

Gender Inclusivity in Medieval France: Evidence of Liturgical Texts (Prières du Prône)

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The present paper is one of a series of studies of inclusive language and images of God in medieval liturgical texts. Others include the following:

Inclusive language in the liturgy: historical perspectives
Inclusive language in the medieval liturgy: documentation
Feminization of medieval liturgical texts through emendation: documentation
Orate, fratres et sorores in the medieval mass liturgy: Documentation
“Ilk man or woman”: Gender balanced language in medieval liturgical prayer and preaching: Documentation
Pèlerins et pèlerines: Doubling of gendered nouns in medieval general intercessions. Documentation
Ceux et celles: Doubling of gendered pronouns in medieval general intercessions. Documentation
Ways in which God is addressed in ancient Latin liturgical prayers
The divine name “Father” in liturgical prayers

Introduction

The use of gender inclusive language to refer to inhabitants of medieval Douai has recently been documented by Kittell and Queller:

Ellen F Kittell and Kurt Queller, “‘Whether man or woman’: Gender Inclusivity in the Town Ordinances of Medieval Douai,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 30 (2000) 63-100.

Such language was used especially with respect to women and men who practiced various occupations and trades. Thus the town ordinances of Douai used six “generic dyads” that included gender balanced nouns such as *hom/feme* as well as gendered pronouns that were doubled, e.g., *cascun/cascune*. Of particular note were 34 “occupational and situational dyads” such as *bouchiers/bouchiere* (butcher) and *taneres/taneresse* (tanner). Additionally, six occupations were identified using solely feminine terms (e.g., *fileresse* - spinner) and eight were identified using solely masculine terms (e.g., *porteres* - carrier). Finally, the town ordinances included eight “singleton masculine forms” referring to both males and females, e.g., *teliers* - weaver.

The town ordinances studied by Kittell and Queller spanned the period 1236-1405; the earlier documents (ca 1250) used gender inclusive language to a much greater extent than did those from the end of this period. Additional studies of wills from Douai from the same period also showed a decrease in gender inclusive language with time (pp 76-77).

Kittel and Queller considered a number of reasons why this decrease in usage might have taken place. They concluded that “French cultural influence” (p 82) or “French cultural imperialism” (p 84) was mainly responsible. This included legal, bureaucratic, educational, literary and religious factors that discouraged the use of gender inclusive language; these influences were stronger in Douai ca 1400 than they had been ca 1250. These results would seem to imply that gender inclusive language would be infrequent or non-existent in Paris, the center and focus of French culture.

Here I present a study of the use of gender inclusive language in medieval France, using two other types of text. These are vernacular prayers used in Sunday worship: the general intercessions or prières du prône, plus excommunications associated with them. These too varied in the extent of gender inclusive language with time and with geographic location. However, the variations are different from those found or implied by the study of Kittell and Queller.

General Intercessions and Excommunications

The texts in question were used in the Sunday liturgy of the medieval church, and are of two kinds – though closely related in use. Both are in the vernacular rather than in Latin.

One is the general intercessions (prières du prône). These consist of a series of intentions for the needs of the church and society and take the form of repeated intentions that begin “pray

for ..” or “we pray for ..” The intentions begin by naming peace, the church, the clergy, the nation, the king, queen and nobility, fair weather and good crops. They continue with intentions for other living persons of significance both in the local civic community and in the local church community (parish, hospital). Finally, there usually are a few or many intentions for deceased persons. The intentions are spoken by the priest.

As a litanic form of prayer, each intention (or a series of related intentions) leads to a response by the people, often the Pater noster and/or Ave Maria. Inasmuch as these texts are addressed to God, while the priest’s part is addressed to the people, it is the people who are actually doing the praying.

Though the general intercessions follow a general common pattern, each text is distinct, being composed locally and varying in detail with changes in church, society and the concerns of the local priest. Gender inclusive language, when it occurs, usually appears mostly in the intentions for living persons of local significance and those for deceased persons.

