



BCDSS Newsletter No. 1/January 2019

BONN CENTER FOR DEPENDENCY AND SLAVERY STUDIES

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News

Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies receives funding for Cluster of Excellence

On 27 September 2018, the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) has been awarded with the funding for a Cluster of Excellence within the Excellence Strategy research competition run by the German federal and state governments. The funding phase will start on 1 January 2019 and run until 31 December 2025.

The University of Bonn received with great euphoria the commission's decision to fund six Clusters of Excellence at the University of Bonn – more than any other university in Germany.

The program is Germany's most prestigious funding scheme, designed to strengthen top-level research at universities in Germany. The approved Clusters are characterized by a high level of involvement of non-university partners and multidisciplinary in the majority of projects extending far beyond "traditional" disciplines.

The interdisciplinary research project will be funded for seven years with several million Euros per year. The exact sum will be approved by the DFG. After the first seven years, it may be possible to extend the funding a further seven years on the basis of an application.

"This approval is a resounding success for our interdisciplinary scholarly work and proves that this topic is essential to understand current political debates in the field of dependency and labor", stated Prof. Dr. Stephan Conermann, Spokesperson of the BCDSS. "During the next years, we will make Bonn an international leading research hub for Dependency and Slavery

Studies.”

To explore asymmetrical dependencies in pre-modern societies the Cluster of Excellence "Beyond Slavery and Freedom" has developed an interdisciplinary, international and multi-faceted strategy. The Cluster's academic activities will be focused on five fields of research:

- Grammars of Dependency
- Embodied Dependencies
- Institutions, Norms and Practices
- Labor and Spatiality
- Gender (and Intersectionality)

Within these five Research Areas, researchers will explore innovative angles of dependencies. It is our aim to broaden the individual scope of academic training by cooperation across disciplines. The Cluster includes colleagues from four faculties (Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Law and Economics, Faculty of Protestant Theology, Faculty of Catholic Theology), and from 25 different disciplines.

To broaden its scope the Cluster is committed to an international recruitment strategy to bring international leading scholars to Bonn.

Workshop: Violence, Punishment and Labor in Ancient Egypt and the Ancient Near East

*Egyptian Museum of the University of Bonn, Regina-Pacis-Weg
7, 15 January 2019*

Throughout history, various forms of punishment have played multiple functions in connection to diverse labor relations. For example, punitive practices have contributed to modify the composition of the workforce, both through forced recruitment and by the expulsion of undesired laborers. At the same time, punishment has been instrumental in the control of labor within specific worksites and in disciplining the workforce at large through symbolic violence. As multiple legal regimes usually co-existed within one context (i.e. legal pluralism), punishments meted out under different legal regimes simultaneously acted upon labor, and expressed concurrent or complementary visions of justice and authority. Moreover, the entanglements between punishment and labor have additionally resulted in the production of durable personal, social and spatial dependencies.



Upcoming I



Within this conceptual frame, the workshop intends to explore the connections between violence, punishment and labor in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The presentations will address the following aspects:

- Violence/punishment against the internal population and “foreigners”;
- Violence/punishment as a system of labor control, in relation to different types of workers (slaves, servants, prisoners of war, etc.);
- Punishment and legal pluralism;
- Real and depicted violence/punishment, including the symbolic and disciplinary roles of punishment;
- Pre-emptive violence/punishment;
- Violence/punishment as everyday experience (e.g. domestic violence).

The participants are also asked to engage with two broader analytical issues, namely:

- Is the analytical distinction between violence and punishment useful in the historical context considered? As part of this conversation, the differentiation between structural and non-structural violence (i.e. embedded in customs/norms or connected to individual manifestations of power and abuses) will also be addressed, as well as the plurality of the forms of violence and punishment.
- How and under which circumstances did the interaction between violence/punishment and labor result in durable personal, social and spatial dependencies?

The workshop is sponsored by the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies and the SFB Project “Macht und Herrschaft – Vormoderne Konfigurationen in transkultureller Perspektive”.

Attendance is open to all members of the Egyptology Section of the Department of Archaeology and Cultural Anthropology and of the Bonn Centre for Dependency and Slavery Studies (University of Bonn).

Find more information see: <https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/events/violence-punishment-and-labour-in-ancient-egypt-and-the-ancient-near-east>



Upcoming II

Dependency, Inequality and Material Culture

Workshop at the University of Bonn, 12-14 February 2019

So far, dependency research has almost exclusively dealt with slavery on the American continent or in antiquity. The cluster seeks to broaden this perspective in terms of content, space and time.

Within five Research Areas, researchers explore innovative angles of dependencies. It is our aim to broaden individual scopes of academic training by cooperation across disciplines.

