

Franciscans in the Early Modern Ottoman World

Megan C. Armstrong, Felicita Tramontana, Manuel Capomaccio, Emese Muntan

The objective of this panel is to explore the complexities of the presence of the Franciscan order in the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It will do so by examining the intricate functioning of the economic, legal, and spiritual networks of two major Franciscan institutions, the Custody of the Holy Land (e. 1342) and the Province of Bosna Argentina (e. 1339), in a trans-Ottoman perspective.

The number of studies on monastic institutions and their role in shaping the social and economic fabric of the early modern Ottoman realm has experienced a surge in the past decades. Although in the field of Ottoman studies, preference has been given to the Orthodox monastic landscape, scholars from related disciplines have been devoting more and more attention to the study of Catholic religious institutions. Inspired by these trends, this panel brings together four scholars from different academic backgrounds and with interrelated research projects to foster a more comprehensive understanding of how the Franciscan order shaped the Ottoman economic landscape during the Early Modern Period.

The first paper by Dr. Megan C. Armstrong (McMaster University) analyzes the dynamics of alms-collecting and information gathering in the early modern Ottoman Mediterranean through the lens of the mobility, information, and spiritual networks of the Spanish Commissioners of the Holy Land. The second paper by Dr. Felicita Tramontana (Roma Tre University) examines the participation strategies of the Franciscans of the Custody of the Holy Land in the local economic and financial networks of 17th-century Jerusalem. The third paper by Dr. Manuel Capomaccio (Roma Tre University) investigates the legal and economic aspects of the interaction between the Franciscan friars of the Custody and the Jerusalem Sharia Court during the 17th century. The fourth paper by Dr. Emese Muntan (Austrian Academy of Sciences) examines the role of the provincial Ottoman administration in shaping the dynamics of Franciscan church ownership in mid-seventeenth century Ottoman Slavonia.

Collectively, the papers of this panel draw on a variety of primary sources in different languages, while combining micro-, meso-, and macro-level approaches and integrating historiographically, methodologically, and linguistically fragmented inquiries. In this way, the panel participants hope to contribute in an engaging way to the main theme of the conference and foster further interdisciplinary discussions.