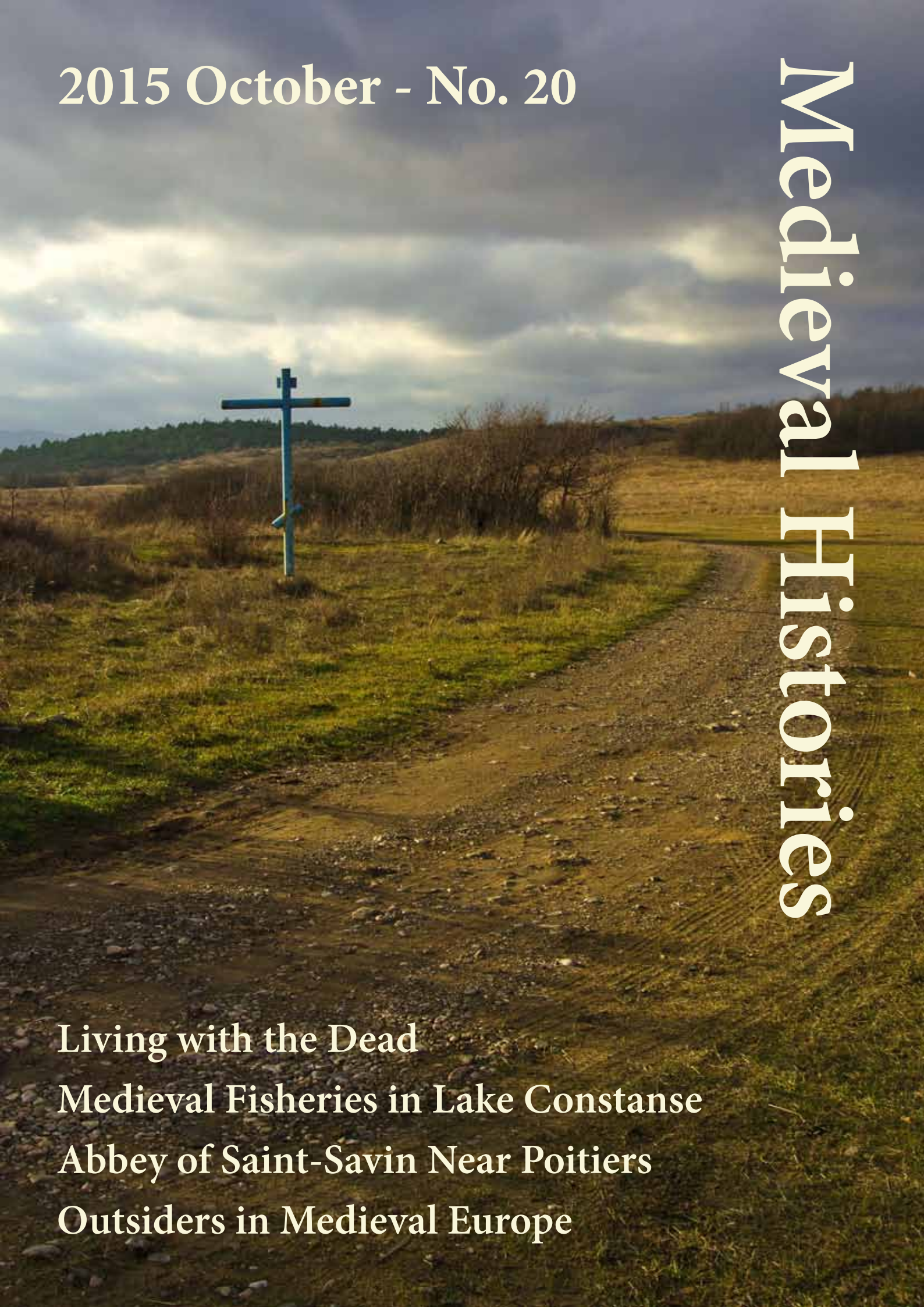

2015 October - No. 20

Medieval Histories

Living with the Dead

Medieval Fisheries in Lake Constanse

Abbey of Saint-Savin Near Poitiers

Outsiders in Medieval Europe

Unique Chance!

Manuscript from 1362 with Roman de la Rose for Sale

On The 18th of November Fraysse & Associés will auction off a French manuscript from 1362 containing the Roman de la Rose.

