



**North American Association of Islamic
and Muslim Studies (NAAIMS)**

**[Formerly the Association of Muslim Social
Scientists of North America (AMSS)]**

**Presents
The 50th Annual Conference**

**“Approaches to Qur’anic
Studies in the Western Academy”**

Friday, November 12, 2021

Cosponsored By:

**Department of Religious Studies
University of Oregon, Eugene, OR**

The North American Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies (NAAIMS)

**P.O. Box 5502
Herndon, VA 20172
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Muslim Studies (NAAIMS)

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A Virtual Conference on the Zoom platform
All Sessions held in Eastern Standard Time (UTC-05:00)

10:00 – 10:15 a.m. Welcoming Remarks by NAAIMS President
Frederick S. Colby, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR
(Program Chair)

10:15 - 11:45 a.m. Panel 1:
21st Century Engagement with the Qur’an: Sound and Meaning
Discussant: [Dr. Elliott Bazzano (Lemoyne College) unfortunately had to withdraw]

Lauren E. Osborne (Whitman College, Walla Walla, WA): “The Sonic Qur'an in the Age of Global Media”

Yunus Dogan Tellieli (Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA): “The Untranslatable in the Qur’an and the Secular”

11:45 a.m. - 1 p.m. Panel 2:
Qur’anic Studies in the Euro-American Academy
Discussant: Aisha Musa (Independent Scholar, Tigard, OR)

Joseph E. B. Lumbard (College of Islamic Studies at Hamad Bin Khalifa, Doha, Qatar):
“Toshihiko Izutsu’s Semantic Analysis: Impact on Qur'anic Studies in the Euro-American Academy”

[Dr. Caner K. Dagli unfortunately had to withdraw]

1:00 – 2:45 p.m. Lunch Break and Juma’a Prayers

2:45 – 3:45 p.m. Keynote Speaker:
Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr
[University Professor of Islamic Studies, George Washington
University, Washington, DC]:

“Approaching the Qur’an Authentically”

3:45 – 5:15 p.m.

Panel 3

Pre-Modern Esoteric Commentaries on the Qur’an

Discussant: Mohammad Faruque (University of Cincinnati, OH)

Mohammed Rustom (College of the Humanities, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada): “A Sufi Theory of Qur’anic Origins”

Syed A. H. Zaidi (Emory University, Atlanta, GA): “The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ as Pre-Modern Qur’ānic Scientists”

5:15 - 6:45 p.m.

Panel 4

Disruptive Hermeneutics: Questions of Authority

Discussant: Celene Ibrahim (Groton School, Groton, MA)

Maria M. Dakake (George Mason University, Fairfax, VA): “Nusrat Amin: A Woman’s Contribution to the Field of Qur’anic Exegesis”

Ali Hassan Zaidi (Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario, Canada): “Interpretive Methods and their Presuppositions: A Comparison of Fazlur Rahman’s and Javed Ghamidi’s Hermeneutics of the Qur’an”

6:45 pm.

Concluding Remarks
NAAIMS President and Program Chair

Biographical Profiles of Participants

Profiles are Listed in Alphabetical Order by First Name:

Aisha Y. Musa [draymusa@gmail.com] holds a Ph.D. in Near Eastern languages and civilizations with a specialization in Arabic and Islamic studies from Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Her research interests include Hadith and Sunna, translation of classical Arabic texts, and Qur'anic interpretation. Her research and teaching interests include Hadith and Sunna, translation of classical Arabic texts, Qur'anic interpretation, women's issues, Islamic Law, and modern-day reformist and neo-traditionalist movements. Musa's publications include *Hadith as Scripture: Discussions on the Authority of Prophetic Traditions in Islam* (Palgrave, 2008), "Hadith Studies" in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Islamic Studies* (Continuum, 2013), "The Relationship of *al-ma'qūl* and *al-manqūl* in Mullā Khusraw's Conceptualization of Sunna" in the *Proceedings of International Symposium on Mullā Khusraw* (Bursa, Turkey, 2013), "*Jizya*: Toward a more Qur'anically based Understanding of an Historically Problematic Term," in *Transcendent Thought* (November, 2011), Al-Mostafa Center for Islamic Research, Manila, Philippines, and "The Qur'anists," *Religion Compass* 4/1 (2010) and *Securing Knowledge: A translation and analysis of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's Taqyīd al-'Ilm* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). Musa is the current Secretary of the NAAIMS Board of Directors. She serves on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies (JIMS)*, and the Editorial Advisory Board of the *Edinburgh Studies in Islamic Scripture and Theology* by Edinburgh University Press.

