

III INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “MEDITERRÁNEOS 2016”-OPENING SPEECH

“A man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see. The grand object of travelling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean. On those shores were the four great empires of the world: the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. All our religion, almost all our law, almost all our arts, almost all that sets us above savages, has come to us from the shores of the Mediterranean.”

Dr. Samuel Johnson, *Boswell's Johnson* (1776)

Distinguished Speakers, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning to everyone and thank you for joining us at the 3rd International Conference Mediterráneos 2016, an initiative that emerged in 2010 among early-stage researchers and the Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Mediterranean and the Near East of the Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences of the Spanish National Research Council.

Embracing the legacy of the previously celebrated conferences in 2010 and 2012, we would like to present our compliments to all academic colleagues and administrative authorities participating in this opening ceremony and express to you our deep satisfaction for sharing this important moment for the development of the study of Mediterranean languages and cultures, considering its Greco-Latin, Jewish, Islamic and Near Eastern origins and influences.

The Mediterranean is and has been a place for movement, contact and exchange, a cultural landmark with permeable and open borders that has served as a common place in the historical encounters of the civilizations and religions that emerged in the surrounding continents throughout the ages. Accordingly, the Mediterranean is conceived here in a comprehensive manner and a broad sense that goes beyond the physical limits or the actual borders of the Mediterranean.

This Conference is aimed at researchers who are at an early stage of their research career in the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences. For the Organizing Committee it is an incredible opportunity to make such an event possible organized for and by early-stage researchers considering the difficulties we face in aspects, such as fund-raising. Our intention was to create a space for dialogue, connection and exchange of ideas and discussion about the different intellectual, cultural and social manifestations that took place in the Mediterranean from Antiquity until the Early modern period.

The Congress will last three days with a duration of approximately seven hours per day. Due to the unexpectedly high number of participants, we decided to keep parallel sessions different from each other in order to avoid the overlapping of thematically similar presentations. The sessions, as you can verify in our program, have been organized on the basis of their themes, as well as on their geographical and cultural scope.

Although the sessions are programmed to end each day at around 5 o'clock, the Congress itself will not end but we suggest to continue exchanging our experiences and visions about our professional future hanging out together in the centre of Madrid. We hope that this Congress will also serve to compare and contrast professional careers in different academic institutions, as it has been conceived as an opportunity for the creation of networks that in the future we hope will remain when all of us will have already advanced in our research career and hopefully got full-time jobs.

We would also like to draw your attention to a guided visit that the Committee has organized with the collaboration of Pilar Martínez Olmo, director of the Library Tomás Navarro Tomás that will take place today at 1 o'clock. You may find of special interest a small exhibit of manuscripts and rare codices that the library has kindly prepared for us on the first floor.

We would also like to inform you that the Organizing Committee will make a preliminary selection of papers for a future publication if we are successful to obtain the necessary funding. Without discarding other publication possibilities, our Congress has already received an offer from Cambridge Scholars Publishing, an independent academic publishing house, with more than 5,000 titles with a particular focus on the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

First and foremost, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to Dr. M^a Ángeles Gallego, director of the Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Mediterranean and the Near East, for her promotion and guidance in the process of organizing this international conference. As the director of our institute, she has always given us support with the courtesy and kindness that define her. The same applies to all the members of the Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Mediterranean and the Near East, who have kindly collaborated with us throughout this process. This initiative would have not been possible without their contribution in their different areas of expertise.

We feel deeply grateful to Dr. Luis Alburquerque, director of the Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences, for the assistance of all the administrative and technical units. Among them we would like to highlight the unit of scientific, cultural and digital dissemination, especially Victor Pareja, head of the unit. We would like to thank them for their inexhaustible patience and continuous attendance, for providing us with posters, leaflets, wifi connection and their amazing capacity of solving all kinds of practical problems.

Our acknowledgments aim as well to the Spanish Association of Hebrew and Jewish studies that helped financing this event considering our activity useful for their field.

We wish to remark our special gratitude to the Professors and post-doctoral fellows that will act as the moderators or chairs presenting our speakers for their availability during the most difficult stages of our project.

Of course, this Conference is the result of the enthusiast initiatives of the early-stage researchers to whom we would like to express our gratitude for contributing with their brilliant proposals or for their mere presence.

Distinguished Speakers, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, in name of the Organizing Committee, we really wish that this International Conference might be advantageous in your research career and we will make everything possible so that you feel at home, here at the heart of Spain. We are all here today to contribute according to our possibilities to the research of the limitless history of the Mediterranean and, in such way, to honor the memory of our ancestors.