Professor Richard Jaffe (Duke University) will speak about his new book Seeking Śākyamuni: South Asia in the Formation of Modern Japanese Buddhism (University of Chicago, 2019). Jaffe reveals the experiences of the first Japanese Buddhists who traveled to South Asia in search of Buddhist knowledge beginning in 1873. Analyzing the impact of these voyages on Japanese conceptions of Buddhism, he argues that South Asia developed into a pivotal nexus for the development of twentieth-century Japanese Buddhism. Jaffe shows that Japan’s growing economic ties to the subcontinent following World War I fostered even more Japanese pilgrimage and study at Buddhism’s foundational sites. Tracking the Japanese travelers who returned home, as well as South Asians who visited Japan, Jaffe describes how the resulting flows of knowledge, personal connections, linguistic expertise, and material artifacts of South and Southeast Asian Buddhism instantiated the growing popular consciousness of Buddhism as a pan-Asian tradition—in the heart of Japan.


Fri Feb 14
4-5:30 PM

East Asian Seminar Room (110C)
Doheny Memorail Library (DML)
USC