

Einladung zum
Tibet-Colloquium
Facets of Buddhism

Dienstag, 8. Dezember 2020

18 (c.t.) – 20 Uhr (on Zoom)

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Alexandra David-Neel and the invention of Modern Buddhism



The French intellectual and traveller Alexandra David-Neel (1868-1969) is well-known for her travels to the East and in particular to Tibet, on which she wrote extensively. She is also acclaimed for being "the first Buddhist in France" and for the numerous books she wrote on this religion. She might even have been the one who coined the term "Buddhist Modernism", as early as in 1911. Many biographies have been written about her extraordinary life but no thorough study was made on her understanding of Buddhism in general and of Modern Buddhism in particular. In this talk I will explore David-Neel's intellectual trajectory from Catholicism to Protestantism, from Occultism and the Theosophical Society to Anarchism and the Guimet Museum, and finally to Ceylon, India, Sikkim, China, Tibet, Japan, and Korea. I will show how David-Neel invented a new, hybrid type of Buddhism, based on an original combination of the knowledge on Buddhism available at her time, Theosophical beliefs and interests, and anarchist ideas. It is the result of this synthesis that she called "Buddhist Modernism". When she discovered, in Sikkim and Tibet, that the indigenous people did not share her "modern" understanding of Buddhism, she decided to "reform Lamaism" in order to restore "true Buddhism" in those lands. Alexandra David-Neel's contribution to the development of Buddhism in the West was not one of *importation*, but one of *invention*. She created a materialist type of Buddhism, where reincarnation, heavens, gods, buddhas, and demons do not exist, where rituals are useless, and where all there is to know is the way the brain works. This very peculiar type of "Buddhism" not only survives but thrives today in the "scientifically-proven mindfulness meditation" trend

Ort: Zoom-Konferenz

Bitte kontaktieren Sie Kamilla Mojzes (emoj@uni-bonn.de), um den nötigen Zoom-Link zu erhalten!

Alle Interessierten sind herzlich willkommen!