Conference Report

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SYMPOSIUM TITLE: NETWORKS & NEIGHBOURS: A SYMPOSIUM ON EARLY MEDIEVAL CORRELATIONS

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NETWORKS & NEIGHBOURS: A SYMPOSIUM ON EARLY MEDIEVAL CORRELATIONS

Networks and Neighbours is a project designed to build upon the successes of series such as the *'Transformation of the Roman World'*, *'HERA: Cultural Memory and the Resources of the Past'* and *'Texts and Identities'* by encouraging the interaction of researchers, young and old, from across the world to formulate new ideas to develop, augment and even challenge the excellent work of previous years.

The two-day symposium to allow early medievalists from and representing universities in Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Hungary, Israel, Mexico, Spain and the United Kingdom to share their views and, appropriately, build networks, took place in the Maurice Keyworth building of the University of Leeds. An impressive array of graduate students and established academics attended and

participated either by giving papers, engaging in the stimulating discussions that followed the panels or in the more informal debates that ensued over the excellent food, coffee and wine provided by the organisers.

The vibrancy of the interchange at the symposium was testament both to the comfortable atmosphere of the event and the enthusiasm of the attendees. It would be too large a task to detail much of the discussion here, and to do so might risk repeating the information given in the overview of papers below. Nevertheless, it seems worthwhile to give a brief summary of some of the major themes that were particularly relevant throughout the symposium.

- The perception and practice of history, from ancient times to modern methodologies was one of the key features of the symposium. Many of the papers presented showed how the past was presented to contemporaries, often as a contrast to current identity (Guy Ron-Gilboa, Asya Bereznyak) or as a legitimation of culture or state (Dimitri Tarat, Philipp Dörler). Various papers also contemplated our notions of history and offered innovative models (Cătălin Țăranu), methodologies (Hervin Fernandez-Aceves, Andre Szczawlinska Muceniecks) or techniques of analysis (Paulo Henrique Pachá) that may assist in future study.

- Networks, unsurprisingly, was also one of the most pervasive themes. Every paper offered some contribution to our understanding of networks of interaction in the early medieval world, but networks of social or cultural identity (Koen Vanheule), for the dissemination of knowledge (Tamar Rotman, Muriel Araujo Lima) and of communication and exchange (Javier Martínez Jiménez, Rodrigo dos Santos Rainha) featured particularly heavily throughout the symposium.

- Finally, neighbours, as the other titular focal point of the project, were also prominent in the panels and the discussion sessions. An impressively diverse set of 'neighborial' relationships were discussed; from the intimate but socially distinct interaction of the bishop and his flock (Paulo Duarte Silva), to rivalry and intrigue between political units (Sandro Teixeira Moita) and the interaction of strangers linked by faith across vast geographical spaces (Lucy O'Connor). The analysis of the characteristics and processes of connection in the early medieval world was not only interesting and insightful, but mirrored the lively exchanges of an ambitious conference which attracted delegates from four continents!

PANEL 1

ANDRE SZCZAWLINSKA MUCENIECKS (UNIVERSITY OF SAO PAULO, BRAZIL), "THE X AND XI CENTURIES AS SOURCE FOR MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIAN HISTORIANS: METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE STUDY OF VIKING AGE RUS"

To open the symposium Andre presented a useful discussion – valuable to most early medievalists – which considered the subjectivity of history versus the apparent objectivity of material studies such as archaeology and numismatics.

This issue is particularly significant for early medieval Scandinavia since the written sources, which are of course the primary interest of the historian, were collected and written several centuries after the events described. Additionally many of the sagas contain material that is openly mythical or fantastic. These problems are compounded, according to Andre, by the categorisation of Sagas under labels such as *Fornaldarsögur* (fantastic sagas) and *Lygisögur* (lie-sagas). Andre concluded that, despite these issues, the efforts of the early medieval Scandinavian historian can be fruitful so long as historians are mindful of their task and address the theoretical demands of the use of such complex but intriguing sources.

PAULO DUARTE SILVA (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL), "BISHOPS AND PREACHING IN FIFTH-CENTURY GAUL: THE SERMONS *AD EPISCOPOS* OF CAESARIUS OF ARLES (502-542)"

In the wake of recent scholarship on the religious and socio-political role of the Late Antique bishop, Paulo attempted to investigate the Late Antique perception of the role of the bishop through assessment of the sermons of Caesarius.

