired a specific, non-royal dimension. This permitted some members of the Piast dynasty to partake in the new ideology – with the result that Poland after 1138, and especially after 1200, was divided into several political entities. In Norway, by contrast, the new rulership ideology became focused on the rank of kings, with Magnus Erlingsson issuing a series of documents (a coronation oath, succession law, and Church privileges) in 1163/64. King Magnus's acceptance of the new royal ideology promoted sole kingship. They thereby prevented (or complicated) a division of the realm, but simultaneously, his endeavours escalated the level of conflict since the possibility of dividing or sharing power was, in effect, blocked. The result was an intense struggle over royal ideology, culminating in King Sverrir Sigurdsson's formulation of an alternative ideology of Christian rulership in the 1190s.⁹ Thus, Poland seems to have had more of an ideological consensus, leading to less political conflict but more territorial division than in Norway, which remained a single political entity, but whose elites were more concerned with intense political/ideological struggles. In the long run, however, the ideology of Christian rulership led to consolidated kingdoms in both realms, albeit earlier in Norway (1240) than in Poland (1320).

In this article, we will use variant A of the comparative method defined in the general introduction. This type of comparison focuses on how concrete elements imported from the centre played out in the peripheries, such as the introduction of coins, the cult of saints, and in this instance, an ideology of rulership.¹⁰ Chris Wickham has stated that “comparison is the closest that historians can get

⁸ On the practice of sharing power, or what in Norway has been termed joint rule, see Narve Bjørgo, ‘Samkongedøme kontra einekongedøme: Ein analyse av norsk kjeldemateriale i historiografisk perspektiv’, *Historisk tidsskrift* (N), 49 (1970), 1–33; Sverre Bagge, ‘Samkongedømme og enekongedømme’, *Historisk tidsskrift* (N), 54 (1970), 239–74; Hans Jacob Orning, ‘Conflict and social (dis)order in Norway, c. 1030–1160’, in Kim Esmark, Lars Hermanson, Hans Jacob Orning, and Helle Vogt (eds), *Disputing Strategies in Medieval Scandinavia* (Leiden, 2013), 45–82.

⁹ See in particular the formulations of the political pamphlet *The Speech against the Bishops*, which in all probability was written in Sverrir's circles in the 1190s. See Erik Gunnes, *Kongens ære: kongemakt og kirke i En tale mot biskopene* (Oslo, 1971).

¹⁰ See the introduction for more discussions.

to testing, attempting to falsify, their own explanations".¹¹ In this context, the *explanans* is the Christian royal ideology stemming from core areas of Europe, which both Polish and Norwegian rulers were in a position to appropriate after being recently Christianized. However, the adoption – and adaptation – of the new ideology happened differently in the two realms, and this becomes the central *explanandum* that the comparative method addresses: why did the same impulse play out differently in these two roughly similar settings? Why did it take much longer for this breakthrough to happen in Norway than in Poland? In formulating these questions in a quasi-experimental fashion, we are the first to admit that this context represents a simplification of the historical past. We do not claim that the situation in Poland at the time of the first coronation in 1025 was identical to that of the Norwegian coronation in 1163/64, and nor were the coronations were exactly similar. Nor would we assume that nothing changed in the position of the Norwegian kings between 1030 and 1163 – only that their ideology did not alter radically. The added value of the comparison is that it triggers the question of why the same factor – the introduction of an ideology of rulership – had such different ramifications in two contexts which otherwise look similar.

Two caveats should be set out before starting the comparison. First, the article mainly builds on previous research, and will therefore engage with primary sources to only a limited degree.¹² Second, the analysis will focus on political and ideological factors, and will largely ignore material causes for the trajectories under scrutiny. The decision to narrow down the focus was partly practical – analysing the whole spectrum of potential causes in this instance would simply exceed the scope of the article, partly for methodological reasons – since comparison necessitates isolating variables, but it was mostly because we consider the ideological/political/religious causes to be the most central – maybe even the decisive – explanatory factors in this case.

¹¹ Chris Wickham, 'Problems in doing comparative history', in Patricia Skinner (ed.), *Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History: The Legacy of Timothy Reuter* (Turnhout, 2009), 5–28, here at 7.

¹² Bloch argues that that building on previous research is a precondition for comparative investigations. Marc Bloch, 'Toward a Comparative History of European Societies', in Frederic C. Lane and Jelle C. Riemersma (eds), *Enterprise and Secular Change* (Homewood, Ill., 1953), 494–521, here at 518 f.

FIRST PHASE: THE INTRODUCTION
OF THE NEW ROYAL IDEOLOGY

Poland and Norway became Christian kingdoms roughly at the same time, around the first millennium. However, Poland adopted a Christian royal ideology much earlier than Norway. In the following, we will briefly narrate the main events in this process in the two countries and then discuss possible reasons for this difference.

After the conversion to Christianity, the polity ruled by the Piast dynasty was included in the religious, political and ideological structures of the Latin West. The first Piast rulers soon established close relationships with the imperial court and political elites of the Empire and swiftly assimilated concepts of Christian kingship, rooted in Carolingian tradition, that were developed under the Ottonian rulers. They adopted symbols and rituals connected with those concepts and started using them to define their status, communicate with their subjects, and legitimise their rights to wield power.¹³

The first steps in this direction had already been made by the first Polish Christian ruler, Mieszko I (r. c. 963–992). Shortly before he died in 992, he entrusted his realm to St Peter. The donation established a special bond between the Polish ruler and the Prince of the Apostles. From that time onwards, the Piast prince was to rule in Poland not through his dynastic descent, dating back to the mythical origin of the community under his rule, but by the grace of St Peter, under the saint's protection and care.¹⁴ Mieszko's donation clearly shows that in the late tenth century, just a quarter of the century after Mieszko accepted Christianity, Christian concepts of power determined to a large degree how the Polish rulers understood and exercised their power.

Mieszko's son and successor, Bolesław I the Brave (r. 992–1025), continued his father's policy to ensure that the Piasts were included in the Christian order. Not only did he maintain the relationship with St Peter, which his father had established, but he also undertook other actions to emphasise the Christian nature of his power, proving in that way that he deserved to be an anointed Christian king. First,

¹³ Dalewski, 'The Piast Rulership', 111–32.

¹⁴ Roman Michałowski, 'Christianisation of Political Culture in Poland in the 10th and Early 11th Century', in Halina Manikowska and Jaroslav Pánek (eds), *Political Culture in Central Europe (10th–20th Century)* (Prague, 2005), 31–46, here at 45.

like the Christian kings who were responsible for converting the pagans to Christianity, Bolesław promoted missionary efforts that sought to spread the Gospel among neighbouring pagan people.¹⁵ Second, he took care of the salvation of his subjects, undertaking actions in the legislative sphere that aimed to subordinate the norms of social behaviour to the rules of Christianity. In this regard, he was no exception, but compared to the rulers of the neighbouring polities of Bohemia and Hungary, it seems that Bolesław went further than other contemporary rulers.¹⁶

Bolesław's efforts to place his power within the Christian ideological order culminated in 1025, when he and his son, Mieszko II (r. 1025–1034), were crowned and anointed kings. The coronation has left little evidence in the sources, but as all the early medieval coronation formulas consist of a similar set of ritual gestures and prayers, there can be no doubt that Bolesław the Brave and Mieszko II were presented as kings appointed by God whose power was essentially religious in nature. This image of the ruler is confirmed in a letter that Duchess Matilda of Lotharingia attached to the codex sent to Mieszko II shortly after his coronation in 1025. Here, Mieszko is presented as an ideal Christian king who was raised to the throne by God Himself: on the one hand, he exercised his rule with consideration, taking care of widows, orphans and the poor, and on the other, he built many churches and undertook efforts to ensure the salvation of his subjects.¹⁷ The image of Mieszko, which emerges from Matilda's letter, is entirely in line with the concepts of kingship dominating the political culture of the Empire in the Ottonian and Salian times.¹⁸

¹⁵ Roman Michałowski, *The Gniezno Summit. The Religious Premises of the Founding of the Archbishopric of Gniezno* (Leiden, 2016), 187–206.

¹⁶ Roman Michałowski, 'The Nine-Week Lent in Boleslaus the Brave's Poland. A Study of the First Piasts' Religious Policy', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 89 (2004), 5–50; id., 'Christianisation of the Piast Monarchy in the 11th and 11th Centuries', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 101 (2010), 14–32; Zbigniew Dalewski, 'The Public Dimension of Religion in the Piast Monarchy during the Christianisation Period', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 101 (2010), 37–49.

¹⁷ *Codex Mathildis. Liber officiorum cum foliis dedicationis*, ed. by Brygida Kürbis, Monumenta Sacra Polonorum Series (Kraków, 2000), i, 139–40.

