

*The Presence of the Prophet in Early Modern and Contemporary Islam Series*

Volume 2

**Heirs of the Prophet: Authority and Power in Early Modern and Contemporary Islam**

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Introduction

This second volume of the *Presence of the Prophet* series engages with the task to analyse the significance of the figure of the Prophet and of those who have claimed his material or spiritual heritage as leader or saviour, for questions of power, authority and individual and collective self-empowerment in the early modern and modern periods. The articles of this volume go back to a workshop in Bochum on the (*The Prophet and the Modern State* - May 2018)<sup>1</sup> and to a colloquium held in Marrakesh (*The Prophet and his Heritage* - November 2018)<sup>2</sup> where they were presented and discussed for the first time.

The historiographical and chronological framework of the collection sets in with the early modern Muslim empires and regional states in the period between c.1450 – 1700, followed by a focus on the age of transformations and revolutionary ruptures of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It then shifts to the formation of Muslim nation states and their ideologies since the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and finally to the thoroughgoing changes that Muslim states and societies have faced from the late 1970s onward until the present.

The beliefs, practices and ideologies connected with the figure of the Prophet generally follow long-term phases of development and cannot be regarded as being automatically subject to the sometimes rapid changes and upheavals of political history. But they nevertheless have remained sensitive to the transformations going on in the political sphere, and to the crises of conscience, legitimation and power that often go along with these transformations and that may also involve recognized or self-acclaimed inheritors of the Prophetic legacy. In such times of crisis it is particularly difficult to maintain a distinction between the time frame of a religious or intellectual

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<sup>1</sup> <https://prophet.hypotheses.org/the-prophet-and-the-modern-state>

<sup>2</sup> <https://prophet.hypotheses.org/international-conference-presence-of-the-prophet-and-his-heritage-marrakesh-4-7-november-2018>

“history of Islam“ on the one hand, and that of the political “history of the Muslims” on the other, and to restrict attention only to one side of the historical process.<sup>3</sup>

The thematic setup of this volume roughly follows the chronological order. It begins with a section (I) on the role of the Prophet in the imperial piety promulgated by the Ottoman court, and on the Prophetic model and its significance for the revolutionary Islamic movements of the 18th and early 19th centuries, before and during European commercial and military encroachment. The next section (II) explores the social and political role of the descendants of the Prophet in different regional and political contexts. The focus then shifts to the Prophet and his place in the state ideologies and in the political practice of the Muslim national states since the early 20th century (III). The final section (IV) discusses patterns of attachment and reference to the Prophet in processes of social and communal mobilisation and empowerment and even of attempted state-building, in the contemporary Muslim world. The coverage of the different periods and polities could only remain far from exhaustive, but the reader will find contributions on states and countries as distant as Morocco, Albania, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

### *Empires and Revolutions*

The first section highlights a long-term phenomenon of the religious and political sphere which can be traced to the late 15th/early 16th century and which remained effective throughout the early modern period. This was the emergence of the Prophet as protector and model for divinely guided rulers and founders of imamates, sultanates, and empires. The beginnings of this period were marked by the rise of the three large Muslim empires of the Safavids, Ottomans, and Mughals. The dramatic developments which took place in these times both in Europe and in the Muslim world went along with an upsurge of eschatological expectations which were shared by Muslims and non-Muslims alike and which have even been labeled as a “millenarian conjuncture“ affecting regions as distant as Portugal and India.<sup>4</sup> An intensification of the pious attachment to the person of the Prophet, at individual as well as collective levels, can equally be observed in many regions of the

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<sup>3</sup> See for this A. Laroui, *Islam et histoire*, 51, 69-90, and his critical remarks on this all-too-common historiographical one-sidedness, discussed in Riecken, *Abdallah Laroui*, 395f.

<sup>4</sup> “Conjoncture millénariste“, see Subrahmanyam, “Du Tage au Gange”.

Muslim world during that period.<sup>5</sup> Supported by these messianic sentiments, sultans and emperors set out for conquests of new territories or for the reconquest of areas and cities that had belonged for a long time to Christian kingdoms.<sup>6</sup>

These Muslim conquerors who saw their struggles as following the footsteps of the Prophet of Islam presented themselves as renewers of his community and claimed his worldly and spiritual heritage for themselves. In order to reinforce this attachment to the Prophet and to enhance their political legitimation, they encouraged the public veneration of his person and patronized large celebrations of his nativity. In his contribution to this volume, Gottfried Hagen argues that this cult of the Prophet under the auspices of the House of Osman became part of a specific configuration of Islamic religiosity which was centered on the *persona* of the Prophet. It was mainly informed by literary and calligraphic media (*sīra*, praise poetry, *ḥilye*, *mawlid*) and by rituals like the display and honouring of the Prophet's relics, such as his mantle and his banner. These performances highlighted Prophetic charisma and promoted emotional expressivity. They invoked the presence of the Prophet's person and promised to lead to salvation by means of spiritual immersion rather than by imitative orthopraxy (although the two certainly could never be neatly distinguished). Ottoman religious and historical scholarship can also largely be seen as serving this image of the charismatic Saviour-Prophet.

