

*Power-Brokers and the Yorkist State, 1461–1485.* Alexander R. Brondarbit.  
Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020. xviii + 214 pp. \$99.

---

Much ink has been spilled on biographies of key players of the Wars of the Roses, both on kings and queens, as well as on famous magnates, such as Richard Neville, “the Kingmaker.” In his holistic study of the most powerful members of the Yorkist elite, Alexander Brondarbit brings lesser-known figures such as John Fogge and Thomas Montgomery to the light, alongside their more famous counterparts. Brondarbit argues that these power brokers are distinguished from the wider aristocracy in their ability to informally direct royal policy, a soft power that was recognized by petitioners who sought to gain their favor. In turn, as Brondarbit shows, powerful magnates helped bolster royal authority with their participation in lavish ceremonial display, rendering their relationship an “alliance of self-interest” (3).

Drawing on extensive archival research, Brondarbit’s aim is to paint a more nuanced picture of this group of Yorkist power brokers. He does so in a thematic rather than a chronological analysis. Central to chapter 1 are the mechanisms of patronage and clientelism. Outlining the complex workings of medieval governmental bureaucracies, Brondarbit shows how indispensable power brokers were to their petitioners by acting as intermediaries for royal favor. In chapter 2, Brondarbit argues that the Yorkist rule was “deeply personal” (50), and examines the place where the brokers’ power was exerted: the royal household. As members of the royal affinity, power brokers also played an important role in displays of ceremony, which served to reinforce both their status as royal favorites and royal legitimacy in general (a prime issue of concern for the Yorkist kings). This topic serves as a bridge to the central concern of the third chapter: the public perception of the power brokers among both English and foreign observers. Having established the three central characteristics of power brokers—their good lordship, their proximity to the king, and their public perception—Brondarbit then turns to two distinctive groups of power brokers whose influence operated slightly differently: women (chapter 4) and the clergy (chapter 5).

The concluding chapter presents a summary of the implications of the study. The Yorkist system was not wholly new or innovative, nor was it discarded at the start of the Tudor age. Though some tried, none of the Yorkist royal favorites ever attained the dominance of Suffolk or Somerset in Henry VI’s reign. Being dependent on their personal relationship with the king, many power brokers were unable to consolidate their position, first when Richard III usurped the throne and later when Henry Tudor became king. Their power, as Brondarbit concludes, “was great but ultimately proved fragile” (181).

In his ambition to paint a full picture of the mechanisms of power brokerage in the Yorkist period, Brondarbit is unavoidably confronted with the inadequacy of the surviving evidence, especially pertaining to female patronage. Many administrative records have been lost, and narrative sources are politically colored—methodological challenges

that the author acknowledges throughout the work, though he does not always manage to counter them completely satisfactorily. In his analysis of foreign depictions of the Yorkist power brokers, for instance, the author tends to adopt the perspective of these sources; descriptions of events and conversations, despite his earlier statement that these sources are often not reliable.

The thematic approach is both the study's strength and, sometimes, its weakness. It successfully serves to fill in some of the gaps of the existing material by focusing on power structures in general rather than on individual careers. On the other hand, the sheer number of details presented to illustrate the power brokers' characteristics sometimes makes the thread difficult to follow. It also obfuscates the developments of power brokerage against the background of the politically turbulent transition period from Lancastrian to Yorkist rule, as well as the differences between the rule of Edward IV and Richard III. However, that was also not the primary aim of this study, and Brondarbit certainly succeeds in his goal to illuminate the dealings of this group of power brokers as a whole. The study presents a treasure trove of facts and events for anyone interested in this period, both concerning the wider political culture and individual key players. A thorough and multifaceted overview of Yorkist power structures, *Power-Brokers and the Yorkist State* provides ample food for thought for students and scholars of late medieval politics.

Aline Douma, *Rijksuniversiteit Groningen*  
doi:10.1017/rqx.2022.390

*Manila, 1645.* Pedro Luengo.

Routledge Research in Early Modern History. Abingdon: Routledge, 2021. xii + 158 pp. \$160.

---

In recent years the study of early modern global history has taken new shape and pursued new directions. This new study follows this trend, as Pedro Luengo underlines that he “attempts to accurately reconstruct Manila in 1645, before the earthquakes of the mid-seventeenth century” (1). The book seeks to analyze the layout and features of the city's houses in order to understand the configuration and urban planning of Intramuros. Most studies on the subject thus far have focused on the main buildings of the colonial port, such as its palaces, churches, or administrative buildings. Luengo, however, explores housing in colonial Manila as a means to establish a cultural dialogue between Southeast Asia and New Spain in the seventeenth century.

To achieve this goal, the author focuses on three different perspectives: first, the multilayered framework of Manila; second, the use of new technologies to obtain data that historical sources on architecture and urban history do not show; and, finally, the hybridization of the architecture of the city and its insertion into the first globalization.