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Michael C. E. Jones, *Between France and England: Politics, Power and Society in Late Medieval Brittany* (Variorum Collected Studies Series). Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003. ix + 326 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliographical references and index. \$105.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 0-86078-906-3.

Review by Craig Taylor, University of York.

Over the last thirty-five years, Michael Jones has established himself as a leading expert on Brittany, whose contributions to our understanding of this important region during the late medieval period are matched only by Jean Kerhevé. A collection of his essays was published in 1988 under the title *The Creation of Brittany: A Late Medieval State* (London: Hambledon Press, 1988), and this second volume reprints twelve articles published between 1986 and 2000, three of them translated into English for the first time.

The first two articles situate Brittany within the wider context of French history. In “The Capetians and Brittany” (chapter two), Jones traces the long-history of Brittany from the ninth century through to the high Middle Ages, when the duchy accepted the overwhelming cultural forms of Capetian France, but administrative power was shared between the dukes and the crown (p. 16). His inaugural lecture, “Tradition, History and the French: A Case of Tunnel Vision” (chapter one), develops upon this point, emphasising that the creation of a powerful hereditary monarchy by the Capetians does not mean that we can, or should, understand the late medieval period solely through the lens provided by central government. Thanks in particular to the Hundred Years War, Brittany, like other regions, was able to undermine the “royal tunnel-vision of the future,” and almost succeeded in asserting its own provincial identity and even statehood, focused upon its own ruling dynasty, court, ceremonial, army, church, representative institutions, university, tax system, coinage, and legal system (p. 26). In short, the historian should beware of the teleological emphasis upon the study of the development of France and the French nation, one that risks underestimating the real independence demonstrated by provinces like Brittany.

A key element of this provincial identity, or even statehood, was the development of a ducal ideology and symbolism. Inspired both by the ancient traditions of the duchy and the example of the French crown, the Breton dukes employed a range of techniques to emphasise the royal and sovereign character of their authority, as Jones demonstrates in an important article entitled “En son habit royal”: le duc de Bretagne et son image vers la fin du moyen âge” (chapter eleven). One of these was the establishment of the Order of the Ermine, founded in 1381 by Duke Jean IV in celebration of his final victory at the battle of Auray in 1364 over his rival, Charles de Blois, thus ending the Breton war of succession. This knightly order served as an adjunct to the range of courtly displays, particularly through this triumphalist aspect (chapter twelve). Ironically enough, the loser at Auray, Charles de Blois, had helped to develop this ducal mythology and ideology, not only by advancing his own public reputation as a pious ruler, but also by reviving the memory of Breton kingship through the cults of his saintly predecessors, Salomon and Judicael, and by adopting certain monarchical images such as the use of a royal crown. Attempts to have Charles de Blois posthumously sanctified may have posed a severe challenge to Duke Jean IV and his dynasty, but they were only too willing to learn the more positive examples that Charles presented to them (chapter six).

Other aspects of this Breton “statehood” are examined in two important articles. In “The Late Medieval State and Social Change: A View From the Duchy of Brittany” (chapter 9), Jones emphasises not only the ideological foundations of Breton identity, but also the fiscal autonomy created through experiments in taxation, and the development of the ducal administration. Particularly important in this regard is the fact that the new bureaucratic elite was closely associated with the nobility, who maintained their share in “public authority” through their participation in government, in contrast with other regions such as Burgundy. Yet, as Jones argues in “Aristocracy, Faction and the State in Fifteenth-century Brittany” (chapter ten), the late-medieval Breton nobility were no different from other French nobles in that they were divided by political faction and severely weakened in the face of the crown, in part because of the absence of any institutions to cement their bonds and to encourage individuals to look beyond their own private interests. As a result, the nobles of Brittany were not ultimately united in the defence of provincial independence and the duchy against the encroachment of the French crown, and faction and intrigue

ultimately facilitated the triumph of the monarchy over Breton independence following the marriage of Duchess Anne (1488-1514) to King Charles VIII in 1491.

Other articles have a more narrow focus. In “Notaries and Notarial Practice in Medieval Brittany” (chapter eight), Jones examines one core group in the Breton administration, the public notaries, who appeared from 1300 and were regulated by the dukes and by the church. The importance role of Nantes in the Breton civil war between 1341 and 1365 is explored in “Nantes au début de la guerre civile en Bretagne” (chapter 3), as Jones sheds important light on the negotiations between Duke Jean III and the city in 1341 and 1342. In an article entitled “Ancenis, Froissart and the Beginnings of the War of Succession in Brittany (1341),” (chapter four) Jones demonstrates that the account of the outbreak of the Breton civil war provided by the *Chroniques* of Jean Froissart is not reliable, even if the great chronicler did catch the flavour of the conflict and contemporary attitudes towards it. Throughout this conflict, the Montfort claimants were assisted by the English king, Edward III, who entrusted military affairs to thirteen men as royal lieutenants between 1341 and 1362. Surveying these individuals, Jones draws particular attention to Sir John de Harreshull in “Edward III’s Captains in Brittany” (chapter five). The final article in this collection is an important biographical account of Jeanne de Navarre (1368-1437), widow of Duke Jean IV of Brittany. Having married King Henry IV of England in 1402, she was subsequently imprisoned and even charged with witchcraft during the reign of her stepson, Henry V, no doubt as part of a plot to confiscate her dower (chapter seven).

This is an extremely important collection of essays by one of the finest historians of late medieval France. Having focused upon the study of Brittany throughout his career, Jones is able to draw upon an extraordinarily detailed knowledge of not just archival documents, but also a range of other sources, including architecture, sculpture, art and literary texts. As a result, all of his articles present detailed and well-grounded arguments that contribute to an important and valuable understanding of key themes in late medieval French history.

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