

Friday-Sunday, February 15-17, 2019

Multiplicity of Asian Buddhist Modernities

2019 Sheng Yen Conference

370 Dwinelle Hall

UC Berkeley

The conference will explore examples of Buddhist modernism that have arisen in Asia since the late 19th century up through the present day. Buddhist modernism, broadly speaking, refers to forms of religiosity, identity, belief, and practice born out of the Buddhist engagement with the modern world. Recent scholarship has called into question the notion that “modernization” is tantamount to “Westernization”—that Asian Buddhist modernities are simply examples of demythologized protestant Buddhism. However, interdisciplinary exchange between scholars of Asian Buddhist modernities has been limited to date. The primary aim of this conference is to develop new ways to explore Asian Buddhist engagements with modernity. To this end, this conference will include scholars specializing in modern Buddhist phenomena from Buddhist traditions in East, South, and South East Asia.

Program

Friday, February 15, 4:00 – 6:30 pm

Political and Social Developments

Chair: Nora Melnikova, University of California, Berkeley

Thomas Borchert, University of Vermont
Managing Monks in Modern Thai Modernity

Erik Davis, Macalester College
Re-narrating the Past to Change the Future: King Ang Duong, Brother Number Two, and Buddhist Revivals

Johannes Beltz, Museum Rietberg
Meditative Detachment or Social Revolution? Buddhist Modernisms in India

Saturday, February 16, 10:00 am - 12:00 noon

Grassroots Buddhist Modernities

Chair: Cody Bahir, University of California, Berkeley

Justin Ritzinger, University of Miami

Enchanting Modernism: Humanistic Buddhism in the Vernacular

Jack Chia, University of California, Berkeley/ National University Singapore

Rocking for Buddha: True Direction and Contemporary Buddhist Music in Indonesia

Saturday, February 16, 1:30 - 4:00 pm

Modernist Buddhist 'Magic'

Chair: John Holt, Bowdoin College

Alexander Soucy, Saint Mary's University

Re-enchanted Modernities: The Reassertion of the Supernatural in Vietnamese Buddhism

Cody Bahir, University of California, Berkeley

Science, Spirits, and Soteriology: A Radical Prediction for the Future of Chinese Buddhist Religiosity

Penny Edwards, University of California, Berkeley

Modernity Dethroned: Buddhism, Prophecy and the battle for Burmese sovereignty, 1850-1920

Saturday, February 16, 4:30 - 6:30 pm

Japanese Buddhist Currents

Chair: Robert Sharf, University of California, Berkeley

James Shields, Bucknell University

Altermodernities in Taishō Buddhism: From Anarchism to Agrarianism

Richard Jaffe, Duke University

Japanese-South Asian Buddhist Interactions: Yamakami Sōgen, Kimura Nichiki, and Masuda Jiryō at Calcutta University

Sunday, February 17, 9:30 – 12 noon

New Methods for Studying Modernities

Chair: Alexander von Rospatt, University of California, Berkeley

Christoph Emmrich, University of Toronto

Nepalese Theravada Literature, or We Have Always Only Been Modern

Kate Crosby, King's College

Modernisers and Traditionalists as Losers in the Face of Theravada Fundamentalism

Erick White, University of Michigan

The Multiple Forms, Idioms and Trajectories of Thai Buddhist Modernity