

WORKSHOP ON ISLAMIC-AESTHETIC EDUCATION

Hosted by the Chair for Islamic Religious Education and Practical Theology

Led by Prof. Dr. Tuba Işık

Islamic religious education is commonly understood not as the imparting of complex religious beliefs in the sense of a material pedagogy, but as a process of intellectual and spiritual development for children and adolescents. In short, it is a matter of *becoming human* in the guiding light of religion. Thus, religious education is understood as a comprehensive aesthetic cultivation of the self for children and adolescents, who undergo self-development out of a deep love for and devotion to God. Against this background, this educational workshop facilitates innovative, project-oriented work at a university level by creating a space for research and experimentation on the development of didactic educational concepts with a focus on the cultural fields of reference – **art** (*fann*), **music** (*mūsīqā*), and **literature** (*adab*). All three fields, with their inherent promotion of individual skills and competences, are based on the common objective of initiating aesthetic learning processes.

ART – فَنّ (fann)

Artworks inspired by religion as well as traditional art forms have been a natural part of religious education for centuries. They serve as an important medium of theological communication and are often described by artists as a religious expression of their own experiential world as well as their personal connection with the divine. The creative process, which cultivates an aesthetic, visual perception and personal qualities, is crucial here.

Instruction in (religious) aesthetic competence aims to train sensory perception as well as those skills that are essential for the exploration of artistic forms of expression and imagery. This includes the opportunity to develop one's own new artistic forms of expression. Furthermore, its purpose is to enrich one's own (religious) self-reflection. In this respect, artistic and aesthetic competence transcends both a basic understanding of art and a mere sensory experience of beauty.



Shah Mosque, Isfahan

LITERATURE – أدب (adab)

In elementary school, literary learning focuses primarily on developing one's own linguistic ability and familiarizing oneself with the narrative text forms of the Muslim cultural world. Oral **storytelling**, which extends back to the time of the Prophet Muḥammad and continues to be of great importance for conveying religious heritage to future generations, is an important method and cultural technique in the Islamic educational tradition. In sum, oral (religious) narratives are one of the traditional forms of learning in Islamic education through which values and basic attitudes are discussed and reflected upon.

Promoting narration and listening in the context of religious education is thus synonymous with promoting language competence, preparing young learners for reading comprehension, and arousing interest in language and reading. In addition, the study of ancient narratives introduces us to a long history of a multifaceted tradition of lived religiosity and its influence, thereby creating an awareness of tradition and enabling children and youth to feel that they are part of a rich body of tradition.

Attentive listening can thus be considered a key competence of religious education. The ability to listen attentively to an oral narrative not only opens up pathways of communication, but also shapes the skills of auditory perception and language formation, which in turn are an essential prerequisite for e.g. processes of aesthetic access to a recitation of the Qur'an.

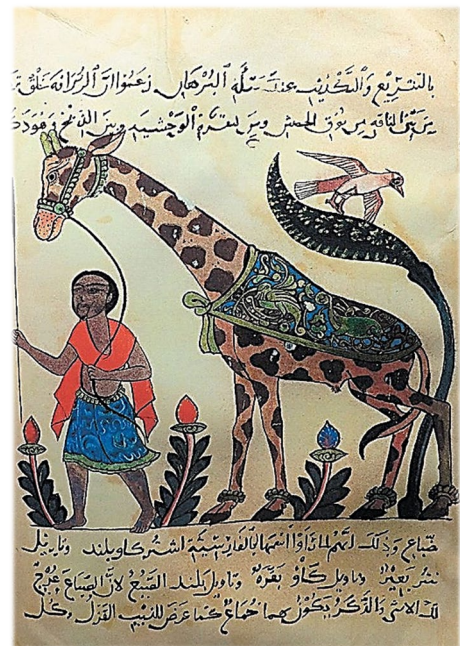
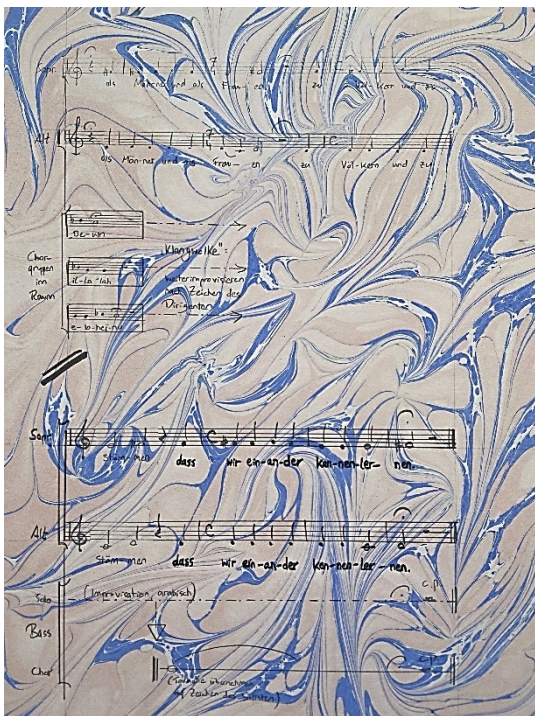


Illustration from al-Gāhiz, Kitāb al-ḥayawān (Book of Animals)

Music – موسيقى (mūsīqā)

Religious education in the Islamic educational tradition always takes a holistic view of the individual, viewing him or her as a unity of body, mind, and soul. From this educational perspective, music has always been a natural subject of religious education. Aesthetic musical education in the broadest sense, however, is a relatively neglected dimension of Islamic religious education. In this context, 'religious music' refers to religiously inspired and inspiring music. In its very own emotional and aesthetic language, it opens up a dimension in which the reality of God, Prophet Muḥammad, and the religious sphere in general can be understood and experienced directly through the senses.



Ebru art by Metin Burak; score by Bernhard König, *Esslinger Credo*

Engaging in musical activity can open up access to extraordinary experiences. This engagement starts from a foundation of listening as an ordinary perceptual and subjective experience. Attentive listening then builds on this foundation. This kind of listening has a relational quality, establishes a more intense connection with what is heard, and opens the listener up to the input's symbolic content and communicative intent. Thus, training students' listening skills is the purpose of musical-aesthetic education and musical engagement. At the same time, traditional musical forms should be translated into an independent didactic approach that is grounded in both religious education and

music education and that builds a bridge to the reality of life for Muslim children and youth today. To this end, we are collaborating actively with the interreligious-musical team *Trimum e.V.* as well as with the artistic pedagogical programs at the faculty of music of the *Berlin University of the Arts*.