The 14th century manuscript of the Roman de la Rose in 4º contains 142 folios with 19 miniatures by Richard et Jeanne de Montbaston. Traces of smudge from fingers and a few stains of water may be found at the back. It was bound in green Morocco in the 18th century.

Richard de Montbaston was a well-known copyist, who owned an atelier in Paris in the 14th century. His wife, Jeanne de Montbaston, worked as illuminator in the workshop. Together, they are known for dozens of manuscripts of the Roman de la Rose. They lived in Rue Neuve Notre-Dame before 1338 – 1353, when he died. She inherited the workshop. Apparently – if the dating of the manuscript is correct – it belongs to the period after his death, when she managed the workshop on her own.

The manuscript is offered for a price between €100.000 – 150.000.

The manuscript is part of collection of 31 medieval illuminated manuscripts and paintings from the 13th to the beginning of the 16th century, which are put up for sale in November at Drouet. The sale is part of a public auction and buyers are warned that the sale is without warranty of any kind

Catalogue

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Roman de la Rose (Medieval Histories magazine 20129

Medieval Histories

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Photo (frontpage):

Old Wooden Cross in the Polish Countryside. © Radosław Kozik

Living with the Dead in Medieval Poland

In the Middle Ages Polish priests and theologians fought to eradicate old and traditional ways of cohabiting with the dead. It does not seem af if they have succeeded yet.

In the late Middle Ages the Polish concern for the salvation of the souls of the loved ones seemingly followed the teachings of the Church. According to this, the dead and deceased had passed over to a posthumous fate, which was entirely in the hand of God. Whether they were still in chains or had become saints, they were not lingering here. Any relationship with the dead could only be established if granted by God.

However, sermons, pamphlets and teachings tell a story of how the Polish people begged to differ. According to old traditional – Slavic – views and not least calendar, the dead were present in a much more concrete way and had important salvific as well as more mundane roles to play in the lives of the descendants.

Hence the living were obliged to care for the death at the funeral as well as all through the year. The whole year was imbued with ritual contacts with the dead, waiting for their arrival and presence, writes Beata Wojciechowska in a recent presentation of her research into the late-medieval folklore as preserved in the writings of the church.

Liminality

First of all the dead were present in the liminal zones on the borders of the villages or at cross roads. Her it was possibly to communicate with the dead souls and get an inkling of what the future might bring. But they might also be present beneath the table, which was indicated by the practice of letting crumbs of bread slip to the floor (something which the priests and theologians bickered about).

However, the dead were not present at all times. Again the concept of liminality makes sense, pointing to the solstices and equinoxes as calendrial events, when the dead were especially present and hopefully working with their descendants to secure success for the family, the farm and the agricultural output. The most intense period was hence Christmas Eve, when making wishes and divinations were prepared by setting out food for the deceased and spreading straw on the floor. Such rites have been described from most of Europe and medieval sermons and handbooks brim over with the complaints of the professionals.

Later, during spring the effigy of death was carried around the countryside. Made of hemp or straw it was dressed in human clothes and carried away to the border of the community, where it was destroyed by being drowned in the stream or swamps, encircling the settlement. At this point the spring awakening of the dead began.

Proper Burials and All Souls

One way of controlling this constant cohabitation between the dead and the living, was to insure that the dead were properly buried. Hence, the church was very diligent in securing the burial of paupers

Jakub Schikaneder: All Souls' Day. 1888. Source: Wikipedia

and princes, alike. “Those shall be condemned after whom candles will not be carried” claimed a Polish preacher in a sermon, writes Beata Wojciechowska (p. 43).

However, another way to “control” the heterodoxy of the populace was to hem the traditions in by establishing a church-controlled event, where the communion between the living and the dead might be envisioned. This led Abbot Odo in the end of the 10th century to create a new liturgy surrounding All Souls. Early on lightening candles on the graves of the deceased became part of this this solemn event in Germany and Eastern Europe. The tradition is known from the Middle Ages.

Although not explored in detail here, this tradition is known from stipulations entered into the last wills and testaments from Germany from the 14th century. (As told in Volkfrommes Brauchtum und Kirche im Deutschen Mittelalter. By Ludvig Andreas Veit. Freiburg in Bresgau 1936).

