Arthur Agarde, Elizabethan Archivist: His Contributions to the Evolution of Archival Practice

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Abstract

In his various capacities as deputy chamberlain of the Exchequer, antiquary, scholar, and writer, Arthur Agarde (1540-1615) played an integral role in Elizabethan society—a society in which recordkeeping activities and use certainly reflected the political climate. The rise of England as a nation-state not only created a spirit of insular nationalism but also engendered political, religious, and legal controversies. During this era, antiquarian scholars increasingly consulted Britain's vast accumulation of documents to research the past and help settle debates. This dramatic growth in the use of historical records pointed out the need for improved recordkeeping procedures. An examination of Agarde's life and career reveals his contributions to an evolving archival practice, especially in description, arrangement, and preservation.

I n 1540 Henry VIII was on the throne of England and the Abbey of Waltham had finally relinquished its property to the Crown.[1] The dissolution of monasteries was nearing completion. That same year, Arthur Agarde, son of Clement, was born at Foston in Derbyshire.[2] The details of his early life and education are not clearly known; however, speculations suggest he may have been educated at Cambridge[3] and/or one of the Inns of Chancery.[4] What is certain is that Agarde was educated for the law but left the legal profession for a career as clerk and deputy chamberlain in the King's Treas-

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[1] Roger Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart Britain 1471-1714* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), 78.

[2] *The Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Agarde, Arthur."

[3] *The Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Agarde, Arthur."

[4] R. J. Schoeck, "The Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries and Men of Law," *Notes and Queries* 199 (1954): 418.

ury, commonly called the Exchequer.[5] During his tenure there, he described and arranged hundreds of public records housed in the Treasury. Agarde's descriptions improved the state of British records and contributed to an evolving archival practice. Two factors necessitated an improvement of record-keeping activities: the proliferation of English records throughout preceding centuries, and an increased interest in their use for historical and scholarly purposes as well as administrative functions in Tudor England.

Agarde's life spanned seventy-five years of British history, during which time changes occurred rapidly. Five monarchs ruled—Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, Elizabeth I, and James I. As early modern England and a growing sense of nationalism emerged, religion, politics, and scholarship were in turmoil. Religion fluctuated from Henry's Reformation to Mary's devotion to the Catholic Church, and back again to the Church of England; politicos rose to power and fell from favor overnight; William Camden wrote his history of England, *Britannia*; Shakespeare was writing great drama; and the Society of Antiquaries was founded as scholars increasingly looked to the past. The unprecedented developing awareness of England as a nation-state required a "science of statecraft" based on evidence and models from historical documents.[6] In Tudor England, "scholars, churchmen, and statesmen. . .were concerned with establishing their new world on newly defined foundations, but these foundations had themselves to be recognizably a part of the ancient world of classical or Biblical antiquity."[7] There was no dearth of resources to consult in building a new foundation from historical models because the preceding centuries had produced many thousands of documents.

The period from the Norman Conquest in 1066 to the end of Edward I's reign in 1307 has been identified as significant in the history of English records. A shift from reliance on memory and the oral tradition to the written word as witness took place in England during this time. Those two-and-one-half centuries also saw the production, retention, and use of records multiply dramatically, a growth which may be both an indication and a consequence of the spread of literacy.[8] Prior to 1066, records were preserved only if they found their way into an ecclesiastical archives, and though secular documents had little chance of surviving, they probably contributed much to the creation

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[5] Thomas Hearne, ed., *A Collection of Curious Discourses Written by Eminent Antiquaries. . .* (London, 1775), 2:421.

[6] Philip Styles, "Politics and Historical Research in the Early Seventeenth Century," in *English Historical Scholarship in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, edited by Levi Fox (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 49.

[7] Stuart Piggott, "Antiquarian Thought in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Fox, *English Historical Scholarship in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 98.

