Medieval History Seminar

Veranstalter: Miriam Rürup, German Historical Institute Washington; Jochen Schenk, German Historical Institute London
Datum, Ort: 13.10.2011–16.10.2011, Washington D.C.
Bericht von: Jan-Hendryk de Boer, Seminar für Mittlere und Neuere Geschichte, Universität Göttingen

The seventh meeting of the Medieval History Seminar, which was again jointly organized by the German Historical Institute Washington and the German Historical Institute London, took place in Washington, DC on October 14-17 2011. Invited as participants were sixteen young medievalists – six from Germany four from the United Kingdom, four from the United States, one from Switzerland, one from Denmark – who were joined by conveners Stuart Airlie, Michael Borgolte, Patrick J. Geary, Frank Rexroth, Barbara H. Rosenwein, and Miri Rubin, the organizers Miriam Rürup, Jochen Schenk and Jan-Hendryk de Boer, to discuss current research in the broadly defined field of Medieval History. In her opening lecture, BARBARA ROSENWEIN (Chicago) outlined the emerging field of a history of emotions of the middle ages, thereby illustrating why emotions are historically variable. During the middle ages different emotional communities evolved, ranging from communities that left hardly any room for the rhetoric of emotions to such that were constituted by a highly emotional and affective way to act and talk.

In the course of the following three days, the participants' papers were discussed in eight panels. All papers had been distributed in advance to the seminar. Each panel therefore began with an introduction of both papers by two fellow participants acting as commentators followed by a short first reply by the papers' authors and general questions and answers. As in the years before, this procedure ensured intense and thoroughgoing discussions. The opening panel started with a presentation of INGO TRÜTER's (Goettingen) paper on the social and cultural capital that men of learning living around 1500 could acquire with a doctoral degree. As a striking example he introduced a jurist from Tübingen whose degree served as a prerequisite for social rise. Seen from this perspective, earning a doctoral degree was a costly investment that could pay off in the future. The dissertation of CHRISTOPHER KURPIEWSKI (Princeton) analyzes the relationship between the German mystic Christina von Stommeln (1242–1312) and her Dominican confessor representing the Dominicans' acceptance of the *cura monalium*. Kurpiewski's attentive examination of the confessor's letters and treatises revealed these texts as stylized documents of a spiritual friendship and as an apology for *cura*, which he portrayed as integral to the Dominican mission.

The second panel was opened by ULLA REISS's (Frankfurt) paper on the evolvement of technical language in English account books during the twelfth century. As her paper demonstrated, scribes of the royal English exchequer tentatively employed different notations and signs, which over time developed into something like an 'expertise'. By adopting useful solutions and dismissing other efforts these scribes unintentionally partook in the creation of a specialized language of accounting. While it is often argued that organizations provide the frame for technical language to develop, Reiss argues that in the case of the English exchequer it was from the successive development of a technical language in the Pipe Rolls that an organization emerged. MIRIAM WEISS (Trier) presented the results of a close reading of the *Chronica maiora* by Matthew Paris, showing how a comparison of the different redactions of the text helps to bring into light Matthew Paris's multifaceted strategy of 'intentional oblivion' as a means of adapting his *Chronica* to changing audiences and circumstances.

In the third panel, ANGELA LING HUANG (Copenhagen) presented her econo-historical study of the international dimension of Hanseatic cloth production (i.e. cloth production in Hanseatic towns) in the fifteenth century. Using material from London custom accounts, she demonstrated how local government enforced high quality standards on imported goods, thus becoming important players in Hanseatic cloth production and trade. BENJAMIN POPE (Durham)

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followed the suggestions of German *Landesgeschichte* to re-examine the relationships between townspeople and rural nobility in late medieval Erfurt and Nuremberg, arguing that the lack of an overall narrative and the varieties on the phenomenal level should be interpreted as results of the sources' social function as documents of the interaction between urban and rural elites: One group used the other as a means to determine its own identity.

