



Order of Medieval Women: Women of Consequence

Medieval Musings

"We cannot live in a world that is interpreted for us by others... use our own voice, see our own light." St. Hildegard von Bingen, 1098 - 1179

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A DYNASTY OF KINGS

The Saxon Dynasty was the ruling house of German kings (Holy Roman Emperors) from 919 to 1024. By Charlemagne's death in 814 his territory had been divided into several independent duchies with five regions, Franconia, Bavaria, Swabia, Saxony, and Lotharingia, re-emerging under Conrad as East Francia from 911-918. As Conrad lay dying he told his brother Eberhard, "Henry, Duke of Saxony is the ablest ruler in the empire. Elect him king, and Germany will have peace." In 919, following Conrad's advice, Henry the Fowler of Saxony was elected king of Germany, ruling a peaceful and prosperous kingdom during his 18-year reign. It was from this beginning the "Holy Roman Empire" emerged, a powerful empire controlling a large portion of central Europe until its dissolution during the Napoleonic Wars in 1806.

Henry, as King of East Franconia, began to consolidate his rule through successful wars and a dynastic marriage to Matilda of Ringelheim, a noblewoman of Danish and Frisian descent. While Henry was able to bring Lotharingia back under German control he was too weak to impose absolutist rule, forcing him to administer the empire as Charlemagne had done, a confederation of duchies while local dukes of Franconia, Swabia, and Bavaria maintained internal autonomy. After Conrad's death the Magyar tribes of Hungary began to strike the area, forcing Henry in 924 to return a captured Bagyar chief and pay tribute in exchange for a nine-year cessation of raids on German territory. Realizing only a strong united state could defend their lands, Henry used the time to develop towns and train a military force that could defeat the Slavic tribes. When the truce ended in 933 Henry refused to pay more tribute and the Magyars resumed their raids only to be destroyed by Henry's now seasoned cavalry.

In 935 when Henry was struck with a paralyzing stroke that halted his plans he decided his son Otto should be his successor to the throne. When his decision was announced many believed the better choice would be his son Henry since he carried his father's name and was more popular at court, but Henry was determined Otto would be his heir and successor. Henry began negotiations for an alliance with the Saxon kingdom that would be sealed by Otto's marriage to one of Edward the Elder's two daughters, granddaughters to Alfred the Great and nieces to Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians. Otto chose Edith who, according to German canoness Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, was a woman "of pure noble countenance, graceful character, and truly royal appearance."



Replica of the *Magdeburger Reiter*, equestrian monument regarded as portrait of Otto I, original c. 1240
© Ajephah CC BY-SA 3.0.



[//etc.usf.edu/maps/pages/6800/6858/6858.htm](http://etc.usf.edu/maps/pages/6800/6858/6858.htm)

Henry died in 936 with some of his assets distributed to his sons Henry, Bruno, and Thankmar, his oldest illegitimate son, but departed from Carolingian tradition by electing 24-year-old Otto his heir. Inheriting the Duchy of Saxony and kingship of the Germans Otto, though Saxon by birth, arrived at Aachen's Cathedral for his coronation in Frankish dress, again linking himself to his predecessor Charlemagne. Escorted by archbishop Hildebert Otto was led into the cathedral's octagonal center where the nobles, one by one, placed their hands in his with a solemn oath of loyalty and support against all enemies. The archbishop then asked "Behold, I bring you one chosen by God and named by your lord of former days, king Henry.

Now he has been declared king by all of the nobles of our realm, if this election finds favor with you show your consent by lifting toward heaven your right hands." Hands were raised and the crowd cried "Hail to our new Leader!" The bishop, before all including Otto's wife and two children, placed the royal insignia upon Otto followed with the anointing as he took his place on the elevated Throne of Charlemagne where he was crowned king. The banquet followed with, according to Saxon chronicler Widukind of Corvey, four dukes of Otto's kingdom acted as his personal attendants, signaling their cooperation and submission to Otto.

The joy of the coronation quickly passed as Otto faced uprisings from the Danes, Slaves, and the Hungarians. While his father had experienced challenges controlling his vassal dukes Otto firmly asserted his overlordship. When the Duke of Bavaria died in 937 Otto seized the opportunity to increase his royal power, rectifying a privilege his father had given Arnulf of naming the bishops for his

duchy. Otto believed the crown and Church functioned as one and naming the bishops was his right as ruler. With this change Arnulf's son Eberhard rebelled, leading an uprising that was joined by discontented Saxon nobles under the leadership of Otto's half-brother Thankmar. The rebellion ended with Thankmar being killed, Franconian Eberhard submitting to the King, and Eberhard of Bavaria deposed and outlawed. In 939 Otto's younger brother Henry was joined by Eberhard of Franconia and Giselbert of Lotharinga in a revolt supported by Louis IV. Otto was again victorious as Eberhard fell in battle, Giselbert drowned in flight and Henry submitted to his brother, only to join a conspiracy to murder Otto two years later. Henry's conspiracy was discovered with the conspirators punished except his brother who was again forgiven and thenceforth remained faithful to his brother, receiving the dukedom of Bavaria from Otto in 947.

Despite these internal difficulties Otto found time to strengthen and extend his kingdom's frontier as he looked towards Italy with interest. In 951 Otto received an appeal for help from Adelaide, daughter of Rudolph II king of Burgundy, offering some interesting possibilities. Adelaide's first marriage to King Lothair II, son of King Hugh of Italy, had been part of a political settlement between the two fathers. Adelaide and Lothair's daughter Emma was born in 948 only to be followed two years later with Lothair's death from poisoning by Berengar II of Italy, another claimant to Italy whose grandfather had been emperor of the west. When Adelaide refused Berengar to marry his son Berengar became worried that she, not yet 20 and beautiful, would soon remarry possibly a powerful Italian noble who could take his throne. In April 951 Berengar captured Adelaide, placing her in a prison at Como until able to transfer her to a fortress in Lago de Garda. Adelaide's supporters and the bishop of Reggio helped her escape to 'a certain impregnable fortress' Canossa. Adelaide sent a note to Otto requesting his protection, he immediately responded. When Berengar heard of Otto's military advance he fled Pavia, leaving the city open for Otto to be crowned king October 951 with the Iron Crown of Lombardy. Otto sent messages to Adelaide asking her to be his bride and queen and before the end of the year they were married. Otto's marriage to Adelaide left his oldest son Liudolf, previously named his successor, threatened. After the birth of Otto and Adelaide's son the following year Liudolf raised the flag of revolt, allying with men of Swabia, his brother-in-law Duke Conrad of Lorraine and Frederick, archbishop of Mainz. Otto, weary of family rebellions called an assembly in May 953, removing Frederick of his office and Conrad his duchy which launched into a rebellion as father and son met across the battlefield in Mainz. The battle lasted for two months before an unsuccessful effort was made to talk of peace. Forced to abandon Mainz Otto marched south into Bavaria and attacked Regensburg as its citizens withdrew into the city's walls. With little provisions Liudolf, unwilling for the citizens to suffer for his sake, cast himself down before his father praying for pardon. An agreement was ratified by an Imperial Diet that promised Liudolf regency over Italy and command of an army to depose Berengar II. In 957 Liudolf successfully invaded Italy with many cities capitulating and Berengar fleeing, unfortunately within a few months Liudolf was dead from a fever. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

