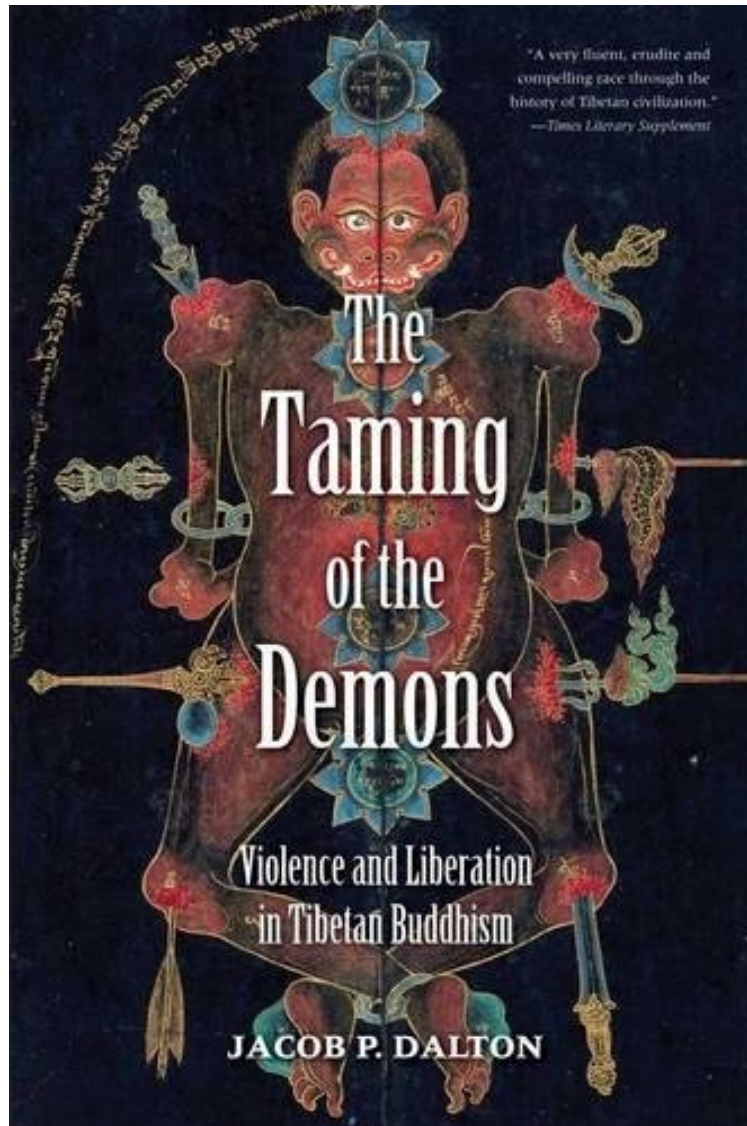


The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism

Jacob P. Dalton PhD

ePub | *DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#603983 in Books Jacob P Dalton 2013-01-08Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.02 x .73 x 5.981, .90
#File Name: 0300187963328 pagesThe Taming of the Demons Violence and Liberation in Tibetan
Buddhism | File size: 16.Mb

Jacob P. Dalton PhD : The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism:

36 of 38 people found the following review helpful. illuminating studyBy inner exileThe first chapter introduces some

