

Dealing with marriage disputes in late medieval Europe

Workshop, 9-10th May 2019
Leuven, Belgium



This workshop brings together a number of scholars to reflect on marriage disputes (partner choice, adultery, violence, ritual...), revealing tensions and conflicts between spouses, relatives or families in late medieval and early modern Europe.

For decades, medievalists have looked at marriage from different perspectives, from socio-political research and studies on law and justice, to research on sexuality and gender. Notwithstanding many ground-breaking publications, the historiography still vacillates between an overly optimistic and an overly negative view. For example, in the debate on marriage formation, scholars agree upon the emergence of ‘modern marriage’ between 1300 and 1700. However the question of whether late medieval society ascribed to the canonical doctrine of consent remains the subject of much discussion. Whilst some historians ascribe a high degree of self-determination to the marriage partners, and defend the existence of love-inspired elopements or the agency of individuals escaping familial pressure, others consider medieval marriage a family matter, defend the subordination of sentiment to strategy, and stress the dependence of children upon their parents, and daughters and wives upon their fathers and husbands. How can these - often contradictory – historiographical views be reconciled?

New trends in research offer fresh perspectives on these ongoing debates and go beyond the dichotomy between individual freedom and structure by touching on other aspects of marital disputes. Firstly, historians have started to compare different cities and regions, pointing out similarities in marriage formation and the settlement of disputes between North-western Europe and more ‘traditional’ Southern European regions (Lightfoot 2013, Titone 2016). Historians have also suggested that marriage formation could have differed in cities with different socio-political structures (McSheffrey 2006) or in rural and urban areas (Goldberg 1992, Donahue 2007). Furthermore, the study of new sources (Armstrong-Partida 2017) and the combination of multiple source types (Vleeschouwers- Van Melkebeek 2011, Falzone 2014) has not only broadened the scope of research but also led to complex new questions. Thirdly, the subject has recently been approached from different historiographical perspectives. Historians have

studied litigation narratives in court (Walker 2000, Youngs 2013) and have reflected on the meaning of concepts such as ‘free choice’, consent, and love (Butler 2004, Charageat 2011, Seabourne 2011).

The purpose of this workshop is to bring together scholars, working on marriage disputes in different parts of Europe, using different sources, within different historiographical traditions to consider how these disputes emerged and how individuals, couples, courts and families dealt with them in late medieval and early modern Europe.

Programme

Thursday 9 May 2019

12u30-13u30 | LUNCH

13u30-15u00 | SESSION 1

Introduction

Mia Korpiola (University of Turku)

Seduced and shameful siblings: elopement and unauthorized marriage as arguments in seventeenth-century Swedish Property Legislation

Sara Butler (The Ohio State University)

Promising marriage for money: women’s agency in suing to enforce marriage contracts

15u00-15u30 | COFFEE BREAK

15u30-17u30 | SESSION 2

Chanelle Delameillieure (University of Leuven)

Se mutuo abduxerunt? The abductee’s consent in the registers of the consistory courts of the Low Countries

Marija Mogorović Crljenko (University of Pula)

Contracting marriage and marital disputes in Istria in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period

Anna Boeles Rowland (University of Leuven)

Hearts and minds: communicating consent in late medieval London

Friday 10 May 2019

9u00u-10u30	Trevor Dean (University of Roehampton) <i>Bigamy in late medieval Bologna</i>
	Emmanuel Falzone (Université Saint-Louis) <i>Playing the king, the bishop or the rook: forum shopping and use of justice in divorce cases within the late medieval Southern Low Countries</i>
10u30-11u00	COFFEE BREAK
11u00-12u30	SESSION 4
	Carole Avignon (Université Angers) <i>Conflits matrimoniaux, tensions juridictionnelles, litiges conjugaux au prisme de la question clandestine (XIIIe-XVIe s.): un bilan critique</i>
	Charlotte Christensen-Nugues (Lund University) <i>Force, fear and consent to marriage. Theory and practice in late medieval Europe</i>
	Conclusions
12u30-13u30	LUNCH
13u30	CITY WALK (optional) Guided walk through medieval Leuven

Practicalities

WORKSHOP LOCATION

Collegium Veteranorum
Room 02.10 Romerozaal
Sint-Michielsstraat 2-4, 3000 Leuven

ENROLMENT

The workshop is open for interested researchers.
For registrations, please register by e-mail before April 26, 2019. More information and registration: chanelle.delameillieure@kuleuven.be.

