

‘Citizen Emperor’: Political Ritual, Popular Sovereignty and the Coronation of Napoleon I

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Abstract

The coronation of Napoleon in Notre Dame on 2 December 1804 was built upon a number of contradictory concepts. As heir to the French Revolution, Napoleon founded the legitimacy of his new regime on the notion of popular sovereignty. He incorporated the idea into a new coronation ceremony, a *mélange* of different rites and customs, incorporating aspects of Carolingian tradition, the *ancien régime* and the Revolution, thereby helping to create a new political culture based on continuity with the past. And yet the people were precluded from the ceremony itself. Moreover, the coronation contained within it the seeds of the Empire’s later turn towards absolute-style monarchy, based on revived notions of divine right. The coronation thus highlights Napoleon’s, and the French political elite’s, ambivalent attitude towards the idea of monarchy and popular sovereignty. Although the coronation should be seen as part of the process of national reconciliation implemented by Napoleon, as ritual it failed to leave a deep impression.

On the morning of 2 December 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte was crowned Napoleon I in the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, and anointed by Pope Pius VII, in the presence of more than 20,000 dignitaries of the Church and the Empire. It was the consecration of a political transformation that had been made six months previously, on 18 May, when the Empire was officially proclaimed.¹ The lavish ceremony was one of the largest held throughout the history of the Consulate and Empire, even if it paled in comparison to revolutionary festivals like the Festival of the Federation, organized on 14 July 1790 to celebrate the constitutional monarchy, and even the celebration held on 26 May 1815 during the Hundred Days on the Champ de Mars to inaugurate another constitution in the form of the Additional Act. As at all Napoleonic festivals, spectators did not actively participate, or did so only minimally by taking part in the festivities peripheral to the main ceremonies.

¹ On the transformation of the French Republic to Empire, see Philip Dwyer, ‘Napoleon and the foundation of the Empire’, *The Historical Journal*, 53 (2010), pp. 339–58. The author would like to thank the two anonymous referees for their helpful suggestions.

Public ceremonies draw people together and, when orchestrated after periods of upheaval, are often designed to give the impression that order has been restored. That was the purpose of the festivals and ceremonies organized by the French revolutionaries, eager to create a new set of political rituals and symbols, especially after the overthrow of the king in 1792 and the foundation of a new republic based on sovereignty and representation.² Almost all the official public ceremonies and festivals that took place between 1790 and 1799 were designed to incorporate the people of France into the new polity, to create a sense of nation, and to create political consensus by reinforcing community.³ In a similar fashion, Napoleon's festivals, from the first months of his reign during the Consulate through to his return from exile in Elba in 1815, were designed to legitimate his rule, to make the new political order appear more authoritative, to acknowledge publicly the place of the people within that new polity, and to create a sense of community first in the Consulate and then in the Empire.⁴ The highly ritualized coronation ceremony of December 1804 falls squarely within that logic, although it is arguable whether the ceremony was the scaffold of a political system that was fundamentally weak, a new dynasty built on shaky foundations, or whether on the contrary it was an affirmation of political confidence.⁵ It was not the first, but certainly the most important public display organized by the new dynasty for the purpose of conveying a degree of legitimacy. The organizers did so by intermingling layers of ancient ritual formerly used by the kings of France – as far back as the Merovingians – with new, invented rituals and symbols.⁶ The ceremony, in other words, constructed a new edifice out of available materials, and

² The literature on the notion of the sovereignty of the people is too vast to cite extensively here, but a good starting point is Jon Cowans, *To Speak for the People: Public Opinion and the Problem of Legitimacy in the French Revolution* (New York, 2001).

³ The politics of pageantry for the era of the French Revolution has been treated by Marie-Louise Biver, *Fêtes révolutionnaires à Paris* (Paris, 1979); Michel Vovelle, *Les Métamorphoses de la fête en Provence de 1750 à 1820* (Paris, 1975); and Rosemonde Sanson, *Les 14 juillet (1789–1975)* (Paris, 1976); Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); Olivier Ihl, *La fête républicaine* (Paris, 1996); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1984). For other periods and other countries see, George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York, 1975), esp. pp. 73–99.

⁴ Napoleonic festivals, entries, spectacles and celebrations have been largely neglected by historians of the period. The exception to the rule is Michael J. Hughes, *Forging Napoleon's Grande Armée: Motivation, Military Culture, and Masculinity in the French Army, 1800–1808* (New York, 2012). For the Second Empire, see Matthew Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics: Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the Fête Impériale, 1849–1870* (Oxford, 1997).

⁵ Andrew D. Brown, 'Civic ritual: Bruges and the counts of Flanders in the later Middle Ages', *English Historical Review*, 112 (1997), pp. 277–99, at p. 280.

⁶ Günter Oesterle, 'Die Kaiserkrönung Napoleons: eine ästhetische und ideologische Instrumentalisierung', in Jörg Jochen Berns and Thomas Rahn (eds), *Zeremoniell als höfische Ästhetik in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 1995), pp. 632–49, at p. 634. For an example of this approach in another time and place, see Christopher Clark, 'When culture meets power: the Prussian coronation of 1701', in Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms (eds), *Cultures of Power in Europe During the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 14–35.

consequently gave both the semblance of continuity with the past,⁷ as well as the idea of breaking with it through new symbols and new rituals. Thus the royal ornaments were purpose-made for the occasion; and it marked a rupture with *ancien régime* ceremony in so far as the political conception of 'royal' power on which the new emperor based his legitimacy was the sovereignty of the people: Napoleon had been 'elected' emperor, through a referendum that took place in May 1804, and which confirmed his status as 'hereditary emperor' by the return of an overwhelming majority of 'yes' votes.⁸ It was the third plebiscite since Napoleon came to power in 1799, and was one of the bases on which the legitimacy of Napoleon's regime was built. Supporters of the Empire could always argue that no other 'nation has exercised so fully the right of sovereignty; never has it delegated more freely to a head of state the power to reign over it; never has a prince, in ascending the throne, rallied to him a suffrage that was more unanimous and more solemn'.⁹

Or so the regime wanted people to believe. One of the objectives of the coronation was to rally those sections of French society that were lukewarm or hostile to the idea of a return to the monarchy. The structure of the ceremony was designed for that purpose, and contained three important elements, political symbols upon which the empire was founded: the coronation itself, a civic act, a political gesture of *rassemblement* that enabled Napoleon to gather the nation around his person; the consecration or anointing (referred to in French as the *sacre*), a religious act that, in this particular instance at least, demonstrated the newly established rapprochement between the church and the state concluded only shortly before with the Concordat; and the coronation oath, sworn before the political elite, that is, the representatives of the people of France, and which linked the French as community to the person of the sovereign.¹⁰

The relationship between, on the one hand, structures of power, authority and dominance, and on the other the symbols of ritualized discourse through which those relationships are mediated and interpreted is now standard fare to many historians.¹¹ Clifford Geertz

⁷ David J. Kertzer, 'The role of ritual in political change', in Myron J. Aronoff (ed.), *Culture and Political Change* (New York, 1983), pp. 53–74, at pp. 67–8.