The intercessions are sometimes preceded or followed (or both) by other vernacular prayers and announcements. Among these might be warnings about kinds of behavior that could lead to excommunication (if people did not change their ways). Two of the sources studied here include such “excommunications”; they are of interest inasmuch as they use gender inclusive language.

Sources and Texts

The source of most of the texts under study is Molin 1967b.

Jean-Baptiste Molin, “L’Oratio communis fidelium au moyen âge en occident du Xe au XVe siècle,” in *Miscellanea Liturgica* in onore di sua eminenza il Cardinale Giacomo Lercaro, 2 vol. Roma: Desclee, 1967. Vol 2, pp 313-457. [= Molin 1967b]

This is supplemented by the following additional sources:

L. Guibert, “Oraisons en langue vulgaire dans un recueil liturgique des XIVE et XVe siècles,” in *Bulletin historique et philologique du Comite des travaux historiques et scientifiques*, (1891) 348-353.

J.-B. Molin, “Les prières du prône à Provins au moyen age,” in *Bulletin de la Societé d’histoire et d’archéologie de l’arrondissement de Provins*, 116 (1967) 45-54
[= Molin 1967a]

Keith V. Sinclair, “Les prières du prône de Poitiers: Le témoignage du manuscrit de Stockholm,” in *Romenia*, 114 (1996) 335-349

Eleven general intercessions are considered here. They are listed here in approximate chronological order.

Poitiers: ca 1260, probably from the parish of Notre-Dame-la-Grande. Sinclair (1996) pp 345-349.

Amiens: ca 1275, from the l'Hotel-Dieu. Molin 1967b, pp 353-358.

Provins A: ca 1300, from “la collégiale Saint-Quiriace.” Molin (1967a), pp 47-50; Molin 1967b, pp 359-361

Provins B: ca 1400, from “la collégiale Saint-Quiriace.” Molin 1967a, pp 47-50; Molin 1967b, pp 377-378 (excerpts only)

Paris A: 1400-1450, from the parish of St André des Arcs. Molin 1967b, pp 408-413

Paris B: 1405; from the parish of Saint-Jean-en-Grèves; probably composed by Jean Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris who also served this parish on Sundays. Molin 1967b, 385-391.

Paris C: 1400-1449; used in an unknown parisian parish. Molin 1967b, pp 414-419.

Joigny: earliest sections from between 1344 and 1361, but expanded and completed 15th c; from the l'Hotel-Dieu. Molin 1967b, pp 420-424

Limoges: 1450-1500, from the parish of St Pierre du Queyroix, in Occitan. Guibert 1891; Molin 1967b, pp 428-429 (most but not all of the text).

Meaux; 1475; from the cathedral. Molin 1967b, 428-429.

Argenton-sur-Creuse: 1493, from a parish served by Franciscans. Molin 1967b, pp 441-442.

Major Variables

As already stated, the general intercessions and excommunications are not “standard” or uniform texts; each one is distinct. The major variable of interest here is the use of gender inclusive language. However, this needs to be considered in light of other variables, including time, geography, type of local community, and the form of the text. The latter points are considered briefly here, and again in the Discussion.

Temporal variation

The first three texts are considered relatively early: 1260, 1275, 1300; the next five are from the period 1400-1450; the last three are from 1450-1500.

Geographic variation

Seven are from outside Paris, while three are from Paris. Because geographic location has been suggested as a significant interpretative factor, I list the sources outside Paris in order of their distance from Paris, followed by their direction and distance from Paris. (National Geographic Atlas, as the crow flies, from the center of Paris, in miles).

Meaux, east, 33 miles
Provins, southeast, 46 miles
Amiens, north, 65 miles
Joigny, southeast, 72 miles
Argenton, south, 151 miles
Limoges, south, 204 miles

For comparison with the study of Kittle and Queller, Douai is 98 miles north of Paris.

