

Title of lecture: Islam after Atheism. Religious reconstruction in Albania

A seminar with Associate Professor Cecilie Endresen, University of Oslo.

Friday November 4, 2016

Eilert Sundts hus, auditorium 6

Free admission and open for all.

What does Islam look like in a country with an Ottoman Islamic and later communist, atheist past? Why are Albanian Muslims so pro-American? How are Sufi-Salafi relations in «the country of dervishes», and what happens when Islam meets nationalism and New Age?

Albania represents a case in point when it comes to Islam, pluralism and secularisation. Europe's first national state (1912) with a Muslim majority population and a third Christians, also had one of its earliest secular constitutions. Within decades, the country was transformed from Islamic to atheist (1967) when religion was completely banned, shut down, and soon, officially eradicated.

With the legalisation of religion in 1990 and end of isolation, the vernacular traditions, globalisation and foreign mission have shaped the religious revival. Many forms of Islam are accommodationist and ethnocentric, or have a fundamentalist, Salafi leaning. Other types are characterised by an esoteric impulse, such as neo-Sufism and free-floating, Islam-inspired New Age spirituality. This lecture guides you through Albania's complex Islamic landscape.

Cecilie Endresen is Associate Professor of History of Religions at the University of Oslo, with a specialization in Islam and religious pluralism in Southeast Europe. Her latest book is *Is the Albanian's religion really «Albanianism»? Religion and nation according to Muslim and Christian leaders in Albania* (Harrassowitz 2012). The present talk is based on the articles «The nation and the nun: Mother Teresa, Albania's Muslim Majority and the Secular State» (2015), «A fantastic people and its enemies: an analysis of an emerging Albanian mythology» (in press), and «Faith, Fatherland, or both? Accommodationist and neo-fundamentalist Islamic discourses in Albania» (2015).