

# Human Sciences Encounters in Phnom-Penh: Past Presentations: Healing in the clamor of history - Doctors, healers and patients in Cambodia

## Healing in the clamor of history. Doctors, healers and patients in Cambodia

Anne Guillou

Wednesday 4, August 2010

In this talk, I will present a research on the Cambodian medicine(s) which has been published as a book (in French) in 2009 (*"Cambodia: Healing in the clamor of history. Physicians and society"*).

The first questions arose when I came in Cambodia in 1990 as a PhD student in medical anthropology. I then began my field research by staying in Cambodian hospitals all around the country and in the refugees's camps. There I observed the many misunderstandings between the Cambodian medical staff and the humanitarian Western (and Japanese) one, regarding the standards of the medical work, both in its technical and ethical aspects.

This research aims at understanding how a Western knowledge and practice such as biomedicine has been integrated and given a new meaning in a non western social context such as the Cambodian society.

The first part deals with the doctors' status and identity that the Cambodian society have forged through the different regimes and the successive State ideologies of public health, since the French protectorate.

The second part describes the daily life in hospitals as I have observed it, focusing on interactions and conflicts between Westerners and Cambodians, and doctor-patients relationship (including an analysis of the Cambodian medical ethics vs the Western one).

The third part entitled "healers and patients" analyses the global healing market by portraying healers such as monks, kru khmaer (particularly the successful "neo-traditionnal" ones), and mediums. Instead of focusing on patients' therapeutic recourse as it is done in most studies, I focus on interrelations between healers themselves (including doctors) by showing how the different categories of healers partially share the same social and symbolic universes.