The Center for Religious Studies cordially invites you to a lecture by

Eszter Spät
(Central European University)

Qadri Dervishes And Their Rituals in Iraqi Kurdistan

A lecture with video footage

Abstract: Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, once played an immense role in Islamization of Kurds, and popular Sufi dervish orders fulfilled an important function in the organization of Kurdish society. While today Sufi orders are being gradually sidelined in Iraq by both secularism and Islamic movements, in some parts of Iraqi Kurdistan the Qadri dervish order still continues to retain its popular appeal and at least some of its previous spiritual and social position. This lecture looks at Sufi life in Akre, a town in Iraqi Kurdistan with an important dervish lodge or tekkiye and in the agricultural villages of the surrounding plains. For many villagers Sufism still informs not only their religious, but also their social and even political life. Participation in the Sufi ritual of dhikr (whether including only music and singing, or ecstatic dance as well) is the focal point of experiencing their faith. Entering trance and performing extraordinary feasts during the ritual are seen as the ultimate “proof” that they are walking on what they call “the right path.”

Eszter Spät defended her doctoral thesis, *Late Antique Motifs in Yezidi Oral Tradition*, at the Central European University in 2009. She has been carrying out field research in the Kurdish Region of Iraq since 2002 and has published two books and several articles on the Yezidis, a religious minority. Her last three trips to the region (between 2011 and 2013) were supported by the Hungarian OTKA and the Gerda Henkel Foundation. She is presently a research fellow at the CEU.

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