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David S. Bachrach, Durham, NH

The 17 essays brought together in this volume address the general question of what the concept of *communitas regni* meant over the course of the tenth through the fourteenth century in France, Germany, England, Scotland, Scandinavia, and the Czech lands, with a focus on the later period. The editors of the volume suggest that by considering the matrix of problems that arise from the analysis of such a multivalent term over such a long period and wide geographical area, it will be possible to develop a more precise taxonomy of its use. In addition, they suggest that by bringing together scholars from different national and historiographical traditions will permit a dialectical process the results in the development of new views and approaches. The volume is organized in three parts that treat in turn: 1 »Terminological, juridical, and theoretical approaches to the concept of *communitas regni*«, 2. »The *communitas regni* as this concept relates to kings and princes«, 3. »The *communitas regni* in practice«. These three sections are bookended with a brief introduction that provides a historiographical treatment of the term *communitas regni*, that emphasizes the contributions made by Susan Reynolds, and a brief conclusion.

Part one of the volume includes six essays. In the first of these, Michel Bur examines the charters produced in the northeast of the French realm by secular and ecclesiastical office holders as well as contemporary narrative sources, to determine whether *communitas* was in use during the twelfth century. Bur found very few examples of the use of this term, and that these limited uses appear to have referred to collective legal rights rather than to a political community. Bur concludes that interpreting the absence of a term is difficult, but that the only community of the realm in this period was the church.

In the next essay Georg Jostkeigrewe begins with the observation that most scholars have concluded the term *communitas regni* generally is absent in continental sources, and that the English model is based on the theoretical juxtaposition of rights of the king and those of the community of the realm. Jostkeigrewe argues, therefore, that in order to draw comparisons between political practice and theory in England and continental realms, it is necessary to find functional equivalents to *communitas regni* in the latter. To this end, he offers an analysis of perceptions

of French politics and political organization from the perspective of German authors in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. He concludes that from the German perspective, France did look like it had a community of the realm, but that, in reality, it is doubtful whether the »nation« formed one of the foundations of the *communitas regni*.

Yves Sassier, in the third essay of this section, considers the concept of the community of the realm from a juridical perspective, with a specific examination of the treatment of the question by theoreticians of civil law in the period c.1150–c.1250 whether the people, denoted as the *universitas civitatis*, could issue laws and control the ruler. Sassier focuses on the work of the glossators of Justinian's *corpus iuris civilis*, and particularly the discussions by Ulpian in the *corpus* regarding the model of the people as the source of imperial authority. Sassier observes in this context that the term used for *populus* was *universitas* and almost never *communitas*. The glossators observed that in Roman law the *universitas* did possess a juridical capacity and that the prince was acting as the vicar of the people. The greatest source of dispute in this context was about what this authority of the people meant in both theory and practice, with some theorists arguing that power was delegated to the prince and others arguing that it had been transferred to him. Sassier does not, however, address the question of how the *corpus iuris civilis* was treated in the earlier Middle Ages, or how the thinking of high medieval glossators was influenced by earlier theoretical treatments of the issue of the *locus* of sovereignty.

The next essay, by Lydwine Scordia, focuses on a series of twelve quodlibetal debates at the university of Paris in the final two decades of the thirteenth century that touched on questions relating to the community of the realm. Scordia identifies several significant strands in these debates, observing that the theological faculty concluded that there were several layers of decision making authority that represented different aspects of the political community. The unitary authority of the prince, in these debates, was intended to maintain unity, while the multiple-member councils were intended to represent a variety of interests without undermining the cohesion of the whole. Scordia includes that for the masters at Paris, the political community was a living reality.

In the fifth essay of this section, Karl Ubl analyzes the treatment by Albert the Great and Engelbert of Admont of Aristotle's work on political organization with specific reference to the problem of empire during the thirteenth century. As is well known, Aristotle identified three proper constitutions, namely monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, but did not include empire in this model. He also identified the city-state as the perfect type of community. Not surprisingly, many medieval political theorists, including Albert and Engelbert, rejected Aristotle's conclusions, regarding the city-state. However, the absence of empire in Aristotle's formulation posed problems for German defenders of the imperial constitution.

In this context, both Albert and Engelbert presented Germany as a mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and oligarchy. Notably, Engelbert, contrary to both Aristotle and contemporary political

theorists, presented oligarchy as a fully-fledged constitution rather than a debased form of aristocracy. Both Albert and Engelbert also treated the empire as a kingdom in political terms in order to stay within the Aristotelian paradigm. However, in the context of discussing imperial theory, Engelbert did emphasize the exceptional status of empire. In concluding his observations regarding the political theory of both Albert and Engelbert, Ubl emphasizes that there is no doubt that contemporaries had a deep-seated conception of the coherence of their polity, and that separating the king from the community, as in contemporary England, would have seemed absurd to both authors.

