Wenceslas looks out: Monarchy, locality, and the symbolism of power in fourteenth-century Bavaria

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An armed and armored man gazes out in life-sized stone effigy from an exterior choir buttress on the church of St Mary in the medieval mining town of Sulzbach in north-east Bavaria. (Fig. 1) He wears the fashionable, narrow-waisted armor of the later fourteenth century, with a broad cloak around his shoulders and a courtly dagger at his richly-worked belt-clasp. Who he might be has attracted various opinions over the centuries; but why he came to be there appears more readily explicable. His presence seems unmistakably to relate to the time, after mid-century, when Sulzbach with the lands round about fell under the lordship of the king of Bohemia, the energetic and image-conscious Charles IV (r. 1346/7-1378): the time when, no doubt partly in response to Charles’s own actions, the church choir was rebuilt in the contemporary gothic style.¹

Sulzbach’s well-armed, petrified knight stands as a troubling reminder of an age in which, across Europe, the symbols of new lordship arrived in the train of companies of stylishly-dressed fighting men. The Swiss chronicler Diebold Schilling, writing in the century after the Sulzbach effigy, had no doubt as to the purpose of the rich banners and devices that the contemporary dukes of Burgundy bore with them: it was to “bring the common people into terror and fear” in the lands that they entered.² Late-medieval people learned to read with trepidation the visible signs of princely power. A notary engaged by the monks of Christ Church Canterbury, in dispute with the English king at the end of the thirteenth century, recounted how the community’s granaries had been sealed by royal agents, who had placed
on them the king’s device, “as if of a predatory lion.” Above all else, it seems, the visible signs of monarchy encoded the formative, compelling power of the monarch himself: in the kingdom of France, to damage or disrespect them was treason.

By their signs, princes conquered, and in those same signs subjects daily read their subjection. Such is the conclusion of much recent scholarship on the late-medieval period, in which war and the building of extended dynastic polities are found to have been underpinned by strategies of visual representation and legitimation disseminated from princely court centers. Mostly such studies focus on western Europe, rather than on the far-flung, loosely-knit territories of the Holy Roman Empire. Just one late-medieval emperor bucks the trend, to attain the front rank of image-making monarchs, alongside a Charles V of France, a Richard II of England, or a Philip the Good of Burgundy: Charles IV of Luxemburg. Charles, who combined the elective imperial crown with his hereditary kingdom of Bohemia, resembles other late-medieval monarchs in ruling over a large and complex, composite patrimony that—at least in the portion pertaining to the Bohemian crown—he worked tirelessly to extend. In pursuit of this goal, the current consensus seems clear, he relied heavily upon a visual culture of power rooted in a rich and settled court. It is this—partially defensible, but unduly one-sided—perspective that the present essay will challenge, through an examination of local influences upon Caroline visual culture. To this end, we will need in due course to revisit our enigmatic armed man on his lonely pedestal outside St Mary’s, Sulzbach.

Charles IV’s current almost universally high profile is of fairly recent origin. Only in Czech historiography, which concentrated on his rule in Bohemia, is his reputation as a great medieval monarch old-established. There, a bourgeois nationalist tradition rooted in the nineteenth century, lauding the king as a wise state-builder and benevolent father to the Czech people, was perpetuated under the state Marxism of the ČSSR. That Charles’s face currently adorns the hundred-koruna banknote of the Czech Republic reflects long tradition.
Elsewhere, however, perspectives on the king were different, or hardly existed at all. Although Charles always commanded considerable attention in German historical scholarship, judgments upon a monarch whose main concern seemed to be for his Bohemian dynastic kingdom were for a long time ambivalent at best.\(^8\) Set beside the perceived imperial glories of the preceding high-medieval *Kaiserzeit*, the Caroline era appeared from German-nationalist perspectives as an age of decline, under a monarch who to some hardly seemed German at all.\(^9\) Anglophone scholarship, in Britain and North America, when it noticed late-medieval central Europe, was mainly interested in the (“proto-Protestant”) Hussite era in Bohemia, whose origins lay in the generation after Charles’s death.\(^10\)

Things began to change during the final decades of the twentieth century. In part, the explanation lies in a shift in values among Charles’s students, so that qualities previously regretted in some quarters—his perceived internationalism and cultural cosmopolitanism, for example—now attracted warm praise.\(^11\) In an era of post-war reconciliation, rejection of strident nationalism, and east-west détente, the time seemed ripe to applaud (in the words of his most influential modern biographer) “an emperor in Europe.”\(^12\) But what did more than anything to launch Charles’s modern career as a pre-eminent fourteenth-century image politician—a “statesman and artistic patron” in one telling formulation\(^13\)—is the succession of high-profile exhibitions that he has enjoyed, beginning with those staged to mark the anniversary of his death in 1978.\(^14\) The appetite for showcasing the splendors of Caroline court culture was boosted by the fall of the Iron Curtain, which made gathering up the treasures scattered across his vast central-European domains both practicable and politically attractive. The (usually beautifully produced and sumptuously illustrated) catalogues and essay-volumes accompanying these shows have published and summarized much of the immense recent research that the exhibition boom helped to stimulate. Their often unwitting effect has been to foster an assumption that the emperor’s contemporaries were necessarily as
enthralled by the glittering artefacts of his court as are modern art historians and exhibition tourists. That same assumption has been fed by tenacious older views of Charles, as subtle arch-manipulator and Bohemian architect of state—a monarch with a political blueprint realized in gold, gems, and soaring masonry. The present paper aims significantly to qualify this view.

The current consensus is firm. “Art,” for Charles, was above all an “instrument of rule,” a medium for “propaganda.”15 His actions exemplify, as a recent general history explains, how in the late Middle Ages “artwork propagated the ideology of states.”16 Caroline politics was a “politics of presentation.”17 Charles’s own directive role takes center-stage. He was the “visionary and founder,” who instigated a full-blown “artistic policy,” as a central element in his “strategy of rule” in the service of “state power.”18 He closely controlled all aspects: the king “was a master of political-dynastic stage-management; he had a virtuoso command of the whole score.”19 Caroline monarchy became its own “trademark”: a distinctive visual brand, expressive and constitutive of political unity across his far-flung, diverse, and expanding territories.20 It was encountered most intensely at the main centers of ritual political theatre in his realms, in Aachen and Nuremberg, and above all in and around Prague. But its distinctive products were also systematically exported from Charles’s Bohemian capital, as visible assertions of power and a standing call for allegiance in the provinces.21

The present paper aims to disrupt and complicate this narrative and to off-center Caroline visual culture, by viewing it not from the court but from the perspective of provincial society. It concentrates upon the territories in north-eastern Bavaria, sometimes known collectively by their post-medieval apppellations as the Upper Palatinate (Oberpfalz) or Neuböhmen, that were incorporated—although for the most part only briefly—into the Bohemian crown lands during the 1350s and 1360s. They have been seen as the subject of
particularly intensive efforts to impose the visible presence of the new regime. But what are we to make of the tangible traces left by the fleeting Caroline era in the region? Did the ubiquitous heraldic lion of Bohemia appear from local perspectives as menacing as that of the Plantagenets sometimes did the English king’s recalcitrant subjects? Was it greeted as an unwelcome foreign predator? Did local people themselves have any constitutive role in making and interpreting images which are usually understood almost entirely as impositions from above? Recent historians seem often to have been blinded to such questions by a series of assumptions about the character, origins, objectives, and consequences of Caroline visual culture, which must be interrogated before we proceed further. Praise for Charles’s politics of symbolism usually rests upon the—generally undemonstrated and often unexamined—assumption that it was “successful.” But was it? Did it advance his aims, for himself and his dynasty? Can we, indeed, glean enough about Charles’s intentions and involvement from the scattered, sometimes enigmatic, artefacts made in his name to judge what “success” in his terms—rather than those of his modern admirers—might entail? The implications of such questions go beyond the specific case. They highlight the value of more searching assessment of the aims and achievements of “propagandist” princes elsewhere in late-medieval Europe, too.

Charles IV: the Grand Design

The view of Charles IV as the author of a “master plan” for dynastic and regnal aggrandizement, into which all elements of his rule were systematically drawn, can appear compelling. An annalist of the Cistercian monastery of Altzella, recording the death of “the cunning Charles, emperor and king of Bohemia,” reflected that he had “achieved many marvels by means of his cunning.” From a perspective closer to the court, it seemed clear
what these comprised. Heinrich von Wildenstein, in a funeral oration, declared that the emperor had “augmented the state [rem publicam], and set far and wide the bounds of the kingdom of Bohemia.”