By 961 Otto had conquered the Kingdom of Italy and again, following Charlemagne's example, was crowned in Rome by Pope John XII in 962 as the Holy Roman Emperor; Adelaide, breaking tradition, was crowned Holy Roman Empress. After the coronation a synod was called with Otto and Pope John XII ratifying the *Diploma Ottonianum*, confirming John XII the spiritual head of the Church and Otto its secular protector. Pope John soon became anxious over Otto's immense power and not only opened negotiations with Berengar II's son Adalbert of Italy to depose Otto, but sent envoys to persuade the Hungarians and the Byzantine Empire to join them. Otto again discovered the Pope's plot and after imprisoning Berengar II, marched to Rome as Pope John XII fled. Otto had him de-

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ST. STEPHEN'S PURSE

Known as St. Stephen's Purse, this reliquary is believed to have once contained blood-soaked soil from Stephen, the first martyr stoned to death outside Jerusalem after scolding his enemies for not believing in Jesus. The original wooden core contains hollow recesses where relics were once kept. The overall shape of this reliquary is reminiscent of other typical pilgrim bags like one carried by St. James in the alabaster



Imperial Treasury, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien (Vienna).



St. James, Gil de Siloe, ca 1486, Met Museum, N.Y.

sculpture by Gil de Siloe (commissioned by Isabel of Castile in 1486 to be placed in the alabaster tomb she had commissioned for her parents). During coronations in Aachen's Palatine Chapel, the purse was placed in a specially created niche in Charlemagne's marble slab throne. The front includes cabochon stones while its sides are medallions stamped into gold foil with mysterious depictions of fishermen, falconers, bird-hunters and a goddess of vengeance stylistically related to the court school of Charlemagne, ca 800-30.

posed, electing Leo VIII pope December 963. Feeling confident of his rule in Italy and Rome secure Otto released most of his army to return to Germany. He misjudged the situation as he and the election of popes were in continual discord; between 962 and May 973, there were seven different popes with John XII serving during two different periods.

Amid all the turmoil of the papacy, Otto continued expanding his Italian realm to the south causing conflict with the Byzantines who claimed sovereignty over the principalities of southern Italy. They objected to Otto's title of Emperor, believing only Nikephoros II was the true successor of the ancient Roman Empire. Peace talks began with Otto calling for an imperial princess as a bride for his son and successor Otto II. A Byzantine princess "born in the purple" had long been Otto's objective, realizing a marriage connection with the Macedonian dynasty in the East would give prestige and validation to his kingdom. To further his dynastic plans for his son's marriage Otto's 12-year-old son Otto II was crown in 967 as co-Emperor, a nominal co-ruler with no real authority until his father's death. With no resolution both empires sought to strengthen their influence in southern Italy until 969 when Byzantine Emperor John I Tzimiskes was assassinated succeeded by Nikephoros. In 972 Nikephoros recognized Otto's imperial title and agreed to send his niece, princess Theophana, to Rome as a bride to Otto II. In 973, with all conflicts resolved, 60-year-old Otto returned to Germany having "established an empire that rivaled in size, population, and wealth to that of Charlemagne's, his accomplishments virtually unrivaled from the ninth to the early nineteenth-century in Western Europe." Dying soon after his return Otto left a legacy supporting learning and culture which led to the "Ottonian Renaissance" an important intellectual and architectural period for medieval Europe. Adelaide would live another 26 years, serving ten years as regent to her son Otto II until his death, followed as regent for five years to her grandson Otto III after Theophana, his mother and Adelaide's daughter-in-law died in 990. Otto III reached legal majority in 995 and Adelaide retired to a nunnery she had established in Alsace until her death in 999. Hrotsvit of Gandersheim wrote *Gesta Ottonis* ('*Deeds of Otto*') in the later years of Otto I's reign, a poetic history supplying details of the Ottonian period and queenship centered around Adelaide.

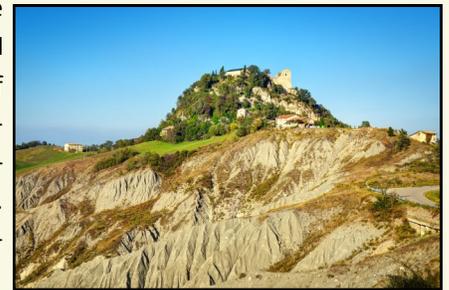
MANDRAKE: A CURE FOR INSANITY



Mandrake, ca 1175, Sloane MS 1975, fol. 49r, British Library.

Mandrake, referenced in Genesis 30:14, was used during the Middle Ages as an anesthetic and cure for various ailments from earaches and gout to insanity. A mandrake was particularly hazardous to harvest as its roots resembled the human form and, when pulled up, shrieked causing madness, death, and damnation. Found in the Mediterranean regions Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder and Greek botanist Dioscorides described elaborate methods of harvesting mandrakes. A 12th-century manuscript, Harley MS 4986, suggested to safely unearth a mandrake "tie a cord to the plant with the other end attached to a dog. A horn should be sounded to drown out the shrieking, simultaneously startling the dog as he pulled up the mandrake, otherwise stuff your ears with clods of earth before attempting to pull the mandrake from the ground." Mandrakes have more recently been featured in several books and movies including two of J.P. Rowling's Harry Potter books, Chamber of Secrets and Deathly Hallows, with potions able to restore those who the monster had cursed or in Chamber where it was used during a battle against the Death Eaters.

