

The Medieval

Magazine

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The Medieval Iceland Effect

Hear the Past at the
Getty



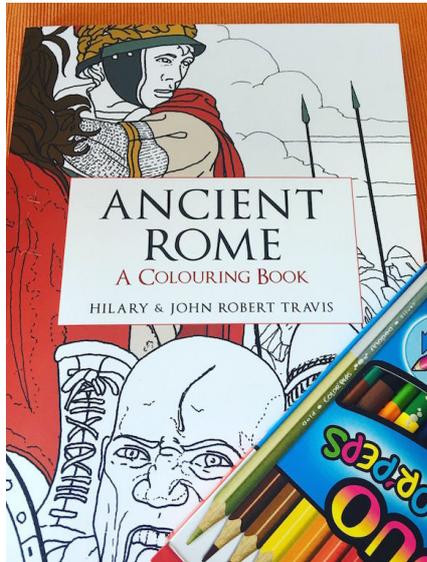
Medieval Student Loans



Claim your Piece of
Canterbury Cathedral



Book Excerpt: *Ancient Rome: A Colouring Book*



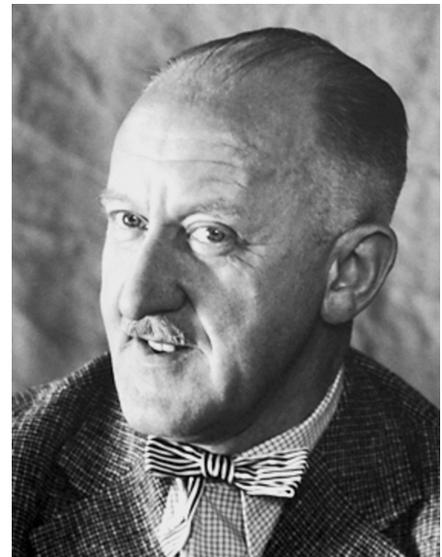
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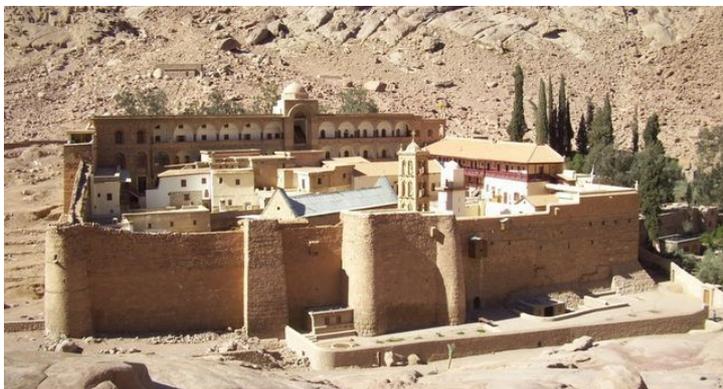
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THE MEDIEVAL MAGAZINE

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Cover Photo Credit: Ingólfur Arnarson is considered the first permanent Nordic settler of Iceland. By Johan Peter Raadsig (1806 - 1882) [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Summer Autumn is Icumen in...

Dear readers,

Summer is swiftly fading. The first cool breeze and the final long weekend just passed here in England. For our North American readers, Labour Day is approaching and with it, the back-to-school frenzy and return to the grind at work.

While August has been relatively quiet, we're looking forward to September and planning a jam-packed schedule of events and stories to share with you. In this final summer issue, Dani indulges her expertise and love of horses in a piece about dressage and a look at the Vikings horses. In honour of school starting, we learn about medieval students loans. The students of the Icelandic sagas get a major feature in "Guide to the Classics" which looks at the historiography of these medieval texts.

Hear and see medieval culture through new resources like Medieval Manuscripts Alive and the UCLA Library's digital collection of the manuscripts of St. Catherine's Monastery. Anthony Booth provides insight on "Extremism" from a medieval Islamic philosophic standpoint. Lastly, you can get a bit of fun with the *Ancient Rome* colouring book! Recreate early medieval mosaics right in your own home, coffeeshop, or office. Don't worry, we won't tell your boss. Everyone deserves a summer break, right?

Warmly,

Sandra and Dani

Sandra Alvarez

Sandra is the co-founder and editor of Medievalists.net, and The Medieval Magazine. Sandra has a Hon. B. A. from the University of Toronto in Medieval Studies, & a diploma in Human Resources from George Brown College. She is a content writer for a digital marketing agency & lives in London, England with her Jack Russell Terrier, Buffy. When she's not doing something medieval, she can be found with her nose in a book, attempting to learn 3 languages, & planning her next adventure. You can follow her on Twitter @mediaevalgirl or check out her blog Mediaevalgirl.com.



Danielle (Dani) Trynoski

Danielle earned her MA in Medieval Archaeology at the University of York in England. She is passionate about "the stuff" beyond the text of primary sources, & how modern people engage with medieval culture. When she's not visiting museums and historical sites, she's riding horses, reading about Vikings, or making loose leaf tea in a French Press. She currently lives in southern California and manages CuratoryStory.com. She is a contributor to Medievalists.net & editor at The Medieval Magazine. You can follow Dani on Twitter: @MissDaniTryn.



Danièle Cybulskie

Also known as The Five-Minute Medievalist, Danièle studied Cultural Studies & English at Trent University, earning her MA at the University of Toronto, where she specialized in medieval literature & Renaissance drama. Currently, she teaches a course on medievalism through OntarioLearn, & is the author of The Five-Minute Medievalist. When she is not reading or writing, Danièle can be found drinking tea, practicing archery, or building a backyard trebuchet. You can follow her on Twitter @5MinMedievalist or visit her website,



Peter Konieczny

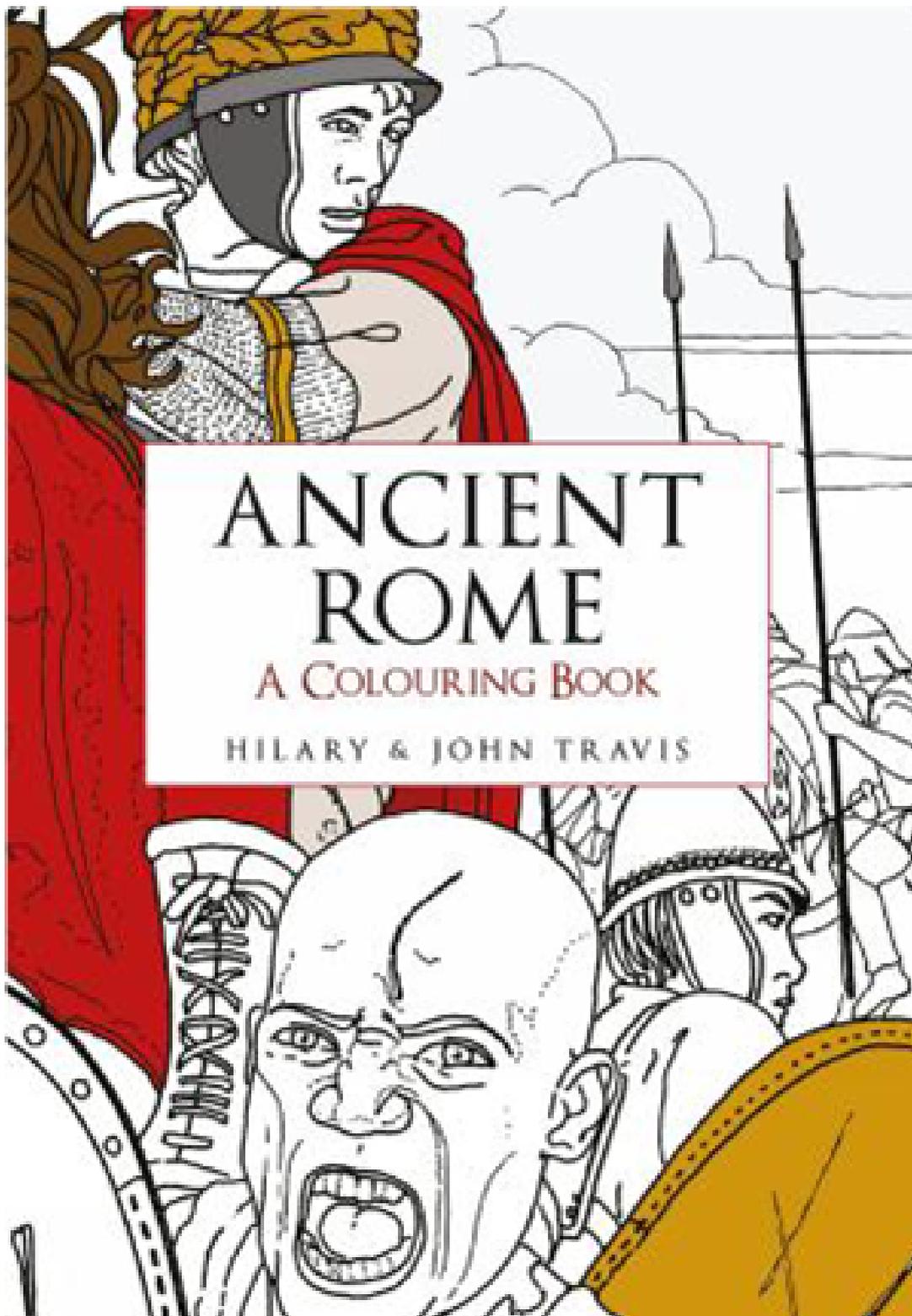
Along with being a co-founder and contributor at Medievalists.net, Peter is the editor of Medieval Warfare Magazine, and the web admin at De Re Militari: The Society for Medieval Military History. He has been working to spread knowledge about the Middle Ages online for over 15 years. Peter lives near Toronto, Canada, and enjoys all the books publishers send to him. When he is not reading about medieval history, you can find him trying to keep up with his son in Minecraft. Follow Peter on Twitter @medievalicious.



Book Excerpt

Ancient Rome: A Colouring Book

By Hilary & John Travis



Ancient Rome captures the imagination like few other historical places or periods. Its dress, buildings, mosaics and inscriptions are instantly recognisable the world over. Romans and their way of life dominated a vast swathe of territory for around 500 years, and their influence can still be seen today, in speech, ruins of their once-great buildings, and even the ingredients we use for cooking. It has featured in many blockbuster films, as well as television programmes and books. In this book, Hilary and John Robert Travis present a selection of historically accurate annotated outlines for creative colouring.

Ancient Rome: A Colouring Book is the latest title in Amberley's new colouring book series. Written and fantastically drawn by well-respected experts in the subject. Perfect for Ancient Rome enthusiasts. Perfect for re-enactors. Also available in Kindle, Kobo and iBook formats.

Publication: August 15th, 2016

Price: £9.99

ISBN: 978-1-4456-5961-9

Hilary Travis holds a Masters and Honours Degrees in Archaeology. In addition to over 20 years experience as an archaeologist, she also has over 20 years combat experience in Japanese martial arts, and over 10 years in reconstruction of Roman and medieval period artefacts.

John Travis is an established author; his first book, Coal in Roman Britain, was based on his PhD thesis. He holds a Masters Degree and Doctorate in Roman Archaeology from the University of Liverpool. He is an archaeologist with over 30 years experience, and an Associate member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (AIFA).

Both Hilary and John are active re-enactors, as members of both the Chester Guard (Deva VV) Roman Society and the Thomas Stanley Retinue (Wars of the Roses Medieval group).

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Book Review

Ancient Rome: A Colouring Book

By Hilary & John Travis



Ready, set....colour!

By Sandra Alvarez

Review a colouring book you ask? Yes. Indeed. Adult colouring books are all the rage right now, so I was skeptical at first, but now, after giving it a shot with *Ancient Rome: A Colouring Book* I've converted and joined the Dark Side.

This has to be, by far, one of the most fun books I've ever reviewed! It's not just a colouring book, it's a whimsical and engaging look at the history of the Roman Empire.

Although the authors are quick to point out that this is not a proper history book, and for more in-depth information on the Roman Empire we should go elsewhere. Having said that, they still put together a nice informative, albeit brief, book on Ancient Rome. It's "Ancient Rome Lite", but it's still educational.



