



## The Royal Succession

*Maurice Druon*

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## **The Royal Succession** Maurice Druon

“This is the original Game of Thrones.” George R.R. Martin.

'No woman shall succeed in Salique land'

Louis X is dead, poisoned, murdered, by the hand of Mahaut d'Artois. Her plan is simple – to clear the path to the throne for her son-in-law Philippe. However, there is the small matter of Queen Clemence and her unborn child.

As the country is thrown into turmoil, Philippe of Poitiers must use any means necessary to save his country from anarchy. However, how far is he willing to go to clear his path to the throne and become King in his own right?

## **The Royal Succession Details**

Date : Published January 2nd 2014 by HarperCollins (first published 1957)

ISBN :

Author : Maurice Druon

Format : Kindle Edition 352 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Cultural, France, Medieval

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# From Reader Review The Royal Succession for online ebook

## Martin Hernandez says

La Ley Sálica fue un cuerpo de leyes promulgadas a principios del siglo VI por el rey Clodoveo I de los francos. Fue la base de la legislación de los reyes francos hasta que en el siglo XII el reino de los francos desapareció. Este código regía las cuestiones de herencia, crímenes, lesiones, robo, etc. y fue un importante elemento aglutinador en un reino como el franco, compuesto por varios grupos y etnias.

Una parte muy concreta de este código sobrevivió a los reyes francos, y pervivió en la historia europea durante varios siglos: se trata de aquella que prohibía que una mujer heredara el trono de Francia, e incluso que pudiese transmitir sus derechos al trono a sus descendientes varones. La realidad histórica, no obstante, es que esta prohibición no fue establecida en Francia sino hasta 1316, con la muerte del rey neonato Juan I de Francia, y que su aprobación se debió a una manipulación de la antigua ley de los salios, motivada por intereses políticos y dinásticos para que no accediera al trono la hermana del niño muerto, sino su tío (Felipe V de Francia).

Esta es la base a partir de la cual se desarrollan los hechos narrados por **Maurice DRUON** en la cuarta entrega de "Los Reyes Malditos", donde mantiene el estilo interesante y absorbente de las tres partes anteriores.

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## Elena says

4.5 stars.

I've waited so long to continue this series, and I was a total fool because *The Royal Succession* was a fantastic read, probably my favourite so far. I am so glad I got back into this world.

The story was great, it was full of political intrigue, scheming and engaging battles of wits. After Louis X's murder the country is in turmoil, and we mainly follow Philippe of Poitiers as he struggles to gain control, but there is also the storyline of the election of Pope Jean XXII, which was very fascinating.

Philippe might be my favourite character of the series, (view spoiler) Cunning, ambitious and resourceful, his dialogues are always a pleasure to read. It is true that he doesn't have much of a conscience, but he is not as bad as his mother-in-law Mahaut, whose ruthlessness reaches even higher levels in this book. However, she remains one of the most intriguing characters, and she reminds me more and more of Olenna Tyrell from ASOIAF.

The secondary plotline of Guccio and Marie (view spoiler)

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## Jennifer says

This was my favourite in the series so far! (I read the English translation of this book, called 'The Royal Succession'. Amazingly detailed with hardly a boring spot (okay, the election of the new Pope, John XXII, in 1327 might have been a bit dry but still had wonderful details about the man himself, such as his belief that

Judgement Day has not yet occurred since there is only one Judgement Day, and therefore no one is occupying Heaven or Hell and no one will until Judgement Day occurs, which will not be until after the demise of all living people on the Earth). Pretty 'avante garde' for his time, no? Of course this view was not at all popular among his peers. Anyway, I digress. This book was one of the most harrowing I have ever read, because of what Mahaut does to the successor of King Louis. (Or at least she and everyone else THINKS one thing has happened but quite another actually has.) Sorry for that but I don't want to give anything away! This series is a MUST READ. Wonderfully written and eminently exciting.