"GO TO CANOSSA"



Canossa Castle ruins, unknown source.

Built ca 940 on the summit of a rocky hill Canossa was one of the most impregnable castles in the Italian Middle Ages. Located in an impressive chain of watch-towers and castles it was here Adelaide fled after being held captive by Berengar II and later rescued by Otto I.

11th-century Matilda of Tuscany inherited the impregnable castle of Canossa, again the setting for another famous story set in 1177 when Henry IV, Holy Roman Emperor stood for three days bare-headed in the snow to plead his case before Pope Gregory VII and Matilda to lift his excommunication.

After Henry's "visit" to Canossa, to go to Canossa became a German term to humble one's self in submission, humiliation or penance. Adolf Hitler referenced Canossa in his private meeting with the Bavarian Minister in 1925, a fortnight after his release from Landsberg declaring the experience was his "journey to Canossa."

POITIERS, FRANCE



Palace of Poitiers © //www.memorablewomen.com.

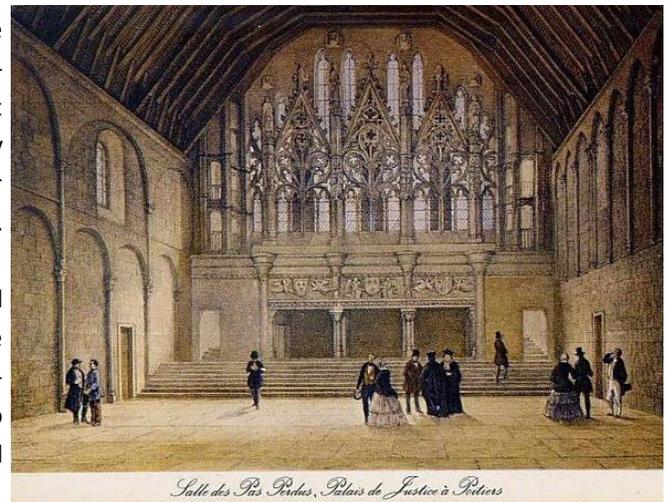
Poitiers, located in west-central France, is an ancient city that once echoed with footsteps of Roman legionnaires. During the 5th-century the area was settled by Visigoths who in 507 were driven out by king Clovis. In 524 Chlothar, one of Clovis' sons, received the area as part of his spoils after murdering his wife Radegunda's brother. When Radegunda discovered the truth she fled becoming a nun, later founding the Abbey of the Holy Cross and one of the first Merovingian saints. In 732 Frankish ruler Charles Martel halted the Saracens invasion of France defeating them near Poitiers at the Battle of Tours. Strategically located Poitiers was a center for politics, international trade, and one of the principal pilgrimage routes to Spain's Santiago.

When the city Charlemagne had reestablished for his son Louis was destroyed by fire coupled with the decline of the Carolingian Dynasty the area became the seat of power for the Counts of Poitou and Dukes of Aquitaine where Eleanor's grandfather William IX, Duke of Aquitaine, gained fame as a crusader and troubadour. In 1104 William added a rectangular keep known as the La Tour Maubergeon, named after his mistress Amaberge, "the Dangerous," wife of Vicomte Aimery de Châtellerauld and grandmother to Eleanor. In 1168 Poitiers became the site of another well-known event as Patrick of Salisbury, grandfather to Ela of Salisbury and uncle to William Marshal, was unexpectedly asked by Henry to escort the Eleanor to safety as the Poitou's rebels had begun laying waste to the region. Not fully armed Patrick and his men were ambushed with Patrick being killed and William wounded and held captive where he was refused medical attention until clean linens mysteriously appeared in a loaf of bread, probably saving his life. Patrick was buried at the church Église Saint-Hilaire-le-Grande and Eleanor, impressed by William's bravery, paid his ransom and became a member of her household, two years later he was appointed Young King Henry's tutor.

Poitiers was interwoven into Eleanor's life. It was her birthplace and where her father left on a pilgrimage dying en route to Santiago, the place she and Henry Plantagenet were married and built St. Pierre Cathedral, where she began her journey to select a granddaughter to marry Louis VIII and her home after Richard's death as she stood against her grandson Arthur to protect John's French properties. Between 1191 and 1204 Eleanor oversaw the construction of the Palais de Justice, a vast dining hall that was perhaps the largest in contemporary Europe. Known as the "hall of lost footsteps" the 8800 square foot hall was designed for meetings of the provincial states and included a beamed ceiling, large fireplaces and stone benches ringing its walls. In 1346 the rectangular keep suffered great damage when Henry of Grosmont set the southern portion of the palace ablaze. A decade later England gained control of the palace during the Battle of Poitiers only to be reconquered by the French. In 1384 Jean I, Duc de Berry, Count of Poitiers, rebuilt what had been destroyed by fire with private apartments restored in the Gothic Flamboyant style and remains today as one of the most remarkable examples of French medieval civil architecture.

In 1420 Joan of Arc was sent by order of the Dauphin Charles to Poitiers for a three-week examination by a panel of clergymen following her claims of her divine mission to save France. She "passed" her physical examination confirming she was a maiden, as she claimed, and was sent back to Charles to fulfill the destiny she had set for herself. While transcripts of the hearing and the exam given in Poitiers no longer exist the *Book of Poitiers* is referred to several times in her trial stating the "Examination at Poitiers took place in the Chapel attached to the Palace of the Counts of Poitou's which adjoins the Great Hall of Justice and was conducted under the direction of the Archbishop of Reims during March and April 1429."

