

Panel proposal - EuroSEAS 2021

Birth and Dying in Southeast Asia: Morality, Personhood and Care

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We were all born and we will all die, but processes of birthing and dying show a huge variation across cultures. Empirical studies of beginnings and ends of life in Southeast Asia suggest that the way a person is born and dies is often considered to reflect their moral qualities. Researchers show that during pregnancy and childbirth the moral personhood of the child is often seen to be at stake, while at the same time where and how a woman gives birth can have profound affects for her coming-into-being as a mother in local moral communities and for her relationship to the state (see, e.g. Blackburn 2004; Gammeltoft 2014; Liamputtong et. al. 2004). In the case of dying, scholars show how a ‘good’ death may not only index the moral personhood of the deceased person, but also their transition to, and position in, the afterlife (see, e.g. Samuels in press; Shohet 2018; Stonington 2012). Moreover, the ethics of birthing and dying may equally impact caregivers. This panel aims to gather scholars working in and on Southeast Asian societies to think through the ethics of birthing and dying together. How are birthing and dying implicated in constructions of moral personhood? How do these culturally specific notions of moral personhood affect practices of caregiving and biomedical interventions at the beginning and end of life? We invite contributions based on empirical research from an interdisciplinary perspective, including (but not limited to) the fields of anthropology, religious studies, history, sociology, gender studies and public health. Panellists are welcome to focus on either birthing or dying, or both. Ultimately, with this panel we aim to provide insight into the cultural dimensions and moralities of care and personhood at these crucial moments in life.

We aim for a double panel (6 presenters)

References:

- Blackburn, Susan. 2004. *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gammeltoft, Tine. 2014. *Haunting Images: A Cultural Account of Selective Reproduction in Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Liamputtong, Pranee, Susanha Yimyam, Sukanya Parisunyakul, Chavee Baosoung, & Nantaporn Sansiripan. 2004. “When I become a mother! The perceptions and experiences of Thai mothers in Northern Thailand”. *Women’s Studies International Forum* 27(5–6): 589–601.
- Samuels, Annemarie. In press. “Strategies of silence in an age of transparency: navigating HIV and visibility in Aceh, Indonesia.” *History and Anthropology*. [Online first](#).
- Shohet, Merav. 2018. “Two deaths and a funeral: ritual inscriptions’ affordances for mourning and moral personhood in Vietnam.” *American Ethnologist* 45(1): 60–73.
- Stonington, Scott. 2012. “On ethical locations: the good death in Thailand, where ethics sit in places.” *Social Science and Medicine* 75: 836-844.