[8] M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 1.

of *Domesday Book* in 1086.[9] The few existing archives and records were housed mostly in churches and consulted occasionally for scholarly purposes[10] or early administrative uses.[11] One notable result of using records to write histories was the Venerable Bede's church history in the eighth century. Throughout the remainder of the Middle Ages, the creation and preservation of records increased and resulted in a growth of both secular and ecclesiastical archives.[12]

The roots of the proliferation of English documentation seem to lie in the production of *Domesday Book*. This survey, conducted by William the Conqueror to measure the extent and value of English property-holdings, was the first major endeavor to put administrative concerns in writing,[13] although some earlier efforts can be found. Nonetheless, the appearance of *Domesday Book* set a precedent. The next century saw the establishment by Henry I of the Exchequer, whose financial activities produced numerous records in a variety of forms such as wooden tallies and large rolls of parchment called the "pipe rolls."[14] M. T. Clanchy maintains that these twelfth-century pipe rolls marked the birth of bureaucracy.[15]

A further development in English recordkeeping activities can be attributed to Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury and a court official in the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries. Walter was the first to deliberately order the creation of multiple copies of a document. The sole purpose of Walter's mandated third copy, called the "foot of fine," was for preservation in the Exchequer. This has been identified as the inaugural set of records made strictly for archival reasons, and it may be the success of Walter's feet of fines series which prompted the government to make copies of royal letters for addition to what might be called, anachronistically, the archives.[16] One can cite several other examples up to and including the quo warranto proceedings, another large survey taken during the reign of Edward I for administrative purposes. The recording of this survey, and that of *Domesday Book*, marked an era of substantial growth in records production.

[9] Susan Kelley, "Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word," in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, edited by Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 45, 51.

[10] James Gregory Bradsher and Michele F. Pacifico, "A History of Archives Administration," in *Managing Archives and Archival Institutions*, edited by James Gregory Bradsher (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 22.

[11] Simon Keynes, "Royal Government and the Written Word in Late Anglo-Saxon England," in McKitterick, *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, 226–56.

[12] Bradsher and Pacifico, "A History of Archives Administration," 22.

[13] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 26.

[14] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 57.

[15] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 35.

[16] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 68–69.

As records accumulated during this period as well as others, little was done to organize or inventory the thousands of documents lying and multiplying in palace and monastery alike. Prior to the sixteenth century, systems for the organization and retrieval of information to enhance use were far more difficult to create than the records themselves.[17] Some indexes were made, such as those to parliamentary statutes and other law books created near the end of Edward I's reign.[18] Other early efforts to enhance access to records included the production of cartularies, collections of charters copied into registers. Though these terms were sometimes used interchangeably, registers grew to have a broader meaning as copying and listing various documents took several forms.[19] Most medieval efforts to assist users of documents, however, were made only within individual records in the form of marginal notations, abbreviations, or symbols.[20] For example, some upside-down script near the lower edge of an eleventh-century document has been identified as a ''finding aid'' created and used by a fourteenth-century record-keeper.[21] The critical problem, however, was that of not knowing which record to consult initially.[22] To remedy this, a few attempts were made to create subject classification systems by placing signs and symbols on storage chests or rolls to indicate their contents.[23] Monasteries, the institutions which had earlier developed the cartulary, were more likely to inventory and identify records than the government.[24]

Although they may have been better organized, when monastic records were dispersed after Henry dissolved the monasteries they became one of many problems which plagued England's recordkeeping activities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Generations of creation coupled with minimal organization brought the public records into a state of confusion by Agarde's lifetime. In addition to these countless, poorly inventoried records and the flood of monastic documents, three other factors contributed to the chaos: storage areas had become crowded, which meant certain records had to be housed outside their administrative home; an attempt to establish a document clearinghouse had failed; and a prevailing attitude of decentralization had forced some materials out of official repositories and into other

[17] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 330.

[18] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 180.

[19] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 101–3.

[20] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 172.

[21] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, plate I.

[22] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 172.

[23] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 175.

[24] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 101, 171.

hands.[25] This chaotic situation was perhaps reminiscent of Dom Claude's comment on the printing press in Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. He called it another "Tower of Babel" and foresaw "incessant activity" amidst "a confusion of languages."[26]

A crucial need to create order out of this chaos became evident. By this time, the printing press was undermining the ancient art and use of memory,[27] thereby rendering vital reliance on all forms of the written word to remember the past. Scholars increasingly depended on the information contained in England's written documents and required access to them. The minimal efforts to organize, inventory, and produce finding aids in the past failed to meet the high demand caused by the circumstances of Tudor society. At this critical moment, Agarde and his contemporaries began to establish strategies for gaining control over the mass of information which was now required for historical research as well as administrative purposes. The symbiotic relationship between scholarship and politics during this era is illustrated by the histories that were written to serve as guides for Tudor politicians. Among them were William Camden's *Annals*, Lord Herbert of Cherbury's *Life and Reign of Henry VIII*, Sir Robert Cotton's *Short View of the Long Reign of Henry III*, and Francis Bacon's *Henry VII*.[28] Access to information was needed for such endeavors, and scholars and recordkeepers alike began to devise ways to more efficiently meet this need. As both scholar and record keeper, Agarde was in a position to be quite useful.

