

**Conversion to/from Islam in the Balkans and beyond:
Historical Comparative Perspectives**

Sarajevo 11-14 May 2017

Workshop organized by

The Center for Islamic Theology, University of Tübingen
&
The Faculty of Islamic Studies, University of Sarajevo

Schedule:

Arrival on Thursday 11 May 2017, departure on Sunday 14 May 2017.

Short description:

Conversion as a process, in which individuals or groups abandon their religions in favour of a new set of beliefs, religious practices and rituals, is a unique tool for the exploration of cultural, social and political identities as well as their definition and construction. In the last decades, conversion has become a flourishing subject in the history of Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations in Europe and beyond. Different theories and approaches have been suggested in order to explicate the historical, social and religious aspects of this phenomenon.

The focus of this workshop is on the European experience of conversion to/from Islam with a primary emphasis on the Balkans and a series of comparative perspectives related to the Iberian Peninsula, Western Russia and the Mediterranean in large, ranging from the Middle Ages to the modern times. By bringing together a cohort of scholars with expertise in the religious and cultural history of these areas, the workshop aims to provide a comparative analysis of historically contemporaneous narratives of conversion and its implications for the construction of religious and political identities.

This workshop will take place in Sarajevo, a city that belongs to a region, i.e. the Balkans, which was and is pivotal to European Islam and interreligious coexistence. What is more, it entails the special Academic interaction of two Faculties with a long-standing scholarly tradition in the study of theology. For these reasons, the intention is to maintain a well-defined focus upon theological and religious issues, implications, and controversies that conversion has stirred within both Muslim and Christian contexts. The workshop will consist of five sessions. Each session will last 1 hour and 30 min. including 45-min. for presentations (case studies, critical approaches to conversion studies, close examinations of sources, comparative perspectives) and 45-min. for interdisciplinary debates.

Pilot Program:

Thursday 11.05

16-16:30 Welcome and Introduction

16:30-18 First session

Presentation: Fahd Kasumović (University of Sarajevo), *Conversion to/from Islam in the Ottoman Balkans: Reassessment of Discourses in Traditional Historiography and Possibilities for Reinterpretation of the Primary Sources*
Discussant: Samer Rashwani (University of Tübingen)

Friday 12.05

9-10:30 Second session

Presentation: Tobias Graf (University of Tübingen), *Christian-European Converts to Islam and the Making of the Ottoman Elite in the Late Sixteenth Century*

Discussant: Fatih Ermiş (University of Tübingen)

11-12:30 Third session

Presentation: Claire Norton (St Mary's University, Twickenham, London): *Constructing Conversion: Stories of Conflict and Captivity*

Discussant: Mujadad Zaman (University of Tübingen)

15-16:30 Fourth session

Presentation: Ana Echevarría Arsuaga (UNED, Madrid): *Military Conversions as an Element of Frontier History*

Discussant: Davide Scotto (University of Tübingen)

17-18:30 Fifth session

Presentation: Dominic Rubín (The Higher School of Economics, Moscow): *Conversion from and to Islam in Modern Russia and the Idea of Eurasia as an Islamo-Christian Space*

Discussant: Stefan Schreiner (University of Tübingen)

21:30/22 Dhikr!

Saturday 13.05

Guided tour to religious, historical, and Academic sites in Sarajevo and its surroundings

Morning: Visit to Sarajevo old city – Christian and Muslim places

Afternoon: Visit to the Franciscan monastery of the Holy Spirit in Fojnica

Sunday 14.05

Morning: Service and visit to the Icon collection of S. Michael and S. Gabriel Serbian-Orthodox Church – Visit to the Jewish Museum “Il Kal Grande”

Afternoon: Departure