



Being There: Place and Space in the 3rd Kamapa's Travelling Songs

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This presentation will explore the relationship between place/object (Tib. yul; Skt. Viṣaya), perceiver/subject (Tib. yul can; Skt. viṣayin) and space (Tib. chos dbying; Skt. dharmata) in the songs of the 3rd Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje (1284 - 1339). His songs are mgur (doha in Northern Indian languages). According to tradition, these songs were sung spontaneously in response to their setting, without the singer classifying and ordering his or her environment. In this way, it was thought, "the play of space" - the interaction between the place and the mind perceiving it - would be reflected in the song. Unlike the tradition of philosophical and textual analysis that they accompanied to Tibet, these songs were not commentaries on Indian texts, but attempts to "sing emptiness" in a new setting. This combination makes them interesting from two perspectives. Firstly, in that their authors' response is supposed to be unmediated, they tend to focus on the minutiae of everyday life. And secondly, as they relate to their environment in totality, rather than objectifying certain phenomena within it, they highlight the artificial distinction created through the translation of the term yul / viṣaya as both "subject" and "place", offering a new perspective to the subject/ object distinction in Buddhist thought.