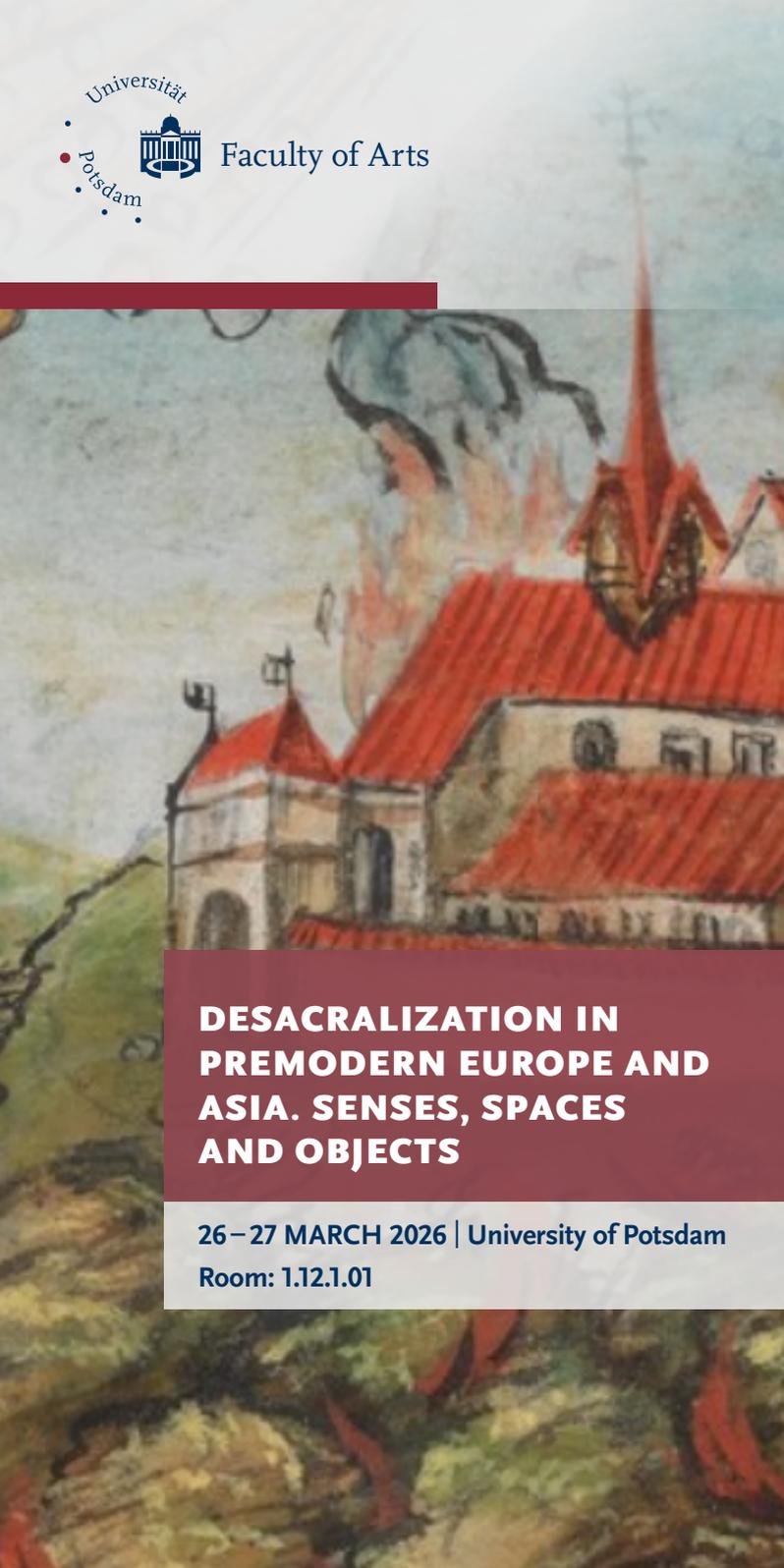


Short Description:

Sacrality is a ubiquitous concept in academia. Although recent studies have complicated the notion of the sacred and the profane, their binary construction remains influential. One consequence of this distinction is that processes of sacralization are well-researched, but processes of desacralization are not. In order to fully understand the meaning of sacrality or sacredness, it is crucial to also consider processes of desacralization. Only by including questions on desacralization in broader historical frameworks can we grasp what made spaces or objects sacred in the first place. By comparing Asian and European regions, we can gain new insights into notions of desacralization that go beyond previous scholarship, which has focused on specific case studies or provided a linear narrative of desacralization. The conference brings together experts from ancient, medieval and early modern studies. Ideas and practices of desacralization always were fractured, but must be understood in a *longue durée*.

Organized by Martin Christ (Erfurt) and
Simone Wagner (Potsdam)

Room: 1.12.1.01



DESACRALIZATION IN PREMODERN EUROPE AND ASIA. SENSES, SPACES AND OBJECTS

26 – 27 MARCH 2026 | University of Potsdam
Room: 1.12.1.01



Program

THURSDAY, 26 MARCH 2026

13:00

Welcome and Introduction: Martin Christ (Erfurt) and Simone Wagner (Potsdam)

13:30 – 15:45

Panel 1: Ideas and Approaches to Desacralization

Alain Arrault (Paris):
Desacralising cultic images in China

Mateusz Fafinski (Erfurt):
Put to Good Use? Decommissioning of Religious Spaces in Late Antiquity

Sara Mondini (Ghent):
Contesting the Sacred: Perception, Ritual, and the Politics of Mausoleum in Kerala

15:45 – 16:30 Coffee Break

16:30 – 18:00

Panel 2: Violence and Destruction

Nicole Volmering (Dublin):
Violence, dirt, and sin. Defiling the sacred in early medieval Ireland

Edmund Wareham Wanitzek (London):
The German Peasants' War as an Event and Process of Desacralisation

19:00 Conference dinner

FRIDAY, 27 MARCH 2026

09:00 – 11:15

Panel 3: Cleanliness and Purity

Bernadette Descharmes (Braunschweig):
Pollution as Politics. Cult Desecration and Civic Danger in the Roman Republic

Simone Wagner (Potsdam):
A danger to sacrality? Dirt and Animals in Churches in Medieval Europe

Paolo Aranha (Florence):
Menstrual Blood and Cow Dung Ashes. Impurity and Desacralization in the Malabar Rites Controversy

11:15 – 11:45 Coffee Break

11:45 – 13:15

Panel 4: Failed Sacralizations? Objects, animals and blessings

Minou Schraven (Amsterdam):
Policing the "Infinite Treasure of Merit". Popes and the Revoking of False Indulgences in Early Modern Catholic Worlds

Andreea Badea (Frankfurt):
Crossing the Threshold. Animal Presence between Ritual Inclusion and Desacralization

13:15 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00

Panel 5: Processes of Desacralization

Christian Stadelmaier (Gießen):
The Question of the Desacralization of St. Aurelia's Church in Bregenz in Walahfrid's Life of St. Gall

Martin Christ (Erfurt):
Perceptions of sacred and non-sacred in early modern Southeast Asia

16:00 – 16:30 Closing discussion