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The Center for Religious Studies cordially invites you to the keynote address of the international conference
“Imperial Mysticisms: Piety and Power in Early Modern Empires from a Global Perspective”

MYSTICISM AND EMPIRE: TOWARDS A GLOBAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

NOVEMBER 27, 2019 | WEDNESDAY | 5.30-7 P.M. | Budapest Campus | Auditorium B



Jesuits at Akbar's Court,
Miniature Painting by Nar Singh, ca. 1605.

ABSTRACT | The purpose of this lecture is to situate mysticism within a broad analytical framework conceptualising religious change and its relationship with power over the global long-term. It therefore adopts a rather distant, comparative perspective on the questions posed by this conference. Strathern distinguishes between two types of religious activity, ‘immanentism’ and ‘transcendentalism’, and the respective forms of sacred kingship they generated. Mysticism mediates between these two forms and derives much of its historical power from its capacity to unblock these forces. One consequence of this in the Islamic world was the emergence of more divinized forms of sacred kingship. Mysticism was deeply implicated in the dynamics of Islamic expansion – of the faith and of its imperial vehicles. Yet how far is it possible to generalise about periodization and extend these patterns outside the case of Islam – to Christianity, and to Indic and East Asian religious cultures?

BIO | **Alan Strathern** is Associate Professor of History at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Brasenose College. Much of his work has concerned Sri Lankan history, including a monograph and an edited collection, but he now works on the global history of religious encounter and change. His most recent work, *Unearthly Powers: Religious and Political Change in World History* (Cambridge, 2019), has a broad theoretical remit, while a forthcoming companion volume will use focussed case studies to explain why ruling elites turned to monotheism in some parts of the world and rejected it in others.

Reception to follow.



EARLY MODERN STUDIES

