Conflicting Perceptions: Chivalry in 12th Century Historiography

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CONFLICTING PERCEPTIONS:
CHIVALRY IN 12TH CENTURY HISTORIOGRAPHY

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Historians have found the task of defining medieval chivalry to be an elusive task. Chivalry was at the intersection of warrior culture, aristocratic values and religious ideals. By analyzing the texts of contemporary historians, William of Malmesbury, Orderic Vitalis and Henry of Huntingdon. Histories are a genre of resources that have not previously been systematically examined. I have found that contemporary historians were just as conflicted over these factors as modern historians. Comparing and contrasting twelfth century histories opens a new area of serious research into chivalric studies, and proves that chivalry was not a commonly-agreed upon set of standards, but had more to do with reconciling military purpose, aristocratic expectations and religious values. Twelfth-century commentators all ascribed different precedence to these factors and the examination of their connections between these values brings the nature of chivalry as a system of interactions between social elements into the open.