

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
72070 Tübingen

Registration and Contact

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Organization

Nora K. Schmid and Holger Zellentin

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

11.15–12.00

Devin Stewart

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 *Dīn*
Ibrāhīm

10.00–10.45

Sara Omar
(Georgetown University)

Contested Kinship: The Legal
Legacy of Muḥammad, Zaynab,
and Zayd

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

12.00–12.45

Johanne Christiansen
(University of Southern
Denmark)

The Beauty of the List in Early
Islamic Narrative and Legal
Discourse

Lunch

Session 2: Ideal and Utopia in Legal Narratives

14.00–14.45

Karen Bauer
(The Institute of Ismaili Studies)

Anger and Divine Law: From
Qur'anic Narratives to Islamic Legal
Culture

Coffee

16.00–16.45

Shawkat Toorawa
(Yale University)

Divine Law and Human Nature in
Ḥadīth Madīnat Wāq Wāq

Discussion

16.45–17.30

Dinner 19.00 (Restaurant Mauganeschtle)

(University of Tübingen)

Early Islamic Interpretations of
“Purified Spouses” (*azwāj*
muṭahhara) in Paradise: Between
Legal Interpretations of Purification
and *Isrā'īliyyāt*

Session 4: Tales about Fair Judgment and Punishment

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
anfāl”

Lunch

14.00–14.45

Idris Nassery
(University of Paderborn)

Islamic Nomos and the Formation
of Early Legal Normativity: The
Mā'iz Narrative Reconsidered

14.45–15.30

Thomas Eich
(University of Hamburg)

Reading the *Kitāb al-Aghāni*
together with Latin Texts from the
6th/7th Centuries: Legalistic
Dimensions of Stories about Qays
b. 'Āṣim and Ṣa'sa'a b. Nājiya
Relating to Female Infanticide

Coffee

16.00–16.45

Nora K. Schmid
(University of Tübingen)

The Ethics and Aesthetics of Fair
Judgment in Wahb ibn Munabbih's
Ḥadīth Dāwūd

16.45–17.30

Discussion

Dinner 19.00 (Restaurant Forelle)

Saturday 11 April

Session 3: Accounts Explicating and Modelling

Norms

09.15–10.00

Joseph Lowry
(University of Pennsylvania)

Exegetical Narrative as Surah
Structure: Muqātil ibn Sulaymān on
Sūrat al-An'ām (Q 6)

10.00–10.45

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

Coffee