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Performative Self-representation of City Governments

Cities as individuals

Every medieval city was unique and individual. Neither its ruling groups, nor its common inhabitants would have ever accepted that so many books in history, written mostly in the 19th and 20th centuries, were concentrated on such absolutely abstract – in reality, non-existent – notions, as “the medieval cities” or “the medieval Bürgertum.” It is remarkable that these historians found only extreme overgeneralised concepts (or “ideal types,” as Max Weber would have said) instead of real and very active historical actors, even if, for example, Frankfurt had nothing in common with Salzburg or Pisa, just as Zürich was fully alien to Lyon or Ghent. With the possible exception of royal legists and university lawyers, contemporaries must have seen in each of their cities nothing similar to any other city, neighbouring or distant. If any sort of solidarity could emerge among civic communities, it was normally the result of a momentary political calculation and not an idea of shared participation in any sort of a common group or social stratum, in opposition to other groups—such as “feudal lords,” “clergy” or “peasants.”

Perhaps a spirit of a certain solidarity could arise, sometimes spontaneously and momentarily, within the framework of diverse political assemblies (*cortes*, *états*, *Landtags* and *Reichstags*), or in joint political measures taken by the military and political cities’ alliances. However, even such mostly inconsequential manifestations of solidarity among the “burghers” generally took place within certain limited regions, such as the northern parts of Italy or Germany, as well as Swabia, Wetterau, Rheinland and around the Lake Constance. Moreover, the “imperial cities,” proud of their privileges, were not particularly inclined to find their equals in cities of a lower legal status. And if a city enjoyed a high level of autonomy, controlled significant territories or important trade routes, or possessed other solid resources, all these things further strengthened the view of its inhabitants that their city was a completely unique, self-sufficient corpuscle—an autonomous political individual. In the context of medieval communities, we are always

Note: This work is also part of the project *Constructing identities in the medieval cultures*, included in the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE University) for 2023.

dealing with very different corpuscles, a long way from being graded, ranked and stripped of their individuality by the leveling energy of the modern national states.

It was around this central idea of uniqueness and exclusivity that the political self-representation of every urban community – both the highly autonomous as well as the less privileged – was constructed. For the ruling groups, which controlled all forms of public representation, expressing the brilliant individuality of their city meant simultaneously strengthening their own leading positions in the community and legitimising the existing social and political orders.

The medieval “political technologists” had many means at their disposal to publicly express the predominant idea of the uniqueness and high dignity of their city. One of the main roles must have been played here by all sorts of representative buildings—starting with city fortifications, continuing with the cathedral and other important churches, and ending with seat of the city government. Programmatic political images could also be relevant, such as those created by the inhabitants of Worms, who one century after another insisted on their freedom from the local bishop, claiming for themselves the status of imperial city. On the Rhine Gate – the main entrance to the city – the Wormser once placed a gigantic image of Emperor Henry IV in commemoration of his union with their city in 1073.¹ Much later, in 1493, they took the same line of visual propaganda again, having painted on the wall of the *Neuer Münze* a huge portrait of emperor Frederic III, along with all his insignia.² Both these images were accompanied by monumental programmatic inscriptions, stressing the idea that a quite special kind of relations connected Worms and the Empire. Many other German cities “formulated” their political identity while also claiming their participation in the imperial glory. But if this method of self-legitimation was rather typical, each of the cities using it insisted on its own, atypical and fully individual, even intimate, relationship with the imperial power. For example, comparing the emperors’ images in Worms with the statues of the king flanked by six princes-electors from the *Graushaus* in Aachen,³ one can observe how different (i.e. individual) the concepts of proximity to the Empire were, even as they are immanent to each of these two manifestations of the cities’ political identities.

1 Fuchs, “*Sacri Romani*.”

2 Fuchs, “*Sacri Romani*,” 190–191.

3 Saele, “*Grashaus* in Aachen.”

Communities expressing their individuality

We will leave completely unattended here the acoustic means of expressing the identity of a medieval city, which historians mostly used to totally ignore: the trumpeters performed the city's own unique musical motto, and the main city bell had a special voice, well-recognised by every citizen from his or her childhood. A bit more attention can be given to sacred relics: owning them could become a matter of special pride. A local patron saint, represented by his or her relics, could play a very active part in civic ceremonies. Thus Charlemagne, embodied since the mid-fourteenth century in his own "portrait" reliquary, used to walk solemnly out of the city gates of Aachen to greet every arriving new King of Rome and to "lead" him in solemn procession into the city to the church of St. Virgin Mary, where the new king was to be crowned. The entire identity of Venice was built upon its unique sacral foundation – the figure of Apostle Marc.⁴ It was direct from his hands that the Venetian doges received their authority, a fact also demonstrated by the image on the Venetian ducats, where Saint Mark invested a kneeling Doge with his banner. When a prince at the city gate piously kissed the shrine of the local saint, he kissed the heavenly patron of the city, but also the most respected and mighty of its burghers, and gave therefore his *osculum pacis* to all members of the community.

In the thirteenth century in France, the practice was invented of systematically displaying the sacred relics for the public, as the main treasure and pride of a city and concentration of its identity. In German lands, this new type of ceremony, not only religious but also in some important respects secular, was introduced at first in Aachen in 1312, followed by Vienna, Cologne, Regensburg, Würzburg and other cities. The case of Nuremberg is maybe the most significant here, due to the happy acquisition of the "imperial relics" by the city in 1424. The "Charlemagne's Crown," the "Holy Lance" and other artefacts from this collection allowed the city to demonstrate its inextricable links with the Empire in the most effective way. As scholars have formulated already, through organising the public veneration of relics, the Church and secular city authorities in fact ultimately honoured themselves. The imperial relics also used to be publicly displayed in Nuremberg during a completely different type of civil ritual: at funeral services for the deceased Roman kings and emperors. This type of mourning ceremony provided a good opportunity in other cities as well to express publicly their identity as indispensable members of the Empire. They lacked, of course, such valuable tools for expressing it as the Nurembergers possessed, but nevertheless used other effective means. In Florence, public

4 Among many other titles, see: Crouzet-Pavan, "Pouvoir et politique."

funerals for significant persons also created an idealised image of the communal power.⁵

Not only funerary processions but also processions of various other types, held many times a year, were among the most important means of representing urban self-consciousness. They could be either regular or extraordinary, caused by some special set of circumstances – often those threatening the well-being of the city. If religious processions were the prerogative of the church, the others, especially extraordinary ones, were often organised by the civic authorities – either alone or in cooperation with the church.⁶ The large civic festivals, such as the feast of St. John in Florence, naturally turned into a massive propagandistic manifestation of the unique virtues of the city.⁷ And even such originally popular entertainments as carnival were successfully brought under the control of the civic authorities, as was the case in Venice, in order to ensure that it also spread the politically “correct” ideas.⁸ But maybe the most extravagant type of civic rituals, organised by the magistrates of diverse cities, big and small, autonomous and otherwise, in order to demonstrate the unique identity of their city, were the greeting ceremonies that awaited every emperor, king, prince or bishop when they visited the city, especially if this visit was their first.

