



## Introduction

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## **Introduction**

**Monique Chatenet , Murielle Gaudé-Ferragu , Gérard Sabatier**

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, at the time of the hundred years war, French and English kings used every possible medium to legitimize and reinforce their power.

Such political communication was not born at the end of the Middle Ages, but it intensified when the necessity of bringing a country together became the important factor in political designs. This communication became part of the theatricalisation of power, when grand public rituals filled the life and reign of the sovereign (coronation, entries, diplomatic receptions). Funeral celebrations took on a magnitude unknown until then. In France, Charles V (1364--1380) was one of its great promoters, bringing onto the stage not only his own eternity (a triple sepulchre for which the recumbent statues had been commissioned during his lifetime), but also that of queens (like his wife Jeanne de Bourbon (1339--1378), integrated - since the accession of the Valois - into the 'cemetery of kings' at Saint-Denis.

In the fifteenth century, Charles V's successors carried on his 'funeral politics': body exposed, face and hands uncovered bearing the insignia of power - a ritual of sovereignty also practised by the pope and by English monarchs -, the canopy, chapel of rest, as well as the presence of the constituent parts of the kingdom (prelates, nobles and civic representatives). The successors introduced a number of innovations, however. In part, these were based on English ritual, such as recourse to the effigy, employed for the first time on the death of Edward II in 1327.

Simple spectacle of the dead king or incarnation as a 'political body', the wax mannequin created by the king's painters and made to resemble his 'person', has aroused

much debate among historians and art historians. Undeniably, at the beginning, the wax semblance responded to a practical necessity: the interval between death and burial exceeding the number of days when the full presentation of the mortal remains was possible; from 1422, a substitute was used (the funeral of Charles VI). And yet, recent research has shown (Brown, Boureau, Gaude-Ferragu, Chatenet, Marachandisse and Girault)<sup>1</sup> that the effigy did not incorporate the legally immortal body of the king. Queens, from the death of Isabeau de Bavière in 1435, had a wax mannequin at their disposal without that object presenting any issue with regard to political permanence; if the 'king never dies', the queen, separated from power since the beginning of the fourteenth century, had merely a mortal body, ephemeral, without any sense of transcendence: her *Dignity* died with her, and yet she was represented by an effigy. This stood for the glorious body of the dead Queen, promised at the Resurrection. It is in this sense, Christian not statutory, that her effigy embodies the notion of eternity.

Some European courts adopted the effigy; the prince's successor, organizer of his funeral, modelled the occasion on French ceremonial (for example, the dukes of Anjou, of Bourbon and Ferrara), asserting in his turn his power and prestige. Others preferred to adopt different signs of sovereignty (such as the canopy and crowned headpiece used at the death of Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne (1391--1467). They all transformed

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<sup>1</sup> See the last two works on this subject, Monique Chatenet and Alain Marachandisse, 'Les funérailles de Georges d'Amboise (Lyon and Rouen, 25 May--20 June 1510', in J.-P. Chaline (ed.), *Au seuil de la Renaissance. le cardinal Georges d'Amboise (1460--1510). Actes du colloque Georges d'Amboise; l'homme et son oeuvre (Rouen 8--9 October, 2010)* (Rouen: Société de Normandie, 2012), pp. 159-69; and P. -G. Girault, *Les Funérailles d'Anne de Bretagne, reine de France. L'Hermine regrettée* (Montreux: Gouracuff Gradenigo, 2014).

funeral ritual into a ceremony of inauguration, with performances (sword or banner lowered and then raised up), and words pronounced such as the cry of inauguration: 'the king is dead, long live the king'.

Thus, before submitting himself to divine justice, the prince - or rather his body - lit a final terrestrial flame: his funeral symbolized a subtle victory, a political reality superimposed upon a physiological one. In the image of Christ who, through his resurrection, triumphed over death, the prince (more humbly) triumphed over forgetfulness with an impressive funeral pomp which endured long in the memory. His sepulchre (often triple in form with body, heart and innards), together with the prayers intoned by the clerics, further perpetuated his repute and inscribed 'for eternity' his passage on earth.

