

Everyday social life in the Myanmar transition:

Exploring authority, justice and morality

Annika Pohl Harrison, Aarhus University

apha@cas.au.dk

After decades of intractable ethno-national conflict, military rule and international isolation, in 2010 Myanmar undertook momentous social and political change. Attendant social, political and cultural shifts are leading to significant changes to daily life, social formations and the ways people, communities and the state relate to each other. The international media and contemporary scholarship has tended to focus on new economic opportunities and changes to the political system brought about by the state's liberalisation and political openings. However, little is known about how Myanmar's political transformation is actually occurring on the ground. How does social life unfold in Myanmar's provinces at this current historical moment? How does the transition influence access to - and perceptions of - justice? How is authority established, networked and negotiated? And how are relationships, practices and everyday lives reconstituted through changing moral social orders?

This panel addresses these questions, based on in-depth ethnographic studies of everyday life in provincial towns and villages during 2015-2016. Justine Chambers (The Australian National University) looks at how traditional modes of obligation, responsibility and kinship are being formed in relation to new forms of value hierarchies and notions of the 'good' amongst young people. Gerard McCarthy's (The Australian National University) research focuses on non-state welfare, the moral notions and patronage networks in which it is embedded and how these are evolving in the context of the transition. Thang Sorn Poine (Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation) explores the changing role of gender and morality in local dispute resolution. Helene Kyed (Danish Institute for International Studies) looks at changing configurations of public and moral authority in local governance. Mikael Gravers (Aarhus University) explores religious authority, spiritual politics and justice in the context of the transition, and Annika Pohl Harrison (Aarhus University) researches the connections between justice, rumors and morality at this uncertain juncture.