

*Abraham's Legacy –  
Competition, Conflict, and Coexistence in the Middle Ages.*

**15th Medievalists' Society Symposium  
Heidelberg, March 3<sup>rd</sup> – March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

The gradual process of the diversification of European societies today raises the question: where do the roots of European identities, traditions and cultural resources lie, and how did they develop? Research on the medieval period, regardless of discipline, can provide explanatory models and offer historical orientation for these questions.

Europe itself as a sphere of social exchange and cultural practice consists of heterogeneous traditions and influences, the formation of which was (and still is) decisively influenced by the different religious cultures within the European territories and on their borders. These cultures converge exemplarily in the figure of a common ancestor who has been named and understood differently by different traditions: Avraham, Abraham or Ibrahim. The different names used to refer to him already point to the coexistence of concepts of unity and diversity. Jewish, Christian and Islamic appropriations of this legacy have produced their own distinct cultures which, for a long time, existed side by side.

The organisation of this complex structure occurred simultaneously in opposition to as well as in cooperation with one another. Competition, conflict and coexistence are discernible as constant factors in the religious, political and cultural development of Europe. The actors on the medieval European stage lived in and gained benefits from cultural exchange, while still experiencing cultural opposition where different cultures existed in a climate of confrontation. The resulting tension left room for ongoing contact; it forced or enabled people to develop hybrid ways of life, which allowed for the formation of specific characteristics of European cultures.

The Heidelberg symposium of the Mediävistenverband (Medievalists' Society) in 2013 offers a platform where specific attention will be paid to the multifarious legacy of Abrahamic filiation and its sediment in culture and society. Approaches from single disciplines within Medieval Studies are asked for just as much as interdisciplinary approaches. These should contribute to a whole range of questions: what enabled the contact between different cultures? Which expectations motivated the actors? What were the conditions of intercultural exchange and what was actually exchanged? Which factors determined mutual perceptions and common horizons and which forms did these take on? Why and how did conflict arise? And what kinds of influences determined everyday life and the formation of different ways of living in the cultures of the European middle ages?

The symposium neither wishes to cultivate naïve, unrealistic views of an idealised past, nor to resort to simple conflict theories. Instead, it aims at a disciplinary self-assessment and meticulous introspection with a distinct methodological foundation. Archaeology, history, Islamic studies, Jewish studies, art, language and literature, music, philosophy, theology, the history of science and other disciplines within medieval studies have their own way of approaching these topics. They will be brought together in Heidelberg and should help to develop perspectives for future research.

Suggestions are requested for group panels, individual papers or interactive workshops on the following **topic areas**:

- I. Images and Imaginations of Abraham
- II. Looking at oneself and at others/one's own views and the views of others
- III. Appropriating and Overwriting the Past
- IV. Diverse Ways of Life
- V. Crossing and Demarcating Borders, Areas of Contact
- VI. Strategies of Overcoming/Coping with Differences
- VII. Science as a Cultural Medium
- VIII. Methodology and Didactics

**Length of a Panel:** generally 1 ½ hours for three papers (including discussion)

**Paper Length:** no longer than 20 minutes

Suggestions for complete panels with three or four individual papers are particularly welcome. Time for papers and discussion should not exceed the time limit of 1 ½ hours. Furthermore, and bearing the Society's interdisciplinary outlook in mind: whenever three people wish to present a panel, a minimum of two disciplines should be covered, in the case of four people it should be a minimum of three different disciplines. Suggestions for interactive workshops are also welcome.

Proposals should follow the following structure:

- The topic area's number (see above, I – VIII)
- A contact address (including e-mail); for teams, the group leader's address
- A proposal (maximum of three pages for group suggestions or ¾ page per contributor). For individual papers and workshops, proposals should not exceed 1 ½ pages in length.

Proposals for papers belonging to a group proposal for a panel should not be submitted individually. The participation of early stage researchers in such panels is particularly welcome.

Suggestions should be submitted, preferably by e-mail attachment, to the following address, no later than **29th February 2012**:

E-Mail: ludger.lieb@gs.uni-heidelberg.de  
Professor Ludger Lieb  
Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg  
Germanistisches Seminar  
Hauptstr. 207-209  
69117 Heidelberg  
Germany  
<http://www.mediaevistenverband.de/symposium/15-symposium-2013/>