In the sixteenth century, the ceremonies for princely funerals were considerably transformed through a double influence: the desire to restore the grandeur of the ancient Romans on the one hand, and the development of court society on the other, the whole effect made under the pressure derived from a sense of strong cultural and martial competition which beset the whole of Europe.

The discovery, in the middle of the fifteenth century, of the Greek text by Herodian on the funerals of Roman emperors, together with the extensive moral heritage belonging to the story of Artemisia (widow of King Mausolus) were at the birth of passionate researches on surviving evidence of the customs and rituals of ancient funerals (Fontaine). They resulted in numerous treatises, beginning with that of Jean Lemaire de Belges (1507), and in the enrichment of funeral ceremonies with stories and monuments (both ephemeral and enduring) as surprising as they were spectacular.

In France, from the death of Charles VIII (1498), as the protonotary Jean du Tillet recorded, the procession when the body and effigy of the king were carried by his fellows in arms already alluded to ancient practice; but it was especially under Louis XII with the celebrated funeral ceremonies of Anne de Bretagne (1514) and with the even more elaborate funeral celebrations of the king himself (1517, less well known) when an event - freely adapted from the funeral ritual of Roman emperors - was born: the meal in front of the royal effigy. During the long interval between the placing in the coffin and the burial itself, meals were ceremoniously served in front of the effigy by the Household personnel 'as if their master were still alive'. As to the long funeral procession which traditionally carried the effigy from Paris to Saint-Denis, it reflected allusions to the Triumphs of ancient Rome, a sad counterpoint to the joyous royal entries. During the sixteenth century, the funeral ritual developed along these lines, being enriched by the inventions of the heralds and masters of ceremony who were never short of imaginative ideas, and endowed with the magnificence and grandeur of the courtly image of the last Valois kings.

Within these developments, the spectacular use of the effigy was to have repercussions beyond French and English borders, notably in the Italian peninsula: first, in Venice for the funerals of the Doge, then for the dukes of Ferrara and Mantua, as well as for the grand duke of Tuscany, without the whole French ritual ever being strictly followed (Ricci). In this regard, the response of Emond du Boulay, organizer of the funeral celebration for the dukes of Guise and Lorraine, is symptomatic. The way in which he masks the evident borrowings from French ceremonial habits beneath the assertion of a pseudo-restoration of ancestral rituals of the Lorraine princes 'sovereigns of the lands between the rivers Meuse and the Rhine', illustrates well the essential role of funeral ceremonial for the prestige of a princely line.

The funeral of Charles V (1558) constitutes another ceremonial climax whose expansion across Europe - and even beyond - was even more immense, by reason of the huge extent of the territories and zones under the Emperor's rule and influence (Marchandise). Charles, who died at the monastery of Yuste where he had retired following his abdication, was buried with a certain ceremony, but almost privately in the church of the Hieronymites where his body lay until its transfer to the Escorial in 1574. Notwithstanding this simplicity, innumerable commemorative ceremonies across Europe displayed a sumptuous ostentation equal to the vast power of the dead monarch: in Spain, Italy, the Low Countries, in the Empire and even in Mexico, there were (it is said) 3,700 commemorations which developed original formulae. In Italy, where the tradition was already established (but also in Spain) an '*apparato*' or catafalque representing the dead Emperor was erected at the centre of the sanctuary. This ephemeral monument in the form of a stepped pyramid - also inspired from ancient forms - was decorated with sculptures and paintings developing not only abundant heraldic and emblematic signs, traditional to Burgundy and the Holy Roman Empire, but also to themes taken from humanistic sources.