Interestingly, Caesarius stressed the divine ordination and civic honour in a position that was becoming increasingly aristocratic and occasionally hereditarily influenced. He also stressed the public and secular responsibilities of a bishop as a trader, steward of the diocese, provider and distributor of charity and spiritual educator who ought to provide sermons that the least learned of the congregation could comprehend.

Paulo strenuously asserted that this perception was personal to Caesarius, and that his preferences reflected the context of his episcopal tenure; for example his emphasis on Petrine

primacy – the authority of the Bishop of Rome – reflected the papal backing that Caesarius received in his dispute with the see of Vienne over spiritual authority in the Rhone valley. Through studies of this kind we can both conceive contemporary perception of episcopal roles and also gain insight into the contemporary socio-political context which would otherwise be poorly documented.

CĂTĂLIN ŢĂRANU (UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS), "THE ELUSIVE NATURE OF THE GERMANIC HEROIC TRADITION: A RHIZOMATIC MODEL"

To close an impressive opening panel, Cătălin suggested a model through which scholars could conceptualise the proliferation of Germanic heroic traditions through both time and space. This issue has intrigued and vexed interested parties for centuries, but tradition linear evolutionary interpretations are insufficient to explain contemporary but geographically variant versions and fail to acknowledge non-extant traditions.

The proposed solution was to consider Germanic heroic traditions in the manner of a rhizome; a botanical term used to describe a 'dynamic, open, decentralized network that branches out to all sides unpredictably and horizontally.' This model could usefully help us explain why and how a seemingly historical event was retold and embellished upon to suit the needs of the teller. Each version might add biases and details that could be retained or discarded in the next; and each version was contemporary to myriad others from which it might vary to a minimal or great degree. Through such an interpretation we can understand how an event, such as the assassination of Sigibert in 575 which was recorded within a few years in a realistic and moralistic fashion by Gregory of Tours, came to be incorporated within grand heroic narratives such as the similar, but still strikingly different epics of the thirteenth century, the *Völsunga saga* and the *Nibelungenlied.*

PANEL 2

SANDRO TEIXEIRA MOITA (FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL/ARMY COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE – BRAZILIAN ARMY), "BUILDING THE KINGSHIP: ROMAN GENERALS, WARRIOR NOBILITY AND THE RISE OF THE GOTHIC KINGS"

In the first paper of the second session, Sandro sought to investigate the rise of Alaric and the Visigoths, who he lead in successive sieges against the Rome, Capital of the Western Empire, which he would eventually, (and famously) capture in 410. The focus of the paper, however, was

on the early career of Alaric and how and why it differed from the various other generals – Gothic and otherwise – in Roman employ during the final years of the fourth century.

In particular Sandro contrasted the careers of the Gainas and Tribigild with that of Alaric: all were Gothic military leaders, leading at least partially-Gothic forces in the Roman Army. Yet the former two seem to have overplayed their hands, and were bloodily put down, whilst Alaric successfully played off both the Eastern and Western Imperial courts, as well as maintaining the leadership of the heterogeneous group that became the Visigoths.

Alaric's comparative success was born of skilful manoeuvrings in a complex politico-military situation. This ability was particularly significant during the moment of crisis, for both Goth and Roman, following the battle of the Frigidus in 394 – the outcome of which allowed Alaric to achieve unprecedented control of his people whilst ceasing upon the Roman need for experienced soldiers and leaders during turbulent years. Opportunity, and the political 'savvy' to exploit it, meant that Alaric was able to maintain roman military command, Gothic leadership and regional control in Illyricum: 'from that moment on he was responsible for collecting taxes…, monitoring the compliance of justice…, [and] the supplying of troops.' With these resources he was able to consolidate his position beyond the ability of other generals. The foundation was laid for both the sack of Rome, and the nature of kingship in the Visigothic *gens*.

PAULO HENRIQUE PACHÁ (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL FLUMINENSE ICARIÁ), "RELATIONS OF PERSONAL DEPENDENCE: SOCIAL TOTALITY AND HISTORICAL DYNAMIC IN THE IBERIAN EARLY MIDDLE AGES"

In the second paper, Paulo attempted to elucidate trends in the economy of early medieval Spain through the case study of gift exchange in the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* (IV, 3). Paulo described how the commercial enterprise of foreign traders was established only through gift exchange with the local potentate; and how that potentate, in this case Bishop Paul, was able to use the cessation of gift exchange as an exemplar of his power over the fiscal and physical wellbeing of the merchants.

