

Medieval Histories

News from the medieval world about anniversaries, exhibitions, books, films, music, travels and new research

News: Financial Crisis in Catalonia

The Girona Tapestry

Authoring the Past

Pere el Gran

Medieval Exhitions in Europe spring 2012

New books - in English, French and German

The Economic crisis is not something new. Wellknown precedents are the Tulipmania in Holland and later The South Sea Bubble. But what about the Middle Ages? This issue focus on a crisis in Catalonia in 1090 and discuss what lay behind

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Photo (frontpage):

Besalu in Catalonia 2011



Swampy river gardens in Girona

Financial Crisis in Catalonia

These days the Spanish Government is threatening the provinces of Spain. Either they control their economy and introduce local austerity packages. Or they will feel the fist of Madrid. At the same time some of the local governments are in an uproar. This is especially the case with Catalonia, where people have begun to notice the ongoing Scottish fight to secede from England. Currently the Scottish government is working to establish a referendum in 1214, the 900-year anniversary of the Scottish victory at Bannockburn.

Inspired by the Scots, some Catalonians currently believe that now is the time for seeking greater autonomy. Part of this quest is fuelled by the current financial crisis, where Catalonia contributes above and beyond to the fiscal redistribution, while other regions are believed to be free riders. Recently a survey documented that

Catalonia each year during the last 26 years have paid about 5 - 8% more of its GDP to the coffers in Madrid, than what it gets back in public spending.

Crisis 1080 - 1140 AD

In a famous thesis the Flemish historian Pirenne in 1895 claimed that the growth of the cities around 1000 AD was the result of the growth of long-distance trade.

Today, however, the "economic revolution" around 1000 AD, characterised by the growth of cities and trade, is in opposition to Pirenne understood as the result of the vibrant and innovative agrarian economy stimulated by a demographic surge.

As the medieval archives of Barcelona are especially well preserved it has been possible here to study this question in detail. In 1995 Stephen P. Bensch presented the

results of these studies in a seminal book about Barcelona and its rulers 1096 – 1291.

According to Bensch, Barcelona was already in the grips of an agricultural economic boom at around 1000. After 1009 -1031, when El-Andalus began to disintegrate and the petty Muslim Taifa-rulers began their internal fights, this was strengthened by the so-called golden boom of the 11th century. Central to this was the influx of the mancus, a golden coin app. weighing 4.25 gr of gold or the equivalent of 30 silver pence.

The infusion of bullion meant that the choice land around the city was consistently converted into either gardens or vineyards, producing vegetables and wine on a hitherto unseen scale. Afterwards the products were marketed in the city, creating a lively local trade. Especially the organisation



The Cathedral of Girona

of the new vineyards is illustrating. In practice their construction was organised through contracts "ad complatandum". Typically a peasant would sell a small plot to somebody with money to spare. Then the plot would be granted to the peasant to plant a vineyard. No income would be expected until 5 -7 years later, when the stocks began to carry fruit. Then half the plot and the produce would be

ceded to the tenant on condition that he continued to work the entire vineyard in the coming years.

However, by 1090 the Almoravids, a fierce and revivalist group of Berbers, began to reconquer El-Andalus, and the gush of gold started to turn into a trickle. From 1090 – 1140 the value of a vine-yard was only 30% of the value of one in 1060 – 1080. In the same period the percentage of transactions, which involved sales of vineyards fell from 60% to 26% a century later. The capital needed for the growing of wine and the organisation of its sales obviously became more and more scarce. As probably did the demand on the market for this luxurious product.

The lesson seems to be clear: without the infusion of gold, the distinct economic development around Barcelona – and maybe large parts of Northern Spain - grinded to a halt. Recession and stagnation loomed threateningly in the horizon.

As it does today. Which of course is why the Catalonians 2012 have feisty dreams of plugging up the current economic bloodletting of their region.

Mancús from the Reign of Ramon Berenguer I (1035-76).

