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Guilhem Pépin, ed., *Anglo-Gascon Aquitaine: Problems and Perspectives*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017. viii + 206 pp. Figures, maps, tables, illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. £60. 00 U.K. (cl). ISBN 978-1- 78327-197-9.

Review by Sandra Raban, University of Cambridge.

The ten essays collected here represent the fruits of a conference held in Oxford in 2011 at the end of the first of three projects to complete the publication of the Gascon Rolls. Although more evidence survives in local archives than one might initially suppose, the rolls matter because, together with records from the exchequer, they form the main source for Plantagenet rule in Gascony. The importance of these “office copies” of business emanating from the English royal chancery results from the almost total loss of the originals in two major disasters; the thirteenth-century archives, evacuated to London on the outbreak of war in 1294, were abandoned on the Isle of Oléron by sailors aggrieved by their unpaid wages, while later records, taken to Paris, were destroyed by fire in the eighteenth century. There is thus much to celebrate in making the remaining manuscript Gascon Rolls available in print and online.

The editor, Guilhem Pépin, provides a clear and useful introduction giving an overview of Anglo-Gascon historiography and the long, drawn-out process of publishing the actual rolls; the first volume appeared as long ago as 1885. As these essays show, the enterprise is injecting new life into Anglo-Gascon scholarship with historians taking advantage of greater ease of access. An incidental benefit is that they offer a survey of the current state of Anglo-Gascon scholarship, now in the process of refining the framework established by classic twentieth-century studies, thereby enhancing our understanding of Gascony between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Guilhem Pépin’s own contribution is a survey of the oath-taking circuits of medieval Gascony based on a roll from 1323 which found its way to London because of the war of Saint-Sardos. Traditionally, incoming dukes and seneschals exchanged oaths with local communities whereby they pledged to uphold their customs in return for allegiance. Rather than summon representatives to Bordeaux, it was customary for these ceremonies to be held at established locations throughout the duchy. As Dr. Pépin shows, neither the oaths nor the circuits were unchanged over time. Nor was the practice peculiar to Gascony. Common elements can be identified, notably the trees which often marked the site of oath taking and investiture.

Two of the essays are based on specific Gascon Rolls. Simon J. Harris views the 244 pardons enrolled on Gascon Roll C 61/37 in the context of the changing use of pardons as a means of military recruitment between their first appearance in any number at the end of Edward I’s reign and the campaigns of Edward III in the 1340s and 1350s. In conjunction with the surviving account book of Nicholas de Huggate, paymaster to the expedition, he is able to draw some conclusions about the nature of the crimes for which recipients were pardoned and their social status. The efficacy of the policy may be doubted. Only 165 of the 244 recipients arrived in Aquitaine and more failed to last the course of the

war. Figures for more conventionally recruited infantry, however, also show a staggering loss for largely unknown reasons.

Françoise Lainé focuses principally on Gascon Roll C61/75 to assess the transfer of sovereignty following the treaties of Brétigny and Calais. This was a complex matter, not least because the transfer from the king of France to the king of England had to be completed before Edward III could in turn transfer it to the Black Prince on the creation of a principality in 1362. One of her most interesting observations is the way in which material was enrolled selectively rather than being a record of routine business for which the Gascon Rolls were first introduced. The roll was thus serving a more political purpose as potentially difficult areas such as Limoges and the new concern with Castile were prominently documented.

Frédéric Boutoulle, in the earliest study chronologically, explores how the development of the Plantagenet administration, especially the increase in the number of provosts (*prévôts*), disrupted the customary role of the peasant élites (*probi homines*) in fulfilling obligations owed to the king-duke. What might appear to be complaints about the corruption of ducal officials can be interpreted more subtly as tensions caused by the loss of authority and influence by these groups within traditional peasant society.