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## **Matt says**

Druon sets out a great continuation in the Accursed Kings series. With Louis X dead (and known to be poisoned by some), all eyes turn to the extremely pregnant Queen Clémence to determine who shall assume the throne. With no clear male heir, a Regent must assume the role of running France in the meantime. All eyes turn to the late king's brother Philippe, whose desire for control inebriates him and those in his inner circle. Passing legislation surrounding the succession of French monarchs, Philippe ensures no woman may ever ascend, including the presumed bastard child of the late king's first wife. As the plot thickens inside the court, Philippe flexes his muscle elsewhere, in hopes of garnering more land for France under his control. His cutthroat actions do nothing but sour him amongst his county neighbours and leaves the door open for more conflict. Philippe turns to influencing the stalemated Conclave, in hopes of ensuring the new pope eats from the hand of the French monarchy. In time, the plan falls together flawlessly. Back in court, Queen Clémence gives birth to a son, though his birth is complicated by breech placement. King Jean I is sent to be crowned, though Philippe is assured his regency powers shall remain in tact for at least another fifteen years. King Jean will require a wet-nurse, to uphold the dignity of the queen. Royal courtiers attend a convent to find a new mother who could play the role perfectly, having just given birth herself. The new mother is none other than Marie, our less than fortunate maid from stories past. Bringing her baby with her, young Marie becomes the royal wet-nurse and takes things into her own hands, noting the similarity between her son and the newborn king, all the while holding royal aspirations close to her heart. Druon could not keep disaster from flooding the story and by the end, all the reader presumed was in place has been turned on its head, with many a thread left dangling and demanding attention. A page-turner and one that pushes some great plot lines forward, sure to share the final few books in the series.

Druon uses this book to turn the tides on the larger series, with a few pitfalls that create branch-off story lines and pushes minor characters to the forefront. The avid series reader will see that all those who have taken their place on the throne have turned inward, searching to better things for themselves in the name of greater France. I am left to wonder what changes could be forthcoming as a faux King sits on the throne and the rumours of poisoning of the previous two monarchs reach a boil. Druon has much ground to cover and little time, making the upcoming fifth book a sure success in its storyline for all readers prepared to take the leap.

Kudos, M. Druon for ramping up the excitement and yet keeping the character pool from becoming too concentrated.

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## **Mieczysław Kasprzyk says**

Maurice Druon's "Accursed Kings" series is an easy read but don't let that fool you. "The Royal Succession"

was so packed tight with intrigue and underhanded dealing, sprinkled with the odd murder or revolt, that one had to really keep on one's toes... whilst reading easily. The king is dead, his wife is pregnant but there is, of course, a vacuum - and a position of power that could become permanent if the child-to-be-born doesn't quite make it. Nature and Politics abhor a vacuum.

While we're at it, the Papal Crown is vacant and it doesn't look like anyone is going to fill that empty space in a hurry... unless, perhaps, things are pushed a little? Power. It's all about Power.

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## **Cera says**

This book focuses on the accession of Phillip V of France, who reigned in the early 14th century. It's fourth in a series which I advise reading from the beginning - it's worth it!

Druon's novels seem so different from more recent historical fiction; he's very present as an authorial voice telling the story to the reader, and loves dropping in to provide psychological analysis of his characters' decisions, as well as the occasional bit of ironic information about their future. Somehow, though, this doesn't detract from the sense of reality that these books have for me; the characters seem real and immediate in their concerns even as the narrative voice reminds me that they're distant and strange. The psychological analysis makes for very vivid characters, and thus the personalities of the historical figures are quite strong in my mind, which is going to be great fun when I read more actual history of the era.

I have no idea what the prose in the original is like, but I'm pleased by Humphrey Hare's translation; it's clear and readable and there are some great descriptive phrases.

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## **Kalliope says**

The fourth volume of the Accursed Kings saga develops, mixed in with a very entertaining plot, another episode in the history of the end of the Capetian dynasty. Upon the death of Louis X, the first son of the 'Accursed' King Philippe IV (damned by the Grand Master of the Knights Templar), the second brother, also named Philippe, gets hold of the Regency first and of the Crown second. And thus this son became Philippe V.

Druon proposes an intrigue in which poison, lies, kidnaps etc move the threads. His proposition is credible enough.

A second plot is the election of Pope Jean XXII, the second of the Avignon Popes. This had been another complex episode of the times. The Papacy had been vacant for two years, and again Druon proposes another credible unfolding of events.

