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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The publishers would like to thank the following for permission to reprint their material.


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


Nagoya Studies in Indian Culture and Buddhism for permission to reprint Tadeusz Skorupski, Šākyamuni’s enlightenment according to the Yoga Tantra’, Nagoya Studies in Indian Culture and Buddhism, Saṃbhāṣā 6, 1985, pp. 87–94.


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REFLECTIONS ON THE MAHEŚVARA SUBJUGATION MYTH

Indic materials, Sa-skya-pa apologetics, and the birth of Heruka*

Ronald M. Davidson


Perhaps one of the least examined topics in Buddhism is the utilization of myth in service of clerical values. Myth, of course, is intimately connected with all the varieties of praxis, yet to read many descriptive analyses of the Buddhist dispensation, the nonspecialist might rapidly come to the conclusion that Buddhism has few concerns outside of doctrine. This impression is reinforced by both the Eurocentric proclivity to see religion in doxographical terms and by the modern Buddhist apologia—especially prevalent in the Theravāda world—that Buddhism is in reality not a religion but a philosophy. Buddhist specialists have frequently been seduced by either the Judeo-Christian models, which continue to exert influence in the quest for underlying unity in religious phenomena, or by the modern Buddhist desire to appear outside the pale of the set of behaviors subsumed under the term “religion.” Thus, the exploration of Buddhist myth—along with ritual and other forms of activity—has taken a back seat to doctrinal formulations, many of which are recast in a twentieth century philosophical diction that can be quite misleading in its implication of set and setting.

Myth, in fact, has been and continues to be extraordinarily important to Buddhists. Yet the mythic functions are not precisely those found in the Near Eastern religions—Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. Specifically, the ideology of an encapsulated temporal sequence, involving a definite creation event, a closed revelation, and an approaching millennium, are all foreign to Buddhist mythic processes, which verify an open-ended spatio-temporal system wherein all phenomena continually participate in the expression of truth. In general, Buddhist myth does not reveal a cosmology of creation and judgement, with all the attendant personality issues of creator and soul. Instead, it seeks to focus the attention of the audience on paradigms exemplifying the potential for immanent rectification, irrespective of eschatology. Thus, as may be seen in most institutional
religions, Buddhist myths partly reinforce and are partially informed by the doc­
trinal structure; for the Mahāyāna this frequently invokes mythic expressions of
the interpenetration of the relative and absolute spheres.

Such an ideology lends a peculiar polyvalence to Buddhist myths. They tend
to serve an astonishing variety of functions, and, perhaps in keeping with the
doctrine of existence without essence, Buddhist myths freely float from one
milieu to another, sometimes being caught in the act of simultaneously serving
multiple masters. The myth under consideration here—the subjugation of
Mahēśvara and the birth of Heruka—is one of these. We will see that it
developed out of a source myth of Vajrapāṇi taming Mahēśvara in the
Tattvasamgraha and was used in service of establishing authenticity for another
body of literature, the Cakrasaṃvara complex. It completed the cycle of
hermeneutics in Tibet by affirming the authoritativeness of an entirely different
system, the Hevajra, itself the scriptural base for the Lam-'bras system of Sa-
skya-pa meditative praxis. The first part of this paper will examine these three
forms of our myth, tracing the development from one form to the next, starting
with the eighth century Indic locus classicus and finishing with fifteenth century
Tibetan materials. The second part of the paper, Interpretive Strategies, will
present an analysis of the Indic and Tibetan forms according to a tripartite
consideration of history, literature, and doctrine, followed by final conclusions.

The locus classicus: Sarvatatthāgata-tattvasamgraha

All three source traditions—Tattvasamgraha, Cakrasaṃvara, and Hevajra—are
members of the larger set of Buddhist systems known as the [Guhya-] Mantrayāna, the Path of Secret Spells, or the Vajrayāna, the Lightning Path, in
turn considered an extension of the Great Vehicle, the Mahāyāna. Like other
facets of the Buddhist tradition in Asia, the Mantrayāna attempted to justify the
inclusion of its scriptures into the open Buddhist canon. For acceptance as the
“word of the Buddha,” literature must verify that it represented the direct per­
ception of absolute truth by the (or a) buddha, that it was preached by that
buddha to a specific assembly, that it was collected by an authentic master of the
dispensation, and that it was received by a current representative of the tradition
through an authoritative lineage of Buddhist masters, however these latter are
understood.¹

Frequently, the crux of the matter was the verification of the circumstances of
a scripture’s preaching and collection. Buddhist innovators commonly identified
a narrow range of dramatic moments when a new scriptural genre was
expounded to an assembly and ultimately compiled into an authentic pronounce­
ment. One of the more curious facts of the Mantrayāna is that, unlike most other
Indic Buddhist traditions, it came up with multiple scenarios which purported to
identify the circumstances of the preaching of the system’s scriptures—known as sūtra, tantra, mahākalpa, dhāraṇī, etc., depending on the genre or period of
composition. Most of these scenarios are lineage-specific; they discuss the
preaching of the great central scripture (in later literature known as *mûla-tantra*),
often followed by a summary scripture (which is the received text) and the ancillary exegetical scriptures (*ākhyāna-tantra*) utilized by the members of a specific contemplative tradition. The lineages of the *Guhyasamāja*, for example, established the preaching of the *tantras* in conjunction with the myth of Indrabhūti, the legendary king of Udiyāna in the Northwest of India. The lineages of the *Kālacakra* maintained two traditions: that the primordial *buddha* preached the great scripture to King Sucandra of Sambhala at the *stūpa* of Dhānyakaṭaka—thus tying the proclamation of the faith to the fabled land of Sambhala—or that the *buddha* preached the *Mahākālacakra* in Sambhala itself.

The most commonly employed Mantrayāna myth, however, is developed from various sections of perhaps the most influential text of esoteric Buddhism: the *Sarvatathāgata-tattva-samgraha*, the *Summary of All Tathāgatas' Reality* (abr. *Tattva-samgraha*), codified in the early eighth century. Traditionally, the text is understood as the complex interweaving of myths and ritual, all under the directorship of the cosmic *buddha*, Vairocana. Of particular interest to those in the business of Mantrayāna apologetics are chapters one, six, and the epilogue. Chapter one delineates the culmination of the career of the *bodhisattva* Sarvārthasiddhi. He has reached the apex of his natural ability to attain supreme awakening and has proceeded to the tree of awakening. All the *buddhas* then appear to him and break the news that he cannot achieve his goal through his current concentration: he needs the consecrations obtained by the contemplations transforming his body, speech, and mind into adamant (*vajra*). These he secures, and accordingly becomes the *buddha* Vajradhātu, with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto. Subsequently, he follows all the *tathāgatas* back to the Adamantine Jeweled Palace at the summit of Mt. Sumeru to take his rightful place. The body of the *Tattvasamgraha* discusses the rituals and mystic circles (*maṇḍala*) focused on enlightenment and concludes, some twenty-six chapters later, with Vajradhātu turning the wheel of the *dharma* and returning to the tree of awakening to perform the acts of the Buddha in accordance with the worldly understanding of the Buddha’s progress. Most importantly for us, chapter six introduces what was to become perhaps the most influential myth of esoteric Buddhism—the subjugation of the god Śiva (Maheśvara).

**Synopsis:** *Tattvasamgraha*

On the peak of Mt. Sumeru, all the *tathāgatas* requested the *bodhisattva* Vajrapāṇi, the master of mysteries, to produce the deities of his clan (*kula*) for the *maṇḍala*. Vajrapāṇi, however, declined, saying that there yet existed criminals, such as Maheśvara and other gods. So Vairocana uttered the mantra *OM SUMBHA NISUMBHA HŪM ... VAJRA HŪM PHAT*, and forms of Vajrapāṇi issued forth from the hearts of all the assembled *tathāgatas*, coming together to create the body of Mahāvajrakrodha. Vairocana intoned the mantra *OM TAKKI*
**TANTRIC BUDDHISM (INCLUDING CHINA AND JAPAN)**

*JJAH*, which is known as the disciplinary ankus of all the *tathāgatas*. By this utterance the criminals, Mahēśvara and the like, were all dragged to the Adamantine Jeweled Palace on Sumeru. Vajrapāṇi then commanded them to accomplish the Buddha’s teaching by taking refuge in the Buddha, the *dharma*, and the *sangha*, and by obtaining the gnosis of omniscience.

But Mahēśvara replied to Vajrapāṇi, “Hey, you’re just a local spirit (*yakṣa*)! I’m the creator and arranger of the triple world, the master of all spirits, the highest God of gods. Why should I do as you, a local ghost, command?” So Mahēśvara turned to Vairocana, “Just who does he think he is, giving orders to God?”

Vairocana responded, “I’d really do what he says, friend, and go for the refuges! Don’t make Vajrapāṇi, this cruel, mean, angry spirit, destroy the whole world with his flaming *vajra*.”

Mahēśvara, however, decided to show Vajrapāṇi what fear is all about, so he displayed his great wrath and cruelty in the form of Mahābhairava, flames spurting out, with Mahāraudra’s laugh, together with all of his minions: “Hey, I’m the Lord of the Triple World! You do what I command!”

They then exchanged more mutual challenges and insults and Vajrapāṇi returned to Vairocana. “Well, Lord, he’s not paying homage to the teaching, being God and all. Now what do I do?”

Again Vairocana intoned the mantra *OM NISUMBHA VAJRA HŪM PHAṬ*, and Vajrapāṇi added his own adamantine HŪM. Immediately, all the gods, Mahēśvara, etc., fell down on their faces, uttering a cry of pain, and went for refuge to the Lord Vajrapāṇi. Mahēśvara alone remained fallen on the ground, unconscious, and there he perished. Vairocana lectured the other gods about the virtues of the Buddhist perspective and they became entirely restored, happy and virtuous.

Then Vairocana addressed Vajrapāṇi: “If we revive His Deadness, he could become a real person.” So Vajrapāṇi intoned the correct *VAJRĀYUH*, and Mahēśvara was brought back from the dead.

He wanted to stand up but couldn’t, and demanded, “What are you trying to teach me?”

Vairocana responded, “You still haven’t done what he said to do. It’s his business, not mine."

“But aren’t you supposed to protect criminals like me?” Mahēśvara asked.

Vairocana replied, “I can’t. He is the Lord of All Tathāgatas.”

Vajrapāṇi then intervened: “Why don’t you just do what I tell you?” When Mahēśvara heard Vajrapāṇi, he again became incensed and violent, displaying his form as Mahāraudra, saying, “I can endure death, but I will not do as you command!”

With that Vajrapāṇi uttered the appropriate mantras, and while the
world laughed, Maheśvara and his consort, Umā, were both dragged stark naked feet first before Vajrapāṇi, who stepped on Maheśvara with his left foot, while standing on Umā’s breasts with his right. Then he uttered the mantra *OM VAJRĀVIṢĀ HANAYA TRAM TRAT* and Maheśvara started beating his own thousand heads with his own thousand arms, while all his minions outside the palace gave a great roar of laughter and said, “Look at our Lord being disciplined by this great being!”

Then Vairocana took pity on Maheśvara and, with the mantra *OM BUDDHA MAITRI VAJRA RAKṢA HŪM*, the touch of Vajrapāṇi’s feet became the consecration which allowed him to obtain the level of the Tathāgata. Abandoning his form of Mahādeva, Maheśvara passed beyond countless world systems and was reborn into the world known as Bhasmacchanna as the *tathāgata* Bhasmeśvara-nirghoṣa.⁷

At that point, Vajrapāṇi commanded all the other gods, “Friends, enter into the great circle of the adamantine assembly of all *tathāgatas* and protect that assembly!” And they replied in assent, “As you inform us, so we will perform!” Then all the gods and goddesses—Maheśvara, Umā, and the others—were given new names and positions in the mystic circle.

This comical tale of direct competition between the Śaiva and Baudhā traditions recognizes the homogeneous nature of many of their rituals and symbols. As story, it was to prove extraordinarily successful: Maheśvara became one of the great scapegoats of Buddhist Mantrayāna literature, an evil buffoon like Devadatta, the “gang of five bhikṣus” in early Buddhist literature, and Māra in virtually all strata of the literate tradition. Indeed, it is clear that Maheśvara became the “Māra” of the Vehicle of Secret Spells, and the similarities between the Buddha’s conduct with Māra and the treatment of Maheśvara were quite explicit, as we shall see.

**How Heruka was born—Cakrasaṃvara mythology**

The success of this myth is reflected in the multiple versions that spread almost as quickly as the Mantrayāna itself. Approximately the same stratum of the myth is found in the *Trailokya-vijaya-mahākalparāja*, whose Chinese translation is ascribed to Amoghavajra (705–774).⁸ This version is more benign, ending with the submission of all the divinities; it completes the story with the assurance that the gods obtain amnesty from execution by their enunciation of a specific mantra.⁹ Alternatively, a longer rendering of the *Tattvasaṃgraha* version was added to the *Vajraśekhara-mahāyoga-tantra*, but without the frame story of Sarvārthasiddhi/Vajradhātu.¹⁰ Presumably, these versions hearken back to an oral epic, which continued to develop in association with the written forms. Beyond this stratum was the rendition of the *Candraguhyatilaka-mahātantrarāja*, which
gives more prominence to sex and violence. Chapter six of the *Candraguhyati-laka* identifies the protagonist as Mahāsamantabhadra, who sends forth the wrathful Vajrabṛkṣṭikrodha to subjugate all the worldly gods and steal their women, finally bringing the gods back to life through the production of divine nectar, while Vajrabṛkṣṭikrodha laughs with Heruka’s voice. Clearly, this direction was mythically profitable, as the motifs were further accentuated in the *Guhyagarbha-tattvaviniścaya*, where chapter fifteen has Maheśvara spawned as one of the denizens of hell. Heruka, the cosmic policeman, seizes Maheśvara and his entire retinue, rips out their internal organs, hacks their limbs to pieces, eats their flesh, drinks their blood, and makes ritual ornaments from their bones—a model of thoroughness. Having digested all these gods, Heruka excretes them into an enormous ocean of muck, which one of his henchmen, Ucchusmakrodha, drinks up. The gods are then revived. Properly grateful for what can only have been an extraordinary experience, Maheśvara and his minions beseech Heruka and the divinities of his mandala to accept their wives, mothers, and daughters as ritual consorts while they take their correct places as the seats of the divinities in the mandala. Apparently, the very vital forms of the myth found in the *mDo dgongs pa ’dus pa* and the fourteenth-century *Thang yig gter-ma* cycles of the rNying-ma-pa take their impetus from the branch of the story initially exemplified by the *Candraguhyati-laka* and the *Guhyagarbha*.13

Yet another version of the myth verified the teaching of the most influential of the yoginī-tantras: the *Cakrasaṃvara*. The birth of Heruka is taken in the *Cakrasaṃvara* system as the necessary antidote for instability in the world, and Heruka has preached the yoginī-tantras specifically to convert all those addicted to perversity. Heruka intentionally imitates their behavior and espouses its practice to win their commitment to the Buddhist dispensation. The source for this version of the myth is actually quite curious; so far as I am able to determine, fully developed forms occur only in indigenous Tibetan language materials, and the text of a Tibetan author of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries appears to be the earliest version.14

rJe-btsun rin-po-che Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan (1167–1216), the grandson of the founder of Sa-skya Monastery in south-central Tibet, is accounted by the standard Tibetan representatives the third of the “five great teachers of Sa-skya,” being the son of Sa-chen Kun-dga’ snying-po (1092–1158) and the younger brother of bSod-nam rtse-mo (1142–1182), the two prior litterateurs of the monastery. Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan was also the codifier of much of the Sa-skya-pa understanding of Mantrayāna as a whole. *How Heruka Was Born*—his verification of the preaching and collection of the *Cakrasaṃvara-tantras*—develops a version of the cosmic drama very different from those seen above in the previous Indic sources. Heruka as the protagonist and Maheśvara as the antagonist are depicted in ways dissimilar from the prior images. The plot, too, unfolds in an entirely different manner, devoid of the fast dialogue of the preceding versions.
Synopsis: How Heruka Was Born

There are three parts to his story: I. the eulogy of the good qualities of the teacher Śākyamuni, II. the manner of the emanation of Śri Heruka, and III. how the tantra-rāja has been uttered by him.

I. The Bhadrakalpika-Mahāyāna-sūtra relates how the teacher Śākyamuni generated the thought of awakening and then perfected himself for three incalculable aeons through the accumulation of merit and knowledge. Overcoming the four Māras, he obtained complete awakening in the final reality (nītārtha) of Akaniṣṭha, where he worked for the benefit of bodhisattvas of the tenth level. At the level of provisional meaning (neyārtha), he emanated himself in different places and taught diverse teachings to beings of disparate capacities. In particular, there was his manifestation as Śri Heruka.

II. At the beginning of this Kaliyuga, beings started contending with each other through their common animosity. As the bodies started piling up from their mutual slaughter, they were removed to the various directions and the eight great charnel grounds formed. From the corpses ran blood, and as its vapor rose into the sky, the eight clouds evolved. When the clouds gave off rain, the eight rivers developed, and in them the eight divine snakes (nāgas) arose. Mists came from the rivers and the eight trees grew, each of them with its own protector.

Then, to the south of Sumeru, in the continent of Jambudvīpa, Maheśvara’s emanation arose. Now in the various directions, there are twenty-four self-originated places. Within each of these, twenty-four ferocities (bhairava) arose, each with his own consort:

A. The four chief gods (deva) and four attendant gods were emanations from the mind of Maheśvara and came to operate in Jambudvīpa from out of the sky, thus identified as the eight sky-going ferocities (*aṣṭa-khecara-bhairava). They were blue because they represented a predominance of anger and were located in specific self-originated places:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directions</th>
<th>Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East—Pullīra Malaya</td>
<td>Places of the four gods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North—Jālandhara</td>
<td>In the language of the gods, these places are called pīṭha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West—Oḍḍiyāna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South—Arbuda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE—Godāvari</td>
<td>The four attendant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW—Ramesvarī</td>
<td>gods. In the language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NW—Devīkoṭa</td>
<td>of the genii (gandharvas),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE—Mālava</td>
<td>these are called upaṃpiṭha.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. The two chief local spirits (yakṣa), the two attendant yakṣa, the two chief demons (rākṣasa), and the two attendant rākṣasa were
emanations from the speech of Maheśvara and came to operate in Jambudvīpa on the surface of the earth, thus identified as the eight earth-going ferocities (*aṣṭa-bhūcarabhairava). They were red because they represented a predominance of desire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East—Kāmarūpa</td>
<td>2 chief yakṣa, from the north.¹⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North—Odra</td>
<td>Called kṣetra in yakṣa language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West—Trīśakuni</td>
<td>2 attendant yakṣa. Called upakṣetra in yakṣa language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South—Kośala</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE—Kaliṅga</td>
<td>2 principal rākṣasas. Called chandoha in rākṣasa language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW—Lampāka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NW—Kānci</td>
<td>2 attendant rākṣasas. Called upachandoha in rākṣasa language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE—Himālaya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. The two chief divine snakes (nāga), the two attendant nāga, the two chief demigods (asura) and the two attendant asura were emanations from the body of Maheśvara and came to operate in Jambudvīpa from below the surface of the earth, thus identified as the eight below-the-earth-going ferocities (*aṣṭa-pātālacarabhairava). They were white because they represented a predominance of ignorance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East—Pretapuri</td>
<td>2 chief nāgas, from the ocean. Called melāpaka in nāga language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North—Grḥadevatā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West—Saurāśtra</td>
<td>2 attendant nāgas. Called upamelāpaka in nāga language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South—Suvarṇadvīpa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE—Nagara</td>
<td>2 chief asuras, from below Sumeru. Called śmaśāna in asura language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW—Sindhu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NW—Maru-deśa</td>
<td>2 attendant asuras. Called upaśmaśāna in asura language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE—Kulatā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Following the emanation of these twenty-four bhairavas and their consorts, Mahādeva arose on the peak of Mt. Sumeru, having four heads, twelve arms, naked, black, with his hair tied up in matted locks and smeared with ashes. His consort, Umā Devī, was red with one face and two arms, and they were in sexual union.

E. In conjunction with Maheśvara, his four Umā and eight Mātrakā emanated. The four Umā derived from the qualities (guna) of Maheśvara and were yellow because of a predominance of malignity.¹⁹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directions</th>
<th>Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front</td>
<td>*Nīlarāhu (sGra gcen sngon mo)²⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left</td>
<td>*Haritoparāhu (Nye ba’i sgra gcen ljang gu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behind</td>
<td>*Raktāndhikā (Mun pa dmar po)²¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>*Pitopāndhikā (Nye ba’i mun pa ser po)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
F. The eight Mātrkā came from the activity of Mahādeva. They were variously colored because of a predominance of envy.\(^\text{22}\)

East—Kākāsya (Raven-headed mother)
North—Ulūkāsya (Owl-headed mother)
West—Svānāsya (Dog-headed mother)
South—Śūkaraśya (Pig-headed mother)

The four intermediate directions were occupied by the four *Ardhamanusya-mukha-rūpinī* (mother having a half human-headed form?).

As a shrine (*caitya*) for each of these bhairavas, Mahēśvara gave them twenty-four *lingams* in the forms of self-produced stones, each in different shapes, from the shape of the top of his head in Pullīra Malaya to the shape of his knee in Kulatā. Offerings were continually made to these bhairavas inhabiting the twenty-four *lingams*.

Once established in Jambudvīp, Mahēśvara and his minions began to conduct themselves in a most irregular manner. For food they ate human flesh and drank human blood as their drink. They made ornaments of human bone—circlets, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and belts—all smeared with the ashes of human bone. From human hair they wove their brahminical threads and fashioned garlands of human skulls.

Now in order to bring them under control, the “causal form of Vajradhara”—the experiential body (*sambhogakāya*) in Akaniśṭha heaven—manifested sixty-two varieties of the emanation body (*nirmanakāya*) as the “resultant Vajradhara.”\(^\text{23}\) In opposition to Mahēśvara and Umā Devī were the Mahāsukhadevī. In opposition to the four Umā were the Mahāsukha-devī. In opposition to the twenty-four bhairavas and their consorts were the twenty-four pairs of heros and heroines, in physical, vocal, and mental grades (*manovāk-kāya-vīrāvīra*).\(^\text{24}\) And in opposition to the eight Mātrkā were the eight Samayadevī. For each of these manifestations of Vajradhara, the color and number of heads and arms were in accordance with the demonic entity to be tamed.

The actual effecting of their conversion was brought about in three stages: behavior, absorption, and subjugation. First, Heruka and his retinue imitated the behavior of these fiends—they began to drink human blood and eat human flesh in the ritual assemblies (*gañacakra*), thus securing them the epithet of Glorious Bunch of Blood-drinking Divinities (*dpal khram 'thung gi lha tshogs : *śriherukadevagāṇa*). Then, stealing all the ornaments, Heruka and his retinue decked themselves out like Mahēśvara and his minions, with garlands of human heads, dhotis of tiger skins, etc. They then supressed Mahādeva and his minions by causing their consciousnesses to be absorbed into the clear light, so that in the future Mahādeva would become the tathāgata.
*Bhasmeśvara, as the Buddha had predicted. Then, in order to demonstrate their victory, Heruka and his retinue each took the cadaver of his opposite number as a platform, which is why it is said that they reside on a preta platform. 25

Yet all these distinctions of subjugation/converted operate only in the realm of provisional meaning (neyārtha); according to the definitive meaning (nītārtha), they are to be understood as non-differentiated. 26 Thus the Guhyasamāja-tantra states:

As physically adamantine, he has become Brahmā;
As the vocal teacher, he is Maheśvara;
As the mental teacher, he is Viṣṇu. 27

So all the bhairavas and everybody else are emanations of Maheśvara, whereas Maheśvara himself is an emanation of Vajradhara. All the converting divinities are emanations of Śrī Heruka, who is himself an emanation of Vajradhara. Thus, according to the definitive meaning of this story, all the characters are essentially (svabhāvatas) Mahāvajradhara.

III. Finally, there is the teaching of the tantra-rāja and the unlocking of its intention by the lineage of exegetes. Having conquered Maheśvara, Vajradhara first preached to the five families of heroes and heroines a version of the scripture in one hundred thousand chapters. But during the time of the Kaliyuga, he summarized it into a version in one hundred thousand verses. Finally, because these could not be accomplished during this Kaliyuga, he preached a version of one hundred thousand letters, collected into fifty-one chapters. In addition there are thirty-two explanatory tantras and innumerable ancillary scriptures. All of these, Vajrapāni collected into texts and rendered into letters following their preaching. Eventually, the teaching survived in the literature of the four major systems of Cakrasamvara exegesis—those of Luhipāda, Ghantapāda, Kāḥapāda, and Śavara. Each of them has utilized the three principal scriptures of the system, the Tantrarāja-Laghusamvara (To. 368), the Abhidhiinottara-tantra (To. 369), and the Yoginisāncarya-tantra (To. 375). This elucidation of the birth of Śrī Heruka was culled from the speech of the teacher.

Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan’s reporting of the myth in the Cakrasamvara arena is reflective of a number of concerns which will be explored below (Interperative Strategies) when the three applications of the myth will be discussed in conjunction with each other. In his framing of the narrative, we notice the decided lack of identified antecedents; it is simply “culled from the speech of the teacher.” 28 The only sense we get that his version follows a Buddhist textual format is in its reference to the Bhadrakalpika-mahāyāna-sūtra. While the use of frame and embedded story is similar to that in the classical versions, the plot structure
follows meditative materials closely, giving the impression of an oral explanation of the *maṇḍala* praxis.

**Lam-'bras and Ngor-chen’s synthesis**

The tradition of the Path / Fruit was one of many extraordinarily fragile yogic systems that found their way into Tibet in the eleventh century. Ostensibly, the *Lam-'bras* was based on the *Hevajra-tantra* and its ancillary scriptures, the *Sampūtodbhava-kalpa-rāja* (To. 381) and the *Ḍākinī-vajrapañjara-tantra* (To. 419). We have no sense, however, that the *Lam-'bras* enjoyed the popularity or prestige in India accorded to those meditative practices developed out of the scriptures of the *Tattvasaṃgraha*, the *Guhyasamāja*, or the *Cakrasaṃvara*—quite the opposite, in fact, since the *Lam-'bras* was a secret set of practices which purportedly passed through relatively obscure figures. Moreover, it was decidedly later than most of the widely disseminated systems and was initially not given in Tibet the esteem and acceptability granted those more popular traditions.

Accordingly, the *Lam-'bras* utilization of the Mahēśvarā subjugation myth followed a more tortuous path than did the *Cakrasaṃvara* version. Each of the *Lam-'bras* strata was verified by a systematic hermeneutic of authentication. Such hermeneutics marked the system’s movement into an increasingly complex institutional milieu. The earliest *Lam-'bras* hermeneutic on the *Hevajra* was a minor work by Sa-chen Kun-dga’ snying-po, a primary exegete of the *Lam-'bras*. His *Heruka’s Prior Epiphany* is focused on the mythic explanation of the *maṇḍala*, rather than an explicit justification of the preaching of the *Hevajra-tantra*.

**Synopsis: Heruka’s Prior Epiphany**

During the practice of generating the visualization of the *maṇḍala* (*utpattikrama*), one should be aware of three specific teachings: the way that such visualization purifies the personality processes, how the goal is accomplished, and the manner in which that epiphany previously occurred. While the former two were explained elsewhere, this opportunity is now taken to explain the latter.

Within the three realms of existence, the formless realm had no master, whereas the realm of form was ruled by Brahmā, and the realm of desire by Kāma-Maheśvara. While Maheśvara’s minions executed his rule throughout, he stayed in Ṣaṇāṇa, overseeing his domain extending from the top of Mt. Sumeru to the four continents. Primary among his retinue were his eight “Big Worldlies” (*jig-rtsen chen po brgyad*), each with his own consort and incalculable henchmen, all of whom jeered at and challenged the emanation body (*nirmāṇakāya*) of the Tathāgata. In order to subdue this ungodly army, the Lord manifested
his wrathful form and the eight goddesses, these latter having the same names as the eight consorts of the “Big Worldlies”: Vetaā, Gaurī, Caurī, Ghasmarī, Pukkasī, Śavarī, Caṇḍālī, and Ḍombini. The major retinue of Maheśvara was overcome by Heruka while Maheśvara himself and the seven remaining “Big Worldlies” and their consorts were overcome by the eight Buddhist goddesses. The subsidary minions were all finally collected into the eight great charnel grounds at the periphery of the maṇḍala. This being done, each of the Buddhist goddesses had the title “Adamantine” prefixed to her name, so that they become Vajra-Gaurī, and so forth. The goddesses’ names indicate their representative castes; Vajra-Ghasmarī was the actual subjugatrix of Īśāna-Maheśvara, while Heruka converted Indra, Brahmā, Māra, and the like: thus their positions as seats of the deities in the maṇḍala. This arrangement is in accord with the explanations of the teachers of the tradition, and the chronicle is derived from the Tattvasamgraha, the Vajrasekha, the Trailokyavijaya, and the Candraguhya-tilaka.

Missing from Sa-chen’s discussion are the many particulars which have made this myth powerful: there is no discussion of the preaching of scripture or its collection by a coterie of disciples; we lack any sense of a drama unfolding. Furthermore, the bifurcation into levels of reality, seen earlier in Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan’s version of the myth, is entirely absent. Into this hermeneutical breach stepped Ngor-chen Kun-dga’ bzang-po (1382–1456), the founder of Ngor E-wam chos-Idan Monastery (1429) and the most influential Lam-’bras figure of the 15th century.

While still at Sa-skya in 1405, Ngor-chen wrote a short work which already displayed his penchant for harmonizing the exegesis of all his available sources, rejecting outright those which did not fall into the range of acceptable variation. In his usage, “acceptable” primarily denoted material reproduced by the great teachers of the early Sa-skya-pa: Sa-chen, bSodnams rtse-mo, and Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan. The text Ngorchen produced, the Amazing Ocean, delineates that aspect of the Lam-’bras tradition particularly concerned with the exegesis of its putative scriptural source, the Hevajra Tantra. Traditionally, Sa-skya-pa scholars have considered this the “Exegetical System” (’grel-lugs) of the Path/Fruit tradition; it relied on scriptural exegesis rather than on the meditative instructions (man-ngag) of the “root” text (Lam-’bras rtsa-ba, To. 2284) which properly belongs to the other branch of the Lam-’bras, the “Instructional System” (man-ngag lugs). Both, though, traced their lineage to the siddha Virūpa, the legendary source for the Lam-’bras. As a chronicle of the Exegetical System, the Amazing Ocean orders itself along the lines of traditional certifications of authenticity: it explores the circumstances of the preaching of the Hevajra-tantra, its collection, the transmission of its exegesis in India and Tibet, and the manner of its proper explanation. We will be concerned with the earlier sections of the work, since they preserve the mythic materials concerning Maheśvara.
Synopsis: Amazing Ocean

The absolute body of the Buddha (dharmakāya) is Hevajra (Heruka) who is the penetration of naturally occurring exalted gnosis into all aspects of reality, pure and impure. The tantra is the absolute, being preached by the absolute to the absolute through the presentation and dissolution of all events within reality.

In the pure realm of Akaniṣṭha-Ghanavyūha, the experiential body (sambhogakāya) of Vajradhara known as *Candrakāntamaniprabha resides, with eight heads and sixteen arms, surrounded by tenth-degree bodhisattvas like Vajragarbha, continually teaching them the holy scriptures of Hevajra.

Now Īśāna-Maheśvara is the lord of this realm of desire from the summit of Sumeru on down and has an inner circle of four principals (gtso-bo bzhi) and an outer circle of eight arrogant henchmen and sultry goddesses. Because they are so insatiable, they spend all of their time—walking, sitting, standing, or lying down—in sexual embrace. Because they are so perversely angry, they sport in killing humans, playing in their blood. They are utterly ignorant about the ethical law of cause and effect, and are entirely given to excess. They control all the people of this world system and spend their time touting their superior power.

Not willing to leave well enough alone, Heruka as the experiential body (as depicted above) entered into the contemplation of "Playful Adamant" in order to subdue Maheśvara and his gang. From each of the pores of his body he emanated mandalas of divinity into the four islands of a billion world-systems. In this Jambudvīpa, he especially manifested as the emanation body (nirmāṇakāya), the resultant form of Heruka: Hevajra with eight faces and sixteen arms. "Just as Sa-chen had explained," Rudra himself was overcome by Ghasmarī while the four worldly gods of his inner circle were overcome by Heruka, and the rest of the retinue were overcome by the other seven of the Buddhist goddesses. By assigning Maheśvara’s incalculable retinue to the eight great charnel grounds at the periphery of the maṇḍala, Heruka overcame their anger. By kissing, fondling, and other forms of great bliss, he suppressed their desire.

Then, immediately following this subjugation, the teacher Bhagavān Hevajra took residence in the palace found in the Vagina of Adamantine Women, and to his supramundane retinue he preached the Hevajra Tantra in 700,000 verses and in 500,000 verses, as well as the ancillary scriptures: the Mahāmudrātilaka (To. 420), the Jñānagarbha (To. 421), the Jñānatilaka (To. 422), the Sampuṭa, and so forth. According to the commentary on the Dākārnava-tantra (To. 1419) there were preached six "root" tantras: the Ocean of Yoga, (yogārṇava) the Ocean of
Gnosis, (jñānārṇava) the Ocean of Discipline (samvarārṇava), the Ocean of Ritual (kriyārṇava), and the Ocean of Reality (tattvārṇava), these five being collectively equivalent in size to the large Dākārṇava (Ocean of Dakas) in 3,600,000 verses. The Hevajra-tantra in 500,000 verses was the text identified as the Ocean of Gnosis, thus being one of the vast scriptures revealed to the goddess Vajravarahi and others.

Sākyamuni was the emanation body preaching all of these scriptures in a former time, later pretending to pass through the stages of a buddha in this world system to demonstrate the proper method for obtaining enlightenment. The great scriptures (Hevajra and the rest) were preached at the former time when the Buddha really obtained his enlightenment, and the received texts are but mere shadows of the source versions (mūlatantra). The process of collection was effected, naturally, by a supernormal being who was not subject to the little merit of this degenerate age: the Hevajra and Samputa-tantras were collected by the bodhisattva Vajragarbha, who acted as interlocutor, while the Vajrapañjara was brought together by Nairāmyā. These, of course, represent the extensive versions—at least for the Hevajra—which have not been revealed during this time when life spans are short and beings are addicted to study and consideration, but without ever arriving at the experience of the taste of deep contemplation. Thus, the source versions of the grand scriptures have remained hidden so that beings will not be seduced into scholarship without meditative practice.

Finally, all the ideas of who preached what, where it was preached, and so forth are details. From the perspective of reality’s direct expression (nītārthatas), all the beings—teacher, audience, gods, devils, ghosts and saints—are merely manifestations of the teacher Sākyamuni’s gnosis. Thus Hevajra II.ii.39:

I, the teacher; I, the teaching; I, the listener with fine retinue. I, the proposition; I, the instructor of the world; I am the world and the things of the world.38

Ngor-chen treats the episode in almost as offhanded a manner as Sa-chen. He is much more concerned with the entire cosmic relation among the various bodies of the buddha, and the tantra as a fragment of an oceanic text expressing innate gnosis. The formal myth merely serves as door for the manifestation of gnosis in the world.

Interpretive strategies

Tucci, Stein, and Iyanaga have made contributions to our understanding of the various moments in the myth, whether in India, Tibet; or China and Japan.39 All three have rightly remarked on the theme of the transmutation of Mahēśvara’s
hubris into the position of buddhahood. Both Stein and Iyanaga, however, have questioned the prima facie explanation that the story reflects the opposition of Buddhism to Hinduism and was developed to demonstrate the superiority of the Buddhist dharma. Furthermore, having maintained that extrapolating doctrinal significance based on a modern perspective appears impossible—and is in any case illegitimate—Iyanaga appears to subvert his own rule by maintaining that the characters depicted in the story are symbolic or allegorical representations, allegory also being a primary theme in Stein’s interpretive strategy. Iyanaga goes even further. He proposes that, as Mahēśvara passes through moments—from being an obstruction to the dharma to becoming a buddha—Mahēśvara’s submission graphically demonstrates the nonopposition of Buddhism and other religions. Following this approach, the Buddhist and the nonbuddhist, Māra and the Buddha, the passions and the wisdoms, are all fundamentally identical. Thus, far from being a tale of the irreconcilable opposition of the two, the myth demonstrates their essential equivalence.

While there is much in these explanations that appears justified by the data, I believe that the conclusions could be further refined and I would resist the assumption that modern assessments are illegitimate. I propose an analysis of the versions of the myth by milieu: I. the Tattvasaṁgraha in India and II. the Cakrasaṁvara and Lam-’bras systems in Tibet. In each case, the analysis considers the myths from three perspectives: a. socio-historical, b. literary, and c. doctrinal.

I. Indian myth: Tattvasamgraha

a. There can be little doubt that the Indic story indicates the real tension between Buddhist and Śaiva factions. Buddhism in India has had a long history of weaving tales of the conversion of heretical leaders, beginning with Uruvilvā Kāśyapa, the leader of five hundred mat-haired ascetics who performed the fire sacrifice. Furthermore, no one familiar with the hagiographic literature of India could doubt that Śaiva and Śākta ascetics—in particular, the Kāpālikas—were the primary targets of the Buddhists’ competitiveness. Buddhist monasteries at this period had become enormous landed institutions that controlled great economic resources but had a tenuous relationship to the wider society, somewhat like medieval Christian monasteries and modern universities. The literature of the Vajrayāna, however, does not reflect the values of these institutions, but stems from village and hermitage-based locales where wandering Buddhist ascetics were but another variety of sādhu found in many of the same environments as Śaiva and Śākta yogins. At this level of society, the perception of superiority is informed by oral literature, the ultimate source of the genres of written literature such as the avadānas, the purāṇas, the epics, etc. While the episode is clearly patterned after similar episodes in purāṇas such as the Devīmāhātmya—particularly noticeable in the mantric invocation of Durgā’s great antagonists, Śumbha and Niśumbha—the circumstances of the utilization of the myth are
quite different. For example, the religious position of Maheśvara is unlike that held by the foes of Devī. Thus, at the socio-historical level, we should understand the Maheśvara myth in the Tattvasamgraha as a straight-forward defensive technique of the Buddhists to establish the superiority of their gods over Maheśvara, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, etc., in an attempt to retrieve some of their lost position in unsophisticated circles in India, whether at Devikota, Vāraṇasī, Patna, or wherever. The noticeably increased mythic and symbolic orientation of the Vajrayāna brought with it both the strength of dramatic images and the weakness of having to follow pre-established models of myth, which were often Hindu. Thus, this strategy vitiated Vajrayānists' efforts at increasing their visibility and position, since they began to appear homogeneous with the more extensive Hindu mythic systems. We realize that they were ultimately unsuccessful in their endeavor and may appreciate the threat by considering either the displacement of Buddhist cave structures in Ellora by the more mythically-oriented Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava versions or the intrusion of Vaiṣṇava brahmans into the Mahābodhi temple at Bodhgaya.

b. The literary techniques employed, as Iyanaga has rightly observed, include material from both the Devīmāhātmya and the Buddha's subjugation of Māra. Like these, of course, the myth works at several levels, including a literal one. Essential to the Indian understanding of story is that it be predicated as real, not regarded as a spiritualized allegory. Indeed, one could make the case that traditional India does not recognize a strict distinction between ideals and reals, the supposition being, for example, that the Meghadūta and the Lokaprajñapti reflect the real landscape of the world, their cosmology indicative of the way things really are, despite appearances.

By the same token, events, in order to be real, must fall into certain ideological frameworks. Should events in the world not correspond to the ideology, then the world is out of balance and must be brought into harmonic resonance with the ideal. Concerns of this variety motivate mythic cycles of world renewal, and Hindu renewal myths—such as the Devīmāhātmya—are devoted to the rectification of the imbalance among the demons, gods and humans. Differences, of course, abound, and we note that the Buddhist version, in which Maheśvara is included into the maṇḍala and eventually liberated, differentiates Hindu themes of naked power from Buddhist models of compassionate activity. Buddhist systems of reform, moreover, go back at least as far as the purāṇas, and the principle of economy would ask us minimally to examine Buddhist literature for prototypes.

The correspondence between Maheśvara and Māra can be seen from internal scriptural statements—as in the Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi-sūtra—and from later hermeneutics, which we will see when we turn to the Hevajra materials, below. However, the Māra story is that of the unenlightened Bodhisattva overcoming the threats and temptations of the Lord of Desire. “Māra,” of course, is derived from the root mṛ, to die, so that the Bodhisattva becomes awakened by overcoming the potential for death and subsequent rebirth. Māra never becomes
converted, and in Buddhist legend remains until it comes time for him to talk the Buddha into passing into final nirvāṇa. Conversely, early Buddhist literature is replete with examples of demonic individuals who became converted and who subsequently won either nirvāṇa or extraordinary greatness—Angulimāla, Asoka, etc.—as opposed to Devadatta, who is like Māra in his intractability.

The Maheśvara episode, in fact, sets up two levels of story. First, there is the frame story of the obtainment of enlightenment by the bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi, who needs the worldly gods integrated into the maṇḍala to complete his activity as a buddha and teach the world. Then, there is the conversion of Maheśvara, who keeps the world out of balance by his activity. The first is brought to fruition by the resolution of the second, embedded, story. In a sense, the interrelation of the two—whatever their prototypes—is patterned after the episodes in the legend of the Buddha, and particularly those of the Vinaya, where teaching can only be effected following the dispersal of a behavioral aberration, in this case, Maheśvara’s unattractive habits.

Just as important is the retention of struggle and resolution in the Vajrayāna context. The universalization of buddhaness (buddhatā) in the form of the cosmic buddha Vairocana obviates any immediate personal difficulties—Vajrayāna, with its concern for postulating an enlightened ground, could not include Mahāvairocana in an individual struggle against his own obscurations. He could, however, become involved in the elimination of other beings’ difficulties by reason of his great compassion, but his activity is mediated through Vajrapāni—Mahāvairocana does not himself subjugate Maheśvara. Thus, the dramatic requirements of cosmic mythology are fulfilled in the Tattvasaṃgraha by the scripture’s refusal to depict Mahāvairocana as an abstract entity. Instead, he works through Vajrapāni for the salvation of beings from their own rude behavior—even if such behavior is as degenerate as that of Maheśvara—insisting finally on their integration into the balanced array of reality’s maṇḍala.

c. Doctrinally, the Tattvasaṃgraha is not complex, and clearly does not invoke the multi-valued structure Iyanaga would have us believe. We get no sense from the text of a dual-truth structure, as is explicit in the exegesis of Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan and Ngor-chen. The simple doctrine is that the dharmadhatu maṇḍala is the essential means for obtaining enlightenment, that any being—Maheśvara included—may obtain the enlightened condition, and that the maṇḍala is the direct expression of salvific reality, established by the eternally awakened Buddha himself. The means for their conversion is the extraordinary power of the living word, the mantra, which is the key to unlocking the palace of awakening. A subtext is that even those killed in the name of religion will be saved in the next life, an idea strictly accepted by early Tibetan religious, and one that may be inferred in India by the subsequent reembodiment of Maheśvara as the buddha Bhasmeśvara. Iyanaga was certainly correct in interpreting Maheśvara’s death and resurrection as a dramatic symbol for the transformation of defilement into gnosis, but this, too, is a symbolic subtext to the main story line of world-reform through the maṇḍala display.
II. Tibetan modification—Cakrasamvara and Hevajra

a. We can detect two primary motives for the mythic exegesis of Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan and Ngor-chen: the desire for cosmological and ritual closure at the textual level, and verification of scriptural-lineal authenticity that textual closure provides.

In the case of Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan, closure of mythic and ritual holes in the heritage of the 'Khon family was of primary importance. Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan was instrumental in putting together much of what is now considered the orthodox Sa-skya-pa perspective on the Vajrayāna, and integrated many fragile meditative systems into the widely respected, if pugnaciously secretive, Lam-'bras. In this endeavor, he utilized the rule already established by other early teachers in southern Tibet, including his father and elder brother: orthodoxy is verified by a system’s Indian antecedents. Where those antecedents were accepted or unassailable, he paid scant attention. Where the antecedents of his system might have been considered controversial, he takes some pains to demonstrate their validity. He did this in a quite systematic way for the Lam-'bras, and the development of the Maheśvara subjugation myth appears to have proceeded on similar lines. Clearly, Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan did not invent the application of the myth to the preaching of the Cakrasamvara. Although not cited by him, commentaries by both Indrabhūti and Śūravajra make the subjugation of Maheśvara part of the lore surrounding the advent of that tantra. Yet the jump from the paucity of Indic materials to the well-developed scenario evident in Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan’s text is comprehensible if we surmise that the Indic storytellers wove their tales on a speedy loom, for, as I have already indicated, the author declared that he received the story from his teachers. I believe that Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan—already removed by some decades from the Indic and Nepalese sources of his tradition—found himself in possession of an enormous quantity of cosmological, hagiographical, ritual, and meditative material, as did most lineage holders in southern Tibet at this time. The resulting textual production was a response to the fear for the imminent demise of the lore—Tibetans being quite aware of current Islamic incursions—the measure of its quantity, and the need to verify its authenticity.

This brings us to the second point: the validation of the system as a whole. Contrary to the stereotypes of popular literature, Tibetans have not always been benign, smiling mountaineers. Competition for economic resources traditionally has been intense, and the early Tibetan hagiographical literature clearly indicates an aspect of the culture obsessed with intrigue, black magic, challenges, occasional religious wars, and hostility between certain members of the Buddhist hierarchy. In such an environment, the myth of Maheśvara’s subjugation was not, so far as I know, interpreted to allow the suppression of personal enemies—as it might have been, given Christian eschatology of the Antichrist—but was utilized to bolster the position of families and monastic institutions in specific ways.
There were, of course, no serious challenges to the organized monastic structure from devotees of Śiva in Tibet. The myth became instead a vehicle for verifying the greatest concern of institutional Tibetan culture: lineages of authority, a reflection of the extraordinary conservatism of Tibetan civilization. The actual mechanism of verification must appear bizarre. Each of the manḍalas implicated in the myths under discussion—that is, the Sa-skya use of the Luhūpāda Cakrasamvara meditation and the Hevajra manḍala of the 'Khon-lugs of Lam-'bras—relate that the particular divinities are visualized trampling on Hindu gods and goddesses, in particular Maheśvara. Additionally, Tibetans had passed down oral materials taken from India and Nepal on the internecine strife among Baudhāyas, Śaivas and Śāktas, including oral and written information on the mythology of Maheśvara's subjugation. Moreover, the apologia of the written myths of the scriptures' preaching certainly was communicated by the Indian and Nepalese source monasteries: Consequently, Tibetans understood quite well that the verification of their own lineage of meditative praxis was dependent in some measure on the utilization of this myth for the verification of a specific lineage of exegesis. For the exegesis of a scripture to be viable, the scripture itself must be tied to the great cosmic event of the tantra's preaching as a considered act of world reform. Tibetans thus quite handily made the jump from Hindu gods appearing in their manḍalas as divine throw rugs to the verification of their familial and monastic institutions as designated heirs of cosmic renewal.

Challenges made from one lineage to another in Tibet were usually on exactly these lines: did the tradition in question draw from an authentic Indic Buddhist background or was it tainted with the pollution of heretical lineages through Hindu rather than Buddhist teachers? Tibetans were quite aware that well-meaning members of the Tibetan clergy fell victim to unscrupulous Indian and Nepalese teachers who represented themselves in areas beyond their authority. For example, Kāyastha Gayadhara is said to have misrepresented himself to 'Gos lo-tsa-ba Khug-pa lhas-tsas as being Maitripa in the flesh.48 Tibetans were equally aware that certain of their own compatriots were not above misrepresenting what they had learned and from whom. Nag-tsho lo-tsā-ba was known to have challenged the claim that Mar-pa studied directly with Naropa.49 Thus, the clergy in Tibet continued to question systems and lineages—a system might be authentic but the lineage of instruction questionable or fabricated, or the entire edifice might reflect non-Buddhist values. Moreover, the bickering evident between the Mar-lugs and the Rwa-lugs, between the Rwa-lugs and the 'Gos-lugs, or between such teachers as dGe-bshes Khyung-po grags-se and Zur-chung Shes-rab grags-pa, certainly must have presented the Sa-skya masters with the motivation to limit their own vulnerability.50

Although we appear to have no record of a direct challenge to his Cakrasamvara lineage, Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan, following in the footsteps of his predecessors, did take some pains with the Cakrasamvara materials at his disposal.51 He discussed the hagiography of the Indian teachers and their Tibetan followers at some length in three separate works, devoted respectively to the lineages of
Kal)hapada, Ghantapada, and Luhipada. The result of Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan’s mythic and hagiographic writings was mixed. While gZhon-nu dpal’s Blue Annals probably made use of his hagiographies, the mythic form of the origin of the Cakrasa1’flvara explored by Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan was not the one to obtain widest currency in Tibet. Such currency derived from the textual and oral materials assembled and amplified by Bu-ston Rin-chen grub (1290–1364); his version was followed by many subsequent authors.

If closure was Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan’s primary concern, defense appeared to be Ngor-chen’s. The Sa-skya-pa had enjoyed a special position in Tibet since the middle of the thirteenth century, when Sa-skya Paññita was designated the first monk-ruler of the Snowy Mountain. While the Sa-skya hegemony fragmented around 1358–59 and the Yuan Dynasty collapsed in 1368, the Sa-skya-pa still enjoyed a special position of power and wealth which attracted the criticism of other orders, especially in the face of the excesses of privilege that had occurred. The backlash against the Sa-skya-pa—intellectual as well as political—must have been intense, and the Sa-skya-pa themselves attempted to retain control of Tibet’s intellectual direction by polemics. It is between the years 1404–1406 (ages twenty-two to twenty-four) that we find Ngor-chen involved in the first of his two periods of apologetics. In 1404 he wrote his defense of the superiority of Vajrayana enlightenment—the theory that buddha-hood obtained by the Path of Secret Spells is more exalted than that obtained by the standard Mahayana perfections. In 1406, he defended the orthodoxy of the Hevajra-tantra itself against those who maintained that, because the scripture speaks primarily of all-embracing gnosis and because Viriipa is rumoured to have been the Vijñanavadin monk Dharmapala before his conversion to the lightning path, the Hevajra must be of the class of texts reflecting the “mind only” conceptualization of reality and therefore inferior to the orthodox Mahayamaka view. Although the chronologies are confused, Ngor-chen’s hagiographies speak of his defending the Sa-skya-pa position in central Tibet against vociferous critics. Doubtless, his Amazing Ocean, written in 1405, also reflected these same concerns, despite the fact that the text is not overtly polemical and does not specifically identify an antagonistic position, as do the 1404 and 1406 apologies.

Who were these pāramitā-based critics of the Sa-skya system? Modern Tibetan religious folklore often reifies all Saskya-pa critics into dGe-legs-pa monks and, in the case of Ngor-chen, into mKhas-grub dge-legs dpal-bzang-po (1385–1438). Certainly, mKhas-grub-rje was one of Ngor-chen’s critics in his later life and clearly did maintain, for example, the doctrine that there was no difference in result when buddha-hood is obtained by either the perfections or the Path of Spells. However, the circumstances were more complex than reification into a single antagonist. For example, the dates themselves are difficult—in 1404, mKhas-grub-rje turned 19 years of age and was still a good Sa-skya-pa monk studying with Red-mda’-ba; he did not even visit Tsong-kha-pa until 1407. Moreover, Tibetan proclivity towards oral exaggeration certainly
exacerbated the problem, some members of the clergy assuming that the refutation of a facet of a practice indicates a wholesale condemnation of the tradition. Red-mda’-ba was a praṭīṇāpāramitā master and is said to have held that Dharmapāla’s view was idealist, but we have no sense that he extended this critique to the Hevajra-tantra itself, although some of his more rash followers may have done so. Clearly, mKhas-grub did not. Exaggeration, in fact, led mKhas-grub to complain that people said he refuted the Lam-’bras, a charge he hotly denied—he had called into question two specific practices. However the polemical stage was set: once Ngor-chen produced the verification of the Hevajra in its mythic setting, his sense of closure became the standard for Sakya-pa savants. We find ’Jam dgon A-mes zhabs, writing his masterpiece of Lam-’bras lore in 1621, specifically reproducing Ngor-chen’s mythos, relying on his prestige.

b. The literary shift from the snappy dialogue of the Tattvasamgraha to the cosmic diagram of the Cakrasaṃvara mandala is in some measure dependent on the shift from an Indian milieu to the Sa-skya-pa system in Tibet. Whereas rNying-ma-pa authors continued the use of vital dialogue, Sa-skya-pa authors eliminated it in favor of the codification into diagrams. Why the difference? Again, social values and levels are at the heart of the issue. Village culture supports the wandering bard, whose presence serves to alleviate oppressive boredom and whose message imbues meaning into the lives of the audience. Clearly, many rNying-ma-pa literary genres were closely influenced by oral and bardic literature. The Sa-skya-pas, conversely, made the transition to textually-based monastic institutions; their myths directly expressed the importance of verifying the presence of texts in the institution rather than delineating the drama of unfolding awareness. For the rNying-ma-pa, the drama of the struggle in multiple episodes was the focus; for the Sa-skya-pa, the goal of the received text as the epiphany of gnosis was paramount.

Turning to the plot, we notice that Mahēśvara and crew are directly included into the dharmadhātu mandala of the Tattvasamgraha, while neither the Cakrasaṃvara nor the Hevajra utilize Mahēśvara or other divinities as anything but adversaries. Both Sa-skya-pa myths make allowance for the ultimate liberation of the Hindu divinities, but neither allows them a formal position in the mandala as exemplars following the universal pattern. The Sa-skya-pa formulation more closely follows the paradigm of the Buddha’s victory over Māra, and the indebtedness of both the Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra episodes to the Māra myth is explicit. Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan specifically introduces his version with a Māra-myth reference; the four figures trampled on by Hevajra are Māra, Mahēśvara, Indra, and Brahmā, while HT I.iii.17 is explicit that Hevajra destroys the four Māras. Thus, the dramatic device—of the contentious dialogue among Mahāvairocana, Vajrapāṇi, and Mahēśvara, followed by the reincarnation and liberation as denouement—is not essential to the plot. Rather, the given qualities of the individuals, being the ground of conversion, are the essential elements for the unfolding of the drama. Symbolically, this is played out in the
direct imitation of one deity by another: Vajrapāṇi does not imitate Maheśvara, but Heruka does. The iconography is developed in recognition, specified time and again in the texts of the Sa-skya-pa, that the *tantras* of the Anuttara-yoga class have been preached to attract those beings filled with all the various defilements and who do not wish to abandon their preferred behavior.

As a corollary, the later myths imply that the lowest variety of behavior leads to the highest enlightenment. We have every expectation that the tellers of such myths enjoyed the spectacle of the lowest fiends and their dastardly crimes, with the gallant Heruka coming to the rescue of all beings. Clearly, Heruka and his retinue do not enjoy acting in a manner similar to that of Maheśvara but have undertaken this form of divine activity to attract those addicted to perverse behavior. We are thus impressed by how far the Buddha’s compassion extends, including even degraded beings. As an antidote to personal guilt, the scenario is as attractive to the myth’s listeners as Amitābha’s saving power in another era—no one need feel irredeemable, whatever their crimes may have been.

In the Cakrasamvara system, the exact locales are important, and their specification is an extension of that lineage’s concern for the integration of the macrocosm and microcosm, each of the twenty-four external locales being identified with an internal locale within the body of the yogin. While the precise Indic source for identifying a system of twenty-four *lingams* and *bhairavas* is obscure, it cannot be immediately assumed that it was a popular Hindu system subsumed into the Buddhist fold. Virtually none of the more famous “lingams of light” (*jotirlinga*) belong to the Cakrasamvara formula; I have encountered no list in purānic literature which corresponds to either the number twenty-four or the places identified. Closest in spirit are the various Buddhist places of pilgrimage specified frequently in most of the *tantras* concerned with dākinīs: the Cakrasamvara, Abhidhānottara, Hevajra, etc. The Buddhist mythic contention that these places were initially Śaiva cannot be accepted as fact, or even that they existed outside of the minds of the storytellers, although some clearly did. Instead, the list is developed out of such geographical lists of places noted in esoteric Buddhist literature as early as the *Mahāmāyūrī-vidyā-rajñī-dhāraṇī*.

As a meditative technique, the identity of macrocosmic locales with microcosmic structures is striking. It allows the meditator to understand the cosmic drama as internal as well as external, Maheśvara as an extension of his own proclivity to defilement and Heruka as the resonance of the Buddha in his own stream of being. As literature, the specification of locales is equally dramatic and is a technique frequently used in Indian and Tibetan tales, whether in the Purāṇas or the Epic of Ge-sar. For a village-bound audience with little opportunity or resources for travel, the identification of all the places of the known world by the wandering teacher must have seemed at least as romantic and exciting as travel stories are for us today. To find, moreover, that the entire itinerary is located within one’s own psycho-physical continuum must have been a stunning validation of the listener’s existence.

No such literary devices are available to Ngor-chen; his work invokes neither
the quick repartee of the *Tattvasamgraha* nor the grand schematism of Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan’s work. In all fairness, the subjugation of Mahêśvara is not his real concern; Ngor-chen just wants to get the *tantras* preached and authenticated, so that he can discuss the scriptural relations and proceed to the hagiographies of the saintly lineage. We get little sense that Ngor-chen appreciates the *literature* of his mythic inheritance. Rather, he appears solely concerned with verifying its reality on a scale of values developed by the institutional requirements of his day. As a result, Ngor-chen’s is the dryest expression of a juicy story.

c. The doctrinal framework of the Tibetan versions of the myth is explicit and, in the *Hevajra* telling, quite essential to the story. Clearly, the expression of multiple levels of truth—further trifurcated in the *Cakrasaṃvara manḍala* into physical, vocal, and mental—brings out the necessity of admitting the mythic reality into the ordinary world. Here, Maheëśvara and his retinue really perform all their actions, which are countered by Heruka and his *manḍala*: evil is suppressed, defilement purified, and the cosmos realigned into the universal form. Much more difficult is the myth as the expression of absolute truth. Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan stresses the drama of subjugation when he extends the movement of reality from Vajradhara to Mahêśvara. Conversely, Ngor-chen emphasizes the process of teaching as an act of nondifferentiated communication, although he clearly includes Mahêśvara in the ground of being as emblematic of defiled existence. The hermeneutic of mythic nondifferentiation raises a fundamental soteriological and ontological question: If Mahêśvara and the demonic horde are merely facets of the teacher’s gnosis, then does the absolute body of the Buddha emanate evil?

Ngor-chen attempts to circumvent the problem by maintaining that both pure and impure elements of reality are penetrated by the *dharmakīya*. I find this explanation intellectually problematic. If the entire process of defilement and awakening—either cosmically or personally—operates absolutely undifferentiated from the absolute body of the Buddha, then the Buddhist has as little claim to solve the problem of evil as does the theist. Indeed, the personality and activity of the eternal Buddha come to center stage, since the drama is enacted at his pleasure. If the Buddhist replies that such a drama is a play to lure beings away from defilement, then the equivalence of the microcosm and macrocosm cannot be maintained. In this instance, external defilement is unreal while internal defilement is real; the internality and symbolic reality of the myth are futile and cannot be reenacted in the discharge of personal awakening.

Buddhist soteriology has yet to come to grips with the problems evoked by an open-ended cosmological system. The apparent sophistication of its doctrine still masks an incomplete exploration of the philosophical implications of its mythic structure, partially because it has recourse to a series of soteriological postulates buttressed by the irrefutable invitation to try it for oneself. Yet when the system attempts to identify itself with the ordinary-language images of the individual, which are required in the mythic process, we obtain a curious reversal: the system, as it were, meets itself coming and going—denying the individual while
relying on the individual’s self-delusion to eliminate the potential for further delusion. If there are no real individuals, however, we revert to a soteriological autokinesis wherein the absolute deludes itself and awakens itself.

So, while mythically powerful, this inversion of agent, from the individual to the absolute body of the Buddha, is problematic in an intellectual culture of agentlessness. The myth has drawn the tradition into the implications of the identity of the two levels of truth, but bringing the absolute into the operation of relative truth, which reverses the vector of standard Buddhist hermeneutic. Traditionally, Buddhist thought has deconstructed the categories of relative truth to arrive at the identity of the two truths. Here, Buddhist myth constructs categories of the absolute truth in order to arrive at this identity, the absolute taking on characteristics of relative process. So, while Ngor-chen has ignored the myth as literature, his invocation of the doctrine of the Buddha’s bodies is quite to the point—the problem is gnostic embodiment as a response of the ultimate. Space prevents a more thorough examination of the issue, but we note that the requirements of textual authenticity and closure propelled Tibetans to a land seldom visited. Exegetes found themselves hovering on the periphery of myth, attempting to manipulate images which did not invoke their ideas while working in a curious twilight between symbol and theory. Yet mitigating the tension between myth and doctrine is Buddhist literature’s playful willingness to eradicate ultimate categories and turn the devil into a Buddha with the stroke of a pen.

Conclusions

The extraordinary popularity of the Buddhist myth of the subjugation of Mahēśvara—whether at the hands of Vajrapāṇi or Heruka—has much to do with its ability to invoke several levels of meaning simultaneously. As a story, it is a classic tale of Buddhist values, overcoming the power-oriented behaviors still evident among Śaiva and Śākta practitioners. As soteriology, it implies that no depravity is irredeemable; indeed, it affirms that the defiled condition will be answered by the insistent movement towards awakening, becoming finally the stuff of enlightenment itself. As doctrine, particularly in Tibet, it affirms the interpenetration of all elements of reality and their mutual interdependence. And, as history, it leads us to understand the internal and external forces that affected the Buddhist communities in India and Tibet, and gives us more insight into the process whereby Buddhist communities developed tools of identity in the face of fissiparous forces.

Abbreviations


To. Hakuju Ui, et al., *A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Cannons* (Sendai: Tōhoku Imperial University, 1934).

**Notes**

* A preliminary version of this paper was read at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Asian Studies, San Francisco, February, 1988. Further research on the *Lam-'bras* and the early Sa-skya-pa was supported in part by a grant from the American Institute of Indian Studies and a Fairfield University Summer Research Stipend. In a general vein, I must acknowledge my debt to Ngor Thar-rtses mKhan Rin-po-che (1933–1987), who gave me the benefit of his instruction in Sa-skya-pa and Lam-'bras traditions for over a decade. I also wish to thank John Thiel for his excellent criticism of a preliminary draft of this paper.


5 Chandra ed. pp. 211–213; Tib. pp. 281.4–282.4; Ch. 443b–444c.

6 The following is a summary of the essential sections of the myth, which is found at Chandra pp. 56–59; Tib. pp. 239.4–241.5; Ch. 370a–372c. The critical reader will realize that I have taken some poetic license with the language to reflect the quick repartee of the Sanskrit. The myth was first studied by Giuseppe Tucci, who discovered the *Tattvasamgraha* manuscript in Nepal; he edited and translated much of the text of the myth in *Indo-Tibetica, Reale Accademia d’Italia Studi e Documenti* I (Rome: Reale Accademia d’Italia, 1932), vol. 1, pp. 135–145. The myth has been considered in detail and summarized by Nobumi Iyanaga, “Récits de la soumission de

7 In using Bhasmacchanna, I am following Tucci’s text, p. 145, and Iyanaga, p. 675, who gives the readings of the edition of Horiuchi Kanjin, (BonZō-Kan taishō) Shoekongō-chō-kyō no kenkyū Bompon Kötei-hen, jo (Kōyasan, 1983), Illa, p. 32. Chandra, p. 59, gives Bhasmacchatrā. It is well-known that Śiva’s conversion as Maheśvara occurs in Kāraṇḍavyūha, in P.L. Vaidya, ed., Mahāyāna-sūtrasamgraha, Part 1, Buddhist Sanskrit Text Series, No. 17 (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1961), p. 304, but see Iyanaga’s p. 675, n. 66, where he indicates that, whatever its occurrence in the Nepali manuscript tradition, it was missing in the recensions translated into Tibetan and Chinese.

8 T. 1171, 1172. The authenticity of Amoghavajra’s translations is frequently disputed; see Iyanaga, “Récits,” pp. 640–642. The Tibetan text is To. 482, and the myth is found in sDe-dge rgyud’bum vol. ta, fols. 10a–12b. sLelung-pa, pp. 10.7 & 13.6, attempts to integrate the rather innocuous statements of the Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi-sūtra (To. 494) into the full-blown form of the myth, but the sūtra simply confounds Māra and Maheśvara, giving a mantra to bring him under control; sDe-dge rgyud’bum, vol. tha, fol. 182a.

9 sDe-dge rgyud’bum, vol. ta, fol. 11b: gang ‘di lta bu’i sngags kyi tshig smra ba ni kyodor tu mi bgrongs so.

10 To. 480; sDe-dge rgyud’bum, vol. nva, fols. 237a–247b.


14 Stein, Annuaire 1973, p. 468, mentions that there is a commentary ascribed to Nāropa which contains a fuller version, but I have no access to the Peking bsTan’gyur at this time. This version is not cited by Grags-pa rgyalmtshan, Bu-ston, sLe-lang-pa, or other Tibetan savants whom I have studied, and so its influence was less than complete, yet Stein mentions that Pretapuri in “Nāropa’s commentary” is identified with Pu-hrangs in Tibet, an identification that Bu-ston accepts, bDe mchog nyung ngu’i rgyud kyi spyi rnam don gsal, Lokesh Chandra, ed., The Collected Works of Bu-ston, Satapitaka Series, vol. 64 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1971), pt. 6, pp. 54–61.

15 dPal he ru ka’i byung tshul, SKB III.298.4.2–300.2.6.

16 The division of Maheśvara’s retinue into celestial, terrestrial, and subterranean is evident in the Tattvasamgraha mythology also; Chandra, pp. 59–60.

17 I have edited the place names; the versions found in the text are clearly orally transmitted and are meant to reflect the widely accepted names for the twenty-four locales found in the Cakrasamvara system. Confer HT I.vii.10–18; Abhidhānottara, PTT 17, vol. 2, pp. 48.1.1–4, 52.5.6–52.3.2, 56.1.6–56.2.3, 56.5.8–57.2.1, 58.4.4–59.2.8, etc.;

18 It is not clear why Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan specifies that these two *yakṣa* came from the north to take control of these two locales, or why he does that selectively in other instances (*nāgas, asuras*). Most likely, it is the conservation of a prior association on his part (did all these figures have such associations?); it is less likely that he is selectively developing associations found in the *sādhanas* in question.

19 Color assignment here contradicts the names of the Uma, which identify each Uma with her own color.

20 I have not observed elsewhere the identification of a goddess with vicissitudes of the planet Rāhu, rendering the stem feminine. The asterisked (*) Indic forms of the names ascribed to the Uma and the Mātrkā are conjectural.

21 We note the irregular application of the feminine ending *mo*.

22 The first four Mātrkā names are available from the literature. See Martin M. Kalff, "Dākinis in the Cakrasāṃvara Tradition," in Martin Brauen and Per Kvaerne, eds., *Tibetan Studies* (Zürich: Völkerkundemuseum der Universität Zürich, 1978), pp. 149–162, esp. p. 157; Tsuda, *Samvarodaya* XIII.30, pp. 117, 285. According to these sources, the other four Mātrkā are most commonly identified as Yamadādhī, Yamadūti, Yamadarmātri, and Yamamathanī.

23 The numbering: 24 Bhairavas + their 24 consorts + 4 Uma + 8 Mātrkā + Mahēśvara + Umađevi = 62 divinities.

24 While the *mandala* utilized by Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan appears the general synthesis of the four traditions mentioned at the end of the text, in the 1730-s edition of the SKB, our text follows the hagiography of Luhipāda’s lineage, leading to the surmise that the Zhu-chan Tshul-krims considered the *mandala* to be based on Luhipāda’s *Śrī Bhagavavadbhisasayā* (To. 1427, sDe-dge 'grel, vol. wa, fols. 186b3–193a1). This text is apparently the earliest attested practice of the *Cakrasāṃvara*, having been translated by Rin-chen bzang-po (958–1055) and Śraddhākārarman. It also enjoys two commentaries by *Tathāgatavajra*, To. 1509–1510, the latter including a separate chronicle of Paṇḍita dPal-'dzin and the teachers of the lineage. A form of the *mandala* is also given in Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., *Nispānayogāvaiś of Mahāpāṇḍita Abhyākaragupta*, Gaekwād’s Oriental Series No. 109 (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1972), pp. 44–46, 26–29.

25 A *preta* is one departed, but usually a ghost rather than a corpse. Here, as before, Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan is attempting to tie the myth to the language of the ritual.

26 This was a favored hermeneutic among the Sa-skya-pa. Sa-chen had maintained that it was one of the signs of the superiority of the Vajrayāna (SKB I.122.3.3), an idea also utilized by bSod-nams rtse-mo in his commentary on the *Hevajra-tantra* (SKB II.51.2.6–3.2). In the previous reference, however, Sachen quotes Padmavajra’s *Guhyasiddhi* (To. 2217) in support of his idea, and we see that Puḍḍarika maintains the idea in his *Vimalaprabhā* commentary to the *Kālacakra*, Upādhyaya ed., pp. 23–24. Decidedly, the Sa-skya teachers looked for Indic support of favored doctrines.

27 The received Sanskrit text of *Guhyasamājā* XVII.19, while discussing Vajrapāṇi, reads somewhat differently:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kāyavajro bhavet brahmā vāgvgvajras tu mahēśvaraḥ} & \text{ /} \\
\text{cittavajradhāro rājā saiva viṣṇur mahārddhikāḥ} & \text{ //}
\end{align*}
\]

Being physically adamantine, let him be Brahmā,
But as vocally adamantine, he is Mahēśvara;
The king bearing the sceptre of mental adamant,
It is just he who is Viṣṇu, of great majesty.

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28 Dpal he ru ka'i byung tshul rnam par g-zhag pa bla ma'i gsung las cung zad blus te }. SKB III.300.2.6.

29 sNgon byung gi rnam 'phrul, SKB 1.388.3.4–389.1.3.

30 Sa-chen was doubtless considering his various commentaries to the basic texts of the Lam-'bras (To. 2284), traditionally considered eleven in number; see Musashi Tachikawa, "The Tantric Doctrine of the Sa skya pa according to the Seg gi me lon," Acta Asiatica 29 (1975): 95–106.

31 Actually, as is apparent from his gDan gyi rnam dag (SKB 1.387.4.4–388.3.4), Heruka tramples on Brahmā, Indra, Kamadeva, and Maheśvara, while Ghasamṛ tramples onĪśāna-Maheśvara, apparently considered the principal variety of the species Maheśvara.

32 The same method was utilized by Ngor-chen in his exegetical monument, the (dPal kye rdo rje'i sgrub thabs kyi rgya cher bshad pa) bsKyed rim gnad kyi zla zer, SKB IX.173.4–277, esp. sec p. 179.3.6.

33 The standard work on the legends and concerns of the Lam-'bras remains the Yongs rdzogs bstan pa rin po ch'i nyams len gyi man ngag gsung ngag rin po che'i byon tshul khog phub dang bcas pa rgyas pa bshad pa legs bshad dus pa'i rgya mtsho of Jam-mgon A-mes zhsabs (1597–1659; text completed 1621), The Tshogs Bsad Tradition of the Sa-skya Lam-bras vol. 1 (Rajpur, India: Sakya Centre, 1983), pp. 1–314; cf. Ngor-chen's introductory materials at the beginning of the bsKyed rim gnad kyi zla zer (SKB IX, pp. 174 ff.), and his own discussion of the central Path/Fruit tradition, the Lam 'bras bu dang bcas pa'i man ngag gi byung tshul gsung ngag rin po che bstan pa rgyas pa'i nyi 'od (SKB IX.108.3.1–126.4.3); this latter text includes supplemental notes by Gung ru Shes rab bzang po.

36 Ngor-chen's primary source for the myth is Sa-chen's text, which he partially misquotes and identifies as gDan gyi dag pa, this latter being placed before (387.4.4–388.3.4) Sa-chen's sNgon byung gi rnam 'phrul in the SKB edition, the quote being from 388.4.3–4. Secondarily, he quotes from Grags-pa rgyal mtshan's commentary to the Hevajra-tantra, SKB III.151.4.6–152.1.1, itself a development of HT II.v.5.

37 Ngor-chen's statement 279.3.4 is an obscure but definite reference to Hevajra tantra II.v.5, which was not translated by Snellgrove:

\[
\begin{align*}
cumbayitvā tu Nairātmyām kṣiptvā vajrāṃ kapālāke | 
mardayitvā stanau devo maṇḍalaṃ samparkāśayet || 
\end{align*}
\]
Having kissed Nairātmyā, having placed your vajra in her skull,
Having fondled her breasts, let the deity express his maṇḍala.

38 vyākhyaṭāham aham dharmaḥ śrōtāham sugaṇnair yutah /
sādhyo 'ham jagataḥ sāstā loko 'ham laukiko 'py am //

We should note that the Tibetan for HT II.ii.39cd reads as if śastā 'loko 'ham laukiko: 'jig rten 'jig rten 'das ma nga, but here following the Yogaratnamalā, HT, vol. 2, p. 139.

39 See note 6, above.


41 André Bareau, "Le Buddha et Uruvilvā," in Daniel Donnet, ed., *Indiantisme et Bouddhisme—Mélanges offerts à Mgr Étienne Lamotte*, Publications de l'Institut oriental-
See Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan's various Cakrasamvara lineage hagiographies listed in note 52. below; his bLa ma rgya gar ba'i lo rgyus (SKB III.170.1.1–174.1.6).


Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi-sūtra, To. 494, sDe-dge rgyud-'bum, vol. tha, fol. 182a.

Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan's great formulation of the Vajrayāna is found in his rGyud kyi mngon par rtogs pa rin po che'i ljon shing, SKB III.1–70.

See Šīrīcakrasamvaratantrarājasambharasamuccaya-vṛtti, To. 1413, rgyud-'grel, vol. tsa fol. 4ab; Miλačatanrāhdvayasamgrahābhīdhānottaratantra-mūlamulavṛtti, To. 1414, rgyud-'grel, vol. tsa fol. 121a7.

See, for example, the rationale given in his gSung ngag rin po che lam 'bras bu dan bcas pa'i don gsal bar byed pa glegs bam gyi dkar chags, The Slob Bsdad Tradition of the Sa-skya Lam-'bras (Rajpur: Sakya Centre, 1983), vol. XI, pp. 1–8, esp. p. 1.3–2.1.

See the bLa ma brgyud pa'i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar snang ba of bLama dam-pa bSod-nams rgyal-mtshan (1312–1375), the first part of his extraordinary Pod nag ma, The Slob Bsdad, vol. XVI, pp. 1–121, esp. p. 20.

Nag-tsho maintained that he visited Nāropa (providing us with a stunning portrait of Nāropa as the Mahāpaṇḍita) and that Nāropa was said to have passed away with great portents while Nag-tsho was accompanying Atiśa in Nepal in C.E. 1041. Sometime later, Nag-tsho traveled with Mar-pa to central Tibet and heard nothing of a meeting. Finally, some of Mar-pa's disciples denied that a meeting had taken place. Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan appears to agree in his reply to Byang-chub seng-ge's request for his opinion on the matter; rNal 'byor byang chub seng ge'i zhu ba dang / de'i dris lan, SKB III.276.3.5–278.2.6.

George N. Roerich, The Blue Annals (Reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), pp. 118–121. The biography of Rwa lo-tsā-ba rDo-rje grags by Bande Ye-shes seng-ge, mThu stobs dbyang phyug rje bstan rwa lo tsa ba'i rnam par thar pa kun khyab snyan pa'i rna ggra, (Lhasa xylograph: 1905) presents a wealth of stories concerning early Tibetan religious intrigue, esp. fols. 22b1–24a1, 26b1–27a5, 39b6–40b3, 46a5–47a5, 62b2–63b2, 70a3–70b3, 47a4–54a4, 97a1, 99b1–100a1, 106a4–108b2, 112b5–114a2, 117a5–118a2, 121b3–122b2, 129a4–129b3, 135a3. WenotethatRwa­lo's biographer has Rwalo claim to have killed 13 sngags- 'dzin (holders of spells) by magic, fol. 136al. Rwa-lo does become involved in a dispute with unnamed clerics at Sa-skya, fol. 56b1–3, but the burden of proof is on him rather than them.

His father, Sa-chen Kun-dga' snying-po (1092–1158), had already written one hagiographic account of his version of the Kāñhapāda lineage; bDe mchog nag po pa'i lugs kyi bla ma brgyud pa'i lo rgyus, SKB I.214.1.1–216.4.1.

Kāñhapāda's is hidden at the beginning of his Nag po dkyi lchos gi bshad sbyar, SKB III.304.3.2–326.3.6, esp. 304.3.4–306.2.2; Ghantapāda's is in sLob dpon rdo rje dril bu pa'i lo rgyus, SKB III.345.1.1–346.1.4; Luhipāda's is found in bDe mchog lu hi pa'i lugs kyi bla ma brgyud pa'i lo rgyus, SKB III.293.2–298.4. The latter text is also apparently the final production, referring to the other two, SKB III.295.1.2–3.

Cf. the bDe-mchog lu hi pa'i lugs with the Samvara section of Roerich, Blue Annals, pp. 380–82; Dung dkar bLo-bzang 'phrin-las, ed., Deb ther sngon po (Szechuan: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1984), vol. I, pp. 460–464.
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56 Zung 'jug rdo rje 'chang chen po'i sa mtshams rnam par bshad pa log rtog ngan sel, written at Sa-skya, SKB IX.164.2.5–172.2.6.

57 Primary is dKon-mchog dbang-phyug’s sNyigs dus kyi rdo rje 'chang chen po chos kyi rje kun dga' bzang po'i rnam par thar pa mdor bsdu pa, Lam 'bras slob bshad, vol. 1, pp. 432–473, esp. 462; also see the pasticcio of Sangs-rgyas phun-tshogs, rDo rje 'chang kun dga' bzang po'i rnam par thar pa legs bshad chu bo 'dus pa'i rgya mtsho, sLob bshad, vol. 1, pp. 475–585, esp. pp. 537, 546.


60 See, for example, Go-ram bSod-nams seng-ge’s commentary on and defense of the bsKyed rim gnad kyi zla zer, dPal kye rdo rje'i sgrub pa'i thabs kyi rgya cher bshad pa bskeyed rim gnad kyi zla zer la rtos pa spong ba gnad kyi gsal byed, in Kun mkhyen go bob 'byams pa bsod nams seng ge bka' 'bum (Rajpur: Sakya College, 1979), vol. 12, pp. 557–693, esp. p. 560, where Ngor-chen’s primary opponents are listed as sLob-dpon chen-po dPal chos-pa, mKhas-grub, and dPal 'jigsmed grags-pa.

61 See his biography, mKhas grub thams cad mkhyen pa'i rnam thar mkhas pa'i yid 'phrog, in The Collected Works of The Lord mKhas Grub Rje, vol. Rje 1, p. 8.

62 Red-mda’-ba’-ba’s name is identified with this position in a note (mchan) to Ngor-chen’s bsKyped rim gnad kyi zla zer, SKB 9.176.3.2.

63 Everything mKhas-grub says in his dPal brtag pa gnyis pa'i rnam par bshad pa leads us to believe that he thought the Hevajra-tantra fully in conformity with fifteenth-century Tibetan comprehension of Madhyamaka; see esp. pp. 559–560.

64 He relates the course of events in a letter included in his (Thor-bu, Collected Works, vol. 7, pp. 775–808. In his discussion of Ghyenasamāja meditation, rGyud thams bcad kyi rgyal po 'oc'ald gsal ba 'dus pa'i bskyped rim dngos grub rgya mtsho, Collected Works, vol. 9, p. 1 ff., esp. p. 238, he had generally refuted the Lam’bras ideas of the physical mandala (lus-dkyil) and the reception of consecration during meditation (lam dus kyi dbang), without citing the system by name. He complains (Thor-bu, p. 776–7) that everyone jumped to conclusions. Given the inflammatory language of mKhas-grub was wont to use, it is easy to see how such an impression developed.
65 Lam 'bras khog phub, p. 70.5.

66 Confer HT 1.vii.10–18, Abhidhānottara, PTT 17, vol. 2, pp. 48.1.1–4, 52.5.6–53.2.3, 56.1.6–56.2.3, 56.5.8–57.2.1, 58.4.4–59.2.8, etc.


68 I presume that there were village-level applications of the Cakrasamvara myth both before and after it entered the monastic milieu, even if the version under discussion is textual/monastic in form.
The hermeneutical and rhetorical dimensions of commentary

Education is not the mere handing down of knowledge but the active developing of the person through the internalization of a tradition's content. If this process begins in the Tibetan monastic education with the acquisition of basic literacy and the heuristic of memorization, it continues with the hermeneutical practices aimed at appropriating the content of tradition as a basis for the cultivation of virtues. In general, hermeneutics can be defined as the art of interpretation systematically analyzed from a philosophical or methodological point of view. Tibetan scholastic educational activities are hermeneutical in that they are reflective interpretive practices that aim to understand the content of the root-texts used as bases of the educational process and their commentaries. These root-texts are themselves commentaries that are memorized and studied in the light of further commentaries. The interpretation of commentaries is thus one form that hermeneutical practice takes in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. It is not, however, the only or even necessarily the main one, for a remarkable feature of much Tibetan scholastic education is the importance of dialectical debates. They sustain the students in their investigations and lead to an in-depth comprehension of the tradition. Dialectical debates, together with commentary, represent the two central aspects of the hermeneutical practices that form the core of Tibetan scholastic education.

A study of the interpretive practices of a tradition cannot focus, however, only on the interpreted message. It must also examine the audience to which this message is addressed and the way in which the author or transmittor of this message intends to influence its audience. To interpret means to clarify, explicate, explain, but also to translate, render, and transpose. Interpretation is the work of an interpreter, a go-between, who mediates between an author and an
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audience (in some cases himself or herself). Interpretation, as Mailloux puts it, "conveys the sense of a translation pointed in two directions simultaneously: toward a text to be interpreted and for an audience in need of interpretation." Hence, a study of the interpretive practices of Tibetan scholasticism must take into account this double orientation and consider the semantic as well as the pragmatic or performative dimensions of interpretive practices. Such a study must understand these practices not only hermeneutically but rhetorically as well. The tradition is not a pure content but acquires its significance only in relation to the way in which it is used.

In one sense, it is tempting and not entirely wrong to assimilate commentary to the semantic aspect and debate to the pragmatic or performative dimension. Nevertheless, as we will see, this distinction is not adequate to the understanding of either form of interpretive practice. Commentary, which is our present focus, cannot be understood merely through an examination of its content. Like other types of text, commentary is not just descriptive but also performative. The commentator seeks to do something by writing his text and, more importantly for our purpose, the tradition or institution that uses his text is also trying to do something through the study of his words. We could speak here of textual communities, that is, actual social entities formed around common uses of basic texts and their commentaries. When people engage in common interpretive practices, they develop a sense of solidarity, of belonging to a distinct community with its own worldview, ethos and sense of identity. In this way, common interpretive practices provide the focus for further institutionalization and the development of rules. They also become the means through which new members are introduced to the community.

Here I examine the pragmatic uses of texts and commentaries in the context of Tibetan Buddhist scholastic education. I approach this education by examining its curriculum, focusing on the use of texts rather than their content. In doing so, I follow a comparative approach in order to avoid the danger of focusing too narrowly on a single tradition, which is then taken to represent Tibetan tradition as a whole. I examine the curriculum of two types of institution which include most of Tibetan scholastic education, the dGe lugs (pron., ge-luk) monastic university exemplified here by Se rwa (se-ra), which can be described as a debating institution (rtsod grwa), and the commentarial institution (bshad grwa) exemplified by the rNying ma (nying-ma) monastery of rNam grol gling (Nam-dröl­ling), which is typical of non-dGe lugs institutions of higher learning.

My examination of the dGe lugs and rNying ma versions of the scholastic curriculum follows a two step approach. I first provide a general comparison, following the classical method of delineating similarities and dissimilarities, between the curriculum of these institutions. In this way I show the nature of the two types of educational institutions that have dominated the Tibetan scholastic tradition. I then examine the curriculum more closely by focusing on one of its central topics, the study of the path, and inquiring into its role in the overall education. I show that in the Tibetan scholastic traditions this kind of topic, which
concerns the practice of meditation, is important less for its direct relevance to meditative practice than for its contribution to the construction of a universe in which Buddhist practice becomes meaningful. I conclude by emphasizing the doctrinal nature of such construction and argue that this reliance on doctrine for the elaboration of a religious universe is one of the main characteristics of scholastic education.

The structure of the curriculum of a dGe lugs institution

Se rwa is typical of the great institutions of higher learning that have constituted the intellectual strength of the dGe lugs tradition. Founded in 1419 by 'Jam chen chos rje (jam-chen-chö-jay), one of Tsong-kha-pa’s (dzong-ka-ba) main disciples, it became a very large monastery in Tibet with more than ten thousand monks in the 1950s, possibly up to a third of them taking part in scholarly activities. It is now relocated in Bylakuppe, in South-India, not too far from Mysore, where it is becoming large again (well over three thousand) due to a recent influx of new refugees from Tibet.

The Se rwa curriculum does not differ substantially from that of the other dGe lugs institutions of higher learning. The dGe lugs curriculum in its different version largely consists of the study of five texts (po ti lnga), which summarize the exoteric aspects of the tradition, and the study of tantric texts, particularly those pertaining to the Guhya-samāja (gsang ba 'dus pa) cycle. This curriculum can be divided in three parts.

1) The first preliminary part is devoted to the mastery of the techniques and basic concepts necessary to the practice of debates. During this period, which can be as short as one year and as long as four or five years, monks are trained in the art of debate through the study of the Collected Topics. They are also introduced to the basic logical and epistemological notions that they will use throughout their studies. The texts used are textbooks (yig cha), specific to the college within the monastic institution.

- Collected Topics (bsdus grwa) in three parts
- Types of Mind (blo rigs)
- Types of Evidence (rtags rigs)

This preliminary study is often completed by an introduction to the study of doxography, which examines Buddhist and non-Buddhist tenet systems, and a Paths and Stages (sa lam) text, so that the students have a good idea of these aspects of the tradition. This part of curriculum is a preparation for the main part, the study of the five treatises. It aims at developing reasoning abilities. It also provides the student with the basic philosophical vocabulary required for the rest of the studies, but does not aim to bring to students any in-depth comprehension.
2) The second and central part is the study of the five great exoteric texts. It is subdivided into two phases: a) The main part which consists of the study of three texts that are considered to summarize the main aspects of nontantric Buddhism as understood by the dGe lugs tradition:

- *Abhisamayālaṃkara*⁵ (Ornament of Realization) attributed to Maitreya
- Candrakīrti’s *Madhyamakāvatāra*⁷ (Introduction to the Middle Way)
- Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇavārttika*⁸ (Commentary on Valid Cognition)

Together with Nāgārjuna’s *Treatise of the Middle Way*,⁹ which is studied in the light of Candrakīrti’s *Introduction*, these texts provide the doctrinal and philosophical core of the dGe lugs tradition. They are considered the most important texts and studied with great care for a period of six to ten years. The students start with the *Abhisamayālaṃkara* (henceforth the *Ornament*), which is studied for four to six years. This text provides an understanding of the Buddhist and more particularly Mahāyāna worldview together with a detailed analysis of the path, as we will see shortly. Dharmakīrti’s *Commentary*, which present an extensive view of Buddhist logic, epistemology and philosophy of language, is studied together with the *Ornament*, during special sessions (one or two months every year). This text is very important, for it provides the philosophical methodology for the whole curriculum. After being already well trained, students are ready to examine what is considered the most profound topic of the studies, Madhyamaka philosophy. Through the study of these three plus one texts, the students are introduced to the sharp philosophical mode of thinking particularly valued by this tradition. Sometimes, monks who are keenly intent on leading the heremitic life leave the monastery after finishing the study of these three texts. Although they could still benefit from further studies, they are considered well trained and able to start on their meditative career.

b) The auxiliary and concluding part of the exoteric curriculum brings more maturity to the already philosophically well trained students through the study of the last two treatises:

- Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharma-kosā*¹⁰ (Treasury of Abhidharma)
- Gunaprabha’s *Vinaya-sūtra*¹¹

These texts bring to the students a grasp of some of the doctrinal and practical backgrounds of Buddhism. The study of the Abhidharma enriches the students’ understanding of the Buddhist worldview and the kind of spiritual perspective that this world enables. The study of the Vinaya completes the monastic curriculum by training the students in the intricacies of monastic discipline and the collective organization of the monastic order. Thus both texts are important but contribute little to the kind of intellectual sharpness that the tradition, and Tibetan scholars in general, particularly value. Hence, they are thought to be less important, though
their studies take a long time (from four to eight years). The reason for this extended period is due to several considerations. The amount of textual material is large, but the main reason is to keep students, who are by then advanced scholars, in residence so that they themselves become teachers and share their knowledge before leaving the monastery. It is only after the completion of these studies that students are allowed to stand for the different levels of the title of Geshe (dge bshes), which brings to an end the exoteric part of the training.

3) Finally, the last part of the studies concerns the esoteric domain of the tantras. Tantras are not included in the official curriculum of monastic universities such as Se rwa. Monks who finish their studies and become Geshe are required to spend some time in a separate college devoted to the study and practice of tantra. This does not mean that these monks have not studied tantra before, for almost all of them have, but such a study is considered private and hence not part of the official curriculum.

The curriculum of a commentarial institution

rNam grol gling monastery, or more specifically its commentarial school, is typical of the non-dGe lugs institutions of higher learning. rNam grol gling monastery is the exiled version of dPal yul (pa-yül) monastery, which is one of the six great monastic centers of the rNying ma school founded in 1665 by Rig 'dzin kun bzang shes rab (rig-dzing kun-zang shay-rab). rNam grol gling monastery, which has over a thousand monks, is also relocated in Bylakuppe, a couple of miles from Se rwa. Its commentarial school, which was started at the beginning of the 1970s, is part of the monastery but is distinct from it. There are over three hundred students in the school, which is by now the largest institution of its type in the exiled community in India. It is quite representative of the style of education adopted by the three non-dGe lugs Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

In examining the curriculum of the rNam grol gling commentarial school, it is important to remember that the institution we are examining is different from a dGe lugs monastery such as Se rwa. Whereas in the latter scholastic studies are central elements of the monastic routine, in the rNying ma and other traditions studies are carried on in special institutions that are linked with the monastery but remain separate, often physically set apart. In rNam grol gling, the commentarial school (bshad grwa) lies next to the monastery but has its own administration, kitchen, and temple, though ultimately it is part of the dPal yul monastery as well. The curriculum of this institution is centered around the study of thirteen great texts (gzhung chen bcu gsum). It can also be divided into three parts: a preliminary, a central part (the study of the thirteen texts themselves), and esoteric tantra studies.

1) The preliminary part, which lasts one year, focuses on two texts: Padma dbang rgyal’s (pe-ma-wang-gyel, fourteenth century) Treatise Ascertaining the Three Types of Vow and Sāntideva’s Introduction to the Bodhisattva’s Deeds.
These texts, which are not counted among the thirteen great texts, are studied with the help of literal glosses and combined with a few auxiliary texts teaching grammar and history. During this period students are introduced to basic Buddhist ideas, Mahāyāna practices, as well as the three sets of vow (pratimokṣa, bodhisattva and tantra) to which Tibetan practitioners usually commit themselves. At this early stage central tantric concepts already are introduced. For example, the difference between sūtras and tantras, a topic formally discussed by dGe lugs scholars only after they have completed their exoteric studies, here is taken as a preliminary of the whole curriculum.

2) The second part is centered on the study of the thirteen great texts. It can be divided into two phases: a) The lower exoteric course, which last for three years, begins to expose the students to the different aspects of the classical exoteric tradition as they are found in the most important Indian Buddhist treatises. Students I have interviewed often describe Madhyamaka philosophy as the main topic of these three years. This subject is examined through the following three of the thirteen texts:

- Nāgārjuna’s Treatise of the Middle Way
- Aryadeva’s Four Hundred Stanzas
- Candrakīrti’s Introduction to the Middle Way

To these three texts several other texts are added. A particularity of this curriculum is its emphasis on Śantarakṣita’s Ornament of the Middle Way, which is studied together with its commentary by Mi pham rgya mtsho (mi-pam-gya-tso, 1846–1912). Like in the first phases of the curriculum, these texts are studied with their commentaries, either literal glosses, often composed by gZhan phan, or more substantial explanations, often by Mi pham. The other aspect emphasized during these three years is the study of the Abhidharma, through an investigation of the following two of the thirteen texts:

- Asaṅga’s Abhidharma-samuccaya (Compendium of Abhidharma)
- Vasubandhu’s Abhidharma-koṣa (Treasury of Abhidharma)

Together with these other texts such as Mi Pham’s Entrance Gate for the Wise, an introduction to the methodology of scholastic studies that rather closely follows Sa skya Paṇḍita’s (1182–1251 C.E., henceforth Sa pan) text on the same subject. The fourth year is also occupied by the study of Buddhist logic and epistemology on the basis of the main text of the Tibetan tradition on this subject:

- Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇavārttika (Commentary on Valid Cognition)

This text is studied together with Mi pham’s word commentary. Throughout this part of the curriculum, a variety of other auxiliary topics (grammar,
composition, poetics, history) are also examined. One of the particularities of the rNam grol-gling’s approach, is the limited role played by the study of logic and epistemology. This is quite different from the dGe lugs tradition, which prides itself on its mastery of Dharmakirti’s thought. It also contrasts with the Sa skya emphasis on the use of Sa pa’s Treasure as a primer of Buddhist logico-epistemological studies. By the end of the first four years, students have a sound command of Buddhist philosophy as well as a good overview of the general structure of the Buddhist tradition.

b) This knowledge is developed by the higher exoteric course, which lasts for two full years, provides students with an understanding of the Mahayana tradition, its view of the path and result. This course focuses on the five treatises attributed to Maitreya:

- Mahāyānottaratantra (The Superior Continuum)
- Abhisamayālaṃkara (Ornament of Realization)
- Mahāyāna-sūtraśālaṃkara (Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras)
- Madhyānta-vibhanga (Differentiation of the Middle and the Extremes)
- Dharma-dharmatī-vibhanga (Differentiation of Phenomena and [Ultimate] Nature)

The course is completed by a study of monastic discipline on the basis of the study of the following two texts, which are the last of the thirteen texts.

- Pratimokṣa-sūtra (the only teaching of the Buddha on the list of thirteen)
- Gunaprabha’s Vinaya-sūtra

In this way, students complete the exoteric part of their studies. They have a sound understanding of a variety of points of view in Buddhist philosophy and a good grasp of numerous aspects of the Buddhist path. They are ready to move to final part of the curriculum.

3) The third part is the esoteric curriculum, the study of tantras. In the seventh and eighth years, general presentations of the tantric path are examined. The study focuses on the Guhya garbha tantra, which plays basically the same role in the rNying ma tradition as the Guhya samaja in the dGe lugs tradition. The main texts are:

- Yon tan rgya mtsho’s (yon ten gya tso) commentary on ’Jigs med gling pa’s (jik-may-ling-pa, 1729–1789) Treasury of Qualities (yon tan mdzod)
- Mi pham’s commentary on the Guhya-garbha tantra
- rDo grub chen’s (do-grub-chen) commentary on the Guhya-garbha tantra

This study is completed by an introduction during the ninth year to the view of the Great Perfection, the main standpoint of the rNying ma tradition. The study
is theoretical and introductory and focuses on kLong chen rab 'byams pa's (long-chen-rab-jam-ba, 1308–1363) two trilogies:

- the Trilogy of Self-Liberation (rang grol skor gsum)\(^{26}\)
- the Trilogy of Resting (ngal gso skor gsum), particularly the Resting [in] the Mind as Such (sems nyid rang grol)\(^{27}\)

Together with these works, other tantric texts, particularly Mi pham's commentary on the Eight Words of Practice (sgrub pa bka' brgyad) and 'Jigs med gling pa's work on the stage of development, are examined. In this way, students are given a solid grasp of the world of tantras, which is, as we will see, one of the goals of this education.

### Comparing curriculums: the organization of knowledge

If we compare the curriculums of Se rwa and rNam grol gling, we can see similarities and differences. There is no point here in listing all the relevant features of our comparison. Rather, let me make a few remarks, starting with the similarities. One of the most important features of Tibetan scholastic traditions is the way they organize knowledge on the basis of root-texts and their commentaries. As we know, this is not a Tibetan invention but derives from the methodology used by both Hinduism and late Indian Buddhism. In traditional India, topics of learning are discussed on the basis of a root text explicated by further commentaries, including a teacher's oral explanation. Even considerations of secular topics follow this model. For example, aesthetics is discussed in relation to the Natya śāstra, a basic text that provides the reference point for the whole field. Similarly, in Tibet the study of grammar, for instance, proceeds by commenting on basic texts, in this case the gsum cu pa and the rtags 'jug pa, two grammatical treatises that are said to have been composed by Thonmi Sam bhuta (seventh century) upon his return from India. Even the study of medicine is organized around the study of basic texts, the four medical tantras (rgyud bzhi), which are first memorized and then commented upon. Hence, commentary is central not just to religious traditions, but to the way in which knowledge is organized in these cultures.

We could even go a bit further and draw a partial contrast between modern ways of organizing knowledge by disciplines and traditional Indian or Tibetan reliance on commentary. Modern cultures mostly rely on an anonymous and abstract organization of knowledge through disciplines structured around "groups of objects, methods, their corpus of propositions considered to be true, the interplay of rules and definitions, of techniques and tools."\(^{28}\) This is quite different from the Indian and Tibetan commentarial mode of organization which is based on the principle of explication of a pre-given meaning found in basic texts, which are called root texts (rtisa ba, mūla). These texts are most often versified, that is, written in kārika (tshig le 'ur byed pa) or mnemonic verses. In the
Hindu traditions, these texts are called sūtras, the aphoristic summaries of a tradition’s scriptural basis, following the methodology developed in Patañjali’s grammatical tradition. For example, the meaning of the Upaniṣads is summarized by the Brahmāsūtra, which is in turn further explained by commentaries. Such texts are not written to be picked up and read by anybody, but are intended to serve as the basis of further oral and written commentary. They would be read in relation to a bhāṣya or a vṛtti (’grel ba), a commentary often written by the author of the root text. Those in turn could be supplemented by a vyākhyā or fikā (’grel bshad), a more detailed gloss used to supplement the first commentary.

Tibetan curriculums are similarly structured. The root-texts that are memorized and studied in the exoteric part of the curriculum are all, with one or two exceptions, Tibetan translations of Indian treatises (bstan bcos, śāstra). All of the five or thirteen texts listed above, with the exception of the Pratimokṣa-sūtra, fit in this category. This extended use of commentary is fairly unique in the Buddhist world. Certainly, other Buddhist traditions use commentaries but the Tibetan reliance on commentary is stronger than in most other Buddhist traditions, which tend to rely more on the study of the direct teachings of the Buddha and less on later commentaries. For example, both Chinese and Theravāda Buddhisms tend to emphasize the study of the direct teachings of the Buddha as they are contained in their versions of the canon. Monks in these traditions study the words of the Buddha more often and their commentaries directly explicate those. This is obviously not to say that these traditions do not rely on commentaries. For example, Theravāda Buddhism relies on commentaries such as Buddhaghosa’s Path of Purification and Chinese schools tend to emphasize texts such as the Awakening of the Faith. Nevertheless, monks and scholars do tend to devote significant efforts to the study of the teachings attributed to the Buddha as a normal part of the curriculum. Theravādins tend to read the main sūtras as contained in the Majjhima Nikāya or the Dīgha Nikāya, whereas Chinese monks often focus their study on a central sūtra such as the Varjārcchedikā, the Lotus or the Avatāmsaka.

The Tibetan curriculum is structured quite differently. Although Tibetans do read and study the Buddhist sūtras, the exoteric teachings that purport to be Buddha’s words, they tend to put less (this is a matter of degree) emphasize on the words of the founder and more on the systematic study of their content. All the five or thirteen texts used in the exoteric studies, with the exception of the Pratimokṣa-sūtra, are Indian treatises (bstan bcos, śāstra). They are the root-texts that are memorized and explained by further commentaries. These treatises do not purport to be the direct words of the founder but to clarify aspects of his message. They offer systematic presentations of the founder’s teachings in order to facilitate the comprehension and practice of followers. Although these texts are not part of the bka’ ’gyur, the collection of the Buddha’s teachings available in Tibetan, they are nevertheless canonical, since they are included in the bstan ’gyur, the translated treatises. The thirteenth century polymath Bu ston (bu-dön) brings out the authoritative and commentarial nature of such treatises, defining
them as “works that explain the meaning of the Buddha’s word, are in accordance with the path for the attainment of emancipation, and are composed by someone with a nondistracted mind.”

We may wonder about such a choice of curricular material, which seems to be unique in the history of Buddhism. This is not the place for an elaborate exploration of the scriptural background of Tibetan Buddhism which would be required to answer such a question in any detail. Suffice it to say that historically the form that Buddhism has taken in Tibet partly derives from the Indian models that existed at the time (eighth to twelfth centuries) when Buddhism was adopted by Tibetans. The emphasis on treatise can also be seen as a way to deal with the tremendous complexity of the canonical material. In general the Buddhist canon is enormous. The bka’gyur contains more than a hundred volumes of the teachings that purport to be Buddha’s direct words. Moreover, these teachings are not only numerous, but they often explicitly contradict each other. Confronted with this mass of teachings, Tibetans have tended to be selective and systematic. They have preferred the systematic treatment of the material found in the canonical treatises to the more inspirational but less organized material found in the bka’gyur.

This organization of the curriculum reflects the unabashedly classical orientation of Tibetan scholastic traditions, their regard for the lost antiquity of high Indian Buddhist culture. The great Indian treatises, which form the basis of the curriculum, are considered to be classical by all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Their scholastic educations look on these texts from a past period (fourth to eighth century C.E.), a period often described as the “golden age of Indian civilization,” as their models in relation to which their contemporary achievements are measured. For Tibetan scholars, such texts are classical in the full sense of the word, which is explained by Gadamer in this way:

The “classical” is something raised above the vicissitudes of changing times and changing tastes. It is immediately accessible, not through that shock of recognition, as it were, that sometimes characterizes a work of art for its contemporaries and in which the beholder experiences a fulfilled apprehension of meaning that surpasses all conscious expectations. Rather when we call something classical, there is a consciousness of something enduring, of significance, that cannot be lost and that is independent of all the circumstances of time—a timeless present that is contemporaneous with every other present.

The great Indian treatises have this timeless and normative status. They are the obligatory reference points for later reflections. They are the “great texts” revered by Tibetan scholiasts. They provide the basis and model for the education of Tibetan scholars, who take them as setting the standards against which contemporary achievements are measured.
Comparing curriculums: commentary vs. debate

On the side of differences, a striking feature is the number of texts and the time devoted to the study of each of them in rNying ma and dGe lugs curricular models. Whereas in the dGe lugs curriculum of Se rwa, only five texts are studied during a period of fifteen to twenty years, rNam grol gling monks study at least thirteen texts in half that time. The number of texts is much greater when we include the tantric ones, which are not counted among the thirteen texts, and additional the texts covering auxiliary topics. We may wonder about the reason for this difference. Does it reflect a difference in the content of the education?

It is true that there are differences in the number of topics covered by the two curriculums. The auxiliary topics of grammar, poetry, history, etc., are not covered in the Se rwa curriculum and neither are the tantras, which are studied privately in the tantric colleges. For the most part, however, the content of the two curricular models is similar. Both curriculums cover the same five main topics, albeit quite differently. If we group the different texts into areas of study, we can then discern five main areas: Madhyamaka philosophy, logic and epistemology, the study of the path, monastic discipline and tantra. Let us leave the last topic aside, since it is not officially part of the Se rwa curriculum and is supposed to be studied privately, and examine the ways the two curriculums cover the first four exoteric topics.

For each topic the Se rwa curriculum tends to focus on a single text, which is then supplemented by further commentaries and textbooks. The only exception to this practice is found in the study of the path which is done through two texts: the Ornament of Realization attributed to Maitreya and Vasubandhu's Treasury of Abhidharma (which I would also count as a study of the path). Even here, however, the textual overlap is only partial, since the former covers the Mahayana path whereas the latter covers the Basic Buddhist path. Thus, each topic is really examined through a single text. By contrast, the rNam grol gling curriculum covers each main area by examining several of the relevant texts. For example, when the Mahayana path is covered all five treatises attributed to Maitreya are examined. Similarly, when the Abhidharma is studied, both Vasubandhu's and Asaga's texts are examined. Thus, the number of texts studied for each area varies, although the four main areas are similar.

Thus, it is clear that the main difference between rNying ma and dGe lugs models is not one of content but of educational style or pedagogy. What we have here are two quite distinct models of scholastic studies. The dialectical style of the dGe lugs tradition exemplified by the Se rwa curriculum focuses on a few texts and emphasizes the practice of dialectical debates as one of (and possibly the) central method of education. Whereas in traditional Indian Buddhism debate seems to have been an occasional skill used mostly in public, the dGe lugs tradition emphasizes its pedagogical use as a way to master texts and develop a spirit of inquiry. This pedagogical role for debate has led the dGe lugs tradition to focus on dialectical questions rather than on the more textual and
commentarial aspects of Indian Buddhism. As a consequence, this tradition has tended to limit the textual basis of its studies.\footnote{38} It has also sometimes neglected, especially in the three monastic universities, the practice of higher literary skills.

The \textit{rNying} ma tradition, as exemplified by the \textit{rNam} grol gling curriculum, on the other hand, is more textual. It emphasizes commentary over debate, and offers a more rounded education which combines literary as well as dialectical aspects. Contrary to dGe lugs institutions, which rely overwhelmingly on the practice of debate, non-dGe lugs scholastic institutions are more moderate in their use of debate as a scholastic pedagogy. Debate is a limited though important part of their curriculum and does not constitute the central methodology, as in the dGe lugs institutions. In that, the non-dGe lugs institutions may be closer to the Indian tradition where debate seems to have taken place mostly for public performance or in actual confrontations with other schools.

These two educational traditions are associated with two institutional forms: the debating institution (\textit{rtsod grwa}) of the dGe lugs tradition, as in Se rwa, and the commentarial institution (\textit{bshad grwa}), as in rNam grol gling. These two types of institution and the traditions associated with them have a long history, which we cannot examine at this point in any detail. Briefly, however, the model of commentarial institutions in Tibet can be traced back to Sa-pan, who transformed the Sa skya tradition into one of the main Tibetan scholarly schools in the thirteenth century. Sa-pan stressed the role of study in monastic training and proposed a model of intellectual inquiry which was in many respects close to classical Indian ideas. Such a model is based on the harmonious combination of three practices: exposition (\textit{'chad}), composition (\textit{rtsom}) and debate (\textit{rtsod}), as explained by Sa-pan's own \textit{Entrance to the Gate for the Wise (mkhas pa la 'jug pa'i sgo)}.\footnote{39} In this text, Sa-pan greatly emphasized traditional Indian commentarial categories as well as their literary background. He stressed the importance of grammar and semantics as basic scholarly skills and the relevance of Indian poetics to commentarial practice.

The debating tradition grew out of the scholarly activities of the famous translator rNgog to \textit{tsa ba} (ngok-lo-tsa-wa, 1059–1109). Despite his belonging to the bKa’ gdam pa (ga-dam-ba) tradition, which in its origins looked askance at the study of philosophy, rNgog was deeply interested in scholarly studies, which he promoted in Tibet. Under his influence, Tibetan Buddhism in general and the bKa’ gdam pa tradition in particular became more philosophically oriented. Under his impulse, the monastery of gSang phu ne’u thog (sang-pu-ne-wu-tok), founded in 1073 by his uncle rNgog legs pa’i shes rab (Ngok-lek-bay-shay-rab, one of Atiśa’s direct disciples) started to develop as an active intellectual center. Its importance further increased with the work of Phya pa chos kyi seng ge (cha-ba-chö-gyi-seng-gay, 1182–1251), who brought about important developments due to his acute and original intellect.\footnote{40} Phya pa is credited with settling the form of debate practiced by Tibetans. It is under his influence that gSang phu became the center of a tradition that was going to differ from the more classical Indian model later imitated by Sa-pan.
Gradually, the education offered by the gSang pu tradition spread throughout the Tibetan world. Later scholastic centers such as sNar thang (nar-thang), Zha lu (sha-lu), and bDe ba chen (de-wa-chen) adopted a curriculum similar to that of gSang pu. It is in these centers that Tsong kha pa and his main disciples received their basic scholarly training. Consequently, the dGe lugs school adopted the gSang pu tradition with its philosophical views, curriculum, and methods of study. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, a close link existed between the three dGe lugs monastic universities around Lhasa and gSang pu. After this period, gSang pu lost its importance as a center of study and was supplanted by the three dGe lugs monastic universities, which became the dominant scholastic establishments in central Tibet.

We may begin to understand better the curricular organization of the two models of Tibetan scholastic education. We realize their important similarities and their more subtle variations, as well as the complex histories that lie behind them. But our effort of comprehension cannot stop here, for we need to understand the content of the curriculum. To do so I could describe the content of each text, but it would be hard to avoid the tedium of a scholastic laundry list. Hence, rather than survey the content of the whole curriculum, let me focus on a single aspect, the study of the path, in order to clarify some of the central topics, goals and concerns of Tibetan monastic education.

The place of the study of the path

If we look at the two types of curriculum and the number of texts studied and years spent on them, we can see that by far the greatest amount of effort is devoted to the area of studies which I have termed the study of the path. In the dGe lugs curriculum, this topic is examined through at least two texts: the Ornament and the Abhidharma. Even Candrakirti’s Introduction is largely concerned with the path as well. The importance of the topic is clear also in the number of years spent on each of these texts, particularly on the former, which is studied for four or five years at Se rwa through an elaborate textual examination always combined with lengthy debates. It is studied with Tsong kha pa’s Golden Garland, and rGyal tshab’s (gyel-tsap, 1364–1432) Ornament of the Essence of Commentaries as well as with the textbooks of the college. In this topic, the textbooks are important because they allow the students to cover topics that are not explicitly covered by the Ornament. Students, who have already examined the Abhidharma topics in their study of the Ornament, examine them again when they study Vasubandhu’s commentary on the Abhidharma for two to four more years. Thus, altogether dGe lugs students may spend close to ten years examining the path.

In the rNying ma curriculum of rNam grol gling, the time devoted to the study of the path explained in the exoteric literature is shorter since the overall exoteric curriculum does not take more than six or seven years. Nevertheless, the topic is covered in considerable detail. True to its textual methodology, the
rNying ma tradition exposes the students to this topic through the study of many texts: at least three of the five treatises attributed to Maitreya are clearly devoted to the study of the path and so are the two Abhidharma commentaries as well as Śāntideva’s *Introduction to the Bodhisattva’s Deeds*, which is used as an introductory text.

One may wonder why this topic of the path is covered so extensively in both types of curriculum? To those who are experts in a Buddhist tradition, the answer to such a question is self-evident. The path (*lam, mārga*) is the central notion of the tradition. As expressed by Buswell and Gimello, the path “incorporates, underlies, or presupposes everything else in Buddhism, from the simplest act of charity to the most refined meditative experience and the most rigorous philosophical argument. The study of mārga directs attention...to a general pattern of discipline encompassing both the whole life of the individual and the corporate life of the whole Buddhist community.”

Scholars of Buddhism know that the study of a particular formulation of the path plays a central role in a Buddhist tradition. It is the structure around which a Buddhist tradition organizes its practices, its main doctrinal teachings, its central narratives, etc.

For those who have little expertise in a Buddhist tradition, this focus on the path may appear alien, requiring the substitution of the well known terms of religious studies with arcane Buddhological jargon. We should first notice, however, that the Buddhist literature dealing with the path is extremely frequent throughout the Buddhist world. Many other classical Indian treatises, such as those attributed to Asaṅga himself, fit in this class. In Tibet, there is a whole literature expounding this topic: the numerous commentaries on the *Prajñāparamitā* literature, the studies of Stages and Paths (*sa lam gyi rnam bzhag*) of the sūtra and the tantra, the texts devoted to the structure of the path in the traditions of the Great Seal and of the Great Perfection. Outside of India and Tibet, such texts are also widespread. In Theravāda, Buddhaghosa’s *Path of Purification* is only the most famous example of an extensive literature. Similarly, such texts have also played an important part in Far Eastern Buddhism, as evinced by the importance of Chih-i’s (538–597) *Mo-ho-chih-kuan*.

The impression of unfamiliarity further dissipates when we begin to realize that this classical Buddhist standpoint can be recast in terms of an emphasis on practice. Too often religious traditions are defined in terms of creed, an approach that is far from being as universal as it may seem. Although such a view has some applicability to Buddhism, I would argue that it is basically inappropriate to a tradition that emphasizes practice as its central focus. This does not mean that doctrines, symbols or narratives are irrelevant to Buddhism, as Buddhist scholars know, but that they need to be understood in terms of how they relate to actual practices.

When we realize that the idea of the path is the way in which Buddhism expresses its pragmatic and soteriological emphasis, we begin to understand why students spend so many years in studying the structure and result of the path. We have yet to understand, however, the way in which such studies relate
to actual practices. It may be tempting to assume that texts dealing with the path directly relate to actual practices, in particular to the meditative practices that are normatively speaking central to the tradition. I would like to argue that this assumption is warranted, however, only to a very limited extent. I would further argue that although practice is central to Buddhist traditions and the various treatments of the path are meant to address this pragmatic emphasis, it is a mistake to assume that teachings on the path necessarily reflect an experiential standpoint.

Recently, R. Sharf has argued in the same sense. His view is that some modern Buddhist scholars and contemporary Buddhist practitioners mistakenly regard the literature describing the structure and results of the path in experiential terms. Sharf says:

In fact, it is difficult to imagine how somebody could mistake this kind of religious literature for “expressions” or “reports” of personal experiences; they are first and foremost scholastic compendiums, compiled by monks of formidable learning who were attempting to systematize and schematize the confused and often conflicting descriptions of practices and stages found scattered throughout the canon. 48

For Sharf, it is a categorical mistake to assume that the literature dealing with the path is either a reflection of Buddhist practice or a direct preparation for it. My point here is not to discuss Sharf’s arguments, which address the presentations of many traditions and thus may have to be nuanced. Nevertheless, I believe that his view is quite appropriate in the case of the Tibetan presentations of the exoteric path that are central to scholastic education, especially the presentations derived from the works attributed to Maitreya and Asaṅga. Let me elaborate this point, before making a few broader concluding remarks.

The study of the path and Buddhist practice

Among the canonical works concerning the exoteric path, the one that stands out is the Ornament, which is attributed by Tibetan scholars to the celestial Bodhisattva Maitreya. This work is studied for often up to six years in dGe lugs institutions and, although less time is devoted to it in non-dGe lugs institutions, it remains a central reference of the Tibetan presentations of the path. Thus, it constitutes an ideal testing ground to see whether Sharf’s view applies to the Tibetan presentations of the path.

The Ornament is a commentary on the Prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra, the main canonical source of the teaching of emptiness. The primary concern of this commentary is not, however, to explain this teaching but to delineate the stages of the path from the Mahāyāna standpoint, a subject taught only implicitly in the sūtra, according to the Tibetan tradition. Tibetan scholars describe the topic of the Ornament as the stages of realization that are the hidden meaning of the
sūtra (smdo'i sbas don mgon rtogs kyi rim pa). The Ornament summarizes its own content in this way:

The perfection of wisdom (prajñā-pāramitā) has been proclaimed by way of eight themes: 1) the wisdom knowing all modes, 2) the wisdom knowing the paths, 3) the wisdom knowing all [phenomena], 4) the full practice of all aspects, 5) the culminating stages of practice, 6) the gradual practice, 7) the instantaneous practice, 8) the dharma-body. 49

Each of the eight chapters of the Ornament addresses one of the eight themes (dngos po, padārtha). There is no point here in analyzing these eight themes. Suffice it to say that the Ornament describes the structure of the Mahāyāna path through the four practices (sbyor ba bzhi, caṭvāraḥ prayogāḥ) or realizations (mgon rtogs, abhisamaya). These four realizations (chapters 4–7) take as their objects the first three themes (chapters 1–3), the three wisdoms of the Buddha. The result of this fourfold practice is the dharma-body of the Buddha and his special attainments (chapter 8).

I suggested earlier that the importance of the path in Buddhist tradition reflects a pragmatic orientation on the part of the tradition, which understands what would be called in English religion more as a matter of practice than of creed. It is tempting to infer from this that since it teaches the Mahāyāna path, the Ornament must bear a direct relation with actual Mahāyāna meditative practices. It is also tempting to infer the since this text explains the Mahāyāna path, those who study it intensively, as Tibetan scholars do, must be interested in this text for practical reasons. These assumptions are, however, unjustified. Although practice is central to Buddhist traditions and the Ornament relates to this pragmatic emphasis, it is incorrect to assume that teachings on the path necessarily reflect an experiential standpoint. In order to understand a text we cannot look just at its content and deduce from this its application; rather, we must consider the ways in which such a text is used by the textual communities in which it is embedded.

In discussing the ways this text is used by Tibetan traditions, we may want to keep in mind the fact that the Ornament is used differently by the two main Tibetan scholastic traditions characterized above. In the non-dGe lugs commentarial institutions, the Ornament is studied for its content, the eight themes, which are explained through seventy topics (don, artha). In this way, students learn about the four realizations, the bodies (sku, kaya) of the Buddha as well as a number of elements of the Mahāyāna path such as the mind of enlightenment (byang chub kyi sems, bodhicitta). Non-dGe lugs traditions do not focus exclusively on the Ornament, but complete this study of the path by examining the other texts attributed to Maitreya as well as Asaṅga’s and Vasubandhu’s Abhidharma texts.

dGe lugs monastic universities proceed differently. They take the Ornament as the central text for the study of the path, treating it as a kind of Buddhist
encyclopedia, and read it in the light of commentaries by Tsong-kha-pa, rGyal tshab and the authors of textbooks. Sometimes a single word of the *Ornament* is taken by commentaries more as a pretext for elaborate digression than as an object of serious textual explanation. Several dGe lugs colleges, such as the Byas (jay) College of Se rwa, recognize this situation and consider these topics as special (*zur bkol*). They are studied in relation to the *Ornament* but apart. In this way, most of the topics relevant to the Buddhist path, whether from a Mahāyāna perspective or from a more general basic Buddhist standpoint, are covered in the course of studying this one text. The summarizing commentaries of the textbooks, particularly the *General Meaning* (*spyi don*), are here helpful in offering synthesized presentations of all the relevant topics. In this way, students are introduced to a variety of topics and perspectives, despite the limitations of their textual basis.

When we look at the ways in which both these Tibetan scholastic traditions use the *Ornament*, we see very little practical relevance, despite some claims by members of the traditions themselves. Among the topics either directly covered by the *Ornament* or studied in relation to it, few appear to have any direct relation to practice. Let us first look at the central themes of the text. Among the eight topics the first three, the three wisdoms of the Buddha, are not meant to be practiced directly. They are taken as the object of the path, which consists of the four practices. Similarly, the last theme, the dharma-body of the Buddha is not directly relevant to practice but is the goal of practice. The central form of practice presented by the *Ornament* is the four practices or realizations, particularly the practice of all the aspects (*rnam rdzogs sbyor ba*), the topic of the fourth chapter. In fact, this is the central topic of the text and may have been an actual practice in which all the different aspects of the three wisdoms are summarized in a single meditation called the *meditation summarizing the three wisdoms* (*mkhyen gsum bs dus sgom*). This is not the place to explain this highly technical topic which would take us into the stratosphere of Tibetan scholasticism. What is relevant for our purpose is that this practice seems to be realistic. It does not involve any extraordinary feat, as in the case of the miraculous qualities of the Buddhas and Celestial Bodhisattvas, but can be implemented by anybody interested in doing so.

But, and this is the important point, no teacher I have ever met, seems to have practiced this meditation or even to have been clear on how to do so. Non-dGe lugs curriculums do study this practice but few seem to have a convincing understanding of this topic, even at the textual level. As far as the students I interviewed, they seem to have gotten very little out of the study of this part of the text. Among dGe lugs scholars, there is probably a better understanding of the topic at the theoretical level. Nevertheless, nobody I encountered seems to be clear about the ways to practice this text. Thus, it is clear that in the Tibetan scholastic traditions, the central themes of this text are not practiced. What about the other auxiliary topics, those that are briefly presented by the text or those that are studied through other texts?
It may seem that some of the less central topics studied have direct practical applications. For example, the mind of enlightenment (byang chub kyi sems, bodhicitta) is studied in the first chapter. Similarly, the single-pointed concentration that leads to the attainment of tranquility (zhi gnas, samatha) is studied in great detail. Concentration is studied with considerable care for several months, and in certain colleges such as ’Bras spung sGo mang (dre-bung-go-mang) and Se rwa Byas is considered a special topic (zur bkol). Thus, topics such as the mind of enlightenment or concentration, which are of practical importance, are studied at great length. Moreover, teachers do point out the practical importance of studying them. Are these not signs that these texts are used for practice?

Although it is tempting to assume here an experiential relevance, the reality appears to be quite different, for the study of these topics remains mostly confined to the theoretical domain. Students do not devote much time to the study of the aspects of these topics that are of direct relevance to actual meditation. For example, in the study of concentration, the nine stages leading to tranquility, which are of practical use, are not given much attention. Similarly, the two methods for generating the mind of enlightenment, which are central to the Gradual Path (lam rim) literature, are barely mentioned. The real focus is theoretical. The mind of enlightenment is not studied here as an attitude to be developed but in function of its role in the overall Mahayana path. Similarly, the study of concentration focuses on the attainments of the four absorptions (bsam gtan, dhyāna) and the four formless concentrations (gzugs med, arūpa). These are standard forms of Buddhist practice which have been and are practiced in certain Buddhist traditions. Nevertheless, they are rarely practiced in the Tibetan tradition. When monks become really serious about practice and start the type of extended retreat that would enable them to aim for such attainments, they do not practice the four absorptions or the four formless concentrations, but focus on the tantric path. There, the attainment of tranquility is discussed for which special methods are introduced, but the attainments of absorptions and formless concentrations play little role.

Thus, the conclusion seems hard to escape. Despite claims to the contrary sometimes made by members of the tradition, the study of the Ornament and other texts similarly presenting the exoteric path seems to have little relation to experience within the context of Tibetan scholastic traditions. We may then wonder why Tibetan scholars spend so much time studying these topics? Are they taken in by their own claims? Or do they just keep studying texts that had an experiential relevance in an earlier time, which is now lost? I have obviously little to say about the historical back-ground of this last question, for the way in which these texts were used by Indian Buddhists is outside the purview of my inquiry. It is important to remember, however, that understanding the practices of a tradition as left-overs of a meaningful past that has lost its relevance is inadequate. People engage in the lengthy study of such texts not out of habit but because they find it meaningful. But what is the meaning that Tibetan scholars find in a text such as the Ornament?
I would like to suggest that the answer is not to be found in experience but in what could be described as the formation of a worldview. The discussion of the exoteric path is central to Tibetan traditions not because it provides practical guidance but because it provides for the construction of the kind of meaningful universe that Buddhist practice requires. This explanation of the role of the Ornament follows a venerable tradition in the Western academical study of religions, which proposes that religion is a way to understand the universe and cope with the limits that it imposes on humans. Some of the formulations of this view, such as those of Tylor and Frazer, are by now thoroughly discredited. They were clearly wrong in presenting religion as a kind of primitive science aiming at the explanation of natural phenomena. Even more recent and relevant formulations of this view are still problematic in that they reflect too closely the theological background out of which they come. Weber, for example, holds that the religions of salvation are based on a theodicy of suffering and happiness. Similarly, Geertz argues that religion is a model both of and for human existence. It enables humans to bear existential problems such as suffering or evil by placing these experiences within a meaningful framework. Although not without merit, these views in which the Protestant influence is transparent fit Buddhism only imperfectly, for the latter is based on the rather optimistic idea that humans can overcome suffering. Hence, the idea of acceptance, which is central to Weber, Geertz and many modern scholars of religious studies, is problematic in a Buddhist context. Nevertheless, it is certainly not wrong to argue that a religion such as Buddhism seeks to enable its followers to cope with suffering and the other limits of human existence.

