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*L'échelle que tu vois, crois-tu qu'elle se rompe ?...
Non, elle continue, invincible, admirable...
Relie, en traversant des millions de lieues,
Les groupes constellés et les légions bleues,
Peuple le haut, le bas, les bords et le milieu,
Et dans les profondeurs s'évanouit en Dieu !*
Victor Hugo

The spatial dimension in the construction of medieval concepts of power is the primary focus of this article. The results of a text-mining analysis of corpora of medieval charters and theological treatises allow me to argue that, depending on the context, power relations were portrayed either as relations “in the power” (a model rooted in an “inside/outside” scheme) or as relations of “power over” (a model based on an “over/under” scheme). The “in the power” scheme is more frequently encountered in the corpora of medieval texts. I suggest that the coexistence and combination of the two schemes in the construction of power concepts align with Philippe Descola’s model of analogist societies and Louis Dumont’s hierarchical models for holistic societies. Finally, the frequency of the second scheme allows us to recall the “polar model” of power as an alternative to the “pyramidal” one.

La dimensione spaziale nella costruzione del concetto medievale di potere è il *focus* principale di questo articolo. I risultati di un’analisi di *text-mining* su corpora di carte medievali e trattati teologici permettono di sostenere che, a seconda del contesto, le relazioni di potere venivano rappresentate sia come relazioni “nel potere” (un modello radicato in una relazione spaziale “dentro/fuori”) sia come relazioni di “potere su” (un modello basato su una relazione “su/giù”). La coesistenza e la combinazione dei due schemi nella costruzione dei concetti di potere sono

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in linea con il modello delle società analogiste di Philippe Descola e con i modelli gerarchici di Louis Dumont per le società olistiche. Infine, la frequenza del secondo schema ci permette di richiamare il “modello polare” del potere come alternativa a quello “piramidale”.

Middle Ages, text mining, spatial relations, power, systems of representation, models of social hierarchy, *CEMA, Patrologia Latina*.

Medioevo, *text mining*, relazioni spaziali, potere, sistemi di rappresentazione, modelli di gerarchia sociale, *CEMA, Patrologia Latina*.

1. Introduction. Spatial schemes and medieval power concepts

The spatial dimension is one of the basic dimensions involved in the construction of concepts. The concept of power also revolves around relationships that can best be understood – and described – in spatial terms: to truly grasp what power is and how it works, we should think in terms of distance, direction, and position.¹ Schemes up/down and in/out, rather referring to movement, and over/under and inside/outside, rather referring to position,² can be considered as invariants in the construction of concepts (observable across the social representations of various societies). However, variations in their usage are apparent among different societies, as their usage is rooted in the physical and cultural experience unique to each society. In this article, I raise the questions of which spatial relations were central to medieval Europe when it came to the notion of power³ and which preconceptual schemes were the basis for the meaning of medieval power.⁴

Recent studies conducted by medievalists highlight disparities in concepts and behaviours between the medieval European society and its con-

¹ Numerous studies were dedicated to the role of orientational metaphors in the construction of concepts, among which the following are the most relevant for our study: Langacker, Cassad, “Inside and Outside,” Lindner, “A lexico-semantic analysis,” Talmy, “How Language Structures Space,” Chun Lan, “A Cognitive Approach,” Boers, *Spatial Prepositions and Metaphor*, Vandeloise, *L'espace en français*, Herskovits, *Language and Spatial Cognition*, Pick and Acredolo, *Spatial Orientation*, Weinrich, “Typen der Gedächtnismetaphorik.” The study of orientational metaphors is closely tied to the inquiry into how the cultural perception of the body is mirrored in the representational framework of different cultures. In other words, it examines which of the orientations, rooted in the physical experiences shaped by our bodily characteristics, are prioritized by a given culture, and specifically, which spatial relations form the basis for the metaphors that a particular society adheres to.

² I am aware that the grouping of up/down and in/out with movement, and over/under and inside/outside with position, might be contestable: all these pairs can also express both movement and position depending on context.

³ The concept of “medieval power” is regarded as a construct under reconstruction, to which I am partially contributing through this study.

⁴ Our concepts shape what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we interact with others. Therefore, the representations of power relations by medieval people were central to their actions. In general terms, sociologists have emphasized the role of categories in the social construction of reality, among others Durkheim, *Les règles de la méthode sociologique*, Berger, Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Godelier, *L'idéal et le matériel*.

temporary counterpart.⁵ Consequently, the spatial dimension of the medieval and contemporary acceptations of any given concept might not align. While in linguistic studies the spatial relations of up/down and in/out are nearly equally addressed, among historians, particularly medievalists, the up/down (over/under) dimension takes precedence in discussions about medieval representations of power.⁶ While acknowledging the central role of the up/down (over/under) relation in medieval society, I contend that other basic relations expressed through spatialized terms⁷ hold significance to envision and enunciate power relations.

To scrutinize the spatial relations that underlay medieval power concepts, I conducted an analysis of the recurrent segments⁸ that emerge through the combination of spatial prepositions and key terms within the conceptual field afferent to power,⁹ as employed by medieval authors.¹⁰ My basic assumption is that Latin prepositions, since they are the primary way to express position and movements, mirror such spatialized representations of power.¹¹ As such prepositional segments hold the potential to establish semantic distinctions¹² (for instance, between “power over” and “in the power”), shedding new light upon power relations.

I posit that “prepositional segments” refer to specific power relations. The typology, referring to the modern world, leans on the distinction between “power to do” and “power over”, sometimes complemented by “power with”.¹³ The typology, spread among medievalists, also distinguishes between domi-

⁵ Speaking about “medieval society”, I am referring to a society that was characterized by the complete imbrication of concepts “*ecclesia*” and “society” in its system of representations. This social system was dominant in European region until it was replaced by the modern society where the dominant institution is the Market: Guerreau, *L'Avenir d'un passé incertain*, Guerreau-Jalabert, “*Spiritus et caro*,” Guerreau-Jalabert, “Occident médiéval et pensée analogique,” Morsel, “La construction sociale des identités,” Morsel, “*Lecclesia*,” Baschet, *La civilisation féodale*, Baschet, “Entre le Moyen Âge et nous,” Méhu, *Gratia Dei*.

⁶ Many studies indicate the importance of the up/down relation for medieval society: Ginzburg, “High and low;” Rigotti, *Metafore della politica*, 85; Zumthor, *La misura del mondo*; Costa, “Immagini della sovranità.”

⁷ A list of spatial relations – front/back, right/left, up/down, near/far, centre/periphery, east/west/south/north – that are used in political constructions can be found in Laponse, *Left and right*, 3.

⁸ Here “recurrent segments” (or “repeated segments”) are units composed of several forms repeated in the same order at different places in the corpus. In this paper, I am interested in such ‘prepositional’ repeated segments, that is, segments formed by a preposition and a noun.

⁹ A conceptual field is a group of words that are related in meaning because they all refer to the same idea or theme.

¹⁰ The concept of “power” in language has previously been investigated by scholars, employing diverse forms of linguistic analysis, occasionally involving computerized methods: Costa, *Iurisdicio*, Kuchenbuch, *Potestas und utilitas*, Schwandt, *Virtus*, the project “Political Language in the Middle Ages” led by Prof. Bernhard Jussen.

¹¹ The idea came to me while reading Heidegger, *Le traité des catégories*, 216.

¹² Contemporary research on prepositional semantics also raises the question of how far insights into the meanings of prepositions give clues to the semantic structure of lexical units and its processing in general: Zelinski-Wibbelt, *The Semantics of Prepositions*.

¹³ Dowding, *Rational choice and political power*, Dowding, *Power*, Berger, “Power over, power with, and power to,” Pansardi, “Power to and power over.”

nation (“power over”) and cooperation (“power with”),¹⁴ expressing two competing models of medieval power and forms of society, which Otto Giercke termed *Herrschaft* and *Genossenschaft*.

The examination of types of power is akin to the study of distinctions by medieval authors¹⁵ (especially made in treatises and legal documents). However, to my knowledge, distinctions between types of *potestas*, *potentia*, *dominium*, etc., proposed by medieval authors, were not grounded in spatial concepts. Therefore, in the present article, I will endeavour to explore another way of addressing medieval power concepts from the perspective of the spatial relations expressing them. I will strive to reconstruct a non-conscious layer in the system of medieval representations. Here, I use “non-conscious” in Pierre Bourdieu’s acceptance of the term, – namely, that the principle of non-consciousness imposes the construction of the system of objective relations in which individuals are inserted;¹⁶ it posits the existence of structures that lie beyond the pale of individual consciousness, yet manifest themselves with such regularity that they must be identified as a collective, and therefore as a societal phenomenon.¹⁷ The medieval representations of power included dimensions which escaped the individual consciousness of medieval authors themselves.