But the main interest of this volume, called after all *The Law of the Males*, for me was the explanation if

offers of how the Salic law came to be adopted by France to govern monarchical inheritance. Druon thinks that this was another curse for French history.

The origins of this law as practiced from the Middle Ages onwards, lie in a Frankish Civil Code from the time of the **Salians** (4th and 5th Centuries). The complete Salian code governed many aspects, but one of its elements was exhumed by the protagonist of this volume, to designate himself Regent and Heir and King.

With this new reformulation of the law, women were pushed aside from the line of royal inheritance. Entirely. Similar to this, but not as severe, is the **Agnatic law** in which the male is given priority over an older female, but women are not entirely eliminated from the line.

Philippe V became King because he succeeded in establishing this manipulated interpretation and after the death of the infant son of his older brother, instead of the throne going to the infant's elder sister, Jeanne of Britany, he got himself crowned as the next male-kin to the (soon poisoned?) new born.

Drone's description of the ostentatious crowning ceremony at Reims, without forgetting to envelop it with riveting suspense, is another highlight of this fourth volume.

I look forward to the remaining three volumes of this highly entertaining and edifying series.

Fascinating times those were.

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### **Patricia says**

As soon as this book arrived, I dropped everything else to read it. It's the best one yet. Louis is dead, Clemence is pregnant and Philippe has a strategy to capture the crown - will it work? The ins and outs of this book, the improvisation in the face of the unexpected, the carefully crafted paperwork to guarantee the desired outcome, you are on the edge of your chair, biting your nails, with every chapter.

Alas. I only wish I had read it more slowly! The next book in the series won't be available until March! Because it is history, we all kind of know how it is going to turn out, but Druon turns historical stick figures into flesh and blood, power-hungry, entitled driven people.

The book reads like a novel, but at the end, Druon has provided detailed footnotes, and the footnotes, too, are fascinating. They give backstory, they give motive, they give the extra details that give texture and substance to the novels. This is a fabulous series.

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### **Jessica Cassidy says**

For a translated book, I really loved this novel, and the following five books in the seven book series (the seventh apparently has not been translated from French yet, and there's no way I'm corrupting my budding Spanish language skills by attempting to read a novel in French). I am normally super wary about reading

translated works, because, understandably, something always gets lost in the translation. This translator, Humphrey Hare, back in 1958 when he was doing his thing, did a fantastic job.

I am reviewing the series as a whole in this entry, so beware: there are spoilers.

First, the characters are well developed and compelling. Almost everyone in the first novel except two of the main characters are killed off by the end of the sixth book, and by killed off I mean: burned at the stake, quartered, poisoned (so much poisoning!), strangled, suicided, bungled with a red-hot poker up the arse (sorry, King Edward II) and driven mad. If you like *The Song of Ice and Fire* because it's nontraditional in that major characters die and it's awful and exciting and it keeps you on your toes, you'll like this book series. In fact, George R.R. Martin has an endorsement on the new 2013 addition, calling this series "the original *Game of Thrones*." And before they die, each character is his own tyrant, with his unique story, and the ways that their lives intertwine are well described. My favorite is Robert of Artois, who is also the novelist's favorite. I won't tell you how he dies.

Second, the novel is fast paced. Action abounds. This series is a definite page turner. Each novel ends at the beginning of some new twist of fate or folly or force. I gobbled these books up in less than a month.

Third, the vocabulary is rich and it makes reading on a Kindle super enjoyable because you can think, "Wait, Kindle, what does catamite mean?" And then Kindle informs you, "That's a boy groomed for sexual purposes, a 'pubescent boy who was the intimate companion of a young man in ancient Rome, usually in a pederastic relationship,'" and you're like, right ON! So not only are you learning about the early 1300s of the French dynasty and the plot twists of how destructive the Capets were, but you're also picking up new (okay, archaic) and exciting words! I loved the use of archaic terms. They added to the Medieval tone of the story.

The only sort of downer to this book is that the author uses foreshadowing like a blunt axe. "From that kiss, she would go on to mother the King of France!" "How their hearts would break, if they knew then that they would not see each other again but once in their lives, and then, only after ten years have passed from this romantic farewell." I am not even certain that I can correctly label what he does as foreshadowing; it's more akin to ruining some major plot twists with a single sentence. But since this is, after all, historical fiction, I guess he's entitled.