In a Buddhist perspective, this coping with suffering, which is the goal of the tradition, has several dimensions. First and foremost, Buddhist traditions hold that only sustained religious practices can effectively help humans to diminish and eventually overcome suffering. Such liberative, or to use J. Z. Smith's words, utopian practices involve a whole range of soteriological practices. Most of them have little to do with meditative experience and pertain to what is usually called merit making. In this category, we can include not only most traditional lay practices such as giving to the monastic order but also most of the monastic practices as well. In particular, the scholastic studies examined here are understood by participants as a form of merit making. This type of Buddhist practice forms the core of much actual Buddhist practice. It should not be considered at odds with so-called higher meditative practices, but, on the contrary, as continuous with them. Merit making is part of the liberative or utopian dimension of the tradition. In some ways, the value that monks find in monastic studies derive from their being meritorious. Studying a text such as the Ornament is intrinsically valuable. It is in and of itself virtuous. Nevertheless, this intrinsic virtuous quality of Tibetan scholastic studies is not their main value. Normatively speaking, the main value of studies, one of the
two types of activity in which Buddhist monks are supposed to engage, is in
their leading to the development of virtues such as inner calm, attention and
inquisitiveness that will in turn enable the practitioner to be successful in the
higher meditative practices. For there is no doubt that, from a normative stand­
point, meditative practices are considered by most Buddhist traditions as the
ultimate means of freedom. In considering these higher practices, however, it is
a mistake to overemphasize the experiential dimension. Although Buddhist med­
itations involve experience, this is not their only or even most relevant feature.
From a Buddhist perspective, meditations are first and foremost ethical practices
that seek to develop central virtues such as detachment and compassion.

Moreover, ethical practices do not exist independently of larger cultural
frameworks in relation to which they make sense. In particular, Buddhist prac­
tices require a cosmological framework in which the virtues that are being
developed and the practices used for this purpose make sense. Buddhist prac­
tices and virtues are supposed to have immediate effects on the basis of which
Buddhist teachers often argue for the cogency of their traditions. But the imme­
diate benefits that one derives from certain practices are not enough to support
the kind of intensive commitment necessary to their implementation. Humans do
not live just by quick fixes but need to decide on long term goals and means to
reach them. They need a narrative through which they know what to do and
become persuaded that they are on the right track. They also need to be able to
bring a sense of closure to such a narrative, to find a standpoint toward which
their efforts are aimed and from which they make sense. Such a standpoint can
be found only in a certain type of universe. To construct such a universe of
meaning is one of the main goals of the study of the Ornament and other related
texts in Tibetan scholastic traditions.

This universe of meaning is the one familiar to students of Buddhism. It is
explained by the basic teachings of Buddhism such as the four noble truths and
dependent origination, supplemented by the Mahāyāna sūtras. The four noble
truths provide the kind of existential analysis of human existence, as imperma­
nent, suffering and no-self, that can provide the basis for spiritual practices.
These basic teachings also indicate the possibility of liberation and the path that
can lead to such a goal, thus forming a universe in which the practices recom­
mended by Buddhist traditions become meaningful. The universe of meaning
constructed by the Ornament and other related texts is not, however, just that of
basic Buddhism, for it is a Mahāyāna universe, where the goal of practice is less
self-liberation than universal salvation. This is the universe of the Mahāyāna
sūtras in which bodhisattvas strive to become Buddha through the practice of the
perfections (phar phyin, pāramitā).

To develop such a view of the world, students go through a number of topics
which pertain either to basic Buddhism or to the Mahāyāna tradition. They study
the basic teachings mentioned above, including the four truths, the analysis of
mental factors, the difference between concentration and insight, the form and
formless absorptions, etc. In the dGe lugs debating institutions, these topics,
(with which students of other Buddhist traditions, particularly Theravāda), are familiar, are studied in the textbooks and the commentaries, which take the Ornament as a pretext for exploring the Buddhist universe. This is in accordance with this tradition’s emphasis on debate and the concordant tendency to keep the textual basis of studies limited. In the non-dGe lugs commentarial institutions, such a study is done in relation to other texts such as those of the Abhidharma.

Students also study the central topic of the Mahāyāna tradition, the structure of the Mahāyāna path, the central topic of the Ornament. Related topics such as the development of the mind of enlightenment, the nature and role of the perfections (phar phyin, pāramitā), or the conflicting views on Buddha-nature (bde gshes snying po, tathāgata-garbha) are examined at great length. Students also study the divisions and sub-divisions of the paths, the stages of the Mahāyāna path, the qualities obtained at each of these stages, and the final results to which they lead. In this way, the students form a coherent picture of the path and the universe in which this path makes sense.

In the non-dGe lugs commentarial institutions, particularly at the rNam grol gling monastery, this Mahāyāna picture of the world is in turn supplemented by the study of the tantric path. Right from the beginning, students are introduced to the tantric dimensions of Buddhist practice. The universe of meaning constructed here is not just Mahāyāna, but tantric as well. Students are made aware that the path and the goal are esoteric and that the exoteric texts figure as introductions to the real path, which is tantric. These texts are meant to be supplemented by the tantric description of the path. Thus the last three years out of a total of nine years of study are devoted to a detailed study of the tantric tradition.

But here again, it would be a mistake to take this tantric curriculum as reflecting a practical orientation. Students do not receive practical instructions on how to meditate. Such instructions are provided only after students have begun their actual meditative career. Moreover, such instructions are mostly given only in private or during optional periods of retreat. Hence, the tantric instructions contained in the curriculum of commentarial institutions are not intended to provide practical guidance but theoretical models that support the construction of a universe in which tantric practice is meaningful. The particularity of the rNying ma curriculum is not that it is more practical, but that the universe that it constructs is tantric rather than based purely on the exoteric aspects of the tradition. Thus, the difference with dGe lugs curriculum is real but does not concern the actual practices of either tradition.

The practices of the Tibetan traditions are quite similar, although not identical. What differs is the rhetoric used to present such practices and the ideological contexts thus created. In the dGe lugs model, the universe and the path to which students are introduced theoretically are exoteric and the actual tantric practices they later engage in are understood to fit into such a framework. Even while describing actual tantric practices dGe lugs texts tend to emphasize the primacy of the exoteric narrative of spiritual progress thereby bringing the legitimacy of the classical exoteric model to their esoteric practices. In the rNying ma...
model, the universe to which students are introduced doctrinally is mostly tantric and the exoteric teachings are taken as supporting this construction. The actual practices that students later engage in fit easily into the narratives of spiritual progress derived from these tantric models. Members of the tradition sometimes find it harder, however, to justify their practices in reference to the classical Indian model.

Scholasticism and the construction of meaning

It is in this ideological and theoretical perspective that the Ornament’s discussion of apparently practical topics must be understood within a Tibetan context. Topics such as the mind of enlightenment or the attainments pertaining to the form and formless realms are important not because they directly prepare for meditations but because they support the elaboration of a universe in which Buddhist practice makes sense. The Ornament and similar texts are, for Tibetans, not reports on or direct preparations for Buddhist practice, but rhetorical representations of the meaningful universe envisaged by the tradition. They provide students with a meaningful outlook, which may support further practices, but which has no direct relevance to them.

This construction of a universe of meaning is not something unique to Tibetan scholastic traditions. Most religious traditions, however, do not take the doctrinal and intellectualist approach adopted by Tibetan scholasticism. Rather, they emphasize the role of myths and rituals in achieving such a goal. In the Tibetan scholastic traditions such dimensions obviously exist but they seem less important than in non-scholastic traditions. Myths are obviously present but they seem to play a less important role in the construction of meaning than the doctrinally based narratives. The central narratives are not derived from the concrete teachings of the founder or the biographies of the central figures, but emerge from abstract doctrines. This, I suggest, is a particularity of scholasticism as a religious phenomenon.

To be successful, this construction of a universe of meaning and the path that transcends it must become self-evident, so that students feel confident in their practices. The steps along the path must appear to them as concrete stages in relation to which Buddhist practice makes sense. This concreteness should, however, be understood in relation to the process of reification through which it is constructed. The map provided by the Ornament literature does not refer to some self-evident mental states existing independently of textuality. The stages described by the Ornament are not set in stone. Rather, they are constructed symbolic objects that acquire the solidity necessary to inspire and sustain people in their actions. They are best characterized, following Burke’s term, as symbolic actions, that is, as representational forces that attempt to influence their audience. Thus, far from being a kind of guide to Buddhist practice or a description of spiritual experiences, the Ornament provides the Tibetan tradition with the framework that makes a narrative of spiritual progress possible and
introduces an element of closure without which the commitment required by Buddhist practices cannot be sustained.

Notes


2. B. Stock defines textual community as “a group that arises somewhere in the interstices between the imposition of the written word and the articulation of a certain type of social organization. It is an interpretive community but it is also a social entity.” Listening for the Text (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) 150.

3. Although there are minute differences between the scholastic institutions of the three contemporary non-dGe lugs traditions, they all have the same commentarial model of education and are quite similar. This similarity is not accidental, for they all derive from the scholarly revival initiated by gZhan phan (Zhanphan) toward the end of the nineteenth century in the context of the non-sectarian (ris med) movement initiated by 'Jam mgon kong sprul (jam-gön-kong-trul, 1813–1899) and 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen tse'i dbang po (jam-yang-kyen-tse-wang-po, 1820–1892).

4. The slight variations in the curriculum between the two scholastic colleges (Byas and sMad) of Sc rwa are irrelevant here.

5. Sources on the curriculum of the three monastic universities are limited. Geshe Sopa, Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture (Dharamsala: Tibetan Library, 1983) 41–3 and A. Wallace, The Life and Teaching of Geshe Rabten (London: Allen and Unwin, 1980) 47–9 are the main sources on the state of monastic education in Tibet. My presentation is also, and perhaps mostly, based on my stays in these monasteries where I observed monastic education as it has been reconstituted in exile in India. It is also based on countless conversations with older monks who constantly referred to the state of monastic life in traditional Tibet.

6. Abhisamayālaṃkāra-nāma-prajñāpāramitopadeśa-śāstra-kārikā, shes rab pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag gi bstan bcos mgon par rtags pa'i rgyan zhes bya ba tshig le'ur byas pa, P: 5184.

7. Madhyamakāvātāra-nāma, dbu ma la'jug pa zhes bya ba, P: 5262.


10. Abhidharma-koṣa-kārikā, chos mgon pa'i mdzod, P: 5590.


12. sDoms gsum rnam par nges pa'i bstand bcos.

13. Śāntideva, B bodhicaryāvatāra, byang chub sems dpal 'jig rten pa'i spyad pa la 'jug pa, P: 5272.

14. The prospectus for the rNam grol-gling institute includes the introduction in the lower sutra course, which thus lasts for four years. It divides the curriculum in three parts: lower sūtra course, higher sūtra course, and tantra course. My own division in three plus one parts is made for the sake of comparison with Se rwa’s curriculum.


16. Madhyamakālaṃkāra-pañjikā, dbu ma'i rgyan gyi bka' 'grel, P: 5286.

17. Abhidharma-samuccaya, chos mgon pa kun las bsus pa, P: 5550.

19 Mahāyānottaratratatra-śāstra, theg pa chen po'i rgyud bla ma bstan bcos, P:5525.
20 Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra-kārikā, theg pa chen po'i mdo sde'i rgyan gyi tshig le 'ur byas pa. P:5521.
21 Madhyānta-vibhaṅga, dbus dang mtha' rnam par 'yed pa, P:5522.
22 Dharma-dharmaṭi-vibhaṅga, chos dang chos nyid rnam par 'byed pa. P:5523.
23 Yon tan rin po che'i mdzod kyi'grel pa zab don snang byed nyi ma'i 'od zer, (Gangtok: 1969).
24 gSang 'grel phyogs bcu'i mun sel gyi spyi don 'od gsal snying po.
25 dPal gsang ba'i snying po'i rgyud kyi spyi don nyung ngu'i ngag gis rnam par 'byed par rin chen mdzod kyi 'de mig, Collected Works, vol. 3 (Gangtok: Dodrup Chen Rinpoche, 1974).
29 A brief examination of the Tibetan catalogues of the bstan gyur suggests that the Tibetan translation of these terms is far from systematic. The word bshad pa is used to translate a vyākhyā as well as a bhāṣya. See P: 5555 and 5565.
31 One exception is the inclusion in the Sa skya curriculum of Sa pai)'s Treasure. That this exception is also a treatise is quite revealing of the role of treatise in the Tibetan scholastic tradition.
37 H. G. Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Crossroad, 1992) 288. Such a description is adequate only from a phenomenological point of view. It describes the attitude of the participants in the tradition toward certain texts, but does not provide an adequate analysis of the cultural reality of these texts. Despite what Gadamer seems to suggest, there is no necessity in classical texts, for tradition is contingent. Textual choices come and go and what is considered classical by one age is forgotten by the next. Tibetan education provides examples of such changes. In the study of logic and epistemology, Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇa-viniścaya was first chosen but later replaced by his Pramāṇa-vārttika under Sa pa’ s impulsion. Since then, Tibetan scholars consider this latter text as the classical expression of Buddhist logico-epistemological tradition.
The dGe lugs tradition is often praised by outsiders for its dialectical depth but criticized for its limitations in knowing the fundamental Indian treatises. Thus dGe lugs scholars are sometimes characterized as having a "limited [textual] vision" (mthong bya chung ba).


It should be clear that this label is a simplification, for both rNgog’s and Sapa1.1’s traditions coexisted at gSang pu. The monastery was divided between bKa’ gdamgs colleges, which followed Cha-ba’s tradition, and Sa skya colleges, which probably followed Sa-pa’s model of education. Rong ston (rong-dön, 1367–1449), for example, who was one of the foremost proponents of Sa-pa’s tradition, taught extensively at gSang pu. See D. Jackson, “introduction,” in Rong-ston on the Prajñā-pāramitā Philosophy of the Abhisamayālamkāra (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1988).

Nevertheless, the name is convenient in view of the later connection between the dGe lugs school and the bKa’ gdamgs elements at gSang pu.


Tsong kha pa, Extensive Explanation of the Treatise of the Ornament Together with its Commentaries, a Golden Garland of Good Sayings. (bstan bcos mngon rtags rgyan ’grel pa dang bcas pa ’i rgya cher bshad pa legs bshad gser gyi phreng ba, Bylakuppe, India: Sera Monastery. Block). The use of this book in the dGe lugs tradition has given rise to a lot of controversies. Despite its being authored by the founder of the tradition, many dGe lugs scholars prefer to rely on rGyal Işhab’s work or on textbooks. This choice is often questioned by thinkers outside of the dGe lugs tradition who sneer at the refusal of many dGe lugs scholars to use the book of their founder. dGe lugs scholars, however, justify their choice by the fact the Golden Garland was written when Tsong-kha-pa was thirty one and had not yet reached his maturity. Hence, it cannot be taken as reflecting a mature dGe lugs standpoint, they argue. There is some truth to this. Tsong-kha-pa’s large work appears to be a compendium of commonly accepted opinions concerning the Ornament and it reflects a variety of views, which are not all compatible with Tsong-kha-pa’s later views. Nevertheless, it contains also some insightful explanations and several dGe lugs teachers hold that it is impossible in this tradition to claim to know the Ornament and its literature without mastering the Golden Garland.

gRgyal Işhab, Ornament of the Essence of Commentaries (rnam bshad snying po rgyan; Varanasi: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Press, 1980).


50 In some colleges, some of the central topics such as tranquility or the distinction
between interpretable and definitive teachings are considered separate topics. They
have special texts devoted to them and in Serwa Byas are studied apart, usually the
year before finishing the Ornament. The other colleges do not have a special time
devoted to them, but they do have special texts.

51 The tradition of the Gradual Path often speaks of two methods to develop the mind of
enlightenment: the first, the seven causes and effect, is based on considering the debt
we owe all sentient beings for their having been our mothers and having had count­
less other kindness. The second, exchanging self and others, focuses on the equality
of self and others and proposes an exchange of one’s attitudes toward oneself and

52 The dGe lugs views on this topic have been well presented by L. Zahler, Meditative
States (London: Wisdom, 1983), and Geshe Gedün Lodrō and J. Hopkins, Walking
Through Walls (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1992). For a detailed Theravāda view on the
topic, see Ňānamoli, The Path of Purification, 1.84–478. For an easier view, see A.
Solé-Leris, Tranquility and Insight (Boston: Shambala, 1986) 56–73.


55 C. Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” The Interpretation of Cultures (New

56 Smith, “The Wobbling Pivot.”

57 For a brief overview of the literature, see: J. Levinson, “The Metaphors of Libera­
tion,” eds. Cabezon and Jackson, Tibetan Literature, 261–274.

Near the beginning of his vast *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas quotes from a patristic writing: "The sacred Scriptures surpass all sciences by their manner of speaking. In one and the same word they record an event and proclaim a mystery." Concurring, Thomas goes on to distinguish between literal and spiritual interpretation by stating: "God is the author of sacred Scripture, and he is able not only to adapt words (which even a man can do) but also to adapt things to signify something. While words mean something in every science, it is characteristic of this science that the things which the words indicate themselves signify something." (I, 1, 10). Here we observe a medieval Christian theologian grappling with the problem of language within his particular religious tradition, and we observe that the discussion of this problem does not originate with Thomas but is passed down to him. The issue would seem to be inherent in sacred materials. Of course, this issue is potentially significant for any discipline or art making use of words, but here—in the thought of Thomas—we notice that the problem is felt keenly, that the problem is taken to be a particularly tough one for religion. And there appears to be warrant for such a feeling. In this "manner of speaking," a single word is said to be capable of multiple meanings, one of the meanings remaining a "mystery." It is acknowledged that words signify but that also things can be used to signify; thus, one might be confronted in religious discourse with a depth of meanings—a word signifying something, itself signifying something else. Obviously, the problem of language in this context lies not with the language as such—which seems capable of many possibilities with no problem at all—but with the interpretation of this highly versatile manner of discourse. The problem is stated by the question, How are we to take what is being said?

The reader may be assured that we are concerned with this question and its answer within Buddhist Tantra. But we have chosen to open our considerations with this look at developed Christian thought—interesting in itself—to call attention to the presence of our problem of language elsewhere, perhaps
wherever religious discourse is found. We call attention also to the features of
the problem as they emerge elsewhere; as will be seen, the features isolated by
Thomas Aquinas appear in similar form within the discussion of Buddhist
tantric language. But the larger context and similarities of treatment serve to
show a peculiarity of the Buddhist discussion. We suggest that while the
problem of language is important for religious discourse in general, Buddhist
discourse seems to be peculiarly self-conscious of the problem. We find, for
example, in Pāli Buddhism, that famous king Milinda and the monk Nāgasena
debating how one should take the words “chariot” and “Nāgasena” in order to
grasp the central doctrine on ātman. Nearly every parable in the influential
Saddharma-puṇḍarīka of Mahāyāna Buddhism takes up the issue of how the
Lord could justifiably utter statements about three vehicles when in reality there
is only one. And then there is the trenchant critique of language by Nāgārjuna
and his follower Candrakīrti in their Madhyamika philosophical formulation of
the Mahāyāna.

We shall see that tantric Buddhism continues this concern for the problem
of language, but we could expect this from the outset. On the one hand,
Mkhas-grub-rje tells us in his Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras that all
Tantras have a philosophical base which is Madhyamika-Prāsaṅgika and thus—
so we might conclude—contain that school’s critique of language in some
form.2 On the other hand, given the sweep of the Buddhist tradition on this issue,
we would find it surprising if the “third turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine”
lost rather than gained sophistication in the uses and interpretation of religious
discourse—unless, of course, we assume a “degenerate” break with tradition.
The assumption can be made and is no doubt behind La Vallée Poussin’s vision
of “disgusting practices both obscene and criminal, including incest” within the
Tantras.3 Yet George has recently translated, apparently without much disgust, a
substantial portion of the Cāṇḍa-mahārōṣana Tantra upon which the great
French scholar himself had once worked. The difference, George observes, lies
in a favorable change in the “intellectual climate” over the past thirty years. We
probably should not take this to mean that modern intellectuals have become
less sensitive to their materials or more cordial toward criminal practices and
incest. Rather, we should understand that a different answer has been found to
the question, How are we to take what is being said?

It must be obvious that our problem is a fundamental one for the study of the
literature of Buddhist Tantra. Scholarship, therefore, has not failed to address it
although the scope of attention has varied. Tucci mentions in a note a distinction
between “literal” and “allegorical” meaning in the Guhyasamāja Tantra;4
Govinda treats briefly of a type of Tantric parlance called “twilight language”
which is said to bear a double meaning, the “ordinary” and the “mystic.”5
Much more fully, Eliade and Bharati discuss this “twilight” feature—preferring
the translation “intentional language”—and develop arguments on such issues
as its double purpose, namely, its secrecy and also its power to induce certain
states of consciousness.6 The Sanskrit for this particular facet of the problem,
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`samdhā-bhāṣā` ("twilight/intentional language"), has itself opened up the more philological discussions of Edgerton, Śāstrī, and others. Wayman has addressed this and other facets of the problem with much attention paid to primary sources that are therefore made available to us, and so it is upon this research especially that much of what follows relies. Let us note that we oppose the opinion of some that interpretations such as these are "not possible"—which must mean "not valuable"—since materials and translations in the field are scarce. To the contrary, we suggest that this opinion is itself an interpretation of Tantra, however indirect, and that the question is really one of better or worse interpretation rather than none at all. The special problem of scarce materials is real, however, as is the problem of developing sufficient skill to deal with them. But all of this points to the necessity of accepting the limits upon one’s ability to solve major problems in this field and to the necessity in some cases of accepting a noticeable dependence upon the work of others. We accept these limits and expect to shed only some light on the problems of language in Buddhist Tantra. And we gladly acknowledge our indebtedness to other scholars; but we do intend to work toward an independent view and intend that the sources speak for themselves.

The problem in general

An important structure from which to begin examination of many issues in Buddhist Tantrism is that of the "four divisions" of its literature classified according to their expression of the "two methods" employed by Tantra, "outer action" (bāhya-kriyā) and "inner yoga" (adhyātma-yoga). Mkhas-grub-rje, disciple of Tsonkha-pa and thus commenting out of the Gelugpa school, tells us: "The Kriya Tantra was expressed for subduing the candidates (vineya) who delight in 'outer action,' while the Carya Tantra was expressed for subduing the candidates who delight in practicing 'outer action' and 'inner yoga' in equal measure. The Yoga Tantra was expressed for subduing the candidates who delight in the 'yoga of inner samādhi,' while the Anuttara Yoga Tantra is the incomparable Tantra for subduing the candidates who delight in 'inner yoga',". The confusing similarity of method for the last two divisions—which are supposed to be distinguished by method—is clarified by Wayman’s statement of this scheme after Tson-khapa. According to the Snags-rim-chen-mo, the Yoga Tantra is expressed for those "who delight predominantly in inner samādhi over external ritual," while the Anuttara Yoga Tantra is for those "who delight in inner samādhi completely." We observe that the Snags-rim-chen-mo also correlates this scheme with activities of "deities." The distinction between deities’ ‘holding hands’ and being “united”—corresponding to the Yoga Tantra and Anuttara Yoga Tantra divisions, respectively—is a clue to the very real difference between these two divisions and supports the fact that the fourth division does “completely” what is begun in the third.

It bears mentioning that what motivates the fourfold distinction of literature is
the difference in candidates for whom different methods need to be expressed. Thus, the Tantras continue the general Buddhist concern for appropriate teaching found in Pali Buddhism and later emphasized in the Mahayana. Yet the attempt here to be precise about which texts function in which way is characteristic of Buddhist Tantrism and, we suggest, an advance of the tradition. Of course, the fourfold scheme is somewhat arbitrary in practice, since the texts classified appear prior to their classification and frustrate its precision. But the attempt remains. We see its persistence in a note to the Lessing and Wayman translation of Mkhas-grub-rje’s Fundamentals. There, we learn that the literature associated with the Pradipodyotana offers the further complexity of a fivefold typology of the Anuttara Yoga candidate alone. This refinement is made with regard to faculty: “The ‘sandlewood-like’ is in the family of fools (blun po/ligs rig s can); the ‘blue-lotus-like’ has inferior faculty (indriya) (dban po dman pa); the ‘white-lotus-like’ has intermediate faculty (dban po bar pa); the ‘red-lotus-like’ has keen faculty (dha/ po rno ba); the ‘jewel-like’ has the most excellent of faculties (dban po rab lcyi rab po).”

As was seen above, a difference of candidate again controls a difference of expression of Tantra; thus, these five types receive instruction by way of “six alternatives” (sasiko; mtha/drug) for expressing the method of “inner samadhi completely.” We list the six instructions here in paris with titles provided by Tso/ka-pa’s Jnana-vajrasamuccaya.14

Alternatives of word (sabda):
- Nontwilight language (na-samdhi-bhāṣā, dgo/ pa can ma yin pa)
- Twilight language (samdhi-bhāṣā, dgo/ pa can).

Alternatives of meaning (artha):
- Hinted meaning (neyārtha, dra/ don).
- Evident meaning (nīthārtha, nes don).

Alternatives of both word and meaning:
- Coined terminology (na-yathāruta, sgra ji bzin pa ma yin)
- Standard Terminology (yathāruta, sgra ji bzin pa).15

The first “alternative” of each pair is expressed to the first four types of candidates treated as a group, while the second of each pair is reserved for the fifth candidate, the “jewel-like” person who has superior faculty. Mkhas-grub-rje notes with regard to the Guhyasamāja Tantra—a chief text of the Anuttara Yoga division—that—that the “jewel-like” candidate arrives at the limit of the first division of vogic practice called the Steps of Generation (utpattikrama) but singularly goes on to the second and final division of yoga called the Steps of Completion (ni/panna-krama).16

These many distinctions have taken us deep inside the Buddhist Tantras and face to face with the problem of language there, especially within the Anuttara Yoga division; even its special terms for that problem have appeared, namely, “word” and “meaning.” We will want to turn our attention to that particular
division of the literature, therefore, and will begin by assessing what guidelines for interpreting tantric texts have emerged thus far. First, we think it is obvious why this literature—including the controversial Candamahāroṣana Tantra mentioned earlier—has caused so much difficulty for interpretation. The Anuttara Yoga uses language in a complex way and is thereby necessarily difficult to understand. Nevertheless, we do know that this division of Tantra instructs its candidates in “inner yoga completely.” As a clue to interpretation, this description opens up an internal landscape for the yogin’s practice and for our recognition of where events of that practice are taking place. Failure to see this much room for interpretation, in fact, may be behind the strong reactions of La Vallée Poussin and others disturbed by what they read in Anuttara Yoga Tantras. We need to be cautious, however, and not take all that occurs in this particular literature as internal process, since features of the Steps of Generation seem to overlap with more clearly external rituals of other divisions. Then, too, we know that the highest candidate in Anuttara Yoga Tantra receives instruction by way of “twilight language,” “evident meaning,” and “standard terminology.” Since he alone proceeds to the Steps of Completion, we can expect to find these uses of language operating wherever features of these Steps emerge, that is, wherever the discussion turns to such practices as manipulating winds and entering light stages. For the same reason, we can expect to find “nontwilight language,” “hinted meaning,” and “coined terminology” wherever features of the Steps of Generation appear, that is, such practices as generating the mandala and offerings.

Some special problems

For these expectations to bear fruit for the actual task of interpretation, we need to know what the “six alternatives” actually are; and it would be appropriate for us at this point to examine each of them closely. We must choose, however, to limit the scope of close examination to the first pair of alternatives; yet it is here that we have the most materials and here too that we can demonstrate most clearly the character of problems of language in Buddhist Tantra. To establish further the context for this special analysis, we should note that the alternatives are paired according to “word,” “meaning,” and “both word and meaning.” While the meaning of these distinctions themselves is problematic, there are immediate implications for translation here. Wayman is able to reject Edgerton’s translation “esoteric meaning” for sāṃdhā-bhāṣā, since “his rendition attributes a given meaning, which is the province of either neya and nīta.” We add that “meaning” is the province also of the third pair based upon word and meaning. But such considerations, while accurate for translation, should not lead us to conclude that the first pair based upon “word” lacks meaning, since that in turn would force the conclusion that the second pair based upon “meaning” lacks words—which is not only linguistically absurd but untrue. Rather, the second pair itself suggests another route to understanding. Wayman has shown that the
alternatives of "meaning" offer two different meanings for a single word.\textsuperscript{18} It follows that the alternatives of "word" offer different words—or systems of words, \textit{bhāṣā}—for a single meaning. Although our reasoning is based upon what may be an artificial symmetry in Tson-kha-pa's titles, we think it will hold in the following analysis. But we shall see also that the one meaning expressed by both "twilight" and "nontwilight" language remains singular in only a general way since a critical distinction lies within it.

In his article "Climactic Times in Indian Mythology and Religion," Wayman discusses traditional India's perception of "climactic points in the temporal flow when experience of time becomes so intense that time itself seems to stop."\textsuperscript{19} Supporting Eliade's description of "sacred time," it is claimed that during such breaks in ordinary time the sage has the best opportunity to break through himself from ordinary to supraordinary states.\textsuperscript{20} Thus it is that Gautama Buddha is said in the earliest Scriptures to have conquered Māra at dusk and to have reached \textit{bodhi} at dawn. We can see that ordinary time ceases at these two moments in the precise sense that each "twilight" (\textit{samdhā}) signals a "paradoxical place where the worlds of darkness and light intersect."\textsuperscript{21} On the strength of this and research elsewhere of a more philological nature, Wayman is able to translate \textit{samdhā-bhāṣā} as "twilight language"—a special language created to express the "ambiguity, contradiction, or paradox of the moment between darkness and light" as well as the ambiguity of the states attained at such a time.\textsuperscript{22} A telling passage is adduced from the non-Tantric \textit{Saddharma-puṇḍarīka}: "And having heard this \textit{buddhadharma}, I thought 'Indeed, this is expressed in the manner of twilight; at the tree of enlightenment the Jina reveals the knowledge that is inaccessible to logic, subtle, and immaculate.'"\textsuperscript{23}

In close parallel—and incidentally continuing the earlier "Lotus" tradition—Tson-kha-pa comments in \textit{Guhyasamāja} literature that the tantric goal is so uncertain that "even the Tathāgatas do not know" it.\textsuperscript{24} Nevertheless, the chief candidate of the Anuttara Yoga Tantra is to be instructed in this very goal, a necessity that requires the expression of instruction to reflect uncertainty. The "ambiguous discourse" (\textit{viruddhi līpa}) of "twilight language," then, functions in precisely this way. Wayman is thus further able to reject other scholars' translations of \textit{samdhā-bhāṣā} as "secret language" or "intentional language," since what cannot be known cannot be properly secret and what lacks certain meaning cannot be said to intend a certain meaning beyond what the words suggest.\textsuperscript{25} It is interesting to note that Govinda—translating "twilight language" yet representative of the position implied by the other translations—argues similarly about "secrecy" when the problem is \textit{mantra}. He states that its secrecy is "not something that is hidden intentionally" but something esoteric only in the sense of being acquired by "insight."\textsuperscript{26} But let us recognize again that "twilight language" does express meaning, albeit ambiguous meaning. In support of our earlier analysis based upon titles of the pairs of alternatives, the tantric Candrakīrti states that a "truth of nature is revealed" (\textit{dharmatattvavakāśanam}).

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It can be said that language has ceased to function here in an ordinary way—like climactic time—because the meaning expressed does not clarify but remains ambiguous, like the time of twilight. Yet, unlike any time, the ambiguity of samdhā-bhāṣā is created, is self-conscious, is intended; and in this sense at least “twilight language” is “intentional language.” This must be so since all of the uses of language we are examining are instructions to particular candidates for particular ends. In the case of samdhā-bhāṣā, however, the “jewel-like” person learns—to use a term from Thomas Aquinas—mystery; he learns what cannot be known. For this to happen, of course, the candidate must appropriate the truth of “twilight language” with a nonrational faculty. This faculty is no doubt that of “insight” (prajñā), by which Gautama Buddha himself was able to “see” the truth at his Enlightenment at the break of dawn. Reasoning further, we can conclude that “twilight language,” functioning specifically as instruction in non-rational states, is actually encouraging—perhaps training—the candidate to use “insight.” This supports Eliade’s conclusion that samsādha-bhāṣā functions “chiefly to project the yogin into a ‘paradoxical situation’ indispensable to his training.”

In sharp contrast to these characteristics of “twilight language,” “nontwilight language” (na-samdhā-bhāṣā) is defined by Candrakīrti thus: “Whichever one teaches with certainty a truth for the comprehension of sentient beings having dull senses and in a very clear way—that one is not expressed in the manner of samdhī.” We observe that again there is teaching of some “truth” which our logic above suggests we take to be the common “meaning” expressed by different “words” in this pair of instructions. Again, Wayman indicates that yogic states are that common reference but that the states are not ambiguous here—like attainments in time which is not climactic, “nontwilight.” Thus, na-samdhā-bhāṣā can be known like ordinary instruction and can be expressed with rational clarity and certainty. Still, yogic clarity is not necessarily scholarly clarity, and our few materials provide little sense of what actually happens here. We note, however, that the candidate in this case has “dull senses”; this signals the group of candidates who practice only the Steps of Generation in the Anuttara Yoga and suggests where we can find “nontwilight language” even if it remains something of a mystery to us.

Near the beginning of the Sarpvarodaya Tantra, selected chapters of which have been published recently by Tsuda, we find—following Tsuda’s translation: “Then, I will explain the meditation upon the process of origination (upattikrama). In accordance with the nature of their various deeds (karman), creatures are of four kinds according to their mode of birth: oviparous, viviparous, creatures produced from moisture and beings born apparitionally” (2.1–2). From the context, announced as Steps of Generation (upatti-krama), we should understand that we are reading “non-twilight language”; and, indeed, there is the ring of ordinary clear instruction to this material which could be found elsewhere in Indian literature. But, from what we have learned of this “alternative” of tantric parlance, we should not take these words to be a Buddhist lecture on
the law of karma and science of embryology. These words, as the text itself says, are a “meditation” (bhaavana) and thereby express yogic states attained by meditating upon the instruction; we might say that the candidate so instructed “knows” the content in trance as the Buddha—before complete enlightenment—says he “conceived (mystic) manifestations (obhaasa)” whereby “knowledge arose.”

We should not, however, read “ambiguity” into such a context, since that would require in addition the “arising of insight.” It strikes us as mysterious to find farther on in this same chapter of the Samvarodaya: “There are two veins in the middle of the yoni (the female organ) and likewise to the left and the right. One should know that semen is on the left and the menstrual fluid on the right. The union of both, (that is,) oneness, is dharmadhatu (the sphere of dharmas) by its nature. Karman is obtained by means of the seed, which is made to move to and fro by winds” (2. 23–24). Yet, however strange such language appears to an interpreter, here it is “non-twilight language” and should be taken as expressive of a certain and clear experience within a particular stage of Buddhist tantric yoga.

Returning now to “twilight language” to find examples with which to sharpen our analysis, we seem at first to have an easy task. The Hevajra Tantra itself—translated by Snellgrove—contains a list said by the “Lord” to be samdhā-bhāṣā, and it is given for the instruction of “Vajragarbha,” the interlocutor.

We learn, in part:

-madhya (wine) is madana (intoxication)
-māṁsa (flesh) is bala (strength)
-malayaja (sandlewood) is milana (meeting) . . .
-catuhṣama (a potion of four ingredients) is gūthā (dung)
-kasturikā (musk) is mūtra (urine)
-sīhla (frankincense) is svayambhu (blood)
-saliya (rice product) is mahāmāmsa (human flesh). [2. 3. 56–60]
side of the copula represents "twilight") is not possible, is meaningless—unless one side of the equation states less well what is meant. The only purpose that a self-conscious inaccuracy could have, then, would be to clarify the fact that "twilight language" refers to yogic states but not to clarify saṃdhā-bhāṣā itself which remains unclear by definition.

This rationale seems cogent upon examination of equivalents for the Hevajra list given by the tantric Nāgārjuna in his Saṃdhībhūṣā-ṭīkā. Wayman translates these for us and provides the correlations but calls the additional materials "explanations" which, as we have argued, they cannot be in any strict sense. Expanded, our excerpt appears thus:34

"wine" is "intoxication" is the ambrosia (amrta) of heaven, to be drunk continuously
"flesh" is "strength" is wind, is food, to be controlled.
"sandlewood" is "meeting" the coming together of external states, sense organs, and perceptions (based thereon)—which is so to be contemplated; also the consubstantial joy (sahajānada).
"a potion of four ingredients" is "dung" is Vairocana, hence is present through anointment of the body.
"musk" is "urine" is Akṣobhya, ditto.
"frankincense" is "blood" is Ratnasambhava, ditto.
"camphor" is "semen" is Amitābha, hence is present through anointment.
"rice product" is "human flesh" is Amoghasiddhi, hence is present the same way.

The additions, one can see, tend to suggest that "wine" and "flesh," etc., have to do with yoga. Controlling winds, contracting sense operations, contemplation are clearly yogic practices; and a knowledge of Buddhist Tantras makes just as clear the yogic reference of ambrosia and consubstantial joy within the Steps of Completion of the Anuttara Yoga. The same can be said for the five Buddhas—Vairocana, etc.—which the yogin attempts to draw in as supramundane svabhāva for his otherwise empty five personality aggregates. Thus, the position that saṃdhā-bhāṣā means yogic states finds support here, but—since that position is even stronger now—we must take Nāgārjuna’s interesting gloss as helpful to us but not very helpful to a candidate seeking the tantric goal. He must be instructed effectively with fully ambiguous expressions.

Immediately following the section in the Hevajra Tantra containing the list called saṃdhā-bhāṣā, a question is asked about singing and dancing. The Lord answers with his own song (in Ṛabhramśa) using more than a dozen words
from the list, and it is here that we are reading “twilight language” proper. We give an excerpt from Wayman’s translation with commentary by Nāropa who tends to agree with Nāgārjuna’s commentary on the list:

Having united the vola and the kakkola, one should eat meat (= the five personality aggregates which are the nature of the five Tathagatas, and which thereby lose self-existence, melting into the self-existence of the mind of enlightenment possessing the five knowledges, mirror-like, etc.); and having united those two, one should drink wine (i.e. ambrosia). . . . He (the Lord) takes the fourfold potion (Vairocana), musk (Akhobhya), frankincense (Ratnasambhava), and camphor (Amitabhā) (because he is inseparable from them). 35

Of course, as this excerpt stands, we are reading sāṃdhā-bhāṣā interpolated with what is not sāṃdhā-bhāṣā; but let us be clear that the interpolation is not na-sāṃdhā-bhāṣā; which is a technical term for the use of language referring to unambiguous yogic states. We can agree with Wayman that Nāropa’s “commentary provides an understanding” but only in the limited sense argued above. What matters here for instruction of a capable candidate is the “twilight” expression of the song (and the medium of singing as well?) whose meaning is experienced or “seen.”

We come now to an important problem which we have been unable to solve to our satisfaction. If our analysis of the sāṃdhā-bhāṣā list and song has merit, then what has become of the equivalent in the basic list or the middle term of the expanded list? In the equation “wine” = “intoxication” = “ambrosia . . . drunk continuously,” how should we take “intoxication”? The question arises because the song makes use of the first term in “twilight language” while the third term appears to serve as commentary. The middle term is left untouched. At first, the solution would seem to be to take “intoxication” as an opaque but concise way of saying “ambrosia . . . drunk continuously” so that both middle and third terms function as commentary to establish the fact of a yogic reference; and it would not be un-Indian to comment in such a concise way that subcommentary would need to follow. The same could be said for the relationship of “strength” and “wind, is food . . .,“ of “meeting” and “coming together . . .”; there seems to be a natural relationship between them. But this reasoning fails upon consideration of the remainder of our excerpted material. No natural relationship pertains between “dung, urine, etc.” and the five Buddhas—at least, these terms do not appear to be correlated any more rationally than are the “twilight” terms “potion, musk etc.” with the five Buddhas. Instead, “musk” and “urine” seem equally distant from “Akhobhya”; they seem equally ambiguous as if both first and middle terms were sāṃdhābhāṣā words.

In fact, in the Candamahāroṣana Tantra, we find an “eating” and “drinking” of urine, etc., which is parallel to the “taking” of musk, etc., in the “twilight” song. The text reads as George translates:36
He should drink urine as he likes
placing his mouth on the Bhaga, and
placing it on the anal lotus, he
should eat feces as he likes.

There should not be even a slight
disgust, otherwise Success \([siddhi]\) would
be ruined. This diet is the best,
eaten by all Buddhas. [4. 100]

Other portions of text refer to the taking in of other substances so that all five of
our middle terms are used in contexts that seem to be “twilight language.” We
note that there is more than the parallel to establish these words as \(samdhā\). In
addition, the mention of \(siddhi\) or “success” in yoga establishes the necessary
yogic context. And since the Tantra at this point is most likely explaining what
follows upon the “Insight Initiation,” this yoga is established within the Steps of
Completion which contain that rite. We are not obliged, however, to take the
Tantra’s mention elsewhere of being “soiled with stools and urine” as \(samdhā-
bhāsā\), since the context of these words refers only to punishment for violating a
certain vow (1. 30). Also, we can observe here a striking feature of \(samdhā-
bhāsā\), namely, that its actual ambiguity of meaning is carried by words which
of themselves seem anything but ambiguous; above, the meaning seems much
too clear! But if all of this establishes the problematic likelihood that both sides
of the equations in the Hevajra list are “twilight,” the Caṇḍamahārōṣana crowns
the problem with this statement:

In front of him, looking him in
the face, she should pinch him
on the chest. She should speak
to him in this way: “Eat my
Vairocana!

Drink the water of Akṣobhya!” [6. 50]

This reads like \(samdhā-bhāsā\), and the context is stated explicitly to be the Steps
of Completion. Yet it is the expansion material that we have analyzed as a kind
of commentary which is being used as \(samdhā\) words, and it is now the com-
mentarial literature—according to the translator’s notes—which “explains” that
we have to do here with faces and urine! Thus, we have seen all three terms of
the equation “musk” = “urine” = \(Akṣobhya\) open to use in “twilight language.”

Additional problems arise from examination of the context of the \(samdhā\) list
of words in the Hevajra and from a look at related materials provided by Snell-
grove in notes and appendix. Since we are examining closely, we pause here in
the analysis to give our translation of Hevajra Tantra 2. 3. 53–67 based upon the
Sanskrit and Tibetan of Snellgrove’s edition and a translation from the Tibetan
of Hevajra-piṇḍārthaṅkā 15. 59b. 3–7, commentary attributed to Vajragarbha. We have also consulted Kāṇha’s commentary Yogaratnamālā for which Snellgrove provides the Sanskrit.39

* * *

Hevajra Tantra 2. 3. 53–67:

Vajragarbha said:

What is called “twilight language” (sandhyābhāsam)?40 May the Lord speak with certainty about that great symbolism (mahāsamaya) of the yoginis which is not understood by Śrāvakas, etc. [53]

By the four divisions—even the Tantra of “laughing,” “gazing,” “embracing,” and “coupling”—“twilight language” is not explained.41[54]

The Lord said:

I will explain. You, Vajragarbha, must listen with one-pointedness of mind. This is “twilight language”—the great language, the symbolic convention (samayasamketa; dam tschig brda)—in full: [55]

“wine” is understood as “intoxication,” “flesh” as “strength,” “meeting” as “sandalwood”; “phlegm” is “going,” “resort” is “corpse,” “naked” is “bone ornament”;42 [56]

“wandering” is said to be “coming”; “drum” is understood as “wood”; “emission” is explained as “nonpotential”; “Kālīnjara” is understood as “potential”; [57]

“small drum” is said to be “untouchable”; “lotus vessel” is “skull”; “satisfying” is known as “food”; “jasmine wood” is “herbs”; [58]

“the potion of four ingredients” is said to be “dung”; “musk” is held to be “urine”; “frankincense” is known as “blood”; “camphor” is understood to be “semen”; [59]

“rice product” is said to be “human flesh”; “resin” is “union of the two”; “gum myrrh” is explained as “thunderbolt”; “perfume” is understood as “lotus.” [60]

“Family” is explained as the “fivefold” divided into five divisions of color. Thus, in “twilight language,” the Buddhas are the “five familiated ones”—43 [61]

“Dombi” is explained as belonging to the Vajra family, and “Naṭi” to the Padma family, and also “Candāḷi” to the Ratna family; “Dvijā” is understood to be of the Tathāgata one. [62]
as is also “Rajakī” of the Karma family. These mudrās are givers of good siddhi. Their śūkra is Diamond.\textsuperscript{44} Having made offering, the devotee drinks.\textsuperscript{45} [63]

Vajragarbha, O Great Being, all of that which has been told to you by me is to be taken with respect as “twilight language” (sandhyābhāṣam; gsan bahi skad), a great wonder. [64]

He who is initiated in this Hevajra and does not speak in “twilight language” destroys the symbolism. In this matter, there is no doubt.\textsuperscript{46} [65]

Thus, one will die from calamity, thieves, demons, fever, and despair—even though he be a Buddha—if he does not speak in “twilight language.” [66]

If the one speaking has attained to the knowledge of his own symbolism (svasamaya) and does not speak this, then the yoginis born of the four pīṭhas will produce their wrath.\textsuperscript{47} [67]

Hevajraṇḍārthaṭīkā 15. 59b. 3–7:

“Symbol (brdah) should be understood as having two divisions. Namely, as stated by the root tantra: if one who has learned the symbols of body and speech (lus dañ ṇa) with the yoga belonging to Heruka does not speak with those symbols of body and speech, then even though he be a Buddha he will certainly be destroyed.

Consequently, subsequent to that (learning), yogins and yoginis adhering to the yoga of Hevajra should keep it in mind to take care of the instruction about the symbols of body and speech.

In the midst of an assembly of male and female messengers (pho ṇa; dūta) of another family and those malicious beings of outside, one should not speak with ordinary convention (tha sīnad; vyavahāra). If we speak with that great secret (gsaṅ chen) which is that symbolism, then pernicious beings and the male and female messengers of the outside will be kept baffled (rmongs par hgyur).

... in this chapter, only the symbolism of body is shown; the symbolism of speech will be shown in another chapter.\textsuperscript{48}

* * *

From this primary material, we can see all too readily that the problem of “twilight language” in Buddhist Tantra is even more complex than our analysis thus far has indicated. First, we note that the samdhā list translated by Snellgrove, whom Wayman follows with changes, differs from our own with regard to the first term; this is significant if the first term is to be taken as unknown “twilight”
being translated into the second term but insignificant if first and second terms are both “twilight.” We have arrived at our list—which we have written out with verbal forms as it appears in the edited texts—by translating consistently from the initial word order thus: *madanam madyam* (as it stands, “intoxication wine”), “wine is . . . intoxication.” Interestingly the Tibetan version transliterates one side of the equation and translates the other; such a practice as this suggests strongly that the transliterated term is a primary term—the one supposedly found in Sanskrit manuscripts as *saṃdhā*—for which a “meaning” is given.49 While there are exceptions, these transliterated terms along with our first terms tend to be the ones found in the “twilight” song. Thus, there is a tendency to treat the list’s first terms as *saṃdhā*. This agrees with our earliest impressions but contradicts our later findings that both first and second terms can be used in *saṃdhābhāṣā*.

These materials also call into question our conclusions on ambiguity and secrecy. We have argued that ambiguous language cannot be known and have agreed with the position that what cannot be known cannot be said to be secret. At first glance, the Hevajra’s repeated statement that an initiate faces disaster “if he does not speak in ‘twilight language’” appears to support us. This could be a way of saying that failure to use *saṃdhā-bhāṣā* means a loss of *siddhi* to which the ambiguity of special discourse opens up a candidate. And this does provide a certain logic for our reading also that “twilight” discourse belongs to yoginis who are “givers of good *siddhi*” but who—when their language is not used—reverse roles and “produce their wrath.” But the text also says that the “great symbolism” (*mahāsāmaya*) “is not understood” (*na chidrita*; literally, “not penetrated”) by Śrāvakas, with the double implication that *saṃdhā-bhāṣā* is actually understood by those who speak it and that this language serves as some kind of screen. Indeed, Kāṇha glosses *mahāsāmaya* as *guptasamketa*, which may be rendered “hidden convention”; and the Tibetan renders *saṃdhā-bhāṣā* as *dgongs paḥi skad* (“twilight language”) as well as *gsan baḥi skad* (“secret language”). Any doubt on this issue is dispelled by Vajragarbha, who states explicitly that “twilight language” is the “great secret” (*gsan chen*) which keeps outsiders “baffled” (*rmons pa*). That commentary even instructs the initiate to speak with “twilight language” instead of “ordinary convention” (*tha mal paḥi tha sñad*) as if these two forms of discourse were interchangeable. But we have argued that such an interchange is meaningless.

Of course, these additional findings are not at all troublesome for scholars who take the position that *saṃdhā-bhāṣā* is ambiguous yet at the same time expresses a certain meaning which can be concealed. But, as we have seen, this position has its own troubles with the materials analyzed earlier and leaves untouched its logical inconsistency. Let us note further that the issue of secrecy—interpreted from whatever materials—has been complicated greatly by our discovery that the full range of *saṃdhā* equivalence can find its way into *saṃdhā-bhāṣā*. As the issue is frequently discussed, “twilight language” conceals the tantric use of degenerate or controversial elements which are better
kept secret; thus “musk” conceals “urine.” But, if this is true, why is it that “urine” sometimes appears openly in a tantric text? Does “urine” conceal the use of “musk”? Does “urine” conceal “Ākṣobhya”? Our last question is rhetorical, of course, but we can conceive of an affirmative answer. It could be advantageous or even humanitarian to hide a powerful yogic term or device from persons who might abuse it somehow, and such an interpretation has the merit of accommodating both ambiguity and secrecy since what is powerful need not be accessible to reason. It may be this argument that Govinda has in mind when he describes “twilight language” as a “protection” against the “misuse of yogic methods and psychic forces by the ignorant or uninitiated.” But, in the final analysis, we are forced to recognize that nothing is concealed, for whatever reason, even though some texts speak of secrecy.

We have remarked already that we see no clear and satisfying way through these many difficulties; we can, however, suggest possible lines of inquiry for further research. It may be that part of the problem of secrecy needs to be shifted to a new locus, namely, to “inner yoga completely.” We judge that errors in Tantra studies can sometimes be attributed to a failure to recognize the internal dimension of Anuttara Yoga Tantra. If the “outsiders” from whom certain things need to be kept secret are really inside the yogin, then a new sort of discussion pertains. We would be able to discuss secrecy with regard to the external environment of a yogin—following materials like those of Tsöṅ-kha-pa as we have done—and then discuss the same issue with regard to that yogin’s inner landscape, which would probably be open to conclusions peculiar to it. Vajragarba’s commentary actually provides the clue to this line of reasoning by referring to the two divisions of “symbolism,” body and speech. The symbolism of body here is the mutual gesturing between yogins and yoginis at the place of meeting, the kṣetra or pīṭha. But Tsuda has been able to show the transfer of the external pīṭha to a place within the body in Buddhist Tantrism. If that transfer occurs, it can be said that all events associated with the pīṭha also are internalized; the gesturing as well as the symbolic speech—“twilight language”—would somehow take place within the yogin. A quite different line of inquiry could take up the problem of ambiguity and its relationship to the interesting ambiguities of scholarship surrounding the problem. Could it be that we can find no consistent interpretation here because this, too, is a characteristic of saṃdhā-bhāṣā? A candidate for the tantric goal is no doubt confronted effectively by the ambiguous meaning of yogic states; but he may also be confronted by the specific contradiction of secrecy coupled with rational inaccessibility, the paradox of definite references to indefinite states, the ambiguity of verbal equivalents whose relationship seems arbitrary at best. And he might find in the midst of the unsettling interchange of these equivalents that for him language has ceased to function in an ordinary way—like climactic time—because meanings overlap or intersect, like day and night at the time of twilight. To be more precise about these matters, however, we need more materials and more research.
Notes


3 Louis de la Vallée Poussin, "Tantrism (Buddhist)," Hastings's Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, as cited in translator's introduction to The Candamahāroṣana Tantra, chaps. 1–8, trans. Christopher S. George (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1974), p. 3.


6 Mircea Eliade, Yoga: Immortality and Freedom, Bollingen Series (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 249–54; Agahananda Bharati, The Tantric Tradition (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1970), chap. 6. It will be noted that our approach differs from that of Bharati, who uses a modern Western linguistic analysis of tantric materials. We, on the other hand, want to determine first to what extent a "linguistic analysis" exists already within the tantric tradition.

7 Accounts of these discussions can be found in Eliade and in Bharati. See also S. B. Dastgupta, Obscure Religious Cults (Calcutta: Mukhopadhyay, 1962), pp. 413 ff.


9 For example, George states this opinion in his introduction to Candamahāroṣana.


11 Wayman, pp. 32–33.

12 Ibid.


14 Wayman, p. 129.


16 Ibid., pp. 219–20.

17 Wayman, p. 129.

18 Ibid., pp. 86 ff., 121, 133.


22 Wayman, Buddhist Tantras, p. 130.


24 Wayman, Buddhist Tantras, p. 129.

25 Ibid.

26 Govinda, p. 28.

27 Eliade, Yoga, p. 250.

28 Wayman, Buddhist Tantras, p. 129.


31 Samvarodaya, p. 242.
33 This is Wayman’s translation based on Snellgrove’s edition and following Snellgrove’s translation in many cases. See Wayman, Buddhist Tantras, pp. 131–32.
34 Ibid., pp. 132–33.
35 Ibid., pp. 133–34; Hevajra, 2. 4. 6–8.
36 Candamahāroṣana, p. 64.
37 Ibid. See p. 56, where a woman as “insight” is introduced to the candidate as part of the “Insight Initiation”; the language used is similar to that of our verses. See also Wayman, Buddhist Tantras, p. 192, for the correlation of initiation rites and stages of yoga.
38 Candamahāroṣana, p. 68.
39 Hevajra, i:xiii, 66; 2:60–63, 145. For an alternative translation see Snellgrove; the reader is alerted to the fact that Hevajra Tantra 2. 3. 61a is edited by Snellgrove but left untranslated.
40 Kāṇha glosses sandhir as abhiprāyah (“Intent, aim, meaning”), which gives support to our analysis that there is “meaning” here.
41 The point seems to be that the Hevajra Tantra is superior to other Tantras because it speaks about this matter (śabdītam; Kāṇha, kathitam). That it does so with certainty (niṣcitam) does not contradict the fact of uncertainty within the teaching itself.
42 We are following Wayman’s translations of the vocabulary which he gives in Buddhist Tantras, pp. 131–32. In conversation, Wayman has suggested that there may be a mantra element involved in the list which could be discovered by analyzing the sound of the Sanskrit. We consider this an interesting possibility worth our future study.
43 Hevajra, buddhās; Kāṇha, buddhā; Tibetan, phyag rgya = mudrās. We follow the Sanskrit here and take the meaning to be some “twilight” equivalence between the Buddhas and the mudrās who in fact do follow in the text. But we can observe here in the discrepancy between the Sanskrit and the Tibetan the problem of what constitutes the primary term.
44 Kāṇha says this is the “sign of attaining the Diamond-knowledge”; śukra here is the “liquid of woman’s desire,” as noted in Candamahāroṣana, p. 64.
45 Kāṇha provides the yogic reference: “by way of the yoga of the lotus and thunderbolt.”
46 This thought is unclear and needs study; it may refer to the pernicious dangers from “outsiders” in Vajragarbha’s commentary.
47 The implications of svasamaya need to be studied and may pertain to the “inner yoga” inquiry suggested in our final comment.
48 The reference is undoubtedly to the chapter in the Hevajra Tantra where sandhābhaya is taught as a “vocabulary list.”
49 For the initial case, the Tibetan renders the Sanskrit for “wine is ... intoxication” as ma da na chan, “wine is ... madana.” But this is the reverse of what we would expect, since it is “wine” that appears in the “twilight” song. We judge this and similar cases to be aberrations since the list tends to meet our expectations.
50 Govinda (n. 5 above), p. 53.
51 Samvarodaya, pp. 269 ff.
The 'das-log' literature centers around a figure in Tibetan popular religious lore. Designating “one who has returned (log) from passing away ('das)‘ the 'das-log' occupies a place in Tibetan folklore and folklife, as well as in the literature associated with the worship of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. There exists a number of written biographies of 'das-log; additionally, they existed in the flesh in Tibet and the Himalayas, as they do today, albeit rarely, amongst the Tibetan refugee population.\(^1\) Claiming to have undergone personally the experience of returning from death, they committed themselves to a life of telling their stories, bringing with them tidings from beings born in limbo (bar-do) and hell to the living, and conveying to men at large injunctions to moral conduct from the lips of the Dharmaraja, the Lord of Death, himself.

The 'das-log' biographies belong to an enormous and an ancient class of world literature; they are variations upon the theme of the spiritual journey. The spiritual adventure or quest “forms the principal theme in the oral literature of the Old World” (Chadwick 1942: 91), and it is found as a central motif both in myth and in many of the world’s literary classics. The particular subtype of this theme to which the 'das-log' genre belongs is the journey-to-hell. The grim reality of hell as shaped by those that have purportedly been there has long been used as a didactic device in the literature of popular religion. In Western literature, such classical figures as Virgil, Orpheus and Er, whose myth is found in the final chapter of Plato’s Republic, expand upon the themes of duty, justice and moral uprightness through this motif. The ‘horror detail of hell” (Owen 1970: 3) and the stories of those who visited it persisted in capturing the public imagination throughout Christendom, especially after the eleventh century and up through modern times (cf. Asin 1968: 46 and 177 ff.; Rowell 1974).

Much like the 'das-log' literature, many of the Western stories and legends about hell and the agonies of death which precede men’s journeys there were told or expressly created for the purpose of convincing sceptics to mend their
ways. Thus we read in the *Dialogues of Saint Gregory the Great* (Gardner n.d.: 223 ff.) that

> God of his great and bountiful mercy so disposeth, that some after their death do straightways return again to life, that having seen the torments of hell, which before when they heard they would not believe, they may now at least tremble at, after they with their eyes beheld them.

In Asian classical literature similar themes are widespread. Journeys to and descriptions of hell are recorded in such sources as the Vendidād of the Zend-Avesta (Darmestetter 1898), the story of Ardā Virāf (West, et al. 1872), the story of Naciketas in the *Katha Upaniṣad*, and so forth.² In traditional China, it has been remarked, the simple peasant does not have "very clear or extensive conceptions of salvation except in terms of the picture furnished him by hell temples where future punishments are vividly depicted in relief" (Day 1940: 117), and that the "judgement of the soul in the courts of hell is by far the dominant feature of the peasant concept of what will happen to him after he dies" (ibid.: 118).

As Reynolds and Waugh (1977) have observed, death creates both a new experience and language which articulates many kinds of experience (ibid: 1) and death's presence "negates ordinary life structures . . . . until all the normal meanings of an individual's life are regarded as having no ultimate worth" (ibid.: 6). Death, as a literary and an experiential motif, gains its metaphoric power in that it can act as a "paradigmatic model for passage to the superior" which transcends worldly dualities (Eliade 1977: 18, 21). Setting the stage of the 'das-log biographies in the interstices of life and death, then, permits the retooling to the 'das-log's creative potential as a religious figure to occur.

Indeed, the major social and didactic function of the 'das-log literature is just this: to teach or to remind an audience of laymen who either may have never known or had been accustomed to forget that the dogmas of Buddhism really work. The biographies of the 'das-log stress three things: suffering and impermanence, the vicissitudes of karma, and how these may be overcome. As such, they are concordant with the basic teachings of the sūtras and the vast commentarial literature of Tibet. The 'das-log, however, is more than just a teller of tales. He himself becomes a source of religious authority and an object of popular worship.

A question I wish to address here is how does an ordinary person become extraordinary, charismatic and invested with moral authority? How does the 'das-log fit into a scheme of things vis-à-vis other types of charismatic religious authorities such as saints, lamas and founders of traditions on the one hand, and shamans on the other? The 'das-log is a minor kind of prophet. In his formulation of the ideal type, Weber (1967: xxxiii–vi, 46ff.) notes that the prophet need not be a founder of a tradition, but a renewer of an already founded one.
Certainly, the doctrines which the 'das-log preach are standard Mahāyāna fare. Cognitively, there is nothing new in what they say, but, as Weber maintains, they exhibit an equally important noncognitive qualification: a renewed and special zeal coming from a special personal experience. The questions I wish to ask here are what are the properties of this experience that cause the 'das-log to undergo such a radical personal transformation? What are the properties of the 'das-log's message that make it an effective didactic device?3

The 'das-log biographies are more than simple devices designed to teach Buddhism to the masses; they are complicated syntheses of various teaching traditions and historical movements in Tibet. Most of the biographies appear to date from the early sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries, a period which saw intense internal missionizing and sectarian popularization in Tibet. During the previous 150 years, and continuing into the 'das-log period, a number of prophets (gter-ston) lay claim to the discovery of new tantric ritual cycles, many of which incorporated local supernaturals and ritual practices, which purportedly had been concealed by the mythohistorical figure Padmasambhava in the eighth century for the renewal of Buddhism in degenerate future times. This was also the heyday of the “mad saints” Thang-stong-rgyal-po (1385–1510), Gtsang-smyon Heruka (1452–1507), Brug-pa Kun-legs (1455–1529) and Dbus-smyon, (dates uncertain). These characters forsook the academic life of the monasteries and travelled the highways and byways of Tibet, spending their time amongst simple folk to whom they preached in the vernacular, even vulgar, language.4 It is to them we are indebted for the finest didactic poetry, songs, witty sayings and folklore from Tibet. Additionally, Thang-stong-rgyal-po is said to have invented lha-mo, the spectacular pageants which remain Tibet’s most popular art form. Notably a heroine in one of these operas. Snang-sa 'Od-'bum, is a 'das-log.

It was also during this period, before the establishment of a central authority, that princely houses, which either constituted sectarian groups themselves or formed close alliances with a particular sectarian group, contended with one another for territorial gain, political power and sectarian establishmentarianism. There seem to have been two effects of this period. First, a great deal of missionizing activity seems to have occurred especially along the southern and eastern marches of Tibet among Tibetanoid populations that practiced shamanistic-animistic religions rather than Buddhism. This geographic distribution corresponds to that of the 'das-log biographies, whose subjects hail mainly from the east and the south. 'Das-log stories from Central Tibet are scarce; in a recent collection of 'das-log biographies, the compiler remarks in the colophon:

Nowadays in Central Tibet no true collections of 'das-log biographies are to be found. To exhort persons of various native abilities to do virtuous deeds for the welfare of all beings, I, Bya-bral-ba Kun-dga'-rten-'brel-rab-'byor, at the behest of my mūlaguru U-pa Rinpoche, have taken the responsibility of helping to so exhort them. In regard to the request: many deep teachings have been mercifully granted by
Gshin-rje Chos-kyi-rgyal-po, who knows the means, who divides the fruits of sin and virtue, who is the reliable authority for the belief in the necessity to carefully calculate karma. To this I exhort all these world’s beings.\(^6\)

I hypothesize, for reasons which will be more fully discussed below, that there is an intimate connection between the 'das-log phenomenon and the missionization of border regions.

The second effect of Central Tibetan sectarian policies upon the appearance of the 'das-log literature is related to revivalistic movements in general. I have mentioned that the 'das-log’s central function is to urge mankind to take cognizance of the basic tenets of Buddhism, and especially the salvation ethics of the Avalokiteśvara cult. It is well known that soteriological movements often occur during periods of stress.\(^7\) In this connection some of the 'das-log biographies mention the depredations of the Mongols against the politically disfavored sects in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Chos-dbang-rgyal-mo, a 'das-log from a monastic community called Dge-'khor bla-brang in G.ya'-sgo, a village in Srad, revives from her trip to the nether regions, and finds the place deserted. “Recently, the people of the bla-brang, fearing the Mongols (Hor), consulted about going south to Sikkim ('Bras-mo-ljong). The excess people joined those from the bla-brang and have already gone south,” she thinks (IV: f. 23b). It is likely that this passage refers to Gushri Khan’s incursions against the Gtsang-pa in 1641–2 (see Shakabpa 1967, chap. 7). Additionally, the 'das-log Karma-dbang-'dzin, from Lho-brag, meets in Bardo a young woman from Lho-stod Sne’u-gdong who was apparently killed by Mongols (I, A: 88). This might refer to one of the several incursions southward into Bhutan in the 1640s; however, other references seem to point to later times. In another scene in Bardo (IA: 176ff.), as a result of a nun’s prayer, a number of persons are freed from hell. But several amongst them are not, including a Gtsang-gi-phyogs-na Mda’-dpon 'Gog-lung-pa, one Gangs-can-nas Dpon-mo (Cho(s)-skyid, and a Lcag-rtse Gri-gu'i-zhol-nas Gnas-chen Bsod-namsdar-rgya(s). It is just possible that these are veiled references to Khang-chennas and the father of the Seventh Dalai Lama, and hence the entire incident might allude to the 1714 invasion of Lha-bzang’s troops or to events thereafter which saw Dzungar armies in and around Bhutan. As the 'das-log biographies generally espouse Bka’-brgyud, Rnyingma, or syncretic approaches to Avalokiteśvara worship, we can see why persecution of these groups at the hands of the Mongols, with or without the connivance of the newly dominant Dge-lug-pa hierarchs in Lhasa, may have been a cause of the 'das-log’s call for a return to basic Buddhist morality.

The teachings of the Avalokiteśvara cult, along with other related Tibetan religious traditions, were instrumental in the missionizing and revitalizing efforts. The worship of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is of some antiquity, appearing first in India and Nepal in the early centuries of the Christian era, but he is held in special regard in Tibet (see Snellgrove 1957). A popular myth
describes this deity as the progenitor of the Tibetan people and Tibet is popularly regarded as his “conversion field.” Accordingly, Avalokiteśvara is also believed to have manifested himself in the world in such figures as Vimalamitra, Srong-btsan-sgam-po, Padmasambhava and other great historical figures who were instrumental in bringing to and promoting in Tibet a Buddhist civilization. Tradition has it that the first Buddhist work to appear in Tibet was the Za ma tog, a work principally concerned with this deity, whose special worship through the recitation of his mantra confers liberation from the samsāric world and rebirth in Sukhāvati, the paradise of Amitābha-buddha.8

In some senses, Avalokiteśvara himself serves as a role model for the 'das-log. In the Za ma tog gi bstan bcos, for instance, there are stories of his activities before he comes to Tibet, in which he releases beings from hell through his compassion, including such notorious characters as the foul patricide Ma-skyes-dgra (pp. 323ff; 351 ff.). Additionally, this work appeared in Tibet along with the other major source of the Avalokiteśvara cult, the Mani bka’ ‘bum, during the period of intense missionary activity just before the appearance of the 'das-log literature.'9 These works proffer salvation through the grace of Avalokiteśvara by the recitation of his mantra and the pertinent practices. The Za ma tog gi bstan bcos, for instance, summarizes passages from the twenty-one sutras and tantras involving Avalokiteśvara which promise deliverance from the dire circumstances of worldly life (pp. 377–401). Further, in accordance with what we have already said above concerning the connection between soteriological activity and stressful events, we find in several works of this period directions for when they are to be used. The Za ma tog gi bstan bcos says (p. 416 ff):

Since the Buddhist doctrine has degenerated,
Not heeding the main doctrine
People consider important the syllables of magic.
Since they are greatly enthusiastic in their initial enthusiasm for religion which then declines,
There is no reason for true religion to spread.
Since they will not practice religious deeds, there is reason for true religion to decline.
Since there is much sectarianism, people exaggerate the differences.
Devils have taken up residence in the hearts of religious persons;
They revile each other and quarrel.
Mantrists are really dam-sri,
Laymen are really 'gong-po,
Who revile each other and fight.
Women are really witches,
Who fight with their husbands and commit suicide.
Children are really the-rang,
Who misbehave.
Gods, klu and gnyan will get angry:
It will not rain when it should,
And there will be famine...
At such a time, if you wish for abundant happiness
Pray to Mahākārūṇika

In a similar vein, we find in a sixteenth century tantric cycle of Avalokiteśvara:

When the Buddhist religion declines
Meditators will become generals,
The saṃgha will lose the armor of forbearance,
Monastic establishments will fight and prepare fortifications,
Monks will always carry knives.
The voice of religion will be disrupted and laymen will speak.
They will lose their profound views, but they will be proud.
Monks will addict themselves to witch-women.
For dharma, they will shamelessly sing and dance,
Yellow-backed 'gong-po will take over the kingdom
And carry off all the wealth.
They will banish the Buddha’s words,
And the yellow-backed demons’ song will be heard far and wide.
They will hanker after illusionary wealth,
And since they wear yellow skins, they will conquer the valleys and passes.
Seizing the prerogatives of lamas, they will wander around like dogs.
Disciples will break their vows and wander around like foxes.
They will break their vows, behave contrary to the Buddha’s words and not atone.
There will be no practice of the mantrayāna.
Men will plunder and steal things,
Women will have no shame and will not protect their virtue,
Undisciplined monks will break their vows.
Hate between clergy and laity will burn like a fire.
Monks without vows will fight.
The Buddhist doctrine will be cast to the wind...

This period was marked by great swings in political fortune, due to the shifting alliances between princely houses and sectarian groups. This, in turn, led to both efflorescence and decline in the production of such texts as we have quoted above. Some who spread the Buddhist doctrine during the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries were forced to do so in the border regions because they themselves had been forced out of Central Tibet; others did so out of missionary fervor, and with political backing. Zhig-po-gling-pa (1524–83), who discovered the text we have quoted above in the very heart of Lhasa—the Central Cathedral
almost within sight of the Dalai Lama’s seat at ‘Bras-spungs—refers provocatively to “yellow-backed ‘gong-po,” a remark no doubt aimed at the growing numbers of Dge-lugs-pa clergy. This, we need say, did nothing to endear him or his disciples to the Great Fifth, nor did it help in the various persecutions of the Bka’-brgyud-pa and Rnyingma-pa sects which were to follow over the next century or so.

The teachings of the Avalokiteśvara cult were spread among the lay populace not only by scholastics and prophets, but by mani-pa as well. This tradition was promulgated in Tibet by such figures as Guru Chos-dbang (1212–73), who is also amongst the first prophets. Guru Chos-dbang advocated that Avalokiteśvara’s mantra be preached in the market place (i.e., made popular) so that all hearing it might be saved. The following quotations are from his Mani-bka’-bum (Ms. B: 217 ff.):

Whenever any being sees these seven syllables of compassion, wherever he is born, he will have all the excellent qualities and live inseparably with Avalokita. O fortunate faithful ones! Listen to Chos-dbang’s precepts! Do not doubt them!

These are the qualities that come from seeing the Maṇi: The Za ma tog bkod pa says,

Whosoever as much as sees the Maṇi—men, women, boys or girls, or even game animals, birds, dogs, cattle, horses, asses and so forth—all will finally be born as bodhisattvas. They will have no sufferings such as birth, old age, sickness and death, meeting with unpleasant things, and being bereft of pleasant things . . .

O all you fortunate ones that are gathered here! If that is the case, erect Manis at crossroads and in—and outside your houses. Taking up mirrors with the seven syllables, show them to everyone; and if they look at the seven syllables written there, your and everyone’s concerns will become the very best . . .

These are the qualities that come from hearing the Maṇi: It says in the Don yod bzhag pa’i mdo,

Those beings that hear the heart (seven syllables) will generate the virtues of several hundred thousand Buddhas. Whosoever has abused a holy being, committed the five boundless sins, etc., all his sins will be purified in this very lifetime . . .

If that is the case, even if beings like animals who do not know how to say the letters, as much as hear the sound, of the Maṇi being said, although they cannot make the sounds of the holy words, they will have the same great significance as for you and others . . .
These are the qualities that come from holding the Maṇi in the mind:

... The *Mtshan rab yongs su bstan pa'i mdo* says, If one holds the heart-syllables in the mind, the five boundless sins, the five near sins, all one's sinful deeds will be purified, and one will never be reborn in hell, or as a *preta* or animal. One will not have sufferings of the body, speech and mind. One will be free of all fears from wild animals, *srin-po*, humans, demi-humans and diseases. One will understand the meaning of the *dharma* and see the face of the *nirmāṇa*, Mahākarunīka. One will have all good works and good things . . .

Hence, cast aside the worries which will not gain you any significant thoughts, and if you hold Maṇis and Mahākarunīka in your mind at all times, you will renounce your own and others' suffering and gain bliss and loving-kindness.

These are the qualities that come from touching the Maṇi: The *‘Khor ba dong sprugs rgyud* says,

> It is fitting for anyone to touch the seven heart-syllables with one’s body and with whatever limb. If one drinks the water (touched with the Maṇi) with which one has washed, one will certainly be born in paradise. It is the same even for earth, wind and fire . . .

... Hence, if one asks blessings from all Maṇis, be they natural, carved in relief or drawn, and one touches them or drinks the water that has washed a statue, there is great benefit for so little toil, and the result is that one will be born in paradise.

These are the qualities that come from writing the Maṇi: The *Za ma tog* says,

> In causing the Maṇi to be writ, one causes to be written 84,000 gates of the dharma. The immediate virtues resulting from causing to be made in gold the many forms of . . . the Buddhas . . . whose number equals that of motes of dust, and causing them to be preserved every day, are exceeded by the immediate results of the qualities gained from writing a single syllable of the seven-syllable mantra. This is especially exalted and beyond comprehension. Further, one will become as a king who governs samsāra, exercising power over the four continents, a heroic son, courageous, with perfect limbs, a complete victor over enemies.

... Hence, if you write the seven syllables—best in gold, next, in copper or vermilion, finally, in white or red earth—you will attain such great qualities.
These are the qualities that come from wearing the Maṇi: The Za ma tog says,

If anyone ties the great six-syllable mantra to his body, O noble son, it will become a kind of vajra-body, a kind of relic-stūpa, ten million relics of the Tathāgata. Further, the body that bears the six-lettered mantra will not be clothed in any deed of desire, fear, ignorance, pride or jealousy. If the man that ties on the six-syllable mantra washes at a ford, any being that drinks or comes in contact with that water will have its sins and defilements purified and will not have a bad rebirth.

... Hence, compared to all those that meditate for their own purpose and have little benefit for others, the easy act of writing the Maṇi has great benefits, equal to being a Buddha.

These are the qualities that come from mediating on the Maṇi: The Thugs rje chen po'i snyan rgyud says,

The Maṇi is the heart of the wish-fulfilling jewel. It is the inexhaustible treasury of the dharma-sphere. If one perpetually meditates upon and repeats it, one will, at best, become a Buddha in this life; next, purify the obstructions to Buddhahood; at least, in one’s next rebirth be free of all accidents, and be born, springing from a lotus flower, at the feet of Buddha Amitābha. It is the perfection of Buddhahood in a single life and form. It has inconceivable qualities: it is beyond measure and explanation; it is unexcelled and transcends the limits of explanation.

... Hence, you who busy yourselves practicing the three gates that do not get you to the bodhisattva plane, if you meditate on the seven-syllable mantra of Mahākarunika in this life, later you will be born in paradise.

These are the qualities that come from saying the Maṇi: The Za ma tog says,

When you say the powerful Maṇi-manaṇa, you assemble the Buddhas ... Even the small living things in your food will become bodhisattvas that do not return. ... Whosoever says this great six-syllable mantra will have no end of learning, a heap of wisdom, great loving-kindness and compassion. Everyday he will perfect the six parāmitās, will achieve the power of ruling over the place of the holders of the lineage. Some, even though they are dying, if they repeat the mantra in their minds, they will become bodhisattvas that do not return, be they kind persons or hateful. Finally, they will become Buddhas ... Further, one can count all the motes of dust, and similarly, every drop in the ocean; one can count every sesamum filling a house a hundred leagues wide; one can count all the seeds that grow on the four continents; one can
measure the weight of the king of mountains, Mt. Meru; one can wear out Mt. Rdo-rgyal by brushing it with a cloth of Benares cotton once every hundred years; one can count every hair of the beings that live on the four continents and every drop of rain that were to fall unceasingly for a year. But one cannot grasp the amount of merit from saying the six-syllable mantra a single time . . .

. . . Hence, all living persons, if you cease to lie, slander, prattle, use rough words and engage in meaningless conversation, and if you strongly say the Mani, it is the fulfillment of lotus-speech . . .

These are the qualities that come from explaining the Mani to others: The sūtras says,

He who speaks the dharma of the Mani-dhāranī is very rare. He who speaks the dharma is like a Tathāgatha. View him as though he were a heap of all beings’ virtue, a heap of gems; as speaking infallible truth, as a wish-fulfilling jewel of holy charity; as a ship that liberates beings. This mantra is the sacred heart of . . . Avalokiteśvara . . .

. . . Hence, all you kalyāṇāmitras! Try to listen and think about the dharma when you are young; and when you are older, renounce the doctrine of prattle! Since worldly practice diverts your attention, give up your burdens. If you count and explain one word of the heart-mantra, you fix the three gates of the doctrine—hearing, thought and meditation—in your understanding. You will obtain all good things for your and others’ benefit. Spread the Mani-doctrine to the ten directions of saṁsāra.

The role of maṇi-pa was not necessarily in high regard during these early years, especially by the sectarian “establishment.” The eminent Sa-skya lama ‘Phags-pa, for instance, sniffed that his rival at Qubilai’s court, Karma Bakshi, was a mere maṇi-pa, implying that he was ignorant of higher teachings and more resembled an itinerant preacher who played on the credulity of the masses (see Epstein 1968: 3–4) However, the tradition did remain strong and other missionizing clergy, great and small, did follow in Guru Chos-dbang’s footsteps. As special devotees of Avalokiteśvara, the maṇi-pa, by presenting a total, yet simple, system of worship, were instrumental in spreading Buddhism amongst the benighted. Typically, modern maṇi-pa—whether monastic specialists or laypersons—travel about with thang-ka and other impedimenta, depicting such things as the “Wheel of Life” and describing the sufferings characteristic of the different realms of existence. They are also the principal tellers of ’das-log biographies (see, e.g. Macdonald 1967: plate i).

There is also a pan-Buddhist tradition with which the ’das-log is connected. Maudgalyāyana, the disciple whose life story emphasizes Buddhist “magical”
power and action (as opposed to wisdom and scholarship as represented by Śāriputra) was a 'das-log of sorts.

Born to a rich and pious householder, his father dies when he is three. When he grows up, his mother, who is as sinful as his father pious, sickens and dies. He then takes vows and eventually becomes an arhant. He asks the Buddha to show him where his parents have been reborn and the Buddha tells him to meditate. He has a vision in which he sees his father has been reborn in heaven and his mother in hell. He travels to hell by ṛddhi. The Dharmarāja and his record keepers can find no account of his mother and conclude she must be in Avīci, the deepest hell, whose inmates are so sinful in life that they fall there without passing before Dharmarāja’s court. After long search and inquiry, he finally confirms that she is there. He is told that only the Dharmarāja, the Lords of the Five Paths and the Buddha can open that particular gate of hell. He returns to the Buddha, who lends him His staff, and with this implement Maudgalyāyana cows the demons that guard the gate and passes through. He mother is fetched, and when he sees her, “pierced with 360 iron nails, her head as big as Mt. Meru, and her waist as thin as a thread,” he bursts into tears and tells his mother he will dedicate food and drink to her every day. His mother says, “In hell, there does not exist even the names ‘food and drink’. How can your giving them to me help? Only doing virtue helps.” He then tells her, “I will bear your sufferings for you”. The demons who guard his mother say, “You must experience karma personally,” and they lead her away. The Buddha sends Ānanda to fetch him back, and then He opens all the gates of hell. All the sinners are reborn in paradise, except Maudgalyāyana’s mother, who continues to suffer rebirths as a preta, in animal forms, and then as a human before she gains liberation.12

The tale of Maudgalyāyana is popular in Mahāyānist countries. This tradition appears to be a Central Asian development, an elaboration of ancestor worship assimilated to a Buddhist format, the source of which is the Avalambana-sūtra that spread in Central Asia in the third century A.D. (deVisser 1935: 8ff., 67 ff.).13 In China, the story is found in popular rituals designed to rescue women from Bloody Hell, whether they are consigned for the crimes of polluting the earth with menstrual blood and by the act of childbirth. The rescue of women, particularly one’s mother, from hell is ritually accomplished by the woman’s male descendents as an act of filial piety. They invoke a Buddha-figure (Maudgalyāyana) who descends to hell and does battle with the King of the Dead for possession of the woman’s soul. Ritual performances symbolize acts of karmic retribution, where sexual desire and envy are depicted as causes of social conflict (Seaman 1976). These themes, as we shall see, are also prominent in the 'das-log literature. In Japan, the Maudgalyāyana story has been assimilated to
indigenous rituals for honoring dead ancestors, and it now forms the mythical basis for the Obon festival, in which dead souls are comforted and given merit (see Smith 1974: 2ff.; Hori 1968: 200 ff.)

Additionally, China also has a popular religious tradition which, in spirit if not historically, is closely related to the 'das-log phenomenon. Dore notes that "under the later Han Dynasty . . . it happened that several cunning rascals escaped from Hades, and remembering the facts of their former lives, divulged the things that took place in the Land of Shades, and how the gods administered the world . . ." (1920: 300). Other traditions also seem similar to the 'das-log. The same source also notes (p. 46 ff.) that Yama, who rules the fifth court of hell, examines the dead. The souls of the dead promise to carry out unfinished vows "such as to repair monasteries, schools, bridges, or roads, to clean wells, to deepen rivers, to distribute good books, to release animals, to take care of aged parents, or to bury them suitably . . . Evil men are led to a tower where they may see their native village . . ." These can see their own families moving about, and can hear their conversation. They realize how they disobeyed the teachings of their elders, see that the earthly goods for which they have struggled are of no value, and how they committed all sorts of sinful acts. "While they observe their village they behold their erstwhile friends touch coffin and inwardly rejoice. They hear themselves called selfish and insincere." These exact or very similar scenes are, as we shall see, prominent in the 'das-log biographies.

Additionally, and perhaps of greater significance for our present purposes, there is also the twelfth century legend of Miao-shan, popularly regarded as an avatar of Kwan-yin, thus paralleling the relationship of 'das-log to Avalokiteśvara emphasized in the Tibetan literature. Miao-shan is a princess who, contrary to her father's wishes, refuses to marry and prefers a life of religious seclusion. This incurs her father's wrath, and he orders her execution. A god in the form of a tiger carries her body off to a forest, where her soul is transported to a strange and silent land. A resplendent youth tells her he has been ordered by Yama to take her on a tour of hell. Here the King of Hell tells her she is admired because of the power of her prayers. Upon reciting the Amitābha-stotra all the souls imprisoned in the infernal regions are freed, and hell itself is transformed into a paradise. Yama then sends her back, her soul reenters her body, and she is allowed by her father to follow her pious persuasions (Dorre, op. cit.: 134 ff.).

In Tibet, an episode similar to Maudgalyāyana's descent to hell occurs in the life of Guru Chos-dbang, in whom the traditions of the maṇi-pa, 'das-log and prophet appear to coalesce. As in the Maudgalyāyana story, Guru Chos-dbang's father is a rich and pious man, the most powerful figure in the region of Lhobrag. His mother is as evil as his father is good. They have no son, but by virtue of the father's prayers and good deeds, Padmasambhava reincarnates as their son. When Guru Chos-dbang is seven his father dies as the result of a pollution-illness caused by his wife's hate and pride. The father urges Guru Chos-dbang to convert his mother to goodness in his final testament. Coming to realize that he
is faced with a hopeless task, Guru Chos-dbhang deserts his mother on the pretext of going off on a trading expedition to Lhasa; instead, he goes to meditate for nine years at the holy mountain Rtsa-ri. His family's pho-lha eventuates in the form of a bird and relates that his mother has died. He returns home to find her bones and the family property divided among the neighbors. He searches for her in all the realms and finally locates her in the "gateless iron fortress" after he tours hell and limbo, witnessing the horrors to be seen there. He splits the fortress with his staff and orders the guards to bring his mother out. She recollects her son's teachings on the Mani on the occasion of his father's funeral rites, and her single recitation of the mantra releases countless beings from hell. Guru Chos-dbhang takes her soul from hell, but "loses" it, so that she is reborn as an ass. Dutifully he performs the ass's labor to spare her further suffering. After other suchlike adventures she is reborn a human and gains liberation. The similarity of this story to Maudgalyāyana's, plus the addition of some of the elements found in later 'das-log biographies—such as the tour of hell and messages given to be taken back to the land of the living—appears to offer at once a legitimating link to a well known Buddhist source and to act as a template for the later 'das-log adventures.

Finally, the so-called "Book of the Dead" traditions must be mentioned in connection with the 'das-log. These traditions have been discussed in great detail and I do not intend to add more than a few comments. The "Book of the Dead" and the 'das-log literature share many of the same historical sources; they are mutual redactions of the ancient world-wide literature to which we have already referred. However, the "Book of the Dead" literature is basically a formal presentation of the death and limbo states from the point of view of a religious elite. The events of passing through the various stages of death process and the intermediate states of rebirth are given a careful and detailed exegesis, with such-and-such an event occurring on this-or-that day and having a meaning of thus-and-so. While the formal literature is meant to be read to a corpse, so that its rnam-shes might find understanding and enlightenment, or by a meditation master whose goals are the same, recitations and readings of the 'das-log biographies are aimed at a living lay audience. The aims of this literature are accordingly less lofty and more preparatory in nature. Likewise, many of the complex theological notions found in the "Book of the Dead" are reduced to the simpler and more concrete language of metaphor, and the neat indexical "plot" of events in the former is drastically attenuated in the latter. While parallels can be found between the two genres, how much of their experience is actually explained in terms of the Bardo teachings appears to be a function of the 'das-log's personal erudition. Whatever the case, none of the biographies fully contains all of the events reported in the theoretical literature.

In this connection it would be well to remember that religions, as cultural systems, are creative processes, which both objectify social experience and provide a template for the meaningful subjective interpretation of that experience (Geertz 1973). In all literary religious traditions certain axioms
Tantric Buddhism (Including China and Japan) constitute a central core of meaning about ultimate concerns, which persist over time and give continuity to the social and psychological structures of the culture concerned. Literary religions with elite clergy undergo historical transformations of both the form and content of these core axioms, making them comprehensible to ordinary persons. Such transformations often appear as relationships of analogy, which permit variant reworkings of meaning, or reinterpretations, to occur, which preserve the core axioms at the same time (see, e.g., Lichter and Epstein 1982). All ethicized religions must also confront experiential events for which their dogmas only marginally account. First among such disjunctive experiences are the problems of meaning raised by death (Berger 1969). Since everyday experience provides a reality test for a religious system, it follows that one’s personal death can have no experiential value, nor can religious theories of death transcend speculation in its purest form. However, accounts of pseudo-death, such as the ‘das-log’ literature, even though they may not be wholly concordant with the descriptions of events described in the theoretical versions of the death process, certainly help to legitimate the latter.15

As I have already stated, the messages which the ‘das-log’ preach are rather standard Mahayanist fare and are similar to the teachings found in popular introductory texts or heard in sermons. They are not so much aimed at the transcendent goals and methods to achieve them for which Tibetan Buddhism is so justly renowned, for even simple philosophy is considered too abstruse for most clergy, let alone laymen. Rather, ethics, by which is meant a minimal understanding of the law of karma and the Four Noble Truths, constitute the focal point. In introductory texts, we invariably find discussions of the rarity and potential waste of human life, suffering, impermanence and death, and karma and ethical behavior.

On timeliness and the waste of human opportunity we find statements like Karma-chag-med’s:

There are many kalpas, but those in which the holy dharma is propagated are rare.
There are many realms of being, but those in which a Buddha comes are rare.
Though a Buddha come, those that dwell in the dharma are rare.
From amongst the six kinds of beings, those that attain human form are rare.
From amongst the four continents, those born in Jambudvīpa are rare.
In Jambudvīpa, those who spread the holy dharma are rare.
Though born there, those that have all their senses are rare.
Though they have all their senses, those that recall the holy dharma are rare.
Though they desire the holy dharma, famous lamas are rare.
Though they meet them, those who attain guidance are rare.
Though they get it, those able to use it are rare. (1970: 3b–4a).
In the same text we read (f. 5a ff.) that when death comes,

The ability of medicine and protective ritual declines; were it ever a time to be miserly, it is come.

Like the sun setting on the western peaks, were it ever a time which cannot be postponed, it is come.

Though your retinue and servants are nearby, you’ve no power to take them with you; were it ever a time to go alone, it is come.

Though your wealth be great, you’ve no power to take a single day’s provisions; were there ever a time to go empty-handed, it is come.

Singly, you wander alone in a land you do not know; were it ever a time to go wherever, it is come.

Though your pain be great, there is no way to apportion it; were it ever a time to suffer each pang, it is come.

Gradually you sink into unconsciousness and unrecognizable sensations and bright lights appear; were it ever a time when you knew not what to do, it is come.

Sounds, the three rays, and hordes of peaceful and wrathful deities appear; it is like being a single dangerous criminal surrounded by an army; were it ever a time for great sensations of fear and terror, it is come.

Cruel and fearsome messengers of Yama lead you away; the god and ghost who are born with you explain your virtues and sins; lying will not help, in the mirror of deeds the small letters are clear; were it ever a time to repent your past deeds, it is come.

Though you desire virtues, there is no source where you can seek to buy or borrow them.

The king of death will distinguish your virtues from your sins.

You cannot repent of them; if you’ve not done so by now,

You’ve imprudently and insincerely deceived yourself.

If you cannot bear to be struck by a spark now,

Hell-fire is seven times hotter than ours.

Without perishing, you’ll be burnt for a kalpa.

If you know what to do, question yourself in whatever you do.

If you cannot bear a winter’s day dressed in thin clothes,

You’ll be stuck for a kalpa in a frozen pit.

What will you do when you cannot even die to escape...

Such grisly reflections on death and the hereafter are of primary motivational importance in Buddhism. As Sgam-po-pa has written, “Meditation on death is of first importance and is the substantive cause (rgyu) of entering the dharma. Next, it is important as the metal of industriousness. Finally, it is important as the impetus to do holy dharma.” (Rdo-je-rgyal-po 1977:26).

Communication of the concept of suffering to the laity confronts the problem...
faced by all salvation religions: how, in the face of life’s seeming sufferableness, does one demonstrate that life itself is suffering? and how does one move people to this view? This problem of conviction is probably exacerbated by Buddhism’s radical salvation view which emphasizes complete renunciation. Traditionally, texts and sermons mention three types of suffering. The suffering of pain (sdug-bsngal-gyi sdug-bsngal) and the suffering of change ('gyur-ba'i sdug-bsngal) seem intuitively acceptable; one bashes one’s thumb and it hurts, or one loses his fortune or a loved one dies and so one suffers. The third type, compound suffering ('du-byed-kyi sdug-bsngal), is a more bitter pill to swallow. Let us take, for example, a cup of tea; the ubiquitous fluid that lubricates most Tibetan transactions is, according to this view, nothing but a cup of sin.

Tea is a plant sown in China. When the seeds are planted and the leaves cut, the insects killed are beyond counting. When bearers come carrying the tea down from Dartsendo, each man carries a load of sixty-two sections. Since they carry it by supporting the whole load with tumplines around their heads, the skin on their foreheads is worn away and one can see the grey of the bone showing through. Yet still they carry. When they reach Dotok, they load the tea on mdzo, yaks, mules and so forth. When they travel on, all those animals are made to undergo the inconceivable suffering of being made to serve with saddle sores on their backs and cinch sores from the braided ropes underneath. Also when the tea is traded, it is sold only by deception and barter which take into account neither honesty or modesty.

The tea is traded for merchandise, usually for things like sheep’s wool and lambskins. In the summertime, the wool consists of an uncountable quantity of single strands of hair and bugs, such as sheep lice or other little things. Usually when the wool is shorn with a knife, the bugs’ heads are cut off or they are cut in two. The ones that are inside the wool come out and are killed. The ones that do not die this way get twisted up in the wool and suffer a bad death by strangulation. Regarding lambskins, as soon as a lamb is born, it has all its senses. It can feel pleasure and pain, and it looks out for itself. At the beginning of its life, a time when it is happiest, it is killed straightaway. Though it be but an ignorant animal, it rejoices in being alive, and it suffers the experience of being killed. If one were to regard as well the suffering of the ewe whose offspring has been killed, it should be seen as that of a mother whose only son has died.

(Dpal-sprul 1971: 117–8)

Such examples are meant to show that if suffering constitutes life itself, it is because the body is subject to physical pain, life’s joys are illusions that come to an end, and because of life’s entanglements, which are created through attach-
ments, cravings and desires, be they so simple as a cup of tea. Further, although the texts obviously focus upon virtuous action as a means to improve one's karmic chances, they also regard sin, which must be paid for sooner or later, as inherent in any action. The 'das-log Dbu-bza' reminds us

It is natural that half of virtue is sin,
It is natural that half of beer is water,
It is natural that half of day is night. (XII: 608)

It is such notions as these that clearly draw the frontier between elite and popular understandings of Buddhism; the question now becomes this: lay Tibetans, probably like most other people who do not spend the better part of their waking hours worrying about the next life (at least until they get old) and who try to make the best of this one, have certain standards of happiness and ideas about what constitutes the good life. These are based upon particular ideas about bodily states (health), making a decent living (wealth) and agreeable relationships with others (love and friendship). Health, wealth and love are, for the most part, positive states achieved transactionally; they are world-involved. The philosophical view of happiness, to achieve bliss in another "world" and to escape this one, is quite another thing; it is based on a universalistic psychology which sees men driven or motivated by hate, lust and ignorance which: (1) negates the body as a thing-in-itself and directs attention to the state of the soul (rnam-shes); (2) abjures involvement with material things; and (3) denounces the best and closest relationships of love and friendship as destructive when they are particularized. 17

The common strategy in all the popularizing traditions is the reduction of high order and abstract concepts to concrete metaphor, which plays upon common fears of emotional and somatic distress. Presumably, the aim of such reductionism is to arouse an imagery of those proximal experiences in such a way as to cause the listener to link them to ultimate concerns. Tibetan Buddhism seems always to have recognized that the same means for everyone is not always appropriate to desired ends. As the biography of Prince Choskyi-dbang-phyug reminds us (p. 3 ff.)

Some do it by Vajrayana and gain liberation in a single life and form.
Some do it gradually by philosophy (mtshan-nyid).
Some do it, entering the doctrine successively through the three turnings of the wheel.
Some do it by degrees through stories and didactics . . .

For instance, in the biography of A-lce Rig-stong-rgyal-mo we find the following verses in which the experience of pain and destructive emotional states are linked to the realms of possible samsāric birth, along with the ethical mode that alleviates such possibilities: 18
A-ra, a-na and a-tsa (three exclamations for ‘ouch’), these three
Are your introduction to the experience of hell.
Have you done merit?

Hunger, thirst and poverty, these three
Are your introduction to the preta realm.
Have you given charity?

Not understanding, not knowing and ignorance, these three
Are your introduction to the realm of animals.
Have you meditated on patience?

Danger, prejudice and attachment, these three
Are your introduction to the experience of suffering birth and death
(= humans).
Have you kept the discipline?

Hatred, jealousy and causing harm, these three
Are your introduction to fighting (= asura).
Have you meditated on kindness?

Pride, egocentrism and arrogance, these three
Are your introduction to falling at death (= gods).
Have you been humble?

Anxieties over living the “good life” are also employed as transformers in
depicting the futility, waste and ultimate illusion of proximate human goals:

The A-ice went to a village where a household had invited many
people. She went there, and five or six sinners, having killed a ‘bri,
were eating meat, drinking blood and drinking beer in order to get
drunk. They said, “A-ice, welcome! Eat some meat, drink some blood
and sing us a song;” A-ice said, “Alas, alas! What a pity!” and she shed
tears of blood. Then she sang this song:

... When you pass over from this life,
Nothing other than the holy dharma will be of help.
Were it not better to renounce sin and evil deeds?

When you are old, with your mouth and nose caved in and tartar cover-
ing your teeth,
All your friends and relations will surround you.
When your breath comes in fits and starts,
Naught but the holy dharma will help.
Were it not better to give up worldly deeds?

Forsake your estates and lofty palaces!
Look amazed at the wealth you’ve saved!
When you go, empty-handed, upon the road to Limbo,
Naught but the holy dharma will help . . .

Birds and dogs will eat your beautiful body, which is but illusion.
You will leave behind the pet names your parents gave you.
When your soul goes along the fearful road,
Naught but the holy dharma will help.
Were it not better to ask for religious teachings?

When the dark red wind of karma impels you,
You’ll be received in the blackness of ignorance.
When Yama has done with you,
Only the holy dharma will help.
Were it not better if you roved the solitary retreats as an anchorite?

During the short time you’ve attained human form,
Having not rested for a moment in doing sins and evil deeds,
Will you be able to withstand experiencing hell?
Learn how to repent!
All of you, for taking the life of even one being . . .

Will you be able to be burnt alive in hell?
Here, at the border of where you go either up or down,
If you’ve done nothing but sin,
Practice the divine religion! (p. 53 ff.)

. . . Then A-Ice went to a village. In a nice house, there was an elderly man, rich
in manpower and cattle. He said, “Girl! Come in and give us a song!” A-Ice
said, “Ha, ha! Om mani padme hūṃ! O matchless rich man, hear me!

If you want to know about nomads,
A mighty yak, black with white shanks,
Eats grass when it’s hungry
And drinks spring water when it’s thirsty.
If you think that yak is happy,
In the end
The black yak-master (butcher) comes.
On his head he wears a rush basket.
He takes the yak, leading it to the middle of Mon land.
He casts it upon water and rocks,
He pierces its feet with nails,
Hits it on the head with an axe,
Pierces its heart with a dagger,
Though the yak’s cervical vertebrae are long . . .
Alas! Poor beast . . .
In your present human form
Do divine dharma!
Rich man! In the city of butchers
Men and women who live happily
Use meat for food
And beer for drink.
They have more leisure than leaders who cheat.
But they’ll know the suffering of damnation.
Yama’s messengers will lead them away.
They’ll see Limbo with their own eyes.
They’ll boil in the Iron Cauldron,
Be pressed beneath the Iron Mountain,
Their bodies pierced with iron nails.
Molten brass will be poured down their mouths.
There will be no liberation for a *kalpa*.
Alas! You poor butchers . . .

Know this! You that live happily
In your four-square houses!
Above you’ve gathered human wealth,
Below you’ve gathered cattle-wealth.
Your grandsons are arranged like gods in rows.
You dine on food of the most delicious kind.
Your bodies are clothed in the softest wool.
Everyone respects you.
If you think these rich elders are happy,
Sooner or later when they get sick
And all the doctors have given them up,
Their friends and relatives will surround them.
The rich ones will gasp for life
And experience the suffering of disease.
The worker-*yamas* will lead them away.
And they’ll come out on a ledge in Limbo.
They’ll fetch the scale of virtue and sin
And weigh the white and black stones.
In accordance with the Dharmaraja’s terrible words,
They’ll be hauled off to hell . . .

O you poor rich folks!
Now that you’ve the will
Won’t you do divine dharma, give charity well,
Make up your minds?
Won’t you accomplish and request religious teachings?
Are you not afraid? (p. 58 ff.)

With this brief introductory background, we may now turn to an examination of the biographical content itself. The *das-log* biographies bring together as a
class an extremely disparate bunch of persons, linked only by the fact that they share a remarkable experience in common. The ‘das-log is seized with an illness and enters a catatonic state; for all intents and purposes, insofar as onlookers are concerned, he dies.\textsuperscript{19} Our task will be first to examine in some detail the physical and affective states of the ‘das-log previous to the onset of their catatonia. What are the characteristics of such states? Can we postulate the existence of preconditions for their seizure in terms of intrapsychic or social-psychological stresses that may help us explain why certain individuals undergo such experiences? If we are dealing with an organic disorder or a genetic one, we cannot of course discover it through texts alone. Instead, we must accept, on faith, and for the sake of argument that there are sociopsychological reasons for them. States of dissociation and hallucinosis may be regarded as defense mechanisms against a range of “disorders” during which there is an intensification of internal perceptions and ego withdrawal. Although I will defer a discussion of this psychological state until later, it will behoove us to see if any such evidence can be found here.

Gling-bza’ Chos-skyid (III, A: 306 ff.)

I, Chos-skyid, after being sick for a full sixteen days, cast lots, did astrology, took medicine, and did all kinds of curing rituals, but to no avail; I got worse. I thought that now it seemed I would die. When I was small I thought I would become a nun, but my parents and brothers did not let me. In my youth, I did not get a single initiation, authorization or introduction to the dharma. I had made no great progress in meditation. I wished to establish a relationship of giving food and support to a few lamas and teachers, but, other than how this would benefit me. I had no other great root virtues. Now since I greatly regretted this, and thought I was dying, I was decimated. I had been killing twenty or thirty yak and sheep every year. Amidst all that, I had not a single virtue, just sin. My husband and sons did not know even how to perform great virtues. Since they greatly desired wealth, they had no faith. I thought, “They do not know how to give things to make great merit. But I have to tell them to make some merit for me,” and I told them, “Come here! Now this disease will not release me. I’ve no great virtue of accumulated merit. Incidentally, I’ve acquired many sins. For my funeral give one-third of my wealth, half of my turquoise and coral to my daughter and half for my funeral. Those that give as much as a knife for virtue can count on the three gems in return. It is best if you practice the dharma. If it doesn’t come about so, make both my boys monks. Finally, shun sin and be well intentioned toward the dharma. If you act otherwise, you’ll greatly regret it when you die. I want you to promise me that you’ll not let my boys and girl fall into the hands of another laywoman.”
My husband said, "If I spend one-third of our wealth, what will we eat? Girls are the ones who want jewels. If we don't get a woman to take care of us, because the children are young, it will be difficult to maintain the family. We will spend an amount for your funeral, which we won't be sorry for later. That's the way it is, and I can't promise we will spend an exact amount."

Now because of what he said, it seemed to be that I'd be given no great virtues. When I had the power to do so, I didn't know enough to give my jewels to lamas and teachers or how to do the dharma, and I was sad. Thinking that he would let the children fall into the hands of another lay-woman, I felt pity that my children would suffer, and while I was in this state, my head and body went awhirl.

Karma-dbang-'dzin (I, A: 7–16)

When she was in her mother's womb and when she was born there were auspicious omens. From a tender age it was apparent she was intelligent, compassionate, pious and virtuous. She did not care for worldly things. The sde-pa of 'Og-gro sent a message to her parents importuning them to send her as a bride. Her parents, being of a worldly turn of mind, wanted her to go. An arrangement was reached with 'Og-gro, and she went as a bride. Once there she met with lamas, meditators and hermits and received from them teachings and initiations.

One time she was making preparations to do retreat at the hermitage of Khra (alt. Phra) phu. All the villagers gave her things for the retreat and accompanied her there. At the hermitage, she developed a great faith in the Buddha, and although her relatives decorate her with ornaments she thinks, "Now, though I'm decorated with ornaments, this life is like a dream. Hence, when one achieves a precious human form, although one may not have the confidence that one can lead other beings to paradise, if one does not have some fear of death, how can one gain it? If I do not implant an understanding in my own mind, how will it come about?" She then received further instruction from Grub-chchen Nor-bu-bkra-shis and practices his teachings for about three months. On the fourth day of the Monkey-month she had a vision of Guru Rinpoche, holding a vessel and a nectar-filled skull. He tells her the nectar will aid the eighteen kinds of mdze-disease and teaches her a mantra. To one side of him is Tārā in the form of an eight-year-old girl. She remembers her former births and finds a deep compassion for all beings.

One year passes, and on the eleventh day of the third month of the Dragon-year she is stricken with a terrible disease. She recognizes no one and loses her taste for food and drink. She wants to see her kin, but
she cannot get up or if she is awake she wishes to go back to sleep. On the following day her handmaiden, a child named Bsod-nams-tshe-ring, says, “Mistress! You have shadows around your eyes and your nose is sunken. Isn’t it best that I go to the village and tell your husband to come here?” Karma-dbang-'dzin thinks that if she cannot stand a little illness she will never be able to withstand the rigors of religious endeavor and she tells the servant to wait until morning. By midafternoon, however, she gets the shivers and is terribly thirsty. She tries to quench her thirst, but the water pours out of her nose. Then the signs of the dissolution of the four elements begin. She begins to lose the use of her senses, her sight diminishes and she cannot recognize her friends; her hearing fails and although she knows that things are being said, she cannot catch the words, and so forth. Visions of her next life begin to appear. She is, however, mentally aware of her surroundings. She recollects her loved ones and cannot dismiss them from her thoughts. She remembers all her sins, regrets them and cries.  

Bla-ma Byams-pa-bde-legs (XI: 12–17)

In the Fire-Male-Monkey year, in the first month, while in meditative retreat, he is stricken with a bad illness. He loses his body warmth and spits bloody phlegm. Doctors attend him and curative rites are performed, but to no avail. He becomes worse. “On the fifteenth, an inauspicious day with the reigning lunar mansion in the descent, and when demonic delusions abound, the sky was clear, and there were śūpa-shaped rainbow clouds and a cloth-like road which everyone saw. A rain of flowers fell and there came forth the delicious smell of incense. I performed reverential petitions to A-khu Rinpoche and did meditation. In the retreat I did whatever I could within my experience, but I could not control my body and the stages of dissolution appeared in succession.

Other 'das-log simply report that they sicken and “die.” When it is mentioned at all the disease is said to be caused by phlegm. Compared with bile and wind-caused diseases, these are generally considered to be much harder to cure and more life-threatening. Additionally, phlegm is a cooling agency, and hence might account for the corpse-like condition of the soma (I am indebted to E.V. Daniel for this observation).

What seems evident in the statements of the 'das-log is the fact that they are under various kinds of stress. Both Karma-dbang-'dzin and Gling-bza' Chos-skyid grieve over their frustrations of having been forced to lead the lives of ordinary worldly women, when their earlier inclinations would have them fulfilling a religious role. This situation is exacerbated in Gling-bza’s case, and as we shall see, in Karma-dbang-'dzin’s, by their relationships with their kinsmen,
whose interests are solely this-worldly. In Chos-skyid's case, mundane, although not unreasonable, family interests appear so dominant, that her husband cruelly denies her dying wishes and hence what she feels are her last-ditch chances at salvation. Another 'das-log, Byang-chub-sengge, whose case we shall examine in some detail below, has a somewhat similar case in structure but not in content. As a monk, he is free of family dependencies, but experiences a different kind of failure. He doubts the veridicality of a vision of Avalokiteśvara, and this, he says, brings on his "sickness." Tibetans maintain that meditation is not an exercise to be lightly regarded. Generally one must lay a scholastic groundwork before one engages in meditative practices. Since it is the sine qua non of monkhood to be a successful practitioner of the meditative arts, failure therein is often said to cause despair and even mental disorder of a psychotic type. In the vision of the death process that follows, the 'das-log encounters many of the various phenomena that are duly reported in the Bardo literature, as well as in many clinical and mystic visions from all over the world. In most of the biographies, the various lights and colors, sounds and shapes encountered receive some degree of elaboration. Byang-chub-sengge, for instance, delivers a lengthy discursus on the entire process (X A: 16-36), while others, e.g., Gling-bza' Chos-skyid (III A: 309-11), recollect a lama's teachings on death and dying and feel somewhat comforted for the moment: I had a vision that I was going below the ground and I felt scared; it was as though many people were holding me down from above. After that I felt as though I were being moved to and fro in a great ocean, and I felt the misery of the cold waves on my body. The whole earth was filled with fire, and I suffered as if my body were being scorched in a great burning roar. After that there appeared red, white and yellow paths, something like dusk, great roaring sounds. Then suddenly, there was the bliss of remembering nothing. Then one moment I felt as though I'd arrived in a crackling butter lamp; just then there appeared over my head many rays being expelled from the midst of a five-colored light. At the tip of each ray were several beings with human bodies and heads of different forms. Their eyes gaped like the sun and the moon, and they carried in their hands many different kinds of weapons. There came forth the roar of a thousand dragons, saying "Ha, ha! Hūm, hūm! Kill! Strike!" I had an inconceivable fear. A lama had instructed me before saying, "All lights are your own light, all rays your own ray, all forms your own form, all sounds your own sound. They are the glow of your own mind." As soon as I thought this, the omens disappeared.

The next section of the biographies provides us with what I believe to be the most fruitful materials for analysis. Here we see the now freed soul torn between lingering attachments of a social nature which initially kept it chained to its
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former environment and its ultimate flight from the world of men. Buddhism is founded on the assumption that attachment to the world, its physical forms and abstract principles of operation, causes suffering. There is a basic irony here; relationships between an ego and the objects in its physical and social surroundings may be in fact cherished and founded upon the most noble of human sentiments, such as love. Even Buddhism touts human existence as the highest of life forms. But it also urges men to abandon such feelings in order to gain salvation. In order to do so, a person must gain a new understanding of himself and his affective states, so that ego-involved sentiment is transformed into an understanding of how basic psychological and somatic drives operate and how they may be overcome. The following scene depicts the beginnings of this transformation by showing the slow dawning of disillusionment with the world. An existential despair replaces his lingering attachments to things he loves the best, as the 'das-log is ignored by his loved ones and he sees their deceits.


Then when I looked at my own bed, there was placed there the stinking corpse of a large pig covered with my clothes. My husband and children and all our friends and neighbors from the village came, crying. Some wrung their hands and wept, and simultaneously I heard the sound of a thousand dragons roaring. Then a hail of pus and blood, the size of eggs, fell and it hurt intolerably. As soon as they stopped crying, the roaring and hail stopped, as well as my pain. Then my brother, Chos-sgron, said, “What good will staying here and crying do? Since there is no one at all to perform transference ('pho-ba), we have to invite twenty-one monks, starting with a mantrist. It’s best we perform rites and prayers. Since elder sister had faith in Yogi Thugs-rje-rinchen, we’ll invite him and ask him to perform the wake (rgyun-bzhugs). I’ll look for four men to recite the Vajra-c-chedika.” No sooner had he said that then my husband said, “We must summon four Bon-po lamas.” Chos-mgon said, “Although sister had no faith in Bon-pos, you do whatever you like. I’m going to invite a mantrist and the Yogi,” and he went off. My nephew Khro-bo-skyabs and my husband went off with six loads of barley and gave them to the neighbors to make rtsampa. I thought, “What are they doing? A curing ceremony? My disease has gotten better. You don’t all have to gather here” But they didn’t even toss me a glance and I felt peckish. I didn’t think I’d died. The middle boy came, bringing chaplain Thugs-rje-rin-chen, and he went away, after giving him the things necessary to recite the Vajra-c-chedika. The chaplain said the refuge formula and did some rites, and I felt a great joy.

Then in the evening about twenty teachers and Yogi Thugs-rje-rinchen came. I greeted the lama and asked for his blessings, but he didn’t
give them and I wondered why. As I stood there, discomforted, the Yogi placed his hand on the pig's head and recited the refuge formula and prayers: "Now, Chos-skyid, your death has come. Don't be attached to your boy or to your wealth and food, but meditate on the particulars of your mind. Say, 'May the white A and the white drop Warn come into my heart! May I be together with Buddha Amitabha in Sukhāvati.' May we both go there!" As soon as he said this, I thought, "But I'm not dead! My body is just as it was before. After the lama says these things, I'll go." But since I was afraid of the pig, I was unable to go past it. The lama said, "Phat!" and I became happy and blissful. The lama said, "The transference is done. Body and mind are separate." Then they made tea and food and invited people in. They gave me nothing. The Yogi said, "Girl! Bring your mother some food!" and my daughter put some porridge on a plate along with a bit of meat, and, together with a cup of tea, placed it near the pig and said, "Mother! Please eat!" I thought, she didn't give it to me but put it near the pig's corpse, and I felt nauseated and despaired at what my daughter had done.

I felt hungry and thirsty, but I endured it. The Yogi said some mantras, such as the Mañi, and burnt bits of my portion of food in the fire. I smelt it and received a vision of eating and drinking, and my hunger and thirst were pacified. The lamas and teachers were completing the altar arrangements and they performed the rites. The monks and Thugs-rje Rinpoche sat in meditation. I was angry at all of them. They didn't give me my share of food. The suffering of my mind and body was boundless. My mind, not having a body to stay in, was wafted like a feather in the wind, moving to and fro. Now I thought about what I should do. I thought I had to take my jewels and wander around the country. All my children were saying 'mother' and weeping. Again a hail of pus and blood fell, and I had immeasurable suffering. When they ceased, so did the hail. Further, without my seeing the source, there was a sound. My body felt heavy and sapped of strength, and my mind felt nervous and confused. Thinking what was best for me to do, I stood in front of the mantrist. I thought, "He is a Bka'-gdams-pa monk. I don't know if he'll let a lay-woman be in his presence," and I hid behind him. I felt better listening to him recite the rites, but it was unable to calm my fears. Thinking what was best for me to do, I went before the Yogi. He had not a defilement on him, inside and out, and I found myself in the presence of an image of the four-handed Avalokiteśvara. He said, "What a pity!" Thugs-rje Rinpoche was meditating on emptiness, like a rainbow, and there was no difference between him and me. The confusion of my mind became calm and I felt immeasurable joy.

Then after a while I recov ed my senses. The others were eating.
Like before, they didn’t give me any food, but placed it before the pig. Like before, the Yogi burnt my portion and I had a vision of eating and drinking. Then in a while I prepared to go, and then a man said, “Chos-skyid, come here!” I went to look. I thought it was my father, who said, “Follow me, I’ve something to show you.” Then he said, “I’ll send you back quickly.” I thought, “Here at home there are many lamas and teachers sitting; they’re all mad at me. My husband and children didn’t give me food.” I felt powerless. I thought I had to leave and immediately came to a barren plateau.

Byang-chub-sengge (X, A: 36–43)

Then I thought I had to go inside and I arrived there. Thinking I had to go home, I got to my family’s house. Greens were cooking on the stove and I asked for some, but they didn’t give me any. Thinking they were mad at me, I thought I’d go elsewhere. There were some people praying on the roof and I went there, but no one said anything to me. I thought all my relatives and acquaintances were angry at me. Then I went behind the door, and someone was making a wheel for the water-mill. I asked what he was doing, but he didn’t answer me. I thought he was deaf. Then I went into the mill and my nephew (bu-tsha) was grinding flour. I thought I’d like some rtsam-pa, but I was afraid to make my nephew get suspicious. I asked, “Nephew, are you making this flour for an offering?” but there was no answer. I thought, “These evil people aren’t talking to me. I’d like to eat some flour.” and reaching into the mouth of the flour bin, the mill stone shook. My nephew said, “Is a dead ghost walking around?” and he took out his knife. I said to him, “The dead are walking? Did your parents die? No one has died here.” But he didn’t answer me. I thought, “It looks as though something is harming his rtsam-pa,” and I fled behind the mill door. Then I got thirsty. At the river’s edge there was a young girl fetching water. I asked her for some, but she didn’t say anything to me. Then I thought, “I’d like a drink of water,” and I put my hand into her vessel. It fell from her shoulder and the bottom broke. I thought the girl would get angry, and like before I fled quickly away. A neighbor was drinking beer, but he didn’t invite me to have any, and I thought everyone was angry at me. Thinking I had to go behind the door, I went and there was a horse. Grabbing it by the tail, the horse fell down. I was also very frightened. Then I came out from behind the door and the horse died. Then an old lady came along carrying a load of wool. I said, “What are you going to do with the wool?” but she said nothing. Then I thought, “I want to take a bit of wool,” and when I reached out my hand, all the pieces of wool were carried away by a wind. The old lady ran around in a dither. I thought, “All the wool has been carried
off by the wind. What should I do?” and I ran off. Thinking I should go to the monastery, I went off, and following on the road behind me a dog came barking. A girl on the roof of a house said, “Rotten mutt! A ghost has made you bark.” I thought, “She seems to have called me a ghost.” I said to her, “Show me a god which isn’t a ghost!” but she said nothing and went back inside. Then, thinking I had to go to the monastery, I arrived there. In my room there was a corpse. I was very frightened. Its arms and legs were stretched out and it faced downwards. Before it were two frightening hunting dogs. I took fright and said, “Om mani padme hūm.” Then I went and looked; it was tied with its feet behind its head. I was very much afraid of it. Then, as soon as I had thought, “It seems I’ve died,” I arrived before a great mountain.

Typical of these scenes are elements which allegorize dominant Buddhist values involving the consequences of attachment and which play upon the dominant media of human happiness and social values. Three “obligatory” events occur in all of the ‘das-log biographies.

First, the “soul” undergoes an autoscopic experience, seeing its own corpse of which it is frightened. Invariably, one’s own body appears in distorted, usually animal, shape, a dog, a pig, a snake, etc., which causes the ‘das-log to feel nauseated and loathing. To make matters worse, the ‘das-log may see its own relatives offer food to this sickening carcass, while he himself is tormented by hunger and thirst, which remains unrelieved except for the efforts of the monks. Here is a comment on the value of the body: rotting animality; and on bodily states in general: loathsome and sickening. This view of the corporeal is expressed in many Buddhist texts which recommend a day in the graveyard as a lesson in the consequences of bodily attachment (see, e.g., Bond 1980). This motif also stands in contrast to the states of bodily beauty promised as a guna of Avalokiteshvara worship.23

Second, the soul, not yet fully realizing it is “dead,” now sees its relatives crying over the corpse. This results in its being painfully stricken by a “hail of pus and blood,” a rather obvious concretization of the concept that sentimental attachments ultimately cause suffering. But why pus and blood? The salience of these substances is never explained in the biographies, yet present in every one of them. The following is a chain of associations, which elaborates upon different levels of understanding. The first proposition is that tears become pus and blood. Generally speaking, a clear limpid liquid becomes viscous colored liquids, which then undergo secondary transformations to solids. Further associations are to be found in statements saying that the ‘das-log was stricken so hard that his flesh and bone were cut, thus completing the substantivation, i.e., pus = white = bone, blood = red = flesh. From general Tibetan associations we may derive bone from father from white liquid (pus/semen); and flesh from mother from red liquid (blood/menstrual blood). On the other hand, clear limpid liquids
have two ethnographically verifiable associations; they may be tears (liquid from the eye as opposed to the sexual organs) or bindu, the drop or spot signifying creative potential in the heart (mind). These in turn stand for compassion and for the potential of the manifest body (sgyu-lus) to be transformed into the wisdom body (ye-shes-lus) and for the bodhicitta of the adept, the comingling of his "semen" with his mudrā. But bodhicitta is also pha-ma'i byang-sems, the white and red drops in the corpse's heart, which are the remnants of the original germ of the parents. These are associated with the life—and "para-sympathetic"—winds in the embryo. Normally found at the forehead's vein-caakra and at the navel's, they migrate to the heart at death, encapsulating the mind in a tent-like structure. When this structure collapses, their gross remnants appear at the nostrils or urinary opening, signalling the departure of the rnam-shes. Here we have at least three sets of associations, all related and all reiterating the same message. The first, the mystical or yogic, is connected to soteriology through the application of means (compassion/tears) to wisdom, in which the "sexual" release of the yogin in connection with his female coadept (real or imagined) renders the transformation of bindu to red and white liquids in the internal body to nothingness/bliss/immortality. The second, the physiological, stands for embryo formation and bodily destruction. The third, the social, stands for explicit sexual and social attachment, where love, mundanely tendered, leads to birth, pain and death, instead of the yogi's immortality.

Third, the soul is further confused by the hospitality shown to mourners by its family, and by other persons' failures to display toward it even the common amenities of the good life. As a ghost-like soul, of course, no one is able to hear or see it. Yet it has not yet come to realize that it has "died," and it still remains attached to the major modes of Tibetan social interaction: commensality and conversation. As a disembodied spirit it is harrassed by the remnants of its own corporeal and social attachments, and it is harried by the attitude of others which cause it emotional distress. This is precisely the kind of situation against which funerary texts and the "Book of the Dead" advise. Since the moment of death can afford the final opportunity in one's life for liberation, anything which distracts the consciousness of the dead and involves it in worldly affect can have the most adverse effects upon both the quick and the dead. We shall return to a more detailed analysis later.

In the next "act" of the biographies, the 'das-log, angered at or disappointed by the acts of its loved ones or acquaintances, takes its leave and is transported willy-nilly to Bardo. Heretofore, the 'das-log has been receiving sensory, albeit distorted, input from its surrounding environment. From this point on until its recovery sense impressions from the outer world entirely cease and the events that follow are entirely hallucinatory. Bardo is described as a strange and baffling land, and Bardo proper as a city. The 'das-log, generally in the company of a guide, tours Bardo and gradually begins to establish meaning and order out of its own initial confusion. The 'das-log witnesses events which are explained to him as basic lessons in the laws of causation and human ethics.
Karma-dbang-'dzin (I A: 38 ff)

I remember thinking (my Guru) Grub-chen Nor-bu-bkra-shis said that at the time of death, this and that vision of the way it is in Bardo would occur. Thinking I had died, I looked to see whether my body had any smell and there was none. Taking some steps up and down, there was no sound of walking. I thought, “Alas, I’ve definitely died.”

While she waits for the yamas to seize her, regretting not having done more religious deeds while she lived, a woman dressed in white, carrying a damaru, and her hair tied up in back arrives. She takes hold of her by the shoulder and picks her up, saying, “Get up! Do not suffer!

When affliction occurs, things that counteract it do not come.
And those that say they have the dharma to do so, speak lies and rough words.
To be born and to die are man’s fortune.
Birth and death come again and again, and men get them.
This is not your only death.
Upon this great path which all must tread.
I will accompany you. Let us go happily.”

Somewhat comforted, Karma-dbang-'dzin follows her and meets an uncle who also tries to set her in the right direction, giving her instructions on the renunciation of hate and jealousy. Arriving at the “plain and city” of Bardo, the ’das-log makes a final break with her fond memories for the world of men. Remembering her parents, friends and relatives she calls out to them, but receives no answer. The white woman comes and Karma-dbang-'dzin seizes her robe and says, “Elder sister! What is this plain called? Whose great city is that? What is it called? Even though I’ve parents and many dear friends, relatives and servants, no one advised me whether to go or remain. I arrived here against my will. Now, A-lce, you take my ornaments and please tell me how to return to my own place!” The woman said, “Because you are ignorant and greatly troubled, your own visions arise as your enemy. This plain, which is like the space of heaven, is called the Desert of Razors. It is the path of those great sinners who go to stay in hell. That great city is Klong-thang City, also called Dmar-khams-sgang or the City of the Dead . . .”

Karma-dbang-'dzin tours Bardo and views many people being rewarded for their virtues and punished for their sins. Such encounters are made all the more poignant as she meets persons known to her, hears their pitiful circumstances and takes messages for the living, e.g., (109 ff.) “Then I arrived in the south, and, from a small monastery, out came my own brother (ming-po), Tshangs-pa-rgyal-mtshan. I was very sad. I took my brother’s hand and cried, “Alas, younger brother! Why
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is it you have had to stay here until now? You were born a lama’s son and did not accumulate sins.” He said, “Sister, I did not accumulate the sin of desiring wealth, but since my parents and elder brothers held me in small esteem, I did not seek out necessary religious things. Though I am a lama’s son, I’ve no understanding of religion. I was even forced to become a cowherd for cattle that were not mine. I knew nothing special about cowherding, except how to muzzle a calf and a few small skills, and I pretended to be an expert in drawing blood from cattle. I did not know sin and virtue. Having caught small birds and marmots, I roasted them alive. In consequence of that there is a great heap of fire from here to yonder bridge, where the worker demons have taken me against my will...”

Generally, the ‘das-log encounters persons both known and unknown to him who recite their names, villages and the history of their crimes. While we have no way of knowing whether these individuals were given their true identities in the biographies, it is certain that they were but loosely disguised, and such a device must have been strikingly effective among those hearing the recitation of the biographies and their “acquaintances” pleas for help. Many plausible sounding names and common shady activities are thus reported: a woman who had been the mistress of a local leader (I, A: 93); a craftsman who makes implements for hunting and warfare (ibid.: 144); a merchant who maltreats his pack animals (X, A: 66); a man who is cruel to his serfs (op. cit.: 136), and so on. Likewise, others are variously rewarded for their good deeds, even though these might not strike one as being overwhelming, e.g.: two men are saved from punishment because they piously fed a dog (X, A: 78). Still others, we learn, are in Bardo for even more vague and unanticipated reasons. Some suffer not through their own failings, but those of their kinsmen who have neglected the proper funerary arrangements (XVI, A: 171). Even more incomprehensible are those that have been the victims of what appears to be simple bookeeping error. The hell-workers occasionally mistake a name and a family and fetch a soul whose life-span is not yet over. These poor chaps can wait in Bardo for years, contrary to the formal teachings which allow only forty-nine days, because their families have erred and destroyed their corpses (see, e.g., III A: 319; XI: 42–3; XII: 583).27

From Bardo, the ‘das-log eventually is taken to the court of the Dharmarāja, before whom he witnesses various “trials,” and tours hell.28 This is generally not a systematic tour of all the hot and cold hells, but sufficient to meet the didactic purpose of the literature. On the other hand, the “trial” scenes before the Dharmarāja tend to be quite extensive, leaving little question of their intent. In the biography of Long-wa A-drung, for example, each case is presented four times: each person, upon being questioned by the Dharmarāja, narrates a catalogue of his sins and virtues; the personal advocates, the god and the ghost who are born together with each individual, then present their cases; the Dharmarāja orders a
check of the statements in the "mirror of deeds" or the scrolls; then the
Dharmarāja summarizes the case and passes judgement. Not all cases are simple
and straightforward, with sinners receiving punishment and the virtuous reward.
Many of the cases ponder the vicissitudes of the strange and contradictory exis-
tential situations with which all of us are daily faced. These bring out the some-
times discrepant results of our actions and our intent, and engage the
contradictions between those things that we must do to insure worldly success
and religious salvation. The following cases may serve as examples:

Karma-dbang-'dzin (I, A: 203 ff.)

