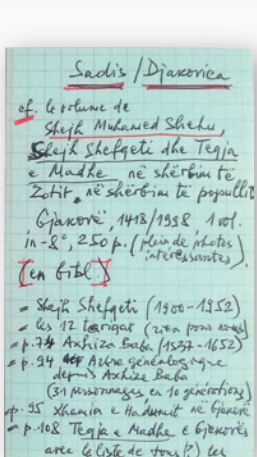


ISLAM IN THE BALKANS RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES 30 YEARS AFTER L'ISLAM BALKANIQUE

WORKSHOP IN MEMORY OF
ALEXANDRE POPOVIC (1931-2014)



15-16 DECEMBER 2016
EHESS, salle Lombard,
96, Bd Raspail, 75006 Paris

ISLAM IN THE BALKANS RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES 30 YEARS AFTER *L'ISLAM BALKANIQUE*

WORKSHOP IN MEMORY OF
ALEXANDRE POPOVIC (1931-2014)

15-16 DECEMBER 2016

EHESS, Salle Lombard
96, Bd Raspail, 75006 Paris

Organised by

Xavier Bougarel (CNRS, CETOBAC)

Nathalie Clayer (CNRS-EHESS, CETOBAC)

Fabio Gioni (CNRS, CETOBAC)

When Alexandre Popovic published his book *L'islam balkanique* in 1986, the Muslim populations of south-eastern Europe were still a little explored and exotic research topic. The secularisation policies put in place by the Communist regimes seemed to confirm that adherence to Islam was superficial and on the decline. The limited scholarship that was available at the period often tended to focus solely on the syncretism of religious practices and on the persistence of pre-Islamic traditions. In other words, the Muslims of south-eastern Europe were viewed as belonging to the population groups dubbed the "forgotten Muslims" by Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay in 1981. The 500 pages of *L'islam balkanique*, divided into six chapters, thus set out a different vision of reality by exploring the post-Ottoman history of Muslims in the six States comprising the region at that time, namely Greece, Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary. For each of these six case studies, Alexandre Popovic accorded a central place to the institutions that, over the course of the contemporary period, had fashioned the life of these communities, that is to say the religious institutions, political parties, associations, and newspapers. The seventy-page bibliography at the end of the book – in French, English, German, Italian, Serbo-Croat/Croato-Serb, Albanian, Turkish, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Hungarian, and Rumanian – stands testimony to the sheer ambition of the project, which was to lay down the groundwork for scientific study of the Muslim populations in this part of Europe during the 19th and 20th century.

In the thirty years following the publication of this book, studies of Balkan Muslims have undergone profound changes, however, as a result both of the political transformations within the Balkans and of evolutions taking place in the social sciences. Firstly, the Western amnesia surrounding the Muslims of south-eastern Europe was soon lifted. In May 1989 images of Bulgarian Muslims fleeing Todor Zhivkov's assimilationist policies and heading towards Turkey reminded Western public opinion that there were «autochthonous» Muslim populations on the European continent. Shortly afterwards, during the Yugoslav wars, images of minarets – often hit by shellfire or dynamited as part of the process of ethnic cleansing – showed that the presence of Muslims in Europe was not just the result

of economic immigration during the second half of the 20th century, but in fact had a far longer history. The same period saw the founding of two States with majority Muslim populations, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

The end of the Cold War, the fragmentation of the Yugoslav space, and the beginnings of European integration thus helped shift perception of Muslims in the region. The result was not univocal, with Muslims being perceived either as victims and representatives of a tolerant and moderate «European Islam», or else as the European «bridgehead» of radical Islam and transnational jihadism. Research had to learn how to negotiate this labyrinth of ideological discourse and counter-discourse, and to meet the legitimate demands being placed on it by the media and administrations to bring understanding.

But studies of Muslims in south-eastern Europe have not been wholly conditioned by political events. Broader transformations in the social sciences have also influenced how these studies have evolved. Alexandre Popovic was himself instrumental in the repositioning of Balkan Islam in what at the time was called the «peripheral Muslim world», which ran from China to Africa, taking in south-east and central Asia. Furthermore, whilst during the 1990s and 2000s researchers working on these populations looked primarily at their relations with the State and at the issue of nation-building, over the last decade new avenues have started to be explored, such as the transnational aspect, leading researchers to concentrate on the circulation of people, ideas, and goods. At the same time other research projects have started to examine hitherto neglected fields of study, such as the history of women and gender, social history, the anthropology and sociology of institutions, and, more recently, the forms of religiosity.

