

The **Department of Medieval Studies** and the **Cultural Heritage Studies Program**
of **Central European University**
cordially invite you to the public lecture of the
Medieval Studies Faculty Research Seminar

Yezidi Ritual Heritage in Iraq: Between Militant Islamism and Modernization

Eszter Spät

Independent researcher

The last decades have seen a decline of the religio-cultural heritage of the Middle East which has been characterized by the rich diversity of religious traditions for centuries. The spread of militant Islamism has posed an existential threat to religious minorities, while social changes brought about by modernization and globalization have also had a profound impact on local religio-cultural forms. The lecture looks at this phenomenon through studying the ritual heritage of the Yezidis, a Kurdish-speaking religious minority in Northern Iraq.

Rituals have always been the main vehicle for the transmission of Yezidi religious knowledge in a system that relied on oral tradition rather than written texts. However, the displacement of more than half of the Yezidi community by ISIS has disrupted ritual life, threatening with the loss of Yezidi religious heritage. At the same time, the transformation of a quickly modernizing Yezidi society has also deeply affected ritual activity in the past decades.



Sema Evarî, Evening Sacred Dance in Lalish (2002; photo by Eszter Spät)

Eszter Spät defended her doctoral thesis at the Central European University in 2009. After her defense she continued her research of Yezidi religious tradition and oral history with the support of research grants from the Gerda Henkel Foundation and the Hungarian OTKA. She was also a visiting research fellow at Käte Hamburger Kolleg, Dynamics in the History of Religions in Asia and Europe. She has been carrying out field research in the Kurdish Region of Iraq since 2002 and has published two books and numerous articles. Her documentary film, "Following the Peacock," analyzes the ritual journey of the most sacred Yezidi object, the Standard of the Peacock, across the settlements of the Sinjar Region.

5:30 p.m. on May 18, 2016
CEU-Faculty Tower 409
Budapest V. Nádor u. 9
Reception to follow



**Department
of Medieval
Studies**

CENTRAL
EUROPEAN
UNIVERSITY