Read more:

Barcelona and its Rulers, 1096–1291. Stephen P. Bensch. Series: Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: 4: 26. Cambridge University Press 1995

La Catalogne du milieu du Xe a la fin du XIe siècle : croissance et mutations d'une société. Pierre Bonnassie

Publicació Tolosa de Llenguadoc: Association des Publications de l'Université de Toulouse-le-Mirail, 1975.





The Girona Tapestry after the latest restoration © Obra Social "la Caixa"

The Girona Tapestry

It is exactly during these tumultuous years of agricultural implosion, the Girona Tapestry must have been embroidered.

The Girona Tapestry or – as it is called in Catalan – El tapiz de la Creación recently underwent a massive restoration and cleaning. Now it is once again exhibited in the Museum of the Cathedral of Girona.

The tapestry is a Romanesque embroidered panel from the end of the 11th century. Today it measures 3.65 x 4.70 meters; but

the latest research has shown that it must have measured app. 4.80 x 5.40 meters. The panel is worked in couched or laid needlework; the same technique which is used in the Bayeux tapestry. The Girona Tapestry, however differs from that of Bayeux in so far as the former is totally covered by embroidery. It is worked in fine wool and linen in a wide variety of colours, predominantly green, yellow, red, burnt earth, blue and white on a reddish wool twill ground, most likely spun and weaved in Catalonia. The historian Palol reached this conclusion, when he studied

the linguistic peculiarities of the embroidered quotations from the Bible.

The tapestry records the creation myth from Genesis, organised as a wheel with Jesus as pantocrator in the centre, topped by the Holy Ghost and surrounded by the four winds. At the bottom of the tapestry was originally a frieze, featuring "The invention of the Cross". Finally at the border is a menologium, a series of square vignettes picturing the seasons and the months represented with their respective "works"; much like the

The Girona Tapestry

Tesoro de la Cathedral Plaza de la Catedral 17004 Gerona, Catalonia www.catedraldegirona.org

Read more:

Wandbehänge und Decken des Frühmittelalters (9 – 11. Jahrhundert). By Ingrid Heidrich. In: Frühmittelalterliche Studien vol 40, p. 103 – 125

El tapís de la Creació / El tapiz de la Creación. By Manuel Castineiras. Capítol Catedral de Girona 2011

The official report: Regreso del Tapiz de la Creación a la Catedral de Girona www.premsa.gencat.cat

frescoes picturing the agricultural year, which may be seen elsewhere, e.g. in the Royal Pantheon in the Basilica de San Isodoro in Leon in Spain. Another piece of art, which belongs to the same aesthetic universe, is the some-



The "new" colours @ Obra Social "la Caixa"

what earlier Girona Beatus dated to the 10th century.

In connection with the cleaning of the tapestry it was discovered that the wool-work at the back of the embroidery had been protected by hessian. This had contributed to the protection of the original colours. A discussion of these colours and many more details may be found in a recent book, which was published last year. In it Manuel Castiñeiras advocates the idea, Manuel Castiñeiras advocates the idea, that the tissue was never for hanging, but was instead used as a carpet in the cathedral choir

and more specifically that it was made in 1097 in order to mark a conciliatory meeting between the Catalan church and the king, Ramon Berenguer II, whose sisterinlaw, Mafalda de Apulia, may have overseen the production of the tapestry in the monastery of Sant Daniel de Girona. All this is however slightly speculative.

At least one question begs an answer: Is it possible that the tapestry could have been used as a carpet, considering the fact that this would have meant that the celebrating priest literally would have had to "walk" on God? In a recent article by the historian, Ingrid Heidrich, this question is not directly confronted. However, in her opinion the tapestry would primarily have been used as a Cortina, that is as a curtain separating the clerics from the lay people during mass.

More likely, though, is the proposition that the textile might have been used in diverse ways according to the occasion, the liturgy etc. For instance the sources discussed by Ingrid Heidrich do not specifically mention the uses of such textiles as pallia in connection with burials; which might have been

Pantocrator in the centre of the Girona Tapestry after the latest restoration © Obra Social "la Caixa"



the case as is shown in the Bayeux tapestry in the scene, where Eadward is carried to the grave.

