



– Institute's Colloquium –

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Provincializing Berlin: Genealogy of Sufismus/Sufitum and a Minority History of Sufi Berlin

This presentation attempts to trace the genealogy of *Sufismus/Sufitum* (Sufism) and the historical contextualization of Berlin's contemporary Sufi networks based on oral history interviews, informal conversations, Sufi *Erfahrungsberichte* (experience reports), survey of secondary literature, contemporary media reports and visual materials collected during a 15-month-long (2013-2014) ethnographic fieldwork in the German capital. In this presentation, I deal with the following questions: *How did Berliners/Germans come to know 'Sufism' and Sufi practice? How these knowledge and body practices could have possibly shaped the Sufi practice of the present? What are the moments in the local history of the city/country that are implicated in the emergence of Berlin's Sufi networks? What do contemporary history-making practices of these networks tell us about the intersection of the knowledge practices on Sufism and their minority histories?* I argue that academic and popular orientalism as well as local religious and esoteric practices informed the early knowledge practices about Sufism. This is evident in its first European articulation in August Tholuck's (1821) Latin treatise on *Sufismus* and elaborated in the subsequent *Erfahrungsberichte* (experience-reports) by the German Sufis. The emergence of early Sufi networks during the inter-war period (1920s) and their proliferation in post-unification Berlin cannot be adequately historicized within the limited capacity of this ethnographic project without primary archival research. However, tracing the history-making practices of Berlin Sufis and their *cartographies of mobility* can enable us to interrupt the majority history of a *hyperreal* Berlin and illustrate a surplus of interests that take us beyond Orientalism into concerns of Postsecularity. The contemporary Sufi networks in the city are engaged in multiple historical moments traversing several geographical nodes, as *history-making* practices. To name a few: the Inayati Sufis evoke certain heroic acts of the past (contemplating Noor Inayat-Khan from the WWII Anglo-French resistance); the Haqqani-Naqshbandis re-enact Ottoman glory (displaying the genealogy of Ottoman Sultans side by side with the chain of Naqshbandi Sufi masters); and the Music therapy network engages in the re-telling of a 'new discovery of old traditions' (referring to the 'golden age' of Islamic therapeutic innovations). A complex web of postsecular moments and 'affective belongings' to a plethora of religious, therapeutic, aesthetic and political movements can be located in the emergence and proliferation of Berlin's Sufi networks, their spiritual economies and therapeutic politics. What is at stake is not only an ontopolitics of *knowledge*, but also how that affects and is affected by the ontopolitics of *becoming*. *How Sufism is enacted in (Eurocentric) knowledge practice*, is always-already implicated in what Sufism *becomes*, and where.

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4-6 p.m.

Institute of Ethnology

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