⁸ See Malcolm Crook, 'The plebiscite on the Empire', in Philip G. Dwyer and Alan Forrest (eds), *Napoleon and his Empire: Europe, 1804–1814* (London, 2007), pp. 16–28.

⁹ Louis Dubroca, *Les Quatre fondateurs des dynasties françaises, ou Histoire de l'établissement de la monarchie française par Clovis, du renouvellement des dynasties royales par Pépin et Hugues Capet et de la fondation de l'Empire français par Napoléon le Grand* (Paris, 1806), p. 327.

¹⁰ David Chanteranne, *Le Sacre de Napoléon* (Paris, 2004), p. 12.

¹¹ See, János M. Bak, 'Introduction: coronation studies – past, present, and future', in János M. Bak (ed.), *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual* (Berkeley, 1990), pp. 1–10; Clifford Geertz, 'Centers, kings, and charisma: reflections on the symbolics of power', in Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York, 1983), pp. 121–46; David Cannadine, 'Introduction: divine rites of kings', in David Cannadine and Simon Price (eds), *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 1–19; and David Cannadine, 'The context, performance and meaning of ritual: the British Monarchy and the

describes the way in which rulers, through ceremonies like royal progresses, 'take symbolic possession of their realm and establish themselves symbolically as the active centre of their society'.¹² For the Napoleonic era, one can see this principle in any number of ceremonies: Napoleon's pilgrimage to Aachen in September 1804 in the months leading up to the coronation – a homage to Charlemagne – and the subsequent imperial progress from Aachen to Mainz that same month; the meeting of German princes at Erfurt in 1808 and again in Dresden in 1812; the numerous triumphal 'entries' made into conquered cities, such as Milan, Vienna, Berlin, Munich, Madrid, Warsaw and Moscow, not to mention a number of key French cities, including his 'entry' into Paris with his new bride, Marie-Louise, in 1810; as well as the regular displays of military prowess performed during the 'parades' at the Tuileries, that is, when Napoleon was in residence. The rituals, festivities and ceremonies of the Napoleonic era were not simply empty exercises in spectacle. On the contrary, they were conscious attempts by Napoleon to place himself both literally and figuratively at the centre of French society and his European empire, and as such were critically important opportunities to rally the country around his person, to increase his support and to project an authoritative image onto the French public.

However, unlike the *ancien régime* kings who used these ceremonies to take symbolic possession of their realm, Napoleon and the regime were also trying to redefine the centre of power by offering a new vision of the relationship between the monarch and society. The reconstitution of monarchy in the form of an empire, in other words, entailed a redefinition of the whole of society. Napoleon's official title from 1804 on was 'republican emperor', although the word 'Republic' would disappear after 1807, while Napoleon later referred to himself as the 'people's king', by which he meant that he governed 'for the nation and in its interests'.¹³ Contemporaries consequently referred to Napoleon as 'citizen emperor', to show the precarious balance between traditional notions of monarchy and the revolutionary notion of the sovereignty of the people.

That precarious balance was never more highlighted than during the coronation ceremony, although historians have largely ignored its political significance. Certainly, the bicentenary of the anniversary of the coronation in 2004 led to a spate of publications in France that purported to reassess the importance of the ceremony and the Empire, but which failed to grapple with a number of simple important

invention of tradition, c. 1820–1977', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 101–64.

¹² David E. Barclay, *Frederick William IV and the Prussian Monarchy, 1840–1861* (Oxford, 1995), p. 106.

¹³ Armand Augustin Louis, marquis de Caulaincourt, duc de Vicence, *Memoirs of General de Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza*, ed. Jean Hanoteau (3 vols; London, 1950), II, 250.

questions, such as why the empire and why an emperor, what was the significance of the ritual behind the coronation ceremony, and why did Napoleon choose a ceremony with religious undertones?¹⁴ This article attempts to reassess the significance of the coronation for the newly established empire; to determine how the French political elite reconciled the ceremony with the ideology of the Revolution; to examine the ideological importance of the oath sworn by Napoleon; and finally to examine what the ceremony may tell us more broadly about French society, the political elite and the nature of the French state. Ritual and pomp are visible signs of power, but it is worth asking in this particular case precisely what that form of power was.

I

Before the coronation could take place, the public had to be prepared for what was coming, the regime's moral values underscored by a spectacular public event. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the highlight of the Salon of 1804, measuring five metres by seven, was Gros's *Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa*.¹⁵ The painting's public and critical reception at the Salon in September of that year was enthusiastic.¹⁶ A secret police bulletin reported that all classes of society had been 'moved' by the painting.¹⁷ It was helped by the fact that the memory of the expedition to Egypt was still fresh in people's minds. One witness recalled that 'the sincere admiration which this composition excited was so general that painters from all the respected schools united to carry to the Louvre a great laurel wreath to hang above Gros's picture'.¹⁸

¹⁴ Laurence Chatel de Brancion, *Le Sacre de Napoléon: le rêve de changer le monde* (Paris, 2004); Thierry Lentz (ed.), *Le Sacre de l'empereur Napoléon* (Paris, 2004); *Napoléon le Sacre: Musée Fesch, Ville d' Ajaccio, 23 avril–3 octobre 2004* (Ajaccio, 2004); Chanteranne, *Le Sacre de Napoléon*; and Jean Tulard, *Le Sacre de l'Empereur Napoléon: histoire et légende* (Paris, 2004). There are also a number of older studies on the coronation, including Frédéric Masson, *Le Sacre et le couronnement de Napoléon* (Paris, 1908); Henri Gaubert, *Le Sacre de Napoléon Ier* (Paris, 1964); and André Cabanis, *Le Sacre de Napoléon* (Paris, 1970).