One of the precious parts of the Girona Tapestry are the panels on either side showing the months, symbolised by their proper works. Although the panel on the right is severely damaged it is still possible to get a feeling for the work invested in them. The works assigned to each month are as follows:

January – ?
February – The catching of birds
March – The catching of snakes,
frogs and birds

April – The ploughing of the land

May – The pasturing of the ani mals – transhumance?

June – Fishing and wild bird catching

July – Mowing or reaping August – Harvesting? September – Threshing October – Grape-picking November – ?

December – ?

To this should be added the four vignettes on the top panel showing a man who reaps grain in summer, picks grapes in autumn, warms himself in front of a fire in the cold winter, and digs the earth in spring.

These vignettes are powerful witnesses to the local economy in the riverine regions of Catalonia such as Girona, which is surrounded by the rivers Onyar and Ter.

Although Girona is not that well

studied as Barcelona, we may presume that the situation was somewhat akin in terms of the basic economy in the 11th century.

Even though it was a politically unstable period, it is well documented from Barcelona that the influx of Muslim gold in this period resulted in a lively agricultural boom. We know from charters that irrigated gardenplots and especially wineyards proliferated on the outskirts of the cities, securing abundant wine for the local market and the growing consumption of this delicacy.

Accompanying this was further the traditional side-catch in marshy regions: wild migratory birds and waterfowls, frogs, snakes plus the income from transhumance and small plot gardening – hence the spade in the vignette for spring.

The Girona Tapestry was embroidered in the end of the 11th century. Exactly at that time when the ecenomy seems to have imploded. Maybe this is the explanation behind the iconographic focus on the history of creation and the vignettes of rural idyls which surround it. A rural idyl which had lain behind the economic boom a generation back.

Even today the rural idyl seems to be present in the minds of people dreaming of the good life in the immediate past.





Authoring the Past

Lineage, chivalry, hegemony, heroic deeds and political supremacy – all are ways in which diverse Catalonian counts and later Aragonese kings tried to validate their rights as rulers. At least this is, according to a fascinating new book, how these counts and kings wished to present their case to their contemporaries as well as posterity through the historical writings, which they initiated and took more or less active part in writing and editing.

The book – Authoring the Past - is written by the historian Jaume Aurell. In it he examines five central texts from the Catalonian Middle Ages – the Latin Gesta Comitum Barcinonesium and four histories in Catalan: the Llibre dels fets by

James I, the Crònica of Bernat Desclot, the Crònica of Ramon Muntaner, and the Crònica of Peter the Ceremonious

Master Fictions

All political authority requires what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz famously called "a cultural frame" or a "master fiction".

According to Jaume Aurell it is exactly this, which these Catalonian genealogies, chronicles and autobiographies from the late 12th to the late 14th century tried to establish through manipulation of genres, sources and narrative strategies. As such these precious Catalonian texts represent special ways of framing their respective

proponents or "heroes". Each in their own way shows how the counts and later kings anchored their rights to rule.

As such each text primarily represents a relic of the diverse ways in which these rulers (or their servants) thought of themselves and their rights to rule – whether this right was founded in their lineage, their chivalric competence, their military prowess and heroic deeds or finally their political proficiency.

At the same time, however, each text represent specific genres – chronicles, autobiographies etc. – which are extensively discussed in order to show the interrelationship between them.

The tomb of Jaime I El Conquistador - author and editor of "llibre de Fets" - The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon. The tomb was part of the artistic program of Peter the Ceremonious at El Real Monasterio de Santa María de Poblet, the Monastery of Pomblet., part of the cultural and political framing of his powerbase, which is ecchoed in his so-called autobiography



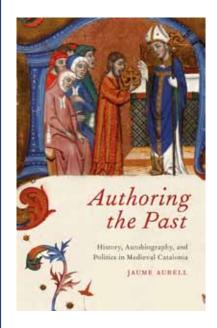
Without prior recognition of this, historians should keep away from naively using these texts as sources. This is one of the obvious conclusions of this erudite exposé.