Ali Hassan Zaidi [azaidi@wlu.ca] is associate professor in the Department of Global Studies, with a cross-appointment to the Department of Religion and Culture, at Laurier University, Ontario, Canada. As a social theorist, he is interested in questions of religion, secularism, hermeneutics, cultural globalization and modernity. He has published in various journals, including most recently the *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies (JIMS)* and *Philosophy East and West*. He has a forthcoming book chapter entitled "Human Rights, Muslim Communities and the Unintentional Secularization of Canada" in the edited volume *Gestures: The Study of Religion as Practice*, (Fordham University Press, forthcoming). In 2017, he was the recipient of Laurier University's Teaching Award of Excellence in Internationalization.

Caner K. Dagli [cdagli@holycross.edu] is a specialist in Qur'anic studies, Sufism, Islamic philosophy, and interfaith dialogue. He is one of the General Editors of *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (HarperOne, 2015). His other publications include *Ibn al-'Arabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture: From Mysticism to Philosophy* (2016); *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Science, Philosophy, and Technology in Islam* (senior co-editor, 2014); and *The Ringstones of Wisdom* (an annotated translation of Ibn al-'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 2004). He has written articles for the *Renovation: The Journal of Zaytuna College*.

Celene Ibrahim [cibrahim@groton.org] is author of *Women and Gender in the Qur'an* (Oxford University Press, 2020) and editor of *One Nation, Indivisible: Seeking Liberty and Justice from the Pulpit to the Street* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2019). Ibrahim's forthcoming book project explores the concept of monotheism in Islamic thought and is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press. She holds a doctorate from Brandeis University, MA, a Master of Divinity from Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, and a bachelor's degree from Princeton University, NJ. She serves as a Muslim chaplain and faculty member in religious studies and philosophy at Groton School, Groton, MA, where she offers courses on global religious history, Islamic and Arabic studies, women's

studies, and applied ethics. Ibrahim is an affiliate faculty member at the Boston Islamic Seminary.

Elliott Bazzano [bazzanea@lemoyne.edu] is associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Le Moyne College, Syracuse, NY, where he teaches courses on Islam and comparative religion, as well as first-year seminars. He hopes that students leave his courses with a better appreciation of how to read texts, view media, think clearly, and communicate with other people about mundane as well as heated topics. Professor Bazzano's research focuses on Qur'anic interpretation, polemics, mysticism, and media representations as well as identity and pedagogy in religious studies scholarship. His peer-reviewed publications include, "Normative Readings of the Qur'an: From the Premodern Middle East to the Modern West," in *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (2016), "Muslim in the Classroom: Pedagogical Reflections on Disclosing Religious Identity" in *Teaching Theology in Religion* (2016), two articles in *Religion Compass* (2015) on Syrian polymath Ibn Taymiyya, a co-edited volume (with Marcia Hermansen), *Varieties of American Sufism: Islam, Sufi Orders, and Authority in a Time of Transition* (SUNY Press, 2019), and most recently, "Wad'ida for Westerners: Combatting Stereotypes about Islam through a Subversive Saudi Drama," in *Muslims in the Movies*, ed. Kristian Petersen (Harvard University Press, 2021). Bazzano has contributed to the Wabash Center blog, "Teaching Islam," hosted podcasts for New Books in Islamic Studies, and co-chairs the Study of Islam Section in the American Academy of Religion (AAR). He lives outside of Syracuse, NY with his two daughters, who patiently tolerate his dad jokes.