I had a strong desire to practice religion, but my parents made me do
worldly things, and I was unable to. Having gone to do worldly work,
when I had had two children a terrible disease struck our land. I had not
accumulated merit and the two children together with my husband died.
For their funerals, I made as much merit as I could, but because my
brothers liked having their brides live at home, my first birthplace was
cut off, and I had no place to which I could return. They said I was of
evil caste and could go wandering. My brothers also listened to evil
gossip about me, and I had to wander in other lands. Searching left and
right of the southern road, I stayed, and I had nothing to give to achieve
virtuous strength. I gave a little service to the Buddha and a bit of
charity to beggars. Otherwise, I gave things and did service for mani-
pas. I gave nothing to them for saying the Manis, but I took the Mani-
vows. I had no confidence in my views, but I prayed for a connection to
hermits. To male and female preceptors, I established whatever connec-
tion I could with each; by giving each a cup of rtsam-pa, I asked
instruction in meditation from a maṇi-pa... and asked to do service for
those performing rituals and rites of abstinence. Please ask those
friends who are making terrible sounds not to send me (to hell)...

The white god confirms her story, and casts a measure of white
stones into the scale of justice. The black ghost, however, relates that
she was a calamitous mother and wife who killed her children, and had
done nothing whatever of virtue. He gives her a half measure of black
stones. The monkey-headed demon weighs them and the white stones
are found heavier, recommending a good rebirth. The ox-headed demon
brings the mirror of deeds and places it before the Dharmarāja, who
says, "What you said about doing virtue when you were in the human
realm is true... What you said about not having sin is untrue. When
you were sent as a bride, you already had a bastard child. You feared it
would be improper for the wife of a great rich man, and you destroyed
it. Isn't killing one's own child a heinous sin...? There is no other
place for you to go but hell. But because you regretted this and, with
your body did obeisances and circumambulations, with your speech
always said the six syllables and many verses of confession before mani-pas, and felt regret in your mind, the sin has been purified. Further, you worshipped the Buddha and asked for services from the clergy. You thought there was no difference in size between the services you requested and those requested by rich people, but that rich people sit in a higher position and were given nice things. You had to sit below them without a cushion, and except for a little, were given no food or things. You thought they paid no attention to the services' size, and were only thinking of being rude and the quality of their appearance. Because your mind was thus engaged from the start, you erased the good you did. Otherwise, you will attain human form, but for now, because you did services with the sin of your mind's having been otherwise engaged, you will take rebirth as a vulture. Then you will attain human form...

Gling-bza' Chos-skyid (III, A: 375 ff.)

A well-dressed, pretty woman says, "I am a princess of Dmar-gung. Today I was going from my home to my parents', and crossing a stream on the way, I fell and arrived here... When many lamas and teachers came I asked for teachings and blessings. I wanted to go and offer food (zas-'bre[), but I was afraid that people would say I was not acting like a nobleman's daughter and that I was uneducated and slutish; so I did not go. I heard a sermon (khrid) from Lama Gzhon-nu-rgyal-mtshan and he asked me to be his yum. He was counting on me, but I thought, "This kind of mendicant lama has asked me such a thing!" and I did not stay to complete the lessons. I did not have faith. Because of my youth, I did not know how to complete virtue. Now, O Dharmarāja. I will give you my turquoise and corals and ask you to send me back. I have the intention to do religion. If you don't send me back, I'll have sinned. Please don't send me to the chaos below."

Checking her story, the Dharmarāja tells her, "...Aside from your having one-quarter of the sin for the animals killed at your wedding, the Lama Gzhon-nu-rgyal-mtshan was one who had meditated on the goal of the rdzogs-chen and had perceived the essence of mind-itself. Working for the salvation of beings, he came to hell last month and saved more than a thousand beings. This kind of lama is good; you went to request teachings from him and he asked you to be his secret yum. You thought you were a daughter of good parentage, and that a mere mendicant had asked you such a thing. Thus you had perverse faith. You left off asking for teachings and told your confidantes. The girl Chos-sgron said, "Because he understands that apparent dharmas are false, it is not all right for you to talk like this. When that lama died, omens and relics came forth, a rainbow filled the sky, and there were
many auspicious omens. I thought he'd liberate you, (but he did not) and now you'll have retribution for your perverse faith.” You said to your acquaintances that they had no reason to go to him, that they need not go out of faith. To your confidantes you said rough words. Having had perverse faith towards the lama, you told many people and they had perverse faith towards him. These people have performed a deed worthy of going to a bad rebirth. In that land, you harmed the lama’s conversions. It is greater sin to blaspheme against lamas and teachers than to kill a thousand beings—humans, horses and dogs”

In a singular incident, we learn that even normally mute animals can protest against one in hell:

Byang-chub-sengge (X, A: 196 ff.)

Then before the Dharmarāja an old man and a frog arrived. The frog said, “O Dharmarāja, hear me! Having awakened the thought of enlightenment I was performing samādhi before a temple. This old man came along and killed me. Punish him!” The old man said, “... I, having awakened the thought of enlightenment, was circumambulating the temple. I didn’t know the frog was beneath the stones. Had I known, I’d never have killed him. I don’t deserve to be punished.” Going through their routines, the Dharmarāja and his court determine that neither the frog nor the old man are morally responsible and that they will both have good rebirths.

In some cases, we learn that even the most trivial of acts can result either in hellish suffering or its reduction. Chos-dbang-rgyal-mo reports the case of a woman who forbore throwing a rock at a dog because it broke a vessel. In hell she is trapped under a rock for hitting the dog, but the lip of the rock’s overhang does not quite reach her head, because of her forbearance. Further, she is supplied with food, because she fed the dog (IV: f. 13b.) In the same work we learn of an otherwise virtuous doctor who must spend one day in hell, since during the course of his doctoring he burnt the “precious human body” (ibid.: f. 16a). In other cases, we learn of the terrible fate of such notorious characters as Tsa-phu-ba’s concubine, the poisoner of Mi-la-ras-pa (X, A: 125 ff.).

We shall not dwell upon the ’das-log’s tour of hell and its various reaches, where we learn through the gory and ingenious tortures that await hapless sinners that punishment will fit the crime with an unmistakable elegance. Perhaps more interesting are other features which tell of ways to escape such a fate. All of the biographies contain scenes, such as the one above, in which a seemingly doomed sinner escapes an apparently well-deserved fate because of a forgotten connection with a lama, or a seemingly virtuous person anticipating a reward conveniently forgets a sin which dooms him (see, e.g., I, B: 190 ff.). In
contrast to the mechanistic image of the scales of justice loaded with black and white stones or the inexorable calculations in the mirror of deeds, we begin to realize that karmic justice is not simply a matter of mechanics. Precise though karma’s laws are, the vector of human ethical activity through a life course is so complex that final judgements are relative affairs, that any little thing, good or bad, can color an entire life.

As we would expect in literature connected with the Avalokiteśvara cult, a primary construct in the ordering of an organic view of human fate is the notion of compassion. As Avalokiteśvara was inspired to turn hell into a garden spot (Za ma tog: 323), so in all biographies do saints appear and rescue errant souls.

Gling-bza’ Chos-skyid (III A: 348 ff.)

The Mani-pa Jo-chung Smra-ba’i-sengge comes to hell and calls out those who are connected with him. One after another, the gates of hell opened. The yamas’ weapons all fell to the ground, and they prostrated themselves. Next, inconceivable numbers of men and women from hither and yon heard him call and said, “He is my lama! He is my lama!” and all came running after him. Thereupon, the yamas arose and looking over their shoulders, said, “Some of you may go, but what have you others done to go?” So saying, they caught about three hundred men and women with hooks and dragged them back and forth to where they belonged. Of the people who went up most were women and only a few men. Of those that went down most were men and only a few women... Then I asked the Dharmarāja, “The pandit lead so many men and women away, and they did not have to undergo any division of their sin and virtue at all. These ones who were called escaped the strict law. Given there are people with such an ability as this, why is it that the ones who were brought down where not sent up? Why amongst those that returned down were there more men and fewer women?” Dharmarāja said, “That pandit was the Mani-pa Jo-chung Smra-ba’i-sengge. He has had faith in Mahākārūnika since he was small, and has revered the... six syllables from his youth. Further, he has preached it in all kingdoms. Those that he has led away revere him with body, speech and mind, being connected to him through audiences, hearing in him preach, having given him food and receiving prayers. Through his mercy he leads those who received his blessings. Aside from him, others here who do not know virtue and sin have no place on the path of liberation. Those that were brought down mostly had no connection with him at all. Some did have one, but had deep-seated perverse faith. Had they not had perverse faith, they would have gone up, but they did not control their arrogance and have purchased sin alone. The men who returned back took a haughty view, thinking they were real men. They forgot they had to die. Thinking they were superior, they had no faith in
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Lamas, nor did they ask for things in accord with the doctrine. They did not exhort others to do Mañis. When their wives and daughters wished to give things to lamas, go and ask for teachings and say Mañis, they became avaricious about their wealth. They are not persons who had faith or were continually mindful of death. They beat their wives and daughters, saying, "What do you mean by taking whatever is sweet, delicious and nourishing to pandits?" They are men who said such evil words as "They say that lamas cheat merchants." Now they must suffer. The men that went up did not do things like that. They had faith, gave gifts, served the clergy and requested teachings. At home they did not beat their daughters and family. They collected merit which benefitted them at death. The women that went up had faith in all lamas. They gave proper gifts and services. In all their births, they will go up. They have taken Mahākārūṇika as their tutelary. They say Mañis to benefit the beings of the six realms. Exhorting others to say them too, they benefit greatly. Those that do so are few. Persons who make reverential petitions to Ārya-Mahākārūṇika have these several connections, but such ones are few.

Finally, we are exhorted by the Dharmarāja himself to mend our ways. After their tour of hell, the 'das-logs invariably find themselves as defendants in Dharmarāja's court. Generally, it is discovered that an error has been made regarding the 'das-log's identity, and that he has some time left to live. Other biographies use considerably more complicated devices.

Karma-dbang-'dzin (I, A: 333 ff.)

After her ḍākini-companion suggests to the Dharmarāja that she be sent back to the world of men, the Dharmarāja checks the mirror of deeds and discovers no such error has occurred. He says, "Have you watched carefully the calculation of good and bad deeds? Have you seen as well the terror of death's messengers? Have you understood the tidings and the dispositions of virtue and sin? Do you know that I am Dharmaraja? Previously, Gling-bza' Chos-skyid returned from death, because a mistake was made concerning her name and family. A woman from Dartsendo named Bsam-btan, a woman of Bonpo lineage from Khams named G. yung-drung-dbang-mo, and you return, no such mistake having been made. The reason for the Dartsendo woman's return was this: I told her, "You have turned your mind to making a profit in trade and in worldly deeds, but unless you practice dharma with good intentions, you will not become enlightened. Do not mix virtue and sin!" and I sent her back. The Bonpo woman from Khams returned for this reason: Because Bon does not have the fruits of enlightenment, having entered the gate of the Buddhist doctrine, I let her return for the
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purpose of the necessity of examining the essence of the Mahāmudrā. Now you too exhort the people of the world to virtue and take my message of the interval between life and death! The reason is this: In a former life you met Rdo-rje-phag-mo. Because you obtained all her initiations and oral precepts the breath of the dākinī has not disappeared for seven human generations. Since you have the ability to work for the purpose of beings you have been put in the world as a guide on the path of liberation... You were born in a previous life as a clairvoyent elephant in India. After that birth, you were reborn a woman in Lho-brag Kho-thing. From the time you were small your parents took you and you did obeisances and circumambulations at various temples. You offered butter lamps and food, and said many prayers. Then Sna-n-gstre-ba, a prophet holding the lineage of Padmasambhava came, and you asked for his compassion. The prophet gave you many vows such as the dam-rdzas myong-grol and the gu-ru'i byang-sems dkar-dmar. He prayed for a long time, saying, may you be one who is able to show the bodhisattva path in later life, and be able to admonish all beings to give up their ignorance and do virtue...” Because of the ability of his power, which perfects, having been born later of good caste and with a clear mind, you will be one of the eight classes of Avalokita’s incarnations, a gate to kindness and compassion for all beings, one who never ceases to say the six syllables, and one, being immovable in your enlightened mind, who is inseparable from protecting tutelary deities. Then because of the benefits of the power of your previous prayers and virtues, you will return to your body in the human realm and you shall perfectly achieve working for the benefit of beings...

In Byang-chub-sengge’s case, his guide is ‘Jig-rten-dbang-phug himself, in the form of an eight-year-old boy, who requests the ‘das-log’s return to the living, telling the Dharmarāja that Byang-chub-sengge is part of his retinue (X A: 242). The ‘das-log is then treated to a lengthy message by the Dharmarāja to enjoin mankind to change its ways, containing lists of do’s and don’t’s.

Bya-bral Kun-dga’-rang-grol (IX B: f. 35b ff.)

Also, give this message to famous lamas! A holy lama is one who protects beings. He spins the wheel of the holy dharma without wandering in samsarā. Try to be a perfect leader of beings. Don’t be a lama only in form. Be perfectly pure and meaningful. Augment the Buddha’s doctrine without contention. Those who prepare themselves to assemble many beings as their disciples (for fame and profit) plant for themselves and others the seeds of suffering in hell. Such lamas as the first kind need not be ashamed before me.

Give this message to the great men that protect the earth! Enforce
the wall of the secular and temporal laws that support the doctrine of Śākyamuni. Those who guard the borders of Lhasa and Bsam-yas, worship and restore them. Practice severally and successively helpful doctrines such as not hunting or fishing, the Bka'-gyur, the Bstan-'gyur, the Sabcu, bum-pa, khro-rol, and gtor-bzlog. Always be kind and compassionate to your subjects. Annihilate enemies that would destroy the doctrine. You may come shamelessly before me ...

Give this message to lay officials! Through the power of the merit of charity, carry on the crown of your head the king’s commands. Carry out his commands evenhandedly. Administer the law honestly, without looking for silver and golden wealth. Protect the subjects with love and compassion, without distinguishing the wise from the stupid. Do not hand out gratuitous punishment that transgresses the law; it is a cause for falling to hell. Those officials that pulverize the subjects and practice ill usages that destroy the doctrine, try not to be ashamed when you come before me ...

Give this message to meditation masters! Think on the impermanence of this rarely attained human life. Respect lamas and offer the maṇḍala of the refuge-mind. Cultivate the bdag-skyed and mdun-bskyed of guruyoga. If you obtain good results, you cut off completely the root of the three doubts. If you look at them exteriorly, they are meditation masters; if interiorly, they are like wolves. Such meditation masters as the first kind do not need to be ashamed when they come before me ...

Give this message to dge-bshes! Depending on your friends in the dharma who have perfections, practice wisdom, the sūtras, mantras and lineage transmissions. Keep your vows perfectly to practice and perfect the vows of the novice, such as the gradual acquisition of the seven noble jewels for your wealth. If you look exteriorly, they are dge-bshes; if you look at them interiorly they are sinful merchants. Such dge-bshes as the first kind need not be ashamed when they come before me ...

Give this message to nuns! Do not lust for samsāra and give up worldly deeds. Keep your vows and renounce beer that makes you careless. Renounce the fetters of a householder’s work and apply yourselves to religion. Rely on famous lamas that you see. Apply yourselves to holy deeds and virtues. Don’t shuttle back and forth, up to the mountains and down to the valleys. Do not cause others to have bodily sins, talk nonsense or have evil ideas. If you look at them exteriorly, they are nuns; if interiorly, they are really whores. Such nuns as the first kind need not be ashamed when they come before me ...

Give this message to the maṇi-pas of the world! First, ask instruction from teachers, disciples and lamas. Then turn the kingdom to the dharma. Those who tell of Sbyin-la-dga’, Gzugs-kyi-nyi-ma, Snang-sa, the royal histories and the Buddha’s deeds; those that tell the biographies of Sgomchung Karma-dbang-'dzin, Padma, Bstan-'dzin-chos-
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sgron and Glingbza’ Chos-skyid’s messages, do not exaggerate what is in them. Say Manis with your body, speech and mind. Although you explain karma to others, if you don’t calculate your own, knowing that, it is sinful. If you look at them exteriorly, they are mani-pas; if interiorly, they are like parrots. The first kind of mani-pa need not be ashamed when he comes before me.

Give this message to mantrists! Although you dwell in the gate of the profound mantric dharma, practice lama, tutelary and dakinī. Always renounce evil intentions, sending curses, black magic. Do not let enemies of the doctrine harm the object of the ten virtues, but liberate their consciousnesses to the dharma-sphere. Do not do harmful deeds, either rough or soft, but practice mantras. Send thread-crosses against demons (sri-gnon). Apply yourselves to virtue, putting an end to the work of harmful demons . . . Do not establish lineages, but take upāsaka’s vows. For those who practice hellish deeds, for those mantrists who cultivate curses, magic and evil thoughts, try not to be ashamed when you come before me.

Give this message to laymen! Respect your parents, give supporting gifts of food and drink to elders and servants. Even though you do not practice divine religion, keep your intentions perfectly pure. Don’t beat your animals, but protect them as if they were your sons. Apply yourselves to virtue and give up theft, robbery and hunting. If you look at them exteriorly, they are laymen; if interiorly, they are like cannibal-demons (srin-po) . . .

Give this message to women! Women, the increasers of worldly life and being, give service to the Three Gems and give charity to the poor and the blind. Give generous hospitality to your guests. Revere your husband with a good heart. Since a bad husband will take retribution, be kind. Don’t let your cattle starve, take care of them. If you look at them exteriorly, they are women; if interiorly, they are witches. Such woman as the first kind need not be ashamed when they come before me.

Give this message to beggars! Not having perfectly done charity in your former lives, you’re now poor and indigent. Say Manis nicely. Renounce theft, robbery, hunting and killing. Try to beg and live in whichever place is best. Do not say bad and deprecatory things or gossip. If you look at them exteriorly, they are beggars; if interiorly, they are rich thieves and bandits. Such beggars as the first kind need not be ashamed when they come before me.

In Byang-chub-sengge’s biography, we find the most systematic presentation, as the ‘das-log went on to propound a special system for the worship of Avalokiteśvara through the use of votary flags which appears to have gained some fame in Eastern Tibet. The biography includes the causes of death, the
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ways to avoid bad rebirths and the paths to Buddhahood, the benefits of saying the Mani, the strength of virtue and Mahākarunika’s compassion, the manner and times for offering jo-dar, a typology of virtues that do not benefit and sins that do not harm, and so forth (X, A: 215 ff.).

These messages often conclude with the Dharmaṣāja’s prophecy concerning the fate of the ‘das-log, who then instantly finds himself at the scene of the corpse once more. The body is then reoccupied with as much confusion and loathing as it took to leave it. The quickening of what was considered a corpse produces, it can be sure, a certain wariness on the part of of the watchers. Usually a lama must be called in to confirm the adventures of the ‘das-log as authentic, in order to insure that a dangerous spirit has not taken control of the corpse. Still, the ‘das-log sometimes reports that others are loathe to accept them and their stories. Though they know their own experiences to be genuine, and the teachings of Buddhism to be true, the world is still the world despite their temporary absence from it, and the onus of responsibility now falls on them to change it.

Karma-dbang-*dzin (I, B: 296 ff.)

When I thought of going inside, there was the corpse of a white-muzzled dog with foam on its mouth. A feeling of fear and nausea came over me and I ran back a few steps. Again, after thinking about it, I felt I could approach it. Getting used to the dog’s corpse, I went there, and as soon as I’d done so, my mind entered my body. Again, my recollections were scattered, as if there were a small darkening. Then I recovered my memory a bit, my body moved a little, and the monk sitting wake said ‘Phat’ three times. When I thought of my suffering in hell, my palms shot upwards and made the curtain covering my face sway. The monk thought, “Is this not a zombie (ro-lang) possessed by a powerful rgyal-po-demon, who wants to do harm?” He pushed the curtain aside and forced my head down again and again. Then he thrust his hand inside my bosom to see whether there was any warmth or not. I thought I must tell him I was not dead and should grasp his hand, but during the seven days my body and soul had separated, my tongue had swollen. The monk was firm and not afraid, and again he checked to see whether my body had any warmth. My chest was warm and he called the names of my family, saying, “Madame has returned! Everyone come here!” Then my mother-in-law came and said “Has mother’s girl returned?” with tears coming from her eyes. She tore the threads of the hide blanket in which I’d been sewn with her teeth. Old Sde-pa (her father-in-law) moved me to another room, and they gave me a mixture of raw sugar boiled with honey. But because my mind and body had been separated for seven days, my throat was dry and I couldn’t drink, so had to be fed by spoon. On the next day, I gradually got some
strength. To all the people they told the good news that I'd returned and all became faithful and pious. Then I wished to go abroad and deliver Dharmarāja's message, but a few persons spread hateful gossip about me, saying I was of evil caste and, having left my body for seven days, my mind had gone to Central Tibet to gather peoples' breath, and that now I'd come back. All the others listened to that talk. Some said, "If that's the case, she's indeed a witch," and the country was filled with such gossip. Then the elder Sde-pa said it was like the expression 'Instead of the fame of circumambulating Rtsa-ri, one gets the gossip of having stolen Mgon-po's yak', and that I should stay awhile and keep my experiences secret.

One day Khra-phu dpon-slob Rje Rinpoche comes and Karma-dbang-'dzin asks for teachings. Thereupon a servant of hers says that the teaching should be easy for her inasmuch as she had gone to the land of the dead and returned. The lama says that he has had the same experience three times and they compare notes. Karma-dbang-'dzin tells him the entire story and gradually people gather around to listen. They see the lama cry. He decides to postpone his teachings and asks her to tell her story and deliver the messages from the dead. Offering her a horse, mule and a servant to accompany her, he then requests that she travel far and wide to work for the salvation of beings, saying that she will have more disciples than himself and praying for her enlightenment.

As a motif in the literature of popular religion, the spiritual journey is often connected to the attainment of special powers, charisma, or used as a metaphor for spiritual growth and development. In traditional Tibetan culture, the ability to "travel" to another realm or time, invisible or inaccessible to other men, is also a source of sacred authority and is among the constituent factors of building personal charisma. Other sources of charisma in Tibet—both Amtcharisma, as in the case of high ecclesiastical officials, and Gentilcharisma, as in the case of membership in a reincarnation or teaching lineage—are often modified by the "personalities" which fill these institutional slots. Personal achievement, measured by such things as scholastic or mystical skill, adds weight to the legitimacy of the occupant of such positions. The criterion of "travelling" is shared by several charismatic specialists in Tibet. Curiously, it is not necessary as a major component in the background or personality of the archexample of personal charisma, the lama. By virtue of the fact that they are worldly manifestations of the unconditioned or noetic, lamas are charismatic by ascription. No other being can bestow or transmit to others divine blessings, which are thought to confer upon the recipient salvation, good health and other desiderata. In the words of one savant, lamas are the symbol of all good things:

The lama is that very self that aggregates all the Buddhas of the three times. His body is the monkhood, his speech the pure law, his mind the
true nature of the Buddha; the lama aggregates these three things. His body is the lama, his speech the tutelary, his mind the dākinī; he aggregates all the three veins. His body is the incarnate form, his speech the fruitional form, his mind the dharma form; he aggregates all three forms. He is the incarnation of all past Buddhas, the source of all future Buddhas, the representative of all present Buddhas.

(Dpal-sprul 1971: 8–9)

The lama stands for simultaneity and contiguity of sacred time and space. All the dimensions collapse into a single figure alone. But these qualities can be “unpacked,” at least in part, and other figures can attain at least partial charismatic status by achieving spatio-temporal control of the sacred environment. By comparing four such figures—the saint, the enstatic mystic, the shaman and the oracle—with the 'das-log we may be able to gain in insight into the structure and history of charisma in Tibetan religion.

There are no firm distinctions between the first two named here. There are, quite simply, no living saints (siddhas); mystics are expected, in the broad sense, to become saints. Once this status is achieved, the saint is able to travel physically to other worlds by rddhi, like Maudgalyāyana or any of the other arhants. Normal corporeal or physical restrictions do not apply to them, and the traditional marks of saintliness emphasize this quite plainly: the ability to float on water, to go beneath the earth, to emanate other forms, etc.

The enstatic mystic, through meditative skill, may also “send” his mind to other realms and times, recalling the past and predicting the future. While not yet a saint, he controls his mind to the point where time and space may be overcome. Some compare this ability to the daydream; no mental element necessarily leaves the soma, but somehow the visions received or engendered in this process are viridical. The biographies of enstatic mystics are filled with their visions of hell, heaven, things to come and so forth. This ability is also a major component in religious innovation. Prophets, for instance, typically regard unique visions (dgong-gter) as legitimation to initiate and spread new doctrines or ritual.

In the case of shamans and oracles, there are numerous references in archaic Tibetan records to specialists that travel to other worlds, riding upon rainbows, sunbeams, drums and other odd vehicles, to battle with malign or illness-causing demons, rescue souls, find out the future and so on. These practices are fully consistent with the so-called classical shamanism of northern Asia. For the most part, this kind of shaman has disappeared from modern Tibet, but they are found occasionally among the peoples of Tibet’s ethnic fringes. Most modern Tibetan oracles are possessed by supernaturals. They do not send their minds or bodies anywhere, but rather act as a corporeal vessel for a possessing deity.

If we compare 'das-log with these other specialists, they may be seen to occupy an intermediate category. With regard to the oracle and the 'das-log, the oracle generally (1) has an early possession experience, which he must somehow
learn how to control. After a period of training, the supernatural is consciously invoked to take possession. (2) Possession by a supernatural is believed to lead to the displacement of the oracle’s own powers of perception and mentation. He “lends” his body and voice to the supernatural. (3) Departure of the deity is followed by a return to somatic and mental normalcy.

In the case of the 'das-log (1) the departure of the soul is entirely involuntary and unconscious. (2) Instead of gaining a “god’s mind” in an empty body in this world, the 'das-log acquires a “spirit-body” (yid-kyi lus) for his soul, which is then conducted through the underworld. (3) His own soul is re-integrated with his body. Instead of his usual status, he has acquired a new one. The 'das-log resembles the archaic shaman in the matters of how the soul travels out of the body, the initiatory “illness,” and in several other ways. In this regard his experience is opposed to that of the enstatic mystic and to the penetration of the oracle by a supernatural. While the mystic, the saint and the oracle (at least in the post-initial phase) all possess voluntary control over the onset of their visionary experiences, in the case of the 'das-log the action is involuntary only. While others may repeat their experiences, there is absolutely no evidence in the biographies to show that whatever happens to the 'das-log happens more than once in their lifetimes. At the same time, the 'das-log resembles the Buddhist saint to a certain extent, but, again, the latter’s actions are voluntary and they travel bodily.

In this set of oppositions, the 'das-log, vis-a-vis saints, oracles, shamans and mystics, occupies an intermediate position in a hierarchy of charismatic religious specialists. Oracles, as opposed to mystics and the rest, are not highly regarded in this hierarchy, and shamans are not only confined to the fringes of ethnic Tibet ethnographically, but are regarded historically by Tibetans as representing a stage of religious development surpassed and supplanted by, and morally inferior to, Buddhism. This hierarchy is based on two factors: sacred power and relative purity (see Tambiah, 1970). In the first instance, we must ask what powers are there that the charismatic taps into. In the second, the question becomes what intentions are involved in the tapping of this power and how it is transmuted. The oracle and shaman deal only with what Tibetans believe are low-order supernaturals. Purity of intentions and high degrees of mental self-control are only minimally involved. Their intentions are to treat and cure this-worldly ills and problems. The saint and mystic, on the other hand, are heroes that undertake the rigors of well-intentioned meditations and moreover succeed at them. These are clearly directed at other-worldly goals. The 'das-log’s career begins as an involuntary act and ends in full-fledged Buddhist commitment. A further parallel may be discerned in the relationship between possession and non-possession shamanism and Buddhism and shamanism. Most possession states (as in the modern Tibetan oracle), and, as Babb (1982) reminds us, karma are amnestic; the possessed oracle cannot recall his deeds during his possession state, nor can one know his past deeds other than by their fruition. The archaic shaman thus presents a handier model for the 'das-log inasmuch as they
experience nonamnestic dissociational states which merge into categories of Buddhist saintliness where various aspects of time and space can be known and recalled.

Finally, as a historical phenomenon, it is interesting that there seems to be a correspondence between where the 'das-log and the archaic shaman flourish. Both the biographical and the ethnographic evidence point to Tibet's outlying areas, which included a higher percentage of semicivilized (non-Buddhist) shamanist-animist peoples than in Central Tibet. Shamanism deals principally with low-order spirits, which symbolize the ad hoc social and environmental dangers which humans face. When, say, sickness strikes, or when one loses his soul to a spirit, a shaman may find the offending demon, drive it away from his client, or bargain with it for the return of the soul. However, the moral framework in which such transactions take place is exceedingly narrow and is based upon exchange, ransom, and threat. Buddhism aspires to a loftier view, which is based upon a more abstract notion of how the world and human nature operate. World relationships are based upon the systematic operations of karma; sickness and soul-loss are ultimately not the results of ad hoc encounters with demons, rather they occur as the result of the karmic intersection of victim and persecutor, whose origin lies in moral debts that must be paid. And humans, while imbued with the creative potential of Buddha-nature, are more likely to fail in their realization of it, because they too easily fall prey to their own ignorance, attachment and hatred. As the 'das-log texts continually remind us, all those scary things which appear in Bardo and hell are appearances of our own minds, and we have but to recognize our own ultimate nature to be free of them. The 'das-log's task then is clear; he must transform both the experience and the moral framework of shamanism into a Buddhist view of things.31

From a psychological point of view, the 'das-log's experience is patently a shaman's initiatory "illness," displaying the classical symptoms of a dissociative state: trance, oncochoroid or hallucinatory phenomena, paramnesia and so on. We use the word "illness" here with caution, since in recent "anthropological and psychological literature, the pathological bias towards dissociation has been lifted. For example, West (1967: 890) writes that dissociation is not necessarily to be considered psychopathological ... Bourguignon (1965) emphasizes the healing aspects of dissociation (writing of) "dissociation in the service of the self" (1965: 55). It is linked to Kris' (1952: 60) formulation of "regression in the service of the ego," i.e., a regressive experience which then leads to artistic inspiration and creative integration, "which" can be cathartic and give relief and expression to repressed thoughts, feelings and desires, as well as provide alternative roles which satisfy individual needs." (Peters and Price-Williams 1980: 402).32 West (1967: 889) also remarks that a dissociated state is a defence of ego against material perceived as dangerous on either a conscious or unconscious level: "maturational shortcomings, emotional conflicts, and stressful life situation are then superimposed upon each other to create a trap or impasse that cannot be resolved by the patient because of overwhelming anxiety inherent in
the available possible solutions ... Generally speaking ... the premorbid personality ... will reveal emotional immaturity, self-centeredness, an historical likelihood of episodic emotional disturbances in childhood or adolescence, and a remarkable lack of solidly gratifying or naturally supportive interpersonal relationships.” Similarly, Laughlin (1967: 741) remarks that dissociation “applies especially to the vicissitudes of interpersonal relationships” especially in early life and that it “follows the lines of infantile and childhood regressions.”

If these notions are to be useful in understanding the 'das-log' literature we must explore them a bit further: what is the 'das-log's problem with regard to attaining maturity and gratifying relationships? and how does a regressive experience help to attain what has otherwise been a failure? To get at these questions will require us first to examine the notion of ambivalence, both in Buddhist soteriology and in psychology.

As we have already said, the 'das-log are connected with the worship of Avalokitesvara. In a prayer to the bodhisattva we learn what happen when one recites his mantra:

The white Om radiates to the land of the gods.
It cleanses their proud character and the suffering of falling . . .

The green Ma radiates to the land of the asura.
It cleanses their jealous character and the suffering of fighting . . .

The yellow Ni radiates to the land of humans.
It cleanses their ambivalent (the-tshom) character and the suffering of worry and indigence . . .

The azure Pad radiates to the land of the animals.
It cleanses their ignorant character and the suffering of stupidity . . .

The red Me radiates to the land of the pretas.
It cleanses their lustful character and the suffering of hunger and thirst . . .

The dark blue Hüm radiates to the land of hell.
It cleanses their hateful character and the suffering of hot and cold . . .

(Tshul-khrims-bzang-po, ff. 3b–4b; see also Lauf 1977: 125)

The literature of this cult, then, proposes that as the constitutive or characterological flaw of gods is pride, of titans jealousy, of animals ignorance, of pretas craving, and of hellish beings hate, the basic human flaw is doubt or ambivalence. Buddhist texts proclaim that all existence is suffering. To become attached to what is after all an illusion is spiritual suicide. Men are torn between their desire for worldly good and comfort and their more noble spiritual nature. Doubt or ambivalence about where their true goals lie keeps them forever in a state of suffering. The way to resolve this is to pick out the basic fly in the
dispositional ointment and, at least, follow the moral precepts of the cult to escape the endless weary round of existence. As Obeyesekere has remarked (1981: 35) there is a basic conflict in Buddhist societies between eros and agape, involvement in the goods of personal family ties and sex versus devotionalism in the service of all mankind. This comment is particularly apt in terms of the material we are examining here because Avalokiteśvara is the embodiment of universal love. Ambivalence, as a baseline, universal, phylogenetic flaw in the human psyche reflects the tension between eros and agape.

In psychology, the term ambivalence is used in its most general sense as the simultaneous existence of contradictory tendencies, beliefs or affects in ego's relationship toward an object. Ambivalence is first exhibited as a phase of normal psychological birth, between the stages of normal symbiosis and the stage when Oedipal conflict has been resolved. It is the late stages of separation and individuation, especially the rapprochement crisis, that are ambivalence-ridden. As children learn to become themselves, to disengage themselves from their objects of primary identification and engage the rest of the world as individuals in their own right, they experience an awareness of separation and a concurrent fear of the loss of the good object with whom they are still primitively identified. Their behavior is characterized by marked separation anxiety in which they wish for reunion with the love object and simultaneously fear engulfment by it. Often this period is marked by increased aggression and splitting of the object into good and bad parts. This stage of development is conflict filled; one's awareness as an individuating entity increases the need for object's love. This in turn increases a fear of an unsatisfactory return to a state no longer useful to the growing individuality of the child, and it continues until a positive maternal image is internalized (Mahler, et al. 1975).

It might also behoove us to take into account the notions of David Bakan (1966) who fuses our two interests in religion and psychology. For Bakan, man begins in a state of undifferentiated, self-satisfied, omnipotent, narcissistic bliss. This is followed by a stage of separation (agency). The agentic is necessary to the development of a functioning ego whose aim is mastery of the world. The ego, however, is terminal: one cannot separate forever, and a recognition of one's separation is also a recognition of one's mortality. Further, as the agentic reaches its limit and eventually, as it must, comes to despair, problematic introjects are expelled or projected outwards as other phenomenal objects which then threaten ego as the demonic. The 'das-log literature explicitly recognizes this when it tells us that all the threatening forms, shapes, lights, sounds, etc., in Bardo and hell are our own. Mature separation ends and the bliss of primary narcissism is restored by what Bakan calls communion. By giving over his mastery voluntarily, by substituting for it understanding, and by reconciliation of the parts engendered in separation, we become whole again, as mature beings in a wider community of order of both the nomothetic and the cosmological.

The 'das-log's problem is precisely a struggle to attain this maturity. To begin with; the "dying" process, both in Western and Tibetan terms, is highly
ambivalent. Shneidman (1973) has observed a “complicated clustering of intellectual and affective states” with marked alternating mood swings in dying patients. The Tibetan tradition, of course, postulates that the processes and visions presenting at the time of death have dual meanings, whose interpretation may lead either to rebirth or salvation. In the pre-trance state, the ‘das-log’s report that they are torn between conflicting desires: hunger and nausea, wishing to arise from their beds and immediately feeling like lying down again, wishing for companionship but being unable to communicate, and so on.

Perhaps more important are the statements that we can garner concerning the ‘das-log’s affective states. Several remark that although they had been inclined to follow a religious life, they were frustrated through the demands of their parents, etc., who wished them to marry. Byang-chub-sengge quite explicitly names doubt over the veridicality of a vision as the cause of his illness (X, A: 53). He plainly has failed to achieve the mature communion of meditative success. Regarding the story of others we can only hazard a guess. Long-wa A-drung provides us with no direct evidence, but in the interval between his lingering at home and Bardo we note that his sister calls him “elder brother” (XVI, A: 156 ff.), yet she is living at home with an adoptive bridegroom (mag-pa) who usurps A-drung’s place at table. We can only note the ethnographic peculiarity of this living arrangement and ponder why this young man of twenty-five has not married and taken his place at the head of his household, i.e., failed to achieve a mature social role. This theme—the failure to achieve social or religious maturity—is also supplemented by reports of undergoing early emotional distress and disillusionment with the world in related literature. The famous female incarnate, the last Shug-gseb Rje-btsun Rinpoche, reports that she also underwent a ‘das-log experience. She remarks that although her relationship to her mother was good—like being in the womb (p. 31), her father was a dissolute drunkard, whose cruelty to the mother and herself caused them to be continually uprooted, in debt and other sorts of trouble (29 ff.). These incidents were followed usually by family reconciliations, again providing us with a general backdrop of psychosocial ambivalence. It is also significant that Rje-btsun Rinpoche was familiar with several ‘das-log stories, including A-drung’s, which she learned from the Royal Chaplain of Ladakh, Bkra-shis-rnam-rgyal, who also preached the Mani to her and her family (p. 45 ff.).

The most informative set of circumstances, however, comes from the biography of Karma-dbang-'dzin. As her soul lingers, invisible and unheeded, in the company of her husband and the friends who try to comfort him, she comes to understand the duplicity of men and the treachery of attachment to them. She successively hears some neighbors’ nasty gossip about her; sees a servant who is supposed to prepare tea for the mourners filch some for himself; hears a family steward in a misbegotten attempt to sooth her husband say she was an undutiful wife. She begs for food and drink, but ignored by her husband and the company, who are seeming to make merry, she lays bare the sources of her ambivalence and reveals the systematic stresses to which Tibetan womanhood is subject.
Having arrived at 'Og-gro, I heard great lamentations. Sde-pa-drung (her husband) and all the menfolk had gone to Phra-phug and were not there. The maids were calling my name and weeping. I thought, "I haven't died. Did Sde-pa-drung scold them?" I took one of the maids by the shoulder and lifted her up, asking if he had scolded them, but she didn't respond and acted as though she'd not seen me.

Outside there were also the indistinct sounds of wailing and I looked out. Some people were saying I'd died. Some said they wept, because I'd been humble and took care of others. Others said I was jealous and spiteful and they said many other nasty things behind my back. I was smitten, and looking those who were not crying in the face, tears came to my eyes. But pretending not to notice them and to hold back the tears, I went back in and cried my eyes out. Some said, "She's died. What a pity!" Others said, "Poor Sde-pa-drung!" and because they cried, it rained hailstones of pus and blood the size of eggs. I suffered as though my bones had been broken and my skin pierced through. A great roaring sound also occurred. I looked at my body and I was wearing the same clothes as before. As soon as the hail fell my body became naked. There arose great lamentations of intolerable suffering.

An indistinct disembodied voice said to me, "Go to Phra-phug!" and there-upon, as soon as the thought of going had flashed into my mind, I arrived there. Sde-pa, master and servants, had already arrived. A full vessel of beer had been placed before them, tea was on the stove and two monks arranged food before an image. They were preparing an offering. I thought, "I didn't know someone died. Is this a seventh-day offering?" People from the village gradually arrived, and I went up to Sde-pa-drung. All of them offered him beer and said many consoling words to him. Then Steward Bde-Chen-grags-pa came, and taking my amber and coral ornaments wrapped in a cloth, he put them in the gtor-khang. He greeted Sde-pa-drung and said, "Sir! Please don't cry! It's true that you feel sad and terrible now, but, however it may be, she was a bride to 'Og-gro and she the girls of Khrab-shos-sbas-khur, inciting them to turn to religion, to had no plans to bear her responsibilities. Since she was always talking she robbed the king of 'Og-gro. Her death should cause you to suffer less than you would for a hurt thumb. For now, it's best you try to clear up this suffering of your eye, your hand, and this corpse outside." Again Sde-pa wept and said, "The sun in the sky is old at noon. We two were dear to each other only a very short time. I've no father or mother. Now the time has come when I must be separated from my only friend," and he wept many tears. Again he said, "There are stories that her kind of person becomes a 'das-log (shi-log)."
There are many stories, like Glingbza’ Chos-skyid’s, about those that were carried off and returned. I fervently hope she’ll return as well. We’d best leave her body without touching it during the forty-nine days.” Thereupon he wept many tears, and I thought, “I’ve not died, have I?” Again, thinking I’d not died, I took Sde-pa’s hand and said over and over, “I’m not dead. There’s no need to suffer,” but Sde-pa and all, lord and servants, did not reply. I thought, “They’re angry with me.”

Then someone brought tea, and, as was my usual habit, I sat down facing Sde-pa-drung, close by him. They gave him and the others tea, and without giving me any, went away. I thought, “There isn’t enough tea. They’ll just make some more and bring it.” Then Sde-pa-drung told A-khrung Tshe-ring-rab-brtan to make more tea. He broke off some tea and put it into his own pocket. I thought, “For a little bit of food, he commits such a sinful deed!” and I was disgusted with both master and servant. Then he offered tea to Sde-pa, and again Sde-pa didn’t ask me to sit or eat with him. They passed none of it my way. I thought, “I’ve no will to eat,” and feeling sad, I wept many tears.

Again I thought, “Alas! I said that I’d perform dharma, but I was not permitted to do so. I was not allowed to stay with my parents. You guaranteed you’d make me happy. Not being allowed to do dharma, I had to do mundane things. Now the way the servants have acted is the same as the way in which you’ve behaved. I have no will to eat and drink. Now I have to go to do dharma.” Going out of the monastery gate, I looked back. I said to Sde-pa-drung, “When my parents first looked after me, I had the will to do dharma. You made me all kinds of promises. Now I have no will to eat and drink. You listened to what others said about me and threw me out of the company that eat and drink together. Generally, menfolk have neither substance nor marrow. Especially you, Sde-pa G.yu-rgyal-phun-tshogs, have no fibre. You’ve kept the ornaments given me as dowry by my parents. First, you looked on me as though I were a goddess. Now I wander like a dog. As for what is left of what you said to me, it is gone, just as what is left of beating water with a stick. They say a woman does not know what will become of her until they place a rope around her neck. Now it has happened to me. Many times I thought I must say, “Virgins! Do not do worldly deeds! Do dharma!” O Sde-pa-drung, servants, listen to me! Formerly my place was like a rolling stone falling into a clean canal (i.e., a misfit). Now go ahead and be happy with your wealth and material things. I will find satisfaction in the dharma. Sde-pa-drung, do not regret!”

Thinking I had to go to do dharma, I went off with nothing burdening me. All the others stayed there, sighing. There was not a single person who told me to stay.
This entire sequence plainly indicates a regression. If an ego’s psychosocial relationships to significant others are thought of as a set of concentric rings with ego at the center, we begin here in the narrative sequence with the outermost circle—neighbors, of the least powerful emotive significance, and fall back ever closer to the more domestic and meaningful ties, from an estate steward (outside the home), to a servant (inside the home) and finally to the husband.

Next, she quits the scene entirely, and travels back to her natal village. On the way she falls in with a strange gang of spooks and goblins:

From the upper part of the valley, many *mi-ma-yin* came all abustle. I listened to what they were saying: “Down there in Dge-bcu Lung there’s a feast. Let’s go!” and off they went, taking neither large steps or small. I followed them, and instantly I arrived at my birthplace, Dgebcu Kun-dga’-gling. Thinking I wanted to go to our house, all the dogs that had been tame before barked at me, and, afraid, I was unable to go. I heard the sounds of the chant leader, Chos-rgyal-bsod-nams and the preceptors doing a *gtor-ma* ceremony in the monastery. Thereupon they threw out many *gtor-ril* and water, and many beings of the six realms gathered there for the water and pills, like flies on rotten meat and rotten lees, and they carried it off like invited guests. Even the excess dishwater was carried off by lesser guests. After that, meek guests didn’t get anything, and miserable because they were hungry and thirsty, they fell face down on the ground and wailed. Even though I was bigger and stronger than them and was hungry and thirsty, I was unable to go and get some out of shame and habits of modesty. Seeing this, I felt a powerful compassion but I had nothing to give them. I thought it was like the blind leading the blind and I wept much. Then I heard a disembodied voice of a woman:

First, these beings do not have the fruits of previously accumulated virtues.
Second, this is the way they experience their karmic suffering.
Third, these are beings of small vision.
When they come together, it causes suffering.
You cannot help them, do not concern yourself.

As soon as I heard that I felt a longing for my parents. There came to me the thought that I had to go to Zag-rum Monastery.

This sequence continues her regression from a noblewoman of high station and responsibility to a rejected mistress and lover to a creature just barely in control of the primary socializing graces (shame). The behavior of the *mi-ma-yin*, despite the exegesis of the mysterious voice, leaves little question regarding their status: they are unsocialized, or: ’y driven children, fighting over scraps and throwing temper tantrums when they do not receive any. The ‘*das-log* is
only slightly “older” than they, although still closely identified with them (the blind leading the blind), inasmuch as she will not indulge in satisfying her oral drives with what is tantamount to excreta. This contention is not only based upon the form of the foods (pill-like solids and soiled water), but by the explicit notion of such authorities as Dpal-sprul Rinpoche who proclaims it is even meritorious to dedicate excrement to pretas (1971: 407).

Finally, she meets her mother:

Again in the same instant, I arrived there. There was mother, circumambulating the mchod-khang of the monastery. I said to her, “Please give me some food and water!” Mother, saying nothing at all, and acting as if she hadn’t seen me, went on circumambulating. Again I thought, “In former times, I’d have ridden a horse, and before me there would have gone a train of servants bearing gifts. Mother would have said, “Welcome,” and I’d have been given reception-beer and been waited upon specially. But now Mother doesn’t even look at me. Did she receive a letter from Sde-pa-drung before I came?” I thought, “She doesn’t think of her own children, but others’ children instead,” and I became sad. Again, looking back at the temple, I went there and grasped her robe. I thought, “Previously I agreed with the advice that you, my parents, gave me about the world. I kept in my mind as much advice as you gave me. I thought I was Sde-pa-drung’s young woman and his support. Even though he beat me much to discipline me, I thought one with a woman’s form must undergo these difficulties, and so I did, without bothering you about them. Now, because I have no children, I’ve been expelled from his company. Since he did not think of the future, he did many spineless things to me, and I have nothing else to do but the dharma. Now since I have not made difficulties for you by arguing and disputing with you, give me something to eat. I will go to do dharma.”

This entire sequence is highly marked by precisely the sort of behavior we would find in a child in the throes of separation: mood swings, the conflict of omnipotence in her demands to be fed and the denial of the wish-fulfilling mother, pushing away and clinging to object figures, leave-taking difficulties, a wish to manage the self and partake in the company of others at the same time and indecision. At any rate, her “fault” is now plain. Karma-dbang-'dzin believes she is being punished for not having achieved social maturation ( ... I have no children ...) and she is unable to cope with her ambiguous social position. Unable to become fully committed to one path of maturation—full-fledged religious commitment, or another—the full resolution of a respectable social role, the ’das-log is subject to stresses which occasion a regressive, dissociated state.

Karma-dbang-'dzin seems to effect here the typical child’s ploy of the hurt innocent, stating that she never caused her parents any problems and that they
reciprocate by paying attention not to her, but to others’ children, and she departs for hell and limbo under a cloud of utter disillusionment. Equally typical in the ‘das-log biographies is the scene in which the ‘das-log departs because of anger. Long-wa A-drung, for instance, says (XVI, A: 161 ff.):

When people I knew came to eat, they didn’t give me any food, but brought this dog-food-like stuff to the dog’s corpse. It has vexed me and I can’t stand my relatives. I’m going to seek a distant land and a good lord.

But in both instances the tone is that of the child suffering anxieties of separation and ego splitting, demanding and not getting oral attention, in a world where it must take unwilling cognizance of others, who intrude upon its sources of satisfaction.33

The ‘das-log biographies, then, preach much the same message as do the texts and the clergy about death. These forewarn us in a rather abstract way to renounce our claims of corporeal, material and sentimental attachment in order to gain liberation, in a last chance to direct our attention to a higher order of purpose. The biographies concretize these last scenes of a person’s life and ground them in a much more specific ethnosophiology. Here the soul is depicted as regressing toward an earlier stage of identity formation, having been battered by one brutal disillusionment heaped upon another, as it attempts to individuate, beginning with the dissolution of the corporeal and ending with the most valued ties of love.

However; the soul, now stripped of its naivete has only begun its transformative journey. I have mentioned that the ‘das-log belongs to the traditions of Avalokiteśvara worship, and I would like to explore briefly what relationships and corresponding affective states seem necessary to complete death’s tale. The whole point of Avalokiteśvara worship, as far as laymen are concerned, is to acquire salvatory merit to guarantee rebirth in paradise or as a human. Often the two seem identical to Tibetans, who are neither overly expectant about their truly paradisaical prospects nor about this world’s perfection. However, since the other possibilities do not offer much comfort either, rebirth as a human, with the goods of human existence, seems not a bad choice. Cultic merit is made by well-intentioned repetitions of the Mani formula and occasional participation in the central cult rituals, principally smyung-gnas (abstinence), during which only certain foods (white foods and sweet foods) are taken at prescribed times and sex is abstained from. The underlying dogma of compassion requires that one must, in order to obtain salvation, become both parent and child to all living things. The general notion is outlined in one text, which reads: of all the beings in the world “there is not a single one that has not been one’s parents. Because they interchange rebirths, one may not recognize them now as one’s parents, but every being has been the parent of every other . . .” One must recognize this fact and “recollect their kindness to one . . . Even hawks and wolves love their off-
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spring, so how can human parents not?” (Rme-ri dge-slong 1974: 9 ff.). In doing so, parents extenuate their own moral circumstances and collect sin for their children’s sake. Hence they are reborn in all sorts of nasty circumstances and undergo suffering. Thus, all beings to whom we are simultaneously parent and child deserve our compassion and our succour. As we, through the cult practices, become identical with the deity or cult guru, our love for all creatures becomes as a mother’s for her child. Avalokiteśvara, in his pacific form, presents as a highly maternal figure, soft, white, curvilinear, having prominent breasts, holding a lotus (a specifically feminine sign), and so forth. (Of course, Avalokita simply becomes a female in China and Japan). As R.A. Paul, in his superb psychoanalytic venture into Tibetan symbolism has recently shown, Avalokiteśvara “as benign savior thus combines the best elements of a compassionate and nourishing but desexualized mother ... and is a model of the maternal imago (1982: chap. iv; see also, 1980), who is highly involved in the separation anxieties, which, we shall see, are central to our understanding of the 'das-log's experience.

But with all this mother-love about, we must recall that the 'das-log has already rejected or has been rejected by his mother or closest kinsmen, and has returned to an unfed, uncomforted transitional child-like state. As we would expect, the maternal imago is split, the bad, the inattentive mother left behind, and a hallucinatory wish-fulfilling mother gained. The 'das-log acquires, usually for the length of his other-worldly journey, and advisor-comforter-companion, i.e., a mother substitute. Most often they are gorgeous, dazzling white-clad figures who nourish the 'das-log with nectar, and further allay the stresses that caused their initial problems to begin with by telling what they want to hear about their potential human careers. Karmadbang-'dzin’s companion tells her (I, A: 38), “You don’t recognize me, but my secret name is Ye-shes-rdo-rje-ma. We two are friends; we’re linked together like a body and its shadow ... “This reference may be taken to allude to the blissful state of normal symbiosis, and it also recalls Rje-btsun Rinpoche’s remark (p. 31) that her early relationships with her mother were like being in the womb. In the company of the dākinī, the 'das-log travels through limbo and hell, where the former carefully and patiently explains the circumstances of the scenes they encounter. These have to do in the main with the inexorable workings of karma, and for the 'das-log the limbo period is one of relatively calm cognitive achievement, with fears of terrible happenings and encounters allayed by the companion, just as one might expect from a nurturant maternal figure. The dākinī-mother helps the 'das-log achieve a mature understanding, instead of a helter-skelter mastery, of the world by providing the object constancy that was missing in relationships with natural figures. The terrible visions and monsters which the 'das-log meets are explained as his own projections. The old ego has been stripped away and is in the process of gradual replacement by a new identity which replaces mere attempts at frustrated mastery and the projection of its evil parts as concrete objects with enlightened understanding.

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At this point we might also note that the shamanic vehicle which the 'das-log adopts concurs with what has been written of shamans in general. Paul, in his model of shamans versus other Sherpa specialists, notes that they are “appropriately associated with the height of conflict which occurs at the midpoint of life” (1982: 93) in transiting from junior to senior status, and that the Sherpa shamans whom he studied had experienced during this period a variety of marital problems (1970: 589).

The scene in hell is quite different, dominated by the Dharmarāja, This awesome figure contrasts rather readily with both with kindly dukini and with Avalokiteśvara whose avatar he is: blue-black in color, fierce, virile holding a sword, surrounded by creatures out of a nightmare. As an implacable dispenser of justice, he initially inspires not kindly nurturance, but abject terror. Dharmarāja is the punishing suprago, an Oedipal figure, *par excellence*. His virility is expressed in his usual form—a horned bull. His mount, again a bull, rapes a supine figure of ambiguous sex, and he himself is often depicted with a prominent phallus. In the judgement scenes Dharmarāja continually reminds those that come before him not to be afraid of him, that if one has done virtues to balance sin, every action will be considered in the defendant’s favor. In the 'das-log’s case, horrid fascination shortly gives way to understanding. Patripotestas, it turns out, is disguised parental love, motivated by wider concerns. Kun-dga’-rang-grol (IX, B: f. 15 ff.) asks a junior *yama*

> Have you not even an instant’s pity? Don’t you act as witnesses for the Buddha?
> Don’t you think of the ones that behave religiously? Where are the famous lamas?
> Don’t they have pity for the beings in Bardo that must expiate their sins ...

It replies,

> Listen, young monk! If black and white were not divided, the human realm would be filled with *bdud* and *srin-po*. If there were no heavens and hells, all creatures would fall to bad rebirths.

It is not that Dharmarāja or his workers lack pity. It is that they have everyone’s concern at heart. The Dharmarāja himself says, “If you see me outwardly, I am Dharmarāja; if you see me inwardly, I am Avalokiteśvara.”

This inner-outer distinction is important. Just as the two monks from Khotan came to know that Srong-btsan-sgam-po, the wrathful king, was also Avalokiteśvara, and that what appeared to them as butchery was compassion (Dpal-sprul 1971: 303–4), so fear, inspired by a remote but just father-figure continues the process that leads to insight. To the 'das-log Dharmarāja delivers a whole list of dyads, naming even the worthiest of the worldly worthy, who, in
contradistinction to himself or to the unconditioned sphere in general, should inspire fear and revulsion and therefore not be clung to:

Lamas = Bandits
Meditation masters = Insufferably ordinary men
Logicians = Parrots
Monks = Laymen
Mantrists = Venemous snakes
Lords = Black snakes
Youths = Wolves
Nuns = Whores, bitches
Women = Witches
The rich = Pretas
Saints = Braggarts
Teachers = Barking dogs

Finally, shorn of delusion, the 'das-log receives a final insight on insight from Dharmarāja before he is dismissed homewards with a message to the world. What seems important here is that whereas the 'das-log entered his regressive hallucinatory state lacking the ability to integrate his split introjects, identifications and contradictory images of the self, he now is about to emerge from this experience having synthesized the dualities of social and psychological life through the rejection of the normative social view, and by moving toward a more ascetic indifference in which dualism disappears. In short, the 'das-log has been reparented by no less than Dharmarāja and ēkaṅiṅī. He reanimates his corpse, studies with lamas, and goes on to lead a fully religious life, dedicated to the reparenting of others. Back in the world it is now men who are loathe to accept the 'das-log, who, upon reanimation, is initially feared as a murderous zombie or ghost. However, ambivalence now properly belongs to other men and not the 'das-log. As the Dharmarāja predicts in Karma-dbang-'dzin's case (I, A: 354):

Men of devilish extraction that revile the Buddha's teachings
And several witches of the butcher caste who bear you evil
Will try to kill you and you will be falsely accused.
Then you will rebut them with protestations of truth;
Impediments will be cleared away by the residents of the Buddha-sphere.

These are not isolated themes in the literature of the Avalokiteśvara cult; the maternal theme is prominent in the entire genre. It is in search of the bad mothers, who are suspect in their husbands' deaths, and who are rejected by their sons, that both Maudgalyāyana and Guru-Chos-bdang sojourn to hell. In both cases, mother's evil has deprived them of decent parental relations. Similar
When I, Byang-chub-sengge, was ten years old, a neighbor was playing with a kid, and the kid broke my leg. As a result, my leg became lame. Then I thought, “If I, learning mantric teachings, do service and pray to the tutelary Dpal-gyi-snying-po, will it be harmonious?” As a result of that I got a rough dream. Then one night in a dream, a red-bodied woman said, “Son! This is not your tutelary. I am!” Then one night I had a vision again: I had gone to Tshogs-gsum Monastery and one night just at dawn, a red-colored woman with a pig’s face said to me, “Get up! I will give you some nectar.” I looked and she gave me some blood and brains inside a skull. She said, “Son this is your ordinary blessing.” Then lifting the blood and brains on a knife, she poured them in my hand. “Son! Rub this on your leg! By tonight it will have helped your leg.” She said this was a pure vision, and disappeared like a rainbow in the sky. I thought, “What sort of vision is this?” and the vision vanished.

When I was in retreat at Ra-lang Mkhar-sgong Monastery, one night I dreamt that the people of the country ate unclean things. When I thought I did not want to eat unclean things, I dreamt a white boy told me not to eat them. Then I followed the white boy and he sat down in the center of a thousand-leafed lotus. He was surrounded by a thousand others like himself. All of them said the six syllables. All of them told me to say the six syllables. Again, the white boy had a conch vase in his hand. Inside it was something like milk, which he gave to me, saying it was nectar. Giving me a crystal rosary he said, “Son! Count this! Say the six syllables. I am Avalokiteśvara,” and he disappeared like a rainbow in the sky.”

It is this vision that Byang-chub-sengge doubts and which causes his “illness.” We are entitled, if not obligated, to read these two obviously parallel scenes together. In the first, we encounter a form of Rdo-rje-phag-mo, who gives him blood and brains from a skull to cure his lameness. In the second, Avalokiteśvara gives him milk from a conch vase, and Byang-chub-sengge becomes his disciple. This scene appears to be a psychodrama of some complexity. The red (sexually potent) woman offers him the contents of a skull (a breast symbol) containing comingled red and white substances. She does so that he may cure his lame (flaccid) leg (penis). She is, in short, offering him instant sexual-cum-yogic success. Byang-chub-sengge appears not to follow her advice, and seems to associate her offer with the eating of filth in his next vision, against which Avalokiteśvara warns him. If we recollect the similar scene from Karma-dbang-'dzin’s encounter with the mi-ma-yin, which we have quoted above, it will be recalled that she also rejects this infantile food (feces). What Avalokiteśvara appears to be doing is telling Byang-chub-sengge to grow up, but not through
the normal means. Instead the bodhisattva, who appears in this scene as a prepubescent (sexually inactive) boy, offers the 'das-log a vase (breast) containing the sweet milk of cult success. Byang-chub-sengge, who opts for this solution in the end, clearly chooses the path of symbiotic nurturance over that of sexual maturity. It should also be recalled here that all the 'das-log are either monks, unmarried men, or women, who, if they are married, reject their families and follow a religious life in the final outcome. We also have in evidence the remarkable yogi’s boast of Ketusengha, author of the Thugs rje chen po'i rnam thar, which focuses on the basic practices of Avalokiteśvara worship (p. 532 ff.):

I, the animal Ketusengha,
Was sent away, tossed out by my parents,
Because of malicious gossip.
Not being kept by my patrilineage, I wandered in the world.
I circled the lands of the six unhappy kinds of beings,
I experienced the suffering of impoverished pretas,
Suffering wherever I went.
Wherever I went, suffering naturally appeared.
I never saw a single day of happiness.
Though I tried, I never was satisfied and I suffered.
Sometimes I went, being nice to others;
I experienced the suffering of having no power to move.
Sometimes I befriended witches and ghosts;
I experienced the suffering of being imprisoned like a piece of meat.
Sometimes I spun the wheel of retribution (had children);
I experienced the suffering of being unable to sustain them.
When unable to bear the punishment, being driven to despair.
I found a permanent lord:
The best of things found, Pha-rgan Zla-brtsod (his guru).
I gave him in service my body, speech and mind.
I thought without regret on sacrificing the very life which one usually holds dear.
My mind was perfectly satisfied.

I am the Yogi Ketusengha.
My matchless, perfect lord’s daughter
Is Bde-gsal'-od-mtsho.
We are long-time lovers, our minds are mixed.
Now I have expelled all evil, there is none left.
Because of the many memories of freely giving alms
I have the foggy idea of hearing and thinking on the dharma.
The results of tantric practice are becoming manifest.
My mind and body have faith in my lama.
I am Ketusengha of dirty faith;
Ketusengha, a householder.
And you are worldly householders.
We two are dissimilar, different.
You worldly householders appear thus:
For a month, a year, however long,
You think whatever you see, whatever you like, is happiness.
That happiness exists I have not seen.
Like the way of the Nāgarāja.
I have experienced the suffering of things becoming ever worse.
When happiness changes, it produces the fury of the planets.
You are always seeking for each other’s faults.
First, when there is no mental fog,
You suffer more than an exhausted deer on a dry hill.
Listen to me! If you do not hold the holy doctrine in your mind, you
will be sad!

You suffer half your life away worrying about what you do not have.
As soon as you reap the results of having children,
You suffer more than a camel whose baby has died.
If you do not keep the holy doctrine in your mind, you will be depressed.

You suffer half your life away thinking of taking a chance.
As soon as the illusion of having family responsibilities shows itself
To be the equal of a nest of pretas,
You suffer more jealousy than a mother for her son.
If you do not keep the doctrine in your mind, you will be plagued by
doubts.

You suffer half your life away looking for food and drink.
As soon as a son is born in the house, you send your daughter away.
You suffer more than the gandharvas.
If you do not keep the doctrine in your mind, you will be oppressed by
thoughts of poverty.

You suffer half your life away without food or wealth.
In the end when you are old and bent,
You suffer worse than being stricken with the king’s judgement.
If you do not keep the doctrine in your mind, you will be plagued by
doubts.

You suffer half your life away being afraid of death.
Listen to me all you fortunate ones!
If you want to know about worldly suffering,
He who wanders powerlessly through rebirths
Is like one that wanders wittingly through poison.
All you courageous clergy
That enter the Buddhist doctrine,
Who wander the circle of permanent suffering,
Are like beggars slurping gruel.
In your younger years you study widely.
But just as you begin to see the heart of the Buddha
In your later life you wander the world;
It is like a ripe fruit falling.
There are those that commit the boundless sins,
Such as ghost-inspired suicide;
Clergy should do the opposite—
One creates one’s own evil.

Again, a household is like a poisonous ocean,
An ocean of joyless suffering,
Through illusion, an ocean of vice.
Again, hear me, o fortunate ones!
Finding a house for such as a pig and snake (ignorance and anger)
Worldly men suffer half their life away becoming easily angered.
Finding a house for such as wives and mistresses,
They suffer half their life away finding no friend.
Finding a house, such as one of mortared stone,
They suffer half their life away finding no one to stay there.
Finding a house, such as one swept empty by a broom,
They suffer half their life away, having lost their food and wealth.
Finding a house, such as one for brown and yellow bears,
They suffer half their life away challenging others before they challenge them.
Finding a house, such as one where gandharvas and btsan gather,
They suffer half their life away doing nothing or making nothing.
Finding a house, such as one with a baby,
Is like living in the grasp of an enemy,
Like being surrounded by death-demons and ghosts
That bring suffering and despair.

If you desire firm plans, enter the gate of the doctrine!
To achieve the great goal, carry it through to the end!
You can do it by yourselves!
Listen to me, o fortunate ones!
My, this yogin’s house, looks like this:
Because I am a lama’s daughter,
I will not do impure deeds.
Because I am natural wisdom,
I have the beautiful ornaments thereof.
Because my body is not flesh and bone,
My vajra-body neither is born nor dies. Because I am of Samantabhadra's lineage, whatever I do, I am able to control my mind and clear my thoughts. Because my vows have no lies, there is nothing secret about them and my way of life. As soon as I see either rich or poor, I have no avarice for what is given in worship... When I rely on famous lamas, my ignorance is completely cleared, my wits sharpened. When others ask me questions, I am expert in explaining such is or is not the case. When the golden powers of Mahāyāna are collected, I can concentrate on practices that accomplish good for this life or the next.

You, aside from being like me, should have no time for other practices. Because of love for all beings, I have no natural progeny that no one can tell me not to have. I, not omitting sterile women, am happier... I have bought the illusionary house of a yogin. You others have bought houses of cattle and horses. Your houses are an illusion: one day they will fall down, of this there is no doubt. In this very lake of rays happiness and clarity will never be separated. I, a yogin, perform the emptiness of mind. You others perform the emptiness of retribution. I know whatever my mind is doing, and it is good. All the ornaments of wisdom are attractive.

Finally, I repay the graciousness of Three Bodies. I, a yogin, rear my disciples that way. Your worldly rearing looks like this: when you have nothing, it is harder to get water than meat and beer. When you have got things, they are the cause of suffering and you fear death. Finally, like an evil carnivore or raven. You do not take care of the parents to whom you owe gratitude. And you do whatever sort of beating and stealing that you know. You kill your parents with weapons, starvation and poison. I do not want this sort of child rearing, not reciprocating the gratitude I owe the dharma. Your own body, speech and mind act as your enemy, and your own sons are born as your enemies. I do not want that sort of child rearing.
As for sons, they are natural retribution.
Only a few sons repay their parents' kindness.
Do not do things on your children's account, do them on your own.
The best of sons is the holy dharma.
Hence, I make firm plans to do the holy dharma.

Here again, we find in the opening verse the same structural theme of expulsion and disillusionment evident in the 'das-log biographies. This time, however, maturity is attained and ambivalence resolved through a spiritual marriage, in which Ketusengha depicts his personal transformation from "animal" and "dirtiness" to other-worldly householder. His bitter attack on worldly relations between parents and children leaves few doubts as to the sources of his anxieties. Though married to his guru's daughter, he abjures even the thought of progeny by her, even though he has already had children in his previous worldly life. Through the works of the dharma, however, he has transformed himself: he is both male and female ("a lama's daughter") whose children are disciples, and like Avalokiteśvara, both a father, a mother and a child to the dharma.

Notes

* I would like to gratefully acknowledge the kind assistance given me in preparing this paper by the staff of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, in particular Mr. Tashi Tsering. I would also like to thank Mr. Ngawang Gelek and the Venerable Sde-gzhung and Khrin-'du Rinpoches for their help. My research on the topic of 'das-logs has been generously supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Institute of Indian Studies. Finally, I would like to thank most deeply Geshe Nawang Norang of the University of Washington for his many hours of help.

I have based this study on an examination of the following sources. Quotations and citations in the text are based on the arrangement below.

I. Karma-dbang-'dzin
   C. -kyi rnam thar in Two 'das-log Stories from the Library of Lhakhang Lama, Delhi, 1978.
   D. Bka' yi phrin lan pa mkha' 'gro ma karma dbang 'dzin bar do'i dmyal kham su byon nas 'khor 'das kun gyi chos rgyal rin po ches las las dkar nag dbye ba'i 'bras bu rnam thar in University of Washington xylograph, chap. ca (see Note 6).

The entire action of the rnam-thar takes place within an area of Lho-brag several hundred square miles in circumference. Her natal village is Kun-dga'-gling in the upper valley of Dge-bcu. A Rnying-ma-pa nunnery was situated here. She is sent as a bride to Bkra-shis-'og-(')gro, a dpon-khag family in the Khra (Phra) valley, about thirty miles northeast of her natal place. Internal references place the biography in the mid-eighteenth century.
II. Guru Chos-dbang
A. O rgyan gyi rgyal po padma 'byung gnas mchog gi bu chen gter ston gu ru chos dbang kyi yum dmyal khams nas drangs rab kyi rnam thar in University of Washington xylograph, chap. tha.
B. Sras gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug gi rnam par thar pa in Rare Tibetan Texts from Lahul. Dolanji: Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, 1974.

III. Gling-bza’ Chos-skyid
A. ’Das log gling bza’chos skyid kyi rnam thar in Two Visionary Accounts .
C. Dmyal ba mi yul kyi sa mishams shi gson gnyis gyis bang chen bka’i ‘phrin pa gling sa chos skyid bar do’i gnas su byon nas ’khor ’das kyi rgyal po chen pos dkar nag dbye ba’i ’bras bu’i rnam thar in University of Washington xylograph, chap. ja.

Chos-skyid hails from somewhere north of Sde-dge, perhaps Gling-tshang. Khrin-du Rinpoche informs me that the ruins of a nunnery built by her were to be seen in A’kho in upper Sga, near the village of Ye-rgyas. See Stein (1959: 401, note 13) on her dates (sixteenth century).

IV. Chos-dbang-rgyal-mo
Dmyal ba mi yul gnyis kyi sa mtshams shi bson gyi bang chen bka’i ‘phrin pa chos dbang rgyal mos dmyal khams gnas su byon nas ’khor ’das kun gyi chos rgyal rin po ches dge sdig dbye ’byed mdzad pa’i ’bras bu’i rnam thar. in University of Washington xylograph, chapter cha.

She comes from the still extant village of G.ya’-sgo in the Srad region of Gtsang. The text refers to a Dge’khor bla-brang, of which informants from the area had no knowledge. Internal events place the biography in the seventeenth century.

V. Bstan’dzin-chos-sgron
Ms. examined in India by this author.

She comes from Mus. Much of the visionary action takes place at Mt. Kailash. She is supposed to have been reborn as another ’das-log called Jinalaka (Tibetan orthography unknown).

VI. ’Dre Rgyal-ba’i-blo-gros
’Dre rgyal ba’i blo gros zhes bya’i grub thob geig gi ma bar do nas drangs tshul, in University of Washington xylograph. chap. da.

VII. Snang-sa ’od-bum
Dmyal yul mi yul sa mtshams shi gson gnyis kyibka’i ‘phrin pa snang sa ngan song gnas su byon skabs ’khor ’das chos rgyal chen pos dkar nag dbye ’byed mdzad pa’i ’bras bu’i rnam thar, in University of Washington xylograph, chap. nga.

VIII. Padma-chos-skyid Ms. examined in India by this author.

IX. Bya-bral Kun-dga’-rang-grol
A. Bya bral kun dga’ rang grol bya ba de mkha’ ’gro gsang ba ye shes kyi sangs rgyas kyi zhung khams drug dang/dmyal khams bco bryad du lam sna mdzad rab kyi lo rgyus, in University of Washington xylograph, chap. ka.

B. Dmyal ba mi yul gyi sa mtshams shi gson gnyis kyi bang chen bka’i ‘phrin pa bya bral kun dga’ rang grol gyi dmyal khams gnas su byon nas ’khor ’das kun gyi chos rgyal rin po ches dkar nag dbye ba’i ’bras bu’i rnam thar, in University of Washington xylograph, chap. kha.
ON THE HISTORY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF THE 'DAS-LOG

The 'das-log seems to be from central Gtsang, not far from Shigatse. The text is probably late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

X. Byang-chub-sengge
A. Spyans ras gzigs kyi sprul pa 'das log byang chub sengge'i dmyal snang shar ba las/dge sdig gi shan dbye dang gshin rje chos kyi rgyal po'i 'phrin yig rgyas pa (Dgon-po dkar-po Ms.). New Delhi, 1976.
B. Chos rgyal chen pos bka' yis 'phrin lon pa sprang byang chub seng ges bar do dmyal bar byon nas 'khor 'das yki dkar nag dbye ba'i 'bras bu'i rnam thar mdor bsdu, in University of Washington xylograph, chap. ga.
C. Dmyal nang rang gro byang chub sengges dmyal kham su skyabs gnas rams la method bstod gsol 'debs phul ba'i le'u nas mdor bsdu pa don zab rmad cha, in University of Washington xylograph, chap. nga.
Byang-chub-sengge comes from Ra-lang, near Mkhbar-agong Monastery, on the right bank of the Nyag-chu. His father was a Bonpo sngags-pa of some repute. He himself is considered to be the rebirth of Gtsang-pa Legs-grub, in turn the reincarnation of Vairocana's disciple, Gyu-sgra-snying-po. He lived in the mid-eighteenth century. In the tolerant atmosphere of eastern Tibet, he studied with both Rnying-ma and Bka'-brgyud teachers, especially those from Ka:-thog. He is best known for his method of offering votary flags (jo-dar). There is a reference to him and this method in The Biography, with a selection of Songs of Nyag-bla Padma-bdud-dul, Dehra Dun, 1975, page 91. A manuscript copy of his method is in the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (No. 10345). I am much indebted to Mr. Tashi Tsering for these references.

XI. Bla-ma Byams-pa-bde-legs
Bla ma byams pa bde legs kyis bar do dang bskal ba'i gzigs snang dang chos kyi rgyal po phrin bsur rams, in Three 'das-log Stories . . .
Byams-pa-bde-legs gives his birthplace as Sna-dkar in Smad-mkhas-smad, west of Dpal-gyi Ri in the northern part of southern Stod. He records that he studied Mahāmudrā at Lo-ro Monastery with an A-khu Rinpoche Rso-nyoms-rdo-rje, who in turn was a student of one Mkhbar-grub Pha-rgod-gzhon-nu, a direct disciple of Gtsang-smyon Heruka. His 'das-log experience took place in a Fire-Male-Monkey year, possibly 1596.

XII. Dbu-bza' Rin-chens-gron-gsal

XIII. Maudgalyayana
Mnyam med shakya'i rgyal no nyan thos dgra bcom pa mo'u 'gal gyi bus a ma dmyal ba nas bton rab kyi le'u, in University of Washington xylograph, chap. ta.

XIV. Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal
Rnal 'byor gyi grub thob ye shes msho rgyal gyi rnam thar nas sdig blon shan ti bya ba dmyal ba las bton tshul gyi lo rgyus, in University of Washington xylograph, chap. na.

XV. La-phyi sprul-sku
La-phyi sprul bsku'i shi log dmyal kham lo rgyus, in Three Bonpo Visionary Accounts . . . La-phyi is located to the northwest of Sde-dge. An informant tells me that the biography is nineteenth century.
XVI. Long-wa A-drung
A. Gshin rje chos kyi rgyal po gsung phrin, in Two Obscure Texts of the Avalokitsvara cult from Spiti, New Delhi, 1975.
B. Khama pa a khrung, in Three 'das-log Stories...
A-drung comes from Snyag-mda’ Phug in Zil-yul in Smar-khams. Local informants could not identify the place and suggested it no longer existed. The colophon (A: 261–2) tells us that the text was written at the behest of Gung-thang chos-rgyal go-ng-ma chen-po Khri Bbud-dul-mgon-po-lde also known as Khri Kun-bzang-nyi-zla-grags-pa, whose reign dates are in the first half of the sixteenth century, in Water-Snake Year (1533). The name of the scribe who wrote the text and the scribe who took down A-drung’s story are both named Rnam-rgyal. If they are the same person, A-drung’s “illness” takes place at the age of twenty-five in a Water-Dragon Year. This might put his birth as late as 1508. I am much indebted to Mr. David Jackson for checking these dates in his copy of Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang-nor-bu’s Bod rje lha btsan po’i gdung rabs mnga’ ri smad mang yul gung thang du ji itar byung ba’i tshul deb gter dwangs shel ‘phrul gyi me long (Burmiok A thing Ms.), ff. 17b–18b.

XVII. Sangs-rgyas-chos-’dzom
Rje btsun spyan ras gzigs kyi sprul pa ’das log sangs rgyas chos ’dzom gyis zhag bdun mar dmyal kham dang yar zhing kham bcas mjal ba’i lo rgyus rnam thar khyad par can. New Delhi, n.d.
Her birth place is Lho-ljongs Bkra-shis-sgang (Bhutan). She is the rebirth of Karma-dbang-’dzin and her birth date is given as a Dog Year, probably the late seventeenth or early nineteenth century.

2 For comparative material, see, e.g., Boswell, 1972; Brandon, 1967; Eliade, 1977; Hyde, n.d.; Owen, 1970; Patch, 1950. For sources relating specifically to the Tibetan, see Lauf, 1977; Poucha, 1952; Scherman, 1892.
3 For an excellent statement of the relationship of charisma to sacred biography, see Keyes, 1982. On sacred biographies in general, see Reynolds and Capp, 1976. See Paul, 1977, for an interesting case in which an attempt was made to gain charismatically derived benefits by falsely claiming ‘das-log status.
4 See Ardussi and Epstein, 1978.
5 See Bacot, 1921; Duncan, 1955; Paul, 1982 for translations and analysis.
6 Bya bral pa kun dga’ rang grol dang sprang byang chub seng ges geos chos kyi rgyal pos bka’i prhin lon pa skya bo pho mo’i rnam thar. Referred to in Note 1 as University of Washington xylograph. It was printed on the Gser-leog estate of the Ka-shod-pa family, probably in the early twentieth century.
8 Za ma tog bskod pa and btsan bcos, Delhi, 1978.
9 See Vostrikov, 1970. The Za ma tog bskod pa was compiled in 1514 and the Ma yi bka’ ‘bum in the fifteenth century.
11 See Snellgrove and Richardson, 1968, chap. 3. For a short biography of Guru Chos-dbang, see Dargyay, 1977. The injunction to teach in the marketplace is found in his Mani bka’ ‘bum, version A, p. 224. See also p. 423 ff. where he composes a na-rag gdong-sprugs text out of pity for those in hell. Cf. also Padma-mam-rgyal, Khrom la mani bskul ba’i thabs sbyor dangos rjes gsun tshang ba thugs rje’i lcags kyu.
12 See Note 1. It should also be noted that Maudgalyayāna went to hell many times for
various purposes. In his commentary on Karma-chags-med’s *Rnam dag bde chen zhing gi smon lam*, Rme-ri dge-slong notes that Maudgalyāyāna took two lazy nephews of Gna’ Kun-dga’-bo to hell in order to have them mend their ways. It so frightened them that they eventually became arhants (p. 326). Maudgalyāyāna died as a direct result of a trip from hell. On a trip there he meets the dead Kun-tu-rgyu teacher ‘Od-srung-rdzogs-byed who asks him to tell his disciples to follow the Buddha, lest they meet the same fate. He does so, and the Kun-tu-rgyu accuse him of blasphemy, where-upon they beat him and he dies of his wounds (Dpal-sprul 1971: 183–4). Byang-chub-Sengge notes that in hell flowers grow from Maudgalyāyāna’s footprints (X, A: 145).

For Chinese sources, see Frick, 1950; Seaman, 1976; Waley, 1960. While I have not found Southeast Asian sources, see Keyes, 1982, for an interesting parallel found in Thai ordination rituals.


On the relationship of text and context, see Keyes and Daniel (ed.), 1982.

Such statements are, of course, commonplace in all Buddhist introductory texts.

See Lichter and Epstein, 1982, for a full discussion of love and friendship as a Tibetan “good” and their ironical implications as models of suffering. See also Ortner, n.d.

A lce rig stong rgyal mo’i rnam thar in Two Texts of the a-lce lha-mo’i rnam thar Genre from Gnas Padma-bkod, Delhi, 1977.

Plum and Posner note that coma with psychiatric disorders is rare (1966), but Wittkowski and Prince (1974: 542) write that schizophrenic catatonic states are more common in Asian countries: “The frequency of catatonic stupors in these countries may be due to the teaching both by Hinduism and Buddhism of social and emotional withdrawal as an acceptable mode of reacting to difficulties; the frequency of cataonic rigidity and negativism in Indian schizophrenics may be due to a traditional passive-aggressive response to a threatening world.” It is to be noted here that various cultures mold in various ways the content of hallucinations and delusions.

See Lati Rinpoche and Hopkins (1979) for an extended discussion of the dying process.


The question of whether ’das-logs really die, of course, is a cogent one. Answers to this question vary, naturally, and cover a wide range of opinion. Some informants regard the ’das-log as truly dead, and attribute their return to “a miracle of Avalokiteśvara.” Others point out that they are really dākini or avatars of Avalokita in any regard so that perhaps natural law does not apply to them. Others are of the opinion that the *rnam-shes* is highly partible and one can be all but corporeally dead. They point out that, barring the extraordinary powers of sainthood, or super-natural status, once Bardo has been entered a new rebirth is demanded; that the body of the ’das-log does not compose; and that the byang-sems do not emerge. Therefore, some element of the life-process must be present. Most seem to regard the ’das-log experience as a form of “vision” (nyams-snang) and point of the Sman bla’i mdo (Rgyud, ta: 429 ff.) in which the Buddha says: “In future times and lives, beings will be completely afflicted by various diseases and chronic diseases will dry up and consume their bodies’ flesh. Their lips will become dry and they will just on the point of dying (’gum pa la ni mngon du phyogs). They will be surrounded by their loved ones, kin and family. They will see darkness in all directions. Yama’s people will take them and the *rnam-shes* sleeping in their bodies and take it before Dharmarāja. The person, and the god born together with him and whatever there is following him will write exactly all his virtues and sins and give it to Dharmarāja, who will question him and examine him and will accordingly divide his virtues and
sins. . . . For the sake of the patient take refuge in Bcom-Idan-'das De-bzhin-gshegs-pa Sman-gyi -bla Bai-ðür-rya'i-'od and do its connected rituals. . . . The rnam-shes will return and it will have been like a dream . . ."

23 See, e.g., Blang dor gees bs dus gsal b a'i sgron me, Dharamsala: Shes rig par khang, pp. 95-9.


25 In relation to the 'das-log as a creative figure, Wallace (1959: 58) notes that "a vast quantity of content has been introduced into the cultural repertoire of mankind by hallucinatory ideation. . . ." McKellar (1977: 94) remarks that hypnagogic states can produce "convincing supernatural etiologies even in unbelievers." See also the papers in Siegel and West, 1975 and Keup, 1970 on the induction of and cross-cultural comparison of hallucinatory states.

26 Remarks such as these are common in the 'das-log texts and seem to emphasize the ethical aspect of action versus worldly notions of ascribed status. Even though one's born station is high as a result of past virtue, virtuous action cannot be forewarned.

27 Bya-bral Kun-dga'-rang-grol's biography gives a detailed description of the various parts of Bardo (f. 2b ff.):

- a. G.ya' ma sn go sing nge ba
- b. Bshan thang dmar po
- c. Bye ma'i la
- d. Spang gshong
- e. 'Khrul snang bar do
- f. Dmar sgang gi grong mo che
- g. Brag ri thor leags zur pa 'dra
- h. Ma thar lus pa sgang
- i. Bca' 'phrang gong ma
- j. Mun pa'i gling
- k. Bskal pa'i me dpung

l. Ri dmar mch in ba 'dra
m. Brag ri sn gon po
n. Khrag mtsho khol ma
o. Ri dkar po
p. Shal ma ri
q. Ral gri lo ma nags tshal
r. Mar me byang thang
s. Grang dmyal gong ma
t. Rdo leb thang
u. Chus lung

28 'Das-logs may also tour the other realms of being, but these are perfunctory visits at best. For example in Byang-chub-sengge's biography (X, A), which is 273 pages long, only pp. 203-7 concern realms other than hell and the human realm. For a brief description of hell see Sgam-po-pa, 1959: 57 ff. For a comparative study of Buddhist hells, see Law, 1973 and Matsunaga and Matsunaga, 0972.

29 A cursory survey of the biographies produces the following list of causes for punishment: highway robbery, stealing from the clergy or holy places, causing others to commit sin, giving unclean things to religious persons, giving false weight and measure, selling and making beer, prostitution, saying the Three Gems are untrue, not respecting parents and teachers, abusing the clergy or their patrons, being an oracle or diviner, doing black magic and making hail, being jealous of others' good deeds, saying the Mani is untrue, doing astrology, poisoning, beating animals and overworking them, castrating animals, hunting, being a smith or fletcher, butchering or slaughtering animals, killing lice, plowing fields and killing bugs, being a bad doctor, having perverse views, fornicating, not repaying debts, robbing corpses, pretending to be a 'das-log, etc. Causes for a good rebirth in the cases tried before Dharmaraja are: being a repentful sinner, doing smyung-gnas and other ceremonies, making offerings, being kind to the weak, giving a place to stay to travellers and pilgrims, dressing statues, giving mang-ja, keeping one's vows, being kind to the sick, and so forth. The odds for receiving punishment are obviously overwhelming.

30 For similar scenes where saints, lamas, and mani-pas save their followers, see, e.g., I, A: 292, 325; X, A: 87-167 passim; XV: 548.

31 For an overview of "classical" shamanism, see Eliade, 1972. On possession and non-

32 See also Cameron, 1963: 362–3 on regression in dissociative reactions; see also Prince Savage, 1972 for an excellent review of the literature.

33 It might be asked why the ‘das-log’s regression is only partial. Regression to a more archaic state in which all objects become estranged or the distinction of self and object were entirely lost would result in either schizoid self-destruction or a mystical enstasis. Neither of these is apparent in the biographical material. While ‘das-logs exhibit some signs of the schizoid condition, their partial regression makes it possible for them to become reconstituted through the reactivation of primitive ego components.

34 Here the question is: who is it that really wants to leave, the separating ego or the maternal figure. The answer is, of course, to be sought in the ambivalence of the rap­prochement stage. We might also note that notions of split female imagos also occur in the bar-do writings: The Mani-bka’-’bum (p. 437) says that “in the bar-do of death, it is like a nephew going to a house of an unkind aunt (a-ne).”

35 For a full study of this figure, see Paul, 1982, chaps. 5 & 6. This view also concords with Paul’s statements (1971: 195 ff) that in Tibetan cultures, fathers are remote and powerful, but essentially benevolent, figures. The biographies are notable for their absence of references to fathers, except as they occur in the figure of the Dharmarāja and in vague reference to parents.

We also note the difference of the ‘das-log’s psychological experience and that of the saint, such as Maudgalyāyana and Guru Chos-’dbang, who visits hell. In the latters’ case, we are witnessing a patent Oedipal drama. The texts imply that their mothers are implicated in the death of their fathers, who leave the mothers to the sons to be looked after. However, the sons, both juveniles cannot adequately fill their fathers’ shoes, and so the mothers die. Oedipal guilt drives them to rescue the ‘bad mothers’ to complete their fathers’ wishes, and in both cases the phallic symbolism of beating down the doors of hell with staffs (in Maudgalyāyana’s case, borrowed from the Buddha, the ultimate father) is evident.

36 This model of inside/outside is, of course, based on the Za ma tog. See also, e.g., I, A: 194 ff.; 347 ff.; III, A: 280; IX, B: f. 34a ff.; X, A: 240 ff.

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ON THE HISTORY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF THE 'DAS-LOG


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A critic of the thesis that asceticism and celibacy are central to mysticism might well turn for support to the Buddhist and Hindu tantras, whose practices often are assumed to involve ‘sex in the service of enlightenment’. I will attempt to show that the issue is not nearly so simple, by demonstrating the ambiguity of sexual imagery in Buddhist tantric texts and the historical ambivalence of the tantric tradition itself regarding the place and meaning of sexuality. After presenting three highly encoded ‘performance-songs’ (caryāgīti) of the Indian Buddhist adept Kānha (11th century), I will discuss the nature of interpretation in the tantric tradition, then the various ways in which the sexual imagery in Kānha’s performance songs may be read. There appear to be at least four possible levels of interpretation: (1) literal, where sexuality is overt, (2) symbolic, where the surface sexuality is a metaphor for certain meditative achievements, (3) ‘higher’ literal, where the symbolized meditative achievements are actualized by ritual sexuality, and (4) yogic, where sexual rites are revealed to entail sublimation rather than indulgence, asceticism rather than eroticism. By way of conclusion, I will address some possible criticisms of my analysis, and suggest broader comparative issues arising from it.

I. Introduction

In most comparative works on mysticism, the figures chosen for discussion — whether Asian or Western, male or female — are predominantly celibate. St Augustine (at least, eventually), Bernard of Clairvaux, Meister Eckhart, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, St John of the Cross, Thomas Merton, Rabi’a, Buddhaghosa, Nāgārjuna, Śāṅkara, Milarepa, Tsong kha pa, Huineng, Dōgen: all of these exemplary figures were unmarried. This hardly is surprising when
we consider that the social milieu most conducive to what we call ‘mysticism’ traditionally has been the monastery or nunnery. If it is assumed that mysticism usually is the outcome of a delicate, difficult process of spiritual growth, it is easy to see how the monastery, deliberately distanced from the common social world, would be the institution most likely to produce mystics. Many traditions have further assumed that because of the social and psychological difficulty of spiritual life, worldly desires — especially sexual desire — are impediments, to be left at the monastery door. There have, of course, been married mystics, especially in traditions less affected by monasticism, such as Judaism and Islam, or where monasticism has been reinterpreted, such as some forms of Tibetan and Japanese Buddhism. Overall, however, such figures tend to be the exception rather than rule, and in their sexual comportment are chaste if not downright celibate. It is not unreasonable, then, to conclude that mysticism is closely related to the practice of celibacy and, more broadly, asceticism.2

A critic of the idea that celibacy and asceticism are central to mysticism might well turn for support to the Hindu and Buddhist tantric tradition, which appears not only to shun chastity, celibacy and asceticism, but actively to encourage sexuality on the path to spiritual liberation. Certainly, popular conceptions of Tantra tend to revolve around the place of sex in the tradition. A perusal of the titles listed in Books in Print under the subject-headings ‘Tantra’ and ‘Tantrism’ reveals the following: Tantra: the Indian Cult of Ecstasy, Secrets of Western Tantra: the Sexuality of the Middle Path, Jewel in the Lotus: the Sexual Path to Higher Consciousness and Tantra: the Art of Conscious Loving. The perception of Tantra as being ‘sexual yoga’, or ‘sex in the service of enlightenment’ is not without basis. Images of tantric deities, especially Buddhist paintings and statues from Nepal and Tibet, often have an explicitly sexual component to them, whether the deity is depicted in sexual union with a consort, or alone but filled with sexual desire. Tantric texts provide further evidence of the place of sexuality in the tradition. Whereas non-tantric Buddhist sūtras3 invariably begin with the phrase, ‘Thus have I heard — at one time the Lord dwelt in the [town, city or grove where the discourse occurred]’, many tantras begin, ‘Thus have I heard — at one time the Lord dwelt in the adamantine vulva that is the essence of the body, speech and mind of all the Tathāgatas’.4 In addition, many tantric texts instruct the practitioner to break traditional Buddhist vows, including that renouncing adultery.5 Further, some tantras give explicit instructions on sexual techniques to be practised either during empowerments (Sanskrit: abhiṣeka) or yogic practice (sādhana).6 Finally, a number of tantric ‘saints’, from such Indian ‘great adepts’ (mahāsiddha) as Kāṇha and Śavara, to Tibetan figures like the Sixth Dalai Lama and ’Brug pa kun legs, have sung openly of their sexual relationships.

This essay will examine critically the thesis that the practices of Tantra prove that chastity, celibacy and asceticism are not central to mystical traditions. I will take as my exemplar the 11th century Indian Buddhist adept Kāṇha, who is credited with composing numerous tantric texts, including at least thirteen of the
collected ‘performance-songs’ (caryāgīti) preserved in Old Bengali and also in Tibetan translation. Kāṇha is a particularly interesting figure to consider, in part because his songs have the ring of autobiography, in part because he has been much discussed in Western writings about tantra, and in part, too, because his biography is problematic and his works not discussed much by Indian or Tibetan commentators — making him a sort of tabula oscura (if not rasa) onto which any number of interpretations may be (and have been) projected without fear of definitive contradiction. The main focus of this essay will be three songs in which Kāṇha makes explicit reference to his sexual relationship with a low-caste woman. The essay’s first section will introduce Kāṇha and the songs. The second, and central, section will consider a number of different ways in which the songs might be interpreted, with particular attention to Kāṇha’s view of ‘sexuality’. The third and concluding section addresses some possible objections to my analysis, and suggests a number of broader historical, hermeneutical and definitional issues that arise from my analysis.

II. Kāṇha and his songs

Like so many pre-modern figures in Indian religion, Kāṇha is historically obscure, to the point where we cannot be certain whether he is one person or many. Tibetan tradition assumes that the figure known in India as Kāṇha, Kṛṣṇa or Cāryapā (as well as variations of each of these), is one person, whose translated name is Nag po spyod pa (from Kṛṣṇa cārya), and who is the author of over a hundred works in the tantra section of the canonical collection of translated Indian commentaries, the bs Tan ‘gyur. This same Nag po spyod pa is listed as one of the eighty-four ‘great adepts’ (mahāsiddha) of Buddhist tantra, most of whom seem to have lived shortly before or after the end of the first millennium of the Common Era, and many of whom figure prominently in the guru-lineages (guruparampara) of the Tibetan schools that were the heirs of late Indian Buddhism.8

Biographical details on Nag po spyod pa are given in Abhayadatta’s 12th century Sanskrit text, Lives of the Eighty-Four Great Adepts, and in a number of Tibetan histories, including those of Bu ston (14th century) and Tāranātha (17th century). Unfortunately, none of the three sources tells the same story about Nag po spyod pa. Abhayadatta’s Nag po spyod pa is a proud and impulsive adept who ignores the advice of his guru, Jalandhari, and, despite miraculous powers, dies by a curse from a woman he has wronged. Bu ston’s Nag po spyod pa is the disciple of Rāmaṇi, is himself an expert in the eight magical attainments, and is guru to disciples who will master Mahāmudrā, the ‘great seal’ that is the goal of tantric practice. Tāranātha’s Nag po spyod pa is actually two figures, an elder and a younger; the former, the disciple of Jalandhari, converts a king to Buddhism, while the latter, a disciple of Nag po spyod pa the elder, is a master of various tantras and author of many treatises.13

The widely varying accounts given by different authors simply make it impossible to know
whether they are referring to one Kāṇha or many — given the common occurrence of a name like Kṛṣṇa, we might well-suspect the latter. Even if they are discussing the same Kāṇha, we cannot be certain that that Kāṇha was the same person who wrote the songs included in the *Caryāgītikosa*, let alone when, precisely, he might have lived — though the 11th century seems the best guess.\(^{14}\)

Thus, for information about the Kāṇha of the *Caryāgītikosa*, we are limited to the songs themselves — as indicated above, this is not without its advantages, since the relative lack of biographical information about or commentaries on Kāṇha the songster will allow us to explore his meaning unburdened with an excess of traditional interpretive baggage. Twelve of the nearly fifty songs in the *Caryāgītikosa* are attributed to Kāṇha. Like other songs in the collection, they are composed in a language that is probably best identified as Old Bengali,\(^ {15}\) and in a style that derives its coherence not so much from syllable counts — which are quite irregular — as from the end-rhymes that link the couplets into which each verse is divided. Specifications in early manuscripts as to the *rāga* appropriate for each song, combined with our general knowledge of the authors’ milieu, makes it virtually certain that the *caryāgīti* originally were sung. As celebrations of and exhortations to enlightenment, they were, quite literally, ‘performance songs’ — performed for audiences and, presumably, inspiring them to performance of actions that might lead them to liberation.

Three of Kāṇha’s songs (*Caryāgītikosa* nos 10, 18, 19) have as a central topic his relation to a Ďombī, a common term for a basket-seller, whose occupation marks her as a member of one of the lowest castes. The three songs are as follows\(^ {16}\):

[10] Outside of town, O Ďombī, is your hut;  
Touching you and touching some more, the brahmin boys go.  
Hey Ďombī! I shall join with you,  
Naked Kāṇha, the shameless skull-bearer.  
The lotus is one, its petals sixty-four;  
Atop it, the Ďombī dances with poor [Kāṇha].  
Hey Ďombī! I ask you truly:  
In whose boat, O Ďombī, do you come and go?  
Strings you sell, O Ďombī, and also baskets;  
For you, I have given up the actor’s stage.  
You are a Ďombī, and I a skull-bearer;  
For you, I have donned a garland of bones.  
Subduing the pond, the Ďombī eats lotus roots;  
I kill you, Ďombī, I take your life!

[18] Easily, I stopped the triple world;  
Sleeping, I sported in great bliss.  
Hey, Ďombī, how goes your flirting?  
The noble is outside, the skull-bearer is within.
O Đombī, you have spoiled everything;  
To no avail, the moon has been polluted.  
This one and that may demean you;  
But the wise don’t relinquish your neck.  
Kāňha sings of the erotic Cāṇḍali;  
Than the Đombī, there is no better whore.

[19] World and nirvāṇa are tabor and drum,  
Mind and winds are flute and cymbal.  
‘Victory, victory!’ — sounds the kettledrum;  
Kāňha sets out to marry the Đombī.  
He marries the Đombī, the feast is consumed;  
The highest Dharma is the dowry.  
Day and night pass in erotic play;  
In a blaze of yoginīs, night becomes dawn.  
Those who enjoy the Đombī’s embrace  
Won’t leave her for an instant — they’re drunk on Simultaneity.

What are we to make of all this? In particular, given the focus of this essay, how are we to read Kāňha’s references to his sexual relationship to the Đombī? It is to the variant ways in which we might interpret the sexually references in Kāňha’s songs that we will turn next.

III. Interpretations

The question of interpretation is one that all religious traditions face. Religious ‘texts’ — whether spoken or written — most often originate at the ambiguous intersection of the secular and sacred worlds. Since they have as one of their purposes the linking of these worlds, religious texts — especially those of expressive power and aesthetic subtlety — generally have built into them double references, whether deliberate or unintended. Thus, even in their own time and milieu, religious texts may be understood in different ways by different audiences. The situation is compounded when the texts are interpreted by audiences in different times or cultures. It may be that it is precisely, and only, because they are ambiguous that religious texts can become ‘classics’, but the ambiguity that assures their greatness also makes their comprehension by both scholars and practitioners a vexing matter at best.

The general problematic affecting the interpretation of religious texts is encountered in a particularly acute form when we seek to interpret tantric texts. Tantra is, by and large, an esoteric tradition, requiring that its practitioners receive initiation (abhiśeka) from a qualified guru. Buddhist theoreticians in both India and Tibet have insisted that tantric texts are written in a kind of code, referred to as ‘international language’ [or, alternatively, ‘twilight language’.
(sandhyābhāṣa)], which only can be read properly by those who are initiates. The ambiguity of tantric texts thus is deliberate. Evocative but obscure, the texts may be taken by the uninitiated as general expressions of religious or social sentiment, but cannot be understood in their true purport. For initiates, the texts may have an aesthetic appeal, but this is subordinate to their primary function, which is to serve as a key to yogic practice.

Thus, tantric tradition has insisted that, yes, its texts are difficult to understand, and this is as it ought to be. As a result, a modern scholar trying to make sense of tantric texts must first be able to read the code in which they are written. This is problematic, of course, because it is very difficult to read the texts without being initiated, while for an initiate to reveal or analyse publicly the true meanings of the texts may be a violation of her vows of secrecy. Further, even if we accept that interpretation is possible without initiation, there remains the problem of which interpretive scheme to apply: the concept of ‘intentional language’ covers a multitude of hermeneutical systems, themselves based in differing traditions of tantric practice and exegesis. There is a further problem, however, for the very notion that tantric texts are written in code, while widely accepted, is itself to some degree an a posteriori theoretical assumption. In other words, tantric theories of interpretation are themselves interpretations, often unwarranted by the texts that are to be interpreted. Thus, a modern scholar also must be sensitive to the possibilities that (a) no interpretive scheme available truly captures the text’s meaning and, more radically, (b) that perhaps interpretation itself was not intended and is not needed.

When we turn back to Kāṇha, therefore, we must try to do so with an awareness that while a ‘figurative’ reading is possible and perhaps even preferable, a literal reading cannot be ruled out a priori. Indeed, as we examine some of the ways in which Kāṇha’s sexual references may be interpreted, we will see that the distinction between ‘literal’ and ‘figurative’ begins to lose some of its clarity. At the same time, and more centrally, our analysis also will reveal that our sense of what ‘sexuality’ itself is may be thrown into some doubt by Kāṇha’s songs, especially in relation to the ways of life pursued by ‘mystics’.

In his pioneering study of the Bengali ‘Sahajiyā’ tradition, S. B. Dasgupta observes that the ‘performance-song’ tradition is marked by three major religious characteristics: (1) the spirit of protest and criticism, (2) aversion to recon­dite scholarship and (3) scathing criticism of the formalities of life and religion. And, indeed, if we read Kāṇha’s songs literally, it is easy to see him as a radically iconoclastic figure, who, in Lee Siegel’s description, ‘renounced his family, smeared his body with ashes, [took up] with a low-class woman ... frequented cremation grounds, and indulged in violently orgiastic rites’, in order, as Stephan Beyer puts it, to ‘tear aside the veils of accumulated custom that hide us from our authentic and joyful mode of being in the world’. This Kāṇha — or ‘Bengal Blackie’, as Siegel dubs him — has only a tenuous relation to mainstream Vajrayāna Buddhism. He may use some terms, such as ‘voidness’ (śūnyatā), nirvāṇa or Simultaneity (sahaja), that have Buddhist doctrinal over-
tones, but is unschooled in philosophical dogmas. He is far more interested in criticizing social and religious convention while celebrating his own idiosyncratic life-style than in propounding a system of thought — or even, perhaps, a system of yoga. Therefore, Kāṇha’s references to his sexual relationship with a Dombī must be taken as accurate reports of the kind of life that he lived: spontaneous, unconventional, uninhibited. He may have been interested in spiritual liberation, but felt that, in the words of Blake, ‘[t]he road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom’. Thus, sex was not only a legitimate pursuit for a mystic, but might serve as a vehicle for his or her enlightenment.

The problem with interpreting Kāṇha solely on a literal level, however, is that a straightforward reading of the songs yields too many ideas and images that seem to point beyond themselves. Not only are there overt references to such Buddhist concepts as Dharma, sāṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the tantric coupling of mind and prāṇa, but any number of images in the songs, including the sixty-four petalled lotus, the boat, and the moon, had acquired, by Kāṇha’s time, well-established symbolic connotations. Read straightforwardly, these images do not cohere much with the narrative of the songs, so if they are not taken symbolically, we end up seeing Kāṇha as an 18th century surrealist — an anachronistic projection, certainly. If some of the songs’ images are symbolic, it does not require a great logical leap to conclude that everything in the songs is symbolic: they are allegories for some kind of inner experience. In this view, Kāṇha is not reporting on his life-style at all; rather, he is presenting a highly encoded account of inner yogic practices that are followed by initiates into the Vajrayāna, of whom he is one. This certainly is the way he is read by his commentator, Munidatta.

Reginald Ray, in criticizing Siegel’s analysis of ‘Bengal Blackie’, maintains that we must not read Kāṇha ‘in a purely naive or literal fashion, as if the Vajrayāna were saying that by indiscriminately indulging in sexual passion and breaking social or religious conventions, liberation might somehow be attained’. Rather, Ray insists, we must understand that sexual imagery in the tantras is a way of (a) expressing the bipolarity of the enlightenment experience, where gnosis and great bliss are conjoined and (b) pointing out that all aspects of the world, including the basest passions, are inherently pure, and not to be regarded as different from enlightenment. Thus, Kāṇha’s references to his sexual relationship with the Dombī cannot be taken literally. The Dombī, like the Cāndalī, the yoginī, the dākinī — or, for that matter, any female mentioned in Buddhist tantric literature — is simply a symbol for wisdom, which has been considered ‘female’ since well-before the tantric period; witness the personification as a goddess of the perfection of wisdom, Prajñāpāramitā. So, when Kāṇha sings of making love to the Dombī he is simply speaking in an evocative manner of his ‘embrace’ of wisdom, his understanding of the voidness that is the nature of all things, the ‘empty’ womb that is the source of all dharmas (dharmodaya). If the female symbolizes wisdom and its object, voidness, the male is a symbol for the compassionate methods that must be conjoined with wisdom on any Mahāyāna path. Kāṇha himself confirms this in the first verse of song
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no. 13, where he says: 'My body is compassion, voidness is my woman'.

In short, to speak of sexual intercourse may really be to speak of the joining of wisdom and method — or, in a tantric context, gnosis and bliss — in the yogi’s mind, without any necessary external referent.

A symbolic interpretation of Kāṇha’s songs certainly places him back in the mainstream of Buddhist thought, but if they are read as strictly symbolic, then an important historical fact is ignored: there definitely have been, at various times and places, tantric practices that did involve the performance of ritualized sexual intercourse. Even if the countless references to such practices in texts of the Highest Yoga Tantra-class are dismissed as symbolic — a reading that requires considerable hermeneutical ingenuity — and even if past or present claims by some Tibetan masters to have engaged in such practices are dismissed as anecdotal, it seems difficult to gainsay the evidence of such Tibetan tantric commentators as Tsong kha pa (1357–1419), who though himself a celibate monk, reports nevertheless that if one hopes to attain enlightenment in this lifetime, one must utilize an actual physical consort, an ‘Action Seal’ (karmamudrā), on the completion stage of the Highest Yoga Tantra.

If one merely uses a visualized consort, a ‘Knowledge Seal’ (jñānamudrā) — as a monk must — then enlightenment must await one’s death. It seems highly unlikely that Tsong kha pa would fabricate an account of the tantric tradition that diminishes his own and his fellow monks’ chances for speedy enlightenment, so it probably is safe to assume that his report of the existence of sexual practices is accurate. In this way of understanding sexual references, then, there is a literal component, so when Kāṇha refers to sexual intercourse with the Dombī he is referring to an actual physical event. The reference to sex may be literal, but its depiction or interpretation as ‘orgiastic’ is misleading, since it actually is part of an advanced yogic ritual that requires considerable discipline and concentration.

Still, it may be insisted, even if ritualized tantric sexual practices are far from wanton, they nevertheless entail a sort of consecration of the body and sexuality, with the consequence that pleasure — including sexual pleasure — is neither demeaned nor suppressed on the tantric path. Further, the imaginatively ritualized sexuality of tantra may provide both a means and a model for understanding how men and women might relate to each other without ego, regarding each other as divine.

The difficulty with this view is that an analysis of the prerequisites and procedures of ritualized sexuality reveals that neither sexual pleasure nor the male-female ‘relationship’ as generally understood seem to play much of a part. In the view of Tsong kha pa and others of his school, who reflect a considerable body of Indian and Tibetan opinion, a physical consort, an Action Seal, is required at the ‘isolated mind’ stage of the completion stage of Highest Yoga Tantra practice, for the specific purpose of inducing one’s mind and prāṇa (vital energies) to enter the indestructible drop at one’s heart cakra. The purification of the very subtle mind and prāṇa within that drop is the basis for the actual transformation of oneself into a Buddha. The Action Seal must be a tantric practitioner, but the texts do not specify unambiguously that she (or he —
though almost all texts are written from the male point of view) must be someone one knows well, or that she must be as advanced a practitioner as oneself. Thus, the element of complete mutuality, or ‘relationship’, does not seem central to one’s interaction with an Action Seal: if anything, the Action Seal is described instrumentally — though, again, this need not preclude ‘relationship’ in our sense of the term.

More importantly — indeed, this is central to my essay — when ritualized sexuality is enacted with an Action Seal, the presuppositions and purposes involved all militate against the view that what is going on is ‘sex’ as we generally understand that term. To begin with, ordinary sexual activity presupposes sexual desire, but from the Vajrayāna point of view, one cannot possibly have reached the completion stage of Highest Yoga Tantra without immense effort and discipline. Indeed, one must have tamed one’s mind and one’s desires to an extraordinary degree. Thus, paradoxically, in order to engage in tantric sexual practices, one needs effectively to have overcome ordinary — i.e. craving-based — sexual desire, though of course one still has a sexual identity and sexual impulses, and could not practise tantra without them. Further, whereas ordinary sexual activity has as an important component — if not as its sole purpose — the attainment of climax, or orgasm, tantric practices almost always involve what is called ‘the retention of semen’. Thus, while tantric sexual practices may arouse sexual energy or impulses, those impulses are not to be released cathartically, but rechanneled, or sublimated. In terms of the subtle body in which completion-stage practices are carried out, sexual impulses are to be directed not downward from the crown cakra and outward from the genital cakra (their natural direction) but turned back inward and upward, where they may be utilized for various yogic purposes — in the case we are considering, it is the forcing of mind and prāṇa into the very centre of the heart cakra, where reside the subtle mind and prāṇa that are the basis of our mental and physical being and the true source of bondage and liberation.

If, thus, ritualized tantric sexuality has little to do with a ‘personal relationship’, presupposes a mastery of sexual desire, and has as its purpose not the release of sexual energy but its sublimation, we seem to have encountered a phenomenon that may actually be less a form of ‘eroticism’ or ‘sexuality’ than of asceticism. If the physical act of sexual intercourse may be involved, but the relationship, desire and cathartic pleasure that for most of us are entailed by sexuality in a positive sense are missing, then is it really ‘sex’? The question is difficult to answer, assuming as it does that ‘sex’ has a clear definition, but the point should be clear: even if Kāapa is referring to actual sexual practices with the Dombi, what is occurring psychologically and physiologically in those practices bears very little resemblance to sex as we generally understand it, since Buddhist tantric assumptions and aims are virtually indistinguishable from those of traditions more readily recognized as ‘ascetic’. Thus, when Kāapa sings of sex with the Dombi, he may ultimately be referring to his pursuit not of erotic bliss, but of an ascetic path.
IV. Summary, self-criticism and concluding remarks

To summarize, an analysis of the sexual imagery in the performance-songs of Kâr̄lha reveals at least four levels of interpretation: (1) literal, where sexuality is overt, unashamed and unsublimated, (2) symbolic, where the surface sexuality is a metaphor for certain standard Buddhist meditative achievements, (3) 'higher' literal, where symbolized meditative achievements are actualized by ritual sexuality and (4) yogic, where sexual rites are revealed to entail sublimation rather than indulgence, asceticism rather than eroticism. Thus, though the presence of sexual practices in tantra — whether physically or, imaginatively performed — may refute the idea that celibacy is crucial to mysticism, it does not necessarily undermine the contention that chastity and asceticism are required on the mystical path.

At least two objections may legitimately be raised against my argument. The first is that I have ignored an important component of the experience of enlightenment in tantric Buddhism, namely the ‘great bliss’ (mahāsukha) that is a simultaneous component of the mind that realizes the void nature of all phenomena. This may not be sexual pleasure as generally understood, and need not result from ritual sexuality, but it clearly is modelled on ordinary sexual pleasure and, more importantly, makes explicit the fact that pleasure is a vital component of tantric enlightenment. If this is the case, then, to describe the tradition’s purposes as ‘ascetic’ seems misleading. Thus, Kâňha may not be describing ordinary sexual bliss, but neither is he describing a state that is beyond all pleasure: indeed, he is describing the highest of all pleasures, that of enlightenment. A possible reply to this objection is that many unquestionably ascetic traditions have as their goal a notion of supreme pleasure, even if their procedures entail the denial or sublimation of pleasure. Thus, Patañjali’s eight-fold yoga, or Orthodox hesychasm, or much of Catholic contemplative life may involve self-denial, but what is won through that denial is something immeasurably sweet, beyond any earthly pleasure that can be known or imagined (cf. inter alia, Teresa of Avila). If it is argued that it is not only the tantric goal, but the path, too, that involves bliss, it may be pointed out that these other traditions also describe sublime pleasures, or ‘consolations’ along the way, without thereby ceasing to be ‘ascetic’. Further, the specific employment of a version of sexual bliss in tantric traditions is not for sexual pleasure per se, but for the purpose of concentrating the mind and manifesting the subtlest levels of consciousness, the transformation of which is the goal of tantric practice. Thus, the only difference between tantra and these ascetic disciplines may be the presence in the former — almost as a mere technicality — of some practices that involve sexual intercourse.

A second objection that might reasonably be made is more historical and hermeneutical. Have I not assumed, in my presentation of the four levels of interpretation of Kâňha’s songs, that each view is higher than the one that precedes it, and the final, ‘yogic’ view is highest of all, and therefore Kâňha’s ‘true purport’? Have I not ignored the fact that these four levels of interpretation — if
they are valid at all — may be related in ways other than successive sublation? After all, from a historical standpoint, it is likely that each of the four has been privileged at some time by some tantric practitioners. Certainly, there have been hedonists who have read tantric sexual references quite literally, puritans who have interpreted them as purely symbolic, and still others who have seen them as celebrations of the body and a refined sexuality. Kānha himself is silent on how his verses are to be read, so what basis have we for privileging one interpretation over another? Further, is it not possible that more than one level of interpretation may apply simultaneously? Perhaps all four interpretations express elements of Kānha’s ‘true purport’, in a non-hierarchical manner. This would seem appropriate in light of the multivalence I earlier assigned to religious texts in general and tantric literature in particular. To these objections, I would reply only that if we accept a multivalent interpretation of Kānha, then the ‘yogic’ interpretation reflects at least part of what he is denoting in his songs. If this is so, then asceticism plays some role in his life, so his sexual references must be ambiguous. And, if I have convinced the reader only of the fact that ‘tantric sex’ may not be quite what it appears, and that tantra should not therefore be branded too quickly as ‘sexual mysticism’, then my essay will have achieved its objective.

Finally, I want to note briefly a number of larger issues — the proverbial ‘areas for further study’ — that emerge from these considerations. The first is comparative: it seems to me that there is a considerable similarity between the ‘ambiguous sexuality’ we have uncovered in the Buddhist tantras and a similar ambivalence found in the mythology and imagery of Śiva — especially that of the lingam, the phallus, which may symbolize either eros or ascesis, depending on how it is interpreted. Among non-Indian traditions, esoteric Taoism employs sexual imagery in a way strikingly similar to that of the Buddhist tantras; in Taoism, too, sublimation appears to be an important element of ‘yoga’, so sexual references there also seem to be ambiguous. Evidence of an ascetic purport to sexual references in either of these traditions would help to support my contention regarding Buddhist tantra. The second issue is philosophical: I have indicated that I think that the term ‘sex’ ought to be applied to tantric Action Seal practices with considerable caution. Some investigation of ‘the philosophy of sex’ might help to clarify the issues involved. For example, philosophers of sex in the analytic tradition have argued over whether sex ought to be defined in a ‘reductionist’ manner as ‘skin on skin’ or in an ‘expansionist’ manner as requiring a concern with another person. If the former is accepted, then perhaps tantric practices may be defined as truly ‘sexual’; if the latter is accepted, then their status as ‘sexual’ is more ambiguous. The third issue is psycho-social: it might be interesting to consider the place of the ‘person’ in tantric sexual practices. Philosophical issues of no-self aside, there is an ‘other’ who serves as consort in the tantric tradition. Is the consort a ‘fully equal partner’? A ‘mere instrument’? Some combination of the two? Can the relation between practitioner and consort be illuminated by Foucault’s analysis of sex as power, or might it serve as a counter-example that brings his thesis into
question? The final issue is gender-based: can the images of sexuality developed in the tantric tradition be seen as transcending particular gender identities — after all, males may visualize themselves as female deities in union with male deities, and vice versa — or, given their cultural heritage, are they derived from an androcentric understanding of the nature of sexuality and gender that might run contrary to female experience? Might females have developed Tantra differently, or, for that matter, might they have contributed to its development? Do the reports of female practitioners reflect values not found in male practitioners’ accounts, or do they reflect instead the internalization of a standard style of ‘tantric’ discourse itself developed primarily by males? The answers to these and the other questions I have just posed go considerably beyond my present scope and competence, and will have to await another time, or another voice.

Notes

1 This essay originally was presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, New Orleans, Louisiana, November, 1990.

2 I take the four technical terms employed in this paragraph as follows: ‘mysticism’ is any practice that aims at the most direct identification with ultimate reality of which a human being is considered capable; ‘celibacy’ is the avoidance of sexual intercourse; ‘chastity’ is the limitation of sexual activity to the most conservative limits prescribed by a tradition; and ‘asceticism’ is the denial of ordinary pleasures for the purpose of attaining an extraordinary goal.


4 The Sanskrit is evaṁ mayā śrutam/ekasmin samaye bhagavān sarvatathā-gatakāyavāk-cittahṛdayavajrayayosīdhbhagesu vijahāra. Alternative, somewhat bowdlerized translations include that of Snellgrove: ‘Thus have I heard — at one time the Lord dwelt in bliss with the Vajrayoginī who is the Body, Speech and Mind of all the Buddhas’ (op. cit., vol. I, p.47; but cf. his Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, Boston, MA, Shambhala 1987, vol. I, p. 121); and Dasgupta: ‘It is heard by me that once upon a time, the Lord sported in the heart of super-human knowledge arising out of the body, speech and mind of all the Tathāgatas’, see S. B. Dasgupta, An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism, 3rd Edn, rpt., Calcutta, University of Calcutta 1974, p. 120. The crucial phrase here is yosīdbhagesu. Yosit is, unambiguously, a woman; bhaga may mean a number of things, including fortune, beauty, loveliness, and ‘amorous sport’. It also means the vulva or vagina, and used with yosit, denotes this. On the issue of bowdlerization in tantra translation, see John Ronald Newman, The Outer Wheel of Time: Vajrayāna Buddhist Cosmology in the Kālacakra Tantra, Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison 1987, Ann Arbor, UMI 1987, pp. 30–1 and note 5.


8 As Dowman notes (p. 130), Kānha also figures in the lineage of the Hindu nāth tradition; a number of figures are common to both lists.


10 E. Obermiller (translator), The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet by Buxton, rpt. Delhi, Sri Satguru Publications 1986, p. 120.


12 Ibid., p. 249.

13 Ibid., p. 268.

14 For a fuller discussion of these issues, see Snellgrove, The Hevajra Tantra, vol. I, p. 13, note 4. According to him, the linguistic evidence of the caryāgīti would seem to place them no earlier than the 11th century.


20 Beyer, p. 258.


22 For the most recent exposition of this view, see John Stevens, Lust for Enlightenment: Buddhism and Sex, Boston, MA, Shambhala 1990, especially pp. 60–80. Stevens cites with gusto a wide range of Indian and Tibetan tantric texts (he excludes Kānha), but shows only a limited awareness of readings of them beyond the literal level.

23 In pre-tantric Buddhism, the lotus is a symbol of purity; the sixty-four petalled lotus refers in tantra to the cakra — at the intersection of sixty-four subtle-body channels — located near the navel; it is the site of the ‘red drop’, inherited from one’s mother,
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that is associated with what is sometimes called ‘psychic heat’. In pre-tantric Buddhism, the boat can symbolize the path to nirvāṇa or the human body (whose passengers are the four ‘mental aggregates’, sensation, perception, formations and consciousness); in tantra, the boat may refer, among other things, to the ‘mind of enlightenment’ (bodhicitta), which is not, as in pre-tantric Mahāyāna, so much an altruistic attitude, but the white seminal drop inherited from the father, that is located at the crown cakra and is associated with bliss. In pre-tantric Buddhism, the moon is a symbol of bodhicitta as the altruistic aspiration to enlightenment; in the tantric tradition, as noted, it is the ‘white drop’. On the homologies among compassion, the ‘mind of enlightenment’ and ‘orgasmic bliss’, see Jeffrey Hopkins, ‘Tantric Buddhism, degeneration or enhancement: the viewpoint of a Tibetan tradition’, Buddhist-Christian Studies 10 (1990), p. 91ff.

24 Munidatta’s commentary is edited and translated by Kvaerne, op. cit.


26 Ibid., pp. 184–5.

27 Voidness is the source of all dharmas not in a substantial cosmogonic sense (though clearly the imagery of cosmogony is invoked), but in the sense that because there is no inherent existence anywhere, phenomena can change or come to be; if phenomena existed substantially, there could be no change, no coming to be of what has not yet arisen. Voidness, thus, is the condition for the possibility of dharmas; see Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamakakārikā, chapter 24, for the classic source of this idea. The equation of the female with the wisdom realizing voidness is most explicit in the naming of the consort of the tantric deity Hevajra: Nairatmya, which means ‘no-self’, and, by extension, voidness.

28 Kvaerne, p. 127; Beyer, p. 260.

29 According to Tsong kha pa and the dGe lugs tradition of which he was founder, Highest Yoga Tantra (anuttara-yoga-tantra) is the highest of the four classes of tantric practice (the others are Action (kriya), Performance (carya) and Yoga Tantra), and the only class through which fully enlightened Buddhahood can be achieved. Highest Yoga Tantra is divided into a generation stage (utpattikrama), on which ‘ordinary appearances’ are overcome through imaginative transformation of oneself into a Buddha, one’s speech into mantra, one’s environment into a mandala, etc. The completion stage (sampnukrama), at the culmination of which Buddhahood actually is achieved, involves working in the subtle body to transform one’s body into a divine body and one’s mind into the omniscient consciousness of a Buddha — equivalent to the Form and Dharma bodies of a fully enlightened being.


31 See e.g. Herbert V. Guenther, The Tantric View of Life, Boulder and London, Shambhala 1976, p. 62ff. Subtle scholar that he is, Guenther is of course aware of a variety of possible readings. However, in this particular section, he does stress the way in which tantric images of sexuality evoke the possibility of human ‘love’ relationships that transcend either prudery or power. Thus, he reads a passage from Kāṇṭha’s Dohākosa, no. 29, (Bengali: to biyu taruṇi nirantarara nehe/bohi ki lābhaï ena bi dehe; Tibetan: gzhon num dang rtag tu mdza’ bde med na/lus‘i vis ni byang chub ji lta’ grub (cf. Shahidullah, p. 81)] as follows: ‘How can enlightenment be attained in this bodily existence/Without thine incessant love, o lovely young girl’ (Guenther, p. 66:
emphasis mine). The crucial term here is nehe, from neha, for the Sanskrit sneha, which has a wide range of meanings, from ‘affection’, to ‘friendship’, to ‘desire’, to ‘lust’. Particularly in Buddhism, its connotations are by no means always positive, and Guenther’s translation of it by ‘love’ would seem, at the very least, to limit the term’s ambiguity — particularly by downplaying the sexual connotations it sometimes has.

The completion stage of Highest Yoga Tantra is generally divided by the dGe lugs pas into five sub-stages: (1) isolated speech, where one’s mental and physical energies are drawn into the central channel of the subtle body, (2) isolated mind, where the energies are drawn into the heart cakra and one undergoes a series of visions like those at the time of death, culminating in the clear light vision, which at this point is a metaphoric equivalent of the realization of voidness, (3) illusory body, where, on the basis of the metaphoric clear light realization of voidness, one generates from subtle physical energies an unpurified image of the Buddha-body one will possess upon enlightenment, (4) clear light, where one directly realizes the void nature of all phenomena and (5) union, where, having utterly purified the illusory body through the clear light realization, one joins the two inextricably together to achieve the Form and Dharma bodies of a fully enlightened Buddha. For the clearest account of this process in English, see Cozort.

The Action Seal is required at this stage if one is to attain enlightenment in this lifetime. The Seal may be used at the outset of the completion stage, to help draw one’s mind and prāna into the central channel of the subtle body (Gyatso, p. 126; cf. previous note.) Hopkins gives a clear explanation of the rationale for this: ‘Because the more subtle levels of consciousness are considered to be more powerful and thus more effective in realizing the truth of the emptiness of inherent existence, the systems of Highest Yoga Tantra seek to manifest the mind of clear light by way of various techniques. One of these techniques is blissful orgasm because, according to the psychology of Highest Yoga Tantra, orgasm — like dying, going to sleep, and fainting — involves the ceasing of the grosser levels of consciousness and manifestation of the more subtle. The intent in using a blissful, orgasmic mind in the path is to manifest the most subtle mind — that of clear light — and use it to realize the emptiness of inherent existence. . . . A consciousness of orgasmic bliss is used because, when the sense of pleasure is powerful, one’s consciousness is totally involved with that pleasure and thus completely withdrawn; this is why the subtler levels of consciousness manifest during the intense bliss of orgasm, even if they are not noticed, never mind realized, in common copulation. Without desire, the involvement in the bliss consciousness would be minimal, and thus Highest Yoga Tantra makes use of the arts of love-making, and so forth, to enhance the process’ (p. 95).

