

Images and Daily Life

Axel Bolvig (Copenhagen)

We gathered to discuss various methods and approaches in our research on medieval daily life. My field of research is concentrated on images – especially medieval wallpaintings.

I think that history is facing a paradigmatic change by the fast growing access to huge amounts of images. The written source material will no longer hold the lead. And consequently quite another image of the Middle Ages will develop in our minds. Because images form a significant material to our understanding of medieval daily life I would like to outline my project shortly: Danish medieval wallpaintings on the Internet and in a database.

We scan and digitize images of our wall-paintings. We put them into a database and connect them with an indexing system. That is quite a normal procedure. The database is open to interdisciplinary approaches which we have not had time or funding enough to elaborate in a satisfactory way. But we operate with the possibilities of supplementing the image base with relevant texts of which, in Denmark, very few have survived. I am speaking of, e.g., hymns to the Virgin Mary, ballads, documents related to the decoration of the churches, etc. As our wallpaintings show a great variety of musical instruments, it would be an interesting task to supply the database with music played on original instruments. The base could be supplemented with images of medieval architectural remains. Groundplans of the churches would be a natural supplement, and, in the long run, 3-D models too. For the time being we are connecting the image database with a GIS system, so that you can highlight the geographic districts, where the subjects of research are located. As the wallpaintings still are to be found in situ, this is of great importance. Then, we shall have the opportunity of connecting the images to the landscape: watercourses, soil, villages, estates, archeological sites, etc.

The electronic revolution has offered possibilities of expanding the approaches to, e.g., the study of medieval daily life – to give our research wider dimensions. Some of the existing dimensions are realised through

the access to other databases with medieval material. In this connection I would like to put forward some proposals.

Images communicate in another way than words – in some ways images are universal. In other ways, they are very exclusive. Images break the traditional barrier between different groups of society. Images question our division of medieval society into elite and popular culture. If we take a starting-point in Fernand Saussure's semiological division *Langue/Parole*, we see the universal importance of visual communication.

In medieval Catholic society almost the total production of images relied on the same *Langue* – which is corresponding to the iconographical contents. In their way of presenting this common iconographical *Langue* artists, sponsors and spectators used their local, social and periodical *Parole* – which is corresponding to the artistic expression and the spectators' visual consumption. Many different kinds of images related to the notion of daily life. Almost all images were part of the daily production and consumption of visual material. Consequently, the analytical distinction between *Langue/Parole* is of great importance to our understanding of medieval daily life.

As medieval images rely on the same *Langue* it is natural to skip national delimitations in our work and in our attempts to create image databases which often are financially bound to specific demarcations. (I personally know that, and this is why our image-base still is entitled: Danish Medieval Wall-paintings). The medieval visual *Langue* is related to and used in whole Europe. The visual *Parole* – which is the artistic way of expression – does not respect national and political boundaries but develops in regional and social territories. Parallel to the *Parole*, daily life is formed by and connected to social groups and certain regions but not to national and political spheres. This means that the history we produce when relying on visual source material will take other forms and contents, and will be bound to other geographic areas than the history based on written source material.

I would like to advocate for

1. Creating better possibilities for exchanging digitized source material – first of all images.
2. Establishing a common web-site with references to all the different relevant databases. In a long perspective, this should lead to the establishment of one common huge database relying on a common indexing system. But I know that this is an enormous project – which at least will demand funding from the European Union. Perhaps such a project belongs to the world of imagination rather than reality. But the idea should be kept alive.

3. On a lesser scale, I would like to promote a common debate forum for the many historians working with the broad and rather diffuse subject "Daily Life in the Middle Ages". It would be a help and a challenge to have a kind of electronic magazine where we can consult colleagues, ask and answer questions, advertise for certain information, put forward written and visual source material, etc.
4. As an ideal, such proposals could lead to a kind of virtual university of "The History of Everyday Life" in medieval Europe.

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VON GERHARD JARITZ

GEDRUCKT MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG DER KULTURABTEILUNG
DES AMTES DER NIEDERÖSTERREICHISCHEN LANDESREGIERUNG

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Vorwort

Medium Aevum Quotidianum legt mit diesem Heft 38 die erste Veröffentlichung des Jahrgangs 1998 vor. Der Band widmet sich im besonderen den Statements zu einem Round-Table-Gespräch "History of Daily Life: The Variety of Approaches", welches im Juli 1997 am *International Medieval Congress* in Leeds mit reger Publikumsbeteiligung stattgefunden hat. Dabei zeigte sich wieder, daß einerseits die interdisziplinäre Analyse unterschiedlichsten Quellenmaterials im jeweiligen Kontext, andererseits die vermehrte Heranziehung bildlicher Überlieferung im Zentrum der Diskussion stehen. Aspekte der digitalen Bildverarbeitung spielen dabei eine relevante Rolle sowohl in bezug auf Bilddokumentation als auch hinsichtlich der Analysen. Zwei Einzelstudien behandeln Wirtshauskriminalität im spätmittelalterlichen Ragusa, sowie die Ausgestaltung von Kaufmanns- und Handwerkerfesten im spätmittelalterlichen Baltikum.

Heft 39 wird bereits anfangs Juli 1998 erscheinen und sich vorrangig mit verschiedenen Möglichkeiten der Bildanalyse in der Geschichte des Alltags auseinandersetzen. Die einzelnen Beiträge werden den nord- und zentraleuropäischen Raum behandeln und konzentriert von Beispielen mittelalterlicher Wandmalerei ausgehen.

Unser Heft 40 wird – mit Schwerpunkt auf dem ungarischen Raum – vor allem der mittelalterlichen Ernährung gewidmet sein und soll neue interdisziplinäre Forschungsansätze vorstellen; dabei werden besonders die Möglichkeiten einer Verbindung der Analyse schriftlicher Quellen und archäologischen Materials im Zentrum der Argumentation stehen.

Heft 41 wird sich wiederum in starkem Maße mit jenen Ergebnissen auseinandersetzen, welche am *International Medieval Congress*, Leeds 1998, in dessen alltagsgeschichtlichen Sektionen zur Vorstellung gelangen werden. Damit soll neuerlich vermittelt werden, auf welcher intensiven Weise sich die Anwendung moderner Methoden und die Verwirklichung neuer Ansätze in aktuellen Studien zu Alltag und materieller Kultur des Mittelalters – im internationalen Rahmen – verfolgen läßt.

Medium Aevum Quotidianum dankt seinen Mitgliedern und Freunden für das anhaltende bzw. steigende Interesse an den Anliegen und an der Arbeit der Gesellschaft.

Gerhard Jaritz, Herausgeber

History of Daily Life: The Variety of Approaches

At the *International Medieval Congress*, Leeds 1997, a round table discussion was organised as part of the strand "History of Daily Life" that dealt with the variety of possible approaches towards this, still rather young field of Medieval Studies. The international panel consisted of Axel Bolvig (Copenhagen), Gerhard Jaritz (Krems), Françoise Piponnier (Paris), Norbert Schnitzler (Chemnitz), and Melitta Weiss Adamson (London, Ontario).

As a kind of basis for the discussion, it was emphasised that the history of medieval everyday life is a field of research dependent on interdisciplinary approaches. Written and pictorial sources, as well as archeological evidence play important roles for any analysis. The different contexts of information and their interpretation determine our (re)construction of everyday life in the Middle Ages decisively. The aim of the round table was to discuss some of the methods and approaches which are relevant for today's research. It should also show that "History of Daily Life", generally, has to be seen as an indispensable field of Medieval Studies that also offers relevant methodological aspects and results for many other historical disciplines.

We are happy to be able to publish the modified short statements of the panelists in this volume of *Medium Aevum Quotidianum*. The originally English statements of Françoise Piponnier and Gerhard Jaritz were translated by their authors into French and German respectively.