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Matthew A. Vester, *Jacques de Savoie-Nemours; l'apanage du Genevois au cœur de la puissance dynastique savoyarde au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Trans. Eléonore Mazel and Déborah Engel. Geneva: Droz, 2008. Vol. 85, Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance. 360 pp. 47.06 € (pb). ISBN 9872600012119.

Review by Orest Ranum, The Johns Hopkins University.

The social and political histories of the French frontiers are again becoming subjects for book-length studies. Lucien Febvre's thesis on the Franche-Comté was the model study for his generation, as Georges Livet's on Alsace was for the next. The depth of research and the range of themes in these works perhaps explains why Febvre and Livet have been left on the shelves by historians of the current generation; but these monuments to scholarship really do explore all the aspects of center and periphery history for the France of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In *Boundaries; the Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) Peter Sahlins explores the process by which a general European peace settlement inevitably affected the village communities in the contested territories, in this instance, the Cerdagna. No major princely families, apart from the sovereigns of Spain and France, could effectively lay claim to the region, with the result that, as in some of the provinces in the south of the Spanish Netherlands, diplomats toyed with making what were quite fantastic exchanges of sovereignty, and without regard for the inhabitants. Such exchange proposals could only be interpreted in light of how marriages brought together the most disparate of lordships and provinces.

In *Pratiques et Practiqueurs: la vie politique à la fin du règne de Henri III, 1584-1589* (Geneva: Droz, 2002), Xavier Le Person explores how a really very minor noble official, the sieur de Pluvault, maneuvered in the Auxonnais to become nearly an all-powerful princeling, in all but name, thanks to the intense rivalry between the Valois and the Guises.

In his history of the house of Laval, *The Counts of Laval: Culture, Patronage and Religion in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century France* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) Malcolm Walsby works out the delicate balancing act, as vassals of the Plantagenets, the dukes (and duchess) of Brittany, and the kings of France, that was carried on by this ancient, rich, borderland family that was also in constant competition with the Rohans. Conversion to Protestantism, while certainly dangerous, did not in the end cause their collapse. Henry IV's strong support for the Rohans, and a *farfelu* Catholic who set off on a crusade against the Turks without having first produced an heir, ended the elder branch of the Guy de Laval. Some of "their" towns and lands are still populated with Huguenots to this day.

Though not an *apanage*, and not situated on the periphery of the realm, the duchy of Nevers, with its links by marriage to Cleves and Mantua, had many features in common with the Savoy-Nemours, mainly an imbrication with the Valois monarchy that touched every aspect of political, financial and social life. In her *Les Ducs de Nevers et l'État royal: gènes d'un compromis (ca. 1550-ca. 1650)* (Geneva: Droz, 2006), Ariane Boltanski finds royal support for the Nevers in the form of huge subsidies, instead of coercion to reduce or even somehow take over a deeply indebted, quite down-at-the-heels high-ranking family. The compromises and cooperation with the Savoy-Nemours come to mind as similar to

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some of the high-handed moves of territorial aggrandizement practiced by French kings in the fifteenth century.

Jonathan Spangler, *The Society of Princes: the Lorraine-Guise and the Conservation of Power and Wealth in Seventeenth-Century France* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), has not yet arrived in the Hopkins Library, so I cannot do more than note that it too belongs to this group of recent studies. After all, as archbishop of Reims, the cardinal of Lorraine-Guise exercised high episcopal powers over dioceses outside of France.

Matthew A. Vester's study of Jacques, duke de Savoie-Nemours is a major contribution to this literature. As head of the oldest cadet branch of the ancient house of Savoy, Jacques's political and social powers emanated from his *apanage* and his duchies within the larger crown of Savoy, which included historic rights and claims to power, lands, and rights of appointment on both sides of the Alps, Switzerland and France.

Never apparently legislated, but established only by royal charter in both Savoy and France, *apanages* – enormous grants of seignorial rights centered in a provincial duchy such as Orléans – continued the medieval dynastic relation between a younger son or brother and a king or, in the case of Savoy, a sovereign duke. Charles duke of Orléans received an *apanage* from Francis I in 1560; the future Henry III became duke of Anjou in 1566, and his brother Francis became duke of Alençon. Thus Jacques duke of Nemours and the Genevois was in illustrious company in his Savoyard *apanage*. Sisters and daughters also received *apanages*.

Born in 1531, and largely raised in a peripatetic fashion like most sixteenth-century *grands*, Jacques earned a reputation as a courageous and successful young commander in the French armies battling the Hapsburgs. Handsome, gracious in manner and a darling at the Valois court, he became a royal counselor in France and governor of the Lyonnais.

