

David Crouch and Jeroen Deploige (eds), *Knighthood and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020). 330 p. ISBN 9789462701700.

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Editors David Crouch and Jeroen Deploige are to be commended for this challenging, provocative, and illuminating collection of essays by an impressive array of international scholars researching the social character of knighthood and chivalric identity in Northwestern Europe during the High Middle Ages. As the editors point out, ‘in popular imagination few phenomena are as strongly associated with medieval society as knighthood and chivalry,’ and few have been the subject of as much historiographic debate. In part these contentions are the consequence of differing national perspectives and ideological assumptions. The aim of this volume is not to produce a synthesis along the lines of Richard Kaeuper’s *Medieval Chivalry* (2016), but to explore various aspects of knighthood and chivalry based on recent research. Accordingly, the volume is divided into five parts: ‘Noble Warriors, Warring Nobles’; ‘Knighthood and Lineage’; ‘Martial Ideals in Crusading Memories’; ‘Women in Chivalric Representation’; and ‘Didactics of Chivalry’. The volume begins with the editors’ historiographical overview of the subject and of the individual essays. Each essay is headed by a useful abstract and ends with a brief conclusion that reflects (in the words of the editors) ‘on the way in which [the author’s] particular research might contribute to a new and better understanding of the different markers of a growing chivalric identity in the West.’

The three essays by Dominique Barthélemy, Jörg Peltzer, and Eljas Oksanen comprising Part One underscore both the strengths and one great weakness of this book. Barthélemy examines the functions of the tournament and dubbing to knighthood in the development of French chivalry in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Rejecting the idea that eleventh-century feudal conflicts were bloody, harsh, and barbaric, and that chivalry was ‘a kind of French or Christian miracle in the heart of medieval darkness,’ Barthélemy argues that the tournament arose from the ‘feudal habit’ of sparring enemies of the same social status; it functioned as arenas in which young nobles could display prowess ‘in accordance with the new chivalric ideal and behaviour marked by vanity and narcissism.’ Dubbing was a right of passage to chivalric manhood and the incentive to perform acts of prowess. In contrast to

the critics of the feudal paradigm, Barthélemy places all of this within the context of feudal lordship and vassalage. The meaning of chivalry and knightly investiture in eleventh- and twelfth-century Holy Roman Empire was different according to Peltzer. Chivalry, based on personal qualities, was a source of honor that cut across the social ranks of the aristocracy, while knighthood became a marker of membership in the lower aristocracy. Oksanen focuses on the knotty relationship between knighthood and paid military service in the Anglo-Norman realm. He proposes that an Anglo-Norman chivalric identity arose in order to differentiate between an aristocratic military elite and lower-class mercenary soldiers who played an increasingly important part in twelfth-century warfare. The three essays taken together demonstrate the regional differences in the meaning of chivalry and knighthood. It also underscores the weakness that I mentioned above — the lack of a synthesis that would pull the three essays together.

Sarah McDougall's contribution to Part Two, 'The Chivalric Family', is of particular interest because it challenges, and I would say demolishes, Georges Duby's representation of aristocratic families of the twelfth century as characterized by patrilineality and primogeniture. McDougall demonstrates that aristocratic family identity drew upon maternal as well as paternal kinship, that, although primogeniture may have been 'the preferred and lauded ideal,' there were no rigid rules of inheritance, and even bastards could inherit land and titles; and that marriage remained a fluid institution. Jean-François Niehus examines the origin and political connections of the noble family of Chocques and challenges the assumption that its tenth-century progenitor Sigard was a lowly military retainer. Niehus' study is in line with recent scholarship that emphasizes continuity between the Carolingian and twelfth-century nobility, another challenge to the 'feudal revolution' thesis.