His main aim, in which he enjoyed spectacular though fleeting success, was to assemble a vast dynastic patrimony across central and east-central Europe, founded both upon his titles as Roman king and emperor and on a much-enlarged Bohemia. His marriage diplomacy on behalf of his offspring included bids (the second successful) for the Polish and Hungarian crowns. By strengthening his influence over the process of election to the imperial throne he hoped to settle the Empire permanently on his Luxemburg heirs. In expanding his Bohemian kingdom, Charles continued a process begun under his father, King John (r. 1310-1346), who in his turn had followed the example of the later Přemyslid kings, notably Otakar II (r. 1253-1278). Already at Charles’s accession, much of Silesia, to the north-east, stood under the Bohemian crown, as did Upper Lusatia in the north. The first westward steps had also been taken. On all these fronts, Charles would continue to make gains. But possession of the imperial crown gave him an immense advantage over previous Bohemian kings. It allowed him to formulate ambitious new plans, to incorporate Bohemia into a great composite polity, binding it to the Empire’s mainly German-speaking territories north of the Alps and establishing, ultimately, a land bridge to his family’s ancestral patrimony on the western imperial frontier. In his pursuit of these goals, the imperial territories bordering Bohemia in the north and west, with north-east Bavaria among them, attained particular importance.

Charles’s long occupancy of his two thrones stands out especially from the turbulent, under-resourced reigns of most of his immediate predecessors and successors in the Empire. He travelled his wide realms and the lands beyond as no emperor had done in two centuries, criss-crossing Europe from Paris to Kraków, from Rome to Lübeck. Over the course of his reign he made at least 1,227 attested stays at 438 different locations. In tireless government
from the saddle, Charles resembles the greatest figures of an earlier imperial age, but in other respects his activities as king and emperor point in new directions. Towns had a particular importance as a foundation for Caroline rule, as well as for its legitimation through display. He drew upon the financial resources and expertise of urban mercantile elites, and took a keen interest in the economic development of his realms. Towns, both in the Bohemian crown lands and in the Empire at large, were favored, but were also heavily taxed to support the king’s ambitious and costly projects.

Charles’s visibility to his subjects displays clear geographical patterns, although with shifts of emphasis over his long reign. Particularly important were the towns and castles strung out along an extended east-west axis, running from Breslau (Wróclaw) in his Silesian dynastic lands to the imperial city of Frankfurt am Main, on which he spent around half his reign. Above all, he was to be found at major centers on the middle portion of this route: his dynastic capital of Prague, where he spent around thirty per cent of his time as king and emperor, and the major imperial center of Nuremberg, which saw some ten per cent of his presence. The block of lands that Charles acquired in Bavaria straddled and controlled the communications arteries between these two key sites. He would justify their acquisition to the electors, whose formal assent he required, as enabling the king of Bohemia more easily to attend imperial elections in Frankfurt and assemblies in Nuremberg. That they should have become a major focus of his attention seems only natural.

It is hard to think of a late-medieval ruler better qualified than Charles IV to devise and direct a Kunstpolitik. He was unusually well-educated for a late-medieval monarch, having spent his youth at the French royal court—an intellectual formation which was reflected in the university that he established in Prague (1348). His linguistic powers inspired contemporary wonder. Charles’s learned interests, embracing theology, history, liturgy, and law, found reflection in his own Latin writings. These indicate a strong concern
with the doctrinal foundations of his rule as king and emperor, and include, in addition to his 
Autobiography, a coronation ordo, a new life of St Wenceslas, and a preface and arengae to 
the chapters of his Bohemian law code, the Maiestas Carolina. Charles’s close knowledge 
of the lands under his rule did not depend only upon his own wide travels: the concentration 
of imperial government in Prague encouraged greater sophistication in written 
communications and record-keeping. The close personal interest that Charles took in the 
visual representation of his monarchy is repeatedly attested, and besides his own actions, 
the prestige of his court ensured that the distinctive styles of Caroline visual culture were 
widely disseminated and imitated—and doubtless widely recognizable, at least among the 
political classes of kingdom and Empire.

Accounts of the ideological, centrally-directed, and co-ordinated character of Caroline 
visual culture can point to its concentration at the main centers for the exercise and 
legitimation of his rule. The heavy focus of art-historical studies upon sites in and around 
Prague, and on the topography of the city itself, draws justification from the fact that it was in 
Prague that Charles’s image as ruler attained the fullest articulation. It is there, and at the 
nearby castle of Karlstein, that his own initiative role in giving his monarchy visible form is 
most evident. Karlstein came to house the imperial regalia, with their relics of Christ’s 
Passion, while Prague became the site of their annual public veneration. Both at the castle 
and within the city, elaborate visual programmes exalted the Bohemian and imperial 
monarchies and situated the monarch and his dynasty in relation to sacral, legitimizing, 
regnal and imperial pasts. It was at Prague and Karlstein that most of the known portraits and 
crypto-portraits of Charles himself were to be found. Processional routes linking key sites 
within the city allowed participants to journey symbolically through sacral-regnal time as 
they moved through urban space.
In Prague, the pictorial and ritual symbolisms of dynastic realm and elective Empire were visibly combined in mutual affirmation, just as Charles’s Bohemian-regnal and imperial powers reinforced each other in the practice of rule. Through his own projects for reshaping urban topography—most notably, his founding in 1348 of the New Town, which tripled the city’s size—Charles demonstrated how entire landscapes might be re-fashioned for ideological no less than material ends. It is in Prague that the king is seen exploiting the broad vistas afforded by his imperial rule to recruit and gather together workers in the visual arts in varied media from diverse corners of his realms. And it was not only the living whom he drew in to enrich his capital. Prague was transformed into a sacred treasury for the bones of saints, which Charles gathered from throughout the Empire and beyond. For his relic-collection, just as for other material symbols of his monarchy, Prague acted not only as treasure house but clearing house, a hub for far-reaching distribution networks.

The cults of saints especially important to Charles as king and emperor were systematically translocated between principal sites. He established at Aachen, the main cult-center of the emperor-saint (and Charles’s paternal ancestor) Charlemagne, an altar to the Bohemian patron (and the king’s maternal ancestor) St Wenceslas. Charlemagne’s cult was in turn introduced into his New-Town foundation in Prague, where the church of the Augustinian convent of Karlshof was dedicated to the Frank and probably modelled architecturally on his minster-church at Aachen. Charlemagne’s memory was celebrated at Karlstein, through the presence there of his relics – not least, the items of imperial regalia associated with him.

Charles also sought to reproduce elements of the symbolic programmes of Prague and Karlstein at other ideologically important sites in his realms, such as Aachen, Nuremberg, and the palace that he founded at Tangermünde in the Mark Brandenburg. More broadly, he established numerous and diverse ties to himself and his court through his many gifts of relics.
to selected churches, in the Empire at large but particularly within his dynastic territories and at sites that he was in the process of binding to his rule. The Bavarian town of Sulzbach was, as we will see, among the centers to benefit in this way from the munificence of its new lord. Yet how far the monarch and his court were responsible for fashioning the local material settings for such gifts, in art and architecture, at these far-flung provincial locations is generally far from clear. Such indications as we have seem on occasion to point instead to the work of local hands.50

The Limits of Central Direction

The view of Charles IV as master-impresario of the visual, fashioning a symbolic empire of images and artefacts as a central resource of rule, is now commonplace. It is a view easily justified and, it seems, richly supported. But it does not represent the full picture and is potentially misleading. Habitual reference to Caroline visual culture as “propaganda” oversimplifies the impulses that called it into being and encourages over-optimistic assumptions about its political consequences.51 Within the Empire at large, there are relatively few indications that visual invocations of Charles’s rule did much to raise awareness of him, still less that they swayed contemporary judgments in his favor. Even in his dynastic territories, where exposure to the royal image was greater, the signs are that it was met on occasion with indifference or open hostility.

The negative verdicts on Charles delivered in some of the older historiography could cite in justification the judgments of contemporary chroniclers, particularly from the Empire’s German lands.52 In these accounts (admittedly often concentrating on his troubled early years on the throne), Charles commonly appears as lacking in the qualities of majesty.53 Even in chronicles recounting the apogee of his reign as emperor, tales of unforeseen,
humiliating incidents suddenly befalling him are strikingly at odds with the transcendent dignity of his visual imagery. In chronicles from the imperial towns, where visible reference to monarchy was always close at hand, it was the burden of Charles’s taxation, and the vexatious means by which he attained it, that tended to be remembered. His development of Prague is mentioned by some German writers, one of whom claimed that he had transferred to the city the seat of Empire, which was previously at Rome and Constantinople. His devotion to the cult of saints and avid accumulation of relics are noted. But such references often come combined with laments about the emperor’s excessive favor for his Bohemian kingdom, where he spent too much time and where he hoarded the Empire’s treasures, sacred and profane.