The fourth panel was opened by JOHANNA DALE's (Norwich) comparative study on saints' feasts and royal coronation dates in England, France and Germany in the High Middle Ages. A detailed comparison of the coronation dates showed that they were well chosen to mark the significance of the event and to place it in a liturgical frame. This strategy served to load political events with biblical and historical symbolism. This was followed by a lively discussion of TILLMANN LOHSE's (Berlin) finished doctoral dissertation on 'the continuity of the foundation' of a collegiate church in Goslar, in which the author argued that the continuity of the foundation from the Middle Ages to present times was disclosed as retrospective abstracting from the many continuities of the foundation on different social, liturgical and economic levels.

In the fifth panel, MICHÈLE STEINER (Fribourg) took an intercultural perspective on the life of Muslim subjects in the Norman kingdom of Sicily. Studying everyday interaction of Muslims and Christians, Steiner pointed out that Normans were willing to adopt principles of Islamic law in their legal contracts with Muslims. This she regarded as further proof of the Normans' well-known strategy of stabilizing their power by assimilating to local traditions. JOHN YOUNG (Flagler College) likewise considered everyday contacts between different religious groups: Jews and monks were frequent if unlikely economic partners in the High Middle Ages. But by comparing a vast array of documents from the German empire, Young argued that Jews and monks interacted regularly in negotiations and discussions with each other. Shifting the focus from extraordinary interactions such as religious debates to the fairly unremarkable everyday interactions, contacts between the two communities were presented as usually normal and peaceful.

In the sixth panel, THOMAS GREENE's (Chicago) paper on Haimo of Auxerre's emotional eschatology followed the path opened by Barbara Rosenwein in her opening lecture. In order to reconstruct the standards in the emotional community that was formed by the monks of Auxerre, Greene examined Haimo's emotional eschatology in his comments on the emotions experienced by souls after death. With Hildegard of Bingen, CHRISTOPHER FLETCHER (Chicago) chose another famous medieval religious author as subject of his paper. Her letters became the hallmark of a subjective theology. Letters were Hildegard's foremost means to put her theological convictions into practice to direct and save souls. Writing letters to abbots and abbesses played a crucial role in implementing her reform theology.

The unforeseen cancellation of JASON BERG's (Leeds) anticipated paper on monsters and monstrous language in the Cosmographia of Aethicus Ister left plenty of time to discuss KRISTIN SKOTTKI's (Rostock) finished dissertation in the seventh panel. In an intercultural perspective, she studied Latin First Crusade chronicle as historic sources and literary products. These chronicles should no longer be read as truthful mirrors to reality, but instead as multilayered representations of possible world views and as drafts of the role of the self and the other – begging for the readers' seal of approval.

On the last day of the conference, MAXIMILIAN SCHUH (Munich) opened the eighth panel with an overview about the results of his recently finished dissertation on fifteenth century humanism at the university of Ingolstadt. Shifting the focus from the well-known great humanists like Konrad Celtis to the more mundane ways in which the new learning evolves at the faculty of arts, Schuh was able to show how the professors and their students felt their way in order to merge new methods and insights with older traditions. Finally, ELEANOR JANEGA (London) tried to highlight the spatial dimensions of Jan Milic's sermons, arguing that the preacher's calls to reform responded to a changing urban culture in Prague during the reign of Charles IV.

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The conveners used the final discussion to pass on some practical and theoretical advice on how to write a comprehensive and thorough dissertation. Nevertheless, it did not seem easy to harmonize idealistic and pragmatic claims. Whereas Michael Borgolte encouraged the young medievalists to open their gaze to non-Latin cultures, Patrick J. Geary reflected on the different cultural importance of the Middle Ages to European and American scholars: Identities of modern day European remained in one way or another anchored in Europe's medieval heritage; on the contrary, for Americans the Middle Ages were a foreign culture, comparable to that of ancient China or ancient India. There was general agreement among the participants that events like the Medieval History Seminar and institutions like the German Historical Institutes, with their ability to assemble young and senior medievalists from different countries and backgrounds, offer researchers important and much needed opportunities to compare their methods and approaches with colleagues from different scientific communities – and thereby to acquire the competence to identify shortcomings in their own scientific traditions.