On the part of any urban community, its meeting with the king must have pursued two quite different goals at the same time. In the course of a complex symbolic dialogue with the prince, it was necessary for the city to express obedience to him on the one hand, but on the other to avoid any diminution of honour.⁹ This meant preserving the existing rights and privileges of the community first of all, and if possible, even extending them.¹⁰ The medieval *adventus* ceremonies were intended not so much to express the submission of the receiving party to the entrant, but rather to come to an agreement that mutually recognised the status of both parties, and to publicise it. This is true even for Paris, where from the late fourteenth century, the *adventus* gradually became dominated by the glorification of the arriving king. The inherently contractual character of the princely entry ceremony had already been clearly expressed in the twelfth-century evidence from Flanders. There, before letting the sovereign within the limits of the city walls, the townspeople forced him to take a solemn oath that he would not violate the city’s freedoms.

5 Strocchia, *Death and Ritual*, 82.

6 Signori, “Ritual und Ereignis.”

7 Gori, *Le feste fiorentine*; Trexler, *Public Life*, 240–263.

8 Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 156–159.

9 See Bernwieser, *Honor civitatis*.

10 Thus in 1429, numerous Champagne towns gained extensive new liberties from Charles VII on such an occasion for recognising him as king: Murphy, *Ceremonial Entries*, 54.

And similarly, in the fifteenth century in a number of Rhine cities, “first entries” were allowed to the local bishops only after they had agreed in great detail on the nature of the contract regulating their future relationships with the city communities.

It is obvious that such forms of self-representation of the community were addressed not to the prince and his entourage alone, but also to the citizens. Indeed, a successfully organised *adventus* strengthened the existing orders: it displayed the hierarchy of civic authorities, confirmed their legitimacy, and even strengthened it by demonstrating their – physical and symbolic – closeness to the person of the prince. During the ceremony, both sides of the ruling elite, those around the king and those controlling the city, exchanged their symbolic capital, mutually strengthening each other’s legitimacy. Emphasising its own specialness and uniqueness, each city developed its local tradition for greeting the visiting princes, modifying it from one case to another. However, most of these unique traditions were based on several more or less typical models of the city’s self-representation that were reproduced with a range of variations.

The city as Jerusalem and as the Virgin

The first of these typical identification models represented the community symbolically as the *Holy City of Jerusalem*. By greeting a prince at their gates, the inhabitants of many cities offered him in fact a sort of metaphorical exchange: we recognise in you the image of Christ, if you recognise in us the image of Jerusalem. Of course, we do not find explicit self-identification with Jerusalem in the city *ordines* prescribing how the visiting princes should be welcomed, but it can be inferred from some eloquent details of the welcoming ceremonies themselves. Thus, along with other townspeople who walked out of the gates of Dortmund to greet the emperor Charles IV in 1377, there were also school pupils. Each boy held in his hand a “green branch as a triumphal palm branch.”¹¹ This salutation was not a local invention, but rather the standard for many regions and many centuries, beginning at least with the reception of Charlemagne outside the gate of

¹¹ *Chronik des Dietrich Westhoff*, 231: “Ein ider mit einem wolrukenden gronen kranze sin hoeft verziert und einen gronen twijch in gestalt eins victoriosen palmrises in iren handen dregende vrolich singende . . .”

This detail is not mentioned in a work devoted specifically to the visit of Charles IV in Dortmund: Hohenberg, “*Carolus 4.*”

Rome in 774,¹² that in turn was itself merely a continuation of an already old tradition. The “boys with branches” were sent to greet the arriving princes by the authorities of many medieval cities, big and small. For example, in Lucca in 1432, all boys between ten and twelve years waited for the emperor outside the city, wearing white robes and carrying olive branches in their hands.¹³ About five hundred “young boys,” under sixteen years of age, gathered in Bern to meet King Sigismund in 1414.¹⁴ Twice as many *innocentes pueri* were engaged in Lyon for the reception of King Charles VI in 1389.¹⁵ Also in the cities of Provence, since at least the thirteenth century, the magistrates would send their boys, or perhaps teenagers, out of the city walls to welcome the approaching princes.¹⁶ Being familiar with this custom alone, one can understand one particular instruction from Cologne, whose unknown author proposed sending children “in the field” to take part in the welcoming ceremonies when Emperor Frederick III in 1473 visited Cologne.¹⁷

The inclusion of children bearing “palms” in the ceremony of king’s *adventus* was an obvious allusion to the welcoming of Jesus at the gate of Jerusalem. Although the canonical Gospels make no mention of *children* waving palms in this scene, the pilgrims to Jerusalem were confident in the authenticity of this detail from as early as the first half of the fourth century.¹⁸ Medieval Europe inherited this confidence. The scene of welcoming the prince by the “Jewish boys” is no less ambivalent than the whole *adventus* ceremony: at the first glance it looks like an expression of the city’s humility, its willing obedience, but on a deeper look it reveals a claim to the high dignity of the city. In fact, by welcoming the prince in such a way the community reproduced essential elements of the Palm Sunday procession, when the entire city population turned into inhabitants of Jerusalem. And the “Jewish boys” were present on such occasions as well.¹⁹ However, the

12 *Liber pontificalis*, 497: “Et dum adpropinquasset fere unius miliario a Romana urbe, direxit universas scolas militiae una cum patronis simulque et pueris qui ad didicendas litteras pergebant, deportantes omnes ramos palmarum adque olivarum [. . .] sicut mos est exarchum aut patricium suscipiendum.”

13 Favreau-Lilie, “Vom Kriegsgeschrei zu Tanzmusik,” 215.

14 Justinger, *Die Berner-Chronik*, 217 (360): “Da waren geordnet bi fünfhundert junger knaben under sechszeihen jaren . . .”

15 Guenée and Lehoux, *Les entrées royales françaises*, 143–144.

16 Noël Coulet, “Les entrées solennelles en Provence,” 71–72.

17 Schenk, *Zeremoniell und Politik*, 529: “Die burgere ind burgers kyndere zo bidden, sich zo beyden, dem keyser mit zwen burgermeisterten, rentmeisteren ind x unser herren onder ougen int velde zo rijden ind zo ontfangen.”

18 *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, 23: “A parte uero dextra est arbor palmae, de qua infantes ramos tulerunt et ueniente Christo substrauerunt.”