Variation in type of community

Most of the texts come from parish communities. Though those from Provins are said to come from a community of canons, the canons evidently served a parish and their general intercessions are not distinguishable from those of other parishes. The text from Meaux is supposed to come from the cathedral, but again it is a fairly typical parish prayer. That from Argenton is associated with a Franciscan community, but again it is a fairly typical parish set of intercessions.

The two prayers from distinctly different communities are those of Amiens and Joigny, both of which originate in hotels-dieu and whose content is different from those of typical parishes.

Variation in type of text

All the general intercessions studied here are complete texts, with the exception of Argenton. The latter is an outline or list of topics, which the priest would be expected to expand on and fill out in the course of Sunday worship.

Format and Presentation

Four types of gender inclusive language are considered in turn:

(a) gender balanced nouns, that is pairs of nouns, one that applies to men and one that

applies to women;

(b) gendered nouns that are doubled, that is, masculine and feminine forms used together;

(c) nouns that apply only to women;

(d) gendered pronouns that are doubled, that is, masculine and feminine forms used together;

In some cases materials that apply to living persons are printed separately from those that apply to deceased persons.

For each gender inclusive term or construction that is identified, the names of all eleven texts studied here are listed in roughly chronological order, as above. Excerpts that show how the term or construction in question is used follow each entry as applicable. Visual inspection therefore quickly shows which sources used which gender inclusive terms or constructions. In some cases, however, as indicated in the text, related masculine terms are given together with the gender inclusive materials for the sake of context.

Spelling and use of accents follows the usage of individual sources.

Gender Balanced Nouns

By gender balanced language I mean the use of gender specific nouns in pairs. This type of usage is considered here both with respect to living persons identified in the general intercessions (Table 1) and to deceased persons (Table 2)

The general intercessions almost always include intentions for the civil government of the nation and regions, that is royalty and nobility; some texts refer to the civil government of the town or city as well. Table 1 shows that all eleven texts name the king, while six name the king and queen together in balanced constructions. In general intercessions from England, the queen is almost always named together with the king, and one wonders why she is referred to less frequently in these French prayers. Perhaps the king was unmarried or widowed when the five “unbalanced” texts were written; perhaps she was unpopular for some reasons in some areas; perhaps her influence and “presence” was greater in some areas than in others. One text (Paris A) uses gendered balanced language also to refer to the nobility.

Table 1 also shows that members of two hospital communities (Amiens, Joigny) were referred to as brothers and sisters. This gendered balanced construction was also used in one case to name members of parish confraternities.

Table 1

Gender Balanced Nouns (Living Persons)

King and Queen (and other Nobility)

Poitiers	- por le roi de France
Amiens	- pour le roi de franche, et pour le royne se feme
Provins A	- pour lou roi de France, pour sa fame
Provins B	- pour nostre sire le roy de france, pour la royne
Paris A-	pour le roy nostre seigneur, la royne - et pour tous les princes seigneurs et dames
Paris B-	pour nostre sire la Roi de france, pour la Royne
Paris C-	pour nostre sire le roy, pour la reine
Joigny	- pour messire le roy de france
Limoges	- Pro rege nostro. Et per nostre seigneur lo rey de france
Meaux	- pour nostre seignour le Roy de france
Argenton	- nostre sire de roy de France

Brothers and Sisters (confraternities, community members)

Poitiers	
Amiens	- pour les frères et les sereurs de la maison de chaiens
Provins A	
Provins B	
Paris A	
Paris B	
Paris C-	pour tous les frères et seurs des confrairies
Joigny	- pour les maistre, frères et seurs de seans
Limoges	
Meaux	
Argenton	- pour ceulx qui maintiennent les confréries

Table 2 shows that the intentions for deceased persons frequently – though not always - name fathers and mothers, and less often, brothers and sisters. These paired nouns are used more often in Paris than elsewhere. One prayer (from Paris) also includes godfathers and godmothers. Again these French usages may be contrasted with those of English general intercessions, which most often refer to all three relationships (parents, siblings, godparents) using gender balanced language. (See the separate document, *Deceased Women in Medieval General Intercessions: Documentation.*)

Several additional gender balanced references to deceased persons have not been tabulated. Thus both Provins B and Limoges include names of specific individuals, sometimes in gender balanced constructions. Several examples only are given here.

