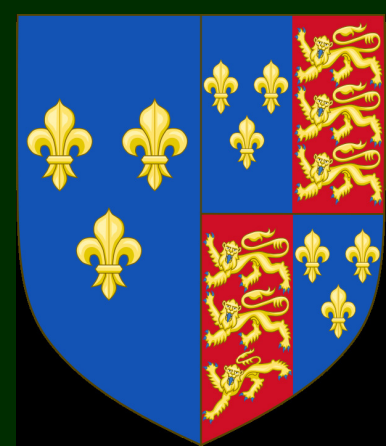
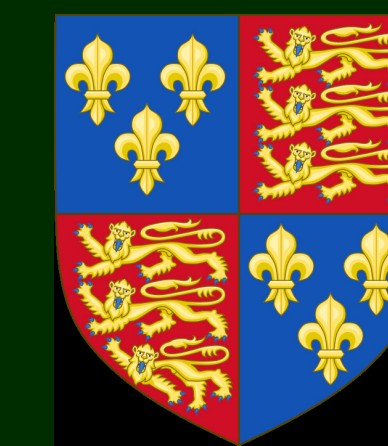




BEDFORD'S RULE OF FRANCE (1422-1435)

Were the English bound to lose the French crown?



Introduction

Joan of Arc be damned! Or should she? As it turns out, the young roasted virgin had barely anything to do with the English expulsion from the French soil, although it is true that she woke up lenient and idle minds and compelled them to take arms.

The English expulsion should mostly be seen as an English problem. The Lancastrians gradually lost interest in their French realm. As soon as Bedford died, France became Winchester and Gloucester's personal chessboard meanwhile the young king Henry VI proved unable to strengthen his authority over a factious government.

Yet, Bedford himself didn't manage to root the Lancastrian dynasty in France. He made some very smart choices as how to govern the continental kingdom, however he lacked the necessary networking skills to ingrain Henry VI legitimacy as king of France.



Bedford Book of Hours, ca 1423
Bedford kneels before St George

Materials and methods

The results of this short study are mostly drawn from side notes that were taken during a master thesis research about a 15th century French captain named "La Hire".

This master thesis research dealt heavily with more than 40 narrative sources and perused many edited archived documents. The schematics (or *sociographs*) illustrated in this poster sum up some of the knowledge acquired through the two years day-to-day scrutiny of those sources.



Bedford Book of Hours, ca 1423
Duchess Anne kneels before St Anne, Virgin Mary and the Christ Child

Wait a minute...

who's that Bedford guy again?