Theodora, wife of Justinian I (a saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church), ruled alongside her husband, and was praised by the historian Procopius for her



My take on 6th century Byzantine Empress Theodora. Original painting below, my version in the colouring book, above. I decided to toss their colour scheme out the window and jazz up the painting a little bit. Have fun with these books - no need to stay with the original colours!



A Late Empire Legionary soldier with a description of his attire and weapons.

The colouring book focuses primarily on the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the two cities that were famously demolished by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. They were inspired by the art and artists of these cities along with bits and pieces of art from around the Empire. The colouring book starts with the earliest days of the Roman empire and explores Roman daily life, military, politics, entertainment, myths and legends. Learn while you colour! Why not?!

All in all, it's excellent fun. The book is beautifully illustrated and has incredible attention to detail. It not only makes a great gift for historians, it's great for just about anyone. Like Ancient Rome? Want to dabble in the trendy new world of 'adult colouring', then pick up *Ancient Rome: A Colouring Book*.

Want to Own a Piece of the Medieval Past?

Visit the Canterbury Stone Auction



Photo by Canterbury Cathedral

Successful bidders will become owners of unique pieces of Canterbury Cathedral history at an unusual auction being held next month (September).

More than 140 lots of stone from one of the Cathedral's largest and finest windows, are to go under the hammer on Saturday 24 September.

The stone has had to be removed from the Great South Window during major conservation work and the pieces being sold range in size and shape from those suitable as large garden ornaments to smaller ones that could be used as book ends.

Many date back to when the Gothic-style window was built in the early 15th century and retain the detailed carving and markings of the stonemasons who have worked on the window during the centuries. Much of the huge 16 metre high and seven metre wide window has had to be rebuilt, in one of the largest projects of its kind ever undertaken in Europe, after a fall of stone in 2009 identified serious structural problems.

Medieval stained glass

Extensive work by the Cathedral's own stonemasons and stained glass conservators is now nearing completion and the team has restored the structure to one that will again hold the world-renowned, early medieval stained glass depicting the Biblical ancestors of Christ.

The Cathedral's Head of Conservation, Heather Newton said: "It is very exciting to know that we are about to reach that time when we can see again the stone which has the appearance of being seemingly weightless and will again let light flood back into the building.

"The rebuilding has been an incredible experience to be part of. We have learned so much and we have been able to share that learning with other cathedrals."

The auction has been organised by Canterbury Cathedral Trust – the independent charity which supports the Cathedral and has helped meet the unexpected cost of replacing the window by raising £2.5 million from private and charitable sources. The money raised from the auction will go towards future conservation work, ensuring the Cathedral's legacy. Canterbury Auction Galleries will be running the sale and supporting the event by not charging auctioneer's fees.

David Parker, General Manager of The Canterbury Auction Galleries, said: *"This sale is such a historic venture and we are extremely pleased to have the opportunity to be involved with the Cathedral."*

Auction information

The auction is at the Cathedral Stonemasonry yard, Shalloak Road, Canterbury CT2 0PR from 14.00 to 16.00 hrs on Saturday September 24. Viewing will be from 14.00 to 17.00 hrs on 17 and 18 September and on the day of the sale from 10.00 to 13.30 hrs when there will be the opportunity to see stonemasons demonstrating their skills and the chance to see stained glass conservators working.

Entry to the auction will be by catalogue (£10 minimum donation) which will enable two adults to attend. Under 18s will be able to attend free. The catalogue is due to be published on 1 September and will be available from the Canterbury Cathedral Shop in Burgate, Canterbury.

Originally article from Canterbury-cathedral.org

Gretna Battlefield Becomes 40th site on the National Inventory Site of Little-Known Scottish Victory at Battle of Sark Formally Recognised



'Scots taunt the English forces into deep water at the River Sark. Conjectural reconstruction by Andrew Spratt, 1984.' Copyright @ Andrew Spratt. Photo by Historic Environment Scotland.

A battlefield to the southwest of Gretna in Dumfries and Galloway has become the 40th site to be added to the Inventory of Historic Battlefields.

The Battle of Sark, fought in 1448, was the first decisive victory for a Scottish force over the English since the Battle of Otterburn, 60 years earlier, and the final pitched battle between the two countries in the period of the Hundred Years War.

Philip Robertson, Historic Environment Scotland's Deputy Head of Designations for battlefields, said: "The Inventory raises awareness about important battlefield sites which add to our understanding of Scotland's archaeology and history. Following an application from a member of the public, we carried out further research into the Battle of Sark, and found that it met the criteria to be added to the inventory. The battle was fought during a fascinating and tumultuous period of Scottish history, and we hope that by adding it to the inventory we will raise

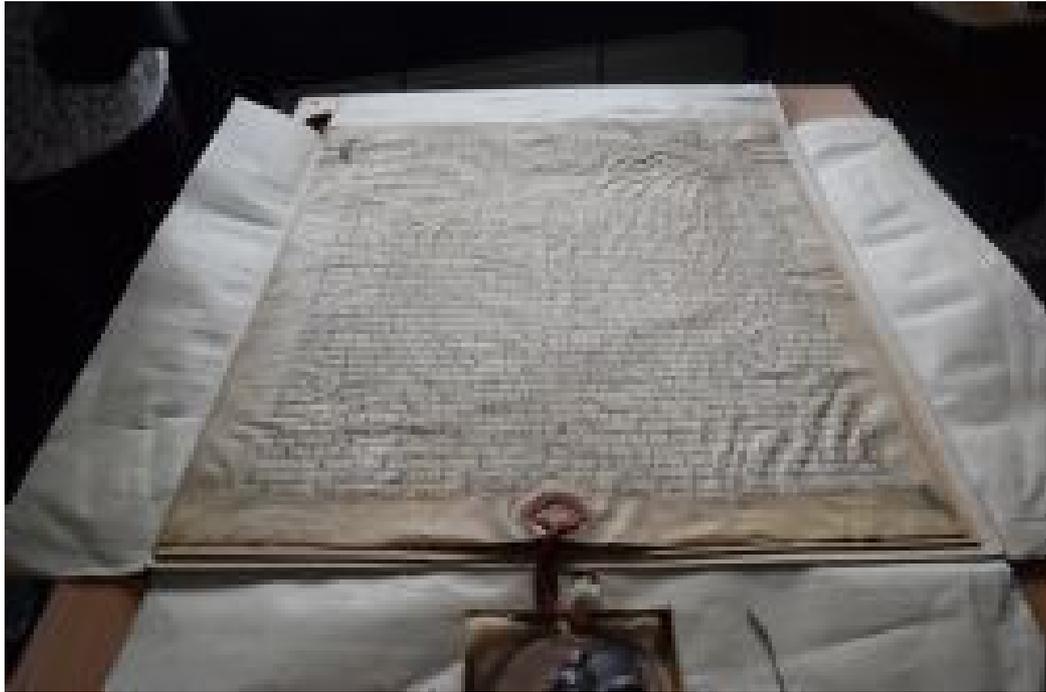
awareness of the battlefield site, stimulate further research around it, and develop its potential as an educational resource and site for visitors."

The background to the battle was a brief period of relative peace between England and Scotland, abruptly brought to an end in late 1448 by the decision of Henry Percy, 2nd Earl of Northumberland to invade Scotland with a force reported to be around 6,000 men. He did so with the blessing of the English king Henry V.

His plan was to ransack the lands of the Douglas family. He made camp in the area adjacent to modern Gretna and dispatched scouting and raiding parties to the surrounding area.

Near the end of October, Northumberland's army was met by a Scottish force of 4,000 men led by Hugh Douglas, Earl of Ormonde.

The Rights of Men: Medieval Charter From King Edward I Authenticated



Medieval scholars at the University of Lincoln, UK, have authenticated a 700-year-old king's charter that put an end to a tax scandal blighting the historic city.

The document, which reaffirmed trading grants and privileges awarded to Lincoln by previous kings has been confirmed as an authentic copy from King Edward I, dating back to 1301.

The rights outlined in the document had been lost in 1290 following claims that the city's authorities were illegally taking money from the poor. Whilst the modern day City of Lincoln Council had known about the document since the early 1900s, its near-perfect condition with the great seal still attached, led to questions about whether it was an original copy of the 1301 Charter or a later fake.

The charter was granted to Lincoln in February 1301 when King Edward I held parliament in the Chapter

House at Lincoln Cathedral. Professor Philippa Hoskin, Professor of Medieval Studies in the University of Lincoln's School of History & Heritage, examined the document to determine its authenticity. Studying the letter formations, additional notes in the margin, and even the way it was sealed all helped Professor Hoskin conclude the charter is genuine. Professor Hoskin said: "At the time it was not unusual to hold Parliament away from Westminster. We don't know for definite, but there are several reasons why Lincoln may have been chosen.

"We know that King Edward I was a great fan of the city, choosing its famous green cloth for his child's nursery, or it may just have been a convenient halfway point between London and his fighting in Scotland. .

“The charter was important for the city at the time, and because of its importance it’s likely the city paid a high price for the document. We know that Norwich paid £20 for a pair of charters in the mid-13th century, enough to pay a day labourer’s wage for twenty years at the time, and I suspect Lincoln paid quite a bit more.

“It’s rare to see a manuscript in such good condition, and even rarer to find the great seal still attached, so it’s been a delight to be able to examine it and to confirm it’s a genuine copy.”

The examination of the document offered a unique teaching experience for two MA Medieval Studies students as they had the opportunity to help date the medieval charter. The Charter was uncovered as part of a revamp of the city’s charter collection, which is

held at the Guildhall over the Stonebow in Lincoln’s High Street.

Kate Fenn, Civic and International Partnerships Manager at the City of Lincoln Council, said: “We are very proud of our historic charters in Lincoln, so it is incredible to find one that dates back this far.

“A find like this shows just how important a part Lincoln played in the country’s history, especially when you consider the other major charters that have links with the city such as the Charter of The Forest and Magna Carta.” Follow the University of Lincoln on Twitter: @unilincn

Article courtesy of the University of Lincoln.



Photo by the University of Lincoln Graduate School blog.

Pine Oldest Living Inhabitant in Europe

A Bosnian pine (Pinus heldreichii) growing in the highlands of northern Greece has been dendrocronologically dated to be more than 1075 years old. This makes it currently the oldest known living tree in Europe. The millenium old pine was discovered by scientists from Stockholm University (Sweden), the University of Mainz (Germany) and the University of Arizona (USA).



Photo by Dr Oliver Konter, Mainz. (Stockholm University)

"It is quite remarkable that this large, complex and impressive organism has survived so long in such an inhospitable environment, in a land that has been civilized for over 3000 years" says Swedish dendrochronologist, Paul J. Krusic, leader of the expedition that found the tree. It is one of more than a dozen individuals of millennial age, living in a treeline forest high in the Pindos mountains.

"Many years ago I read a thesis about this very interesting forest in Greece. In our research, we try to build long chronologies to construct climate histories, so finding living trees of old age is one of our motivations. To age the tree, we needed to take a core of wood, from the outside to the center. The core is one meter and has 1075 annual rings" says Krusic.

Thousand years of climate history

The scientists hope the annual variations of the tree rings from trees like this and those fallen in centuries past, yet still preserved on the ground, will provide an informative history of climatic and environmental conditions, going back thousands of years. Considering where the tree was found, and its venerable age, the scientists have named this individual "Adonis" after the Greek god of beauty and desire.

"I am impressed, in the context of western civilization, all the human history that has surrounded this tree; all the empires, the Byzantine, the Ottoman, all the people living in this region. So many things could have led to its demise. Fortunately, this forest has been basically untouched for over a thousand years" says Krusic.

The millennium old trees were discovered during research expeditions conducted by the Navarino Environmental Observatory (NEO), a cooperation between Stockholm University, the Academy of Athens and TEMES S.A. The observatory studies climate change and its impact on environment and humans in the Mediterranean.

Timeline

941 – Adonis is a seedling. The Byzantine Empire is at its peak. From the North, the Vikings reach the Black Sea.

1041 – Adonis is a 100 years old. In China, a book is published describing gunpowder. A man called Macbeth is crowned King of Scotland.

1191 – Adonis is 250 years old. The universities of Oxford and Paris are founded. The third crusade battles Saladin in the Holy Land.