Note that I am using the term ‘orgasm’ differently than does Hopkins: in my usage, it entails ‘seminal release’; in his (see previous note), it does not.


ON THE CONCEPT OF SAHAJA IN INDIAN BUDDHIST TANTRIC LITERATURE

Per Kvaerne


The importance of the term sahaja in tantric Buddhist thought has long been recognized – in fact, certain scholars, apparently without textual justification, have introduced the term Sahajayāna, as if there were a particular yāna within tantric Buddhism characterized solely or at least chiefly by its dependence on the concept of sahaja¹. Likewise we find expressions like “the Buddhist Sahajiyā cult”, “Sahajiyā Buddhists” etc. – presumably due to confusion with the term sahajiyā used in connection with the Vaishnava sahajiyā movement in Bengal².

While the concept of sahaja certainly is not limited to any particular yāna within tantric Buddhism – as we shall see, it is frequently found in a basic tantra like the Hevajratantra (HVT), and is, moreover, identical with many other concepts, like mahāsukha (“Great Bliss”), tattva (“the Essence”), samarasa (“Sameness of Flavour”) etc. – there can be no doubt as to its fundamental importance. However, this basic concept of tantric Buddhism has not, to the best of my knowledge, been studied in a systematic way³.

Sahaja literally signifies “being born (-ja) together with (saha-)”. The Tibetan lhan-čig skyes-pa, followed by the Mongolian qamtu törügsen, faithfully renders this. Frequently this basic meaning is expanded to include “congenital, innate, hereditary, original”, hence also “natural”. Translations of sahaja have tended to be based on these derived senses; thus, to quote but two examples, Shahidullah rendered it “l’Innè”⁴ followed by Snellgrove “the Innate⁵”. While this translation is etymologically sound, and doubtlessly expresses an important aspect of sahaja, it nevertheless has the disadvantage of suggesting that sahaja is purely subjective or in some sense individual, that it is something like a hidden “divine spark” in the depths of man. Such at least are the associations which would seem most readily to present themselves. M. Eliade has suggested another translation, “le non-conditionné”⁶; while certainly correct as far as it goes, this, too, is unsatisfactory as it seems to lay exclusive stress on the transcendent nature of sahaja.
In a work now in the press, An Anthology of Buddhist Tantric Songs. A Study of the Caryāgīti, I adopted the translation suggested by H. Guenther\(^7\), and I shall repeat here his explanation: “The literal translation of the Tibetan term *han-čig skyes-pa* (Sanskrit sahaja) would be “co-emergence” ... Essentially it refers to the spontaneity and totality of the experience in which the opposites such as transcendence and immanence, subject and object, the noumenal and phenomenal indissolubly blend’. – I still believe that Guenther has succeeded in giving a correct description of the implications of the term sahaja. However, his translation must, I think, be modified to “co-emergent”, i.e. to an adjective, as I doubt whether sahaja is ever used – as far as Buddhist tantric texts are concerned – as a noun\(^8\), except as short-hand for sahajānanda, sahajajñāna etc., terms which will be discussed below. For the moment I shall limit myself to saying that I believe that “simultaneously-arisen” or the like is the most suitable translation\(^9\), and (anticipating my conclusions) that the term sahaja is basically connected with the tantric ritual of consecration where it refers to the relation between the ultimate and the preliminary Joys.

A few words concerning the scope of the present essay will be in order. I intend to study the concept of sahaja as found in Indian Buddhist tantric texts. In other words, I shall not deal with the concept of sahaja as found in non-Buddhist sources, e.g. the writings of the Nath-panthī yogins or the Sant poets. Nor will use be made of the vast body of Tibetan material, which includes translation of Sanskrit originals as well as an abundant exegetical literature – not because this material is unimportant, for it is, on the contrary, of inestimable value, but because any meaningful use of it would entail a long-term project. Consequently I shall limit myself to published Sanskrit (and Apabhṛṣṭa) sources – and they are, after all, sufficiently extensive to allow one to arrive at a certain number of conclusions, at least. The only exception will be the Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras (FBT) by mkhas grub rje, which I use for the simple reason that it is readily available in Lessing and Wayman’s edition and translation. When quoting this text, I retain the translation adopted in that edition. I likewise retain, whenever quoting from them, Snellgrove’s translation of the HVT and George’s translation of the Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra (CMT). However, all other translations – from the Pañcukrama (PK), the Advayavajrasamgraha (AVS), the Sekkodesaṭika (ST), Hevajrāsekaprakriyā (HSP), and other texts – are my own unless otherwise specified.

### I. The tantric ritual of initiation

The important part played by rituals in the tantras is well known; indeed tantricism is frequently described as ritualistic, i.e. as based on the innate efficiency of external rituals properly performed. One need only glance through the most readily available Buddhist tantra, the Hevajrātantra, to become convinced of this – page after page deal with rituals for producing rain, for destroying enemies, for gaining mastery over a young woman, and the like\(^10\). Not only the
attainment of worldly success depends on rituals. The progress of the adept towards Buddhahood, i.e. towards final liberation from the bonds of ignorance and powerlessness in the whirl of saṃsāra, is likewise at every stage intimately connected with ritual acts of one kind or another.

To this one may perhaps object that the rupture de niveau, the transfer to a higher plane of being to which the adept aspires, after all requires an internal sādhana, an interior process of realization in the form of certain meditational practices. But while perfectly true, this only serves to stress the ritualistic character of tantricism; for not only are the meditational exercises preceded by rituals, but even the interior sādhana itself proceeds according to a ritualistic pattern. In fact, external ritual and internal sādhana form an indistinguishable whole, and this unity finds its most pregnant expression in the form of the maṇḍala, the sacred enclosure consisting of concentric squares and circles drawn on the ground and representing that adamantine plane of being on which the aspirant to Buddhahood wishes to establish himself. The unfolding of the tantric ritual depends on the maṇḍala; and where a material maṇḍala is not employed, the adept proceeds to construct one mentally in the course of his meditation.

The form and function of the maṇḍala have been authoritatively described by G. Tucci, to whom the reader is referred. Here the following only will be stressed: the ritual of the maṇḍala, whether conceived of in internal or external terms, takes the form of a series of initiations, i.e. of ritual acts par excellence, serving to prepare the adept for the attainment of Buddhahood, the goal to which not only tantric, but indeed all Buddhism aspires. It will therefore be well to examine more closely the tantric ritual of initiation (seka or abhiṣeka). In this connection we have at our disposal three texts which give a relatively full and coherent account of the successive initiations, viz. the Sekoddeśaṭikā (ST) of Nādapāda, edited by M. E. Carelli, the Hevajrasekaprakriyā (HSP), edited and translated by L. Finot, and the first eight chapters of the Cauḍama-hāroṣanatantra (CMT), edited and translated by C. S. George.

Before we proceed to examine these initiations, a brief discussion of the term abhiṣeka will be in order. It is derived from the root sic- "to pour out, sprinkle, soak". It is commonly used for the act of impregnation, and perhaps retains this connotation in those cases where the abhiṣeka involves a hieros gamos. Seka or abhiṣeka is thus basically an "aspersion", and this idea is never lost. "As externally one washes away exterior dirt with water, so one sprinkles water for the washing away of ignorance; it is thus called a sprinkling" (AVS p. 36). More concisely, HVT II.iii.12 states: "Thereby one is sprinkled, that is to say cleansed - hence the word seka is employed". Because of the sacred character of the aspersion, the word "baptism" has been used to translate seka; however, as this term is obviously heavily loaded with Christian connotations, it does not seem quite suitable. Another reason for rejecting it, is that the various stages of abhiṣeka do not, in fact, always include aspersions; and if water is not employed, it seems rather inappropriate to speak of baptism. One might employ the term "initiation", as this is beyond doubt what the abhiṣeka in fact is; but this has
The disadvantages of wholly obliterating the etymological meaning of the word, and is a very wide term covering all sorts of rites. The best translation would therefore seem to be "consecration" since there is explicit analogy with the rite of royal consecration, for which the term abhiṣeka is likewise used. The term "coronation", however, must be rejected as stressing the associations between initiation and royal dominion to the exclusion of all other associations.

The consecrations to be conferred on the neophyte may be divided into two groups, the minor or preparatory consecrations, and the major or final ones, in ST styled "transcendent" (lokottara). We shall deal first with the minor consecrations.

The actual proceedings of the preliminary consecrations are described in detail in ST, and a resumé is given by Carelli (p. 32–33). We are thus dispensed from going over the same ground here.

For our purposes it will be sufficient to note that the consecrations take place inside the mandala, representing the sacred world which the neophyte is now entering, and that they consist, among other things, of a series of aspersions and recitations of mantras performed by the preceptor (guru) of the aspirant (śiṣya), thereby purifying him and elevating him in body, speech, and mind to that adamantine plane which constitutes the necessary basis for the subsequent major consecrations. The preliminary consecrations thus combine to form a rite de passage, a movement from one mode of being to another. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that even before they are performed, the aspirant is identified with a divine being: a deity, in the case of ST Vajrapani, is invoked and thereupon believed to take possession of the neophyte who sings and dances in the manner appropriate to the deity.

It would be beside our purpose to discuss whether this rite (krodhāveśa, lit. "entrance of the fierce deity") represents a genuine, as opposed to a merely simulated, state of possession, and to what extent it may – in psychological terms – be held to contribute to, or be involved with, the subsequent attainment of mystical insight; what is significant, is the fact that the neophyte is from the very outset regarded as a being enjoying divine status.

The texts which I have consulted enumerate the minor consecrations as five, six, or seven, as shown in Fig. I. It would be futile to embark upon a lengthy discussion of the divergencies illustrated in Fig. I. However, a few observations may nevertheless be in order. Except for one text (VA), in which Water is preceded by Flower-Garland, the initial consecration is that of Water, followed by Diadem. It seems reasonable that Fillet, which is given by ST and DVP as the fourth, but not mentioned in the other texts, is simply a specialization of the preceding Diadem. The same two texts likewise stand isolated in combining Vajra and Bell in one consecration, whereas the other texts list them as third and fourth (VA as fourth and fifth) respectively. For Vajra and Bell, CMT instead has Sword and Noose. ST then inserts the Consecration of the Vajra-Vow, (in DVP styled Own-Lord), so that the following consecration, that of the Name, comes as fifth in AVS, JTT, FBT, HSP, and CMT, and as sixth in VA, ST, and DVP. The final consecration would seem to be properly styled Master, as is explicitly done in AVS and FBT; JTT calls it Irreversible, which according to FBT,
commenting on JTT, is just another name for the Consecration of the Master (p. 141). Permission (ST) and Buddha-Order (DVP) are certainly identical, and as is made clear by the Yugalanda-prakāśa-nāma-seka-prakriyā, (FBT p. 141), both refer to the third and last stage of the final consecration, namely that of the Master. According to FBT, this text “explains prophecy (vyākaraṇa), encouragement (praśvāsa), and permission (anujña) to be the Hierophant’s Initiation” (ācāryābhiṣeka).

Minor problems are posed by AVS (p. 36) which designates all six initiations as Irreversible (“because they have the nature of the six Tathāgatas”); JTT, as we have seen, uses the term only for the sixth and last; while YRM, on the other hand, stresses that the Master is not identical with the Irreversible. At the moment I must leave these difficulties unresolved, and will proceed to discuss the major consecrations.

These are stated by HVT (I.1.30 and II.iii.10) to be four: that of the Master (ācārya), the Secret (guhya), the Gnosis of Wisdom (prajñājñāna), and the Fourth (caturtha). In other words, according to HVT the preliminary consecrations, regarded as a unit, represent the first of a series of four major consecrations, and if this first consecration is styled Master, it is presumably, as Snellgrove has pointed out, because the Master-Consecration completes the preliminary set of six. AVS (p. 36) explicitly states that the first major consecration, here called the Consecration of the Jar (kalasābhiṣeka), consists of the six preliminary ones, and the following reason is given: “Because all of them include the use of a jar, they are known (collectively) as the Consecration of the Jar”. The same explanation is given by FBT (p. 317).

However, both ST and DVP distinguish clearly between the preliminary consecrations and that of the Jar; thus DVP explicitly styles it “the eighth”. Further, as will be seen, ST gives a different explanation of the term ‘Jar’, linking it with the breast of the mudrā. For while there were only two actors in the minor consecrations, the neophyte and the preceptor, there now enters a third, the heroine, one might say, of the sacred drama, namely a young woman variously known, to quote but the most common of her titles, as mudrā (“Seal”), vidyā or prajñā (“Wisdom”), or simply devī (“Goddess”). In the Consecration of the Jar (at least when this, as is the case in ST, is clearly distinguished from the preceding minor consecrations), and above all, in the Consecrations of the Secret and of the Gnosis of Wisdom, she plays a crucial role. HVT II.viii.3–5 describes her in glowing terms:

She is neither too tall, nor too short, neither quite black nor quite white, but dark like a lotus-leaf. Her breath is sweet, and her sweat has a pleasant smell like that of musk. Her pudenda give forth a scent from moment to moment like different kinds of lotuses or like sweet aloe wood. She is calm and resolute, pleasant in speech and altogether delightful, with beauteous hair and three wrinkles in the middle of her body. By vulgar men, in fact, she would be classed as first-rate.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of consecration:</th>
<th>Flower-Garland</th>
<th>Water</th>
<th>Diadem</th>
<th>Vajra</th>
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<td>Vajra-Bell</td>
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Fig. 1
ST (p. 21), on the other hand, mentions the characteristics which render a woman unfit to function as mudrā:

She who is timid, or whose mind is confused, who ...(?) 26, who is under the dominion of another, who is afflicted by disease or who has recently given birth, who is short-tempered, arrogant, or desirous of wealth, who delights in falsehood or strife, who has some bodily defect or who is impure 27 – in the Consecration of Wisdom these should be avoided by one’s skilful preceptor, o king!

What, then, were the procedures of the rites in which the mudrā took part? On the whole, the texts are reticent. The reason is of course the esoteric character of the rites involved, which were to be performed “at night beneath a lonely tree or in a cemetery ... or in some unfrequented spot” (HVT I.vi.6); “In a garden, in a lonely place, or in one’s inner apartment” (HVT II.xi.11, cf. also I.x.3). The desire to avoid public censure may have been a reason to keep the rites secret; but the basic motive was beyond doubt the belief, so often repeated in the tantras, that if the rites were performed by those who were unqualified to do so, the results would be disastrous. In the words of HVT II.iv.71: “If he drinks strong poison, the simple man who does not understand it, falls senseless. But he who is free from delusion with his mind intent on the truth destroys it altogether”. In other words, the rites imply two diametrically opposed possibilities: not only the liberation of the enlightened, but equally the bondage of the ignorant, which the rites were believed to perpetuate if practised for any other purpose than the attainment of mystic insight. Hence, “Those things by which men of evil conduct are bound, others turn into means and gain thereby release from the bonds of existence” (HVT II.ii.50). 28

I shall postpone until the following chapter the discussion whether the rites were, as far as can be understood, intended to be performed according to their literal description. For the moment we shall simply study the ritual itself to the extent that it can be reconstructed on the basis of the texts, without entering into its various implications. As in the case of the minor consecrations, it is ST, HSP and CMT which provide the most detailed accounts. FBT will also be quoted, although it should be borne in mind that this late text consistently provides each initiation with an “interiorized” interpretation (see chap. II).

The Consecration of the Jar

That which first of all is the touching of the glorious Wisdom on the breast, that indeed 29 is the Consecration of the Jar. (ST p. 21)

In the first consecration a beautiful maiden, trembling 30, free from the flaw of confusion etc., twelve years old and in all respects perfect, should be entrusted by the disciple to his preceptor. ... Thereupon he addresses an entreaty to his preceptor. Thereupon the preceptor, being satisfied, lets him touch, concealed from public view, the breasts of his Seal – thereby this is the Consecration of the Jar (ST p. 22)
From the secret comes the Consecration of the Secret — through tasting the Moon and through beholding (the Lotus of the Seal). (ST p. 21) Having thereupon performed the worship of the secret, he (i.e. the preceptor) gives the Nectar of Immortality to the disciple and lets him behold the Lotus of the Seal — thereby (this) is the Consecration of the Secret, through tasting the Moon and through beholding (the Lotus of the Seal). (ST p. 22)

Thereafter, in a place made secluded by means of a screen etc., the Master takes hold of the Seal who possesses the characteristics mentioned in the tantras, who resembles Nairātmyā, and on whom have been impressed the three syllables OM, HŪM, and ĀH on her head, heart, and throat (respectively). Having recited the mantra “OM padma sukhadhara” (“OM Lotus, receptacle of bliss”), and having made the host of Buddhas situated in space enter the Vajra, he sprinkles her until she becomes possessed of śukra.

“As the Sons of Enlightenment are consecrated by the former Buddhas, (thus) are you consecrated by me with the flow of (Bodhi)citta in the Consecration of the Secret” — with this mantra the preceptor, using the middle and the fourth finger, causes the Thought-of-Enlightenment which is inside his own Vajra to drop into the mouth of the disciple who has the form of Vairocana. And he, crying “Ah, bliss!” tastes the Nectar of immortality.

Having thereupon arisen, that naked woman whose form is beautiful wantonly places the drops of honey remaining inside her own Lotus on his lips which are in the middle of the lotus which is his face. Thus is the Consecration of the Secret. (HSP p. 30)

Then there is the following Secret Consecration: The student should give clothing, etc., to his teacher and present to him a delightful woman adorned with beauty and youth . . . Then, having paid his respects to the teacher, the student should go outside and remain there, repeating the mantra: “Om, O Candamahāroṣaṇa, hūṃ, phat!” The teacher, moreover, should worship himself with intoxicants, meats, etc., and having satisfied Wisdom, being in her embrace, he should place the resulting white and red on a leaf, shaped into a funnel, etc. Then, having summoned the student, he should take that substance with his ring finger and thumb, and write the letters “Hūṃ, phat!” on the student’s tongue. Then he should have the student pronounce the words. “Ah! Pleasure!” And then the teacher should say the following “To day I cause to be produced the Buddha-knowledge, the very same means by which the past, present, and future Buddhas, Lords, obtained independent (apratiṣṭhita) Nirvāṇa. (CMT p. 55).

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The *guru* unites with the *vidyā*; and ... the substance of the drop molten by the fire of great passion, falls into the "lotus" of the "Mother" and mixes with the red element of the "Mother".

The procedure of conferring the initiation is as follows: the red-and-white element of the "Father-Mother" union are taken from the "lotus" of the Mother with the thumb and ring finger of the "Father-Mother" and placed on the tip of their own tongue(s). (FBT p. 319)

The Consecration of the Gnosis of Wisdom

Having been purified by all the families of the Buddhas with regard to (her) limbs and head, in the Consecration of the Gnosis of Wisdom the Seal is to be given to the disciple – the Buddha, however, having been made the witness by the preceptor.

Having by means of his own Vajra-Jewel which has the nature of union of Wisdom and Means had intercourse with a beautiful maiden, twelve years of age, adorned with all ornaments and like molten gold (in hue) (so that she becomes) impassioned, having (moreover) realised the purity of the disciple, and having thrust the Vajra with its seed into the mouth (of the disciple), only then is his own Seal to be given (to the disciple). (ST p. 21)

After she has been put in possession of the whole host of the five families by means of the seed syllable *OM* etc., the Seal should be given to the disciple, and the Buddha, i.e. the Vajrasattva, having been made the witness by the preceptor for the purpose of mutual embrace ... (ST p. 22)

To the disciple who has (by now) obtained the Consecration of Wisdom and the Irreversible Consecration he (i.e. the preceptor) thereupon commits the (Seal) who has the form of highest benevolence, who engenders dharma, who resembles Nairātmyā, and who has been (ritually) blessed by himself, reciting the mantra

"Take, o take, o Great Being, this goddess who is a bestower of delight, a bestower of perfection, who is beautiful and charming, and having taken her, offer her worship!"

And she ....... (lacuna in Ms of about one page). When he has taken hold of her on whom have been impressed the mantras etc. mentioned above, he impasses her, causing her who has the nature of a deity to regard the joy arising from the Thought-of-Enlightenment which is inside (his Vajra). And the preceptor, having seen that he (i.e. the disciple) has reached full accomplishment, (i.e.) having seen (in him) the outward sign of a Gnosis-Being, (and) the disciple having manifested the delight of passion by means of the splendour of a Gnosis-Being, he (i.e. the preceptor) lets it enter the citta of the
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disciple\textsuperscript{54}. And he (i.e. the disciple) having experienced that joy thanks to the preceptor becomes \ldots (lacuna) fallen from the Lotus of the Wisdom and possessed of the (proper) characteristics. Having taken with her tongue the Thought-of-Enlightenment consisting of the host of Buddhas, she arises\textsuperscript{55}.

Thus is the procedure of the Consecration of the Gnosis of Wisdom. (HSP p. 30–31)

Then he should entrust that very Wisdom to the student \ldots Then the teacher should whisper in his ear the division of the Four Blisses. Then the teacher should go outside. And then the Wisdom, having become naked, and squatting, should indicate her secret place with the forefinger. \ldots Then the candidate should concentrate that he himself has the form of Candamahāroṣaṇa; and embracing Wisdom in the form of Anger Vajrī, he should aim at the Four Blisses. When that is completed, he should present himself before his teacher, and make a circle with intoxicants, meat, etc. Thus ends the Wisdom Consecration. (CMT p. 56–57).

The guru offers to the disciple that vidyā with whom he had entered into union at the time of the secret initiation, or a similar vidyā as appropriate. (FBT p. 320–21)

The reader may now ask: what about the fourth and final consecration? In fact neither HSP, CMT nor ST describe it. The reason, as will be fully discussed later on, is that this consecration is not conferred from without, but ensues of its own accord in the mind of the neophyte at the time of the third consecration. ST does not mention it at all; HSP merely states that

Having thereupon obtained the Fourth Consecration thanks to the instruction of the preceptor, he (i.e. the disciple) once again offers a recompense to the extent of his capacity to the two Seals\textsuperscript{56} and to the karmavajrin\textsuperscript{57}. (p. 31)

Certain passages of HVT which previously were somewhat unclear, now fall into place, the essential structure of the rite having thus been established. Thus 1.x.5–7 clearly refer to the Consecration of the Secret. Here it is also stated that “One binds the face of the prajñā and likewise of the upāya\textsuperscript{58}, and the product of the service rendered one drops into the pupil’s mouth”. Likewise II.iii.13–14 must refer to the Consecration of the Secret: “The Prajñā of sixteen years he clasps within his arms, and from the union of the vajra and bell the Master’s consecration comes about \ldots Then with thumb and fourth finger he drops the bindu\textsuperscript{59} in the pupil’s mouth”. We note in passing that here the union of preceptor and Seal is assigned to the first consecration; in any case, the essential point of the Consecration of the Secret is the transfer of the Thought-of-Enlightenment of the preceptor to the neophyte. The passage just quoted then proceeds (v.16–17)
to describe the third consecration, without explicit naming it: “Then having honoured and worshipped the Prajñā, he should consign her to the pupil, saying: “O Great Being, take thou the Mudrā who will bring you bliss”, and knowing his pupil to be worthy, free of envy and wrath, he then further commands him: “Be ye one, O Vajradhāra!” – HVT II.iv.37–39 (not translated by Snellgrove) also refer to a rite corresponding to that of the Consecration of the Secret. Finally HVT II.xii.2–3 refer to the words spoken by the preceptor to the disciple during the second and third consecration respectively; both formulae are found in HSP, thus enabling us to see them in their proper context. Finally it may be mentioned that Chap.III of the Prajñāpāramitāśācasiddhi, translated by Snellgrove, refers to the various rites of consecration, but very briefly, so that no clear idea of the actual procedures can be formed.

Summing up, one may, following ST which is particularly clear and logical, characterize the first three major consecrations thus: in the first, the disciple is permitted to touch the Seal, thus experiencing the subsequent bliss by anticipation, as it were; in the second, this bliss is actually experienced by the preceptor, and its essence, in the form of the Thought-of-Enlightenment, transferred to the disciple, who is thereupon permitted to regard the Lotus of the Seal, i.e. the source of bliss; and in the third, the disciple is himself united with the Seal, thus fully experiencing the bliss of union for himself – and in that very moment, as we shall see, this bliss takes the form of the fourth and ultimate consecration.

II. The ritual – attitudes and implications

In the face of practices which apparently contradict all previous Buddhist tradition and which are so far removed from the sense of religious propriety not only of Europeans, but equally of many if not most academically trained Indians (“The official Indian culture, formulated by Vivekananda ... by Gandhi and Radhakrishnan, keep tantrism well outside the ken of permissible interests”), it is not always easy to retain a balanced view. Speaking of “the strīpūjā, worship of women”, L. de la Vallée Poussin limited himself to hinting that “disgusting practices, both obscene and criminal, including incest, are a part of this pūjā”. To regard tantricism as a “degeneration” of earlier Buddhism has been – and in many circles still is – extremely widespread.

Yet if the tantric rites are dismissed as mere licentiousness, it will hardly be possible to credit such rites with providing the basis for profound mystical experiences. Before passing judgement, it will therefore be well to see what justification the tantras themselves offer for their rites of consecration.

In HVT it is clearly stated that “This fourfold set of consecrations is for the purpose of perfecting living beings” (II.iii.12) – in other words, it serves the purpose of universal liberation. And as for the individual adept, the same text states that “Then taking her, one should perform the practice with the realization of one’s own composure. For this practice, which is called terrifying in appear-
ance, is not taught for the sake of enjoyment” (II.ii.21–22). This is, in fact, the crucial point: the rite “is not taught for the sake of enjoyment”, but for the purpose – universal in all schools of Buddhism – of attaining Buddhahood. Regarding it, as we do, from the point of view of an historian of religions, it is necessary to stress the fact that it is not viewed by its practitioners as a profane act, but as a rite steeped in sacrality. We have already noted that the minor consecrations constitute a typical rite de passage in which the world of flux and ignorance is left behind; let us further note that the actors in the major consecrations are regarded as divine beings – according to HSP, for instance, the Seal is assimilated to Nairātmyā, the disciple to Vairocana, and the preceptor to the Buddha. Likewise FBT (p. 319) explains that immediately before performing the Consecration of the Secret, the preceptor “with visualization of all the gods of the mandala unites them and draws them into his own body”.

It therefore seems to me that Snellgrove has eloquently formulated the only possible attitude of serious scholarship when he says of the ritual of maithuna, of sexual union, that

If one is to judge it rightly, one must see it as part of the whole context. The realization in oneself of samsāra and nirvāṇa is the serious and avowed intention. One may regard this as no true end for the best of human endeavour and as founded on an incomplete conception of the nature of existence, but one must still in all fairness view its practices in the light of its intention, and not censure these as though they were wanton acts of foolishness.

As for the claim that the tantric movement represented a degeneration, a discussion of this question obviously falls outside the scope of the present study, but I may perhaps simply state that in this case, too, I fully share Snellgrove’s conclusion that

One conceives too easily perhaps of Buddhism in terms of the abstract theories of a few famous philosophers, and so when in the tantras one is brought face to face with actual practices, the like of which had long been practised, one may exclaim too readily that these cannot be Buddhist. That new elements are introduced, the effect of which is far-reaching, there is no denying, but there is no essential break in the development of the doctrine. One might even claim that these new elements far from issuing in a degeneration brought about a rejuvenation, nourished in the hidden well springs of Indian religious life.

Alternatively it may be argued that the tantras are rendered respectable by their tendency to interpret the rites in a figurative sense, i.e. as referring to an inner process of realization. We shall briefly examine this point of view, which to a large extent is based on a figurative interpretation of the role of the female
partner. Of this PK III.40–41 and its commentary – if my interpretation is correct – furnishes an example:

He who does not indulge in the union of Vajra and Lotus according to common practice gains success due to mastery of yoga, even if he has experienced it only once. Having recognized the action of knowledge in its true nature according to its divisions, the yogin will again at all times recognize her (i.e. “Woman”) as obscurity (prakṛti). (PK p. 29).

This passage is perhaps not necessarily to be understood as a rejection of ritual union, but the commentary certainly gives a wholly interiorized interpretation:

*He, i.e. the yogin, who (does not indulge etc.), gains success due to mastery of yoga, i.e. due to the mastery of union with the Wisdom-deity (prajñā-devatā) who is resplendent with the characteristics of the Gnosis-Seal, because that yogin has experienced it once, i.e. at the time of initiation (he has experienced) due to the force of the preceptor’s instruction the Gnosis of the Great Void which is technically known as ālokopalabdhi.*

By “according” etc. (the following is expressed): *having recognized in the woman of flesh-and-blood (bāhyāṅganā) the division of āloka etc. which is the cause of obscurity (prakṛti), and having obtained the action of Gnosis, i.e. the action of passion, absence-of-passion, and medium-passion (rāga-virāga-madhyarāga-vṛtti), he will again recognize, i.e. point out, her as obscurity present in women of flesh-and-blood. (PK p. 34)

Although this passage is none too clear, it is at least evident that there is a rejection of the “woman of flesh-and-blood”, whose substitute is an interior “Gnosis-Seal”. This tendency towards interiorization seems to be found above all in the later exegetical literature; a good example is provided by Munidatta’s commentary (M) to the Caryāgītī, which very strongly tends to emphasize the interior process, at times even exhorting the adept – as did the commentary to PK – to abandon the Seal of flesh-and-blood, e.g. M 50.2: *By abandoning, o yogins, the delusion of the woman of flesh-and-blood, obtain the perfection of the Great Seal!*

Yet even in this later exegetical literature the concrete, actual performance of the rite remained the ideal. Thus a work as late as the 15th century FBT, which gives a consistently interiorized interpretation of the ritual, nevertheless presents the opinion that Śākyamuni was himself concretely initiated in the Consecration of the Gnosis of Wisdom:

*He equipoised himself in the Space-filling samādhi. At that time all the Buddhas of the ten directions assembled and by the sound of snapping
fingers aroused him from that samādhi... Thereupon he proceeded to the Bodhi-tree. All the Buddhas summoned the daughter of the gods Tilottamā and revealed the method of concrete initiation (dnos dban-du bskurba'i chul bstan) into the third, the Insight-Knowledge Initiation. (FBT p. 39)

The author admits that there is a discrepancy between the teachings of the tantras and the practice as performed in his days:

Although it is stated in the Tantras and authoritative texts that there is an initiation based on the Action Seal, i.e. a concrete “wisdom”, this means the initiation of the “jewel-like” individual among the candidates for the high goal of the Anuttara[-tantra]. Here, the guru units with the vidyā... Nowadays, a person with keen faculties has Bliss produced concretely through a conviction that the guru and the “Knowledge Seal” have united. (FBT p. 319)

As to why this initiation is no longer conferred concretely, the author of FBT gives the following explanation:

Nowadays, we do not find such hierophants, neophytes, along with a vidyā, that possess the complete characteristics as have been set forth. Hence, ... (the disciple) imagines he has been made to enter into union on account of the vividness in his mind that the body of himself and the vidyā is the desire-god in the sense of the “Father-Mother” union. Thereby, in one with keen faculties, bliss is produced concretely. (FBT p. 323)

This passage, reflecting, among other things, the pan-Indian theory of cosmic degeneration, clearly implies a nostalgia for the concrete consummation of the consecration, believed to have been conferred, as we have seen, on the Buddha. For the fact remains that there can be no doubt as to the actuality of the tantric rites. This is perfectly clear from the texts we have studied, and is further supported, albeit indirectly, by the historical fact that similar movements have played an important part in Indian religious history, for example the Vaishnava sahajiyā movement or the “left-handed” Śākta ritual.

The present study is not primarily a comparative one. Yet it will be useful to examine, however briefly, some of those “hidden wellsprings of Indian religious life” to which Snellgrove, quoted above, referred. Thereby it will be possible – and this I believe to be important – to see the structure and the implications of the Buddhist tantric consecrations in a wider context.

One of the most striking features of the Buddhist tantras is the role played by the female partners of gods as well as of men. The role of the Action-Seal, the physical female partner, during the various consecrations is indispensable, at
least according to certain texts: "How could the distinction between the Moments and the Joys be realized without the Action-Seal? Therefore the Action-Seal must not be vilified". This particular feature has been interpreted as an aspect of a general resurgence of the non-Aryan religious substratum, manifested in the tantric movement, Hindu as well as Buddhist, i.e. a resurgence of a religious universe in which the role of the female creative force, manifested in every woman, comes to the fore. With all possible reservations for the Buddhist tantras, where the active part is always played by the male element ("Means", "Compassion", etc.) and the female element is represented as passive ("Wisdom", "Void", etc.), this nevertheless seems to provide a plausible explanation of the emergence of erotic symbolism – and practices! – in Buddhism.

The other major "well-spring" with which we are concerned is to be found in the Upanishads, for here we discover, at an early stage in Indian religious life, that identification of the sexual act and of ritual which is so typical of the tantras. Thus the Brhadāranyaka-up. expresses the sexual act in terms of ritual; i.e. the sexual act is sanctified by being homologized with a ritual:

La femme, en vérité, est Agni. Son giron est le combustible, les poils la fumée, la vulve la flamme, ce qu'on y introduit les charbons, la jouissance les étincelles. Dans ce feu-là les dieux offrent le sperme; de cette offrande nait l'homme (VI.2.13).

Or the sexual act may be regarded as a liturgical chant:

Il l'appelle, c'est le hīṅkāra; il lui fait sa proposition, c'est le prastāva; il s'étend avec la femme, c'est l'udgīthā; il s'étend sur la femme, c'est le pralīḥāra; il arrive au terme, c'est le nidhana. Ceci est le (sāman) Vāmadevya réalisé dans le coit.

Celui qui connaît ainsi que le Vāmadevya se réalise dans le coït, celui-à s'accouple, il se reproduit de coït en coït, il va jusqu'au terme de sa vie . . . Il ne faut se refuser à aucune; telle est l'application pratique. (Chāndogya-up II. 5. 13.1–2)

Conversely, we find that as early as in the Brähmaṇas, the ritual itself was explained in sexual terms:

Si, dans le cours d'une récitation, le prêtre sépare les deux premiers quarts du. vers, et rapproche étroitement les deux autres, c'est que la femme écarte les cuisses et que l'homme les serre dans l'accouplement; le prêtre représente ainsi l'accouplement, afin que le sacrifice donne une postérité nombreuse. La récitation à voix basse par le hotar est une émission de semence; l'adhvaryu, quand le hotar lui adresse l'appel sacramental, se met à quatre pattes et détourage le visage; c'est que les quadrupèdes se tournent le dos pour émettre la semence.
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This passage is of great interest, for it provides an early precedent for the use of sexual terms to describe a ritual which in fact did not involve overtly sexual actions. As we have seen, this is precisely what happened with the tantric ritual: the erotic descriptions of it were interpreted in terms of images expressing an interiorized ritual – the tantras prolonging in this respect, too, i.e. in the development of "interiorization of ritual", an Upanishadic tradition.

Dealing with the tantras, it is, in fact, difficult to say where a ritual, whether external or interior, is described in sexual terms, and where a sexual act is expressed in ritual terms. The problem has been well expressed by Tucci:

...the cosmology, mythology and soteriology of India are dominated by the presence of sex. The processes of speculative thought are directed towards the erection of finespun philosophical and mystical structures which transform the erotic and sexual element into a symbol of the stages of the divine epiphany or into an object of meditation, sublimating and purifying it to such an extent that it is not always easy to separate the two interpretations and distinguish the real from the allegorical sense... Tantric thought... is subjected to the same process of sublimation and "transference" – not always with complete success.

The texts are in fact steeped in that systematic ambiguity of erotic terminology which perhaps no-one has stressed more clearly than Eliade:

Tantric texts are often composed in an "intentional language (sandhyābhiṣṭa), a secret, dark, ambiguous language in which a state of consciousness is expressed by an erotic term and the vocabulary of mythology or cosmology is charged with Hathayogic or sexual meanings... The semantic polyvalence of words finally substitute ambiguity for the usual system of reference in every ordinary language...; through language itself... the yogin must enter the plane on which semen can be transformed into thought, and vice versa.

The ambiguity which Eliade has so well described follows, as far as the Buddhist tantras are concerned, from the ambiguity of all phenomena, an idea which derives, ultimately, from the Madhyamika doctrine of the two planes of truth or of being – the relative (samvrti-satya) and the absolute (paramārtha-satya). Thus the bodhicitta, the Thought-of-Enlightenment, may be regarded from the point of view of either mode of being: as relative it is the physical seed, “white as white jasmine”, as Absolute it is “essentially blissful” (HVT II.iv.30). In either case it is the same Thought-of-Enlightenment: “The Lord has the form of sukra” (HVT I.viii.50); “I am the Master with the thirty-two marks, the Lord with the eighty characteristics... and my name is sukra” (HVT II.i.41).

The importance of this dual, at once concrete and spiritual, nature of the Thought-of-Enlightenment cannot be too strongly stressed. It is only in the light
of this concept that the initiations studied in the previous chapter can be understood as truly religious acts, profoundly affecting their participants. This we must keep in mind in particular when dealing with the Consecration of the Secret. In this connection, it should be pointed out — apparently no one has previously done so — that this consecration implies, as far as the preceptor is concerned, an emission of the Thought-of-Enlightenment; how could it otherwise be transferred to the pupil? Thus the statement that “all Vajrayāna texts seem to insist on seminal retention as a sine qua non” (A. Bharati)\(^93\), is only true if it is understood to apply to the third consecration (admittedly the most important one); but this distinction has so far, to the best of my knowledge, not been made. Thus there is no need, as does Bharati\(^94\), to resort to forced interpretations in connection with passages like the following (PVS III.20–21):

The most blessed Master, having thereupon entered into union with the Seal, and having thereafter caused the Thought-of-Enlightenment to enter the Lotus-Casket, the dwelling of the Buddhas, . . . thereupon consecrates the neophyte, who is (now) united with the Seal.

These lines refer to the second and the third consecration in due succession. – Now, there must be a reason for this emission, and this reason is, I believe, suggested in the passage from FBT quoted above (p. 319): the union of the Thought-of-Enlightenment (seed, white, male, etc.) with the female fluid (blood, red, female, etc.)\(^95\) points to that union of Wisdom and Means, manifested in the form of man and woman, which the neophyte will experience for himself in the subsequent consecration, thus restoring the unity and fullness of the Buddhanature. Even if the entire sequence of consecrations is envisaged as taking place inside the neophyte, the function of the imagery remains the same as that of the external rite.

III. The relation of the “Moments”, “Joys”, and “Seals” to the ritual

We have seen that the progress of the neophyte towards complete spiritual realization is made possible by a series of consecrations which at the same time indicates the various stages of this progress. However, the same process of spiritual maturation is conceived of as a series of four “Joys” (ānanda) taking place at the appropriate “Moments” (kṣaṇā). Further, the female partner, indispensable in one form or another throughout the ritual of the major consecrations, is likewise conceived of as fourfold. It is therefore important to establish, as far as possible, the relationship between these various concepts.

Basing ourselves, first of all, on HVT, we discover the following correspondences\(^96\) (Fig. II).

As Fig. II shows, each Joy, experienced at a particular Moment, is connected with one of the four Consecrations\(^97\). How, then, are the four Joys described in
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**Name of Joy**

(I.i.28; x.13; II.iii.9)
Joy (ānanda)
Perfect Joy (paramānanda)
Joy of Cessation (viramananda)
Simultaneously-arisen Joy (sahajānanda)

**Corresponding Moment**

(I.i.24; II.iii.6)
Variety (vicitra)
Development (vipāka)
Blank (vilakṣaṇa)

**Consecration**

(II.iii.10)
Master
Secret
Wisdom

**Consecration**

(II.iii.10)
Master
Secret
Wisdom

**HVT**? A number of relevant passages of HVT may be rendered schematically as follows (Fig. III).

Two questions arise from the material presented in Figs. II and III – firstly, what is the significance of the succession of the various Joys, and secondly, what is the relationship between the Joys and the four Consecrations? We shall examine these questions in detail.

What emerges with great clarity from Fig. III is the transcendency, the radical "otherness", of the Fourth Joy in relation to the other three. They are "of this world", but the Simultaneously-arisen Joy “exists not in these three” (I.x.15); in it there is found “neither passion nor absence of passion, nor yet a middle state” (I.vii.35;x.17), therein is “neither Wisdom nor Means” (I.vii.35 – Wisdom and Means correspond to nirvāṇa and saṃsāra respectively, cf. I.vii. 34); it is “other than these three and knows neither passion nor the absence of passion” (II.vi.8). Consequently, it is ineffable: “By no other may it be told, and from no one may it be received” (I.vii.36), “It is known intuitively” (ātmanā jñāyate) (ibid.) and can only be directly experienced by oneself (svaśāṃśvedya)98. Thus the Moment at which it takes place is said to be Blank (vilakṣaṇa, lit. “void of characteristics”) or “free of diversity” (II.iii. 22)99.

It would therefore appear to be quite natural that the Simultaneously-arisen Joy should come last – for what could there be beyond this? Nevertheless two texts in AVS – the Sekanirṇaya (SN) (p. 28 I. 3–4) and the Caturmudrānīścaya

**Joy**

**is caused by:**
desire for contact

**results in:**
some bliss

**characterized as:**
a middle of this state

**Perfect Joy**

desire for bliss

**result in:**
yet more bliss

**characterized as:**
a passionless state

**Joy of Cessation**

the passing of passion

**result in:**
the Sim.-arisen Joy

**characterized as:**
exists not in these three

Simultaneously-arisen Joy

thereby the fourth is realized (HVT I.vii.33)

**result in:**
Joy (I.vii.32)

**characterized as:**
exists not in these three

(Fig. III)
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(CMN) 100 (p. 32 1. 11) – list this Joy as third. So, in fact, does HVT in three passages where the Simultaneously-arisen Joy is stated to come “at the end of the Joy that is Perfect and at the beginning of the Joy of Cessation” (II.ii.40; v.66, 70). This order is apparently contradicted not only by the passages quoted in Figs. II and III (and by the very name “the Fourth”), but by the term viramânta (HVT I.viii.24) which is used to describe the Simultaneously-arisen Joy and which is translated by Snellgrove as “the End of Cessation” 101. However, this term might just as well be translated “having Cessation at its end”, in other words, “followed by the Joy of Cessation”.

The crucial point is the Joy of Cessation. If it is regarded as the third Joy, one would, as suggested by Fig. II, a priori suspect that it may be correlated with the third Consecration, i.e. the Consecration of the Gnosis of Wisdom. We thus arrive at the second question, viz. the relationship of the Joys and the four Consecrations. We have seen (Chap. I) that the third Consecration involves the ritual union of the disciple and the Seal. In other words, the Joy of Cessation would appear to be connected with sexual union. This is further brought out by the term designating the corresponding Moment, vimarâda, which literally means “rubbing”. Thus HVT I.viii.31, where the third Joy is called “the Joy of coition” (suratânanda) -- the preceding two Joys having been characterized as yogin and yoginâ respectively -- becomes intelligible 102.

However, in the act of sexual union all four Joys are experienced; this is clearly stated by CMT (pp. 56–57), speaking of the Consecration of Wisdom:

Then the teacher should whisper in his ear the division of the Four Blisses ... and embracing Wisdom ... he (i.e. the disciple) should aim at the Four Blisses. When that is completed, he should present himself before his teacher ... 

The following passage from ST (pp. 54–55) likewise serves to show that the four Joys follow each other in one continuous process. In this passage the succession of the various Joys is seen as a result of the downward movement of the Thought-of-Enlightenment from its reservoir in the brain 103, through the seven cakras or “lotuses” of the body 104, to the tip of the Vajra (the “Vajra-Jewel”):

The coming of the sukra, consisting of the five lunar digits called Nandâ. Bhadrâ, Jayâ, Riktâ and Pûrpa, 105 from the lotus with four petals of the ushidha 106 to the lotus with sixteen petals of the forehead, (and its) permeation (vyâpti) of both, is the First Joy.

Thereafter (follows) the Perfect Joy, in the throat and in the heart: (the coming of the sukra) from the lotus with thirty-two petals of the throat to the lotus with eight petals of the heart (and their) complete permeation is Perfect Joy.

Thereupon follows the Joy of Cessation: (the coming of sukra) from the lotus with sixty-four petals of the navel to the lotus with thirty-two...
petals of the sexual organ (guhya) (and their) permeation is the Joy of Cessation. And (while the sukra is) in the navel it (i.e. the Joy of Cessation) is characterised by various delights such as close embraces, the sudden drawing-in of breath and deep moanings (due to thrills of pleasure), etc. However, as (the bliss arising when the sukra is) in the sexual organ eludes concrete description, the Joy of Cessation, arising at the end (of sexual union), is the mere perception of bliss, being characterised by the thought “I am experiencing bliss”.

But a delight which is gone is not bliss; therefore, the coming of the drop which has the sixteen lunar digits from the lotus of the sexual organ to the lotus with eight petals of the Vajra-Jewel which is hidden therein (i.e. in the sexual organ) is the Simultaneously-arisen Joy. It is permanent due to the absence of emission (of sukra) through the force of retention.

This extremely instructive passage, which, on the strength of the passage from CMT just quoted, we may take to refer to the third Consecration, has certain important implications. Firstly it distinguishes between actual bliss of orgasm and the perception or reflection that such bliss has been experienced. It is this perception, “coming at the end” (paryantaja), which properly speaking is the Joy of Cessation. “Consummation (vimarda) is defined as the reflection (ālocana) that bliss has been experienced by oneself” (HVT II.iii.8). Thus the Simultaneously-arisen Joy arises simultaneously – and hence its name – with the orgasm, i.e. at the Moment of Consummation, but its nature is transcendent, for that which enters the final cakra, that of the Vajra-Jewel, is the sixteenth digit of the Moon, in other words the Thought-of-Enlightenment in its absolute mode of being. From the point of view of profane time this ultimate Joy is also transient, for while “arising simultaneously” with orgasm, it is almost immediately replaced by the Joy of Cessation when grasped by the consciousness (“I have enjoyed bliss”), thus replacing unity with duality.

Secondly the final line of this passage from ST shows that the transcendent nature of the experience when the Thought-of-Enlightenment enters the Vajra-Jewel depends on its non-emission. Bodhicittam notsājīt – “the Thought-of-Enlightenment must not be emitted”, on this the texts insist. We need not doubt that this is to be taken in a literal sense. Techniques for retention or re-absorbtion of the semen are well-known in Hatha-yoga and are still practised by certain Indian yogins, thus prolonging beliefs and practices attested as early as the Upanishads.

Thus sexual union, if performed ignorantly and with profane intentions, will not entail the experiencing of ultimate bliss; for the ultimate Joy, while ‘arising simultaneously’ with orgasm, will not arise at all unless the neophyte has been properly prepared, both yogically and sacramentally. It would be a fatal mistake to confuse the essentially profane experience of orgasm with the Simultaneously-arisen Joy. Hence CMN (p. 33), to which we shall return, warns us that:
Masters who teach evil doctrines, having performed the (Consecration of the) Gnosis of Wisdom and having stated that "The Simultaneously-arisen (joy) has (now) been experienced!" cause (the neophyte) to feel (false) satisfaction.

The confusion into which such masters lead their neophytes is compared, as we shall see, with the erroneous belief that the reflection of a face in a mirror is the face itself. In other words, a profane orgasm, however blissful, is not identical with the ultimate state of spiritual transcendence; yet the similarity — whether deceptive or real — is so close that CMN (p. 33) calls the bliss of sexual union "the inferior Simultaneously-arisen (Joy)", adding, however, that this "is not the immobility of the (transcendent) Simultaneously-arisen (Joy)".

In the context of the Consecrations, then, the ultimate Joy is experienced during the third Consecration, i.e. it arises simultaneously with it. This is stated clearly in passages of which the following (M1,2) is typical:

Having obtained the Consecration of the Gnosis of Wisdom, ... measure the Fourth Joy! ... In the Joy of Cessation, know the Simultaneously-arisen Joy!

Thus from point of view of consecration, it is necessary that the Joy of Cessation should be fourth. "If Consummation is the reflection (viz. "I have enjoyed bliss"), how can it be thought to come as third?" (AVS p.28) Snellgrove, who quotes this passage from AVS, has already suggested this:

"One suspects that the placing of the Joy Innate as third is, however, in direct analogy with the ritualistic embrace and actual experience. As third, it is followed by the Joy called Cessation, which is a return to normal experience".

This conclusion receives final confirmation from CMS (AVS p. 32) where we find the following significant passage:

When one places Blank in the middle (i.e. between Development and Consummation), this is to be understood in (the context of) Consecration. In Hathayoga, however, the position of Simultaneously arisen (Joy) and of (the corresponding) Blank must be understood to be at the end. But this has been taught by the Lord both in the context of Consecration and of Hathayoga.

Placing the Joy of Cessation last reflects accuracy of observation both in the context of the ritual, and in psychological terms. While it is not quite clear what is meant by "Hathayoga" in the passage quoted from CMN, I nevertheless suspect that it indicates an interiorized experiencing of the Four Joys, connected with the upward march of the Thought-of-Enlightenment through the cakras of the navel, heart, throat, and head, the latter being frequently referred to, for example in M, as the "cakra of Great Bliss" (2.4, 8.2, 16.5, 21.4, 47.2), equated
with the "Fourth Bliss" (16.2)\textsuperscript{116}. The tendency to list the Joys in this particular succession (as in HVT I.i.28; x.13, etc.) would also be strengthened by the universal Indian fondness for contrasting three stages comprising various aspects of profane, mundane existence, with a fourth, indicating transcendency, sacrality, etc., typified in the well-known list of the states of consciousness (waking state, dream, dreamless sleep; "the fourth")\textsuperscript{117}.

We now turn to the fourfold set of Seals. They are enumerated as follows (Fig. IV) in our texts.

Fig. IV shows that there is considerable disagreement between the various texts as to the order of the Seals. For instance, while the Great Seal (mahāmudrā) is placed last in the majority of the texts, its position as third in AVS corresponds to the position in that text of the Simultaneously-arisen Joy. We may further note that PK identifies the Gnosis-Seal (jñānamudrā) with the Dharma-Seal; in TDK, however, it takes the place of the Convention-Seal (samayamudrā). Finally, YRM places the Convention-Seal second, which is in conflict with the other texts. Further discussion of the problems posed by these discrepancies will not be undertaken here; at the present stage, it will be of greater importance to attempt to define the nature of each Seal, and with this end in view, I shall now proceed to translate a number of relevant passages, beginning with three passages from ST:

The Action-Seal bestows fleeting bliss (ksarasukha), the Gnosis-Seal bestows quivering bliss (spandasukha), the Great Seal bestows motionless bliss (niśpandasukha). (ST p. 36).

The Action-Seal has breasts and hair; she is the cause of bliss in the Realm of Desire (kādhātu). "Action" consists in kissing, embracing, touching the sexual organ, rubbing the Vajra, etc.; the Seal who is characterised thereby gives proof of herself (pratyayakāriṇī), and the proof in this case has the characteristic of fleeting bliss. "She gives happiness (mud-am), i.e. a high degree of bliss, or delight (ra-tim) – hence, she is called "Seal" (mud-rā).

The Gnosis-Seal is imagined by one’s mind (syacitta-parikalpitā) . . . It is knowledge, the cause of bliss in the Realm of Form (rūpadhātu), characterised by the imagining of previous smiles, states of enjoyment, etc.\textsuperscript{118} Here the proof has the characteristic of quivering bliss\textsuperscript{119}.
“It is great and it is a Seal hence it is called the Great Seal. Further, its greatness consists in its being endowed with all excellent forms, not its restrictedness (??). Here the proof is void of elements which can be imagined by one’s own mind, being (nothing but) the appearance of one’s mind, (svacittapratibhāsa) preceded by signs such as smoke etc.; (yet) it is accessible to yogins ‘like an opposing army’. But the Fruit-Seal is the pleasure of the Great Seal, characterised by the knowledge of supreme imperishable bliss. (ST p.56).

When the Thought-of-Enlightenment, embraced by its own Wisdom, i.e. the Action-Seal etc., has reached the lotus of the Vajra-Jewel, (there ensues) by means of the Action-Seal, the state of fleeting bliss in which the Moon has entered the Yajra-Jewel.

By means of the Gnosis-Seal the state of quivering bliss (is brought about). “Quivering” – (by this is understood) a retention of that which is fleeting, being like a flow. When these two states of bliss are manifested, they produce perfection in this world, characterised by mastery in the Realms of Desire and of Form.

By means of the Great Seal, however, which is an imperishable mental state (nispandāksiṣarabhāvanā), perfection transcending this world, characterised by knowledge, is brought about. (ST p.62).

The most complete description of the four Seals is found in CMN (AVS p.31–32), of which the greater part will now be translated:

The nature of the Action-Seal will now be described: the Seal who consists of ‘action’, i.e. of body, speech and mind, and whose nature is mental-construction (kalpanā) – in that Action-Seal “The (four) Joys arise distinguished by the Moments. And from knowledge of these Moments the knowledge of Bliss is consummated in that sound EVAM”...

“All that exists is simultaneously-arisen”: it is said to be ‘simultaneously-arisen’ because it may be compared to a reflection which arises simultaneously (sahajācchāyānukārītvāt). The reflection which arises simultaneously produces a Gnosis which is similar to the Simultaneously-arisen (Joy). (Therefore) the (Consecration of) Gnosis of Wisdom is ‘simultaneously-arisen’. But for that very reason, too, the origin of the Simultaneously-arisen (Joy) is not to be found in the Gnosis of Wisdom, (that origin) “whose nature, known as Simultaneously-arisen, has the uncontrived characteristic of all dharmas”. Therefore, having obtained an Action-Seal, the corresponding fruit (nisyanda-phalam) is obtained. Outcome (nisyanda) is similar activity. ‘Similarity’ (may be illustrated as follows): just as the reflection of a face found in a mirror is not the face (itself), but merely produces a likeness thereof as it (i.e. the face) was not actually present (in the
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mirror) before (the image appeared), nor now (that the image is there) – yet people, believing that they have seen their actual face, are satisfied due to an illusion –, thus in the same way masters who teach evil doctrines perform the (Consecration of the) Gnosis of Wisdom, and stating that the Simultaneously-arisen (Joy) has now been experienced, they cause (the neophyte) to feel (false) satisfaction. And being satisfied, they have no idea of the Dharma-Seal. But as they do not know the Dharma-Seal, how can that which is spontaneously-produced (akṛtrima) and which is called Simultaneously-arisen be obtained by means of the Action-Seal alone, who is not spontaneously-produced? For the appearance of a result depends on its cause being of the same nature, and not of a different nature; thus from a śālī-seed appears a śālī-sprout, and not that of a kodravya. Thus from proximity to the spontaneously-produced Dharma-Seal arises the spontaneously-produced Simultaneously-arisen (Joy). Therefore the Dharma-Seal is said to be the cause of the Great Seal, difference in that which is no difference being postulated by means of a figurative expression.

Why is this? Here the Lord has said:

"The sacred syllable E, adorned at its centre by the syllable V A M, is the abode of all delights, the casket of Buddha-gems" (HVT II.iii.4).

As it may be compared to a reflection of the Buddhas (buddhacchāyānukārītvāt), the 'casket' is the basis, i.e. the support; hence the Lotus of the Action Woman is a heap of 'gems', i.e. an abundance of Joy. When the jewel of the relative Thought-of-Enlightenment, by way of the central psychic-channel (avadhūti), has entered that pure place during the pleasurable union of the male and female sexual organs, at that moment arises the knowledge, called "momentary" (kṣanika), which is known as the inferior simultaneously-arisen (Joy) (aparasahajākhyam). (But) that is not the immobility of the (transcendent) Simultaneously-arisen (Joy) (sahajanispandaḥ). In accordance with its nature it is called, both in Consecration and in Hatha-yoga, the corresponding fruit accompanied by the four Moments of the Action-Seal, i.e. the three joys of (the Consecration of) the Gnosis of Wisdom. The setting-forth of the corresponding fruit of the Action Seal is the first.

The Dharma-Seal has the Realm of Dharma as its nature, is not manifested in dispersion (nisprapañca), is free from discursive-thought, non-contrived, non-produced, has Compassion as its nature, is the one agreeable means of Perfect Joy. That which by the perpetuity of its continuity has the nature of the Simultaneously-arisen (Joy) i.e. that which is inseparable from (the Consecration of) Wisdom through (the latter's) simultaneous emergence (therewith), that is called 'Dharma-Seal'...
And thus it has been said by the Lord:

"Lalana has the nature of Wisdom and Rasana consists in the Means, and Avadhiti is in the middle, free from the notions of subject and object" (HVT I.i.14).

The avadhiti which is found in the middle between the lalana and the rasana is no other than the Dharma-Seal, the sole movement of mind in which all things are comprehended and which has the nature of the Simultaneously-arisen; (and it is) the cause of the Great Seal due to its non-difference (therefrom).

The setting-forth of the Dharma-Seal, the fruit of maturation (vipakaphala)\textsuperscript{131}, is the second.

"It is great and it is a Seal" – hence it is called the Great Seal. The Great Seal is without own-nature, is free from the hindrance of objects of knowledge etc., is similar to the clear mid-day sky of autumn, is the basis of all blessings, combining in one nature samsāra and nirvāṇa, its body is Compassion without support, its one form is Great Bliss. And thus (it is said):

"Elements-of-existence not produced by intellection are wholesome, those produced by intellection are unwholesome".

And in the Pravacana (it is said):

"Who has not a single mental image formed by discursive thought, whose intellect is not founded (on any idea), without recollection, without anything formed in the mind, without support – obeisance to thee!"

That of which this is said, is called the Great Seal. By means of that Great Seal, whose form cannot be conceived, the fruit which is called Convention-Seal is born. The setting-forth of the Great Seal, (the fruit of) purity\textsuperscript{132}. That is said to be the Convention-Seal which is a flashing-forth (visphuraṇam) for the good of living beings of Vajradhara in the form of Heruka, an immaculate form which has the nature of the Body of Enjoyment as well as of Illusion . . . . .

The setting-forth of the Convention-Seal, the result of heroic deed (puruṣakāra)\textsuperscript{133}, is the fourth.

Finally, I quote a passage from FBT (p. 321):

"In explanation of the "Action Seal" and the "Knowledge Seal" with which one enters union – by reason of acts (karma) of former lives, one flings himself on the body of a woman, and there realizes, hence "the Action Seal"; and such actions as the mutual embrace with limbs do not require any contemplation by oneself – only the seal itself (or herself) is necessary, hence "the Action Seal". Nowadays, the general explanation of the expression 'renowned Knowledge Seal' is as follows: one
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does not realize in a concrete place, i.e. the woman. However, Knowledge is one’s own samādhi. Being the seal which expands and generates that, it is called “Knowledge Seal”.

Summing up, we may conclude that the Action-Seal is a woman of flesh and blood; she is the “External Seal” (bāhyamudrā). She is also known as the “Action-Woman” (karmānganā). She is the human partner of the adept during the rites. Seen in isolation, her role is provisional; the bliss she gives is “fleeting” (kṣara), and the knowledge which results from the union with her is “momentary” (kṣaṇika). CMN admits that this bliss is “simultaneously-arisen” – in the sense, perhaps, of “spontaneous” – but as such it is “inferior” (apara).

Nevertheless, as far as the four Joys are concerned, the role of the Action Seal becomes crucial – for the neophyte – during the third Consecration, i.e. the Consecration during which he is united with her in her aspect of Wisdom. CMT states that all four Joys are experienced by the neophyte during this Consecration; CMN does not say so explicitly, but nevertheless envisages the succession of the four Seals as a continuous process, beginning with the Action-Seal.

The following Seal is the Dharma-Seal (PK, TDK, CMN) or the Convention-Seal (YRM). CMN discusses the Dharma-Seal at length, stressing its “non-difference” from the final attainment, the Great Seal. As the effect must be similar to the cause, the Dharma-Seal is the cause (kāraṇa) of the Great Seal, both being – in contrast to the Action Seal – “spontaneously-produced” (akṛ-trima). The Dharma-Seal is, in fact, the avadhūtī, the central “psychic-nerve” (nādi) which, located in the spine, pierces the various “psychic-centres” (cakras) on its way to the “Lotus of Great Bliss” situated in the head. PK, as we have seen, identifies the Dharma-Seal with the Gnosis-Seal; and this is supported by M where the avadhūtī is frequently styled “the Gnosis-Seal” 134. The importance of the avadhūtī can hardly be overrated; M, for instance, is nothing but a sustained paean of the divine yoginī in the yogin’s own body – for the Gnosis-Seal is frequently pictured in the songs of CG as a woman, dissolute or socially despised, a ḍombī, a caṇḍālī, a dancing-girl, a harlot, etc. In M the Gnosis-Seal is characterised as “non-self” (nairātmā), i.e. the Void, and as “free of all opacity”, i.e. the defilements of unredeemed matter 135.

ST, as we have seen, places the Gnosis-Seal second. This, however, does not warrant an identification with the Dharma-Seal of CMN, for while the latter is connected with the Realm of Dharma (dharma-dhatu), is free from discursive-thought (nirvikalpā), and is non-produced (utpādāhita), the former is connected with the Realm of Form, and is imagined by one’s mind (svacittaparikalpā).

The Convention-Seal, which CMN places last, is stated to be the form of the fierce deity arising from within the adept as a result of his sādhana; perhaps the “Fruition-Seal” (phalamudrā) described by ST (p. 56) as the imperishable bliss resulting from the attainment of the Great Seal is identical with the Convention-Seal.
The texts studied here seem to suggest that the Gnosis-Seal does not originally belong to the fourfold set, but rather to a—perhaps earlier—threefold set, as found above all in ST (see Fig.IV), but also, it might be added, in M. ST (p. 62)—contrasting in this to some extent with M—is careful to distinguish the Gnosis-Seal, which is characterised as "mundane" (laukika), from the Great Seal, which is "transcendent" (lokottara). In FBT, as we have seen in Chap.II, the Gnosis-Seal replaces the Action-Seal, but is nevertheless mentally personified as a woman; this is also indicated by ST (p. 56) where the Gnosis-Seal is characterised by the remembrance of "former smiles, states of enjoyment, etc." Thus the Gnosis-Seal effectively retains the erotic nature of the Action-Seal.

The Great Seal is identical with Simultaneously-arisen Joy (HVT II.iv.45), Great Bliss (HVT II.ii.31), etc. It cannot be ascertained by means of mental concepts (ST p. 56), and is characterised by omniscience (ST p. 62), etc. It is nothing but "an appearance of one's own mind" (svacittapratibhāsa), and for that very reason cannot be grasped by the mind\(^{136}\). This final state will be further discussed in the following chapter.

The fourfold set of Seals bears, in my opinion, the marks of secondary speculation, based on the doubtlessly older notions of the four Consecrations and four Joys\(^{137}\). An indication of this is the fact that the texts show considerable disagreement as to the order of the Seals, and the fourfold set is in any case unknown in an early and basic tantra like the HVT; here only Seal and Great Seal are referred to, the former being the physical woman, the latter the transcendent state aspired to\(^{138}\). The fact that the physical woman, too, may be referred to as Great Seal "in relative form" (HVT II.viii.1) simply shows that the terminology had not yet—at the stage of HVT—become finally fixed. It would therefore appear—although this can only be verified by further research—that the formulation of the doctrine of the fourfold set of Seals was accompanied by a tendency to de-emphasize the role played by the physical partner of the adept, and replace her—without, however, wholly eliminating her, which could not be done without unbalancing the entire scheme—by the Gnosis-Seal.

Our study has now come to the point where it is possible to attempt the translation of a rather difficult passage of YRM (p. 107-9) which has previously been translated by Snellgrove. However, as my interpretation of the entire passage differs from his, both as to its fundamental structure and on many points of detail, I shall proceed to give my own translation. For the text and for comparison with Snellgrove's translation, the reader is referred to his study of HVT\(^{139}\).

He progresses (car-ati) far from evil elements-of-existence"—hence he is called "Master" (ā-cār-ya). That, indeed, is his practice (samvarā), having the nature of the Consecration of the Master, which with the help of the Action-Seal is a proceeding characterised by the Four Moments and the Four Joys\(^{140}\) ....

Firstly, then, one is consecrated by means of the Consecration of the Master in Hevajra etc., in order that one may become worthy of listen-
ing to, reflecting, and meditating on the yoginitantras. So according to one’s understanding the (Consecrations of the) Master, the Secret, the Wisdom, and the Fourth – characterised by the Four Moments – are experienced. When the zealous application of those who have received the Consecration of the Master and whose sense-faculties are weak has been established, instruction in meditation (bhāvanā) is given by means of the Action-Seal.

Thus – even in the Process of Realization \(^{141}\) – the perception, in accordance with the instruction of the preceptor, of the Four Joys corresponding to the Four Moments by means of the Jewel (of the Vajra) which is placed in the Secret, is called the Consecration of the Secret – because it cannot be explained to yogins in terms of diffuse mental concepts \(^{142}\). In this consecration, instruction in meditation on the Convention-Seal is communicated to those of medium sense-faculties.

Likewise (the Consecration of the Gnosis of) Wisdom: “Wisdom” is the highest Gnosis; “Gnosis” is the quality of all elements-of-existence of being nothing but one’s own mind \(^{143}\). The consecration which has the purpose of bringing this (Gnosis) about, is the Consecration of the Gnosis of Wisdom. So the marking – with the help of the External Seal and in accordance with the instruction of one’s preceptor – of the (Four) Moments, (a marking, that is,) which has the form of the unity of the three psychicveins corresponding to the three kinds of consciousness: imaginary, contingent, and absolute, by means of one’s (Vajra-) Jewel (placed in the Lotus) – that is to be known as the Gnosis of Wisdom. Being consecrated with that consecration, instruction in the Dharma-Seal, i.e. the “illusion-like samādhi”, is to be communicated to those of strong sense-faculties.

Likewise “Then the Four thus” (HVT II.iii. 10): the consecration by which one sees or realizes that which has the nature of Thusness, Climax-of-being, Realm-of-Elements, etc. without any difference of meaning, (that is the Fourth Consecration). Thusness is expressed by the word “thus”; “then” means that one gives it at the same time as the (Consecration of the) Gnosis of Wisdom.

So that which, possessing the characteristic of absence of discrimination as to definite place of origin, is made – in accordance with the instruction of one’s preceptor and with the help of an External Seal – the object of perception by means of a process (yoga) which is not the object of perception, that is called the Fourth...

Therefore, precisely at this time of the Fourth Consecration, there is the attainment of the Great Seal for those beings who are fully perfected. (YRM p. 107–09).

Beyond doubt this passage raises as many questions as it answers. Granted that YRM represents a later stage in the development of Buddhist tantricism
than HVT which it explains, it nevertheless enables us to complete and clarify our study of the tantric consecration in certain important respects.

In the first place, it correlates the Four Seals and the Four Consecrations, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action-Seal</th>
<th>Master</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convention-S°</td>
<td>Secret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharma-S°</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great S°</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also note that the union of the neophyte with the Wisdom is here stated to take place during the Consecration of the Secret, and that nothing is said of a transference of the Thought-of-Enlightenment from the preceptor to the disciple during this consecration, on which other texts, as we have seen, insist. The essential point, however, is this: during the first consecration, the preceptor ("master") unites with the Action-Seal, and experiences, in due succession, the various Joys; in the second, the neophyte enters the same union, and experiences the same succession of Joys – i.e., strictly speaking, during the second consecration he experiences only the second (or perhaps the first and second) Joy, but the important point is that the third and fourth consecrations follow – provided he has the required spiritual keenness – while the disciple remains in union with his Wisdom. Thus in the second consecration, he is united with the Action-Seal (the "Jewel" being placed in the "Secret"); but at the same time he is initiated into the Convention-Seal, which is a "meditation", literally a "thought-construction" (bhāvanā)144. Thereupon – if he has the ability – he enters a state of samādhi, i.e. "enstasis", in which there is no "thought-construction", only "Gnosis" (jnāna) in which all elements-of-existence reveal themselves as being nothing but one’s own mind (in its pure, non-discursive state) – this is the Dharma-Seal; and at that very instant he may experience that transcendent, eternal state, beyond the range of words (vāggocarāti) which is the Great Seal. Here YRM exhibits great clarity of expression: the Great Seal is experienced, hence "one makes it an object of perception" (ālambanikaroti); however, the process by which it becomes an object of perception cannot in itself be an object of experience (anālambara), for as we have seen (HVT II.iv.45), the Great Seal is Simultaneously-arisen, it manifests itself "without any interval" (anantaram, YRM). To this final state, then, we shall now turn our attention.

**IV. Mysticism and the experience of sahaja**

We shall now study the actual experience of sahaja, particularly as described in HVT. The various ways in which this text describes the Simultaneously-arisen condition will be arranged under a series of headings as shown below145.
ON THE CONCEPT OF SAHAJA

We are, first of all, warned that as to the actual experience of sahaja,
(1) it is ineffable,
that is to say, words convey no accurate idea of what it is: “it surpasses the
scope of words” (I.viii.51). Hence “By no other may it be told, and from no-one
may it be received” (I.viii.36). Thus it can only be “experienced by oneself”
(svāsāmvedya) (I.viii.46, 51; ix.3; x.8), and may in this way be “known intu-
itively” (I.viii.36). The experience is said to be “like a maiden’s (first experience
of) sexual bliss” or “like the dream of a fool” (II.v.70) – both very apt images,
the first pointing to the difference between this experience and anything experi-
enced before, the second to the impossibility of giving a satisfactory, coherent
account of it.

Yet here, as in all other religious traditions, we find that in fact quite a lot has
been said about that which is claimed to be beyond words. The most guarded
expression, perhaps, is that “like the sky it is pure and void” (I.x.9), or that it is
“calm” (nistarāṅga, lit. “without waves”) (I.x.34, 36) and “undifferentiated”
(I.x.36). But more frequently, positive statements are made, for instance to the
effect that
(2) it is blissful.

This is underlined by the very term sahajananda, “Simultaneously-arisen
Joy”, which we have already discussed. It is also referred to as “Great Bliss”
(mahāsukha) (I.viii.5, 46; II.ii.34, 59; iii.2, 22; v.68) – a term which is extremely
common in other texts. It is referred to simply as “bliss” (saukha) (I.v.21), or as “the highest delight” (paramarati) (I.x.33). In this connection we
may also note the various passages, translated above, discussing the relationship
between the bliss experienced in the course of the first three consecrations and
the Simultaneously-arisen bliss.

Not only is it blissful, but like that instant in profane life in which love
reaches its climax,
(3) it is timeless,
or, which amounts to the same, eternal. “Seeking after the Great Symbol, he will
gain thereby that eternal state (sātatyam)” (I.viii.43); “This is . . . the great bliss,
perfect and eternal” (II.ii.59). – In M 4.1 the Great Seal is explicitly stated to be
kāla-rahita, “unconnected with time”. – Time being abolished, there is nothing
one may not know; hence
(4) it is a state of omniscience.

This fact is expressed in various ways. It is “knowledge” (jñāna) (I.viii.49;
x.32), “great knowledge” (mahājñāna) (I.i.12; II.iii.24), “perfect knowledge of
all elements-of-existence” (sarvadharmaparijñāna) (I.viii.44), or it is said to
consist of “the knowledge that pertains to the Omniscient Ones”, i.e. the
Buddhas (sarvajñājñāna) (I.viii.51). Hence “the Simultaneously-arisen is called
Awakening (bodhi)” (I.x.17).

What is the object of this knowledge, or, to employ a word which carries
something of the same religious implications as jñāna (and is derived from the
same Indo-European root), of this “gnosis”? Properly speaking, it has no object,
for it is “knowledge, free from the ideas of self and other” (I.x.8). For one of the most important aspects of the Simultaneously-arisen state is that

(5) it is an abolition of the duality of subject and object.

This is, of course, one of the basic postulates of all tantric Buddhism, and is expressed in a great variety of ways, employing cosmological, physiological, sexual and other symbols: it is the unity of lalanā and rasanā, the two subsidiary psychic-veins, of Lotus and Vajra, of sun and moon, of Thought-of-Enlightenment and blood, of the Yamunā and Gaṅgā, of samsāra and nirvāṇa, etc., or, in brief, of Wisdom and Means. “The conjunction . . . of lunar disk and solar disk, is the great bliss” (I.viii.4). Speaking of the Simultaneously-arisen Joy, HVT states that “there is neither samsāra nor nirvāṇa. It is the great and perfect bliss, where there is neither self nor other” (II.v.68), or “the essence, pure and consisting in knowledge, where there is not the slightest difference between samsāra and nirvāṇa” (I.x.32). The abolition of the dichotomy of subject and object is also expressed in terms of the various sense-faculties: “In reality there is neither form nor seer, neither sound nor hearer etc. . . . neither thought nor thinker” (I.v.i); “no smell, no sound, no form, no taste” (I.ix.20). In short, “there is neither object nor subject” (I.x.33), hence “there is neither meditator, nor whatso’er to meditate” (I.v.11), for “nothing is mentally produced in the highest bliss, and no-one produces it” (I.x.33). – Before proceeding, we may note that it is already quite clear that “bliss”, “omniscience”, “abolition of duality”, are simply one and the same. To say that they are “interdependent” or even “aspects” of the one experience, would be to separate them, for there is only “a single substance of the one same flavour” (samarasam) (I.viii.40).

With many different images HVT makes it clear that

(6) it is cosmic.

“It is the origin of all that is . . . it is there that the threefold world arises” (I.viii.39); “it is the life (prāṇa) of living things . . . all-pervading” (I.x.10), “the stuff the world is made of . . . the universal consciousness, the primeval puruṣa, Isvara, ātman, jīva, sattva, kāla, pudgala” (I.x.11–12). “This bliss is . . . all things moving and unmoving” (II.ii.32); “Whatever things there are, moving and motionless, all these things am I” (I.viii.39). “The whole of existence arises in me . . . by me pervaded is this all” (I.viii.41). “Whatevery things there are, whether moving or motionless . . . they are conceived of as the supreme essence (tattvam) and possessing the nature that one possesses oneself. In them there is just one without a second, great bliss which can only be experienced by oneself” (I.viii.45–46). – One notes how the last passage speaks of “identity-with-cosmos”, “abolition-of-duality”, “experience-of-bliss”, and “ineffability” in one breath, to which, as we have seen, “knowledge” and “timelessness” could have been added. In short, “the world is pervaded by bliss” (II.ii.35), or “The whole world is the Simultaneously-arisen, for the Simultaneously-arisen is its essence” (II.ii.44). Duality being abolished, no further explanation can be expected, beyond the fact that “at that moment knowledge . . . assumes one form together with the heavens, hells, and abodes of men” (I.viii.52–53), to which a comment-
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ary adds the following explanation: “At the moment of the arising of the Simultaneously-arisen, everything assumes its nature, and there is none of the conflict of a twofold nature”.

Yet the authors of HVT must have felt that this experience could by no means be reduced to an identification with the universe, and felt compelled to caution that

(7) it transcends the universe.

“Great knowledge abides in the body, but although it pervades all things and exists in the body, it is not in the body that it arises” (I.i.12). It is “the essence of all things and yet free of all things” (I.x.18). And as we have already noted, “the Simultaneously-arisen (Joy) exists not in these three (preceding Joys)” (I.x.15).

Finally – and to the significance of this one can hardly attach too much importance –

(8) it is sacred.

This is powerfully expressed in the awesome figure of Hevajra, who is, as Snellgrove has rightly pointed out, regarded by the Buddhists “as real in the beginning, more real that flesh and blood . . . In fact, the very power of these gods as means of purification (viśuddhi) resides in the initial belief that they instilled . . . as pure symbol they would be powerless.” The apparition of Hevajra is indeed a mysterium tremendum, and his figure is vividly described in HVT (I.iii.13–15; II.v.7–12). As Means, Hevajra is nothing but existence in its “purified” form, i.e. existence as it is when its essential Buddha-nature has been disclosed – “Of Buddha-nature is this world” (I.ix.4). And this Buddha-nature is, as we have seen, identical with Simultaneously-arisen Joy (I.x.17). Thus Hevajra says of himself that “The Simultaneously-arisen Joy I am in essence” (II.v.3) as well as “the essence of all forms” (II.v.2).

To acquire Buddhahood is, indeed, the goal of all Buddhism, and the Buddha-nature forms the basis of all Buddhist conceptions of sacrality. Thus when “the yogin wanders . . . in possession of a nature that is common to all beings” (I.vi.23), it must be realized that “All beings are buddhas” (II.iv.69), and that “There is no being that is not enlightened, if it but knows its own true nature. The denizens of hell, the pretas and the animals, gods and men and titans, even the worms upon the dung-heap, are eternally blissful in their true nature” (II.iv.73–74). – To render this blissful Buddha-nature manifest is the purpose of tantric sādhana, whether externalised in rites or internalised in yoga.

There is one aspect of the ultimate experience, so vividly described in HVT, which is hardly touched on in this text. We have seen that it is described as in some way embracing the entire cosmos; but, as is made very clear in other texts, it is also, and perhaps essentially, the shining forth of that unlimited “luminosity” (prabhāsvāra) which is nothing but one’s own true consciousness or mind (citta). Thus

(9) it is the luminosity of one’s own mind.

HVT states that “the mind (citta) itself is the perfect buddha” (II.iv.75), but says nothing of luminosity. However, according to PK (I.43), the consciousness
is itself luminosity (vijñānāṁ ca prabhāsvarām), and it is the same Luminosity which is the source of all phenomenal existence – the world emerges from it as suddenly and spontaneously as a fish jumps out of the water of a river (PK V.31). Thus there is ultimately no difference between the experience of the luminosity of the consciousness and the experience of identity with the world; but there is, nevertheless, a clear tendency to connect this luminosity with the highest of the bodily cakras, the Lotus of Great Bliss situated in the head. For this cakra, Luminosity sometimes (as in M) functions as a synonym\textsuperscript{153}. Thus Luminosity, identified both with Simultaneously-arisen Joy (M 2.2) and with the mind (citta) (33.4)\textsuperscript{154}, is said to be “hidden in the body” (18.2), and the relative Thought-of-Enlightenment is said to “contain the cause of Luminosity” (18.4).

This experience of sahaja may be interpreted within a broader phenomenological context.

In his book Mysticism and Philosophy (London 1961), W. T. Stace has suggested that the following seven points are common to all or at least most “mystical” experiences, which he for purposes of classification divides into the two basic types of “extrovertive” and “introvertive”\textsuperscript{155}:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extrovertive mystical states</th>
<th>Introvertive mystical states</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Unifying vision – all things perceived as One.</td>
<td>1. Unitary consciousness, void of conceptual or sensuous content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The One permeates all things as “life”, “consciousness”, etc.</td>
<td>2. Non-spatial, non-temporal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common to both types
3. Sense of objectivity or reality.
4. Blessedness, peace, etc.
5. Feeling that what is apprehended is sacred.
6. Paradoxicality.
7. Alleged to be ineffable.

If we accept these criteria as valid and sufficient to identify an experience as “mystical”\textsuperscript{156}, it will immediately appear that the experience of sahaja, of Simultaneously-arisen Joy, is a typical example of a “mystical” experience, and, consequently, that tantric Buddhism, which with all its ritualistic paraphernalia only serves to clear the ground, so to speak, for the Simultaneously-arisen Joy, may be characterised as “mysticism”. The importance of this conclusion is obvious, for in spite of its many “exotic” traits, tantric Buddhism immediately becomes more readily intelligible when it has been established that it is nothing but another variant of a universal and fundamental aspect of man’s religious experience.

We may note that the experience of sahaja – whether this term or synonymous terms like Great Bliss, Buddhahood, etc. are used – is both extrovertive and introvertive. It is extrovertive, everything being seen as One – “there is only
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a single substance of the one same flavour.” (HVT I.viii.40); the mystic identifies himself, as we have seen, with “all things, moving and unmoving”. The one, the Essence, with which the mystic merges, is “the life of living things” (I.x.10) – the word which is used, prāṇa, signifies the biological life-force itself. It is the Buddha-nature, and “Of Buddha-nature is this world” (I.ix.4). In this identification with the cosmos, there is, indeed, more than “a hint of immortality”157 – in the exultant words of one of the authors of OG, “Say how Kāṇha should cease to exist! He incessantly shines forth, merged in the three worlds” (42.2).

At the same time, the experience is introvertive. It is “without discursive thought” (nirvikalpaka), it is a condition of “enstasis” (samādhi) in which the sense-faculties no longer occupy themselves with the objects of sense (SP 5); it is an effulgence (prabhāsvara) of consciousness (citta). Thus the experience of sahaja provides a clear confirmation of Stace’s assertion (p.67) that “mystics in general do not distinguish between the introvertive One and the extrovertive One”. And how indeed could they? The experience is non-dual (advaya), free from the notion of subject and object, hence also free from the distinctions of “inner” and “outer”.

From the experience of unity follows the paradoxicality of the experience, for as Stace has pointed out, logic depends on multiplicity158. The paradoxicality of the mystic experience has been characterised by Stace as “the vacuum-plenum paradox” (p.163), i.e. it is simultaneously described in positive as well as negative terms. This he formulates as follows (ibid.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Aspects</th>
<th>Negative Aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(plenum)</td>
<td>(vacuum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) has qualities</td>
<td>has no qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) is personal</td>
<td>is impersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) is dynamic, creative, active</td>
<td>is static, motionless, inactive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This analysis fits our case extraordinarily well. The Essence a) “is replete with all forms”, yet it is “Emptiness” (SP 31). b) It is personified in the figure of Hevajra, or in the union of Hevajra and Nairātmyā, and “this unity is known as Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Amogha, Ratna, Ārolika, and Sātvika, as Brahmā, Viśnu, Śiva, Sarva, Vibuddha, and Tattva” (HVT I.v.12) – yet it is, equally clearly, impersonal (“Essence”, “Non-duality”, etc.). c) Finally, it is dynamic, it is “the source of the world” and “the life of living things”; but it is also static, it “does not come from anywhere, nor does it go anywhere, nor does it remain in any place” (SP 30). – It is difficult to regard paradoxicality as anything but yet another expression of ineffability, and our texts frequently prefer the way of negation rather than that of affirmation. “The yogin gains fulfilment in that which is no fulfilment, for its characteristic is the very absence of any characteristic” (HVT I.x.20). We are warned (SP 2) that even to say of the Essence that it is “eternal” or “bliss” is nothing but a mental construction (saṅkalpa). As YRM
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(p. 108) subtly observes, the final mystical rapture may be perceived, but not the process (yoga) by which it comes about\(^{159}\).

In an article criticizing Stace’s book, J. Findlay has stressed that “mysticism is essentially a frame of mind connected with an absolute of some sort”\(^{160}\), and proceeds to give a definition of an “absolute” which he claims is characterized by the following features: (1) it is “irremovable and necessarily existent and self-existent”, it has “uniqueness and singleness”; (2) it “shows forth absolutely every type of excellence . . . in a fashion so transcendent that it can . . . be rather said to be all these types of excellence . . . the sole cause for their presence in any finite case” (p. 153). As far as we are concerned, this definition only serves to complete the one given by Stace, for once again, it is immediately evident that sahaja, the Spontaneously-arisen Joy, is precisely such an “absolute”. It is “irremovable” (akṣara, cf. the passages translated from ST) and “self-existent” (svayambhumāna, SP 9), and as we have seen, “Shows forth every type of excellence” (sarvakaravaropeta). This is, I think, significant, for it is precisely in its capacity of being an “absolute” that the Simultaneously-arisen Joy transcends all other types of experience, no matter how deceptively similar they may appear to be, and thus provides tantric Buddhism with its profound religious dimension.

A few points remain to be discussed. The first concerns the knowledge or “gnosis” (jñāna) which accompanies, or rather, is an integral part of, the mystic experience as described in our texts. For it is, indeed, an integral part; and it is rather surprising that Stace has not included it among the criteria he posits for the mystic experience\(^{161}\). It is of course not a knowledge about “something”, duality being abolished; in this sense, the mystic experience is noncognitive. Yet it is an infinite expansion of the yogin’s perception of reality, “a knowledge of creation . . . so perfect and intoxicating that no tongue could express it”\(^{162}\). The very term bodhi, “Awakening”, fully testifies to this.

Secondly, as a result of this “gnosis”, the experience leads to a permanent change in the adept. The experience itself is timeless; yet when the yogin returns to the realm of time, he is not the same as he was before. It is not a case of merely transforming “idealistically the whole of phenomenal existence into a mystic absolute”\(^{163}\), but of truly seeing samsāra and nirvāṇa hence-forth as one. “Such as is samsāra, such is nirvāṇa. There is no nirvāṇa other than samsāra, we say” (HVT II.iv.32). “The wise man continues in samsāra, but this samsāra is recognized as nirvāṇa” (ibid., 34). This state of “two-in-one” is technically known as yuganaddha, “bound to the (same) yoke”, the image presumably being that of two oxen or horses, samsāra and nirvāṇa, yoked side by side. Numerous descriptions of the perfected yogin, roaming the world in the absolute freedom of yuganaddha, are to be found in tantric literature: “Whatever demon should appear before him, even though it be the peer of Indra, he would have no fear, for he wanders like a lion” (HVT I.vi.25). Several passages in HVT allude to this state of spiritual freedom (I.vi.18–26; II.ii.11–12; ii.41–49), and Chap. VI (Yuganaddhakrama) of PK is wholly devoted to a description of the liberated yogin. For the sake of illustration I translate some ślokas from this chapter:

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(2) When, avoiding the two notions of ‘samsara’ and ‘nirvana’, they are made one, then it is called yuganaddha.

(4) The yogin who wanders, having combined the notion of ‘form’ and ‘formless’, knows yuganaddha.

(5) When there is no dual concept of ‘object’ and ‘subject’, but only nonseparation, then it is called yuganaddha.

(6) He who lives, having abandoned the two concepts of ‘eternity’ and ‘dissolution’, that wise one knows the Essence which is called yuganaddha.

(10) The separation from the notion of ‘non-self of the person’ and ‘non-self of the elements’ is the characteristic of yuganaddha.

(13) When, having known the relative and absolute each by itself according to their division, there is a commingling of both, then it is called yuganaddha.

(16) For whom there at no time is contemplation or non-contemplation – that yogin, remaining in yuganaddha, is free from existence and non-existence.

(19) Having rendered both cause and effect inseparable according to their own nature – that condition of the yogin is yuganaddha, the Buddhas say.

(23) The yogin who thus remains fixed in the state of yuganaddha, he is said to be omniscient, a seer of the Essence, sustainer of the universe.

(24) Fully seeing through the net of maya, having crossed over the sea of saṃsāra, having done what is to be done, the great yogin remains in the cessation of the two (modes of) truth.

(25) This indeed is non-dual knowledge, non-supported cessation, buddhahood, vajrasattva-hood, and also omnipotence.

(30) As to oneself, thus to one’s enemy; as wife, thus daughter; as mother, thus servant-girl; as dombī, thus twice-born woman.

(31) As clothes, thus skin; as jewel, thus chaff; as urine, thus excrements; as rice, thus dung.

(32) As sweet-smelling camphor, thus stench from excreta; as a voice singing praises, thus a voice which is repulsive.

(33) As demon, thus holder-of-Vajra; as night, thus day; as dream, thus that which is seen; as that which is destroyed thus that which remains.

(34) As bliss, thus pain; as villain, thus son; as hell, thus heaven, as evil, thus good.

This type of description of the radical freedom of the accomplished yogin is of course well-known in Indian religious literature; one need only, to quote but one example, point to the 19th and 20th songs of the Aṣṭāvakragītā. N. Smart has submitted the various types of accounts of mystical experiences to a critical analysis, and has suggested that these accounts be divided into four categories, viz. auto-interpretation with a low or with a high degree of ramification, and hetero-interpretation, likewise with a low or with a high degree of ramification. By “ramification” Smart means interpretation, use of symbolic language, theological terms, etc. It seems to me that the accounts of the mystical
experience to be found in the Buddhist tantric literature which we have studied exhibit clear instances of “auto-interpretation with a low degree of ramification”, and that they for that reason should be of considerable interest to anyone undertaking a comparative study of mysticism. If we examine, for instance, the various headings proposed in the previous chapter for the description found in HVT of the mystic state, one is struck by the fact that only a few of them can be said to point to specifically Buddhist “ramifications”.

In fact, the uniqueness of Buddhist tantricism is not, I would suggest, to be found in the mystic experience to which the yogin aspires, but in the ritual which – as a “means-of-approach” (upāya), i.e. as a preliminary procedure – plays a fundamental part in the whole tantric scheme of salvation. This is true whether the ritual was actually performed, or whether it was conceived as an interiorised process, for in the latter case, the basic categories of the process of consecration (the succession of Four Joys, for instance) were nevertheless retained. Thus its insistence – and dependence – on ritual places Buddhist tantricism in a rather unique position compared to the mysticism of other religious traditions. This ritual is described in frankly – often grossly – sexual terms; in it, in fact, we have an instance of a hieros gamos described with a sense of elaborate detail and a psychological insight and subtlety which is absolutely without parallel in the history of religions. Yet it is a hieros gamos utterly void of connection with “fertility” of any kind; its sole legitimation resides in the restoration of the wholeness – or, which is the same thing, the “holiness” – of the Buddha-nature, the unity of Wisdom and Means\(^\text{166}\). In the Buddha-nature the duality of samsāra and nirvāṇa is perceived to be illusory, and the timelessness of their perfect unity is realized in the mystic rapture, as described in a remarkable Buddhist version of the motif of the bride and bridegroom, the Premapaññaka (“Five Stanzas of Love”), in which the unio mystica of Wisdom and Means, although envisaged as a wholly interiorised process, is nevertheless expressed, with complete faithfulness, in terms of the exterior ritual of consecration (AVS p.58):

“If there was no beloved bridegroom, i.e. ‘reflection’ in the form of origination-in-dependence, the loving bride, the Void, would be regarded as no better than dead\(^\text{167}\).

The Void is the much-beloved bride, unequalled in beauty; and were he separated from her, the beloved bridegroom would be fettered.

Therefore the two, bride and bridegroom, trembling come before the preceptor who of his innate kindness creates between the two spontaneous, mutual love\(^\text{168}\).

Such is the cleverness and extraordinary skill of the true preceptor – the vital-breath – that the two become indestructible (nirāvedhya)\(^\text{169}\), non-dependent, and supreme, both having plentitude of all characteristics, both free from the four pairs of opposites, both having the nature of all things – yet always said themselves to be without a nature of their own!”

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Notes

1 The term yāna is somewhat out of place when referring to the various aspects of tantricism; the distinction between Sahajayāna, Kālacakrayāna, and Vajrayāna is quite artificial.

2 Such is the terminology of e.g. S. B. Dasgupta, ORC p. 13–14 et seq. dealing with the “Buddhist Sahajiyā Cult”.

3 A commendable but not entirely satisfactory attempt has been made by Dasgupta in the sub-chapter “The Idea of Sahaja”, ORC p. 77–86.

4 Les Chants Mystiques, passim.

5 HVT passim.

6 Yoga, p. 268, has “Innate”. The French original has “non-conditionné”.


8 However, sahaja is used as a noun designating the Absolute, God, etc. in a poet like Kabīr, as well as in Sikhism etc. See C. Veaudville, Kabir granthavali (Doha), Publ. de l’Inst. Française d’Indologie No. 12, Pondichery 1957, p.xviii–xx.


10 See in particular HVT I.i and xi, passim: II.v.38–47; x, passim.

11 HVT I.x.2–5, 21–29 and CMT Chap. II passim describe the external laying out of the mandala. AVS p.40–43 (translated by Snellgrove in Buddhist Texts Through the Ages, Oxford 1954, p.249–52) gives an account of the evolving of an internal mandala. HVT II.v.4–37, 48–57 could be understood both ways.


13 I reproduce Snellgrove’s translation, HVT Part I, p. 131.

14 Thus Carelli, ST p.5 and passim.

15 Thus translated by Lessing and Wayman, FBT passim; however, their translation is of the Tibetan term dbaṅ bskur-ba, lit. “confering of power”.


17 The term is used by Tucci, Theory and Practice, p.44.

18 For further descriptions of the consecrations and of the ritual of the mandala in general, see, besides the work just quoted by Tucci, M. Eliade, Yoga, p.219–27, with extensive bibliography p.408–09.

19 ST p.29. Cf. HVT I.vi.10 “Then the yogin, self-collected, performs the dance in the place of Hevajra”, and CMT p.54–55.

20 However, note that unless it vanishes of its own accord, it is to be “undone” by a special rite called āvesopāsāmana, lit. pacification of the state of possession”.

21 Translation of the relevant passage is found in HVT Part I, p.131–32.

22 Ibid.

23 ST p.27.

24 The assimilation of a female breast with a jar is conventional in Sanskrit, cf. expressions like kuca-kumbha, stana-kalasa etc.

25 Further titles are given HVT I.v.2, 16–18; II.v.59; vii.11. The term mudrā will be discussed in Chap. III.

26 Carelli’s ed. has śabdā, certainly a corruption, perhaps for * sodasābdā as the suitable mudrā is elsewhere (p.32) stated to be dvādaśābdā. The texts differ as to the age of the Seal, see Wayman, “Female Energy.” in particular p. 105–10.
27 Carelli's ed. has viūddhā “pure”, but as this hardly makes sense, I emend to avi, “impure”, which the original Ms may well have had, as there probably was no space between (a)vī and the preceding word ending in -ā.

28 This thought is repeated with slight variations throughout the tantric literature, cf. for instance PK IV.16: “And by that very mind (cittena) with which fools are bound in saṃsāra, by that same mind yogins attain the condition of buddhahood”, and JS I.15 (p.32): “By that action due to which living beings are tormented in the terrible hell for hundreds of myriads of kalpas, by that same (action) the yogin gains release”.

29 Carelli, Introduction p. 34 erroneously takes sa eva to refer to guhyābhiseko of the following line.

30 The text surprisingly has trasta “trembling”, which previously (p.21) was listed as one of the characteristics of an unsuitable Seal.

31 “Secret” (guhya) is a conventional term, in tantric as well as non-tantric literature, of the sexual organ. However, a number of available sources give different explanations of the term guhya in the present context. Thus YRM states that “this experience is the Secret Consecration because it cannot be explained to yogins in terms of diffuse mental concepts” (Snellgrove’s translation, HVT Part I, p.132); another commentary to HVT, the Netraśivāngha of Dharmakirti, says that “The Secret Consecration is so called, because it is a secret from the śrāvakas, pratyek-abuddhas and all those below them” (Snellgrove’s translation, HVT Part I, p.95 n.1). Finally, FBT p.321 gives the following explanation: “Lexicons say it is called “secret” (guhya) because it is the initiation obtained from tasting the secret substance”. It will be noted that these various explanations are not mutually exclusive.

32 “Moon” is a universal symbol for semen virile in yogic and tantric literature. In Buddhist tantric literature it is a synonym for bodhicitta, i.e. the Thought-of-Enlightenment – it must be remembered that in the tantras the Thought-of-Enlightenment is at all times regarded as both relative (material, concrete) and absolute (transcendent, the source of Bliss, etc.), cf. HVT I.viii.29 “In man there is this twofold nature, ākṣra (relative) and the bliss arising from it (absolute)” – ākṣra being the conventional term for semen virile, interchangeable with bodhicitta.

33 I thus translate amṛta, which is always envisaged as a liquid. It is synonymous with bodhicitta, and shares its ambiguity. The Buddhist concept of the Thought-of-Enlightenment thus merges with the older Vedic concept of soma being the drink of the gods (amṛta), being stored in the moon (later soma acquires the sense of “moon” outright), being the seed of the heavenly bull, etc.

34 Cf. HVT II.viii.3–5 translated above.

35 The female partner of Hevajra, see HVT passim.

36 Kiñjalka normally signifies “the filament of a plant, especially of a lotus”, Perhaps it means “the throat” in the present context, cf. Tucci, Theory and Practice p.89: “OM. AH, HfJM are placed respectively on the head, the throat and heart”; p.94 id. However, I suspect that its tantric use is that of “lotus”, cf. the following passage, quoted from the Nīrṇādanātra (a non-Buddhist tantra), in AVS p.28: “This jewel-City (ratnapuram i.e. lotus, bhaga, etc., cf. HVT II.iii.4 “Jewel-Casket”, ratnakarāṇḍaka), o Goddess, situated in the kiñjalka, is to come to a state of fire”.

37 In tantric texts, Vajra conventionally signifies the male sexual organ, Lotus the female. See for instance HVT Part I p.140 under vajra. – “The host of Buddhas” can only refer to the bodhicitta, i.e. the Thought-of-Enlightenment which is indeed the essence of all the Buddhas.

38 “Sprinkles” (sicyate) is used here in the sense of “impregnates” (with the undertone, no doubt, of “consecrates”). Ākṣra may refer either (and most frequently) to semen, but also to the female fluid, cf. HVT I.viii.29 (“... in woman too it is the same, ākṣra
and the bliss arising from it”). Being identical with the Thought-of-Enlightenment, sukra shares its twofold nature. – In the present passage, reference is possible to either male or female sukra. Cf. HVT I.x.6 “A yoginī is resorted to (sevyate), so long as she possesses sukra”. In the light of HSP (sicyate instead of HVT sevyate), Snellgrove’s translation, while possible, is, however, necessary. Cf. HVT II.iii.63 “These are the Mudrās, bestowers of siddhi; adamantine is their sukra”.

39 The same mantra is found in HVT II.xii.2, on the basis of which the corrupt forms ātmanas (for aittais) and caturdhārayā (for citta-) in HSP may be corrected. Finot’s translation must be corrected accordingly. His emendation of sīkto ‘si to siktāsi may be rejected. – Likewise on the basis of HVT II.xii.5, Finot’s version padmamukhādhāreti may be corrected, not, as he suggests, to‘ mukha-dhare iti, but to padma sukhdhāreti.

40 Cf. HVT I.x.7 “The product of the service rendered one drops into the disciple’s mouth”; II.iii.14 “Then with thumb and fourth finger he drops the bindu into the pupil’s mouth”; HVT II.iv.39 “With his tongue he must receive the ambrosia (āmṛta)”.

41 Nirambaravarāṅgā may also (cf. the passages translated from ST p. 21 and 22) be understood as “(a woman) having the sexual organ uncovered”.

42 Makaranda (“honey, nectar”) can in the present context only be a synonym for sukra.

43 I am not certain that these lines are, as Finot suggested, “une citation tronquée de quelque stance érotique” (p.47). Granted that is not altogether clear, it can yet, without forcing it, be made to make sense within the context of the Consecration of the Secret. Finot’s emendation of ambare to ambarena may be rejected.

44 Lessing and Wayman here translate “the ring fingers”. However, mtheb-srin is quite clear: thumb and fourth finger. Cf. n.40 above.

45 On the five so-called Buddha-families, see Snellgrove, Buddhist Himalaya, Oxford 1957, p.64–67, 74–75.

46 All this refers to the preceding consecration.

47 Vajrasattva (lit. “adamantine being”) is the tantric version of the universal Buddha. Ultimately it is identical with Great Bliss etc., which will be dealt with below.

48 The remainder of the passage is not clear to me.

49 I.e. the preliminary consecrations, cf. Fig.1.

50 I translate svādhiṣṭāna “blessed by himself”, cf. HVT Part 1 p.133. Presumably this refers to the union of preceptor and Seal of the preceding consecration. HVT II.iv.36 employs svābhiṣṭān in the same context. Alternatively it could refer to the impressing of mantras on the body of the Seal at the beginning of the Consecration of the Secret.

51 The same mantra is found HVT II.xii.3.

52 Finot’s ed. has sthānādām which is supported by the Tibetan translation of HVT (gnas sbyin-ma), but siddhidām, found in all MSS of HVT, gives better sense. YRM (p.159) has sthāna6.

53 For a discussion of the term Gnosis-Being (jñānasattva), see Tucci, Theory and Practice, p.95–96.

54 The meaning of this passage (śiṣyacitte praveśayet) is not quite clear to me. Perhaps one may emend to “cittām pra ‘he lets the citta of the disciple enter (the Lotus of the Seal?)”.

55 Cf. n.37.

56 That there are two Seals is shown by the dual form mudrābhyām. Usually, as in PVS (Snellgrove’s translation p.245), there appears to be only one. However, it is clear that there may for that matter be many Seals involved: “If there are ten Seals, then commit that one to the disciple in whom he is able to arouse passion” (ST p.24–25).
Presumably the preceptor.

Upāya, “Means”, is the male partner, the female being “Wisdom”; together they constitute the fullness of the Buddha-nature.

Bindu, “drop”, is used synonymously with bodhicitta, śukra, etc. See n. 32 and 33 and HVT Part I p.135.

Buddhist Texts Through the Ages, p.240–46.

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Bindu, “drop”, is used synonymously with bodhicitta, śukra, etc. See n. 32 and 33 and HVT Part I p.135.

FBT p.319, however, speaking of the Consecration of the Secret, states that “according to the Kalacakra, initiation is obtained in a bhagamanḍala, but this is a special feature of that Tantra, which sets forth the initiation of the disciple by way of displaying to him the bhaga, and such a thing is not set forth in other Tantras.” This is directly relevant to ST which is a commentary to the chapter on consecrations of the Kalacakratantra.

Bharati, The Tantric Tradition, p. 11.

Hasting’s Encyclopaedia of Religions and Ethics, vol. XII, p. 196, 2, Edinburgh 1921.

Cf. the entering of “the host of Buddhas situated in space” into the Vajra of the preceptor at the same occasion, spoken of by HSP.

HVT Part I, p. 34.

Bharati, The Tantric Tradition, p. 11.

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Cf. the entering of “the host of Buddhas situated in space” into the Vajra of the preceptor at the same occasion, spoken of by HSP.

HVT Part I, p. 34.

Ibid. p. 40.

L. de la Vallée Poussin, in the article quoted above, was fully aware that “a number of speculations, beliefs, and practices which reach their full development in the Tāntrik or last period of Buddhism were not unknown during the former period” (p. 194, 1). On maithuna in pre-tantric Buddhism, see Eliade, Yoga, p. 258.

My translation presupposes the emendation of saṃvṛtyā to *saṃvṛttyā, prompted by de la Vallée Poussin’s gloss lokavyavahāratalah, see Eliade, Yoga, p. 262. But one might perhaps retain saṃvṛtyā “according to relative (truth)”. This refers to the “triple division of knowledge” (jñānatrayaprabhedā) of verse 36, explained in verses 37–39: “By the coming together of the two organs, i.e. the union of Vajra and Lotus, comes the union, known as the coming-together (saṃpatti), of the twofold knowledge. And the knowledge which through effort is obtained by the coming-together of the twofold knowledge in the manner which has been described, is (known as) ālokapalabdha (i.e. the third knowledge”).

I emend tām evaṁ to tām eva in accordance with the commentary. Tām refers to verse 36: “Of all illusions, that of woman is the greatest”, “the illusion of woman” being explained by the commentary (p. 34) simply as “woman” (strī eva). This, however, must be understood in the light of the preceding verse 13 (p. 27) where the first void is given the terminus technicus “woman”. See the following note.

A discussion of the basic ideas of this chapter of PK will be found in Dasgupta, ORC p. 45–46 and Introduction p. 51–54.

The mentally-created mudrā, further discussed in Chap. III.

In adopting this translation of sampradāya (usually “doctrine, tradition”), I follow the interpretation of de la Vallée Poussin, see Eliade, Yoga, p. 261.

This void, being the third, corresponds to the third Consecration. See n. 10.

Corresponds to the first void, se n. 10.

Corresponds to the triple division of knowledge discussed in n. 8. For the terms “passion” etc., cf. also HVT I. viii. 35 and II.vii.8.

Numerous instances of interiorized interpretations as found in Buddhist tantric literature are given by Wayman, “Female Energy”, particularly p. 79 and p. 100 et seq. — For Hindu tantric texts, similar figurative interpretations are quoted by Eliade, Yoga, p.248; p.262–63.

I.e. a physical woman, see Chap. III.
ON THE CONCEPT OF SAHAJA

79 The Tibetan text has dños-kyi rig-ma las-rgya-la brten-nas which I take to express identity between the Action-Seal and the Wisdom, and not, as Lessing and Wayman translate, “the Action-Seal of a concrete "wisdom".”

80 See note 72 and the following chapter.


82 For a translation of a modern ritual manual (the Vāmamārga), see Bharati, The Tantric Tradition, p. 244–65.

83 Commentary to verse 25 of TDK, Bagchi p. 68.

84 See for example Eliade, Yoga, p. 341–53.


88 On “ritual interiorization”, see Eliade, Yoga, p. 111–114, and (Index) p. 501 for further references.

89 Tucci, Rati-Lilā, p. 44.

90 Eliade, Yoga, p. 249–251.

91 In Sanskrit the word for “truth” (satya) is derived from the root as- “to be”.

92 This refers to the conventional lists of marks characterizing a Buddha, with whom ākṣara (under its dual aspect of relative and absolute) is identified.


94 Bharati, op.cit. p. 179–180. It is true, as Bharati points out, that ni-vis- does not mean “to discharge”; however, no-one has claimed that it does. However, it certainly means “to enter” and is here in the causative.

95 For a discussion of these correlative sets of concepts, see HVT Part I, p. 27.

96 Except when translating sahaja, I adopt the terminology employed by Snellgrove.

97 This is explicitly confirmed by YRM p. 132, commenting on HVT I.x.13. However, YRM p. 107–108, commenting on I.i.23 et seq., connects all four Joys with each of the first three Consecrations. This entire passage is translated at the end of the present chapter.

98 Snellgrove’s translation of svasamvedya – “self-experiencing” – may cause misunderstanding. Svasamvedya is an adjective and there does not seem to be any reason why it should not be translated as such. The corresponding noun is svasamvedana.

99 I believe Snellgrove is wrong in taking ni-nātavavarjite kṣaṇe as descriptive of paramānande (“the moment of Perfect Joy which is free from all diversity”). I would prefer the translation “When the pupil has reached Perfect Joy, just then in the moment free from all diversity etc.”

100 The correct title of this text, which has no title in Shastri’s ed. of AVS, has been established by Snellgrove HVT Part I p. 137 on the basis of the Tibetan translation, found in the Tenjur.

101 In this connection one may note the rendering of viramānanda found in FBT p. 322 1.5 and in the Tibetan translation of M, passim, viz. khyad-par-gyi dga’-ba. Here vi- is interpreted as viṣīṣṭa, “extraordinary”, and -rama is either untranslated, or regarded as synonymous with ānanda. The same interpretation is found in a Sanskrit text like YRM, p. 132 1.5 from bottom, commenting HVT I.x. 13: viṣīṣṭottamaramo viramah, in which vi- is likewise understood as viṣīṣṭa, further explained as uttama, “highest”. One can therefore understand the term suratānanda, “Joy of coition”, used by HVT I.viii.31, cf. n.14.

102 I am at a loss to understand why Snellgrove translates suratānanda as “extreme joy”.

203
It is a wide-spread belief in Indian yoga that the male seed is stored in the brain, cf. ORC p.239-44.

See for example Eliade, Yoga, p.241-45. Normally, Buddhist tantras only operate with four cakras (head, throat, heart, navel), cf. HVT Part I, p. 38. However, schemes involving (at least by implication) five as well six cakras are also known (ibid). Note that the positions of the cakras described by ST do not entirely correspond to that found in Hindu tantras, cf. Eliade, ibid.

The Thought-of-Enlightenment, assimilated with the Moon (thus continuing the Vedic assimilation of soma, the drink of immortality, with the Moon) may be divided into fifteen digits (kalā), further divided into three groups of five, each group corresponding in the present text to one of the first three Joys. The Simultaneously-arisen Joy is expressed as the "sixteenth digit", i.e. as transcendent. Cf. HVT II.iv. 25-26: "The last of all must be firmly rejected, for there is no sixteenth phase. And why is that? Because it is non-productive of an effect. The moon with its fifteen phases represents the Thought-of-Enlightenment". The number sixteen is a sacred number, expressing the whole or the immortal part, cf. Brhadāranyaka-up, I.5.14 "The Year is Prajāpati, it has sixteen parts". Note that the Seal is frequently said to be girl "sixteen years of age".

The ādīna is the cakra situated at the top of the head. It is also well-known in non-tantric Buddhism as one of the marks of a Buddha, represented iconographically as a protruberance on the top of the head.

An essentially identical scheme is to be found in FBT p. 323, where there are, however, only five cakras (head, throat, heart, navel, Vajra-Jewel) involved. There is the same stress on the non-emission of the Thought-of-Enlightenment: "After (the candidate's) entering into union, when he takes recourse to drawing the wind into the "middle vein", the melted white element reaches the neck from the middle of the forehead, at which time there is "joy" (ānanda). After that, it reaches the heart, at which time there is "super joy" (parama-ānanda). After that, it reaches the navel, at which time there is "extraordinary joy" (virama-ānanda). After that, it reaches the tip of the thunderbolt gem, and by his abiding by the precept to not allow it to be emitted, at that time there is produced the knowledge of "together-born joy" (sahaja-ānanda)." (Lessing and Wayman’s translation).

The entire passage is translated below.

On this point opinions seem to vary. Tibetan texts attest to the tradition that any coition will produce, however fleetingly, Simultaneously-arisen Joy. See Wayman, “Female Energy” p. 94 (quoting Tsongkhapa), and The Tibetan Book of the Dead, ed. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, London, 3rd ed. 1957, p. 179, which connects the experiencing of the Simultaneously-arisen Joy with the act of conception: "Just at this moment when the sperm and the ovum are about to unite, the Knower experienceeth the bliss of the simultaneously-born state, during which state it fainteth away into unconsciousness. (Afterwards) it findeth itself encased in oval form, in the embryonic state".

Cf. AVS p. 28 1.4 where vimarda (“consummation”) likewise comes fourth, “in repudiation of hathayoga” (hathayoganirūkṣṭeḥ). See the following.

This may well be a direct reference to HVT II.iii.8. quoted above.

HVT Part I, p. 35.
If the Four Joys are connected with the four cakras, then the Simultaneously-arisen Joy *must* be the fourth, being connected with the *uṣṇīṣa*, the cakra of the head, if the march of the Thought-of-Enlightenment is upwards, and not, as in the texts quoted above, *downwards*.

This scheme is attested as early as the Vedas, e.g. AV x.7.

Cf. FBT p.323, quoted above (“The disciple imagines he has been made to enter into union on account of the vividness in his mind that the body of himself and the vidyā is the desire-god (kāmadeva) in the sense of the ‘Father-Mother’ union”).

Carelli’s ed. has sparsa-sukha which must be corrected to spanda cf. ST p.36 and 62. Wayman, “Female Energy” p.79, perhaps mislead by the association of “Realm of Form” (rūpadhātu), translates this passage without making the necessary emendation.

Sarvākāravaropeta is frequently used to describe the Void (śūnyatā).

My rendering of pradeśika is based on BHSD p.380.

Cf. HVT I.x.20 “Its characteristic is the absence of any characteristic.”

“The proof is void of elements which can be grasped by one’s own mind” – for the mind cannot grasp itself. This is a basic position in Mahāyāna, elaborated in the Vījñānavāda and given striking expression in Zen. CF. A. Watts, The Way of Zen, p. 154–73.

ST p.39 gives these signs as “smoke, mirage, fireflies, lamp, cloudless sky” in due succession. See Wayman, “Female Energy” p.91. Cf. Śvetāśvatara-up. II.11: “Fog, smoke, sun, fire, wind, fireflies, lightning, a crystal, a moon – these are the preliminary appearances which produce the manifestation of Brahman in Yoga” (Hume, p. 398).

The significance of this expression is not clear to me. Cf. ST p.39, 1.27: paścāt tad eva dhūmādikam kalpa-arhatam pratisenāvad iti/

“The sound EV AM” signifies the Lotus of the Seal. Snellgrove is not correct in his rendering “navel” in HVT II.i.56. The text has evamkāre “in the syllable EVAM”, and elsewhere (II.i.30) EVAM is said to be the symbol for the female sexual organ (stākakkolla, translated somewhat euphemistically by Snellgrove as “lotus-paradise”). Cf. also HVT II.iii.4 and its commentary in the following lines of CMN, translated below.

Cf. HVT II.i.44: “the whole world is simultaneously-arisen”.

I have emended nispanda to nisyanda, cf. BHS p.308. Cf. HVT II.iv.56: EVAM-kāre ca nisyandam, and II.iv. 58 yathā kṛtām tathā bhuktaṁ nisyandam iti śabditam. Nisyanda phala is one of the five phalāni (“results”), see BHSD p.396.

Nisyandā may here be retained in the sense of “immobility”. Cf. ST p.36 and 62 where nispdasukkha and nispandāśarabhāvāna are associated with the Great Seal, i.e. with the Simultaneously-arisen Joy.

Pravāhānityatvena sahajasvabhāvā yā prajñāyāḥ sahajodayatvena abhimāṇa yā sā dharmamudrā ity abhiśhāye. My translation of this passage is tentative.

HVT II.iv.56 vipākāṁ dharmacakrataḥ; iv.58 “A fruit of retribution is the reverse of this (i.e. of corresponding fruit), where the activity is small and the fruit is great.” Vipākaphala is one of the five “results” (phala), cf. BHSD p. 491. Snellgrove HVT II.iv.56 translates vipākaphala “the fruit of retribution”. However, vipāka is also the name of the Moment of Perfect Joy, which, being second, corresponds to the Dharma-Seal in the scheme of CMN.

Vaimalya (“purity”) is not mentioned among the 5 phalāni BHSD p.396, but HVT II.i.v.57 vimalaphala (“the pure fruit”) is in the head; II.iv.58 “arises from the purificatory process of yoga” (vaimalyam yoga-suddhitaḥ).

Purussakāra is one of the five “results”, cf. BHSD p.348.

Explicit identification in M 19, 5.
The expression prakṛti-parisuddha, often used in connection with the avadhiitī, could of course be understood as “naturally pure”. However, prakṛti also signifies “matter”, or rather, as it is contrasted to prabhasvara, the “Clear Light”, it is “opacity”. Cf. PK III.7–26 translated by Dasgupta, ORC p.45–46 and Introduction p.51–54.

For what appears to be an example of a late speculative scheme in which numerous correspondencies are worked out systematically, cf. the passage from the Sampṣṭikā, quoted by Dasgupta, Introduction p.123 n.1. – Concepts employing other meanings of the term mudrā than the specifically Buddhist tantric one of “female partner”, which may have formed the basis of speculation leading to the fully developed concept of the Four Seals, are the “four Seals which define a Promulgation” (bkar-btags-kyi phyag-rgya bži), FBT p.85. Cf. also passages like “E-Vam is the Buddha, and, in short, the Seal of the doctrine” (ibid. p.71). For a discussion of the word mudrā, see Eliade, Yoga, p.405.

See HVT Part I p. 146 (Index) for exhaustive references.


In other words, the union with the Seal is consummated by the Master in the first Consecration (cf. HVT I.iii.13 “The Prajñā of sixteen years he clasps within his arms, and from the union of the vajra and the bell the Master’s Consecration comes about”). Elsewhere, as we have seen, this union is counted as the second Consecration.

The higher of the twofold “process” (krama) which constitutes the “thought-creation” (bhāvanā) just referred to by YRM. This explanation, which in itself seems inappropriate, is added as an after-thought, contradicting the explanation just given. It may well be an interpolation.

This may also explain the claim to “omniscience” (sarvajñatva).

This is in agreement with CMN, translated above, in which the Convention-Seal was defined as “the flashing-forth of the form of Heruka”.

Except when translating sahaja, I retain Snellgrove’s precise and fluent translation. It should perhaps be pointed out that terms like sahaja, māhamudrā, tattva, mahāsukha, Hevajra, AHAM, etc., will in this connection be regarded as pointing to the same ultimate reality – without thereby ignoring the fact that their associations, even contexts, are different.

Perhaps “experienced directly” is the best rendering of svasamvedya.

Kumārisuratam, Snellgrove’s translation, “blissful like that of union with a maiden”, misses the point.

All these concepts represent the highest metaphysical absolutes of various Indian philosophies.

“I”, AHAM, consists of the syllables A, representing Nairatmya (HVT II.iv.41), and HAM, representing the Moon, Hevajra, etc. (1.i.31); hence AHAM is the totality, the plenitude of the Buddha-nature.

HVT Part I p.78 n.3, quoting a passage of the commentary of Saroruha.

As in the dvandva-compound svādhīṣṭhāna-prabhāsvara (M 5.4), svā being the cakra situated at the base of the genital organs, cf. Eliade, Yoga, p.241.

For a detailed study of the luminosity of thought in non-tantric Buddhism, see part IV (“La luminosité naturelle de la pensée”) of D. S. Ruegg, La théorie du tathāgata-garbha et du gotra, Publications de l’École Française d’Extrême-Orient vol.LXX.
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156 A great number of other sets of criteria have of course been proposed in this connection; the classical one is perhaps that of W. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, New York (paperback ed.) 1961, p.299–301, viz. “ineffability”, “noetic quality”, “transiency”, and “passivity”. A discussion of these and other criteria would of course go far beyond the scope of the present study.

157 I take this expression from E. C. Dimock, Jr., The Place of the Hidden Moon, Chicago 1966, p.222, where it is used to refer to the Vaishnava sahajiyā ritual of union.

158 See his chapter on “Mysticism and Logic”, p.251–76.

159 See the translation of the relevant passage in the preceding chap.


161 See Stace p.278–80. However, his treatment of the subject is, in my opinion, inadequate. The examples which he quotes must by no means (as does Stace) be interpreted as “alleged scientific revelations”. That the mystical experience involves some kind of “knowledge” may be shown to be the case in a great number of widely scattered instances. Here attention will only be drawn to the fact that “knowledge” is regarded as a part of satori in the case of several prominent Zen-masters; this is significant, as Zen is generally recognized as being particularly “anti-cognitative”. Cf. H. Dumoulin, A History of Zen Buddhism, New York 1963, p. 252.


163 Quoting Snellgrove, HVT Part I p.29.


166 This unity is particularly stressed in PVS.

167 A. Bharati, The Tantric Tradition, has protested against the alleged monism implied by this interpretation which in substance agrees with that of H. P. Shastri (AVS, Preface, p.xiii). Bharati’s protest is due to his insistence that tantric Buddhism is “non-ontological” (op.cit. p.27–28). However, I fail to see how such a position can be maintained.

168 Sāhaja is a derivative of sahaja. The use of sāhaja in the present context has the broader sense of “spontaneous”.

169 Shastri’s ed. has nijabcdha’ which cannot be correct.

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### B. Texts and abbreviations


**BHSD** *F. Edgerton*, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary, Delhi 1970

**CG** *Caryāgīti*, text and translation in Kverne, An Anthology of Buddhist Tantric Songs, see above.

**CMN** *Caturmudrāniścaya*, p. 32–35 of AVS


**HVT** *Hevajratantra*, ed. and transl. by D. L. Snellgrove, see above.


**M** Munidatta’s commentary to CG, ed. Kverne, see above.

**ORC** Obscure Religious Cults, by Dasgupta, see above.

**PK** *Pañcakrama* by Nāgārjuna, ed. L. de la Vallée Poussin, Gand 1896, (includes a short commentary by Parahitarāksita).


**SN** *Sekanirnaya*, p. 28–31 of AVS.


**YRM** *Yogaratnamātā* by Kāṇha, ed. D. L. Snellgrove, HVT Part II (see above), p.103–159.
In the West, pre-Buddhist religious beliefs and practices in Tibet have generally been referred to by the Tibetan term *bon*. As Geoffrey Samuel has pointed out (1993: 320), "the special nature of Tibetan religion has often been explained in terms of the influence of Bon on Buddhism." At the same time, and in conformity with Tibetan usage, *bon* also refers to one of the organised, monastic religious schools of present-day Tibet, a school which manifestly has many points of similarity with Buddhism. Accordingly, among the most pertinent questions which the study of *bon* in the West has attempted to answer, are: What is the relationship, if any, between early, pre-Buddhist *bon* and the present, organised religious school likewise styled *bon*? What is the relationship between this religious school and Buddhism? What is the relationship between *bon* in either sense of the word and popular, non-monastic religion? The present paper will present an outline of various responses to these questions, and suggest areas which would seem to be in particular need of research in the years to come.

In 1993, Geoffrey Samuel published a short but useful survey of Western research concerning Bon (referred to above), and the following year I published a similar survey (Kvaerne 1994). Inevitably, I shall repeat much of what has already been said, although the present paper will bring these surveys up to date and also offer some additional remarks.

Although several scholars, above all, perhaps, the Indian pundit Sarat Chandra Das and the German missionary A. H. Francke had already written about the Bon religion, the first scholar who set himself the task of dealing with it in a comprehensive manner and on the basis of all the sources which were available at the time, was Helmut Hoffmann. His study, *Quellen zur Geschichte der tibetischen Bon-Religion* (Hoffmann 1950) was completed in manuscript as early as 1944, but was only published in 1950. It was based on ethnographic material provided by Western travellers in Tibet and adjacent regions, as well as on the few Bonpo texts available in Europe at the time; it also made use of a
selection of Tibetan Buddhist texts, mainly historical works, in which Bon is referred to.

Hoffmann's work remains an impressive and in a sense, fundamental study. However, it is based on a particular theory of the development of the Bon religion. Briefly, this theory had two components. The first component concerned the nature of the 'original' (i.e. pre-Buddhist) Bon religion. Hoffmann claimed that this religion was characterised by the total dependence of the Tibetans on the natural environment in which they lived. In order to cope with the fear and awe which this environment engendered in their minds, Tibetans worshipped nature spirits and made use of magic and divination. In a work published a few years later, he wrote: "... the Tibetans of those days were apparently completely subject to the powerful and formidable nature of their natural surroundings. Their completely nature-rooted and nature-dominated religious ideas revolved reverently and submissively around the powers and forces of their wild highland landscape whose divinities were reflected in the idea of numerous good and evil spirits the Tibetans thought to see all around them" (Hoffmann 1961: 17). In adopting this argument, Hoffmann only followed nature-romantic ideas which had been current in Europe since the early nineteenth century, but which by the 1950s were outdated both in anthropology and in the study of religion. However, in defining this early religion of Tibet, Hoffmann made use of two terms which were to prove to be tenacious in the study of Bon: animism and shamanism. Hoffmann maintained that it was possible to reconstruct, at least in part, this pre-Buddhist animistic-shamanistic religion by studying the modern popular religion and with the help of literary sources composed after the final triumph of Buddhism in the eleventh century. Further he maintained that "... we are in a position to say with some certainty that the original Bon religion was the national Tibetan form of that old animist-shamanist religion which at one time was widespread not only in Siberia but throughout the whole of Inner Asia, East and West Turkestan, Mongolia, Manchuria, the Tibetan plateaux and even China" (Hoffmann 1961: 14–15).

The second component in Hoffmann's theory was a certain periodization of the development of Bon. Although it is well known, it is necessary to briefly summarize it here. According to Hoffmann, the history of Bon can be divided into three periods. The first, the pre-Buddhist period, was that of the shamanistic-animistic religion outlined above, essentially identical with present-day folk religion in Tibet. The second period was characterized by the emergence of an organised priesthood and a developed doctrine under the influence of religions to the west of Tibet, a process in which, according to Hoffmann, Gnostic, Shaivite, and Buddhist Tantric elements all played a role. This was the religious establishment which confronted Buddhism when the latter was introduced into Tibet during the reign of the kings of the Yarlung dynasty. The third and final stage took place after the triumph of Buddhism. Adherents of Bon, now forced to retreat to outlying parts of the country, in order to ensure the survival of their religion copied essential elements of Buddhism, such as monastic life, religious texts, philosophy, liturgy, and iconography. Although Bon thus underwent a dramatic transformation, it retained,
so Hoffmann claimed, a basic characteristic, viz. an implacable hatred of the new, dominant Buddhist religion. This hatred was expressed in the reversal of Buddhist customs; thus, circumambulation of holy objects was performed in a counterclockwise direction, prayer wheels were rotated in the same contrary fashion, and so on. Bon became a kind of heresy, and Hoffmann put much effort into presenting it as a distortion of Buddhism, characterised by perversion and negation, comparing it, in fact, with the supposed Satanic cults of mediaeval Europe. In *The Religions of Tibet*, Hoffmann goes to the extent of quoting a novel of Alexandra David-Neel, *Magie d’amour et magie noire, Scènes du Tibet inconnu* (Paris 1938) as if it were an ethnographic report: “... some Bon priests are supposed to lengthen their own earthly days by appropriating the life force of others who die a painful death by starvation. However, these victims must be voluntary, as otherwise the sacrifice is of no effect” (Hoffmann 1961: 107).

As is now well known, Hoffmann’s account of the development of Bon in three historical stages, completely unknown in Bonpo sources, was based on a work written by the Tibetan Buddhist scholar belonging to the Gelugpa school, Thu’u-kwan Blo-bzang chos-kyi nyi-ma (1737–1802), completed in 1801. In this work, Chos-kyi nyi-ma discusses all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism, and also includes a short chapter on Bon. This chapter was translated into English by Sarat Chandra Das and published in 1881, only eighty years after it was written, and thus became the basis for Western conceptions of the history of Bon.

