

Panel 33: New approaches to the study of Sufism in South Asia: Perspectives from the History of Emotions

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Abstract: Emotions and their manifold ways of expression have long been a crucial and contested aspect of Sufism. Thus, various actors of the Sufi traditions in South Asia have developed concepts of particular emotions in Islam and took distinct positions in regard to the relationship between the norms of the religious law and emotional spiritual practices. Literature written by Sufi authors shows that certain themes were exposed to processes of emotionalisation at particular times, as for instance the memory of tragic events in worldly and spiritual history or the relationship between the Sufi master and his disciples.

This panel aims at exploring the cultivation of emotions like love, fear, grief and others in Islamic mysticism and its interaction with other fields of society. Motives and strategies of the actors shall be traced as well as the effects of these developments on power-relationships, identities and community building. The theoretical frame is based on the assumption that emotions are shaped in different ways by socio-cultural factors and in turn they form individuals and institutions. Papers may focus on religious, philosophical, political and literary aspects of Sufism.

The interdisciplinary approach combining philological and social Regional Studies with the angle of the History of Emotions hopes to open up new epistemological grounds in the study of South Asian Sufism and to offer new insights how Sufi saints and their ideas both stem from into the milieu they are living in and influence it.

Once the panel proposal is approved, the list of the participants will be prepared and papers for the panel will be invited.

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