

Divine Presence: Islam, Ontology, and Transcendence

Online Workshop: 14 January 2022 (CET time)



The workshop explores both ethnographically and theoretically the question of divine presence and the relation between immanence and transcendence in the Islamic tradition in regions as diverse as Egypt, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Turkey, Central Asia, Russia, and Europe. It does so by shedding light on how Muslims experience, understand, and approach saints, prophets, and other holy figures, dreams and dream visions, the relation between life and death, as well as any other state of being which renders the barrier between immanence and transcendence more porous. The papers illustrate how Muslim encounters with divine presence – through light, saintly voices, *istikhara* practices, pondering on the end of life or sacred landscapes – all rest on an engagement with Muslim epistemologies and related cosmologies. In this regard, the workshop calls for major engagement with such epistemologies. Relatedly, it aims to discuss new theoretical and methodological insights on how to approach phenomena and experiences which make their presence felt in human life but which, because not immediately perceivable, are not easy to grasp through conventional approaches and methods.

PROGRAMME

9:00-9:30 Welcome and introductory remarks

9:30-12:30 – Section 1

Christian Suhr (Aarhus University), Light Flowing from the Heart: An Analysis of How Micro-Phenomenological Interviews and Audio-Visual Media can be Applied to Describe Religious Experience

Maria Louw (Aarhus University), Staying behind: Radical Hope at the End of Life among Elderly Kyrgyz Muslims

Fabio Vicini (University of Verona), Making Death Present: Islam and the Transcending of Immanence

12:30-14:00 – Lunch break

14:00-17:00 – Section 2

Ismail Fajrie Alatas (New York University), Living with/as the Qur'ān: Sufis' Engagement with God between Transcendence and Immanence

Annika Schmeding (Harvard University), Dreaming the Path: Ontological Shifts in a Sufi Order in Afghanistan

Lili Di Puppo (HSE University, Moscow), Remembering Eternity: Muslim Pilgrimage, Saints and Sacred Matter in Russia's Urals

17:00-18:00 – Final discussion

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