

Royal Women in Late Fourteenth-Century England: Queen's Gold

***Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature* Travel Bursary Report 2017**

Louise Tingle

Cardiff University

My thesis compares three royal women of fourteenth-century England, the queens Anne of Bohemia and Philippa of Hainault, with the mother of a king, Joan of Kent, in order to assess the differences and sources of queenly power through patronage and especially intercession. This thesis will also concentrate on wider court culture, including patronage of learning, literature and art, as well as political relationships, confirmed through the giving of gifts. Although there is existing research on the power and authority of medieval queens, my work will be unique in consistently comparing queen consorts with another royal woman and the uncrowned mother of a king. My research also focusses on circles of patronage and indirect influence rather than authority alone, with the result of a deeper understanding of the roles that late medieval royal women played in court circles and the transmission of culture between their native lands and marital kingdoms.

I was fortunate enough to receive funds towards my research trip to the National Archives, Kew, earlier this year in order to investigate certain documents relating to the custom of queen's gold. Queen's gold was a tax with roots as early as Anglo-Saxon queens and the Domesday Book, and present in records from the life of Eleanor of Aquitaine, but which faded in the Tudor period. Queen's gold, which was worth a tenth of each fine, was claimable on a range of voluntary fines owed to the king on favours including pardons, purchases, and grants. The documents in E 5/347, E 5/349, E 5/352, E 5/354, E 5/355 and E 5/570 contain writs and receipts relating to queen's gold, showing the vast amount of writs for gold issued under Philippa of Hainault. These writs also illustrate the problems associated with queen's gold, leading to the issue of multiple writs, sometimes years after the original fine.

The study of queen's gold forms the link between intercession and the funding of the queen's household and her cultural endeavours. Queen's gold originally developed as a form of thanking the queen through monetary value for her assumed intercession with the king on behalf of the petitioner, and a recognition of the queen's unofficial influence with the king. The explicit link between intercession and queen's gold became submerged over time, but was still cited in official documents emphasising the legal right of the queen and her council to claim queen's gold from individuals and towns. To a wider extent, queen's gold also formed one of

the key funding sources for the household, demonstrating how the queen and her household participated in a complex network of transactions. The queen interceded on behalf of others, received money through queen's gold, and spent this money both on the day-to-day expenses of her household as well as on material patronage and gifts, including jewellery and books, endowing universities, and donating to religious institutions and the poor. Queen's gold was thus an important link between intercession and patronage, and the possibility of expressing indirect power through spending and gift-giving.

This research will enable not only the development of the chapter of my thesis based around petitioning and household finances, providing the link between intercession and the funding of the queen's household and her cultural endeavours, but also a paper which I am giving at the International Medieval Congress at the University of Leeds this year, entitled 'Custom, Right, or Privilege: Philippa of Hainault and Queen's Gold'. I also hope to develop this chapter and paper into a published article later in the year. To a wider extent, queen's gold is also a generally understudied topic for which there is a rich trove of research available for the length of a few years under Edward III and Philippa of Hainaut, with ramifications not only for the household and finances of Philippa, but with wider significance for the study of queenship with regard to the queen's agency and influence with the king. I am extremely grateful to the Society and wish to thank them for their assistance.