

Civitas

21e Mediëvistendag / 21st Medieval Studies Day 2015



30 October 2015, Ghent University, Het Pand (Onderbergen 1)

Organised by the Henri Pirenne Institute for Medieval Studies, the Dutch Research School for Medieval Studies and the Flemish Medievalist Association

Programme

10:30 Registration (with coffee/tea)

10:50 Welcome (Wim Verbaal, Director of the Henri Pirenne Institute)

11:00 VWM Pirenne Lecture: Julia M H Smith (University of Glasgow): *Multiculturalism in the early Middle Ages? Material Religion in 8th-century Rome*

12:00 Katell Lavéant (University of Utrecht): *Building Communities through Parody? Joyful Culture in the Late Middle Ages*

13:00 Lunch with optional short city walk leaving at 13:30

14:15 PhD student presentations in parallel sessions (see below)

15:45 Break

16:00 Marc Boone (Ghent University): *Urban society in the late middle ages: communal ideal and 'herrschaftsfremde Charisma'*

17:00 Closing (Catrien Santing, Director of the Dutch Research School for Medieval Studies)

17:10 Reception offered by the VWM

Civitas

In 2015, the Dutch-Flemish Medieval Studies Day will be hosted by Ghent University. We will focus on the concept of *civitas* for this day, and thus refer to the long tradition of research into the medieval city, which ever since Henri Pirenne's pioneering work is still very much alive at Ghent University.

The concept of *civitas* has a broad range of meanings and can be studied from a variety of angles. In Antiquity, *civitas* stood for a political community, the civil rights that were connected with this, and urban settlements and their surroundings. In the Middle Ages, the term *civitas* became more associated with the actual city, in particular with episcopal towns, fortresses, etc. From the High Middle Ages onwards, urban environments gave rise to communal ideals and political emancipation, organised trade and craftsmanship, new religious ideals, and artistic development expressed in architecture, art and literature.

The concept *civitas*, however, was also central to the development of a particular kind of symbolic urbanism, often Christian. We find this symbolic urbanism for instance expressed in Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, in Lambert of Saint-Omer's representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem, and Christine de Pisan's allegorical *Cité des dames*. It also inspired the early-medieval idea of *civitates* as Christian communities around rural monastic communities modeled after the ideal of Jerusalem or Rome, in particular in the British Isles. Meanwhile the ideal of the city was not limited to the West or to the Christian world. As can be noticed in, for example, the *Muqaddimah* by Ibn Khaldun, reflections on the meaning of the city also circulated in the Islamic world.

As such *civitas* has the potential to bring together a wide range of medievalists to discuss urban development, communities in religious and secular context, literature, political representation, etc.

Keynote Strand: Ideals and practices of urban life

Three keynote lectures will offer different approaches to the theme:

Multiculturalism in the early Middle Ages? Material Religion in 8th-century Rome

Julia M H Smith is Edwards Professor of Medieval History at the University of Glasgow. She holds a Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellowship for the project *Christianity in Fragments*. She gives the first keynote and Pirenne lecture of the Vlaamse Werkgroep Mediëvistiek.

This paper tells a story of wealth, love, jealousy, and revenge in early eighth-century Rome. It uses an eyewitness account of these events to explore how Christians of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds expressed their beliefs in material form, notably through amulets, curses, relics and icons. By examining responses to this Christian multiculturalism, the second half of the paper traces the emergence of a normative set of expectations, first in Constantinople and then in Rome. In so doing, it probes the tension between Rome as a city of lived religion and 'Rome' as an idealised reference point of correct Christianity. It closes by reflecting on how this affects characterisations of 'early medieval Christianity' as distinct from 'late antique Christianity'.

Building Communities through Parody? Joyful Culture in the Late Middle Ages

Katell Lavéant is Assistant Professor in French Language and Literature at the Universiteit of Utrecht and coordinator of a new Vidi-project on parodies in the Low Countries.

