

Islamic Historiography as Polemic Literature: Deconstructing Biographies of Medieval Jewish Converts

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The lecture considers biographical material on Jewish converts to Islam authored by medieval Muslim historians, enumerating and analyzing its recurring themes. Deconstructive analysis of the historical texts reveals that the motifs found in this material are consonant with Islamic theological perceptions of other faith-based groups, especially the Jews. These themes also reflect their writers' notion of exemplary history. Beyond this, Dr. Amir Mazor assumes that the main objective behind the texts studied is to reaffirm fundamental principles expressed in the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīth* (Islamic oral tradition) and the *sīrah* (biography of Muhammad) to demonstrate the veracity and superiority of the Muslim faith.



Mamluk Court Scene (probably Egypt, 1334),
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Dr. Amir Mazor is a researcher of the medieval Muslim world. His monograph, based on his Ph.D. dissertation, dealt with the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt and Syria (1250-1517). His research includes mainly socio-political aspects of the Mamluk sultanate, Muslim-Jewish relations in the Middle Ages, and the representation of Jews, Jewish doctors and Moses Maimonides in medieval Muslim sources. Dr. Mazor taught for several years in the Israeli academic institutions of Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan and the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. Currently, he is a member of the Israel Studies Department at the University of Haifa.

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