



*Medieval Patronage and the Court.* Paris: International Medieval Society, Paris, 30.06.2005-02.07.2005.

**Reviewed by** Julian Führer

**Published on** H-Soz-u-Kult (November, 2005)

## Medieval Patronage and the Court

The *École des Chartes* provided an illustrious setting for the second Annual Symposium of the International Medieval Society in Paris. Fifteen speakers from different disciplines and as many as seven countries presented current research on the themes of Patronage and the Court as well as Medieval Paris over the course of three days to a total of about forty members.

Our keynote speaker, Elizabeth A.R. Brown, Professor Emerita of Brooklyn College and The Graduate School, The City University of New York, opened the symposium with a paper titled “Springes to Catch Scholars: Patrons, Authors, and Artists in Late Medieval and Early Modern France.” Brown addressed a persistent methodological problem that continues to plague medieval studies, the pitfalls of positivist projects that assign recognizable titles to distinguish and localize the frustrating fact of anonymity, whether it may be a person, a patron, an author or artist. Can we say anything with certainty? What is left when we remove our rubrics and evaluate what we think we know? All too often knowledge is anchored to time-honored tautologies. It is time to reassess what rubrics actually provide, and devise new frameworks for ordering material. While it is unnecessary to argue against any demand for academic rigor and transparency, we might also consider that some risk taking can lead to new insights. The caveat, persuasively articulated by our speaker, is that we must recognize fact/history from positivism/fiction in advancing our hypotheses and write our studies “as detective stories, not as a narratives.”

The theme of Patronage and the Court followed the keynote lecture on the first day. While still primarily centered upon Paris (perhaps owing to the second theme of the conference on that topic), the mélange of papers from different disciplines yielded a series of new insights, and those addressing subjects extra muros ascertained the overarching themes. While the production of literature, art, and music contributes to that greater sphere we describe as culture, patronage in the Middle Ages served to express, aggrandize, and legitimize claims of its perpetrator. Sean Field (University of Vermont) spoke of the *Speculum Anime* (“Reflecting the Royal Soul: Blanche of Castile and the *Speculum anime*”), questioning whether it provided an example of Blanche de Castille, thirteenth-century queen of France and mother of Louis IX, as literary patron, and asserting that the work itself provided directives for her political policies and thus reflected temporal power.

Most often, real or illusory associations with the past serve as the basis for larger claims. Joan A. Holladay’s (University of Texas, Austin) paper on “The Court as Physical Setting: the Genealogical Cycle of Philip IV in the Palace at Paris” examined royal genealogy as expressed in the sculptural program of the Grand’ Salle in the Palais de la Cité. Holladay argued that the public expression of one’s illustrious genealogy could strengthen political and social claims. A possible source that underscored claims to divine kingship was identified in the visual representation of papal succession, such as that illustrated in the churches of St. Peter’s and St. Paul’s Outside the Walls in Rome. Allusions

to genealogy were present throughout the Palais de la Cité, with its buildings as indices to its Roman and Carolingian heritage. We might question the distinction, if any, between intentional historicism in the former program and the historical stratigraphy in the latter. Donna Sadler (Agnes Scott College) demonstrated the integration of both in her contribution entitled “The Past Perfect of Saint Louis in the Future Imperfect of Philip the Bold.” The Chartreuse de Champmol in Dijon exists as Philip the Bold’s attempt to elevate Valois family status via appropriation and conflation of royal and biblical visual imagery. The kneeling duke and duchess, accompanied by Saints John the Baptist and Catherine, payed homage not only to the Virgin and Child on the trumeau, but also to the royal past they symbolically prolong in the statesmanship of the future they embody. The entire funeral chapel for the Valois dukes planned by Philip the Bold evidenced an effort to simulate the necropolis of French rulers established in the abbey of Saint-Denis. Even the patronage of music was not devoid to political and historical overtones, as explained by Alice Clark (Loyola University, New Orleans) in “Music for Louis d’Anjou”. While Louis’s association with the visual arts is clearer than his interest in music (he commissioned the Apocalypse tapestry now visible in Angers), evidence exists both of wages paid to musicians and songs and motets that may refer to him or members of his family. A discussion of the leper-house of Mont-aux-Malades in Rouen by Elma Brenner (Cambridge) moved beyond the sphere of royal patronage. While sponsored by the dukes of Normandy and the kings of France, the institution’s most numerous patrons were the bourgeois of the communal government. Rouen’s mayors and leading families generously endowed the leper house and participated in its religious life, mimicking courtly behavior in their charitable donations and thereby generating an important transformation in social practices. Questions related to ecclesiastical patronage emerged in the presentation by Xavier Dectot (Musée national du Moyen Age, Paris) on the portal Sainte-Anne of Notre-Dame in Paris. Stylistic associations with other churches tied to Etienne de Garlande suggest that Etienne, the archdeacon of Notre-Dame and dean of Sainte-Geneviève, may have been more involved in its production than previously recognized, though the images itself - at least today - express the dominance of the church. Social articulation and amelioration emerge as dominant themes across the spectrum, irrespective of the source and primary function of the object of patronage, at least in these studies. But beyond the expression of power and political advantage, what other concerns directed patrons? Charity

(as shown by Brenner), education (Field), and even simple pleasure (Clark) also drove commissions. We might consider further the extent to which patrons conditioned artistic production and the role of the artist in fulfilling circumscribed requirements.

