

Edward III and the Hundred Years War: The Emergence of State Building

Tina Spence

The period historians call the Hundred Years War, stretching from 1337-1453, brought about a number of changes to England and France. The period is known for military advances, the chivalric writings of Geoffroi De Charny, the founding of the Order of the Star in France and the Order of the Garter in England, and Joan of Arc. The Hundred Years War also saw the early developments of national consciousness and state-building that allowed England to enter into the early modern period with a more defined sense of 'national self' than many other European countries. This paper will examine the reign of Edward III and how he influenced state building from 1327-1377. The Hundred Years War saw changes in the way that the crown of England taxed its subjects, acquired international loans, and was involved in Parliament, allowing for the early development of state-building to occur during the reign of Edward III.

Most historians agree that nationalism was a concept not present in Europe until the French Revolution in 1789. The Oxford English Dictionary defines nationalism as: "advocacy of or support for the interest of one's own nation, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations. Also: advocacy of or support for national independence or self-determination."¹ English citizens at the start of the Hundred Years War did not have a sense of being "English" but rather identified generally with their specific communities or townships. State-building, for the purpose of this period, will be described as the steady emergence of a national identity. Due to the fighting with France, and the developing independence of Parliament the regional communities represented by the commons began to self-identify as part of the English Kingdom. Although Kingdoms were not nation states, England did begin to resemble one between 1327 and 1377, because the Parliament and monarchy began to function together as an independent political state where the people were connected by a common history.

The historiography of the Hundred Years War is vast and covers topics such as political figures, military achievements, chivalric attitudes, and political developments during the period. Numerous authors, most notably Paul Johnson and David Green, have written complex biographies of the political leaders that influenced the Hundred Years War.² Johnson examines Edward of Windsor, crowned Edward III in 1327, and how he brought victory to England during the opening years of the war. Johnson argues that Edward III was driven by a need to gain national recognition and bring about English unity after taking over the crown at just fourteen.³ By encouraging public awareness of the English nation, Edward III helped bring about a national consciousness in England.⁴ In his biography of Edward the Black Prince, David Green analyzes the outstanding life of Edward

¹ "nationalism" Oxford English Dictionary Online.

² David Green, *Edward The Black Prince: Power in Medieval Europe* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2007), 141.

³ Paul Johnson, *The Life and Times of Edward III* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 52.

⁴ National consciousness is usually defined as the identification of a group of people to the nation they live in rather than just identifying with a town or a district.

III's natural heir and the role that he played in securing success in the early decades of the Hundred Years War. Green argues that it was the younger Edward's activities in France and his role in the Good Parliament, in 1376, before his death that aided his father, Edward III, the most.⁵ According to Green, it was during this period that the concept of a "state" was emerging in the English Parliament. The relationship between King and Parliament was being shaped and strengthened, and the Black Prince aided in solidifying this relationship during the Good Parliament.⁶

Several works about the Hundred Years War broadly survey the period as a turning point in the history of England and France. Historians such as Christopher Allmand, Kenneth Fowler, and Desmond Seward have written macro studies of the changes that occurred during the Hundred Years war.⁷ A distinct similarity among these three authors is their focus on the military aspects of the war that aided in changing political, economic and social networks in England and France. Kenneth Fowler notes that "the war effected the social institutions of England and France in three particular ways: through the redistribution of wealth, the devastation of the countryside and taxation."⁸ Historians of the Hundred Years War all agree that the war brought about significant political, economic, and social changes in England.

Bjorn Weiler offers insights about the nature of medieval kingdoms and the complex politics of monarchies. The shift from Empires to individual kingdoms created the need for a new type of government. Weiler notes that "the idea of monarchical rule as the 'natural' form of government" emerged from the authority that was endowed to Christian popes.⁹ Prior to the thirteenth century England was the only kingdom that had codified law. This process made them unique in Europe creating an advantage when it came time to ruling the kingdom. Laws were not only used to run kingdoms but also to give an air of power back to the nobility who had aided in the creation of new laws. Weiler stated that taxation was not a codified practice unless the realm was engaged in war. However, it was often taxes that caused the peerage and the commons in England to call the authority of the king into question, which made declaring war a difficult political move. Politics in medieval realms was complex due to the relationship among monarchs, their advisors, and, in the case of England, the representative parliament. Weiler argues that "negotiating the balance between privilege and obligations and defining what abstract values and concepts meant in practice was rarely a smooth or peaceful process." This process is "what gave European society in the central Middle Ages its political dynamic."¹⁰ Every European society had a different way of creating stability for a dynamic group of individuals and, although it was a slow process, the definition of abstract values is what began to set realms apart in the Middle Ages.