1441 – Adonis is 500 years old. The Ottoman empire conquers Greece. Many Greek scholars flee to the west, influencing the Renaissance. In Sweden, the first parliament is held in Arboga. Johannes Gutenberg is about to test his first printing press.

1691 – Adonis is 750 years old. Isaac Newton has formulated his Laws on Motion. Ice cream, tea and coffee are introduced in Europe.

1941 – Adonis is a millennium old. World War II is ravaging the world. Greece is occupied by Nazi Germany, Italy and Bulgaria.

Article courtesy of Stockholm University.

What is extremist belief?

An answer from medieval

Islamic philosophy

by Anthony Booth

Every time we are shocked by a new terrorist atrocity, or when a surge in hate crimes takes hold in a country, we lament the malign grip of extremism. But what exactly do we mean when we say that someone holds extreme beliefs? And what exactly is wrong with extreme beliefs? Frankly, there has been little work in western philosophy to tackle these questions. Luckily, however, we can look to the work of a medieval Islamic philosopher – Abu Nasr al-Farabi – to help us find some answers.

Let's consider two possible models for conceptualising extreme belief. One we might call the "defective belief model" which has become the tacit consensus view of the contemporary West. The other is the "over-belief model" favoured by al-Farabi, one of the great figures of the Islamic golden age of medieval philosophy, who lived in Baghdad in the 9th and 10th centuries. Al-Farabi is well known for his contributions to logic – his contemporaries gave him the moniker "the Second Master", suggesting that only Aristotle surpassed his logical prowess. In Europe, he was better known as Alfarabius.

I want to make some conceptual points against the Western model of extremism and some in favour of al-Farabi's.

Let's begin by taking a look at the idea of defective belief. Under a version of this model, someone has extremist beliefs when they believe propositions that are morally bad to believe, such as that racism is permissible, or

that it is permissible to target non-combatants during war.

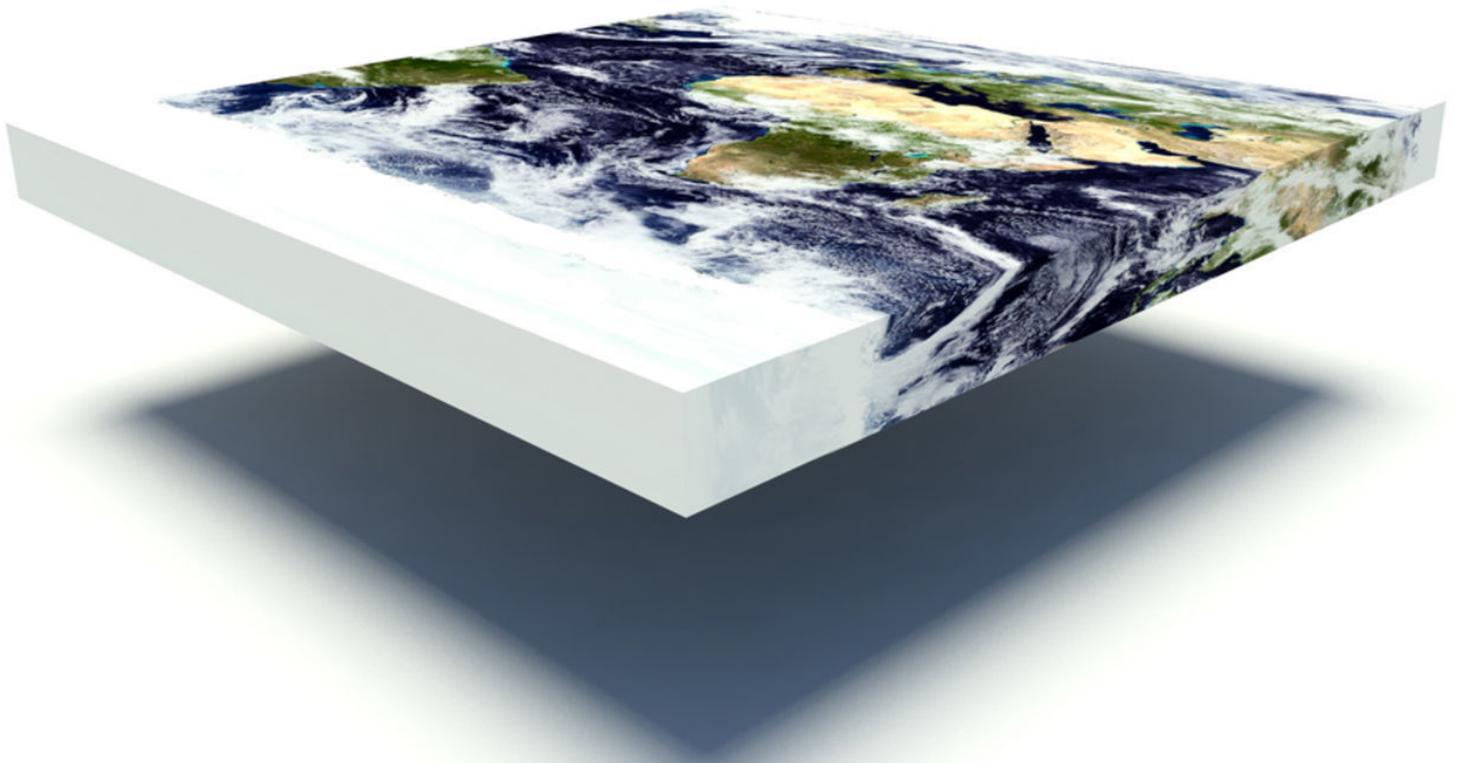
Bad believer

The trouble with this view is that we do not have the same sort of control over our beliefs that we do over our actions. Suppose that someone offered to give you a million pounds to raise your right arm right now (assuming you have one). Try to do it. You can. But now suppose that someone made you the same offer to believe that you are a giant grasshopper. Try to believe it. You can't. But then it seems that there are no morally defective beliefs. This is because we can only be held to moral account for things that are under our control. For example, it seems crazy for me to blame you, the individual reader, for the last monsoon rains in India, given that their happening was something you could not control.

We might then make the following modification (staying within the model): what is defective about extremism isn't to do with morality, but rather to do with extremists' beliefs being grossly at odds with our evidence. We might then think that someone who does not believe in climate change, or who believes that Earth is flat is as much of an extremist as someone who believes that non-combatants are legitimate targets during war. But the problem is that if extremist beliefs are just beliefs that are badly out of kilter with the evidence, then what, precisely, is extremist about them? If I was entirely convinced that I had fed the cat this morning, against the

evidence provided by a full tin of cat food and a furious animal, does that make me an extremist? I think it doesn't.

Further, there is the issue as to determining what is the available evidence. Some people may have what we think of as extreme views but only for want of access to key evidence (perhaps they've been brainwashed, or "radicalised" by the withholding of access to that evidence). Their views, may be well in accord with the evidence that is available to them, but does that stop us from identifying their views as those of an extremist?



Question of degrees

So what about that “over-belief” model?

Suppose that beliefs can come in degrees: that someone can have a stronger belief that Manchester United will stay in the Premier League next season than that they will win it. Following Bayesian mathematics, we can assign a range of values from say 0.1 to 1.0 to attempt to model the various degrees of belief. I might then have a 0.8 degree of belief that Manchester will avoid relegation, but only a 0.6 degree of belief that they will win it. The question is what constitutes “full” belief? A tempting answer is that it is absolute certainty – 1.0. According to the over-belief model of extremism, however, it is more like 0.8. Anything above that is, other than in very unusual circumstances, to have too much credence in one’s belief. Put differently, we should nearly always allow for at least some small possibility that we might be mistaken – absolute certainty is almost always problematic relative to our evidence. To believe with absolute certainty, such that nothing could persuade us otherwise – to over believe – is to have extreme belief.

This way of thinking about it circumvents the problem of attaching moral responsibility to our beliefs. Extreme beliefs are held to be problematic relative to the evidence – and not to some moral standard. It also identifies something distinctive that all extremists’ beliefs possess, and so differentiates them from non-extremist beliefs which only rub up against the

available evidence.

Something at least approximating this view can be found in the writings of al-Farabi. In one essay he identifies an intermediate state of knowledge between full certainty and a sort of sceptical nihilism. And he argues that as only the Prophet is in a position where he can attain full certainty, the rest of us mortals will need to learn to live with a less perfect state of knowledge.

Al-Farabi was well known for his contributions to logic, but he was also very well known, especially in the Islamic World, for his work in political philosophy – connecting philosophical problems with practical ideas. The Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Kazakhstan, for example, recently instituted a project designed to use al-Farabi’s teachings on the ideal city-state as a blueprint for governance of the University. His teaching carries with it a lot of sway in the politics of the contemporary Islamic world – especially given the special status the Islamic world accords to the Medieval golden age of Islam.

And for al-Farabi, to believe with absolute certainty is to present oneself as possessing a state of knowledge available only to prophets and to God. To be an extremist is then to espouse idolatry, and, even, polytheism. And according to prophecy, of course, one of Muhammed’s central vocations was to cleanse Mecca (and the world) from these shirk idols.

This article was originally published by The Conversation on August 15, 2016.

Andrew Booth is a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Sussex.

Medieval Manuscripts Alive



*A selection of the languages in the Medieval Manuscripts Alive program.
Graphic: The Getty Iris (The J. Paul Getty Trust)*

Hear the pages of centuries-old books come to life in a new series featuring expert speakers reading the languages of the Middle Ages

In 2014, the Getty Museum started a new feature series in its online magazine *The Getty Iris: Medieval Manuscripts Alive*. This project aims to collect audio files of readings of medieval manuscripts in their original languages.

All of the recordings are accompanied by detailed information such as a description of the medieval culture which produced the

manuscript, photographs of the illuminations, and the original context or use of the manuscript. Each reading will be accompanied by a translation into English and a brief description of the relationship between the text and image.

The best part? Freely accessible audio files hosted online. These amazing resources offer a multitude of possible applications, such as history education, cultural studies, linguistics, art analysis, or just enjoyment of the beautiful sound of Persian, Ge'ez, or Middle French.

medieval manuscripts))) ALIVE

Guide to the Classics: The Icelandic Saga

Iceland has been in the news quite a lot lately, mainly because of its young soccer team's outstanding performance in the Euro 2016 football tournament. And there has also been a surge of general interest in other aspects of Icelandic culture, including modern Icelandic literature.

by Margaret Clunies Ross

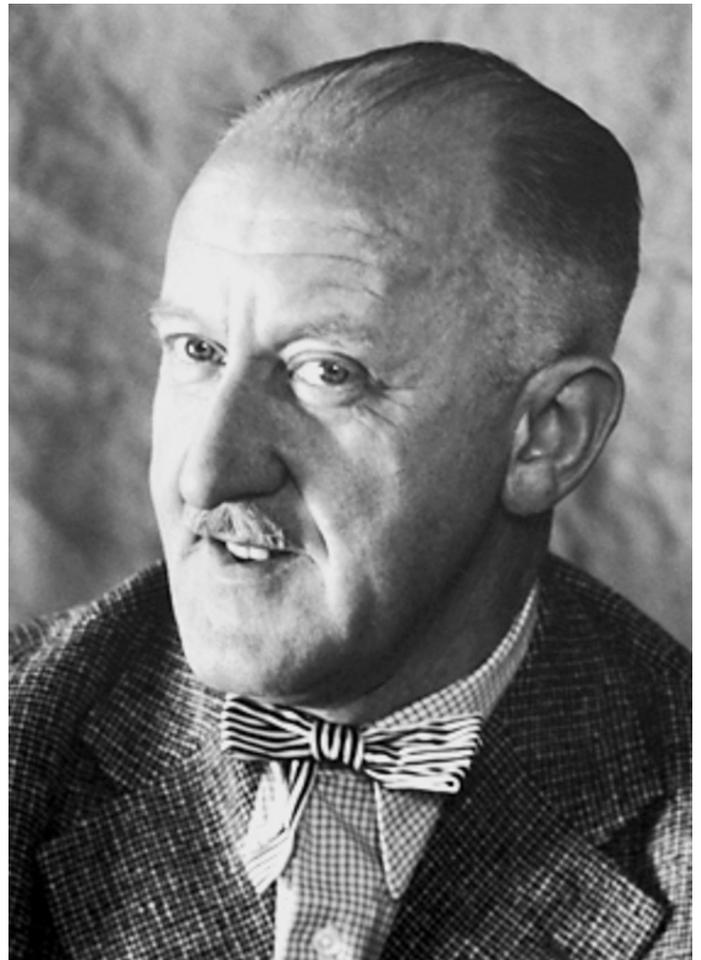
Icelanders love books, both reading and writing them, and in recent years translations of contemporary Icelandic literature have made it into bookshops and literary pages abroad in increasing numbers. Nor must we forget that in 1955 the Icelander Halldór Laxness won the Nobel Prize for literature.