Provins B	- pour l'ame du conte henry qui fonda l'eglise de ceans, et pour la
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comtesse marie sa femme
- pour l'ame du roy de navaire thibault qui morui en navaire, et pour la
royne sa femme

Limoges - - per scientifique persone Monsr mestre Paul Guay, et per donne
Johanete Vidale, sa moiller
- per lo Seigr Jo. Romanet et donne Margarite Vigane, sa moiller
- per lo Seigr Jo Romanet et donne Catherine Rogiere, sa moiller
- per lo Seigr Teve Romanet lo filz l'annat et per da dame Ysabeau
Doubet, sa moiller

In addition, Joigny prays "pour nostre fondaressse qui fonda et doissia l'ospital et le lieu de céans,
pour tous les aultres fondeurs et fondaresses et bienfaicteurs de nostre di hospital."

Table 2 **Gender Balanced Nouns (Deceased Persons)**

Fathers and Mothers

Poitiers - por nos pèrez, por nos mèrez
Amiens - pour les âmes de nos pères et de nos mères
Provins A
Provins B
Paris A- pour les âmez de noz pères et mères
Paris B- pour les âmes de nos pères, mères
Paris C- pour les âmes de nous pères, de nous mères
Joigny
Limoges
Meaux - pour les âmes de noz pères, de noz mères
Argenton

Brothers and Sisters

Poitiers
Amiens - de nos frères, de nos sereurs
Provins A
Provins B
Paris A
Paris B- suers, frères
Paris C- de nous frères, de nous seurs
Joigny
Limoges
Meaux - de noz seurs, de noz frères
Argenton

Godfathers and Godmothers

Poitiers
Amiens
Provins A
Provins B
Paris A
Paris B- parins, marines
Joigny
Limoges
Meaux
Argenton

Doubling of Gendered Nouns

The use in town ordinances of Douai of doubled gendered nouns to identify women and men who practiced numerous trades and occupations is one of the striking features of Kittel and Queller's study, considered above.

Collectively, the general intercessions considered here use doubled gendered nouns to identify eight types of living persons: citizens, community and confraternity members, laborers, merchants, orphans, pilgrims, and the sick. These usages are shown in Table 3, which also shows when the masculine form of each noun is found alone. Pilgrims are referred to five times using doubled constructions, while merchants and orphans are doubled three times. All or most of these usages are from parisian texts.

Four of the doubled constructions that are found only once each comes from a single source and three of these are nonparisian. The single occurrence of *laboureur et labouresse* is noteworthy, as the doubled construction *arbaiter und arbaiterin* is used frequently in German general intercessions; *arbeiter* is never used alone. (See the separate document, *Pèlerins et pèlerines: Doubling of Gendered Nouns in Medieval General Intercessions: Documentation.*)

While one or several sources use doubled nouns to identify particular groups to be prayed for, only masculine forms of the same nouns are used by other sources to name the same persons. Thus both *bourgoys et bourgoises* and *bourgoys* alone are each used once, by different sources. As already mentioned, *laboureur et labouresse* is used by one source, while *laboureur* alone is used by nine. Similar mixed usages occur also for merchants, orphans and pilgrims. While the Occitan source, Limoges, used the gender inclusive *malaudeys et malaudas*, French sources use the masculine *malades* (Paris B, Argenton) or *enfermes et malades* (Paris C).

Members of the local community are identified using the masculine nouns *habitans*, *manans*, or both (Paris A, Joigny, Limoges), or *parrociens ... et pour tous les bienvueilles de ceste ville* (Paris B). The use of *habitans* and *manans* only the masculine was commented on by

Kittel and Quller (p 83). It is perhaps noteworthy also that the term *bienfacteurs*, which is used by seven sources, is always in the masculine.