Even in his Bohemian kingdom, the persuasive power of Caroline image-making was evidently modest. It certainly did little to win over the native nobility, who would force their king ignominiously to withdraw his legal reform for the kingdom, the *Maiestas Carolina*, and to claim, implausibly, that the text had been accidentally destroyed. Glimpses of the local reception of Charles’s royal image in his dynastic lands are afforded by the chronicle written by Johannes von Guben, town scribe of Zittau in Upper Lusatia. These have particular interest, since they relate to the small-town landscape of a largely German-speaking province of the Bohemian crown, crossed by major communications routes and thus, it seems, broadly comparable to eastern Bavaria. Johannes is unusual in engaging explicitly with the visual symbolism of Caroline rule, describing closely the iconography of a Bohemian silver Heller, with crowned bust and armorial lion. Regnal imagery, even at its most “banal,” could evidently catch the attentive local eye. That did not, however, prove to be of much help to its royal subject. Charles, fulminated Johannes, was an “oppressive lord,” who encouraged disputes between Zittau’s burghers in order to amerce them. His recurrent theme is the king’s demands, for military manpower and, particularly, money payments. That Johannes
knew (and specifically mentions) that some of these latter had gone to fund the rebuilding of St Vitus’ cathedral did nothing to lessen his resentment. Charles, who had “enserfed” the town, is implicitly contrasted with an earlier Bohemian king, Otakar II, its founder, whose wise measures and generous grants of liberties and trading privileges had formed the basis of Zittau’s prosperity. Yet elsewhere in his domains, it was Charles himself who would appear as a founder and benefactor of towns, and not merely their exploiter. Where that was the case, the visible signs of his rule might enjoy a different reception—as becomes clear from the case of north-eastern Bavaria, to which we must now turn.

Charles IV and the Upper Palatinate

The surviving traces of Charles’s involvement with the region indicate predictably wide ambition and ceaseless activity. They also seem to disclose, viewed from a local perspective, royal government at its most tangible and burdensome. The nature of the Bavarian territories and their particular importance for the king encouraged a firm and busy hand and a keen eye for gain. Faced with a complete absence of contemporary texts reflecting local voices from Bohemia’s Bavarian lands, it is tempting to fill the void with Johannes von Guben’s pungent response to Caroline lordship in Upper Lusatia. Yet circumstances in Bavaria were in some ways different, resulting in different local experiences of Bohemian rule—which in turn found reflection in visual representation and memory.

Charles’s properties in the region came into his hands over a period of years, by various means. Bohemian footholds west of the frontier already existed when he came to the throne, through the imperial pledges granted to King John by the Wittelsbach emperor Ludwig IV (r. 1314-1347). A substantial parcel of Wittelsbach castles and settlements fell to Charles himself in 1349, as the dowry of his second queen, Anna of the Palatinate, only to be
lost briefly at her death four years later. The real foundation for Charles’s Bavarian territory was laid in 1353, when Anna’s dowry properties returned to him, substantially augmented by new gains, including the valuable and growing town of Sulzbach, in settlement of the Palatinate Wittelsbachs’ debts. Piecemeal acquisitions continued under various terms throughout most of the 1350s and 1360s.65

In a diploma dated 5 April 1355, the day of his imperial coronation in Rome, Charles legally incorporated his Bavarian acquisitions into the ambit of the Bohemian crown, thereby affirming their central importance to his wider territorial plans.66 The corona regni Bohemiae, a transpersonal constitutional concept which attained particular importance under Charles, took on visible form in the new Bohemian crown that he had commissioned and that usually resided upon a bust reliquary of St Wenceslas in St Vitus’ cathedral.67 The burghers of Sulzbach accordingly swore fealty, in November 1353, “to our lord the king as king of Bohemia, to his heirs and successors as kings of Bohemia, and to the crown of the same kingdom [der Kronen dez selben Künckreichs], as our natural, perpetual lords.”68 The adherence of territories to the Bohemian crown had implications for the ways in which royal power was represented visually, as will shortly become clear. It also, in principle (and from a local perspective, importantly), endowed Charles’s acquisitions with constitutional permanence, prohibiting their alienation.

By the late 1360s, however, the king’s priorities were changing, as his eyes turned towards the still-richer prize of Brandenburg, with its electoral vote and routes into northern and north-eastern Europe.69 In 1373, as part of his measures to raise the staggering sums needed to purchase the Mark, Charles handed back the—more important—southern portion of his Bavarian lands, including the town of Sulzbach, to the Wittelsbachs. Although this act took the form of redeemable pledges, the surrender proved permanent. The remaining Bohemian lands “beyond the forest” were then mostly lost under Charles’s luckless heir
Wenceslas (r. 1363/76-1400/19). In something like its full extent, the Bavarian lordship of the king of Bohemia had existed for barely twenty years.

For most of that time, however, the king was building for the long term. It was not only the region’s importance to Charles’s wider goals that encouraged heavy intervention. The Bavarian lands lacked natural and historic unity: properties that had recently stood under different lords were now to be brought under a single administration. The potential gains were high, since the region was crossed by busy trade routes, running eastwards from Nuremberg towards Prague and beyond and north-eastwards to Eger (Cheb), and northwards from Regensburg into Thuringia and Saxony. The lands themselves were rich in natural resources, including deposits of iron ore, along with abundant timber and fast-flowing streams to support metal-working industries. Intervention was also encouraged by the character of regional settlement. Towns were few and small at the start of Charles’s reign, but an abundance of proto-urban market centres located on or close to long-distance highways signalled rich potential for growth. To a monarch with an inexhaustible appetite for taxes and dues, and with a keen sense of the potential benefits of direct royal intervention, particularly in regions bordering his Bohemian kingdom, such growth appeared well worth fostering.

Bohemian government quickly gained a firm grip on the new lands. “For who doubts that castles are truly necessary?,” asks the Maiestas Carolina, in a passage that may originate with Charles himself. And castles were duly acquired, rebuilt, and extended throughout the territory, some now gaining substantial permanent garrisons. Institutions of justice and written administration were developed, centralized on Sulzbach. A Captain, drawn from the Bohemian nobility, was placed in over-all charge of the land, although—importantly, for local perceptions of the new regime—many of the numerous lesser offices went to members of the regional nobility. A detailed register of dues and renders owed to the crown, similar
to those compiled for other Luxemburg dependencies, was drawn up for use by the Sulzbach administration.\textsuperscript{77} This included a full account of the arrangements for collecting tolls and providing armed escorts to travellers between specified points on the main east-west highway. The solid infrastructure of rule depended in turn upon heavy, though varying, dues and renders owed by individual communities.\textsuperscript{78} The Bohemian lion stalking the land was hungry indeed. Yet the nature of the new territories invited royal behaviors more complex than mere rapacity; and the surviving visual deposit of Bohemian rule suggests that local responses were likewise complex.

Uncertain Signs: Looking for Bohemia in the Provinces

In Bavaria, too, Charles’s efforts in the visual field are predictably highly rated in recent scholarship,\textsuperscript{79} but their main fruits are far from easy to interpret. The most substantial of these is the castle at Lauf, around three hours’ ride east of Nuremberg on the road towards Bohemia.\textsuperscript{80} Built during the later 1350s on the site of an earlier fortress, it served as a toll-station but was clearly also designed to provide a visually magnificent representation of Bohemian lordship—although to whom and to precisely what end remains uncertain. It fulfils no defensive function but is richly decorated. Specifically, it includes a first-floor chamber with walls incised with more than a 120 armorials, portraying the political structure of the Bohemian kingdom with its component territories, major towns and churches, but emphasizing particularly the secular nobility.\textsuperscript{81} The Bohemian patron St Wenceslas is twice represented: in a low-relief carving in the armorial hall and in a full-length statue on the gatehouse exterior (Fig. 2). Both images show the saint bearing a shield displaying the Bohemian lion, which also adorns a keystone and the gatehouse façade.\textsuperscript{82}
That the project and its decoration are linked to the Caroline court is beyond doubt. Architectural details show affinities with Karlstein and with the choir of St Vitus—both works in progress when the castle at Lauf was under construction. The armorials’ identifying inscriptions signal the involvement of Czech-speakers. Much less clear, however, are the purpose and meaning of its rich—and, among Charles’s buildings, unique—iconography. Lauf’s common identification as a “residence” is misleading: although the king stayed there several times, all his visits were brief, and he spent much longer at nearby Sulzbach, as well as in Nuremberg. Indeed, the castle is too small to have supported more than the shortest stays. It is possible that the imagery at Lauf, which stood close to the westernmost limit of Bohemian lordship, was aimed particularly at high-status travellers entering the newly-established territory. The armorial display may even represent a visualization of the promise expressed in Charles’s 1355 incorporation diploma, which invokes the powers of the Bohemian kingdom as guarantor of the security of those passing through its Bavarian lands. But it can never have reached or influenced a numerically large public. The works of the master-propagandist on the throne of Prague raise a surprising number of unresolved questions regarding their origin and communicative purpose.