¹⁸ Andrzej Pleszczyński, *The Birth of Stereotype: Polish Rulers and their Country in German Writings c. 1000 A.D.* (Leiden, 2011), 254–74; Przemysław Wiszewski, *Domus Boleszlai. Values and Social Identity in Dynastic Traditions of Medieval Poland (c. 966–1138)*

In Norway, the process of adopting the European-style Christian royal ideology took a much longer time than in Poland. On the one hand, Christianity was accepted relatively quickly following a phase of resistance to the missionary efforts of the kings Olaf Tryggvason (r. 995–1000) and Olaf Haraldsson (r. 1015–1028/30). After 1030, Christianity turned from a divisive political force into an integrative one, and there were no more recorded protests against the new religion. Henceforward, Norway was a Christian kingdom, and its kings acted as leaders of the Church, building churches and having bishops in their retinues.¹⁹ On the other hand, the impact of the new religion on the royal ideology remained limited for a long time, as the European-style Christian royal ideology was slow to make headway in Norway. Kings continued to be appointed at popular assemblies, and they were primarily perceived to be charismatic and generous warrior-kings, whereas their Christian properties were mostly passed over in silence.²⁰ An indication of the limited impact of the Christian royal ideology is the fact that King Olaf Haraldsson was venerated as a saint shortly after his death, but it took more than a century before Norwegian kings seized on the potential to promote themselves as inheritors and successors of the saintly king – in contrast to the Polish kings who were quick to connect their authority to the new faith (St Peter) as well as to use the potential of a national saint (St Adalbert) for political purposes.²¹ Hence, Polish rulers legitimised their power in religious and universal terms, whereas

(Leiden, 2010), 66–76; Zbigniew Dalewski, ‘Sakralność władzy królewskiej pierwszych Piastów’, *Historia Slavorum Occidentis*, 14 (2017), 43–57.

¹⁹ On this process, see Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c. 900–1350* (København, 2010); Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Viking Friendship: The Social Bond in Iceland and Norway, c. 900–1300* (Ithaca, NY, 2017); Knut Helle (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia: Prehistory to 1520* (Cambridge, 2003).

²⁰ Harald Hardrada brought along impulses from Byzantium, and he issued national coinage, see Svein H. Gullbekk and Anette Sættem, *Norske myntfunn: 1050–1319: penger, kommunikasjon og fromhetskultur* (Oslo, 2019). However, in general, Norwegian kings continued to rule in accordance with customary conceptions of kingship. See Per Sveaas Andersen, *Samlingen av Norge og kristningen av landet: 800–1130* (Bergen, 1977); also Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson’s Heimskringla* on the fundamental secular attitude to kingship.

²¹ Lars Boje Mortensen (ed.), *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c. 1000–1300)* (Copenhagen, 2006).

Norwegian kings mainly sought local and mostly secular legitimation of their position.

It took over a century before the European royal ideology finally made headway into Norway. In 1163/64, Magnus Erlingsson was crowned king, giving rise to a series of documents and rituals that constituted a major break in Norwegian history: a succession law, a coronation oath and a letter of privileges to the Church. The succession law – the first to be written down in Norwegian history – represented a break with previous succession rules since it promulgated sole monarchy, whereas the customary rule allowed all the sons of a king to be elected king. Moreover, the Church gained a foothold in the king-making process, partly through appointing peasant delegates to the assembly and partly through their opportunity to protest if the pretender was evil or had lost his wits.²² The coronation oath is infused with the new Christian ideology of kingship, encompassing a vision to assist powerless people and to rule according to Christian principles of justice and peace.²³ Magnus Erlingsson subjugated himself and the Norwegian realm to St Olaf in a letter of privilege to the Norwegian Church.²⁴ Taken together, these documents testify to the pervasive impact of European ideas about kingship on the royal ideology, in contrast to the indigenous ideas about kingship that had prevailed so far.

Why did Polish rulers adopt the new royal ideology immediately, whereas, in Norway, it left relatively little imprint on how kings legitimised themselves for more than a hundred years?

There are several reasons for the relatively early acceptance of ideas of Christian kingship in Poland. One is connected to external factors.

²² Literature on the succession law and its impact is vast, but fairly old and in Norwegian. See Tobiassen, 'Tronfølge Lov og privilegiebrev'; Claus Krag, 'Skikkethet og arv i tronfølge loven av 1163', in Claus Krag and Jørn Sandnes (eds), *Norske historikere i utvalg VI. Nye Middelalderstudier: Kongedømme, kirke, stat* (Oslo, 1983), 110–25. For more recent contributions, see David Bregaint, *Vox Regis: Royal Communication in High Medieval Norway* (Leiden, 2015), 28–48; Thomas Malo Tollefsen, *Scandinavian Kingship Transformed: Succession, Acquisition and Consolidation in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, PhD dissertation, University of Cardiff, 2020, <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/134700/1/2020tollefsentphd.pdf> [Accessed: 16 May 2024].

²³ Sverre Bagge, Knut Helle, and Synnøve Holstad Smedsdal (eds), *Norske middelalderdokumenter* (Bergen, 1973), 30–3. See Tobiassen, 'Tronfølge Lov og privilegiebrev' on the ideology of the oath.

²⁴ *Norske middelalderdokumenter*, 48–55.

For the Piast rulers, who established close contacts with the Empire, the notion of Christian kingship became an obvious point of reference for the concepts of their own power. In 1000, Emperor Otto III visited St Adalbert's tomb in Gniezno and met with Bolesław the Brave. In the religious sphere, the meeting confirmed the establishment of the archbishopric of Gniezno, which had been founded at a synod in Rome a year earlier.²⁵ The creation of an independent Polish Church, which was not subordinated to any German archbishopric and had its own archbishop, also had political implications. Admittedly, the coronation orders did not require that the consecration of a new king had to be performed by an archbishop. In practice, however, it was generally accepted that the right to crown a king was an archbishop's prerogative. As a result, the establishment of the Gniezno archbishopric enabled Bolesław to think seriously about his own coronation. His coronation plans were justified by the decisions Otto III made during the Gniezno meeting, which radically changed the status of the Piast ruler in his relationship with the Empire. As Thietmar of Merseburg vividly put it, the emperor made a lord out of a tributary and, in that way, allowed Bolesław to participate in his power and to share values and ideas on which it was based.²⁶ It seems that Bolesław believed that in the aftermath of the meeting, he would be elevated to kingship through a coronation ceremony, but after Otto III died in 1002, his successor Henry II opposed such a coronation, and as a result, Bolesław was only crowned after Henry's death.²⁷ The inscribing of REX BOLIZLAVUS on the coins Bolesław minted between 1005 and 1015 shows, however, that despite the lack of the coronation, he perceived his power in royal terms throughout almost his entire reign.²⁸

However, there were also internal factors that stimulated the Piasts' interest in adopting the new ideology. It is unclear how the Piast dynasty justified its claims for power in the period before Mieszko I's

²⁵ Michałowski, *The Gniezno Summit*, 74–222.

²⁶ Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, ed. by Robert Holtzmann, MGH SS rer. Germ. N.S. 9 (Berlin, 1935), book 5, chap. 10, p. 232.

²⁷ Zbigniew Dalewski, 'Dlaczego Bolesław Chrobry chciał koronować się na króla?', in Józef Dobosz, Marzena Matla, and Leszek Wetesko (eds), *Gnieźnińskie koronacje królewskie i ich środkowoeuropejskie konteksty* (Gniezno, 2011), 21–41.

²⁸ Stanisław Suchodolski, 'Rex Bolizlavus – tzw. królewskie monety Bolesława Chrobrego', in Andrzej Rachuba, Sławomir Górzyński, and Halina Manikowska (eds), *Heraldyka ... i okolice* (Warszawa, 2002), 285–95.

acceptance of Christianity. The Piast dynastic legend is preserved in a chronicle written down by an anonymous author traditionally referred to as Gallus Anonymus in the 1110s at the court of Mieszko I's great-great-grandson Prince Bolesław III Wrymouth (Krzywousty; r. 1102–1138). Gallus presents Mieszko as an heir to a long-established line of dynastic succession and emphasises the sacral sources of the Piast power.²⁹ Yet, archaeology tells us another story, suggesting that the Piast polity had emerged not much earlier than the first information about Mieszko I that appeared in the written sources in the 960s. Recent excavations have revealed the sudden appearance of an extended network of strongholds erected following a unified plan and characterised by the formerly unknown 'hook' wall structure in an area where no supra-local social organisation forms had existed. These formations indicate that the Piast polity did not emerge through a gradual transformation but instead was the result of a rapid turnaround related to the imposition of a new model of socio-political organisation and the subordination of local communities to the power of the Piast dynasty.³⁰ It seems, therefore, that the Piasts' power was not very firmly rooted in the political traditions of the communities under their rule. It was mainly legitimated by their military success and ability to distribute tribute taken from the communities they had conquered. The introduction of Christianity opened up new opportunities for the Piasts to justify their claims to rulership. It helped to break down old divisions among different local communities, leading to the creation of a new community defined by its relations with the Piast dynasty.

²⁹ Gallus Anonymus, *Cronicae et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, ed. by Karol Maleczyński, Monumenta Poloniae Historica, nova series, 2 (Kraków, 1952).

³⁰ Zofia Kurnatowska, 'Wielkopolska w X wieku i formowanie się państwa polskiego', in Henryk Samsonowicz (ed.), *Ziemia polskie w X wieku i ich znaczenie w kształtowaniu się nowej mapy Europy* (Kraków, 2000), 99–117; Andrzej Buko, 'Unknown Revolution: Archaeology and the Beginnings of the Polish State', in Florin Curta (ed.), *East Central and Eastern Europe in the Early Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor, 2005), 162–78; Michał Kara, *Najstarsze państwo Piastów – rezultat przełomu czy kontynuacji? Studium archeologiczne* (Poznań, 2009); *id.*, 'Medieval historical studies and medieval archaeology about origin of the Piast State. An overview', *Archaeologia Polona*, 48 (2010), 37–58; *id.*, 'Polish archaeology in the Millennium research on the early Polish state, with particular emphasis on the Poznań research centre. Major research paradigm', *Przegląd Archeologiczny*, 65 (2017), 151–67.