One other example of doubled gendered nouns has not been tabulated. Thus several texts refer to saints – obviously as intercessors rather than as persons to be prayed for. In all five such cases the noun has been doubled, as follows:

Poitiers - et des sains et des saintes
- et des sains et des saintes

Paris A- et de tous sains et saintes de paradis

Paris C- et aux benois sains et saintes de paradis
- por l'intercession des glorieux sains et saintes

Table 3
Gendered Nouns that are Doubled (Living Persons)

Citizens

Poitiers
Amiens
Provins A
Provins B
Paris A- pour touz les bourgoiz
Paris B
Paris C
Joigny
Limoges
Meaux
Argenton - pour tous bourgoys et bourgoises

Community / Confraternity members

Poitiers - por toz les confreres et les confrresses
Amiens
Provins A
Provins B
Paris A- pout touz les ... manans et habitans
Paris B- pour tous les parrociens... et pour tous les bienvueilles de ceste ville
Paris C
Joigny - les habitans et manens
Limoges - tous lous habitans
Meaux

Argenton

Laborers

Poitiers - por les laboreors
Amiens - pour tous les waigneours
Provins A - pour touz les labourez
Provins B - pour les laboueurs
Paris A- pour touz loyaulx laboueurs et labeurresses
Paris B- pour tous laboueurs
Paris C- pour tous les loyaulx laboreux
Joigny - pour tous bons laboueurs
Limoges
Meaux - pour tous laboueurs
Argenton - pour tous... laboureulx

Merchants

Poitiers
Amiens - et pour les markans
Provins A - pour touz marcheans
Provins B
Paris A- pour tous ... marchans et marchandes
Paris B- pour tous lealz marchans et marchandes
Paris C- pour tous loyaulx marchans et marchandes
Joigny - pour tous loyaulx marchans
Limoges
Meaux - pour tous leaulx marchants
Argenton - pour tous marchans

Orphans

Poitiers
Amiens
Provins A
Provins B
Paris A- pour touz orphelins et orphelines
Paris B- pour orphelins
Paris C- et pour tous orphelins et orphelines
Joigny
Limoges
Meaux
Argenton

Pilgrims

Poitiers
Amiens - pour tous pèlerins

Provins A - pour tous pelerins et pelerines
 Provins B - pour tous pelerines et pelerines
 Paris A- pour tous pèlerins et pèlerines
 Paris B- pour tous pèlerins et pour toutes pèlerines
 Paris C- pour tous pelerains
 Joigny
 Limoges
 Meaux - pour tous pèlerins
 Argenton - pour tous pèlerins

Sick Persons

Poitiers
 Amiens
 Provins A
 Provins B
 Paris A
 Paris B- pour tous les malades
 Paris C- pour tous enfermes et malades
 Joigny
 Limoges - Pro infirmis. Et per tous malaudeys et malaudas
 Meaux - pour ceulx qui sont en enfermeté de maladie de corps
 Argenton - pour tous malades

Nouns that Apply Only to Women

Medieval general intercessions also included language that applied solely to women. Thus, as shown in Table 4, pregnant women were named frequently. These texts also include widows; widows and orphans (Table 3) are always referred to together. (See the separate document, *Pregnant Women in Medieval General Intercessions: Documentation.*)

Table 4
Nouns that Apply Only to Women

Pregnant Women

Poitiers
 Amiens
 Provins A - pour toutez fame ensinte
 Provins B
 Paris A- pour toutes femmez grossez d'enfant
 Paris B- pour toutes femmes enchaintes d'enfant
 Paris C- pour toutes femmes enchaintes d'enffant
 Joigny

Limoges
Meaux - pour toutes femmes qui sont ensaintes d'enfant
Argenton - pour toutes femmes grosses

Widows

Poitiers
Amiens
Provins A
Provins B
Paris A- pour toutes femmes vefvez
Paris B- pour vesves
Paris C- et femmes vesves
Joigny
Limoges
Meaux
Argenton

Doubling of Gendered Pronouns

The general intercessions under consideration here use double gendered pronouns to identify both living persons (Table 5) and deceased persons (Table 6) to be prayed for.

