



THE DAILY LIFE OF CONFRATERNITIES IN THE EARLY MODERN IBERIAN WORLD

A RESEARCH WORKSHOP

UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA DE BARCELONA
5-6 NOVEMBER 2026

ORGANISED BY

Diana Berruezo-Sánchez

Gerard Rosich Pagès

Elizabeth Blakemore

BADEMS
the cultural history
of the Black african diaspora
in early modern Spain

UAB
Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona





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We are delighted to invite you to participate in the research workshop *The Daily Life of Confraternities in The Early Modern Iberian World*, which will take place at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona on **5-6 November 2026**. Conceived within the framework of the European Research Council funded project, *The Cultural History of the Black African Diaspora in Early Modern Spain* ([BADEMS](#)), this workshop stems from the project's research on Black confraternities in early modern Spain but expands its focus to engage scholars working on confraternities more broadly—not only considering confraternities outside of Spain (Portugal, the Americas) but also confraternities founded and organised by other cultural minorities. We hope this expansive approach will help us better understand the complex phenomenon of the confraternitiy, its inner organisation, its visible presence in public life—particularly during religious festivities— and members' reception from, and interaction with, other confraternities and the wider community.

Our aim is to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue on how confraternities—particularly those involving racialised communities—functioned as spaces of devotion, sociability, and cultural expression. By bringing together historians, literary scholars, musicologists, and art historians, we seek to explore how confraternal life articulated questions of belonging, hierarchy, and negotiation; how these associations channelled the demands and experiences of their members; and how they participated in the cultural, artistic, and religious fabric of societies across the early modern Iberian world.

Over the past decades, research has illuminated how Black Africans and other racialised groups in the Iberian world built networks of solidarity, defended their faith, and strengthened their confraternities. In particular, the BADEMS project considers more than thirty Black confraternities founded in Spain from the late fifteenth century onwards, in cities such as Seville, Cádiz, Granada, Madrid, Valencia, and Barcelona, as well as in smaller centres like Medina-Sidonia and Usagre. These confraternities operated within a broader ecosystem of associations—some defined by occupation or trade, others by ethnic identity or religion order—creating a mosaic of devotional and cultural practices that connected local communities to the transatlantic Iberian world.



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Within this context, the BADEMS project examines how Black confraternities curated, produced, and received cultural forms—particularly literary and devotional creations that operated at the intersection of evangelisation and entertainment. It also explores how these confraternities might have preserved cultural traits specific to African societies while mediating integration into Iberian life, acting as institutional interlocutors with civic and ecclesiastical authorities. The project draws on a wide range of sources—foundation records, trials, confraternal ordinances, and chronicles of local fiestas—to rethink how confraternal communities expressed faith, demands, aspirations, identity, and belonging through creative and performative practices.

Building upon these ideas, the workshop seeks to consider confraternities across the Iberian world as **cultural hubs** where spirituality, performance, and negotiation intersected. We are particularly interested in how literary and devotional creations may have circulated through confraternal networks, shaping and being shaped by their religious and social dynamics. Were confraternities spaces of transcultural dialogue that fostered solidarity, exchange, or even tension among different groups? Can we trace connections across the Atlantic that reveal shared repertoires or devotional models? How might records of musical, theatrical, and artisanal confraternities—those of actors, painters, or musicians—help us to understand the participation, collaboration, or exclusion of racialised individuals within the broader cultural economy of early modern Iberia?

Rather than prescribing a single research path, the workshop will be guided by a set of open and intersecting questions. Together, we will ask how confraternities negotiated cultural, religious, and social identities in their daily life; how musical, theatrical, linguistic, and literary practices were cultivated, contested, or transformed within these devotional frameworks; and how these associations mediated between local devotions and transatlantic circuits of faith and festivity. We will also reflect on what their archives—legal, musical, or textual—reveal about experiences of mobility, community, agency, oppression, and belonging in early modern Iberia. These guiding questions are intended not as limits but as invitations to think comparatively and collaboratively, opening the conversation to other regions and forms of confraternal organisation.