Perception and Performance of Social Identities in the Nascent Urban Societies of the High Middle Ages in North-western Europe

22-24 May 2014, Ghent and Brussels

Abstracts

Letha Boehringer (Universität zu Köln)

Aspiring families and new forms of urban religious life: Beguines in hospitals and convents of Cologne (c. 1220-1260)

The first half of the 13th century was decisive for the formation of a new urban elite in Cologne, some 15 patrician families called Geschlechter (dynasties). They had risen to wealth in trade and held positions in the archbishop's service. Their male members controlled large portions of the city's economy, formed the council (first mentioned in 1216) and strived for political and administrative independence. Their tenacious fight for municipal rights went on for decades, until the archbishop was expelled from Cologne in 1288, after he lost the battle of Worringen.

Rich evidence from the Cologne municipal archives provides ample source material for marriage bonds and offspring as well as political and religious connections and activities of these families; scholars have been studying them since the 19th century, but many aspects are still open for discussion. The topic of this paper is the connection between aspiring families and municipal institutions which they founded, supported and controlled: hospitals and convents for beguines. These institutions were to shelter their own daughters, who in turn would pray for their families' good fortune and establish the memoria of those deceased. Such models were soon imitated by more "middle-class" families who were wealthy but had little or no political influence. In course of time, new forms of lay religious life emerged which were closely connected with several layers of urban society.

Paulo Charruadas (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

Exploring nascent social identity: The Brussels aldermen, between behaviours, representations and perceptions (twelfth-thirteenth centuries)

To explore the social identity of a group of individuals, it is first necessary to ask the nature of this group and its characterization: group with a real social cohesion or empirical social category? This first step makes it possible to address the issue of "identity" in a coherent way. In this contribution, the choice to look into the group of aldermen is conscious. The available sources consist mainly of deeds (from the duke, the ecclesiastical houses and the aldermen themselves), happily supplemented by a collection of seals recently published. This material gives some benchmarks and allows us to grasp the key traits of this social identity - in their behaviour and internal organization; in the way they represent themselves as social group; finally how they are perceived by other people (duke, lords, clergy).

James Davis (Queen's University Belfast)

Urban Market Regulation and Commercial Morality in Anglo-Norman England

There has been a significant amount of recent work on the regulation of medieval English markets, as well as the morals and ideology that underlay that oversight and the behaviour of market users. Much of this work has concentrated on the late twelfth to fifteenth century, particularly the early part of this period when signs of market-orientation were increasingly prominent. It has been argued that the commercialisation, urbanisation and monetarisation of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries were instrumental in creating an increasingly market-oriented peasantry, a new market ethic, and consternation among contemporary writers. However, what of the foundational market system and commercial activity upon which these developments were built? The Anglo-Saxon structures have been examined by historians such Peter Sawyer, while Richard Britnell, for one, has looked at the market rules for Anglo-Norman England. However, relatively little has been done on the underlying attitudes towards market organisation and activity in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. This paper examines the market regulations that were in place in eleventh- and early twelfth-century English towns as a precursor to considering the market morality that they may have reflected or shaped. These laws are placed in the context of clerical and literary evidence that circulated in the central Middle Ages, rather than more high-minded theological debates, and how medieval commentators understood the market and trade in Anglo-Norman England. Can we discern consistent themes in both these discussions and in commercial law that might be regarded as constituting a market morality in English towns before the main onset of commercial expansion? The assumption is that this was a society constrained by anti-market concepts and suspicion of traders, but then this was once the view of late medieval England. Perhaps we might see the seeds of a more pragmatic approach to commercial activity, but one that suited the economic conditions and trading needs of the time. Or perhaps this was a society not yet attuned to a high level of monetary-based exchange and profit-making. In understanding the conceptions that dominated the everyday marketplaces of Anglo-Norman England, we might also better discern what was really new in urban market attitudes and behaviour in subsequent centuries.

Daniel Gerrard (University of Oxford)

"Imbued with the Spirit of an Antique Nobility": The Dignity of the City in High Medieval England

Historians' treatments of urban communities in the High Medieval period have often emphasised the atypical character of urban life in a predominantly agrarian society. Indeed, it has often been suggested that contemporaries struggled to accommodate cities, and in particular the early phases of the communal movement, within their understanding of political and social order. In contrast, this paper will show that English voices in this period tended rather to highlight the nobility of urban communities, the beauty and strength of urban sites and the importance of cities in English history. Far from being outside contemporary concepts of social order, the English already viewed their cities as centres of power, wealth and civilization.