This type of construction appears to be more common here than in the town ordinances studied by Kittel and Queller, probably because of the distinct nature of the two kinds of documents.

Table 5 shows that such gender inclusive language with respect to the living has to do with eight different groups of persons. Two uses of doubled gendered pronouns occur only once (persons to be prayed for, persons who promote peace) and one twice (pilgrims).

The use of doubled gendered pronouns to refer to benefactors (3 texts, 5 uses) and community/confraternity members (5 texts, 7 uses) are consistent in that masculine pronouns are never used by themselves.

Other persons to be prayed for, however, are named using mixtures of doubled pronouns and masculine pronouns alone. Those in a State of Grace, for example, are referred to using doubled pronouns in seven texts, while three (Amiens, Meaux, Argenton) use only masculine pronouns. Similarly, Those in a State of Mortal Sin are referred to using doubled pronouns by four texts, while two others (Amiens, Meaux) use masculine forms only. Finally, all three parisian texts refer to Those who Supply Bread with doubled pronouns, whereas three other texts (Provins A, Limoges, Meaux) use masculine forms.

Not tabulated is the sole use of masculine pronouns to refer to the sick in three texts

(Provins B, Meaux, Argenton).

Table 5
Gendered Pronouns that are Doubled (Living Persons)

Benefactors

Poitiers	- por toz ceaus et totes celes qui funderent ceste yglise - por ceaus et celes qui ceens aportent lors oblacions et lor lumineres
Amiens	
Provins A	
Provins B	
Paris A	
Paris B-	pour tous ceulz et celles qui ont lessié les rentes - pour tous ceulz et celles qui tiennent le luminaire de l'église
Paris C	
Joigny	
Limoges	- Pro benefactoribus ecclesie. Et per aquilz et aquillas que en bastit...
Meaux	
Argenton	

Community / Confraternity Members

Poitiers	- por ceaus et celes qui en ceste yglise [confraternity]
Amiens	
Provins A	
Provins B	
Paris A-	pour ceulx et celles qui demeurent et habitent en ceste parroise
Paris B	
Paris C-	chascun et chascune dices humblement et devotement pater noster
Joigny	- pour tous ceulx et celles qui sont ordonnez
Limoges	- Pro presentibus. Et per aquilz et aquellas que sont venent ouvrir lo divinau offici - tous et toutas en vuellas dire lo pater noster - tous et toutas en vuellas dire lo pater noster
Meaux	
Argenton	

Persons to be Prayed For

Poitiers	
Amiens	
Provins A	
Provins B	
Paris A	
Paris B-	et de tous ceulz et celles pour qui nous sommes tenus, et de qui nous avons

entention de prier

Paris C
Joigny
Limoges
Meaux
Argenton

Pilgrims

Poitiers - pour tous ceus et por toutes celles qui sunt en pelegrinages d'outre-mer
Amiens
Provins A
Provins B
Paris A
Paris B
Paris C- pour tous ceulx et celles qui sont en saint voyage de le saint sépulcre d'outre
mer
Joigny
Limoges
Meaux
Argenton

Those in a State of Grace

Poitiers - por toz ceaus et por toutes celes qui sunt en bon estement
Amiens - pour chiaux qui sunt en grâce
Provins A - pour touz ceux qui sunt en grace
Provins B - en pour tous ceulx et celles qui sont en grace
Paris A- pour tous ceulx et celles qui sont en estat de grâce
Paris B- pour tous ceulz et celles qui sont en estat de grâce
Paris C- pour tous ceulx et celles qui sont en estat de grâce
Joigny - pour tous ceulx et celles qui sont en estat de grace
Limoges - Pro existentibus in statu gracie. Et per touch aquilli et aquelles qui sont
en estat de gracie
Meaux - pour ceulx qui sont en estat de grace
Argenton - pour ceulx qui sont en estat de grâce

