

THE GHENT CENTRE FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES (GCBS) PERMANENT TRAINING IN BUDDHIST STUDIES PRESENTS:

A PUBLIC TALK BY PROF. DANIEL STUART, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA/UNIVERSITÄT HAMBURG

## THE CONTOURS OF PARADISE: PLEASURE GARDENS AND FIGURATIONS OF THE SELF IN THE HEAVEN OF THE THIRTY-THREE



Descent of Buddha from Trayastriṃśa Heaven, V&A IS.11-1947

Daniel M. Stuart is Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of South Carolina and is currently a Visiting Professor at the University of Hamburg under the auspices of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. He holds an MA in Sanskrit Literature and a PhD in Buddhist Studies from the University of California at Berkeley. He has worked extensively on sūtra and narrative literature, śāstric texts, and Buddhist manuscripts in various Asian languages and scripts. He works with textual materials in Sanskrit, Pāli, Hindi, Gāndhārī, Buddhist Chinese and literary Tibetan. His research focuses on the history of traditional Buddhist contemplative practices from their origins in premodern South Asia into the global present. He is the author of five books: *Thinking about Cessation* (2013), *A Less Traveled Path* (2015), *The Stream of Deathless Nectar* (2017), *S. N. Goenka: Emissary of Insight* (2020), and *Insight in Perspective* (2024).

This presentation introduces newly edited Sanskrit material from a manuscript of the *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna*. This text contains the most extensive surviving Sanskrit account of Buddhist cosmology. Likely composed in Greater Gandhāra in the fourth century CE, it presents a visionary narrative in which a Buddhist yogic practitioner experiences the five realms of the cosmos: the human realm, hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, and deities. Focusing on descriptions of the heavenly realms within the sphere of sensual desire, this talk explores how these depictions relate to broader developments in Buddhist thought. In particular, it examines the relationship between traditional cosmological models, emerging scholastic taxonomies, visionary yogic practice, and conceptions of the interpenetration of phenomena that became central to major strands of Mahāyāna philosophy.

**Wednesday, April 22, 2026 @ 17.00**

**Location: Lokaal 1.13 (1<sup>st</sup> Floor)**

**Blandijn, Campus Boekentoren**

**9000 Gent**

All are welcome. The Gandhāra Corpora Lecture Series is in-person and hybrid online. Please register for the series through this Google Form: <https://forms.gle/TwffQCPuVipUpMvk6> (or through the QR code above).



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Contact Prof. Dr. Charles DiSimone

[charles.disimone@ugent.be](mailto:charles.disimone@ugent.be)

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