



Arab captives presented to the Byzantine Emperor Romanos III Argyros. Madrid MS Graecus Vitr. 26-2, Codex Graecus Matritensis Ioannis Skylitzes, f. 204v, Biblioteca Nacional de España.

CALL FOR PAPERS Medieval Unfreedoms: Slavery, Servitude, and Trafficking in Humans before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

CONFERENCE DATES: OCTOBER 19 – 20, 2018

Across the medieval world (c. 500 – c. 1500), multiple forms and degrees of unfreedom—slavery, serfdom, forced concubinage, coerced labor, captivity, and bondage—co-existed. Slaves and other unfree people made crucial, but often obscured, marks on societies that accorded them varying degrees of power even as they constrained and exploited them. Trade in humans tied together distinct cultural zones, religions, and geographic regions.

Shifting definitions of freedom and unfreedom shaped evolving social systems, and helped to shape developing concepts of race, ethnicity, social status, and cultural difference and belonging from Iberia to Ethiopia and from Iceland to Persia and beyond. Scholars have long pondered the decline of an ancient Roman slave society and the legacy of both Roman and late-medieval forms of unfreedom for the emergence of the trans-Atlantic slave trade (and the concomitant transformation of slavery) and of colonial systems of race, power, and government. This interdisciplinary conference, hosted by the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (CEMERS) at Binghamton University, seeks to bring together scholars whose research relates to unfreedom before the advent of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

We hope to foster conversations across traditional disciplinary boundaries about the definitions, cultural significance, and evolution of unfreedom in disparate parts of the medieval world. How does examining conceptions of freedom and unfreedom inform our understanding of medieval cultures? What is the legacy of medieval definitions of liberty and bondage? We particularly welcome comparative perspectives on unfreedom across religious and geographical frontiers.

We invite papers from a variety of disciplinary and methodological perspectives on any topic related to medieval unfreedom, including:

- Forms of unfreedom after the end of ancient slavery and on cultural frontiers
- Unfreedom in the Byzantine, Islamic, and Latin Christian worlds
- Trafficking in humans across political and religious frontiers
- Concepts of humanity, race, ethnicity, religion, and freedom
- Gender, sexuality, and unfreedom
- The interaction between slaving zones and centers of power
- The unfree at royal and aristocratic courts
- Textual and artistic unfreedoms
- Law, rights, and unfree status
- Manumission, social capital, and social mobility
- Varieties of coerced and unfree labor
- Raiding, piracy, and unfreedom
- Resistance and rebellion against bondage

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MAY 1, 2018.

Abstracts for individual papers and for sessions are invited. Papers should be 20 minutes in length. Send abstracts to cemers@binghamton.edu.

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