

IQSA Annual Meeting

5-7 September 2022

FSCIRE – La Pira Library and Research Centre

via U. Maddalena 112 – 90137 Palermo

fscire
fondazione
per le scienze
religiose

IQSA



Università
degli Studi
di Palermo

مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَا هُوَ كَيْفَ

مَا لَكَ لِأَوْجِهَهُ لَكُمُ الْكِبْرُ وَالنَّيْبُ تَرْجَعُونَ



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IQSA Annual Meeting

5-7 September 2022

FSCIRE – La Pira Library and Research Centre

via U. Maddalena 112 – 90137 Palermo



Università
degli Studi
di Palermo

La Pira Library

Andrea Amato,
Francesca Badini,
Gianmarco Braghi,
Giuseppe Brocato,
Rosanna Budelli,
Francesco Cargnelutti,
Rosanna Cucchiara,
Ines Cumerlato,
Michele Di Carlo,
Minoo Mirshahvalad,
Adnane Mokrani,
Ivana Panzeca,
Riccardo Amerigo
Vigliermo
Tel: +39 0919101866
maktaba@fscire.it

IQSA

Alba Fedeli and
Devin Stewart (co-
directors of the
Conference), Hythem
Sidky (executive
director of IQSA),
Anne Marie McLean
(executive assistant),
Mehdi Azaiez, Karen
Bauer, Suleman
Dost, Asma Hilali,
Shari Lowin, Johanna
Pink, Devin Stewart,
Sarrah Tlili, Holger
Zellentin (Board of
Directors)

Thanks

The 2022 Annual Meeting has become reality thanks to the contributions and enthusiasm of all speakers who submitted a proposal or a panel. Scholars and colleagues from the La Pira Library and IQSA have worked jointly towards organizing this event and gathering all of us to share our research and discover new approaches in studying the qur'anic text

Special thanks

Special thanks to Emran El-Badawi and Devin Stewart who encouraged and supported the idea of having an international meeting in Palermo; to Alberto Melloni for the generous hospitality at the La Pira Library and Research Centre; to Francesca Badini for her patient work in making the Annual Meeting possible in all its practical details

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Introduction



FSCIRE

The **Fondazione per le scienze religiose (FSCIRE)**, with headquarters in Bologna and Palermo, is a research institution that publishes, trains, serves, organises, welcomes and communicates research in the field of religious studies, with particular regard to Christianity, Islam, and the religions with which they have been in contact. The final destination of a journey that began in 1953 and is recognised as a Foundation by a decree of the President of the Italian Republic, FSCIRE has an agreement with the University of Bologna and other universities: it operates in conditions of full autonomy from churches and universities, collecting funds from public and private donations, foundations, companies, and cooperatives, and creating synergies with other research centres. FSCIRE continues scientific research in the field of historical-religious disciplines initiated by Giuseppe Dossetti (1913-1996) and developed by Giuseppe Alberigo (1926-2007), who was its soul and Secretary for almost fifty years. In 2014, FSCIRE was recognised as a national research infrastructure.

La Pira Library

In October 2018, the **La Pira Library** was established in Palermo as a library specialised in the history and doctrines of Islam, with the aim of representing all its linguistic, doctrinal, and cultural varieties.

*It is dedicated to **Giorgio La Pira**, a Sicilian scholar and political leader who played a key role in the peace movement throughout his life and career.*



The La Pira Library was founded thanks to the crucial support of the Italian institutions and has three main goals:

1 Planning and realising a long-term scientific activity which will deal with a sensitive issue for the future of Europe and the Mediterranean area through knowledge and research. In order to reach this goal, the La Pira Library intends to be one of the major independent centres in this field and one of the few to represent all Islamic traditions.

2 Making the city of Palermo a crucial hub for religious studies and one of the main poles of research and cultural diplomacy in the Mediterranean region and in the European Research Area, complementing the successful example of the Dossetti Library in Bologna.

3 Encouraging the research cooperation of different traditions, which will be able to create an area of rights and understanding through scientific progress in the fields of history, theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, and philology.

The La Pira Library follows a few clear principles: scientific excellence, which makes us think of dissemination as a consequence of knowledge, not as a substitute for it; a system of top-level international relations, which enhances Italian leadership and visibility through the network of the European Research Infrastructure of Religious Studies; full independence from universities and religious communities, which avoids opportunistic

conditioning and allows for rigorous and open competitions. In order to maintain its independence, and following the example of the Dossetti Library in Bologna, the La Pira Library has never asked and will not ask for financial support from Islamic countries or institutions; its economic resources are provided by the Italian government and the top players of national and European culture through direct awards and successful EU competitive procedures.

Donations of books and manuscripts are welcome and a great effort is being made with the goal of reaching 200,000 books in two years and 500,000 in six years.

Since 2018, the librarians and researchers based in the La Pira Library have established, and continue to establish, collaborations and relationships with major institutions in numerous countries, including Albania, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia, China, Egypt, Russian Federation, Jordan, Dubai, Kazakhstan, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Malaysia, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Syria, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the USA and Yemen. The collaborations are aimed at the acquisition of duplicates, rare items and gifts, following in the footsteps of the great libraries of the Islamic tradition.



The mission of the La Pira Library is based on a few main pillars: a coenobitic rigour in its labour; an administration inspired by parsimony and based on an out-of-time egalitarianism; scientific excellence as an instrument to disclose knowledge; a network of international, first-class relationships; full independence from universities and religious communities; a planned cognitive voracity. With its ambitious project, the La Pira Library does not plan to become an institution exclusively focused on the Arab world, nor an educational centre for imams, nor an organisation of interreligious dialogue, and not even an academy devoted to detached erudition. On the contrary, it hopes to become a reference forum for cultivated research, enhancing the experience of the EU research infrastructure on religious studies as launched and led by FSCIRE.

A ten-person team of researchers and librarians with different specialisation and academic backgrounds is currently working full-time at the La Pira Library and their number is expected to double in the next five years.

The team is working to affirm its scientific leadership inside and outside Europe with an agenda based on scientific excellence, open research, inclusive independence and diplomatic integrity.

Mission and Strategic Vision

Mission Statement

Foster Qur'anic Scholarship

Strategic Vision Statement

The International Qur'anic Studies Association is the first learned society devoted to the study of the Qur'an from a variety of academic disciplines. The Association was founded to meet the following needs:

- Regular meetings for scholars of the Qur'an
- Cutting edge, intellectually rigorous, academic research on the Qur'an
- A bridge between different global communities of Qur'anic scholarship
- Regular and meaningful academic interchange between scholars of the Bible and scholars of the Qur'an
- Involvement of Islamic scholarly institutions and faith communities

The Association offers its members opportunities for mutual support, intellectual growth, and professional development through the following:

- Advancing academic study of the Qur'an, its context, its relationship to other scriptural traditions, and its literary and cultural influence

- Collaborating with educational institutions and other appropriate organizations to support Qur'anic scholarship and teaching
- Developing resources for diverse audiences, including students, faith communities, and the general public
- Facilitating broad and open discussion from a variety of academic perspectives
- Organizing congresses for scholarly exchange
- Publishing Qur'anic scholarship
- Encouraging and facilitating digital technology in the discipline
- Promoting cooperation across global boundaries

Core values

Accountability, Collaboration, Collegiality, Critical Inquiry, Inclusivity, Openness to Change, Professionalism, Respect for Diversity, Scholarly Integrity, Tolerance

Participation and Membership

IQSAweb.org

IQSAweb.org has *all* the information necessary for you to benefit from IQSA and for you to get involved. On this site, visitors can familiarise themselves with IQSA's governance, resources, and programs, as well as learn about its policies, vision, and history. To receive updates, subscribe online by entering your e-mail address where it states "Follow IQSA by E-Mail" on the left margin of IQSA's website.

[Online Discussion Group](#)

Join the Google Discussion Group to share ideas, discuss, and collaborate with other scholars and members of IQSA. Join by visiting **<https://groups.google.com/g/IQSAdiscussion>**.

[Weekly Blog Updates](#)

The IQSA blog has attracted widespread international interest and participation of scholars, students, and the general public. The blog includes weekly updates about IQSA, information on its academic meetings (North American and International), schedules for other conferences and colloquia taking place around the world, and various stories and reports on new research. IQSA strongly encourages all those working on new and exciting Qur'anic Studies projects to contribute to the IQSA blog.

Become a Member of IQSA

Become a member of IQSA, join from the IQSA website, located under “Membership & Governance”. Be sure to follow IQSAweb.org for updates about this and other matters. Through the website, members will receive access to our publications, including:

- *Review of Qur’anic Research*
- Membership Directory
- Bilingual English-Arabic *Journal of the International Qur’anic Studies Association*

*If you are interested in getting involved, writing for the IQSA blog, or have advertising or other inquiries, please write to **contactus@iqsaweb.org**. Do not forget to find IQSA on Facebook and Twitter!*

Donate

Support IQSA’s work by making a tax-deductible contribution. Donate online at **members.iqsaweb.org/donate** or e-mail us at **contactus@iqsaweb.org**.

Advertise with IQSA

IQSA is the first and only learned society of its kind devoted to the critical investigation of the Qur'an, encompassing a broad community of scholars, students, publishers, and members of the public.

IQSA encourages advertising partnerships and opportunities in the following capacities:

1 Advertise in the Annual Meeting Program

Book – Every year the International Qur'anic Studies Association holds an Annual Meeting in conjunction with the Society of Biblical Literature/ American Academy of Religion, attracting a wide audience in the scholarly community from across the nation. The accompanying Program Book published by IQSA is read by hundreds at the Annual Meeting and thousands around the world, providing a critical platform for relevant businesses market their publications and services. Email contactus@iqsaweb.org to reserve an advertising space today!

2 Advertise in Print – IQSA provides advertising space in three of its flagship publications: the *Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association (JIQSA)*, the monthly *Review of Qur'anic Research*, and the forthcoming monograph series *IQSA Studies in the Qur'an (ISIQ)*. Email contactus@iqsaweb.org for details.

3 Advertise Online – While IQSA does not currently hold a physical headquarters, its website serves as the central meeting point and face of the organization visited by hundreds of members and non-members every day. Email contactus@iqsaweb.org to inquire about advertising with us online via www.iqsaweb.org.

4 Send an Email to IQSA Members – IQSA will send emails on behalf of publishers and other advertisers of interest to our members. The publisher/advertiser is responsible for composing the email. Please contact the Executive Office at contactus@iqsaweb.org for more information.

JIQSA – Call for papers

The *Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association* (JIQSA) commenced publication annually in 2016, with Michael E. Pregill and Vanessa De Gifis serving as its founding editors. Articles are rigorously peer-reviewed through a double-blind review process, with reviewers appointed by the Head Editors in consultation with the Editorial Board. The journal's launch reflects a time of particular vitality and growth in Qur'anic Studies, and its primary goal is to encourage the further development of the discipline in innovative ways. Methodologies of particular interest to the journal include historical-critical, contextual-comparative, and literary approaches to the Qur'an. We especially welcome articles that explore the Qur'an's origins in the religious, cultural, social, and political contexts of Late Antiquity; its connections to various literary precursors, especially the scriptural and parascriptural traditions of older religious communities; the historical reception of the Qur'an in the West; the hermeneutics and methodology of Qur'anic exegesis and translation (both traditional and modern); the transmission and evolution of the *textus receptus* and the manuscript tradition; and the application of various literary and philological modes of investigation into Qur'anic style and compositional structure.

The journal's website, including additional information and contact details, can be found at lockwoodonlinejournals.com/index.php/jiqsa. For more information on the International Qur'anic Studies Association, please visit www.iqsaweb.org.

Editors

Sean Anthony, The Ohio State University, USA
(volume 7 and following)

Nicolai Sinai, University of Oxford/Pembroke
College, UK (volumes 3 to 7)

Michael E. Pregill, University of California,
Los Angeles, USA (volumes 1 to 3)

Vanessa De Gifis, Wayne State University, USA
(volumes 1 and 2)

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Michael E. Pregill, University of California,
Los Angeles, USA

Nicolai Sinai, University of Oxford, UK

Programme



Monday 5 September 2022

Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri, Piazza Marina 60

8.30–9.15 | Sala Magna

Introductory Remarks

by IQSA, La Pira Library, University of Palermo

9.15–9.30

Coffee Break

9.30–10.30 | Sala Magna

Keynote Lecture. *Qur'anic Studies Today: Composing Past Approaches and Building New Perspectives*

by **Roberto Tottoli** (University of Naples L'Orientale)

10.30–10.45

Coffee Break

10.45–12.15 | Sala Magna

Panel 1. *The Medinan Surahs: An Integrative Approach*

organized by **Nicola Sinai** (University of Oxford)

10.55–11.15: *Qur'an 2:40ff. in Comparative Perspective* (**Marianna Klar**)

11.15–11.35: *"A Scripture to Enlighten Them": Light Imagery, Exhortation, and Ethical Guidance in the Medinan Surahs of the Qur'an* (**Nora K. Schmid**)

11.35–11.55: *The Medinan Theology of the ummah* (**Nicolai Sinai**)

11.55–12.15: *Purity in the Medinan Qur'an* (**Holger Zellentin**)

12.15–14.00

Graduate Student Lunch

(upon registration)

Palazzo Alliata di Villafranca, Piazza Bologni 20

14.00–15.50

Panel 2A | Sala dei Musicisti

Genealogies of Qur'an Translations

organized by **Johanna Pink** (University of Freiburg)

14.10–14.30: *The Hilālī-Khān Translation of the Qur'an into English (1977):*

Reconstructing Textual History (Mykhaylo Yakubovych)

14.30–14.50: *Da'wa, Modernism, and the Ahmadiyya Question: The Waxing and Waning Influence of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an Translation (Johanna Pink)*

14.50–15.10: *What Influences Revisions of Ahmadi Qur'an Translations and How Are They Legitimized? An Analysis of the Current German Translation (Kamran Ahmad Khan)*

15.10–15.30: *The Impact of Muslim Modernist and Revivalist Movements on Tatar Translations and Commentaries of the Qur'an in Imperial Russia (Elmira Akhmetova)*

15.30–15.50: *In the Shadow of Ignaty Krachkovsky: The Influence and Approaches of Contemporary Russian Qur'an Translations (Elvira Kulieva)*

Panel 2B | Sala da Ballo

Chronology, Non-Linearity, Intratextuality, Performance and Performative Act

chaired by **Nora K. Schmid** (University of Oxford)

14.10–14.30: *"But My Word Has Proved True": An Intra-Textual Reference in Qur'an 32:13 (Gabriel Said Reynolds)*

14.30–14.50: *Time and Qur'anic Eschatology (Feras Hamza)*

14.50–15.10: *Towards an Exhaustive Analysis of the Formation and Reception of the Qur'an's Formulas (Daniel Bannoura)*

15.10–15.30: *The Qur'an, Iltifāt, and Public Performance (Adam Flowers)*

15.30–15.50: *Penitent Prophets: Admonition and Consolation of the Qur'anic Messenger in Q. Ṣād 38 (Andrew J. O'Connor)*

15.50–16.10

Coffee Break

16.10–16.55

Panel 2A | Sala dei Musici

Qur'an Translations

chaired by **Johanna Pink** (University of Freiburg)

16.15–16.35: *Sources and Strategies in Translating the Canonical Readings of the Qur'an (with case study of Surah al-An'ām) (Sohaib Saeed and Marijn van Putten)*

16.35–16.55: *Qur'an Translations & the Global Religious Politics of Maryam Jameelah (Justine Howe)*

16.55–18.00

Panel 3A | Sala dei Musici

Trends in Sufi Tafsir



organized by **Adnane Mokrani** (FSCIRE, Palermo); chaired by **Andrea Amato** (FSCIRE, Palermo)

17.00–17.20: *The Light that Shines from the Cave: Sufi Tafsir on Aṣḥāb al-Kahf* (**Jason Welle**)

17.20–17.40: *‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ġazā’irī as a Sufi Interpreter of the Qur’an* (**Rasha Rouabah**)

17.40–18.00: *Rumi and the Sufi Interpretation of the Qur’an* (**Adnane Mokrani**)

16.10–18.00

Panel 3B | Sala da Ballo

Exegesis, Implausibility and Challenges

chaired by **Joseph E. Lowry** (University of Pennsylvania)

16.15–16.35: *About Supposed References to Prenatal Human Life in the Qur’an.*

The Opening Lines of Surah al-Insan (Q. 76) as an Example (**Thomas Eich**)

16.35–16.55: *Intellectual Legacy of the Exegesis of Qur’an 4.24 and Its Sexual Ethics Implications* (**Roshan Iqbal**)

16.55–17.15: *The Named and the Unnamed: Name and Status in the Qur’an* (**Sarra Tlili**)

17.15–17.35: *From Al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 820) to Al-Maqdisī (d. 1267): Chronicling A Neglected Opinion on the “Seven Aḥruf”* (**Yasir Qadhi**)

17.35–17.55: *The Shi‘ah Ijtihad over Male Guardianship* (**Minoo Mirshahvalad**)

18.00–18.15

Coffee Break

18.15–19.30 | Sala da Ballo

Roundtable. Qur’anic Coherence

Karen Bauer (Institute of Ismaili Studies, London) and **Feras Hamza** (University of Wollongong in Dubai)

19.30–19.40

Coffee Break

19.40–20.40 | Sala dei Musici

Event. A Read-Through of “Surah Yusuf, A Translation in 5 Acts”

Shawkat M. Toorawa (Yale University, New Haven)

20.40 | Scuderie

Reception

(upon registration)

Tuesday 6 September 2022

Palazzo Alliata di Villafranca, Piazza Bologni 20

8.30–10.00

Panel 4A | Sala dei Musicisti

Vision and Visuality in the Qur'an and Beyond (first part)

organized by **Hannelies Koloska** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

8.35–8.55: *Images, Imagination and Sensory Persuasion in the Qur'an* (**Hannelies Koloska**)

8.55–9.15: *Seconding Sinai?: The Re-presentation of Mosaic Theophany in the Qur'an* (**Eric DeVilliers**)

9.15–9.35: *Angelic Visions in the Qur'an* (**Louise Gallorini**)

9.35–9.55: *Phenomenology of Quranic Visuality and Corporeality: A Concrete Sense of Being in the World* (**Valeria Gonzalez**)

Panel 4B | Sala da Ballo

Framing the Antagonist: Modern Readings of the Qur'anic Concept of Fir'awn

organized by **Margherita Picchi** (Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies/University of Cape Town) and **Francesca Badini** (FSCIRE, Palermo); chaired by **Francesco Cargnelutti** (FSCIRE, Palermo)

8.35–8.55: *Fir'awn in the Qur'an: Persistent Disbelieving and Opposition Creating an Example of Extreme Enmity toward Faith, a Linguistic Perspective* (**Riccardo Amerigo Vigliermo**)

8.55–9.15: *Fir'awn in the Tafsir al-mawḍūʿī: The Narration of Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1917–1996)* (**Francesca Badini**)

9.15–9.35: *“Make your Houses Places of Worship (Iʿjalu buyutakum qibla)”: COVID-19 Policies and Jumuʿa Politics at Cape Town’s Claremont Main Road Mosque* (**Margherita Picchi**)

9.35–9.55: *Al-Fir'awn and the Salafist Understanding of this Concept in the Contemporary Arab-Islamic World: Between Theory and Praxis* (**Marco Di Donato**)

10.00–10.20

Coffee Break



10.20–11.50

Panel 5A | Sala dei Musici

Vision and Visuality in the Qur'an and Beyond (second part)

organized by **Hannelies Koloska** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

10.25–10.45: *The Weltinnenraum of the Qur'an: Towards a Visceral Phenomenology* (Thomas Hoffmann)

10.45–11.05: *Concupiscent Curiosity of the Gaze in Medieval Islam: Qur'an 24:30–31* (Ahmed H. al-Rahim)

11.05–11.25: *Qur'anic Piety as a Practice* (Karen Bauer)

11.25–11.45: *Rethinking Female Representations in Qusayr Amra and Their Qur'anic References* (Inbal Kol)

Panel 5B | Sala da Ballo

Narratives, Predecessors, Contacts (first part)

chaired by **Fabrizio D'Avenia** (University of Palermo)

10.25–10.45: *Unlocking the Name of YHWH: A Qur'anic Interpretation* (Abdulla Galadari)

10.45–11.05: *Ṣuḥuf Mūsā (Q. 53:36; 87:19): The Book of Jubilees?* (Raymond K. Farrin)

11.05–11.25: *Moses and Other Mountains* (Sarah Zweig)

11.25–11.45: *Q. 5:48 and 49:13 and Their Late Antique Context* (Jáchym Šenkyřík)

11.50–13.30

Short Visit of Palermo

(upon registration)

13.30–15.00

Panel 6A | Sala dei Musici

Material Culture

chaired by **Ivana Panzeca** (University of Palermo/FSCIRE, Palermo)

13.35–13.55: *Decolonizing Abraham: A Preliminary Survey of the Material Record in Mecca* (Nevin Reda)

13.55–14.15: *Qur'an Fragments in Cairo Genizah Collections* (Nick Posegay and Magdalen M. Connolly)

14.15–14.35: *Compatibility and Contradiction in the Rules of Qur'anic Writing in the Light of Old Qur'anic Manuscripts* (Munshid Falih Wadi)

14.35–14.55: *Radiocarbon Dating and Qur'anic Manuscript Chronology* (Hythem Sidky)

Panel 6B | Sala da Ballo

Narratives, Predecessors, Contacts (second part)

chaired by **Gianmarco Braghi** (University of Palermo/FSCIRE, Palermo)

13.35–13.55: *Mobilizing Multiple Figures to Build the Authority of the Qur'an: Remarks from the Fada'il al-Qur'an Traditions in the Early Abbasid Times* (**Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau**)

13.55–14.15: *The Pagan and Biblical Topography of Qur'anic Pilgrimage* (**Emran El-Badawi**)

14.15–14.35: *The Qur'an's Equivocation Strategy to Survive a Cosmological Paradigm Shift: the Case of Heaven's Pillars* (**Mohammad Ali Tabataba'i**)

14.35–14.55: *Education between the Qur'an and the Bible. A Project. Presentation and Discussion* (**Johanne Louise Christiansen** and **Rachel Claire Dryden**)

15.00–15.20

Coffee Break

15.20–16.20 | Sala dei Musici

Keynote Lecture. *The Light of Civilization, the Shadow of Empires: Mediterranean Muslims and the Qur'an under British and French Colonial Rule*

by **Johanna Pink** (University of Freiburg)

16.20–16.40

Coffee Break

16.40–17.40 | Sala da Ballo

General Business Meeting

17.40–19.40 | Sala dei Musici

Roundtable. *Gender-Based Research in Qur'anic Studies: An Exploration of Theoretical and Methodological Directions in Contemporary Scholarship*

organized by **Celene Ibrahim** (Groton School); chaired by **Nevin Reda** (Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto)



Wednesday 7 September 2022

8.15–9.30

Transfer from Palermo city centre to La Pira Library and Research Centre (location and time details communicated by email)

La Pira Library and Research Centre
via U. Maddalena 112

9.30–11.00 | Sala lettura

Panel 7. Kitab, Narratives and Technique

chaired by **Devin Stewart** (Emory University)

9.35–9.55: *On the Semantical Structure of the Qur'anic Term Kitab* (**Ivan Dyulgerov**)

9.55–10.15: *The Qur'an in Early Nusayri Discourse: A Case Study* (**David Hollenberg**)

10.15–10.35: *Qur'anic Codes: Basic Building Blocks of Qur'anic Legislation* (**Joseph E. Lowry**)

10.35–10.55: *An Analysis of the Prophetic Speeches through Qur'anic Narratives* (**Antonio Cuciniello**)

11.00–11.20

Coffee Break

11.20–12.20 | Sala lettura

Presidential Address. A Historian Looks at the Qur'an

Fred Donner (University of Chicago); Respondent: **Nevin Reda**

(Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto)

12.20–13.00

Guided Tour of the Library and Final Remarks

13.00–14.00

Meetings of the Committees (for members only)

Lunch Break (buffet at La Pira Library)

14.00–18.00

Visit to Monreale (upon registration)

Papers



Monday 5 September 2022

Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri, Piazza Marina 60, Palermo

08.30-09.15 | Sala Magna

Introductory Remarks

Alberto Melloni – Secretary of FSCIRE

Massimo Midiri – Rector of the University of Palermo

Alba Fedeli and **Devin Stewart** – Co-directors of IQSA Annual Meeting in Palermo

Hythem Sidky and **Holger Zellentin** – IQSA executive director and IQSA Board of directors' Chair

09.15-09.30 | Coffee Break

09.30-10.30 | Sala Magna

Keynote Lecture. *Qur'anic Studies Today: Composing Past Approaches and Building New Perspectives*

Roberto Tottoli – University of Naples L'Orientale

Today, Qur'anic Studies are thriving, and there is not a year in which tens of introductory or specialist essays do not appear. Since the 1970s and the work of John Wansbrough, a constant research production has celebrated and analyzed many aspects of the sacred text of Islam. Old lines of research have been added new perspectives and approaches which are prompted by scholars of differing attitudes and sensibilities. Revisionist and critical interpretations live together with sympathetic and even confessional points of view in dealing with the main themes connected to the Qur'an such as its contents, its relation to previous religious cultures, its form and the history of the text. The future of the Qur'anic Studies is not different from the general future of humanities: trying to compose differing attitudes with aim to build a common knowledge and avoiding an excessive fragmentation and hyper-specialization.