⁵ Green, *Edward The Black Prince*, 141.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁷ Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c. 1300-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Kenneth Fowler ed. *The Hundred Years War* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1971); Desmond Seward, *The Hundred Years War: The English in France, 1337-1453* (New York: Atheneum, 1978).

⁸ Fowler, *The Hundred Years War*, 9.

⁹ Bjorn Weiler, "Politics," in *Central Middle Ages: Europe 950-1320* Daniel Power, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 96.

¹⁰ Weiler, "Politics," 120.

Medieval politics blended ancient Roman governmental policy and Christianity. Michael Oakeshott claims that the source of medieval politics was Christendom specifically the divine right to rule founded by St. Peter. Kings slowly began to emerge after the fall of the Roman Empire from the old lordships. Oakeshott argues that "by the end of the thirteenth century Western Europe was fast becoming a collection of emergent independent states."¹¹ It was in the independent state of England that Edward III began to develop an early national state.

England was engaged in a form of proto-state-building in the reign of Edward III. It is important to note that Edward III and his reign were greatly influenced by his grandfather, and father before him. England in the thirteenth century was in a state of constant flux and because of the transgression of his predecessors, Edward III took control of an unpredictable country. Ralph Griffiths notes that "the protracted experience of war had a significant impact, not just on political structures but also on perceptions. Many – perhaps most – of the familiar ingredients of national identities were already present in the 1280s."¹² During the reigns of Edward I and Edward II, England saw political changes and war that gradually brought the country together in a more national sense than under previous kings. While the Magna Carta (1215; see Appendix B) had altered laws, the notion of statutes and what they were able to do was still relatively undefined. Edward I began to change this when, according to Michael Prestwich, he issued many statutes in direct relation to the state of the realm and the church in particular.¹³ War with France in 1294 changed Edward I's role when taxes were implemented on the English people in order to pay for the war he commenced. As noted earlier, taxation was not a common practice except during wartime, and caused tension between the King and his subjects. Prestwich states that "the financial system lost a great deal of its earlier flexibility, and although the crown amassed a considerable reserve of cash in 1294, it soon found that expenditure was fast exceeding income."¹⁴ The church was a problem for Edward I. They refused the taxation that he placed on clergy members and as a result he lost a considerable amount of favour with the people of England. The overextended expenditures of the crown ran high debts creating upset in the population and decreased support of the war. Edward I both alienated subjects and created debt that was not answered for until his son, Edward II took the throne.

Michael Prestwich argues that "Edward II was one of the most unsuccessful kings ever to rule England. The domestic history of the reign is one of successive political failures punctuated by acts of horrific violence."¹⁵ Edward II's ineffective rule was mirrored in his neglect and misuse of the sponsorship from mainland realms that his father had built up before him.¹⁶ The English were more united under his rule in their dislike of the way they

¹¹ Michael Oakeshott, *Michael Oakeshott Selected Writings, Volume 2: Lectures in the History of Political Thought* (Bedfordshire: Andrews UK, 2006), 329.

¹² Ralph Griffiths, *Short Oxford History of The British Isles: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 170.

¹³ Michael Prestwich, *The Three Edwards: War and State in England 1272-1377* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1980), 20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁶ Edward's 1311 Ordinances, after the failed campaign in Scotland, are often seen to be tied to the reign of Edward I. Though central to Edward II's reforms, little is known about the purpose of these ordinances.

were treated and the King's lack of governing ability. The Parliament was under constant threat in the last years of Edward II's reign and even after he was summoned to Parliament in 1326 he refused. In response, the archbishop, clergy and the English deposed him.¹⁷ Edward II left a legacy of incompetence and political instability for his young son to contend with after his awkward deposition and subsequent murder. Edward III took several long years to bring the house Plantaganet (see Appendix A) out of the political darkness that his father had created and effectively take power away from Isabella, his queen mother.