Agarde's scholarship was evident in his activities with the Society of Antiquaries. Although the beginnings of English antiquarian study may be found as early as 1475 with the publication of Ptolemy's *Geographia*,[29] more than one hundred years would pass before England's interest in its past manifested itself in an organization of men. Around 1586, when Camden's *Britannia* was published, the Society of Antiquaries was founded. The founding members were Camden, his pupil Robert Cotton, and the lawyers James Ley and Henry Spelman. The Society flourished, and by 1591, it had twenty-four members, one of whom was Agarde.[30] This Society had a profound effect upon British history. Most of its members adhered to a modern view of England's past which was verifiable in existing documents. They rejected earlier unsubstan-

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[25] May McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon-Oxford University Press, 1971), 75–76.

[26] Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, translated by Walter J. Cobb (New York: Signet Classic-NAL Penguin, 1965), 188.

[27] Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 127.

[28] Styles, "Politics and Historical Research," 50.

[29] Joan Evans, *A History of the Society of Antiquaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 2.

[30] Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton 1586-1631: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 17.

tiated myths and romantic stories, and instead studied "ancient law, the origin of institutions, offices, customs, privileges, and . . . the history of land tenure and of the measurement of land."[31]

Agarde wrote and delivered papers to the Society on a variety of antiquarian topics. Although many of Agarde's works are extant only in the Cottonian manuscripts at the British Library, Thomas Hearne, an eighteenth-century scholar, published some of them in his *Collection of Curious Discourses.* Printed there are twenty-one of Agarde's papers on such subjects as the etymology of the names of English nobility, castles, forests, and of England itself. One also finds there Agarde's histories of ceremonies, epitaphs, parliaments, offices, seals, and religion. It was, however, Agarde's studies of *Domesday Book* and *Dialogus de Scaccario,* two books of great importance to both British history and administration, which were most notable.

Agarde's treatise, *Tractatus de Usu & Obscurioribus Verbis Libri de Domesday,* was a boon to researchers of *Domesday Book* because it explained obsolete words, the etymology of *Domesday*'s title, the method of its compilation, and its uses.[32] *Domesday* was vital to antiquaries in answering questions relating to land ownership and its duration, the borders and placement of counties, farms and other properties, and amounts of taxes paid.[33] Agarde's study existed in manuscript form only for a number of years, but proved so useful that Roger Gale had it printed in 1722, more than one hundred years after Agarde's death, as an appendix to Gale's *Registrum Honoris de Richmond.*[34] Some of Agarde's presentations to the Society also concerned *Domesday.* One of the papers he delivered in 1599 dealt with the beginnings of land measurement in England. In it, Agarde often cited information from *Domesday,* thus demonstrating both his acquaintance with it and its usefulness. Elizabeth M. Hallam applauds Agarde for this dissemination of knowledge and asserts that with him, the expository analysis of *Domesday Book* began in earnest.[35]

Dialogus de Scaccario was also important to the scholars of Agarde's time. Its relevance is underscored by the many copies made of *Dialogus* during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; more than twenty were produced by or for antiquaries. *Dialogus* was written in the twelfth century, shortly after the establishment of the Exchequer, and is a thorough description of the Treasury's operations.[36] Agarde was well acquainted with this work also. He re-

[31] T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1950), 114.

[32] Hearne, *Collection of Curious Discourses,* 421.

[33] Elizabeth M. Hallam, *Domesday Book Through Nine Centuries* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 37.

[34] *The Dictionary of National Biography,* s.v. "Agarde, Arthur."

[35] Hallam, *Domesday Book Through Nine Centuries,* 116–17.

[36] [Charles Johnson], introduction to *Dialogus de Scaccario: The Course of the Exchequer and Constitutio*

searched it for his treatise on *Domesday*, citing the section in *Dialogus* which revealed *Domesday*'s etymology.[37] Another important contribution to scholarship was Agarde's identification of the authorship of *Dialogus*. Most writings named the author as Gervase of Tilbury; however, Agarde was one of few scholars who first discovered that Richard Fitz Nigel had written the work, thus advancing knowledge of this document. Though *Dialogus* is primarily a utilitarian work, a kind of manual of the Treasury's functions and organization, the historical data interspersed throughout were of great interest to antiquarians.[38] This combination of historical information and technical details about the workings of the Exchequer made *Dialogus* indispensable to historians, and was critical to Agarde's work both as a scholar and an archivist. It is, therefore, no surprise that he was intimately familiar with both *Dialogus* and *Domesday*.