The final essay in this section, by Frédérique Lachaud, focuses on the question of whether the *communitas regni* in thirteenth and early fourteenth century England represented the political community as a whole or was limited to the opponents of the king. She examines this question through an analysis of a variety of texts including mirrors for princes, political pamphlets, biblical commentaries, and preaching aids. Lachaud observes that the term *communitas* was used during the twelfth century in documents such as Henry II's assize of arms in 1181 to point to the common obligation to defend the realm. The *communis/communitas* terminology also was used by King John in 1205 when asking the magnates for an oath of loyalty to him in the context of defending the realm against external aggression. Lachaud argues, however, that in the period after 1258 the vocabulary relative to community took on a new dimension as a result of the conflict between the barons and the crown. The *communitas regni* became the term of art for describing efforts to secure the common good rather than merely solidarity with the realm focused on the ruler.

The first essay in part two, by Rolf Große, examines the political and constitutional role of the princes in the German kingdom during the course of the eleventh and twelfth century, primarily under the Salian kings. He begins by observing that the term *communitas regni* does not appear in texts produced in Germany during this period. But it is clear, nevertheless, that by the second half of the eleventh century, the princes did have a corporate identity that, in their view, made them the personification of the realm.

The author presents the Ottonian kings of Germany, in the tenth and early eleventh century, as the integrative factor in the realm, often acting in opposition to the great magnates. In this manner, Große refreshingly rejects the myopic focus on so-called »konsensuale Herrschaft« that dominates much of the modern historiography dealing with the Ottonian realm. Große posits the change in the political structure of the realm as resulting from two major factors. The first of these was the minority of King Henry IV during the period c. 1056–1065. He argues that the inability of the child Henry IV or his mother Agnes, acting as his regent, to lead the realm effectively, led the magnates to take upon themselves the authority for securing the well-being of the German kingdom.

The second major factor was the concomitant loss of control over the church reform movement by the German kings to the papal reformers in the curia, exemplified in the person of

Hildebrand, the future Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085). He argues that the long struggle between Henry IV, and his son Henry V, against the great magnates brought fundamental change in the German political community so that the king ceased to be the incarnation of the realm, but rather, under rulers such as Frederick Barbarossa (1153–1190) became *primus inter pares* with the great magnates, all of whom had joint responsibility for the maintenance of the *res publica*.

The next essay, by Jörg Peltzer, examines the meaning of the transition in the terms used to denote the great officials of the realm, such as the chamberlain and marshal, for our understanding of the nature of the political community, with a focus on England in the thirteenth century. The author observes that the holders of the great secular offices in England, all of whom were earls in the thirteenth century, sought to develop new titles for their offices that indicated they worked on behalf of the kingdom (*regnum*) rather than the king (*rex*). However, King Edward I (1272–1307), in contrast to his father Henry III (1216–1272), pursued a policy of restricting both the competency and the titles of the great secular offices.

Peltzer suggests that Edward was mindful of the experience of his uncle Richard of Cornwall, who had sought the German crown, as well as King Adolf of Nassau of Germany (1292–1298), Edward's ally against the French, both of whom faced significant opposition from the German electors. Edward I thus, according to Peltzer, sought to diminish the role and power of the earls, particularly those holding high office, so as to forestall any effort by them to become the representatives of the realm in a manner similar to the German electors. Peltzer concludes by arguing that Edward II, deposed in a coup in 1327, paid the price for not recognizing the dangers inherent in powerful court offices envisioned by his father.

In the third essay in this section, Dominique Barthélemy examines the political implications of the treatment of the battle of Bouvines (1214) by historians of the thirteenth century. Barthélemy focuses on the very different depictions of the battle by William the Breton and the so-called minstrel of Rheims, who wrote, respectively, in the decade after the battle and in the 1270s. William depicted the victory at Bouvines as a glorious victory of the French ruler Philip II, supported by the entire realm, including notably significant contingents of militia troops from the cities of northeastern France.

