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A Conference at Saint Louis University, Madrid

Avenida del Valle 34, 28003 Madrid.

10–11 April 2015

**T**his symposium examines the phenomenon of powerful religious outsiders in comparative perspective during the long medieval era, from Constantine to the advent of secular modernity. We hope to augment our understanding of the political dynamics and social settings that permitted such outsiders to be variously elevated, marginalized, empowered, envied, trusted, despised, revered, cashiered, denounced, petitioned, and excluded.

**D**ominant in-groups by definition enjoy superior access to power in their societies. Yet individuals who for various reasons (ethnicity, class, religion, etc.) do not belong to the in-group can also come to exercise authority on its behalf. The medieval and early modern periods, in which monotheistic religious affiliation functioned as a marker of group identity and an agent of political cohesion, also produced striking examples of powerful religious outsiders: the Jewish and pagan officials barred from office under Theodosius and Honorius; the forebears of John Damascene who administered the Syrian Umayyad empire; the famous Jewish courtiers of al-Andalus; turcoples and other mercenaries who fought across religious boundaries around the Mediterranean; the Christian and Jewish officials of the Fatimids; the crypto-Muslim retainers at the Norman court; the Muslim, Jewish, and Cuman servants of the Arpad kings; the beleaguered Coptic scribes of the Mamluks; the early-modern Hofjuden, and others.

**P**owerful outsiders present certain paradoxes. If they were truly outsiders, in what sense did they wield authority? Did access to power erode their outsider status or cement it? The conjunction of power and alterity generates a dynamic tension that, whether sustained or resolved, reveals much about how particular historical actors negotiated issues of identity, belonging, and competition for finite resources.

14:45-16:45 — Session V: Representing Alterity  
and Power

(Moderator: Michael Lower)

**Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala**

*Universidad de Córdoba*

"And the Lord will raise a great emir in a land". Muslim political power viewed by Coptic-Arabic authors: A case in the Arabic 'Apocalypse of Pseudo Athanasius II "

**Hussein Fancy**

University of Michigan

"Faking It: Religious Impostors between the Maghrib and the Crown of Aragon "

**Tamer el-Leithy**

*The Johns Hopkins University | American Research Center in Egypt*

"Regulating (Official) Copts, Refashioning Mamlūk Sovereignty in Medieval Egypt "

17:00 — Closing Remarks

## Saturday 11 April 2015

10:15-10:45 — Coffee

10:45-12:45 — Session IV: Dynamics of Exclusion and

Power

(Moderator: Maribel Fierro)

**Nora Berend**

University of Cambridge

“The changing role of religious outsiders as the ruler's agents in medieval and Ottoman Hungary”

**Ana Echevarría Arsuaga**

*Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia*

“The Access of Qadis to Power in Medieval Christian Polities”

**Giuseppe Mandalà**

*Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas*

“¿Libros en árabe para reyes cristianos? Reflexiones sobre la anomalía siciliana”

12:45-14:45 — Lunch

## Friday 10 April 2015

10:30 — Welcome and Opening Remarks

10:45-12:45 — Session I: Alterity, Power, Boundaries

(Moderator: Nora Berend)

**Maribel Fierro**

Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas

“Doctors with borders: the confessionalization of medicine in the Medieval Islamic West”

**Marina Rustow**

The Johns Hopkins University

“Non-Elite Subjects and State Power under the Fatimids”

12:45-14:45 — Lunch

14:45-16:45 — Session II: Alterity and Power

in Prescriptive Discourses

(Moderator: Hussein Fancy)

**Antonia Bosanquet**

*Freie Universität Berlin*

“Keeping their Place. The Prohibition on Non-Muslim Scribes in *Ahkām ahl al-dhimma*”

**Alejandro García-Sanjuán**

*Universidad de Huelva*

“Presencia de no musulmanes en funciones de gobierno en al-Andalus (siglos IX-XI)”

**Michael Lower**

*University of Minnesota*

“Christian Mercenaries in North Africa: Their Status in Medieval Islamic and Canon Law ”

16:45-17:00 — Coffee

17:00-19:00 — Session III: Case Studies

(Moderator: Ana Echevarría Arsuaga)

**Jeremy Johns**

University of Oxford, Khalili Research Centre

“George of Antioch: an Armenian defector from Zīrid Ifrīqiya in Norman Sicily ”

**Luke Yarbrough**

Saint Louis University

“A Christian official in the Mamluk State speaks: Ibn al-Suqāʿī and his world ”

**Samir Khalil Samir, S.J.**

*Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome*

“Dialogue et Affrontements Culturels et Religieux sous les Ayyoubides (1171-1250)”

19:30-21:00 — Break

21:00 — Dinner