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The methods of New Historicism remain underutilized in the study of the intellectual culture of the premodern Islamic world, especially in matters of Islamic theology and law. Our knowledge of the immediate context of many debates, as well as backgrounds of the disputants, continues to be superficial in many cases. We often view scholars as cyphers and eschew investigation into the influences behind their arguments. As a result, we reduce paradoxes within debates to competing visions of orthodoxy or project a duplicity upon whatever party appears to be flouting a perceived religious duty. The current study by Luke Yarbrough is an ambitious reconsideration of one such paradox, the proclivity of Muslim rulers to employ non-Muslims administrators, and signifies the promising work to be done in exploring the historical realities and thematic diversity that underlie these debates. He contends that, despite its ubiquity from the ninth to the seventeenth century and beyond, the scholarship decrying the hiring of non-Muslim officials is inconsistent in its argumentation. Moreover, Yarbrough finds that the scholarship behind the treatises were not merely proactive calls to uphold orthodoxy for its own sake. They were instead aspects of a more complicated political and social game wherein diatribes against the employment of *dhimmis* might signal anything from a response to recent events at court, to an attempt to strengthen a particular *madhhab*'s status, or even an embittered effort to shore up a failing career. To illustrate the rules of this game, Yarbrough draws upon Bourdieu to describe this scholarship as a competition to acquire, control, or regain various types of real and symbolic resources. He argues that these contests were rarely about the employment of non-Muslims, but instead they point to competing understandings of governance between scholars and rulers.

By revising a century of research on attacks against non-Muslim employment, Yarbrough has marshaled an impressive source base to illustrate this discourse and its contexts over the course of almost a millennium. He traces attacks on *dhimmi* officials from Persia to al-Andalus and beyond and puts them in dialogue with concurrent discussions in Europe and China. Moreover, the project's methodology of tracing the competition for resources puts Yarbrough in communication with a growing revisionist conversation about the perception and use of power in premodern societies. The updated bibliography on this subject is alone worth the price of admission for scholars in a range of disciplines, but they will stay for Yarbrough's adroit Bourdieusian interpretation of this literature as evidence of a contest between those with and without power.

Yarbrough describes his research as an articulation of a prescriptive discourse or, more artfully, of an elaborate tapestry with a beginning, an elaboration on themes, and an efflorescence where themes go in a variety of directions. The first section—beginnings—outlines

non-Muslim employment in premodern Islamic societies and describes the earliest attacks against these officials up to the reign of al-Mutawakkil. Except for those occupations related to Islamic law and rituals, *dhimmi*s occupied almost every position available within Islamic governments, especially in the early centuries of Islamic history. Their omnipresence, along with pre-Islamic examples for the exclusion of religious others from political office, provided ample opportunity and precedent for complaints to be levelled against them. Yarbrough rehearses modern scholars' univocal statements about Islam's prohibition of the employment of non-Muslims, but he points out that references to such matters in the Qur'an and *hadith* were few and ambiguous, and thus required interpretation rather than recourse to literalism. However, such interpretations were rather scattershot as the earliest arguments from the eighth and ninth centuries draw upon a pastiche of apocryphal parables about the earliest caliphs as well as vague, unsubstantiated claims about *dhimmi* unreliability more than proof texts. Yarbrough's contextualization of these works and authors reveals that both can be traced back to areas that experienced growth in the competition for positions in the wake of slowed conquests. The evidence behind this prescriptive discourse does not point to permissive rulers and subsequent concerns for orthodoxy, but to the organic growth of Muslim scholarship on the nature of governance, some of which touched on the subject of *dhimmi* officials for reasons more social, political, or personal than religious.

The second section describes the overflow of this discourse into later and diverse genres ranging from the juridical to the literary. Scholars from the tenth to the twelfth century engage with and expound upon previous representations of non-Muslim officials with new arguments and evidence, but Yarbrough argues that their treatments never rise to the same level of rigor or coherence that typifies debates within Islamic jurisprudence. His research demonstrates how the prescriptive discourse can appear internally consistent among members of individual *madhhabs*, which have given generations of scholars the sense of a widespread antipathy toward *dhimmi* administrators. Yet this consistency maps on to other internal and practical concerns within these schools of thought regarding doctrinal gatekeeping as well as competition between *madhhabs* for the attention of political elites. The spillover of this dialogue into belles-lettres likewise gives the impression of consensus within a wider swath of the scholarly community. Yarbrough deftly connects many authors to the charged environments of Seljuq Baghdad, Fatimid Egypt, and al-Andalus during the *taifa* period. Political intrigues combined with the flourishing court cultures to produce multivalent competitions among would-be courtiers, who frequently denounced the employment of non-Muslims as a subtle way to criticize ruling elites or show off their rhetorical skill. Again, Yarbrough divulges that the discourse follows both fluctuations in political fortunes and developments in popular media within the Islamic world.

The third section is Yarbrough's most ambitious as he traces the diatribes into the later Middle Ages and offers comparisons to discourses against the employment of religious others in Europe and East Asia. While earlier arguments against *dhimmi* administrators appeared in a variety of works, the attacks of later centuries became a genre unto themselves. Yarbrough casts a wide net in his analysis of these independent counsels, and his conclusions become more tentative as a result. Nevertheless, he argues that the increasingly vehement nature of these works mirrors the fragility of the political situation in the later Middle Ages, which created push and pull factors for writing in this vein. As governments rose and fell during and after the Mongol invasions, scholars took the opportunity to disparage the employment of non-Muslims by elites, whose tenuous position made them increasingly sympathetic and sensitive to criticism. Also, fractious politics only increased the level of competition among scholars for prestige and thus their output

in this genre became more vast, diverse, and intense. Yarbrough widens his lens in the last chapter and afterword by exploring how the Islamic oikumene differs from European and Chinese governments. His fascinating comparisons reveal the disparity within respective spheres of power between Hungary, Iberian, Yuan China, the Mongol Empire, and the Islamic world. Unlike their counterparts elsewhere, Muslim rulers governed larger minority communities and thus had more opportunity and incentives to employ non-Muslim officials. More importantly, historical precedents set by the *Rashidun* meant that the Muslim clerical class was freed to shape religious doctrine, but they were largely divorced from the exercise of political power and possessed little experience of ruling. While European kings were constrained by a powerful, landowning clergy and Chinese rulers had to contend with a large Confucian administration, Muslim rulers could be selective and strategic regarding who they listened to or ignored even in later centuries.

In his afterword, Yarbrough advances the prescriptive discourse against *dhimmi* officials to the nineteenth century to illustrate the persistence of this facet of Islamic society, governance, and literature into the modern era. His conclusions here as elsewhere regarding the differences between societies are incisive and far-reaching as they reveal critical implications for the development of Muslim perspectives on executive authority, secularism, and the separation of religious and political power. Indeed, what makes this project particularly remarkable is its balance of treating the local implications of a discourse, which scholars have long believed to be universal and a reflection of orthodoxy, alongside general tendencies of a wider society. While many studies aspire to such a balance, few are so compelling in their source base. Not many examples appear to have escaped Yarbrough, and this treatment has made the work quite dense in parts, as evidenced by the recourse to taxonomies beginning in chapter five. His arguments will continue to be refined, especially the more tentative ones that appear later in the work. Nevertheless, Yarbrough has fashioned a breakthrough study on a question that may have been considered closed and offered a compelling framework for similar analyses of premodern Islamic thought.

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Author's Response

The author was provided with an opportunity to respond to the review, but declined.