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Neil Murphy, *Ceremonial Entries, Municipal Liberties and the Negotiation of power in Valois France, 1328-1589*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016. xvii + 291 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography, and index. 130.00 € (hb). ISBN 978-90-04-31356-9.

Review by Lawrence M. Bryant, California State University, Chico.

Neil Murphy states that his examinations of urban administrative archives from the early fourteenth century and the beginning of the Valois dynasty until its end in 1589 “...systematically analyse the strategies urban elites devised to obtain both the ratification of their charters and the augmentation of their liberties” (p. 3). In a few instances, he goes forward in time into the early Bourbon monarchy. His study seeks to counter-balance the predominant attention to street pageantry in studies of early modern entries by looking instead at, as is frequently repeated, “...how municipal governments used entries to try and win influence with the decision-making core which lay at the heart of French government” (p. 23). Historians can only welcome the move beyond the aesthetics and artistry of entries from chronicles and festive books to the focus on the inner councils and concerns of townspeople in the performative traditions of entries. During the time of the Valois, these traditions became based on juridical principles of reciprocity that were acted out in the encounters between the towns and kings. As Murphy makes clear, these encounters were extramural and pre-date elaborate intermural pageantry and constructions. His sources include records from over thirty municipal and departmental archives or libraries as well as a thorough bibliography of studies related to French urban histories and entries. The “Introduction: Framing Royal Entries” effectively sets forth the social and political matters of entry studies. Murphy organizes his research of the urban archives topically and synchronically. There is considerable repetition, but his approach to the study of entries aims to offer “a more nuanced appreciation of these ceremonies” from those studies focusing on the growth of the monarchy (p. 18). The sum of his research, finds that entries of the period were evolving rather than static rites and that urban entries throughout France tended toward performative uniformity. Thus, the municipal peripheries and the royal center are seldom separated in their practices and interactions, but in the towns, the social bases of urban elites changed over time from power bases in guilds to powerful patriarchs to juridical and royal officials. Regardless of the socio-economic group holding urban power, the objective of interacting near the king in an entry was to be seen and to have access to the ruler.

Chapter one, “Confirming Municipal Liberties,” follows the pre-entry performances involved in the king’s extramural public confirmation of municipal liberties at the request of urban elites through the practice of “reciprocity” within the traditions—or invention of traditions—of the symbols and acts of entry performances. The welcoming harangue or speech always included such requests and it was frequently followed by the gift of the keys to the city and displays of banners. The parts of speaker and form of the speech sometime changed from local officials to professional rhetoricians. Although not specifically mentioned by Murphy, the harangues in larger cities at least were carefully written and considered by the town’s council. The council also from the 1530s ordered the town’s processional from the city, “thus, displaying their power to the wider population” (p. 72). Town officials gained access to the king before he entered on horseback in his processional, which was ranked according to either royal protocol or local

customs. Murphy finds the sixteenth-century constructions of raised loggias outside the gates for the seated king to receive the supplicant leaders restricted "...the amount of direct contact the king had with urban officials during the ceremony" (p. 72). At the same time, it enhanced in a public theater the town's elite receiving of the king's promise to preserve their liberties and status. One could add that the loggias could well have been a necessary result of the enormous growth of the court and urban participation in sixteenth-century entries, and they offered a dignified respite for a king and his entourage from time in the saddle. The loggias also emphasized the new attentiveness to staging royal majesty in a manner similar to the king being escorted by various town groups under a canopy in the intramural part of the ceremony.

Chapter two, "Petitioning the King," considers the stratagems of the urban elite to extend the access inherent to the public extramural ceremony to a later "more exclusive encounter" (p. 91). The most important activities consisted of gift giving of a "memory object" (p. 110) and a "second harangue" in which "civic leaders made a number of requests relating to specific economic, political, military and religious matters" (p. 111). Murphy presents "A Typology of Requests" on a variety of matters where the elites sought special privileges and royal assistance (p. 111). The ceremonial embellishment of such requests seems to start with the recovery of France under Charles VII and to continue into the Bourbon dynasty. This was the same period that nobles in the king's entourage began being housed in bourgeois residences. Chapter three, "Assessing the King," moves from the entry ceremony to "the real business of government [that] took place behind the scenes and without the king's involvement" (p. 145). The royal secretaries appear as the major forces in acting on or refusing petitions. Public promises connected to the entry ceremony were frequently never honored because the secretaries found them detrimental to the crown. Municipal account records of gifts and payments attest to the rising importance of the *fourriers* who had responsibility for assigning lodgings for the visiting dignitaries. In one of his few references to social tensions created by entries, Murphy finds that municipal councils wanted key members of the royal entourage to be housed in bourgeois households and that "...the wider urban population did not share the elite's desire to gain access to those in power" (p. 161).