Devotional practices related to the person of the Prophet were strongly framed by the Sufi brotherhoods whose geographical and social expansion was at its peak during the early modern period. Sufis followed the conquering armies as protectors and spiritual advisors to the soldiers and sultans. The Sufi shaykh Āq Shams al-Dīn (Akşemsettin), spiritual master of Mehmed II, predicted to the sultan the fall of Constantinople (1453) and pointed out to him the tomb of Abū Ayyūb al-Ansārī (Eyüp Sultan), companion of the Prophet, in the vicinity of the Byzantine city; this became the place of the famous sanctuary at the Golden Horn, where the Ottoman sultans would henceforth be girded with the sword of Osman. We also know the role of the Khalwatiyya in the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans.<sup>7</sup> The Naqshbandiyya of Central Asia extended to Northern India and the Deccan in the wake of the rise of the Mughal dynasty.<sup>8</sup> In Iran, the Safavid dynasty emerged from a

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<sup>5</sup> Reichmuth, "Aspects of Prophetic Piety in the Early Modern Period".

<sup>6</sup> Garcia-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform*.

<sup>7</sup> Clayer, *Mystiques, Etat et société*.

<sup>8</sup> Bühler, "Naqshbandiyya in Timūrid India"; Green, *Indian Sufism since the Seventeenth Century*.

Sufi *ṭarīqa* whose founders claimed Prophetic descent and later passed to Shī'ism. In the Maghreb, the alliance and interplay of Sufism and Sharīfism gave birth to the great *zāwīyas* some of which would mark the cultural and political history of this country throughout the early modern period.<sup>9</sup>

The veneration of the *ashrāf* in Morocco was strongly backed by the *ṭuruq* and become institutionalized in the 15th century, at the time of a profound crisis of legitimacy of the ruling dynasty and by Christian offensives against the country's ports and cities. Men of God who regarded themselves as invested with the mission of renewing religion rose up to defend the *dār al-islām*. Here as in the case of the Safavids of Iran, the rise of a *sharīfian* dynasty in the 16th century enjoyed strong popular and Sufi support and unfolded in a climate of fervent eschatological expectations.

From North Africa and the Middle East to Central Asia and South Asia, Muslim rulers relied on the patronage of Sufi shaykhs and their brotherhoods for the sake of legitimation and for the establishment of Sunni Islam in the conquered regions. Along with the erection of mosques, mausoleums, and Sufi centres (*khānqāhs*, *tekkes*, *zāwīyas*), cults of saints of local or translocal significance would frequently develop. Sainthood was often derived from the doctrine of the cosmic reality of the Prophet as a primordial light giving birth to the world, and as an intercessor for his community. He was thought to extend his blessings through the saints, the "Friends of God" (*awliyā' Allāh*), as his spiritual representatives. The Prophetic heritage thus came to be shared in Sufi ideology between Prophetic descent and an identification with the Prophet through spiritual realization of his model; two concepts that remained in close but tense relationship to each other.<sup>10</sup>

The cult of the Prophet and of the saints did not go uncontested. The old debates and polemics that centered around the doctrine of the mediation and intercession of the Prophet and about the religious practices to which they gave rise, had been revived since the fourteenth century, particularly in the circle of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and his followers. They were now resumed with renewed vigour in the sixteenth and seventeenth century by Birgīlī (or Birgivi) Meḥmed Efendī (d. 1573) and his successors, the *Qadizadeli*, a puritan and anti-Sufi movement which became highly influential in the Ottoman capital as well as in the provinces, especially in Syria. The *Qadizadeli* engaged in fierce confrontations with their adversaries, and sometimes physically attacked the Sufis

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<sup>9</sup> Laroui, *Les Origines Sociales et Culturelles du Nationalisme Marocain*, 137; Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*; Berque, *Al-Yousi*, 55ff., 87-93.

and their tekkes.<sup>11</sup> They contested many of the theosophical and mystical doctrines and practices of the time and advocated a return to the historical model of the Prophet through a strict application of his Sunna. Following the long tradition of anti-Sufi writings, they denied the claims of the Sufi shaikhs to charismatic authority and called for respect of the sacred texts alone.

