The many faces of Duchess Matilda: matronage, motherhood and mediation in the twelfth century
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Matilda as a consort: authority and motherhood
A charter dated 1 February 1168, known through a seventeenth-century copy, tells that Henry and Matilda were betrothed in Minden Cathedral on that day. Although many chroniclers mention that Henry and Matilda were married, actual information on their wedding is scarce. In his overview of events occurring in 1168, Albert of Stade in his Annales Stadenses (1240-1256) writes that the nuptials (nuptias) were celebrated in Brunswick with great splendour. On arrival at the Brunswick residence, the ducal couple is said to have festively distributed coins among the people. This is at least how Julius Menadier envisioned the use of the bracteates (thin silver coins struck on one side) depicting the busts of Henry and Matilda. He therefore designated them as wedding coins issued in order to commemorate this event [ill. 2.1 & 2.2].

Menadier’s contention that Henry and Matilda’s bracteate was issued on the occasion of what he believed to be the couple’s wedding in 1168 is often regarded as a fact, though some scholars have expressed their doubts.
That he connected this coin type to this event was partly motivated by the assumption that when a woman was depicted as a consort this must have been the result of the marriage, a fine example of paternalism. However, in this chapter I will argue that this coin type can also be interpreted differently. Based on the depiction of the sceptre in the hand of Matilda, the coin might be the visualisation of the *consors regni* idea. Consequently its dating may be revised. While Menadier dated this bracteate type to 1168, I put forward a dating of around 1172. This means that it was issued in the period in which Henry made preparations to go to the Holy Land, while leaving the pregnant Matilda behind in Brunswick. In this chapter I first propose that it was Henry’s absence that offered Matilda the opportunity to exercise authority, as is communicated through the coin (2.1). Next, I will argue that the duke’s journey may be viewed in the context of the absence of male heirs and Matilda’s pregnancy, demonstrating that offspring was not merely a woman’s affair (2.2).

In 1954, Thilo Vogelsang studied the *consors regni* in the Middle Ages, a formula referring to shared rulership between a husband and wife already mentioned in the Old Testament in the story of Esther and Ages, a formula referring to shared rulership between a husband and wife intervention, prayer and virtue. underscored the spouse’s responsibilities in supporting her husband through *consors regni* ing sacral and legitimate rule: the concept of Pamme-Vogelsang’s art-historical study of the depictions of royal couples in to royal and imperial ruling couples, but also applied to the high nobility. Nonetheless, the concept of *consors regni* has mostly been studied in relation to queens and empresses. Franz-Reiner Erkens pointed out that it originated from an imperial tradition. His article on Ottonian and Salian empresses is relevant because it reveals that it is difficult to establish to what extent *consors regni* can be interpreted as a well-defined partnership. Gudrun Pamme-Vogelsang’s art-historical study of the depictions of royal couples in the High Middle Ages suggests that they usually do not reflect marriage or coronation ceremonies, but emphasise ideas about husbands and wives sharing sacral and legitimate rule: the concept of *consors regni*. Such images also underscored the spouse’s responsibilities in supporting her husband through intervention, prayer and virtue. In her study of medieval German queens, Amalie Fößel pointed out that the absence of the *consors regni* clause – as can

6 Vogelsang 1954: 3. For a more recent analysis and some critical notes towards Vogelsang see Fößel 2000: 56-68 (on consors regni) esp. 58.
7 Vogelsang 1954: 52-58.
9 Erkens mentions that consors regni was not limited to husband and wives, but could be applied to fathers and sons as well. See Erkens 1992, vol. 2: 253.
12 Fößel 2000: 64.
14 The data Fößel collected indicate that the *consors regni* clause was sometimes used after their coronation (Adelheid, Theophanu, Cunigunde), sometimes after a marriage (Agnes, Bertha). During the reign of Richenza she was referred to as consors regni only after her coronation in 1050, but without the regni. See Fößel 2000: 57-64. This indicates not that the *consors regni* clause was less frequently used, instead consors and coniux were used.
15 Jonathan 1986: 149-225 (devotional journey: Fried 1998: 111-137 (Arnold made a crusade into a pilgrimage in order to praise Henry); Scior 2002: esp. 292-309 (disagrees with Fried about the idea of a crusade); Ehlers 2008: 111-137 (Arnold made a crusade into a pilgrimage in order to praise Henry)).
16 Broer 1990: 154 and 160.
19 Fößel 2000: 57-64. This indicates not that the *consors regni* clause was less frequently used, instead consors and coniux were used.
20 Jonathan 1986: 149-225 (devotional journey: Fried 1998: 111-137 (Arnold made a crusade into a pilgrimage in order to praise Henry); Scior 2002: esp. 292-309 (disagrees with Fried about the idea of a crusade); Ehlers 2008: 111-137 (Arnold made a crusade into a pilgrimage in order to praise Henry)).
question arises. Was Matilda able to turn her authority into actual power, or to put it differently: what did the consors regni mean in practice? Admittedly, the limited charter evidence makes it difficult to answer this question straightforward. There are circumstances, however, that would at least have provided Matilda with the opportunity to exercise authority. At this point, we should distinguish between Matilda’s authority and her power. Usually, power is associated with the male domain: men exercised military command, they held justice, and they issued money.16 Recent studies, however, have pointed out that women could also be involved in these activities (although less frequently).17 Moreover, it has been questioned whether land tenure, military command and money were the only ways to wield power. Taking part in events that mattered and attempting to influence them was also possible through mediation and advice, or what we would today call diplomacy. The degree to which women were able to wield power – whether the ‘manly’ or the softer sort – was determined by several circumstances such as age, medieval ideas about women’s place in the natural order of society and the political situation.18 In her book Women, Power and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages, Erin Jordan stated that authority can be understood as the legitimate right to act.19 Because of her marriage to Henry the Lion, Matilda was a duchess and shared in his authority. Moreover, her status as the daughter of the English king, Henry II, enhanced her authority. However, the fact that Matilda held authority does not mean that she also exercised power. Power is more abstract and often based on personal capacity to make decisions (for example, by using force or engaging in battle).20 In Pauline Stafford’s words, power ‘is the ability to take part in the events, to have the means at your disposal to give some chance of success in them.’21 Charters may offer proof of a woman’s power, but as previously stated, such direct evidence is virtually non-existent where Matilda is concerned. Does this mean that Matilda did not exercise power? Perhaps charter evidence of Matilda’s power is lacking because it simply disappeared. Even if we accept that there are no explicit proscriptive sources (charters) for Matilda’s power, in the chapter on the Rolandslied I have demonstrated that women could make decisions or affect their husband’s actions by mediation, advice and alliances. Such actions were often not recorded formally, but this does not mean that women did not act. In this chapter, I will follow up on the idea of women’s responsibilities. Moreover, I will suggest that Matilda was viewed as co-ruler, together with Henry, and in accordance with this notion, she was given an opportunity to act at the time he left for the Holy Land in 1172. An interpretation of Henry and Matilda’s coin type as a means to express co-rule and authority, however, is not without its complications. First, there are no written sources that mention why this specific bracteate was issued. Second, coins depicting husbands and wives have not been studied in great depth. Finding visual evidence to underscore my hypothesis was therefore not an easy task. Those twelfth-century coins that do include depictions of spouses are found in the Appendix. Moreover, changes in the iconography of the representations found on these coins were not always related to shifts in political thinking, as pragmatic concerns were also a factor. Rulers issued new coinage every one or two years. It was necessary to adjust the iconography in order to distinguish new coins from the old ones. Lastly, there is no consensus regarding the interpretation of images in which both husbands and wives are depicted. Do they refer to actual co-rule or not? Whatever the conclusion, scholars have suggested that a change in iconography may reflect changing political circumstances, e.g. a victory over an enemy or the recently obtained advocacy of a monastery (Klosterstifter).22

A specific problem arises in trying to establish the meaning of the sceptre. Does it only refer to authority or does it also indicate power? Or are we to regard the sceptre as an ‘insigne’ – a term that, in medieval usage, was not restricted to objects of royal stature23 – merely indicating noble status, as Susan Johns has suggested in her study of seals depicting twelfth-century Anglo-Norman noblewomen?24 It is my contention that its meaning can be best established by addressing each occurrence as a unique case. By examining the sceptre in the hands of a specific noblewoman, given the context of what we already know about her, we may be able to determine what this attribute communicated in more precise terms. As the message of co-rule would have required an audience, we will first briefly reflect on the use of...
bracteates and the possible audience for which they were intended before turning to the coin’s iconography.

The term ‘bracteate’ dates to the seventeenth century. It was, and still is, used to indicate regional silver coins struck on one side.25 These coins were not medals or ‘Schmuckbrakteaten’ distributed on special occasions, but actual currency used in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries issued by mints.26 Such mints exploded in number during the reign of Frederick Barbarossa (1152-1190), with most of them run under the nobility’s supervision.27 Because old coins were exchanged for newly struck ones at the annual markets, the issuing authority was able to profit from striking money (in the case of Henry and Matilda’s bracteates, this was Duke Henry). Twelve old coins were worth only nine new ones, offering a profit of twenty-five percent for the issuing authority.28 This means that old coins fell out of favour when new ones were issued – at least in the region where the coins were issued and where they still had some monetary value. According to Elisabeth Nau, regional coins were usually only valid in the region they were struck.29 This might explain why the discovered hoards containing Henry’s coins with the depiction of a lion were restricted to Brunswick, Lüneburg, Bardowick (about seven kilometres north of Lüneburg) and its environs.30 This suggests that the use and spread of the bracteates was limited to a specific region. The sixty-three extant bracteates depicting Henry and Matilda together would indeed seem to confirm this, as they were all found in a single location near the Benedictine monastery of St Aegidius (founded 1115), in the southern part of Brunswick near the Oker River [ill. 2.3].31 The hoard, which also comprised an additional 149 bracteates issued by Henry the Lion on which he is depicted alone, was probably concealed there around 1180.32

While there is no denying the economic function of these coins, the iconography of the depicted representations suggests that they were as well a medium of communication.33 The relatively large surface of the

26 For the monetary value see Nau 1977, vol. 3: 87 and 93; Kühn 1995a: 82-89.
27 Of the 215 mints during Frederick’s reign 81 were in the hands of the secular nobility. See Nau 1977, vol. 3: 89. Frederick, owning 28 mints, was the superior moneyer who granted the right to issue to his vassals. Therefore almost all feudal lords had their own coinage.
30 Kühn 1995b, vol. 2: 405. A map with places where hoards were found in Kühn 1995a: 77. This map reveals that the mint of Henry’s coins were used in the region between the rivers Weser and Elbe. See also Nau 1977, vol. 3: 95.
31 Lüneburg only became a mint after Bardowick had been taken from Henry. See Köln 1995a: 401. Grote 1834: 17 and plate IV figs. 55 and 56. Figs. 55 and 56 represent the two specimens of the same type found in the hoard. Grote gives no references to earlier publications or other sources between 1756 (when the hoard was found) and 1834 and he does not inform the reader where these were stored after the discovery.
bracteates, with a diameter varying roughly between 25 millimetres and 50 millimetres,24 provided enough space for a design that could convey specific ideas. It is this communicative function that is the focus of this chapter on Henry and Matilda's bracteate. Such an approach implies there is an audience to receive such a message. Unfortunately, very little has been written on the topic of audiences with regards to coinage of the High Middle Ages. This is perhaps understandable, if acknowledging the difficulty of determining who exactly bought and spent bracteates. More importantly, we have no idea of what the user's response to the coin's imagery might have been. Yet it is plausible to think that the people who possessed them were familiar with the persons depicted and, ideally, were cognisant that Henry and Matilda were depicted as equals, both holding his or her own sceptres. Matilda's depiction on a coin of Henry the Lion is likely to have drawn attention, as it differed from all previous coins of Henry. Because this coin type was found only in a single hoard, one can conclude that the number of people who had access to these coins was probably limited, and similarly, that the communicated message reached a select audience. At the same time, it seems to me that those individuals who could afford to have money, or who otherwise required money for their trade, were exactly the ones with whom Henry the Lion wished to communicate. The bracteates featuring both Henry and Matilda were meant to convey that, in the duke's absence, the duchess was to be seen as his co-ruler. While the communication of this message not needed to be restricted to the moment when Henry was absent, I think this likely for two reasons. For one, the duke is forced to make arrangements that will secure his position during his absence. Communicating authority by issuing a new coin type may have been part of this strategy. Additionally, as far as we know this coin type has been issued only once and was found on just one location, near the Aegidius monastery, suggesting that the bracteate type was issued on an occasion of local importance. How the bracteates reached the public remains unclear. Perhaps they were distributed on the annual market. It is also possible that they were thrown at the local audience. At the same time, it seems to me that those individuals who could afford to have money, or who otherwise required money for their trade, were exactly the ones with whom Henry the Lion wished to communicate. The bracteates featuring both Henry and Matilda were meant to convey that, in the duke's absence, the duchess was to be seen as his co-ruler. While the communication of this message not needed to be restricted to the moment when Henry was absent, I think this likely for two reasons. For one, the duke is forced to make arrangements that will secure his position during his absence. Communicating authority by issuing a new coin type may have been part of this strategy. Additionally, as far as we know this coin type has been issued only once and was found on just one location, near the Aegidius monastery, suggesting that the bracteate type was issued on an occasion of local importance. How the bracteates reached the public remains unclear. Perhaps they were distributed on the annual market. It is also possible that they were thrown at the local audience. Although there are no twelfth-century documents to confirm this latter practice, in the late Middle Ages this occurred quite frequently, e.g. when the Burgundian dukes made their grand entry into an important city or made an appearance at banquets and weddings.25 Throwing coins would have been a highly suitable way to communicate the consortium of husband and wife, particularly in the duke's absence.

