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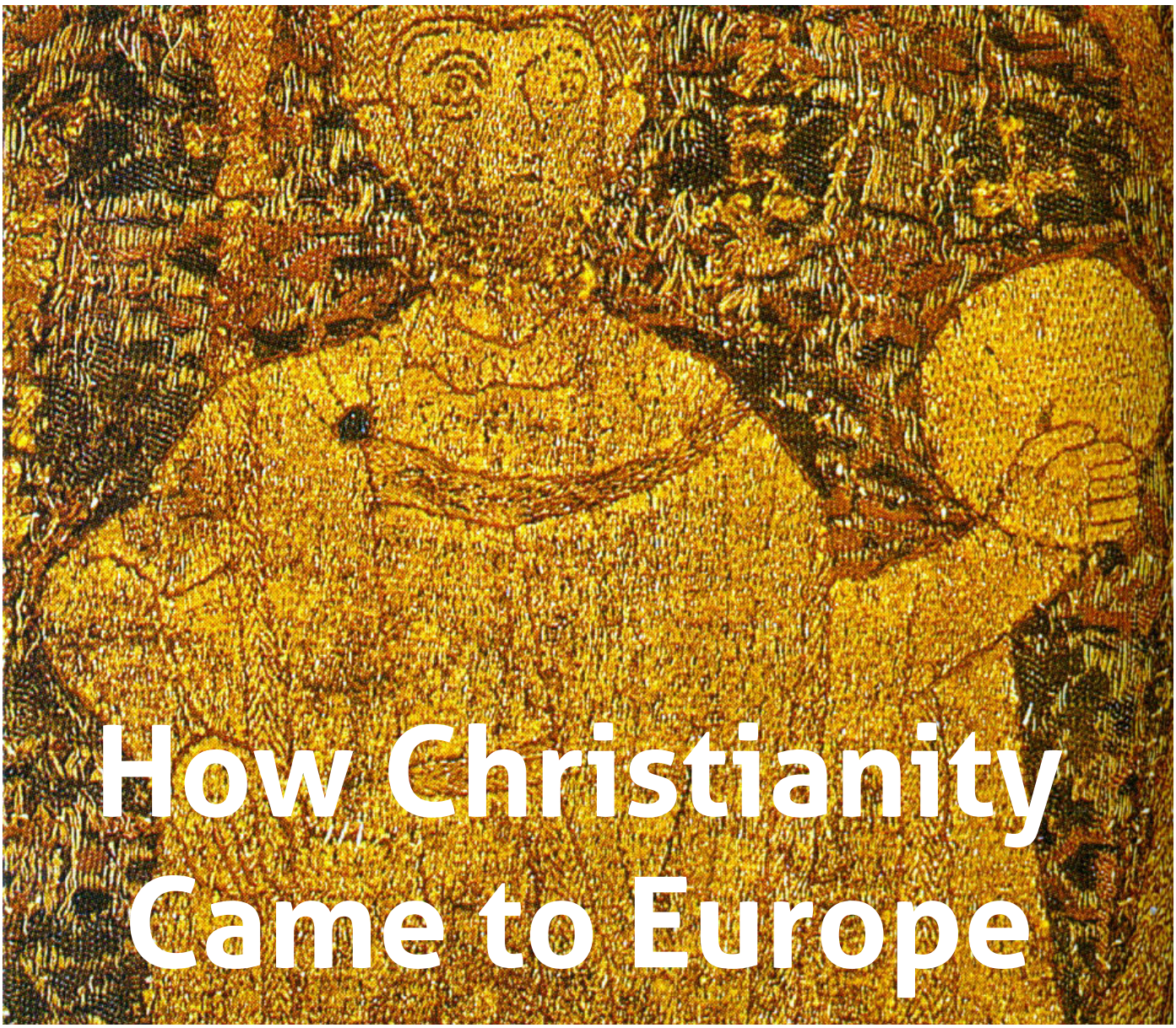

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‘But Where are the Dungeons?’: How to Engage the Public at the Tower of London

A talk about how historical sites, like the Tower of London, engage the public. How to handle visitor expectations, what do people come t see and how to tell history in a captivating but accurate manner.

Medievalist helps scientists rewrite climate records terrain is the threat of

In a paper published in the world-leading scientific journal, *Nature*, Dr Conor Kostick’s research into medieval evidence for climate events to pinpoint the relationship between historical volcanic activity and severe winters.

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The Afterlife of the Dead: Reform in Attitude Towards Medieval Burials, Corpses and Bones

Coverage of three papers from the International Medieval Congress on death, burial and the treatment of corpses

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Cover Photo: 11th century image of Saint Stephen of Hungary

‘But Where are the Dungeons?’: How to Engage the Public at the Tower of London

The Tower of London is the the most visited site in the United Kingdom – last year alone three million people passed through its gates. How should its medieval history be presented?

This was the topic of a paper given by Sally Dixon-Smith one of the leading curators for Historic Royal Palaces, the body that manages the Tower of London. She spoke last week at the International Medieval Congress, held at the University of Leeds, as part of the session ‘Engaging the Public with the Medieval World’. Her paper ‘But Where are the Dungeons?’: Some Challenges in Presenting the Tower of London to 2.5 million People a Year, was one of three aimed at demonstrating how to engage the public at historical sites, and in the classroom. Dixon-Smith spoke about how she engages visitors to the Tower of London and how curators can handle visitor expectations while maintaining the integrity and authenticity of the historical experience.