¹⁵ See Norman Bryson, 'Representing the real: Gros' painting of Napoleon', *History of the Human Sciences*, 1 (1988), pp. 75–104; Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, 'Rumor, contagion, and colonization in Gros's *Plague-Stricken of Jaffa* (1804)', *Representations*, 51 (1995), pp. 1–46; Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France* (New Haven, 2002), pp. 65–103; David O'Brien, *After the Revolution: Antoine-Jean Gros, Painting and Propaganda under Napoleon* (University Park, PA, 2006), pp. 97–104, 111–16. For a medical/scientific interpretation of the painting see Todd Porterfield, *The Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism, 1798–1836* (Princeton, 1998), pp. 53–61.

¹⁶ The press described it as the greatest success of the Salon (Henri Mollaret and Jacqueline Brossollet, 'A propos des "Pestiférés de Jaffa" de A. J. Gros', *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor schoone kunsten* (1968), pp. 271–3).

¹⁷ Hauterive, *La police secrète du premier Empire*, I, 115 (29 Sept. 1804); Mollaret and Brossollet, 'A propos des "Pestiférés de Jaffa"', p. 273.

¹⁸ Jean-Etienne Delécluze, *Louis David, son école et son temps: souvenirs* (Paris, 1855), pp. 291–2.



Figure 1 Detail of Antoine-Jean Gros, *Bonaparte visitant les pestiférés de Jaffa* (Bonaparte visiting the plague victims at Jaffa), 1804. Oil on canvas. 5.320 m × 7.200 m. (Musée du Louvre, Paris).

The ostensible purpose of the painting was to provide an alternative vision to the rumours surrounding Napoleon's order to poison plague victims at Jaffa by focusing on an episode that has since become part of the legend, when Napoleon purportedly visited and touched the sick and dying in the hospital at Jaffa.¹⁹ The scene depicted in the painting is one of dire misery in which the arrival of the saviour – Napoleon – appropriately recognized by the light cast on him in contrast to the dark shadows that engulf the dying, illuminates the whole and brings the promise of healing. Napoleon is therefore portrayed as active hero who extends his hand in a Christ-like gesture to heal a victim of the plague. It is an image, as one historian has put it, of 'Christ in a republican uniform' (see Figure 1).²⁰

The subtext, as has been pointed out by a number of historians, is that of Napoleon as thaumaturge king.²¹ Traditionally, the anointed

¹⁹ On the retreat from St John of Acre in 1799, Bonaparte had ordered lethal doses of opium to be administered to troops in Jaffa dying of the plague. See Grigsby, *Extremities*, pp. 90–101; Dimitri Casali and David Chanteranne, *Napoléon par les peintres* (Paris, 2009), p. 37.

²⁰ O'Brien, *After the Revolution*, p. 102.

²¹ Walter Friedlaender, 'Napoleon as "Roi Thaumaturge"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 4 (1941), pp. 139–41; Edgar Munhall, 'Portraits of Napoleon', *Yale French Studies*, 26 (1960), p. 7. This interpretation is contested, but it certainly shows Napoleon as the 'caring father', very much in the tradition of the clement ruler that was one of the main themes of Napoleonic

kings of France would appear outside the cathedral at Rheims and demonstrate the miraculous character of their office – the king's body being rendered sacred by the anointing ceremony – by laying hands on and healing the sufferers of scrofula.²² The practice was discontinued under Louis XV, but revived under Louis XVI (more than 2,400 sufferers of scrofula turned up for his coronation). A number of historians have argued that Louis XV 'ruptured the lines of legitimacy that bound the people to the crown', and have consequently referred to the 'desacralization of the monarchy'.²³ Given the grief that accompanied the execution of Louis XVI in 1793 among some monarchists, the argument may well be exaggerated. After the Revolution, Napoleon could not renew the practice of the king's touch, but then anybody wearing a crown would have enjoyed a certain form of sacrality.²⁴ Moreover, the idea of the king's sacred body appears to have been resurrected in Gros's painting, albeit elliptically, so that for the first time the dignity of the citizen and that of the monarch are combined to form a new amalgam, the dignity of the citizen-monarch.

The plague afflicting the French army is a metaphor for the sickly, faction-ridden French body politic that Napoleon as saviour healed by his presence and by his touch.²⁵ An alternative to chaos and death is presented to the onlooker – the uniformed soldier, in the form of Napoleon and his generals. The logical conclusion is that allegiance to Napoleon was the only alternative to the dissent and factionalism that had riven French society. This was the message driven home time and again by the regime, namely, just as the coup of Brumaire in 1799 was necessary to bring all Frenchmen together, so too was the Empire designed to heal the festering social and political wounds of the Revolution. The crowning moment of this campaign was to be a religious ceremony in the Cathedral of Notre Dame designed to impress the people of France and Europe and at the same time lend weight to Napoleon's claim to the throne.

painting in the later empire. See, Manfred Heinrich Brunner, *Antoine-Jean Gros: die Napoleonischen Historienbilder* (Bonn, 1979), pp. 152–5, 175–80; Paddy Jill Morse, 'A Revaluation of the Napoleonic History Paintings of Jean-Antoine Gros', PhD dissertation (Ohio State University, 1993), p. 54; and *Les clémences de Napoléon: l'image au service du mythe* (Paris, 2004).

²² See Marc Bloch, *Les Rois Thaumatourges: étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale particulièrement en France et en Angleterre* (Paris, 1983), pp. 399–405; Chantal Grell, 'The sacre of Louis XVI: the end of a myth', in Michael Schaich (ed.), *Monarchy and Religion: The Transformation of Royal Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 345–66. Charles X reinstated it when he was crowned in Rheims in 1825, but it was the last time it was used.

²³ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York, 1996), p. 237. See Jeffrey W. Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, 1990). For a critique of the thesis, see William Doyle, *France and the Age of Revolution: Regimes Old and New from Louis XIV to Napoleon Bonaparte* (London, 2013), pp. 103–11.

