

Tod und Sterben im Buddhismus: Einblicke in die unterschiedlichen buddhistischen Kulturen

Laos: Rituelle Praxis, Verdienstübertragung und Essen: Zwei Rituale für die Geister der Toten im laotischen Buddhismus

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Funerary cultures are not exclusively related to rituals directly associated with death, but also include the commemoration of the dead in a post-mortem state. In Lao Buddhism not only commemorative events organized by families perpetuate the relation with the deceased, but there are also rituals that are part of the yearly ceremonial cycle (hit sipsong). In festivals such as boun khau padap din and boun khau salak one finds a construction of a multiplicity of relations between the living and the dead. These sometimes involve monks as necessary intermediaries (transfer of material provisions and merit), but also allow for a direct “feeding” of the deceased without the mediation of monks. The various receivers (peta, vinyan or phi) of these provisions are constituted by rather fluid categories and regularly intermingle in local interpretations. In this paper I would like to argue that the relationship established with the dead during these festivals take on features of what I shall label “caring for the dead”. Care shall in this context be defined as the “provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone”. Besides taking an ethnographic look at the performance, the textual backgrounds and the processes of exchange, I would like to explore the various transfers and the circulation of “objects” performed during these festivals that lie at the basis of this care for the dead: they articulate the cultivation of relations with the dead and moreover express an emotional attachment to them. From the perspective of the living these festivals are occasions for meritorious giving and developing good intentions and skilful practice. While the deceased relatives, in turn, grant the family protection and well-being, there are also some “special dead” addressed in this ritual who secure the fertility of the rice fields and thereby reveal the intimate link between death, Buddhism and agricultural fertility.

(Vortrag auf Deutsch, Fragen/Antworten zum Film Deutsch und Englisch)

mit anschl. **Film: *Caring for the Beyond – Two Lao Buddhist Festivals for the Deceased***