Edward III came onto the throne at such a young age that establishing his independence from his Queen mother may have been a driving force to act differently from his predecessors. He had to solve the problems that he had inherited from his father and reconcile his subjects with the difficult way in which he came to power. Paul Johnson argues "one salient principle runs through his reign: the quest for national reconciliation and unity, the attempt to realise the medieval image of the community as an organism, a body, each of whose parts worked in conjunction with the others in its predestined role."¹⁸ Edward III created and defined his government and rule based on war with France that started in 1337. He was aware that war with France would resume and, "recent research shows that Edward recruited to his Chancery a group of highly-trained, experienced and multi-lingual diplomats, and that they were hard at work throughout the 1330s, in intensive correspondence with the various courts involved."¹⁹ Apparently, Edward had learned from the mistakes of his predecessors and included parliament in all the decisions that he made in relation to war and funding. Medieval historian Maurice Keen argued that Parliament was not pleased with the way that men and funds were raised for the war with France before Edward III.²⁰ If he was to have a successful campaign against the French, Edward III realized that he needed to make changes to wartime procedures to appease the Parliament.

Edward III ascended to the throne in a time of political unrest between England and France and despite peace in 1326. This peace was less than ideal due to the financial clauses that it entailed and lasted only eleven years.²¹ Jonathan Sumption states that "after three decades in which the ambiguous status of the duchy of Aquitaine had poisoned relations between England and France, Philip VI of France decreed the confiscation of the duchy in 1337 and Edward III declared war."²² As the tensions between England and

Historian Jeffery Hamilton notes, "the primary thrust of the reforms was aimed at the king and his household, but there was also a noteworthy emphasis on the role of parliament, which from now on was to oversee a variety of government appointments and functions." The only version of the Ordinance still in existence gives little more evidence about the true purpose of the document because a large portion of the Ordinance is lost. See Jeffery Hamilton, *Plantagenets: History of a Dynasty*, (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2010), 112; see also Michael Prestwich, "A New Version of the Ordinances of 1311," *Historical Research* 57, no. 136, (Nov. 1984), 189.

¹⁷ Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, 98.

¹⁸ Paul Johnson, *The Life and Times of Edward III* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 52.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁰ Maurice Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1975), 86.

²¹ Malcolm Vale, *The Origins of the Hundred Years War: The Angevin Legacy 1250-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 248.

²² Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War: Divided Houses* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) xv.

France increased, Edward III was careful to maintain parliament's support. As Johnson explains:

conscious that he was embarking on a hazardous venture, aware that administrative reforms to sustain it might prove unpopular, and above all anxious that this plan should receive the stamp of national approval, Edward took great pains to solicit and obtain the ratification by Parliament of every step which carried him closer to war.²³

Edward's awareness of the politically necessary steps needed to justify a war allowed him to develop a strong relationship with his government before he put it to the test. As Johnson notes, "indeed, it can be argued that no English government before – and scarcely since – has entered war by a fuller process of constitutional assent."²⁴

Although it took Edward several years to understand how to rule effectively, what he did learn in the early years of his reign allowed him to govern England during the war with France more effectively than his father did. Edward III was aware that the peace negotiated in 1326 would not last and in the 1330s he began to add taxes to the wool industry to increase revenue and began to take out loans from foreign countries.²⁵ This steady accumulation of wealth was not just to pay for the war in the foreseeable future but to also make sure that Edward didn't accumulate the bad debt and disfavour that Edward II had gained in his rule. According to Richard Kaeuper the embargo placed on wool in 1336 would ensure that the Continent would pay top dollar for English wool which in turn would allow Edward III to raise funds for the inevitable continuation of war with France.²⁶ The crown used wool to raise money but it was not the only means that was available for acquiring war funds. Raising funds through commercial products was, however, not a problem for Parliament and did not cause stress between nobility and the king.

Taxation was reliable for wartime funds, and Edward III employed new taxes after funds began to diminish in the early 1340s. Christopher Allmand states that the King employed two basic types of taxation: "direct taxes were those raised on an assessment of sources of wealth both fixed and moveable," and "a hearth tax, which townspeople paid at a higher rate than their country neighbours, and the rich more than the poor."²⁷ Although taxation was not new to individuals living in England, Edward III attempted to set up new ways of acquiring tax monies and ways of organizing the funds that were acquired. These changes were necessary because of the problems that taxation had caused between Parliament and the king during the reign of Edward I. As Allmand notes, "new taxes would require new methods of organisation to make the most of what was coming to be increasingly regarded as public money, or 'la pecune publique.'"²⁸ Edward III enacted specific Ordinances to make the government more efficient in the collection of taxes. In

²³ Johnson, *The Life and Times of Edward III*, 63.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁶ Richard Kaeuper, *War, Justice, and Public Order: England and France in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 39.