What is the Tower of London About?

The Tower of London can be a bit of a confusing site, it has a lot going on in one space. The castle today is how you would have seen it by 1300 but the White Tower was built by 1100. It’s a UNESCO World Heritage site, and has three separate museums: The Royal Armouries, Historical Palaces, and the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. Even today, it still a functioning army base! Dixon-Smith explains that there are days where they have over 10,000 people on the grounds and up to 70% are international. Many international visitors of them have little knowledge of English history or don’t speak English as a first language so there is a challenge in presenting important information when language can be a barrier. Dixon-Smith is interested in improving the approaches to interpretation and is concerned that the language provisioning isn’t done well enough. She also notes that some of the way the Tower is presented dates back to the 1840s and needs to be updated.

What are People coming to see at the Tower of London?

Dixon-Smith reveals the most popular aspects of the Tower of London:

The Crown Jewels
Torture/Executions/Gore
Anne Boleyn/Henry VIII
The Ravens
Beefeaters (Yeoman Warders)

She adds that torture/gore aspect was a part of the history but a very small part of it, so there is some disappointment when visitors realise that and you have to manage those expectations.

Difficult Choices: Things We Don’t Say

Dixon-Smith mentioned the difficulty in selecting what stories to tell that will interest the visitor and what stories to leave out. She cited one example to do with Traitor’s Gate, which was built by Edward I. What’s not said during tours is that this building was financed by a large tax on

The White Tower of The Tower of London. Photo by Medievalists.net

a large tax on the Jewish community under Edward I, who went on to expel the Jews from England in 1290. Why is this not addressed? The Tower of London may have a dark and violent past but this particular tale isn't one that can be spun into something digestible. The financing of Traitor's Gate off the backs London's Jewry would seem like a very relevant piece of information about the Tower's history, and while it may be of interest to most historians, stories like these are often left out for the average guest. One the one hand, some pieces of history are left out because they aren't that captivating and may only appeal to specialists, and then there is also, as this story poignantly illustrates, some inherent embarrassment; this isn't a story that makes one feel proud to share with visitors.

Communicating to the Masses: The Dumbing Down Question

"Are you dumbing down?" is the most common question asked of Dixon-Smith. It is also one that she dislikes, stating 'I don't think clarity of communication is dumbing down'. She explains there has to be a balance between making history accessible, and informative, yet captivating, to everyone who comes to the Tower. Since 70% of the visitors are not from England, it's important to make English history comprehensible while still retaining authenticity and accuracy. This is a struggle faced by all curators as they change exhibits, and the ways people move through or interact with the material and spaces around them.

For myself, and many people at the paper, engaging the public with medieval history (any history for that matter) has always been extremely important. As cuts hit the humanities, donations from alumni trickle out, and the general public asks: why is this relevant, why should we continue to fund these subjects? Papers like hers bring back the focus as to why history is important today and how to connect it in fun and interesting ways for the non-specialist.

Medievalist helps scientists rewrite climate records

A University of Nottingham historian has helped resolve a global debate about scientific evidence for ancient extreme climate events by examining medieval manuscripts and other historical sources.

In a paper published in the world-leading scientific journal, *Nature*, Dr Conor Kostick's research into medieval evidence for climate events has allowed scientists to pinpoint the exact relationship between historical volcanic activity and severe winters.

Climate science has made major steps forward in recent years as data collection from natural sources such as tree-rings, ice cores and mineral cave formations has become more and more sophisticated. Much can be learned about the Earth's changing climate from analysing the chemicals found in ice cores, for example, and a crucial phenomenon affecting climate is volcanic eruption.

Rewriting climate history

Scientists know that a major volcanic eruption can have significant cooling effects because its smoke plume injects sulphur particles into the atmosphere which reflects sunlight away from the planet. But what is the past history of such volcanic climate forcing? Most climate scientists believe it played a part in creating some of the cold years faced by our predecessors, such as 536 CE when a cloud covered Europe for a year, with disastrous consequences.

But the exact relationship between historical volcanic activity and severe winters has been confused by the fact that for various reasons, dating errors can accumulate as scientists attempt to count the layers of ice in their cores.

Now though, a team of ice-core experts has dug a new Arctic core and used new techniques to establish with great precision the dating of each ice layer. The results of their work shows that our previous ice-core dates for the period before about 1000 CE (and therefore for volcanic activity) are wrong by about seven years. With the new data it becomes evident that for certain years, such as 79, 536, 626 and 939 CE, volcanoes did indeed cause severe cold to develop over Europe.

Medieval evidence

Dr Conor Kostick commmented, "When Michael Sigl from the Desert Research Institute in Reno, Nevada and his team learned of my work on extreme medieval climate events, they asked could I find 'tie-points' – years in which the historical sources suggest volcanic activity. Thanks to my Nottingham Advanced Research Fellowship and my subsequent Marie Curie Fellowship I have been able to assemble a great deal of relevant evidence for unusual climate events in the medieval period.

Eruption of the Etna volcano, March 2 1669, seen from the east

my subsequent Marie Curie Fellowship I have been able to assemble a great deal of relevant evidence for unusual climate events in the medieval period.

