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James Lowth Goldsmith, *Lordship in France 500-1500*. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. xiv + 529 pp. \$88.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 0-8204-6849-5.

Review by Kathleen Thompson, University of Sheffield.

The title of this work suggests an ambitious project, for much work on lordship has been undertaken by French and Anglophone scholars in the years since the Second World War. Professor Goldsmith looks at the nature of lordship and its origins in the late Roman Empire, and then provides chapters on lordship in Merovingian France, Carolingian France, late Carolingian and early Capetian France, late Capetian France, and late Medieval France, interspersed with chapters on regional patterns of lordship 900–1200, 1200–1328 and 1328–1500 at appropriate points. His declared intention is “to pull research together and present the story of medieval French lordship, the *seigneurie*, to a wider audience” (p. xiii). His bibliography is impressive, running to fifty pages, but the works listed are almost exclusively French and there are some surprising omissions. Only one mention is made of the work of Stephen D. White for example—surely one of the most influential scholars working on this area.

Few, if any, primary sources appear in the bibliography and none that are unpublished. Perhaps this is not unreasonable, since the work is intended to present research to a wider audience, although it is not clear what that audience might be. It is unlikely to appeal to the general public, and would be a hard read for even the most diligent undergraduate. The work itself is descriptive, tending to summarize the author’s reading without further analysis. Errors abound, suggesting that there has been little editorial support to take the text from the author’s personal computer to the printed page. Selecting more or less at random, for example: “Alexandre Dumas” (p. 6), where the bibliography gives Auguste Dumas; “the bishopric of Le Mans in Poitou” (p. 50); “Gregory of Tour’s parents” (p. 56); “Initially the monasteries fell under the controlled of the bishops” (p. 57); “per total Galliam fit descriptio generalis” (p. 122).

The work is much influenced by the work of the “Romanist” historians, such as Elisabeth Magnou-Nortier. Its conclusion begins “Lordship solidified in France when the centralized power of the late Roman state dissolved in fifth century Gaul,” but the author has no new perspective on that or anything that follows (p. 381). The project was a brave one, particularly for a historian who has previously worked on the early modern aristocracy, but its value lies chiefly in identifying the need for “an interpretive synthesis that spans the entire medieval era” rather than in supplying it (p. xiii).

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