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The Ineffectiveness of Lordship in England, 1200–1400

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This essay is concerned with the English aristocracy, meaning lay and clerical lords, from the gentry to dukes and archbishops, mainly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It examines critically the reputation that the lords have gained in modern times for playing a very decisive and

forceful role in the economy.¹

...

The aristocracy, especially the magnates, are often depicted as attaining a pinnacle of economic success in the thirteenth century. They had been faced with grave problems around 1200, as inflation threatened to reduce the value of their fixed incomes, and a predatory Angevin monarchy increased its financial demands on them. By the end of the thirteenth century, they had increased their landed revenues; embraced direct management of agriculture on their estates; honed an effective system of private administration; completed the imposition of a new form of serfdom; developed written records as an...

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