In the problems that it poses for familiar accounts of Caroline image-policy, the castle at Lauf has a striking counterpart in another major building project dating from just a few years later, and also located towards the edge of the expanding Bohemian patrimony. In the mid-1360s, work began on an ambitious complex of buildings, combining a palace and a Celestine monastery, sited on a clifftop in a remote spot at Oybin, not far from Zittau in Upper Lusatia. Here too, masons appear to have been employed with links to the Bohemian court, and a surviving armorial fragment from the now-ruinous church confirms it as a royal project. It was paid for in part by dues extracted from the nearby town. Yet the purpose of the palace-monastery complex remains obscure, the intended public for its prestigious
architecture and decoration no less so. Charles himself hardly ever stayed there, and the nature of the site would have ensured that few of the travellers taking the nearby highway to and from Bohemia encountered it close up. The precise objectives of the “state-propaganda power play” with which the king is now credited can at times prove surprisingly elusive—particularly for works located far from his Prague court.

But if one difficulty with Caroline image-politics concerns the narrow bounds of its demonstrable success, and another the uncertain communicative purpose of some of the ruler’s prestige projects, there is a further one: where control over the making and meaning of the visible signs of rule actually lay. Other studies of monarchical imagery in the lands of the Empire have shown how established narratives of top-down direction are prone to break down when the images in question are inspected closely in their local settings. For Charles IV, too, where the evidence is richest it often discloses a picture more complex than the familiar one of control from on high, with urban elites in particular active alongside the monarch as patrons. Caroline image-making emerges recurrently as a collaborative, perhaps negotiated, venture involving multiple interested parties, local as well as courtly.

Complex interactions of this kind are suggested particularly by another, smaller, cluster of images evoking Bohemian rule in Bavaria: the fragments of painted glass preserved in the parish church at Hersbruck, some fourteen kilometres east of Lauf on the east-west highway. These include a roundel with the Bohemian armorial and a window depicting the Virgin (to whom the church is dedicated) as the apocalyptic Woman Clothed with the Sun. The latter image in particular signals a connection to the Caroline court, where this exotic form of Marian devotion enjoyed a vogue. The painting style, too, finds parallels in the Bohemian heartlands. Yet other indicators point westwards, and hint at possible local involvement.
Why the king would have acted alone to establish these splendid (and in his Bavarian lands, unique) images at a modest settlement where he probably never lodged is unclear. For the local population, however, their potential value seems more evident. Hersbruck had done well out of Bohemian rule, which brought the market community in rapid succession grants of urban status and valuable privileges. Symbolically placing the new town’s welfare in the protective hands of the courtly Virgin and setting the Bohemian lion to stand guard in the most sacred urban space may have seemed prudent. Who could say, after all, when their generous, demanding, and restless king would next be in town—or what were his future plans for the region? Under such circumstances, the visible and lasting symbolic presence of Bohemian lordship was a potentially powerful reassurance. The involvement of local figures becomes more likely if, as recent scholarship has tentatively proposed, the glass-painters came not from Prague but nearby Nuremberg. There, Hersbruck’s elders could have found a model in the magnificent church of the Virgin (Frauenkirche), founded by Charles but with wealthy burghers as co-patrons. That church, too, boasted a Madonna in Sole window.

Just how closely the king and his court were engaged in the comprehensive ideological branding exercise often claimed merits closer scrutiny than it tends to receive. It is noteworthy that the Caroline administration never evolved a unifying documentary vocabulary for the new acquisitions, which instead appear under a varied array of titles, such as “Bavaria beyond the Bohemian forest,” “the king’s lordship in Bavaria,” “the Bavarian land,” and “the land of Sulzbach.” Charles’s own actions to establish a personal symbolic presence, moreover, were remarkably few. It seems that no unambiguous images of him were established, as they were particularly in and near to Prague. At most, his portrait circulated via small coins struck at the mint that he established in the newly-founded town of Lauf. Whether local people were as alert to their iconography (about which we lack complete
knowledge) as was Johannes von Guben is impossible to say. Nor did he seek, as he recurrently did in the Bohemian core-lands, to have castles or towns named from himself.105 Neither Lauf nor the main military strongpoint in Bavaria, nearby Rothenberg, was so identified. Just one Caroline castle was linked by name with the new masters: the fortress above the town of Pegnitz, which Charles purchased in 1357 and which gained (at whose instigation is unknown) the tellingly impersonal appellation of Böheimstein.106

Lordship, Legitimacy, Locality: St Wenceslas

This depersonalized conception of Bohemian lordship found particular material form in a figure recurrently encountered wherever Caroline rule in Bavaria was concentrated: St Wenceslas.107 The saint was present in royal chapel dedications at Lauf and Rothenberg.108 He was the dedicatee of the hospital which the king patronized, and may have founded, at his regional administrative centre, Sulzbach.109 Visual representations of Wenceslas at key locations were doubtless more numerous than surviving indications allow us to tell. A Wenceslas-figure once adorned the portal of the Sulzbach hospital-church; and mention of a St Wenceslas bridge at Rothenberg indicates the likely presence there of an image of the saint. Reference also appeared on coins minted locally.110

All this suggests a cult imposed by the new regime as the sacral legitimation and visual embodiment of its rule. Charles’s own devotion to St Wenceslas, whose name he received at baptism and whom a court historian termed his “principal aid and protector,” was profound.111 The westward extension of Wenceslas’s cult has been viewed as a manifestation of Charles’s “state piety” (Staatsfrömmigkeit), the projection of personal religiosity as an instrument of rule.112 It afforded a means of conceptualizing and visualizing Bohemian lordship in abstract, constitutional terms—particularly necessary, perhaps, in lands never
previously subject to the Bohemian king. Wenceslas gave visual articulation to the concept, repeatedly invoked in diplomas for the Bavarian territories, of the “Bohemian crown.” The saint’s image codified in Bavaria the same Bohemian regnal order that was articulated in detail in the armorial chamber at Lauf—where Wenceslas was also recurrently present.

The question of Wenceslas’s acceptability to his Bavarian subjects is not, however, only a constitutional one. Late-medieval saints were understood as the protectors and embodiments of regnal communities, that is to say, communities of identification and sentiment also imaginable as unities of blood and descent. Wenceslas’s reputation in Bohemia was as the supernatural champion of a historical kingdom and its people, under kings who, like Charles IV, were his descendants. But by Charles’s day there are signs that the Bohemian kingdom was in some quarters coming increasingly to be identified with its Czech-speaking majority population, defined particularly against their German-speaking western neighbours. Germans were also now a prominent, sometimes resented, element at court and among Bohemia’s urban elites. On occasion Wenceslas himself was drawn into the fray, reputedly deploying his supernatural powers in order to teach Germans respect for his cult and his people.

So was the saint viewed in the king’s Bavarian lands as anything more than a symbol of foreign rule, imposed by the new master in Prague and his local agents? In fact, Wenceslas’s cult had roots in the region long antedating the new lordship: his feast-day is recorded in Bamberg calendars already in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In the surrounding German-speaking regions, evidence of his cult goes back even further. In the late Middle Ages, too, local veneration of Wenceslas in north-eastern Bavaria, as reflected in parish-church dedications and devotional images, flourished independently of royal actions. It did, however, reflect to a degree the ties that already bound both secular and spiritual lords in the region to the monarch and his court: to such men, and indeed to the inhabitants of eastern
Bavaria more broadly, Bohemia was no remote or alien world. Within regional society there is little trace of the sentiments of cultural difference from, and antagonism towards, Czech-speakers, of which the nationalist historiographies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries made so much, and which did indeed find a voice during the Hussite conflict in the fifteenth century. When the Czech reformer Jan Hus himself travelled the road from Bohemia to Nuremberg in October 1414, bound for Constance, he had only praise for the warm hospitality and attentive audiences that he encountered in the German towns along the way. The Bohemian Wenceslas was a supernatural champion to whom local populations too might look.

