

BOOK REVIEWS

Some bold and striking designs do remain. The town of San Ginesio (p. 183) has *Gules a squadra argent*, where the *squadra* is a right-angled piece formed by the bottom two thirds of a pale conjoined at its top to the sinister half of a slightly enhanced fess. (A similar charge was in arms granted a few years ago in England to a Mr Corner.) Fano (p. 105) has what might very loosely be blazoned *Per pale embattled argent and gules*; but since the vertical ‘crenellations’ are drawn so large as to allot only three dentils to each side of the shield it looks more like two interlocking monkey wrenches or – more heraldically – partially visible labels. The small town of Pioraco (p. 203) has *Gules a crayfish argent*. It is an excellent choice heraldically, and evidence for it seems to date back to the eighteenth century. But the authors suggest persuasively that it is really a misunderstanding of a schematic frontal view of the town’s patron, St Victorinus of Camerino, in his self-inflicted penitential position: arms raised and lashed to the branches of a tree that curve and arch down above and around him.

Another case of misinterpretation would seem to be the unofficial arms used by Montecalvo in Foglia (p. 68). Currently the shield has a white field with three mounts in base, behind which rises a red castellated wall, issuant from the sinister side of the shield and reaching halfway across it, though not stretching up to the top. This curious arrangement seems to derive from a simpler, older version: *Per pale argent and gules three mountains issuant in base or*. To this design, in 1933, was added the ‘lictorial chief’ imposed by the Regime on all municipal arms: a chief with the *fascies* of a Roman *lictor*. After the fall of Fascism, the whole chief might have been removed, but evidently in some cases only the *fascies* went, leaving a blank chief which was then read as conjoined to the *argent* dexter half of the field. Finally, the resulting red rectangle was interpreted as the wall of a square fortress or tower – the commune has more than one to offer – and accordingly ‘masoned’ and given crenellations.

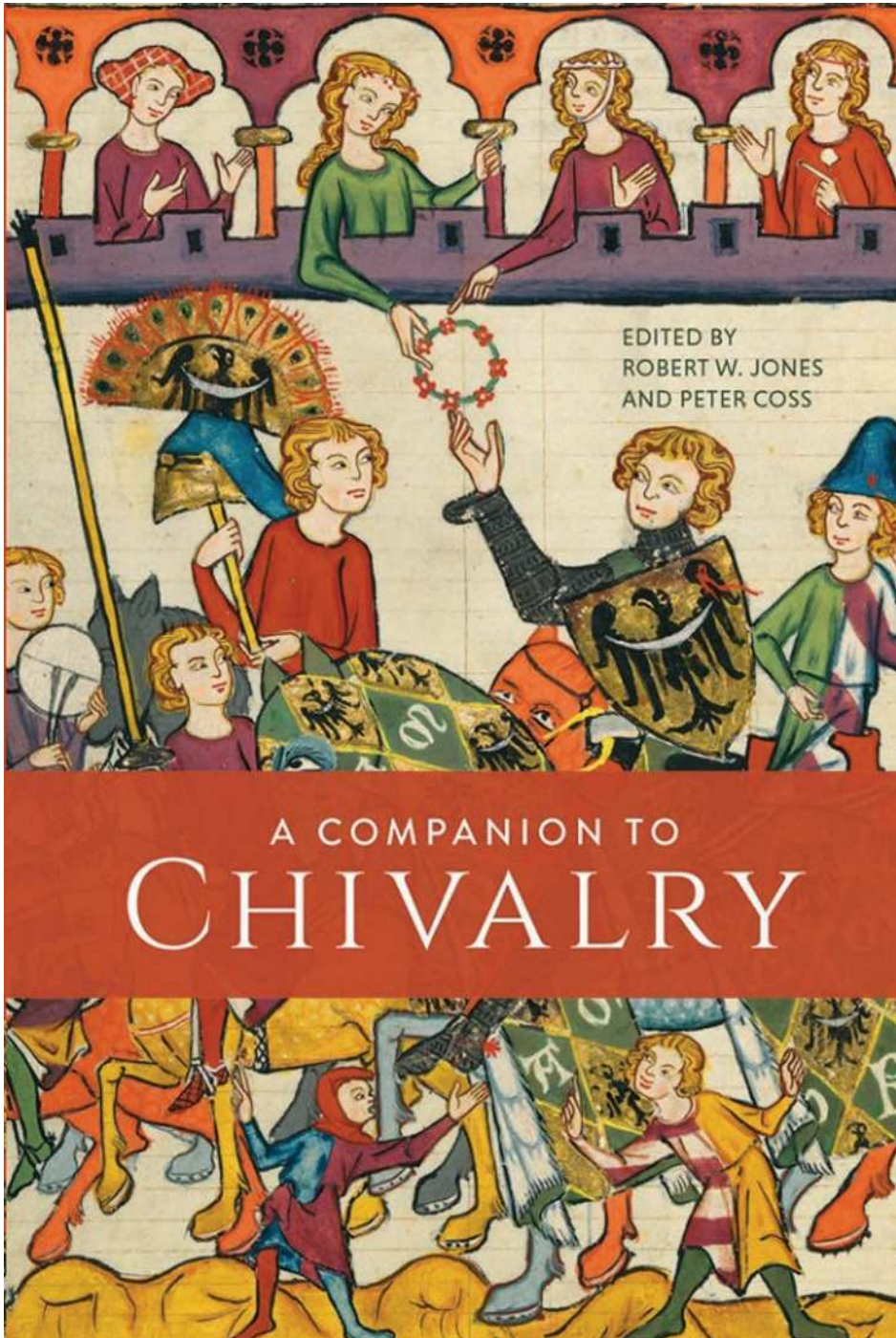
A short essay at the front of the book by Mario Cassai and a longer one by Vieri Favini and Alessandro Savorelli add considerably to its utility and interest. Favini and Savorelli in particular do not stint on offering opinions, never to the disadvantage of the information they have to impart. For this reader, a representative of heraldic authority, it was entertaining and salutary to read their persuasive remarks on the baleful influence had on communal heraldry by the Consulta Araldica. Between 1896 and 1943 that official body attempted to resolve uncertainty and chaos in armorial matters by intervention and decree. Suffice it to say that it did not do so with the same inspiration, or the same success, as Saint Francis. The illustrations are excellent except for the maps.

