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The Tibetan Book Of The Dead: Or, The After-Death Experiences On The Bardo Plane, According To Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup's English Rendering (Galaxy Books)



Synopsis

The Tibetan Book of the Dead is one of the texts that, according to legend, Padma-Sambhava was compelled to hide during his visit to Tibet in the late 8th century. The guru hid his books in stones, lakes, and pillars because the Tibetans of that day and age were somehow unprepared for their teachings. Now, in the form of the ever-popular Tibetan Book of the Dead, these teachings are constantly being discovered and rediscovered by Western readers of many different backgrounds--a phenomenon which began in 1927 with Oxford's first edition of Dr. Evans-Wentz's landmark volume. While it is traditionally used as a mortuary text, to be read or recited in the presence of a dead or dying person, this book--which relates the whole experience of death and rebirth in three intermediate states of being--was originally understood as a guide not only for the dead but also for the living. As a contribution to the science of death and dying--not to mention the belief in life after death, or the belief in rebirth--The Tibetan Book of the Dead is unique among the sacred texts of the world, for its socio-cultural influence in this regard is without comparison. This fourth edition features a new foreword, afterword, and suggested further reading list by Donald S. Lopez, author of *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*. Lopez traces the whole history of the late Evans-Wentz's three earlier editions of this book, fully considering the work of contributors to previous editions (C. G. Jung among them), the sections that were added by Evans-Wentz along the way, the questions surrounding the book's translation, and finally the volume's profound importance in engendering both popular and academic interest in the religion and culture of Tibet. Another key theme that Lopez addresses is the changing nature of this book's audience--from the prewar theosophists to the beat poets to the hippies to contemporary exponents of the hospice movement--and what these audiences have found (or sought) in its very old pages. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

This translation deserved the good reviews. The text has been summed up well in other reviews. A word about the author seems appropriate. It is worth pointing out that W.Y. Evans-Wentz was an American (one reviewer stated that W.Y. E-W was English). The confusion here stems from the fact that W.Y. E-W went to Oxford, England, as a Rhodes scholar. He was a very articulate and erudite man - well versed in the Western classics, Western mystery tradition etc. - and in his footnotes, he made frequent cross references to such. A few people now fault E-W' work - because of the universal sweep of his intuitions. It has even been suggested that he corrupted the purity of the Tibetan teachings - by his inter-cultural or trans-cultural horizons. Some Tibetan Lamas (i.e. Trungpa) have faulted E-W's work on such grounds. Western aficionados of Tibetan Buddhism - people who like to imagine themselves among the elect (Professors and pop followers alike) have chimed in. Such people forget (or prefer to ignore) the fact that W.Y. Evans-Wentz spent many years studying and working with Tibetan Lamas. Be assured, W.Y. Evans-Wentz' projects had the blessing of his Tibetan co-worker - Lama Kazi Dawa Sammdup. There are those who would argue that this blessing did not extend to the commentary material - subsequently added by E-W, after his work with the Lama. But how E-W presented the material to a Western audience - was his business. Death is most certainly a universal experience - and E-W placed it in a truly universal context. Is that so surprising? The Jungian commentary appended to the first ed. of this text has also come in for criticism (some editions now delete it).

This is the original "Tibetan Book of the Dead". All other versions are a toned-down version of this work by different authors who want to accommodate people who do not want to put the work in. You need to put the work in. No one can spoon-feed this kind of wisdom to you. The Tibetan Book of the Dead is an extremely authoritative translation of the original texts of the "Bardo Thodol" by Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdub who schooled W.Y. Evans-Wentz in Tibetan Buddhism. The book is an extremely important piece of work for both the scholars of psychology and religion, and the lay person who has the time to spend working on it. The book is also the reality behind the

"Necronomicon" which has been popularized by fiction writers, such as H.P. Lovecraft, but has been completely taken out of its true context. To begin with, this book is a beautiful book once you truly understand the message that it is trying to convey to the reader - or more correctly, when the reader correctly understands the message that is being conveyed. It has a primordial air to it and is certainly ancient in its wisdom and understanding. The book was translated in the early 1900s and was first published in 1927. Be warned - this book is exceptionally difficult to read because the standard of grammar used is of the highest acumen humanly possibly. Evans-Wentz was a Doctor of Literature, a Doctor of Science and a Master of Arts. If you don't have a full size Oxford dictionary, then you will have trouble reading it. There is also a difficulty in the translation. There are many Tibetan words that do not exist in English so Evans-Wentz sometimes derives a more descriptive meaning behind the message that is trying to be communicated to the reader. Dr. C.G.

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