



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Tantra in India and Tibet - 35837

Last update 11-09-2024

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 2nd degree (Master)

Responsible Department: Asian Studies

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: English

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Alexander Zorin

Coordinator Email: aleksandr.v.zorin@gmail.com

Coordinator Office Hours: by appointment, generally before or after classes

Teaching Staff:

Prof. Alexander Zorin

Course/Module description:

This course is intended for students interested in the history, ideology, and practices of Buddhism, particularly Indian and Tibetan Buddhism. It introduces students to the formation and development of Tantric Buddhism in India (in relation to Śaivite Tantrism), its spread to other countries, and the history and practice of this form of Buddhism in Tibet, where it became dominant. The course also covers key elements of Tantric literature and arts that were imported from India and further developed in Tibet.

Course/Module aims:

The aim of the course is to provide a foundational understanding of key elements of Tantric Buddhism as a religious system that was formed in India during the 8th-12th centuries and became dominant in Tibet.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- explain the circumstances surrounding the formation of Vajrayāna in India and its historical relations to other forms of Buddhism and Indian religions, particularly Śaivism;*
- understand the main reasons and paths by which Tantrism became dominant in Tibet;*
- identify the major classifications of tantric practices;*
- differentiate between the major types of rituals and the deities invoked for their accomplishment;*
- interpret key elements of Tantric symbolism when reading translations from Sanskrit and Tibetan or observing objects of Tantric art.*

Attendance requirements(%):

100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Frontal lectures, reading and analysis of translation excerpts from Sanskrit and Tibetan.

Course/Module Content:

- 1. Tantra (Vajrāyana) in the history of Buddhism.*
- 2. Śaivite Tantrism, its relation to Buddhist Tantra.*
- 3. Spread of Vajrāyana to Eastern and Southern Asia.*

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4. *Tantra in Tibet during the early spread of Buddhism and the fragmentation period.*
 5. *Old tantras of the Nyingma school.*
 6. *Tantra in Tibet during the later spread of Buddhism.*
 7. *Four classes of tantra: overview.*
 8. *The Creation and Completion Stages.*
 9. *The cults of Dharmapālas.*
 10. *Four types of tantric rituals. Tantra and magic.*
 11. *Tantric iconography.*
 12. *Tantric literature.*
 13. *The system of Kālacakratāntra.*

Required Reading:

Bentor, Yael and Penpa Dorjee, 2024. *Ocean of Attainments - The Creation Stage of the Guhyasamāja Tantra according to Khedrup Jé*. Wisdom publications, 2024.

Beyer, Stephan. *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

Davidson R. M. *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the rebirth of Tibetan culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Einoo Shingo, ed. *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo, Institute of Oriental Culture, 2009.

de Nebesky-Woikowitz, René. *Oracles and Demons of Tibet. The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities*. Delhi: Classics India Publications, 1998 (1st edition: 1956).

Additional Reading Material:

Acri, Andrea, ed. *Esoteric Buddhism in Mediaeval Maritime Asia: Networks of Masters, Texts, Icons*. Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016.

Andresen, Jensine. *Kālacakra: Textual and Ritual Perspectives*. Ph.D. dissertation. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1997.

Beer R. *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*. Serindia Publications, 1999.

Bentor, Yael. *The Cosmos, the Person, and the Sādhana — A Treatise on Tibetan Tantric Meditation*, Sample. University of Virginia Press, 2024.

Bentor, Yael. "Maintaining Identification with a Buddha: Divine Identity or Simply False?", in Schaeffer, Kurtis, William McGrath and Jue Lang (eds), *Histories of Tibet: Essays in Honor of Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp*. Wisdom Publications, 2023. Pp. 307–322.

Braitstein, Lara E. *Saraha's Adamantine Songs: Texts, Contexts, Translations and Traditions of the Great Seal*. Ph.D. dissertation. Montreal: McGill University, 2004.

Bronkhorst, Johannes. *Buddhist Teaching in India*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009.

Buddhism. *Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*. Edited by Paul Williams. Volume VI. *Tantric Buddhism (including China and Japan); Buddhism in Nepal and Tibet*. London and New York: Routledge; Taylor & Francis Group, 2005.

Bühnemann, Gudrun. "Buddhist Deities and Mantras in the Hindu Tantras I: the *Tantrasārasaṃgraha* and the *Īśānaśīvagurudevapaddhati*", in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 42. Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999. Pp. 303–334.

Bühnemann, Gudrun. "Buddhist Deities and Mantras in the Hindu Tantras II: the *Śrīvidhyārṇavatāntra* and the *Tantrasāra*", in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 43. Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000. Pp. 27–48.

Dalton, Jacob R. *Conjuring the Buddha: Ritual Manuals in Early Tantric Buddhism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2023.

Dalton J. R. *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*. Yale University Press, 2013.

Davidson, Ronald M. *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of Tantric Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

English, Elizabeth. *Vajrayoginī: Her Visualizations, Rituals, and Forms. A Study of the Cult of Vajrayoginī in India*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2002.

Goodall, Dominic and Harunaga Isaacson, ed. *Tantric Studies: Fruits of a Franco-German project on Early Tantra* Paperback. EFEO, 2016.

Goodall, Dominic, Shaman Hatley, Harunaga Isaacson, Srilata Raman, ed. *Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions: Essays in Honour of Alexis G.J.S. Sanderson*. Brill, 2020.

Gray, David B. *The Cakrasamvara Tantra (The Discourse of Śrī Heruka): A Study and Annotated Translation*. New York: 2007.

Hartzell, James Francis. *Tantric Yoga: a Study of the Vedic Precursors, Historical Evolution, Literatures, Cultures, Doctrines, and Practices of the 11th century Kaśmīrī Śaivite and Buddhist Unexcelled Tantric Yogas*. Ph.D. dissertation. New York: Columbia University, 1997.

Hoffer, Theresia, ed. *Bodies in Balance: The Art of Tibetan Medicine*. University of Washington Press, 2014.

Isaacson, Harunaga. "Observations on the Development of the Ritual of Initiation (*abhiṣeka*) in the Higher Buddhist Tantric Systems", in *Hindu and Buddhist Initiations in India and Nepal*. Wiesbaden, 2010, Pp. 261–279.

Kapstein, Matthew and Sam van Schaik, eds. *Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang: Rites and Teachings for This Life and Beyond*. Brill, 2010.

Kragh, Ulrich Timme. *Tibetan Yoga and Mysticism. A Textual Study of the Yogas of Nāropa and Mahāmudrā Meditation in the Medieval Tradition of Dags po*. Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies (Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series XXXII), 2015.

Kvaerne, Per. *An Anthology of Buddhist Tantric Songs*. Bangkok: White Orchid Press, 1986.

Lama Chönam, Sangye Khandro, translator. *The Guhyagarbha Tantra. Secret Essence Definitive Nature just As It Is*. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2011.

Lorenzen, David N. *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas: Two Lost Śaivite Sects*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1991.

van Schaik, Sam. *Approaching the Great Perfection: Simultaneous and Gradual Methods of Dzogchen Practice in the Longchen Nyintig* (Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism). Wisdom Publications, 2004.

Samuel, Geoffrey. *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the Thirteenth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

van Schaik, Sam. *Buddhist Magic: Divination, Healing, and Enchantment through the Ages*. Shambhala: 2020.

White, David Gordon. *The Alchemical Body. Siddha Traditions in Medieval India*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Grading Scheme:

Additional information: