

## ***The Medieval Chronicle 10 (2015) – Abstracts***

### ***James Howard-Johnston – The Chronicle and Other Forms of Historical Writing in Byzantium***

The fundamental concern of the Byzantine chronicle was with what happened, when it happened, and God's role in human affairs. Its scope was universal, going back to the beginning of time (either on its own or through a chain of predecessors) and combining religious with secular history. Its key characteristics were chronological precision and conciseness. Eleven chronicles written between 600 and 1200 are examined, and compared to non-chronicle histories of the same period. Almost all the authors belonged to the bureaucratic world. Hence their calibration of time by financial years as well as from Creation, and their viewing of history from the vantage point of Constantinople. Virtually no local history was written in Byzantium. Historical production, including chronicles, was limited compared to that of the medieval West and the Caliphate, but much more varied than that of contemporary China. Byzantium was unique in being able to draw on all three early traditions of historical writing: Biblical, classical and bureaucratic. (*MedChron 10 (2015)*: 1-22)

### ***Pauline Stafford – Noting Relations and Tracking Relationships in English Vernacular Chronicles, Late Ninth to Early Twelfth Century***

Between the late ninth and mid twelfth century a group of vernacular chronicles were produced in England. They are generally known as THE Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, though the reality is, as we shall see, much more complex. This paper is concerned with the ways these chronicles present kin relationships, but also with the relationships between and among this group of texts; with how these chronicles treat kin relationships, but also with their own kinship, as well as with their individuality and divergences. When reading what they tell us about kinship and relationships, we need to be aware of their individual, separate histories, but also of the fact that those histories, and these texts, are linked. The aim is to add to our knowledge of kinship relations and their importance at this date, but it is also to address questions about the reading of these texts. The vernacular chronicles have a central place in the historiography of early England. Such a study should also throw light on history-writing in England across these centuries. (*MedChron 10 (2015)*: 23-48)

### ***Eduardo Fabbro – ‘Capitur urbs quae totum cepit orbem’: The Fates of the Sack of Rome (410) in Early Medieval Historiography***

This paper analyses the history of a story: the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410. It starts with the contemporary reactions in Augustine, Jerome and Orosius, following their reception both in the west (the fifth-century chroniclers, Gregory of Tours, Fredegar, Isidore and Paul the Deacon) and in the east (Olympiodorus of Thebes, Sozomen, Socrates Scholasticus, Theodoretus, Procopius and Jordanes). It aims to highlight how the story was used in different forms, and how the narrative was adapted from one chronicler to the other, in order to respond to their own views of history and society. Comparing the readings of the sack, we can perceive a shift in the perception of warfare: while the early fifth century produced a very religious historical explanation, from the sixth century on writers managed to re-insert traditional militaristic values into a Christian discourse. It is my contention in this paper that, by analyzing how later chroniclers and historians used well-known stories, such as the sack of Rome, we can better perceive their thoughts about history, their methods and their approaches to the past. (*MedChron 10 (2015)*: 49-67)

### ***Chris Jones – Perspectives from the Periphery: French Kings and their Chroniclers***

The history of the later Capetian kings of France is often explored from the perspective of the court and those connected with it. While the great chronicles produced in Paris and its environs have been the focus of much research, historians are frequently more muted in their discussion of chronicles produced outside the Île-de-France. Yet regional chroniclers have a value that can be easily overlooked. Such chronicles provide an alternative to works influenced either directly or indirectly by the court. These writers were often less well-informed than their Parisian counterparts; their works can, however, demonstrate both the common ground that existed across the French kingdom as well as important differences. This article considers the perspective of two such texts, the vernacular chronicle of the so-called minstrel of Reims, produced in the 1260s, and the Latin history of the Benedictine of Sens Geoffroi of Courlon, written in the early 1290s. By exploring how concepts of political

organization were understood beyond Paris in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, the article establishes that chroniclers from the periphery of the French kingdom have a unique contribution to make to our understanding of the history of political thought in this period. (*MedChron* 10 (2015): 69-93)

**Courtney Konshuh – Fighting with a *lytle werode*: Alfred’s Retinue in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle***

This article explores the usage of formulaic expressions in the Common Stock annals of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, focusing particularly on *lytle werode*, which is used to describe King Alfred’s forces in 871 and 878. Other Old English contexts for this term as well as Latin translations of it are taken into consideration to determine if this is a literary term or if it is a more specific military term referring to a specific body of warriors. This has implications on the study of King Alfred’s succession and his early wars against the Vikings. (*MedChron* 10 (2015): 95-117)

