

Charles V, Louvre and Château de Vincennes 1364 - 1380

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Medieval Histories

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Medieval Histories

Magazine about our Medieval Heritage & History

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News about our
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Photo (frontpage):

Charles V is received in Rheims on the eve of his coronation. From the coronation book. © British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B VIII fol. 44v. ©



Portrait of Charles V from the coronation book, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B VIII fol. 44v

Charles V, King of France 1338 - 1380

Charles V of the House of Valois was born in January 1338 as the eldest son of John II and Bonne de Luxembourg. He was born at a time, when the 100 years war had just broken out. Charles was the first heir to the French king, who was styled Dauphin de Viennois. In 1349 the last dauphin – dolphin – of Viennois sold his rights to the French king on condition that the designated heir to France in the future would carry this honour in his arms.

Charles had an eventful youth. Twelve years old he was married to his cousin, Jeanne de Bourbon, with whom he had

eleven children. At seventeen he was already militarily engaged in connection with a rebellion by the King of Navarre, Charles the Bad, against his father.

Then in 1355 he was sworn in as regent, after the English took his father, John II, and his younger brother as prisoner at the battle of Poitiers. Before the king was captured with his immediate entourage, he had succeeded in sending the Dauphin, the future Charles V, away. The king, however, together with his youngest son was taken as prisoner to England.



Battle of Poitiers according to an illumination in the Chronicle of Froissart, 15th century. BnF 2643, fol. 207r

Meanwhile

... all went wrong with the Kingdom, and the state was undone. Thieves and robbers rose up everywhere in the land. The nobles despised and hated all others and took no thought for the mutual usefulness and profit of lord and men. They subjected and despoiled the peasants and the men of the villages. In no way did they defend their country from enemies. Rather, they trampled it underfoot, robbing and pillaging the peasants' goods".[1]

The reason was the enormous ransom, the English king demanded: cessation of most of Western France and the payment of a colossal ransom of 4 million écus. Although later reduced to 3 million, it still represented a hefty sum. Charles tried to raise the sum by devaluing the cur-

rency. At the same time he summoned the Estates-General in October to seek money to bolster the defence of the country and Paris. At this parliament the third estate represented by the provost Etienne Marcel tried to get serious political concessions. Charles refused, but the provost ordered strikes and in the end Charles had to accept. However, when the news reached his father, who was – although in the royal style – living as prisoner in Bordeaux at this time, he refused to accept the agreement. Back to the drawing board, Charles began to try to take back Paris. At some point, though, he had to flee the capital and he did not return until 1359.

At the same time the English once more invaded France, with Edward reaching Rheims in December and Paris in March. This time, the defence was successful and

this paved the way for renewed negotiations. In the end the king was set free. However 40 nobles including the younger son of John, Louis, were given as hostages. At some point the young man decided to flee, as France continued to have a very weak economy and simply had no funds to pay the agreed sum. This induced John to return to England, perhaps to honour his agreement, perhaps to negotiate directly with Edward the III. In January 1364 he died in London.

At home Charles was finally king. His health, though, was seriously impaired, probably due to an arsenic poisoning and at the same time he lost two of his eleven children. Further, his realm was severely reduced as the English had taken over a third of France (mostly Aquitaine and Gascony). At the same time 'routiers', ruthless mercenary soldiers, ravaged the countryside.

Nevertheless, the new king succeeded in regaining control of both Paris and the rest of France. At the same time he began on some of the major construction works, for which he is known – Louvre and Château de Vincennes (see below)

As king, Charles benefitted from three things. First of all he had to collaborate with a reform-minded French council

while being supported by a royalist alliance of Northern and Western nobles. Then, in 1369, his brother Philip the Bold succeeded in marrying the heiress of Flanders and Artois, thus denying this alliance to the English. Finally his closest ally Bertrand de Guesclin succeeded in placing a pro-French candidate on the Castilian throne. Through these political manoeuvres the English in South-Western France were caught between two hostile political powers. At the same time, Charles was able to cement a political alliance with a prominent Breton, Olivier de Clisson, who joined the camp of the French with a host of other knights.

All this fed the success of his lieutenants in the military field, where his army succeeded bit by bit in regaining former French territory. By avoiding pitched battles and instead besieging and negotiating their way forward, the English ended up with little more than a narrow coastline in Western France.

All in all, he was later considered a most wise ruler. Much of this, though, was due to the biography by Christine de Pizan, written in 1404 – *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* (see below). Historians have later debated whether he was in fact as politically sage as portrayed.



However there is no doubt Charles maintained the French court in an opulent and refined manner that anticipated the courts of the European Renaissance. Christine de Pisan, Charles' biographer, paints a picture of a wise ruler whose academic tastes led him to commission and to collect some of the finest works of medieval illuminated manuscripts of his day. Eventually Charles amassed at his royal residences a library

of over 900 manuscripts, of which around 100 are known to survive today. Among the most important of these manuscripts is this Coronation Book.

[1]From the Chronicle of Jean de Venette for the year 1356. Ed. by Jean Birdsall and Richard A. Newhall, *The Chronicles of Jean de Venette*, Columbia University Press 1953, p. 6

Coronation of Charles V

In 1364 Charles V (1338 -1380) was crowned as king of France in Rheims. The following year he commissioned a beautiful manuscript to commemorate the event – the so-called Coronation Book of Charles V.

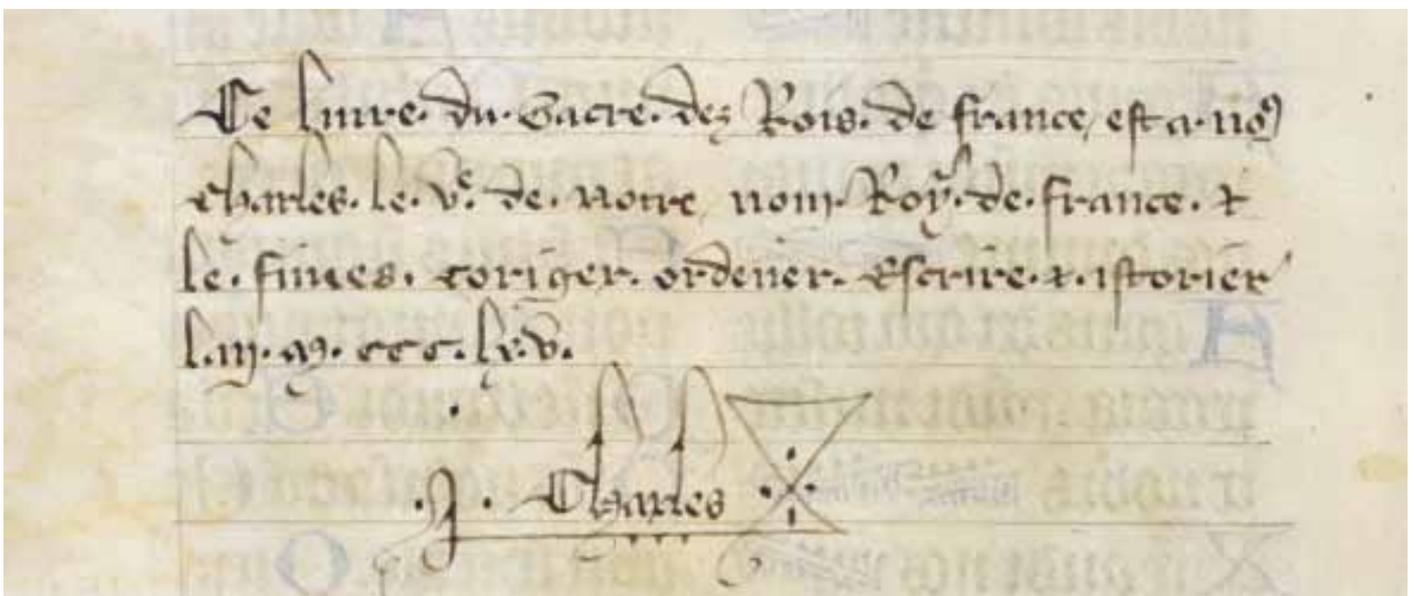
The Coronation Book of Charles V measures 29,5 x 20 cm. It contains 38 minia-

tures showing stages of the liturgy of the coronation of the French King and Queen. It begins with a translation from about 1320 of the Ordo of Rheims plus a text rendering the coronation oaths and a list of the French peers of the realm. However, the main part of the manuscript is devoted to the coronation ceremonies of the king

Royal signature in the coronation book of Charles V. British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B VIII, fol.74v. The text reads like this:

Ce liure.du.sacre.dez Rois.de france/est a nous Charles. Le Ve.de.Notre. nom.Roy.de france.et le. Fimes. Coriger.ordener.Escrire.et istorier. Ian. M.ccc.LX.V. Charles.

