

Peindre et Ecrire le Temps au Moyen Âge Time in Word and Image in the Middle Ages

calendar and reconciling it with the Christian calendar for religious and mercantile purposes. ILLUSTRATION 4. The Middle Ages was rife with magic and superstition, hence the importance of games of prediction, such as the Tarot. Here we present a fifteenth-century Lombard Tarot Card of the Sun. According to readings of the Tarot, the Sun is a positive card, symbolizing discoveries made while fully conscious and wide awake, a card of intellect, clarity of mind and youthful energy. Sometimes two children, predicting a birth, accompany the image of the Sun. ILLUSTRATION 5.

Chronicles and genealogies show chronological time, while pilgrimage documents suggest the conception of cyclical time, the changes of generations marked by the coming of Christ and the Last Judgment. Medieval history, as recounted in standard chronicles, always began with the First Age of the World (evidence of God's creation) and ended with the Last Age, signaled by the coming of Jesus Christ. In this way, two temporalities merged: the sacred time of the past and the historical time of the present. Pilgrims similarly merged two temporalities as they sought protection of long-dead saints during their journeys in order to ensure their own speedy ascent from Purgatory in the future.

How did people tell time in the Middle Ages? Honorius of Autun, a twelfth-century Christian theologian and encyclopedist, divided the hour into 4 points, 10 minutes, 15 parts, 40 moments, 60 signs, and 24,560 atoms. Most people, however, employed simpler mechanisms in their everyday lives. A bell, a candle, and an image of an astrolabe remind us how different methods of telling time were in the Middle Ages, in an age before clocks and cell phones. ILLUSTRATION 6.

Full descriptions and images are available in an online web catalogue starting February 9.