²⁷ Allmand, *The Hundred Years War*, 107.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

1338 the Walton Ordinances were implemented to make government more effective and efficient in wartimes. Historian Mark Ormrod argues that the Ordinances were not practical because "they called for ruthless economies at home but set no limits on the kings' expenditure abroad."²⁹ Despite the Ordinances' ineffective use in England the initiative on the Kings part to attempt to regulate his kingdom as a united entity shows he was thinking of the "national good". The Walton Ordinance incorporated detailed information about the "'value for monies', and on the use of the audit to control expenditures in both war and diplomacy, as the appointment of a special treasurer for war was intended to show."³⁰ The use of a war treasurer allowed the government to have a better understanding of the monies destination; in the best circumstances this worked, but often positions of power are open to abuse. However, the creation of special branches of the government allowed for the consolidation of power in Edward III and as a result his Parliament became more powerful and self-recognized.

Parliamentary changes, including establishing a war treasurer,, helped Edward III solidify his rule. Parliament was the best way for Edward to gain support for continuing war with France in 1337, and he was well aware of this. The King relied first and foremost on officials for recognition of his decrees, and he needed the support of Parliament and everyone involved in order to stay in power and in favour. Kenneth Fowler argues:

the elaborate machinery, and tedious procedures, by which all the English kings, from Edward III on, sought to justify the war; the insistence on the claim to homage and service; the repudiation of homage to the Valois; all the 'legal' debate which preceded and accompanied the war, was associated with the king's right to the feudal allegiance of both English and 'foreign' allies."³¹

It was through Parliament that Edward III achieved better control over the way that war was perceived and managed at home. Despite the non-permanence of Parliament and the rather un-defined role that it was to play Edward consulted the body often to appease it. Johnson notes that it was "clear that Parliament, including the Commons, had ceased to be an optional element in the way the country was run, and during Edward's reign practice came steadily closer to procedures laid down in the *Modus*."³² The *Modus Tenendi Parliamentum* had many similarities with the Good Parliament that occurred 50 years later and has been viewed more as an ideal than an actual way of running government. The author of the *Modus* introduces the book by stating:

here is described the mode of how Parliament of the King of England and his Englishmen used to be holden in the time of King Edward, son of King Etheldred; which mode indeed was recited by the more select men of the kingdom before William Duke of

²⁹ Mark Ormrod, *Edward III* (Cornwall: TJ International Ltd., 2011), 200.

³⁰ Allmand, *The Hundred Years War*, 109.

³¹ Fowler, *Hundred Years War*, 129.

³² Johnson, *Life and Times*, 151. The *Modus Tenendi Parliamentum* (The Way Parliament Should be Held) was written in 1320 by an experienced Parliamentary official. It shows the King as part of the Parliamentary body, not as a sovereign.

Normandy, both Conqueror and King of England, the Conqueror himself commanded it, and by him approved, and used in his own times and also in the times of his successors Kings of England.³³

As Clementine Oliver notes, "yet as the *Modus* contains only an idealized description of parliamentary procedure, and not an accurate one, it remains difficult to determine why it was written...or whether it was actually intended for use in pursuit of parliamentary reform."³⁴ Although the *Modus* was only an idealized way for parliament to operate the author explained that the guidelines in the book were initially created by William the Conqueror and it was by his authority that they should be recognized. Edward III looked to the advice of his parliament to effectively enact the *Modus* to aid in developing a sustainable state in the early decades of the Hundred Years War.

Edward III knew he was going to be going back to war with France in the early years of his reign, so he began to borrow money from foreign lenders soon after he was crowned. In the early 1330s, before war was declared, Edward was able to borrow up to £300,000 between "raising cash on the home and international money-markets."³⁵ This was far more than any other sovereign had been able to collect in the past but it still proved to be insufficient once the war actually started. After only one year of war with France, "in July 1338 the Great Crown of Edward III was shipped across the channel along with other royal jewels, to serve as security for the war loans needed to keep the king's continental campaign alive."³⁶ The mass loans that Edward took out from foreign powers and aristocrats allowed him to flood the English markets with silver in order to keep the prices for domestic goods afloat. Edward III caused the royal credit system that had been in place, and functioning efficiently, since the Angevin monarchy to collapse. Kaueper argues that "although records for the credit transactions of the early years of Edward III, before the launching of the Hundred Years War, are incomplete, those surviving indicate that Bardi lent more to the King than all other crown creditors combined."³⁷ The heavy reliance on continental loans indicates that Edward III knew that the money he was raising domestically through taxes and wool trade would not be enough. The ability to foresee the need for extra income, despite its questionable dispersion, speaks to the way in which Edward was prepared for a costly war and the way that he had learned from the financial mistakes of his father and grandfather. As the war progressed it became more expensive to pay for the men and the supplies that were being sent and in turn, government also became more expensive taking from the already crippled treasury.³⁸ Unlike kings of the past, though, Edward III was able to pull his country out of the extreme debt that he had created and "during the middle years of his reign, Edward was able to wage war – and enjoy peace when it came – against a background of comparative political and financial stability."³⁹

³³ Thomas Duffus Hardy, ed., *Modus tenendi parliamentum: an ancient treatise on the mode of holding the Parliament in England* (London: George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1846), 2.

