Chapter 10

ENTERING ADOLESCENCE

Knighting, Seals and Royal Maturity

Youth – in the sense of young adulthood – was the time of kings, according to Bede's vision of world history. His claim that 'youthful dignity was well-suited to royal power' still resonated several centuries later, especially with writers in eleventh-century Germany who incorporated the sentiment within their own histories.[1] Likewise, when Wipo dedicated a poetic panegyric to the German ruler Henry III in 1041, he anticipated the mature king's future actions because, although only in his early twenties, Henry had already flourished in all his deeds as both *puer* and *iuvenis*.[2] Accompanying such optimistic hopes for a young ruler's potential was a wariness of the progression from childhood to adulthood. William of Newburgh celebrated Malcolm IV's untimely death at the age of twenty-four because it meant the king of Scots would not face temptation from the countless opportunities and incentives which drive youthful rulers astray.[3] John of Salisbury ended his praise of Henry II's good deeds and displays of military prowess from adolescence on a cautiously optimistic note, perhaps unwisely tempting fate: 'the end of adolescence is mistrusted by some, and I hope that the good are fearful in vain!'.[4] Inevitably, kings faced harsh condemnation when their rule failed to meet with contemporary expectations. For adolescent or youthful leaders, written denunciation of their actions was often linked directly to their stage of life. Whereas boyhood deflected direct criticism

[1] 'iuvenilis enim dignitas regno est habilis', Bede, *De temporibus*, ed. C. W. Jones, in Bede, *Opera de temporibus* (Cambridge, MA, 1980), 293–303 (303); *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. M. Giese, *MGH SS rer. Germ.* 72 (Hanover, 2004), 383; Lampert, *Annales*, 3; Goetz, '*Adolescentia*', 261–2.

[2] Wipo, *Tetralogus*, 76; E. Niblaeus, 'Beautiful power: panegyric at the court of Emperor Henry III (1039–56)', *JMH*, 47 (2021), 1–21.

[3] William of Newburgh, *History*, II, 80.

[4] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 6.18 (ed. Webb, II, 54; trans. Nederman, 122). For similar concerns attached to a boy king's coming of age in the later Middle Ages see Mroziewicz, 'King's immature body', 151.

away from the king and onto his custodians almost without exception, as Chapter 9 illustrated, as rulers grew up and began to exert more of their own will, censure of their deeds became increasingly likely. Adolescent kings faced condemnation for being seduced by bad counsel, giving in to the 'thorns of lust' and other sexual immoralities, or indulging in evil practices.[5] Lampert of Hersfeld's assertion that Henry IV became a new Rehoboam when he began to live according to his 'own will' (*propriam … voluntatem*) again cautions against the assumption that a child ruler was the kingdom's worst-case scenario.[6] Displays of royal will did not necessarily make for peaceful or stable governance, especially in the eyes of monastic writers.

Coming of age was a protracted process rather than any instantaneous event. Ideas of age varied widely. Age identity could incorporate customary and formal expectations around specific chronological ages, cultural and social markers of maturity, biological or physiological indicators grounded in observable human ageing, and an individual's behaviours and actions.[7] Ælred of Rievaulx's assertion that 'the age of the king is judged by the allegiance of his *milites*' suggests further flexibility around the political symbolism of a ruler's *aetas*.[8] That kingship often altered a child's progression from boyhood to manhood, distinguishing a boy king's experience of adolescence from other elite youths, especially by the thirteenth century, is a common theme throughout this chapter. Cultural, social and legal markers of elite maturity were shifting over the central Middle Ages, generating changes which affected how young people experienced late childhood and early adulthood. Rites of passage such as knighting acquired new symbolic associations. Age-related markers became a more prominent part of ruling identities as seal usage spread widely throughout the aristocracy and nobility. Practices of inheritance and wardship increasingly defined the legal restrictions imposed on adolescents and youths, especially boys who had lost their fathers.[9] This chapter examines how some of these developments unfolded in relation to child kingship, with a particular focus on knighting and sealing, to reinforce a recurring argument throughout this book: change over time was more substantial than differences between kingdoms.

[5] Honorius III, *Opera omnia*, II, no. 84 (cols 561–2), for criticism of James I of Aragon; 'vepres … libidinum', Bruno of Merseburg, *Buch vom Sachsenkrieg*, 14; Gregory VII, *Register*, trans. Cowdrey, nos. 2.5, 2.18, for criticism of Philip I of France.

[6] Lampert, *Libellus*, 353. See Chapter 3.

[7] For a useful summary of recent research on age identity across the social sciences see Gowland, 'Ageing the past', 143–54.

[8] Ælred, *Eulogium*, 449 (trans. Freeland and Dutton, 60).

[9] See Ward, '(Im)maturity', for the shifting legal framework around maturity.

KNIGHTING

The shifting significance of a boy king's knighting is one of the most noticeable changes over the period. The acceptance of arms transformed from having been part of a child king's rite of passage to young adulthood in the mid-eleventh century to become a crucial element in a royal child's rite of passage to kingship a century and a half later. This meant that, by the first half of the thirteenth century, immaturity was no longer incompatible with knighting, as had formerly been the case.[10] The origins of the link between the girding of arms and adult male identity have been much debated.[11] In antiquity, as still across the central Middle Ages, public acceptance of arms was only one facet among other diverse social and cultural practices which could signify a boy's progression to maturity.[12]

Child rulers in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were girded with arms after coronation and succession, several years into their reigns. Knighting was never an indicator of rulership; it was part of the social performance of adulthood and served as a rite of passage for boy kings, much as for other young men growing up at royal and aristocratic courts.[13] The king's acceptance of arms commonly occurred after his fourteenth birthday, often at a significant feast day during his fifteenth year. Henry IV was girded with a sword (*gladium cinxit*) at the Easter court at Worms in 1065, a few months after turning fourteen.[14]

Dating Philip I's knighting is more problematic since the sole reference to his acceptance of arms is in an antiquarian copy of a charter of Baldwin II, count of Hainault, originally issued in 1087. Baldwin of Hainault describes himself as the son of Baldwin VI, count of Flanders (1067–70), 'who invested King Philip with military arms befitting a king', memorialising the event as part of the distinction of his paternal line.[15]

[10] What follows revisits aspects of an earlier discussion in Ward, '(Im)maturity', 207–11.

[11] M. H. Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, 2005), 66–7; J. L. Nelson, 'Ninth-century knighthood: the evidence of Nithard', in J. L. Nelson (ed.), *The Frankish World, 750–900* (London, 1996), 75–87.

[12] M. Harlow and R. Laurence (eds.), *Growing Up and Growing Old in Ancient Rome: A Life Course Approach* (London, 2002), 67–9, 72–5, for Roman rites of passage such as the *toga virilis* and the shaving of a young man's beard; R. Bartlett, 'Symbolic meanings of hair in the Middle Ages', *TRHS*, 4 (1994), 43–60 (esp. 44, 47–8). I have found little contemporary discussion of the facial hair of boy kings.

[13] M. Lieberman, 'A new approach to the knighting ritual', *Speculum*, 90 (2015), 391–423 (401, 412–13).

[14] *Annales Weissenburgenses*, 53; Lampert, *Annales*, 93; Berthold, *Chronicon*, 198, although wrongly dated to Henry's fourteenth year; J. Flori, *L'essor de la chevalerie XI^e–XII^e siècles* (Geneva, 1986), 56–8. For events leading up to Henry's acceptance of arms see Black-Veldtrup, *Agnes*, 34–6.

[15] 'qui Philippum Francorum regem regalis insignivit militia armis', A. du Chesne, *Histoire généalogique de la maison de Béthune* (Paris, 1639), 361.

