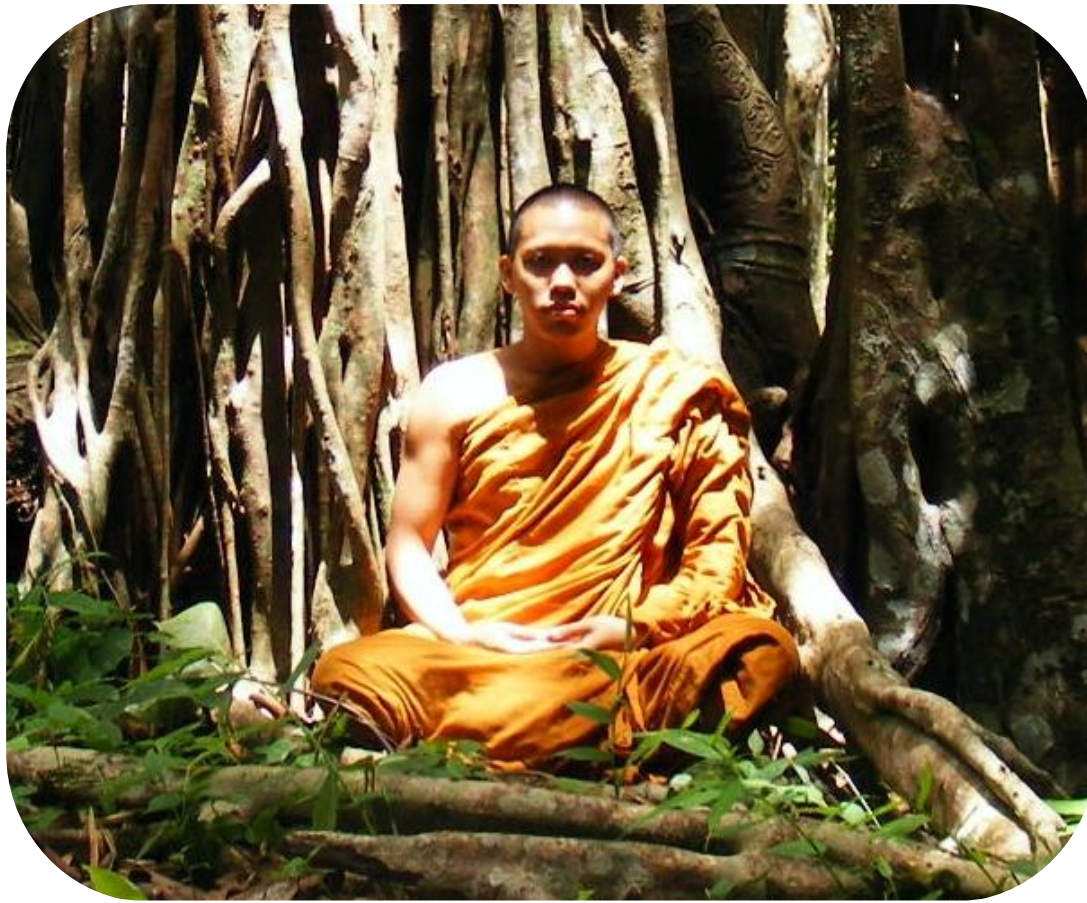




Renegades or Heroes? Extraordinary Ascetics in Indian Buddhism

Guest Speaker: **Oliver Freiberger** (The University of Texas at Austin)

June 22, 2026 || 18:15-20:00 hrs

Venue: Room 1.06, Nauklerstr. 35

This talk explores the puzzling *dhutaṅga* practices, which are normally classified as optional ascetic practices for Buddhist monastics. Still practiced to this day, a closer look shows that they were, in part, rather controversial in the early period, as they challenged the idea of the Buddhist “middle way” between a life in luxury and strict asceticism. While the *dhutaṅgas* are primarily associated with monks, the talk also explores whether some of them were adopted by Buddhist nuns as well. It argues that a favorable reading of later commentaries has clouded our analysis of early canonical texts, leading to various misconceptions about the nature of these practices. A thorough examination of the early period may also help to contextualize the motives of contemporary practitioners in Buddhist countries, both male and female.

About the Speaker: Dr. Oliver Freiberger is Professor of Asian Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. His primary research interests include the history of Indian Buddhism, asceticism, religious boundary-making, and comparison in the study of religion. He has (co-)written five monographs, (co-)edited eleven collected volumes, and published multiple articles and book chapters on those and other topics in Asian religions and on method and theory. His current book project addresses the methodology of studying religious boundary-work.



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