

*Royal and Elite Households in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: More than Just a Castle*, edited by Theresa Earenfight. Leiden: Brill, 2018. Pp. 416. ISBN 9789004314320.

This excellent collection grew out of the Kings & Queens 3 conference which was held at the University of Winchester in 2014; the theme of “Entourage” provided an inspiration for the papers which Theresa Earenfight has ably brought together in this volume. The sixteen case studies range from the tenth to sixteenth centuries and span Western Europe, bringing together examinations of the households of kings, queens, and princes as well as those of nobles and even elite (female) prisoners. Despite their diversity in terms of the geographical, gendered, and temporal setting of their studies, these chapters consistently demonstrate the interconnectedness and interdependent nature of royal and elite households. They show that personnel frequently moved between households, bringing their experience and loyalties with them, and most importantly, perhaps, they demonstrate that households formed the center of wide networks connecting royal and elite families across the realm and beyond. In the introduction, Earenfight rightly argues that the foundation of monarchy itself rested on these networks formed in and radiating out from the royal household. Several chapters note that the formation and composition of the royal household formed the basis of the government, both as a model for the administrative framework and as many courtiers held both household posts and governmental offices. Given the importance and centrality of royal and elite households to the workings of monarchy and the administration of the realm, these case studies provide a very useful opportunity not only to deepen our understanding of individual households but also to gain a better understanding of how they operated as a key mechanism of power, authority, and influence in their respective realms and across medieval Europe.

The two key strengths of this collection are the high standard of scholarship across all of the case studies and the connections that run across the various chapters. The editor clearly encouraged the authors to read each other’s papers as they developed their own studies and this has resulted in clear and effective links being drawn across all of the chapters, which highlight both connections and key themes across the volume. Another kudo to the editor is the organization of the volume, which works exceptionally well. It is roughly chronological, which demonstrates a sense of progression or development over the period, but the well thought-out grouping of the papers aids the flow and again deepens the connections across the volume.

The first three papers are roughly grouped around the tenth century; while Penelope Nash's paper looks at the Holy Roman Empire and David McDermott examines the households of early English *aethelings*, Megan Welton's study neatly bridges the two by comparing the households of royal women on both sides of the Channel. All three papers unpack documentary sources, including surviving charters and diplomas, to try to understand the membership and functioning of these early medieval households.

Next, we have a grouping of four chapters which look at royal and quasi-royal female households in medieval England, from Linda E. Mitchell's detailed study of Joan de Valence's household management through to Caroline Dunn's prosopographical examination of the queenly household of Isabella of France. Sandwiched between these are two interesting examinations of the impact of imprisonment on the household of two royal women: Eleanor, the erstwhile heiress of Brittany who was held captive by King John and Henry III, and another Eleanor, the disgraced wife of Humphrey of Gloucester who was charged with witchcraft. While Eileen Kim questions whether the personnel who served Eleanor of Brittany during her confinement can truly be deemed a household, Sally Fisher examines the depiction of the destruction of Eleanor Cobham's household following her arrest and imprisonment.

The next two studies offer a comparison of how royal households could serve as a basis for jockeying for power. Alexander Brondarbit demonstrates how serving in the royal household and accruing royal favor and access could enable courtiers to become important power brokers whose influence could be felt across fifteenth-century England. In contrast, Alana Lord demonstrates almost the reverse in her study of fourteenth-century Aragon, showing the concern that courtiers could have a negative influence on the royal figure that they served and that a king expected to be able to influence the household of his heir, as much as the prince might try to fight that parental/regal control.

From Alana Lord's paper onwards, the remaining papers (bar one) are all either based in or connected to Iberia, reflecting the editor's own area of expertise. The following two chapters offer an interesting comparison of two Portuguese courts, with Isabel de Pina Baleiras's examination of the unstable court of King Fernando and his scandalous wife Leonor Teles, and Manuela Santos Silva's discussion of how Leonor's successor Philippa of Lancaster's household was carefully developed as the first queen of the new Avis dynasty. The next chapter by Gamero Igea also considers the challenges in forming a household for a new dynasty in a consideration of the retinue of Ferdinand of Aragon as king consort of Castile. While both Philippa and Ferdinand were

foreign consorts, Ferdinand's situation was complicated by being a male consort and the reigning king of Aragon—his household had to reflect both of his roles, yet still recognize that the household of his wife Isabel was the primary royal household in Castile.

The following two chapters offer an excellent examination of networks, relationships, and influence in female households. Zita Rohr unpicks Anne de France's *Enseignements* for her daughter Suzanne on how to form and manage her household. Rohr counters arguments that this text emphasizes submissive behavior for royal women and courtiers, arguing instead that this manual can be seen in a more subversive light, comparing it to Machiavelli's *Il Principe*. Theresa Earenfight's study of the household of Catherine of Aragon demonstrates the deep bonds of service and friendship that the queen made with members of her household, both Castilian and English. These loyalties endured through Catherine's precarious widowhood and final years even when her title and queenly household were stripped from her.

The final chapters give intensive and detailed studies of sixteenth-century households. Audrey Thorstad digs into the records of the Duke of Buckingham's travelling household, offering a fascinating window into the functioning of an elite household as it wended its way back and forth between Buckingham's own base in the West Country and the capital. Hélder Carvalhal's study is similarly detailed but instead compares the households of the various *infantes* or royal offspring of Manuel I of Portugal. Carvalhal charts the development of their households, noting the difficulty that some *infantes* had in gaining autonomy so that they could cultivate their household as a basis for their own authority and influence.

In sum, this collection is an excellent addition to scholarship on royal, court, and queenship studies as well as gender and political history. It is a must for institutional libraries to support both modules on medieval studies and scholars working in the period.

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