²⁴ Doyle, *France and the Age of Revolution*, p. 106.

²⁵ For this see Morse, 'A revaluation', pp. 74–81, 101–7; Grigsby, *Extremities*, pp. 101–2; Grigsby, 'Rumor, contagion and colonization', p. 36.

Louis Fontanes seems to have had the idea for a religious coronation, although it did not go down well with everyone.²⁶ Comte Jean-Baptiste Treilhارد, a one-time member of the Committee of Public Safety, now in the Council of State, questioned the need for it. He was among a number of politicians who preferred a civil ceremony on the Champ de Mars, to be put off till the following year.²⁷ For most in the Emperor's entourage, however, the political symbolism of a religious ceremony was understood. Fontanes, for example, suggested that Napoleon adopt the pomp traditionally associated with the kings of France, urging him not to neglect the religious elements of the *sacre*.²⁸ As Jean-Etienne-Marie Portalis, later to become director of religious affairs, pointed out to Napoleon, 'anything that renders sacred the person who governs is a good thing'.²⁹ Contemporaries were well aware, in other words, that the ceremony was about constructing an appearance of legitimacy through the use of tradition, costume and symbolism.

The choice of Notre Dame for the ceremony is itself an interesting one. Napoleon hesitated holding the ceremony in Paris because of the public reaction during the trial of General Moreau, who was accused of conspiring against Napoleon. Public approval of the regime during the trial had been tepid: Moreau was very popular among republicans.³⁰ Napoleon's hesitation obliged the councillors of state to debate alternatives.³¹ Rheims, the cathedral where every French king except two (Louis VI and Henry IV) had been crowned, was for that reason eliminated: it was too closely associated with the former monarchy. Aachen, where not only Charlemagne but also thirty-four other emperors and ten empresses had been crowned, was ruled out by the pope (about whom more below) on the grounds that he did not want to visit the region because it contained too many Lutherans.³² The clergy of Orleans proposed that city's cathedral, but the offer does not appear to have been seriously considered.

That left Paris. In June, Napoleon suggested the Champ de Mars would be an appropriate place for a coronation, and at first the members of the Council of State agreed.³³ He revisited the question a couple of weeks later, having had second thoughts in the meantime. He had decided that the common people were to be excluded from the

²⁶ Guy-Édouard Pillard, *Louis Fontanes, 1757–1821: prince de l'esprit* (Maulévrier, 1990), p. 196; Gaubert, *Le Sacre de Napoléon*, p. 38; Thierry Lentz, *Nouvelle histoire du Premier Empire* (4 vols; Paris, 2002), I, 72.

²⁷ Alfred Marquiset, *Napoléon sténographié au Conseil d'Etat, 1804–1805* (Paris, 1913), pp. 22–9; Jacques-Olivier Boudon, 'Les fondements religieux du pouvoir impérial', in Natalie Petiteau (ed.), *Voies nouvelles pour l'histoire du Premier Empire* (Paris, 2003), pp. 195–212, at p. 206.

²⁸ Pillard, *Louis Fontanes*, pp. 192–6.

²⁹ Marquiset, *Napoléon sténographié*, p. 25.

³⁰ Joseph Fiévée, *Correspondance et relations de J. Fiévée avec Bonaparte . . . pendant onze années, 1802 à 1813* (3 vols; Paris, 1837), II, 39.

³¹ Lentz, *Nouvelle histoire du Premier Empire*, I, 73.

³² *Journal des Débats*, 2 prairial an XII (22 May 1804); Chanteranne, *Le Sacre de Napoléon*, p. 62.

³³ Marquiset, *Napoléon sténographié*, pp. 23–4 (12 June 1804).

event. If an altar was placed in the middle of the Champ de Mars, he declared, it would become a populist ceremony. It was important that Paris should not think of itself as the nation. This was no longer the Revolution when the people of Paris intervened directly in the political process.³⁴ Besides, there was always the risk of bad weather; it would not look dignified if the imperial family were exposed to the rain and the mud, as had been the case during the Festival of the Federation.³⁵

It was Portalis who suggested the idea of having the pope confer on Napoleon a blessing that would transform the Empire into a Christian monarchy, and Napoleon into a legitimate monarch.³⁶ Bringing the pope to Paris, however, was no easy thing. In the past, the pope had travelled to crown the king of France on only two occasions: when Stephen II (III) crowned Pepin (the Short) King of the Franks in 754; and when Stephen IV (V) crowned Louis the Pious emperor in 816 at Rheims, almost a thousand years before. All other kings and emperors anointed by the pontiff had gone to Rome, including Charlemagne. Napoleon, however, wanted the pope to come to him, thereby asserting the power of the French Church,³⁷ and the power of the emperor over the pope. This is not to say that there was no opposition to the pope's presence – the members of the Council of State were reticent as were a number of anticlerical republicans – but Napoleon's arguments prevailed: the presence of the pope would help cut the religious base from under the counter-revolution; it would help bring about the national reconciliation Napoleon was aiming at; and it would accord with the religious sentiments of the majority of the nation.³⁸ It was in that respect an attempt to recreate, domestically, the coalition between throne and altar that had existed before the Revolution, as well as, in foreign political terms, challenging Francis as Holy Roman Emperor for the domination of Germany.³⁹

As for Pius VII, he at first balked at the idea of coming to Paris, arguing that there would have to be a serious religious motive for him to leave Rome.⁴⁰ The Curia pointed to the illegitimacy of the French monarch, the pope's poor health, the fear that he would not be respected in revolutionary France, and the policy of freedom of religion practised under Napoleon. The reasons for agreeing to travel were, however, overwhelmingly political: Pius hoped to receive from

³⁴ Marquiset, *Napoléon sténographié*, pp. 36–7 (26 June 1804).

³⁵ Gaubert, *Le Sacre de Napoléon*, pp. 44–5.

³⁶ Boudon, 'Les fondements religieux du pouvoir impérial', pp. 206–12.

³⁷ Jacques-Olivier Boudon, *Napoléon et les cultes: les religions en Europe à l'aube du XIXe siècle, 1800–1815* (Paris, 2002), p. 127.