Back in the Middle Ages, Icelanders were great literary producers and consumers too. The term "saga" is used to refer to the new literary genre that developed in Iceland from the late 12th century up to the end of the 15th century and sometimes later than that. "Saga" is an Icelandic word that means "something said, a narrative". Originally the term is likely to have been applied to stories that were probably formed and transmitted orally.

Later, they came to be recorded in writing, in hand-written manuscripts, many of which survive to the present day, though a good number have perished over the past 500 years or so. In terms of its structure, the Icelandic saga is usually a prose narrative, but in many cases contains a good deal of embedded poetry. With regard to its subject-matter, the saga falls into several categories, and these allow it to be differentiated into generic sub-groups.

The subjects of sagas

Sagas of kings are historical biographies of the kings of Norway (and to a lesser extent, of Denmark) from prehistoric times into the 14th century. Although the antecedents of the first kings' sagas were composed by Norwegians, Icelanders quickly became the masters of this genre, which usually contains much embedded poetry.



Halldór Laxness by Nobel Foundation
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

This poetry is attributed to the court poets, or skalds, of these kings, whose compositions (mostly elaborate praise-poems) must have been passed down by word of mouth, in some cases over more than 200 years.

Most Icelandic saga writing was probably considered in the Middle Ages to be a form of history rather than fiction. This does not necessarily mean that the standards of modern historiography were applied to it, but what is narrated is likely to have been considered to be within the bounds of historical probability.

Coleridge's "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, that constitutes poetic faith" might have applied in the consciousness of some audiences to some of the events and characters that appear in a sub-group of the saga that modern scholars call the *fornaldarsögur* ("sagas of the old time"), in which supernatural happenings abound. But other people would probably have considered such things to have been normal in the society of the pre-Christian age in Scandinavia and other prehistoric realms.

As for the Icelanders' own history, that was the subject of several sub-genres of the saga, including the best-known today, the so-called "sagas of Icelanders" or "family sagas", as they are often known in English.

There were also the so-called "contemporary sagas" that tell of what happened in Icelandic society during the turbulent 13th century – in the middle of which Iceland lost its political independence to Norway – and sagas of bishops and saints.

Furthermore, following the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson's introduction of a programme of translating French romances into Norwegian, another type of saga, the sagas of knights, appeared, at first translating foreign romances, later, in Icelandic hands, developing indigenous romance narratives.

From the 18th century, when saga translations first began to appear in modern European languages, sagas of Icelanders (family sagas) in particular have attracted foreign readers. There are now many English translations to choose from, in some cases multiple versions of a single saga.

The most widely accessible at present are probably the most recent Penguin translations, which are new editions of a five-volume series originally published in Iceland in 1997 as *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*. These were prepared by a number of saga scholars in collaboration with Icelandic colleagues. Increasingly, there are saga translations available on the web, though their quality is not always reliable.

Sagas of Icelanders are about Icelandic families whose ancestors migrated to Iceland from Norway, the British Isles and (in a few cases) other parts of Scandinavia towards the last decades of the ninth and the first three decades of the 10th century AD.

Some people have called Viking-Age and medieval Iceland the first post-colonial European society and there are certainly parallels to be drawn with ideas from contemporary post-colonial studies.

Empire writing back to the motherland

Icelandic saga writing can be seen in the context of the modern idea (first formulated by Australian scholars) of the empire writing back to the motherland, in this case Iceland “writing back” to Norway and to common Scandinavian oral traditions of poetry and story. In this process, medieval Icelandic authors created a new literary form.

The structure of saga narratives allows a number of different thematic and stylistic tropes to flourish. Many sagas of Icelanders are about feuds between families and their supporters; they give graphic accounts of fights, escapes, outlawry and reconciliation. They detail complex legal procedures that, in the absence of a police force on the island, were the individual’s main recourse to justice, but only if he had sufficiently powerful supporters.

Some sagas, the so-called sagas of poets, detail the love lives and stormy careers of well-known skalds, off duty in Iceland from their careers at the Norwegian court. Others are more regional histories of families from certain parts of Iceland and their struggles with neighbours and with the supernatural inhabitants of their region. The saga form has often been compared to the modern literary form of the novel, but, though similarities exist, there are also important differences. Like the novel, the saga narrates a chronologically defined story, but as often as not, there is not one story, but several intertwined narratives in a saga.

That may sometimes be true of the novel, of course, but saga strands do not always link up to the main narrative. They may just peter out when the saga writer no longer needs a particular character or line of narration. It is common for saga authors to explain that someone or other is now “out of this saga”.

Unlike the novel, the saga does not normally get inside a character’s skin to reveal his or her inner thoughts or psychological motives; rather, external actions ascribed to the character reveal something of his motivation, given the small-scale society described and its conventionalised behaviour. For example, if a character puts on dark-coloured clothes (rather than neutral homespun), then you can be pretty sure something important is going to happen, usually of an aggressive nature.

Narrative voice

The stance of the saga’s narrating voice also differs from that of many narrative voices in the modern novel. The persona of the narrator is not omniscient, although he may reveal what the common opinion of a character or an action may be. Sometimes he will refer to dreams or what we would classify as supernatural happenings as indicators of what is likely to occur in the future or how a present action should be judged.



Ingólfr Arnarson is considered the first permanent Nordic settler of Iceland. By Johan Peter Raadsig (1806 - 1882), via Wikimedia Commons

An example from Brennu-Njáls saga, The saga of Burnt Njáll, regarded by many critics as the best of the Icelandic family sagas, shows how the narrative voice in a saga can be heard obliquely.

At a certain point in this saga, a group of men involved in a feud decide to burn Njáll and his family in their farmhouse, an act that was conventionally regarded as a heinous crime. Njáll himself, old and prescient, with an understanding of true Christian values though he lived before the conversion to Christianity, lies down with his wife under an ox hide to wait for death, saying that God "will not let us burn both in this world and the next".

When, after the fire, the couple's bodies are discovered to be uncorrupted, the audience is left to draw the conclusion (assuming a medieval understanding of the Christian religion) that God has indeed saved Njáll and his wife even though they were unbaptised. The conclusion here is, however, based upon our knowledge of how medieval Christian audiences, for whom these narratives were written, would think.

It is not directly stated, and quite recently an American scholar, William Ian Miller, has repudiated the interpretation above for one of pragmatic realism: the couple did not burn because the ox hide protected them.

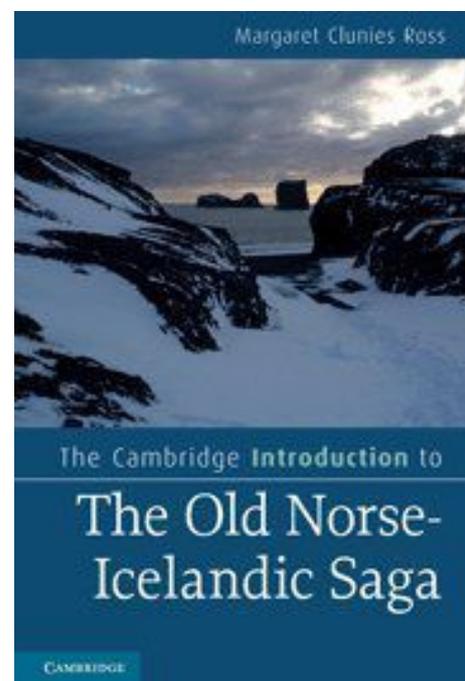
I think myself that Miller is wrong, and that the text contains ample clues of how the audience for which the saga was written would have understood it and how we should understand it today.

Although medieval Icelandic sagas are much less well known than many other classics of European literature, they richly deserve a place in the company of the best that European literature has to offer.

We do not know the names of their authors, and must recognise that the anonymity of those who created them has a literary point to make: sagas narrate history, and that history belongs, if not to everyone living in Iceland at the time of writing (and to their modern descendants), then to specific families and other interest groups, whose ancestors figure in their stories. The authors shaped those stories but did not distort them.

Margaret Clunies Ross' 2010 book, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga*, may be of interest for readers seeking a further introduction to the sagas. Ross is Emeritus Professor of English Language and Early English Literature, University of Sydney.

This article was originally published by *The Conversation*.



How the Vikings gifted gaited horses to the world



Ambling Iceland pony during World Championship. Photo: Monika Reissmann via alphagalileo.org

Some horses have special gaits, which are more comfortable for the rider than walk, trot or gallop. Now, a study by an international research team under the direction of the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research (IZW) in Berlin revealed that these gaited horses most likely originated in the 9th century medieval England. From there they were brought to Iceland by the Vikings and later spread all over Europe and Asia. These findings were published in the current issue of the journal "Current Biology".

Walk, trot and gallop are the gaits which all horses can master. However, riders who want to sit in their saddle more comfortably while still making good time on long journeys would benefit from choosing gaited horses. They are able to perform special gaits, like the ambling or pacing, which are typical for Icelandic horses and allow for a smoother ride. Responsible for this ability is a mutation in the DMRT3 gene, which was recently shown by a study with over 4,000 horses from different breeds. To investigate the history of gaited horses the scientist analysed this mutation in the genome of 90 horses from the Copper Age (6000 BC) to the Middle Ages (11th century).

They detected the mutation in samples of two English horses from 850 - 900 AD and more frequently in Icelandic horses dating to the 9th – 11th century. Most likely the first gaited horses appeared in medieval England and were then transported to Iceland by the Vikings. Horses have existed in Iceland since 870 BC. In contrast, no European (Scandinavia included) or Asian horse of the same period carrying the mutation for the alternative gaits was found.

It is improbable that the English and Icelandic gaited horse populations developed independently from each other in such a short time. "It is much more likely, that the first horses ever imported to Iceland already carried the mutation for alternative gaits. The Vikings recognised the value of the gaited horses and preferentially selected for this trait – thereby laying the foundation for

the worldwide distribution,” explains Arne Ludwig, geneticist at the IZW. Historic sagas also suggest that Icelandic horses exhibited the ability for alternative gaits at a very early stage. Although the origin of the Icelandic horse is not fully resolved, the general assumption is that they came to the island together with the Vikings. However, since the mutation was not found in Scandinavian horses of the 9th century, horses from other regions must have been brought to Iceland as well. Historic records report that Vikings were repeatedly pillaging on the British Isles and conquered the region of today’s Yorkshire – precisely the region the two historic gaited horses originated from. “Taking that into account our results suggest that Vikings first encountered gaited horses on the British Isles and transported them to Iceland,” explains Saskia Wutke, PhD student at the IZW and first lead author of the study. The high frequency of the mutation for gaitedness in the early Icelandic horses indicates that the Icelandic settlers preferably bred gaited horses – apparently the comfortable gaits proved to be particularly suitable for long distance travel through rough terrain.

This article is a summary of "The Origin of Ambling Horses" recently published in the journal Current Biology:

The Origin of Ambling Horses; Wutke S, Andersson L, Benecke N, Sandoval-Castellanos E, Gonzalez J, Hallsson JH, Lembi L, Magnell O, Morales-Muniz A, Orlando L, Pálsdóttir AH, Reissmann M, Muñoz-Rodríguez MB, Ruttkay M, Trinks A, Hofreiter M, Ludwig A; CURR BIOL 26, 697-698; DOI: 10.1016/j.cub.2016.07.001.

Feature

Talk the Talk

Arabic

Noun

hisan

حصان

horse



Medieval Minded

Aleks Pluskowski



Read about
Aleks' research
at www.ecologyofcrusading.com

Current occupation?

