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## Call for Papers

### The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) International Workshop

# Beyond Eurocentrism and Arabocentrism: Race, Ethnicity, and Knowledge Production in the Arabo-Islamic 'Golden Age'

12–13 September 2025

School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History,  
University of Aberdeen, UK

#### Main organizers:

**Hany Rashwan**, AGYA member, United Arab Emirates University, UAE

**Florian Zemmin**, AGYA member, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

#### In collaboration with:

**Nicola Carpentieri**, Università degli Studi di Padova, Italy,

**Nile Green**, University of California, Los Angeles, USA

**Jakub Zbrzeźny**, University of Aberdeen, UK

#### Cooperation partners:

**European Research Council** (SIQILLIYA consolidator grant, Università degli Studi di Padova, Italy)

**Interdisciplinary Institute of the University of Aberdeen** (Social Inclusion & Cultural Diversity)



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# Beyond Eurocentrism and Arabocentrism:

## Race, Ethnicity, and Knowledge Production in the Arabo-Islamic 'Golden Age'

What is called 'The Islamic Golden Age' is usually dated by historians from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, a period during which science, philosophy, medicine, and literature saw remarkable advancements across the Arabo-Islamic world(s). During this era, both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars translated, preserved, and expanded upon the knowledge of ancient civilizations, such as the Greeks, Persians, and Indians. Their achievements transformed cities like Baghdad, Cairo, Córdoba, and Samarkand into cosmopolitan centers of learning that welcomed seekers of knowledge regardless of their ethnicity or their mother tongue.

This workshop explores the role of scholars of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds (e.g., Persians, Berbers, Turks, Africans, Jews, Aramaic-speaking Christians, and others) in shaping the production of knowledge during this era. It aims to explore how this ethnic, racial and religious diversity influenced Arabo-Islamic intellectual paradigms, institutional formations (such as madrasas and libraries), and the transmission of knowledge across various linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Modern educational narratives sometimes emphasize shared Arabic literary traditions while giving less attention to the variety of ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds of premodern scholars. Following the colonial period, could the process of constructing national histories have led to prioritising commonalities over differences as a means of fostering unity? This pattern—where nationalist movements often highlight shared heritage over diversity—raises questions about how we understand the multifaceted nature of premodern Arabic intellectual communities. The workshop will interrogate how and why diversity was overlooked and explore the implications for both historical scholarship and contemporary understandings of identity in the Islamicate world.

The workshop hopes to foster a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the Islamic intellectual tradition—one that recognises its pluralistic foundations and the dynamic interplay of race, ethnicity, religion and language in shaping premodern knowledge production. We hope to inspire a richer, more inclusive understanding of the pluralistic foundations of Arabo-Islamic scholarship and its lasting impact on modern identity and historiography.

The workshop invites contributions from the humanities and the social sciences on the nature of diversity throughout premodern Arabo-Islamic history to the modern times. Each paper should present a clear case study that effectively highlights its historical and cultural contexts. Suggested topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Exploring how premodern scholars of non-Arab and non-Muslim origin contributed to Arabic intellectual traditions without identifying as ethnically Arab, and how modern narratives have retroactively Arabized them.
- Analysing how Arabic became the dominant medium for scholarship in the Islamic world and how it was adopted by speakers of Persian, Turkish, Berber, and other languages.
- Revisiting classical texts to understand how premodern Muslim thinkers acknowledged and analysed ethnic diversity.
- Developing new frameworks for understanding the multicultural and multilingual reality of the Islamic Golden Age beyond the Arab-nationalist paradigm.



Those interested in presenting papers are invited to submit an abstract (500 words, including references) and a short biography (150 words) through the digital portal accessible by clicking [here](#), or opening the link <https://forms.office.com/e/qCFVz288dx>, or scanning the QR code given above by 30 July 2025.

The accommodation and travel costs for invited speakers will be covered by the organiser. Funding is subject to approval.

## Selected References

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**Carpentieri, Nicola.** 2024. 'Love poetry as social practice: On the function of medieval Sicilian love lyric in Arabic and Italian'. In: *Beyond Arabic: Multilingual poetics in premodern Islamic worlds*, special issue of *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, edited by Hany Rashwan, vol.15(3), pp. 763–782.

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**Green, Nile.** 2023. 'Introduction: Arabic as a South Asian Language'. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 55 (1): pp. 106–21.

**Rashwan, Hany.** 2024. 'Editor's introduction: Beyond Arabic in premodern Islamic worlds.' In: *Beyond Arabic: Multilingual poetics in premodern Islamic worlds*, special issue of *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural studies*, edited by Hany Rashwan, vol.15(3), pp. 605-630.

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## About AGYA

The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) is based at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW) and at the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT) in Egypt. It was established in 2013 as the first bilateral young academy worldwide.

AGYA promotes research cooperation among outstanding early-career researchers (3–10 years post-PhD) from all disciplines who are affiliated with a research institution in Germany or in any Arab country. The academy effectively supports the interdisciplinary projects and collaborative initiatives of its members in various fields of scientific research, science policy and education.

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