In 1988 Rolf A. Stein pointed out that this periodization, far from being invented by Chos-kyi nyi-ma, was adopted from a much older Buddhist source, viz. the *dGongs gcig yig cha*, a work dating from the early thirteenth century (Stein 1988: 31). Chos-kyi nyi-ma uses this periodization in a polemical context. In fact his attack on Bon is not so much due to ignorance and lack of sources, although that would certainly also seem to have been the case, as to the fact that, as pointed out by E. Gene Smith in 1969, he was “writing at a politically unfavourable time, a few decades after the Manchu campaign against the Bon-led rebellion in the state of Rab-brtan ... in the Rgyal-rong” (Smith 1969–1971 vol.1: 1). In other words, Chos-kyi nyi-ma was writing in a specific political situation which no doubt determined his account.

Before moving on to scholars who have been more directly influential for contemporary Bon studies, brief mention must be made of a scholar who shared some of Hoffmann’s ideas concerning the syncretistic nature of Bon, viz. Matthias Herrmanns. Herrmanns, who had lived in Amdo in the 1940s, was convinced that Bon was heavily influenced by Iranian religion and by Manichaeism, and in his work (Herrmanns 1965), he argued that the biography of sTon-pa gShen-rab as found in the *gZer mig* was entirely of Manichaean inspiration (Herrmanns 1965: 130–131). While Herrmanns’ claims were certainly wildly extravagant, the whole question of Iranian influences on Tibetan culture in general, and on the Bon religion in particular, remains in my opinion open; one suspects that such influences have made themselves felt, but conclusive evidence is still lacking. (See Kvaerne 1987: 163–174).
Although Hoffmann subsequently modified his views, his basic assumption that pre-Buddhist Bon was “shamanistic” and “animistic” became extremely influential and has continued to be repeated by other, less critical authors. However, scholarship was soon to develop in new directions. Simplifying a complex process, it may be said that in the early 1960s two new factors became increasingly important: firstly, the presence of learned Bonpo monks in India and the West following the uprising in Tibet, and, secondly, the systematic study of Dunhuang documents (and royal edicts and other inscriptions from Tibet itself). Simplifying even further, one may say that the first factor dominated the study of Bon in England and the second in France.

In the 1950s and 60s, David L. Snellgrove had been one of the first Western scholars to make prolonged visits to Nepal, and he had travelled extensively in the northern parts of that country, where he came into contact with small but ancient Bonpo communities. Not only could he see for himself that the ethos of Bon was not one of perversion and negation (as Hoffmann had claimed), but he also discovered that the Bonpos possessed a vast and totally unexplored literature. Although this had been hinted at by earlier travellers to Tibet, such as J.F. Rock and George Roerich, no one had actually looked into this literature in situ before.

In 1960, Snellgrove met several learned Bonpo monks from Tibet. These monks had brought not only books, but also a vast treasure of traditional learning. Snellgrove was the first scholar in the West to seize the opportunity which these circumstances offered, and in 1961 he invited three of these monks to London where, for several years, he collaborated closely with them.

The first and most visible result of this collaboration was the publication in 1967 of The Nine Ways of Bon (London Oriental Series Vol. 18), which provided, for the first time in the West, a systematic presentation of the teachings of Bon in the form of the text and translation of excerpts from an important Bonpo canonical text. However, equally important was the manner in which the translation had been made: it was the result of line-by-line consultation with a Tibetan Bonpo scholar, the learned head teacher of sMan-ri monastery, Lopön Tenzin Namdak. For the first time, the understanding which the Bonpos themselves have of their religion and history was taken seriously, although it was by no means adopted in the new theory of the nature and history of Bon which Snellgrove proposed in the introduction to his book.

The most important aspect of this theory was that in spite of its polemical attitude towards Buddhism, post-eleventh century Bon was not a sinister perversion of Buddhism, but rather an eclectic tradition which, unlike Buddhism in Tibet, insisted on accentuating rather than denying its pre-Buddhist elements. Nevertheless, the real background of Bon was, Snellgrove stressed, mainly to be found in the Buddhist Mahayana tradition of Northern India, although in the case of Bon, this tradition could have reached Tibet by a different course than that which was followed by the particular Buddhist transmission which eventually came to prevail under the Tibetan term chos. Thus, independently of the official introduction of Buddhism into central Tibet in the seventh and eighth centuries under the
patronage of the Tibetan kings, Buddhism had also penetrated areas which today are in western Tibet but which at that time were part of the independent kingdom of Zhang-zhung. This form of Buddhism, essentially of a tantric type, adopted the name of bon and came to be regarded as the native religion of that kingdom. Thereafter Bon was propagated in central Tibet, where it inevitably came into conflict with chos. In the course of time, Bon, itself in reality a form of Buddhism, interacted with the other Buddhist traditions in Tibet, in particular with the Nyingmapa tradition, up to the present day. This historical model was restated in several publications (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968, Snellgrove 1987).

Snellgrove’s work, not only with regard to substance, but also with regard to method, has been extremely influential, indeed crucial for subsequent studies. However, his interest was mainly focussed on the organised religious school which, starting in the tenth and eleventh centuries, can be traced continuously up to its present-day adherents in Tibet, Nepal, and in exile. He regarded this religion as fundamentally a form of Buddhism, as heterodox and eclectic rather than “heretical”. He had less to say concerning Bon as a non-Buddhist or even pre-Buddhist religion existing in Tibet (as distinct from Zhang-zhung) before the introduction of Buddhism from India under the patronage of the Yarlung dynasty. This aspect of Bon was, however, the special field of the French Tibetologists from the 1960s onwards.

The course of the French school of Bonpo studies had been set as early as 1952 with Marcelle Lalou. Starting with Lalou, the French scholars have completely dominated the study of the extremely problematic Tibetan material from Dunhuang, the only material which, together with a small number of inscriptions in Tibet itself, actually physically dates from the Yarlung period. Lalou’s interest in Bon was, however, limited, and in her book (Lalou 1957), one finds the often-quoted statement that “S’il me fallait définir en deux mots ce qui me semble le plus caractéristique du milieu Bon, je dirais: le sang et le poison” (Lalou 1957: 12) (“If I had to define in two words what seems to me most characteristic of the Bon milieu, I would say: blood and poison”). Bon is depicted as a ritualistic religion obsessed with bloody sacrificial rites and with administering poison to enemies. However, she also revealed a nature-mythological turn of mind when she mused, in terms similar to Hoffmann’s, that, “Nor is it impossible that some of the events recounted are renderings by means of imagery of the impressive and dangerous phenomena of the Tibetan climate, and that they for the most part are simply inspired by the characteristics of the seasons that regulate the life of the pastoralists” (Lalou 1957: 10).

Needless to say, an excellent scholar like Lalou was perfectly aware that there was more to it than that; however, it was Rolf A. Stein who significantly developed the study of Bon in France. Stein’s research in this respect has primarily focused on myths and rituals, and his material has been partly documents from Dunhuang, partly the ritual compendium Klu ‘bum which undoubtedly contains much ancient material, and partly but to a lesser extent more recent texts.

In his book La civilisation tibétaine (Stein 1962), Stein introduced a major
conceptual innovation by distinguishing between popular religion, which he regarded as essentially non-Buddhist, on the one hand, and the Bon religion, not only in its contemporary, organised form, but also in its dynastic, pre-Buddhist form, on the other. In his book, popular religion was styled “the nameless religion” and dealt with in a separate chapter; it was allotted, somehow, a timeless existence as the authentic, autochthonous religious system of the Tibetan people. He regarded Bon, on the contrary, as a specific religious tradition, containing many non-Tibetan religious elements, primarily from India, which had been formed in Tibet in a certain historical period, perhaps simultaneously with the rise of the Yarlung dynasty.

Stein’s preference has been for textual and historical specificity, as is consistently reflected in his immense and uniquely learned work. This has in fact all along been the hallmark of French Tibetology. Not long after the publication of Stein’s book, an original and, as it turned out, controversial, study was published by another French Tibetologist. In a monumental article entitled, somewhat dauntingly, “Une lecture des Pelliot Tibétain 1286, 1287, 1038, et 1290. Essai sur la formation et l’emploi des mythes politiques dans la religion royale de Srong-bcan sgam-po” (“A reading of PT 1286 etc. An essay on the formation and the use of political myths in the royal religion of Srong-bcan sgam-po”) (Macdonald 1971), Ariane Macdonald argued, on the basis of an analysis of certain Dunhuang manuscripts, that until the ascendancy of Buddhism, the official religion in Tibet during the Yarlung dynasty was not Bon at all, but a specific cult of the king regarded as a divine being. This cult was known as gtsug or gtsug lag. The complete triumph of Buddhism explains, so Macdonald maintains, the total silence of later sources with regard to gtsug.

Perhaps because of its somewhat inaccessible mode of presentation, Macdonald’s article never inspired the broad debate one might have expected. It was only in 1985 that the salient points of her theory were discussed and refuted at length by R.A. Stein (1985: 83–133). However, both scholars would probably have agreed that “the religion of the early Tibetan royal court in the sixth to eighth centuries was an entirely different affair from the Bon religion as it exists today. Neither should be identified with any original Tibetan pre-Buddhist religion” (Samuel 1993: 320), although Stein subsequently documented concrete instances of loans (significantly using the word “emprunts”) in the later “organized” Bon from Dunhuang documents (Stein 1988: 55).

The Western scholars discussed so far have had, in spite of their erudition, a tendency to ignore, or at least to not take seriously, the understanding of Bon actually found among adherents of the Bon religion itself. The basic postulate of these scholars was, as we have seen, that there is no direct continuity between the pre-Buddhist faith and the later Bon religion, and that the latter is, essentially, a form of Buddhism (no matter how heterodox or eclectic). Both postulates are firmly denied by contemporary Bonpos as well as by their entire literary tradition. However, a deeper appreciation of the beliefs and world-view of the many Bonpo monks and laymen in exile as well as in Tibet who over
many years have so patiently and generously shared their time and knowledge with inquisitive scholars from the West, has gradually led to a shift of emphasis not only in my own case, but, I think, also in the case of other scholars. Some, including myself, would now maintain that it is perfectly legitimate, indeed necessary, to view Bon as a distinct religion, in the same way, perhaps, that the Sikh religion is distinct from Hinduism or the Druse faith is distinct from Islam. This reassessment of Bon stresses aspects such as historical tradition and sources of authority and legitimation rather than doctrine, philosophy, and external practices and monastic institutions.

Looking back, I think that an important factor in this gradual shift in perspective was the publication in 1972 of Samten G. Karmay’s translation of a part of the history of Bon by the Tibetan Bonpo scholar Shar-rdza bKra-shis rgyal-mtshan (1859–1935). Although written in the 1920s, this text presents, with abundant quotations from older sources, the traditional Bonpo view of history. Karmay is by no means uncritical of this version of history – he suggests, for example, that with regard to the Bonpo tradition of two persecutions of Bon “the possibility that later Bon-po historians have made two persecutions out of what was in fact only one” (Karmay 1972: xxxiii). Nevertheless, Shar-rdza’s work is an impressive and consistent statement of a coherent historical perspective which it seems impossible to ignore. I shall return to this below.

Our discussion has now brought us to the present time which is, of course, nothing but a transition to the future. I shall therefore say something about the present situation while at the same time suggesting certain future tasks and challenges. I must, however, emphasize that there can be no question of making anything even approaching a complete survey of all the ongoing research regarding Bon.

In a sense, the crucial question regarding the development of Bon is the context and nature of the religious beliefs and practices prevalent in Tibet at the time of the rise of the Yarlung dynasty and up to the final triumph of Buddhism. Without a clearer idea of the religion of this period, its relationship with later developments must necessarily remain obscure. On the assumption that we can reconstruct the pre-Buddhist religion neither on the basis of popular religion as recorded in recent centuries nor on post-tenth century literary sources, we are left with sources which are more or less contemporary with the Yarlung dynasty, i.e. the Dunhuang manuscripts and a limited body of epigraphic material. Unfortunately it does not seem that younger scholars take much interest in continuing research in these crucially important but extremely difficult texts. Nevertheless, I would emphasize that an adequate and coherent description of the religion of this period is the single most important task in the study of Bon. Perhaps one can hope that archaeological excavations, which have begun to be undertaken on a small scale in Tibet in recent years, may bring new material to light and maybe even open up new perspectives.

While the study of the earliest sources with regard to non-Buddhist religion seems to have entered a period of hibernation, there is considerable activity
focused on the subsequent period, i.e. the period of the second propagation of Buddhism in Tibet starting in the eleventh century. As far as Bon is concerned, this period is characterised by the emergence and consolidation of religious beliefs and practices, known as Bon, within certain family lineages and expressed in a growing body of texts. Of particular significance is the research directed towards historiographical and biographical texts from this period. Probably the most important contribution has been made by Anne-Marie Blondeau in the form of an article published in 1990 in which she analyses the contents of the earliest available historical texts in Bon and argues convincingly that the oldest among them probably dates from the twelfth century (Blondeau 1990: 37–54). Blondeau has continued research into these early texts, and also compared them with certain early Buddhist sources, especially the sBa bzhad.

The earliest of these texts, the Grags pa gling grags, on which all subsequent Bonpo historical texts seem to rely, is of extreme rarity. Until very recently only two manuscripts were known, one preserved in the University Library of Oslo, the other in the Bonpo monastery in India. A third manuscript, which is of particular interest as it is somewhat longer and more detailed than the other two, has now surfaced in Tibet. I have prepared a complete translation of this text, which I plan to publish as soon as possible. Taking this text as a point of departure, I hope other scholars will study and perhaps translate other Bonpo historical texts so that eventually a more complete understanding of the alternative view of Tibetan history as formulated by the Bon tradition may emerge.

In my article (Kvaerne 1994: 139), I wrote that “A title-list, and eventually a proper catalogue of the texts in the Bonpo Kanjur is a research project which should be given high priority”. In the academic year 1995–96 I had the good fortune, thanks to a generous grant from the Centre for Advanced Study at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, to carry out this project. I was able to invite a group of seven scholars, including four Tibetans, to Oslo. In the course of a year we compiled a detailed catalogue of the more than 190 volumes of the Bonpo Kanjur. Within a year or two, this catalogue should be ready for publication and will, hopefully, be of use in the exploration of this vast literary corpus.

With regard to Bonpo literature, a major issue has been the question of its origins. To Hoffmann, it seemed highly probable that “there is some justification of the Buddhist charges of plagiarism” (Hoffmann 1961: 108). Even Snellgrove, in his introduction to The Nine Ways of Bon (Snellgrove 1967), stated that “Much of this literature, e.g. some of their sūtras and especially the ‘Perfection of Wisdom’ teachings, has been copied quite shamelessly from the Buddhists”, but he did add that “by far the greater part would seem to have been absorbed through learning and then retold, and this is not just plagiarism”.

Real progress in this controversial issue was, however, only made by Blondeau in her study “Le Lha ’dre bka’ than” (Blondeau 1971). In this article, the importance of which can hardly be overrated, she established a close textual correspondence between the Buddhist account, dating from the second half of the fourteenth century, of the epic journey of Padmasambhava to Tibet and a
similar narrative in the Bonpo text *gZer mig*, the two-volume ("medium-length") version of the biography of sTon-pa gShen-rab, of the journey of the latter from 'Ol-mo lung-ring to rKong-po in pursuit of the demon Khyab-pa lag-ring who had stolen his horses. Blondeau arrived at the surprising conclusion (surprising, that is, to Western scholars, but not, of course, to Bonpos) that it was not the Bonpo text which was a copy of the Buddhist original, but the other way round. Subsequently Samten G. Karmay has arrived at similar conclusions with regard to certain *rdzogs chen* texts (Karmay 1988: 216–223). This kind of comparative study should be continued, for it is the only way by which one may hope to define the origin and nature of Bonpo literature.

A closely related field of enquiry is that of the affiliation of ideas, though not necessarily of actual textual passages. Among the most significant contributions of this kind are several studies by Katsumi Mimaki based on the fourteenth century Bonpo doxographical text, the *Bon sgo gsa/ byed*. For example, Mimaki has compared the thirty-two marks of Buddha Sakyamuni with the list of the thirty-two marks of sTon-pa gShen-rab found in that text (paper presented at the 1998 IATS seminar), and the structures of various classifications of schools and doctrines according to Buddhist and Bonpo sources (Mimaki 1994: 117–136).

In my 1994 survey of research, I pointed out that "In addition to the study of literary sources, a complex iconographical tradition also awaits study" (Kvaerne 1994: 139). Hopefully, this situation has to some extent been remedied through the publication in 1995 of my book on the iconography of Bon (Kvaerne 1995). If nothing else, the book shows that the Bon religion has been capable of producing sculpture and painting which is of the highest standard and should thus, once and for all, lay to rest the notion, still entertained by some, that there is something 'primitive' about Bon.

In the same article, I expressed the hope that the immense ritual legacy of Bon would be studied while there are still senior Bonpo lamas alive who can pass on their vast store of knowledge. In fact, in the 1980s a fair number of articles and studies of Bonpo rituals were published (listed in Kvaerne 1994: 138 n.5), but in recent years this trend seems to have stagnated, with the notable exception of the remarkable book by Namkhai Norbu (1995).

Being written by a noted Tibetan *rdzogs chen* master, this book in a certain sense falls outside the scope of my paper. However, as it has been translated into English and published for a Western audience and has a preface written by an Italian scholar, Adriano Clemente, it should be briefly referred to. Namkhai Norbu's basic idea is that what he calls "the ancient Bön tradition" (Namkhai Norbu 1995: xviii) was "the original wisdom of the Tibetans" (1995: xviii). This wisdom was characterized by "a practical and concrete knowledge of the various aspects of the energy of the individual in relation to the dimension in which he lives" (1995: xviii). However, these ideas, which for Namkhai Norbu represent the "genuine roots" of Tibetan culture, "undoubtedly derive from the ancient Bön tradition and civilisation of Shang Shung" (1995: xix). In other words, there is no difference between the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet and the Bön religion
Tantric Buddhism (including China and Japan)

associated with Zhang-zhung: "... the culture of the kingdom (i.e. Yarlung) was that of Shang Shung, as was its religion" (1995: xvi). The later Bon tradition, i.e. the tradition which still exists in Tibet as an organised religion, and which Namkhai Norbu calls "official Bön", was, however, influenced by Buddhism to the extent that "the importance of the original traditions was neglected in favour of the philosophical teachings derived from Buddhism ... and the authentic principles of the ancient Bön culture were misconstrued and almost excised by the protagonists of official Bön" (1995: xviii). Although he regards Bon, as did Hoffmann, as "very probably based on elements common to the heritage of panasiatic Shamanism" (1995: xv), he considers, as opposed to Hoffmann, shamanism to be anything but primitive. As Clemente says in his Preface, "Understanding in our own time the value and significance of these rites means opening a door onto the immense panorama of the primordial experiences and knowledge of man" (1995: xiii).

In summing up, we return to the question of periodization of Bon. Geoffrey Samuel has proposed a model for the historical development of early Tibetan religion on the basis of an analysis of successive stages in the history of early Tibetan society (Samuel 1993: 436 ff.). The first period (before the seventh century) is designated "the original shamanic religion of the Tibetans" (Samuel 1993: 438), subdivided into two periods, that of a stateless society and that of proto-states. Samuel of course uses the word "shaman" in a different sense from Hoffmann. This is followed by a "court religion" connected with the rise of the Yarlung dynasty, characterised by the activities of bon and gshen priests, influenced not only by the "shamanic religion" but also by an earlier "court religion" of Zhang-zhung. Samuel emphasises that "The bön priests who formed part of the court religion at Lhasa were only one of a number of kinds of priests at this time." Contemporary Bon is regarded as "a Buddhist or quasi-Buddhist order," although "it seems likely that the modern Bön religion has preserved a significant amount of early material" (1993: 438).

This historical model is probably the most sophisticated one to be suggested to date, and taken as an analytical tool it can be extremely useful. In the absence of historical sources, some of its stages must, however, remain hypothetical. Personally I would suggest a simpler and in a sense more conservative model employing only four categories: (1) an autochthonous, "pre-Buddhist" Tibetan religion (which may or may not have been styled bon at the time), corresponding to Samuel's "original shamanic religion of the Tibetans", and (2) an organised cult, perhaps focusing on the person of the king, influenced by religions in neighbouring cultures such as India (including, perhaps, Buddhism), or even Iran, established in Zhang-zhung as well as in Tibet, and which again may or may not have been called bon. This would correspond to the "court religion" both of Zhang-zhung and of Tibet. However, I would emphasize that even the distinction between the two categories mentioned so far is made for analytical purposes only, and that the sources do not allow us to define the extent to which we may in fact be dealing with different entities, the main problem here being...
that an “original shamanic religion of the Tibetans” has to be reconstructed entirely a posteriori. Further, we may, with Stein and Tucci, distinguish (3) a contemporary “folk religion” or a “religion without name” which has often been styled Bon in Western literature but is never thus referred to in Tibetan. While we cannot reconstruct an ancient “pre-Buddhist” religion on the basis of this contemporary “nameless” folk religion, we should not on the other hand dismiss all links between present-day popular religion and pre-Buddhist beliefs and practices. On the contrary, we find significant areas of continuity, particularly represented by the cult of ancestral, hence sacred mountains or deities identified with such mountains, or dwelling on such mountains, which is well attested from the period of the Yarlung dynasty, as well as in present-day popular religion, as has been documented in several important studies by Samten Gyaltsen Karmay (1996: 59–75). Finally, (4) the post-eleventh century, organised and eventually monastic Bon religion, styling itself g-yung drung bon, “Immutable Bon”, which has been the main focus of research in the years following Snellgrove’s first contact with its adherents around 1960, still needs to be defined in relationship not only to Buddhism, but to the other three analytical categories outlined above. In spite of its obvious links with Buddhism, I would prefer to regard it as a separate religion, for reasons given above.

Before closing, I cannot refrain from expressing mild despair at the tenacity of certain notions regarding Bon, which may still be found in the writings of otherwise excellent and well-established scholars, particularly in works intended for the general public. Thus a recent German guide book to Tibet writes of pre-Buddhist Bon as “a religion which presumably was originally strongly marked by animistic and nature-religious characteristics” (Everding 1993: 75). The author continues: “The priests, the Bönpos, worshipped the stars of heaven, they attempted to influence fate by means of sacrifices of animals and in certain circumstances even of humans; they practised all kinds of magic in order to exorcise evil spirits and to pacify malevolent demons”. “With the arrival of Buddhism, the Bon religion . . . developed a systematic doctrine, adopted Manichaean and Persian religious elements, and in the course of time its teachings gradually moved closer and closer to those of Buddhist philosophy” (1993: 76).

One of the most widely used guide books, viz. Stephen Batchelor (1987) refers to “the native Bön religion, an animistic cult governed by exorcists, shamans and priests” (Batchelor 1987: 15) and to “the primitive and less universal beliefs of Bön” (1987: 19), and Gyurme Dorje adopts the tripartite periodization of Bon of Chos-kyi nyi-ma as if it were an established fact (Gyurme Dorje 1996: 69–70).

In 1948, the Italian photographer Fosco Maraini accompanied Giuseppe Tucci on his last expedition to Tibet. In the Tromo valley, upon encountering Bonpo monks from the local Bonpo monastery, he styled them “the Etruscans of Asia”, thus eloquently expressing the aura of mystery which at the time surrounded Bon (Maraini 1952: 113). Today, the Bonpos are no longer the Etruscans of Asia. But as the contours of its history slowly emerge, Bon becomes in turn the basis of new myth-making. Projections of Western fantasies regarding Tibet multiply also
with regard to Bon. In particular, it is now fashionable in certain circles to link Bon with shamanism; not with the northern Asian shamanistic complex, as Hoffmann imagined, but with Native American shamanism, a potent symbolical term in the New Age movement. As encounters between Bon and the West multiply, so also do misrepresentations. Bon, surrounded by an aura of mystification in which terms such as “Zhang-zhung” and “Tönpa Shenrap” abound, has become a commodity in the global supermarket of religions. Bon has become an object of New Age economic and ideological exploitation, in which the Tibetans, ultimately, are the losers. To reinsert Bon into its real historical and cultural context is therefore not only a meaningful academic pursuit, but is also a way for us, as scholars, to practise solidarity with the Tibetan people.

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A MODERN NEWAR GUIDE FOR VAJRAYĀNA LIFE-CYCLE RITES
The Nepāl Jana Jīvan Kriyā Paddhati

Todd T. Lewis


1. Introduction: Newar Buddhist ritualism

Sugat Saurabh, modern Nepal’s greatest epic poem in the Newari language, is an account of Śākyamuni Buddha’s life by Chittadhar Hṛdaya (1901–1982), a Newar lay Buddhist of Kathmandu’s Urāya caste. Hṛdaya’s hagiography (Hridaya 1948) draws upon Sanskrit and Newari literary traditions which portray the Buddha in his early life and in previous births as a high caste householder who participates in the ritual customs appropriate to his status (Lewis 1989c). For Newar Buddhists in similar stations, it is natural that such saṃskāras (rites of passage) are integral to their lives as well.

This study examines the role of ritual in the Mahāyāna Buddhist community of Nepal and presents a translation of a modern ritual guidebook, Nepāl Jana Jīvan Kriyā Paddhati, that outlines Vajrayāna Buddhist life-cycle rites.1 The Newar tradition represents a unique yet continuing survival of later Indian Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna Buddhism (Lienhard 1984), and this article is intended to add to the documentation and description necessary for an emerging and important field within Buddhist studies (Gellner 1986, 1987, 1988, 1992).

The abundance of cultural vitality evident in the later Malla era (1482–1768) that created the magnificent art and architecture in the Kathmandu Valley (Pal 1974; Slusser 1982) and established vast libraries of Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts (Hodgson 1874; Burnouf 1844) was applied to other cultural domains as well. Hindu and Buddhist Newars – kings, priests, merchants, commoners – maintained an almost continuous yearly round of festival observances for their society. Likewise, their priests arranged complex rites to mark all significant events in an individual’s lifetime. From conception to long after death, in celebration and in mourning, rituals have long been integral to the Newar lifestyle.

The elaboration of Buddhist ceremonies in this community is truly immense:
a recent handbook on rituals lists over 125 “major” pūjās (Vajrācārya 1981). The vast orchestration of such performances shows the extent to which Buddhists in the Kathmandu Valley adopted and maintained traditions from earlier Indian civilization. Nowhere else in the Himalayas has so much of earlier Indian Buddhist culture survived intact.

In this large Newar ritual heritage, there are patterns of regularity: most life cycle and other rituals can be broken into core “units” that tend to be assembled in consistent structural patterns (Lewis 1984: 192–198; 210–227). Still, the cumulative ritual tradition is so vast that even the best of priests must refer to ritual texts to do all but the most common pūjās.

Ritualism in the Newar context must be understood in relation to Buddhist history. The growth of popular devotion to celestial Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara and Tārā also fostered the ritual accentuation of later Buddhism. Mahāyāna bhakti directed Buddhist laymen to take refuge in these divinities that occupied a similar, competing niche alongside the great devas of the Indian pantheon. Popular texts recount these Bodhisattvas’ rescuing devotees, bestowing boons, and controlling nature. The establishment of Buddhist temples to these saviors created the need for an attending priesthood and the development of proper ritual procedures. For this reason, the great texts of the later tradition, e.g. the Saddharma Puṇḍarīka and Bodhicaryāvatāra, all contain chapters concerned with Buddhist pūjā and its rewards. A host of ritual guidebooks were also composed in this later Buddhist era.

The Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition that grew in importance from the fifth century CE onward in India furthered these ritualistic tendencies (Snellgrove 1987: 456), representing both a critique and a fulfillment of early Mahāyāna philosophy and praxis. The chief tantra-path exponents and exemplars, the siddhas, developed sādhana traditions outside of the scholarly monastic circles and rejected the prevalent multi-lifetime, slow approximation Bodhisattva approach to enlightenment. These yogins introduced the means to visualize and control sūnyatā directed by associating with the Buddha’s three “secrets”: Body (mudrā), Speech (mantra) and Mind (samādhi) (Wayman 1971: 443). Through a host of innovative techniques, the Vajrayāna masters showed the immediate possibility of harnessing the experience of sūnyatā to attain enlightenment.

As a corollary to their soteriological discoveries, the siddhas also composed rituals that applied a master’s power to accomplish more mundane goals. The later scholars who eventually organized and domesticated the sādhana practices fashioned a Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna Buddhist culture that emphasized pūjā (ritual performance), vrata (devotional rites to a chosen deity (Lewis 1989), and abhiseka (esoteric initiation). Ritual descriptions constitute an important part of most tantric texts (Snellgrove 1987: 456); pilgrimage – a form of ritual – was also emphasized in the religious lifestyle (Bharati 1965).

This shift in religious emphases was also accompanied by adaptations within the saṃghas. Mahāyāna monks who adopted the Bodhisattva ethos viewed
serving the lay community as their chief duty, and ritual was a principal medium. As Robert Miller has noted,

This responsibility may be thought of as community service. Thus, the ... monk ... rejects complete release from the cycle of existence, choosing instead to return again and again in the world in order to aid others in attaining release. This new duty is added to the old one of achieving personal enlightenment through the performance of the regular prayers and observances ... Since the layman is unable to pursue enlightenment directly, the samgha ... is obliged to find a means by which he can pursue it indirectly (1961: 430).

Thus, by establishing many levels of legitimate religious practice for laymen and many areas in which the samgha served society, the later Buddhist tradition engaged the entire spectrum of society. Farmers, traders, and artisans had a place in the spiritual hierarchy, as ritual offerings linked householders to temple-dwelling celestial Bodhisattvas as well as to their hierophants and teachers in the samgha. By the Pāla period in northeast India (c. 750–950), this sort of Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna culture was predominant (Dutt 1962: 389).

Judging by the central Sanskrit texts and rituals still resorted to by Newar vajrācāryas, it is clear that this stage of development was reached at roughly the same time in the Kathmandu Valley. With the eventual widespread assimilation of Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna culture among Nepalese Buddhists by 1200 CE, the dominant tradition seems to have reached a plateau in its evolution and identity. The Newars, like Buddhists across Asia, seem to have closed the door on core formulations of doctrine; perhaps influenced by teachings of the Dharma’s decline (Williams 1989: 10), new emphasis and high priority shifted toward “preserving Buddha tradition.” I surmise that certainly by 1200 later generations of devotees regarded the basic religious questions as solved: the Bodhisattva ideal became the predominant religious standard and the philosophical understanding of the universe – for those concerned with intellectual subtleties – was rooted in Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamika dialectic or Yogācāra idealism (Willis 1979; Mus 1964). Householders inclined to more immediate accomplishments could proceed upon a multitude of vajrayāna paths that held the promise of attaining quick spiritual progress toward enlightenment.

For the Newar samgha, the major areas of religious focus were preservation and manuscript copying and Nepal’s vihāras to this day preserve a massive corpus of Sanskrit Buddhist texts. Ritual priests in medieval Nepal also devoted themselves to adapting Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna religious understandings in ritual terms. We have already noted how this was done in a most thoroughgoing manner for their society. For Newar upāsakas (devout laymen), their expression of distinct Buddhist identity became adherence to this ritually-centered lifestyle, devotion to Mahāyāna saviour deities, faith in the siddhas and yoginīs who discovered the highest path.
This pattern of development and help explains why Newar Buddhist tradition seems to lack a strong philosophical/scholastic dimension. What is carefully elaborated is the ritualism that expresses and interjects the Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna world view into every conceivable juncture: for relating to deities, celebrating festivals, moving an individual through his lifetime, and seeking nirvāṇa. Lacking in philosophical inquiry, the “genius” of Newar Buddhism lies in its pervasive orchestration of Vajrayāna rituals and teachings which channel blessings, well-being, and – for those householders willing to practice – movement toward enlightenment. In this respect, Newar Buddhism carries on the evolutionary patterns and lay ethos of later Indian Buddhism and should be considered the most important surviving outpost of this tradition (Lienhard 1984).

Newar Buddhism suffered a serious decline with the conquest of the Valley in 1769 by Parbatiyā kṣatriyas from Gorkha and the massive transitions its society has undergone. From a polity of isolated medieval city-states, the Kathmandu Valley has become the capital region of the modern Nepalese nation. Far-reaching changes in many spheres have accelerated, with the medieval Newar preoccupation with celebrating the rich and elaborate cumulative religious traditions the cultural domain that has suffered the most precipitous decline. Today there is no widespread doctrinal understanding of the most common rituals still performed. Few vajracāryas grasp even the most basic underlying philosophic assumptions or relate to the rituals beyond the procedural level of proper order and mantra recitations (Lewis 1984: 569–573). Nonetheless, many of these traditions are so deeply embedded in Newar life that they continue to survive. Even though many observances have been lost in the last century, the vast cumulative tradition of Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna ritual remains one of the most distinctive characteristics of Newar culture.

II. Newar Buddhist life cycle rites: features of ‘applied Vajrayāna Buddhism’

From the first passages of this text, the application of core Vajrayāna concepts is apparent. Conception is described in terms of tantric physiology and the priest’s sādhana is often cited as the basis for the rituals performed. The vajracāryas’ generation of amrta prasād ("ambrosia") through their pūjās became integral to a medical-religious system that linked priests to laymen (Stablein 1978). This is all very orthodox from the standpoint of the later Buddhist textual traditions. But the Buddhist Newars have also combined many non-Buddhist strands of Indian culture with their own for the last fifteen centuries so that their observances evidence both continuities and divergences from the classic Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna ideals.

Concerning the Newar vajrayāna rites, a historical perspective is again the necessary starting point for grasping the evolution of Newar practice. From the earliest times onward, the samgha in India was instructed to adapt the tradition to the exigencies of the locality. This could entail reinterpreting certain Vinaya rules, accommodating local cultic practices (with certain changes), and making
social accommodations (Dutt 1962: 25ff). Lacking a centralized pan-regional bureaucracy or a universally accepted center of doctrinal authority (Lamotte 1984), the Buddhist \textit{samgha} eventually became dependent upon the power of their polity's royalty to insure its orthopraxy/doxy (Tambiah 1976: 32–72; 159–164). \footnote{In North Indian history until 1200, as in later Nepalese history under Malla and Śāh rule, the socio-cultural context of Buddhism was also one of increasing Brahmanical dominance in the cultural environment (and especially true in the legal domain).} The Newar Buddhist \textit{samskāras} outlined in the \textit{Jana Jīvan} manual closely follow the classical paradigms of Indian Brahmanical tradition (Pandey 1969), marking the key points in a person's life with \textit{vajrayāna} rituals that remove forces that threaten his passage, empower him, while eliminating any incurred pollution. These Buddhist \textit{pujās} follow many ancient Brahmanical ritual procedures, but have been transformed with alternative Buddhist gestures (\textit{mudrās}), incantations (\textit{mantras, dhāranīs}) and meanings. In general, Newar Buddhist ritualists adopted many core components of Brahmanical ritualism (caste perceptions, rite organization, mantra belief, purity concerns) but maintained separate boundaries through transpositions of ritual implements, priestly vestments, mantra formulī, \textit{mudrās}, theories of ritual empowerment. The remaining task in this section is to underline some key points in the \textit{Jana Jīvan} text that reflect the main outlines of this Newar Buddhist adaptation.

\textbf{Caste}

Particularly striking is the acceptance of caste categories in ritual reckoning. The text states that birth into a Śākyā caste family is a necessary prerequisite for entry into the Newar \textit{samgha}. Because Buddhism existed for at least 1700 years in India, this attention to caste should not be surprising. \footnote{Nonetheless, the Newars' use of strict endogamous lineages to define \textit{samgha} membership is a unique and heterodox feature of the modern tradition.} Nonetheless, the Newars' use of strict endogamous lineages to define \textit{samgha} membership is a unique and heterodox feature of the modern tradition.

It is also noteworthy that the \textit{vajrācāryas} recognize Hindu deities and perform \textit{pujās} to them. But this is classical cosmological orthodoxy: Newar Buddhists regard all Indic and indigenous deities as subservient to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Ancient doctrinal and iconographic traditions that depict this image of Buddhist spiritual conquest are still maintained in the Kathmandu Valley. By extending their rituals to the "Hindu" deities, Newar Buddhists are not practicing "syncretism" but making the classical statement of Buddhism's superior spiritual status, especially by asserting these divinities' conversion by their tradition's divinities. \footnote{Disease and karma}

\textbf{Disease and karma}

The passages dealing with karma indicate that Newar Buddhism adheres to orthodox doctrines expressed in the earliest texts. Karma is regarded as the
supreme causal power in the cosmos, but it is not the only cause. Still, it does contain birth status and, accordingly, caste. Because normal human beings cannot discern the exact state of anyone's karma, the Jana Jivan text recommends that at times of illness, the protocol of treatment should include medicines, other practical remedies, and rituals.

Death rituals

It is important to note that approximately one half of this guidebook is devoted to the rituals associated with death. All vajrayana ritual activity seeks to avert bad destiny and make punya to insure a good future for the sponsor(s), but the rituals surrounding death are the most prominent.

In prescribing year-long sraddha offerings to the departed person for the first year after death, the Newar tradition is different from Tibetan and East Asian Buddhist practice, where 49 days is usually recognized as the limit of possible linkage and thereby effective ritual action. (Subsequent yearly rites on the death anniversary are consistent across the entire Buddhist world.) This seems highly unorthodox: despite espousing the doctrine of karma and rebirth, Newar vajracaryas simultaneously maintain the necessity of these monthly sraddha rituals throughout the first year. Even more Brahmanically, our text gives repeated assurances that the departed will reach pitrloka if all of the rituals are done well and the requisite offerings are made by a suitable priest; but it does not specify how this cosmology meshes with alternative Buddhist textual notions.13

In pursuit of this Brahmanical desideratum, Newars spend vast time and resources on their sraddha rituals. Thus, this Buddhist tradition plays to both sides of the Indian question of whether one's destiny is based strictly upon the individual's own karma from past and present lifetimes, or whether rituals can overrule this and manipulate rebirth destiny (Edgerton 1927).14 Like most Indic religious systems founded on the doctrine that the cosmos is governed by karmic law, Newar tradition naturally looks to death as the critical time when causal mechanisms operate. It is not surprising that the very highly ritualized Buddhism of the Newars' has applied vajrayana ritual expertise to this time as well.

This may well represent the Newar samgha's economic adaptation in parallel with the patterns of Newar Brāhmaṇ ritualists who subsist mainly through death time gift-giving. It is important to note that sraddha rituals are one of the chief occasions for laymen presenting dāna to the vajracarya samgha (Lewis 1984: 325–6). So proficient were they in these rituals that until recent times even otherwise Hindu high caste Newar laymen regularly called vajracaryas to perform their death rites. Dependence on after-death ritual service for income also shows the Newar form of Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna Buddhism similar to modern Japanese traditions, where such rituals are the predominant area where Buddhist tradition endures (Kitagawa 1966: 296).
**Hierarchy in the Newar Buddhist samgha**

The text provides important new information on the Newar samgha’s conceptions of itself. As much has been written on this complex community already (Locke 1975, 1985; Gellner 1988), we will simply note several of the author’s assertions here. The text implies, though does not say explicitly, that one must be born into the Śākyā caste to be a member. (The text also does not specify that the vajrācārya initiation should be restricted to Vajrācārya sons.) It is also important that when describing the qualities of a good vajrācārya, “purity” (New. sucī) figures prominently (cf. Tambiah 1985). The Jana Jivan recurringly underlines the point that if a vajrācārya priest is worthy, he can guarantee the supramundane destiny of laymen. Finally, it is noteworthy that the authors make a case for five divisions of rank in the Newar samgha:

Mahāyāna Sūtra Pandita Vajrācāryas  
Vajrācārya Ritualists  
Bhikṣu Bande  
Cairak (Śākyas)  
Śrāmaneka (Śākyas)

**Authoritative texts in Newar ritual tradition**

Finally, attention must be drawn to the texts that are claimed as the traditional sources of Newar ritual authority. Hardly known in western scholarship, these works require further investigation. A list of these texts shows the authors’ wide-ranging acquaintance with Sanskrit documents. In brackets, I have indicated the number of ślokas quoted from each:

{6} *Samvara Tantra*¹⁶  
{50} *Maṇjuśrī Pārājikā*  
{24} *Nema Sūtra Pārājikā*  
{6} *Kriyā Saṃgraha*¹⁷  
{2} *Prāṇigrāhana Vidhane*  
{11} *Bauddhoktā Samsārāmaya*  
{7} *Piṇḍa Vidhāne*

We can only note that these texts have been mentioned since Hodgson’s time as part of the Newar textual tradition (Lewis 1984: 452), but none are in the Newar Buddhist collection of well-known texts, the *Nava Dharma*.¹⁸ The “Durgati pariśodhana maṇḍala” is also cited (although the tantra is not quoted); the recitation of this dhāraṇī has an important role in modern Newar Buddhist death rites (Lewis 1984: 377; Skorupski 1983).
III. Notes on the authors and the text

The Rana government that ruled Nepal despotically from 1846–1950 consciously sought to undermine Newar culture and limit traditional celebrations. Once the Ranas were deposed, publishing in Newari was allowed and a very vibrant literary culture emerged in the Kathmandu Valley. Poetry, fiction, and historical publications soon appeared, as did a host of religious texts and tracts. Newar Buddhists who saw the decline in their vajrayāna samgha were quick to resort to the printed media to restore the older tradition’s fortunes, especially in the context of Theravadin missionizing (Kloppenborg 1977; Lewis 1984: 494–517). Badri Ratna Bajracarya and Ratna Kaji Bajracarya have been two of the most prolific writers in this field. Vajrācāryas of Kathmandu City have long been recognized as the preeminent ritual specialists in the Newar samgha and it is not surprising that these authors are members of vihāras in the capital city.

The Nepāl Jana Jīvan Kriyā Paddhati is a very schematic outline of the chief life-cycle rites, with minimal, though revealing, statements justifying important observances in the Newar Buddhist tradition. Although somewhat inconsistent in its citations, the text quotes verses from Sanskrit sources that authorize the particular ritual being presented. Following these quotations, the rules and regulations are stated in simple Newari. There are forty-one subject headings and I have translated all Newari headings and text. The Sanskrit verses are included in the transliterated text of Part V, transcribed exactly as quoted in the original.

The language of the Jana Jīvan is very terse, intermixed with Sanskrit vocabulary, and more often resembles shorthand than accomplished literary composition. Orthographic renditions of vocabulary words vary irregularly in the text, often contrary to classical Sanskrit norms. (Prominent examples are the interchangeable “b” for “v” and “l” for “r”, irregularly reduplicated consonants, and jumbled sibilants.) I have rendered the language in close to literal form and preserved the authors’ style divisions but with numbers added to ease reference with the text. The footnotes are also minimal, designed to explain important technical terms and the most obscure references. There are many points and topics that require additional elaboration (and further study), but this is a task for later publication.

IV. Translation


I.

In the life of the Nepalese people, from the time of birth up to the time of death with the pinda duties, etc., for all the required duties we will give an explanation.
The mother and father as two people marry and afterwards a birth will occur. Both are proceeding on the road of possible joy and happiness.

In the middle of the woman’s yoni, there are two nādis that extend to the right and left sides. Into the left nādi the semen seed descends; into the right nādi, the blood seed descends.

Just as the inherent nature of the Dharmadhātu is one thing so in the middle of the yoni the two things – the man’s semen and the woman’s blood – are joined as one thing. Having been joined, particle goes to rest in the mother’s womb.

At 1 month, after having gone into the uterus of the mother’s womb, it will seem like a dirty substance after having been mixed with semen. At 2 months after slowly moving, it will seem like a grain of sleep dust. At 4 months it will seem thick.

At 5 months, after air (vāyu) has entered into it, it will take on the fish form; the hands, feet, head, body and every part is very tiny and will (change) quickly. And so the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and mind, i.e. the 5 parts, will be filled up with the 5 substances. At 6 months, the bones and cartilage will be solid.

At 7 months there is head hair, body hair, and nails. At 8 months the sense organs are complete and sensitive. After the 5 materials are complete, birth occurs at 10 months.

2. Cutting the umbilical cord

After the birth, in order to protect the baby, and thinking that one must guide the nine-limbed newborn one to be naturally intelligent, one puts the umbilical cord on a nutmeg and cuts it.

After cutting the umbilical cord, one washes (the child) and plays auspicious music. And then, having given a gift, one performs a ceremony. From the time of the cord cutting, one observes restrictions.

3. Release from birth pollution

To be released from childbirth (restrictions) according to tradition, one gives Kalaśā abhiseka to the baby and offers best wishes.

Having put ghee and honey on a pipal tree leaf, and having done pūjā according to the rules, one feeds these to the baby.

Having assembled 6 pathi of barley grain on top of a leaf (and putting this on Śrī Mañjuśrī’s maṇḍala), one puts 60 lights around the leaf and [the Vajrācārya] does the 3 samādhi meditation and all pūjās.

And again, according to the planet sādhana guide, one writes the horoscope; having analyzed the planet pūjā [the Vajrācārya] recites the mantra of the 9 planets [grahamātrkā].
4. Name giving

According to the caste, the Nāmā karma ("Name Giving") at 10 days, 12 days, or 20 days is proper.

5. Showing the sun

To show the child the sun is proper after 1 month or 4 months. The influence of this rite will be to protect the child and make it auspicious.

6. First rice feeding

At 6 months or 1 year one gives the child fruit. Then having assembled the following — book, pen, cloth, clay, raw cotton, paddy — one shows all to the child and lets him/her choose one. Based upon which is taken, having thought about the result, one again gives rice.

7. In-house protection (Jaṃko necklace)

One collects together the following things as symbols of the following deities, joins them into a kuhmākā thread and if one puts this around the child’s neck, the child’s welfare will also be sure and he will be protected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deity</th>
<th>Substance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Āditya</td>
<td>Gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Śoma</td>
<td>Hiular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bhaṅgal</td>
<td>Costus speciosus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Budha</td>
<td>Sobhāy fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Brhaspati</td>
<td>Patak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Śukra (Indra)</td>
<td>Jatamas herb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Śaniścar</td>
<td>Iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Rāhu</td>
<td>Harthe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ketu</td>
<td>Copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. All together</td>
<td>Silver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Opening the throat

On the day after anna prāśana, having done a kalaśa pūjā, one does a Dharma pūjā that opens the throat of the child. Also, one touches the hasam to the baby’s mouth and throws it out in the lakhu. One then gives sagram.

9. First hair cutting

The ritual of cūḍākarma (or bartabandhaṇa) and piercing the ears is done according to the tradition of the different castes, i.e. whether Brāhmaṇa,
Kṣatriya, Vāsiṣya, Śudra. It is the same (in name) according to the work. Time is reckoned from fertilization in the womb, and from year seven until year twelve, one can do this cūḍākarma and ear piercing.

10. Initiation as adult male householder

(A rite for males): Between years 7 and 12, when the bartabandhaṇa is performed, one cuts the hair, leaving the āṃgṣā; one cuts the nails, and then sesame and ambā are used for bathing. Following the rules, one does a pūjā. Then one gives an arrow, water pot, and stick, and sends the child to the forest. If he is one who prefers to stay a householder, one carries the child to the (nearest) outside Ganesa, gives alms, and brings the child home. Then there is an auspicious celebration.

11. First monastic initiation

Again, (if) one lives at home, one cuts the hair completely (including the topknot (āṃgṣā)) and the nails. After he puts on kāśi clothing, the 5 teachings and 10 teachings are given.

So having been sent to the saṃgha for the 3 refuges and having taken the śīlāku in the right hand and the begging bowl in the left hand, the saṃgha will give instruction in the Six Pāramitās and then be told of the Catur Brahma Vihāra and the Aryan Truths.

Having been given the Koṭi Sikṣā and the Bodhisattva Jñāna, if one acquires both of these, he is called “Bhikṣu”. And even if he acquires 1/4 of these two, “Śrāmaneka”. And even if he acquires 1/2 of the “Śrāmaneka”, he is called “Cāraka”. And among these three, the best is the Bhikṣu. But they cannot perform the homa karma (pūjā).

12. Initiation as Vaijṛacārya

If one is born into a Śākya clan, after the Pravarthya Grahaṇa is acquired, that Bhikṣu is called “Bande”. After the Bhikṣu [stage], the one having the grahaṇa of the vajra and bell is called “Śrī Vaijṛacārya”, and reaches the highest stage.

For the one who can pass the Nirmāṇa level but has no other higher aspirations, one gives him the vaijṛacārya abhiṣeka. And he will have all rights such as [doing] homa karma, etc. That man who has these two – the vajra-ghanṭha initiation and the right to perform homa karma, he earns the status of Vaijṛacārya. If one has the [title] “Mahāyāna Sūtra Pandit”, he will give the most auspicious darśāna.

13. Marriage

On the right date and right moment, one looks for a girl with a body possessed of good characteristics.
Having washed the girl’s body and anointed it, one waves a lamp (around her), respectfully submits to the god, and performs the *visarjana*. Then one gives her a marriage sari to wear and provides various ornaments.

The bride, holding a receptacle that contains yellow and red and gold powders, worships the god and the *gurus*.

And then, the (groom) gives *sindur* to the bride’s hair part.

**14. Gift of a virgin girl**

One puts salt, molasses, 3 kinds of flowers, betal nuts and leaves, ginger, etc. on a feast leaf plate.

Writing a *Svasti* figure on the bride’s hand, after putting flowers, a *byā* fruit, *tāy*, *ākhe* on a *jyonam lapte*, one closes her hands, saying the *Samkalpa* and he [the priest] gives the *kanyādāna* to the groom.

**15. The Nikṣāḥbhū**

This ritual is performed on the next day of the marriage but is not found everywhere. Some do it, some do not.

**16. Dressing the hair**

The second day after the wedding, the groom performs *keśa bandhana*, or “wetting the hair”, combing the hair, etc. Nowadays only some people like to do it.

**17. (Girl’s) confinement**

At the time of *bādha*, the *kalaśa pūjā* is done and the girl who is living in the dark room must fast and then stop [eating]. In a dark room, the girl doing the *bādha* must be controlled. She must not be see the sun’s rays or a man’s face. After 12 days of this and after a purifying bath, she must have *darśana* of the sun.

According to tradition, having done the *sūrya maṇḍala pūjā*, she is sent to the nearest temple, or she is sent [specifically] to a Ganeśa temple. She is given, after returning, curd *sagam* and then the egg *sagam*. This is done only for girls.

**18. Bhīmaratha jaṃko (1)**

When a man or woman reaches the age of 77 years, 7 months, and 7 days, the son will do *upanayana jaṃko* for his mother and father.
Having read the graha mātrkā from the Graha Sādhana book and done a pūjā on a graha maṇḍala, all should purify themselves by cutting their hair and nails, and by bathing. This is called kṣurakarma (upanayana).

The bhīma ratha rite is observed by the old person who has seen 950 full moons. Having made the horses and ratha according to their clan custom, they will do the bhīma ratha.

19. Devaratha jaṃko (2)

After that, again after the old person has reached 88 years old, 8 months, 8 days, after seeing 1000 full moons, at the time of the full moon, the deva ratha jaṃko is performed.

Or else, it can be at when the old person reaches 80. [If so,] one makes the maṇḍala of Śrī Basundhara; and having drawn the 8 female demonesses [yakṣī gaṇa] around it, one does pūjā and requests the 8 powers (siddhi).

20. Mahāratha jaṃko (3)

And again, at 90 years, 9 months, 9 days, after 1200 full moons, there will be the mahā ratha kriyā.

Just as at the time of the bhīma ratha, having completed all the things, having made the horses and drawn the maṇḍala of Uṣṇiṣavijaya, the mahā ratha is done.

21. The ripening of karma

Birth, suffering from disease, and old age – all these 3 things are the result of the previous birth. From the time of being in the mother’s womb, the different types of disease etc. are all results from the previous births.

Paralysis, jaundice, flu, fever, the four diseases, and great troubles – these are also the result of the punya and pāp of one’s previous life.

Whoever becomes sick, [he sees] the best doctor who examines the nerves, and diagnoses the patient’s disease looking at the tongue, wrist, and urine. This doctor (bāidyā) will say which disease it is and give the appropriate medicine.

If one is afflicted by dangerous nāgas, deities, piśācas, pretas, bhūts, or big enemies, to get rid of these afflictions one does the bali karmah pūjā, etc. For each different type, there is a way to make each one peaceful.

For those ācārya doing siddhi sādhana, one must use [curing] mantras for a long time. If this is not successful, then it is a planetary influence and the one must show the horoscope to him [astrologer].

Having studied the chart, the astrologer will tell [the afflicted] of the influence of the planets and suggest doing a graha dāna pūjā. In this way, one must do many things for [achieving] the good result which will be for their life’s welfare.

Still, if after having done pūjā to the kula devatā and having done the svasti
bācā pūjā, he may be suffering from a great fatal disease and even though all kinds of remedies are tried, the disease may not be removable.

In order for the prāṇavāyu to exit from one of the 9 orifices (from the ear, etc.), a powerful medicine [must be given] to increase the respiration. Bāittarani dāna is given to guru acāryas.

Again, according to the regulations, the cow dāna is offered. Afterwards, having poured empowered argha water on the legs, the priest will recite the kula devatā’s and other mantras [to the dying person].

Only the prāṇa will go out from the body because there is only the prāṇa left. That prāṇa will go out from the body and go to Yama’s gate.

Immediately, [Yamarājā] will show to the being his own karma level. If good, the result will be good; if bad, a bad result. (It is all according to one’s own karma [and] he will have to take the result of that karma).

22. First death rites

After death, one does Utkrānti yoga. To do this before death is not appropriate. If done then, we will go down to hell quickly.

So that only if we know death has come should this be done.

23. After-death observances

After life is finished, the dead body should be in contact with iron (or a knife) for protection. Alongside the head, [there should be] a lamp; next to the legs, also, another lamp. (If possible, lamps should be put all around the body.) The prāṇa goes out and it may return, but if iron or a knife are put there, the prāṇa cannot return into the body. If they are not there, the prāṇa vāyu upon return will enter [the body] again and so will become an agati. Therefore, we must keep iron on the dead body and this is the reason for its presence.

24. Coming to the depository for impure things

One must throw out the clothes of the dead one, his old clothes, his personal things, the waistcloth, the mat he used, etc. at the same chvasa where his umbilical cord was discarded. So that the dead one’s disease, etc. cannot be transmitted, his clothes, things, etc. must be thrown at the chvasa. It must be done for this reason.

25. Smoke fumigation

At the Pikhā luku and in all the dark room concerns, one places a clay pot with the burning cow dung [inside]. The smoke must be brought around the house to all places. If done well, the disease and smell of death etc. and the germs will be removed.
26. Removal from the house and making the litter

White clothes ("duḥkhā pikhām tike") [will be given to the dead body]; write a svasti on the floor covered with cow dung where the body is lying. The white cloth must cover the entire body. A Mahādigu lamp must be made.\(^1\) The dead body will be taken out to the stretcher; and around the stretcher are placed the āṣṭamangala, flags, flowers, etc. [Throwing] together onto the stretcher tāy, flowers, tika, abira, [attendants] put the body into the litter. [They then go to the ghat.]

**House furification**

After the body is taken out, the whole house is swept out and the dust is taken to the chvasa.\(^2\) The dead body has left behind insects of disease which can be transferred – therefore the broom and dust pot are also thrown out [there].

27. Death procession

At first, the ground is swept, then water and kumbum, etc. are sprinkled. After burning incense is lit and rice thrown, the ācāryas chant the Durgati Pariśodhana Dhāraṇī. The words "Yama Bādya"\(^3\) are made audible and the Maṅgala Bādya\(^4\) are played along the way to the śmaśāna.\(^5\) At the śmaśāna, wood is piled up and on this wood the dead body is placed down. Before the rite of burning begins, all relatives come to give holy water [firthajala] to the dead body.

28. Observances at the dija

In front of the dead one, put out the kāka pinda,\(^6\) the preta pinda and svāna pinda.

If the father is dead, the eldest son gives the flame; if the mother, the youngest son. Śrāddha must be done before the flame. If [there is] no son, the wife or brothers are responsible. If no brothers, then the goṣṭhi (phukā members) must do the rites.

(If this kāka pinda is offered, the person will not be born as a bird. If the svāna pinda is offered, the person will not be born as an animal. If preta pinda is offered, the person will never be born in the place of the pretas. If these three śrāddhas are offered, person will be safe from these three destinies.)

If the kāka pinda is offered, all the works will be successful. If the svāna pinda is offered, the [dead one] will see the dharmamārga.\(^7\) If one does the preta śrāddha, the dead one will be free from the preta destiny.

One must give the fire to the mouth of the dead body. The dead body must be burned at the riverside dija (and the fire rites done) because at the riverside or in front of the mātrkās are never-ending sacrificial places. Therefore, the dead body is like a great lamp burned and offered before [them].
29. Disposal of the ashes

After 3 days, there is the “washing-the-bones” pūjā. The nali pūjā is done ([for which] one makes a bhasma cāitya with the ashes) and the remaining ashes will be thrown in the river. On the 5th day, 6th, 7th day, the remaining ashes are thrown in the river, in stages.

30. The durgati pariśodhana maṇḍala (and other) customs

On the 6th day, the durgati maṇḍala is made and a pūjā is done. The aṣṭi tārana pūjā is also done and also the Aparimitā text is recited on the 5th, 6th and 7th day. And again on the 7th day, the bone ash will be put inside a copper/brass cāitya and the cāitya will be sealed after a pūjā of establishment. Later it will be thrown into the pañca fīrthas.

31. Seventh day [rites]

Again on the 7th day behind the pikhā lukhu, a cooked rice meal (dal and vegetables) is given.

32. Setting out cooked rice [beneath the eaves]

Again on the 7th day, in the night (after most people are asleep), up into the air (from a window) a rice feast is presented and left. ([It is called] pākhāja khāye.)

33. Release from death pollution

And again all family relations will go together to the river and according to their own [caste] rule will cut the hair, cut the nails, take a bath, wear new clothes and take the pañcagavya and purify themselves. While at the river, take ātri, amb, sesame, oil seed, kvo oil, etc. and all who have lived in an impure state through [this] washing will become pure.

34. The betal nut rite and house repurification

Vajrācāryas [after] 7 days; for others, [after] 12 days: take betal nut and leaf together with a tooth stick, and then after and having taken betel sagram, do the homa karma and the house will be purified.

35. Ten ‘piṇḍa’ ritual

Vajrācāryas on the 7th, others of the various castes on the 10th day do the śrāddha of the ten piṇḍa etc. and the preta piṇḍa.

Why do the daśa piṇḍa? On the 1st day, piṇḍa is for the head; the second day for the eye; the 3rd day for the nose; 4th for the ear . . .
On the 5th day, for the heart; 6th for hand; 7th for stomach; 8th for sense faculties/organs...

... On the 9th day for the leg; 10th day for hair, nails. If the 10 are completely done [the dead one] will be complete in manifesting [new] body parts.

36. Eleventh day ‘pindha pujā’

Again, on the 11th day, the ekādaśi pindas are given. When this is done, [the dead one] will take birth in one of the 4 [human] yonis.

37. [Other] ‘pindha’ rules

Again, in the name of the dead one at 1 1/2 months, at 3 months, 6 months the pindha dāna śrāddha will be done.

After one year the same pindha dāna must be done in the dead one’s name.

38. The ‘lina pindha’

For this śrāddha to be done, there must be 3 generations. If it is a man, the man’s father, and grandfather, and great grandfather will be offered pindha. If it is the mother who died, the mother, grandmother, great grandmother. In this way we bind together the 3 generations and do pujā to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha and take refuge in the Triratna together.

For the man whose son is dead and whose father is alive, he need not do lina śrāddha.

We do lina śrāddha equally well in a house, in the mountains, at a vīrtha, or a very holy place. When doing śrāddha, one must wear suitable clothes for worship and the food, etc. must be fitting. If the food is impure or the clothes are bad, do not offer [them]. At the time of śrāddha worship use only good, fine, pure things together.

39. Regarding the priest

To do śrāddha, what kind of guru is needed? He is one living in good society; he must have a good soul, control over his sense organs, not be talkative or greedy, and one who is easily satisfied. He knows all of the rites; is willing to donate his time for free; he is pure (suci). Those type of priests with these traits [should be called] to do the śrāddha. If such types do the śrāddha, then a very good result follows and the dead person will be completely satisfied.

In doing the śrāddha, if one retains a priest who has an evil soul, always chatters, eats excessively, is unsatisfied, not clean, and quarrelsome: with the such a priest, don’t do śrāddha. If he is [evil] like this, [we know] that in and pitrloka, having been unsatisfied, the dead one will return [to the house] go to hell.
40. Śrāddha

On the Kārtik full moon, if one offers piṇḍa, this is called dharma piṇḍa. If this is done, the dead one will get these 4 results – artha, dharma, kāma, mokṣa.72

During [the months:] Kārtik, Śrāvaṇa, Bāiśākh, Māgha, in these 4 periods one also does śrāddha. These days are good for doing piṇḍa dāna: on Kārtik punhi,73 Māgh full moon, Śrāvaṇa during the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight, or Bāiśakḥ trtīyā. One has to do piṇḍa śrāddha on these days. If done on these days, the dead one will without doubt get countless merit.

If śrāddha is not done on the day of death, or if śrāddha is done on another day, it will be useless and the clan will be undermined.

If someone is not free from the impurity of death or if a woman is menstruating, she should not do śrāddha for it will be useless.

After 12 pm and up to 3 pm do the śrāddha piṇḍa. After sunset, śrāddha is prohibited.

While doing śrāddha, put rhino meat inside the piṇḍa. If a small piece is kept and the piṇḍa is offered, due to the reaction of the rhino meat the dead one will get lots of meat and be very satisfied always.74

To make piṇḍas, one should use the best food – jāki, baji,75 rice flour barley wheat flour, etc. But not corn flour or millet flour, as these are proscribed.

Having made ghee, honey, milk, curd, etc. together with meat of various kinds, and having prepared flowers, incense, lamps, perfumes, and food offerings: in whoever’s name this is [be offered], in that one’s name one offers piṇḍa.

To do śrāddha, one sits on a kuśa grass mat and offers libation vessels etc.; in just this way, generations from long ago until the present time have offered the main piṇḍas.

After that, one puts out a vikala [piṇḍa] and for any śrāddha, one makes this vikala. If one doesn’t put out vikala [piṇḍa], then even if one performs an infinite number of śrāddhas, they will all be fruitless.

Having been born into our lineage, there is no one who does not have an older or younger brother, or sons; and again, persons who have been set in a mother’s womb and been miscarried; or older and younger brothers who have been deformed in many forms, or younger and older sisters who have lived in the world in this state: all these who have received the libations on the earth should be satisfied. Those dwelling in the wrong path and lacking in [good] saṃskāras, to all these deformed ones (vikalas), we should give piṇḍas.

When doing piṇḍa dāna, you should not put them in an iron pot, [clay] pottery, or wooden vessels; if someone does this, the recipient will go away without taking it and feel disappointed.

During the aṣṭami vrata, if you offer multi-colored flowers, – white jasmine, fragrant flowers, etc., it will only satisfy those in the devaloka. For the offerings to reach pitrloka, it is not fitting to offer these. If they are offered, the beings there will not be satisfied.
If the magnolia, fragrant green flower (*masvām*), lotus, *tahapyām* flower or *cihapyām* flower are offered, those in the *pirloka* will be satisfied.

If sesame seeds, *kuśa* grass, water, flowers, etc. are offered together with mantras, they will satisfy those from the *pirloka* and they will go away sustained. (It is not faultworthy to omit one or two of these things). But sesame and *kuśa* are essential.

If there is no *kuśa*, *śrāddha* will be fruitless. *Kuśa* is the best thing for ritual performances. Particularly for *śrāddha*, *kuśa* is best of all. 76

After finishing the *śrāddha*, the copper vessel [*kollā*] which contained the *pindas* should be put out on the *pikhā lukhu*. One should pour water around it three times clockwise, then three times in a counter-clockwise direction. The *jajmān* should face west and pour while the priest chants the concluding verse.

Having hopefully given as much succor as possible to all beings, say [to the *pretas*], “Return now to your own places from whence you came before.”

41. The place for discarding ‘*pīṇḍa*’

If you can throw away the *pīṇḍas*, throw them at the stones for this [*pyamgā*] 77 or else at a *fīrtha*, or in a pond. After that, offer a savory feast to all relations and friends.

V. The text 78


I.

_Nepāle jana jīvane janma marañāntaśc ca kriyā /
Kathayāmyahāṃ pīṇḍa karmādi kaṇca yathā vidhim //

Nepāla jana jīvanya busāṃ nisyēṃ sināvanā pīṇḍa karma ādi bidhi-bidhāna kriyā takyā khaṃ vyākhyā yānā haye //

Samvara Tantra:

_Mātā pītā disām yogā dāikśayedbhava janmina /
Ati Nirbhara Sānandāṃ suṅka mārga pravesyate //

Māṃ abu vai nima milana jula dhāvyaṃ janma jvīgū sambhavajī ānanda sukhayā mārgē māṃ abu vanā cvani /

_Dva nādyo yoni madhyetu bāma daksīṇa yosthathā /
Vāme suklāṃ vijāniyā daksīne raktamevacah //

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Māṇyā yoni madhye javāṃchahu khavaṃchahu nāḍī vayā cvamgudū khavaṃgu nāḍī sukla bija hāyā cvana javagu nāḍim raktabija hāyā cvana

Tayo mūrlana mekatvaṃ dharmadhātu svabhāvataḥ /
Śukla sōṇi tayormadhye bindu rūpeṇa tiṣṭhati //

Dharma dhātuyā svabhāva gathe chathi jvīgu kha athe he yoni madhye abuyā sukla māṇyā raka thva nitā lvaṅka jyānā chati juyā bindū rūpaṃ māṇyā garbhe macācheṃ cvaṃ vanī /

Pratharma kalalā kāraṃ ayuṅ daṅca dvitiyakaṃ /
Trīya peśito jātaśca caturtham dhanamevaca //

Thanali māṇyā garbhe macācheṃ bija vanā lachi daibale sukla bahi lvaṅkajīyānā bhyaṭathyem cvani nilā daibale jhulu jhulu sanā pyāca thyem cvani pelā daivale khvātuse cvani /

Vāyuṇā pūrya māṇusya macchākāram tatobhavet /
Paṅcamāsa-gatam bijaṃ paṅcaspho ḍaśca jāyate //

Nyālā daibale vāyu duvinā macchākāra jvī lāhā tuṭi kṣoṃ śarira chagu chaguyā bhāga cicidhamkaṃ chakolāṃ dai hānaṃ cakṣu śrota ghrāṇa jīhṇā mana thayenātā ādi vyaṅjanam pūrṇa jvī (kvom sem pvāye khulāṃ pūrṇa jvīḥ)

Keśa romā nakhā cingā cānāsena jāyate /

Saṃ cimisam lusi nheylāṃ dai /

Indriyāṅica rūpāṇi vyaṅjanā nīyaḍa māsataḥ /
Sampūrṇa navamāsyana cetanā dašamā sataḥ //

Cyālā daibale īndriye sampūrṇa samjātajvī vyaṅjanam sampūrṇa juyā jholāṃ janma jvī /

2. Nābhi Kṣedana [Pidhenegu]

Maṇjuśrī Pārājikā:

Navāṅga bija vinyāsāiḥ sarakṣerjāta māṇavā /
Cheda yeśca tato nābhi śūnyatā bhāva pūrvakaṃ //

Janma juma māṇava macāyaṭa rakṣā yāyega nimite gūgu angayā bija tayā prajāṇa svabhāva juyemā dhaigu bhāva pūrbakaṃ jiphole pihditatakāva pihdhene /
TANTRIC BUDDHISM (INCLUDING CHINA AND JAPAN)

Tathāivasnāna dānasca mangalotsāha vardhayet /
Nābhi cheda krte paśyā yasmāc ca sūtakaṁ tadā //

Nābhi chedana yāye molhuke mangala vādyā thātake anali dānakarma yātake utsava yāye / gukhunhū pīdhena ukhunū nisye sutaka kenī //

3. Jātakarma [Macābu Beṃke]

Maṇjuśrī Pārājikā:

Sūta kānte prakūrvīta pūjāsatkarme kārayata /
Abhiṣekam tato dattvā aśirbāda dikām pūnāḥ //

Macābu beṃke kriyākarma bidhi anusārama yāye macāyāta kalāśābhiseka biya hānaṁ āśirvāda nāṁ biye /

Dhartaṅca madhumca sthāpayat kuṇjarāśana patre /
Pūnāḥ ghṛta madhu prāśāṅ ca vidhivat kāraya //

Ghyo kasti ogalasīma hale tayā vidhivata pūjāyanā macāyāta hānaṁ ghṛta madhu prāśana yāye /

Tathāiva pujayet sarvaṁ samādhi traye bhāvanā /
Sāli Dhāñyāṅca saṭapaṣṭa sthītipaṁ praṇāvālayat //

Hānaṁ puvāphaḥ khupha dvocine boyā dyone (ṣrī maṇjuśrīyā maṇḍala sallākāsa cvayā taye) 60 khuipvā mataṁ cāuyēke / Trisamādhi bhāvanā phukam pūjāyaye //

Tathāiva kārayata pūjāṁ jāgareṇa vinikramam /
Graha māṭṛkāṁ samabhyaṛcyā yathoktam grahasāghane //

Hānaṁ vidhi anusārama graha sādhane dhayāvaṁ thyeṁ janma patrikā coye graha pūjā jāgaraṇa cvane graha māṭṛkā pāṭha yāke /

4. Nāmā Karma [Nāmchuye]

Maṇjuśrī Pārājikā:

Daśame dvādaśe cādīdvāśeḥanivā punah /
Nāmakarmaṁ prakarttavyaṁ varṇā nāṅcā viro dhataḥ //

Varṇānusāra nāmakarma yāye (macāyāta nāma chuya) varṇa anusārama jhinu khunu nam jyu jhinīnu khunū bā hānaṁ nīnuḥ khunu nam jyu /
5. Sūryajope

Dirghā rakṣantu bālānāṁ maṅgalārthāṁ samanvitaṁ /
Māse tṛitiye caturthebālādārsā yedraviṁ //

Macāyāta sūryajope lachinaṁ jyu pyelānaṁ jyu thuli kṛīyāyā prabhāvaṁ macāyāta āpālaṁ rakṣā jvīḥ //

6. Phala Prāśana Anna Prāśana [Macā Jamko]

Anna prāśana sāṣṭhe vā cāṣṭe samvatsare thavā /
Tanīṇca pūraskṛtya śrāstrādi śilpa karmakaṁ //

Khulā va dakṣiṇ macāyāta phala prāśana yāke saphu jyābha alāmkāra tīsā vastra cāḥkapāe vāḥ masī kalam puthi thuli vastu saṃdyukta yānā macāṃkāeke macāḥ chuchukāla vava phala bicā yaye hāna macāyāta (anna prāśana) jānaṁ nake //

7. Grha Rakṣā [Jamko Kkokhā]

Nemasutra Pārājikā:

Āditya rakta pāśāna vacaḥ śomaṁ tathāivaca /
Kūṭa maṁgārakaṁ jñeya śripadaṁ budhame vaca //
Patanṭi guru vidyāyā sukro jyoti smatistathā /
Lohaṁ śaniścara jñaya rāhoścahaṭha vijakaṁ //
Tāmraṁ keśoṣca vijneyā janmato ropyā mevaca /
Etāśca graha rakṣantu bālānāṁ hitahe tave //

Ādityayā luluṅg 1 śomayā hiulara 1 maṅgalayā kūṭa 1 vudhuyā sobhāya phala 1 vrhaspatiyā patak 1 sukrayā jatāmāsa 1 saniścarayā naḥ 1 rāhuyā herthē 1 ketuyā sīja 1 janmayā vāḥ thuli saṃdyukta kuhmākāsa honā macāyāta kog-vāya ke macāyāta sadāṁ hita jvīḥ rakṣā jvīḥ /

8. Kāṇḍha Śodhana [Kāṇḍhakhu]

Anna prāśanayā kanekhunu kalaśa pūjāyānā dharmā danke kāṇṭha khuya janma-juma macāyāta mhutūḥ hasaṁ vāke sthāna lukhura choya sagaṁ biya /

9. Busakhā

Maṇjuśrī Pārājikā:

Cūḍākarma karma bheda yathā saṃkhyana karnayat //
Brāhmaṇa kṣatriya vāiṣya śudrānāi ca tathavaca /
Garbhaṅtsaptama varṣeṇā yāvata dvādaśa vatsare //
Cüḍakarma brattabandhaṇa nṝhayapaṁ pvaḵhane karmakriya yāṇa haya brāhmaṁya ksatriya, vaisya, śudraya kathathyeṁ uṭhyeṁ uṭhyeṁ karmayāgy garbhye cvasaṁnīsyē nyhaydaṁ nisyē jhiṁmidtayā bhitrē cūḍākarma karnabheda yāye //

10. Bartabandhaṇa

Saptame dvādaśe varṣe vartavandhaṇaṇa kārayat /
Kṣora armādikaṅcā pūṇaḥ cūḍāśire sthāpayat //
Vidhivata bālānāṁ tita dhātreṇa snānāṁ caret /
Kesu daṇḍaṁca śara yajño paviti pradāpayat //

(Mijaṁpiṁtaḥ yāyegu kriyā) nhere bā jhiṁnirayā bhitrē bartabandhana yāye saṃkhāke āṅgaśāyatēke lūṣi dheṁke āmaṁ lāṁ molhuke bidhivata pujāyāye / Śara, jvānā phosi katiḥ la īhāya vanāntara choya, grhaṁthēa rambhasa conima julasā sthānalakku gaṇeke yēṅkā (pikhaḥulhusām) bhikṣā viyā chem dutahaye mangalotsava yāye /

11. Pravarthya Grahaṇa

Tataḥ kesāṇa vatāryah sthāpayeca sikhāśire /
Kāśāya paṇca pradātavyām daśa sīkṣa padaṁ pūnaṁ //

Hānaṁ chene cvaṅgu sam pācuka dhene (āṅgaśānaṁ dhene lūsi dhenegu kāśāya bastra pūnakā paṇcāsīkṣā daśasīkṣā sametāṁ viyā /

Samgha triṇīṇa dasaṁnaṁ sīkṣāskīrī kāṅca pradāpayat /
Śat pāramitā samādāṇa māryya satyādi samvarāṁ //

Samghapiṁke triśaraṁ choya piṇḍapātra kuṁḍhāra śīśalāku laba lḥātha sāta pāramitā upadeśa viyā catur brahmavihāra āryya satyanāṁ kane /

Maṇjuśrī Pārājikā:

Tadagra koṭi sīkṣāṅca bodhi cattāṁ pradāpayet /
Etesaṁ grahaṇāt bhikṣu śrāmanera tadardhakam //
Cāirakaṅcā tadarddhenā trayāyāṁ bibhāvanāt /
Sarvaṁ sāṁmagraṇi bhikṣū yajña kāryyā dibarjjitām //

Anaṁli koṭi sīkṣā biye anaṁli bodhicitta jñāna biya thuli jñāna lāmayat bhikṣu dhāye thuliyā bachiyā bachi sīkṣā lāmayāta śrāmanneka dhāye thvate śrāmennekayā bachi sīkṣā lāma cairaka dhaya thvaḥ svamasiyā bhānra thathe thvaḥ svamasiyā madhye uttamaṁ bhikṣū dhāya thumisam homa karma yāye madu //
12. Vajrācāryābhisēka

Kriyāsāṃgraha:

Śākya vaṃśa praśā bande janmanāca praśāyate /
Pravaryyā grahaṇāt bhikṣu punarāḥṛti vajra dhṛk //

Śākya vaṃśa janma juyā pravarthya grahaṇalāma bhikṣuyāta bande dhāye /
Hānaṃ bhikṣu karmmāṃ vajra ghanṭha grahaṇa yāma uttama śrī bajarācārya
dhāye //

Maṅjusrī Pārājikā:

Nirvāṇā śraya bhūtatvānnira pekṣā svabhāvataḥ /
Vajra ghanṭhā dīkaṃ homa sarva karmānu sāghanām //
Dvābhya meva pradātavyaṃ vajrācāryya padāṃ punaḥ /
Sūtrādi mantra pāthāṃca maṇḍalāṃ darśaye tathā //

Nirmāṇa padayā śreṇī lākamaḥ mebayāke upāścchā mayākama thathimmaḥ
bhikṣuyāta vajraghanṭhayā abhiṣeka viye homakarma ādiyā sarvādhikāra jula
bajraghanṭha thva nītā abhiṣeka lāmesita hānaṃ vajrācārya padabiye mahāyāna
sūtrādi paṃ- pāṭha maṅgala darśana biye //

13. Pāṇi Graha

Kriyā Saṃgraha:

Śubha tithi nakṣatre kaṃnyāṃ pari kṣapet /

Bhīṃgu tithi bhimgu nakṣatre sūrakṣānaṃ samyuktam laṅkṣanaṃ paripūrṇa
ma kanyā svayāhaye (yajña prāṇi graha vidhi kriyānusāra yāye) /

Kanyā Lasvaye Maṇḍala Pūjā

Tadanu kanyā śarire śodhanaḥ nirāņjana prākṣāna bastrādiḥ /
Visarjjanaḥ devatādi pranāsa bastrādi sarvā laṅkāra dadyāt //

Kanyāyāta śarire śodhanaḥ nirāņjana lvāhā rakṣā vi matapham tvaye devatā
anyāke visarjana yāye īparasiṃ sike anega tiṣāṃ tīke //

Rakta kaṃcūka sūbarna mūdrikā sindhūra /
Bhānjanāṃ samgrnhyā debā gurūbe dāpayat //

Mhasinha rakta candana cūṃhcūṭī tayāgū sinha battā kanyāṃ jvaṃkā
dyoṣyāta gurupinta chāyake biye /
TANTRIC BUDDHISM (INCLUDING CHINA AND JAPAN)

Paścāt kanyāyāi sindhuraṃ vāroyaṃ samāro hayat/
Hānaṃ kanyāyāta siñce sinha chāyakeviye modakinaṃ tayu/

14. Satabhedikā Taye

Priṇi Grahaṇabidhāṇa:

Ādrā labaṇa guḍaścāiva pīta kāśṭha madanaṃ tathā/
Śobhāṃjanaṃ macchā tāmvu rādi rājā kṣata apicantathā //

Pālu, ci, cāku, mikusim, madampho, śobhāyphala, ṇā, byā, gvaye, tāy, ākhe, jyonā lapte, pocinā kanyāya mhaduchī kuḥmakā satachītu kāye ghānā kanyāyāta kokhāyake (isalāpā lālhaye) /

Haste nandā bali likhitvā śrīphalām dudyāt /
Lājā kṣatasthāpayat pūnāḥ rājya pattrena pāṇāu bandhayat //

Kanyāya lhāte svasti coyā vyājvanākā tāy ākhe tasyaṃ jyonāṃ lapteṃ lhāpo cikeh kanyā samkalpa yānā kanyādāna puruṣa yāta lava lhāye /

15. Nikṣāḥbhū

Nikṣābhū dhayāgu vivāhayānā kane khunu yāyegu / Thva kriyā guli guli sithām-jaka du / Gulisiyāṃ mathā /

16. Keśa Bandhana [Saṃ Pyāke]

Vivāha yānā svanu dukhunu yāyegu kriyā yāta kesavandhana arthāt (saīḥpyākegu Dhāi) / Purusāṃ bhāryāyāta sampyākegu samā ādi yākegu thvanāṃ guliguli siyāṃ thva kriyā mayā /

17. Nārī Jāti Yāta Yāyegu Kriyā Raja Šolā Bidhi [Bādhā Taye]

Vādhā cvani khunu kalasha pūjā vādhā cvanimesīta dhalaṃ danke bisarjjana yāye / Bādhā koṭhāsa vādhā conimesīta vādhā koṭhāsa sone (vādhā taye) / Suryyaya kirṣa jaḥ mavayaka vālampyanē arthāt sūryyayā kirṣaṇa jaḥ makene mijāmpīnī khvāḥ makene thukaṭhāṃ vādhā tayāgu jhiṃminhu dayava suci snāna yākā sūryya darśana bye / Vidhi pūrbaka sūryya manḍala pūjā yāke sthāṇa laskhus choya arthāt gane deke choya sagaṃ biya thuli kriyā misāpinta jaka yāīgu /
18. Bhūmratha Kriyā (Bṛhat Nara Bṛhat Nārī Jaṃko 1)

Nema Sūtra Pārājikā:

Saptasapti barsāni mānica dinā nica /
Upanayanaṁ yathā kāryaṁ pitā putreṇa kārayat //

Nheye nhayada varṣa nhayelā nhaynu dayva bāu māmyāta kāya macaṁ upanayena dhaigu jaṃko kriyā yāye /

Graha māṭrkaṁ puraskṛtya yathoktaṁ graha sādhane /
Kṣura karmā dikaṁ sarvaṁ sacāila snānamā care //

Grahamāṭrka pāṭhayānā graha sādhane gathe dhayā vana vathyem grahamāndala daykā pūjā yānā kṣura karmā dhaigu saṁ lusī dhenā sakala siyām suci snāna yāye /

Pañca nava sataṁcandra drṣṭivā kṛta bhīmarathamā /
Yathākula viśeṣena asvādi ratha yojayet //

Gusalava nyemha pūrṇacandrāmā khāṃmesina bhīmaratha kriyā yāye viśeṇaṁ thagu kule cale jugu thyem sala ādiṁ samyuktagu ratha dayekā bhīmaratha kriyā yāye /

19. Devaratha (Jaṃko 2)

Nema Sūtra:

Aṣṭa Śitica varṣāni māsanica dinānicaḥ /
Deva ratheti bikhyālaṁ sahasra candra drṣyate //

Thanaṁli hānaṁ caye cyāda varṣa cyālā va cyānu dayeva dochimha (pūrṇacandrāmā darśana lāgu belāśa) devaratha dhaigu jaṃko kriyā yāye /

Basubarṣa samāpūrṇā basudharārcanam kuru /
Aṣṭāi yakṣa sama biṣṭhā aṣṭāu siddha prārthayat //

Athabā cayeda varṣa jaka puke jyevam jyūḥ śrī vasundharā yāgu maṇḍala cotāh cyāmāḥ yakṣanā gaṇaṁ cāyekā pūjā yāye aṣṭa siddhi phone /

20. Mahāratha (Jaṃko 3)

Nema Sūtra:

Nava navati varṣāni māśānica dinānica /
Mahā ratheti bikhyātā dvādaśa sata candra dhṛk //
Thanampli hanaṃ guyeda gulā gunhu puke juyeva jhiṃ nisala candramā
darśana prāpta juyeva mahāratha kriyā yāye /

Pūrvat sarva sāmyukta yajña veda prakalpayet /
Uṣṇiṣa vijayam cāiva kṛtvā manḍala muttaman //

Nhāpā bhīmaratha kriyāsa dhaivaṃthyaṃ sakatāṃ sāmyukta yānā yajñśālā
daykā uṣniṣa vijayayā manḍala coyā mahāratha kriyā yāye /

21. Karma Vipāka

Janma byādhi jārāmatyā garbha sthānāni dehajam /
Srjyate sarvasatvā nāṅca nānāvyādhi samuṭ bhavam //

Janmajvīgu roga*jvīgu vṛddhāvīgu thva sakala pūrvajanmayā phalam māmyā
garbhe cvasāṃ nisyem juyāvaī hānaṃ anc anegu roga utpatisvīgunaṃ pūrbajan-
mayā phalāṃ /

Bāṭa pitta kaphaśāvita sannā pātādi rogaī /
Catuyrotare mahā vyādhi mahī punyādi dehajam //

Vātapitta kapha sannipāta catur roga ādi mahāvyādhi utpati juigunam pūrva-
janmayā pāpa punyayā phalam /

Tesubāidyā tamonādi jīvhamūtra parikṣayā /
Cikitsā kārayet vāidyā yathānāya yathām vidhi //

Suṃ gumhesita roga jūī uīta uttamaṃ vaidyaṃ nādi svayaṃ mehyāgu coyāgo
parīkṣā svaya (śarīre juge) gugu roga jula ugu roga anusāraṃ vāsa yāyi /

Āgantu kādi dōṣeṣu ghoraḍuṣṭa bhayān nakam /
Balikarma vīdhīscāvī nānā śaṃti prayogata //

Hānaṃ ghora duṣṭa bhayānakapiṃ bhūta preta, piśāca, deva, nāga, pinigu
doṣalā dhakā balikarmaṃ pūjā ādi yānā aneku prakāraṃ śaṃti yāyi /

Siddhi sādhana mācāryyo mantrayogeṇa sādhayat /
Grahadosa samuda bhūte jātapatra pradarsa yat //

Hānaṃ siddhi sādhana yāpiṃ ācāryyapisam mantra pryoga sādhana yaki
graha doṣalā dhakā jāta keṇī /

Ādi tyādi graha duṣṭe tatodānaṃ samā dadet /
Tathāva pari māṇantu niru jānmā navā care //
Thanaml jatha kene jyotisam dhathahathem adi tyadi grahayagu dosa dhakar grahamana yayi thugi prakaram parimanaarya manusyaapisaam jiu thayetaka thagu jiu upakara yayi /

Svesta daiva vata pujane svasti vacana karmmaca /
Mahar mrtuy samutpanna mupayena nasammyati //

Hanam thamha kula devata yata pujaya yana lipa svasti baca karmanath yayi tara mahar mrtuy jvgu roga utpatti jvibale nguge upaya yasam rogalai makhu /

Pranaka kartha gata svasa mahuasadhi dadatte tam /
Baitara pyam tato dadyam dacaryya gurbhyah yathath //

Pranavayu nhayapaam adim nabadvaram phahaa vaneta svasa thahaa vai ugu bakhate tadhamgu auasadhi gutika nakvii guru acaryapinta baitaranii dana yayi /

Gaudanaam vidhy naasciva paddayo jala bindutah /
Svesta devataad mantradi nuccaryya karyaddhit //

Hanam bidhi purbakaam sadananaam yanavi thanaml pailasa arghajala tay thah kula devatadi yagoo mantra nylonkii biyi /

Pranamatra saraaracha tatra tyaktv gabonkusam /
Pranaka mukto bhavetpusam yamadvaresu gamyate //

Sarire pranaa mtra danigunam sarira yata tota pranaka peham banii thvamanusya sarira tyagaa yanaa yamadvare vanii /

Svasva karma krtasaciva karma bhumi pradarshakaam /
Durgati sugati caiiva svakarma phalamkhavet //

Thathahgur karmanam yanagug karman bhumi kenegu yenii durgati jusam sugati jusaam thamamyanagug karmany anusaraam (karmayaa phale yani) /

22. Uttrakanti

Utrakanti kalasam prapta makale deva ghata kam /
Devaghatenaa matrenaa narake pacyate dhruvam //

Sinii vaneva uttrakanti yoga yaye sinaiya mavaankaam uttrakanti yoga yay majyu yata dhasa yakanaam narake lavani /

Tasmatmytyu cinhani jnayatetu vica ksanai //

Atheyaa karane kale jnana sikajaka uttrakanti yaye /
23. Mṛtyu Kriyā

Anti kriyā sidhayava mṛtyuyā aṅsas īvāhā rakṣā (naḥ arthāta cakū) tayā phusa likvos mata chapvā chapvā taya (phatasā mata cha cālam cāuīke) naḥ cakū taya viyāguliṃ praṇā bāyū pihāṃvane dhūṃkūgu hānaṃ lyāhāvayā praveśā jūvaye phaimakhu same siyāmhe naḥ tayā mabila dhasā prāṇa bāyū hāna lyāhāṃ vayā prabēsa jvauyo totāvane dhāṃkūgu prāṇabāyū hānaṃ lyāhāṃvayā praveśa jula dhasā aṅgīvatāh īvānayeto atayba akeṃ jhisāṃ simay mhenah tayā vimāgu kāraṇa juyā cvana /

24. Chvāse Vāyegu

Mṛtyūya bastra tvakā athābab vayāgu phulāṃguvāsa vagāgu āsana (arthāta sukhū) nābhi paṭṭana bandha bastra (jani) thuli jaṃma jūbāle pīpāye sā ītyāc vām choyagushāne (chvāse) vāṃchoya mṛtyū juyā vaṃesigu roga ādī sare juyā vaigu bhāe dugujiyām nimitiṃ uīgu bastra ādī āsana su dhānta chvāse vāṃchoyaṃke māgu juyā congu kāraṇa ukeṃ /

25. Pākhākūṃ Thānegu

Pikhā īukusa, pākhā kunasa, tayā bhājane micyākā sepāḥ yāgu kūṃ thane, thva sapāyāgu kūṃ cheṃ chakkāṃ neṇka thanāgu nimiti mṛtyūyāgu roga gandha ādī kitānu nāsa juyī /

26. Duḥkhā Pikhām Tiya, Sāu, Sāyegu

Śvetabastraṃ (duḥkhasā pikhāṃ tike) sausāya ata eva gomaya arthāt (gobar) nām svasticoya svasti coṣyāgu sthānasa mṛtyūya ānga dikā sveta-bastra mṛtyūyā mha chahmāṃ bhunā mahā digu dayake (ataeva duḥkha pikhāṃ tiya) / Va sthānaṃ pitahāyā aṣṭamaṅgala kikinījāla phayagaṃ puspaṃāla dhvaja ādi samyuktagu ratha athavā (kūṭā) lesa tayā tāye avira svām, sinha ratha chaguli nyāṃka abiraṃ chvākā /

Picām Vāya

Samapitayaṃke dhūṃkā che chakkāṃ bapuyā bapuyāgu dhūḥ dhūvayāgu thalaṃmā chvāse vāṃchoyayake / Sinhāḥ varṃmesiyā īvāya sarejuī dhakā bapuyāgu tuphi dhūvayāgu thala smetaṃ bāṃchoya yanṃkemāgu /

27. Sīthaṃ Yemkegu

Maṇjuśrī Pārājikā:

Pratamaṃ bhūmi samsakāraṃ dutiyaṃ jaladhārakaṃ /
Trīyaṃ kūṃkūmaṃca aguraṇca dhupamaṇca tāthā /
28. Dīpe Yāygu Kriyā

Buddhotkāh Saṃsārāyā

Mṛtyūsyāgre kāka svāna preta tr piṇḍa dāpayat /
Mṛtyūyā nhyone, kāka piṇḍa preta piṇḍa, svānatre piṇḍa thayeke /

Piṇḍa pradāna putrenavā bhārīyyavā bhrkenavā /
Punāḥ bhāya sukartavya sahgotra vāndhavāḥ dibhiḥ /

Putraṁ piṇḍa thayeke athava putra madusā bhārīyyā (kalā) naṁ thayeke kalānaṁ madusā dāju kijāṁ thayeke hānam thvatenā sūṁ madusā goṣṭhi ādi (phukītesam) thayeke /
(Kāka piṇḍa thāyagū pūnyēm pamsīkule janma jūvanīmakhu, svāna piṇḍa thāyāgulīṁ jantuyā kule janma käye mālī makhu, preta piṇḍa ayāgulīṁ pretagati ādi tiryaka gati mocana jūī) /

Kāka piṇḍa pradānena kārayāṃ siddhica hetave /
Svāna piṇḍa pradānena dharma mārga pradarśayat //

Kāka piṇḍa thāyāgulīṁ sakala jyā siddhajuśi svāna piṇḍa thāyāgulīṁ dharmayāmārγa (lapu) khani /

Pretā piṇḍa pradānena pretagati mocayat /

Pretā piṇḍa thāyā viyāgulīṁ pretā gati arthāt (preta dhāekā janmajvī māli-makhu) pretā gati mocana jūī /

Tasmāi vāgni mukhaṁ kāryāya mṛtyah agni sakṣārayat //

Mṛtyuyā mūkhe (mhutūi thathe agnau saksāra yāke) (Dīpe yaṁkā saksāra yāyamāgu chāy dhāsā mātrkāyā nhyonebā khusiyā sithe gavalem he visarjana majūgu yajñasālā ata eva mṛtyuyā sarira mahādīgu daykā tāyāgu cyākā bā āhuti biyagu kāraṇa khaḥ) /
29. Āśṭi Parikṣāraṇa

Maṅjuśrī Pārājikā:

Trīyē hani sam prāpte kartavyāsthi sacaya /
Bhasma Sātaṁ puṇah kṛtvā roṣa bhasmāni vāhayat //

Svanu khunu aṣṭi sile pūjāyaye śamśānasa, nali, pūjā yāye hānaṁ (bhasma caitya) daykā pūjā yāye lyeko bhasma khusi cūyke/Aṣṭi parikṣāraṇa pūrvata nyānu khunu khunu, nhenu khunu naṁ, yāy māla /

30. Durgati Parisodhana Mandala Kriya

Maṅjuśrī Pārājikā:

Trīyē divasa mārabhya paṁca sapta yathākramanā /
Durgati sōdhanārthaṇca maṇḍala vartaya kramat //
Nadyāprati sthāpayo aṣṭi cātya garbhaye viśeṣataḥ /
Amī toṭ bhava sūtrana ca pātho ca punah punah //

Khunu durgati maṇḍala coyā pūjā yāy aṣṭi tāraṇa ādinaṁ pujā yāy aparimitā pāṭha yāye nyānu khunu, nhenu khunu uthyem nhenhukhunu kaṁsayā (kaye yā) caityasa aṣṭi duthanā samkṣipta pratiṣṭhā karma pūjā yāye paṁca tīrthasa aṣṭi cūyekā choya /

31. Nhenumā

Tataḥ sapta gate ahaṁ dināi kasya pramānaṇā /
Odanaṁ bhāṁjanāi sthāpya bhakṣā bhojyaṃca dādaū //

Hānaṁ nhaynu khunu pikhā lukhi nhenuyā jābo biya (arthāt nhenumātaye) /

32. Pākhājā Khāye

Ākāse sthāpayat odanaṁ caḥ dīpa sahitam tathaḥ /
Tato rātre janāi śunya tyasā dadyaṭa odanaṁ //

Hānaṁ ukhunuhe banisiyā cāne lokāpiṃ śunya jula dhāyava ākāse dīpa sahitam jābo ākāse khanā biya (pākhājā khāye) /

33. Dubemke

Sagotra bhāṭr bandhubhyāṁ kṣāura karmma vidhiyate /
Paṅca gabya tatha bastram tīrthe snātvā śuci kṛtam //

Hānaṁ thaḥ gotra bandhu dājukijā sakala sīyāṁ khusivanā bidhi anusā-rasāḥ khanā lusi dhenā molhuyā nhugu vastram punā paṅcagarbhaye kaya śuci yāye /
(Tīrthe āti amba hāmo kvo cikaṁ khau ītyādi kayā asuddha juyācvamgu dehayāta suddha yāye) mha lhuy /

34. Grha Sūddha Gvāsagam Kriyā

Saptame dvādase dine homa kūrryyāt grhe śuci /
Danta kāṣṭham tāmbulaṁ pūgya phalāṃca prakṣālayat //

Ācāryayā nhenu mepini jhinīnu gvgye danta kāṣṭa gāsag[ga]m kayā vāmk-ṣoya homakarma yāy grhe (chem) śuci jvī //

35. Dasa Piṇḍa Kriyā

Nema Sūtra:

Daśama piṇḍa mityuktaṁ preteca sarvarvānake /

Sinā vamesiyā nāmaṁ sikhunū nisyem nhaynu bā jhinutaka samasta lokayāṃ petā bārnayāṁ daśa piṇḍa ādi preta piṇḍa thaye māla /

Budokta Saṁsārāma:

Prathamaṁca sirojātaṁ dvitiyaṁca ksūrūṭhavāṁ /
Nāśikāṁca trtiyaṁca caturthī kaṛṇa mevaca //

Daśa piṇḍa thayeguyā pramāṇa chanhuyā piṇḍa thayā biyā gulim kṣom ninuyā piṇḍa thayābiyāgulim mikhā, svanuyā piṇḍa thayābiyā gulim nhāy, pyanuyā piṇḍathayā gulim nhāypaṁ /

Pañcamāṁ hrdaya ccāiva hasta jātaśca śaṣṭayo /
Saptame nābhisaṁ bhūtaṁ īndriyaṁ jātaṁ aṣṭama //

Nāṇuyā piṇḍa thayābiyā gulim nuga, khunhuyā piṇḍa thayā biyā gulim lhā, nhenuyā piṇḍa thayā biyā gulim pvā, cyānuyā piṇḍa thayābiyā gulim āndriya jātajvi /

Navame pāda saṁbhūtaṁ daśame roma saṁbhavāṁ /
Daśapiṇḍa pradānena kāya śṛṣṭyarya hetuve //

Gunhuyā piṇḍa thayābiyā gulim tuti, jhinuyā piṇḍa thayābiyā gulim sam lusi dayā vai jhinutaka piṇḍa dāna yānā biyā gulim kāya sṛṣṭi jvīh /

36. Ekādaśa Piṇḍa Kriyā

Pūnah ekādaśa dine eka piṇḍaṇca dadyāt /
Ekādaśa dine eka piṇḍa phalena yonī prāpyate //
Hānaṃ jhichanu khunu ekādaśa pindā chagva thayābiye /
Jhīmchanhu khunu ekādaśa pindā chagha thayābiyā gulīṃ (pyaṃgu yoni madhye chagu yonī) janma kāvani //

37. Pinda Thayegu Kriya

Sadipāṃ gata nāmena pindā dānamca samācāre /
Tripakṣe ca samāsena trimāsa taṭa māsakaḥ //

Hānaṃ sinā vaṃbhesigu nāmaṃ latyām bā svalāṃ pīndadāna yānāviya khulānaṃ pindā thiya biya māla /

Pūnaḥ tamya mānena varṣa dineca pīṇḍa dāpayat /

Hānaṃ dachi dayavanamā vaigahe nāmaṃ pīṇḍa thayā biyamāla /

38. Līna Pīṇḍa

Maṇjuśrī Pārājikā:

Pitā pītā māhādināṃ mātā māto mahiyathā /
Buddha dharmanca samghanca sāraṇaṃ tasyāivah sägatiḥ //

Pīṇḍa thaybale svaṃgu pustā taymā mijāma mhasā vayā bau chagu 1 bājyā 2 tāpāya bāyā 3 misāṃhasā vaya māṃ 1 ajī 2 tāpā ajī taya / Hānaṃ thvate svapūstāsa līna yāye bhāva buddha dharma samgha triratna saraṇa dhakaṃ /

Jīvateca pitā yasya mṛiyamteca yadisūt /
Saṅnaṃ kāraṇaṃ tasya yasya śrāddha layāṃkūta //

Gumhasiyā kāy sinābani vau mvānā coni umasīyā līna yāyemvā vamhasiyā śrāddha līna madu /

Līnāntaraṃ samālatya nāimitike grhe /
Tirthacālaya parbate śrāddha pīṇḍa prakathye //
Bhakṣa bhokṣādkikaṃ sarba dravyaṃ kūtsita varjitaṃ /
Sampūrṇaṃ nirmanam śuddha sthāpa yatsū samāhitam //

Līna pīṇḍa samāna pīṇḍa nimitta pīṇḍa chem vā parvate vā tīrthe vā sampūrṇa śuddha sthānasa pīṇḍa thaye hānaṃ śrāddha yāyabale chāygu vastū naygu jogyagu bastū chāy mabhimgu ayogyagu āsuddhagu bhakṣā bhokṣādi mabhimgu bastū machāye bhimgu bāṃlāgu śuddhagu sampūrna yānā śrāddha yāyebale chāye /
39. Guru Rakṣaṇa

Maṇjuśrī Pārājikā:

Samyamo śuddha śuddhātmā jinendriyona sūpara /
Nirāsī svalpa saṃtuṣṭa kriyāvanta suciṣṭaṇa //

Saya vāsāu guru śrāddha sthāpa yaṣca samāhita /
Bhave śuddhāica yaśrāddhaṃ akṣayaṃ pitāro gatā //

Śrāddha, yāta, gathīṃmha guruṇyā mā dhāsā mahāne me cvana cvaṃmha bhinṛu ātmā īndriya ci phuma mvāyaka mvāyakaṃ namavāmha lobhi majumha saṃstuṣṭamha kriyā phukaṃ siṃmha kṣemavantamha svacivantamha thathimha guru śrāddhayāke thathimha guru śrāddha yāta dhāsā mahāna akṣaya phala lāi pitṛloka śānti jvi śantusta jvi /

Dūṣṭātmā vacara kruca vavaktā śīkarahāprīya /
Asaṃtuṣṭa śṛucī bhṛasta sa eva guru barjaya //
Nirāsā pita rājānti dātā narakam vajet ///

Śrāddha karmaṣa gathima guru yāye matya dhāsā duṣṭa ātmā juā cvaṃmha pārā pārā hālā cvane yomha āpā nayephumha asaṃstuṣṭamha asuṣci lvāye yomha thathīṃmha guru śrāddha karmaṣa yāymate atheṇaṃ yāta dhāsā pitṛloka nirāsā juyā lyāhāvani dātā naraṇe lai /

40. Śrāddha

Kārtike śukla mārabhya pūrṇerākā dinam prti /
Dharmma piṇḍa prakrartavyā catura varga phalāptaya //

Kārtika Pūrṇi khunu piṇḍa thayābiyevadharma piṇḍa dhakā dhāyi dharma piṇḍa thayā biyāgulim dibṃgata juyā omṃesita catur varga artha dharma kāma mokṣa phala lai /

Kārtike māghave māghave śrāvane yuganigate /
Kārtike pūrṇimāsyāntu tṛṭiyā māghavesite //

Pūrṇamāsyā tathā māgha śrāvane kṛṣṇa trayodaśi ///
Yena tatra kṛtam piṇḍaṃ aprameyaṃ phala labhyat ////

Kārtikabale śrāvaṇabale va bāiśākhe, Māgha thva pyemgu yuge śrāddha karma yāye / Kārtikya pūrṇi khunu māghaṇa pūrṇi khunu śrāvaṇ kṛṣṇayā trayaudāsi baiśākhayā tṛṭiyā khunu thvate yuga yugayā dine dine piṇḍadāna śrāddha yānā biye thva pūnmeṃ dibāḥ gata juyāveṃme sita punne thūlī lītā dhayāgu samkhyā madu /
Manjusri Parajikā:

Viksāteca dinemena śrāddha bhaṅga kṛtaṁ yadi /
Nirūsā pitaro jānti kūlacheḍantu jāyate //

Gumhāsiyā śrāddha yāyegu din makhu, ubale śrāddhayāta dhālasā va śrāddha bhaṅga jū śrāddha bhaṅga jula dhāsā kula kṣaya jvi /

Śrāddhantarā mūlpanne mṛtakeca rajasvalā /
Śutake tasyānte ca śrāddha bhaṅga kṛtaṁ yadi //

Duḥkhaṃ māyaka rajasolā jumesiyāṃ thila bā mavyaṃkāṃ śrāddha yāye mate yāta dhāsā śrāddha bhaṅga jūi /

Maghyānevā thavānaka dinānte praharatraya /
Saevā kāla pinda smanisā kālantu varjyaṇat //

Vānhiṃ lipā madhyāne nhimyā svapahale śrāddhaṃ pinda dāna yāye chāna nibādyo vikāna śrāddha yāye matyo /

Khaḍga māṃsa eka sulkāṇca pinda garbhe sthāpayet /
Khaḍga māṃseneka kalpani tusyanri pirāu sadā //

Śrāddha yābāle pindiyaṃ dune gayeḍāyā lā svathane chahu ṭukraṇaka tayā pindiḍāna pata dhāsāṃ chagu kalpa vitejusāṃ (va gayeḍāyā lāyā prabhāvaṃ) śrāddha yānagū punne bāyāta lāh vani sadāṃ pitṛ samṛtuṣṭa jviḥ /

Idam pinda sahṛtā sodasā satvabandhā samāṁsā saśāka śrāddhaya
Saṃviroṣa sahitā sarva kūtsita varjita yadvi dyannte /

Dāsyāmi saḥ puṣpa dhupa dipa gandha naivadyādī samyuktā
divamgata yuṣmata tasya nāmena idampindam svaghā //

Pinda thayat bhimbhingu anna jāki bajī jākicūṃ tachocūṃ ādi sāmāṃgrī dayake lokapisam niseddha yānā tagu (kanicūṃ dusecūṃ) yā madeke /
Ghyo kasti duru dhaù ādi nānā prakārayā upakāraṇam māṃsa samyukta yānā daykā puṣpa dhupa dipa gandha naivedya samyukta yānā tvāḥ suyā nāmanī khaḥ yathānāmaṃ pinda thaye /

Mañjuśrī Pārājikā:

Kuṣāsana margha mātraṇca pinda sanāṃ tathāivaca /
Sthāpa niyāṇa pīta purbāṃ pancātipindani dāpayat //

Śrāddha yāyimha kuṣāsane cvanā arghapātra ādiṃ tayā pinda thaye nhāpāṃ pustāniṃ taye mūhpiṇḍa lipā taye /
Vajrayāna Life-Cycle Rites

Vika tena vinā pīṇḍaṁ koṭī pīṇḍa vyathā bhavet /
Tasmā dātmanāḥ sarveṣu vikala pīṇḍa pradāpayat //

Anamśi vikala taye nhyāguhe śrāddhenām vikala tayemā vikala pīṇḍa matasye śrāddha yātasā koṭi śrāddha yātasā naṃ nisphala jvī /

Piṇḍa Vidhāna:

Yecā aṣmat kulejātā aputro yeca bāndhavā
Āṭma garbha virupāca jñātāḥ jñāti kūlemama
Bhūmāudattena tṛpyantu tṛpyatā yāntu parāgartinām /

Sarvasaskāra hīṇa vikala piṇḍa sarvatrāidhātukāṁ
Nīvā sīnāṁ sava pretānāṁ tṛpyatāyāṁ vikala pīṇḍaṁ
Mārga saṃsūdhanāyā vikala pīṇḍaṁ sampreksāṁisvadhā //

Jimigu kule janma juyā vampīṁ kāy macā dāju kijā hānaṁ suṁ madupīṁ /
Hānaṁ garbhasa āṃśaye yānā kodaya vamppīṁ guli rupāḥ virupa juyā agatitve lānā cvampīṁ dāju kijāpiṁ sakasyātaṁ vā tatākeṃpiṁ sakasyātaṁ bhumisa cvanagu lakham tarpāṇa yānā guliṃ tripta juyamā makhugu mārga gatisa cvanā saskāra hīṇa juyā cvampīṁ sakala sipimīgu nāmaṁ vikala tayeta piṇḍa biyā /

Lohasam mṛtmayāṁ dārū śrāddha pātraṇca varjayat /
Pramādā diyaye yatra datvā. kilvi patā bhavet //

Piṇḍadāna yāyeta nahyāgu cāhyāgu sīhyāgu thalelayā piṇḍadāna yāye matya kadācit yāta dhāsā pitṛ nirāsā juyā vanī /

Yathāṣṭami vrata eva varṇa gandhaṇca barjjayat
Mallikā mātali puspa drṣṭdvā tustryanti devatā
Nayānti pitṛ asaṃstustam vīṃ kāvkaiva tathāivaca /

Aṣṭami vratasa citra vicitra svāṁ, nasvā svāṁ, jisvāṁ campaḥ svāṁ devaloka jaka yāta saṃstuta jvī pitṛloka yāta hyāṃgusvāṁ, jisvāṁ, campāsvāṁ, nasvāṁ svāṁ, tayā śrāddha chāy majyu dhāta dhāsā pitṛloka asaṃstusta juyā vanī //

Piṇḍa Vidhāna:

Śalojal mallikāścāiva tarka bhrīgam campakam
Yetāni puspa dāṣyanti tustryanti pitaraḥ sadā
casvāṁ, mūsvāṁ palesvāṁ tahapyāṃsvāṁ, thuli śrāddha yāyebale chāta dhāsā pitṛloka saṃstuta jvī /
TANTRIC BUDDHISM (INCLUDING CHINA AND JAPAN)

Tila vāri kūśaṁ pustam mantra yūkto mahārthata
Saḥ eva śrāddhāni juktaṁ tusyanī pitarā sadā

Śarvabhāve kūśaṁ śrṣṭaṁ kūśabhāve byathākriyā
Śarva kāryye kūśaṁ śrṣṭaṁ yajñe śrāddhe viṣeṣaṁ

Hāmo kūśa lakhaṁ svāṁ thvate ādīpaṁ mantra samjukta yānā śrāddha yāye bale pīṭrlokaṁ ādoḥale samasta pīṭrloka samtuṣṭa juyāvani (chatā nītā marusāṁ āhuṁ doṣa maru) hāmo kūśa marekaṁ maga

Kūṣa madayakaṁ yāta dhāsa śrāddha yānāgu nisphala jvi samasta kāryya yātāṁ kūṣa śrṣṭaḷu biṣaye yānā śrāddha yajñasa mahā śrṣṭha

Maṇjuśrī Pārājikā:

Vedi kāryyā bahī bhūmānu sthāpayitvāpi bhāṁjanam
Jala dhāra trayaṁ kṛtvāṁ pranāmya paścimā mūkhaṁ

Pitr visarjyayat paścāt gāthāyo nayāsaha

Śrāddhayā vyādhaṁ pīṇḍa vāmya tayāgu kollā pikhā luhusā tayā jaladhārā javam svaka khaval svaka cāuyekā gati biya jajamānam paścim śokā bisarjjana gāthā bone

Maṇjuśrī Pārājikā:

Kṛto va sarva satvārtham Siddhi datvāyathā nūgā
Gacchadham vāsau sthānam pūnarā gamanāyaca

Sarvasatvāyā Siddhiyāye phagua āsirbāda biya gathe nāpā bijyānāgu-khaḥ atheye thaḥ thagu sthāne lyāḥ bijyāhūṁ

41. Pīṇḍa Cuyekēgu Sthāna

Pretālaya ārthe tadā pūskare pīṇḍa pravāhayat
Pīṇḍa seṣaṣca annanca vāndhavāṁ saha bhojayat

Thana pīṇḍa cuyake datasā pretaśilāsa (pyāmghale) athavā ārthe jusāṁ pukhlujusāṁ pīṇḍa cuyake anāli bandhuvargapīnta sakasitaṁ bhaksā bhojana yāke

Notes

1 Field work was conducted in Kathmandu from 1979–82 and in 1987. The author gratefully acknowledges grant support from the Fulbright Fellowship Program and assistance from the U.S. Educational Foundation in Kathmandu. Ratna Muni
Bajracarya and Mani Gopal Jha merit special thanks and recognition for their most helpful critical readings of the translated text.

2 “Mahāyāna Buddhism and Hinduism should be [seen as] using the same language, having recourse to the same metaphors and often admitting fairly similar patterns of devotion. This is especially the case when it comes to the personal relations established, in both religions, between the worshippers and the Cosmic Supreme Saviour, continually devoting himself to their preservation and final deliverance. The fact that the Hindu name of ‘the Lord’ (Īśvara), appears as part of Avalokiteśvara’s usual appellation, has given rise to much speculation. He even has another ... name, Lokēśvara, ‘Lord of the Universe’, in common with Śiva” (Mus 1964: 464–465).

3 This proliferation of Buddhist ritualism was also characteristic of central Asian areas where Mahāyāna Buddhism dominated (Snellgrove 1987: 347), especially in Khotan (see Emmerick 1968).

4 Modern scholarship has hardly identified or dealt with this genre of texts. The sources of the Nepal Jana Jīvan Kriyā Paddhati are mentioned above.

5 The Mahāsāṃghika sect, likely forerunners of the Mahāyāna saṅgha, were present in Licchavi Nepal (i.e. 400–800 AD) (Riccardi 1979).

6 Information in the Tibetan records on Buddhist traditions extant in Nepal suggests the date for this assimilation being no later than 1200. Other studies on Newar-Tibetan connections have been published (Lewis 1988; 1989a). Our data conform to the time of the precipitous decline of North Indian Buddhism, assuming a major transformation due, in part, to the closing down of the greatest Buddhist network that linked the heartland to highland, and on which monks, pilgrims, and merchants traveled across Asia.

7 The Tattvasaṃgraha, a tantra that often figures in modern Nepalese ritual guidebooks, states, “Even those beings who cling to wealth and food and drink and detestable things, who take no pleasure in the vow and are not proficient in the preliminaries and so on, even they, by acting in accordance with their understanding and entering the maṇḍala, will bring to perfection what they have in mind.” (Translated in Snellgrove 1959: 211.)

8 Accounts of Central Asia confirm this assessment emphasizing the tendency toward elaborate ritualism in later Indian Buddhist cultural environments (Snellgrove 1987: 347). The ritualism of Tibet also supports this interpretation.

9 In this, of course, Newar Buddhists are like many laymen in the world today: adhering to the old ways of religious life, with little concern for intellectual sophistication. This comparative insight has often been forgotten in the early assessment of Newar Buddhism: writers have often used for the basis of comparison an inflated ideal of Theravāda Buddhist society. Despite the anomalies of caste and saṅgha in the Kathmandu Valley, Newar Buddhist laymen closely resemble co-religionists in other countries.

10 This flexibility was central to Buddhism’s success as a missionary religion that was accepted across Asia. The saṅgha’s vihāras were essential repositories of the material wealth and core culture of the tradition, just as the Dharma contains a host of teachings and stories providing paradigms of spiritual conquest.

11 Tibetan Buddhist traditions also emphasized caste perceptions in its socio-religious domain (Gombo 1982). In medieval and modern Sri Lanka, certain nikāyas only admitted high caste individuals for ordination (Gombrich 1971). The caste-related concepts of auspiciousness and purity (Carman 1985) are also quite pervasive in the Newar context and the Kathmandu Valley civilization in this domain conforms to the pan-Indic pattern (Madan 1985; Tambiah 1985).

12 It should be noted, however, that such a catholic spirit is not universally accepted in
Mahāyāna texts (Conze 1970: 121–2). See Lewis 1984: 468–481, where the discussion of Hindu-Buddhist relations is developed in greater depth.

13 As yet, there is not enough historical evidence to determine whether this is a relatively new addition to the Newar Buddhist tradition or an ancient component. Wayman notes the popular Buddhist belief that “after death one must cross a river (called the Vaitarana) with the three current speeds (the karma of the three evil destinies of hell beings, animals, hungry ghosts); if the deceased can cross the river presumably he goes to one of the good destinies (1971: 448).” The Jana Jīvan text shows that this general notion is found among the Newars, but not in this time frame. If Mus is correct in distinguishing Buddhist śrāddha from the Hindu ritual on the basis of the former’s offerings to preta as opposed to the latter’s ēpit (Mus 1939: 250), then in this area the Newar Vajrācāryas’ śrāddha has been converted to the Brahmanical version as well.

14 In a recent work, Snellgrove’s pointed out this same duality in Tibetan Buddhist approaches to the karmic juncture that death presents (Snellgrove 1987: 453).

15 This claim is also made by lama ritualists in the Tibetan tradition (Snellgrove 1987: 427).

16 A new edition of the original 1919 translation of this text, with an introduction by Lokesh Chandra, has been published recently (Dawa-samdup 1987).

17 The Kriyāsamgraha by Kuladatta has been utilized by Wayman in a recent article (1984).

18 The Nava Dharma (also called Nava Grantha) in the Newar tradition are:

- Prajñāpāramitā
- Saddharmapuṇḍarīka
- Lalitavistara
- Subvarṇaprabhāsa
- Lāṃkāvatāra
- Daśabhūmika
- Gaṇdhavyūha
- Saṁādhirājā
- Guhyasamājā Tantra.

(Lewis 1984: 447)

19 “Literally, the realm of [all] dharmas, this term is used to characterize the totality of existents and hence to demarcate the limits of reality. It is sometimes employed as a title for ultimate reality (Willis 1979: 180).”

20 According to vajrācārya informants, this belief derives from Brahmanical theory: throughout the ten (lunar) month period of gestation, the fetus is thought to assume the shapes of the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu.

21 These refer to the five skandhas of Buddhist analysis. The term refers figuratively to the “bearer of the burden [of the ego]” (Willis 1979: 188).

22 Those are the five elements: earth, air, water, fire, and ether.

23 Women are confined and the family is excluded from normal social discourse. For all such family observances, the patrilineal descent group (phūkī) is the unit of ritual observance.

24 The text does not mention the family bathing by the river, with all getting their nails cut and men their hair shaved by a barber.

25 A bath with blessed water from a kalaśa vessel, usually obtained by performing a kalaśa pūjā.

26 The rite is done at one year only if the phūkī is undergoing a period of mourning.

27 The choice indicates innate career tendency due to karma.

28 A wicker tray that contains ritually polluted foods (cipa).
29 This is a small pit located in Newar neighborhoods and every vihāra compound, where Śiva as “Luku-Mahādyāp” and unclean spirits reside.

30 An auspicious ritually orchestrated snack served by the senior women of the household. There are two types: “yoghurt sagam” and “egg sagam.” (See Lewis 1984: 199–202.)

31 Called “keitha pūjā” (“loincloth pūjā”) in modern parlance, this rite is performed by all high caste householders.

32 In modern practice this term (also spelled pravrajya in classical Buddhist terminology) refers to the Bare chuyégui initiations into the saṃgha for all Bare. The text omits the first day’s proceedings, in which the initiate receives instruction in doing the guru maṇḍala pūjā and prepares his hair for cutting (Locke 1986: 57). It starts on the second day.

33 lit. “Benares cloth,” an old term meaning a monk’s robe.

34 These refer to the pañcaŚīla (“5 Rules”) appropriate for the Buddhist householder and the daśaŚīla (“10 Rules”) for celibate monks. See Locke 1975.

35 A mendicant’s ritual staff, with a Buddhist symbol on the top (Vaidya 1986: 20).

36 The term refers to the “six transcendent stations” of a Bodhisattva: giving, moral discipline, patience, energy, meditation, and insight (Willis 1979: 185).

37 The Brahmvivhāras consist of cultivating, through prescribed meditative techniques, four particular feelings: (1) Maitrī, love, or friendliness; (2) Kāruṇā, compassion; (3) Muditā, sympathetic joy; and (4) Upekṣa, equanimity (Willis 1979: 96). These are also known in the Pali Canon.

38 The core formula of Buddhist understanding: suffering, its origin, its cessation, the eightfold path leading to cessation.

39 Teaching to awaken the generation of bodhicitta, the “thought of enlightenment”.

40 This refers to the end of a 4-day period “in the robes” as celibate monk, when the initiate renounces the śrāvakayāna and enters the Mahāyāna path. The ideal sought is the Bodhisattva vehicle, and stages of knowledge (jñāna) measure one’s progress through a series of stages (bhūmis). See Willis’ presentation for Asanga’s views on this subject (1979: 87–100).

41 This likely means “human level” here, in contrast to higher levels. There is also a suggestion of the initiation imparting supermundane status, as nīrmanā is used in Buddhist texts to refer to “magically created appearance ... with reference to the bodies of enlightened beings” (Willis 1979: 184).

42 The next sequence describes wedding rites. Coming before the girl’s post-puberty ritual it likely reflects the formerly common custom of child marriage.

43 This ritual, called “Thi” today (Lewis 1984: 271–276), is now performed in childhood for girls. Here, again, is evidence that this was once part of a childhood marriage rite.

44 Puffed rice.

45 Unbroken rice grains.

46 Leaf feast plate.

47 The vow that cites all the celestial and location details of the occasion and calls upon beings to witness the event.

48 Two forms of priest-led ritual prasād dispersements cum refreshments, done after the auspicious completion of a major event (see Lewis 1984: 199–202).

49 This pūjā must be done according to an astrologically determined time (New, seit) and before a woman reaches menarche. Popular belief is that if done properly, the pain of the monthly periods throughout life will not be great.

50 This deity is pictured in hanging paintings made for the occasion. These have often been noted as examples of Newar art (Pal 1974).

51 An offering of animal intestines and other impure substances.

52 Lineage deity, also called digu dyah in Newari.
53 The rite in which the priest recites the mangala sūra.
54 Lit. “life-force wind”. This exists in the body, but is dispersed at death. Here the authors imply that the prānavāyu is the vehicle of karma.
55 An offering helpful for crossing the river of death, (Skt.) Vaitarana, as described above.
56 A secret rite performed in front of the body by the vajrācārya. It is done today only for laymen who have taken the dīkṣā initiation.
57 Lamps are needed here and on subsequent days to guide the prāna-vāyu back to its resting place, in case it gets lost in the first movements out after death. It will thus still stay close and benefit from the rituals that follow, even though the iron keeps it from re-entering the body.
58 An unhappy malevolent spirit unable to pass into a new existence.
59 The depository site for dangerous impure refuse in each neighborhood. It is thought to be the specific abode of one Newar form of Hārāti Ajimā, and more generally the haunting place of a host of minor spirits (Lewis 1984: 112).
60 A small carved stone ritual receptacle placed outside the main entranceway of every Newar house (Lewis 1984: 124).
61 A tall lamp made of cloth.
62 Done by the women, who in high caste households do not go to the ghat.
63 lit. “Face Yama”.
64 A drum/cymbal music played by untouchables.
65 Caste-specific riverside sites are the norm in the Kathmandu Valley.
66 Pindaśas are kneaded balls of foods offered to the dead only. See the text for further elaboration.
67 lit. “Righteous Path” or “the Buddha’s Way”.
68 “Safe passage for the ashes pūjā”.
69 Paničagavya, the five cow products – milk, butter, curds, dung, urine – are used by Newar Buddhist hierophants.
70 Sugarcane.
71 Myrobalan fruit.
72 The four goals in life, according to Brahmanical literature: wealth, fitting conduct, pleasure, salvation.
73 Skt. pūrṇimā, the full moon day.
74 Used in all pinda rituals, rhino meat is thought to insure the conveyance of offerings, a belief recorded in the Mahābhārata (Briggs 1938: 7–8). Many wealthy Newar Buddhists own a rhino skin vessel for pinda pūjās (Lewis 1984: 322).
75 Uncooked husked rice and flattened rice, respectively.
76 Here is a good example of the complexity surrounding an analysis of Hindu-Buddhist relations. At first view, this appears to be a straightforward Brahmanical adoption by the Buddhist hierophants. But in fact this kuśa grass (known in western botanical classification by the Latin name poa cynosuroides) is mentioned in many Buddhist accounts, from the earliest records onward, as having been the stuff of the Buddha’s enlightenment seat (see Thomas 1927: 71).
77 Every major Newar vihāra possesses indented stones for this purpose. This is one rite that binds the laymen to a specific Buddhist establishment.
78 The text presented here is transliterated exactly as found in the original publication. Only numbers have been added to order the headings. Savants will note that the Sanskrit spellings and endings are irregular, in places almost making the text indecipherable. To correct the errors in the published text would be an immense undertaking; the ślokas reproduced here stand as a specimen of Newari panditry. Readers interested in receiving a copy of the original nāgari should write to the author.
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THE UNIQUE FEATURES OF NEWAR BUDDHISM

John K. Locke, S.J.


The political unit known as modern Nepal has existed since the latter part of the 18th century when the first king of the present dynasty, Prithivinarayan Shah, starting from the small kingdom of Gorkha in central Nepal, began the process of uniting the numerous petty kingdoms in the hills into one nation. Over the centuries the hill area has provided a haven for people from north and south, so that the present racial make-up of the country is a mixture of various Asian elements, and Nepal has been called the ‘ethnic turntable of Asia’. Prithivinarayan Shah himself likened his kingdom to a flower garden in which flourished the four traditional castes and thirty-six tribes (or sub-castes).

Nepal, however, has existed as a country since at least the beginning of the Christian era, and for most of that period consisted of the Valley of Nepal (or the Kathmandu Valley) plus some of the surrounding hill territory as far east as Dolakha, as far west as Gorkha, north to the Tibetan border and south almost to the plains of India, the amount of territory depending on the fortunes of the various dynasties. The original inhabitants of the Valley are Newars, who still comprise about half its population. Here also there has been a meeting of races and cultures. The Newars have been active traders with the plains and with Tibet from the beginning of their history right down to the present, and the Valley has provided a new home for refugees from India from the time of the Buddha and the rise of the Mauryan dynasty to the time of the Indian Mutiny in 1857. There is a difference though. Throughout the hills, refugees and new settlers tended to settle on isolated hillsides and in the shelter of inaccessible valleys where, until the push for development and modernization in Nepal which began after 1951 and brought improved communications and new opportunities, they remained as closed units, cut off from their neighbours of a different race and culture on the nearby ridges and in the valleys beyond. In the Valley, the newcomers from the north and south were integrated into Newar society, becoming Newars in the
process and making, in turn, a contribution to the cultural fabric of Newar society. As a result the term ‘Newar’ is not a racial term, but a cultural term, denoting the very rich and complex culture of the society of the Valley. It denotes a people who speak a common language, Newari, and who share a common but diverse culture.