In order to investigate whether the coin could have served as a visual representation of Henry and Matilda's shared rule, the first section of this chapter is dedicated to an iconographic analysis of the bracteate itself as well as the sceptre as a female attribute (2.1). That the coin's general iconography was not unusual is evident when examining the type that was issued at the time of Henry the Lion's first marriage to Clementia of Zähringen, which was annulled in 1162. In this case, neither Henry nor Clementia is depicted with a sceptre. As a matter of fact, the visual evidence discussed in this chapter will reveal that this attribute is unique to representations of twelfth-century noblewomen in which they are depicted together with their husbands. Moreover, to comprehend the full meaning of this insignia, it is necessary to review various depictions of women holding sceptres. I will demonstrate that the portrayal of Matilda – together with Henry and holding a sceptre – was explicitly designed to communicate co-rule. It is a detail easily overlooked. In her book, Queens in Stone and Silver, Kathleen Nolan highlights the importance of (subtle) choices made in iconography. She argues that the Capetian queens introduced iconic and formal (shape, size, two-sided) alterations to their royal seals – when compared with their male contemporaries and their female predecessors – and that they did so because they wished to communicate notions of authority and family relations.26 While coins differ from seals, it is possible to compare the two media based on similarities related to size, geographic dispersion and a direct association with authority.27 My aim to suggest that the iconography of Henry and Matilda's bracteate, like that found on seals, may be interpreted as a carefully constructed image that was meant to communicate co-rule. To support my argument that the sceptre in Matilda's hands is important to deciphering the coin's meaning, I will provide a detailed analysis of the sceptre as a woman's attribute. Matilda's sceptre was not just an embellishment, but rather a possible clue to the authority she held precisely because she was the duke's wife. In 2.2 I will investigate a number of situations in which Matilda was obliged to act or wield power.
When Matilda arrived at Brunswick at the age of twelve in 1168, there seems to have been no need to communicate the message of *consors regni*. As a minor and foreigner, she was not yet capable of actively being involved in her husband's politics. This situation changed in 1172, when Henry the Lion left his territory for more than a year. Admittedly, the written record related to Matilda's actions in the years 1172/1173 is not abundant. In spite of this, I have tried to chart, as carefully as I could, all evidence referring to the various actions and duties that she was expected to perform. Based on the surviving charters, the dedicatory text in the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda donated to the Church of St Blaise, and other written sources, I will discuss the *consors regni* in relation to the bracteate, both in theory and practice. The argument that this coin type may have indeed communicated co-rule is supported when turning to Henry's first wife Clementia. She ruled during her husband's absence, thus demonstrating that she engaged in her husband's affairs at this time. As we shall see, the same also applies for other historical female figures.

2.1

The iconography of Henry and Matilda's bracteate

The coin type decorated with the ‘portraits’ of Henry the Lion and Matilda was already familiar to Henry. Two specimens that differ from Henry and Matilda's bracteates also show a man and a woman flanking a tower [ill. 2.4]. They are portrayed in profile on top of two arches; beneath the two arches, a lion is depicted facing right. There is no legend to identify the issuing authority, but the lion makes it perfectly clear that this type is related to Brunswick and Henry the Lion (see also paragraph 2.2.1). Due to its more crude style (flat, schematic and less detailed compared with Henry's coins issued at a later moment), this coin is dated around 1150. In all likelihood, the woman is Henry's first wife, Clementia, whom he married in 1147 and separated from 1162. Henry's reason for issuing this coin type is unclear. It may possibly be related to Clementia's activities as regent, as discussed in Chapter 1 (1.3.2), in the years 1151 and 1154, at which time Henry was away.40

**COMMUNICATING CO-RULE**

Clementia is one of a number of women who acted as rulers in the twelfth century. Bettina Elpers's study of regent mothers in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Germany has shown that women, by virtue of their marriage, were entitled, perhaps even expected, to care for their sons. This also meant that they ruled in their son's stead.41 This is reflected not only in charters and chronicles, but also in literary texts. In the *Rolandslied*, discussed in Chapter 1, Ganelon's nameless wife finds herself in a similar position. Her husband departs, leaving her behind with their son, Baldwin, and entrusting her with the care of his property. Just as Henry appointed Adolf to support Clementia, so too did Ganelon ask his vassals to support his wife and swear loyalty to his son. Finally, Queen Bramimonde as well assumes her husband's rule after his death.

38 Those specimens were found at Duderstadt and Bourg-Saint-Christophe. The specimen found in Bourg-Saint-Christophe is in the Cabinet des Médaillies de Lyon and discussed by Berghaus 1954: 80. Berghaus considered the specimen to be issued in commemoration of the marriage of Henry and Matilda in 1168. Gerhard Welter preferred to link the specimen to Clementia. See Welter 1973, vol. 2, no. 1; Jürgen Derichsthought this a daring idea. See Derichs 1983, vol. 1: 21.

39 Köln 1995b, vol. 2: 404, ill. 383 on 402. The depicted coin in Köln seems to be the same specimen as the one depicted in Berghaus 1954: plate III.

40 The title regent was not used in the twelfth century. See Elpers 2003: 7. Both Elpers and Erkens use the term to refer to women acting on behalf of their underage sons. See Erkens 1991, vol. 2: 236 and Elpers 2003: 7. A definition of regent or regency (or Statthalter) is not in LexMA.

41 Although most examples discussed by Elpers concern widows with sons, and this defines the situation as one of maternal regency (Mütterliche Regentschaften), she acknowledges that death is only one of the moments when husbands were absent. See Elpers 2003: 5. The sources do not inform us how these women became maternal regents: simply as the result of the marriage, were they assigned as regents, and if so by whom (their husbands before they died, their husband's advisors after he had died)? The first option seems the most plausible.
Although we cannot be sure, it is possible that the issuing of Henry and Clementia's bracteate is to be understood in the context of Henry's absence. In this scenario, the coins would have functioned as visual reminders of their joint rule, a necessary message at a time when a ruler was engaged in affairs that enabled others to question his authority and territory. There is no proving beyond a doubt that Clementia's regency was linked to the issuing of the coins on which she is depicted together with Henry. It might explain, however, why Henry and Matilda were also depicted together. The iconography might refer to the transfer of ducal authority from Henry to his wife. Considering her position as partner of the duke, or consors regni, Matilda may have held authority in theory. The question remains, however, as to whether she was able to translate this authority into actual power. For this reason, it is safer to speak of Matilda's 'authority' versus her 'power'. I argue that the sceptre depicted in the hand of Matilda on the bracteate can best be seen as a possible allusion to her authority.

2.1.1 A visual analysis of the coin: the construction of an image

The iconography of coins as a carefully constructed representation. Together with its inscription (legend) the issuing authority's profession – a nobleman, an abbot, a bishop – and/or his territory were referred to, as means of showing his status. The pictorial elements on Henry and Matilda's coin type and their meaning will be discussed next by comparing this type with that of other married couples. While the depiction of the sceptre in the hand of Matilda in relation to the consors regni idea is crucial to my argument, the ducal couple's bracteate comprises other iconographic elements of equal importance. Henry's standard coin iconography included pictorial motifs, such as the lion and the architecture, while others were new and therefore generated a new meaning. I will point out that a combination of these selected elements tell us Matilda's story as co-ruler is told through a combination of these selected elements, which likewise served to communicate the coin's message to the Brunswick audience which was described in the chapter's introduction.

The type or central motif: husband and wife

The central motif on the bracteate of Henry and Matilda is the ducal couple's joint depiction. This is what distinguishes this type from the others minted under Henry's rule. Only a few bracteates of this type dating from the twelfth century are known. Besides Henry and Matilda, there were (to the best of my knowledge) twelve other married couples ruling in the German territories, including Emperor Frederick and his son, Emperor Henry VI, whose images were depicted on coins, see the appendix. While husbands and wives sometimes appear separately on the obverse and reverse of coins, more commonly they are depicted next to each other. When women appear together with men on coins, they are usually depicted in mirror image across from each other; both seated, both crowned, both under an arch or flanking a tower. The shape of the coin and its moderate size favoured this manner of depiction. The distinction between the sexes is not so much determined by their clothing, but rather by their headwear – or lack thereof. In the case of Henry and Matilda, the duchess is wearing a veil and coronet; the duke's hair is parted down the middle, with curls falling over his ears. According to the fashion of their time, both are wearing a chemise with tight-fitted sleeves and a dress with wider sleeves.

From the observer's point of view, Matilda is depicted on the left and Henry the Lion on the right. They are represented in the form of busts, with arms and shoulders visible, and the head shown in three-quarter view. Other examples feature men and women portrayed together in a seated position or standing in full- or half-length. Differences in size of the persons depicted are not to be interpreted as an indication of status, but rather as the consequence of fitting other elements into the composition, such as buildings and animals. When territorial princes and emperors are depicted alone, they assume poses similar to those when two people are portrayed. Most

42 Elkins 2009: 35.
44 All the coins depicting husband and wives were made of silver, measure between 32 and 37 millimetres and their weight varies from 0.75 to 0.90 grams.
commonly, emperors are portrayed seated on the throne. Frederick Barbarossa, however, also appears on horseback. Most noblemen are depicted either standing in full-length, on horseback, enthroned, or in bust form from the waist up. Their iconography was either copied from that of kings and emperors, or from earlier noblemen whose ‘portraits’ were as well based on royal imagery.\textsuperscript{45}

The ‘men on the right, women on the left’ composition of this bracteate is common. Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and his two wives, Adelaide and Beatrice, are depicted in this fashion on some of their coins. Albert of Brandenburg (nicknamed ‘the Bear’), Walter of Arnstein and Ulrich of Wettin and their wives follow this composition as well [ill. 2.5-2.7]. According to the drawings in Menadier’s publication, some Bohemian coins show the queens placed on the right. On some of Frederick’s coins, Beatrice is depicted on the right. Their son, Henry VI, and his wife, Constance, are portrayed in the same manner. Admittedly, I have not found this same composition on coins of the nobility. There the ‘men on the right, women on the left’ composition is prevalent, although the limited number of extant coins depicting married couples may not present a complete picture. It is not clear whether the ‘men on the right, women on the left’ composition reflects an established hierarchy, as has been argued for religious imagery.\textsuperscript{46}

In any event, the ‘men on the right, women on the left’ arrangement was not standard and, as such, it offers no direct solution for distinguishing the men from the women. In some cases, the women can be identified by their dress, but more often by their veil. Whereas Duchess Matilda’s appearance on this coin type was perhaps perceived as a novelty, the architectural motifs found on this coin type, were probably more familiar to the viewer.

**ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS: CITY OR CASTLE AND THE REPRESENTATION OF POWER**

In the case of Henry and Matilda’s coin type, additional pictorial motifs are prominently displayed. The architectural elements consist of an arch flanked by two towers, comprised of four galleries and topped by merlons. Numismatists and art historians have not paid much attention to architectural representations on medieval coins.\textsuperscript{47} Peter Berghaus considered them embellishments on imperial and royal coinage, signifying nothing in particular.\textsuperscript{48} What has been written is usually of a survey-like nature inherent to the numismatic practice of organising coins according to type.\textsuperscript{49} Other
numismatists have sought to determine whether twelfth-century architectural elements are linked to earlier coins, thus distinguishing between tradition versus innovation. In the end, no extensive survey of architectural motifs on coins exists. Perhaps this is a consequence of the vast quantities of German material that survive, which prohibits a satisfactory overview. Another explanation could be that an iconographic approach—though studied by numismatists—still primarily belongs to the domain of art historians, who generally do not study coins.

Two numismatic studies concerning architectural motifs on coins are relevant to our discussion. Arthur Suhle, in an article on the depiction of Burger (castles) on bracteates, and Dietrich Mannsperger, writing on imperial coins, have both concluded that such pieces provide no clues with regards to the appearance of castles that once actually existed. Accordingly, the architectural representations found on these coins are to be interpreted as references to a ruler's residence, and more specifically, to his town. Walls, towers, gates, temple and castle denote the seat of earthly powers. Suhle's and Mannsperger's findings are substantiated by the material gathered in the Staufer Catalogue of 1977. The architectural elements found there are usually similar—but not identical—to the architecture found on Henry's coins. The arch and towers on Henry's bracteates can either be viewed as a reduced depiction of the town of Brunswick or as a general representation of Henry's castle or Burg [ill. 2.8 and 2.9]. What we see corresponds with architectural structures and buildings featured on other medieval coinage. One example is a bracteate issued by Conrad the Great (r. 1127–1157), depicting a castle with three towers [ill. 2.10]. In many cases, they are not meant to display a real site or building: they must instead be interpreted as a metonym. Walls, gates, towers and castle—whether separate or merged—are designed to represent a town, and in so doing, appear to symbolize the territories owned by the lord of that town. This would appear to be the case with one of Henry's bracteate types, where the architecture is combined with the inscription: 'I am Henry of Brunswick'. The architecture depicted refers to the town of Brunswick and refers to the duke, whose human 'portrait' has been replaced by the representation of a lion.

While architectural elements on Henry's coinage were probably less important than the lion, the representation of Brunswick is certain to have mattered. The seal of the town Brunswick, devised prior to 1231, demonstrates that the lion, and the wall with its gate flanked by two towers were part of the town's history and identity [ill. 2.11]. Although the seal's designer made an effort to depict the town more three-dimensionally and added details to enhance its lifelike character, the architectural elements are essentially the same as the ones depicted on Henry the Lion's coins.
That the architecture mattered to the townsmen is understandable: it was a visual representation of their town, albeit an unrealistic one. In the case of Henry the Lion, the architecture on his coins is both a declaration of his relationship with the city of residence and a manifestation of his power. The users of Henry’s coinage were in all likelihood aware of this relationship. Yet architecture was not the only means to emphasise this. Noblemen also employed animals as trademarks of their identity, for instance, as the powerful ruler. For this reason, these animals also appeared on coins. It comes as little surprise that Henry, nicknamed ‘the Lion’, would choose to place representations of lions on his coinage.

**The Lion and Other Animals**

On all bracteates issued by Henry, the lion is a recurring motif that referred to Henry, surnamed ‘the Lion’, or in more general terms, to Brunswick, the most important residence in the Welf territory. The lion appears on coins with images of Henry and on coins with architectural decorations alone. Although the lion always roars, it can either face right or left. Perhaps Henry’s most famous coin type is the one on which he is portrayed sitting on his throne, holding a sceptre in his right hand and a sword in his left. It is evident that these insignia refer to Henry’s authority and rulership in general. More difficult to assess is the precise meaning of the sword and sceptre, primarily because so little research has been done on the meaning of insignia in the hands of noblemen. In his book on royal insignia, Percy Ernst Schramm wrote that the meaning of royal insignia is never self-evident, because it varies from country to country and from century to century. Considering the fact that the sword is associated with military status, it likely refers to Henry the Lion’s right and obligation to defend his land and people (and to ensure peace?). The sceptre might simply signal authority, but it may just as easily refer to Henry’s right to administer justice. Furthermore, Henry is flanked by two towers on arches. Below these arches, two lions (which could also be leopards or bears) are depicted at Henry’s feet. Stylistically, this specimen is related to Henry and Matilda’s coin. It is therefore generally dated around 1170. Because it differs both in style and iconography from Henry’s other coinage, it has been suggested that a special occasion must have served as an impetus for issuing this type. Jürgen Denicke suggests that Henry’s recovery of Bavaria in 1156 might have been one such occasion. In this case, the two lions would then be considered as references to the duchies Saxony and Bavaria held by Henry at that time. The issuing of this type around 1156 would therefore be a more appropriate, with a date of 1170 in this case untenable.

The difficulty of securely dating coins is also evident from a bracteate on which the lion is depicted on a pedestal. Menadier concluded that the appearance of the lion on Henry’s coinage was related to the erection of a gigantic bronze lion in front of his castle at Brunswick. He believed that the bronze lion was constructed in 1166, and that the coin, which now only exists as a drawing, could thus be dated to the same year. From this he concluded that the coin of Henry and Matilda must have been made shortly thereafter. Yet there is some reason for doubt with regards to the dating of the bronze lion. The earliest written source mentioning its construction is Albert of Stade, who wrote his Annales Stadenses around 1256. The account of the bronze lion is found in his entry entitled ‘1166’. A closer examination reveals, however, that Albert cites other notable events in this very same entry that are in fact known to have occurred as early as 1165 and as late as 1181. This discrepancy brings the precise dating of 1166 into ques-

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55 The iconography of the lion on Henry’s coins has been studied most extensively by Walter Kühn. See Kühn 1995a.
59 Specimens of this type were found at the Aegidius monastery, together with the coin type of Henry and Matilda. For its dating see Kühn 1995a: 79.
60 Menadier 1891-1898b, vol. 1: 46-47 with arguments for the year 1166; Menadier 1891-1898b, vol. 1: 93.


Albert of Stade, Annales Stadenses: 44.

Ehlers 2008: 258 for Henry's nickname 'the Lion'.

Ehlers 2008: 258 for Henry's nickname 'the Lion'.

See the appendix.

The bronze lion was erected at some point within this timespan. Hence, Henry may very well have included the lions on his bracteates prior to the bronze statue's erection. After all, his nickname had been 'lion' ( leo) from 1156 onward, serving as an excellent reason to incorporate the lion on coins. Whatever the case may have been, it is evident that the lion on his coins and the impressive animal in front of his castle were visual expressions of Henry's name and identity. In light of Henry's power and the regional use of his bracteates, the lion on his coinage was clearly considered a direct reference to his authority as 'Münzherr' and duke. Its presence on Henry and Matilda's coin type was by no means a novelty.

An overview of coins in the Staufer Catalogue of 1977 reveals that the addition of an almost heraldic emblem to coins was not restricted to Henry the Lion. Many of his contemporaries selected objects befitting their names, often in reference to the name of their castle. Count Walter II of Arnstein and his wife were depicted with an eagle ('Arn' meaning eagle). Count Burchard II of Falkenstein, unsurprisingly, chose a falcon [ill. 2.13]. Moreover, the use of the lion was not restricted to Henry the Lion. His uncle, Henry Jasomirgott (r. 1141-1177), Margrave of Austria, issued a coin that also bore a lion, (though its design differs greatly from the lions on Henry's bracteates). And Duke Leopold V (r. 1177-1194), a later margrave of Austria, chose a leopard-lion for his coin (and again, this design is so different from Henry's that a distinction is easily made). That Henry the Lion attached great value to his name is evident when observing the legend on his coins. This too was a common feature, in all likelihood very well known to the bracteates' users.

The legend: dux heinrichs o leo

The legend, or inscribed textual content, of Henry and Matilda's specimens reads: OPIEO . LE OEL DUX HEINRICHS O LEO A . +. Some of these letters – here underlined – are mirrored, with the reason for this being unclear. The unusual spelling is not restricted to this coin type. Some letters in the legend on the bracteate featuring Henry enthroned are also mirrored [ill. 2.8]. The same phenomenon is also seen on a number of his bracteates on which only the lion is depicted. In virtually every case, one can read that the coins were issued by Duke Henry the Lion. While there are variations in the legend's content, the description 'Duke Henry [the] Lion' is encountered frequently: it was not limited to the coin on which Henry and Matilda are depicted together. On Henry's bracteates, the inscriptions were always placed outside the field that contained the central motif (or type). In this manner, the legend is always separated from the coin's iconography. There were, however, no well-defined rules for inscriptions on coins. As a matter of fact, a legend was not even obligatory. Several of Henry the Lion's bracteates are devoid of inscriptions, with the lion and the hoard's date being the only clues to confirm that the coins were indeed likely to have been issued under Henry's authority. Objects related to the issuing person or his house – such as the lion, the eagle, or plants – could be equally strong signifiers in revealing the issuing authority's personal identity.

With regards to the legend of the coin that depicts both Henry and Matilda, it is not an exception that Henry's name alone is mentioned. Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, Margrave Albert of Brandenburg, Count Ulrich of Wettin and Emperor Henry VI are all depicted together with their wives on bracteates, see the appendix. In all these cases, only the husband's names are mentioned in the legend.
In the next section, we will see that in addition to legends, architecture and animals, attributes (insignia) were also crucial in communicating authority. Precisely because coins could be used as means of communication, every detail was essential. This I would especially argue when it comes to the sceptre. This insignia is by no means unique to Henry or any other male figure, particularly in the case of kings and emperor. Where the sceptre does appear to have been a novelty is in the hand of Matilda.

2.1.2
Married couples and the sceptre as a female attribute

The expression ‘to wave the sceptre’ is derived from the notion of the sceptre as an attribute of authority and an expression of power. In his book on signs of rule (Herrschaftszeichen), Percy Ernst Schramm mentions that this attribute was first used by emperors and kings as a sign of their rule. Like the crown, the king was invested with the sceptre during the coronation ceremony. It became such a powerful sign that when kings and emperors were depicted – on coins, seals or in manuscripts – they often held a staff or rod as a visualisation of their authority as ruler. This could either be a long staff (baculum) or a short rod (sceptrum), although from the eleventh century onwards, the latter seems to have been preferred in the Holy Roman Empire. Schramm has pointed out that the use of insignia was of importance to churchmen as well. The Concordat of Worms – the agreement between Pope Calixtus II and Emperor Henry V in 1122 that brought the Investiture Controversy to an end – states that the elected bishops and abbots of the German Empire were to receive the ring and staff from the hands of the Pope and invested with the sceptre by the emperor. Similarly, the emperor was allowed to present bishops with the sceptre only. This was a shift in thinking, clearly demonstrating that the insignia had acquired their significance as a sign of communication. He also presents an analysis of twelfth-century coins attributed to specific secular princes reveals that Henry the Lion, who first appears on a coin with sceptre around 1170, was not the first territorial prince to hold this attribute. Kuno of Münzenberg (r. 1151-1212), Frederick’s chamberlain from 1162 onwards, is perhaps the first nobleman to be portrayed holding sword and sceptre. Only after 1180 does the sceptre become more widely dispersed.

Of course, the sceptre was by no means the only attribute carried by secular noblemen. Swords, standards, banners and shields can frequently be found on coins, especially when the figures depicted are dressed as knights, whether standing, seated or on horseback. The crown and globe were reserved for kings and emperors. By no means were these attributes obligatory. The coins of Henry the Lion and Clementia, Walter II of Arnstein

sacred authority, while the sceptre was a secular attribute symbolising worldly authority. Jürgen Petersohn extended the leading study by Schramm by investigating how the royal-imperial insignia were utilised (at many times and in relation to other people as signs of communication). He also presents a clear overview of the methodological issues related to the source material. As Petersohn’s study is limited to the use of insignia by kings and emperors, it provides little insight into the use of similar attributes by secular lords. Petersohn does state, however, that these lords received the sword and sceptre when enfeoffed by the king. It is nevertheless difficult to assess to what extent these insignia were physically bestowed or merely presented in symbolic terms.

