

# "Breaths of Intimacy: Haunted Subjectivities and Free Submission in the Sufi practice of Zikr"

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Live Stream Available @[www.icgc.umn.edu](http://www.icgc.umn.edu)

Through ethnographic research among the silsila (chain/spiritual genealogy) members of Naqshbandia Awaisia in Pakistan, my project focuses on the Sufi practice of zikr in which practitioners synchronize the repetition of their breath and head movement with the inner recitation of Allah's name. This is presumed to enable practitioners' recognition of and attunement to their own spirits, thereby infusing a realization of a Divine Presence that is immanent to their being. My presentation explores the significance of this recognition of their own Divine Otherness in shaping practitioners' ethics, desires, and everyday material (dis)engagements. I ask: When individuals themselves become the source of knowledge production and ethical action, what will be the stakes for an anthropology of Islam that associates ethics of submission with certain forms of external authority? What kind of ethics of the self does the Sufi practice of zikr generate? And what does political Islam look like if the spirit, rather than, or, in addition to, religious authorities, is considered the source of (self)knowledge? At stake in my research is an attempt to bring to the fore another conceptual frame where submission in Islamic iterative practices is taken to be infused with creativity, involving an agency that appears to be different from the autonomous or subversive agency that undergirds understandings of the subject in liberal modernity. These questions are important to ask because they challenge Western assumptions and contemporary polemics about Islamic ethics of submission that are presumed to be devoid of freedom.

## ICGC BROWN BAG



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