ROBERTO TOTTOLI is the rector of the University of Naples L'Orientale. He holds a BA in Oriental Languages and Literatures at Venezia Ca' Foscari (1988) and his PhD at Napoli L'Orientale (1996). He studied at Hebrew University in Jerusalem under the direction of M.J. Kister (1993–1994), and then taught in Turin (1999–2002) and Naples L'Orientale since 2002, where he is full professor in Islamic studies since 2011. He has been Visiting Researcher/Professor at Princeton University (2014), Harvard (2015), EHESS Paris (2016), Institute for Advanced Study Tokyo (2018), University of Pennsylvania (2019) and member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in 2016–2017. Since 2019 he has been PI in the European project ERC-Synergy EUQU (The European Qur'an – cPI Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, Cisc, Madrid, PIs John Tolan, Nantes, Jan Lopp, Canterbury), funded 10 million euros. He has been a corresponding member of the Accademia dei Lincei since 2019. He has carried out research on biblical prophets in Islam (*Biblical Prophets in the Islamic Tradition*, Paideia, 1999, English translation 2002), he has dealt with Islamic literature in general and, more recently, with editions and translations of the Qur'an in the modern age (*Ludovico Marracci at Work*, Harrassowitz, 2016, written with R. Gleis, Wiesbaden). He has translated several texts of Islamic literature into Italian (*Malik, al-Muwatta'*, *Manual of Islamic Law*, Einaudi, 2011, for which he won the King Abdullah ibn Abdulaziz International Award for Translation in 2015) and has edited works on Islam in the West (*Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West*, Routledge, 2015) or on the history of Islamic civilization (*The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, Wiley Blackwell, 2018, edited with A. Salvatore, B. Rahimi). Since 2011 he has been writing about Islam for *Corriere della Sera*.

10.30–10.45 | Coffee Break

10.45–12.15 | Sala Magna

Panel 1. *The Medinan Surahs: An Integrative Approach*

organized by **Nicolai Sinai** (University of Oxford)

This panel by members of the Oxford-based ERC project Qur'anic Commentary: An Integrative Paradigm (QuCIP) explores various literary, rhetorical, doctrinal, and legal features of the Medinan Qur'an. Klar proposes a methodical analysis of the language of the Moses material in Surah 2, looking at precise overlaps with the language and diction of other Moses pericopes, areas where other prophets or situations are, intentionally or unintentionally, being invoked, and areas where Q. 2:40ff. utilise Medina-specific phraseology. The intention is to gain a deeper understanding of the Moses pericope in Surah 2 and with it a more nuanced perspective on the use of narrative within the long Medinan surahs.



Schmid's paper examines the role of light imagery in the hortatory rhetoric of the Medinan surahs. Light imagery is a particularly prominent semantic figure that structures moral oppositions and stands for the transfer of religious knowledge, especially ethical and legal knowledge. Schmid discusses the Qur'an's hortatory uses of light imagery in the Medinan surahs in comparative perspective, drawing on the Gospel of John and late antique sermons. Sinai's paper focuses on the role that the community or ummah of believers plays in the Medinan understanding of Muhammad's universal prophetic remit. According to Q. 2:142 and 22:78, the Medinan ummah is to function as a community of "witnesses" set up over the remainder of humankind just as the qur'anic Messenger is to function as an exemplary "witness" over the qur'anic believers. As Sinai will argue, the universal role of the qur'anic ummah is conceived in terms ultimately similar to the function of a "light to the nations" that is ascribed to the people of Israel in the book of Isaiah. Finally, Zellentini's paper will study Medinan legal passages bearing on the issue of purity, situating the topic within its Arabian, biblical, and late antique context.

10.55–11.15 | Panel 1

Qur'an 2:40ff. in Comparative Perspective

Marianna Klar – University of Oxford

The overlaps in lexicon and diction across the seven qur'anic Iblīs pericopes have struck numerous scholars, while the variant presentations of the qur'anic Shu'ayb have also been the subject of limited scholarly attention. The Moses narrative, however, which similarly recurs at several junctions of the corpus, has been assessed only in parts. This paper proposes a methodical analysis of the language of the Moses material in Q. 2, looking at precise overlaps with the language and diction of other Moses pericopes, areas where other prophets or situations are, intentionally or unintentionally, being invoked, and areas where Q. 2:40ff. utilize Medina-specific phraseology. The intention is to gain a deeper understanding of the Moses pericope in Q. 2 and with it a more nuanced perspective on the use of narrative within the long Medinan surahs.

MARIANNA KLAR (DPhil, Oxford, 2002) is a researcher at Oxford's Faculty of Oriental Studies, Senior Research Associate at Pembroke College, Oxford, and Research Associate at the Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS. Her most recent publications focus on the Qur'an's structure, its narratives, and its literary context. She has also worked extensively on tales of the prophets within the medieval Islamic historiographical tradition and on qur'anic exegesis. Her monograph on al-Tha'labī's *Tales of the Prophets* was published in 2009 with Routledge, and she recently edited *Structural Dividers in the Qur'an* (Routledge, 2021).

11.15–11.35 | Panel 1

"A Scripture to Enlighten Them": Light Imagery, Exhortation, and Ethical Guidance in the Medinan Surahs of the Qur'an

Nora K. Schmid – University of Oxford

This paper examines the role of light imagery in the Qur'an's hortatory rhetoric. Despite a growing interest in Islamic oration, the Qur'an's ties to preaching as well as qur'anic exhortations and their constitutive features have received little scholarly attention. I argue that light imagery is one such hortatory feature that characterizes Medinan surahs in particular. The word *nūr* occurs 31 times in Medinan surahs, and 20 of these occurrences are found in comparatively short homiletic surahs. Light imagery is employed in a variety of different ways: the believers are identified as those who proceed from "darkness" (*ẓulumāt*) into "light" (*nūr*). They are admonished that "a light and a clear Scripture have come to you from God, / by which God guides those who seek His approval to paths of peace. He brings them from darkness into the light by His permission and guides them to a straight path" (Q. al-Mā'ida 5:15–16). The verses illustrate that light imagery, exhortation, and ethical guidance are intertwined. God, the Prophet, and the Qur'an are conceptualized as the source and medium of an enlightenment of the listeners. Of particular importance in this regard is certainly the Verse of Light (Q. al-Nūr 24:35), which affirms that "God is the light of the heavens and the earth". The Qur'an is sent to the believers as "a Scripture to enlighten them" (*kitāb munīr*). I propose to discuss qur'anic hortatory uses of light imagery in comparison with biblical and sermons and exhortations of late antiquity. For example, light imagery

is particularly prominent in the Gospel of John: Jesus admonishes the crowd, anticipating his own death, “Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you” (John 19:35). The sermons also employ this semantic figure to exhort the listeners and to provide ethical guidance. “The soul of the Priest”, writes the preacher John Chrysostom (d. 407), “should shine like a light beaming over the whole world” (*On the Priesthood* VI, 4). A strikingly similar idea is expressed in a qur’anic verse that calls Muhammad a “light-giving lamp” (Q. al-Aḥzāb 33:46). I show that light imagery is a particularly prominent semantic figure which structures moral oppositions and which stands for the transfer of religious knowledge, especially ethical knowledge.

NORA K. SCHMID is a postdoctoral researcher in the project *Qur’anic Commentary: An Integrative Paradigm* at the University of Oxford and a Junior Research Fellow at Wolfson College. She holds a PhD in Arabic Studies from Freie Universität Berlin (2018). Her research interests include the Qur’an as a text of late antiquity, Arabic asceticism, early Islamic poetry, the intellectual and literary traditions of pre-Islamic Arabia, and Islamic law.

11.35-11.55 | Panel 1

The Medinan Theology of the ummah

Nicolai Sinai – University of Oxford

Various statements in Meccan surahs – e.g. the description of the Qur’an as a “reminder for the world-dwellers” (*dhikrun li-l-‘ālamīn*; e.g. Q. 68:52) – create a prima facie impression that Muhammad’s preaching had a universal outlook from early on. However, other Meccan verses attribute a much more localized remit to Muhammad’s ministry and present him as a messenger sent to warn “the mother-town and those dwelling around it” (Q. 6:92, 42:7). Meccan passages also stress the Arabic character of Muhammad’s revelations (e.g. Q. 12:2). Although the issue is disputed, for the Meccan surahs it is overall more persuasive to privilege such parochial statements over ostensibly universal ones. The Medinan surahs, however, give hints that Muhammad’s missionary role is indeed envisaged as extending well beyond a constituency of Arabic-speaking pagans: Medinan texts lack any references to the Arabic character of Muhammad’s proclamations and attribute to Muhammad

the task of serving as God’s messenger to the scriptureless and those in possession of scripture alike (Q. 3:20, 7:157–158, 62:2–3). This supports a straightforwardly universalist reading of Q. 2:143 and 22:78, according to which God brought the qur’anic *ummah* into existence “so that you [plural] might be witnesses set up over the people” while the Messenger is meant to act as “a witness set up over you”. At the same time, I will argue that the role Q. 2:143 and 22:78 (and also 3:110) envisage for the qur’anic *ummah*, although of a world-historical kind, does not involve a scenario in which the ranks of the qur’anic *ummah* are to be swollen by ever more global converts. Rather, the qur’anic believers are to function as an exemplary beacon for the rest of humanity, a role resembling that of the “light to the nations” that is ascribed to the people of Israel in Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6. In fact, the description of the qur’anic community as “witnesses” may well be a deliberate echo of Isa 43:10, where the people of Israel are called YHWH’s “witnesses” (Peshitta: *sāhday*). Thus understood, the claim that the Medinan surahs place Muhammad and the qur’anic believers against a “universal horizon”, to borrow a formulation from the biblical scholar Jon Levenson, is compatible with the continued existence of a plurality of human communities, set apart by different practices and customs (Q. 5:48), and with qur’anic assurances that the members of other religious communities are by no means precluded from achieving eschatological salvation (Q. 2:62, 5:69).

NICOLAI SINAI (PhD Freie Universität Berlin, 2007) is Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Pembroke College. His publications include *The Qur’an: A Historical-Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017) and *Rain-Giver, Bone-Breaker, Score-Settler: Allāh in Pre-Quranic Poetry* (American Oriental Society, 2019), and he has recently edited the volume *Unlocking the Medinan Qur’an* (Brill, 2022).

11.55–12.15 | Panel 1

Purity in the Medinan Qur’an

Holger Zellentin – University of Tübingen

The Qur’an’s notion of purity stands at the core of its message already in the Meccan surahs and gains further prominence in the Medinan ones. Purity from sin is the essential aim of the believer’s

existence, whereas bodily purity remains a precondition to gain God's favor. Yet the notion of purity has not been appropriately theorized in Western scholarship on the Qur'an, just as the relationship between the Qur'anic concept of purity and Jewish and Christian cognates is regularly misconstrued. Building on the foundational work by Milgrom and Klawans, this paper will first seek to establish a topical definition of purity by differentiating between "prohibited" and "regulated" forms of impurity as conceived of in pagan Arabia as well as in the Hebrew Bible, in rabbinic Judaism, and throughout Christianity in late antiquity. It will then compare and contrast these notions to those of the Qur'an, arguing that the Islamic Scripture stands in continuity with aspects of biblical purity discourse in ancient Arabia and late antiquity, all the while setting itself clearly apart from both.

HOLGER ZELLENTIN (PhD 2007, Princeton University) is Professor of Religion (Jewish Studies) at the University of Tübingen. He has previously taught at Berkeley, Nottingham, and Cambridge. His publications include the edited volume *The Qur'an's Reformation of Judaism and Christianity* (Routledge, 2019) and the monograph *The Qur'an's Legal Culture: The Didascalia Apostolorum as a Point of Departure* (Mohr Siebeck, 2013). His *Law Beyond Israel: From the Bible to the Qur'an* (Oxford University Press) is forthcoming.

12.15–14.00 | [Graduate Student Lunch](#) (upon registration)

Palazzo Alliata di Villafranca, Piazza Bologni 20, Palermo

14.00–15.50 | [Sala dei Musici](#)

Panel 2A. *Genealogies of Qur'an Translations*

organized by [Johanna Pink](#) (University of Freiburg)

This panel takes a close look at the historical trajectories behind Qur'an translations and the influences that shape them. It does so by tracing editions and reeditions of translations, as well as their acknowledged and unacknowledged sources. The results of this investigation defy seemingly obvious clear-cut distinctions between Orientalist and Muslim translators, traditional scholars and modernist intellectuals, or Ahmadiyya, Shi'ah and Sunni Muslims. Rather, they show the extent to which the larger ideological climate, but also contingencies and matters of convenience, shape translators' choices and, thereby, predominate readings of the Qur'an.

*The Hilālī-Khān Translation of the Qur'an into English (1977):
Reconstructing Textual History*

Mykhaylo Yakubovych – University of Freiburg

Published by King Fahd Qur'an Printing Complex in 1997, the “explanatory translation of the Holy Qur'an” by Tāqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Muhammad Muḥsin Khān had many innovative advantages compared to other works of this kind. First of all, it used modern English and not the King James Bible translation style; secondly, this translation has been among the first works produced on the basis of what is now known as the “Salafi hermeneutics” of the Qur'an, popularizing the legacy of Ibn Kathīr. Nevertheless, its peak of popularity comes only two decades after its first printing. The study will exhibit a difference between the first two editions of the translation (1977, 1978) and the later prints revised by Dārussalam publisher (1985 and later) and KFQPC (two editions 1997). Since most of the interventions are closely related to the ideological background of modern qur'anic interpretation like interreligious relations, gender issues, references of modern natural sciences in exegesis etc., exploring the textual history of this translation and the roles of international agencies in its promotion can show many “exemplary” trends for contemporary Muslim translations of the Qur'an. Finally, referring to this case, the research is going to explain how and why some of the translations of the Qur'an by individual Muslims (advocated by official religious institutions) in English influenced so many exegetical works produced in a number of other languages. Revealing a story behind this translation of what was the real role of every translator and why Saudi religious authority published three other English translations before (Muhammad Asad, Marmaduke Pickthall, Abdallah Yusuf Ali) also will be a good illustration for the problem of further recognition and broad reception of the Qur'an translation.

MYKHAYLO YAKUBOVYCH (PhD 2011) is currently affiliated with Global Qur'an ERC-funded project, Orientalisches Seminar, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Germany. Author of the first complete translation of the Qur'an into Ukrainian (twelve editions since 2013), also numerous books and academic articles. He has held numerous research

fellowships in Poland (University of Warsaw), Saudi Arabia (Academic Department, King Fahd Qur'an Printing Complex), the USA (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton), Germany (IOS Regensburg and Freie Universität Berlin) and Hungary (Central European University). Main academic interests cover modern Qur'anic Studies and Islamic intellectual history.

14.30–14.50 | Panel 2A

Da'wa, Modernism, and the Ahmadiyya Question: The Waxing and Waning Influence of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an Translation

Johanna Pink – University of Freiburg

Muhammad Ali's (1874–1951) English Qur'an translation, first published in 1917, was a great success far beyond the circles of the Lahore Ahmadiyya movement over which he presided. The first widely distributed and read English Qur'an translation by a Muslim, it was used as a reference by many subsequent translators and fully or partly retranslated into a number of other languages, including Dutch and Chinese. The reasons for the appeal of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation were often largely or completely unrelated to his Ahmadiyya background. Rather, Muhammad Ali's modernist and rationalistic perspective on the Qur'an fulfilled the needs of many Muslims for a secular education. The extensive introduction helped many of them acquire basic knowledge of the Qur'an and Islam. The equally extensive notes provide many philological and exegetical clarifications, and they elaborate on the connections between the Qur'an and the Bible, often in an apologetic fashion. As such, they spoke to Muslims who were living within multireligious or colonial settings and felt a need to defend the Qur'an against claims of plagiarism or irrationality. In this talk, I demonstrate and explain the impact of Muhammad Ali's translation on subsequent Qur'an translations in different contexts, including India, Indonesia and South Africa, and discuss the reasons for its influence in terms of the distinctive perspective on the Qur'an that it offers. I furthermore show how an increasing awareness of the Ahmadiyya movement and the growing hostility towards it gradually caused translators, editors and publishers to distance themselves from the Ahmadiyya and erase some of the traces of Muhammad Ali's translation.

On a more general level, the impact of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation functions as a case study that shows how specific verses or expressions in the Qur'an may become focal points of a particular – sectarian or ideological – approach to the Qur'an. That approach may serve the needs of certain audiences, but also become a cause for intense polemics. The interpretation and translation of such segments of the Qur'an then becomes a symbolical issue in which there is no neutral ground – a dilemma in which even scholars who strive to avoid sectarian and ideological biases might become caught up.

JOHANNA PINK is professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Freiburg, Germany. She taught at Freie Universität Berlin and the University of Tübingen. Her main fields of interest are the trans-regional history of *tafsir* in the modern period and Qur'an translations, with a particular focus on trans-regional dynamics. She is the principal investigator of the research project GloQur – *The Global Qur'an* and general editor of the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an Online*. Her most recent monograph is *Muslim Qur'anic Interpretation Today* (Equinox, 2019).

14.50–15.10 | Panel 2A

The What Influences Revisions of Ahmadi Qur'an Translations and How Are They Legitimized? An Analysis of the Current German Translation

Kamran Ahmad Khan – University of Freiburg

The Ahmadiyya Movement was founded in India in 1889 by Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (d. 1908). The founder of the movement claimed to be the Messiah and Mahdī, sent by God with the mission to lead people to God and spread Islam throughout the world. Inspired by the zeal and messianic claims of their leader, many Ahmadis invested much effort and expense to advance the missionary activity. An important medium through which Islam and the views of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad were to be spread, especially in the Western world, were translations of the Qur'an into European languages. As early as 1905, the first English translation of the Qur'an was published, written by Abdul Hakim Khan (d. 1919?), which was the first English translation ever produced by a



Muslim. Subsequently, other translations into English, German, Dutch, etc. followed. After the death of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the movement split into two groups due to a succession dispute in 1914: the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, led by Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad's son Mirzā Bashīr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad (d. 1965), and Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at-e-Islam Lahore, led by Muhammad Ali (d. 1951). The split and the resulting competition for followers and prestige also proved to be a driving force to bring out Qur'an translations in European languages. This paper will look at the translation activity of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, which has translated the Qur'an into more than 100 languages. However, too little research has been done on what certain decisions of Ahmadi translators are based on. This paper will provide some insights into what influences Ahmadi translator's choices during the translation process and it will focus on the German translation by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, which has probably undergone the most revisions of any translation they produced. In 1954, *Der Heilige Koran* was composed and published by a team of scholars of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat. Numerous revised editions have subsequently appeared (the most recent revised edition was printed in 2021). The aim is to explore the differences between the first German edition and the current revised edition of *Der Heilige Koran* and to draw conclusions about how the concept of Qur'an translation has changed over the past decades. The paper will also explore the extent to which translations have changed in terms of translator's choices and language. This will help to elaborate on what decisions made by Ahmadi translators are based on and how changes are legitimized and authorized today.

KAMRAN AHMAD KHAN is a PhD student at the Albert-Ludwig Universität in Freiburg. He studied Islamic Studies and Psychology at the Philipps Universität in Marburg. His research within The Global Qur'an research project focuses on the English, Urdu und German Qur'an translation of the Ahmadiyya Movement and their influence on various Qur'an translations which were produced later on. His research interest includes Qur'anic Studies, South Asian reform movements and Sufism in India.

