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Mentions of hostages (Latin *obsides*) are ubiquitous in all manner of written sources across the entirety of the Middle Ages and, indeed, from the proceeding Roman period as well. Despite the prevalence of hostages, hostage-taking, and negotiations about hostages in the medieval period, this topic received scant attention from scholars until the publication by Adam Kosto of »Hostages in the Middle Ages« in 2012. The volume under review here was stimulated, in large part, by Kosto's study, both in terms of offering a deeper analysis of questions only touched upon by Kosto and in offering interpretations that differ from his.

»Medieval Hostageship« begins with a helpful overview of the state of the field by the editors Matthew Bennett and Katherine Weikert in which they situate the concept of hostages in a medieval context. They emphasize the role of hostage taking and giving as part of the social fabric rather than as evidence for crises whose participants expected a violent resolution. The editors note the difficulty of examining »normal« as contrasted with »extraordinary« hostages because of the tendency of surviving sources to emphasize the plights of high-ranking individuals. Bennet and Weikert also discuss the difficulty of offering a definition for hostages, despite the valiant effort of Kosto to provide a working definition of this phenomenon in his study. As a consequence, this volume, as evidenced by its subtitle, is concerned far more with the social and political impact of those held as captives, whether as hostages or as something else, than it is with providing precise categories for captives of various types. In this context, the editors explain that the purpose of this collection is to allow readers to understand hostages through a social rather than a legal prism, and thereby broaden our understanding of role played by hostages in a wide range of situations.

The eleven essays in this volume are organized chronologically beginning in 7th century and running up through the late 15th century, with the majority of the studies focused on England. The first three essays by Katherine Barker, Ryan Lavelle, and Alice Hicklin all treat Anglo-Saxon England. Barker offers a tightly focused examination of the concept of hostageship in Bishop Aldhelm of Sherborne's poem, titled »Carmen rhythmicum«, which he composed in the late 7th century. She points to the possible identity of the dedicatee of this poem as Abbot Helmgisl of Glastonbury, on the basis that Aldhelm may have been using a play on the Latin phrase *casses obsess*, that is helmet hostage, which is also the meaning of the Anglo-Saxon compound *helm* and *gisl*. The political implication of this dedication, according to Barker, is that the monastery of Glastonbury was held as a kind of hostage by the new political and economic reality brought about by the establishment of the bishopric of Sherborne, whose see was held by Aldhelm.

Ryan Lavelle examines roughly the same period in Anglo-Saxon history, and considers the public role played by hostages in demonstrating royal

authority and power. Lavelle draws upon four cases in four different sources to support this argument: a letter written by Bishop Wealdhere to Archbishop Berhtwald of Canterbury, Bede's »Historia ecclesiastica«, the Frank's casket, and finally the »Anglo-Saxon Chronicle«. From these texts and material source, Lavelle concludes that publicly presenting hostages served to enhance a ruler's prestige. He then adduces from some places names that seem to draw upon hostage-holding terminology that there may have been places that were particularly associated with the keeping of hostages in Anglo-Saxon England.

The final essay in this group by Alice Hicklin considers the role played by hostages in Swein's conquest of England in 1013 and the subsequent mutilation of these hostages by Cnut following a revolt of the English against his rule. Contrary to the state of the question, Hicklin argues that Swein required hostages from all shires in England, both north and south of Watling street, and treated all of these hostages in the same manner. The death of Swein and the effort by the Anglo-Saxon leadership to recall Eathelred as king led Cnut to order the mutilation of these hostages. Hicklin argues that it is quite surprising that this mass mutilation of hostages did not generate much commentary by either contemporary writers or modern scholars despite the rarity of such an act. Hicklin suggests that Cnut's decision to mutilate the hostages by cutting off their hands, noses, and ears was predicated on the idea that the hostages would survive this ordeal and subsequently serve as a visible reminder of the Anglo-Saxons' faithlessness. Ultimately, she concludes that the taking and giving of hostages was intended to avoid violence, but the failure of agreements and the mutilation inflicted by Cnut demonstrates that such agreements were, in fact, fragile.

The next two essays by Matthew Bennett and Christian Ispir consider, in turn, hostage taking in twelfth-century France and the role of hostages in John's rule over England (1199–1216). Bennett approaches the problem of hostage taking in the long 12th century as an aspect of high medieval knightly mentalité, and draws upon both historiographical and more explicitly literary works. Bennett points to the accounts offered, for example, by Orderic Vitalis and the »Song of Roland« to suggest that hostages frequently were offered and taken in a variety of military conflicts. He also concludes, in a manner similar to Kosto, that the killing of hostages was relatively rare even in cases where agreements were broken. Interestingly, Bennett found that this pattern remained even in conflicts between Muslims and Christians.

Turning from the more or less horizontal relationships examined by Bennett, Christian Ispir considers King John's demands for hostages from his barons as an element of the ruler's heavy-handed efforts to ensure obedience. Ispir argues that the hostility to John's demands for hostages resulted not only from the king's lack of political skill, but also because the early 13th century witnessed a shift in aristocratic views away from demanding hostages to ensure agreements. The great abundance of records that survive from John's reign makes it much easier to track the king's demand for and handling of hostages than is true for earlier rulers. As a consequence, Ispir is able to show the great variety of purposes for which John demanded hostages, including securing financial transactions, securing faithful service, and also securing political agreements with foreign powers such as the Welsh and Scots.

