

De Nobilitatibus Sapiencijs et Prudencijs Regum

contents 140 large, illuminated pages. I have counted 16 chapters and an introduction to the opus. Each chapter begins with a large half page vignette, an initial and the heading in red. Latin: rubric = red. This structure make it easier to study a manuscript like this.

De Nobilitatibus is a manual in How to be a king, a royal mirror, made in 1326. That year is also written in the introduction on page 5. Here comes a practice in medieval latin:

Hic incipiunt rubrice capitulorum huius libri de nobilitatibus sapiencijs et prudencijs regum editi ad honorem illustris domini edwardi dei gratia regis angelie incipientis regnare anno domini ab incarnatione milesimo tricentesimo vicesimo sexto.

The text is to be found below the image of a young king – he is about 15 here – sitting as the central figure with a crown on his head and a falcon on his hand. On each side there is a falconer with gloves as robust as the king's. And they are wearing cross-striped dresses with dots and lines. BILD sid 5



It is because of this types of dresses we examine De Nobilitatibus and other manuscripts.

As for De Nobilitatibus we not only know when it is written, but also by whom. It is written "Suus humilis et devotus Walterus de Milemete clericus". In the margin someone has added "Author". BILD sid 21



The young king, for whom Walter de Milemete got the mission to write a royal mirror, is Edward III (1312-1377), son to the king of England Edward II (1284-1327) and Isabella Capet (1295-1358), daughter of Philippe IV le beau, king of France.

Philippe le beau died in 1314 and was succeeded by his sons in order: Louis X, Philippe V, Charles IV. When the last dies without heirs in 1328 it is time for the Hundred Years War to begin. And there Edward III will be one of the actors, as the daughter's son of Philippe IV.

Barbara Tuchman describes Edward in A Distant Mirror in this way: "He was well built and vigorous ... of good humour and vanity, kind, headstrong and not unfamiliar with the lowest in human. ... He had insights in practical politics without deeper knowledge in the art of sovereign ... very fond of amusements, fighting, hunting, tournaments and wasteful festivity."

De Nobilitatibus is in fact a manual in the art of sovereign. If we will trust Tuchman Edward did not study the manual he got being a new king very close.

The introduction of the opus ends with an image of Christofer. The saint in a cross-striped kirtel is standing in the ford in a river with the Christchild on his arm. Christofer means He who bears Christ. Perhaps this image will remind the king of his duty as defender of faith in his kingdom? An aspect on beeing Rex Dei Gratia? BILD sid 8



After a whole page image where the king with a crowned helmet receives his shield by Saint George, patron saint of England, follows a double page spread with the conquering of the Fortress of Love. On the left page we see four mounted knights in armour ascending a hill. On the right page we see a castle on the hill top defended by four ladies, one with a cross bow, one with a longbow, but they are shooting flowers. The other two are throwing their flowers from the tower stairs and over the wall. Note that the ladies are wearing dresses with dots and lines.



Next comes a whole size page with the king and the queen on a joint seat. Both have dotted edges on their (lined?) robes. Note that the over and under dress on the king and the queen are switched! The bottom of the page view their shields. For the king it is England's leopards, for the queen a clefted shield with leopards and the lillies of France. A later hand has written below the shields "Edwardus III Rex Angliae & Isabella filia Philipii Pulchri Regis Franciae". After that someone has changed III to II.

BILD sid 12

Here is what has occupied the interest of the scholars. Is this an image of the kings parents, or is it the king and his mother? Has the opus been edited due to the deposing and death (murder?) of Edward II? That's a question being discussed.

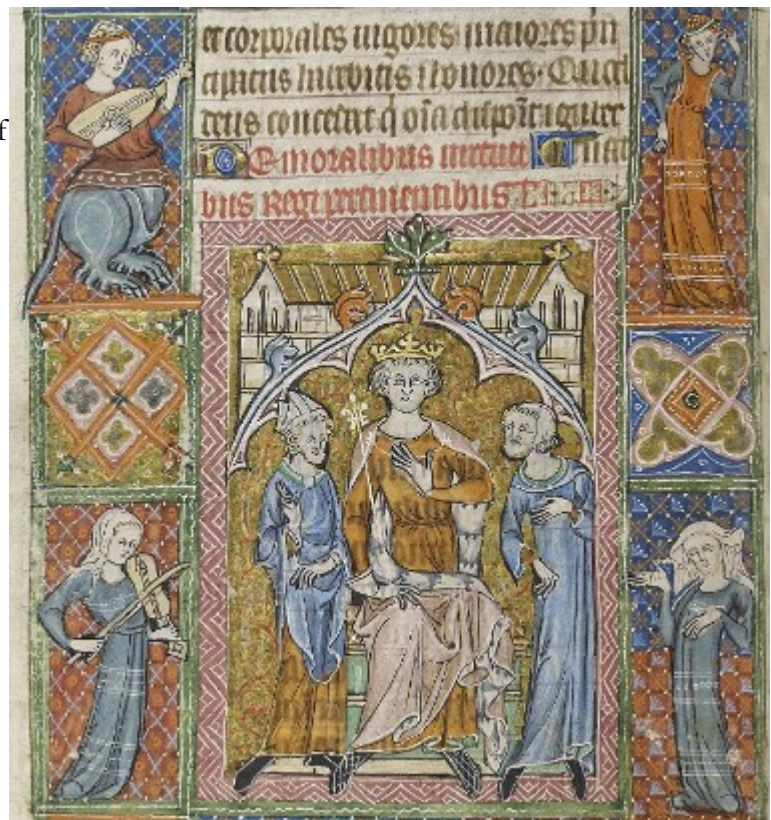


We are here mostly interested in the dresses with dots and lines.