Frederick (Rick) S. Colby [fscolby@uoregon.edu] is associate professor of religious studies, and director of the Middle East and North Africa studies program at the University of Oregon, Eugene, OR. He currently serves as President of the North American Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies (NAAIMS). Aside from his monograph *Narrating Muhammad's Night Journey* (SUNY Press, 2008), Colby's book-length publications include an edition and translation of an Arabic treatise by the early Sufi Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulamī entitled *The Subtleties of the Ascension* (Fons Vitae, 2006), as well as a volume of essays co-edited with art historian Christiane Gruber entitled *The Prophet's Ascension: Cross-Cultural Encounters with the Islamic mi'raj Tales* (Indiana University Press, 2010). From 2011-2017, Colby served two terms as co-chair of the Study of Islam section of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), first with co-chair Dr. Kecia Ali (2011-12), and then with co-chair Dr. Juliane Hammer (2012-17). Before his graduate studies, Colby spent a year as a Thomas J. Watson fellow living in Egypt and making short trips to neighboring countries while researching coffeehouse culture. Subsequently, he earned an M.A. in Near Eastern languages and civilizations from the University of Chicago (1995), and a Ph.D. in religion (specialization in Islamic studies) from Duke University, Durham, NC (2002). While engaged in dissertation research analyzing historic Arabic manuscripts preserving premodern discourses about the Prophet Muhammad's famous Night Journey and Ascension that later formed the basis of his first monograph, Colby received a Fulbright fellowship for research in Syria (1999-2000), and two four-month fellowships (2000) from American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT) and the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE).

Joseph E. B. Lumbard [jlumbard@hbku.edu.qa] is associate professor of Qur'anic studies in the College of Islamic Studies at Hamad bin Khalifa University, Doha, Qatar, and one of the general editors of *The Study Quran* (HarperOne, 2015). A specialist in Qur'anic studies, Sufism, Islamic philosophy, and comparative theology and former advisor for interfaith affairs to the Jordanian Royal Court, he is the author of *Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, Remembrance and the Metaphysics of Love* (2016), *Submission, Faith and Beauty: The Religion of Islam* (2009), and editor of *Islam*,

Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition (2nd edition, 2010). He is currently the host of *Quran for All Seasons*, a podcast in Qur'anic studies.

Lauren E. Osborne [osbornle@whitman.edu] is associate professor of religion and South Asian and Middle Eastern studies at Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington. A native of New Hampshire, she spent her childhood roaming the woods and frequenting the public library. A lifelong musician, Lauren started college at Lawrence University hoping to go on to a professional orchestral career. But she found the academic study of religion there and graduated with both a B.A. in music [flute performance] and a B.A. in religious studies. She pursued her graduate studies at the University of Chicago, where she earned an A.M. and Ph.D. in the study of religion, focusing on Islamic Studies. Her research is about the recitation of the Qur'an, and she teaches classes about Islam, sound, and religion and the senses. She is working on a book on the recited Qur'an and has published articles and chapters in *The Yale Journal of Music and Religion*, *Body and Religion*, *Religion Compass*, and the books *Qur'anic Studies Today* and *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'an*, to name a few places.

Maria M. Dakake [mdakakem@gmu.edu] researches and publishes on Islamic intellectual history, Qur'anic studies, Shi'ite and Sufi traditions, and women's spirituality and religious experience. She is one of the general editors and contributing authors of the *The Study Quran* (HarperOne, 2015), which comprises a translation and verse-by-verse commentary on the Qur'anic text that draws upon the rich and varied tradition of Muslim commentary on their own scripture. Her most recent publication, *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'an* (September 2021), is a co-edited volume with 40 articles on the Qur'an's history, content, style, and interpretation written by leading contemporary scholars working from different methodological perspectives. She is currently completing a monograph, *Toward an Islamic Theory of Religion*, and has begun work on a partial translation of a Persian Qur'an commentary written by the 20th century Iranian female scholar, Nusrat Amin.

Mohammad H. Faghfoory is professor of Islamic studies at the George Washington University, Washington, DC, and the director of the M.A. Program in Islamic Studies. He received his Master's degrees in history and Middle East studies from the University of Illinois, and a Master's degree and a Ph.D. in political science and Middle East studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He was an adjunct professor of Middle East history at Mary Washington University in Fredericksburg, VA, and has taught at the University of Tehran, Iran. He served as a visiting scholar at the University of California-Los Angeles, and an Islamic Manuscripts Specialist at Princeton University, NJ, and the Library of Congress. Since 1995 he has been teaching graduate and undergraduate courses and advising graduate students in the religion department at the George Washington University. Faghfoory has written, translated, and edited twelve books, numerous book chapters, articles, and book reviews. His works have been published by the Cambridge University Press, Kazi Publishers, State University of New York Press, University Press of America, Oxford Encyclopedia of the Muslim World, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, the *Middle East Journal*, and the *International Journal of Shi'i Studies*. A collection of his articles has been translated into Persian and is in press in Tehran, Iran. His most recent work is the *Ethics of War and Peace in Islam* published by Kazi Publishers, Chicago, IL. He has lectured extensively in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East, and participated in interfaith dialogue organized by the American media.

