
H-France Review Vol. 22 (April 2022), No. 43

Dominique Barthélemy, Isabelle Guyot-Bachy, Frédérique Lachaud, and Jean-Marie Moeglin, eds., *Communitas regni: La "communauté de royaume" de la fin du X^e siècle au début du XIV^e siècle (Angleterre, Écosse, France, Empire, Scandinavie)*. Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses, 2019. 352 pp. Maps, tables, notes. €34.00 (pb.). ISBN 9-79-1023106138.

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The phrase "*communitas regni*" may give readers of H-France pause. It is, after all, not a term one frequently encounters in a French context. As the introduction to this fascinating collection of seventeen essays, arranged in three parts, makes clear, historians of the later Middle Ages are most likely to associate this particular terminology with the British Isles, and with thirteenth-century England in particular. Sir Maurice Powicke, as the editors indicate, charted its emergence in the language of baronial resistance to King Henry III, while Walter Ullmann offered a theoretical analysis that highlighted the link between *communitas regni* and the developing concept of the Crown.[1] Three of the essays presented here *do* consider the concept in its Anglo-Scottish context, and in doing so furnish new insights; however, the majority of this volume takes us beyond Britain. With Susan Reynolds' reconsideration of political conceptions firmly in mind, the editors set out to explore whether the concept has resonance on a wider European stage.[2] Is *communitas regni* a valuable tool for thinking about the nature of political communities in the later Middle Ages, even those that did not employ this precise terminology? The contributions range across northern Europe, and involve a wide-range of approaches and sources. Fervent Brexiteers will be disappointed: the editors certainly succeed in demonstrating the value of considering what is sometimes thought of as a uniquely English--or at least British--concept in a broader European context.

The volume's first part, comprising six essays, is an exploration of *communitas regni* at a theoretical level. Three of the contributions take the form of tightly focused case studies. Lydwine Scordia explores how the political community was understood in the quodlibetical debates generated at the University of Paris in the last twenty years of the thirteenth century. The formulation *communitas regni* itself is absent from these; the university masters framed their debate in terms of *res publica*. In the course of exploring the nature of membership of the latter, Scordia highlights a fascinating "secular" evolution of the traditional body politic metaphor and effortlessly demonstrates the relationship between the world of the lecture theatre and Philip IV's government's ever growing need for funds, a need fuelled by its ever expanding list of confrontations. Equally revealing, albeit very different, is Georg Jostkleigrew's exploration of the early-fourteenth-century vernacular chronicler Ottokar of Styria. In exploring Ottokar's perspective on what constituted a French political community, Jostkleigrew touches on issues,

raised by Reynolds, concerning the medieval “nation” and identity. He outlines an approach proposed by Jean-Marie Moeglin. Consciously building on this, Jostkleigrewe raises the possibility that Ottokar’s work, which traces French expansion in unusual detail, may in fact construct a sense of French “national” identity principally in reaction to encroachments on the Empire. That identity may, itself, have been a projection of a German conception of the political community. Yet Jostkleigrewe ultimately concludes that “national” sentiment, like the idea of French expansion itself, was little more than a rhetorical tool and, perhaps, less significant to the emergence of political communities in this period than might be assumed. This is a fascinating, subtle analysis. In the third of these case studies, the volume’s only contribution in English, Karl Ubl explores the impact of Aristotelian conceptions of the political community in the thought of Albert the Great and Engelbert of Admont. Ubl is particularly interested in the flexibility of Aristotelian ideas. For Engelbert, all kingdoms operate under a similar model, including that of the Germans. The Empire itself, however, defined by its universality, remains something apart. The influence of Aristotle on those who challenged secular universalism is well-trodden ground; Ubl’s consideration of how those who defended the Empire employed Aristotelian ideas is refreshing food for thought.

While the precise terminology of *communitas regni* is absent from Scordia’s, Jostkleigrewe’s, and Ubl’s sources all three offer new, very different, ways of thinking about a concept of “community of the realm”. In this sense they are suitably accompanied by Yves Sassier’s useful survey of the way in which Roman law jurists addressed the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Sassier clearly outlines the two dominant theories that evolved from the twelfth century: that the people’s grant of authority to the ruler was irrevocable and without qualification or that, to the contrary, it was a delegation that might well be revoked in certain circumstances. While the jurists did not express these ideas using the language of the English barons, Sassier’s cogent discussion reminds us that the ways in which the political community could be conceived were a matter of debate. Frédérique Lachaud, whose contribution takes us to baronial England, illustrates a debate on a different level, that between the language of “practical” politics and political theory. Lachaud’s key question concerns the breadth of political identity that the term *communitas regni* came to encapsulate. Her exploration involves a wide-ranging selection of texts, from the Song of Lewes to much less well-known sources such as Thomas Docking and Walter Milemete. Central to her argument is the suggestion that *communitas regni*, the language of immediate political debate, was a cloak of sorts for a deeper conception of *res publica*, which appears in more theoretical reflections. This essay is packed with first-class analysis although some of the conclusions might have been drawn out more clearly. Michel Bur’s conclusions, by contrast, are *very* clear: the relevant vocabulary is rare, if not entirely absent, from northern French sources in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the concept does not strike a chord in a French context. Bur’s portrait of a French alternative, particularly his proposition that Abbot Suger was a foundation stone for later French political thought, is certainly stimulating, whether you agree with it or not. Readers may feel, however, that Bur’s interpretation of Suger’s use of “*imperium*” to presage the idea of the king of France as emperor in his own kingdom and “*corona*” as a conception of public authority are painting with slightly too broad a brush and rather more hindsight than is warranted. In any case, the article would have benefitted from a more geographically-specific title.

