

Gender and History Conference: Gender and the Pre-Modern City

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Engagement with the space of the pre-modern city has found particular expression in scholarship concerned with the construction of gender. This issue seeks to expand these discussions by focusing on the ways in which gender is negotiated in urban spaces anywhere in the world that predate or were unaffected by 'modernity' via the processes of eighteenth- and nineteenth- century Western industrialisation and globalisation. Our definition of 'pre-modern' is deliberately broad so as not to exclude relevant case studies from anywhere in the world, and to avoid implying that our focus of interest is Europe and the Western world. Clearly, our understanding of a 'city' varies depending on indigenous cultural contexts, and definitions of a 'city' may refer to temporary spaces and structures largely devoid of permanent inhabitants. Notions of gender and the pre-modern city may equally be explored through an emphasis on the social and political stratification and processes that regulate residence, presence, movement, and the expression of power and authority within these spaces.

Cities have long been the focus for research, centring on space in all its manifest forms. Theoretical approaches have taken the lead from Foucault's and Bourdieu's discussions on the intersection between time and space, and have applied to space the work of Habermas, as well as theories on the political, cultural and social functions of cities, such as those of Saskia Sassen. Cities play a key role in World Systems Theory (out of which were derived the notions of 'core and periphery' and 'globalization') and post-colonial historical approaches to cities as centres of political, economic and cultural hegemony. Following these leads, scholars have developed a range of theoretical models concerned with, for example, structuration and social agency. We aim to bring together new scholarship to develop a variety of theoretical approaches and case studies to explore notions of gender and its operation, in the setting of the pre-modern city across temporal and geographical boundaries.

Cities are a key feature of many pre-modern societies, but they may be differently conceptualized, hold a very different place and fulfill quite different roles from those in the modern world. Can context-sensitive studies of gendered behaviours in their many forms highlight what is distinctive about these cities and their wider importance? Pre-modern cities were laboratories for the kaleidoscopic praxis of social structure in many societies. How did gender function distinctively in pre-modern cities? Did urban life enable the elaboration of gendered roles and their interaction with status, wealth, age, occupations etc.? In what ways did gendered ideologies underpin practices of governance, politics, religion, law, military and other urban institutions? How did gender function in economic life and behaviours? How was it expressed in visual, architectural and material cultural forms, as well as in writing? How might ideologies of gender have affected the practice of writing and record keeping itself? How might deep-seated principles of gender have been a key element in the division and use of space and the development of pathways of communication (roads, streets, meeting places, houses and their internal divisions)? In worlds where 'public' and 'private' might not be fully articulated, or might be conceptualized in ways quite different from those to which we are accustomed, how might gendered behaviours have helped to discriminate between different kinds of spaces, pathways and routes? Would gendered behaviours affect the use of urban space over time, both short and long term – over the course of a day, seasonally, over the longer term?

Proposals for papers are sought from scholars at all levels to be presented at a conference in **Nottingham (11-12 September 2010)**. A selection of papers will be published in a special issue of *Gender & History*.

An abstract of no more than 500 words must be submitted by **1 February 2010** to both Lin Foxhall (lf4@le.ac.uk) and Gabriele Neher (gabriele.neher@nottingham.ac.uk).

By the end of February 2010, authors of selected papers will be asked to submit longer abstracts (1000-1500 words) for an April 2010 deadline. Full first drafts of papers will be due in May 2010, and revised drafts will be pre-circulated in August 2010, before the conference.

Contributions, including cross-disciplinary papers, are welcome from – but not limited to – the following areas:

- The concept of the city as an urban conglomeration/ centre; explore indigenous definitions of the city; cities as defined by their context
- Temporary 'cities' vs. permanent built structures (e.g. military camps)
- Political concept of a city; cities without urbanism
- Cities without population; ceremonial centres; exchange centres
- Models of exchange between pre-modern cities
- Attitudes towards the body and its display
- Gendered space and spatiality
- Pathways through the cities
- Status and gender/ social and political institutions and gender; inclusion and exclusion according to gender (e.g. religious orders)
- Performance of gender/ display of status in gendered ways
- Subaltern, gendered roles: prostitution, beggars, camp followers, slaves, servants, dependants and clients etc.
- Crime and thieves; gendered crimes
- Gender and consumption; fashion; display; material culture
- Religion; how is this manifest in an urban setting?
- Urbanism; gender and legal structures; gender of interest to legal context
- How does agency operate in the matrix of complex institutions; social agency?