This example shows not only the proprieties and intricacies of international networks but also, as Paulo argued, the subordination of commercial exchange to gift exchange as the former could only exist in the framework of the latter. Furthermore, it shows the 'conflictive' character of gift

exchange and how this practice served to affirm the authority of the 'top agent'. Paulo suggested that the relationship of personal dependence displayed by the events of the case study could display general social norms, and therefore that the exchange of gifts, influenced by Roman and Germanic practices such as *patrocinium*, was central in the establishment of the Visigothic social hierarchy.

KOEN VANHEULE (GHENT UNIVERSITY, BELGIUM), "(RE-)FORMING A REFORMER: THE INFLUENCE OF ABBATIAL NETWORKS ON MONASTIC REFORMS IN THE EARLY-ELEVENTH-CENTURY EMPIRE"

Koen investigated similar personal networks of dependence, but on a more individual level, in eleventh-century, north-west continental Europe. The career of Poppo of Stavelot was used as method to cast a sceptical eye over the supposed monastic reform 'movement'.

The remarkable rise of Poppo from lesser Flemish aristocrat and *milites* to become a central and influential figure in imperial ecclesiastical policy under both Henry II and Conrad II was a product of his early relationship with the powerful Luxembourg family, who had been regents of Flanders during Poppo's military service. Koen persuasively demonstrated that Poppo's appointments to various institutions were made with the intention of ingratiating himself with the magnates of secular imperial politics and that, in particular, his periods of influence neatly coincided with those of the Luxembourg family.

Therefore, Koen was able to demonstrate that the rise Poppo was not simply due to his charismatic qualities as a reformer, but rather the result of complex interconnection between aristocrats of the ecclesiastical and secular spheres. This conclusion casts doubt over simplistic interpretations of monastic reform and gives valuable insight into the personal politics of the Holy Roman Empire.

PANEL 3

TAMAR ROTMAN (BEN GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV, ISRAEL), "THE MARTYRDOM OF AGATHONICE AND THE TRANSMISSION OF HER STORY"

In this paper Tamar attempted to add to our knowledge of voluntary martyrdom by arguing for the greater validity of the Greek account of the story of Agathoinice. This version has

Agathonice as an observer in the crowd witnessing the martyrdom of others who was overcome by divine inspiration and cast herself into the flames of execution contrasts with the Latin version where she is martyred forcefully alongside fellow adherents of Christianity.

The Latin account is generally recognised by historians as the more reliable as it fits the general patterns of hagiography more accurately. Tamar argued that this interpretation overlooks parallel examples of voluntary martyrdom, and that the more typical Latin translation was probably itself adapted to make it more conventional and palatable, even credible, to western audiences. Furthermore the site of the martyrdom, Pergamon in Asia Minor, was a Greek-speaking region and it seems reasonable to suppose that the Greek version remains truer to the original.

This reinterpretation presents a radical departure from the conventional understanding of the source; thereby reopening the issue of transmission and potentially offering a new perspective on the rare but remarkable practice of voluntary martyrdom in Late Antiquity.

GUY RON-GILBOA (THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM, ISRAEL), "ǦĀHILĪ BRIGANDS IN MAMLŪK HISTORIOGRAPHY: TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL MAQRĪZĪ'S ACCOUNT OF THE BRIGANDS AMONG THE ARABS"

In the chronologically most recent paper of the symposium, Guy explained the unusual preoccupation of al Maqrīzī with early Arab brigands. His universal history was largely composed of other sources, yet paid particular attention to pre and early-Islamic bandits. In a number of lively and adventurous tales the brigands appear both as models of barbarity and as noble savages.

To some degree the accounts are moralistic; often the bandits seem so evil that they continue to kill even after death. These tales are presented as counter-examples to the tales of heroism and civilisation in the early Islamic period. However, according to Guy, al Maqrīzī's purpose was more complex: his insistence on the inclusion of these stories betrays the political situation of his own day and the agenda of his text. The Mamlūk domain was, at that time, beset with Bedouin rebellions which were accompanied by brigandage alike to that included in these episodes of savagery. The inclusion of these stories in the moralistic format was intended to highlight the

impiety of the bandit transgressors of al Maqrīzī's own day, and to encourage those who were seditious to repent lest they suffer as their barbarous predecessors had done.

JAVIER MARTÍNEZ JIMÉNEZ (UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, U.K.), "THE LACK OF ENGINEERS IN POST-ROMAN SPAIN: THE CONTRIBUTION OF AQUEDUCTS"

In the final paper of the panel, Javier attempted to shed light on the question of Roman continuity and technology in Visigothic Spain through the medium of aqueducts. Despite the often simplistic style of construction in Visigothic Spain it is evident from the new and extensive projects at Toledo and Reccopolis that skilled builders were available in post-Roman Spain. However, for the construction of aqueducts builders were insufficient, no matter how skilled.