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Robert W. Jones and Peter Coss (edd.) *A Companion to Chivalry*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2019. Hardcover. x+338 pp. 28 black and white and colour illustrations. ISBN 978-1-78327-372-0. £60.00.

More than most aspects of medieval life, the subject of chivalry continues to attract interest across a wide spectrum – from academic researchers and students, to amateur

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historians, genealogists, and re-enactors. Yet given its various military, socio-economic, literary, and artistic dimensions, attempts to grasp its essence and full ramifications can prove difficult. The editors of this collection have chosen to approach the subject by assembling fifteen essays, each providing a synopsis of scholarship or offering new research on the social and ideological dimensions of chivalry and aspects of the lifestyle and material culture of knights as a group.

In the opening essay (the longest contribution) Peter Coss surveys Anglophone and Francophone historiography on the origins and diffusion of chivalry up to the early thirteenth century. He highlights the pioneering work of Sidney Painter, Maurice Keen, Matthew Strickland, David Crouch, Georges Duby, Jean Flori and Dominique Barthélemy, identifying a consensus that chivalry 'began life as a set of values widely shared by an aristocratic warrior elite' but that from the twelfth century onwards 'a more aggressive spirit of social exclusion, emanating from the high aristocracy, turned chivalry into an immensely powerful ideology [...] that encapsulated the sense of difference and of entitlement that characterised the secular elite' (p.38). However, rulers also played a key role. David Simpkin, writing on the organisation of chivalric society, illustrates how Western monarchs tried to embody chivalric values and employ patronage in order to unify their social elites. Louise Wilkinson discusses the place of women in chivalric culture, stressing their importance as sources of inspiration, virtue, and morality, while important aspects of patronage are elaborated in separate essays on the creation of chivalric orders (David Green), the holding of tournaments (Richard Barber), and heraldry and heralds (Robert W. Jones). Jones does not attempt to describe the characteristics and rules of heraldry, but concentrates on its origins and functions. He follows David Crouch, Adrian Ailes and others in seeing the tournament as the prime driver in the use of coats of arms for *individual* identification, so that a tourneyer's deeds could be recognised and celebrated by peers and spectators alike. Jones stresses how heraldry developed beyond its immediate origins into a sign of social status, as can be seen in the adoption of heraldic devices by women, and in disputes over the ownership of particular arms. In one important case (*Chandos v. Clermont*), however, the disagreement was not about the actual arms, but a badge depicting a lady in blue. Jones interprets this as an example of the growth in the use of liveries by great lords to distinguish themselves from lesser knights, 'stamping their identity and ownership on both property and men' (p.150). He also considers the fact that the increasing use of plate armour from the late fourteenth century onwards led men-at-arms to abandon the shield and sometimes the surcoat in battle, which is doubly surprising given that this period saw the greatest growth in the role of heralds and their output in the form of armorials. In a second essay Jones looks at how aristocrats, knightly retinues, and – increasingly – professional soldiers were organised in warfare by examining unit sizes, command structures, and discipline in English and French armies. He shows how, despite the highly hierarchical structure of medieval society, there was almost always a tension between the demands of discipline and orderly formations on the one hand, and the desire of individuals to display prowess and honour on the other.