This article will investigate the acceptations of the medieval concepts of power expressed through spatial relations that medieval authors did not deliberately enunciate but nonetheless spontaneously manifest themselves throughout their works. Thus, my objective is to unveil new distinctions of medieval power relations through the study of prepositional segments, prepositions expressing spatial configuration which in turn convey specific conceptions of power relations.

Text mining methods allow to access the “non-conscious” level of medieval authors’ conceptual thinking by studying large corpora of texts through distant-reading analyses.¹⁸ The emergence of various computer programs facilitating linguistic text analysis coupled with the proliferation of extensive online repositories and corpora allows me to identify the recurrences of specific spatial relations in the expression of power relations.

I conducted an analysis of two Latin corpora, each of which compiles a specific type of document. The first one, Nicolas Perreaux’s *CEMA (Cartae Europae Medii Aevi)*, aggregates Western European charters from the 5th to the 15th centuries and is accessible through the NoSketch Engine.¹⁹ A charter

¹⁴ Bobineau, “Histoire du pouvoir.”

¹⁵ The distinctions of the Central Middle Ages have been studied by Meyer, *Die Distinktionstechnik in der Kanonistik*.

¹⁶ Bourdieu, Chamboredon, Passeron, *Le métier de sociologue*, 29-34. Non-conscious is not the unconscious in the sense used in psychoanalysis (particularly following the work of Freud, Jung and Lacan).

¹⁷ Morsel, “Kategorisierung,” 215.

¹⁸ Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*.

¹⁹ <https://cema.lamop.fr/#aimsoftheproject> The description of the corpus in Perreaux, “De l’accumulation à l’exploitation?”

is a short document, typically issued by an authority, that records a legal act such as a grant of land, privileges, rights, or confirms existing customs. The analysed corpus comprises approximately 270,000 charters and 80 million tokens.²⁰

The second corpus is the *Patrologia Latina*,²¹ a 217-volume collection of the writings of the Church Fathers and other ecclesiastical authors, from Tertullian (d. 230) to Pope Innocent III (d. 1216), edited in roughly chronological order. The main genres of texts in the *Patrologia Latina* include theological treatises, biblical commentaries, sermons, letters, hagiographies, and ecclesiastical histories. This corpus – also accessed through the NoSketch Engine – contributes approximately 84 million tokens to the enquiry. One of the experiments has been conducted on a subcorpus of texts written by eleven theologians from the 12th century, compiled from the *Patrologia Latina* section of the *Corpus Corporum*.²² The analysis of the latter is performed using the TXM software.²³

Working with both charters and theological treatises ensures that I work on the system of representations of medieval dominants. On the one hand, charters are considered instruments employed by medieval dominants to negotiate power relations within their group. On the other hand, the *Patrologia Latina* offers texts which established and buttressed social domination. These texts were also deliberately copied and transmitted, ensuring that the concept of power they express was recognized as authoritative during the Middle Ages.

These two corpora mainly reflect representations by the dominant group of medieval society, primarily members of the Church, which constitutes a limit of this study. Meanwhile, the limit is a relative one for two reasons: first, the very basis of the Church's domination during the Middle Ages laid in its ability to convert other members of society to its perspective on the social order; second, while worldviews may vary between social groups, it is reasonable to assume that dominant groups, being part of the societal whole, internalized some broadly shared cognitive structures operating at the level of the non-conscious.

There is no denying that an analysis based on macro-corpora of such size and chronological breadth must necessarily remain at a certain level of generality. Nevertheless, the availability of both corpora online allows researchers to zoom in on specific cases at any time.

²⁰ Here, a token is an individual occurrence of any given word form.

²¹ <https://voces.scriptores.pl/#concordance?corpname=PL>

²² <https://www.mlat.uzh.ch/browser?path=/38>

²³ Heiden, Tournier, "Lexicométrie textuelle."

2. The experiment

Although most of the medieval terms belonging to the conceptual field of power were already in use in classical times, their usage underwent significant changes. Specifically medieval use of ancient lexical units by notaries and ecclesiastical writers sheds light upon the evolution of the medieval conceptual mindset from its classical roots. This article focuses on these specific medieval use and acceptations.

2.1. Frequencies of prepositional segments

A scrutiny of the list featuring the 100 most characteristic co-occurrences²⁴ of prepositions and terms expressing power in the *CEMA* corpus yields the following results: *auctoritas* (*per*), *dominium* (*sub*, *in*, *cum*, *ad*), *potestas* (*in*, *sub*, *ad*), *iurisdicatio* (*sub*), *uoluntas* (*pro*, *ad*, *cum*, *per*), *imperium* (*sub*), *dominatio* (*sub*), *dicio* (*sub*),²⁵ *manus* (*per*, *in*, *subter*, *ad*, *apud*, *pre*, *de*), thus revealing the crucial role of prepositions conveying localisation (*in*, *sub*), of direction (*ad*, *de*, *a*), and provenance (*ex*, *per*).

The lemmas *potestas* and *dominium* offer both a high frequency and association with diverse spatial prepositions, therefore they will be central to my analysis. Besides, I will include the frequently-used ‘hand’ metaphor,²⁶ as *manus* represents the key power metaphor in the corpora under study.

Frequency-analysis of the prepositional segments²⁷ in the *CEMA* corpus gives the following result: *in manu* (10783 occurrences), *in manum* (1195), *sub manu* (181), *in potestate* (2436), *in potestatem* (545), *sub potestate* (235), *in dominio* (1711), *in dominium* (502), *sub dominio* (303), *potestas super* (98

²⁴ Co-occurrence refers to any instance where two or more words appear together within a specific context or window, such as within the same sentence, paragraph, or document: Lafon, “Analyse lexicométrique.”

²⁵ The lemmas *prelatio*, *maiestas*, *potentia* do not attract the spatial prepositions within the 100 most characteristic co-occurrences.

²⁶ The role of the hand as a “political” metaphor has been emphasised in Schmitt, *La raison des gestes*. To specify, it is primarily a metaphor and a metonymy for the power of God, as Jacques Le Goff has observed for the world of images: Le Goff, *Le Dieu du Moyen Âge*, 58.

²⁷ The data from less extensive corpora available online strengthen my hypothesis. *Corpus Thomisticum*, *Index Thomisticus*, ed. Enrique Alarcón, Universidad de Navarra, [online] www.corpusthomaticum.org (accessed 10 Oct 2024): *in potestate* (662), *in potestatem* (121), *in dominio* (19), *in dominium* (25), *in manu* (391), *sub potestate* (53), *sub dominio* (3), *sub manu* (8). *Alberti Magni e-corpus*, text search platform, St. Jerome’s University / University of Waterloo, [online] watarts.uwaterloo.ca/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/albertus/searchAlbertus.cgi (accessed 10 Oct 2024): *in potestate* (424), *in potestatem* (45), *in dominio* (12), *in dominium* (11), *in manu* (530), *sub potestate* (14), *sub dominio* (2), *sub manu* (6). *Corpus Synodaliū*, juridical documents corpus, [online] corpus-synodaliū.com (accessed 10 Oct 2024): *in manu* (117), *in manus* (47), *sub manu* (8), *in potestate* (10), *in potestatem* (5), *sub potestate* (4), *in dominio* (7), *in dominium* (1), *sub dominio* (7), *potestas super* (6).

repeated segments *potestas super*),²⁸ *dominium super* (52). The complete corpus of the *Patrologia Latina*²⁹ offers the following results: *in manu* (5934), *in manum* (395), *sub manu* (319), *in potestate* (1936), *in potestatem* (460), *sub potestate* (349), *in dominio* (78), *in dominium* (59), *sub dominio* (70), *potestas super* (226), *dominium super* (17).

Although this kind of data does not account for the fact that the preposition *in* is much more frequent in the corpora than the preposition *sub*, calculating co-occurrences still leads me to the following observation. Latin spatial prepositions³⁰ used in conjunctions with keywords expressing power – *potestas*, *dominium*, *manus*, – refers to two sets of relative positions: a) over/under (up and down), b) inside and outside (in/out).³¹ This points towards the fact that a medieval dominant was characterized not only by his capacity to subordinate others to themselves, but also by an ability to integrate, to encompass, and therefore to exclude.