It has been suggested that Philip's knighting most likely took place during his fifteenth year (23 May 1066 x 22 May 1067).[16] This is certainly plausible, especially since other important political changes characterised this period. Two documents issued before the end of 1066 describe Baldwin V's guardianship of king and kingdom in the past tense.[17] At around the same time, Philip granted royal confirmations to two religious foundations closely associated with Baldwin and the archbishop of Reims, possibly in recognition of their involvement in managing the affairs of the realm during his childhood.[18] That Philip accepted military arms from Baldwin V's son, rather than the count himself, may indicate that the king's knighting took place slightly later, after Baldwin's death early in September 1067. Alternatively, the choice of Baldwin VI could betray contemporary anxieties that the magnate responsible for governing the kingdom should not also invest the young ruler with arms.

These eleventh-century royal cases fit neatly within contemporary noble and aristocratic practices.[19] Until *c.* 1220, adolescents and youths usually accepted arms between the ages of twelve and thirty, with a median age at knighting of around fifteen.[20] Even into the later twelfth century, there was still no indication that knighthood was considered a prerequisite to kingship. Malcolm IV, king of Scots, was girded with arms several years into his reign, similarly to Henry and Philip, although at a slightly older age. Malcolm was eighteen when Henry II of England knighted him, probably at Périgueux around Saint Martial's Day (30 June) 1159, as the kings travelled south to besiege the city of Toulouse.[21] Insufficient evidence survives to date Philip II's entry into knighthood, but Cartellieri plausibly suggested that it took place at a tournament celebrated at Arras at Pentecost (8 June) 1180.[22] This was during the French ruler's fifteenth year, shortly after his marriage to Isabella of Hainault and his crown-wearing alongside her in April. If we accept Cartellieri's theory – which, it must be noted, is based only on conjecture – then in France, even by the later twelfth century, knighting was not yet perceived to be an essential precursor to a boy's inauguration or succession

[16] Prou, *Recueil*, xxxiv.

[17] Prou, *Recueil*, nos. 27–8. But for doubts over the authenticity of the former see Chapter 7.

[18] Prou, *Recueil*, nos. 25–6.

[19] See, for example, Bates, *William*, 53–4, 70–1.

[20] Flori, *Essor*, 12, 15. The median age appears to have been higher in certain regions of France. For example, see Evergates, *Aristocracy*, 154–6.

[21] Geoffrey of Vigeois, *Ex chronico*, in *RHF*, XII (Paris, 1877), 421–51 (439). Scottish chroniclers suggested a slightly different location and timing for Malcolm's knighting: *Chron. Holyrood*, 132–3; *Chron. Melrose*, fo. 19v. For knighting in Scotland see D. Crouch, *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain, 1000–1300* (London, 1992), 116–17.

[22] Cartellieri, 'Avènement', 14.

(nor indeed, on this occasion, a precondition of marriage). This also appears to have been the case in the empire, despite differences in the early development of knighthood's cultural associations.[23] When Frederick Barbarossa knighted his two eldest sons at the famous Whitsunday court at Mainz in May 1184, the eighteen-year-old Henry was already a king, having been crowned fifteen years before in Aachen.[24] Prior to the thirteenth century, then, a young king's entry into knighthood was primarily linked to the onset of adolescence and his progression to young adulthood, though it could also mark his acquisition of greater control over the kingdom's administration, and, in some cases, heralded married life or celebrated martial campaigning.

The meanings attached to knighting had changed completely by the initial decades of the thirteenth century, when the acceptance of arms was brought forward to precede coronation. In England, the nine-year-old Henry III was 'made a knight' (*fais chevaliers*) before his coronation at Gloucester in 1216.[25] In France, Louis IX was twelve years old when he was 'promoted as a knight' (*promotus in militem*) at Soissons as he travelled to Reims for his inauguration in 1226.[26] These accounts reflect terminological shifts while also revealing changing ideas about kingship and maturity. Knighting young royal heirs at a far younger age than ever before distinguished their experience from most of their aristocratic peers. Gradually, from the later twelfth century and more steadily after around 1220, knighting became detached from its former status as a declaration of adolescence and young adulthood.[27] Knighting seems to have become less necessary among the aristocracy, and even among younger members of the royal family. The median age at which knighting took place increased as it was ever more likely to be delayed until a youth had reached his twenties at the earliest, if not several years later. The consolidation of new legal ideas regarding majority accounted for this change, which superseded the need for knighting as a rite of passage.[28]

[23] B. Arnold, *German Knighthood, 1050–1300* (Oxford, 1985); R. Mortimer, 'Knights and knighthood in Germany in the central Middle Ages', in C. Harper-Bill and R. Harvey (eds.), *The Ideals and Practices of Medieval Knighthood: Papers from the First and Second Strawberry Hill Conferences* (Woodbridge, 1986), 86–103. See also W. H. Jackson, 'Knighthood and the Hohenstaufen imperial court under Frederick Barbarossa (1152–1190)', in C. Harper-Bill and R. Harvey (eds.), *The Ideals and Practices of Medieval Knighthood*, III, *Papers from the Fourth Strawberry Hill Conference 1988* (Woodbridge, 1990), 101–20, who emphasises the chronological similarity between developments in knighthood in French and German regions.

[24] Freed, *Frederick Barbarossa*, 446–9.

[25] *Histoire des ducs*, 181; *History of William Marshal*, II, 266–9.

[26] William of Andres, *Chronica Andrensis*, ed. J. Heller, *MGH SS* 24 (Hanover, 1879), 684–773 (766).

[27] Lieberman, 'New approach', 421; J. Peltzer, 'Knighthood in the Empire', in D. Crouch and J. Deploige (eds.), *Knighthood and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Leuven, 2020), 51–70 (64–5).

[28] Flori, *Essor*, 12; Guilhiermoz, *Essai*, 399 n. 16.

For some young men, the act of knighting still accompanied legal maturity and confirmation of their inheritance. Louis IX's younger brothers, for example, were all knighted at the age of twenty-one and, at the same time, received the territories their father had bequeathed to them.[29] But notions of legal maturity usually took precedence over social rites of passage. An amendment to the provisions for underage heirs in the 1216 Magna Carta specified 'that if he [a ward] is made a knight (*fuerit miles*) while still under age (*infra etatem*), the land nevertheless shall remain in his lord's wardship (*custodia*) for the full term [i.e., twenty-one, as specified in the previous sentence]'.[30] Knighting was no longer as overt an indicator of the end of wardship as it had been formerly.[31] As legal majority was pushed later, wardship increasingly detached from social and cultural views about the onset of male adolescence. These legal changes unquestionably influenced how boy kings experienced their progression to adulthood, as we will see, but child rulers now experienced knighting in a very different way to most of their peers. Rather than delaying the necessity of the royal heir's acceptance of arms, there was a heightened urgency for these children to be made knights before they became kings. For boys in this position, the ritual acceptance of arms took on new symbolic functions, becoming more associated with the concept and office of kingship than with the physiological body of the child ruler or practical care of his kingdom.

Other changes likewise contributed to knighting's shifting meaning in cases of child kingship. Ecclesiastical influence over knighting has received significant attention from modern scholars and remains a highly contested topic, but it is clear that, by the early thirteenth century, there were far closer parallels between the liturgy for making a knight and royal inauguration *ordines*.[32] The sword held an important symbolic and ritual place within the liturgy used for inaugurations in England, France and the Empire.[33] Churchmen such as Abbot Suger, writing in

[29] Le Goff, *Louis*, 94; Grant, *Blanche*, 113, 124–5, 131–2, 316–17. Robert, count of Artois (b. 1216), was knighted in 1237, Alphonse (b. 1220), count of Poitou, in 1241 and Charles (b. 1226x7), count of Anjou, in 1247.

