HREL 44000: Tibetan Auto/biography

Spring Quarter 2004
Monday 15:00-17:50
Swift Hall Rm 200

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Course description:
In this course, we will explore the genres of biography and autobiography in Tibetan religious and literary culture, with special emphasis on the latter. Though often considered a genre characteristic of—and exclusive to—Western modernity, autobiography has had a long and rich history in Tibet, spanning at least a thousand years. We will begin the course by reading some theoretical studies of biography, autobiography, and narrative. We will then consider some issues specific to Tibetan auto/biography and its historical development, and characteristics of the related genre of Tibetan hagiographical literature. The remainder of the quarter will be spent in reading and analyzing representative examples of these genres, drawn from a variety of authors and periods.

PQ: Preferably some background in Tibetan or Buddhist studies.

Schedule of Class Meetings:

Part One: Theoretical Tools

Week One (29 March 2004): Introduction
Readings: none

Week Two (5 April 2004): Auto/biography as social practice
Readings: Gunn, “The Autobiographical Situation”
Bruner, “The Narrative Construction of Reality”
Sanders, “Theorizing the Collaborative Self”

Week Three (12 April 2004): Tibetan Auto/biography
Gyatso, “Counting Crows’ Teeth: Tibetans and Their Diary-writing Practices”
Gyatso, Apparitions of the Self, Chapter 1, pp. 101–123

Week Four (19 April 2004): Auto/biography and Hagiography
Readings: Robinson, “The Lives of Indian Buddhist Saints”
Templeman, “The Mirror of a Life”
Garratt, “Biography by Installment”

Part Two: Readings

Week Five (26 April 2004): An Influential Pseudo-Autobiography
Readings: Life of Milarepa (entire)

Week Six (3 May 2004): Four Lamas of Dolpo
Week Seven (10 May 2004): ’Jigs-med gLing-pa

Week Eight (17 May 2004): Autobiography of Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug Rang-grol

Week Nine (24 May 2004): The Autobiographies of the Dalai Lama XIV
Readings: H.H. the Dalai Lama XIV, *My Land and My People*, and
H.H. the Dalai Lama XIV, *Freedom in Exile*

Week Ten (1 June 2004): The Autobiography of Tashi Tsering
Readings: Goldstein, Sibenschuh, and Tsering, *The Struggle for Modern Tibet*.

Final Papers will be due in Swift 201 on 8 June 2004 by 3:00PM.
Bibliography

I. Course Readings


II. Selected Other Recommended Sources


