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Title : Expressing the Indescribable : the Expression *Rex et Sacerdos* through the Figures of the Priest-King Melchisedech and the Prester John in the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire, 1198-1517

Version anglaise :

This thesis studies the question of *rex et sacerdos* through the only two king-priests seen positively by medieval society, the king-priest Melchisedech and the priest John, in the spaces of the kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire, from the beginning of the pontificate of Innocent III in 1199 until the eve of the Reformation in 1517.

The angle of attack is that of the figures themselves, to then study their presence or absence in the sources. Three questions arise: the question of the representation and justification of the double power of these figures in the sources, whereas the union of powers should not be able to exist outside of Christ. The second question is that of the modalities of acceptance or rejection of these figures by the medieval political society, which allows or not their use in the debates. The last question is that of their place in the medieval imaginatio, as part of utopias or as real models of power, depending on the circumstances.

In the first part, we trace the history of the expression *rex et sacerdos* from its Roman and biblical origins to the end of the 12th century, in a triple analysis of the biblical, textual/iconographic and finally political traditions. The second part is devoted to the study of the great dynamics of the sources, with a particular study of texts and images on a broad spectrum of sources. The third part is devoted to political case studies under the popes, emperors and kings of France of the period, and to case studies on the points of difference between the laity and the clergy that are war, marriage and the relationship to the altar. Finally, the fourth part is devoted to the vision of the priest-kings by the medieval society outside the medieval West, whether they are spatially elsewhere, like the priest John in the East, or chronologically elsewhere, like the Hasmonean kings, in order to show that it is impossible for a priest-king to be durably present and even desired in the medieval Latin West before the end of time.

The sources used are primarily illuminated manuscript sources, such as typological works (*Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, *Biblia Pauperum*), devotional works, illuminated Bibles, travelogues and universal chronicles. In addition to these sources, there are Latin edited political sources, such as the anonymous *Reformatio Sigismundi*, the *Defensor Pacis* by Marsilio of Padua, and the works of Giles of Rome.