2.2. Two kinds of spatial relations and the power relations

In order to ascertain that distinct types of power are actually expressed through these two sets of spatial terms, an examination of the contextual variations in which these segments appear is required. It will allow us to assess the degree of synonymy between constructs utilizing *sub*, *supra*, and *in*.

²⁸ However, 381 co-occurrences were found within the window of 5 words on the right side from the key word.

²⁹ The analysis of syntagm frequencies within the corpus can be accessed at the following link: [online] voces.scriptores.pl/#concordance?corpname=PL (accessed 20 Jan 2025).

³⁰ To eliminate the possibility that a language effect is brought into play, the lists of the repeated segments in Old French (*Chartae Galliae*, [online] telma.irht.cnrs.fr/outils/chartae-galliae/index/, accessed 07 Nov 2023) and Old Castilian (*CNDHE*, [online] apps.rae.es/CNDHE/view/inicioExterno.view, accessed 07 Nov 2023) were checked. Regarding the Old French word *pooir*/*poeir*, the prevalent prepositional segments are *de pooir* (when signifying the “force of action”), *a pooir* (indicating ownership of a dominant). In Old Castilian, within the corpus of charters and acts included in the *CNDHE*, the most frequent segment is *en poder*, which allows the construction of relationships within the family (*en poder del avuelo/padre/parient*) and among office-holders or institutions (*en poder del cabildo*). Conversely, almost no occurrences of segments *poder sobre* or *so poder* can be found (‘power over’ or ‘under the power’). Notably, the words *poder* and *poderio* do not tend to align with the preposition *bajo*.

³¹ The pair of prepositions “infra/extra” should also be taken into account when discussing the scheme of “inside/outside”. However, a search for the most distinct co-occurrences of these two words reveals that both terms primarily associate with nouns representing concrete spatial objects, rather than relationships. Besides, it is worth noting that medieval authors do not employ the preposition *circa* to indicate the same relations. The dominated are not gathered “next to a dominant” in the descriptions of medieval authors; if they are gathered around, their place is more often specified.

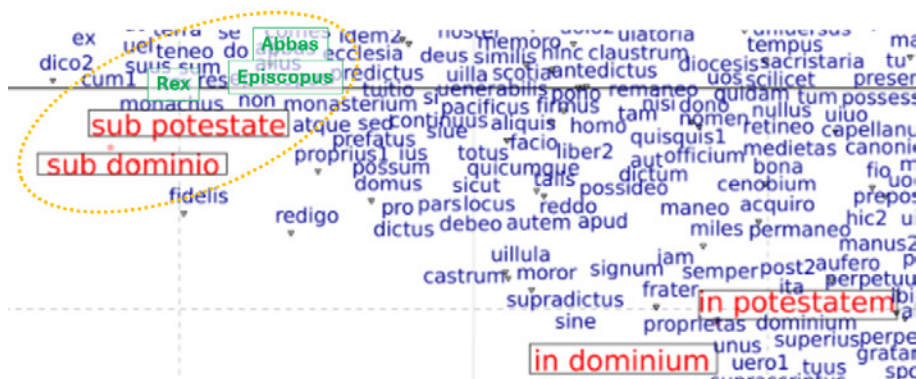


Figure 2. Zoom in: *sub potestate*, *sub dominio*.

sub (*sub manu*), the other based on the preposition *in* (*in potestatem*, *in dominium*). These results show a low degree of synonymy between constructs utilizing the various prepositions and hint toward potentially different uses of “over/under” (and “up/down”) and “inside/outside” (and “in/out”) schemes to represent social relations within the medieval mindset.

The distribution of shared vocabulary between the two groups is also of interest. Both clusters formed by the prepositions *sub* and *in* are connected to terms related to the right to possess (and transfer) lands and people. Key terms in this context encompass *reddo*, *retineo*, *pertineo*, *do*, *dono*, *trado*, *possideo*, and *uendo*. These words represent the primary contexts within which lemmas such as *dominium* and *potestas* are employed within the charter corpus.

At the same time, distinct patterns of usage can be discerned within each group. In instances involving the transfer of property through someone’s will (*uoluntas*), segments constructed with the preposition *in* come into play. The primary driving force behind acts of giving is associated with *fides* (faith).³³ Within the segment of *in dominio*, co-occurrences of nouns often pertain to the property intended for transfer, and these are usually detailed extensively within the charters. Conversely, the segments *in potestate* and *in manu* embody negotiations concerning rights over lands and people among individuals in power. This is manifested through co-occurrences with such terms as *arbitrium*, *iniuria*, and *iudicium*.

The analysis also highlights the significant role played by the Church as an institution that gathers both lands and people “in its hands” or “in its power”. The authority of various dominants – king, bishop, abbot, or God – can be expressed using either the over/under or the inside/outside scheme. Notably, lemmas like *rex*, *episcopus* and *abbas* are situated on the left side of the factor

³³ The lemma appears among the co-occurrences of the segments *in potestate* and *in manu* in the upper right section.

plan, attracting associations with both *sub potestate* and *sub dominio* as well as *in potestatem* and *in dominium* clusters.

The *in* group also attracts a lexicon referring to the middle tier of the church hierarchy, including words like *archipresbiter*, *diaconus*, *decanus*, along with higher-ranking designations like *archiepiscopus*. In contrast, the shared co-occurrences for the segments *sub manu* and *potestas super* revolve around terms that allude to the power of the top-ranked figures, specifically the pope (*papa*) and cardinals (*cardinalis2*),³⁴ except *archidiaconus*.



Figure 3. Zoom in: *sub manu*, *potestas super*.

An analysis of the most distinctive occurrences for each segment within the *CEMA* corpus provides information on the group formed by the *sub* and *super* prepositions. The co-occurrences of the three segments involving the preposition *sub* are employed within distinct contexts. The *sub manu* segment predominantly characterizes the power held by lay individuals, although references to prelates and other ecclesiastical positions can also be identified within the list. This segment is indicative of a form of power associated with subordination and protection, understood as a euphemized form for subordination.³⁵ Among the co-occurrences of the *sub potestate* segment, other terms, such as *tuitio*, also express domination in such manner.

The *sub potestate* segment is frequently employed to depict relations within a monastery, particularly concerning the authority of abbots (*abbas*, *monasterium*, and *claustrum* rank among top co-occurrences of the segment, as

³⁴ Some of the lemmas include the numbers 1, 2 or 3, which indicate different meanings of certain polysemous words. The lemma *cardinalis2* refers to cardinals.

³⁵ One of the most frequent repeated segments in the corpus is *sub protectione*. Michele Maccarrone has dedicated a study to the pope's *protectio*, especially on the monasteries. The author has connected the use of the word *protectio* by the popes of the 11th-13th centuries with their claims to jurisdiction over the whole Church. Maccarrone, "Primato romano e monasteri." On medieval protection from another angle, that of the semantics of the word *Schirm* and the verb *schirmen*, which may have more negative connotations than one can think, see the study Algazi, *Herrengewalt und Gewalt der Herren*.

also is visible in the visualization). The list of co-occurrences allows to clarify that the *potestas super* segment frequently emerges in contexts describing control over monasteries, various things (*res*), and lands. The *potestas super* segment also express judicial power (for instance, *potestas iudiciaria*, *immunitio*, and *arbiter* are among its co-occurrences). Besides, the co-occurrences of the *potestas super* segment tend to pertain to scenarios of power as participation (or of power partaking: *plenarius*, *mandatum*, and *procurator*).

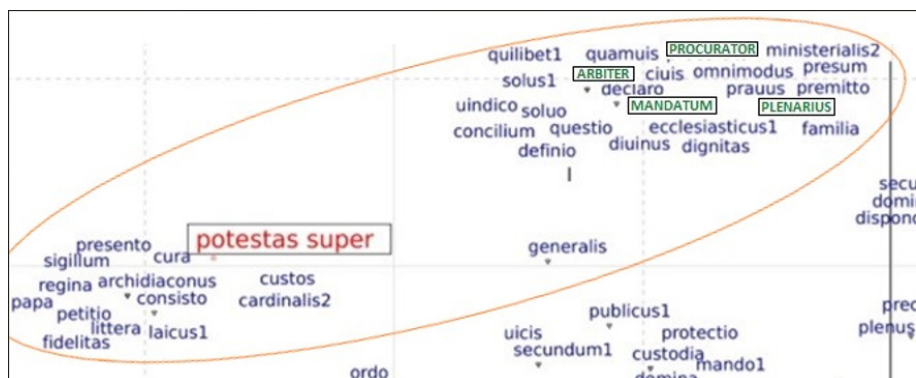


Figure 4. Zoom in: *potestas super*.

