

XX EASR CONFERENCE
VILNIUS, 4th–8th SEPTEMBER 2023
‘RELIGION AND TECHNOLOGIES’

Title: Practices, tools, and ecology of magic-shamanic traditions across pre-modern and modern Monsoon Asia

Convenor: Paolo E. Rosati, PhD

Email: paoloe.rosati@gmail.com

Short abstract: This panel aims to shed light on tools, environments and ecology of magic-shamanic contexts in mainstream Indic, tantric, vernacular, and tribal religions across Monsoon Asia. Perspective authors are expected to focus on that practices often labelled as phenomena outside the mainstream religiosity.

Abstract: This panel considers Monsoon Asia as a geographical area—which includes the Indian subcontinent, Tibet, mainland and maritime Southeast Asia, and Southern China—where several religious practices are shared, hence, a socio-cultural unity of the region is marked. In fact, Indic mainstream (e.g. Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism), tantric, vernacular, and tribal religions, share several socio-religious traits whose origin could be traced back to an ancient common, and complex substratum. The resilience of magic-shamanic elements is among these common traits.

This panel aims to shed light on that (material or intangible) instruments, which have been used as ritual, magic, or shamanic tools since pre-modern history of Monsoon Asia. Indeed, usually mastering magic and shamanic powers is closely related to meditation, yogic practices, severe penances, manipulation of bodily fluids, the consumption of intoxicating substances, the use of bones and skulls as talismans, the use of ashes, mantras, spells and spell-books, geometric diagrams (such as *maṇḍalas* and *yantras*), music instruments (particularly drums and other percussions), etc. Panel’s papers discuss in depth the role of these and other tools in magic-shamanic contexts and how they affected practices such as ecstatic possession, shapeshifting, trance and other altered states of consciousness, healing and/or harmful capacities, alchemy, divination (such as scapulimancy and plastromancy) in mainstream, tantric, folk, and tribal traditions across pre-modern and modern Monsoon Asia. Furthermore, this panel invites to analyze the ecology of magic-shamanic contexts in order to better understand the role of the *locus sacer* as a sacred space where the practitioners can cross the borders with the supra-human world or may reach the enlightenment or other transcendental states.

Perspective authors are expected to use both empirical and theoretical methodology and to engage the subject with a multidisciplinary approach, considering disciplines such as textual studies, history, art history, archaeology, ethnography, anthropology, folkloric studies, religious studies, etc.