

NEH Distinguished Professorship in the Humanities Lecture

**TRANSMISSION WITHOUT A PAPERTRAIL:**

**THE CASE OF THE PROPHETS AS IMPOSTORS**

by

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**Place: The Mountain Suites, Highsmith University Union, UNC  
Asheville**

**Time: Tuesday, March 15 at 4:30 p.m.**

This lecture argues that it was not just by translations that ideas travelled from the Islamic world to Europe in the pre-Reformation period: they moved by oral communication too, sometimes with dramatic results. The example examined is the thesis that all prophets, or more specifically three Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, were all impostors who had deceived mankind. This postulate had a rich history in the Islamic world by the thirteenth century, when it reached Europe, where it acquired an equally rich but quite different history culminating in the fervent endorsement of the postulate by Radical Enlightenment thinkers.

Patricia Crone's research is focused on the Near East from late antiquity to the coming of the Mongols. She is interested in the delineation of the political, religious, and cultural environment in which Islam began and how it transformed, and was itself transformed by, the regions that the Arabs conquered. Originally a political, social, and military historian (some diversions notwithstanding), she has been steadily moving into the history of ideas. She now works mainly on the Qur'an and the cultural and religious traditions of Iraq, Iran, and the formerly Iranian part of Central Asia.

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