While we cannot be sure whether secular lords actually physically carried sceptres and used them in rituals, their appearance on coins indicates that they were meant to communicate authority. The sceptre found on coins that were issued by territorial princes is derived from the iconography on royal coinage. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, several noblemen are depicted with such an insignia. An analysis of twelfth-century coins attributed to specific secular princes reveals that Henry the Lion, who first appears on a coin with sceptre around 1170, was not the first territorial prince to hold this attribute. Kuno of Münzenberg (r. 1151-1212), Frederick’s chamberlain from 1162 onwards, is perhaps the first nobleman to be portrayed holding sword and sceptre. Only after 1180 does the sceptre become more widely dispersed.

73 On the idea of sacral kingship and its desacralisation see Rießer, 1993: 51-90.
75 Looschorn 2007: 82, no. 19.
76 See for example Kluge 1991: 83 (on the images of secular princes), 229, no. 301 (Count Henry of Stade, 978-1000), 226, no. 301 (Count Eckbert of Brunswick, 1068-1090) and 232, no. 239 (Duke Lothar of Saxony, 1106-1215).
77 This analysis is based on the material gathered in Die Zeit der Staufer 1977 and Heinrich der Löwe und seine Zeit 1990.
78 Die Zeit der Staufer 1977, vol. 1: 131 and vol. 2: nos. 94, 20-23. The three bracteates portraying Kuno with sword and sceptre are attributed to him on stylistic grounds. A coin issued by a count of Formbach-Pitten, perhaps Eckbert III (? 1150), could portray the later holding a sword and sceptre, but this is not really clear. See Die Zeit der Staufer 1977, vol. 1: 110, nos. 208-209. Other examples of noblemen with a sceptre are Count palatine Frederick of Sommerschenburg (r. 1137-62), who was a supporter of Emperor Lothar III and politically engaged in Saxon affairs. See Die Zeit der Staufer 1977, vol. 1: 146, nos. 189-192. Another type in Berghaus 1954: 82, no. 5, Landgrave Louis III of Thuringia (r. 1172-1193), an ally of Frederick Barbarossa and Henry the Lion until 1179, is depicted standing between two towers holding a sword and a sceptre. See Die Zeit der Staufer 1977, vol. 1: 134, nos. 187-26-27.
and Ermengard, and Ulrich of Wettin and Hedwig all demonstrate that attributes were not necessarily depicted [ill. 2.4, 2.6 and 2.7]. Since the sceptre is an attribute of authority and, in some cases, even an expression of actual power, this insignia enforces Henry's image as a powerful duke ruling from Brunswick (even when he was not there).

Can the same be argued for Matilda? After all, she also carries a sceptre. This in fact distinguishes Henry and Matilda’s coin type from other coins on which husband and wives are depicted together.79 Unlike noblemen and royal women, noblewomen are rarely depicted on coins holding their own attribute. The depiction of Matilda holding a sceptre is thus unique, a distinction of which the audience was possibly aware. For this reason, a more detailed look at this insignia is justified. Those reticent in following my argument that Matilda’s presence on the coin might possibly indicate co-rule, would perhaps suggest that the duchess was added to the coin’s iconography merely to underscore Henry’s enhanced status following their marriage. After all, the lion, the legend and the architecture clearly represent Henry’s ducal authority and power. Had this indeed been the case, then one should expect to find Matilda on other coin types as well. Moreover, the sceptre would not have been an obligatory attribute for Matilda. An analysis of the sceptre in the hands of noblewomen will provide the necessary proof in demonstrating that Matilda’s sceptre may be considered as a sign of authority and that the message it communicated was one of co-rulership.

**Female attributes: sceptres**

That Matilda holds this insignia is clearly visible. Like her husband, she carries a fairly long rod, topped with a flower bearing three leaves. This is virtually identical to the fleur-de-lis employed by the Capetian kings and queens. As we have seen, most male attributes were related to their position as knights. Because of their sex, women were generally not allowed to hold this position. It is for this reason that they were not depicted holding swords, shields and banners. Nor were they dressed in armour. Like the crown, exclusively worn by queens and empresses (and therefore not discussed in the chapter on Henry and Matilda’s coin), the sceptre was an attribute that can also be viewed as less gender-specific.

The observation that noblewomen are not shown with a sceptre when depicted together with their husbands – queens and empresses being the exception – does not mean that women were never depicted with this insigni, whether discussing coins or other media. Studying the visual evidence from the Holy Roman Empire, one may conclude that there are two categories of women who were portrayed with sceptre in hand. The first category comprises depictions of royal-imperial women together with their husbands, with both partners holding sceptres. This iconography first appears in liturgical manuscripts. Such images serve as a visualisation of the queen, analogous to the biblical Queen Esther, who enters the consortium by virtue of her marriage to the king. As a result she shares in the social sphere associated with Christian kingship.80 After 1050, kings and emperors, as well as their consorts, are no longer found in liturgical manuscripts. This has been explained as a consequence of the Investiture Controversy, where the king – and accordingly, his wife – was no longer able to claim his Christ-centred kingship.81 This does not mean that images of royal couples disappeared entirely. As so few objects have been preserved from the twelfth century, it is difficult to assess the manner and frequency of such depictions. Judging from the twelfth-century material that is available, however, one may conclude that the queen’s image and presence – together with that of her husband – was communicated primarily through coins.82 The second category of representations with women holding sceptres is one in which the figure is portrayed alone. Here the sceptre is held not only by queens (again on coins and seals), but also by women of the high nobility.

To analyse all of the available visual sources based on the historical context and the pictorial traditions that undoubtedly shaped them, would be an impossible task given the specific scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, this brief overview of female representations featuring the sceptre in...
the Holy Roman Empire hopes to provide a modest contribution to the study the high nobility’s use of insignia, a topic that has received too little attention.\(^83\) Moreover, I have only included those depictions made during the lifetime of the women under discussion. My analysis of the sceptre in the hands of noblewomen – a new motif – will provide sufficient evidence in support of the notion that Matilda’s sceptre was to be seen as a sign of authority and accordingly was meant to communicate the message of co-rulership. In an attempt to define the sceptre’s meaning more precisely, the duties and responsibilities of these women will be taken into account.

The earliest depictions of secular women holding a sceptre are most likely to have appeared in eleventh-century liturgical manuscripts. The first noblewomen to be portrayed with the sceptre were probably Queen Cunigunde (r. 1002-1024, † 1033) and Empress Agnes (r. 1043 † 1077) [ills. 2.14 and 2.15].\(^84\) Both are depicted together with their husbands, who in turn carry sceptres as well. There is reason to assume that queens and empresses of the Holy Roman Empire held this insign of authority because they shared in their husband’s imperial authority as censors regni. This co-rulership is communicated verbally on two occasions. In the Pericopes of Henry II and Cunigunde, donated to Bamberg Cathedral (deducible from the presence of St Paul and St Peter), the poem accompanying the miniature says that Cunigunde is Henry’s illustrious co-ruler (Cunigunda sibi corregnante serena). This indicates that she was at least perceived as co-ruler.\(^85\) The same message is communicated by the inscription above the heads of Henry III and Agnes, who donated their gospel book to St Simon and Juda at Goslar, stating that Henry and Agnes rule through Christ (per me regnantes. vivant/ beinricus et agnes).\(^86\) As Amalie Fößel pointed out in her study of medieval queens, both women were successful in turning this authority into an actual exercise of power thanks to their active participation in the political and religious affairs of their husbands, via interventions and regency.\(^87\) In these two cases, the presence of the sceptre appears to underscore these women’s active involvement.

There are no extant visual sources between 1100 and 1150 that provide us with information concerning the insignia of empresses depicted together with their husbands. Only when Frederick Barbarossa marries Adelaide of Vohburg do images of royal women holding a sceptre once again appear. In the twelfth century, these images are not found in liturgical manuscripts, but rather on coins. Images of Cunigunde and Agnes, as well as depictions of Frederick Barbarossa’s wives, Adelaide of Vohburg (r. 1147-1153) and Beatrice (r. 1156 † 1184), suggest that the sceptre in the hand of a woman clearly carried both royal and imperial connotations. This topic will be discussed next.

**Queen Adelaide of Vohburg and Empress Beatrice of Burgundy**

Both Frederick Barbarossa and his first wife, Adelaide of Vohburg (* 1128 † after 1187), are depicted enthroned and richly dressed, with their heads turned towards each other [ill. 2.16]. As a sign of their rule, they wear crowns. Frederick holds a lance in his left hand and a cross-topped rod in his right;
Adelaide has an open book in her right hand and a sceptre crowned with five leaves in her left.88 Because the legend identifies Frederick as king, this coin type is likely to have been issued after 9 March 1152, Frederick’s coronation as king, but before March 1153, at which time he separated from Adelaide.89 The fact that Adelaide is seldom referred to as consors regni does not itself prove her presence was passive: it is the scarce mention of any personal intervention in matters of state that suggests her action radius was limited.90 It is therefore difficult to interpret the meaning of Adelaide’s sceptre, thought it seems to have signified the authority she held through her marriage.

Frederick married his second wife, Beatrice (* 1145–† 1184), in June 1156 at Würzburg. From that time on, she used the title dei gratia Romanorum imperatrix augusta, though she was not crowned empress until July 1167.91 Beatrice is depicted together with her husband on bracteates that were issued somewhere between 1156 and 1184. On one of these, Beatrice – like Adelaide – is depicted on Frederick’s right. She holds a short rod crowned by a lily of the same type depicted on Matilda’s sceptre [ill. 2.17].92 Both emperor and empress are portrayed at half-length, wearing crowns and similar attire. In his right hand, Frederick holds a rod surmounted by a cross, a reference to the Holy Roman Empire. In compositional terms, it visually separates the king from his wife.

The second coin was struck in approximately 1180 [ill. 2.18]. Here a cross separates Frederick and Beatrice. Unlike the other two bracteates, however, they are now depicted enthroned, both of them holding a sceptre crowned by a lily. Judging from the iconography on the coins of Frederick Barbarossa, it seems clear that the lily-crowned sceptre is not to be seen as a symbol specifically related to a female figure, but rather as an insignia referring to the rulership of both the emperor and his wife. Contemporary sources referring to Beatrice are rather limited. Yet Amalie Fößel has determined that Beatrice frequently travelled with her husband, was actively involved in the affairs of her home territory, the county of Burgundy, and that she also intervened on behalf of monasteries, churches and bishops as cited in Frederick’s charters.93 In the two charters issued by Beatrice and Frederick together, she is referred to as his consort.94 And in two of Frederick’s charters, she is mentioned as carissima consors.95 The royal couple’s mutual activities may even indicate that the notion of consors regni was communicated through their coinage as well.96 A marriage was considered crucial for a king. Coins were a highly suited medium for communicating to others that his spouse shared in his rule. Perhaps the depiction of a royal couple is to be seen as a statement that their marriage stands for the continuation of the dynasty, and consequently, the royal house’s prosperity. This is at least what Andrea Stieldorf suggests in her study of royal women’s seals in the Holy Roman Empire. Here too,
women, like their husbands, are depicted seated on the throne and wearing a crown. In Stieldorf’s view, this royal iconography, also to be found on coins, was employed to underscore the spouse’s position of support and legitimacy towards her husband and children. If this were the case, then it would apply equally to the interpretation of Henry and Matilda’s bracteate. There is, however, a nuance to be observed. Stieldorf acknowledges that the use of women’s seals was often restricted to their own personal domains or ‘domestic’ affairs. In so doing, she implicitly suggests that these activities are separated from politics and power. In my opinion, this represents a limited view of politics and power, because it dictates what we are to understand as ‘public’ in a far too narrow sense. Such a critique is likewise voiced.

