GUEST LECTURE

WESTERN PRACTITIONERS OF ORIENTAL SPIRITUALITY: AMONGST SOFT POWER AND KINSHIP ROMANTICISM

Ph.D. Cand. Jens Augspurger (SOAS, London)

Western practitioners of ‘Oriental’ spiritual disciplines are regularly crossing cultural and geopolitical borders to pursue their spiritual aspirations when traveling to the supposed ‘homeland’ of such spiritual movements. The presentation explores the correspondence that Western practitioners of Yoga and Kabbalah entertain with India and Israel respectively, investigating how these correspondences can develop into “unlikely alliances” (McCartney 2019) that make foreign practitioners complicit of ethno-nationalist agendas such as Hindu fundamentalism or right-wing Zionism. Exploring the mechanisms that facilitate such politicisation, the presentation will consider the self-Orientalisation and commodification of spiritual practice, the negotiation of identity and the discourses on past lives that are central to the practitioners’ spiritual eclecticism.

Jens Augspurger is a doctoral student at London’s School of Oriental and African Studies. His research interest lies at the intersection of political philosophy and religion, with particular focus on nationalism, identity, and the epistemology of emic narratives in the anthropology of religion. Jens is also a yoga teacher and holds a certificate in conflict mediation.

Tuesday November, 26th 2019, 16.15 - 17.45 hrs
Venue: Voßstraße 2 CATS (010.00.01)