

Spring 2025 Arts of Asia Lecture Series: Visualizing the Divine  
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## **The Buddhist Wheel of Rebirth, Past & Present**

Stephen F. Teiser, Princeton University  
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### **Glossary & Object List**

#### **I. What is the Buddhist wheel of rebirth?**

*Wheel of Rebirth*, cotton painting, 19<sup>th</sup> c., Tibet, #65356, Rubin Museum of Art

*samsāra*: “flowing together with” or “undergoing transmigration”

*karman/karma*: action; all deeds have results

*nirvāṇa*: extinction, extinguishing

Great Demon of Impermanence

Yama (literally: twin), king of underworld

3 poisons: greed (rooster), hatred (snake), delusion (pig)

6 paths: gods (in heaven), demi-gods (*asuras*), humans, animals, hungry ghosts, hell beings

Mount Sumeru: largest mountain, located at center of world

cycle of dependent origination (*pratītya samutpāda*)

#### **II. Variations**

*The Buddhist Wheel of Existence*, 19<sup>th</sup> c., #2001.49, AAM

*Wheel of Rebirth* mural, Yulin Cave 榆林窟 19, Gansu, early 10<sup>th</sup> c.

*Flower Ornament Sūtra* 大方廣佛華嚴經, 14<sup>th</sup> c., Horim Museum

*Wheel of rebirth* relief carving, Dabaodingshan 大寶頂山, Dazu 大足, Chongqing, ca. 1250

*Ten Realms of Mind Contemplation*, 觀心十方界圖, by Hinokimae Hisei 檜前斐成 (1669),  
British Museum

#### **III. Context**

*délok* (‘*das log*, Tib.): one who has returned from the dead

Françoise Pommaret, *Les revenants de l’au-delà dans le monde tibétain* (1989)

Phra Malai (Thai; Skt.: Maudgalyāyana): name of Śākyamuni Buddha’s disciple

*Manuscript with scenes from the story of the holy monk Phra Malai*, 1844. #1993.10. AAM

*Wheel of Rebirth*, Phuntsokling Monastery, Tibet A.R, 2007

*Wheel of Rebirth and Circle of Mountains* (cakravāla), Pal Karma Surmang Shedrup monastery,  
Sikkim

#### **IV. Modern Wheels**

*The Life of Jesus Christ*, Elaine M. Robson (b. ca. 1941; Ph.D. Bristol University, 2014)

*Americosmos: A Mandala of the Unenlightened States of Affliction*, Darren Drda

D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966)

Tenzin Gyatso, Dalai Lama XIV (b. 1935)

## Further Reading

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- Huntington, Eric. *Creating the Universe: Depictions of the Cosmos in Himalayan Buddhism*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018.
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- Rotman, Andy. *Hungry Ghosts*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2021.
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