

## Behinderung und Armut im frühen Mittelalter. Eine quellenkritische Annäherung

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This paper examines, firstly, how poverty was characterised in the early Middle Ages, secondly, whether disability and poverty were connected and, finally, what the causes of disability could be. The basis for this will be normative legal texts, documents and narrative sources.

Normative sources such as the 16th canon of the first Frankish synod, which convened in Orléans in 511, seem to confirm the link between disability and poverty, as the bishop is called upon to give food and clothing to the poor and sick (*infirmi*) who are unable to work with their own hands due to their weakness (*infirmitas*). Based on this, one might actually think that disability or illness in the early Middle Ages was inevitably linked to poverty, as those affected could no longer work and were dependent on the support of the church. But the situation is much more complicated. There is no special word for "disability" in Latin. *Infirmitas* can describe a normal illness as well as a disability, and *infirmus* can also describe a normal illness or a disability. *Debilitas* or *debilitare* do not necessarily denote a disability either, but can also indicate weakness or frailty. If the disabilities are not specifically described, it is difficult to differentiate here.

In order to recognise the many different reasons for impoverishment, the Formulae, which were used to compose charters, letters and other texts according to the rules of the time, are important. They offer a series of formulae for self-selling, giving various reasons for poverty and the associated descent into bondage.

The miracle books of Gregory of Tours (538–594), on the other hand, describe people with clearly named disabilities who are healed by miracles. Despite their proximity to the biblical miracles of Jesus, it is worth analysing these texts. For in order to give the stories a credible framework, Gregory had to link them to the concrete world of life. In this respect, it is interesting to see which groups of people appear in Gregory's stories, what disabilities they have and why, and how these change their everyday lives.

Finally, using the catalogues of penances in various collections of laws, the question of the extent to which violence could lead to disabilities is examined.