

Summary

In the article I have attempted to describe a 1681 semi-forgotten work of an erudite French Benedictine Jean Mabillon (1632–1707): the *De re diplomatica libri sex*. Although it is true that this book is just one of his several works, I regard it as the essential one. The work was written by Mabillon to defend the reputation of France and the Benedictine Order, and in particular of the royal abbey of Saint Denis. The good reputation of Saint Denis was endangered by Papenbroeck who came out against the authenticity of many old Benedictine documents (in particular charters) allegedly dating back to the 6th century. By using dated and authentic documents, Mabillon surveyed every aspect of mediaeval charters, creating the field of study known as diplomatics. Mabillon is not the exclusive author of the work: almost the entire 4th book was written by his fellow-worker Dom Michael Germain. The work, however, was praised by author's contemporaries (Papenbroeck himself was one of the first who recognised the value of the Mabillon's work), until a broad European Republic of Letters finally lost interest in this book. Its renaissance in Western Europe dawned thanks to Benjamin Guérard, and the heyday of studying this work dates from the turn of last decades of the 19th century. The main aim of this study was to remember the work as an example of pioneering and epoch-making works.

Keywords: diplomatics; Jean Mabillon; historiography; France

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