

Concepts and their transmission in the medieval Euromediterranean. Theoretical and visual expressions of 'political' thought in situations of 'cultural' encounter

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The conference, hosted and financed by the German Historical Institute in Paris, fused the topics of two research projects: a project on cultural exchange carried out by the research group „FranceMed“ at the GHI Paris between 2008 and 2010, and the project „Political Language in the Middle Ages. Semantic Approaches“, directed by Bernhard Jussen and managed by Gregor Rohmann at the University of Frankfurt.

The transmission of political concepts was dealt with on a Euromediterranean scale, covering the period from the 7th to the 15th century and a region framed by Scandinavia in the north, the Iberian Peninsula and northwestern Africa in the west, the Arabian Peninsula in the south and the 'imperial' centers of Constantinople, Baghdad and late medieval Moscow in the east.

Methodologically, the general theme was approached from various angles. Several papers reflected theoretically on the definition and analysis of concepts and their transmission. SILKE SCHWANDT (Frankfurt am Main) presented the research method of historical semantics, which she applied by presenting a comparative analysis of the Latin term 'virtus' with its terminological cooccurrences in the works of Augustine and John of Salisbury. MARGIT MERSCH (Kassel), who dealt with urbanistic planning in the Eastern Mediterranean of the 12th to 15th century, highlighted the difference between systematic and theoretical conceptual thought on the one hand, comparatively unreflected and instinctive forms of conceptual thought relevant in situations of pragmatic activism on the other. ELISABETH RUCHAUD (Düsseldorf) applied the French concept of „lieux de mémoire“ to transfer studies. Using the Holy

Sepulchre in Jerusalem as an example, she showed how, on the basis of information received from the Holy Land, medieval Western European Christians created numerous architectural imitations and a specific liturgy to reproduce and reenact the special character of this 'navel of the earth'. Neither exact imitation, nor undistorted transmission, but the creative adoption and development of one or several elements typical of the Holy Sepulchre brought Jerusalem to the Latin West.

Other papers concentrated on different variants of expressing political thought. Dealing with the formative period of the Qur'ān in the 7th century, MOHAMMAD ALI AMIR-MOEZZI (Paris) brought attention to the fact that this text found its final form in a period characterized by internal strife among the early Muslims. As opposed to the traditional Sunni interpretation of the text's history, later Shi'ite sources claim that the original Qur'ānic text was highly distorted by groups who had only adhered to Islam relatively late but who eventually managed to take over power in the 7th century. LUTZ ILISCH (Tübingen) focused on the expression of political authority in early Islamic numismatics, tracing different phases. Early Islamic coins were modelled modeled on Byzantine coins and still feature human images. The latter were soon replaced by Qur'ānic verses whose ideological message varied according to political context. As opposed to other numismatic traditions, Umayyad and Abbasid rulers generally abstained from engraving their names on coins. Exceptions can be noted, however, when different rivals tried to claim caliphal power. THOMAS LIENHARD (Paris) traced early medieval Medieval Latin discourses on the humanity and the political organization of the Slavs. Sources from neighbouring Bavaria and Hamburg localized the Cynocephali, i.e. dog-headed men already known from antiquity, among the Slavs. The latter were also called Canaanites, not only in reference to the Latin term for 'dog' (canis), but also in regards to the rich and fertile 'promised' lands they inhabited. Up to the 9th century, the Slavs were treated as a 'race' (genus) and were only divided into peoples (gentes) as soon as the Latin West began envisaging their conquest. In this context, the papacy formulated a claim on

this region by stressing its oriental roots vis-à-vis Byzantium. RANIA ABDELLATIF (Paris) dealt with Ayyubid architecture as one manifestation of political thought in the Middle East of the crusading era. She pointed out that the increasing number of Friday mosques, the diffusion of the madrasa, the introduction of Islamicate elements of decoration from the east as opposed to the abandonment of Byzantine artistic decorations went hand in hand with the rise of jihād-ideology propagated to unite the Muslims against the crusaders.