The Impact of Muslim Modernist and Revivalist Movements on Tatar Translations and Commentaries of the Qur'an in Imperial Russia

Elmira Akhmetova – University of Freiburg

This paper intends to contribute to regional and historical perspectives of the Qur'anic Studies through discussing Tatar translations and interpretations (*tafsir*) of the Qur'an in Imperial Russia up to 1917. It demonstrates a drastic change in local Tatar understanding of the Qur'an from classical to modernist perspectives, and highlights the role of Muslim modernist and reformist movements in shaping that transformation. The first translations of the *Tafsir* Al-Tabarī (838–923) into the Turco-Tatar language occurred in the 11th–12th centuries. Yet, due to the waning political situation and colonial context, the religious and intellectual interest in understanding, interpreting and translating the Qur'an and its commentaries into Tatar arose only in the 19th century. The first complete Tatar commentary of the Qur'an, *Tafsir Nu'mani*, appeared in the first half of the 19th century under authorship of two scholars, 'Abd al-Nasir Al-Qursawi (1776–1812) and his student, Nu'man bin Sabit As-Samani. The paper further underlines that, up to the end of the 19th century, Tatar commentaries of the Qur'an presented a traditional approach and followed classical *tafsir* works in interpreting the qur'anic message. The paper further discusses the fact that the classical approach in Qur'anic Studies had changed due to far-reaching reforms undertaken by the Ottoman state between 1839 and 1876, generally referred as Tanzimât, which resulted in the spirit of progress and advancement in Muslim intellectual thought, and openness to learn from more advanced societies. In parallel with ongoing modernization processes, a new wave of progressive understanding and interpretation of the qur'anic message within the context of modern developments occurred in the entire Muslim world, with its emerging center, Cairo, the *Al-Manâr* periodical and prolific thinkers such as 'Abduh and Rashîd Riḍâ. Thus, subsequent Tatar interpretations of the Qur'an became significantly influenced by these modernist and revivalist ideas. An elaboration of modern terms, ideologies and contemporary issues became dominant in Tatar interpretations of the Qur'an written by



Barudi, Jarullah, Zia Kamali and Amirkhan, but a relevant understanding of the Qur’anic message was the most central element. Subsequently, the outcomes of Industrial Revolution, new innovations and scientific developments resulted in a new direction in the Qur’anic Studies, that is a tendency towards verifying that all scientific discoveries were foresaid in the Qur’an. New commentaries eventually were essential to discover these hidden messages in the Qur’an. Such developments led to the emergence of reformist exegetics movement among Tatars. As the last part of the paper highlights, by the beginning of the 20th century, a movement for understanding the message of the Qur’an also necessitated the translation of its text and commentaries into Tatar.

ELMIRA AKHMETOVA, PhD, a Tatar scholar from Russia, is External Senior Fellow at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies, the Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg, Germany, and an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow. She also serves as Director for Academic Affairs at the Institute of Knowledge Integration Academy, Georgia. Akhmetova was previously employed in the Department of History and Civilization at International Islamic University Malaysia (2015–2021), Adjunct Associate Professor at University of South Australia (2018–2021), a Research Fellow at International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies Malaysia (2013–2016), and a lecturer at the Kazan State University (1996–1997) in Russia.

15.30–15.50 | Panel 2A

In the Shadow of Ignaty Krachkovsky: The Influence and Approaches of Contemporary Russian Qur’an Translations

Elvira Kulieva – University of Freiburg

The first edition of the Russian Qur’an translation *Koran: Pervod I Kommenrarii* by the Soviet Russian Arabist Ignaty Krachkovsky (1883–1951) was published in 1963. While the distinguished academic credentials of the translator created an image of a rigorous and reliable translation, this posthumous translation in fact consisted of unfinished work based on rough drafts used for a university course he was teaching about the Qur’an, and was never approved by Krachkovsky for publication. Despite this, Krachkovsky’s translation became widely respected as it was based on the original Arabic source text, was not associated with the anti-Islamic polemics of Christian missionaries,

and was thought to represent “genuine academic objectivity” by the standards of the time. Krachkovsky himself was a person whose life spanned the two epochs of Imperial and Soviet Russia and whose work had a lasting influence on the subsequent, post-Soviet era. His works were a turning point that defined a new direction for both Russian oriental studies and Muslim translators of the Qur’an affiliated with the various religious movements that emerged after the end of the Soviet empire. Krachkovsky’s translation had an impact on many of the stylistic features and word choices made in later Qur’an translations of differing types, including poetic (ex. V. Porokhova), academic (ex. N. Osmanov), and “confessional” works (ex. E. Kuliev). This paper approaches Krachkovsky’s work as an intertext for the subsequent development of the genre of Muslim Russian Qur’an translations, and traces the dynamics of its influence. It will first introduce the socio-historical context of Krachkovsky’s Russian Qur’an, and then move on to discuss its impact on later Muslim-authored translations through a number of comparative examples. By focusing on specific patterns of Krachkovsky’s translation choices and comparing these to the choices made in later works, this paper argues that the genealogy of Muslim Russian Qur’an translation in the modern era is inseparable from orientalist scholarship of the past. Moreover, it will become clear that the tensions at play in Krachkovsky’s work became a part of the Russian Muslim lexicon, and also the point of departure for debates about linguistic practices and vocabulary within Russian Muslim communities. For some translators, it was seen as an authoritative work that needed to be considered, or as a useful tool on the basis of which a “correct” translation of the Qur’an could be built. For others, it was important to adopt a critical stance, and to escape and rework his linguistic legacy.

ELVIRA KULIEVA is a second-year PhD student at the University of Freiburg, where she focuses on the modern history of Russian Qur’an translations, and their use by Russian-speaking Muslims. Her PhD project analyzes the genealogy and linguistic practices of modern translations of the Qur’an, and the interplay between these translations and *tafsir*, in relation to a wide range of topics, including theology, gender issues, and interfaith interactions. She has an MA in Islamic Studies (Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Doha) and another in History/Civilization Studies (Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul). Her research interests include Qur’anic Studies, Sufism, Islam and science, and orientalism.



Panel 2B. *Chronology, Non-Linearity, Intratextuality, Performance and Performative Act*

chaired by **Nora K. Schmid** (University of Oxford)

14.10–14.30 | Panel 2B

“But my Word Has Proved True”: An Intra-textual Reference in Qur’an 32:13

Gabriel Said Reynolds – University of Notre Dame, IN

In Sajdah (32):13 the Qur’an has God declare: “If We had (so) pleased, We would indeed have given every person his guidance. But My word has proved true: ‘I shall indeed fill Gehenna with jinn and people – all (of them)!’” (trans. Droge) The phrase “My word has proved true” (*ḥaqqā al-qawlu minnī*; see Qarai: “My word became due”), suggests that what follows (“I shall indeed fill...”) is God’s quotation of something He has said earlier. As Droge himself and other scholars note, one can indeed find similar statements in Q. 7:18; 11:119; and 38:85. This raises the intriguing possibility that the Qur’an in Surah 32 is referring back to one or more of these statements, and therefore could in principle allow one to establish a relative chronology free from external (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) traditions. In examining these passages (beginning with Q. 32:13) I will engage with both classical and modern *tafsir*, relying principally on the *Zād al-masīr* of Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) both as a catalogue of early views and for the author’s own arguments, as well as, for the modern period on Ibn ‘Ashūr’s (d. 1972) *Tafsir al-tahrīr wa-l-tanwīr* and Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s (d. 1981) *Mizān fī tafsir al-Qur’ān*. Among recent academic scholarship I will engage with Nicolai Sinai’s work on internal chronology in his 2009 *Fortschreibung und Auslegung* and his more recent articles “Processes of Literary Growth” and “The Qur’ān’s Dietary Tetralogue: A Diachronic Reconstruction”. I will also look at the specific commentary in *The Study Qur’an, Le Coran des historiens*, and *The Message of the Qur’an* (M. Asad). Finally, I will explore further how the phrase at hand in al-Sajdah fits in within the larger topos of the Qur’an giving voice to the people of hell (in v. 12 they are said to express their

penitence) and ask how their conversation with God contributes to the larger goals of the surah. It is important to note how al-Sajdah ends (vv. 26–29) with allusions to the dwelling places of peoples whom God has destroyed, natural signs, and to the “day of victory” (*yawm al-fath*), an apparent allusion to the Day of Resurrection. Thus this surah is a coherent example of qur’anic exhortation or paraenesis.

GABRIEL SAID REYNOLDS is Crowley Professor of Islamic Studies and Theology at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of *The Qur’an and the Bible: Text and Commentary* (Yale University Press, 2018) and *Allah: God in the Qur’an* (Yale University Press, 2020). He also hosts a YouTube channel entitled *Exploring the Qur’an and the Bible*.

14.30–14.50 | Panel 2B

Time and Qur’anic Eschatology

Feras Hamza – University of Wollongong in Dubai/The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London

It is common for scholars to list eschatology as one of the Qur’an’s subjects, rather than the major frame around which all other subjects are structured. Such framing of the Qur’an’s topics might be read to imply that literary features such as narratives or law exist independently in the text, or that there is a doctrinal distinction between eschatology and these other subjects; this may have the unintended result of eliding their inherent interdependence. Eschatology, in this view, seems to be limited to those verses that mention the afterlife directly. But, however one enters the Qur’an, sooner or later one realizes that there is an eschatological drama unfolding. This paper argues that the frame should be shifted to reflect the centrality of eschatology to all of the Qur’an’s other elements. Even as certain distinctions may hold in the sense of literary descriptions (“command”, “narrative”), doctrinally these elements are all interconnected by their eschatological import. It is not that scholars have not noticed the repeated insistence on the afterlife; it is that, by treating it as only one of the Qur’an’s subjects, discrete from others, eschatology is not given its full narrative function throughout the text. The Qur’an is historically grounded, and its narrations developed over time; but its worldview is one in which past and future are equally



a part of the ever-present eschaton: the only real time is eschatological time. Eschatological time allows the qur'anic subject to have a constant view towards their own end on earth, which is the beginning of the afterlife, and to prepare for that transition by cultivating an inward, pious disposition manifested in part through worldly action. Hence time is collapsed in the text itself where present, past, and future are interwoven. This paper proposes that the “collapsed” aspect emerges most clearly not when the Qur'an is rearranged according to its chronological order of revelation, but when the received text is read cyclically. Similar stories and motifs occur in all parts, themes are repeated through surahs; surahs comment on each other; stories appear here and there. For casual readers, the Qur'an's non-linearity makes it seem incoherent. But when read with more familiarity, this non-linearity is the key to its coherence.

FERAS HAMZA (PhD Oxford) is head of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Wollongong in Dubai and Visiting Research Fellow in the Qur'anic Studies Unit at the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS), London. He is the general series editor for the *Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries* project (Oxford University Press with IIS) and co-edits Brill's *Islamic Literatures: Texts and Studies* series. His publications include (co-edited with Sajjad Rizvi) *An Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries*, vol I, *On the Nature of the Divine* (Oxford University Press, 2008), and (co-edited with Karen Bauer) *An Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries*, vol. II, *On Women* (Oxford University Press, 2021). With Karen Bauer he has recently authored *Women in the Qur'an: A Critical Study of Eschatology, Piety and Moral Agency* (forthcoming).

14.50–15.10 | Panel 2B

Towards an Exhaustive Analysis of the Formation and Reception of the Qur'an's Formulas

Daniel Bannoura – University of Notre Dame, IN

This paper advances the research developed by Andrew Bannister in *An Oral-Formulaic Study of the Qur'an* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), and the analysis on the Qur'an's doublets presented by Gabriel Said Reynolds in “Intratextuality, Doublets, and Orality in the Qur'an, with Attention to Suras 61 and 66”, and “The Qur'anic Doublets: A

Preliminary Inquiry”. Therein, the paper develops the data analysis software used by Andy Bannister in *Oral-Formulaic Study* to detect the various repeated formulas and doublets interspersed throughout the Qur’an. Once detected, the paper examines several formulas with reference to their immediate contexts – namely within their own verses and surrounding pericopes, as well as throughout the various surahs as they are understood chronologically. Based on that examination, the paper attempts to trace the history of these formulas, namely their inception and development, and how they are employed in the various verses, pericopes, and surahs. For example, the paper looks into the oft-repeated phrase “inna alladhīna āmanū wa-amilu aṣ-ṣāliḥāt” (those who believe and do good deeds), and examines its function in the twelve verses where it is found (e.g. Q. 98:7; 19:96; 18:107; 41:8; 85:11; 2:277). It also looks into the various constructions of the formula “kafā bil-llāhi shahīdan bainī wa-bainakum” (God is enough as a witness between me and you) and the variety of their usage in surahs found in the middle and late Meccan periods, as well as the Medinan period (e.g. Q. 17:96; 13:43; 4:79, 166). The paper also pays close attention to the peculiar and frequent pairing of the formula “sīrū fil-arḍi” (travel throughout the earth) with “fanthurū kaifa kāna ‘āqibata ____” (and observe the fate of ____) (see Q. 27:69; 30:42; 35:44; 40:82; 47:10), and observes the changes in their grammar and stylistic features, as well as their intended function and meaning. In conclusion, the paper proposes a number of scenarios that explain the distances that exist between the verses and pericopes that include the examined formulas. These distances could either be explained temporally (from early Meccan to Medinan), or through the process of redactional distancing that occurred throughout the process of preserving, collecting, and redacting the various pericopes and surahs that formed the *textus receptus* of the Qur’an.

DANIEL BANNOURA is a second-year PhD student in Qur’anic Studies at the Department of Theology of the University of Notre Dame. He received a BSc degree in Physics from the University of Florida, an MA degree in Theology from London School of Theology, and a second MA degree in Islamic Studies from the University of Chicago. Daniel’s research interests include the relationship of the Qur’an to its sectarian milieu, the reception of biblical material in the Qur’an, and redaction and form criticism of the Qur’an. Daniel is married to Shannon, and currently lives in South Bend, Indiana.

The Qur'an, Itifāt, and Public Performance

Adam Flowers – University of Chicago, IL

The literary phenomenon of *itifāt*, the shift of grammatical subjects, addressees, cases, and numbers, is one of the Qur'an's most distinct literary features. Indeed, the study of these grammatical shifts became an important part of classical understandings of the Qur'an's inimitability (*i'jāz*) as a text. For too long, however, the study of the Qur'an, generally, and *itifāt*, specifically, has been hamstrung by a consideration of the Qur'an as a fundamentally written corpus. This paper will begin by arguing that the Qur'an is a record of the Prophet Muhammad's public preaching and must be analyzed as such. Accordingly, the qur'anic phenomenon of *itifāt* should be viewed as a performative rather than a strictly textual rhetorical device. With reference to performance theory, this paper will argue that the process of the Qur'an's oral proclamation was not a one-directional transference of content from speaker to a single audience but a multifaceted and reciprocal process of performance in three-dimensional space with a variety of listening audiences. In particular, it will argue that the grammatical "turning" characteristic of *itifāt*'s change of subjects and addressees can be correlated to the qur'anic proclaimer's physical "turning" to address different communities listening during the act of oral performance. This understanding of *itifāt* will be applied to the interpretation of qur'anic verses and passages to demonstrate how a consideration of the Qur'an's performativity can elucidate a variety of exegetical difficulties. The conclusion of the paper will suggest avenues forward in the study of the Qur'an as performance, including a reconsideration of the Islamic exegetical tradition's account of the process of qur'anic revelation and the role of performance in differentiating between the Prophet's revealed (Qur'an) and profane (*khutbah*) public speech.

ADAM FLOWERS is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Chicago. His research interests include the literary character of the Qur'an and Arabic papyri.

Penitent Prophets: Admonition and Consolation of the Qur’anic Messenger in Q. Şād 38

Andrew J. O’Connor – St. Norbert College in De Pere, WI

In Surah Şad 38, after encouraging the Prophet in the wake of the doubts of his interlocutors, the Qur’an relates two brief accounts of David and Solomon. These narratives, however, differ from the structure of the more common “punishment story” iteration of qur’anic reminiscences, which emphasize the destruction meted out to unbelievers (found in abbreviated form, e.g. in vv. 12–14). Instead, these two pericopes relate how David and his son were penitent (*awwāb*, vv. 17, 30) and were tested (Ar. root *f-t-n*) yet turned to God in repentance (*anāb*, 24, 34). If the passages in question, therefore, do not serve to forewarn the Qur’an’s audience of divine retribution, but instead recount the repentance of two *prophets*, then what purpose do these two stories serve within the larger context of the surah? Might it be the case, as was first suggested to me by Hythem Sidky, that these accounts of David and Solomon are directed at the Prophet himself, admonishing him and encouraging his own repentance – for him too to be *awwāb* and *anāb* after a test? In this paper, I pursue this possibility, arguing that Surah Şād 38 is not only an extended apologia for the prophetic claims of the Messenger, but for his *fallibility* as well. I contextualize the David and Solomon pericopes within the larger surah, which frequently addresses the Prophet directly concerning the doubts of the recalcitrant disbelievers, emphasizing the past vindication of prophets (v. 14) and the need to exercise patience (v. 17), as well as highlighting the sole prerogative of the Prophet to function as a warner (vv. 4, 65, 70) who asks for no wage (v. 86). The consolation of the Prophet is a recurring theme, but there are subtle hints of admonition as well. Indeed, the accounts of David and Solomon do seem to be directed at the Messenger: e.g. v. 21 asks if the “account of the dispute” (*naba’u l-khaṣm*) have “reached you”, in the second person singular: *atāka*. The Prophet is to learn from their examples. Methodologically, I largely draw upon Walid Saleh’s “The End of Hope”, which I also use to address the larger implications of distinguishing between the agency of the qur’anic voice and the Prophet



himself. I argue that even if a surah is addressed to the Prophet himself, it nonetheless remains a performative act for the benefit of others.

ANDREW J. O’CONNOR is Assistant Professor of Theology & Religious Studies at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin (USA). He holds a PhD from the University of Notre Dame, an MA from the University of Chicago, and a BA from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. In the 2017–2018 academic year, he was the recipient of a Fulbright Research Grant to study in Amman, Jordan. One of his recent publications is “Obeying God and His Messenger: Medinan Prophetology in the Meccan Qur’an?” in *Unlocking the Medinan Qur’an*, edited by Nicolai Sinai (Brill, 2022).

15.50–16.10 | [Coffee Break](#)

16.10–16.55 | [Sala dei Musici](#)

Panel 2A. *Qur’an Translations*

chaired by [Johanna Pink](#) (University of Freiburg)

16.15–16.35 | [Panel 2A](#)

Sources and Strategies in Translating the Canonical Readings of the Qur’an (with Case Study of Surah al-An‘ām)

Sohaib Saeed and **Marijn van Putten** – Ibn ‘Ashur Centre for Quranic Studies, Glasgow and University of Leiden

Despite normative Islamic scholarship settling upon the validity and authority (or “Qur’anicity”) of ten collected reading traditions (*qirā’āt*), the translation movement has tended to adhere exclusively to the sub-reading of Ḥafṣ an ‘Āṣim which has been dominant in most Muslim regions for at least the past few centuries. This paper considers exceptions to this norm – such as translations of the reading of Nāfi’, or free choice exercised by translators at limited junctures – as part of outlining the strategies available to account for the canonical readings when translating the Qur’an. The authors highlight the significance of the genre known as *tawjīh al-qirā’āt*, which flourished alongside *tafsir* works until the 6th century AH. This has two purposes: to extract those scholars’ insights concerning how variant readings can be harmonized or differentiated semantically; and to consider what their observations,

and their craft more generally, imply concerning attitudes to reading variance in this early period (pre- and post-“sevenization” by Ibn Mujāhid, d. 324/936, and before the interventions of Abū Ḥayyān, d. 745/1344). The paper draws upon these sources to perform a close study of over fifty reading variants in Surah al-An‘ām (Q. 6), demonstrating how they can be translated at times reductively and at times distinctly, with the rationale for these decisions. Comparison is made with two recent translations that incorporate variant readings in their footnotes (while Ḥafṣ retains its normativity). The first, in Japanese, is *Nichi-A Taiyaku Kuruān. Tsuki Yakkai to Seitō Jū Dokuju Chūkai* (2014) by Kaori Nakata, Kazuki Shimomura and Yōhei Matsuyama, edited by Kō Nakata. The second, in English, is *Bridges’ Translation of the Ten Qira’at of the Noble Qur’an* (2020) by Fadel Soliman. This comparison aims to highlight good practice as well as causes for error, and to consider to what extent these modern projects align with, or diverge from, the attitudes of the early *tawjīh* scholars.

SOHAIB SAEED is director of the Ibn ‘Ashur Centre for Quranic Studies, based in Glasgow, and serves as content lead for Quran.com and research head for Bayyinah Institute. He was trained in tafsīr at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and completed his doctorate at SOAS, London. He then did postdoctoral research with The Global Qur’an project at Freiburg University. Following his award-winning translation from *The Great Exegesis* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, his first monograph *Explaining the Qur’an Through the Qur’an* is forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press.

MARIJN VAN PUTTEN is a researcher that specializes in the linguistic and textual history of the Qur’an. His main focus currently is on the history of the qur’anic reading traditions, both as it appears in literary sources and in manuscript record. Besides this he has published on questions regarding qur’anic paleography and textual criticism and extensively on the linguistic history of both Qur’anic Arabic and the modern dialects. He also continues to publish on the linguistic history of the Berber and Semitic language families.

16.35–16.55 | Panel 2A

Qur’an Translations & the Global Religious Politics of Maryam Jameelah

Justine Howe – Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH

This paper examines the role of Qur'an translations in the global religious imagination of Maryam Jameelah (1934–2012). Jameelah was an American Jewish convert who left New York City in 1961 for Lahore, Pakistan, at the invitation of Abul A'la Mawdūdī. In the decade that followed, she became an important voice of the global Islamic revival and published under the auspices of the Jamaat-i-Islami presses. Jameelah was a staunch critic of both American culture and postcolonial Muslim societies, seeking to convince her readers that Muslims faced an existential threat from Western capitalism and secularism, with the recovery of a pure Islamic way of life being the only route to the survival of the *ummah*. Translated into 15 languages, her twenty books and many more pamphlets and articles had remarkable staying power throughout the 20th century, as they began to circulate through revivalist organizations focused on *da'wa* such as the Muslim Students' Association in the United States (Howe 2020). Jameelah never learned Arabic or Urdu, and thus her work relies entirely on translations of the Qur'an and other sacred texts, as well as English translations of other revivalist authors whom she quotes and cites, especially Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb. Jameelah's preferred translation was that of a fellow convert, Marmaduke Pickthall, which she praised for its "[...] sweep of eloquence, the virility and dignity of the language that is unsurpassed in any other translation" (Jameelah, *Islam and the ahl al-kitab*, p. xxiii). Jameelah's childhood in a Reform Jewish milieu and her time spent among Black, Sunni Muslim communities in New York City, notably the Islamic Mission of Brooklyn, both shaped her conviction that English could be a primary medium for the core message of the Qur'an (as she understood it). This paper focuses on the how Jameelah used the Qur'an to promote a highly ideological brand of Islamic revivalism. While there is now a vast ethnographic literature concerning women's participation in the *da'wa* movement, we know considerably less about how women intellectuals and thinkers contributed to transnational revivalist print culture and the ideological contours of revivalism more broadly (with the notable exception of Ellen McLarney's *Soft Force*, 2014). I argue that Jameelah marshals quotations from the Qur'an (sometimes alongside hadith translations) as evidence for Islam being a complete, timeless system of universal expectations, which in turn require Muslims to adopt particular political positions in the contemporary era. I focus

on Jameelah's positions regarding gender complementarianism, the seclusion of women from public space, and legal regulations concerning marriage and divorce. In such passages, Jameelah uses a range of translations, sometimes relying on Pickthall, and at other times, drawing on the translation of Muhammad Habib Shakir. These translations – offered without commentary or recognition of the multivalence of Arabic terminology in the verses – work to underscore Jameelah's claims of the superiority of Islam as a foil to the moral depravity of the West. In other passages, she offers paraphrases of translations, giving her own gloss to qur'anic passages, all with the aim of distilling its content to action-oriented, highly politicized interpretations.