From a survey of Spanish aqueducts Javier demonstrated that most had already ceased to function in the fourth century. By the sixth century even the maintenance of aqueducts in major cities had ceased, yet there were two cases of aqueduct construction in this century; one at Reccopolis and the other at Merida. Javier explained these anomalies as probably the product of the skills of foreign engineers, hired in the aftermath of a treaty between the Goths and Byzantines. Since the style of the Reccopolis aqueduct mirrors the rest of the extensive royal complex there, it is even possible that foreign engineers were employed to assist in the entire construction. This important analysis sheds light on both the pervasion of technology in the post-Roman world and the existence of networks of knowledge between neighbouring political entities in Late Antiquity.

PANEL 4

MURIEL ARAUJO LIMA (UNIVERSITY OF SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL), "ENGLISH BESTIARIES AND THEIR EARLY MEDIEVAL PRECEDENTS"

In the opening paper of the second day of the symposium Muriel, like Guy on the previous day, investigated the presentation and transmission of early medieval knowledge into the high and late medieval periods.

In particular the transmission of the late antique Greek text, the *Phisiolodus*, into the early medieval Latin west and thence to the famous English *bestiaries*, was considered. The description and pictorial portrayal of various beasts was investigated to illustrate the way knowledge

transformed to best fit the needs and understanding of contemporaries. An array of striking images accompanied the presentation to illustrate the transformation of knowledge in an important paper that stressed that networks and neighbours exist in time as well as geography.

LUCY O'CONNOR (THE UNIVERSITY OF EXETER, U.K.), "THE GATHERING OF DEVOUT PILGRIMS THROUGHOUT THE EARLY MEDIEVAL HOLY LAND"

In this paper, Lucy investigated the identities and motivations of the numerous and disparate pilgrims to the Holy Land in the early medieval period, and what they sought and found upon their arrival. A range of sources were considered and compared, from the fourth to eighth century, to provide an extensive picture of pilgrimage in Late Antiquity.

Of particular interest were the descriptions of amenities in the holy land, where secular and religious communities sought to alleviate the difficulties of travellers with the provision of guidance, provisions, protection and lodging, either out of commercial interest or charity. The interaction between these groups was complex, due to the geographic diversity of pilgrims, but facilitated by the willingness of locals and other travellers who were multilingual. Even services and sermons would be translated by members of the congregation as they were given or after their completion. The paper served both as an important reminder of the scale of pilgrimage in the first millennium of Christianity, and the interaction between distant peoples in the milieu of a sacred locality.

ASYA BEREZNYAK (THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM, ISRAEL), "KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR OWN: TRANSMISSION, TRANSFORMATION AND APPROPRIATION OF CHRISTIAN IDEAS IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES"

Asya's ambitious paper described and compared the political effects of the various methods of chistianisation in early medieval Europe. The paper opened with an appraisal of the brutal forced conversion of the Saxons by Charlemagne, and the contrast between this forceful secular method and the conciliatory tone of the Church in the generations thereafter, which sought to reconcile Christianity with Saxon traditions and pride.

This was compared to the technique used by the Bulgarian monarchy to convert their fissiparous groups of that domain; the assertive policy of the Bulgar nobles was mirrored by the portrayal of

the pagan past by the fledgling Church – the Byzantine missionaries and their royal patrons made little effort to accommodate pagan traditions. But this rigorous approach was offset with a local focus centred on the new Slavonic liturgical language.

Finally the case of Bohemia was considered; here the Premyslid monarchs were unwilling to accommodate foreign influences like the Franks or Byzantines, so their attitude to their pagan ancestors was neither reconciliatory nor damning but rather unconcerned; becoming Christian was certainly laudable, but pagans and their traditions were not denounced or incorporated.

This paper served to sharply denote the various methods of Christianisation and the importance of the interaction of the ranks of the social hierarchy and political units to the establishment of a new faith, and the perception of the old.

PANEL 5

DIMITRI TARAT (BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY IN THE NEGEV, ISRAEL), "CONTINUITY AND CHANGE; THE COMMUNITY OF HAMBURG-BREMEN, C. 831- 888"

To open the final session, Dimitri attempted to shed light upon the shadowy and contentious origin and early years of the Church of Hamburg-Bremen. The paper stressed the difficulty in proselytization in a scarcely populated, war-torn and sometimes openly hostile landscape. These issues were compounded by the intrigues of competing bishoprics which the partisan source materials often seek to influence – tacitly or otherwise.