There are dotted edgings on the main figures dresses, mostly plain and silky. But dots, lines and sometimes circles are seen only on side figures and marginal ones. Above all there are two pages in the opus with figures in dresses of such cloth we have studied.

The chapter "De moralibus" begins with a vignette with the king in the middle and with a bishop and a counsellor on each side. Around the image there is a group of musicians, all in dresses with lines, dots and circles.

BILD sid 106



In the vignette introducing "De regis misericordia" there are also figures in dresses with lines and dots. Two torch(?) bearers flank the image with the king listening to two lawyers who have their bound clients kneeling before the king, appealing for mercy. The angels on the bottom of the page are supporting the king's and the heir's shields. The angels have a different kind of dotted and striped clothings. Their dresses seem to consist of layers on layers.

BILD sid 119



Further on in the opus there is often seen soldiers wearing cross striped tabards, sometimes with lines and dots, but those images are not so fully shaped in details. BILD sid 129, 125, 138



In the first part the illuminated frames around the text consists of decorative elements, with a pair of shields at the bottom of the page, sometimes there are men in arms to the left and right in the margin. Beginning with page 61 the crowd of musicians, fabulous beasts, archers, hunting scenes appear in the margin. In the sixteenth and last chapter "De prelijs regis et prudencijs in bellis" there are seen on most of the pages mounted knights having an encounter in the bottom margin. SIDA 126



I will also point on the chapter "Declaratio epistole regis", though there are no dresses with dots and lines on that page. The king are here lectured by the filosofer Aristotel. Perhaps this can be an introduction; Walter de Milemete was at the same time producing a second opus with the title Secretum Secretorum, but that opus we will study in a contribution to follow.

BILD sid 103



The first illumination in the opus was an image of the king. There were many such images following. The last illumination, after 140 pages, is an image of a pot de fer. This is the very first representation of such a fire-arm, it is said. Perhaps we here can see an omen of the events in the hundred years to come?

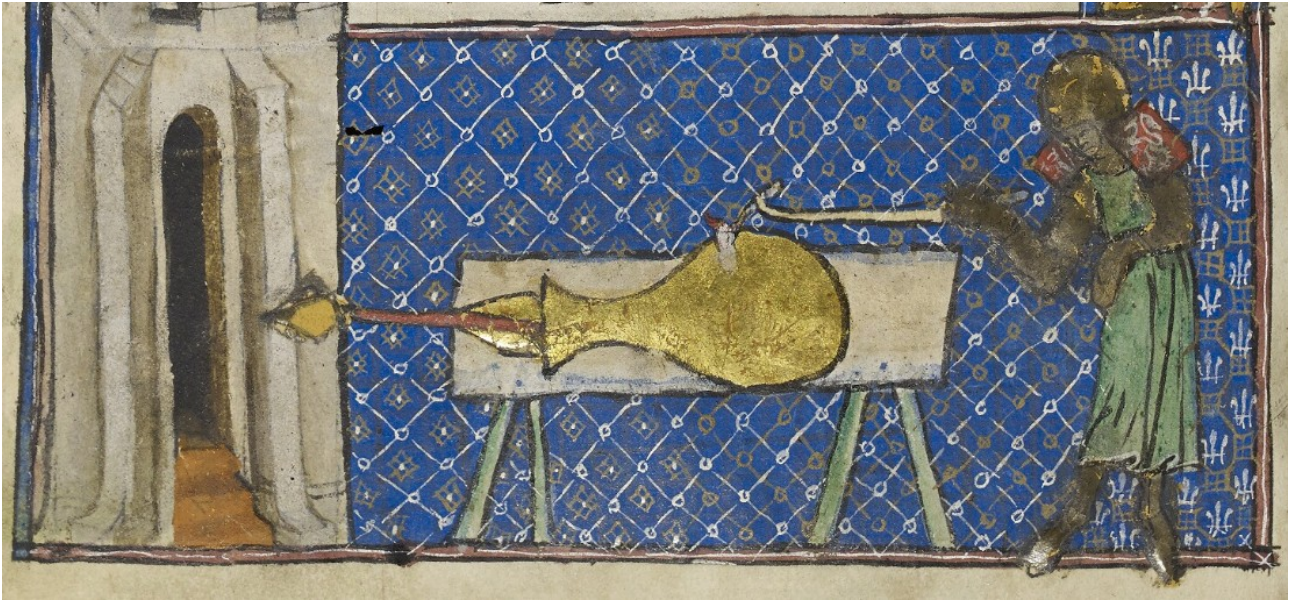


BILD sid 144