Derin Terzioglu, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of History

Bogaziçi University, Istanbul

Born in 1969 in Ankara

Studied History at Princeton University and History and Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University

© Wissenschaftskolleg

PROJECT

The Fashioning of a Sunni Orthodoxy and the Entangled Histories of Confession-Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries

During my residence at the Wissenschaftskolleg, I will be co-writing a book with Tijana Krstic, that will present the results of our five-year ERC-funded research project (OTTOCONFESSION) on the formation of a Sunni orthodoxy and the entangled histories of Muslim, Christian and Jewish confession-building in the core lands of the Ottoman Empire between the 15th and 18th centuries.

Sunni-Shii confessional polarization and its ramifications for the diverse Sunni, Alevi and confessionally ambiguous Sufi (and non-Sufi) communities in Anatolia and the Balkans constitute a principal focus of my research. I am particularly interested in the responses of members of these communities to religious indoctrination, be it in the form of compliance or resistance, subterfuge or indifference, and in the social and cultural codes that allowed certain forms and venues of cultural expression such as poetry to be relatively immune to confessionalizing pressures.

Secondly, I investigate the challenges that were presented to the Ottoman state-sponsored scholarly elites' formulations of Sunni orthodoxy from among the ranks of the more "puritanical" Sunni scholars and the social, political and intellectual currents and dynamics that made these challenges more visible after the 16th century. Lay participation in scholarly debates and the role of preachers and preaching are among the topics that I plan to discuss under this rubric.

Thirdly, I look into the evolution of rival discourses on morality in both "public" spaces, such as mosques and coffeehouses and in "private" or socially more exclusive spaces, such as the home. The impact of religious indoctrination and social disciplining on the formation of well-defined gender and generational roles within as well as outside the family, the maintenance and policing of communal boundaries, and cross-communal interactions and socializing are the principal topics that I shall be examining under this last heading.

Recommended Reading

Terzioglu, Derin. "Where Ilm-i Hal Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization." Past and Present 220 (2013): 79-114.

-. "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion." Turcica 44 (2012-13): 301-338.

-. "Man in the Image of God in the Image of the Times: Sufi First-Person Narratives and the Diary of Niyazi-i Misri (1618-1694)." Studia Islamica 94 (2002): 139-165.

Confessional Ambiguity in the Confessional Age: Sufism, Alid Loyalism, and Sunni Islam in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire

Until the 1980s, the history of the Ottoman Empire was largely written in isolation from the history of other regions and polities, as part of either "Turkish" or "Middle Eastern" or "Islamic" history; but since then, new generations of scholars, many of them trained in the U.S., have opened up the field to broader, more comparative and/or connected, trans-regional or global perspectives. The larger project of which this study is a part (OTTOCONFESSION, ERC Consolidator Grant, #648498, P.I. Tijana Krstic) is one such broadly conceived inquiry; it examines the transformation of the religio-communal structures and cultures in the core Ottoman lands of Anatolia and the Balkans between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries as part of a transregional and even global experience of "confessionalization." The central concepts that inform the project, "confession-building" and "confessionalization," were developed originally by a group of German historians to analyze developments in early modern Europe. Specifically, "confession-building" was proposed to denote the demarcation of Christians living in Central Europe between roughly the mid-sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries into rival Protestant and Catholic "confessions" with distinctive articles of faith and rituals, while "confessionalization" was put forth as a broader concept that posits a link between the former process and the processes of social disciplining and state building in the same period.

A major question that the OTTOCONFESSION project tackles is whether these concepts can also be fruitfully employed to analyze the Sunni-Shii polarization that resulted from the rivalry between the Ottoman and Safavid dynasties and the Safavid adoption of Twelver Shiism and the Ottoman formulation of their own brand of Sunni "orthodoxy" during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In her talk, Tijana Krstic presented an answer to this question based on her research in Ottoman-era Sunni creedal literature. In my talk, I will engage with the same question, but focus on those aspects of Islamic faith and culture that complicated and thwarted the process of Sunni "confession building" in the early modern Ottoman context.

In the core lands of the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire, there were no Shii communities to speak of, but only a wide variety of confessionally ambiguous Sufi groups, some of them with a strong streak of Alid loyalism that made them susceptible to the loosely Shiite faith of the early Safavids. Moreover, Sufism was an important, socially and politically powerful part of elite as well as commoner cultures. Because the Sufis conceived of the world as emanations from God that constitute multiple levels of reality, and because they addressed both fellow Sufis and a more general audience, they could discourse about matters of faith in a variety of ways and registers, making it difficult for those who shared a similar outlook to take them to task for divergence from the Sunni creed and Shar'i norms. Notwithstanding these complications, there are clear indications that Islamic law as discourse and practice became progressively ascendant in the public realm and placed greater discursive and socio-spatial limits on the expression of other forms of Islamic piety in the major urban centers of Anatolia and the Balkans in the course of the sixteenth and especially seventeenth centuries. Ironically, even though rifts between the Sufis and the Ottoman dynasty had provided the early impetus for this process, in the socially and politically fractured terrain of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the best defense strategy for the Sufis and their sympathizers against their Sharia-minded critics remained their longstanding alliance with the Ottoman dynastic state, memorialized in hagiographies and histories and sustained through reciprocal exchanges of prayers and benefits. This dynamic persisted until the dismantling of the old imperial order, itself a gradual process that began with the destruction of the Janissary corps and the closing of Bektashi lodges in 1826 and that culminated in the proclamation of the Republic in 1923 and the closure of all dervish lodges in 1925.

Terzioglu, Derin (Piscataway, NJ, USA,2022)

Entangled confessionalizations? : dialogic perspectives on the politics of piety and community building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th centuries

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1809997437

The modern Muslim world ; 15

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1809997437

Terzioglu, Derin (Leiden,2021)

Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450 - c.1750

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1743184220

Islamic History and Civilization ; Volume 177

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1743184220

Terzioglu, Derin (Leiden,2020)

Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450-c. 1750

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1725631121

Islamic history and civilization ; volume 177

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1725631121

Terzioglu, Derin (Oxford,2013)

Where ▢▢lm-i Ḥ▢l meets catechism : Islamic manuals of religious instruction in the Ottoman empire in the age of confessionalization

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1668580608

Terzioglu, Derin (Louvain [u.a.],2013)

How to conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization : a historiographical discussion

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1668485567

Terzioglu, Derin (Leiden,2002)

Man in the image of God in the image of the times : Sufi self-narratives and the diary of Niyizi-i Misri (1618-94)

https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1668822377