SOURCE:

The Remembrance of the Deceased in the Traditional Polish Culture of the Middle Ages
By Beata Wojciechowska (Jan Kochanowski University)
In: Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe
Series: ColleGium: Studies across disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Volume 18
Helsinki 2015
ISBN: 978-951-51-1221-7

READ MORE:

Saints and Souls

Between 1024 and 1033 the monks at Cluny began commemorating the dead souls on the day after All Saints...

Sweets for Souls

Our European traditions offer a selection of medieval traditional fare

Soul Cakes

The tradition of giving alms in the form of bread or cookies on All Saints and All Souls has medieval roots.

Souling

Traditions like souling and the distribution of soul-cakes helped to fuse the feasts of All Saints and All Souls

Medieval Fisheries in Lake Constance

Lake Constance – Bodensee – was early on renowned for its medieval fisheries. Remarkably, the focus was on sustainability from at least 1350.

Lake Constance is a lake on the Rhine at the Northern foot of the Alps. It consists of three bodies of water, the upper lake, the lower lake and the connecting Seerhein. Characterized by abundant fisheries, it was early on exploited by professional fishermen, who knew how to navigate the different fishing waters for their prey: salmon, eels, roach, bream, trout, pikes and not least the renowned “Felchen” – a beloved whitefish

With different ecologies, different habitats and different migratory patterns the many species represented a rich, albeit challenging resource. Early on this created a niche for professional fishermen well versed in where, when and how to fish for the different species. Not least, the wielding of different types of gear and the access to local knowledge about the diverse fishing waters made this a highly specialised artisanal craft.

Contributing to this development of this professional fishery was also the political situation. Lake Constance (Bodensee) was early a very important hub for long distance trade in linen cloth, salt, iron and luxuries with important North-South and East-West routes traversing each other in the region, dominated by a number of

Gallup sailing on the Bodensee. Stiftsbibliothek St.Gallen, Handschrift Nr. 602 from 1452.

monasteries and towns along the lakeside, Reichenau, St. Gallen, Constance, Lindau etc. It is thus no surprise that the region early on became the centre of constant fighting and warring, resulting in a patchwork of localities answering to different (and constantly shifting) overlords: the Church, the Hapsburgs, the Swiss confederacy etc. Even today, the lake is not divided by a border; Germany, Austria and Switzerland govern the lake through separate treaties.

Fishermens' Guilds

In the midst of all these upheavals, the local fishermen went about their very important business, which was to supply the towns and the monasteries around the lake with their daily fish. Early on – and at least from the mid 14th century – it was known that this business could not be a free-for-all. Although the resources were plentiful and fishing might be intensified when climatic events caused poor harvests, there were obviously limits. Especially the fishing of certain types of fish had to be regulated since they were highly sought, for instance the young perch, the Hürling, which was considered a delicacy. Accordingly the use of certain types of gear (trawling nets), the size of meshes, the size of fish, they were allowed to land, dates for the conservation of species, the number of fishermen allowed to fish in the lake etc. was constantly renegotiated. In order to organise this, fishermen set up local guilds or cooperative bodies, which were overseen by the magistrates or local authorities bent on balancing their need to secure stable supplies of fresh fish on a daily basis with those of the fishermen to have a satisfactory income. To this should be added the constant need to "police" the strife and fray between fishermen from different localities fishing from one end of the lake to the other, as well as to negotiate the treaties proclaimed by the diverse principalities in the region.

In a recent book this fascinating story is told in all its details by the German histo-

Fish market ca. 1420 From: Konstanzer Richental Chronik.
Konstanz, Rosgartenmuseum, Hs. 1, fol. 24v

rian, Michael Zeheiter, who has been able to demonstrate how both fishermen and local authorities were bent on a sustainable approach from 1350 and onwards. Reading this, we learn of how the Abbot at Reichenau changed the allowed size of the pikes, when an illness hit the fish; or about the allowed size of fishes, which had to be cut into the railing of the boat; or about the ban on a small trawling net, called the Streiffen, which was used to catch bullhead, a kind of bait-fish. Obviously, the fishermen needed to use this gear; but with its close meshed net and its use near the shore, a significant by-catch of young fish of more valuable species was to be expected. For almost a century the local authorities and in collaboration with the fishermen tried to regulate the use of the Streiffen.

