Religion and Civil Society Project

The Anthropological Dimension of the Monarchies: Festivals

This study will focus on the evolution of festivals and tourneys in Castile during the 15th century, with special emphasis on their relationship with royal symbols. This research will be carried out by Teófilo Ruiz. The entries of royalty into the city will be described and interpreted, along with the carnivals, and the festivals for Corpus Christi and other Saints. The aim is to offer a typology of festivals in Castile and their relationship with the Monarchy, looking at examples of different types of festivals and activities and explaining their significance in the context of social, cultural and political life, and their implications; comparisons will also be made regarding other peninsular and European monarchies.

Traditionally, the social history of festivals and ludic tradition has been carried out from a strictly functional perspective. The anthropological and aesthetic aspects of the celebrations have been described, emphasizing their function as part of the political strategies of the monarchs. This approach, which has already proved to be very successful, must be reviewed and completed; the interpretation of festivals should be brought to a higher level rather than simply explain them as projections and representations of royal authority and an attempt must be made to analyze up to what point the festivals were converted into resistance movements against royal authority. In particular, many of these festivities are developed differently from that which the monarchs had originally planned, becoming areas of contestation and protest rather than the consolidation of power sources.

For this investigation, stories of travels, chronicles, will be used as sources. Additional documentation available in the archives with the crown of Aragón will also be used and in particular, chronicle-like documentation from the municipal archives of some medieval cities in Castile will be used as complementary information.