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Amy Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin: Aristocratic Life in the Lands of the Loire, 1000-1200*. Ithaca, N.Y. and London: Cornell University Press, 2010. xi + 280. Maps, charts, notes, appendices, bibliography and index. \$45.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-8014-4841-6.

Review by Katrin E. Sjursen, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

In *Out of Love for My Kin: Aristocratic Life in the Lands of the Loire, 1000-1200*, Amy Livingstone leads a frontal assault on the three P's of medieval historiography: patrilineage, primogeniture, and repressive patriarchy. Since at least the 1970s, scholarship has asserted that the societal, political, and religious transformations of the eleventh and twelfth centuries coincided with and perhaps even effected similar transformations in how families were structured (shifting from extended kinship to patrilineage--nuclear units traced solely through the father's side), how inheritance was distributed (moving from partible inheritance or ownership by extended kin networks to primogeniture--inheritance by the eldest son alone), and how women interacted with their families and wider society (in which an increasingly repressive patriarchy excluded women from opportunities to exercise power).^[1] This model has been contested since the late 1990s, often by Livingstone herself in several well-supported articles, so the attack itself is not necessarily new.^[2] The challenge to all three fronts of the original model at once and the basis of that challenge being a collection of 500 charters representing hundreds of people, rather than case studies of individuals, however, provides a comprehensive challenge at the same time that it offers an alternative model. Inclusivity, Livingstone argues, should be the chief defining characteristic of medieval family life in this period and region--inclusivity in that extended kin remained prominent members of families, property was regularly bequeathed to all family members (even, at times, adult siblings and cousins), and women remained valued (and powerful) members of both their natal and affinal kin.

Livingstone bases her study on a variety of sources, such as charters, chronicles, hagiography (especially that of St. Foy just to the south of Livingstone's region), literature (particularly the *lais* of Marie de France and romances of Chrétien de Troyes), letters (especially those by the bishops of Chartres), and monastic obituaries. Aside from the charters, some of the sources were written in neighboring regions, but Livingstone is always careful to note their provenance and indicate that the information thus provided suggests the prevalence of the practices she identifies through the charters for her region. These charters commemorate gifts to monastic houses and quitclaims by various kin in regard to those gifts. Because all members of the family who could possibly have a claim on the gifted property needed to approve or witness the donation, Livingstone could tease out the ties between relatives and their comparative positions within the family. For example, some families included uncles, aunts, and cousins amongst the witnesses who authorized the donation, indicating that these families did not view themselves as exclusive nuclear units.

Livingstone divides the work into eight chapters that lead the reader through her disputes with the earlier historiography by building upon one another. Chapter one lays out the background of aristocratic life in the eleventh- and twelfth-century Loire, arguing for land as the basis of wealth, describing the emergence of the important families such as the counts of Blois-Chartres,

their viscounts, the vidames (the political lordships appointed by the church), and the lesser nobles. Livingstone concludes that many of the men made their names and founded dynasties at this point, but that they took care to marry into and associate with older families that could trace their lineage back to the Carolingians. Thus, she sees both continuity and change in regard to the participants, if not the structure and practices in which those participants lived.

Chapters two through four focus on the family: the interactions between family members, the organizing structure, and the patterns of inheritance that reveal these structures. All three chapters argue for diversity in family structures and inheritance patterns at the same time that they take aim at some other long-standing interpretations of family life. For example, chapter two's focus on family life--the relationships between parents and children, the importance of aunts and uncles, the continued reliance on adult siblings and cousins, the unceasing contact of women with their natal and affinal kin--all point to an inclusive understanding of family that had been in place as far back as the late Carolingian period, even as the chapter destroys the myth that families were cold and distant. Livingstone pairs charters that commemorate gifts by grieving parents to chronicles that reveal the same emotions.

Chapter three covers much the same ground, but does so by examining three families in particular, who intermarried throughout the 200 years; in all, an examination of how more than 200 individuals fit into their families' lives. Livingstone displays a masterful command of these individuals and endeavors to help the reader untangle the relationships through references to earlier episodes in which the individuals appear and the use of family trees housed in the appendices at the end of the book. Despite these efforts, however, the sheer number of stories makes it difficult to follow the broader outlines. Livingstone's point, however, that diversity of organization rather than a singular pattern of patrilineage remained the norm throughout the period is well taken.