In this sense, however, the book is also an invitation. The reason is that we get small glimpses of exactly the kind of historical anthropological insights, which might be gleaned from these texts *after* their genre and intentions have been laid bare

For instance this is demonstrated in the presentation of a number of coronation vignettes, where we learn how the later kings of Aragon established self-sufficient gestures, like the practice of Self-Coronation as opposed to the earlier sacralisation, which was instituted by the church and where the climax consisted in the officiating Archbishop crowning the king.

One must ardently hope that the book on "Authoring the Past" will not only invite scholars to continue in performing the same kind of penetrating analysis of other historical chronicles of the Middle Ages in order to establish a proper comparative perspective; a work which is in progress all around Europe. But also that historical Anthropologists per se will find plentiful inspiration here to delve into these quite remarkable Catalonian histories.

Although only some of the texts discussed in the new book may be found in adequate editions and translations, it is of great value that Jaume Aurell has presented future historians and students with an overall grid, whereby it becomes possible to read these texts anew and - not the least - between the lines, so to speak.



Authoring the Past. History, Autobiography, and Politics in Medieval Catalonia. University of Chicago Press 2012.

Jaume Aurell

Jaume Aurell is associate professor of History and dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Navarra. He is the author of La escritura de la memoria. De los positivismos a los postmodernismos and La cultura del mercader en la Barcelona del siglo XV.

He is also editor of the series: Rewriting the Middle Ages in the Twentieth Century (Brepols). Articles and essays have appeared in Annales, Biography, Rethinking History: Journal of Theory and Practice, the Journal of English and German Philology, and the Journal of Medieval History.

More on modern historiography might be found at www. culturahistorica.es/

The five chronicles

Gesta Comitum Barchinonensium. Cróniques Catalanes, II. Edd: Lluís Barrau-Dihigo and Jaume Massó Torrents.

Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1925. (No English Translation available)

The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon: A Translation of the Medieval Catalan Llibre dels Fets.

Translated by Damian Smith and Helena Biffery. Ashgate 2003

Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon by Bernat Desclot.
Partly translated by F. L.
Critchlow. Princeton University Press 1928 -34. (Critical edition in Catalan: Benat Desclot. Crònica. ed. Miquel Coll i Alentorn. Barcelona: Barcino 1949 -51)

The Chronicle of Muntaner. Translated by L. Goodenough. Nendeln, Lichetenstein. Kraus Reprint 1967. (Critical edition: Muntaner, Crònica. In: Les Quatre Grans Còniques. Ed. Ferran Soldevilla (Barcelona: Selecta 1971).

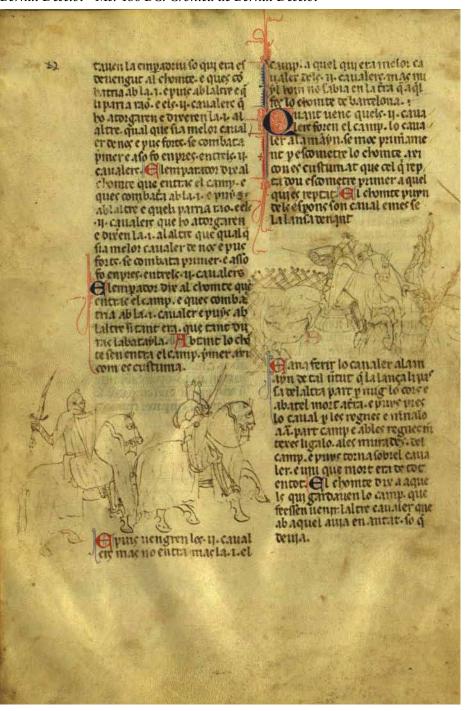
Chronicle. Pere III of Catalonia (Pedro IV of Aragon). Translated Mary Hillgarth witj and introduction and notes by Jocely N. Hillgarth. Toronot: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies 1980.

