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Stephen D. White, *Feuding and Peace-Making in Eleventh-Century France*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. xii + 306 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$114.95 U.S. ISBN 0-86078-961-6.

Review by J. E. M. Benham, University of East Anglia.

Some twenty-five years after the original publication of Stephen D. White's article "*Pactum ...legem vincit et amor iudicium*": The Settlement of Disputes by Compromise in Eleventh-century Western France", there is a strong case for arguing that the article still occupies a place under the heading of 'Essential' in reading lists of most university undergraduate courses on medieval Europe.[1] It would certainly be difficult to disregard the contributions that Stephen White has made with that article, and since then with several others, to the debate on the feudal revolution of the year 1000 and to the topic of dispute processing. Thus the re-appearance of a number of these articles in a single collection is only to be warmly welcomed at a time when a number of recent studies have brought these topics back into the focal point of modern historiography.[2]

The collection is divided into two parts with the articles approaching the main themes from the two different angles of "Feuding" (part one) and "Peace-making" (part two). The four essays in part one deal with a set of feuds waged by lords in the Touraine in around 1100, and how these cases highlight certain problems in the study of medieval feuding (chapter one); the practice and meanings of the "violence" often associated with the feudal revolution of the year 1000 and the century following it (chapters two and three); and the interpretation of emotion talk that eleventh- and twelfth-century texts attributed to the parties to feuds (chapter four). Part two discusses the settlement of disputes by agreements rather than by judgements, and why the first kind of settlement was more common than the second (chapter five); the ways in which medieval people made legal arguments in inheritance disputes (chapter six); the practice in eleventh-century French court cases of proposing and then avoiding ordeals and judicial duels (chapter seven); the study of dispute processing in France and its importance to the debate on the feudal revolution (chapter eight); and a set of tenth-century law cases interpreted as evidence of slow, but increasing, changes in judicial processes from the late-ninth century onwards (chapter nine). These nine essays then, describe the feuding and peacemaking process as a largely local, low-level course of action that operated outside of royal government.

The essays in this collection approach the two main themes primarily by exploring the records available in cartularies. As evidenced in chapters one, two, three, five, six, and seven, monastic houses could be parties to disputes, as well as mediators or benefactors of their settlement. In particular, it was the need of monastic communities to keep track of their land, rights, and other wealth that has provided the historian with the most detailed accounts of feuding and peacemaking (I: pp. 204-5; II: pp. 205, 210-15; VI: pp. 55-6; VII: p. 91). As recognised by White, such sources will only ever give the historian the monastic understanding of how these conflicts were supposed to be conducted and "accounts of the same cases by secular informants would have differed significantly" (I: p. 247). Chapter four, however, refreshingly explores the theme of anger and emotion talk through a wider variety of sources, ranging from vernacular literature to Latin chronicles and charters. This chapter, furthermore, provides a welcome break from the somewhat difficult material found in the cartularies and interpreted in the majority of the chapters, and reinforces the fact that the main purpose of a collection such as this is to provide an insight into specific topics, and is not to be read from cover to cover.

The essays contained in this collection are based on research that has a limited geographical scope. Indeed, the title of the collection is misleading in that it implies that the articles will cover “France” (a difficult term in itself in this period), when, in fact, they only really deal with the feuding and peacemaking of the western parts of this area. Though comparisons with the research of other scholars covering different regions of France are frequent, few links are indicated between White’s studies and those (admittedly fewer) studies covering other parts of medieval Europe.[3] The exception to this lack of other European references is, naturally, Iceland, a particular favourite among scholars of feuding and peacemaking.[4] To take one example, at one point in chapter four, “The Politics of Anger”, White compares the frequency of emotion talk in sources of Northern French and English origins to the lack of such descriptions in those Icelandic Sagas investigated by Miller (pp. 133-5). This is obviously not comparing like for like, because though the French and English sources used by White in his research comprise of vernacular texts, as well as Latin charters, chronicles, and poems, the sagas were all written in the vernacular. Apart from anything else, the comparison totally excludes the fact that Latin sources exist in Scandinavia, particularly in Denmark, that are perhaps closer in scope to such works as those of Orderic Vitalis and Suger than the thirteenth-century sagas.[5] Yet, even in this, White’s work is essential in that his comparisons inadvertently highlight the current gaps in the historiography. Furthermore, though the articles in this collection are geographically limited, each is set in a broad anthropological and historiographical context. Chapter eight, for instance, is a broad survey of available studies of disputes in medieval France, set firmly in a context of the historiography surrounding the feudal transformation of the year 1000. It is in this broad context that the real importance of White’s work lie, because it provides both a starting- and a reference point for those interested in dispute processing and the enduring debate on the feudal revolution.

