

	<p><i>Ateliers</i></p> <p><i>Anthropologie comparée du bouddhisme</i></p> <p><i>2013-2014 : Le champ religieux</i></p> <p><i>Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière (CASE) et Nicolas Sihlé (CEH)</i></p>	 <p>CENTRE D'ÉTUDES HIMALAYENNES</p>
<p>Ateliers cofinancés par le programme « DYNAMIQUES ASIATIQUES »</p>		

Dossier Dropbox¹ : <http://bit.ly/PCfbbS>

Atelier n° 3 :

Spécialistes de la possession en contexte bouddhique

6 juin 2014 (9h30 – 18h)

Centre d'études himalayennes, bâtiment D, salle de conférences (rez-de-chaussée)
7, rue Guy Môquet, 94800 Villejuif
(station Villejuif Paul Vaillant-Couturier, ligne 7 en direction de Villejuif)

9h30 – 10h :

Nicolas Sihlé (Centre d'études himalayennes [CNRS])

Introduction

10h – 11h15 :

Erick White (Cornell University)

Porous borders, contested definitions and ambiguous sacrality: Possession within the religious field of late-twentieth century Thailand

It is conventional in most academic studies of possession in Buddhist Thailand to locate possession within “spirit cults” and to designate mediums as those who get possessed. These stereotypic perceptions are also common within much of the official and public ideology of Thai culture as well as among those Thai authoritative voices describing contemporary religion and Buddhism. However, there exists multiple modalities of possession within twentieth-century Thailand, and not all of these are embedded within cultural formations structured around mediums and spirit cults. Moreover, in messiness of actually existing religious behavior, possession and possession-like experiences are found among an expansive variety of religious actors, including esoteric ritual specialists of various types and even monastic renunciants. In sum, trance, possession and mediumship are distributed across the total Thai religious field in a much more diffuse, diverse and ambiguous pattern than is commonly recognized in existing academic and anthropological models, although scattered evidence of this can be discerned in the shadows, corners and footnotes of existing scholarly studies.

Informed Thais are aware of this complexity and diversity. However, given the generally stigmatized nature of possession experience in Thailand one can often witness struggles over the classification, definition, and interpretation of possession and possession-like behavior. In the field and in the academic literature one finds religious actors who lay claim to an unusual but valued religious experience that displays many of the classic experiential, behavioral and performative

¹ Précision technique : les liens fournis ici permettent à quiconque de parcourir le dossier en ligne Dropbox dédié à ces ateliers, et d'accéder au choix de documents PDF placés dans ces dossiers. Si vous désirez installer ce dossier sur votre ordinateur comme « dossier partagé » synchronisé (ce qui en rend l'usage encore plus simple, et permet de bénéficier automatiquement de tout ajout ou modification), prière de contacter Nicolas Sihlé (nicolas.sihle [at] gmail.com) à ce sujet.

markers of trance possession as Thais conventionally understand this, yet who explicitly deny that anything like trance possession, much less spirit possession, is occurring. Instead, they consciously and with great effort reframe, reconceptualize and relabel it as some other type of religious experience which is more acceptable, commendable, and legitimate from the perspective of normative Buddhism.

In this presentation I will explicate the different modalities of possession and possession-like behavior within twentieth-century Thailand, beginning with those cultural formations conventionally understood and defined as involving possession, whether associated with mediumship or not. I will then describe forms of possession and possession-like behavior which consistently generate controversy over how they should be categorized, labeled and/or interpreted. The goal will be to explore how the Thai religious field is, in part, defined less in terms of either the presence or absence of possession, and more in terms of its relative social distribution, the particular modalities given expression among particular social actors, the types of labels assigned to this set of experiences and behaviors, and the degree to which any of these modalities are publicly recognized and legitimated vis-a-vis particular religious agents, institutions or authorities. Examining this differential distribution, classificatory contestation and strategies of legitimization, moreover, will reveal how normative ideas about proper Buddhist values and practices, morality and ethos profoundly shape the Thai religious field as a domain for experiencing and enacting possession.

11h30 – 12h45 :

Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière (Centre Asie du Sud-Est [CNRS/EHESS])

Specialists of possession within the Burmese religious field / Les spécialistes de la possession dans le champ religieux birman

Possession is an analytic and descriptive category to designate forms of religiosity in which direct contact with the divinity or the spiritual world occurs in people, being it anybody or specialists. In Burma, spirit possession is institutionalized as a distinct field of religious practice known as the cult to the Thirty-seven Lords and open to all the lay Burmese Buddhists. In this context spirit possession has its own specialists or spirit mediums known as *natkadaw*, meaning “spirit’s spouse”. However, other forms of possession exist in different fields of practice. First, it is present in the devotion to the *weikza* who are virtuoso of both Buddhist and esoteric practice whose powers have allowed escaping of the samsara while they are still available to help Buddhist people. Second, it exists also in the exorcists’ practice that applies to people affected by evil possession. The three forms of possession will be presented contrastively and in their various relations, within the Buddhist context.