Mohammed Rustom [MohammedRustom@cunet.carleton.ca] is professor of Islamic thought at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. An internationally recognized scholar whose works have been translated into over ten languages, he specializes in Islamic philosophy, Sufism, Qur'anic exegesis, and cross-cultural philosophy. Professor Rustom is author of the award-winning book *The Triumph*

of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mullā Ṣadrā (2012), co-editor of *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (2015), translator of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *The Essence of Reality: A Defense of Philosophical Sufism* (2022), and author of *Inrushes of the Heart: The Sufi Philosophy of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt* (forthcoming, 2022).

Muhammad U. Faruque [faruqumu@ucmail.uc.edu] is Inayat Malik Assistant Professor (beginning 2022) at the University of Cincinnati, OH. He earned his Ph.D. (with distinction) from the University of California, Berkeley, and served as exchange scholar at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, and George Ames Postdoctoral Fellow at Fordham University, NY. Faruque is the recipient of numerous articles and awards, and author of the groundbreaking book *Sculpting the Self: Islam, Selfhood, and Human Flourishing* (University of Michigan Press, 2021) which addresses “what it means to be human” in a secular, post-Enlightenment world by exploring notions of selfhood and subjectivity in Islamic and non-Islamic literatures.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr [shnasr@gwu.edu] is the editor-in-chief of *The Study Qur’an* (HarperOne, 2015), and he is presently University Professor of Islamic Studies at The George Washington University, Washington, DC. With over fifty books and five hundred articles authored, Professor Nasr is an internationally recognized Islamic philosopher in both the Islamic world and the West. His deep understanding of Western civilization and profound understanding of traditional Islamic philosophy, art and spirituality places him in the unique position to present the deeper aspects of Islam, while distinguishing it from modernism and fundamentalism. He has been recognized by the Western intellectual milieu by having been the first Muslim to deliver the prestigious Gifford Lectures in 1981. These lectures were subsequently published under the title *Knowledge and the Sacred* (SUNY, 1989). He was the first traditional Islamic philosopher to be inducted into the Library of Living Philosophers where a volume titled *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (Opencourt, 2000) was dedicated to his intellectual exposition and dedication to such subjects as metaphysics, spirituality, art, the environment, and science. Since graduating from The Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University in the 1950s, and in addition to his writings, Nasr’s productivity has continued unabated with his training of several generations of scholars. He has also served as Dean of The Faculty of Arts of Tehran University from 1968-1972, president of Aryamehr University from 1972 to 1975 and founder and first president of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy from 1973 to 1979.

Syed A. H. Zaidi [Syedzaidi.nyc@gmail.com] is a Ph.D. candidate in Islamic philosophy at Emory University’s Islamic Civilizations Program, Atlanta, GA. He has published several book reviews and articles in the *Journal of Iranian Studies*, the *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies (JIMS)*, the *Kronos Philosophical Journal*, and a chapter in *A Guide to Sufi Literature*. His dissertation is on the influence of Hermeticism and Neoplatonism on the thought of the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-Safā’*). He has also presented several times at the American Academy of Religion (AAR), Middle East Studies Association (MESA), International Qur’anic Studies Association (IQSA), The British Association for Islamic Studies (BRAIS), and other major international conferences. Zaidi also works extensively on the *Theology of Aristotle*, and the works of Ibn Sīnā, Mīr Dāmād. He obtained an M.A. (2016) in Islamic studies from the George Washington University, Washington, DC, and a B.A. (2012) in international relations from Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York.

Waleed El-Ansary [elansaryw@xavier.edu] is the Helal, Hisham and Laila Edris El-Swedey University Chair in Islamic Studies at Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH, where he teaches courses on comparative religion, Islamic studies, and religion and science. He holds a Ph.D. in Islamic and