If Christianity introduced new ways for legitimising and indeed increasing royal power, as it did for the Polish rulers, why did their Norwegian counterparts not see the potential of this new ideology of rulership until the mid-twelfth century? Why were Norwegian kings so quick to adopt Christianity but so slow to use the Christian royal ideology to strengthen their own position? The most apparent cause has to do with external factors. Like Poland, Norway was situated in a regional cluster where they were subjected to various degrees of pressure. The usual situation in Scandinavia was that Denmark was the most powerful polity.³¹ Danish kings had controlled much of eastern Norway since the Viking Age, and in the half-century up to the death of King Cnut the Powerful in 1036, they were overlords over Norway for most of the time. After 1036, however, this situation changed radically, as the Danish Empire quickly disintegrated, and Denmark entered a century of weak or quarrelling kings.³² With no external threats, Norwegian kings could rule relatively safely without external interruptions, and there was no pressing need to bolster or centralise power. In this situation, the traditional royal ideology of power-sharing was conducive to the political realities of the time, as it allowed numerous kings to partake in the extraction of resources and could accommodate a quite high level of internal rivalry and competition.³³ The introduction of the Church organisation did not result in the abandonment of this system, as the kings controlled the central Church resources until the mid-twelfth century for all practical purposes.³⁴ Hence, an obvious difference between Poland and Norway in the eleventh and early twelfth century is that Poland was close to the Empire, while Norway had no comparable powerful neighbour to squeeze it. It is also possible to find internal factors for why the Norwegian kings did not have the same need to adopt the new ideology as the Piasts had done in Poland. First, around the time of Christianisation, the Norwegian royal dynasty was probably more firmly established in Norway than the Piasts were

³¹ Narve Bjørgo, *Selvstendighet og union: fra middelalderen til 1905* (Oslo, 1995); Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Scandinavia in the Age of Vikings* (Ithaca, NY, 2021).

³² Ole Fenger, *“Kirker rejses alle vegne”: 1050–1250* (København, 1993).

³³ On the practice of joint kingship, see references in fn 8.

³⁴ Andersen, *Samlingen av Norge og kristningen av landet: 800–1130*; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Kristninga i Norden 750–1200* (Oslo, 2003).

in Poland.³⁵ Second, as already mentioned, Norway had a strong indigenous tradition of promoting kingship, which might have made the need for additional legitimation of royal power less urgent.

The next question is why Norwegian kings finally adopted the Christian royal ideology in the mid-twelfth century, after over a century with scarcely any development of royal ideology. Again, we have to invoke external factors, as Norway's century of 'splendid isolation' came to an abrupt end after 1150. In 1157, King Valdemar Knudsen emerged from internal strife in Denmark as the victor and sole ruler, and he inaugurated a period of a consolidated Danish kingdom that was again intent on dominating neighbouring areas such as Norway.³⁶ Norwegian kings soon came to notice the change, and the king's father (and real governor) Erling Skakki only prevented a Danish incursion by becoming the earl of King Valdemar.³⁷ Another decisive event was the foundation of the Norwegian archdiocese in 1152/53, which also signalled the introduction of the Gregorian Church programme in Norway.³⁸ This programme had the potential to lead to conflicts with the monarchy, but it was also possible for it to bolster royal ideology, and in 1163/64, it did the latter. The main reason for this alliance was that both parties were in a vulnerable position. Magnus Erlingsson was not a king's son, which was a requirement for becoming king in the traditional manner. For his part, the archbishop needed royal support to increase his revenues. The new royal ideology was the glue which held the newly established alliance together. With the

³⁵ The ancestry and lineage of the Ynglings is a hotly debated topic, see Claus Krag, *Ynglingatal og Ynglingesaga: en studie i historiske kilder* (Oslo, 1991); Sverrir Jakobsson, 'The Early Kings of Norway, the Issue of Agnatic Succession, and the Settlement of Iceland', *Viator*, lxxvii, 3 (2016), 171–88. See also Allport and Rutkowski in this volume. However, regardless of these uncertainties, it is beyond doubt that Norwegian kings had had overlordship of Norway for more than a century before Christianization.

³⁶ Fenger, 'Kirker rejses alle vegne': 1050–1250; Michael Bregnsbo and Kurt Villads Jensen, *Det danske imperium: storhed og fald* (København, 2004).

³⁷ Knut Helle, *Norge blir en stat: 1130–1319* (Bergen, 1974). Valdemar adopted the same strategy towards Emperor Fredrick Barbarossa.

³⁸ On the foundation of the archbishopric, see Arne Odd Johnsen, *Studier vedrørende kardinal Nicolaus Brekespears legasjon til Norden* (Oslo, 1945). On Archbishop Eystein, see Tore Iversen, *Archbishop Eystein as Legislator: The European Connection* (Trondheim, 2011); Erik Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein: statsmann og kirkebygger* (Oslo, 1996).

help of the Church, the king was able not only to sidestep his weak traditional claim to kingship but also gained a more far-reaching authority than that within the traditional conceptions of royal power.

To sum up, a major difference between the two countries is the much later introduction of the Christian royal ideology in Norway than in Poland. In Poland, the new ideology was adopted in a polity where the state-building process was just about to start, whereas in the case of Norway, we deal with a crisis of legitimacy within a polity that had functioned for a century and a half, and which had its own means to legitimise power that had worked so far. However, the situation of the introduction of the new ideology is to some extent similar in the two countries. In both places, the Christian royal ideology was embraced by rulers who had a weak or controversial legitimacy in their realm and who, at the same time, were pressured from abroad. In both places, the introduction was wholesale and abruptly orchestrated by rulers who sought a new ideological justification for their power to lend their rule more legitimacy. It seems that either the European package was adopted in its entirety or not at all.

SECOND PHASE: TENSIONS AND STRUGGLES OVER THE NEW ROYAL IDEOLOGY

The introduction of the Christian royal ideology in Poland and Norway implied that rulers started to be presented as appointed to the throne by God and that the power they wielded was placed in a sacral sphere and was mainly defined by their responsibilities in religious matters. As such, it provided both the monarchy and the Church with a new means of strengthening their position and legitimacy in society. Nevertheless, such a monopolisation of power could easily be perceived as a threat by other members of the royal dynasty, as well as by magnates more generally. As we have seen, in both places the sharing of power had been the normal way of wielding power, whether this was done informally or formally through a system of joint rulership. In this second part of the article, we will first briefly outline the tensions and struggles that followed the introduction of the new royal ideology, which played out in similar ways in the two realms but had very different results. Then we will try to explain why Poland and Norway arrived at such different solutions to the same ideological input. Finally, the diverging paths in the two realms during the

following century (Norway)/centuries (Poland) will be demonstrated and discussed.

In Poland, the introduction of the new royal ideology soon led to intense struggles. After the coronation of Bolesław I the Brave and his son Mieszko II in 1025, it took only a few years before opposition arose. In 1031 Mieszko II's power was questioned by his brothers – Bezprym and Otto – who rose up against him, supported by the Empire and Rus'. The defeated king lost his power and had to flee the country. Bezprym took power, but he gave up his royal aspirations and sent his brother's royal insignia to the emperor. One year later, after Bezprym's death, Mieszko managed to regain power. However, he had to humble himself before the emperor Conrad II, give up his royal dignity, and accept a division of the realm with his brother Otto and cousin Theodoric. Shortly before his death, Mieszko II was able to reunify his realm, but he did not regain the royal title.³⁹ More than 40 years later, in 1076, Mieszko II's grandson, Bolesław II the Generous (Szczodry; r. 1058–1079), was crowned as king, almost two decades after he succeeded his father Kazimierz I the Restorer (Odnowiciel; r. 1034–1058) as a ruler. Bolesław intended the coronation to confirm his distinguished position in relation to the sacred, and prove his prerogative as a ruler appointed by God.⁴⁰ It seems, however, that he also wanted to use the ideology of Christian kingship and the idea of the sole rule of God's anointed king connected to it to secure the succession to the throne for his son, Mieszko, and exclude his younger brother, Władysław Herman. However, the royal reign of Bolesław the Generous was even shorter than that of his grandfather. Less than three years after his coronation, in 1079, he lost power in the aftermath of a revolt by the nobles and was forced to flee the country. After the collapse of Bolesław's power, Władysław I Herman (r. 1079–1102) was elevated to the throne. The new ruler had no royal ambitions.

The introduction of the new royal ideology in Norway also soon led to intense struggles. The coronation of Magnus Erlingsson in 1163/64

³⁹ Danuta Borawska, *Kryzys monarchii wczesnopiastowskiej w latach trzydziestych XI wieku* (Warszawa, 2013²); Gerard Labuda, *Mieszko II król Polski (1025–1034). Czasy przełomu w dziejach państwa polskiego* (Kraków, 1992).