There is, however, a nuance to be observed. Stieldorf acknowledges that the function of the sceptre in representations of women is analogous to that of men: it demonstrates co-rule, which is not to be confused with actual participation. Because Stieldorf implicitly associates participation with public power, her definition of a spouse’s participation is simply too narrow. Notwithstanding, the earliest evidence does indicate that the first occurrence of this insignia is in a royal setting.

There is no doubt that Frederick’s wife, Beatrice, once had a seal in her possession. Frederick wrote in a letter (1157) to his chancellor, Wibald of Stablo, that a seal should be made for his wife as he saw fit, just as the one he produced before. No wax impressions or traces of this seal have survived. A seventeenth-century text, however, describes its appearance: Beatrice was depicted wearing a crown and seated on a bench, holding a sceptre in her right hand and a cross in her left hand, with the latter raised in front of her chest. The legend of the seal designated Beatrice as empress. While Stieldorf agrees that this iconography signals authority, she thus designed Beatrice’s seal in the male imperial fashion, i.e. enthroned and holding a sceptre and cross, thereby suggesting her privileged position as empress. Since Stieldorf suggests that this iconography signifies authority, she

2.1.3

By themselves: women carrying a sceptre

The earliest representations of women – depicted without their husbands and bearing sceptres – are thought to have appeared on wax seals, followed later by coins. According to Andrea Stieldorf, Empress Matilda (r. 1114-1125 in Germany)99 and the aforementioned Empress Beatrice, spouse of Frederick Barbarossa, were the first women to be depicted in such a manner.100 In her view, the function of the sceptre in representations of women is analogous to that of men: it demonstrates co-rule, which is not to be confused with actual participation.99 Because Stieldorf implicitly associates participation with public power, her definition of a spouse’s participation is simply too narrow. Notwithstanding, the earliest evidence does indicate that the first occurrence of this insignia is in a royal setting.102

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99 On Empress Matilda’s seal see Barrie 1970: 104-107. The legend reads S. MATTHALISI DEI GRATIA ROMANORVM REGINA. It is interesting to note that Matilda also issued currency with the title imperatrix. See Chibnall 1991:ills. 6a and 6b. It has been suggested that the pennies she issued were struck around 1141, the period of her greatest success because King Stephen was imprisoned. See Archibald 1984: 337.

100 Stieldorf 2000: 5-6. Stieldorf does not mention the seal of Queen Richenza of Poland († 1003), wife of Mieszko II. She is depicted in half-length wearing a crown and holding a sceptre surmounted with a lily in her right hand. The legend designates her as + Richenza + Regina. Richenza used this title from 1025 until her death in 1063, and was granted this right by Conrad II after she fled to Germany in 1031. See Vossberg 1854: 9 and fig. 6; Fößel 2000: 291. It is not clear whether she sealed both in Poland and Thuringia. The wax imprint of the seal was found attached to two (fake) charters of 1054 concerned with donations to the Nicolaus monastery at Braunsfeld (Hesse). See Lübbe, LexMA, vol. 7, col. 832.


102 Another German noblewoman depicted holding a sceptre was Abbess Adele of Wierns-Oltingen († 1080) who, among others, married Henry II of Laach († 1095) and brought with her the Palatinate of the Rhine. See Kathezer 1092: 89, fig. 62, ø 8,2 cm. Her seal shows her portrayed at half-length, holding in her right hand an open book in which she seems to be reading and in the other a lily-sceptre. The legend designates the countess as Adeleit, Palatina, comitissa, giving her name and title. See Kittel 1970: 277-278, fig. 191.

103 Stieldorf 2000: 10.

104 Stieldorf 2000: 34, no. 4; Gürlich 2011: 256.
is not convinced that the seal testifies to Beatrice’s – or any other queen’s – political position in the Empire other than her role as wife. Bernd Kluge, however, contends that the coins on which Beatrice is depicted holding a sceptre may indicate that she was indeed actively involved in the political affairs of her time.

Information concerning these royal women is too limited to make any comprehensive statements concerning the meaning of the sceptre as a means to express power. Just as in representations featuring husband and wife, the sceptre in the hands of women who are pictured without their husbands also communicate a degree of authority. It was not just a female attribute chosen to visualise nobility, as was indeed the case with noblewomen's seals in the Anglo-Norman realm, according to Susan Johns. That these royal women used their own seals and could issue their own coinage indicates that they were also able to exercise power. Coins issued by Judith of Thuringia and her sister, Bertha of Lorraine, confirm that messages of authority and power were by no means restricted to royal coinage. They either appropriated the sceptre from their queens – just as noblemen imitated elements of the king's iconography on their own coins – or they appropriated it from their husbands.

The sceptre in the hands of Landgräfin Judith of Thuringia and Duchess Bertha of Lorraine

The sisters, Judith and Bertha, were not just any noblewomen, they were Frederick’s half-sister and sister respectively and, therefore, closely related to the imperial family. The sisters are depicted with a sceptre. Considering their ties to Frederick, this suggests their insignia had royal connotations. Due to the absence of substantial biographies on these women, the evidence for their involvement in politics remains largely obscure. Both of their husbands are said to have died early and therefore the mothers maintained close relations with their sons. It is likely that these two women were granted opportunities to become involved in political affairs. This is corroborated by the coins that each of them issued as well as a seal belonging to Bertha – media that would have been used to communicate their authority. It is highly likely that they adopted the sceptre as an insign for precisely this reason.

Judith of Thuringia (* 1133/34 – † 1191) was the daughter of Count Frederick II of Swabia and the half-sister of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. Around 1150, she married Landgrave Louis of Thuringia († 1172). Several images referring to her authority exist. On one of her bracteates she is depicted standing between two sceptres. While her son Hermann is not portrayed, his name does appear next to his mother’s in the legend [ill. 2.19]. Hermann was Judith’s second son. The fact that his name is mentioned in the legend as opposed to her first son, Louis III, may indicate that this coin type was issued after Louis’ death during his return from the Third Crusade in October 1190. As Judith’s name is stated and she is depicted in full-length (though barely legible), the bracteate must have been issued prior to her death on 7 July 1191. The juxtaposition of a mother with a legend referring to her son is interesting. Hermann’s presence, inscribed on the bracteate, probably signalled and communicated the commencement of his rule as Landgraf in 1190. That his mother, Judith, is also depicted clearly demonstrates her importance to the family and house. With this in mind, the two sceptres can perhaps best be understood as references to Judith’s rule and that of her son, for whom she acts as a regent. A slightly altered message was perhaps communicated through one of Judith’s other coin types.

The Landgräfin is also portrayed riding a horse [ill. 2.20]. It is likely that this motif – so common for men – was appropriated by women (albeit riding side saddle in this case), the same as that which occurred with the royal iconography used for queens and empresses. Judith must have been at least familiar with the iconography, as both her husband, Louis II, and Judith of Thuringia.
of Thuringia, and their son, Louis III (r. 1172—1190), were represented on horseback on their coins [ills. 2.21 and 2.22]. Wolfgang Eichelmann has suggested that Louis II deliberately employed this iconography to emphasise his relations with the imperial house. King Conrad III was depicted in this fashion on his coins from 1132 onwards. The same motif appears on a coin type issued by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa.

Judith, following either the iconography of her husband or that of her half-brother, is holding a lily-sceptre in her left hand, while she clutches her mantle with her right hand. Above the rear side of the horse, a half arch with two towers is depicted. The architecture might be a reference to the Runneburg Castle at Weißensee, which Judith commissioned to be built in

130 131

114 Louis III was a supporter of Henry the Lion and turned against him in 1179. In 1180 Frederick made Louis III count palatine of Saxony and shortly thereafter he was imprisoned by Henry who kept him in Brunswick and Segeberg for one-and-a-half year. See Walter 2004: 42. On Bertha see Bertha de Souabe; see Echols and Williams 1992: 82 (with reference). Lorraine was situated within the Holy Roman Empire. The uncertainty of Bertha's birth date makes it difficult to establish at what age she married.

115 116 Suhle 1938: 80. According to Suhle Bertha had the right to issue coins during her son's absence.

117 Perhaps Judith’s ‘horse coin’ was issued around 1180/81, when she acted as a regent for her sons, Louis III and Hermann I, during the period that they were imprisoned by Henry the Lion. While the exact nature of her involvement in politics cannot be readily established, the existence of the bracteate on which Judith is depicted with a sceptre and on horseback – a typically male iconography – seems to indicate that she had indeed once ruled. It is clear that she had an opportunity to do so, reflecting the influence of a woman’s lifespan on her chances of wielding power. Judith not only outlived her husband, but her sons, Louis and Hermann, were also frequently absent from their territories during their lifetimes, possibly offering them the opportunity to oversee territorial affairs. As further detailed information on Judith is lacking, her movements cannot be traced. Fortunately, when turning to her half-sister, Bertha of Lorraine, the written sources have more to tell.

118 119 Suhle 1938: 80. According to Suhle Bertha had the right to issue coins during her son’s absence.

2.19 Bracteate Landgrave Louis II of Thuringia, LVDVICVS PROVIN COMES [N und S retrograd], 1140–1172. Ø 46 mm, 0.87 g. Münzkabinett Staatlichen Museen Berlin, obj. no. 18205019.

2.20 Bracteate Landgräfin Judith of Thuringia and her son Hermann I, IVTTA. LAND. HERMANNI (? ca. 1190/91).

2.21 Bracteate Landgräfin Judith of Thuringia, 1172–1190.

2.22 Bracteate Landgräfin Judith of Thuringia, 1172–1190.

2.23 Bracteate Landgräfin Judith of Thuringia, 1172–1190.

2.24 Bracteate Landgrave Louis III of Thuringia, 1172–1190.

2.25 Bracteate Landgravine Bertha of Lorraine, 1130–1194/95.

113 Eichelmann 2010: 10.
coincide with Bertha’s involvement in her husband’s affairs. We know that Bertha is mentioned more than once as the person who consented to her husband’s donations to religious communities. After Matthew’s death in 1176, Bertha was herself once more involved in the donation (of land) to religious institutes. Donations made to religious communities demonstrate that caring for the hereafter was one of the duties for which women were responsible. Bertha likewise involved her children in these acts of donation. In all likelihood, she did this not only to include them in their father’s commemoration, but also to establish and strengthen ties between the family and the monks at the abbey. Such ties would not only have fulfilled spiritual needs, but would also have served other purposes, such as asserting authority, promoting prestige or imposing power.

2.1.4
Some concluding remarks on Henry and Matilda’s bracteate

From a practical, compositional and iconographic perspective the bracteate type with the portraits of Henry and Matilda is not unique. Other twelfth-century examples of married couples depicted on coins are known. Nor is it special that Henry is depicted on the right and Matilda on the left. The lion is a prominent feature, indicating that Henry the Lion was the issuing authority. His authority is also confirmed by the coin’s legend, which not only designates him as Duke Henry, but as ‘lion’ as well. While the use of the lion is neither limited to this coin type nor exclusively employed by Henry the Lion, the audience is very likely to have understood that the duke was the issuing authority, because the area in which the bracteates were dispersed was confined to the region between the rivers, Weser and Elbe. The architectural element was a widespread motif that the audience would have read as a metonym, referring to Henry and Matilda’s residence and territories. The mentioned elements – the presence of women, their position

120 Medieval Lands index, http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/ SWABIA.htm#BerthaJudithdied1194
121 http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/SWABIA.htm#BerthaJudithdied1194
122 Jordan 2006: 62
123 Kühn 1995a: 77
on the left, the legend and the architecture – were not new to Henry’s coins. They were therefore familiar to twelfth-century Brunswick public. However, the sceptre held by Matilda is unusual and has therefore received the greatest attention. With the exception of queens and empresses, none of the noblewomen portrayed together with their husbands on twelfth-century coins carry a sceptre, see the appendix. This is not to say that noblewomen never carried this insigné. It is in this light that Matilda’s image must likely be considered.

