



PROPHET

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THE PRESENCE AND ESCHATOLOGICAL ROLE OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE

ANR-DFG *Prophet* Workshop

2-3 May 2019



Baba Farid (Pakpattan, Pakistan, 2013)
Photo courtesy of Stefan Reichmuth

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The rise of Prophetic piety among Muslim communities, anchored in forms of faith and doctrine which emerged already since the 12th century, gained momentum in the early modern period and has continued ever since. This piety was shaped in manifold ways by different historical and cultural settings and by conjunctures of religious hope and fear prevailing in Muslim societies. Expressed in competing rigorist and mercy-centred manifestations, it has contributed until today to the structuring of emotional life and moral consciousness among Muslim individuals. Widespread eschatological beliefs attribute a living presence to the Prophet Muhammad after his death, which allows for direct personal access and relations with him. The pious emulation of his model, as transmitted in the Prophetic Tradition (*ḥadīth*), gained increasing salience for the moral formation and emotional cultivation of the Muslim Self, both in its active and receptive qualities. Since late medieval times, we witness among many Muslim individuals and communities a growing desire for communication with the Prophet in dreams and visions, by securing personal access to relics and historic places connected with his life, by surrounding themselves with calligraphic representations of his names, and by constantly expressing the benediction upon him (*al-ṣalāt ‘alā an-nabī*) whenever his name is mentioned. Hope and prayer for his intercession (*shafā‘a*) at Judgement Day became a dominant, though often contested, theological issue. - The construction of a Prophetic presence in these individual as well as collective manifestations of piety and religious experience, and their eschatological dimensions still need to be clarified. This also holds for their comparison with more general trends of socio-cultural individualization, which are often assumed for the early modern and modern world in and beyond Europe.

The fourth workshop of our Franco-German ANR/DFG Project “The Presence of the Prophet: Muhammad in the Mirror of his Community in Early Modern and Modern Islam” approaches the individual and eschatological dimensions of Prophetic piety from perspectives informed by the history of mentalities and emotions and by religious anthropology and sociology. By this it is intended to bring out the historical emergence of the different ways of encounters with the Prophetic presence and to highlight the embodiment of the Prophetic model as part of the formation of the Muslim individual. The constant negotiation of this model between claimants of strict adherence to the letter of the Prophetic *sunna* and, on the other hand, the advocates of personal and mystical experience will be given special attention, as the formation of Muslim individuality has to be seen in the light of this historical tension that has gained in fervour in more recent times. The interface of the Prophetic model and the often-suggested growth of religious individualization in modern times still has to be worked out for the Islamic world. We have to ask, furthermore, how Muslims evoke the eschatological aura of the Prophet and his language through the transmission and emulation of Prophetic Traditions, by instilling fear and mercy (*rahma*) in their proselytizing efforts (*da‘wa*), or by appealing to his role as an intercessor for them in their prayers.

The following four categories of Prophetic piety will serve as session topics for our workshop:

1) The Prophet and the construction of the Self: morals and emotions: Over centuries, the Prophetic model derived from the corpus of his transmitted tradition has played an increasing role in the moral

upbringing and the formation of the self within Muslim communities. Muslims emulate his morals and his character (*al-akhlāq wa-l-ādāb al-nabawīya*), Sufis increasingly focused on the Prophetic Path (*al-tarīqa al-muḥammadīya*), and some even aspired to a mystical union with his person. Anthropologists have increasingly studied the various forms of Islamic religious discipline and ethical self-fashioning connected with the Prophet, and their convergence with, and differentiation from, modern concepts of personality. We will attempt to bring out the increasing cultivation of a strong emotional identification with his person in recent times, that contributed in no small way to the recent outrages against the tarnishing of his image within and outside the Islamic world.

2) Visions, dreams and encounters with the Prophet continue to have a special role in Islam as the only part left of prophecy (*mubashshirāt*), and as a crucial element of personal religious experience with far-reaching social functions, which secure his eschatological presence and even allow for union with him. Literary reports about such encounters abound throughout history, and they are still searched for, transmitted and discussed today in pious circles of both Sufi and Salafi orientation. The transmission of the Prophet's sayings appears to convey a similar meta-historical immediacy of contact.

3) Materiality of the Prophetic presence: body, relics, places, symbols: Though always strongly suspected and often condemned as "polytheism" (*shirk*), Muslim attachment to the bodily traces and relics of the Prophet, to the holy places and their search for their blessing (*baraka*) survives until today in many parts of the Muslim world. Calligraphic presentations of his names and of his physical description (*ḥilya*) invite for a similar attachment in symbolic form. We will have to ask how all these elements mediate an affective presence of Muhammad for the believer.

