

## *Preface*

This volume first started as a conversation with one of the contributing authors. What started out as a very simple discussion about the history of prostitution turned into a discussion on the lack of such research in Central and Eastern Europe. One of the authors of this volume mentioned how she had approached her advisers expressing an interest in the topic but was told that not only was there no documentation for her to follow up with, but also that she should not be researching such things in the first place. After many choice words of disbelief were uttered (none of which need be put into print), a temporary solution was decided upon – the creation of a workshop specifically focusing on the question of how to research medieval sex workers in Central and Eastern Europe. While there have been several excellent monographs published on the subject for England, France, and Germany in the medieval period, such work has scarcely been attempted to the east. The workshop was entitled “Forgotten Women from a Forgotten Region: Prostitutes and Female Slaves in Central and Eastern Europe in the Long Middle Ages,” and it took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2017 at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary.

The focus of this small workshop was simple – the central question was how to research prostitution in this region when the source situation is so sporadic? The workshop did two things to help with the authorship of such topics. First, the papers that were to be presented were circulated to the other authors beforehand so instead of a formal speech, the panelists were able to talk about certain problems they encountered while aiming to do their own research. Second, external advisers were consulted in order to read through the papers and provide feedback. Ruth Mazo Karras (coming to Budapest over Skype) commented on all of the papers, while Gerhard Jaritz and Judit Majorossy provided additional advice depending on the area of specialty. The conference was a large success, but it also opened up more questions than answers, particularly as how prostitutes were not operating within a vacuum in the Middle Ages, but how there were also part of a larger trend of “Other women.” Women could be

marginalized because of their religious idiosyncrasies, because of their place within the sex work, or because of their chosen occupation. This point was further reinforced at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds which took place two months after the workshop.

From these two conferences, this volume was put together with the intention of addressing several issues facing women in the Middle Ages with the intent of focusing on women in parts of Europe where Gender Studies has been negated or attacked outright. Authors from all over the world have contributed to make this volume possible with the intent of combining our findings and to complement each other, not to compete with each other. Our hope is that this piece will be the first of many that addresses forgotten people in all shapes and forms.

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