Pere el Gran - Peter the Great 1240 - 1285

Peter the Great was king of Aragon and count of Catalonia from 1276 – 1285. He was the primary hero of the famous chronicle of Bernat Desclot, which built upon personal memories, oral narratives and records from the royal chancellery. Bernat Desclot might have been identical to a scribe in the Royal Chancellery called Bernat Escrivà. The chronicle, written between 1283 – 1288, established the fame of thePere el Gran to such an extent that he ended up as a singing minstrel in the Divine Comedy of Dante.

One of the defining incidents in the life of the king was his marriage to the Sicilian princess, Constance, who was daughter and heir of Manfred of Sicilia. This resulted in the war called The Sicilian Vespers, which ended in Aragonese supremacy from 1282. During the next years fighting between the Aragon and French king took place from Calabria to Northern Catalonia. This culminated when the Pope licensed the so-called "Aragonese Crusade", which never the less ended in a route of the French Army at Girona and later at the Colde Panissars.

Bernat Desclot - Ms. 486 BC. Crònica de Bernat Desclot



Exhibition

The reign of Pere el Gran is currently the theme of an exhibition at the Archive of the Crown of Aragon in the Virreyes Palace in Barcelona.

In the exhibition a number of documents are brought together, which illustrate the personality and political behaviour of the king. Among the highlights are the treaty signed together with the King of Castille in 1281 plus a copy of the chronicle of Bernat Dusclot. Several panels, reproductions of miniatures and maps show the conquests of the king. In the shop there is a comprehensive catalogue available in Spanish, Catalan and English.

Exhumation of a king

The exhibition is a follow-up on the controversial exhumation of the remains of the king, which took place in 2010.

Pere el Gran suddenly died of plague in 1285 in Vilafranca del Penedès and was buried in the Reial Monestir de Santa Maria de Santes Creus, a twelfth-century Cistercian Abbey in Aiguamúrcia.

In 2010 it was decided to open his tomb, a Roman porphyry bath



One of the results was a reconstruction of the face of Pere el Gran, which shows a stout man in his mid forties

with a sculptured crown. From the tomb his body was transported to and archeological center in order to undergo a long series of technical and scientific investigations.

As a result it was discovered that he had been laid to rest in a Cistercian habit with a linen shift, a woolen tunica, a coverlet and a cope and cowl. Research on his bodily remains found that he probably suffered from TB as well as gastrointestinal parasites, stemming from the eating of less wellprepared meat. His last meal had amongst other things consisted of grapes, fruits and pepper. During his life he must have bleached his beard, probably in order to look Norman. One of his claims to the Sicilian throne was - apart from that of his wife - his descent from Mafalda de Apulia, who is

presumed to have been active in connection with the production of the Girona Tapestry. We do not possess a physical description of Peter the Great. However his father was described as a typical - idealised - Norman:

"The King of Aragon, James, was the most comely of all men and was greater in stature by a handbreadth than any other. And he was well favoured and sound in all limbs. And his countenance was broad and with a ruddy color and his nose was long and straight and his mouth large and well shaped. And his eyes were black and his hair was bright as strands of gold..."

(From: Jaune Aurell: Authoring the Past. History, Autobiography, and Politics in Medieval Catalonia. University of Chicago Press 2012. p. 42) There is no doubt that the reconstruction of the face of his son must have been inspired by this description as weel as the remarkable miniature of his father shown below.

Jaume I, father of Pere el Gran



Read more:

Pere El Gran: Vida, Actes i Paraula. Stefano Maria Cingolani Museu D'Historia de Catalunya 2010

See the exhibition

Pere el Gran 1240 - 1285 Archive of the Crown of Aragon, Comtes 2 (Palacio de los Virreyes o del Lloctinent) Barcelona. December 12, 2011 a 31 August 2012

See the Video

See the video of the exhumation

http://vimeo.com/39062094

Catch it while you can!

