



Voces 2021. Latin Middle Ages through Key Words

Feast, Holiday, Celebration

Workshop – 29-30 September 2021

Medieval society is inseparable from both the written and spoken words that brought it to life. It is through those words that the people of the Middle Ages shared their beliefs, their ideas and their experiences. Words were used to share knowledge, spread the Gospel, but also to stigmatize the Other, exclude heterodoxy, and call for war. Controlling word senses was one of the major means to sustain power, to take possession of goods and to control access to knowledge. That could lead to verbal jousting or even real conflicts.

Modern scholars that are trying to reconstruct the meaning of medieval words in their relationship with historical, social or psychological reality, are facing multiple problems. Firstly, they have to handle the inherent vagueness and ambiguity of the Latin language that prevent them from pinpointing the exact meaning of most frequent words. Secondly, they have to measure the pragmatic functions of those terms, which served not only to talk about objects but also to *make things*. Finally, they have to establish the link between words and cultural, social or political reality.

The conference cycle *Voces. Latin Middle Ages through Key Words*, co-organised by the IRHT (CNRS) and Institute of Polish Language (PAS) aims to take a closer look at Latin words that have played an important role in the medieval culture. Every two year we propose to focus on a different major medieval concept and its linguistic expressions.

The conference aims to bring together historians, linguists, philosophers and philologists from various theoretical background (historical semantics, *Begriffsgeschichte*, cognitive semantics, *histoire des mentalités* etc.) and who use various methodology (corpus studies, lexical analysis, etc.). Papers dealing with medieval key words or concepts in a broad context of social, political and religious life are particularly encouraged.

Voces 2021. Feast, Holiday, Celebration

This year's edition concurs with the 100th anniversary of the *Medieval Latin Dictionary*, a project of the International Academic Union which was to bring together the post-war European scientific community around the impossible task of describing medieval Latin vocabulary. Originally scheduled for 2020, the conference was to focus on the concepts of FEAST, CELEBRATION and HOLIDAY and their vocabulary. Despite the current health crisis, the organizers have decided to stick to this topic. Depending on circumstances, the conference will be held either in hybrid mode with the in-person event at the Campus Condorcet, Paris-Aubervilliers, or fully online.

As still today, the feasts deeply structured social and private life of medieval people. The recurring religious holidays reminded believers of their relationship to the Absolute and gave meaning to the medieval sense of time. Private celebrations, limited to friends and family, were used to underline the events of people's lives. Public holidays, on the other hand, created and sustained social coherence, by highlighting common values and cultural norms that are usually implicit.

Suggested topics

We invite papers that discuss a chosen term or concept, to illustrate how the concepts were understood and represented in medieval cultural, religious, social and political life.

1. The concepts of FEAST, CELEBRATION and HOLIDAY and their linguistic representations: *festum, sollemnitas, feria* etc.; Latin vs. vernacular terms; the metaphors of FEASTING etc.; the vocabulary and the social reality of FEASTING etc.
2. Religious holidays: Church holidays, ceremonies, saints day; was there boundary between religious and political, social or individual celebrations?
3. Structuring lives of individuals: birth, wedding and funeral; celebrating individual experience.
4. Celebration as social practice: urban vs. rural vs. courtly celebrations; bonding through celebration; carnival and social hierarchy.
5. The materiality of celebration: drinking and eating; games and activities; *loca celebrandi*.
6. Theoretical issues
 - Latin vocabulary and categories of medieval thought: a simple link?
 - lexical borrowing and semantic change: new words = new worlds?
 - medieval Latin and individuals: cognition, experience, emotions
 - scientific vs. folk knowledge
 - ideology, power, violence, memory
 - negotiating meaning in interpretative communities

Submission

We welcome two forms of submissions:

- **Long papers** (30 minutes, 15 minutes discussion), that go beyond a single text or author, and provide either wider (historical, social, cultural etc.) context for the discussion or pose important theoretical and methodological questions (historical change, methodological issues etc.);
- **Short papers** (15 minutes, 5 minutes discussion), which are more limited in scope, but still bring forward links between vocabulary, conceptualization and socio-cultural reality of the Middle Ages.

Paper language: English, French, German, Spanish.

Abstracts should be submitted via <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=voces21> by **15 May 2021** (23:59 CEST):

- long papers: 500 words (without references)
- short papers: 250 words (without references)

Submissions should clearly state the paper topic, briefly discuss existing research and explain why the analysis of the suggested term or field is important to our understanding of medieval social practices.

The proceedings of the conference will be published in a special issue of the *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi (Bulletin Du Cange)*.

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Important dates

submission: by 15 May 2021
 acceptance notice: 30 June 2021
 registration: from 15 July 2021
 conference date: 29-30 September 2021
 submission for publication: by 30 November 21



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