In spite of his successes and contributions, modern historical scholarship has revealed distinct errors made by Agarde.[39] One example is his inaccurate count of *Domesday*'s folios.[40] And, there is evidence that Agarde regarded as fact some of those unverifiable legends concerning Britain's past which his colleagues rejected.[41] Agarde's contemporaries also found themselves at odds with his research methods. Cotton and Camden frequently interacted with German, Dutch, and French historians, while Agarde remained rather narrowly insular and relied almost exclusively on English authors and scholars. Agarde's colleagues regarded this limited scope as a weakness. Yet, Society members held to a common cause and often shared resources in their effort to further scholarship. Agarde often borrowed books from Cotton's esteemed library and eventually bequeathed to Cotton all his manuscripts, ledgers, and papers.[42]

Agarde was also valuable to his colleagues in his role as deputy chamberlain of the Exchequer. Though one can find some disagreement with the date, it is fairly well established that Agarde was appointed to this office in 1570.[43] At that time, there were two responsibilities of the office: striking

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Domus Regis: The Establishment of the Royal Household (Oxford: Clarendon-Oxford University Press, 1983), xi, xvi.

[37] Hallam, *Domesday Book Through Nine Centuries*, 117.

[38] [Johnson], introduction to *Dialogus de Scaccario*, xiii–xiv, xxii.

[39] *The Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Agarde, Arthur."

[40] Hallam, *Domesday Book Through Nine Centuries*, 117.

[41] Kendrick, *British Antiquity*, 100–1.

[42] Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton*, 22, 19, 50, 65.

[43] C. H. D. Coleman, "Arthur Agard [*sic*] and the Chamberlainship of the Exchequer, 1570-1615," *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* 100 (1980): 64.

tallies (that is, recording receipts) and keeping records.[44] The second duty, keeping records, was more labor-intensive than the first. Records had to be closely guarded at all times and yet made available to users under rigorously applied rules. One overview of typical recordkeeping duties for deputy chamberlains in Agarde's day reads:

> [T]hey surveyed the structure of the treasuries and the condition of their contents, both routinely and after heavy rains and flooding; they supervised necessary maintenance, cleaning, repairs, and modifications; they prepared the treasuries for occasional inspections by the Treasurer and Undertreasurer; they dried and repaired records damaged by damp or flood; they made scutcheons for valuable records committed to their charge; they compiled repertories; [and] they attended on the Privy Council, with records, both at Court, in the Star Chamber, and in the Treasurer's own house. . . .[45]

Of course, they also had duties related to the management of accounts.

Certain political events which occurred early in Agarde's tenure conspired to simplify the deputy chamberlain's office by eliminating the duties related to money, accounts, and receipts, thereby situating Agarde as one of "the principal archivists of the Exchequer."[46] As politics played a role in redefining his duties, scandal forced further changes which embellished Agarde's career. A theft, in 1573, of £380 from the Treasury sent a clerk to prison and his relinquished key to Agarde. This key provided Agarde with unlimited access to the records, thus enabling him to conduct his own research more thoroughly and to serve as a vital link between antiquarian scholars and the records they needed.[47] In only the first three years of his tenure, circumstances had rendered Agarde uniquely poised to affect Britain's recordkeeping activities.

Just as his research advanced antiquarian scholarship, Agarde's compilation of catalogs, calendars, and inventories improved the state of British documents and proved important to archival history. Agarde transcribed, translated, sorted, revised and repaired many documents. One of these is his compilation, *Abbreviatio Placitorum in Banco Regis, 1271-1307*, an account of financial records during the reign of Edward I. He was also primarily, if not solely, responsible for extracting valuable information from many records and collecting it into five large volumes.[48] As principal archivist of the public records at that time, Agarde defined them as consisting of two types: arcana imperii, or records relating to "matters of estate and the crown only;" and

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[44] J. C. Sainty, comp., *Officers of the Exchequer*, List and Index Society Special Series, no. 18 (London: Swift, 1983), 164.

[45] Coleman, "Arthur Agard and the Chamberlainship of the Exchequer," 65.

[46] Coleman, "Arthur Agard and the Chamberlainship of the Exchequer," 66–67.

