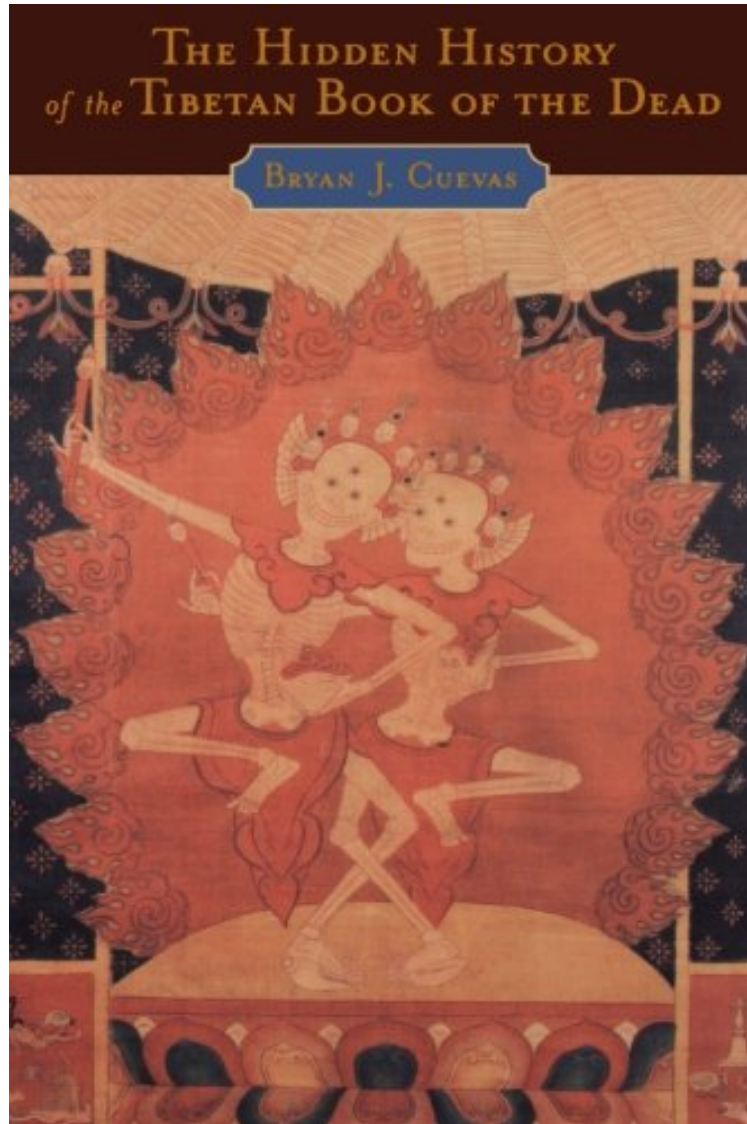


[PDF] The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead

The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead

Bryan J. Cuevas

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Bryan J. Cuevas : The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead:

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Valued CustomerExcellent!!!19 of 19 people found the following review helpful. A must read if you are interested in the Tibetan Book of the DeadBy 3.14piThis book is required reading for anyone studying the Tibetan Bardo tradition. Professor Cuevas exposes the prejudices of some revered authors on the subject, including pioneer Evans Wentz, who Cuevas points out gave the work its misleading name. As other highly personalized interpretations followed from Tim Leary's The Psychedelic Experience to E.J.

Gold's *The American Book of the Dead*, little attention was given to the actual historical context of these ideas. Cuevas digs deeply into the available records finding links between Bon and Buddhist traditions that produced not one but many works on the bardo. Many of the key ideas westerners associate with the bardo writings are traced back to their source in Hindu tradition. Cuevas takes time to acquaint the reader with neglected facets of these teachings from their earliest form to nearly forgotten elaborations revealing an until now lost world of rich and varied contributions.

In 1927, Oxford University Press published the first western-language translation of a collection of Tibetan funerary texts (the Great Liberation upon Hearing in the Bardo) under the title *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Since that time, the work has established a powerful hold on the western popular imagination, and is now considered a classic of spiritual literature. Over the years, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* has inspired numerous commentaries, an illustrated edition, a play, a video series, and even an opera. Translators, scholars, and popular devotees of the book have claimed to explain its esoteric ideas and reveal its hidden meaning. Few, however, have uttered a word about its history. Bryan J. Cuevas seeks to fill this gap in our knowledge by offering the first comprehensive historical study of the Great Liberation upon Hearing in the Bardo, and by grounding it firmly in the context of Tibetan history and culture. He begins by discussing the many ways the texts have been understood (and misunderstood) by westerners, beginning with its first editor, the Oxford-educated anthropologist Walter Y. Evans-Wentz, and continuing through the present day. The remarkable fame of the book in the west, Cuevas argues, is strikingly disproportionate to how the original Tibetan texts were perceived in their own country. Cuevas tells the story of how *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* was compiled in Tibet, of the lives of those who preserved and transmitted it, and explores the history of the rituals through which the life of the dead is imagined in Tibetan society. This book provides not only a fascinating look at a popular and enduring spiritual work, but also a much-needed corrective to the proliferation of ahistorical scholarship surrounding *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

"Cuevas' achievement lies in his association of a time, place, and likely author(s) with the earliest works, a major step forward in our understanding of this genre. The presentation of the sophisticated religious milieu of the text's 'revealers' is lucid, grounded as it is in a strong command of the literature. Historical developments relating to hagiography, textual transmission, funeral liturgy, and other matters are treated with similar ease...In many ways, this constitutes a model contribution to Tibetan studies." --Religious Studies " ...deserves to be highly recommended as a precious contribution to the field of the fascinating Tibetan Book of the Dead" --Journal of Asian Studies "Cuevas's book is required reading for anyone seriously interested in the Tibetan Book of the Dead." --Choice "The Tibetan Book of the Dead is without doubt the Tibetan work best known in the West and in the three-quarters of a century since its initial translation it has won a secure place for itself in the Religious Studies canon. Nevertheless, its actual history and role in Tibetan religious culture have remained topics of ignorance, even among scholars of Buddhism. In *The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Bryan Cuevas now masterfully addresses these matters, shedding welcome light on a celebrated book and on Tibetan religious history more generally." -- Matthew Kapstein, Professor, The University of Chicago, Director of Tibetan Studies, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris "Works that are considered to be timeless world classics arose at specific times and in specific places. The Tibetan Book of the Dead is one such work, and it is through understanding its time and its place that we can gain new insights into many meanings. In this compelling study, Bryan Cuevas provides a lamp that illuminates this book that we thought we knew so well." -- Donald S. Lopez, author of *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* and *The Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to Its History and Teachings* About the Author Bryan J. Cuevas is John F. Priest Professor of Religion and Director of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies at Florida State University.