



## Religion and Secularity in the Balkans – Past and Contemporary Case-Studies and Trends

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

**9–10 November 2023**

Convenor: Wolfgang Höpken (KFG “Multiple Secularities”)

### Approach

The changes in the religious field in the Balkan societies over the last 30 years have been as dynamic and ambivalent as the transformation in the political system, in the economy and the social and everyday- life. We have witnessed and are still witnessing a readjustment between the religious and secular, whose results and forthcoming directions are far from being clear. We are faced with contradictory tendencies and phenomena, which are hard to subdue to general interpretations and conclusions. As contradictory as the development are the repercussions within the academic debates. Sociologists, Historians and Anthropologists have come up with diagnostic findings of their own, sometimes being hard to reconcile. Those, who are more or less close to theories of secularization see the Balkan societies in an “early stage of secularization”, despite of an obvious increase in religiosity, which they describe more as a temporary follow-up phenomenon of a burdensome transition from communism to democracy and market economy, as a long-term effect of 40 years of communist atheism or as a result of a particular intermingling of religion and national identity, apparently typical for the Balkan societies. Those who are skeptical to the theory of secularization see the Balkan development more as part of a global revitalization of religion, confirming that religion even under the conditions of “modernity” and “post-modernity” has not lost its significance, proofing thus the conceptional bias and limits of any theory of secularization. Others, in turn, see the current development in the Balkans as an ‘indigenous’ attempt to readjust the religious and the secular, based on the specific historical and cultural features of the Balkans, which cannot and should not be subdued to any “great narrative”, neither of a “western type” secularization, nor to the assumption of a global religious revival.

Picking up individual case studies from various Balkan countries and bringing together representatives from different disciplines and approaches, the workshop, which takes place within the context of the work of the Center for Advanced Studies on “Multiple secularities” at Leipzig University, wants to debate the question, how the borderlines between the religious and the secular have been drawn, both in the past and during the more recent decades.

**The workshop will take place as a hybrid event. [Click here to join the zoom.](#)**

## Schedule

### Wednesday, 8 November 2023

- 19:00**      **Joint Dinner**  
Meeting 10 minutes to 19:00 in the hotel lobby

### Thursday, 9 November 2023

- 09:15–10:30**    **Introduction**  
[Monika Wohlrab-Sahr](#)  
"Welcome and Introduction"  
  
[Wolfgang Höpken](#)  
"‘Belated Westernization’ or ‘Religious Revival’: Some Introductory Remarks on Religion and Secularity in the Balkans"
- 10:30–11:00**    **Coffee Break**
- 11:00–13:00**    **Panel I**  
**11:00–12:00**    [Ninja Bumann](#)  
„Separating Islamic and State Law: Sharia Courts in Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878-1918)“
- 12:00–13:00**    [David Henig](#)  
"Locating the Secular in Everyday Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina"
- 13:00–14:15**    **Lunch**
- 14:15–16:15**    **Panel II**  
**14:15–15:15**    [Roland Clark](#)  
"The Shepherd of Maglavit: Lived Religion in Modern Romania"
- 15:15–16:15**    [Anca Şincan](#)  
"Church allegiance to the nation or church allegiance to the regime? The new framework of church and state relations in communist Romania"
- 16:15–16:30**    **Coffee Break**
- 16:30–18:00**    **Panel III**  
**16:30–18:00**    [Emil Bjørn Hilton Saggau](#)  
"Nationalism and the Sacred"
- 19:00**      **Joint Dinner**

**Friday, 10 November 2023**

**09:15–11:15 Panel IV**

**09:15–10:15** Ina Merdjanova

"Women, Neo-Secularization and Orthodoxy in Bulgaria"

**10:15–11:15** Klaus Buchenau

"(Non)Secularity as Nationalism. An Overview on Serbia since the 19th century"

**11:15–11:30** Coffee Break

**11:30–12:30 Panel V**

**11:30–12:30** Aleksandra Pavicevic

"Secularism as Scientific Ideology and Liturgical Renewal in Serbia. Back to ethnography."

**12:30–14:00** Lunch

**14:00–15:00 Panel VI**

**14:00–15:00** Cecilie Endresen

"Multiple Secularities in Multireligious Albanian Contexts"

**15:00–15:30** Coffee Break

**15:30–16:30 Panel VII**

**15:30–16:30** Maria Asavei

"The Art and Politics of Neo-Traditional Cultural Production of Religious Inspiration In Romania"

**16:30** **Final Discussion**