

# From Universalism to 'Ethnopathos' in Religious Knowledge on South Asia – An Intersectional View on Religion as Colonial Category in Germany 1871–1945

**Veranstalter** Universität Erfurt

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German knowledge production concerning the topic 'India' was deeply influenced by questions surrounding Western cultural dependence on the East, the origins of Christianity, the status of sacred texts, the organisation of disciplines and the beginning of Religionsgeschichte. By defining and applying European concepts surrounding the notion of 'religious', turning its inherent social normativity into a universal validity and making this an objective for research and comparative analysis in religious studies and neighboring disciplines, phenomena of foreign cultures are transformed into 'religions', thus engendering a colonial paradigm of broad impact. Conversely, the concept of Christianity is one that itself has also been influenced by growing knowledge production concerning non-European traditions.

German influence on colonial thinking has often been dismissed with reference to the non-existent German colonial empire while the debate today on Germany's colonial legacy has been overshadowed by an engagement with the National Socialist past. In this workshop, the focus on the possible continuity and intersectionality of colonial thought structures and argumentative patterns in

National Socialism will be examined starting from the issue of knowledge production on 'India'.

This kind of research can only be conducted on an interdisciplinary level, and we encourage researchers from relevant fields to send abstracts on the following topics:

1. How has knowledge production on 'religions' in South Asia pertaining to academic disciplines such as Religious Studies, Anthropology, Ethnology, Missiology, Comparative Linguistics, Art History, and others, applied premises which derived from colonial and/or National Socialist ideologies? To what extent were these interconnected?
2. How has the transfer of religious/spiritual/ritual knowledge served as a means of implementing international cultural policies?
3. How were individual biographies affected by the intersecting views on 'religion', 'race', and 'gender' in Germany as well as in South Asia?

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