The focus of the second part of the volume, which includes five essays, is an exploration of the concept of *communitas regni* in the context of the relationship between king and princes. Like the book as a whole, this part ranges widely both geographically and chronologically. The majority

of contributions reflect, to some extent, a theme intrinsic to the English experience, that confrontation with royal authority was the catalyst for the development--and expressions--of new conceptions of the political community. Two essays make the Capetian involvement in Flanders in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries their focus. Isabelle Guyot-Bachy, while highlighting that the phrase *communitas regni* itself is absent from her sources, offers one of the volume's most considered explorations of the concept. Guyot-Bachy examines the language employed in chronicle accounts and the way in which themes that developed in the early-fourteenth century in response to the French victory at Mons-en-Pévèle were projected back into accounts of the most famous Capetian victory in Flanders, Bouvines. Guyot-Bachy's argument, that French chroniclers sought to create a linked series of events between 1214 and 1304, is wholly convincing. My only query was whether more attention might have been paid to the question of intended audience(s) when considering the variations between the Latin and French versions of texts, particularly William of Nangis's life of Louis IX. In a second essay with a Flemish focus, Dominique Barthélemy offers an account of the changing role attributed to the baronage in accounts of Bouvines. In common with Guyot-Bachy's essay, this displays a subtle command of sources, including the important but much neglected minstrel of Reims. Barthélemy's explanation, that the growing importance of the barons reflected disquiet with Louis IX's style of government, is, again, thoroughly convincing,[3] as is his observation that the continued importance of William the Breton's version of events led to a veritable "war of accounts" (*guerre des récits*) (p. 179). My only criticism of an otherwise excellent essay is to note that Barthélemy's assertion that the upholding of the crown does not appear in images of the coronation ceremony in the thirteenth century is incorrect.[4]

Returning to baronial England, Jörg Peltzer considers the evolution of the titles of the great officers of the Plantagenet kingdom. Or were they the officers of the king? Peltzer traces the evolution of the usage and what it may tell us. This includes the fascinating suggestion that the circulation of Martin of Troppau's chronicle, with its portrayal of the imperial electors, may have fostered royal concerns about English officers exercising authority independently of the king. Rolf Große considers, to some extent, the ultimate origins of these concerns in his examination of the rapid evolution of the German princes' relationship with their ruler between 1056 and 1077. In Große's assessment, Henry IV's reign proved critical to the emergence of the princes as a political community that represented the Empire, a position that evolved but was not reversed under the first Hohenstaufen. In the final essay in this section Jean-Marie Moeglin considers what meetings between rulers, specifically those between the Capetians and the English king-dukes and the Capetians and the German emperors, can tell us about emerging concepts of regnal identity. Highlighting the important presence of elites at such meetings, Moeglin suggests these events came to involve a political community, rather than simply individual rulers. It may be the case, as he goes on to argue, that we can see here a shift towards agreements between kingdoms, rather than simply between kings. At the same time, Moeglin's assumption that the rulers involved regarded each other as equals, enjoying "relations de souverain à souverain" (p. 211), must be questioned. This was certainly not always the case. We might, for example, consider the choice of location for the final enacting of the 1259 Treaty of Paris: Henry III came to Louis IX, a symbolic acceptance of his (new) status as Louis's vassal. This was not, in short, a meeting of equals. It is also worth highlighting that the central dynastic focus of the 1299 Quatrevaux meeting is absent from Moeglin's analysis.[5] And while I agree that William of Nangis's claims regarding imperial concessions at the meeting were, as Moeglin puts it, fanciful--Philip IV and Albrecht of Habsburg met to discuss, principally, a dynastic alliance--William was not the only one to have taken them seriously.[6] This is a stimulating essay but, for me, Moeglin's portrait

of emerging regnal identities takes, overall, too little account of the world of feudal and familial relationships to be convincing. We should be cautious of any tendency to cast thirteenth-century kingdoms as nascent modern states waiting to emerge. While I recognize Michelangelo was a genius, I believe he imagined the apocryphal angel in the marble; I do not believe it was there, pre-existent, waiting for the master to carve to set it free. Others will, no doubt, disagree!