⁴⁰ Krzysztof Skwierczyński, "O majestacie królewskiej potęgi!" – koronacja Bolesława II Szczodrego', in Dobosz, Matla, and Wetesko (eds) *Gnieźnieńskie koronacje*, 103–13.

was accompanied by an effort to crush the opposing factions with unprecedented severity. Magnus's father, Erling Skakki, who was the real governor of the realm, formed a tight-knit political action group (called a *flokkr*) with the explicit goal of overthrowing rival groups. The formation of such a group with a goal of supremacy was a novelty in Norwegian history, and it soon succeeded in eliminating the opposing groups with far more harshness than was usual.⁴¹ The alliance with the Church was pivotal for this endeavour since it helped to promote the idea that enemies should be excluded from society. For a long time, Magnus and his father Erling Skakki were successful in these efforts, but, in 1179, Sverrir Sigurdsson established himself as an opposing king and as the leader of an armed group called the *Birchlegs* (from wrapping and tying birch bark around their legs), and in five years he managed to conquer and kill both Erling and Magnus on the battlefield, and to drive the archbishop into exile. In 1194, Sverrir was crowned in Bergen by the Norwegian bishops. The coronation was controversial from the outset, and the supporters of the deceased Magnus Erlingsson-faction were quick to rise up. Moreover, the conflict with the Church had never been resolved, and at the time of Sverrir's coronation, Archbishop Erik was living in exile in Denmark. The coronation proved to be the spark that ignited a full-scale opposition; it brought Sverrir's secular and clerical enemies together. In 1196, an armed group called the *Crozier*s – whose name derived from a bishop's staff – was established in Denmark as a faction with its own king. The struggle also gained a distinct ideological dimension as the Crozier's mustered the full support of the Pope, who excommunicated King Sverrir. What followed was a decade of unusually intense political and ideological struggles.⁴²

Thus, in both Poland and Norway, the introduction of the new ideology led to increased struggles, which eroded the relative stability of a loose, decentralised system of joint rule that had been practised hitherto for long periods. A central reason for the potential conflict

⁴¹ Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'Networks and *flokkar*: The civil wars in Norway c. 1130–1163', in Hans Jacob Orning, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, and Kim Esmark (eds), *New Perspectives on the 'Civil Wars' in Medieval Scandinavia* (forthcoming: Turnhout, Aug. 2024).

⁴² For more literature on this period, see Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c. 900–1350*; Helle (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia: Prehistory to 1520*.

resulting from the new kingship ideology lies in its promotion of sole rule. In both realms, the exclusive and elevated position of a sole king was perceived as a threat by other members of the royal dynasty, who expected to be able to share the rule – be they close relatives as in Poland or more distant (and controversial ones) as in Norway. The new ideology offered few means for solving this acute political knot and, therefore, triggered increased tensions and conflicts. However, Poland and Norway depart from each other in how these conflicts played out in the following century. In Poland, the royal plans of the first Piast rulers failed. The idea of a unified Poland was not dead, but after 1138, the realm gradually became more fragmented, and Polish rulers stopped using the royal title. There were numerous challenges to regnal unity in Norway, but it continued to be a unified kingdom. Using the comparative method prompts the question of why Poland and Norway developed so differently after adopting the new Christian ideology of kingship.

There were many reasons for the failure of the royal plans of the first Piast rulers. The policy of the Empire was not without significance in this respect, as the Piasts had close relations with the Empire's political elites. The imperial ideology emphasised the king's position as God's anointed, appointed to rule by God and responsible for the salvation of his subjects, and as we have seen, this became a point of reference for political concepts developed at the Piast court. At the same time, however, the close relations linking the Piasts with the Empire threatened their royal aspirations. The imperial court perceived the Piast coronations as usurpations and illegitimate appropriations of kingship; they interpreted them as violations of imperial rights and, thus, as a threat to the established order of things.⁴³

However, the collapse of the royal plans of the first Piasts cannot be linked only to the hostile policy of the Empire. As we have seen, the concept of Christian kingship not only implied extending royal responsibilities in religious matters but also had consequences in the sphere of political practice, defining the rules of succession to the throne. The scarce and fragmentary sources only give limited possibilities for looking more closely at the internal structure of the Piast dynasty and modes of wielding power. It seems, however, that

⁴³ Zbigniew Dalewski, 'Pierwsze piastowskie królestwo', *Acta Universitatis Carolinae. Philosophica et Historica*, 1 (2019), 161–73.

in the political culture of the Piast polity at the earliest stage of its history, power was regarded as a common good belonging to the entire ruling family and that all members of the dynasty had the right to participate in it. As a result, the circle of people entitled to rule was not restricted to a ruler's narrow family, his brothers or sons, but also included other more distant relatives. Thus, the Piast dynasty formed a broad kinship group that cherished the memories not only of their blood ties but also of the royal prerogatives with which the whole ruling house was invested. This dispersal of power among all members of the Piast dynasty strengthened its dominant position within the political system of the polity. The right to participate in rulership demonstrated the special character of the ruling house and distinguished it from other noble families.

The new concept of Christian kingship did not leave much room for the ideas of the collective nature of royal suzerainty, one which would be equally invested in all the members of the ruling family. The ritual of anointment elevated the king above his relatives and gave the king, called by God to govern on His behalf and to His likeness, an exclusive right to wield power. Now, Piast descent was no longer enough to participate in kingship. The power entrusted by God to the king could not be shared with other dynasty members; it was turned into an office. Moreover, it could not be handed over to all royal sons to be wielded by them together. Thus, the introduction of the concept of Christian kingship entailed a radical break with previous patterns of dynastic power and led to the transformation of the Piast kindred into a narrow, vertically-oriented dynastic structure where rights to wield power were restricted to one of its members distinguished by royal anointment, leaving out his relatives.⁴⁴

These new rules of succession caused tensions within the ruling family and met with resistance from marginalised members of the dynasty who did not accept that they would be deprived of their rights to participate in power. As mentioned above, Bolesław the Brave's decision to hand power over only to Mieszko II met opposition from his other sons, who were excluded from the succession. The conflict between Mieszko and his brothers opened a whole series

⁴⁴ Zbigniew Dalewski, *Modele władzy dynastycznej w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej we wcześniejszym średniowieczu* (Warszawa, 2014); *id.*, 'Family Business: Dynastic Power in Central Europe in the Earlier Middle Ages', *Viator*, xlvii, 1 (2015), 43–59.

of bloody disputes, which not only led to the collapse of Mieszko's royal rule but also undermined the position of the Piast dynasty as a whole. The domination of the Piasts over the polity they had built was, to a great extent, based on the practice of sharing power by all members of the dynasty to which they were entitled through their Piast descent. In that way, the Piasts were able to monopolise power in their hands. The concept of Christian kingship questioned the king's relatives' participation in power for the very reason of their kinship with him and raised doubts over the Piasts' exclusive rights to rule; it thus threatened how the whole political system of the Piast polity functioned. As a result, at least some political elites lost their confidence in the legitimacy of Piast rulership and decided to back claimants to the throne from outside the Piast dynasty. In 1037, Mieszko II's son, Kazimierz I the Restorer, lost power in the aftermath of a rebellion by the magnates and had to flee the country. After his exile, power over at least one region of the Piast realm was appropriated by a non-Piast.⁴⁵

In 1039, Kazimierz, supported by Emperor Henry III, returned to the country. He regained power and consolidated his rule over the whole realm in the next few years. However, his victory did not lead to the return to the concepts of Christian kingship propagated by his grandfather and father. To legitimise his regained power Kazimierz based his claim to rulership on the old concept of power as the common good of the entire Piast dynasty. Only in that way was it possible to overcome the internal crisis, consolidate power and enable the functioning of the whole political structure of the Piast polity.

However, Kazimierz's renunciation of royal aspirations did not mean that he gave up the idea of the sacral nature of Piast power, resulting from God's endowment. There is much to suggest that during his reign, efforts were undertaken to reformulate the concept of Christian kingship to give a new ideological form to the Piast claim to rulership. The basic elements of this ideological programme can be seen in the chronicle of Gallus Anonymus, which was written down in the early twelfth century, but the Piast dynastic legend contained in it had

⁴⁵ Zbigniew Dalewski, 'Strategies of Creating Dynastic Identity in Central Europe in the 10th–11th Centuries', in Andrzej Pleszczyński, Joanna Sobiesiak, Michał Tomaszek, and Przemysław Tyszka (eds), *Imagined Communities: Constructing Collective Identities in Medieval Europe* (Leiden, 2018), 30–45.

probably been crystallised during Kazimierz's reign in connection with his efforts to find a new justification for his rule.⁴⁶

On the one hand, these efforts sought to place Piast's power within the framework of Christian ideology. Gallus clearly defined Piast's power in terms that were typical of the concept of Christian rulership. The Piast dynasty was appointed by God as the single act of God's intervention elevated the first legendary Piast ruler – Siemowit – to the throne. On the other hand, this concept drew on traditional power-sharing patterns as a common good within the extended Piast dynasty. In Gallus's chronicle, there was no need to refer to the anointing to prove that the Piast dynasty was appointed by God, as His election of Siemowit to the throne was sufficient to define once and for all the royal prerogative of the whole dynasty and of all Siemowit's descendants. Piast dynasts, distinguished by divine choice, wielded power by the grace of God. Hence, the Christian royal ideology applied to the Piast dynasty even if they were not anointed and were not kings, and even if they ruled as a collective enterprise, not as a sole ruler.⁴⁷

We can trace the emergence of this ideology to a pontifical that dates to the second half of the eleventh century and was commissioned by the Kraków bishopric. The pontifical contained a set of three prayers termed *benedictio principis*, which usually were not part of pontifical rituals in such books. It seems that they were intended to create a new ceremony for princely inauguration based on a model of royal coronation. This ceremony placed the power wielded by the Piast rulers in the sacral order of the system of Christian values. Thus, it enabled Piast princes to present themselves – despite the lack of royal anointing – as rulers equal to kings, who wielded power by virtue of divine investiture and enjoyed special heavenly protection.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Jacek Banaszkiewicz, 'Tradycje dynastyczno-plemienne Słowiańszczyzny północnej', in Samsonowicz (ed.), *Ziemia polskie w X wieku*, 261–77; Michałowski, 'Christianisation of Political Culture', 45–6.