19 See an example from twelfth-century Orléans: Fassler, “*Adventus*,” 32.

original meaning of the symbolic figure of the “Jewish boys” seem to transform noticeably over time, because the liturgical interpretation began to give way to secular motives. With increasing frequency, the “boys” now held flags or pennons with coats of arms of their city and arriving prince instead of “palms.” It was in this way, that the “boys” from the city of Bern waited for the emperor Sigismund in 1414. (This scene was featured in a 1485 miniature in Diebold Schilling’s *Berner chronicle*.) In 1454, also in Bern, four or five hundred boys aged ten to twelve preceded Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, in a procession, everyone carrying a banner with the ducal arms and loudly shouting “Long live Burgundy!”²⁰ The same scene could be witnessed at the king’s arrival in Tournai in 1464.²¹ It therefore becomes clear why, when Frederick III entered Nuremberg in 1471, it was schoolchildren who were ordered to hold hundreds of flags decorated with his emblems.²²

The very use of the image of Jerusalem could change over time and even turn from a symbol into a quasi-political programme. Thus in 1515 one of the guilds in the city of Bruges welcomed the future emperor Charles V as the future liberator of earthly Jerusalem. Obviously, they saw in him not (only) a christomimetic ruler, but a commander capable of leading the united army of Christian monarchs in the Holy Land.²³ In the context of *adventus* ceremonies, the metaphorical model which compared the host city to Jerusalem was clearly compatible with another metaphor as well: “our city is a chaste virgin,” “a bride,” yearning for the coming prince. The eschatological context of this biblical metaphor seems to have mostly already faded by the late Middle Ages.²⁴ However, the image of the city-

20 *RTA* ÄR, Bd. 19, Hälfte 1, Nr. 19 b 2 c., 172 (an excerpt from the *Chronicle* of Matthieu d’Ecouchy): “A son entrée firent aler au devant de lui avec eulx de 4 à 5 cens enfans en dessoubz de 10 à 12 ans, chascun portant une banière armoyé des armes dudit duc, criant à haulte voix: ‘Vive Bourgoingne!’”

21 Guenée and Lehoux, *Les entrées royales*, 185: “Item que dehors la ville [. . .] seront grant nombre de petis enfans, vestus de toille blanche, ayant cappeaulx vers et portans petites vergues blanches, ou ait escuchons a armes de France, lesquelz, quant le roy passera, toute a une voix criront a haulte voix: ‘Noel et Vive le roy [. . .].’”

22 *Die Chroniken der fränkischen Städte*, Bd. 5, 458: “Item darnach was bestellt von allen schulern ir iedem ein panerlein in sein hant der lant des kaisers wappen daran gemalt.” *Die Chroniken der fränkischen Städte*, Bd. 4, 326: [. . .] und man gieng im mit allen schulern, heten venlein leiht 800 in den henden [. . .].”

23 de Puys, *La tryumphant et solemnelle entrée*, fol. LIir–LIiv.

24 Indeed, the Bible instills the comparison of the city to a bride with distinct eschatological associations—due primarily to two passages from the Book of Revelation, which discuss “the bride” Jerusalem in the context of the drama of the apocalypse (Revelation 21.1–2; 9–10): “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”; “And there came to me one of the seven angels [. . .] and talked

maiden waiting for the bridegroom was constantly used in the ceremonies of the welcoming of emperors, kings and bishops. One notable example comes from Florence: each new bishop entering the city had to solemnly exchange rings with the abbess of San Pier Maggiore, who was viewed as “the representative of the Florentine people.”²⁵ Florence was far from alone having turned the *adventus domini* ceremony into a sort of a mystical marriage: in fact, this was one of the most ancient and universal metaphors concerning the meeting of the “female” community with its “male” ruler. As the city of Tournai welcomed king Louis XI in 1464, by means of a special mechanism, the most beautiful girl of the city descended before him “as if from clouds.” Greeting the king, she unfastened her dress at her breast and took out from her bosom a magnificently manufactured heart with a very elegant and precious *fleur de lis* made of gold. This very flower the girl presented to the king on behalf of the city, saying “Just as I am a virgin, so too my city is a virgin.” And she explained this claim, elucidating that Tournai had never opposed any king of France and every citizen there bore a royal lily in his (or her) heart.²⁶ Three years later, the townspeople of Mechelen also presented their community to Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy as a beautiful girl (*La Pucelle de Malines*) with a sceptre and seven golden keys to the city’s gate. In the same way as previously in Tournai, the girl descended from a cloud, upon which she had been sitting majestically, in order to hand the keys to the duke.²⁷ Welcoming the French King Charles VIII in 1484, the citizens of Troyes staged a series of allegorical *tableaux vivants* for him.²⁸ One of them presented the king

with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife [. . .] and showed me that great city, holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”

25 Miller, “Bishop of Florence”; Miller, “The Route of the Bishop’s Entry,” 238 and 242. The famous Venetian ritual of the doge’s betrothal to the sea is not discussed here, since it does not express the relationship of the ruler with his city, but rather the expansionist aspirations of the Serenissima. See Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 127 and 134.

26 Guenée and Lehoux, *Les entrées royales*, 194 : “[. . .] après ce, une tres belle fille, et la plus belle de la ville, par engin qu’on avoit fait, descendit comme de nues et vint saluer le roy, et ouvrit sa robe sur sa poitrine ou y avoit ung coeur bien fait, lequel coeur ce fendit, et en issit une moult noble fleur de lys d’or, qui valloit grand avoir; laquelle elle donna au roy de par la ville, et lui dit que comme elle estoit puchelle, qu’aussi estoit la ville puchelle, et qu’oncques n’avoit esté prinse, ni estee ny tournée contre les roys de Franche mais avoient ceulx de la ville chacun en leur coeur une fleur de lys.”

27 Hurlbut, “Les joyeuses entrées françaises,” 133; Hurlbut, “Noise in Burgundian Ceremonial Entries,” 136–137.

28 For an examination of the use of “living pictures,” at the entries of princes, see Blanchard, “Le spectacle du rite.” For more on the organisation of these mini-performances, see also de Merindol, “Entrées royales et princières,” 42–45. Regarding similar phenomena in Italy, see Helas,

himself, played by a young “very handsome and lovely” actor, and the city of Troyes as a girl offering him her heart.²⁹

The Parisians used to create sophisticated artistic representations of their own style. In 1431, the eleven-year-old Anglo-French King Henry VI was welcomed into the city by a “very ornately adorned” “goddess named Glory.” As the caparisons of her horses were decorated with emblems of Paris, the identity of the goddess as a personification of the city was obvious.³⁰ Thirty years later, Louis XI was welcomed into his capital by five female riders, who were regally adorned in gold-braided attire. Their horses were also covered with gold-braided caparisons that reached almost to the ground. Each woman held a scroll inscribed with the name of the virtue that they represented: “Peace,” “Love,” “Prudence,” “Merri-ness,” and “Dependability.” The first letters of the virtues (in French) formed the word PARIS, indicating clearly that all these virtues were present in this very community. To dispel all possible doubts, these female personifications followed a herald bearing the coat of arms of Paris.³¹ At the time of his visit to Paris Henry VI was still a child, a fact that perhaps sufficiently explains why the witnesses did not mention any “erotic” connotations in the self-representation of the city. But these very connotations could be particularly emphasised in situations when the ceremony was intended to put an end to a protracted confrontation between the city and its lord. Thus in 1392, Londoners squandered no opportunity to suggest a simple idea to Richard II, who had finally visited the city: that he was a groom on the way to his bride’s chamber. His *sponsa*, the city of London, had once rejected her betrothed, but was now dreaming about him, hoping that he would return to her, not subjugating her by force, but showing mercy.³² When Ghent offered Duke Philip the Good (who not long before had defeated the army of Ghent in a bloody battle) a magnificent reception in 1458, the victor was met by (among

Lebende Bilder, especially 59–102. For an analysis of the scenes presented during princely entries into Bruges, see Ramakers, “The Tableaux Vivants,”; Perret, “From *Tableaux* to Theatre.”