Medieval Exhibitions in Europe 2012



Franciskus
Light out of Assisi
Paderborn, Germany
09. 12. 2011 – 06. 05. 2012



Splendours of the Middle Ages.
The abbey of San Vincenzo al Volturno in the time of Charlemagne.
22. 01. 2012 – 04. 11 2012
Venafro, Molise, Italia



The Romance of the Middle Ages 28. 01. 2012 - 13. 05. 2012 Bodleian Library , Oxford, England



Goldene Pracht Medieval treasures in Westfalen. 26. 02. 2012 – 28. 05. 2012 Domkammer zur Münster, Münster, Deutschland



Gaston Fébus (1331-1391) Prince Soleil 18. 03. 2012 - 17. 06. 2012 Musée du château de Pau, Les Pyrenees, France



Ottomania. The Turkish world through Western Eyes 07. 03. 2012 - 07. 05 2012 Rijksmuseum Philips Wing, Amsterdam, Holland



Flemish Miniatures 27. 03. 2012 – 01. 07. 2012 Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France



Cluny 1 1 2 0 The Abbey and the Church at Cluny in 11 2 0 28. 03. 2012 – 02. 07. 2012 Musée national du Moyen Age, Paris, France



Très Riches Heures de Duc de Berry 04. 04. 2012 – 25.06. 2012 Le Louvre, Paris, France



Verbündet, verfeindet, verschwägert. Bayern und Österreich. 19. 04. 2012 – 06. 11. 2012-03-11 Burg Burghausen, Altötting, Deutschland Kloster Ranshofen, Stadt Braunau, Österreich Schloss Mattighofen, Braunau, Österreich



Schats für die Ewigkeit Manuscripts infrom the time of Heinrich II in the Cathedral of Bamberg 14. 05. 2012 – 11. 08. 2012 Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, Bamberg, Deutschland

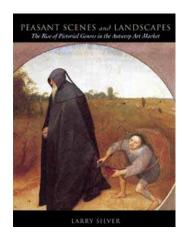


Der Frühe Dürer 24. 05. 2012- 02. 09. 2012 Germanisches National Museum, Nürnberg, Deutschland



Golden Flashes
The international Gothic in Florence from 1375 to 1440
19. 06 2012 – 04. 11 2012
Galleria degli Uffizi, Firenze, Italia

New Books - in English, French and Italian



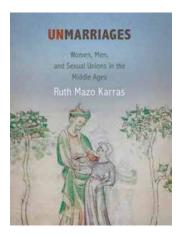
Peasant Scenes and Landscapes

The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market Larry Silver Penn University Press 2012



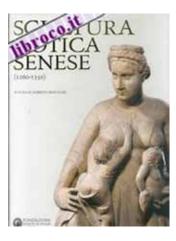
Die Privaturkunden der Karolingerzeit

P. Erhart, K. Heidecker, B. Zeller Urs Graf Verlag 2012



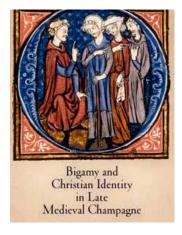
Unmarriages

Women, Men, and Sexual Unions in the Middle Ages Ruth Mazo Karras A volume in the Middle Ages Series. Penn University Press 2012



Scultura gotica senese (1260-1350) Roberto Bartalini

Allemandi 2012



Bigamy and Christian Identity in Late Medieval Champagne

Sara McDougall
A volume in the Middle
Ages Series.
Popp University Press

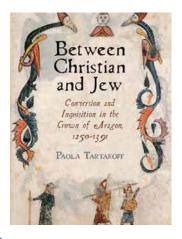
Penn University Press 2012



I Longobardi e la storia Un percorso at-

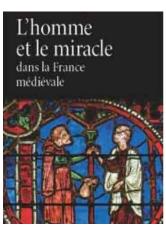
traverso le fonti F. Lo Monaco (Redattore), F. Mores (Redattore)

Viella 2012



Between Christian and Jew

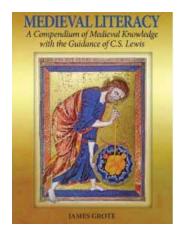
Conversion and Inquisition in the Crown of Aragon, 1250-1391
Paola Tartakoff
A volume in the Middle Ages Series
Penn University Press
2012