[47] Coleman, "Arthur Agard and the Chamberlainship of the Exchequer," 67.

[48] McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age*, 91.

legal and financial documents which were of concern to both the public and the monarchy.[49]

Perhaps Agarde's most significant and enduring contribution, however, was his inventory of the documents in the four treasuries of the Exchequer. Its relevance to scholars throughout many years is seen in the numerous times it has been reissued. Thomas Powell published the first printed guide to the public records in 1622, *Direction for Search of the Records*. He issued an improved republication in 1631, as *Repertorie of Records* which was based almost entirely on Agarde's inventory in manuscript.[50] In fact, the work is attributed more often to Agarde than to Powell. The inventory was also reprinted as "The Compendium of the Records in the Treasury" in *The Antient Kalendars and Inventories of the Treasury of His Majesty's Exchequer*, edited by Sir Francis Palgrave in 1836. In addition, a facsimile of the *Repertorie* was issued in 1971. Agarde's work has not ceased to be useful.

Although Agarde's motivation was to produce a finding aid for researchers, his inventory also painted a portrait of "the archivist at work and . . . the difficulties that beset him."[51] For instance, in *Repertorie* Agarde laid out certain instructions for future deputy chamberlains. He wrote that they should know Latin and French, understand the records, and forbid researchers to touch *Domesday Book* and other documents with their bare hands lest the records be smudged. However, Agarde did not apply this injunction against touching manuscripts to himself. In fact, unlike modern archivists, Agarde did not shrink from glossing and annotating the records in his care, even *Domesday Book*. In his hand, and sometimes signed by him, are marginalia regarding farms, tenure, landholders, cross-references to other records, and explanations of abbreviations. While such close scrutiny certainly helped establish Agarde's lasting contributions to *Domesday* studies,[52] these methods are foreign to modern archival principles.

More familiar to today's archivists is Agarde's advice regarding the preservation of records. He stated that there are four dangers which "may bringe wracke to recordes." They are fire, water, rats and mice, and misplacing. His instructions regarding fire were that records should be put in vaults, and only candlesticks placed in lanterns should be brought into the treasuries. In case of "a great glut of raign snow or tempest," the officers of the Exchequer were bound, Agarde reminded them, to go into the treasury to determine whether dampness had penetrated the vaults or buildings and damaged the records. If so, the records must be laid out to air-dry. Agarde advised putting

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[49] R. B. Wernham, "The Public Records in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Fox, *English Historical Scholarship in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 11.

[50] Wernham, "The Public Records in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 24.

[51] McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age*, 91.

[52] Hallam, *Domesday Book Through Nine Centuries*, 116–17.

the records in boxes and chests to keep rats, mice, and weasels from gnawing them.[53]

Some of these chests provided security from more than rodents and vermin. For example, the chest which contained *Domesday Book* was quite an elaborate security system. It was "made of wood clad with iron inside and out, and reinforced with iron straps. The contents are protected from theft by four strap hinges, by two massive iron flanges to prevent it being forced from the side, and by. . .three locks."[54] While locks and vaults and chests guarded against theft, obtaining access to the public records in Elizabethan England was not particularly difficult. There were two requirements for access: scholars had to be introduced to and known by the deputy chamberlains; and they had to have money. Fees were charged for both inspection and transcription of documents.[55] The first requirement made Agarde invaluable to his antiquarian colleagues.

Access to and use of records could result in the fourth danger Agarde listed, misplacing. In fact, he used strong language to emphasize the importance of this danger:

> For the fourth, id est misplacinge; it is an evill that riseth by the officer that produceth the record for the search or service, and it is an enemye to all good ordre, and the bringer in of all horror and inconvenience among records. For if theer bee not had regard for ev'y record to be placed in its right or knowne chest or presse 't in its nature but one thrust into an others bagge or misplaced in its Kinge's time 'tc. (as I sayd before,) it is impossible to find any thinge certaine, yea and th officer shall bee discredited. . . .[56]

The arrangement of records in the four treasuries certainly could have contributed to the possibility of misplacement. They were left in the various chests, baskets, cupboards, bags, and drawers in which they were found. Agarde's meticulous and detailed description of the arrangement certainly helped ensure that records could be found and replaced correctly. Though the language seems cumbersome today, Agarde took care to systematically and logically explain where the records were located and what they were:

> There is a little Roome adjoyning to the same Courts, wherein are three Chests, In which are Records placed, viz. The first Chest next to the Doore, containeth Pleadings of the *Quo Warranto coram Iusticiarys itinerantibus*, and *Placita Corona*, and Placita de Iur. & Ass. in and through the most part of the Shires of England, in King Edward the firsts time. Only some two shires

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[53] Arthur Agarde, comp., "The Compendium of the Records in the Treasury," in *The Antient Kalendars and Inventories of the Treasury of His Majesty's Exchequer*, edited by Francis Palgrave (n. p., 1836), 2: 313.