⁴⁷ Brygida Kürbis, 'Sacrum i profanum. Dwie wizje władzy w polskim średniowieczu', *Studia Źródłoznawcze*, 22 (1977), 19–40; Roman Michałowski, "'Restauratio Poloniae" dans l'ideologie dynastique de Gallus Anonymus', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 52 (1985), 5–43; Zbigniew Dalewski, 'Vivat princeps in eternum: Sacrality of Ducal Power in Poland in the Earlier Middle Ages', in Aziz Al-Azmeh and János M. Bak (eds), *Monotheistic Kingship: The Medieval Variants* (Budapest, 2004), 215–30.

⁴⁸ *Pontyfikał krakowski z XI wieku* (Biblioteka Jagiellońska Cod. Ms. 2057), ed. by Zdzisław Obertyński (Lublin, 1977), 69–70; see Władysław Abraham, 'Pontificale

Turning to Norway, the introduction of the Christian royal ideology gave rise to new ideological struggles, just as in Poland. However, here, the character and intensity of the struggle develop very differently in that regnal unity and the royal title were preserved, and in that Norway developed no parallel to the Polish solution of focusing the ideology at the level of the whole dynasty. Why did Norway take a different path than Poland in these respects? As in the case of Poland, we will start with external forces and then turn to internal factors that impinge on the process.

In the Polish case, we saw that the Empire placed pressure on Poland, basically not accepting kingship as a legitimate political solution on its eastern periphery, thereby probably propelling the creation of a new, non-royal form of rulership ideology. Norway experienced similar external pressures in the mid-twelfth century, when the reconsolidated Danish monarchy squeezed Norway from the south, claiming that parts of Norway, and sometimes all of Norway, legitimately belonged to Denmark. Erling Skakki swore an oath of allegiance to King Valdemar of Denmark that made him the latter's earl. Danish kings moreover made concrete efforts to conquer or at least uphold their hegemony in Viken around 1200.⁴⁹ Thus, Norway was squeezed by a neighbouring realm that also claimed the right to the royal title in a way which was not altogether different from Poland. However, the Danish kings were not strong enough to sustain long-term pressure on Norway, and the failed campaign around 1200 probably put an end to their ambitions to become kings of Norway.

This means that we need to scrutinise internal factors in trying to explain why Norway remained a single entity despite the tensions

biskupów krakowskich XII wieku', *Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności, Wydział Historyczno-Filozoficzny*, 41 (66) (1927), 3–31; Zdzisław Obertyński, 'Wzory i analogie wybranych formuł w liturgii krakowskiej XI wieku', *Studia Źródłoznawcze*, 14 (1969), 35–51; Dalewski, "'Vivat princeps in eternum'". There are, however, attempts to connect the benedictions from the Kraków pontifical not with the ceremony of princely inauguration, but with the liturgy of war, see Paweł Figurski, 'Liturgiczne początki Polonii. Lokalna adaptacja chrześcijańskiego kultu a tworzenie "polskiej" tożsamości politycznej w X–XI w.', in Roman Michałowski and Grzegorz Pac (eds), *Oryginalność czy wtórność? Studia poświęcone polskiej kulturze politycznej i religijnej (X–XIII wiek)* (Warszawa, 2020), 725–96, here at 774–95.

⁴⁹ Bjørge, *Selvstendighet og union: fra middelalderen til 1905*; Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c. 900–1350*.

that such a solution entailed. The question is more pertinent as there were strong historical antecedents in Norway for sharing power and dividing the realm. In the sixty years from 1103 to 1163, several kings ruled the realm for fifty of those years, leaving only a decade of sole rule.⁵⁰ Moreover, shared or divided rule continued to be an option. After the arrival of King Sverrir and his establishment of Trøndelag as his main power base in 1179, Norway was, in reality, divided between a northern (Trøndelag) and an eastern (Viken) part, and this division was formalised in the period 1208–17.⁵¹ Thus, we should not overstate the difference between Poland and Norway when it comes to the division of the realm and the sharing of power as political solutions. Yet, in comparison to Poland, the salient feature in Norway is, after all, that the realm was not formally divided for longer periods and that the royal title never disappeared. The question is why.

One factor that might have contributed to preserving the unity of the Norwegian realm is that it was more established in the mid-twelfth century than the Polish one had been a century earlier. In Poland, we saw that the period of monarchy only lasted a few years after the coronations in 1025 and 1076 and that it was frequently challenged both from within and from the Empire. Norway had a longer prehistory of a national monarchy by 1163/64, even if we limit ourselves to the period after 1030, when the sources are more abundant, and we are on safer ground concerning dynastic links.⁵² Norway thus had more than a century of cementing the idea of a Norwegian kingdom when the new royal ideology was introduced – in contrast to the Polish case.

Another cause for the Norwegian promotion of unity may paradoxically reside in the looser definition of its royal dynasty. For all its

⁵⁰ The only single rulers in the period are Sigurd (1123–30) and Inge (1157–60). The importance of a collective notion of rulership is indicated in that some of the kings were children, functioning more like figureheads for magnate factions. See Ian Peter Grohse, 'Fra småbarns munn – Myte og propaganda under kongene Inge og Sigurd Haraldsson c. 1136–1139', *Historisk tidsskrift* (N), 95 (2016), 473–91.

⁵¹ After 1217, Norway was divided between King Hakon Hakonsson and his earl Skule Bårdsson until the latter was put down in 1240. In addition, concrete suggestions of division were made – but turned down, both in 1180 and 1240. See Sverre Bagge, 'Håkon og Skule 1217–1240', *Historisk tidsskrift* (N), 99 (2020), 184–96; Hans Jacob Orning, 'Håkon, Skule og de norske borgerkrigene', *Historisk tidsskrift* (N), 100 (2021), 221–37.

⁵² See footnote above.

sharing of power, the Piast dynasty was clearly demarcated. The Piast dynastic tradition written down by Gallus Anonymus completely ignored all the ancillary branches of the dynasty and limited the Piast kindred only to one line of Bolesław Wrymouth's ancestors and descendants.⁵³ In Norway, on the other hand, the royal dynasty was more loosely defined, partly because secondary lines were more readily included than in Poland,⁵⁴ and partly because in Norway representatives of side branches with disputed pedigrees tended to pop up regularly to confound and dilute the royal dynasty. Here it is sufficient to mention Harald Hardrada, who came from Byzantium in 1045, Harald Gilli from the British Isles in the 1120s, and Sverrir Sigurdsson from the Faroes in 1177. These contenders were never voluntarily welcomed into the dynasty, and their appearance led not only to increased internal strife but also to a sense that the royal dynasty could be more of a source of disruption of elite dominance than a collective denominator of the ruling elite as in Poland.⁵⁵ So far, we have discussed why the new ideology developed so differently in the two realms. In Poland, it was combined with shared rule, whereas in Norway, it was not. In the following, we will scrutinise the implications of this difference in the subsequent century.

The model of Christian rulership, which had been established in the second half of the eleventh century, came to define Piast power in the next two centuries. This system was cemented in the rules of succession laid down by Bolesław III Wrymouth in 1138. Bolesław combined the concepts of supremacy and shared rule by appointing his oldest son as his main successor, *princeps*, giving him Lesser Poland with Kraków to rule over and assigning other provinces to his younger sons, in line with the Piast tradition. This compromise arrangement addressed and tried to reconcile two different concerns: on the one hand, the principle of seniority was intended to avoid succession disputes that usually accompanied the seizure of power by a new ruler. On the other hand, it was motivated by an aim to guarantee

⁵³ Zbigniew Dalewski, 'Creating Dynastic Identity: Gallus Anonymus's Chronicle', in Walter Pohl, Francesco Borri, and Veronika Wieser (eds), *Historiography and Identity*, v: *The Emergence of New Peoples and Polities in Europe, 1000–1300* (Turnhout, 2022), 231–49.

⁵⁴ See Allport and Rutkowski in this volume.