³⁴ Clementine Oliver, *Parliamentary and Political Pamphleteering in Fourteenth-Century England* (New York: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 11.

³⁵ Johnson, *The Life and Times of Edward III*, 61.

³⁶ Kaueper, *War, Justice, and Public Order*, 42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

³⁸ Allmad, *The Hundred Years War*, 102.

³⁹ Johnson, *Life and Times*, 73.

Edward learned much about what he could afford in war in his later reign and as a result he consolidated a great deal of power through his government and aided in bringing together the separate parts of government collectively in order to bring about political stability in England.

In 1348, what later became known as the Black Death came to England by way of ships returning from trade in Sicily. As Barbara Tuchman notes, "in a given area the plague accomplished its kill within four to six months and then faded, except in the larger cities, where, rooting into the close-quartered population, it abated during the winter, only to reappear in the spring and rage for another six months."⁴⁰ It was within this atmosphere that Edward III's government drafted and implemented the Ordinance of Laborers in 1349. Simply explained the Ordinance was "a vain attempt by the king to freeze wages paid to laborers at their pre-plague levels, the ordinance is indicative of the labor shortage caused by the Black Death."⁴¹ The Ordinance was the government's first cohesive attempt to combat the serious loss of manpower that had occurred in the wake of the Plague. The Ordinance clearly outlined the types of labour, and in turn the products of that labour, to be regulated. The Ordinance was aimed to keep people working but to not break the crown treasury, or cause more inflation in the country. This proved increasingly difficult because the number of able-bodied workers that were left cause a shortage in supply with an increased demand. Edward III's government saw the Ordinance as the best way to keep people working and to protect the common interest of the realm. The Ordinance, as an act of Parliament and signed by the King, shows how the system was starting to be changed from within to not simply serve the sovereign but all those involved in the process.

The Ordinance of Laborers was followed by the Statute of Laborers in 1351. The Statute was created to try and further impose the Ordinance on the population that was rejecting it. The Statute reflected the relationship between the nobility and the common people and the attitudes that were present during the difficult financial times. While the Statute seemed to simply reiterate the decrees set out in the earlier Ordinance, it also outlined punishable actions. In specific regard to servants for nobility the Statute asserted:

whereas late against the malice of servants, which were idle, and not willing to serve after the pestilence, without taking excessive wages, it was ordained by our lord the king, and by the assent of the prelates, nobles, and other of his council, that such manner of servants, as well men as women, should be bound to serve, receiving salary and wages, accustomed in places where they ought to serve in the twentieth year of the reign of the king that now is, or five or six years before; and that the same servants refusing to serve in such manner should be punished by imprisonment of their bodies, as in the said statute is more plainly contained.⁴²

⁴⁰ Barbara W, Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 93.

⁴¹ Ordinance of Laborers, 1349," Medieval Sourcebook, in White, Albert Beebe and Wallace Notestein, eds. *Source Problems in English History* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1915) <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/seth/ordinance-labourers.asp>.

⁴² "Statue of Laborers, 1351," Medieval Sourcebook, in White, Albert Beebe and Wallace

While clearly being oppressive to commoners that could not live on the pre-Black Death wages in the inflated economy, the Statute also showed how the way that the English Parliament was united in regard to the way the country should deal with insubordination to the King's rule. There also developed a more defined process of creating and enforcing Statutes. A change can clearly be seen in the way that Parliament viewed the importance of Statutes as a way of imposing the united will of the upper class on the lower. A similarly important statute from Edward III was the "Statute of Pleading" which stated that laws of the realm should not be in French, a language that few but educated men could read. The Statute stated, "understanding of that which is said for them or against them by their Serjeants and other Pleaders; and that reasonably the said Laws and Customs [the rather shall be perceived] and known, and better understood in the Tongue used in the said Realm."⁴³ The statute allowed for a recognised English language to be used in England so that everyone could understand laws. A single language in the entire realm was a major step towards England becoming recognisably independent from other kingdoms. This clarity is drastically different from the way that Statutes were seen during the reign of Edward I and Edward II when the use and purpose of Statutes were undefined.

