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Center for Comparative Empire  
and Transcultural Studies



## Religious Networks as a Catalyst for Commercial Renewal? The Western Mediterranean in the Long Eighth Century:

### Abstracts and Participant Bios



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## Abstracts and Participant Bios

**Session 1, 10.00-12.30**

**Coins as Means of Exchange - or Exchanging of Meanings**

### North African Silver: Money for Western Eurasia - Its Rise and Demise

10.10 am

Dr. Stefan Heidemann  
Universität Hamburg

#### **Abstract**

For a short span of time in the 780s, North African mints seem to have provided most of the physical money for the entire Empire stretching to Central Asia. Noonan estimated that between 780 und 794 32 to 86 % - depending on the year – of all newly minted coins of the Empire originated from North African mints. Coin hoards in the Jazīra in the western Mediterranean consist almost entirely or to a large extent of these coins. Even in Estonia a hoard has recently been found consisting of only these North African dirhams. They also entered the Carolingian Empire, as we can assess from a few hoards along the Rhine. Here however, their quantitative impact is more difficult to access since the Carolingian mints might have re-minted them in their entrepôts. The outsized impact of the North African mints waned quickly. This phenomenon has been noted since the 19th century, but is poorly understood. Even the location of the major mint al-‘Abbāsiyya is debated, as is the role that it might have played. Eustache mapped in addition all the new mints in the Kharajite Berber Maghreb and related them to mining activities, and Savage hinted at the Ibādī trade network. Do we get a better picture of this North African phenomenon, impacting the economies in Western Eurasia? Might the religious networks play a role?

#### **Bio**

Stefan Heidemann is Professor of Islamic Studies at Universität Hamburg since 2011 and currently co-director of “RomanIslam Center of Comparative Empire and Transcultural Studies” in Hamburg. He was PI of the ERC Advanced Grant Project “The Early Islamic Empire at Work – The View from the Regions Toward the Center” (2014-2019), and is editor-in-chief of the Journal *Der Islam*. Formerly he served as Associate Curator of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum and as Professor of Islamic History and Material Culture at The Bard Graduate Center, New York. Ph.D. at Free University Berlin 1993; Habilitation, at Jena University 2001.





## **The Orient in the West: The Consolidation of the Umayyad Monetary System in al-Andalus**

10.55 am

Dr. Almudena Ariza Armada  
New York University Madrid

### **Abstract**

When Islam arrived at the Iberian Peninsula in 92/711, the Islamic monetary issues started in the new Umayyad territory, al-Andalus. These issues, despite having their own local characteristics, were deeply influenced from the outset by oriental elements that have not always been sufficiently highlighted. The Andalusí coinage was born because of a political, economic, religious, and numismatic process occurring beyond their borders. After a transitional period, Andalusí dinars and dirhams were adjusted to the reform of Abd al-Malik and became fully Arabized currencies. In this process, they were also adjusted to the oriental parameters. The monetary hoards from this period show the importance of the oriental coins in the Andalusí economy because they were the main currency circulating in the territory. During the Long Eighth Century, the consolidation of the Umayyad Monetary System took place: as al-Andalus, their coinage was Umayyad. Not only their physical characteristics but especially their monetary legends. And as such, they became an essential way of the Dynasty to express its ideological and religious position

against the other powers in the Mediterranean area... and beyond. When the Umayyad Caliphate of Damascus was replaced by the Abbasid Caliphate and al-Andalus became an Independent Emirate, in 138/756, the maintenance of Umayyad monetary features was the best expression of their rejection of the Abbasid Caliphate. Rejection that was not only reflected in the issues but also in the monetary circulation, as evidenced by coin hoards. Unlike the previous period, the main circulating currency was Andalusí dirham, which evidences the consolidation of the Umayyad monetary system in al-Andalus.

### **Bio**

Almudena Ariza Armada holds a BA and MA degree in Medieval History, doctoral studies in Numismatics and her Ph.D. in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the Complutense University of Madrid. She is currently teaching in the international programs in Madrid of Stanford University, NYU and USD. She has participated in several research projects and received numerous grants from Spanish, European and American institutions, as well as several awards for research and teaching innovation. She is a member of several scientific committees of specialized journals and her research activity is focused on Islamic Numismatics, a subject on which she has published numerous works. Her fields of interest are the representation of sovereign power, the legitimacy, and the manifestation of political, religious, and cultural exchanges in coinage.