Translation: This book of the consecration of the kings of France belongs to us, Charles the fifth of our name, king of France; and we had it corrected arranged, written, and illustrated in the year 1365. Charles) [1]





Charles V is enthroned © British Library: Cotton MS Tiberius B VIII, fol 59v

and queen. These are illustrated with a series of “comic-stripe” like illuminations detailing the series of distinct tableaux from one end to the other. It is largely intact except from some water damage, it suffered in 1731.

It has been speculated, that the book might not render the precise ritual used in Rheims in 1364, since there was only a two-month gap between the death of the old king and the coronation in Rheims. On the other hand it is highly unlikely that the king had the ‘ordo’ corrected at that point. The logical process must have been that the king - when the coronation was planned - met with the Archbishop and discussed the details, which during this pro-

Sceptre of Charles V with a statuette of Charlemagne, Louvre. Source Wikipedia



cess were written down as a proper ordo. The present 'coronation' book, as we possess it, is probably an illuminated and formal "publication" of this text (as claimed by the King in his colophon). Sherman believes that the book was commissioned by the king, but that the actual supervision of the layout and the miniatures were carried out by the royal PR-bureau, headed by Raoul de Presles or Nicole Oresme (but others might also be candidates).

The miniatures, themselves, were painted by the so-called "Master of the Coronation Book", who worked in the royal scriptorium from 1350 to the end of reign of Charles V. He is also known for his miniatures in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*.

There are many intriguing elements in these miniatures, due to the care, which was taken to render them as correct as

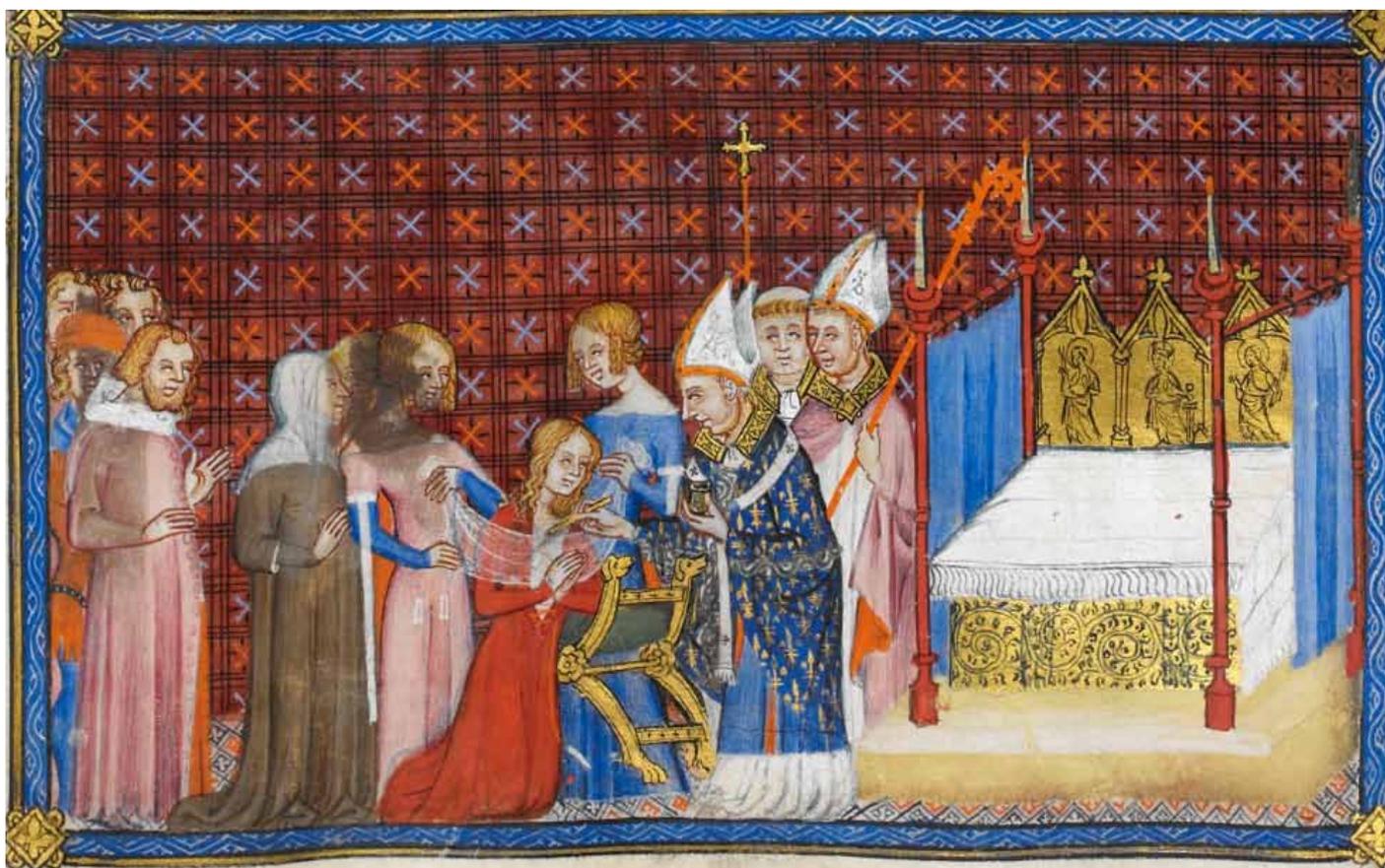
possible; as witnessed by the use of portraiture in the faces of king, queen and archbishop. But also the exact clothes, the couple wore, as well as the heraldic signs carried by the participants have been rendered faithfully. For instance one of the scepters worn by the king, may still be seen in the collection in Louvre. Others have easily been identified with those pictured in drawings made in the 18th century of the French crown jewels and insignia.

In short: the manuscript seems to have been designed in order to provide as exact as possible a record of the rituals used on a specific day, at a specific place, and involving specific people.

The coronation book probably entered English hands around the year 1425 when John, Duke of Bedford and regent of France after the Battle of Agincourt, took ownership of the library of Charles VI. It was

Charles is being dressed in hoses with fleur-de-lis. The Coronation Book of Charles V. Cotton MS Tiberius B VIII, fol. 47 r. © British Library





The coronation book also includes the ordo for the coronation of the queen. Here Jeanne de Bourbon is being anointed, while her ladies do their best to shield her from immodest eyes. The Coronation Book of Charles V. Cotton MS Tiberius B VIII, fol. 47 r. © British Library

probably used at the coronation of Henry VI in Paris in 1431 and perhaps even later at English coronations. In the early 17th century it ended up in the collection of Robert Cotton. From there it entered the British Library in 1753

NOTES:

[1] **The Queen in Charles V's "Coronation Book": Jeanne de Bourbon and the "ordo ad Reginam Benedicendam".**

By Claire Richter Sherman
In: *Viator*, Vol 8, p. 255 - 298

SOURCE:

The Coronation Book of Charles V, king of France (r. 1364–1380) (ff. 35-80).

Bound with a 12th-century pontifical (ff. 3-34, 81-197, Cotton MS Tiberius B VIII:).
<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/online-ex/remarkmanu/charlesv/>

The Coronation book is digitized and the illuminations can be studied in magnificent detail

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_tiberius_b_viii

READ ALSO:

Vive le Roi! A History of the French Coronation from Charles V to Charles X

By Richard A. Jackson

Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press 1984

Charles V and
Jeanne de Bourbon



Anonymous, 1365 - 1380. © Louvre. The statues were originally meant to embellish the entrance gate

Daily Life of Charles V | 1364 - 1380

How did a late medieval king conduct his business? What did his daily life look like? Recent studies of Charles V, King of France (1364 – 1380) reveals a way of life that is quite different from what we might first think.

Charles V called 'the Sage' became regent of France in 1355, when the English captured his father, John II, at the battle of Poitiers. In order to get the king's release, France had to abandon large portions of South-Western France as well as pay a huge ransom.