Saint Joan of Arch's Trial: [//www.stjoan-center.com/Trials/](http://www.stjoan-center.com/Trials/)



Salle des Pas Perdus, Palais de Justice à Poitiers

unknown source

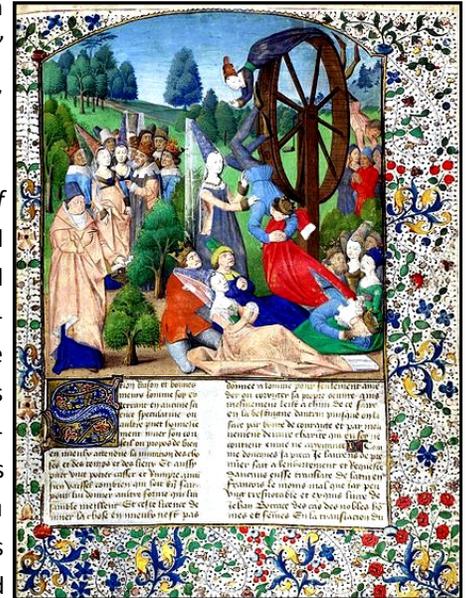
"I am not afraid...I was born to do this."

Joan of Arc 1412-1430

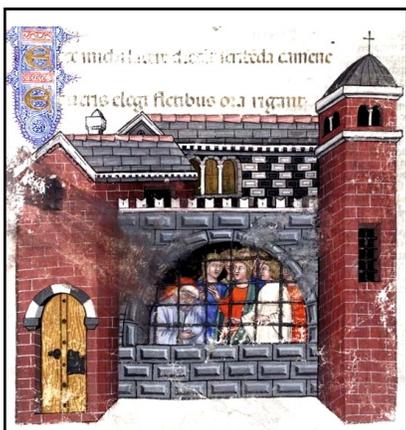
LADY FORTUNE AND HER WHEEL

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, a polymath and considered “The Last of the Romans.” The aristocrat, realizing the Classical World was ending and future generations would not have access to Greek scholarship, translated classical Greek logic to medieval Latin. He left a legacy of textbooks on arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music forming the quadrivium in addition to commentaries on Aristotle, Porphyry, and Cicero, essays on logic, and four treatises of theological doctrines. Raised in an upper-class family he received an exceptional level of education, his home a center for early Italian Humanism. In 507, as a patrician of Rome and one that enjoyed the king's confidence, Boethius was entrusted by Kibbyng Theodoric with several important missions. Although revered by Roman nobility, neither his noble birth or great popularity could save Boethius after he came to the defense of a friend who had become embroiled in a plot to overthrow Theodoric and restore Roman rule. Accused of disloyalty to the Ostrogothic king and plotting to restore “Roman liberty” the paranoid and vengeful king cast Boethius into prison, his explanations unheard and, like Socrates, condemned to death based on false charges by his political enemies.

During the two years he awaited his fate Boethius wrote his final work *The Consolation of Philosophy*, considered the single most important and influential work of Medieval and Early Renaissance Christianity. Originally written in Latin even kings and queens translated his story into their languages, Alfred the Great and Elizabeth I each tried their hand at rendering the work into English. Comprised of five books the story combined prose and verse as a dialogue, beginning with a conversation between Boethius and the imaginary Muses of Poetry. As Boethius wrote he was interrupted by the entrance of Philosophy personified as a woman. He asked Lady Philosophy, “Is not my terrible treatment at Fortune's hands not clear. Look at this dreadful cell! Does it resemble that cozy library where you used to visit in my house?” His earlier life was precious to him and was devastated by its loss, intensified by the fact he believed he has been done an injustice. He wrote: “Instead of being rewarded for my actual virtue, I am punished for imaginary crimes.” As if this injustice was not painful enough Boethius was miserable believing that the evil people who persecuted him were being rewarded saying “I am thus stripped of my honors, deprived of all my possessions, the subject of wicked gossip, and punishment for all my years of honest service, while the wicked, dancing in their delight, plot new accusations and hatch new schemes.” He felt he had been abandoned by God as “the innocent suffer penalties proper to malefactors, and wicked men sit upon thrones.” Lady Philosophy personified the medieval belief that personal misfortune was less the result of individual action than a reflection of the inevitable turning of her wheel. She tells him she has come in his hour of need as he suffers from the sickness of being too attached to material and earthly things; the transitory nature of health, wealth, honor, and power never truly belongs to any human being and are soon visited by the wheel of fortune with earthly things quickly snatched away. She asserts it is unwise to become attached to temporal things as happiness comes from within and virtue is



Fortune and Her Wheel: Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (On the Fates of Famous Men, Vol. 1, Paris, 1467, MSS Hunter 371-372, folio 1r Prologue.



Boethius imprisoned, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, 1385 MS Hunter 374 (V.1.11), folio 4r, scribe "Brother Amadeus" Italy, University of Glasgow.

all one truly has. As Boethius tried to understand how evil men could become successful while good men suffer wrongly she assures him that goodness has its reward and the evildoer is only hurting himself; once he accepts that wealth, power and status are meaningless evil men can do him no harm. After he considers whether or not humankind have free will if God determines each man's fate he finally realizes that God has given free will to man and although God is omniscient, he does not intervene in man's affairs but allows mankind to make their own decisions. The book's philosophical message of religious piety encouraged medieval readers not to seek worldly goods but internalize virtues, an interpretation closely linked to the spirit of Christianity.

Considered the last great work of the Classical era *The Consolation of Philosophy* was the most translated and copied secular work, revered for over 400 years and considered by many including King Alfred of England and Chaucer as a work of utmost importance.

HOW GOLDSMITHS FOOLED THE ANGLO-SAXON WORLD

Britain's largest treasure hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold, known as the Staffordshire Hoard, was discovered in 2009 off an old Roman road bordering a forest in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia. The late 7th-century treasure consisted of about 3,500 fragments with more than 300 sword-hilt fittings, 10 scabbard pendants, 3500 garnet cloisonné pieces and 86 sword-pommel caps, a number that corresponds to the number of men that made up a nobleman's troop of retainers. The undisturbed 1300-year-old burial appears to have been centered around the military as there were no domestic objects, vessels, eating utensils or feminine jewelry and only three religious crosses. The workmanship was very high and a mystery why most of the gold and silver items appear to have been intentionally removed from the objects they had been attached although it suggest possibly reflecting the giving of heriot. During England's late Anglo-Saxon period the giving of heriot, a death duty paid to the lord from the belongings of a tenant and could include horses, swords, shields, spears, a tradition mentioned in *Beowulf* with warriors stripping the pommels off their enemies' swords.