[54] Hallam, *Domesday Book Through Nine Centuries*, 114–15.

[55] Hallam, *Domesday Book Through Nine Centuries*, 114.

[56] Agarde, "The Compendium," 314.

put into a Bag, and some one shire, for the more easie finding and Preseruation thereof.[57]

Indeed, because of such complicated arrangement in the treasuries, his inventory often reads like a list of clues for some kind of ancient treasure hunt:

> In a little cupboard in the wall, next ye north window at the fudermost end m'ked thus, Collected: 1610: are conteyned divers recordes of accompts 'tc. bound up in bundles, and on every bundle the contents written, which are alsoe entred into a booke and conteyned twoe leaves. . . .Then returninge backe by the wall is a press marked * wherein are contenied, coffers and boxes or olde evidences touchinge the landes one the Spencers, the father and the sonne.[58]

One can see, therefore, that in this work, Agarde provided a detailed map of the treasuries and guided his readers through their labyrinthine rooms, halls, and cloisters, and the contents therèin. He described and listed such vital records as accounts of the treasons of Thomas More, Bishop Fisher, the Earl of Devon, and others; Papal Bulls; treaties of peace between England and France, and England and Spain; patents of Henry VIII conferring the lands of dissolved monasteries; and records relating to Henry VIII's divorces, to name but a few. Documents concerning many kings and queens, artifacts such as seals, plate, receipts for jewels, and many other interesting items are listed in his inventory. Throughout the work there is other evidence of Agarde's labor.[59] He described certain contents of a chest, then added such phrases as ''put into order by me'' or ''abbreviated by me into a booke covered with redd lether.''[60] Agarde's inventory is an exemplar of such industry and detail except in describing the fourth treasury. Because it was located in the cloister of the Abbey behind two massive doors and under lock of five strong keys, Agarde confessed he took notes quickly and did not stay long.[61] In spite of this and other shortcomings, Agarde's *Repertorie* is quite a feat of archival description as well as a useful guide to many of England's important historical documents.

But was it unique? Was Agarde the first to produce such an important tool? One cannot truthfully claim innovation on Agarde's part in compiling and creating his finding aids. After all, he did not live and work in a vacuum. Since this particular period of English history was ripe for such efforts, it is hardly surprising to find others engaged in activities comparable to Agarde's.

[57] [Arthur Agarde], *The Repertorie of Records. . .* (1631; reprint, *The English Experience: Its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile*, no. 291, Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1971), 19.

[58] Agarde, ''The Compendium,'' 326.

[59] McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age*, 92.

[60] Agarde, ''The Compendium,'' 329–30.

[61] McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age*, 92–93.

Robert Smith, recordkeeper for the city of London, and Richard Langley of the Merchant Taylors' Company were two of Agarde's colleagues credited with enhancements in their repositories. Smith compiled transcripts, indexes, and catalogs in addition to facilitating access to the records. His calendars are achievements similar to Agarde's in improving information retrieval[62] in an age which saw both "increased interest in record keeping and archives generally" and "an explosion in governmental activity."[63]

Another of Agarde's contemporaries was Brian Twyne of Oxford. Twyne, too, made compilations of the records in his care as well as designing a plan of organization for documents relating to the college's rights and land entitlements.[64] Twyne's work has been described as one of deliberate archival effort:

> It is important to note the thoroughness and detail of Twyne's work, the painstaking corrections, the careful insertions and the cross-references designed to lead a searcher through the pages. The tone of the catalogue is not one of casual antiquarianism. Twyne was absorbed by the single-mindedness of his archival purpose. The volumes are not the notebooks of an antiquary, but an archive catalogue prepared with a objective task in view, the ordering of all the documents in an archive according to a set pattern.[65]

The question remains, then, what, if anything, sets Agarde's work apart? Or, does his importance lie merely in his being part of the whole—one of many who contributed to improved archival practice?