Anne E. Lester (University of Colorado at Boulder, USA)

Susceptio Reliquarum in the Cities of Northwestern France: Sacred Geography and Civic Identity in the Aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, 1204-1240

It has long been recognized that one of the major consequences of the Fourth Crusade and the expansion of the lands of the Outremer to include the Latin Empire was the unprecedented influx of relics and sacred objects – principally relics connected to Christ's Passion and the Apostolic past – sent from the treasuries of Byzantine churches and chapels to the collections of northern France and Flanders. These translations of holy objects reshaped practices of devotion in the west in profound ways, making both the idea and the material imprint of the Holy Land visible to all who interacted with the newly acquired relics. The arrival of Greek relics in the cities of north-western Europe also served to create a new sense of cohesion and civic identity as urban communities wrote the new relics and the stories of their acquisition into their liturgies and crusade commemorations. These narratives, often embedded in the lections used in cathedral and monastic liturgies, demonstrate the process of linking the Apostolic Past with the crusading present and inserting these concerns into the local sacred geography of northern France. This paper has three parts. In the first, I will identify the major relics and collections of objects that came into north-western Europe in the decades following 1204 and discuss the geographical dispersion of these objects. In doing so I will show the sacred networks and connections formed between and among relic collections that linked monastic houses and cathedral communities within and across the dioceses of the region. I will then turn to the liturgical sources created to celebrate these new relics, especially the lections that recount their translation from Greece to the West and then analyze how their new feasts were fitted into a pre-existing liturgical calendar as a strategy for linking the Levant and Byzantium with the civic identity of northern France and transforming the latter in turn. In many cases, the celebration of the advent or susceptio of the new relics marked a moment of civic solidarity and a point where urban communities could come together and reinvent themselves in connection with the crusade movement and with the reception or taking up of a new Apostolic identity, one that could enhance if not even eclipse that of the pre-existing local identities tied to a lineage of local (usually Merovingian or Carolingian) saints. Finally, the paper closes with a preliminary assessment of the impact of these relics on the broader patterns of devotion and civic identity emergent during the thirteenth century, looking specifically at the growing numbers of hospital communities, leper houses, and smaller monastic foundations associated with crusader families who seem to have indulged an ideal of the

Apostolic model partly informed by the advent of new relics in their midst. If, as Gautier Cornut famously suggested, the coming of the relics of the Crown of Thorns made Paris and indeed France into a new Israel, so I would argue the reception of relics from Constantinople after 1204 also rendered the urban networks of north-western Europe a version of the Holy Land, making in Courut's words "one region (Gaul) equal to the other (Greece and the Holy Land)."

Keith D Lilley (Queen's University Belfast, UK)

On socio-spatial Othering in the English medieval city

This paper explores the placing of bodies in the medieval city. Drawing upon critical geographical ideas of David Sibley especially, a case is made that (urban) place and (cultural) identity are closely linked. Defining what urban bodies can do, and where, relies on ideas of 'centre' and 'edge', spatial concepts that were used in England in the Middle Ages to mark out 'the Other'. This can be seen in a number of different contexts, including cities such as Norwich, Nottingham and Hereford in the eleventh century, as well as in later centuries too, such as Bristol in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, where socio-spatial Othering pushed certain groups to the urban margins while centring elites. The aim of this paper is to begin to conceptualise these spatial relationships seen in English medieval cities, not simply by using modern ideas of space and power, derived from Michel Foucult's work for example, but by exploring ideas of urban ordering present in medieval Europe, particularly in Christian cosmography and theology. The persistent analogy made by contemporaries between cosmos-city-body was lived out through the spatial practices of those who governed and dwelled in medieval cities, reinforcing perceptions of the Other and ordering urban spaces.

Jehangir Y. Malegam (Duke University, NC)

Aesthetics of Belonging and Alienation: Organization of Hatred in the Northern French Communes

Treating hatred as a social relationship (after Bartlett and Smail) this paper suggests a process of boundary making in northern French towns during the twelfth century. In Laon, legal provisions concerned with "mortal hatred" produced malleable space for the commune, and a resource to be exploited during disputes with the local cathedral chapter. Because its policing drew upon communal resources, including time, persons and reputations, hatred was a claim of participation within the Peace of Laon. In Laon's charter, a transitional zone where hatreds were beyond management by any party (commune, chapter, castellan) enabled political manoeuvring and self-help by juridically "empty" persons whose claim on the commune was tentative, and whose social resources might be extra-local or non-existent. Building on anthropologist Mary Douglas' conception of dirt, this study examines specific political and juridical processes by which socially reprobate elements police and expand the boundaries of a collective that all but rejects them. It also demonstrates the importance of hatred for membership, participation and self-identification in a northern French commune.

Hélène Noizet (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)

Spatialiser pour mieux régner : le roi, l'évêque et les Parisiens d'après la « forma pacis » (1222)

Spatialiser pour mieux régner : le roi, l'évêque et les Parisiens d'après la forma pacis (1222) En 1222, le roi capétien, Philippe Auguste, et l'évêque de Paris, Guillaume de Seignelay, mettent par écrit leurs droits respectifs dans la capitale. Cet acte est fondamental car il pose la base des relations de pouvoir entre les plus puissants seigneurs concernés par l'espace parisien jusqu'au 17e s. Une étude détaillée de ce dossier documentaire montre comment la concurrence seigneuriale tend au début du 13e s. vers une dépersonnalisation des rapports de domination au profit de leur spatialisation. La relation à l'espace fonde l'identité de ces différents acteurs, en même temps qu'elle constitue un élément de réactualisation de leur pouvoir.