Michael Zeheter have demonstrated how authorities together with the fishermen were able to negotiate a set of sustainable practices in and around Lake Constance. How often, these practices failed and the lake verged on overexploitation cannot be measured accurately. However, it is clear that for more than 400 years, there was "something" to protect and negotiate about. In spite the lake was a commons, order was upheld. "Again and again they prioritised their long-term-interest and the inhabitants of the Lake Constance are still profiting today from this chain of decisions, writes Michael Zeheter.

Today the Lake still accommodates more than 140 professional fishermen and services 13.500 anglers. As in the middle ages the gear, the number of nets, the sizes of the mesh and the days as well as dates for the season are laid down in an international treaty.

SOURCE:

Die Ordnung der Fischer Nachhaltigkeit und Fischerei am Bodensee (1350–1900)
By Michael Zeheter
Series: Umwelthistorische Forschungen Vol 6.
Böhlau 2014
ISBN: 978-3-412-22356-4

An article was recently published, which presents the main conclusions for an English reading audience:

Order in the Lake: Managing the Sustainability of the Lake Constance Fisheries, 1350-1900
By Michael Zeheter
In: Environmental History Vol 21, No 4., November 2015, pp. 597 – 629.

A Medieval Fish Pie

It is probable that most of the fish caught in the Lake Constance would have ended up as soup and served to bread. Although no medieval recipe for a local fish paté has been found, it seems probable that it was served at more festive occasions – as is known for salmon.

Felchen is the local name for fish belonging to the family of Coregonus, a genus of fish which has long been threatened with extinction. There are at least 68 extant taxa, but the number of distinct species is a matter of debate. In Britain it is called Vendace and has traditionally only been found in the cold, deep lakes in Scotland and the Lake District. Further up in Germany it is known as Ranke and Maränen, while it goes under the name of Helt, Heltling or Løje in Denmark and in the Baltic. Here it may be found in diluted brackish water in the gulfs of Finland and Bothnia. Everywhere it is considered a delicacy.

Fish Pie with Felchen

The recipe may be made with any fatty fish like salmon, mackerel or trout.

Dough

250 gr of flour is mixed with 125 gr butter, which is rubbed until it looks like grated cheese. 1 tsp salt is diluted into 1 dl water, which is used to combine the mixture into a ball. Don't overwork it, but use your fingertips. Wrap and refrigerate.

Filling

In a bowl mix 1 tbsp kitchen salt, 1 tbsp ground ginger, 1 tsp of freshly ground black pepper, a pinch of ground cloves and ½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg. A generous use of chopped parsley and/or goutweed (if in season) will definitely do no harm. Into this is mixed lightly cooked and flaked fish of any of the varieties mentioned above. Mix it together with some whitewine.

Roll out the dough (thinly) and cut into four squares, which are used to envelope the filling (great for picnics). The less daring may prefer to use a pie-form.

If used for Advent or Lent the filling may be served in pancakes made with oil.

Inspired by :

The Medieval Kitchen
Recipes from France and Italy.
By Odile Redon, Françoise Sabban and Silvano Serventi.
University of Chicago Press 1998.

God Creates the Sun and the Moon. From Saint-Savin at Gartempe

Medieval Travels:

Abbey of Saint-Savin Near Poitiers

Malraux once called the Abbey of Saint-Savin in Poitou-Charentes for the "Sistine Chapel of the Romanesque period". True is it that it holds one of the largest Romanesque paintings in Europe and has been officially designated as part of our World Heritage since 1983

From its position of the River Gartempe, the Abbey church of Saint-Savin dominates the landscape east of Poitiers with its well-preserved Romanesque exterior.

The Abbey of Saint-Savin was founded by Badillus (Badilon) of Marmoutier, who was clerking for Charlemagne in the beginning of the 9th century and dedicated to the two brothers, Savin and Cyprien from Macedonia. As Christian martyrs they ended up decapitated and according to legend Savin ended oup being buried at Gartempe. Later it was enlarged by Louis the Pious and placed under the care of his “Grey Eminence”, Benedict of Aniane. As such it became one of the French centres for monastic Benedictine reform.

Today it serves as the local parish church, while the monastic buildings are used for local administrative purposes. It was been designated by UNESCO as World Heritage in 1983.

The Church

Interior of Abbey Church of Saint-Savin
Interior of Abbey Church of Saint-Savin. Source: Wikipedia
The construction of the Romanesque church of the Abbey of Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe was begun in the mid-11th century, and was carried out under the direction of the abbots Odon and Gervais.

