

Lecture 1

Religious Museums in Taiwan

Intermediate Spaces between Sacred and Secular Spheres?



佛光山佛陀紀念館 (source: FGS)

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**Rooms 8 & 9, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies,
Sidgwick Site, University of Cambridge (in-person)**

This lecture investigates the negotiation of sacred and secular spaces in present-day Taiwan, with ‘religious museums’ as its case-example. A religious museum is here defined as one designed, run, and managed by a religious organisation; such museums raise a number of interesting questions concerning the religious organisation’s rationale for and specific approach to setting up and running a museum (as a supposedly secular space). I focus on the strategic discourses within religious organisations concerning the aims and purposes of their museum projects, in particular with regard to the definition and differentiation of secular and sacred spaces and functions; furthermore, I examine the museums’ functionality within the sponsoring religious organisations’ ongoing negotiation of their relationship with secular institutions and agents (such as, for example, government agencies, educational institutions, commercial companies, etc.). The lecture addresses selected case-examples, including the Museum of World Religions (2001, New Taipei City), the Buddha Museum (2011, Kaohsiung), the Chung Tai World Museum (2016, Puli township, Nantou county); the Taiwan Soka Association art centre (Taipei), museums attached to Yiguandao temples (Tainan, Taichung, Hsinchu, Taoyuan), and a museum attached to a local temple (New Taipei City).