

The final volume of *The New Cambridge Medieval History* covers the last century (interpreted broadly) of the traditional western Middle Ages. Often seen as a time of doubt, decline and division, the period is shown here as one of considerable innovation and development, much of which resulted from a conscious attempt by contemporaries to meet the growing demands of society and to find practical solutions to the social, religious and political problems which beset it.

The volume consists of four sections. Part I focuses on both the ideas and other considerations which guided men as they sought good government, and on the practical development of representation. Part II deals with aspects of social and economic development at a time of change and expansion. Part III discusses the importance of the life of the spirit: religion, education and the arts. Moving from the general to the particular, Part IV concerns itself with the history of the countries of Europe, emphasis being placed on the way that centralised (often monarchical) power developed, thus giving rise to the growth of the nation-states of the 'early modern' world.

The New Cambridge Medieval History

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Volume VII *c.* 1415–*c.* 1500

THE NEW
CAMBRIDGE
MEDIÆVAL HISTORY

Volume VII c. 1415–c. 1500

EDITED BY
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PREFACE

MUCH has happened in the development of historical study in the two generations which have elapsed since the tardy publication, in 1936, of the final volume of the original *Cambridge Medieval History*, to which the present volume is successor. More so than was the case sixty years ago, the historian today is a member of an ever-broadening international community, a development which is itself part of the greater internationalisation of society. Increasingly, the preoccupations of the historian take him beyond the boundaries, local, provincial or national, in which he normally works. Not only has he access to an ever-increasing number of books and periodicals which bring him knowledge and ideas from communities the world over. In an age of easier travel, he has opportunities to meet fellow specialists at conferences, whose published proceedings (if he cannot attend in person) he is often able to read, thus helping him keep up with current thinking and research. Furthermore, the results of his labours are given greater value by his conscious assimilation of the specialised knowledge of other disciplines (literature, art, philosophy for example) and other methodologies (such as those of the social scientist) which have given him a broader and better understanding of the past.

Such developments have greatly extended the horizons of modern historical scholarship. These have also been reflected in the way that much history is now taught, particularly in universities. The popularity of courses encompassing more than one of the traditional academic disciplines has forced teachers and researchers to look at their subjects or periods of interest within broader frameworks than might have been the case years ago. Add to this an awakening European consciousness and a growing willingness to consider the whole spectrum of European history, in both its unity and its diversity, as a field of comparison and contrast, and we have the conditions appropriate for the study of comparative history ready at hand.

The changes of approach can quickly be seen by comparing the contents of this volume with that published in 1936. Never mind the fact that this volume is

longer than its predecessor, and that the number of countries or states given a chapter to themselves has increased. More important is the fact that the number of chapters dealing with themes on a broadly European level has doubled. This underlines how the willingness and ability of historians to consider questions of this kind and in this way has greatly increased over the years. The decision to place the sixteen 'thematic' chapters (parts I, II and III) before, rather than after, those concerned with the development of the European states, the principal theme running through the fourth and final part of this *History*, is founded on the belief that both men and politics are part of a wider world picture which encompasses ideas, political, religious, cultural and artistic, as well as economic and social change and development. Before a subject or a period can be fully appreciated, something of its aspirations and culture must be understood. It is with this in mind, rather than with any intention of downgrading the individual political history of the states of Europe, that the more usual order of presenting history ('politics first, culture second') has been reversed.

Two concluding points may be made. The final century of the traditional Middle Ages has long suffered from being seen as a period of decay and decline which, in the eyes of some, inevitably required major changes to set the world 'on course' again. Such a view, however, has not unduly deterred a whole generation of researchers who have witnessed a significant shift of interest towards the late Middle Ages, and whose work has greatly enriched our understanding of fifteenth-century society. All over Europe, research has revealed an age of important, indeed dynamic, achievements, some of which are the outcome of earlier advances, others seeing their fulfilment only in the century to come. While the short-term, narrowly focused study can be of the greatest significance, the approach represented by this volume requires a willingness to see development in more than one field in terms of the *longue durée*.

It requires, too, that while each chapter (particularly those in part IV) should be separate and free-standing, each should also be regarded as part of an attempt to present Europe as a whole, rather than as a collection of individual entities. Here the approach by comparison and contrast, properly used, may be particularly fruitful. The ability to explain similar developments, like the skill in accounting for different ones, is something which may reasonably be asked of the historian. It is also a way of seeing what is both important and interesting in the history of Europe during a century which, far from being a dead end, was to complete what had been begun earlier and set in train what would be completed later.

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THIS volume has been long in the making. Now that it is offered to the world, its Editor wishes to thank the contributors for their labours, their patience and understanding, as well as for coming to his rescue in times of difficulty. He is happy to acknowledge the help and advice of friends and colleagues freely and generously given at various times. Not least, he thanks the General Editors for their assistance at the planning stage of the venture. Members of the production team, most notably the volume's able copy-editor, Linda Randall, and its indexer, Meg Davies, have given much practical help in transforming a bulky typescript into an attractive volume. The calm encouragement consistently offered by William Davies, of the Cambridge University Press, has been greatly valued. It is acknowledged with particular gratitude. Anne Clough, Stephanie Dennison, Dr Stephen Rowell and Rosemarie Zamonski rendered valuable service with translations of several chapters submitted in languages other than that in which they finally appear.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AB</i>	<i>Annales de Bourgogne</i>
<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
<i>AM</i>	<i>Annales du Midi</i>
<i>AN</i>	<i>Annales de Normandie</i>
<i>Annales ESC</i>	<i>Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations</i>
<i>BBCS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i>
<i>BEC</i>	<i>Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes</i>
<i>BIHR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>BJRULM</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
<i>BL</i>	<i>British Library</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>DBI</i>	<i>Dizionario biografico degli Italiani</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>EconHR</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
<i>EETS</i>	<i>Early English Text Society</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
<i>HZ</i>	<i>Historische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>IHS</i>	<i>Irish Historical Studies</i>
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
<i>JMedH</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
<i>JModH</i>	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
<i>JWCI</i>	<i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i>
<i>MA</i>	<i>Le moyen âge</i>
<i>NH</i>	<i>Northern History</i>
<i>NLWJ</i>	<i>National Library of Wales Journal</i>
<i>PBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Past & Present</i>

List of abbreviations

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<i>RH</i>	<i>Revue historique</i>
RHS	Royal Historical Society
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Renaissance Quarterly</i>
RS	Rolls Series
SATF	Société des Anciens Textes Français
SHF	Société de l'Histoire de France
<i>SHR</i>	<i>Scottish Historical Review</i>
STS	Scottish Text Society
<i>THSC</i>	<i>Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion</i>
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
<i>WHR</i>	<i>Welsh History Review</i>

