

Workshop Program

“Religion and its History in Turkey: New Approaches, Alternative Perspectives”

Leipzig University, 27-28 January 2023

Institute for the Study of Religions at Leipzig University,
co-sponsors: Centre for Advanced Studies “Multiple Secularities –Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities” at
Leipzig University, Nonreligion in a Complex Future Project.

Conveners: Gökçen Beyinli (Hamburg University), Markus Dressler (Leipzig University)

The dichotomy between a “secular state” and a “religious society” has been for a long time the dominating discourse on the modernity experience of the Republic of Turkey. Although the “secularism” of the Turkish state and its homogenising policies have been interrogated, less attention has been paid to its “counterpart,” “religious society.” Academic research on religion in modern Turkey has been confined largely to Islam, thereby privileging binary oppositions such as orthodox-heterodox, official-popular, or high-low Islam. Such dichotomies do not pay sufficient attention to alternative religiosities or dynamics of convergence between religions. This two-day workshop aims to revisit Turkish modernity experience on the centenary of the republic by considering the diverse forms of religiosity and the complexity of religious life in Turkey. With contributions of critical and theoretical religious studies research, we would like to question the binary conceptualisations of religion as well as the strict dichotomy between religion and the secular. We also want to elaborate on everyday material and spatial aspects of religion to challenge normative assumptions about religiosity and “true religion” as defined by religious institutions. By bringing scholars from diverse fields together, we want to address the following questions and corresponding ideas to promote further research:

- How can we move beyond dominating binary conceptualisations of religion such as orthodox-heterodox, official-popular, high-low?
- Which new methodologies and sources can expand our scope of analysis?
- What are the contested religious experiences of ordinary people that have until now stayed invisible in scholarship?
- Which practices, stories, or people that challenge the religious-secular binary have been rendered invisible? Which normative definitions of religion and religiosity are similarly concealed?
- How can we rethink about religion and religiosity through a spatial and geographical perspective?
- How does gender matter in binary conceptualisations of religion(s) and the secular, and how can we include women as religious subjects beyond Islamic activism?

Schedule

27 January 2023

9:00 – 9:15 Gathering and Greeting

9:15 – 11:15 Panel I: Historiography and Concepts

Chair: Lori Beaman

Markus Dressler

“Charisma, Embodiment, and Continuous Revelation: Rethinking the Conceptualization of Islam as ‘Discursive Tradition’”

Zeynep Oktay

“The History of Popular Religion in Turkey: Conceptual and Methodological Issues”

Gökçen Beyinli

“Living Religion Together as Text: *Mevlid* Books in the History of Turkey”

11:15 – 11:30 Coffee Break

11:30 – 13:30 Panel II: Negotiating Secularism

Chair: Markus Dressler

Bekir Zakir Çoban

“Religiosity in Turkey as Local and Political”

Önder Küçükural

“Nonreligious Imagineries in the Turkish Context: What is more Banal? Secularism or Religion”

Ayşe Çavdar

“To ‘Be Oneself’: Ethical and Political Dynamics of Bottom-up Secularization in AKP’s ‘New Turkey’”

13:30 – 15:00 Lunch

15:00 – 17:00 Panel III: History of Religion from the Empire to the Republic

Chair: Deniz Ali Gür

Bret Wilson (Online via Zoom)

“The Last Masters: Sufi Shaykhs at the End of Empire and in the Early Republic”

Çiğdem Buğdaycı

“Medicalization of Sufism: The norm of being a Secular Turkish Citizen”

Timur Hammond (Online via Zoom)

“Urban Worlds of Islam: Networks, Traditions, and Places”

19:00 Dinner at Pan Restaurant

<u>28 January 2023</u>

9:00 – 10:30 Panel IV: Everyday Pluralities

Chair: Gökçen Beyinli

Smita Tewari Jassal

“Baraka in the Turkish Imaginary”

Nil Mutluer

“Tactics of Everyday Religion and Secularity in Turkey”

10:30 – 10:45 Coffee Break

10:45 – 12:45 Panel V: Religion Contested

Chair: Yasemin Ural

Jeremy F. Walton (Online via Zoom)

“Religious Freedom, Spatial Politics, and Heritagization in Today’s Turkey”

Mark Soileau

“What is Felt When a Martyr Falls in Modern Turkey”

Şebnem Köşer Akçapar (Online via Zoom)

“Migration, Gender and Religion: Continuity or Change?”

12:45 – 13:30 Closing Discussion