29 Königson, “La Cité et le Prince,” 66.

30 Guinée and Lehoux, *Les entrées royales*, 64 : “Et tantost après [. . .] en approchant la dicte bonne ville de Paris, vint au devant dudit seigneur une deesse nommee Fama, moult richement aourné, monté sur une coursier couvert des armes de la dicte ville de Paris.”

31 Guinée and Lehoux, *Les entrées royales*, 87 : “Aprés eulx [i.e., the representatives of the monastic brotherhoods], femmes, toutes vestues de drap d’or, a maniere de royne, ayans sur leur bras leurs nons, selonc les lettres de Paris: la premiere portoit P, qui segnefie Paix; la seconde A, par quoy est entendu Amour; la tierche portoit R, par quoy est entendu Rayson; la quarte portoit I, par quoy est entendu Joye, et le chinquimme portoit S, par quoy est entendu Seureté. Et estoient toutez richement montees a cheval, vestues de drap d’or jusques au piés; et, devant elles, ung hiraus ayans cote d’armes semet du blason de Paris.”

32 Kipling, *Enter the King*, 18.

other symbolic figures) a very young, beautiful girl with a pale blue hat covering flowing hair and in a wedding dress, kneeling beneath the coats of arms both of the Duke and the community of Ghent subscribed with golden letters with a verse from the Song of Songs (3.4): “I found him whom my soul loveth.”³³

The symbolic distance between a beautiful virgin representing the city and *the* Virgin could not have been too great. This opened the way for presenting the Virgin Mary as the patroness and representative of the city—even in the cases where her cult did not prevail over other cults in the city. The model was set in the first Christian capital, Constantinople, whose heavenly patron was declared the Mother of God. At that time this could have been, firstly, a tribute to the common interpretation of every city as a female (as “complement” to the male ruler), and secondly, a Christian transformation of the “pagan” iconographic personification of Constantinople, a female figure modelled after the personification of the City of Rome. A meaningful example where the Holy Virgin was reinterpreted as the proper representative of the city took place in March 1486, as the city of York anxiously awaited the new king Henry VII Tudor after his triumph over Richard III, whom the people of York had always actively supported. In the course of the welcoming ceremonies, Henry was met by an entire slate of figures representing legendary, historical and biblical personages, the last of which (and hence the most significant) was the Virgin Mary. It was she who uttered an impassioned speech in defence of the community of York, announcing to the new Tudor monarch that Christ was filled with faith in this city, and promising the king that she would intercede with her son on his behalf (judging by the context, however, only in exchange for the favourable disposition of the king towards the city).³⁴ The half-heartedness of the “constitutive” images presented by the citizens of York contrasts starkly with the complexity of the representations offered by their contemporaries in Florence. In spite of the fact that the Florentines considered St. John the Baptist to be their primary heavenly patron, in preparing for the 1494 entry of the French king Charles VIII, they decided to identify their community with the Virgin Mary. But they did not do so in a straightforward manner: the

33 *Kronyk van Vlaenderen*, 217: “[. . .] an ’t welke hinc de wapene van minen vorseiden gheduchden heere ende de wapene van der steede, ende rechts onder de wapene van der steede stont ghescreven met guldenen letteren: *Inveni quem diligit anima mea. Cant. canticor.* 3^o. In dit priel knielde eene schoene jonghe maght van omtrent x. jaren oudt, ghecleedt met eenen witten sydenen keurse, ende met eenen witten sydenen mantle al van lakenen van damast, met schoenen hanghenden hare ghelijc eenre bruyt, ende met eene vincorde hoede up haer hoeft [. . .].” For an analysis of this welcoming ceremony, see Smith, “*Venit nobis*,” 261 and 265 (on Ghent personified by a girl) as well as Arnade, *Realms of Ritual*, especially 136.

34 Attreed, “The Politics of Welcome,” 222.

symbolism employed in their reception was constructed around the scene of the Annunciation, which was presented to the king twice: first as a *tableau vivant*, and, after a few days, in the form of a miracle play.³⁵ This allegory had a clear interpretation: Florence was compared to the Virgin Mary, obediently accepting God in her womb, as is written in the Gospel: “I am the Lord’s servant, may it be to me as you have said” (Luke 1.38). The matrimonial theme was also continued by other less allegorical elements of the reception, in which Charles was represented as a bridegroom about to enter into marriage with his bride, Florence.³⁶ Another sophisticated combination of the motif of sacred marriage alongside the association of the city with the Virgin Mary can be possibly recognised in the scenery prepared in 1529 by the Genoese for emperor Charles V. One of the programmatic *tableaux vivants* depicted the emperor placing a crown with both hands on the head of Genoa (who must have been personified by a humble but beautiful maiden). This composition was an obvious allusion on the iconography of the coronation of Mary.³⁷

Order and beauty

One of the most significant messages conveyed by the welcoming rituals in medieval cities could be perceived in every procession or parade not only in the Antiquity or the Middle Ages, but also up to the present day. Already present in the *Book of Ceremonies* of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (written about 956–959), it was denoted by the term *taxis*, meaning the highly organised order of the universe, with the social world as one significant part. The harmony of political pageantry stood metaphorically for the high orderliness of the social world, achieved under the firm and wise rulership of the current leader and his authorities. The same can be observed also at the level of individual cities. Not only was it necessary for the city council to carefully organise the procession and other welcoming rituals, but the managerial skill of the government was even better demonstrated by the extent to which it was able to bring order to the tumultuous crowds of “passive” spectators (who were in fact anything but passive). As an example of a rather simple arrangement, in 1377 in Dortmund, it was prescribed that all men should stand in their best clothes on one side of the street along which emperor Charles IV and his entourage moved in their entry procession, whereas all women should take places

³⁵ Mitchell, *The Majesty*, 64.

³⁶ Mitchell, *The Majesty*, 65.

³⁷ Gorse, “Republic and Empire”: “E l’Imperadore con ambe le mani incoronava Genova.”

on the opposite side.³⁸ Organisational effort often needed to be expended on presenting the high-ranking city officials or different groups of officials in some sort of “uniform.”³⁹ But many more resources needed to be spent when the magistrates decided to arrange for each of the various categories of the urban population (corporations of artisans and merchants, brotherhoods, as well as foreigners and others) to wear unified clothes of a certain style.⁴⁰ In the same way as in Ancient Rome, the medieval regulations dividing the inhabitants of a city into certain ranks for ceremonial purposes allow a modern historian insight into the reflections of civic authorities about their own society. The cleavages they emphasised by differences in dress, as well as in the functions of the participants’ groups within the pageantry, testify to the “sociological” imagination of the organisers.

