

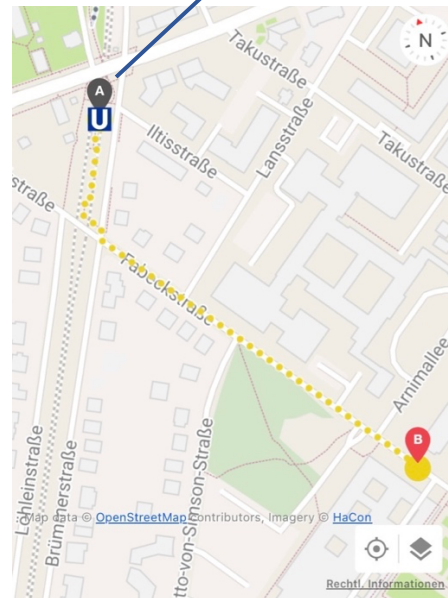
Goal and Guiding Questions

While ethnicity and unfreedom have in recent years received considerable attention by historians working on premodern Europe and the Middle East, these two topics are only rarely explored together despite their obvious interconnections. The workshop brings together historians of Europe and the Middle East who work on the period of ca. 800–1500 CE and share an interest in questions of ethnicity and/or various forms of unfreedom, including, but not limited to slavery and serfdom.

The goal of the workshop is to use the methods of transregional comparison and entanglement analysis to identify similarities, differences, and interconnections between norms, concepts, and practices of unfreedom and ethnicity in Europe and the Middle East. To do so, the participants are invited to reflect in their contributions on one or several of the following guiding questions based on their respective regional expertise:

- How were legal, social, and religious norms, concepts, and practices of unfreedom constructed, expressed, and applied regarding specific ethnic groups?
- Which roles did concepts of unfreedom play in the construction, application, and performance of ethnic identities?
- How were the semantics of unfreedom and ethnicity interconnected?
- Were specific ethnic groups considered to be better suited for unfreedom (or freedom) than others and if so, were specific ethnic identities linked to particular forms of unfreedom (e.g., military slavery vs. domestic slavery)?
- How did ethnicity impact processes of the acquisition, transfer, and change of status of unfree people, and how were ethnic identities constructed, expressed, performed, and transformed during these processes?

6min walk from U Dahlem-Dorf to Holzlaube
(Fabeckstr.23-25)



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Friedrich-Meinecke-
Gesellschaft

DFG Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft

International Workshop

Unfreedom and Ethnicity:



Europe and the Middle East in Comparison (800-1500 CE)

March 28–29, 2025

Holzlaube, Fabeckstr. 23-25,
14195 Berlin, 2nd floor, 2.2058

Conveners: Thomas Ertl and Christian Mauder
(Freie Universität Berlin)

Freie Universität  Berlin

Friday, March 28

14:00 Welcome and Introduction
(Thomas Ertl and Christian Mauder)

14:30 Panel 1: Late Antique and Early Medieval Traditions (Chair: Benjamin Scheller)

Jelle Bruining (Universiteit Leiden): "Ethnicity and Dependency in Papyrus Documents from Early Islamic Egypt"

Gerda Heydemann (Freie Universität Berlin): "Ethnicity, Race, Slavery: Biblical Models in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages"

16:00 Coffee Break

16:30 Panel 2: Ethnicity and Commodification (Chair: Ingrid Evans)

Laura Emunds (Universität Bern): "Is Ethnicity a Marker of Commodification in Islamic Law?"

Josephine van den Bent (Universiteit van Amsterdam): "Ethnic Descriptions in Slave-Buying Manuals"

18:30 Dinner

Saturday, March 29

09:00 Panel 3: Forms of Mediterranean Slavery (Chair: Maximilian Schuh)

Marc von der Höh/Hanna Wichmann (Universität Rostock): "Domestic Others. 'Tatar' Slaves in Late Medieval Florence (1300-1500)"

Alasdair Grant (Universität Hamburg): "Slavery and Ethnicity in the Byzantine Commonwealth"

10:30 Coffee Break

11:00 Panel 4: Military Slavery and Ethnicity (Chair: Alexander Schunka)

Reuven Amitai (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem): "Ethnicity, Warfare and Military Slavery in the Mamluk Sultanate"

Christian Mauder (Freie Universität Berlin): "Circassian Ethnicity in the Late Mamluk Period between Unfreedom and Rulership"

12:30 Lunch Break

13:30 Panel 5: Slavery in the Late Medieval and Early Modern West (Chair: Julia Burkhardt)

Roser Salicrú i Lluçh (IMF-CSIC Barcelona): "On the Labelling of Slaves in the Late Medieval Crown of Aragon: Origins, Religion and Ethnicity"

Corinna Peres (University of Vienna): "Claiming Ethnicity and Resisting Slavery in the Italian-Iberian World around 1400"

15:00 Coffee Break

15:30 Panel 6: Concluding Panel (Chair: Thomas Ertl and Christian Mauder)

Julia Bühner (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt): "Unfreedom in the Early Atlantic: 'Old' and 'New' Strategies to Legitimize Slavery (14-16th century)"

Julien Loiseau (Université d'Aix-Marseille): "Suited to Serve? Slaves from the Ethiopian Highlands and Ḥabashī Identity in the Mamluk Middle East"

Concluding Discussion