

## EMBODIED DEPENDENCIES

CONFERENCE  
SEPTEMBER 22–23, 2021  
ONLINE VIA ZOOM

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.

The conference “Embodied Dependencies” will approach the material evidence of asymmetrical dependencies by examining embodied dependencies in human societies from archaeological, art-historical and anthropological perspectives, exploring their historical breadth and variety. The conference will help to establish an inventory of material evidence for asymmetrical dependencies and its range of expression and information as an important tool to read and analyze such dependencies alongside the written word. Integrating the insights brought forth by the “material turn”, as well as recent debates on environmental history and biohistory, this conference also aims to qualify the modern/Western focus on written culture by adding a pre-colonial perspective. The conference will be organized along four thematic panels: Bodies, Representations, Resources, and Spaces.

University of Bonn  
Online via Zoom

## CONTACT

### Conference Organizers:

Nikolai Grube, BCDSS, University of Bonn

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Please **register** for the conference  
**by September 17, 2021** via [email](#).

We will send you a link so that you can join the Zoom conference. Please visit our [conference website](#) for more information.

**Bonn Center for Dependency and  
Slavery Studies (BCDSS)  
University of Bonn**

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## Wednesday, September 22, 2021

9:30 – 10:00 AM (CEST) – Welcome

PANEL I: Bodies of Dependency  
Chairs: Sinah Kloß, Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali  
(both BCDSS, University of Bonn)

10:00 – 10:45 AM

Enslavement and 'The Fashion Intelligence':  
*Punch Magazine* and the Raced Body  
**Royce Mahawatte**  
(BCDSS Fellow/University of the Arts London, UK)

10:45 – 11:30 AM

"If you see a disheveled woman, you suspect she is  
the slave mistress": Bodily Adornment, Slavery and  
Christianity in Late Antiquity  
**Julia Hillner**  
(BCDSS Fellow/University of Sheffield, UK)

11:30 AM– 12:15 PM

TBA  
**Ciraj Rassool**  
(University of the Western Cape, South Africa)

12:15 – 1:30 PM – Lunch Break

1:30 – 2:15 PM

The "Hands of God" as Instruments of Death and  
Creation: Physicality, Embodiment, and Symbolism of  
sacrificial Knives in Mesoamerica  
**Vera Tiesler**  
(Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, Mexico)  
**Guilhem Olivier**  
(Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)

## Wednesday, September 22, 2021

PANEL II: Resources of Dependency  
Chairs: Bethany Walker, Paul Graf (both BCDSS,  
University of Bonn)

2:15 – 3:30 PM

Access to Resources in Dutch Caribbean Slavery:  
Perspectives from Archaeology and Oral History  
**Felicia Fricke**  
(University of Copenhagen, Denmark)

3:30 – 4:15 PM

Looking Good and Feeling Good: Fashioning Enslaved  
Bodies and the Materiality of Jamaican Lace-Bark,  
1700s to 1900  
**Steve Buckridge**  
(Grand Valley State University, USA)

4:15 – 5:00 PM – Wrap-Up Day One

## Thursday, September 23, 2021

PANEL III: Representations of Dependency  
Chairs: Julia Hegewald, Dita Auzina (both BCDSS,  
University of Bonn)

11:00 – 11:45 AM

Re-thinking the Representation and Construction of  
Trans-Atlantic Slavery in Glasgow through the  
Glassford Portrait & Glasgow Museums  
**Marenka Thompson-Odlum**  
(Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, UK)

11:45 AM – 12:30 PM

Entangled Bodies:  
Caste, Representation, Dissonance  
**Saurabh Dube**  
(El Colegio de México, Mexico)

12:30 – 2:30 PM – Lunch Break

## Thursday, September 23, 2021

PANEL III continued: Representations of Dependency  
Chairs: Julia Hegewald, Dita Auzina (both BCDSS,  
University of Bonn)