relevant ideas pertaining to compassionate violence in the Mahayana sutras, which is followed by a synopsis of the Rudra (an epithet of the Hindu god Shiva) subjugation myth, an excellent full translation of which, taken from "The Collected Tantras of the Ancients" (rNying-ma'i rgyud 'bum), is given in appendix A (pp. 159-206). The ultimate message for Vajrayana practitioners can be summarized as follows: "[T]he gradual unfolding of consciousness into increasingly coarse forms may be understood as either a cosmogonic process, describing the origin of beginningless samsara, or a phenomenological one, tracing the momentary emanation of concepts out of emptiness. In this sense, the universe is collapsing and being reborn at every instant, the phenomena of samsara withdrawing into the foundation [laya/kun gzhi] and, propelled and shaped by our own fears and karmic predispositions, reemerging once more in its variegated forms as wisdom and ignorance, good and evil...Nupchen [Sangye Yeshe, 9-10th c.] thus understands the Rudra myth as a narrative account of the very nature of samsaric existence, a violent universe rooted in a seminal moment of intrinsic ignorance when beings mistake their own projections onto the foundation for the foundation itself, when Rudra misunderstood the Mahayoga teachings" (pp. 40-41; cf. chapter 9 in M. Kapstein's *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* 2000). Chapter 2 explores through some textual evidence how during the 'age of fragmentation' (sil-bu'i dus; 842-986) certain demon-taming rituals gained popularity, freed from the Old Tibetan royal court's supervision, were adopted and altered to bind the myriad local spirits of the Tibetan landscape. Chapter 3 includes a full translation and analysis of a 10th-century Mahayoga manual, found in the Dunhuang "library cave" (Pelliot tibetain 42, 840/1 and India Office Library 419; appendices B-C on pp. 207-17), which is aimed at the liberation (sgrol-ba) of a person being guilty of committing any of the five crimes against the Dharma (p. 85; see also 'mtshams-med Inga': "five boundless/inexpiable [sins/transgressions]"). The author's dilemma is whether a live victim (whose severed head is cast in the mandala, and the consciousness is being directed - ideally - to a favourable rebirth) or, as was/is customary, an effigy of paper, cloth, or dough, was used during this rite. The text is then compared to the 'Blood Chapter' in the Hindu "Klika Purana". Chapter 4 discusses Guge king Yeshe (947-1024) prohibitive edict to counter the "rampant abuse of tantric ritual," including live liberation and/or ritual killings. Dalton refers to the "eighteen robber monks" (ar-tsho ban-de bco-brgyad), citing *The Blue Annals* (Two parts in One) (Pt. 1 2) (pp. 696-7), a "group [which] had studied the tantras under a visiting Indian master named Prajnyugupta, and by the early eleventh century they had become notorious for kidnapping victims, stretching them out on the ground between ritual stakes, and sacrificing them to the dkins" (p. 99). "Yeshe was working to negotiate a new relationship between religious violence and the state. The Buddhist tantras bestowed upon their most accomplished practitioners the right to enact violence, and this presented a direct threat to the authority of the Tibetan court" (p. 14). Chapter 5 focuses on the geomantic, mystical theory underlying the massive construction efforts of sacred sites that characterized the early stage of 'the later diffusion' (phyi dar) of the 11-12th centuries. By drawing on the rediscovered treasure (gter-ma) known as the "Pillar Testament" (bKa'-chems ka-khol-ma), the author investigates the popular myth of pinning down the giant supine demoness/rkshas, an overarching metaphor for the Buddhist conversion of the barbaric and backward Tibet. "Rudra's ghastly palace of skulls atop blood-soaked Mount Malaya had provided the original setting for the tantras to be taught. Similarly for Tibetans of the later dispensation period, tantric violence provided the sacred space within which Buddhism flourished. From preliminary rites for pinning down local gods, to the mapping of Tibetan geography, the violent imagery of Rudra's sacrificial liberation remained formative" (p. 111). Please note the Tibetan verb for 'tame' ('dul) is also used for translating the Sanskrit term Vinaya/Monastic Discipline ('Dul-ba). The various rituals performed with the intent to subjugate native spirit beings can be viewed in the context of weather magic, whereby certain environmental conditions are believed to be manipulated in order to make a given location suitable for human existence and agriculture. Examples for Buddhist warfare (Sokdokpa Lodr Gyeltsen 1552-1624, the Fifth Dalai Lama 1617-82, et al.) are provided in chapter 6, as manifested in large scale army-repelling (dmag zlog) rituals during the Mongol-Sakya hegemony (1250-1350s) and in framework of the Kagyu-Geluk inter-sectarian rivalry under the Tsangpa rulers (1570s-1642). "Large numbers of ritual experts would gather for performances that could last several days, if not weeks. Legions of effigies of the enemy soldiers would be fashioned, so that the practitioners in effect recreated the battlefield within the confines of the ritual space" (p. 134). "When representing their sacred realm and their demons, the greatest threats no longer inhered in Tibet's own soil; they dwelt at its dark edges. The model of demons pinned underfoot gave way to one of demons massing at the borders. Buddhist construction gave way to Buddhist warfare, foundation sacrifice to war magic" (p. 143). The final chapter draws parallel between Scotsman L. A. Waddell's view of 'Lamaism' as "deep-rooted devil-worship and sorcery" and his Tibetan contemporary, rigdzin Garwang's complaints from a text called "The Dangers of Blood Sacrifice" (dMar mchod nyes-dmigs) concerning the benighted practices of his fellow countrymen. Also considered, though briefly, are some of the themes relating to the so-called 'hidden valleys' (sbas yul) that functioned as safe havens for the devout in times of external attack, internecine conflict, plagues, etc. "Simultaneously dark ravines and hidden paradises, the borderlands and their violent inhabitants operate as both poison and cure for Tibet...The realities of the borderlands and the lives of their inhabitants matter less here than the reflective power these places have in the Tibetan imagination. Tibetan attitudes toward these places thus represent Tibetans' own internal dislocation, a divide over violence that they have represented to themselves as an external dualism between center and periphery" (pp. 154-5). Endnotes (pp. 219-77), glossary (279-

