

Connecting Medieval Worlds Seminar Series, March – June 2017

Organisers: Holly Atkinson (PhD Archaeology, University of Manchester), Sihong Lin (PhD History, University of Manchester), Adam Simmons (PhD History, University of Lancaster)

Outline and aims

The **Connecting Medieval Worlds** seminar series was a student-organised collaboration. Its aim was to connect like-minded researchers and share cross-disciplinary research on the often-marginalised non-Western medieval world.

The collaboration was borne out of discussions between the three organisers acknowledging:

- (a) the lack of communication between like-minded researchers (both student and staff) within UK universities on non-Western medieval research topics, to the point that researchers were unaware of others conducting research that complemented or informed their own;
- (b) the lack of a platform for student- and early-researcher led discussion and problem solving for methodological and theoretical issues surrounding concepts of ‘medieval’ and historical globality;
- (c) the lack of a platform to disseminate research to relevant peers;
- (d) the need for greater communication between the connected disciplines of archaeology, history, and medieval studies, and;
- (e) the need to increase academic and non-academic awareness of non-Western medieval archaeology and history in a framework currently dominated by European narratives.

From these points, the following aims were created:

- To develop a free, inclusive seminar series so researchers could disseminate their ideas and findings
- To hold open debates and Q&As on theoretical and methodological issues affecting research
- To encourage inter-university and inter-disciplinary networking and knowledge-sharing
- To create a social media platform that would outlive the seminar series, continue conversations beyond it, and encourage further informal networking opportunities and research dissemination/discussion.

Content

The collaboration consisted of a seminar series and active social media presence, with Twitter being the preferred medium (@*ConnectMedWorld*). The seminar series was as follows:

Date	Title	Speaker	Position/ Affiliation	Attendees
06/03	<i>Rethinking the urban revolution in world history</i>	C. Leyser	Associate Prof. of Medieval History, Uni of Oxford	15
30/03	<i>Options and experiments: defining the “global middle ages”</i>	N. Standen	Prof. of Medieval History, Uni of Birmingham	15
18/05	<i>Wheat, arms, and secrets – Carlo II Tocco and the Republic of Ragusa</i>	R. Shields	PhD student, Dept. of History, Royal Holloway	14
18/05	<i>Declassifying trade systems in an</i>	A.	PhD student, Dept. of	14

	<i>international era</i>	Simmons	History, Uni of Lancaster	
15/06	<i>Ritual and economy: thinking through a 12th C. shrine from Northern Ghana</i>	H. Atkinson	PhD student, Dept. of Archaeology, Uni of Manchester	11
15/06	<i>Sharing spaces, sharing symbol: the creation of 'in-between identities' in moments of first encounter in the New World</i>	C. Rogers	PhD student, Dept. of History, Uni of Leeds	11

Outcomes

Attendance to all of the seminars was steady and encouraging. Seminar speakers were a mix of established academics and PhD researchers. The question and answer sessions after each seminar were followed by discussion and debate, all of which was lively, interesting, and cross-disciplinary. Key discussions included defining medieval and the challenges presented by the variation in nomenclature in different disciplines, and how the medieval world was understood in the diverse regions speakers presented on. Overall, the seminar series and its aims received excellent verbal feedback from all attendees. There was no negative feedback.

Social media outcomes were positive. The call for papers, uploaded to Holly Atkinson's *Academia.edu* profile, was viewed 20 times and downloaded five times. The schedule, uploaded to Adam Simmons' *Academia.edu* profile, was viewed 20 times. Our Twitter presence earned 366 followers both within academia and without it, from across Europe. Each seminar was live-tweeted to prompt discussion and provide a summary for those who could not attend.

The seminar series was publicised and discussed in an article in March by the Manchester Medieval Society and in a post on the Manchester History Department blog, both of which received positive feedback. Discussions with the peer-reviewed journal *The Medieval Globe*, about the production of a special Connecting Medieval Worlds-themed edition, are ongoing.

Based on these responses, the organisers are satisfied the outcomes of the series have been met. **Connecting Medieval Worlds** has established a network and the intention is to continue with the series in the next academic year, and to use the experience gained from this initial foray into interdisciplinary engagement to expand and to continue furthering our original aims.

Expenses

The cost of holding this seminar series, including travel/accommodation costs for the speakers and refreshments for each seminar, are as follows:

06/03/2017 – £98.10 for travel and accommodation of speaker and c. £16 for refreshments.

30/03/2017 – c. £16 for refreshments only, as speaker was based near Manchester.

18/05/2017 - £12.70 for travel costs of speakers and £16.26 for refreshments.

15/06/2017 - £32.76 for refreshments (speaker from Leeds has yet to submit receipts for travel).