⁵⁵ On royal networks, see Bente Brathetland, *Nettverksmakt: sosiale band og nettverk i dei norske innbyrdesstridane 1130–1208* (Bergen, 2019).

all representatives of the dynasty – at least in theory – the possibility of participating in power. In this way, it would solidify the dynastic sense of solidarity and thus confirm its dominant position in the political system of the polity subjected to its rule.⁵⁶

The system of power that Bolesław Wrymouth had introduced functioned quite well for almost a century, although it did not prevent dynastic struggles from occurring quite regularly. The eldest son of Prince Bolesław, Władysław II, succeeded him without any problems, and his right to overall power, resulting from his seniority, did not raise any doubts. However, he lost the throne in 1146 in the aftermath of a conflict with his younger brothers and had to leave the country. After his expulsion, according to the rule of seniority, power was taken by the eldest of the remaining sons of Bolesław III Wrymouth, Bolesław IV the Curly (Kędzierzawy).⁵⁷ He, too, was faced with a rebellion by magnates who wanted to elevate his younger brother, Mieszko III the Old (Stary), to the throne. In this case, however, the rebel nobles followed the principle of seniority, as Mieszko was the next oldest in the Piast kindred.⁵⁸ Eventually, Bolesław the Curly managed to come to terms with the rebels and get the situation under control. After Bolesław's death in 1173, Mieszko III seized power as the oldest member of the Piast dynasty. Thus, even if the system of seniority-cum-shared rule did not prevent dynastic conflicts from erupting, such conflicts were fairly limited in scope and only concerned who should be defined as the legitimate 'senior' ruler.

The seniority principle was only broken in 1177, namely when the noble rebels overthrew Mieszko III and elevated to the throne

⁵⁶ Gerard Labuda, 'Testament Bolesława Krzywoustego', in *Opuscula Casimiro Tymieniecki septuagenario dedicata* (Poznań, 1959), 171–94; Józef Spors, *Podział dzielnicowy Polski według statutu Bolesława Krzywoustego ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem dzielnicy seniorackiej* (Słupsk, 1978); Janusz Bieniak, 'Polska elita polityczna XII wieku (Część I. Tło działalności)', in Stefan Krzysztof Kuczyński (ed.), *Spółczesność Polski średniowiecznej*, ii (Warszawa, 1982), 11–61; Zbigniew Dalewski, 'Was Herrscher taten, wenn sie viele Söhne hatten – zum Beispiel im Osten Europas', in Jussen (ed.), *Die Macht des Königs*, 124–37.

⁵⁷ Gerard Labuda, 'Zabiegi o utrzymanie jedności państwa polskiego w latach 1138–1146', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 66 (1959), 1147–67.

⁵⁸ Janusz Bieniak, 'Polska elita polityczna XII wieku (Część 3. C Arbitrzy książąt – pełnia władzy)', in Stefan Krzysztof Kuczyński (ed.), *Spółczesność Polski średniowiecznej*, viii (Warszawa, 1999), 9–66.

the youngest son of Bolesław Wrymouth, Kazimierz II the Just (*Sprawiedliwy*), who was not the next oldest member of the dynasty.⁵⁹ Kazimierz, moreover, attempted to monopolize rule over Kraków and thereby to claim overlordship for his dynastic line over the whole of Poland to the exclusion of other members of the Piast dynasty. In justifying his aspirations to supremacy, Kazimierz did not draw on concepts of kingship, but sought legitimation from the Pope and the Emperor.⁶⁰ Kazimierz's attempt to gain supremacy failed, however, as Mieszko III the Old attempted to regain power, and other Piast princes opposed his claims to exclusive rights to Kraków for himself and his offspring. In 1210, the senior member of the dynasty, Mieszko IV Tanglefoot (*Plątonogi*) of Opole, managed to obtain from Pope Innocent III confirmation of the validity of Bolesław III Wrymouth's decisions concerning seniority as a principle that defined the rules of succession to the Kraków throne.⁶¹

We have already discussed the pontifical of the Kraków bishopric from the late eleventh century, which created a new ceremony of princely inauguration based on a model of royal coronation that enabled Piast princes to present themselves as rulers equal to kings despite the lack of royal anointing. Marginal notes in the pontifical prove that the manuscript was in the possession of the Kraków bishopric in the thirteenth century, and the princely benediction continued to be used during ceremonies of assuming the throne by a new prince.⁶² There is no clear evidence that other Piast princes used similar ceremonies at that time. It is probable, therefore, that the rights of the princes of Kraków to overlordship over the whole of Poland were justified not only by their seniority over other members of the dynasty but also by the liturgical ceremony, which stressed the religious aspects of their power. However, even if this was, in fact, the case, this distinguished position did not prevail over the concepts of power as the common good of the entire Piast dynasty. As a result, the form of rulership

⁵⁹ Janusz Bieniak, 'Polska elita polityczna XII wieku (Część 2. D *Arbitrzy książąt – zmierzch*)', in Stefan Krzysztof Kuczyński (ed.), *Spółczesność Polski średniowiecznej*, ix (Warszawa, 2001), 9–53.

⁶⁰ Józef Dobosz, *Kazimierz II Sprawiedliwy* (Poznań, 2014), 113–27.

⁶¹ Benedykt Zientara, *Henryk Brodaty i jego czasy* (Warszawa, 1999), 176–9.

⁶² Abraham, 'Pontificale biskupów krakowskich XII wieku', 3; Adam Vetulani, 'Krakowska biblioteka katedralna w świetle swego inwentarza z 1110 r.', *Slavia Antiqua*, 4 (1953), 163–92, at 187.

which developed in Poland linked the idea of Christian kingship and its rituals with the practice of sharing power among all dynasty members. Polish rulers thus shared a rough understanding of what constituted the ideology of rulership, and an important reason for this consensus was that the ideology could accommodate the whole Piast dynasty.

In Norway, by contrast, the new ideology of rulership came to play a much more divisive role. The main reason for this is that from its very outset, the new ideology was strongly associated with sole monarchy, which complicated the flexible sharing of power and resources. It started with Magnus Erlingsson and his father, Erling Skakki, who propagated sole rulership in 1163/64 and implemented a ruthless strategy of eliminating rivals to the throne. The usual way of dealing with opponents was to reconcile with them and give them pardon [*grid*]. Such settlements had the advantage of keeping animosities at a low level by providing the losing party a share in the kingdom.⁶³ On the other hand, such compromises seldom radically changed the power constellations, as the defeated party would be placated rather than beaten. The unrelenting way that King Magnus and Erling Skakki pursued their enemies must be seen as a consequence of the new royal ideology, where they had obtained ideological backing from the Church for eliminating their enemies, which was unusual for this time. This was a situation where the possibilities for striking a compromise between royal contenders were as good as non-existent. The fact that a compromise in terms of a division of territories and resources was not a possible political solution made the struggles more intense and prolonged and was mentioned by Snorri Sturluson as a reason why opposing groups kept popping up against Erling Skakki.⁶⁴

Moreover, the fact that Magnus Erlingsson had formulated his claims to kingship in ideological terms propelled opposition groups to turn to ideology to establish an alternative to the ruling king. There had been no lack of dynastic struggles in Norway before 1160. However, political disagreements had never been formulated in ideological terms

⁶³ On this mode of conflict solution, see Louisa Taylor, *Moderation and Restraint in the North: Ideals of Elite Conduct in High Medieval England, Norway and Denmark* (London, 2016).

⁶⁴ 'Magnúss saga Erlingssonar', in *Heimskringla III*, trans. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes (London, 2015).

but presupposed a vague, shared ideology between the contending parties – what we could term *mentality*.⁶⁵ The explicit formulation of a royal ideology changed this, as it forced opponents of Magnus Erlingsson to develop alternative ideologies as part of their resistance. We get a clear image of alternative rulership ideologies in *The Saga of King Sverrir* and the ideological pamphlet *The Speech Against the Bishops*, written in the late 1190s.⁶⁶ Initially, such ideologies were formulated in traditional terms. In the first two years of King Sverrir's career, he is described in his saga as a charismatic warrior king who had to convince his supporters to follow him – a “gang leader” in Sverre Bagge's terminology.⁶⁷ An obvious line of attack against Magnus was his lack of a royal father, contrary to Sverrir, who claimed to be the son of a king.⁶⁸ It is probably no coincidence that an *explicit formulation* of this indigenous, secular royal ideology only occurred in response to an explicitly formulated Christian royal ideology.

However, to oppose the ideology and, indeed, power of Magnus Erlingsson, it was necessary to counter his claim to be God's elected king. The alliance between King Magnus and the archbishop gave Sverrir little choice if he were to pursue his goal to become a king; then he necessarily had to defy the royal ideology established in 1163/64.⁶⁹ On the one hand, this was done by attaching the king directly to God without intermediaries, inspired by early medieval political

⁶⁵ Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla*; Hans Jacob Orning, *Unpredictability and Presence: Norwegian Kingship in the High Middle Ages*, The Northern World Series, xxxviii (Leiden, 2008).

⁶⁶ On Karl Jonsson and *The Saga of King Sverrir*, see Sverre Bagge, *From Gang Leader to the Lord's Anointed: Kingship in Sverris saga and Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* (Odense, 1996). *The Speech against the Bishops* never mentions Sverrir's name and therefore cannot be attributed to him with absolute certainty, but the content and the form makes the match very probable. See Gunnes, *Kongens ære*.

⁶⁷ Bagge, *From Gang Leader to the Lord's Anointed: Kingship in Sverris saga and Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*. This royal ideology is one of authority from below, not above, based on persuasion, not obedience.

⁶⁸ Sverrir himself had a royal ancestry as son of King Sigurd Haraldsson that many doubted. According to *The Saga of King Sverrir*, Sverrir's mother travelled to Rome to gain the Pope's indulgence for giving birth to a royal child out of wedlock. The story is invented, but it shows how important royal blood was, and how much Sverrir involved the Church in his rhetoric.