[30] *EHD*, III, 327; *The Statutes of the Realm: From Original Records and Authentic Manuscripts*, 11 vols (London, 1810–28), I, 14. This clause remained the same in later issues of Magna Carta in 1217 and 1225.

[31] For the earlier link between knighting and the end of wardship in England see N. J. Menuge, *Medieval English Wardship in Romance and Law* (Woodbridge, 2001), 62.

[32] Keen, *Chivalry*, 71–7; Flori, *Essor*, 322–4; Lieberman, 'New approach', 393; R. Elze, 'Königskrönung und Ritterweihe: der burgundische Ordo für die Weihe und Krönung des Königs und der Königin', in L. Fenske, W. Rösener and T. Zotz (eds.), *Institutionen, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Josef Fleckenstein zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (Sigmaringen, 1984), 327–42.

[33] Dale, *Liturgical Kingship*, 80–7, 147.

the mid-twelfth century, interpreted the king's reception of the 'ecclesiastical sword' at consecration within the context of setting aside secular knighthood.[34] Protracted discussions of the sword's liturgical symbolism may have heightened expectations that ritual girding with arms was vital prior to any man or boy accepting the regalia within the process by which he became king. This order of events – knighting then coronation – was, of course, the usual situation. Rulers who came to their thrones as youths or adults had typically already received arms many years before their succession, often at the hands of their own fathers or another king. John, for example, had been seventeen when Henry II knighted him in 1185, while Philip Augustus had knighted his eldest son, the future Louis VIII, at the age of twenty-one in 1209.[35] William Marshal's biographer, writing in around 1220, dwells at length on the Marshal's supposed knighting of the eighteen-year-old Henry the Young King in 1173, at the outbreak of his first rebellion against his father.[36] Despite doubts over whether this knighting took place, the biographer's admission that it was a struggle to justify to men of reason why the Young King had been made king first and knight later reveals just how intricately bound the rituals of knighting and coronation were in some kingdoms by the early decades of the thirteenth century.[37] Knighting royal children before inauguration thus made a symbolic statement that the child ruler was no different to other kings; they experienced the ritual events of a royal ruler's life in the same order. Child kings also made the same coronation promises as adults, including a recognition of the possibility of military leadership through their pledge to defend the church and the kingdom.[38] Age was no barrier to kingship nor, any longer, to knighthood.

New notions about the interrelationship between knighting and coronation were influential, but they were not immediately embraced everywhere. Prior to the pope granting the rite of unction to the kings of Scots in 1329, royal inauguration in Scotland was not as intimately entwined with liturgical rituals for coronation and anointing, nor was it associated with the act of knighting. It was not until the coronation of the seven-year-old David II in 1331 that a Scottish king's acceptance of arms was first explicitly tied to his consecration.[39] Nevertheless, according to the author of *GA I*, debates about whether knighting should precede inauguration

[34] Suger, *Vie*, 86. [35] See also Barrow, *Kingdom*, 255, for pertinent Scottish examples.
[36] Other sources date the Young King's knighting to June 1170, just before his coronation. See, for example, Gervase of Canterbury, *Historical Works*, I, 219.
[37] *History of William Marshal*, I, 108–9; Crouch, *William Marshal*, 51–2; Strickland, *Young King*, 82–4.
[38] Weiler, 'Knighting', 279. [39] Dean, 'Crowning the child', 263, 267.

had reached the kingdom nearly a century earlier. On 13 July 1249, the day proposed for Alexander III's inauguration at Scone, the Scottish magnates deliberated over how to proceed with the seven-year-old boy's succession. The chronicler reports that Alan Durward, justiciar of Scotia, was in favour of knighting Alexander first, namely because he wished to be the one to gird the boy with arms.[40] Durward may have hoped that knighting the child ruler would strengthen his own political position, much as William Marshal's knighting of Henry III four decades earlier had heralded the magnate's recognition as *rector regis et regni* in England.[41]

The question of who should bestow the king, or his eldest son, with arms could be contentious, especially when a secular magnate performed the honour. A letter concerning the knighting of the sixteen-year-old Louis, Philip I's son, at Abbeville on Whitsunday 1098 indicates one magnate's apprehension around his proposed role in providing the royal youth with *arma militaria*. Guy, count of Ponthieu, makes an adamant and urgent request for the authority of the counsel of his kinsman, the bishop of Arras, concerning the matter of Louis's knighting.[42] In the Iberian kingdoms, kings such as Alfonso IX of Léon (d. 1230) and his son, Fernando III of Léon and Castile (d. 1252), attempted to sidestep issues around knighting by girding themselves with arms or involving the queen mother in the proceedings.[43] In Scotland, Walter Comyn grounded his opposition to Alan Durward's proposal to gird the young Alexander with arms by stating that it was not so unusual to become a king before becoming a knight. Comyn claimed that 'he himself had seen a consecrated king who was not yet a knight, and he had also often heard of kings consecrated, who were not knights', and he further stressed the need to raise Alexander as king swiftly.[44] The assembled magnates sided with Comyn, and Alexander's inauguration went ahead with the boy unknighted. Although ideas about knighting as a prerequisite to kingship had not won the debate in 1249, other aspects of the shifting social connotations of knighting had gained greater traction. Alexander's knighting was postponed, but only by two years. At York on Christmas Day 1251, the day before Alexander's marriage to Margaret, the English king provided the ten-year-old king of Scots with *arma militaria*.[45] Although Alexander's acceptance of arms was associated with another social marker

[40] *Chron. Fordun*, 293.
[41] Duncan, 'Before coronation', 141; Watt, 'Minority of Alexander', 7; Crouch, *William Marshal*, 160.
[42] *Recueil des actes des comtes de Pontieu (1026–1279)*, ed. C. Brunel (Paris, 1930), no. 7 (trans. Lieberman, 'New approach', 403). I would like to thank Alice Taylor for initially drawing my attention to this example.
[43] Shadis, *Berenguela*, 106–7, 209. [44] *Chron. Fordun*, 293 (trans. Duncan, *Kingship*, 132).
[45] *Chron. Melrose*, fo. 56r. See also *Chron. maiora*, V, 267.

of maturity, marriage, his knighting remained detached from legal notions of maturity or cultural understandings of the onset of adolescence, similarly to the cases of both Henry III and Louis IX.

It is difficult to get a clear sense of how royal children and adolescents viewed the actions and rituals by which they received arms, or whether the event's personal significance changed as the cultural and social meanings of knighting shifted. Monastic chroniclers were rarely forthcoming with details about these occasions, and they did not dwell on how a king's acceptance of arms may have influenced the ruler, the realm or the wider political community.[46] Knightings may have been events of such common significance that writers barely considered them worthy of discussion. It is also possible that the ceremony did not always mark as much of a substantial change as has sometimes been assumed; it was, after all, only one aspect of a more gradual process by which youthful rulers exerted greater influence over political affairs. Nevertheless, there are indications that some young men regarded knighting to have conveyed an important change in status worth commemorating. Malcolm prefaced several charters he issued in 1161 or 1162 with the words 'know that after I received arms'.[47] Modern historians have viewed the king's adoption of this diplomatic clause as a reflection of his 'pathetic' desire to be knighted.[48] Such a pejorative interpretation overlooks knighting's personal significance to a youthful ruler forming ideas about his own power, authority and kingship. Malcolm's ritual acceptance of arms took place on his first military campaign, during the king's initial voyage beyond his realm, and on a European stage in the presence of prominent elites undertaking an impressively planned and provisioned expedition.[49] Nor was Malcolm alone among twelfth-century rulers in attributing a special importance to his knighting within royal documents. Although most of Louis VII's acts were dated using the Incarnation and regnal years, the latter counted from his father's death (1 August 1137), there were some occasional exceptions where the regnal year was counted from January 1134, the moment when Louis, having attained his fifteenth year, had been armed as a knight.[50]

[46] Lieberman, 'New approach', 414. There is an especial lack of detail regarding the knightings of German rulers. For a mid-fourteenth century claim that the twenty-year-old William II was knighted at the same time as his coronation as king of the Romans in 1247 see Jan Beke, *Chronographia*, ed. H. Bruch (The Hague, 1973), 185.

