

# HUMANS AS GIFTS

## HISTORICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES

**Deadline extended: 31.10.2023**

**Call for papers for an international conference at the Bonn Centre of Dependency & Slavery Studies, University of Bonn, 23–24 May 2024**

Why would someone give a human being to someone else as a gift? Who are the giver and the recipient? How does gift-giving affect the status of the gifted human? The conference “Humans as Gifts” brings together historians and anthropologists to answer these questions.

Anthropologists have dedicated many pages to the nature of the gift. Yet, they avoid humans as gifts. In contrast, historical and ethnographic records from all regions and periods document similar practices: A father to his daughter a slave as a marriage present, a ruler gives slaves as diplomatic gifts to his peers abroad, victors divide captives as slaves among their households, etc. A human is a donation to god or a temple in other cases.

We are looking for historians and anthropologists who are eager to answer these questions:

1. Who are the giver and the recipient of humans as gifts?
2. Why did they give and take humans? Was it a passing over of wealth and status, building relationships, exposure of unwanted dependents, religious practices, etc.?
3. How does the gift-giving transform the life and status of gifted individuals? Who were they before, during and after the gifting/donation: a free, a chattel, someone else?

We welcome case studies from all regions and periods. Our ultimate goal is to find out whether the giving of humans away “for free” was a universal phenomenon or a characteristic of certain societies, for example, those with slaves?

The Bonn Centre for Dependency & Slavery Studies covers participants’ travel expenses and provides accommodation. We plan to publish the papers as a special issue of a top-tier peer-reviewed historical or anthropological journal.

Please send your paper proposal (ca. 300 words) with a short CV to [vbartash@uni-bonn.de](mailto:vbartash@uni-bonn.de) by **October 31, 2023**.

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