

cfp **südostasien** 3/2018

Topic: Spirit belief in Southeast Asia

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Spirit belief is integral to everyday life in Southeast Asia. Against the predictions of modernization theory concepts of spirits have not waned in the context of modernity and economic upswing.

This is perhaps most evident in the widespread incidence of ancestor cults in their various local forms: the spirits of deceased relatives are venerated, for example, through ritual offerings. Furthermore, spirit exorcisms to “treat” supposedly “abnormal” people regularly hit the headlines.

Spirit concepts also play a role when dealing with violent histories in Southeast Asia (Indonesia 1965, Khmer Rouge in Cambodia) affording ways of coping with violent events and resulting traumas. Places of torture or mass graves often are haunted spaces.

At times also Southeast Asian political leaders have a connection to the supernatural. During elections diviners and astrologists are in high demand.

Not least, spirits seem to be important allies in the resistance against intolerable conditions, such as when exhausted factory workers become “possessed” by spirits so that production needs to be suspended. In the context of nature conservation, moreover, indigenous people stress the “claims of the spirits” which humans need to honor. But spirit belief is also used by capitalist enterprises, such as, where shamans are employed by mining companies so that workers dare to go underground; or in cases where the seat of a “spirit of a place” is relocated for capital investments.

Spirits are most present, of course, in Southeast Asia’s pop culture. Countless movies, TV series and horror books pick up on well-known spirit figures, which is often connected to meanings of the marginal and supposedly threatening (nature, women, ethnic minorities, the night etc.). In that they shape the perceptions of broad sections of societies such popular-cultural representations of spirits are very powerful.

In the coming “südostasien” issue we would like to enter into the following (and more) questions:

- How do people in Southeast Asia deal with spirits on an everyday basis? How do they come to terms with them? Which spirits are invoked or employed in certain everyday situations?
- How do spirit stories talk about copings with the past? Which narratives about unspeakable and terrible events underlie spirit beliefs?
- Where are spirits situated in ecological or political relations? How and why do they attain agency?
- How does popular culture keep alive stories of, and belief in, spirits? Which narratives and stylistic devices are put to this use?

With these questions we seek to include various ways presentation: reports / descriptions, analyses, portraits, interviews or even photo essays. We’re looking forward to your ideas!

Deadline for submissions (max. 15.000 characters) is the 30th of November 2018, please send a short abstract first. If accepted please attach relevant and titled photographs of sufficient quality (300dpi) to your article and make sure the copyright is dealt with beforehand. We are also looking for short reviews of books, films and music about or from Southeast Asia. Contact email: soa_mag@asienhaus.de

Mission statement: südostasien gathers voices from and about Southeast Asia on current developments in politics, economics, ecology, society and culture. Four key topics each year collect contributions on the region and on the respective countries of Southeast Asia and their global/international relationships. südostasien sees itself as a pluralist forum for a dialogue driven by solidarity and critique of domination. südostasien aims to create a space for discussions between actors in Southeast Asia and Germany with proximity to and knowledge of social movements. südostasien deals with the possibilities of transnational solidarity work in the face of unequal power relationships between the Global North and the South. With regard to the above mentioned principles südostasien wants to provide food for thought to German readers.

Our next topics are:

- Labour Movements in Southeast Asia (Deadline January 2019)
- Plastic and plastic waste in Southeast Asia (deadline April 2019)