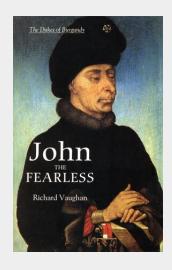
John the Fearless

The Growth of Burgundian Power

The aims and personality of the second duke are illuminated, and the development of the Burgundian state during his ducal reign (1404-1419) charted. His supposed 'infernal pact' with the English and his assassination are examined; his activities in France are studied, as he exploited French resources for the benefit of Burgundy. John the Fearless, second Duke of Burgundy, is one of the more dramatic and puzzling characters among medieval rulers. He inherited the newly created duchy from his father, and defended and developed its power ruthlessly during his ducal reign (1404-1419). In the process, he allied himself with the English party in France, with whom he was supposed to have made an 'infernal pact', and came to dominate French politics; his manoeuvres led directly to his assassination on the bridge of Montereau in the presence of Charles, dauphin of France, who may have been personally involved. Indeed, the main theme of the book is John the Fearless's activities in France, which are seen in the light of the continued need to exploit French resources for the benefit of Burgundy. John also continued to build on the administrative and financial structures created by his father, which were the mainstay of the ducal power, andhe had to deal with the restlessness of the Flemish towns, only recently made part of the Burgundian state. More than any other Burgundian ruler, it is John's personality which determines the course of events: violent and unscrupulous, one quality which John the Fearless completely lacked was prudence. He was a masterful opportunist, who acted impulsively with speed and decision, on the spur of the moment. In the end it was one of his own favoured weapons, political assassination, which was turned against him.



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