2:30 – 3:15 PM

Not seeing like a State: Visualization of Human and  
other than Human Relations in ancient Ulua Traditions  
of pre-Hispanic Honduras  
**Rosemary Joyce**  
(University of California, Berkeley, USA)

PANEL IV: Spaces of Dependency  
Chairs: Christian Mader, Nikolai Grube (both BCDSS,  
University of Bonn)

3:30 – 4:15 PM

Slavery in Things: Beyond Shackles and Chains  
**Lydia Marshall**  
(DePauw University, USA)

4:15 – 5:00 PM

Spaces of Dependence at an ancient Fortress on the  
Nile  
**Laurel Bestock**  
(Brown University, USA)

5:00 – 5:45 PM

Plant and Human Bodies and their Dependencies: Rice  
Cultivation and Sovereignty in 19th Century Highland  
Madagascar  
**Zoë Crossland**  
(Columbia University, USA)

5:45 – 6:30 PM – Wrap-Up and Final Discussion

**Annual Conference "Embodied Dependencies"  
All Abstracts**

**Name:** Laurel Bestock, Associate Professor of Archaeology and Egyptology  
Acting Director, Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World  
Brown University

**Title:** *Spaces of dependence at an ancient fortress on the Nile*

The fortress of Uronarti was one of more than a dozen built by the expansionist Egyptian kings of the early 2nd millennium BC in Lower Nubia, today northern Sudan and southern Egypt. Recent archaeological excavation and survey seek to document daily life and colonial interactions at the site, which was occupied for approximately 200 years. In this talk, a brief overview of the archaeological remains and their historical context will be followed by examinations of how physical space intersected with dependence at multiple scales, both enforcing dependence and providing opportunities for reactions to it. At the largest scale, the remote and inhospitable landscape forbade human settlement without support from the state, meaning that all inhabitants were dependent on shipments of grain for their basic sustenance. On the medium scale, we see a specific large building in the fortress with controlled access probably serving as a space in which trade between the garrison and local population took place. At the smallest, we see modification of individual houses in the barracks over time, subtle indication of shifts away from state planned architecture towards uses of space that more closely reflected the social structures and daily needs of those who occupied them.

**Name:** Steeve O. Buckridge, Grand Valley State University

**Title:** *Looking Good and Feeling Good: Fashioning Enslaved Bodies and the Materiality of Jamaican Lace-Bark, 1700s to 1900.*

The focus of this study is on the custom of lace-bark production and its consumption in Jamaica among enslaved African women. Lace-bark is a unique form of bark-cloth that resembles fine lace, a virtually forgotten textile obtained from the bark of the fibrous lagetto tree. The lace was desirable and widely used in the manufacture of exquisite clothing for members of the enslaved population.

By examining the fashion sensibilities of enslaved bodies, the study reveals the hidden lives of the black women who created the complex chain from living plant to clothing, giving agency to those overlooked by botanists and historians. My findings are suggestive as to how dress and lace-bark can be used to communicate aspects of women's lives and enable us to comprehend the meaning of lace-bark belongings and illuminate the social and cultural history embedded in them. Additionally, the analysis provides insight into the reciprocity of fashion trends between classes and races, and the fashion synthesis that emerged in Jamaica.

I argue that lace-bark was transformed into meaningful things that influenced and shaped identities and was an important source of material wealth for enslaved and free African women in Jamaica and the basis of women's power, strategies, and agency. Women's lives were intertwined with the making of lace-bark and reflected the material environment of Plantation Jamaica and the disruption of Jamaican Victorian fashion sensibilities.

**Name:** Zoë Crossland, Columbia University

**Title:** *Plant and human bodies and their dependencies: rice cultivation and sovereignty in 19th century highland Madagascar*

This paper will consider the ways in which irrigated rice cultivation was drawn into the constitution of sovereignty in 18th and 19th century Madagascar. Sovereignty was imagined as a divine partnership with rice and ancestors, underwritten in part by the alienation of the enslaved from their ancestral rice lands, and by the demands that wet rice production made on the community and landscape. Writing against the reductive backdrop of Wittfogel's model of hydraulic despotism I suggest that the history of highland Madagascar nevertheless demands that we make a full account of the role of rice in the production of new forms of sovereignty and governance and suggest that this may be productively explored by tracing how human-plant relationships were imagined and articulated both in discourse and practice.

