

OTTOMAN SLAVERIES AND TYPOLOGIES OF UNFREEDOM

CONFERENCE

JUNE 24-25, 2026



Picture credit: Willem Blaeu, Turcicum Imperium (Amsterdam, ca. 1638–1643)

THE BONN CENTER FOR DEPENDENCY AND SLAVERY STUDIES

hosts the Cluster of Excellence “Beyond Slavery and Freedom”, which aims to overcome the binary opposition of “slavery versus freedom”. We approach the phenomenon of slavery and other types of strong asymmetrical dependency from methodologically and theoretically distinct perspectives.

For centuries, slavery constituted a fundamental component of Ottoman society, shaping households, labor regimes, political structures, and social hierarchies across the empire. Yet recent scholarship has increasingly emphasized that slavery in the Ottoman world cannot be understood as a singular institution. Rather, enslaved and dependent individuals experienced diverse forms of unfreedom that varied according to gender, legal status, occupation, religion, geographic setting, and access to social networks. These differences challenge binary distinctions between freedom and slavery and call for a more nuanced understanding of dependency and agency in Ottoman history. The conference Ottoman Slaveries and Typologies of Unfreedom brings together scholars from different disciplines to examine the plurality of Ottoman slaveries and related forms of dependency. Through perspectives from social, legal, economic, and cultural history, participants will explore how concepts of freedom and unfreedom were negotiated in everyday life, how legal and political institutions structured relations of dependency, and how enslaved and formerly enslaved individuals navigated conditions of constraint. By foregrounding questions of agency, mobility, emancipation, and post-manumission dependency, the conference seeks to contribute to broader debates on slavery, asymmetrical dependency, and the historical meanings of freedom and unfreedom.

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**BONN CENTER
FOR DEPENDENCY
AND SLAVERY
STUDIES**

VENUE

University of Bonn

Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies

Conference room 0.018

Niebuhrstraße 5

D-53113 Bonn

and online via ZOOM

CONTACT

Conference Organizers:

Stephan Conermann, BCDSS, University of Bonn

Veruschka Wagner, BCDSS, University of Bonn

Please register via email with Jan Hörber

(events@dependency.uni-bonn.de) by 19 June, 2026.



Picture credit: Volker Lannert/University of Bonn

Wednesday, June 24, 2026

1:00 – 1:30 PM

Welcome and Introduction

Veruschka Wagner and Stephan Conermann

1:30 – 4:15 PM

Panel I: Labor, Unfreedom, and Provincial Dynamics

1:30 – 2:15 PM Presentation 1

Ottoman Slavery and the Asiatic Mode of Production: Agency and Unfreedom

Vartan Halis Yıldırım
(LMU)

2:15 – 3:00 PM Presentation 2

Slavery and Unfreedom on the Danube Border of the Ottoman Empire

Viorel Achim
(Nicolae Iorga Institute of History)

3:00 – 3:30 PM – Coffee Break

3:30 – 4:15 PM Presentation 3

Angry Turks and 'Ignorant Rumis': Decentralisation, Crisis, and Identities in Ottoman Damascus

Rana Münteoha Aldemir
(Georgetown University)

4:15 – 5:45 PM

Panel II: Gendered Dependencies

4:15 – 5:00 PM Presentation 4

Asymmetrical Dependencies and Gendered Representations: British Women's Travel Writing on Ottoman Slavery

Zeynep Y. Gökçe
(BCDSS)

Wednesday, June 24, 2026

5:00 – 5:45 PM Presentation 5

A Comparative Analysis of Women's Manumission Practices in the Ottoman Egypt and Early Antebellum South America

Halide Kahraman
(BCDSS)

6:30 PM – Reception

Thursday, June 25, 2026

10:15 – 11:45 AM

Panel III: Spatial Settings of Unfreedom

10:15 – 11:00 AM Presentation 6

Should We Just Kill Them or Sell Them in the Market? - Captivity and the Piracy in the Ottoman Mediterranean

Anıl Karzek
(University of Bonn)

11:00 – 11:45 AM Presentation 7

The Threshold of Unfreedom: The Imperial Slave Market in Istanbul

Musa Azimli
(Virginia University)

11:45 AM – 12:15 PM – Coffee Break

12:15 – 1:00 PM Presentation 8

Burden of Proof and Freedom Claims in Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Sharia Courts

Sümeyye Şimşek (online)
(independent researcher)

Thursday, June 25, 2026

1:00 – 2:30 PM – Lunch Break

2:30 – 3:15 PM Presentation 9

The Ottoman Empire and the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference of 1889–1890

Sıla Önder
(Virginia University)

3:15 – 3:45 PM – Coffee Break

3:45 – 5:15 PM

Panel IV: Post-Manumission Dependencies

3:45 – 4:30 PM Presentation 10

How Free Was Yusuf? Fragile Freedom and Post-Manumission Violence

Turkana Allahverdiyeva
(BCDSS)

4:30 – 5:15 PM Presentation 11

The Afterlives of Slavery in the Household: Foster Daughters and Invisible Dependency

Sinem Hızarcı
(Istanbul Bilgi University)

5:15 – 6:00 PM – Closing Discussion

6:30 PM

Dinner