

The Medieval Chronicle 13 (2020) – Abstracts

Inés Fernández-Ordóñez – The Imperium in Alfonso X’s Historiography

The concept of *imperium* (i.e. ‘pre-eminent power of divine origin over different peoples and lands’) is pervasive in the historiography of Alfonso X the Learned, king of Castile and Leon (1252-1284) and pretender to the Holy Roman Empire (1257-1275). As proven, the *imperium* structures the chronology and provides the main content and ideology of both his *Estoria de España* (‘History of Spain’) and *General estoria* (‘General history’) (both written in 1270-1284). But of the two possible *imperia* Alfonso aspired to, that is, over the Iberian peninsula or over Europe, there are arguments sustaining that *imperium Hispaniae* was truly his main concern, e.g. the major iconographic project devised for the history of Spain (and not for world history), the language chosen (Castilian instead of Latin), and the pre-eminence given to the king over the emperor.

(*MedChron 13 (2020)*: 1-32)

Cristian Bratu – Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir royal chez Wace: pour une relecture du Roman de Rou

Medievalists have proposed several possible explanations for the abrupt ending of Wace’s *Roman de Rou*, which I discuss in the first part of this article. I argue that the most relevant among these hypotheses are the ones that consider the political and religious context in which Wace composed the *Rou*. Although the hypothesis of the *Roman de Rou*’s pro-ecclesiastical bent is particularly relevant for our discussion, I argue that a reassessment of the textual evidence adduced in support of this theory is imperative. In the second part of the essay, I briefly discuss the political and religious context in which the *Rou* was written, with particular emphasis on the ‘Becket affair’. In the last section, I analyse Wace’s statements that appear to confirm his pro-ecclesiastical stance.

(*MedChron 13 (2020)*: 33-58)

Pierre Courroux – Remarks on the Use of Numbers by Medieval Chroniclers in Battle Narratives

Medieval chroniclers pay much attention to great battles. Of course, modern historians are aware that many details they give are purely literary. However, it is hard to deal with their numbers. They are often our only estimates for such fights. In rare cases where it is possible to judge their reliability, thanks to exceptionally well-preserved archives, the chroniclers are often shown to be wrong. Occasionally chroniclers cite the same figures but in most cases their individual estimations vary even as much as tenfold. The problem becomes all the greater when the variances are significant across several manuscript versions of the same work. To which extent did the scribe feel free to change the numbers? Were the numbers considered as important features, or just peripheral details, which could be changed for literary effect? In this paper, we propose that the numbers in chronicles are mainly symbolic. They may concern order of magnitude but cannot be treated mathematically. Thoughts about the possible readings of certain examples of numbers will also be given.

(*MedChron 13 (2020)*: 59-80)

Isabelle Guyot-Bachy – ‘Du commencement du monde depuis que Dieu ot fait ciel et terre’: Une chronique universelle en français composée à Valenciennes sous le règne de Philippe le Bel

The manuscript Bibliothèques de Nancy, ms. 194 is the only known witness of the first recension of an universal French chronicle, composed in the last years of the thirteenth century. The present study analyzes for the first time the author’s project and the sources he used. Reading this chronicle reveals that it was composed by a cleric, probably in Valenciennes, when the aldermen, in conflict with their lord John II d’Avesnes, strove to demonstrate to King Philip the Fair that their city had long belonged to the kingdom of France from a long time.

(*MedChron 13 (2020)*: 81-105)

Victoria Legkikh – Paroemiae to SS. Boris and Gleb: Complementarity of chronicles and liturgical canon in the creation of the image of the first Russian saints

The first Russian saints Boris and Gleb, canonized as martyrs in the twelfth century, put a recently baptized country not only into the context of the Holy Land but also into the context of the first Christians. Hymnography to SS Boris and Gleb shows very important parallels: the protomartyr St Stephen, the apostles, Abel, saint healers, military saints and even Christ. So Rus not only followed Byzantium but became itself a special holy land. By analyzing specific features of SS Boris and Gleb, we can distinguish the main characteristics of the Russian national identity: victimhood, mercy and charity. ‘Historical’ paroemiae based on chronicles and also on biblical canonical literature supported this image, giving an element of reality to the liturgical canon. Later there was an attempt to change these paroemiae into apostolic ones but mainly copyists continued to use ‘historical’ paroemiae. The paper compares the image of SS Boris and Gleb in ‘historical’ and liturgical texts, showing their complementarity, and analyzes the existence of paroemiae in different versions of the service based on typikons and menaions.

(*MedChron* 13 (2020): 106-130)

Mariana Leite – Translatio Imperii, translatio linguarum? On Medieval Universal Chronicles produced around the Holy Roman Empire

Universal Chronicles, written to narrate the history of all humanity in detail, flourished all around Europe, especially from the twelfth century onwards. This article studies Universal Chronicles composed around the Holy Roman Empire by authors closely related to Hohenstaufen emperors and candidates. Four chronicles will be considered, focusing on their front matters, dedications and prologues: Otto of Freising’s *Historia sive Chronica duabus civitatibus*, Godfrey of Viterbo’s *Pantheon*, Rudolf of Ems’ *Weltchronik* and Alfonso X’s *General Estoria*. The choice of this particular corpus is due to the authors’ interpretation of the Emperor’s sacred duty in history, as well as the Hohenstaufen’s role in imperial development. The choice of texts also reflects a linguistic diversity – Latin, Middle High German and Castilian – that may help to consider how the use of different languages manifested different perspectives on imperial aspirations, or throughout the Holy Roman Empire.

(*MedChron* 13 (2020): 131-148)

Șerban V. Marin – Between Authorship and Anonymity. The Case of the Venetian Chronicles

This paper is based on a methodological approach to the question of authorship of chronicles, as applied to the study of the Venetian chronicles.

There are over two thousand Venetian manuscripts that included chronicles, and they were written over a long period between the eleventh and the eighteenth centuries. Such manuscripts may be found not only in Italy, but also in many other parts of the world. The authors of some have been identified on the basis of solid arguments. For others, however, the arguments are far from convincing.

My paper is an attempt to analyze all those instances of chronicles, the authorship of which has been wrongly established, and to explain how that happened.

I will argue that in such cases the attribution to a particular author is wrong. In my view the default assumption should be the anonymity of chronicles. One can accept a named author, only when there are no doubts about it.

(*MedChron* 13 (2020): 149-181)

Ramunė Markevičiūtė – Rethinking the Chronicle. Modern Genre Theory Applied to Medieval Historiography

From the first conferences of the Medieval Chronicle Society it became increasingly apparent that a large variety of medieval historiographical texts could be considered as chronicles. Simultaneously, questions regarding the definition of the term ‘chronicle’ have been raised. In this present paper I wish to question the use of the term ‘chronicle’, particularly in reference to its applicability to a specific genre. First, I will discuss earlier attempts to classify medieval historiography. A look at modern genre theory will reveal trends and methods for genre definition. In what follows, I want to suggest a new approach to genre in medieval historiography. The goal is to maintain the notion that systemisation of texts on the basis of

specific features is possible, while strict classification of genre models may be abandoned. Instead, this new conceptualisation understands abstract genres and concrete texts as interacting elements in a network. The suggested model is then examined in further detail and applied to a concrete text, Henry of Latvia's *Chronicon Livoniae*.

(*MedChron* 13 (2020): 182-200)

Henry F.T. Marsh – Richard II's Rejection of Counsel in the *Westminster Chronicle* and Thomas Walsingham's *Chronica Maiora*

Thomas Walsingham's continuation of the St Albans *Chronica Maiora* and the anonymous *Westminster Chronicle* both provide detailed commentaries upon the reign of Richard II and the importance of counsel during his reign. These commentaries, although their authors were evidently well versed in the traditional rhetoric and political theory of counsel, offer distinctive readings of what constituted good governance. Walsingham represented the ideal government, during Richard's reign, as one led by the magnates and challenged the rhetoric of the king as simply one poorly counselled by wicked advisers. The *Westminster* chroniclers presented Richard II in a more positive light, suggested that his favourites had some virtues and emphasised the importance of the king's independence from his counsellors. The comparison of these different narratives offers insight into the sophisticated political commentary and imagination of late fourteenth-century chroniclers and challenges notions of the chroniclers as uncritical writers.

