

Ritual and Embodiment

Ritual and Embodiment: Making Religion in contemporary (West) Africa

Join us for lecture by Prof. Agnieszka K?dzierska Manzon (Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (EPHE) – PSL / Imaf, France).



Przydatne informacje **Miejsce:** ?urawia 4, room 108

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Godzina: 10:30

If, as Marcel Mauss once suggested, all religious traditions involve specific, extradayly body usage responsible for inducing non-ordinary experience in practitioners, they do not all do so in the same way. Even within a single tradition, the alteration of organic functions and ordinary psychomotor patterns can take multiple forms. Analyzing these forms sheds light on the ways selves are forged through ritual practices while also informing us about the structure of religious landscapes that these practices contribute to generate in each particular case: such is the proposition the lecture advances and illustrates through selected examples of ritual embodiment from West Africa.

Based on over twenty years of fieldwork I have conducted among Mande people in rural and urban Mali, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire, to substantiate my claim, I will, more precisely, draw on the materials pertaining to three sets of practices which constitute today the non-Islamic pole of the contemporary Mande religious landscape. Those are: the activities of the donsow-hunters and their initiation societies, the manipulation of "power objects" known as basitigiya, and finally a spirit possession cult, currently expanding, called jin?don.

These practices represent possible points of entry chosen to discuss a more general theoretical problem: the modalities and mechanisms according to which rituals contribute to the making of religion and its agents. The question the lecture tries to tackle is not what ritual does but how it does what it does: how it helps practitioners to

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become different kind of persons, change their relation to the world, to Others, and to themselves through the elaboration of new embodiments, as well as through the specific, varied, yet extra-daily body practices.

Prof. Agnieszka Kedzierska Manzon - Chair of Anthropology of Religion in Africa at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris, France and member of laboratory Institut des Mondes Africains, professor Kedzierska Manzon studies so called "African Traditional Religion" as well as new forms of ritualization currently developing south of Sahara – especially in Western and Southern Africa - within a comparative frame, focusing on their material and somatic aspects. She authored *Guérisseurs et féticheurs : la médecine traditionnelle en Afrique de l'Ouest* (2006) *Chasseurs mandingues : violence, pouvoir et religion en Afrique de l'Ouest* (2014) et *Corps rituels : la fabrique du religieux en pays mandingue* (2023, English translation 2024), 3 edited volumes and more than 20 articles and book chapters.

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