The complex relationship between royal agency and local interest, perception, and response, and St Wenceslas’s role as mediator in that relationship, is most clearly observable in the town of Sulzbach. As the main centre of Bohemian rule in Bavaria, Sulzbach had a special importance for Charles IV. It was easily his most frequent place of stay in the new territories, his presence there attested on eighty-nine different days. Sulzbach was the point of departure (on the feast of St Wenceslas, 1354) on his journey to Rome for coronation and his first place of lodging on Bohemian soil upon his return, while in the previous year he had probably also participated in the Corpus Christi procession there. Sulzbach provided the stage for important acts of royal diplomacy. But the people of the town also benefited from their visible and active new lord. Charles quickly perceived Sulzbach’s economic and fiscal potential, confirming and extending the mining rights conceded to the burghers by his Wittelsbach predecessor and granting far-reaching trade privileges, including toll freedoms throughout Bohemia and the Empire. Under Caroline rule, Sulzbach more than doubled in size, reaching an extent not surpassed before the nineteenth century. And characteristically, the king paired economic with religious favors, donating relics to the town’s church: a finger-joint of St Burkhard and, a particular treasure, a fragment of the skull of John the Baptist.
was probably these gifts, in 1355, that occasioned the church’s rebuilding, starting with the choir—upon which would shortly afterwards be set the enigmatic armed man encountered at the start of this paper (Fig. 1), and to whom it is now time to return.  

The several identities ascribed to the figure at various times themselves help to illuminate his complex local significance. In the seventeenth century he was claimed to represent Charles IV’s son Wenceslas, whom his father had invested as count of Sulzbach and who was mistakenly credited with building the church. More recently, the statue was long believed to portray Charles himself. There can today be little doubt, however, that it was intended to represent (primarily, at least) the Bohemian patron St Wenceslas. It adheres closely to the established late-medieval iconography of the saint, showing him as a courtly knight wearing a ducal cap, a shield in his left hand – though the lance that he probably once held in his right was long ago lost. The rosettes on his breastplate signify martyrdom. Stylistically, however, the statue does not display the flowing forms of the Wenceslas-figure outside the castle at Lauf, which has been associated with Charles’s court artists, the Parlers, but instead shows affinities with late fourteenth-century Nuremberg sculpture. It probably dates from shortly after the end of Bohemian rule in the town—raising the important, still too little considered, question of who commissioned its making, and why.

Its significance and purpose are not immediately obvious. The church is dedicated to the Virgin, though it is thought to have contained a Wenceslas-altar. But the figure in any case stands not within the sacred structure but outside, isolated and exposed, facing onto urban space. This location, too, invites closer reflection than it has received. The saint gazes directly across the market place towards the town hall. That building, symbolising Sulzbach’s corporate existence and the municipal rights that Charles had confirmed and extended, was likewise constructed in the second half of the fourteenth century, and shares
architectural details with the adjacent church. Who sponsored the Wenceslas-statue’s making—the court, local royal agents, Sulzbach burghers, or some mix of these groups—is unknown, although its probable late date points strongly to local initiative. Perhaps significantly, it was believed in the seventeenth century to have been made at the townspeople’s behest.

That the saint should occupy an exterior location, relating to his urban surroundings, fits a broader pattern: Wenceslas is recurrently found out of doors. He had a particular affinity with bridges. A famous statue of the saint, now in the Wenceslas chapel of St Vitus, previously occupied a niche on the cathedral’s south façade. From there, it has been proposed, Wenceslas directed his approving gaze towards the nearby royal palace, habitation of his descendants and successors on the throne. But if St Wenceslas could thus shed welcome legitimacy upon Charles IV in his capital, might he not also be co-opted to lend visible and permanent endorsement to the king’s precious but vulnerable grants to his new subjects? Wenceslas stood, importantly, for the perpetual endurance of the Bohemian crown and its subject lands, of which each king was regarded as a mere temporary trustee. Such undying symbolic affirmation might have seemed all the more welcome when it became clear that Bohemian rule might not prove so permanent after all. But the possibility cannot be dismissed that the statue was also intended as a crypto-portrait of Charles IV (who was, after all, Wenceslas’s blood descendant), or quickly came to be understood as such by the townspeople. For Charles too is to be found gazing benevolently down from exterior church fabric over urban space and its privileged occupants.

Embodying Urban Privilege
In the imperial town of Mühlhausen in Thuringia, the emperor peeps down in over-life-sized
effigy from above the south portal of the principal church, the Marienkirche, in company with
his queen and two courtiers. (Fig. 3). The figures are roughly contemporary with the
Sulzbach Wenceslas, though there are no grounds to suppose a connection. In later tradition
at least, the emperor’s effigy participated directly in the town’s constitutional life, as the
council was annually sworn in under his gaze. In Mühlhausen, too, the figure faces towards
the Rathaus. And while little is known about why or at whose initiative these images came to
be made, there are good grounds for thinking that the petrified emperor was understood as a
guarantor of urban liberties—specifically, of Mühlhausen’s continued enjoyment of direct
imperial lordship, safe from the otherwise ever-present danger of pledging to a neighbouring
prince. For communities with much to lose, the perpetual symbolic presence of the ruler on
whom their rights depended had obvious attractions.

German towns were quite capable of invoking for themselves the monarch’s
talismanic presence in symbolically-charged locations. In certain cases, such as the
monumental carved figure of Ludwig IV in the town hall at Nuremberg, the purpose seems to
have been directly to embody the freedoms granted to the town under that emperor’s seal.
The town hall front, the market place in its shadow, adjacent church portals and façades, and
standing structures such as fountains, all came to bear cycles of figure-sculpture and heraldry,
constructing the town’s relationship with royal authority—usually on terms that visibly suited
the burgher elite. James Masschaele has written of late medieval England that “markets
created an audience for the state, and the state gradually realized that it made sense to
perform before it.” But in Germany urban audiences were performers too, with meanings
of their own to inscribe upon the visible signs of power. Local symbols of lordship might thus
become the subject of changing interpretations, rewritten over time as champions of urban
liberties even against the town’s lord. The monumental figures of Charlemagne’s paladin
Roland, widespread in towns across northern Germany in the late Middle Ages, came with time to symbolize the collective defence of urban privileges—in particular, trading privileges—understood as imperial grants. The militantly sentinel Roland (himself a warrior-martyr in late-medieval estimation) invites at least broad comparison with the Sulzbach Wenceslas.

The saint was not, however, the only symbol of Bohemian rule facing Sulzbach’s town hall across the market. On the façade of the adjacent house “Zur Krone” are still visible three carved armorials: the Bohemian lion and two eagles, one that of the Empire, the other perhaps the customary device of St Wenceslas. (Fig. 4) Their significance has generally been regarded as straightforward: marking the monarch’s lodgings with his arms was common practice. The former patrician house may indeed have been Charles IV’s occasional place of stay—though modern archaeological work on the palace outside the town has undermined the earlier belief that the house “Zur Krone” was his regular lodgings. Yet the armorials’ permanent sculpted form, their location facing the Rathaus, and the apparent invocation of St Wenceslas alongside the king, all seem to suggest a more substantial purpose, as do the deliberate steps that were taken locally to preserve them. Nor were they unique in Caroline Bavaria. A carved Bohemian armorial of similar style survives on a house-front in Hirschau, again—and again perhaps significantly—adjacent to the Rathaus. (Fig. 5) Hirschau, still more than the larger Sulzbach, owed its late-medieval success to Charles IV, who not only granted the settlement urban status but in 1367 ordered the re-routing of the east-west highway to pass through the new town. In eastern Bavaria, Bohemian lions long stood guard over a landscape transformed to the benefit of nascent burgher communities. It was not only the supposedly all-controlling Charles who might perceive advantage in their presence.
Studies of Bohemian “state-making” in Bavaria tend to be particularly impressed by the fulsome language of allegiance spoken by the symbols and inscriptions on seals from the new, or newly privileged, towns.\textsuperscript{158} “Hersbruck obediently faithful to Bohemia,” declares that town’s seal, first attested in 1364. At Neustadt an der Waldnaab, a pre-existing seal featuring St Martin came to include the Bohemian arms, with the words “Neustadt faithfully bound to the kingdom of Bohemia.” Sulzbach’s new seal (Fig. 6) showed a fortified town gate topped by a banner displaying the double-tailed lion, with the legend “Sulzbach faithful member of the crown of Bohemia.”\textsuperscript{159} Yet, while the new government doubtless made clear via local agents the expectation that towns symbolically declare their loyalty, what is striking about these seals is the absence of that standardization that might indicate close direction from above. Much was evidently left to local initiative. Nor can the sentiments expressed be dismissed as merely formal or coerced. Seen through local eyes, the banner flying above Sulzbach’s stylized walls did not guard the king’s rights alone. Who set it there—and at whose initiative other signs of Caroline lordship were established and maintained—has no simple answer. 

