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Theodore Evergates, *Henry the Liberal, Count of Champagne, 1127-1181*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. ix + 307 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, and index. \$75.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-8122-4790-9

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Contemporary accounts of Henry the Liberal, count of Champagne (1121-1181), are nearly indifferent to his life. Memory of the count dissipated quickly as none of his entourage shared remembrances in writing. Modern historiography has been drawn to the stellar consolidation and economic prosperity of the county during the twelfth-century. Theodore Evergates, an eminent scholar of medieval Champagne, is uniquely positioned to demonstrate how the life of Count Henry and the development of the county as a state are intertwined. His narrative moves beyond the notion that Henry shaped Champagne's fate to illuminate those most elusive interactions, between individuals and circumstances, contingency and personality, material environment and social ordering, when all contribute to a mutually formative rapport. In writing a biography of Henry the Liberal, Evergates augments the history of the second half of the twelfth century, deploying an overall chronological narrative regularly punctuated by thematic foci. The bibliography and such useful appendices as a chronology and several tables listing Count Henry's officers, canons, and neighboring bishops permit easy reference to the count's relevant circumstances and contemporaries.

Evergates skillfully rises to the challenge posed by the nature of the evidence: Henry the Liberal is approachable principally through the few letters and the 552 charters issued in his name (though not necessarily by his chancery),[1] the palace-chapel complex he built in Troyes (1152-1160), the library he assembled, the tomb he commissioned in the 1170s, and the rolls of fiefs compiled prior to his departure on crusade in 1178. Evergates particularly considers that the palace, the rolls, and the tomb respectively enshrine Henry's political center, principality, indeed his person and that they served as crucial extensions of comital being; he thus returns frequently to the significance and implications of these achievements. Evergates also interweaves his biography with local anecdotal events, encounters, and situations that he has painstakingly culled from the hundreds of charters issued by Henry during his lordship and court business. Many such episodes recur in the narrative depending upon their topical or temporal relevance. These repetitions, interpolated within the dynamic of chronologically related occurrences, effectively emphasizes for this reviewer a salient aspect of Henry's personality: his tendency to adopt and stick to formulas centering both rulership and principality upon himself. Evergates pronounces Henry as "egocentric in death" (p. 168) but provides evidence suggesting that Henry's ego was strong throughout his life and energized specific and recurrent behavior.

Henry began life in December 1127 as the first-born son of Count Thibaut IV of Blois (II of Champagne, d. 1152) and Mathilda of Carinthia (d. 1160). His earliest home, alongside his mother, was in Vitry before, at the age of seven, he began following his father's itinerant court and bureaucracy to learn the art of governance. By the time he reached his early twenties, Henry had also become a *litteratus* as his father had wished. The latter made sure that his first-born received a suitable education, likely at the

hand of the highly literate Stephen of Provins, who may have served as his tutor in the 1130s and who became his chancellor in 1176. Henry's participation in the Second Crusade (1147-1149) exposed him to the cultures of the Mediterranean, Byzantium, and the Middle East, while linking him to fellow crusaders with whom he developed life-long ties of trust. Among these were King Louis VII of France (d. 1180), to whom he remained a steadfast loyal vassal and whose daughter Marie he betrothed in 1154 and married some ten years later, and Champenois compatriots who were to form the nucleus of his administration (such as Butler Anselm of Trainel, Constables Odo of Pougy and William of Dampierre, and Seneschal Geoffroy of Joinville).

