



 UrbanMetaMapping



UrbanMetaMapping Semester Talks: Summer Term 2022 via zoom, 12.00 - 13.00 (CEST)

Registration via: talks.urbanmetamapping@uni-bamberg.de

June 22:

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Living heritage or heritage destruction? Mapping Bagan's Transformation between 1995 and 2011.

Bagan is one of Asia's most prominent Buddhist sites. Up until today, this sacred landscape of about 40 square kilometres remains an important centre of Theravada Buddhism. The site comprises more than 3.000 Buddhist monuments ranging from small stupas and temples to monastic complexes and several enormous stucco-covered structures originally built during the 11th to 13th centuries, when Bagan was flourishing as the capital of the first Myanmar kingdom. Following the collapse of the kingdom towards the end of the 13th century, most of the religious structures fell into disrepair. Only very few of the major temples continued to be used and were continuously restored over time. For many centuries, Bagan was a landscape of ruins.

However, from 1995 to 2011, when Myanmar was ruled by an authoritarian military regime, the top generals directed an extensive reconstruction programme at the site. As part of the programme more than a thousand religious monuments were partially or fully rebuilt. Within a time span of only 15 years the ruined site was completely transformed.

In my talk, I am going to discuss the political implications of this spatial transformation. Taking Contemporary Archaeology as an approach, I will describe the architectural and archaeological evidence of this material transformation with the help of maps and images. I will then cross-reference my spatial analysis with other types of data to create a multi-faceted narrative that complements the institutionalized interpretations of this highly contested site.



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