**Guy Lurie – French Citizenship and the Uprisings of 1380–1383**

The popular uprisings of the beginning of the reign of Charles VI (1380–1422), in the years 1380–1383, are relatively well known. Yet a re-examination of the period and of these uprisings reveals less well-known conceptions and practices of citizenship in France. Six contemporary chronicles that treat these events in some detail permit an in-depth study of these civic conceptions and practices. The chronicles reveal a fully developed conception and practice of citizenship of inhabitants (*régnicoles*) in the whole realm of France. The rhetoric of the period was Aristotelian and republican. Clearly delimited elites perceived themselves as active citizens, who participate in decision-making and in the administration of the commonwealth. Still wider groups in the population also tried to take part in decision-making. The identity of citizens though clear at the time, was under popular pressure to change. (*MedChron* 10 (2015): 119-40)

**Roger Nicholson – ‘Confundit Omnia’: Constructing Treason in the Late Medieval London Chronicles**

This paper examines treason in the London chronicles in light of their peculiar historiographical formation: heavily patterned annals, mostly composed retrospectively, in line with their essential business – the listing of London’s mayors and sheriffs – but distributing their attention, moment by moment, between municipal and national matters. The frequency and varied elaboration of treason reports reflect not just the extraordinary number of treason trials during the long fifteenth century – largely the period of chronicle production – but, more particularly, the felt significance of such judicial action. Jack Cade’s insurrection is much the most fully detailed of chronicle treason narratives, but even in this case the final reduction of the rebels to condemnation as traitors brings their history into conformity with a general pattern that emphasises the outcome of treason, rather than its incidents, or the individual character and designs of those who engage in it. In these terms, London, the formal ground of any chronicle, serves as the favoured site for royal display of the control it exercised over those who challenge the state by threatening the king’s life (as determined by the 1352 Statute of Treasons). This paper, then, focuses on the dominant political function and the symbolic force of the representation of treason and treason trials in the London chronicles. (*MedChron* 10 (2015): 141-61)

**Angel Nicolaou-Konnari – Leontios Makhairas’s Greek Chronicle of the ‘Sweet Land of Cyprus’: History of Manuscripts and Intellectual Links**

The chronicle attributed to Leontios Makhairas (c.1360/80–after 1432) and written in the local Greek dialect constitutes a major landmark in the historiographical production of medieval Cyprus. It recounts the history of Cyprus from the fourth century to 1458, focusing primarily on the Lusignan rule and embodying a fusion of the Byzantine and Latin Eastern historiography.

Three manuscripts of the two recensions of the chronicle are well known: the ones in Venice (after 1523), in Oxford (1555) and in Ravenna (c.1600), the latter two preserving a similar shorter version; there also exists an Italian translation of the Ravenna text at the Vatican Library. The discovery of a hitherto unknown mid seventeenth-century manuscript (London, British Library, Harley 1825), containing extracts from the Oxford manuscript, enhances our understanding of the chronicle’s circulation and sheds light on the links connecting their copyists, owners or translators, as well as on

the social and intellectual context that instigated an interest in the text and allowed its circulation and preservation. (*MedChron* 10 (2015): 163-201)

***Douglas Whalin – Bede and the Syriac Chroniclers: Interactions of Subject and Genre in Contemporaneous Historiography***

In the eighth century AD, despite differences of language Christian chroniclers and historians worked in a still-unified literary tradition. This tradition was shaped by rapid dissemination of historical data throughout the Christian world, by the common set of literary genre from which these writers drew, and by the similar themes which shaped their engagement with the past. Authors conceived of themselves as an interconnected community bound by their faith. Narratives about that community naturally focused on the universal, Christian, Roman Empire ruled from Constantinople as that world's central political player.

While best-known for his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, the Venerable Bede (c.672–735) authored a staggering quantity of material in other genres, including two chronicles. In this paper, Bede's minor historical writings are compared with similar works written by his contemporaries. This group included many anonymous authors who wrote in Latin, Greek, Syriac, and other languages, but also the polymath philosopher and historian Theophilus of Edessa (c.695–785). In doing so, it becomes clear that even though the reality of political unity under the Roman emperors was a thing of the distant past, conceptually the Mediterranean world had not yet become divided between East and West. (*MedChron* 10 (2015): 203-21)

**Review**

***John Page's 'The Siege of Rouen', edited by Joanna Bellis (Chris Given-Wilson)***

(*MedChron* 10 (2015): 223-24)

**Edition**

***Heather Pagan and Geert De Wilde – The Anglo-Norman Prose Chronicle of Early British Kings or the Abbreviated Prose Brut: Text and Translation***

(*MedChron* 10 (2015): 225-319)