The next three essays in the collection by Gwen Seabourne, Katherine Weikert, and Annette Parks draw attention to the problems inherent in understanding female hostageship. The first essay in this group, by Seabourne, is focused on the question of definitions, and particularly what it meant for a woman to be a hostage. In this context, she challenges Kosto's definition of hostages as those who were given rather than taken, through

a close examination of the cases of Margaret and Isabella, the daughters of King William the Lion of Scotland, who were handed over to King John by their father. In particular, Seabourne wonders whether the girls were given as hostages, as Kosto concluded, or for some other purpose. In addition, Seabourne challenges Kosto's argument that gender was not an important factor in the giving and taking of hostages, particularly in the later Middle Ages. She argues that women were far more likely than men to be taken captive to ensure behavior than were men, very frequently without any agreement from their families. By contrast, Seabourne states, formal written agreements were much more common for men given into captivity.

Katherine Weiker also focuses her attention on the Scottish princesses Margaret and Isabella, who were treated in the previous essay. Weikert provides a detailed examination of royal politics in both England and Scotland with a focus on the ongoing tension between King John and King William, and subsequently between William's successor Alexander and King John as well as the latter's son Henry III. As Weikert makes clear, the fate of the two princesses hung on the resolution of this ongoing series of conflicts between the two realms, with the result that their treatment at the hands of their English captors varied over time. The ambiguous handling of the girls by the English crown led, in turn, to a variety of descriptions of them by contemporary and near contemporary narrative works during the period of their captivity and subsequent marriages to English noblemen with the result that in some cases the princesses were denoted as hostages and in others as wards awaiting marriage.

The final essay in this section by Annette Parks moves away from England to southern Italy in the second half of the 13th century and examines the fate of King Manfred of Sicily's family at the hands of Charles of Anjou. Parks emphasizes throughout her essay that the status of Helena as well as her three young sons as captives rather than as hostages entailed a harsh fate for all of them. Parks provides a detailed and moving narrative of the fate of Manfred's family after his death in battle against Charles of Anjou. The little boys, who posed possible threats to Charles' hold on their father's kingdom, were blinded and kept in harsh captivity until their deaths. Helena was kept in similarly harsh circumstances, although without suffering direct physical harm, until her death. By contrast, Helena's daughter Beatrice, the only one of her children who might have been considered a hostage, had a better fate, in large part because her step-sister was the queen of Aragon. Ultimately Beatrice was released from captivity and went on to marry and have children of her own.

The final three essays in the volume by Gordon McKelvie, Alex Brondarbit, and Rémy Ambühl consider the problem of hostage taking in the context of the Hundred Years War and the War of the Roses during the late Middle Ages. McKelvie focuses on the fate of King James I of Scotland, who was held as a prisoner rather than as a hostage, first by Henry IV and then by Henry V of England. In contrast to the distinction drawn by Parks in her examination of Manfred's family, McKelvie argues that it was social status rather than legal status, that is as a hostage or prisoner, which determined the treatment of the captive. In discussing the 17 years of James' captivity, McKelvie draws a number of distinctions between his treatment at the hands of Henry IV and Henry V. The former, constrained by the demands of parliament, provided James with a rather limited stipend and kept him locked away in secure castles far from court. By contrast, Henry V provided James with a significantly higher standard of living, brought him to court, and used the Scottish king extensively in public ceremonies to enhance Henry's own prestige. McKelvie

concludes that James I's subsequent rule in Scotland was shaped to a great extent by what he learned of politics and statecraft at Henry V's court.

In the second essay of this group Alex Brondarbit treats the problem of royal hostages during the War of the Roses, in which Henry VI was held captive on three separate occasions, while Edward IV and Edward V, were each held captive once. Brondarbit distinguishes between traditional hostage arrangements in which the captor sought a ransom or a negotiated settlement, and the holding of the English kings, who were detained for rather different reasons. In particular, Brondarbit argues that holding of the English king during the later 15th century was intended to give the captor an opportunity to separate the king's two bodies, namely his official god-given status as ruler and his physical self. By doing this, the captor hoped to be able to assume the ruler's status and then dispose of his physical body. Brondarbit points out that this tactic was only effective in a limited manner because the great magnates, who comprised the political community, generally were unwilling to see the captor usurp the king's role. Brondarbit argues, however, that holding the king captive did allow the captors to drive the political agenda and achieve many of their goals.

The final essay in the volume, by Rémy Ambühl, offers a detailed examination of what happened to hostages, who were given to ensure the fulfillment of a surrender agreement, when the agreement collapsed. Ambühl offers as a case study the example of eight hostages, who were handed over by the defenders of the castle and palace of Rouen in November 1449 to the French king. The garrison commander Edmund, duke of Somerset, ultimately was not able to fulfill the agreement that required the evacuation of Rouen as well as several other fortifications and the payment of a substantial ransom. As a consequence, the status of the English captives, including John Talbot, the earl of Shrewsbury, was changed from hostage to prisoner of war. Ambühl argues that this new status guarantied the lives of the English prisoners, but ensured that they no longer were treated as a group, but rather faced individual fates that depended upon their own social status as well as the economic and political interests of their captors. One of the interesting side notes of Ambühl's investigation is that the English crown took no responsibility for securing the freedom of these eight men, who were left to their own devices and the resources of their families and friends.

As a group, these essays provide a number of stimulating approaches for considering the various roles played by captives in medieval societies, including not only as hostages, but also as prisoners of war, as well as inconvenient prisoners. It is also clear that much work remains to be done in this area of inquiry. The considerable focus in this volume on England suggests that other regions of Europe may provide equally stimulating case studies that will illuminate further the many ways in which captives of all sorts facilitated or hindered social, political, economic, and military relationships. Another point that emerges from this volume is that a lack of definitions an lead to some confusion even among authors in the same volume. As more information is developed about hostages and captives generally, it may be possible to devise definitions or at least categories that are aligned more closely with the lived reality of people within specific places and times.