Patricia Crone Memorial Conference

The Majlis revisited: Inter- and intra-religious and cross-cultural disputations in the Islamicate world

Casa Árabe, Cordoba
12-14 April 2018

Support for this event is provided by the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, Director's Excellence Fund, established by a grant from the Hendricks Charitable Foundation, and by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (Anneliese Maier Award 2014)

©Jose Carmona Monje. Madinat al-Zahra

The year 1999 saw the publication of a collection of articles that was to have a major impact on the study of interreligious polemics and apologetics: *The Majlis. Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam,* edited by Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, Mark R. Cohen, Sasson Somekh and Sidney H. Griffith (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz). The nine articles in this volume dealt with true or fictitious reports of religious, philosophical and even literary disputations and exchanges said to have taken place at scholarly sessions or literary salons hosted by political or religious leaders in some of the main centres of the Muslim world. Since then, much work has been done on this genre and many new texts have been unearthed that deserve to be edited and analysed.

Apart from presenting new insights into texts that were already known, the specific aim of the proposed conference is to explore such newly discovered texts. And whereas the study of majlis debates has so far dealt mainly with the so-called religions of the Book, that is, besides Islam: Judaism and Christianity, we aim to broaden the scope by including Zoroastrianism as well as Buddhism. However, the conference will not only deal with polemical and apologetical exchanges between members of different communities, but also with intra-religious disputations. We have therefore also solicited papers focusing on exchanges between members of different branches or schools within the same religion that existed in the Islamicate world (e.g. Ismāʿīlī vs. Sunni, Melkite vs. "Nestorian", Karaite vs. Rabbanite and Samaritan, Mālikī vs. Ḥanafī).

PROGRAMME

DAY 1, THURSDAY 12 APRIL 2018

9:00–9:15
Opening Session
Pedro Martínez-Avial, director general, Casa Árabe
Academic Organizers

SESSION I. THE MAJLIS: ANATOMY OF A GENRE · Chair: Sabine Schmidtke

09:15-9:45
Kevin Blankinship (University of Chicago)
"Impartially Have I Judged": Contests of poetry and adab in the medieval Islamic court

9:45–10:15
Luke Yarbrough (Saint Louis University)
Professional competition, ideological difference, and the Majlis

10:15-10:45
Daniel de Smet (CNRS, Paris)
The Majlis genre in the Ismaili tradition: real or supposed disputations with other Muslim groups, Christians and Jews, or dissident movements inside the community

10:45-11:15 Discussion

11:15-11:45 Coffee break

SESSION II. DEBATING THE PROPHETHOOD OF MUḤAMMAD · Chair: Devin Stewart

12:00-12:30
Jan Thiele (ILC-CSIC, Madrid)
Biblical material in Muslim theological literature: a 'new' link between writers from the North African Ashʿarite-Mālikī and the Persian-Shiite milieus

12:30-13:00
Sabine Schmidtke (IAS Princeton)
Biblical proof texts in polemical literature: The Case of Daqāʾiq al-naẓar fī ḥaqāʾiq al-bashar *of ʿUmar b. Khiḍr b. ʿUmar al-Iṣfahānī*

13:00-13:30
Asad Ahmed (Berkeley University)
Muhammad and the emergence of Sunni sectarianism in nineteenth-century India

13:30-14:00 Discussion

14:00-15:30 Lunch break

SESSION III. THE MAJLIS AS AN INSTRUMENT TO STRENGTHEN IDENTITY · Chair: Javier Rosón

15:00-15:30
Devin Stewart (Emory University)
Abū al-Fatḥ al-Karajiki's Majlis at the Fatimid Dār al-ʿIlm on legal analogy

15:30-16:00
Christian Mauder (New York University Abu Dhabi)
Negotiating Sunni identity in a courtly space: Ḥanafī Māturīdīs and Shāfiʿī Ashʿarīs in the majālis of the Mamluk Sultan Qānisawh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501-1516)

16:00-16:20 Discussion

16:20-16:45 Coffee break

SESSION IV. INTER- AND INTRA-RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSIES IN THE IRANIAN REALM · Chair: Daniel de Smet

16:45-17:15
Jonathan Brack (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
Debating heaven, arguing over hell: Muslim-Buddhist polemics in fourteenth-century Mongol-ruled Iran

17:15-17:45
Matthew Melvin-Koushki (University of South Carolina)
Innovation, inquisition and debate in Timurid Iran: The Apologies of Ibn Turka; or, Can Sunni orthodoxy be scientific?

17:45-18:05 Discussion

Reception

DAY 2, FRIDAY 13 APRIL 2018

SESSION V. CRITIQUE AND COMMENTARY IN SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE · Chair: Sonja Brentjes

9:00-09:30
Peter Pormann (University of Manchester)
Confession and community in the Arabic commentaries on the Hippocratic Aphorisms

09:30-10:00
Nahyan Fancy (DePauw University, Indiana)
Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi's polemic against Ibn al-Nafis in his Tuhfa al-Sa'diyya

10:00-10:30
Evgenia Kermeli (Hacettepe University)
"Jamming" in 17th century Ottoman Istanbul: A Christian-Muslim debate on astronomy and religion

10:30-11:00
Regula Forster (Universität Zürich)
Talking about an occult science. Ibn Arfaʿ Ra's and the tradition of alchemical dialogues

11:00-11:40 Discussion

11:40-12:00 Coffee

SESSION VI. ZOROASTRIANISM AND THE MAJLIS · Chair: Maribel Fierro

11:45-12:15
Christian Sahner (University of Oxford)
The Mowbed in the Caliph's court: An example of Zoroastrian dispute literature in its Islamic context

12:15-12:45
Domenico Agostini (Tel Aviv University)
On Zoroastrian and Muslim polemics in Late Antiquity

12:45-13:15
Mihaela Timus (IHR, Rumania-BBAW)
A Zoroastrian kalām?

13:15-13:45 Discussion

13:45-15:00 Lunch break

SESSION VII. MAJĀLIS AND POLEMICAL EXCHANGES IN AL-ANDALUS AND CHRISTIAN SPAIN · Chair: Camilla Adang

15:30-16:00
Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala (Universidad de Córdoba)
Arguing it out! Muslim sources in Christian hands

16:00-16:30
Mònica Colominas (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science)
The Mudejar and the Morisco "Majlis": Some reflections about debates in Muslim accounts from Christian Iberia

16:30-16:50 Discussion

16:50-17:15 Coffee

SESSION VIII. MORE FROM THE ISLAMIC WEST · Chair: Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala

17:15-17:45
Maribel Fierro (CSIC, Madrid)
Almohad majālis

17:45-18:15
Camilla Adang (Tel Aviv University)
An unlikely guide to majlis etiquette: Ibn Ḥazm and his Faṣl fī ḥuḍūr majālis al-ʿilm

18:15-18:35 Discussion

Dinner

DAY 3, SATURDAY 14 APRIL 2018

9:00-13:00
Antonio Vallejo (Junta de Andalucía)
The caliphal court as a locus of majālis: a study visit to Medina Azahara (Madīnat al-Zahrā')

Organized by **Camilla Adang** (Tel Aviv University), **Sonja Brentjes** (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science), **Maribel Fierro** (Instituto de Lenguas y Culturas del Mediterráneo-CSIC) and **Sabine Schmidtke** (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton)

Secretary: **Víctor de Castro** (ILC-CSIC)

Casa Árabe es un consorcio formado por: