

# Editor's Foreword



Rituals surround us. They divide our days and mark significant moments in our lives, we witness them in memorialising ceremonies and in the grand ceremonial of state. Rituals are, in short, ubiquitous to the human experience, and our encounters with them are wide and varied, a fact demonstrated by the range of topics and approaches our authors bring to volume 9 of *Ceræ*, themed 'Ritual: Practice, Performance, Reception'. I am pleased to present, on behalf of the editorial team, the largest volume of the journal to date, comprising seven themed articles, one unthemed article, and one *varium*.

In our opening article, Solveig Marie Wang heeds recent calls to Indigenise medieval studies in her analysis of Saami ritual performance. In so doing, she brings nuance to the depictions of Saami in Old Norse texts, reveals the often-neglected roles of Saami characters, and exposes how their rituals could at once be perceived as normative *and* transgressive in the cultural milieu of medieval Fennoscandia. What Wang brings to light is a dynamic 'cultural interface' in which social boundaries between the Saami and their neighbours was far from clear-cut. Staying in the north, our second article comes from Caroline Wilhelmsson who examines royal ceremonial across five centuries of Swedish history. Specifically, she analyses the royal procession

known as the *eriksgata*, in which the king-elect undertook a journey across the realm to have his kingship confirmed by provincial assemblies. Wilhelmsson takes the position that the *eriksgata* served a dual purpose as a political tool, both uniting the realm under one ruler, while also reaffirming and legitimising regional identities and governance.

For our next two articles, we journey across the North Sea to England. Grace Catherine Greiner offers an essay on Chaucer's fourteenth-century dream vision, *The Book of the Duchess*, undertaking an analysis of the narrative framing of the lyric. Greiner suggests that Chaucer is here musing on the nature of performance and loss, that the poet invites the reader (or listener) to both participate in public commemoration and to experience loss on a personal level through the ephemeral performance of elegiac lyric. Michele Seah also turns her attention to performative rituals, but takes as her subject one with significant political overtones: the 1174 pilgrimage of King Henry II to the shrine of St Thomas Becket. Seah argues that Henry's penitential pilgrimage was directed to a wide audience, designed as a visual display to express both the king's humility and to demonstrate his genuine contrition.

For our final three themed articles, we head to continental Europe. Giulia Torello-Hill examines the ritual performance aspects of dynastic weddings in northern Italy by focussing on *cazzoni*, or wedding chests. Through her examination of the iconography of these ritual objects, Torello-Hill demonstrates that they served a dual didactic purpose for the young brides for whom they were made. Samantha Happé turns her attention to almanacs produced during the reign of Louis XIV, and

the role the images they contain played in disseminating knowledge of events during the Sun King's reign. Happé's article pays particular attention to the visual framing of the ceremonial welcoming of various foreign embassies into the French court. Finally, Elisabeth Niederdöckl undertakes an analysis of how portable altars were used and staged in the days between Maundy Thursday and Easter. Niederdöckl explores how the very specific liturgical ceremonies associated with these objects during this period of the Church calendar served as allegories for Christ's passion and death.

In addition to these themed articles, Yianni Cartledge and Brenton Griffin offer a full-length study of the 'heretical' Paulician and Tondrakian movements that emerged in medieval Armenia. In turn, Jennifer Perkins supplies a *varium* on human-bird interaction in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.

As ever, thanks must go out to our peer-reviewers for offering their time and expertise, and to our committee for their tireless, voluntary efforts in keeping the journal running. Especial thanks must go to my deputy editors, Zoë Enstone and Jenny Davis Barnett for their help in processing the more than twenty submissions received for this volume. And finally, congratulations to our authors on the publication of their fascinating and varied research. It is thanks to all these people that working as *Ceræ's* editor has been such a rewarding experience, and I look forward to continuing in that capacity for the journal's tenth anniversary edition in 2023.

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