Associate Professor in Medieval Archaeology at the Department of Archaeology, University of Reading, UK

Why'd you go medieval?

My conditioning started early, with my parents taking us to see countless castles, ruined abbeys, churches, museums and heritage festivals across Britain. My grandfather lived in York which, with its fantastically preserved medieval buildings, really fired my imagination as a child. We also used to go to Kraków on holiday, where part of my family originates, with its beautifully preserved centre that miraculously survived WWII. I think I have to give credit to Umberto Eco, as *The Name of the Rose* really hooked me onto the medieval in my late teens. As an undergraduate at Cambridge I was inspired by Catherine Hills' courses on Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian and Medieval British archaeology, which ultimately led me to do a PhD in medieval archaeology. In my second summer as a BA student I was able to secure a placement to excavate in Prague, and ever since then I've worked in many different regions of Europe which have continued to inspire me. For me the Middle Ages is the formative period for our modern European society, and has left a legacy which we are still trying to understand and appreciate. Also, you can't beat a good castle. Speaking of which...

Favorite medieval thing?

The castle at Malbork in north Poland (formerly Marienburg in Prussia), which began to be built in brick by the Teutonic Order after the end of the Prussian Crusade in the late 13th century. It became their headquarters in 1309 which prompted a century of expansion. The castle withstood a siege by the Polish-Lithuanian army in 1410, and was only lost when its garrison of mercenaries sold the castle to the town of Gdańsk (Danzig) in 1456, which promptly handed it to the Polish crown. Encompassing an area of 21 hectares, it's the biggest castle from the Middle Ages and although it was heavily restored in the 19th century, and especially after WWII, its superstructure still exudes the power, wealth and identity of the Order. I've been fortunate enough to be able to work at the castle and its former territory for almost a decade. I've seen it in practically every season – from glowing in the summer sun to buried under snow – and it never fails to impress.

If you could time travel, would you live medieval?

No, I enjoy the luxuries of modern living far too much! But if I could I'd like to visit different regions of Europe at different points in the Middle Ages knowing that I could escape again, purely to satisfy my intellectual curiosity. When you work with archaeology or history, the Past is like a jigsaw that's been smashed to even smaller pieces with a big hammer, and then two thirds of the pieces have been thrown away. It would be nice to have a more complete picture!

Favorite modern thing?

Healthcare! I'm thankful we don't have to rely on the supernatural for healing, although some people still choose to...that and film. My mind is very visual, so for me the cinema and everything which followed is one of the greatest achievements of modernity.

UCLA Library offers a digital view of the manuscripts of St. Catherine's Monastery

The fathers of St. Catherine's Monastery have been careful stewards of the oldest continually operating library in the world for centuries. More than 1,000 of its rare manuscripts will be available digitally through the UCLA Library.



Photo by UCLA Library

St. Catherine's Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage site that's located on rugged terrain at the foot of Mount Sinai in Egypt, houses the oldest continually operating library in the world, containing ancient and medieval manuscripts second only to those held by the Vatican Library. These remarkable manuscripts, which delve into subjects ranging from history and philosophy to medicine and spirituality, were never easily accessed by scholars and students, who had to travel to this desert region, considered sacred to three world religions — Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Today, access is even more problematic given security concerns in the Middle East. That will all be changing, thanks to a major grant from The Ahmanson Foundation to the UCLA Library. The grant will fund key aspects of the Sinai Library Digitization Project to create digital copies of some 1,100 rare and unique Syriac and Arabic manuscripts dating from the fourth to the 17th centuries. The three-year project is being initiated by the fathers of St. Catherine's Monastery.

It's being made possible through the participation of the UCLA Library and the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library (EMEL), a nonprofit research and service organization based in Southern California that uses digital technologies to make manuscripts and other historical source materials accessible to scholars and the public. It specializes in the design of systems to support fragile manuscripts during digitization and in the recovery of text from damaged, deteriorated or erased manuscripts.

"The manuscripts at St. Catherine's are critical to our understanding of the history of the Middle East, and every effort must be made to digitally preserve them in this time of volatility," said UCLA University Librarian Ginny Steel. "The Ahmanson Foundation's visionary support honors the careful stewardship of St. Catherine's Monastery over the centuries and ensures that these invaluable documents are not only accessible, but preserved in digital copies."

"St. Catherine's Monastery proposed a program to digitize its unparalleled manuscript collection, and an international team was assembled to help digitally preserve the ancient pages," said Michael Phelps, EMEL director. "EMEL is collaborating with the monastery to install world-class digitization systems, and the UCLA Library will host the images online on behalf of the monastery."

Among the monastery's most important Syriac and Arabic manuscripts are a fifth century copy of the Gospels in Syriac, a literary language based on an eastern Aramaic dialect; a Syriac copy of the "Lives of Women Saints," dated 779 A.D.; the Syriac version of the "Apology of Aristides," of which the Greek original has been lost; and numerous Arabic manuscripts from the ninth and 10th centuries, when Middle Eastern Christians first began to use Arabic as a literary language.

Just as the 19th-century discovery at St. Catherine's of the Codex Sinaiticus — the oldest complete Bible (345 A.D.) — spurred new theological scholarship, this project will enable scholars to gain new insights and pose new lines of inquiry, project leaders said.

"We are deeply grateful to The Ahmanson Foundation for its generous investment in this important project, and for its longstanding partnership with the UCLA Library," Steel concluded.

As one of the world's leading research libraries, the UCLA Library maintains a research collection of record, making its materials accessible to a broad audience of students, scholars, researchers, and the public. Last year, more than 20 million people accessed UCLA Library's digital and online resources. By preserving global cultural heritage, the UCLA Library fuels the transfer of knowledge across generations and across the world. For more information, contact UCLA at newsroom.ucla.edu

Not A Modern Problem: Medieval Student Loans

*In 1473, Alexander Hardyng, who had finished his bachelor's degree at Oxford nearly two years previous, **borrowed money through an educational loan service.** The loan came with a one year repayment deadline.*



A silver Medieval half groat of Edward IV, Second reign (1471-1483), mintmark rose c.1477-1480, double saltire stops, Canterbury mint, North 1637. Image from the Portable

With some of that money, he rented a room at Exeter College and offered tutoring services to college students. He soon repaid that loan. In 1475, Hardyng took out a second loan – again, in part to rent teaching space.

Then, in 1478, he was appointed as a subdeacon, a post two orders lower than a priest, likely in Durham, a city in the north of England. From all evidence, it seems that he promptly packed his robes and abandoned his teaching gig. There is also nothing to suggest that he gave a single penny to his lenders.

For students today, Hardyng's story would be too good to be true. Not only did he get his bachelor's degree without incurring debt, but also, he did not have to repay the money he borrowed.

Prompted by my own anxiety about educational debt, an anxiety that intensified several years ago with the birth of my own prospective college students, I have been researching the long history of educational loans in order to get a better context for the current student debt crisis.

With student loan growth rates spiraling out of control, it behooves us to think through the ways other time periods and cultures have monetized, funded or not funded student labor.

Loan chests, books as collateral

The history of student loans starts with the establishment of institutions of higher learning in medieval Europe from the late 11th century.

The University of Bologna, considered the first official university, was quickly followed by the University of Paris, Oxford University and Cambridge University. All of these places offered degrees to young men, training them for positions in the Catholic Church and, later, in government.

At first, scholars who needed money did not differ from other borrowers: everyone took loans from the same lenders. But in 1240, Robert Grosseteste, the bishop of Lincoln, used Oxford University money to launch the first documented student loan system. He named it St. Frideswide's Chest.

St. Frideswide's Chest was literally a chest. Bound by two different locks, with each key held by a different college magister, or faculty member, it resided at St. Frideswide's Priory, a religious house in central Oxford, amid the city's colleges, academic halls and student apartments.

To get a loan from St. Frideswide's, a borrower had to be a scholar of modest means – and likely took an oath for proving so. He also had to have something of value to deposit in the chest as collateral. From the pledge notes I've seen in roughly 100 manuscripts and descriptions of manuscripts, it's clear that scholars hocked everything from silver spoons to gold plates.

But the most commonly collateralized items were books. Not fancy, illuminated books. Just textbooks. In the late Middle Ages, this included works by Aristotle, the Bible, law codes and medical tracts. Here's a link to a manuscript at Balliol College that was used as collateral. The lines on the final page record two loans taken out by a scholar, Thomas Chace, in 1423 and 1424. The Merton College manuscript (pictured) contains eight pledge notes from the same century.



Sir Thomas Bodley's chest. Norman Walsh, CC BY-NC

These were not textbooks as we know them today. They were manuscripts made from animal skin and completed through hours of scribal labor. They fetched large sums. As in modern times, medieval textbooks too derived part of their value through the educational market.

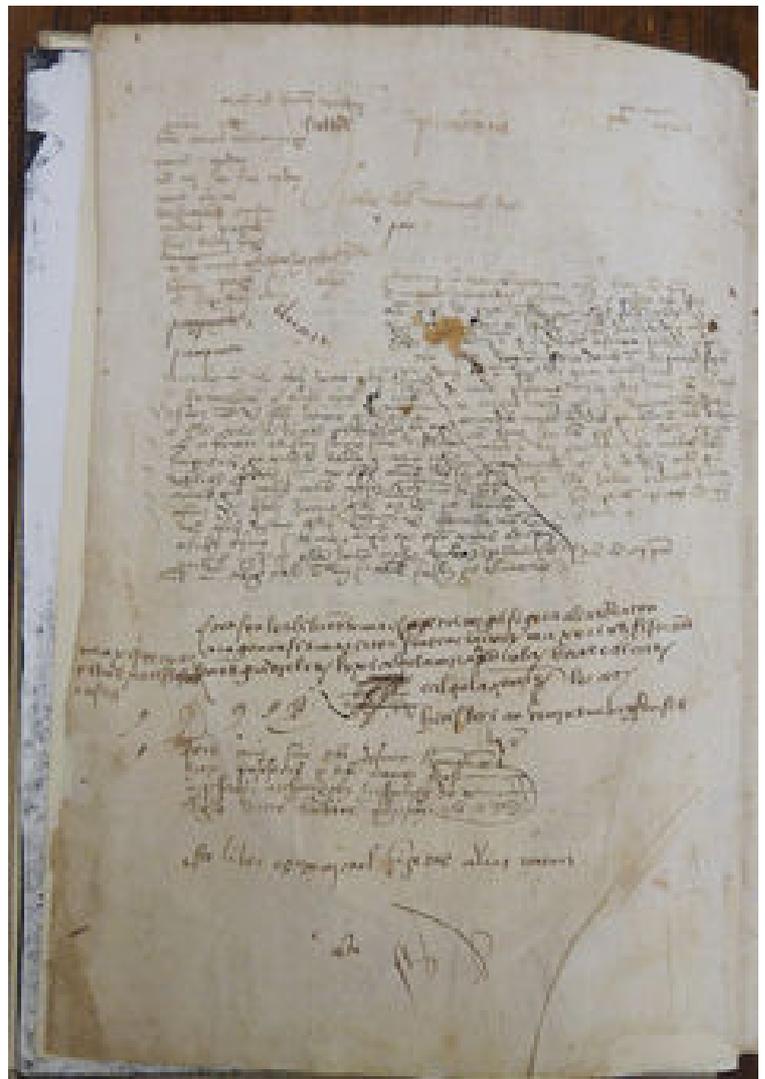
Today, for example, the *Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications* (US\$305 secondhand) commands a high price because faculty use it to teach and students use it to research in one of the fastest-growing majors. Back then, it was Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, a staple of the Oxford curriculum and also the book Hardyng used for collateral.

Sadly, the pledge note in Hardyng's text, as recorded in the British Library's on-line description of its manuscripts, does not include the loan amount. But on another leaf of the manuscript one can see a scrawled "precii xl.s." or "price 40 shillings." Hardyng almost surely did not get a loan of this amount. As noted by other scholars who have written extensively on medieval loans and debt collection, the value of the collateral far outweighed the actual amount of the loan. But given that a student in the early 15th century could pay for an entire series of lectures for six shillings, even a loan of 20 shillings, or half the book's value, would have represented a hefty sum.