Probably the major problem was the relationship with the archdiocese of Köln which held authority over Bremen, but less so over Hamburg, and therefore its authority was contentious after the amalgamation of the two. It seems likely that the silence of early writers regarding the early years of the Bremen diocese was specifically designed to deny information to Köln, who had a strong case for authority over the independently minded northern bishopric. From such thoughtful interpretation of the sources Dimitri was able to present an intriguing picture of a nascent diocese beset with secular dangers to the north and east and potential ecclesiastical rivals to the south and west. It was in this context that the community of Hamburg-Bremen produced the self-congratulatory and occasionally clandestine writings that provide information to modern audiences.

HERVIN FERNANDEZ-ACEVES (CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY), "NETWORKS AND NETWORKING IN THE ROYAL COURT AS SEEN BY 'HUGO FALCANDUS': THE CASE OF SOCIAL PROMINENCE AS CONSTRUCTED BY THE NARRATIVE"

In a paper that drew on mathematical and sociological techniques to create an impressive methodology, Hervin attempted to gain insight into the personal networks of relationship in Norman Sicily through analysis of the appearance and actions of characters in a narrative source.

This innovative approach highlighted the significance of less socially significant figures at the royal court and those that might seem peripheral in the narrative, and allowed some measurement of their influence and prestige. As such Hervin was able to draw conclusions that would have otherwise been difficult, if not impossible, to firmly support. The paper tied in well to the symposium's emphasis on networks and provided intriguing potential for further narrative analysis.

PHILIPP DÖRLER (UNIVERSITÄT WIEN, AUSTRIA), "THE *LIBER HISTORIAE FRANCORUM* – A MODEL FOR A NEW FRANKISH SELF-CONFIDENCE"

Much like in Asya's paper earlier in the day, Philipp considered that attitude of early medieval people to their past, this time in the context of seventh-century Merovingian Francia. In particular the differences in the presentation of the Trojan origins of the Franks was stressed. While the *Chronicle of Fredegar* – written slightly earlier than the *Liber Historiae Francorum* (*LHF*) – stressed the connection of the Franks to Romans in the heroic past, the *LHF* stressed the independent prestige of the Merovingians whose bloodline, according to the *LHF*, was continuous from the Trojan refugees of the imagined past.

Not only were the Franks not subordinated to the Romans in the *LHF*, they were equated with biblical Kings with explicit parallels drawn between Dagobert I and Solomon regarding temperament, authority and fame. Philipp asserted that this confident and proud portrayal of the Frankish past was due to a troubled contemporary situation; like Solomon's successors the heirs of Dagobert were losing ground to the Frankish aristocracy and especially the Pippinids. In this context the author of the *LHF* sought to trumpet the ancient grandeur of the Franks as a whole people, partly as a plea for unity but perhaps also to avoid alienating either the monarchs or the aristocracy.

RODRIGO DOS SANTOS RAINHA (UNIVERSIDADE ESTÁCIO DE SÁ, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL), "EDUCATION AND MASTER-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE VISIGOTH KINGDOM"

In his paper Rodrigo challenged received wisdom about education in the Visigothic kingdom. In contrast to prevailing views he argued that the reality of education was a very individual, hierarchical form of learning that was meant to sustain social-political differences and not expand education in the broader sense. To develop this argument, he studied four bishops: Isidore of Seville, Braulio of Zaragoza, Eugenius II of Toledo and Taio of Zaragoza. These men, linked through the continuous exchange of letters and the exercising of episcopal duties, all relied on their predecessors as teacher, using this acquired education to reinforce their positions on the episcopate.

Isidore of Seville in particular stressed the master-student/disciple relationship and this type of personal education as a way to regulate and indicate the clergy from society by establishing legitimacy through clear hierarchies of authority. In turn, the former student of Isidore, Braulio, along with Eugenius (a potential former student of Isidore) and Taio followed the personal tutorship style of Isidore as a way to build authorship for clerical/episcopal leadership. Thus the legacy of the master/disciple education structure carried on throughout the seventh century and the Visigothic kingdom and in so doing maintained a limited space for learning and education, contrary to the rhetoric of the pedagogical texts and epistles.

CONCLUSION

Finally, participation was consistent, engaging and fruitful with many new connections and correlations drawn. All of those involved seemed satisfied and excited about the event and many already expressed an interest to return for the next *Networks and Neighbours* Symposium in Brazil.