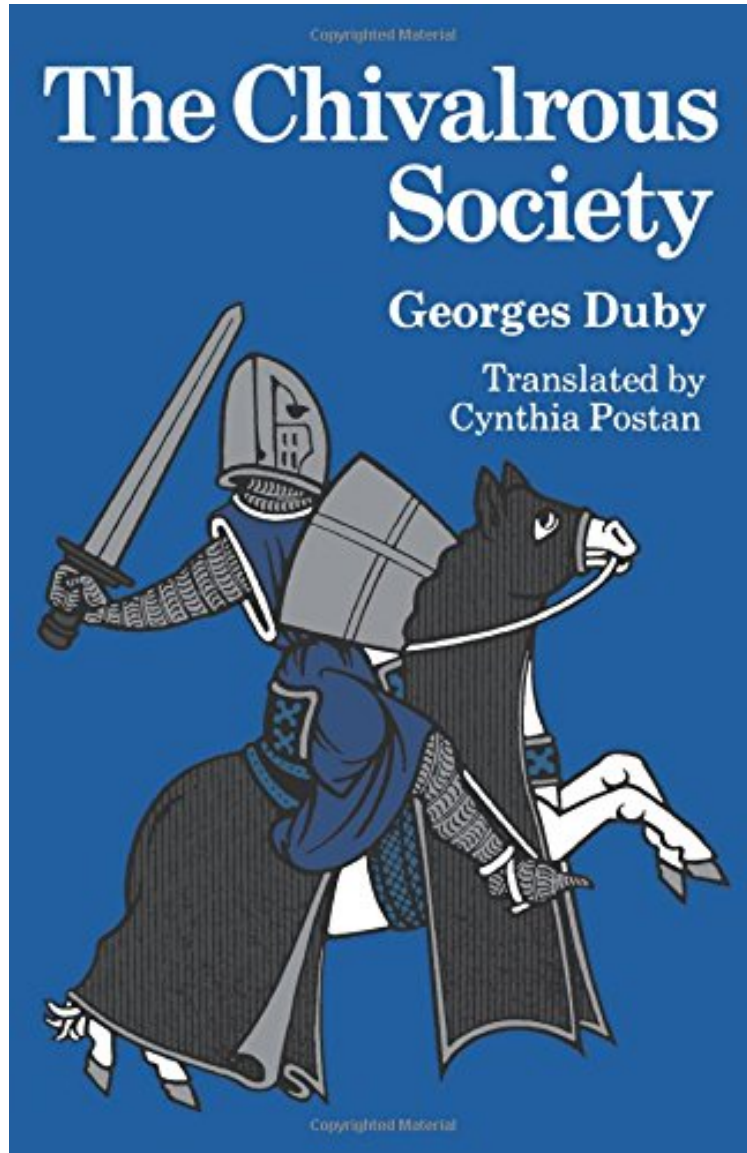


(Library ebook) The Chivalrous Society

The Chivalrous Society

Georges Duby

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Georges Duby : The Chivalrous Society before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Chivalrous Society:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A collection of scholarly articles, some with valuable insights, but others very dense and definitely not for the layman By Whitt Patrick Pond The Chivalrous Society is not a single work but a collection of articles by Georges Duby (translated by Cynthia Postan), one of the most prominent 20th century authorities on medieval history and culture. Unfortunately, many of the articles in this collection, while they do

contain some interesting insights into "the chivalrous society" of the title, are academic papers written for readers who are already intimately familiar with the subject and are definitely not for the layman. Reading them took considerable effort as they tend to meander endlessly through obscure details rather than present a coherent picture of the topics being covered. That said however, there are some articles written with sufficient clarity to offer valuable insights without making the reading a laborious grind. The chapter titles indicate the topics addressed: 1. Medieval society 2. The evolution of judicial institutions 3. Lineage, nobility and knighthood 4. The history and sociology of the medieval west 5. The origins of a system of social classification 6. The nobility in medieval France 7. Youth in aristocratic society 8. Laity and the peace of God 9. The structure of kinship and nobility 10. French genealogical literature 11. The origins of knighthood 12. The diffusion of cultural patterns in feudal society 13. The transformation of the aristocracy 14. The manor and the peasant economy 15. The history of systems of values

I did learn a number of things from some of the articles in this collection. "Youth in aristocratic society" was particularly interesting as it points out that in feudal society, the word "youth" had a very specific meaning and was used to refer to a particular demographic. Youth was defined as the period between when a young man was first knighted, which was generally around the age of 15, and the time he got married, which could occur anywhere between his late teen and mid-twenties all the way up into his thirties and forties. And "youths" as a group referred to groups of these unmarried young knights - usually second, third or fourth sons - who would band together, usually around a leader who was a first son and thereby sure to come into an inheritance someday: "Within these bands of companions pleasure was pursued. The leader squandered his money for he loved luxury, play, miming, horses and dogs; morals were far from strict. The main business, however, was fighting 'in tournaments and in war'. Three days before Lent a troop of French knights turned aside to visit Clairvaux, so Saint Bernard exhorted them to refrain from taking up arms, but 'as they were youths and great knights, they refused' and, after drinking, left bent on military exploits. Companies of youths like these formed the spearhead of feudal aggression. Always on the lookout for adventure from which 'honour' and 'reward' could be gained and aiming, if possible, 'to come back rich', they were mobile and ready for action with their emotions at a pitch of warlike frenzy. In an unstable milieu they stirred up turbulence and provided manpower for any distant expedition.... Dedicated to violence, 'youth' was the instrument of aggression and tumult in knightly society, but in consequence it was always in danger: it was aggressive and brutal in habit and it was to have its ranks decimated. On this point our information is abundant. Indeed, the most frequent references to 'youths' in the documents consulted here, are connected with their violent deaths, either accidentally when out hunting, or in the exercise of arms or, more frequently in military confrontation. Death continually claimed many victims and sometimes the entire offspring of a family could be cut down." Recommended primarily as a potential reference for people who already possess an intimate familiarity with the finer details of medieval society, though a few chapters can provide useful insights to the layman. Not recommended as a work worth reading in its entirety however due to the frequent denseness of the writing.

10 of 18 people found the following review helpful. As much fun to read as eating rocks

By Charise White

This is a collection of early works by the French Medievalist, Georges Duby. For the most part, I find Duby's work fascinating and scholarly; I own and have read most of his work. Unlike his later works where he was too arrogant or forgetful to acknowledge his sources, this work is filled with footnotes galore - and reading it also requires as many naps as footnotes to get through it (one essay had some 240 footnotes). Yes, it's that boring to read. If you want an interesting book on the Middle Ages, read William Marshall: *The Flower of Chivalry* or *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, both by Duby. This book addresses issues only two scholars in the world care about. Trees could have been saved by preventing the printing of this book! This book deserves three stars for the scholarly work contained therein, but zero stars for readability. Who cares how scholarly it is when it's so boring to read? There are many books out there that exhibit both scholarly efforts and readability.

"Georges Duby in productivity and originality stands at the forefront of active medievalists in France and in the world. The present collection contains 15 of his short articles, most but not all of which appear in English for the first time. . . Of capital interest are his several essays that explore the evolution of nobility, knighthood, the noble family, and the ideals of chivalry across the central Middle Ages. They are both a summary and the point of departure of current research into the medieval aristocracy Indispensable."

Language Notes
Text: English, French (translation)
About the Author
Georges Duby (October 7, 1919 December 3, 1996) was a French historian specializing in the social and economic history of the Middle Ages. He ranks among the most influential medieval historians of the twentieth century and was one of France's most prominent public intellectuals from the 1970s until his death in 1996.