"I looked through my data and gave them a list of events, based not just upon obvious reports, such as eyewitness accounts of the eruption of Vesuvius in 472 CE, but also on more subtle evidence such as reports of the sun being dim, or discoloured. And the beauty of what happened next is that these examples formed a perfect match with the new ice-core data, even though I hadn't seen their data and had no idea which years they were interested in."

The resulting revision of the global history of volcanic aerosol forcing will be very important to researchers working in the climate sciences, historians and archaeologists. The major compilation of historical data published with the paper will also be a valuable asset in its own right.

Dr Conor Kostick has been awarded a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award for early career researchers. **Click here to visit his** webpage at the University of Nottingham website.

Click here to access the article 'Timing and climate forcing of volcanic eruptions for the past 2,500 years' from *Nature*.

Explaining Extreme Weather in the Middle Ages

Halley's comet in 1456

What was causing extreme weather in the Middle Ages? A medieval historian is starting to examine how chroniclers and writers from this period were turning to the night sky to better understand and perhaps prevent natural disasters.

In his paper, 'Managing Meteorological Hazards in the Early and High Middle Ages, 5th-11th Centuries', Thomas Wozniak explained how he is looking at how medieval communities often used weather to explain unusual circumstances. The paper was given earlier this week at the International Medieval Congress at the University of Leeds.

Wozniak, who is currently doing a Post-Doctoral program at Philipps University Marburg, noted that it is important to understand the difference between weather and climate. Weather is the current state of the atmosphere and climate is the weather over a longer period of time; weeks, months, seasons or even years. Wozniak asserted that his paper was not about climate change because these weather and climate models are not useful at the micro scale level. "Weather is just one possible part of the framework in which politics and change occur," he explained.

Wozniak's research has involved compiling over 120 sources, such chronicles, annals and letter collections, that examined several specific weather related situations. At this point, he has decided not to use other types of sources, such as charters – which he notes rarely mention weather data, and are often forged so they are unreliable as accurate sources of information – or hagiographic material.

However, the sources he did use were not without their own set of problems. Annals could be written by different authors, and newer writers completing older annals. Writers from different regions might determine certain weather as colder than it really was if they came from a warmer climate, like Ibn Fadlan, the traveller who visited Bulgaria in the winter of 921/922. It was also important to consider the writer's intent. Narratives that provide actual dates and times, are more likely eye witness accounts.

He also categorised his sources by region: Byzantine sources, Irish sources, etc. Wozniak noticed that the Byzantine descriptions were much wider and contained more information.

Wozniak gave examples of some how medieval writers looked for answers:

Locust Invasion of 873/874 AD

The hot summer of 872 created the perfect conditions for an excess of locusts. That year, there was a massive famine in parts of Europe and the locusts appeared in the words of one chronicler, "Like snow they covered the entire surface of the country. They were able to gnaw through the roughest tree bark." The reactions to locusts were between scientific interpretation and prayer but oddly enough, no one likened it to the Egyptian plague of locusts from the Bible.

A Comet in Constantinople in 975 AD

In the History of Leo the Deacon, the author tells of how a comet that could be seen in the night sky for 80 days, "a marvelous and novel sight exceeding human understanding; for nothing of the sort had been seen in our time, nor had one shone previously for so many days."

Leo goes on to explain:

When the emperor saw the unusual portent, he asked scholars of astronomy for their opinion on the significance of such phenomenon. And they interpreted the appearance of the comet, not as their technical knowledge would lead them to conclude, but in accordance with the wishes of the emperor, and declared that he would be victorious over his enemies and live a long life...But the appearance of the comet did not foretell these events, which the men told the emperor to please him, but bitter revolts, and invasions of foreign peoples, and civil wars, and migrations from cities and the countryside, famines and plagues and terrible earthquakes, indeed almost the total destruction of the Roman Empire, all of which I witnessed as the events unfolded.

How Christianity

During the Middle Ages nearly all the lands of Europe converted to Christianity. In this short guide, we take a look at how various lands adopted Christianity, including by means of missionary efforts, politics and warfare.

1. Early Christianity

Starting with the first followers of Jesus Christ, Christianity spread out into the Middle East and along the Mediterranean Sea to other parts of the Roman Empire. Although believers faced periodic Roman persecutions, the religion would grow, with some scholars suggesting that its idea about the resurrection of the dead and immortality of the spirit were appealing theological ideas, while others believe that the practical efforts of the church to help the poor was important in its increasing popularity.

2. Armenia

Armenia became the first country to establish Christianity as its state religion when, in the year 301, St. Gregory the Illuminator convinced Tiridates III, the king of Armenia, to convert to Christianity.

3. Constantine I

By the beginning of the fourth century official persecution of Christianity had ended in the Roman Empire, and support for the religion grew even among elites. It was under the reign of Constantine I (306-337) where Christianity became an official religion of the empire. Constantine himself had been introduced to the religion by his mother Helena, and according to Christian sources, he himself witnessed a miraculous cross in the sky before a battle. While Constantine himself did not become a Christian until he was on his deathbed, he supported the Church financially and oversaw its administration, even judging which religious beliefs were to be followed.

y came to Europe

4. Arianism

The fourth-century also saw the rise of a new branch of Christianity, known as Arianism. Based on the teachings of a scholar named Arius, it advocated the position that Jesus Christ was created by God and not completely equal to him. While the mainstream Christian churches considered Arianism a heresy, it did find many followers, including a couple of Roman emperors. More importantly, some Germanic tribes accepted the Arian version of Christianity, including the Ostrogoths, who took over parts of Italy, the Visigoths, who seized control of the Iberian Peninsula, and the Vandals, who moved all the way into North Africa and ruled what is now Tunisia. The Vandal persecution of other Christians was one of the reasons why the Byzantine Empire conquered their territories in the years 533-34.

