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0521431891 - War and Government in the French Provinces: Picardy, 1470-1560

David Potter

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1470, the dominant power in the region of Picardy was the Burgundian state, which then seemed to be at its zenith. By the time that Henry II of France made peace with the Habsburgs in 1559, Picardy was a clearly organised province of France, the *fidelissima Picardiae natio* whose loyalty had been reinforced by generations of war. A loosely defined and undifferentiated region had become one of the great *gouvernements* of the French kingdom and had taken its place as the French frontier with the Empire and the kingdom's first line of defence. The process by which this was achieved was not straightforward and was accompanied by generations of warfare and political adjustment, which are the themes of this study.

The history of Picardy, though a rich territory for the historian of the earlier middle ages,<sup>1</sup> has been largely neglected in the early modern period. American historians have begun to explore, notably, the religious history of the area and the clientage connections of the nobility during the wars of religion,<sup>2</sup> but the emergence of the province during the decisive period from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries is, apart from the pioneering work of Augustin Thierry and Edouard Maugis, an historiographical blank.<sup>3</sup> Some differences of perspective and emphasis from other regional studies may result from the nature of the sources characteristic of the century before 1560. Many of the great *pays d'états* have been studied through the sources left behind by their

<sup>1</sup> R. Fossier, *La terre et les hommes en Picardie jusqu'à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (2 vols., 1968); Fossier (ed.), *Histoire de la Picardie* (1974).

<sup>2</sup> D. Rosenberg, 'Social Experience and Religious Choice: a Case Study of the Protestant Weavers and Woolcombers of Amiens in the XVIth century' (Yale thesis, 1978). K. Neuschel, 'The Prince of Condé and the Nobility of Picardy: a Study of the Structure of Noble Relationships in Sixteenth-Century France' (Brown Univ. thesis, 1982); Neuschel, *Word of Honor. Interpreting Noble Culture in Sixteenth-Century France* (1989).

<sup>3</sup> See the bibliography for the works of these scholars.

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estates or their *parlements* in their battles with the crown. The studies by William Beik of Languedoc, by Daniel Hickey of Dauphiné, and by Sharon Kettering of Provence, are three obvious recent examples concentrating on the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> Provinces closer to the centre of power have not been so well served, while modern French historians have, until recently, been reluctant to embark upon a reassessment of the political and administrative history of the sixteenth century or to continue the work of Philippe Contamine on the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The major studies by French historians of the *Annales* tradition have only lately begun to turn to this field, though at their best they integrate the history of social structures and institutions.<sup>5</sup>

An exploration of the diverse sources for central and local government in Picardy from the late fifteenth century onwards quickly revealed the pre-eminence of war and its impact on the lives and assumptions of all the people. Allied to this was the obvious point that the process by which the province of Picardy took shape coincided with a period usually associated with the tentative development of the late mediaeval *Etat de justice* into the *Etat de finance* of the early modern period. Michel Antoine, in a fine series of studies, has begun to reveal the extraordinary extent of administrative innovations generated by the demands made on government in the reigns of Francis I and Henri II.<sup>6</sup> One reason for viewing this period as a high point of a proto-administrative monarchy is that, in the context of the long epoch of internal strife from the early fourteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries, the years from 1500 to 1560 were ones in which the political supremacy of the monarchy went largely unchallenged. This was a stage of political development born in the English and Burgundian struggles of the fifteenth century and further

<sup>4</sup> W. Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France. State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (1985); D. Hickey, *The Coming of French Absolutism; the Struggle for Tax Reform in the Province of Dauphiné, 1540–1640* (1986); S. Kettering, *Judicial Politics and Urban Revolt in Seventeenth-Century France: the Parlement of Aix, 1629–59* (1978).

<sup>5</sup> E. g. E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Les paysans de Languedoc* (2 vols., 1966); J. Jacquart, *La crise rurale en Ile-de-France 1550–1670* (1974); P. Deyon, *Amiens, capitale provinciale. Etude sur la société urbaine au 17<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1967). Some important provincial studies have concentrated on culture and religion: N. Lemaître, *Le Rouergue flamboyant* (1988) and C. Longeon, *Une province française à la Renaissance. La vie intellectuelle en Forez* (1975).

