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MÜNCHEN

FAKULTÄT FÜR KULTURWISSENSCHAFTEN  
INSTITUT FÜR ETHNOLOGIE



*Vortrag im Oberseminar*

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Prof. Dr. Martijn van Beek (Dept. of Anthropology, Archaeology and Linguistics,  
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### **Dumbing Down the Dharma? Meditation, Mind Science and Modernity**

#### Abstract

In recent years, there has been a boom in scientific research on meditation and its effects on health and well-being, resulting in a growing number of publications in leading scientific journals as well as tremendous interest in the popular press. Some of the most celebrated work has been done in collaborations between scientists and experienced meditators, most famously Tibetan monks, sparked in part by the personal interest of the Dalai Lama in dialogues with scientists. While scientists and therapists borrow the aura of Buddhist monks, some Tibetan lamas are now integrating scientific results and terminology in their presentation of the Buddhist teachings. “Mindfulness” meditation in particular has seen a remarkable rise in popularity, partly as a result of the development of “secularized” therapeutic programmes such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT).

Drawing on fieldwork in (neuroscientific) meditation research and among communities of Buddhist practitioners in Asia and in the West, some of the aporias of the dialogue and collaboration between Buddhist practitioners and scientists (and those who are both) will be discussed, focusing on concerns about authenticity in the transmission and translation of esoteric Buddhist practice to marketable, secular, “modern” packages such as MBSR. Does the popularisation of meditation entail a “dumbing down of the dharma”, as one concerned practitioner put it?

Montag, 11. 1. 2010, 18.00 – 20.00 Uhr

Edmund-Rumpler-Str. 13, Raum B 112