

Lecture

Nang Nak—Ghost Wife:

Desire, Embodiment, and Buddhist Melancholia in a Contemporary Thai Ghost Film

Arnika Fuhrmann

(Cornell University, Ithaca, New York)

November 21, 2018, 4.15-5.45 pm

Universität Hamburg, Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1, ESA-Ost, Room 120



The 1999 Thai ghost film *Nang Nak* renders desire and sexual personhood in the idioms of Buddhist pedagogies and economies of desire.

The talk shows how new forms of cinematic representation take recourse to Buddhism and parallel the ways in which sexual and economic sufficiency policies draw on Buddhist concepts.

Finally, the talk demonstrates how the temporal incongruity of haunting can also be made available to feminist interpretation. When Buddhist stories highlight the difficulty of giving up attachment, these

stories—as well as women’s devotional practices related to the ghost *Nak*—also become counterdoctrinal and highlight the persistence of women’s desires.

Arnika Fuhrmann is an interdisciplinary scholar of Southeast Asia, working at the intersections of the region’s aesthetic and political modernities. Her book *Ghostly Desires: Queer Sexuality and Vernacular Buddhism in Contemporary Thai Cinema* (Duke University Press, 2016) examines how Buddhist-coded anachronisms of haunting figure struggles over sexuality, personhood, and notions of collectivity in contemporary Thai cinema.

In a new research project, Fuhrmann focuses on new media and how the study of the digital allows for a perspective on the political public sphere that transcends commonplace distinctions between liberalism and illiberalism. This project intersects with her interests in the transformation of cities in contemporary Southeast and East Asia.

She is currently Assistant Professor of Southeast Asian Studies in Cornell University’s Department of Asian Studies.