

Concept Outline

Around the world, saints, religious leaders, social and political activists, thinkers or scientists who often have not been remembered for decades or even centuries, are rediscovered and endowed with new significance as iconic figures. Often figures of the past, they are presented as role models in order to shape presents and futures. Such processes inevitably involve inclusion and appropriation, while producing otherness at the same time. However, the alterity at work in these constructions of the past are not only to celebrate icons and role models, but also to reject those of them that are deemed undesirable and unvaluable. Allegedly heretics, these leaders of other religious communities, or ideological adversaries, also feed particular narratives and representations of the past. This conference aims to critically examine the construction, deconstruction and functioning of iconic figures from a transregional perspective. A major question is: when and how societal transformations or crises and historiographical lags or gaps are instrumentalized by political and religious groups in order to produce alternative values and norms, selective readings and constructions of the past?



Religious procession in Moscow, USSR, on 23 September 1990

Iconic Figures Intersecting Religious and Political Narratives of the Past

Conference, 7–9 December 2022
Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33
14129 Berlin

Organized by:
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Wednesday, 7 December 2022

14.00 – 14.30 Welcome and Introduction

14.30 – 16.00 Chair: Ulrike Freitag

Omar Bortolazzi: The Charismatic Leader Imam Musa al-Sadr and the Mobilisation of the Lebanese Shi'a Community

Philipp Bruckmayr: Debating a Controversial American Icon: African American Muslim Movements and the Figure of Elijah Muhammad

16.00 – 16.30 Break

16.30 – 18.00 Chair: Frédéric Madore

Danladi Abah: Ibraheem Yaqoub El-Zakzaky: Shia Islam, Society and the Rise of Iconic Figure in Contemporary Northern Nigeria

Deepra Dandekar: Hamid Dalwai: Third-Space Muslim Secular Activism in India

Thursday, 8 December 2022

09.30 – 11.00 Chair: Heike Liebau

Katarzyna Jarosz: Personality Cults as a Form of New Religion

Ismail Hashim Abubakar: Shaykh Ja'far Mahmud Adam and Countering Physical Violence with Rhetorical Violence: A Contextual Analysis of a Selected Sermon of the Murdered Nigerian Cleric

11.00 – 11.30 Break

11.30 – 13.00 Chair: Sana Chavoshian

Pavel Basharin: The Many Faces of al-Ḥallāj

Katharina Neef: Icons of Secularism. How European Freethought Gathered Around a Canon

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch

Friday, 9 December 2022

14.00 – 15.30

Chair: Jacob Nerenberg

Marc Tabani: Personifications of a Prophecy: Strangers as Cargo Cult Leaders in Tanna (Vanuatu)

Elena Manchado Rodríguez: The Beatas of Kyoto and their Hagiographies: Elaboration and Transatlantic Circulation of a Sainthood Ideal (XVII–XVIII Centuries)

11.00 – 11.30

Break

16.00 – 16.45

Chair: Stanislau Paulau

Yanwar Pribadi: Kyai Kholil of Bangkalan, Madura, Indonesia: Saint for the Ummah, Guru for 'Ulamā', and Symbol of Riding the Coattails for Politicians

17.00

Documentary

“Bamba, The Taste of Knowledge” Film and Discussion

Introduction: Abdoulaye Sounaye

9.00 – 10.30

Chair: Florian Coppenrath

Aleksandr Svyetlov: Leading Figures of “National Emancipation” in Times of Historical Ruptures: Almost Iconic? A Case Study

Perna Agarwal: Men of Socialism: George Fernandes and Icons of Socialism in India's Postcolonial History

10.30 – 11.00

Break

11.00 – 12.30

Chair: David Leupold

Muhammed Anees: Reinventing Images of Variamkunnan: Politics of Memory and Patriotism in Contemporary India

Krzysztof Jaskulowski: The Memory Politics of the Cursed Soldiers. Between Cult and Contestation