



## **Buddhism in Mexico: Historical and Intellectual Approaches**

Despite being far from the Asian regions that saw the birth and development of Buddhism, Mexico shares with other Latin-American countries a growing interest in the ideas and practices of traditional and modern forms of this religion. This interest, however, is not new, nor is the presence of Buddhism in this region. Starting with the influence of Chinese and Japanese motifs introduced through the maritime route that linked the Asian Pacific with the New Spain from the 16th century, Buddhism would gradually acquire a more stable yet elusive and precarious presence in the region from the 17th to the 19th centuries due to the various waves of Chinese and Japanese migration. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, some illustrated figures of modern Mexican society began to show an increased interest in the artistic dimensions and doctrinal tenets of Buddhist traditions. Among them, the literati Amado Nervo and José Vasconcelos stood out, becoming a precedent for sophisticated intellectual approaches such as that of the famed poet Octavio Paz in the 1960s. In the second half of the 20th century, we witness a more definite and conscious process of diffusion, that would gradually lay the foundations for the development of multiple lineages and group identities informed by global trends, but at the same time characterized by specific presuppositions, needs and expectations of a diverse Mexican society.

During this course, we will explore some of the challenges in studying the presence of Buddhism in Mexico. We will address this phenomenon in its historical development, tracing the different stages of its diffusion and adoption. We will study the interpretations and adaptations of Buddhist thought and art made by modern intellectuals and artists, as well as the construction of diverse Buddhist identities in the recent decades. Finally, we will take a glimpse into the history of the Buddhist studies in Mexico.