

# 85 - Intersecting Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean



Friday, January 6, 2023



8:30 AM - 10:00 AM



*Philadelphia Marriott Downtown - Independence Ballroom III (3rd Floor Headhouse Tower)*

## Description

The Medieval Mediterranean was an environment of ethno-religious diversity, composed of societies with typically included significant minority communities, by which we usually mean Christians and Jews under Islam, and Jews and Muslims in Christendom, not to mention the various denominations within these larger confessional communities. But while confessional affiliation may have been the prime mode of social organization, it was not the only one. Individuals also pertained to informal communities defined by factors such as class, gender, language, ability, physiology, or geographic origin. Moreover, many individuals moved both simultaneously and serially through apparently opposed modes of identity: as for example, converts, captives, or members of affiliations which bridged confessional communities. Understanding and accounting for shifting, ambiguous and multiple identities is key to disentangle in the political and social realities of the ethno-religiously diverse pre-Modern Mediterranean world. Failing to do so, and thereby simplifying and essentializing ethno-religious identities, inevitable produces misinterpretations of historical data, and leaves us with a picture of this environment which is not only incomplete but mistaken.

The present panel puts four papers by graduate students and early- to mid-career scholars in dialogue. The papers range in chronological sweep from the eighth to the seventeenth centuries, and stretch from Iberia and the Maghrib to Ottoman lands. We begin with Emma Snowden's "The Collapse of Muslim and North African Identities in Christian Chronicles from Medieval Iberia," which analyzes the labels applied to Muslims in medieval chronicles written by Christians in Iberia, arguing that many of them intentionally collapsed religious and ethnocultural identities, conflating Muslims and North Africans. Next, in "Cypriot identity under the Lusignans after the fall of Acre, 1291," Gail Hook attempts to identify methods of accommodation and survival used by non-Frankish natives and refugees under Lusignan rule in Cyprus (1192-1489) after 1291, as they worked to insert themselves in this socio-cultural environment in which full integration with the dominant Lusignan identity proved impossible. Third, Marina Schneider's "Staging Brotherhood: Confraternities and Processions in Early Modern Iberian Cities," considers the various policies of inclusion and exclusion applied to Jews, Muslims, and converts in cities around Iberia, in order to suggest that confraternities and processional space served sites for resistance and social validation and even the integration of out-group individuals. Finally, in "European Archives by Other Means: The Ottoman Registers of the 'Foreign Nations' in the Seventeenth Century," Constantine Theodoridis examines the seventeenth-century Ottoman "registers of the foreign states," demonstrating European agency in the development of this administrative institution, and showing how the "identity," of a state archive can at times be as complicated as the identities of the historical actors to which it pertains.

These papers offer a range of approaches to the subject of the construction and intersection of ethnic and religious identities, in a range of historical and cultural environments. With four papers bridging the breadth of the Mediterranean and the length of the long Middle Ages, the panel eschews a formal respondent, in favor of comment by the session chair and discussion involving the audience.

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## Commentator

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[Brian A. Catlos](#)  
University of Colorado Boulder

## Chair

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[Brian A. Catlos](#)  
University of Colorado Boulder

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## Presentations

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[Collapsing Muslim and North African Identities in Christian Chronicles from Medieval Iberia](#)


**Emma Snowden**, *Hollins University*

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[Staging Brotherhood: Confraternities and Processions in Early Modern Iberian Cities.](#)


**Marina Schneider**, *University of Texas at Austin*

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[Cypriot Identity under the Lusignans after the Fall of Acre, 1291](#)


**Gail Dallas Hook**, *George Mason University*

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[European Archives by Other Means: The Ottoman Registers of the “Foreign Nations” in the 17th Century](#)

**Constantine Theodoridis**, *Princeton University*

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