5. Rise of the Papacy

Even in the early centuries of Christianity, the Bishop of Rome made claims to be the head of the church, although it is unclear how much other parts of the Christian world accepted this claim or what it meant practically. The Roman bishops, who were known as Popes, at times had considerable influence, but during parts of the Early Middle Ages the Popes were overseen and controlled by the Byzantine Empire. However, the Popes were also prominent in sending out missions to convert other parts of Western Europe. Gradually the Roman church broke off from their co-religionists in the Eastern Mediterranean - the main churches would be known as Roman Catholic and Orthodox.

6. Ireland

There was a Christian presence in Ireland by the year 400, and it is believed that during the 5th century that St Patrick, a Romano-British man who was once captured by Irish pirates and served as a slave, returned to Ireland and led efforts to convert the population. Through the work of him and others, a thriving Christian community was established in the fifth and sixth centuries, with Irish monasteries becoming centres of learning and many missionaries leaving Ireland to spread the Christian faith in the British Isles and continental Europe.

The Arian Baptistry in Ravenna, Italy

7. Anglo-Saxon England

Efforts to bring Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England were not as smooth, but during the seventh century Christian missionaries, sent from both Ireland and the Papacy, were able to convert various rulers. However, parts of the country would revert to paganism as the Vikings invaded and established their rule during the ninth and tenth centuries.

8. Central Europe

The baptism of Clovis I, ruler of the Franks, which took place on Christmas Day, 496, was an important milestone in the establishment of Christianity in continental Europe. Medieval historians have pointed out that conversion of efforts of Christian missionaries were often a top-down process, in which they looked to convert their leaders of various peoples, with the hopes that the lower classes would gradually fall in line.

9. Carolingian Wars against the Saxons

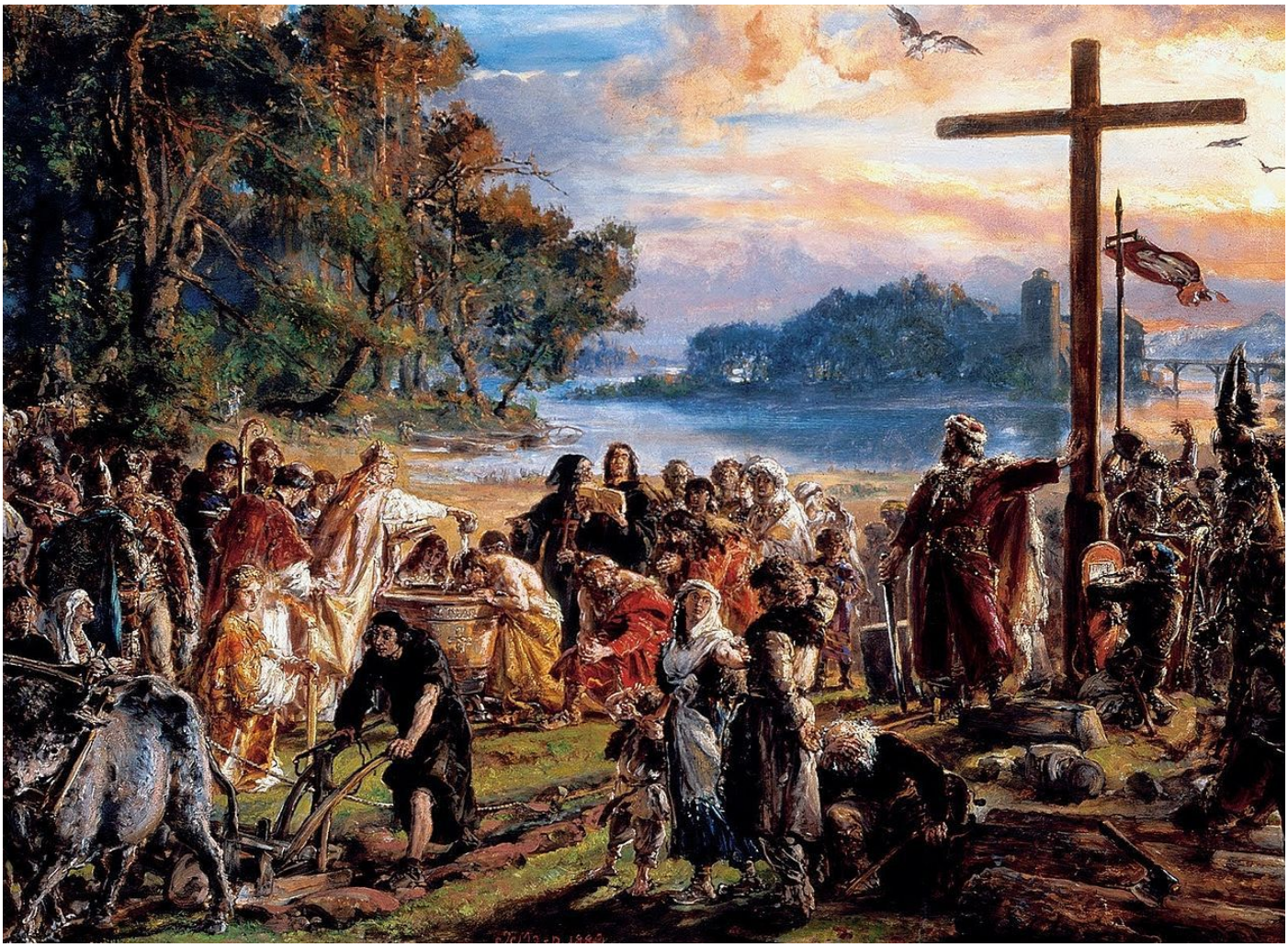
The Carolingian Emperor Charlemagne led a series of campaigns against the Saxons, a Germanic tribe, in order to pressure them to convert to Christianity. This included the destruction of the Saxons' holy site at Irminsul and the massacre of 4500 Saxon captives at Verden in 782. Three years later the Saxon leadership and peoples surrendered and accepted baptism.