There are two important essays on material culture. Ralph Moffat provides a highly accessible survey of knightly weapons and armour which makes excellent use of surviving material culture and secondary literature, but also delves into many unpublished archival

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sources to give a plethora of illuminating examples on topics as diverse as blunted practice swords, injuries caused by the lance, manufacturing techniques, and bespoke decoration of armour, as well as the difficulties of training, fighting, and sometimes sleeping in harness. Another innovative contribution is made by Oliver Creighton on 'chivalric landscapes' (p. 187), by which he means the variety of constructed landscapes where different aspects of chivalric life were played out, from castle gatehouses and tiltyards to orchards and deer parks. He shows how many castles in England and Wales were constructed not for purely defensive purposes, but were consciously established to produce impressions and experiences of civility and gentility, often by evoking literary associations. Creighton also discusses important evidence for the existence of tournament grounds at castles and palaces, most of which are sadly no longer extant.

There are also contributions on the military orders (Helen Nicholson) and post-medieval expressions of chivalry (Matthew Woodcock and Clare Simmons). Finally, there are two essays on literary evidence, which illustrate some of the problems of dealing with the topic adequately. Matthew Bennett pulls off the difficult task of showing how a range of mostly prescriptive texts (notably the Roman military manual by Vegetius) related to the actual conduct of warfare from the Carolingian period to the Hundred Years' War. By contrast, the survey of chivalric literature by Joanna Bellis and Megan Leitch deals only with texts in Middle English and French written in, or relating to, England. It is difficult to see why a vast number of chivalric texts beyond this circumscribed area should be ignored, and the Anglo- and Franco-centric focus is the main weakness of the collection as a whole. There are some exceptions, such as the case studies of knightly violence in Florence and Castile by Peter Sposato and Samuel Claussen, while Simpkin devotes some space to the unfree *ministeriales* of Germany, a group who were key bearers of chivalric culture. However, it is strange to find no mentions of medieval German authors such as Hartmann von Aue and Wolfram von Eschenbach, whose works inspired a vast array of chivalric literature, and only one passing reference to Emperor Maximilian, who not only devised innovative tournament forms but, despite his constant impecuniosity, was a great patron of chivalric writings and pageantry. The omission of such a large cultural area also means that there is little consideration of important German-language scholarship on knighthood, such as the fundamental works on knighthood and courtly culture by Joachim Bumke.¹ So while the volume is not quite the holistic survey it claims to be, it is both accessible and, in many respects, innovative; it could easily serve as introductory reading for university courses on chivalry while also providing much of interest to the general reader.

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¹ For example, Bumke, *Studien zum Ritterbegriff im 12. und 13. Jh.* (1977) and *Höfische Kultur: Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter*, 2 vols (1986), both of which are available in English translation.

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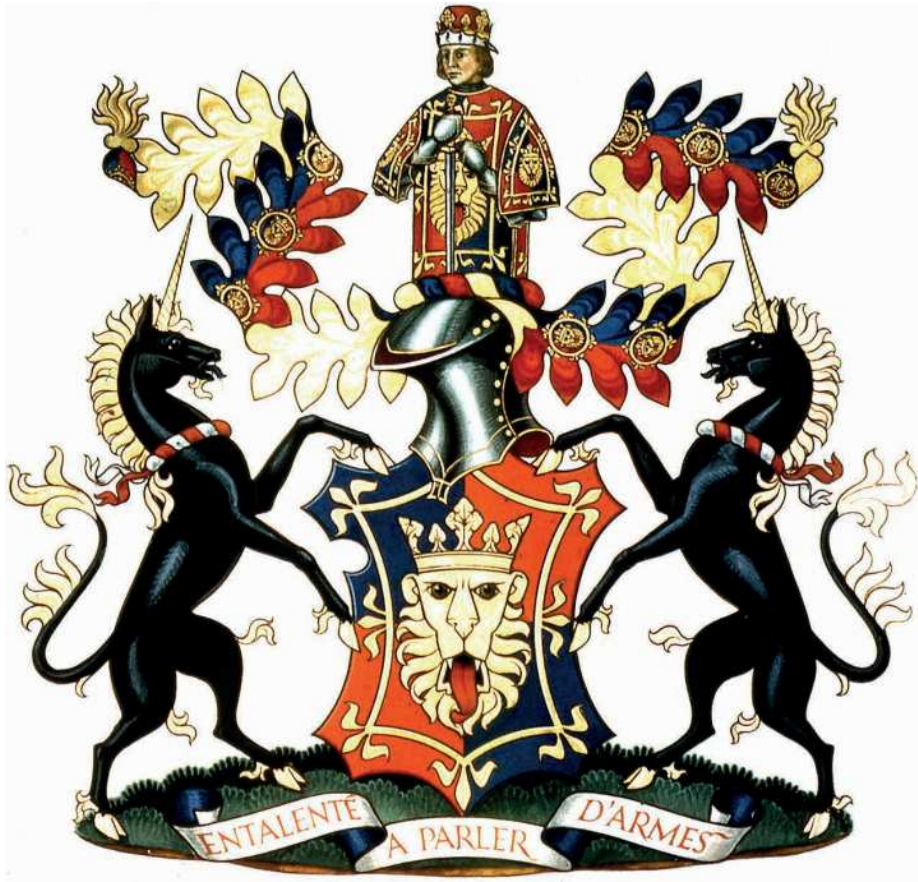
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