religious studies from George Washington University, Washington, DC, and an M.A. in economics from the University of Maryland, College Park, MD. His research focuses on the intersection of religion, science, and economics. He has authored numerous publications, including “Islamic Environmental Economics and the Three Dimensions of Islam” in his co-edited volume *Muslim and Christian Understanding: Theory and Application of a Common Word*. Other recently published articles include his “Can Our Science and Economics Honor Nature?” in the inaugural issue of *Renovatio*, “Hindu and Islamic Economics: On the Need for a New Economic Paradigm” in a special issue of *The Muslim World* devoted to Hindu-Muslim relations, and “The Need for a New Economic Paradigm: Seyyed Hossein Nasr on Islamic Economics” in *Voices of Three Generations: Essays in Honor of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. His most recent book with Alexis Blum, Grand Rabbi Emeritus of Neuilly, and Bishop Claude Dagens, Bishop of Angouleme, is *Knowing the Religion of the Other*, which was arranged through the UNESCO-based Aladdin project to help train young rabbis, priests/preachers, and imams (as well as any other interested parties) about the Abrahamic traditions for greater mutual understanding and peace. The French edition has been published, the English edition is forthcoming shortly, Hebrew and Arabic translations are underway, and the Vatican is translating the book into Italian. His forthcoming works include “An Islamic Theology of Work and Vocational Occupation: Implications for Islamic Economic Theory and Practice,” *Human Flourishing, Virtue, and Markets*.

Yunus Doğan Telliel [ydtelliel@wpi.edu] is assistant professor of anthropology and rhetoric at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), Worcester, MA. Before arriving at WPI, he was a postdoctoral fellow at UC Berkeley’s Center for the Study of Religion. He received his Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from the City University of New York (CUNY). His research interests include the anthropology and philosophy of language; religion, science, and secularism; and technology ethics. He is currently working on a monograph, “What Is the Language of Islam?: Science, Secularism, and the Qur’an.” The monograph analyzes college-educated young Turkish Muslims’ engagement with modern science and Qur’an translations. His new research focuses on the relationship between design and moral imagination in robotics, and he is also the co-director of Applied Robot Ethics Lab at WPI.

Abstracts

Abstracts are Listed in Alphabetical Order by Author's First Name:

Ali Hassan Zaidi (Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario, Canada): “Interpretive Methods and their Presuppositions: A Comparison of Fazlur Rahman’s and Javed Ghamidi’s Hermeneutics of the Qur’an”

This paper examines the interpretive methods and presuppositions of two influential Pakistani Qur’anic scholars who were forced into exile in America because their scholarship was deemed too controversial: the late Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), whose oeuvre has had a paradigmatic influence on progressive Muslim scholars and reformers, particularly in North America, but also elsewhere, for more than thirty years; and contemporary scholar Javed Ahmad Ghamidi (1951-), who now lives in Texas and heads al-Mawrid Institute, a foundation for research and education which has chapters around the world. While not yet as widespread as Rahman’s influence, Ghamidi’s influence is growing, particularly since 2006. By contrasting the hermeneutic methods underlying their respective work, it becomes apparent that we are presented with two differing interpretive positions. Rahman’s oeuvre regards historical and social context as decisive in the hermeneutics of the Qur’an whereas Ghamidi’s oeuvre regards the classical Arabic language itself as decisive. This paper interrogates their presuppositions by asking the following questions: How does privileging historical and social context over and above the classical Arabic text alter one’s conceptions of truth, society and culture? Can there be trans-historical truth, if the interpretation of the Qur’an is fixed by the context or alternatively by the classical text? What effects do such methods have on Muslim self-understanding? The paper ends by offering some remarks on the implications of adopting historical versus philological methods for Muslim self-understanding.

Caner K. Dagli (College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA): “What Counts as Qur’anic Studies and Whose Opinion Matters?”

Any field of study such as Qur’anic studies can be understood as a sub-institution within an overall institution of inquiry, which itself is a sub-institution within an even larger metaphysical institution that goes by various names such as culture, civilization, tradition, or religion. In the case of the Western study of the Qur’an, one has an entity that can loosely be called “Qur’anic studies” which is embedded in a larger entity called “the academy” which itself is a branch of the overall Modern Project. At each level of institutional structure (field, academy, project), there is a three-dimensional reality of community, practice, and legacy, regardless of whether those who operate within the institutional structure are aware of their membership in a certain community with certain practices and a certain legacy. Who are these community members, what practice do they repeat and modify, and what legacy do they bequeath and inherit, as a field, as a part of academia, and as part of a larger metaphysical project? It is tempting to define a field like Qur’anic studies in terms of a method or procedure, but no method or procedure makes sense unless it presupposes an input upon which the method is used and an output toward which the method or procedure is oriented. One’s presuppositions about the world and human beings and about the purpose of inquiry itself, despite seeming far away or neutral as relates to a field such as Qur’anic studies, are actually very important to make explicit, and this can be done through the framework of understanding the relevant communities, practices, and legacies.

