The notion of inyŏn, ‘causes and conditions’, occupies a special place in contemporary Korean Buddhism. Not only is it a doctrinal concept shared by all Buddhist traditions, but in South Korea, it has also become a common expression to designate relationships.

We will focus on the cardinal place occupied by the notion of inyŏn in contemporary lay Buddhist practice, and the reflection on the place of ‘practical religiosity within Buddhism.'
Lecture Content:

The notion of inyŏn 因緣, 'causes and conditions', occupies a special place in contemporary Korean Buddhism. Not only is this notion a doctrinal concept, part of the reflections and theories on dependent origination shared by all Buddhist traditions, but in South Korea, it has also become a common expression that has entered everyday usage to designate relationships (between people, with places, objects...). In South Korean Buddhism as it is experienced and lived by the laity, this omnipresent expression plays a crucial role. Observing its place in real-life use sheds light on the contemporary practices of this tradition.

Based on extended ethnographic fieldwork in temples and lay Buddhist associations, together with an analysis of Buddhist teachings from the 20th and 21st centuries, this presentation describes the cardinal place occupied by the notion of inyŏn in contemporary lay Buddhist practice. It analyses the different ways in which this concept is used and how it influences and is influenced by the concrete commitments and forms of religious and ritual practices of the people who use it. In particular, it shows that this concept, with its multiple uses, plays a pivotal role today, as it contributes to articulate together the traditional ritual responsibility of housewives—to pray for the health and happiness of the family—and their concern—in line with the emphasis placed by Buddhist institutions on lay education—for an orthodox and educated form of Buddhist practice. Through this case study, this presentation aims at contributing to a larger reflection on the place of 'practical religiosity' within Buddhism.

Lecturer:

Florence Galmiche

Florence Galmiche is an associate professor at the Université Paris Cité, a member of the Centre for Studies on China, Korea and Japan (EHESS-CNRS-UPCité), and a junior member of the Academic Institute of France (IUF). Her research in Anthropology focuses on Korea and is based on two main themes. The first one revolves around the contemporary practices of Buddhism, especially those that aim to have an influence on this world. The second one focuses on the relations between the living and the dead, more specifically on the contemporary treatment of the Korean dead from Japanese colonial mobilisation.

Lecture: 16:00-17:40  
Q&A: 17:40-18:00

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