Chapter four, "Royal Power in the Provinces," turns to the operations of monarchical power and government within the ceremonial politics of entries, as they were extended to members of the royal family, governors, and favorites. Along with gifts and monetary payments, the symbols of power, such as loggias, towns' keys and canopies, came to encompass those related to or representing the king. Particularly in the sixteenth-century, these entry honors facilitated towns' maintaining of patrons and representatives at the royal court and establishing lines of clientage. Murphy writes that royal governors' entries "grew in frequency, size, and importance from the late fifteenth century to the extent that they were almost indistinguishable from those of the king" (p. 178). His sources are taken primarily from the towns' records of their gifts and audiences and may give such an impression, but it should be added that this importance does not usually hold regarding the intramural pageantry of kings' and queens' entries. Official town records would not call attention to the tensions among civic elites in decision making and popular discontent. In the time after 1420, historians see a "portentous cultural shift" from the decentralized medieval guild and corporate authorities to the centralizing of the king's power. In this shift, existing rules of deportment, identity, and authority did not correspond to existential realities.[1] While entries took place in specific towns, they nevertheless recycled ceremonial symbolism in new guises and forms to serve the aspirations of political powers and cultural groupings beyond them.

Over time and in rapidly changing circumstances, town leaders invented different strategies for their preservation: amid policies for securing of a new Valois dynasty in 1328, during the many French disasters and divisions of the Hundred Years War, with the growth of a national monarchy, and in the calamities of the Religious Wars. Most of the time, Murphy acknowledges these challenges, but without placing them within a sustained systematic or chronological narrative. As we review them, entries grew from medieval kings' receptions at churches or cathedrals, which had experience in such staging in their ceremonies of *jocundus adventus* for bishops. The extramural greeting and the intramural spectacles on the

route to the church developed in part spontaneously among local guild and residents and in part with some attention to reaffirm the harangues and requests of the greeting. The celebration was occasioned by the reciprocity acted out between two legal personalities: the king and the city. Murphy gives little attention to how the ceremony functioned within the concept of juridical monarchy in which the towns' governments and many of their guilds identified as juridical personalities with rights and liberties. This political and cultural theory was frequently expressed in ceremonial representations rather than explicit writings or urban records. However, ritual consent appeared to place local institutions under the protection of law.

Murphy's topic would have benefited more with some consideration of moments when the king's public promises did not hold, as when the people of Reims discovered in seeking to use Louis XI's 1461 entry promise to reduce the taxes imposed by his father Charles VII and refused payment to the royal tax collectors who arrived three weeks later. The king vigorously suppressed the revolt and, without doubt, sent a warning to other towns of the difference between courteous ceremonial acts and the administration of the kingdom. It is fair to ask that in looking at negotiations of power among the various urban elites, Murphy do more to grapple with the correlation between kings' ceremonial promises and their actions in discussing the rise of royal secretaries. In a time when local and provincial assemblies proliferated and we see the calling of Estates General for the kingdom, such an analysis is required before concluding that "[q]uite simply, ceremonial entries lay at the heart of how the state functioned in pre-modern France" (p. 228). While there was an expectation of decorum and truthfulness in royal performances by contemporaries of early modern kings, such expectations frequently failed in the practice of governing.[2]

A royal entry could temporarily unify towns from the tensions among local factions, as was the case in 1580 for the entry of Catherine de' Medici at Romans, where the *menu peuple* were in revolt from the local patriciate. Both groups participated in the welcoming of the Queen Mother, but in the days after, the supporters of the *menu peuple* were butchered.[3] For the period covered in Murphy's study, there are many other accounts of social tensions within towns and the performance of an entry exacerbating, pacifying, or leading to arbitration. As mentioned above, towns' authorities might not have wished to include these issues in their records to give an entering dignitary the impression of solidarity among elites and the lesser folk. However, there are occasions where towns refused to give kings entry ceremonies, particularly during the Hundred Years War and the Religious Wars. In other instances, kings made a military rather than a ceremonial entry. Even if the records are silent on these issues, some mention of them would demonstrate the world in which towns staged entries. The contemporary interpretations of entries and the people performing in them were greatly in flux, and dividing the ceremony into extramural and intramural parts does not adequately convey the dynamics of its politics, culture, and influence. For example, entries served as evidence in legal and constitutional publications as in the lawyer Barthélemy de Chassenuz's book on *Customs of Burgundy* (1517) which cited as proof of a king's duty to keep those promises made in the entries into Dijon. Other lawyers also published this claim.[4] Also, the printing of entry books included records of the ranks and acts of officials and institutions in the processions, an important source both for urban and monarchical histories.

The study would be strengthened by more assertively acknowledging the impact of a centralizing monarchy, urban resistance, rise of meetings of Estates, and of the printing press on the changes in the urban elite and in the entry ceremony. On the positive side, scholars interested in towns and entries will find most helpful Murphy's excellent index, which directs readers to specific rulers, towns, and entries. His effort in searching through towns' archives can be appreciated and, even more, his moves beyond their limitations to give some larger social and political contexts.

NOTES

[1] William J. Bouwsma, "The Renaissance and the Drama of Western History," *American History Review* 94 (1979): 13 and reprinted in *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990).

[2] On this see, Lawrence M. Bryant, "'What Face to put on': Extravagance and Royal Authority in Louis XI's Ceremonies," in J.J. Contreni and S. Casciani, ed., *Word, Image, Number: Communication in the Middle Ages* (Bottai: SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2002), pp. 319-350 and reprinted in Lawrence M. Bryant, *Ritual, Ceremony and the Changing Monarchy in France, 1350-1789* (Farnham Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 94-126.

[3] See Le Roy Ladurie, Carneval, *A People's Uprising at Romans* (London: Scolar, 1980).

[4] Barthélmey de Chasseneuz, *Consuetudines Ducatus Burgundiae* (Lyon: B. Vicentium, 1574) col. 1305.

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