[47] *Malcolm IV*, nos. 183 ('Sciatis quod postquam arma suscepi'), 184, 195, 198.

[48] Barrow, *Kingdom*, 255; Nelson, 'Queens and queenship', 119.

[49] J. Martindale, '"An unfinished business": Angevin politics and the siege of Toulouse, 1159', *ANS*, 23 (2001), 115–54.

[50] Bautier, 'Actes', 103. Other documents counted the regnal year from Louis's coronation on 25 October 1131.

Ideas about knighting and maturity increasingly overlapped with the possession and use of a seal as sealing spread through the aristocracy and nobility. I have already shown how the shift to sealing as the crucial authoritative form for authorising royal documents affected a young heir's participation in documentary culture before his succession.[51] Turning to consider the seals produced for and used by boy kings reveals further changes between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries and shows how royal sealing practices could, once again, set child rulers apart from their aristocratic peers.

SEALS AND SEALING PRACTICES

When Henry I, king of the Franks, died, his eight-year-old son was already crowned but did not yet possess a seal of his own. The first fragmentary impressions of Philip I's seal appear on a diploma issued at Senlis later in 1060, in which the king's aunt, Countess Adela of Flanders, requested that her nephew give a *villa* in Paris to Saint-Denis.[52] Drawn up by a chancery scribe, the document looks to be modelled closely on contemporary imperial diplomas. Philip's and Adela's names appear in majuscule – an infrequent but not entirely unusual feature of French royal diplomas at this time – drawing the eye to those most closely associated with the gift. More unusually, the queen mother, Anne of Kyiv, participates in the act *per interventum*, an intercession formula rarely used in early Capetian charters and more commonly associated with Salian royal women.[53] Empress Agnes, for example, had a prominent intercessory role in many of her husband's acts. Her intercession, usually in the form *ob interventum*, remained a central feature of her son's diplomas until 1062.[54] It is possible that Philip's diploma for Saint-Denis reflects the royal chancery's deliberate search for contemporary precedents of a boy king ruling with his mother alongside him, and a desire to represent Philip and Anne in comparable terms to Henry IV and Agnes. The seal Philip began using from 1060 is especially noteworthy for its reuse of his father's seal matrix.[55] Apart from altering the ruler's name, so that the legend now read PHILIP(us) D(e)I GR(ati)A / FRANCORV(m)

[51] See Chapter 4. [52] AN, K 20 no. 1; Prou, *Recueil*, no. 4.

[53] For the longer history linking intercession and royal women in the Empire see Gilsdorf, *Favor of Friends*, esp. 114–24. The phrase *per interventum* or similar only appears in two further acts during Philip's reign, both from the year following Henry's death and likewise referring to Anne's intercession. See Prou, *Recueil*, nos. 5, 12.

[54] Ward, 'Diplomatic women', 413–15; Chapter 4. [55] *Corpus des sceaux*, II, 142.

REX, all other details remained identical to Henry I's seal. Recycling seals by retouching their legends was not an unusual practice in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and a child's succession was especially suited to the decision to recycle a seal matrix.[56] The act of reuse conveyed symbolic significance and was not solely a practical or economical solution. In Philip's case, the near-identical resemblance of his seal to his father's exhibited political continuity and placed his acts under Henry's posthumous protection.[57] That Philip may have first begun using this seal while at Senlis, a location especially important to Anne and where she held dower lands, may also reflect his mother's central participation in decisions concerning her son's seal.[58]

For royal and aristocratic boys before the mid-twelfth century, possession and use of a seal was usually bound to their accession to the position of sole ruler after their father's death, rather than to their acceptance of arms or any contemporary notions of maturity. Philip's knighting and entry into young adulthood did not alter his seal, even as other changes were ongoing in the chancery between 1067 and 1072.[59] The latest surviving impression of Philip's first seal dates from 1069, but the king still appears to have been using this seal in 1071. Tentative evidence even suggests that it had not yet been replaced by February 1076, when Philip was twenty-three.[60] Since there is no evidence for the existence of Philip's second seal before April 1080, we must look for other reasons than simply the king's 'majority' to explain its creation.[61] Territorial gains during the later 1070s, for example, may provide a far more compelling motivation for the ruler to create a new seal matrix and refresh the impression of his royal identity.[62]

Inauguration had become a far more conspicuous catalyst for seal possession by the later twelfth century, contrasting with earlier cases where a child's associative coronation does not seem to have necessitated their

[56] J.-F. Nieus, 'L'hérédité des matrices de sceaux princiers au XII^e siècle, entre conscience lignagère et discours politique', in M. Gil and J.-L. Chassel (eds.), *Pourquoi les sceaux? La sigillographie, nouvel enjeu de l'histoire de l'art: actes du colloque organisé à Lille, Palais des Beaux-Arts les 23–25 octobre 2008* (Lille, 2011), 217–39 (223, 230–1).

[57] Nieus, 'L'hérédité des matrices', 231.

[58] For Senlis during Philip's early reign see Ward, 'Anne of Kiev', 442, 443, 450.

[59] Dufour, 'Typologie des actes', 71.

[60] *Corpus des sceaux*, II, 142.

[61] *Corpus des sceaux*, II, 143, where the legend remains the same and the iconography barely changes; Nieus, 'L'hérédité des matrices', 230, who suggests Philip used his father's matrix only until his majority.

[62] M. Gabriele, 'Frankish kingship, political exegesis and the ghost of Charlemagne in the diplomas of King Philip I of Francia', in W. J. Purkis and M. Gabriele (eds.), *The Charlemagne Legend in Medieval Latin Texts* (Cambridge, 2016), 9–32 (15).

seal's immediate creation. Philip II began to append his own royal seal to acts issued in his name shortly after his inauguration in 1179, even though his father was still living.[63] On the one hand, this was an exceptional set of circumstances, since Louis VII, although alive, was incapacitated by a serious illness which left him bed-bound until his death in September 1180. On the other hand, a comparable situation had recently occurred in England when Henry the Young King received a personal seal soon after his coronation in 1170.[64] There are important distinctions between the two seals. Philip's incorporated full recognition of his royal majesty, with the legend bearing the words D(e)I GR(ati)A. The obverse image showed the enthroned king in a similar style to the depiction on Louis's seal, holding a parallel *fleur de lis* and sceptre.[65] By contrast, the Young King's first seal made a very different statement about the authority conveyed in its impression. It uniquely omitted the DEI GRATIA and its style diverged from Henry II's personal seal.[66] In both cases, however, the seal's creation was likely interconnected with other markers of maturity as well as with coronation, royal office-holding and practical political circumstances. The first evidence for Philip's seal cannot be dated any more precisely than between April and September 1180, but these months also saw the king's marriage to Isabella of Hainault, his fifteenth birthday and possibly his knighting. Likewise, although the Young King had already been married to Philip's half-sister, Margaret, for nearly a decade at the time of his coronation, he turned fifteen a few months before the ceremony and was probably knighted at around the same time.[67]

The possession of a seal was becoming gradually more entwined with other indicators of aristocratic adult identity, especially from the second half of the twelfth century. There are prominent signs in England linking the creation of a youth's seal to his knighting. Geoffrey de Mandeville the younger announced in 1154x5 that his steward had sealed an act for him 'until I am a knight and have a seal, and then I will confirm this with my own seal'.[68] Similar trends have been observed in parts of France and

[63] *Corpus des sceaux*, II, 150; *Philippe Auguste*, I, nos. 1–13, for acts issued in Philip's name before 19 September 1180. By contrast, Louis VII does not appear to have had a seal until his father's death in 1137, despite his prominence within royal documents for several years before this. See *Corpus des sceaux*, II, 146 n. 1.