Conference overview:

Opening lecture: Barbara Rosenwein (Loyola University, Chicago): Emotional Embodiment and the Medievalist

First Panel
Chair: Michael Borgolte (Humboldt University, Berlin)

Ingo Trüter (University of Goettingen): Von Häusern, Pergamentbriefen und roten Baretten. Was ein Doktorgrad wirklich wert ist.

Christopher Kurpiewski (Princeton University): The Confessor's Stone: Christina von Stommeln and Dominican Acceptance of the cura monialium

Comments: Michèle Steiner, Christopher Fletcher

Second Panel
Chair: Patrick Geary (University of Richmond/UCLA)

Ulla Reiss (University of Frankfurt a.M.): Wissen, Lernen, Herrschen. Fachsprache in den englischen Rechnungen des 12. Jahrhunderts

Miriam Weiss (University of Trier): Der Prozess des Vergessens. Beobachtungen in den Chronica maiora des Matthaeus Parisiensis

Comments: Johanna Dale, Thomas Greene

Third Panel
Chair: Jan-Hendryk de Boer (University of Goettingen)

Angela Ling Huang (Univeresity of Copenhagen): Hansestädtische Tuchproduktion im internationalen Handel des 15. Jahrhunderts

Benjamin Pope (Durham University): Relations Between Townspeople and the Rural Nobility in Late Medieval Germany

Comments: Maximilian Schuh, John Young

Fourth Panel
Chair: Barbara Rosenwein (Loyola University, Chicago)

Johanna Dale (University of East Anglia, Norwich): Saints' Feasts, the Liturgical Calendar and Royal Coronations, ca. 1050-1250

Tillmann Lohse (Humboldt University, Berlin): Die Dauer der Stiftung. Eine diachronisch vergleichende Geschichte des Kollegiatstifts St. Simon und Judas in Goslar

Comments: Ulla Reiss, Benjamin Pope

Fifth Panel
Chair: Jochen Schenk (GHI London)

Michèle Steiner (University of Fribourg): Muslimisches Leben unter christlicher Herrschaft – Islamisches Recht im normannischen Sizilien

John Young (Flagler College): Unlikely Partners: Jews, Monasteries, and the German Economy in the High Middle Ages

Comments: Eleanor Janega, Angela Ling Huang

Sixth Panel
Chair: Stuart Airlie (University of Glasgow, UK)

Jason Berg (University of Leeds): Monsters and Monstrous Language as a Means to Define Frontiers in the Cosmographia of Aethicus

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Ister (cancelled)

Kristin Skottki (University of Rostock): Lateinische Chroniken des Ersten Kreuzzugs in kultur- und historiographiegeschichtlicher Perspektive

Comments: Christopher Kurpiewski, Ingo Trüter

Seventh Panel
Chair: Miri Rubin (Queen Mary, University of London)

Thomas Greene (Loyola University, Chicago): Beatus, id est felix: Haimo of Auxerre's Emotional Eschatology

Christopher Fletcher (University of Chicago): Hear the Most Noble Father Admonishing You: Subjective Theology in the Letters of Hildegard of Bingen

Comments: Miriam Weiss, Tillmann Lohse

Eighth Panel
Chair: Frank Rexroth (University of Goettingen)

Maximilian Schuh (Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich): Institutionelle und individuelle Aneignungen der studia humanitatis. Artistischer Rhetorikunterricht an der Universität Ingolstadt im 15. Jahrhundert

Eleanor Janega (University College, London): Jan Milic of Kromeriz and the „Church of Prague": Urban Culture, Flux, Response and Gain

Comments: Kristin Skottki

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