In Northern Europe, however, notably in Augsburg, on the initiative of Emperor Ferdinand, and especially in Brussels under the orders of Philip II, a great procession, crossing the city according to Burgundian ceremonial traditions took the pre-eminent role. Metamorphosed into a *Triumph of Sorrows*, the procession - although somewhat different in form - constituted a parallel to contemporary French funeral ceremonies, yet with a magnificence and a power unequalled. There was no effigy, but at the centre of the whole machine, after the banners, after the steeds of honour crested with the arms of the States of the Empire, with the pieces of honour of the dead monarch, came a gigantesque triumphal car in the form of a ship symbolizing the *pegma* : it was the moving theatre of the Imperial

State. As for the immense *Castrum doloris* (Castle of Sorrow) erected at the entrance of the choir in Sainte Gudule's cathedral, it represented a compromise between the traditions of Northern and Southern Europe: an immense '*apparato*' in the form of a pyramid, sheltered beneath an outsize chapel of rest (recalling a medieval tradition) on which thousands of candles blazed as immutable signs of eternal life.

In the seventeenth century, princely funerals in Europe imbibed the effects of the general tendency for monarchical powers to increase in strength. However, the evolution of funeral ritual was far from being uniform, as it responded to contradictory impulses in the functioning of traditions and strategies within the diverse dynasties.

In certain cases, tradition survived while adjusting itself to certain accommodations appropriate to the times. Thus, in Spain for the funeral celebrations of Philip IV (1665), the humble ritual which went back to Philip II was respected with a modest procession bearing the remains to the Escorial. However for the first time, the corpse had been disembowelled and embalmed according to the methods of other monarchies, and it was presented in splendour in the Golden Saloon of the Alcazar palace, beneath a canopy, in court dress, with hat and sword, whereas his predecessors had lain there either in a simple shirt or dressed in a monastic habit. In the Escorial, after a funeral service without splendour, Philip IV took his place in the Pantheon of marble, completed in 1654, and where the remains of earlier kings were assembled. The following ceremonies respected medieval traditions: the raising of banners in Madrid for the proclaiming of the new King; funeral honours in the presence of notables and ambassadors; and the cenotaph surrounded by the swords of all the kingdoms of the monarchy. This fundamental conservatism had also been present in the German principality of Hesse-Cassel in 1632: the almost complete absence of religious ceremonial following Lutheran precepts;

display of the territory with coats of arms on the coffin when the body was exposed in the castle; the assembly of the whole community forming a body around the coffin; and dynastic continuity evident by the presence of an armed knight in front of the dead corpse, and the successor behind. The immense procession moving from the place of death to the site of burial among ancestors was the essential element as is proved by the fifty-two engravings contained in the *Monumentale sepulcrale*.

The funerals of the dukes of Ferrara (1659) and of Modena (1663) testify to the preeminent importance attached to such celebrations in the strategies of small princely houses in attempts to raise themselves to the level of the great. They linked a traditional medieval process to an innovation taken from the modern repertory of the spectacular. The D'Este family, dispossessed of their dukedom of Ferrara and burdened with the stains of bastardy, were obliged to recall their great antiquity and publicize their splendour. The first series were briskly over : embalming and a sober burial in the funeral chapel of the dynasty. The essential event took place in the church of San Agostino, transformed by Gaspare Vigarani (1588--1663) into a funeral theatre, decorated with 124 statues and the medals of illustrious ancestors, each one incorporating a virtue or some heroic quality through the good offices of the Jesuit Domenico Gambati. In 1663, the church was transformed into a pantheon of all the D'Este family and the ephemeral machine had become a fixed feature. The remembering of the ducal lineage celebrated in a closed space had taken on the form of a dynastic cult, the people being less participators, but rather mere spectators.

It was in France that royal funeral ceremonies received their most radical changes. In 1610, the suddenness of the king's death and the need to inscribe the new dynasty into the preceding line, made the Queen Regent and the followers of the dead king reproduce a



ceremony unchanged from the Valois model. This necessitated a complex play between the public representation of the corpse for a very long time and the Parisian procession turned into an antique triumph. These two preliminary sequences, lasting a month and a half, constituted the essential elements of the royal funeral ceremony. The third event was short and without pomp: a mass in Notre Dame, half way along the nave, and another at Saint-Denis followed by the traditional burial.

