

Life among strangers: Exile in the Middle Ages

IN THE 1300s, A ROVING GANG OF THUGS went on a crime spree in France that included robbery, homicide and burial — possibly alive — of a body in a public privy. One of the gang's members was Philip "Little Phil" Cavillon, an Englishman who'd been sentenced to exile in France.

The lives of Little Phil and other exiled English subjects in the late Middle Ages are the focus of a new book by historian William Chester Jordan, the Dayton-Stockton Professor of History. By studying English judicial documents, petitions to the king for pardon and surviving French records, Jordan pieced together the stories of these forsaken individuals in the scholarly work *From England to France: Felony and Exile in the High Middle Ages* (2015, Princeton University Press).

Not all of the exiles were murderers, but most had committed a serious crime, such as arson or theft, and then sought refuge in a church where they confessed their sins. Protected from execution by the church, the offenders were condemned to exile.

Between 1180 and 1350, thousands of men and the occasional woman went into exile, or "abjured the realm," boarding ships in the port of Dover and arriving, often penniless and des-



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perate, in the village of Wissant in a Dutch-speaking region of France. Some sought work as farm laborers, servants or prostitutes, while others, like Little Phil, resumed their lawless behaviors.

Jordan's stories of these exiles bring to life what it was like to live at the height of the Middle Ages, an era that was prosperous by medieval standards but was close enough to subsistence level that theft was a threat to survival and punishable by death.

The practice of sentencing of criminals to exile probably arose as a backlash to the harsh punishments — notably hanging — allowed by medieval English law, Jordan said, drawing comparisons to the use of exile by France, which transferred felons to French Guiana, and Russia, which shipped political prisoners to Siberia.

"When society realizes that too many people are being executed," Jordan said, "you begin to see the

rise of alternatives such as exile, which itself contributed to many deaths, but far out of sight of the authorities."

—By Catherine Zandonella

PHOTO BY FRANK WOJCIECHOWSKI



tions. In a study published on Dec. 18, 2014, in the journal *Cell*, the researchers demonstrated that an enzyme known as Sirtuin 4 acts as a guardian of cellular energy production.

"The finding has broad implications in human health," said Ileana Cristea, associate professor of molecular biology, who led

Energy boost: Study sheds light on mitochondrial disease

INSIDE OUR CELLS, TINY FACTORIES convert nutrients from food into a form of energy that cells can use. Failure of these factories, known as mitochondria, can lead to metabolic disorders that are difficult to diagnose and even harder to treat.

Now researchers have identified an important regulator of cellular energy production that could aid in the diagnosis and treatment of a range of condi-

the study. "Stress, nutritional deficiencies and viral infections can impact Sirtuin 4 functions and trigger dysfunction in energy metabolism," Cristea said. "With this knowledge, we now have a new regulatory point that can be targeted in therapeutic interventions."

Cristea's team discovered that Sirtuin 4 turns off energy production by removing certain protein modifications, called lipoylation, from a key part of the energy-making machinery, called the pyruvate dehydrogenase complex.

The research team included former Postdoctoral Researcher Rommel Mathias and Associate Research Scholar Todd Greco in the Cristea laboratory, as well as collaborators Thomas Shenk, the James A. Elkins Jr. Professor in the Life Sciences, and Yibin Kang, the Warner-Lambert/Parke-Davis Professor of Molecular Biology.

Cristea's research is supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, and the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. **—By Catherine Zandonella**