Loans for scholars

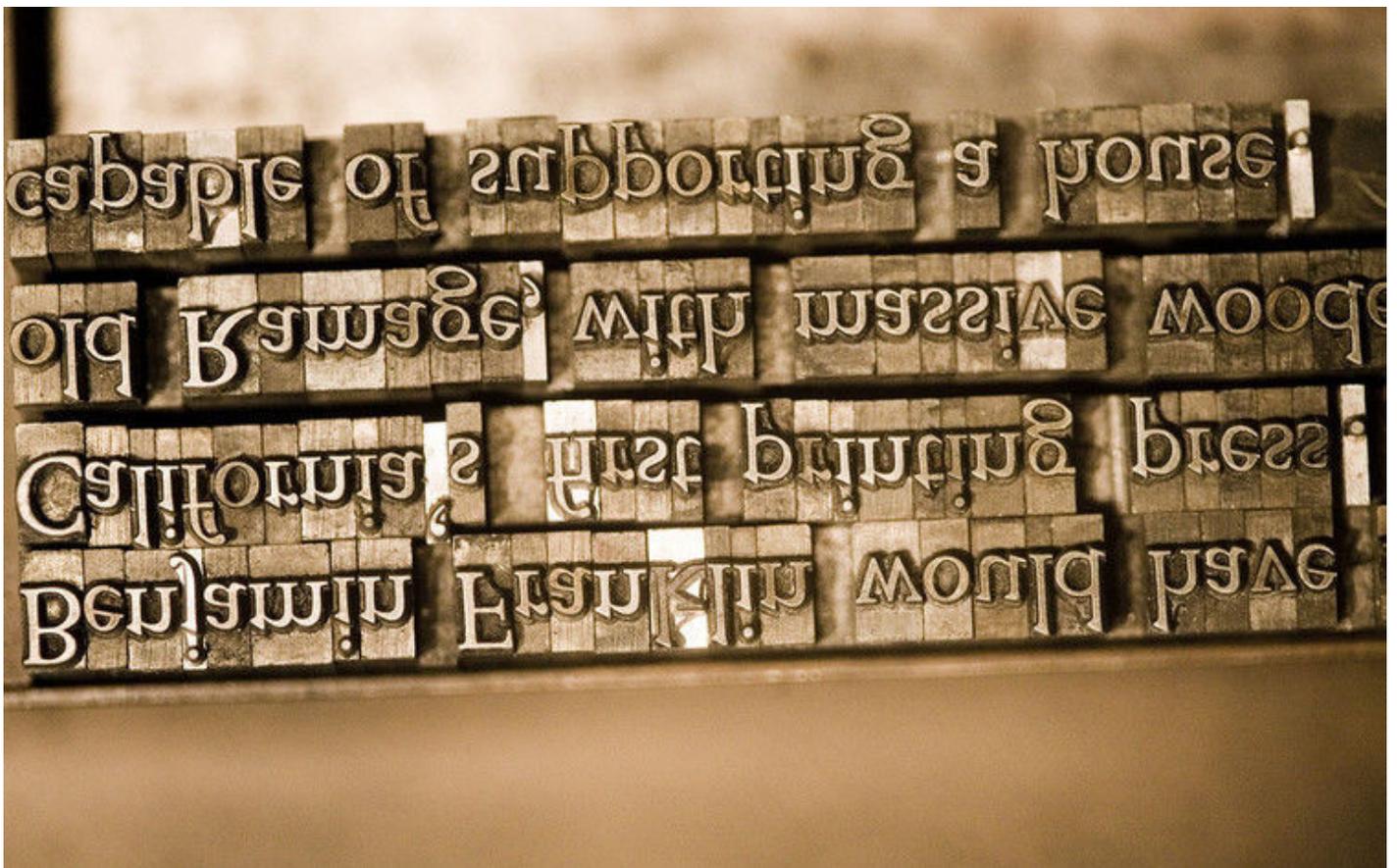
This system might sound like a pawn shop crossed with a secondhand book store. But the use of collateral meant scholars did not always feel the need to repay their loans. Once employed, they could walk away from their debts, just as Hardyng did.

If that happened, the chest manager would then put the collateral back into the market. For many borrowers like Hardyng, who had finished his education, buying back his book was simply not worth it. Now employed, he had little need for his copy of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. By the end of the 14th century, roughly 20 more loan chests had appeared in Oxford.



Leaf from Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. POP, CC BY

The chests had also moved in 1320 from St. Frideswide's Priory to the university's congregation house, and they held the equivalent of millions of today's dollars. Most often the money came from wealthy patrons who either wanted to support scholars or liked the thought of having their name associated with a chest. This later impulse seems to have been the case with some of the later chests, which were funded by professionals rather than the nobility. Thus, while King Edward I's consort, Queen Eleanor of Castile, founded a chest in 1293, the Guildford Chest (1314) and the Robury Chest (1321) were founded, respectively, by a judge and an attorney-turned-judge. These later chests opened borrowing to all scholars, not just poor students. In short, the chests now targeted the Alexander Hardynges of Oxford. Hardyng was not poor. He probably funded his education through parental handouts and part-time work, or received on support from a wealthy patron. But clearly by several years after his graduation, he needed money to stay afloat.



The arrival of the printing press changed the value of a book. Thomas Hawk,

Printing press changes the system

For 300 years, the loan chest system thrived. Then, one evening in early March of 1544, two men – Robert Raunce and John Stanshaw – armed with an “iron bar and hammer,” broke into the congregation house and smashed all of the loan chests. Although Raunce and Stanshaw were eventually tried and sentenced, their burglary still managed to wipe out much of the chests' wealth. Yet even before this, the loan system had started to decline.

Although the arrival of the printing press in the late 15th century didn't have an immediate effect on manuscript production, it would eventually make books cheap and thus no longer worth collateralizing. Even in the chests' final century of use, the use of gold plate and jewelry was increasing and by 1500 had surpassed the use of books.

Around the same time, bankers began to make loans on the premise of future returns rather than in exchange for real property. The shift toward anticipated future earnings soon came with the England's 1624 legalization of interest-bearing loans, which pushed even more people into this model of lending.

With their loan chests gone, students again became just like other borrowers. And just like other borrowers, they, too, could end up the notorious debtors' prisons that began to swell with inmates as early as the 17th century.

Modern-day loans

Student loans arrived in the United States in the mid-19th century. Like the medieval loan chests at Oxford, these loans started through a singular university, in this case Harvard, which administered them.

This localized system changed in the mid-20th century with the creation by the Department of Education in 1965 of federally guaranteed student loans made by private lenders and available to students across the country.

Students were once again put into a special category. But in this case, this meant they could now collateralize their estimated future incomes (without even knowing what those incomes might be) in order to obtain a degree.

For a long time and for many students (this writer included), this model of credit worked. Loans opened up college to many people, allowing them to pursue a career path otherwise unavailable. But now that we've entered the age of six-figure student loans, this freedom seems more like a virtual debtors' prison than a chance to economic mobility.

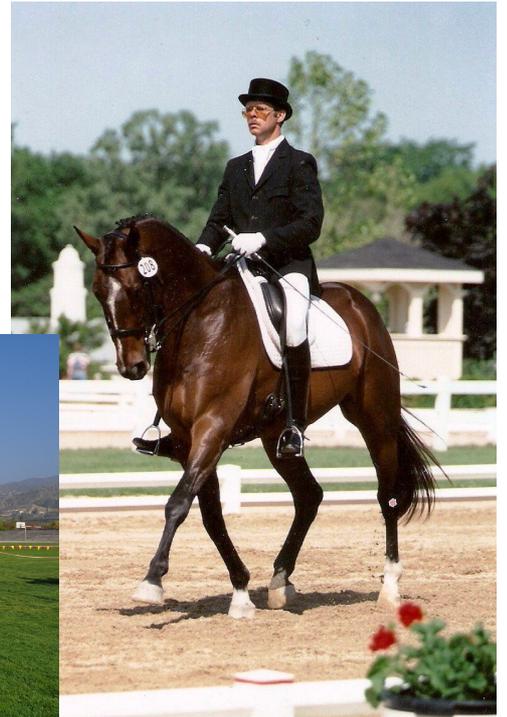
I would never advocate a return to the Middle Ages. Yet as we consider the current morass of educational debt, we need to think harder about historical precedent.

True, medieval universities excluded many groups – religious minorities, feudal villeins (a commoner legally tied to a feudal lord in the Middle Ages) and women were barred from entry. Yet poor young men with talent had a chance. Fees were not high. Patrons helped out. And if one needed money, one might be able to pledge a book – not a future.

Jenny Adams is Associate Professor of English, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

This article was originally published by The Conversation.

Dancing into Battle with Dressage



**by Danielle
Trynoski**

Photos by D. Trynoski

With the end of the XXXI Olympiad in Rio, several countries took home medals in the sport of Dressage. This graceful event evaluates the movement, athleticism, and obedience of the horse and its harmony with the rider. The Dressage test is a list of specific movements executed before a judge. The horse-and-rider team receive a score (out of 10) for each movement and for collective style marks at the end of the test. So what does “horsey dancing” have to do with medieval history?

While the modern sport is very formal, with impeccably groomed horses and riders in jackets inspired by fox hunting uniforms, Dressage has ancient origins as war training. A Greek text from c. 350 b.c., *On Horsemanship*, by Xenophon of Athens is one of the earliest known essays for any equestrian activity, and it focuses on Dressage training. The 14th century *Livro do Cavalgar* by Duarte I of Portugal is one of the earliest surviving medieval texts dedicated to horsemanship and riding styles, and numerous other manuscripts discuss medieval uses for horses including hunting, exercise, transportation, and military engagements.

In a medieval military context, horses were viewed as a tool. Unlike the swords or lances these tools have minds of their own! In order for horses to be effective in a military engagement, it requires specialty training. Similar to progressive dog training, horses need incremental exposure to new experiences i.e., the noise of battle. As a prey animal, horses have a natural instinct to flee so training must emphasize the non-predatory nature of the man-made environment. Part of this is to be responsive to the directions of the rider’s aids.

The aids, including the legs, hands, weight (seat), and voice, are the steering wheel and gear shift of the equine vehicle. By applying pressure with the aids, the rider can ask for specific types of movements and transitions between the walk, trot, and canter. True Dressage training is really just riding practice; to refine the technique of the rider and the responsiveness of the horse. It's like practicing a language in which neither conversant is a native speaker. Sometimes you might miss a verb or use an awkward phrase, but there should be some kind of understanding. As the studies and practices progress, so does the fluency and comprehension.

Dressage training helps improve the understanding between horse and rider and makes it a fluid partnership. In modern competitions, the rider should appear still and immobile, with the aids barely detectable. See the video below for an excellent example of harmony between horse and rider. This Olympic Gold Medallist and World Champion pair, Charlotte Dujardin riding Valegro, receive perfect marks on their harmony and precision from top judges. Not only are they a beautiful pair, but they embody the best of ancient and classical Dressage techniques.

This article will discuss a few select movements that were absolutely required in the field of battle. The horse needed to perform these movements obediently and immediately, which is also a requirement in Dressage competitions.



Often called the Sport of Kings, this graceful display seems to be far removed from the melee of battle but actually shares a lot of similarities!

