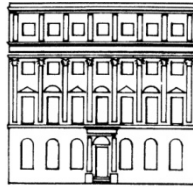


# German Historical Institute London



## BULLETIN

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*Making and Breaking the Rules: Discussion, Implementation, and Consequences  
of Dominican Legislation*

Conference Report

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*Making and Breaking the Rules: Discussion, Implementation, and Consequences of Dominican Legislation.* Conference held at the German Historical Institute London, 6–8 March 2014. Convener: Cornelia Linde (GHIL).

The study of religious orders in the Middle Ages has attracted increasing attention in modern scholarship, but never before have the Dominicans been so exclusively in the spotlight. Organized in eight sessions, this conference brought together experts from all over the world to explore aspects of obedience and disobedience in the Dominican Order. The aim of this interdisciplinary event was to shed light on the Order's legislation and its implementation using a variety of methodological approaches from diverse disciplines to do justice to the wealth of source material available.

Central to the entire conference, Christine Caldwell Ames (Columbia, SC) examined the key term 'obedience' and the role of the individual in the Dominican Order. Caldwell Ames described the Dominicans as legal specialists endowed with expertise and political insight. Consequently, disobedient behaviour inside the Order often resulted from transgression of self-made rules. While in theory obedience was understood as a true virtue, in reality Dominicans had to deal with disobedience and resistance. Sita Steckel (Münster) added an acute analysis of the secular-mendicant controversy in France and emphasized its impact on Dominican normative order. She highlighted different stages of the conflict, especially its escalation caused by Pope Innocent IV's bull *Etsi animarum*, and stressed the Order's dependence on papal privileges. Matthew Champion (London) turned attention to the fight against heresy as another element of 'obedience'. Champion's paper focused on the Dominican inquisition, in particular, the Dominican inquisitor Nicolas Jacquier within the context of fifteenth-century Dominican reform. Jacquier's inquisitorial inventions and works about demonic witchcraft, full of aggressive, sermon-like rhetoric, mirror Dominican legislation.

Gilberto Coralejo Moiteiro (Lisbon) devoted his paper to observant Dominican nuns in Portugal in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Moiteiro chose a normative approach, focusing on both narra-

The full conference programme can be found under Events and Conferences on the GHIL's website <[www.ghil.ac.uk](http://www.ghil.ac.uk)>.

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tive and prescriptive texts. The rule of St Augustine presented the basis for a stricter regulation of monastic life. A translation of his sermons to hermits further illustrated Augustine's exemplary function. Turning to thirteenth-century Dacia, Johnny Jakobsen (Copenhagen) shed light on Dominican life in high medieval Scandinavia. He portrayed papal dispenses of the penitentiary as vivid sources for recurrent irregularities such as indecent sexual relationships caused by suspicious female company.

The keynote lecture given by Gert Melville (Dresden) underlined the emerging ambivalence of the Dominican constitution and organization. Melville compared the inherent dual structure of Dominican life to the solid and liquid states of matter. On the one hand it was guided by a set of written rules, the normative core text of the *constitutiones* constituting an unalterable solid grid of law. On the other hand, the rules could be changed, whether by a *capitulum generalissimum* or the approval of three consecutive general chapters.

Opening the second day of the conference, Klaus-Bernward Springer (Erfurt) discussed how the Dominicans found themselves caught between secular law and their Order's rules, and thus obedience and disobedience. Because of their preaching activities, they had intensive contact with the secular world. As a result, they could easily come into conflict with other systems of law besides their own, which, in turn, provoked disobedient behaviour. Cornelia Linde (London) added to this by presenting a special disciplinary reaction to disobedience in the Dominican Order. Her paper drew attention to forced resettlement as a means of correction. The geographical removal was intended both to create distance between a troublemaker and his sphere of influence, and to prevent future incidents. In terms of detention methods, a major change was introduced in the year 1257, with the constitutional installation of prisons in all Dominican convents. Wolfram Hoyer OP (Augsburg) drew up a list of offences for which a Dominican could be imprisoned: they included *inquietudo*, noise or disturbance provoked by trouble-makers, theft, speaking to demons, and the major crime of apostasy.

Speaking on Dominican legislation and *uniformitas* in the art of later medieval central Italy, Joanna Cannon (London) opened the fourth session. Visual *uniformitas* provided similarity and conformity, which can still be seen in Dominican churches. Cannon focused on choir screens and polyptychs, especially on the high altarpiece of S.

Caterina, as sources for imposing visual uniformity in Dominican milieux. Transferring the ideas of *uniformitas* vs. *diversitas* to Castile during the late Middle Ages, Mercedes Pérez Vidal (Mexico City) looked at how Dominican nunneries dealt with legislation concerning architecture and liturgy, and how they were influenced by patronage relationships. It became clear that Castilian Dominican nunneries were torn between autonomy and dependence on a patron, whose form of influence could vary from region to region as well as at local level. Concluding the session, Sebastian Mickisch (Dresden) spoke on topography and architecture as carriers of identity. Mickisch highlighted the convent as the visible sign of an order's presence, representing the *vita religiosa* and preventing corruption from the outside. In addition to the potential visual impression of architecture, buildings also enclosed social space. Mickisch introduced the categories of built space and social space, their practical division into interior and exterior, and emphasized the fact that monastic architecture was not only influenced by the ideas of poverty and simplicity, but also had to adapt to local customs.