L'homme et le mira-

cle dans la France médiévale Pierre André Sigal CNRS 2012

New Books - in English



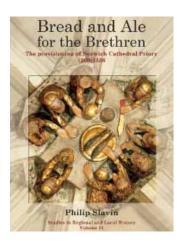
Medieval Literacy

A Compendium of Medieval Knowledge with the Guidance of C. S. Lewis
Jim Grote
Fons Vitae 2012



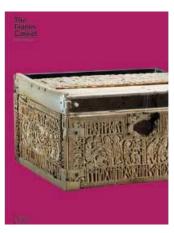
Pope Alexander III

Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West Peter D. Clarke and Anne J. Duggan Ashgate 2012



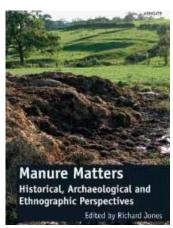
Bread and Ale for the Brethren

The Provisioning of Norwich Cathedral Priory, 1260-1536 (Studies in Regional and Local History) Philip Slavin University of Hertfordshire Press 2012



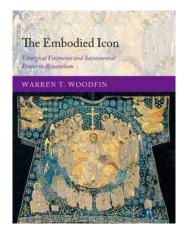
The Franks Casket

Objects in Focus Leslie Webster British Museum 2012



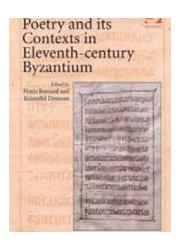
Manure Matters Richard Jones

Ashgate 2012



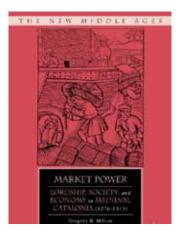
The Embodied Icon-

Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium (Oxford Studies in Byzantium) Warren T. Woodfin Oxford University Press 2012



Poetry and its Contexts

in Eleventh-century Byzantium Floris Bernard and Kristoffel Demoen Ashgate 2012



Market Power.

Lordship, Society, and Economy in Medieval Catalonia (1276-1313) The New Middle Ages Gregory B. Milton Palgrave Macmillan 2012

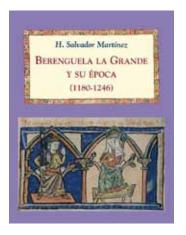
New Books - in Spanish and German



Historia del arte medieval Juan V. Garcia Marsilla Universidad De Valencia



Verbündet - Verfeindet - Verschwägert Bayern und Österreich 1-2 Theiss 2012



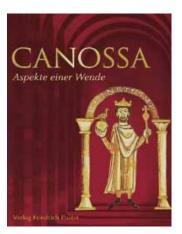
Berenguela la Grande y su época (1180-1246)

H. Salvador Martínez Santamarta Ediciones Polifemo; Edición 2012



Königliche Stiftungen des Mittelalters im historischen Wandel

Quedlinburg und Speyer, Königsfelden, Wiener Neustadt und Andernach Claudia Moddelmog Oldenbourg Akademieverlag 2012



Canossa

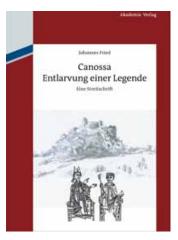
Aspekte einer Wende

Wolfgang Hasberg Editor), Hermann-Josef Scheidgen (Editor) Pustet, Regensburg 2012



Geistliche als Kreuzfahrer

Der Klerus im Konflikt zwischen Orient und Okzident 1095-1221 Thomas Haas Universitätsverlag Winter 2012



Canossa

Entlarvung einer Legende. Eine Streitschrift Johannes Fried Oldenbourg Akademieverlag 2012



Gräber im Kirchenraum

Archäologisch-historisches Forum Jörg Jarnut, Martin Kroker, Stephan Müller, Matthias Wemhoff (Eds) Fink (Wilhelm) 2012