As a collection of essays written over a period of twenty-five years is bound to contain theories or questions that have since been superseded or developed further by other scholars, White has attached select supplementary bibliographies to chapters one, three, four, six, and seven. In these bibliographies he has included not only up to date studies, but also works criticising his own methodological approach. A couple of studies by Philippe Buc are especially noteworthy as essential reading in conjunction with White’s work, because they focus on the real difficulty of using those anthropological models of which scholars of dispute processing are so fond, and they are dismissed in just one sentence in the preface of this collection (p. ix).[6]

In recent years, the “long” eleventh century has become a focal point of great debate among medieval historians. Regardless of one’s stance in this debate, it is clear that the nine essays collected in this work show some of the political, social, legal, and cultural nuances of conflicts and conflict resolution during an important period in the history of Europe.

LIST OF ESSAYS

- “Feuding and Peace-Making in the Touraine around the Year 1000”
- “The ‘Feudal Revolution’: Comment”
- “Repenser la violence: de 2000 à 1000”
- “The Politics of Anger”
- “*Pactum ...legem vincit et amor iudicium*: The Settlement of Disputes by Compromise in Eleventh-century France”
- “Inheritances and Legal Arguments in Western France”
- “Proposing the Ordeal and Avoiding It: Strategy and Power in Western French Litigation, 1050-1100”
- “From Peace to Power: The Study of Disputes in Medieval France”

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- “Tenth-century Courts at Mâcon and the Perils of Structuralist History: Re-reading Burgundian Judicial Institutions”
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NOTES

[1] Stephen D. White, “Feuding and Peace-Making in the Touraine around the Year 1000”, *Traditio* 42 (1986): 195-263.

[2] For but a few examples, see Dominique Barthélemy, *L’an mil et la paix de Dieu: la France chrétienne et féodale, 980-1060* (Paris: Fayard, 1999); Chris Wickham, *Courts and Conflict in Twelfth-Century Tuscany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Bernhard Jussen, ed., *Ordering Medieval Society: Perspectives on Intellectual and Practical Modes of Shaping Social Relations*, tr., Pamela Selwyn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Adam J. Kosto, *Making Agreements in Medieval Catalonia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Kiril Petkov, *The Kiss of Peace: Ritual, Self, and Society in the High and Late Medieval West* (Leiden: Brill, 2003)

[3] For two such examples, see Adam J. Kosto, *Making Agreements in Medieval Catalonia* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Kiril Petkov, *The Kiss of Peace: Ritual, Self, and Society in the High and Late Medieval West* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

[4] For the most important Icelandic studies, see Jesse Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); William Ian Miller, “Choosing the Avenger: Some Aspects of the Blood Feud in Medieval Iceland and England”, *Law and History Review* 1 (1983): 159-205; idem, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago, Il.: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[5] For two Danish examples available in English, see Saxo Grammaticus, *Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia*, Books X-XVI, 3 vols., ed., Eric Christiansen, BAR International Series 118 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1981); *The Works of Sven Aggesen*, tr. Eric Christiansen (London: Northern Society for Viking Research, 1992). There is also a little used Norwegian saga, which, unlike the Icelandic ones, is contemporary to the events it portrays. *Sverris saga*, ed. J. Sephton (London: Nutt, 1899).

[6] Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); idem, “Political Rituals and Political Imagination in the Medieval West from the Fourth Century to the Eleventh”, in Peter Linehan and Janet L. Nelson eds., *The Medieval World* (London: Routledge, 2001).

J. E. M. Benham
University of East Anglia
J.Benham@uea.ac.uk

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