[64] As discussed in Chapter 4. [65] *Corpus des sceaux*, II, 146, 150.

[66] Smith, 'Henry II's heir', 305–6 (see also 302–3, 307). [67] Strickland, *Young King*, 82–4.

[68] 'donec sim miles et habeam sigillum, et tunc eam firmabo proprio sigillo', N. Vincent, 'Warin and Henry fitz Gerald, the king's chamberlains: the origins of the FitzGeralds revisited', *ANS*, 21 (1999), 233–60 (254, 237). Geoffrey was born before 1144, but it is unclear how old he was in 1154/5.

in Scotland, among both noble and royal children. In 1184, when John II, castellan of Noyon and Thourotte, assigned a dower during his *adolescentia*, he promised to confirm the act with his own seal after becoming a knight.[69] The first evidence for the seal of Philip Augustus's eldest son comes from August 1209, only a few months after Louis's knighting at the age of twenty-one.[70] A couple of years later, a letter from William, king of Scots, to the English king implies that William's son may have been prevented from using a seal before he was knighted.[71] The associations between knighting, maturity and seal possession were not always as coherent as these examples imply. Knighting was only sometimes a prerequisite to possessing a seal; on other occasions, marriage could instead spur its creation. The lord of Vierzon, writing in 1235, declared that he did not have a seal because he was neither a knight nor yet married.[72] In practice, as Theodore Evergates has emphasised, the diverse markers of aristocratic male maturity – possession and use of a seal, acquisition of inheritance, marriage and knighting – rarely coincided. Instead, these markers were part of a lengthier process from childhood to adulthood which varied widely between individuals.[73]

The idea that a king should possess a seal persisted into the thirteenth century but, from this point, there was increasing diversity in seal forms and variation in their creation for and use by child kings. The variety in sealing practices reflects the flexibility of ideas around age and further accentuates the influence of shifting legal notions of maturity, especially when magnates and prelates had a prominent role in the guardianship of king and kingdom. Comparing the seals used by Henry III in England, Louis IX in France and Alexander III in Scotland illustrates three different pathways for the design, regulation and use of a boy king's seal: control, continuity and creativity.

The arrangements for Henry III's Great Seal (Figure 10.1) were very tightly controlled by his guardians, counsellors and royal officials, with input from the papacy. The king's childhood delayed the seal's creation and initially prompted the delegation of attesting and even sealing royal letters to William Marshal.[74] Whereas most boy kings usually possessed

[69] Evergates, *Aristocracy*, 155–6, 355 n. 73.

[70] *Corpus des sceaux*, II, 154. The legend identifies Louis as FILII REGIS FRANCIE.

[71] *ASR*, 26–7. See also Guilhiermoz, *Essai*, 396 n. 11, for later thirteenth-century aristocratic examples.

[72] *Chartes du Bourbonnais (918–1522)*, ed. J. Monicat *et al.* (Moulins, 1952), 167; J. Richard, 'L'adoubement de Saint Louis', *Journal des Savants* (1988), 207–17 (210).

[73] Evergates, *Aristocracy*, 153.

[74] Select examples include *Acts of the Marshal Family*, nos. 39, 58; *PR, 1216–1225*, 1; Carpenter, *Minority*, 52.

Figure 10.1 First Great Seal (obverse) of Henry III of England on a grant to Stanley Abbey, 11 Hen III, 28 October 1226 x 27 October 1227. London, TNA, E 42/315. Photograph and permissions: The National Archives, London.

a royal seal within a few weeks of their father's death, it was not until early November 1218 – two years after John's demise and Henry's first coronation at Gloucester – that the eleven-year-old English ruler had a seal of his own.[75] A year earlier, Pope Honorius had permitted the legate Guala to ensure a seal was made for the king if he considered it expedient.[76] This did not happen straightaway. The 1217 Magna Carta ended by noting that Guala and William Marshal would attach their personal seals because Henry did not yet have one.[77] Several chroniclers drew attention to the seal's creation the following year, showing sealing's contemporary significance as a marker of royal authority and legitimate government.[78]

[75] *RLC*, I, 381. [76] Honorius III, *Opera omnia*, II, no. 350; *Letters of Guala*, no. 171.
[77] *Statutes of the Realm*, I, 19; *Waverley Annals*, in *AM*, II, 129–412 (290); *Magna Carta*, 412–15 (and 420, 423, for a comparison with the 1225 Magna Carta, to which Henry attached his Great Seal).
[78] *Tewkesbury Annals*, in *AM*, I, 43–180 (64); *Winton Annals*, in *AM*, II, 3–126 (83); *Waverley Annals*, 291; *Chron. maiora*, III, 43; Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicon*, 187.

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The production of Henry's Great Seal likely contributed to shifting intentions for the king's progression to maturity. Before 1218, court and chancery officials had emphasised the significance of Henry's fourteenth birthday as a marker of legal majority.[79] From late 1217, the phrase *usque ad etatem nostram*, commonly associated with tenurial notions of aristocratic maturity, entirely superseded earlier age-specific references for the terminus for custody of lands and castles, letters of protection, safe conducts and notes of pardon.[80] Despite the Great Seal's creation, the young king was still frequently separated from his seal and his guardians continued to attest royal letters on his behalf.[81] This disconnect between the king's presence and the workings of royal government was not exclusive to the conditions of child kingship. Even by the 1170s, the pre-eminence of the Great Seal was 'fast becoming an administrative fiction', with large numbers of letters issued in the king's name without the need for his presence or the impression of the royal seal.[82]

More exceptional to Henry's situation was the introduction of age-related restrictions on the royal seal's use at the time of its creation. Through the common counsel of the kingdom, Henry was to issue no charters or patent letters of confirmation, alienation, sale, donation or concession in perpetuity, nor was he to seal these documents with the Great Seal until he had reached his legal maturity (*usque ad etatem nostram completam*).[83] These pronouncements were not always binding, and Henry's guardians still granted lands and cash rents in consultation with other prelates and magnates. Further legal limitations were likewise imposed on the king because of his childhood. When Dunstable Abbey was summoned to the king's court in 1220, the community was able to call on Henry, who was then thirteen or fourteen at most, as their guarantor. Before that date, the annalist claimed, the king had been considered legally too young (*infra etatem*).[84] The stringent regulation of Henry's seal and other controls on the child ruler's actions typify how movements towards conciliar government – in this case the combination of secular magnates as leading guardians of king and kingdom, prominent papal

[79] See *PR, 1216–1225*, 1, 23, 26, 64, 72, 76–7, 100, 107, 112 and 132, for 'usque ad quartumdecimum annum etatis nostre completum' or similar. This was not used exclusively and there were also references to the general *ad etatem* during this earlier period (see 28, 121 and 124).

