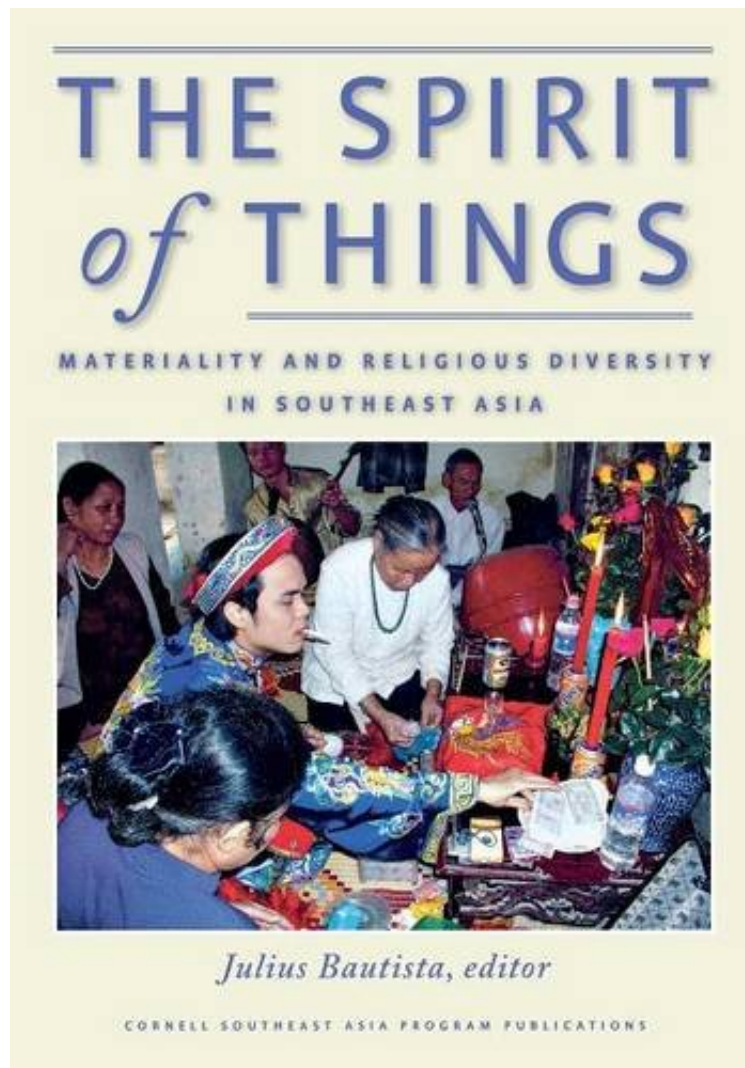


[Download pdf] The Spirit of Things: Materiality and Religious Diversity in Southeast Asia

## The Spirit of Things: Materiality and Religious Diversity in Southeast Asia

*From Julius Bautista*

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**From Julius Bautista : The Spirit of Things: Materiality and Religious Diversity in Southeast Asia** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Spirit of Things: Materiality and Religious Diversity in Southeast Asia:

What role do objects play in crafting the religions of Southeast Asia and shaping the experiences of believers? The

Spirit of Things explores religious materiality in a region marked by shifting boundaries, multiple beliefs, and trends toward religious exclusivism. While most studies of religion in Southeast Asia focus on doctrines or governmental policy, contributors to this volume recognize that religious "things"—statues, talismans, garments, even sacred automobiles—are crucial to worship, and that they have a broad impact on social cohesion. By engaging with religion in its tangible forms, faith communities reiterate their essential narratives, allegiances, and boundaries, and negotiate their coexistence with competing belief systems. These ethnographic and historical studies of Southeast Asia furnish us with intriguing perspectives on wider debates concerning the challenges of secularization, pluralism, and interfaith interactions around the world. In this volume, contributors offer rich ethnographic analyses of religious practices in the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Burma that examine the roles materiality plays in the religious lives of Southeast Asians. These essays demonstrate that religious materials are embedded in a host of practices that enable the faithful to negotiate the often tumultuous experience of living amid other believers. What we see is that the call for plurality, often initiated by government, increases the importance of religious objects, as they are the means by which the distinctiveness of a particular faith is fenced in a field of competing religious discourses. This project is called the spirit of things to evoke both the aura of religious objects and the power of material things to manifest that which is fundamental about faith and belief.

Contributors: Julius Bautista, National University of Singapore; Sandra Cate, San Jose State University, California; Margaret Chan, Singapore Management University; Liana Chua, Brunel University, London; Cecilia S. de la Paz, University of the Philippines (Diliman); Alexandra de Mersan, Centre Asie du Sud-Est (Paris) and Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales; Johan Fischer, Roskilde University, Denmark; Janet Hoskins, University of Southern California; Klemens Karlsson, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm; Laurel Kendall, American Museum of Natural History and Columbia University, New York City; H. Leedom Lefferts, Drew University and Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore; Nguyn Thi Thu Huong, Academic Council of the National Museum of History, Hanoi, and Vietnam Museum of Ethnology; Anthony Reid, Australian National University, University of California Los Angeles, and National University of Singapore; Richard A. Ruth, United States Naval Academy; Kenneth Sillander, University of Helsinki; V Thi Thanh Tm, Vietnam Museum of Ethnology; and Yeoh Seng Guan, Monash University, Malaysia

"By focusing on the material dimensions of religious life, this stimulating volume sheds new light on some important sources of both creativity and conflict in Southeast Asia. Through a fascinating range of cases, the authors demonstrate the power of things to provoke, facilitate, and constrain people's religious projects. This book is the fruitful outcome of strong local knowledge brought to bear on questions of wide interest across this complex region." Webb Keane, University of Michigan, author of *Signs of Recognition: Powers and Hazards of Representation in an Indonesian Society and Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*

About the Author Julius Bautista is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. He is author of *Figuring Catholicism: An Ethnohistory of the Santo Nio de Cebu* and coeditor of *Christianity and the State in Asia: Complicity and Conflict*.