

Human Sciences Encounters in Phnom-Penh: Past Presentations: Spirits in Cambodia

The Spirits of Cambodia: New Research into Current Practice

presented by, Courtney Work

The villagers in the newly settled village of Damnak Klung in Kompong Chhnang Province articulate a number of relationships with spirits. Some of these are economic relationships, some confirm and support special talents - like healing or playing music, some influence interpersonal relationships and still others constitute relationships with physical space. These spirits are at once a part of Buddhist practice and are separate from it; as one woman told to the researcher, “the spirits are connected to Buddhism because we use the tools and the language of Buddhism to talk to the spirits, but they are different -they are older.”

Courtney Work's research project is to explore and document village life and religious practice in rural Cambodia in the early twenty-first century. In this presentation she will discuss the work of spirits in everyday rural life, highlighting the various social and physical connections mediated by spirit beliefs and practices.