Workshop
Rethinking Late Antiquity and Islam
June 24, 9am – 8pm

Venue
Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Einsteinsaal, Jägerstr. 22–23, 10117 Berlin

Convened by
Seminar für Arabistik und Semitistik, Freie Universität Berlin (Angelika Neuwirth)
Corpus Coranicum, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Michael Marx)

Speakers
Daniel Boyarin (University of California, Berkeley / WIKO Fellow 2012-13)
Garth Fowden (National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens / WIKO Fellow 2012-13)
Peter Gemeinhardt (Universität Göttingen)
Lutz Greisiger (Universität Halle–Wittenberg)
Andreas Kaplony (Universität München)
Elizabeth Key Fowden (WIKO Berlin 2012-13)
Michael Marx (Corpus Coranicum, BBAW)
Mischa Meier (Universität Tübingen)
Angelika Neuwirth (Freie Universität Berlin)
Christian Robin (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris)

Objectives
The workshop focuses on the concept of Late Antiquity. The term Late Antiquity in historical studies is used to designate an epoch, whose extension is, however, contested. According to the prevailing view established in the “Peter Brown School” it would cover the period from 200 to 750 CE. More recent scholarly work, though, carried out in projects such as EDRIS (Göttingen), Corpus Coranicum (Berlin), SFB 980 “Episteme in Bewegung” (Berlin) or Garth Fowden’s “The First Millennium: from Augustus to Avicenna” and Daniel Boyarin’s “Dispersing Diaspora” has called the current view into question. The striking evidence of closely related argumentative patterns and stratagems that underpin the radical transformations which “antique” texts and concepts went through with the establishment of the three scriptural religions, renders the delineations proposed until now highly implausible. Peter Brown’s concession of a continuation of Late Antiquity into the Umayyad era (until 750) is elusive, since it exclusively engages with the situation of the Christian population in the early Islamic state. Any epochal classification that is teleologically oriented toward the later emerging “Europe” necessarily has to resort to pulling out early Islam (including the Qur’an) from its ancestral embedding in a late ancient landscape of debate – an essentialist view that calls for revision. The dissociation of Late An-
tiquity from political rule and its re-allocation not in a political but in an epistemic space and the reflection about a new overarching epochal category such as the „First Millennium“ are urgently required to accommodate the currently vindicated new readings of texts and concepts across the boundaries of languages and religious cultures. The “rededication” of Late Antiquity would allow to relocate the three scriptural religious cultures in a shared space: the landscape of debate that for centuries defined the pluricultural Mediterranean.