In 1374 the war had gone badly for both England and France and a special congress was held in Bruges to determine peace terms. However, the delegations were colored by the war that had brought so much turmoil to the countries, and the congress lasted for 3 years before anything was resolved. In the early 1370s in France chronicler Jean Froissart documented some of the worst, most un-chivalric deeds in his recording of the war which he noted to be a cause for the Bruges congress. Edward the Black Prince was the culprit in the ordeal and peasants were massacred after an incident with English miners.⁴⁴ The results of this massacre were felt in the Congress of Bruges and this may have been part of the reason that the terms that were presented to the English were their complete removal from Normandy and Brittany meaning a complete defeat for Edward III in Northern France. This blow in the early stages of the negotiations can clearly be seen in what would later be named "the Good Parliament" of 1376.

The Good Parliament was the pivotal point in English state building history. As David Green notes, "it was in the Good Parliament of 1376 that the Commons first launched a major programme of opposition to the Crown and its ministers."⁴⁵ The central grievance of the Good Parliament went back to the extreme taxation that Edward III had implemented in order to pay for the war with France. After negotiations for peace had left England in a relatively humiliated state the Commons felt that it was the fault of the Crown and the "state" felt the need to make their position known. Parliament had steadily been gaining authority and, Green argues, that the Good Parliament is the culmination of that

Notestein, eds. *Source Problems in English History* (New York: Harper and Brother Publishers, 1915)
<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/seth/statute-labourers.asp>.

⁴³ "Statute of Pleading, 1362", <http://www.languageandlaw.org/TEXTS/STATS/PLEADING.HTM>.

⁴⁴ "Jean Froissart: On the Hundred Years War (1337-1453)," From G. C. Macaulay, ed., *The Chronicles of Froissart*, Lord Berners, trans. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1904), 104-105; 128-131; 201.

⁴⁵ Green, *Black Prince*, 141.

power.⁴⁶ The power that Parliament was gaining was a direct result of the war with France and the authority that was granted to them by the crown in order to keep the war funded and employed. Edward III was losing his health and as a result a partial power vacuum was created and it was Parliament and the Commons that stepped in to take the role of government. Green argues:

the growing influence of parliament, particularly the Commons, the shifting complexion of aristocratic society, and the greater authority of statute law, all of which took place in an uncertain political climate, resulted in a new balance of power being established in medieval England.⁴⁷

Although the Commons had become the "official opposition" to the crown in Parliament it was by no means powerful enough to overthrow the government nor did it attempt to step beyond its place in the government. The role of the Commons became a symbol of the new state that was emerging and the changing political structure of England in the latter half of the fourteenth-century. "The decline in trade, the heavy war taxation, and failure and disgrace to the English arms and policy," George Trevelyan argues, were the conditions started in the reign of Edward III that were prevalent throughout the Hundred Years War. They caused the English government to rethink its role in the shaping of the state. Edward III pushed his government to be more active in the everyday running of the country and made Parliament and future kings acutely aware of their impact on the creation of a cohesive country with citizens that identified with a nation, rather than a village or town.

The start of the Hundred Years War saw changes to operation of politics by the upper class and also some push-back from the lower classes. This push back was directly related to the Ordinance and Statute of Laborers put in place after the Black Death. Although a mass peasant revolt did not occur until 1381 in the reign of Edward III successor Richard II. As Samuel Cohn argues, "until the Black Death, no pan-European pattern in the timing of revolts can be detected."⁴⁸ In England, there was no full-scale revolt, but the active push-back against the King's forced wage freezing caused pockets of riots. With a serious decline in the number of people living in towns the King and his Parliament had a problem of limited tax payers. This sparked the "ordinance, then the Statute of Labourers (1351) to halt these irresistible forces,"⁴⁹ but enforcing the laws was incredibly difficult. The open defiance of peasants to abide by the law was an early state of national consciousness being formed and as a result the government needed to extend and tighten its grip. The government tried to push its authority out to bring more people together into a cohesive nation, and as a result they were more directly involved in actual lives of the people. This government involvement in not just the role of law and war making but also active involvement in the general public was the beginning of state building

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁴⁸ Samuel Kline Cohn, "Popular Insurrection and the Black Death: A Comparative View," *Past and Present* 2 (2007): 191.

