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Extrait de l'article

Historians have long turned to royal consecration ordines for insights about early medieval kingship. Christian royal consecrations go back into late antiquity, but ordines for these rites first emerged in Carolingian Europe, above all in ninth-century west Francia. Generally speaking, an ordo is a liturgical text that prescribes the actions and words of celebrants during a rite. Ordines for royal consecration are thus transcripts for that most significant of rites, a king's or queen's inauguration. Supplemented by written or archaeological sources, ordines speak to the very essence of medieval rulership : what legitimized and constituted it.

But there are problems with traditional Ordines-Studien. Historians often study ordines with an eye to actual ritual ; Schramm tried to match each west-Frankish ordo with a specific consecration. Yet the leap from textual description to ritual performance is dubious. Texts, as Philippe Buc reminds us, are also « forces in the practice of power » : interpretations, not just reflections, of the world around them. Liturgy was a common battleground for competing politics in the early middle ages, and the fight did not stop once pen hit vellum. Actual consecrations are important (they had larger audiences than texts after all), but consecration ordines are primarily evidence for the motives, perceptions, and beliefs of their compilers, only secondarily for actual rituals.

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