⁶⁹ Kåre Lunden, *Norge under Sverreætten, 1177–1319: Høymiddelalder, Norges historie* (Oslo, 1976), 81–100.

thought.⁷⁰ This is evident in *The Saga of King Sverrir's* use of Old Testament examples, in particular drawing on parallels between King Sverrir and King David as God's elected kings regardless of the royal title of their adversaries.⁷¹ On the other hand, *The Speech against the Bishops* drew on a variant of the dualist notion in adopting the well-known image of the human body as a metaphor for society, where the Church was the head which was supposed to lead the body. However, now the body had fallen ill, and this was caused by the bishops, who were "blinded by lust for money, lack of restraint, greed, arrogance, and injustice".⁷² The climax of this ideological battle was the papal interdict on Sverrir in 1196.⁷³

The struggles concerning royal ideology came to an end with King Sverrir's death in 1202. This raises the question of to what degree the ideological intensity in Norway constitutes a singular case occasioned by the exceptional personality of King Sverrir. The hypothesis of Norwegian exceptionality is strengthened by the fact that Denmark and Norway had a similar situation around 1160–70 that consisted of a sole king with ecclesiastical support who triggered resistance from those excluded from power, but where the Danish king (Valdemar), in contrast to the Norwegian one (Magnus), was able to curb and suppress such opposition. However, the *regnum-sacerdotium* struggle in Norway follows a typical European pattern, and the result of the struggle, the consolidation of the realm, is similar to what happened in Denmark.

⁷⁰ Caesaropapism is mostly used for the Byzantine Empire, but also under Charlemagne there are such tendencies. See Ken Pennington, 'Caesaropapism', *The New Catholic Encyclopedia: Supplement 2010* (Detroit, 2010), i, 183–5.

⁷¹ *The Saga of King Sverrir* juxtaposed Sverrir with King David, particularly with David's resistance and eventual overthrow of King Saul after the latter had lost God's favour due to disobedience partly in his dreams, partly in his speeches (see Hans Jacob Orning and Frederik Rosen, 'Sverris saga: A Manifesto for a New Political Order', in Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Hans Jacob Orning (eds), *Nordic Medieval Civil Wars in a Comparative Perspective*, [Leiden, 2021], 62–93). This parallel would later be expanded in *The King's Mirror* from c. 1250 (Bagge, *The Political Thought of The King's Mirror*).

⁷² The author was careful to liberate the Pope from accusations, as he "does not know much about our country" and was presented with "lies and slander" (p. 265) from Norwegian bishops. The guilt thus lay exclusively with the bishops (p. 264). *En tale mot biskopene*, ed. by Anne Holtmark (Oslo, 1986).

⁷³ *Norske middelalderdokumenter*, 72–5.

To conclude this second part, Poland and Norway faced much the same situation after introducing a Christian royal ideology. The ideology gave the king more power than previously, but by the same token, it aroused more opposition from groups excluded from royal governance. We have seen that opposition against crowned kings was quick to evolve in both realms but that the solutions to these increasing tensions were different. In Poland, the solution was to abandon the royal title, which allowed the extended Piast dynasty to share power, while the ideology of the God-chosen ruler was preserved. Poland thereby avoided large-scale warfare over who should be the sole ruler (even if there were frequent skirmishes on the relationship between seniority and co-rulership) but at the expense of regnal unity. No compromise between the new ideology and shared rule was within reach in Norway. The struggle was for sole rulership, making conflicts more intense than in Poland. Moreover, introducing the Christian royal ideology added an ideological dimension to the conflicts – forcing opponents to formulate alternative variants of the Christian royal ideology.

THIRD PHASE: IDEOLOGICAL CONSOLIDATION

So far, we have discussed the short-term consequences of the introduction of the new ideology of Christian rulership in Poland and Norway, which, in various ways, resulted in increased political tensions. However, in the long run, the new ideology was to serve as a basis for a consolidated kingdom in both places. If we again use royal coronations as our yardstick, Poland had its first coronation since 1076 when Przemysł II of Greater Poland in 1295 was anointed and crowned as a king of the Poles, and royal coronations took place again in 1300 and 1320. In Norway, Hakon Hakonsson was crowned king of Norway in 1247, and subsequent Norwegian kings were crowned upon their ascension to the throne. The first observation is that Norway, which had been lagging behind Poland in adopting the new royal ideology (1163 vs 1025/76), was ahead by a half-century (1247 vs 1295). Hence, the period of uneasy tensions following the introduction of the ideology was considerably shorter in Norway than in Poland, in addition to more conflicts there, as seen previously. In this last part, we will follow the impact of the new ideology on the formation of consolidated monarchies in the thirteenth century, where

its potential for providing the basis of a more elevated and exclusive royal power was fulfilled. Our task here is to trace how and why this happened in the two realms, particularly why the consolidation process was much quicker and smoother in Norway than in Poland. Our theory is that ideological divisions (Norway) were easier to solve than predominantly territorial divisions (Poland). We will, therefore, start with a brief account of this process in Norway before discussing it in more detail with the more complicated case of Poland.

In Norway, the ideological struggles were, by and large, terminated with King Sverrir's death in 1202. Shortly afterwards, King Hakon Sverresson (r. 1202–1204) and the archbishop came to terms, issuing a letter of reconciliation.⁷⁴ For the king, the agreement provided a welcome pretext for ending a struggle that was intolerable for the royal legitimacy, while the Church thereby joined forces with the strongest political party, which secured its substantial power.⁷⁵ Hereafter, the main contents of the royal ideology were strengthened, based on a dualistic conception of authority as divided between the secular and the spiritual spheres. There were periods of conflict and tension about the royal ideology, but such disagreements primarily boiled down to how and where to draw the boundary between secular and spiritual matters.⁷⁶ Despite these skirmishes, the monarchy and the Church shared a common interest in promoting an ideology where they together were responsible for vital societal functions, which had previously been down to individuals and kin. Now, the latter's mode of solving conflicts through self-help, vengeance, and violence could be condemned as the forces of chaos, whereas royal and ecclesiastical efforts were clothed in a language of concern with

⁷⁴ *Norske middelalderdokumenter*, 74–7.

⁷⁵ Discussions on who was the 'victor' – state or Church, have been intense. See Lunden, *Norge under Sverreætten, 1177–1319: Høymiddelalder*, 139–46.

⁷⁶ We can identify four phases of varying cooperation and rivalry. Under King Hakon Hakonsson (r. 1217–63), the royal side of the dual relations was strengthened, in particular compared to the strong ecclesiastical influence under Magnus Erlingsson. Under King Magnus Lawmender (r. 1263–80), there were more intense conflicts between the kingdom and the Church, resulting in a separate Church law and a concordate in 1277. Under King Eirik Magnusson (r. 1280–99), there came a reaction among the lay magnates, including the revocation of Church privileges, but the situation calmed down under King Hakon 5 (r. 1299–1319). See Bregaint, *Vox Regis*.

peace, the protection of the weak and the promotion of the common good. We can see the reassessment clearly in the letter from 1202, where the present situation was spelt out in gloomy colours: “Now neither learned nor unlearned fear God or good men. Rather, every man now lives as he pleases in a lawless order”.⁷⁷ By describing the present circumstances as one of chaos, the monarchy and the Church could offer a way out of the misery. This ideological transformation laid the ideological and political foundation for a more stable Norwegian kingdom in the thirteenth century.

In the last section, we left Poland in the early thirteenth century with the combined system of seniority and shared Piast rule that had been established by Bolesław III Wrymouth in 1138. The coronation of Przemysław II as king of Poland in 1295 represented a fundamental break with this system in that the ruler now possessed the title of king for the first time since 1076. Przemysław himself is a parenthesis in Polish history, as he was killed the following year, but he inaugurated a new era of royal coronations in Poland. In 1300, Wenceslaus II, the king of Bohemia, who had ruled over Kraków since 1291, took Greater Poland and was crowned king. Twenty years later, in 1320, Władysław the Short (Łokietek), who after Wenceslaus II's death in 1305 had taken Kraków and in the following years managed to extend his power over some other provinces, was crowned too. The question is what caused this resurgence of royal power over Poland after such a long time. How did the Polish rulers finally succeed in gaining real overlordship and outmanoeuvre the forces of division that had dominated politics for more than two centuries?

One cause of this transition lies in the growing crisis in the system of seniority. This compromise arrangement had hinged on acknowledging the senior Kraków ruler as the supreme ruler in the symbolic sphere, if not so much in real power, over the other Piast rulers. From the early thirteenth century onwards, this largely symbolic domination of the rulers of Kraków over the other Piast princes was becoming more and more illusory, and the process of political disintegration

⁷⁷ *Norske middelalderdokumenter*, 76–77. Roughly similar descriptions can be found in introductions in the New Law of 1260 and the National Law of 1274, as well as the descriptions in *The King's Mirror*. See Orning, ‘Veien ut av villfaringståka?’, in Else Mundal, Erik Opsahl, Miriam Tveit, and Jørn Ø. Sunde (eds), *Landslova av 1274* (Oslo, 2023), 39–62.

of the Piast unity progressively deepened. The regional princes started to perceive their dominions as separate units that belonged to their family lines only, and their primary focus was on local politics.⁷⁸ Moreover, they adopted liturgical ceremonies, which placed their power within the framework of the Church rituals.⁷⁹ As a result, princes who aspired to rule over the whole of Poland had to search for other forms of ideological justification of their claims in order to legitimise their overlordship.