³⁸ Lentz, *Nouvelle histoire du Premier Empire*, I, 77; Chanteranne, *Le Sacre de Napoléon*, p. 45.

³⁹ Todd Porterfield and Susan L. Siegfried, *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres, and David* (University Park, PA, 2006), p. 7.

⁴⁰ On the negotiations between Napoleon and the pope, see Jean Leflon, *Histoire de l'Eglise: depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris, 1949), pp. 223–6; Gaubert, *Le Sacre de Napoléon*, pp. 70–88, 102–12.

Napoleon as many changes to the Concordat in its favour as possible. Ever since Napoleon had inserted the infamous addendum known as the 'Organic Articles', added to the Concordat without the pope's knowledge or consent, Pius had been looking to turn the situation around.⁴¹ He mistakenly believed that by agreeing to come to Paris he could extract concessions from Napoleon. Eventually, however, this was to prove a vain hope; the pope had to concede on almost every point.

II

After entering the Cathedral around 11 o'clock in the morning, Napoleon and Josephine sat on their respective thrones facing the high altar. All the symbols of the Carolingian empire on the altar were blessed individually by the pope, including spurs, what was supposed to be Charlemagne's sword, the sceptre of Charles V adorned with a statuette of Charlemagne, and a replica of Charlemagne's crown made especially for the occasion. The act of anointment too was designed specifically for the ceremony; it was Napoleon who gave the order to proceed, so that he could speak of an act of 'self-unction'. It is interesting to note that he did not, as was the tradition in coronation ceremonies, expose parts of his upper body while the anointing was being carried out. Traditionally, the sovereign was thereby presented as a frail being who had to be brought into contact with the divine.⁴² Instead, the pope only anointed Napoleon's head and hands after he had stripped down to a satin tunic, another sign that he had no intention of submitting to the authority of the Church.⁴³ It was only after the objects had been blessed that Napoleon received the ring, the sword, the coat of golden bees – a nod in the direction of the Merovingian kings – the hand of justice, and the sceptre.⁴⁴ He then climbed the steps of the altar. The gesture that followed has since become symbolic of Napoleonic power. As the pope

⁴¹ On the 'Organic Articles', see Jean-Luc A. Chartier, *Portalis, le père du Code civil* (Paris, 2004), pp. 251–7.

⁴² Edward Shils and Michael Young, 'The meaning of the coronation', in Edward Shils (ed.), *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago, 1975), pp. 135–52, at p. 141.

⁴³ Margaret Waller, 'The emperor's new clothes: display, cover-up and exposure in modern masculinity', in Timothy Reeser and Lewis Seifert (eds), *Entre hommes: French and Francophone Masculinities in Literature and Culture* (Newark, 2008), pp. 115–42, at pp. 121, 122.

⁴⁴ In ancient times, the bee was a symbol of immortality and resurrection, but people also remembered that metal jewellery in the form of bees had been discovered in the tomb of the father of Clovis, Childeric I (440–81), at Tournai in 1653, during the reign of Louis XIV (Masson, *Le Sacre et le couronnement*, pp. 75–6). It is more likely that what was discovered were cicadas or crickets, and they were not emblems but votive objects placed on the royal clothes: insects enabled the soul of the departed to fly more easily towards heaven (Chanteranne, *Sacre*, p. 67). The bee was nevertheless a symbol that drew on the past, even if contemporaries had incorrectly interpreted its historical significance. It was also meant to be a metaphor for France: the beehive was the republic, with its leader a hard worker. And perhaps it was hoped that the French would be as submissive as drones working for the queen. The bee thus enabled the regime to draw a link between the farthest reaches of French history – the Merovingian dynasty – and the present.

appeared to crown him, Napoleon took the crown from the pope's hands and placed it on his own head. This part of the proceedings had been discussed and planned beforehand, in fact suggested by Cambacérès.⁴⁵ According to one witness, this was the moment everyone had been waiting for. A profound silence reigned over the cathedral, in stark contrast to much of the chatter that had accompanied the ceremony to that point.⁴⁶ After Napoleon had placed the crown on his head, everyone in the cathedral stood up spontaneously, the men waving their feathered hats.⁴⁷

This self-coronation, the 'quintessential Napoleonic act, legitimisation as self-legitimation', broadcast the defining features of Napoleonic power.⁴⁸ It was not the first time a sovereign had crowned himself.⁴⁹ Napoleon's excuse was that he did not want any arguments among the court elite about who would presume to hand him the crown in the name of the people.⁵⁰ It was also meant to assuage republican fears of too direct a rapprochement with the Vatican, as well as embodying the claim that as the supreme representative of the people Napoleon was the only person who could effect the transition from republic to empire. Napoleon had, in fact, entered the cathedral with the crown of laurels already on his head, and carrying the sceptre, which he then placed on the altar before both were blessed by the pope. This gesture turned the ceremony on its head. If Napoleon was already symbolically wearing a crown and if he intended placing Charlemagne's crown on his head in the course of the ceremony, then what was the point of having the pope come all that way?⁵¹ Of course the self-crowning was a question of Napoleon asserting his political independence, underlining how much he owed his elevation not to the pope, but to himself and himself alone. In the age-old conflict between the spiritual and the temporal, Napoleon was vigorously asserting the supremacy of the temporal. This sent not only a political but also a personal message.

Then it was Josephine's turn. She knelt at Napoleon's feet – a gesture that signified she was subordinate to him. Napoleon then took the imperial diadem and placed it, as planned, on his wife's head. There was nothing terribly unusual about a sovereign crowning his wife: the kings of Spain traditionally did so; Frederick I of Prussia crowned his wife in 1701; and the tsars of Russia, after placing the crown on their own head,

⁴⁵ Marquiset, *Napoléon sténographié*, pp. 49–50 (16 Oct. 1804); Peter Hicks, 'Un Sacre sans pareil', in Lentz (ed.), *Le Sacre*, pp. 101–39.

⁴⁶ René Boudard, 'Le Sacre de Napoléon vu par un figurant', *Revue de l'Institut Napoléon*, 50 (1954), pp. 33–4, at p. 34.

⁴⁷ Stéphanie de Bade (ed.), 'Souvenirs de Stéphanie de Beauharnais', *Revue des deux mondes*, 102 (1 mars 1932), p. 81.