Bibliographical suggestions for Thailand and Burma:

- Brac de la Perrière, Bénédicte. 2012. Spirits versus Weikza: Two Competing Ways of Mediation. *Journal of Burma Studies* 16 (2): 149-179.
- Jackson, Peter A. 2012. The political economy of twenty-first century Thai supernaturalism: Comparative perspectives on cross-genderism and limits to hybridity in resurgent Thai spirit mediumship. *South East Asia Research* 20 (4): 611-622.
- Morris, Rosalind C. 2000. *In the Place of Origins : Modernity and Its Mediums in Northern Thailand*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Pattana Kitiarsa. 2012. *Mediums, Monks and Amulets: Thai Popular Buddhism Today*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- Spiro, Melford E. 1978. *Burmese Supernaturalism : A Study in the Explanation and Reduction of Suffering*. 2nd expanded ed. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja. 1970. *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Sections : “The cult of the guardian spirits”, “The afflictions caused by malevolent spirits”, “Exorcism as healing ritual”, “A kaleidoscopic view of the religious field”)
- Tanabe, Shigeharu. 2002. The Person in Transformation: Body, Mind and Cultural Appropriation. In *Cultural Crisis and Social Memory: Modernity and Identity in Thailand and Laos*. Ed. Shigeharu Tanabe and Charles Keyes. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Wijeyewardene, Gehan. 1981. Scrubbing Surf: Medium and Deity in Chiang Mai. *Mankind* 13 (1): 1-14.

[12h45 – 14h : pause]

14h – 15h15 :

Katia Buffetrille (EPHE/CRCAO)

Order and disorder in an Amdo village: Medium (*lha-pa*), lama and *glu-rol* festival / Ordre et désordre dans un village de l’Amdo : médium (*lha-pa*), lama et fête *glu-rol*

The *glu-rol* festival, dedicated to the local deities, is “played” in some villages of the Reb-gong area by the villagers under the supervision of two mediums (*lha-pa*) to delight the local deities and to receive in exchange prosperity and well-being, victory over enemies, internal solidarity, protection of villagers and cattle, lack of sickness and calamities. It aims also at restoring order in the local microcosm organized according to four concentric squares: the innermost square is represented by the “House of the Army chiefs”, corresponding to the house of the deities/*lha-pa*; the second one by each household; the third one by the whole village of Sog-ru and the external one, by the neighbouring area, a schema that refers to the Tibetan conception of the earth in its horizontal extension.

Based on several periods of fieldwork carried out between 1992 and 2011, this presentation will study the changes brought in the village following a conflict in which the main protagonists are a *lha-pa* and a lama.

15h30 – 16h45 :

Pascale Dollfus (Centre d’études himalayennes [CNRS])

Des médiums par « hérédité » : les *lha-pa* de la vallée de la Pin, au Spiti

Au Spiti, la vallée de la Pin forme un monde à part marqué par une endogamie très forte et qui se singularise par des particularismes sur le plan administratif et politique, son affiliation religieuse rNying-ma-pa et la présence des *buchen* (*bu-chen*, « grand fils »), conteurs de biographies religieuses et interprètes d'un rituel spectaculaire : s’y succèdent des invocations aux *bodhisattva* et grands saints du bouddhisme tibétain, des pirouettes sur la pointe de sabres, bris d'une pierre sur estomac, et des chants profanes.

Dans cette vallée, on est médium (*lha-pa*) de père en fils ou d'oncle en neveu, non sans que la divinité locale dont ces médiums sont le support (*rten*) ait son mot à dire. Je propose d'examiner le rôle de ces médiums « héréditaires » dans la vie quotidienne villageoise et les relations qu'ils entretiennent avec les dieux dont ils sont les « corps d'emprunt » (*lus-g.yar*), puis d'étudier leurs rapports avec les autres spécialistes religieux – prêtres bouddhistes et *buchen* – notamment à l'occasion de deux grandes fêtes célébrées l'une au sortir de l'hiver, l'autre à l'annonce des moissons où tous interviennent.

Bibliographical suggestions for Tibetan and Himalayan areas:

- Balikci, Anna. 2008. *Lamas, Shamans and Ancestors : Village Religion in Sikkim*. Leiden; Boston: Brill.
- Buffetrille, Katia. 2008. Some Remarks on Mediums: The case of the *lha pa* of the musical festival (*glu rol*) of Sog ru (A mdo). *Mongolo-Tibetico Pragensia*, no. 8:13-66.
- Diemberger, Hildegard. 2005. Female Oracles in Modern Tibet. In *Women in Tibet*. Ed. Janet Gyatso and Hanna Havnevik. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Dollfus, Pascale. 2009. Working for the Welfare of All Living Beings. Mediums, Lamas and Storytellers in the Pin Valley, Spiti. In *Bards and Mediums. History, Culture and Politics in the Central Himalayan Kingdoms*. Ed. Marie Lecomte-Tilouine. Delhi: Alhora.
- Dpal-ldan bkra-shis and Kevin Stuart. 1998. Perilous Novelties: The A-mdo Tibetan *klu-rol* Festival in Gling-rgyal Village. *Anthropos* 93 (1-3): 31-53
- Nagano, Sadako. 2000. Sacrifice and *Lha pa* in the *Glu rol* Festival of Reb-skong. In *New Horizons in Bon Studies*. Ed. Samten G. Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano. Senri Ethnological Reports 15. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- Orofino, Giacomella. 1994. Divination with mirrors. Observations on a simile found in the Kālacakra literature. In *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (Fagernes, 1992)*. Ed. Per Kvaerne. Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture.

17h – 18h :

Discutante et discussion finale : Anne de Sales (Laboratoire d’ethnologie et sociologie comparative [Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense/CNRS])