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Call for Papers for a workshop on:

**Anthropology of Fright. Perspectives from Asia**

Aarhus University, 18-19 May, 2017

Headlines around the globe in 2016 – ranging from terrorist attacks to war in Syria, Brexit etc. – were dominated by “frightful” events. For this workshop we would like to focus on fright and fear in a broad sense – not limited to the above-mentioned global events. Taking a distinctive Asian perspective we are interested in the idea of fright: what are sources of fright and fear, how do we encounter them and handle such fears whenever we are confronted with them, when and how are ‘monsters’ produced, what mechanisms are employed to suppress, transform or seek fright? In a comparative and multidisciplinary approach we would like to bring together different but often overlapping contexts of fright including:

- the political sphere taking into account frightful moments such as riots and violence;
- fright as socio-moral regulator and counterbalance to social change and the ambivalence of social, cultural, ontological or political otherness;
- fright as linked to religion such as the frightening sight of goddesses like Kali etc., but also myths, legends and narratives about potentially harmful beings, spirits or “monsters”; as well as fright as motor for religious change, such as the adoption of Christianity or other new religious denominations in tribal India to control traditionally, uncontrollable ontological beings such as bad spirits, monsters or post-mortem personalities;
- every-day and life cycle attempts to safeguard the well-being of persons, families, clans by transforming or minimizing risks or dangers and completing cycles such as turning dead into proper ancestors, while avoiding untransformed substances possibly leading to threatening ghosts, warding off the evil-eye etc;
- popular culture representations of fright in the form of horror films, splatter movies, but also post-mortem photographs valued or rejected by viewers, but also as horror cabinets in theme parks etc that create rather safe encounters with fright which may be actively sought, appreciated, considering entertaining or time-passing and so on.

Fright and fear – we surmise - is like to come into a kind of intimate non-place for a particular culture, secret and yet elective, in which a community is willing to confront perhaps the most critical aspects its own identity. This effort is reflected in the social sphere through exogenous dynamics of rationalization of otherness, namely the relationship with all that is perceived as alien for the society - the different, the stranger - what lies beyond the defined boundaries or even, having crossed them, by contrast imposes itself as a new dominant culture. This criticality, with all its inherent fears, often forcefully reemerges in periods of transition and change when the community looks within itself, examining its values, its knowledge - or the decay thereof -, inquiring about its spirituality. As in the rites of passage: both in ordinary ones, and in the most important/crucial ones, such as birth, death, *post mortem* ...

Thus, we ask: What or who is (or is not) considered frightening, scary, creepy, harmful etc by whom and in which context? How do perceptions and constructions of the other, the other worldly, the unknown or unclassifiable play a role in such processes? How are fright and fear locally combined with or complemented by awe, ridicule or laughter? When are fright and fears arising and how are they linked to liminality, crisis or new beginnings? How are technologies used to manage or reproduce fright?

We invite contributions from across the humanities, arts and social sciences spectrum including anthropology, sociology, religious studies, area studies, folklore studies, political science etc based on empirical research. Please send an abstract (250-300 words) by 28<sup>th</sup> of Feb to [cisca@cas.au.dk](mailto:cisca@cas.au.dk). (Presenters of accepted papers will be informed by 15<sup>th</sup> of March.)

#### Organisers

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