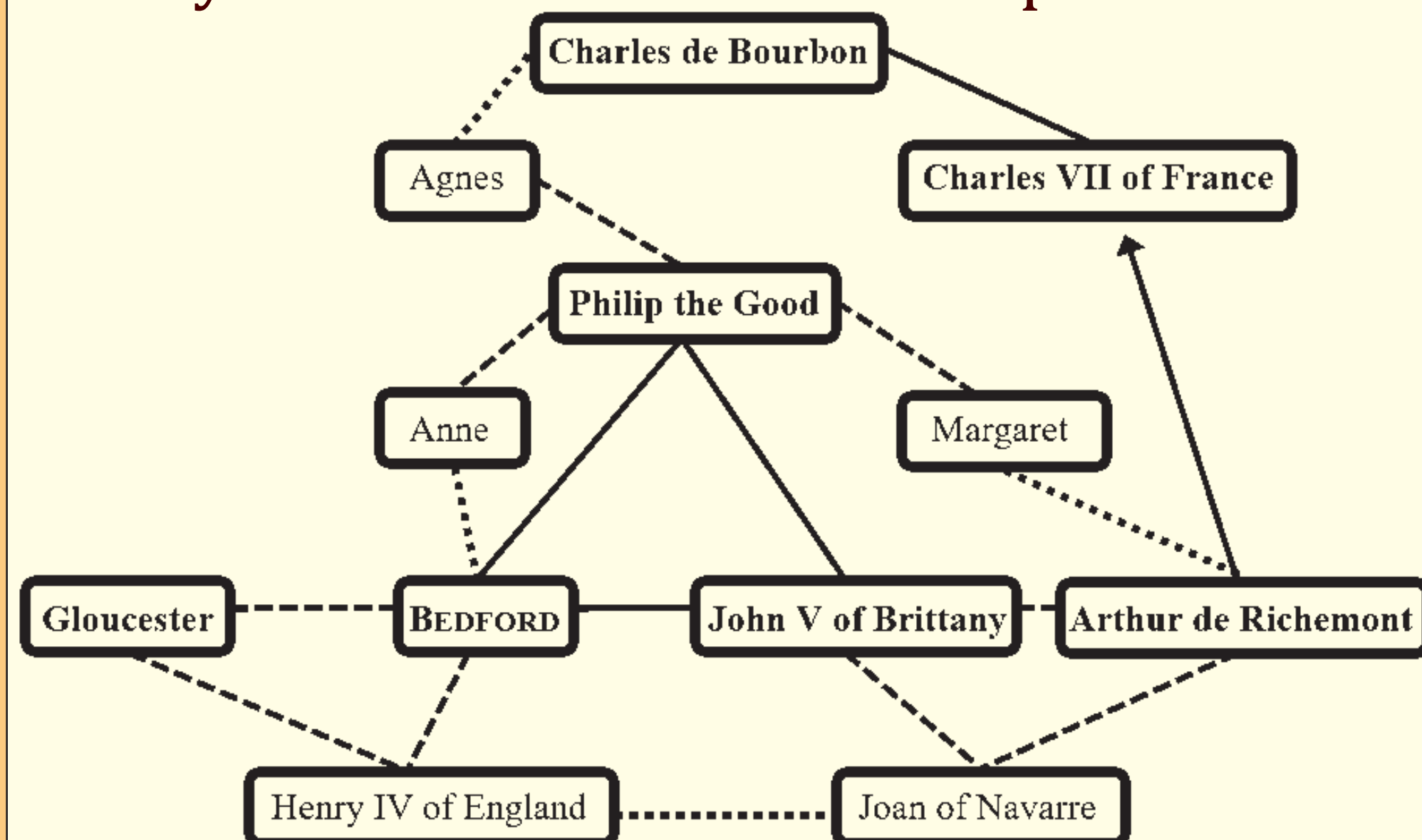
John of Lancaster, 1st duke of Bedford, was born in 1389 and died in 1435. He was Henry IV's third son, Henry V's brother and Henry VI's uncle. Since his elder brother, Thomas, duke of Clarence, died in 1421, he rose to power after Henry V's death, in 1422.

Thanks to the "Traité de Troyes", signed in 1420 by Henry V and Charles VI, king of France, Henry VI, who was Henry V's only son and Charles VI's grandson, inherited both realms of England and France when Charles VI passed away a very few months after Henry V, in 1422.

At that point, someone had to rule France on Henry VI's behalf for he was barely one year old. Therefore Bedford stepped up and became regent of the mighty continental kingdom. However, Charles VI's own son, Charles VII, didn't relinquish his rights to the throne.

No less than a three decade long bloody civil war ensued...

