



**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)

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. Ismā'īlī 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 Ash'arite-Mālikī and the Persian-Shiite milieus*

**12:30-13:00**

**Sabine Schmidtke** (IAS Princeton)

*Biblical proof texts in polemical literature: The Case of Daqā'iq al-nazar fi haqā'iq al-bashar of 'Umar b. Khidr b. 'Umar 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-Faṭḥ al-Karajiki's Majlis at the Fatimid Dār al-'Ilm on legal analogy*

**15:30-16:00**

**Christian Mauder** (New York University Abu Dhabi)

*Negotiating Sunni identity in a courtly space: Ḥanafī Māturīdīs and Shāfi'ī Ash'arīs 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 Arfa‘ 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 Sahrer** (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-‘ilm*

**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)



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