

4<sup>e</sup>

CONGRESS

Middle East and Muslim Worlds  
Studies

28 June - 2 July 2021



## Panel 13

---

### Food and foodways in Islamic Middle Age. New data, new prospects

Over the last twenty years or so, the food history of medieval Dār al Islām has proved a dynamic topic thanks to a renewed historiographical interest and the increased availability of both textual and material data. While the written sources have benefited from in-depth studies, archaeological disciplines have provided new information on the eating habits of medieval communities. This interdisciplinary approach is therefore decisive to better understand the effects of Islamic expansion on dietary practices and norms, allowing researchers to question the phenomena of transition and Islamisation, their modalities and chronologies. A comprehensive analysis of food and foodways, in all their complexity, opens up new perspectives for an exploration of diet from various angles, ranging from the supply (including the analysis of containers and their contents) to the prescriptive norms underpinning modes of consumption (culinary, medical and legal) and practice, as revealed, for example, by the osteological remains of human and animal origin. The expanded range of textual and non-textual documentation has been accompanied by the development of new methods, such as chemical and isotopic analyses, which make it possible to question the specific characteristics, continuities and mobility of people, foodstuffs and knowledge across the Islamic Empire and the medieval Mediterranean.

**People in charge and discussant : Brisville Marianne (Université de Lyon, UMR5648 CIHAM)**

#### Program

---

**Alexander Michelle (University of York, BioArCh)**

*Diet and Isotopic analysis in Medieval Mediterranean*

Isotopic analyses are an equally recent and innovative approach to studies dedicated to feeding human and animal communities in the Middle Ages. Osteological remains from the Iberian Peninsula and Sicily provide new information documenting diets from the 5th-6th centuries to the 13th-15th centuries. They thus make it possible to put into perspective the eating habits of the Islamic and Christian (Visigothic, Byzantine and Latin) populations. The comparative approach, therefore, makes it possible to question the influence of political, economic, social and cultural factors on the consumption patterns of these communities.

**Monchot Hervé (UMR 8167 « Orient et Méditerranée »)**

*The zooarchaeological contribution to understanding the lifestyle and the environment of the Bilad al-Sham inhabitants during the Umayyad period*

In recent decades the development of archaeozoology, i.e. the study of bone remains in an archaeological context, has improved our understanding of the meat diet at different times, and in particular in the Bilad al-Sham of the Umayyad dynasty. Indeed, if the bone remains mainly represent butchery waste

*Fourth Congress of Middle East and Muslim Studies*

or meal leftovers, they also provide a great deal of information on the environment (paleoecology, chronology), on the economy (trade, transport, agriculture), or on the evolution of food practices over time. We will present the main results from the ancient village of Khirbet es-Samra, with a reoccupation of the byzantine church 29 or the Umayyad palace of Al Fudayn

### **Richarté-Manfredi Catherine (INRAP, Université de Lyon 2, UMR 5648 CIHAM)**

#### *Containers and contents of Arab-Islamic ships in the Western Mediterranean*

The archaeological ceramic constitutes a major, even traditional, source of the history of food since they provide information on the essential instrumentum to the supply and feed medieval populations. Advances in archaeometry as well as new methods of analysis – including biomolecular chemical analyses – allow us to advance our reflections by questioning the dialectic between container and content. This is notably the case of the cargo of Islamic shipwrecks found on the Provençal coast, dated from the end of the 9th10th centuries. Whose containers contribute to a better understanding of the conservation techniques, required for the transport of organic foodstuffs transported, on a more or less long scale. As in the Roman period, these practices are essential for the conservation, of food products. The questions of the products traded, their packaging, conservation and consumption during the Early Middle Ages are thus raised.

### **Vigouroux Élodie (UMR 8167 « Orient et Méditerranée » et Institut français du Proche Orient)**

#### *Food consumption in Medieval Damascus*

During the second half of the 20th century, food history studies of the medieval Near East were based on the editing (and translation?) of culinary, scientific and normative texts (Rodinson 1949, Perry 1985). Over the past fifteen years, this field has seen considerable progress in particular with the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach. However, due to the availability of the rich literary and archival corpora associated with Baghdad and Cairo, these cities have logically focused the attention of researchers (Nasrallah 2004, Levanoni 2005, Lewicka 2011). The recent editions of Syrian texts (Perry 2017) and archival material (Eychenne, Meier, Vigouroux 2018) as well as the publication of archaeological works concerning Damascus (François 2008, 2011) will enable us to focus instead on places and modes of food consumption in this city at the end of the Middle Ages.