

## **Multiple Secularities in Africa and the Diaspora**

International Workshop at the Centre for Advanced Studies  
"Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities", Leipzig University

**1–3 June 2022**

Hybrid event format, on-site event at Leipzig University and online via Zoom.

Convenors: Marian Burchardt, Magnus Echtler, and Katharina Wilkens (Leipzig University)

### **Approach**

In the field of secularity studies, Africa has remained the 'heart of darkness', marked by a peculiar absence. One line of argumentation suggests that this absence is justified as Africans allegedly never entered what Charles Taylor has described as the 'immanent frame'. In this reading, African ways of being in or knowing the world are outside the religious-secular divide. This interpretation also suggests that the idea of modernisation as secularisation is an instance of epistemic violence that has underwritten much of Africa's colonial history. However, arguably this position underestimates the impact of the colonial encounter, essentialising and othering African societies as shaped by holistic indigenous cultures rather than differentiated religions. This second interpretation explains secularity's apparent irrelevance by Africa's revenant otherness which formed part of its secularisation while hiding the process. This workshop seeks to tackle epistemological distortions and blind spots through empirical studies of African social realities. In particular, we are interested in the heuristic values of divergent conceptualisations (religious/secular, spiritual/material, sacred/profane, transcendent/immanent, or singularly mundane). Regarding Africa and its diaspora, the power/knowledge topography of religion and secularity surely requires deeper investigation.

**The workshop will take place as a hybrid event. The corresponding connection data will be made available to all registered participants shortly beforehand.**

## Schedule

### Wednesday, 1 June 2022

**14:00–14:30 Registration**

**14:30–15:00 Welcoming**

Christoph Kleine (Leipzig University) and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (Leipzig University)

**Opening Remarks**

Marian Burchardt, Magnus Echtler and Katharina Wilkens (all Leipzig University)

**15:00–17:00 Panel 1: Colonialism**

[Tyler Zoanni \(Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle\)](#)

"Religion, Politics, and Pre-Colonial Secularity in Nineteenth-Century Buganda"

[Gabriel A. Rantoandro \(Antananarivo University\)](#)

"Quête d'un savoir sécularisé face au projet missionnaire à Antananarivo dans la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle : enjeux socio-culturels et politiques"

("The Quest for Secularized Knowledge in the Face of the Missionary Project in Antananarivo in the Second Half of the 19th Century: Socio-Cultural and Political Issues")

[Peter Kneitz \(Leipzig University\)](#)

"From the Kingdom of Boeny to the 'Church of the Sakalava': A Case Study of Secularity in Madagascar"

[Judith Bachmann \(University of Heidelberg\)](#)

"The True (and Scientific) Religion': An African Adaptation of Esotericism and Rejection of Materialism in the Colonial Encounter"

**17:00–17:30 Break**

**17:30–19:00 Keynote: Humanism**

[Leo Igwe \(University of Cape Town\)](#)

"Licencing the Devil: Religions and Organized Atheism in Kenya"

**19:00 Joint dinner for all invited participants**

**Thursday, 2 June 2022**

**09:00–10:30 Panel 2: Politics I**

Jörg Haustein (University of Cambridge)

"A Global Frame: Situating Africa in the History of the Secular State"

Fábio Baqueiro Figueiredo (UNILAB, University for International Integration of the Afro-Brazilian Lusophony)

"Revolution, Religion, and Tradition in Angola: Intersections and Interplay"

Ana Carolina De Oliveira Costa (University of Brasilia)

"Frontières Floues: Entre la Laïcité et le Spiritualité au Bénin"

("Blurred Boundaries: Between Secularism and Spirituality in Benin")

**10:30–11:00 Break**

**11:00–12:00 Panel 3: Politics II**

Benedikt Pontzen (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin)

"(Post)Secular Framings: The State and 'African Traditional Religion' in Ghana"

Dorothea Schulz (University of Münster)

"Religious Governance and Muslim Minority Politics in Uganda"

**12:00–13:30 Lunch**

**13:30–15:30 Excursion: Völkerschlachtdenkmal (Monument to the Battle of the Nations)**

**15:30–16:30 Panel 4: Christians in Secular Contexts**

Diana Lunkwitz (University of Hamburg)

"On Growing Private Christian Universities and a Colonial Heritage of Education in Sub-Saharan Africa"

Abel Ugba (University of Leeds)

"Alone Against Secularisation? Conceptualisations of, and Encounter with, Secularism by African Pentecostals in Europe"

**16:30–17:00 Break**

**17:00–18:30 Panel 5: Health and Law**

Oluwaseun Otedede Williams (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva)

"Colonial Public Health and the Incongruities of Secularising Meat Production in Nigeria"

Anne Beutter (University of Lucerne)

"When May a Christian Slaughter a Sheep? A Case Introducing the Secular-Religious Divide in Local Practice"

Abdallah Zouhairi (Hassan II University, Casablanca)

"Law and Religion in the Ethics of Abortion Amongst Midwives in Morocco"

**19:00 Joint dinner for all invited participants**

**Friday, 3 June 2022**

**09:00–10:30 Panel 6: Arts**

[Abdelmjid Kettioui \(University of Moulay Ismail, Morocco\)](#)

"Doing Non-Religion as in Producing Counter-Fantasy: Moroccan Alternative Epistemologies of Non-Belief in the Diaspora"

[Nadir A. Nasidi \(Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria\)](#)

"From the Secular to the Sacred: *Sufi* Representational Art in Kano"

[Ajibade George Olusola \(Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife\)](#)

"Between Secularity and Religion: Depiction of Islam and Christianity in Yorùbá Proverbs"

**10:30–11:00 Break**

**11:00–12:30 Conclusions**

**12:30 Lunch**