The two further contributions to the first section, which highlight the significance of the Prophetic model for the revolutionary Islamic movements of the 18th and early 19th centuries, reflect this tense antagonism between the Sufis and their opponents in religious and political life. Enmity against the Sufi veneration of saints and also of the Prophet found its most radical and exacerbated expression in the Wahhābī movement in Arabia.<sup>12</sup> Its view of the Prophet and of Islamic history is discussed by Martin Riexinger in his article on the summarized biography of the Prophet titled *Mukhtaṣar sīrat al-rasūl* (“Short version of the Life of the Prophet”), written by Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792). In his narrative which is largely based on the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām, all episodes which illustrate the superhuman nature of the Prophet have been left out; he retains only those which describe him as an ordinary human being that was not free from error (as demonstrated by the famous story of the “Satanic Verses”). Imitation of him therefore had to be restricted to clearly normative matters. The author passes over all the miraculous events connected with the foretold coming, gestation and birth of the Prophet, thus undermining the whole doctrine of the “Muḥammadan Light” as the principle of creation that is celebrated in all the *mawlid* narratives which were so popular at his time. The most outstanding event in the traditional accounts of the life of Muḥammad, his heavenly ascension (*mi‘rāj*), is also dealt with only briefly.

The obvious purpose of this presentation of the Prophet as an ordinary human being is to clear him of any veneration that would tarnish the sole worship of God alone (i.e. the *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*, the central issue of Wahhābī ideology). This *Sīra* can also be read as an ethical and political program: it is the Muslims who have now succeeded the Prophets in their task to educate and coerce mankind whenever it lapses into idolatry (*shirk*), and to lead it back to the path of God by re-enacting the model of the Prophet. Riexinger finally brings out the cyclical and basically pessimistic view of human history underlying Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s *Sīra*. It may be added that it appears

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<sup>11</sup> Lewis, *The Balance of Truth* by *Katib Chelebi*; Öztürk, *Islamic Orthodoxy among the Ottomans*; Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*; Çavuşoğlu, *The Kādizādeli movement*.

<sup>12</sup> Mouline, *The Clerics of Islam*; Peskes, *Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb im Widerstreit*; for Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s links to Syrian Kadizadeli scholars, Currie, “Kadizadeli Ottoman Scholarship”

difficult not to relate this moral pessimism to the turmoil of the author's lifetime, which had overlapped in his early years with Nādir Shāh's stunning military incursions into the Ottoman and Mughal empires.

As the anti-Sufism of the Wahhābī emirate of the 18th and early 19th century clearly remained an influential but marginal position in its time, most of the Islamic reformist and revolutionary movements that can equally be observed in the same period in many different parts of the Muslim world were strongly shaped by Sufism and by Sufi brotherhoods active in their regions, even if they shared a good deal of their reformist agenda with the Wahhābīs. Based on a comparative overview of these movements that highlights the crucial role of their attachment to Prophetic models, Stefan Reichmuth in his article proposes to view them as part of a Muslim "Age of Revolutions", which roughly coincided with the revolutionary period in Europe and America but had taken on its own religious and political dynamics well before being drawn into the confrontation with European – and Chinese - imperial expansion. Four features illustrating the attachment of these movements to the Prophet, which were widely shared among them, are highlighted in the article. These include a strong reliance on Prophetical ḥadīth for their doctrinal positions and their practice, an orientation towards Medina and the creation of local memorial landscapes connected with the Prophet and his companions, a programmatic emulation of the Prophet as a source of religious and political mobilization, and a cultivation of eschatological expectations, including the posing of their leaders as "Renewer" (*mujaddid*) or even as Mahdī. Taken together, they add to the profile of a Muslim revolutionary age that would exert a lasting impact on the Muslim world of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### *Prophetic Descent and Authority*

