

Harmony and Dissonance: Exploring the Interplay between the Franciscan Custody of The Holy Land and the Jerusalem Sharia Court in the 17th Century

Manuel Capomaccio

This inquiry thoroughly examines the intricate dynamics and controversial interrelation between the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land and Ottoman authorities during the 17th century, with a specific emphasis on the interaction between Franciscan friars and the Ottoman institution of the Jerusalem Sharia Court. The study aims to uncover how Franciscan friars adeptly navigated the legal landscape within the Ottoman judicial framework and utilised the court as a discerning instrument. By illuminating the various occasions and modalities through which the friars engaged with the court—both proactively and in response to summonses—the research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of these interactions. Notably, Franciscan sources reveal that in numerous, specific instances, the friars chose to refrain from legal recourse due to the significant financial implications associated with such proceedings and the perceived corruption within the legal system.

In the endeavour to ascertain the presence of this perspective within official Ottoman sources, the research examines a corpus of 90 documents, encompassing *ḥuğğah* deeds and *firmans*, sourced from 30 records (*siğill*, pl. *siğillāt*) of the 17th-century Jerusalem Sharia Court. The methodology intertwines historical analysis and linguistic scrutiny to unravel the multifaceted dynamics between these religious and legal entities.

Beyond its immediate historical context, this research assumes broader significance by elucidating the interplay between religious institutions and legal systems. The anticipated findings aspire to not only contribute to a deeper understanding of the historical interactions but also to enrich the discourse on religious coexistence and legal intricacies within the region.