

RG ST 125/EACS 181BC **Special Topics: Buddhism and Local Cults in Asia**

UCSB Spring 2011 Time: MW 9:30-10:45 Place: NH1111

Professor Fabio Rambelli, HSSB 2253

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Office hours: M 11-12, W 3:00-4:00, and by appointment

Course Overview

One of the most significant, and neglected, characteristics of Buddhism is an active interest in local cults. This interest often resulted in various forms of interaction, in which Buddhist doctrines, rituals, and imagery were combined with pre- and non-Buddhist religious phenomena; old cults were restructured, and new cults arose. This course is an attempt to outline a systematic understanding of Buddhism's manifold relations with local cults in various parts of Asia, beginning with patterns established in ancient India, and followed by further developments in Thailand, Burma, Tibet, China, and Japan.

Course Requirements

You are expected to attend all classes, prepare the readings before each class, and actively participate in in-class discussion. You are required to take a **mid-term exam** and a **final exam**, and to write a **research paper** on a topic of your choice related to the course readings but discussed with me well in advance and approved by me.

Absences: you will be permitted two excused absences from lectures; additional absences will result in a grade reduction.

Mid-term Exam and **Final Exam:** you will have to choose two topics from among a few general themes addressed in the class and write about them in a concise but thoughtful, original, and exhaustive way.

Research Paper: at the end of the course you will have to turn in a 10-page research paper about one of the subjects addressed in the course. Tangential topics are OK only as long as they are clearly connected to course material. You must discuss the topic of your research paper with me well in advance and obtain approval. Please understand that papers whose topics have not been discussed with me in advance might be subject to a grade reduction (including, in extreme cases, a failing grade). You are expected to use at least 8-10 sources (among which, at least 5 must be books).

Grading

Attendance and active participation in class: 15%

Mid-Term Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 25%

Research Paper: 40%

Required Texts and Readings

Robert DeCaroli, *Haunting the Buddha: Indian Popular Religions and the Formation of Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004

Stanley Tambiah, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970

Stephen Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*. Princeton University Press, 1996

—Course Reader

The books and the course reader are available at the Campus Bookstore (UCen). The required books, as well as other books related to the course, are also on reserve in the library.

IMPORTANT NOTE: All students are expected to adhere to university codes of academic integrity. All instances of academic misconduct (including Cheating, Plagiarism, and Collusion) will be rigorously investigated and carried forward with the academic judiciary at the Office of Student Life.

***Please turn off all cell phones and electronic devices before each class.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (March 28) Course Introduction

<<March 30 NO CLASS: Dr. Rambelli attends a conference in Honolulu>>

Week 2 (April 4 and 6) Indian Popular Religion and the Formation of Buddhism

Readings: *Haunting the Buddha*

Week 3 (April 11 and 13) Burma Nats Cults

Readings: *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism; Burmese Supernaturalism; The Burmese Nats* (Reader)

Week 4 (April 18 and 20) Thai Spirit Cults 1

Readings: *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand*

Week 5 (April 25 and 27) Thai Spirit Cults 2

Readings: *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand; Spirits of the Place* (Reader)

<<<<<<MID-TERM EXAM ON APRIL 27>>>>>>

Week 6 (May 2 and 4) Bon: The Indigenous Tradition of Tibet

Readings: Bon: A Heterodox System; Bon Religion: Scriptures, Pantheon, Ritual; The Bon Religion (two chapters); Tonpa Shenrab Miwo; Olmo Lungring; Myths and Rituals; Bonpo Tantric Deities (Reader)

Week 7 (May 9 and 11) Buddhism and Shinto

Readings: Combinatory religion... in pre-modern Japan; Medieval Shinto as a form of "Japanese Hinduism"; Wrathful Deities and Saving Deities; Shinto Icons; Re-positioning the gods; Both parts or only one?; Buddhist and Shinto traditions at Suwa shrine (Reader)

Week 8 (May 16 and 18) Buddhism and Chinese Folk Religion 1

Readings: *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*

Week 9 (May 23 and 25) Buddhism and Chinese Folk Religion 2

Readings: *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*

<<<<<<FINAL EXAM ON MAY 25>>>>>>

MAY 30 NO CLASS MEMORIAL DAY

Week 10 (June 1) Final Considerations: Autochthonous, Local, Translocal

Readings: Tradition: The nameless religion; Buddhism, local cults and cultural semiotics (Reader)

<<<<<<RESEARCH PAPER DUE ON MONDAY, JUNE 6, BY 4 PM>>>>>>

Course Bibliography

- Aung, Maung Htin. *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Spiro, Melford E. *Burmese Supernaturalism*. (Expanded Edition). New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1996 (original edition 1967), pp. 40-63, 90-142, 247-280.
- Brac de la Perrière, Bénédictine. "The Burmese Nats," *Diogenes* No. 174, Vol. 44/2, Summer 1996, pp. 45-60.
- Holt, John C. *Spirits of the Place*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009, pp. 15-75, 233-258, 271-274.
- Powers, John. *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1995, pp. 431-447.
- Bansal, B.L. *Bon: Its Encounter with Buddhism in Tibet*. Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1994, pp. 68-98.
- Stein, R.A. *Tibetan Civilization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972, pp. 191-247.
- Tucci, Giuseppe. *The Religions of Tibet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, pp. 213-248.
- Kvaerne, Per. "Tonpa Shenrab Miwo," in Samten and Watt, eds., *Bon: The Magic Word*. New York: Rubin Museum of Art and London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2007, pp. 83-97.
- Martin, Dan. "Olmo Lungring," in Samten and Watt, eds., *Bon: The Magic Word*, pp. 99-123.
- Karmay, Samten. "Myths and Rituals," in Samten and Watt, eds., *Bon: The Magic Word*, pp. 147-163.
- Kvaerne, Per. "Bonpo Tantric Deities," in Samten and Watt, eds., *Bon: The Magic Word*, pp. 165-179.
- Teeuwen, Mark and Fabio Rambelli. "Introduction: Combinatory Religion... in Pre-modern Japan," in Teeuwen and Rambelli, eds., *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, pp. 1-54.
- Iyanaga Nobumi. "Medieval Shinto as a Form of 'Japanese Hinduism,'" *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 16, 2006-2007 (published 2009), pp. 263-303.
- Sato Hiroo. "Wrathful Deities and Saving Daities," in Teeuwen and Rambelli, eds., *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*, pp. 95-114.
- Kadoya Atsushi. "On the Formation of Shinto Icons," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 16, 2006-2007 (published 2009), pp. 151-182.
- Rambelli, Fabio. "Re-positioning the Gods," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 16, 2006-2007 (published 2009), pp. 305-325.
- Scheid, Bernhard. "'Both Parts' or 'Only One,'" in Teeuwen and Rambelli, eds., *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*, pp. 204-221.
- Inoue Takami. "Buddhist and Shinto Traditions at Suwa Shrine," in Teeuwen and Rambelli, eds., *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*, pp. 287-312.
- Rambelli, Fabio. "Interactions Between Buddhism and Local Cults," *Sapporo Daigaku Sogo Ronso* 23, March 2007, pp. 35-55.