

French galleys. The book shifts from domestic affairs to a focus on international affairs with the chapter “The Global King: From the Mississippi to the Mekong,” which neatly encapsulates French international ambitions and covers French ventures in the Americas, Africa, the Ottoman Empire, and Asia. Foreigners play a role as diplomats and formidable potential international allies. Yet, the one succinct chapter on French efforts abroad suggests that Louis XIV was not quite the King of the World that he aspired to be.

The biography of Louis XIV offers a captivating account of the Sun King rich in details that only an expert in the primary and secondary materials, like Mansel, could offer. The book undoubtedly will serve as an essential guide, reference book, and fascinating read on Louis XIV’s long life for scholars and anyone interested in the world inside as well as far beyond the golden gates of Versailles.

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*The French Monarchical Commonwealth, 1356–1560.* James B. Collins.  
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In this important book, James Collins integrates a vast array of municipal, regional, and national economic, judicial, and legislative sources with better-known works of political theory such as Nicole Oresme’s vernacular translations of Aristotle’s *Ethics* and *Politics* (1370–73) to present an authoritative analysis of the development of political language in France. Covering the two centuries between King John II’s capture at Poitiers and the meeting of the Estates General of Languedoil in 1356 and Vincent Sertenas’s printing of key commonwealth texts and the meeting of the Estates General in 1560, *The French Monarchical Commonwealth* moves the historiography of political theory toward a socio-political history of political ideas that will benefit many historians.

In a compelling introduction, Collins seeks to understand the relationship between the language of political theory, the rhetoric of politics, and the “constellation of power relations” (26) in France from 1356 to 1560. He starts by explaining how the traditional assumption that the state and the republic are the same has distorted analysis of the French monarchy and obscured the primacy of commonwealth discourse in this period. Instead of offering a teleological reading that looks for the origins of seventeenth-century developments in the Middle Ages, Collins evaluates the political system and its language as they were and on their own merits. He acknowledges that “many of the basic elements of the early modern monarchical State took root in this period—permanent taxation, a standing army, an ever-expanding royal officialdom” (24) while showing how public discourse shifted from using the terms *bien public* and *chose publique* to *republique*.

Chapter 1 surveys thirteenth-century political literature, the occasional ambiguity of language, and the king's need for money to support near-continuous warfare. The latter stimulated new taxes, debased coinage, and emboldened claims to more regalian rights. The political debate over coinage led directly to the adoption of the term *bien de la chose publique* in the 1350s. Subsequent decades saw the triumph of this new commonwealth vocabulary. In chapter 2, Collins shows how commonwealth vocabulary was applied during the reign of Charles V (r. 1364–80), who patronized vernacular translations, including Oresme's Aristotle, on a scale previously unseen. The focal points of chapter 3 are Christine de Pizan, Jean Gerson, and the early decades of the fifteenth century during which Charles VI (r. 1380–1422) had bouts of madness, his wife Isabeau of Bavaria helped govern, an uprising in Paris cost several royal officials their lives, and the Duke of Burgundy had the Duke of Orleans murdered. Here Collins highlights the influence of Christine de Pizan, who "popularized the secular body politic, providing the clearest exposition of the 'chose publique' of any fifteenth-century French author" (127).

In chapter 4, Collins argues that Louis XI (r. 1461–83) assaulted the commonwealth, provoking strong reactions from clerics, nobles, and judges. The king's behavior has been read as an attack on everything related to his father and as an attempt to create a new method of governance. Whatever the motivation, he stimulated an outpouring of disapproval unprecedented in the French monarchy's history. The next chapter moves from a chronological reading of language to a positional one as Collins shifts from national politics to regional and municipal sources to answer the questions: when did transitions in vocabulary take place at more localized levels, and what relationship did the changes have to broader events? He shows that commonwealth vocabulary was not uniformly adopted across French territories or used in the same ways across municipalities. The final chapter traces the confusing shifts in language in the mid-sixteenth century. Collins discusses the first appearance of *republique* in royal documents and the expansion of the royal bureaucracy. In the conclusion he posits four main reasons for the divisions in France that proved fatal to commonwealth vocabulary as *republique* gradually replaced *chose publique*.

*The French Monarchical Commonwealth* shows that the relationship between political rhetoric and political theory was symbiotic and grounded in existing political systems, which changed from 1356 to 1560. It underscores the vitality and dynamism of language, the complexity of commonwealth discourse, and the contingency of historical developments. A companion volume, entitled *From Monarchical Commonwealth to Royal State, 1561–1651*, is forthcoming.

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