During the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, a vibrant festive culture existed in the towns of Western Europe. An important part of it was what can be called 'joyful culture', a shared system of sociability for groups and individuals organising playful performances and activities in a ritualised way, in which parody had a central role. This is especially noticeable in the Burgundian Low Countries and in France, in the many theatrical contests and festivals that were organised in and by the cities, as well as in many manuscripts and printed material circulating joyful literature.

In my lecture, I will present important features of this festive culture, among which the central notion of parody, and investigate its value for urban communities, as a mean to secure civil stability and cohesion. Which ideals are revealed by parodic practices and texts? How could parody and joyfulness be inclusive and bind a community together?

Urban society in the late middle ages: communal ideal and ‘herrschaftsfremde Charisma’

Marc Boone is Professor Medieval History at Ghent University. He coordinates the collaborative IUAP research project *City and Society in the Low Countries (ca. 1200-ca. 1850). The ‘condition urbaine’: between resilience and vulnerability.*

Ever since urban societies imposed themselves as an essential power in the medieval society, they were looked upon in a twofold way. On the one hand they were seen as a threat to the existing feudal order, on the other hand they offered opportunities for economic growth and expansion and became soon a phenomenon society had to take into account. The burgher or citizen therefore developed into a essential persona within medieval society. At least so we think given a strong historiographic tradition reaching back to Pirenne, Max Weber and their like. The question to be asked is whether this opinion is still valid in the context of the new comparative insights urban history has developed.

Parallel Sessions

Session 1. ‘Urban Citizenship’. Respondent: Marc Boone. Chair: Jeroen Deploige.

Zaal Rector Gillis

Ben Eersels (KU Leuven): Participation and Peaceful Protests. Common Citizens and Urban Politics in Late Medieval Brabant and Liège (ca. 1300-1500)

During the waves of social upheaval in the 14th and 15th centuries, common citizens in Western Europe protested to demand rights of political participation. In some towns of the Low Countries, they succeeded and obtained representation in the town councils. Existing research on these commoners strife for political emancipation, however, has focused too much on their violent confrontations with the authorities. Yet, some recent case studies suggest that townsmen also caused substantial political changes by only using peaceful means of resistance. Still, a systematic enquiry of the commoners peaceful actions to influence politics has never been carried out. Furthermore, the commoners impact on urban policy-making after their acceptation to power, remains understudied, even though there is proof of their collaboration with urban authorities. In this paper, I will present my doctoral research, in which I try to fill these two gaps in the existing historiography. By studying several towns in Late Medieval Brabant and Liège, I will discuss the commoners political agenda and the peaceful means they used to affect urban policy.

Janna Everaert (VUB): Power in the Metropolis. Urban elite formation during the demographic and commercial expansion of Antwerp (c. 1400-c. 1550)

During the late 15th and early 16th century, Antwerp replaced Bruges as gateway city. In this period, Antwerp transformed from a medium-sized Brabantine city into the leading metropolis of the Burgundian-Habsburg Netherlands. Most post-war historians focused on the demographic and economic aspects of Antwerp’s growth, but devoted less attention to the impact on the political elite and to the question how this group or aggregate of groups dealt with the opportunities and challenges that accompanied the urban expansion process. The central objective of this project is an

in-depth study of the Antwerp political elite, proceeding from an analysis of the composition and evolution of the Antwerp magistrate between c. 1400 and c. 1550.

Hannelore Franck (KU Leuven-KULAK): Parochial Poor Relief in the Late Middle Ages: Expression of Sincere Piety, Example of Conspicuous Consumption or Exhibit of Civic Solidarity?

The poor relief in the late middle ages and the underlying rationale has been researched intensely but the debate is still ongoing. Some researches define the medieval poor relief as an expression of sincere piety in which the first concern of the donor was their own faith after death. Others interpret the poor relief mainly as a possibility to assert the donor's own social position and thus can be seen as an example of conspicuous consumption. The judgement in both cases is harsh: the poor relief was inadequate because helping the poor was not the prime goal but rather a tool to reach a different goal. Other research, however, noticed that the 'middle class' was the main participant in the poor relief system of the late medieval town. The explanation is that these people faced the threat of poverty themselves and therefore this system was actually an exhibit of civic solidarity. In my own PhD research, which I will present in this paper, I will try to offer new insights by focusing on the interaction between poor relief and memorial services in the parochial poor relief in late medieval Bruges.