Stylized filigreed seahorse by unknown master goldsmith, 7th-century, 1.6" high, Staffordshire Museum, Birmingham, England.
© National Geographic.

In 2014 the hoard underwent the largest surface metal analysis to date with astonishing results. The testing revealed Anglo-Saxon goldsmiths had been familiar with depletion gilding, sophisticated techniques used to treat gold objects to improve their color, making them appear 'more gold' by removing alloyed metals like copper and silver from the surface of the objects. This technique was not recorded in Anglo-Saxon times and had never before been detected in metalwork from the period although a similar technique was known from Roman accounts. It appears Anglo-Saxon metalworkers knew what they were doing as this wasn't something that could have happened by accident. The gold with up to 25% silver alloy was delib-



Interpretation ca 7th-century helmet, horsehair/ wool padding, hammered iron
© National Geographic.

erately heated in an acid solution made from iron-rich minerals, such as brick dust, creating almost certainly ferric chloride, allowing the silver from the top few microns of the surface to leach out from the 12-18 karat slightly greenish pale yellow gold/silver alloy into what appeared as a rich deep yellow 21-23 karat gold. This is the first study to show this technique being widely used in the Anglo-Saxon period and of enormous significance to the study of the Anglo-Saxon period, providing new insights into the metals used by Anglo-Saxon goldsmiths and techniques they used to create objects. Initial tests on pieces from other collections suggest this system was more common on pieces made for women and not on the highest status pieces such as a king's arm ring.



Staffordshire hoard scattered just below the surface of a field at Hammerwich. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images.

READERS CORNER: FULK FITZ WARINE:

AN OUTLAWED BARON IN THE REIGN OF KING JOHN

Discovered 100 years ago buried in London's ancient Royal Library stacks was a manuscript written from a poem about Fulk Fitz Warine and his encounters with king John. Dated before the 14th-century the story appears as one recited by Anglo-Norman trouvères with extraordinarily detailed knowledge of geography, Ludlow traditions, history of the Fitz Warine family and a background of the initial confrontation and details of Fitz Warine being hunted as an outlaw by the king's men. Read this story, it mirrors the story of Robin Hood!

archive.org/details/historyoffulkfit00wriguoft/page/n23

MORE THAN JUST A TROUBADOUR



Agnes of Aquitaine, Genealogia dos Reis de Portugal, MS 12531, British Library.

Eleanor's grandfather Duke William IX of Aquitaine, known as the first troubadour, had close connections to Spain after his daughter Agnes married King Pedro I of Aragon. In June 1120 he with his Aquitanian knights joined Aragon and Navarre forces, taking the Almoravids by surprise at the Battle of Cutanda, a battle so utterly devastating the Muslims that for years later there was a popular saying for those unlucky "were like the vanquished at Cutanda." It was after this battle that William received the 6/7th-century rock crystal vase which Eleanor inherited, her only artifact known to still exist. Eleanor gave the vase as a wedding present to Louis VII who bestowed it to Abbot Suger at the dedication of St. Denis in 1144, now housed in the Louvre in Paris.

AUTOMATA: FANTASTICAL MACHINES

Automata, an intersection of natural knowledge and technology that originated in Ancient Greece was referenced in Homer's Iliad telling of Hephaestus, the god of fire and craftsmen who became lazy and created mechanical female helpers on golden wheels "so they could scurry of their own accord to the god's gatherings" with two golden female assistants endowed with speech, and strength to assist at his forge. By the 3rd-century BC Alexandria engineers were designing automata to illustrate mechanical principles of power with catapults, water clocks, singing birds and even a mobile shrine to Dionysius with figures within a small fixed theatre that used counterweights for scenery changes. Unfortunately the only surviving ancient automaton is the Antikythera Mechanism, a precisely geared analog computer, ca 80 BC, discovered in a shipwreck in the Aegean Sea in 1900. About the size of a briefcase and powered by a hand-crank the mechanism could calculate phases of the moon, predict eclipses of the sun, moon and determine the date Greek games would occur.



Tempus Fugit Clock, Prague, ca 1410, Old Town Hall Tower, strikes the hour 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. when the procession of the Twelve Apostles is set into motion.

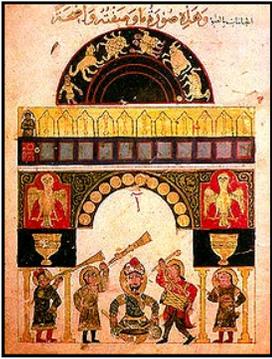


Largest gear fragment about 5 1/2" diameter, ca 80 BC, Antikythera Mechanism, Archaeological Museum, Athens.

The science of automata continued in the Byzantine court as it mirrored medieval Baghdad's knowledge and abilities. In 757 Constantine V sent Pepin the Short a steam-powered organ. The Royal Frankish Annals documents contact between the Abbāsīd dynasty and Carolingian empire in 804 when a brass water clock (clepsydra) was sent to Charlemagne as a gift, something never seen before in the Christian empire, as the hours rang by dropping small brass balls onto a cymbal. Instead of a numbered dial time was displayed with 12 mechanical horsemen who, at the end of each hour, popped out of a window previously closed. The Frankish chronicler recording the gift described it as a marvel "wondrously wrought by mechanical art" with many other features too numerous to mention. Charlemagne reciprocated with gifts of Spanish horses, Frisian robes and the largest hounds best at chasing and catching lions and tigers.

In 949 Italian diplomat Liuprand of Cremona attended a reception in Constantinople given by Constantine VII, later writing of his unusual experience in the throne room of the Emperor's Palace. As Liuprand entered the room the Emperor was seated on the great throne of Theophilus with a golden lion on either side that "gave a dreadful roar with open mouth and quivering tongue" as its tail switched back and forth. On one side of the throne was also a life-sized golden tree with dozens of birds perched on its branches, glistening with gold and precious stones, each singing the song of its particular species. After prostrating himself before the emperor Liuprand lifted his head to find the emperor and throne had risen almost to the ceiling, soon returning with the Emperor dressed in a different robe. Byzantium intentionally presented such spectacles to foreign ministers to demonstrate their wealth and power. While the throne and its automaton disappeared long ago Liudprand's experience was also documented by Constantine VII in a Byzantine manual of courtly etiquette. As the Roman Empire declined the ability to create mechanical creations became lost to Western Europe yet continued to flourish in the cosmopolitan courts of Baghdad, Damascus, and Constantinople. Hellenistic texts, preserved by monasteries and scholars, tell of three Iranian brothers in 850 working under the Abbasid Caliphate writing an illustrated work *The Book of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*. In 1206 Ibn-al-Razzaz al-Jazari completed a similar book which was widely circulated across the Muslim world with some of its ideas reaching Europe through Islamic Spain. In the early 1500's da Vinci was commissioned by Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan (uncle to Catherine Sforza) to build a mechanical lion able to walk and once reaching its destination a compartment in the lion's chest would open to reveal a fleur-de-lis in honor of the French monarchy.