The cruciform church carries a square tower over its crossing. The transept was built first, then the choir with its ambulatory with five radial chapels in the polygonal apse. In the next building campaign, three bays of the nave were added, the bell tower and its porch, and finally the last six bays of the nave. The bell tower is finished by a fine stone spire more than 80 meters high, added in the 14th century and restored in the 19th century.

It is a remarkable experience to enter the church and discover its beautiful and magnificently scaled columns with foliate capitals its painted vault with scenes from the Old Testament. The columns are painted in trompe l'oeil to resemble colourful variegated marble.

The Murals

The paintings, which adorn the vault of the ship, the gallery, the choir and the crypt are believed to have been carried out between 1095 and 1115.

Although fragmentary, extensive murals survive in the western gallery, the nave,

the crypt and the porch. In the gallery the subject is Christ's Passion and Resurrection with the entombment occupying the central position. The vault carries a painted ceiling measuring 460 m2, 42 metres long and 11 meters wide. Of the 61 original scenes, 44 are retained. They outline the major episodes of Genesis and Exodus.

In the crypt, the entire wall is painted with scenes from the lives of SS. Savinus and Cyprian. Divided into three sections, the barrel vaults carry six scenes from the Revelation.

The Future

Since 2014 the **management of site has been reevaluated**. In October 2015 a new general plan of this important French Heritage site was launched with the object of expanding the buffer zone and raising the awareness of the site as a potential cultural tourist hot-spot in the area.

SOURCE:

L'église romane de Saint-Savin (Vienne): une voûte peinte exceptionnelle". 2013

Saint-Savin at Gartempe

SEE MORE:

Le vieux pont à Saint-Savin from the 13th century is well-preserved thanks to the continous effort of the city to rebuild the bridge. In the end of the 19th century a new bridge was constructed.

Poitou-Charentes holds a number of churches with Romanesque Murals. Here is an overview of the main sights in the **"La Vallée des Fresques"**

The Clothes

One of the interesting features in the scenes are the depiction of clothes, which illustrate the difference between the dresses of the workers and the nobles and kings parading their finery. Examples of this can be seen below, but it pays to consult **the generous web-publication** featuring a high definition photo of the paintings in the vault.

Saint-Savin: scene 14.
Abel and Cain. Abel is wearing a long priestly robe, while Cain is wearing a royal outfit as witnessed by his cape and the green colour.

Saint-Savin: scene 29
Building the Bable Tower - and the Abbey. Notice the workers brown tunic and that of the foreman or architect, which is green and with a weaved pattern

Saint-Savin: Scene 31.
- Lot and Abraham Notice the weaving of her dress and the borders of the tunics worn by the "nobles".

Entrance to the Jewish ghetto in Trier. Source: Wikipedia

TEACHING RESOURCE:

Outsiders in Medieval Europe

Teaching minority students about the medieval persecution of Jews, Muslims, heretics, lepers, prostitutes and gay people opens up for a broader understanding about Medieval Europe, says Rosemary Lee.

Students of Medieval History often have problems overcoming the public misconception that the Middle Ages was nothing but a violent and chaotic interlude. Teaching Medieval History from the margins invites students to explore both the history of the facts behind this bad press and their own queer identities. In 2014 Rosemary Lee, who is now a lecturer at the University of Virginia, taught two courses at the College of the Holy Cross and at Sweet Briar College on medieval minorities. In two new articles she has generously shared her experience.

Medieval History from the Margins
By Rosemary Lee
History Compass 2015

Teaching and Learning Guide: Outsiders in Medieval Europe
By Rosemary Lee
History Compass 2015

Abstract:

Around 1000 CE, minorities like Jews, heretics, and Muslims, the physically and mentally ill, and gay men began experiencing increased persecution in medieval Europe. City leaders ordered the segregation of people believed to be contaminating such as lepers, Jews, or prostitutes, while liberties were increasingly restricted. Residence, occupation, and dress became more and more scrutinized by both ecclesiastical and secular powers. An example of this is the first walled ghetto for Jews, which was erected by the Bishop of Speyer in 1084. Popular sentiments also appear to have become harsher and less inclusive in this period. During the crusades and the Black Death Jews increasingly Jews became victims of uprisings and panics.