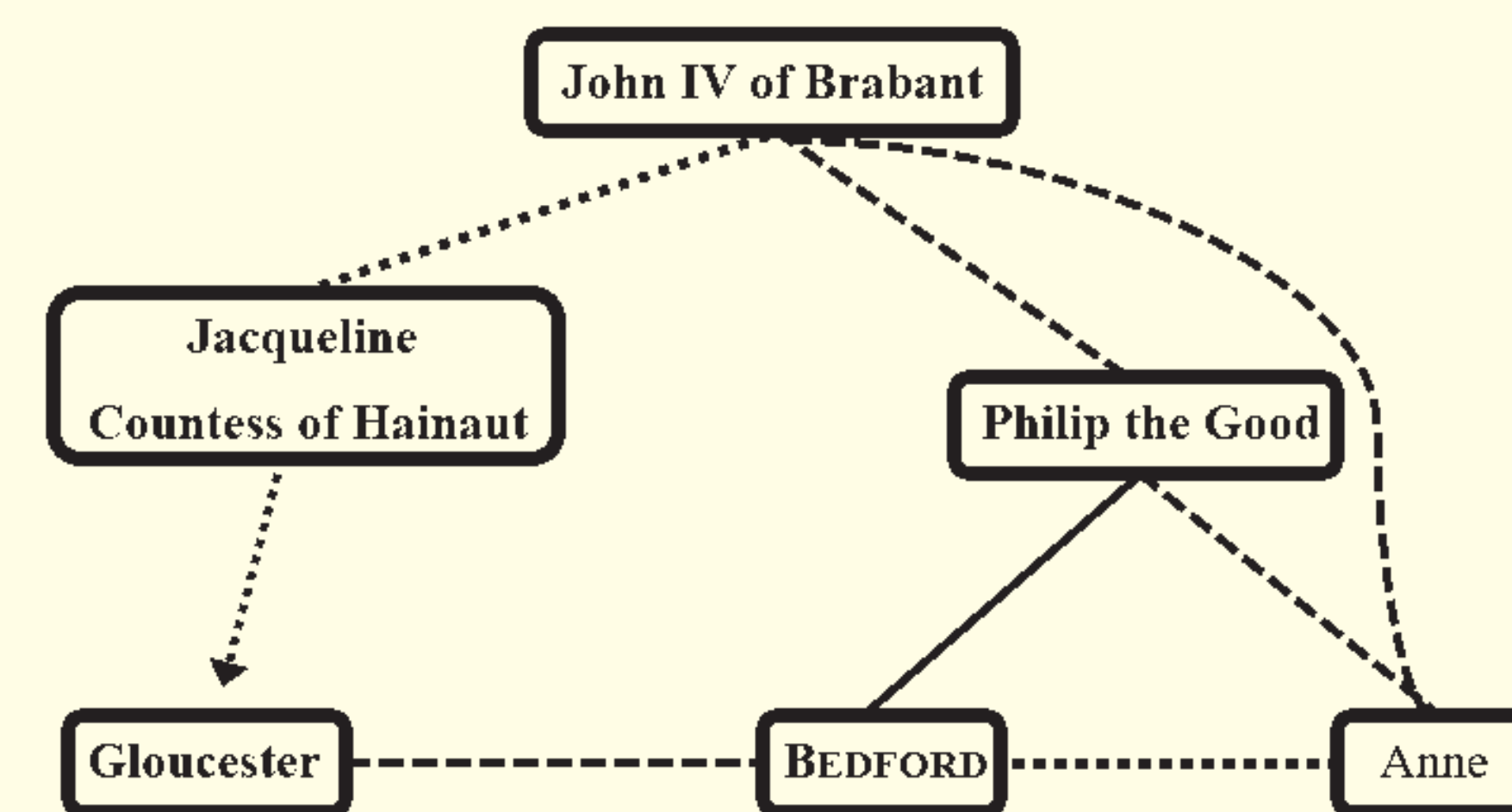
Bedford quickly proved to be a fierce and gifted ruler. Yet he managed the French people better than he managed the French aristocracy. He founded a university in Caen, donated to various religious orders, assigned French ecclesiastics to key government offices, chased bandits and restored law and order around Paris, then he also triumphed from his enemies several times on the battlefield. Therefore he secured his seat as regent of France and gained universal respect and admiration as well from his allies than his foes. Nonetheless his lack of trust toward the French though Burgundian nobility and the English monopoly of high military offices backfired on the long run. Bedford never managed to cure the realm from his many factious and treacherous political divisions, nor did he outsmart them.