The fifth session was dedicated to Dominican attempts to missionize Jews and Muslims in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Opening the session, Elias H. Füllenbach OP (Düsseldorf) analysed the Dominican mission to the Jews. He emphasized that the preaching of the mendicants transported anti-Jewish stereotypes and resulted in a unified and unifying anti-Judaism. In addition, he underlined the connection between harsh, polemical sermons on the one hand, and persecution of Jews on the other. Harvey Hames (Beer Sheva) went into further detail on the Dominican mission, differentiating between *intra* and *extra ecclesiam*. Hames identified and analysed the three key elements as preaching, disputation, and inquisition. His paper then took a closer look at one of the key texts of Dominican mission, the Barcelona Disputation of 1263 between the convert Saul of Montpellier, better known as Friar Paul, and his Jewish antagonist Nahmanides. The session was concluded by Thomas Burman (Knoxville, Tenn.), who focused on the intellectual and religious interaction between the Dominican mission and Islam. Devoting his paper to the key figure Ramón Martí, he presented new evidence of Martí's remarkable knowledge of Arabic and the Islamic world.

The contributions to the sixth session looked at Dominican chant books and the Order's attempt to impose a new, uniform liturgy.

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After the Dominican Order spread across Europe, local practices were adopted. As an answer to this liturgical diversity, Humbert of Romans presented a manual of practical advice for the Order, the *instrucciones de officibus ordinis*. Eleanor Giraud (London) and Hrvoje Beban (Zagreb) presented detailed comparative analyses of chant manuscripts with square notation, and antiphonaries of Dominican convents in late medieval Dalmatia respectively. Giraud and Beban demonstrated the existence of regional differences and argued that scribes had a certain flexibility regarding quantitative and qualitative changes in notation, despite the fact that these manuscripts were supposed to be copied without any changes. Christian Thomas Leitmeir (Bangor) offered a new view of Dominican polyphony and questioned its status as a forbidden art. He based his position on a thorough analysis of explicit or presumed Dominican legislation on polyphony, paying special attention to the umbrella term *discantus*, in the acts of the general chapters. This normative approach was supplemented by the perspective of Humbert de Romans and his texts on music, and concluded with the Dominican prohibition of certain types of song, both polyphonic and monophonic.

Jonathan Rubin (Jerusalem) presented a paper on the study of foreign languages in the Dominican Order. Friars in the Holy Land and neighbouring provinces had to learn Arabic and also preached in other Oriental languages. In sum, the Dominican Order possessed a linguistic tradition which can be subsumed under the three main skills of writing polemical texts, literary compilation, and translating in the context of diplomatic activities. After this linguistic approach to the preaching of the Dominicans, Anne Holloway (Melbourne) shed light on the question of how the performance of Dominican preaching was managed in practice. How do you teach preaching? Taking preaching as a means of conveying model behaviour, Holloway argued that sermons served as tools to inspire imitation of the *vita apostolica* or *imitatio Christi*. The important role of exemplars can be seen in their popular use as preaching material embedded as narrative stories in sermons. But what was to be done when all preaching failed? Emily Corran (London) addressed this question in her paper on the early casuistry of lying in Dominican confessors' manuals. To convict a liar, confessors' manuals tried to improve both frequency and quality of confession, and to encourage inquiry into the circumstances of sin. They also provided guidance in moral dilem-

mas. Consequently, they presented a pragmatic approach by the Dominican Order and offered confessors a high degree of autonomy.

In the final session, Gábor Bradács (Debrecen) and Attila Györkös (Debrecen) shifted the focus to medieval Hungary. While Bradács focused on the Dominican mission among the Cumans in the thirteenth century by presenting a new approach to old sources, Györkös dedicated his paper to St Marguerite of Hungary. Bradács highlighted the knowledge and use of the Cuman language in the Dominican mission. Nevertheless, the Dominicans achieved only partial success, perhaps because their approach was too intellectual. Györkös added to this the presentation of the *Vitae* of St Marguerite as the earliest written evidence of the Dominican settlement in Hungary. These legends made it clear that this female saint had transgressed the frontiers between adequate and excessive devotion for a Dominican nun, and gave an insight into the regulative structures of a Dominican nunnery in high medieval Hungary.

In sum, the conference's interdisciplinary approach perfectly highlighted multiple and various aspects of the Dominican Order's diversity. The contributions showed that ambivalence constitutes an important characteristic of the Friars Preachers. Covering four centuries and various parts of the world, the conference's multiperspectivity resulted in an enormous synergetic effect as the assembled scholars discussed how to identify the point at which diversity became unacceptable and constituted transgression, and, thus, disobedience. Recurrent themes such as the influential figure of Humbert de Romans, the role of the Order's chapter meetings, and certain normative strategies and legislative texts were complemented by closer looks at Dominican missionary activities, topography, and efforts to attain both a unified liturgy and visual coherence. The papers also highlighted that daily life in a Dominican convent could be very different from the ideal portrayed in the constitutions and acts of the general chapters, and that disobedience was often the result of pragmatic approaches in order to deal with the challenge of saving the souls of fellow humans. The conference ended with special and sincere thanks to the organizer, Cornelia Linde, and a warm invitation to continue the fruitful discussions at a conference dedicated to Dominican identity to be held in Cologne in November 2014.

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