## The Place of Southern Italy in Trans-Mediterranean Bullion Flows, 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Century

11.45 am

Dr. William Day  
University of Cambridge

### **Abstract**

The Italian peninsula appears to have played only a minor role in facilitating the massive inflows of silver from the Islamic world to Europe especially in the eighth century, but it was more instrumental as a pathway for outflows of gold. This paper examines the changeover in much of Italy, which followed the advance of the Carolingian Empire into the peninsula during the later eighth century, from a monetary system based mainly on gold to one based largely on silver, especially in the North and Centre. In the South, the switch to silver came later and was more ephemeral, while the leaching of gold through Southern Italy is readily discernible in the declining standard of the coinage of the southern Lombards at Benevento and Salerno. Ultimately, gold proved more resilient in the South and, except for a brief period in the later ninth century, remained the cornerstone of the monetary system. When the gold coinage of the southern Lombards (and ultimately the Carolingians) disappeared, the gold coinage of the new Islamic regimes in Sicily quickly filled the gap, eventually leading to Southern Italian imitations of the Sicilian coins. It was only towards the end of the eleventh century during the First Crusade that bullion flows started to reverse, with French and above all Italian silver pouring into the Crusader states, while Fatimid, Almoravid and later Almohad gold leached into Italy, laying the foundations for the so-called “return to gold” or “gold revolution” in the West in the thirteenth century. The Italian South, in strictly monetary terms, nevertheless retained its closer ties to Islamic world. Two centuries after the Normans had driven the Fatimids from Sicily, when the West was embracing gold, the Angevin kings of Naples abandoned gold, enthusiastically adopting silver at a time when Islamic regimes in the Middle East and North Africa were also relying increasingly on silver.

### **Bio**

William Day is an economic historian and numismatist who focuses on Italy and the Mediterranean world in the Middle Ages. He is co-author of *Medieval European Coinage*, vol. 12: Northern Italy, and he is currently working on vol. 13 in the same series on Central Italy. He is based in Cambridge.



**Session 2, 13.30-16.15**

**The Islamic Connection? The Iberian Peninsula, North Africa and Italy**

**Eighth-Century Africa. What Kind of Transition?**

1.00 pm

Dr. Paolo Tedesco  
Universität Tübingen

**Abstract**

This paper assesses the social and economic trajectories that characterized the Maghreb in the seventh and eighth century and focuses on one major question central to our understanding of developments in this period in general. The economic history of Mediterranean was marked by cycles (broad fluctuations across whole swathes of history) that see the latter seventh century as the start of a cyclical downturn which was, however, peculiar to the Byzantine Empire and its 'western islands' and did not involve the territories under Islamic control. This is a crucial point in my analysis, which nevertheless raises another related question pertaining to the Mediterranean economy of the Early Middle Ages. Why and how did the Islamic economy differ from the economy of Late Antiquity? Were the driving forces of the former different from the state and aristocracies that dominated the Mediterranean networks in the Roman era?

**Bio**

Paolo Tedesco teaches History at the University of Tübingen. His main research interests include the social and economic history of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, comparative agrarian history, the fate of the peasantry across different types of societies, and historical materialism.





**Protecting the Outsider. What Rulings  
about Byzantine Merchants Reveal about  
Trade in Early Islamic Ifrīqiya**

1.45 pm

Dr. Antonia Bosanquet  
Universität Hamburg

**Abstract**

In the century before the Arab conquest most trade from the region that became Ifrīqiya was with the Byzantine Empire to the east and the ports of the western Mediterranean. The Arabic literary sources reveal little about how these trade patterns changed after the Arab conquest, focusing instead on the military interactions around the coastline of Ifrīqiya. However, it is unlikely that trade across the Mediterranean ended with the arrival of the Arabs. This paper considers the evidence of legal sources for the continuation, or resumption, of commercial interaction in the long 2nd/8th century. It also addresses the role that state and private actors played in encouraging or suppressing Byzantine access to the Ifrīqiyān economy.

**Bio**

Antonia Bosanquet is a post-doctoral researcher at the RomanIslam Center of the University of Hamburg. Her research addresses the integration of the Aghlabid province of Ifrīqiya into the Islamic Empire and the relevance of Islamic law and the slave trade to this process. Her previous research project focused on *Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1351), which was one of the earliest compendia of legal regulations dedicated specifically to Jews and Christians living under Muslim rule.



**Between Armed Conflicts and New Opportunities. Economic Linkages of the Southern Italian Mainland with the Aghlabid World**

2.30 pm

Dr. Kordula Wolf  
Deutsches Historisches  
Institut Rom

**Abstract**

The shifts of power that accompanied the spread of Islamic rule in the "West" had lasting effects on the struggle with Byzantium for thalassocracy in the Mediterranean. Also the southern Italian mainland was deeply affected by these transformations. Focusing on the relations of Tyrrhenian coastal towns with Saraceni, the paper analyses the nexus between newly emerging political structures, the effects of decades of looting and economic changes during the Aghlabid period.

**Bio**

Kordula Wolf is a researcher at the German Historical Institute in Rome with a focus on the early and high Middle Ages. Her main fields of interest concern southern Italy, transcultural entanglements, the history of the central Mediterranean and border studies.