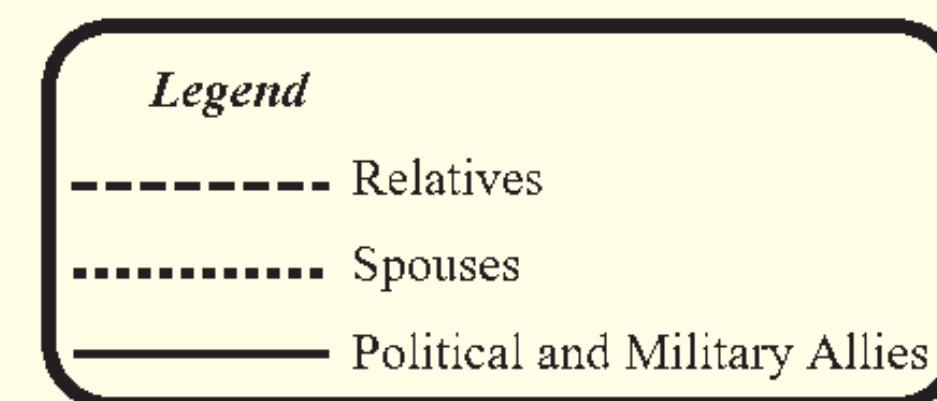
Sociograph showing Bedford's alliance network by 1423.

Since Bedford's father, Henri IV, wedded Joan of Navarre, Bedford was stepbrother to the duke of Brittany. However, gentle John V of Brittany carefully followed his own boisterous brother's political guidance, Arthur de Richemont. Richemont grew up at the Burgundian court and was England's hostage since Agincourt (1415). As Bedford sent him in Brittany, John V pleaded allegiance to the "Traité de Troyes" and agreed to contract a formal alliance with England and Burgundy against Charles VII. That alliance was sealed in Amiens, 1423, when both Bedford and Richemont betrothed two of Philip the Good's sisters. Yet Bedford and Richemont had a falling out when the regent refused John V's brother any high military rank in his army. Richemont then quickly manoeuvred to join Charles VII and received the highest military title when he was given the connétable's sword, in 1425. John V immediately sided with his brother and left the alliance he had just agreed upon.