To meet these demand the future king had to raise taxes and quell a series of rebellions. Nevertheless, he succeeded

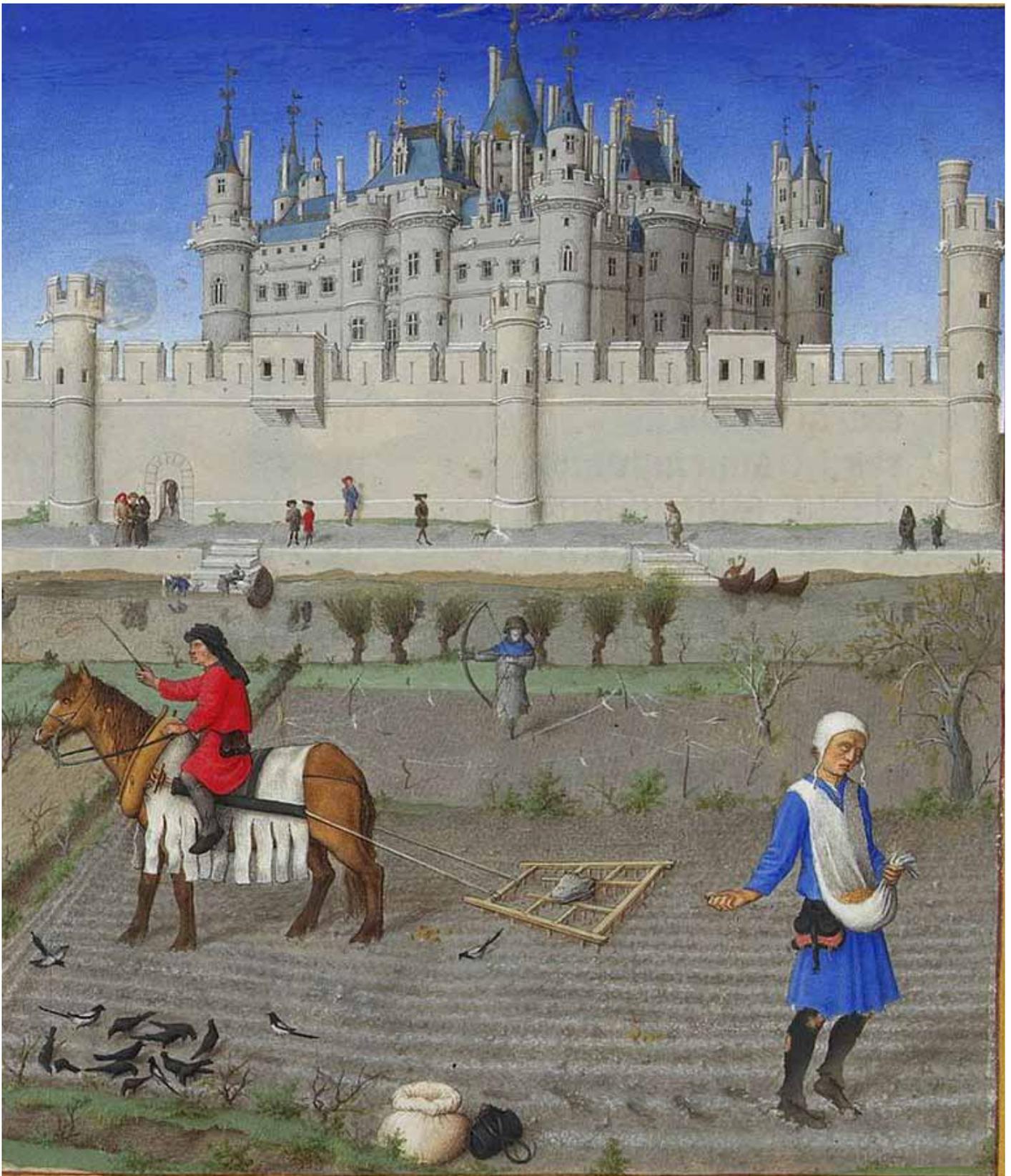
in replenishing his coffers after he was crowned as king in 1364. These funds were channelled into a series of important buildings as well as a magnificent library with more than 1200 volumes, and what we can unfortunately only glimpse, a large treasure of gold and silver.

The fascination with Charles V is that his daily life is very well known. We can actually trace his footsteps through Louvre simply by studying the new organisation of his apartments. However, it is especially due to a famous description by Christine de Pizan that we know how his daily routine looked like – at least ideally.

According to her, the king rose at six or seven, was combed and dressed and said his 'hours' together with his personal chaplain. Then around 8 o'clock he descended to the courtyard and from there

Louvre at the Time of Charles V. © Dassault Systèmes





Louvre in the time Louis V. Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry. Chantilly. Source: Wikipedia

went to the Royal Chapel to hear Mass. After this he would move out into the Grande Salle, which was located in front of the chapel and further into the courtyard to meet with his people, deliberating their complaints and show himself off as the Lord of the Realm. After this public ap-

pearance, he would withdraw to hold the daily meeting with his council. First then, around 10 AM he would partake in a light dinner, which would be followed by a general audience with the outer circle of courtiers, ambassadors, diplomats and others. Around 1 PM he would withdraw to his

inner sanctum for a rest. The remains of the day would be used in pleasant company with his closest friends and perhaps his family. After vesper, supper and perhaps a walk in the garden, he would go to bed.

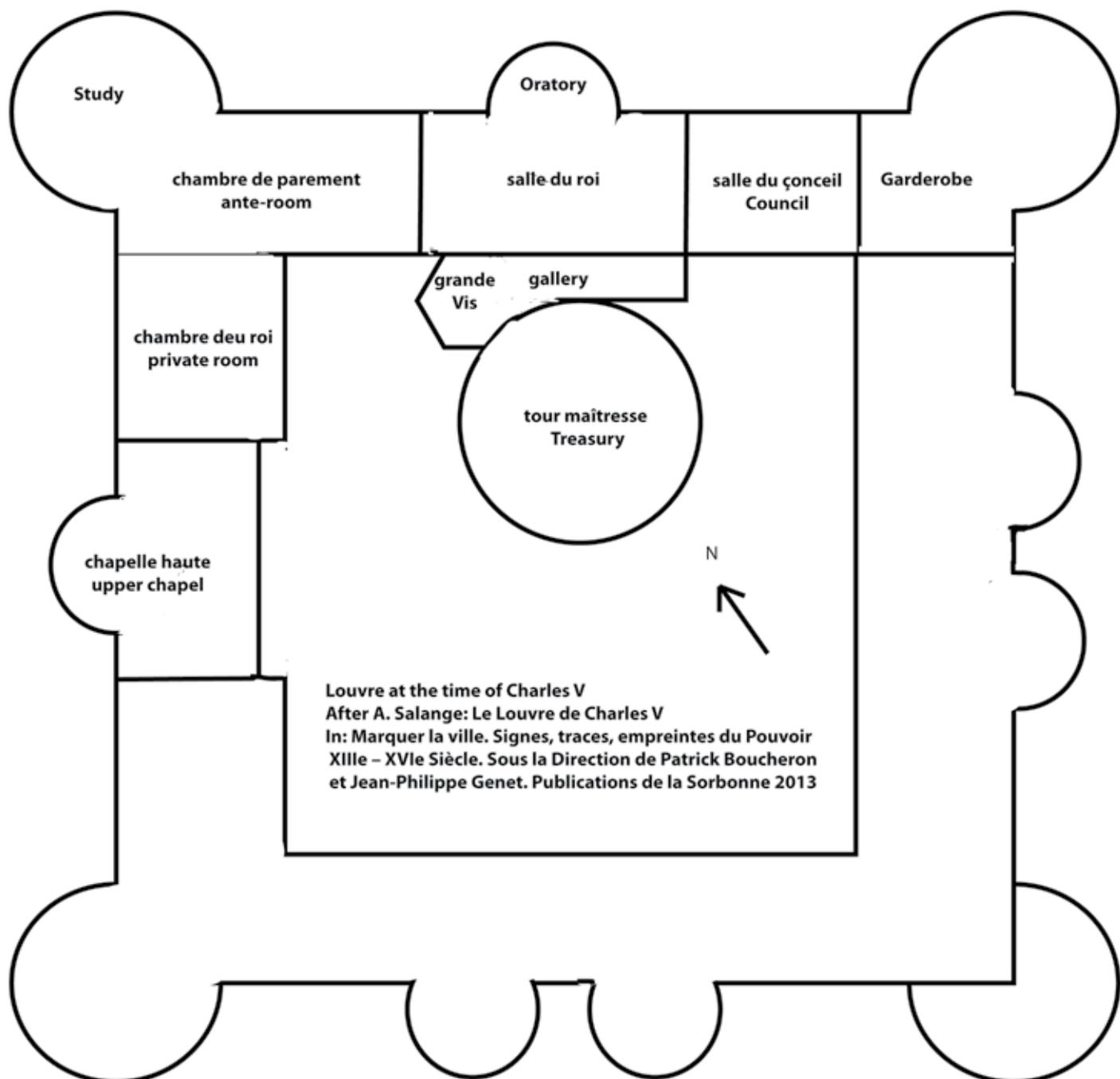
When reading her account, it may seem somewhat sketchy and intangible. Luckily, however, we are rather well-informed about the physical setting of Louvre,

where it all played out [1]. This helps to flesh it out for us.

Louvre

In general Louis IX stayed away from the fortress at Louvre, built by his grandfather Philippe Auguste. Instead he preferred to stay at the Isle de France, where he built his famous chapel, Sainte Chapelle. Al-

Sketch of Louvre at the time of Charles V. Built on the work of A. Salange: Lecture d'une symbolique seigneuriale. In: Le Louvre de Charles V. by A. Salamagne. In: Marquer la ville. In: Signes, traces, empreintes du Pouvoir XIIIe - XVIe Siècle. Sous la Direction de Patrick Boucheron et Jean-Philippe Genet. Publications de la Sorbonne/ École française de Rome 2013



though he did expand the private quarters of Louvre to make it more habitable, this was no major restoration.