10. Scandinavia

While missionaries came to bring Christianity to parts of Scandinavia as early as the 8th century, it took a considerably long time before most of the region would abandon the Norse religion. Rulers such as Norway's Olaf Tryggvason attempted to impose Christianity on his subjects, only to see them rebel and overthrow him. The Sami peoples who live on the northern stretches of Scandinavia did not accept Christianity until after the Middle Ages.

11. Iceland

While Christian missionaries had come to Iceland in the 10th century and converted some people, others remained committed to their old religion. In the year 1000, during the Alþing - a general assembly of the Icelandic people - it was decided that law speaker of the Alþing, Thorgeir Thorkelsson, would be given the role to arbitrate on which religion to choose for the people. After spending a day and a night thinking about the matter, Thorgeir decided that Christianity would become the official religion, while the Norse faith could still be practiced in private.



12. Bulgaria

During the ninth century, both the Papacy and the Byzantine church worked towards converting the Bulgarian peoples under their own jurisdiction. The Bulgarian ruler, Boris I (852–889) used this situation to court each side, looking for the best choice for his own strategic interests. Eventually, he wasable to make a deal with the Byzantine Empire that allowed for the creation of a national Bulgarian church that was only loosely under the authority of the Archbishop of Constantinople. Even the Bulgarian language would serve as the official liturgy for this church.

13. Poland

It was on 14 April 966 that Mieszko I, the first ruler of the Polish state, was baptized. According to early chronicles, much of the credit for this was to go his wife Dobrawa of Bohemia. However, historians believe that it was more likely that Mieszko accepted baptism in order to make an alliance with Dobrawa's father, Boleslav I, Duke of Bohemia.

14. Kievan Rus'

By the ninth century the Byzantines were making efforts to Christianize the peoples of Eastern Europe in what is now Ukraine and Russia. While some people living in the region did convert, it was until the ruler of Kievan Rus' Vladimir Sviatoslavich the Great (980-1015) that Christianity became the main religion. According to the Primary Chronicle, in the year 986 Vladimir met with representatives of several religions, including Jews and Muslims, to help him decide which religion to follow. He also sent envoys to neighboring nations - those who came to Constantinople were very impressed with Hagia Sophia. Ultimately, Vladimir and his family were baptized and followed the Orthodox church.

15. Hungary

After the Magyars invaded and conquered the Carpathian Basin at the end of the 9th century, efforts were made to convert them, with mild success. It was during the reign of King Stephen I (1000 or 1001–1038) that the monarchy undertook considerable actions to promote Christianity and remove their pagan religion. Stephen, who is regarded as the national saint of Hungary, made sure that churches were built and those who did not follow Christian practices were punished.

16. Lithuania

The last major holdouts to Christianity in Europe were peoples in the Baltic region - and during the 12th to the 14th centuries crusades were undertaken to force these people to convert. The Teutonic Order was able to carve out a state for themselves in parts of the Baltic region, but the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was unconquered and becoming an important regional power. It was not until Grand Duke Jogaila (1377-1434) married the Polish Queen Jadwiga in 1386 (and becoming Władysław II Jagiełło) that he was baptized a Roman Catholic Christian. A year later he had the Lithuanian people baptized, although elements of the pagan faith survived past the Middle Ages.

The Afterlife of the Dead: Reform in Attitude Towards Medieval Burials, Corpses and Bones

Sandra Alvarez reports from the International Medieval Congress at the University of Leeds

Anglos Saxon grave – skeletal remains of a 16-year-old female Catholic convert

As usual, I'm drawn to the macabre so I kicked off my Leeds experience by taking in 3 papers on death, burial and the treatment of corpses. Basically, the premise here was: how were people buried? Why did people in the Middle Ages disturb corpses on a much more frequent basis than we do? And how were criminals treated during and after death?

The first paper was, *False Continuity, Community Identity, and Death: The Creation of 'Tradition' in the Cemeteries of Northern Britain 650-900 AD* by Alexandra Aversa Sheldon (University of Oxford). Sheldon's areas of interest are: burial practices, churchyard cemeteries, and viewing death through an archaeological, theological, and anthropological lens.

