



Quelle: Benares (Varanasi), Uttar Pradesh; corpses being burned and consigned to the river Ganges. Photograph. Date: [between 1800 and 1899?]. Wellcome Collection. References: 664310; <https://wellcomecollection.org/wo/rts/yuuwvxbu>

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**UNIVERSITÄT
ERFURT**
Max-Weber-Kolleg

15-16 MAY 2025 NECROGEOGRAPHIES OF THE MARGINAL DEAD

ORGANIZERS: MARTIN CHRIST AND ELYSE SEMERDJIAN

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Critical studies of death (thanatology) have illuminated how human societies organize spaces of burial according to gender, race, class, sexual preference, and religion. Informed by these works “Necrogeographies of the Marginal Dead” introduces how studies of death, especially of persons within groups excluded from systems of power in the living world, illuminate how the structures of power exceed life extending into the afterlives of the dead. Drawing upon a diverse array of research, this conference will offer examples from Europe, South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. The conference will transgress traditional disciplinary and chronological boundaries in order to understand how the marginal dead were treated and placed. The workshop combines two recent concepts in the study of death and burial—necrogeographies and the marginal dead—to stimulate new research trajectories.

Necrogeographies of the Marginal Dead are found within diverse urban settings, which is why the contributions focus on major cities such as London, Cordoba, and Istanbul. At the same time religious and confessional marginality is a defining feature of urban life, where different religious groups co-existed and interacted, sometimes involving the exclusion and marginalization of faith groups. The workshop, therefore, includes approaches of the DFG-funded research project “Religion and Urbanity”, especially that of co-spatiality, understood as the overlapping of different burial spaces within one city, and heterarchies, illustrative of urban power structures. Moreover, it engages with the topic of “group formation” through the treatment and placement of the dead, another important element in the project.

WEDNESDAY | 14 May 2025

Meeting Point | Domplatz

Afternoon | arrival and tour of Jewish cemetery and Old Synagogue in Erfurt

THURSDAY | 15 May 2025

9:00 - 10:00 | **Elyse Semerdjian and Martin Christ**: Welcome and Introduction

Panel I: Methodological Reflections

Chair: Martin Christ (University of Erfurt)

10:00 - 11:00 | **Elyse Semerdjian** (Clark University): “Even the Dead Will Not Be Safe”: Necrogeographies of Postmortem Warfare

11:00 - 12:00 | **Carmen González Gutiérrez** (University of Córdoba): The Study of Cemeteries in Islamic Córdoba (8th-13th centuries): from Topography to Society

12:00 - 1:00 | **Colleen Kron** (University of Erfurt): Tangible and Imagined Geographies of the Greco-Roman Dead

1:00 - 2:30 | Lunch Break

Panel II: Death and Conflict

Chair: Sara Keller (University of Erfurt)

2:30 - 3:30 | **Victoria Abrahamyan** (University of Geneva/ London School of Economics): Imperial Death and Double Marginality: Death and Burial of British Soldiers at Kut al-Amara, 1915-1916

3:30 - 4:00 | Coffee Break

4:00 - 5:00 | **Qudsiya Contractor** (Centre for Liberal Education, Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai): Death and its afterlife in post-Babri Mumbai

5:00 - 6:00 | **Epsita Halder** (Jadavpur University, Calcutta): Here Lies the Dead Shaykh: A Micro-spatial Study of the Mazar Network in Kolkata

6:00 - 6:30 | General Discussion

7:00 | Conference Dinner

FRIDAY | 16 May 2025

Panel III: The Politics of Marginalization

Chair: Elyse Semerdjian (Clark University)

9:00 - 10:00 | **Martin Christ** (University of Erfurt): Who makes the Dead Marginal? Considerations from Early Modern European Plague Epidemics

10:00 - 11:00 | **Tony Chamoun** (North Carolina State University): Bodying Histories of the Middle East Differently: Or, Moving Between Bioarchaeology and History

11:00 - 12:00 | **Meriam Belli** (University of Iowa): The Funerary Neutrality Utopia: Cemetery Regulations and the Marginalization of Jews and Muslims in France

12:00 - 2:00 | Lunch Break

Panel IV: Rituals, Spaces and Marginality

Chair: Mirjam Wien (University of Erfurt)

2:00 - 3:00 | **Anna Cusack** (St Mary's University, London): ‘To be buried in a Cross-Way, with a Stake drove therein’: Burying Suicides, London 1600-1750.

3:00 - 4:00 | **Agnes Flora** (Romanian National Archives, Cluj): Burial Societies in Cluj: Their Role and Legacy from the Medieval to Present

4:00 - 4:30 | Coffee Break

4:30 - 5:00 | **Mara Albrecht** (University of Erfurt): Closing Comment

5:00 - 6:00 | Concluding Discussion and next steps

6:30 | Dinner

SATURDAY | 17 May 2025

Meeting Point | InterCity Hotel

Morning | excursion to the main cemetery of Erfurt and departure / Individual discussions about publication plans