Several papers presented various case studies on processes of transmission and reception. A certain percentage focused on the analysis of titles as expressive manifestations of authority. ANDREW MARSHAM (Edinburgh) reflected on the relation of the early Umayyad titles „amīr al-mu‘minīn“ and „khalifat Allāh“ with Romano-Byzantine precursors, thus emphasizing links between late antique and early Islamic manifestations of authority based on a shared pool of interpretative paradigms. DANIEL FÖLLER (Frankfurt am Main) compared two Scandinavian conceptions of kingship represented by the terms „konungr“ and „rex“. Whereas the first applied to a particular prestigious early medieval Scandinavian warlord, the latter applied to Christianized rulers over an ethnically defined group who displayed their kingship in ways known also from other parts of the Latin West. Both concepts of rulership coexisted for a certain period, until the latter eventually replaced the former. DANIEL KÖNIG (Frankfurt am Main) analysed what Arabic-Islamic scholars made of Latin-Christian titles of authority. Contact with the Latin West provided knowledge about the ideological implications of certain titles (pope, king of the Goths), deprived certain titles of their historical dimension (imperator, consul), distorted their etymology (amiratus) or adapted them to new circumstances (comes), but also introduced the Arabic-Islamic world to new constitutional phenomena such as communal rule.

Other papers concentrated on the transmission of concepts of political and religious legitimacy. MAGALI COUMERT (Brest) provided an analysis of al-Mas‘ūdī’s list of Frankish kings, pondering on the question if the latter’s fragmentary and distorted character

reflected the Carolingian claim to legitimate rule as passed on to Umayyad Córdoba by early Catalan transmitters. MAYTE PENELAS MELÉNDEZ (Granada) highlighted that the political theology of the late antique Latin-Christian historiographer Orosius of Braga did not survive the transmission to and reception by Arabic-Islamic historiographers, who mainly used the Arabic version of this work to bolster their factual knowledge on pre-Islamic history. Comparing several Christian sources on Islam’s prophet Muḥammad, DAVID THOMAS (Birmingham) addressed a labyrinthine process of polemic reception spanning several centuries and traced a specifically Christian interpretation of the latter as a prophet sent not to the entire human race but only to the Arabs. THOMAS WETZSTEIN (Heidelberg) analysed the use of the Latin term and concept ‘plenitudo potestatis’, i.e. full jurisdictional power, demonstrating how this concept originated in imperial Rome to be adopted by the late antique papacy. In the late Middle Ages it was frequently used as a jurisdictional term, not only in canon law but also by several secular rulers including Frederic II. PASCAL BURESI (Paris) explained how a 13th-century Almohad decree from the Muslim West could come to be regarded as a textual model in a Middle Eastern formula of the early 15th century. When it became part of a collection of decrees, the text was deprived of its original ideological terminology, thus becoming acceptable to Middle Eastern Sunni scholars in spite of the fact that they regarded the Almohads as heterodox. DAN IOAN MUREȘAN (Paris) dealt with the diffusion of the imperial idea in Eastern Europe at the hands of the patriarch of Constantinople. Due to the fact that imperial coronation by the pope or the patriarch in Constantinople came to an end in the 15th century, Romanian princes of this period adopted titles reminiscent of empire because they were first consecrated by the metropolitan bishops in Moldavia and Wallachia, then – in an imitation of the ancient Byzantine coronation ritual – by the patriarch himself. Under Ottoman rule, the latter eventually gave permission to the metropolitan bishop of Moscow to consecrate Ivan IV in 1546.

A last section of papers addressed proces-

ses of mixing politically relevant heritages of different origin. Dealing with the question, if the Viking settlement of Normandy left a clearly definable imprint, ELISABETH RIDEL (Caen) reviewed linguistic evidence which points to influence on matrimonial traditions, possibly certain aspects of penal law, maritime techniques linked to whale-hunting and tidewrack as well as toponyms. All in all, however, the Scandinavian settlers introduced no new political concepts but integrated rather effortlessly into the existing landscape with its preexistent forms of conceptional political thought. GREGOR ROHMANN (Frankfurt am Main) dealt with the entangled development of two concepts of illness, i.e. falling sickness and dancing mania, comparing manifestations in late 13th-century Constance and Paris and interpreting the ecclesiastical sources on these concepts as manifestations of a discourse on inclusion and exclusion as expressed in (the lack of) bodily self-control. In the ecclesiastical interpretation several strands of tradition came together, ranging from the Platonic interpretation of mania to a specific exegesis of the biblical story about the murder of John the Baptist at the instigation of Herod's dancing daughter Herodias/Salome. Ideologically, people succumbing to dancing mania moved in a liminal space between salvation and illness. Geographically, dancing mania only appeared in the frontier zone between the 'Romanic' and the 'Germanic' sphere. MAURO ZONTA (Rome) analysed how, in their interpretation of texts by Aristotle and Boethius, late medieval Hebrew scholastics formulated ethical ideas that had originally been conceived and formulated by their Christian colleagues. He highlighted, nonetheless, that certain political ideas relevant to Christian scholars were not as important to their Jewish colleagues due to the fact that medieval Jews held no political power.

