

## **Women and Pilgrimage in the Ancient and Pre-Modern World**

*University of Amsterdam*

8-9 June 2018

### **Call for Papers**

The organizing committee welcomes contributions for a conference on women and pilgrimage from the ancient to the pre-modern period that will be held at the University of Amsterdam on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2018.

The aim of the conference is to explore the social dimensions of women's religiously motivated travel ("pilgrimage") by taking a cross-cultural and diachronic perspective on the phenomenon. Pilgrimage is an element of popular ritual practice in many societies from earliest antiquity and from a wide range of geographic and cultural backgrounds, taking the form of travel to sanctuaries, shrines, holy persons, for commemorating the dead or for healing. The question this conference seeks to answer is: how did women's participation in religious travel contribute to their accessing or expressing social agency, religious authority, or power over their bodies within their communities? We are interested in pilgrimage as a form of "lived religion", that is, as a popular expression of religious participation. By adopting a broad definition of pilgrimage, we hope to reach out beyond the traditional interpretation as applying to mainly Christian practice and forge connections with other cultures and periods in time. The chronological range ends with the modern period and the advent of widespread mechanized travel, i.e. ca. 1900.

The conference is meant to provide an interdisciplinary discussion, promoting a cross-cultural approach to and a diachronic view of the theme. Therefore, researchers from different disciplines, such as historians, archaeologists, anthropologists and specialists in religious, Near Eastern and gender studies, are warmly welcome to submit their papers. The communications should be in English.

We are particularly interested in the following areas of research:

- 1) *Gender and "performance" in pilgrimage*: Pilgrimage as a form of gendered social performance and its meaning for gender identity.
- 2) *Power and agency in pilgrimage*. Power not just as political power but social power as well, the effect of pilgrimage on women's social status and agency within their community, and agency over their own body (e.g., in the case of pilgrimage for healing).
- 3) *Methodological innovations*. Challenges of "recovering" women from the historical record and the contributions of other fields such as archaeology, epigraphy, art history, anthropology, sociology of religion, etc.
- 4) *Material and economic aspects of women's pilgrimage*. The materiality of pilgrimage has received increased attention of late, and we aim to incorporate understanding of how landscape, spaces, and objects contribute to our knowledge of women's pilgrimage.

**Proposals should include:**

- the author's name and affiliation.
- an abstract of ca. 250 words for a 20-minute presentation, clearly stating the problem being discussed and relationship to the themes of the conference and the research avenues presented above.

Please send your proposal via e-mail to [womenandpilgrimage2018@gmail.com](mailto:womenandpilgrimage2018@gmail.com) by **Friday, 12 January 2018**. The results of the call will be announced on Monday, 12 February 2018.

Contact us at [womenandpilgrimage2018@gmail.com](mailto:womenandpilgrimage2018@gmail.com) for further information regarding the conference.

This conference is supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) as part of the project *Gendering Sacred Space: Female Networks, Patronage, and Ritual Experience in Early Christian Pilgrimage*.

We look forward to receiving your proposals.

The organizing committee,

Dr Marlena Whiting

Ms Emilia Salerno