However, in the 14th century at the time of Charles V, the kings of France once again needed to stay in more secure and defensible locations and the walls surrounding Paris were accordingly strengthened. At the same time Charles V chose to rebuild the old fortress from the 12th century. In 1364, immediately after he had been crowned a Reims, the king engaged his architect, Raymond du Temple, to transform Louvre into a splendid royal residence. Apartments around the central court featured large elaborate windows and to the north, a lovely garden was created. This garden could be seen from the central part of the royal apartment, the new royal 'salle'.

Central to this renovation was the construction of a sumptuous spiralled staircase – the “grande vis” – which the king could use for his majestic processions in and out of the gaze of the public, which was allowed entrance into the open court and into the old ‘grande salle’ at the ground floor to the west. Moving back up, the king entered his private apartments, which consisted of a series of rooms, perhaps gradually becoming more and more private, the further from the “grande vis”, they were located.

From the “grande vis” the Charles V would enter a small, probably open gallery leading into his own or new ‘salle’ located next to the ‘salle de conseil’. Behind this was the king’s ‘garderobe’. To the other side of the ‘salle’ would be the ‘chambre de parment’, where he would meet with his closer retinue and friends. Further behind, to the west, his private chamber was located next to the upper (or private) chapel of the

king. Here he might retreat, when not engaged in a public performance. The corner tower would be where he kept the main part of his magnificent library (1000 – 1200 volumes). According to Christine de Pizan he would spend the rest of the day in pleasant and more private company with his close friends, his family or simply on his own, studying his impressive collection of illuminated manuscripts or collection of golden artworks.

Valuables

These valuables, a significant part of the royal treasury – were kept in the old Donjon – the ‘tour Maîtresse, which was specifically not torn down by Raymond du Temple. The king would have access to this tower from the galleries constructed on each level and next to the ‘grande vis’.

These entrances would connect to the staircase in the corner behind the tower.

Chain from the late 14th or early 15th century © Cleveland Museum of Art





Chain from the late 14th or early 15th Century. Detail. © Cleveland Museum of Art

The king would thus be able to access all three levels of his treasury with his jewel-chamber at the ground-floor, his golden vessels etc. on the second floor and the valuable textiles on the third floor. Here he would be able to walk around and admire his collection of golden chains, crowns, belts, brooches and pins, buttons, salt-cellers, chandeliers, chalices, goblets, liturgical vessels, evangeliaries, golden brocades and costly velvets etc. But perhaps, more correctly: he could walk around with his closest friends and allies and evaluate and choose which goblets, should be presented to whom as a gift in return for what.

It is around this time, the old tradition of giving gifts at New Year develops into a significant royal ritual. And even though we have no accounts, which describe or specify this practice at the time of Charles V, we do possess some fine records from the court of his son, Charles VI. According to the studies of Jan Hirschbiegel, 6403 actual gifts are recorded for the period between 1381 -1422 at the Valois Court or a little more than 156 gifts each year

(received and presented). The Burgundian Duke spent on average 6.5 % of his yearly budget on New Year's gifts [2].

The Business of Kings

To rule was very much a public affair. From the morning ritual, described by Christine de Pizan, where the king smiled and joked pleasantly with his servants, while he was groomed and dressed, to his later afternoon perusal of his jewels, each moment or activity represented a contact or a liaison to be nursed and nourished through the never-ending ritual of gift-giving and receiving. What we see in this text is a king, who was simply busy with the public affairs of his kingdom until after supper, when he seemed to have "gone for a walk" in his garden or to have spent time with his family.

This view of the king as a "public" person with "little privacy" has recently been explored by Michael Brauer [3], who in a very interesting article has compared the daily routines of Charles V with that of Angela Merkel, noticing the lack of private time in her business day as compared to that of the medieval king. However, what he stresses is the dominant motive of "performance" and its preponderance in the kings' daily life. What he perhaps forgets is the very real investment in time, a late medieval king had to set aside for his constant evaluation of his treasury and its use for maintaining his social network.

Royal business was perhaps (to quote Christine de Pizan) "what should be done according to what was proposed to him, or [how he] promised to solve some matter in council, forbade what was unreasonable, accorded favors, signed letters with his own hand, gave reasonable gifts, promised

vacant offices, or answered reasonable requests”.

Which means that it was definitely also business, when he – after his midday rest in the early afternoon – “spent a time with his most intimate companions in pleasant diversions, perhaps looking at his jewels or other treasures.” We tend to think of the king and his friends indulging themselves in a fetishistic “study” of his many jewels and treasures while fondling them lovingly. As we perhaps do, when we visit an art museum and peruse the delicate details of some medieval piece of golden art, which miraculously have survived.

No doubt the king and his cronies enjoyed themselves. However, be not mistaken. This activity was also serious business.

NOTES:

[1] In the 1992 a reconstruction of the remodelled Louvre was published by the art historian, Mary Whiteley in a much cited article: **Le Louvre de Charles V: Disposition et fonctions d'une residence royale**

(In: *Revue de l'Art*, Vol. 97, no1: 60 – 71. Recently, however, the historian Salamagne has reworked the sources and presented a new model. See: **Lecture dune symbolique seigneurale: Le Louvre de Charles V**. By A. Salamagne. In: *Marquer la ville. Signes, traces, empreintes du Pouvoir XIIIe – XVIe Siècle*. Sous la Direction de Patrick Boucheron et Jean-Philippe Genet. Publications de la Sorbonne/ École française de Rome 2013, pp. 61 – 81. It is this reworking, which has been used here.

[2] **Past Presents: New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts**, ca. 1400. By: Birgitte Buettner. In: *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 83, No. 4 (Dec., 2001), pp. 598-625

Étrennes. Untersuchungen zum höfischen Geschenkverkehr im spätmittelalterlichen Frankreich der Zeit König Karls VI (1830 -1422). By Jan Hirschbiegel, München 2003

[3] **Politics or Leisure? A Day in the Life of King Charles V of France (1364 – 80)** By Michael Brauer. In: *The Medieval History Journal* 2015, Vol. 18, note 1, p. 46-6

Charles V receives a manuscript of Nicole Oresme. Bruxelles, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 9506-6 fol 2v



The King's Chronicler: Christine de Pizan

Excerpt from Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Deeds and Good Character of King Charles V the Wise*.

"I find a comparable order in the case of our own wise King Charles, so that it seems to me reasonable to recount his agreeable habit of leading a life well-regulated in all respects, which should be an example to all who may follow it in empires, kingdoms, or important lordships for a well-ordered life.

The hour of his rising in the morning was normally six or seven o'clock, and indeed anyone who wanted to make use here of the language of poets might say that just as the goddess Aurora, by her rising, rejoices the hearts of those who see her, so the king gives pleasure to his chamberlains and other servants appointed to attend his person at that hour, for, regardless of anything that might make it otherwise, his face was joyous. Then, after making the sign of the cross, and very devoutly addressing his first words to God in prayer, he exchanged with his servants, in agreeable familiarity, some pleasant and happy remarks, so that his kindness and gentleness would encourage even the least of them to joke and enjoy themselves with him, however humble they might be. They all enjoyed these comments and exchanges. When he had been combed, dressed, and outfitted according to the demands of the day's program, his chaplain, a distinguished person and honorable priest, brought him his breviary and helped him to say his hours, according to the canonical day of the cal-

endar. Around eight o'clock he would go to mass, which was celebrated each day with glorious, melodious, solemn singing. In the retirement of his oratory low masses were sung for him.

As he came out of the chapel, all sorts of people, rich or poor, ladies or maidens, widows or others who had problems, could make their petitions to him and he very kindly would pause to listen to their supplications, responding charitably to

Banquet in the honor of Charles IV at the Palais de Cité. From the translation of the Grandes Chronique, made for Charles V.

From: Grandes Chroniques de France, ms. fr. 2813, fol. 473v, fin XIVe s., Paris, Bnf



those that were reasonable or piteous. More doubtful cases he turned over to some master of requests to examine.

After this, on appointed days, he would meet with his council, and then with some noblemen of his own blood or some clergymen who happened to be present. If some particular lengthy matter did not prevent him, he would go to the table around ten o'clock. His meal was not long, for he did not favour elaborate food, saying that such food bothered his stomach and disturbed his memory, He drank clear and simple wine, light in color, well cut, and not much quantity nor great variety. Like David, to rejoice his spirits, he listened willingly at the end of his meals to stringed instruments playing the sweetest possible music.