84), bibliography (285-304), index (305-11).1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. IlluminatingBy christopher realTaming of the demons was very illuminating in regards to the foundations of Tibetan Buddhist practice. As a Buddhist, one is often introduced to the myths, but not the history. This text expertly weaves together the founding myths of both the Nyingma (ancient way) and Sarma (new translation) traditions. It gives insight into practice for vajrayana Buddhist followers, and insight into history and culture for the casual reader.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Fantastic Piece of ScholarshipBy JPCDalton's The Taming of the Demons (2011) examines Buddhism from what is known as Tibet's period of fragmentation (842-985 c.e.) until the Mongol invasions of the 13th century. The work examines how a constitutive other played a crucial role in the formation of religious identities used to legitimate political regimes both during periods of relative economic and political isolation. One of the fundamental points argued by Dalton is that theological developments cannot be understood in isolation from the political and economic contexts in which they take place. Dalton focuses on the theme of sacrifice, and argues that it played a similar ideological function in both the British colonial project in India and Tibet, as well as the 10th-century state-building project of the Tibetan king Yeshe . The Rudra myth, and its associated liberation rite a violent act of human sacrifice as practiced by the tantrikas played an important role in defining the new legal structures introduced during the 10th century by Yeshe , functioning as the formless chaos that would define by contrast the shape of the Tibetan state. Dalton demonstrates how Tibetan political fragmentation was, on the one hand, something necessary for the spread of Buddhism: without a central, monastic authority, Buddhism spread at the local level, and this was precisely what allowed the populace of Tibet to make Buddhism its own. Yet at the same time, the fragmentation necessary for the spread of Buddhism, and the innovations made at the local level, were equally necessary for the later consolidation and control of orthodox, monastic Buddhism.

The Taming of the Demons examines mythic and ritual themes of violence, demon taming, and blood sacrifice in Tibetan Buddhism. Taking as its starting point Tibet's so-called age of fragmentation (842 to 986 C.E.), the book draws on previously unstudied manuscripts discovered in the library cave near Dunhuang, on the old Silk Road. These ancient documents, it argues, demonstrate how this purportedly inactive period in Tibetan history was in fact crucial to the Tibetan assimilation of Buddhism, and particularly to the spread of violent themes from tantric Buddhism into Tibet at the local and the popular levels. Having shed light on this dark age of Tibetan history, the second half of the book turns to how, from the late tenth century onward, the period came to play a vital symbolic role in Tibet, as a violent historical other against which the Tibetan Buddhist tradition defined itself.

"Dalton offers clear and concise explanations and provides background information, thus making the content accessible to upper-level undergraduates or graduate students with only a minimal understanding of tantric or Tibetan Buddhism . . . Highly recommended."--A.L./i--A.L. Folk "Choice ""This well-documented study is a great contribution to our understanding of how Tibetan Buddhism was formed and goes a long way to explain some of the more unusual aspects of this tradition. Dalton's work displays impressive scholarship and provides a very innovative and original take on an important and yet not well-understood aspect of Tibetan Buddhism. It will be an important book."--Georges Dreyfus, Williams College--Georges Dreyfus (11/23/2010)"Shining a light on esoteric texts from the seldom-studied "dark" period of Tibetan Buddhism, this important book follows their ritual and rhetorical legacy into modern times, bringing us face to face with one of the greatest challenges to our interpretive abilities in all of Tibetan religious history. The incisive questions it raises, not only about the difference between symbols and the real, but also the very valence of violence in the religious - and ethical -- life of humankind, will be ours to ponder for a long time."--Janet Gyatso, Harvard University--Janet Gyatso (11/23/2010)"Jacob Dalton's "Taming the Demons" is the single best book to date on Buddhists' (and especially Tibetans') struggle to come to terms with the religious sanctioning of violence. Staggering in its breath, and covering 2000 years of Buddhist textual history, the book explores Buddhist attitudes toward violence in literature as diverse as Indian monastic texts, tantric myths and rites, moral treatises, biographies, and legal speculation. A major contribution to our understanding of Buddhism."-- Jose Ignacio Cabezon, UC Santa Barbara--Jose Cabezon (11/23/2010)"This is a complex book that is sure to provoke specialists, but also a very fluent, erudite and compelling race through the history of Tibetan civilization...Jacob Dalton has done a great service to the field."--George Fitzherbert, "Times Literary Supplement"--George Fitzherbert"Times Literary Supplement" (03/16/2012)Shortlisted for the 2012 Academy of Religion Book Awards in the Historical Study of Religion category (winners will be announced around mid-July)--Historical Study of Religion Award Shortlist "American Academy of Religion "About the AuthorJacob P. Dalton is assistant professor of Tibetan Buddhist studies in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley.