

Abteilung für Asiatische und Islamische Kunstgeschichte WS 2024/25:

Vortrag von Dr. Kikee Doma Bhutia
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A Reimagining of Sikkim's Sacred Landscapes: Narratives of Conflict and Controversy

Montag, 21.10.2024, Beginn: 18.15 Uhr

Abteilung für Asiatische und Islamische Kunstgeschichte, Adenauerallee 10, ÜR (EG)
<https://uni-bonn.zoom-x.de/j/65457930296?pwd=dFSisXm0janPDpKlqdJNxSPY2jyee5.1>

Using the Buddhist sacred landscapes of Sikkim as a case study, this lecture examines the relationship between conflict and controversy in narratives concerning the conversion and establishment of sacred sites. Drawing primarily on ethnographic research embedded in the daily lives of Lhopo Buddhists, the presentation explores the belief narratives surrounding the transformation of the sacred landscape, driven by both natural and man-made disasters. It aims to demonstrate how local communities negotiate their beliefs and rituals, adapting to changes by creating new sacred spaces. In this process, the materiality of religious practices—embodied in altars, shrines, and ritual objects—plays a central role in transforming the landscape. By



establishing new physical manifestations of their faith, these communities reshape their environment into a conflicted site of religious and cultural significance.



Kikee Doma Bhutia is a Research Fellow at the University of Tartu, Asia Centre. Her doctoral studies in Folkloristics were completed at the University of Tartu in the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore with the title *Mythic history, belief narratives and vernacular Buddhism among the Ihopos of Sikkim 2022*. The focus is on beliefs about the *yul lha gzhi bdag*, the local protective deities in Sikkim (India), and how these deities are related to village life. A larger focus of her research is folk belief and belief narratives, as well as vernacular theory and theorizing of Buddhist (folk/vernacular) lifeworlds. Currently, her research interest ranges from the politics of identity under crisis, geopolitics of the Himalayas, vernacular symbols in times of crisis, ecology and environmental politics, border conflict in the Himalayas, and the plight of indigenous communities, and India's place in the global economy.