Covadonga Valdaliso explains English involvement in the Castilian civil war of the later fourteenth century which he argues is widely misunderstood by both English and French historians. Using more sophisticated modern ways of interpreting chronicles, he unravels the complicated and many layered account of Pedro López de Ayala who changed sides, was sometime present and sometimes not, and wrote with a political sub-text. Appendices provide the account of Pedro I's trip to Aquitaine in 1366 to seek the help of the Black Prince in both Spanish and English.

Nicholas Savy and Guilhem Ferrand occupy themselves with the Anglo-Gascon companies (*routiers*) which were the scourge of SW France in the mid- to late-fourteenth century. Neither the English nor French crowns possessed the financial means needed to bring them under control, leaving local powers to do the best they could to protect the interests of their own people. Nicholas Savy examines the manoeuvring of the town councils of Quercy between allegiance to the English and French kings, while Guilhem Ferrand uses the accounts of Jean II, count of Armagnac to clarify his relations with the *routiers* themselves.

Andy King's essay illustrates the reluctance to commit serious military resources to Gascony from an English perspective. Such armies as were sent were small. The English exchequer mostly funded a few English archers and modest garrisons at places like Bordeaux or Fronsac. The majority of the English soldiers who served in Gascony held senior posts and even then their selection was often governed by English politics or patronage.

Robert Blackmore re-examines the later fourteenth-century wine trade to produce a more nuanced picture of the damage caused by war, particularly in the dramatic reduction of exports in 1369-70. Independent factors such as plague and English regulation are taken into account. He suggests that vineyards did not lend themselves well to the policy of devastation favoured by armies, although he perhaps under-estimates the effects of damage done to equipment and even the vines themselves at seasons other than the *vendange* reliant, as they were, on a heavy input of labour.

In the last essay Pierre Prétou examines the use Charles VII made of Scottish companies to subdue the southern Landes in the mid-1440s. Their brutality, combined with Charles' affectation of mercy, proved highly effective. Until their unpopularity led Louis XI to dispense with their services, it has been suggested that Anglo-Gascon Aquitaine could even be described as Scottish Aquitaine.

As one would expect from Boydell, the volume has been produced to the highest standards. My only minor complaints are the absence of a list of abbreviations and a failure to include the most frequently

cited MS sources in the bibliography. Both would make the book easier to use. Anglo-Gascon historians will find it indispensable. Those who, like me, have a strong interest in Plantagenet Gascony, but whose main researches lie elsewhere, will find it a treat. Guilhem Pépin is perhaps a little too pessimistic in claiming that Anglo-Gascon history is not dear to the hearts of either French or English academia (p.12). While it is true that Aquitaine was rarely the top priority for either crown in the Middle Ages, this collection bears witness to the long record of collaboration between the institutions of both countries in order to publish the Gascon rolls and also to the large amount of work published since the turn of the millennium.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Frédéric Boutouille, “Royal bailiffs and peasant communities in Western Gascony during the reign of Henry III (1216-1272)”

Guilhem Pépin, “The oath-taking circuits of the seneschals of Gascony and their origins: the case study of Ralph Basset of Drayton’s circuit (1323)”

Simon J. Harris, “The grant of pardons for military service in the war of Saint-Sardos (1323-1325)”

Françoise Lainé, “Recording sovereignty: a study of Gascon Roll C 61/75”

Covadonga Valdaliso, “Aquitaine in a Castilian chronicle: Pedro López de Ayala’s account of King Pedro I of Castile’s journey”

Nicolas Savy, “The attitude of town councils (*consulats*) of Quercy at the beginning and the end of the principality of Aquitaine (1360-1362 and 1368-1369)”

Robert Blackmore, “Profit out of ‘desolation’: the Anglo-Gascon wine trade (1369-1381)”

Guilhem Ferrand, ‘Jean II, count of Armagnac (1373-1384) facing the Anglo-Gascon *routiers*’

Andy King, “‘Labour in knyghthood’; English soldiers in Gascony (1369-1450)”

Pierre Prétou, “The subjection of the Landes and Southern Aquitaine by the king of France (1441-1463)”

Sandra Raban
University of Cambridge
sgr20@cam.ac.uk

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