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H-France Review Vol. 5 (January 2005), No. 1

Philippe Poirrier, Ed., *L'Invention du Patrimoine en Bourgogne*. Dijon: Editions Universitaires de Dijon, 2004. 100 pp. (pb). €25 ISBN 2-905965-99-1.

Review by Kirrily Freeman, University of Waterloo.

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This slim collection of essays is the product of a *journée d'études* held in Dijon on January 25, 2002, organized under the auspices of the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme de Dijon and the Institut d'Histoire Contemporaine. The colloquium brought together a diverse group of academics and cultural administrators, and this collection of essays reflects the collaboration between researchers and policy makers in the study of French *patrimoine*.

Patrimoine, traditionally translated in English as "cultural heritage," is increasingly a subject of interest for academics and government alike. Nationwide *journées du patrimoine* are but one example of a phenomenon that Pierre Nora has described as a national obsession.[1] As Nora and numerous others have explored in depth, the notion of *patrimoine* lies at the core of French *lieux de mémoire*, representing points of crystallization of national history and national identity.[2] The concern with studying and safeguarding patrimony in France, which emerged in its contemporary form in the early 1970s, coincided then, as now, with public debates over the loss of such sites as the Halles de Baltard and, more recently, the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires and the Musée de l'Homme. It is in this context, therefore, that Poirrier's collection must be placed.

Outwardly, the scope and aim of Poirrier's collection is modest. It focuses on the region of Burgundy and outlines the origins, organization, and role of the cultural administrations responsible for patrimony in the region, particularly the Services des Monuments historiques and the Inventaire général. It charts the rise of historical and administrative interest in patrimony as an area of study and as an object of protection, conservation and restoration. Case studies of Dijon, Auxerre, Le Creusot, and la Bresse bourguignonne examine the implementation of patrimonial policy, highlighting the diversity of Burgundy's cultural heritage.

In his introduction, Philippe Poirrier calls for decentralization in the administration and study of French patrimony, and offers this collection as a first step in that direction. Poirrier's call in fact coincides with current decentralizing initiatives on the part of the French government, in which the responsibility for the management of heritage sites is being shifted from national to regional, departmental, and municipal administrations. Poirrier and his collaborators outline the strides taken in Burgundy to incorporate a vigorous and extensive patrimonial policy into municipal planning and administration and highlight the roles of regional and municipal administrations and *sociétés savantes* in promoting and advancing patrimony.

Despite its modest scope, however, *L'Invention du Patrimoine en Bourgogne* makes some important contributions. Poirrier's advocacy of decentralization is accompanied by a practical collaboration between academics and cultural administrators, and also embraces the opportunity for multidisciplinary in the study and conservation of French patrimony. The collection also raises issues of broader theoretical significance to scholars of French cultural history. For those colleagues interested in cultural policy, an overarching theme in this collection is the relationship between the state and municipalities in the development and implementation of patrimonial policy. The contributors also devote considerable attention to the historic role of *sociétés savantes* as advocates of conservation.

Furthermore, heeding Poirrier's call for decentralization, these essays look at patrimony from a local and regional perspective, and stress the relationship between cultural heritage and local and regional identities. The use of patrimony in the construction of national identities has been well explored, most notably in Pierre Nora's *Lieux de Mémoire* project, but the place of regional identities in this process remains a rich and fruitful area of study. [3]

In addition to delineating patrimonial policy as a distinct sub-field of cultural policy, an important contribution of this collection is the expansion of the notion of what constitutes patrimony to include modern, industrial, scientific, and technological sites and objects, and even entire communities. Sylvie Le Clech-Charton describes this process in her article on the Inventaire général. New research interests, she explains, have led to the evolution of the types of objects studied for the Inventaire, and to the awakening of scholarly interest in certain types of patrimony previously overlooked or disregarded, including objects and architecture of the twentieth century such as the church of Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay in Nevers and, particularly, elements of France's industrial history and heritage (p.34). Françoise Fortunet and Patrice Notteghem explore the "invention of industrial patrimony" in their article on the creation of a museum from the factories and mines of Le Creusot (p.75). The Le Creusot initiative, they stress, is a seminal step in inscribing France's industrial heritage in the nation's collective memory (p.75). Annie Bleton-Ruget describes the phenomenon of the experimental Écomusée—a 'museum' in which the entire community constitutes a living exhibition (p.76).

Another important contribution of this book is its investigation of the process of "patrimonialization." This process is explored by Stéphane Dufour in his article "La Patrimonialisation des biens religieux populaires dans la seconde moitié du XXe siècle." Dufour describes how objects that undergo a process of "patrimonialization" evolve both physically and semantically. They are changed physically through restoration and exhibition, as they become objects of public and scholarly attention. The transformation of their role, their decontextualization, ideological neutralization, and physical modification lead to changes of meaning and signification. This acknowledgement that "patrimonialization" is a process of invention is the greatest strength of the book. In recognizing this process of invention, the authors also acknowledge that it is a process that involves agency not only on the part of the state, and of exceptional representatives of the state like André Malraux, but also public agency and the action of municipal and regional authorities as well as local cultural organizations. It is also satisfying to see the emotive element of patrimony explored at the local level. As Stéphane Dufour stresses, "le patrimoine se reconnaît au fait que sa perte constitue un sacrifice douloureusement ressenti." (p.39)

*L'Invention du Patrimoine en Bourgogne* is, ultimately, a helpful reference guide for specialists, and makes a modest but important contribution to the growing field of the study of patrimony. This collection lacks some of the theoretical elements present in Philippe Poirrier and Loïc Vadelorge's *Pour une Histoire des Politiques du Patrimoine* (2003), particularly with respect to the social uses of patrimony. The detailed explanation of the structure and implementation of contemporary patrimonial policy in Burgundy leaves the reader wondering about the political impetus and agendas behind the policy. But, in the end, this is not the purpose of the volume, and *L'Invention du Patrimoine en Bourgogne* admirably meets its goals of fostering a multidisciplinary approach, encouraging dialogue between academics and administrators, and furthering a localized perspective in the study of patrimony.

#### LIST OF ESSAYS

- Serge Wolikow, "Préface"
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- Stéphane Dufour, “La Patrimonialisation des biens religieux populaires dans la seconde moitié du XXe siècle”
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  - Annie Bleton-Ruget, “L’Écomusée de la Bresse bourguignonne, l’identité locale et le patrimoine rural”
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## NOTES

[1] See Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* 7 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984-1992).

[2] This nuance has led many Anglophone scholars to adopt the term “patrimony” which perhaps conveys the links between sites or objects and constructions of nationhood more effectively than the usual “cultural heritage.”

[3] The nature of French regionalism has recently been re-examined by H.R. Kedward “Contemplating French Roots” in Martyn Cornick and Ceri Crossley eds., *Problems in French History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000) and by Julian Wright, *The Regionalist Movement in France 1890-1914: Jean Charles-Brun and French Political Thought* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Kirrily Freeman  
University of Waterloo  
kafreema@watarts.uwaterloo.ca

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