The Early Modern Mediterranean in the Early Twenty-First Century: Methodology, History and Historiography

Workshop with
Wolfgang Kaiser (Paris), Peter N. Miller (New York),
David Nirenberg (Chicago), Suraiya Faroqhi (München)

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Peter N. Miller:
The Mediterranean from Marseille: Merchants, Mariners, Missionaries, and a Scholar

“The Mediterranean from Marseille is in the first instance a philological reconstruction of the day-to-day practice of a Mediterranean vocation in the 1620s and 1630s through the Peiresc papers. It is the sea which, like a giant lens, focuses us on the intricate and extensive web of relations that binds Peiresc to the practical men of Marseille, its merchants, mariners, officials, and ships’ captains. The second, large argument being made in this book is an invitation to think about the differences between historical research and history-writing. So, for example, though I have ordered its sections so as to articulate a vision of the Mediterranean opening out from Marseille and moving eastward, and have presented this information in shorter and longer narratives — 34 of them, to be precise — readers are also invited to plot their own course among these sections, some of which are diachronic, some synchronic, and some microhistorical. Some are very long and some are very, very short. Behind this pluralism is the desire to approximate, in some still accessible way, the experience of following Peiresc in his own terms and categories. The benefit of this, for the reader, is a closer encounter with the past as it comes down to us. For the writer, this approach yields a “counter-history”; a re-balancing of the familiar relationship between research and writing which better exposes the craft practices — and struggles of the historian.”