In the general public these tragic events have fostered a feeling that the adjective

Mask of Shame.
Museum der Festung Salzburg, Österreich/
Source: Wikipedia/Klaus D. Peter.

Jesus Brought Before Caiaphas. From Salvin Hours c 1275 © British Library

"medieval" is an appropriate shorthand for all sorts of persecution, intolerance and outright violent behavior, she writes. Teaching "The Middle Ages" from this perspective arguably makes students belonging to the margins willing to invest both time and energy in the subject. This is witnessed by the experience of Rosemary Lee and her teaching at the Colllege of the Holy Cross and at Sweet Briar College on minorities and other outsiders in medieval Europe. Here students were invited to study medieval anti-Semitism and medieval Jews, explore Christian interactions with Islam before and after the crusades, and examine John Boswell's argument about Christian attitudes towards homosexuality. Students concluded the course by studying female mysticism and attitudes towards illness

As a follow-up she has generously written an introduction to the field plus shared her experiences as teacher as well as the syllabus including the reading list, which was handed out.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Rosemary Lee is a lecturer in history at University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903, USA. Rosemary Lee is a lecturer in history at University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903, USA.

Radzyń Chełminski or Burg Rheden. The lake is now cultivated. Source: Wikipedia/Zerojeden

NEW RESEARCH:

The Ecological Impact of Conquest and Colonization on a Medieval Frontier Landscape

The story goes that the Teutonic Order colonised and christianised a pagan wildernes. Studies of the ecological impact in this medieval frontier landscape shows that cultivation by the Slavs had been going on for centuries

The Ecological Impact of Conquest and Colonization on a Medieval Frontier Landscape: Combined Palynological and Geochemical Analysis of Lake Sediments from Radzyń Chełminski, Northern Poland

By Alex Brown, Rowena Banerje, Amanda Dawn Wynne, Normunds Stivrins, Marc Jarzebowski, Lisa-Marie Shillito and Aleks Pluskowski

In: Geoarchaeology Volume 30, Issue 6, pages 511–527, November/December 2015

Abstract:

Slavic and German colonization of the southern Baltic between the 8th and 15th centuries A.D. is well-documented archaeologically and historically. Despite the large number of pollen profiles from Poland, few palaeoecological studies have examined the ecological impact of a process that was central to the expansion of European, Christian, societies. This study aims to redress this balance through multiproxy analysis of lake sediments from Radzyń

Chełminski in Northern Poland, using pollen, element geochemistry (Inductively Coupled-Optical Emission Spectroscopy [ICP-OES]), organic content, and magnetic susceptibility.

Radzyń Chełminski or Burg Rheden

The Chełmo-land was colonised by Slavs from the 8th century until it came under Polish control in the end of the 10th century. At this time the region functioned as an unstable frontier-zone between the Prussians and the Slavs. This led to increasing missionary activities by the Prussians. From the 13th century this was accompanied by the colonisation of the border-region and the construction of a number of fortified strongholds. In 1226 the teutonic Order was granted territory in the Chełmo-land by duke Konrad of Masovia. Form the 11th century a Slavic stronghold was situated adjacent to the lake at Radzyń and in 1234 the first timber fortifications were erected. The surviving brick-built castle is dated to 1310 - 1340. This was situated 500 m west of the stronghold and surrounded by former wetland. The castle retained its importance until 1454 when it became the centre of a local administration of the Polish_Lithuanian state. In the 16th century it was partially dismantled.

The close association between lake and medieval settlements has presented the ideal opportunity to reconstruct past vegetation and land-use dynamics within a well-documented archaeological, historical, and cultural context. Three broad phases of increasing landscape impact have become visible in the pollen and geochemical data dating from the 8th/9th, 10th/11th, and 13th centuries, reflecting successive phases of Slavic and German colonization.

Originally (AD 0-300) the area was a predominantly wooden environment charac-

Radzyń Chełminski or Burg Rheden. The lake is now cultivated. Reconstruction in the local museum

terised by widespread pines and birches, interspersed with nearby cultivated and grazed lands. In the migration period (AD 300 -700) the massive wooden environment continued. However, now oak-trees and hornbeams came to dominate the profile. From mid 10th century the woods were obviously in decline accompanied by a general shift from oaks and hornbeams to pines and birches. In the same period pollen from cultivation began to increase. Especially rye was leading this agricultural expansion. Finally, after 1234 cereal pollen values reached their maximum, slightly declining after the crisis in the 14th century.