[80] See *PR, 1225–1232*, 65, for its last appearance in October 1226, the month Henry turned nineteen. See also Chapter 6.

[81] Carpenter, *Minority*, 94–5.

[82] Vincent, 'Why 1199?', 32.

[83] *PR, 1216–1225*, 177; Carpenter, *Minority*, 18–19, 95–6; Powicke, 'Chancery', 222–3. See also Chapter 8.

[84] *Dunstable Annals*, 57.

Figure 10.2 Seal of majesty (obverse) of Louis IX of France on a confirmation of properties in favour of Saint-Denis, issued at Fontainebleau, September 1233. Paris, AN, K 30 no. 8b. Photograph: author.

involvement through the legate and the fluctuating *consilium* of other magnates and prelates – encouraged the adoption of measures to constrain royal authority. The specification of restrictions upon the king's actions until a future date associated with his legal maturity shows how closely Henry's guardians and counsellors drew upon contemporary procedures for managing aristocratic wardship. Such regulatory measures were superfluous when a queen mother was the principal custodian of the boy king and realm.

Continuity was the chief characteristic of royal sealing practices following Louis IX's succession to the French throne. From December 1226 at the latest, the twelve-year-old king possessed a seal of majesty and used it to authenticate royal orders (Figure 10.2). Seal fragments remain on Louis's commission to two royal officers sent to Flanders to receive oaths of fidelity on the king's behalf only a few weeks after his coronation.[85]

[85] AN, J 534 no. 16.

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Certain types of royal document, especially oaths of fidelity and gifts to religious institutions, often feature Blanche of Castile prominently alongside the young king.[86] Yet there was never any suggestion that the queen mother's seal should either replace or accompany her son's, as sometimes occurred in near-contemporary aristocratic cases.[87] The seals of Capetian queens were usually kept for private and domestic matters, so there was little precedent in France for a queen mother to seal orders, gifts or confirmations made in the king's name.[88] Louis's seal was not created by reusing his father's matrix, as Philip I's had been, but its iconography was still closely modelled on Louis VIII's seal, although with some small changes to the enthroned king's hair, clothing and sceptre (and an entirely different choice of counter-seal image). The legend on the obverse of Louis IX's seal is indistinguishable from that on his father's: LVDOVICVS D(e)I GR(ati)A / FRANCORVM REX.[89] Even at the very start of Louis's reign, there were no obvious restrictions on the types of transactions the young ruler could issue or authenticate. Louis attached his seal to treaties, assurances of safety, grants and gifts, confirmations of judicial sentences, property exchanges and acceptances of homage, among various other transactions.[90] Assurances of the act's perpetual nature accompanied many of these actions, and the queen mother's presence alongside her son likely served as an additional guarantee of the royal authority underpinning the transactions.

Since Henry and Louis had very different early interactions with their Great Seals and the arrangements for their guardianship also diverged, it is hardly surprising that the relationship between each king's maturation and their authentication of royal actions differed. The French king's progression through adolescence and youth left little impression on royal

[86] See Chapter 8; Yvelines, AD 48 H 11, for an early example of Louis requesting prayers for Blanche's soul and the celebration of anniversaries for both his parents.

[87] J. Richard, 'La chancellerie des ducs de Bourgogne de la fin du XII^{e} au début du XV^{e} siècle', in G. Silagi (ed.), *Landesherrliche Kanzleien im Spätmittelalter: Referate zum VI. Internationalen Kongreß für Diplomatik*, 2 vols (Munich, 1984), I, 381–413 (392); S. M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester, 2003), 57–8, 127, 137.

[88] B. M. Bedos-Rezak, 'Women, seals and power in medieval France, 1150–1350', in M. Erler and M. Kowaleski (eds.), *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Athens, GA, 1988), 61–82 (64).

[89] *Corpus des sceaux*, II, 155, 156.

[90] Select examples include: *LTC*, II, no. 1896 (where Louis's seal represented *perpetue stabilitatis robur* on a letter concerning the treaty with Flanders); Louis IX, 'Lettres patentes … aux habitants de Saint-Antonin', ed. F. Pottier, in *Bulletin archéologique et historique de la Société archéologique de Tarn-et-Garonne*, 9 (1881), 231–6 (safeguard and confirmation of customs); Yvelines, AD 48 H 11 (gift to Joyenval abbey) and 60 J 351 (where Louis attached his seal *ad petitionem partium* to confirm a judicial sentence); AN, K 30 no. 2 (property exchange with Saint-Denis) and J 622 no. 16^{2} (record of liege-homage originally sealed, although seal now lost). See also Moufflet, 'Autour de l'hôtel', Itinéraire nos. 1–304.

sealing or the attestation of documents. Intermittent references to a future time when Louis would reach *legitima etas* suggest that the king was not entirely exempt from legal markers of maturity, but there was no public proclamation that his attainment of the age of twenty-one marked any practical or political turning point.[91] Notions of exactly what constituted a 'legitimate age' within a royal context could also vary wildly.[92] This was not the case in England, where both Henry and his subjects viewed his twenty-first birthday as a decisive marker of the full legality of royal actions.[93] In practice, however, processes for authenticating royal actions and asserting Henry's will had already been changing gradually; twenty-one was only the upper legal limit of a far more protracted process which often centred around the king's ability to use his seal.

Letters arrived in England in April 1223 proclaiming the pope's support for Henry to assert greater personal control over the mechanisms of royal government and to claim possession of lands and castles currently in the custody of other magnates and castellans. The political manoeuvring around securing and implementing these letters has been considered in detail, but it is worth highlighting that Honorius III addressed one of his letters to the keeper of the royal seal, Ralph de Neville.[94] Since Henry 'should be reckoned an illustrious adolescent in years', the pope stipulated that his seal should only be used at the king's pleasure and according to his will.[95] Towards the end of the year, the justiciar, Hubert de Burgh, and the archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, put the papal recommendations into practice at a time of their choosing. From December, the sixteen-year-old English king controlled the use of his own seal, and he also began to assert greater influence over the attestation of royal actions. Formulae such as *teste me ipso* and *per ipsum dominum regem*, which emphasised the king's presence and agency in authorising actions, began reappearing in royal documents.[96] Although, in one sense, these actions acknowledged that the king had reached some form of legal majority, the Dunstable annalist explained that this was 'not to the extent that it could be corroborated in a legal decree by someone'.[97] Towards the end of 1226, when Henry was nineteen, letters issued in his name

[91] *LTC*, II, nos. 1828, 1962, 1995, 2060; Ward, '(Im)maturity', 202, 205. See also Chapter 6.
[92] See, for example, Mroziewicz, 'King's immature body', 146. [93] Carpenter, *Minority*, 123–4.
[94] Norgate, *Minority*, 200–7, 286–90; Carpenter, *Minority*, ch. 8.
[95] 'illustris adolescentia computetur in annis', *ROHL*, I, no. 358 (431). Honorius continued to stress the significance of Henry's consent and will later that same year. See appendix 5, no. 14.
[96] Although Henry attested some orders himself (*teste me ipso*) prior to January 1217, the formula then disappeared from usage until 1223. For its reappearance see *PR, 1216–1225*, 417; *RLC*, I, 578.
[97] *Dunstable Annals*, 83 (ed. and trans. D. Preest and H. R. Webster, *The Annals of Dunstable Priory* [Woodbridge, 2018], 52).