The Latin West was fascinated by the mechanical devices as enthusiasm for mechanical clocks began to sweep northern Europe. Giant timepieces began to appear that modeled the cosmos, chiming the hour and predicting eclipses while church bells were programmed with melodies audibly marking the passage of time. During the 1290's one of the most famous medieval automaton collections belonged to Robert II, Count of Artois, grandson to Blanche of Castile. The elite were no strangers to elaborate entertainment and Robert's Hesdin chateau with its grounds of idyllic beauty offered guests surprising and unexpected "engines of amusement," prank machines that would soak guests with jets of water, devices that flung them into piles of feathers or an artificial lake with a bridge adorned with wooden monkeys operated with ropes. Robert II died in 1302 and his daughter Mahaut continued to



Book of Ingenious Mechanical Devices, al-Jazarica 1206, © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

oversee the park as its royal connections continued to visit and enjoy the park. In 1419 Philip II, Duke of Burgundy came to power during an extremely prosperous period when their dukes were among the wealthiest rulers in Europe. Also fascinated with automata Philip began renovating Hesdin for public spectacle, transforming its ballroom into a distraction room where water flowed under the floor through a network of ducts to persecute and chase visitors. All his court activities were choreographed and marked by lavish displays, frequently employing mechanical fountains and automatons at feasts including his wedding in 1430 to Isabelle of Portugal, granddaughter to Philippa of Hainault, where outside the ducal palace various fountains gushed with wine and inside figures of deer and unicorns spouted rose water and hippocras (popular in the Roman Empire made from wine, sugar, and spices).

Secular powers also embraced this technology and by the late 14th-century automata had become a part of elite courtly pageantry. In 1377 London's Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths created a golden mechanical angel that handed Richard II a crown during a pageant held the day before his coronation in Westminster Abbey. Automata were also featured in Chaucer's *Piers the Plowman, Prologue* "as movements of automata are set against a background of painted trees." In 1389 King Charles VI commanded a grand spectacle for Queen Isabel of Bavaria's entry into Paris. According to chronicler Juvenal des Ursins, the royal entry included numerous *tableaux vivants* (living pictures) and fountains dispensing wine, milk, and water. A small man dressed as an angel descended "by means of some well-constructed machinery from one of Notre-Dame towers, placed a crown on the queen's head and then ascended by the same means...appearing as if he were returning to the skies of his own accord." In 1414 at Ferdinand I of Aragon's coronation feast in Zaragoza, Spain a mechanical "cloud" swept down from the ceiling with a mechanical figure of Death appearing to claim a courtier and jester. While other guests had been forewarned, nobody told the jester who was terrorized as "the king marveled and was greatly amused." While the period 1890-1910 is considered the "Golden Age of Automata, to this day they "continue to entice and enthrall as museums actively display these mechanical wonders to a never-ending interested audience.



"Watch Wisdom" Henrich Seuse, ca 1450, Bibliotheque Royale Albert, Brussels MS. IV, f. 111.

CROWN OF THORNS

In 1236 Baldwin II, heir to the Byzantine empire and ward to Emperor John of Brienne, visited Rome, France and Flanders seeking money and military aid as he tried to recover the lost territory of his realm. When Brienne died in 1237 Constantinople was left in desperation, short of food and money the population fled the city leaving it vulnerable to outsider attacks. Byzantium desperate for money made a loan with some Venetians for 13,134 *hyperpyra*, placing the Crown of Thorns as collateral. By September 1238, less than a year later the money had been spent with no sign of help from the West. Another loan of 13,134 *hyperpyra* was made by Venetian banker Nicola Quirino, again with the Crown as collateral in addition to an agreement that if the loan was not repaid along with interest "Quirino could do with it as he wanted." Before the 4 months were up Quirino discovered Baldwin had offered the Crown to Louis IX who immediately dispatched two Dominicans to Constantinople bearing letters patent. Upon their arrival they discovered the Crown had already been pawned and was about to be shipped to Venice. The two Dominicans joined the voyage and upon arrival one guarded the Crown while the other hurried to France to advise Louis who immediately sent ambassadors to Venice with money to redeem the sacred relic. Sorry to lose such a potentially profitable attraction the Venetians honored the transaction although the sole record of payment refers to a sum of 10,000 *hyperpyra*, 3,000 short of the original loan. During Baldwin's absence his consort Marie of Brienne, Berengaria of Castile's granddaughter served as regent.



Crown of Thorns set in 1896 crystal reliquary, Notre-Dame Paris © Sydney Bristol.



Left: Archbishop Gauthier Cornut of Sens displaying the Crown of Thorns; right: King Louis IX carrying the Crown, ca 1245-48, Tours, France, pot-metal glass and vitreous paint, Cloisters Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y.

Source: Archbishop of Sens Gautier de Cornut, 1239-40, published in Riant, *Exuviae sacrae*, I, pg 43-53.

ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE:

THREE GENERATIONS OF FEMALE DESCENDANTS

Eleanor, mother of two queens and grandmother to many more, “left a lasting influence over a wider Europe than the empire built by her second husband Henry II and lost by their youngest son, John.” It was during her queenship the queen’s role changed as the Chancellor of the Exchequer took over the royal household, wardrobe, bedchamber and holding keys to the treasury while the queen wielded political power as regent, intercessor, cultural and church patron. Eleanor was the first queen to bring tremendous wealth into her marriages, giving her power, prestige, and great influence to the political scene, a position that continued for many of her female descendants including her five daughters as they populated Europe's royal houses.

