

## CONSTRUCTING CITIES: TEXT, IMAGINATION, MATERIAL REMAINS, AND HISTORY

GHI-sponsored panels at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds, July 9–12, 2007. Convener: Barbara Rosenwein (Loyola University of Chicago). Moderators: Claudius Sieber-Lehmann (University of Basel), Felicitas Schmieder (Fernuniversität Hagen). Participants: Miriam Czock (University of Bochum), Florian Hartmann (GHI Rome), Alizah Holstein (Boston College), Damien Kempf (Mission Historique Francaise en Allemagne, Göttingen), Lovro Kunčević (Institute for Historical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, Dubrovnik), Anja Lutz (University of Basel).

The two sessions at Leeds brought together former participants of the GHI's 2005 Medieval History Seminar who wished to continue their fruitful contact. The sessions attempted to show that cities are not only spatial units confined by physical frontiers, but are also imagined virtual spaces. Proposing that the self-image of urban communities is vital for the unity and development of cities, the papers approached the subject of self-fashioning by asking in what ways and by what means town-dwellers perceived and shaped their own past and present.

The first session opened with Miriam Czock's paper on "Constructing Community: Places of Community in the Writing of Galbert of Bruges." She argued that in Galbert's writing, a twelfth-century source about the murder of Charles the Good, place is at the center of social identity. A careful reading of two instances of conflict arising about places demonstrated how the citizens of Bruges modeled their identity using places. It emerged that the citizens of Bruges perceived themselves as a community because they integrated historical or symbolic meaning in places, and were prepared to protect them from physical harm, as well as shield them from definitions not of their own making.

In her contribution "Material Remains of the Immediate Past and Their Perception in Fifteenth-Century London Chronicles," Anja Lutz posited that the chroniclers of late medieval London were hardly interested in the materiality of their surroundings and their past, although their contemporaries were interested in and had knowledge about building activities and the "*anciennité*" of buildings in the city. In contrast, the authors of the so-called *London Chronicles* aimed to make certain places and buildings of their city "timeless." Due to this, the history of London (and of the whole realm of England) was firmly connected to the iconic and symbolic sites covering the city like a loose web that did not precisely correspond to the boundaries of the medieval city. Through their work,

the chroniclers made the perception of the city's history accessible for their readers, and at the same time they shaped this perception.

Damien Kempf contributed a paper called "A Curious Passage From a Sixteenth-Century Chronicle of Metz, Or: The No Less Curious Story of the Transmission of a Greek Apocryphal Text in the West." In this paper, he investigated a passage from a sixteenth-century chronicle that identifies the fourth bishop of Metz, Patient, as Prochorus. Prochorus was the author of a fifth-century Greek apocryphal text on St. John the Evangelist that enjoyed remarkable success in Byzantium, but remained mostly unknown in the West. A close examination of the manuscript dissemination of Prochorus's *Acts of John* in the West reveals that the text was, in association with the legends of Patient, mainly disseminated from Metz, thanks to its use by the prominent abbey of St. Arnulf in Metz.

The second session opened with a paper by Florian Hartmann on "The Self-Image of the Aristocracy in Eighth-Century Rome." Interpreting prominent artworks from the middle of the eighth century in Rome, he asked why examples of aristocratic self-image in Rome are only to be found from the middle of the eighth century onward. He argued that growing aristocratic power was caused by the increasing importance of the estates surrounding Rome, which were in the possession of Roman aristocratic landholders. Symbolic of the expanding power of the aristocracy was its self-image apparent in the extraordinary works located just at the places of aristocratic charity and alms. All the surviving inscriptions and images of the Roman aristocratic laymen are documented in the context of deaconries and charity. As a result, these laymen were linked to the supply of free grain, thus taking some authority away from, and aligning themselves with, the popes.

Alizah Holstein delivered a paper entitled "Death and Memory: Constructing Florentine Communal Identity in Late Trecento Rome." Drawing on court testimonies from the Archivio Segreto Vaticano, she examined the ways in which Florentine merchants, residing in Rome during the War of the Eight Saints (1375–1378), negotiated their fragile position on the periphery of two warring cities. On the basis of their claimed loyalty to Rome, and at the same time, their open acknowledgment of continued ties to Florence, her paper questioned the dominant paradigm of the city as the single determining factor of late medieval social identity.

In the final paper, Lovro Kunčević dealt with the image of Ragusa as the defender of Christendom to detect the historical context of the creation of this image and the ways in which it changed from the fourteenth to the early seventeenth century. Moreover, he analyzed the sociocultural context of its production, trying to answer questions concerning the creators and users of this image, the purposes it served, and the audiences

to which it was directed. Finally, he placed this specific Ragusan self-image within the wider European context, drawing parallels between Ragusan and other similar claims of being “antemurale” or “propugnaculum Christianitatis” (e.g. Hungarian and Polish cases).

Every paper was followed by a lively and stimulating discussion. The participating scholars would like their fruitful experience to continue, and are now setting up a network to organize regular workshops.

*Miriam Czock and Anja Lutz*