**Name:** Felicia Fricke

**Title:** *Access to Resources in Dutch Caribbean Slavery: Perspectives from Archaeology and Oral History*

This presentation will address the evidence for resource access in contexts of enslavement on the Dutch Caribbean islands of St Eustatius, St Maarten, and Curaçao. It does this using data from archaeology, osteology, and oral history, and is underpinned by a theoretical approach that emphasizes the physical and psychological experiences of the enslaved person, rather than the economic and administrative aspects of the institution that often come to the fore in historical studies. This approach allows a perspective on slavery that can turn established narratives on their heads. Topics covered include: Why did enslaved people in Curaçao wear shoes? Did enslaved people in St Eustatius have easy access to the economy? And did enslaved people in St Maarten become free in 1848? How enslaved people found food, built their homes, and acquired possessions can be an important lens through which to view Dutch Caribbean enslavement as a whole. Most importantly, it contradicts the dominant narrative of 'mild' slavery and instead privileges the narratives of people who were enslaved and their modern descendants, who are still experiencing structural inequality today.

### **Biography**

Dr Fricke is an archaeologist and oral historian who has been studying inequality and colonialism in Europe and the Americas for over ten years. In 2019 she obtained her PhD in the archaeology, osteology, and oral history of enslaved lifeways on the Dutch Caribbean islands of Curaçao, St Eustatius, and St Maarten. She is an experienced field archaeologist, having held positions in both the research and commercial sectors in the UK and the Netherlands. She will soon begin a postdoctoral researcher position at the University of Copenhagen.

**Name:** Julia Hillner, BCDSS Fellow/The University of Sheffield

**Title:** *"If you see a dishevelled woman, you suspect she is the slave mistress": Bodily Adornment, Slavery and Christianity in Late Antiquity*

This paper takes its departure point from a curious change in the representation of high-elite Roman women between the third and the fourth century CE: the appearance of jewellery on their portraits, which now also often showed them surrounded by enslaved attendants in the act of adornment. In the earlier Roman period, women of status had been

usually depicted with sober and frugal looks, a marker of distinction from more common, non-Roman, sexually immoral or even unfree women, and the representation of acts of adornment of human women had been very rare. The paper will briefly discuss possible reasons for this development before concentrating on its reflection in the writings of fourth-century Christian authors, especially Jerome of Stridon. It will be shown how Jerome balanced expectations of Christian renunciation to bodily adornment with endorsement of the existing social order and asymmetrical dependencies, including those between free and enslaved bodies as expressed through attire.

**Name:** Rosemary A. Joyce, Professor of Anthropology at University of California, Berkeley

**Title:** *Not seeing like a state: Visualization of human and other than human relations in ancient Ulua traditions of pre-Hispanic Honduras*

How are "embodied dependencies" shaped by, not merely reflected in, the materials studied by archaeologists and art historians? Drawing on analyses of the visual culture of the ancestral Lenca of northwest Honduras, what archaeologists today call the Ulua style, this presentation explores this question in a region where hierarchy is muted, where there is little evidence of absolute abjection of the kind taken as definitive of enslavement, or even of the less extreme forms of gender-based dependency treated as constitutive of some societies in neighboring Mesoamerica. This presentation will advance an argument that inherently, the anthropomorphic and anthropomorphized objects that are the products of Ulua traditional craft production created discourses about valued forms of embodied subjectivity, both human and other-than-human. In the context of a broader discussion of asymmetrical dependency, the Ulua context offers particular insight as a social order that has been characterized successively as non-state, pre-state, egalitarian, heterarchical and in my current work, as illuminated by theories of anarchic society. The kinds of visual- and object-relations explored with Ulua materials in this presentation are not unique, and the analysis presented seeks to contribute methodologically to broader comparative understanding of the ways that visibility, corporeality, and agential intra-action may be understood.

