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Jean-Michel Matz and Noël-Yves Tonnerre, *L'Anjou des princes, fin IXe-fin XVe siècle*. Paris: Picard, 2017. 408 pp. Maps, figures, suggested readings, and index. \$55.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-2-7084-1023-7.

Review by Amy Livingstone, Wittenberg University.

L'Anjou des princes is the second volume in a series dedicated to the history of Anjou. As such, it provides a comprehensive survey of the important trends, developments, and personages of medieval Anjou. The two authors, Jean-Michel Matz and Noël-Yves Tonnerre, divide the seventeen chapters between themselves chronologically. Tonnerre examines the history of the county from the eleventh through the thirteenth century and Matz takes on the thirteenth through the fifteenth century. Their objective is to offer an *histoire totale* of Anjou (p. 11); in other words, an examination of all social classes as well as the physical environment. As the book is a synthesis of the material rather than a new scholarly argument, the target audience would be the general reader or student. But *L'Anjou des princes* will also prove to be a useful reference for specialists in the Middle Ages.

The authors collaborate on the volume's introduction in which they argue for the importance of Anjou in the broader geopolitical context of medieval Europe. They also point out that this book fills a gap in the scholarship by furnishing a synthesis of the history of medieval Anjou. Tonnerre begins his examination of Anjou in the central Middle Ages with a discussion of the sources available for his analysis. This is an important and engaging chapter in which he alerts those not familiar with the challenges of doing the history of these centuries to the limitations and challenges imposed by the documents. In addition to the textual material, Tonnerre indicates that recent archeological work will also inform his discussion. One drawback to this otherwise helpful chapter is that it does not provide bibliographical references to the sources that have been edited and published, which would have been particularly useful to a non-specialist. Tonnerre's exploration of Anjou in the central Middle Ages is divided into three topical sections. The first section focuses on political power. In chapters two and three, Tonnerre supplies a narrative of the political developments between circa 900 AD when the counts of Anjou emerged as territorial princes to 1204 when the county fell into the orbit of the Plantagenets and ceased to be an autonomous principality. He follows this discussion by examining those who had power: the nobility. Points of discussion include the nature of noble power, transformations within the noble class from the eleventh through the twelfth century, and the physical footprint of the aristocracy. Archeological data on the castle, motte, and manor help to inform Tonnerre's analysis of the role of these elites.

In the next section, Tonnerre moves from political and social organization to an examination of the spiritual, mental, and cultural milieu of medieval Anjou. Chapter four queries the relationship between the counts and the Angevin clergy, particularly the bishops and monastic foundations. The medieval church experienced a period of reform during the late eleventh and twelfth century often called the Gregorian Reform Movement. Tonnerre considers how this broader church reform affected Anjou. Here he discusses the impact of the new monasticism and the crusades. In chapter six, the last chapter in this section, Tonnerre makes the case for Anjou as a major cultural center by examining the contributions of

the schools of Angers, as well as the richness and vibrancy of Angevin art, specifically painting and architecture.

The final section on Anjou in the central Middle Ages includes two chapters that focus on the countryside and emerging urban centers. These two chapters provide interesting information on the physical environment of Anjou in both the town and village. Tonnerre sketches out the topography of the region and discusses how the peasants, monks, counts, and lords of Anjou shaped the countryside by clearance and expansion. Chapter eight builds on this foundation by discussing the social and economic dynamism of those living in the country and town. Here we learn about the lives of peasants, but also the kinds of crops they cultivated and the technologies they employed, like water mills, of which there were over 300 constructed in Anjou in this period. The chapter closes with a detailed discussion of the "new city" of Saumur.

Jean-Michel Matz takes up the narrative at this point. His discussion of Anjou in the late Middle Ages begins with a political overview. Missing from this discussion of late medieval Anjou is a chapter that summarizes the primary sources available to historians and that Matz will use in the crafting of his narrative. This is unfortunate as it disadvantages the reader not intimately familiar with the sources of the late Middle Ages. Matz's rendering of the Angevin later medieval centuries is itself divided into two chronological sections. The first explores Anjou under the late Capetian monarchs; the second considers Anjou during the time of the Valois dynasty up to the end of the fifteenth century.

Chapter nine focuses on the question of how Anjou and its counts fared under the direct supervision of the Capetian kings. In particular, Matz considers how being a royal appanage and part of the Angevin Empire that included ambitions in the Mediterranean affected both counts and county. This shift away from Anjou had consequences for the administration of the county as the lords gained autonomy. Yet Anjou continued to prosper economically in spite of the count's absence (perhaps, in some ways, because of it). In chapter ten, we learn about the rise of the commercial development within the cities of Anjou, as well as contact between town and countryside. As a result of this economic prosperity, the church, piety, and culture were able to thrive, which Matz demonstrates in the next chapter. Religious life in the parish is explored here, but also the teaching that occurred in the city of Angers. The picture presented is one of intellectual dynamism and growth. Unfortunately, the somber realities of famine, war, and pestilence were looming on the horizon. Chapter twelve explores the poverty, social tensions, and the "march toward war" that would come to characterize the next centuries in Anjou and, indeed, much of Western Europe.