**Session 2. Respondents: Katell Laveánt and Julia Smith. Chair: Marjolein Stern
Zaal Rector Vermeylen**

Nanouschka Wamelink (University of Amsterdam): Interpreting the unseen spectacle of the past

In my recently started research project, I will analyse the alleged food abstinence of medieval female saints from a performative point of view. In practice this means that I will look at the ways in which medieval sources present this fasting as public behaviour. By comparing these fasts with other forms of public self-starvation, I will try to reconstruct these medieval performances as they are narrated in the sources. In this presentation I will discuss some of the methodological concerns with regard to using a performative approach to study Medieval religiosity.

Claudia Daiber (University of Amsterdam): The Reformation on stage: protestant influence on the passion play

Generally scholarly research holds the opinion that the passion play as it originates from the Middle Ages as a theatrical performance came to an end with the Reformation (1517-1648) on the European continent. This observation, however, needs some refinement as far as the passion plays are concerned which are comprised in the so-called Alemannic group which originate from the Southern part of present day Germany and the German speaking part of present day Switzerland. These passion plays are not only characterized by a common linguistic feature but likewise by their participation in the discourses stirred up by the Reformation. The Catholic *Donauesching Passion Play* (ca. 1480) for example, introduces the notion of plurality of beliefs, the, as well, Catholic *Lucerne Easter Play* (1545-1616) appropriates certain Protestant positions and last but not least the genuinely Protestant *Zurich Passion Play* (1545) conveys religious positions in the Zwinglian tradition. This contribution elaborates on the way the genre of the passion play communicates these challenges.

Cora Zwart (University of Groningen): Weaving the Religious Civic Web: A socio-historical analysis of fifteenth-century religious city life in Utrecht, Leiden and Bruges

This project aims at writing a social history of late medieval city life in Utrecht, Leiden and Bruges from a religious perspective, to uncover the societal role of religion in the cities as a whole. To pinpoint the religious civic web, religiously-coloured networks will be studied that connected lay and religious people and groups that today too often are considered as not connected. Using the Actor-Network-Theory, networks of social relations, religious objects and buildings, and religious actions will be examined. Hypothetically these materials taken together show city-specific dynamic religious societal webs.

The investigations start bottom up, at the level of a few selected citizens of each of these cities, people of whom religious books with personal notes have been preserved, and of whom social activities and private and public connections can be traced in archives, museums, and libraries. Later, the scope widens to their families, friends, social and religious contacts. Eventually the cities will be compared.

As an example I will focus here on one of the citizens selected for the casus of the city of Utrecht, Dirck Borre van Amerongen (ca. 1438-1527), alderman and mayor. Using textual, visual, and archival sources, the role of religion in his personal and public life will be presented.

Session 3. Respondent: Wouter Ryckbosch. Chair: Sara Moens
Persconferentiezaal

Jan Trachet (UGent): Measuring Monnikerede. An interdisciplinary research for a medieval outpost of Bruges

The Zwin tidal inlet functioned as the Medieval gateway to the port of Bruges. Along the banks of this linear harbour-hub, a series of smaller landing sites soon acquired city and staple privileges. Thus, the fishing village of Monnikerede got engaged in transshipment and commerce, was integrated into international trade networks and soon transforming it into a miniature city. However, economic, geomorphological and military developments in the troubled 16th century showed that smaller landing sites were inviable without the port network in which they sprout. Consequently, they were gradually deserted and disappeared from the landscape.

In order to detect and assess the location, morphology and state of preservation of these deserted ports, we apply a double-layered methodology. First, the broader port area was approached from a macro-scaled historical-geographical framework in which both historical as oblique aerial photographs and LiDAR were combined with cartographical and geological data. Then, the focus narrowed to a micro-scaled high-resolution scan of the outports themselves, starting with a full-scale geophysical survey and a comprehensive DGPS-mapped fieldwalking campaign. Furthermore, we managed to plot and visualize non-cartographic proto-cadastral documents, using retrogressive techniques. The GIS-integration of these highly detailed datasets provides us with various layers of subsoil-information at the scale of the individual Medieval allotment. The combination of these traditional and innovative techniques delivers a promising methodology for non-invasive research on Medieval (landing) sites.