Joseph E. B. Lombard (College of Islamic Studies at Hamad bin Khalifa University, Doha, Qatar): “Toshihiko Izutsu’s Semantic Analysis: Impact on Qur’anic Studies in the Euro-American Academy”

This paper analyzes the manner in which the “philosophical semantics” of Toshihiko Izutsu can provide a bridge between Qur’anic Studies in the Euro-American academy and in the Muslim world. Izutsu’s method of semantic analysis allows for the fact that the Qur’an was in dialogue with Jewish and Christian traditions, as well as pagan Arabian traditions, but does not reduce the Qur’anic message to any of these sources as the ultimate origins of the text. Izutsu recognized that new worldviews are necessarily in dialogue with multiple perspectives and that the Qur’anic text arose organically within a complex linguistic and social milieu. His approach allows for the congruencies that many scholars observe in relation to pre-Islamic traditions and the incongruencies and demonstrates how these incongruencies result from a dialogue with multiple traditions and a reshaping of those traditions. He sought to build from understanding the context, not to reduce the Qur’an to the context as is often done in historical critical analyses of the Qur’an, but to build a deeper understanding of the manner in which the Qur’an transformed the society in which it first appeared. The paper proposes that this method can establish the ground for a dialogue among non-Muslim scholars who seek to understand the *sitz in leben* of the Qur’anic text and Muslim scholars for whom the *sitz in leben* of the Qur’an remains a defining factor in their life and work.

Lauren E. Osborne (Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington): “The Sonic Qur’an in the Age of Global Media”

In this presentation, I discuss the role of orality, sound, recording technology and recorded media in the study of the Qur’an. The Qur’an has a rich and vibrant role in the lives of Muslims through the practice of reciting and listening to recitation. The sound of the Qur’an is the primary site of contact for many believers worldwide. And yet, attention to the Qur’an in the Western academy has been dominated by concern with the written word and the discursive contents of those words as text, rather than sounds. A small but growing number of studies have attended to the recitation of the Qur’an, all noting the need for increased attention to the recited Qur’an in scholarly literature, (i.e., Denny, Graham, Nelson, Gade, Rasmussen, Osborne, Mouftah). The gap between scholarly treatment of Qur’an as text and pious experience of the Qur’an as sound largely remains, however. At present, there exists a thriving field of recitation recordings, resources, and educational materials on new media and recording platforms for pious engagement. These range from merely audio or video recordings of reciters to websites devoted to explaining the rules of *tajwīd*, educational videos on specific techniques, all the way to online distance learning platforms devoted to techniques of recitation and memorization of the Qur’an. In this presentation, I argue that the use of new media technology for pious learning of recitation offers an opportunity for expansion of scholarly approaches to the Qur’an and understanding of the Qur’an as recitation and as sound.

Maria M. Dakake (George Mason University, Fairfax, VA): “Nusrat Amin: A Woman’s Contribution to the Field of Qur’anic Exegesis”

It has historically been vanishingly rare for women to engage in independent exegesis of the Qur’an. Pioneering efforts were made, however, in the mid-20th century, with the partial Qur’anic commentary of the Egyptian, Bint al-Shati’, and the more recent work of Muslim women scholars working in Western academic contexts (Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas, among others), who offer new readings of Qur’anic passages relating to issues of gender equality. This paper, however, perhaps the only known complete, commentary on the Qur’an written by a woman, the Iranian scholar, Nusrat Amin (1886-1983). Known most commonly as a religious legal authority, Nusrat Amin also produced a 15-volume *tafsir*, *Makhzan-i irfan*. While Amin held very conservative views on a number of women’s issues, she fully embraced her own religious authority to comment on the Qur’an. In her commentary, she quotes from a variety of earlier exegetes, but also critiques their views, and offers her own readings of the Qur’anic verses. She displays not only her knowledge

classical Sunni and Shii works, but also a grounding in Islamic philosophical and mystical traditions. This paper examines Amin's combination of Qur'an commentary and makes the case for the importance of this work in modern Islamic intellectual history.