Since the beginning of recorded history in the middle of the sixth century AD the Valley of Nepal has been ruled by Hindu kings. The first historical kings were the Licchavis (c.400–900 AD), presumably refugees from Vaiśālī (near Muzaffarpur in modern north Bihar) who had left their homeland several centuries before rather than submit to the Mauryan dynasty.¹ They were Hindus and ruled ‘by the favour of Paśupatinath’. They were followed by a line, or several lines, of kings conveniently grouped together under the name ‘Thākurī’ who ruled from c.900 until 1200 AD. This is a period of little information as the ‘Thākurī’ kings left few inscriptions, and what knowledge we have about this period is limited to occasional notes on manuscripts, mostly Buddhist, which end with “copied in the year such-and-such during the reign of king so-and-so”. Yet it is clear from what little we know that these kings were also Hindus. They were followed by the Mallas, not a single dynasty, but at least three separate dynasties all claiming Rajput descent and all Hindus who ruled from 1200 AD until the fall of Bhaktapur to Prithivinarayan Shah in 1769. Yet extant historical records show that, from the time of the Licchavis down to the present, Hinduism and Buddhism have existed side by side in the Valley, presenting a picture that is a reflection of the relationship between the two in India throughout the period when Buddhism flourished there. Buddhism appears not as a movement separate from or opposed to the stream of culture of the subcontinent, but rather as an integral part of the religious culture that grew and flourished in its soil.

The Buddhism of the Valley of Nepal is tantric and therefore Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna. It is often said to be unique and it is in many ways. However, it is not unique because it is tantric. It is basically the same kind of Buddhism that one finds in the Tibetan culture, whether within Tibet or among those of other countries who share the same culture, such as the Sherpas and other northern border people of Nepal. The rituals performed by the tantric Buddhist priests of Nepal are the same as the rituals performed by the lamas and basically the same as the rituals performed by the priests of the Shingon sect of Japan. The tantric texts on which their teachings and ritual are based are the same.

It is not unique because it is ‘mixed up with Hinduism’ as has so often been said. At the level of Buddhist dharma, at the level of understanding the meaning of rituals and the meaning of the multifarious deities, the Newar Buddhists are not ‘mixed-up’ at all. They have very clear ideas. The only ones confused are
the outside observers who are used to seeing earlier and simpler forms of Bud­dhism which flourish today in a non-Hindu society. David Snellgrove remarked several years ago:

“We forget that ... Buddhism, being one of several religions which grew and developed on Indian soil, was affected like all the others by the rich and extravagant tendencies which characterized medieval Indian civilization ... Indian styles of architecture with their stylized and symbolic arrangements, were then as much Buddhist as Hindu, for they were all part of the same cultural heritage. Likewise temple litur­gies and techniques of yoga belonged to an Indian patrimony developed and enriched over the centuries by generations of worshippers and religious practicers, and the craftsmen who produced the images, religious paintings and temple decorations and ritual implements, worked in the same artistic mediums and styles. Śaivite tantrism and Buddhist tantrism presumably developed as the different aspects, conditioned by their sectarian differences, of a common Indian development in philo­sopical thinking, in approach to the gods, in building styles and all the rest. It is thus a misleading interpretation of events, if one assumes that Buddhism was now suddenly pervaded and corrupted by Hinduism. Throughout the one thousand seven hundred years of its long history in India, Buddhism could find no expression which was not part of the Indian scene.”

The uniqueness of Newar Buddhism, however, is related to the fact that it is embedded in a dominant Hindu society confined within a very small geographical area. Buddhism in India flourished in a Hindu society, but within a vast area where it was possible for the monks to truly withdraw from Hindu society to establish their monasteries in relatively remote places where they were less affected by the customs and strictures of Hindu society. In the Valley of Nepal, Buddhism flour­ished within the confines of the three small walled cities of Patan, Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, where it was very much a part of its (Hindu) surroundings.

In order to understand Newar Buddhism I think it is important to approach it with an open mind and attempt to understand it on its own terms, that is, within the context of its own ideology and institutions, and without prior judgements about what constitutes Buddhism. This is important, because so many western writers on Newar Buddhism begin their treatment by saying that it is an unortho­dox, aberrant or corrupt form of Buddhism mixed up with Hinduism. This creates a prejudice in the mind of the reader which precludes any real under­standing of Newar Buddhism, because the frame of reference is orthodox (usually Hīnayāna) Buddhism as it is practised today in non-Hindu countries, or as we find it delineated in the classical Buddhist texts which propose the ideals and say little about the way Buddhism was actually lived among the Buddhist population at large.
The Newar Buddhists, like Buddhists everywhere, take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha, but in a Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna context. The Buddha is, of course, the historical Sakyamuni Buddha, but in Mahāyāna and tantric Buddhism the five transcendent Buddhas (Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi) are more known and have a more important place in the ritual than the historical Buddha. In a tantric context these five are presided over by the Ādi-Buddha or Vajrasattva, the personification of sūnyatā. Much of the devotional life of the people centres round the worship of the Bodhisattvas, especially Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī; and the tantric rituals are centred on the maṇḍalas of such deities as Cakrasamvara-Vajravarahi and Hevajra-Nairatmyā. The Dharma is, of course, the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-Fold Path, but understood in a Mahāyāna context and practised according to the tantras. There are eight Mahāyāna sūtras and one tantric text which the Newar Buddhists to this day consider to be their canon: Prajñāpāramitā, Gaṇḍavyūha, Daśabhūmiśvara, Samādhīrāja, Lankāvatāra, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, Lalitavistara, Suvarṇaprabhāsā, and the Tathāgatagūhyā (or Guhyasamājatantra). These texts are recognized as the official texts, some of them (especially the Prajñāpāramitā) are recited at various times, and the books are worshipped. Today, however, there are few, even among the priestly class, who understand Sanskrit and can study these texts.

All of this is standard Mahāyāna and tantric Buddhism; what is unique is the lifestyle of the saṅgha and the vihāras in which they live.

The term vihāra, of course, refers to the Buddhist monastery, the place where the bhikṣu-saṅgha live. In Newari there are two terms for these buildings: bāhā and bahī. Bāhā is derived from the Sanskrit vihāra (vihāra > vāhāra/bāhāra/bāhāla > bāhāl > bāhā). The term bahī seems to have been derived from the Sanskrit bahir, and these institutions were so-called because they were outside or at the edge of the old cities.

The traditional style of the vihāra seems to have been handed down from the earliest days of Buddhism, and this can be traced if one looks at the well-preserved cave monasteries of Ajantā and Ellora built in western India some two thousand years ago. There one sees the same pattern that can still be found off the streets and alleys of the cities of the Valley: a series of rooms built round an open courtyard with a special room opposite the entry-way, which serves as the shrine of the monastery. Vihāras in Nepal were built of brick and wood and because of both the climate and frequent earthquakes there are no existing vihāra buildings which pre-date the sixteenth century. Many institutions are much older than this; and some of the ornamentation – carved windows, roof struts, toranas – were preserved from earlier buildings and may be as old as the twelfth century. However, even the oldest foundations have been continually rebuilt, often much more recently than one would suspect by looking at the buildings.

The traditional style of the bāhā has been best preserved in a bāhā of Kathmandu known as Chusyā Bāhā. The present buildings were built in 1649 AD,
though the struts supporting the roof may be a hundred years older. Chusya Bähä is a two-storied building of brick and wood built round an open and paved courtyard. The courtyard is sunken and the ground floor plinth is a foot or more above this pavement. Opposite the entrance is the shrine of the bähä, which contains an image of the Buddha sitting in vajrāsana and showing the earth-touching gesture. The carved doorway of the shrine has a wooden door of lattice work enabling one to see into the shrine even when the door is closed. Three sides of the ground floor are open halls. One of these is the entrance hall which has two benches and images of Mahākāla and Gañēśa set into the wall. These two images are placed at the doorway of each bähä and bahi as protective deities. To these is usually added a third protective deity, Hanumān, who is often represented simply by a triangular chink in the wall rather than by an image. In each corner of the quadrangle are two small dark rooms, one with a stairway leading to the upper storey. Each of these four stairways leads to an apartment of three rooms on the first floor. Each of these four apartments is separate with no interconnecting doors or passageways. Above the shrine of the Buddha is a five-fold window, behind which is a large room (digi) where the elders of the saṅgha meet, and off which is a doorway leading to the shrine (āgam) of the secret tantric deities of the saṅgha. A bay window over the entrance projects over the courtyard, and the outside of the upper storey is pierced by several windows. The outer wall of the ground floor has two other doorways, but no windows. All of the windows of the first floor are elaborately carved, and the tile roof is supported by a series of exquisitely carved struts portraying various deities, each of which is named. Above the roof is a bell-shaped finial (actually an inverted kalaśa) known as a gajūra. Over the street entrance and also over the door of the shrine is a torana or tympanum. The one over the street entrance portrays Prajñāpāramitā (a personification of the Mahāyāna text) and the one over the doorway of the shrine portrays Mahākāśobhya, a tantric form of the transcendent Buddha Akṣobhya. In the courtyard of the monastery are two caityas, an image of Tārā and a stone image of Vajrasattva flanked by figures of the two donors of the image.

The structure of a bahi is similar but has its own distinctive features. It is also a brick and wood structure, usually of two stories, built round a courtyard. In general it is a simpler structure with less ornamentation than the bähä. There is usually only one opening in the entire ground floor, the main entrance, and usually one mounts a flight of steps up to the entrance. In most bähäs the entrance is at ground level. Inside the entrance are the images of Gañēśa, Mahākāla and Hanumān. The entire ground floor, except for the shrine, is usually one continuous open hall. In one corner, usually to the left as one enters, is a single staircase leading to the upper storey. The shrine is a small, windowless room situated directly opposite the main entrance and offset from the rest of the building so that it is possible for devotees to circumambulate it. The upper storey usually has a projecting balcony which enlarges the space, but like the lower floor it is usually undivided and a continuous open hall except for a single
blind room directly above the shrine. This room houses the secret tantric deity of the *bahī*. The first storey of the building usually has three or five windows on the outside, except for the side of the building which houses the shrine, which has fewer. The balcony running round the upper storey is frequently enclosed with lattice screens. The upper storey often has another balcony extending out over the entrance to the street. The roof is wide and overhanging, and the space under the roof is usually unused. Above the shrine is a small temple-like structure: a sort of hanging lantern or cupola.

This seems to have been the traditional architecture of a *bāhā* and *bahī*. However, few today conform to this prototype. The *bahīs*, if the buildings have survived at all, have more consistently maintained the traditional architecture. Many *bāhās* today consist of a courtyard with residential buildings, most of which have been constructed at different times and often in different styles, with a *bāhā* shrine opposite the entrance. The shrine has preserved certain distinctive features: a carved doorway with lattice work surmounted by a *torāṇa* and flanked by two small, blind windows. Usually the entrance to the shrine is marked by two stone lions. The first storey of the shrine usually has a five-fold carved window and contains the *dīgī* and the *āgam*. If there are more than these two stories to the shrine the upper stories, which often have living quarters, may have over-hanging balconies, carved windows or even modern glass windows. The roof, which may be of tile or corrugated iron sheeting, is commonly surmounted by one or more finials, often in the form of a *caitya*.

Especially in Patan, there are places where the shrine is much more elaborate, becoming in fact a modified, multi-roofed temple set into the complex of buildings round the courtyard. The facade of the shrine is often decorated with a profusion of Mahāyāna and tantric deities, some of stone or cast metal, others done in repoussé brass or gilded copper. The facade of a number of these shrines has been covered with gaudy, ceramic tiles. At Bhince Bāhā in Patan the shrine is actually a free-standing temple of three roofs.

There are a few examples of another type which might be called an extended *bāhā* complex: a very large courtyard (almost as large as a football field and sometimes resembling a park) surrounded by residential buildings with a *bāhā* shrine located along one side. The courtyard is usually filled with images and *caityas*. Perhaps the best example of this is Bu Bāhā in Patan.

Another type of *bāhā* is what I have called the modern *bāhā*. This consists of a courtyard surrounded by residential buildings with a small Buddha shrine somewhere in the courtyard but not a separate section of the buildings. Sometimes the shrine is entirely free-standing, either set to one side or in the centre of the courtyard. Sometimes it is a small plastered shrine set against one wall of the courtyard building. I call these 'modern' because all the examples encountered were founded or built within the past one hundred to one hundred and fifty years, and seem to reflect the deteriorating economic status of the *bāhā* communities. There are no complete *bāhā* complexes, such as Chusyā Bāhā, which have been constructed within the past hundred and fifty years. Even reno-
vations of old shrines after earthquakes or the ravages of time tend to be simplified structures or ‘modern’ bāhās.

Whatever the present style, there are three essential elements to a vihāra: the shrine of the Buddha, a caitya and a tantric shrine.

The image of the Buddha, known as the kvāpā-dya in Newari, is the centre of the non-tantric worship of the community of the vihāra and his shrine is the one shrine which is open to the public. The current term kvāpādyā is a contraction of kvā/koca-pāla-deva which is found in earlier inscriptions. This in turn appears to be a Newari variant of the Sanskrit term koṣṭhapāla which is found in one fourteenth century inscription and is used as a synonym for the Buddha.\(^6\) Koṣṭhapāla means a guard, watchman or storekeeper and hence the current tradition that the term means the ‘guardian of the saṅgha’. In Patan one also finds the term kvāpā āju, the ‘guardian grandfather’.

In most vihāras the kvāpā-dya is an image of the Buddha sitting in vajrāsana and showing the earth touching gesture. This is also the iconographic form of the transcendent Buddha Aksobhya. Some claim that the image is always the historical Śākyamuni Buddha and not the transcendent Buddha Aksobhya; but in some cases we have inscriptions, put up at the time of the consecration of the image, which clearly state that the image is Aksobhya (especially in Kathmandu). Over fifty percent of the kvāpā-dya images are of this form of the Buddha. The next most popular image is a standing Buddha figure showing the boon-granting gesture with the right hand and with the left hand raised to the shoulder level and gathering up the ends of the robe in an elegant sweep. This is a popular form of the Buddha in Nepal: very ancient and certainly pre-tantric. Nepali scholars identify this gesture as the viśvavyākaraṇa-mudrā, and popular devotion identifies the image as Maitreya\(^7\). There is no justification for this hand posture (mudrā) or for the identification of the image as Maitreya in standard iconographic texts, but it is certainly common in the oral tradition of the Valley.\(^8\) Some of the images are one of the other transcendent Buddhas, Padmapāñi-Lokesvara or Maitreya. All of the kvāpā-dya images are non-tantric deities except for one image in Bhaktapur of Mahavairocana. The images face north, east or west. The favoured direction is north, with over half of the shrines oriented to that direction; east and west are about equally divided. The shrine never faces south as this is considered inauspicious – south is the direction of Yamarāja, the lord of death and the underworld.

In the courtyard of every vihāra is a caitya. The caitya or stūpa has from the earliest days been the specific symbol of a Buddhist institution. Many of these caityas are small stone monuments only about three feet high, and most of them are not over six feet. A few vihāras, however, such as Sigha Bāhā, Yatakha Bāhā and Mahābū Bāhā in Kathmandu, have been built round large stūpas. Especially in Kathmandu the caitya in the courtyard of the bāhā is often given a lime whitewash with the result that after several centuries it appears as a shapeless white mound or white spire. Popular folk devotion calls such caityas ‘Asoka Caityas’ in the popular belief that they were all erected by the Emperor Asoka.
In addition to the official caitya in every vihāra, one often finds an array of other votive caityas, erected by members of the saṅgha or by lay people, in memory of the deceased. In nearly every vihāra courtyard in Patan and in many in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, one also finds a mandala, either entirely of stone or of repoussé brass (or copper) mounted on a stone base. The mandala in question is the Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara mandala. This is one of the largest of the tantric mandalas and the central figure is Mañjughoṣa, a form of Mañjuśrī considered in this mandala to be of the family of Vajrasattva.9

The third essential feature of the vihāra is the āgam, or tantric shrine, where the initiated members of the saṅgha gather to worship the secret tantric deities of the saṅgha. The deities in question are most frequently Cakrasaṃvara-Vajravarāhī but occasionally Hevajra-Nairātmyā or one of the other tantric pairs.

Another feature of most of the vihāras is the torana or tympanum over the doorway. In ancient India the torana was a decorated arch or arched doorway leading into a shrine. In Nepal this has become a semi-circular decorated panel over the doorway of a shrine (whether Hindu or Buddhist), whose main figure usually depicts the deity in the shrine. However, in the case of the vihāras, the figure is often another form of the Buddha, a tantric figure or a representation of an aspect of the Dharma.

The outer circle of the torana is identical in almost all cases. In each of the lower corners is a makara (sea monster) facing out. Above the makaras rise swirls of vapour often personified with figures of deities and ending in the coils of two serpents with human heads. The coils of the serpents are held fast by a figure above. This figure is either a garuḍa grasping the serpents in his talons or a cepu, a sort of Bhairava mask with hands on either side of the face, which grasp the serpents. Above the rising vapour are usually found figures of the sun and the moon.

In the centre of the torana are found one or more Buddhist figures. One of the commonest motifs found on the toranas of the vihāras is the five transcendent Buddhas, usually with Vairocana in the central position but occasionally with Akṣobhya in the centre. Another common motif is the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha. The Buddha is usually Akṣobhya. The Dharma is a four-armed figure of Prajñāpāramitā with two hands joined before her breast in the bodhyaṅga- (or dharmacakra-) mudrā and the other right and left hands holding a garland of beads (mālā) and a book, the text of the Prajñāpāramitā. Alternatively she may hold the stem of the blue lotus on which rests the Prajñāpāramitā. The Saṅgha is represented by a form of Lokesvara. This is usually Śaḍākṣarī-Lokesvara, a four-handed, seated form with the two main hands joined in the namaskāra-mudrā and the other right and left holding a garland of beads and a lotus respectively. This is the Lokesvara who is a personification of the six-syllabled mantra (śaḍākṣarī-mantra) – Oṃ Maṇi Padme Hūṃ. Occasionally the figure is a seated, two-handed Avalokiteśvara holding the lotus in his left hand and showing the boon-granting gesture with his right hand. In several places, mainly in Kathmandu, the Buddha is represented by Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara. This is a figure

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with four faces (though often only three are shown) and eight arms. The two main arms show the dharmacakra-mudrā. The remaining right hands hold a sword, arrow and a vajra; and the left hands hold a book (Prajñāpāramitā), a bow and a bell. Another form of this same deity, known as Mahārāga-Mahāmañjuśrāi, is also occasionally found. This form also has four faces and eight hands. The four left hands hold the arrow, noose, book (Prajñāpāramitā) and a bell, the right hands hold a bow, an elephant goad, a sword and a vajra.

Another popular motif, especially in Kathmandu, is the figure known as Nāmasaṅgiti, a personification of a text often recited in the vihāras of Kathmandu. This is a single-faced figure with six pairs of hands. The first pair at the heart show the gesture of fearlessness, the second pair of the crown show the gesture of supplication (aṅjali-mudrā), the third pair usually each hold a staff: one with the double, crossed vajra (viśva-vajra) surmounted by a sword and the other a khatvāṅga. The fourth pair exhibit the gesture of homage to the departed (tarpana-mudrā – the specific mudrā of the Nāmasaṅgiti), the fifth pair the gesture of sprinkling nectar (āyapalā-mudrā), and the sixth pair rest on the lap in the gesture of meditation (dhyāna-mudrā) with the begging bowl resting on them. The figure sits in vajrāsana on the lotus seat and wears five ornaments, each representing one of the transcendent Buddhas: the wheel (cakra) – Akṣobhya; ear rings (kundala) – Amitābha; the necklace (kaṇṭhikā) – Ratnasambhava; bracelets (rucaka) – Vairocana, and a cincture (mekhalā) – Amoghasiddhi. This deity seems to be a peculiarly Nepalese creation; it is not found in Indian texts.

Every vihāra has two names, a Newari name and an official Sanskrit name. The Newari name is often a place name (Dhwākā Bāhā – ‘the bāhā near the [city] gate’), a direction (Waṃ Bāhā – the ‘Eastern Bāhā’) or a nickname (Cikan Bāhī – ‘Mustard Oil Bāhī’). Especially in Patan the official Sanskrit name often commemorates the founder or chief donor of the foundation: Śrī Lakṣmīkalyāṇa Varma Samskārita Ratnākara Mahāvihāra (Ratnākara Mahāvihāra founded by Śrī Lakṣmīkalyāṇa Varma). The term mahāvihāra was used in India for a cluster of vihāras, or a large vihāra that had many branches, such as existed at Nālandā. In Nepal the term mahāvihāra is used without any discernible rationale, often the smallest and most insignificant foundation is called mahāvihāra, and some important and ancient foundations are called simply vihāra.

The most unique feature of Newar Buddhism is the bhikṣu-saṅgha which constitutes a sort of priestly class in Newar society. Four features characterize this saṅgha: (1) All of the bhikṣus are married. (2) Entrance into the bhikṣu-saṅgha is limited to the sons of initiated bhikṣus. (3) Some of the initiated bhikṣus belong to a higher sub-class of tantric priests. (4) The bhikṣus do not live by alms, but have a secular occupation to support themselves and their families. Traditionally the Śākyas were goldsmiths, and the Vajrācāryas the same, as well as professional priests. Even in the Malla period many Śākyas were carpenters or bricklayers. Today both Śākyas and Vajrācāryas engage in a wide range of occupations.

The general Newari term for the bhikṣu is bare, derived from vande a term of
respect for the Buddhist monk.  In inscriptions and other documents from the Malla period they are called Śākyabhikṣu or Śākyavamśa (implying descent from the clan of the Śakyas), and in Patan those who were members of a bāhī as opposed to a bāhā were often called Brahmacarya-bhikṣu (though in fact they were married). Today most of the ordinary bare use the surname Śākyas, while those who are tantric priests use the surname Vajrācārya.

The sāṅgha of most monasteries claim descent from a common ancestor, or one of several brothers who are considered to be the founders of the vihāra. Few vihāras can document their history and origins, but the tradition of descent from a common ancestor is preserved in legends and underlined by the worship of a common lineage deity (digu/degu-dya). Every Newar (and in fact every Nepali) lineage has such a deity which is worshipped once a year by the lineage members as a group. Every family of Śakyas or Vajrācāryas has a lineage deity; and, in all but a few cases, all of the members of the sāṅgha of a vihāra share a common lineage deity. Lineage deities are usually situated outside the town or village, and the shrine consists of a very simple enclosure with one or more aniconic stones. For most people, the lineage deity does not have a name, it is simply degu dya. However, in most cases the lineage deities of the members of a vihāra have an identity. Frequently the deity is a caitya, or one of the transcendent Buddhas, but very often it is identified as a tantric deity such as Cakrasaṃvara, Yogāmbīra or Vajrayoginī. The common descent is also underlined by the fact that marriages within a sāṅgha are forbidden on grounds of consanguinity. The exceptions prove the rule: in the few cases where marriages are permitted within the sāṅgha, it is because the sāṅgha is made up of two or more groups of people with different origins.

From the viewpoint of Buddhism the bhikṣus initiated in a given vihāra, plus their wives and children, constitute the sāṅgha. However, in Newar society this has further ramifications. The Valley has always been ruled by Hindu kings and is basically a caste society. The bare are in fact a caste, the highest caste among the Buddhist Newars, with the tantric priests considered to be slightly higher than the other bare. Their position is the same as that of the brhmans among the Hindu Newars.

From the viewpoint of social custom and social interaction, the members of a vihāra-saṅgha constitute a gūthī. A gūthī (Sanskrit goṣṭhi) is an organization based on caste or kinship, or occasionally on geographical propinquity, which ensures the continued observance of the social and religious customs and ceremonies of the community. Gūthīs in general are social institutions which determine the rights and obligations of a Newar towards his community. Every Newar is a member of several such gūthīs, and membership in religious and functional gūthīs (such as the funeral gūthī – si gūthī) is compulsory and inherited. Such membership defines a person’s place in society, and to lose membership in such a gūthī is to lose one’s place in society. Each gūthī originally had an endowment, some agricultural land, from which the members obtained an annual income to finance the activities of the gūthī. Whatever
money was left over from the specific activities of the gūthī was used for an annual feast.

Each gūthī is well-organized and has strict rules and conditions for membership and the performance of prescribed functions. The most senior member of the gūthī is called thāypa or thakālī, and he acts as the chairman of the gūthī and of the board of elders who oversee its functioning. Their main function is to maintain the discipline of the members. The gūthī passes judgment in cases of dispute among members and takes action against those who violate its rules. A majority vote can levy punishments for infractions or even expel a member. Infractions would include bad manners, irregularity in attendance, failure to fulfil one's assigned role in the gūthī, breach of caste regulations. Every gūthī has an annual meeting when business is conducted and a feast is held. In addition to the thāypa there is also a gūthī administrator. The position of administrator is rotated through the membership, and it is the duty of the current administrator to make arrangements for the annual meeting and feast, and to finance the feast if there is insufficient revenue from the gūthī endowment.

In the case of the vihāras, the structure of the gūthī has been grafted on to the structure of a Buddhist monastic community. The members of the gūthī are the initiated bhikṣu-saṅgha, the elders are the sthavira and the senior-most elder, the mahā-sthavira. The functions which they oversee are the daily, monthly and annual Buddhist observances in the vihāra, initiations into the bhikṣu-saṅgha and the discipline of the saṅgha, which in this case consists in seeing that prescribed rituals are performed in turn by the members and that social or caste regulations are observed.

Every Buddhist monastic community in India had some common religious exercises each day – brief and simple in Theravāda monasteries, much more elaborate in Mahāyāna and tantric foundations. One of the main features of this worship was, and still is, Buddha-pūjā – the worship of the image of the Buddha enshrined in a monastery. The vihāras of the Valley also have a daily pūjā which is at least a worship of the main image enshrined in the vihāra, the kwpā-dya. It seems that originally the vihāras had a full schedule of rituals throughout the day. This is no longer true except at a very few places like Jana Bāhā in Kathmandu and Kwā Bāhā in Patan. All have a ceremony in the morning (shortly after sunrise, the time depending on the time of the year). This is the official, prescribed worship, the nitya-pūjā, and consists primarily in the offering of the pañcopacāra-pūjā and the recitation of hymns. The pañcopacāra-pūjā is a five-fold offering consisting of flowers, incense, light, scent and food (puṣpa, dhūpa, ḍīpa, gandha, naivedya). Most also have an evening service, the main part of which is the offering of a light to the deity, the ārati-pūjā.

The daily rituals are performed by the initiated members of the saṅgha in turn. The attendant on duty is called the dya-pālā or dya-pā, the guardian of the deity. In most vihāras, rotation is through the entire roster of the initiated from eldest to youngest. However, in a number of the vihāras the rotation is by
household or lineage. In some places today the rituals are always performed by one man. Service in the shrine of the kwāpā-dya is one of the main rights and duties which is conferred on the members of the saṅgha by their initiation, and it is a privilege indeed as no one but the initiated members of the saṅgha may actually enter the shrine. Until very recent times every member of the saṅgha faithfully took his turn as dya-pālā. Today many find this inconvenient and get another member of the saṅgha who has the time to take their turn. In some vihāras failure to take one’s turn reduces one to the status of a sort of fringe member and disqualifies one from serving as an elder of the saṅgha. In other places it seems to make no difference. The term of service varies, but is most frequently one lunar month or one lunar fortnight. Originally the attendant had to spend the entire period of his service in the shrine at the vihāra and to follow the monastic rules of a monk for that period. This is seldom the case today. In most vihāras the dya-pālā comes in the morning and evening, opens the shrine, performs the prescribed rituals and returns immediately to his home or his quarters in the vihāra. In a few of the principal institutions he remains on duty throughout the day, and members of the saṅgha as well as lay people come for the prescribed rituals or to perform their own private devotions.

Certain days of the month are sacred to the Buddhists, especially the full moon day and the eighth day of the bright half of the month, which is sacred to Avalokiteśvara. At many of the vihāras one can see large groups of people (mostly women) who come to perform a fast and ritual in honour of Amoghapiśa-Lokesvara (the aṣṭamī-vrata) on this day.

Theoretically every vihāra (as also every caitya and every other Newar shrine, Buddhist or Hindu) has an annual festival which commemorates the founding of the vihāra and is called busā-daṅ, the ‘birthday’. Traditionally this has been the one day in the year when the entire saṅgha of a vihāra gathered for religious exercises and a feast. From the viewpoint of the structure of Newar society, this is the annual meeting and feast of the vihāra gūhī. In Patan the custom is almost universally observed; in Kathmandu, as families have moved away from their old homes and as income from the endowments has diminished, the custom has begun to die out.

Another annual observance of the entire Buddhist community is what is known as Guīlā dharma. Guīlā is the name of one of the Newar months, occurring usually from mid-July to mid-August (from the beginning of the bright half of Sravan to the end of the dark half of Bhādra on the national calendar), and the whole month is sacred to the Buddhists. This custom is perhaps an echo of the ancient monastic custom of the ‘rainy season retreat’. Throughout the month there are special observances at the vihāras and at the homes of Buddhists. Each day is supposed to begin with fasting; streams of people can be seen each morning going to Svayambhū, the large stūpa outside of the city of Kathmandu, and women and girls fashion countless numbers of clay caityas which are thrown into the river at the end of the month. At the vihāra, it was the custom to recite texts during this month, especially the text of the Prajñāpāramitā, but this
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custom has largely died out. Following are three customs which are still rather generally observed during this ‘month.

First is the pañcadāna, the giving of five offerings. Originally this was the offering of gifts of food to the monks and the present custom is an adaptation of this. On the appointed day, which differs in each of the cities, the Buddhist lay people prepare a sort of altar at their home adorned with Buddhist images. In front of the altar they place baskets with four kinds of grain and salt. Throughout the day bare (Śākyas and Vajrācāryas) of the city come and collect their share of offerings. Many of the wealthier Śākyas and Vajrācāryas no longer make the rounds, but there is still a continuous procession of bare throughout the day. In Bhaktapur the ceremony is enhanced by a procession of the five main Dīpankara images of the city. These proceed to a central place where the faithful from the area place their offerings, and the bare of that neighbourhood come to receive them. After some time the procession moves on to the next neighbourhood and so on throughout the day. The whole custom is intimately connected with Dīpankara, and in each of the three cities the main image put out on this day is of him. In Patan people say that the custom originated when Dīpankara Buddha himself came to Patan to seek alms and took the alms offered by a poor, old woman of Guita Tole in preference to the rich offerings of the king. A statue of this woman is put out each year on the day of pañcadāna. Dīpankara is one of the earlier Buddhas said to have come before Śakyamuni, and who is supposed to have predicted his coming. His cult attained a great popularity in Malla Nepal, and there are images of him at almost every vihāra. The images are donated by individuals who have the image consecrated and then usually install it in one of the vihāras. All of these images are brought out in procession at the time of the samyak ceremony, which is held every five years at Kwā Bāhā in Patan and every twelve years at Bhuikhel below Syayambhū in Kathmandu. The ceremony is a sort of general pañcadāna to which are invited the sanghas of all the vihāras in the city. In Malla times it was the custom for wealthy traders to sponsor such a samyak ceremony when they returned prosperous from a long trading expedition to Tibet.

The second observance is what is known as bahī-dya-boyegu, the “showing of the gods in the bahīs”. Traditionally this lasted for ten days, and on the first day the members of the vihāra and the lay people used to bring whatever images, Buddhist relics, paintings or books they had to put on display for ten days. Perhaps the custom began first at the bahīs where they have large open halls suited for such a display. Now the custom is fast dying out. Most vihāras no longer put anything out for display, and those which do have a rather meagre display for only a day or two. Many reasons are given for this, the most common being fear of theft; but the fact is that a very large number of these ancient relics have already ‘disappeared’.

Patan has an observance that is not found in the other cities, the matayā or ‘festival of lights’. This occurs on the second day of the dark half of the month of Guṇlā; and on this day the people of Patan, carrying lighted tapers, candles or
torches, go in groups to visit all of the caityas and bähəs of the city of Patan. Given the large number of bähəs in Patan, to complete the circuit of all of them is a day-long endurance test. This occurs on the day after gāijātrā, a Hindu festival commemorating those who have died within the past year; and the matayā is considered to be the Buddhist equivalent. This festival is not observed in either Kathmandu or Bhaktapur. There is, however, a similar observance known simply as bähə-pūjā which can be performed by those who wish at any time of the year and is not a commemoration of the dead. It consists in a visit to each of the bähəs in the city, and substantial offerings are made by the participants at each site. The ritual is an expensive one and seldom performed again.

Another annual observance at the vihāras is what is known as disā-pūjā, ‘directional worship’. Performed twice a year in Paṣ and Jyeṣṭha (December and June), this ritual marks the solstice, the end of the sun’s journey north or south, and at the level of popular folklore is said to stop the sun’s progress and turn it back.

Harkening back to the monastic practice of having a head of the monastic saṅgha (the mahā-sthavira) and the custom that ordinations cannot be performed without the presence of the monastic community, each vihāra has a number of elders who theoretically oversee the life of the saṅgha and whose presence is required for valid ordinations. In the days when the life of the saṅgha was more vigorous and touched on the daily life of the people more closely, the governing committee was busy and had clearly defined duties. At present their duties are limited to making arrangements for daily services in the shrine, making arrangements for the annual religious observances and feasts, seeing to a few routine business matters like making repairs to the vihāra shrine, and settling alleged violations of vihāra customs and caste regulations. In many vihāras today the elders are no more than honorary seniors who have no clearly defined functions other than to be present at ordinations and to sit in the place of honour at feasts. Most vihāras have five or ten elders, some have twenty or twelve, and many of the bahis have only one. Ordinarily the elders hold office on the basis of strict seniority of initiation and, in a vihāra-saṅgha that is made up of both Śākyas and Vajrācāryas, irrespective of whether one is a Śākya or Vajrācārya, with one exception. The cakreśvara, the one who has to perform the tantric rituals in the secret tantric shrine, must be a Vajrācārya if there are Vajrācāryas in the saṅgha. The cakreśvara is always one of the elders, so there must be at least one Vajrācārya elder.

As noted above membership in the vihāra-saṅgha is limited to the sons of the initiated members of a given vihāra. The sons must be born of a mother of equal caste; if the mother is of a lower caste the son is ineligible. The saṅgha of a vihāra is in effect a patrilineal descent group. The initiation is known as the bare-chuyegu (the ‘making of a bare’) and is essentially the pravrajyā, or first initiation of a bhikṣu.

The age for initiation is about ten years, in any case before puberty. However, this may vary considerably. Initiation ceremonies are lengthy and expensive;
hence, especially in the smaller institutions, initiations are held at irregular intervals whenever there are enough candidates to share the expenses. About a week before the actual initiation the candidates come to the vihāra and, after presenting five betel nuts, pān, flowers, sandalwood paste, fragrant incense and a lamp to the senior-most member of the saṅgha, they formally request the pravrajyā initiation from him. On the day before the initiation itself the candidates come again to their vihāra, and in a ceremony that lasts most of the afternoon, they are taught to perform the gurumāṇḍala rite, a basic rite in honour of Vajrasattva that is performed before every Vajrayāna ritual and which they will have to perform on the next day. At the conclusion of the ceremony the head of the saṅgha ties a tuft of hair at the crown of each candidate’s head with a piece of cloth containing a particle of gold, or with a gold ring. This is in preparation for the shaving of the head on the following day: the day of the pravrajyā. The term cūḍā-karma (or karana) (‘making of the top knot’) is often popularly used for this rite and is found in some of the ritual texts, but it properly applies only to the first part of the ceremony. The terms upanayana and vratabandha are also popularly used, even by the bare themselves, but they are not found in the ritual texts and are obviously used in analogy to the Hindu initiation rite.

First, the candidates perform the guru-mandala rite as learned on the previous day. The rubrics then specify that a short explanation be given to the candidates of the meaning of the pravrajyā rite, after which they take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha. Then, the five rules of discipline are read to the candidates. At the conclusion of this the candidates again request initiation, this time from the officiating Vajrācārya priest. Next, the candidates, who sit in a line according to age, are led away from the area of the rituals to a barber seated at the edge of the vihāra courtyard for the cūḍā-karma. The barber shaves the head of each boy, leaving a top knot (cūḍā), as is done by caste Hindus. Then the boy is presented with a loin cloth. The giving of the loin cloth (mekhala-bandhana in Sanskrit, kayata-pūjā in Newari) and the shaving of the head apart from the top knot is the initiation rite for all of the Newar castes exclusive of the bare. Thus the bare is first initiated as a householder. The point is underlined in the ritual texts themselves, for at this point the priest or his assistant is told to address the candidates: “As a result of the rites which have been performed you are now householders. It is not too late to change your mind. Do you really want to be bhikṣus, and why?” The candidates respond that indeed they do want to be bhikṣus and again request the pravrajyā initiation.

This is followed by the pravrajyā itself. The candidates are led in turn to a spot directly in front of the shrine of the vihāra. There the senior-most member of the saṅgha cuts off the top knot and the loin cloth. Then the five eldest members of the saṅgha and the officiating priest pour sacred water over the candidate’s head. The cutting of the top knot and shedding of the loin cloth symbolize the renunciation of the status of householder and the rejection of caste status by the bhikṣu.

Following the pravrajyā proper, the candidates are invested with the robe of a
bhikṣu, a red or yellow robe, to which is added two silver bracelets, a pair of earrings, and a silver necklace. The candidates are then presented with the bhikṣu's begging bowl, a staff and a ritual umbrella. The presiding priest then gives each of them a new name saying, "You are now a bhikṣu; you must not hanker after the life of a householder, a home, or such things. You must lay aside your household name. I will give you a new name, the name of a bhikṣu." Then the candidates perform the pūjā of the maṇḍalas of the Three jewels: the Buddha-maṇḍala, the Dharma-maṇḍala and the Saṅgha-maṇḍala. They then listen to the reading of the ten rules of discipline of the bhikṣu. The ritual texts then give a prayer to be recited at the conclusion of the investiture: "May all those who have undergone this rite of pravrajyā in the presence of the Buddha, ever be victorious by the favour of the gods and the power of fire, water, sky and the vital spirit, as long as Mt. Meru stands, as long as the Ganges flows, as long as the earth, the sun and the moon remain constant."

At the conclusion of the investiture each of the candidates in turn is handed a golden kalasa and is led carrying it into the shrine of the vihāra. As an initiated member of the saṅgha he has the right to enter this shrine and the duty to serve as an attendant of the Buddha.

The bhikṣu must beg his food daily and the next rite is a ceremonial offering of alms to the new bhikṣus. A low basket is placed in front of each of the bhikṣus and a procession of people comes along to offer uncooked rice and coins to them. The first to offer alms to each must be the boy's mother's brother, who offers him not only rice, but also a tray containing a new set of clothes which he will don four days later. Finally the new bhikṣus are taken out of the vihāra in procession round the neighbourhood. In Kathmandu this procession always goes to Hanumān Dhokā, the old royal palace, where the bhikṣus present betel nuts to the throne of the king.

The boys are now bhikṣus, and for four days they must live the life of Buddhist monks, though they continue to live at home whether the family has quarters inside of the vihāra or outside. They have to observe the regulations of diet of the monk (only one meatless meal a day, taken before noon), avoid contact with anything unclean, and keep the ten rules of discipline. They have to go out each morning to beg their food, and for this they must go to the houses of their mother's brothers and their father's sisters. Beyond this they ordinarily go to the houses of any other relatives who call them, usually three or four houses a day.

Four days after the pravrajyā rites the young bhikṣus return to the vihāra for the ceremony of "laying aside the monk's robe" (civara kote vidhi). The rite is also called vratamoksana (release from the vows). For this ceremony the boys are taken up into the secret tantric shrine of the vihāra there they make the following petition to the officiating priest, "O guru, O upādhyāya, we find that it is too difficult to spend our whole life like this as śramaṇas." The priest responds, 'If you find it too difficult to live as śramaṇas then live as householders. If you want heaven (svarga) you can obtain it by being a householder, but do not indulge in violence, do not tell lies, do not covet another's wife. If you
They then lay aside their monk’s robes and put on the new set of clothes given them by their mother’s brother on the day of the pravrajýã. Finally they are given a mantra of Heruka Cakrasamvara.

According to the tradition of the Newars, the bare do not cease to be bhikṣus by the above rite, but pass from the state of celibate bhikṣus to that of householder bhikṣus, a fact underlined by the name bhikṣu or sākyabhikṣu used to refer to them down the ages. Allen records of the ceremonies in Patan, that after their completion, the boy is taken home, where he is introduced to some elementary Vajrayāna rituals by the family Vajracārya priest, after which the priest addresses him along the following lines: “You have gone through Śrāvakayāna and now come to Mahāyāna, the greatest of the Buddhist yānas. You have participated in some Vajrayāna rituals and after going through some higher ordinations you will know what Chakrasambar is.” From the viewpoint of Vajrayāna Buddhism, the initiated passes through successively higher forms of Buddhism. Starting as a totally uninitiated boy, he is first initiated as a householder (upāsaka). Then he becomes a Hinayāna monk through the pravrajyā. With the “laying aside of the robes” he embraces the Mahāyāna state and, if he is a Vajracārya, he will be further initiated into the mysteries of the Vajrayāna—the adamantine way: the highest and most powerful of the Buddhist ways of attaining enlightenment.

Entrance into the ranks of the Vajracāryas is limited by birth; only the sons of Vajracāryas may be initiated. The Vajracārya initiation, known in Newari as the ācā-luyegu (the ‘making of an ācārya’) and in Sanskrit as the pañcābhiseka (the ‘five consecrations’) is always given after the bare-chuyegu, in Kathmandu usually the day after the “laying aside of the robes”, and in Patan at a later date.

The initiation consists of five tantric consecrations: the kalaśabhiseka (water flask consecration), mukutabhiseka (crown consecration), vajrābhiseka (vajra, or diamond, consecration), ghanṭabhiseka (bell consecration), and guhyabhiseka (secret consecration). The kalaśa, ritual crown, vajra and bell are the implements which the Vajracārya uses for his performance of the ritual. The secret consecration was originally the consecration of the tantric yogin with his consort and symbolizes the union of prajñā and upāya (wisdom and means), the female and male principles of Vajrayāna philosophy. At present the candidates are presented with a flower garland and shown a picture of Heruka Cakrasamvara in union with his consort Vajravarāhī. Following these consecrations, the candidates are given a different mantra of Heruka Cakrasamvara from the one they were given before. They are then enjoined to secrecy about the details of these initiation rites. In practice the secrecy is taken to refer to the mantra itself; this is always passed from guru to disciple and never divulged or written down even in the ritual texts.

Having taken these consecrations, the Vajracārya is empowered to perform the homa sacrifice, an essential part of all major rituals, and to confer consecrations. He is further empowered to perform the secret tantric rites in the āgám of
the bähä, or in his own home if he has such a shrine. He is entitled to have jajamānas – client families – for whom he acts as priest and from whom he receives a stipend for his services. In each bähä where there are Vajrācāryas, there is an acārya-gūthi composed of all the Vajrācārya members of the saṅgha, and in Kathmandu there is an overall organization of all the Vajrācāryas of the city known simply as the Ācārya-Gūthi. This Ācārya-Gūthi was responsible for standardizing ritual and providing ritual texts for its members. For this reason there is greater uniformity in the performance of ritual in Kathmandu than in Patan or Bhaktapur; and the Vajrācāryas of Kathmandu are recognized by their confrères in Patan and Bhaktapur as experts in the performance of the ritual. The Ācārya-Gūthi also strictly controlled the relationship between the Vajrācāryas and their clients. Client families were passed on from father to son as a right consequent upon ordination. The clients had no say whatsoever in the selection of their priests. However, as a result of a dispute some years ago which lasted nearly thirty years, the Ācārya-Gūthi lost its hold both over its priests and over its clients. Now people feel free to call any Vajrācārya if they are dissatisfied with their priest.  

From a religious and social point of view, the most vital service provided to the Buddhist community by the bare is the priestly service of the Vajrācāryas. They are needed for caste initiations, marriages, worship of the lineage deity, and all principal pūjās, whether performed in the home or at a bähä. Hence the dominant place of the Vajrācārya and of the Ācārya-Gūthi in Kathmandu, whose eighteen bähäs are still recognized as the principal bähäs of Kathmandu. There are today some 363 Buddhist vihāras still extant in the Valley, but they are not all of equal status. Among the bähäs there are two broad categories called in Newari mū-bähä and kacā-bähä; that is, main vihāras (Sanskrit mūla) and branch vihāra (Sanskrit sākha). A main vihāra is one in which bare-chuyegu initiations are rightfully performed. The branch vihāras are just what the name indicates: branches of the main institutions founded when the pace in the original vihāra would no longer accommodate the ever-expanding saṅgha, or when a lay donor was moved to found a vihāra and donate it to one lineage of an existing vihāra-saṅgha. Originally it seems that new monasteries were founded with independent saṅghas, but there came a time when the number of official monasteries became fixed and new foundations were considered to be branches of the original monastery. In such a case the members of a branch are still considered to be members of the main monastery and must receive their initiation there, take their turn in the shrine and serve as elders of the saṅgha. At the same time they have similar obligations towards their branch monastery.

Thus in Patan there are eighteen main bähäs, called ‘The Fifteen Bähäs’. 24 In addition there are over 130 bähäs which are branches of these main monasteries. 25 In Kathmandu there are eighteen bähäs belonging to the Ācārya-Gūthi, all of which have Vajrācārya members and several have only Vajrācārya. To this day they are considered to be the most important bähäs of Kathmandu,
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despite the fact that there are ten other main bāḥās of Śākyas where bare-chuyegu initiations are performed. Both the main bāḥās of the Ācārya-Gūthī and the ten Śākya bāḥās also have branches. In Bhaktapur there are only nine main bāḥās, some Śākya and some mixed. All of the extant Bhaktapur bāḥās are main bāḥās.

The bāḥās form a separate class of monastery, but today the difference between the two has been lost for all practical purposes. We have seen above certain architectural differences between the two types. Certain other superficial differences are obvious. Most of the bāḥās are in a general state of disrepair in contrast to the bāḥās, especially the main bāḥās of Patan, which have been kept up and are periodically renovated. The saṅghas of the bāḥās are small and continually decreasing so that the membership of the bāḥī-saṅghas accounts for only 5.4% of the total bare in the Valley. Several institutions which were functioning fifty years ago are now empty and falling into ruins. Because of their small numbers, bāḥās, except for Cīkan Bahī in Patan, usually do not have branches. In general the members of the bāḥās are financially less well off than the members of the bāḥās. The organization of the saṅgha of a bāḥī is different from that of a bāḥā. In Patan there are two groups of bāḥās, one comprising ten bāḥās and the other fifteen. In Kathmandu there are sixteen bāḥās. Though initiations are (or were until recent times) performed in all of these vihāras, each of these three groups of bāḥās had one overall saṅgha (sarva-saṅgha) with five elders for each of the two groups of Patan and a group of sixteen elders in Kathmandu, one from each bāḥī. This system is somewhat modified now, as the two groups in Patan have broken up in recent times, and several of the bāḥī-saṅghas in Kathmandu have died out entirely.26 In Patan, until recent times, the members of a bāḥī were called brahmaṇ-bhikṣu rather than śākya-bhikṣu or śākya-vamśa. Though the term is still known, most of these people today prefer simply Śākya.

All of these are rather superficial differences, and if one asks bare today the difference between bāḥā and bāḥī, they are hard pressed to give a meaningful answer. Members of the bāḥās will often say that the bāḥīs were later foundations set up for people of mixed or lower castes. Historical evidence contradicts this contention. A number of the bāḥīs have definitely been in existence for six hundred years or more. I Bahī and its associates in Patan are probably about nine hundred years old, Guita Bahī in Patan existed in 1024 AD, Thāṃ Bahī in Kathmandu certainly existed in 1041 AD and Ča Bahī in Kathmandu certainly goes back to Licchavi times, though the present saṅgha seems to be later. The members of I Bahī claim brahmaṇ descent, and though this cannot be proven with documentary evidence, some of their still current customs confirm this. It is true that the members of the bāḥīsaṅghas were, until recent times, looked upon as somehow slightly lower than members of a bāḥā. Members of a bāḥā would usually not give their daughters in marriage to a bāḥī nor would they take wives from them. This prejudice has almost disappeared today. Others will say that the organization of the bāḥī-saṅgha is less structured and that the bāḥī people have

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fewer rituals to perform. To an extent this is true, but the statement is made against the background of a theory which says that the more rules one has to follow and rituals one has to perform the higher one’s religious status. Today in fact there is little difference, and one has to look at the history of the two institutions to find the original difference.

The position of the Śākyas and Vajrācāryas in Newar Buddhist society is clear. They are the bhikṣu-sangha, and the Vajrācāryas among them are the priests of the entire Buddhist community. Their religious traditions and their rituals are all clearly tantric Buddhist, and if asked they will identify themselves as Buddhists. The question of the lay Buddhists — who they are and what percentage of the Newar population they constitute — is one which has vexed every commentator. The Newar trading class of Kathmandu (the Udāya), most of the Mānandhars and the Citrakārs are clearly and consciously Buddhist. Beyond this there are few clear distinctions. Most commentators have settled on the criterion of the family priest — if a family, or a caste, uses Vajrācārya priests for their life-cycle rites and family rituals they are classed as Buddhist, if they use brahmans or tantric Hindu priests they are classed as Hindu.

I have used this criterion myself, but have increasing doubts about its usefulness. The farmer class among the Newars, the Jyāpūs, make up some forty-five percent of the total Newar population. They constitute a large percentage of the population of the three cities, and the bulk of the population in the villages which dot the plain of the Valley. There are no bare in most of these villages, so the people call a Vajrācārya priest from Patan, Kathmandu or Bhaktapur when they need one. Until recent times nearly 100% of the Jyāpūs used Vajrācārya priests. These were the priests assigned to them in days gone by, and they continued to call them for the performance of life-cycle rites or death ceremonies, and to preside over the annual festival of the principal deities of their villages or area of the city. The principal deity in these villages and in the Jyāpū sections of the cities, is usually a tantric Hindu deity — Harisiddhi, Bhagavaṭī, Nāsa Dya (the Dancing Śiva) etc. In recent times many of the Jyāpū families, especially in more remote places like Sankhu and Dhulikhel and in the city of Bhaktapur, have begun to call brahman priests (usually non-Newar brahmans) to perform their life-cycle rites and the commemoration of the dead. When questioned as to the reason for this, they respond that these brahmans offer their services cheaper, it is more convenient to call them, or it is more politic to have brahman priests in a Hindu kingdom. When they switch priests the only thing that changes in their religious culture is the priest — they continue to worship the same deities with the same rituals, and understand their life-cycle rites and ceremonies for the dead in exactly the same way.

What we seem to have is a substratum of religious rites and customs that were originally purely animistic but which have been influenced by outside forces of a higher tradition — tantric Hinduism which has resulted in Hindu names for the deities, stories from the Purāṇas to explain their background, and modes of worship that are tantric and Hindu. Tantric Buddhism contributed the
priests, and this probably came about because of the availability of the Vajrācāryas. In Malla Nepal there were far more Vajrācāryas than brahmans, especially in Patan and Kathmandu. Even today in Bhaktapur, the most Hindu of the three cities, there are only 26 households of Newar brahmans as opposed to 209 houses of bare, about half of whom are Vajrācāryas. It is clear that in Malla Nepal there were barely enough brahmans to serve the needs of the court and the aristocracy who were caste Hindus. In fact, the use of brahman priests may well have provided a convenient distinction between the rulers and the ruled. From the viewpoint of the people (i.e., the Jyāpūs), the Vajrācāryas were accepted and respected above all because they possessed power – power to ward off evil, to subdue malevolent deities, to coerce supernatural forces and to bend them to the use of the villagers. Even to this day people in the Valley, even non-Newars, will say that the most powerful jhāṅkrai is the Vajrācārya. If then one uses the criterion of the family priest to classify people as Hindu or Buddhist, what information does this convey? Very little indeed. What is needed is a fresh anthropological analysis of the religious customs of these people from a different viewpoint.

What are the historical antecedents that led to the unique features of Newar Buddhism today? At the outset it must be said that one cannot give a definite answer to this question at the present state of our knowledge. In what follows I will attempt to draw together what few threads we have from the medieval period, and try to form some tentative hypotheses.

Buddhist stories and legends give a hoary antiquity to Buddhism in the Valley, tracing human habitation to a visit of Mañjuśrī, who drained the lake that once filled the Valley. Legends speak of visits to the Valley by the legendary. Buddhas who preceded the historical Buddha: Kāśyapa Buddha, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, Dīpankara; and some of the vihāras are said to have been founded by these early Buddhas. Legend speaks of a visit to the Valley by the Emperor Asoka. The four stūpas at the cardinal points of the city of Patan are attributed to him, many ancient caityas in Kathmandu are attributed to him, and he is said to have married off a daughter to a kṣatriya of Nepal. In their old age she and her husband founded a vihāra, the present Cā Bahī, which was named after her. The Sanskrit name of this vihāra is often given as Čārumati Vihāra.

Given the proximity of the Valley of Nepal to Lumbini and Kapilavastu and to the areas of North Bihar where Buddhism spread rapidly even during the time of the Buddha, it is quite possible that the Dharma found its way to the Valley during the lifetime of the Buddha himself. It is not a priori impossible that the Emperor Asoka visited the Valley, but there is no contemporary evidence of such a visit either from Nepal or from Buddhist sources in India. Unlike India, where the ancient Buddhist sites are abandoned ruins, the ancient sites in Nepal are still active shrines. Hence archeological investigation of sites such as the four stūpas of Patan is impossible without offending the religious sensitivities of the people.
The first contemporary evidence of the presence of Buddhism in the Valley comes from the corpus of Licchavi inscriptions ranging from 464 to about 880 AD and comprising nearly 200 inscriptions, some of them mere fragments.\textsuperscript{33} Vṛṣadeva, a king of the Licchavi period who precedes the time of the earliest inscriptions, is said by the inscriptions and by the chronicles to have been a Buddhist and to have founded a monastery at the famous Swayambhūnāth Mahācaitya.\textsuperscript{34} The inscriptions mention 14 vihāras, and the Gopālaraśavamsāvalī, the earliest and most reliable of the Nepalese chronicles, mentions six vihāras from this period.\textsuperscript{35} Though all of the kings, except possibly Vṛṣadeva, seem to have been clearly Hindu, some of the monasteries were founded by royal patronage or royal grants: Śrīmāna Vihāra built by Mānadeva and Rāja Vihāra built by another king, possibly Aṃśuvarma. An inscription from the time of Aṃśuvarma mentions religious taxes and the institutions which the collected revenue support. Among these institutions (mostly Hindu shrines) are several vihāras.\textsuperscript{36} Two inscriptions, both dated Samvat 103 (678-9 AD), from the time of Narendradeva, grant large tracts of land to vihāras for their support. With the grant of land and its income went certain other rights. The saṅgha was entrusted with authority to collect the taxes for their own use and to function as civil authorities, settling disputes among the people and issuing punishment for crimes committed by people within their territory.\textsuperscript{37} Even at this early date one sees the saṅgha very much involved in secular business.

From the inscriptions themselves we know nothing about the internal operation of the vihāra, the makeup of the saṅgha, or the life-style of the bhikṣus. We know nothing about the sect or sects the bhikṣus of a given vihāra belonged to, except for a fragmentary reference at Sankhu to the mahāsāṅghika-bhikṣu-saṅgha.\textsuperscript{38} There are a number of references to the bhikṣu- or bhikṣuni-saṅgha and one reference to a śākya-bhikṣu.\textsuperscript{39} From a number of references in inscriptions to Avalokiteśvara and images of him from the period which have survived, we know that Mahāyāna Buddhism flourished. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-tsang noted that there were both heretics (i.e. Hindus) and true believers (Buddhists) in Nepal. The temples of the gods and the monasteries existed side by side and there were a total of about 2,000 monks who studied both the Mahāyāna and Hinayāna.\textsuperscript{40} It seems that Vajrayāna Buddhism was known, but certainly had not attained the dominance it later enjoyed.\textsuperscript{41} This is really the sum of our knowledge of Buddhism during this period. Of the extant vihāras, only one can be traced with any degree of certainty to the Licchavi period: Guṇ Bāhā at Sankhu, the Guṇ Vihāra of the inscriptions. The Swayambhū Mahācaitya of course still exists, but the vihāra has long disappeared.\textsuperscript{42}

The next period of Nepalese history is the so-called Ṭhākurī period which extends from about 750 AD (or 879 AD if one counts from the beginning of the Nepal ēra) until the first of the Malla kings in 1200 AD.\textsuperscript{43} It is a period of which our knowledge is limited. Few inscriptions have survived and what little we know of even the political history of the period comes mostly from colophons on manuscripts, largely Buddhist, which mention the name of the reigning king
and occasionally a few other bits of information. From the large number of Buddhist manuscripts which were copied during this period it is evident that Buddhism flourished. Contemporary records mention eleven of the still extant vihāras and another thirty-one vihāras which are unknown today. The Buddhist manuscripts include standard Mahāyāna texts such as the Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā and the Kāraṇḍavyūha, collections of Buddhist stories such as the avadāna-kathās, plus a large number of tantras and tantric ritual texts, the most popular of which was the Pañcarakṣa. All of the manuscripts are in Sanskrit; there is not a single Pāli text from this period.

One of the most important sources of information on the Buddhism of this period is a collection of 140 palm-leaf land deeds found a few years ago at Uku Bāhā in Patan. The earliest of these is dated Nepal Samvat 103 (982-3 AD) and they extend down to the early part of the Malla period. Nearly all of them deal with land transactions involving vihāras and the residents of vihāras. Some thirty-seven of these have been published and the entire corpus is currently being edited. Those which have been published give the names of a number of the vihāras of Patan, most of which are unknown today. The residents of the vihāras are usually referred to as sākya-bhikṣu or simply bhikṣu; a few are identified as Vajrācārya. What strikes one immediately in these documents is the large number of sākya-bhikṣus and bhikṣus who are buying and selling land in their own name. There are only a few instances of transactions in the name of a sāṅgha or a vihāra. This would seem to indicate a high degree of secularization. An analysis of the entire corpus of these documents will perhaps shed more light on this question.

Another source of information on this period is the Tibetan records, for it was precisely at this time that the Dharma was being revived in Tibet and many Tibetans were coming to Nepal and India to study and receive initiations. Records such as the Blue Annals attest to the presence in the Valley of a number of pandits and tantric adepts under whom the Tibetans studied. Many of these were Indian, but some were definitely Nepalese, indicating that there were at least some of the residents of the vihāras who were scholars and yogic adepts. These included such famous Indian scholars and siddhas as Vāgīśvarakīrti, Vibhūticandra, Buddhāśrī, Ratnakāśita, Śāntarākṣita, Vasubandhu. Atiśa or Dipaśakara Śrījñāna as he was known in India, spent a year in Nepal in 1041–42 AD and built a temple or shrine at Taṃ Vihāra (the present Thām Bahī in Kathmandu). He noted that the discipline and the manner of conducting the study of the doctrine at this vihāra was excellent. Early in the thirteenth century the Tibetan Dharmasvamin spent several years in Nepal staying at the vihāra at Svayambhū where he studied under Ratnakāśita and Mahāpañḍita Raviindrādeva. He too mentions Taṃ Vihāra and notes that from the time of Atiśa until the present the religious rites were properly observed in this monastery. Among the Nepalese scholars mentioned are Anutapa-gupta and Vairocana (disciples of Atiśa) [Blue Annals p. 850], Nayaśrī [p. 1053], Bandepa, also known as Paindapatika [p. 402], Buddhāśrī [Taranatha p. 317], Phammthin-pa and his four
brothers [Blue Annals p. 380ff]. The last of the famous Indian pandits came in the fifteenth century and was a Bengali known as Vanaratna and called by the Tibetans ‘The Last Great Pandit.’ He spent several years in Nepal, went to Tibet and then later returned to Nepal, where he retired to a monastery which still exists, Gopicandra Mahāvihāra (Pintu Bahī). What is strange about all of these scholars and siddhas mentioned by the Tibetans is that the Newar Buddhist tradition has retained no memory of any of them. The case of Vanaratna is the most striking, as a painting of this man was made the year after his death in 1468. This painting was preserved at Pintu Bahī until 1862 when a copy was made because the original had become faded. Both paintings have identical inscriptions in Newari explaining who the man was, and in the case of the second painting, why the new copy was made. Today the earlier painting is in the Los Angeles County Museum, the later one is in the Bharat Kala Bhavan in Varanasi and no one in Pintu Bahī has ever heard of Vanaratna.

The Malla period (1200–1769) is characterized by much more abundant information. The early period, down to the end of the reign of Yakṣa Malla (1482 AD) presents a picture that is a continuation of the so-called Ṭhakuri period with references in a variety of sources to vihāras and the manuscripts copied by those who live there. By 1482 we have references to at least forty-four of the extant monasteries and another seventy-six which no longer exist. There are an increasing number of references to Vajrācāryas. The earliest reference to a Vajrācārya who is definitely a native of the Valley comes from a copper-plate inscription dated 218 NS (1097–8 AD), which refers to one Vajrācārya Dharma Sirpha of Vajrasila Mahāvihāra, one of the still extant main bāhās of the Ācārya-Gūḍhi. After 1100 AD there are abundant references to Vajrācāryas and their bāhās.

The monks continue to be referred to as bhikṣu, sākya-bhikṣu or sākya-vamśa implying descent from the clan of Sākya, a claim still made by some of the Sākyas. The term brahmacarya-bhikṣu appears for the members of the bāhās in Patan. A manuscript of 561 NS (1440–41 AD) gives rules for the conduct of the bare-chuyegu (vandechuya in the text) in a Patan monastery – Vam Bāhā, one of the extant main bāhās. It lists the various donations that are to be made at the time of initiations and specifically states that if any member of the sāṅgha has a son who is of a lower caste (jāti) than himself (if he is the son of a woman of a caste lower than bare), the boy is not to be initiated. This is a clear statement of three facts: the members of the sāṅgha are married and have sons, membership in the sāṅgha is limited to sons of members, and pure caste status is a prerequisite for initiation.

As one moves into the late Malla period, after Yakṣa Malla one gets further unequivocal references to married bhikṣus. An inscription of 631 NS (1510–11 AD) refers to one sākya-bhikṣu Śrī Jyotirāja Pāla, his mother Ullāsa Lakṣmī and his wife Abhaya Lakṣmī. An inscription of 635 NS (1514–15 AD) refers to one brahmacarya-bhikṣu Śrījakarājājū and his wife Manamayī. From this time on there are a large number of such references, usually in inscriptions which record
donations and repairs to the vihāras. Such inscriptions often list the names of all the members of a donor’s family. Few such inscriptions have survived from the earlier periods, so one cannot draw any conclusions about when such married monks first appeared, or when the custom became general. Even the term bhikṣunī is occasionally used for the wife of a Śākyā or Vajrācārya.55

When celibate monks entirely disappeared is a question that simply cannot be answered at the present state of our knowledge. I have been given concrete examples of celibate Newar monks in the Valley within the past two hundred years, but they were clearly exceptions to the rule and individual, isolated occurrences. They seem to have been men who had spent some time in Tibet, received ordination there as Mahāyāna bhikṣus and continued their practice when they returned home. Most of them seem not to have been bare but Udāya, i.e., men who by caste were excluded from the rank of monk (bare) in Nepal. Slusser is of the opinion that there were celibate monks in the Valley up to the seventeenth century.56 This opinion seems to be based on Wright’s chronicle, (= History of Nepal) which states (in speaking of the arrangements for the vihāras made by the king of Patan in the seventeenth century): “The Yampī Bihār, built by Sunaya Misra was nirbānic (i.e., the inhabitants did not marry) . . .”57 It must be noted that this interpretation of nirbānic is Wright’s not the chronicle’s, and it is clear from the rest of the account that they were in fact married.

David Gellner’s recent paper on the vihāras of Patan has shed considerable light on this whole passage in Wright’s chronicle. Gellner has gone back to the original Nepali text; and it is clear that Wright’s translators have omitted several key words and mistranslated others. Gellner treats this passage in the context of his treatment of Cikaṅ Bahī of Patan, which is the one exception to the general pattern of decay in the bahīs. Cikaṅ Bahī has a large sangha of 135 Śākyas. This sangha is very active; the bahī buildings have been kept in good repair (and are currently being extensively renovated), and over the last hundred and fifty years they have built and consecrated several branches. This seems to have been a result of two factors: the relative wealth of these families and the fact that they have kept alive something of the original traditions of the bahīs. One of the aged elders of Cikaṅ Bahī gave Gellner the following account:

“When the bahī were inhabited by married śākya-bhikṣus who worked for their living, there were still brahmacarya-bhikṣus, unmarried monks who did no work, in the bahī. In the bahī they did tantric rituals, had gūthīs, (i.e. annual ritual obligations] and so on, but in the bahī all they had to do was keep the rule of celibacy (brahmacarya pāle yāye). Then one day the king decided that the 1200 ropanī of land belonging to the Knoti Bahī was too much, and he took the land to feed his soldiers. ‘Since you live by begging,’ he said, ‘go ahead and beg!’ Eventually they had to marry and find work, although the 64 kinds of work had already been given out to the 64 castes. So they did as the Śākyavāṃśa were doing.”58
What this seems to indicate is that the bahīs are relics of an earlier and celibate tradition. For a long time after the distinctive feature of these communities, their celibacy, had been abandoned they continued many of their traditions. Finally, in the face of the overwhelming popularity of the bāhā traditions, the ritual and social high status of the Vajrācāryas, and the official sanction of this tantric Buddhism (with its round of ritual which fit so well into the structure of ‘Hindu society’) by the ruling elite, the bahīs were relegated to a place outside the mainstream of the Buddhist tradition of the Valley. Perhaps it is in this sense that the term bahīr (outside) has the greatest import.

This line of reasoning is confirmed by the relevant passage in Wright’s chronicle. Siddhi Narasimha, the king of Patan, had called together the elders of the ‘Fifteen Bāhā’, and made arrangements for their government. He then called the elders of the twenty-five bahīs of Patan. The chronicle calls these vihāras ‘nirvāṇik vanaprastha’. Wright explains this term as meaning “the inhabitants did not marry”, though it is abundantly clear from the chronicle that they were in fact married. The term seems meaningless because Wright’s translators have omitted the contrasting term which the chronicle writers used for the bāhās: ‘saṃsārik tantrik vihāra’ (‘this-worldly tantric vihāra’). The chronicle clearly contrasts nirvāṇik vanaprastha vihāras (bahīs) and saṃsārik tantrik vihāras (bāhās). When the king tried to make reforms in the bahīs similar to the reforms he made in the bāhās, the members of I Bahī complained that since they followed the other-worldly forest-dwelling dharma they could not take the tantric initiation of those who are members of a worldly tantric vihāra. The chronicle then describes the arrangements made for the bahīs in general and especially for I Bahī concluding:

“In this way the rules were established both for the worldly tantric (saṃsārik tantrik) monasteries and for the other-worldly forest-dwelling (nirvāṇik vanaprastha) monasteries.”

One sees here an intermediate stage. Celibacy had disappeared, but the bahīs were still repositories of a different tradition which their members wanted to preserve. However, their efforts were doomed as they were caught in an anomalous situation. They were custodians of the tradition of the celibate monks, but they were not celibate. The king was anxious to make all of his subjects conform to the traditional customs of Hindu society. One of these customs was the performance of the fire sacrifice (homa) after the death of a member of a family in order to purify the household and its members. Since they were married men with families, they must also adopt this custom, and for this they must have a priest who is empowered to perform such a sacrifice. He may be Buddhist, but he must be a Vajrācārya, as the priests from bahīs were not recognized (by their own people or the majority community) as Vajrācāryas and hence did not perform the fire sacrifice. So Vajrācāryas from Dhum Bāhā were assigned to be the priests of I Bahī. The bahī priests continued to function for rituals pertaining to the monastery itself, but Vajrācāryas from the bāhās became the family
priests of the families attached to the bahīs. This arrangement further blurred the lines of distinction between bahīs and bāhās and today few people know where the line is and what it signifies.

Gellner concludes his analysis of the situation of the bahīs with the following statement:

"The decline of the bahī was evidently already under way when Siddhi Narasimha made his reforms, since the chronicle tells us that certain bahī were empty, their inhabitants having moved on after taking up the householder dharma. The members of the bahī made a virtue of their being the descendants of the last truly celibate monks, but this was not enough to stop a steady decline in population. Wherever possible members must have transferred to bāhā; but precisely because such practice is in theory not allowed it is impossible to trace it or prove it. The lower prestige of the bahī is due to the fact that the Buddhism of the Newars is Tantric: celibate monastic Buddhism, of which the bahī are the most prominent representatives, is given a place, but only the lowest one. The bahī themselves have been less and less able, and less and less interested, to combat this assessment."

These considerations lead to three conclusions: (1) It is the bahīs not the bāhās which are the repositories of a celibate monastic tradition. (2) In the days when celibate communities existed, if celibate monks decided to become householder monks, they left their celibate monastery (even if it meant leaving the place empty) and joined or founded a bāhā. They did not turn a de jure celibate institution into a householder monastery. (3) Celibacy as such had ceased to be observed in the bahīs by the seventeenth century. (Recall the inscription of 1514–15 noted above which speaks of a married brahmacarya-bhikṣu.)

Even in the days when celibacy was observed in these monasteries, it had its unique features. Wright’s chronicle recounts the foundation of I Bahī (Yampi Vihāra) in an earlier era by one Sunaya Śrī Miṣra, a brahman from the plains who had become a Buddhist monk. He spent a long time in Tibet studying the dharma, and finally settled in Patan where he built a monastery for himself (Yampi Vihāra). Later two of his disciples, Govardhana Miṣra and Kāśyapa Miṣra came from the plains and each built separate vihāras. Later yet his mother and his sons came and found him in Nepal. He built for them a house near his vihāra. Then “when a grandson was born, he made his son become a bhikṣu also. His wife placed an image of Kuliśēswari to the south of the vihar. He made it a rule for his descendants, that, on the birth of a son, they were to leave their homes and live a life of celibacy.” Even in this early tradition where celibacy is enjoined, one finds that the monastery is not open to all but is a family affair for the descendants of Sunaya Śrī Miṣra, and that a man first married and later retired from a worldly life to the monastery. Presumably a similar custom was adopted for the other two monasteries he founded for his disciples.
Are the bāhīs then older institutions than the bāhās as some commentators have speculated? This is doubtful. My survey of the bāhās and bāhīs shows that we have only two confirmed dates for extant bāhīs before 1200 AD (i.e., the beginning of the Malla period). These are for Guita Bahī in Patan and Thañ Bahī in Kathmandu. On the other hand we do have several confirmed dates from the so-called Thākuri period for bāhās of the Ācārya-Gūḍhī in Kathmandu and the ‘Fifteen Bāhās’ of Patan. We also know that several of the principal bāhīs were founded in the time of Jayasthiti and Yakṣa Malla: Ubā Bahī and Ibā Bahī in Patan, Nhāykaṇ and Syāngu Bahī of Kathmandu. Another curious fact is that except for two manuscripts copied in Dugan Bahī (Ṣaḍākṣari Mahāvihāra) in Kathmandu, we have no manuscripts copied in bāhīs. Buddhist manuscripts were copied by people in bāhās, usually Vajrācaryas. However, I would hesitate to draw any conclusions from this data about the relative age of the bāhī. We know so little about the so-called Thākuri period that an argument from silence is very weak indeed; and we have no way of knowing if what data we have is in any sense a representative sample of data from that period. It may well turn out to consist of chance finds from certain groups that are in no way representative of the society as a whole. What does seem clear is that from the viewpoint of the dominant tantric Buddhists of the Kathmandu Valley, the bāhīs represented an archaic form of Buddhism. No definite conclusions can be stated, but my own hypothesis is that the two institutions perhaps existed side by side from the earliest days. Gradually, and as a result of the ascendancy of the Vajrācāryas and their form of tantric Buddhism, the celibate communities diminished, finally succumbing to the dominant tradition and becoming married ‘celibate monks’ (brahmacyara-bhikṣu), still trying to maintain something of their original traditions. If more accurate information on the Licchavi and so-called Thākuri period is ever made available, we may well find that the celibate communities were always in the minority.

It has often been said that the bāhās and bāhīs are all former monasteries. This statement is erroneous on two counts. First, in the accepted tradition of the Valley they are still monasteries, that is, abodes or shrines of an initiated saṅgha of householder bhikṣus and tantric priests, the Vajrācāryas. If the statement means to say that the bāhās and bāhīs were formerly the residences of celibate monks, it is also inaccurate. Most of the bāhīs may well have housed celibate monks at one time. The branch bāhās, which make up the bulk of the number, were clearly founded for a lineage of a householder bāhā. Though it cannot be proven yet with any degree of certainty, it is entirely possible that the main bāhās have always been what they are today: vihāras for a married saṅgha. We have no evidence that they were ever anything different, and how else explain the consistent tradition of a common descent for all members of the saṅgha and a common lineage deity? They may well have been founded by individuals who had once been celibate monks, but the individual then left his former monastery and founded a family vihāra (or a samsārik tantrik vihāra) which has been passed on by heredity from one generation of his descendants to the next.
The key seems to lie in the two words samsārik: having families and being busy with things of this world, and tantric: there are no Vajrācāryas in bahīs. The fact that in later days the members of the bahīs were indeed married is irrelevant; they were the guardians of a celibate tradition, a different tradition. The absence of Vajrācāryas does not mean that the bahīs were non-tantric. Every bahī has its tantric shrine (āgām) and the rituals they perform are basically tantric. The point is that they were independent from the bāhās whose members were by definition householders and from Vajrācāryas who were priests to such families, and whose bāhās had a much more elaborate and structured ritual adapted to a household tradition.

From the viewpoint of the bāhās this has a different meaning. Several years ago one informant gave me the following explanation of bahīs:

“In the days when all of these communities were open to any qualified candidate the bahīs were a lower class of vihāra, where the bhikṣu would receive his first training. After completing his training he would become an upasampradaya-bhikṣu and join a bāhā, where he would study further and receive further training, which would eventually entitle him to become a Vajrācārya.”

This is the view of a Śākya attached to one of the principal bāhās and expresses quite accurately the view of the dominant bāhā community who consider the tantric traditions of the Vajrācāryas to be a higher form of Buddhism. It may also reflect the reality. The bahīs may well have housed the last communities of celibate monks (true brahmacārya-bhikṣus) who had the leisure to pursue a study of the dharma. Their vihāras may well have been schools of the dharma where Buddhists from the bāhās could go to learn the basics of the dharma.

This line of reasoning, however, overlooks another explanation for the development of Newar Buddhism which is found in the later chronicles and is known to many people today. According to this tradition, Śaṅkarācārya came to Nepal, defeated the Buddhists, destroyed their manuscripts, killed many of the monks and forced the remaining monks to marry. This is the source of a general theory upheld by some foreign and many Nepali writers that an abrupt change took place when nearly all the monks and nuns suddenly married and abandoned the traditional celibate life style of the bhikṣu.

There is no contemporary evidence for a visit by Śaṅkarācārya to Nepal from either Indian or Nepalese sources. He would have come to Nepal at the height of Licchavi power, but there is no evidence from the Licchavi inscriptions of such a visit and no evidence of a religious upheaval resulting in the virtual destruction of the Buddhist tradition. Furthermore, there is no evidence of either a visit by Śaṅkarācārya, or a concerted effort to destroy Buddhism in the earliest and most reliable chronicle, the Gopālārājavanśāvālī. To expect such an event at this time does not fit what evidence we have of the history of Buddhism in Nepal. From the evidence, it is clear that the greatest flowering of Buddhism in the
Valley of Nepal occurred long after Śaṅkarācārya in the Ṭhākurī period. If one has to explain the later changes by a single event or a period of persecution of the Buddhists, one would have to look for this in the Malla period or shortly before its inception.

It is entirely possible that the story arose from the coming of a later Śaṅkarācārya who is known from a single inscription dated 262 NS (1142 AD). According to the evidence of the inscription, this man twice visited Nepal and in his second visit in particular gathered quite a following. In his religious practice and doctrine he was the antithesis of the great Śaṅkarācārya – a follower of Dvaitavāda, an expert in yoga and a tantric master who covered himself with the ashes of a Śaiva sāduḥu and rode a bull. Even this inscription though gives no evidence of a violent attack on the Buddhists. It does indicate a growing influence of tantric Śaivism at the highest levels. He is reputed to have given dikṣā to the sons of the king, Śivadeva, to have repaired the Paśupatināth temple and to have introduced tantric rituals in the worship of the līgām there.

What evidence we have from the Ṭhākurī period and the early Malla period supports the theory of a gradual change, eventually resulting in the disappearance of celibate monks. It is interesting that this myth of Śaṅkarācārya is found only in the later chronicles written in the last century after the Gorkhali conquest. In speaking with Vajrācāryas and Śākyas I have found a different strain in the oral tradition. I have been continually told that the state of Buddhism is due to the pressure exerted on the community by Hindu kings, who forced them to conform to the social model of standard Hinduism. The king always mentioned in this connection is Jayasthiti Malla. This must be linked with the general tradition that Jayasthiti Malla imposed a reorganized caste structure on Newar society. This contention is also found in the chronicles, but again only in the later chronicles. There is no mention of it in the Gopālarājavamsāvalī, the last part of which was composed during the reign of Jayasthiti Malla and is almost a day by day chronicle of events of his reign. That Jayasthiti Malla was a staunch Hindu is clear, and if he had reorganized society along Hindu lines one would expect this to be heralded in the chronicle. The only evidence we have of a king directly interfering in the running of the vihāras is the story in Wright’s chronicle (still current in the oral tradition) of Siddhi Narasimha reorganizing the monasteries of Patan. His reorganization of the vihāras seems to be an attempt to induce some order into a chaotic situation and ensure that the traditions are preserved. Objections were only raised by members of the bahīs, who complained that he was forcing on them a custom at variance with their traditions. Yet it is clear that he does this only because they are not what they claim to be: celibate monks. If they had been celibate monks without families there would have been no need to impose family priests on them. I would see the myth of Śaṅkarācārya as a reflexive attempt by the better educated and more reflective members of the Buddhist community to explain the discrepancy they perceive between the Buddhism of the Mahāyāna sūtras or the tantric texts and the way it is lived by the community at large.
In light of this one must ask the question: is Newar Buddhism corrupt? A resounding 'yes' has been given by almost every western writer on Newar Buddhism. Yet what does it mean to say that Newar Buddhism is corrupt? It can be taken in two senses. It could mean that the type of Buddhism practised in Nepal is itself corrupt, or it could mean that the present situation is a deterioration from an earlier period when a pure, pristine type of Buddhism was practised.

One has the impression that many writers find Newar Buddhism corrupt because it is tantric. This is a biased judgement, and ultimately any evaluation of Newar Buddhism must be made against the yardstick of their Mahāyāna-Tantra tradition. A common complaint is that it is mixed-up with Hinduism. Again, this often seems to be a judgement of tantric Buddhism with its multiplicity of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, protective deities and demons, plus the tantric ritual. The iconography of many such deities has been 'borrowed' from the Hindus, or better from the general treasury of Indian tradition. Thus, many forms of Avalokiteśvara (e.g., Nīlakanṭha-Lokeśvara) show heavy Saivite borrowings and the very name Lokeśvara is ambiguous to the outsider. But Avalokiteśvara is not Śiva and no Buddhist would conflate the two. The rituals performed by the Vajrācāryas and the rituals performed by the Hindu tantric priests may seem identical to the casual observer, but the meaning and purpose of the rituals is totally different.

The most common complaint concerns caste - the bhikṣus have become a caste and the saṅgha is a closed society. This is indeed contrary to the Buddhist tradition that the saṅgha is open to men and women of any caste. Yet the complaint is often made against the background of a very questionable thesis, namely that Buddhism was a revolt against caste and that caste was unknown among the Buddhists. Buddhism was a revolt against caste to the extent that it denied that 'salvation' was open only to the brahman or the high caste and that it admitted all comers into the saṅgha. However, throughout its history in India, Buddhism existed in a caste society. The monk could withdraw from that society to his vihāra, but the lay Buddhist remained very much a part of Hindu society and lived according to its traditions, making use of the brahmans to perform the usual rituals and initiate his sons into their caste. By becoming a Buddhist a man chose a different way of salvation, he did not opt out of (Hindu) society. What a study of Newar Buddhist society then presents us with is not so much a corrupt form of Buddhism, as some inkling of the way Buddhism functioned in India as a part of the Indian (Hindu) scene. It is indeed, as one writer has called it, 'the survival of Indian Buddhism'. With the disappearance of Buddhism in India, Nepal was cut off from a source of renewal, and because of the very closed and confined nature of the society of the Valley its position within a Hindu society was pushed to its logical conclusion - the monks became a caste. Yet this development which is so decried is probably the most important factor in the survival of Buddhism in the Valley. It survived because the monks became a caste, thereby insuring that their sons would of necessity be ordained bhikṣus in order to maintain their place in society. This created a permanent
Buddhist community and prevented its complete absorption by Hinduism, as happened in India. What is surprising is that so much of the tradition has survived to the present day.

The question of the deterioration of the Buddhist tradition of the Valley is somewhat vexed. It has generally been presumed that the Valley, and especially Patan, had a glorious Buddhist past characterized by large communities of celibate monks and a great number of scholars and pandits. Speaking of Patan, Snellgrove has written: "Patan must have been a kind of vast university-city, differing little in its mode of life from similar towns in medieval Europe. In fact its buildings, its traditions, its way of life, must have been modelled on the great monastic universities of central India." Again: "This city was once a place of sanctity and learning, where monks and pandits were glad to come and visit. Some came from India to teach. Others from Tibet to learn."

From Nepalese sources we have little to support such a thesis. We know that in the medieval period there were a great number of monasteries and a great number of bhikṣus and sākya-bhikṣus, especially in Patan and Kathmandu. We know that a lot of manuscripts were copied in this period. Manuscript copying is not scholarship, and the evidence from the colophons is that the manuscripts were copied, often on commission, to gain merit either for the copier or for the one who commissioned them. Internal evidence suggests that the manuscripts, like the manuscripts of early medieval Europe, were copied by monks who did not understand the language. Manuscript copying was a profession which did not presuppose a knowledge of Sanskrit or of Mahāyāna philosophy. Many of the manuscripts were tantric ritual texts and we see a growing influence of tantric ritual and the dominance of the whole Buddhist scene by the Vajraāryas. Vihāras continued to be built and repaired, often by the Hindu elite, caityas were erected, and Buddhist art flourished, especially the making of metal caste images and woodwork. The cache of palm leaf land deeds from this period suggests that the bhikṣus were very busy with buying and selling land and the management of such property. They also contain several references to Sākyas as suvarṇākara: goldsmiths. By 1440 it is clear that bhikṣus of the bāhās of Patan are married men and the saṅgha a family and caste affair.

From Tibetan sources we know of a number of learned scholars and famous siddhas who flourished in the Valley from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. Some of these were Indian, some Nepalese, but none of them are remembered today by the Nepalese. In Kathmandu the memory of four great siddhas has remained alive: Mañjuvajra, Lilāvajra, Suratavajra, and Vākvajra. To these must be added Śāntikarācārya who is revered as the first Vajraārya. All of these men were tantric siddhas, and even they are mere shadows. No one knows when they lived or what they did beyond some legendary accounts of their use of tantric power. The scholars have been totally forgotten, as though they were irrelevant to the whole tradition. Perhaps the medieval picture is much closer to what we find in the late Malla period. Scholars there were, but they were the exception to the rule; and what scholarship there was, withered once it was cut off from a
source of renewal in India. Buddhism in the Valley has always been a popular religion catering to the needs of a largely uneducated and agricultural society which has always been a caste Hindu society, though perhaps less rigidly so before Jayasthiti Malla.

Despite this, every Newar would admit that today a deterioration has set in. The story cited above of the painting of Vanaratna is a case in point. 125 years ago he was remembered, and it was so important to the people of Pintu Bahī to preserve his memory that they made a new copy of the faded painting. Within the past thirty years the paintings were both sold and Vanaratna has been forgotten. People will point to the deteriorating state of the vihāras, especially in Kathmandu where soaring cement boxes replace sections of the bāhā complex, so that all that is left of the original architecture is the shrine of the kwāpā-dya. Except at a few places, like Jana Bāhā in Kathmandu and some of the main bāhās in Patan, rituals, are performed perfunctorily with few people in attendance. Fewer people attend many of the festivals each year, and there is more and more of a carnival atmosphere. Many people call the Vajrācārya for only the most essential rituals, and even at these one often finds that the family leaves the priest to perform the rituals alone. They are present at the beginning or only when their presence is required. Vajrācāryas are poorly paid for their services. People are paying them the same stipends they were years ago before inflation, and it is impossible for a man to make a decent living functioning only as a priest. One has the impression that they are providing a service that the people still feel obliged to make use of but one which they find increasingly irksome or irrelevant. Many young Śākyas and Vajrācāryas know of their bāhā only as the place where they received their caste initiation. One Śāky of Patan, about thirty years old, says he has visited his bāhā only once: at the time of his initiation. He does not remember the name of the bāhā and can give only the most general indications of its location. There are few Vajrācāryas today who know any Sanskrit and who can explain the Dharma or even explain the rituals they perform. When questioned by their clients they respond that it is all secret and they cannot explain it to any but the initiated.

These changes are a part of the general socio-economic and political changes which began with the Gorkhali conquest, but have intensified since 1951 when Nepal was opened up to the outside world. The most important factor in these changes, which affect all sectors of Newar society and not just the vihāras or the Buddhists, is the undercutting of the economic basis of Newar cultural institutions. All Newar cultural institutions are regulated by gūthīs and financed by revenue from gūthī lands. Several factors have cut into this revenue. The most obvious is the ever increasing population of the vihāras. The members of the families who farm the land of the vihāras are also increasing. Land is not increasing. A given piece of land must now support more farmers and feed more people at gūthī feasts. Even if all the endowments had remained intact, the whole system would be under strain. But they have not. Some lands were confiscated by the Gorkhalis when they conquered the Valley, and more agricultural
The most important factor, though, has been the Land Reform, effectively implemented in the Valley. Land reform gave and guaranteed rights to the tenants who farmed the land, and it limited the amount of rent they have to pay to their landlords, whether individuals or corporate bodies such as a gūthī. Second­ly, land reform seems to have given the coup de grâce to the bond of trust which existed between the bāhā communities and the cultivators of their land, the Jyāpūs. The members of the vihāra-saṅghas were the religious leaders of the Jyāpū community – the Vajrācāryas served as their priests and the Śākyas lived in and tended the religious centres which formed an important part of their religious-cultural milieu. They were also the only educated members of the community. To the Jyāpūs they were all gurujū. Whereas most landlords of the Valley are present on the day of the harvesting of the rice, either personally or through their agents, and make sure that every grain of rice is measured and that they get their share, this was not the custom of the vihāra-saṅghas. The Jyāpūs harvested the rice and, without fail, they brought the customary share, or a payment in cash to the vihāra. The members of the saṅgha seldom, if ever, visited the site of their lands; they knew they were safe in the care of the Jyāpūs and that they would get their due share. This arrangement was under strain because of the increasing press on the land. Land reform bestowed on the farming community an increased sense of security and independence. In many cases they simply stopped bringing the share to the vihāra, and the members of the vihāra, suffered in silence. Furthermore, many of the Jyāpūs have taken further advantage of land reform and the confused state of ancient records to lay claim to the land as owners and not simply as tenants. They simply got their names registered in the field book of the cadastral survey. It takes documentary proof and a court case to dispossess the man whose name is listed on that field survey. Again, members of the vihāra-saṅghas have deplored this, but done nothing. Much of this shows also a loss of a feeling of solidarity among the bare. In fact, it is not only the Jyāpūs who have taken advantage of the changed circumstances. I have been given many concrete examples of members of the saṅgha getting gūthī land registered in their own names and then selling it off. In a very few cases the saṅgha has taken the initiative, sold off their gūthī land and put the money obtained into a trust or simply a long-term deposit in the bank. In this way their endowment has changed from fields to a deposit in the bank. The annual income continues to fund the feasts and other activities of the gūthī. However, this fixed annual income buys less and less each year, unlike the old income which was a fixed quantity of produce or a fixed percentage of the harvest.

Along with this undercutting of the economic basis is a growing change in the life style of the bare, especially in Kathmandu. Many of the bare are in businesses which have prospered, or in government service. When a family has the means they usually sell off their cramped quarters in the vihāra and build a
house on the outskirts of the city. Others find that there is simply not room enough in the vihāra for their growing family, and either buy or rent quarters wherever available in the city. This migration is breaking up the old communities. Whereas in former times all members of the saṅgha lived in the vihāra and thus shared in the daily round of ritual, the monthly and yearly observances and the local festivals, they now return to their vihāra only for the annual festival or the worship of the lineage deity. In some cases they return only for the all-important initiation of their sons. The round of ritual and the stories told during the rituals served as the catechesis of the young—the vehicle by which the traditions of the community, its values and obligations were passed on to the young. This has been lost. Even for the young who still live in the vihāra there are more alluring attractions than watching rituals—Hindi films, videos, or a stroll with their friends down New Road. This pattern is most obvious in Kathmandu, but in ten years’ time the situation in Patan will be identical.

It is also the Śākyas and Vajrācāryas, and more so the wealthy trading class among the Buddhists of Kathmandu, who have taken the greatest advantage of the availability of modern education. This has had two effects. Vajrācāryas who have the education go into the professions or into government service, with the result that the young Vajrācāryas who are left to carry on the tradition are the least educated members of the community. The better educated Buddhists who want to preserve their Buddhist traditions then have no one within their own tradition to turn to for an exposition of Buddhism commensurate with their own education.

Many sincere Buddhists within the community are acutely aware of the crisis this has provoked. Groups have been formed and efforts are being made to spread the Dharma through books, seminars, singing groups, etc., but one wonders if a renewal of traditional Mahāyāna Buddhism is possible without an educated and celibate saṅgha. A true revival, however, is taking place, but it is a Theravāda revival: another matter.

Notes
1 Not all scholars agree in identifying the Licchavis of Nepal with those of Vaiśālī known from Indian History and the Buddhist records. The name is unusual, and all we really have is a common name. What is clear is that the Licchavis of Nepal came from the plains as they were very clearly caste Hindus with a highly developed Sanskrit culture.
3 The etymology of this word is clear from the Malla period inscriptions where the Sanskrit term and the derivatives vāhāra/bāhāra/bāhāl are interchanged, often within the same inscription. See Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, Kathmandu: forthcoming, 479, n. 1.
4 This custom of protective deities goes back to ancient times. I-Tsing, who travelled through India in the latter part of the seventh century, reports that it was common to find an image of Mahākāla near the door or in the kitchen of the great Indian vihāras.
He identifies him as belonging to the beings of the Great God (Mahesvara = Śiva) and placed there to protect the vihāra. I-Tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, Delhi 1966, 38.

5 All of these wood carvings have been photographed and described in Kerel Rujik van Kooij, “The Iconography of the Buddhist Wood Carvings in a Newar Monastery in Kathmandu (Chusya-Bähā)”, *JNRC* 1, 39–82.

6 The earlier Newari form is found in a number of documents. For the Sanskrit term see Sankarman Rājavamsi, “Sthitimalako pālako Vi. Sam. 1545ko Mānandra Śakyako Tāmrapraṛa ra Tyasko Aitihāsik Vyākhya”, *Pūrnīmā* 4, 54–55.

Some have interpreted kwāpā as a shortened form of kwātha. (See for example Siegfried Lienhard, “Nepal: the Survival of Indian Buddhism in a Himalayan Kingdom”, in Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich, *The World of Buddhism*, London 1984, 112). Kwātha is a Newari term for a fort and it is true that some of the vihāras were referred to as forts, especially bahīs on the edge of the city and two bāhās now called Kwa Baha. However, most of the vihāras were not forts and were not referred to as forts. I have heard this etymology only from people at Kwa (= Kwātha) Bähā in Patan. Informants at other vihāras have consistently denied this etymology; and, more important, the term kwāthapāla (deva) does not occur in any document.


8 This figure appears on a number of early monuments such as the seventh century caitya at Dhwākā Bähā in Kathmandu, where Pal tentatively identifies it as Maitreya. The caitya has four figures: Śākyamuni Buddha, two Bodhisattvas and this figure. Though Maitreya is usually portrayed as a Bodhisattva, he is also portrayed as a Buddha, and there seems to be no reason to have two images of Śākyamuni on the same monument. Furthermore, on some similar monuments the fourth figure is another form of Maitreya which is unmistakable. Pratapaditya Pal, *The Arts of Nepal*, Part I, Leiden 1974, 28.

9 For a complete description of this manḍala, see *Nipañayogāvālī*, 60–68, and for the Sanskrit text 54–65.

10 See Śādhanamālā, No. 61. This tantric deity assumed a very prominent place in the devotion of the Newar Buddhists in the Late Malla period. No one has been able to explain the sudden popularity of this deity, which is not found in earlier iconography.

11 Śādhanamālā, No. 62, 63. This deity belongs to the lineage of Amitābha, while Dharmanandavāgīśvara belongs to the lineage of Vajrasattva, but informants have consistently equated the two to me.

12 See Marie Therese de Mallman, *Introduction à L’Iconographie du Tantrisme Bouddhique*, Paris 1975, 206; and B. Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, Calcutta 1968, 206. There is also a Nāmasaṅgīti Mañjuśrī which is found in the Śādhanamālā, No. 82, but this is quite a different deity – a form of Mañjuśrī with three faces and four arms. The Nepalese Nāmasaṅgīti is identified as a form of the Buddha himself.

13 This is the well-known Ha (or Hakhā) Bähā of Patan.

14 Bare, and more especially its Nepali corruption bāndā, is considered to be a derogatory term and hence is seldom used today by the bare themselves. I continue to use it here because there is no other inclusive term which applies to both Śākyas and Vajrācāryas; and in speaking of the vihāra-saṅgha it is important to emphasize that they form one group with equal rights and duties.

15 See Sukamar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, London 1962, 136 and passim for descriptions of the pūjā performed in Indian monasteries; also I-Tsing, *op. cit.*, 147–50.
16 See John Locke, *Karunāmaya*, Kathmandu 1980, 175–181, for a description of the more complete rituals still performed at Jana Bāhā in Kathmandu. Hemrāj Śākya gives the following schedule of rituals formerly followed at Bhinchu Bāhā in Patan:

1 Early in the morning, about 4:30, the dya-pālā should rise and open the outer door of the shrine of the kwāpā-dya.
2 The dya-pālā goes for a ritual bathing (paṇca-snāna).
3 He sweeps the floor of the shrine.
4 He washes all of the pūjā vessels.
5 He prepares the materials for the paṇḍopacāra-pūjā (flowers, incense, a light, scent and food). While he is doing this a group of devotees gather to recite the Nāmasaṅgīti and other Mahāyāna sūtras.
6 In order to arouse the mind of enlightenment in himself the dya-pālā recites a hymn (gāthā) known as the Akāśa-dhātu.
7 He recites verses from the Mahāyāna sūtras.
8 As the group in front of the shrine recite the Nāmasaṅgīti, begging bowls are offered to the Buddha.
9 The dya-pālā opens the inner door of the shrine and laying aside his street clothes, he dons the saffron robe of a monk.
10 He takes the large metal plate used for the offerings to the Buddha and meditates on its meaning as he recites an appropriate verse.
11 He performs a nāga-pūjā to the water vessel used for the rituals.
12 Before going into the inner sanctum of the shrine, he places the ceremonial metal mirror on the ground in front of the shrine and draws the letter ‘Om’.
13 Ringing a bell and offering grains of rice three times he performs the ritual known as the purification of the body (kāya-śodhana).
14 Pouring a stream of water over the metal mirror he recites a hymn (gāthā) called Yan-mangalam-sakalasattva-hrdi-sthitasya. (This is the daily, ritual bathing of the image of Buddha.)
15 Taking the mirror in his hand, he recites the gāthā Prativimva-samadharma as he goes round the deity three times.
16 He sprinkles the worshippers who have gathered with the bathing water as he recites the gāthā Abhiṣeka-mahāvajra.
17 Pouring out the remaining water he traces a maṇḍala known as the dhara-maṇḍala.
18 Just before dawn he touches this dhara-maṇḍala which he had traced earlier and draws on it a crossed vajra.
19 On this spot he places the ‘shoes’ of the kwāpā-dya.
20 He takes the wooden gong outside and striking it 108 times he recites the Aparamitā-dhāraṇī.
21 He offers a libation to the seven Tathāgatas (Vipaśin, Sikhin, Viśvabhū, Krakuchanda, Kanakamuni, Kāśyapa, Sākyamuni).
22 He offers the paṇḍopacāra-pūjā with a meditation. (This is the main part of the morning worship, the nitya-pūjā.)
23 While this is going on, the group that gathered to recite the Nāmasaṅgīti recites a number of gāthās, a hymn to Vairocana and another hymn.
24 Recitation of the Saptavidhānuttara-pūjāstotra.
25 Recitation of the two dhāranis, one in honour of Śākyamuni and the other in honour of Aparamitā.
26 Recitation of the Daśapāramitā-stotra and the Budhhatrailekvanātha-stotra.
27 Recitation of the Bodhipārīnāmana-gāthā and the Anuttarabodhi-jiñānapada. (This concludes the early morning rituals.)
28 In the middle of the morning, between eight and nine AM the dya-pālā places a
sort of throne or seat on the mandala just outside the main entrance to the shrine and having placed a caitya on this he offers a libation to it.

29 Next he takes the key to the main door of the shrine and ringing a bell he makes a circuit of all the shrines and caityas in the complex.

30 When he comes back he sounds the wooden gong 108 times as before.

31 Again he offers the pañcopacārā-pūjā.

32 Waving the yak-tail fan he recites the Daśapāramitā-stotra.

33 Singing the praises of the Buddha, he closes the door of the shrine. (After this he goes to take his rice meal.)

34 Between two and three in the afternoon he again opens the shrine and sounds the wooden gong 108 times.

35 He recites the Daśapāramitā-stotra waving the yak-tail fan.

36 In the evening between five and six he again sounds the wooden gong 108 times and makes a circuit of the shrines in the compound as before.

37 Again he offers the pañcopacārā-pūjā to the Buddha.

38 About seven in the evening a group of devotees again gather to recite various hymns.

39 At the conclusion of the hymns they recite the Daśapāramitā and the Buddha-trailokyānātha-stotras after which the dya-pālā recites the Dipādāna-stotra, lights a lamp and offers āraṭī to the Buddha. Then the devotees offer āraṭī, after which they are given a saffron fīkā and flowers. This concludes the āraṭī ceremony and the daily schedule of rituals.


18 Ibid., 9.

19 Ibid., 10.

20 Ibid., 13.

21 This description is based on a bare-chuyegu ceremony I witnessed in Jana Bāhā in 1974; some details of the ceremony are slightly different in Patan, but it is essentially the same ritual.


24 According to tradition, the bāhās of Patan were reorganized by Siddhi Narasimha, the king of Patan, in the seventeenth century. When he made the new rules there were fifteen main bāhās in Patan. Later he amalgamated the two village institutions of Kirtipur and Cobhār to those of Patan, and later still a new one was founded, bringing the total to eighteen, but they continued to be called ‘The Fifteen Bāhās’. See the section below on the main bāhās.

25 At Kwa Bāhā in Patan, six of the branches are semi-independent, performing their own initiations. They may well have been separate institutions that were amalgamated to Kwa Bāhā. This is the only case of such semi-independent branches. In a recent article David Gellner has referred to these as independent branches and the other branches as Lineage Monasteries, a very accurate term. David Gellner, “The Newar Buddhist Monastery – An Anthropological and Historical Typology”, 7, 39–9.

26 See Gellner, op. cit., 19–25 for certain other differences he found in Patan, not all of them valid for Kathmandu.

27 See for example, Christoph von Führer-Haimendorf, “Elements of Newar Social Structure”, JRAI, No. 86, Part 2, 18–19, and Rosser, op. cit.
28 See Rosser, *op. cit.*
30 Such power is still the key to understanding the villager’s respect for the Vajrācārya. A few years ago Iswar Anand Śresthācārya, a Newari linguist, was collecting data on the vocabulary peculiar to a village festival. He was speaking with the eldest man of an entirely Jyāpu village and asked the man why they called the Vajrācārya and what he did. The man remarked that it was the custom. The interviewer kept returning to this question seeking a fuller answer. In exasperation the old man finally said, “Look, I am a simple villager. What do I know about such things. The Vajrācārya comes, he does his pūja and recites his mantra and the pot of beer needed for the festival begins to shake. Then the festival can start. It can’t start until the pot shakes.”
31 The *jhānkrī* is the spirit healer of Nepal, a man possessed by the spirit of a deity who can cure diseases and overcome the malevolent influences of evil spirits or witches.
32 Cārumati Vihāra is not the official Sanskrit name of this *vihāra*, and Slusser concludes that the Newari name has given rise to both this popular Sanskrit name and the daughter of Asoka. Mary Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, Princeton 1982, 276–7.
33 See Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, *Licchavikālkā Abhilekh*, Kathmandu, 2030 VS and Dilli Raman Regmi, *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal*, New Delhi 1983, for the corpus of these inscriptions. For a survey of what is known of Buddhism from these inscriptions see also, Theodore Riccardi, “Buddhism in Ancient and Early Medieval Nepal”, in A.K. Narain, (ed.), *Studies in the History of Buddhism*, Delhi 1980, 265–81. Strangely, there are no pre-Licchavi Buddhist remains. There are a number of Hindu pieces from as early as the second century BC, but it is only from the fifth century onward that one finds Buddhist pieces. See Lain S. Bangdel, *The Early Sculptures of Nepal*, New Delhi 1982, 7.
42 At the present time there is a *bahi* at Swayambhū which is a fourteenth century foundation. There is also a community of Vajrācāryas (called *Buddhacārya*) who are initiated at the Mahācāitya. They may be the successors of the ancient *bahi* community, but they have no *vihāra* at the present time.
43 The term ‘Thākuri period’ is most unsatisfactory as it purports to be a dynastic title; but there is no certainty that the earliest of these kings were indeed a new dynasty at all, and they were certainly not all of one dynasty. The Malla kings in turn may well be of the same dynasty as the last of the Thākuri kings. Slusser (*Nepal Mandala*) has used the term ‘transitional period’ and this has been followed by Luciano Petech in the new edition of his *Mediaeval History of Nepal*. However, a ‘transitional period’ of over three hundred years sounds strange indeed and seems to suppose a transition from one clear-cut situation to another. Furthermore, the new term has not been accepted by any Nepali historian.
44 Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, Appendix II and III. It is important to emphasize that these records simply mention these monasteries in passing. They do not indicate the date of foundation, but state the fact of their existence at the date mentioned. They may well be much older. There were also probably many more monasteries in existence which are not mentioned in these random finds.
45 Hemraj Šākya, Śivadeva Sāmskārita Śrī Rudravarṇa Mahāvihāra Śhitā Talpatra-Abhilekh, Patan, 2524 n.s. A critical edition of nearly all of these documents prepared by Prof. Bernhard Koller and Hemraj Šākya is currently in the press.

46 Alka Chattopadhyaya, Aīśa and Tibet, Delhi 1981, 322; George N. Roerich, (tr.), The Blue Annals, Delhi 1979, 247. See also Luciano Petech, Mediaeval History of Nepal, Rome 1984, 41–43 for a correction of the earlier translations of the relevant passages.


48 In his translation of the Blue Annals, Roerich consistently claims that Vāgīśvarakīrti and Phamtimpa are the same man. Nowhere does he give any evidence for the identification. It is clear that Vāgīśvarakīrti was an Indian and equally clear that Phamtimpa’s brothers were Nepalese.


50 Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, Appendix I and II.

51 Hemraj Šākya, Śrīsvayambhū-Mahācaitya, Kathmandu 1098 NS, 124.


54 Ibid. 3: 104.

55 Locke, Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal, 481, n.4.

56 Slusser, Nepal Manḍala 1, 288–9.


58 Gellner, op. cit., 25.

59 Gellner, ibid., p. 30 from his retranslation from the original manuscript of the relevant passage from Wright’s chronicle. This passage has been entirely omitted by Wright’s translators.

60 Gellner, ibid., 32.

61 Wright, History of Nepal, 116.

62 What is important is that these monasteries were de jure celibate institutions. This sort of reasoning is not so unusual. Nepali brahmans today will explain their superior status by the fact that they are forbidden to drink alcohol. When one points out that today many brahmans (perhaps even the informant) do, the informant will respond that this is irrelevant. What is important is that as a caste they are non-drinkers; and so they were defined in Nepalese law. The old code of law (Mūlukī Ain), in force until twenty five years ago, divided the clean castes into two broad categories: those who wear the sacred thread (tagadhāri) and those who drink alcohol (matvaḷi).

63 See for example Wright, History of Nepal, 118–20.


66 Leinhard, see references.


68 Ibid., 95.

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THE UNIQUE FEATURES OF NEWAR BUDDHISM

--- Śivadeva Samskārita Śrī Rudravarṇa Mahāvihāra Sthīta Tālpatra-Abhilekh Buddha Jayanti Samiti, Patan 2524 BS.
--- Śrīsvayambhū Mahācaitya, Svayambhū Vikāś Maṇḍala, Kathmandu, 1098 NS.


--- "Shrines and Temples of Nepal", AA 1, No. 1:3–10 No. 2:93–120.


--- (ed. and tr.) Licchavikālkā Abhilekh, Historical Series No. 6, Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, Kathmandu 2030 vs


--- and Vijaya Ratna Vajrācārya, Nepā Deyā Vihārayā Tācā, (Key to Viharas in Nepal), Authors, Kathmandu 1983.


Chen-yen (mi-chiao, "esoteric Buddhism") Buddhism was among the most important Buddhist traditions in the history of Chinese religion, yet many historians of religions, sinologists, and Buddhologists have never heard of it.

That Chen-yen has been invisible is itself an indication of traditional and modern biases. By becoming aware of these biases we can better discern the outlines of Chen-yen both as true Vajrayāna and as truly Chinese, and we can recognize Chen-yen as a political and religious movement which had a far more profound impact than is commonly acknowledged. Indeed, in viewing Chen-yen we can see one of the most comprehensive and unique developments of the Vajrayāna, one which changed the face of Chinese religion and which continues to the present day. I hope in this study to begin the process of the reclamation of the Chen-yen tradition as a distinctively Chinese form of Vajrayāna.

To begin reclaiming the outlines of this "lost" tradition, I first examine some of the biases which have rendered Chen-yen invisible. I then briefly discuss some key issues of Vajrayāna cosmology and practice, particularly the important notion of siddhi—the goal of ritual. In doing so I furnish some of the necessary materials for historians of religions to place Chen-yen in the context of Chinese religions, in the context of the Vajrayāna, and in the wider context of the history of religions. Finally, I discuss two of the most prominent facets of the Vajrayāna in China: rites for the salvation of hungry ghosts, and the unusual ninefold Vajradhātu manḍala. Both serve to illustrate common misperceptions about Chen-yen and to establish the true nature and persistence of the tradition.

**The myth of the nonexistent tradition**

Chen-yen's importance has been obscured because it has been viewed from a series of sectarian perspectives, perspectives which have been generated by the
orthodoxies of Shingon Buddhism, neo-Confucianism, and Western sinology and Buddhology.

Like the parent of many a famous child, Chen-yen has been obscured by its offspring, Japanese Shingon. Shingon Buddhism was founded by Kūkai, who elaborated the teachings of his Chinese master Hui-kuo. Hui-kuo had been a disciple of Amoghavajra (Puk'ung), who with his master Vajrabodhi (Chin-kang-chih) had come to the eighth-century Chinese court as a Vajrayāna missionary. They had been preceded by a few years by Subhākarasimha (Shan-wu-wei), and the three ācāryas ("teachers") are regarded in the Shingon tradition as "patriarchs" of the school. The Shingon tradition regards Hui-kuo as the last important master in a school which, from its perspective, died out just after the transmission
to Kūkai. Kūkai, the architect of Shingon, recounts his meeting with Hui-kuo: "I called on the abbot in the company of five or six monks from the Hsiming Temple. As soon as he saw me he smiled with pleasure and joyfully said, 'I knew that you would come! I have waited for such a long time. What pleasure it gives me to look upon you today at last! My life is drawing to an end, and until you came there was no one to whom I could transmit the teachings.'" Based on this account, on the conflicting needs of establishing a legitimate line of transmission from India through China to Japan, and on the underscoring of the purity and uniqueness of Japanese Shingon, the Shingon tradition and scholars influenced by it have consigned Chen-yen to a fleeting moment in Chinese history. According to this perspective "true" Chen-yen existed as a moment of "pureness" between "miscellaneous" unsystematized tantra (tsa-mi) which existed before the ācāryas and later teachings which were influenced by Chinese and Indian folk tradition and by "degraded" forms of Hindu tantrism. The obvious point of reference is the Shingon system of Japan. Works and rites produced before the ācāryas who had direct lineal contact with Kūkai are regarded as "unsystematic," "miscellaneous," and fragmentary. Works and rites developed in China or India after Kūkai returned to Japan are either unrecognized or "impure."

Modern scholars have found it hard to examine the Chinese Vajrayāna critically. For example, one specialist in Indian Vajrayāna recently recounted the story of the transmission of Vajrayāna from China to Japan thus:

Kūkai ... reached Ch’ang-an the capital towards the end of the year [804] and in the sixth month of the following year he visited master Hui-kuo at Ch’ing-lung Temple. Hui-kuo had inherited the branch of Tantric Buddhism represented by the Tatvasamgraha-tantra from Amoghavajra, of whom he was the successor, and the branch represented by the Vairocanābhisambodhisūtra from Hsiian-ch’ao, a disciple of Šubhākarasimha. Therefore he was the first person in the history of Tantric Buddhism to have received initiations into both branches. He welcomed Kūkai’s arrival as if he had been expecting it, and initiated Kūkai into the two branches of Tantric Buddhism, transmitting to him the whole body of his teachings. As a result, Kūkai became his one and only successor to the integral form of Tantric Buddhism consisting of the two branches of the Tatvasamgraha-tantra and Vairocanābhisambodhi sūtra, for until then none of Hui-kuo’s disciples had been initiated into both branches. Then, as if he had been living solely in order to transmit his teachings to Kūkai, Hui-kuo died in the twelfth month of the same year.

This account is part of the piously embellished mythic corpus of the founding of the Shingon school, yet to this day it is repeated without caveat or circumspection by fine scholars. The Chen-yen tradition is thus compressed into the life of a single individual, that of Hui-kuo. This is particularly ironic since, by
implication, Chen-yen is recognized as a Chinese creation, a recognition which is studiously ignored in most scholarship to this day. The convenient solution to this problem is the implied demise both of Hui-kuo and, not long after him, of the tradition in China.

On careful examination, one finds that the account is historically inaccurate and dubious in several ways. First, Hui-kuo was neither the only successor to Amoghavajra nor the first to receive initiation into the techniques of both texts. Indeed, it is now known that Subhākarasimha, Vajrabodhi, and Amoghavajra were promulgating the teachings both of the Mahāvairocana Sūtra (MVS) and of the Sarvatathāgatatattvasamgraha (STTS).5 Second, Amoghavajra’s last will lists six fully initiated disciples, Hui-kuo among them. But it was Hui-lang who succeeded Amoghavajra as patriarch of the school, and he was recognized as such by the emperor.6 Third, Kūkai’s own account of his departure from Hui-kuo tells us of I-ming, the disciple who would carry on the teachings in China.7 Fourth, while Kūkai was a brilliant young man, it is doubtful that he fully mastered the complex Vajrayāna teachings in six months. He certainly received the initiations, but these are not tantamount to mastery. Kūkai had studied the Vajrayāna to some extent before his trip to China. He received the initiations, collected texts, and on his return he synthesized his own style of Japanese Vajrayāna over a period of the next twenty years.8

Until quite recently what little work had been done on Chen-yen had been influenced by Shingon tradition, which led to a passive acceptance of the Shingon account, an account which elevates the uniqueness of Kūkai and focuses on him a special transmission, pure of taint and existing only long enough on Chinese soil for the fortuitous transmission to Japan.9 By this account, Chen-yen could not exist before Hui-kuo or after him. This view is fundamental to some of the best scholarship on Chen-yen.10 Chen-yen has thus been portrayed as an appendage to the orthodox foundation of Shingon lineages. This orthodox vision hinders us from seeing the important, influential, and unique Vajrayāna tradition which existed in China before the time of Kūkai, continued to develop after his departure, and which, to some extent, still exists today.

This narrow Shingon-centered view has recently been challenged by a growing recognition of Shingon as a form of Vajrayāna Buddhism and by overt exploration by Japanese and Western scholars of the similarities between the Indo-Tibetan Vajrayāna traditions and those of China and Japan.11 The Indian link which was necessary for Shingon legitimacy, yet defiling in light of the sexual imagery of the Indo-Tibetan Anuttarayoga tantras, has at last been fully acknowledged.12 While this is encouraging, some of these studies now insist on understanding Shingon in the light of the fourfold classification of tantras employed in later Indo-Tibetan systems, in effect anachronistically replacing Shingon’s set of orthodox prescriptions with those of the Tibetans.13 Further, as I discuss below, most current interpretations of the Vajrayāna with their lopsided understanding of the path to enlightenment do little to help us understand its forms and importance in China.
But what is stunning is that there is little systematic exploration of the Chinese context and its effect on the development of East Asian Vajrayāna. With the exception of some of the researches of Osabe Kasuo, and some of the French school—R. A. Stein, M. Strickmann, A. Seidel, and their students—Chinese Vajrayāna has remained unknown and uncharted. Further, the exceptions which I have just cited have been piecemeal in character, densely philological, and lamentably slow in their dissemination and impact. Particularly important are the research and seminar reports of R. A. Stein. Hidden in hard to find *Annuaire*, these researches have yet to influence wider audiences. Indeed, the only books on East Asian Vajrayāna available in English totally ignore this scholarship and recite the orthodox Shingon version of the development of the tradition in China. As I argue below, the Chinese context had as much impact on the shape of the Vajrayāna in China, Japan, and Korea as did its Indian roots.

But before I discuss these issues further, I must briefly touch on other causes for Chen-yen’s invisibility. From the perspective of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy as promoted from the Sung dynasty onward, Chen-yen in particular and Buddhism and Taoism generally were anathema. The reign of the emperor Tai-tsung (762–79), during which the *ācārya* Amoghavajra was most powerful, is regarded as the epitome of the degrading influence of Buddhism on imperial institutions. In the orthodox Confucian view this is the worst moment in the dynasty that was most guilty of Buddhist and Taoist fraternization.

Modern sinologists have picked up, largely unconsciously, these twin blinders of Shingon and Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, and these biases dovetail with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western views of China, in which Confucianism represented enlightened ethical rationalism and Buddhism and Taoism represented the magical and superstitious religion of the masses. Buddhism during the T’ang (618–907), especially before the An Lu-shan rebellion of 755 and the persecution of 845, is seen as the “apogee” of the religion in China. Thereafter there are—to quote one sinologist—“memories of a great tradition” and “decline.” Although the economic and social dimensions of Buddhism increased after the T’ang, “no outstanding Buddhist cleric such as Hsüan-tsang, Fa-tsang, or Chih-i emerged; no new school of Buddhist thought developed; no important Buddhist *sūtra* was translated.” Chen-yen in particular “declined.”

This sort of evaluation follows naturally from the premises of Western sinology and Confucian orthodoxy with their focus on great men and schools of philosophical discourse rather than on popular movements and ritual. Moreover, it is an evaluation reinforced by traditional Buddhist reckonings of what constitutes authoritative and “orthodox” tradition. Indeed, Stanley Weinstein notes that

The most significant feature of the Buddhism of the post-An Lu-shan era was its “popular” character. Inasmuch as Buddhism had a mass following in China before the rebellion, it obviously contained ele-
ments that had a broad appeal to the Chinese people. But this popular side tended to be despised or at best ignored by those eminent monks who enjoyed the patronage of the imperial family and the aristocracy. It is no coincidence that as military men and local officials assumed the role of sponsors of leading monks in the capital, the “popular" elements in Buddhism—particularly as represented by the Ch’ an and Pure Land traditions—came to be increasingly stressed. 21

The Chen-yen tradition should be added to this list along with Ch’an and Pure Land. It was supported by the military, by the T’ang imperial family with its rough military roots in the northwest, and by provincial officials. 22 This support continued in the widespread use of Chen-yen rites at small hereditary temples especially for the laity. 23 Chen-yen rites and techniques permeated other Buddhist schools, Taoism, and folk tradition.

But during the Sung dynasty, Chen-yen lineages faded into obscurity. Occasional notices by Japanese pilgrims shed small areas of illumination on the lineages that existed, but by then Chen-yen had become a conglomeration of ritual techniques handed down in the context of other lineages. 24 Given taxonomic categories based on great men, on schools, and on lineages, the standard evaluation of Chen-yen is perfectly understandable. Chen-yen’s formal lineage vanished, and therefore it ceased to exist as a “school" in the eyes of Asian and Western high culture. 25 The Shingon claim thus appears quite reasonable.

Another significant factor in the disappearance of Chen-yen is a pervasive bias in high culture against religion practiced for “worldly" ends. Modern sinological evaluations merely echo the proper Confucian and even Buddhist bias against religion practiced for worldly gain. Thus, Tsan-ning, the compiler of the Sung kao-tseng chüan, notes: “According to the scheme of the Mañḍala of the Five Divisions, young boys or virgins must be used as the media to summon spirits. It was once extremely easy to cure illness or exorcise evils. People in modern times, however, use this method to profit their body or mouth, therefore little result is obtained. Generally, these methods are held in contempt by the world. Alas, the deterioration of the Good Law has gone so far as this!" 26

This last view is not merely the bias of the Buddhist establishment. It is also a bias of some contemporary interpreters of the Vajrayāna. It has become a commonplace in textbook treatments of Indian religion that the rise of the Vajrayāna signaled the decline of Buddhism in India, a decline that was triggered by Buddhism’s loss of pristine purity. 27 I think it is no accident that some sinologists have applied the same reasoning to their own turf.

Evaluations of Chen-yen as materialistic fundamentally misunderstand the nature of the Vajrayāna in China and its role in the development of Buddhism from the mid-T’ang onward. Many scholars of Buddhism regard the pursuit of enlightenment as somehow necessarily detached from the various “applications" of Vajrayāna ritual to everyday life. Both pursuits are termed siddhi, but these mundane “applications" are clearly denigrated as being secondary to the pursuit
of enlightenment. Such an interpretation does violence to the basic principles of the Vajrayāna and betrays a modern, Western bias against anything in religion that seems remotely magical, too worldly, or political. We might term this a transcendentalist or essentialist bias, and it often manifests in interpretations of objectionable or worldly elements in the Vajrayāna as purely symbolic. David Snellgrove is among the few who have questioned this notion. In his *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* Snellgrove has argued: "When modern apologists use the term 'symbolic' as though to suggest that the external practices were never taken in any literal sense, they mislead us. Central to tantric practice is the refusal to distinguish between the everyday world (samsāra) and the experience of nirvana."  

In fact, Snellgrove defines the Vajrayāna as essentially concerned both with enlightenment and with practical ends: "All tantras of all classes promise both supramundane success (the gaining of Buddhahood sooner or later) and mundane successes, such as gaining prosperity, offspring, a particular woman, good harvests or rainfall, overcoming adverse influences such as various kinds of disease-causing evil spirits, curing the effects of poison, etc. It is sometimes suggested that while the tantras, later classified as inferior, cater for the more mundane requirements, the superior ones are concerned with more truly religious objectives. In fact all tantras are interested in precisely the same objectives, whether supramundane or mundane."  

It is this last point that I wish to develop here, for if we set aside the notions that Chen-yen disappeared or degenerated and consider instead the nature of Vajrayāna practice and the rites prominent in the Chinese context, we gain a very different, and challenging, view of Chen-yen Buddhism.

**Chen-yen: Vajrayāna as applied realization**

In 771 Amoghavajra wrote a memorial to the emperor Tai-tsung requesting that the texts he had labored to translate over a thirty-year period be entered into the official imperial catalog. In this memorial Amoghavajra says: "Among the teachings I have translated, the Yoga of the Tip of the Vajra is the path for quickly becoming a Buddha. ... As for the remaining sections of the Chen-yen teachings ... these I present to help the state avoid disasters, to keep the stars on their regular courses, and to insure that the wind and rain are timely."

Throughout Amoghavajra's writings and in the writings of his spiritual grandson Kūkai, there is reiterated the assertion that the Vajrayāna (Chen-yen, Shingon) is the best method for the pursuit both of enlightenment and of various forms of "worldly" attainments. The notion of the intimate relationship between supramundane and mundane siddhi ("attainment") and between inner and outer homa ("immolation") is found in the root texts of the tradition and is the basis for apotropeic ritual. This pursuit of a "dual goal" is implicit in Vajrayāna cosmology, and it is the key for "seeing" Chen-yen in China.

The Chen-yen tradition, particularly that founded by Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra, and their successors, is based upon two tantric ritual texts, the *Mahāvairo-
cana Sūtra and the Sarvatathāgatatatvamātraḥ. These texts originally had nothing to do with one another, other than the fact that both are major tantric Buddhist ritual texts whose central divinity is Mahāvairocana. In the Chen-yen system developed in the eighth-century Chinese court, the central structures of these two texts provided the blueprint for the ritual realization of siddhi and for the elaboration of a variety of apotropeic rites.

Although the texts came to be viewed as a pair, each text was originally meant to stand on its own, and each provides a comprehensive ritual vision, a cosmos to be realized in the sādhanā (ritual evocation). As is the case with many Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna texts, the Mahāvairocana Sūtra and the Sarvatathāgatatatvamātraḥ were intended to substitute for the entire Tripitaka and to be a summary and synthesis of Buddhist traditions.

Each of these texts contains two types of cosmology. One is a cosmology of progress and process, exemplified by the bodhisattva path through the imagery of seeds and fruit and of families (kula), and the language of substance and time. The other is a cosmology of paradox, best known through the formulation of the “Two Truths” or the identity and nonidentity of samsāra and nirvana. It is a cosmology of vision and light, a cosmology emphasizing structure and instantaneousness. These two cosmologies provide much of the dynamic tension and creativity of Buddhism, as well as its adaptability. In the case of the Vajrayāna, the world of process stands in the same relationship to the world of paradox as samsāra stands to nirvana in the Two Truths. The quick path uses the imagery of the bodhisattva path, of seed and family, yet it collapses that imagery in the immanent ritual instant. Not surprisingly, an examination of Vajrayāna ritual based on these texts usually reveals marked recursiveness—the adept is first saved, then initiates others, who then save and ritually initiate yet others—in a process that wraps around on itself in a “strange loop.” Thus, the savior becomes the object of salvation in the process of ritual. The adept and those he seeks to exorcise/initiate become ritual clones of one another. All are suffering, all are saviors, in a ritual world where samsāra and nirvana collapse. This dual structure marks the Vajrayāna and most of its texts in China.

All Buddhist tantras are concerned with the construction of a ritual reality, a universe which emerges in the sādhanā experience. This is the heart of tantric practice. The purpose of the sādhanā is the attainment of siddhi (ch’eng-chiu, transliterated as hsi-ti), the term literally meaning the attainment of a goal. The basis of siddhi is usually defined as the realization of the practitioner’s identity with his “basic divinity.” When siddhi is considered from the perspective of ultimate enlightenment, anuttarasamyaksambodhi, then one refers to it simply as siddhi or more specifically as lokottara siddhi (ch’u-shih ch’eng-chiu, or ch’eng-chiu hsi-ti). When this attainment is considered from the perspective of the ritual manipulation of the conditioned universe it may be referred to as mundane siddhi (laukika siddhi, shih-chien ch’eng-chiu). Although siddhi is thus of “two types,” an examination of ritual texts reveals that each attainment implies and requires the other.
The basic structure of the realization of *siddhi* is commonly expressed as some variant of the notion of the “union of opposites” or *yuganaddha*. *Yuganaddha* as a sexual union is the primary symbolism of the *Anuttarayogatantras*, the union being interpreted as the conjunction of wisdom (*prajñā*) and compassion (*karunā*) necessary for complete enlightenment. Other conjunctions are also widespread, including that between the two *siddhis*, the body of the basic divinity and the body of the ācārya, and between the transcendence and mastery of the cosmos.

Characteristically, tantric *sādhanas* focus on the body of the adept as the primary locus for the realization of *yuganaddha*. The *sādhanas* are structured around notions such as the inner versus the outer cosmos, the human body and the divine body, the samsaric cosmos and the nirvanic cosmos. These relationships are established and manipulated through visualization, through the use of *mantra*, and through *nyāsa*. All of these various interpretations and homologues of *yuganaddha* are explicitly correlated with the Two Truths.