It is obvious the progressive clearance of oak-hornbeam dominated woodland and the development of an increasingly open agricultural landscape took place before the Prussian invasion and colonization. Although the castles and towns of the Teutonic Order remain the most visible signs of medieval colonization, the palynological and geochemical data demonstrate that the major phase of woodland impact occurred during the preceding phase of Slavic expansion; Germans colonists were entering a landscape already significantly altered.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

- Alex Brown, Rowena Banerjee and Amanda Dawn Wynne are from the Department of Archaeology, School of Archaeology, Geography and
- Environmental Sciences, University of Reading, Reading, United Kingdom
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- Lisa-Marie Shillito works at the Friedrich-Meinecke-Institute, Free University of Berlin, Berlin, Germany
- Ales Pluskowski works at the School of History, Classics and Archaeology, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Templar Cross in the wall at Radzyń Chełminski or Burg Rheden. Source: Wikipedia/Margoz

NEW BOOK:

Popular Romances of Medieval England

In the 21st century medieval romances are bestselling as never before. Now the time has come to read the real thing, the Middle English romances from the 13th and 14th centuries.

After centuries of being dismissed "a wit-besotting trash of books" written by "literary hacks", the Middle English romances have only recently been recognized as intelligent and evocative texts helping to illuminate medieval insular culture.

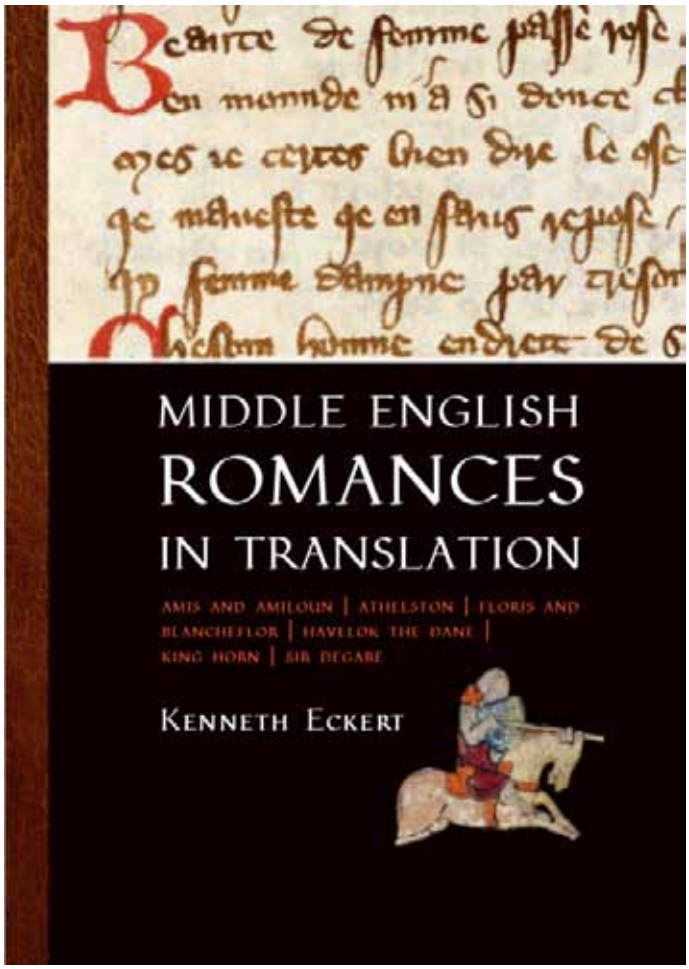
New book hopes to further such a dialogue with six romances representative of different themes and origins. Each chapter is a facing translation, featuring the original Middle English text on the left of the page and an academic close-line translation into Present Day English on the right, accompanied by explanatory notes and sources.

Middle English Romances in Translation: Amis and Amiloun, Athelstan, loris and Blancheflor, Havelok the Dane, King Horn, Sir Degare
Edited and translated by Kenneth Eckert
Sidestone Press 2015
ISBN: 9789088903397

The book is available in print, but may also be read for free in Scribd or downloaded as a pdf.

