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Abstract

Moderne Paranormale als spirituelle UnternehmerInnen in Indonesien?

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Paranormal or supranatural are a contemporary reconfiguration of dukun or mystical-spiritual experts and traditional healers. Most paranormal belong to the urban middle-class, are well educated, professional, highly mobile, members of national organizations, and they make extensive use of modern mass media to advertise their supernatural skills. They offer general strengthening and solutions for all problems of life, success in political elections, business, career, love affairs as well as assistance to overcome health problems. This paper presents a quantitative analysis of their advertisements as well as results from qualitative anthropological fieldwork encounters. The latter bring an ambivalent attitude towards money and materiality to the fore: Although most paranormal practitioners make a living – and some of them a fortune – from their clients, money-orientedness is seen in a negative light. Their success depends on the staging of magical powers and traditionality. Thus, the spiritual economy of the modern paranormal relies on both entrepreneurship and cultural values. But what does “tradition” mean in this context? This article argues that the paranormal tend to emphasize a cosmopolitan outlook and hence can be regarded as potentially counterbalancing fundamentalist stances. The paper deals with a wide variety of theoretical frameworks and is based on anthropological field research in 2011, as well as 25 years of engagement with Java.

Keywords: Anthropology of Indonesia, spiritual economy, paranormal, dukun