**Name:** Royce Mahawatte, BCDSS Fellow, University of the Arts, London

**Title:** *Enslavement and 'The Fashion Intelligence': Punch Magazine and the Raced Body*

This paper will explore the relationship between embodiment, fashion writing and enslavement in early nineteenth-century British media. It will particularly look at the *Punch Magazine* articles called 'The Fashion Intelligence': a series of satires that offered quasi-fashion commentary. While the trope of the slave appears extensively in fashion media of the period, references to the transatlantic slave trade and the American slave economy are few. *Punch Magazine*, with its reputation for cutting (racist) satire took it upon itself to present both fashion and race as being informed by American slavery. Using one article from 1841 as a focused case study I will read against the grain of the text and explore embodiment, fashion and dependency as racialising structures, which are presented as wit and humour. Drawing particularly on the work of Alexander Weheliye and also the literary analysis of Patrick Brantlinger, I will present the surface of the fashioned body itself as a metaphorical and temporal boundary with slavery (and abolition) on one side and colonialism on the other.

**Name:** Lydia Wilson Marshall, DePauw University

**Title:** *Slavery in Things: Beyond Shackles and Chains*

Archaeologists rarely find objects of restraint and domination like shackles and chains, even at sites where the practice of slavery is well documented through historical sources. The extreme rarity of such objects has led some scholars to argue that slavery itself is not archaeologically recognizable. Indeed, there is no specific material signature that can indicate slavery in all of its iterations across time and space. However, in recent decades, archaeologists have moved away from such a narrow focus on the material identification of slavery. Their more ambitious goal is to use archaeology to understand how slavery affected and shaped societies more broadly. A brick or bowl, a house or seed, a nail or bead—all these can be as much objects of slavery as shackles and chains if slavery shaped how they were produced, consumed, and used. This broader material perspective is the primary contribution that archaeologists can offer to an interdisciplinary approach to slavery studies.

**Name:** Marenka Thompson-Odlum, Research Associate at Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford

**Title:** *Re-thinking the Representation and Construction of Trans-Atlantic Slavery in Glasgow through the Glassford Portrait & Glasgow Museums*

In the mid-2000s the city of Glasgow had a reckoning with its history and the city's involvement with the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. The 'discovery' of the image of a young, enslaved man of African descent within a prominent Glaswegian merchant family portrait forced the city and its institutions to rethink their national narrative, and in the years since the city has actively engaged with various aspects of its history with trans-Atlantic slavery. Although the young man in the Glassford portrait acted as a catalyst, his representation in many ways remains problematic. The enslaved figure is never treated as anything more than an evidence of Scotland's misdeeds, in many ways he has remained that two-dimensional figure on canvas, discourse around him within the museum and archival setting reiterating his marginalisation. Using the Glassford portrait as a case study, this talk unpicks the ways that those hierarchies and ideologies that upheld slavery are often reinforced in contemporary interpretation, cataloguing and framing. The Black presence in the Glassford portrait goes beyond 'evidence', within the visual and archival representation of enslavement lies the construction of Blackness and the Black body and lives of those at times forcibly redacted and transposed.