In this situation, a new ideological resource presented itself for Piast rulers who were intent on seeing themselves as rulers whom God had exalted above other members of the Piast dynasty. This was to be found in the complex ideas which had developed around the cult of St Stanislaus (Stanisław), a bishop of Kraków, who had lost his life in the aftermath of the conflict with King Bolesław II the Generous in 1079. His *Vita*, written around 1260 by Vincent of Kielcza, established a direct link between the saint and the royal dignity of the Polish rulers. On the one hand, in the *Vita*'s rendition, Bolesław the Generous's murder of St Stanislaus led to the loss of God's grace, and as a result of this, Polish rulers had lost royal dignity and their kingdom had disintegrated. On the other hand, the *Vita* stressed that thanks to St Stanislaus's intercession, the Polish rulers would in the future be able to regain God's favour so that they could re-appropriate kingship and rebuild the kingdom. The author of the *Vita* even seems to suggest that the kingdom's restoration was part of God's plan. He stated that the coronation insignia of the first Polish kings, which were kept in the treasury of Kraków cathedral, was preserved by God Himself to hand them over to the future king

⁷⁸ Marcin Rafał Pauk, 'Eine Dynastie oder mehrere? Herrschaft und ihre Legitimation in der politischen Kultur Polens (12.–13. Jahrhundert)', in Grischa Vercamer and Ewa Wólkiewicz (eds), *Legitimation von Fürstendynastien in Polen und den Reich. Identitätsbildung im Spiegel schriftlicher Quellen (12.15. Jahrhundert)* (Wiesbaden, 2016), 29–54; *id.*, "Regnum in se divisum". Ku syntezie kultury politycznej Piastów doby dzielnicowej', in Michałowski and Pac (eds), *Oryginalność czy wtórność?*, 76–163; *id.*, 'Language of Power and Communication in the Piast Dynasty: Towards a Reappraisal of Polish Political Culture of the 12th–13th Century', in Vercamer and Zupka (eds), *Rulership in Medieval East Central Europe*, 178–97.

⁷⁹ Paweł Figurski, 'The Exultet of Bolesław II of Mazovia and the Sacralization of Political Power in the High Middle Ages', in Karolina Mroziewicz and Aleksander Sroczyński (eds), *Premodern Rulership and Contemporary Political Power: The King's Body Never Dies* (Amsterdam, 2017), 73–110.

whom He would appoint to kingship.⁸⁰ There is some evidence that these old royal insignia were used during the coronation of Przemysł II in 1295. Thus, in the new political and ideological realities established by the end of the thirteenth century, pretensions to rule over Poland had to be confirmed in the act of royal coronation, placing the power of the new king within a long tradition that stretched back to the first coronations of the Piast kings and presented their rule as a continuation of the reigns of their remote predecessors. In this way, the new king was able to present himself not only as a rightful successor to the first Piast kings but also as a true restorer of the Polish kingdom, announced in St Stanislaus's *Vita*, who had been elevated to the royal throne by God Himself.⁸¹

CONCLUSION

In this conclusion, we will first emphasise that there are many other causes that could be listed to explain the different political and ideological trajectories in Poland and Norway during this period. We can briefly mention topographical factors (Poland land-oriented, Norway sea-oriented) and military factors (Polish fortifications, Norwegian fleet as most dominant features), in addition to several incompatible factors relating to specificities in each realm, as well as what can be termed coincidental factors.⁸² However, using a comparative method means that we have to isolate factors that are compatible. In this article, the focus has been on how the same ideology of Christian rulership impinged on two realms that can be viewed as fairly similar. Our main task has been to explain why this ideology developed

⁸⁰ *Vita Sancti Stanislai Cracoviensis episcopi (Vita maior)*, ed. by Wojciech Kętrzyński, *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, 4 (Lwów, 1884), 226–27, 391–3; see Wojciech Drelicharz, *Idea zjednoczenia królestwa w średniowiecznym dziejopisarstwie polskim* (Kraków, 2012), 150–99.

⁸¹ Zbigniew Dalewski, 'Przeszłość zrytualizowana: tradycja królewskich koronacji', in Halina Manikowska (ed.), *Przeszłość w kulturze średniowiecznej Polski* (Warszawa, 2018), ii, 29–57, at 33–36.

⁸² For instance, if Norway had not had Sverrir, struggles would probably have ended earlier and become less ideologized – in Denmark Valdemar the Great managed to put down rebellions in the late twelfth century. Or: Norway was divided in 1208 and could easily have remained so, if Hakon Hakonsson had not managed to put down rebellions from Ribbungs and Skule Bårdsson.

differently in Poland and Norway as a way of getting a more profound understanding of what is peculiar and common to the two realms – and thus of what is self-evident and what needs explanation. There are still blind spots in such an analysis that could have been exposed had we included a third or even fourth area of comparison or had we expanded the theme to include factors other than those relating to ideology and dynastic politics. However, such an expansion would have exceeded the scope of one article and possibly also diluted the clarity of the analytical setup. So, what are the main findings of this comparison of Poland and Norway?

First, we noted that the new ideology had its breakthrough at different times in the two realms. In Poland, it came immediately after Christianization, whereas in Norway, it took more than a century for the new ideology to really manifest itself. We explained this difference partly through external factors (Poland was more tightly integrated in European politics than Norway), and partly through internal factors (Norway had a more established royal dynasty and indigenous royal ‘ideology’).

Both in Poland and Norway, the new ideology had far-reaching implications for how the whole political system functioned, as it led to a radical break with traditional patterns of succession to the throne and with power-sharing practices since it promoted a form of rulership which monopolised power in the hands of a single ruler. However, the tensions resulting from the introduction of the new royal ideology evolved in different ways. In Poland, they led to the emergence of a new concept of Christian non-royal rulership, which combined ideas about the sacral nature of power with the practice of sharing or dividing power among many members of the Piast dynasty. In Norway, the option to divide power was blocked, leading to what Sverre Bagge has termed the “ideologisation” of conflicts.⁸³ Whereas previous dynastic conflicts had played out as rivalries within a commonly shared and loosely defined royal ideology, the explicit formulation of a royal doctrine fuelled political opponents to develop alternative ideologies.

⁸³ Bagge, *From Gang Leader to the Lord’s Anointed: Kingship in Sverris saga and Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, 159; *id.*, ‘The Structure of the Political Factions in the Internal Struggles of the Scandinavian Countries during the High Middle Ages’, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 24 (1999), 312; Orning, *Unpredictability and Presence: Norwegian Kingship in the High Middle Ages*.

Why did Poland and Norway arrive at such different solutions, which had significant ramifications for the nature and intensity of the political struggles? One cause relates to external factors. Both Poland and Norway were squeezed by mighty neighbours who challenged their legitimate rights as kingdoms, but the Emperors were able to enforce their claims more efficiently vis-à-vis Poland than the Danish kings managed against the Norwegian rulers. Regarding internal factors, we have argued that both realms had strong traditions for shared rulership, so this does not explain why this principle persisted in Poland but was rejected in Norway. Here, we point to two possible causes for the stronger position of sole rulership in Norway. First, Norway was more established as a political realm than Poland was at the time when the new ideology of rulership was introduced: in the early eleventh century in Poland, but a century later in Norway. Second, the Polish dynasty was more clearly defined as an entity than the Norwegian one, which was loose and subject to controversy – and therefore less apt to function as a cohesive factor for political stability.

The consequences of the initial adaptation to the new ideology of rulership were pervasive in both realms for the following century. In Poland, the accommodation of the new ideology within the system of power-sharing among Piast relatives made for a flexible political system. On the one hand, the intensity of conflict was fairly low, mainly concerning who would be considered the legitimate ‘senior’ with the right to occupy the Kraków seat. On the other hand, the power of the senior, elevated ruler of Kraków to command his relatives remained limited. In Norway, by contrast, the introduction of the new ideology created much more controversy, as it became impossible to adjust it to the practice of power sharing. Hence, it triggered intense conflicts over who should be the sole ruler, which were reinforced by ideological issues. However, the price of victory was much higher than in Poland, as it meant controlling the whole realm. This, in turn, facilitated the transition to the phase of ideological consolidation, which in Norway took place smoothly at the turn of the thirteenth century, whereas in Poland, it was a much more drawn-out and piecemeal process.

At the turn of the fourteenth century, Norway and Poland again looked similar – as they had done 300 years earlier. However, as this article has demonstrated, in the intermediate period, their paths toward royal consolidation were widely different.

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Zbigniew Dalewski – the political and cultural history of the Middle Ages, especially in East Central Europe; professor of medieval history at the Faculty of History, University of Warsaw and at the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences, where he is a head of the Department of Medieval Studies; e-mail: zbigdal@gmail.com

Hans Jacob Orning – the political, ideological, literary and military history of medieval Scandinavia; professor of medieval history at the Institute for Archaeology, Conservation and History at the University of Oslo. His latest book *Constant Crisis: Deconstructing the Civil Wars in Norway, c. 1180–1220* will be published by Cornell University Press in 2024; e-mail: h.j.orning@iakh.uio.no