When he had risen from table after his

Charles V in his study. From: Jean de Salisbury, Polycratique, traduction en français par Denis Foulechat. The manuscript from 1372 was commissioned by Charles V and was located in his library at Louvre. It shows the king in his study. BNF Français 24287



light meal, all sorts of strangers and others who had come with request could approach him. There one might find several kinds of foreign ambassadors, noblemen, and knights, of whom there was often such a crowd, both foreign and from his own realm, that one could scarcely turn around. Nevertheless, the very prudent king received them all and replied to them in such a civil manner and received each one so justly with the honor due him, that all considered themselves content and left his presence happily...

He arranged what should be done according to what was proposed to him, or promised to solve some matter in council, forbade what was unreasonable, accorded favors, signed letters with his own hand, gave reasonable gifts, promised vacant offices, or answered reasonable requests. He occupied himself with such details as these for perhaps two hours, after which he withdrew and retired to rest for about an hour. After his rest period, he spent a time with his most intimate companions in pleasant diversions perhaps looking at his jewels or other treasures. He took this recreation so that excessive demands on him would not damage his health...

Then he went to vespers, after which, if it was summertime, he sometimes went into his gardens where, if he was in his hôtel Saint-Pol, sometimes the queen would join him with their children. There he spoke with the women of the court, asking news of their children. Sometimes he received curious gifts from various places, perhaps artillery or other armaments and a variety of other things, or merchants would come bringing velvet, cloth of gold, and all sorts of beautiful, exotic objects, or jewels, which he had them show to the connoisseurs of such things among members of his family. In winter, especially, he often occupied

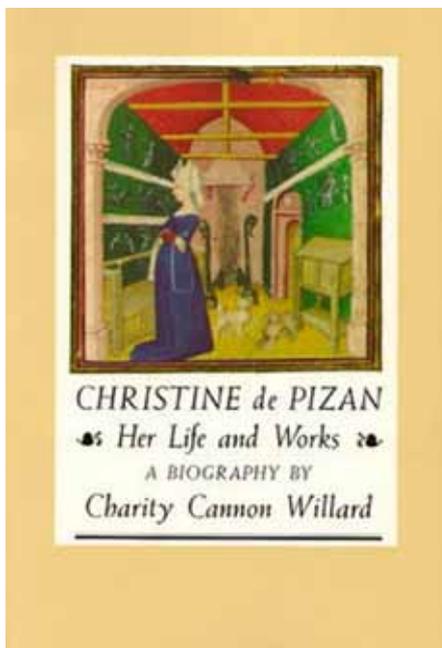
himself by having read to him fine stories from the Holy Scriptures, or the Deeds of the Romans, or Wise Sayings of the Philosophers and such matters until the hour of supper, where he took his place rather early for a light meal. After this, he spent a short period in recreation with his barons and knights before retiring to rest. And

thus in continual good order, this wise and well-bread king followed the course of his life.”

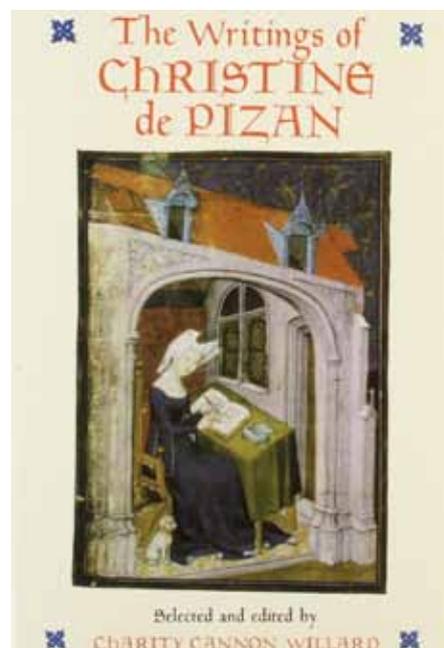
(Excerpt from Christine de Pizan, The Book of the Deeds and Good Character of King Charles V the Wise, ed. by Charity Cannon Willard, pp. 236)

Christine de Pizan

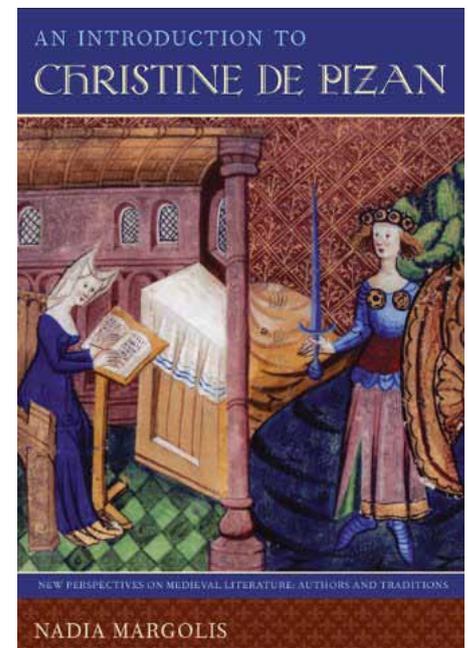
Christine de Pizan (1364 – c. 1430) was an Italian-French late medieval author, daughter to the physician, who treated Charles V. She grew up at the court of the king and knew his world intimately. Later, after she was widowed, she served as a court writer for several dukes (Louis of Orleans, Philip the Bold of Burgundy, and John the Fearless of Burgundy) and the French royal court during the reign of Charles VI. She wrote both poetry and prose works such as biographies and books containing practical advice for women. She completed forty-one works during her 30-year career from 1399–1429. The literature about her work is immense. However, a good as any place to start is in the work of Charity Cannon Willard, who wrote a seminal biography about her in 1984.



Christine De Pizan: Her Life and Works
by Charity Cannon Willard
Persea Books 1984



The writings of Christine de Pizan
Ed. Charity Cannon Willard
Persea 1994



An Introduction to Christine de Pizan
by Nadia Margolis
Univers. of Florida Press 2014



Château de Vincennes

Situated in an odd corner of suburban Paris, this castle is seldom on the itinerary of the cultural tourist. After an extensive renovation ending in 2010, it deserves a visit.

Originally Vincennes was a hunting lodge built in the outskirts of the Forest of Vincennes in the 12th century. Archaeological excavations have revealed the foundations of a manor, which was gradually rebuilt and extended during the 13th and 14th centuries. As far as can be known from old maps and descriptions, this manor – called a *domus* – was a rambling and rather unstructured complex of buildings, which

had been added over the years. In a map from 1654 it seems as if there was an old donjon, next to a large hall (the Sainte-Louis Hall). However, most of the buildings seems to have been added in a more or less haphazard way.

Nevertheless, the French kings, beginning with Saint Louis considered it a favourite residence. In the 13th century a fountain was built in the centre of the courtyard. Rebuilt in the 14th century by Charles V, the fountain is the only remaining part of the original Capetian manor. The water feeding this fountain – and the palace itself – was channelled from Montreuil via clay pipes. A dam was also constructed at Saint-Mandé, in which fish was raised. During this period Vincennes was repea-

tedly called the 'Bois de Vincennes'. Apparently it was an attractive place, and members of the royal retinue seem to have been busy building a series of manors or hunting lodges in the vicinity to enable them keeping company with the royal family, while enjoying their stay in the country-side.

100 years war

At the start of the 100-years war, King John II (1350 – 1364) began the construction of the impressive keep, which even today stands at the centre of the moated castle. This building phase was carried on by his son, Charles V, until ca. 1370, when a protective wall with a length of 1100 meters and nine towers was constructed around the keep and its outer baily.

The plan was to transform Vincennes into a proper fortified city with room for the

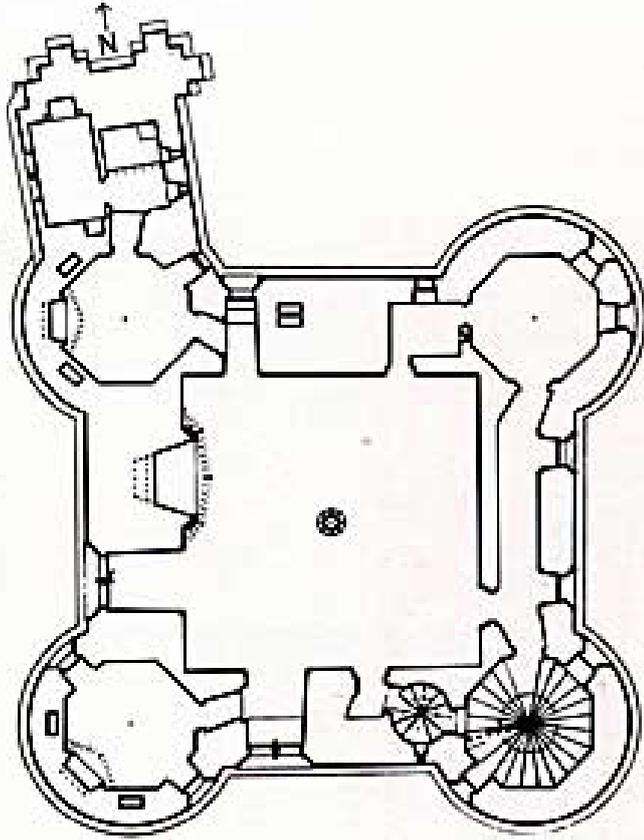
whole court. Each tower was 40 to 42 metres high and was used both as living quarters and as a defensive structure. One of these towers – at the main gate – still stands at its original height. As was the case with the other towers, this was originally adorned with statues.