Leg Yield

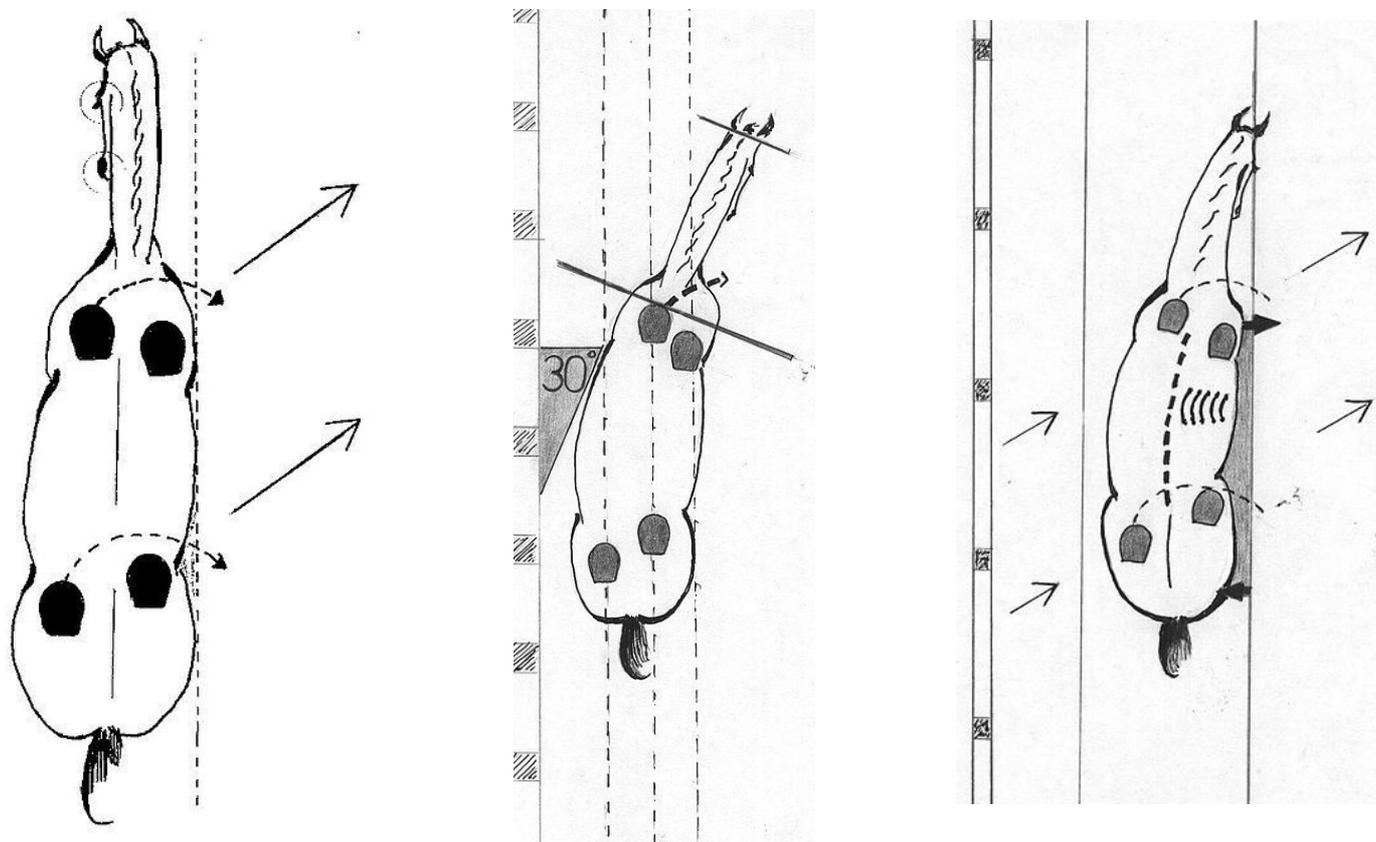
(Left) The horse moves along a diagonal line, stepping forward and sideways simultaneously. The horse's body stays mostly straight, occasionally with a slight bend away from the direction of movement. This is considered one of the introductory training movements, teaching the horse to move away from leg pressure. In a medieval battle, the rider might need to suddenly leg yield away from a swinging sword or a pike, then charge forward in an attack. Diagram of leg yield movement WikiCommons by Nabil Youssef Dahan - CC BY-SA 3.0

Shoulder-In

(Center) The horse bends through the rib cage and continues moving along a straight line. The four feet travel along three tracks: The outside hind, the inside hind together with the outside front, and the inside front. This requires the horse to hold the tension along the bent inside half of its body while stretching the outer half. Imagine a shield wall facing a mounted charge, where the knights approach with their horses shouldering in so they can more effectively use their lances against the foe. A shoulder-in movement would allow the rider to more effectively face an approaching enemy in an attack or defensive situation by changing the angle of interaction between rider and enemy. Diagram of shoulder-in WikiCommons by Nabil Youssef Dahan - CC BY-SA 3.0

Half-Pass

(Right) This movement requires the horse to maintain a slight bend while moving forward and sideways. It is a combination of the leg yield and shoulder-in (and its relative the haunches-in). It places all four feet on four tracks, making for a steadier, more stable horse under the rider. The ability to give the rider a wider field of approach to his enemy, while moving forward and sideways, would be an unquestionable asset in a mounted military engagement. Diagram of half-pass WikiCommons by Nabil Youssef Dahan - CC BY-SA 3.0



Events

Zombie Run? Tough Mudder? Forget That and Do a Knightly 10km!

Fancy a new twist on obstacle courses? Looking to send summer off with a bang? Want to wear chainmail doing it? Then in seven days head on down to Grail Quest in Somerset as they kick off their 10km medieval obstacle course.



Grail Quest promotional YouTube video

Participants can take on twenty challenges, such as climbing walls, pulling carts and sloshing through mud-filled ditches in full costume. If you're worried about the short notice to get in tip-top shape, have no fear - the obstacle course is suitable for all fitness levels. There are medics and water stations along the route to keep participants safe and hydrated.

Not in the mood to clamber over a wall in armour? That's OK, hang out in the medieval village and catch a sword fighting demonstration, or try your hand at archery, then cool off with a drink while you cheer on your favourite champion.

There are still many spaces available. The entry fee is £45 per person.

Follow Grail Quest on Twitter: @grailquestrace

For more information, please visit: grailquestrace.co.uk

Beyond the Harem: Ways to be a Woman During the Ottoman Empire

A new volume of essays looks afresh at women's lives during the 600 years of the Ottoman empire. The book challenges the stereotypes of female lives confined to the harem and hamam – and reveals how women were surprisingly visible in public spaces.



Ottoman women shopped. They didn't just shop; they also ran businesses, owned property and, on occasion, stormed buildings to stage protest meetings. Not only did they flirt and dance – and infuriate their husbands with demands for the latest fashions – but they exerted genuine political and economic power. And they did all this much more visibly than is often assumed.

In *Ottoman Women in Public Space*, a group of scholars of the Middle East and the Islamic world turn their attention to a neglected topic: what life was actually like for women at the height of an empire that lasted for 600 years (right up until the turn of the 20th century) and, at its most powerful, stretched eastwards from present-day Hungary, southwards to the religious centre of Mecca, and westwards around the southern Mediterranean to the bustling port of Algiers.

Edited by Dr Kate Fleet and Ebru Boyar (Faculty of History and Skilliter Centre for Ottoman Studies at Newnham College), *Ottoman Women in Public Space* is a collection of essays by specialists based in five countries and from a range of academic disciplines.

In drawing on sources that span from court records to poetry, the contributors challenge the notion that female life was confined to the sequestered spaces of the harem and the hamam (traditional Turkish bath).

The conventional narrative places Ottoman women firmly in the domestic sphere and fails to see how visible they were outside the home, either in the mahalle (neighbourhood) or beyond. Female lives, viewed in modern western terms, were undoubtedly proscribed. But scholars are now exploring the extent to which women were publically visible, whether they were members of the elite sampling the delights of the pleasure gardens of great cities or peasants labouring in the fields.

Why have women been missing from histories of the Ottoman empire – and why have narratives about females centred on the seclusion of the harem? As Boyar and Fleet explain, women's voices are absent in records which were almost exclusively produced by men. When female voices are heard, they are mediated through a male narrator. It's a universal reality, they point out, that a large proportion of women – those who are older or of low status – have long been effectively 'invisible' in public.

How visible a woman was, where she was free to go and what she was able to do, depended largely on who she was. The mobility of noble women was more constricted than that of poor women. In the countryside, female labour was essential to agriculture. An 19th-century engraving of harvesting in Bulgaria shows two women at work. With a child on her lap and a whip in her hand, the younger woman drives a horse and threshing sledge over the crop to separate the grain from the chaff.

In cities the most visible of all women were the thousands of slaves who ranged from poor serving girls to powerful concubines. In a chapter devoted to the extremes of visibility, Fleet writes: "While women were positioned at various points along the trajectory of visibility ... slave women moved through the whole gamut of visibility from physical invisibility and seclusion at one end of the spectrum to total exposure on the market place, a level of display unthinkable for any other Ottoman woman, at the other."

Slaves crossed private/public boundaries. Vital to the smooth-running of the home behind closed doors, they were also a marker of public respectability. A hand-coloured portrait (late 16th century) of a lady walking to the baths accompanied by her slave shows both dressed to impress. The slave's presence signalled that the lady being accompanied was legitimately out in public and under the close protection of her family.

As commodities, slaves were bought and sold, traded and transported. "The visibility of slaves on the market varied from complete exposure in public slave markets to the more private display within a slave dealer's house, or presentation of a slave dealer within the konak (residence) of a potential buyer," writes Fleet. An English visitor to Istanbul at the end of the 16th century described its slave market: "They sell many Christian slaves of all sects and adge, in manner as they sell thier horses, looking them in the eyes, mouth, and all other parts."

At the other end of the social spectrum, and with more agency at their disposal but less mobility in public spaces, wealthy women devised numerous ways to make their presence felt without jeopardising their reputations: they used perfumes; they appeared on balconies, briefly visible to passers-by; sweet sounds of their voices carried into the street. Their bodies may have been covered as they negotiated public spaces, but they walked with a sway of their hips and used tokens as a secret language to convey messages of love.

Male control of women was underpinned by notions of moral rectitude but women were out and about much more than has previously been thought. They were (at least sometimes) visible to the gaze of foreign observers, curious about a culture so seemingly exotic. In the collection of the Correr Museum in Venice is an illustrated travel manuscript showing scenes of Istanbul in the late 17th century. Among them is a delightful sketch of a group of women enjoying an outing in a boat rowed by three handsome oarsmen sporting splendid black moustaches.

Notions of honour ran deep in Ottoman society. Boyar writes: "The desire to protect women's honour had less to do with women than it did with concern with the well-being of society as a whole, for an immoral woman meant an immoral society." Women could be seen in public but how they behaved, and how they were perceived, was of paramount importance. For women to be seen visiting the graves of their relatives, or shines of holy personages, was acceptable; for women visiting a cemetery to be seen drinking and eating with unrelated men was not.

Women's lives were controlled not just by the state, argues Boyar, but also by "an imagined moral community" with the "power to label a woman as honourable or dishonourable as it thought fit, leaving the woman concerned with no recourse to this judgment". However, social perceptions of respectability were fluid – and varied across time and space. An Anatolian visitor to Cairo was shocked to see the wives of high-ranking men riding on donkeys. His reaction was coloured by the practice elsewhere for prostitutes to be punished by being displayed on donkeys.

It was within the intimacy of the mahalle (neighbourhood) that the question of reputation was most potent. "For a woman to be labelled a prostitute had significant ramifications for it left her exposed without the protection of either family, society or the state," writes Boyar. "She was seen as challenging the imagined moral community and as seeking to build a life outside its boundaries and control." On one hand condemnation could mean ruin, on the other marginalisation could be empowering. Brothels were everywhere. Not only did prostitutes have access to public spaces but, as an integral part of society, they were sometimes invited to important celebrations and took part in street processions.

By the turn of the 20th century, the Ottoman empire was crumbling. Its demise had opened up new opportunities for women to enter public spheres. As Boyar writes: "Their progress and the speed of change in both the level of their participation and the acceptance of their new position owed much to the dire circumstances that the empire found itself in in that period and to certain changes, in particular the emergence of the press and the development of female education."

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Unsurprisingly, so profound a societal change was by no means unopposed. As late as 1915, a regional governor expressly forbade women discussing the government to "create demoralisation with their lying and inaccurate words and gossip". But even this condemnation of female gossip shows how much women were present and how their voices were heard in the Ottoman public space.