JUSTINE HOWE is Associate Professor and the Elizabeth and Raymond Armington Professor of Religious Studies at Case Western Reserve University. She currently serves as Chair of Religious Studies and Co-Director of the Program of Women's and Gender Studies. Her first book, *Suburban Islam*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2018 (paperback 2021). She is also the editor of Routledge *Handbook of Islam and Gender* (Routledge, 2020). She has published in a wide range of venues, including the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* (2016). She earned her PhD in Religious Studies from Northwestern University and holds an MA in the Anthropology and Sociology of Religion from the University of Chicago.

16.55–18.00 | [Sala dei Musici](#)

Panel 3A. *Trends in Sufi Tafsir*

organized by **Adnane Mokrani** (FSCIRE, Palermo); chaired by **Andrea Amato** (FSCIRE, Palermo)

The three papers of this panel present the works of significant Sufi masters, like al-Sulamī (d. 1021), Rumi (d. 1273), and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Ġazā'irī (d. 1883), tracing their thoughts and methodologies, and exploring the characteristics of the Sufi qur'anic interpretation and the theory behind it.

17.00–17.20 | Panel 3A

The Light that Shines from the Cave: Sufi Tafsir on Aṣḥāb al-Kahf
Jason Welle – Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, Rome



This presentation explores Sufi *tafsir* on the qur’anic passage of the Companions of the Cave (Q. 18:9–26), with a particular eye to the elements that distinguish Sufi interpretation of these youths from the concerns of Sunni *mufassirūn* more generally. Early commentaries by Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) and al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021) take center stage, as these two spiritual masters frame the youths as exemplars of spiritual wayfaring, as models of the remembrance of God, and as mirrors of the glory of divine light that illuminated the youths and would cause anyone looking upon them to flee. Both commentaries rely upon the binary frame of *zāhir* and *bāṭin* associated with Sufi *tafsir*, as well as familiar tropes of *fanā’* and *baqā’*, *ma’rifa*, and others. Jamal Elias has questioned whether scholars should speak about “Sufi *tafsir*” as a genre of its own; this presentation argues that when placed alongside commentaries that focus on philological problems (*al-raqīm*, Q. 18:9), on the latent critique of Christian hagiography regarding these sleepers, or on other features of this enigmatic passage, Sufi commentaries on the verses about *aṣḥāb al-kaḥf* show that this passage provides a privileged window onto the key interpretive concerns of Sufi masters in the formative period. Particularly rich in what Gerhard Bowering once called the “keynotes” that stimulate mystical commentary, the passage sparks comments about light and shade, veiling and unveiling, yielding interpretations that show that these Sufis did not understand the section as a discourse about a past event, but as a dynamic presentation of what they themselves hoped to achieve in the spiritual journey.

JASON WELLE is Director of Studies at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI) in Rome. His teaching and research focus on medieval Islamic mysticism, on the Franciscan intellectual tradition, and on Muslim-Christian relations. He has authored or co-authored a dozen scholarly articles in the field of Islamic Studies and is co-editor of a two-volume collection on the Second Vatican Council (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). He holds a PhD from Georgetown University and masters’ degrees from the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Theological Union.

17.20–17.40 | Panel 3A

‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ġazā’irī as a Sufi Interpreter of the Qur’an

Rasha Rouabah – University of Algiers 1

This paper addresses the Sufi *tafsir*, as one of the primary hermeneutical methodologies in *tafsir* literature, through the specific case of al-Amīr ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ġazā’irī (d. 1883) and his book *al-Mawāqif*. ‘Abd al-Qādir is well known as a politician and fighter against the French occupation of his country Algeria. Still, the Sufi dimension of his personality and work has remained little studied and known. The paper deals with ‘Abd al-Qādir’s vision of the Qur’an, and the aesthetic dimension of his mystical interpretation. After introducing the concept of Sufi *tafsir* and its characteristics, the paper presents a series of analytical examples from *al-Mawāqif*. It traces the idea’s roots in Akbarī Sufism, the school of the Andalusian Great Master Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240), of which ‘Abd al-Qādir was a notable modern representative.

RASHA ROUBAH is Professor of Theology and Sufism in the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, University of Algiers 1. She holds a PhD from Batna University in Algeria and an MA from al-Amīr ‘Abd al-Qādir University for Islamic Sciences, Constantine, Algeria. She is interested in Sufi studies in Arabic and Persian, a member of the al-Amīr ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ġazā’irī National Association, and a member of the Scientific Council of the Khalwati Foundation for Sufi Studies and Research in Algeria.

17.40–18.00 | Panel 3A

Rūmī and the Sufi Interpretation of the Qur’an

Adnane Mokrani – FSCIRE, Palermo

The paper traces the hermeneutical principles, mentioned by Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Ḥarrālī (d. 638/1241), in the *Maṭnawī* of Ġalāl al-Dīn Balḥī, known as Rumi (d. 672/1273), even though there was no direct contact between them. Ḥarrālī’s theoretical introduction to Sufi *tafsir* is of extreme importance as the counterpart of the influential introduction made a few decades later by Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). Rumi’s work, also known as the “Persian Qur’an”, is an atypical *tafsir* without using the term. The paper is particularly interested in the qur’anic narratives and how Rumi “internalizes” them. His focus is no more the veneration of persons from the past but rather the transformation of these figures into symbols of inner conversion for people today. This spiritual and even psychological reading of the

Qur'anic narratives is relevant today because it resolves the problem of historicity and gives the text a vivid actuality.

ADNANE MOKRANI is a senior fellow at the La Pira Library and Research Center, Palermo. He is also Professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. He holds a PhD from al-Zaytuna University, Tunis, and a PhD from the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI), Rome. Among his writings are *Toward an Islamic Theology of Nonviolence. In Dialogue with René Girard* (Michigan State University Press, 2022) and “Semitic Rhetoric and the Qur’an: The Scholarship of Michel Cuypers” in *New Trends in Qur’anic Studies, Text, Context, and Interpretation* (Lockwood Press, 2019).

16.10–18.00 | Sala da Ballo

Panel 3B. *Exegesis, Implausibility and Challenges*

chaired by **Joseph E. Lowry** (University of Pennsylvania)

16.15–16.35 | Panel 3B

Thomas Eich – University of Hamburg

About Supposed References to Prenatal Human Life in the Qur’an: The Opening Lines of Surat al-Insan (Q. 76) as an Example

Since the early 20th century, research has stated that in its debates with deniers of the resurrection the Qur’an would repeatedly refer to the example of God bringing about the development of humans from an insignificant substance to a born human being. If God can do this, so the argument goes, he can surely bring about comparable things surpassing human comprehension, such as the bodily resurrection of the dead. In doing this, the Qur’anic text develops an argument, one which may also be found in texts by Jewish and Christian authors. The argument that the Qur’anic text would refer to prenatal life in a number of instances rests on the premise that these respective passages refer to or presuppose each other. One of them is Q. 76:2 speaking about “a sperm drop, a mingling” (Arberry translation of *nutfa amshāji*), often understood as describing the mixing of male and female semen. In my paper, I will argue for a new interpretation of the opening lines of Q. 76. First, I will address two already existing approaches, which appear to dominate the

research on this passage, i.e. the rhetorical reading of Q. 76 together with Q. 75, and the idea of mixing semen. Drawing on manuscript studies and the study of Hadith and Qur'an exegesis, I will voice my hesitancy regarding these two approaches. Then I will give a structural overview of other Qur'an passages using *nutfā*, followed by a look at Syriac texts by Ephraim, Jacob of Sarug, Babai the Great, and the *Cave of Treasures*. These Syriac texts emphasize that God created the first human through mixing substances. Looking again at Q. 76:1–3 against this background, I will put forward my interpretation that the Surat al-Insan does not refer to prenatal human life rather than the creation of the first human, *al-Insan*.

THOMAS EICH is a scholar of Arab and Islamic studies. He graduated from Bamberg University and did his PhD at Bochum University. He works on imaginations of prenatal human life as they are expressed in Arabic texts including the Qur'an and Hadith.

16.35–16.55 | Panel 3B

Intellectual Legacy of the Exegesis of Qur'an 4.24 and its Sexual Ethics Implications

Roshan Iqbal – Agnes Scott College, Decatur, GA

My paper traces the intellectual legacy of the exegesis of Qur'an 4:24, which is used as the proof text for the permissibility of *mut'ah*, temporary marriage. I ask if the use of verse 4.24 for the permissibility of *mut'ah* marriage is justified within the rules and regulations of Qur'anic hermeneutics. I examine seventeen Qur'an commentaries, the chronological span of which extends from the first extant commentary to the present day in three major Islamicate languages (Arabic, Persian, and Urdu). As Western academia's first comprehensive work concerning the intellectual history of *mut'ah*, my work illustrates the power of sectarian influences on how scholars have interpreted verse 4:24. This is the only work in English that includes a plurality of voices from minor schools (Ibadi, Ashari, Zaidi, and Ismaili) largely neglected by Western scholars, alongside major schools, and draws from all available subgenres of exegetical works. Further, by revealing ambiguities in the interpretation of *mut'ah*, my work challenges accepted sexual ethics in Islamic thought, as presented by most classical and many modern Muslim scholars – and



thus opens up space to theorize Islamic sexual ethics anew and contribute to this crucial conversation from the perspective of Muslim feminism.

ROSHAN IQBAL hails from a small hamlet of 20 million: Karachi, Pakistan. She received her PhD in Islamic Studies from Georgetown University. Prior to this she read for her MPhil at the University of Cambridge. She has studied in Pakistan, the US, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, the UK, and Iran. Her research interests include gender and sexuality in the Qur'an, Islamic law, Film and Media Studies, and modern Muslim intellectuals. Her forthcoming book is titled, *Marital and Sexual Ethics in Islamic Law: Rethinking Temporary Marriage* (Rowman & Littlefield). As Associate Professor at Agnes Scott College, she teaches classes in the Religious Studies department and also classes that are cross-listed with Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Film Studies.

16.55–17.15 | Panel 3B

The Named and the Unnamed: Name and Status in the Qur'an

Sarra Tlili – University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

The Qur'an has a small number of personal names compared to other scriptures, including the Bible and the Hadith. It refers by name only to God, thirty-nine human individuals, five angels, the devil (Iblis), and six or seven collective groups. As a result of this feature, many relatively central figures remain unnamed. These include highly developed persons such as the individual referred to in qur'anic exegesis as "The Believer of Sūrat Yāsīn" and historically important figures such Adam's wife and sons. Although the Qur'an's system of providing or withholding names has not been studied closely, the fact that, among women, it mentions only Mary by name has garnered some attention and has generally been read in terms of status. Medieval exegetes felt the need to account for the perceived inconsistency between Mary's distinction and the fact that her name was disclosed because according to their value system the disclosure of a free woman's name was debasing (al-Rāzī). In contrast, modern readers often take Mary's exceptional mention by name as a sign of her special status (Tamara Agha-Jaffar, Kaltner and Mirza, Spellberg), but this reading seems to relegate other qur'anic women to a lower status. Indeed, Fatima Mernissi complains that although the Qur'an "speaks of a 'woman ruling over the people

of Sheba”, the woman “has no name in our holy book”. The aim of this presentation is to show the implausibility of reading the Qur’an’s naming system in terms of status and to propose a more text-based approach to this question. Sūrat Ghāfir (40) seems to provide useful insights into this topic. The narrative section in this surah begins with the announcement that God sent Moses to the Pharaoh, Haman, and Korah, but the key and most favorable role is reserved for “a man of faith from the Pharaoh’s people who had kept his faith hidden”. The man remains unnamed throughout the narrative and is, instead, referred to as “The One Who Has Believed”. The Qur’an refers to this man using the quality that it values the most – his faith. In contrast, Korah – the disbelieving Israelite – is mentioned by name in the introductory verse of this narrative, but unlike even the Pharaoh and Haman, he is totally absent from the scene of events. The mention of Korah by name is thus not a sign of distinction, nor is the anonymity of “The One Who Has Believed” a sign of lower status.

SARRA TLILI is Associate Professor of Arabic Literature at the University of Florida, Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. Her main areas of research are animal and environmental ethics in Islam, Qur’anic stylistics, and tradition and modernity in Arabic literature. Her publications include *Animals in the Qur’an* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), “All Animals Are Equal, or Are They? The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’s Animal Epistle and its Unhappy End”, in *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 15/2 (2014), and “From Breath to Soul: The Quranic Word *Rūḥ* and Its (Mis)interpretations” in *Arabic Humanities, Islamic Thought*, edited by Joseph E. Lowry and Shawkat M. Toorawa (Brill, 2017).

17.15–17.35 | Panel 3B

From Al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 820 CE) to Al-Maqdisī (d. 1267 CE): Chronicling a Neglected Opinion on the “Seven Aḥruf”

Yasir Qadhi – The Islamic Seminary of America, Richardson, TX

The “seven *aḥruf*” hadith is one of the most well-known Prophetic traditions related to the diversity of the Qur’anic text and different recitations. Yet, despite its universal acceptance amongst all strands of Islam, there is considerable diversity of opinion in attempting to demarcate what exactly the *aḥruf* are. Multiple reports from some of the most respected specialists in the field of Qur’anic sciences and *qirā’āt*



indicate the sheer frustration that some of these erudite authorities had in attempting to decipher the reality of this concept. Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī (d. 1392) in his *magnum opus* on the sciences of the Qur'an, *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, lists around fifteen opinions, while Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), in his seminal work *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, famously lists around forty. These two works defined for all later scholars the discipline of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, and are still the primary references in seminaries around the world. Conspicuously absent from these two works is an opinion about the reality of the *aḥruf* that was championed by many famous earlier authorities, including al-Shāfi'ī (d. 820), al-Ṭahāwī (d. 933), Abu al-Faḍl al-Rāzī (d. 1062), and Abū Shāmah al-Maḡdisī (d. 1267), amongst others. This opinion claims that the *aḥruf* tradition is a Divine concession to the Companions that allowed them to substitute the original words with their own synonyms in specific circumstances. Neither al-Zarkashī nor al-Suyūṭī list this opinion, or in fact names any of these authorities, in their respective discussions on the *aḥruf*. Additionally, not a single modern work on the sciences of the Qur'an references this opinion. In fact, it is only with difficulty that one finds it mentioned anywhere outside of the original writings of these authors. This deafening silence is almost inexplicable, especially in light of the fact that one of these authorities, Abu al-Faḍl al-Rāzī, was actually the first authority to write an entire treatise on the meaning of the *aḥruf*. Many of the opinions that al-Zarkashī, al-Suyūṭī and other authors quote are clearly fringe opinions championed by non-specialists and with little academic merit, and which they themselves dismiss. Why, then, is an opinion that was championed and proposed by such seminal figures sidelined? This paper seeks to document and chronicle this neglected opinion, and offer suggestions as to why an opinion that was held by such luminaries became completely forsaken over time.

YASIR QADI has a BSc in Chemical Engineering from the University of Houston, a BA in Hadith Studies from the Islamic University of Medinah, an MA in Islamic Theology from the University of Medinah, and a PhD in Islamic Studies from the Yale University. His interests include the development of early Sunni theology, the recitations of the Qur'an, and *sīrah* literature. He has published papers and monographs on aspects of theology and the sciences of the Qur'an. He is currently the Dean of the Islamic Seminary of America, and resides in Dallas, Texas.

The Shi'ah Ijtihad over Male Guardianship

Minoo Mirshahvalad – FSCIRE, Palermo

Over centuries verse 34 of the An-Nisā', besides some other qur'anic verses, has played a pivotal role in the definition of the Islamic family law. In the modern time, this verse has elicited many reflections and concerns regarding women's human rights. Some articles of Iranian family law (e.g. 1005, 1105, 1114, 1117, 1133, 1180, 1181, 1233), which emerge from this verse, are considered unacceptable according to the modern understanding of gender relations. The qur'anic verse defines the rights and duties of Muslim couples through the notion of *qawāmiyya*. This notion, roughly translatable as "guardianship" is a keyword in this qur'anic verse that implies male superiority over women. Since the Middle Ages the meaning of *qawāmiyya* and superiority, the reasons why men should be women's guardians, and the implications of such a relationship between couples have been subject to controversies. The current paper is dedicated to Shi'ah jurists only and examines the different ideas of these jurists concerning *qawāmiyya*. It aims to show how some reformist, lay scholars, such as Fereshtian and Katuzian, as well as *maraji* (Shi'ah prominent clerical jurists), such as Ayatollah Sanei, Ayatollah Montazeri, Ayatollah Fadlallah, and Eshkevari, have found original interpretations of this qur'anic notion. Some new exegetes challenge the conviction of the medieval scholars who believed in men's mental superiority. The reformists provide a new understanding of male guardianship that goes beyond men's mental superiority. They challenge the sphere of applicability of the guardianship: whether it indicates the guardianship of any man over any woman. Some of them consider *qawāmiyya* as men's obligation to maintain their wife instead of men's right to control them. The current paper presents and compares the different understandings of the qur'anic verse, which have been found in the Persian and Arabic medieval manuscripts as well as some modern Persian manuals of law.

MINOO MIRSHAHVALAD obtained her PhD at the University of Turin in Sociology of Cultural Processes. Since 2016, she has been studying Shi'ah communities in Italy and since

2020, she is a member of PRAISE, which is an international research team that monitors Shi'ah communities in Europe and the US. Her current research project regards Italians' conversion to Shi'ah Islam. Moreover, she collaborates with the chair of Islamic Studies at the University of Pisa as an expert in Islamic studies. Currently she is a senior researcher at FSCIRE.

18.00–18.15 | Coffee Break

18.15–19.30 | Sala da Ballo

Roundtable. *Qur'anic Coherence*

organized by **Karen Bauer** (Institute of Ismaili Studies, London)
and **Feras Hamza** (University of Wollongong in Dubai)
chaired by **Karen Bauer** (Institute of Ismaili Studies, London)

Panelists

1. **Feras Hamza** – University of Wollongong in Dubai
2. **Asma Helali** – University of Lille
3. **Marianna Klar** – University of Oxford
4. **Joseph Lowry** – University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
5. **Nevin Reda** – University of Toronto, ON
6. **Gabriel Said Reynolds** – University of Notre Dame, IN
7. **Nicolai Sinai** – University of Oxford
8. **Shawkat M. Toorawa** – Yale University, New Haven, CT

Somewhere near the beginning of most English introductions to the Qur'an, authors mention that the Qur'an is non-linear. This points to certain expectations on the part of English-speaking audiences, highlighted nicely by a quote in Neal Robinson's *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* (Georgetown University Press, 2003, second edition), in which a fictional character becomes terribly annoyed at what he perceives to be the Qur'an's lack of narrative progression, and decides that there must be a lock upon his own heart preventing him from understanding it. Indeed, non-linearity is often associated with modernist authors such as Virginia Woolf or James Joyce, not with books from the 7th century; and perhaps especially not with sacred scripture. The Qur'an defies such expectations with its non-chronological arrangement and juxtaposition of commands and

exhortations, stories, supplications, promises and threats; stories which are told in parts and almost never in whole; iteration and reiteration of themes and even exact phrases; mixture and alternation of tenses, speaking voices, and direct and indirect addressees. The received Qur'an (the *muṣḥaf*) thus raises questions for some readers, centering on whether it can be considered a coherent text, and/or what might it take to make it coherent. This roundtable gathers together prominent Qur'anic Studies scholars to discuss an issue that lies at the heart of how we read, understand, and study the Qur'an.

The roundtable will be animated by several framing questions:

- 1) How do you define textual coherence and what do you expect from such coherence?*
- 2) Should coherence be considered one of the potential, but not inevitable, consequences of the scholarly study of the Qur'an? Why should coherence not be considered a basic premise in the received Qur'an?*
- 3) Is coherence attended to by discovering structural patterns, or does coherence entail something more (narrative, plot, themes, emotion, theology)?*
- 4) What methods and methodologies reveal coherence, or alternatively reveal a lack of coherence in the Qur'an, or in parts of it?*
- 5) Is it possible to find coherence in the arrangement of the received Qur'an (the muṣḥaf)? Does the arrangement of sūras impact the Qur'an's coherence?*

Format: Panelists will be given six minutes each for an initial response to one or more of these questions, and will be also given a chance for a follow-up question to respond to one another's points, before discussion is opened up to the audience.

KAREN BAUER (PhD, Princeton) is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London and a visiting scholar at the Oriental Institute, Oxford. Her publications include *Gender Hierarchy in the Qur'an: Medieval Interpretations, Modern Responses* (Cambridge University Press, 2015); she has edited *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qur'anic Exegesis* (Oxford University Press, 2013) and, along with Feras Hamza, *An Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries*, vol. II, *On Women* (Oxford University Press, 2021). Also along with Feras Hamza she has recently authored *Women in the Qur'an: A Critical Study of Eschatology, Piety and Moral Agency* (forthcoming).

ASMA HILALI is an associate professor of Islamic studies at the University of Lille. Dr Hilali has worked in various research centers in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. Her main interest is the transmission of religious texts in early and medieval Islam. She is the author of *The Sanaa Palimpsest: The transmission of the Qur'an in the First Centuries AH* (Oxford University Press, 2020), and the edited volume *The Making of Religious texts in Islam. The Fragment and the Whole* (Gerlach Press, 2017).

