

THE GANDHĀRA CORPORA PROJECT, SOUTH ASIA NETWORK GHENT, & GHENT CENTRE FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES PRESENT:

**A lecture by Professor Nicholas Witkowski, University of San Diego**

## MONASTIC MONSTERS: HISTORICIZING OUTCASTE CHARACTERS IN THE GROTESQUERIE OF INDIAN BUDDHIST LITERATURE

This presentation forms one pillar of a broader project to write the history of outcaste Buddhism drawing upon texts from the Buddhist legal codes (Vinaya). There is an assumption, implicit in much of early Buddhist material, as well as in much of modern scholarship, that Buddhism is primarily an upper-caste affair. In other words, the field effectively operates as though outcaste Buddhist communities lacked the agential capacity to shape the institutional and soteriological landscape of South Asian Buddhism. Articulating the contours of outcaste influence, or even presence, can prove difficult, as many cases in the Vinaya tend to mask caste status. This presentation will focus on a particular Vinaya case about a monastic monster—a sexually deviant figure—in order to propose a methodological approach to reading for outcaste monastics. As postcolonial studies of colonial literature have argued, the discourse of sexual deviancy is often code for subaltern fugitivity—in this case, fugitivity from the socio-economic fetters of caste. This presentation will argue that we may read cases of sexual deviancy among monks in the Vinaya as a discursive index of upper-caste anxiety about the presence of outcaste communities in the monastery.



**Date and Time: October 3, 2024, at 16:00**

**Location: Faculteitszaal, Blandijn  
faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte  
Blandijnberg 2**

**9000 Gent**

This will be a hybrid talk simultaneously viewable on Microsoft Teams. For the Teams link please contact the organizer via email.

**For Teams link please contact:**

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