She started off by listing the various burials, not all of which are included here as her list was extensive: plank linings, clothed burials, chest burials, coffin burials etc... for the sake of brevity, Sheldon chose log coffins (that resemble rough canoes), quartz stone burials (where milky quartz was deposited on top of the grave) and Long Cist (stone built coffin) burials.

There were commonalities amongst log coffin burials: The practice is pre-Northumbrian, dating to 500-750 AD and there appeared to be prestige and elevated social status associated with log coffin burials.

Quartz burials took place between 700-1066 AD. Large swaths of white stone covered the top of these graves and at first glance, seem Pagan, but Sheldon countered that they could've represented a fusion of Paganism and Christianity; the cross between local cultural practice and religion. St. Columba was rumoured to have blessed a white stone like the quartz stone and curing stones continued to have a place in Anglo-Saxon medicinal purposes. She also added that the colour white in this period was associated with purity, goodness, God, and holiness, and it was often found in Anglo-Saxon poetic imagery. After Christianisation, this practice of using quartz only survived in the north and in Ireland. Quartz stone burials appear almost exclusively in churchyards.

The second paper in the session tackled crumble burials in, *From Outcast Sinners to Fellow Christians: The Effect of Purgatorial Thinking on the Burial Treatment of Executed Criminals in Medieval England 900-1200 AD*, by Alyxandra Mattison (University of Sheffield).

Mattison is a medieval archaeologist interested in corporeal punishment, decapitation, death and burial in Britain, and bodily fragmentation in the middle ages.

Burials of Anglo-Norman criminal are not visible in the archaeological records. With Christianisation, burial in consecrated ground became important. In typical medieval burials, the corpse was often wrapped in a shroud, with the bodies oriented east-west, supine, with extended arms by their sides, and in simple, unfurnished graves. This is a problem for archaeologists looking for criminal burials; unless you can get radio carbon dating it is difficult to securely date churchyard graves.

Deviant Burials

Deviant burials, however, give us some information. Deviant burials do not hey usually face east-west, they exemplify osteological trauma, like decapitation, or bone damage, and some show evidence of bound arms and legs. These deviant cemeteries became known as execution cemeteries. A list was compiled on Anglo-Saxon execution burials and they show a few similarities: they are located on the borders of hundreds or towns, but near roads in an effort to exclude sinners from the community of the dead, as criminals were excluded from the community of the living. There is also evidence that suggest criminals may have actually been executed at these places, because they are buried around what were believed to be gallows. There was an increase of these sites in the later period as government grew and exercised its control.

After the Conquest, execution cemeteries were not abandoned immediately. When the Normans took over, they initially adopted the practices that the were used by the Anglo-Saxons as it took a while for Norman reeves and justices to replace Anglo-Saxon ones. However, no new cemeteries were created after the Conquest.
Mattison suggested several reasons for the lack of criminal burials:

1.) Criminals were buried outside the known range of cemeteries.
2.) The bodies of criminals may have been left to hang until they rotted away and the remains scattered.
3.) William the Conqueror attempted to get rid of execution when he came into power. Execution still existed but he implemented mutilation as punishment for former death penalty offences.
4.) Criminals could have been buried in consecrated churchyards like everyone else – and Mattison believes this is the most likely case of the 4 reasons given for the lack of finding criminal burials in the Anglo-Norman period.

Decapitation

Decapitation was one of the most identifiable methods of execution and easy to see with osteological evidence. Mattison found a sample from a church in Thetford and in Barton Bendish's All Saint's Church. The bodies were buried away from deviant cemeteries, buried facing east-west, and in consecrated ground. There were no arm or leg bindings found in Anglo-Norman periods, so even if criminals were hanged, they may have been buried in the churchyard.

The Move to 'Merciful Mutilation'

So why the sudden shift? This change may have been due to Norman cultural influences, like early conceptions of Purgatory which believed in providing a second chance to the soul. Anglo-Saxon corporeal punishment was limited to hand, tongue and foot mutilation. These mutilations replaced beheadings and the punishment was considered merciful because the soul was saved from death and the suffering of the criminal from physical wounds was believed to cleanse the sinner's soul. William the Conqueror only has 1 execution occurring during his reign, he moved towards amputation, blinding and castration, as merciful substitutes for death. However, Mattison pointed out that it was difficult to find evidence of the move from execution to mutilation in osteological records because amputated hand and foot bones because these bones are delicate and often disintegrate or get lost.

Our last paper talked about the medieval propensity for disturbing the dead. To the medieval mind – death wasn't the end of the road, there was plenty that could be done after the deceased was put in the ground and this paper examined why they didn't always stay there. What did medieval people do to their dead after they buried them? How were the dead treated? These are the questions Jennifer Crangle (University of Sheffield), tried to answer in, Post-Depositional Disturbance of the Medieval Buried Dead: A Functional Response to Overcrowded Cemeteries, or a Forgotten Funerary Practice.
Crangle is a Funerary archeologist and focuses her research on the curation and the treatment of the dead in the Middle Ages. While the idea of disturbing a dead body seems pretty horrific to us, by looking at bones, we can see other reasons medieval people had for disturbing the dead.