At the death of Count Thibaut, Henry acceded to his inheritance (1152), receiving the richest lands of his father's patrimony, Champagne, and combining his father's title and palatine county with the name of the city of Troyes, where he settled his capital and built a lavish princely compound (inhabitable by 1160). From 1152 onward, until his death in 1181, Count Henry immersed himself in the business of local and international politics, often as a mediator. Energetically and most notably, he created from the eastern counties of Thibaut's legacy, Vitry, Troyes, Bar-sur-Aube, and Meaux, a new, rich, and eminent polity, the county of Champagne. Evergates rightly emphasizes Henry's commitments to peaceful mediation and resolutions, though never explicitly remarking on the extent to which Henry seems to have kept war and conflicts away from his territories. Henry acknowledged the lordship of Frederick Barbarossa but stayed clear of his ecclesiastic politics, was courteous to Henry II of England yet remained supremely loyal to Louis VII and close to English exiles gathered nearby around Thomas Becket. He befriended the counts of Flanders and of Burgundy through ties of kinship and lordship. His participation in the Crusade of 1179, which seems to have been more touristic than martial, was prudently terminated in 1181. Henry's political ventures, thus, appear to have been complementary and therefore subordinate to his passionate investment in the growth of his principality.

Evergates systematically traces in great detail, and later admirably summarizes in his conclusion, the transformations that took place in late twelfth-century Champagne and the strategies deployed by Henry to achieve them. Economically, the trade fairs of Champagne became international and integral to the local economy, stimulating the appearance of textile industries in towns (Provins and Troyes) as well as in the countryside, distributing profits widely throughout society and binding the Champenois in a symbiotic economic relationship to its count. With respect to governance, Evergates argues that by creating a capital in Troyes, Henry secured for himself a stable court, a fixed chancery, and a literate administration for which he managed to procure loyal and capable personnel. For loyalty, he turned to his father's old officials, to fellow crusaders, and to relatives. For expertise, he relied on educated secular canons from his chapters in Troyes and Provins and from the cathedral of Troyes. The chancery wrote down, sealed, and dispatched the court's business, recording gifts, confirmations of transactions and privileges, settlements of disputes, adjudications of challenges to comital rights, and all sorts of property transactions including a brisk traffic in fiefs.

However, Evergates may have slightly overemphasized the sedentariness of comital business in Troyes, since Henry held court in multiple castle-towns and built a new residence in Provins, which emerged as the county's financial capital. Provins was the site of the comital mint, which produced an international currency (the *provinois*), and of the powerful chapter of St-Quiriace, which housed and administered the count's cash-filled treasure. Also perhaps overestimated is the training attributed to the chancery staff, and the level of documentary sophistication. Michel Bur, one of the editors of Henry the Liberal's *acta*, states that comital charters contain many mistakes and that their Latin is corrupted by the vernacular.^[2] Evergates notes that no financial registers are known for twelfth-century Champagne (p. 82, 175). He is inclined to consider that they existed and did not survive on the grounds that the management of comital finances, especially as it pertained to the fairs, must have necessitated written records. That the charters of the count are known only by their archival preservation by the beneficiaries casts doubt as to whether the comital chancery systematically maintained registers. A roll of fiefs was, however, specifically produced by the chancery in 1178-1179 before Henry's departure on

crusade so that Countess Marie would have an accurate record of the count's castles and military forces in his and his marshal's absence. The effort suggests that such knowledge was normally kept in the marshal's mind, and Evergates confirms that the roll was not a working register but a commemorative record supplementing human memory.

Even if the roll does not represent a bureaucratic breakthrough, it nevertheless highlights the radical re-organization Henry had imposed on his principality by the mid-1160s. Upon the old geo-political order of Count Thibaut's counties, lordships, and properties, Henry had imposed the template of a single polity composed of some thirty castellanies. In this re-organization, the castellany became an administrative district surrounding the count's castle town, which comprised his lands, rights, revenues, domains, as well as resident tenants, communities, and knights' fiefs. All comital fief-holders were listed according to the castellany to which they owed castle-guard, and also, most significantly, even castle lords who did not hold their castles from the count. The roll of fiefs asserted the superiority of Henry's lordship over that of any other lord in the county while divorcing the county's administrative geography from the *mouvance* of Henry's nominal overlords. The economic prosperity of Champagne may have eased acquiescence to this expansive administrative lordship, as local lords shared in the wealth of a monetized economy or were perhaps convinced by the count's liberal bribes. For Walter Map, such behavior was the origin of count Henry's qualifying moniker, "The Liberal."