The Keep

Plan of the Keep at Chateau de Vincennes
At the centre stood the impressive square keep, reaching 52 meters up, measuring 16.2 meters on each side. The walls are more than three meters thick. At the corners were four turrets, each with an external diameter of 6.6 meters. Against the north side stands a rectangular tower, 5 meters wide and 6 meters long on the outside, containing latrines on every floor.

The huge square tower, was divided into six floors with four centrally arched rooms





fifth floor the construction was less elaborate. The sixth floor was a blind room, only two metres high at the top.

A wall with a deep moat in front protected the keep; this moat was originally filled with water.

In its time the keep was a truly remarkable architectural feat and a visual demonstration of the royal power. It was built quickly and with a political determination to create a safe haven for the royal family and its invaluable treasure.

The Châtelet

Entrance to the keep was through the châtelet, where visitors used to be greeted by life size statues of Charles V, Jeanne de Bourbon and Saint Christopher. Above them was a relief of the Trinity creating a sense of divine protection. The keep was also decorated with carved sculpture. It is possible to get a glimpse of angels fiddling away as musicians on the sculpted

(the four first floors). Each archway rested on a single, slender central column. From this central room there was access to smaller rooms in each corner-tower. At the





frames of the windows on the second and third floors. The second and third floors of the châtelet were reached through a spiral staircase mounted on the outside of the building. Perhaps the same type of architecture was used for the great staircase at Louvre.

The châtelet or gateway was the preferred working space for Charles V. In his study on the second floor, he used to receive visitors. His secretaries had offices in the two adjoining turrets. From here the king could pass directly to his private living quarters. The footbridge or gangway would be watched over by a clock, installed in 1369. This was one of the first clocks ever installed in a private residence. The gangway was the only way to get into the keep itself.

The Royal Apartment

The donjon had a total of eight floors counting the terrace. The ground floor had

a well and may have been used as a kitchen. However, with smoke drifting up in the royal apartment, it is more likely that this was a general storeroom and servants hall.

On the first floor was the council room. This was the first room, a visitor would enter. Some of the original oak panelling may still be seen here. A tiny oratory was cut into the northern wall. Dendrochronology has documented that the oak panelling could be dated to 1363 and most probably stemmed from trees felled at Gdansk (Poland).

The second floor held the royal bedroom. Fairly similar to the council room, we find major traces of the decoration from the time of Charles V. The ribs and vaults are decorated with fleur-de-lis painted with gold on a blue background. This room appears to have been panelled with oak, but only a few hooks remain. A magnificent fireplace may still be seen there.

In 1380 after the death of Charles V an inventory of the royal treasure was made, which gives a hint of what the room looked like, when he was alive. In the western window opening near the daylight a box was located containing 31 manuscripts of a religious nature, including two psalters, which used to belong to Sainte-Louis. In the turrets a large number of manuscripts, jewels and relics were kept.

The rooms further up are believed to have been used by the king's servants and entourage. It was formerly believed that the queen had lived here. However, it is likely she stayed in more comfortable surroundings with the children in parts of the old manor.

It is interesting to notice that the layout of the Kings apartment at Vincennes seems to have been organised after the same formula as at Louvre, with a formal entrance through the châtelet and over the gateway into what may have been used as the 'salle de roi'. On top of that and thus more "private" was the royal bedroom.

The chapel

In the middle of the wider grounds Charles V began to build a chapel in 1379. It was modelled on the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, except it only had one floor. On each side, oratories were reserved for the queen and king, while to the north east a small building contained the sacristy and the treasury of the chapel.

VISIT:

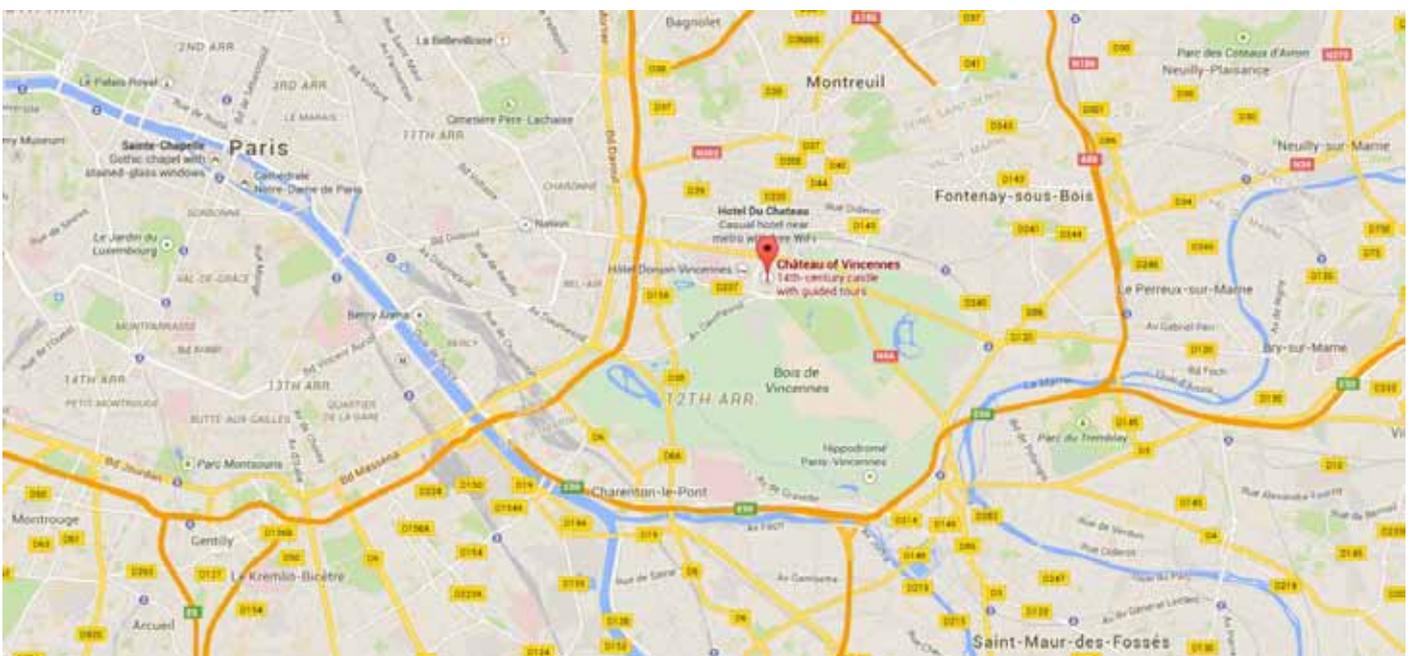
Château de Vincennes
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94300 Vincennes
France

READ MORE

Une histoire de Vincennes. Mémoire pour l'an 2000.

By Jean Chapelot , Claude Troquet, Charles Kauffmann, et al.

Vincennes municipal de l'information et des Relations publiques, 1999





Paston Letters Online

The collection known as the Paston Letters is one of the largest archives of 15th-century English private correspondence, comprising about 1000 letters and documents including petitions, leases, wills and even shopping lists.

A huge part is now online; but more will follow.

The Pastons

Around 1390 a wealthy landowner by the name of Clement from the village of Paston in Norfolk had saved enough money to let his son, William (1378 -1444) be educated as a lawyer. Ultimately William was to end his career as Justice of the Common Pleas. On the way he succeeded in acquiring an

imposing estate from the proceeds of his office. In 1420 he married Agnes Barry with whom he had four sons and one daughter. In a way it is a rather ordinary family representative of the late medieval gentry, to which it obviously belonged even though aspirations at some points ran high.

Nevertheless, it is probably one of the most well-known families from that period. During the 15th century a remarkable private archive was amassed of letters, documents, shopping lists and all sorts of bits and pieces. Luck has it, the archive was preserved, and today the unique cache is in The British library (though with a few items at Oxford and elsewhere).

For a long time scholars and cultural historians have dipped into this treasure trove to paint a picture of daily life during the War of the Roses. Not least since the letters have been painstakingly edited and published in 1970's.

Now, however, there is an opportunity to study the letters "in real". British Library has commenced to digitize the whole collection and already a substantial part has gone online. This is very important because it makes it possible to use the letters as a tool to learn how to read English documents from that period (the edited and published texts can be placed next to the digitized document). Perhaps this might help local historians on the way to

exploit "unread and unloved" documents in their local archives.