Post Mortem and Post-Burial Physical Treatments:

- reburials
- articulate additions to graves
- charnel deposits
- ossuaries
- relics
- intercutting

Charnel Houses

Crangle looked at charnel houses and medieval ossuaries, which were storehouses for the dead and for skeletal material. They were more commonly called Charnel Chapels, ossuaries, bone house, and had links to penance and confession. People assume that these were uncommon in medieval England however, they proliferated in the 12th century. Why was that? They spread because pilgrimage took off at this time along with a shift in the view of purgatory. This means they were clearly prevalent in medieval England.

There were 2 types of charnel houses: they were either below churches, or freestanding and they always had a semi-subterranean basement chamber that was never completely underground. They were created this way for visibility and accessibility, and always in very prominent locations. These charnel houses were often along pilgrimage routes because they had links to relics.

Another assumption was that graveyards were emptied for future interment and skeletal material was moved to charnel houses, like the situation that occurred in the late 18th century with Les Innocents in Paris. However this was not normally the case. Crangle looked at medieval cemetery management, and the types and range of sites. 25 of them gave very clear evidence that there was an ideal method for medieval burials. Rows were north-south, and bodies laid out east-west. The rows were filled from the north to the south and radiated from the outside of the church. When cemeteries became full, burials were placed between individual graves. This meant they knew where the bodies were buried and it wasn't some haphazard operation. There was some evidence of intercutting but not directly to the bodies.

Translations and Elevations

Translations and elevations were found in cases of canonisation to recognise the individual as a saint. The ceremony was a community event with many people invited. The person who removed the bones out was usually the most pious person in the community, and often the head of a religious house or a monk. The bones were washed with water and relocated near the altar. In early graves, the individual religious community made this decision, but in the later medieval period, translation was a papal decision and the ceremony accompanying it was massive. Royal lay saints were also translated in the later Middle Ages, like the Winchester chests; it was not longer solely for ecclesiastics.

Treatment of the dead didn't finish once the body went into the ground, and there was also the idea of the 'sentience' of the corpse. In the Middle Ages, a corpse was considered dangerous. There was a prohibition against disturbing flesh burials; superstition, bad air, and blood contamination were all reasons to leave flesh burials alone. It was believed that it took a year for the body to fully decompose. Crangle finished by saying that the dead featured heavily in the lives of the living, and there was intense protection and care for the deceased's physical remains and skeletal material.

Medieval Articles

A Comparative Analysis of the Concepts of Holy War and the Idealized Topos of Holy Warrior In Medieval Anatolian And European Sources

By Ceren Çıkın Sungur

Master's Thesis, Bahçeşehir University, 2014

Abstract: Claims of holy war characterized the Middle Ages in both Muslim Anatolia and Christian Europe, where soldiers on both sides were portrayed as holy warriors. Named gazis, akıncıs, alps, chevaliers and knights, they came from the elite military classes. Literary depictions of these men as holy warriors were fundamentally idealized topoi created by writers who were patronized by or were close to those in power. These topoi were largely determined by political, social and economic circumstances, as well as the ambitions of the sovereigns, but they also reflected the ideals, beliefs and customs of the past. The idea of holy war was generated by the collaboration of power holders, religious scholars and writers who had received a predominantly religious education. Similar circumstances which arose separately in Anatolia and the West caused transformative movements in the idea of holy war in both regions. Thus, as writers produced works which involved the idealized topos of the holy warrior, Islamic and Christian versions of holy war peculiar to the Middle Ages were formed. Written in simple language which ordinary people could understand, these topoi represented role models for the people, catering to the needs of the ruling classes and forming society's self-image during this formative period.

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Could Christ Have Been Born a Woman? A Medieval Debate

By Joan Gibson

Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1992)

Introduction: Contemporary Christianity is far from resolving many controversies about gender and religion. Problems arise around issues ranging from the role of women in society, to the suitability of church art portraying Christ as a woman; from a tendency to identify women with the flesh or sin, to the ordination of women or the use of inclusive language. While differing responses to feminist, or even feminine, elements in our understanding of the divine are clearly at stake in all these issues, it is important to note how current debates are also fueled by conflicting interpretations of history and historical documents.

Click here to read this article from the University of Winchester

Minecraft and the Middle Ages

By Peter Konieczny

It is one of the most popular video games ever created. Moreover, educators are finding ways to use Minecraft as a teaching tool, and one that could be ideal for learning about the Middle Ages.

At first look, it seems odd that Minecraft is so well-loved. The graphics on this game look as if they come from the 1980s, and when you first start the game, your character is dumped into a field or forest with no obvious idea on what you should be doing. However, looks are deceptive, and it is the simplicity of the game that allows users to add in their own creativity.

Created by Swedish programmer Markus "Notch" Persson, Minecraft was first released to the public on May 17 2009. Within less than a year Minecraft had gained over a hundred thousand years, despite the fact that it will still in 'development stage'. By July 2011 the number of users had grown to ten million, while the game was picking up many awards. As the game got released on different platforms, interest and sales skyrocketed. On a single day – Christmas Eve of 2012, over 453 000 versions of Minecraft were sold. Last year the company that owned the game was sold to Microsoft for $2.5 billion U.S.

Among the fans is my nine-year old son, who got the game about four months ago. "Finding a village and living it it," is his favourite part of playing. "The second part I like is how zombies and skeletons die!" he adds.

