



PROPHET

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THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PROPHET
IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE

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Between God and Man:

The Representations of the Prophet in the Construction of Islamic Knowledge

The relation of the contemporary Muslims to the Prophet Muhammad, as reflected in their daily lives, in scholarly writings and legal consultations, in Sufi practice and devotional expressions, and even in political propaganda, largely derives from the rich heritage of Islamic knowledge, whose formation and development took many centuries and was shaped by different societal and spatial contexts. In the course of this process, the constant rereading and re-appropriation of this heritage created again new forms of knowledge and practice, whose relations to the “ancient” ones constitute an object of study of its own. Hence the necessity to focus on these diverse, multiple and sometimes even contradictory representations, which reveal so manifold relations to the Prophet, as well as appreciations and modalities of his presence, in the life and destiny of his *umma*.

This first workshop focuses on representations of the Prophetic figure in Islamic knowledge and practice as they became constructed and progressively established in the formative age of Islam, then in the medieval and early modern periods, and re-read and re-appropriated in present times. The core element of all the Prophetic representations and, at the same time, the common thread running through all contributions to this workshop, is the constant state of tension between the divine and the human aspects of his person and message. In the Muslims’ relation to the Prophet, he is represented and envisaged throughout as a medium of the divine message and as a human being. The tension between the divine and the human realms which were connected in the person and message of the Prophet was often solved by elevating his personality to superhuman perfection, despite his emphatic demarcation from any divine status. This ambiguity is further increased by his function as a messenger of both divine wrath and mercy. The workshop aims to shed more light on this state of tension and to work out more clearly how the divine is mediated through the human in the Prophet’s person.

This involves, first of all, to scrutinize the “excellent model” (*uswa ḥasana*) incarnated by the Prophet, and its role as a source of authority. Inquiry then has to focus on the scriptural foundations of this model and authority, and to their interpretations in the different spheres of Islamic knowledge, including law and theology, where the tension between humanness and divine election become evident. This applies, for instance, to his portrayal in the Qur’ān, to his image as military leader in the *maghāzī* and *ḥadīth* literature, and to his changing role as a model of emulation (*taqlīd*) in Islamic law.

“Revivification” to the Prophet can be considered as a structural element in the relation of the believers to him. As he is perceived as the best of human beings (*khayr al-anām*) he appears as a mediator of divine law and power and, at the same time, as a figure of compassion, mercy and salvation in this world and the hereafter. His prerogative of intercession, valid for actual time as well as for the eschatological future, adds an element of immediacy to his presence. The different forms of evoking the presence of the Prophet will be discussed in several

contributions. These efforts have achieved particular immediacy in the revivification of the Prophet's living tradition (*sunna*) and of the transmission of Prophetical *ḥadīth*, which encompasses meticulous details of his human life and legitimizes him as a normative guide by divine election.

The tension between the divine and the human in the Prophet similarly pervades his position and status in Prophetic history, in relation to other prophetic figures but also in his role in the creation of the universe in eschatology. The workshop will also shed light on this tension with respect to the contours of his figure in the different receptions of Muhammadan prophetology within the Sunnī exoteric and esoteric environment, as well as in Shī'ī imamology and among the Muslim philosophers.

Finally, the model and authority of the Prophet as perfect human being appears as a quasi-icon at the center of a very "modern" problem, i.e. the construction of the Self. In this context the Prophet is often referred to as an inspirer of an "autochthonous" modernity. In the early modern Indian Sufī context of the *ṭarīqa muḥammadīya*, his humanness embraces all aspects of individual and social life and directly pervades the self of each follower of his path. The call for an imitation of the Prophetic model is equally widespread among modern Islamist movements, be it among Pashtun Islamists in Pakistan or in the contemporary discourse of global *da'wa* which recalls the personality of the Prophet even for rather secular, neo-liberal ideas.

The workshop cannot be exhaustive on such a vast subject. We will, nevertheless, remain attentive to three interdisciplinary problems, which will preoccupy us throughout the program: *i*) the eschatological dimension attached to the prophetic figure; *ii*) his character as an excellent model in his twofold meta-historical and "immediate" reality, both in the daily life of the believers and in the development of Muslim societies; and *iii*) his central place in the construction of personal and collective identities and of religious and political authority. We will take several types of sources into account: Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*; *shamā'il* literature; theological treatises; legal sources; Qur'ānic commentaries (*tafsīr*), Shī'ī sources, philosophical treatises, and literature of proselytism (*da'wa*). The philological and historical approach will certainly be at the centre of our efforts, but the opening towards other humanities and social sciences, such as political science, law, philosophy, and social anthropology will be equally important.

PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 5 July 2017

Morning

9.00-9.15 **Welcoming coffee and address**

9.15-9.30 **Presentation of the workshop**

First session 9.30-12.15

1-The Prophet as an Excellent Model and as a Source of Authority

9.30-9.50 **Denis Gril**: *Le Prophète du Coran : entre humanité et élection*

10.00-10.20 **Adrien de Jarmy**: *Images du Prophète durant la période des expéditions militaires, tel qu'il est représenté dans les maghāzī et les ḥadīth-s d'al-Bukhārī*

Coffee break 10.30-10.45

10.45-11.05 **Eric Chaumont**: *Peut/doit-on dire que la communauté musulmane est muqallid vis-à-vis du prophète lorsqu'elle le 'suit' (ittibā') ?*

11.15-11.35 **Christian Müller**: *Changing roles of the Prophet in Islamic Law (8th - 13th century)*

11.45-12.15 Discussion

Lunch

Afternoon

Second session 2.15-3.45

2-The Immediacy of the Prophetic Presence

2.15-2.35 **Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino**: *"He who vivifies my Sunna has vivified me" The Prophet and the destiny of the Muslim community in the Kitāb al-shifā' of Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ*

2.45-3.05 **Marco Schöller**: *Ritualisation of Ḥadīth transmission in the Mamluk period*

3.15-3.45 Discussion

Coffee break 3.45-4.00

Third session 4.00-5.30

3-Muhammadan Prophetology and Its reception

4.00-4.20 **Pierre Lory:** *Le Prophète et les autres figures prophétiques dans l'interprétation mystique du Coran*

4.30-4.50 **Olga Lizzini:** *La prophétie chez Avicenne : imagination et rôle politique*

5.00-5.30 Discussion

Reception

Thursday, 6 July 2017

Morning

Fourth session 9.00-10.45

4-Muhammadan prophetology and its reception (continued)

9.00-9.20 **Mohammad-Ali Amir Moezzi:** *Relations entre le nabî et le walî aux premiers temps du shi'isme*

9.30-9.50 **Nadjet Zougar:** *La figure prophétique chez Ibn Taymiyya*

10.00-10.30 Discussion

Coffee break 10.30-10.45

Fifth session 10.45-1.00

5-The Prophet and the Construction of Identity

10.45-11.05 **Soraya Khodamoradi:** *The Self and the Prophet in the Eighteenth-Century Sufism of Khwaja Mir Dard (d. 1785)*

11.15-11.35 **Jan-Peter Hartung:** *The representation of the Prophet among Pakhtun Islamists*

11.45-12.05 **Jamal Malik:** *The Prophet in the discourse of contemporary da'wa*

12.15-12.45 Discussion

Lunch

Afternoon

Sixth session 2.00-3.00

6-Conclusions