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Erika Graham-Goering, Michael Jones, and Bertrand Yeurc'h, eds., with the collaboration of Philippe Charon, *Aux origines de la Guerre de Succession de Bretagne. Documents (1341-1342)*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes. 2019. €39.00 (hb). ISBN 9782753577893.

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The Hundred Years War was much more than a straight fight between the kings of France and the kings of England who claimed the French throne. Within the many sideshows which need to be taken into account, the succession dispute in Brittany was exceptionally important. Not only did it open up a new theatre of action in the early 1340s, it also affected the Anglo-French war for many decades to come, even after the ostensible solution of the original succession dispute itself. In later phases of the war, the English continued to hope for, and sometimes to achieve, the support of the dukes of Brittany for their cause in France. Not until the final expulsion of the English from Normandy in 1449-1450 did the French gain the unequivocal support of the then Duke of Brittany. Even after then, into the later fifteenth century, the dukes dallied with an English alliance against their French royal overlords.

This excellent book takes us back to the origins of the succession dispute in 1341. It takes the form of an edition of key texts with full scholarly apparatus, a long introduction, and biographical notes on key personages. It is the product of a collaboration of experts, among them Professor Michael Jones who has done so much to bring important archives on the history of late medieval Brittany into the public domain as well as publishing a mass of books and articles on a wide range of themes, including the vernacular architecture of the duchy. Alongside him, Erika Graham-Goering brings her particular expertise on the Penthièvre family. (Her eagerly awaited monograph *Princely Power in Late Medieval France. Jeanne de Penthièvre and the War for Brittany* has just been published by Cambridge University Press in March 2020). The team is completed by Bertrand Yeurc'h, an expert on the Breton nobility. The collaboration of Philippe Charon, director of the Archives Départementales de Loire-Atlantique, is also valuable. Indeed, we are much indebted to him and his co-editors of the series *Sources médiévales de l'histoire de Bretagne* in which this volume appears. Established in 2014, the series has already seen important editions of the *Actes* of various dukes of Brittany, a number of monastic cartularies, a chronicle, and Jones's magisterial edition of *Comptes du Duché de Bretagne*.^[1] All credit to the Presses Universitaires de Rennes not only for being willing to publish sources of this kind. but for the exceptionally high standards of production. This current book is beautifully produced in hardback with a page layout editors might dream about—maps, charts and illustrations, all in colour, and a very enticing cover. Such high quality is an appropriate match for the high quality of the contents within.

The succession dispute concerned who should succeed Duke Jean III, who died in 1341. Philippe VI had chosen as heir Charles de Blois by virtue of the claim of his wife Jeanne, daughter of Guy de Penthièvre, younger brother of Jean III. But there was another claimant, Jean de Montfort (d. 1345), half-brother of the deceased duke, being the son of a second marriage of Jean III's father, Duke Arthur, to Yolande of Dreux, countess of Montfort. Given the state of Anglo-French relations in 1341 it is hardly surprising that Edward III of England threw his support behind the Montfort claim, first of John de Montfort and subsequently of his son, known later as Duke Jean IV. The civil war between Blois and Montfort was caught up with the Anglo-French war and not resolved until the death of Charles de Blois at the battle of Auray on 29 September 1364, after which the Montfort line remained unchallenged.

The documents in this collection consist primarily of the cases that Jean de Montfort and Charles de Blois brought before Philippe VI of France after the death of Jean III. Charles had made his claim to the French king in August 1341, to which Jean de Montfort responded with his own claim and his arguments against the Blois succession (texts 2 and 1 respectively). The original documents have been lost, but survive in later copies. What is important here and in other documents in the collection are the carefully constructed arguments, drawing on theological, legal and feudal "proofs." For Blois, the cases revolved around the rights of Guy de Penthièvre, the second son of Duke Arthur, as being superior to those of the third son, Jean de Montfort. But of course there was also the need to advance the right of Guy's daughter over the claim of her uncle. The case is therefore important in terms of arguing the rights of a daughter in the inheritance of fiefs. But it was Charles de Blois making the claim to the ducal title, noting that on the day he married Jeanne, he swore in the presence of the barons of the duchy that he would hold it without making any alienation and would maintain its the customs and bear its arms. The nine bishops of the duchy were in agreement too. Montfort's claim was that a brother took precedence. According to the law which God had given to Moses, when a man died without a son, his heritage would pass to his daughter, but if there was no daughter (as in this case, since Jean III had no heirs of his body) the inheritance passed to the brother.

The arguments of both sides were put forward in detail and make fascinating reading. But equally interesting are the depositions made in the enquiry which was ordered by the French king and which took place in late August and early September 1341. Witnesses for both sides were interviewed and their testimony recorded. We find many justifications put forward, including much on what had happened in other inheritance cases in the duchy. The editors have provided biographical notes on these witnesses. Taken together, therefore, this collection provides a unique insight into Brittany at this key moment of its medieval history. It also reveals the sophistication of enquiry, as well as the complexity of the matter and of the various arguments devised and deployed. The Blois case advanced the notion of the Breton nobility as a distinct *corps politique* with the duke as *chef* supported by the *membres* of the local barony. By contrast, the Montfort case saw the duke as a prince serving their overlord the king. The right of female inheritance also loomed large but, as the editors point out, the rights of Jeanne de Penthièvre were always specifically linked to the question of her marriage, an element which has not always been emphasised as it should be.

Whilst some of the texts had been printed earlier, the importance of this collection lies in its comprehensiveness, its careful editing (which involves efforts to reconstruct the chronology of

the case), and its excellent introduction, which not only explains the specifics of the case but sets it in a wider discussion on the history of the duchy within the kingdom of France.

NOTE

[1] Michael Jones and Philippe Charon, eds., *Comptes du Duché de Bretagne: Les comptes, inventaires et exécution des testaments ducaux, 1262-1352* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2017).

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