Suggestive here is the tenacity with which some local communities clung on to the tangible legacy of Bohemian rule many years after its ending. References to the Caroline era on town seals survived far into the post-medieval period.\textsuperscript{160} In Weiden, where Bohemian lordship ceased in 1406, the armorial lion still adorned the town gate in 1533, when someone was fined for breaking off a leg—though whether as vandalism or to secure a portion of its imagined tutelary power is unknown.\textsuperscript{161} Only in 1586 did the painter’s brush finally transform it into the golden, single-tailed beast of the Palatinate. Where artefacts of the Caroline era encoded enduring local privileges, their survival might be long indeed. The town of Neustadt an der Waldnaab preserves today a glove of Charles IV (Fig. 7), delivered to the town in 1354 in token of a grant of wood-cutting rights in the adjacent royal forests.\textsuperscript{162} Other
major grants followed for Neustadt before the Caroline era closed (although the town, exceptionally, would remain under Bohemian lords, latterly the Lobkowitz family, down to the early nineteenth century). The Caroline glove—seemingly specially made for such an occasion—was still being handed over to each incoming Bürgermeister, along with the town keys and seals, as proof of the community’s inviolable privilege, in the late seventeenth century. It offers a key to contemporary understandings of other visible deposits of Bohemian lordship in Bavaria—not only as tokens of a power enforced from above, but as material warrant for rights gained and guarded locally.

Conclusions

The surviving artefacts of Caroline visual culture are very numerous. The more portable ones alone would fill any exhibition space many times over, without considering the castles, churches, monastic sites, or entire townscapes created in Charles’s name—or, indeed, the innumerable more fleeting manifestations of his visual style, glimpsed in ritual and performance. But his realms were very large too, while many of the most striking, ambitious, and ideologically eloquent works commissioned by the monarch and by members of his court were concentrated at just a few prestigious locations. Often, they were clearly destined for few eyes, sometimes almost solely Charles’s own. This is not an art that, for much of the time, looks outward onto public spaces, to address the emperor’s passing subjects. The annual relic-showings in Prague, which drew large crowds of pilgrims and in which Charles himself played a prominent part, represent an important but relatively isolated exception.

But with increasing distance from the center the picture changes. The purpose and meaning of some surviving works become less obvious, and were perhaps less obvious to people at the time. Far from court and metropolis, the limits of the capacity of Caroline
image-culture to impress and persuade are occasionally starkly revealed. But also occasionally discernible, though almost never in detail, are the multiple and complex transactions between monarchy and locality, between agents of the centre and local elites, through which diverse signs of Caroline rule came into being and were inscribed, and re-inscribed, with meaning. If such processes seem particularly in play in Charles’s Bavarian lands west of the Bohemian forest, that is perhaps a reflection of how much was at stake there for both sides: the monarch and his agents, intent on drawing maximum benefit from a strategically-located territory; and local populations, for whom that same strategic situation promised rich but possibly impermanent rewards.

Accounts of Charles IV’s Kunstpolitik would benefit on occasion from a more cautious assessment of its character and aims and a less relentlessly optimistic (or, at least, more nuanced) estimate of its results. They might also usefully linger a little longer in the provinces. St Wenceslas looked out upon an array of diverse social and political landscapes, and where his gaze was favourably met this was often the result of local needs as much as central direction. The same principle, moreover, might usefully be extended to other late-medieval European polities. “Looking for the state” (in John Watts’s phrase) can never mean looking only for the visible symbols of power projected downwards, even if these were what sometimes caught the shocked contemporary eye: it must also involve seeking out the often-elusive signs of negotiation, compromise, and the constitutive power of locality.

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8 Generalisation is difficult, however, since the most detailed studies were often by Bohemian Germans and Austrians, who identified patriotically with Charles or regarded his composite realm as prefiguring that of the Habsburgs. See Beat Frey, “Karl IV. in der älteren Historiographie,” in Kaiser Karl IV., ed. Seibt, 399-404.

9 For an admittedly extreme example, reflecting the values of the NS era, see Josef Pfitzner, Kaiser Karl IV. (Potsdam: Athenaiion, 1938), esp. 106-7.

10 An exception is Bede Jarrett, The Emperor Charles IV (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1935). No general, book-length study of Charles has been published in English since.

11 Early signs of this shift, including a trend towards locating Charles approvingly within “European” contexts, are traced by Peter Moraw, “Kaiser Karl IV. 1378-1978: Ertrag und Konsequenzen eines Gedenkjahres,” in Politik, Gesellschaft, Geschichtsschreibung: Gießner Festgabe für F. Graus, no editor (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1982), 224-318 (here esp. 269-86).

Exhibitions dedicated to Charles’s reign were held in 1978 in Nuremberg and Prague, with another, concentrating on the emperor’s court artists, the Parler family, in Cologne. Subsequent major exhibitions with Charles as their theme took place in New York and Prague in 2005-6 and in Prague and Nuremberg in 2016-17. Charles’s court painter Master Theodoricus was the subject of a Prague exhibition in 1998. Caroline artefacts have featured prominently in major exhibitions dedicated to the visual culture of the medieval western Empire more broadly, such as those staged at Aachen in 2000 and Magdeburg in 2006, as well as in numerous, more local and thematically specific exhibitions.


Jiří Kuthan and Jan Royt, Karel IV. Císař a český král – vizionář a zakladatel (Prague: Universitas Carolina Pragensis, 2016); Richard Němec, “Herrscher—Kunst—Metapher: Das


23 The term is used by Němec, “Kulturlandschaft und ‘Staatsidee’,” 100.


26 Seibt, Karl IV., ch. 7; Jörg K. Hoensch, Die Luxemburger (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), 155-76.


34 Moraw, “Vom Raumgefüge,” 75.


38 For Charles’s known writings and their bearing upon his political conceptions, see: Reinhard Schneider, “Karls IV. Auffassung vom Herrscheramt,” in *Beiträge zur Geschichte des mittelalterlichen deutschen Kaisertums*, ed. Theodor Schieder (Historische Zeitschrift Beihefte 2, Neue Folge, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1973), 122-150 (here esp. 124-5); Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller, *Cogor Adversum Te: Drei Studien zum literarisch-theologischen Profil Karls IV. und seiner Kanzlei* (Warendorf: Fahlbusch, 1999), esp. 221-413.


41 For Karlstein, see František Kavka, “The role and function of Karlštejn castle as documented in records from the reign of Charles IV,” in *Magister Theodoricus: Court


46 Upon Charles’s accession to the Bohemian throne, only 77 relics are attested in Prague (though there were doubtless others); by the time of his death 605 can be shown to have been present in the city (though, again, this cannot be a complete figure): Martin Bauch, Divina favente clemencia: Auserwählung, Frömmigkeit und Heilsvermittlung in der Herrschaftspraxis Kaiser Karls IV. (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2015), 317; and see also Schmid, “Vom Rheinland nach Böhmen.”


An example is the church of St Nicholas in the town of Luckau in Lower Lusatia, which was the recipient of an important Caroline relic (part of the skull of St Paulinus), but where the small bust-figures, probably of Charles and his queen, on the north choir portal, created in all likelihood in connection with the gift, seem too modest to be courtly commissions: Marie-Luise Favreau-Lilie, “Von Lucca nach Luckau: Kaiser Karl IV. und das Haupt des heiligen Paulinus,” in Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Kaspar Elm zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. Franz J. Felten and Nikolaus Jaspert (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999), 899-915 (here 901).


For what follows, see generally Beat Frey, Pater Bohemiae – Vitricus Imperii: Böhmens Vater, Stiefvater des Reichs. Karl IV. in der Geschichtsschreibung (Bern: Peter Lang, 1978), esp. 18-34.
Thus the Strasbourg chronicler Twinger on Charles’s return from imperial coronation in Rome, 1356, telling of how his queen was abducted into a brothel by the Pisans and how the imperial couple had to flee an angry mob in Siena through a window dressed only in their nightshirts: Chronik des Jacob Twinger ed. Hegel, 482; for Charles’s hasty post-coronation retreat from Italy (“pauc a de re publica imperii ibidem disponens”), Die Kölner Weltchronik, ed. Sprandel, 98-9.