⁴⁸ Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting: Antoine-Jean Gros's 'La Bataille d'Eylau'* (Oxford, 1997), p. 35.

⁴⁹ See Clark, 'When culture meets power', p. 19.

⁵⁰ Lentz (ed.), *Le Sacre*, p. 116.

⁵¹ The question is raised by Chanteranne, *Le Sacre*, p. 153.

took it off and touched the empress's forehead with it.⁵² In France, however, the coronation of a queen was a rare event – Josephine was the only queen to be crowned and anointed other than Marie de Medici in 1610 – but this was the first time that an empress had been anointed and crowned, and the first time in French history that a queen had been crowned at the same time as her male counterpart. Napoleon insisted because Josephine thereby came to embody the aspirations of the nation.⁵³

Then came the second phase of the ceremony. After the mass was over, Napoleon ascended the 'grand throne' erected on a high platform at the west end of the cathedral, with the crown still on his head. There, with one hand on the bible, he swore an oath to

maintain the integrity of the territory of the Republic: to respect and to cause to be respected the laws of the Concordat and of freedom of worship, of political and civil liberty, and the sale of nationalized lands; to raise no taxes except by virtue of the law; to maintain the institution of the Legion of Honour; to govern only in view of the interest, the well-being and the glory of the French people.⁵⁴

There are a number of things worth pointing out about the oath. It was a 'social pact' or social contract between the French people and their sovereign,⁵⁵ very similar to the oath demanded of Louis XVI when he became constitutional king in 1791, and which was an acknowledgement on the part of Napoleon that there was a power superior to God or indeed to his own personal will, the will of the people. If Napoleon broke that contract, the understanding was that the people, or at least the political elite, would have the right to depose him, as they did in 1814.⁵⁶ It was also a political pact, the culmination of the Revolution. Power was conferred on Napoleon not by God, but through a secular contract with the French people. Napoleon thus became the first among equals (*primus inter pares*). Finally, it was a text presented to Napoleon by the Senate, albeit modified after some toing and froing to conform to Napoleon's wishes.⁵⁷ It was still meant to be a constitutional guarantee of the political and civil liberties of all French citizens. The oath, in other words, enshrined the values of the Revolution.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 158–9; Clark, 'When culture meets power', p. 14.

⁵³ Chanteranne, *Le Sacre*, p. 157.

⁵⁴ Frédéric Bluche, *Le Bonapartisme: aux origines de la droite autoritaire (1800–1850)* (Paris, 1980), p. 31.

⁵⁵ Annie Jourdan, 'Le Sacre ou le pacte social', in *Napoléon le Sacre*, pp. 25–33; and Annie Jourdan, 'Le Premier Empire: un nouveau pacte social', *Cités: philosophie, politique, histoire*, 20 (2004), pp. 51–64.

⁵⁶ See Jean Tulard, *Napoléon ou le mythe du sauveur* (Paris, 1977), pp. 172–3; Boudon, *Napoléon et les cultes*, p. 128.

⁵⁷ Annie Jourdan, 'Conclusion: the Napoleonic empire in the age of revolutions: the contrast of two national representations', in Michael Broers, Peter Hicks and Agustín Guimerá (eds), *The Napoleonic Empire and the New European Political Culture* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 318–19.

III

This is what the elaborate coronation ceremony attempted. An art historian writing recently about the ceremony described it as a ‘microcosm of the intellectual disorder of the Napoleonic macrocosm’, a ‘pure demonstration of Napoleonic *bricolage* in action’.⁵⁸ By that he meant that it was a form of intellectual ‘plunder’, an opportunistic appropriation of a past ritual, in much the same way as Napoleon looted the art treasures of Europe to build the Louvre. That is to dismiss entirely the ceremony without attempting to understand its meaning, how it celebrated a particular set of values, and how it was designed to promote social integration and political consensus, a synthesis that demonstrated the will to bring the Revolution to an end.⁵⁹

One way to read the coronation ritual is, *à la* Durkheim, as a ‘producer’ of reality, transforming the status of the person carrying it out, and thereby contributing greatly to the integration and cohesion of French society.⁶⁰ According to this approach, political ritual thereby produces consensus, although it ignores the fact that it can also contain within it contested and conflictual as well as consensual activities. Nor does it take into account contemporary narratives surrounding the ceremony, which both reflect the contested and consensual nature of the ceremony as well as distort it.⁶¹ Regardless of the presence of oppositional elements, or the lack of consensus, a rite like a coronation obliges people to conceive of the political world in a particular way. One should not confound social conformity and the fact that many thousands attended the ceremony because it was expected of them, and belief in the new political structure. Put another way, the acclamations, even if loud and sincere, do not necessarily translate into an adhesion to empire. That can only be judged by the social mobilization around the new monarchy, and the degree to which ‘routine gestures’, such as court etiquette and the return to former speech patterns – the use of the formal address, ‘sire’, for example, rejected by the revolutionaries – became institutionalized.

⁵⁸ Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting*, pp. 32, 38.

⁵⁹ Jean-Marc Olivesi, ‘De l’impossible porphyrogénèse à un rituel de légitimation: le Sacre’, in *Napoléon le Sacre*, pp. 9–14, at p. 10.

⁶⁰ Edward Shils and Michael Young, ‘The meaning of the coronation’, in Edward Shils (ed.), *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago, 1975), pp. 135–52; and T. J. Nossiter, ‘Attitudes to the monarchy: their structure and development during a ceremonial occasion’, *Political Studies*, 19 (1971), pp. 149–71; Emmanuel Fureix, *La France des larmes: deuils politiques à l’âge romantique (1814–1840)* (Paris, 2009), pp. 18–20.

⁶¹ Most accounts of the ceremony dwell on the attitude of republicans, especially among the military, who were obliged to attend, thus underlining the extent to which oppositional elements made their opinions known. See, for example, Anita Brookner, *Jacques-Louis David* (London, 1980), p. 150. For a critique of Durkheimian notions of ritual by medievalists, see Philippe Buc, ‘Rituel politique et imaginaire politique au haut Moyen Âge’, *Revue historique*, 305 (2001), pp. 843–83; and Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, 2001).