The more complex and varied the scenario of such a feast was, the more it expressed the idea that the city government was effective – of course, only if the performance took place more or less in accordance with the planned scenario. If you take the word of city chronicles, you have to admit that political performances went without a hitch: the authors of such official texts, as a rule, were inclined to draw the reader’s attention to everything but the inevitable failures and even less likely to call attention to episodes that were politically problematic.⁴¹ Even the weather was allegedly always perfect, and not only in Italy, but in Holland and England as well . . . There are some records (mostly private) where one occa-

38 *Chronik des Dietrich Westhoff*, 232: “Die burger und burgerschen stonden ordentlich in iren besten und zijrichsten kledern langs den Oestenhelweg bis an Sanct Reinolts kerkhof, de mans an einer, als neemlich der rechter, sijt und de vrouwen an der ander, als de luchter und nartsiden der straten [. . .].”

39 Thus, when in 1488 the community of Cologne greeted its new bishop, and a delegation of eight highest magistrates was sent to meet him, they all were dressed alike (*Feierlicher Eintritt des Erzbischofs Hermann IV.*, 187): “Item diese vurgenanten geschickte herren hatten mallich einen brunen rock an mit mardern gefodert, und hatten mit sich ryden ire burgere in einer kleidongen alsamen bruyn gekleidt, wail und rustich gezughet mit harnesch und perden [. . .].” In Frankfurt in 1474, the chief magistrates were dressed more colorfully (*Frankfurter Chroniken*, 199): “[. . .] uns mit einander glich gekleidet hasen wammes und kogeln: die linke sitte roit und die rechte sitte swarze und wiße geviert geteilt und uber das harnesß fiolfarwe morginsrocke.”

40 To give just one example from many, Jean le Bon entered Paris to such a welcome in 1350 (Guenée and Lehoux, *Les entrées royales*, 48): “Et toutes manieres de gens de mestier estoient vestus chascun mestier d’unes robes pareilles; et les bourgeois de la dite ville d’unes autres robes pareille. Et les Lombars qui en la dite ville demouroient furent tous vestus d’unes robes parties de deux tartares de soie; et avoient chascun sur sa teste chapeaux haulz aguz my partiz de meismes leurs robes.”

41 Thus, in its official accounts, the city council of Constance preferred not to mention any substantial deviations from the custom when bishop Nikolaus von Riesenbourg entered the city in 1384: Bihrer, “Einzug, Weihe und erste Messe,” 81.

sionally comes across episodes that challenge this trend, such as in January 1474, when Frederick III entered Frankfurt. Because it was snowing and a strong wind was blowing, the emperor refused to leave his carriage. The welcoming clerics also decided to bring only one shrine from the church with them into the snow, but indeed it was a shrine with the most precious relic that the city possessed: the head of the Apostle Bartholomew. The emperor got out of the carriage to kiss the reliquary, and, after listening to the chant *Advenisti desiderabilis* and the following two responsorials and antiphon, took refuge back in his carriage. Thus he must have deeply disappointed the multitude of people who had gathered, despite the terrible weather, to look at his majesty. Under the canopy ready for him, the emperor agreed to walk only from the carriage to the church entrance and then back. In the same way other arrangements prepared by the city authorities must have had little effect upon the crowned guest, as well as upon the public.⁴²

But the magistrates of Worms failed even more in their efforts to arrange a decent welcoming for Maximilian I and Bianca Maria Sforza in 1494. This ceremony did not go well from the very beginning, and almost every stage of it was full of mistakes and inconsistencies.⁴³ In the eyes of contemporaries, the whole spectacle must have looked anything but impressive, in terms of not only politics but also aesthetics. After all, it was common for contemporaries to describe their impressions of the political pageantries in terms that were aesthetically colourful. The usual brief description could often be as short as a single word: “beautiful.” This “beauty,” of which we read so often in medieval accounts, was a topical word used for complex feelings including political loyalty. No less political must have been that special inner mood of the spectators which was meant implicitly, namely “the joy,” that should certainly prevail in the entire city every time that any “constitutional” political pageantry took place.⁴⁴ Even those sick residents of

42 *Frankfurter Chroniken*, 198–199: “[. . .] so was es den ganzen dag also fuechte unstede wetter vom regen snehe und wind durch einander, das sie das vergulte heubt alleine trogen, und bleben mit disser procession uf dem platze bi sant Maderns kirchen stehende umb des gedrenges willen des folkes. und do der keiser darbie kom, steig er uß dem wagen und köste das heubt und steig do widder uf den wagen [. . .] aber der keiser bleib in dem wagen umb des fuchten wetters willen, das sie des tuoches uber em nit bedorften tragen den von dem phareisen biß in die pharkirche und widder biß uf den wagen.” See also *Frankfurter Chroniken*, 23: “[. . .] tunc temporis portabatur solum caput sancti Bartholomei, quia aura fuit valde turbida ac pluviosa.” A short description of this case can be seen in Drabek, *Reisen und Reisezeremoniell*, 15–17.

43 Schenk, “Zähmung der Widerspenstigen?”

44 Just one example, from Tournai in 1464, reads (Guenée and Lehoux, *Les entrées royales*, 189) : “Item sera commandé que, le jour que le roy sera arivé, les habitans, en demonstrent exhaltation de joye, fachent feux parmy la ville et aultres esbattemens de joye et de liesse, le plus grand qu’ilz pourront, pour l’onneur et reverence du roy, leur prince et seigneur neturel.”

a hospital, who might hardly see the “beautiful” train of the entering prince with their own eyes, had to be “happy” as it passed by – so it was at least presumed by our sources.⁴⁵

Admittedly, the city authorities were able to organise a demonstration of the opposite kind, for example, to let the burghers hold complete silence, as in Bruges in 1301 on the occasion of the entry of King Philip IV the Fair. The king may not only have been “surprised” by such a greeting, as noted by the chronicler: he must have also understood its political message.⁴⁶ Today’s historian has every right to be sceptical of his sources, asking whether such emotionally invariable communities – totally joyful or, on the contrary, totally silent, expressing no emotions at all – could have existed in reality, or whether our informants, loyal to their civic governments, were rather inclined to “create” such homogenous communities in their writings.⁴⁷

Exchanging symbolic capital

If any feast controlled by the city authorities ultimately served to confirm their legitimacy, the solemn greetings of emperor, kings, bishops and other princes are especially interesting as complex systems of creating or confirming not only symbolic but also legal relations between two different (and sometimes latently opposed) holders of power – the civic community and the high-ranked visitor. Both parties were equally interested in the ceremony being impressive and “beautiful,” because they both profited from it, borrowing for their own benefit the legitimacy of their counterpart and thereby reinforcing their own legitimacy. In this kind of exchange, the symbolic capital of both parties only grew. In the scene, for example, where the best people of the city carried a canopy over the head of the entering emperor, he benefited from being honoured by the most authoritative officials in this particular local community, but they, in turn, benefited no less from demonstrating their proximity to the person of the emperor.