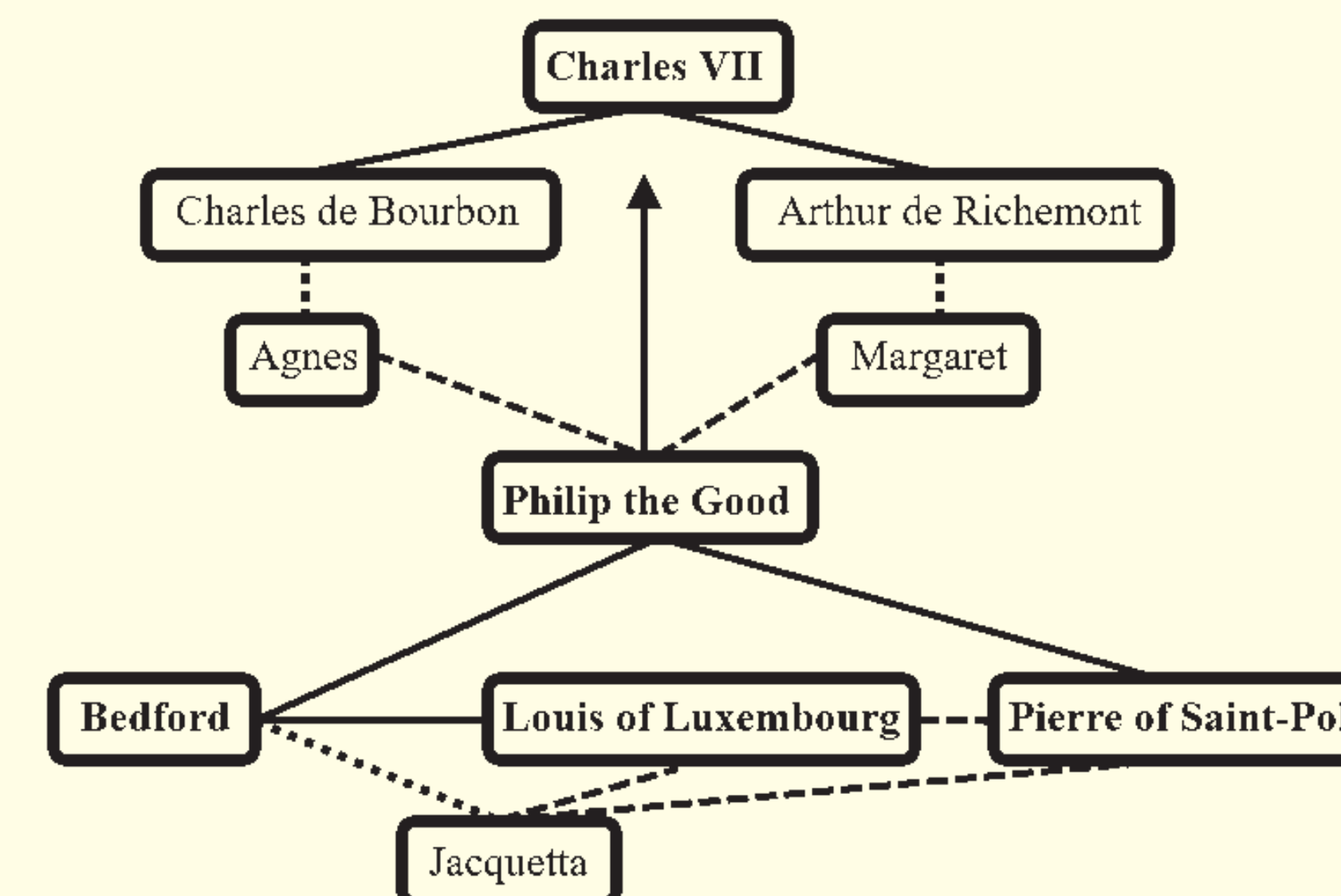
The Story



Sociograph showing Bedford's alliance network by 1424.



Bedford also had a troublesome brother of his own, Humphrey, duke of Gloucester. Searching his purpose in life and society, full of himself and chivalric virtues, Gloucester flew to Jacqueline's rescue. The countess of Hainaut wanted to break off what she thought was a very unhappy marriage. Her husband's cousin, however, wouldn't agree to it. Philip the Good held Jacqueline to her engagement toward John IV of Brabant. Gloucester, deprived of her would-be fiancée, then waged war against the duke of Burgundy and plotted his murder. Bedford had to neutralize his brother's machinations in order to save the Anglo-Burgundian alliance, as they were losing Brittany's support that very same year (1424). Gloucester had to step back, which hurt his pride. The hatred he then felt against Philip the Good would never falter. The feeling proved to be mutual.



Sociograph showing Bedford's alliance network by 1433.

Soon the Anglo-Burgundian alliance only held together thanks to Anne's good will and diplomatic abilities. Wife to the regent and sister to the duke of Burgundy, she was held in high regard by the people of Paris, if not as the real queen of France. Her death in 1432 came as a tremendous blow that nearly shattered the alliance and Bedford barely managed to save it by marrying Jacquetta of Luxembourg the year after. This young 17 years old girl was daughter to Philip the Good's most powerful vassal, Pierre, count of Saint-Pol, whose brother, Louis of Luxembourg, had been appointed chancellor of the realm by Bedford. The Luxembourg family was committed to the "Traité de Troyes" as no other French noble family and they'd try anything to keep the Lancastrians on the throne. However, Philip the Good only waited seven days after Bedford's death, in 1435, to turn to Charles VII and forsake his pleads of allegiance to the notorious "Traité de Troyes" that he had himself helped to settle.

Conclusion

The Lancastrian loss of the French crown was not due to some early proto-nationalist reaction to any English "occupation" of the land. Nationalists came long afterwards and explained history through their own bias. Joan of Arc was neither any cause to the English dynasty being expelled from France.

Though he proved to be a gifted ruler, Bedford couldn't rally the French nobility to his cause. He treated them with mistrust and didn't associate them fully to his military campaigns. It just so happened, so to speak, that Philip the Good also waged war to Charles VII. Yet the Anglo-Burgundian army (if there was ever such a thing), as a whole, always was on the edge of collapsing.