4) Benedictions (*taṣliya*) of the Prophet, and prayers for his intercession (*tawassul, istighātha*) have gained increasing importance for Muslim piety since the later Middle Ages. The "Benediction of the Prophet" (*ṣalāt 'alā an-nabī*) became at the same time an expression of love and a guarantor of hope for life in this world and the next, even serving in Sufism as a path for the realization of a union with him. The Prophet himself even came to be addressed by a special genre of "Letters to the Prophet". The use and spread of such prayers in the different historical conjunctures of fear and hope, and their individual usages for consolation or decision-making will be taken up with interdisciplinary discussion.

PROGRAM

Thursday, 2 May 2019

Morning

9.30-9.45	Welcoming Coffee
9.45-10.00	Opening of the Workshop
<i>First Session</i> 9.30-13.00 The Prophet and the Construction of the Self: Morals and Emotions	
10.00-10.30	Abdoulaye Sounaye (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin), <i>Son Manzon Allah: Reclaiming the Prophet through Performance</i>
10.40-11.10	Fabio Vicini (29 Mayis University, Istanbul), <i>Embodying the sunna, Cultivating the Brotherhood: Muslim exemplary conduct in a Sufi-inspired reformist community in contemporary Turkey</i>
11.20-11.40 <i>Coffee Break</i>	
11.40-12.10	Samuela Pagani (University of Salento, Lecce, Italy), « <i>Priez comme vous m'avez vu prier</i> » : <i>l'intériorisation du modèle de Muhammad selon Mahmūd Muhammad Tāhā ("Pray as you have seen me pray": The Interiorisation of the Model of Muhammad According to Mahmūd Muhammad Tāhā)</i>
12.20-12.50	General Discussion
13.00-14.45 <i>Lunch</i>	

Thursday, 2 May 2019

Afternoon

Second Session 15.00-16.35	
The Prophet and his Heritage: Between Recital, Encounter, and Vision	
15.00-15.30	Denis Gril (Iremam, Aix-en-Provence), <i>Le Maître des maîtres : de la vision du Prophète en songe et à l'état de veille (The Master of Masters: About the Vision of the Prophet in Dreams and in the Waking State)</i>
15.40-16.10	Thomas Pierret (CNRS, Iremam, Aix-en-Provence), <i>Prophet-related ritual innovations in modern Syria :defending the "old orthodoxy" with the ulama in it</i>
16.20-16.35 <i>Coffee Break</i>	
Third Session 16.35-17.45	
Materiality of the Prophetic Presence : Body, Relics, Places, Symbols	
16.35-17.05	Hiba Abid (post-doc Collège de France, Paris), Anouk Cohen (Centre Jacques Berque, Rabat), <i>Uniting with the Prophet: Codicological and Anthropological Approaches to the Material, Sensory and Aesthetic Experience of the Dalā'il al-Khayrāt Collection</i>
17.15-17.45	General Discussion
<i>Dinner for the participants</i>	

Friday, 3 May

Morning

Fourth Session 9.00-12.00	
Materiality of the Prophetic Presence : Body, Relics, Places, Symbols	
9.00-09.30	Luca Patrizi (University of Turin), <i>"Drinking" the Baraka of the Prophet : The Role of Water in the Veneration of the Âthâr al-Nabî in Contemporary Islam</i>
9.40-10.10	Sean McLoughlin (University of Leeds), <i>Visiting the Prophet's Grave: Contested Pieties, Performativity and Translocal Circulations of Material Religion in UK Muslim Diasporas</i>

10.20-10.40 <i>Coffee Break</i>	
10.40-11.10	Patrick Eisenlohr (University of Göttingen), <i>Sonic Atmospheres and the Presence of the Prophet in Mauritian Muslim Devotional Practices</i>
11.20-12.00	General Discussion
12.00-14.00 <i>Lunch</i>	

Friday, 3 May

Afternoon

<i>Fifth Session 14.00-16.45</i>	
Benedictions of the Prophet and Prayers for his Intercession (<i>tawassul</i> and <i>istighâtha</i>)	
14.00-14.30	Nelly Amri (Université de la Manouba- Tunis), <i>Les assemblées nocturnes de « prière sur le Prophète » au Maghreb ou Majâlis al-‘Arûsî (m. v. 897/1492). Une pratique dévotionnelle toujours vivante et son ancrage soufi (The Nocturnal Meetings of "Prayer on the Prophet" in the Maghreb or Majâlis al-‘Arûsî (v. 897/1492). A Devotional Practice still alive and its Sufi Anchoring)</i>
14.40-15.10	Michele Petrone (Université de Copenhague – Islam in the Horn of Africa Project), <i>From Tunisia to Ethiopia: the uses of a collection of prayers on the Prophet, the Tanbîh al-Anâm of Ibn ‘Azzûm (d. 1552-3)</i>
15.20-15.50	Andrea Brigaglia (Université de Capetown), <i>Beyond “Devotional literature”: reading the writings of Muhammad Ghibrima al-Dâghirî (d. 1975) in the Longer History of the Salawât as a literary Genre</i>
16.00-16.30	General Discussion
16.30-16.45 <i>Coffee Break</i>	
<i>Sixth Session</i> 16.45-17.30	
16.45-17.30	Conclusions