FERAS HAMZA (PhD Oxford) is the head of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Wollongong in Dubai and Visiting Research Fellow in the Qur'anic Studies Unit at the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS), London. Feras is also general series editor for the *Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries* project (Oxford University Press with IIS) and co-edits Brill's *Islamic Literatures: Texts and Studies* series. His publications include (co-edited with Sajjad Rizvi) *An Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries*, vol I, *On the Nature of the Divine* (Oxford University Press, 2008), and (co-edited with Karen Bauer) *An Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries*, vol. II, *On Women* (Oxford University Press, 2021). With Karen Bauer he has recently authored *Women in the Qur'an: A Critical Study of Eschatology, Piety and Moral Agency* (forthcoming).

MARIANNA KLAR (DPhil, Oxford, 2002) is a researcher at Oxford's Faculty of Oriental Studies, Senior Research Associate at Pembroke College, Oxford and Research Associate at the Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS. Her most recent publications focus on the Qur'an's structure, its narratives, and its literary context. She has also worked extensively on tales of the prophets within the medieval Islamic historiographical tradition and on qur'anic exegesis. Her monograph on al-Tha'labi's *Tales of the Prophets* was published in 2009 with Routledge, and she recently edited *Structural Dividers in the Qur'an* (Routledge, 2021).

JOSEPH E. LOWRY is a specialist in Islamic law, Arabic literature, and classical Islamic thought. He is the author, among other works, of *Early Islamic Legal Theory: the Risala of Muhammad Ibn Idris al-Shafi'i* (Brill, 2007) and the editor (with D. Stewart and S. Toorawa) of *Law and Education in Medieval Islam: Studies in Memory of George Makdisi* (Gibb Memorial Trust, 2005) and (with D. Stewart) of *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography II: 1350–1850* (Harrasowitz, 2009). He has edited and translated al-Shafi'i's *Epistle on Legal Theory for the Library of Arabic Literature* (New York University Press, 2013) and is a member of the editorial boards of the Library of Arabic Literature and of the journals *Islamic Law and Society* (Brill) and *Abbasid Studies* (Brill). Before completing his PhD he was an attorney in private practice.

NEVIN REDA is Associate Professor of Muslim Studies at Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto. Her research interests include the poetics and hermeneutics of qur'anic narrative structure, the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an, spiritually integrative approaches to the Qur'an, Islamic feminist hermeneutics, and Islamic ethical-legal theory. Her publications include *The al-Baqara Crescendo: Understanding the Quran's Style, Narrative, Structure and Running Themes* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2017) and a co-edited volume (with Yasmin Amin), *Islamic Interpretive Tradition and Gender Justice: Processes of Canonization, Subversion, and Change* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2020).

GABRIEL SAID REYNOLDS is Crowley Professor of Islamic Studies and Theology at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of *The Qur'an and the Bible: Text and Commentary* (Yale University Press, 2018) and *Allah: God in the Qur'an* (Yale University Press, 2020).

NICOLAI SINAI (PhD Freie Universität Berlin, 2007) is Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Pembroke College. His publications include *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017) and *Rain-Giver, Bone-Breaker, Score-Settler: Allāh in Pre-Quranic Poetry* (American Oriental Society, 2019), and he is the author of the forthcoming monograph *Key Terms of the Qur'an: A Critical Dictionary* (Princeton University Press, 2023).

SHAWKAT M. TOORAWA is Professor of Arabic Literature, Professor of Comparative Literature and Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations at Yale University. He is currently preparing a book of translations of devotional surahs and passages; translating Surah Yusuf as a playscript; and editing a volume on the Qur'an's literary dimensions.

19.30–19.40 | Coffee Break

19.40–20.40 | Sala dei Musici

Event. *A Read-Through of "Surah Yusuf, A Translation in 5 Acts"*

Shawkat M. Toorawa – Yale University, New Haven, CT

I propose to coordinate and perform the read-through of a translation of Surah Yusuf (12) as a playscript/screenplay, and moderate a discussion thereafter. My aim is threefold. First, I will demonstrate through oral



performance of some of the most prominent – and “cinematic” – rhetorical features of this surah, including stage directions, scene setting and cuts, and dramatic dialogue, among others. This will entail enlisting colleagues to read the various parts. Several have already agreed. Second, I will be sharing an innovative, perhaps even radical, way of translating the surah, guided by the above-mentioned considerations. In particular, the surah’s narrative economy will be on display. In keeping with my previous efforts, the translation will be in rhyme. Third, it will provide all in attendance with an opportunity to interact with the Qur’an in a completely new embodied way – as scholars, speakers, listeners, translators, and performers, all at one and the same time. The read-through will be followed by a group discussion, focusing on all three aspects mentioned above: the dramatic/cinematic qualities of the surah, translating the surah, and interacting with the surah.

SHAWKAT M. TOORAWA is Professor of Arabic Literature, Professor of Comparative Literature, and Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations at Yale University. He is currently preparing a book of translations of devotional surahs and passages; translating Surah Yusuf as a playscript; and editing a volume on the Qur’an’s literary dimensions.

20.40 | [Scuderie](#) | [Reception](#) (upon registration)

All are welcome to RSVP to the general reception following the performance around “Surah Yusuf, A Translation in 5 Acts” on Monday, 5 September, from 20.40. Light refreshments will be provided.

Tuesday 6 September 2022

Palazzo Alliata di Villafranca, Piazza Bologna 20, Palermo

08.30–10.00 | Sala dei Musicisti

Panel 4A. *Vision and Visuality in the Qur'an and Beyond* (first part)

organized by **Hannelies Koloska** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

The Qur'anic text offers multifaceted aspects of visuality such as concepts of vision, conventions of the gaze, references to images or descriptions of visions. Thus, the Qur'an creates a visual space of its own while drawing upon different visual cultures and establishes the basis for visualities in Islamic traditions. This panel aims to explore aspects of visuality in the Qur'an and material and textual traditions relating to it. It wants to invite discussion of the importance of the study of material and visual culture in the approach to the Qur'anic text in its historical context and later interpretation.

08.35–08.55 | Panel 4A

Images, Imagination and Sensory Persuasion in the Qur'an

Hannelies Koloska – Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The significance of the visual and of the sense of sight in religious material and literary traditions in late antiquity has long been recognized, but the study of its resonances in the Qur'an is still at its beginning. The importance of the vision report of the Qur'anic messenger (Q. 53) has widely been acknowledged as part of prophetic legitimation and authority that would distinguish him from the profanity of the audience. However, the importance of eye witnessing as integral part of the Qur'an has not yet been explored. Not just verses that refer to visions or dreams but verses, phrases and passages that intend to making the listeners and reader “see” in their imagination and through words alone, or verses that ask the audience to see and observe are



manifold in the Qur'an, such as the description of the companions in the cave or the ruins along travel routes, not to forget the descriptions of hell and paradise. They set in motion intellectual and spiritual processes, creating an impression of sensation without involving the sense of sight directly and stimulate an illusion of presence. Is it possible that the variegated repetition of visual terms has an effect of directing more of the audience's attention to those things and leave a deeper imprint than others? Can we trace the widely used rhetorical genre of ekphrasis in the Qur'an that is used to generate "ekphrastic hope and fear"? Is the status of vision and the visual in the Qur'an owing its importance to apocalyptic traditions in which seeing provides its theological and literary foundation; or is the pervasive verbal representation of the visual a strategy to overcome the apocalyptic dominance?

HANNELIES KOLOSKA (PhD 2012, Free University Berlin) is senior lecturer at the Department of Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and principal investigator of the ERC research project VISIONIS – *Visuality in the Qur'an and Early Islam*. Her work focuses on historical and literary studies on the Qur'an, Islamic exegesis, gender related studies in classical Islamic literature and the study of visual and material culture.

08.55–09.15 | Panel 4A

Seconding Sinai?: The Re-presentation of Mosaic Theophany in the Qur'an

Eric DeVilliers – University of Notre Dame, IN

Theophany in the Torah constituted an axis of exegetical controversy in late antiquity. In particular, Jews and Christians offered contrasting accounts of what Moses saw at the Burning Bush and at Mount Sinai and what these visual dispensations disclosed of God. An investigation of how the Qur'an receives these accounts of theophany and the logic behind its reformulations, however, remains a scholarly desideratum. This paper, then, outlines how the Qur'an systematically re-presents these two biblical episodes (e.g. 7:142–146, 20:9–36, 27:6–12, and 28:29–35) to respond to Christian and Jewish presentations of theophany and visual dispensation. I argue that, in these passages, the Qur'an accepts vision as the highest mode of divine manifestation,

but continually demonstrates the frailty of human vision in order to emphasize divine-human asymmetry.

ERIC DEVILLIERS received his BA in Religious Studies from Yale University and his MTS in the History of Christianity from the University of Notre Dame, where he is currently a PhD candidate in the Department of Theology. His research focuses on the origins, development, method of *Kalām*. His dissertation studies how theological discourses surrounding the questions of vision and the visibility of God (*ru'yat Allah*) contributed to the systematization of Islamic theology. His research interests include religious thought in late antiquity, Qur'anic Studies, Christian and Muslim scholastic theology, and theories of enculturation.

09.15–09.35 | Panel 4A

Angelic Visions in the Qur'an

Louise Gallorini – American University of Beirut

The invisible world (*al-ghayb*) is as important in the Qur'an as it must have been in previous and contemporary cosmologies, while listeners are enjoined to believe in it as fact as much as they do in the visible world, as the latter is impacted by the former in many ways. This invisible world is filled with creatures and phenomena, which the Qur'an "reorganizes", and among them we find angels, discreet but pervasive throughout the text. This paper will explore how angels, as narrative figures inside the Qur'anic text, define some aspects of the emerging religion by playing on their (in)visibility. Their cosmological function as messengers is well-known, replacing jinn and any other invisible being in this process, however their involvement in redefining theological aspects and their use by the Qur'an in its argumentation is less clear. Angels are mostly invisible, except at particular times and for particular people, and their invisibility and capacity in becoming visible – whether in fact or in theory (depending on the narrative presented) – is part of the argumentation for convincing the listener/reader of its message.

LOUISE GALLORINI holds a PhD from the Arabic and Near Eastern Languages Department of the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. Holds a BA and MA in Arabic literature and languages from University Lumière Lyon 2 and the INALCO in Paris, she



focused on contemporary Arabic literature from Lebanon and the Arabian Peninsula before returning to classical Arabic and Islamic literature. She is currently working on her book based on her dissertation exploring the functions of angels in the Qur'an and pre-Mongol Sufi texts (Sufi *tafsir*, Mi'rāj literature and the works of Ibn 'Arabī).

09.35–09.55 | Panel 4A

Phenomenology of Qur'anic Visuality and Corporeality: A Concrete Sense of Being in the World

Valeria Gonzalez – SOAS University of London

It is an interesting fact that, among the three Abrahamic monotheisms, Islam is the faith that places the greatest ontotheological distance between the faithful and the divine. Nothing can be tangibly associated with God in Islam, and His mode of manifesting Himself to his created beings consists of the most immaterial of all means of communication: sound. There is not even an equivalent of the burning bush in Islam, which is uniquely characterized by a total abstraction, invisibility and irrepresentability of the divine. Consequently, for Muslims God's words gathered in the Qur'an constitutes the only way of knowing Him: a non-solid verbal bridge crossing over that unfathomable ontotheological distance. One could then think that such a disembodied relationship between the Creator and His creatures only relies on the strength of a blind faith founded on a dry discursive pact. But that would mean ignoring what I would call "the texture", as opposed to the "text", of the Qur'an. This texture, uniquely rich in the Qur'an by comparison to the other Abrahamic scriptures, is formed the Qur'anic text's phenomenological properties addressing the faithful's sensory faculties, particularly vision, obviously through the eidetic path (mental visualization) as the text medium does not operate in the material realm. In this paper, I will demonstrate how the Qur'anic texture allows the faithful to visualize and relate bodily to things and entities in both the external reality and the hereafter. By thus anchoring the experience of existence in the concreteness of the expansive universe Islamically conceived, in all its dimensions seen and unseen, the Qur'anic phenomenology of eidetic visuality and corporeality induces a strong sense of being in the world, and thereby of being with God.

Consequently, I will argue, it suffices to read, recite, and listen to the Qur'an, the very instruments of the Islamic piety, for the said distance to yield to the desired proximity with the divine.

VALERIE GONZALEZ is a research associate at the SOAS. She specializes in Islamic art history and aesthetics. She holds a PhD in Islamic Studies and a Master of Fine Arts. Her research addresses questions such as figurality, ornament or abstraction in Islam visuality. Her scholarships include the Kunsthistorisches Institut-Max-Planck-Institut, Florence; the Getty Research Institute; the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, MIT; the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. She is the author of *Aesthetic Hybridity in Mughal Painting, 1526–1658* (Ashgate, 2015); *Le piège de Salomon: La pensée de l'art dans le Coran* (Albin Michel, 2002) and *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics of Islamic Art and Architecture* (IBTauris, 2001).

08.30–10.00 | Sala da Ballo

Panel 4B. *Framing the Antagonist: Modern Readings of the Qur'anic Concept of Fir'awn*

organized by **Margherita Picchi** (Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies/ University of Cape Town) and **Francesca Badini** (FSCIRE, Palermo); chaired by **Francesco Cargnelutti** (FSCIRE, Palermo)

The term fir'awn is mentioned more than 70 times in the Qur'an as a symbol of malice, enmity, and opponent of the true faith, with only one exception in Q. 10:90–92 – when he tries, as soon as he dies, to encourage conversion. The panel, introduced by a linguistic and semantic analysis of the term fir'awn in the Qur'an, aims to analyze how different hermeneutical discourses have interpreted the Qur'anic figure of Pharaoh in the light of their specific historical, social, and political contexts.

08.35–08.55 | Panel 4B

Fir'awn in the Qur'an: Persistent Disbelieving and Opposition Creating an Example of Extreme Enmity toward Faith, a Linguistic Perspective

Riccardo Amerigo Vigliermo – University of Modena and Reggio Emilia/ FSCIRE, Bologna



The word Pharaoh *fir'awn* appears explicitly 74 times in 67 verses throughout the entire Qur'an and it is mentioned indirectly many other times as "enemy" *'aduww* (e.g. 20:39, 80). The figure of the Pharaoh is well known and is mentioned in the Qur'an in different occasions as one of the fiercest examples of hostility and harshness against faith and clear divine signs. By using linguistic resources (such as The Quranic Arabic Corpus, AnalyzeQuran etc.) to conduct a linguistic analysis on word occurrences and relationship between concepts, we propose to outline the *fir'awn*, the figures close to him (*mala'*, *hāmān*, *ḡunūd*, *saḥrah*), their behaviors when facing divine *'ayāt*, and the consequences of their actions. This short introduction is designed to draw a picture of the *fir'awn* figure as a complex opposition concept in a recurrent dynamic of disbelief, opposition and divine punishment which represents the backbone of the example of extreme enmity and misleadingness but at the same time represents the overwhelming power of Allah in leading those who have faith and destroying those who disbelieve with such emphasis. It is interesting to observe how the concept of example (*maṭāl*) related to the *fir'awn* figure, as opposed to those who have faith, is clearly exposed in Qur'an 66:11, when speaking about the wife of the Pharaoh: "And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, 'My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people'". We can also notice how words and roots related to specific semantic fields define behaviors of the *fir'awn* (*fa-istakbarū wa kānū qawm^{an} muḡrimīn^a* [7:133, 10:75], *kaddabū bi-'ayyātinā wa kānū 'an-ha ḡāfilīn^a* [7:136], *kafarū* [in 8:52], *kānū zālimīn^a* [8:54], *kānū ḥāṭī'in^a* [28:8], *ṭaḡā* [20:24–43; 79:17], etc.) and actions against the divine message (*la-'uqaṭṭi'anna and la-'uṣallibannakum* [7:124], *yudabbihūn^a 'abnā'akum wa yastahyūn nisā'akum* [2:49]), *yasūmūnakum sū' al-'idābi* [7:141], etc.). Punishment then is always present as a reminder of Allah's power (*fa-'ahlaknā bi-dunūbihim wa 'aḡraqnā āl- fir'awn* [8:54], *fa-'arsalnā 'alayhim al-tūfān^a wa-l-ḡarād^a wa-l-qummal^a wa-l-daffādi^ū wa-l-dam^a* [7:133], and so on). At the end of this introduction, few examples of formal and conceptual parallelism between *suwar* will be presented to enlighten interesting linguistic and semantic connection of terms related to other opposition entities (e.g. *kayd^u sāḥirⁱⁿ* in 20:69 related to the Pharaoh and his magicians and *kayd^a-hum* in 105:2 related to Abraha and his army).

RICCARDO AMERIGO VIGLIERMO graduated from University of Naples L'Orientale in 2018 with a thesis on the comparison of the Sayyid Quṭb and Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī's interpretations of the *jihād* Qur'anic verses. From the beginning of the 2020 he focused pretty much on the application of Arabic and Persian language to the Machine Learning, NLP, and TR fields. By the end of 2020 he was nominated collaborator at MIM.FSCIRE where he started working on a cataloguing of non-Latin texts project. From January 2021 he became a junior researcher at Department of Education and Human Sciences of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (UNIMORE) where he worked on a project called: *Cataloging of non-Latin alphabet texts. New approaches between digital humanities and AI*, under the broader context of CLUSTER project. From November 2021 he is a PhD student in Digital Humanities at UNIMORE where is working on his project, *Digital Maktaba: For an Innovative System of Conservation and Management of Multi-alphabetic and Multicultural Heritages*.

08.55–09.15 | Panel 4B

Fir'awn in the Tafsir al-mawḏūī: The Narration of Muhammad al-Ghazālī (1917-1996)

Francesca Badini – FSCIRE, Palermo

The term *fir'awn* appears 74 times in the Qur'an and its significance within the sacred text of Islam has been analyzed several times in encyclopedias and dictionaries of the Qur'an. The exegetical frameworks of the biblical and the Qur'anic *fir'awn*, have also been analyzed, including in a comparative context. The issue of the eschatological meaning of the term in the sacred texts has also attracted scholarly attention: in the Bible, this has been consistently connected to the dynastic title of the rulers of ancient Egypt; after the advent of the Qur'an, this has increasingly acquired a precise historical character and, at the same time, a more symbolic quality. For instance, the Qur'an sees the struggle against the *fir'awn* – including in the case of the life of Moses – as a metaphor for the overcoming of even the greatest of obstacles in preparation to self-abandonment to divine will. As Gabriel Reynolds has pointed out, in modern Qur'anic commentaries a particular interest in the *fir'awn* emerges in full continuity with the intellectual path taken by Muhammad al-Ġazālī (1917–1996), Sayyid Quṭb (1906–1966) and their predecessors, who reflected on the political-theological significance of the Qur'anic references to the *fir'awn* and the multifaceted declinations of its meaning according

to the themes they were particularly interested in, as well as the verses they were inclined to choose to foster their own exegetical arguments. In his *Tafsir al-mawḏūʿī*, which was first published in an incomplete draft (1992) and in its full version (1995), the author stresses a discrete group of narratological verses in precise surahs – for instance Q. 2; 4; 10;11; 20; 25; 26; 40; 43; 54; 79 – in an attempt to comment upon contemporary themes such as authority, the liberation of the oppressed, tyranny, disbelief and rebellion, atheism and paganism, thus drawing a picture of the *firʿawn* as the quintessence of negativity. In this paper, the different declinations of the concept of *firʿawn*, as elaborated by Muhammad al-Ġazālī in his commentary, will be analyzed in an effort to reconstruct the exegetical discourse of the author in the public sphere, with particular attention to the intellectual context in which he operated and which he subsequently influenced. The goal of this paper is to show, through the symbolic use of the *firʿawn* by al-Ġazālī, whether how the interpretation of the Qurʿan could be used to spread religious teachings in the Muslim public sphere of the 20th century.

FRANCESCA BADINI graduated in Philosophy at the University of Trento in 2015. She discussed a thesis on Islamic thought entitled *Martirio nobile e martirio terroristico: il ruolo del fenomeno migratorio nell'Islam contemporaneo* (supervisor Massimo Campanini; co-supervisor Francesco Ghia). In 2018, she graduated in History and Oriental Studies at the University of Bologna; she discussed a thesis in Islamic Studies entitled *Le pie Madri della Nigrizia e i Comboniani prigionieri della Mahdiyya (1881–1898): memorie ed epistole* (supervisor Caterina Bori; co-supervisor Elena Vezzadini). From October 2019 she became PhD student at the La Pira Library in Palermo. Her topic of research is the *Tafsir al-mawḏūʿī* written by Muhammad al-Ghazālī (1917–1996), with a particular focus on the idea of educational *tafsir* and anti-imperialism (supervisor Johanna Pink). From April 2021 to July 2021, she was guest doctoral student at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg.

09.15–09.35 | Panel 4B

“Make your Houses Places of Worship (Iʿjalu buyutakum qibla)”: COVID-19 Policies and Jumuʿa Politics at Cape Town’s Claremont Main Road Mosque

Margherita Picchi – Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies/University of Cape Town

On 16 March 2020, the day after South African president Cyril Ramaphosa declared a national state of disaster due to the rapidly growing COVID-19 pandemic, the Claremont Main Road Mosque (CMRM)'s Board of Governors announced the closure of the *masjid* "until such time as the situation in the country changes". Although the national ban on religious gatherings was lifted two months later, the Board of Governors renewed its decision to keep the mosque closed, offering an online-streamed Friday message or *naṣīḥa* instead of the regular *khuṭbah*, while encouraging the members of the congregation to perform the prayer at home with their family. When the mosque opened its doors again, for a few weeks only in November 2021 and more regularly since 4 February 2022, congregants and visitors were required to present a vaccination certificate in order to attend *jumu'a*. The strict COVID-19 policy adopted by CMRM's Board of Governors is almost unique in the South African context, where the government has implemented relatively relaxed control measures for containing the pandemic, and a significant number of Muslims have continued to perform the congregational prayer in mosques throughout this period, in some cases directly confronting the State to affirm their right to do so. This intervention aims to explore how the mosque's Imam Rashied Omar and his vice-Imam Shaheed Gamielien have relied on Islamic sources – and especially the Qur'an – to legitimize the *masjid*'s COVID-19 policies. A special attention will be devoted to a *khuṭbah* delivered by Rashied Omar on 3 December 2021 to announce the new closure of the mosque, and his hermeneutics of the Qur'anic verse 10:87, where *Mūsā* and *Hārūn* are told to "settle your people in houses in Egypt and make your houses a place of worship". Building on Ibn Kathīr's *tafsir* of the verse as commanding the *Banī Isrā'īl* to avert the harm and the danger of *Fir'awn* oppression by worshipping in the safety of their homes, Omar's re-reads it to apply it to the current "life-threatening danger of the highly infectious and deadly Coronavirus". In doing so, he confirms a larger tendency shown by CMRM's interpretive community to creatively resignify the hermeneutical categories of political Islam, as elaborated in the crucible of the anti-Apartheid struggle, to respond to the new moral, socio-political and spiritual challenges emerged in post-1994 democratic South Africa.

