

Medieval images of the other in Scandinavia, Western Europe and Byzantium

Stereotypes of sameness or multiple enemy images?



Auditorium U100
17 April 2007

The Medieval Centre, University of Southern Denmark, Odense

For participation, please register by sending an e-mail to kf.rasmussen@hist.sdu.dk. The seminar is open to all. Please indicate when registering whether you wish to have the seminar lunch (150 Dkr. or 20 Euros).

Images of the other were in the middle ages created – as they are today – both through literature, propaganda, and mutual contacts. Crusades, political conflicts, and plain warfare led to stereotyped enemy images in the West of Muslims, Jews, and Greeks – images that were to have great impact in the Middle Ages and beyond. But other channels of contact existed than those between the major powers involved, and the Scandinavian connection with e.g. the Byzantine Empire may have contributed with alternative images, questioning the stereotypes and repetitive sameness of the enemy images. This seminar will address the issue of multiple enemy images from various perspectives, but special attention will be given to the Nordic contribution to a general Western European outlook. Did Scandinavian – and English – contacts with the Byzantine Empire result in differentiating the general negative view of Byzantium, as it is often claimed by modern historians in Western Europe, and what did these contacts in turn mean for the images of the Muslims as for instance communicated in official crusade ideology? Did the various images come into conflict, or would they be applied only according to circumstances? Or the other way round: Did contacts with the North have an impact on how the Greeks viewed “Franks”? Did they differentiate, and could several images exist simultaneously? Furthermore, could the same model of simultaneous presence of conflicting views be applied to western views of Jews, living rejected – and yet to some degree accepted – within western societies? In the seminar, these questions will be raised and followed up till the Late Middle Ages, pointing out the important implications that these questions have for the present debate about the role of Islam within the Western democratic societies. And in these debates, it is not uncommon to encounter arguments that have not changed substantially for more than a thousand years.

Programme

9.45-10.00: Introduction
Dr. Christian Høgel & Dr. Janus Møller Jensen, University of Southern Denmark

10.00-12.00: Session 1:

Scandinavian images of Byzantium in the Early Middle Ages
Dr. fil., John H. Lind, University of Southern Denmark

The Byzantine Conception of the Latin Barbarian
Ph.D.-candidate, Jason T. Roche, University of St Andrews

Images of Muslims in medieval Iceland: The evidence of the sagas
Dr. Bjørn Bandlien, University Library in Oslo

Enemy gods and godless enemies: Saracens in the crusade propaganda of Jacques de Vitry and Eudes de Châteauroux
Ph.D.-candidate, Miikka Tamminen, University of Tampere

12.00-13.30: Lunch

13.30-14.30: Session 2:

Of sameness, with difference. Stereotypes of Muslims in the Christian Middle Ages
Dr. Thomas Hoffmann, Carsten Niebuhr Institute

This abominable heresy. The Latin Christian discovery of the Talmud and of the Quran in the mid twelfth century
Prof. Kurt Villads Jensen, University of Southern Denmark

14.30-15.00: Coffee

15.00-16.00: Session 3

A deterioration and not made for man. Byzantine views of Islam in the Age of Humanism
Dr. Christian Høgel, University of Southern Denmark

The Empire of Evil: The Turks in the Scandinavian imagination in the sixteenth century
Dr. Janus Møller Jensen, University of Southern Denmark

16.00-17.00: General discussion