In 1643, Louis XIII introduced a 'ceremonial *coup d'état*' (Jean-Marie Le Gall). He died at Saint-Germain, his embalmed body shown as in life, holding a crucifix in his hands. No effigy, no insignia of monarchy. The first had been abandoned as tainted with paganism, the second suppressed through humility. It was the model of a Christian death, a model Philip II, commended by the Counter Reformation. Louis XIII's second '*coup d'état*', following the logic of the first, was a procession without pomp, a procession made up of the Royal Household and close servants, 600 participants who went straight to Saint-Denis, thus avoiding the city of Paris completely. The reason given for such a drastic change was to reduce the expense, the kingdom's finances having been exhausted by the cost of the wars against Spain. Deprived of the prayers of his subjects through the short time his body was exposed in Saint-Germain, together with the avoiding of Paris, king Louis rested for a month in the choir of the basilica, waiting to receive his subjects. After that, the funeral ritual proceeded, without pomp other than a chapel of rest.

While Louis XIII had arranged his own funeral ceremonies, this was not the case for Louis XIV who was beset with all the problems of his succession. The Regent, the duc d'Orléans ordered that the ceremonies be the same as for his father. Thus, the Valois model was not restored, but the Bourbon ceremony of Louis XIII was used, adopting meanings and changes which ended up in a ceremonial formula which accorded perfectly with the

new conceptions of monarchy. The remains of Louis XIV were not exposed as were those of Louis XIII, gangrene having set in necessitated their being put in a coffin immediately after embalming. However, in erecting in the Saloon of Mercury at Versailles, a ceremonial bed with the coffin and urns containing the heart and entrails situated at its foot, the fiction of the exposure of the whole body was preserved. Yet, the modesty and humility which had characterized the funeral of his father were entirely absent. The avoidance of Paris and the break with the people were signs of the rupture of the monarchy from its subjects, concerned to make prominent by this separation, its own eminence. This segregation was emphasized by the exclusive involvement of the court whose members formed the procession on their own, with the body of the king. Majesty was made manifest with the spectacle of 3,000 persons carrying lighted torches, moving through the night to arrive at Saint-Denis at daybreak. This innovation of travelling through the night owed much to Spanish example (the first instance was for the funeral of Anne d'Autriche), and it dramatizes the whole process likening it to the resurrection of the phoenix. All that the royal funeral ceremony lost in the pomp of the palace, the last terrestrial dwelling of the king, was recouped - and more - by the splendour of the religious funeral ceremony in the basilica metamorphosed into a great theatre of death. In 1683, the funeral of the Queen had introduced Italian spectacle with a monumental *Castrum doloris* (Castle of Sorrow). Following funeral ceremonies merely enhanced this theatrical tendency. Removed from the care of the abbey's religious personnel and given to the royal service of the Menus Plaisirs, the funerals of the Bourbons had become the employment of the religious in the service of the glorification of an absolute monarch.

These changes in funeral ceremonies, in harmony with the monarchical system itself, were not limited to France. For the same reasons, one sees its use in Scandinavian kingdoms.

The installing of absolutism in Denmark in 1660, and in Sweden in 1680, brought the disappearance of great processions and the separation of monarchs from the people. Kings organized their own funerals in private chapels and adopted the Italian model of the *Castrum doloris* (Castle of Sorrow) (made popular in France), associating it with a Germanic tradition of a sepulchre made in shining bronze. For the Queen of Denmark, Sophie Amélie in 1685, and for Ulrica Eleonora of Sweden in 1693, the move from a dynamic procession to a static funeral ceremony in the Church, demonstrates that the King and the Queen did not belong to the same social sphere as their subjects.