

## Institutscolloquium SoSe 2013

03.07.2013, 16 – 18 Uhr, Stadtstraße 21, Münster, Raum STU 105 (2.10)

**Prof. Dr. Jürgen Wasim Frembgen**

(Professor for History of the Religion and Culture of Islam,  
Institute of Near and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Munich and  
Senior Curator and Head of the Islamic Collection, Munich State Museum of Ethnology):

### **“The Iconic Presence of the Qalandar: Aesthetics of Devotion in the Cult of the Sufi Saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Pakistan”**

Lal Shahbaz Qalandar (d. 1274) is the most popular Sufi saint in all of Pakistan with the largest following of devotees – including Muslims as well as Hindus. They venerate him as a charismatic protector, healer, saviour and miracle-worker who wields an enormous spiritual power. In short, his devotees adore him as a towering figure among the Sufi saints and as a unifying force beyond all religious denominations in Pakistan. His shrine in Sehwan Sharif in central Sindh, the southernmost province of Pakistan, is the focus of pilgrimage year-round, but in particular on the anniversary of his death, the ‘urs’ or ‘mystic nuptial’ with God. During this ritual event the flourishing Sufi cult centre becomes a vibrant place of ecstatic religiosity marked by intense forms of devotion such as prayers of supplication, processions, trance dance, flagellations by Shi’as and musical gatherings celebrated in a spirit of enthusiasm and joyousness.

Devotion to Lal Shahbaz is the dominant idiom of ritual engagement and initiates the creation of aesthetic spaces. In the lecture at the University of Münster, I will present and discuss a selection of pictures from an archive comprising about 230 object-related photographs taken in the field as well as 92 artefacts and prints kept in the collection of the Munich State Museum of Ethnology. After addressing the question of the popularity and ‘success’ of the Qalandar cult, the popular visual culture of the veneration of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar will be discussed. The presentation will be structured according to the pictorial content of different devotional media, such as portraits, pictorial emblems and calligraphy.

The lecture will be followed by the reading of some paragraphs from my ethnographic narrative “At the Shrine of the Red Sufi. Five Days and Nights on Pilgrimage in Pakistan” (Karachi 2011/Oxford University Press; German edition published in 2008 by Waldgut).

**Alle Interessierten sind zu diesen Vorträgen herzlich eingeladen.**