

Aubrée David-Chapy, Anne de France. Gouverner au féminin à la Renaissance, Paris (Passés/Composés) 2022. 285 p. 13 col. fig., ISBN 978-2-3793-3276-0, EUR 22,00.

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Anne de France is a fascinating figure from late 15th- and early 16th-century France. David-Chapy seeks to increase the reader's understanding of Anne's power and influence in France. While David-Chapy argues that Anne was a singular figure with unique talents to lead, she also explores how and why Anne was able to gain such influence and highlights some of her legacies.

The monograph is divided into 12 chapters and a brief »Epilogue«. The first seven chapters provide a comprehensive narrative of Anne de France's life at the French court as the favorite child of her father King Louis XI and then as de facto regent for her young brother King Charles VIII. After her brother reached the age of majority, Anne shifted her focus from France to the House of Bourbon into which she married. Chapters 8–13 explore: Anne's education and her supervision of the education of other royals; how she established and used extensive networks of other royals and diplomats throughout Europe; how she harnessed the power of ceremony to strengthen the monarchy; how important books were to her; and how she was a transitional figure between the medieval and early modern conceptions of power and monarchy. David-Chapy notes that while Anne de France was never queen, she became a model for female rulers. One important question the author asks about Anne was whether she was the last medieval princess, or the first powerful woman of Renaissance France and asserts that she was both.

Anne de France was the daughter of Louis XI and his second wife Charlotte de Savoie. Anne was born shortly before her father became king. Her father recognized her intellectual abilities and made sure she was well educated, including the study of diplomacy. Anne was surrounded by books from both her mother and father, and her mother's library included numerous volumes of the works of Christine de Pizan who David-Chapy sees as an important influence on the French princess.

David-Chapy explores various attributes of Anne's marriage to Pierre de Beaujeu. Their partnership was critical to the French crown's success against the rebellion (1485–1488) by princes of the blood led by Louis d'Orléans after the death of Louis XI. The late king left his young heir in the hands of Anne and her husband. David-Chapy does a good job exploring how both sides of the revolt used propaganda to bolster their positions in the rebellion. While the princes denounced the Beaujeus as »usurpateurs illégitimes« that claimed power for themselves,



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the crown expounded how they were simply serving France and supporting the monarchy (p. 39).

The author examines how Anne used the Estates General to gain legitimacy as the de facto regent for her brother, the young king. David-Chapy details how Anne assumed leadership over numerous aspects of the war effort using diverse sources including correspondence, the libraries Anne had access to, the propaganda for and against the Beaujeus, and poetry of the time. Clearly, Anne was an effective user of communication methods of the time.

According to David-Chapy, Anne always presented herself as speaking on behalf of the king and being completely devoted to him, and she limited access to the young monarch which angered many other royals. The author presents the rebellion of the princes as both a military war and a war of words. A coalition of the nobility of the robe supported Anne and the monarch against the rebellion of the princes of the blood. The author demonstrates that Anne used diplomatic networks throughout Europe; some newly established by Anne, but others put in place by her father. Charles VIII ultimately let the rebellious princes back into his court, and as a result, Anne and Pierre lost some of their influence over the young king.

In addition to the French monarchy, Anne strengthened the House of Bourbon which she was part of through her marriage. She established an important regional center at her court in Moulins. David-Chapy details how Anne had her hand in arranging marriages of numerous royal couples including marrying her daughter Suzanne to her cousin Charles de Bourbon-Montpensier to increase the power of the Bourbons. David-Chapy asserts that Pierre had wanted his daughter to marry a prince of the blood, but Anne got her way. Anne knew the value of a good education for royal women, and she oversaw the education of young princesses at the French court, and she continued the practice when she retired to Moulins.

The monograph would have benefitted from further examination of Anne de France's marriage which appeared to have been a very successful political partnership, but was her marriage successful in other areas? David-Chapy uses Anne's relationships with other women, including her daughter Suzanne, as evidence of the French princess's broad influence. Anne left detailed instructions for her daughter to help her follow in her mother's footsteps writing »Enseignements à sa fille« as a guidebook to help Suzanne continue the family's leadership of the House of Bourbon. What else is known about this important relationship between mother and daughter?

David-Chapy has deep knowledge and understanding of Anne de France, and she has published extensively on the French princess. »Anne de France. Gouverner au féminin à la Renaissance« illuminates her importance for the development of the monarchy,



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the female regent, and European diplomacy. David-Chapy offers a fresh portrait of a pivotal Renaissance woman.

Frühe Neuzeit – Revolution –
Empire (1500–1815)

DOI:

[10.11588/frrec.2023.3.99897](https://doi.org/10.11588/frrec.2023.3.99897)

Seite | page 3



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