The political and social role played by the descendants of the Prophet (*sayyids, ashraf*) in different regions and times is explored by three contributions. The first by Jaafar bin al-Hajj Sulami offers an overview of the historical development of the institutionalized body of the Descendants of the Prophet (*Niqābat al-ashraf*) in the Maghrib. Although the Mālikī scholars of this region were familiar with the legal framework for the *Niqāba* as part of the caliphal apparatus, which had been largely shaped by the Shāfi'ī jurist Māwardī (d. 1058), the institution did not play any notable role

until the Marīnid period, when the status of the *ashrāf* was much enhanced by the sultans. Under the sharīfian dynasties the apparatus of the *niqāba* was much diversified and brought by some of its most energetic rulers under their close supervision. The legal framework was adapted to the needs of the sharīfian status groups, and the directories of sharīfian families were updated several times amid larger efforts initiated by the sultans. The later centuries also saw a rise of genealogical and historical studies among the Moroccan scholars, who thus responded to the increasing significance of the *ashrāf* in the country, and to the need for the protection and control of the membership of this prestigious group which kept its considerable political potential vis-à-vis the royal court. The account shows in an exemplary way the social and political integration of the *ashrāf* into a Muslim polity of the early modern period that was ruled by a *sharīfian* dynasty.

In India, in 18th-century Delhi, the famous Sufi and poet Mīr Dard (d. 1785) described by Soraya Khodamoradi, attempted to conceive of a Sharīfian solution to the divisions and sectarian conflicts between Sunnis and Shī'īs, which were regaining strength with the decline and decentralisation of the Mughal empire. Being of Prophetic descent himself and belonging to circles of the *Naqshbandiyya mujaddidiyya* founded by Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1622), he claimed a revival of the line of the Shī'ī imams in the person of his father, the founder of a Sufi *ṭarīqa* of his own, which he had called "The Pure Muḥammadan Path" (*ṭarīqa muḥammadiyya khālīṣa*). Dard's elaborated concept of the *ṭarīqa* of his father, whose authority was to be founded on both genealogical and spiritual links to the Prophet, was offered by him as a model for the reconciliation of Sunnis and Shī'īs under this Sufi umbrella. Dard and his father thus posed as bearers of religious renewal and as unifiers of a Muslim community in the grip of a deep political, moral and religious crisis. Even if this peculiar branch line of the "Muḥammadan Path" clearly remained a road not taken by others, it illustrates the enduring self-concept of prominent Sayyids who were still able to regard themselves as standing above the sectarian divisions in Islam.

The case of the contemporary "Syndicate of the Descendants of the Prophet" (*Niqābat al-ashrāf*) in Egypt studied by Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen describes a very old institution whose recent history is anchored in the construction of the Egyptian state under Muḥammad 'Alī (1805-1848). Dissolved after the revolution in 1953, it was re-established in 1991 and became situated together with the headquarters of al-Azhar (*Mashyakhāt al-Azhar*) and state institution responsible for Fatwas (*Dār al-Iftā'*) in a set of three modern buildings in neo-Mamluk style, not far from the old

centre of Cairo. Its main activity, the verification of Sharīfian genealogies, relies on the established science of genealogy (*‘ilm al-ansāb*). At the same time it also reinforces the interconnections and the status of a family-oriented Islam in Egypt, which is still strongly territorialized and closely connected with Sufi families and activities. Its social and religious dimensions locate the *niqāba* outside the bureaucratic and political world to which it belongs at first sight. It is part of an Egyptian Islam that defies globalisation and insists on endangered continuities. It can ultimately be identified as an interpretation of the Prophetic intercession that constitutes the basis of the very constitution of the *ashrāf* as a privileged group - a claim now disputed by Salafism and ignored by a majority of Egyptians.

### *Modern Nation States and Ideologies*

The third section of the book covers a period of profound political change, ranging from the revolution of the Young Turks, the First World War and the end of the Ottoman Caliphate to the birth of the Turkish Republic and the Soviet Union, to the independence movements after the Second World War and to the birth of new national states.

Some Turkish accounts of the life of the Prophet which appeared in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century had already presented him as a reformer who brought about profound social reforms for the society of his time. By this they attempted to legitimize the reforms initiated by the Ottoman state. Still before the revolution of the Young Turks, the historian Ahmed Refik (d. 1937), trained at the military school, had authored a small work on the military campaigns (*ghazawāt*) of the Prophet (published in 1906). Its four chapters are devoted to his four most important battles, which are illustrated with maps and sketches. Miracle stories are either ignored or minimized in this narrative which portrays the Prophet and the companions as embodiments of all the qualities required for a perfect soldier in a modern army.<sup>13</sup>

Representations of the Prophet continued to play an important role in the intellectual debates before and after the First World War. The sacred image of the Prophet that had still prevailed in the nineteenth century gave way under the combined impact of European imperialism

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<sup>13</sup> Hagen, "The Prophet Muḥammad as an Exemplar in War".