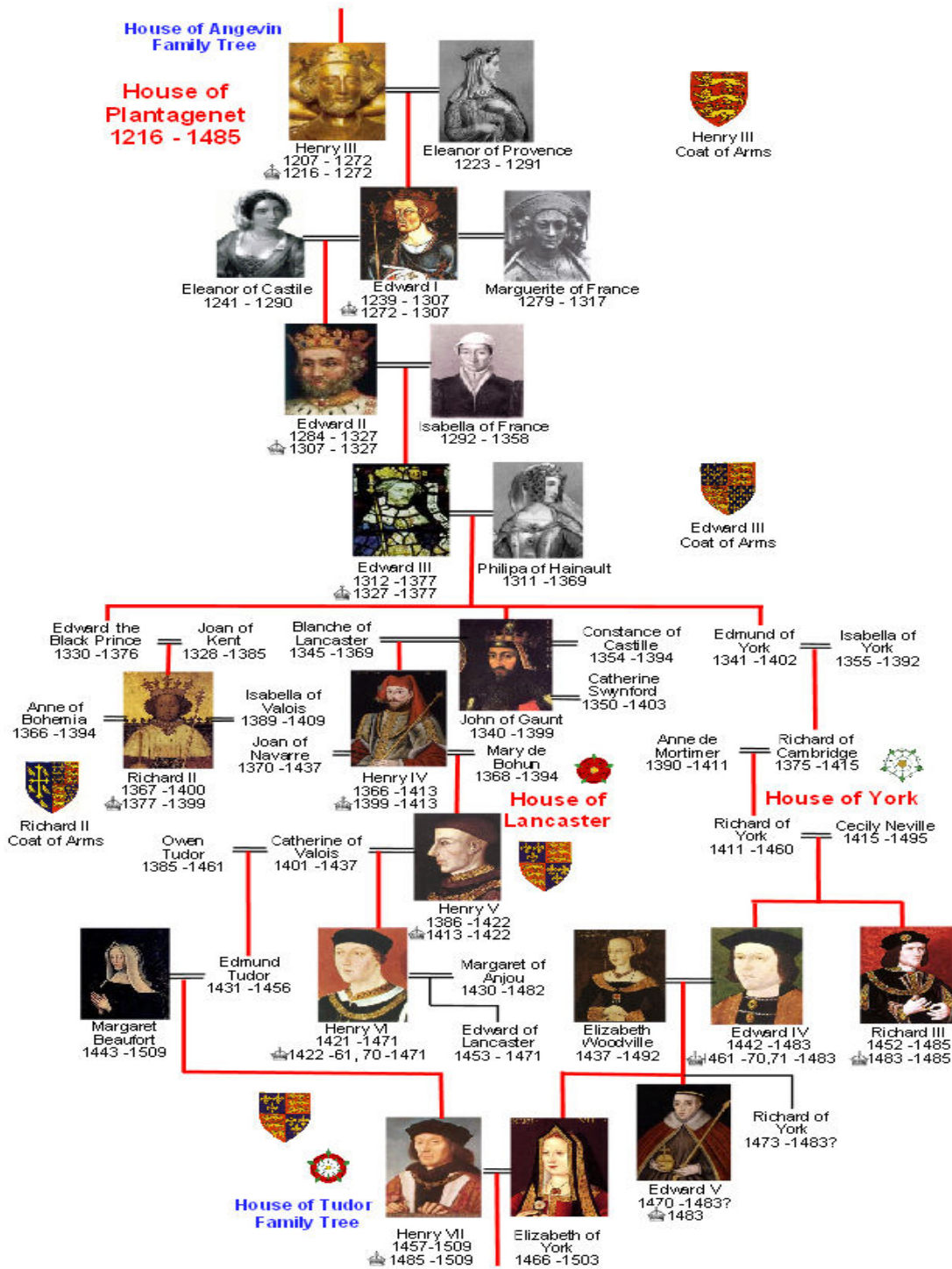
⁴⁹ Johnson, *Life and Times*, 155.

in England. Parliament and the King were becoming hyper aware of what they needed to do in order to make the country run effectively in war time and with the implementation of the Laborer statute, the lower classes became an important part of England functioning.