Those in a State of Mortal Sin

Poitiers - por tous ceaus et totes celes qui sunt en pechie mortau
Amiens - pour tous chaix qui sunt en mortel pechié
Provins A - pour touz ceux qui sont en péchié
Provins B - pour tous ceulx et clles qui sont en péchié
Paris A- pour tous ceulx et celles qui sont en péchié mortel
Paris B
Paris C- et ceulx et celles qui sont en péchié mortel
Joigny

Limoges
Meaux - et ceulz qui sont en péchié mortel
Argenton

Those who Promote Peace

Poitiers - tos ceaus et totes celes qui la [paix] volent et la gardent et la maintement
Amiens
Provins A
Provins B
Paris A
Paris B
Paris C
Joigny
Limoges
Meaux
Argenton

Those who Supply Bread

Poitiers
Amiens
Provins A - pour touz ceulz qui font la charité dou pain benoit
Provins B
Paris A- pour tous ceulz et celles qui font la charité du pain
Paris B- pour tous ceulz et celles qui font la charité du pain benoit
Paris C- pour tous ceulz et celles qui ont font la charité du pain benoit
Joigny
Limoges - Et per aquelz qui cey donnent lo pan beneict
Meaux - pour ceulz qui ont fait la charité des pain benoist
Argenton

Table 6 shows that two general intercessions use doubled pronouns to refer to deceased benefactors, while five texts use this type of construction to refer to persons buried in this church or cemetery. Two additional texts use this type of construction for other deceased persons.

Table 6
Gendered Pronouns that are Doubled (Deceased Persons)

Benefactors

Amiens - prions tous et toutes pour les âmes de tous chaix et de toutes cheles qui la maison de chaiens estorerent et qui les aumosnes...

Paris B- et par especial de ceulz et celles qui fondèrent ceste église
Paris B- pour tous ceulz et celles qui ont lessié à la cure de céens rentes

Buried in this Church or Cemetery

Poitiers - por ceaus et por celes qui en cest saint cimentire gisent et reposent
Amiens - pour les âmes de chaix et de chelles qui se reposent en le chimentaire
Paris A- touz ceulz et celles desquels les corps reposent en l'église
Paris B- pour les âmes de ceulz et celles dont les corps reposent en l'église
Limoges - por aquilz et aquellas que sont sepulturant

Other

Paris B- pour tous ceulz et celles qui attendent la miséricorde et merci de notre seigneur
Joigny - pour tous ceulx et celles qui ont fondé et lessié céans leurs anniversaires

Excommunications

Warnings about behavior that might incur excommunication that are attached to four general intercessions under consideration here use several kinds of gender inclusive language. Thus Table 7 shows that gender balanced language is used to identify men and women who operate a house of ill repute, while doubled gendered nouns are used not only for male and female prostitutes, but also for those who practice usury. Particularly interesting is the use of such constructions also to identify three kinds of magic, namely sorcery, divination, and casting spells.

Doubled gendered pronouns are used most frequently to communicate the general message, “those who don’t behave will be excommunicated (unless they mend their ways).” In one case, however, a more specific behavior is specified, namely doing physical violence to priests.

Table 7
Gender Inclusive Language in Excommunications

Gender Balanced Language

Limoges - et tout homme et toute fenne, Sr ou donne d’oustau que estas may de tres dyomencz enseguentz seys venir a vre esglese parrochiale seys eysonie rasonable [note: maitre ou maitresse du maison]

Doubled Gendered Nouns

Paris B- useriers et userieres
Paris B- sorciers et sorcieres
Limoges - dyvys et dyvynas [devins et devineresses]
Limoges - sortiliers et sortilieras

Limoges - concubins et concubinas publicz et maniffestz

Doubled Gendered Pronouns

Paris B- ceulz et celles qui les enfraignent soient mauldis et excommenierz

Paris B- ceulz et celles qui empeschent et detienment les juridicions de saint eglise, soient excommenies

Paris B- ceulz et celles qui mettent main violent en prestres, en clercs

Limoges - ceulx et cells qui vont au contraire sont mauldis et excommenies

Discussion

The eleven general intercessions and two excommunications studied here show that gender inclusive language was used extensively – though inconsistently – in at least certain texts used during Sunday worship in medieval France. Collectively, these texts use inclusive constructions to refer to approximately 35 groups of persons, living and dead.