Finally, two contributions provided an alternative and overriding perspective on the conference's main topic. The film „Messages from Paradise“, presented and commented by DANIELA SWAROWSKY (Berlin/Rotterdam) and SAMULI SCHIELKE (Berlin), dealt with a contemporary case of transmission. The film addresses images and

visions of Europe prevalent in a particular town of Morocco whose inhabitants are confronted regularly with the summer visits of former residents who have found a living in the Netherlands. The film juxtaposes statements made by members of both groups, thus providing a moving insight into their difficulties of communication and the effects caused by the certain images of life in Europe as transmitted to those who stay behind. JÖRG FEUCHTER (Berlin) concluded the conference with an analysis of medieval cases of transmission that have been imagined by modern historiography. He highlighted that such cases of imagined transmission have to be interpreted in the light of the political context they were written in. He also pleaded for the necessity of considering the interpretative traditions concerning each case of transmission as to avoid coming to premature conclusions that interpret parallels as links and create connectivity where there is none. This paper was followed by a lively discussion on the reasons, objectives and methods of the study of transmission, the use and abuse of terminology, the popularity of specific concepts in certain academic circles and other topics, thus furnishing a fitting finale to a stimulating and highly communicative conference.

Conference overview:

Introduction

Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (Paris): *Guerres civiles et Écritures saintes aux débuts de l'islam: nouvelle grille de lecture*

Andrew Marsham (Edinburgh): *From hyparchos to khalifa? Umayyad Articulations of Monarchic Authority and their Contexts (661–750 CE)*

David Thomas (Birmingham): *Christian Portrayals of Muḥammad. The Politics of Condemnation and Accomodation*

Lutz Ilisch (Tübingen): *God and/or Men – Conflicting Concepts for the Formulation of Sovereignty in the Coinage of the 7th to 9th Century Caliphate*

Magali Coumert (Brest): *La continuité des rois des Francs*

Silke Schwandt (Frankfurt am Main): *Trans-*

forming virtue. A Semantic Career between Philosophy and Christianity

Daniel Föller (Frankfurt am Main): *konungr and rex. Scandinavian Semantics of Kingship in the Viking Age*

Elisabeth Ridet (Caen): *L'intégration des Vikings à la société franque au Xe siècle: un paradoxe politique et culturel à la lumière des données linguistiques*

Thomas Lienhard (Paris): *L'autonomie politique, un concept nomade (avec une attention particulière à l'Europe centrale)*

Elisabeth Ruchaud (Düsseldorf): *La mémoire des lieux saints de Jérusalem en Occident: transmission liturgique et architecturale*

Rania Abdellatif (Paris): *L'architecture du XIe – XIIIe siècle au Proche-Orient: Expression d'une nouvelle identité politique ?*

Margit Mersch (Kassel): *Transmission and Transformation of Urban Concepts in the Aegean after 1204*

Thomas Wetzstein (Heidelberg): *La papauté médiévale – un laboratoire d'idées pour la pensée politique en Occident?*

Dan Ioan Mureșan (Paris): *Le Patriarcat de Constantinople et la diffusion de l'idée impériale en Europe orientale*

Mayte Penelas Meléndez (Granada): *The Reception of Orosian Political Thought in Arabic Historiography*

Daniel G. König (Frankfurt am Main): *Offices and Titles. Terminologies of Latin-Christian Authority in Arabic-Islamic Sources*

»Messages from Paradise #2, Morocco: Netherlands« (Daniela Swarowsky – director / Samuli Schielke – camera) – Film and Commentary by DANIELA SWAROWSKY (Berlin/Rotterdam) and SAMULI SCHIELKE (Berlin)

Pascal Buresi (Paris): *De l'hétéro- à l'orthodoxie religieuse. Le formulaire au cœur de la normalisation du discours politique à l'époque almohade (XIIIe siècle)*

Mauro Zonta (Rome): *Aspects of Christian Political Ethics in Some Late Medieval Jewish Interpretations of Aristotle's Nicoma-*

chean Ethics, Book V, and Boethius' De consolatione philosophiae

Gregor Rohmann (Frankfurt am Main): *From Falling Sickness to Dancing Mania. Conceptualizing Bodily Expressions in Sacred Space in Late 13th-century Paris and Constance*

Jörg Feuchter (Berlin): *»Charlemagne's Jihad«? Transferts médiévaux imaginés par l'historiographie moderne*

Concluding discussion

Tagungsbericht *Concepts and their transmission in the medieval Euromediterranean. Theoretical and visual expressions of 'political' thought in situations of 'cultural' encounter.* 10.09.2012–12.09.2012, Paris, in: H-Soz-Kult 11.12.2012.