

Metropolitan Dharma: Buddhism in Global-City Singapore

DATE AND TIME

6 May 2026,
10.30am - 12pm

Assoc Prof Jack Meng-Tat Chia

Foo Hai Associate Professor in
Buddhist Studies
National University of Singapore

VENUE

Lecture Theatre 3
Building 2, Level 4 (2.403)

SYNOPSIS - This talk traces the historical development and contemporary transformations of the Buddhist community in Singapore. Beginning in the nineteenth century, it examines how waves of migration from China, South Asia, and Southeast Asia produced a diverse Buddhist landscape encompassing Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna traditions in a colonial port city. It then considers the transition from syncretic “folk” practices to more institutionalized and reformist forms of Buddhism in the twentieth century, shaped by monastic networks, lay organizations, and state policy. Turning to the present, the talk explores the plurality of Buddhist identities within Singapore’s urban context, ranging from “traditional” and “reformist” practitioners to the “inactive” majority, alongside an increasing emphasis on education, welfare, and public engagement. It concludes by reflecting on the challenges of secularization, demographic change, and religious competition, demonstrating that Buddhism in Singapore continues to be reconfigured through processes of urbanization and global circulation.

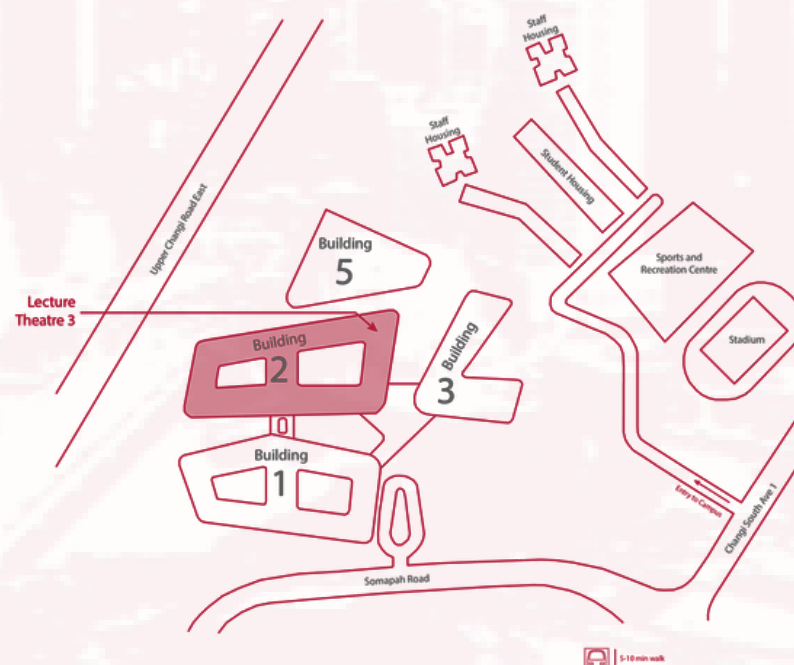


ASSOC PROF JACK MENG-TAT CHIA
Department of
History
National University
of Singapore

JACK MENG-TAT CHIA is the Foo Hai Associate Professor in Buddhist Studies at the National University of Singapore, where he also serves as Assistant Dean of Research at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. He is a historian of religion specializing in Buddhism and Chinese religions in Southeast Asia. He is the author of *Monks in Motion: Buddhism and Modernity Across the South China Sea* (Oxford, 2020), which received the 2021 EuroSEAS Humanities Book Prize, and *Dongnanya fayin: Xinjiapo fojiao yanjiu lunji* 東南亞法音：新加坡佛教研究論集 [Southeast Asia’s Dharma: Essays on Buddhism in Singapore] (Boyang, 2025). His edited volume, *Figures of Buddhist Diplomacy in Modern Asia* (Bloomsbury, 2026), is supported by the 2020 Social Science and Humanities Research Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council, Singapore. Chia is the founding chair of the Buddhist Studies Group and co-chair of the GL Louis Religious Pluralism Research Cluster at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS.



Scan QR Code to Register



For more information on the event, please visit <https://lkycic.sutd.edu.sg/>

For enquiries, please email lkycic@sutd.edu.sg.