Eleanor and Louis VII of France had two daughters, Marie of France, Countess of Champagne, and Alix of France, Countess of Blois-Chartres. During the 13 years between Eleanor and Louis’ annulment and the birth of his son Philip Augustus, the two daughters were Louis’ only heirs making their marriages into the House of Blois-Champagne key, cementing a political alliance against his major rival, the Plantagenets.

In 1164 Marie married her step-mother Adele’s brother Henry I, future Count of Champagne. She was able to wield power through a series of regencies in Champagne, first while Henry was in the East from 1179-1181 followed in 1181-1187 during the minority of their son Henry. Her third regency began in 1190 when her son Henry traveled East and continued until 1197 when their second son Thibaut reached majority as Henry had married Queen Isabelle of Jerusalem and never returned to Champagne. Her final regency was 1197-1198 during the minority of her grandson Thibaut III. Marie followed her mother as a patron of courtly love with the court of Champagne becoming a center of literary works that enhanced the power and reputation of women. She commissioned a French translation of Genesis from Evratt, was a patron to Andreas Capellanus, poets Gace Brulé, Gautier d’Arras, and most notably Chrétien de Troyes who created the great Arthurian romances, refining the role of chivalry and investing knight-hood with strong moral and social issues. Marie and Henry had two daughters, Scholastica and Marie. Little is known about Scholastica who married Guillaume IV, Count of Vienne and Ma-



Wedding Eleanor and Louis VII,
Les Chroniques de Saint-Denis,
late 14th-century, British Library.

con and their daughter Beatrice. Marie and Henry’s second daughter Marie married Baldwin I of Constantinople, acting as regent in Flanders from 1202-1204 while Baldwin served as one of the most prominent leaders of the Fourth Crusade. In 1204, with Venetian support Baldwin I was crowned Emperor of Constantinople. Marie left to join him but died en-route, Baldwin died the following year leaving daughters Jeanne and Marguerite as wards of their uncle Philip I of Namur. After negotiations Jeanne married Fernando of Portugal, succeeding as Countess of Flanders and Hainaut. En-route to Flanders the couple was captured by her first cousin Louis VIII who sought to take back his mother Isabelle of Hainaut’s dowry, releasing them only after concessions were made. Fernando joined an alliance against France and fought at the Battle of Bouvines but was captured and imprisoned, leaving 14-year-old Jeanne to rule their kingdom for 12 years until Blanche of Castile was able to release Fernando after the accession of her son Louis IX. Jeanne promoted her Flemish cities’ development with legal and tax privileges, establishing several abbeys, a dozen monasteries, supported hospitals, and transformed a women’s place in both society and the church. Marie and Baldwin’s second daughter Marguerite of Flanders married Bouchard D’Avesnes but later divorced due to consanguinity. Her second marriage was to William de Dampierre with 3 sons and 2 daughters, Johana, wife of Hugues III de Vitry and Marie, Abbess of Flines, a Cistercian nunnery her parents founded in about 1234.

In 1164 Louis VII and Eleanor’s second daughter Alix of France married her step-mother’s other brother Thibaut V of Blois who held the more important family lands west of Paris. During their 27-year marriage Alix often appears in charters with her husband bestowing pious gifts to local religious communities and, as the Countess of Blois-Chartres, actively supported the patronage of the royal monastery Saint-Lomer de Blois. In Thibaut’s absence Alix assumed responsibility for maintaining Chartres’ defensive walls and after Thibaut died in the crusades served as regent for seven years during the minority of their son Louis. They had seven children, three daughters. Alice served as Abbess of Fontevault while her sister Isabelle married twice, although only her first marriage to Sulpice III, Seigneur of Amboise, resulted in a daughter Matilda who succeeded her as Countess of Chartres but died childless. Isabella exercised great power and authority as countess, noted for her patronage of religious houses including Saint-Antoine-des-Champs in Paris and founder of several houses for Cistercian nuns. Alix’s third daughter Marguerite, Countess of Blois married three times, first to troubadour Hughes D’Osis, placing her in the center of his poems and 12th-century French “courtly love.” With her second husband Othon I, Count of Burgundy they had two daughters, Joanna and Beatrice II, wife of Otto I, Duke of Merano. Margarete’s third marriage

was to Gautier D’Avesnes with a son and two daughters Isabelle, wife to Jean d’Oisy and Marie, Countess of Blois who married Hugh of Chatillon who had three sons.

In May 18, 1152, just weeks after Eleanor’s marriage to Louis had been annulled, she married Henry, Duke of Normandy. Over the next 13 years, they had five sons and three daughters. Their oldest daughter Matilda, named after her grandmother Empress Matilda, married Henry ‘the Lion’ of Brunswick, Duke of Bavaria and Saxony. When Henry ‘the Lion’ became involved in a conflict with his father-in-law Emperor Frederick Henry II interceded to protect his daughter’s interests. After a second conflict, Henry and his family fled Germany, taking refuge for three years in her parent’s court until they were able to return to Saxony; Matilda remained marrying crusader Geoffrey III, Count of Perche.

Eleanor and Henry’s second daughter Eleanor (Leonor) married Alfonso VIII, King of Castile in 1170. Acting alongside her husband in royal administration she exercised considerable political power, teaching her daughters their responsibility to serve the family thru marriage. It was Leonor who persuaded Alfonso to agree that Berengaria must marry his cousin as no peace was possible per the *Cronica Latina*, “unless the king of Castile united his daughter the lady Berengaria to the King of Leon, in de facto marriage,” by December they were married. Married for 44 years Leonor and Alfonso’s seven daughters Berengaria, Sancho, Urraca, Blanche, Mafalda and Leonor made important royal marriages to the kings and future kings of Leon, France, Portugal, and Aragon while their youngest daughter Constanza became a nun.

