



## Call for Papers

Workshop on

# **Muslim Secularities: Explorations into Concepts of Distinction and Practices of Differentiation**

June 18-20, 2017 at Leipzig University

*Humanities Center for Advanced Studies*

*"Multiple Secularities: Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"*

in preparation for a special issue with *Historical Social Research*

ed. by Markus Dressler, Armando Salvatore, and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (conference organizers)

Keynote speakers:

**Bryan S. Turner, The City University of New York and Australian Catholic University,  
Melbourne**

**Tijana Krstic, Central European University**

Critical studies on secularism have since at least a decade wielded a considerable influence on the academic study of Islam. Often inspired by scholarship in the footsteps of Edward Said and other figureheads of postcolonial studies, critiques have been launched against the essentialism and the political complicity of parts of Islamic Studies scholarship with colonial and imperialist projects. Moving methodologically and theoretically beyond the limits of postcolonial critique, the work of anthropologist Talal Asad has more recently inspired a new school of research that challenges previous frameworks of investigating religion. Asad directed attention to the way in which hegemonic knowledge about religion is structured by arrangements of power vested in a secular episteme.

While recognizing the merits of this brand of scholarship, we nevertheless think that in the course of this debate important research questions of relevance to the study of secularization and secularity have been neglected. The notion of the secular took form within a web of new emerging concepts, such as society, nationhood, citizenship, science, or history, gaining traction during the 19th century as a result of an accelerated globalization of knowledge largely unfolding under the aegis of colonial domination. Inner-Islamic traditions of knowledge interacted with Western concepts in the formation of modern Islamic discourses and thus affected the ways in which these discourses have suggested, endorsed, and/or questioned particular distinctions between religious and secular spheres. Against this background our goal is to shift attention to historical and sociological questions concerning concepts and practices of *distinction and differentiation* related to religion and the secular (or comparable concepts) in both modern and pre-modern times. We are also interested in the historical conditions under which such concepts and practices emerged and the processes which they stipulated.

Inspired by the 'multiple modernities' framework, the approach to 'multiple secularities' promotes research that interrogates conventional assumptions regarding the boundaries of the 'West' and 'modernity', and aims at a comparative perspective in which similarities and differences as well as continuities and discontinuities can be openly discussed. By probing the existence of a global regime of the secular, this approach lays a premium on the relations and tensions between various Western and non-Western settings, and between modern constellations and pre-modern traditions resting on distinctions between religious and non-religious concepts, practices, and spheres of life.

We call for papers delineating concepts and practices of distinction and differentiation (and/or their undoing) within Islamicate social and historical contexts, the conditions of their emergence, and the socio-economic, doctrinal, and political conflicts that have sustained them.

### **Application procedure**

Please send a 500 words abstract of your paper **by March 1, 2017** to [markus.dressler@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:markus.dressler@uni-leipzig.de). We will cover travel and accommodation for the selected participants. Papers for the workshop, at least in draft form, are due **by June 2, 2017**. Selected papers will be published in a special issue of the journal *Historical Social Research*.

Humanities Center for Advanced Studies  
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