The “beautiful” pageantry and the universal “joy” both demonstrated not only the efficiency of the city government but also the loyalty of the entire community

45 Seemüller, “Friedrichs III,” 650 (the entry into the city of Fribourg): “Vnnd yederman freyat sych, die krannckhen in dem spital, vnd kruchen her fur, vnnd triben freyt jung vnd alt [. . .]”

46 *Annales Gandenses*, 14: “Et hoc igitur communitas offensa in occursu regis stetit quasi muta, ita quod rex de hoc, ut dicitur, mirabatur.” See also Blockmans and Donckers, “Self-Representation of Court and City,” 88.

47 On this notion, see: Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*.

to the entering prince as well as the city government. Nevertheless, the relationships between the main counterparts of these ceremonies were typically complex, because the idea of the loyalty of a city to its lord was always accompanied by another idea: the proclamation that the community was a self-sufficient political subject, submitting only voluntarily and by its own consent, within certain limits, to the newly arrived ruler.⁴⁸ However, this latent conflict normally did not come to the surface. As usual in political rituals, each party was satisfied, “reading” from the polysemantic ceremony only those meanings that were convenient to itself. Therefore, there is no contradiction, for example, when some chronicles, describing how Philippe le Bon visited the cities of Flanders in 1419, wrote that he had subjugated the burghers, while others believed that he swore an oath to them to observe their freedoms.⁴⁹ After all, it was this very polysemy which provided to political rituals such a high level of communicative force, allowing its participants to interact successfully, in spite of their different, sometimes opposing, interests. The very readiness of all parties to assume their prescribed roles within a political scene supposed their consent to constructive interaction with each other. If a king or a prince was seriously angry with a city, he did not allow himself to be solemnly welcomed at all, no matter how servile the gestures of submission were that the citizens were ready to demonstrate towards him.

The reverse was also true: city governments were anything but eager to play their role in the spectacle of power if they were not convinced beforehand that their interests would not be infringed upon by the arriving prince. Thus it was common in the Rhenish cities that the magistrate refused to solemnly receive their local bishop (in other words, refused to participate with him in a joint ceremony), before the “constitutional” agreement between the bishop and the community about mutual rights and privileges was concluded. In 1461, the bishop of Speyer, along with his entourage, was blocked in the street between two gates right in the middle of his solemn entry into the city. The bishop was not allowed out of the trap until he presented his charter with a full list of city privileges to the burghers and swore hand on breast to observe these privileges.⁵⁰ Some bishops had to await their *adventus* for months or even years until they reached an agreement with the city council regarding the conditions under which they could be admitted by the city.

That princely entry ceremonies were inherently contractual was expressed frankly even from the twelfth century in the earliest evidence of *adventus* in Flan-

⁴⁸ This ambiguity was demonstrated on the episodes from the later period in Brady, “Rites.”

⁴⁹ Nadia Mosselmans, “Les villes face au prince,” 542–543.

⁵⁰ Mone, “Einzug des Bischofs Johannes II,” 521–522.

ders and France. There, the burghers, before letting their lord into the city walls, forced him to take a solemn oath that he would not violate the city's freedoms.⁵¹ About 450 years later, the same practice could still be seen in some cities: the *adventus* ceremony could begin only after the lord had sworn to respect the freedoms of the community.⁵² But this was far from the universal rule. For a number of late medieval cities, it was characteristic for the burghers to demand that the prince present a document confirming his status. Thus, at the first visits of the Archbishop of Trier to Oberwesel, the town of his own principality, he had to humbly present his subjects with an official instrument attesting that he had been elected with the consent of the entire chapter. And when, one day in 1503, a newly elected Jacob II was not accompanied by such a letter, the bishop had to postpone his entry into the town and even the swearing-in ceremony.⁵³ At the imperial level, with exactly the same logic, the burgomasters of Aachen demanded in 1485 that King Maximilian, who had arrived at their gate for his coronation, show a letter (*offen Brieue*) with seals certifying his successful election in Frankfurt.⁵⁴

Of course, in both cases the burghers were well aware of the status of the princes visiting them. However, by arranging such a symbolic examination, the city authorities added a very important feature to their political image. They presented themselves to their lords as responsible subjects, devoted not to this or that powerful individual, but above all to common institutional interests.⁵⁵

51 See for example the account on the entry of the count of Flanders in Bruges in 1127: Murray, "Liturgy," 137.

52 One example from Cologne (*Feierlicher Eintritt des Erzbischofs Hermann IV.*, 187): "[. . .] und der Burgermeister [. . .] fraigde sin gnade, off sin gnade in der meynongen were inzuryden, wulde dan sin gnade der Stat ire alde priuilegia, so wie sie die von sinen vurfaren Ertzbischouen hetten, na alder gewoinheit bestedigen, so wulden sie sich zu dem inrijden gutwillig bewiesen. Daruff sin gnade antworten ja, und dede inen von stunt an ouermitz siner gnaden Canzler die confirmation besiegelt geuen und ouerleuereu, und sin gnade lachte die handt uff die burst und geloufde der Stat ire priuilegia zu halten in aller maissen, wie dat in dem brieff der confirmation geschreueu was."

53 More to this case in Boytsov, "Archbishop of Trier," 338–341.

54 *RTA MR*, Bd. 1, Nr. 918; see also Müller, *Heiligen Römischen Reichs*, 32: "[. . .] mit ihrem offen Brieue und anhangend Insigeln des Decrets der Election vor die Pfort des Gamyllen [correct Bannmylen – M.B.] kommen haben Ihr Mai. die Burgermeister der Statt Aach empfangen."

55 See the justification of the burghers from Oberwesel (Koblenz, Landesarchiv, Bestand 701 (Handschriften), fol. 92v): "Aber syne gnade sullte es in gnaden von inen versteen, sie hetten eyne gewonheide / by inen, wanne eine inkummender Ertzbischoff / ghen Wesel queme, huldonge zuentfahen, so were / es vonn noeden, das derselbe Ertzbischoff, ader / bestetigter schriftlich kunntschaft by ime hette, das / er durch das Capittel zu Trier eynhellig vffgenomen were, / damit nit irronge entstoende, der huldonge halber"; see Boytsov, "Archbishop of Trier," 338, n. 72.