(*MedChron* 13 (2020): 201-222)

Margaretha Nordquist – Constructing Political Time: Temporal Structures of Meaning in the Old Swedish Chronicles *Prosaiska krönikan* and *Lilla rimkrönikan*

The representation of time in historiographical narratives reveals important conceptions about origin, continuity and change, and the perceived links between the past, present and future in a society. Through temporal structures of meaning such as genealogy, political power can be explained, legitimized and reinforced in narratives of the origin and history of a people and its rulers. The aim of this article is to investigate the construction of political time in two fifteenth-century Old Swedish narratives, *Prosaiska krönikan* and *Lilla rimkrönikan*. These chronicles constitute some of the first attempts to write continuous histories of the Swedish realm and its rulers from time immemorial. While the two chronicles share basic temporal structures, their different narrative forms also involve shifting emphases in their representation of a political time that functions as the basis for claims to a precedence of power and authority in relation to the other Scandinavian kingdoms. By considering temporal structures of meaning in the two chronicles, light can be shed on the political and ideological utility of history writing in late-medieval Sweden.

(*MedChron* 13 (2020): 223-246)

Simone I.M. Pratelli – The Textual Tradition of Bar 'Ebroyo's *Chronography* and its Continuations: First Soundings

The present paper focuses on the *Chronicle* by the Syrian polymath Grigorios Bar 'Ebroyo (†1286), which has always been acknowledged as a milestone in Syriac historiography, especially in regard to the use of previous histories and compilations.

Presenting the outcomes of the first three-year phase of a research project aiming at preparing a dependable and unabridged critical edition of Bar 'Ebroyo's *Chronicle*, the following pages draw attention to the tangled manuscript tradition, structure and linguistic features of the *Chronography* and its so-called *Continuations*, with special focus on the rather inconsistent relationship between these last texts.

In fact, despite the apparently seamless continuity, both arrangement and chronology of events show some gaps, and further text-critical issues (e.g. the skewed transmission of the same subtexts in witnesses) make the outlining of the original drafting process difficult. Eventually, not only do such divergences issue philological challenges, but also understanding the link between the work and its sources is problematic.

(*MedChron* 13 (2020): 247-265)

Carol Sweetenham – 2000 Cows and 4000 Pigs at one Sitting: Was the *Gesta Francorum* Written to be Performed in Latin?

This paper argues that the *Gesta Francorum* could have been written in Latin as a text designed for performance. It starts by looking at the style and approach of the text itself, arguing that whilst the *Gesta*'s Latin is close to the vernacular it has strong performative elements. It argues that Latin texts could be made comprehensible to a non-Latin literate public in a range of contexts. It explores the linguistic climate in Southern Italy and Sicily at this time and argues that Latin would not only have been comprehensible to the audience but a possible *lingua franca* for wider use, meaning that the text could have served as a pivot text for other languages. The paper concludes that looking at the text as designed for oral delivery offers insight into why it seems to have existed in several versions, why it was seen as so unusual by contemporaries and why it was so influential.

(*MedChron* 13 (2020): 266-288)

James Titterton – Bloodless Turks and Sanguine Crusaders: William of Malmesbury's Use of Vegetius in His Account of Urban II's Sermon at Clermont

This essay analyses a hitherto unnoticed borrowing from Vegetius's *De re militari* in William of Malmesbury's account of Urban II's sermon at the Council of Clermont. Scholars have long recognised that the various reports of Urban's sermon are as much literary constructs, reflecting their authors' personal views of the crusading movement, as they are reports of the pope's actual words or sentiments. It demonstrates how Malmesbury wove material from Lucan and Vegetius into his text to create a uniquely 'secular' version of Urban's sermon, one that appealed as much to his audience's sense of honour as their Christian piety. Malmesbury drew on Vegetius as a Classical authority to demonstrate that the Turks were inherently poor fighters. In this, Malmesbury reflected not only Classical theories about race but also his own well-documented prejudices against the 'barbarian' and the other, whether they be Welsh, Scandinavian or Turkish.

(*MedChron* 13 (2020): 289-308)

Review

Bertrand Boysset, *Chronique*. Éd. et présentée par P. Gautier-Dalché, Marie-Rose Bonnet et Philippe Rigaud (Isabelle Guyot-Bachy)

(*MedChron* 13 (2020): 309-311)

Review

Livia Visser-Fuchs, *History as Pastime. Jean de Wavrin and his Collection of Chronicles of England* (Antoine Brix)

(*MedChron* 13 (2020): 312-314)