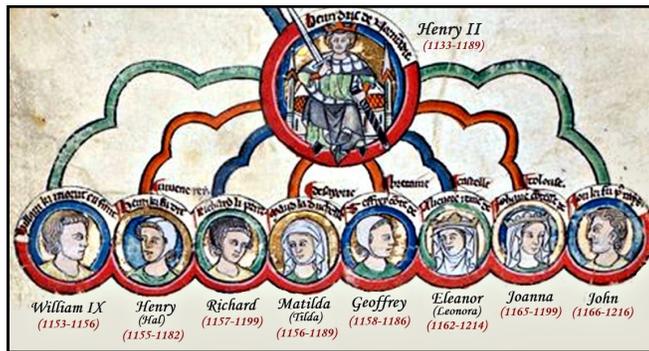
After seven years of marriage and five children, Lenor and Alfonso’s oldest daughter Berengaria found her marriage to Alfonso IX annulled on grounds of consanguinity. After her parent’s death and brother’s accidental death, Berengaria reigned for a short time before abdicating to her son Ferdinand yet continued to be his closest advisor, serving as regent while he was on long campaigns. She became known for her negotiations as she persuaded Alfonso IX’s two daughters from an earlier marriage whom Alfonso had designated his heirs to abdicate to her son. She orchestrated negotiations against other kingdoms for her daughter Berengaria of Castile-Leon’s marriage to Jean de Brienne, Emperor-Regent to 12-year-old Baldwin II de Courtenay. Berengaria and Jean had three sons and a daughter Marie de Brienne who, at 12, married Baldwin II, the last Latin Emperor. Maria was left in nominal command of Constantinople as the sole rep-

resentative of the imperial family while Baldwin was recruiting arms and raising funds in Western Europe. The following year after his return he was crowned emperor in the Hagia Sophia. In 1243 their only child Philippe I de Courtenay was born while Baldwin was again in France seeking support before joining the Seventh Crusade. Baldwin returned in 1248 and within a month Maria left with to visit her great-aunt, Blanche of Castile who had earlier given Baldwin 20,000 livres with promises first he would not sell his properties at Namur and secondly would send Marie for a visit within a month of his return which she did, remaining with Blanche until her death in 1252.

Perhaps Leonor and Alfonso’s most famous third daughter Blanche married Louis VIII. Pregnant at least twelve times with five surviving to adulthood, four sons and a daughter Isabel of France, Abbess of Longchamp and later canonized. Their fourth and youngest daughter was Leonor who married Jaimie I, King of Aragon with one son before he had their marriage annulled. Henry and Eleanor’s youngest daughter Joanna married into the

wealthy and decadent court of King William II of Sicily at Palermo Cathedral. Crowned Queen of Sicily she lived in almost oriental seclusion as William had adopted many of the customs of his Turkish subjects, including maintaining a harem. In 1189 William died childless as his cousin Count Tancred of Lecce seized control of the island, holding Joanne in “polite captivity” until she was rescued by her brother King Richard. Eleanor with Richard’s bride Berengaria of Navarre joined Joanna and Richard briefly before Eleanor left to return home. Berengaria and Joanna stayed in the area for some time until they boarded a ship bound for Brindisi, with Richard to soon follow. During some severe storms the ship was wrecked but they were to continue their way first to Rome then Poitiers, accompanied by Count Raymond VI of Toulouse whom Joanna married in 1196, giving birth to their son a year later. By 1199 Joanna found herself in a disastrous marriage, ill, pregnant, and seeking help from John and Eleanor at Rouen, begging to be veiled as a nun at Foutevrault which she was just before her death and that of her newborn son.

By 1199 only Eleanor and John Lackland remained of the original family. Known as the “grandmother of Europe,” she died in 1204 yet continued “to influence the medieval world through her descendants as they spread across Europe’s royal houses, assuming roles of leadership and supporters of their Christian faith.”



Henry II & his children, ca 1275-1300, Membrane 6 of Royal 14 B VI, British Library.

A NEW WORD: HEXATEUCH

Hexateuch, Old English from Greek's "six books" refers to the first six books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua. ('Pentateuch' refers to the first five books, which also make up the Torah, the first part of the Hebrew Bible.) The early 11th century Cotton Claudius B IV is notable as the oldest surviving copy of the Old Testament in Old English, also known as "Anglo-Saxon," the language of Beowulf. As an example, the first line of the Lord's Prayer in the Wessex dialect of Old English is Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum, ("Father ours, thou that art in heaven"). The text includes various dialects ca 1066 and includes several letters in its alphabet that are no longer used. The manuscript includes 400 pictures illustrating all the stories, some original in both content and style such as that depicting the fall of the rebel angels, unlike anything known elsewhere in traditional sacred textual art.



Old English Hexateuch, Canterbury, England, first half of the 11th century. Adam naming the animals, British Library, Cotton MS Claudius B IV, fol. 4 © The British Library Board.

The image illustrates Genesis chapter 2 as God instructs Adam to give names to the animals. ("And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and every beast of the field").

16TH-CENTURY GERMAN AUTOMATON



Automaton Galleon, a 'nef' or ship table ornament intended to announce the start of banquets in the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, ca 1585, created by Hans Schlottheim, goldsmith and clockwork automata, Augsburg, British Museum, London.

Mechanical automata were often used as diplomatic gifts. The three-foot-tall mechanical Galleon was based on European ships that sailed the oceans during the 1500s. Constructed by Hans Schlottheim in southern Germany, the automaton was listed in Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II of Habsburg's 1585 inventory. Designed in the shape of a "nef" the automaton was an elaborate status symbol in European courts intended to announce banquets at court.

In the center is Rudolf II seated beneath a canopy and a double-headed eagle coat of arms. The entertainment began with music from a miniature reed organ in the hull, drumming as the ship traveled across the table with the three masts rotating, followed by the front cannon firing when it stopped. The masts carried furled cloth sails with a metal pendant at the top of each mast complete with wire rigging ropes and waxed thread ratlines. The main deck includes seven figures all with swords. In the crows' nests of the mainmast, sailors strike the hours and quarters on inverted bells. The bowsprit contains a wheel-lock canon which fired automatically while on the starboard side a large rotating barrel played music once it stopped. Ten cannons were arranged around the hull and at the base of the mainmast, a small clock showed the time in hours and minutes on a silver dial with colored enamel floral motifs.



Part of the British Museum's Clock's and Watches collection.

Within the gilded brass hull that was embossed with decorations of the sea with waves and monsters, was a spring-driven clockwork mechanism that operated the automaton figures and provided motion for the machine to run in addition to pumping the bellows to provide air for the reed organ. The Galleon would have to be wound every 24 hours and as the concept of clockwork was new it would have been regarded as "magical."