The grammatical distinction between segments such as *potestas super* (active function) and *in potestatem* (passive/resultative function) may be central to interpreting the opposition observed on the vertical axis. Besides, the difference in the verbal environments of the segments under study is largely due to the contrast between the ablative and accusative cases – between expressing movement toward and denoting the state of “having in one’s power”.

To summarize, segments coupling identical keywords with varying prepositions describe diverse power relations, even if a common semantic background emerges, namely contexts where power is characterized as possession.

2.2.2. *Patrologia Latina*, entire corpus

The analysis of the entire *Patrologia Latina* corpus has revealed an opposition in the meanings of the lemmas *potestas* and *manus*, which, however, is not particularly relevant to the purposes of this article. The analysis was repeated twice: first, including only lemma co-occurrences that appeared in at least two segments (as previously done for the *CEMA* corpus); and second, including all the most characteristic lemma co-occurrences. The segments chosen for analysis are as follows: *in potestate*, *in potestatem*, *sub potestate*, *potestas* (lemma) *super*, *in manu*, *sub manu*, *in manum*. Besides, the segment *in manus* (a plural form frequently attested in the corpus) was included in one of the two experiments, which slightly changed the results.

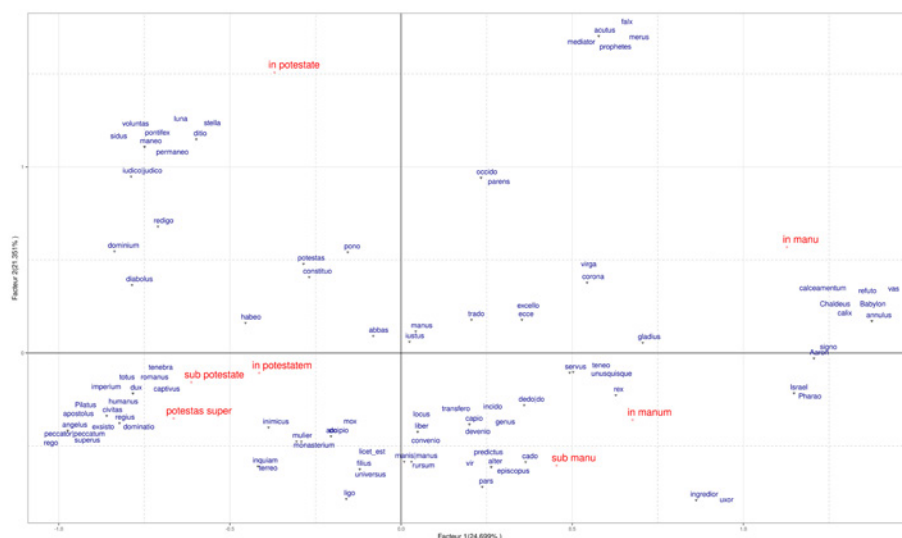


Figure 5. *Patrologia Latina*, 7 segments, common co-occurrences.



Figure 6. *Patrologia Latina*, 8 segments, common co-occurrences.

The major opposition visible on the horizontal axis of these two plots is that between the *potestas* segments and the *manus* segments. The second opposition is that between the segments *potestas super* and *in potestate*. Although the oppositions visible on this plot do not directly contribute to uncovering semantic relations between the *in* and *sub* segments, they are nevertheless significant for understanding medieval culture, and the outcome is coherent.

On the two plots we observe very few co-occurrences shared by at least two lemmas. This experiment demonstrates that each segment tends to belong to a particular context – or to originate from a specific quotation – which explains why the co-occurrences of each segment are highly specific and exhibit relatively few intersections. The plots generated for the most characteristic co-occurrences of each segment, along with the possibility of consulting these lists separately (and of checking the concordances as well), make it possible to zoom in on the specific meanings associated with each segment or group of segments.

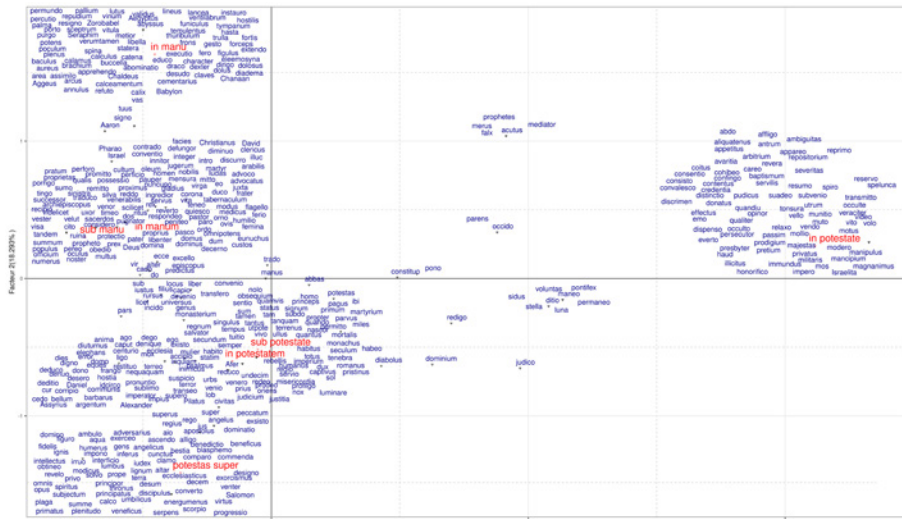


Figure 7. *Patrologia Latina*, 7 segments, all characteristic co-occurrences

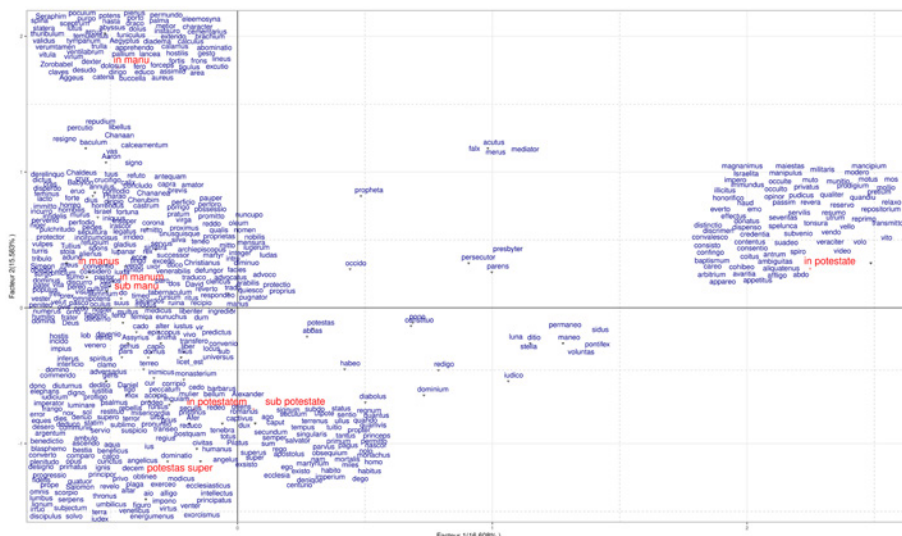


Figure 8. *Patrologia Latina*, 8 segments, all characteristic co-occurrences.

Three groups are visible on the plots. The usage of the segment *in potestate* is somewhat more specific. The most frequent verb collocations – *consisto*, *habeo*, *constituo*, *pono* – reflect the usage of the segment in discussions of what precisely belongs, or does not belong, to the power of a dominant figure or an individual, depending on the context. The segment reveals co-occurrences with lemmas such as *maiestas* and *mediator*, which appear in contexts referring to Christ's power. The devil is also considered a possessor of power. Two characteristic lemma co-occurrences – *arbitrium* and *voluntas* – indicate discussions of *liber arbitrium* throughout the corpus.