Mohammed Rustom (Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada): “A Sufi Theory of Qur'anic Origins”

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī (d. 525/1131) was a mystic, philosopher, theologian, and judge who was born in the western Iranian city of Hamadan. He was the student of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126) and is best known as a maverick-like figure who was put to death by the Seljuq government at the tender age of thirty-four, ostensibly on charges of “heresy.” Looking beyond the causes surrounding his state-sponsored execution and to his writings, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt emerges as a first-rate thinker who was thoroughly conversant in the Islamic intellectual and spiritual sciences, along with Arabic and Persian poetry. For all of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's importance, there is relatively little scholarship on him that is entirely reliable, and there are major features of his thought which remain unexamined. His engagement with the Qur'an is one glaring example. In this lecture I outline the main features of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's Qur'anic vision by focusing on the importance he places upon the Quran's all-encompassing nature on the one hand, and his notion of cultivating “worthiness” (*ahliyya*) in order to understand the Qur'an on the other. This will then set the stage for an exposition of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's unique perspective on the Qur'anic “detached letters” (*al-ḥurūf al-muqattaʿa*), through which he presents us with his theory of the Quran's true origins.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr (George Washington University, Washington, DC): “Approaching the Qur'an Authentically”

We have in mind in this exposition especially the West and not the Islamic world itself, although of course now they are closely interconnected. Interest in the Qur'an began in Christendom from the time of the rise of Islam, and over a thousand years ago Peter the Venerable ordered its translation into Latin. Since then, hundreds of translations of the Qur'an have been made in various European languages, earlier by missionaries and orientalist, and since the 20th century by a number of Muslims. The non-Muslim translations of the Sacred Scripture of Islam did not and usually do not consider it to be a revelation, and so theologically there is no question of authenticity of their work from the Islamic point of view. Authenticity in their case meant solid scholarly translation of the Arabic text and understanding of its commentaries at least on the outward level. For contemporary Muslims in the West, authenticity means quite something else while of course including linguistic authenticity. Muslims today dealing with Qur'anic scholarship must be deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition of Qur'anic studies. And yet, they also have to be aware of modern Western scholarship concerning the Qur'an. They have to be rooted in their own tradition and yet be able to deal with the levels of meaning of the Qur'an and their explications in a contemporary language that is both authentic and comprehensible to the present-day public.

Syed A. H. Zaidi (Emory University, Atlanta, GA): “The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ as Pre-Modern Qur'anic Scientists”

According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, traditional Muslim thinkers approach philosophy and the sciences through the lens of the Qur'ān, while modern Muslim thinkers would force the Qur'ān to reflect modern beliefs. In this talk I will examine how it is that the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*) fall into the former categorization, demonstrating that they were the first serious group of Muslim philosophers who had examined science through the lens of the Qur'ān. Not only are there fifty-one treatises replete with verses from the Qur'ān, but the two summaries of their treatises can

be seen as Qur'ānic exegeses of their philosophical and scientific thought on the one hand, and proofs that the Qur'ān should be seen as the foundation for understanding philosophy and the science on the other. My focus in this presentation will be on their treatise on theurgy. In this text, the Brethren use a plethora of verses from the Qur'ān to prove how theurgical practices are not forbidden. Furthermore, in their summary of this particular treatise, they draw upon the verses of the Qur'ān regarding the *Jinn* in an attempt to show that good Jinn exist in the *Neoplatonic Universal Soul*, and that evil Jinn subsist in the physical world. By citing these verses, the Brethren implore their readers to conduct theurgical practices and to connect with the world of the Universal Soul so that they can learn how to become by none other than the good Jinn.

Yunus Dogan Telli (Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA): “The Untranslatable in the Qur'an and the Secular”

Focusing on modern Qur'an translations, this paper explores the question of untranslatability in our secular age. While Islamic scholars once contested the worth of translating the Qur'an for mass consumption, today even the most conservative groups have come to publish their own translations in order to compete with rival groups. In places where Muslim intellectuals are compelled to engage with secularity, Qur'an translations are situated not only between Arabic and a vernacular language, but also between conceptual languages of Islamic tradition and secularism. This heightened capacity for reflexivity has turned Qur'an translation into a common public platform for intellectual intervention and exchange. The paper asks: if translation is seen essential to liberal democratic life, what constitutes the untranslatable in our secular age? This question is particularly pertinent to the translation of verses that might grate against secular sensibilities, such as those associated with the regulation of violence that promote retribution for wrong-doing. In such situations, I argue that the translatable and the untranslatable cease to be opposing conditions and operate together in delimiting the terrain of intelligibility and desirability in public discourse.