In the performance of ritual, then, the attainment of *siddhi* is the realization of a soteriology in a “recursive” cosmos. The realization of one’s basic divinity is the realization of one’s own enlightenment and the simultaneous purification of one’s world. As I will demonstrate below, the ritual expulsion and subduing of demons and epidemics is identical with the process of the elimination of *kleśas* and results in the attainment of enlightenment both by the demons and by the exorcist. Certain scholars of the Vajrayāna have begun to pay attention to this dual goal in “everyday” rites and practices. Stephan Beyer’s *The Cult of Tārā* demonstrates this for Tibetan rites to Tārā, and the articles of William Stablein demonstrate the process in Newar healing rituals. Indeed, the Vajrayāna’s two kinds of *siddhi* may be considered the ritual realization of the Two Truths.

If we keep this dual purpose in mind and try to banish the notion that Chen-yen strives solely for an abstracted pursuit of enlightenment, then it is apparent why Chen-yen exists in China primarily in a series of esoteric yet popular rituals in which enlightenment is identified with “mundane” pursuits such as the healing of diseases, the expulsion of enemy armies or epidemics, and the salvation of ancestors and “hungry ghosts.” It is, in large part, because of their overtly mundane aims that these rites have been classified as “miscellaneous,” peripheral, popular, or somehow less than important by scholars of Shingon. The proliferation of such rites outside of established Vajrayāna lineages has been used to bolster the assertion that Buddhist esotericism was no more than an evanescent moment in China. I see these rites and their classic Vajrayāna structures as evidence of the real nature of Chen-yen, of its adaptive and assimilative power. To see the Vajrayāna in China, we must bracket our taxonomies of “pure” and “miscellaneous,” of “lineage,” of “elite” and “popular,” and look carefully at these rites and at the contexts they inhabit.
Saving the hungry ghosts

Both Amoghavajra and his spiritual grandson Kūkai are plain about the role of Chen-yen: it is the one tradition which promises success both in the achievement of enlightenment and in the pursuit of worldly concerns. Most Chen-yen applications combine both goals. A large proportion of Chen-yen works are ritual texts used to promote or to stop rain, to control heavenly phenomena, to exorcise illness and epidemics, to protect the state, or to aid in the salvation of beings in the hells or in other unfortunate places of rebirth.

The single most visible fact concerning Chinese religion from the Sung dynasty onward is that of rites for the dead. This is not the place to detail the variety of rites for the dead or the pre-T’ang rituals. Rather, I will focus on the rituals for “hungry ghosts” (eh-kuei; Sanskrit, pretas) performed according to texts written in the generation or two after Amoghavajra and elaborated in rituals which permeated every corner of Chinese religion, including folk religion, Taoist ritual, and all versions of the modern-day p’u-tu (rites of “universal crossing” to salvation). The rites for hungry ghosts constitute the single most visible manifestation of the Vajrayāna in China, a fact which has seldom been remarked. Even Stephen Teiser’s fine work, The Ghost Festival in Medieval China, does not deal with the central ritual texts of the Ghost Festival from the mid-T’ang onward.

The folk celebration at whose heart is the Vajrayāna rite for the salvation of suffering beings is a prominent and colorful part of traditional Chinese life. On the evening of the thirtieth day of the sixth lunar month one walks the streets with care. For it is believed that on this night the gates of the underworld are thrown open; the boundaries between levels of the cosmos become permeable, and various ghosts or kuei are free to return to their lifetime haunts. This begins the avalambana festival, the Yü-lan-p’en hui, the “Festival of the Hungry Ghosts.”

Celebrated in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Hawaii, Indonesia, and in other overseas Chinese communities as well as to a limited degree in the People’s Republic of China and in Japan (Bon), the festivities, which may stretch out over the month, focus on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. The rite is second in stature only to the lunar New Year and encompasses a wide complex of rituals, including the nourishing, propitiation, and exhortation of wandering spirits and spirits in hell, merit making for oneself and one’s ancestors, and the promotion of communal harmony and prosperity. These rites may be performed by Buddhist monks or by Taoist masters in remarkably look-alike rituals colloquially termed “Universal Crossings” (to salvation) or P’u-tu.

Vegetarian feasts for ancestors and other dead have their roots in the communal feasts of Six Dynasties Taoism, in folk tradition, and in the pre-T’ang offerings to the saṃgha based on the story of Mulien’s (Sanskrit, Maudgalyayana) attempts to save his mother from the preta gati. These celebrations became the occasion for new rites devised by Amoghavajra and his followers for the salvation of imperial ancestors.
Soon, however, the new rites became independently circulating "techniques" transmitted outside of "proper" Chen-yen lineages. Unlike the situation during the High T'ang and in Japan, the norm in post-T'ang China is precisely that of individual texts and textual lineages which are collected by members of what are actually non-Vajrayāna (and even non-Buddhist) schools. These rites for the dead actually became the principle source of income for small hereditary temples, the most numerous kind of monastic institution.

Scholars who have studied the Ghost Festival have tended to focus on the early Buddhist and Taoist festivals and on the popular story of Mu-lien, thereby avoiding the complicated Vajrayāna core of the rites. Most who have remarked on the Vajrayāna foundation and performance of the rituals for hungry ghosts have noted the mechanical performance of the rites and the profit motive, as a way of discrediting any validity the rites might hold. As I noted above, this reflects an essentialist bias toward ritual—a focus on the mental dimension of practice and the attainment of enlightenment as being more important than ritual action and mundane ends.

When we turn to the Buddhist canon or to commentaries and to iconographic collections of these rites we find that they are classified as "miscellaneous" tantra and relegated to the back of the collections. Rites for the protection of the state or the production of rain come soon after the root texts and their commentaries. This treatment by modern compilers reinforces the sense that these rites for the dead are quite peripheral, and perhaps even on the edge of orthodoxy.

It may come as a surprise, then, that the rites reveal close adherence to the Two Truths cosmology and to notions of siddhi found in the root texts. Indeed, the rites are based on ritual structures drawn from the STTS and have affinities to those found in the Sarvadur-gatiparisodhana and other performances found in the Indo-Tibetan tradition. In others words, the rites for the salvation of hungry ghosts which are performed to this day are classic Vajrayāna rites.

Buddhist texts on hungry ghosts constitute eleven numbers in the Taishō edition of the Tripitaka. Eight of these are directly connected with the rites as practiced for the last eleven hundred years. The other three texts belong to a branch tradition concerning the "three siddhis" which is interesting in its own right but quite distinct from the practice under consideration. Numbers 1313, 1315, 1318, and 1319 are attributed to Amoghavajra. Number 1320, the text which is the basis of all rites from the Yüan dynasty onward, is sometimes attributed to Amoghavajra. Numbers 1314 and 1317 are attributed to Śikṣānanda. Number 1321 is by P'o-t'o-mu-a.

The crucial texts are 1319, Origins of the Teachings Given to Ānanda concerning the Distribution of Food to the Burning Mouths from the Essentials of the Yoga-tantra (Yü-chia chi-yao yen-k'ou shih-shih ch'i-chiao A-nan-to yüan-yu) and 1320, Rites for Distributing Food to the Burning Mouths from the Essentials of the Yogatantra (Yü-chia chi-yao yen-k'ou shih-shih i [YCYK]). Attributed to Amoghavajra, they may date from his circle and from the circle
around the next generation of disciples.\textsuperscript{50} Texts 1313 and 1318 are nearly identical with the first half of 1319. The story presented in these texts concerns the plight of the ever hapless Ānanda.

The story may be summarized as follows. Once, while the Buddha and the great assembly of Bodhisattvas were convened during the annual rain retreat Ānanda was off by himself, meditating in his hut. During the third watch of the night, a \textit{preta} named “Burning Mouth” (Yen-k’ou) appeared to him. This frightful apparition informed the shaken Ānanda that his human life was ending; three days hence he too would be reborn in the \textit{preta} realm. Ānanda inquired of Burning Mouth if there was some way to avoid this fate. Burning Mouth replied that if Ānanda were to give one Maghada bushel of food and drink to each of the one hundred thousand \textit{nayutas} of \textit{pretas} and other beings he would avoid this calamity, have a long life, and Burning Mouth and other suffering beings would be reborn in a heaven or in a pure land.

Ānanda, weeping, took his plight to the Buddha, who told of a rite and a \textit{dhide} method he had been taught in a past life when he was a Brahmin living in Avalokiteśvara’s pure land. It is called “The Method of the Dhāraṇī of the Tathāgata of Limitless Majestic Virtue and Self-Existent Brilliance.” The Buddha then describes the rite which includes offerings to the samgha.\textsuperscript{51} Texts 1318 and 1319 then outline the ritual use of the \textit{dhide}.\textsuperscript{52} The Rites for Distributing Food to the Burning Mouths from the Essentials of the Yoga-tantra (1320) gives full ritual instructions for the rite, and it is this text which I will outline below.\textsuperscript{53} The rite may be divided into ten sections and an appendix:

1 Preliminaries, invitation, worship of worthies by the ācārya. This includes preparation of the site for the altar, the invitation of the Buddhas of the ten directions, the visualization of the Manḍala for the rite, and the worship of the divinities by the ācārya.\textsuperscript{54}

2 The ācārya generates himself as Kuan Tzu-tzai (Avalokiteśvara). The adept closes his eyes and visualizes in his own body a clear and pure lunar disk in the heart. “Shining brightly on the disk is a \textit{Hṛīh bija} which transforms into an eight-petaled lotus. On this lotus throne is Kuan-tzu-tzai…. The Bodhisattva thinks: ‘each being has this flower of enlightenment. The pure Dharmadhātu is without stain….’ One then visualizes this eight-petaled lotus gradually expanding to fill up limitless space and thinks, ‘May this flower of enlightenment illuminate the assembled ocean of Tathāgathas. One [thinks] desiring to complete the great offering, if my mind is steady then limitless creatures will arouse compassion. Like this enlightenment blossom’s light all suffering beings are completely free [of stain], just as is Kuan Yin.’ ” The flower vision now shrinks gradually into the adept’s own body. He makes the Kuan-tzu-tzai \textit{mudrā/adiśṭhāna} at the four places: the heart, shoulders, throat, and top of the head. At each place the \textit{mudrā} touches there appears a \textit{Hṛīh}. He then recites the Mantra: \textit{Om vajra dharma hṛīh}, and his body becomes that of Kuan-tzu-tzai.\textsuperscript{55}
3 Visualization of smashing the gates of hell (in the guise of Tītsang; Sanskrit, Kṣitigarba) and the invitation of ghosts and spirits from the various gatis (realms of existence). Making the Vajra-fist the adept advances visualizing the opening of hell and chanting the hell-smashing spell. A fiery light streams from the mudrā, and from his mouth there comes a fiery brilliance. The adept visualizes a red Hṛih shining with a red brilliance on the lunar disk in his heart. The three lights together illuminate the Avīci hell. As the adept chants the mantra three times, all of the locks on the gates of hell loosen and open, and everyone with crimes comes out. (He may then proceed to the other five gatis.) He recalls the vows of Tī-tsang not to attain Buddhahood until hell has been emptied, and he invites the beings to come to this dharma assembly. Moving to the next gati he makes the mudrā of summoning the pretas and chants the appropriate mantra. Visualizing himself as Kuan-tzu-tzai, the adept sees a red Hṛih on the lunar disk in his heart and its light illuminates these sinful beings. The adept thus traces the descent of Avalokitesvara through the various gatis, moving on the altar from the east gate to the south gate (hells), to the southwest gate (pretas), to the west gate (animals), to the northwest (humans), to the north (asuras), and finally to the east (devas).  

4 Summoning, fixing, and elimination of obstructions and bad karma. This sequence of meditations and ritual actions is aimed at alleviating the karmic effects of past deeds for the now assembled beings of the cosmos. The crimes are “summoned” or evoked in a process in which a brilliant white hook produced of a white Hṛih syllable amasses the crimes of beings in the three lower gatis into a black mist which takes the shape of various demons. The crimes are then “destroyed” in a meditation involving a four-faced version of Avalokitesvara through the light of a black Hṛih. Referring to the Sarvatathāgatatattvavasāgraha, the text says one takes on the body of Trilokya vijaya. This technique eliminates karma which has not yet been “fixed.” The karma is then “fixed” and “extinguished.”  

5 Feeding the ghosts with “Sweet Dew”—Bodhicitta. This sequence has two parts. First the adept makes the mudrā and recites the mantra of the Tathāgata of Wonderful Body Who Distributes Sweet Dew (Kanlu; Sanskrit, amṛta, bodhicitta). The visualization involves a Vam syllable indicative of Mahāvairocana of the Vajradhātu man-dala and the imagery of Prajñā wisdom sweet dew water falling like refreshing rain on all the assembled beings. In the second part of the sequence the adept makes the mudrā of “opening the throats” and the mudrā of the Tathāgata of Expansive Spirit. Visualizing a white A syllable indicative of Mahāvairocana of the Garbhakośadhātu man-dala, in his left hand, the adept opens his hand like an opening lotus blossom. So too, the throats of the assembled beings are visualized as opening.  

6 Recitation of the names of the seven Tathāgatas. The Buddhas are: Precious Conquerer (Pao-sheng ju-lai, identified with Ratnasambhava); Bestower of
Fearlessness (Li pu-wei ju-lai, Abhayārāmda); Wide and Vast Body (Kuang-po shen ju-lai, Vyasakaya); the Tathagata of Wonderful Body (Miao-ssu shen ju-lai, Surupakaya); Many Treasures (Tuo-pao ju-lai, Prabhutaratna); Amitabha (A-mituo ju-lai); and the Tathāgata in the World of Broad and Majestic Virtue of Self-existent Light (Shih-chien kuang-ta wei-te tzu-tzai kuang-ming).

The mantra of each is chanted, and the text follows with an explanation of the benefit produced. For example, hearing and chanting the name of Abhayārāmda results in always attaining peace and joy. Hearing the name of the Tathāgata in the World of Broad and Majestic Virtue of Self-existent Light produces five separate results, including the attainment of the great self-sufficient ju-i, the ability to fly through the air, as well as a body and mind like a pearl.60

7 The initiation of the assembly of beings, including their arousal of bodhicitta, and their taking of samaya vows. This sequence involves the formal initiation (through visualization) of the amassed beings into the Vajrayāna. The beings are visualized as taking refuge, arousing bodhicitta, taking bodhisattva vows, and receiving samaya.61

8 The initiated beings now save and feed other beings.62 The newly initiated beings, under the leadership of the adept, now make the mudrā and mantra (and, one supposes the visualization) of the Tathāgata of Limitless Majestic Virtue of Self-existent Light. Thus, in this sequence, the adept and all the assembled beings now feed all beings with a nourishing sea of sweet dew.

9 The dhāraṇīs of dismissal. The adept makes the mudrā and mantra appropriate to Bestowing Presents and then the long Dhāraṇā of the Victorious and Worthy Buddha's Uṣṇīṣa.63

10 Closing gāthas. Finally, the adept recites a series of gāthas, ending with the one-hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva, and the beings are dismissed. The full series includes gāthas for: (a) each of the six gatis, (b) arousing complete conversion, (c) great fortune—going to the pure lands, and (d) one-hundred-syllable dhāraṇī of Vajrasattva.64 Appended to the manual is “The writ on the 10 sorts of lonely hun [spirits].”65

This brief examination of the rites for the salvation of hungry ghosts shows that, as in the root texts, one can observe the Two Truths cosmology and the interlocking pursuit of two kinds of siddhi. The mundane siddhi which is achieved in the rite is the salvation of the pretas and other suffering beings and the effective exorcism of these troubling spirits from the community. The route for accomplishing this cosmic housecleaning is the promotion of supramundane siddhi. First the adept and then the suffering beings are purged of their klesa, after which they achieve the arousal of bodhi, the initiation into the maṇḍala, and enlightenment. The two kinds of siddhi and their attainment are intertwined, a fact underscored by the once-suffering beings, who, acting as bodhisattvas, proceed to lead other beings through the rite. The universe becomes filled with
the suffering who become saviors who make offerings to those who saved them, and so on.

Thus, enlightenment, the fully initiated ācārya, and the world of suffering and those beings in it form a “strange loop,” and like the Two Truths, are both identical and not identical in the process of ritual action. Such “application” of Vajrayāna principles, far from being “degraded,” is precisely what the Vajrayāna is all about.

The maṇḍala without precedent

At the opposite end of the spectrum from the popularly dispersed rites for hungry ghosts is another Chen-yen phenomenon which is perhaps more widespread and just as “invisible.” The maṇḍalas of esoteric Buddhism, particularly the Garbhakośadhātu maṇḍala largely derived from the Mahāvairocana Sūtra, and the Vajradhātu maṇḍala based on the Sarvatathāgatatattva-saṃgraha belong to the esoteric and “elite” realm, and their relationship to eighth-century China is problematic. Yet there are no two pieces of graphic art which have enjoyed wider distribution and greater influence in East, Central, and Southeast Asia. The Vajradhātu maṇḍala, derived from the STTS, is particularly widespread. It appears in monuments such as Chandi Sewu in Java, in Tibetan temples, and in numerous painted reproductions, not to mention its structural clones in hundreds of ritual maṇḍalas for rites such as that described above.

The problem, stated succinctly, is where certain features of these maṇḍalas came from. Obviously, the maṇḍalas are derived from constructions described in the texts. They are therefore “Indian,” Chinese style notwithstanding. But the actual paintings do not wholly agree with the textual descriptions, and, in the case of the Vajradhātu maṇḍala derived from the STTS, there is a great degree of difference: The maṇḍala is commonly arranged as a composite of nine separate maṇḍalas in a three-by-three square. The text of the STTS presents a series of four sets of six maṇḍalas in a fashion typical of Vajrayāna ritual texts. The maṇḍalas are integrated vertically in the text through their identical structural principles. But during the last half of the eighth century a standard Vajradhātu maṇḍala emerged. This maṇḍala is based on the Mahā-maṇḍala partially described in both the texts of Amoghavajra and of Vajrabodhi. The Mahā-


This odd configuration is ascribed to East Asian interpretation, particularly in the person of Kūkai, the founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism, or, at most, to his Chinese teacher Hui-kuo. Recent work on the topic has sought explanation for the strange configuration in Indo-Tibetan exegetical categories.

Ninefold configurations may indeed be derived from the Indo-Tibetan tradi-
tion, but one must do some theoretical acrobatics to justify such interpretations. There are sixfold versions of the mandala, and Śubhākārasimha's Wu-pu shin-kuan presents one such arrangement. The innovation is usually ascribed to Hui-kuo (the “one moment” of Chinese Vajrayāna) and to Kūkai and left at that. Indeed, one gets the distinct impression from the literature on the topic that the ninefold arrangement was a natural outgrowth of Vajrayāna principles and Japanese genius. With the exception of the fleeting influence of Hui-kuo, the entire topic of Chinese influence is quietly tabled. But if it was Hui-kuo, what could have inspired him to produce the ninefold Vajradhātu mandala?

Let us put aside the orthodox history of Chen-yen given us by the Shingon tradition and ask, Is there any Chinese conception, model, or idea which could have led to this ninefold mandala? There is indeed. It is the “lo-shu” of Taoism—the magic square of nine—and the imperial Taoist cult of T’ai-i which flourished at precisely the same time as did the Chen-yen ācāryas.

First, it is important to understand that the Chen-yen ācāryas may be said to have continued and improved upon the centuries-old technique of “matching meanings” (ko-i). Established as a technique of translation in the early Six Dynasties, ko-i brought together indigenous Chinese terms and notions in the service of communicating Indian Buddhist ideas. Though ko-i effectively ended as a rigid means of translating with the advent of Kumārajīva, it remained a hermeneutic reality on a number of levels. The Chen-yen ācāryas, and particularly the sinofied Amoghavajra and his immediate Chinese disciples, raised this technique to an art not only in using particular terms from the Chinese milieu but also in the adaptation of general principles.

Foremost among the principles which Amoghavajra made use of was the notion of the transformative virtue of the ideal Confucian sage-king. The notion of transformative virtue is widespread in Amoghavajra’s rites and correspondence, and in that of his disciples. The ācāryas used traditional Chinese mythology, speculation, and ritual practice surrounding the sage-king. They could not have missed the significance of the cult of T’ai-i and related cosmological diagrams which have come to be associated with the Lo-shu and the Ho-t’u.

During the Han (B.C.E. 206–20) and Six Dynasties (220–589) numerological, prognosticatory, and cosmological speculation coalesced to form the structural principles for a wide-ranging cosmological system based on the five activities (wu hsing) and their disposition in nine “palaces” or “courts” (chiu kung). In these speculations the universe is envisioned as a square of three-by-three or nine “palaces,” the central palace representing the emperor while the outer palaces represent the nine provinces of the empire. The lord of the central palace is T’ai-i, the “Great Monad” or “unity.” Through numerological speculation and the use of homology one could divine the orderly processes and transformations of the natural world, the alternation of yin and yang, and the cyclic transformations of the five “activities” and the five seasons.

By the time of Han Wu-Ti (B.C.E. 140–87), T’ai-i had been homologized to the sovereign in the palace of the pole star who ruled the eight other sectors of
the heavens. In later centuries the earthly emperor was equated with this heavenly ruler. It was thought that the emperor, as the ruler of the nine courts, should circulate from one court to another in imitation of the transformative process of the universe. By adhering to the proper ritual activity, the color of garments, etc., the emperor could bring himself into harmony with the transformations of the cosmic order and in turn this virtuous behavior could influence these transformative processes for the good of the empire. This notion found expression in discussions of a Ming-T’ang or “Bright Hall,” a cosmic palace modeled on the T’ai-i numerology and in which the emperor “circulated,” performing rituals according to the season. Few were the emperors who actually built a Ming-t’ang, though the notion of such a cosmic palace was entertained in most reigns.70

Nonetheless, speculation led to the actual construction of such edifices down through Chinese history, and a cult of T’ai-i was active during the time of Hsüan-Tsun and Amoghavajra when nine thrones were set up and the various stellar lords were “circulated” each year.71 Moreover, it now appears that a key Taoist initiation rite made extensive use of this nonary or ninefold configuration.72 It is not too difficult to imagine the Vajrayāna masters putting these indigenous and familiar structures to good use. I propose that the arrangement of the Vajradhātu maṇḍala may have been a case of “ko-i.” The lack of any obvious precedent in the Vajrayāna and the presence of the T’ai-i cult and its diagram are evidence enough to make T’ai-i a primary suspect. The Vajradhātu maṇḍala of the Chenyen school cannot be accidentally related to the cult of T’ai-i, which was an active concern of many people whom Amoghavajra and Hui-kuo knew. It is only traditional biases which have rendered this structural similarity invisible and beyond the realm of reasonable investigation.

Seeing the Vajrayāna in China: closing remarks

As we look at the Vajrayāna in China, several avenues for research are open. Despite previous emphasis on the root texts, they are still in need of intensive study. So too, the various contexts of “applied” Chen-yen need to be explored, and these are social, political, symbolic, etc. To give but one example, let us probe the connections surrounding the imagery of the fire in South and East Asia. Initial work has been done here—for example, the articles contained in Fritz Staal’s Agni and in Richard Payne’s dissertation on homa rites.73 But what of the imagery of the fire as recreating the cosmos/dharma? How is the feeding of such fires symbolically related to ancestral complexes, to pretas (here, literally “flaming mouths”), and to the feeding of the monks? Is it not remarkable that the chief and most visible aspect of Buddhism in China came to be associated with these rites and with the dual feeding of “wandering fires”—pretas and ascetic monks?

A careful study remains to be done on the connection between the Buddhist
and Taoist performances of the P'u-tu rites. John Lagerwey quotes a Taoist master as asserting the identity of the rites. I have watched the simultaneous performance of these rites in Hong Kong, and I too noted the similarities. Yet the rites are not the same. While it is apparent that the P'u-tu rites contained in Lin Ling-chen's and Ning Ch'uan-chen's Hsüan-tu ta-hsien yü-shan ching-kung i in outline resemble the Yü-chia chi-yao yen-k'ou shih-shih i, the meditations, visualizations, and cosmology are strikingly different.

And then, what of the men and women who, during the ghost festival, burn "hell-money" on the streets of Hong Kong? Should we restrict our researches only to those "orthodox" manifestations of the Vajrayāna? I think not.

Jacques Gernet has said that "the death of Amoghavajra in 774 symbolizes in its way the end of the Chinese middle ages." I will put it this way: the rise of Amoghavajra and the dissemination and assimilation of Vajrayāna rites signal the beginning of modern Chinese religion. It is time we return Chen-yen to the place it has actually occupied in Chinese religions and in the Vajrayāna. We must begin to see Chen-yen.

Notes

An earlier version of this article was presented in the panel "Historical Explorations of the Diamond Path" at the Association of Asian Studies in San Francisco, April 1988. For Chinese characters, see fig. 1.

* Author's 2005 note: It is a humbling experience to revisit an article written fifteen years ago, and there are many things one is tempted to reconsider and revise. Chief among them would be a more problematized application of the terms Vajrayāna, Chen-yen, Esoteric Buddhism, and tantra. Nonetheless, the main thesis — that the impact of esoteric texts, rituals, and hermeneutics on T'ang and Sung religion has been under studied and under represented, and that sectarian scholarship played a key role in creating and perpetuating this situation — remains valid. For more recent work on the topic the reader should consult my Politics and Transcendent Wisdom (1998), Michel Strickmann's Mantras et Mandarin (1996), and Chinese Magical Medicine (2002), as well as Appendix A of Robert Sharf's Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism (2002), and my review of the same in Journal of the American Academy of Religion (2005).


2 Several fine works on Shingon promote this view of Chen-yen or remain bound by the sectarian categories of "pure" (tun mi) and "miscellaneous" (tsa mi). See, e.g., Minoru Kiyota, Shingon Buddhism (Tokyo and Los Angeles: Buddhist Books International, 1978); Tajima Ryūjun, Les deux grandes mandalas et la doctrine d'esoterism Shingon (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), and also his Étude sur le Mahāvairocana Sūtra (Dainichikyo) (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1936); Ömura Seigai, Mikkyō Hattatsu-shi, 5 vols. (Tokyo, 1918, reprint, 1972); Matsunaga Yūkei, Mikkyō no rekishi (Kyoto: Heiraku-ji shoten, 1969), and his "Tantric Buddhism and Shingon Buddhism," Eastern Buddhist 2 (November 1969): 1–14; and Osabe Kazuo's Tōdai mikkyōshi zakkō (Kobe: Kōbe Shōka Daigaku Gakujutsu Kenkyūkai, 1980).
1971), and Tō Sō mikkōshi ronko (Kyoto, 1982). Texts spoken by Mahāvairocana are “Pure.”


4 As, e.g., in Hakeda, Kiyota, and Matsunaga. For a summary of the debate on just when “pure” Shingon and the two-mandala system appeared, see Lokesh Chandra, The Esoteric Iconography of Japanese Mandalas, Satapitaka Series no. 92 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1971).


6 See Taishō shinshū daiizōkyō (The Taishō canon in Chinese, hereafter T.), T. 2120:52, Tai-tsung ch’ao tseng ssu-k’ung ta-pien cheng kuang-chih san-tsong ho-shang piao chih-chi (The collected documents relating to the monk Pu-k’ung of Tai-tsung’s reign), comp. Amoghavajra’s disciple Yuan-chao. In 844a28–29 Amoghavajra specifically speaks of his most advanced disciples, all of whom he has fully initiated into the “Yoga of the Five Divisions,” or that of the STTS. Elsewhere, such as in the Toupu t’o-lo-ni mu (T. 903 898c–900a) attributed to Amoghavajra, but probably the work of a disciple, both traditions are mentioned, and yet other disciples such as his biographer Chiao Ch’ien make pointed reference to Amoghavajra’s teachings as being comprised of the STTS and “the method of setting up the mandala according to the Mahākārungarbhamaṇḍala of the Mahāvairocana Sūtra” (see T. 2056, 292c5ff, and 283a6–9). For Hui-lang, see T. 2120:52.850c12–15, 851a9–852b6, etc. Some Japanese scholars, such as Ono Gemmyo, have argued on the basis of mandala iconography that Amoghavajra is the author of the pure “dual mandala” tradition; see Chandra, p. 37.


8 Interestingly, Shingon scholars present this picture alongside that of the supernormal Kūkai who learned the tradition in six months; see Hakeda, pp. 62–76.


10 An interesting example is the superb work of Osabe Kazuo (n. 2 above). Osabe, unlike most Japanese scholars of Shingon and Chen-yen, spends a great deal of effort on what amounts to “miscellaneous” tantra and in doing so recognizes its tremendous importance and the importance of Chen-yen’s relationship to Chinese folk and Taoist traditions. Yet he still uses the categories of pure and miscellaneous.
It is noteworthy that Korea has been almost totally overlooked in this regard.

While earlier scholars, such as Tajima Ryûjun, Ômura Seigai, and Toganoo Shôun used comparative Vajrayâna materials, it is only in the last fifteen to twenty years that the Indo-Tibetan Vajrayâna tradition has become a major context for the exploration of East Asian Vajrayâna. Comparative Iconography of the Vajradhatumandala and the Tattva-sangaha by Dr. Mrs. Shashibala, Šata-pitaka Series, vol. 344 (New Delhi: Mrs. Sharada Rani, 1986) presents a summary of much Japanese scholarship relevant to the Indo-Tibetan context of the STTS and its mandalas. But most encouraging is the work coming out of the French school—R. A. Stein and his students (see below, nn. 14 and 15).

While such investigations can be useful for heuristic purposes, we should be careful in finding the key to all East Asian Vajrayâna in Indo-Tibetan doctrinal constructs. See, e.g., Shashibala, pp. 24-25, where the reason for the ninefold schema of the East Asian Vajradhatu mandala is found in the “Tibetan taxonomy and topical analysis of the tantras” as being the six sub-mandalas of the STTS with “the seventh mandala representing the exegesis from the prajñā standpoint and the eighth and the ninth mandalas betoken[ing] the upâya viewpoint.” Not only is such an analysis possible both in East Asian and in Indo-Tibetan traditions, but it ignores possible and obvious influences from Chinese religions.

For the best of the French school, see Michel Strickmann, ed., Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honor of R. A. Stein, vols. 1–3 which constitutes vols. 20–23 of Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques (Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1981, 1983, 1985); vol. 23 is forthcoming. These are mostly brief reports found in Annuaire de l’Ecole pratique des Hautes Études, Section des Sciences Religieuses, and Annuaire du Collège de France, especially from 1973 to 1981. The situation is beginning to change with the publication of Tantric and Taoist Studies (n. 14 above) and with the ongoing work of Hôbôgirin: see Iyanaga, “Recits” (n. 5 above), p. 646.

I am referring to Kiyota (n. 2 above). Yamasaki Taiko, Shingon: Japanese Esoteric Buddhism, trans. and adapted by Richard Peterson and Cynthia Peterson, ed. Yasuyoshi Morimoto and David Kidd (Boston: Shambala, 1988) contains what is by far the most careful portrayal of the development of the Chen-yen school in China that is available in English, though it too ignores recent work by French sinologists and gives a largely orthodox presentation of the Shingon school.

Typical of such judgments is that of Liu Hsu, the compiler of Chiu T’ang shu (CTS), “Most of the fertile land and much of the wealth in the capital region passed to the Buddhist monasteries and Taoist temples, and the officials were powerless to control the Buddhist clergy. Tai-tsung’s faith in Buddhism remained unshaken even in the face of recurrent corruption, rebellion, and military defeats”; CTS 118, p. 3417, quoted in Stanley Weinstein, Buddhism under the Tang (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 89.


Ibid., p. 389.


Weinstein, Buddhism under the T’ang, p. 63.

It was fortuitous for the Chen-yen masters that they appeared at the court in the early to mid-T’ang. Until the reunification of North and South under the Sui, there had been two disparate emphases in Chinese Buddhism. Buddhism in the South was dominated by intellectuals. It was literate and aimed at the acquisition of insight. Buddhism in the North, under the non-Han rulers, emphasized the pragmatic benefits of healing,
prognostication, and in general the supernormal powers of monks such as Fo T'u-teng. The T'ang ruling family united the two cultures and provided precisely the right climate for Chen-yen, which likewise united the pursuit of enlightenment and the transformative activity in the world. For the split between Northern and Southern Buddhism, see Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 121–212. For the wonder worker Fo T'u-teng, see Arthur Wright. “Fo-T'u-Teng: A Biography,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 11 (1948): 321–71.

23 A partial list of Amoghavajra’s circle includes emperors: Hsiian-tsong, Su-tsung, Tai-tsung; imperial family: Tu-ku Kuei-fei (queen), Prince of Han (son of previous queen), Princess Hua-yang (queen’s daughter, Amoghavajra’s adopted daughter); government officials; Liu Chu-lin (governor general of Ling-nan-tao; Chou [n. 9 above], pp. 288–89, n. 22), Ko-shu Han (military governor general, Chou, p. 294, n. 46, *CTS* 104, 10a–14b), Li Yüan-tsung (commissioner of religious affairs), Li Fu-kuo (Chou, p. 295, *CTS* 184.7a–9b), Wang Chin (prime minister, Chou, p. 296, n. 61, *CTS* 118.10), Li Hsien-ch’eng (eunuch), Liu Hsien-ho (eunuch), Yen Ying (censor general), Yü Ch’ao-en (eunuch, commander of the imperial army), Yüan Tsai (prime minister, Chou, p. 330, app. S, *CTS* 118. 1a–6b); monks: Fei-hsi, Vajrabodhi, Han-kuang (T. 50.879c), Hui-pien, Li-yen (Kuchean monk), Ch’ien-chen (Chou, p. 298, n. 67, T. 50.736b–737a), Hui-lang (Chou, p. 301, n. 85), Yüan-chiao, Hui-chao, Hui-kuo, Chueh-ch’ao, Liangpen, Tzu-lin, Li-yen, Hui-lin; lay disciples: Chao Ch’ien (literary councillor to the emperor (Chou, p. 300, n. 79); Taoists: Lo Kung-yüan; literati: Hsu Hao (calligrapher).


25 Yet when this happened is unclear. Tsan-ning, writing during the Sung, says everyone knows the lineage; see Chou (n. 9 above), p. 306.

26 Ch’en, p. 337, ends his account of the school thus. He is citing Chou, p. 284. Ch’en has modified Chou’s translation slightly; I have restored its original phrasing.


30 T. 2120:52.840b1–12.


32 T. 848 and 865, respectively. The best source on the *Sarvatathāgata-tattva-saṅgrahā* (T. 865 and 866) is David L. Snellgrove’s introduction to *Sarva-Tathāgata-Tattva-Saṅgrahā* (n. 5 above). One should note that Shingon references to the *STTS* are usually references to Amoghavajra’s text (865), though references to Vajrabodhi’s text (866) and a host of commentaries is not uncommon. The “translations” of the *STTS* by Amoghavajra and Vajrabodhi are really more like notes on the text. The first complete translation of the *STTS* was by Shih-hu in 1002. The *STTS* is perhaps more accurately described for East Asian Vajrayāna as a “cycle.” See Iyanaga (n. 5 above). For the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, see Tajima, *Étude* (n. 2 above). A major branch of the Chen-yen school developed with the rise in importance of the *Susiddhikara* (T. 893:
18) in the late T'ang. This text was seen as a third, integrating principle uniting the MVS and the STTS. For these developments, see R. Misaki, “On the Thought of Susiddhi in the Esoteric Buddhism of the Late T'ang Dynasty,” in Studies of Esoteric Buddhism and Tantrism in Commemoration of the 1,150th Anniversary of the Founding of Koyasan (Koyasan: Koyasan University Press, 1965), pp. 255–81.

For the two types of cosmology, see Randolf Kloetzli, Buddhist Cosmology (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983); and Charles D. Orzech, “Cosmology in Action: Recursive Cosmology. Soteriology, and Authority in Chen-yen Buddhism with Special Reference to the Monk Pu-k'ung” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1986). Traditional scholarship has repeatedly tried to pigeonhole each of these texts as predominantly Yogacara or Madhyamika. These efforts might serve some heuristic purpose but, as is the case with any text which is self-consciously synthetic, they admit of many interpretations and affiliations.


Jeffrey Hopkins describes this process as “approximation” in his translation of Tsong-ka-pa’s The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra: The Yoga of Tibet (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), in the exposition of “Performance Tantra” (carya tantra) which is primarily about the Sarvatathāgatatatvasamgraha; see esp. pp. 185–88. When full siddhi is achieved the approximation becomes an icon (my term) or samaya.


On nīsā (the localization of divine powers in the body), see Bharati, pp. 273–74; Eliade, pp. 210–11; and the Mahāvairocana Sūtra, T. 848:18.22a–22b, 38b–38c.


Indeed, one of the most widely used Vajrayāna rites is that designed to protect the state. See my “Puns on the Humane King: Analogue and Application in an East Asian Apocryphon,” Journal of the American Oriental Society 109, no. 1 (January–March 1989): 17–24.

The sources for the P‘u-tu are many, and I will list just a few here. The best description is still that in Juliet Bredon and Igor Mitrophanow, The Moon Year: A Record of Chinese Customs and Festivals (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1927), pp. 386–90. Also,
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42 Teiser has limited investigations to the pre-Vajrayāna materials and to the mythology surrounding the figure of Mu-lien; see his “Postscript: The Ghost Festival after T’ang Times,” p. 107.


46 De Visser is one exception.

47 For instance, Welch, pp. 185, 197. This begs the question of ritual efficacy.

48 See Tadeusz Skorupski’s translation and study of The Sarvadurgatiparisodhana Tantra: Elimination of All Evil Destinies (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983). The text not only deals with the various kinds of rites for propitiation, etc., but it specifically deals with aid to beings in the lower gatis, and it is related to the Yoga-tantra “class” of texts as are similar rites which I will detail below. Also relevant from a comparative and genetic point of view are the Yi-dags kha-nas-me- ’bar-ba la skyabs-mdzad-pa’i gzwis and the Yi-dags-mo kha-’bar-rna dbugs-dbyin-ba’i gtor-ma’i cho-ga, Toh. 646, 1080 and 647, 1079, respectively; Yensho Kanakura, ed., A Catalogue of the Tohoku University Collection of Tibetan Works on Buddhism (Sendai: Tohoku University, 1953). These are translations of T. 1314 and T. 1313. There are popular parallels to the Chinese practice in the Tibetan smyuñ gnas, an annual rite involving the lay community in the feeding of hungry ghosts.

49 Osabe treats these texts in his Tōdai mikkyōshi zakkō, pp. 204–52. The texts (T. 899, 905, 906) are connected with the “Three siddhis” movement and have little to do with the rites for the salvation of pretas that I am discussing. A quick reading of these texts indicates that they are heavily colored by Taoist ritual techniques. They would make a fascinating study on their own.

50 There is some disagreement over the attribution and dating of texts 1319 and 1320. More traditional scholars attribute both to Amoghavajra, while Osabe dates these texts, especially 1320, anywhere from late T’ang to Ming. See Osabe, Tōdai mikkyōshi zakkō (n. 2 above), pp. 154–55. Chou Shu-chia has recently noted that 1319 agrees with the Tibetan. Based on linguistic evidence Chou regards 1320 as a Yuan supplement which revives the original practice begun by Amoghavajra. See Chou Shu-chia, “Yen-k’ou,” in Chung-kuo fo-chiao (Beijing, 1982), 2:397–99. There was a hungry ghost revival through the instigation of Chu-hung (1535–1615), who

52 A brief overview of the rite is in T. 1319:21.473b27–c15.
53 Ritual details of the rite can be found in the Taishō Zuzōshō iconographic appendix to the Tripitaka (12 vols., hereafter TZ), vol. 3, Besson zukki, chiian 57; and vol. 7, Byakuhōkusho, chiian 62. The Besson zukki (twelfth century) contains much old material which likely dates from the T’ang. The Byakuhōkusho (fourteenth century) is of later date and highly colored by Shingon doctrinal controversies. For these works, see Raoul Birnbaum, Studies on the Mysteries of Maijjušrij (n. 9 above), n. 56, pp. 109–11.
54 T. 1320:21.473c–476b. I am omitting line numbers in the following text references because of the half-size lines of auto-commentary on the visualizations and because each section is clearly demarcated and easy to find.
56 For Kṣitigarbha, see Marinus Wilhelm De Visser, The Bodhisattva Ti-tsang (Jizo) in China and Japan (Berlin: Oesterheld, 1914). Also Sūtra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, Buddhist Text Translation Society (New York: Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions, 1974). For Kṣitigarbha in the Taoist p’u-tu, see Pang (n. 41 above).
57 T. 1320:21.476c–477a; see 477a on the other gatis.
59 T. 1320:21.477c–478a. Like the notion of siddhi, “sweet dew” or bodhicitta is at once the “idea of enlightenment” (its usual English translation) and the tantric semen. Its abstract and concrete meanings are perhaps best encompassed by the translation “essence of enlightenment.”
60 T. 1320:21.478b–479a. Ju-i here means the will to accomplish one’s aims. It is often symbolized by a scepter or a gem.
64 T. 1320:21.482a–483b.
65 T. 1320:21.483b–484a constitutes an interesting text in itself, though it is beyond the limits of this discussion.
67 TZ, 2:2974–76; see Iyanaga, “Recits de la soumission” (n. 5 above), n. 143, pp. 706–7.


Kalinowski, p. 780, points out that this is the only documented pre-Sung dynasty confluence of the nonerian T’ai-i cult and imperial ritual. Also see Cammann, “The Magic Square of Three,” pp. 37–38; the description in the “Explanation of the T’ai-i Spirit,” ts’e 490, pp. 16–20; the account in the Chiu t’ang shu [The old T’ang history] (Peking: Chung-hua Shu-chü, 1975), pp. 922–39; and the “Altars of the Nine Courts,” in the T’ang hui-yao [The essentials of the T’ang], comp. Wang P’u (929–82 a.d.) in one hundred chuian (Kiangsu shu-chü blockprint ed. of 1884), chuian 10b:17–23. The last is a full description.

Kalinowski discusses this in detail, and one cannot help but think that its sexual overtones were an added attraction to the Vajrayāna teachers.


75 A comparison of the rites outlined above with those in Boltz (n. 43 above) and in Lagerwey clearly reveals a difference, especially in the internal "yogic" practice of the two systems; see Lagerwey, pp. 195–237. The text is in *Tao-tsang*, 217, *chiüan* 60–62.

TRUE WORDS, SILENCE, AND THE ADAMANTINE DANCE
On Japanese Mikkyō and the formation of the Shingon discourse

Fabio Rambelli


This paper deals with Japanese esoteric Buddhism (Mikkyō), in particular the Shingon tradition, as it relates to the emergence of new and peculiar epistemological concerns. Through a discussion of the kenmitsu system outlined by Kuroda Toshio, the paper first situates Mikkyō within the religious and institutional framework of medieval Japan, underlining its liminal and heterological nature as both an institutionalized discourse and a reservoir of oppositional possibilities. The paper then analyzes the formation of Shingon orthodoxy as an attempt to systematize the Tantric field in Japan through a re-organization of preexisting religious doctrines and practices. Special attention is given to the actual articulation of the kenmitsu episteme and its orders of significance. Finally, the paper outlines some fundamental epistemological tenets of Mikkyō discourse. Though it focuses on Shingon discourse and orthodoxy, this paper confronts basic epistemic assumptions and discursive practices common to the multifarious forms of esoteric Buddhism in Japan.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the discourse of Japanese esoteric Buddhism (particularly the Shingon 真言 tradition) as it developed in conjunction with the emergence of a distinctive form of philosophical reflection on signs and the formation of a corpus of practices relating to the production of meaning. My basic hypothesis is that esoteric Buddhism (Jpn. mikkyō 密教, secret teachings, hidden doctrines) can be understood as a discursive formation that presupposes a particular cosmology, attitude towards reality, and episteme (“the attitude that a socio-cultural community adopts in relation to its own signs”; Greimas and
It can be seen, in other words, as an ensemble of knowledge and practices concerned with the interpretation of reality as well as the production, selection, conservation, and transmission of knowledge. These things, in turn, are implemented through interpretive strategies, repertoires of metaphors, and a general structuring of knowledge. Like every discourse, that of esoteric Buddhism determines (and is determined by) distinctive institutions, ideologies, rituals, and relations of power.

The Mikkyō semiotic paradigm was extremely influential in Japan for centuries and still operates today on a certain cultural level (although in a marginalized and nonorganic fashion). An understanding of this paradigm is thus essential for the study not only of medieval Japanese religiosity and culture but also of the esoteric ceremonies, magic rituals, and traditional divination still performed in contemporary Japan.

The reconstruction of medieval Mikkyō discourse and its underlying epistememe should, ideally, begin with a consideration of the Tantric-Daoist syncretism that occurred mainly, but not exclusively, within the Chinese Zhenyan 真言 lineage during the Tang and Song dynasties, and then trace its development and transformation in Japan. I confine myself, however, to the early and medieval Japanese Shingon tradition, not only to set reasonable boundaries to this study but also to answer in part the urgent need for a cultural history of the Shingon sect. The lack of such a history has been a major hindrance to the study of Japanese religiosity in its various manifestations and has left many questions unresolved, particularly those concerned with the ways in which Shingon knowledge and practices were codified, transmitted, and diffused, and with the modalities of interaction of the various esoteric lineages in Japan. Because of this the Shingon tradition in most major studies on premodern Japanese culture has been obliterated, or, at best, reduced to a mystified Kūkai 空海 (Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師; 774–835).

I use the term “Shingon tradition” for want of a better translation of the term “Shingon-shū” 真言宗. In its medieval usage “Shingon-shū” indicated a loosely connected network of temples and lineages (ryūha 流派) that shared a myth of Kūkai as founder and a common set of initiatory knowledge and practices. This complex was defined in relation to other similar “sectarian” denominations, particularly those included in the Eight Schools system (hasshū 八宗) and its expanded versions. In medieval Japan, the term shū 宗 referred essentially to a textual corpus associated with a transmission/foundation lineage in the Three Lands (India, China, Japan). Such corpora/lineages implied orthodoxy and legitimacy because they were officially recognized by the emperor and because they were traditionally associated with certain temples and sacred places (see GYÖNEN). Each shū was thus an influential cultural reality as part of the doctrinal, political, ideological, and geographical system of the Eight Schools, and at the same time an “abstract” ideological foundation legitimating the various locale-specific lineages.

Though I will focus on the creation of Shingon discourse and orthodoxy,
I believe that the basic epistemic assumptions, discursive practices, and rhetorical strategies discussed here reflect traits common to all the multifarious forms assumed by esoteric Buddhism in Japan. By viewing Mikkyō as a discourse I will try to bring into relief an important, though often ignored, feature of Japanese medieval culture, and also counter the ideological mystifications of traditional sectarian scholarship with its stress on specific lineages and the figures (myths) of their founders. I hope thereby to avoid confining Mikkyō to the reassuring boundaries of our received knowledge.

Tantric Heterology and Its Japanese Avatar: The Kenmitsu System

Tantrism, from its very beginnings on the Indian subcontinent, has constituted a complex heterology, an often successful attempt to confer centrality to a heterogeneous ensemble of elements that were culturally marginal and were as such excluded from institutionalized discourses. This heterology in large part accounts for the difficulty of identifying a common substratum to Tantrism’s multifarious historical and cultural manifestations.

Tantrism was in origin the heterology of what Michel de Certeau calls an “untiring murmur” at the background of Buddhist cultures, a “consumption” and displacement of “high” culture products and discourses by marginalized individuals and social groups (1990, p. 53). James Boon writes, “‘Tantrism’ is a nineteenth-century European coinage based on an ‘exotic’ term. The ‘ism’ part makes shifting fields of oppositions, differentiations, and plural relations sound substantive, doctrinaire, and uniform” (1990, p. 159). Tantrism can be characterized as a complex magico-ritual apparatus that systematically reverses the renouncement ideals proper to religious institutions, especially Buddhism (Dumont 1979, pp. 342-43), although it does not necessarily conceive of itself as an opposition ideology. As will become clear later, this characteristic is shared, to some extent, by Japanese avatars of Tantrism. Ritual based on a principle of reversal seems, then, to be a fundamental trait of Tantrism. In fact, as Boon suggests, “Tantrism” is merely “a name for a polymorphous reservoir of ritual possibilities, continuously flirted with by orthodoxies yet also the basis of countering them”; it defines a field of possibilities against which “more orthodox positions and transformations become shaped and motivated” (1990, p. 165).

Japanese Mikkyō provides an interesting case of “Tantric heterology.” As Boon notes with respect to Tantrism in general, the very term “Mikkyō” presents Japanese esoteric Buddhism as an apparently uniform cultural entity. Actually, it covers three quite different aspects of Japanese Buddhism, among which it is important to distinguish. The first aspect is the Tantric substratum as a “reservoir of ritual possibilities,” a disseminated and nonsystematic cultural entity, a matrix of anti-institutional potentialities; this is an aspect often downplayed or ignored by traditional scholarship. The second aspect is Tantrism as “flirted with by orthodoxies,” that is, as a systematic and organized tradition
indissolubly related to non-Tantric forms of Buddhism (*kengyō* 観教, exoteric teachings); this is the most common understanding of Mikkyō, since scholars usually stress the systematic aspects of Japanese Tantrism. Mikkyō in this second sense is organized into lineages and possesses textual corpora and ritual practices; it is a vast phenomenon encompassing various sectarian divisions. The third, and most limited, aspect is Mikkyō as the Shingon tradition, conceived of as the purest form of esoteric Buddhism.¹¹

Tantric Buddhism in its second aspect interacted with other Japanese Buddhist movements, religious traditions, and philosophical systems to create a new organism, defined by KURODA Toshio (1975) as an “exoteric-esoteric system” (*kenmitsu taisei* 顕密体制) with its own ideology (*kenmitsushugi* 顕密主義, exoesotericism). Kuroda’s concepts—formulated to describe the complex Buddhist institutional system in medieval Japan—have opened the way to understanding Japanese Buddhism as a global cultural system possessing multiple interrelations with other religious and cultural systems. His concepts have undergone various adjustments, but on the whole they are useful tools for portraying what is an ideological, political, and economic organism.

Kuroda and such followers as Satō Hiroo, Sasaki Kaoru, and Taira Masayuki are concerned primarily with the social, institutional, and ideological aspects of the medieval *kenmitsu* system,¹² while I am concerned here more with its epistemic aspects. In particular, I see Mikkyō discourse as an important part of what I call the “*kenmitsu* episteme,” by which I mean the basic epistemic features of Kuroda’s “exoesoteric” system and ideology.

Kuroda distinguishes three phases in the formation of the *kenmitsu* system:

1. Mikkyō (in the first sense discussed above) unified all religious movements on an original “magic” background;
2. the Eight Schools established their own doctrines, esoteric practices, and *kenmitsu* theories¹³ on this new esotericized basis;
3. the respective schools, thus organized, were recognized by secular society as legitimate Buddhism and formed a type of religious establishment with a strong social impact—a situation that occurred only in Japan.

KURODA stresses the fact that what underlies the entire *kenmitsu* system is not a particular sect, but Mikkyō in general as a common substratum of ideas and practices concerned with the ultimate meaning of reality and the supreme goals of Buddhist cultivation (1975, p. 537). The main characteristic of Japanese Mikkyō is its capacity to permeate and unify all religious traditions and to organize the magical beliefs of the people (pp. 432, 436). It differs from Indian Tantraism in the importance it assigns to rituals and prayers (*kitō* 祈祷) for worldly benefits and the protection of the state (p. 433), a difference based on deeper cultural motivations.¹⁴ The *kenmitsu* system was not just a religious logic and ideology, but was so closely connected to Japanese political authority that it acquired the status of an official ideology and gradually esotericized the state
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It constituted the hegemonic system of thought and practice in medieval Japan (pp. 445-46) and was the reigning orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Shinto was fitted into this framework as a local and concrete manifestation of Mikkyō (p. 537).

It should be noted that Kuroda sees the ensemble of Tendai concepts and practices known as hongaku hōmon 本覚法門 or hongaku shisō 本覚思想 as "the model of kenmitsu ideology" and the Tendai school as "the representative entity of the kenmitsu system" (1975, p. 445). Although Kuroda mentions the central role of Kakuban’s 覚讖 Shingon thought in shaping the system (KURODA 1975, p. 475), he fails to analyze this role and thereby neglects the role of Shingon and other important esoteric lineages. Kuroda’s treatment leaves it unclear whether he envisioned a single, Tendai-centered kenmitsu system shared by all other schools or whether he intended only to present another influential paradigm of a manifold reality.

I am inclined to believe the latter. I see the kenmitsu system, in the general terms it has been described above, not as the whole institutional and ideological apparatus of Japanese medieval Buddhism but as something akin to a "generative scheme" of multiple cultural interventions, an open framework that the various Buddhist schools and traditions could actualize on their own terms. In fact, all the Eight (or Ten) Schools offered the same range of "products" and "services": simple formulae for salvation and rebirth, easy practices, relations with local "Shinto" cults, esoteric doctrines and practices, political ideologies, services for the protection of the state and the ruling lineages (chingo kokka 鎮護國家), and so forth. These were then personalized through specific doctrines and practices. In this respect, the schools formed a sort of trust controlling the religious market, and Mikkyō was their common religious, epistemic, and ideological substratum.

There are other points in Kuroda's treatment of kenmitsu requiring further development. For instance, Kuroda does not mention the fact that the very notion of kenmitsu resulted from an act, both conceptual and practical, of articulation and restructuring that affected the entire Japanese religious and philosophical world. Nor does he deal in depth with the heterological nature of Tantrism or with the complex process of creating a Mikkyō discourse—a necessary requisite for establishing the kenmitsu system and its distinctive internal logic. Mikkyō’s evolution is reduced to the thought of Kūkai and later Tendai developments, and the esotericization of other schools is presented as an inevitable outcome.

As we will see in more detail later, “Kengyō” was constructed simultaneously with “Mikkyō” as the Shingon exegetes dissimulated, rearticulated, displaced, and rewrote preexisting doctrines and practices. No place was recognized in this process for the ritual rivals of Kūkai’s Mikkyō: Onmyōdō 隈陽道 and the preceding or competing forms of esoteric Buddhism (zōmitsu 雑密, taimitsu 台密). The ideology of kenmitsu was introduced by Kūkai in his Ben kenmitsu nifyō ron as a means of defining the polar relation between the
Shingon esoteric system and preexisting teachings, which he considered superficial and provisional. In this respect Kūkai reversed traditional hermeneutical criteria, turning what was "evident" (ken 顕, teachings that are clear and self-evident without problems of interpretation) into something "superficial," and what was "hidden" or "not immediately evident" (mitsu 密, teachings related to a certain intention of the Buddha and therefore apparently unclear and requiring interpretation) into something "profound and true."

Kūkai's understanding of the term kenmitsu came to be widely accepted, and after the late Heian period was commonly used to designate the whole Buddhist system (although Kūkai's redistribution of doctrines and practices was rooted in the old idea of the existence of a secret transmission of the true teachings and rituals of the Buddha—an East Asian counterpart of the European hermetic mysteries). In this manner, Kūkai opened the way for a definition of the Mikkyō discursive field as comprising that which the other doctrines do not teach, that which the other schools ignore and leave unsaid. The silence of the Buddha marked the boundaries of Shingon intervention.

Mikkyō played another important role, functioning as a relay in the circuit between center and margin. This made the kenmitsu system an important instrument of power. By controlling and integrating negative forces that threatened the cultural center from "outside" (KOMATSU and NAITO 1985) and by providing central institutions with an efficacious cosmology and a distinctive epistemic field, Mikkyō paradoxically became the dominant paradigm of Japanese medieval culture. Systematic Mikkyō, itself a product of a semantic reversal, succeeded in reformulating on its own terms and from its own perspective—that of systematic reversal—the main concepts and practices of Japanese culture. Moreover, monks belonging to esoteric lineages were closely related to the imperial court and the ruling lineages, so that the Tendai and Shingon schools exerted a true hegemony (a hegemony that was economic as well).

It is, I believe, safe to assume that the real kenmitsu matrix of the Shingon school emerged during the late Heian period with the appearance of a new literary genre: the treatises on the distinction between ken and mitsu by such great scholars and religious figures as Saisen 直善 (1025–1115), Jitsuhan 実範 (?–1144), and Kakuban 觉鑑 (1095–1143). Generally ignored by scholars today, these men were directly responsible for the creation of medieval Mikkyō. Contemporary events—such as the creation of the cult of Kōbō Daishi or the emergence of Kōya-san as an object of popular faith connected with the quest for immortality and rebirth in paradise—were closely related, on the one hand, to the cultural mood of the time (the idea of mappō 末法 and the search for methods to counter it), and, on the other, to the need of religious institutions to gain new sources of income and wider social support. In this respect, it is interesting that the collection and study of Kūkai's works, as well as the attempt to adapt Mikkyō to new religious needs and trends, began after the creation of new forms of cult and religious "consumption."

Still, Mikkyō heterology never lost its formidable function of opposition,
precisely because of its special contact with the “outside” and with “otherness,” and because of its direct links with marginal, heterodoxical, and ambiguous cultural products (sacred mountain cults, popular religious practices, and social organizations of marginality). Among the expressions of Mikkyō were the hijiri 聖, marginal religious figures that gravitated around central political and religious institutions and possessed the power to subvert them. The number of hijiri and monks of low status using their esoteric training to get close to political power was large, and included such figures as Gyōki 行基 (668–749), Genbō 玄昉 (8th c.), and Dōkyō 荛鏡 (d. 770) in the Nara period, Kūkai and Kakuban in the Heian period, and Monkan 文観 (1278–1357) and many of the monks around Emperor Gōdaigo in the Nanbokuchō era. A later example was Tenkai 天海 (1536–1643), the architect of the political and religious cosmology of the Tokugawa government. An example of a “Tantric” attempt to organize social marginality was the Shingon Ritsu tradition of Eison 藤原 (1201–1290) and Ninshō 忍性 (1217–1303) (OISHI 1987).

Mikkyō never became a unified opposition force, but was a reservoir of nonorganized and asystematic oppositional possibilities. Its history is a series of attempts to keep an almost impossible balance between center and periphery, between institutionalized discourses and practices and their heterological counterparts. A conflictual relation between center and margin existed throughout the whole of premodern Japanese history, contributing to the flourishing of the esoteric tradition. Nevertheless, people apparently did not realize the questionable compromises such a stance entailed, with perhaps the only significant exception being the Hossō monk Tokuitsu 徳一 at the beginning of the Heian period.

Tokuitsu’s criticism of Mikkyō

That Tokuitsu (fl. ca. 820) was aware of the heterological nature of Kūkai’s new Mikkyō is evident from his Shingonshū miketsu-mon, a short treatise in which he listed his doubts and criticisms concerning Shingon doctrines and practices (T #2458, 77.862–865). A seemingly harmless work, it in fact reveals the total incompatibility of Mikkyō with the doctrines of the Six Nara Schools (TSUDA 1985). As noted by TAKAHASHI Tomio, Tokuitsu’s criticism was directed less at the Shingon school than at Mikkyō as a distinct new tradition (1990, 181–82). His criticism encompassed Tendai forms of Mikkyō as well, so that Tendai monks were among those who responded to him.

The tenor of the debate was unusual. While disputes among schools in East Asia were usually over the provisional or ultimate nature of teachings or lineages, Tokuitsu argued from a Mahāyāna perspective that Mikkyō, as explained by Kūkai, was utterly untenable. His criticism was directed particularly against the features of Kūkai’s thought connected with the formation of an orthodox esoteric discourse separate from the Nara Buddhist establishment, features such as the authenticity of the esoteric lineage, the salvific value of its practices, the idea of sokushin jōbutsu 即身成仏 (becoming Buddha in this very body), and the
unconditioned nature of the Sanskrit language. Since Kūkai saw the salvific power of his teachings as lying in the absolute nature of esoteric words, Tokuitsu’s observations threatened his Shingon system at its very basis: if mantras are not expressions of an unconditioned language, then the truth they convey is conditioned and the rapid attainment of siddhi (supernatural powers) is consequently impossible. This would amount to the dissolution of Mikkyō. Tokuitsu’s doubts are thus clues to the fundamental alterity of the esoteric system, and to the impossibility of understanding it on the basis of Mahāyāna principles.

Because of Tokuitsu’s perhaps unexpected attack, Kūkai realized that influential figures in Nara Buddhism saw the teachings of his new school as flawed, yet nevertheless as potentially threatening. In order to confer preeminence upon the Shingon doctrines, therefore, Kūkai had to find new hermeneutical criteria. He also was at least partly aware of the fundamental heterogeneity of Mikkyō, and accordingly stressed its systematic coherence with Mahāyāna texts. Although Kūkai never explicitly answered Tokuitsu’s criticisms, all of his work can be understood as an indirect reply (for a different interpretation, see Tsuda 1985).

Only by raising Shingon Mikkyō above its marginal and asystematic background could Kūkai and his successors confer on the Shingon school a dominant role within the Japanese religious establishment. In order to bring this about it was necessary, first, to create a new discourse and orthodoxy that partially concealed Tantrism’s heterogeneity and underlined its continuity with the dominant forms of state Buddhism; and, second, to devalue most preceding Tantric forms and write a new classification of Japanese Buddhist schools. A very difficult agenda, undoubtedly. But Kūkai’s efforts, especially in consolidating the kenmitsu categorization, constituted an impressive attempt to create a new tradition. The endeavor required time to bear fruit, and several centuries passed before convincing replies to Tokuitsu’s objections were formulated: first it was necessary to build up a solid alternative point of view grounded in a systematic discourse. Of course, the debate did not concern only theoretical matters and doctrinal prestige; what was really at stake was ideological supremacy and power.

Tokuitsu’s criticisms were not pursued by other members of the contemporary Buddhist establishment, and Tokuitsu was silenced even by his own Hossō colleagues and successors. The Nara establishment soon realized the ideological and ritual importance of the new Mikkyō as an instrument of political and economic control, and adopted it in a sort of surreptitious paradigm shift. Esoteric Buddhism became in this way an essential feature of premodern Japanese culture. It is not by accident, therefore, that Tokuitsu has been canceled from the official history of Japanese Buddhism, and that most of his works are no longer extant. Forced to play the role of the loser in the debates on the kenmitsu matrix, he became a kind of scapegoat of the kenmitsu system.
Purity and heterogeneity: the formation of Mikkyō discourse

In his criticism of Mikkyō, Tokuitsu ignored the important fact that Nara and early Heian Buddhism already contained numerous esoteric (Tantric) elements, mainly relating to the ritual and meditative apparatus. Among these elements were those directed toward the political center (e.g., rites for the protection of the state) and those expressive of cultural and political marginality (e.g., individual practices to gain various siddhi) (see KUSHIDA 1964, 1-54; HAYAMI 1975; MURAYAMA 1987, 1990). We see here a different configuration of the traits that characterize Indian Tantrism (DUMONT 1979). The ritual apparatus of Nara Buddhism, with regard to both central state rites and marginal individual practices, was Tantric in that it reversed Buddhist ideals of renunciation by stressing material benefits and protection of the state (symbolized by the imperial lineage).27

Later Shingon scholars stress the “miscellaneous,” “unsystematic,” and “fragmentary” nature of Nara Mikkyō, which they label zōmitsu 雑密, in contrast to the pure, systematic, and mature esoteric teachings—junmitsu 純密—that were supposedly introduced to Japan by Kūkai. Although the distinction between zōmitsu and junmitsu is often taken for granted, its basic criteria are neither clear nor objective, and it is thus quite problematic as a description of actual doctrinal and ritual differences.28 MISAKI (1988) has demonstrated the existence of multiple esoteric trends in Tang China, and of numerous attempts to construct orthodoxies. These efforts were continued in Japan by Shingon and Tendai monks. The junmitsu/zōmitsu distinction was the product of just such an effort, one that rewrote Mikkyō’s history to magnify Kūkai’s lineage, downplay Tantric practices and rites prior to Amoghavajra,29 and belittle subsequent developments in rival lineages. These efforts, animated by a certain “volonté d’orthodoxie” (a term used by Bernard Faure), were in large part successful, though the translation and production of so-called zōmitsu texts did not cease (MISAKI 1988, pp. 146–47). Tantric multiplicity also continued to flourish in marginal cults like Tachikawa-ryū 立川流, local traditions like Shugendō 修験道, and even “orthodox” Mikkyō as institutionalized lineages proliferated and sometimes integrated heterodoxical practices.

The Mikkyō daijiten defines junmitsu as a synonym for ryōbu 岩部 mikkyō, a form of Mikkyō that combines the doctrines and practices of the Womb (taizō 胎蔵) system and the Diamond or Vajra (kongo 金剛) system. Junmitsu is believed to be the direct expression of the enlightenment of Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来 (Mahāvairocana), the personification of the Dharmakāya (MD, p. 1108). Zōmitsu is synonymous with zobu 雑部 mikkyō, that is, everything in Mikkyō that cannot be reduced to junmitsu. It comprises conditioned doctrines and rituals propounded by Dainichi Nyorai’s three communicational and transformational bodies (the tajuyūshin 他受用身, hengeshin 変化身, and tōrushin 等流身), and as such is explicitly inferior to ryōbu. This is a major difference
with respect to Tendai Mikkyō (taimitsu 台密), according to which the zōbu is the very space where the nondualism of the Womb and the Diamond systems is realized.

The term zōbu was first used by Kūkai in the Shingonshū shogaku kyōritsuron mokuroku, his catalogue of esoteric texts (also known as the Sangakuroku) compiled in 823. This work, perhaps the first systematic attempt to classify Mikkyō texts (MISAKI 1988, p. 150), utilizes the three traditional categories of sūtras (daikyō 大経), precepts (ritsu 律), and treatises (ron 論). The Shingon sūtras are then classified as Diamond-lineage, Womb-lineage, or miscellaneous (zōbu). Problems with criteria and modalities appeared even in this early classification, however, and later attempts were not much more successful. The criteria tended to be arbitrary and overly influenced by the desire to support the claims to orthodoxy of the compiler’s own lineage. It is not surprising then that the ryōbu/zōbu distinction is related within Shingon to the more general kenmitsu articulation.

It is nevertheless possible to trace a distinction between Nara Mikkyō and later Mikkyō. In the latter one finds an attempt to develop a systematic discourse, different from and sometimes antithetical to “normal” Buddhist discourse. Although very few differences can be detected between junmitsu and zōmitsu with regard to cosmology and soteriology, Heian Mikkyō presents a more systematic aspect, and devotes a large amount of attention to semiotic and discursive problems (usually connected, again, with its need to establish its own orthodoxy). It may be that such a discursive self-awareness was also present in late Nara Mikkyō, an interesting point requiring further research. But, though of interest for the history of Japanese culture and the establishment of the esoteric orthodoxy, this possibility does not affect the characteristics of the full-fledged Mikkyō discourse.

Esoteric elements in pre-Heian Japan were assembled into a literary and ritual genre, a loose corpus called the darani-zō 陀羅尼蔵, one of the five sections of the Buddhist Canon in the prajñā-pāramitā tradition (Dasheng liqi liuboluomituojing, T. 8.868b; see also Kūkai’s treatment of the subject in the Ben-kenmitsu nikyō-ron). The esoteric formulae, variously called darani, ju 呱, and mitsugo 密語, are discussed in many Mahāyāna texts (UJIKE 1984; MISAKI 1988, pp. 18–25). The wide diversity of approaches and interpretations shows that dharanic expressions made up a heterogeneous field not organically integrated within Hinayāna and Mahāyāna traditions.

According to UJIKE Kakushō (1984), who describes in detail the development of dharanic thought in China and Japan, spells designed to facilitate the understanding and usage of Mahāyāna doctrines developed into instruments of power, and later became a kind of microcosm that offered the chance to “become a Buddha in this very body” (sokushinjōbutsu 即身成仏). UJIKE points out that, after the age of the great Tang acāryas, increasing attention to linguistic problems together with a new vision of salvation caused the transformation of the darani-zō into the Shingon vehicle (1984; see also RAMBELLI 1992, pp. 189–93).
And just as mysticism separated from theology in Europe in a process studied by Cer­teau (1982), so the dharmic ideas and practices of the *darani-zō* detached themselves from the Mahāyāna corpus to form an independent discourse. This movement "is related to a sharper consciousness of a specific and original language. The word that referred to an experience developed to designate a language" (Michel de Certeau, quoted in the introduction to the Italian translation of Cer­teau 1982 [Bologna: II Mulino, 1987]).

Tantrism was also concerned with the operations performed on the terms it invested with meaning. It thus possessed pragmatic and metalinguistic significance: it specified both how to use and how to interpret its expressions. It specified, in other words, how to practice language. These linguistic and semiotic practices, when they became complex and explicit enough, established a field of their own: *junmitsu* Mikkyō. Mikkyō proposed a unitary and organic vision of esoteric linguistic phenomena, thus performing a restructuring of Buddhist discourse. Denomination marked the will to unify all the operations until then dispersed, to organize, select, and regulate them. A new discipline was born from this attempt to systematize discursive practices (see also Cer­teau 1982).

In this process, undoubtedly connected to more general cultural factors, *junmitsu* emerged as (Shingon) Mikkyō orthodoxy; thus "pure" Mikkyō was the result of a mystified idea—an ideology—of orthodoxy, purity, and uncontamination. The very concept of a Shingon "school," with its overtones of unity and group identity, conceals the manifold moves made over the centuries to exploit new and different possibilities of representation. Bernard Faure has deconstructed traditional views of lineage and orthodoxy through a critique of their arborescent model: "Orthodoxy takes its shape not from its kernel—a lineage—but from its margins, the other trends against which it reacts by rejecting or encompassing them" (1987, p. 54). Shingon Mikkyō, too, developed in rhizome-like fashion as the result of "an amnesia, an active forgetting of origins" (1991, p. 14), and of complex interactions with so-called *zōmitsu* and *taimitsu* intervention.

This being the case, what is the role of the founder, Kūkai, in this rhizomatic process? As Faure explains, "Individuals ... are not the source of tradition, but rather its products, its nodal points, its textual paradigms or points of reemergence" (1987, p. 54). Contrary to traditional myths, Kūkai is to be considered the emergence of peculiar discursive strategies in relation to already extant ideologies, discourses, and literary genres. His achievement can be seen to lie in his successful attempt to bring esoteric trends into the proximity of the political, institutional, and cultural center through his construction of a new Mikkyō orthodoxy.

A "space of interplay": the Kenmitsu matrix and its surrounding silence

Let us now turn to the processes whereby orthodox Mikkyō discourse was generated. As Cer­teau points out, "The right to exercise language otherwise is
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objectified in a set of circumscriptions and procedures” (1986, p. 83). First, “a spatializing operation which results in the determination or displacement of the boundaries delimiting cultural fields” (pp. 67–68) is necessary. Next, “the spatial divisions which underlie and organize a culture” will be reworked (p. 68).

As explained above, the first step in the formation of Mikkyō discourse (“determination or displacement of the boundaries delimiting cultural fields”) involved the problematic and artificial articulation of the Tantric field into jummitsu and zōmitsu through the constitution of a new orthodoxy grounded in the myth of a direct transmission of an original ostension.\(^{32}\) Sources report that Dōji 菩提 (?–744), the Nara monk credited with introducing the Köhūzō gomonji-hō 虚空蔵求聞持法 to Japan, studied in the Tang capital Changan under the ācārya Śubhakarasimha (Shanwuwei 善無畏 637–735). In order to counter this and assert his own claim to orthodoxy, Kūkai had to invent a new, more powerful, and more appealing lineage, the one that connected him to Amoghavajra. Thus much of the Shingon textual production is pervaded by an insistence on the contrast between the old teachings (miscellaneous and impure and therefore ineffective), and Kūkai’s new teachings (systematic and pure and therefore extremely effective). This is not a mere rhetorical topos, but part of the ideological operation that helped establish Shingon sectarian orthodoxy by declassing earlier tendencies as zōmitsu and silencing rival lineages like taimitsu.

Although officially relegated to the periphery of the Shingon system, zōmitsu and, to a certain extent, taimitsu were de facto retained as an essential part of Shingon Mikkyō. The general ken-mitsu distinction operated as a “generative scheme,” according to which the fundamental oppositions common to the whole Mahāyāna tradition could be displaced, relocated, and reinterpreted. Relevant questions included the “sudden/gradual” soteriological polarity, the Twofold Truth paradigm, the conditioned/unconditioned nature of the Buddha’s preaching, and the semantic levels of language (jiṣō 字相 / jīgī 字義).

Michel de Certeau’s second phase, the more general cultural reorganization, corresponds to the Tantric restructuring of the whole religious situation in Japan, an operation—perhaps already completed in Tang China—that culminated in Kūkai’s articulation of the ten levels of the kenmitsu system in the Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron.\(^{33}\) Kūkai “reversed” the classifications of the Three Teachings (sangō 三教) and traditional Chinese Buddhist panjiao 判教 hermeneutics, which ignored esoteric teachings, by placing his new “orthodox” Mikkyō at the top—and, at the same time, in the background—of the whole system, thus strategically situating formerly marginal practices at the center of the Buddhist establishment.\(^{34}\) Although engaged in articulating their own system, Shingon commentators stressed the continuity of their own teachings with those that preceded them: important authors like Kūkai, Kakuban, and Raiyu 隆瑜 (1226–1304) untiringly repeated that the difference between Mikkyō and Kengyō lies not in their ultimate truth, which is identical, but rather in their approach to it, which is utterly different.

Basically, Kūkai’s doctrinal and ritual system contained few innovative
TANTRIC BUDDHISM (INCLUDING CHINA AND JAPAN)

elements. The Chinese Tiantai 天台 and Huayan 華嚴 schools already recognized the possibility of becoming a Buddha in the present life, and Tantric elements already existed in most schools. It is possible to argue that Kūkai's success was the result of his ability to provide the emperor and the imperial system with a new ideology and a new imagery, rooted in a grandiose cosmology and explicitated in powerful rituals (such Tantric imperial imagery and ritual were very fashionable at that time in the sinicized world). The truly new characteristic of junmitsu—the one that firmly grounded it—was its conviction that it was the only true discourse by virtue of its esoteric ordering of things.

As Certeau has explained, the process of articulating and establishing a new discourse requires a "space of interplay,"

one that establishes the text's difference, makes possible its operations and gives it "credibility" in the eyes of its readers, by distinguishing it both from the conditions within which it arose (the context) and from its object (the content).

(1986, p. 68)

Such a "space of interplay," a kind of meta-discursive level, is to be found in the kenmitsu generative scheme, where, as explained above, Buddhism was rearticulated in order to establish the place of Mikkyō in the religious discourse. Shingon orthodoxy (junmitsu) lived between two vast silences, between two kinds of unsaid: it emerged from an "ideological silence" where its zōmitsu origins were actively forgotten and its Tantric rivals silenced, and it set its discursive space on a background of "epistemological silence," in the sublime realm that the other traditions considered beyond the reach of language and thought. Mikkyō deals with what the other doctrines do not teach, with what the other schools cannot fathom and are silent about: the realm of the supreme enlightenment of the Buddha.35 Thus silence is an important element in the construction of the discourse of True Words. Mitsu represents a further reversal of perspective: it deals not with the itinerary of sentient beings toward Buddhahood, but with discourse from the absolute point of view of the unconditioned Dharmakāya.

Kenmitsu doctrine

Let us now look at the basic doctrinal framework of the kenmitsu matrix, based on a small corpus of representative texts on the subject.36 I hope that this short and synchronic account of the core of Mikkyō teachings will provide a useful starting point for further inquiry, despite its neglect of subtle doctrinal distinctions, sectarian controversies, and important historical developments.

As explained above, Mikkyō divides the teachings of the Tathāgata into two general kinds: superficial and secret. Superficial teachings are the provisional doctrines taught by Śākyamuni, or, more generally, by the lower, conditioned
manifestations of the Buddha: the Nirmānakāya and Sāṃbhogakāya. The
meaning of these teachings is clear and easy to comprehend. Secret teachings
are “the most profound doctrines beyond the faculties of sentient beings, dealing
with the ultimate secrets of all Buddhas’ enlightenment” (RAIHŌ, 734c–35a). As
an unconditioned discourse spoken by the Dharmakāya to itself for the pure
pleasure of the Dharma, these teachings are permanent and immutable and transcende the doctrine of the Decline of the Law (mappō 末法). They are com-
posed of “real words” (shinjitsugo) free from all communicational, pragma-
tic, and contextual constraints. In this way, esoteric teachings elude the
logic of upāya and are not restrained by their listeners’ expectations and limita-
tions, a major shortcoming of Mahāyāna from the Mikkyō point of view.

Ken and mitsu show also different attitudes towards principle (ri) and phe-
nomena (ji). This is particularly important for the present discussion, be-
cause these two ontological categories possess a deep semiotic relevance.
According to the Mahāyāna, ri can be seen as the ideal type of a sign, while ji
defines its tokens, actual and manifold occurrences. Ken distinguishes between ri
and ji, thereby establishing two levels: Dharma-essence (hosshō 法性) versus its
multifarious dharmic aspects. Ken thus fails to attain true nondual knowledge.
Mikkyō, in contrast, states that both ri and ji are absolute and unconditioned:
every single dharma, with all its particularities, is marked by the “aspect of true
reality.” According to the esoteric tradition, the Dharmakāya’s modalities of
existence (shiju, 四種法身), its activities (sanmitsu 三密), and its wisdom
(gochi 五智) are not different from the elements of ordinary human cognition
(sense organs, objects, mind apparatus). As a consequence, the esoteric absolute
principle (ri), or tathatā, is in a nondual relation to phenomena (ji), being articu-
lated in substance (taidai 体大), signs (sōdai 相大), and dynamic manifestations
(yūdai 用大). It does not transcend human intellective faculties, and the world of
enlightenment—the ultimate result of religious practice (kabun 果分)—can be
described and explained in the absolute language of the Dharmakāya.

Individual phenomena do not differ from the supreme principle; an individual
entity is no longer a mere token (ji) of a type (ri), but is itself an absolute, a micro-
cosm. There is ultimately no distinction between the mind of each ascetic, the
global mind of sentient beings, and the Buddha. Salvation is thus close and easy to
attain: the person who performs Mikkyō rituals after proper initiation is able to
accomplish the sublime practice of sanmitsu in his or her “body generated by father
and mother and become Buddha instantaneously.” Although mandalas and dharanis
are not suited to those of low abilities, their powers and virtues are unfathomable,
and even the most superficial practice produces benefits and blessings. The esoteric
cosmos is an immense salvific machine, in which everything is absolute.

As Tokuitsu realized, at least in part, Mikkyō’s differences with the rest of
Buddhism relate to the nature, structure, and power of signs. While the
Mahāyāna schools describe the Dharmakāya—the absolute, the kernel of Bud-
dhist ontology and soteriology—as devoid of signs and forms, Mikkyō describes
it as the totality of all possible signs. The Dharmakāya is thus able to “speak”
and explain to all beings its own enlightenment—an absolute language exists that is able to convey in some way the ultimate reality (Rambelli 1994). The essential identity of sentient beings (shujo 衆生) and Buddhas is the ground for symbolic practices that lead to the reproduction within the practitioner of the characteristics and particularities of the absolute.

Semiosophia, semiognosis, semiopietas: Mikkyō orders of significance

It is now necessary to outline the internal structure of the kenmitsu episteme. An account of the actual articulation of the kenmitsu epistemic field should take into account the following considerations:

1. the diachronic transformation of Buddhist semiotics;
2. the complex epistemic relations within Buddhism as both a “high” culture and a “popular” phenomenon;
3. the presence of other influential models of semiotics and semiosis (Confucian, Daoist, and later, “Western”) that coexisted and interacted in various ways with and within the kenmitsu epistemic field.

On a superficial level, the most evident feature of Mikkyō texts (both Shingon and Tendai) is their phonetic and graphic exoticism, in which the foreign is considered closer to the Origin. This is reflected in the large number of Sanskrit terms and in the wide usage of siddham (Jpn. shittan) characters. It could be said that the core of Mikkyō texts is formed by shingon/shittan, and that everything else exists only to create a context so that they might be correctly practiced. This reflects an idea of language and signs typical of Tantrism. As we have seen, ancient zōmitsu texts were a heterogeneous part of the Mahāyāna paradigm: their language was an upāya to convey meaning or induce certain actions. In the Mahāyāna philosophy of language, linguistic expression has value only insofar as it is able to convey its contents, to which it has an arbitrary connection. As Etienne Lamotte puts it, “The letter indicates the spirit just as a fingertip indicates an object, but since the spirit [that is, the meaning] is alien to syllables ... the letter is unable to express it in full” (1988, p. 15). With the formation of a Tantric discourse in East Asia, basic linguistic conceptions changed. Language was transformed from an upāya into an absolute and unconditioned entity, something that could not be translated without losing its essential character. Kūkai believed that the Indian phonemes and script were endowed with a unique nature. He wrote:

Mantras, however, are mysterious, and each word is profound in meaning. When they are transliterated into Chinese, the original meanings are modified and the long and short vowels confused.

(Kūkai, Shōrai mokuroku, translated in Hakeda 1972, p. 144)
Correct interpretation and use depend upon correct transmission. Kūkai mentions that Amoghavajra, aware of the limits of translation, initiated his disciples using Indian words only (Kūkai, Bonji shittan jimo narabini shakugi, T 84.361). He thereby lent epistemic relevance to the esoteric concept of an unaltered transmission based upon an original ostension (a necessary part of founding an orthodoxy).

Mikkyō semiotics is what governs the expression of that which transcends ordinary language (cf., Rambelli 1992). It is possible to recognize within Mikkyō three different modes of semiotic knowledge and interpretive practice of reality: semiosophia, semiognosis, and semiopietas. 45

Semiosophia refers to exoteric forms of the knowledge of signs (sō 相), according to which language and signs are considered to be arbitrary and illusory, but nevertheless usable as upāya to indicate the truth. I use this term instead of semiotics in order to distinguish it from both semiotics as common sense and semiotics as metalanguage. 46 Various ken types of semiotics can be classed as semiosophia, including Kusha, Hossō, Sanron, Tendai, and Kegon. Although there seem to be basically three epistemological models (Abhidharma, Madhyamika, and Yogācāra), each school developed its own concept of the sign in relation to its view of ultimate reality and its hermeneutical strategies. In the kenmitsu paradigm, mitsu semiotics presupposes ken semiotics; 47 semiosophia thus constitutes the superficial level (senryakushaku 浅略相) on which the esoteric interpretive structure (jinpishaku 深秘相) is built.

Semiognosis denotes esoteric semiotic doctrines and practices as something akin to a type of soteriological knowledge (i.e., leading to salvation) that is gained through specific practices of a predominantly ritual and/or mystical character ... Both [semi]sophia and [semi]gnosis are connected with systems of symbolic representation, but their epistemological frameworks and intentionality differ.

(Grapard forthcoming; the original uses geosophia and geognosis instead of semiosophia and semiognosis)

Semiognosis refers to specific knowledge and practices that are “claimed to have been extracted from [signs themselves], to correspond in mysterious ways to sacred scriptures and to divine rule, and to lead either to mystical achievement or to religious salvation” (Grapard forthcoming). The initiatory knowledge concerning structure, function, and power of the esoteric symbols (especially mantric expressions) is considered the kernel of enlightenment and the key to “becoming Buddha in this very body.” 48

In consequence, one of the fundamental activities of the Mikkyō exegete is “remotivating” language and signs, that is, overcoming the arbitrariness of language and signs by finding a special “natural” relation between expression, meaning, and referential object. Remotivation is accomplished by reorganizing each expression’s semantic structure and thereby making the expression
identical" to its meaning. In this process an esoteric symbol becomes a kind of replica of its object, and the practice in which it occurs is deemed identical to its goal. Mikkyō salvific practices consist mainly in visualization and manipulation of mantric expressions (shingon-darani) and other complex symbols of various kinds, whose very structure, organized on three deeper levels (jinpi 深秘, hichū no jinpi 秘中之深秘, hihichū no jinpi 秘々中之深秘), appears to the initiated person as the inscription of the path both to salvation and to the attainment of siddhi. 

Related to semiognosis is honji suijaku 本地垂迹, an expression of the realm of meaning of Shinto and Buddhism that is itself a result and a displacement of the kenmitsu epistemic field. The combinatory logic and practices (shūgō 習合) of honji suijaku concern the relationships between the Shinto and Buddhist deities, myths, and doctrines that lie at the basis of Japanese medieval religiosity and ideology, and obey rules grounded on "associative linguistic phenomena such as metaphor, paronomasia, and anagogy" (GRAPARD 1988, p. 264; see also 1987, 1992). In other words, operations on the substance (both graphic and phonetic) of language and meaning governed the esoteric interpretation of reality. According to Grapard, such combinatory practices brought about a reduction from plurality to singularity (1987), but I think that they also exposed the plural nature of supposedly singular entities. This kind of esoteric operation on signs is remarkably evident in a corpus of medieval texts known as engimono 缘起物, which deal with the history of sites of cult.

The esoteric episteme, in its more conscious and systematic manifestations, was basically a "high" culture phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is important to trace the dissemination of esoteric doctrines and practices among the general populace, and to analyze their transformations and the counter-practices they produced. This dissemination was extremely important for the establishment, which saw the "esotericization" of the lives, activities, and environment of the ordinary people as a powerful device for controlling them. In general, "popular" texts dealing with Buddhism (performances, sermons, kana literature, and narratives) were not directly concerned with esoteric doctrine—one must recall that, because of Mikkyō's belief that it expressed the absolute point of view of the perfectly enlightened Buddha, it was not easy for Mikkyō to translate its doctrines into everyday language and practice. However, the discourse to which such popular texts belong, and therefore their semiotic presuppositions, discursive strategies, and rhetorical devices, are definitely esoteric. In the engimono genre, Mikkyō succeeded in transposing its absolute logic of the unconditioned (jinen hōni 自然法爾) into a narrative of karmic events that occurred at specific historical moments in specific places (see KURODA 1989). These widely circulated materials were the major vehicle for the "popularization" of the esoteric conceptions and the power relations that they implied.

The diffuse beliefs and practices of the uninitiated concerning such sacred esoteric objects as images, texts, amulets, and talismans constitute semiopietas, "a primarily religious mood of relation to sacred [signs]" (GRAPARD forthcom-
ing). Semiopietas is the esoteric “easy path” (idō 易道) to salvation, represented mainly by the himitsu nenbutsu 秘密念仏 and kōmyō shingon 光明真言 practices. For most of these practices no formal initiation was required—all that was needed was a transmission with simple explanations, usually called kechien kanjō 結縁灌頂; furthermore, practices pertaining to semiopietas were considered to be efficacious even when not correctly performed, provided the intention was right, as explained for instance by Rentai in his Shingon kaiku-shū. Since the salvific power of signs is intrinsic to them, the uninformed usage of Mikkyō amulets or talismans (usage that leaves meaning out of consideration) has its theoretical foundation in semiognosis, and is legitimated by the weight of tradition and the idea of an unaltered secret transmission (see also Rambelli 1991, pp. 20–21; 1992, pp. 240–42).

Ritual and the adamantine dance

I have claimed that at the background of the various avatars of Tantrism, at least in Japan, lie certain ideas on cosmology and soteriology that possess a semiotic nucleus defining phenomena as manifestations of the Dharmakāya and that—above all—deal with the power of symbolic actions to produce salvation. Mikkyō envisions the cosmos as a fractal structure, in which each phenomenon is “formally” similar to all others and to the totality. This recursive cosmology, unique to Mikkyō, is related to a recursive soteriology that attributes enormous importance to ritual practice and visualization (see Orzech 1989). One may assume that certain configurations of the Mikkyō episteme lay at the basis of the combinatory doctrines and practices that developed in premodern Japan in a way that was mainly locale-specific and lineage-grounded (Grapard 1992).

Allan Grapard points to the existence of an “episteme of identity” (1989, p. 182) underlying Japanese mythology and mountain asceticism, an episteme that sees “the world (nature) and words (culture) in the specific lights of similitude, reflection, identity, and communication”; Grapard (1989, p. 161) explicitly refers to the preclassical European episteme as reconstructed by Michel Foucault. I suggest that such an “episteme of identity,” at least in its more systematic forms, was first codified on the basis of Mikkyō doctrine, and that it then assumed cultural hegemony in medieval Japan. The Mikkyō episteme appears to be characterized by the workings of what Tsuda Shin’ichi calls the “logic of yoga,” which asserts the substantial non-differentiation of all things on the basis of concepts of analogy and resemblance. This opens the way, in turn, to a kind of “symbolic omnipotence,” based on the belief that ritual—indirect “symbolic” practices—produces numberless powers by virtue of the structure of the signs involved in the ritual process (Tsuda 1978, 1981). It should be clear, however, that such epistemic constructs, far from being simple ritual or meditative escamotages, were directly related to the creation of a ritualized world (closely connected to power and dominant ideology) in which each event and each phenomenon was cosmologically marked and played a salvific function. Moreover, as forms of visualization-
tion based on a complex semantic and ritual network, symbolic practices grounded on the logic of yoga produced a cognitive transformation; when seriously performed, esoteric practices disclosed a different world.

The logic of yoga thus underlies Shingon ritual practice, which is often despised as a degeneration of “true” Mikkyō by scholars who forget that ritual effort aimed at cosmic integration and political legitimization is a demonstration of the fundamental principles supporting the esoteric episteme. As we have seen, basic to Shingon Mikkyō are its peculiar semiotics and semiosis. Ritual action is not a degeneration of “pure” Mikkyō or a relic of earlier “miscellaneous” forms, as many scholars insist, but is directly related to the postulates of the esoteric episteme itself.54

The basic epistemic framework of the Shingon tradition, with its complex interrelations of cosmology, soteriology, semiotics, and ritual, was shared by virtually all esoteric lineages in Japan. It should be stressed, however, that the preceding account applies mainly to those learned monks (gakuryō 学侶) who attempted to manifest the esoteric universe through meditation and ritual and who exploited to the utmost degree the power that they attributed to esoteric (or esotericized) signs—a semiotic power that reinforced, and was reinforced by, economic, social, and political power in the framework of a coherent sociocosmic order. It is possible to argue, on the basis of diaries and other textual evidence, that the aristocrats and, to a certain extent, the ordinary people also lived in such an esotericized, ritual universe.55 They shared the same mentality and ensemble of combinatory beliefs and practices; at the bottom of their way of life was an awareness—rarely discussed explicitly or critically—that the cosmos is an unceasing “adamantine dancing performance” (RAIHO, T 77.731a), a continuous transformation of shapes similar to the endless movement of waves on the surface of the sea, governed by linguistically grounded combinatory rules.

This awareness is related to a diffuse heterology/heteropraxy that pervades the entire Indian tradition (and perhaps the entire Buddhist world as well) and emerges from what Iyanaga Nobumi calls “mythologie ‘buddhico-èsotérico-sivaïte’.”56 The epistemic aspects of this mentality have been referred to as “Siwaic Semiotics” (BOON 1990, p. 70). Medieval Japanese ideals, rituals, and practices of orthodoxy and identity were thus underlain by a combinative episteme of transformation, in itself an avatar of Indian sivaitic mentality. The epistemic field manifested itself and was actualized in at least two ways: in a fully conscious way through semiognosis, and in a simplified and uninformed way through semiopietas (semiosophia lying outside the “Tantric” mentality). Both paradigms were aimed at esoterically framing the lives of the people, and functioned as powerful means of social control. But when the incessant “adamantine dance” of shifting forms was properly performed and ritually controlled, the esoteric cosmos took on the shape of an immense salvific “machine,” where all movements were ritualized and oriented to individual self-realization and universal salvation.

In the above discussion of Mikkyō heterology, I mentioned ambiguous, mar-
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Original, and antisystematic forms of Japanese esoteric Buddhism. These can be seen to represent “Tantric” tendencies aimed at countering the systematic, “man-dallic” Mikkyō—Mikkyō as an organic part of the kenmitsu system—that I have outlined. These trends, all related in some way to the complex and multifarious hijiri phenomenon, attempted to overcome the symbolic nature of the secret practices, or, at least, to exploit them in a quest for a more “direct” salvation, either individual or collective. What follows is a partial list of the most significant of these movements.

The Shingon Ritsu school of Eison and Ninshō attempted to perform bodhisattva practices within an esoteric context; their activities were aimed at bringing concrete relief to suffering beings and, at the same time, at realizing “symbolic”—and therefore indirect—universal salvation. Shingon Ritsu was also very active in controlling and organizing the newly rising forces of social marginality—a potential threat to the kenmitsu establishment (see Amino 1986 and Oishi 1987). Shugendō lineages produced new heterodox and syncretic practices and spread them throughout Japan, thus contributing to the diffusion and proliferation of Mikkyō. The Ji movement of Íppen (1239–1289) at a certain point was virtually in control of Kōya-san, although its position in the Japanese Tantric field is yet to be analyzed. Tachikawa-ryū, Genshi kimyōdan, and related trends in other schools developed direct practices grounded on the idea of absolute nondualism. The peculiar esoteric quest for paradise, a major esoteric trend since the late Heian period, is interesting because of its attempt to integrate antithetical Shingon and Nenbutsu practices. Finally, the case of sokushinbutsu 即身仏—a sublime and disquieting murmur pervading the whole East Asian Buddhist tradition—deserves mention because of the extremes to which the ascetics involved carried the desire to attain direct and universal salvation. The doctrines and activities of these and other movements are not fully compatible with the orthodox Mikkyō discourse that has been outlined here; as a kind of “dark side” to the secret teachings, they require further research.

Notes

An earlier draft of this essay, entitled “Kenmitsu Episteme and Mikkyō Heterology: On the Semiotic Doctrines and Practices in Medieval Japan,” was presented at the 45th Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Los Angeles, March 1993. I would like to express my gratitude to Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, chair of the panel at which it was presented, and the other participants, especially Allan Grapard and Neil McMullin, for their comments and criticism. I wish also to thank Bernard Faure and Yamaguchi Masao. I am greatly indebted to the editors of, and an anonymous reader for, the Japanese Journal of Religious Studies, for insightful and valuable suggestions in the process of revising this article.

1 According to Charles Sanders Peirce’s definition, a sign is “something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity”—in other words, anything that can be charged with meaning and interpreted.
I agree with James Boon, who considers semiotics “less an integral theory than a clearinghouse of issues in the complexity of communicational processes” (1982, p. 116). I see semiotics as an open field of problematics, a network of approaches and theories that can shed light on basic issues of signification and discursive formations.

On these subjects, and on the role of Mikkyō ideas and practices in contemporary Japanese magic and religious ritual, see Komatsu 1988.

By the expression “medieval Mikkyō,” I mean the totality of the forms taken by esoteric Buddhism from the Insei 院政 age at the end of the Heian period (late eleventh-twelfth centuries) to at least the Nanbokuchō age (early fourteenth century).

The founder of the Japanese Shingon sect.

The Eight Schools (Kusha 仏會, Jōjitsu 成実, Ritsu 律, Sanron 三論, Hossō 法相, Kegon 華厳, Tendai 天台, and Shingon) were the Buddhist scholastic traditions officially “imported” from China and acknowledged by the Japanese imperial system. Such traditions as Zen 禪, Jōdo-shū 法華宗, Jūdo Shinshū 法華真宗, and Nichiren-shū 日蓮宗 were added in the Middle Ages. The system of the Eight Schools (and its extended versions) constituted the framework within which each sectarian denomination acquired its status and legitimacy.

Properly speaking, Shingon has never had a unified center, and a Shingon “sect” does not exist even today. Temples affiliated with the Shingon sectarian denomination belong to either the Kogi 古義 Shingon-shū or the Shingi 新義 Shingon-shū, both of which are further articulated in many sub-branches.

Interestingly, Boon sees “a Western parallel” of Tantrism in “that range of hermetic heterodoxies, a murmur of Gnostic, Neoplatonist, crypto-liturgical positions: from freemasons to Bohemians, from counterculture to poètes maudits” (1990, p. 165).

Although the Tantric field in Japan still needs to be surveyed and charted, I think it constitutes a continuum ranging from clearly “Tantric” positions to formations that could be defined as “tantroid,” such as the marginal Pure Land movements known as Ichinengi 一念義 (sometimes related to the radical Tachikawa-ryū 立川流) or the Jishū 時衆 groups often associated with Kōya-san 高野山 and Shingon institutions.


Most studies on Mikkyō deal only with Shingon, while most studies on Tendai consider only its non-Tantric aspects. Tantric elements in other traditions have never been studied in depth.

For a critical appreciation of kenmitsu taisei, see Sasaki 1988, pp. 29–52.

Theories delineating the relationship between Tantric and non-Tantric Buddhism.

It is possible to discern in this feature a reversal of the traditional Buddhist outlook, that is, an awareness that mundane and political activities aimed at establishing a Buddhist kingdom and constructing a Buddha-land can be closely related to salvation.

The present study deals with the question of orthodoxy in relation to the formation of Shingon discourse; thus the approach taken here differs from that of Kuroda.

This, Kuroda argues, is due to the fact that the Tendai tradition (especially the Sanmon 山門 lineages) occupied a hegemonic position during the Japanese Middle Ages. Sasaki Kaoru, on the other hand, indicates that, while Tendai institutions were at the center of the kenmitsu system in western Japan, the religious system established by the Kamakura bakufu was essentially based on Zen and Mikkyō, having its roots in the Rinzai 禅宗, Tōji 東寺, and Onjō-ji 圓城寺 lineages, as well as in Onmyōdō 陰陽道. Sasaki calls this alternative system the zenmitsu taisei 禪密体制 (1988, pp. 94–148).

The interaction of Mikkyō and Onmyōdō doctrines and practices in Japan has been described in Murayama (1981, especially pp. 197–241; see also 1987, 1990), Hayami 1975, Komatsu 1988, and Komatsu and Naitō 1985.

19 Yamaguchi Masao (1989) has presented an illuminating interpretation of the ambiguous and "marginal" nature of the Japanese emperor. This could explain, at least in part, the political importance of Mikkyō.

20 In the systematic esotericization of Japan and its culture that was carried out during the Middle Ages, geographic space was conceived of as a *mandala*, the Japanese language was identified with the absolute language of the *shingon-darani* 真言陀羅尼, and literary production was assimilated to sacred texts dealing with esoteric truth (this process will be the subject of a later study). An esoteric dimension was attributed also to death (see Kakuran, *Ichigo taiyō himitsu shū*) and birth (see Dairō; I am grateful to James Sanford for having brought to my attention this fascinating text).

21 Cases such as that of Kakuban, closely connected to the retired emperor Toba 鳥羽, and Monkan, in the entourage of Emperor Go-Daigo 後醍醐, are well known. Earlier, during the Nara period, esoteric monks such as Genbō and Dōkyō were closely associated with those in political power. On a more orthodox and official level, the Shingon hierarchy has been close to the emperor since 834, when a Shingon chapel, the Shingon-in 真言院, was established inside the Kyoto imperial palace precincts. It is also to be recalled that the development of Mikkyō, first in the early Heian period (ninth century) and later in the Insei age (late eleventh-twelfth centuries), was closely related to more general restructurings of the Japanese political, social, and economic order.

22 On the cultural role of marginality and its relationship with the center, and on the principle of exclusion in Japanese culture, see Yamaguchi 1975.


25 More recently, Tsuda (1978) has expressed doubts that the two fundamental texts of the Shingon tradition, the *Dari jing* (Jpn. Dainichi-kyō) and the *Jinggang ding jing* (Jpn. Kongōchō-kyō), can be integrated into a single and noncontradictory system. According to Tsuda, these two texts epitomize two cosmologies and soteriologies (those of Mahāyāna and those of Tantric Buddhism) that exist in a "critical" relation to each other, i.e., that are completely different and incompatible. Tsuda, interestingly, refers to Tokuitsu's criticism (1985, pp. 89–91). It should be stressed, however, that Mikkyō, far from being reducible to the Dañ jing and the Jinggang ding jing, comprises a complex intertext of commentaries on and explanations of both sūtras, plus numerous other texts that lack direct relations to them. On a still deeper level, one can recognize a diffuse set of non-systematic knowledge and ritual actions, many of which are not clearly supported by textual authorities.

26 He directly tackled only Tokuitsu's eleventh doubt, concerning the Iron Stūpa where Nāgārjuna, the human patriarch of Mikkyō, was initiated by Vajrasattva into the esoteric teachings (Kōkai, Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden).

27 The efforts of esoteric monks like Genbō toward establishing the Kokubun-ji 国分寺 system of state-run provincial temples indicate the importance of Mikkyō in the formation of Nara State Buddhism (see Hayami 1975, pp. 4–5).

28 Even the origin of the terms *zōmitsu* and *junmitsu* is obscure, and presumably quite late; according to Misaki (1988, pp. 146–47), the first person to use the words was Ekö 震光 (1666–1734). On the mystifications in the traditional sectarian treatment of the *junmitsuzōmitsu* distinctions, see Orzech 1989 (especially pp. 88–92), and Misaki 1988.

29 Bukong 不空 (705–774), a Tang *ācārya* with direct lineal contacts with Kūkai.

30 For instance, a sūtra such as the *Suxidi-jieluojing* 蘇悉地羯羅經 is included among the
precepts and regulations; the *Dari jing* does not conform to the classificatory criteria, containing as it does many explicit references to *genze riyaku* 現世利益; texts that are not sūtras (i.e., that do not contain doctrinal elements and concern *genze riyaku*) are included in the Diamond textual lineage (Misaki 1988, pp. 150–52). In general, the Shingon school appears to have followed Amoghavajra’s method of including into the Diamond lineage authoritative (and useful) texts and rituals of miscellaneous origin.

31 See, for instance, Misaki’s analysis of the classification proposed by Gohō 玄宝 (1306–1362), the great scholar monk of Tō-ji 東寺 (1988, pp. 157–58), and Yūkai’s 有寛 (1345–1416) attempt as described in MD (s.v. Ryōbu zōbu: 2284).

32 The first link in the chain of the secret transmission of Mikkyō doctrines and practices is Dainichi Nyorai. In order to stress that these teachings were born in the self-presence of the Dharmakāya and are themselves unconditioned, a myth of an original ostension was created in which the esoteric sūtras and mañḍalas appeared in the sky to Nāgārjuna, who faithfully copied them and handed them down to later disciples. The myth of the manifestation in the sky, perhaps of Daoist origin, expressed the idea that the esoteric transmission transcended the arbitrariness of signs, conditioned cultural codes, and ordinary semiotic strategies. See also Rambelli 1991, pp. 20–21.

33 Various Mikkyō texts (like the *Lueshu jinggaoding yuqie jenbie shengwei xuzheng famen*) developed their own hermeneutics, thus confronting the Buddhist establishment. In any event, Mahāyāna texts already dealt with the *ken-mitsu* distinction, although in a different way (see, for instance, the *Jie shenmi jing*). A major source of Kūkai’s thought on the matter was the *Shi moheyan lun* (Jpn. Shaku makaen ron).

34 Such a hermeneutical reversal is most evident in Kakuban’s *Gorin kui myō himitsu shahu*, where all Buddhist schools and all religious traditions are explicitly envisioned as steps on the path toward the attainment of esoteric goals. In this manner, all salvational endeavors became parts of a Mikkyō soteric framework. On panjiao hermeneutics, see López 1988.

35 Kūkai, *Ben-kenmitsu niki-y-ron*, KDZ 1, 482; Raiyu, *Shashii kyōri doi shaku*, DNBZ 29: 5a–b. According to the *Dari jing*, the essence of the Shingon teachings is to be found where “the way of language is interrupted and mental activity also vanishes. It is a realm comprehensible only in the communication between buddhas” (T #848, 18.9a).

36 The texts are, respectively: Kūkai, *Ben-kenmitsu niki-y-ron*; Kakuban, *Kenmitsu fudō ju* and *Gorin kui myō himitsu-shahu*; and Raiho, *Shingon myōmoku*. Each author stresses different aspects of the *kenmitsu* paradigm, in accordance with the main trends of debate in his time. Kūkai is especially concerned with the uniqueness of Mikkyō in relation to the other schools, Kakuban underlines the absolute character of the esoteric teachings and shows how they transcend the idea of mappō, and Raihō emphasizes the essentially enlightened nature of all things.

37 This is the well-known principle of hosshin seppo (the Dharmakāya’s preaching), one of the products of Kūkai’s systematizing genius. It is a perfect model of absolute communication characterized by total circularity. For a semiotic analysis, see Rambelli 1994.

38 The concept of mappō, though not referred to in Kūkai’s texts, became of major importance in Japanese culture after the eleventh century. Kakuban stressed the negation of mappō as one of the characteristics of Mikkyō, emphasizing its unconditioned nature and soteric power.

39 This idea probably resulted from the identification of the linguistic thought of the *Shi moheyan lun* (605b) with dharanic conceptions and practices.

40 Nara schools were particularly sensitive on this point. The Six Schools taught that the differences between Śākyamuni and Mahāvairocana are dissolved in the meta-level of
absolute reality (although Shingon Mikkyō proposed itself as that very meta-level). They also recognized that Mikkyō, as a part of Buddhism, is an offspring of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment, the esoteric teachings being the secret doctrines taught by Śākyamuni upon entering Mahāvairocana’s samādhi. For a direct account of the Nara approach to Mikkyō, see GYOSEN.

41 The different conceptions of ri and ji are the main theme of RAITYU’s Shoshū kyōri dōi shaku, a contrastive analysis of Shingon and the Mahāyāna schools.

42 See for instance KAKUBAN’S Kenmitsu fudō ju, in particular the following verses: “Ken teachings explain the initial stage [of practice leading to Buddhahood (inbun 因分)], mitsu teachings explain the final stage [of attainment of Buddhahood 成仏 (kabun 果分)]: “Ken principle (ri) has no relationship with the sense organs [rokkon 六根], mitsu sees them as the Four [Buddha-] bodies [shishin 四身]; ken principle has no relationship with objects [rokkyō 六境], mitsu sees them as the Three Adamantine Mysteries [san(mitsu) kon(gō 三(密)金(剛))]; ken principle has no relationship to mind apparatus [rokushiki 六識], mitsu knows them to be the universal wisdom of the Dharmakāya”; “Ken principle has neither signs [sō 聞] nor activities [yū 音], mitsu Tathatā [(shin) nyo (真(如)手] is endowed with substance-signs-dynamic manifestations [sandai 三大]].” On the sandai doctrine, see RAMDELLI 1991, pp. 4–5.

43 These have traditionally been the objects of inquiry of two different disciplines: the history of ideas, and anthropology. For a critical presentation of some theoretical positions concerning the meaning of “popular” religion in East Asia, see FAURE 1991, pp. 79–95.

44 On the importance of re-creating the original context of mantras, see LOPEZ 1990, pp. 369–72.

45 I am indebted here to Allan Grapard’s threefold categorization of the orders of significance in Japanese representations of sacred space (geosophia, geognosis, and geopiety) (forthcoming).

46 It is very difficult to evaluate the role of common sense in ideas and practices relating to signs in the esoteric episteme, especially in light of the almost total lack of research on this subject. Buddhist setsuwa 説話 collections, for instance, suggest that signs are clues to a hidden reality and at the same time instruments for action: they not only foretell and express events but also give rise to them (see RAMBELLI 1990). It is not clear, however, whether these texts reflected widespread popular ideas on signs and semiosis or were vehicles for the diffusion of a new, Buddhist-continental semiotic mentality.

47 According to Kakuban, without the superficial interpretation of signs (jisō 字相), the deeper truth (jiji 字義) cannot be conveyed, but the esoteric truth cannot be taught to people lacking the status or the capacity to receive it—this is why it is called “secret” (himitsu 秘密).

48 Kūkai equates the monji 文字 (expressive symbols, signs) of the “Dharmakāya’s preaching” (hoshin seppo 仏口説) with the three mysteries (sanmitsu) pervading the Dharmadhatus; thus language and signs (sōdai) cannot exist separately from the cosmic substratum (taidai) of original enlightenment. Kūkai then adds: “Therefore Dainichi Nyorai, by expounding the meaning of [the relations between] language and reality, arouses sentient beings from their long slumber.” Mikkyō semiotics thus has a direct soteric relevance: “Those who realize this are called Great Enlightened Ones, those who are confused about it are called ‘sentient beings’” (Shōji jissō-gi, 401c). See also RAMBELLI 1992, pp. 163–85; and 1994.

49 On mantric expressions as inscriptions of soteriology, see LOPEZ 1990. For an analysis of Shingon inscription strategies, see RAMBELLI 1991 and 1992 (pp. 249–55; 265–70; 296–316).

50 See RAMBELLI 1992 and GRAPARD 1987. Another vivid example of these combinatory
practices can be found in Dairyū's *Sangai isshin-ki*, where the stages of the human embryo are associated to the Thirteen Buddhas via various operations on their names.  

51 The absolute value of phenomena and particularities—i.e., of differences—is one of the major themes of most exoteric and esoteric *hongaku* (original enlightenment) texts from the middle Kamakura period; for an introductory account of this subject, see Rambelli 1993, Concerning the plural nature of Tantric symbols and entities, see Boon 1990, pp. 79–83.  

52 Recent discoveries have revealed the existence of an esoteric genre of *sctsuwa* literature, an example of which is the *Aizen ō shōryū-ki* in Kusuda 1979, pp. 819–41.  

53 It should be noticed, however, that my treatment of these subjects is different in perspective and approach from that of Tsuda, which lacks explicit semiotic and ideological concerns.  

54 Since the present essay is concerned mainly with the formation of the epistemic space and the conditions of possibility in the Japanese esoteric Buddhist discourse, all-important questions concerning ritual practice have remained in the background. Epistemic problems of esoteric rituals, such as the ritual manipulation of symbolic entities, will be the subject of a future study.  

55 Their lives were probably similar in structure and basic attitudes to that of Jinson 専尊 (1430–1508), abbot of the Daijō-in monzeki 大乗院門跡 of the Kasuga-Kōfuku-ji 富第興福寺 complex, as it has been portrayed by Allan Grapard (1992, pp. 171–85). Grapard explains: “To Jinson, the mirrorlike relation between the heavenly bureaucracy and the structure of the [Kasuga-Kōfukuji] multiplex and of society in general was the manifestation of a preestablished harmony that could never be discussed, even less called into doubt. Such preestablished harmony, however, grounded though it may have been in myth and supported by ritual, needed another type of reinforcement... provided by economic power and, more precisely, land” (p. 174).  

56 Personal communication, 6 April 1993. For a masterful description of the workings of such a mythology, see Iyanaga 1994.  

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THE JO-NAN-PAS, A SCHOOL OF
BUDDHIST ONTOLOGISTS
ACCORDING TO THE GRUB MTHA'
SEL GYI ME LOÑ

D.S. Ruegg


In the history of Buddhist philosophy in India and Tibet an extreme and somewhat isolated position was occupied by the Jo nañ pa school which flourished in Tibet from about the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. Amongst the earlier Indian Buddhist schools a perhaps comparable tendency towards ontological and metaphysical development is probably to be found in the pudgalavāda of the Vātsiputriyas; but the exact significance of this pudgala or personal element which is indeterminable (avācya) in relation to the Aggregates (skandha) remains somewhat uncertain owing to the lack of original texts belonging to this school which might be expected to explain its meaning clearly and fully.1a Somewhat later, on the other hand, one at least of Dignāga's writings, the Traikālyaparīkṣā, exhibits a rather remarkable ontological tendency which was however repudiated in his Pramāṇasamuccaya.1b

To judge by the accounts of their doctrines given by their critics, the Jo nañ pa masters took up a specifically ontological and hence apparently un-Buddhist position by accepting in quite literal terms what appears as an eternal (nitya, śāśvata) and stable (dhrūva) element. They taught also a theory of the absolute Gnosis (ye šes, jñāna), undifferentiated between apprehender and apprehended (grāhya-grāhaka: gzun 'dzin gnis med kyi ye šes mthar thug pa), which is constant or permanent (nitya) and 'substantially' real (rtag dnos; ū bo rtag pa; rañ byun du grub pa; etc.) and which is the parinispamna or Absolute. Their fundamental doctrine was the Void-of-the-other (gžan ston), that is, an absolute which is established in reality and is Void of all heterogeneous relative and phenomenal factors, as against the Void-of-Own-being (rañ ston; svabhāvaśūnya) of the Mādhyamika which the Jo nañ pas considered to be a merely preliminary or lower doctrine bearing on the relative (samvrtil) and not on the absolute Meaning (paramārtha). Although the Jo nañ pas none the less considered themselves to
be true Madhyamikas, the Tibetan Madhyamikas who follow Candrakīrti—in other words the majority of Tibetan scholars—resolutely oppose and refute their theories.

Certain authorities also compare the theory of the Jo nān pa, and after them of the unorthodox Sa skyā pa doctor Śākya mchog ldn (1428–1507), concerning the Void-of-the-other with the explanation the author of the Brhatīkā gives of the parinispāna as being Void of the discursive and phenomenal represented by the ‘imagined’ (parikalpita) and the ‘relative’ (paratantra). According to the orthodox Yogācāras on the other hand, the paratantra Void of the parikalpita is the parinispānallakṣaṇa.

To substantiate their particular interpretation the Jo nān pa masters referred to a group of canonical texts known as the ‘Sūtras teaching the Essence’ (sūn po) which includes the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra, the Śrīmālavīśimhanādāsūtra and the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra. At the same time the Kālacakra constituted one of their principal sources. And amongst Sāstra works they referred especially to the Stotra collection attributed to Nāgārjuna. It can thus be said that their doctrine represents an admixture of the mantra method and of the intuition achieved through practice-in-meditation (bhiṇavanā) of the Kālacakra with the Sūtra and philosophical method chiefly founded on the group of Sūtras just mentioned. And it was just this contestable mixture of the two methods of ‘metaphysics’ (mṭshan ēd) and mysticism that called forth many of the criticisms directed against their doctrines by doctors who did not reject the validity and authenticity of their intuition and understanding as such.

Thus, not only did the Jo nān pa have a tendency to hypostasize reality, but they were also thought to have as it were mixed their metaphors by combining together systems of expression belonging to different traditions. These traditions and their symbolical systems are all nonetheless generally held to be valid in their own domains; and only a few authorities, notably Red mda’ ba (1349–1412), actually opposed the Kālacakra and the Śādaṅgayoga—perhaps much in the same way as Sa skyā paṇḍita (1182–1251) did the later Tibetan phyag rgya chen po or mahāmudrā system—for introducing into the well authenticated and in themselves complete methods of the great Buddhist masters extraneous and not easily verifiable notions and terms.

Another problem of fundamental and far-reaching importance was posed by the method a particular school adopted to explain the Sūtras; and the application of the criteria by means of which intentional canonical texts whose meaning has to be interpreted (neyārtha texts) can be correctly explained and distinguished from other canonical texts of definitive meaning (nītārtha) was thus the subject of much discussion. Various solutions were advanced by the different schools which depended on their understanding of the basic doctrines of Buddhism. The Jo nān pa, unlike many of their contemporaries, considered that the ‘Sūtras teaching the Essence’ were of definitive and certain meaning. And in accordance with this view they elaborated their characteristic doctrine of the gzan ston, which they linked with the ādibuddha doctrine of the Kālacakra.
While underlining this remarkable and rather extreme position amongst Buddhist schools occupied by the Jo nañ pa, it is also necessary to consider them both as one of the most renowned and as one of the most controversial of the Tibetan schools during a period of several centuries.

As the author of the *Grub mtha’ šel gyi me lon* informs us, at first, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, they appeared closely linked with the Sa skya pas, only becoming clearly distinct after their doctrines had become the object of a formal philosophical presentation, for which Dol bu pa was chiefly responsible. But since both the Sa skya pa and Jo nañ pa schools had their centres in gTsãn province and since at this time the Sa skya pas were perhaps the dominant force in Tibet (though very closely rivalled by some of the bKa’ brgyud pa sects), this connexion may have even earlier been above all geographical and due to the fact that the Jo nañ pa masters had usually studied in the chief monastic colleges which belonged to the Sa skya pas. This is the impression conveyed at least by the passage from the *Kha skoñ* of the Ňor pa chos ’byün quoted below. At all events, theories accepted by the Jo nañ pa were rejected by Sa skya paṇḍita in his *sDom gsum rab dbye*.

A connexion also existed between the Jo nañ pa on the one side and on the other Bu ston (1290–1364) and the Ňa lu pa school owing no doubt in part to their common interest in the Kālacakra; in fact, according to the *ThG*, the Jo nañ pa master Phyogs las mam rgyal studied under Bu ston. But from the point of view of *mtshan ñid* or philosophical method their doctrine of the gžan ston and of the *tathāgatagarbha* was refuted both by Bu ston and his great disciple sGra tshad pa Rin chen mam rgyal. It is nevertheless to be noted that in his *mDses rgyan* they are not attacked by name; and if Padma dkar po states in his *Chos ’byün* that Bu ston refused to discuss publicly with Dol bu pa when the latter came to see him for that purpose, this may have been because he did not wish to engage in open controversy with teachers who were regarded with great respect. A Sa skya pa authority, Nag dban chos grags, states that whereas Bu ston held that the dharmadhātu though real is non-existent in reality (*bden par med*), Dol bu pa proposed the thesis: The dharmadhātu as the subject of the proposition will exist in reality because it is real.3

Reference has furthermore sometimes been made to a connexion between the Jo nañ pa and bKa’ brgyud pa schools.4 This does not appear to be clearly borne out by the present chapter of the *ThG*, though this text does indicate that the gžan ston and the mahāmudrā are in certain respects comparable. Certain teachers of the Karma pa sect of the bKa’ brgyud pas however proposed an interpretation of the sūnyatā, the absolute Gnosis and the tathāgatagarbha that was close to the Jo nañ pa doctrine.5

While the question of the affiliations of the Jo nañ pa with the other Tibetan schools clearly requires much further study, it thus seems correct to say that they were to begin with closely connected with the Sa skya pas; however, their doctrines differed from those of most of the Sa skya pa doctors. An exception was Śākya mchog ldan, whose theory of the sūnyatā agreed with the Jo nañ pa
theory; for this reason his theories are often discussed together with theirs, as is
done at the end of the present chapter of the ThG.

The above very brief sketch of some of the philosophical problems posed by
the Jo naṅ pa school should at least be sufficient to reveal their great importance,
and also to show that it is scarcely adequate to characterize them as representing
chiefly ‘tantristische Zauberlehren.’ Opinions may perhaps differ as to whether
the Kālacakra, which (as seen above) was one of the pillars of their theory, was
above all a magical teaching or not; but the Jo naṅ pa analysis of the mind
(sems), of the Gnosis (ye śes) and of śūnyatā as the gzhon ston clearly bears
witness to a very deep concern with the soteriological, metaphysical, epis­
temological and psychological problems which interested philosophers in
general. That doctrines closely allied with the gzhon ston were also accepted by at
least some bKa’ brgyud pa and rNin ma pa scholars would indicate that the Jo
naṅ pa masters were not altogether isolated.6

The apparently very close relationship of the Jo naṅ pas with both Indian
teachings and Indian teachers is also notable. It has even led one scholar to
speak of ‘Brahmanists’ in Tibet.7 The originator and source of their doctrines,
Yu mo, is indeed said to have received his doctrine at Kailāsa;8 and the chief
systematizer of their doctrines, Dol bu pa (also known as Dol po pa) śes rab
rgyal mtshan, must have come from the Dol po region near the frontier of
Nepal.8a And such links then continued up to the time of the suppression of the
school in the seventeenth century. For at that time Tāranātha was in close
contact with Nepālese and Indian paṇḍits;9 and the wall-paintings he had
executed in the Phun tshogs glii temple are reminiscent of certain Indian
schools of painting, including curiously enough to a certain extent even the
modern Bengāl school.10

The history of the Jo naṅ pa school may perhaps at the same time be
explained, at least to a certain extent, by factors in the history of gTsan. Under
the Sa skya pas this province had for a long time assumed a preponderant posi­
tion in Tibet. Separatist tendencies were later strongly asserted by the princes of
Rin spuṅs, some of whom, though connected principally with the Karma pas and
more specifically with the Žva dmar hierarchs, also patronized the Jo naṅ pas. In
fact the ThG links the decline of the Jo naṅ pas with the downfall of Karma
bsTan skyon dbaṅ po, the last of the Rin spuṅs princes, who was defeated in
1642 by Gu śri Khan on behalf of the fifth Dalai Lama.11 Given these circum­
cstances, it may then be pertinent to consider the possibility that the Jo naṅ pa
school was proscribed at the time of the fifth Dalai Lama both because of the
unorthodoxy of its teachings and because of some Himalayan and ultramontane
connexions which might have tended to sustain local separatist movements in
the south-western areas of Tibet in which they were chiefly established. At all
events it is known that the Jo naṅ pa centres in gTsan were at that time con­
verted to the dGe lugs pa order; and the only monasteries that survived were,
according to the ThG, to be found in eastern Tibet.12 At that time also the line of
incarnations to which Tāranātha himself belonged was transferred to Mongolia,
where it was recognized as the line of the Khal kha rje btsun dam pa of Da Khu re (or Hu re chen mo, Urga) which continued into the present century. Tāranātha was thus the last great representative of the school.

The circumstances of this radical dispossession of the Jo nañ pas in the middle of the seventeenth century however present a sharp contrast with the fact that two and a half centuries earlier two of Tsoil kha pa’s teachers, Phyogs las rnam rgyal and Na dpon Kun dga’ dpal, had belonged to this school. And, although Tsoil kha pa came to disagree with their teachings and despite the fact that their tenets thus form many of the pūrvapākas refuted in the Legs bsdad sūñ po for example, the masters of this school continued to be respected. An authority like Guñ than dKon mchog bsTan pa’i sgron me, though always rigorously opposing the unorthodox scholastic exposition of their doctrines, admits that Dol bu pa’s spiritual intuition was very profound and that he was ‘a not inferior omniscient being because of his comprehension and, as the closing lines of the present chapter devoted to them in the ThG clearly indicate, the author, Blo bzañ chos kyi ni ma, does not condemn them out of hand.

As a contribution to the study of the history and doctrines of the Jo nañ pas as well as of the criticisms of their interpretations made by masters of the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism a translation is offered here of the sixth chapter of the History of Philosophical Doctrines (Grub mtha’ shyel gyi me loṅ). Completed in 1801 by Thu’u bkvan Blo bzañ chos kyi ni ma, this work contains a valuable if brief account of the history of the school together with notices on the lives of many of their most important teachers followed by a short outline of their doctrines and a refutation of them according to the Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika method of the dGe lugs pas.

In this critique the author first shows that the Jo nañ pa doctrines are in several respects comparable to the doctrines of the Brāhmanical schools and that they are consequently open to the same criticisms to which the latter were subjected by the great Buddhist teachers of India and Tibet. Thus their doctrine is first of all found to resemble that of the Word-brahman advocated by the Sabdabrahmavādins such as Bhartṛhari; and the first kārikā of the latter’s Vākyapadīya is quoted according to which the sabdabrahman appears as the objective world (arthabhāva) and the source of mundane differentiated construction (prakriyā jagataḥ). It is then shown how the participation and involvement of the Absolute in the cycle-of-existences (samsāra) also results from the Jo nañ pa theory of an eternal and immutable element of potential Awakening inherent in every being in the samsāric condition. It is also to be noted that the tendency towards an ontological position—or at least towards an ontological formulation of a doctrine—which, as mentioned above, appears in the case of Dignāga is also connected with the Vākyapadīya; for Dignāga’s Traikālyaparikṣā is essentially an only slightly modified version of verses taken mostly from Bhartṛhari’s Prākritakakāṅḍa (3. 3. 53–85).
It is next explained that the Jo nañ pa doctrines are similar to those of the Sāmkhya inasmuch as they assume what amounts to a kind of inherent liberation existing continuously from the outset in every puruṣa or being. But, as the author of the ThG shows at some length, such an interpretation has been explicitly rejected in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra itself in its presentation of the tathāgata-garbha doctrine. Similarities are also pointed out in the ThG between the logical consequences of the Jo nañ pa theories and some Mimāṁsaka and early Vedāntin doctrines; as regards the latter, it is also to be noted that the relative world is said to be an erroneous illusory appearance (‘khrul snan [bhrānta-ābhāsa?], but not māya). 18

The ThG moreover briefly indicates how the Jo nañ pa theory is in conflict with the basic doctrine of the Buddha, for it inevitably leads both to a ‘nihilistic’ and to an ‘eternalistic’ position—ucchedavāda and sāśvatavāda—, the two extremes which the teaching of the middle path avoids. Contradictions are also pointed out with the teaching of Nāgārjuna; and it is explained that the Dharmanadhatustotra is to be interpreted in the sense of the Mādhyamikakārikās.

A list is then given of the chief refutations of the Jo nañ pa doctrines composed by scholars of various schools. And reference is also made to some comparable points in the doctrine of the famous but unorthodox Sa skya pa scholar šākya mchog Idan.

The Jo nañ pa chapter of the ThG does not however close on an exclusively polemical note; for, while rigorously combatting their unorthodox teachings which conflict with the Mādhyamika, Blo bzan chos kyi ni ma also pays tribute to the part played by their masters in transmitting instructions in the Kālacakra.

Translation 18a

Here begins the discourse concerning the history of what is known as the Jo nañ pa doctrine,
The way opened up wide by Dol bu pa, the white banner renowned as the Omniscient One who made the entire assembly of scholars tremble greatly.