Due to the scarcity of sources, we are unable to draw any solid conclusions. Judging from the coins and seals of noblewoman in the Holy Roman Empire that have survived, it seems that they were commissioned only after the death of their husbands. The women then ruled on their own or together with their sons. Matilda would be in a similar position in 1172, when her husband departed for the Holy Land. Because of their sex, women could not be depicted as knights holding a lance, sword and shield. To visualise their authority, the horse and the sceptre were the only remaining options. The coinage of Judith and Bertha suggests that women belonging to the emperor’s family were particularly prone to choosing the sceptre as their insigné. In this case, the sceptre cannot be traced back to the seals or coins of their husbands, for there was simply no precedent. These women may have chosen this attribute based upon its explicit connotations with authority. The sceptre was used to communicate this message not only by men, but also by queens, empresses and noblewomen. The use of seals and coins by women, such as the Empresses Matilda and Beatrice, was often limited to their own (inherited) territories and affairs. The iconography found on these works of art communicated a message that was identical to that of their husbands: the sceptre – in combination with other attributes – signified not just status, but also authority. This leads me to conclude that the sceptre was considered the female attribute of authority par excellence.

While we have established that the sceptre in the hands of a noblewoman signals authority, we are still not sure how this visual formula relates to the actual power that these women held. A woman’s ability to translate her authority into power depended not only on the character of the woman in question, but more importantly, was also influenced by her lifespan and land tenure. In taking matters into her own hand, the options available to a woman were highly dependent on whether she was married or widowed, had children, or held land. It is possible that we would have known more about Matilda’s actions if Henry had died before her, or if she had stayed behind in Brunswick in 1182, when Henry was forced to go to England. In the second part of this chapter, I will investigate whether Henry’s absence in 1172 provided the duchess with an opportunity to wield power.

### 2.2 Matilda in action: ruling in the absence of her husband

At some point in 1171, Henry probably began preparing for his visit to the Holy Land. At this time, he was without a son and heir. His first wife, Clementia, whom he separated from in 1162, had given birth to a son, but this child had died during infancy as the result of a fall from a table at Lüneburg. Although Henry also had a daughter, Gertrud, the absence of male progeny, like marriage and death, was a political issue of the highest order.

According to Bernd Schneidmüller, Henry tried to solve this matter via a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This would certainly guarantee succession. Eckhard Freise suggested the same by stating that: ‘he [Henry] was concerned for his rightful heirs. The donation of lamps to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, was also meant to evoke prayers for his [male] heirs, who were not yet born in 1173.

One of the most important medieval sources regarding the lives of Henry and Matilda is the chronicle written by Arnold of Lübeck. The book was therefore probably written around 1210. As a monk, Arnold had learned much about Henry the Lion and his family through the abbot of his monastery, Henry of St Aegidus, at Brunswick. Arnold remained closely con-
connected to Abbot Henry, who became the bishop of Lübeck in 1172 and made Arnold the abbot of St John’s Monastery at Lübeck in 1177. Henry’s journey to the Holy Land was by no means a story of Arnold’s own invention, as there are two sources confirming that he actually left Germany. The first is a charter of 1172 testifying that Henry visited the Holy Sepulchre. The second source is provided by the Byzantine chronicler, John Kinnamos, writing in the 1180s, who recorded that Henry arrived at the court of Emperor Manuel I Komnenos. According to Kinnamos, the duke’s visit was not related to a pilgrimage, but rather to achieving reconciliation between Frederick and Manuel. Arnold’s narration provides additional information about Henry’s journey, yet there is no mention of exactly why he undertook this enterprise. The chronicler does state, however, that Matilda was pregnant, and for this reason, she was unable to accompany her husband. To this he adds that Matilda gave birth to a daughter, named Richenza, during Henry’s absence. The fact that the same passage mentions that Matilda raised four sons as well — Henry, Lothar, Otto and William — clearly demonstrates the importance of having heirs. It is therefore tempting to associate Arnold’s comments on progeny to Henry’s journey. Perhaps he undertook his ‘pilgrimage’ in order to secure the safe delivery of the child that was about to be born. There are several sources that provide examples of men (and women) who seem to have undertaken pilgrimages in a desire to obtain a male heir. By discussing these sources, I will present an additional argument for linking Henry’s journey to the absence of male progeny.

2.2.1

The sins of a father as the impetus for a journey

In his book on pilgrimage, Jonathan Sumption provides several examples in which the relation between fertility (or the lack thereof) and pilgrimage is evident. According to him, one case is found in the second book of the Liber Sancti Jacobi (also known as Codex Calixtinus), a miracle book compiled between 1110 and 1120. This written source states that a Frenchman visited Santiago in 1108 to pray for the birth of a son: ‘as is customary’. At the Cathedral of Santiago he ‘wept, cried out, and prayed with all his heart’. The man then returned home, and after making love to his wife, she subsequently gave birth to a son, who they named James.

A second story, also cited by Sumption, is recorded in the Gesta Principum Polonorum, composed between 1112 and 1117. In the year 1085, King Wladislaw and his wife, Judith of Bohemia, still had no heir. As a consequence, they undertook a series of fasts, vigils, and prayers. They also magnanimously gave alms to the poor. The bishop advised the couple to send envoys to the shrine of St Giles (Aegidius) in Provence, bearing myriad gifts. Among these gifts was a golden image fashioned in the shape of a boy. The messengers also presented a letter addressed to St Giles and his monks. Upon the receipt of the letter and gifts, the abbot and monks partook of a three-day fast and prayed. The chronicler concludes by stating that, even prior to the monks completing their fast, Judith found out she was pregnant with a son, later named Boleslaw III (1086–1138). This episode illustrates that both king and queen were involved in the actions that they hoped would bring them a child.

There are also literary texts (romance stories) in which the absence of an heir forms the impetus for the main male character’s desire to undertake a journey. In the prologue of Wilhelm von Österreich, written by Johann von Würzburg at the beginning of the fourteenth century, Duke Leopold visits the tomb of the apostle John, at Ephesus, in the hope that he will act as an intercessor to ensure the birth of a son. And indeed, when Leopold returns, he is given a son: Wilhelm, the story’s protagonist. The same motif appears in Reinfried von Braunschweig, written by an anonymous writer after 1291. The story narrates of Reinfried, Duke of Brunswick, who receives an invitation from the Danish court to partake in a tournament. The duke falls in love with the Danish princess, Yrkane, takes her to Brunswick and marries her. The second part of the story is devoted to Reinfried’s journeys. The impetus for his first trip (against the pagans) is the fact that, after ten years of marriage, there was still no male heir. We hear Yrkane’s prayer for a child, with the author next stating that Reinfried as well hopes to receive a

132 Arnold of Lübeck, Chronica: 12. Freise thinks Henry and Matilda already had another daughter. See Freise 2003: 38. See also Chapter 3 on the Gospel Book of Henry and Matilda.
133 See also Harris-Stoerz 2010: 104 (Childbirth and Pilgrimage) and 218 (Fertility).
134 For the reference to the Liber see Sumption 2002: 81.
child. Just as with King Wladislaw and his wife, Judith of Bohemia, Reinfried offers a gold image of a child in the hope that this will provide him with an heir. Then the Virgin appears before Reinfried and promises him he will receive a son. In exchange, he must embark on a crusade. Here too, there is a relation between the absence of a child and a journey to secure the dynasty. Reinfried von Braunschweig bears even greater relevance, as this story reveals several parallels to the life of Henry the Lion. Both Reinfried and Henry married princesses, both travelled to the Holy Land and both of their wives gave birth to a child while they were away. Any reference to Henry the Lion does not necessarily mean that a Welf nobleman commissioned the text, or that the story was written for a Welf audience. That said, the story does recall the magnificent past of the dukes of Brunswick and evokes the rights that they once held prior to Henry’s loss of his territories in 1180/1182.

While the examples cited above concern only married couples that were without an heir, there is also a story that shows that such journeys were undertaken even after a child had been born. These travels were made either out of gratitude and/or to secure the child’s health. Margrave Otakar III of Bohemia (1144-1164) following the birth of his son, Otakar IV, in August 1163. By the time his child was born, the margrave had been married to Cunigunde of Luxembourg for fifteen years. It has been suggested that his journey was related to the fact that his son was born and had survived the first year of his childhood. Unfortunately, Otakar III died on 31 December 1164 and never returned to Marburg alive. As a result, Cunigunde was appointed as her son’s regent. Not much is known with regards to her activities. However, at a time when Frederick Barbarossa was in continual conflict with Bishop Conrad of Salzburg, a supporter of Alexander III and the owner of extensive properties in Styria, the absence of war would suggest that Cunigunde had

138 Yrkane’s prayer, Reinfried von Braunschweig 1297-1327; Reinfried’s wish for a child is expressed in lines 12810-12823.
143 In all likelihood Otakar III did not leave before 20 October 1164, because he is mentioned in a charter of that date together with his wife. For this charter see Elpers 2003: 104-105.
144 Elpers 2003: 105 notes 31 and 32. Otakar III was the son of Leopold I of Steiermark and Sophie of Bavaria. Sophie was the sister of Henry the Proud, who was the father of Henry the Lion. Cunigunde was the sister or half-sister of Adolf of Bavaria, the first wife of Frederick Barbarossa.
146 Elpers 2003: 106-111.

147 Arnold of Lübeck, Chronica Slavorum: 12. Henry’s sins (and those of his family) mentioned in the charter issued because Henry made a donation to the Holy Sepulchre seem to be ‘general sins’ and cannot be related to specific situations, although Jacobus de Voragine’s thirteenth-century vita and was already established in the twelfth century, although Jacobus de Voragine’s thirteenth-century

152 (devotional journey); Fried 1998: 111-137 (Arnold made a crusade into a pilgrimage in order to pray for Henry; Scicl 2002: 280-305 disagree with Fried about the idea of a crusade); Ehlers 2008: 199-211 (Henry was to fight the infidels and to negotiate with Sultan Kılıç Arslan II).
pressing need to do so. Arnold of Lübeck states that the journey itself was not only well planned, but that serious preparations were also made for those remaining behind. It is this passage that confirms the notion that Matilda may have acted as a regent.

2.2.2
Duchess Matilda in charge

It was noted above that Abbot Arnold of Lübeck was familiar with Henry the Lion and his family. Both Henry and his son, Otto IV, play prominent roles in this chronicle written around 1210. Although Arnold states that his chronicle is a continuation of Helmold of Bosau’s *Chronica Slavorum*, his narration does not revolve around events concerning the Slavs. Instead, he is interested in the main events of Henry the Lion’s life: his journey to the Holy Land, the conversion of the Slavs, the investiture of bishops and his exile to England. Matilda and her royal lineage are also mentioned. According to Bernd Ulrich Hucker, Arnold presents this image of Henry in order to glorify Otto IV, who deserved to be a king because of his father’s glorious deeds. Accordingly, Hucker labelled the abbot’s chronicle as a *historia regum*. Arnold devotes one longer passage to Matilda in which he combines everything that he regards as useful in relation to the duchess. We learn that Matilda was the daughter of the English king, a fact that is often commented upon in other chronicles as well. Moreover, she was pregnant when the time Henry departed for the Holy Land. This pregnancy resulted in the birth of a daughter, Richenza. Matilda is also fortunate enough to have given birth to four sons, whose names are also mentioned by Arnold. As already stated, Arnold mentions the sons on the occasion of Henry’s preparations for his journey instead of in another context. Evidently the passage underscores Matilda’s fertility and links Henry’s journey to his male offspring. According to Arnold Henry the Lion left Brunswick well-prepared.

154 In the same passage Arnold also writes that Matilda was very devout and educated two children. Such eulogies must be seen in relation to Matilda’s responsibilities for the care for the hereafter. See Elpers 2003: 217.

156 Same Latin means ecclesiastical protection. See Niermeyer 2002, vol. 2: 1388. In the German translation by Laurent he chose Obhut, meaning protection or supervision.

