Call for Papers – International Conference „The Qur'an in its Milieu of Origin. Possibilities of the Historical Reconstruction of the Qur'anic Revelation", 08-10 November 2019, Münster, Germany

Organization: Center for Islamic Theology (Prof. Dr. Mouhanad Khorchide and Catharina Rachik) and the Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics" of the University of Muenster

Conference venue: Johanniter Gästehaus, Weißenburgstr. 60 - 64, 48151 Münster, Germany

Deadline: 31 July 2019

Different ways of the interpretation of the Qur'an, often utmost diverse, have existed side by side ever since the emergence of the Muslim community. With the beginning of the modern age, Islamic scholars advocated to rethink traditional ways of interpretation by means of the adaptation of a 'critical' exegesis in order to understand the Qur'anic message within modern circumstances. Important thinkers, such as Fazlur Rahman (1911-1988), developed distinct theories of hermeneutical interpretation of the revelation, to reconcile tradition, e.g. Qur'anic norms, with the values of modernity. As a reaction to a widespread literal interpretation of the Qur'an, being more focused on the wording than locating the Qur'an in its historical context, an increasing number of contemporary scholars of the Qur'an argue for a contextualizing interpretation, placing the holy text in its milieu of origin. In doing so, scholars attempt to situate the Qur'an in the historical context of 7th century Arabia. For this purpose, a variety of methodological tools is at hand, such as the 'historical-critical interpretation,' developed by Christian theologians. It is today adapted and applied successfully to the field of Qur'anic Studies. At the same time, the historical context is reconstructed based on traditional Islamic sources by many scholars.

The second conference of the project „Roundtable Qur'anic Studies – traditional and modern approaches to the Qur'an in dialogue" is particularly dedicated to the context of the Qur'an in its milieu of origin. The project was launched in 2018, aiming to establish a research platform for an academic exchange between representatives of the different inner Islamic schools of interpretation.

The aim of the conference in 2019 is to establish a vivid international discourse as well as to create an academic network in which open discussions will be able to develop or to improve scholarly methods for the contextual interpretation of the Qur'an. Considering the methods alluded to above, several critical questions arise that are to be discussed during the conference. **In particular, we are looking for contributions concerning the following questions:**

- Do we have enough authentic Islamic and non-Islamic historical sources to reconstruct the historical context of the Qur'anic revelation?
- Which sources, studies and academic researchers could be employed to contextualize the Qur'an historically?
- Is it possible to reconstruct a reliable chronology of the Qur'anic revelation, refraining from historical information, included in sīrah-works, which are themselves not always unproblematic in nature? What are the most important attempts to reconstruct the Qur'anic chronology and how controversial are they? What constitutes the main argument for or against already existing chronologies such as Nöldecke's, Blanchere's, or Bell's?
- The occasions of the revelation (asbāb an-nuzūl), to which many scholars of the Qur'an refer to are apparently part of the hadīth-literature, which were written down much later

than the Qur'an. How reliable are they, and to what extent are they helpful by means of reconstructing the historical event of the Qur'an?

- If the existing historical material – in- and outside the Islamic tradition – is not sufficient to reconstruct the historical context of the 7th century convincingly, what would be a viable alternative to address the context? What further methodologies could help in reconstructing the historical context?
- Some scholars even claim that it is impossible altogether to reconstruct the historical context of the Qur'an. Which consequences would such resignation imply for contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics? Would it be possible to develop new approaches to the Qur'an that are not based on the historical reconstruction of its context?
- What are the consequences of this discussion for on application of the so-called 'historical critical method' of the Qur'an?
- How can we build a bridge between historical/ critical and Islamic approaches to the subject matter?

We kindly invite all Qur'anic scholars, working on one or more of these questions, who are interested in presenting their preliminary findings at the conference in Muenster, as well as to participate in the discussion on these and related questions with other scholars of the Qur'an. To apply for this unique platform, we kindly ask **to submit the following documents no later than 31 July 2019:**

- **2-3 pages of a brief summary of the presentation (Exposé)**
- **CV**
- **List of publications**

The presentation should be no longer than 20 minutes and should be intended to stimulate a vivid discussion to follow. Please send your documents by e-mail to the following address:

Prof. Dr. Mouhanad Khorchide: prof.m.khorchide@uni-muenster.de

After the positive evaluation of your documents, you will be kindly asked to hand in a final version of your presentation no later than 15 October 2019. The conference format will be a round table aiming at fruitful discussions between the invited scholars. **Costs for travel and accommodation for the conference will be payed by the Center for Islamic Theology and the Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics". The conference will be held in English.**

Please also forward this call to young scholars of the field who may be interested in contributing.