
H-France Review Vol. 18 (June 2018), No. 131

Yannick Frizet, *Louis XI, le roi René et la Provence*. Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2015. 368 pp. Preface, bibliography, *pièces justificatives*, maps, tables, and index. €25.00 (pb). ISBN 9782853999700.

Review by Philip Daileader, The College of William & Mary.

Since the completion of his 2011 doctoral thesis (written at what is now Aix-Marseille Université), Yannick Frizet has published two books based on that thesis: *Louis XI, le roi René et la Provence*, published in 2015; and then *Munificence et stratégie de Louis XI en Midi provençal*, published in 2017. The second of these books, already reviewed on H-France Review, examines art, King Louis XI's presentation of himself to the people of Provence, and how those people in turn viewed the king.^[1] Jean-Michel Matz, author of *Louis XI's* preface, explains that Frizet chose to publish the historical and the art historical sections of his doctoral thesis as separate titles. *Louis XI* is the historical section.

In the first half of the fifteenth century, the Kingdom of France faced the real possibility of conquest by England. Following the end of the Hundred Years War and during the twenty-two-year reign of Louis XI (d. 1483), however, the Kingdom of France expanded territorially. To France's southwest (Roussillon and Cerdagne) and east (the County of Burgundy), expansion took the form of temporary acquisitions, surrendered by the Crown before 1500. To France's southeast, expansion proved to be more continuous and durable. *Louis XI, le roi René et la Provence* surveys Louis XI's relations with the various lordships and towns in the region of Provence, but above all else, it tells the story of how the French king inherited and, in effect, annexed the County of Provence.^[2] The "roi René" of the book's title is René d'Anjou, count of Provence between 1434 and his death in 1480. Besides the title "count of Provence," René d'Anjou held many other titles (if not always the lands corresponding to those titles) such as king of Jerusalem, king of Naples, duke of Bar, and duke of Anjou. He also happened to be Louis XI's uncle. René d'Anjou sought to prevent his nephew from gaining control of the County of Provence. In the end, however, Louis XI outmaneuvered his uncle as well as others who sought to keep the County of Provence independent.

Louis XI follows a chronological organization. Frizet divides the book into four sections, with each section containing two or three chapters, and each chapter containing two or three subsections. The first section, "Un dauphin de France projeté vers le Midi (1440-1456)," examines Louis's contacts with and interest in Provence prior to his accession as king. The second section, "La mêlée franco-angevine et le Midi Provençal (1461-1473)," treats King Louis XI's diplomatic and military maneuvers in the region of Provence through 1473. That year marks a turning point because René d'Anjou's grandson Nicholas died in 1473. Upon Nicholas's death, René d'Anjou had no direct male heir; the count's male sons had all died, and now the male sons fathered by his male sons were all dead as well. The break in dynastic continuity raised the questions of who would get René d'Anjou's lands after his death, and who might preemptively seize those lands while he still lived. Louis XI saw the opportunity.

Sections three and four, called “Évincer les Anjou jusqu’en Provence (1474-1480)” and “Mise sous tutelle du comté de Provence (1480-1483)” respectively, are the book’s strongest and most engaging sections, in part because events developed a sustained momentum during these years. In his will of July 1474, René d’Anjou did not name Louis XI as his heir. Instead, the count named one of his own nephews, Count Charles II of Maine, as heir to the County of Provence and Duchy of Anjou, and even adopted Charles II as his son to solidify the family tie between them. Additionally, René d’Anjou named his daughter’s son, Duke René II of Lorraine, as heir to the Duchy of Bar. Louis XI responded to the will’s publication with quick and aggressive hostility; the king invaded and occupied Anjou and then Bar in 1474, and still occupied Bar when René d’Anjou died in 1480. In the years leading up to the count’s death, Louis XI sought to achieve the strongest possible position for himself via-à-vis René d’Anjou and those whom the count had designated as his heirs. Sometimes the king threatened them, sometimes he cajoled them, and sometimes he mollified them, as circumstances dictated. For his part, René d’Anjou fell into ever greater financial dependence on the king of France, whose pensioner he was. Louis XI’s seizures of Anjou and Bar had deprived the count of those duchies’ incomes.