Isabel Kimmelfield (Radboud Universiteit): A Geographical Approach to Defining the Suburbs of Constantinople

The development of Constantinople's suburbs in its early centuries was strongly influenced by the geography of the region. The major waterways of the Sea of Marmara, the Bosphorus, and the Golden Horn bounded the city on three sides, separating the city centre from many of its major suburban sites. But, at the same time, these bodies of water provided easier (and more pleasant) means of transportation to these (often shoreline) suburbs than road travel. Even the landscape around Constantinople, which was punctuated by numerous hills and rocky regions, making land-travel more challenging, did not merely divide the city from its hinterland. This hilly landscape also provided vantage points from which panoramic views of the city could be attained and vice versa. Thus, while practically obstructing easy travel to the city, these hills nonetheless brought the hinterland of Constantinople closer to the city visually.

This visual component is important – it is expressed in the words of visitors arriving at the city, viewing it from outside, but it also appears in the words of inhabitants describing the view from the city of the regions beyond the walls. Constantinople itself was a hilly city, and there were numerous points from which inhabitants could view the city's surroundings. Evidence both explicit and implicit of frequent movement between the suburbs and the city centre further suggests that inhabitants did not simply ignore these surroundings, but rather the city's immediate hinterland served numerous key functions, both practical and symbolic. This paper will explore some of the ways in which geography contributed to these uses and meanings of the suburbs, while elaborating on the liminal role of the suburbs as places that were both separate from, and yet near to the Queen of Cities.

Jerem van Duijl (Leiden University): The possessions of the Teutonic House in Utrecht (1231-1620)

In 1219 Sweder van Dingede participated in the siege of Damiate during the fifth crusade. Being impressed by the work of the Teutonic Order there, he donated some of his possessions to these knights. His son, also called Sweder van Dingede, promised to go on crusade as well. But instead he and his wife Beatrix in 1231 redeemed their vow by donating land to the Teutonic Order. Properties just outside the city walls of Utrecht were part of this gift. A year later a convent house for the brethren was built there. The acquisition of more possessions, either by gifts or by buying land, contributed to the growing importance of the Teutonic house. During the 14th century it became the regional headquarters of the Teutonic Order, the so-called bailiwick of Utrecht.

The aim of this research project is to reconstruct the possessions of the Teutonic house and the way they were managed, from 1231 until the transformation into a protestant organization about 1620. Following these possessions from the well-documented 16th century back in time, we encounter the times of prosperity and stagnation of the Teutonic Order.

Research master students

For more information about the assignment (1 ECTS) for researchmaster students of the Dutch Research School for Medieval Studies who participate as part of their training please contact [Martin de Ruiter: ozmed@rug.nl](mailto:Martin.deRuiter@ozmed@rug.nl)

Practical

Lectures will be in de zaal Rector Vemeylen (2nd floor)

Parallel sessions will be in zaal Rector Vemeylen, Rector Gillis, en Persconferentiezaal (all 2nd floor)

Registration, lunch, breaks and reception will be in de Kloostergang (1st floor). There will also be a **bookstand by Brepols publishers** there. In the lunch break, there will be a short **city walk leaving at 13:30**, guided by Jelle De Rock.

Dinner: participants can join us for dinner (*NB: at own expense*) on Friday night, **18:30 in De Oude Vismijn**, Sint-Veerleplein 5, 9000 Gent. If you would like to come, but have not indicated this on your registration form (or if you are not sure you have, or you have changed your mind), please talk to Marjolein Stern before the end of lunch.

The fee of 10 euros can be paid in cash upon registration. This includes lunch and reception. The day is free of charge for doctoral and researchmaster students who are a member of the Vlaamse Werkgroep Mediëvistiek or the Onderzoekschool Mediëvistiek.

Organisers



Flemish medievalist
association