**Name:** Vera Tiesler (Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán) and Guilhem Olivier (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)

**Title:** *The "hands of god" as instruments of death and creation: physicality, embodiment, and symbolism of sacrificial knives in Mesoamerica*

In this talk we shall analyze sacrificial knives both in the (bio) archaeological record, among written sources and in the iconography. The written sources specify that the knives used for heart extraction were made of flint, whereas obsidian implements were used for self-sacrifice and dismemberment practices. In this work we approach our subject firstly through a material and formal review, emphasizing the diversity of cutting weaponry through time and Mesoamerican territory. By combining the forensic evidence with the material study of sacrificial knives, swords and blades, we shall put into perspective the implements with particular practices of laceration and penetration of the human body during and after the sacrificial act. The representations in codices and especially the specimens in museums allow us to approach the study of the handles, some with a rich iconography. We also find

deities in the form of knives such as Itztli and Iztapaltótec in the codices and a large corpus of knives with divine attire in the ritual deposits of the Templo Mayor. Thus, deities such as Quetzalcoatl, Tlaloc, Xiuhtecuhtli and Xochipilli were represented as flint knives with different characteristic attire. The symbolism of flint is linked to sacrificial death but also to the birth of gods from knives – represented in codices and illustrated in myths – and to concepts of fertilization. For all of the above, the flint knife perfectly symbolizes one of the main meanings of human sacrifice: to generate life from death.

**Vera Tiesler, PhD**, is a leading bioarchaeologist specialized in Mesoamerica. Based in the Mexican part of the Maya area she serves as a research professor at the University of Yucatan, where she heads the Laboratory of Bioarchaeology and the work group of archaeological studies. She received her BA in Art History from Tulane University, an MA in Archaeology (ENAH) and a PhD in Anthropology (UNAM), with five accredited years of Medical School (MHH, Hannover, Germany, and IPN, Mexico). Tiesler's academic interest lies in illuminating the human condition of the ancient Maya and of past society in general. Her work focuses on the Maya burial record and includes active fieldwork at Palenque, Calakmul, Yaxuná, and Chichén Itzá. By exploring skeletal information jointly with pre-Columbian art, artifacts, and ethnohistoric sources, Tiesler's research addresses ancient lifestyles and death practices, physical appearance and permanent body enhancement, violence, sacrifice, and body processing. These approximations are intimately tied to the multilayered dimensions of the human body and operationalized by scaled examinations of individuals, their genders and social ages, local communities and polities. Recent book publications include "New Perspectives in Human Sacrifice and Ritual Body Treatments among the Ancient Maya" (Tiesler & Cucina, eds. 2007); "The Bioarchaeology of Artificial Cranial Modifications" (2014); "Before Kukulcán. Maya Life, Death, and Identity at Classic Period Yaxuna, Yucatan, Mexico" (Tiesler, Cucina, Stanton, Freidel 2017); "Social Skins of the Head. Body Beliefs and Ritual in Ancient Mesoamerica and the Andes" (Tiesler & Lozada, eds. 2018), and "Smoke, Flames, and the Human Body in Mesoamerican Ritual Practice" (Tiesler & Scherer eds., 2018).

**Guilhem Olivier** holds a PhD in History from the University of Toulouse, France. He is a researcher at the Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and a member of the Sistema Nacional de Investigadores, level 3. He has also been a lecturer at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. He is a specialist in Mesoamerican religions, using both a historical and anthropological approach. His lines of research include the nature of the gods, hunting and sacrifice, symbols of power, animals and divination. He is the author of "Mockeries and Metamorphosis of an Aztec God. Tezcatlipoca, 'Lord of the Smoking Mirror'", 2004 (French and English versions are available) and "Cacería, sacrificio y poder en Mesoamérica: Tras las huellas de Mixcóatl", Mexico, 2015. He has edited several collective volumes, including "El héroe entre el mito y la historia", 2000 (with Federico Navarrete); "Símbolos de poder en Mesoamérica", 2008, "El sacrificio humano en la tradición religiosa mesoamericana", 2010 (with Leonardo López Luján); "Mostrar y ocultar en el arte y en los rituales: perspectivas comparativas", 2017 (with Johannes Neurath); "Adivinar para actuar. Miradas comparativas sobre prácticas adivinatorias antiguas y contemporáneas", 2019 (with Jean-Luc Lambert) and from the exhibition catalog Tetzáhuil: Los presagios de la Conquista de México, 2019 (with Patricia Ledesma Bouchar).