When René d’Anjou died in 1480, his designated heir, Charles II of Maine, did indeed inherit the Duchy of Anjou and the County of Provence, thereby becoming Count Charles III of Provence. But Charles III was poorly positioned to maintain Provençal independence. Like René d’Anjou, Charles III needed the French king’s money and received royal pensions. The new count even allowed French troops into Provence in 1481, thereby allowing Louis XI to establish a military presence. Charles III was effectively in Louis XI’s pocket—and the count lacked a direct male heir. Then he fell ill in late 1481, dying that same year on December 11. The day before he died, Charles III named Louis XI as his heir.

Frizet argues that the initial Provençal reaction to Louis XI’s inheritance of the County of Provence was, by and large, positive or at least neutral. The county’s inhabitants foresaw a union between Provence and France rather than the incorporation of the former into the latter. For his part, Louis XI encouraged such thinking for a while, and at first he relied on Provençal notables such as Palamède Forbin to orchestrate the transition to French rule. But in 1483, Louis XI pushed Forbin aside and instead put the Burgundian Jean de Baudricourt in charge of the transition. Baudricourt systematically excluded Provençals from office, and the people of Provence found themselves increasingly often ruled by others, right up to the moment when Louis XI himself died in 1483.

The bulk of sections three and four is devoted to narrating the above events, but these sections also contain Frizet’s most significant analytical contributions. Against those scholars who would have Louis XI dreaming of a Provençal annexation above all else, Frizet argues persuasively that, in fact, the king of France coveted other of René d’Anjou’s territories more and earlier than he coveted the County of Provence. As the dynastic crisis broke in 1473 and 1474, Louis XI swiftly invaded the Duchies of Anjou and Bar, but not the County of Provence, where Louis XI took a slower and somewhat gentler approach. Until René d’Anjou’s death and even for a short time beyond, Louis XI pressed his position in Provence using only legal maneuvers and diplomacy, not military force. Indeed, Frizet suggests that Louis XI regarded the County of Provence almost as an afterthought, and he explains why the king would have done so. Both Anjou and Bar had greater strategic significance to Louis XI than did the County of Provence on account of their respective proximities to Brittany and to Burgundy, both of which posed significant military and diplomatic challenges to the Kingdom of France. Also pushing Louis XI in the direction of a more gradual and less forceful approach to the County of Provence were issues of legal status. The County of Provence had been moving in an increasingly French orbit since the middle of the thirteenth century, but Louis XI’s claims to the county were not as strong as his claims to Bar and most especially to Anjou, which was an *apanage*.

There is much to admire in *Louis XI*. Frizet is a generous scholar whose *pièces justificatives* include nine documents, some of which are new transcriptions of previously unpublished sources. Making these documents more accessible is a gift for which his colleagues will be grateful. Frizet shows consideration for the reader by ending each chapter with a lucid, helpful summation of the material just covered.

Frizet is also an assiduous scholar. To piece together the story of how Louis XI came to be count of Provence, Frizet relies on Louis XI's voluminous correspondence (there are more than 2,000 of his letters extant, published in eleven volumes), as well as on royal ordinances, fiscal records, and administrative documents of various sorts. He supplements these materials with bits of information gleaned from chronicles and municipal records. Frizet reconstructs events with remarkable thoroughness.

That having been said, *Louis XI* is not for everybody. To those already interested in Louis XI or fascinated by the history of fifteenth-century Provence, Frizet's book offers a wealth of factual information. But to those interested in broader conceptual issues such as state formation, *Louis XI* offers little beyond a dense narrative of regional events and political machinations. One broader issue does appear in *Louis XI*, and Frizet calls it "*francisation*" (p. 223), which refers to the Provençal experience of and response to French rule. But Frizet's decisions to focus on the interplay between René d'Anjou and Louis XI, and to end the book with Louis XI's death in 1483 (just twenty months after he had inherited the County of Provence), force the author to truncate his consideration of *francisation*. The reader gets to glimpse only the very beginning and merest sliver of something important.

NOTES

[1] Rainbow A. Porthé. Review of Yannick Frizet, *Munificence et stratégie de Louis XI en Midi provençal*. *H-France Review* Vol. 18 (April 2018), No. 65. <https://www.h-france.net/vol18reviews/vol18no65porthé.pdf> (accessed June 9, 2018).

[2] Provence the county and Provence the region (or the *Midi provençal*, as Frizet usefully calls it) were not coterminous. Also part of the *Midi provençal* but independent of the County of Provence were, for example, Avignon and the Comtat Venaissin, the Principality of Orange (located within the Comtat Venaissin), and the lordship of Monaco.

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ISSN 1553-9172