Liberal historians of the 19th century used William's account both to emphasize the manifestation of a truly national spirit, and the cooperation between the bourgeois and the king for the improvement of the realm. In his focus on the triumph of Philip II, William tended to downplay the role played by the barons. By contrast, the minstrel of Rheims elevated the role of the barons, and gave them a central place in the battle of Bouvines. Barthélemy concludes that historical treatments of Bouvines in the latter thirteenth century represent an effort to control the memory of the battle of Bouvines, but that the barons did not win this struggle entirely because William's account continued to be copied throughout this period.

The next essay, by Isabelle Guyot-Bachy, also considers the political uses and memory of the battle of Bouvines, particularly by King Philip IV (1285–1314) in the context of his wars in Flanders. She begins by observing that three battles in Flanders, those at Bouvines 1214, Mons-en-Pévèle 1304, and Cassel 1328, were among the 31 chosen in 1833 to be memorialized at the newly opened museum of the history of France at Versailles. Guyot-Bachy analyzes a number of thirteenth and early fourteenth century discussions of the battle of Bouvines, which tend to emphasize the territorial nature of the French realm, and observe that contingents were drawn from throughout the kingdom, factors that point to a conception of *communitas regni*.

Guyot-Bachy further observes that Philip IV's effort to call on the memory of Bouvines in response to the devastating losses suffered at the battle of Courtrai (1302) point to the enduring political influence of the memory of Bouvines throughout the thirteenth century. She concludes that an analysis of the treatment of the Flemmish wars of Philip IV by contemporary historians reveals a sense of community of the realm, and that this did not develop *ex nihilo* in 1302. Rather, this understanding of the *communitas regni* existed throughout the thirteenth century and increased in intensity after 1280.

The final essay in section two, by Jean-Marie Moeglin, considers the problem of »international relations« and what an analysis of this theme might reveal about *communitas regni* in France in the eleventh and twelfth century. Moeglin begins with the bald assertion that the concept of international relations in the early and high Middle Ages is anachronistic, arguing instead that diplomatic interactions consisted of personal relations between rulers rather than between polities. It is not clear that such a view is shared by all historians of this period, particularly in light of the research of scholars such as Hans-Werner Goetz that demonstrates the »transpersonality« of the realm already was well established in the early ninth century, and likely much earlier than this.

Nevertheless, Moeglin hopes to examine putative tensions between the conception of a *communitas regni*, comprised of the great magnates, and the personal relationships established by rulers. After providing an annotated list of meetings between the kings of France with those of Germany and England, Moeglin concludes that the great magnates, who attended these meetings, served several functions including aiding and advising the king, acting as intermediaries between kings, providing agreement to the provisions of treaties made by rulers, and finally serving as guarantors that the rulers would honor the terms of the treaties that they had made.

While it is certainly the case that in some instances magnates served some of these roles in international relations, Moeglin's starting assumptions call into question his conclusions. One need only read the text of the treaties made by the Ottonian rulers of Germany with the city-state of Venice in the tenth century to see the functioning of inter-state diplomacy based on the public interest of both polities. Similarly, the relations between Henry II of Germany (1002–1024) and King Robert II of France (996–

1031) highlight the interests of the *res publica* and not the private interests of the two kings.

The first essay in section three, by Jean-Christophe Blanchard, analyzes the so-called Wijnbergen roll of arms. This text, composed of two elements that likely were drafted during the reign of King Philip III of France (1270–1285), includes the arms of some 1300 individuals, who were loyal to the French ruler. Blanchard's question is whether this roll of arms can provide insights regarding the contemporary conceptions of the *communitas regni*. He points out that the individuals listed in the text overwhelmingly were from the northeast of the French realm along the frontiers of the Empire. Blanchard suggests this narrow focus, which excludes magnates from southern France almost entirely, could be interpreted as representing the author's own bias regarding the composition of the French realm, or perhaps reflects the political program of King Philip to strengthen the position of the French kingdom vis-à-vis the Empire. Blanchard concludes that Philip III's aggressive efforts to strengthen the ties of the crown with the magnates in the northeast suggest that the latter interpretation may be the correct one.

The next essay, by Laurence Moal, examines the politics involved in the decision in 1213 by King Philip II of France to marry Pierre Dreux, a member of a cadet branch of the Capetian family, to Margarette of Brittany, the half-sister of Arthur, the Angevin duke of Brittany, murdered by King John in 1203. Moal emphasizes that Philip hoped that the fragile »feudal« relationship between the new duke and the French crown would be enhanced by a feeling of family loyalty. Moal argues, against much of the state of the question, that Pierre Dreux was a loyal supporter of Capetian interests, despite some dallying with the government of King Henry III of England (1216–1272), and also laid the foundations for the strong ducal government that persisted in Brittany after Pierre handed over authority to his son John in 1237.