It begs the question: did the coronation have the desired effect? Did it increase Napoleon's personal legitimacy and help establish the authority of the Empire? Historians disagree about the meaning of the coronation, but they all seem to agree on its spectacular lack of success, and they usually cite the tepid acclamations of the crowd as proof.⁶² Napoleon could not but be aware that various sections of the French public, including some among the social and political elite, were unhappy with the proclamation of the Empire, and even unhappier with the coronation. Republicans disliked what they perceived to be a return to the monarchy, and objected to what appeared to be a religious revival. Catholics reproached Napoleon for his treatment of the pope, for not having taken Communion during the ceremony, and for having crowned himself. Royalists rejected the coronation outright. The ceremony itself was supposed to have taken these various political and religious tendencies into consideration. Even if, as we have seen, various groups within France understood perfectly well what Napoleon was doing, the details of the ceremony and the symbolism made use of appear to have been so complex as to remain impenetrable to the vast majority of onlookers.

This reaction might explain why Napoleon never spoke of the coronation again, and why it was so little used as a propaganda set piece. Apart from Jacques-Louis David's monumental painting, *The Coronation of Josephine*, which was first exhibited in the Musée Napoleon in February 1808, there were very few engravings and fewer popular prints of the coronation.⁶³ Even then, the actual moment captured in David's painting is that of Napoleon paying tribute to his wife, a banal caring husband in, as one art critic has put it, a bourgeois comedy of devotion.⁶⁴ On the whole, the painting was well received – some even felt compelled to cry out 'Vive l'Empereur'⁶⁵ – but it was only ever displayed

⁶² On the reactions of the crowd, see Archives Nationales, F7 3833, 4 frimaire an XIII (25 Nov. 1804); Charles de Rémusat, *Mémoires de ma vie* (5 vols; Paris, 1958–67), I, 51; Jean-Nicolas-Auguste Noël, *Souvenirs militaires d'un officier du premier Empire: 1795–1832* (Paris, 1895), p. 35; H. C. Cheuvreux (ed.), *Journal et correspondance de André-Marie Ampère (de 1793 à 1805)* (Paris, 1872), p. 335; Miot de Métilo, *Mémoires*, II, 231; Lentz, *Nouvelle Histoire du Premier Empire*, I, 90–2, 94–6; Alfred Fierro, *La vie des Parisiens sous Napoléon* (Saint-Cloud, 2003), pp. 207–12; Natalie Petiteau, 'Lecture socio-politique de l'empire: bilan et perspectives', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 359 (2010), pp. 181–202, at p. 197.

⁶³ The following is based on Brookner, *Jacques-Louis David*, pp. 150–6; Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting*, pp. 38–48; Porterfield and Siegfried, *Staging Empire*, pp. 115–69; Todd Porterfield, 'David sans David', in Mark Ledbury (ed.), *David after David: Essays on the Later Work* (Williamstown, MA, 2007) pp. 39–53; Sylvain Laveissière et al., *Le Sacre de Napoléon peint par David* (Paris, 2004); O'Brien, *After the Revolution*, pp. 145–8.

⁶⁴ Philippe Bordes, 'La Fabrication de l'histoire par Jacques-Louis David', in *Triomphe et mort du héros: la peinture d'histoire en Europe de Rubens à Manet* (London, 1988), p. 116; Porterfield and Siegfried, *Staging Empire*, pp. 10–11.

⁶⁵ Ernest de Hauterive, *La Police secrète du premier Empire: bulletins quotidiens adressés par Fouché à l'Empereur* (5 vols; Paris, 1908–1964), IV, 63 (15 Feb. 1808). According to the newspaper accounts, crowds were always found gathering before the painting (*Annales de l'architecture et des arts libéraux et mécaniques*, 18 March 1808, pp. 185–90).



Figure 2 ‘Representation of the Consecration [and] Coronation of Napoleon I, Emperor of the French’ (*Représentation du Sacre [et] du Couronnement de Napoleon I, Empereur des François*). Woodcut engraving. 16.7 × 30.8 cm. Bibliothèque nationale, Richelieu.

for one month. Its impact, therefore, would have been relatively limited. The vast majority of French, if they were to see any representations of the coronation at all, were more likely to see woodcut prints or engravings based on David’s work. One of the most popular was a print entitled *Representation of the Coronation* in which the principal events that took place during the ceremony – the papal anointment, the self-coronation, and the crowning of Josephine – are all portrayed (see Figure 2).

The regime failed, however, to make as much of the ceremony as it did with other Napoleonic festivals – the marriage to Marie-Louise in 1810, for example – and in particular some Napoleonic victories. The official organ of the regime, the *Moniteur universel*, did not even give an account either of the ceremony or of the festivities that followed, almost as though the coronation never took place. The anniversary of the coronation was celebrated every year on the first Sunday of December, but the date was often confused with the battle of Austerlitz, which took place on the same date one year after the coronation. Napoleon himself seems to have doubted the importance of the coronation as a legitimizing ritual; the lack of public enthusiasm surrounding the event as well as the tepid manner in which the elites responded seems to have had an impact on him.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Cited in Gaubert, *Le Sacre de Napoléon*, p. 184.

IV

What then are we to make of the significance of the ceremony, if even the regime seems to have doubted its usefulness as an instrument of propaganda? As with the kings of *ancien régime* France, the coronation ceremony was an indispensable rite within the process of legitimating the new sovereign, but as we have already seen, the impact of this self-legitimizing ritual, produced by the state 'with the goal of securing dynastic continuity',⁶⁷ was limited, even in an era when it was possible to distribute widely a message through the media of the day, not to mention the church pulpit. What was particularly significant about this ceremony was the use of the notion of popular sovereignty as a legitimating principle, how Napoleon viewed power, and what the ceremony tells us about the relationship of the political elite to Napoleon, the Revolution and the people.

