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Léonard Dauphant, *Le Royaume des quatre rivières. L'espace politique français (1380-1515)*. Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2012. 431 pp. Preface by Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, 61 maps, 17 figures, 7 tables, 4 annexes (including bibliography), 2 indexes. (pb). ISBN 978-2-87673-594-1.

Review by Daisy Delogu, University of Chicago.

The *Royaume des quatre rivières* traces the emergence of the idea of France as a bounded political and cultural space over the long fifteenth century, spanning from the reign of Charles VI to that of Louis XII. Dauphant argues that “état, nation, et territoire” coincided in France at a comparatively early historical moment, giving rise to an idea of France that in no way detracted from the regional identities simultaneously constitutive of many French people. The author brings to bear the questions and methodologies associated with both geography and history. Geography in France has long been associated with rural histories such as those of Le Roy Ladurie or Braudel, while recent historiography has tended to focus more on Parisian political institutions (cf. Claude Gauvard, Philippe Contamine, Bernard Guenée).^[1] Dauphant is certainly interested in institutions, but his focus expands far beyond Paris and takes into account the many and diverse regional figures, bodies, and institutions that contributed to the governing of France over the fifteenth century. His analyses are contextualized in a very material way, and Dauphant is sensitive to the specificity of places.

The volume is divided into three parts, which focus respectively on the mastery of space and time, representations of space and territorial practices, and socio-political spaces. Dauphant enriches the well-studied royal institutions with extensive archival work at the local level, notably in Champagne, Lorraine, Bar-le-Duc, Dijon, Languedoc, Auvergne, and Dauphiné. The book includes sixty-one maps, forty-nine in color, but this welcome addition could be better exploited. While the black and white maps are integrated into the text, and consequently into Dauphant’s arguments, the color maps are grouped in the center of the volume, and Dauphant rarely refers to them. Occasionally a footnote will advise the reader to consult one of the maps, but on the whole, they do not support the author’s arguments as they might have.

In part one Dauphant considers both how individuals experienced space, and how the kings of France sought to exert mastery over space. Understandings of space were inseparable from scale and socio-political status. For individuals of modest means, one’s village and parish could represent the most significant markers of location and identity, whereas bailiffs and itinerant administrators of justice would necessarily understand space, distance, and locations very differently. Urban space was often divided among competing authorities. In Caen, for example, it was divided into a castle and three *bourgs*: Bourg-le-Roi, Bourg-l’Abbé, and Bourg l’Abbesse. Fiscal, legal, and ecclesiastical spaces did not necessarily map onto one another, creating the possibility for other types of discontinuity. The knotty term *pays* is defined by Dauphant on the basis of its very fluidity. In linguistic terms it might be understood as a shifter, and Dauphant shows effectively that space can only be understood inasmuch as it is lived and experienced by specific subjects.

In their efforts to know and to govern territory, the king and his administrators often configured space as a list—of the nobles of the kingdom, of the towns of the kingdom, or of the villages that fell under a

given jurisdiction. Under the pressures of the Hundred Years' War, towns were often required to provide for their own defense. This resulted in a local need for planning and implementation of collective projects, and produced a high degree of local autonomy. Rivers were essential topographical markers which both delimited and connected. Though they provided an important means of communication and commerce, by and large the river basins were not connected, since large-scale civil engineering projects remained beyond the capacity of any given town.

In Part 2, Dauphant studies representations of the kingdom. From the time of the treaty of Verdun (843), the four rivers—Escaut, Meuse, Saône, and Rhône—marked the eastern border of the kingdom. This idea was used to delimit the kingdom, but more importantly to assert the king's sovereignty over all that lay to the west of those river borders. Dauphant examines *parlementaire* records and letters of pardon to assess the validity of the kings' claims to sovereignty, evidence of resistance to and limits on homage sworn to the king, and the letters of naturalization that were required from the reign of Charles VII for individuals to bequeath or inherit goods. As a result of his analysis we see that these three important measures of the king's authority do not map precisely onto one another, particularly at the margins.

To see how people represented space and the kingdom to themselves, Dauphant examines travel narratives, maps and views of towns or castles, debate literature, and lists. These various forms exhibit a detailed and accurate knowledge of the kingdom. Somewhat paradoxically, France is simultaneously depicted as a prosperous kingdom of moderate climate and morals, and a kingdom in need of reform, notably fiscal. Of the various forms examined, "la liste apparaît comme la représentation spatiale la plus commune du temps" (p. 158). There were lists of noble titles, of *bonnes villes* that took part in the regional Estates General, and of fiefs. Only lists seem to constitute a true tradition that displays continuity, adaptation, and transformation.

In the final chapter of part two, Dauphant discusses regional particularism as it related to the perception of national unity. Language was used as a marker of identity, but *post facto*, not to found, but to affirm Frenchness and/or political loyalty. Like *pays*, *France* is a polysemous term which derived its meaning from its context. As Dauphant notes, "Picards et Français se distinguent à Paris, mais ils se confondent en Auvergne" (p. 198). By uniting the political, intellectual, juridical, courtly, and economic functions, Paris served to unite diverse regions, providing cultural and practical points of reference. Individuals experienced their identity in both regional and national terms. Many cities had their own myths, customs, and sources of renown, but these in no way detracted from a feeling of Frenchness. Indeed, the basis of France's cohesion was precisely the unification of diverse cultures with a Gallo-Roman ethnolinguistic community.

In the final part of the volume, Dauphant examines socio-political spaces—frontiers, the spaces occupied by the king, and those occupied by his officers. Because concepts like homage, fiscality, and jurisdiction did not always align neatly, the border zone could be quite ill-defined at a local level. Administrative activity, carried out in relation to some people and not others, helped to construct and reinforce borders. The border was a zone not only of separation, but also of contact. It afforded some cities a certain freedom because they were neutral zones, but in other cases it proved a source of friction, even violence. In general, France's borders did not divide people who were radically different from one another, and often the struggles within and between villages—over questions of royal vs. ducal allegiance for instance—allowed for political consciousness raising. France's borders assured territorial cohesion by contributing to the self-definition of the French in contrast to their neighbors.

In order to imagine the kings' space, Dauphant reconstructs the travels of each king from Charles V to Louis XII in terms of where they went, when, how often, and for how long. As the author observes, "le choix de ses résidences et de ses voyages est un enjeu politique, une forme de pouvoir" (p. 273). Travel allowed the kings of France to see their subjects and to be seen, to (re)assert their authority, and to

discover the kingdom. Royal entries became increasingly important symbolic occasions, and were frequently commemorated in text and image. Some of the spaces shared by multiple kings included the Parisian basin, situated between Reims, Rouen, and the Loire valley, and the valley of the Allier and the area around Lyon.

The local administration of justice carried out by bailiffs and their lieutenants evolved considerably during the period under consideration. From the peripatetic and temporary bailiffs instituted to assure impartiality, there was an increasing tendency towards the hereditability of these offices. At the same time the actual duties of judge were often delegated to a lieutenant, as the bailiff or seneschal assumed more diverse responsibilities. Increasing numbers of lesser nobles, who could not maintain their rank based only on the revenues from their lands, came to depend upon offices granted by the king. In this way we can see the emergence of a new noble society maintained on the basis of its loyalty to the king.

In the final chapter, Dauphant examines some of the people and entities who shared in and reinforced the kings' authority: governors, princes, and the *bonnes villes*. As a proxy for the royal presence, governors served as conduits for the transmission of information to and from the king, fiscal and judicial administrators, military commanders, or other functions as needed. The title of governor was a prestigious one, but governors were not the natural lords of the regions they governed, and they depended on the king's favor for their authority. One also observes a proliferation of regional power centers, whether *parlements*, estates general, or the *bonnes villes*, all of which similarly required the approval of the king. In their relations with regional princes, kings often proved willing to cede territory, but remained firm in asserting their rights of sovereignty and *ressort*. In turn the princes, like the regional power centers, were more concerned with the preservation of their privileges than with independence from the king.

Dauphant concludes that over the course of the long fifteenth century, French society was transformed according to a model of service to the king, the mastery of law and of the French language, and the ambition of nobles. He argues that the binary centralization/decentralization, which has long been invoked as a driving force or explanatory factor in France's development and history, is not a useful one. He proposes the term *deconcentration* to describe the way in which power was not ceded to the regional centers, but instead constructed there according to the model articulated at the center. In this way, the center multiplied, but did not disperse, its own power and authority. Dauphant's attention to regional differences, to the complexity and diversity of different regions', bodies', and individuals' interactions with the kings of France, and his keen awareness of the contingency of administrative practices, is perhaps the greatest strength of a rich, well-researched, and often compelling book. Its weakness, I suggest, lies in Dauphant's reliance on a monolithic notion of *l'État royal* that imposes a kind of teleology upon the situations and developments that he otherwise describes with so much nuance. For instance, Dauphant cites the delegation to the towns of the responsibility for their self-defense as part of a process of state-building: "l'État royal s'assure de pouvoirs locaux organisés sur son modèle pour être des relais et des soutiens de son autorité" (p. 382). This granting of local autonomy and responsibility might have arisen from sheer necessity, rather than from a conscious effort to "deconcentrate." Dauphant's use of the terms *État* and *État royal* as grammatical subjects and agents of political and administrative change masks the heterogeneity of kings and of royal practices, and gives the impression of a consciousness and a will that I am not convinced was actually present. That said, Dauphant's approach to the idea of France, one predicated upon the successful negotiation of regional and national identities acting in concert, and the product of interactions of a multiplicity of local, regional, and national forces, is original and well-substantiated by his meticulous research.

NOTE

[1] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Histoire du climat depuis l'an mil* (Paris: Flammarion, 1967) and *Histoire du Languedoc* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1967); Fernand Braudel, *L'identité de la France* (Paris: Arthaud, 1986) and *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Collin, 1949); Claude Gauvard, *'De Grace spécial': crime, état et société en France à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991); Philippe Contamine, *Guerre, état et société à la fin du Moyen Age. Études sur les armées des rois de France 1337-1494* (Paris: Mouton, 1972); Bernard Guenée, *Tribunaux et gens de justice dans le bailliage de Senlis à la fin du Moyen Age (vers 1380-1550)* (Paris: Société d'éditions Les Belles Lettres, 1963) and *L'Occident aux XIVe et XVe siècles: les états* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971).

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