

The Power of Pawns: An Analysis of Parisian Identity and Loyalty during the Anglo-Burgundian Occupation, 1420-1436



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Abstract

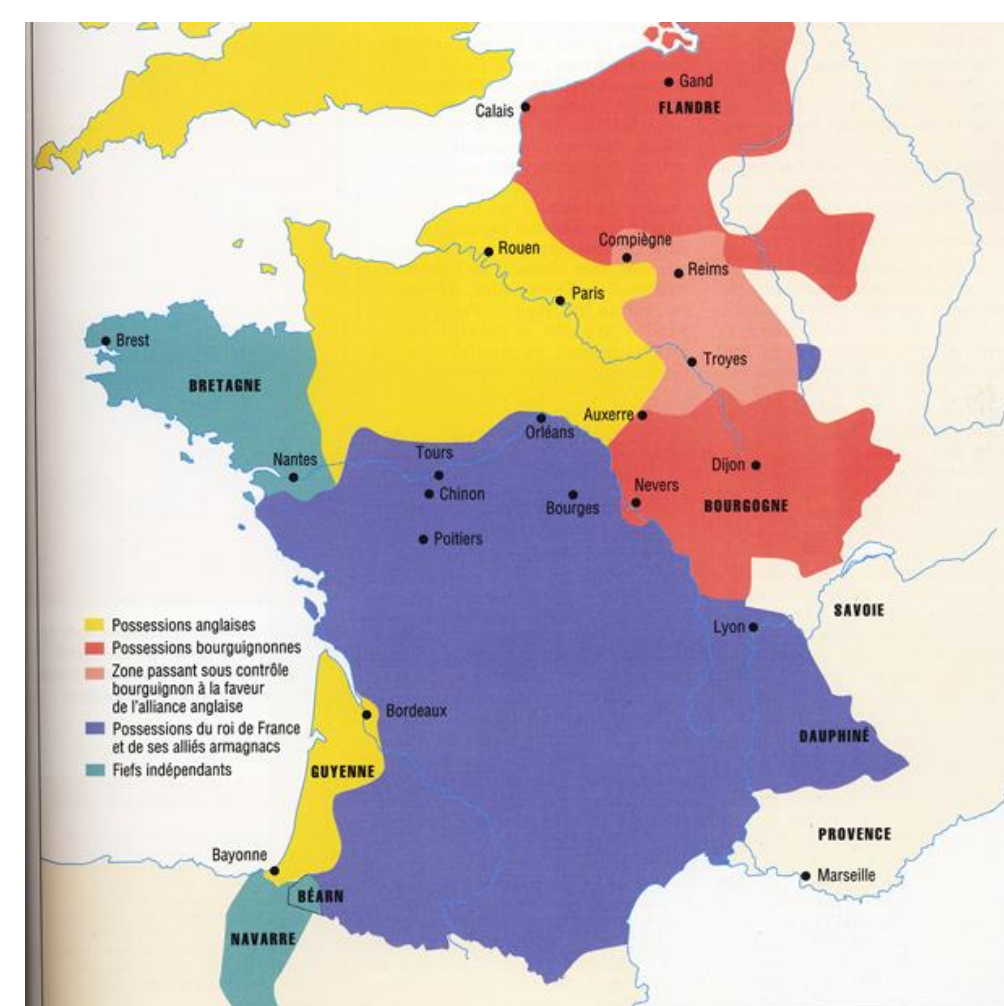
At the height of the Hundred Years' War, from 1420 to 1436, the city of Paris was occupied by an alliance between the King of England and the Duke of Burgundy. Most studies of Paris during this period utilize a top-down perspective, basing their analyses on the actions of nobility; my research paper analyzes Parisian identity from the perspective of the lower classes. Drawing off a 15th-century primary source, the *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris*, which survives as an invaluable record of Parisian opinions during the Anglo-Burgundian occupation, my paper argues that Parisian identity was rarely expressed in relation to the French crown, and was mostly understood in local terms. I support my claim by assessing the importance of noble clout among locals, analyzing Parisian reactions in French and Anglo occupied times, and comparing the Parisian experience to that of other occupied regions in 15th century France. Ultimately, I suggest that any loyalties that Parisians held for those nobles and kings competing for their support, from the Duke of Burgundy to the French loyalist coalition known as the Armagnacs, were largely driven by Parisian self-interest.