Research Area B: Embodied Dependencies (<https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/program/research-areas/research-area-b-embodied-dependencies/description-of-ra-b>) examines primarily non-textual relics of asymmetrical dependencies, which have been 'inscribed' in bodies and artefacts. The aim of this research area is to correct the widespread imbalance in the academic evaluation of written and non-written traditions by taking a pre-colonial perspective into consideration and to establish archaeology, art history, and object-based anthropology on an equal level with those disciplines of the humanities that focus on textual sources. In this way, we give actors operating in non-textual environments a 'voice'. The research will be conducted by PhD students, Postdoctoral researchers and senior academics.

In order to plan the future work of Research Area B we would like to discuss different approaches with specialists and young researchers from the fields of anthropology, archaeology, bio-archaeology and art history who have experience or profound interest in the topic of asymmetrical dependencies and inequality.

Contributions (20-30 min.) based on all kinds of material culture (images of enslavement and dependency, architectural remnants, remains that testify hard physical labor, grave-contexts, skeletal material etc.) from all continents and periods prior to the 19th century are welcome.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact: Dr. Dennis Beck: dbeck@uni-bonn.de



BCDSS People

Prof. Dr. Stephan Conermann

Speaker of the BCDSS

Stephan Conermann completed his PhD from the University of Kiel, Germany, in 1996. In 2001 he completed his habilitation. Since 2003, he holds the chair for Islamic Studies at the University of Bonn as a fulltime professor.



Stephan Conermann holds various positions at the University of Bonn. Besides being the spokesperson of the DFG-funded Cluster of Excellence “Beyond Slavery and Freedom. Asymmetric Dependencies in pre-modern societies,” he currently is also Vice-President for International Affairs of the University of Bonn; as well as spokesperson for the DFG-Institute of Advanced Studies (FOR 1362) “History and Society during the Mamluk Era (1250–1517)”. He also serves as deputy spokesperson for the DFG Collaborative Research Center “Macht und Herrschaft (Power and Rule). Premodern Configurations in a Transcultural Perspective” (since 2016).

Over the past couple of years, he has built research links across different disciplines and institutions and has established an international network of leading scholars. Throughout the funding period of the Cluster of Excellence until 2025 the already existing network will be further strengthened. The individual network of the Cluster’s members already extends to 270 contacts in 31 countries.

Within the BCDSS, Stephan Conermann’s research will focus on the comparison between different forms of slavery in pre-modern societies. His starting point are different forms of dependency in the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt and Syria (1250—1517). There a predominantly Arabic population was dominated by a Turkish-speaking elite of manumitted military slaves who sought to regenerate themselves continuously through a self-imposed fiat of import and training of young mamluks. The only person who could become a Mamluk was a Turk (and less frequently other races) who had been born free outside the Islamic territories as a non-Muslim, then enslaved, brought to Egypt as a slave, converted to Islam, trained as a warrior, and finally freed and enrolled in the Sultan's armies.

Call for Applications

The Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies is currently calling for applications for:

Six (Junior) Research Group Leaders for the Five Research Areas of the BCDSS

The positions are initially limited for a period of three years (1 October 2019 to 30 September 2022), with the option of extending the contract for another three years (3+3 years).

The successful candidates will be employed at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS): https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en?set_language=en. In September 2018, the BCDSS was awarded the status of "Cluster of Excellence" by the German Research Council. We are therefore recruiting early-career researchers who are interested in contributing to an outstanding interdisciplinary and international research center. In the unique position of a (Junior) Research Group Leader, you will be a key member of the BCDSS in a position to shape the BCDSS' future research strategy and research activities.

The topics of the Research Groups should be designed to provide broad conceptual entry points for the study of forms of strong asymmetrical dependencies in pre-modern societies. They should not copy the topics of the Research Areas. They are aimed at stimulating research with a global, and multi-disciplinary approach across different historical periods. Therefore, the individual research projects of the members of each Research Group may deal with various contexts, while seeking to address the key issues of the Research Group.

The application deadline is **15 March 2019**. Find all of the calls and information about the application procedure here: <https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/career>

Three Junior and three Senior Fellowships at the Heinz Heinen-Kolleg for up to 12 months

The Heinz Heinen-Kolleg is a center for advanced studies. It is part of the Cluster of Excellence "Beyond Slavery and Freedom. Asymmetric Dependencies in pre-modern societies" and will also be hosted by the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies. The Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies approaches asymmetrical dependencies in different societies in five different Research Areas. These form five different thematic and methodological angles. In each of these Research Areas specific conceptual debates and approaches of the humanities are drawn upon and put to the test for arriving at a new social history of asymmetrical dependencies. For the academic year of 2019/2020 the Cluster will put a thematic emphasis on **Research Area A "Grammars of Dependency."** Research Area A focuses



on the textual articulation of dependencies and the production and use of a 'grammar of dependency' by making use of the new interest in historical semantics.

The Heinz Heinen-Kolleg invites applications by scholars focusing on topics related to Research Area and will provide them with:

- A stipend
- Travel allowance
- Basic accommodation

The application deadline is **15 March 2019**. Find more details about the Heinz Heinen-Kolleg and the application procedure here: <https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/heinz-heinen-center-for-advanced-study>.

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