For a hostile view from Augsburg, see Chronik von 1368 bis 1406 mit Fortsetzung bis 1447, ed. F. Frensdorff (CdtS, vol. 4, Leipzig: Hirzel, 1865), 42. On Charles’s taxation generally, see Moraw, Von offener Verfassung, 252-3; on visual symbolism in imperial towns, Reichszeichen: Darstellungen und Symbole des Reiches in Reichsstädten, ed. Helge Wittmann (Petersberg: Imhof, 2015); Daniela Kah, Die wahrhaft königliche Stadt: Das Reich in den Reichsstädten Augsburg, Nürnberg und Lübeck im späten Mittelalter (Leiden: Brill, 2018).


60 For the role of everyday, often-unnoticed, images and symbols in nurturing common identity in modern societies, see Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

61 *Jahrbücher*, ed. Haupt, 23: “...wen wir habin leyder eynen swerren herren .... .”

62 Ibid., 18.

63 Ibid., 3-4, 52.


69 Seibt, Karl IV., 279-85.

70 Fuchs, Die Städte, esp. 22, 25-6; for the region’s place within Charles’s broader schemes for trade networks, Herrmann, “Karl IV. und Nordostbayern,” 173-5.

71 For a statistical overview of the development of towns and markets in the region, see Schmid, “Städte und Märkte,” 117; for Charles’s interventions to stimulate trade, Fuchs, Die Städte, esp. 48-50.


For local offices and servants, see Fuchs, Die Städte, 52-3; Richard Klier, “Tschechische Dienstmannen auf den Burgen der Luxemburger in Neuböhmen?,” Mitteilungen der Altnürnberger Landschaft 12, no. 1/2 (1963), 1-14; Hellmut Kunstmann, Die Burgen der östlichen Fränkischen Schweiz (Würzburg: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1965), 379-91; Herrmann, “Karl IV. und Nordostbayern,” 179-81. In 1365 Pope Urban V granted, at Charles IV’s request, permission for priests in Rothenberg, Sulzbach, and Neustadt to hear confession in Czech. Some Czech-speakers undoubtedly settled in Bavaria, particularly as members of the households of Bohemian royal officials (who were themselves probably mostly bilingual), though firm evidence of their presence is limited, while Klier’s prosopographical study of Charles’s castellans found a predominance of local men.

For contrasting sums owed by different communities, see Fuchs, *Die Städte*, 54, 61-2, 84.


Fajt, “Die Oberpfalz,” 332; Bobková, “Corona regni Bohemiae,” 127. The imperfect fit between statue and niche suggests that the figure was not made for its present location. That Wenceslas’s shield here repeatedly bears the Bohemian lion, rather than his more common device of a black eagle on white, may reflect a desire to mark this frontier-point with the most unambiguous possible signs of Bohemian lordship: Němec, *Architektur—Herrschaft—Land*, 136.

Although broad comparisons can be drawn with the painted genealogies and galleries of rulers known to have been displayed in the Caroline palaces in Prague, Karlstein, and Tangermünde: Fajt, “Die Oberpfalz,” 331. For theories about the armorial chamber’s function, see: Barbara Schock-Werner, “Die Burg Karls IV. in Lauf als Mittelpunkt eines geplanten neuen Landes,” in *Burg Lauf a.d. Pegnitz*, ed. Großmann, 19-24 (here esp. 19-21); Němec, *Architektur—Herrschaft—Land*, 140-6.


Růžek, “Neue Erkenntnisse,” 78, who sees a particular stimulus to the armorial programme in the gathering of leading figures from the Empire in nearby Nuremberg for the baptism of Charles’s heir Wenceslas in April 1361; Němec, “Kulturlandschaft und ‘Staatsidee’”, 96.

*MGH Constitutiones*, vol. 11, ed. Fritz, 209, no. 390.


The difficulties are made clear by Němec, “Die Burg- und Kosteranlage,” despite his description of Oybin (247) as “karolinische Propaganda.”


For patronage links between court and urban patriciate in Nuremberg, see Jiří Fajt, “Was ist karolinisch an der Hofkunst Karls IV.?” in Die Goldene Bulle, ed. Hohensee, Lawo, Lindner, Menzel, and Rader, 1.349-68 (here 362-4); for Prague, and for the lesser Caroline centre of Luckau in Lower Lusatia, Bauch, Divina favente clementia, 354, 414-15.


Regesta Imperii records only one Caroline diploma which names Hersbruck as its place of issue, perhaps during a brief pause in Charles’s travels: Die Regesten des Kaiserreiches unter Kaiser Karl IV. (1346-1378), ed. Alfons Huber (Regesta Imperii, vol. 8, Innsbruck: Wagner, 1877) [henceforth RI], 216, no. 2648 (10 May 1357).
It might be noted that the burghers enjoyed rights of self-government and low justice, though the town was subject to a Bohemian local agent (voit): Fuchs, *Die Städte*, 25; Das *Böhmische Salbüchlein* ed. Schnelbögl, 32.

Fuchs, *Die Städte*, 76-7. The precise date of Hersbruck’s elevation to a town is unknown, but it probably occurred in the period 1359-64: Scholz, *Die mittelalterlichen Glasmalereien*, 218; also Bobková, “Corona regni Bohemiae,” 129.


*Kaiser Karl IV.*, ed. Fajt and Hörsch, 587, cat. no. 16.3.


Ibid., 258-60, arguing that Charles himself deliberately pursued a different approach to naming in his Bavarian lands.


For the Sulzbach hospital sculpture, see Bogade, “Kulturtransfer,” 94. The surviving figure dates from the fifteenth century, but may well have had a predecessor. Its presence above the church portal was noted in the late eighteenth century in [Thomas Leinberger], Die Beherrschung der Stadt Sulzbach durch achthundert Jahre, vorgestellt an dem Jubeltag des durchlauchtigsten Kurfürsten von Pfalz und Bayern Karl Philipp Theodors fünfzig Jahre regierenden Herzogs von Sulzbach (Den 20sten Julius im Jahr 1783) (Sulzbach: no publisher, 1783), 34. For the St-Wenceslas bridge, see Gerd Zimmermann, “Die Verehrung der böhmischen Heiligen im mittelalterlichen Bistum Bamberg,” Bericht des Historischen Vereins für die Pflege der Geschichte des ehemaligen Fürstbistums Bamberg 100 (1964), 211-39 (here 232). For coins, Bobková, “Die Oberpfalz und die Burg Lauf,” 33; Ernst G. Deuerlein, “Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der ‘neuböhmischen’ Münzstätte zu Auerbach,” Mitteilungen der Altmünchner Landschaft 13, no. 1/2 (1964), 26-32.


112 Bogade, “Kulturtransfer,” 88. The term was coined by Franz Machilek: see his “Privatfrömmigkeit und Staatsfrömmigkeit,” in Kaiser Karl IV., ed. Seibt, 87-101.


116 The chronicler Francis of Prague recounts under the year 1338 the story of a German craftsman struck dumb for mocking St Wenceslas as a “rustic.” Francis adds that, on account of this miracle, “Deinceps Theutonici patronum nostrum in maiori reverencia habuerunt”:


120 Specifically, there appears to be no evidence of conflicts between members of the Czech entourages of Bohemian officials and local populations.

121 Jana Husi Korespondence a Dokumenty, ed. Václav M. Novotny (Prague: Nákl. komise pro vydávání pramenů náboženského hnutí českého, 1920), 212-14, no. 93 (Nuremberg, 24 October 1414); Bernhard M. Baron, “Der Zug des Magisters Jan Hus 1414 durch die Obere Pfalz,” Oberpfälzer Heimat 37 (1993), 75-80.

122 Seibt, Karl IV., 279. Since this relies on surviving documents issued in Charles’s name, the total amount of time that he spent there is likely to have been considerably greater.

123 RI, 154, no. 1928, 179, no. 2207; Franz Martin Pelzel, Kaiser Karl der Vierte, König in Böhmen, vol. 1 (Prague: Hagen, 1780), 400.

124 It was there that on 1 August 1354 Charles reached a final reconciliation with Ludwig of Brandenburg and his Wittelsbach kinsmen: RI, 151-2, nos. 1899-1907.


