

There is a variety of conceptions, regulations and ritual practices centered on the ways of disposing of the dead body across religious communities. Hegel once remarked that history is the record of “what man does with death”. Arguably, religion is a testimony of how humanity deals with death, and without death there might have been no religion.

Ongoing discourses concerning the ways of disposing of the dead include aspects about the body (the vessel) – by entombing, mummifying, dismembering, embalming, consuming (cannibalism), cremating, burying (in soil or at sea), or feeding it to the vultures – that are believed in many cases to have an effect on the afterlife of its ‘contents’ (the soul, spirit, mind-stream, or self). While the physical after-life of the corpse is associated with the location of its disposal (i.e., cemeteries, mausoleums, rivers, etc), it is closely linked with the creation of borders (i.e., between life and death, the dead and the living, partisans of different religions, etc.). Likewise, ‘places of death’ (burial sites) may serve to unite and attract people of the same faith and distance people of other faiths. A common belief is that the dead are not dead, but they are alive, although not as a fully fledged human being, but nevertheless real and present.

Burial evidence may help us reconstruct and interpret the formation and expansion of religious structures and traditions. Funeral rites are after all about a set of rituals by which those living are forced to deal with death and its materiality, and they are vital to the definition and redefinition of religious ideas in times of expansion. As such they are not coherent, consistent and orthodox. They are not performed in the same way among equals (i.e., varying according to the rank of the deceased) and social and legislative variations are often observed within the same religious contexts. The participation of members of different religious communities in funerary practices and commemorations was at times, but not always encouraged, while instances of desecration may be the byproduct of cross-religious dynamics. Hybrid death rituals and shared burial sites speak of periods of conversion and transference of ideas from one religious tradition to another, while mixed artistic traditions in slabs and funerary monuments might reveal compelling traces of religious acculturation and adaptation.

Wednesday, 12 October 2011

09.00h	Introduction
09.30 h	Phoenician Burial Customs and Rites (8–6th c. BC) in the Mediterranean <i>Bärbel Morstadt, Bochum</i>
10.30 h	Coffee Break
11.00 h	Separated by Death? Body Disposal and the After-life of the Dead at Rome (1st–3rd c. CE) <i>Andreas Bendlin, Toronto / Bochum</i>
12.00 h	Augustine on the Corpse as a Contested Space <i>Knut Martin Stünkel, Bochum</i>
13.00 h	Lunch
14.30 h	Killing Christians and Haunting Muslims: Jewish Holy Dead as Defenders of the Faith in the Middle Ages <i>Alexandra Cuffel, Trenton (N.J.), USA / Bochum</i>
15.30 h	Coffee Break
16.00 h	Struggling with the Impurity of Corpses in the Old Testament. Some Considerations on Num 19 and its Background <i>Christian Frevel, Bochum</i>
17.00 h	Final Discussion

Thursday, 13 October 2011

09.00 h	The Conflation of Esoteric Buddhist Practices and Traditional Burial Customs in Late Medieval China <i>Henrik Sorensen, Copenhagen / Bochum</i>
10.00 h	Coffee Break
10.30 h	Stability and Modification: Ancient Indian Funeral Rites as Objects of Religious Dynamics <i>Sven Wortmann, Bochum</i>
11.30 h	The Emergence of Śaiva Tantric Death Rites: Practice over Doctrine <i>Nina Mirnig, Groningen</i>
12.30 h	Lunch
14.00 h	Appropriation and Endurance of Burial Models between Christians and Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula <i>Ana Echevarría, Madrid / Bochum</i>
15.00 h	‘They Took Custody of His Body,’ The Burial of Osama bin Laden and the Islamic Tradition <i>Anna Akasoy, Oxford</i>
16.00 h	Coffee Break
16.30 h	Final Discussion
17.00 h	Conclusions

CONFERENCE ORGANISATION

Georgios Halkias / Ana Echevarria

Käte Hamburger Kolleg »Dynamiken der Religionsgeschichte zwischen Asien und Europa«
Ruhr-Universität Bochum
SH 1 / 184
Universitätsstr. 150
D - 44801 Bochum
Tel.: +49-234-32-22979
E-Mail: georgios.halkias@rub.de
ana.echevarria@rub.de
www.khk.ceres.rub.de

REGISTRATION

Attendance is possible without registration. Those interested in attending are encouraged to inform Ana Echevarria or Georgios Halkias by email.

DIRECTIONS

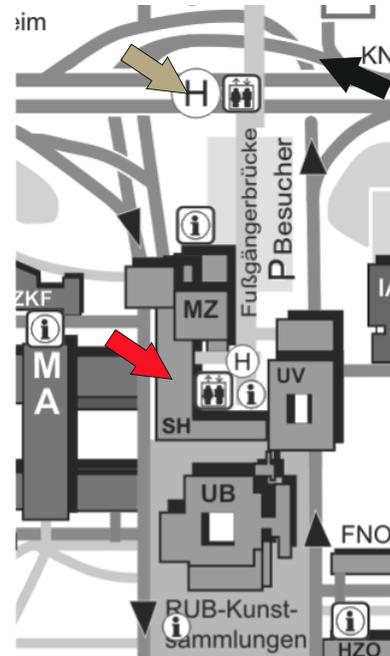
By plane or train:

From Dusseldorf Airport via, or directly from, Bochum Hauptbahnhof (Central Station) take the U35 towards Bochum Querenburg (Hustadt) and get off at stop »Ruhr-Universität« (➡) (Ticket needed: Preisstufe A).

At the exit to the station turn right and walk about 100 m. Enter the Studierendenhaus (SH) building on your right (under sign for »Kulturcafé«). Go up one flight of stairs and follow signs to KHK »Dynamics in the History of Religions«.

By car:

Motorway A 43, interchange »Bochum-Witten«, exit at »Bochum-Querenburg/Universität« (exit no. 19). Universitätsstraße direction Universität/Zentrum, exit at »Uni - Mitte« (➡), about 2 km. Free parking is sign posted.

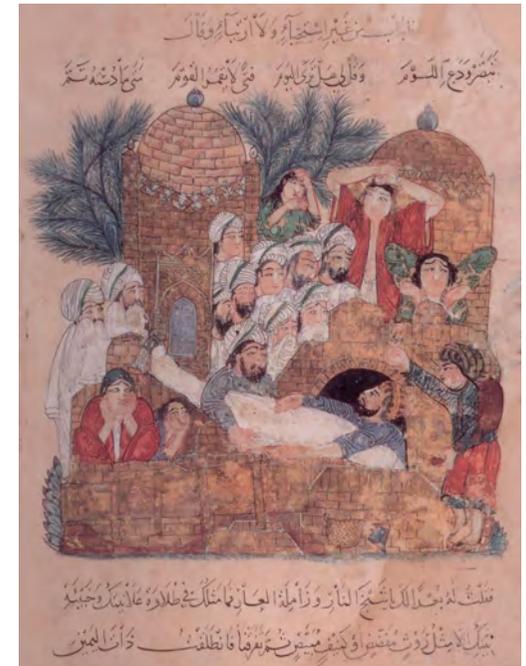


Workshop of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg



Sites and Rites of Death

Spacing the Corpse in and Across Religious Contexts



12 – 13 October 2011
Ruhr-Universität Bochum
Studierendenhaus
Level 01, Room 187

Illustration:

Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

[repr. in Muhammad's Grave. *Death Rites and the Making of Islamic Society*, ed. Leor Halevi, 2007]

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