Individual texts within this group of eleven, however, show a great deal of variability. Whereas the study of town ordinances by Kittel and Queller focused on the variable of time (earlier and later texts), the general intercessions vary with respect to time, geographic location, and authorship. These will now be considered in turn.

The general intercessions studied here range over the period ca 1260-1500, but there is no really clear correlation between date and extent of gender inclusive language. The earliest text (Poitiers, 1260) is highly inclusive, but Amiens, dated only shortly thereafter (1275) is much less so. The texts listed last here (Meaux, Argenton) have relatively little gender inclusive language, but Limoges, which overlaps these chronologically, is quite gender inclusive. Certainly most of those from the middle of this range (ca 1400-1450) are highly inclusive.

Geographic location is a second variable. Inasmuch as Kittel and Queller conclude that “French cultural influence” may have been responsible for decreased use of gender inclusive language over time, the implication may be drawn that texts from Paris would be less gender inclusive than those from outside Paris. The general intercessions studied here, however, show that the three parisian texts are quite inclusive, whereas general intercessions from outside Paris vary widely in their use of gender inclusive language.

Individual general intercessions also show a considerable degree of internal variation in the use of gender inclusive language. Even the most highly inclusive texts potentially could be more so, and moderately inclusive texts vary widely in which nouns or pronouns they double, or what gender balanced constructions they use. Though this variation might be intentional, based on some sensitivity or rationale of individual priests, it may also be simply random or unconscious.

Influences suggested by Kittel and Queller for the change in usage practice they studied may well be valid for the type of documents they studied, namely town ordinances. However, these do not seem to apply to the general intercessions studied here. As they are prayers used in Sunday worship, any conservative influence of the church cannot be a factor. As the most extensively inclusive text was written by a chancellor of the university of Paris, any negative influence of the university has to be questioned. As three of the most extensively inclusive texts come from Paris, “French culture” does not seem to be an inhibiting factor.

Except when males are clearly intended (clergy of all kinds, kings, nobility, mayors and aldermen), the logic of the general intercessions favors gender inclusivity. After all, these are prayers for local civic communities that include women; they are also prayers for the local church community that also includes women.

It may be implied that the use of doubled nouns and pronouns by some sources includes the assumption that gender inclusivity is always intended even when other sources use masculine nouns and pronouns (e.g., laborers, merchants, orphans). In addition, it is known that couples rather than individuals usually supplied the bread for the holy bread (*eulogia*), so masculine pronouns here reflects a gender inclusive practice.

Important questions remain, however. Why, in particular cases, one choice or the other was used is simply beyond our knowledge. Why some nouns seem never to be used in doubled form also remains a mystery.

It is interesting that the excommunications given in two sources are quite consistently gender inclusive. This is true not only of doing magic, but also of doing physical violence to priests. Male as well as female prostitutes are also mentioned.

Before concluding, it is worth noting that Latin liturgical texts used in Sunday worship in medieval France also used gender inclusive language, at least to some extent. Thus the construction *famulorum famularumque tuarum* ([God’s] male and female servants) was said twice in the canon of the mass (though this was not audible to the people). It was also used in some other prayers. (See the separate document, *Inclusive language in the medieval liturgy: documentation.*)

In addition, the invitation, *Orate, fratres et sorores* was addressed to the people in some places and times, though sometimes this was worded, *Orate, fratres*. Whether the people actually heard this text addressed to them probably depended on the size of the church (See the separate document, *Orate, fratres et sorores in the medieval mass liturgy. Documentation.*)