

CONCEPT

Sufism, due to its diffusion to the west in the 20th century and its association with universal mysticism, has come to be increasingly truncated from legalistic notions about Islam. Within this context, Sufism was viewed as bringing about national integration, fostering humanism and syncretism. The prominent voice of criticism to this discourse in the public sphere remains the rationalist, modernist and feminist voices that views these practices as religious, superstitious and possibly exploitative.

The notion of Sufism as humanistic and syncretic has also not protected it from being viewed in parts of South Asia as an anti-national force maintaining linkages with 'outside influences', engaged in converting Hindus and Buddhists to Islam either. Neither has there been dearth of research seeking to prove the shared Hindu-Muslim traditions of Sufism. The co-existence of divergent streams of political discourse about Sufism has made it into a political interface of communication about Islam that also defines the position and questions of belonging for many Muslim in South Asia today, who practice Sufism.

This workshop seeks to bring together scholars working in various regions of South Asia to illuminate the discourses surrounding Sufi Islam. By focusing on case-studies from different regions, the workshop seeks to map how politics at the local, regional, or national level creates images of Sufism and deploys these in order to negotiate local politics.

Contact:

Deepra Dandekar (Ph.D.)
Post-doctoral Researcher

Department of Modern South Asian
Languages and Literatures
South Asia Institute
Im Neuenheimer Feld 330
69120 Heidelberg

deepra.dandekar@asia-europe.uni-
heidelberg.de

www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de

Workshop Organized by the Project "Sufi Shrines
as Transcultural Communicative Interfaces in
Western India"

Photo credit: Maitreyi Desai

Workshop

Sufi Islam and the
Politics of Belonging in South Asia



November 6, 2014
8.30 am – 5.30 pm

Room 212
Karl Jaspers Centre
Voßstraße 2, Building 4400
Heidelberg

Workshop

Sufi Islam and the Politics of Belonging in South Asia

PROGRAMME

8.45 am

Hans Harder (Heidelberg)
Introduction and Welcome

Key Note Address: 9.00 am to 9.45 am

Kelly Pemberton (Washington DC)
The Politics of Gender in the Sufi Imaginary

9.45 am to 10.00 am: Tea Break

SESSION I: CATEGORY FORMATION

Chair: Hans Harder (Heidelberg)

10.00 am to 10.20 am

Dušan Deák (Bratislava)
Who's the Master? Understanding the Religious Preceptors on the Margins of Modernized Religion

10.20 am to 10.40 am

Afsar Mohammad (Austin)
Invoking the Sufi Past: Literary Narratives and Muslim Discourse

10.40 am to 11 am

Prof. Robert Hayden (Pittsburgh)
Sufis, Dervishes and Alevi-Bektaşis: Interfaces of Heterodox Islam and Nationalist Politics from the Balkans, Turkey and India

11.00 am to 11.30 am

Discussion of papers in session I

SESSION II: SHRINES AND COMMUNITIES

Chair: Heiko Frese (Heidelberg)

11.30 am to 11.50 am

Prof. Dennis McGilvray (Boulder)
Islamic and Buddhist Impacts on the Shrine at Daftar Jailani, Sri Lanka

11.50 am to 12.10 noon

Linus Strothmann (Berlin)
Shaping a National Religious Identity at the Shrine of Data Ganj Bukhsh in Lahore, Pakistan

12.10 noon to 12.30 pm

Discussion of papers in session II

12.30 pm to 2.00 pm: Lunch Break

SESSION III: NATIONALISM AND IDENTITIES

Chair: Christina Österheld (Heidelberg)

2.00 pm to 2.20 pm

Julien Levesque (Paris)
'Sindhis are Sufis by Nature' Sufism as a Marker of Identity in Sindh

2.20 pm to 2.40 pm

Torsten Tschacher (Berlin)
'From Rational to Sufi Islam?' The Changing Place of Muslims in Tamil Nationalism

2.40 pm to 3.00 pm

Discussion of papers in session III

3.00 pm to 3.10 pm: Tea Break

SESSION IV: NARRATIVES AND DISCOURSES

Chair: Jürgen Schaflechner (Heidelberg)

3.10 pm to 3.30 pm

Nandagopal Menon (Göttingen)
'Islamic Renaissance', Sufism and Political Theologies: A Debate in Contemporary Kerala

3.30 pm to 3.50 pm

Deepra Dandekar (Heidelberg)
Sufism within Notions of Progressivism in Maharashtra

3.50 pm to 4.10 pm

Discussion of papers in Session IV

4.10 pm to 4.30 pm: Tea Break

4.30 to 5.15 pm: Film Presentation and Discussion

Stefan Hayden & Sara Valenzuela
Between Trident and Crescent: Sharing and Contesting a Hindu-Muslim Saint in Central India

5.15 to 5.45 pm

Final Discussion

7.30 pm: Workshop Dinner