began referring to a time when he was of 'minor age' as if it were now in the past.[98] Such emphasis on Henry's maturity appeared at exactly the moment a boy seven years his junior had been crowned king of France. The clause first features within a confirmation of properties to the heirs of his mother, Isabella of Angoulême, and her second husband, Hugh de Lusignan. The couple had been embroiled for years in negotiations with the Capetian and Plantagenet rulers as to who could offer them the best compensation settlement for Isabella's dower lands.[99] In 1226, therefore, the English chancery attempted to exploit ideas of Henry's maturity at a crucial moment of political jostling to give the youthful English ruler an edge over Louis IX, the new boy king of France. An announcement followed in January 1227 which asserted that Henry, with the backing of 'common council', would now issue charters under his own seal.[100] The subsequent flurry of requests for confirmations of old charters and grants of new ones raised £3,288 during the rest of the regnal year.[101]

Despite these differences, there were also some important parallels between Henry's and Louis's experiences of royal sealing as children and adolescents. First, the king's childhood was never deemed incompatible with his possession of a seal, even if, in Henry's case, there had been a prolonged wait for its creation. This was a marked difference from contemporary aristocratic norms which often delayed the creation of a boy's seal until he was much older.[102] In the early decades of the thirteenth century sealing was, like knighting, another example of how kingship could shift certain markers of elite male maturity. Secondly, despite the prominent restrictions imposed on Henry's kingship, especially before 1223, his first Great Seal, like Louis's initial seal of majesty, made no concession to the ruler's childhood in either its iconography or its legend. Henry's two-sided seal depicted him, like his father, as an enthroned king on the obverse and on horseback on the reverse. He used this seal for four decades from 1219.[103] Louis, likewise, continued to use the same seal well into adulthood. It is only from early 1252, when Louis was thirty-seven, that there is evidence for the creation of a second seal of majesty. This second seal closely resembled the first, as had been

[98] *PR, 1225–1232*, 98 (similarly 100). [99] Vincent, 'Isabella', 209.
[100] *RLC,* II, 207; Carpenter, *Minority*, ch. 11 (esp. 389).
[101] B. Hartland and P. Dryburgh, 'The development of the fine rolls', *TCE*, 12 (2009), 193–206 (195). A similar process of reconfirming charters can be seen in Hungary after Ladislaus IV (b. 1262) turned fifteen. See J. M. Bak, 'Roles and functions of queens in Árpádian and Angevin Hungary (1000–1386 AD)', in Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship*, 13–24 (20).
[102] As discussed earlier in this chapter, 259. Seal production could also be much later for royal princes whose fathers were still alive, as discussed in Chapter 4.
[103] A. B. Wyon, *The Great Seals of England* (London, 1887), 20–1.

the case for his predecessors Philip I and Philip II.[104] Most kings who had received their initial seals as children continued using the same matrix to produce identical authenticating impressions of their royal identity and authority long past the end of boyhood. This reinforces the idea that rulers sought, above all, to emphasise the continuous authority of their kingship from succession.

The initial years of Alexander III's reign diverged from other thirteenth-century examples in pioneering a creative form of royal sealing and the production of a seal associated exclusively with the circumstances of child kingship. At first, Alexander's guardians seem to have tried to combine innovation and continuity in sealing practices. Because no royal charters survive from the initial year of Alexander's reign, we cannot pinpoint exactly when the king's first seal was created (nor, indeed, which of two seals was produced first).[105] Much as in France after Louis's succession, however, Alexander's young age did not prevent the creation of a Great Seal modelled on his father's seal. This was in use by December 1250 at the latest, when Alexander was nine years old.[106] More unusually, a separate small seal, only 4 centimetres in diameter, was also produced, and fragments of it survive on a grant dated 3 June 1250.[107] The two seals may have been used concurrently for several months, but the first Great Seal was decommissioned the following year. Its withdrawal was almost certainly linked to accusations made against Abbot Robert of Dunfermline and Alan Durward while the Scottish court was at York over Christmas 1251 for Alexander's marriage to Margaret. The chancellor and justiciar were accused of using the Great Seal to appeal to the pope to legitimise Durward's daughters as potential heirs to the Scottish kingdom (their mother, Marjory, was the king's half-sister).[108] Concern to secure the royal succession likely motivated these actions rather than any malicious intentions towards the young king and queen, since Margaret's father, Henry III, strongly supported Durward's reinstatement as one of the royal couple's guardians only a few years later. Nevertheless, this incident raised sufficient concern regarding the potential misuse of the Great Seal to encourage its retraction.

If, as seems likely, the small seal had been created specifically for Alexander's minority and was used during the years before he reached his

[104] *Corpus des sceaux*, II, 156–7.

[105] Alexander's inauguration was in July 1249, but the first surviving charter issued in his name is dated June 1250. See *Alexander III*, no. 1.

[106] Duncan, *Kingship*, 151; *Alexander III*, no. 3. The seal legend and some of the iconographical details remain unclear since only fragments of this first Great Seal survive.

[107] *Alexander III*, no. 2.

[108] *Chron. Melrose*, fos 56r–v; *Chron. Fordun*, 296; Duncan, *Kingship*, 155.

twenty-first birthday, it is unprecedented as a material and visual indication of how contemporary notions of maturity could shape the image of royal majesty. In England, male heirs in their mother's wardship sometimes had round seals smaller than their mother's.[109] Alexander's small seal likely conveyed the same notion that both he and his kingdom were placed under guardianship, but in his case this was entirely compatible with a vision of full royal authority. There is little evidence that Alexander's mother, Marie de Coucy, was actively involved in arrangements for her son's custody, although Henry III named the queen and her second husband, John of Acre, among a list of royal counsellors (*consiliariis*) with responsibility for the 'care of the realm of Scotland' in November 1258.[110] The king's small seal may still have deliberately evoked his maternal connections. Displayed on the seal's reverse were the royal arms of Scotland, 'portrayed for the first time as a lion rampant within a double tressure, the latter evocative of the young king's affinity, through his mother, with the French royal house'.[111] Two further impressions of Alexander's small seal survive from June 1252 (Figure 10.3) and June 1257, but it is unclear when this seal was replaced.[112] From August 1260, shortly before Alexander turned nineteen, the king began to attest royal letters himself. This appears to have been the first time a king of Scots used the *teste me ipso* form of attestation, and it contrasted with an earlier letter which the earl of Dunbar had attested on Alexander's behalf.[113] It is therefore significant that the clause first appears in Alexander's correspondence within a letter to his father-in-law, since this was the same formula which had been a prominent aspect of Henry III's own display of control over royal actions three decades earlier.[114] The change in practices of attestation marks a likely point for the introduction of Alexander's second Great Seal – which differed substantially from all his earlier seals, great and small – but there is no firm evidence for this seal's existence prior to July 1264.[115]

There are marked stylistic differences between Alexander's small seals and his two Great Seals, although there are also some material and iconographical similarities – for example, all the seals were two-sided and

[109] Johns, *Noblewomen*, 127. [110] 'curam regni Scocie', *ASR*, 70.
[111] *Alexander III*, 30. Marie was the eldest daughter of Enguerrand (III) de Coucy (d. 1242), great-grandson of Louis VI through his maternal line.
[112] *Alexander III*, nos. 16, 25; Simpson, 'Kingship in miniature', 132–3.
[113] *Alexander III*, nos. 24, 29.
[114] Five additional letters from Alexander to Henry in 1262 all use the same attestation. See *Alexander III*, nos. 34, 35, 37–9.
[115] *Alexander III*, no. 49; Birch, *Scottish Seals*, I, 28–30, 119, 121.

