

[LECTURE> Zoom via Northwestern, Dr. Melissa Curley, "Living Memory: Mass Body Relics in Modern and Contemporary Japan" Thurs Feb. 2 5pm CST](#)

Discussion published by Sarah Jacoby on Monday, January 30, 2023

Dear Colleagues,

The Khyentse Foundation Buddhist Studies Lecture Series at Northwestern is pleased to announce the following lecture, free and open to the public via Zoom:

Date: Thurs Feb. 2, 5pm CST

Speaker: Dr. Melissa Curley, Associate Professor of Buddhist Studies in the Comparative Studies Department at Ohio State University

Talk Title: "Living Memory: Mass Body Relics in Modern and Contemporary Japan"

Abstract: Japanese Buddhists, medieval and modern, have made a dizzying number of things. A tiny fraction of these things are made out of body parts—fragments cast off from the maker's own body and gathered from the bodies of other people, during life or after death, harmlessly or violently. Most these things are immediately legible as Buddhist relics, which gives Buddhist institutions access to a range of ritual strategies for appropriately managing them. I am interested in the things that have been harder to manage—body fragments collected from ordinary people and not quite sublimed into the body of the Buddha, entrusted to temples without clear instructions on whether they are supposed to be hidden or put on display. In this talk, I try to make my way through three case studies of complicated things: ropes made of hair, Buddha statues made of ashes, and a mound interring the noses of Korean soldiers and others murdered in the course of the Imjin War (1592-1598). I examine the ways that Buddhist temples and practitioners borrow strategies both from the Buddhist repertoire and from other modern memory institutions—museums, art galleries, and heritage sites—in order to take care of the objects for which they are responsible. Thinking with Alfred Gell's notion of the exuvial, especially as it has been taken up by Miho Ishii, I consider how these mixed strategies invite us to imagine these fragments as full persons.

Please register using the following link:

https://northwestern.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_T_SWMjZwOp2CeJ7Nfjyi1w

Best wishes, Sarah

Sarah Jacoby

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<https://networks.h-net.org/node/6060/discussions/12275356/lecture-zoom-northwestern-dr-melissa-curley-living-memory-mass>

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