MARGHERITA PICCHI earned her doctoral degree in Women's and Gender History in 2016, at University of Naples L'Orientale, where she also obtained her Master's degree in Science of Languages, History and Cultures of the Mediterranean and Islamic Countries in 2011. Her research interests include modern Islamic intellectual history, Qur'anic Studies, as well as gender and queer studies in Muslim contexts. She is currently a Humboldt experienced researcher at Freiburg Institute of Advanced Studies (FRIAS, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität), where she is conducting a project on Qur'anic hermeneutics in sermons delivered in Cape Town's Claremont Main Road Mosque in the post-Apartheid period; and an honorary research affiliate of the Centre for Contemporary Islam (University of Cape Town).

09.35–09.55 | Panel 4B

al-Fir'awn and the Salafist Understanding of this Concept in the Contemporary Arab-Islamic World: Between Theory and Praxis

Marco Di Donato – University of Palermo

This paper will focus on the “despotic” meaning and value of “Pharaoh” in the Qur’an, by observing its usage in the contemporary fundamentalist political and social movements/parties. How this Qur’anic figure, where the “God’s and Satan’s handiwork are overlapped” (to quote Ida Zilio Grandi), has influenced the contemporary action of fundamentalist movements and parties? How this contributed to define their conception of “enemy”, their political and social action, their identity definition, their Manichean vision of the world? In a *rebours* process, through fundamentalist inspired texts (the praxis), the speech will focus on the “theory” placing the Qur’anic discourse at the core of the analysis. A specific attention will be paid to the specific cases (e.g. al-Ġamā’a al-Islāmiyya) as well as a special focus will be dedicated to Ibn Taymiyya and his writings (by upscaling Tottoli findings on this specific point), by searching potential connections/differences between modern and contemporary Islam conception. Has Ibn Taymiyya writings and Pharaoh vision influenced contemporary fundamentalist vision? How Qur’anic verses in which Pharaoh is quoted (e.g. 28:8 and 28:40) have been exegetical interpreted by fundamentalist terrorist groups (e.g. Da’esh)? As already noted by other scholars, the concept of Pharaoh seems to be crucial in the

reconstruction (better imitation, *taqlid*) of a perfect past appearing to the one of jihadism's key narratives. In line with recent studies (Afsaruddin and Hassan), the scope of the speech will be to demonstrate the possibly improper and partial usage of sacred sources and past ideologies in the contemporary fundamentalist discourse to justify their political, violent, project. The speech will follow three consequential steps. Firstly, the master narrative in the Qur'an of Pharaoh with specific reference to "injustice" and "despotism" will be presented. Secondly, an analysis of Ibn Taymiyya conceptualization of Pharaoh will be presented. Finally, I will focus on how both sacred sources and on Ibn Taymiyya's writings analysing how (and if) both have eventually influenced the contemporary fundamentalist discourse in relationship to their crucial ideological elements (e.g. the caliphate or the *hakimiyya*).

MARCO DI DONATO, PhD researcher in Political Thinking and Political Communication from the University of Genova, holds a Master Degree cum laude in Arabic language and Islamic Studies at the University of Naples L'Orientale. He focuses his research on the Islamist movement in Middle East area and related Qur'anic exegesis. Author of several publications with Italian and International publishing houses, in 2018 he published a monograph on salafism edited by La Scuola and in 2021 he edited a book on Islamic Political Theology. He is a Senior researcher (Type B) in History of Islamic countries at the Department of Culture and Societies at the University of Palermo. He currently teaches the courses of History of Islam in modern and contemporary history and Middle East and North Africa: history, politics, cultures.

10.00–10.20 | Coffee Break

10.20–11.50 | Sala dei Musici

Panel 5A. *Vision and Visuality in the Qur'an and Beyond* (second part)

organized by **Hannelies Koloska** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

10.25–10.45 | Panel 5A

The Weltinnenraum of the Qur'an: Towards a Visceral Phenomenology

Thomas Hoffmann – University of Copenhagen



When investigating the Islamic sensorium, including the notion of the senses in the Qur'an, it is important that we take into account those senses and sensorial experiences that are more ambiguous and difficult to categorize than the five canonical, exteroceptive senses of sight (*baṣar*), hearing (*sam'*), taste (*ṭa'm*), smell (not attested in the Qur'an, except the notion of bad smell), and touch (*lamassa*). These senses are, as indicated in the *terminus technicus*, open and perceptive to the external world. They are able to produce extremely fine-grained and differentiated sensations as well as the most euphoric and agonizing sensation (e.g. the vision, *ru'yā*, of God, or the torments of Hell). Consequently, the exteroceptive senses loom large in the theological, ritual, legal, and "lived practice" vocabulary of the Qur'an. Two other sensorial domains are relevant, yet often neglected in the research: *proprioception* and *interoception*. Proprioception is often defined as the sense of our bodies in space, the position and movement of the body, which involves balance and the use of muscular force. Proprioceptive sensations do inform the Qur'an, but they do not seem to be particularly prominent. We come across proprioceptive moments in verses like Q. 68:51, "wa-'in yakādu lladhīna kafarū la-yuzliqūnaka bi-'abṣārihim" (and the unbelievers almost make you^s trip with their gazes). Here the exteroceptive power of the gaze exerts an unwanted physical-emotional effect on the Prophet. Another example could be the opening lines of Q. 94. The third sensorial domain concerns interoception, the sensations of the viscera, defined here as the inner organs of the body, such as the stomach, the heart, the breast, the throat, the lungs, the womb and the proverbial loins (*ṣulb*). Interoception is much less fine-grained than the exteroceptive senses and works in relative darkness and obscurity. Interoceptive sensation is generally ambiguous and often disappears into the background of our conscious bodily apparatus. We generally cannot see these organs. When, however, they (re)appear from their obscurity they often do it with great intensity, often of a painful, abjective, and uncontrollable character, e.g. thirst (*zama*), hunger (*jū'*), the throbbing of the heart (*wājifah*), breathing (*tanaffasa*) the feeling of being choked (*ghuṣṣah*), ejaculation (e.g. Q. 86:6–7; 56:58), and "the last breath" (Q. 75:26). In my paper, I will concentrate on interoceptive passages and wordings in the Qur'an and attempt to sketch out Qur'anic phenomenology of interoceptiveness, the *Weltinnenraum*, as it were, of the Qur'an.

THOMAS HOFFMANN is Professor of Qur'anic and Islamic Studies at the Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen. Articles published, *inter alia*, in *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* and various anthologies.

10.45–11.05 | Panel 5A

Concupiscent Curiosity of the Gaze in Medieval Islam: Qur'an 24:30–31

Ahmed H. al-Rahim – University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

The gaze, or the act of seeing the other and the awareness of being seen, has a storied history in the Islamic tradition. In the Qur'an, the gaze or glance (*nazar*), along with the “amorous eye” and its attendant curiosity, is associated with the “lust of the eye” and its corruption of the heart. The indulgence of the concupiscent gaze is most often also presented as the first inauspicious step toward perpetrating the grave sins of fornication or adultery. The Qur'an instructs the believing men and women to avert their gaze from those of the opposite sex in order to preserve their chastity and thereby ensure their salvation. This thematic study examines the exegetical literature (*tafsir*) on Qur'an 24:30–31 and the concomitant Muhammadan traditions, or exegetical ḥadīth, on the gaze as concupiscent curiosity in medieval Sunni Islam.

AHMED H. AL-RAHIM (PhD, Yale University, 2009) is Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Director of Islamic Studies at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *The Creation of Philosophical Tradition: Biography and the Reception of Avicenna's Philosophy from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century A.D.* (Harrassowitz, 2018) and current Einstein Center Chronoi Fellow at the Einstein Stiftung Berlin.

11.05–11.25 | Panel 5A

Qur'anic Piety as a Practice

Karen Bauer – Institute of Ismaili Studies, London

This paper makes the case for a revised notion of Qur'anic piety and law, which takes into account not just obedience or disobedience, but the various levels of moral goodness and purity that one may

achieve through pious practices. The focus is on the Qur’anic ethic of modesty and sexual propriety, to highlight three major findings: first, how particular bodily dispositions are connected to the larger frame of internal discipline, purity and salvation; second, how the norms and terminology from later Meccan Qur’anic narrations are brought into legislation in the Medinan period; third, the bivalence of many terms associated with bodily discipline such as clothing (*libās*), sight (*baṣar*) and purity (*z-k-w*, *ṭ-h-r*). Marianna Klar has remarked on the metaphorical aspect of the *libās al-taqwā* (the clothing of God-wariness); she suggests that in *al-Baqara* the *libās al-taqwā* is contrasted not with physical nudity but rather with “the covering that God places on the hearts, eyes, and ears of the disbelievers”. And yet the bivalence/correspondence of sight (*baṣar*) and clothing (*libās*) indicates that there is a link between external and internal practices of propriety. These terms have a literal sense, in which, for instance, the gaze is to be lowered from temptation and trained to see God’s signs, and one must don physical clothing (7:27, 21:80) and not display oneself like the pagans did (Q. 33:33). The terms also have a metaphorical sense of the *libās al-taqwā* and spiritual insight (*baṣar*). By comparing Meccan stories with Medinan rulings, it becomes clear that in the Qur’an, adherence to rules on modesty and physical covering are practices that enable the *libās al-taqwā* and spiritual insight. Qur’anic piety can thus be considered as a practice and a discipline of the body and mind. The discussion of piety is related to moral purity. This paper uses the notion of piety as a practice to show that the achievement of purity is graded and that one can achieve ever-higher states, corresponding to the grades in the afterlife.

KAREN BAUER (PhD, Princeton) is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. Her publications include *Gender Hierarchy in the Qur’an: Medieval Interpretations, Modern Responses* (Cambridge University Press, 2015); she has edited *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qur’anic Exegesis* (Oxford University Press, 2013) and, along with Feras Hamza, *An Anthology of Qur’anic Commentaries*, vol. II, *On Women* (Oxford University Press, 2021). Also along with Feras Hamza she has recently authored *Women in the Qur’an: A Critical Introduction to Eschatology, Piety and Moral Agency*.

Rethinking Female Representations in Qusayr Amra and their Qur'anic References

Inbal Kol – Hebrew University of Jerusalem

How does the establishment of a distinct Islamic visual culture develop alongside the reading and interpretation of the Qur'an? This paper tries to shed light on the aspect of interpretation and representation of the female in Umayyad art. For a long time, the diverse female representations at the Umayyad palace Qusayr Amra were interpreted as visual exhibition of Walid II hedonistic lifestyle and the reproduction of given iconographic depictions of Byzantine and Sassanian origin. Following the researches of Garth Fowden and Nadia Ali, and based on modern gender approaches, this paper claims that those representations display an active adaptation of cultural and artistic elements based also on the reading and interpretation of the Qur'an. It argues that Walid II's role in the process of creating a distinct Islamic visual language by converging known artistic elements with new meanings should be reassessed.

INBAL KOL holds her MA from the Department of Art History of the Hebrew University and is currently a doctoral fellow at the ERC Project VISIONIS. Her research focuses on contemporary art and the philosophy of art. Her research interests include reception theories studies, visual culture studies, race and gender studies and the connections between religion and culture. Her PhD focuses on the interaction between the ways in which we view and write about early Islamic art and how those have been affected on visual aspects of contemporary Islamic art.

Panel 5B. *Narratives, Predecessors, Contacts* (first part)

chaired by **Fabrizio D'Avenia** (University of Palermo)

Unlocking the Name of YHWH: A Qur'anic Interpretation

Abdulla Galadari – Khalifa University

The Qur'an re-articulates Moses's narrative in Exodus, particularly when God revealed Godself using the term "be" to Moses and asked him to go to Pharaoh. The Qur'an usually paraphrases this encounter. Even the phrase in Exodus 3:14, "ehēye 'āšer 'ehēye" (I will be who I will be) is paraphrased in three different ways in the Qur'an: 1) "innī anā Allāh"; 2) "innanī anā Allāh"; and 3) "innahu anā Allāh". The Qur'an completely paraphrases this without explicitly using the term "be", as a more accurate translation of this phrase would have been, "akūn alladhī (man) akūn". In Exodus 5:2, after Moses introduces God to Pharaoh, Pharaoh asks "Who is Yhwh", but the Exodus narrative provides no response. However, in Q. 20:49–50, when Pharaoh asks "Who is your Lord", the response is "Our Lord is that who gives everything (*shay'*) its creation and then guides". I argue that the Qur'an here is responding to the unanswered question in Exodus by attempting to interpret the meaning of the name Yhwh. In several Semitic languages, there are different forms of the verb "to be" from the roots: *k-w-n*, *h-y-y*, and *sh-y-y*. Thus, the etymology of the Arabic, *shay'*, is that which has become. As such, the Qur'anic response is that God is the one who causes existence, which can be described in Arabic as *yukawwin*, *yuhayyi'*, or *yushayyi' / yashā'*. The Arabic intensive form *yufa'il* is equivalent to the *yiqtol* conjugation of the *pi'el* form in Hebrew. There is no specific evidence, however, of what the *pi'el* form of the Hebrew root *h-y-h* looks like in the Hebrew Bible, let alone its *yiqtol* conjugation. Nonetheless, applying to the Hebrew *h-y-h* in a similar fashion to that of other weak verbs in its form (*'ayin-yod* and *lamed-yod*), the *pi'el* in *yiqtol* conjugation becomes *yhwh*, and it could be pronounced as *yihuwwê*. This form corresponds to the Arabic *yuhayyi'*, which, though not made explicit, is how the Qur'an describes God in response to Pharaoh's question. As such, even though the Qur'an is not explicit, it alludes to what the name Yhwh means. This is especially the case that prior to the Qur'an paraphrasing the Exodus narrative and Pharaoh's question, it explicitly introduces the narrative by stating that

to God belongs the beautiful names (e.g. Q. 20:8). Thus, the Qur'an is aware that the narrative is associated with the name of God.

ABDULLA GALADARI is an Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at Khalifa University. His research fields are the Qur'anic hermeneutics and the Qur'an's possible engagement with Near Eastern traditions in Late Antiquity. He uses a multidisciplinary approach towards the Qur'an, such as using cognitive science of religion and philology. He is the author of *Qur'anic Hermeneutics: Between Science, History, and the Bible* (Bloomsbury, 2018), *Metaphors of Death and Resurrection in the Qur'an: An Intertextual Approach with Biblical and Rabbinic Literature* (Bloomsbury, 2021), and *The Spiritual Meanings of the Hajj Rituals: A Philological Approach* (Fons Vitae, 2021).

10.45–11.05 | Panel 5B

Ṣuḥuf Mūsā (Q. 53:36; 87:19): The Book of Jubilees?

Raymond K. Farrin – American University of Kuwait

This paper investigates whether the *ṣuḥuf Mūsā* mentioned in the Qur'an may be a reference to the ancient Jewish text of Jubilees. It proceeds from Haggai Ben-Shammai's recent proposal that *ṣuḥuf* may denote, as a Syriac loan translation, "apocalypses", besides the conventional meaning of "sheets" or "scrolls". The paper suggests that Jubilees, or the Apocalypse of Moses, as it was called in ca. 810 CE by the Byzantine chronicler from Palestine George Syncellus, is a good match for these early Qur'anic references. The first part of this paper gives background to the possible reference for Qur'anic *ṣuḥuf Mūsā*. Likely written in the 2nd century BCE, Jubilees was translated into Greek and thereafter rendered into Ethiopic perhaps in the 5th–6th centuries CE. It bore the title *Maṣḥafa kufālē mawā'ēl* (The book of the division of the times) in Axum and gained canonical status in the Ethiopian church. Given the Christian Ethiopian influence in South Arabia during the 6th century, and the fact that the first emigration of believers in ca. 615 CE was to Axum, it is quite possible that the text was not unfamiliar to some Arabs during Muhammad's time. The paper then cites Ben-Shammai's above-mentioned discussion about a loan usage for *ṣuḥuf*, one designating a scriptural genre, and points to the specific Byzantine naming of this text as the Apocalypse of Moses. The

second part of the paper examines the validity of a possible reference to Jubilees. In the first chapter of Jubilees, Moses ascends Mount Sinai where he experiences a divine vision (see Q. 53:4–11). An unnamed Angel of the Presence then dictates to Moses from heavenly tablets about what has happened and what is to come. Moses is instructed to write the revelations for the benefit of God’s people. Rhetorically, then, the situation of Jubilees is quite like that of the Qur’an. Moreover, Jubilees contains an eschatological message of salvation for the righteous and damnation for their enemies (e.g. in chapters 1 and 23) like the one prominently featured in the early Qur’an. References to Jubilees in Q. 53:36 and 87:19, in support of the Qur’an’s own eschatological message and perhaps suggesting a similar prophetic experience for Muhammad, are thus entirely plausible. In conclusion, it seems that the Book of Jubilees may be added to the Torah, Gospel, and Zabūr as a scriptural predecessor indicated by the Qur’an.

RAYMOND K. FARRIN is currently Professor of Arabic at the American University of Kuwait. He studied Arabic in Cairo for two years and received a PhD in Near Eastern Studies from the University of California, Berkeley in 2006. His publications include *Abundance from the Desert: Classical Arabic Poetry* (Syracuse University Press, 2011), *Tharwa min al-badiya: al-shi’r al-‘arabi al-qadim* [translation of Abundance from the Desert] (Dar al-Farabi, 2013), and *Structure and Qur’anic Interpretation: A Study of Symmetry and Coherence in Islam’s Holy Text* (White Cloud, 2014), as well as numerous articles on classical Arabic poetry and the Qur’an.

11.05–11.25 | Panel 5B

Moses and Other Mountains

Sarah Zweig – Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Sūrat al-Kahf relates Moses’ quest for the confluence of the two seas and for divine knowledge – a story without biblical or rabbinic parallel. However, Moses’ adventures closely mirror a narrative known from the Alexander materials. Modern scholarship has mostly tried to explain the Moses-Alexander conflation on the basis of shared features – physical attributes, trajectories and failures. This paper offers a very different explanation for the blurring of Alexander with Moses. Based

on a close comparison with two Syriac sources – the so-called *Alexander Legend* (*Neṣḥānā dīleh d-Aleksandrōs*) and the *Alexander Homily*, I track and explain the differing itineraries of the heroes in the Syriac Alexander narratives and the Qur’anic Moses episode. Diverging from the prevalent approach, I suggest that the Moses-Alexander fusion is not merely inspired by shared attributes. Instead, it is motivated by the reconfiguration of certain narrative building blocks shared by the *Alexander Legend* and the *Alexander Homily*. I argue for this thesis by comparing the legend and the homily with the Qur’anic episodes in 18:60–65 and 18:82–102. The narratives take on an exegetical dimension with respect to their *Vorlage*. The variations in names and places seem to be the result of attempts to solve discrepancies in the source text. In this exercise Alexander joins us as a fellow philologist – travelling from one text to another and undoing textual knots – not with a single sweep of his sword, but with narrative strategies.

SARAH ZWEIG is conducting doctoral research on the Moses episode in Sūrat al-Kahf and its literary background in Late Antiquity at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Sarah’s research interests include religion, society and culture in Late Antiquity, Qur’an and *tafsir* studies, Euro-Asian literary motifs and Sanskrit theatre traditions. She is currently a research fellow at the India International Centre, New Delhi. She was a fellow at the Doha Institute for Advanced Studies in 2021. Previously she studied Philosophy and Comparative Religion in Jerusalem, Paris and Rome. Growing up Sarah was a circus performer on horse and the trapeze. She worked for over ten years as a cinematographer in documentary and feature films.

11.25–11.45 | Panel 5B

Q. 5:48 and 49:13 and their Late Antique Context

Jáchym Šenkyřík – Charles University, Prague

Qur’anic verses 5:48 and 49:13 (see also 10:19; 11:7, 118; 67:2 etc.) instigate a specific relation towards others, especially those staying temporarily outside Muslim *ummah*. They encourage, in one possible understanding, active contact and participation with others. We can read these verses against the backdrop of other Qur’anic texts encouraging

forgiveness towards enemies, reconciliation between foes, repelling evil with good, or making peace among people and communities. Somewhat conversely, we can read verses 5:48 and 49:13 (and others) against the backdrop of a paradigmatic Qur’anic story of Iblīs as well. Why is Iblīs considered one of the *kāfirīn* (see Q. 2:34; 38:74)? What was his transgression? He refused to bow before Adam, and it looks like his proudness lies in stark contrast to verses 5:48 and 49:13. This paper looks at the Late Antique context of these verses in order to ask about their specific role within this context and within the Qur’anic texts as well. On the one hand, we have got the tradition of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7; see also the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6:20–49) and later Christian texts following Jesus’ demanding ethics (see, for example, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, etc.). On the other hand, we have got the story of Iblīs and its parallels in pseudoepigraphical texts (see, for example, 1 Enoch; Jubilees; Cave of Treasures etc.). This paper thus asks how Qur’anic verses 5:48 and 49:13 creatively use and transform these Late Antique motifs in making a specific argument for the dialogical contact towards others. It hopes, in the end, to shed more light on our understanding of these verses within both the Late Antique context and the intra-Qur’anic context.

JÁCHYM ŠENKYŘÍK is a PhD candidate in the field of Philosophy of Religion at Charles University in Prague, Czechia. His PhD research focuses on the Qur’anic views of the “religious other” and the Qur’anic discourse about interrelations between people of different faiths. It thus combines the interests in the Qur’anic Studies, interhuman relations, the impact of the ubiquitous processes of othering on these relations, and how the Qur’anic texts cope with these processes.

[11.50–13.30 | Short Visit of Palermo with Ice Cream](#) (upon registration)

[13.30–15.00 | Sala dei Musici](#)

Panel 6A. *The Qur’an and its Material Culture*

chaired by **Ivana Panzeca** (University of Palermo/FSCIRE, Palermo)

Decolonizing Abraham: A Preliminary Survey of the Material Record in Mecca

Nevin Reda – Emmanuel College of Victoria University
in the University of Toronto, ON

This paper explores and critiques approaches to the Qur’anic stories of Abraham and their historicity within orientalist scholarship and seeks a decolonial approach to the Abraham narratives. It argues that a good starting point for decolonization is to explore the physical artefacts associated with the ancient patriarch, who is accredited with founding Mecca in the Islamic and pre-Islamic Arabian traditions. It provides an alternative to a popular theory that views Abraham as a literary creation of the ancient Israelites during their exile in Babylon, as can be noted in the work of the well-known archaeologist and historian Gösta Ahlström. Ahlström’s theory is based partly on the lack of material records within the appropriate timeframes in the Levant, e.g. in the destruction levels of the site commonly identified with the biblical Beer-Sheba. This paper provides an alternative to this theory, one that is similarly based on the material record and that has potential for future research. The paper is composed of three parts, each addressing one line of investigation for potentially historicizing Abraham. Part one focuses on the material record, which has largely been ignored in contemporary scholarship. It surveys three avenues of possibilities for dating Abraham that are not mutually exclusive: the stone containing Abraham’s fossilized footprints, the architecture of the building, and the grave of Hagar and Ishmael. It compares them to architectural styles and burial patterns known from the Levant and Yemen, proposing the Early Bronze Age I (ca. 3300–2900 BCE.) as a very preliminary timeframe of interest. It underlines the need for carbon dating the ichnofossil and for excavations in the Hijaz highlands to construct a pottery chronology and clarify the archaeological record. Parts two and three examine the connection between the Qur’anic and biblical narratives of Abraham and their potential connection to Mecca. Part two looks at the pilgrim rituals, which re-enact the city’s founding narrative, and explores them from a social memory perspective. It examines the relationship between



archaeology and social memory in connection with Bronze Age sites, the conditions for long-term memory transmission, the changing nature of social memory, and its contribution to group identity. Part three delves into historical geography. It examines the Bible and other textual sources for mention of toponyms that could potentially be related to Mecca, including Shiloh, Paran, Beer-Sheba, and Bakka. The paper concludes that the Meccan hypothesis for the origins of the Abraham stories in the Qur'an and Bible is worthy of further study.

NEVIN REDA is Associate Professor of Muslim Studies at Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto. Her research interests include the poetics and hermeneutics of Qur'anic narrative structure, Hebrew Bible and Qur'an, spiritually integrative approaches to the Qur'an, Islamic feminist hermeneutics, and Islamic ethical-legal theory. Her publications include *The al-Baqara Crescendo: Understanding the Qur'an Style, Narrative, Structure and Running Themes* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017) and a co-edited volume (with Yasmin Amin) *Islamic Interpretive Tradition and Gender Justice: Processes of Canonization, Subversion, and Change* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020). She has published several articles and book chapters, including "The Poetics of Sūrat Āl 'Imrān's Narrative Structure", in *Structural Dividers in the Qur'an*, edited by Marianna Klar (Routledge, 2020).

13.55–14.15 | Panel 6A

Qur'an Fragments in Cairo Genizah Collections

Nick Posegay and **Magdalen M. Connolly** – University of Cambridge and Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

A *genizah* (pl. *genizot*) is a hidden space, usually in a synagogue or cemetery, where Jewish communities deposit old manuscripts that are too damaged for further use. This act protects sacred texts, such as those written with the name of God and Hebrew script, from profane disposal with other rubbish. The Cairo Genizah is a unique genizah from the Ben 'Ezra Synagogue in Fustāt that contains texts spanning more than a millennium of Jewish history. These include tens of thousands of Hebrew and Judaeo-Arabic manuscripts now held in collections around the world. The Cairo Genizah is best known as a preeminent source for the study of Jewish society, especially Egyptian Jewish

society, in the medieval and pre-modern periods. Less well-known is the fact that this repository of “Jewish” texts also contains thousands of manuscripts written in Arabic script. Among these are fragments from at least 25 separate Qur’an manuscripts, all of which lack any traces of Hebrew writing. The palaeographic and codicological features of these Qur’an fragments do not differ from personal Qur’ans found in more “Islamic” contexts, and their varied characteristics suggest they were placed into the Cairo Genizah at many points throughout its history. They thus provide a diachronic corpus for the study of Arabic writing, the transmission of the Qur’an, and Jewish peoples’ engagement with the Qur’an in Islamicate lands. This paper examines these 25 Genizah Qur’an manuscripts in terms of their material history and orthography to demonstrate how they can be utilized for Qur’anic Studies. It also discusses how Qur’an fragments came to rest in a Jewish Synagogue and explores possible motivations for the Jews who may have stored them there.

NICK POSEGAY is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the Cambridge Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, where he researches interfaith exchange in the intellectual history of Middle Eastern languages. He earned his PhD in Middle Eastern Studies (2021) from Cambridge as a member of Corpus Christi College. Previously, he completed a BA in Near Eastern Languages and Religious Studies (2016) and an MA in Middle Eastern Studies (2017) at the University of Chicago. He is also a Research Associate at the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit.

MAGDALEN M. CONNOLLY is a Humboldt Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Institute of Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, where she researches linguistic features of written Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic in pre-modern folktales. Prior to this, Magdalen was a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Cambridge’s Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and a part-time Research Associate at the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit. She earned her PhD in Middle Eastern Studies (2018) from Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Previously, she completed a BA in Arabic & Theology (2013) at the University of Exeter and an MA in Hebrew Studies (2014) at the University of Cambridge.



Compatibility and Contradiction in the Rules of Qur'anic Writing in the Light of Old Qur'anic Manuscripts

Munshid Falih Wadi – University of Diyala, Iraq

This paper deals with scholars who present points of both agreement and disagreement concerning certain words in ancient Qur'anic manuscripts. These points of approval or disagreement are studied in light of the rules of the rasm of the Qur'an agreed upon by the scholars of the Qur'an. Determining the time of their writing, these revelations constituted a turning point in the scientific research related to the Qur'anic text. Recently, it has become possible to rely on ancient documents that may have been written in the first Hijri century. These Qur'anic documents constitute an important treasure of knowledge for researchers because they were written in very early periods of Islam during a period that preceded the codification of the Qur'anic sciences and the science of interpretation by several centuries. This article raises the legitimate question about what the subject of controversy is – can those rules established by scholars of Qur'anic sciences be subordinated to these discovered documents? It discusses some of the issues that arose as a result of differences found in the ancient manuscripts and compares them with the explanatory heritage that set the rules for the *rasm* and readings. The results that the researcher proposes are that, regarding many of the rules that have been rooted in the writing of the Qur'an, the disputes contained in them can be resolved based on what was mentioned in the ancient manuscripts as certified documents that were written in an early period of Islam and prior to the codification of sciences in Al-Nafsir and others. Lastly, the researcher recommends rereading the controversial issues in light of the documents and ancient Qur'anic manuscripts, but these studies need much research effort and capability and constitute a huge scientific project that may be adopted by some scientific institutions interested in this aspect of the study of Islam's heritage.

MUNSHID FALIH WADI graduated from the University of Baghdad at the College of Islamic Sciences and his final thesis revolved around the analytical approach to the Qur'an. Munshid is interested in studies of Islamic thought, philosophy and orientalism and has

written several research papers and books in Arabic and English. He is currently a teaching researcher at Diyala University in the Department of Islamic Thought.

14.35–14.55 | Panel 6A

Radiocarbon Dating and Qur'anic Manuscript Chronology

Hythem Sidky – IQSA

Recent years have seen an increased use of radiocarbon dating as a method for the absolute dating of Qur'anic manuscripts. This has resulted in unprecedented insight into the age of the earliest surviving material witnesses to the Qur'anic text. However, these data have not yet been leveraged to construct a holistic chronological model detailing the emergence, evolution, and diffusion of the text. There is also no consensus on the interpretation and reliability of these data among Qur'anic scholars. As a result, the chronology of key events relating to the formation and crystallization of the Qur'anic canon remains in dispute. In this paper, I describe a unified framework for interpreting radiocarbon dating evidence in combination with other sources of data. I also attempt to address several concerns over the reliability of radiocarbon dating including issues of long-term storage, calibration offsets, and statistical outliers. I further argue that available radiocarbon data are consistent with independent paleographic, epigraphic, and literary evidence and that they all support a canonization of the text during the reign of the caliph 'Uthmān (r. 644–656 CE). Some notable interpretations to the contrary are shown to be erroneous. Finally, I propose a new preliminary schematization of early Qur'anic script styles based on radiocarbon dating evidence.

HYTHEM SIDKY is the Executive Director of the International Qur'anic Studies Association. His research combines expertise in the sciences with a specialization in Qur'anic manuscripts and reading traditions. He holds an MS in applied mathematics and PhD in biomolecular engineering from the University of Notre Dame. Hythem's dual background allows him to bring together traditional philology and mathematical analysis to study the dynamics and evolution of the Qur'an in early Islam. He has worked on the stemmatics of Qur'anic manuscripts, reconstruction of regional oral traditions, and continues to investigate applications of stylometry to the Qur'an.



Panel 6B. *Narratives, Predecessors, Contacts* (second part)

chaired by **Gianmarco Braghi** (University of Palermo/FSCIRE, Palermo)

13.35–13.55 | Panel 6B

Mobilizing Multiple Figures to Build the Authority of the Qur'an: Remarks from the Fada'il al-Qur'an Traditions in the Early Abbasid Times

Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau – University of Strasbourg

In the early Abbasid period, several scholars of Islam collected, selected, transmitted and taught traditions about the Qur'an's nature, authority and role to be played in the believers' lives. Many of these traditions were later gathered in works called *Fada'il al-Qur'an*, a genre which puts to the fore together several aspects of Qur'anic culture: the specific status of the Qur'an as revealed Scripture of God (*kitab Allah*), the necessity for the believer to be in connection to the Qur'anic text on a daily basis especially through recitation, the modalities and conditions of recitation performance, the expected good behavior (*adab*) of the pious who hold the Qur'an in their memory (*huffaz al-Qur'an*) and perform recitation, the respect due to Qur'anic manuscripts (*masahif*), the variant readings (*qira'at*), the supernatural aspects of Qur'anic recitation, the protection and *hasanat* that may be gathered through the practice recitation for retribution in the hereafter, etc. On which authorities – and on which ultimate authority – have these traditions been transmitted? Naturally, the Prophet Muhammad is *par excellence* the model figure in quranic *adab*. His authority is mobilized to develop the believers' faith in the Qur'an's authority and the believers' daily practices, above all the practice of recitation. Nevertheless, a close study of the *Fada'il* traditions shows that many of these also get back to other figures, be they Companions, spouses of the Prophet, or religious or political leaders from the first centuries of Islam. Some of these figures may at times be controversial, such as for instance Ibn Mas'ud, to whom is attributed a pre-canonical version of the Qur'anic text that

had substantial differences with the version attributed to ‘Uthman. Moreover, other types of non-muhammadian authorities have been mobilized: ancient prophets, such as Jesus, appear in the *Fada’il* genre to enhance the motivation to perform recitation. In some occurrences, intertextuality to Christian or Jewish texts and traditions can be traced within the narratives. At times, the mobilized authority is directly depicted as one of the previous “*kitab-s*”, such as the Torah (*Tawrat*). Analyzing early *Fada’il* traditions in collections of early scholars such as ‘Abd al-Razzaq al-San‘ani, Abu ‘Ubayd’s or Ibn Durays’, and connecting to hadith studies, early *tafsir* studies, and studies on how Qur’anic *adab* is depicted in hadith or in the *Fada’il* genre, this talk intends to deepen the apprehension of how hadith material helped shape the status of the Qur’an in the formative period.

ANNE-SYLVE BOISLIVEAU (PhD) is Assistant Professor in History of Medieval Islam at the Faculty of History of the University of Strasbourg (France). Her first book *Le Coran par lui-même: Vocabulaire et argumentation du discours coranique autoréférentiel* (Brill, 2014) deals with synchronic self-referential discourse in the Qur’an; her book on diachronic Qur’anic discourse is forthcoming. She wrote several surah commentaries for *Le Coran des historiens* (edited by Mohammad-Ali Amir-Moezzi and Guillaume Dye, Cerf, 2019). Among her interests are Qur’anic rhetoric, Qur’anic-biblical intertextuality, early Islamic History, Umayyad Syria, and early Islamic religious texts.

13.55–14.15 | Panel 6B

The Pagan and Biblical Topography of Qur’anic Pilgrimage

Emran El-Badawi – University of Houston, TX

Qur’anic pilgrimage is an Arabian custom with an ancient and complex history. In recent years scholars, including Aziz al-Azmeh, Gerald Hawting and Patricia Crone, position the Hajj, as it is known in the text, between the poles of pre-Islamic Arab commercial life on the one hand, and the biblical figure of Abraham on the other. This dual approach to researching Qur’anic pilgrimage is for good reason. Surah 22 is entitled *Al-Hajj* and Q. 22:26–36 mandate the reform of a pre-existing Abrahamic tradition. In fact, this tradition was an age old, well-trodden pilgrimage in and probably around the Kaabah of



Mecca, not a new or abrupt religious innovation. This paper builds on modern research, re-examining Qur'anic passages and the critical use of the Arabic sources, arguing the topography of Qur'anic pilgrimage deliberately fuses Arabian cultic sites with landmarks from the Hebrew Bible. The first order of examination considers the scholarly discussion around the seemingly biblical context of some Hajj customs. The connection between the two does not necessitate a Palestinian topography as some scholars have suggested, but rather a transposal or inheritance of biblical landmarks within a Hijazi topography. Through literary analysis of Qur'anic passages and excavating the Arabic sources, this topography is identified as: a) the valley of Mina; b) Mt. 'Arafat; c) the plain of Muzdalifah. These sites served specific cultic functions and, I argue, possibly recall: the valleys nearby Jerusalem, notably the Hinnom and Kidron; Mount Sinai; and the plains of Mamre. Our second order of examination considers the cultic rise of Allah, and how his ascent to power shaped the topography of the Hajj. As the new Semitic high god Allah's physical location was affixed to the mountaintop of 'Arafat, once occupied by the erstwhile god of lightning Quzah according to tradition, and now accessible to faithful petitioners climbing up to the sacred sanctuary (*al-mash'ar al-haram*; Q. 2:198). I argue this lofty, arid, skyward location was where the divine male resided, and that inversely the divine female resided in the verdant valleys beneath, including Mina. Finally, Muzdalifah is identified as the location between the divine male and divine female, where blood sacrifice and intercession used to take place.

EMRAN EL-BADAWI is Department Chair of Department of Modern and Classical Languages at the University of Houston, where he also serves as Associate Professor and Program Director of Middle Eastern Studies. He is author of the forthcoming *Queens and Prophets: How Arabian Noblewomen and Holy Men Shaped Paganism, Christianity and Islam, The Qur'an and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions* (Simon and Schuster, 2022), and co-editor of *Communities of the Qur'an: Dialogue, Debate and Diversity in the 21st Century* (Oneworld Publications, 2019). His current book on female power in the Qur'an and early Islamic Arabia is complete and under review. He teaches courses on Islamic civilization as well as the modern Middle East, and is a contributor to *Forbes*, *The Houston Chronicle*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*.

The Qur'an's Equivocation Strategy to Survive a Cosmological Paradigm Shift: The Case of Heaven's Pillars

Mohammad Ali Tabataba'i – Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, Tehran

The vague Qur'anic phrase *rafa'a/khalaqa l-samawati bighayri 'amadin tarawnahā* (Q. 13:2; 31:10) has for centuries been, and continues to be, a matter of debate among *mufasssirūn*. The reason lies in this phrase's particular grammatical structure, which allows for two different interpretations. While at first glance, it seems that it admits the existence of some invisible pillars for heaven, its structure also permits the reader to interpret it in a manner that negates any kind of pillar for heaven. Hence, the *mufasssirūn*, in different periods, have read and interpreted this phrase according to the scientific paradigm of their own time, and at the same time rejected the rival reading because of its conflict with the predominant cosmological theories. Not only did the Muslim exegetes of the Qur'an have such an exclusive reading of this Qur'anic phrase, but even the modern scholars did so: for some, the Qur'an speaks of invisible pillars following post-biblical or Arabian thoughts, while some others think the Qur'an negates any pillar under the influence of Syriac Christianity. I would, however, argue that wholly intentionally did the Qur'an take an equivocal language to refer to heaven's pillars. The reason behind this odd behavior goes back to the unique historico-cultural context in which the Qur'an represented itself as a scripture. Since, on the one hand, mentioning heaven's pillars was part and parcel of every ancient scripture. But, on the other hand, a paradigm shift was occurring from ancient cosmology and theology (Babylonian- biblical) to a new one (Greek-Christian) that no longer accepted the existence of pillars of any kind for heaven. Therefore, the Qur'an had to walk a fine line between following the earlier scriptures and considering the newest developments in cosmology and theology. Against this paradoxical situation, the Qur'an resorted to an intelligent solution to observe both parties' sensitivities through speaking about heaven's pillars in an equivocal way that is readable according to both views. Taking this historical fact into consideration, now we can explain why this verse

was aptly interpreted in agreement with the ancient Babylonian-biblical cosmology by the earliest *mufassirūn*, like Ibn ‘Abbās, and later successfully reconciled with the Greek cosmology, following the Translation Movement, by the medieval exegetes, while it never found a satisfying interpretation consistent with the modern cosmology.

MOHAMMAD ALI TABATABA’I is the Assistant Professor at the Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, Tehran, since 2020. He has a BA in Qur’an and Hadith Studies, MA in Abrahamic Religions, and PhD in Qur’an and Hadith Studies from the University of Tehran. His main research interests include the Qur’anic cosmology in relation to other ancient cosmologies, and the intellectual history of biblical falsification (*tahrīf*) in early Islam. His English papers have appeared in journals like *Arabica*, *Al-Bayan*, along with many papers in Persian. His two forthcoming books are *Intellectual History of Biblical Falsification (Tahrīf) in Early Islam* and *Shii Exegetes’ Attitudes Towards the Bible*.

14.35–14.55 | Panel 6B

Education between the Qur’an and the Bible. A Project. Presentation and Discussion

Johanne Louise Christiansen and **Rachel Claire Dryden** – University of Southern Denmark

The project EQaB investigates the relationship between religion and education, the Qur’an and the Bible. Although aspects of this relationship have been researched separately, no attempt has been made to compare educational strategies in the Qur’an and Bible, either within Qur’anic Studies, the broader study of religions, or on a theoretical basis. The Qur’an, New Testament, and Hebrew Bible, are, of course, unique in their structures, contexts, and processes of canonization etc., but they are also comparable from a theoretical perspective: As scriptures stemming from a particular phase in the history of religion, which emphasize teaching and training their adherents’ beliefs and practices in a way that seems new and radical compared to more ancient types of religion. Based on a theoretical complex combining historical, system-theoretical, and cultural-evolutionary perspectives, we approach the Qur’an and Bible as religious texts primarily intended for the purposes of education. In this paper, we will present the overall questions and

hypotheses of EQaB, arguing that the complex relationship linking education, the Qur'an, and the Bible, constitutes a unique and unexplored basis from which religious phenomena can be explored. While comparative studies between these two textual corpora have been conducted, education has not yet been seen as a common and wide-ranging religious characteristic of both the Qur'an and Bible. Focusing on the two subprojects of EQaB, which examine Qur'anic pedagogues and different educational strategies of biblical and extra biblical literature, we will exemplify how educational and pedagogical strategies are implemented, successfully and unsuccessfully, in the two text corpora. Having an overall educational aim, both the Qur'an and the Bible introduce models for correct religious adherence. Adherents are to believe in the major tenets of their respective worldviews and follow different ritual and social rules (e.g. Q. 5:1–6; Neh 8). On numerous occasions, however, explanatory educational passages in the Qur'an are followed by variations of: “but most of them do not understand” (*wa-aktharuhum lā ya'qilūn*; e.g. Q. 5:103; 6:37; 7:131; 8:34). And in the Hebrew Bible, we find passages like Jeremiah 35:14–15, where God laments the Israelites' continuous disobedience and failure to heed the warnings of his prophets. In such passages, the intended learning curves of the educational projects seem to be disrupted, leaving the Qur'anic and biblical teachers frustrated with their students.

JOHANNE LOUISE CHRISTIANSEN (PhD 2016, Aarhus University), is Assistant Professor at the Department of the Study of Religions, at the University of Southern Denmark. Her research focuses on the application of theoretical perspectives from other research fields, such as the study of religions, to the Qur'an. Christiansen is currently the PI of the research project *Education between the Qur'an and the Bible*, which is funded by the Independent Research Fund Denmark from 2022–2024. Among Christiansen's recent works is the book *The Exceptional Qur'an: Flexible and Exeptive Rhetoric in Islam's Holy Book* (Gorgias Press, 2021).

RACHEL CLAIRE DRYDEN (PhD 2022, University of Cambridge), is a postdoctoral researcher on the project *Education between the Qur'an and the Bible* (EQaB), at the University of Southern Denmark, funded by the Independent Research Fund Denmark. Her research is concerned with reading the Qur'an in its late antique context, and the Qur'an's value as a source for understanding intra-monotheistic dialogue and exchange.



Keynote Lecture. *The Light of Civilization, the Shadow of Empires: Mediterranean Muslims and the Qur'an under British and French Colonial Rule*

Johanna Pink – University of Freiburg

In 1934, Nejmi Sagib Bodamialisade, a Muslim from British Cyprus, published the first of several collections of segments of the Qur'an that he "translated" into English. His version of Q. 96:1–5 started thus: "READ by the Name of ALLAH, the Almighty Author, / Read, learn, teach, publish all the world over; / Read by the Help of your LORD, who created Man, / Gave senses and reason, taught the uses of Pen [...]". From today's perspective, his attempts of rendering the Qur'an in English verse might seem like an oddity. They were by no means atypical in the 1930s, though, when significant parts of the Mediterranean region from British Cyprus to French Algeria were under direct or indirect colonial rule. Muslims in these countries were experimenting with translating and teaching the Qur'an in a setting in which they were largely disconnected from the traditions of exegetical scholarship and cut off from the centers of Islamic learning. At the same time, they were very much influenced by European curricula and literary canons. The experiments of colonized Mediterranean Muslims in the field of Qur'an translation allow for unique insights into the interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim approaches to the Qur'an, about the perception and presentation of the Qur'an in a colonial setting, and about buried and unused possibilities of engaging with the Qur'an?

JOHANNA PINK is a Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Freiburg, Germany. She taught at Freie Universität Berlin and the University of Tübingen. Her main fields of interest are the trans regional history of *tafsir* in the modern period and Qur'an translations, with a particular focus on trans regional dynamics. She is the Principal Investigator of the research project GloQur – *The Global Qur'an* and general editor of the Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an Online. Her most recent monograph is entitled *Muslim Qur'anic Interpretation Today* (Equinox, 2019).