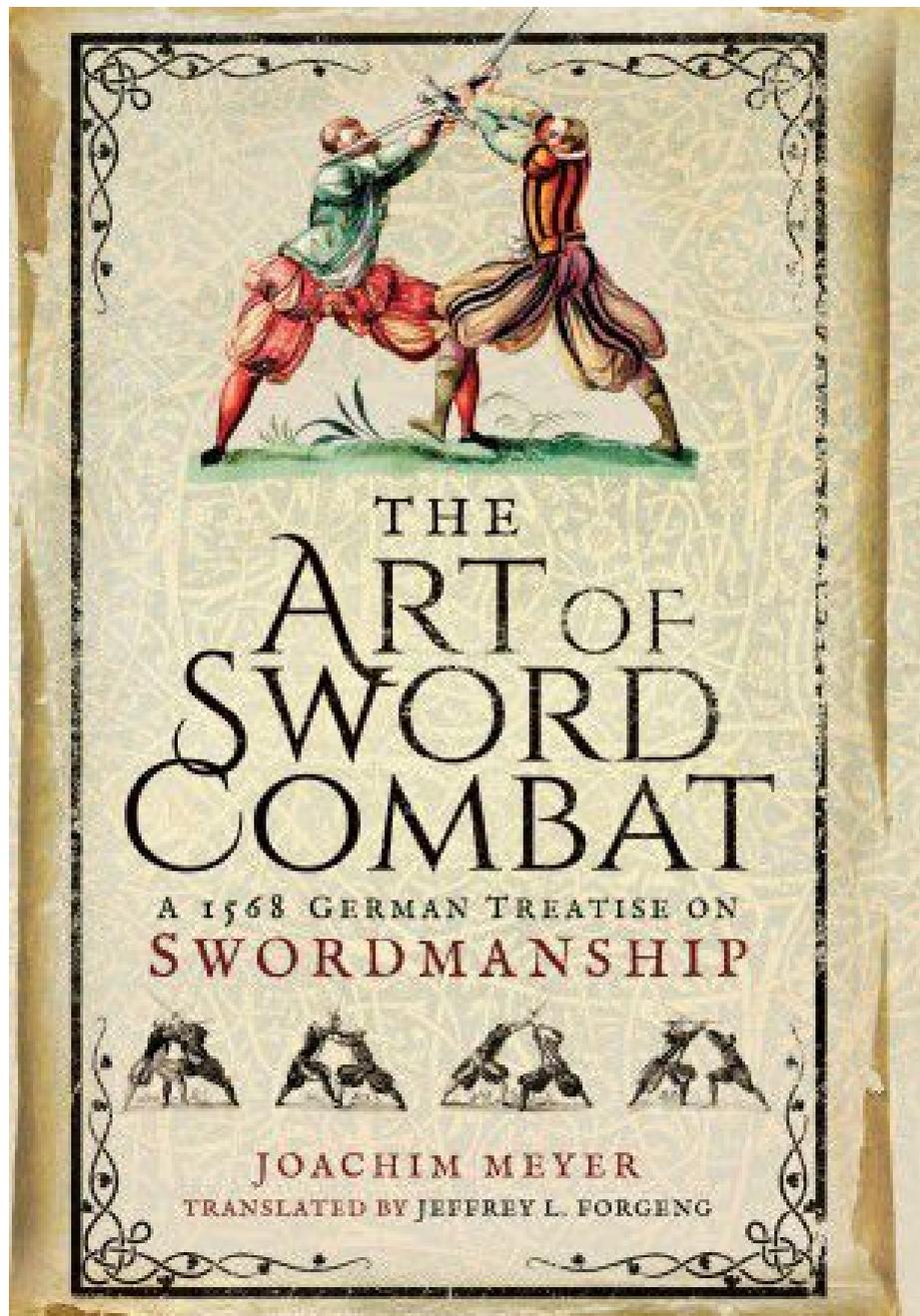
With this new volume, Fleet and Boyar and their contributors lift the lid on many thousands of lives previously marginalised by academic histories.

This article originally by the University of Cambridge Research

Fighting to Win: The Art of Sword Combat in The Early Modern Period

by Danièle Cybulskie

Usually, writing about the Early Modern Age isn't my deal, but it was definitely an interesting time. This was the period in which men went around in puffy pants with rapiers at their hips, ready to duel anyone who ridiculed the puffiness of their pants. And if you're going to wander around with a rapier, you'd better know how to use it.



Enter Joachim Meyer, a German sword expert, who literally wrote the book on sword fighting, and wisely titled it *The Art of Sword Combat*. Published in 1568 and dedicated to Meyer's local count, Otto von Solms, *The Art of Sword Combat* instructs the reader on the use of the longsword, the dusack – a wooden or leather sword used for sport (Forgeng, 20) – and the rapier. Detailed instructions are set forth for each weapon in clear prose, including woodcuts and examples of how and when to use each stroke of the sword. This is a purely instructional book, which makes it great reading for historians because it breaks things down into its simplest parts, and explains everything. As Meyer himself says,

I am not writing for great fighters or artists, nor have I intended to write this as a historical monument to combat, presenting the art as worthy of serious attention, but only to write a book of instruction...[for] those who love this art. (73)

Unlike some books, like Ramon Llull's *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, Meyer's book doesn't concern itself with symbolism or the place of the swordsman's skills in the universe, but the simple brass tacks of fighting to win. And that's what makes this book so interesting to me: the emphasis on fighting to win, not necessarily how to win with honour. In medieval treatises, there is a chivalric emphasis on fairness, and medieval romances frown upon the combatant that stoops to trickery to win, or kicks his enemy when he is down. (Doubtless, real medieval warriors would have used whichever tactics would have kept them alive.) In this most practical

book, Meyer puts no stock in fairness, but rather emphasizes using the opponent's weakness or gullibility against him. Critical to many (if not most) of Meyer's techniques is the feint; deception is not only acceptable, but prized. Likewise, provocation is essential, to make the opponent slip up. Meyer says of rapier combat,

when your opponent will not cut at you, you should also not cut the first stroke at him to hit him, but see how you can provoke him to strike; and when he strikes, then parry that blow...and you shall quickly cut after that parrying. (137)

He also says,

as soon as you feel that [your opponent] has been weakened, then before he recovers, cut quickly to his body, whether low or high. (137)

Kick your enemy when he is down, in other words, and he will stay down. When you see the balletic feints and parries of Olympic fencing, it's hard to remember that the people behind the masks are actually practicing a skill that was once meant to kill or seriously injure. In *The Art of Sword Combat*, Meyer doesn't bother to be delicate about it. There are frequent instructions to cut or thrust at your opponent's head, face, ears, or belly. There is also the startling sentence from the section on the longsword: "when you have sliced an opponent's arms, then you may draw the slice through his mouth" (82).

For Meyer, there is no point in being delicate because fighting hard and with skill might well save your life. weapon" (141).

There is a section near the end, simply titled "A Good Technique", which outlines what to do "if you must defend yourself in an emergency, when someone rushes on you with a *partisan* and you have only a rapier or some other one-handed weapon" (141).

The section immediately following this one outlines how to use your cape (a piece of regular clothing for men at the time) to defend yourself against a rapier attack. For the record, you can wrap your cape around your arm to block a stroke, or throw it over your opponent's blade and then strike him with yours (142). Someone writing a book on sword combat today is not likely to suggest that you'll need to use your coat against a sudden attack in the street, but in Meyer's day, these were certainly good techniques to know, just in case.

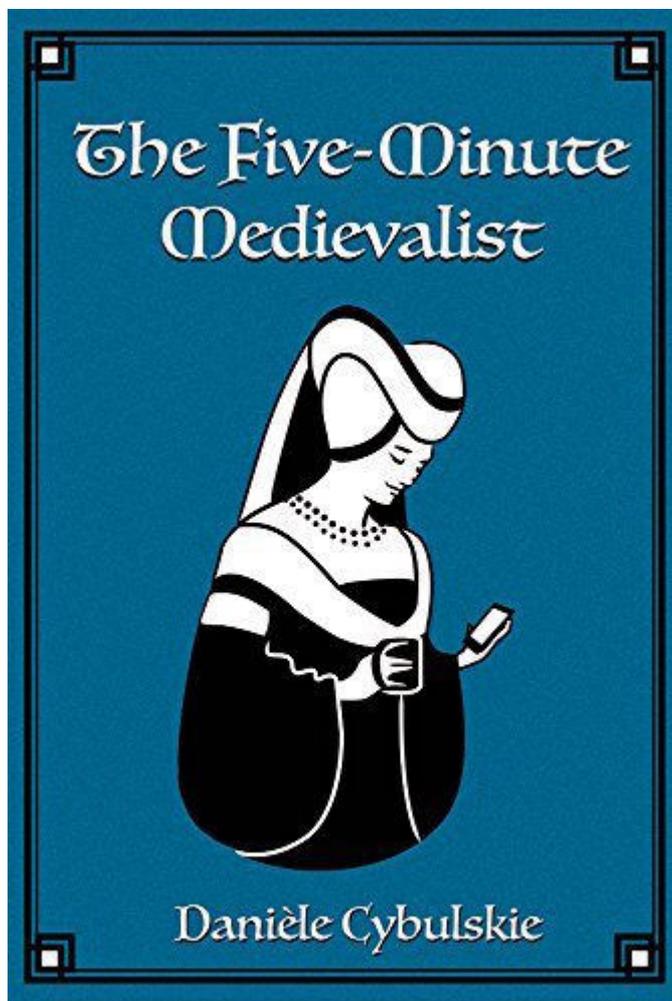
If you're interested in how people actually fought in the Early Modern Age, or just want to be able to visualize the duel between Romeo and Tybalt, *The Art of Sword Combat* is a book that will tell you everything you need to know. You can check out *Jeffrey L. Forgeng's* new translation [here](#).

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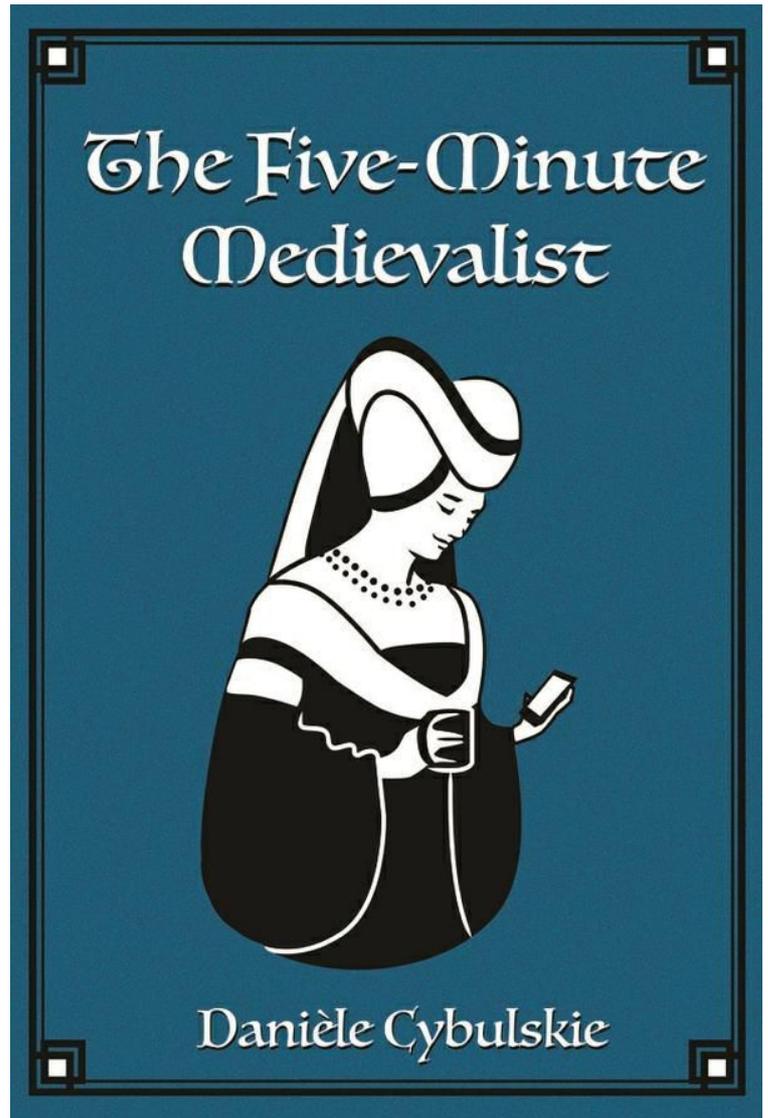


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By Danièle Cybulskie

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