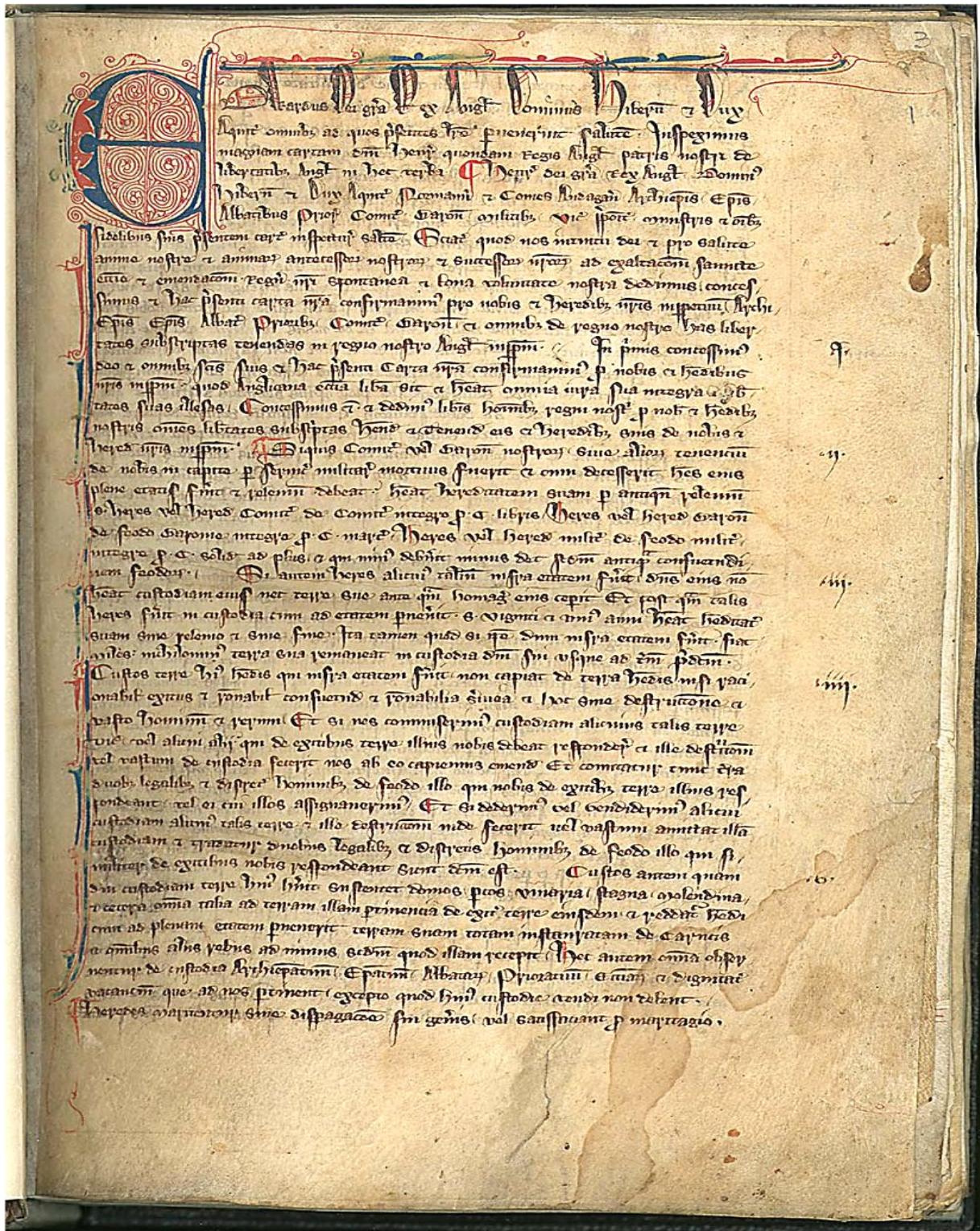
The Hundred Years War was a time of great upheaval and confusion for the people of England. As chronicler Jean Froissart noted the war was a time of great chivalric deeds and both governmental success and defeat.⁵⁰ The government of Edward III changed extensively, especially in the way that it needed to function in order to fight an exhaustive war with France. Taxation, funding, and the organization of Parliament all transformed during the first forty years of fighting and would last into the next sixty years. The self-awareness of the Commons and their unique role in the Parliament show a significant shift towards state-building, and this was a direct result of the reign of Edward III. National consciousness and state-building began to occur in England simultaneously in the fourteenth century and continued throughout the war. England emerged into the modern era with a more clearly-defined sense of what it meant to be a nation under the rule of not a sovereign King, but a collective government with national interests at its core.

⁵⁰"Jean Froissart: On the Hundred Years War," 104-105.

Appendix A



Appendix B



MS 1390
Magna Carta as regranted by Edward I in 1297. England, ca. 1299

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