

**Shame between punishment and penance.  
The social usages of shame in the Middle-Ages and Early Modern Times.**

Shame is a multilayered and “moral” emotion and is a fundamental component of human identity. It remains to a large extent unexplored in its historical dimension so far. Aristotle understood shame as a deeply social phenomenon and regarded it as the conception of bad reputation, i.e., as “certain pain and uneasiness about those evils, which can cause a bad reputation”. This conference is concerned with the historical and cultural coding of this emotion by observing its social use in the Middle Ages and in the Early Modern Times. The scientific exchange will focus on the Christian and theological discourses on shame in the contexts of confession and punishment and their reflex on the organisation of social relations of medieval and early modern humans. Public criminal law and more precisely shaming punishments are treated as an example for the particular social usage of shame in that period. Because being precisely at the interface of Christian discourse and the anthropology of honour (aristocratic, but in a wider sense, social), shame covers this particular function to fill the discursive and ethical hiatus between the two spheres. Shame, indeed, concerns, in both cases, the public space: the condemned and condemnable acts (they might be sinful or a fault) bring into play the reputation and the social standing of others. In these two worlds, shame refers to a consensus tacitly validated by all and to a normative standard of the social order. It is thus starting from these two grounds of analysis, the field of confession and the field of punishment, that we put to ourselves the question of a cultural construction of shame and its specificities in the medieval world, which one could say that it was a face to face society or a the guilt-culture dominated society (Ruth Benedict). What role did shame play in the strategies of the authorities to maintain hierarchies and the hierarchical order? At this conference, scholars will be brought together to explore both spheres and to develop new perspectives on the history of shame for a joint interdisciplinary discussion.

Shame is expressed in the European languages differently, whereby genital and/or body shame, respect and social shame can be either summarized in one word or articulated by different terms. For example, in classical Latin *erubescencia*, *pudor* and *verecundia* are the most important terms to designate shame. In the conference, the words and their meanings for shame in the Indo-European languages and their semantic development up to the Middle Ages will be pursued. Several questions rise here which require an interdisciplinary discussion: Which concept of shame was transported (mainly over the Old Testament) into the early Christian church, and how did this concept develop from there? Which foundations did the Christian shame concept encounter at the tribal Western European pagan populations? How was the Christian concept of shame instrumentalised in the early Middle Ages in the various political and religious contexts?

In the 9th century at the latest, shame, confession and penance moved more closely together in the theological discourse. Shame became an important component in confession and the shameful blush was a required indication of the internal regret and a component of the penance later on. The effects of this development are still virtually unknown for the practical theology of the late Middle Ages after the 4th Lateran Council (1215) and the development of the public criminal law. Which role did shame play in lecture, confession, homily, hagiography, rules of Christian Orders and scholarly theological discourse, compared with other emotions? Even outside public punishment and private penance by shame, it is not yet discovered as to what use was made of shaming in the context of pastoral care. For example, the theological interpretation of Genesis 3 on the source of original sin, whose direct consequence is the emotion shame, must also be considered here. Finally, we need to ask

whether the fear of public shaming in penance was just as pronounced as the fear of the purgatory in the later Middle Ages? What can this tell us about the identity in and the functioning of the medieval society? These are the central questions that will be discussed in the second section of the conference.

The discourse of shame in theology and pastoral care will also shed new light on the social use of shame within the range of medieval and early modern criminal law, a topic which will be discussed in the third part of the conference. Is it mere coincidence that shaming punishments appear in the sources in the second half of the 12th century all of a sudden, at the same time when theologians discuss intensively the role of shame in confession and penance? Closely related to civic jurisdiction banishment, pillories, iron collars, stones of shame, the cucking stool and other devices all around Western Europe and were used to shame and dishonour persons, who had offended the normative rules of cities or countries and were guilty of actions relevant to the internal peace and the mutual trust within a community. What were the purposes of these punishments that apparently were used quite extensively in the 15th and 16th century? Did shaming punishment lead directly into infamy or were there attempts to draw a dividing line between shame and infamy? And if there was a line, where did it run? Which role did shame play in the strategies of the powerful people and how did shame create and sustain social order? In a discussion between international experts on the history of criminal law and crime and specialists on church history, questions about the origins and forms, developments and changes in the function of these punishments will be followed up through the centuries starting from the establishment of the great cities to the end of the Thirty Years' War.

The last section on the perspectives of the history of shame in the context of confession, penance and punishment will be devoted to the reflection on and the classification of the results obtained so far into theoretical models of a history of shame in Western Europe. Apart from sociological, philosophical and anthropological theories, we will also discuss the theory of "reintegrative shaming" by John Braithwaite and the amazing renaissance of shaming punishments in the last twenty years. The goal of all these considerations is to gain a better understanding of the history of shame through a variation of sources and approaches, in the light of both theory and practice and to better estimate continuities and breaks in the context of a Historical Anthropology of medieval Europe.

Section titles of the conference:

- *Semantics of shame in Antiquity and the Early Middle-Ages*
- *Shame and penance in theological discourse and practice*
- *Shame and punishment in medieval and Early Modern Times*
- *Perspectives for a history of shame between punishment and penance*

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