



Wednesday, 3 April 2019, 6 pm

Muslim Cosmopolitanism and the Writing of World History

Keynote Lecture by Prof. Seema Alavi (Delhi University) as part of the Conference *Claiming and Making Muslim Worlds: Across and Between the Local and the Global*

Muslims were central to the intellectual project of creating the "modern" world. Indeed their lives offer an interesting entry point in decentering the conceptual eurocentrism that underlines world history. This keynote lecture will focus on one Indian Muslim subject – Imdadullah Makki – who was representative of a class of typical Mughal gentlemen legatees. Like many of his peers he too was a man of religion who was proficient in Arabic, Persian and Urdu and trained at the seminaries of North India. And like many of them he was also declared an 'outlaw' by the British administration for his alleged role in the anticolonial Indian uprising of 1857. The talk highlights the ways in which Indian Muslim 'runaways' like Imdadullah carved a Muslim cosmopolitanism at the cusp of the British and Ottoman Empires; and examines the possibility of using cosmopolitanism as an analytical category to write world history.

Finally the lecture will dwell on the tension between elite and social histories and suggest possible ways to make the writing of world history more embracing and accommodating of people and communities that have hitherto remained beyond its reach.

Writing world history via Muslim cosmopolitans dilutes the conventional dichotomies of territorial rootedness versus mobility, nascent nationalism versus cosmopolitan sensibility, and pan-Islam versus Western hegemony. Instead, it views the history of Muslim networks as integral to the world of Empires.

Dr. Seema Alavi is Professor for Medieval and Early Modern South Asian History at the University of Delhi, India. She has published extensively on the transition of Mughal political culture to early colonial political culture in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Her latest monograph, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire*, was published in 2015 by Harvard University Press.

Please confirm your attendance by 1 April 2019:
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Venue

Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient
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