In considering Count Henry's achievements, Evergates acknowledges the foundations laid by count Thibaut, Henry's father, who had already shifted the center of his operations toward the eastern regions of his territories and opened them up to international trade. Henry also inherited from his father a cast of talented officials, prestigious royal (England) and high-ranking kindred, and a cohort of siblings, such as Stephen, count of Blois and royal seneschal, William, cardinal-archbishop of Reims, and Adele, queen of France and mother of King Philip Augustus, who enabled Henry to navigate seamlessly the spheres of secular and ecclesiastical elites where he himself cut the fine figure of a highly respected prince. Father and son were both celebrated for their generosity, but Evergates is able to infer from the praises directed at Henry that much of his liberality had the practical purpose of an investment to stimulate production and generate taxable trade. The extraordinary amount of cash available to Henry enabled him to pursue distinct ambitions in the realms of art and culture, and his accomplishments in these domains set him most fully apart from his predecessor.

With his exploration of Henry's cultural patronage and its implications, Evergates succeeds in exposing a hitherto little known dimension of the count and in offering a more intimate portrait of his personality. Henry's most visible act as the new count of Troyes was to build a princely compound there, within which soon emerged the palace chapel of St-Etienne, a Gothic jewel whose size and splendor dwarfed the old-fashioned neighboring cathedral of Troyes. Evergates suggests that Henry may have been inspired when attending Suger's dedication of St-Denis (1144), though there is no evidence that Henry actually attended. During his travels as a crusader, he may have been in Roger II's Palermo and seen the construction of the new palace with its Capella Palatina (late 1140s). St-Etienne of Sens may have provided a nearby influence. At any rate, Evergates is on surer ground with Henry's choice of a religious staffing for St-Etienne, a chapter of well-schooled secular canons whose installations he also lavishly supported throughout his county, creating a new class of clerics in Champagne.

In the aftermath of early twelfth-century monastic reform, Henry's choice was not popular with those who favored regular canons. Henry seems not to have sustained his father's beneficence toward reformed monasticism and the Cistercian order in particular. Evergates notes that Bernard of Clairvaux had no influence on Henry. In fact, Henry's life-long chaplain, influential confidant, and cultural advisor was Nicholas of Montiéramey (d. ca. 1178), who had been fired in 1151 by Bernard (d. 1153), whose secretary he then was, for stealing books, money, and three seals including Bernard's. Immediately after his firing, Henry, despite the close friendship between his father Count Thibaut and Bernard who were both still alive, appointed Nicholas as his chaplain thereafter enjoying some twenty-five years of his

intellectual mentorship. Evergates does not speculate about this gesture, but demonstrates convincingly the role Nicholas had, together with other *litterati* who composed the chapters of secular canons, in promoting the cultural life of the county. In such endeavors, they particularly benefitted from the stimulating presence of Thomas Becket, Herbert of Bosham at Pontigny and Sens, and of other English exiles such as John of Salisbury at Reims. Both Sens and Reims, with their well-established schools, were bright intellectual centers with which Troyes could not compete, especially after the departure of Peter Comestor in 1160.

Despite the intense composition, acquisition, exchange, and production of books that characterized the region's educated milieu, Henry, himself a *litteratus*, is not known to have commissioned original books (but for the derivative *Elyas*), nor to have patronized contemporary writers or to have had volumes dedicated to him (with the ironical exception, in 1179, of a treatise in defense of regular canons by his old friend Peter of Celles). Henry's achievement was the formation of a fine library that reveals his taste for Latin texts, ancient history, and patristics. Evergates considers the possibility of Jewish influence on Henry's keen interests in biblical history, noting that he had contact with the Jewish scholarly descendants of the celebrated Torah commentator, Rashi of Troyes (d. 1105), but is not known to have had relationships with the many other Jewish communities in his territories. Count Henry expected his readings to provide him with exemplary historical models and with moral and practical instruction for proper conduct. This focus may account in part, according to Evergates, for Henry's indifference to the vernacular romances of Chrétien de Troyes. Yet, Chrétien may have alluded to Henry's construction of his own tomb (p. 143) in *Cligès* (ca. 1176) and in the *Knight of the Cart* (*Lancelot*, ca. 1177), this latter work having been dedicated to Marie, countess of Champagne. Overall, the evidence points to Henry's preference for acquiring copies of existing classical, historical, and exegetical works, which he had lavishly illuminated by Mosan artists.

