

RELS 399 Proposal / Spring 2005

Chelsea Diffendal, with Professor Zeff Bjerken

Project Title: “Sleeping, Dreaming and Dying in Tibetan Buddhism”

Project Description:

This course will examine Tibetan Buddhist theories and meditative practices concerning sleeping and dreaming, and their relation to dying, the intermediate state, and rebirth. For this independent study course I will explore the role of dreams and dreaming in Buddhism, focusing primarily on Tibetan Buddhism, but also drawing upon Chan/Zen Buddhism for comparative purposes. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, I will examine the relationship between dreaming and the liminal post-death realm of the *bardo* (the “in between state”). **How is dream yoga in the Tibetan tradition linked to the *bardo* state? How do Tibetan Buddhists conceptualize and explain the relationship between dreams and the Bardo in terms of karma and the theory of reincarnation? What is the ontological status and soteriological significance of dreams in Tibetan (and Chan) Buddhism?** This last question will enable me to explore the relationship between the “reality” of dreams and the everyday “reality” of mundane life, and how Buddhists develop practices and rituals, including “shamanistic” practices, for connecting these two realms in an effort to achieve enlightenment.

I will meet with Professor Bjerken once a week (Thursdays) for two hours to discuss the reading material listed in the bibliography below. I will write two ten-page papers on the topics that I will explore over the course of the semester.

Bibliography

- Amore, Roy C. “Comparative Study of Buddha's Pre-Enlightenment Dreams: Implications for Religions.” *The Notion of ‘Religion’ in Comparative Research*. Ed. by Ugo Bianchi. Rome, 1990, pp. 541-46.
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- Faure, Bernard. “Dreaming” and “Images of Death” in *Visions of Power: Imagining Medieval Japanese Buddhism*. Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 114-178.
- Faure, Bernard. “Dreams within a Dream” from *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism*. Princeton University Press, 1991, pp. 209-230.
- Germano, David. “Food, Clothes, Dreams, and Karmic Propensities.” In *Religions of Tibet in Practice*. Ed. Donald Lopez. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 293-312.
- Samuel, Geoffrey. *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993.
- Sharma, Jagdish, and Lee Siegel. *Dream-Symbolism in the Sramanic Tradition: Two Psychoanalytic Studies in Jainist and Buddhist Dream Legends*. Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1980.
- Wangyal, Tenzin. *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*. Ithaca: Snow Lion Press, 1998.
- Young, Serenity. *Dreaming in the Lotus: Buddhist Dream Narrative, Imagery, and Practice*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999.