

Birth and dying as existential transitions in human life have a profound significance for every society. Surprisingly, in historical research they are usually considered in isolation. However, anthropologists and ethnologists have been interpreting them as entangled practices for a long time, as envisioned in the concept of liminality and rites of passage by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. In observing that cultures have different approaches to these phenomena, they observed that their functions depended on the specifics of a given society and its cultural beliefs and performances.

In modern societies, processes of secularisation, modernisation, scientification, and rationalisation have had a major impact on (religious) systems of beliefs as well as everyday life. Therefore, these processes also influenced the meaning of liminality and rites of passage that are subjects to public discourses, political decisions, and legal requirements. The workshop explores how modern, especially pluralist, societies cope with the liminal stages at the beginning and end of human life.

Venue

German Historical Institute Warsaw
al. Ujazdowskie 39
00-540 Warsaw
www.dhi.waw.pl

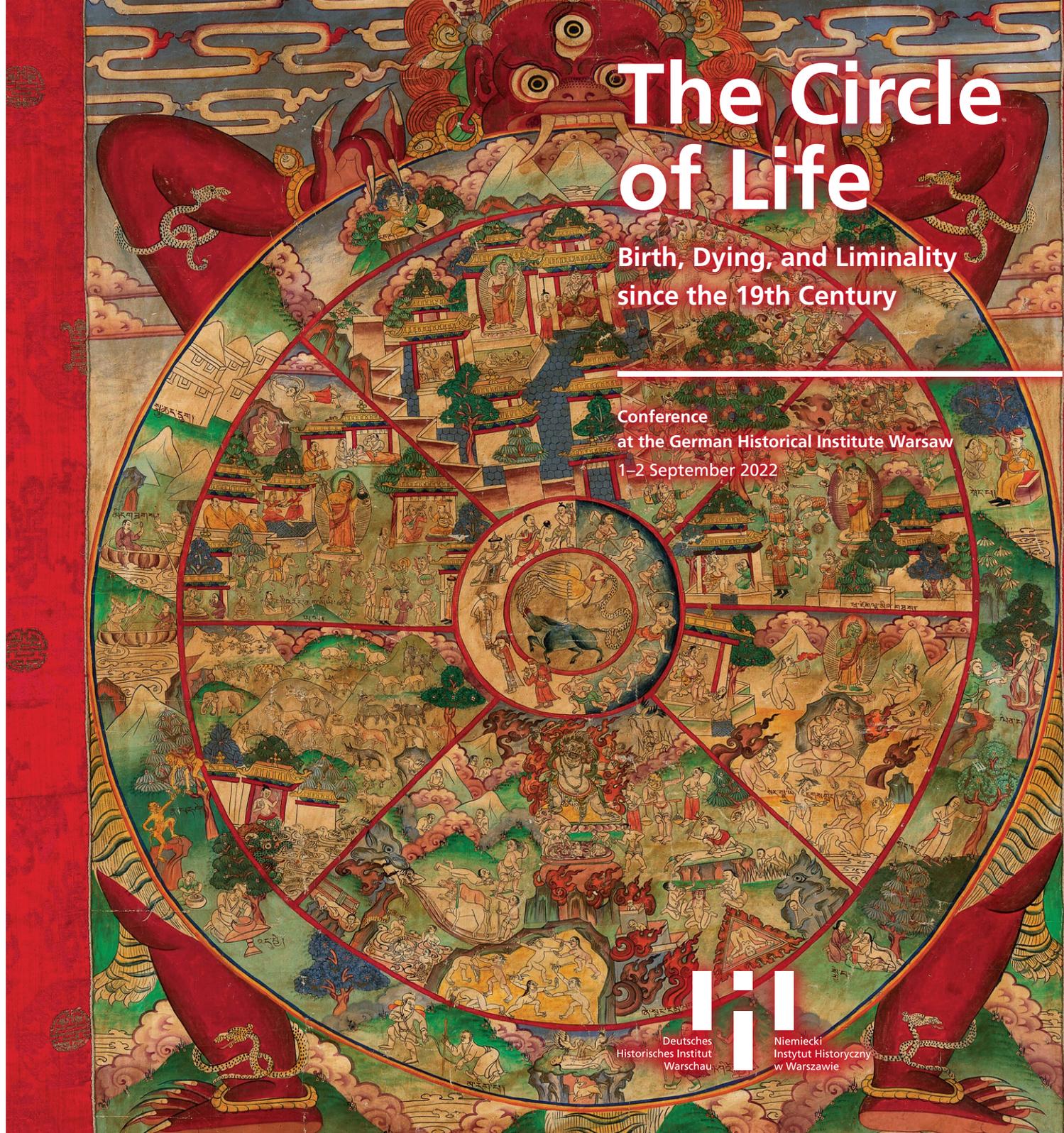
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The Circle of Life

Birth, Dying, and Liminality
since the 19th Century

Conference
at the German Historical Institute Warsaw
1–2 September 2022

hi
Deutsches
Historisches Institut
Warschau

hi
Niemiecki
Instytut Historyczny
w Warszawie

Thursday, 1 September

4.30 – 4.40 pm

Welcome by **Prof. Dr. Miloš Řezník** (Warsaw)

4.40 – 5 pm

Michael Zok (Warsaw)

Introduction: Birth and Dying.

Liminal Stages from Different Perspectives

5 – 6.15 pm

Panel I: In Utero

Wiebke Lisner (Hanover)

“Halted Blood” and Unborn Children during the Nazi
“War on Births”. Perceptions of Pregnancy and Abortion
in Occupied Poland between Racial Segregation and
Biopolitics

Marina Banitou (University of Thessaly)

Ceausescu’s Abortion Ban: Implications and Inferno
Orphanages (1966–1989)

6.15 – 7.45 pm

Warsaw Old Town Tour

7.45 pm

Dinner

Friday, 2 September

9.30 am – 11.15 am

Panel II: Constructing End-of-Life

Thorsten Benkel (Passau)

The Imposition of Intermediate States. Irritations
of Knowledge and the Liminality of the Dead Body

Paula Muhr (Karlsruhe)

Visualising the Dying Human Brain: Visibility versus
Interpretability of the Neural Activity in the Liminal
Period Preceding Death

Julia Dornhöfer (Freiburg)

Planning your End: Fallacies of Autonomy around
Patient Wills in Everyday Life

15 minutes break

11.30 am – 1.15 pm

Panel III: Dying with Dignity

Boopathi P (Central University of Tamil Nadu)

Between Life and Death: the Story of Aruna Shanbaug
and Euthanasia Debate in India

Eric Franklin (Lucerne)

From Honour to Dignity – Changing Notions
in the Swiss Suicide Assistance Movement

Anna Bauer (Munich)

Neo-modern Constellations of Dying –
›Holistic‹ Palliative Care as Organized Polyphony

1.15 – 2 pm

Lunch (@GHIW)

2 – 2.15 pm

Florian Greiner (Heidelberg)

Epilogue: Liminality and the Circle of Life
in Modern Societies

2.15 – 3 pm

Final Discussion



on the cover:
Yama holding the wheel of life,
Buddhist distemper painting
source: Wellcome Collection, London