One of the most important and, moreover, widespread public gestures of the city government was handing over the keys to the city gates to the prince (usually these were real keys, not just symbolic substitutes). In transmitting their keys to the prince, the burghers recognised him for their lord; and he, in accepting them, took the city under his protection in turn. Therefore, in German lands this custom extended only to the cities, subordinate to the Empire directly, in other words, to the Emperor or the King of the Romans. He had to be vigilant not to accept the keys from townspeople not of imperial cities and towns. The burghers might be in conflict with their lord, and were eager to liberate themselves by any means, even symbolical ones. Taking their keys would be seen as the king voluntarily allowing himself, contrary to the law and tradition, to turn the princely city into an imperial one and encroach on subjects who were not his own.⁵⁶

In German lands, returning the keys back to those who had presented them was almost obligatory: exceptions were very rare. With this gesture, the prince demonstrated his grace and trust to the townsmen in a public way. Before returning the keys, the king often shook them in the air, and while handing them back, said words such as: “Keep my town with the same diligence as you have been accustomed to do until now.”⁵⁷ The same formula also seems to have usually been pronounced in such cases in Italy,⁵⁸ as well as in France.⁵⁹ Despite this strong tradition, the magistrates of Frankfurt, for example, considered it necessary to make a special request to the king to return their keys to them, as if they did not realise that this gesture was in fact almost compulsory.⁶⁰ In contrast to German emperors and kings, the French kings throughout the fifteenth century used to retain the keys and entrusted them to one of their officials for the time the king remained within the city walls.⁶¹ Cases where the burghers received the keys back immediately, as was common in Germany, were rare in the French kingdom. What caused such deviations, as, for example, in Tournai in 1463, is not easy to explain.⁶² Neil Murphey assumes that the king deliberately decided to step away from the usual

⁵⁶ Drabek, *Reisen und Reisezeremoniell*, 26–27.

⁵⁷ See examples in Schenk, *Zeremoniell und Politik*, 347–348.

⁵⁸ *Cronaca senese di Tommaso Fecini*, 844 (King Sigismund in Siena in 1432): “E in quel tanto e’ gonfalonieri li derono la chiavi e esso le prese e baciolle e poi le rendè a’ signori e disse: ‘Siate voi propii guardia della vostra città senese.’”

⁵⁹ Murphy, *Ceremonial Entries*, 57.

⁶⁰ Drabek, *Reisen und Reisezeremoniell*, 27.

⁶¹ Murphy, *Ceremonial Entries*, 57–58.

⁶² Guenée and Lehoux, *Les entrées royales*, 191–192: “[. . .] et lui presenterent les clefz des portes de ladite ville qu’ilz avoient fait apporter sur ung coursier, ricement mises et atachees sur ung abitacle de bois qui estoit sur la selle dudit cheval, desquelles choses le roy fut tres content et prinst lesdites remonstrances en grant gré, delaisant lesdites clefs a ceulx de ladite ville, disant

“French” ceremonial style here, wanting to emphasise his special trust in the city because it was situated close to the border of his realm. However, the local version of the scene with the keys in Tournai can also be interpreted in a very different way: it might have been influenced by the neighbouring ceremonial tradition of the imperial cities. The distance between these two possible answers is significant, and not only has a casual but also a general meaning for the nature of relationships between the king and the cities. If the first is correct, then the king controlled and regulated these relations at his own will. But if the second one, then he, on the contrary, had to respect local norms to such an extent that he had to deviate significantly from the usual form of self-representation.

Swearing oaths and pardoning convicts

However, the most important scene, in which the civic authorities could express their own political dignity especially clearly, was the swearing of the oath of allegiance. Of course, this action was the culmination of only the first entry of a new prince into the city. This solemn procedure could be repeated later only if the lord acquired a new legal capacity. Thus, the burghers would take an oath of allegiance to the new emperor, even if they had already sworn to him before – but at that time “only” in his capacity as the king of Rome. Like so many other practices in the broad field of political rituals, the procedure of citizens taking oaths seems, at the first glance, to be almost identical in all cities. However, a closer examination reveals that, on the contrary, each such scene had its own nuances, often expressing important peculiarities of how the city authorities saw their community and how they interpreted their relationship with the lord. The multiplicity of such variants is hardly noticeable to historians who only study princely entrances into large cities located at great distances from each other. Fascinated by the splendour of medieval metropolises, such as Florence,⁶³ Venice,⁶⁴ Paris or Ghent,⁶⁵ historians have paid almost no attention to acts of political symbolism in small towns and modest boroughs under the rule of local princes. Meanwhile, the first attempt to study this issue, through the example of the cities and towns of the archbishops of Trier welcoming their rulers and swearing allegiance to them, allowed significant observa-

que toujours l'avoient bien gardé et que encoires feroient, comme bien se confioit; et lors fut cryé: 'Noel.'”

⁶³ Trexler, *Public Life*.

⁶⁴ Muir, *Civic Ritual*.

⁶⁵ Arnade, *Realms of Ritual*.

tions.⁶⁶ First of all, the neighbouring communities, concentrated within a modest territory belonging to this principality, did not establish any sort of standard procedure for welcoming the new prince and taking the oath to him. In each city or town, the reception differed in certain details, sometimes significantly, from everything awaiting the prince in any other neighbouring place. The leaders of one community could force the bishop to swear “to preserve all liberties of the town” first, while in the next community, on the contrary, their colleagues had nothing against swearing their oath of allegiance earlier than the bishop. Some demanded explicitly that he swear his oath with his hand on his chest, while others did not attach any importance to this gesture. Often there were special demands that the new bishop should swear exactly as his predecessor had sworn. Another point, on which the citizens could insist, was that the bishop’s oral oath alone was not enough – and they immediately drew up a notarial instrument to bind all his promises. In one place it was enough for the bishop to shake hands with the head of the local community alone, but in numerous other places he had to do so with everyone who took the oath. But what is more important for us than this diversity, is the fact that most local authorities, even in small boroughs, instrumentalised the welcoming ceremony to publicly demonstrate the pride and dignity of their community and the fact that they would obey the prince only according to strictly negotiated terms. In the eyes of a modern historian, these attempts look ridiculous, since such towns had no noticeable resources to oppose their mighty lords. Nevertheless, they persistently sought symbolic gestures from every new archbishop, proving that they were not simply obeying him, but exchanging their loyalty to him for his reciprocal loyalty towards them.

A particularly striking example was that of Oberwesel, mentioned above, where the oath to the archbishop paradoxically expressed the dream of the civic authorities to return to their former status of imperial city, i.e. make themselves independent from the same archbishop. On the micro-level of provincial towns one can discern the symbolic strategies of self-representation in many types of urban communities, large or small, free or subordinate to their lords.

