



The Department of Anthropology  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

presents a seminar

by

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on

# Lived Religion and the Study of Buddhist Wizards in Myanmar

Friday, 20 September 2019

1:00 – 2:30 pm

Room 114 Humanities Building

New Asia College, CUHK

A light lunch will be served at 12:30 pm. First come first served.

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Supernatural wizards with magical powers to heal the sick, inhabit the minds and bodies of men and women and defend religion from the forces of evil is not the usual vision of Buddhism. But this is exactly what one finds in the Buddhist country of Myanmar, a country where the majority of people abide by Theravada Buddhism --- a form of Buddhism generally perceived as stoic and staid, lacking religious devotion and elements of the supernatural. These Buddhist wizards, and the beliefs and practices that developed around them, have received little scholarly attention, especially when compared with research done on other aspects of Buddhism in Myanmar.

This talk begins by introducing the framework of "lived religion" to examine the religious lives of those who engage the world of Buddhist wizards, as well as the experiences these individuals consider central along with the varied rituals and practices that make up their personal religious expressions. The talk then proceeds to examine aspects of Myanmar religious life from the perspectives of those whose experiences are often misrepresented or ignored entirely, not only in western academic works on religion, but also in Myanmar historical monographs and other written, oral, and pictorial sources. In addition to increasing our understanding of the lived religious experiences and practices of the wizards and their devotees, this approach to religious studies also enriches our investigation of the complex interrelationship between these experiences and practices and the wider social world in which they are enacted.

**Thomas Patton** is currently assistant professor of Buddhist and Southeast Asian Studies in the Department of Asian and International Studies at the City University of Hong Kong. He completed his Ph.D. in Asian Literature, Religion, and Culture at Cornell University. His teaching and research is attentive to religion in Southeast Asia, particularly focusing on historical and ethnographic interests engaging Buddhist phenomena in relation to Burmese cultural contexts, issues of gender and class, and politics. His current research is on lived religion in Myanmar, specifically examining local cults of saints and peoples' relationships with them, shrines, miracles, and other manifestations of religious devotion.

ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME