

**The 2nd Projekt-Workshop**  
**of Research Area 3 “Offenbarung, Ratio und Identität.**  
**Bildung im frühen und klassischen Islam”,**  
**Courant Forschungszentrum „Bildung und Religion (EDRIS)“**  
**Bad Liebenstein, 12-14 October 2011**

**Report**

**by Dr. Asma Hilali**

Participants: Prof. Dr. Jens Scheiner (CRC EDRIS, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen), Dr. Damien Janos (CRC EDRIS, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen); Dr. Asma Hilali (External Discussant, Institute of Ismaili Studies, London)

Excused: Luise Ossenbach, M.A. (CRC EDRIS, Georg-August- Universität Göttingen)

In this brief report I will summarize the workshop focusing on some important questions discussed rather than giving a chronological description of our meeting. By this, I intend to describe the principal guidelines of our discussions and to propose some thoughts for further research. During our stay in Bad Liebenstein, three meetings were held to two thematic sessions on methods of Qur’ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) and biographical literature (*tarājim*). Theoretic articles and extracts from Arabic sources were used as starting points for the discussion. As exterior discussant, I also presented from my research. I gave a work-in-progress-paper about the Ṣan’ā palimpsest of the Qur’ān in the view of the history of transmission. In the third thematic session two individual projects were presented: Jens Scheiner’s: The *quṣṣāṣ* as historians, based on al-Wāqidī’s *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* and Ibn Hishām’s *Sīra* and Damien Janos’: The Methodology of *Tafsīr* in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*. In this context selected passages of Arabic sources were analyzed.

Various problems were raised during the discussions concerning essential methodological issues. For example: What are the different categories of *Tafsīr*? What is the innovative aspect in al-Rāzī’s *Tafsīr*? What are the sources of information in the biographical dictionaries like Ibn Khallikān’s *Wafāyāt*? How to organize the material in the analysis of biographical sources? What is the relevance of the distinction between factual information and anecdotes in the sources?

Two major questions appear as essential to me: To what extent does each textual category (*genre*) claim to be historical? For example, is the whole *Tafsīr* written by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī belonging to one genre? What are the historical meanings of the word *qiṣṣa* and does it

refer to the work of the *quṣṣāṣ*? What are the similarities and differences between *khobar* and *qiṣṣa*? The common area of our different projects concerns the very definition of historical writing and how the various texts subscribe to different disciplines and genres. As historian or as teacher, the intention of the author is evoked (the author's political mainstream), the philological and rhetorical strategy of the writing (the meaning of the words and the intellectual background of the author), the textual categories and genres and their value as sources of "what really happened". I would like to end my report with the following question which could be the conclusion of our rich and interesting meeting: To which extent does the literary genre contribute to the historicity of the text?

Thank you for inviting me to this meeting, I enjoyed a lot my stay and our discussions. The visit of the city of Eisenach was a very nice moment and I wish you a lot of success in your respective projects.

Asma Hilali

London, the 17-Oct-2011.