One further important form of symbolic interaction between the princes and their cities has enjoyed a great deal of attention from scholars, primarily in German medieval studies. In many European cities, from Flanders in the west to Silesia and Livonia in the east, from Saxony in the north and sometimes even to Tuscany in the south, throughout the late Middle Ages and into the Early Modern period, the secular and ecclesiastical princes, in the course of their solemn entries, brought exiles with them inside the city walls, who had been previously convicted by city

66 The following is based on the article Boytsov, “Archbishop of Trier.”

courts for certain crimes. In fact, these people were not only forbidden to return to the city, but also to approach it at a distance of a certain number of miles for a certain number of years, or even forever. Now they returned before everyone's eyes, in a solemn procession, often clinging to the prince's horse, holding on to his clothing, stirrup, saddle, demonstrating thereby a completely material, physical attachment to his personality. In this way, for example, King Frederick III brought eleven criminals with him to Zurich in 1442⁶⁷ and even thirty-seven on his entry into Basel in 1473.⁶⁸

Of the many scholarly interpretations of numerous episodes of this kind, two have been the most popular. Firstly, historians saw here a manifestation of a special quality of the ruler, his charisma, or some kind of sacrality, which supposedly exempted those who managed to physically touch the sacred person from responsibility for the crime they had committed. The roots of this exotic custom must have originated in the law-books of the thirteenth century, the *Sachsenspiegel* and the *Schwabenspiegel*, going as far back as to Roman law and/or even to the hypothetical legal traditions of the ancient Germanic tribes, whose chieftains allegedly possessed a specific sort of sacrality.⁶⁹ Another hypothesis (related to the first one as well as to the idea that the custom had imperial Roman origins) assumes that the emperor, by reintroducing criminals to a city, demonstrated the superiority of his legal dominance over the civic authorities, with imperial justice overriding any local court. By his own will, he could cancel the earlier verdicts and mercifully pardon the convicted and restore their rights.⁷⁰ A careful reading of the sources leads to the conclusion that both of these hypotheses, still popular among specialists, do not really have any serious basis. The situation described in the *Saxon Mirror* has, upon closer examination, little in common with the custom under discussion, whereas all attempts to connect it with some kind of "sacrality" of the ancient Germanic tribal leaders seem to be nothing more than ideological fantasies. The strange custom in German lands seems rather to have been adopted from France, and no earlier than in the late thirteenth century.⁷¹

67 Peyer, "Empfang des Königs," 220–221.

68 Schuster, *Der gelobte Frieden*, 125, corrected in Schenk, *Zeremoniell und Politik*, 353, n. 532.

69 Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsalterthümer*, vol. 1, 368–369; vol. 2, 341; His, *Das Strafrecht*, 391–392; Peyer, "Empfang des Königs," 228; Drabek, *Reisen und Reisezeremoniell*, 35–36; Niederstätter, "Königseinritt und -gastung," 496; Schubert, *König und Reich*, 52; Treppe, "Könige," 31; Tenfelde, "Adventus," 52 and 54; Dotzauer, "Die Ankunft des Herrschers," 262.

70 For this point of view, see for example Schenk, *Zeremoniell und Politik*, 358. Against it: Garnier, *Die Kultur der Bitte*, 324–338.

71 See the argument in Boytsov, "The Healing Touch." The following is based on this article.

More important here, however, is the fact that the allegedly voluntary decision of the ruler to cancel the verdict of the city court, turns out on closer examination to be an amnesty carried out by the city authorities. Any attempts to ignore their will run into the most resolute resistance of the citizens. Maybe the most significant case that should be remembered here was the attempt of the papal legate Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa in 1451 to bring with him into Magdeburg “many prisoners and exiles.” In spite of the fact that he was already moving with them in the solemn procession to the city gates, the authorities of the bishop and the city refused to admit the legate (also a great philosopher), who had to turn back when already halfway to the gates.⁷² This case was, of course, scandalous. Far more often, the citizens allowed their unwanted guests to remain within the city walls for some time, but no longer than the prince himself stayed there.⁷³ The city government of Strasburg in 1400 did not allow King Ruprecht to bring any criminals with him into the city at all.⁷⁴ Even a short-term and conditional amnesty usually also required the prior approval of the city magistrates. As for those cases when the exiles received complete forgiveness, it is difficult to believe that the candidates for this mercy were not agreed upon in advance in negotiations between the prince and the magistrates. Admittedly, we hear about such negotiations only indirectly and mostly in a different context, when, under obvious pressure from the townspeople, the prince has to give up his original intention to bring city convicts pleading for his help into the city with him. So King Sigismund in 1414 had to address a group of exiles from Bern seeking his intercession with words reminiscent of a quote from the Gospel: “Depart from me now! You will not find mercy with us!”⁷⁵ No one apart from the authorities of Bern could reveal to the king the full measure of the atrocities committed by these very people . . . Thus it turns out that the decision about whom to forgive and whom not to forgive was made by the city authorities, and not by Sigismund. This case is far from being unique: there are numerous similar ones. Thus, the public remission of the criminals by the ruler only outwardly looked like acts of his own representation as a merciful ruler, as the *rex pacificus*. In fact, in most cases these were at least

72 *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*, 399–400; *Gesta archiepiscoporum Magdeburgensium*, 469.

73 So in Aachen in 1442 (*RTA ÄR*, Bd. 16, Nr. 100, 173): “Auch wann ain Römisch kung gen Ach komen ist [. . .] und verpannt lewt einkomen, als in andern stetten gewonhait ist, diselben leut mugen des kungs kunft nicht lenger geniessen, wann alslang er zu Ach ist, wann die von Ach des freihait haben.”

74 *Fortsetzungen des Königshofen*, 259: “[. . .] kain ächter mit dem kunig oder mit der kunigin in die stat kamen solt, noch in noch iren pferden oder wagen anhangen [. . .]”

75 Justinger, *Die Berner-Chronik*, 219 (363): “Get hin bald! Ir solt nicht gnade an uns vinden!” Compare with: “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7.23) or: “Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity” (Luke 13.27).

joint actions, co-organised by the city councils as much as by the king's advisers. And such scenes served to demonstrate the *misericordia* of the city government no less than that of the king.

Legitimising political individuality

In these few pages the language of political ceremonies, systematically used and developed by city governments to present themselves to external view, as well to their own burghers, could be demonstrated only in its basic forms. The rich cities could afford not to be limited to these basics when staging sophisticated symbolic dialogues with their powerful and sometimes dangerous guests, from time to time arriving from outside the small world of a particular urban community.⁷⁶ However, two characteristic features seem to be common to the most varied urban symbolic expressions, the simplest as well as the most elaborate. The first consisted in asserting the *subjectivity* of the urban community, its political self-sufficiency – no matter if the city itself was big or small, free or dependent. This was also an assertion of the legitimacy of the government, addressed not only to the outside, but also, no less, to all members of the city community itself. The city always presented itself as an absolutely unique and perfectly organised social individual. But to express this idea, each city seems to have resorted primarily to rather standard images, the same as those used by others. So, every city could present itself as the Holy City Jerusalem, or the Chaste Virgin. The technical ways in which these images were embodied were also fairly similar in different cities. In some cases, the agents of one city sent reports home, describing the ceremonies with which the king was welcomed in another city. The purpose of this was probably to allow their own government to take into account the “positive experience” of their neighbours, when preparing to welcome the king into their own walls in the near future. However, even the most standard technical solutions could not be reproduced in one city in exactly the same way as in another: each specific implementation of any general idea or image could not but differ in one city from how they were implemented in another. So, it turned out that the image of the city as a unique individual was formed from a set of standard general ideas, which, however, were inevitably interpreted by every city government in its own unique ceremonial way.

⁷⁶ See for example: Smith, “*Venit nobis.*”

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