The Hundred Years War and Paris

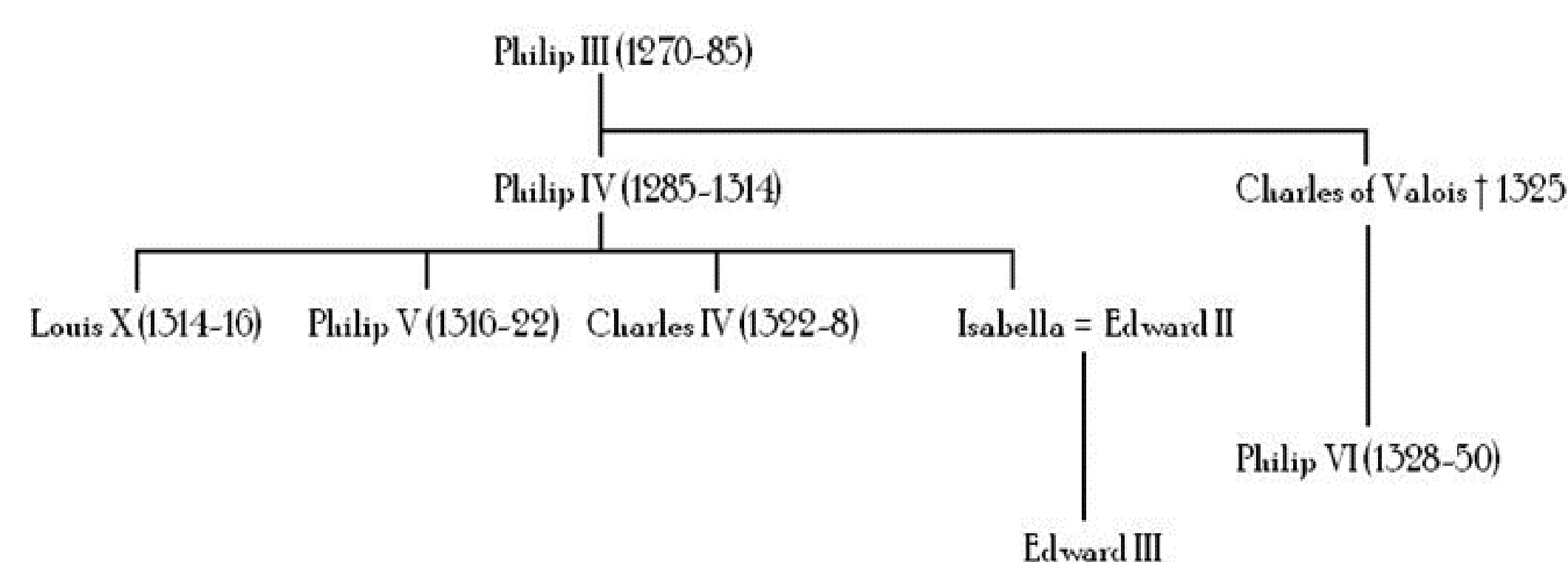
The Hundred Years War lasted from 1337 to 1453. It began in 1328, when King Charles IV, the last Capetian monarch, died and left the French throne to Philip VI, a member of the Valois branch of the family. However, Philip's cousin, Isabeau, also had royal blood and her son, King Edward III of England voiced a claim to the French throne through his mother. For much of the war, the English seemed to be more adequately prepared to win. However, much of this advantage relied on financial support from England and internal conflicts in France. These factors began to slip towards the end of the war, ultimately giving the French Valois the victory.

Paris was the capital of the French Kingdom during the Hundred Years' War and it was the largest urban space in all of Western Europe. As such, it was highly contested by all of those jockeying for political power in France. Paris had been the historic seat of the French monarchy, and was one of the few parts of the state actually under direct royal jurisdiction.



Historiography

Few sources from the Middle Ages have survived, making studying the period very difficult. As such, the most studied subjects tend to surround royalty, wars, architecture, and materials that were deemed significant over the centuries. In this way, most historians studying the Hundred Years' War have focused on major battles, lines of succession, and actions between kings and nobility. Social history, daily life, and the peasant perspective have essentially been ignored. The few sources that do look at the people of Paris argue about it in the way of a national identity that could not have existed at the time. The prior historiography, therefore, is difficult to use for a social history, while at the same time also contains the essential context and hidden building blocks necessary to analyze Parisian identity.



Argument

This case study of Paris suggests that local identity and bonds of allegiance to powerful nobles, rather than abstract loyalties to "national" monarchs, characterized the experience of the Anglo-Burgundian occupation for most Parisians. Social identity among lower class Parisians in during this period based itself not on ties to the nation, but on the interplay between local contexts, locales, and outside pressures. During the Anglo-Burgundian occupation of Paris, preexisting loyalties as well as the war itself shaped how Parisians defined themselves; they allied themselves only with those who had Paris's best interest in mind. Parisian loyalties were initially created through perceptions of the image and ideas about a leader, which was often the result of cleverly masked propaganda; however, any sign of fealty came as a reaction to actions and policies promised by the nobility, showing that the Parisian residents did take their own situation seriously and carefully considered who to follow in order to preserve a somewhat peaceful lifestyle. Their identity was not unique among lower class urban residents the time, but their support and loyalty did help define the strength of the kingdom, and also shaped the tide of the war itself.



Methodology

This work seeks to analyze Parisian identity during the Anglo-Burgundian occupation from 1420 to 1436. I do so by assessing the impact of the Burgundian-Armagnac Dispute in the years before occupation, identifying the importance of noble influence, comparing Paris to other English-occupied regions, and considering the Parisians' motivations. There is an important focus on the noble family of Burgundy which held a deliberate desire for Parisian control to improve their noble status in the kingdom. They ultimately became a large deciding factor in the English's successes and failures in Paris. Furthermore, I compared the Parisian to that of the occupied Normandy to highlight the differences during the war.

The source most used for depicting the Parisian perspective and experience was *A Parisian Journal*. This book was a collection of detailed notes and illustrations of quotidian life in Paris from one resident's perspective. The unknown author was of the bourgeoisie of 15th Century Paris, and was somewhat well versed in the actions of the nobility as well as public reaction. While this source may not completely give justice to the greater Parisian opinion in the Fifteenth Century, it remains as one of the most widely used primary sources among medieval histories.

