Call for Papers

International Conference

Second Fiddles in Medieval Rituals

Department for historical studies NTNU, Trondheim 20-22 September 2017

This conference addresses the role, status and performance of secondary actors in medieval rituals, thus enabling us to diversify and deepen our understanding of rituals in pre-modern societies. Although peripheral to the engineering and execution of rituals in a formal sense, the postures and actions of these ancillary players often made their participation vital for the success of the rituals’ primary agents. What roles did secondary actors play in medieval rituals and what were the deeper meanings ascribed to them? What relation did they have to central actors? Did they operate individually on their own volition or as representatives serving broader group interests? How freely could they maneuver within and influence the rituals in which they participated?

Although relegated to a subordinate tier within the formal hierarchy of ritual service, their role and status was not immutable. With every ritual came new opportunities for secondary actors to renegotiate the divisions of service. How and to what end did secondary actors alter their role, status and performance? Can we identify disruptions that challenged the hierarchies of ritual (coup, initiatives), and what was the meaning and purpose for restructuring ritual performances?

Above all, this conference seeks to trace the changing functions and performances of secondary actors over time and in relation to their evolving political and cultural contexts. In doing so, we will also explore the sources for reading medieval rituals, including codifications and narrative portrayals, and the manner in which these works’ authors depicted the role and status auxiliary ritual agents. While these are some of the suggested avenues for exploration, contributors are invited to enrich the topic with related themes of their choosing.

We welcome proposals for relevant papers, to be presented in English and roughly 20 minutes in length. Proposal should include the author’s name, affiliations and address, a brief author biography/CV and an abstract of roughly 500 words. All proposals will be reviewed by a scientific committee.

Proposals should be submitted to david.bregaint@ntnu.no no later than 31 March 2017. Notification of acceptance will be given on 28 April 2017. It is the intention of the organizers to publish the conference proceedings.