



## Abteilung Neusprachliche Südasiestudien

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## “Urdu as an Islamic Language”

Urdu, presently the national language of Pakistan and the identity symbol of Indian Muslims, is associated with Islam in South Asia. This association was forged during British colonial rule when modernity first impacted India. The British replaced Persian, the official language of Mughal rule, with Urdu at the lower level and English at the higher one in parts of North India and present-day Pakistan. Urdu was disseminated by networks of education and communication in colonial India. It became the medium of instruction in the Islamic seminaries (madrassas) and the major language of religious writings. It also became part of the Muslim identity and contributed, next only to Islam itself, in mobilizing the Muslim community to demand Pakistan which was carved out of British India in 1947.

In Pakistan Urdu and Islam are the main symbolic components of the Pakistani Muslim identity which resists the expression of the ethnic identities of that country based upon the indigenous languages of the people. This (Pakistani Muslim) identity is supported by right-wing politics and is antagonistic not only to ethnic identification but also to the globalized, liberal, Westernized identity based upon English which is the hallmark of the elite. In India, however, Urdu supports the Muslim minority against right-wing Hindu domination. In short, Urdu plays complex and even contradictory roles in its association with Islam in Pakistan and parts of North India.

**Date:** Wednesday, 18.7.2012  
**Venue:** South Asia Institute, Room 317  
**Time:** 11.15 pm / 11 Uhr c.t.

All are cordially invited!

Dr. Christina Oesterheld