The Empire was, in some respects, the result of a monarchical reflex that had persisted in French political and popular culture despite more than a decade of republicanism. Many people seemed genuinely pleased with a return to monarchical forms, and not a few in the political elite were convinced that constitutional monarchy, which the empire was meant to mirror, was a better political system than a republic. The coronation therefore served as a rite of passage,⁶⁸ one that Napoleon was obliged to go through in the transformation from Republic to Empire and one that, because of its symbolic significance, bestowed a semblance of legitimacy on him. To paraphrase Jon Cowans, there is no political reality without a representation of it.⁶⁹ To an extent, the French people accepted the legitimacy of the empire, although Napoleon and the empire never succeeded in entirely overcoming the country's political divisions brought about by the Revolution. It is possible that the people of France associated the coronation of Napoleon with the coronation ceremonies of the former Bourbon kings of France, but there is little in the sources to indicate they did, and even then the link between the ceremony, monarchical legitimacy and popular culture would have been weak.

As we have seen, a central part of the coronation ceremony was the oath, a social contract between the new monarch and the people. And yet, and herein lay one of the contradictions inherent in the ceremony, the invitations to the coronation declared that 'divine providence' had called Napoleon to the throne, a sentiment that can also be found in the media of the day, although in somewhat subtler terms.⁷⁰ In short, the

⁶⁷ As Abby Zanger, *Scenes from the Marriage of Louis XIV: Nuptial Fictions and the Making of Absolutist Power* (Stanford, CA, 1997), p. 7, has pointed out for another period.

⁶⁸ Kertzer, 'The role of ritual in political change', p. 69.

⁶⁹ Cowans, *To Speak for the People*, p. 3.

⁷⁰ Joseph-François-Nicolas Dusaulchoy de Bergemont, *Histoire du couronnement, ou Relation des cérémonies religieuses, politiques et militaires qui ont eu lieu pendant les jours mémorables consacrés à célébrer le sacre et le couronnement de S. M. I. Napoléon Ier* (Paris, an XIII-1805), pp. 2–3; Lentz (ed.), *Sacre*, p. 170.

idea of divine right is curiously mixed with the notion that Napoleon had been called upon by the French people to adopt the title 'emperor'. The traditional notion of divine right and the revolutionary notion of the sovereignty of the people were thus in precarious balance.

Napoleon, and for that matter the French political elite who had urged him down the path towards empire, was ambivalent about popular sovereignty, a notion that, as contemporaries should have realized, was fundamentally incompatible with Napoleon's style of government. Napoleon was not only deeply suspicious of the people, associated with violence and disorder, but he held no truck with parliamentary forms and dissent.⁷¹ Napoleon's attitudes, like those of the elite, were rooted in his own experiences during the Revolution, and as a result he had a profound conviction that elected assemblies were useless. As an institution they had been abased long before the Directory, while there was also a decline in the direct vote, something of which the elite approved. One of the best ways of obtaining strong and stable government, they argued, was to distance the people from politics by placing severe restrictions on their voting rights.⁷²

Parallel to the dysfunctionality in democracy was a resurgence in the belief in the sacred nature of the monarchy, but not just any monarchy, one that was founded in the person of Napoleon, who became the symbolic custodian of the power of the people.⁷³ This is not the same, however, as the notion of sacrality that existed in *ancien régime* France, despite Gros's painting. It had now taken on a slightly new form, founded on notions of individual destiny (Napoleon's), as well as popular sovereignty. We can see it in the Imperial Catechism of 1806, an attempt by Napoleon to define a subject's duties by placing himself within the tradition of European monarchs anointed by God. As such, it represents a radical shift away from the secular nature of the French polity towards a more traditional notion of rule by divine right. Those who now failed in their duty towards Napoleon would find themselves facing 'eternal damnation'.⁷⁴

It is not because a state creates and manipulates symbols that its attempts at ritualization are necessarily successful. Partisans of the

⁷¹ Caulaincourt, *Memoirs*, II, 250. Note Napoleon's reactions to the limited opposition shown by the Tribune and the Legislative Corps during the Consulate, and which led to an effectual purging in 1802 (Isser Woloch, *Napoleon and his Collaborators: The Making of a Dictatorship* (New York, 2002), p. 92; Irene Collins, *Napoleon and his Parliaments, 1800–1815* (New York, 1979), pp. 66–7).

⁷² Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le Sacre du citoyen: Histoire du suffrage universel en France* (Paris, 1992), p. 197; Vida Azimi, *Les premiers sénateurs français: Consulat et Premier Empire, 1800–1814* (Paris, 2000), pp. 155–6.

⁷³ Petiteau, *Les français et l'empire*, pp. 165, 170, argues that this period sees a reinvention of relations between monarch and subject and that we are seeing a return to a new kind of sacralization of the monarchy, less superstitious, than that which preceded the Revolution.

⁷⁴ André Latreille, *Le Catéchisme Impérial de 1806: Études et documents pour servir à l'histoire des rapports de Napoléon et du clergé concordataire* (Paris, 1935), pp. 80–1; André Latreille, *L'Église catholique et la Révolution française*, II, 135–9; Bernardine Melchior-Bonnet, *Napoléon et le Pape* (Paris, 1958), pp. 86–8.

Empire, in their eagerness to replace rituals sponsored by the Revolution, and by reverting to a mixture of *ancien régime* and revolutionary symbolism, were successful up to a point. But the ritualization raises questions about the Empire as a political entity, and whether it was entirely associated with the person of Napoleon. In other words, ritual and political symbolism have a limited influence on people's attitudes. The political struggles that characterized the Revolution, often waged through ritual but also of course through executions and assassinations, were largely brought to an end during the Consulate and the Empire. A ritual, the coronation, legitimized the new regime, and in the process delegitimized both the *ancien régime* and the Revolution. It associated an emerging dictatorship with the symbols of democracy and kingship; it superimposed the notion of popular legitimacy and the idea of a monarchy.⁷⁵ As ruler, there can be no doubt Napoleon was authoritarian, but he was also a populist. We later see an evolution, which consisted of Napoleon moving away from revolutionary concepts like the sovereignty of the people and gradually moving towards the notion of absolutism by divine right, all the while maintaining a footing in popular sovereignty.⁷⁶ Both of these elements were present in the coronation ceremony of 1804.

⁷⁵ Rosanvallon, *Le Sacre du citoyen*, p. 203.

⁷⁶ Bluche, *Le Bonapartisme*, p. 90; Aurélien Lignereux, *Histoire de la France contemporaine*, I: *L'Empire des Français (1799–1815)* (Paris, 2012), pp. 85–6.