Papers that addressed courts and courtly life complemented the theme of patronage at the conference. While most studies focused on the royal court and its activities in Paris, the exceptions once again provided keen insight into the dominant issues current in the study of this subject, namely the difficulty in distinguishing between public and private spheres within the court, and the integration of secular and spiritual practices. In her discussion of the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris, Meredith Cohen (Reid Hall, Columbia University and The University of Leeds) demonstrated that the monumental reliquary served as a public space on special occasions designed to popularize and extend the cult of kingship. Tracy Hamilton (Sweet Briar College) in “La Roynne de France est a Paris venue: Queen and City as Created by Marie de Brabant and Adenet le Roi” claimed that Marie de Brabant created a sphere of influence in Paris after 1274, beginning with her triumphant entrance into Paris and lavish coronation ceremony, also in the Palais de la Cité at the Sainte Chapelle. The ceremonial entrance of the bishop Jean de Simon into Paris in 1495, elaborated by Agnès Bos (Musée national de la Renaissance), also proved to be a highly public occasion that utilized the space of the city and stations to assert the prelate’s spiritual lordship. Donna Mayer-Martin (Southern Methodist University), in her analysis of the secular and sacred music in Gautier de Coinci’s *Miracles de Notre-Dame*, explored the image of Mary in the court of heaven, and the image of Gautier as minstrel in Mary’s court. Danielle Gurevitch (Bar-Ilan University) spoke about “The Architecture of the Court and the Lord’s Authority”. Late medieval castles stood as a manifestation of power, wealth, and grandeur. Their gatehouses and drawbridges, chapels, fabulous towers and fortifications, as well as the unique inner space arrangement, including living quarters, dining halls and guests’ chambers, became in literature encoded with courtly ideals such as unity, bravery, and love. Spaces once believed to be private thus became public from their use and transformation as universal signifiers. In examining “Art and Court Identity in Papal Avignon,” Cathleen A. Fleck (Washington University, St. Louis) argued that the public and private spaces of the papal palace maintained different styles of painting to reflect different personal and public personas. Clement VI, a French pope, commissioned Matteo Giovanetti for

the public spaces in the Avignon palace, perhaps because fresco technique was more widely practiced in Italy, but arguably to demonstrate outward connections with Rome. In his private spaces, however, Clement VI privileged French art, perhaps reflecting his personal taste. Timur Pollack-Lagushenko (Wright State University) demonstrated that social hierarchies were not established by differencing social spheres, which were often integrated. Hierarchies and power thus had to be established through different means, such as visual effects and personal practices. Mary Brown (University of California, Berkeley) concluded the session with “Les Leys d’amors de Toulouse, d’apayement de la poesie courtoise”, a treatise on poetry, philosophy and history that expresses the literary practices in a more bourgeois and more pious context, which transformed courtly metaphors in to a new literary context. The multiple instances in which both private and public orders, diverse social spheres, as well as sacred and secular ideas and practices merge, sometimes all together, emphasize the necessity to recognize our own contemporary preconceptions and to withhold as per Brown, the desire to separate, classify, and order according to established traditions.

The Paris session this year revolved around different facets of the University and intellectual life in Medieval Paris. Conrad Rudolph (University of California, Riverside) explained in “Old Theology, New Theology, and the Cosmos in Hugh of Saint Victor’s *The Mystic Ark*” that this enigmatic and complex treatise functioned not solely as a pedagogical instrument or as an illustration of the politics of theology but also as an active agent in shaping the new intellectual elite and the polemical discourses of the twelfth century. Diego Fasolini (Tulane University) discussed the wide impact of the Paris university in the career of a foreign academic in Paris, that of John Duns Scotus in the late twelfth / early thirteenth centuries. Pascale Duhamel (Institut de Recherche et d’Histoire des Textes, Paris) in “L’activit  intellectuelle universitaire

  Paris: l’exemple de la musique” offered a large survey of twelfth century Paris and examined the extent to which music was part of the curriculum. While the *De institutione musica* of Boethius was a crucial text, there are no commentaries on it. About fifteen manuscripts with quaestiones dealing with music have survived, but, as Pascale Duhamel said, “La musique est un tr s mauvais exemple pour l’histoire de la vie intellectuelle   Paris”.

In the afternoon Pascale Duhamel (Institut de Recherche et d’Histoire des Textes) and Agn s Bos (Mus e national de la Renaissance) led a visit on “The University of Paris: Spaces and Structures”. The first stop was the Lyc e Henri IV, formerly the monastery of Sainte-Genevi ve, where participants saw the twelfth and thirteenth-century remains of the church architecture as well as two recently discovered chapels on the site. In addition, we were able to climb the Tour Clovis for a fabulous view of the entire city. Then the group ambled over to the Chapelle du Coll ge de Dormans-Beauvais and Saint-S verin where both speakers provided fascinating insights into their places of specialty. A closing ap ritif was the final event to celebrate the three days of intense work on Patronage, the Court, and medieval Paris.

The meeting of scholars from different countries and branches of study opened a wealth of new perspectives on the issue of court and patronage. An important outcome of the symposium was that court and patronage always have a legitimatory function which is manifested in diverse forms of representation. The fact that France and Paris were in the focus of interest proved to be particularly fruitful. It provided a thematic coherence regardless of the different approaches of the participants, as the stimulating debates after the speeches demonstrated. The meanwhile third annual symposium of the International Medieval Society in summer 2006 will be held again in Paris, then on the topic “Foreigners, Strangers, and Others in Medieval France”.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

**Citation:** Julian F hrer. Review of , *Medieval Patronage and the Court*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. November, 2005.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=28018>

Copyright   2005 by H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved. This work may be copied and redis-

tributed for non-commercial, educational purposes, if permission is granted by the author and usage right holders. For permission please contact [H-SOZ-U-KULT@H-NET.MSU.EDU](mailto:H-SOZ-U-KULT@H-NET.MSU.EDU).