The group *potestas super*, *in potestatem*, *sub potestate* largely draws on biblical vocabulary. The segment *potestas super* frequently appears in repeated formulas, with many of its most characteristic co-occurrences including *gens*, *ignis*, *Deus*, *daemon*, *blasphemo*, *plaga*, and *virtus*. The segment *in potestatem* occurs in other biblical contexts, with co-occurrences such as *stella*, *luna*, *nox* (in the segment *lunam et stellas in potestatem noctis*), *dies*, and *sol* (in *solem in potestatem diei*), as well as *diabolus*. Besides, this segment is used in a larger context to describe the transfer of cities or enemies from one power to another, for example in the context of war (*redigo*, *bellum*, *inimicus*). The segment *sub potestate* also appears in both biblical and non-biblical contexts. In biblical contexts, it co-occurs with terms such as *homo*, *Pilatus*, and *centurio*, while in non-biblical, it co-appears with terms like *episcopus*, *abbas*, *pontifex*, and *monasterium*, when jurisdictional questions are at stake.

The third distinctive usage is represented by the segment *in manu*, whose use contrasts with that of the group *potestas super*, *in potestatem*, and *sub potestate*. The segment *in manu* attracts terms denoting concrete, tangible things – tools, objects, or symbolic items – mainly from biblical contexts: *ventilabrum*, *statera*, *thuribulum*, *calamus*, *calix*, *virga*, *area*, *diadema*, *funiculus*, and *annulus*. Among its other most frequent usages is the formula *cor in manu Dei*. The segments *sub manu*, *in manum*, as well as *in manus*, constitute a group between the segment *in manu* and the group *potestas super*, *in potestatem*, *sub potestate*. The usage of the segments *sub manu* and *in manum* is semantically close to that of *in potestatem* and *sub potestate*. The segments *in manum* and *sub manu* occur primarily in contexts of transfer or movement. The most frequent verbal collocates of *in manum* are *trado* and *do* (in both biblical and non-biblical texts), as well as *convenio* (in a specific juridical context involving *vir*, *mulier*, *defungor*). A closely related usage is found with the segment *in manus*, whose most characteristic collocations denote a transfer into the hands of enemies: *hostis*, *inimicus*, and the verbs *incido*, *trado*, *horreo*, and *commendo*. The segment *sub manu* also attracts specific vocabulary; its most characteristic term is *humilio* – “to humble (under the hand of God)”, and, by analogy, under the authority of a superior person, such as an abbot. The figures who have others *sub manu* include *Deus*, *sacerdos*, *pastor*, *abbas*, *frater* (in relation to the abbot), *pater*, and *rex*.

The frequency of most of the segments examined in the *Patrologia Latina* can be attributed to their occurrence in biblical contexts. Since the Bible

served as a matrix of meaning throughout medieval Europe, these usages are particularly significant for the theme under discussion. This does not imply, however, that we will encounter the same usages of the segments everywhere or elsewhere: the vocabulary of Latin corpora representing different genres varies considerably. For this reason, it is good practice to repeat the experiment for each corpus. As the functions of texts vary across different genres, they reflect the distinct vocabularies of the dominant groups in medieval society.

The important point is that the segments under study are frequently attested. Some occur predominantly in fixed formulas, while others display a wider range of meanings. The number and diversity of collocations indicate that these are not merely formulaic usages. For instance, the segment *in potestate*, within a window of ten words and with a minimum frequency of three, yields 726 co-occurrences, whereas the segment *sub manu*, with only 319 occurrences, yields 170 distinct lemmas as its co-occurrences. As for the formulaic usages, they should not be overlooked, given that they persist in the texts throughout the entire period under study.

2.2.3. *Patrologia Latina*, 12th-century theologians

The same analysis has been applied to a corpus consisting of texts written by eleven 12th-century theologians: Peter Abelard, Anselm of Canterbury, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bruno of Segni, Hervé of Bourg-Dieu, Hugh of Saint Victor, Ivo of Chartres, Martin of Leon, Peter Lombard, Philip of Harveng, Richard of Saint Victor.³⁶ This selection is predicated on three factors. First, the 12th-13th centuries saw the *ecclesia* established as the dominant institution of medieval society; second, a significant proportion of charters in the *CEMA* corpus also date back to the 12th and 13th centuries: as such both experiments target the medieval mindset at the same stage of its development; third, the chosen authors held pivotal roles in the development of medieval thought. The extensive works of the selected authors provided an opportunity to conduct a properly targeted analysis, and the visualization of the results revealed various significant features. Based on the frequency data of the segments, five prepositional segments were included into the experiment: *in manus*, *sub manu*, *sub potestatem*, *in potestatem*, and *in potestate*. The segment *in manu* was discarded since it is too often used in a literal sense.³⁷ Like in the previ-

³⁶ The texts were copied from the *Corpus Corporum*, *Patrologia Latina*, [online] www.mlat.uzh.ch/browser?path=/38 (accessed 15 Jun 2024).

³⁷ In its literal usage, the segment refers to attributes of God, of saints, to the instruments of saints' martyrdom, which are quite literally held in hands (such as *calix*, *sagitta*, *statera*, *catena*, *falx*, *claves*, *calamus*). The segment is often encountered within biblical references or quotations. When co-occurring with the lemma *rex* (for instance, in such context as "in the hands of the Assyrian king") the segment takes on its metaphorical connotation of "in the power". In this metaphorical sense, *in manu* is often coupled in a binomial with the segment *in potestate*.

ous experiment, all terms connected to at least two segments were targeted by the analysis.

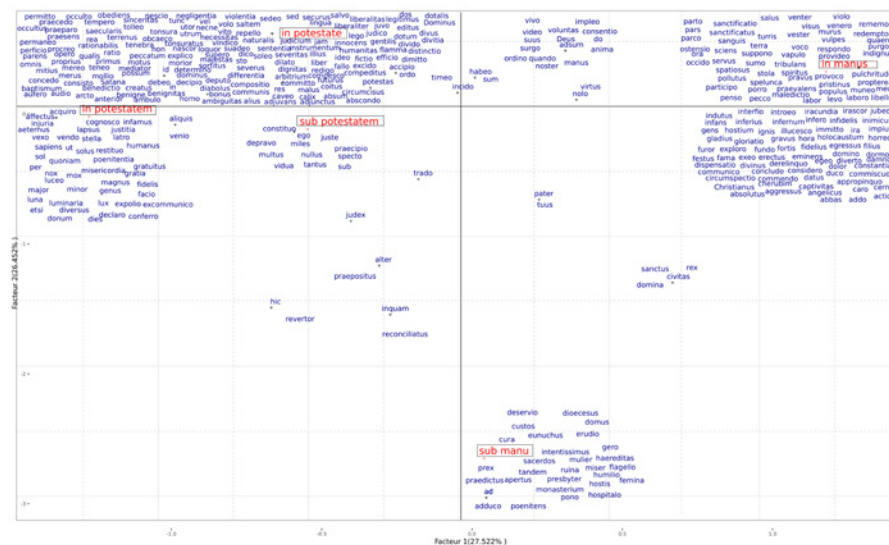


Figure 9. Corpus of Theological Treatises.

The first feature that emerges is the limited number of shared co-occurrences among the segments under study, as was also observed in the results for the entire *Patrologia Latina* corpus. Only a few words intersect along the axes. As such, it is obvious that the targeted segments were ordinarily used within diverse contexts. On axis 1 (horizontal), the *in manus* segment and the *in potestatem* segment (along with the two other segments formed on the same lemma) clearly belong to widely different semantic contexts. Axis 2 (vertical) shows an opposition between the *in*-based segments and the *sub manu* segment. While the results may seem reminiscent of the findings derived from the charter corpus, these polarities are determined by distinct underlying factors.

The *in manus* occurrences are repeatedly connected to terms drawn from Bible quotations. Examples include (*horrendum est/sit*) *incidere in manus Dei viventis* (Heb 10:31), *tradidit in manus inimici muros turrium* (Lamen 2:19), *tradentur in manus gladii* (Psalms 62:11), *omnia dedit ei Pater in manus eius* (John 13:3) and *in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum* (Lc 23:46). Among the main co-occurrences, words such as *anima*, *Deus*, *Pater*, and *spiritus* hold significance. The occurrences of the *sub manu* segment similarly stem primarily from Bible citations quoted by 12th-century theologians, which accounts for its co-occurrence with lemmas like *ruina*, *flagello*, and *eunuchus*.

Both the *in potestate* and *in potestatem* segments attract abstract terms that carry positive connotations, many of which describe God's power (often

to draw analogies with earthly rulers' power). Notably, words such as *voluntas*, *benignitas* and *maiestas* (in the context of God's power), along with *gratia*, *misericordia*, *liberalitas* and *sinceritas*, are frequently associated. Besides, the segment *in potestate* is used by theologians to discuss the concept of *liberum arbitrium* (which has been previously observed in the analysis of the entire corpus as well). The segment also conveys judicial power, particularly the power to judge attributed to Jesus Christ (co-occurrences including *iusticia*, *iudico* and *iudicium*). This segment also encompasses references to both God's authority and the authority of the devil. Meanwhile, the prepositional segments formed on the lemma *potestas* find application in theologians' discussions of God's relationship with human beings, as well as relationships among humans within the earthly realm.