From this passage Joachim Ehlers concluded that Archbishop Wichmann of Magdeburg (r. 1152-1192) was appointed as regent or deputy over Saxony. However, Wichmann and Henry the Lion had a complicated relationship, characterised by both peace and conflict. In 1166, Wichmann joined the coalition against Henry that tried to besiege his castle, Haldensleben (about 30 kilometres north-west of Magdeburg). In response, Henry plundered the land in Magdeburg’s vicinity. Henry’s decision to appoint Wichmann as regent is, considering their turbulent relation, somewhat difficult to comprehend. Matthias Puhle suggests that Henry chose the archbishop as his ward over Saxony because of his exceptional personality, but also admits that we know nothing about their personal relationship. Wichmann’s position as regent over Saxony by no means implied that he and Henry were to remain everlasting allies. Wichmann would also try to establish his own position as a lord in Saxony. He was also a supporter of Frederick Barbarossa.
Moreover, the nature of Wichmann’s duties as regent are entirely unclear. Even if we were to accept Arnold of Lübeck’s remark that the bishop gained temporary control over Saxony, this does not exclude the possibility that Matilda was also involved in such affairs. After all, Wichmann could not act as her advocatus, as he – like other churchmen – was not considered a legal person and therefore required an advocatus himself. Anyone who was in need of an advocatus could not himself (or herself) act as one.

According to Arnold, the duke’s ministerials, Egbert of Wolfenbüttel and Henry of Lüneburg, obtained command over Henry’s household, but they were also to be at Matilda’s disposal. That it was Henry of Lüneburg who was assigned the task of serving Matilda was perhaps not only the consequence of his loyalty to Henry the Lion, but possibly also related to Matilda’s dower settlement in the vicinity of Lüneburg. That Lüneburg was Matilda’s dower is stated in the Annales Pegaviensis, written in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. While Duke Henry was fighting his opponents in Saxony in the months of July to November 1181, the duchess remained behind in Lüneburg, which had been granted as her dower. According to the annals, Frederick Barbarossa willingly made a declaration to Matilda that the city would not be besieged. A similar account can be found in the late twelfth-century chronicle, Gesta regis Henrici II, which tells of events occurring in the years 1169 to 1192 both in England and on the Continent during the reigns of Henry II and his son, Richard I. Its writer states that the ‘emperor granted to the duchess […], permission to remain at perfect liberty and under his protection, and to enjoy all her dower freely and quietly; and the emperor further agreed that, if she should prefer to go into exile with her lord, he would place keepers for the purpose of protecting her dower.’ Nowhere does the author of the Gesta explicitly state the location of the dower; there is nevertheless little doubt that it was in fact Lüneburg.

That Henry involved Matilda in his affairs was not without precedent. His first wife, the aforementioned Clementia of Zähringen, remained at Lüneburg when Henry left Saxony. In 1151, Henry went to Swabia to fight Duke Henry Jasomirgott of Bavaria, to strengthen his claim on Bavaria. And in 1154, Henry joined Frederick Barbarossa on his war campaign in Italy. Helmond briefly mentions Clementia’s activities in these years in his Chronica Slavorum. Unfortunately Arnold, unlike his literary predecessor Helmond, makes no mention of Matilda’s duties. Nor are there charters providing insight into her actions. It is equally unclear in what ways she was advised and assisted by the two ministerials, Egbert and Henry. Nevertheless, a comparison between Helmond’s and Arnold’s texts with regards to Henry’s wives reveals that the two women were described with a similar wording. Commenting on a number of events in the year 1151, Helmond wrote:

The duke [Henry the Lion] therefore gave the custody to our count [Adolf of Holstein] over his lands of the Slavs and north of the Elbe and after arranging things in Saxony he left on a military campaign, in order to take back the duchy of Bavaria. Hereafter, the duchess, Lady Clementia, remained at Lüneburg, and the count was eminent in the house of the duke and dutiful in the service of the duchess and an advising father. Judging from the passages in the texts of Arnold and Helmond, we can infer that the care of the land is entrusted to a protector or custodian (tutelam or custodiam), respectively Archbishop Wichmann of Magdeburg and Count Adolf of Holstein. The difference between the two positions is that, while Wichmann as archbishop could not act as Henry the Lion’s advocatus, Count Adolf could. Therefore Wichmann was not appointed to serve Matilda. Neither were Henry of Lüneburg and Eckbert of Wolfenbüttel assigned to the task, as far as can be ascertained. While the land (terra) in Helmond’s

164 Ehlers 2008: 180, 342 and 345 (with reference to Roger of Howden).
165 Ducissa quoque in custodia remanens at eundem urbem donum suam sine statu affirmavit, cum aliis imperatoribus idemur annuentes conservavit, Annales Pegaviensis et Bossenbornensis: 265.
166 Praeterea etsi imperator concussit praefatae ducissae […] ut habet domum suam librum et ipsam habet. Et si qua matril cum domino aux in exilium ex, imperator concussit ei, quasi contiones suas pretendit ad doth suam custodiam, Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatas 1867, vol. 1: 268.
167 This account can also be found in the Chronicarum regis Roger de Hoveden 1168, vol. 2: 260. The Annals of Roger of Howden 1153, ed. 1. 16-17. In the English translation of the chronicarum (1153) it was translated as doth, but this word is usually used to indicate the land given to the bride’s husband by the her family at their marriage. The context of the passage, however, suggests that Frederick Barbarossa refers to Matilda’s dower (the land she received from her husband).
168 The lines in the Chronicarum are almost verbatim copied from the Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi, vol. 1: 260.
169 Ehlers 2008: 77-78.
171 Commentarii quidem et custodiam terrae Slavorum atque Montisbargorum comiti nostro compositaquem rebus in Saxonia profectus est cum milicia, at recipient ducatum
Noblewomen as Regents

Bettina Elpers's research on noblewomen acting as regent mothers following their husbands' deaths demonstrates that women indeed acted as deputies. admitting, there are two ways in which Matilda's situation differs from that of the women described in her study. Firstly, unlike the deceased husbands in Elpers's study, Henry's departure was not meant to be final, i.e. he hoped one day to return. Secondly, at the time of Henry's parting, Matilda had not yet become a mother. That said, Matilda's position might not have been that different from the regent mothers studied by Elpers.

From the charters and chronicles gathered by Elpers, it is not easy to determine how these noblewomen came to be regent in terms of the exact protocol involved and by whom they were appointed. These sources only tell us that they acted as regents. It is reasonable to assume that when it concerned their own children, these women automatically held the right to act as regent mothers. It is equally possible that the situation was no different in the event a woman did not have children. Some husbands explicitly assigned their wives with this task. In a letter Count Robert II of Flanders († 1111) wrote before departing on a crusade in 1095, he referred to Clementia, who was put in charge of all of his land and with it all my rights during my absence.377 Arnold of Lübeck's passage, like that of Robert's, suggests that Matilda was not only perceived as Henry's wife sharing in his rule (consors regni), but that she may have also been granted an opportunity to exercise power. Can the idea and practice of Matilda as consors regni also be established from any other sources?

2.2.3 Matilda and the consors regni in idea and practice

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Matilda is never literally referred to as consors regni in any of the extant sources written in the Holy Roman Empire and the Anglo-Norman realm dated prior to 1210 (the year Arnold of Lübeck wrote his chronicle). One may wonder, however, whether the absence of this clause might be interpreted a concept and practice that...
by this time had begun to disappear. In principle, the *consors regni* clause is most frequently encountered in charters. Vogelsang’s use of *ordines*, historiographic and visual sources (coins, seals and miniatures), however, reveals that besides clauses, there were also ideas about co-rule. The consor- tium idea was not restricted to the royal house, but also thrived in circles of the German high nobility. We may assume that Matilda – through her marriage to Henry – entered this consortium and was therefore expected to act accordingly upon acquiring the age of approximately sixteen years. Although Matilda’s position in this consortium was not formally documented as that of *consors regni*, other words may also have been employed to communicate the same idea. Several studies exist that support this conclusion, as will briefly be discussed next.

Régine Le Jan sees the emergence of the title *comitissa* in ninth-century West-Francia as an imitation of the title of *regina* and as a reflection of the ecclesiastical *consors* model. It emphasised the indestructible bond between a husband and wife and underscored the idea of homogamy (two spouses being of equal rank). In the tenth and eleventh centuries, when countesses made donations to their vassals together with their husbands, they were usually designated as *dominae*. Like *comitissa*, *domina* also indicated that the woman’s position was derived from her husband. Charlotte C.J. Broer observes a shift in the opposite direction with titles attributed to wives of the counts of Holland in the late twelfth century. Between the ninth and twelfth centuries, such women are labelled *uxor* or *coniunx*; from about 1200 onwards, they are referred to as *comitissa*. According to Broer, this shift does not necessarily signal an improvement in these women’s position of power. The words *uxor* and *coniunx* suit a wife of the count perfectly and are therefore of no lesser importance than countesses. After all, as wife (*uxor*) or spouse (*coniunx*), the woman was still capable of becoming a regent mother.

Attributing meaning to medieval terminology is clearly a complex matter. At the same time, however, this complexity also demonstrates that the idea of *consors regni* would not necessarily have disappeared with the introduction of new clauses. Consequently, one must distinguish between the *consors* clause and the *consors* idea, but also between the actual position of the men and women in question and the then prevailing notions concerning women and rulership. That the *consors* idea had not ceased to exist seems evident. It has also been pointed out that women, as the partners of their husbands, were not excluded from holding rulership. For this reason, a brief discussion of the three charters associated with Matilda is justified when trying to establish her contribution to her husband’s rule.

**Matilda, daughter of the English king, engaged to be married?**

The earliest charter, known through a seventeenth-century copy, linked to Henry and Matilda marks the celebration of their engagement on 1 February 1168 with the donation of the estate (curiam) at Lahde, about 15 kilometres northeast of Minden, and all its belongings to Minden Cathedral. The dis- position – mentioning the content of the judicial act and the details concerning the donation – clearly states that Henry’s daughter, Gertrud, gave her consent to the donation of this alodial property. As related above, Ger- trud, born after 1150, was Henry’s daughter from his first marriage with Clementia. In 1166, Gertrud married Duke Frederick IV of Swabia, son of Emperor Conrad III. Their marriage was a brief one, as Frederick died in August 1167. Gertrud was Henry’s only heir and it is in this capacity (*legitimi beroedis nostri*) that she consented (*consensu*) to his donation of property that would perhaps someday belong to her. Matilda only appears in the charter’s recognitio – indicating place and time – and is described as *Machtildem filiam regis Anglie*. That she is referred to as the daughter of the English king is far from unusual, since it can be found in almost all of the other sources. The *filia regis* clause conveys that Matilda is Henry II’s daughter and highlights her status as princess, hence increasing her husband’s status. It can also be seen as an expression of the fact that Matilda, as a scion of very high lineage, was of higher status.

| 180 | MGH UU HDL: 111-113, no. 77, Lahde belonged to Henry’s Billung inheritance (Lahde). |
| 181 | MGH UU HDL: 111-113, no. 77, Lahde belonged to Henry’s Billung inheritance (Lahde). |
| 183 | MGH UU HDL: 111-113, no. 77, Lahde belonged to Henry’s Billung inheritance (Lahde). |
| 184 | MGH UU HDL: 111-113, no. 77, Lahde belonged to Henry’s Billung inheritance (Lahde). |
| 185 | MGH UU HDL: 111-113, no. 77, Lahde belonged to Henry’s Billung inheritance (Lahde). |
| 186 | MGH UU HDL: 111-113, no. 77, Lahde belonged to Henry’s Billung inheritance (Lahde). |
| 187 | MGH UU HDL: 111-113, no. 77, Lahde belonged to Henry’s Billung inheritance (Lahde). |

than a regular duchess. At the same time the clause underscores that Matilda's position is dependent on a man, as is almost always communicated in these kind of documents. All of this evidently interested the German chroniclers, but its presence in Henry's charters underscores the fact that it was important to the duke as well. We have already seen that Matilda's descent was mentioned in the epilogue of the *Rolandslied*. It hardly comes as a surprise that Matilda's ancestry is also mentioned in the gospel book that Henry and she donated to the Church of St Blaise as well as inscribed on the pyx of the Altar of the Virgin in the same church. Both objects are discussed in the next chapter. That a woman's family descent is mentioned time and again is certainly not restricted to Matilda. When women are mentioned in chronicles and charters, their ancestry is almost always underscored.  