The official handbook explains that "Minecraft is a block-building game with no set rules, where you build anything you can possibly imagine." There are two ways of playing the game: in Survival Mode, the player enters the game in a wilderness area and then needs to collect items so he can build shelter and find food, all the while trying to avoid various monsters that might appear from time to time – spiders, skeletons and Enderman are among the baddies. Gradually, your shelter becomes a house, and then villages are built. You can go into caves to mine various goods, or build up farms, as civilization gradually grows around you.

If you want to avoid having to fight monsters or worry about where you will sleep each night, the player can select Creative Mode, which allows them to build with unlimited resources. This allows the player to build on a vast scale, and I was surprised how quickly my son was able to learn how to build not only houses, but apartment buildings, bridges, and even landmarks.

The simple architectural elements of the game make Minecraft ideal to be used in teaching about the Middle Ages. One example can be found in the recently published book ***Minecraft in the Classroom: Ideas, inspiration, and student projects for teachers*** – one chapter examines how John Miller, a history teacher based in California, made use of the game for Grade 7 classes learning about medieval China. The students used the game to recreate the Tang Dynasty capital of Chang'an.

"They were highly motivated and inspired by the work done by previous classes," Miller explained. "They challenged themselves to learn more and to be better and more historically accurate builders. They created choices for building materials and debated which blocks to use for greater authenticity."

He now is planning on enlarging the project so that students "could pass through the gates, travel north on horseback, and encounter the Great Wall. Beyond that be Genghis Khan and the Mongols. As student progress, I'll create a

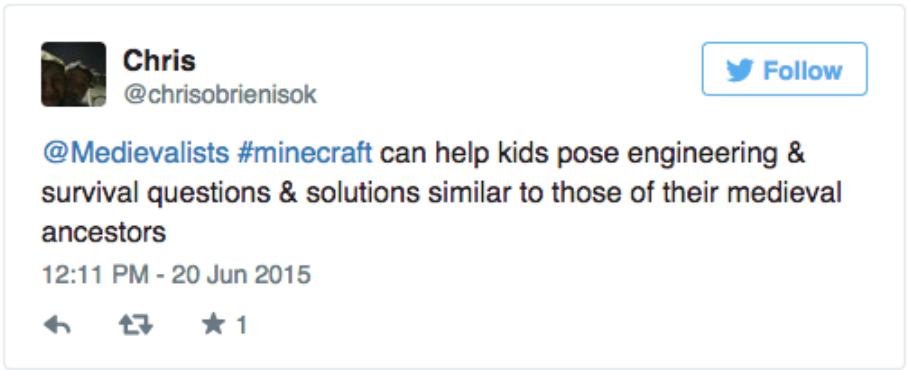
A quick look on Youtube will reveal that users have been able to create elaborate constructions, including copies of medieval castles and cathedrals.

Mongols. As student progress, I'll create a pathway west that would take them along the Silk Road, with building options to support the study of trade and commerce. They would eventually end in Constantinople and then travel to Florence and learn about Renaissance Italy."

Other teachers and educational companies have established lesson plans making use of Minecraft. At **Wonderful World of Humanities on Minecraftedu.com**, detailed resources are offered that allow one to use the game to do things like explore Ancient Lighthouse of Alexandria or live in a medieval castle.

With access to data, the possibilities with this game even grow further. Last year the **Danish Geodata Agency** used official topographical data to create a 1:1 facsimile of Denmark, including historical places, buildings, roads and monuments. "You can freely move around in Denmark," the agency explains, "find your own residential area, to build and tear down as you can in whichever any other Minecraft world." Meanwhile, the **New York Public Library** has made it possible for users to turn one of the library's 20,000 digitized historical maps into a Minecraft world.

There is also potential for Minecraft to be useful in higher levels of education, including as a cost-effective way of creating models of medieval buildings and settlements. This is being done already by **Project 1845**, a Digital Historian Project that is creating full size virtual reality models from within the game of Minecraft. The began with by developing a model of the Forbidden City inside the Beijing as it would have looked in 1751. They are now planning to create facsimile of Pompeii and an Aztec city.



PREDATOR: Dark Ages

Watch medieval warriors take on the ultimate hunter in the galaxy in PREDATOR: Dark Ages!

Set during the Crusades, the faith and fighting skills of a group of Templar Knights is put to the test when they encounter the Predator. Their battle is the thing Myths and Legends are born from.

This is fan-made film, a tribute to the Predator film franchise, was written and directed by James Bushe. It stars Adrian Bouchet, Amed Hashimi, Sabine Crossen, Ben loyd-Holmes, Jon Campling, Joe Egan and Philip Lane.

The 27-minute film, which was funded by a Kickstarter campaign last year, has been getting strong reviews. The *A.V. Club* calls ***PREDATOR: Dark Age***s "surprisingly well done and incredibly competent fan film, while *Blastr.com* comments "they do a great job of setting the tension across the board, and it never delves too far into cheesy territory (despite the light *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* vibe at times). They also did an excellent job with the on-screen Predator. Ahnold would be proud."

You can follow the film on:

Facebook: **www.facebook.com/PredDarkAges**

Twitter: **@Predator_DA**

Medieval Videos

Medieval Poleaxe Combat Demonstration at the 2015 International Medieval Congress at the University of Leeds. This live combat display was performed by the European Historical Combat Guild.

Archaeologists discovered the remains of a child or teenager from the 12th or 13th century