CALL FOR PAPERS

Negotiating Trade: Commercial Institutions and Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Medieval and Early Modern World

An interdisciplinary conference presented by the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Binghamton University (SUNY)

September 24 – 25, 2010

With the ongoing development of trans-regional commerce, trade in the medieval and early modern periods required an increasing number of institutions (social, economic, legal, and administrative) to mediate between local and foreign merchants, and among merchants, state officials, creditors, money exchangers, and brokers. Such institutions protected those who traveled long distances and assisted them in unfamiliar systems of exchange even as they permitted local polities to control and profit from the activities of this growing merchant class. Alongside these institutions may be counted the increasingly international systems of credit and banking, which operated above or beyond the sphere of states issuing currencies, and a growing class of agents who served “on the ground,” as it were, translating local languages and practices for traveling merchants.

The Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (CEMERS) at Binghamton University invites papers for a conference to be held on the Binghamton University campus on September 24 and 25, 2010, to explore the institutions that facilitated and accommodated long-distance trade and the globalizing of capital in the medieval and early modern world. The conference organizers conceive “institutions” as a broad category that includes formal, informal, permanent and temporary organizations, associations, conventions, and practices. The scope of the conference is global; papers may concentrate on particular localities or regions, or they may present cross-regional comparisons and convergences. We encourage submissions from a broad range of disciplines, methodologies, and perspectives.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

-Permanent sites of trade, such as harbors, marketplaces, customs houses, banks, and exchanges
-Hostels, warehouses, and other spaces used by merchants for temporary residence and storage
-The development of regional markets (urban and rural) and international fairs
-Permanent and ephemeral architecture associated with trade
-Social and economic conventions that governed commercial transactions
-State administrative policies relating to trade and commercial travel
- Supra-state networks of trade (social, cultural, geo-political and economic implications)
- Cross-cultural systems of banking and credit
- Translation across linguistic and cultural boundaries
- Modes of determining creditworthiness across regional boundaries
- The practices of brokers and creditors
- Methods of accounting and documenting transactions
- Strategies (individual and corporate) for adapting to foreign systems of trade
- Modifications in commercial institutions with the expansion of early modern trade networks
- The politics of merchant tribute
- The relationship of merchants, companies, banks, and brokers to states minting currency
- The emergence and operations of legal institutions adjudicating disputes concerning trade
- Religious stances towards cross-cultural commercial endeavors
- The representation of commercial institutions in art and literature

Proposals for individual papers (20 minutes maximum) should be no more than 500 words in length and may be sent by email, with a current CV, to cemers@binghamton.edu (Re: 2010 Conference). Those wishing to submit hard copies of the proposal and CV should forward them to: CEMERS [ATTN.: 2010 Conference], Binghamton University, P.O. Box 6000, Binghamton, NY 13902-6000. We also welcome proposals for integrated panels. Panel organizers should describe the theme of the panel and send abstracts with names and affiliations of all participants along with current CVs. A panel should consist of no more than three papers, each twenty minutes in length. Selected papers may be published in Mediaevalia, a journal of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

**Submission Deadline:** Please submit abstracts by October 30, 2009.

Please send all inquiries to cemers@binghamton.edu