and orientalism, to the model of a military and political leader and of a religious and social reformer, which was disseminated by the new printed media and literary genres of the time. Classical accounts of the Prophet were reoriented or rewritten to serve nationalist projects. A famous case was the adaptation of Būṣīrī's famous poem in praise of the Prophet, the "Mantle Ode" (*Qaṣīdat al-burda*), by the Egyptian poet Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1930). His version, titled "The Way of the Mantle" (*Nahj al-burda*), was written in 1910 in a country facing Ottoman decline and British occupation. This poem restructures the *Burda* "into a forceful and eloquent plea for the restoration of the Islamic Ummah based on "humanistic" concepts which he locates in the Classical Arab-Islamic past".<sup>14</sup> It became a huge success, especially in its version which was sung by Umm Kulthūm in the middle of the Nasserist period.

The writing of biographies of the Prophet, which had declined in the nineteenth century, reemerged in Egypt during the inter-war period - but in a complete break with the traditional *sīras*. The aim of these modern biographies was ideological and didactic and was aimed at a broader public. There was no longer any question of miracles or legends, and Muḥammad is presented in them as an ingenious human being responding to the needs of his time. This reorientation also responded to a political and cultural disenchantment with Europe and found its strongest expression in Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, *Ḥayāt Muḥammad* (1935), who attempted to recall the genius of the Prophet in order to reconcile the eternal truths of Islam with human reason and with the changing practical demands of modern society.<sup>15</sup> This trend continued until the 1960s, when 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Šarqāwī's *Rasūl al-ḥurriya* ("The Messenger of Freedom", published 1962) presented the Prophet as a precursor of Nasserist socialism.

The positivist approach to the life and mission of the Prophet also permeated the writings of the early Muslim reformists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Florian Zemmin explores the construction of the Prophet as an ideal religious and social reformer, which was put forward by the Syrian Islamic intellectual Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), in his journal *al-Manār* and in his tremendously successful book titled "The Muḥammadan Inspiration" (*al-Wahy al-Muḥammadi*, first published 1933). Based on a distinction between a true and universal Islamic religion (*al-islām al-dīnī*) and its actual innerworldly manifestations (*al-islām al-dunyawī*), Riḍā attempts to construct Islam as a program

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<sup>14</sup> Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes*, xiv.

<sup>15</sup> See for a critical account of his description of the Prophet see already Johansen, *Muḥammad Ḥusain Haikal*, e.g. 170-186.

of comprehensive reform in all social and political fields, aiming at the perfection of humans as individuals and collectivities. His representation of a modern Prophet pursued two aims: on the one hand the emotionally charged figure of the Prophet mediated the salience and practicability of abstract Islamic principles to a wider audience; on the other hand he served as a role-model and lent authority to Riḍā himself who poses in his writings as a self-styled reformist. In his article Zemmin shows that the debates about religion and modernity and the pedagogical reconstruction of the figures of the prophets as reformist role-models were not unique to Islam but can also be found in the contemporary writings of Jewish and Christian intellectuals and theologians. Riḍā's activist view of the Prophet already foreshadows the concept of an individual moral recovery (*iṣlāḥ fardī*) from contemporary decadence, which would provide the base for a reform of the whole society (*iṣlāḥ jamā'ī*) and for its immunity against imperialist influence, which later developed by the Islamist thinker Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966).

The model of the Prophet Muḥammad as a social and political reformer was even cultivated by Muslim and even Arab Christian communists who supported the emerging Soviet Union. In this volume, Renaud Soler follows the career of Bandalī Ṣalībā Jawzī (d. 1942), a Palestinian Orthodox Christian who turned towards Marxism and settled as an academician in Baku, keeping his connections with the Arab Middle East throughout his life and continuing to write in Arabic along with Russian. In his magnum opus titled "On the History of the intellectual movements in Islam" (*Min tārikh al-ḥarakāt al-fikriyya fī l-islām*, printed in Jerusalem in 1928), he outlines his views on the life of the Prophet for an Arab readership, integrating him into his Marxist scheme of dialectical materialism, as an authentic Arab reformer who tried to reduce the existing inequalities of wealth and the oppression of women in his society, and who fought against tribalism without perceiving or being able to touch at the roots of social disorder. As such he sees him as a forerunner of a future socialist order for the Arab and Muslim world, that was further foreshadowed by the revolts of Bābak and the Ismā'īlis and Qarmaṭians in Abbasid times.

In the period after the Second World War, the Prophet was instrumentalized by the national states which had emerged in the meantime. They presented him as a model and identity founder for their nationalist and pedagogical projects. Even in the most secular of these states a gradual shift towards a strengthening the Islamic character can be observed over the last decades, which also touches upon the public status of the figure of the Prophet.