Mosan artists were also at work in Henry's palatine church of St-Etienne, which he spent his lifetime beautifying with splendid stained glass, luxurious interior furnishings, magnificent liturgical vessels, and numerous relics encased in sumptuous reliquaries. He was so committed to the notion that his chapel was private that, exceptionally, he entered into conflict with the pope and the bishop of Troyes to maintain its exemption from episcopal authority. His chapel was to serve as Henry's own reliquary and as a dynastic necropolis; his personal mausoleum there was completed in 1179. Once again, Mosan craftsmen were entrusted with the making of his metalwork tomb which, decorated with bright enamel plaques, featured bisected arches through which could be glimpsed the recumbent figure of the count, clad in a belted tunic and mantel, and wearing a skullcap over long, curly hair. In death as in life, Henry's image eschewed martial emblems in favor of the civil figure of a donor holding a model of St-Etienne.

The only images Henry used of an equestrian in arms are found on his seals. He had three different matrices, one as son of Count Thibaut (he never had a seal as count of Bar and Vitry as suggested p. 29), and two as count of Troyes. Remarkably, the first matrix of the comital seal that was in use (1152-1176) during most of Henry's rule was rather clumsy and archaic,^[3] in contrast to Henry's contemporary achievements in his palace and chapel. The second seal-matrix (1176) projected more of Henry's artistic flair, and offered the first display of comital heraldic emblems, the band cotised of Champagne. Henry's seals, with their lack of counter-seals and relative absence of style, are uncharacteristically primitive by Henry's and contemporary standards. They also testify to his timid commitment to heraldry, in contrast, for instance to Geoffrey Plantagenet's (d. 1151) enamel effigy on his comital tomb at Le Mans.

Evergates' relative silence concerning the seals and the count's iconographic portraits as donor of St-Etienne is typical of his restraint when confronted with the possibility of considering Henry's psychology. Nevertheless, his portrait of Henry is compelling, drawing the reader close to Henry's presence in the courts, on the roads and seas, in the encounters of his life, and to his ambitions and strategies. Rich materials are presented in an elegant and pithy style that never tires so that, after

closing this fine biography one is convinced of Henry's grandeur, even if one would have wished for a conclusion to unify the many aspects of Henry's personality that inhabit the narrative. A close reading of Evergates' *Henry the Liberal* nevertheless succeeds in depicting Henry as a loyal and prudent man with a practical mind who saw benefit in tradition and innovation, who understood the power of money in cementing a territorial society; as a man who sought stability and peace, avoiding the distractions and destructions of military conflicts. Seemingly not a romantic character, he remained a bachelor for a long time, barely celebrating the arrival of his wife Marie in Troyes and failing to valorize her during his rule. Henry appears rather to have been interested mainly in himself, naming his first son after himself rather than after his father as was traditional; reading for self-improvement, constructing and embellishing his environment for self-promotion. As Evergates superbly chronicles, Henry's drive and self-centeredness played a key-role in endowing his county with centrality and driving its political and economic success. Yet we may ask whether he was actually liked by contemporaries who failed to write about him and who let his memory quickly fade.

NOTES

[1] John Benton and Michel Bur, *Recueil des actes d'Henri le Libéral, comte de Champagne (1152-1181)*. 2 vols (Paris : Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2009-2013).

[2] Benton et Bur, *Recueil*, vol. 1, pp. xi-xii.

[3] Arnaud Baudin, "Les sceaux du comte Henri Ier le Libéral. Images et usages," in Benton et Bur, *Recueil*, vol. 2, p. 82. The seal is catalogued and illustrated on page 96.

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