

About

Scholarship on the formation of early Islamic legal culture tends to privilege accounts of the history of Islamic law: from Ḥijāzī “origins” to comparatively late processes of theorization and institutionalization, leading to the emergence of the Islamic legal schools and the development of legal hermeneutics. Qur’anic law itself often plays a marginal role in such accounts. This is not surprising since there are some noteworthy discontinuities between Qur’anic and Islamic law.

While the ties between Qur’anic and Islamic legal thought and expression remain to be investigated in greater detail, one important aspect of early Islamic legal culture remains especially under-explored: legal narratives.

We invite speakers to rethink the formative period of Islamic legal culture by identifying and discussing Qur’anic and early Islamic “legal stories.” These are narratives whose aesthetics helped diffuse and anchor societal norms and legal and ethical ideas. Such stories played a crucial role in shaping Qur’anic and early Islamic legal culture and, while suggesting societal transformations, they indeed also displayed continuities in legal thought and practice between the Qur’an and the Islamic tradition.

Venue

Universität Tübingen, Alte Aula
Münzgasse 30
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Registration and Contact

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Organization

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SFB 1391 Andere Ästhetik

<https://uni-tuebingen.de/de/159334>

QaSLA

<https://www.qasla.eu/>



SFB 1391 Andere Ästhetik

Teilprojekt B8: Ästhetik narrativer
Rechtskommunikation im Koran und im vormodernen
Islam

Early Islamic Narrative Aesthetics and Legal Culture

International Conference

10–11 April 2026
Alte Aula

Image credits

Front: Cain carrying the body of his slain brother Abel
Inside: Moses receives the Torah
The New York Public Library, Digital Collections, Spencer Coll.,
Persian MS. 46, f. 15r, 90v

Friday 10 April

09.00–09.15	Welcome	14.45–15.30	Ana Davitashvili (University of Tübingen) Early Islamic Interpretations of “Purified Spouses” (<i>azwāj</i> <i>muṭahhara</i>) in Paradise: Between Legal Interpretations of Purification and <i>Isrāʿīliyyāt</i>	11.15–12.00	Devin Stewart (Emory University) ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and Suspect Marriages
Session 1: Stories of Legal Origins					
09.15–10.00	Nicolai Sinai (University of Oxford) A Rocky Patch in Arabian Religion: Seductive Souvenirs, Imported Idols, and the Degeneration of <i>Dīn</i> <i>Ibrāhīm</i>	Coffee 16.00–16.45	Shawkat Toorawa (Yale University) Divine Law and Human Nature in <i>Ḥadīth Madīnat Wāq Wāq</i>	Session 4: Tales about Fair Judgment and Punishment	
10.00–10.45	Zishan Ghaffar (University of Paderborn) Imagining the Israelites – The Aesthetics of Interreligious Scriptural Hermeneutics	16.45–17.30	Discussion	12.00–12.45	Marianna Klar (University of Oxford) Legal Narratives Pertaining to Taxation and to the Revelation of Q 8:1, “They ask you (s) about the <i>anfāl</i> ”
Coffee 11.15–12.00	Holger Zellentin (University of Tübingen) Jesus’ Confirmation and Abrogation of the Torah: Narrative Aesthetics and the Founding of Islamic Law in Q 3:48–53	Dinner 19.00 (Restaurant Mauganeschtle)		Lunch 14.00–14.45	Idris Nassery (University of Paderborn) Islamic Nomos and the Formation of Early Legal Normativity: The Māʿiz Narrative Reconsidered
12.00–12.45	Johanne Christiansen (University of Southern Denmark) The Beauty of the List in Early Islamic Narrative and Legal Discourse	Saturday 11 April		14.45–15.30	Thomas Eich (University of Hamburg) Reading the <i>Kitāb al-Aghānī</i> together with Latin Texts from the 6th/7th Centuries: Legalistic Dimensions of Stories about Qays b. ʿĀṣim and Ṣaʿṣaʿa b. Nājiya Relating to Female Infanticide
Session 2: Ideal and Utopia in Legal Narratives					
14.00–14.45	Karen Bauer (The Institute of Ismaili Studies) Anger and Divine Law: From Qurʾanic Narratives to Islamic Legal Culture	09.15–10.00	Session 3: Accounts Explicating and Modelling Norms	Lunch 14.00–14.45	
		10.00–10.45	Joseph Lowry (University of Pennsylvania) Exegetical Narrative as Surah Structure: Muqāṭil ibn Sulaymān on <i>Sūrat al-Anʿām</i> (Q 6)	Coffee 16.00–16.45	Nora K. Schmid (University of Tübingen) The Ethics and Aesthetics of Fair Judgment in Wahb ibn Munabbih’s <i>Ḥadīth Dāwūd</i>
		Coffee		16.45–17.30	Discussion
		Coffee		Dinner 19.00 (Restaurant Forelle)	
		Tuba Işık (Berlin Institute for Islamic Theology, Humboldt University) “Begin with your Jewish Neighbor”: Neighborliness as an Aesthetic- Ethical Legal Space in an Early Islamic Narrative			