

DOTTORATO DI INTERESSE NAZIONALE IN STUDI RELIGIOSI

Ateneo e Dipartimento sede della borsa: Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Dipartimento di Studi sull'Asia e sull'Africa Mediterranea

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Titolo del progetto formativo della borsa di dottorato: Buddhist Contemplative Practices

Descrizione del progetto formativo della borsa di dottorato

Supervisore accademico (Responsabile Scientifico): Professoressa Francesca Tarocco
Supervisore aziendale: Dr. Filippo Scianna

Buddhism encompasses a great variety of scriptural traditions and practices that revolve around the topic of “consciousness”, its nature, potential and functions. A wide array of schools, lineages and practices display distinctive models of contemplative and meditative practice, in order for Buddhist practitioners to have first-hand experiences of various states of consciousness, deepen their understanding of the “inner mind” and shape it in light of the Buddhist soteriological aims. Within the tradition, arguably, *bhāvanā* has been one of the main engines of Buddhist practice. Numerous analytical meditative practices have been designed to address specific doctrinal issues and fundamental epistemological topics, especially after the epistemological turn that took place in India with Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. Other meditation techniques have been developed in order to nurture the wholesome aspects of the inner consciousness and eradicate the unwholesome ones. If the *brahmavihāra* practices are an important example, one can also think of a few other similar practices, for instance those which ended up sketching the so-called ‘mind-training’ (*blo sbyong*), an approach that could be considered as rooted in Śāntideva’s *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* and was resumed in the Tibetan Buddhist context thanks to the Kadampa masters and their lineages. Besides analytical and ethical approaches, one can also mention the wide variety of tantra visualizations and the non-dual approaches which are peculiar to the Dzogchen (*rdzogs chen*) and *mahāmudrā* traditions. As many of those meditative techniques are still practiced, valued and applied in contemporary societies, we welcome projects that analyze their importance both historically and in the contemporary endeavors where they are still applied.

We welcome projects that address the following list of topics but are also open to other proposals:

- Analysis of specific meditative techniques within the Buddhist tradition
- Analysis of the ways in which mind-training exercises, visualizations, concentration practices and other contemplative techniques seek to approach the non-dual dimension of the “inner mind” in various Buddhist practice lineages and traditions
- The distinctive features of traditional Buddhist practices that seek to tap into the non-dual nature of consciousness, and their ability to disclose promising perspectives on the nature of the inner world, with a particular focus on the ways in which they could be meaningful and relevant to the ongoing contemporary debate on the nature of the mind
- The ways in which meditative techniques are still practiced today, with an analysis of the various implications of the major shift from the Buddhist soteriological framework and the modern secular societies
- Contemplative practices in Japan with specific reference to the Zen schools
- Contemplative practices in China with specific reference to Chan
- To what extent are contemplative and meditative practices seen as ritual practices

- Analysis of modern secular meditative and mind-training programs (mindfulness-based programs, compassion-focused programs, etc.) inspired by traditional contemplative practices.

The scholarship will be offered to candidates that respond to the key requisites of the PNRR framework (environmental sustainability, sustainable development, equal opportunity and access to people with (dis)abilities) supported by Ca' Foscari University and the Department of Asian and North African Studies in collaboration with Ubiliber, the publishing company of Unione Buddhista Italiana. In particular, PHD candidates are expected to work to a high standard of language fluency in one or more Asian languages as well as English for academic purposes. The scholarship will include a minimum of six month textual and/or fieldwork training in collaboration with Ubiliber and the Unione Buddhista Italiana, and a minimum of six months to eighteen months training in a designated site outside of Italy, conducting fieldwork or research with a host university or other relevant institution. The University upholds the principles and practices of "Open science" e "FAIR Data".

Buddhist Contemplative Practices

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