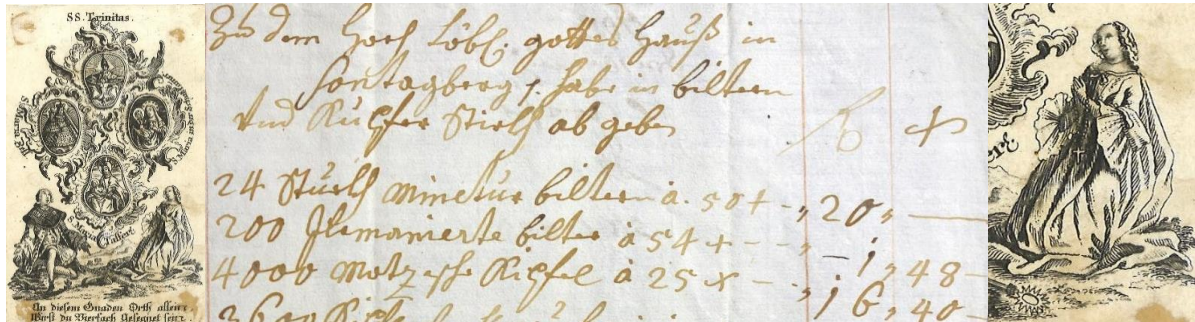


Call for Papers | International Conference

“Accounting for Salvation” Salvation Economics and Pilgrimage in the Early Modern Period



Vienna, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies
October 19–20, 2026
Submission deadline: February 28, 2026

The starting point for this international conference is the interdisciplinary research project [SALVEMED](#) (Salvation Economics and Media. Constituting Social Spaces via early modern Pilgrimage in Lower Austria), funded by the Austrian Science Fund [FWF](#), which aims to make a new contribution to a differentiated view of the diverse mechanisms of early modern pilgrimage in Austria by investigating the mediality and the associated socio-spatial networks of pilgrimage sites. In this project, pilgrimages are analysed as a phenomenon of “condensed” mediality, which manifests itself in dense communication based on a variety of closely interrelated media.

The conference will focus on aspects and questions relating to the expectations of pilgrims with regard to the attainment of salvation. These include both (ecclesiastical) legal issues and the examination of networks of actors, as well as the disposition of pilgrimage sites as destinations of a special kind:

I Pilgrimage media and the economics of salvation

On what media basis and with what temporal and regional focus do the practices and strategies of “accounting for salvation” become clear and verifiable from a contemporaneous perspective (and for us today)? Questions of legalisation (e. g. ex voto, foundations and vows as “contracts” with God and the saints, indulgences) play a central role here: Who uses such media where and for what purposes? What about the choice and design of motifs? What practices and forms of presentation and staging are traceable in this regard at the sites of pilgrimage?

II Networks of actors and social space formation – production – acquisition – distribution

An in-depth look at the networks relating to the media production of pilgrimage sites requires the analysis of various actors. This includes, among other things, the diversity of in-house production along with outsourcing to supra-regional devotional object producers and dealers, as well as the question of which sources can provide information on this. Quantitative and qualitative aspects between mass production and outstanding individual pieces also play an important role. Finally, from the perspective of media diversity and media focus, it will be necessary to ask which media each place of pilgrimage relied on more heavily and why.

III Praxeological aspects of pilgrimage (in relation to the media)

Finally, a third point concerns the role of the media in religious practice and the media-driven construction of pilgrimage sites as destinations: How did pilgrimage media shape the perceptions and behaviour of pilgrims, and can we speak of a specific “pilgrim gaze” analogous to the concept of the tourist gaze? Were similar expectations consistently met, or can unique selling propositions be identified? In this context, it is interesting to explore whether specific media strategies can be observed at individual places of pilgrimage, which target groups were primarily addressed, and how local and “distance media” interacted. In this regard, can a “destination” be described as a place of longing that is served exclusively through media?

We welcome proposals for 20-minute presentations in German or English from all relevant disciplines. Travel and accommodation expenses for speakers will be covered if necessary. Please send an abstract (approx. 300 words) and a short CV by **28 February 2026** to the following address: veronika.decker@oeaw.ac.at

Image Credits:

Johann Michael Motz, Adoration of the images of grace of Mariazell, Sonntagberg and Maria Taferl, middle of the 18th century (photo: Werner Telesko), full image (left) and detail (right).

Stiftsarchiv Seitenstetten (StAS), 4.9.1.4.14.4.32 – Sonntagberg, devotional items accounts, account compiled by Anton Grätz, 10 May 1763 (photo: Sarah Deichstetter).