<sup>6</sup> The renewal of interest in sixteenth-century administration was begun by H. Michaud's magisterial *La grande chancellerie et les écritures royales au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle (1515–89)* (1967). M. Antoine, 'La chancellerie de France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle' and 'L'administration centrale des finances en France du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', repr. in his *Le dur métier de roi. Etudes sur la civilisation politique de la France d'Ancien Régime* (1986); Antoine, 'Genèse de l'institution des intendants', *Journal des Savants* (1982), 283–317; 'Institutions françaises en Italie sous le règne de Henri II: Gouverneurs et intendants', *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome* 94 (1982), 759–818, a study of capital importance based on the du Thier papers in Moscow. On the concept of the *Etat de finance*, see B. Barbiche, 'Henri IV, Sully et la première "monarchie administrative"' in *PWSFH*, 17 (1990), 10–23.

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galvanised through the demands of the Italian and Habsburg–Valois Wars of the sixteenth century. That the monarchs of the Renaissance, from Charles VIII to Henry II, were warrior kings who led their armies in the field at the head of their cavalry gave added impetus. In fact, the initial phase of ‘absolutist’ state-building from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries can be seen as the engagement of state power in the construction of a war machine adequate for participation in large-scale dynastic conflict.

Paradoxically, the ‘guerres de magnificence’ in Italy from 1494 to 1521 did little to aggravate the general fiscal burden; indeed, they provided opportunities for enrichment while keeping the negative effects of war away from French territory. The scale of military operations remained limited; the monarchy was maintaining armies of little more than 25,000 men on a semi-permanent basis in the 1490s and 1500s, the burdens substantially borne by the theatre of operations.<sup>7</sup> The transformation of these wars after 1521, when the Habsburg dynasty succeeded in balancing the resources of France, involved an important expansion of investment in military personnel, equipment and administration. By the end of the 1550s, the crown was forced to maintain an army of 50,000 men on the northern frontier alone for several months. The maintenance of armies on a wartime establishment for several years running inevitably generated greater taxation. Nor were the wars of that period self-financing, while for some regions, most notably Picardy, they became increasingly destructive, both in terms of enemy devastation and of the burden of army support. If military expenditure absorbed at least one-half of crown revenues in the later fifteenth century, by the 1530s there were years in which the proportion was above three-quarters.<sup>8</sup>

The years from, roughly, 1460 to 1560, however, were those in which the economic and demographic recovery from the calamities of the previous century, though delayed in northern France, permitted the accumulation of the surplus necessary for more extensive state activity, particularly in the field of

<sup>7</sup> F. Lot, *Recherches sur les effectifs de armées françaises des guerres d'Italie aux guerres de religion* (1962): the expeditions of 1499–1501, involving no more than about 25,000 men, virtually denuded France of troops, while total state revenues stood at only L 2.5 million in 1501. The vast disparity in military costs, estimated by the Venetian Contarini in 1492 at L 2.3m for the gendarmerie and L 3m for fortifications and military equipment while total income was L 3.6m (see L. Firpo, *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, 11 vols. (1965–84), V (1978), 19–20) is to be explained not by the imposition of extra taxes, as he thought, but by the transfer of costs to Italy; see P. Chaunu, ‘L’Etat’ in F. Braudel and E. Labrousse (eds.), *Histoire économique et sociale de la France* (1977) I, i, 155.

<sup>8</sup> P. Contamine, ‘Guerre, fiscalité royale et économie en France (deuxième moitié du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)’, in M. Flinn (ed.), *Seventh International Economic History Congress*, II, 269. For 1536: total revenues of L 6,725,000, expenditure on *extraordinaire des guerres*, L 4,439,890; under Henry II, average global revenues, 1548–55 10 millions, average exp. on *extraordinaires* 1548–55, L 6,317,538 (figures, Clamageran, *Histoire de l’impôt* (3 vols., 1867–76) and below, p. 189 and appendix 6A.

warfare, and enabled French society to sustain an increased fiscal burden. The potential resources of the French monarchy were already the most formidable in Europe: 60–3 tonnes of fine silver p.a. in the years 1484–1515, 92–6 tonnes in 1523–43, 209 tonnes in 1547–59, though the purchasing power of such sums remained more stable. The high levels of taxation prevailing in the 1550s did not equal the purchasing power of Louis XI's revenues in 1482 (125 tonnes of silver). The rise under Francis I from 63 tonnes p.a. to 115 tonnes (183%) was almost offset by the 160 per cent rise in prices in terms of silver. The near 100 per cent rise in revenues under Henri II, however, took place at a time of more moderate inflation and is to be explained by the crown's ability to tap the resources of the clergy in that period. Over the longer term, in relation to total productivity, royal taxes rose from 18.5 per cent to 26.5 per cent from 1453 to 1482, but had sunk to 14.8 per cent in 1559. Except for the later years of Louis XI and those of Henri II, the growth in the taxation burden cannot be compared with the grotesque increases promulgated under the war finance régime of the seventeenth-century cardinal ministers, though the expansion of French society from the 1480s to the 1550s provided an increasing resource for the state.<sup>9</sup>

Henry Heller has argued that the fiscal burden of the monarchy was one of the factors that aggravated what he sees as the endemic social conflict between nobles and commoners that prevailed throughout the sixteenth century in France and that the magnificence of the Renaissance was built up on increasing commoner impoverishment. Though there is reason to doubt this particular explanation, his study does reopen the question of whether the idea of the 'society of orders' was so generally accepted and this has implications for the state.<sup>10</sup> There has been much ultimately inconclusive debate about the social configurations which permitted or encouraged the development of absolutism, much of it concentrating on the seventeenth century and influenced to a greater or lesser extent by a view of political systems of control as super-structures dependent upon social forces.<sup>11</sup> In this specific case: who actually benefited from the construction of the modern state? Rival interpretations,

<sup>9</sup> See P. Chaunu, 'L'Etat', in Braudel and Labrousse, *Histoire économique et sociale*, 39–45, 148–66; Morineau, in *ibid.*, I, ii, 978–81 (tables). N.B. revenue figures in terms of silver are based on the computations of A. Guéry. The feebleness of royal revenues as a proportion of productivity is stressed more recently by E. Le Roy Ladurie, *L'Etat royal de Louis XI à Henri IV, 1460–1610* (1987), 59.

<sup>10</sup> H. Heller, *Iron and Blood. Civil Wars in Sixteenth-Century France* (1991), 3–11, 23–7. He argues that tax increases outstripped inflation and that *crues* and *tailions* should be taken into account. Even so, it is difficult to see taxes as a major source of impoverishment except in certain special circumstances, like Dauphiné in the 1530–40s.

<sup>11</sup> R. Mousnier and F. Hartung, 'Quelques problèmes concernant la monarchie absolue' in *Relazione del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche IV* (Rome, 1955), 1–55 and the discussions in the same volume. P. Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolute State* (1979 edn), 1–59, has, from a Marxist perspective, stressed the centrality of war in this process.

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which see in Absolute Monarchy a channel for the increasing power of proto-capitalist urban wealth in the creation of a national market, or alternatively a device willed into being by feudal aristocracies confronted by the agrarian crisis of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in order to reinforce their control of a refractory peasantry, are in themselves no more than historians' arbitrary constructs. Nor is the notion of a balance of forces which allowed the monarchy to emancipate itself from controls any more convincing; any effective state structure must involve a substantial range of interests in its survival.<sup>12</sup>

For this period, the problem is posed most starkly in the common assumption that Louis XI's objective was to eliminate aristocratic power by enlisting the support of the cities. The second half of Louis's reign saw, as has been pointed out, a prodigious increase in the burden of royal taxes on French society not to be paralleled until the 1550s. Despite spectacular cases of destruction of princely power, systematic study of the royal council in the period reveals that this governing institution continued to be dominated by the nobility.<sup>13</sup> It should not, therefore, be surprising that the apogée of this first stage of classical absolutism, customarily placed between 1520 and 1560, should see the crown continue in its role as supreme patron of the nobility and provider of the employment and opportunities created by war, or that the court had emerged as at one and the same time the most centralising and also the most aristocratic institution of the kingdom. Jean de Tillet's observation, in his *Advertissement à la noblesse*, that 'la gresse & opulence de ce Royaume, toutes les grandeurs & commoditez, retournent aux gentils-hommes', was pointed.<sup>14</sup> As Philippe Contamine observed, by the time of the Estates-General of 1484 the principal political objective of the French nobility was the assurance of place, salaries and pensions within the monarchical system.<sup>15</sup>

Part of the explanation for this may be sought in the economic position of the nobility. The collapse of seigneurial revenues in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is now widely accepted. The consequences in the succeeding period,

<sup>12</sup> N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, vol. II, *State Formation and Civilization* (1982), 161.

<sup>13</sup> On the development of this idea, B., Guénee, 'L'histoire de l'Etat en France à la fin du Moyen Age', *RH* 232 (1964), 331–60; H. Séé, *Louis XI et les villes* (1891); R. Gandilhon, *Politique économique de Louis XI* (1940) and comments in G. Zeller, 'Louis XI, la noblesse et la marchandise' in his *Aspects de la politique française* (1964), 240–53; B. Chevalier, 'La politique de Louis XI à l'égard des bonnes villes. Le cas de Tours' *Moyen Age*, 70 (1964); H. Miskimin, *Money and Power in Fifteenth-century France* (1984), 91–105 on the influence of bullion shortage on the thrust of royal policy. P.-R. Gaussin, 'Les conseillers de Louis XI', in B. Chevalier and P. Contamine (eds.), *La France de la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle – Apogée et Renouveau* (1985), 123, 128.

<sup>14</sup> Jean de Tillet, *Advertissement envoyée à la noblesse de France* (1574 edn), fl. Biiij v–ivr.

<sup>15</sup> P. Contamine, 'De la puissance aux privilèges' in his *La France aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles. Hommes, mentalités, guerre et paix* (1981), 255.

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however, are not certain and wide variations have to be envisaged. The development is illustrated by the fortunes of the La Trémoille family, parlous under Louis XI, who treated it with disfavour, but resplendent by the 1530s after a generation of royal favour and employment.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, studies of aristocratic wealth, including that of the Bourbons in Picardy, increasingly reveal the great opportunities for restoration available to the wealthier nobility with direct access to crown patronage during the economic revival of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; reflected, too, in the emergence of sharper stratification as a result of the increasing exclusivity of the rank of *chevaliers* within the nobility.<sup>17</sup> For middle and lesser nobility, however, the prospects may have been more ambiguous, dependent on genealogical chance and personal ability. Here, military and administrative employment were an important supplement to income. In Picardy, the Mailly family was nearly ruined in the early sixteenth century and was rescued only by direct royal support.<sup>18</sup> The patterns observed by Robert Fossier for the thirteenth century, first for the vast proliferation of seigneuries in Picardy and, secondly, for the consolidation of a small number of successful lignages through astute management and links with the Capetian monarchy, are to some extent echoed in the sixteenth, as will be seen in chapter 3.<sup>19</sup>

Much has been made of the pronouncements of contemporary theorists

<sup>16</sup> G. Bois, 'Noblesse et crise des revenus seigneuriaux en France aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles: essai d'interprétation', in P. Contamine (ed.), *La Noblesse au Moyen Âge* (1976), 219–33. W. A. Weary, 'La Maison de La Trémoille pendant la Renaissance: une seigneurie agrandie', in B. Chevalier and P. Contamine (eds.), *La France de la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 197–212 and introduction, pp. 4–5, on Chabannes family. On the importance of royal subventions for one favoured member of the La Trémoille family, see P. Contamine, 'Georges de La Trémoille' in his *La France au XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles* II, 72.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. D. L. Potter, 'The Luxembourg Inheritance: the House of Bourbon and its Lands in Northern France during the Sixteenth Century', *French History* 6 (1992); M. Greengrass, 'Property and Politics in Sixteenth-Century France: the Landed Fortunes of the Constable Anne de Montmorency', *French History* 2 (1988), 371–98. P. Contamine, 'Points de vue sur la chevalerie en France à la fin du moyen âge' in *La France aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, 259–62, 271, 283–5: the number of chevaliers contracted from around 5,000–10,000 in 1300 to around 1,000 in 1500, growing slightly to a little under 2,000 by the 1570s: see M. Orleat, *La noblesse aux États généraux de 1576 et de 1588* (1980), 50–67. For the numbers in Picardy, see below, ch. 4.

<sup>18</sup> For studies of other regions where the fortunes of the nobility in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were very mixed see: M. Le Mené, *Les campagnes angevines à la fin du moyen âge* (1982), 487–99; P. Charbonnier, *Une autre France. La seigneurie rurale en Basse-Auvergne du XIV<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1980) I, 547–77, II, 830–53, 945–88, esp. 974–88: there was a strengthening of incomes in the middle range, 1488–1551, but signs of indebtedness among the small hill-country landowners. A. Ledru, *Histoire de la maison de Mailly* (1893) I, 176–81 on difficulties of Antoine de Mailly caused by expenses in the Anglo-French naval war, 1512–13.

<sup>19</sup> R. Fossier, *La terre et les hommes en Picardie*, II; Fossier, 'La noblesse picarde au temps de Philippe le Bel', in P. Contamine (ed.), *La noblesse au Moyen Âge* (1976), 105–27, esp. 111–14, 126–7.



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concerning the development of absolutism, though the differences between them may have been exaggerated, and we should be alert to the facts that not only is the use of systematic theory in the history of power too static a perspective, but also not even the most rigorous defender of royal sovereignty could countenance despotism. The point was quite effectively established by Roland Mousnier.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, it hardly needs to be stressed that the very word 'absolutism' is a neologism, though public discourse was no stranger to the concepts of 'puissance absolue, de plain pouvoir, de propre mouvement' castigated by Estienne Pasquier in the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>21</sup> As a 'system', however, it was simply not an issue either in the province discussed in this book or in France as a whole, though the various ways in which the royal power was invoked, used, manipulated and twisted certainly were, since that power wielded military force.

The engagement of the monarchy in the Italian wars from the 1490s and the wider conflict from 1521 may well have concealed fundamental disagreements over the demands of the state, but the power of the crown to manage exterior policy was unchallenged and public discourse was dominated by those, mainly nobles and jurists, who sought to glorify external conquest or urge vigorous defence. Thus, although there is good reason to suppose that the recurrence of war, with its attendant grave effects on international commerce, contributed to the outbreaks of violent disorder in the cities (for instance at La Rochelle, Rouen and Tours in 1542 or Troyes in 1529), there is little evidence that the right of the crown to manage military and diplomatic policy could be called into question; rather, discontent was focused elsewhere. The king could not be directly blamed; instead the 'triste et misérable estat de la guerre' was conceived of as a sort of natural calamity.<sup>22</sup> For a province like Picardy, involved in the exportation of grain to the Low Countries – indeed a major cause of discontent – the commencement of war had at least the stabilising effect of prohibiting cross-border grain movements.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> C. de Seyssel, *La Monarchie de France*, ed. J. Poujol (1961), 113–28, esp. 120; B. Basse, *La constitution de l'ancienne France* (1986), chs. x and xiii; on Bodin, see J. L. Bourgeon, 'La Fronde parlementaire à la veille de la Saint-Barthélemy', *BEC* (1990), I, 17–89, esp. p. 34; H. Lloyd, *The State, France and the Sixteenth Century* (1983), 158–60; D. Parker, 'Law, Society and the State in the Thought of Jean Bodin', *History of Political Thought 2* (1981), 253–85. Mousnier and Hartung, see note 11.

<sup>21</sup> E. Pasquier, *Lettres* (Amsterdam, 1723), II, 155.

<sup>22</sup> AM Compiègne BB 21 fo. 56v (18 Oct. 1552). Municipal records often register the reception of news about the start of war but usually confine themselves to the resulting decisions concerning security. H. Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 27–9, on the role of war in provoking riots because of the interruption of trade.

<sup>23</sup> Grain exportation was prohibited both in war and in times of shortage by governors' *ordonnances*: AM Amiens AA 12 fo. 164v (1530), 165v, 167v (1531); fo. 181 (1535), 183 (1536), 191 (1538), 193 (1539), 185 (1540), 206v, 211 (1542), 222 (1547); AA fol. 10r (1552).