Five stars. Recommended strongly.

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## **Marita says**

The king is dead... long live the king! Except that there is no king. Louis X is dead and his widow Clémence is expecting a baby who might be the future king. As various characters scramble for the position of Regent there is much intrigue. Philippe de Poitiers in particular is very shrewd and cunning. In this complex but skillfully told tale there are all sorts of succession issues. Woven through the story from the beginning of the series there is also the sub-plot of the young lovers Guccio and Marie. The various characters in the series continue to develop.

I agree with other reviewers that this is the best book in the series thus far. Be sure to have plenty of Kleenex at hand, and raise a glass to the wonderful description of the dramatic coronation.

The translation is excellent too, and the writing never appears to be stilted. Praise also for the very interesting

## Gabrielle says

This is my second or third time reading through "The Accursed Kings" series by Maurice Druon, and I have to say, I am always impressed by it. It is, by far, my favorite historical fiction series. Druon's skill with language and characterization makes events that happened over six hundred years ago sound fresh and fascinating. It is also a intricate study on politics and how egos and personalities have influenced history.

The fourth installement of the series (weirdly translated as "The Royal Succession" in English, when the original title actually meant "the law of males" - a reference to laws installed to prevent women from inheriting powerful positions) opens at the death of Louis X. His uncle Charles de Valois and his brother Philippe de Poitiers both have their eye on the regency, as Louis' heir is still in the womb. While this bickering takes place in Paris, a different power play is going on at the papal conclave, where the French and Italian cardinals try to put their favorite on the throne of Avignon... or bring the papacy back to Rome.

The focus of this book, as the title suggests, is to see who will be king after Louis. His wife Clémence was pregnant at the time of his passing, but this was still no certainty of an heir, since it was possible that her child was a girl; in which case, Marguerite de Bourgogne's daughter would have been Louis' oldest living child. But there had never been a situation where a woman was heir to the throne before, and as there were several power-hungry male relatives vying for power, a female sovereign was not a desirable option. Very soon, questions of allegiance and legitimacy push the characters towards intrigue and conspiracy.

This might be my favorite book of the series after "The Iron King" because it puts some of my favorite characters at the forefront. Philippe the Tall is - by far - Philippe the Fair's most competent son, and the only one of the three who has natural leadership. He is shrewed, cool as a cucumber and actually thinks of the kingdom of France, and not simply of his own satisfaction. The dialogues that involve him are always sharp and delightful. Featured prominently in this tome is also the Cardinal Jacques Duèze, an unorthodox contender for the role of Holy Father. The two men understand each other very well, and they will use their keen minds to settle the conclave's struggle once and for all in a most interesting way... Duèze's life is a fascinating story, and the only thing I can fault this book with is not digging further into the background of this most unusual man of the cloth.

And of course, Philippe's machavellian mother-in-law, Mahaut d'Artois is unleashed in this episode: the lengths to which she will go to see her daughter as queen of France are impressive and horrifying, but I still loved every word of her story arc. Still locked in a vicious conflict with her nephew Robert over the county of Artois, she plots, schemes and strikes. Her lady in waiting, Béatrice, is almost as scary as her with her secrets and witchcraft. She drops hints of gruesome crimes into Mahaut's willing ears and sets into motion terrible chains of event.

Guccio and Marie's love story turns to tragedy in this episode, and I never fail to feel a sharp stab of pain for the poor lovers, who's connections with the mighty and powerful ruined their happiness. Their story is not a simple romantic addition to the political arc of the book: it is based on a real and intriguing story (look for John I of France on Wikipedia if you are curious). History can sometimes be even stranger than fiction.

As you can imagine, the historical details embedded in the narrative are impressive. From the sort of food eaten, to the remedies prescribed for various ailments and details of ceremonial clothing and social protocols,

Druon brings the reader back to a complicated era that we often romanticise or oversimplify.