The volume's third part explores the reality of political communities through a series of six well-chosen case studies. It is here that the editors' aim, which is essentially to avoid re-treading the path taken by Susan Reynolds and to explore the wider applicability of the concept and the language of *communitas regni*, is most fully realised. Of the two studies focused on Scandinavia, Corinne Péneau's exploration of Sweden is not simply exceptional but, for me, the stand-out essay in the volume. Here, a comparative approach with England is at its most explicit: while *communitas regni* developed in England in relation to parliament, in the Swedish case it was linked to the system of elective monarchy. And yet in both cases it was the product of dialogue/confrontation with royal authority. Éloïse Adde considers an altogether different environment, one in which vernacular Czech literature provided a vehicle for a political identity that opposed the Bohemian nobility to German-speaking townsmen. Like Sweden, however, the soil in which this identity grew involved dynastic crises. Some, if not all, of these themes resonate in Alice Taylor's revisionist approach to the development of the Scottish *communitas regni*. Readers familiar with G. W. S. Barrow's interpretation of the growth of Scottish government will find a very different perspective here, one with the Scottish nobility at its heart. Perhaps of greatest interest to readers of H-France, Jean-Christophe Blanchard offers, with suitable caution, a brilliant re-evaluation of the Wijnbergen armorial. This is a nuanced and careful re-evaluation of a thirteenth-century document once tentatively linked to Philip III's imperial candidature. Blanchard re-envisioning it as a statement of the Capetians' broader, longer-term ambitions in the western lands of the Empire. With Jostkleigrew's contribution in mind, here we find all of Ottokar's worries realised visually! Blanchard might have drawn on Joseph Strayer's classic account of Philip IV's continuation of his father's approach to underline the reality of French expansion.[7] He might also have gone further: I would be tempted to argue that the armorial's tangle of feudal networks, which ignore the south and criss-crossed the Empire, is an important key to the reality of the Capetian political community. Of the essays in this third part, Grégory Cattaneo's consideration of the development of the General Assembly in Iceland and Laurence Moal's discussion of Peter Mauclerc's tenure as duke of Brittany fell a little flat for me. Both are illuminating studies in themselves, but both struggled at times to tie their discussions to the volume's overall theme.

In his 2021 revised edition of *What is Medieval History?*, John H. Arnold emphasized the possibilities of adopting a comparative approach. He was reflecting on the "global turn" and what might be gained by exploring European history in its wider context.[8] While this particular collection has a strong European focus and, in particular a northern European focus, it still illustrates the value of such comparative approaches. I must admit that I would probably never have read essays on the General Assembly of Iceland or the Swedish and Bohemian nobilities were I not reviewing this book. Even where there are weak points in specific essays, the whole is very much more than its individual components. Unlike many contemporary essay collections, this is a case where the editors have made some very thoughtful decisions. As Bruno Lemesle's reflective conclusion demonstrates it is certainly a selection that *could* be re-arranged: in his concluding comments Lemesle divides up the content using three slightly different themes to the divisions employed by the editors. And yet, there is nothing amiss with the editors' structure; it

simply emphasizes one particular set of comparisons. In fact, my one criticism of their work is the lack of an index, which would make it easier to return to specific themes. Readers who explore the book in its totality, as opposed to those who dip in and out for the essays relevant to “their” specialism, will find the experience enriching. Finally, Lemesle also asks what is perhaps a fundamental question for this study: are we justified in considering a concept in a context where the specific terminology of *communitas regni* was not employed? After reading this volume, I would agree that we are, and I would suggest that doing so has the potential to help us think about medieval Europe in new ways.

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NOTES

[1] F. M. Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward. The Community of the Realm in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947); Walter Ullmann, *Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1961).

[2] Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

[3] It is worth noting that the minstrel’s tendency to side with a baronial perspective is similarly on display in his account of Frederick II’s dealings with the papacy: Chris Jones, *Eclipse of Empire? Perceptions of the Western Empire and its Rulers in Late Medieval France* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 46-49.

[4] The upholding of the crown appears in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS latin 1246, fol. 26, which dates to the mid-thirteenth century. For analysis: Jean-Claude Bonne, “Images du sacre,” in Jacques Le Goff, Éric Palazzo, Jean-Claude Bonne, and Marie-Noël Colette, eds., *Le sacre royal à l’époque de Saint Louis d’après le manuscrit latin 1246 de la BnF* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), p. 176.

[5] The extensive documents relating to this meeting go unmentioned. See, MGH, *Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum*, 4:1, Jakob Schwalm, ed. (Hannover/Leipzig: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1906), pp. 61-70 (nos. 80-91). For analysis: Jones, *Eclipse of Empire?*, pp. 300-306.

[6] At about the same time, Pierre Dubois, who could never be faulted for his optimism, reported the rumour that Albrecht’s concession had also included the kingdom of Arles and Lombardy: Hellmut Kämpf, ed., *Petrus de Bosco (Pierre Dubois), Summaria brevis et compendiosa doctrina felicis expeditionis et abreviacionis guerrarum ac litium regni Francorum* (Leipzig/Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1936), p. 5. The ubiquitous Ottokar of Styria seems to have thought it included at least the former:

Paul Fournier, *Le royaume d'Arles et de Vienne (1138-1378). Étude sur la formation territoriale de la France dans l'est et le sud-est* (Paris: A. Picard, 1891), p. 315.

[7] Joseph R. Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 349-350.

[8] John H. Arnold, *What is Medieval History?* 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021), pp. 119-120, p. 144.

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ISSN 1553-9172