Medieval History Workshop 2023-24
presents a talk by

Dr. Lorenzo Bondioli

Weaving Capital and Labor: The Medieval Egyptian Textile Boom

Textiles are among the first mass-consumption commodities to have played a key role in the history of capitalism and globalization, underpinning Company Colonialism and the Industrial Revolution alike. But even in the pre-colonial and pre-industrial world, textiles were one of the chief bulk commodities fuelling moments of expansion in long-distance commerce.

Between the ninth and the twelfth centuries, Egypt experienced an impressive boom of textile manufacturing and trade, marked by the skyrocketing production and circulation of cheap linen made from domestically grown flax and of luxury silk woven from imported Sicilian and Iberian fibers. This paper looks at the two protagonists of the textile boom: the clothier merchants who invested their capital, and the textile workers who contributed their labor. While in absolute terms this was a moment of economic expansion, the picture becomes more complicated once we analyse its differential impact on these two groups, for the windfall of the boom did not benefit all sections of society equally, but rather heightened preexisting social stratification.



Dr. Lorenzo Bondioli is a Postdoctoral Fellow in History and NELC. His work investigates the political economy of medieval Islamic empires, aiming to lay bare the antagonistic symbiosis between the merchant and ruling classes, and the ever-embattled entanglement of subaltern and elite groups.

Tuesday October 17, 2023 | 4:30-6pm | Robinson Basement Seminar Room B21 (Warren Conference Room)
Refreshments provided

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