

Il est certain que les musulmans ont toujours considéré le jeûne comme une de leurs pratiques rituelles majeures. Voire même, sans doute que l'habitude d'observer le jeûne au cours du mois de ramadân est très ancienne. Mais les sources – dont le Coran en particulier – ne donnent que très peu de renseignements sur ce jeûne. L'enquête qui a été menée montre que non seulement les règles qui président au jeûne ont changé au cours du temps, mais qu'en évoluant, elles ont transformé en profondeur la nature du jeûne ainsi que l'ensemble de la structure dans laquelle il s'insère et qui résulte de l'articulation du système religieux et de la société. Quand on considère la casuistique, on a le sentiment que les docteurs de la Loi traitent les questions une à une, dans la mesure où ils argumentent au cas par cas. En mettant en relation les différents cas étudiés ainsi que les solutions promues, on s'aperçoit qu'il y a une certaine unité derrière cet éparpillement apparent. Ce faisant, les docteurs de la Loi n'ont pas seulement réorganisé le jeûne de ramadân, mais ils ont également réorganisé l'islam ainsi que la société, en les façonnant dans une direction qui prévaut jusqu'à nos jours.

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Facts or Fables?

Muslims' Evaluation of Historical Memory

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Abstract

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Muslim scholars maintain that the report of a text or event could be considered as indisputably true if it has been confirmed by the collective historical memory of the community throughout the ages and down the generations. Some suggested that if the authority of historical memory came into doubt, the entire edifice of religion and history would collapse as both were firmly based on historical memory. They were however aware of the possibility that an unconscious, spontaneous coordination of minds due to a shared feeling of a people might create a common assumption that turns a statement or event into a common knowledge for future generations and builds what we know as historical memory. They knew that stories are not fixed but can change over time, and that people might add additional material including their own interpretation of an event to their observation and thus form a collective memory that may have no truth embedded in it. They knew that the first hearing of an event or a report might influence the mind in such a way that the mind always remembered the event or report within that original understanding. So, how to prove that a piece of historical memory was really true and that it was not merely hearsay that people at the time happened to believe in, or wanted to believe in, and narrated to one another, passing it down from generation to generation? What is the line between fact and rumor and when does historical memory represent the truth, that is, the actual occurrence of an event or utterance of a statement? A number of requirements have been suggested in the Islamic tradition to narrow down the scope of error and increase the credibility of a piece of historical memory as representative of the actual occurrence of an alleged fact. This paper attempts to present those suggestions.

Keywords

 collective memory – doxa/endoxa – historical memory – tawātur