

Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lecture Series

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Monday, 31.10.2022; 4:15 - 6:00 pm CEST

Timothy J. Coates, The College of Charleston:

**Castro Marim: Where Sin Became Salt in Portugal's Algarve, 1450-ca. 1836.**

Abstract:

The town of Castro Marim in SE Portugal was a legal haven and later the site of internal exile for several thousand minor sinners and convicts from the Middle Ages until the first decades of the nineteenth century. The guilty could flee to this sanctuary to avoid prosecution. Later, courts of the Inquisition and the state sent those convicted of minor offences to reside in the town, typically for periods of two to four years. Faced with the punishment of long-term obligatory residence, these newcomers had little choice but to engage in the economic activities around them: chiefly in salt extraction, but also fishing, boat building, agriculture, and smuggling. Men had the additional option of military service in the town. As a result, this use of exile to Castro Marim is more than a micro-history of a small town. It is a vivid example of social control as practiced by courts of the Church and state. It is also an example of the limitations of early modern royal authority. The crown was (eventually) forced to solve these limitations by turning to ideas crafted from Enlightenment urban and financial planning which, together with penal reform and the rise of the modern prison, ultimately ended Castro Marim's special status.