Chapter thirteen details the problems of what the author labels an "era of difficulties." Matz explores the social and economic instability that characterized Anjou from the middle of the fourteenth to the end of the fifteenth century. He examines a wide social swath ranging in status from elites to the very poor to discover how the crisis in production—especially in viniculture—as well as the increased taxation required from the crown affected Angevin residents. Matz then turns his attention to the political milieu. In these centuries the house of Anjou was subsumed into the Valois dynasty. As the count of Anjou first became a duke and then eventually a king, he appeared less and less in the county. However, consorts such as Marie of Blois and Yolanda of Aragon did spend time in Anjou, particularly in their favored residences at Angers and Saumur. Discussion of these women is a welcome addition, as the experience of women remains largely unaddressed in this volume. The next chapter moves on to a discussion of the late medieval church in Anjou and how it fared between "crisis and reform." Bishops of this era became largely absentee, a symptom of the decline in clerical quality and their lack of engagement with the faithful characteristic of the late medieval church. Matz balances discussion of the clergy by also exploring the religious life of the common believer. In spite of the problems and crises, Matz borrows from the seminal work of Jan Huizinga to assert that late medieval culture experienced a "*bel automne*." The court of the Angevin princes was a vibrant cultural center, as evident in the books owned and commissioned by the princes and their court, as well as the rising status of the University of Angers as the prime center of education in the west of France. Amidst all of this cultural glory,

however, were inklings of a new culture: humanism, which would come to be emblematic of the new learning of the renaissance and a new era in Anjou.

The last chapter in the book traces the tentative steps toward recovery after a century and half of demographic, political, and economic trauma. Yet Europe, and Anjou, re-emerged a very different place. For the Angevin princes, it meant the end of their autonomy and their complete subjugation to the Valois king. The time of the independent principality had concluded as national monarchies began to take shape and dominate.

L'Anjou des princes is an accessible narrative of the history of medieval Anjou. The information is clearly presented and easily digestible. Although informed by scholarship on the Middle Ages, the book does not offer any new arguments. The overview provided is quite traditional and follows the accepted ebb and flow of events and developments. Unlike many co-authored texts, it nicely synthesizes the two halves of the book. The organization of the chapters is well integrated and each section overall mirrors its counterpart in the other half of the book. The work of Anglophone scholars, however, could have been better represented among the suggested readings. The illustrations, maps, genealogical charts, and figures are attractively executed and complement the text. But the complex genealogies of the Angevin houses were embedded in various chapters, making it difficult to locate them. Placing the genealogies at the beginning of the book would have been preferable to make them more easily accessible.

At its core, however, *L'Anjou des princes* is more of a political narrative than an *histoire totale*. In the first half of the book, only twelve pages are dedicated to the lives of medieval peasants—who made up over 80 percent of the population. Also missing from these pages is any real discussion of women. While there are obligatory references to some countesses, these are mostly impressionistic. Medieval historians have shown how countesses played a key role in the politics of the eleventh through the twelfth centuries. Abbesses too have been shown to wield considerable influence, not to mention the contributions of the women of the cities and countryside. This oversight is ameliorated somewhat in the second half of the book as Matz does recognize that wives and mothers of the Angevin dukes were important in tying them to the politics and power of the Valois court. The reigns of Yolanda of Aragon and Marie of Blois, who clearly played pivotal roles as consorts and guardians, are briefly discussed. Compounding the absence of women in the pages of the book, the bibliographical suggestions provide the interested reader with little guidance to books or articles exploring women's experience, particularly that of Anglophone scholars. Perhaps the most glaring bibliographical oversight is Zita Rohr's recent biography of Yolanda of Aragon.^[1] Errors in the factual details of the life of Eleanor of Aquitaine plague the first half of the volume, which exacerbates the impression of how little value is placed on the history of medieval women, even the most famous. Recent scholarship has demonstrated the incontrovertible role that medieval women played a role in all aspects of their society. It might have been hoped that the era of surveying the Middle Ages and not including substantive discussion of women was at an end. Unfortunately, this volume indicates that this is not the case.

Overall this is a readable and well-executed survey of the history of Anjou from the eleventh through the fifteenth century. Although there is much to recommend *L'Anjou des princes*, one cannot help but wonder about the life experiences of the people who are missing from its pages.

NOTES

[1] Zita Rohr, *Yolande of Aragon (1381-1442): Family and Power* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016).

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