The attraction of lemmas with positive connotations by the *in*-group lead me to inquire further into the opposition between (contextually) positive and less positive elements. Hypothetically, the contrast between the prepositional segments formed by the prepositions *sub/supra* and *in* (in segments with words referring to power) might be correlated with the general use of abstract vocabulary in the corpora under study (for instance, with the general prominence of such orientational metaphor as "IN is GOOD" in the construction of concepts).³⁸

The list of the most characteristic co-occurrences of the spatial prepositions *in*, *super*, *sub*, *de*, *ex*, *ab*³⁹ and abstract nouns, as well as nouns denoting various types of relationships, within the *CEMA* corpus is as follows.

in: *nomen, ecclesia, testimonium, manus, honor, eleemosyna, ius, potestas;*

sub: *pena, anathema, defensio, tuitio, protectio, regula, obligatio, iuramentum, regimen, excommunicatio, nomen, tutela, dominium, potestas;*

super: *iuramentum, mandatum;*

de: *signum, pars, res, ius, hereditas, donum, consensus, assensus;*

ex: *pars, donum, ecclesia, res, vis, ius;*

ab: *incarnatio, annus, pars, exactio, servitium, ecclesia, consuetudo, ius.*

If we take into consideration the entire corpus of the *Patrologia Latina*, the results are as follow:

in: *substantia, nomen, spiritus, potestas, fides, materia;*⁴⁰

³⁸ The hypothesis is dependent of the concept of polysemy in prepositions (especially medieval prepositions), among which the preposition *in* refers to the container schema. Susan Lindner has observed that our body-based understanding of things, in terms of container schemas, extends to a broad range of abstract concepts. Lindner, "A lexico-semantic analysis."

³⁹ Many of these prepositions are not only spatial but also temporal.

⁴⁰ In the corpus of the 12th-century theologians (from the *Patrologia Latina*): *in: conspectus, principium, nomen, tempus, resurrectio, passio, pax, tribulatio, fides, solitudo, iudicio, ueritas.*

sub: *lex, nomen, umbra, potestas, iugum, protectio, silentio, defensio, peccatum, tempus, anathema, custodia*;⁴¹

super: concrete vocabulary is dominant;

de: *testimonium, sermo, res, substantia, lumen, scriptura, sententia*;

ex: *pars, fides, verbum, lex, nomen, tempus, opus, voluntas, virtus*;

ab: *initium, ecclesia, mundus, opus, tempus, officium, pars*.

The data shows that *sub* tends to attract a number of words with (relatively) less positive connotations (and frequently words indicating exclusion), while *in* tends to draw more positive associations. One plausible interpretation is that contexts where a dominated figure is perceived as belonging to a dominant's sphere of influence have a generally more positive overtone compared to scenarios where the power of the dominant is asserted over the dominated figure. The power relations themselves are not assigned inherently positive or negative connotations; rather, the emphasis is placed on how power-holders wield their *potestas* or *dominium* and their underlying intentions. This observation aligns with Philippe Descola's classification of medieval society as an analogist society.⁴² The large, inclusive analogist scheme (*spiritus/carō*) specified for medieval Christendom by Anita Guerreau-Jalabert can be read in the construction of medieval power concepts (as of any other concepts),⁴³ including where a spatial dimension is involved.

Now, I will turn to the question of how my observations based on a lexicon study of corpora fit with previous analysis proposed by medievalists and how historians can interpret the "inside/outside" spatial relation underlying the construction of abstract power relations by medieval dominants.

3. Text-mining observations in a broader context. On the importance of the "inside/outside" spatial relation in medieval representations

I will now examine the non-linguistic evidence for the importance of the "inside/outside" scheme in medieval representations of social relations, whose concrete manifestations have already been addressed by medievalists. I argue that the combination of various spatial schemes, including both "over/under"

⁴¹ In the corpus of the 12th-century theologians (from the *Patrologia Latina*): *sub*: *species, lex, silentium, modium, tempus, umbra, peccatum, nomen, interrogatio, potestas, iugum*.

⁴² Descola, *Par-delà nature et culture*. According to anthropologist Philippe Descola, an *analogist society* is one of the four ontological regimes. In an analogist ontology, the world is understood as made up of a vast number of distinct entities, each with its own essence, and these entities are related through a complex web of correspondences and analogies.

⁴³ In the medieval society, the interior is valued in relation to the exterior in a manner analogous to the binomial *spiritus/carō*. Guerreau-Jalabert, "Spiritus et carō," 290-5; Guerreau-Jalabert, "Occident médiéval et pensée analogique;" Baschet, *Le sein du père*, 79-81.

(“up/down”) and “inside/outside” (“in/out”), characterizes representations in analogist societies, and is pregnant in medieval Christendom. Besides, the hierarchical model proposed by Louis Dumont for holistic societies supports the idea that power relations were envisioned through both spatial schemes. Finally, I address how my observations on the use of spatial relations in the shaping of power concepts correlate with the pyramidal and polar models of medieval power.

3.1. *Spatial relations and abstract concepts*

A possible explanation for the importance of the “inside/outside” spatial relation in the medieval representations of power is rooted in the linguistic theories on conceptual metaphors. People within the same society might perceive space, time, and social relations through analogical schemes, constructed either in conjunction with each other or based on analogy. Space can be regarded as a more concrete domain, while power relations are situated within a more abstract domain.⁴⁴ The relational structure inherent in the “source domain” (space) can be transposed to the “target domain” (power),⁴⁵ and the image schemas of the space domain commonly accepted in a concrete society can be projected onto the corresponding abstract configurations of abstract concepts.⁴⁶

Drawing from this perspective, social relations within medieval society could follow the scheme described by Ernst Cassirer for pre-modern cultures: the distinction of regions in space starts from the place where the speaker himself is, and from there, through concentric circles that widen, leads to the articulation of the whole, of the system, of all the situations.⁴⁷ In particular, the construction of power relations, which could potentially explain the prevalence of prepositions that describe power relations as emanating from one centre (*in, de, ex, ab*), and progressively encompassing different elements within their sphere of influence, can likewise be structured according to this spatial scheme.

The concrete spatial organization of power relations in medieval Christendom (as reconstructed and conceptualised) is based on the opposition “inside/outside”. A model of the medieval spatial organisation suggests that it categorized places based on their proximity to a specific pole/centre (spe-

⁴⁴ Among the first works by linguists who speak about mappings from “source domain” to “target domain” counts Lakoff, Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*.

⁴⁵ Here I follow Lera Boroditsky’s idea that the mechanisms for the type of metaphorical structuring may be the same as that used to understand analogies. Boroditsky, “Metaphoric Structuring.”

⁴⁶ Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 283.

⁴⁷ Cassirer, *La philosophie des formes symboliques*, 161.

cifically, the spiritual one). Alain Guerreau hypothesized⁴⁸ that, during the Middle Ages, space was perceived as discontinuous and heterogeneous, characterized by polarization at every point. Certain places were esteemed, held as sacred, in contrast to others which were regarded less positively. Nicolas Perreaux's observations align with suggestions by Alain Guerreau, indicating that the relationships within medieval society contributed to this polarization, resulting in relational, hierarchical, and analogical intervals among its constituents.⁴⁹ Multiple concrete manifestations of relationships, all sharing the same underlying spatial scheme "inside/outside", were envisioned along homological lines.

3.2. *Relations between the whole and its parts*

The importance of the "inside/outside" scheme in the system of medieval emic representations —understood as representations shaped by and meaningful within the worldview of the medieval authors themselves— stems from its role in structuring representations of power relations as resulting from the dynamic interaction between the whole and its components. That is, the hierarchical relations observed in the medieval context can be described using the model proposed by Louis Dumont.

