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Guest Editorial: Interreligious Encounter and Religious Change in former Yugoslavia

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EDITORIAL

Interreligious Encounter and Religious Change in former Yugoslavia

In recent years, historical and anthropological scholarship on former Yugoslavia's religious landscape is mostly focused on the intertwining of religious and national identity, ethno-religious conflicts, and histories of particular "traditional" religious communities. Research on religious expression and practice in Yugoslavia reflects the internal complexity and dynamics of religiosity in a region that has constantly faced various challenges, including shifting borders, political upheavals, and migration. The late 19th and the first decades of the 20th century were characterized by border shifts and the appearance of new religious groups, such as neo-Protestants. The emergence of these new churches had a profound social, cultural and political impact on the region. This led to new religious impulses, some of which resulted in conversions to other forms of Christianity, while others transformed themselves into renewal movements. Contacts between religious communities across regions, largely due to internal migrations, the return of guest workers, and policies of various regimes lead to different responses, such as appearance of renewal movements within already existing religious traditions, conversions or movements of religious dissent. Thus, the topic of religious change in the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional region of Yugoslavia presents an ideal context within which we can analyze interreligious encounters and religious conversion in the 20th century.

In this issue of OPREE, three case studies by Gašper Mithans, Evelyn Reuter, and Aleksandra Djurić-Milovanović explore interreligious encounters in Yugoslavia and religious transformations that brought new dynamics in interreligious relations between majority and minority religions. The contribution by Aleksandra Djurić-Milovanović is based on ethnographic fieldwork among the Romanian ethnic minority in the northern Serbian Province of Vojvodina and includes a case study of the conversion of returned migrants. Continuing with the topic of conversion, however in the Slovenian context, Gašper Mithans analyzes the role that religious converts, for the large part originally Catholics, played during the interwar period in Slovenian regions, a phenomenon that led to the gradual transformation of the religious landscape over a longer period of time. Evelyn Reuter's paper is based on qualitative-empirical fieldwork data and historical sources and examines the socialist impact on Christian and Muslim contact at the Saint Naum Monastery as an example

for shared religious places. The paper focuses on the socialist period when places of interreligious contacts vanished, and the religious ambiguity of these places increased. A selection of ex-Yugoslav republics is included in these three papers in order to identify and reflect on regional differences with regards to religious change and mutual influences between religious groups.

Guest editor

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