Reading these books again, it becomes increasingly obvious to me that Mr. George R.R. Martin shamelessly ripped Druon off. His stories of fantastical powerplays, assassination and ruthlessness are very obviously inspired by "The Accursed Kings", and some characters of the "Song of Ice and Fire" series are clearly revampings of those found in Druon's work. Oh well, they say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery...

5 solid stars. Now I'm off to go find the 1972 TV series DVDs!

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### **Princess says**

Totalmente interesante, mi humilde punto de vista, estos libros son tan interesantes, que cada vez que termino uno, enseguida quiero empezar el siguiente, en ningún momento me he aburrido.

Las intrigas son fabulosas, esa continua pelea que tienen toda la vida, La Condesa Mahout de Artois con su sobrino, el Conde de Artois, es una pelea que acarrea muerte por envenenamiento, personas en la cárcel, en fin entre esa tía y ese sobrino la pelea por el condado del Artois es hasta la muerte, ninguna da tregua. Hermosa lectura!!!!

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### **Richard Hannay says**

Quizá porque los mismos hechos narrados cogen velocidad, quizá porque la estructura de la novela está tan perfectamente ensamblada es éste el mejor de los cuatro libros que llevo leídos de la serie "Les Rois Maudits". Hay una cierta artificiosidad en la resolución de la historia de Guccio y Marie pero en general todo es razonable, creíble y está estupéndamente contado. Durante unos momentos pensé que el bueno de Druon se deslizaba hacia el cenagoso terreno en el que Dan Brown ha construido su obra?. Una rápida visita a wikipedia me saca de mi error: cuanto se narra es cierto, o mejor, lo fue en la mente y en la reclamación de un "impostor inverosímil" como Tom Castro, como Anna Anderson como el Pseudo Nero, Terentius. Tiempos pasmosos.

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### **Sud666 says**

Louis X is dead. Poisoned by Mahaut d'Artois. The throne of France is open, or is it? Queen Clemence is pregnant and the unborn child, if male, is the true heir. Meanwhile, Louis' brother, Philippe, the Count of Poitiers, becomes the Regent.

This is the story of how Philippe negotiates the treacherous landscape of French Royal politics. Having secured himself as Regent, until Queen Clemence gives birth, he manages to apply the old Salique (often called "Salic" in English) law where only a male may inherit the Crown. The various conflicts and intrigues contained in this tale I shall not get into since that's why you should read the book. I will point out some respect for Philippe and his machinations.

The story ends with the death of Jean I, the son of Queen Clemence, and her subsequent travels, as well as the rise of Philippe to become Philippe V, King of France aka Philippe the Long. Full of intrigue, murder, lies and violence this is why I chuckle when I hear parents cooing to their daughters and calling them

"Princess". Are you SURE you want your daughter to be a "Princess"? Maybe you should read history and see what kind of a life it REALLY is. To sit on the Throne takes a combination of talent, birth, luck and ability-otherwise you won't sit long. NO ONE in power is EVER truly "innocent" or "good". If you believe that well, no offence, but you aren't dealing with reality just wishing something were a certain way. Might as well be religious.

Reading the real life stories of the historical figures who created the nations we now live in will humble some of the machinations we see on Game of Thrones. So, especially if you live in Europe, if you pass by the old palaces and castles of these historical figures- pay them some due respect. Consider your actions in their shoes and wonder if your reign would have lasted even a week. Something to think about. But do take the time to read this wonderful historical fiction about the powerful houses vying for the Crown of France. This is an epic time for both the Crowns of England and France- weak Kings (Edward II and Louis X) will lead their lands into a time of deep conflict and rebellion. Highly recommended.

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### **Martin Yankov says**

This was... quite depressing, actually.

The fourth installment in Druon's historical fiction series is certainly the best one so far. The characterization is better than ever, the plot moves quickly and the writing style is more than enjoyable. We finally see what I can only imagine is an ending to some pretty important storylines that started way back in the first book.

Reading this I appreciate the previous novels more than I did when I first went through them. Some of the events in them seemed kinda random and forced, but now I see everything was a great build-up for this. And all the pieces that were laid down in the early novels just fit perfectly here. I'm so glad I didn't give up on the series, even when it looked more mediocre than great at the beginning.

I'll take a little break, because the final events in this novel really broke my heart. But I know I'll return to the series sooner rather than later.

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