Spatializing for better ruling : the king, bishop and Parisians in the forma pacis (1222) In 1222, the capetian king, Philippe Auguste, and the bishop of Paris, Guillaume de Seignelay, put in writing their respective rights in the capital. This chart is fundamental because it is the core, the basis of the power relationship between the most powerful lords concerned by the parisian space up to the 17th century. A detailed study of this document will show how the lordly competition tended, at the beginning of the 13th century, to a depersonnalization of relationship of domination, in favor of their spatialization. The relation to space set up the identity of these different actors, and, at the same time, update their power.

Walter Simons (Dartmouth College, NH)

"Brood omme God": Religious Vagrancy, Begging, and Labor, 1100-1350

This paper examines the beghards of the southern Low Countries as exemplars of a new kind of lay religiosity on the margins of orthodoxy emerging around 1220. Beghards (Dutch: begarden; German: Begarden; French bég[h]ards) were lay men who lived religiously in a fashion comparable to heir female contemporaries, the beguines, but did not take vows and never formed a religious order. Like beguines, they sometimes formed communities in major cities of the Low Countries that combined penitential and contemplative forms of life with manual labor and charitable work, particularly the care of elderly and sickly weavers. Many beghards, however, chose not to join such "settled" communities and led an itinerant life as textile workers. The paper will pay special attention to the controversial practices of radical poverty and lay public begging in the context of dominant thought on work and mendicancy in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries.

Ewoud Waerniers (Ghent University)

Perception and performance of urban identity in the episcopal cities Cambrai and Tournai (1180-1230)

The commune of Cambrai is one of the most famous and most studied urban sworn associations of the High Middle Ages. Nearly all historians who studied the communal phase in Cambrai focussed on the origins and the early developments of the commune from the uprising of the year 1077 until the middle of the twelfth century. Those studies are based on narrative sources. In contrast I will use diplomatic sources to explore the events in which the commune is involved during the last decades

before the association is prohibited in 1227. The history of the commune of Cambrai is characterised by a conflictual relationship between the lay inhabitants of the city on the one hand and the bishop and the clerical party on the other hand. In order to gain insight into this discordant atmosphere, I will compare the situation of Cambrai with the developments in Tournai during the last decades of the twelfth century and the first quarter of the thirteenth century. These two cities have a lot in common. Both cities functioned as the see of a diocese, located on the banks of the Scheldt and situated within the border area between Flanders and Hainaut, the German empire and the French kingdom. Furthermore, Cambrai as well as Tournai suffered under a comparable rivalry between the communal and the ecclesiastical party. Moreover, we are well-informed about the situation in both episcopal cities thanks to a similar corpus of diplomatic source material. In this paper I want to answer two questions: how are the conflicting parties described in the charters? And which actions, deeds and rituals are used by the different parties in those conflicts? By analysing this, I will come to a deeper understanding of conflict mechanisms, used by rivalling urban groups in episcopal cities in North-western Europe around the year 1200.

Jörg Wettlaufer (Academy of Science and Humanities, Göttingen)

The emergence and social usage of shaming punishments in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Northwest European cities

The study of early public criminal law in the emerging urban communities of the high middle ages can shed some light on the social identities and ritual performance of their citizens. Although the overall number of textual witnesses related to shaming rather than to other corrections or punishments is relatively small for the period under consideration, we can gain some insights through the study of the extraordinary and symbolic rich forms of pacifying the growing cities as reflected through charters of liberty and franchises.

With a focus on the evidence east of the Rhine before 1300, the presentation will concentrate on early normative examples of shaming at the pillory, carrying the stones of shame (Schandsteine) and other humiliating processions through the city as well as the custom of dunking offenders in water or mud. They were applied as an alternative to a monetary fine. The typical offences that were punished by those rather complicated punitive measures include ignominious words (verbis contumeliosis), scolding, gossip, fraud, theft and adultery. They were applied in particular in the context of moral failure against the community in case of repetition of an offense and have a strong relation to the market place that also often served as a stage for the execution of the public shaming. In cases of detailed statutes we can see, how these punishment applied different to social groups (e.g. Speyer 1230) and in how far gender was an important distinctive criterion.

It is argued that at least some of the aforesaid penal customs are rooted in rituals of public penance and therefore propagate the purpose of reformation of the offender through shame and repentance. Another, even more important purpose was to render the misdemeanour public and to prevent repetition. At the same time the pillory also was used as a supplementary punishment to banishment and other excluding practices. Due to the lack of sources there is no straight picture how the particular types of punishment were distributed throughout Europe during this period, but the earliest examples for the usage of pillory and stones of shame stem from charters of liberty of communities in North-Eastern France.

UNIVERSITEIT
GENT

HENRI PIRENNE
INSTITUTE FOR MEDIEVAL STUDIES

KVAB
Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie
van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten

fwo
Research Foundation
Flanders
Opening new horizons

IAP 7/26 Belgian Science Policy
City & Society
in the Low Countries (1200-1850)

Dartmouth

WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY

Belgian Science Policy Office
belspo