Abstract:

The popular romances of Medieval England are fantasy stories of love at first sight; brave knights seeking adventure; evil stewards; passionate, lusty women; hand-to-hand combat; angry dragons; and miracles. They are not only fun but indicate a great deal about the ideals and values of the society they were written in. Yet the genre of Middle English romance has only recently begun to attain critical respectability, dismissed as "vayn carpynge" in its own age and generally treated by twentieth-century critics as a junk-food form of medieval literature. Chaucer's Tale of Sir Thopas has been assumed to be a satire of the romances' clichéd formulas and unskilled authors. But the romances evidently enjoyed popularity among all English classes, and the genre itself continued to flourish and evolve down to present-day novels and movies. Whatever Chaucer and his contemporaries thought of romances, they would have needed



The Decretals of Gregory IX c 1300-c 1340, fol 84r. The bottom of the pages show illuminated stories. This one is from a story of a lion and a kinght based on the Chevalier an Lion by Chrétien de Troyes (ff. 80v-88r). © British Library

some personal familiarity with the stories and texts for comic tales such as Sir Thopas to be understood.

A century ago, Beowulf faced the same problem that the Middle English romances still face: no modern translations were published because few had heard of the poem- because there were no modern translations published. Where the romances have been printed, they have normally been reproduced as critical editions in their original language, or translated into heavily abridged children's versions, but few have been published as scholarly close line translations with notes. This book is an attempt to remedy this by making some of these romances available to the student or lay reader who lacks specialized knowledge of Middle English, with the hope that a clearer understanding of the poems will encourage not only enjoyment but also further study.

Table of contents

and entertaining "roman rose" about a boy of a Muslim king who falls in love with his Saxon playmate and travels to Arabia to rescue her from the Emir's marriage plans.

- Havelok the Dane (date: c. 1285)
  A dramatic 'male Cinderella' romance where Havelok, prince of Denmark, is rescued as a boy from an usurper's plans for murder by a fisherman and brought to England, where he grows up to marry the dispossessed princess, brings revenge to both nations, and regains the throne.
- Prince Horn (date: c. 1280)
  A seafaring romance where prince Horn is exiled by invading Saracens and sails to a new land where King Murray raises him, complicated when he is accused of deflowering the princess and banished to Ireland; after avenging his father he returns to settle scores and rescue his lady.
- Sir Degare (date: c. 1330)
  Possibly from a Breton lay, a mysterious tale of a princess raped by a handsome fairy who sends away her baby to be raised by priests; after proving himself as a knight, Degare unwittingly marries his mother, but when the error is recognized he seeks out glory and his father.

About the author:

Dr. Ken Eckert is Assistant Professor of English at Hanyang University (ERICA), Ansan, Korea, where he teaches undergraduate courses in English literature and graduate-level composition theory. He studied at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (PhD, 2011), with a dissertation in Chaucer and medieval romance; Memorial University of Newfoundland (MA, 2001), with a thesis and translation of Beowulf; and Concordia University of Edmonton (BA, 1990).

Lions and dragons were stock characters in the Medieval Romances. Here from the Macclesfield Psalter.
© Fitzwilliam Museum

NEW BOOK:

How to Plan a Crusade

How to Plan a Crusade: Reason and Religious War in the Middle Ages
by Christopher Tyerman
Allen Lane 2015
ISBN-10: 1846144779
ISBN-13: 978-1846144776

Abstract:

This book presents a lively and compelling account of how the crusades really worked, and a revolutionary attempt to rethink how we understand the Middle Ages. The story of the wars and conquests initiated by the First Crusade and its successors is itself so compelling that most accounts move quickly from describing the Pope's calls to arms to the battlefield. In this highly original and enjoyable new book, Christopher Tyerman focuses on something obvious but overlooked: the massive, all-encompassing and hugely costly business of actually preparing a crusade. The efforts of many thousands of men and women, who left their lands and families in Western Europe, and marched off to a highly uncertain future in the Holy Land and elsewhere have never been sufficiently understood. Their actions raise a host of compelling questions about the nature of medieval society.

How to Plan a Crusade is fascinating on diplomacy, communications, propaganda, the use of mass media, medical care, equipment, voyages, money, weapons, credit, wills, ransoms, animals, and the power of prayer. It brings to life an extraordinary era in a novel and surprising way.

The book has received a number of very positive reviews in the Spectator, the Guardian and The Times.

About the Author

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