John Hosler's and Nicholas Paul's stimulating essays about knightly ideals and crusading are high points in this volume. Hosler analyzes how four eyewitness accounts of the siege of Acre (1189-91) during the Third Crusade focused upon prowess, honour, and piety from the knights, linking military success to valorous deeds and military failure to either poor performance or cowardice. The chroniclers celebrated those who lived up to their chivalric ideals and denigrated those who did not. Hosler warns military historians that they must read these sources critically, understanding that in their accounts they were contrasting what happened in battle with what these authors believed should have happened. Nicholas Paul uses what on its face is an unpromising

source for chivalry — a collection of texts commemorating the gift of a fragment of the True Cross by a local lord, Manasses of Hierges, to the abbey of St Gerard of Brogne near Namur — to shed light on the relationship between crusading and chivalry. Paul concludes that ‘While the devotional character of crusading is beyond question, the crusading frontier was also a critical zone for the cultivation of reputations and prowess.’ The crusading frontier ‘was as much an arena for chivalric performance as a stage for Holy War.’ Both essays build upon Richard Kaeuper’s insight that knightly piety fused ideals of chivalric prowess and violence with penitential suffering.

Another highlight of the volume is Louise J. Wilkinson’s long essay on ‘The Chivalric Woman’. Women qua women have largely been ignored by historians of chivalry, except as the objects for male demonstrations of prowess and courtliness. Wilkinson argues that aristocratic women were immersed in chivalric culture. Because of the strong moral component in chivalry, women could themselves be ‘chivalrous’ by exhibiting the ideals of feminine virtue and noble conduct and behaviour. Ladies, Wilkinson points out, adopted heraldry, with its martial imagery, to emphasize their noble status. What makes Wilkinson’s essay stand out in particular is its inclusion of several well-chosen medieval manuscript illustrations to support her points. Nicholas Ruffini-Ronzani’s discussion of the noble *trouvere* Hugh III of Oisy’s *Tournoiement des Dames* has less to do with the role of women in chivalry than with their political importance. Ruffini-Ronzani places the poem and the noble women named in it within the context of Hugh’s attempt to integrate himself into the political milieu of the court of the young King Philip II Augustus.

Claudia Wittig’s ‘Teaching Chivalry in the Empire (ca. 1150-1250)’ demonstrates how vernacular didactic literature inculcated images and ideals of chivalry and knighthood among the lower aristocracy of the Holy Roman Empire. Chivalric ideals ‘provided lower-ranking elites with means of improving their social standing’ and associating themselves with the higher nobility. Wittig’s study of German didactic literature strongly supports Petlzer’s argument about knighthood’s significance as a marker of nobility for the lower aristocracy. The final essay of the volume is David Crouch’s ‘What Was Chivalry? The Evolution of A Code’. In it, Crouch develops and revises Maurice Keen’s argument that ‘the self-conscious code of Chivalry’ emerged in the early thirteenth century. Rather than view the *Ordene de Chevalerie* as the ur-text for chivalry, as Keen did, Crouch sees it as the synthesis

of three strands of didactic literature, that he labels 'The Schoolroom or Catonian Tradition', 'The Biblical or Solomonic Tradition', and (perhaps most critically) 'The Instructional or Vernacular Tradition'. For Crouch what distinguishes 'Chivalry' from knightliness, the activities associated with knighthood, is that the former is a 'hyper-moral' code of behaviour that integrates knightliness with the 'superior conduct' of courtliness (*cortezia*) and Christian moral excellence. Although I accept the importance of this didactic literature in formulating the thirteenth-century conception of chivalry, I am less persuaded than Crouch is that 'chivalry' was a hyper-moral code. Rather, like Richard Kaeuper, I tend view it as a contested ethos of an aristocratic elite rather than a code. Though authors of chivalric poetry and treatises agreed on the basic values and virtues of a *preudomme*, the ideal man, which of these attributes were emphasized varied from author to author.

I have only two reservations about this outstanding volume of essays. First, it really is not about the High Middle Ages but about chivalry and knighthood in France, the Anglo-Norman realm, and Germany. Some consideration of the development and meaning of chivalry in Iberia and Italy would have been welcome. Secondly, the volume cries out for a concluding chapter that pulls together its various strands. In a sense, the editors' introduction attempts to do this to a degree, but more of a synthesis would have been welcome. Nonetheless, this is a collection of essays that will repay both specialists and a general audience interested in medieval knighthood and chivalry.

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