IQSA General Business Meeting

Roundtable. *Gender-based Research in Qur'anic Studies: An Exploration of Theoretical and Methodological Directions in Contemporary Scholarship*

organized by **Celene Ibrahim** (Groton School, MA)

chaired by **Nevin Reda** (Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto, ON)

Panelists

1. **Amira Abou-Taleb** – University of Helsinki
2. **Omaima Abou Bakr** – Cairo University
3. **Mulki Al-Sharmani** – University of Helsinki
4. **Yasmin Amin** – University of Exeter
5. **Halla Attallah** – Georgetown University, Washington D.C.
6. **Rahel Fischbach** – University of Innsbruck
7. **Abla Hasan** – Nebraska University, Lincoln, NE
8. **Celene Ibrahim** – Groton School, MA
9. **Roshan Iqbal** – Agnes Scott College, Decatur, GA
10. **Hadia Mubarak** – Queens University of Charlotte, NC
11. **Shuruq Naguib** – Lancaster University

The 2016 *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* roundtable, “Feminism and Islam: Exploring the Boundaries of Critique”, featuring essays by Asma Barlas, Amina Wadud, Karen Bauer, Kecia Ali, Aysha Hidayatullah, YaSiin Rahman, and Fatima Seedat, presents an informed discussion about the state of feminist and gender-based approaches to the Qur’an. The essays, which include an opening and concluding statement by Barlas as well as responses from the other contributors, scrutinize a range of issues related to methods on reading for gender in the Qur’an,



interpretive frameworks, and reading goals. The essays suggest the vibrancy of this subfield within Qur'anic Studies. They also indicate the divisions, and perhaps even the growing pains, characterizing this scholarship. Since then, a number of studies have been published that illustrate the continued growth of this field and its diversification, including works that expand the field of Islamic feminist inquiry into new areas, including a more robust engagement with Qur'anic ethics and Islamic spirituality. This roundtable builds on the work of this variegated scholarship and examines current and emerging trends in Islamic feminist and gender-based research. It takes a special interest in the question of methodology and the connection between Qur'an scholarship and the realities of women on the ground. Roundtable members will discuss a variety of topics related to Qur'anic religious ethics, Qur'anic narratives, and feminist hermeneutics.

- 1) What new directions or methodologies do you see in Islamic feminist scholarship or other gender-based research in Qur'anic Studies? What do you think are the challenges and opportunities of these new directions? Can you give an example from your own work?*
- 2) How do Qur'anic narratives portray women and men? What is similar and different? Are there ways in which the Qur'an's discourse reifies or disrupts gender binaries?*
- 3) How do Qur'anic narratives engage with themes related to women's bodies, including issues of infertility, pregnancy, and childbirth, and how is this important?*
- 4) What are the main concerns of Qur'anic ethics pertaining to gender? How would you describe concepts such as equity and justice in Qur'anic discourse? How do you see the Qur'an's engagement with these concepts played out in lived realities?*
- 5) How does tafsir figure in Islamic feminist and other gender-based research? What methodologies are best employed to engage tafsir studies?*
- 6) How do you personally situate your scholarship in the field of Islamic Studies? Do you use terms such as "Islamic feminist", "Muslim feminist" or "feminist" to describe your own scholarship? Why or why not?*

Format: (Eleven) Panelists will be given five minutes each for an initial response to one or more of the proposed questions, and will be also given a chance for a brief follow-up to respond to one another's points, before discussion is opened up to the audience.

AMIRA ABOU-TALEB is a doctoral fellow in the faculty of theology at the University of Helsinki. Her thesis examines the concept of *ih̄sān* in the Qur'anic moral worldview and the exegetical interpretive tradition. Her research expertise lies in the areas of gender relations, ethics and aesthetics, Islamic art, and the non-Muslim other. Amira received her MA in Islamic Studies from the American University in Cairo and is the author of "Constructing the Image of the Model Muslim Woman: Gender Discourse in Ibn Sa'd *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*", in *Islamic Interpretive Tradition and Gender Justice: Processes of Canonization, Subversion, and Change*, edited by Nevin Reda and Yasmin Amin (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

OMAIMA ABOU-BAKR is a Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Cairo University. She has published numerous articles in both English and Arabic on historical representations of women in premodern Muslim societies, women and gender in religious discourses, and Islamic feminist issues. Her books include *Al-niswiyyah wa-al-dirasat al-diniyah* (Feminism and Religious Studies: A Reader) (WMF, 2012), *Feminist and Islamic Perspectives: New Horizons of Knowledge and Reform* (WMF, 2017), and *Al-niswiyyah wa-al-manzur al-islami: afaq jadidah lil-ma'rifah wa-al-islah* (WMF, 2013). She is a founding member of the Women and Memory Forum in Egypt, a founding member of the Islamic Feminism Forum, and a member of the *Musawah* knowledge building working group (<https://www.musawah.org/>).

MULKI AL-SHARMANI is Associate Professor of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at University of Helsinki. Combining textual and ethnographic methodologies, she researches Islamic feminism, gender in modern Muslim family laws and classical Islamic jurisprudence, transnational Muslim families, and Muslim marriage norms and practices. Her publications include *Gender Justice and Legal Reform in Egypt: Navigating Muslim Family Law* (American University in Cairo Press, 2017), *Men in Charge? Authority in Muslim Legal Tradition*, co-edited with Ziba Mir-Hosseini and Jana Rumminger (OneWorld, 2015), and *Wellbeing of Transnational Muslim Families: Marriage, Law, and Gender*, co-edited with Marja Tiilikainen and Sanna Mustasaari (Routledge, 2019). She is a member of the *Musawah* knowledge building working group (<https://www.musawah.org/>).

YASMIN AMIN received her PhD in Islamic Studies from Exeter University's Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies. She obtained a post graduate diploma in Islamic Studies and an MA in Islamic Studies from the American University in Cairo. Her research covers various aspects of gender issues, early Muslim society and culture as well as the original texts of



Islamic history, law and hadith. She is the author of *Musnad Umm Salama and the Factors Affecting Its Evolution* (Brill, forthcoming), co-translator of *The Sorrowful Muslim's Guide* (Edinburgh University Press, 2018), and co-editor (with Nevin Reda) of *Islamic Interpretive Tradition and Gender Justice: Processes of Canonization, Subversion and Change* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

HALLA ATTALLAH is doctoral candidate at Georgetown University's Department of Theology and Religious Studies. Her research focuses on the Qur'an's narrative content, its rhetorical style, and its engagement with the concept of embodiment. Her publications include, "Abraham and His Family", co-authored with George Archer in the *Routledge Companion of the Qur'an* (Routledge, 2021). She is currently completing her dissertation, "(In)fertility in the Qur'an's Annunciation Type-Scenes: A Narratological Reading of Gender and Embodiment in the Qur'an".

ABLA HASAN is Associate Professor of Practice of Arabic Language & Culture and Arabic Studies Program Coordinator, Nebraska University. Her teaching and research focus on Qur'anic Studies, Qur'anic Hermeneutics, Islamic feminism, and Arabic Studies. She has published with Brill, *Analize, Ar-Raniry, JIL, Disputatio, Al-Manarah, E-logos* and other peer-reviewed international journals. She is the author of *Decoding the Egalitarianism of the Qur'an: Retrieving Lost Voices on Gender* (Lexington Books, 2019) and *On Pain and Suffering: A Qur'anic Perspective* (Lexington Books, 2022).

CELENE IBRAHIM is the author of *Women and Gender in the Qur'an* (Oxford University Press, 2020) and *Islam and Monotheism* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2022). Ibrahim completed her PhD in Arabic and Islamic Civilizations from Brandeis University and holds an M.Div. from Harvard University. She is a faculty member in Religious Studies and Philosophy at Groton School and offers courses on global religious history, Islamic and Arabic studies, women's studies, and applied ethics.

ROSHAN IQBAL is Associate Professor in Religious Studies at Agnes Scott College and teaches classes that are cross-listed with Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Film Studies. She received her PhD in Islamic Studies from Georgetown University. Prior to this she read for her MPhil at the University of Cambridge. She has studied in Pakistan, the US, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, the UK, and Iran. Her research interests include gender and sexuality in the Qur'an, Islamic law, and the writings of modern Muslim intellectuals. Her publications include *Marital and Sexual Ethics in Islamic Law: Rethinking Temporary Marriage* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022).

HADIA MUBARAK is Assistant Professor of Religion at Queens University of Charlotte. She previously served as Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Guilford College and as a Research Fellow at New York University-Abu Dhabi (NYUAD), where she wrote her book, *Rebellious Wives, Neglectful Husbands: Controversies in Modern Qur'anic Commentaries* (Oxford University Press, 2022). Mubarak completed her PhD in Islamic Studies from Georgetown University, where she specialized in modern and classical Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic feminism, and gender reform in the modern Muslim world. She currently serves as a scholar-in-residence with the Muslim Community Center of Charlotte and a scholar with the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding.

NEVIN REDA is Associate Professor of Muslim Studies at Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto. Her research interests include the poetics and hermeneutics of Qur'anic narrative structure, Hebrew Bible and Qur'an, spiritually integrative approaches to the Qur'an, Islamic feminist hermeneutics, and Islamic ethical-legal theory. Her publications include *The al-Baqara Crescendo: Understanding the Qur'an's Style, Narrative, Structure and Running Themes* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017) and a co-edited volume (with Yasmin Amin) entitled *Islamic Interpretive Tradition and Gender Justice: Processes of Canonization, Subversion, and Change* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

RAHEL FISCHBACH is a postdoc in the Department of Islamic Theology at Innsbruck University, training a new generation of Austrian Muslims to be Islam teachers at public schools. After receiving her PhD in 2016 from Georgetown University specializing in modern Qur'an hermeneutics, she completed a postdoc at Millsaps College and served for three years as Associate Professor for Islamic Studies at James Madison University. She has published on Qur'an hermeneutics, secularity, gender, and religious pluralism and taught classes on *fiqh*, Qur'an, Islamic Anthropology, gender, *sīra*, and Muslim-European cultures. Her new research project explores the aesthetics of violence in the Qur'an.

SHURUQ NAGUIB is a lecturer in Islamic Studies at Lancaster University. She received her PhD from the University of Manchester, Department of Middle Eastern Studies. Her research covers classical and modern Qur'an hermeneutics. She has written on ritual purity, Arabic rhetoric in post-classical Qur'an interpretation, the literary school of *tafsir*, Islam and gender theory, and feminist hermeneutics of the Qur'an. She is the Associate Editor of the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an Online* (Brill) and co-author of *Islam on Campus: Contested Identities and the Cultures of Higher Education in Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2020).



Wednesday 7 September 2022

08.15–09.30 | **Transfer** from Palermo city centre to La Pira Library

La Pira Library and Research Centre, via U. Maddalena 112, Palermo

09.30–11.00

Panel 7. *Kitab, Narratives and Techniques*

chaired by **Devin Stewart** (Emory University)

09.35–09.55 | Panel 7

On the Semantical Structure of the Qur'anic Term Kitab

Ivan Dyulgerov – Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

The issue of the Qur'anic word *kitab*, of its scope and meanings, generated a longstanding and fruitful discussion. The level of our understanding of the Islamic sacred text has been significantly raised by various scholarly endeavors: by linking it to previous religious traditions (Jeffery; Widengren); by elaborating the so-called pericopization (Neuwirth) and two-*kitab* (Goudarzi) hypotheses; by systematically defining it as a symbol for divine authority and knowledge (Madigan); by arguing for its interpretative rendering into Qur'an (Sinai); or by suggesting a straightforward reference of it to the biblical tradition (Stewart). This paper seeks to offer a solution to a well-known question: Do different meanings of *kitab* constitute a polysemous unity, or do they amount to an array of more or less incongruous meanings? Solving this issue, although in a somewhat simplistic way, would draw semantic border lines within which shared and differing meanings would become more apparent and distinguishable. Thus, in the present essay, I will demonstrate that in the whole Qur'anic text, *kitab* (or its verbal relatives) occurs in at least six types of linguistic contexts that accordingly are to determine six interrelated meanings of it: 1. scripture (in more than 200 verses as in Q. 2:2 or Q. 4:66); 2. divine record (in about 39 verses as in Q. 3:53 or 39:69); 3. divine predestination (in about 37 verses as in Q. 9;

51 or Q. 57:22); 4. scroll (at least once in Q. 21:104); 5. letter (Q. 27:28–29); and 6. document (at least once as in Q. 24:33). Furthermore, among other points, I will argue that the meaning of scripture corresponds to guidance as a notion encompassing prescriptions, admonishment through prophetic stories, etc. I thereafter will suggest that a significant opposition exists between the meanings of scripture and divine predestination, on the one hand, and that of divine record on the other. For while implying an obligation (as indicated by *kataba ‘alā* for instance), or a benefit (expressed by *kataba li*), or a predetermination, *kitab* stands for something that by God’s will has to be done, is to take place, or will inevitably happen. Whereas in the latter case it refers to the consequent process of collecting evidence and data. To put it differently, since guiding by necessity requires an act of recording for the sake of an ultimate judgment, the divine realm *kitab* needs to be considered as a unified concept appearing in two main facets – guidance and record – and implying the pivotal connotation of proclaimed and fulfilled law in its very general and positive sense.

IVAN DYULGEROV worked for a long period of time as an Arabic lecturer and translator, especially of classical Islamic literature. He earned a PhD in Arabic Linguistics from Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski in 2016. Currently, he is Assistant Professor of Arabic at the same university where he teaches a range of classes on Lexicology, Phonetics and Phonology, and Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic, as well as an introductory course into Qur’anic Semantics, the field that is at the core of his scholarly interest. Among his publications is *The Qur’an on the Concept of Religion* (in Bulgarian).

09.55–10.15 | Panel 7

The Qur’an in Early Nusayri Discourse: A Case Study

David Hollenberg – University of Oregon, Eugene, OR

In their important research on Nusayrism, Meir Bar-Asher and Aryeh Kofsky have depicted Nusayrism as a syncretistic religion that grew from Shi’i ghuluww, but that is ultimately outside the bounds of Islam. In light of this description, it is surprising that the Qur’an figures prominently in one of its key doctrinal sources. Indeed, in the longest Nusayri work in the group’s corpus, the 5th/11th-century *Manhaj al-‘ilm*

wal-bayān wa-nuzhat al-sama‘ wal-‘ayan (The method of knowledge and clarification and the pleasure of hearing and witnessing) composed by the Nusayri sage named Muhammad b. ‘Isa ‘Ismat al-Dawlah, the Qur’an is by far the most commonly adduced source. The Qur’an is central in both theology – that is, its metaphysical status, and rhetoric, the language through which Nusayri doctrines are expressed. There is one lengthy chapter exclusively devoted to Qur’anic exegesis, and Qur’anic formulations resound throughout the work – allusions that would only be meaningful to an audience who know the Qur’an well. In this presentation, I describe the status of the Qur’an and the approach toward its exegesis in the *Manhaj*. This paper will elucidate the role of the Qur’an in the source, and the author’s close and highly original reading of the Josef story in particular.

DAVID HOLLENBERG’s research concerns how communities of believers apply narrative, doctrine, and ritual to form and maintain communal identity and differentiate themselves from those outside their group. He applies such questions to research on medieval Islam in general, and Ismaili and Nusayri Shiism in particular. He and Mushegh Asatryan are completing a critical edition and translation of *Manhaj al-‘ilm wa l-bayan wa-nuzhat al-sama‘ wa l-‘ayan*, a doctrinal treatise by the Nusayri sage Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ‘Ismat al-Dawla (d. ca. 1050). His publications include *Beyond the Qur’an: Ismaili ta’wil and the Secrets of the Prophets* (University of South Carolina Press, 2016).

10.15–10.35 | Panel 7

Qur’anic Codes: Basic Building Blocks of Qur’anic Legislation

Joseph E. Lowry – University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

In this paper I propose a label for certain legal or legislative passages in the Qur’an. In particular, I want to borrow the term “code” as it has been used in the source-critical study of the Hebrew Bible and apply it, albeit with some significant changes, and in a very specific way, to certain verses and groups of verses in the Qur’an. I will argue that the Qur’anic Code forms a distinctive literary expression of the Qur’an’s late Medinan legislative style and that employing this term helps us focus on the formal, compositional, and in one case thematic aspects of these discrete sets of legal verses rather than just considering them

to have an identifiable legislative-doctrinal content. The Qur’anic code is a condensed, tightly organized set of interlocking rules that displays logical arrangement and systematic rule-subordination. From a literary or rhetorical perspective such codes also project compact systematicity and completeness or exhaustiveness. While such codes are in general much shorter than, for example, collections of legal materials in the Hebrew Bible that have (historically) been designated “codes”, they are consistent with the Qur’anic technique of abbreviation, a technique that occurs throughout the Qur’an and is most often associated with Qur’anic narrative. The Qur’anic codes are concentrated in three later Medinan surahs and thus represent a legislative style that contrasts with earlier collections of Qur’anic legislation. This paper will present and contextualize these Qur’anic codes in regard to positive legislative content, literary form, and Qur’anic theology.

JOSEPH E. LOWRY is a specialist in Islamic law, Arabic literature, and classical Islamic thought. He is the author, among other works, of *Early Islamic Legal Theory: The Risala of Muhammad Ibn Idris al-Shafi’i* (Brill, 2007) and the editor (with D. Stewart and S. Toorawa) of *Law and Education in Medieval Islam: Studies in Memory of George Makdisi* (Gibb Memorial Trust, 2005) and (with D. Stewart) of *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography II: 1350–1850* (Harrasowitz, 2009). He has edited and translated al-Shafi’i’s *Epistle on Legal Theory for the Library of Arabic Literature* (NYU Press, 2013) and is a member of the editorial boards of the Library of Arabic Literature and of the journals *Islamic Law and Society* (Brill) and *Abbasid Studies* (Brill). Before completing his PhD, he was an attorney in private practice.

10.35–10.55 | Panel 7

An Analysis of the Prophetic Speeches through Qur’anic Narratives

Antonio Cuciniello – Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan

In the Qur’anic text God says that the reports about the previous messengers are being narrated to Muḥammad by God Himself. Yet, not all of them have an evident narrative importance. As regards the accounts of the prophets, “as examples of ‘normative precedent’”, all of them (except Joseph) are not present in dedicated contexts. Furthermore, each story is mainly portrayed as an edifying narrative, a divine “sign” and a reminder for listeners. In addition, specific narrative parts are

repeated in different surahs with a few variations or additions in the plot, so that the storyline is not recounted episodically as in a normal writing style. Finally, not all the prophets are cited as speakers, so the amount of speech of each prophet is obviously directly proportionate to the development of each single story. In order to explore these issues, this paper will first give a general overview about some key features of the Islamic concepts of language of revelation and prophethood. This will be followed by an examination of the Qur'anic narrative of the prophets. The intent is to introduce a symmetrical reading, between incidents and the specific language used in the different parts of the Qur'anic narrative of the prophets, outline different personal profiles and try to counter an approach that claims to see all the Qur'anic envoys only in their instrumental function in the mission of Muḥammad. Actually, Muḥammad is told that the previous prophets were just like him: they had the same mission and had to endure the same trials. As a result, they would only be seen as a sort of *preparatio prophetica* of Muḥammad. This approach, obviously, would tend to underestimate, or even neglect, the different personalities and specific traits of the envoys, even though interesting diverse profiles emerge through the situations they face and the language they use. Through the dialogues the Qur'an portrays the different characters in the different contexts and it highlights their human traits, so that despite their divine mission, they cannot be considered divine. Such an aspect appears when reporting direct speech which defines remarkable peculiarities and differences of their human personality. Certainly, "dialogue is one of the media through which the Qur'an emphasizes their humanity" and it lets readers get a remarkable insight into characters seen as both envoys and human beings.

ANTONIO CUCINIELLO received his PhD from the Catholic University of Milan where he is Postdoctoral Research Fellow in History of Islamic Countries. In 2001 he got a Diploma in Arabic Studies and in 2002 a Licentiate in Arabic and Islamic Studies at Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies. From 2003 to 2005 he lived in Cairo. He has been part of the scientific committee of Italian Islam of the Office for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue of the Italian Episcopal Conference. His research is focused on the eschatological function of Jesus in Islamic scriptures, with particular reference to texts from the medieval period.

11.00–11.20 | Coffee Break

11.20–12.20

Presidential Address. *A Historian Looks at the Qur'an*

Fred Donner – University of Chicago; Respondent: **Nevin Reda** – Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto

The Qur'an, as a sacred text, poses distinctive challenges for the historian. The talk will begin by addressing briefly some of these challenges, in particular the limits of what the historian can say about sacred texts like the Qur'an. The bulk of the talk will then discuss the challenges historians face in understanding the text's transmission, as revealed both by Muslim tradition and from the evidence of the material record, and what implications the historian might draw from the Qur'an's content.

FRED M. DONNER is Professor of Near Eastern History in the Oriental Institute and Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. His main field of research is the origins of Islam and early Islamic History. He is the author of *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2012) and *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Darwin Press, 1998).

12.20–13.00 | Guided Library Tour and Final Remarks

13.00–14.00 | Lunch Break (buffet at La Pira Library)

13.00–14.00 | Meetings of the Nominating, Programming and Publications and Research Committees (for members only)

14.00–18.00 | Visit to Monreale (upon registration)

Publisher Corner

Monday 5 September | 13.00–20.40

Palazzo Alliata di Villafranca, Piazza Bologna 20

- Brill
- De Grutyer
- Leila Books
- Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS)

Tuesday 6 September | 08.30–19.40

Palazzo Alliata di Villafranca, Piazza Bologna 20

- Brill
- De Grutyer
- Leila Books
- Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS)

IQSA Annual Meeting | 5-7 September 2022

FSCIRE – La Pira Library and Research Centre

On 5-10 July 2021, IQSA International Conference was virtually hosted by the La Pira Library and Research Centre in Palermo, Italy. Scholars of various backgrounds and disciplines presented their paper and convened online from more than fifteen countries from California, USA to Kerala, India. Despite the online format, the conference hosted by the La Pira Library has been a very lively, inclusive, inspiring and enjoyable event that created new contacts among scholars in Qur'anic Studies thus confirming IQSA's mandate as an international academic association helping scholars to meet, and share their knowledge and discuss their hypotheses and analyses.

The enthusiastic and generous support of the whole La Pira Library team in hosting the online conference has been fundamental in making possible that speakers and attendees expressed the wish to repeat in person in Palermo the following year. In 2022, the IQSA Annual Meeting will finally take place in person in Palermo. It has become reality thanks to the contributions and enthusiasm of all speakers who submitted a proposal or a panel. Scholars and colleagues from the La Pira Library and IQSA have worked jointly towards organizing this event and gathering all of us to share our research and discover new approaches in studying the Qur'anic text.

