INSTITUT FÜR
ETHNOLOGIE

UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

Institute-Colloquium Anthropology

Tuesday, 23th October 2018

17-19 h, Werkstatt

Guido Sprenger (Heidelberg):

„Galactic polities and imperial metaphors: The animated landscape in Southeast Asia and China“

Western scholars have traditionally considered Southeast Asia from a perspective that stresses its Indian influences, notwithstanding the fact that Indians historically had only a limited presence in this region. Considering Southeast Asia from a Chinese perspective, however, would make at least equal sense. In particular practices and ideas of space making suggest that Southeast Asian notions of animated landscapes and certain ideas from Chinese folk religion can be considered as transformations of each other. In both regions, places receive their identities from the communicative emergence of localized gods and spirits. The crucial difference however lies in the relationships between localities, spirits and organizations that provide encompassing spatial identities, i.e. states. While Southeast Asian polities tend to domesticate spirits of the wilderness, the animated landscape of China was and partially is understood as an ever-expanding bureaucratic apparatus. These cosmological constructions of space can tentatively be linked to the way a Southeast Asian state, Laos, and mainland China currently relate to each other in politics and economy and how they conceptualize and transform their non-human environment.

All those who are interested are cordially invited!

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