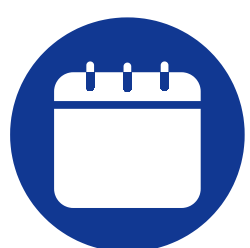


DIVINATION THROUGH THE “WRITTEN WORD” IN YEZIDI ORAL TRADITION: ‘BOOKISH’ TECHNIQUES OF PROGNOSTICATION AS SOURCES OF ESOTERIC KNOWLEDGE

This lecture explores the divinatory practices of Iraqi Yezidis as a means of accessing esoteric knowledge (‘ilmi batinî) within an oral religious tradition. I examine how these practices predict the future, alleviate afflictions, and overcome obstacles, while also providing Yezidis with a direct form of “bookish” revelation from the spiritual world in place of written sacred texts, within a cultural context where only religions of the book have historically held legitimacy. Central to these practices is the Book of Angel Sheikh Sin, manuscripts of which are held by select priestly families. Considered to channel divine revelation, it is used in the creation of amulets, reflecting influences from written Islamic esoteric traditions. Similarly, the phenomenon of “falling into book,” where Yezidi seers enter altered states of consciousness to communicate with the supernatural, underscores the interaction between the conceptualizations of oral and bookish revelation. While often dismissed by religious elites and scholars of textual traditions, I argue that these practices play a significant role in Yezidi spiritual and communal life. Moreover, their study provides insight into the influence of neighboring bookish religions on Yezidism and the impact of literacy on Yezidi religious orality.



Eszter Spät is a scholar of religious minorities and popular religious practices in the Middle East. Her research centers on the oral religious tradition of the Yezidis of Iraq, examining how its ongoing scripturalization is reshaping the content and structure of Yezidi religion, as well as traditional religio-social hierarchies and institutions. She has conducted extensive fieldwork among Yezidi communities in Northern Iraq, as well as their Christian and Muslim neighbors. In addition to two monographs and numerous scholarly articles, she has produced the documentary *Following the Peacock*. Alongside her academic work, she has also worked as a journalist, covering the 2003 Iraq War and other issues in Iraqi Kurdistan.



Date:
Tuesday - 17 June, 2025



Time:
6.15 - 7.45 PM

**Location: Big Seminar room,
Hartmannstr. 14, Building D1, Erlangen**

Link for virtual attendance: <https://fau.zoom-x.de/j/62556506187>



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