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# The Tibetan Book Of The Dead: First Complete Translation (Penguin Classics)



PENGUIN CLASSICS

*The Tibetan Book of the Dead*

FIRST COMPLETE TRANSLATION



## Synopsis

The most graceful English translation of this masterpiece of world literature - prepared with the participation of the Dalai Lama and eminent contemporary masters of this tradition appointed by the Dalai Lama. One of the greatest works created by any culture and one of the most influential of all Tibetan Buddhist texts in the West, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* has had a number of distinguished translations, but strangely all of these have been partial abridgements. Now the entire text has not only been made available in English but in a translation of quite remarkable clarity and beauty. A comprehensive guide to living and dying, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* contains exquisitely written guidance and practices related to transforming our experience in daily life, on the processes of dying and the after-death state, and on how to help those who are dying. As originally intended this is as much a work for the living, as it is for those who wish to think beyond a mere conventional lifetime to a vastly greater and grander cycle. 'Extraordinary ... this work will be a source of inspiration and support to many' His Holiness the Dalai Lama

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## Customer Reviews

The Tibetan Book of the Dead edited by Graham Coleman, Thupten Jinpa, translated by Gyurme Dorje (Viking) is by far the most popular example of indigenous Tibetan Buddhist treasure literature. An edition was issued in 1927 by Oxford University Press under the general editorship of W. Y. Evans-Wentz. The block-print copy, he used was an abridgment obtained in Nepal and translated by a Tibetan lama. Evans-Wentz was a scholarly Theosophist who imported certain Theosophical preconceptions into his commentary on the work. Carl Jung the prominent analytical psychologist even wrote a psychological commentary on the work prompted by Evans-Wentz. Since the 1970s, beginning with Francesca Fremantle and Chogyam Trungpa's edition of the text and more recently Robert Thurman's translation, corrected versions of the Tibetan Book of the Dead are well represented in English and other European languages. The mistakes and egregious errors of the pioneering edition have been corrected and Tibetan Buddhism now in America and Europe has been flourishing with many translations and commentaries on basic Buddhist practices as well as the indigenous literatures of Tibet. This new edition by Graham Coleman and Thupten Jinpa uses a fuller edition of the work for translating, adding new chapters and reflecting the interpretation of contemporary masters and lineage holders of this tradition. In many ways this is the first complete The Tibetan Book of the Dead. In many ways this book is both a guide for living as well as a how to consciously move on after death. The book has been extremely popular in Central Asia among Buddhists.

This handsome edition comes with many credits. The title page tells us that it was composed by Padmasambhava, revealed by Tertön Karma Lingpa, translated by Gyurme Dorje, edited by Graham Coleman with Thupten Jinpa, and has an introductory commentary by HH The Dalai Lama. This chain of transmission parallels the Tibetan Buddhist method of instruction: oral teachings, ideally, from master to student unbroken for millennia. "The Great Liberation by Hearing in the Intermediate State" was revealed in the eighth century, but Padmasambhava foresaw its esoteric nature might be misconstrued and its power diminished, so he arranged to hide it as a "treasure text." It was found by Karma Lingpa in the fourteenth century, and W. Y. Evans-Wentz in the 1920s popularized it after what he understood as its Egyptian counterpart (one remembers the Tut craze then); the misleadingly evocative title has stuck. What the compendium shows, well over six hundred pages in its first comprehensive presentation, is much more than the twelfth book-- what Evans-Wentz, recently followed by Francesca Fremantle & Chogyam Trungpa, Robert Thurman, and Stephen Hodge with Martin Boord have separately translated as the TBoD. That chapter seen in context here falls into place as part of a broader set of pre- as well as post-mortem

litanies, guidance, and rituals. Its editor-translators here capture its essence well when they refer to Jung's conception of the work as used in a "backwards" trajectory in reference to psychoanalysis. That is, we can interpret its teachings moving not only with us after death, but reversed towards our primordial life-force, "right back to a pure original cognitive event.

The Penguin edition of 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' (Bardo Thodol) is the first complete translation of the 'Natural Liberation' texts since W.Y Evans-Wentz's translation that introduced the text to western audiences back in 1927. But Wentz's version translated only three chapters out of the twelve. Here, for the first time, we have a translation of all twelve chapters of the original text considered to be authored by the mythical Indian yogi Padmasambhava back in the 8th century. The legend goes that Padmasambhava hid the texts in a mountain, to be discovered later in a time when people could grasp its meaning; as a result it was uncovered in the 14th century by 'treasure-finder' Karma Lingpa. The Penguin Edition has some beautiful colored illustrations of the 'Peaceful & Wrathful Deities' that are said to arise out of the deceased mind during the 'Intermediate State of Reality', also called the 'Bardo of Reality'. There are three main Bardos (Intermediate States) that are noteworthy: 1.) The Bardo of Death: Spanning from the moment dissolution of the physical body begins to the arising of the 'Clear Light' soon as respiration ceases (the 'Dharmakaya', or the 'Buddha Body of Reality' denoting the essence of the Enlightened Mind). For the initiated, this recognition will come naturally as a result of experience obtained via meditation, but for the common folk it's a tall task as the moment is instantaneous, and often they will be awed and cower from the Light in fear. 2.) The Bardo of Reality : Where, if the deceased fails to recognize the Clear Light as the essence of his own reality, the Peaceful & Wrathful Deities will arise, and the deceased will still have a chance to thwart cyclic existence by understanding the reality of these mental projections.

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