Schock-Werner, “Die Burg Karls IV.,” 22; Fajt, “Die Oberpfalz,” 332; Die Kunstdenkmäler, ed. Hager and Lill, 89, for affinities with the figures on Nuremberg’s market-fountain, the Schöne Brunnen, datable to the 1380s/90s. Günther Bräutigam, “Gmünd—Prag—Nürnberg: Die Nürnberger Frauenkirche und der Prager Parlerstil vor 1360,” Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen 3 (1961), 38-76 (here 72), dates the Sulzbach figure to c. 1380, pointing to the later style of armor in comparison to Prague (St Vitus) and Nuremberg (Frauenkirche) Wenceslas-figures, both probably of two decades earlier. The late date and a Nuremberg origin are supported in the catalogue-entry by Heinz Stafski, in Die Parler und der schöne Stil 1350-1400: Europäische Kunst unter den Luxemburgern, ed. Anton Legner, 3 vols. (Cologne: Museen der Stadt Köln, 1978), 1.364.


The seventeenth-century chronicler Johannes Braun noted specifically that the statue faced the market and Rathaus: Nordgauchronik, ed. Eckert, 107.


Nordgauchronik, ed. Eckert, 107 (though an origin in Charles’s initiative is nevertheless assumed by Bobková, “Die Oberpfalz und die Burg Lauf,” 28). The same chronicler also claims that the Wenceslas-statue at Sulzbach’s hospital-church was a local commission, in gratitude for Charles’s favor towards the town: Nordgauchronik, ed. Eckert, 105.


Michael Viktor Schwarz, “Wenzel in der Welt,” in Kunst als Herrschaftsinstrument, ed. Fajt and Langer, 184-91 (here 187); but see also Ivo Hlobil, “Die Wenzelsstatue mit Peter Parlers Zeichen im Veitsdom,” Umění 47, no. 5 (1999), 385-8. Jana Gajdošová has proposed that the statue may originally have been located near the Old Town Bridge Tower – another location in outdoor, public space: Gajdošová, “The Charles Bridge,” 143-5. For the
Wenceslas chapel and its decoration, see generally Lucy Ormrod, “The Wenceslas chapel in St Vitus’ cathedral, Prague: the marriage of imperial iconography and Bohemian kingship” (PhD diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1997).


141 It has been argued, based on evidence from Prague, that support for Wenceslas’s cult was waning around the time that the statue was made: David C. Mengel, “A holy and faithful fellowship: royal saints in fourteenth-century Prague,” in Evropa a Čechy na konci středověku: Sborník připěvků věnovaných Františku Šmahelovi, ed. Eva Doležalová, Robert Novotný, and Pavel Soukup (Prague: Filosofia, 2004), 145-58 (esp. 156-7); Bauch, Divina favente clementia, 293-4. That he nevertheless retained his salience in Sulzbach seems to underline the importance of local and constitutional considerations.

142 It would not be the only instance of the visual assimilation of monarch to saint: the seated figure of Charles on the Old Town Bridge Tower in Prague (1370s), for example, incorporates iconographic motifs for representing St Wenceslas: Rosario, Art and Propaganda, 78, 80. Another suggestive parallel is with the sculpture of Charlemagne on Frankfurt am Main’s Galgentor (1365), which it has been suggested evoked both St Wenceslas and Charles IV: Jacobs, “Das Bild Karls des Großen,” 84; Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch, “Karl der Große im Spätmittelalter: zum Wandel einer politischen Ikone,” Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins 104/105 (2003), 421-61 (here 430-5).

143 See Hans Peter Hilger, “Die Skulpturen an der südlichen Querhausfassade von St. Marien zu Mühlhausen in Thüringen,” Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch 22 (1960), 159-64; Christa Richter, Die Thomas-Müntzer-Gedenkstätte Marienkirche zu Mühlhausen (Mühlhausen

144 Richter, *Marienkirche*, 18 n. 19; Boockmann, “Der Deutsche Orden,” 28 with n. 84. The evidence is from the early eighteenth century.


146 The burghers of Donauwörth, for example, placed an image of Charles’s son Sigismund (r. 1410/11-1437) on their fortifications in gratitude for his aid to the town against the duke of Bavaria: Olaf B. Rader, “Zwischen Friedberg und Eco: Die Interpretation von Urkundentexten Karls IV. oder Vom Gang durch die Säle der Erkenntnis,” in *Kaiser, Reich und Region*, ed. Lindner, Müller-Mertens, and Rader, 245-93 (here 269-70).


project), with imperial, Bohemian, and Brandenburg armorials, faced the Rathaus: Bobková, “Corona regni Bohemiae,” 129-30.


150 This seems to have been the late-medieval fate of the equestrian statue, probably representing the emperor Otto I (r. 936-73), set up in the market place in Magdeburg by the town’s archiepiscopal ruler in the thirteenth century, as witness to the imperial privileges by which he ruled: Ernst Schubert, “Der Magdeburger Reiter,” Magdeburger Museumshefte 3 (1994), 5-42; Von der Dunk, Das Deutsche Denkmal, 57-60. On the negotiated character of medieval urban space more generally, see Martha C. Howell, “The spaces of late medieval urbanity,” in Shaping Urban Identity in Late Medieval Europe, ed. Marc Boone and Peter Stabel (Leuven: Garant, 2000), 3-23 (here esp. 18-19).


152 Fajt, “Die Oberpfalz,” 330 with n. 18. Identification of one of the eagles with St Wenceslas is supported by the observation of Johannes Braun in 1648 that the Sulzbach Wenceslas-statue bore on its shield a (recently renovated) “black imperial eagle”—surely in origin, given its location, the saint’s own (similar) device: Nordgauchronik, ed. Eckert, 107; Sagstetter, “Sulzbach,” 70. For a different interpretation of the two house-façade eagles, Bobková, “Corona regni Bohemiae,” 124 n. 23. A broadly comparable armorial programme was placed on Charles’s likely accommodation in Breslau—which also faced the Rathaus: Romuald Kaczmarek, “Schlesien—die luxemburgische Erwerbung,” in Karl IV. Kaiser von Gottes Gnaden, ed. Fajt, 308-25 (here 311-12).

153 For the houses of leading burghers as places of stay for late-medieval emperors when travelling, see Gerrit Jasper Schenk, Zeremoniell und Politik: Herrschereinzüge im
Excavations during the 1990s revealed that the Schloß, previously regarded as a largely post-medieval structure, had already attained appropriately regal proportions in Charles IV’s day. References in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century documents to a Kaiserstube and a Kaysser Garten there suggest the place of stay of an emperor—who can only be Charles: Elisabeth Vogl, “Das Sulzbacher Schloß,” in Eisenerz und Morgenglanz, ed. Stadt Sulzbach-Rosenberg, 2.755-776 (here 759). That Charles ever stayed at the house “Zur Krone” appears to have no evidential basis beyond local tradition, supported by the house’s armorial decorations, though Thomas Leinberger, Die Beherrscher der Stadt Sulzbach, 34, claimed that it was his “vorzüglichste Herberge und der Absteigort.” However, archaeological evidence of fire damage at the Schloß, probably still under repair in the early 1350s, does support the likelihood that his early stays in Sulzbach were in a town house: Vogl, “Das Sulzbacher Schloß,” 760-1.

The earliest reference to the existence of a document obliging the householder to maintain the armorials appears to be [Carl Christoph Adolph von Seidel], “Historische Denkwürdigkeiten des ehemaligen Herzogthumes Sulzbach,” Wochenblatt der Stadt Sulzbach, September 25 1844, 313-15 (here 315); and see also Georg Christoph Gack, Geschichte des Herzogthums Sulzbach (Leipzig: Weigel, 1847), 92. Commemorating the monarch’s stay by means of an ephemeral painted armorial was far more common practice: for marking Charles’s (and his son Wenceslas’s) visit to the town of Rothenburg ob der Tauber in this way, see Michail Bojcov, “Ephemerität und Permanenz bei Herrschereinzügen


161 Fröhlich, “Der böhmische Löwe,” 102. For other late local survivals, see ibid., 103.

162 Kaiser Karl IV., ed. Fajt and Hörsch, 592, cat. no. 16.8, with essay by Jana Knejfl. The glove appears to be too small for an adult to wear.

Thus Neustadt an der Waldnaab, Stadtarchiv B13 Ratsprotokoll 1686-97. I am grateful to Ursula Wiechert for her guidance on this, and on the post-medieval fortunes of Charles’s glove and Neustadt’s woodcutting rights more generally. Around 140 householders (the so-called *Corporation*) retain these rights today; their annual mass remembers Charles IV. See also Rainer Christoph, “Kaiser Karl IV. und die Oberpfalz,” *Oberpfälzer Heimatspiegel* 40 (2015), 64-71 (here 68); Ursula Wiechert, “Neustädter Handschuh kehrt heim,” *Oberpfälzer Heimatspiegel* 42 (2017), 62-4.

For this occasion, with evidence for its popularity, Bauch, *Divina favente clementia*, 365-80.