Both the "inside/outside" and "over/under" spatial relations inherently indicate an inequality between the entities to which they metaphorically apply; both these relations are hierarchical. The "inside/outside" relation cannot actually be associated with the horizontal dimension commonly attributed to the notion of equality by a modern mind. To the medieval society, the hierarchy model proposed by Louis Dumont⁵⁰ is more relevant; this model is based on the idea that there is unity at the superior level of a hierarchy and differentiation at the subordinate level. After differentiation, one element of each spatial prepositional couple ("inside/outside" and "over/under") becomes associated with the positive pole (due to its capacity to unite), the powerful, while the second becomes linked to the less positive, subordinate pole.⁵¹ Oppositions within medieval society are hierarchized, highlighting the asymmetry of relationships between the system's components. The preposition *in*, much

⁴⁸ Guerreau, "Quelques caractères spécifiques." Besides, the practice of moving towards the centre, the pole is one of characteristics of this society. Julien Demade writes that to serve was above all to move toward the master; in the manorial system, the symbol of domination was not labor but this movement. Demade, "Les corvées," 344.

⁴⁹ Perreaux, "L'écriture du monde," 199.

⁵⁰ Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus*, Dumont, *Essais sur l'individualisme*.

⁵¹ It should also be noted that each spatial binomial-metaphor can be accompanied by another binomial-metaphor: for instance, up and light, down and darkness. Francesca Rigotti claims that the "up" is always accompanied by the masculine, power, reason, and the "down" by the feminine, the absence of power, passion: Rigotti, *Metafore della politica*, 91.

like *sub* and *supra*, allows the construction of relations between two objects, where one assumes a dominant role and the other is dominated.

Furthermore, it appears that power relations with an emphasized spatial dimension are more often depicted as being constructed from the dominant's perspective. Segments formed by the preposition *sub* predominantly identify who holds the power ("under the power of X"). Similarly, segments based upon *super* appear in contexts identifying the dominant ("X holds power over Y"). Both of these prepositional segments express the idea "DOMINANT PERSON IS UP". Meanwhile, the preposition *in* serves as a reference to the first, more positive element of the alternative "inside/outside". Additionally, the prepositions *de*, *ab*, and *ex* (which do not always function as converses to *in*) contribute to segments indicating provenance from a location or source, including a dominant (for example, in the phrase *de dono X* or *ex dono Y*). As such, the prepositions *in*, *de*, *ab*, and *ex* allude to the metaphors "IN IS GOOD" and "A DOMINANT PERSON IS A CENTRE".

Both spatial relations in representations of power implicitly refers to a unified framework and implies a holistic vision of the world. The "over/under" relation likely emphasizes the asymmetry between two components in a given context, with one component being assigned a more positive value. Relationships marked by "in" tend to underscore the importance of unity of various parts within the whole or, in some contexts, the provenance from the same higher-level unit. It is worth noting in this framework that dominant elements tend to be considered as more direct emanations of the whole. In turn, this stress upon unity implies an asymmetrical/hierarchical relationship once distinction between components of the whole appear: the united is more positive, the dispersed less so, implying that the dispersed should strive to the united whole.

The dominant in medieval times could have been perceived as a centre of gravity, sometimes even as an inclusive/absorbing centre. It could have been attributed the ability to directly unite or encompass the scattered components of the medieval world (according to Philippe Descola's model of analogist societies). In medieval society, that belongs to holistic societies, unity held great significance, taking precedence over the differentiation of individual entities.⁵²

A manifestation of the hierarchical scheme proposed by Louis Dumont in the system of emic representations can be found in metaphorical depictions of society as a body, a primary metaphor for medieval Church that is also extensive to the medieval society as a whole. Unity was considered as both *unitas* (the whole) and *caritas* (the internal bonding relationship between the "head" and other members of the social body and among its members). Persons or institutions who were capable of framing the whole – one of the metaphors

⁵² Various essays of the volume Bedos-Rezak, Iogna-Prat, *L'individu au Moyen Âge* underlie this point.

for such frames was the body – and uniting all components of the society “in the bosom” (like God⁵³ or Abraham), “in the womb” (like the Church), or who were capable to unite them “in their hands” without any gap between (God, pope, bishop, king, count, other *domini*), were seen as a positive pole, gathering otherwise scattered entities.⁵⁴ In the medieval society’s perspective, being situated “inside” was decidedly preferable to being excluded. The prepositions *in*, *ex*, *ab*, and *de* indicate the medieval dominants’ ability to establish a sphere of belonging or inclusion around them, the power relation engendering a sense of unity.

As such, dominants hold the key to integration within society as a whole. This aspect was particularly significant for the clergy, the dominant group of the medieval society. Both baptism and the Eucharist, through which a person became part of the body of Church and Christ, placed individuals under the jurisdiction of the clergy. Conversely, *excommunicatio*⁵⁵ was considered one of the most severe punishments, although it was temporary and reversible, and as such inseparable from the process of *re-inclusion*.⁵⁶ The authority to impose and lift this penalty belonged to the Church, further emphasizing its control over inclusion and exclusion, over transition from both “outside to inside” and “inside to outside”. Social exclusion – through exile, banishment, or the forfeiture of status and legal rights – is a recurring theme in medieval European historiography, legal history, and ecclesiastical history. Studies in this field provide examples of how the “in/out” scheme was actualized in practice in medieval society.⁵⁷

3.3. *Combinations of the two spatial relations: “inside/outside” and “over/under”*

While one spatial relation might be more prominent than another in certain contexts, medieval individuals often combined both “inside/outside” and “over/under” spatial relations within the same context to achieve precise con-

⁵³ For instance, Pseudo-Denis gives a definition of God: he who embraces, who unites and anticipates all the things. Eco, “La metafora nel Medioevo latino,” 66.

⁵⁴ *In sinu* represents the highest degree of inclusion, belonging to the celestial realm; it embodies eternal proximity to God, representing a state of being. *In manu* signifies the power that operates from the outside to the inside, essentially representing an active force that gathers (the dominant’s hand acts to gather).

⁵⁵ Excommunication consists of an exclusion from *communio* as participation in the mystical body (the *ecclesia*, locally realised in the parish), and it is spatially translated by the exclusion from the centre (it is forbidden to the excommunicate access, centripetally, to the church and the cemetery): Morsel, *Communautés d’habitants*, 366.

⁵⁶ Gabriel, *Dictionnaire critique de l’Église*, 419. The literature on the subject is so extensive that I can mention here only a few representative works: Paravicini Bagliani, *Il rito pontificio di scomunica*, Iogna-Prat, *Ordonner et exclure*, Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages*.

⁵⁷ On exclusion from the commune see Giuliano Milani, *L’esclusione dal comune*, on exile see Napran, van Houts, *Exile in the Middle Ages*.

ceptual representations of power. Medieval iconography and ceremonies illustrate how a medieval dominant figure could simultaneously occupy centre stage, be at the forefront and above everything/one else.

One concrete manifestation of the combination of two spatial relations is the medieval perception of the church's spatial organization. The spatial and visual arrangement of a church⁵⁸ seems to mirror and shape power relationships. The faithful (*fides* denoting a relationship of trust and submission) is held in the hands of the ecclesiastical official and the saints, while simultaneously being drawn toward God's heavenly bosom.⁵⁹ Besides, more generally, in the medieval perspective, the Last Judgment signifies the transition of the chosen from a lower, earthly realm to the upper reality of the Heavenly Kingdom, conceived as the encompassing space *par excellence*. I posit that the up/down power dynamics were perceived as especially fundamental (and positive) in the context of the spatial relations between the celestial and terrestrial realms. Within each of them, the medieval system of representations was built upon the "inside/outside" scheme.⁶⁰

Another obvious example, where several spatial relations are combined on the level of real practices, include ceremonies and all medieval events where powerful people were gathered and ordered, such as assemblies and councils. Once the "round table model" was replaced by the "order of precedence" principle, the position of any person participating in a significant event started to be assessed in reference to a centre identified with the most important dominant present (the Pope, king, archbishop, etc.). Proximity encompassed both a closer/further dimension, a higher/lower dimension, as well as a right/left distinction.⁶¹

3.4. *Models of power relations and the representations by medieval authors*

The "over/under" ("up/down") dimension in the medieval representations of the social relations has traditionally been given precedence by the histori-

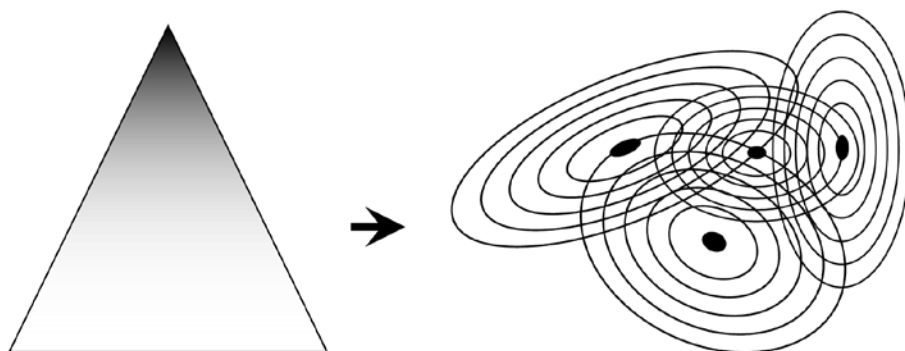
⁵⁸ Jérôme Baschet emphasised the importance of the inside/outside relation in the polarisation of church space, including in the decoration of some cathedrals: Baschet, *L'iconographie médiévale*, 80. Julien Demade underlines that communities of inhabitants and parishes are structured on the opposition "interior/exterior": Demade, "Postface."