The purpose of this workshop is therefore to go over these new themes, and also to put into perspective these new ways of conducting research in/about this region, showing how they can lead on to vaster issues relating to the way the social sciences are practised and how they apprehend Europe and the Mediterranean. We thus wish to invite colleagues working in various disciplines that have made a significant contribution to these domains to examine four major themes in the light of their own research: «circulation and mobilisation», «rethinking institutions», «gender, body and sexuality», and «religion and spirituality». One session will be devoted to the screening of a documentary about the *mevlud* ritual so as to accord due place to visual and audiovisual studies. A round table about the comparative and global dimensions will make provide an opportunity to examine the place these approaches have in studying Balkan Islam, based particularly on issues relating to peripheral Islam and European Islam.

The workshop is organised with the generous support of *Centre d'études turques, ottomanes, balkaniques et centrasiatiques* (CETOBAC), *Laboratoire d'excellence Transformations de l'état, politisation des sociétés et institution du social* (LabEx TEPSIS), the research programmes *Espaces, réseaux et circulations. Les re-configurations du politique en Turquie* (POLTUR), *La production du politique dans l'espace post-ottoman. Réseaux, espaces et circulations* (PROPOL) and *Institut d'études de l'Islam et des sociétés du monde musulman* (IISMM).

15 DECEMBER

9.00 > 9.30

Introduction

9.30 > 12.30

Panel 1: Religion and spirituality

Discussant: **Marc Gaborieau** (EHESS)

Armina Omerika

Goethe University

Islamic theology and the Balkan Muslim studies

Gianfranco Bria

University of Calabria, CETOBAC

Celebrating Sultan Newruz between theological debate and multi-framed practice in contemporary Albania

Marie-Laure Boursin

CNRS, IDEMEC

The “resurgence” of Bulgarian hatim? What the Ottoman and communist past makes to the ritual

Cecilie Endresen

University of Oslo

Floating Islam: Islamic referents and Muslim identities in Albanian New Age spirituality

12.30 > 14.00 Lunch

14.00 > 17.00

Panel 2: Rethinking institutions

Discussant: **Bernard Lory** (INALCO)

Arolda Elbasani

European University Institute

Accommodating Islam and religious pluralism in new democracies

Philippe Gelez

University of Paris-Sorbonne

Muslims and land in Bosnia, 19th c.: from fiscality to territoriality

Gilles de Rapper

CNRS, IDEMEC

Kinship and family in Communist Albania: photography as a source, a tool and an object of research

Nathalie Clayer

CNRS-EHESS, CETOBAC

De-centering the study of Islamic official institutions in the Balkans

17.30 > 19.00

Roundtable

“Balkan Islam”, “peripheral Islam” and “European Islam”

with **Marc Gaborieau** (EHESS)

and **Constant Hamès** (EHESS)

16 DECEMBER

9.30 > 12.30

Panel 3: Circulations and mobilisations

Discussant: **Tassos Anastassiadis** (École Française d'Athènes, McGill University)

Konstantinos Tsitselikis

University of Macedonia

Muslims of Greece: mobilizing for the impossible?

Xavier Bougarel

CNRS, CETOBAC

The Reis and the veil: a religious controversy in interwar Bosnia-Herzegovina

Kerem Öktem

University of Graz

Turkey's moment in the Balkans: From ‘primus inter pares’ to the leadership of Islam?

Iva Lučić

University of Uppsala

The Political Elevation Process of Muslims in Socialist Yugoslavia

12.30 > 14.00 Lunch

14.00 > 16.00

Panel 4: Gender, body and sexuality

Discussant: **Jocelyne Dahlia** (EHESS)

Ina Merdjanova

Trinity College Dublin

Muslim women in the Balkans between nationalism, transnationalism, and neoliberalism

Fabio Giomi

CNRS, CETOBAC

Exploring the intersection between gender and Islam in Southeastern Europe: the case of the Muslims of Yugoslavia

Piro Rexhepi

Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

European borders and Arab others: the racial and gendered hierarchies of Balkan Islam

16.30 > 18.00

Documentary screening

Bosnian Muslim Women's rituals. Bulas singing, reciting and teaching in Sarajevo

Catharina Raudvere and Zilka Spahić-Šiljak, 2016, 59 min

The screening will be followed by a debate with **Catharina Raudvere** (University of Copenhagen).

Discussant: **Jean-Claude Penrad** (EHESS)