



Noblesse Oblige?

Barons and the Public Good in Medieval Afro-Eurasia
10th-14th Centuries

1st and 3rd Conference - 25th-27th May 2023
St Cross College and Pusey House, Oxford



25th May Thursday

- 9h Registration and Coffee
- 9h30-10h **Introduction and Problematique**
Maximilian Lau *Worcester College, University of Oxford* Gregory Lippiatt *University of Exeter*
- 10h-10h30 Coffee
- 10h30–11h15 **Political argumentation in the 1150s and 1160s: the example of the Saint-Victor Register**
Alice Taylor *King's College London*
- 11h15–12h **The Maliks of Hindustan: A New Conquest Nobility?**
Abhishek Kaicker *UC Berkeley*
Hasan Siddiqui *University of British Columbia*
- 12h–12h30 Questions and Discussion
- 12h30–13h30 Lunch
- 13h30–14h15 **Benevolent Elites? Shared Rulership and Privileges in Early Medieval Japan**
Mickey Adolphson *University of Cambridge*
- 14h15–15h **Basqaqs, darughas or envoys? Transience, mobility and Mongol elites in Rus**
Angus Russell *Trinity College, Cambridge*
- 15h–15h30 Questions and Discussion
- 15h30–16h Tea
- 16h *Optional Visit to Oriel College Archives (Magna Carta, Papal Bulls and More)*
- 19h Speakers' Dinner

26th May Friday

- 9h30–10h Coffee
- 10h–10h45 **Minority Rule in Medieval Syria: The Establishment and Maintenance of the Burids in Damascus during the Reign of Tughtegin (1104-1128)**
Alex Mallett Waseda University, Tokyo
- 10h45–11h30 **L'aristocratie, l'empereur et le bien commun dans l'empire romain d'Orient**
Jean-Claude Cheynet Paris IV-Sorbonne
- 11h30–12h15 **The common good and baronial rebellion in England, c. 1199-1327**
Sophie Ambler University of Lancaster
- 12h15–12h45 Questions and Discussion
- 12h45–14h *Lunch*
- 14h–14h45 **A Shatterzone on an Ecotone: Fortifying the Steppe-Sown Frontier and Contending for Authority in the Ordos Region of Asia, Circa 800-1200**
Ruth Mostern University of Pittsburgh
- 14h45–15h30 **Defining Elite Alterity in the medieval Maghrib and al-Andalus, c. 1000-1300**
Amira Bennison Magdalene College, University of Cambridge
- 15h30–16h Questions and Discussion
- 16h–16h30 Tea
- 19h Conference Dinner

27th May Saturday

9h30-10h

Coffee

10h–10h45

The Limits of Leadership: Cities, Frontiers, and Incursion in the Narratives of North-Western Europe, 1100–1300

Emily Winkler *St Edmund Hall, University of Oxford*

10h45–11h30

The Kouroukan Fouga and Oral History: Further Reflections on African Narratives of *Noblesse oblige*

Adam Simmons *Nottingham Trent University*

11h30–12h15

The Rich, The Poor, and The State: Ideas of Good Government in Song Dynasty China

Sukhee Lee *Rutgers University*

Questions and Discussion

12h30–13h30

Concluding Remarks, Round Table Discussion, Next Steps

Gregory Lippiatt *University of Exeter*

Maximilian Lau *Worcester College, University of Oxford*

13h30-14h30

Lunch and Farewell



About the *Noblesse Oblige?* Project

This project and its conference is a forum for the re-evaluation of 'baronial' government and the common good between the tenth and fourteenth centuries across Afro-Eurasian polities. By bringing together emerging and established international scholars, it challenges the traditionally Eurocentric approach to this problem and uses new methodologies to reassess our framework for studying the medieval period, leading to a fundamental reappraisal of the teleological narrative that has previously explained the rise of modern states.

The story of the medieval barons is commonly a negative one. Because aristocracies have been almost universally eclipsed by centralised states in the modern world, they are often cast as regressive forces whose self-interest held back 'progress'. Nor is this exclusively a European narrative: the historiographical attention paid to the 'rise of the State' has privileged the Latin Christian experience of political formation and shaped the way in which non-royal élites are seen in other historical contexts. As a result, 'private' rulers such as lords, amirs, jun and kshatriya are often assumed to have been at odds with the needs of the wider society.

This network is challenging this understanding of the role of 'barons' in their relation to public good in two important and complementary ways. First, we are exploring case studies of how these non-royal élites conceived and implemented responsible government, whether for themselves or for others. Second, we are comparing these case studies in a bold transnational framework, reaching from western Europe to China, that spans the collapse of major centralised imperial projects in the ninth century to the destabilising experience of the Great Death in the fourteenth.



We would like to thank the following organisations for their support of this project and the organisation of this conference:



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