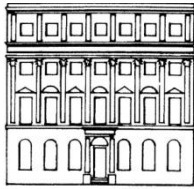


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Jan-Hendryk de Boer:  
*Medieval History Seminar*  
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*Medieval History Seminar.* Conference organized by the German Historical Institute Washington and the German Historical Institute London, with help from Jan-Hendryk de Boer (University of Göttingen), and held at the GHIW, 13–16 Oct. 2011.

The seventh meeting of the Medieval History Seminar, again jointly organized by the German Historical Institute Washington and the German Historical Institute London, took place in Washington, DC on 13–16 October 2011. Invited as participants were sixteen young medievalists—six from Germany, four from the United Kingdom, four from the United States, one from Switzerland, and one from Denmark—who were joined by conveners Stuart Airlie, Michael Borgolte, Patrick J. Geary, Frank Rexroth, Barbara H. Rosenwein, and Miri Rubin, and 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, 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 those that were constituted by a highly emotional and affective way of acting and speaking.

Over the following three days, participants' papers were discussed in eight panels. All papers had been distributed in advance of the seminar. Each panel therefore began with an introduction of both papers by two fellow participants acting as commentators, followed by a short initial reply by the authors and general questions and answers. As in previous years, this procedure ensured intense and thorough-going discussions. The opening panel started with a presentation of Ingo Trüter's (Göttingen) 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. Christopher Kurpiewski's (Princeton) dissertation analyses the relationship between the German mystic Christina von Stommeln (1242–1312) and her Dominican

The full conference programme can be found on the GHIL's website <[www.ghil.ac.uk](http://www.ghil.ac.uk)> under Events and Conferences.

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 evolution 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 'expertise'. By adopting useful solutions and dismissing other efforts these scribes unintentionally participated in creating a specialized language of accounting. While it is often argued that organizations provide the frame for technical language to develop, Reiss suggested that in the case of the English exchequer an organization emerged from the successive development of a technical language in the Pipe Rolls. 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 cast light on 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 cloth production in Hanseatic towns in the fifteenth century. Using material from London custom accounts, she demonstrated how local government enforced high standards of quality on imported goods, thus becoming important players in Hanseatic cloth production and trade. Benjamin Pope (Durham) followed the suggestions of German *Landesgeschichte* to re-examine relationships between townspeople and the 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 the result of the sources' social function as documents of the interaction between urban and rural elites: one group used the other as a means of determining its own identity.

The fourth panel was opened by Johanna Dale's (Norwich) comparative study of 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 cho-

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sen 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 Tillman Lohse's (Berlin) completed doctoral dissertation on the continuity of the foundation of a collegiate church in Goslar. In it, the author revealed that the continuity of the foundation from the Middle Ages to the present was the result of retrospective abstracting from the many continuities of the foundation at 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 between Muslims and Christians, Steiner pointed out that the 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 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. 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 ones, he presented contacts between the two communities 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. In Hildegard of Bingen, Christopher Fletcher (Chicago) chose another famous medieval religious author as the subject of his paper. Her letters became the hallmark of a subjective theology. Letters were Hildegard's foremost means of putting into practice her theological conviction to direct and save souls. Writing letters to abbots and abbesses played a crucial part in implementing her reform theology.

The unforeseen cancellation of Jason Berg's (Leeds) paper on monsters and monstrous language in the *Cosmography of Aethicus Ister*

left plenty of time to discuss Kristin Skottki's (Rostock) completed dissertation in the seventh panel. She studied Latin First Crusade chronicles as historical sources and literary products in an intercultural perspective. These chronicles should no longer be read as truthful mirrors of reality, she suggested, but instead as multi-layered 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 of 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 such as Konrad Celtis to the more mundane ways in which the new learning evolved in the Faculty of Arts, Schuh showed how the professors and their students felt their way in order to merge new methods and insights with older traditions. Finally, Eleanor Janega (London) highlighted 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.

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 is not easy to harmonize idealistic and pragmatic claims. Whereas Michael Borgolte encouraged 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. While the identity of modern-day Europeans remains anchored in Europe's medieval heritage in one way or another, for Americans the Middle Ages are 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, which bring together 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 academic communities – and thereby to acquire the competence to identify shortcomings in their own academic traditions.

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