In the third essay in this section, Grégory Cattaneo examines the question of what it meant to have a *communitas* in a polity without a king, that is in Iceland between 930–1264. Cattaneo seeks in this essay to redress the imbalanced use of the available sources by scholars, who have tended to focus on the sagas without giving due attention to narrative works, law codes, and charters. Cattaneo argues that both local assemblies and the famous Icelandic national assembly were public institutions and played a crucial role in the development of a common identity among the Icelanders. However, he rejects the romantic notion that these assemblies were democratic institutions, as their membership did not constitute a majority of even the free male population.

The next essay in this section, by Corinne Péneau, also treats Scandinavian history and considers the creation of a *communitas regni* in Sweden during the thirteenth and fourteenth century, through the prism of the revolt against and removal of King Birgen (1290–1318). Péneau observes that even in Latin documents, the Swedes tended not to use the term *communitas regni*, and that community, in general, tended to be conceptualized on a provincial rather than a national level.

It was in the provincial assemblies that the Swedish king was elected and compelled to swear to respect the laws of the province, as well as to refrain from levying taxes or raising armies without the approval of the provincial assemblies. The only national organization, as Péneau explains, was an assembly of secular and ecclesiastical magnates, who were summoned by the king. She concludes that the *communitas regni*, as it functioned in Sweden, was a conglomeration of groups that joined together in pursuit of their individual interests. Their power to constrain the ruler, should he violate his oaths to the disparate elements of the political community, was demonstrated in the removal from office of King Bergin in 1318.

The penultimate essay in section three, by Alice Taylor, considers the use of the terminology of *communitas regni* by the Guardians in Scotland immediately following the death of King Alexander III in 1286, and examines the institutional and political developments in the realm that serve to explain the rapid diffusion and adoption of the concept of the community of the realm. In this context, Taylor revisits the question of how well developed the institutions of the royal government were in the twelfth century, challenging the state of the question that all of the important structures and offices were in place by c. 1150.

She argues, instead, that the development of these institutions, such as the shrieval office, was quite gradual and continued well into the first half of the thirteenth century. Taylor also argues that in Scotland (in marked contrast to England) the expansion of the institutions of the royal government did not diminish the competency and reach of seigneurial jurisdictions, particularly in legal affairs. Rather, by the reign of Alexander III, seigneurial lords were partners of the royal government, and seigneurial justice was incorporated directly into the practice of royal law. As a consequence, the development of royal institutions did not create two separate spheres of power, public and private, but rather brought the two into fruitful cooperation. The use of the terminology of *communitas regni* by the Guardians in the period 1286–1292 thus affirmed the political realities that had developed in Scotland over the previous century.

The final essay in the volume, by Éloise Adde, examines the use of the concept of *communitas regni* by the Czech nobility during the fourteenth century to justify their control over the public affairs of the realm. Through an examination of both Latin documents produced by the Czech ducal and royal governments, and vernacular literature patronized by the Czech nobility, Adde argues that we can see the emergence of a self-conscious political community that emphasized the common good over the particularist interests of any individual, including the ruler. The exercise of collective authority by the Czech nobility, therefore, was depicted in numerous sources as justified because they represented the incarnation of the body politic in the face of weak kingship, particularly in the period after c. 1280.

The volume ends with a brief conclusion by Bruno Lemesle, who attempts to identify common themes among the essays, while offering a brief synopsis of each. In this context, Lemesle observes that the authors largely eschew a nominalist approach

because the term *communitas regni* simply does not appear in the source materials in many of the places and periods examined in this collection. As a result, Lemesle argues, it is necessary to consider what is meant by a community, who was part of a particularly community, and what were the connections between this community and the realm.

Of course, Lemesle's observations in this regard call into question the wisdom of organizing a volume around a term that had such limited temporal and geographical valency, particularly given the stated goal in the introduction of developing a fine grained understanding of the various ways that contemporaries used and understood *communitas regni*. Both the individual authors and the collection as a whole would have been better served if the editors had asked for a consideration of specific questions regarding political theory and political practice, as well as the sources that provided information about each.

Moreover, the decision to focus on the particular vocabulary of »community of the realm« seems to have discouraged the investigation of questions regarding the theory and practice of the political community in earlier polities, such as the Carolingian Empire and Anglo-Saxon England, which exercised considerable influence on their successors. As a consequence, the volume, despite having a number of outstanding contributions, is significantly less than the sum of its parts.