So far five volumes containing some of the most studied items have been published: four volumes from 1440-1489 (Add MS 43488, Add MS 43489, Add MS 43490, Add MS 43491) and a volume that contains further material from the second half of the 15th century, together with later correspondence from of the later 16th century (Add MS 33597).

But these five volumes are just a part of the large collection of Paston letters and further volumes of the family's letters and documents are scheduled for digitisation in the future.

The Authoritative Edition of The Paston Letters

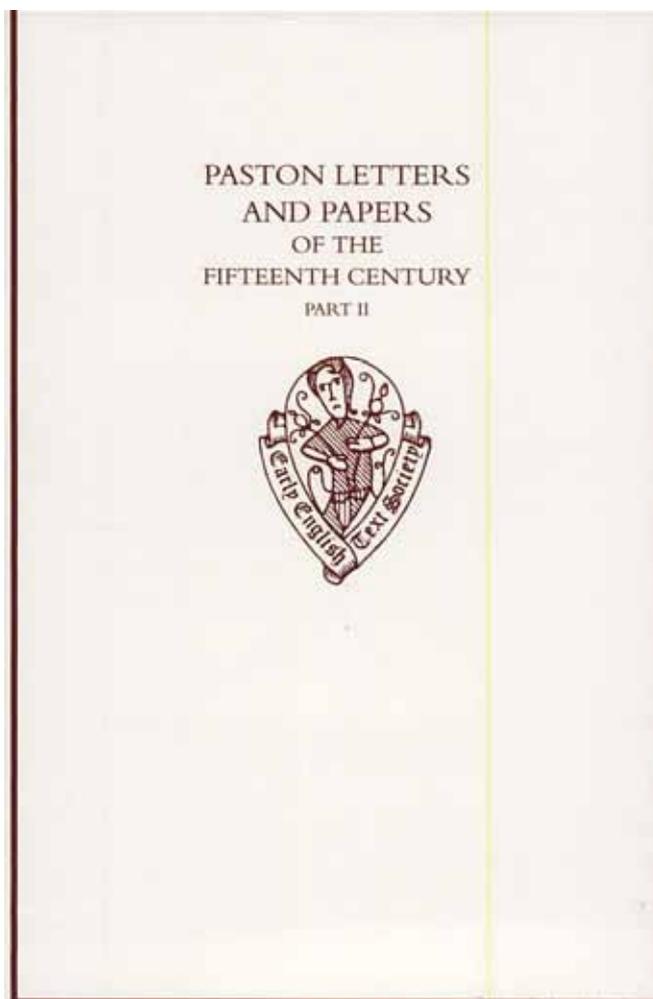
Paston Letters and Papers of The Fifteenth Century. Part I-III

By Norman Davies, Richard Beadle and Colin Richmond

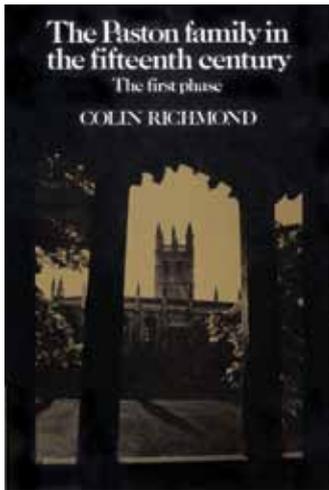
New Edition: Early English Text Society / Boydell & Brewer 2004 -2005

Parts I and II of Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century, edited by Norman Davis, were originally published by the Clarendon Press in 1971 and 1976, and were reissued with corrections by EETS in 2004.

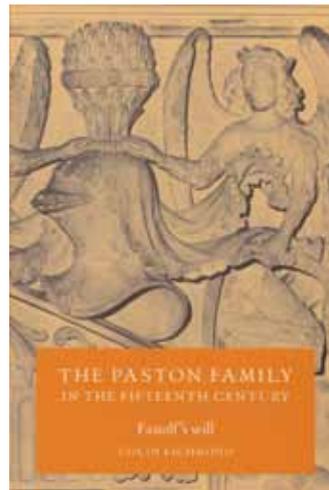
Part III completes the edition. It contains the texts of 120 additional letters and papers, many of them relating to Sir John Fastolf and his circle. These texts are previously unprinted, or printed only in part; some only came to light after the publication of Parts I and II.



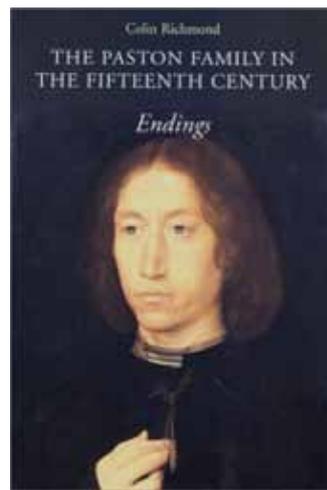
Academic Studies of the Life World of the Pastons



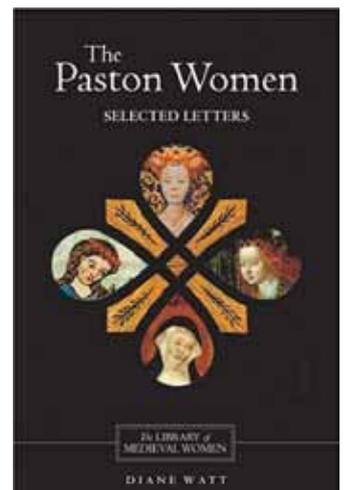
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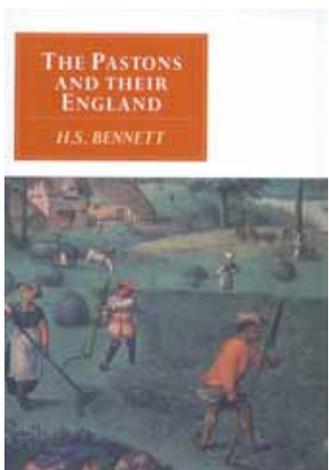


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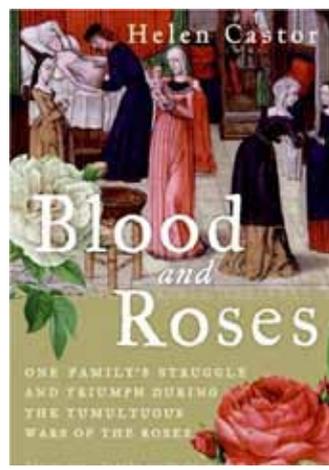


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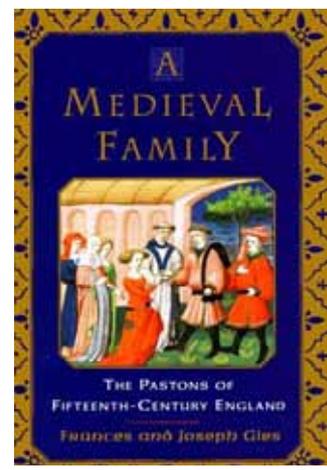
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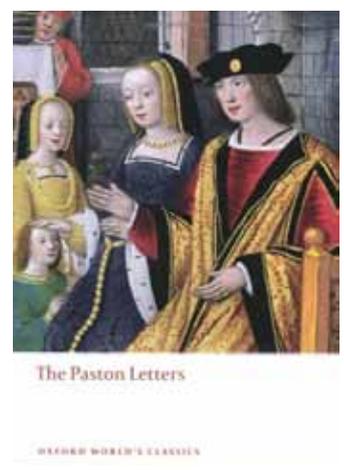
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The Paston Letters: A Selection in Modern Spelling
Ed. Norman Davies
Oxford University Press (1983) 2009



Grilled Fish and Nettles in Medieval Caravate

Fish filled with nettles and grilled over a blazing fire was on the menu in medieval Caravate near Lago Maggiore, shows a study of medieval dental plaque. We are lucky the good people forgot to floss!

Caravate

Caravate is a small village near Lago Maggiore in Northern Italy. Some time after AD 800 a small chapel was built, Sant Agostino di Caravate. In 2002 the small Romanesque chapel underwent restoration and in connection with this, the surroundings were excavated. Right next to the chapel fourteen graves were found in a necropolis. The skeletons of men, women and children were analysed and found to be rather short; the average height did not exceed 1.65 metres, while life expectancy was on average no more than 45.

In connection with these anthropological studies, the teeth of three individuals were placed under the microscope and carefully scraped. The reason was that the archae-

ologists had the opportunity to study the teeth before a cleaning of the skulls had taken place. One result was that it was possible to do a detailed chemical analysis of the plaque or calculus.