Matthew Vester begins his study with a reflection about Jacob Burkhardt's emphasis on the rise of Individualism in the Renaissance. For Vester, the result has been to distort and even submerge the importance of princely families, in effect, dynasties, each with its own way of looking at Europe, its ambitions, its failures and its memories. The book under review confirms the point, as Jacques de Savoie-Nemours draws on his family and subjects to navigate the turbulent waters that were relations between the head of the senior branch of Savoy, and the King of France during a period of post-Cateau-Cambrésis tensions, civil-international wars and religious division.

Following the chapter on military service under Henry II comes a lengthy study of the litigation that pitted the Savoy-Nemours against the great Breton family, the Rohans, as the result of what were probably broken promises of marriage. The trial would continue for years, there would be mediators and attempts simply to move on by Jacques, whose honor would seem to have been less threatened because he had the support of the French king. These were decades when high-ranking families may have sought marriage alliances with families geographically distinct from their principal domains, not only to enhance their prestige but also to gain *fidèles* from another part of the country who could speak up for them at court. The Lorraine, Montmorency and la Trémouille families, to mention only three, had long since become powerful in several provinces thanks to inheritances. While not consistent, the last Valois may really not have favored the Nemours-Rohan marriage, and consequently helped Jacques avoid it.

The chapter on Savoy's role in the first war of religion, and in particular Jacques's role, is a subtle exploration of how Jacques, who eagerly sought a French military command, found himself on the sidelines as a result of the duel between the Châtillons and the Lorraines for control over Valois foreign policy. Jacques would have sufficient power to sustain the Catholic cause without becoming a client of the Guises. Throughout his reconstruction of Jacques's role in the Wars of Religion, Matthew Vester

insists that the historians who have asserted that he was a Guise client are wrong. To be sure, Jacques lived with the Guises as close relations, and he supported some of their moves at court; but he had the dynastic strength to remain his own man by maintaining close ties with the senior branch of the house of Lorraine.

Jacques's marriage to the widow, Anne d'Este, was favored by the Valois. With high favor at the French court, and prestige in distant Ferrara, Anne brought not only wealth and prestige but *savoir-faire* as well, for she assumed the burden of supervising the couple's inevitable legal and fiscal battles.

Discussions, not really negotiations, took place with greater or lesser intensity between the duke of Savoy's financial officers and the officers belonging to Jacques, but there never seems to have been a stand-off or breakdown among the cousins over money or rights. Jacques's revenues usually came more or less equally from his Savoy and Genevois duchy and from his French estates, pensions and offices. Total income varied considerably as a result of sales of estates and special gifts from the Valois, but it has not seemed possible to estimate the total impact of civil war on Jacques's income. The pages on the size of households, gifts, the purchase of horses, buildings, clothes and jewelry are very suggestive of what "keeping up appearances" could cost. The indebtedness and connections to officials up and down the administrations of both the Valois and the Savoyard governments confirms the argument that Jacques's *apanage* was like a state within a state. On average, Jacques's annual income remained considerably higher than, for example, that of the dukes of Montmorency and Guise, thereby confirming J.-P. Labatut's general findings on the correlation between very high rank and income, in his *Ducs et pairs de France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1972).

Like all the *grands*, Jacques had his "*gens*," the household estate managers, foresters, toll-takers, and so forth, who represented him officially and negotiated diplomatic, legal and financial matters on his behalf. Representation almost inevitably increases both power and prestige. His principal correspondent at the Valois court as early as 1562 was Florimond Robertet d'Alluye, the member of a dynasty of powerful royal officials who carried out diplomatic missions and answered letters in the king's name. Their origins in the fiscal administration would not be forgotten as the new title "secretary of state" was first created for them (B. Barbiche, *Institutions...* Paris: P.U.F., 1999, p. 175).

The civil and international wars of the 1570s and 1580s, Jacques's declining health, and the renewed tensions over the limits to the powers granted him by Savoy make for painful reading. The exemplary courtly knight whom Madame de Lafayette would immortalize in *La Princesse de Clèves* gave up the governorship of the Lyonnais and failed in the poorly coordinated effort to restore the city of Geneva to the duchy and Catholicism. Negotiations with his cousin to permit Jacques to reside in a more clement region of Savoy (Chazey, in the Piedmont) revealed the distance and divisions within the family. Jacques became heir to the Savoy throne in 1580, but he was *persona non grata* at Turin, because the councilors around the new heirless duke did not want anyone around who was so prestigious and wealthy. Jacques died in 1585, from the pernicious effects of gout, and his body was transported to Annecy to be interred among his ancestors in the church of Notre-Dame de Liesse.

The archives have yielded much to Matthew Vester's patient hard work. A history of the life of Jacques de Savoy-Nemours (not a biography) has required the mastery of what are really sub-fields such as dynastic mentality, social history (for the study of income and expenditures), diplomatic history and political-cultural history, to mention only a few. In Matthew Vester, Jacques de Savoy-Nemours has found his historian, and now the often simplified history of the territorial construction of France must be revised to take this into account.

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