For many people, the correct handling of death entails consequences for human-human and hu-
man-non-human relations, as e.g. between people and the supernatural world. Ceremonial acts
or customs are, however, increasingly subject to reconsideration. In a context where many socie-
ties experience ideological closures and retreat to identity politics, death and burial have become
symbolically laden sites of religious and ethnic fray. A case of death may engender negotiations
over how to dispose of the body or ashes correctly, where, when and accompanied by which ritu-
als; simultaneously the varying positions may be immediately declared non-negotiable. These is-
sues become even more sensitive when suicide, violent death that seeks retaliation or compen-
sation, or religious concerns over procedures are involved. At the same time, the increasing possi-
bility of prolonging life by the advancements of biotechnology opens up new questions on the
nature of death, care and self-determination which are often conceived as non-negotiable.

This workshop takes up two of the DGSKA’s conference focal issues: (a) what renders po-
sitions of individuals, groups and/or administrations concerning death non-negotiable and what
are the consequences if opposing parties do not subscribe to this non-negotiability, and (b) how
are new forms of ideological closure and social boundary-making in cases of death experienced
within and beyond nation states? How and when does the nonnegotiable becomes negotiable,
when and by whom is mediation accepted or not, and how do conflicts materialize if no compro-
mise can be reached? How do conceptualizations of the ‘right’ death and burial play out within
capitalist/religious (revivalist)/ media and commodity cultures? Specifically interesting are situa-
tions where two or more moral and/or political orders compete.

The workshop invites contributions to these and related questions which may be sent in
German or English, with reference to any time or region. Papers should be circulated among the
participants prior to the conference in order to foster the discussion. A subsequent publication is
intended.

Vortragende / Speakers:

Markus Höhne (Universität Leipzig)

Negotiating the violent past through forensic anthropology:

Clashes of norms around grave sites in a post-civil war setting

“We want to reunite the living with the dead”, “People have the right to know [what happened to
their loved ones].” These were formulations used by forensic anthropologists from Peru who vis-
ited Somaliland, a secessionist republic in northwestern Somalia, upon invitation of the govern-
ment to investigate mass graves dating from the first phase of the Somali civil war in the 1980s.
Yet, the experts were shocked by the resistance by relatives of the dead who demonstrated at the
grave sites, arguing that it was against Islam to open graves and that this would only bring back
emotional pain without any gain. Government officials rushed to the sites and argued that it was
in accordance with Islam to open mass graves and provide those “hurled into a hole” with a proper
burial. They also stressed that Somaliland would profit from the international forensic experts

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Jeanine Dagyeli (Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan)
proving “genocide”; this could be used to advance the country’s claim for recognition. My presentation is based on field work covering several rounds of exhumations, during which I observed and followed-up the negotiations about the proper way of handling the violent past in the post-civil war setting of Somaliland.

**Johanna Sarre** (Universität Bayreuth)

**Burials and graveyards - beginning or end of negotiations of belonging?**

The Nubian inhabitants of Nairobi’s biggest slum, Kibera, have to negotiate their Kenyan citizenship in multiple ways – as descendants of ‘Sudanese soldiers’ in the colonial troops, their belonging is questioned. In the Kenyan, ethnicity, citizenship and land rights are decisive factors in the negotiation where to bury a person. Graves confirm both, the ancestral home and the person’s belonging to the respective collective (family, ethnic group and ultimately Kenyan nation). Drawing on material from ethnographic research around the Kibra (Nubian) Muslim Cemetery and cases of contested belonging at death, I analyze Nubian burial practices as negotiations of belonging. I contextualize these with the literature on debated burial places in the Kenyan context of politicized ethnic regionalism, e.g. Burying S.M. (Cohen&Odhiambo). I suggest moving beyond discourses of autochthony (being ‘born from the soil’ (Geschiere)) and towards a critical analysis of who is buried in the soil. In the case of Kibera’s Nubians, who claim the slum as their (ancestral) home, death is not the end, but the beginning of negotiations of belonging.

**Jeanine Dagyel** (Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan)

**Funerary identity politics between tradition, bureaucratization and globalized Islam**

Perceptions of a mutual influence of the living and dead are prevalent throughout Central Asia, and the way funeral and mourning ceremonies are conducted is said to have direct influence on this relationship, thus also on the livelihoods of the bereaved. Public, visible mourning, especially the emotional performance of women, is a key element in so-called traditional funerary rites. Since the first introduction of globalized, scripturalist interpretations of Islam in the 1980s and an increased influx after the collapse of the Soviet Union, disputes, within families, communities as well as the wider public, about the religious rightfulness of certain funerary and commemorative practices have intensified. Practices once considered normative and non-negotiable increasingly undergo critical assessment, be it by state bureaucrats eager to standardize burials and curb costs, Islamic institutions that call for a purification of rituals, or individuals who feel strangled in their personal expression of grief by “too much tradition”. The presentation is based on field work conducted in Uzbekistan, mainly Bukhara and Tashkent, from 2009 onwards and on some preliminary observations in Kazakhstan. It argues that in opening up putatively non-negotiable funerary practices to contestation in the emotionally stressful circumstances after a case of death, burials have become one site of negotiating and asserting claims on multiple individual and collective future identities.

**Volker Gottowik** (Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt/Main)

**Liebe, Tod und Tantra:**

**Heterodoxe Ritualpraktiken im Kontext islamischer Heiligenverehrung auf Java**

Pilgerfahrten zu Heiligengräbern sind auf Java fester Bestandteil der rituellen Praktiken. Was an diesen Gräbern im Einklang mit dem Islam praktiziert werden darf, ist jedoch hochgradig umstritten. Die Frage nach dem rechten Umgang mit Tod und Begräbnis spaltet die muslimische Gemein-