Dental Plaque

The point is that teeth are living organisms, which will try to encapsulate any residue stemming from intake of foodstuff – bacteria, microscopic fragments of food or cooking vessels etc. by forming calculus, tartar or hardened dental plaque. The hypothesis is that by analysing such calculus from ancient skeletons it should be





NEW BOOKS:

Livonia, Rus' and the Baltic Crusades in the Thirteenth Century

By Anti Selart

Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015

ABSTRACT

This monograph by Anti Selart is the first comprehensive study available in English on the relations between northern crusaders and Rus'. Selart re-examines the central issues of this crucial period of establishing the medieval relations of the Catholic and Orthodox worlds like the Battle on the Ice (1242) and the role of Alexander Nevsky using the relevant source material of both "sides". He also considers the wide context of the history of crusading and the whole Eastern and Northern Europe from Hungary and Poland to Denmark, Finland, and Sweden in 1180-1330. This monograph contests the existence of the constitutive religious conflict and extensive aggressive strategies in the region – the ideas which had played a central role in modern historiography and ideology.

This volume is number 29 in the series, East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450-1450 published by Brill.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction

The Religious Frontier in Eastern Europe in the Twelfth Century

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Relations between Rus' and Livonia under

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Russian Principalities in the Eastern European Sources, 1250–1350

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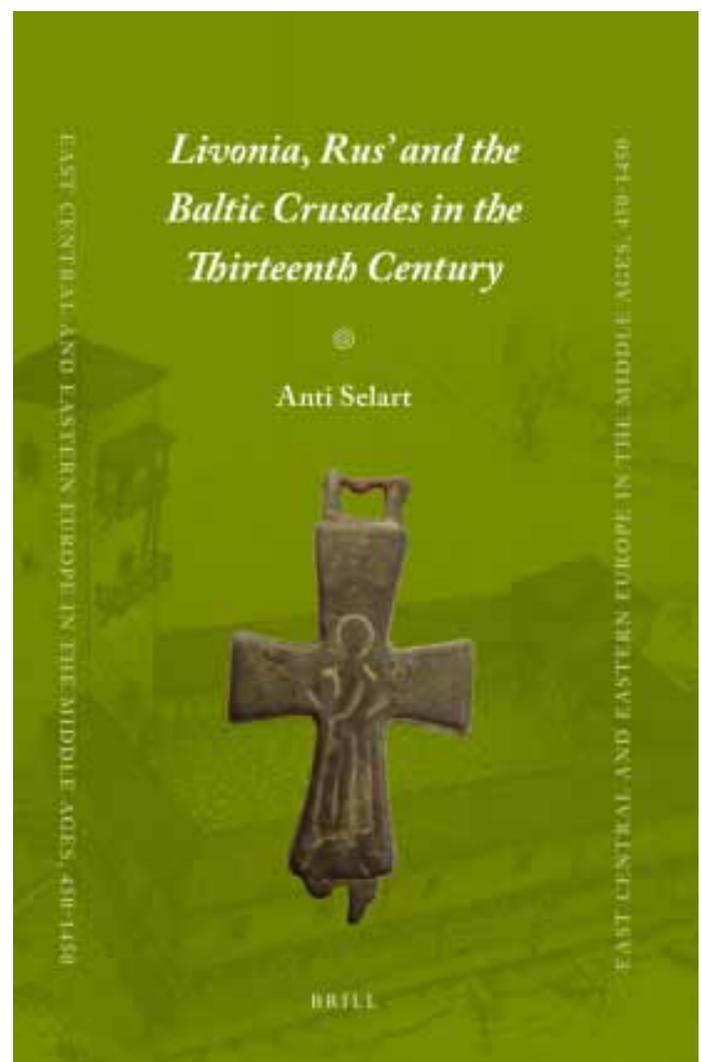
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Anti Selart, Ph.D. (2002) is Professor of Medieval History at the University of Tartu, Estonia. He has published on the Baltic Crusades and the medieval and 16th-century history of the Baltic region and Russia.



NEW BOOKS:

Unwritten Verities: The Making of England's Vernacular Legal Culture, 1463-1549

by Sebastian I. Sobecki

Series: Reformations: Medieval and Early Modern

Publisher: University of Notre Dame Press
2015

ABSTRACT

In *Unwritten Verities: The Making of England's Vernacular Legal Culture, 1463-1549*, Sebastian Sobecki argues that the commitment by English common law to an unwritten tradition, along with its association with Lancastrian political ideas of consensual government, generated a vernacular legal culture on the eve of the Reformation that challenged the centralizing ambitions of Tudor monarchs, the scriptural literalism of ardent Protestants, and the Latinity of English humanists.

Sobecki identifies the widespread dissemination of legal books and William Caxton's printing of the Statutes of Henry VII as crucial events in the creation of a vernacular legal culture. He reveals the impact of medieval concepts of language, governance, and unwritten authority on such sixteenth-century humanists, reformers, playwrights, and legal writers as John Rastell, Thomas Elyot and many more.

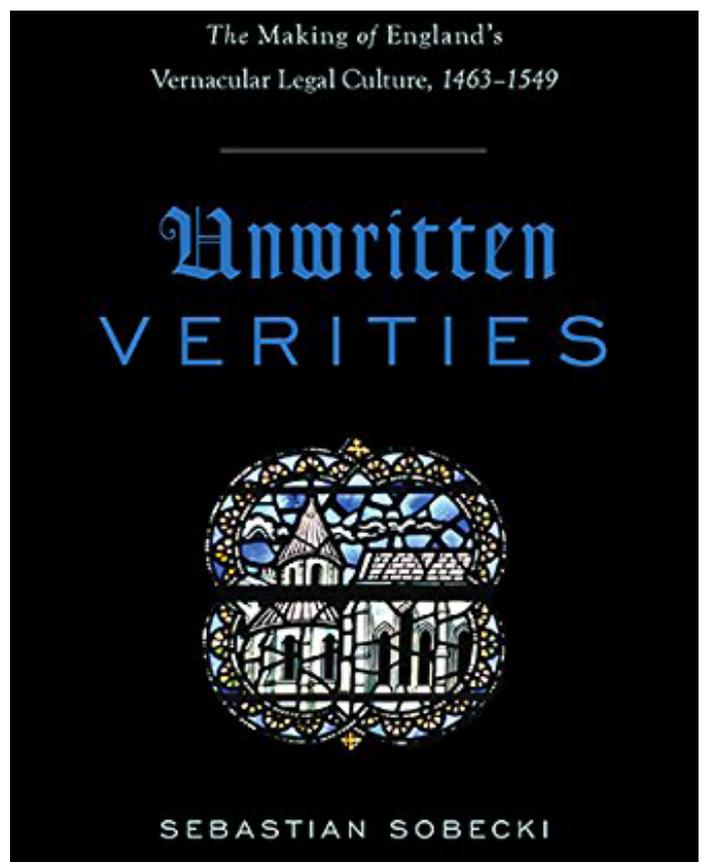
Unwritten Verities argues that three significant developments contributed to the emergence of a vernacular legal culture in fifteenth-century England: medieval literary theories of translation, a Lancastrian legacy of conciliar government, and an adherence to unwritten tradition. This ver-

nacular legal culture, in turn, challenged the textual practices of English humanism and the early Reformation in the following century.

Ultimately, the spread of vernacular law books found a response in the popular rebellions of 1549, at the helm of which often stood petitioners trained in legal writing. Informed by new developments in medieval literature and early modern social history, *Unwritten Verities* sheds new light on law printing, John Fortescue's constitutional thought, ideas of the commonwealth, and the role of French in medieval and Tudor England.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Sebastian Sobecki is professor of medieval English literature and culture, University of Groningen, the Netherlands.



NEW BOOKS:

The Monstrous New Art: Divided Forms in the Late Medieval Motet

The Monstrous New Art: Divided Forms in the Late Medieval Motet (Music in Context)

by Anna Zayaruznaya

Cambridge University Press 2015

ABSTRACT:

Late medieval motet texts are brimming with chimeras, centaurs and other strange creatures. In *The Monstrous New Art*, Anna Zayaruznaya explores the musical ramifications of this menagerie in the works of composers Guillaume de Machaut, Philippe de Vitry, and their contemporaries. Aligning the larger forms of motets with the broad sacred and secular themes of their texts, Zayaruznaya shows how monstrous or hybrid exempla are musically sculpted by rhythmic and textural means. These divisive musical procedures point to the contradictory aspects not only of explicitly monstrous bodies, but of such apparently unified entities as the body politic, the courtly lady, and the Holy Trinity. Zayaruznaya casts a new light on medieval modes of musical representation, with profound implications for broader disciplinary narratives about the history of text-music relations, the emergence of musical unity, and the ontology of the musical work.

ABOUT THE EDITOR:

Anna Zayaruznaya is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Music at Yale Uni-

versity. Her research brings the history of musical forms and notation into dialogue with medieval literature, iconography, and the history of ideas. Her study of musical voice-crossings used to depict the action of the goddess Fortune in the motets of Guillaume de Machaut was awarded the 2011 Van Courtlandt Elliott Prize by the Medieval Academy of America. She has also received awards and fellowships from the American Musicological Society, the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, and the Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Studies at Harvard University, where she was a fellow in 2013–14.