This comes out very clearly Dilek Sarmis's article on the Role of the Prophetic figure in school textbooks and Religious Education in Turkey. The figure of the Prophet Muḥammad, which had been overshadowed by Mustafa Kemal who was associated with the Prophetic role by nationalist intellectuals in the 1920s and 30s, has markedly increased in visibility in the pedagogical literature since the 1980s. It can be noted that the earlier doctrinal and historical approach to the Prophet has been superseded by his role as a model for citizenship and human exemplarity for the Turkish state. The moral figure of the Prophet has become functional for the solution of questions of identity and social conflicts faced by the individual citizen. As an instrument of educational and social engineering, he remains a common identifier for Turkish citizenship. Paradoxically, the moralization of a modern republican figure of the Prophet has also led to a recognition of public rituals connected with the birth of the Prophet (*mawlid*) and to a revival and institutionalisation of *sīra* studies.

In the case of post-communist Albania studied by Gianfranco Bria, the celebration of the Prophetic birthday (*mevlud* in Albanian) has been gradually integrated into the cultural framework of a secular Albanian nationalism. Already since the late Ottoman period, *mevlud* literature was firmly established as part of the national literary culture, and in the interwar period, *mevlud* celebrations had become an important element of public Islamic piety in a pluralist and confessionalised kingdom, and an emotional and performative medium for Muslim religiosity. The radical socialist secularisation that followed this period virtually wiped out the religious practice of the *mevlud* and its literary memory. The post-socialist era, still dominated by a socialist heritage of secular rationalism, has seen a state-sponsored revival of the *mevlud* as a political expression of identity and patriotic belonging to the Albanian nation.

Jamal Malik's study of the position of the Prophet in the legal and constitutional framework and its social reality in Pakistan traces the trajectories of laws related to blasphemy in British India, followed by their translation into the Pakistani constitution and penal law against the backdrop of the discussion on the Islamicity of the fledgling state. In the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the majority of judgements on this issue have been pronounced against non-Muslims and minorities. The atrocious consequences of the public handling of these laws are exemplified with three cases that have caught the attention of the national and international media: the assassination of the governor of Punjab in 2011 and the subsequent veneration of his murderer, the lynching of Mashal

Khan in early 2017 and the spectacular rise of the religio-political party *Labbaik Ya Rasul Allah* in late 2017 and 2018. These cases provide some understanding of the struggles between local factions competing for the scarce resources of patronage and public goods, in which the Prophet becomes a major point of reference.

David Jordan investigates the changing representation of the Prophet Muḥammad in the public discourse of the Iraqi Arab Socialist Ba‘th Party from 1943 till 2003, which underwent a striking increase of its religious expression during and after the First Gulf War. Focussing on the role of the Prophetic figure in Ba‘thist ideology and politics throughout this period, the author argues, that, in the core, the Ba‘th regime remained committed to its secular principles till the end but gradually increased the incorporation of the Prophetic heritage into the official political language. The turn towards the use of Islamic traditions and motifs by an Arab nationalist regime can be explained as a strategic attempt to take advantage and remain in control of the general Islamic and religious resurgence that could be observed throughout the Islamic world and beyond since the late 1960s. This was a political move that fuelled and promoted this resurgence even further.

#### *Mobilisation, Empowerment, and Social Reform*

If the figure of the prophet was desacralized by reformist religious currents and by nationalist leaders and their parties like those in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, a resacralization of social and political life set in from the 1970s onwards which spread throughout the Muslim world. The course of the Iranian revolution (from 1979), the war against Russian occupation in Afghanistan (1979-1989) and the breakdown of the Soviet Union (1991) formed the backdrop to a multifaceted process of social Islamization and for the proliferation of Islamic educational, missionary and political movements. These were led by Islamic scholars, preachers, intellectuals and students, who have increased their public recognition and their political weight in many Muslim countries. The Prophet has once more moved to the centre of the efforts of diverse religious actors for social and religious reform and political empowerment, for militant resistance against foreign powers and for the establishment of an Islamic state in the turmoil of multi-sided warfare in the Middle East.

