

# MONDAY LECTURES | SOSE 2026 IN RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES

RESEARCH BUILDING "WELTBEZIEHUNGEN" | C19.00.02/03 | 16:15 - 17:45

## 20.04.2026 | GIANNI SIEVERS

### SOUNDTRACK OF TWO MOVEMENTS: ISLAMIC MODERNISM AND THE NATIONALIST REINVENTION OF HINDUSTANI MUSIC IN COLONIAL NORTH INDIA

Islamic modernism and efforts to canonize raga-based music as part of a newly imagined "national culture" emerged on the Indian subcontinent at roughly the same time, both responding to the challenges posed by British colonialism and Western cultural dominance. However, while Islamic modernist reformers such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan promoted educational reform as a remedy for Muslim political "decline," many Muslims—acutely aware of their increasingly vulnerable position as a religious minority—felt excluded from the modern reinvention of Hindustani music as a "classical" tradition and national cultural heritage, a project advocated by upper-caste Hindu figures like V.N. Bhatkhande. Integrating two fields of inquiry rarely treated conjointly in the historiography of modern South Asia, this talk examines the links, overlaps, and entanglements between these reformist movements, arguing that they shared intellectual concerns, educational strategies, and political anxieties to a greater extent than is generally assumed. It explores the role of sound and music in the lives of Muslim reformers, modernizers, and political activists; evaluates the importance of song, poetry, and performance to both Hindu and Muslim nationalism; and analyzes Muslim responses to growing socio-cultural marginalization, showing how music became a key site for negotiating colonial modernity, identity, and national belonging.

ORGANIZED BY SEMINAR FÜR RELIGIONSWISSENSCHAFT.

**ALL GUESTS WELCOME.  
NO REGISTRATION NECESSARY.**



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