Chapter four's emphasis on inheritance patterns similarly lays out the diversity of practices in the Loire at this time and demonstrates that, despite previous scholarship theorizing the contrary, primogeniture did not replace other practices. In fact, Livingstone's analysis of the charters reveals a variety of practices that stretches far beyond the typical binary of partible inheritance versus primogeniture. Both of these patterns were available and in use, of course, but so was impartible inheritance granting the property to an entire kin group (sometimes a nuclear family and sometimes an extended group) in which all members had a say in determining its use. Likewise, impartible inheritance could tender the land to a single individual, though not necessarily the eldest child. Partible inheritance could divide lands amongst siblings or siblings and cousins. The possibilities were seemingly endless. Again, Livingstone argues that no change in practice occurred from the late Carolingian period, though she does acknowledge an increasing interest in noting birth order, even if the birth order did not influence inheritance patterns.

Chapters five through seven shift the focus from families to marriage, laying out the basics of dowries and dowers, the statistics of marriage, and the relations between spouses. The underlying themes of these chapters, though, focus on the power and status of women within marriages. Thus, while chapter five looks at what families bestowed on women for dowries and dowers, whether women could control such bequests, and what exactly they chose to do with the property, it proposes that women did not merely consent to their husband's plans for the property but directed the property themselves. Similarly, chapter seven finds that women were instrumental in establishing peace between their male kin or vassals and the monasteries. The ladies' efforts in this regard reveal women who acted as co-rulers with their husbands, rather than as subordinates.

Livingstone's last chapter, chapter eight, takes us to a new section yet again, looking at how, why, and when individuals contested grants made to monasteries. Most often, a challenger disputed a gift when his or her status in the family was transitioning to a new phase. Thus, a newly married woman and her spouse might contest a previous grant made by her natal family. The new couple would make the claim not so much because they wanted land as the recognition that she and her spouse were members of her natal family. A son's claim on previously granted land often followed on the footsteps of his father's death, as a way to publicize his new status within the family. Disputes, then, were less about greed than they were a way to re-establish and publicize the wide kinship networks that Livingstone has worked so hard to reveal in the previous chapters.

With its breadth of sources and careful descriptions of family organization and interactions, *Out of Love for My Kin* serves both as an introduction to this historiographical debate and a solid refutation of the earlier scholarship. Undergraduates and those new to the topic will find the footnotes particularly fruitful in tracing the debates and in providing more details about specific individuals. Indeed, the footnotes are so informative that many of them could have been usefully included in the text itself. For example, in footnote 25 of chapter four, Livingstone notes that one son did not accompany his mother and two siblings to make a donation, leaving the reader wondering why not and what impact his refusal or inability to participate has on the argument that "all [the family's] members were donors of the property" (p. 95).

As a further aid to the newly initiated reader, a more open discussion of the methodology and terminology would have been welcome. The definitions of the terms employed by scholars of family relationships is buried in footnote two of the introduction (p. 2); since the diversity of family structures and inheritance patterns is the focus of the book, these definitions would be useful in the text itself. Similarly, Livingstone hides the information about her database in footnote fifteen of chapter four, inadvertently downplaying the significance of the depth of her sources. Throughout the book, she refers to the database only sparingly, such as when she notes in chapter two that 20 percent of gifts were made for the express purpose of remembering or aiding relatives (p. 54). Two charts in chapter six display ages at marriage and length of the unions, but they include only five men and five women--why these five people out of the five hundred charters in her database?

Nonetheless, the book remains a valuable introduction to the topic and refutation of previous scholarship. Livingstone's use of charters admirably counters previous definitions of families that relied primarily on chronicle and literary descriptions of individual families.

NOTES

[1] Livingstone repeatedly refers to this idea as the Duby/Schmid model, based on Duby's popularization of Schmid's thesis.

[2] To name just two, see Amy Livingstone, "Diversity and Continuity: Family Structure and Inheritance in the Chartrain, 1000-1200," in Catherine Laurent, Bernard Merdrignac, and Daniel Pinshot eds., *Mondes de l'ouest et villes du monde: Regards sur les sociétés médiévales--mélanges en l'honneur d'André Chédeville* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 1998), pp. 415-430, and "Kith and Kin: Kinship and Family Structure of Nobility of Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Blois-Chartres," *French Historical Studies* 20(1995): 55-72. See also the essays in Theodore Evergates ed., *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) and Kathleen Nolan ed., *Capetian Women* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

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