C. H. D. Coleman claims May McKisack has made Agarde into "something of a hero."[66] Although McKisack points out that he is somewhat overlooked, she acknowledges that while Agarde's catalog is a "model of clarity" and quite useful, it is also "superficial."[67] Perhaps Coleman read too much into McKisack's statement: "Despite his heroic efforts to reduce it, confusion still reigned among the public records when Agarde died in 1615."[68] Coleman himself states "that Agarde's own achievements have probably been underestimated."[69] McKisack seems to get to the heart of the matter, however, when she makes the connection that Agarde's true importance lies in the fact that he was both archivist and scholar: "He was much more than a mere

[62] Piers Cain, "Robert Smith and the Reform of the Archives of the City of London, 1580-1623," *London Journal* 13 (1987-88): 3–16.

[63] Cain, "Robert Smith," 3, 8.

[64] C. M. Woolgar, "Two Oxford Archives in the Early Seventeenth Century," *Archives* 16 (1984): 258, 271.

[65] Woolgar, "Two Oxford Archives," 271.

[66] Coleman, "Arthur Agard and the Chamberlainship of the Exchequer," 64.

[67] McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age*, 85, 91, 93.

[68] McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age*, 93.

[69] Coleman, "Arthur Agard and the Chamberlainship of the Exchequer," 67.

custodian and classifier. He was a genuine antiquary with a passion for seeking origins: his epitaph in the cloister of Westminster Abbey justly describes him as 'diligens scrutator' of the royal records deposited nearby."[70] McKisack also stresses that Agarde was a lawyer, which was considered an added value for Elizabethan archivists.[71] She claims, therefore, that Agarde was familiar with critical portions of the documents.[72]

Hallam, too, regards Agarde's contributions to archival practice rather highly: "Through him, the office of deputy chamberlain gained an archival and scholarly quality it had not had before."[73] This is not necessarily in dispute; however, while Coleman acknowledges that Agarde's position was loftier than his antecedents, he stresses events and circumstances that shaped Agarde's career rather than any deliberate effort on Agarde's part to advance archival practice or enhance his office.[74] And although Hallam calls Agarde's inventory "the earliest finding aid to be produced by a record keeper,"[75] this paper has previously made note of a "finding aid" created by a fourteenth-century recordkeeper.[76] While defining Agarde's innovations may be merely a matter of semantics, one may fairly question any claim to describe his work as original or unique.

But that is not the point. It does not really matter if Agarde was first or earliest, or if he single-handedly brought order to the chaos of British public records. Agarde's worth lies in the fact that as scholar, lawyer, and archivist, he brought a more rigorous approach to both use of and access to the records. His contributions were notable because they were the result of his regard for the records as a lawyer, his use of the records as a scholar, his description of the records as an archivist, and, therefore, his in-depth knowledge of the records as a citizen of Tudor England. One affected the other, and together they affected the state of the public records. In addition to his production of inventories, descriptions, and catalogs, Agarde left behind a portrait of an archivist in Elizabethan England and instructions for those who followed him. In this, Agarde played a critical role in advancing recordkeeping principles. He was influential not because he was necessarily unique, but rather precisely because he was a man of his times, working and making contributions to both an evolving British society and archival practice. As Agarde preserved and promoted British history, he created a legacy for to-

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[70] McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age*, 85–86.

[71] Cain, "Robert Smith and the Reform of the Archives," 3.

[72] McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age*, 85.

[73] Hallam, *Domesday Book Through Nine Centuries*, 115–16.

[74] Coleman, "Arthur Agard and the Chamberlainship of the Exchequer," 66–67.

[75] Hallam, *Domesday Book Through Nine Centuries*, 116.

[76] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, plate I.

day's archival profession. An analysis of his achievements helps advance our understanding of the evolution of modern archival practice.

Agarde died in 1615 at the age of seventy-five.[77] He left much behind to show for his long life: in retaining, exploring, and explaining the written record, he devoted his life to making sense of another Tower of Babel. A passage from a charter by King Aethelred the Unready, dated 995, can serve as both prologue and epilogue for Agarde's life and work: ''Whatever is transacted by men of this world to endure for ever ought to be fortified securely with ranks of letters, because the frail memory of men in dying forgets what the writing of letters preserves and retains.''[78]

[77] *The Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. ''Agarde, Arthur.''

[78] Keynes, ''Royal Government and the Written Word,'' 226.