



ZMO-Colloquium Winter Term 2014/2015

Who Speaks? The Global History of Intellectual Practices: Epistemological, Political, and Ethical Challenges

Thursday, February 26th, 2015, 6 pm

Caliphates and Kings: Secular Anxieties in Islamic Thought

By Prof. James McDougall (Oxford University)

Venue:

Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33

14129 Berlin

Between the 2005-6 Danish cartoons controversy and the January 2015 murders at *Charlie Hebdo*, public perceptions of an unbridgeable rift between a globalised Islam, on the one hand, and the globalising character of a secular public sphere, on the other, have returned to prominence despite decades of scholarship that undermined both universalising accounts of Islam and long-dominant accounts of secularisation as factors of world history.

If the methods and concepts of intellectual history and classical sociology that both assumed and constituted the centrality and normativity of an idealised Europe need to be provincialised, histories flowing from Asia and Africa, correspondingly, need to escape from their provincialism, from the marginality of the residual 'non-West' and from the heteronomy in which both European thought and cultural nationalism contained them. If Islam, today, thanks to Da'sh (IS) and al-Qa'ida, pre-eminently holds the place assigned to modernity's other, can a modern global history of Islam contribute to the larger project of a global intellectual history capable of both provincialising Eurocentric assumptions and of enabling a more capacious theoretical framework with which to replace them? Can a rethinking of the major world-historical forces of the past three centuries — capital and the division of labour, the market and the state — as constitutive of a world whose interconnectedness is profoundly and intensely uneven, contribute to a more satisfactory global history of Islam than is provided by either comparative area studies or older-style civilisational accounts? This paper aims to suggest ways towards framing such a history.

GEFÖRDERT VOM



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James McDougall is a Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, where he teaches modern European and world history, with a focus on the Middle East, Northwest Africa, and the global history of Islam. He previously taught at Princeton and at SOAS, London. He is the author of *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (2006), and co-editor of *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa* (2012) with Judith Scheele, and *Global and Local in North Africa* (2013) with Robert Parks. He is currently writing *A History of Algeria* (forthcoming from Cambridge University Press) and a history of colonialism and its legacies in France and Africa.