The article by Rachida Chih discusses the writings and activities of Shaykh Abdessalem Yassine (‘Abd al-Salām Yāsīn, d. 2012), founder of the so-called ‘Islamist’ movement “Justice and Spirituality” (*al-‘Adl wa-l-Iḥsān*) in Morocco, who claimed for himself the title of “reviver of religion”

(*mujaddid al-dīn*), pre-destined to restore the purity of the faith and renew Islamic Law. He identified with this role on the basis of his Sharīfian and Sufi legacy and set himself the mission of the moral reconstruction of the Muslim mind. This he saw as a preliminary step that would lead to the building of a society defined by Islam. He also founded his own community (*jamā'a*) as a model for this new society. On the basis of the examination of his major work, *The Prophetic path (al-Minhāj al-nabawī)*, Chih analyses Yassine's concept of the Prophetic heritage. Relying on the *memoire* of a messianic mysticism that has been identifiable in Morocco since the Middle Ages, which he fused with concepts of activist piety borrowed from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Yassine established himself with this book in the eyes of his followers as an *imām* predestined to set in motion a great social transformation. This would restore the Islamic community to its original purity by placing it under the direction of an actualized *sunna* of the Prophet.

Alix Philippon's article offers a social movement approach to the Sufi organisation which has been at the centre of the anti-blasphemy campaigns over the recent years in Pakistan (discussed already by Jamal Malik in the preceding section from a more legal and constitutional perspective). The example used for this are the Barelwis, a Sufi and theological movement originating from 19th-century India, that has most loudly proclaimed its love for the Prophet and has posed as a staunch defender of his honour against any attacks. The author describes the figure of the Prophet Muḥammad as a symbolic reference point and an "empty signifier" (Laclau) for the negotiation and structuring of social conflicts, and for the articulation of political claims for collective action.. After participating in several political alliances of Islamic groups the Barelwi activists finally succeeded in taking the lead in the protest against the publication of the (in)famous *Satanic Verses* written by Salman Rushdie. An organization called "Preservation of the Honour of the Prophetic Message" (*Tahaffuz-e Namooos-e Risalat*) was founded by them for this purpose. In later times the Barelwis who always struggled for recognition vis-à-vis the other Islamic organised bodies like the Deobandis and the *Jama'at ul-Islamiyya* came to the fore with their calls for a rigorous application of the death penalty for blasphemy. The author describes the background and activities of one of the most active and most successful Barelwi leaders, Pir Afzal Qadri (b. 1953), the founder of several religious organisations, and patron of a mass movement, *Tehreek-e Labaik Pakistan* (TLP), which has become the main protagonist of these anti-blasphemy campaigns which managed to exert maximum pressure on the Pakistani government and judiciary finally took part with considerable success in the nationwide elections of 2018, by this reasserting the position of the Barelwis in the political

landscape of Pakistan.

The different uses of Prophetic images by a wide selection of actors in Afghanistan who were involved in the resistance against the Communist regime in Kabul and the Soviet military invasion between 1978 and 1992 are investigated by Jan-Peter Hartung. His analysis of rare source materials (mainly in Pashto) shows a considerable variation in the uses of the images of the Prophet that were invoked, depending of the social and educational background of these activists. While urbanized Islamist circles emphasized Muḥammad's role as military commander and statesman, those of rural and tribal origins rather stressed the image of the Prophet as the ideal guide to salvation in the Hereafter. A closer look into such images in Pashto poetry, both classical and contemporary, suggests that both positions seem to have historical antecedents, which reflect distinct ethical frames that are at play in the Pashtun-dominated borderland between Afghanistan and Pakistan. One that resonates well with the urbanized Islamists, stresses the princely virtues as an epitomé of Pashtunness, while the other one, reflecting the views of more subaltern rural and tribal actors, emphasizes equality as the Pashtun social ideal. Islamic ethic, epitomized in the figure of the Prophet thus articulates with the different social layers of Pashtun society.

The most recent attempt to create an Islamic Caliphate built on the Prophetic model was the so-called "Islamic State" (IS) which was established in northern Iraq and eastern Syria and whose remnants still linger on in scattered groups of fighters in the Syro-Iraqi borderland and in other regions of the Middle East and North and West Africa. Christoph Günther, who has been analysing the self-expression of the IS in its "mediascape", highlights the role of the Prophet Muḥammad as a major source of self-legitimation for these and other groups of the Jihādī-Salafī current. He scrutinizes several topics and symbols which illustrate the effort of the "Islamic State" to appropriate the Prophetic aura and presence for its own authority. Via texts and songs (*anāshīd*), and by their highly elaborated propaganda films they frequently refer, directly or indirectly, to the Prophet or to the nascent Muslim community under his leadership. But Günther also argues that, although IS leaders have fiercely claimed to defend pristine Islam and to follow the most exact interpretation of its sources, they hardly engaged intellectually with the Sunna itself. The figure of the Prophet has been mainly evoked by them for spectacular actions and for their aesthetics of violence in order to equip their own rule with Prophetic power.