In this earliest charter, Matilda is neither described as *uxor*, nor as *ducissa*. As the *recognitio* mentions that Henry and Matilda were espoused (*subbarreat*, derived from *subbarhare*), the donation was probably made at the time they were engaged, but not yet married. Therefore, Matilda, the daughter of the king, was not yet designated as ‘wife’ and ‘duchess’, epithets referring to her married status and shared rule. It is thus possible that the ceremony that took place on 1 February 1168 was a betrothal rather than a wedding. During this initial ceremony, properties and rings would have been exchanged. If this was the case, the wedding ceremony might have been celebrated at another time and place. In this regard, the chroniclers who mention the wedding say nothing specific. As such, there is no way of establishing when the union was actually solemnised. Perhaps the wedding was celebrated shortly after the betrothal in Minden. Albert of Stade, writing between 1240 and 1256, suggests this in his enumeration of the events of 1168, wherein he states that Duke Henry ‘took’ the daughter of the English king and celebrated a magnificent wedding in Brunswick. The Anglo-Norman chronicler, Ralph of Diceto, also refers to a wedding having occurred in his *Opera historica*, written from 1171 to 1202.

The second charter dates from 1170, known to us from a sixteenth-century *cartularium*. It concerns the donation of the villages Barnstorf and Wendes-sen and houses in Hillerse and Northeim to the monastery of Northeim in exchange for the estate at Hone (about 75 kilometres south of Northeim). With the exception of Barnstorf, which is located in Minden’s vicinity, the other donated properties are situated around Brunswick. The charter’s closing protocol (*eschatocul*) states: ‘All these things were done with the consent of the glorious lady Matilda, duchess of Bavaria and Saxony, and also with the devout permission of lady Gertrud, daughter of the duke and Clementia; prosperous until eternity’. Two conclusions may be drawn from the mention that Gertrud had granted her permission. First, that Gertrud was still Henry’s only heir and was therefore entitled to inherit. Second, because of her right to inheritance, she was in a position to wield influence.

In the same charter, Matilda is designated as *domina Matildis, Bawarie et Saxonie ducisse*. *Domina* refers to Matilda’s marital status through which she had obtained the title of duchess, sharing in her husband’s authority as duke of Bavaria and Saxony. More difficult to assess is why Matilda’s name is mentioned in the first place. The donation did not concern her  

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188 This is evident from the material gathered by Bettina Elpers 2003. See for example *Epipara 2003: 102* about Cumi-ganda of Vollitur († 1164); wife of Margrave Olaker III.  
190 It seems that the chroniclers were not interested in the engagement or wedding itself, but merely emphasised the marital bond. In *Tempus eorum innerum misti Heinricus dux Bawariae et Saxoniae nepotes in Anglia, et ambser-ant Nnem regis Anglia cum argenti de auro et divisum magnas, et secundum sam dus in urbe venit. Superarum omnium fuerat a prine conuoge domina Clementina populer cognosca- cionis filiam. Nabi autem in no a filiam, quam Nlln Conraduli regis dedit in matrimonium, qui aliquans medico supervivit tempus, proventus immatura morte in Italia nepoli- cisco, ut supra dictum est, memoris de Bawari, Chronicce Silorum: 209. The phrase ‘to take as wife’ indicates a wedding rather than a betrothal. See Niermeyer 2002, vol. 2: 129b.  
193 MGH UU HzL: 123-124, no. 83. Barnstorf, Wendessen, Hillesen were Lotharian allods and Northeim was an Northern allot. See Pietsch 1987: 30, no. 153 (Barnstorf oder Bernnortz); 32, no. 177 (Wendessen or Wendissen); 37, no. 223 (Northeim or Hillesen).  
194 Acta action sunt hic annus dominica incricatio* MGH XX* incipitv* sec. in Henricoburgo F anno xestens. Dominus Baldwinus submissa domino diebol assisinent. Defensio habuit actum in assenaa gloriosaioann domine Matildis, Bawaria et Saxonie ducisse, nos non ox eau assenaa domine Gertrudis. Alio ducio, feliciter in per- petuam, MGH UU HzL: 123-124, no. 83.
dower property, Lüneburg, so this cannot be the explanation. Was it simply because Henry desired that his wife’s name be mentioned or perhaps only to record the fact that she was physically present at the time the transfer was sealed? Or did Matilda have an actual say in the event? Matilda is merely mentioned as domina, rather than uxor or consors. Perhaps this indicates that Henry and Matilda had as yet not shared the bed, which would be understandable considering that Matilda was still only fourteen at the time. When turning to the third and final charter, the situation does apparently change.

**MY WIFE, DUCHESS MATILDA**

The third and last charter in which Matilda appears has survived in its original form. In this document, Henry’s donation to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (1172) is finalised. Matilda, who did not join Henry on his journey due to her pregnancy, is mentioned in the charter. She is not presented as a co-donor, nor does she give her consent or act as a witness. Instead, she is cited as one of the beneficiaries of a donation made by Henry. Henry states that he is donating three eternal burning candles to ensure that his own sins may be forgiven, but also the sins of ‘my wife (uxoris).’

Duchess Matilda, daughter of the great king of the English, as well as my heirs, who were given to me by the grace of God, and my whole family. Both Matilda’s descent and her authority as duchess are also specifically stated. The addition of uxoris mee seems very meaningful, as it not only declares that the relation between Matilda and Henry is legitimate, but also implies that she is responsible for Henry’s offspring (the consequence of marriage), for whose spiritual wellbeing the donation is also to be made.

While chroniclers wasted few words on the various stages of Henry and Matilda’s marriage (engagement, wedding, children), the three charters shed some light on the process. The first charter speaks of an engagement, suggesting that rings and (moveable) goods were exchanged.

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196 For this reference in chronicles see Henrith de Beau, Chronica Slavorum: 200; Robert of Torigny, Chronica, vol. 4: 234; Ralph of Diceto, Opera historica, cited after Ahlers 1987: 54 n. 240; Anselme van Enghien (Chronicles), 250-251; Gesta regis Henrici secondi, vol. 1: 288; Roger of Howden, Chronica, vol. 2: 268-270; Gerhard of Steterburg, Annales Steterburgenses: 271; Arnold of Lisibuch, Chronica Slavorum: 11-12.

were intertwined.\footnote{Or as Franz-Reiner Erkens states in regards to Cunigunde, the epithets coniux, contectalis, nostri thori consors and regis copula indicate that the emperor's wife was more than just a person sharing his sacral rule. She was expected to be 'fertile', explicitly referred to in the coronation ordo. This was important because the queen must give birth to successors to the throne to ensure the continuation of the dynasty.\footnote{In discussing Henry's reasons for visiting the Holy Land, I have already argued that fertility was an important issue. The subject of heirs will be discussed more extensively in the next chapter, where I will argue that the Gospel Book may have been commissioned and donated based on his desire for offspring.}}

\textbf{My wife Duchess Matilda: different words for an old idea}

There are no consors regni clauses or accounts of personal intervention -- at least stated in explicit terms -- to prove beyond doubt that Matilda was her husband's political partner and that she wielded real power. Nevertheless, in the charter of 1170, the titles domina and ducissa were used to underscore the authority that had clearly been bestowed upon her. In 1172, Matilda was designated as uxor, indicating that she shared her husband's bed. As a result, Henry considered her as his associate and she was expected to provide her husband with an heir, as is confirmed by the use of consorti thori in the dedicatory text in the Gospel Book. This term approaches the consors regni idea that, through marriage, wives shared in their husband's rule. Unfortunately, the written sources discussed here provide no solid evidence concerning Matilda’s ability to exercise power. Yet when taking all of the evidence into consideration -- limited though it may be -- it becomes apparent that the wording of Arnold of Lübeck’s description of Henry’s wife was intended to convey the message that the 'Duchess Matilda' was indeed capable of ruling in her husband's absence.

This idea could be communicated through words, as with the charters and the dedicatory text in the Gospel Book. But as I have argued above, it could also be expressed through coinage. By donating coins, a relatively large audience can be addressed in a short period of time. In the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that the audience of these coins consisted of the inhabitants of Brunswick. If we acknowledge that the court was at the heart of the town, however, then we must also take a courtly audience into account. After all, it was the members of the court who witnessed Henry’s charters, who joined Henry and Matilda in court festivities, and who accompanied the couple during the performance of the \textit{Rolandslied}, who would also have to be informed of the duchess's rule during her husband's absence.

\textbf{A courtly audience and ritual use of coinage?}

According to Arnold of Lübeck, Henry and his followers left Brunswick on the eighth day after the Epiphany (20 January 1172).\footnote{Before Henry set forth for the Holy Land, he summoned several people from Saxony to join him. In all likelihood, the duke took this opportunity to demonstrate and constitute his wealth and power, and in addition, to strengthen his relations with his vassals and allies. During this meeting, rituals undoubtedly played an important role in communicating his position. Gerd Althoff has demonstrated that rituals had a demonstrative and public character. In this manner, they served to construct and clarify relationships between persons or parties. Such rituals -- e.g. meals, the vassal placing his hands into his lord’s hands (\textit{immixtio manuum}) or gift giving -- also functioned as demonstrations of reform and changes within the existing order. The audience served as its witness. That rituals were indeed constituting acts is also evident in the \textit{Rolandslied} discussed in Chapter 1. In this text, gift giving was used as a ritual to seal the bond between Charlemagne and Marsilie (disregarding the fact that Marsilie's motives were dishonest). At the same time, the exchange of gifts gave each court an opportunity to display its splendour. Moreover, Charlemagne's presentation of his glove to Ganelon was a demonstration of loyalty between a ruler and his vassal. In this case, however, the dropping of the glove by Ganelon was a bad omen, a reference to Ganelon's future disloyalty.}

\textit{...}
Perhaps the bracteates on which Henry and Matilda were portrayed can also be viewed as being part of a constituting act. Although I have found no records of coins being distributed amongst friends and followers during the High Middle Ages, as if to underscore such relations. Conceivably, one or more coins could very well have been donated to each of the vassals and allies who were to join Henry on his journey as a means to establish or strengthen their bond. In this case, it would not only have been the coins’ monetary value that mattered, but also their symbolic value.

The ultimate message conveyed by Henry could perhaps have been that there would be no vacuum of power during his absence, because he himself had prepared for everything in advance. After all, based on Arnold of Lübeck’s words, one could infer that Henry not only had the support of Wichmann and the ministerials, Henry and Eckbert, but that he also entrusted his wife, Matilda, with the authority to act on his behalf.

2.3 Conclusion: the bracteate as a witness to Matilda’s co-rule

In this chapter I have argued that the dating and interpretation of the bracteates with the depictions of Henry and Matilda as proposed by Menadier can be interpreted alternatively. Instead of connecting them to the commemoration of Henry and Matilda’s wedding in 1168, as Menadier did, I have proposed to view them in relation to co-rule. The coin type is outstanding for two reasons. First, only a few examples of coins depicting husbands and wives are known. Second, the bracteate of Henry and Matilda is the only one on which a non-royal or imperial husband and wife are both depicted holding a sceptre. Both elements, and especially the sceptre held by Matilda, suggest that the impetus to issue this coin may have been related to a time when the communication of co-rule was thought necessary. I have argued that the year 1172, when Henry embarked on a journey to the Holy Land and Matilda stayed behind in Brunswick, was suitable moment to communicate Matilda’s presence and authority to the local Brunswick community. Although Matilda was never explicitly addressed as consors regni, the idea that women shared their husband’s authority through their marriage was still common.

Studying the bracteate type with the depictions of Henry and Matilda in combination with chronicles and charters has demonstrated that both pictorial elements and chosen words such as subbarbare, uxor, coniunx and consors thori offer a more nuanced view on Matilda’s duties at her husband’s court. Consequently an approach addressing a variety of sources would be beneficial in the study of medieval noblewomen and authority. As I already argued in Chapter 1, fictive stories such as the Rolandslied and Reinfried von Braunschweig, are valuable as well. While both texts confirm that women held authority and acted as co-rulers during their husband’s absence, the latter text also underscores the importance of offspring for medieval noble families. The examples of men embarking on pilgrimages in order to secure the safe delivery of their child or to invoke the pregnancy of their wives, suggest that the responsibility to be fertile was not restricted to women. The importance of the consortium is also evident when turning to the splendid Gospel Book commissioned by Henry and Matilda and donated to the Church of St Blaise — a topic to be discussed in the next chapter.