Figure 10.3 Small seal (obverse) of Alexander III, king of Scots, on a grant to the abbot and convent of Melrose, issued at Newbattle, 8 June 1252. Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland, Melrose Charters, GD 55/336. Reproduced with kind permission of The Buccleuch Collections.

depicted the king enthroned on their obverse. The small seal bears an unconventional choice of legend which has long perplexed historians. The royal figure was encircled by words Christ had spoken to his apostles: ESTO PRVDENS VT SERPENS ET SIMPLEX SICVT COLVMBA ('be as wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove').[116] Alexander's second Great Seal, by contrast, adopted a more traditional legend: ALEXANDER . DEO . RECTORE . REX . SCOTTORVM. Various interpretations have been posited to account for the small seal's legend, including that it is an obscure reference to Saint Columba or a fitting warning for a boy king 'who has to learn to grow up into the realm of harsh political reality as he reaches maturity'.[117] Seals were not produced solely to impart advice to their owners, however. The

[116] Matthew 10:16. [117] Duncan, *Scotland*, 556; Simpson, 'Kingship in miniature', 137.

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authoritative presentation of Alexander's kingship to the political community through the small seal was more important than the proclamation of an apt personal motto or the display of biblical learning. This seal legend should be read as a prominent, public reclamation of the positive link between innocence and childhood within the context of royal authority.[118]

Other aspects of the seal's iconography support this perspective. Attention has often focused on the small seal's depiction of a sword lying across the king's knees rather than in his hand, but this does not necessarily signify a lack of justice under the child ruler.[119] Royal and episcopal acts drew prominent attention to Alexander's presence at and participation in judicial settlements during his childhood; a seal impression indicating the exact opposite would be unlikely.[120] It is also revealing that, when Alexander had greater influence over the design of the new seal matrix for his second Great Seal, he opted to omit the sword entirely from the obverse. Instead, he chose to represent himself holding a sceptre in his right hand (Figure 10.4).[121] The sword was confined to the seal's reverse, where it was wielded by a mounted warrior astride a galloping horse. Rather than articulating limits to the boy king's authority, Alexander's small seal only redoubled efforts to stress the legitimacy and divinely ordained nature of the child's rule. This was an especially pertinent message at a time when Scottish envoys were petitioning the papacy to grant full rights of anointing and coronation to the kings of Scots.[122] The English king had also recently sought, and been denied, a papal grant of his right to consent to the Scottish ruler's coronation.[123] Alexander's small seal depicted him crowned, holding a foliated sceptre and, in the later impressions from June 1252, surrounded by the words DEI GRA' REX SCOTT'.[124] Later that year, Henry III paid for the creation of a double-sided seal for his twelve-year-old daughter Margaret, queen of Scots. Little evidence for Margaret's seal survives, so we cannot be certain what legend it bore or if she ever used it to issue documents, but it would have reinforced the image of the royal couple's ruling

[118] Ward, 'Star lit by God', in press.
[119] As suggested in Simpson, 'Kingship in miniature', 136.
[120] See Chapter 8.
[121] Earlier seals of majesty had typically depicted the king of Scots holding a sword in his right hand. See Birch, *Scottish Seals*, I, 105, 109, 113.
[122] Taylor, 'Historical writing'; Duncan, *Kingship*, 152, who suggests the small seal may have been created expressly to approach the pope about anointing; Broun, *Scottish Independence*, 203–4, for Alexander II's earlier attempt to secure the right of coronation.
[123] See *ASR*, 58–9, for Innocent IV's letter refusing the English king's requests.
[124] Simpson, 'Kingship in miniature', 138.

Figure 10.4 Second Great Seal (obverse) of Alexander III, king of Scots, on a grant to Melrose, issued at Traquair, 12 December 1264. Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland, Melrose Charters, GD 55/324. Reproduced with kind permission of The Buccleuch Collections.

identity especially if it, too, employed the DEI GRATIA form.[125] Alexander's small seal still represented the full weight of royal authority even if this was embodied in a more petite form, much like the king himself. In parallel with the small seal, there were attempts to use Alexander's coinage to support a similar political message. The depiction of a youthful unbearded figure on the obverse of 'Phase E' of the Short Cross coinage served to identify 'the youth and innocence of the king with the authority of the currency circulating under his name'.[126]

The circumstances of child kingship necessitated the creation of Alexander's small seal, but the statement the seal made was of the harmony of

[125] Nelson, 'Queens and queenship', 239. For *Dei gratia* on the seal of Margaret's mother, Eleanor of Provence, see E. A. R. Brown, 'Eleanor of Aquitaine reconsidered: the woman and her seasons', in J. C. Parsons and B. Wheeler (eds.), *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* (New York, 2002), 1–54 (47 n. 141).

[126] Taylor, *Shape of the State*, 392–3 (quote at 393).

youth and rulership, with a divinely chosen child as king of Scots. This diverged from the message behind Louis IX's seal of majesty, which had stressed the continuity of Capetian kingship without directing attention to the king's childhood. It was also a far cry from the arrangements for Henry III's Great Seal. Henry's guardians and counsellors had displayed their influence over royal actions through the regulation of the boy king's seal and the application of tenurial legal measures which shaped the ruler's progression to maturity. Alexander's guardians and counsellors instead chose to create an entirely new seal design which acknowledged the king's childhood without attempting to regulate his authority.

The pursuit of precise indications of the beginning of a boy king's 'personal rule' has attracted disproportionate attention even though attempts to pin maturity to a specific age are misleading. A warning has already been sounded against making too distinct a gap between Alexander III's 'minority' and 'majority', especially considering the continuities of personnel around the king.[127] Similar caution is advisable in other cases. The idea of a king's 'minority' is a convenient collective expression to denote the years a child sat on the throne, and I have employed the term intermittently throughout this book, but its application is problematic.[128] 'Minority' does not have a straightforward equivalent in either Latin or vernacular sources, even as legal expressions such as *infra etatem*, *legitima etas* and *minor etas* became more widespread. The term implies a static concept with a predetermined, formalised end date, a situation which bears little resemblance to any of the cases in this study and fails to capture the nuances of change over time.

Boy kings experienced the transitional years from childhood to young adulthood very differently in the thirteenth century than they had in the eleventh. As coronation and anointing became less common aspects of a child's preparation for rule, inauguration and royal office-holding became increasingly important stimuli in altering how social and cultural markers of maturity applied to boy kings. Together with the consolidation and diffusion of ideas about knighthood's symbolism and status, these shifts entirely severed arming's previous association with the onset of a king's adolescence. The rise of sealing as the pre-eminent form for exhibiting royal authority prompted more diverse responses to a child's succession by the thirteenth century. Sometimes this resulted in greater regulation of the seal of majesty, as in England where the seal's use was bound ever more tightly to notions of royal maturity and the king's will.

[127] Young, 'Noble families', 7–8.

[128] See also D. Bates, 'The Conqueror's adolescence', *ANS*, 25 (2002), 1–18 (3).

Elsewhere, the creation of novel seal forms celebrated youth's compatibility with royal rule. Differences in how political communities managed a boy king's progression to young adulthood are far more apparent by the thirteenth century, but shifting legal ideas of maturity had a prominent influence across the kingdoms of north-western Europe. Greater emphasis on the significance of aristocratic legal majority – increasingly associated with a young man's twenty-first year or attainment of the age of twenty-one – pushed ideas of royal maturity later and, in some cases, encouraged further demarcation between childhood and absolute royal authority. Nevertheless, even Henry III's guardians, who generally endorsed the idea that their ruler should be bound by the same legal practices which applied to aristocratic children in cases of tenurial wardship, recognised that kingship and political expediency necessitated greater flexibility in notions of maturity. The broader norms of male aristocratic experience by the thirteenth century – that children could not accept arms or possess a seal, and that knighting and sealing were closely entwined markers of young adulthood – did not transfer neatly onto the circumstances of child kingship.