

Abteilung für Asiatische und Islamische Kunstgeschichte SoSe 2026:

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“Tibetan Buddhist Art in a Leisure Context: A Case Study from a Newly Constructed “Sacred” Site in Kathmandu”

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<https://uni-bonn.zoom-x.de/j/62745727246?pwd=xAxf8uQASPAXI2bkfoNxJIW8XoV775.1>

Tibetan Buddhist historiography tends towards a “borderland complex” that fueled fascination with, and pilgrimage to, holy sites in South Asia. Yet, focusing on central Nepal—as both a destination for devotees and a periphery from the perspective of the major sites of the Buddha’s life—problematises applying such discourse to modern times. Kathmandu’s Boudhanath *Stūpa* has on its own periphery a newly created “Ghyoilisang Pond and Peace Park” devoted to the eighth-century tantric master and “second Buddha,” Padmasambhava. This site expresses Tibetan, Newar, Tamang and other Himalayan identities as part of its architecture, iconography and as used by pilgrims, tourists and locals. Yet the park is also a leisure destination funded in part by the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu and run by Nepali municipal administrators. This presentation analyses its ecology in relation to other sites visited by followers of Tibetan Buddhism in Nepal that are both old and new. It will also contextualise them within older dynamics of pilgrims creating and reading space, identifying the “sacred” and negotiating holy sites.



Left: Ghyoilisang Pond and Peace Park pictured from the front gate at night; Right: *Nāga* statue
Photos: Prof. Dr. Lewis Doney