One reason for cooperation was the participation of urban oligarchies in the propaganda of the crown, evident in the manifestos accompanying the demands for the *taille* that sought to justify the king's actions, and also in the public ceremonial – processions, prayers, bonfires – by which the crown insisted that the *bonnes villes* participate in the triumphs and disasters of the monarchy. Michèle Fogel has shown how important the reign of Henri II was in the genesis at Paris of frequent public ceremonies, like the *Te Deum*, as supplements to the traditional intercessory processions to mark public events; the same could be said of the main towns of Picardy.<sup>24</sup> Less frequently, though more spectacularly, the personal presence of the king, especially at his first ceremonial entry into the towns of the province, gave a vivid opportunity for propaganda. Louis XI's entry at Amiens was staged soon after its recovery, in 1464. Charles VIII and Louis XII both delayed their *entrées* for many years, while Francis I and Henry II arrived soon after their accessions (1517 and 1547). Such events now tended to concentrate on emphasising the splendour of the crown rather than any contractual obligations between king and community, though the towns of Picardy remained attached to the 'mysteries', in the traditions of sacred drama, staged on such occasions, and placed great emphasis on the Glorious Virgin in fostering their relations with the king. The programmes of these pageants could be contradictory; on Charles VIII's entry at Abbeville in 1492 one tableau showing the annunciation called for peace while another, of the Trinity, called for the king's victory over his enemies.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> E.g. Sept. 1489, *Te Deum* and procession at Amiens with a large image of the Virgin and the head of St John the Baptist, for the peace treaty with the emperor (AM Amiens AA 12 fo. 97v); from April 1509 the governor ordered weekly processions and prayers for the success of Louis XII's campaign in Italy until news of the victory (AM Péronne BB 6 fo. 196r–7r); standard phrase 'faciez rendre grâces à Dieu ensemble faire processions et feuz de joye' (on news of Marignano, *ibid.* BB 7 fo. 7); on the birth of the dauphin, April 1518 (AM Amiens AA 12 fo. 131v); on the truce of Nice, processions with relics were ordered at Compiègne and a sermon at St-Corneille 'contenant plus au long les raisons, causes et moyens desd. tresves' (AM Compiègne BB 19 fo. 3r). *Te Deum, feux de joie* and procession for the peace with England, March 1550 (AM Amiens, AA 12 fo. 230v–31r). On Paris, M. Fogel, *Les cérémonies d'information dans la France du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1989), 133–88.

<sup>25</sup> On the royal entry ceremonial, see L. Bryant, *The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony: Politics, Ritual and Art in the Renaissance* (1986); Bryant, 'The Medieval Entry Ceremony at Paris' in J. M. Bak (ed.), *Coronations* (1990); J. Brink, 'Royal Power Through Provincial Eyes: Languedoc 1515–60', *PWSFH* 10 (1982), 52–9. A certain number of royal *entrées* in Picardy have been printed: A. Ledieu, 'Entrée solonelle du roi Charles VIII à Abbeville (1493)', *Bull. archéol. du Comité des travaux hist.* 1888, I, 55–65; Ledieu, 'Entrée de la reine Eléonore d'Autriche à Abbeville le 19 décembre 1531', *BSEA* 5 (1900–2), 15ff., 33ff., F.-C. Louandre, *Histoire d'Abbeville* 2 vols. (1844–4) II, 1–17; for the entry of Francis I at Abbeville in June 1517, see *Inventaire sommaire, Abbeville*, 148; Pollet, 'L'entrée d'Henri II à Calais en 1558', *Bull. comm. Monuments hist. Pas-de-Calais* 7, v (1956), 547ff. A. Dubois, *Entrées royales et princières dans Amiens pendant les 15<sup>e</sup> et 16<sup>e</sup> siècles* (1868): Charles VIII made his entry in 1493 but Louis XII delayed his ceremonial entry as late as 1513 (AM Amiens, BB 21 fo. 177–86: provisions for the staging of 'mystères'). Francis I in June 1517



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In more routine matters, after Louis XI's frenetic activity in the region, Charles VIII and Louis XII appeared only rarely, but from 1513 the royal itinerary indicates a growing royal presence in Picardy, with the king either on campaign, a tour of inspection or staying with the duke of Vendôme at La Fère. Of 662 days spent by Francis I in the province (excluding many long stays at Compiègne), there were 220 between 1515 and 1530, 442 from 1531 to 1547.<sup>26</sup>

The *chants royaux*, composed each year at Amiens in the competition for verses in honour of the Virgin for the confraternity of the *Puy Notre-Dame*, emphasised the duty of obedience to the king; one competitor in 1472 proclaimed:

Voeillons huy tous de une alliance,  
Servir au noble roi de France,

...

Car le bon roi, par industrie,  
Scet de cœur et pensée france  
Honoré la Vierge Marie.

The competition took on a special significance for the entry of Francis I and Louise of Savoy into the city in 1517. The yearly paintings commissioned for the festival had, since their inception in the mid-fifteenth century, brought the figure of the king to prominence in conjunction with that of the Virgin herself. A painting of 1519 depicts a complex allegory concerning the king's title to the Empire.<sup>27</sup> Earlier, around 1500, the confraternity had commissioned two triptych side panels, now at the Cluny Museum in Paris, showing the coronations of David and Louis XII, the latter inscribed: 'Une foy, une loy, un roy'.

The French monarchy, like its Castilian counterpart, had an absolutist ideology inherited from the early mediaeval past, which invoked doctrines of Roman law in justification of its command of public policy. As an *avocat* of

(AM Amiens CC fo. 194v); queen Eléonore, 1531: details not preserved. Entry of Henri II at Amiens, Aug. 1547, AM Amiens, BB 25 fo. 288–92: the 'rétoriciens' Obry and Lemaire were given 'ce quy a esté fait anchienement' for staging the 'mystères' and 'istoires'. On the latter, see A. de Calonne, *Histoire de ville d'Amiens* 3 vols. (1899–1906), I, 343–52, 400–1, 486–7. The *mystère* of 'Jonas sortant de la baleine' was staged for the entry of Louis XI in 1464, for Marguerite of Austria as dauphine in 1483: 'l'ancienne histoire dont jadis vint Franchion et la noble maison de France'.

<sup>26</sup> For royal itineraries, now complete between 1461 and 1559, see Louis XI: J. Vaesen and E. Charavay, *Lettres de Louis XI*, 12 vols. (SHF, 1883–1909), XI; Charles VIII: *Bulletin philologique et historique*, 1896, 629–90; Louis XII, *ibid.*, 1972, 171–206; Francis I: *CAF VIII*, 411–548; Henri II: *CAH III*, introduction.

<sup>27</sup> A.-M. Lecoq, *François Ier imaginaire* (1987), 325–42. The poem of 1472 was by Jean Du Bosquel, see *ibid.*, 341.

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David Potter

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the Parlement put it in 1491, 'l'autorité du roi . . . n'est sujette aux opinions'. It may, though, be argued that this in itself was not the generator of authoritarian rule or of despotism. R. Bonney has drawn attention to the traditional distinction between the king's 'retained' and 'delegated' justice, which he sees as essential in understanding Bodin's adumbration of a theory for the growing power of royal *commissaires* in the sixteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Nor is absolutism synonymous with state centralisation, which could take shape within a wide range of early modern polities.<sup>29</sup> A useful case in point emerges from the separation of Picardy and Artois which occurred as a result of the conflicts of the late fifteenth century, discussed in chapter 1. Artois retained its estates organisation, and there is good reason to suppose that distrust of the taxation powers of the French monarchy was an important factor in the ultimate maintenance of its loyalty to Burgundy and later to the Habsburgs. Yet the compromises made by the French crown in the course of its acquisition of Picardy must raise a question over whether Picardy was more heavily taxed than Artois by the middle of the sixteenth century. The existence of estates certainly channelled a degree of political awareness and provincial loyalty but did not in itself deny the implementation of authoritarian policies.

Bonney has argued that the concept of 'centralisation' in early modern France is anachronistic, though others have pointed out that centralisation is a useful term that does not imply uniformity in a society marked by corporate privilege and regional and local autonomies.<sup>30</sup> There is an undoubted sense in which the changes in France and elsewhere during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shifted the initiative to the crown and its circle of institutions: the court, the councils and bureaucracy. The common feature in this process was the response to international conflict and military emergency, which becomes ever more exigent from the late fifteenth century onwards. The centralised monarchies of the early modern period have rightly been called

<sup>28</sup> R. Bonney, 'Bodin and the development of the French Monarchy', *TRHS* ser. 5, 40 (1990), 43–61, at 50.

<sup>29</sup> On absolutist ideology in Castile, see J. A. Maravall, 'The Origins of the Modern State', *Journal of World History*, 6 (1961), 789–808. By contrast, Württemberg, a classic *ständestaat*, was a highly governed polity: see D. Sabean, *Power in the Blood. Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (1984), 12–27; while Venice, as an aristocratic oligarchy, was one of the most effectively governed early modern states, see G. Cossi and M. Knapton, *La Repubblica di Venezia nell'età moderna* (1986), part 2. The point is also made by J.-P. Genet in *Genèse de l'état moderne: bilans et perspectives* (1990), 261–81, where he argues that the 'modern state' born in the crisis of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and firmly anchored in the economic and political dynamism of feudalism, could give rise to a range of systems 'fortement différenciées'.

<sup>30</sup> R. Bonney, 'Absolutism: What's in a Name?', *French History* 1 (1987), 94; R. Mousnier, 'Centralisation et décentralisation', *XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* 155 (1987), 101–11; B. Barbiche, 'Henri IV, Sully et la première "monarchie administrative"', 10.