
Reviewed by: Charles-Louis Morand Métivier
The University of Vermont

Philippe de Mézières has of late been at the center of French medieval research. An international colloquium in Cyprus in 2009 led to proceedings that offered a large array of the most recent scholarship on the subject; the Songe du vieil pèlerin, one of Mézières’s most famous works, as well as the Epistre lamentable et consolatoire, were finally made available in modern editions, with strong critical apparatus and analyses. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Joël Blanchard regroup the proceedings of the international colloquium held in Le Mans (26–27 May 2017) and have gathered papers that address the multifaceted personality of Mézières, a tireless traveler, whose sense of discovery led him to unite people around a certain idea of Christian territoriality, a reflection of the context of Europe between union and rejection. The three parts of this volume—"L’Europe, un concept multiforme?" (Europe, a multiform concept?), "Aventures européennes?" (European Adventures?), and "L’Europe, fille de la croisade?" (Europe, the daughter of crusades?)—all emphasize the importance of the European paradigm, in all its forms, in the world of and around Mézières.

The first part of the volume begins with an article by Klaus Olschmaja, who was the keynote speaker at the conference. He explains how defining the idea of Europe in the times of Mézières is difficult, as he did not give clear guidance on what his word and concept meant for him, even though it was used at the period in documents and literature. But fear and anguish towards the Turks, and the necessity to chase them from the Christian lands, can lead the reader to understand how the idea of Europe was understood at the time. Anne-Hélène Miller focuses on the Songe du vieil pèlerin, in which, she argues, Mézières operates a recreation of the geographical spaces of Europe, making it a mental reproduction of memorial geographies. Kiril Petkov explains how Mézières’s geographies were difficulty conceivable as man-made entities. Instead, he argues that in Mézières works, Mézières calls for the recreation of a more extensive Christian union of people that would transcend traditional borders and frontiers, and uniting people under the single banner of God. Christine Gadrat-Ouerfelli, in the vein of Olschmaja, underlines the difficulty of defining the European space for Mézières, as well as for other writers of the period. Finally, Benoît Grévin focuses his paper on the linguistic differences in the European Middle Ages, notably the gaps in understanding and importance between Latin, the quasiofficial language of Christian Europe, and the other languages of the Continent.

The second part starts with Pierre Monnet, who proposes an analysis of the life of Charles IV of Luxembourg who, like Mézières, was a great traveler, and
whose reflections on Europe were as pertinent as Mézières's, even if they did not share the same visions on Europe. François Foranda tackles the representation of space in the Vieil pélerin, and notably the interest that Mézières had for Spain. Emile Rosenblieh investigates the role of councils in the potential creation of a European community of Christianity. Catherine Gauquier-Bougassas analysis how an eleventh-century book of maxims on universal wisdom, then translated into multiple European languages, offers the image of an open Europe, open to alterity and the world surrounding it. Sylvain Piron concludes this second part, with an article that examines cod. 6435 from scribe Opicino de Canistris, another text that brings the same sets of questions as the previous article, in which he proposes a detailed cartography of Europe represented as human bodies.

Finally, the last part of this volume opens with an article by Sylvain Buc, who examines (in the Epistre Lamentable, Philippe's discourse on crusading) the far from apparent contradiction that Mézières expresses between Christian brotherly love and the liberation of the Holy Land. Kevin Brownlee offers a parallel analysis of the crusading discourses (and of their different outcomes) of Jean Froissart and Philippe de Mézières, seen through two events: the marriage of the king of England and the daughter of the king of France, and the disaster of Nicopolis. Camille Rouxpetel examines how Mézières envisions the participation of the Greek church in his political and religious project. He considered they were partly responsible for the disaster at Nicopolis because of their weakness. Thus, since the protection of Jerusalem mostly fell in their hands, the only solution to overcome their weakness was for them to Latinize themselves, thus erasing their identity for a more global one. Antoine Calvet focuses in his paper on the Oratio Tragedica, a largely autobiographical work. An exegesis of the Passion of Christ, Mézières constructs a highly elaborate rhetorical text, which he argues echoes the Songe. His paper is followed by his and Joël Blanchard's edition and translation of the Oratio, a fantastic piece of scholarship that opens up new horizons for studies of Mézières. The final paper of the volume, by Yves Coatiy, examines different fragments of the Songe that was present in Morbihan, Brittany and examines how this document arrived there.

This volume is an incredibly important piece of scholarship, and already positions itself as a crucial work for not only Mézières specialist, but also anyone working on the idea and definition of Europe in the Middle Ages. The articles, from various background, are all excellent; Blanchard and Blumenfeld-Kosinski made a fantastic work in editing this tremendous piece of scholarship that will quickly become a staple in late-medieval studies.