If nothing else, the contributions to this volume may serve to illustrate a Weberian truism about the interplay of economical and political developments with religious and cultural phenomena, which may be conditioned by economical and political processes but may also be relevant for them.<sup>16</sup> This interplay includes pious as well as strategic patterns of identification with the Prophet. Each case has, of course, to be observed and closely assessed in order to clarify its specific constellation of factors. Collective attachment to the Prophet and political strategies pursued by leaders, individuals and groups seem to reinforce each other in several ways in the described case studies, which expose the contradictions and weaknesses of the respective political and legal systems. The Prophet comes out in them as a larger-than-life symbol of socio-political representation and identity (Albania), as the model of an ideal reformer (Zemmin) or of a civilized citizen (Sarmis), as ancestor of the leader and supra-confessional integration figure (Jordan), with his honour serving as a rallying cry against internal enemies (Malik, Philippon). He may also reinforce princely or egalitarian values in urban or rural settings (Hartung), offer a model for a future utopian society under an ideal leader (Chih), or enhance the power of a self-acclaimed caliphate (Günther). In many of these exemplary cases, his presence and authority have been evoked with diverse and sometimes quite innovative forms of communication and in novel organisational settings.

In conclusion, the resurgence of Islam which unfolded since the late 1970s has been such that even states that had pursued a policy of secularization could not fail to refer to religion in order to legitimize their authority. The Prophet who had been emptied to a large extent of his spiritual dimension, was then invoked again in his eschatological dimension. The case study of Iraq (described by David Jordan) provides perhaps the most telling example of the radical ideological turn of a secular government towards the revival of the figure of the Prophet as intercessor and saviour since the war against Iran in the 1980s and the humanitarian crisis provoked by the Gulf War in the 1990s, with the president posing as a descendant of the Prophet and accusing Imam Khomeini (himself also a Sayyid !) to be an enemy of Islam.

It appears striking that the actors of the recent Islamic mobilization movements quite often

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<sup>16</sup> Weber, "Objektivität' sozialwissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis", 202-206, defines the interdependences between economical and cultural phenomena as an object of the social and economic sciences; see also Swedberg and Ageval, *The Max Weber Dictionary*, 73; Giddens, "Marx, Weber and the development of capitalism", 297. The transfer of this model to political science can be found e. g. with De Grazia, *Political Behavior*, 66, who divides its objects into "politics, the politically relevant, and the politically conditioned".

relate themselves in their identification with the Prophet to the revolutionary Islamic movements of the 18th and early 19th centuries in their home regions and beyond, whether to those in Arabia, West Africa, or in South and Central Asia (discussed in Stefan Reichmuth's article). Or they revive older patterns of religious doctrine and expectation along Prophetic or Imamic lines, as in the Islamic Republic of Iran or in the case of Morocco (described by Rachida Chih). Islamological research has often been taken in by this historical self-identification of Islamist actors, without giving sufficient attention to the contemporary challenges that they have been facing together with their societies, and to the unmistakably modern traits of their movements.

But all of the contemporary Islamic movements certainly fit into a general historical trend that can be observed throughout the early modern and modern period. It consists in the growing importance, from late medieval times onwards, of the figure of the Prophet, in learned religious circles as well as in popular piety. This has been supported and encouraged by the political elites who, from the 15th century onwards, made their links with the Prophet a source of legitimation for their own power.

The figure of the Prophet, which has throughout history oscillated between human and super-human dimensions, has been constantly reappropriated under different modes of reference. This can be related to its eschatological quality, which – as argued in the general introduction – not only invites expectations regarding the end of the world but also beliefs in a salvation already unfolding in the present. In imperial times, sultans and emperors displayed their ethical, spiritual and charismatic links with the Prophet as a source of legitimation and a promise of universal peace and justice (as demonstrated by Hagen for the Ottomans). In the revolutionary movements of the 18th/early 19th century the Prophet was referred to as the founder of the original and authentic Muslim community, and as a model of action. In the times of the nationalist movements and the struggles for independence, was presented as an ideal head of state, a reformer of his society, a source of law and social order and even as a guardian of Muslim identity and culture. His presence has not diminished, therefore, neither with modernity nor with the processes of secularization which have unfolded in most Muslim countries. The explorative studies of the diverse political representations of the Prophet, which are presented in this volume, bring out the interplay of both secularization and sacralization of the Prophetic model, in a process which has gone along with an increasingly globalised struggle over the control of his image.



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