⁵⁹ Méhu, "La porte et l'autel."

⁶⁰ The aspiration for union with God in the afterlife is an ideal within the medieval society. Everything that is accomplished in God holds value. The horizon of expectation of the society under study is centred around the Last Judgment, where a distinction will be made between the chosen and the condemned. As a result of this distinction, the chosen will find inclusion in paradise, while the condemned will be consigned to hell. This process of differentiation might be seen as akin to exclusion.

⁶¹ The works that underlie the multiple dimensionality in the calculations of a person's position at an assembly are numerous, among which Hébert, "L'ordre des discours;" Müller, *Théâtre de la préséance*; Heimpel, "Sitzordnung und Rangstreit;" Helmraht, "Rangstreite auf Generalkonzilien."

ography, in reference to the widely recognized societal model of the pyramid (“power is up”), usually depicted as a 2D triangle. However, recognizing the importance of the “inside/outside” spatial relations paves the way to a greater consideration of another model of power in medieval society, a “polar model of medieval power”. As such, it is important to describe its constitutive elements and offer a visualization of this alternative model.⁶²



Firstly, the organizing principle of relationships based on the “in” dynamic seems to be rooted in the proximity between dominant and dominated individuals/groups,⁶³ a situation best represented by sets of overlapping concentric circles. Second, within medieval society, many individuals identify themselves as dominants (*domini*). As such, the intersecting concentric circles must be envisioned as operating independently. However, even if each pole (God, king, bishop, etc.) gives rise to one such set of concentric circles, this does not imply the belief in the coexistence of numerous distinct “heads” within medieval society, which would entail the idea that all these concentric sets functioned on the same level (within the same two-dimensional space). According to the medieval perspective, in any given context, only one “head” (the pole of attraction) could exist. This pivotal position could be occupied by various holders of high offices, according to specific circumstances. This dynamic further underscores the struggles among dominants to gain control over distinct spheres of power (*iurisdictio*). The observations made in the first part of the article reveal a scheme centered on a pivotal point from which all relationships emanate.⁶⁴ This font of power is envisioned in terms of attrac-

⁶² The name of the model is directly linked to Alain Guerreau’s ideas about polarisation in medieval society, in particular spatial polarisation. The visualization of the model was created by Joseph Morsel, to whom I extend my gratitude.

⁶³ This means that the significance of the distance from God, an (arch)bishop, a king, etc., varied depending on the specific scenario.

⁶⁴ Besides, this metaphorical representation offers an advantageous perspective as it allows us to move away from perceiving the relationship between a dominant and its representatives

tion, and capacity to ensure transition from exterior to interior. Distance from the centre tells and shapes power relations between individuals.⁶⁵

Both polar and pyramidal models are modern scholarly constructs. However, in the emic representations of some analogist societies, elements that prefigure these contemporary models are already present – and at times combined. For instance, in East Asian representations, one can observe the integration of circular and pyramidal (or other vertical) structures in medieval depictions of the divine realm, most notably in mandalas (especially Tibetan ones).⁶⁶ Similarly, some stupas, though architecturally diverse, often combine vertical ascent with circular base plans. Christendom also offers an equivalent in a literary-theological construct: Dante's Hell and its depiction by Botticelli, which takes the form of an inverted vertical structure organized into descending circles. This suggests the possibility of proposing new models or hybrid configurations, grounded in a renewed understanding of the medieval mindset. Such an understanding can emerge from text-mining approaches that bring to light non-conscious patterns, when buttressed by classical historical analysis of the social structures of Christendom.

4. Conclusions

Within medieval society power concepts are expressed through several fundamental spatial relations, two of which (“over/under” and “up/down”; “inside/outside” and “in/out”) were discussed in the article. While in contemporary medieval scholarship, the “over/under” spatial relation is typically regarded as paramount for representing power relations, the “inside/outside” spatial relation turns out to be more frequently present in the conception of these relations in medieval society.

as merely a delegation of power. Instead, it encourages viewing it as a form of participation in power, which does not involve the transfer of competences.

⁶⁵ The analysis of the acquired data provides a basis for me to propose that the dominant figure in the medieval world can be likened to a “gravitational centre”. Additionally, the importance of the proximity/distance binomial (with proximity measured from the dominant centre) should be highlighted, particularly in cases involving the “attraction” of the dominant pole (this potential is inherent in the “inside and outside” relation). This dynamic was especially significant for persons in close proximity to the ruling centre and those who, in various ways, were involved in the power of the dominant pole. It is worth noting the significance of the “nearer/farther” distinction from the dominant within the medieval rulers’ courts. To be more precise, proximity signifies both accessibility and relatedness. My observations also imply a return to the problem of the gradient, which Joseph Morsel put forward in his work. “Gradient” is inherent in ideas about spatial structure: the existence of a gradient from the centre to the periphery should encourage scholars to move beyond a binary schema (centre vs. periphery) in favour of a kind of nesting, in which each ‘periphery’ globally becomes a ‘centre’ in relation to a new ‘periphery’. In doing so, as we can see, we move from the centre-periphery pair to the interior-exterior pair, which is perhaps more relative (and therefore more gradual) than the former. The notions of the “social” and the “spatial” follow logically similar patterns: Morsel, *Communautés d’habitants*, 370.

⁶⁶ For mandalas, see Rambelli, *A Buddhist Theory of Semiotics*.

Within medieval texts, the preposition *sub* is used to convey the idea of the dominant figure's superiority over the (inferior) dominated person, while the preposition *in* conveys the integrative or encompassing ability of the dominant, who gathers and orders the dominated entities. A medieval dominant figure was characterized not only by his ability to subject others to his authority in the strict sense – as understood in modern representations of dominant versus dominated relations – but also by his role as an integrative force able to include or exclude. Both dimensions resonate in the capacity of a subordinate to operate inside the domain of a dominant. Such a power relationship generates a sense of unity by establishing around the powerful figure a space into which subordinate figures can act legitimately, as they “belong” to it thanks to the dominant. Stressing the “inside/outside” spatial relation highlights a model of medieval power, that might be termed a “polar model.” This model, derived from observations on the centrality of spatial orientation, can be visually represented as concentric circles radiating from a central pole.

Stressing the significance of the “inside/outside” schema in the system of medieval emic representations is important to realize that the “over/under” hierarchical relation usually given centre stage in historical analysis should be mitigated in order to envision power as a dual dynamic of integration and ordering, the interplay between the whole and its components. Both “inside/outside” and “over/under” inherently convey inequality between the entities connected; both implies a hierarchical relation, in the meaning of the “hierarchy” proposed by Louis Dumont. While one spatial relation may take the fore in specific contexts, medieval people often simultaneously employed both “inside/outside” and “over/under” organizational principles within a single context. Besides, the expressions “under the power” and “in the power” occasionally carry the same meaning, with the powerful person consistently serving as the focal point around which relationships are constructed.

The spatial dimension in the construction of abstract concepts is fundamental to the structure of the concepts themselves, but concrete schemes may vary between pre-modern and contemporary societies. Studying the use of vocabulary denoting emic concepts in medieval text corpora highlights these divergences.

The contemporary Western world's prevailing liberal and individualistic views of power predominantly stem from the notion that power constitutes an external and *a posteriori* connection to the entities it binds. As a result, the distinction between “power over” (in the modern sense) and “power to do” has become prominent. Medieval power might not represent an external relationship between entities. In the medieval system of representations reconstructed here, these relationships originate from the dominant pole; they exhibit an asymmetry between dominant and dominated entities, with a more salient dominant figure, embodying to a certain point the whole; and these relationships, rather than being represented as arising afterward, are simultaneous with the entities they connect.

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