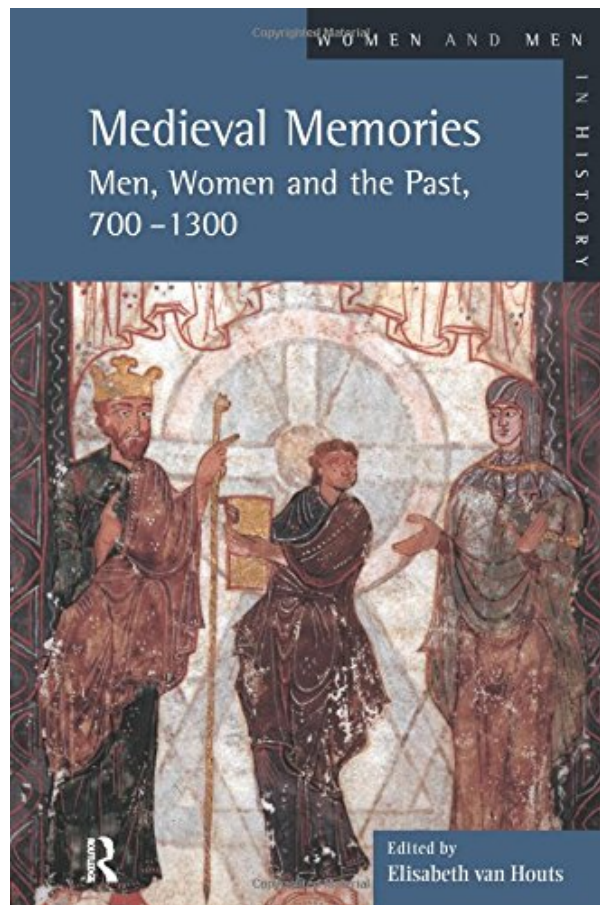


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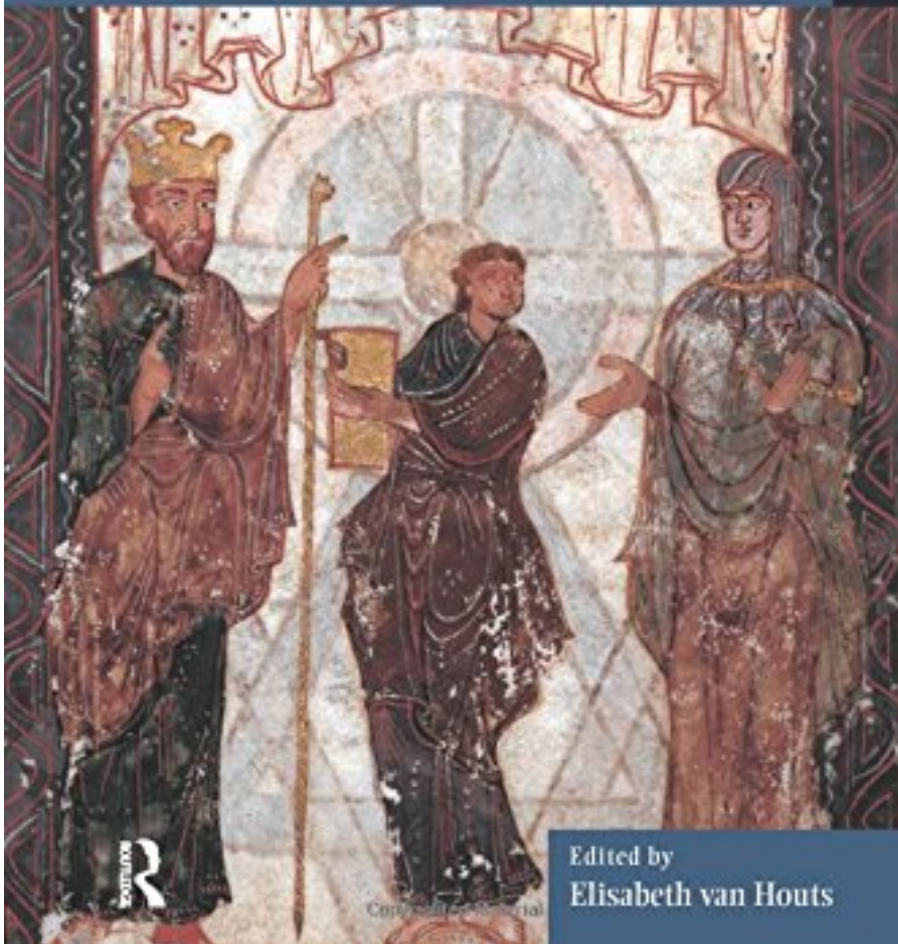
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# Medieval Memories

Men, Women and the Past,  
700 – 1300



Edited by  
Elisabeth van Houts

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From the Back Cover

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This book is a fascinating and original study of the memories of medieval people. In the middle ages, as now, men and women collected stories about the past and handed them down to posterity.

This inherited bank of experience has traditionally been transposed into the accepted narrative of recorded history. It is therefore essential to ask who, exactly, was responsible for the preservation of knowledge about the past? How did people preserve their recollections and pass them on to the next generation? Did they write them down or did they hand them on orally?

Many memories centre on the aristocratic family and lineage while others are focused on institutions such as monasteries or nunneries. The family and monastic contexts clearly illustrate that remembrance of the past was a task for both men and women and that each sex had a specific, gendered role. Memory also involves selection of what should and should not be remembered and its corollary, amnesia, therefore requires scrutiny.

Anchored in the present, memory casts a shadow on the future and thus prophecies form an important component of the cult of remembrance. For the first time, in Medieval Memories tombstones, medieval encyclopaedias and legal testimonies figure alongside perceptions of the medieval past. The role of gender is at the cutting edge of this exciting new research into the medieval period.

This volume helps us to recover the medieval past by understanding how the people who lived then

understood and recorded their experience.

Elisabeth Van Houts is Lecturer in Medieval History at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, UK.

#### About the Author

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Who, exactly, was responsible for the preservation of knowledge about the past? How did people preserve their recollections and pass them on to the next generation? Did they write them down or did they hand them on orally? The book is concerned with the memories of medieval people. In the Middle Ages, as now, men and women collected stories about the past and handed them down to posterity. Many memories centre in the aristocratic family or lineage while others are focussed on institutions such as monasteries or nunneries. The family and monastic contexts clearly illustrate that remembrance of the past was a task for men and women and that each sex had a specific gendered role. Memory also involves selection of what should and should not be remembered and its corollary, amnesia, therefore, is discussed. Anchored in the present, memory casts a shadow on the future and thus prophecies form an important component of the cult of remembrance. For the first time in *Medieval Memories*, tombstones, medieval encyclopaedias and legal testimonies figure alongside moral guidebooks, miracle stories and chronicles as material for the gendered perceptions of the medieval past.

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