The sixth chapter of the Grub mtha’ šel gyi me loñ on the history of the Jo nañ pa doctrine contains three sections: 1, the history of the doctrine; 2, the doctrinal method of the gzan ston theory according to their system; and 3, the demonstration that this this theory is bad.

1. The history of the doctrine

The anchorite Thugs rje brtson ’grus19 founded a monastery at Jo mo nañ. After Dol bu pa had settled there, the doctrine spread widely; and subsequently those who maintained this tradition received the name of Jo nan pas.
Yu mo Mi bskyod rdo rje was the originator of the Jo naṅ pa doctrine. At first a yogin, he later became a monk with the name of Dad pa rgyal po. He attended on many spiritual-superiors including Sog 'dul 'dsin; and [2a] he heard some teachings from Somanī.tha, the great paṇḍit from Kaśmīr. From Somanī.tha’s disciple sGro ston gNam la brtsegs he heard in detail the _Tantravṛtti_ [the Vimalaprabhā] of the Kālacakrā together with its _upadeśa_, as well as the _Pradīpoddyotana_ [of the Guhyasamājā] together with its _upadeśa_. He then went to 'U yug and achieved intuitive-comprehension (adhigama) by means of realization-in-meditation (bhāvanā); and the _gzan ston_ theory appeared in his mind. As a master of abhijñā he was very well known as an adept (siddha), for he many times manifested many transformations-through-artifice in the shape of a crow, a magpie and so forth. He also composed some manuals on the Kālacakrā. He died at the age of 82 [i.e. in his 82nd year].

The chief of his many disciples was his son Dharmeśvara. Up to the age of twenty he mastered all the texts and the traditional instructions belonging to the great adept. And, attending on many scholars, he cultivated above all the Mādhyamika and logic, the Guhyasamājā, and the Kālacakrā [2b]. Fully endowed as he was with transcending discriminative knowledge (prajñā), he is known as the manifestation of Mañjuśrī. Several of his teachings are extant.

His great disciple was Nam mkha’ od zer; and the latter’s pupil was Dharmeśvara’s son Se mo che ba Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan. Next came 'Jam gsar śes rab ’od zer. It is said that until then the scripture (āgama) of the Kālacakrā was limited (in its diffusion), but that after 'Jam gsar the teaching became generalized.

The latter’s pupil was the omniscient Chos sku ’od zer. His pupil was the anchorite Thugs rje brtson ’grus who composed a treatise on the sByor drug (Ṣaḍāṅgayoga). His pupil was Byan sems rGyal be ye śes. Yon tan rgya mtsho, learned and reverend, was the pupil of the last two masters; and his disciple was Dol bu pa śes rab rgyal mtshan, known as the Omniscient.

Dol bu pa listened extensively to the Sūtra and Tantra doctrines under more than thirty masters, and he studied in detail Pāramitā, logic and Abhidharma under sKyi ston 'Jam dbyaṅs grags pa rgyal mtshan. He then held philosophical discussions in the provinces of dBus and gTsül and became very well known as a scholar. From sKyi ston he heard all the Mantra instructions such as the Consecration (ahbiṣeka) itself and about seventy ancillary indications. He received the bhikṣu’s ordination from the great ācārya of Chos luṅ tshogs pa, bSod nams grags pa.

Until then he had been a follower of the Sa skya pa doctrine; but at the age of 31 he went to Jo mo naṅ and heard many Consecrations and instructions, and above all the _dban khrid_ of the Kālacakrā, from the learned and reverend Yon tan rgya mtsho [3a]. Henceforth he followed the doctrinal tradition of the Jo naṅ pas; and through his realization-in-meditation of the Ṣaḍāṅgayoga the sign of perfect _prāṇāyāma_ appeared. He then occupied the abbatial seat of Jo naṅ and constructed the great _sku ’bum_.
At that time he ascertained completely the theory of the gžan ston; and he composed a treatise devoted to it called the Ri chos nes don rgya mtsho. Hence it is said that, a mountain having been heaped up, the ocean flowed forth. To many scholars he preached chiefly the exposition of the Tantra-vṛtti of the Kālacakra and the gžan ston theory. He showed signs of spiritual realization, such as the vision of the countenances of many divinities and the simultaneous manifestation of three bodily dispositions (vyūha); and he fully accomplished the tasks of the scholar by conferring on many pupils the texts, expositions and instructions of Sūtra and Tantra and by composing treatises. In general more than 2000 religious and about 1000 adepts gathered together; and it is related for example that mChims Blo bzaṅ grags pa perceived him in the form of Avalokiteśvara while his disciple (antevāsin) Nam mkha’ byan chub perceived him in the form of Mañjughoṣa.

Amongst the numberless disciples who came to him, the translator Blo gros dpal and Sa bzaṅ Mati paṇ chen became his spiritual sons. Phyogs las rnam rgyal and many other scholars [3b] who preserved the continuity of Action (’phrin las: kārītra) also came to him.

Phyogs rgyal ba after having made his studies at Sa skya became a great scholar. At first he did not accept the gžan ston theory; but when the great Dol bu pa gave a discourse on the scriptural tradition and reasoning on the occasion of a discussion at Jo nān, he felt no disturbance and became his disciple. He heard in their entirety numerous expositions of Sūtra and Mantra, and above all the dbaṅ khrid of the Kālacakra. He also requested many teachings from the omniscient Bu ston. He was Master of the law (chos dpon) at Nam riṅs, and he composed many treatises on Pāramitā and logic.

The great scholar Na dbon Kun dga’ dpal arrived in order to become his disciple. And the omniscient master Tson kha pa also heard the Kālacakra from Phyogs rgyal ba, as well as the Pāramitā from Na dbon.

Subsequently the current of the consecration and explanation of the Kālacakra received a very wide diffusion. But the gžan ston theory was unanimously refuted by numerous scholars and adepts, and it became weak. However, Jo nān Kun dga’ gro lchos byaṅ rtse and the rest—were equally changed into dGe lugs pa ones, and the majority of the xylographs of their scriptures were sequestred and sealed. Except that mention is made of a monastery in mDo khams Dsam than which was
founded by Jo nañ kun mkhyen’s [i.e. Dol bu pa’s] pupil’s pupil, the drun and dka’ bži pa Rin chen dpal, and of some monasteries which are its dependents, at the present time no foundation maintaining the Jo nañ doctrine exists in dBus or gTsān.

And, with the sole exception of the sGrub thabs rin chen 'byun gnas, the streams of religion of Jo nañ have disappeared (literally: have become a rainbow-body).

* * *

The source of the gžan ston doctrine originated with Yu mo Mi bskyod rdo rje. When he realized-in-meditation the Ādaṅgayoga of the Kālacakra, the divine Body image of Void-form (ston gzugs kyi lha'i sku rnam pa) arose from within and constituted the basis of misapprehension. Relying only on the letter of Sūtras of indirect meaning (neyārtha) as well as on some Tantras, he taught that the gžan ston, the truth of absolute-Meaning (paramārthasalya), permanent, stable and eternal, pervading all that is static and mobile, is identical with the sugatagarbha and exists in the Existential-Nature of Foundation (gzi'i gnas lugs la yod pa). As a result of spiritual practice employing the graded method of the six Yogas, there arose in his conception this mass of contradiction in the direct-apprehension of the dharmatā-Body which is the Result; and he named it the theory of the gžan ston. And mixing with it the practical instruction (khrid) on the Kālacakra, he expounded it as a hidden doctrine (lkog pa'i chos).

This explanation was transmitted from disciple to disciple down to Dol bu pa šes rab [4b] rgyal mtshan. However, there had hitherto existed no manual devoted especially to this doctrine, but only oral indications; and because the masters who upheld this doctrinal tradition were solely Yogins who had only good spiritual experiences, they had not made detailed expositions to demonstrate the scriptural tradition and arguments. Hence they were not well known.

Dol bu pa composed a treatise expounding this theory called the Ņes don rgya mtsho, as well as many opuscules such as the bkA’ bsdu bži pa. After having made several demonstrations of the scriptural tradition and the arguments, he established the doctrine (siddhānta) known as the ‘theory of the gžan ston of absolute-Meaning.’

Following him Phyogs las nam rgyal composed the large and the small ‘Khrul ’jams. And Ṇa dbon Kun dga’ dpal composed the Grub mtha’ ’od gsal rigyan, etc.

Subsequently the theory and doctrine of the Jo nañ pas became very well known.

2. The doctrinal method of the gžan ston theory

In the Ņes don rgya mtsho the following is taught. The Essential-Nature (yin lugs) of all dharmas, the truth of absolute-Meansing, is permanent, stable and eternal. In the ālaya there are the Gnosis (jñāna) and the vijnāna, and it is the
Gnosis; it is also the triratna of the dharmatā of absolute-Meaning (don dam chos ŋid kyi dkon mchog gsum); it is the divine-Assembly of the non-duality of 'noema' and 'noesis' which exists penetrating everything static and mobile (brtan g-yo kun la khyab par bžugs pa'i dbyiṅs rig dbyer med kyi lha tshogs); it is identical with the sugatagarbha, the Lineage existing by Nature, and the hundred Families (kula) etc. mentioned in the Tantras. It has been explained in detail how it resides in the continuum of the non-duality of Ground and Result; how it exists in the three conditions (gnas skabs) of the dharmakāya; and, since it is considered that it never appears (snañ ba) in the vijñāna despite the fact that it always resides in the Ground, how it—the Existential-Nature of Foundation (gzi'i gnas tshul)—is the immediate-apprehension of the dharmatā-Body of Result through the gradual practice of the six Yogas. It is stated that this is clearly expounded in the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra, the Mahābhārata, the Jñānālokākāraśūtra, the Śrīmālādeviśimhanādasūtra, the Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa, the Mahāparinirvānasūtra, the Avataṃsaka, the Ratnakūta, and the Suvarnaprabhāsottamasūtra. And this has been set forth in detail in the Uttaratantra and its Commentary, where the intention of the last Cycle of the Teaching is explained, as well as in the dBu ma la bstod pa of Ārya-Nāgārjuna, etc.

The explanation given by the great masters, the realization-in-meditation of the great Yogins, and the doctrines taught by the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas of the ten directions of Space are all without error. But all that which belongs to the Relative (saṃvṛti)—the doctrines of the Void-of-Own-being (raṇ stōṇ), the Void of destruction (chad stōṇ) and the Void of negation (dgag stōṇ) which are the Partial (prādeśika) Void and total non-existence (ye nas med pa)—must be rejected in all their forms by those seeking Liberation. Such is the teaching of the Nes don rgya mtsho.

3. Proof that this doctrine is wrong

It is established by his reputation that the great Omniscient Dol bu pa was an excellent and inconceivable being; and a foundation for an intentional statement having a special motive (dgoṅs gzi dgos pa khyad par can) may indeed exist in accordance with an occasional declaration by Bhagavat which is intended for certain disciples (vineya) and according to which a pudgalātman exists [5b]. However, the system which accepts the doctrine literally appears quite comparable to the theses of the heterodox (fīrthika).

In fact, the fīrthika proponents of the Word-brahman (śabdabrahmavādin) state that there is a transformation (yoṅs su 'gyur ba) of the brahman which is free from the spatial differentiations of east, west, etc., which is unproduced and indestructible, and which is the proper-nature of Word; the aggregate of entities of form etc. is just this [transformation]. The Śabdabrahmavādins thus state: "The brahman without beginning and end is the Word-essence and the Syllable: in it is produced the world construction, and it transforms itself into the world of
objectivity.” Since it is the essence of Word, it is called śabdatattva, meaning that it is the true essence of the Word. What is called ‘supreme’ (mchog) is the Self of the oṁ (oṁ gyi bdag ṅid); in fact, oṁ is known as the proper-nature of all words and all things (artha); and it is the Veda. It constitutes the means of comprehending the Veda which is present as a series of syllables and words; and it exists as the form of this [Veda]. The Sābdabrahmavādins add that this brahman, the supreme ātman, constitutes the obtaining of the supreme dharma-of-result, felicity (abhyudaya) and the summum bonum (niḥśreyas), and that it is not perceived by the inner-organ.

Similarly, the Jo nan pas teach that the permanent, stable and eternal taught under the name of ‘sugatagarbha’—the Divinity of absolute-Meaning (don dam pa’i lha), mantra, tantra (rgyud), maṇḍala, mudrā, etc.—[6a], the Perfection of the supreme self—which is totally pure, has the qualities of the Forces (bala), etc. existing inherently since the beginning, and exists since the beginning pervading all the static and mobile world—is the Existential-Nature constituting the foundation of all that is the relative rañ stoñ.

Thus, just as the āśtrikā proponents of the śabdabrahman maintain that all entities (bhāva) are transformations of the Word and that they possess its proper-nature, the Jo nan pas also consider that the permanent and stable which pervades all that is static and mobile is the Essential-Nature of all. There is therefore not the slightest difference between these two theories.

Moreover, the way in which the Jo nan pas teach how Liberation is obtained does not appear to differ from the āśtrikā Sāṁkhya philosophers. The Sāṁkhya postulates 25 categories and maintains that amongst them 24 are material (jada) while the 25th is cognition (śes pa) or consciousness (rig pa), permanent and stable, the proper-nature of the sentient-being which pervades all that is static and mobile, is unconditioned and is the self of proper-nature free from the actions of going, coming, etc. When the puruṣa of cognition and consciousness has a desire for the enjoyment (bhoga) of an object, the pradhāna manifests all the aggregates of transformation; the buddhi which is of a material nature then becomes inclined (žen pa: abhiniviš-) to this, and the puruṣa has the enjoyment of the object of inclination. Thus, while the solitary puruṣa of cognition and consciousness has never before been perceived in the condition of the cycle-of-existences (saṁsāra), by reason of the inclination together of the puruṣa and the objects of enjoyment, it finds itself turning about in saṁsāra [6b] and experiences Pain (duḥkha).

Thereupon one practises meditation, and when its constant habit has been achieved, the desiring inclination that the puruṣa has for objects diminishes more and more. Because it is observed by the divine-eye (divyacakṣus), the pradhāna no longer manifests the transformation-aggregate because of shame; and the transformations are first reabsorbed in that from which they were originally produced, and the transformation is finally tranquilized in the nature of the pradhāna. As the pradhāna exists in a potential state without ever being manifested, all these perceptible evolutes from it having a worldly nature clarify themselves like a rain-bow in space; and the self or
puruṣa of cognition and consciousness then exists alone. When nothing else appears any more, the Sāṃkhya holds that Liberation has been obtained.60

Similarly, the Jo naï pas also consider that the Essential-disposition of all dharmas, though existing permanently from the outset, is not seen because of conceptual-inclination (abhiniveśa). Then when one perceives through the practice of yoga that they have the proper-nature of a mirage (marīci), of smoke, etc.,61 he obtains ultimate Awakening (sāṁrgyas); the permanent tathatā alone appears then, and nothing else appears. Whereas the sāṁvṛti and the rañ stōn are nothing but total non-existence (ye med la sŏn ba), when nothing but the solitary absolute-Meaning appears Awakening is obtained.

The two preceding systems are thus quite similar; and there is not the slightest difference of superiority or inferiority between them, as any intelligent person who examines them will understand.

Moreover, the Jo naï pas maintain that the whole of the octad [of vijñānas] consisting of the present ālayavijñāna etc. possesses an impure proper-nature (tsogs brgyad 'dus pa 'di dag dri ma'i rañ bzhin can), and in this they resemble the Mīmāṃsaka who accepts impurity as the proper-nature of the mind [7a]. The impurity penetrates into the nature of the mind; therefore, though one may try to remedy it so as to eliminate it, this is really useless. Hence, although they have a theory of liberation, it is the cycle-of-existence (sāṁsāra) that they have really established!

Moreover, the Jo naï pas, inasmuch as they maintain that the things which belong to relativity are only illusory appearances ('khrul snañ), admit that the permanent absolute-Meaning is established if it differs from this [relativity]. Now this theory is comparable to that of the different tīrthikas who advocate the Vedānta and who affirm that this ('di) is just an erroneous appearance; that the permanent and omnipresent knowledge (šes pa) which includes no duality between subject and object finds itself when separated from this ('di nas logs na) in the proper-nature of Liberation; and that the many separately existing selves of the creatures are absorbed in the essence of the great Self when they obtain liberation. This is so because, except for a mere difference in terms, they both hold in reality that liberation is permanent and because their systems of liberation (grol tshul) and of [bondage in the] cycle-of-existences ('khor tshul) are similar.

The theory proposed by the Jo naï pas in this respect proves to incur besides the twin fault of eternalism and nihilism. For by holding that the proper-nature of the absolute-Meaning exists as a permanent proper-nature, they fall into the extreme of the eternal (sāśvatānta); and by accepting that the relativity which exists beforehand in the sāṁsāric condition no longer exists when one is Awakened, they fall into the extreme of nihilism (ucchedānta).

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To support their doctrine of the gzan stōn which is truth of absolute-Meaning (paramārthasatya), permanent, stable and eternal, and which pervades all the
static and mobile, the Jo nān pas also quote the Tathāgata garbhasūtra, the Kālacakra, the Dharmadhūtusotra, and numerous Sūtra and Śāstra texts [7b]. It is however absolutely necessary to interpret texts of indirect meaning (neyārtha) by means of the three Gates [i.e. criteria] of the intentional-basis (dgoṅs gzi, that which is intended but expressed indirectly), the motive (dgos pa) and the incompatibility (gnod byed, between a literal interpretation and the real doctrine).

If it is declared (by the Teacher) that Forces (bala) and Intrepideities (vaisāradya) exist in the sentient-being, this refers only to the ground (gvi) for their production through purification of the impurity of the sentient-being, who is by nature perfectly pure (prakṛti viṣuddha).

If it is declared that the permanent and stable tathāgata garbha exists, this is an indirect meaning pronounced with reference to the tathatā in order to attract the ārthikas; but if it were of definitive meaning (nītārtha), it would not differ from the heterodox ātmavāda. This has been clearly declared by the Buddha himself in the Lankāvatārasūtra:62 ‘The Bodhisattva Mahāmati addressed Bhagavat respectfully saying: Bhagavat has declared the tathāgata garbha. Bhagavat has declared that the primordially-pure through Purity which is luminous by proper-nature since the outset and possessing the thirty-two Marks (lakṣaṇa) exists within the body (lus = deha) of sentient-beings; Bhagavat has declared that, though enveloped—like a precious stone enveloped by a rag—by the rag of the skandhas, dhātus and āyatanas, overwhelmed by concupiscence, hate and confusion, and soiled by the impurity of unreal dichotomizing-thought,63 it is permanent, stable and eternal. O Bhagavat, if this is so, how does the tathāgata garbha doctrine differ from the ātmavāda of the ārthikas? [8a] O Bhagavat, the ārthikas also formulate a doctrine of permanence, speaking as they do of the permanent, stable, attributeless, omnipresent, and indestructible.

‘Bhagavat replied: O Mahāmati, my teaching of the tathāgata garbha is not like the ātmavāda of the ārthikas. O Mahāmati, for the meanings (padārtha) śūnyatā, bhūtakoṭi, nirvāṇa, anutpāda, animitta, aparāniḥita, etc. the Tathāgatas-Arhat-Saṃyaksaṃbuddhas have given the teaching of the tathāgata garbha. So that the puerie may abandon their states of fear concerning Insubstantiality (nairātmyasamtrāsapada), the state of the absence of conceptualization, the domain of non-appearance (nirābhāsagocara) is taught by the teaching of the Gate of the tathāgata garbha. O Mahāmati, the Bodhisattvas of the future and the present must not attach themselves in their conceptions (abhinivis-) to a self. O Mahāmati, a potter for example makes from a single lump of clay pots of different shapes by using his hands, skill, a tool, water, a cord, and effort. Similarly, O Mahāmati, by the varied use of transcending discriminative knowledge and skill in means the Tathāgatas teach [8b] that reversal of all the features of conceptualization, the Insubstantiality of dharmas, either by the teaching of the tathāgata garbha or by the teaching of Insubstantiality—and this by different turns of word and syllable in the manner of a potter.64 O Mahāmati, the Tathāgatas thus teach the (tathāgata)garbha inasmuch as they teach the tathāgata garbha in order to attract (ākārṣaṇa) those who are attached to the heterodox
ātmavāda. How can people whose minds (āṣaya) fall into the conceptual theory bearing on an unreal self (abhūtātmavikalpa) attain quickly the complete Awakening in the supreme and exact Sambodhi, possessing a mind (āṣaya) comprised in the domain of the three vimokṣamukhas? O Mahāmati, it is because of this that the Tathāgatas teach the tathāgatagarbha. O Mahāmati, with a view to casting aside the heterodox theory you must treat the tathāgatagarbha as non-substantial (anātman).

In this text Mahāmati is Maṇjughoṣa, and in order to resolve the doubts of people of little intelligence he respectfully asked the Teacher: If the Lord’s mode of teaching the tathāgatagarbha is of indirect meaning, what is the intentional-basis and what is the motive; if it is a teaching of definitive meaning, there will be no difference between it and the self of the tūrthikas. The Lord then replies: Whereas this would be true if the meaning were definitive, because the meaning is indirect the teaching is not similar to the ātmavāda of the tūrthikas.

In this connexion the intentional-basis [9a] is the Limit-of-Reality (bhūtakoṭī). The motive is to attract through Means those whom it would be impossible to introduce to the Teaching because of their fright were the Essential-Nature to be taught straightaway to the heterodox who are from the outset attached in their conceptions to a self; they will have faith in this mode of verbal teaching conforming with their theory of the permanent self and in the Tathāgata, and then little by little they will comprehend the reality (tattva). Thus the teaching is not faulty, and attainments will result.

If this Sūtra were of definitive meaning, this would involve the enormity of an unconditioned (asaṃskṛta) adorned with the Formal-attributes of the Marks (lakṣaṇa) and subsidiary Marks (anuvyāñjana), of an ultimate dharmadhātu endowed with the two Purities united with the skandhas and dhātus having an Efflux (sāsrava), and of a Buddha overwhelmed by the three poisons [of concupiscence, hate and confusion]. For, in Nāgārjuna’s teaching contained in the Dharmadhātustotra etc., the intentional-basis of Relativity—viz. the shining-knowledge of the Mind, Production-in-interdependence, that which is dependent—and the intentional-basis of absolute-Meaning—Reality, all that belongs to saṃsāra and the ground of purification (sbyān gū) from the impurities, are only discursive denominations. For otherwise there would arise a contradiction with the Mādhyamikakārikās.

If you object that there exists an important distinction because the gūn stōṇ of absolute-Meaning has been expounded in the Stotra-collection whereas the Mādhyamikakārikās expound merely the raṇ stōṇ (svabhāva-śūnya) and Absolute-Negation, it will be necessary to point out that the Mādhyamikakārikās (25. 4–6) reject the opinion that nirvāṇa is either an entity or a non-entity by stating:

[bhāvas tāvena nirvāṇam jāramaranalakṣaṇam/
prasaśyeyasti bhāvo hi na jāramaranam vinā/
 bhūvas ca yadi nirvāṇam nirvāṇam saṃskṛtam bhavet/
 nāsaṃskṛto hi vidyate bhāvaḥ kvacana kaścana//

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bhāvaś ca yadi nirvāṇam anupādāya tat katham/
nirvāṇaṁ nānupādāya kaścid bhāvo hi vidyate//

Nirvāṇa is not an entity [9b]: (otherwise) the characteristic of ageing-death would arise, for there is no entity without the characteristic of ageing-death. If nirvāṇa is an entity, it will be conditioned; for nowhere does a non-conditioned entity exist. If nirvāṇa is an entity, how is it that nirvāṇa is independent? For nowhere does an independent entity exist.—What is it then? The Mādhyamikakārikā (25.3) explains:

[aprahāṇam asampṛaptam anucchinnam asāśvatam/
aniruddham anutpannam etan nirvāṇam ucyate//]

That which is unrejected and unobtained, undestroyed and non-eternal, unabolished and unproduced is called nirvāṇa. Your thesis contradicts this statement.

If you object that this refers to the raṇ stoṇ, your own opinion that nirvāṇa is the absolute-Meaning itself without a distinction between raṇ stoṇ and gāṇ stoṇ is untenable. Moreover, you must explain how the Mādhyamikakārikās 25.19–20 are to be understood:

[na saṃsārasya nirvānāt kimeid asti viśeṣaṇam/
na nirvāṇasya saṃsārāt kimeid asti viśeṣaṇam//
nirvāṇasya ca yā koṭīḥ koṭīḥ saṃsārasya ca/
na tayor antaraṃ kiṃ cit susūkṣmam api vidyate//]

Saṃsāra is in no way different from nirvāṇa, and nirvāṇa is in no way different from saṃsāra; the limit of nirvāṇa is the limit of saṃsāra, and there is no distinction between them, however subtle.

If all the sources which have constituted erroneous discourses concerning the system of the two Truths and the theories on the indirect and definitive meanings of the three Cycles were to be cited in addition, there would be a superabundance; and seeing that details about this are to be found elsewhere, we shall not expatiate on them here. It has been necessary to explain this much here because some persons who pride themselves now on being interpreters of the dharma are embroiled in the very work of Mara inasmuch as they teach that this Jo naṅ pa doctrine is similar not only to the Cittamātra but also [10a] to the intention of the Kālacakra and its commentary and also to the essence of the Mahāmudrā in the mantra-system. The ominous talk which such an affirmation comprises is like the shameless cry of a crow;67 and the errors in this bad theory have therefore been briefly revealed. But on the ears of those beings without desires who perceive that the good and the bad, gold and aconite, are Equal, how can such talk have the effect even of the sound of a herdsman’s flute?

In Tibet, the land of snows, there exist many different philosophical doctrines, and it is necessary to identify the sources belonging to the different channels and
instructions of authoritative scholars and adepts. Although some errors may exist in the manner of constructing the discursive presentation, if persons versed in the scriptural tradition and in reasoning and endowed with spiritual experience examine them with an impartial mind, the essential meaning will be in fundamental agreement, as is written in the Omniscient Pan chen's *Phyag chen rtsa 'grel.* But because this Jo naṅ pa doctrine stems from a personal invention, it is not a source transmitted by the Indian scholars and adepts; and if a sentient-being propounds such a bad and low theory which is incurable because the intention of many Sūtras and Śastras of definitive meaning has been incorrectly explained, all the Sūtras and Tantras proclaim that the Maturation (vipāka) of this is unimaginable. If the sentient-being remains on the correct Path, he will become the protector of numberless sentient-beings. But by severing the vital-artery of Liberation (rgyu), the cause (rgyu) of the dharma-kāya of the tathāgata is destroyed.

Thus, because they could not tolerate this method, many excellent beings of the past who were as renowned as sun and moon composed many treatises which destroyed these pernicious views.

The Omniscient Bu ston composed the refutation called *b De gšogs snyin po gsal zin mdses pa'i rgyan*; and his spiritual son the Translator (*lo tsā ba*) composed the *b De gšogs snyin po'i mdses rgyan gyi rgyan.* The pitakadhara brTson 'grus dpal composed the *bDe gšogs snyin po gsal bar byed pa'i sgron me.* Yar 'brog pa Rin chen tog composed the *mNam med dban po'i rdo rje,* the Ye šes thog tog, the *rDo rje'i thog chen,* and the *rDo rje'i tho ba.* The Sa skya scholar and master of the six sciences dGe 'dun dpal, the pitakadhara of *bDe ba can Rin chen gzhon nu,* and the *dka' bži pa Rin chen rdo rje* also forcefully refuted this doctrine.

In their discourses the incomparable and great Red mda' ba and our omniscient *bla ma* Tson kha pa expounded many texts and arguments refuting this bad theory. And during the time when he was residing at gNas rnin before going to the presence of the Master, the eldest of the latter's spiritual sons, the omniscient rGyal tshab, also composed a treatise named *Yid kyi mun sel* which defeats the theory of those who hold the extreme position of a permanent self having the name *buddha.* He then circulated in the schools of scholars a challenge called a Request for the opportunity to discuss at any place and time, saying that if a refutation of the thesis of this doctrine is not permitted, people will incline to the opinion that this is the truth and that all else is confusion (moha); but seeing that complete proofs exist in the scriptural tradition and in reasoning, if a discussion is permitted, once the Sūtras and the Tantras and their instructions, the great masters of India and Tibet, and all the doctrines established by the Buddhists and non-Buddhists have been cited, they will be discussed in order to determine which are in accord.

Though there were at that time many followers of Dol bu pa’s system like Phyogs rgyal and Na dbon who were excellent debators, nobody had the requisite skilled-insight (pratībhāna) to refute his arguments on this matter.
Later Zi luṅ pa Šākya mchog Idan, who claimed to uphold the Sa skya teaching and who was celebrated as a great scholar, wrote in his youth the dbu ma rnam ńes, the rTsod yig tshigs bcad ma, etc. Moved as he was without his being free in mind by the demon of passion and hate directed against the method of the theory established by the master Tson kha pa—the real meaning of Nāgārjuna and his Son (Āryadeva)—he thus composed many apparent refutations. And claiming he had accepted literally the texts of the Rigs tshogs and of Candrakīrti, he explained that the theory of neither being nor non-being (yod min med min gyi tla ba) was the doctrine of Śrī-Candra. But in his old age he composed the Lugs gnis rnam 'byed; and, after having affirmed that Asānaka and his brother Vasubandhu were Great Mādhyamikas and that Candrakīrti and the rest were Mādhyamika proponents of the non-existence of Own-being (nihsvabhāvatā), he for example insisted that this sūnyatā is not to be practised at the time of realization-inmeditation because it is the sūnyatā of destruction (chad ston) and absolute-negation (prasajyapratiṣedha). He thus composed many terrible discourses.

As a result of having during his whole life studied the doctrines, at the time of his death he became aware of the bad and low theory which defeats the cause (rgyu = hetu) of the dharmakāya of the tathāgata; and this constitutes a sign of the great merits of Šākya mchog Idan. When he changed his field-of-existence (žin), he accepted as retribution the fruit-flowing (nisyandaphala) from his act of reviling the exact vision of his youth. And in his subsequent existences he had experience of many burdens in accordance with what is expressed in a verse of the Catuhṣataka (12.10): “He who is enveloped by confusion of thought procures for himself spiritual obstacles, and he will obtain neither the good nor a fortiori Liberation.”

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In the divisions of one lunation of the established-doctrine (siddhānta), the bright fortnight brings the clear light which is the right explanation;

And the dark fortnight comprises the thick darkness of bad theories: the Jo naṅ pa system includes both.

The brilliant dawn, which is the good explanation of the Kālacakra, brings thousands of suns which are the joy of scholars;

But the darkness of the bad and incurable theory in the Jo naṅ pa system obscures the Path of Liberation.

The refutations made by scholars constitute sometimes a shower of hailstones, while sometimes offerings of flower-garlands of praise are made.

After such a one as I has subjected it to a decisive examination, it is difficult to praise or criticise [exclusively] the Jo naṅ pa system:

This system joining together the iron band of the theory of the permanent, stable and eternal and the golden band of the consecrations of the Tantras and instructions
Was obtained, it is related, from Kailāsa by Yu mo in a state of Composition of mind.

The preceding discussion of this history [12a] has been made both like a naturally shining mirror and like a needle that removes the thorns of faults and errors.

This exposition of the history of the Jo naṅ pa doctrine which is part of the Cristal Mirror of good Explanations which expounds the sources and methods of the doctrines is finished.

[Well-being to all!]

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Appendix

History of the Jo naṅ pas according to the Nor pa chos ’byun

Jo naṅ kun spāṅs [Thugs rje brtson ’grus] came to Dab šar in La stod Byaṅ. He was the abbot of Naṅ stod rKyaṅ ’dur. Having relinquished this function, he practised religion in mountain retreats and became renowned as an anchorite (kun spāṅs). When Jo mo nags rgyal presented a secluded place (dgon gnas) to him, he founded Jo mo; and since this lord (rje) was a pupil of the Dharmarāja ‘Phags pa and the others, Jo naṅ also is a branch monastery (dgon lag) of Sa skya. Thereafter, Byaṅ sems rGyal ba ye šes, mKhas btsun Yon tan rgya mtsho and others came.

Dol bu šes rab rgyal mtshan came to Dol bu Ban tshaṅ in mNa’ ris, and he attended on sKyi ston, mKhas btsun Yon tan rgya mtsho and others. He occupied the abbatial seat of Jo naṅ, instituted the doctrinal system of the gžan ston and constructed the sKu ’bum chen mo, and [thus] the treasury of the Dharma was revealed; so he said he thought that, the mountain having been heaped up, the ocean flowed forth.

His pupil Jo naṅ Phyogs rgyal ba also came to Dol bu in mNa’ ris; and he occupied the abbatial seats of both Jo naṅ and Nam riṅ.

Concerning Nam riṅs, together with the bdag chen of Byaṅ, the Tva wen chen po Nam mkha’ bstan pa, this master founded the residence (bla braṅ), assembly hall, etc. of Nam riṅ. [149a] Thereafter there was a line of abbots at Nam riṅs.

Kun mkhyen Dol bu pa’s pupil Kun spāṅs Chos grags pa was the son of the dpon Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan, the elder brother of the great Yon btsun Grags pa dar, the dpon chen of Byaṅ in the g-yas ru [of gTsaṅ province] belonging to the dbon rgyud of the Sa skya bla braṅ Khan sar chen mo. He attended on dPaṅ lo, dPal Idan sein ge, Bu ston, Dol bu pa, and many other scholars and adepts. He established many religious schools (chos grva) including bZaṅ Idan, ‘Ga’ ron, Chuṅ kha ba, etc., and he accomplished much that was beneficial as the ornament of the Teaching.

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Sa bzaṅ Ma ti ba came to mDog dpañ po [spelling?] and attended on Dol bu ba, Kun spāṅs pa, dPaṅ lo tsā ba, and others. He also was the first Upādhyāya (mKhan po thog ma) of bZaṅ Idan. His learning was great, and his action was farreaching. He also founded the hermitage (dgon gnas) in the secluded place of dGa’ Idan sa bzaṅ.

Sa bzaṅ 'Phags pa gžon no blo gros occupied his seat there. And the Vajradhara Kun dga’ bzaṅ po came together with the others and occupied this seat.

Notes
1 To begin with the writer wishes to express his deep gratitude and indebtedness to his Tibetan teachers who have generously given him instruction; whatever value the following contribution may possess is largely due to the guidance and instruction of these kind kāläyānaamitras.
1a Cf. Kathāvatthu, p. 56 ff.; etc.
1b Some resemblances are also perhaps to be found between Jo naṅ pa doctrines and certain works attributed to Āśvaghoṣa which are not available in either Sanskrit or Tibetan. Points in common are also noticeable between them and certain schools of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, including Ch’an/Zen and T’ien-t’ai/Tendai. These cannot be further gone into here.

Since the present paper is intended in the first place to make more accessible the chapter of the Grubs mtha’ šel gyi me loṅ dealing with the Jo naṅ pa school, prefatory matter and annotations have had to be reduced to a minimum. There is not enough space to go into detail about their theory of śīnayātā or the tathāgatagarbha and the exegesis of the canonical texts treating it. (This topic forms the subject of a separate study the present writer is preparing.) Nor has it been possible to furnish a full analysis of all the doctrines of the Jo naṅ pa school according to their own texts, since it has hitherto been necessary to rely almost exclusively on accounts of them contained in works written by their critics; it has therefore been possible to give only an outline of their best known doctrines.

The chapter of the Grub mtha’ šel gyi me loṅ (ThG) translated below is one of the most comprehensive discussions available despite its comparative brevity and should thus serve as a reliable sketch of the history and doctrines of the Jo naṅ pa. The writer hopes to publish accounts drawn from other sources in further articles.

The best known and the most recent of the original Jo naṅ pa sources is the gsun 'bum of Tāranātha (sgrol mgon) Kun dga’ shin po, who was born in 1575. (The spelling Tāranātha appears to be the invention of a few modern writers.) On Tāranātha, cf. G. Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, pp. 128–131, 163–164. The gsun 'bum was printed at Phun tshogs glin, the Jo naṅ pa centre mentioned below (cf. op. cit., p. 163b).—A collection of a Century (?) of Jo naṅ pa texts was apparently printed at sDe dge in a single volume under the title Jo naṅ mdsad brgya; and more or less fragmentary manuscripts of some of their works have also been preserved (v. R. O. Meisezahl, Die alttibetischen Handschriften im Reiss-Museum; L. Chandra, JA (1961), p. 513, number 103).

In this article the following abbreviations will be used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KD</td>
<td>gSun 'bum of Kloṅ rdol Rin po che (1Ha sa edition);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KhG</td>
<td>mKhas pa’i dga’ ston of gTsug lag phreṅ ba (Delhi edition);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ThG</td>
<td>Grub mtha’šel gyi me loṅ of Thu’u bkvan Blo bzaṅ chos kyi ni ma;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DN</td>
<td>Deb ther sṅon po of ‘Gos lo tsā ba gžon nu dpal;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSJZ</td>
<td>dPag bsam ljon bzaṅ of Sum pa mKhan po (Calcutta edition);</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Jo nan pas might then be described as advocates of a kind of substantialistic theory, though they are not ontologist supporters of the reality of a composite (samskrtta) thing. Even the Yogacāras are considered in the Tibetan histories of philosophy to be ‘ontologists’ (dhisos po smra ba) because they hypostasize not only the parinispanna but also the paratantra as something established in reality.—However, the entire question of ontology and substantialism in Buddhist philosophy requires further study under such terms can be meaningfully applied to a given school. One authority for example—dKon mchog ’jigs med dbaṅ po in his Grib mtha’ rin chen phren ba (6b0 and 9a2)—went so far as to ascribe to the Sāṃmatīya/Vātsīputrīya the doctrine of the substantial existence (rdzas yod: dravyasat) of the pudgala; but this view has been questioned by followers such as Guṅ than dKon mchog bsTan pa’i sgron me (Legs bṣad sīn po ’i mchan 19a). The discussion on the gzan ston refers back to the itaretarasūnyatā and the Śūtra text which gives as an example of one kind of Voidness a residence for the community (gtsug lag khaṅ, kūṭāgāra or vihāra) empty of elephants, cows, sheep, etc., but not empty of all monks, etc. Since the comparison made between the author of the Yum gsum gnod ’joms and the Jo nan pas concerns only the method of expounding Voidness (ston tshul), there need be no contradiction with what is said in the ThG translated below concerning the Jo nan pa doctrines being a Tibetan invention.

The exact significance of this comparison with Daṃstrāsena is in any case difficult to evaluate since the authorship of the Yum gsum gnod ’joms is disputed. Bu ston (Luṅ gi sīne ma, 3a6) states that Daṃstrāsena was the author of the ’Bum gyi ṅik, i.e. the gnod ’joms chuṅ ba (mDo ’grel, volumes na and pa) on the Śatasāhasrikā. But, while noting the ascription of the Yum gsum gnod ’joms also to Daṃstrāsena, the Bu ston Ohos ‘byün (156a5–6) considers this commentary to be in fact a Paddhati by Vasubandhu; and this last ascription is also found in Bu ston’s gSan yig (17b2). (Exactly how Bu ston could attribute this work to Vasubandhu is not altogether clear. Could he possibly have had in mind the slob dpon dByig gshen or Vasubandhu to whom another work of doubtful authorship preserved in the bsTan ’gyur—the Don gsaṅ ba—is ascribed? But see the dKar chag of the Peking edition as quoted by P. Cordier, Catalogue du fonds tibétain, Troisième partie, p. 284.)—In any case, the ascription to Vasubandhu is cogently rejected by Tson kha pa, who ascribes it tentatively to Daṃstrāsena (gSer phren, 4b-5b, and Legs bṣad sīn po, 37b6), (This question has been touched on by E. Obermiller, Bu ston’s History of Buddhism, II, p. 146 note, and Doctrine of Prajñāpāramitā, AO, 11 (1932), p. 5 note.)

See my Introduction to the BNTh, Serie Orientale Roma, p. 10–12, concerning the school of Mādhyamikas with which Bu ston is to be connected. Sum pa mkhan po (PSJZ, p. 175.2) states that he is a Prāsaṅgika; while the other authorities cited agree that he was in fact a Prāsaṅgika, they point out that some of his teachings were formulated from the point of view of the Yogācāra-Mādhyamika-Svātantrika method.

This is stated to be the case especially for Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1554), who held
that Maitreyanātha really had in mind the gzan ston theory; his conception of the advayajñāna as the Absolute is thus close to that of the Jo naṇ pas.

Karma 'Phrin las seems also to have held views on the tathāgatagarbha that might be compared with those of the Jo naṇ pas, and he refers to the views of Raṅ byun rdo rje (?1284–1339) on this subject. (I owe this last reference to the kindness of Dr. H. V. Guenther. The dates are as indicated by H. E. Richardson, “The Karmapa Sect,” JRAS, 1958–59.)—The link may thus have been above all with the Karma pas, as is indeed indicated by rJe btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan’s Klu grub dgon’s rgyan. ThG (bKa’ brgyud pa chapter, fol. 46b) attributes such errors to an inability to distinguish properly between the neyārtha and nītārtha texts.

6 The Si tu rin po che Chos kyi ŋin byed is said to have at first followed the Mūdhyaṃkika theory but to have been later introduced to the Jo naṇ pa doctrine by a rNyin ma pa and to have then adopted the gzan ston theory (see ThG 51b).—A gzan ston chen mo is said to be still accepted by rNyin ma pa bla mas.


8 V. ThG 11b, below. On connexions with āśaivism, cf. TPS, p. 92.

The Dol po region in question used to be counted a part of mNa’ ris province, and it is mentioned together with Pu hran, Glo bo (or Mustang, on which see G. Tucci, Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions to Nepal), Gu ge, and Ya tše as part of the sTod region. See also the Kha skoṅ of the Nor pa chos byun, fol. 130b5. This Dol po is now part of Nepal.

The appelation Dol po pa of Šes rab rgyal mtshan points to the connexion between this Jo naṇ pa master and a Dol po region of sTod mNa’ ris. And the name Dol bu must be identical with Dol po—or very nearly so—for not only is Šes rab rgyal mtshan also known as Dol bu pa, but for the place name Dol po’i Ban tshaṅ of DÑ (tha 11a3) the Kha skoṅ (fol. 148 ‘og ma b5, translated below) has Dol bu Ban tshaṅ (or Ban tshad?) in mNa’ ris.

The name Dol however raises a problem. It appears as a kind of surname of persons whose connexion with mNa’ ris Dol po is not determined; and, indeed, according to the DÑ (pa 5a5), Dol is a gdüṅ or clan; but elsewhere it appears as a place name.—In any case, Dol pa was the ‘surname’ of many illustrious Tibetan masters. In the DÑ (ca 14a3), Dol pa dMar žur pa is the same person as Rog Šes rab rgya mtsho. And in many cases a precise connexion with mNa’ ris has not been established; for example, Dol pa Zan thal of the dol gduṅ was a native of ‘Tshur phu (DÑ pa 5a5; on the ‘Tshur family (rigs) in Dol gyi mda’, see ņa 7b5; cf. ga 34b4). However, Dol pa dBaṅ rgyal was from sTod (as distinct from sMad: DÑ na 5a4). (A La[s] stod pa dBaṅ rgyal is mentioned in DÑ tha 9b and ņa 57b6; La stod was the province in which the early Jo naṇ pa master Thugs rje brtson ‘grus was born, and Byaṅ is part of it. On this see the translation of the Kha skoṅ below, as well as p. 80 n. 19 and p. 81 n. 39). Moreover, Dol pa ‘Gar ston dBaṅ phug grub belonged to the spiritual lineage of Yu mo, the early Jo naṇ pa master and teacher of the Kālacakra (DÑ ja 6b7 and tha Sa; cf. also ga 38b6 and tha 4b4).

The latter passages at least appear to establish a link between several bla mas bearing the ‘surname’ Dol pa and Yu mo (who lived in the Kailāsa region and who was the spiritual ancestor of Dol po pa) and his lineage.

It is to be noted that this area in general, and in particular the region of Kailāsa and Mānasarovar, have for countless centuries been places of pilgrimage for ascetics and yogins from India. It is then not impossible that encounters with them may have had some kind of influence on the doctrinal tendencies of the Jo naṇ pateachers.

9 On the pañcits Gokula and Krṣṇa as well as Buddhagupta, Pūrṇānanda, Pūrṇavajra, etc., v. TPS, pp. 137 and 164 (cf. p. 74–75).
TANTRIC BUDDHISM (INCLUDING CHINA AND JAPAN)

10 V. TPS, pp. 189–108.

11 On the princes of Rin spuṅs and Karma bsTan skyoṅ dباn po, usually referred to as sde srid, see THG translated below and also quoted in A. Schieffner, Tāranātha's Geschichte des Buddhismus in Indien (St. Petersburg, 1869), pp. vi–viii (followed by G. Schulemann, Geschichte der Dalai Lamas [Heidelberg, 1911], pp. 135–137); rDogs ldan gžon nu'i dga' ston, fol. 90a f.; TPS, pp. 37a, 58–64, 256 n. 130, 651b, 607–608; H. E. Richardson, The Karma pa Sect, JRAAS, 1958, p. 156–157.

12 V. ThG 4a, below. A Jo naṅ pa monastery—'Dsi ka (spelling?) dgon pa—is said to exist in the district of the same name which forms part of the rNa pa (?) region of A mdo; G. N. Roerich (Blue Annals, p. 777) also speaks of Jo naṅ pas in the lNa ba region of southern A mdo. (It might seem that the PSJZ [ed. L. Chandra, pt. 3, p. 146] also refers to such a connexion with the A mdo region; but Jo naṅ there is presumably an error for Jo noṅ.)

13 V. KD za, 22a–b.

Tāranātha’s spiritual successor, the 17th in the line, was the first Khal kha rje btsun dam paBlo bzāṅ bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan, who lived from 1635 to 1723. Cf. Lokesh Chandra, Eminent Tibetan Polymaths of Mongolia (New Delhi, 1961), pp. 15–17; C. R. Bawden, The Jebtsundamba Khutukhtus of Urga (Wiesbaden, 1961).

14 Dran nes kyi dka’ grel (fol. 10a): mṇon par rtogs pa’i yon tan gyis mi dman pa’i kun mkhyen pa.

15 Many references to this school are naturally to be found in the various Chos ’byun’s and Grub mtha’s. See in particular the Kālacakra chapter of the Dān; KhG tsa, 36b; and BrCh 127b.

16 Blo bzāṅ chos kyi ni ma (1737–1802) was the second re-embodiment of the Thu’u bkan bla ma of dGoṅ lun in A mdo (founded in 1604) and the successor of Nag dbaṅ chos kyi rgya mtsho (1680–1736).

Besides the A mdo editions of his gsun ’bum, a print of it exists in ten volumes made at the Zhol par khan. And a separate edition of the ThG was made at sDe dge, where it is also known as the Bod ohos ’byun.

17 Despite certain resemblances with earlier Indian masters, as noted above the author of the ThG (fol. 10a of the Jo naṅ pa chapter) and other Tibetan authorities reject the idea that the Jo naṅ pas continued some Indian Buddhist tradition. The connexion between Dignāga and Bhartrhari has surprisingly not received the attention it merits though pointed out by E. Frauwallner in 1933 (Festschrift Winternitz [Leipzig, 1933], p. 237). Cf. also my Contributions à l’histoire de la philosophie linguistique indienne (Paris, 1959), pp. 90–92, where some aspects of the question were briefly discussed.

18 It is not always easy to determine exactly to what stage of development in the history of these Brāhmaṇical doctrines the outlines contained in the Tibetan Grub mtha’s correspond. The description of the Śūṅkhyā given in the ThG appears to derive from Candrakīrti’s remarks in Madhyamakāvatāra 6. 121; this form of Śūṅkhyā was briefly discussed by R. Garbe, Śāmkhya-Philosophie (Leipzig, 1917), pp. 391–392. Other sources are the Tarkajviśa and Jñānaśri’s commentary on the Lankāvatārasūtra.—On similarities between the Śāmkhya and Bhartrhari, cf. E. Frauwallner, WZKSO 3 (1959), p. 107–108.

As regards the Vedānta, it maintains in its theory of error the anirvacanlyakhyātidvā. But the word ‘khrul snan cannot directly correspond to this term; once in the Daśabhūmikasūtra, ‘khrul ba corresponds to vivarta. On mithyājñāna, avidyā and the anirvacanlyika, see the Śāmkarabhāṣya on Brahmastūtra 1. 3. 19; 2. 1. 22 and 3, 46; 3. 2. 6; etc.; cf. S. N. Dasgupta, History of Indian Philosophy, II, pp. 8–12 and 185.—In Buddhist usage ‘khrul snan and ma rig pa (avidyā) are not usually synonymous.
The following translation is based on the žol par khan edition compared with the sDe dge edition of the *ThG*.

In the translation of technical terms, Sanskrit equivalents, when known or at least probable, have been included in many cases because Sanskrit as the lingua franca of Buddhist studies serves to identify many terms which would otherwise be obscured in the translation. However, it should be recalled that in some cases such equivalents are given with reservations since an absolutely regular and automatic system of equivalents does not exist; moreover, it has not always been possible to determine the Sanskrit equivalents of certain Tibetan terms because of the unavailability of a great number of relevant Sanskrit texts. As regards the English translation, in some technical passages it is regrettably only an approximation because of the lack of English (or known Sanskrit) equivalents. It is hoped that the forthcoming publication of the Tibetan text announced in India will enable the reader to achieve a more precise understanding than a translation at present allows.

19 Thugs rje brtson 'grus, 1243–1313 (RM); cf. *DN* tha 2b, 9b; *KhG* tsa 36b; *BrCh* 127b.

20 Yu mo is mentioned in *DN* tha 2b, 5a; ga 36a; *KhG* tsa 36b. Cf. *RM* under 1052 and 1067.

21 Somanātha was the pañḍita responsible for the Tibetan translations of the *Vimalaprabhā, Sekoddesāfīka, Sahajasiddhi*, and *Sekaprakriyā*. Cf. *DN* tha 2b, etc.

22 sGro ston is mentioned in *DN* tha 2b, 7b; *KhG* tsa 36b.

23 Dharmesvara is mentioned in the *DN* and *KhG*, *ibid.*; he was born when his father Yu mo was in his 56th year (*DN* 5a).

24 Se mo che ba is mentioned in *DN* tha 2b and 8b–9a (Teacher of Chos sku 'od zer).

25 'Jam dbyāns (g)sar ma šes rab 'od zer is mentioned in *DN* tha 2b, 8b; cha 4b–5a; ta 2a. He was a teacher of Chos sku 'od zer *DN* cha 5a; tha 2b, 9a. V. *RM* under 1214.

26 The žol par khan ed. reads *dus* 'khor bka* dogs kyanế*, but the sDe dge ed. reads *dog kyanế* which appears to be preferable in view of what is said later.

27 Chos sku 'od zer, 1214–1292, is mentioned in *DN* tha 9a; cha 5a; na 10a–b; *BrCh* 127b. He was famed as a master of the Kālacakra.

28 Byān sems rGyal ba ye šes, 1257–1320, became abbot of Jo nān in 1313 (*DN* tha 10b).

29 Yon tan rgya mtsho, 1260–1327, became abbot in 1320 (RM); cf. *DN* tha 10b–11b; *KhG* tsa 36b.

30 Kun mkhyen chen po or Jo nān kun mkhyen Dol bu pa šes rab rgyal mtshan, 1292–1361; cf. *DN* 11a. See also *BrCh* 127b concerning his visit to Ri phug in order to hold a discussion with Bu ston which the latter however refused.—As already mentioned above he continued to be held in great respect, as his title kun mkhyen pa indicates, also by his dGe lugs pa opponents; this fact is of some significance in evaluating the doctrinal disputes which took place between the different masters and their schools.

31 sKyi ston 'Jam dbyaṅs, a disciple of Roṅ pa šes rab sen ge: *DN* tha 2b, 11a.

32 bSod nams grags pa is mentioned in *DN* tha 10b, and he appears to be identical with Bu ston’s ānārya at the time of his upasampadā (v. *BNTh* 9b, and *Life of Bu ston Rin po ohe*, p. 78 n. 131.

33 Prāṇāyāma constitutes the third member of the Śādaṅgayoga of the Kālacakra (cf. also *Maitrīyaṇīyop.* 6.18). The signs mentioned are dhūма etc. indicating the realization of non-duality; cf. *Sekoddesāfīka* p. 29 f. p. 35 f.; *Guhyasamāja tantra* 18.


35 This saying is found in *DN* tha 11b.

36 Blo gros dpal revised the Tibetan translation of the ‘Kālacakra’ together with Mati
37 Sa bzaṅ Mati paṅ chen Blo gros dpal is mentioned in DÑ tha 11a–b, pha 18a7, etc. He was the author of an important commentary on the Abhidharmasamuccaya. He distinguished between a viññāna in which is relative and one that is of absolute value (don dam pa), corresponding respectively to the rnam šes and chos can and to the ye šes, bde gšegs sньн po and chos ŋid. (On the distinction established by the Jo naṅ pa between ye šes (viññāna) and rnam šes (viññāna) in the aḷāya, v. infra ThG 4b.) Tsön kha pa received instruction from him.

38 Phyogs las mam rgyal. 1306–1386; v. DÑ 11b–12a. mKhas grub rje (rNam thar of Tsöṅ kha pa, 11a) states that Tsöṅ kha pa at about the age of 19 studied under Chos rje Phyogs las mam rgyal; however PSJZ (p. 214) refers to this teacher as Bo don Phyogs las mam rgyal, while RM mentions a Bo don Phyogs las mam rgyal, which is relative and one that is of absolute value (don dam pa), corresponding respectively to the rnam šes and chos can and to the ye šes, bde gšegs sньн po and chos ŋid. (On the distinction established by the Jo naṅ pa between ye šes (viññāna) and rnam šes (viññāna) in the aḷāya, v. infra ThG 4b.) Tsön kha pa received instruction from him.

39 The monastery of Byaṅ Nam riṅ(s), which the RM states may have been founded in 1225, was restored in 1354 with the permission of Dol bu pa by Byaṅ Ta'i dben (M). This is the dpon chen mentioned in the rDsogs ldan gzhon nu'i dga' ston (fol. 66a) belonging to the family of the princes of Nam riṅ who were closely linked with the teachings of the Kalacakra (TPS, p. 164b); cf. DÑ tha 12a; A. Ferrari, Guide, n. 536. This family also helped Tāranātha in having the work on the rTag brtan phun tshogs glnī temple (infra, n. 42) executed.

40 Na dbon Kun dga' dpal is mentioned in DÑ tha 11b, 13a; cha 7a, 9a; pha 6a. The rNam thar of Tsöṅ kha pa (11b) and the PSJZ (p. 214) give an account of his study of the Prajñāpāramitā with Na dbon. Along with brTsön 'grus dpal, a teacher of gYag phrug Sans rgyas dpal, Na dbon is considered the chief pupil of Dol bu pa and Bu ston (ThG 80a5).

41 Kun dga' groł mchog, 1495–1566 (RM); he was the 14th in the line in which Tāranātha (born in 1575) was the 16th (KD za 22b).


42a V. supra, p. 77, n. 11.

43 According to the Vaidūrya ser po (Delhi ed., p. 323), this refoundation took place in the year sa khyi (= 1658).

44 The žol par khaṅ ed. reads yaṅ slob, while the sDe dge ed. has only slob.

45 Cf. supra, n. 12.

46 This sGrub thabs was revised by the Paṅ chen Blo bzaṅ dpal ldan bsTan pa'i ņi ma; it was also expanded by Blo bzaṅ nor bu šes rab, a younger Mongolian contemporary of Tāranātha's successor, the first Khal kha rje btsun dam pa rin po che, in his work called sGrub thabs rin 'byun gi thon thabs.

47 The ston gzugs is for example realized in the Kālacakra system on the level of the fourth abhiṣeka. But the Jo naṅ pa confounded this intuition and the philosophical expression to be given to the theory of the pure jñāna or citta. The Uttaratantra (1. 104) indeed states that in the incarnate-being there exists the anāsravajñāna or Gnosis devoid of impurity; but such authentic sources may become the basis for the
unfounded interpretation of the Jo nan pas who, while maintaining that the rüpakāya of such nature is the Self of the five Jinas etc., concluded erroneously that the purified Self is the negation of all relative phenomenal elements attached to a pre-existing pure jīna; for according to them this negation is not the non-propositional absolute Negation (prasajyapratisedha) of the Prāsaṅgikas but a really existent Gnosis Void of all else (gzan ston). The Jo nañ pas thus consider that the gzugs Body adorned with the Marks and secondary Marks is an object. And it is against this combination of two techniques that their critics took exception; see in this regard Gun than bsTan pa'i sgron me's legs bṣad sūn po'i yig cha, fol. 12a-b: zag med ye šes dnos su 'khrul pa yin žin / de ŋid gzugs sku rgyal ba bha sogs kyi bdag ŋid du smra ba ni' 'dis dag pa'i bdag žes biags pa snar gyi ye šes de'i sten du kun rdsob rnambs bkag pa ni med dgag tsam ma yin par ye šes de ŋid yin pa la mtshan dpes bkra' ba'i ston gzugs kyi sku žig 'dsin staṅs su 'dod pas/ dus 'khor gyi choṣ skad cuṅ žig bsres pa yin te!

The Tibetan critics usually stress that this theory was unknown before the Jo nañ pas, and in particular before Dol bu pa, who was the first to write it down in a manual.

Along with the Nes don rgya mtsho the DNH (tha 11b) mentions a bs dus don sa boad, commentaries on the Uttaratantra and the Abhisamayālāṅkāra, the bsTan pa'i spyi 'grel, and the bKa bsdu bzi pa as Dol bu pa's treatises expounding the gzan ston. See G. N. Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 777.

The rendering 'noēma' and 'noesis' for the term dbyiins rig is only an approximation. This non-dual realization of the integration of dbyiins rig constitutes a high order of intuition relating to the level of the dharmakāya.

These are the pure condition (sin tu rnam dag gi gnas skabs), the impure-and-pure condition (ma dag pa dan dag pa'i gnas skabs) and the impure condition (ma dag pa'i gnas skabs).

51 Cf. supra, n. 33.
52 This may be an error for the Chos kyi dbyiins su bstod pa = Dharmadhātu stotra (').
53 Cf. infra, 6b. And, as is explained later (fol. 7a), with this theory of the total non-existence of the relative—which is to be carefully distinguished from Absolute-Negation—the Jo nañ pas risk falling into the extreme of destruction (ucchedānta).
54 This is the first kārikā of Bhartrhari's Vāyuyapadāya:

   anādīnīdhanaṃ brahma śabdattattvam yad ākṣaram/
   vivartate 'ṛthabhāvena prakriyā jagato yatāh//

A less adequate translation of VP 1. 1 is found in the Tibetan version of Jñānaśrī's Commentary on the Lankāvatāra (fol. 126b in the Peking ed.); this version has been noted by H. Nakamura, Studies in Indology and Buddhology (S. Yamaguchi Presentation Vol., Kyoto, 1955), p. 123 f.


The sense of this remark is not altogether clear. But nañ gi byed pa may correspond to antaḥkaraṇa; on this cf. e.g. VP 1. 114; 3.7.41 and 3.6.23 (v. H. Nakamura, loc. cit.).

58 This description of the Sāṃkhya, apparently based on the Madhyamakāvatāra 6. 121, differs somewhat from that found in the Sāṃkhya-kārikā and Kaumudi (v. 59–61) and described by Garbe, loc. cit., and by E. Frauwallner, Geschichte der Indischen Philosophie, 1 (Salzburg, 1953), pp. 316–318, 378 f. (where the doctrine which is described by Frauwallner is attributed—der Einfachheit halber [p. 303]—to Pañcaśīka). Cf. supra, p. 79 n. 18.
59 This refers to the Unmanifest (avyakta) or prakrti, a kind of natura naturans.
60 This is the kaivalya of the Sāṃkhya (-Yoga).
61 Cf. supra, p. 81, n. 33.

In a few points, which scarcely affect the meaning of the passage, the text of the Lankāvatārasūtra as found in the ThG differs slightly from that found in the bKa’ "gyur and the Sanskrit (ed. B. Nanjio, pp. 77–79).

63 The Sanskrit text has: rāgadvēsamoḥābhīhitapari-kalpalamalamināḥ ... The Tibetan translation presupposes something like "paribhūta" instead of "abhūta".

64 The ThG reads here de bžin du de bžin gšegs pa rnam kyan ohos la bdag med par rnam par rtog pa’i mtshan ŋid thams oad rnam par log pa de ŋid šes rab dan thabs la mKhas pa de dan ldan pa rnam pa sna tshogs kyi de bžin gšegs pa’i śṛṅiḥ por bstan pa’i/ bdag med par bstan pas kyan ruṇa stel/ rdsa mkhan bžin du tshig dañ yi ge’i rnam grans sna tshogs kyi ston te—The 1Ha sa edition (mDo en, fol. 136b2) reads chos la bdag med pa’i rnam par rtog pa’i mthsan ŋid thams oad rnam par log pa de ŋid; Bu ston seems to have read chos bdag med pa’i rnam par rtog pa’i ... (if the 1Ha sa edition of the mdSes rgyan, fol. 21b6 is to relied on). Nanjio, p. 78, reads: tad eva dharmanairātmayan sarvavikalpalakāraṁavirēṣitam ... 

65 Sems gsal rig is the mind in its phenomenalizing and conditioned state. Pure ‘luminous knowledge’ is given as the distinguishing feature of Mind in its relative form, whereas the Void is its proper-nature (gsal ŋin rig pa sems kyi mtshan ŋid; gsal ba sems kyi mtshan ŋid / ston pa sems kyi raṇ bžin’; etc.); and, according to some, it is the unabolished principal-manifestation of Mind (sems kyi raṇ gda’ns ma’ gag pa gsal tsam rig tsam šel sgoṅ lla bu; see mKhas grub rje’s lTa khrid mun sel, 13a2, 16a1 and 23b6). The definition ‘pure luminous-knowledge’ applies to Mind as container (rten), ‘it being established by a logical proof that no upper and lower limits are to be reached for pure knowledge when it is firm (Kun mkhyen Blo rig 26a5: rten sems gsal rig tsam yin la/ de bṛtan par rig pa tsam gyi ya mtha’ dañ ma mtha’ thug med du sgrub pa’i rigs pas grub pa’i phyr).

Paṅchen bSod nams grags pa states (rGyud bla ma’i ’grel pa, 28b) that some earlier scholars considered the sems gsal rig of the sentient-being to be the tathāgata-garbha (sems oan gyi sems rig cin gsal tsam de ... bde gšegs śṛṅiḥ por ’chad).

66 The žol par khaṅ ed. has de bžin ŋid (tathātā), and the sDe dge ed. has de kho na ŋid (tattva).

67 Just as the ominous call of a certain bird, the than bya, forbodes drought, and calamity, so does this ominous talk indicate the presence of danger.

68 Two works of the Paṅchen Bzo bžan chos kyi rgyal mtshan.

69 Bu ston’s spiritual son, the lo tsā ba, is rGra tshad pa Rin chen rnam rgyal.—The writer has prepared a translation of these two works which he hopes soon to publish, together with a study on the theory of the tathāgata-garbha and the gotra.

70 Yar ’brog pa refuted the Jo naṅ pa doctrines by showing that they had erroneously confused the mantra method of the Kālacakra with the pāramitāyāna and the Śūtra method. His point of view is however peculiar inasmuch as he included the Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtras of definitive meaning in the third Cycle of the Teaching, while he held that the Tathāgata-garbhasūtra etc. agree with the Saṃdhinirmoosāsūtra etc. His refutation of the Jo naṅ pa theory was therefore considered by the sDe gues put to be ineffective since he had as it were given up his sword to the Jo naṅ pa whom he then attempts to fight with an empty scabbard.

71 A bKa’ bṛgyud pa Rin chen gzhon nu is mentioned in DN 140a f., but bDe bca can is a name of a school at sNe than. (Another bDe bca can gyi mchod khaṅ is mentioned in the Sa skya dkar ohag: Ferrari, n. 494.).

72 A bka’ bzi pa Rin chen rdo rje is mentioned in DN ta 11b.

73 Red mda’ ba gzhon nu blo gros, 1349–1412, was a Sa skya pa master and one of Tson
kha pa's principal teachers. He was a pupil of Na dbon Kun dga' dpal; he is known as a critic of the Kalacakra, and the three Byan chub sams 'grels attributed to Nāgārjuna as well as of the khris of the  Sadānagayoga. At first he also considered the Uttaratantra to be a Vijñānavādin work, but he later changed his opinion. He is especially famous for his commentaries on the Abhidharma and the Madhyamakāvatāra.

74 Cf. PSJZ, p. 271 where it is stated that, before becoming a disciple of Tson kha pa, rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen (1304-1432) had studied at Sa skyā, gSan phu, rTse than, etc. and had defeated in discussion Roṅ ston and gYag sde paṅ chen.

75 Śākya mchog Idan, 1428–1507, was a disciple of Roṅ ston śākya rgyal mtshan (1307–1440), who is stated to follow the Madhyamika-Svātantrika doctrine.

Śākya mchog Idan is said to have at first followed the Mādhyamika, then the Vijñānavāda, and finally the Jo naṅ pa doctrine (ThG 85b3–4; cf. PSJZ, p. 257). His doctrines, like the Jo naṅ pa ones, are said to have the effect of destroying the cause of the dharmakāya of the tathāgata (see below; and above, fol. 10a); this is so because he came to reject the Prāsaṅgikā theory according to which śūnyatā is Absolute-Negation (which is not to be confused with total non-existence, ye nas med pa).

76 These are Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamakārikās, Vīgrahavyāvartini, Ratnamālā, Yuktiśaṣṭikā, Śūnyatāsaptati, and Vaidalyasūtra. Bu ston in his Chos 'byun (fol. 19b) gives a slightly different list; cf. also E. Obermiller's note 506 in his translation of Bu ston's History of Buddhism.

77 This general interpretation of the Mādhyamika was quite frequent amongst scholars of the Sa skyā pa, rNin ma pa, Karma pa and 'Brug pa schools. It was also accepted by žaṅ Thag saṅ pa, a follower of sPa tshab Lo tsa ba who introduced the Mādhyamika into Tibet (cf. DN cha 8a-b).

78 dBu ma pa chen po. The term 'Great Mādhyamika' (dBu ma chen po) is applied by certain Tibetan scholars, including the Jo naṅ pas and Karma Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1554), to the theory of the Gnosis without differentiation between apprehender and apprehended (grāhy-grāhaka: gzun 'dzin giṅs med kyi ye śes) which is held to be the ultimate reality (gnas lugs mthaṅ thug pa). This advaya-jñāna corresponds to the Jo naṅ pa definition of the parinītāpanna or Absolute. According to Mi bskyod rdo rje, this doctrine of the dBu ma chen po was taught in the Stotra collection attributed to Nāgārjuna and in Āryadeva's Catuḥṣatakā. The Great Mādhyamika is then distinct from the partīā Mādhyamika (phyogs goig pa'i dBu ma) which teaches Absolute non-Existence (bden par med pa tsam gyi ston ņid and the med dgag or Absolute-Negation). Mi bskyod rdo rje furthermore held that the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras and the Abhisamayālāṅkāra are to be interpreted in accordance with the dBu ma chen po of the aliṅkāra doctrine of the Nirākāravādins Asanga and Vasubandhu; Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, and Dharmakīrti are thus considered to have maintained the dBu ma chen po which is then assimilated to the sems tsam 'rnam brsdun pa doctrine. The doctrine of the gzan sti chen mo also belongs to the dBu ma chen po.

Śākya mchog Idan apparently also accepted a comparable classification of these Indian sources inasmuch as he is stated to consider the Mādhyamika of Candrakīrti which teaches Insubstantiality (niṅ bo ņid med pa, niṅsvabhāvaṁ) to be a lower doctrine which does not correspond to the highest Gnosis.

Long before Mi bskyod rdo rje, Go rams pa bSod nams sen ge (1420–1489), a contemporary of Śākya mchog Idan, had rejected for the Sa skyā pa the idea that the teachings of Maitreyanātha and the works of Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, and the other masters of this line could be considered as setting forth the dBu ma chen po identical essentially with the 'real' opinion of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva. Indeed, if such were the case, Go ram pa asks, what texts should we have belonging to the Cittamātra?
The background to these theories still remains to be studied on the basis of the abundant sources available both in Sanskrit and in Tibetan.

According to a frequently mentioned idea, a movement in the discursus of the relative world at the same time presupposes and brings about a counter-movement; thus, on the discursive level a truth may engender as it were a counter-truth. This mechanism is compared to the periodic alternation of the sukṣma and kṛṣṇaśāstas, of the vivartas and samvarātākāpas, etc. According to the rNin ma pa this also accounts for the existence of false gter ma’s and gter ston’s beside the authentic ones. Here the Jo nang pa doctrine is said to comprise within itself both phases of this periodic movement.

The following notice on the Jo nang pas, which furnishes some further valuable information not included in the ThG, is taken from folio 148 'og rna of the Khabs klong legs bsdod nor bu’i bstan mdosd by Sans rgyas phun thsgos, a supplement to the Dam pa’i chos kyi byaṅ tshul legs bsdod bstan pa’i rgya mtshor ’jug pa’i gru chen by dKon mchog lhun grub. On this work see also TPS, p. 145.

The word ’byon pa meaning ‘come, arrive” is apparently applied here and below to the ‘advent’ of a master in his birth-place. On Dol bu pa’s ‘advent’ in mNa’ ris Dol bu Ban tshaṅ see just below.

This name appears as La stod byaṅ gi dab phyar sgaṅ in DÑ tha 9a7.

rKyab ’dur was founded by ’Jam dbyals gsar ma according to DÑ cha 4b; cf. id. tha 8b4 and 9b1.

It is not quite certain whether the xylograph has Ban tshad or Ban tshail, as in DÑ. Cf. supra, p. 77, n. 8a.

On Nam rin(s) which was a famous centre for the study of the Kālacakra, etc., v. supra, p. 81, n. 39.

On Nam mkha’ bstan pa (or brtan pa), v. BNTh 28b3 (which also mentions the religious name Rin chen dpal bzaṅ po) and 40aB; rDsogs ldan gzhon nu’i dga’ ston, 66a. Cf. supra, p. 81, n. 30.

On the khaṅ gsar (and Byāṅ rin) see DÑ ŋa 6a-b.

This passage of the Kha skon is not quite clear concerning these persons. Compare rDsogs ldan gzhon nu’i dga’ ston 60a2 f., which is followed by PSJZ, p. 160.

According to these sources, the Byāṅ bdag and dpon Grags pa dar was a contemporary of Se chen, i.e. Qubilai Qan. His grandson was Nam mkha’ bstan pa (v. supra), whose son was Rin rgyan, and the latter’s son was Chos grags dpal bzaṅ, a si tu chaṅ gu (1352–1417; cf. the Genealogical Table IV in TPS). It does not seem that this Chos grags dpal bzaṅ si ti chaṅ gu is Chos grags pa, the kun spangs, of the same family, whose father was Kun dga’ rgyal mthamshan.

dPal Idan sen ge is mentioned in DÑ tha 15a-b. He was a teacher of Bu ston (BNTh 9a7 and 12a7; cf. DÑ ja 11a, 15b) and a disciple of šes rab sen ge (DÑ tha 15b and pha 21a).

dPaṅ lo tṣā ba Blo gros brtan pa was also a great master of the Kālacakra, etc. (DÑ tha 15b, etc.). (The xylograph here reads dpaṅ lo dpal ldan sen ge as if dPaṅ Idan sen ge were his name; but the reference is presumably to the well known dPaṅ lo tṣā ba, 1276–1342.)
92 Tson kha pa studied in these two seminaries (cf. *TPS*, p. 426a).
93 On Sa bza\'an Mati pa\'a chen Blo gros rgyal mtshan, v. supra, and *DN* pha 18a.
94 Sa bza\'an \'Phags pa g\'on nu blo gros is mentioned in *DN* pha 18a5 and 18b1.
95 Nor pa Kun dga bza\'an po, 1382–1444 founded Nor E va\'a in 1429 (*RM*). On his connexion with Sa bza\'an see also *DN* pha 18a5.
V Ajrayāna
Origin and function*

Alexis Sanderson


The Vajrayāna (the Diamond Way), also called the Way of Mantras (Mantrayāna), is examined in its latest phase, that of the Y ogini-tantras in general and the Śaṃvaratantras in particular. It is shown that the tradition of those texts is modelled on that of the non-Buddhist cults seen in such yet unpublished early Śaiva Tantras as the Picumata, the Y oginiśāmcārī of the Jayadrathayāmala, and the Siddhayogēśvarīmata. Dependence on this non-Buddhist tradition is proved by evidence that extensive passages in the Śaṃvaratantras have been redacted from those texts. The theory that this form of Buddhism and Tantric Śaivism are similar because they have drawn on a hypothetical common source is redundant. Since the Buddhism of the Y ogini-tantras entails forms of religious practice which a member of the Sangha could not adopt without breaking his vows – this is shown through a summary of the ritual of empowerment [abhiseka] prescribed in the Vajravali of Abhayākaragupta and the Kriyāsamuccaya of Darpaṅācārya – it may in some sense be described as heretical and non-Buddhist. There were certainly communities of monks in India who were sufficiently offended by these supposedly Buddhist practices to resort to the destruction of Tantric images and the burning of Tantric texts. However, this paper also considers the ways in which Tantric Buddhism is Buddhist, how it imparts a Buddhist meaning and purpose to its rituals, and how it either used the Buddhist doctrines of the Mahāyāna to justify the supposed sinfulness of these rituals or, more commonly, adjusted them so as to avoid this sinfulness. Either way actual transgression of monastic and lay vows is marginalized.

From about the third to the ninth century C.E. the corpus of scripture recognized by the mainstream of Mahāyāna Buddhists was greatly expanded by the addition
of Tantric texts. The Tibetans, who received Indian Buddhism when this de­
velopment was virtually complete, incorporated in the Tantric section of their
canon translations from the Sanskrit of almost five hundred Tantric scriptures
and of more than two thousand commentaries and explanatory works. The
Chinese Buddhist canon too contains many Tantric works, though the last and
most controversial wave of Tantric compositions, that of the Yoginītantras, with
which this paper will mainly be concerned, is poorly represented.

The term ‘Tantric’ is used here to denote a form of religious practice which is
distinguishable from the rest of Buddhism principally by its ritual character,
only secondarily by soteriological doctrine, and hardly at all by specific theories
of ultimate reality. The basic character of this Tantric ritual is that it entails the
evocation and worship of deities [devatā] by means of mantras of which the
visualized forms of the deities are transformations [pariniśama, parāvṛtti]. Access
to such mantra-ritual is not achieved by virtue of the prātimokṣasamsāvara. The
prātimokṣa vows of a lay Buddhist [upāsaka / upāsikā], a pośadhā faster, a pro­
bationer nun [śīksamāṇā], a novice monk or nun [śrāmanera / śrāmanerikā], or a
fully ordained monk [bhikṣu] or nun [bhikṣunī] are not sufficient qualification. It
is necessary to undergo in addition an elaborate ritual of empowerment
[abhiṣeka] during which the initiand is introduced to a particular mantra-deity
and its retinue.

**Empowerment ritual in the Yoginītantras**

These deities are first installed and worshipped in a maṇḍala made of coloured
powders [rajomaṇḍala]. The initiands take the Tantric vows [saṃvara] and then
spend the night sleeping in a room adjoining that in which the maṇḍala has been
prepared [sīsyādhivāsana]. The next morning the initiator interprets the ini­
tiands’ dreams and takes ritual measures to eliminate any obstacles to success
which they may reveal. He then goes into the maṇḍala room, bestows on himself
the first empowerment, that of the garland [mālābhīṣeka], and then imagines that
his own guru is bestowing the rest. The initiands are then blindfolded, led in by
a female adept [yogini] or male assistant [karmavajrin] and presented before the
maṇḍala. They are made to take an oath of absolute secrecy [kosaṭa] and are
then made by means of mantras to become possessed by the maṇḍala-deities
[āveśavidhī] for the purpose of prognostication. After terminating the possession
by dismissing the deities the guru asks each initiand the colour of the lights he
saw and interprets the colour as predicting special aptitude for this or that Tantric
accomplishment [siddhi]. Still blindfolded he is given a flower. He is to identify
the flower in his hands with himself, imagine that the deity of the maṇḍala [maṇ­
dalesa] is standing before him in the maṇḍala, mentally enter the maṇḍala, and
throw the flower forward on to the deity. The guru determines the Buddha­
family [kula] of the initiand from the direction in relation to the centre of the
maṇḍala of the point on which the flower falls. The flower is then attached to
the initiand’s hair. This is the garland-empowerment [mālābhīṣeka (1)].
The blindfold is then removed and the initiand is told the inner meaning of each element of the maṇḍala [maṇḍalatattva] now revealed to him. He is then ‘bathed’ by the guru in a ritual area traced on the ground to the east of the maṇḍala. As he does this the guru visualizes the śiṣya undergoing a mystical rebirth which transforms him into the transcendental nature of the deities. This is the water-empowerment [udakābhīṣeka (2)]. The śiṣya is then clothed in a red or many-coloured garment, given an umbrella, and venerated by the guru. Imagining that the śiṣya is being empowered by the deities themselves as he touches his head, brow, two temples, and the back of his head, he ties a band of cloth about his head (the crown-empowerment [mukuṭābhīṣeka (3)]). The two characteristic implements of Vajrayānīst worship, the vajra and the bell, are now placed in his right and left hands. The śiṣya crosses them over in front of his chest, so entering the posture of embracing a consort [ālinganamudrā]. The giving of the vajra is the vajra-empowerment [vajrābhīṣeka (4)], and the rest is the bell-empowerment [ghanṭābhīṣeka (5)]. The guru then takes the two implements, touches the śiṣya’s head with them, meditates upon him as fused with the deity Vajravairocana, and gives him his Vajrayānīst name. This is the empowerment of the Vajra-name [vajranāmābhīṣeka (6)]. The name is determined in part by the śiṣya’s Buddha-family established earlier by the casting of the flower.

The vows taken on the previous day were either the common Tantric vows [sāmānyasamvara] or those of a Vajra Master [vajrācārya]. The difference in outcome is that a Vajra Master is empowered and required to perform rituals for the benefit of others, such as this rite of initiation, and the consecration of idols, temples, monasteries and the like. He must worship for his own benefit as well; but he is also a priest-like officiant [ācārya], whereas the ordinary initiate is qualified only for his personal mantra-cult. If he took the vows of a Vajra Master he now requests the empowerment of a Vajra Master [ācāryābhīṣeka (7)]. This has the appearance of being a repetition of the concluding rites of the phase just completed. The guru places the vajra in the śiṣya’s right hand and the bell in his left. The śiṣya rings the bell. Then the guru makes him enter the embrace-pose as before; but this time the symbolic meaning of this act is made more explicit: the guru empowers him by mentally bestowing on him an immaterial female consort [jñānamudrā]. The giving of the vajra, bell and consort is not classified as a separate empowerment. It is termed instead ‘the rite of bestowing the three pledges’ [trisamayadānavidhi]. The guru now imagines that all the Tathāgatas and the goddesses [devī] who are their consorts assemble before him in the sky and consecrate the śiṣya in his new office by pouring water upon his head. Proclaiming that he is giving the śiṣya the empowerment of all the Buddhas [sarvabuddhābhīṣeka] he inundates him. He then visualizes the Tathāgata Akṣobhya on the śiṣya’s head and the other Tathāgatas and their consorts merging into his body, worships him with offerings of flowers and the like, and then explains again the meaning the maṇḍala and its components [maṇḍalavisuddhi]. This is the ācāryābhīṣeka (7) proper. It is followed by a series of concluding rites. First the guru gives the mantra(s) [mantrasamarpanavidhi]. Then he anoints the
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śīṣya’s eyes in a symbolic removal of the blindness of ignorance [aṇjanavidhi], and shows him a mirror. All phenomena, he explains, are like reflections and the deity Vajrasattva, who rests in the heart of all beings, is the mirror in which they appear. The śīṣya should recognize that no entity has any intrinsic reality [svabhāva] and should act with this knowledge for the benefit of others [darpanadarṣanavidhi]. Finally the guru shoots arrows in the various directions to remove all obstacles from the new officiant’s path [saraksepavidhi].

Candidates for the highest and most esoteric mantra-cults, those of the Yogini tantras must now receive a series of further empowerments whose bizarre and apparently sinful nature has been the cause of much controversy in India and Tibet. The following account, like that of the rest of the ritual of empowerment described here, summarizes the Vajrāvalī of Abhayākaragupta, a mahāpaṇḍita of the great Vikramaśīla monastery around the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the Kriyāsamuccaya of Darpanācārya, a work of uncertain date based on the Vajrāvalī. The rituals of Vajrayānist initiation still practised by the Newars of the Kathmandu valley in Nepal and found in handbooks which combine the text of a Sanskrit liturgy with glosses and instructions in Newari, are based on these same sources, though they have completely removed all that might be compromising in these rituals.

After the rituals described so far have been completed a Tantric ritual feast [samayacakra] is served. A candidate for these higher empowerments must leave the feast with the girl who will be his consort, go in to the guru, give her to him, and return to the group outside. The guru copulates with the girl. The candidate is then led in by an assisant [karmavajrin]. He kneels down and offers a flower. The guru them gives him his semen, which the śīṣya must place on his tongue and swallow, thinking of it as the embodiment of all the Buddhas. The female rises and gives him from her sex ‘a drop of the pollen of all the Tathāgatas.’ He must swallow it in the same way. This is termed the ‘secret empowerment’ [guhyabhiseka]. The guru then returns the girl to the disciple, or gives him another who is bound by the pledges and vows, or is at least endowed with beauty and youth. He unites with her and experiences the four blisses [ānanda]. This is ‘the consecration of the knowledge of wisdom’ [prajñājñānābhiseka].

Finally the śīṣya requests what is termed ‘the fourth empowerment’ [caturthābhiseka], so called because it is the fourth if all the empowerments up to that of the Vajra Master are counted as one ‘vase-empowerment’ [kalaśābhiseka]. It takes the form of the guru’s reciting an exposition of the nature of the four blisses, consisting for the most part of quotations from the esoteric Tantras and of Apabhraṣṭa and Sanskrit verses attributed to Siddhas.

The guru then joins the hands of the couple and ties them together with a garland of flowers. He calls the company to be witnesses in the presence of the maṇḍala that this woman has been bestowed on this man before the eyes of the Buddhas. He must never abandon her [vidyāvratadānavidhi]. The guru then gives the vajra into the disciple’s right hand [vajravratavidhi].

The guru now gives the implements needed for the performance of the
postinitiatory period of mantra-observance [caryāvrata]. He gives the skull­
topped staff [khatvāṅga], the rattle-drum [damaru] and the bowl made from a
human skull [padmabhājana]. A woman who adopts this observance must be
visualized as Nairātmyā, the consort of Hevajra, as Vajravārāhī, the consort of
Cakrasaṃvara, or as the goddess of the Buddha-family determined by the
flower-casting. A man should be visualized correspondingly as Hevajra,
Cakrasaṃvara, or the family Buddha. He then gives the mudrās or sect-marks of
human bone. They are a chaplet [cakrī], earrings, a necklace, bracelets [rucaka],
and a girdle-skirt [mekhala]. A man receives a sixth mudrā, namely ashes with
which to smear his body. This is ‘the rite of bestowing the observance’
caryāvratadānavidhi).

This empowerment is confined, it seems, to ritual time. The implements are
immediately returned. However ‘the vow of the observance of Heroes’
viracaryāvrata can be adopted. In this case the śiṣya is empowered for a period
of paripatetic observance during which he will carry these implements and wear
these sect-marks. Here the divine identities of the practitioners are no longer
optional: a man must be identified with Śaṃvara and a woman with his consort
Vajravārāhī. The śiṣya is given the sectmarks as before, a garland of skulls
[muṇḍamālā], a tiger-skin as lower garment, a skull-bowl, a skull-staff
[khatvāṅga], a rattle-drum, a brahmanical caste-thread made of sinews or the
hair (of human corpses [kesayajñopavita]), ashes, a head-dress made out of the
hair of a thief twisted into two coils [kacadori], a garland, a vajra, armlets,
anklets, and little bells. This observance is also called the ‘the Diamond (i.e.
Vajrayānist) Kāpālika observance’ vajrakāpālikacaryāvrata.

The guru then adopts the Buddha’s prediction posture and predicts the initi­
ate’s liberation vyākaraṇavidhi, gives him formal permission and encourage­
ment to practise his office [anujñāvidhi, aśvāsadānavidhi], dictates the various
rules of discipline which will bind him [samayaśrāvaṇavidhi], requests and
receives a sacrificial fee [dakṣinā], and finally explains to him the inner meaning
of all the consecrations [abhiseka] he has received [sekaśuddhi].

In taking up the implements and adornments of the postinitiatory observance
the initiate takes on the basic character of the deities of the Yoginītantras.
Śaṃvara, for example, is visualized as follows:3

“In the Śaṃvara-manḍala there is a circular enclosure of vajras. In its
centre is the cosmic mountain Sumeru. On that is a double lotus seat.
On that is a pair of crossed vajras supporting a temple. In the centre of
that temple the Lord [Śaṃvara] stands in the pose of the archer, with
his left leg bent at the knee and his right leg straight. He treads
Bhairava beneath one foot and Kālarātri beneath the other. Both lie on a
sun-disc which rests the top of the pericarp of a double lotus throne. He
is black and has four faces looking in the [four directions]. Beginning
from that which looks towards the front [piūrva], [and proceeding to
those which face to his right, behind him, and to his left] they are black,
green, red and yellow. In each he has three eyes. He wears a tiger skin and has twelve arms. With two of these holding a vajra and a bell he embraces [his consort] Vajravārāhī. With two he holds up over his back a white elephant hide dripping with blood. In his other right hands he holds a rattle-drum [damaru], a hatchet, a chopper-knife and a trident, and in the remaining left hands a skull-staff [khatvāṅga] adorned with vajras, a skull-bowl filled with blood, a vajra-noose, and the head of Brahmā. Hanging about his neck he has a string of fifty freshly severed human heads. He has all six sect-marks [mudrā], a caste-thread made of human sinew, a series of five skulls above his forehead, and a left-facing new moon and a pair of crossed vajras upon a black head-dress of matted locks. His faces are wrathful and sharp fangs protude at the corners of his mouths. He combines all nine dramatic sentiments.

His consort Vajravārāhī is red, three eyed and single faced. Her long hair is unbound and she is naked. Her hips are adorned with [a skirt made of] fragments of human skulls and she quenches the thirst of her Lord with a stream of blood pouring from the skull-bowl held to his lips by the hand that embraces him. With her other hand reaching up holding a vajra and with its index finger outstretched in the gesture of intimidation she threatens the evil. She wears a garland of blood-drained and shrivelled human heads and the five or the six sect-marks. Menstruating, she laughs, with all the hairs on her body standing erect.

Tantric initiation was not open only to those who had taken monastic vows. It could also be received by married laypersons [grhaṭha]; and there is some evidence that the traditional superiority of monks over laymen was undermined. This appears from the fact that there are authorities, such as the Vimalaprabhā commentary on the Kālacakratantra, which condemn the practice of monks venerating married Vajra Masters [grhaṭhacārya] as their gurus if any ordained Vajra Master is available, and of married Vajra Masters being engaged as officiants for such rituals as the consecration of monasteries. The text insists that it is the duty of the king to ensure that this hierarchical distinction between the white-robed and the red-robed Vajra Masters is preserved, and compares the situation in India, where this distinction was obviously precarious, with that in China [mañjuśrīvīśaya]. There, he says, the Emperor sees to it that any novice or monk who is guilty of a grave transgression [pārājika] is stripped of his monastic robe, dressed in white, and expelled from the monastery; and this applies even to a Vajra Master in a Tantric monastery [mantrivihāra].

Śaiva origins

Let us now consider the senses in which this tradition of the Yoginītantras is and is not Buddhist. The present author’s view is that almost everything concrete in the system is non-Buddhist in origin even though the whole is entirely Buddhist
in its function. The non-Buddhist origin claimed is a specific area of the Hindu Tantric tradition. This view opposes a school of thought which, while recognizing that Tantric Buddhism, especially the systems of the Yoganītantras, has drawn on a non-Buddhist source, prefers to locate this source at a level deeper than either the Hindu Tantric systems or the Buddhist. This source has been referred to as the 'Indian religious substratum'. It is held that similarities between Tantric Buddhism and Tantric Śaivism are to be explained as far as possible as the result of independent derivation from a common source, rather than as a direct dependence of the Buddhist materials on the Śaivite. Stephan Beyer has given us a good, unambiguous example of this kind of thinking when he writes the following about the deities of the Yoganītantras:

Although there are iconographic variations among these general high patron deities, they share instantly recognizable similarities: they are all derived from the same cultic stock that produced the Śiva figure . . .

The problem with this concept of a 'religious substratum' or 'common cultic stock' is that they are by their very nature entities inferred but never perceived. Whatever we perceive is always Śaiva or Buddhist, or Vaiṣṇava, or something else specific. Derivation from this hidden source cannot therefore be the preferred explanation for similarities between these specific traditions unless those similarities cannot be explained in any other way.

This is not to say that all the cults of the Yoganītantras are identifiable with specific Śaivite cults once they have been stripped of whatever Buddhist doctrinal and soteriological content they may have and are taken simply as rituals based on certain sets of deities, mantras, maṇḍalas and the rest. The evidence indicates rather that those who put the Yoganītantras together drew on Śaiva textual materials from a specific area of the Śaiva canon to assemble wholes which were identical with no particular Śaiva system except in this or that constituent, but resembled all the Śaiva systems of this area of the canon in their general character, structure and method.

This conclusion derives from a reading of the early Śaiva Tantric literature, mostly unpublished, that was authoritative at the time of the emergence of the Yoganītantras. That the redactors of these Tantras depended on the Śaiva scriptures was obvious enough to those Śivas who knew the literature. This is evident from a Kashmirian version of a well known Śaiva myth included by Jayadratha in the thirteenth century in his Haracaritacintāmani. The Hindu gods are being oppressed by the demons Vidyunmālin, Tāraka and Kamala. They can do nothing to destroy them, since devotion to the Śaiva liṅga cult has made them invincible. However, Brhaspati, the teacher of the gods, comes up with the following ruse:

"I shall propagate the following system and call it Bauddha (/ Buddhist) – truthfully enough, since it will be no more than the invention of my
intellect \( [\text{buddhi}] \). In it the famous Buddha will be represented as master over the \[\text{Hindu}\] gods. In his visualizations even our great Cause-Deities, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Iśvara, Sadāśiva and Bhairava, will be portrayed as his parasol-bearers, and the Buddhist idols will be shown standing on the heads of Gaṇapati and other high Śaiva deities. When the demons get to know of these falsely conceived icons, they will undoubtedly fall into the delusion of believing that these deities really are superior to Śiva. Once I have established these icons and seen to it that they are widely recognized, I shall add certain mantras culled from the Śaiva Tantras; and lifting various passages out of these scriptures of Śiva I shall fabricate and propagate a system of [Buddhist] Tantric ritual. I shall also write passages of a more learned kind dealing with the question of bondage and liberation, displaying a level of intelligence that will prove extremely seductive. My definition of the state of bondage will include references to the worship of the linga, and my liberation will be a ‘voidness’ calculated to undermine their faith in their Śaiva rituals. Indeed I shall attack the practice of sacrifice and all [Hindu] rituals; and I shall deny the existence of the Supreme Lord by arguing that there is no Self. By putting this system together and insinuating it into their hearts I shall succeed in destroying their devotion to Śiva.”

By converting the demons to Buddhism behind the back of their Śaiva guru Śukra Brhaspati removes the sole obstacle in the way of their destruction, enabling Śiva to accomplish the Kashmirian version of his famous exploit as Destroyer of the Three Cities (Tripurāntaka).

The form of Tantric Buddhism to which this sectarian myth refers is evidently that which includes the Yoginītantra traditions. That to attack Buddhism before a Kashmirian audience in the thirteenth century was to attack a system that culminated in these Tantras is confirmed by another piece of Śaivite propagandist mythology in the same work. Once again three demons have defeated all the gods. They have destroyed heaven itself and brought about the end of orthodox religion. Śiva restores the Hindu order through Garuḍa, the winged vehicle of Viṣṇu. Empowered for his great task by Śiva’s touch he flies to the golden mountain Meru, on which the demons have enthroned themselves. Turning himself into a she-ass he wraps his tail three times round the mountain’s summit and hurls them down into the world of the dead \( [\text{pretaloka}] \). The three demons are the two Vajraśīkas, namely Hevajra and Śaṃvara, and the Ādibuddha. Their leader is Hevajra, eight-faced, four-legged, sixteen armed and embraced by his consort Nairatmyā. He is surrounded by Mahāyānists, Vajrayānists, Śrāvakayānists and copulating Buddhas, all intent on the subversion of Hindu society. Thus, when Jayadratha represents the Buddhist scriptures as built up out of elements of Śaiva mantra-ritual, the works he has in mind are above all the Yoginītantras, which authorize the cults of these demonized gods.
The mythological account of the relation between the two groups of Tantras is no doubt highly biased. But it rests on facts. The Yoginītantras have indeed drawn on the Śaiva Tantras. Specifically, there are extensive parallels between these texts and the group of Tantras classified as the Vidyāpīṭha of the Bhairava section of the Śaiva canon. These Tantras are related to the rest of the Śaiva Tantric tradition in much the same way that the Yoginītantras are related to the other classes of Buddhist Tantras. They see themselves as the most esoteric revelations of the canon; and like the Yoginītantras they stand apart by reason of their Kāpālika character.

The principal texts to have survived are the Siddhayogesvarimata, the Tantrasadbhāva, the Jayadrathayāmala and the Brahmayāmala. The first is the earliest scriptural basis of the system known as the Trika, which is expounded by Abhinavagupta (fl. c. C.E. 975–1025) in his Tantraloka and is the core of ‘Kashmir Śaivism’. The second too belongs to this system. The third, also known as the Tantrarājabhātīraka, is in the tradition of that other great component of esoteric Kashmirian Śaivism, the system of Kālī worship known as the Krama. The fourth, also known as the Picumata, is the basic Tantra of the cult of Kapālīśabhairava and his consort Candā Kāpālinī, a system known to Abhinavagupta, who frequently quotes the work on matters applicable to all the systems of the Vidyāpīṭha. These three works were the main pillars of the esoteric Śaiva tradition.

A comparison of the two groups of texts shows a general similarity in ritual procedures, style of observance, deities, mantras, maṇḍalas, ritual dress, Kāpālika accoutrements, specialized terminology, secret gestures, and secret jargons. There is even direct borrowing of passages from the Śaiva texts. Chapters 15 to 17 of the Buddhist Laghusamvara (Herukābhidhāna), which teach a secret jargon of monosyllables [ekākṣaracchoma] (15), and the characteristics by means of which the Buddhist adept may recognize females as belonging to one or the other of seven Yoginī-families (16) and seven Dākinī-families (17), equal the samayācāra-cetā vidhāna chapter of the Yoginīsāṃcāra section of the Jayadrathayāmala. Chapter 19 of the Laghusamvara, on the characteristics of the Yoginīs known as Lāmās, equals chapter 29 of the Siddhayogesvarimata. Chapter 43 of the Buddhist Abhidhānottara, on the rules [samaya] that bind initiates, equals chapter 85 of the Picumata. And the fifteenth chapter of the Buddhist Samvarodaya, on the classification of skull-bowls, is closely related to the fourth chapter of that work.

Dependence on the Śaiva literature is also apparent in passages in the Tantras of Śaṃvara (the Laghusamvara, the Abhidhānottara, the Śamvarodaya, the Vajradāka and the Dākārnava) that teach the sequences of pīṭhas or holy places that figure prominently in the ritual and yoga of this system. The system of pīṭhas from Pulī ramalaya (Pū-ṛṇagiri) to Arbuda given in the Śaṃvarodaya and elsewhere is found in the Trika’s Tantrasadbhāva. The direction of transmission is evident from the fact that there is an anomaly in the Buddhist list which can best be explained as the result of a distortion of the Śaiva model. This
anomaly is the occurrence of Grhadevatā after Pretapūrī and before Saurāstra in the series of the Saṁvarodaya. This Grhadevatā is the only place name that does not occur in the Tantrasadbhava’s list; and it is the only name that is puzzling. It is puzzling because the meaning of the word is ‘household deity’, hardly a likely name for a place. Now, in the version in the Tantrasadbhava we are told not only the names of the pīthas but also classes of deities associated with each. The class associated with Saurāstra is that of the Grhadevās, the household deities. Evidently, while intending to extract only the place names from a list pairing names and deities, the redactor’s mind has drifted without his being aware of it from the name-list to that of the deity-list and back again.

There is no need, then, to postulate the existence of a common substratum or cultic stock to explain the similarities between the two systems. Examination of the texts reveals these similarities to be detailed and pervasive. It also enables us to explain them as direct borrowings by redactors producing what was obviously intended to be a Buddhist system parallel to the Śaiva Kāpālika cults but, of course, superior to them. Even the some of the titles of the Buddhist Yogiṇītantras are borrowed. Within the division of the Śaiva Vidyāpītha that contains the Śaktitantras there are besides the Siddhayogēśvarīmata, the following works listed: Sarvavīrasamāyoga, Śrīcakra, Viśvādyā, Yogiṇījālaśāmvara and Viḍyābheda. Among the Yogiṇītantras there are the Sarvabuddhabhasamāyoga-Dakini-jālasamvara,21 the Hevajrāyakinijālasamvara (the full title of the Hevajratantra) and the Dakinijālasamvara (as the Abhidhānottara also calls itself).22 The expression Dakinijālasamvara/-samvara occurs frequently in the Śamvara texts as a description of their subject matter; and it is part of Śamvara’s heartmantra: om śrīvajra he he ru ru kam hūm phat dakinījālasamvarāṁ svāhā.23 In the Dākārnāvamahāyoginītantra the term sarvavīrasamāyoga, ‘the fusion of all the Heroes’ qualifies ultimate reality24 and in the Saṁvarodaya we have the expression sarvavīrasamāyogadākinījālasatsukham,25 where satsukham, ‘excellent bliss’, is evidently an etymological substitute for ūṣamvara [Tib. bdem-mchog].

The redactors’ belief in the superiority of their systems over those on which they drew is eloquently expressed in the iconography of their deities. Śamvara tramples Bhairava and Kālarātri (/ Kālī), the principal deities of the Tantras of the Vidyāpītha. In some visualizations he wears the flayed skin of Mahābhairava as his lower garment.26 This subjection has an esoteric meaning, of course. We are told in the Abhidhānottara that Bhairava is vikalpa, ‘objectification’ and trṣnā, ‘craving’;27 and these are to be overcome by the knowledge of Emptiness, or the Great Bliss filled with Emptiness and Compassion, or the Dharmadhatu, which are the essence of the enthroned deity (śūnyatājñāna28; mahāsukha + śūnyatā and karunā29; dharmadhatu30). But this metaphysical meaning does not exclude the other. This appears from visualizations in the same text in which the deity is said to wear the flayed skins of Brahmā and Viṣṇu, to carry the head of Śiva in his hand, and also to stand upon the non-Buddhists [tīrthika] and their religious systems [dārsāna], wearing the flayed skins of Brahmā and Viṣṇu and carrying the severed head of Śiva in his hand31. The Buddhist redactors were
simply adapting yet another feature of the Śaiva Tantric tradition. For the esoteric Śaivas' Bhairavas and Kālis are enthroned upon the corpse of Sadāśiva, the icon of Śiva worshipped in the more exoteric Śaiva Siddhānta, and Bhairava enthroned on Sadāśiva became himself the corpse-throne of certain forms of Kāli in the tradition of the Jayadrathayāmala. Here too there is no shortage of metaphysical explanation of this iconography of subjection; but our authors are also alive to the sectarian meaning. In due course of Śaiva tradition of Kashmir responded to the Buddhist Tantric iconography by creating Kāli Sugatasamhārinī, 'the destroyer of the Buddhas'. She embraces a ferocious Bhairava who wears a garland made from the severed heads of Heruka and the Buddhist Krodharājas. Hanging from his ears as ornaments are the bodies of the Buddhas, while Tārā and other Buddhist goddesses provide the hair twisted together to form his sacred thread. There is also Trailokyadāmarā Kāli, who tramples the severed head of Mahākāla beneath one foot and the skeleton of Heruka beneath the other.

**Buddhist function**

When we consider Tantric Buddhism in terms of its origin we see Śaiva influences at every turn; and the higher one goes up the hierarchy of the Buddhist Tantras, the more pervasive these influences become. However, Tantric Buddhism is, of course, entirely Buddhist in terms of its function and self-perception; and in transforming Śaiva elements it gave them meanings which obscure these origins. You will recall that the ritual of initiation includes two explanations of the meaning of the elements of the maṇḍala, and an explanation of the significance of the various consecrations. The process of worship itself is structured by purely Buddhist meditations. For example, one carries out the second evocation of Śaṃvara as follows. After reciting the Mahāyānīst formulae: confessing sins, delighting in the merit of others, transferring one's own merit for the benefit of others, and taking the vow of the bodhisattva, one contemplates the four brahmavihāras: benevolence, compassion, joy and patience. One then meditates on the essential purity of all phenomena and oneself, sees oneself and all things as nothing but mind [cittamātra], realizes their emptiness, and then out of this emptiness generates the deity's icon. Later one meditates on the mandala as being resorbed stage by stage into the syllable haum, the syllable gradually disappearing into a single point, and this point into a formless resonance which one is to contemplate as the mind devoid of objectification, the Great Bliss.

The Śaiva rituals also contain meditations which see the pantheon as emerging out of consciousness and returning into seed-syllables which gradually dissolve into pure awareness. But here we see that the basic pattern of emanation and resorption has been given a thoroughly Buddhist interpretation.

There remains the problem of the sinfulness of esoteric Buddhist ritual. By adapting the sexual rites of the Śaivas and their ritual consumption of the five jewels and other impure substances they were establishing a kind of Buddhism
that would have to be seen as transcending the scope of the Prātimokṣa disciplines. That a Buddhism which sanctioned such heterodox practices should have been accepted in the high seats of monastic learning in India was offensive enough to some communities of monks to prompt them to destroy Tantric images and burn Tantric texts. The tradition of Abhayākaragupta and Darpaṇācārya remained true to the early tradition, insisting that any Buddhist, layperson or monk, may take the Tantric vows and receive all the consecrations, including the problematic consecrations involving sexual intercourse, provided he has achieved insight into the doctrine of emptiness. The problem of the infringement of the exoteric Buddhist vows is transcended then by means of the Mahāyānist doctrine of a higher and a lower truth.

The general trend, however, has been to modify the rituals so that they longer involve these infringements. The great Tantric Master Atiśa considered that the sexual elements of Vajrayānist ritual were permissible only for married householders. Monks could receive all the consecrations, including the most esoteric, but would receive the latter only in a symbolic or mental form Among the Newar Buddhists of Nepal an even more thorough expurgation has been achieved. Though their ritual handbooks are based on the works of Abhayākaragupta and Darpālacarya and though all those who receive the initiation of the Yoginītantras are married men and women, all explicit sexuality has been removed from the ritual, leaving only alcohol, meat, possession, and the Kāpālika accoutrements.

Notes

* Presented on 7 February 1990 in Bangkok, Thailand, at the First International Conference ‘Buddhism into the Year 2000’, hosted by the Dhammakāya Foundation.

1 The term Yoginītantra [Tib. rnal hbyor mahi rgyud] refers here to the class of Sanskrit works whose Tibetan translations are Nos. 360–441 in the Tohoku catalogue. The principal components of these are the Tantra groups of the following deities: Kālacakra, Śaṃvara (and Vajraśārīra), Hevajra (and Nairātmyā), Buddhakāpāla, Mahāmāyāhava, Yogāmbara, Candamahārosana and Vajrāṃśa, among which the first three were by far the most influential. These same Yoginītantras were also known as the Yogāṅuttara-/Yoganiruttaratantras [Tib. rnal hbyor bla med kyi rgyud], ‘the Tantras of the Ultimate [Division] of the Yoga [Class]’. The term Yoginītantra is opposed to Yogatantra. Within the latter the texts distinguish between the Yogatantras proper (Tohoku 479–493) and the Yogottaratantras ‘the Tantras of the Higher [Division] of the Yoga [Class]’ (Tohoku 442–478). The Yogatantras proper, of which the foremost is the Tattvasaṃgrahasūtra, together with the Mahāvairocanaśambodhisūtra, the principal Tantra of the small Caryātantra class (Tohoku 494–501) placed below the Yogatantras, formed the basis of the esoteric Tantric Buddhism that was propagated in China during the eighth century C.E. by the Indian missionary translators Subhakarasimha (Zemmui), Vajrabodhi (Bodaikongo) and Amoghavajra (Fukū), and was brought to Japan at the beginning of the ninth by Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi), where it survives as the Buddhism of the Shingon sect. The Yogottaratantras, principally the Guhyasamāja, have more in common with the Yoginītantras than with the Yogatantras. Both teach rites involving sexual intercourse and the consumption of alcohol and other impure substances; and in both the deities are worshipped embracing consorts. Sexual practice appears in the Yogatantras too; but it is marginal there.
The common character of the Yogottaratantras and the Yogānuttara-/Yoginītantras is recognized in a classification which groups them together as the Anuttaratantras [Tib. hla med kyi rgyud], ‘the Ultimate Tantras’. In Tibetan Buddhism the Yogottaratantras and the Yogānuttara-/Yoginītantras jointly occupy the position of the most esoteric level of the Buddha’s revelation. In the Indian subcontinent, where Tantric Buddhism survives among the Newars of the Kathmandu valley, the Yogottara tradition has died away leaving that of the Yoginītantras in command; and among these that of the worship of Śaṃvara and his consort Vajrārāhī is overwhelmingly dominant. Two major Yogottaratantras, the Guhyasamāja and the Advayasamāvatijaya, reached the Sino-Japanese Buddhist canon in translations (Taishō 885 and 887) by the Indian Sego (Skt. Dānapāla ?), who was working as a translator in China from 982 to 1017 C.E. Also Yogottara is a ritual of Vajrabhairava translated around 1000 C.E. (Taishō 1242; cf. Tōhoku 468). Of the Yoginītantras, the last and most unconventional wave of the Tantras, only the Hevajra [I)akinjalasāṃvara] entered that canon (Taishō 892). It was translated by Hōgo (Skt. Dharmapāla ?), who was in China from 1004 C.E. until his death in 1058. The most striking difference between the Yogottara and Yogānuttara-/Yoginītantra traditions is that the latter bring to the centre the symbolism, practices and deities of the Saivā culture of the cremation grounds. Beneath the Yogatantras and the Caryātantras are the Kriyatantras (Tohoku 502-827). These texts, which form the lowest category, are entirely concerned with the attainment of supernatural benefits; and the majority of the works so classified are undoubtedly the earliest specimens of Buddhist Tantrism. Texts of this class were translated into Chinese from the third century C.E. However, they were never supplanted by later developments in the way that the Yoga- and Yogottaratantras were by the Yoginītantras. They continued to be used in important apotropaic rituals in Newar, Tibetan and Japanese Buddhism. Nor did the later scholars who translated the soteriological Tantras consider them beneath their dignity. Amoghavajra, for example, produced new translations of the Anantamukhasā-dhakadhāraṇī (Taishō 1009 [Tōhoku 525]), the Mahāmeghastūra (Taishō 989, 990 [Tōhoku 658]), and the Mahāmāyūrvidyāraṇī (Taishō 982, 983 [Tōhoku 559]). Chinese translations of the first go back to the third century (Taishō 1011), of the second and third to the fourth century (Taishō 388 and 988).

2 Abhayākara-gupta, Vajrāvalī (ed. Lokesh Chandra, Satapitaka Series Vol., Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1977 [photographic reproduction of a Ms]) 219-5-6: viracāryavratam eva yauvarājyavratacaryveti vajrakāpālikacaryavratam iti cokta srāṃputapatantrasa. 3 Translating Abhayākara-gupta, Nippannayogavali (ed. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, Gaekwad’s Oriental Series No. 109, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1949), 26-13. 4 Following MS B naharuyajjiopav’ifiti against the editor’s nīgaya pavāv’iti. See Vajrāvali 219-3: nr(nī) naharumaya/brahmasūtram/; “The sacred thread should be made from human sinews or hair.” For the form nahāru cf. Pali saññā, Maithili nahru. 5 Vimalprabhā (Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project, Running No. E13746, Reel No. E618/5, Place of Deposit: Asha Kaji Bajracharya, Lalitpur) folio 175r1-5: tathābuddha – yo grhi mahākībhokta sevako lāngali vanik / saddharmavikrayā mukho na sa vajrādharo bhuvī // ityādina trividha guruc ācāryaparīkṣāyām utkha // dasatattvaparījñātī trayāṇām bhikṣur uttamaḥ / madhyamaḥ śrāvane rākhyo grhañhas tv adhamas tayor iti / tathā – na kartavyo guruc āñābhumīlābham vinā grhi / tatra śrutaparījñānair lingī kartavya eva yaḥ / bhūmīlābham vinācāryo grhañha pūjyate yādā / tadā buddhaḥ ca dharmas ca samgho gacchati agauravam / atha – vārahe dṛṣṭiḥādhiyam kartavyam lingīnaḥ sadā / satsu trīṣṇa ekadēse ca na grhiṇā śvetāvāsinā iti / evam anekaprakārenācāryaparīkṣāyāṃ bhagavatokto guruc śisyenārādhīnaṇa iti /; ibid. folio 175v7-176r9: iha trīṣkālam bhikṣubhiḥ kaśyayadhāribhir vajrācāryo vandate na grhi na navakhā saddharmavyākhyāṇena vinā / sad-

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8 Translating Haracaritacintamani 13.74c–83.

9 A pun on the word bauddha, which means ‘Buddhist’ (<buddha>) or ‘intellectual’ (<buddhi>).

10 Haracaritacintāmani, paññāla 17.

11 Ibid. 17.4–9.

12 Herukabhīdhanāntaratantra, also called Laghusārvaratantra: Kaiser Library Kathmandu, Manuscript 410; Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project, Reel No. C 44/3.


14 Siddhayogesvarimata, patāla 29 (unnamed), verses 22c–50: Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, Manuscript 5465 (Government Collection), folios 69v6–71v3.


18 The present author is preparing a monograph in which he edits these parallel passages and demonstrates the relation between them.

19 See Saṃvarodaya, paññālas 7 and 9 (Shinichi Tsuda [ed & tr]. The Saṃvarodaya-Tantra: Selected Chapters, Tokyo: Hokusaido Press, 1974); also Abhidhānottāra, paññālas 9 and 14; Yogiṇīsaṃcāra (Buddhist), paññālas 5 and 13 (National Archives, Kathmandu, Manuscript No. 5–22/vi [‘Saṃcāratantrapaṇḍija’]).
20 Tantrasadbhāva, adhikāra 16 (yoginīlakṣaṇa-), verses 60c–68b: National Archives, Kathmandu, Manuscript No. 5–1985, folio 78v9–13: kulūtāyām aranyeye sindhudēse nageśvare / 60 / sadurakukṣyā<mente> saurāṣtre pretapuryām himālaye / kāčīyām (Ms: kaṃcyo) lampākāvysiaye kālīnāe kauśale sthale / 61 / trisāṅkunāu (Ms: trisāṅku- nis) tathā caudre (Ms: codre) kāmarāpe ca mālāye / devikote sūdhārāme godāvaryaś (Ms: godāvaryaṁ) taṭe 'rbude / 62 / eṣu (Ms: esa) deṣeṣu yāh kanyāḥ (Ms: kanyā) striyo vā klinnavayānv / sarvāḥ tāḥ kāmarāpinyo manovegāniuvṛttyayā / 63 / seṣeṣu yāḥ samutpannya<h> śākinyo ghorāmatare / sad yogināḥ kulūtāyām aranyeye ca mātāraḥ / 64 / sindhudēse bhagināyus tu nageśe kulanāyikāḥ / sadurakukṣyām (Ms: sadurakukṣyām) kāmipīvāh saurāṣtre ghredavaṭāṭāḥ / 65 / pretapuryāṁ mahākālīvyāṁ himavādirgirā / kāčīyām (Ms: kaṃcyō) ambā<mente> samākhyātā lampākāvysiaye 'mṛtāḥ / 66 / kalinge vratadhārīnaya<h> kauśale piśītāsaṇāḥ / cakravākya<h> sthāne proktā<s> triśān<mente> nyām amāra<h> śmṛtāḥ / 67 / desadvaye ca śākinyo nāvīkāyikā<h> /.

21 Tohoku 366.
22 Abhidhānottara, pātalā 1, prose after verse 3 (Ms cit., folio 1 v5–6).
23 See, e.g., Nispnayogāvalī 26b–2.
24 Daśkārnavatanta, pātalā 1, last verse (National Archives, Kathmandu, Manuscript No. 3–447, folio 7v2): sarvāvrasamāyogaḥ vajrasattvam paramā sukham; pātalā 49 (Ms cit., folio 149r 1): sarvāvrasamāyogam dhātu<m> sarveṣu cāntaram /.
25 Śamvarodaya (ed. Tsuđa) 3.6cd; 26.10cd.
26 Abhidhānottara, pātalā 29, verse 7cd: mahābhairavacarmanmēna kaṭim āveṣṭyā (Ms: āveṣṭha) samśhitam /.
27 Ibid. pātalā 27, verses 4c–5b: vikalpa bhairomaṇi caiva tryṇātāḥ rsātā kāḷārātyayoh / pādākrāntatale kṛtvā sarvadūndantadāmakāḥ /.
28 Ibid. pātalā 30, verse 7cd: bhujadvādāsaṃbhīr (Ms: Ábhi) yu<k>tam śunyatājñānām uttamam /.
29 Ibid. pātalā 48, verses 1c-3b: hūṃkārākṣaraṁpannam vajraḍākaṁ mahāsukham (Ms: māhāsukham) / 1 / sādhuḥমুনির্গাত্রায় মহাশুক্তম (Ms: mahāsukham) / 2 / vārāhyā ca samāpannam śuny- atākarunākalam /.
30 Ibid. pātalā 34, verse 13cd: mahāmudrāsāmāpannam dharmadhūtusvabhavākām /.
31 Ibid. pātalā 28 (on cult of Praṇavādāka), verse 5 to 9: adha<h>pādātalābje tu durbhagā<mente>fartikha<h> kṛtvā / pāncadarśanam ākramya pratyāliḥadapakramāt (Ms: līdhaḥpratiyālīhadapakramāt) / 5 / ... viṣṇu carmanvīśamānī duḥkālaśvānālakṣitaḥ / vyājanāśīśīṣyuktam (Ms: āśīti-) ālikālīyudhamvam prabhum / 2 / viḍārthi ca samāpannam śuny- atākarunākalam /.
32 Jayadrathayāmāla, śatka 2, pātalā 21, verses 8c to 14 (National Archives, Kathmandu, Manuscript No. 5–4650, folio 80r1–5): catuscakresvarṣeṣvāraḥ bhairomavaggamīni / 8 / prathamaḥ bhairomavu ṛvaḥ mahāpātaṇkānam / ... dasābhūmiṣvara-m- buddha-pratikārnavālambitam / aṣṭaḥ ye krodharājino herukāyā mahābāla<h> / 12 / teṣaṁ mṛdāntraprakārādvasāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁśāṁś ārāmāḥ yās ca saktavāya / 13 / āsāṃ cūḍākālāpena vaktvayukterāḥ bhūvatsā / jāniphāvām utrāsāḥ dhārayantam suḥbhavām / 14 /... 
33 Jayadrathayāmāla, śatka 3, pātalā 4, verses 26 to 27 (Ms cit., folio 28r8–v1): kopolbhaṇamahākālā- (Ms: laṃ) muṇḍadattaika (Ms: āṃtaika) pādikām / ghora-herukakānākanyastapāpadadvityakām / 25 / krodharājāṣṭakākāṃ bhūma<v> bhairomaṇi­ dratadhāgatān (Ms: tāḥ) / samcūrṇayānīṃ tān (?). Ms: -aṃṭīśā) ghorapādāghātair bhāyānākām / 26 /.
34 For the formulae, and the meditations on the four bhrūmajīhāras, mind-only and emptiness as the preliminaries of sādhana see Sādhanaṃlā (ed. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, Gackwad’s Oriental Series No. 26, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1925), 458–459.
(Mahāmāyāsādhana), 4661-12 (Vajradākasādhana), 46819-20 (Hevajrasādhana) etc. For the resorption of hūṃ, etc., the Cakrasamvarapu-jāvidhi (Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project, Running No. 791 D, Reel No. D 35/28, folios 1v–23v), folio 20r-4-1: hūṃkāram mahāsūkhayam bhāgayet / candram ūkāre ūkāram hakāre hakāre śirasi śiro 'ṛdhacandre 'ṛdhacandraṃ bindau bindum nāde nādam bālāgraś atasahasrabhāgārpaṃ nirvikalpaṃ mahāsūkhayam cītām nirūpayet /

35 See, e.g., Svachchandatrantra (ed. Panjīt Madhusudan Kaul, Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, Bombay: Research Department, Jammu and Kashmir State, 1921–1935) 4.525–529c. Here two the seed-syllable is hūṃ (the seed of Nīskala-Svachchandabhairava, the high deity of this Tantra).

36 See Debala Mitra, Buddhist Monuments (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1971), 19: “The radically-reoriented religion evoked protests from the orthodox monks of Ceylon and Sindh. According to the Tibetan monk Dharmasvamin (p. 64) and Lāmā Tārānātha, the Ceylonese Śrāvakas at Vajrāsana described Vajrayāna as being foreign to the teachings of the Buddha. They put into fire many mantra books, destroyed the silver image of Heruka and tried to convince the pilgrims about the uselessness of the Vajrayāna teachings.”

37 See Kriyāsamuccaya (ed. Lokesh Chandra, Śatapitaka Series Vol. 237, Delhi: Sharara Rani, 1977 [photographic reproduction of a Ms]) 3238–3244: anena mañjhkarmantrapradhānataṃ asya yānasya darsāvayat avirodārthaṃ / prakṛtisāvadye 'pi hi karmai samutthānavisēśad anāpattir bhagavatā bahuṣaḥ prakāśita tathā ca “candālavuṣkārādyā mārānārthiḥthācitakāḥ / te 'pi hevajrāmārgāsthāḥ sidhānte nātā sanśāyāḥ /” api ca “nāpattīśubhacītasya śnehā caiva dayāvataḥ / nīsidhamaṃ apy anuṣṭhātaṃ kṛpāḥ arthādārṣinaḥ /” iti / yah punar upacatapunyāhūṣrūtyādibhīḥ sarvadharmān svapnasamān śūnya-tākarasān sadṛh ham adhīmūcātī tasya bhiksuvajradhārasyaṃvarāvayaḥ kva virodhagandho ‘pi / ata evoktam bhagavatā “bhikṣum vajradhāram kuryād /” ity avasyam caitad abhyupeyam /,” Hereby he shows, in order to avoid contradiction, that the emphasis of this Way is upon mental action. For the Lord has taught many times that even if the action is sinful by nature there is no offence if it has an (appropriate) cause. Thus: “Even untouchables, reed-cutters and the like, men who profit by killing (?), attain the goal if they enter this path of Hevajra. Of this there is no doubt.” And: “There is no offence when the action is of one whose intention is good, who acts out of affection, who is compassionate. Even the forbidden is allowed in the case of the man who is compassionate and intent on the welfare of others.” But he who by virtue of such factors as his accumulated merit and great learning has achieved the firm conviction that all phenomena are like illusions or dream images and identical with emptiness cannot be subject even to the slightest trace of a contradiction between his vows as a monk and his vows as a Vajra Master. Therefore the Lord has said: “One may make a monk a Vajra Master …” This must be recognized” ibid. 3242-: yadi punar durjanagocaraḥ pradesāḥ syati tadā tasyāpi jñānamudrayaḥ guhyaprajñānābhīṣekasu ātāvaya / durjanāsambhava tu karmamudraiva / adṛdhaḥdimokṣaya tu bhikṣoḥ śrāddhasāyāḥ bhāyaprajñābhīṣekṣakagrahaḥ nīsidham / anyathā pūrvasamvarabhṛṣaṃ mahān anarthaḥ syati / yadi punar guruh sthirabhāvako bhavati tadā tenārāpyāyāḥ jñānārāpyāyāḥ jñānamudrayāṃ tasyāpi prajñānābhīṣekdo deyo grhnṛtaḥ ca nābhrāmacyaena kāpy ṛaptitvam bhaveti / / karmakāyābhāvat / tasya tu prāgrasthāvasthāvasthāyam anubhū-​tasukṣayaṃ smaranenānandādhibhēdāḥ pratipādayitavayaḥ / guror api sati bhikṣute guhyābhīṣekādīdāne sarvāṃ uktaṃ anuṣamdheyam /,” But if the region is the home of evil men, then he may give the candidate the Secret Empowerment [guhyābhīṣek] and the Empowerment of the Knowledge of Wisdom [prajñānābhīṣek] through a Knowledge Seal [i.e., a non-physical consort]. However, if there are no such evil men, only the Action Seal
[i.e. the physical consort] will be adequate. This is so unless the monk lacks firm conviction [in the illusory nature of phenomena]. In that case, even if he is a faithful Buddhist, he is forbidden to take these empowerments with an external Wisdom [i.e. consort]. If he were to do so, it would be a great ill; for he would then be guilty of breaking his vows. Rather, if his guru is capable of sustained contemplative realization he must impart the Empowerment of the Knowledge of Wisdom to him by giving him a Knowledge Seal; for in receiving ‘her’ he will not be guilty of abandoning his chastity. If he has been a married man before [his ordination] he can be taught the various Joys (ānanda etc.) [in the fourth Empowerment [caturthābhiṣekā]] through his memory of the sexual pleasure he experienced then. All that has been said about giving the Empowerments that begin with the Secret should be applied to the case of the initiating guru, if he is a monk.”

38 See David Gellner, Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 273–281, 297–304. Gellner gives an ordered account of the ritual of initiation in the cult of Śaṃvara and Vajrārāhi following the verbal testimony of Newar Vajracāryas. This account agrees almost entirely with the record of Newar practice preserved in the ritual manuals; see, e.g., Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project, Running No. E 1093/5 (Dīkṣāvidhi), E 1203/3; Asha Saphu Kuti Bubi 84 (Dīkṣāvidhāna), ibid. 85 (Dīkṣā-vidhāna), ibid. 45 (Dīkṣāvidhāna), ibid. 47.

Further reading


Giuseppe Tucci, The Religions of Tibet. Translated from the German and Italian by Geoffrey Samuel (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 47–162 (Chs. 4 and 5).
According to the Yoga Tantra, Śākyamuni attained to the supreme and perfect enlightenment not at Buddhagayā but in the Akaniśṭha Ghanavvyūha Paradise.¹ In the Sarvatathāgata-tatva-samgraha (=STTS), the mūla tantra of the Yoga Tantra class, the event of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment is described in the manner of a dialogue between all the assembled Tathāgatas and Siddhārtha. The gradual ascent from the fundamental understanding of the mind (citta) through the intermediate stages of mystical experience to the crucial moment culminating in Siddhārtha’s Buddhahood is outlined in five consecutive stages called the five abhisambodhis (in Tibetan mnon-par-’ishan-rgya-ba or mnon-par-byan-chub); each sambodhi being characterized by its own particular mantra, state of meditation and appropriate visualization.²

Before embarking on discussing in some detail the five adhisambodhis, let us consider briefly the circumstances which preceded them and the actual site at which they took place. In STTS in the introductory passage which is followed by the description of the abhisambodhis we read that Buddha Vairoccana as the supreme of the Pañcatathāgatas surrounded by an entourage consisting of Tathāgatas and Bodhisattvas was residing in the abode of the king of the Akaniśṭha gods. It was therein that all the Tathāgatas assembled together because Siddhārtha sat down under the bodhi tree with a firm resolve to gain the state of supreme Buddhahood.

In the Vajraśekhara, the explanatory tantra, it is said that Śākyamuni after his arduous ascetic feats reached the final Stage (sa-mtha’).³ Having received the garment consecration he took residence in the Akaniśṭha Ghanavvyūha abode under the name of Mahāmati, and made a final resolve to become a Buddha for the sake of all living beings.

The most important commentaries on the STTS were written by three renowned Indian scholars, namely Buddhaguhya, Śākyamitra and Ānandagarbha.
They provided us with the following interpretations relevant to the circumstance of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment.

Buddhaguhya and Śākyamitra maintained that Śākyamuni from the time of his birth as Sidhārtha and the son of Śuddhodana to the moment of practising severe austerities on the banks of the Nairājinā River had all the essential characteristics of a Bodhisattva of the tenth Stage (bhūmi). After six years of ascetic vicissitudes he entered into four successive trances (dhyāna). It was during the fourth trance that the Buddhas of the ten directions interrupted his meditation and having instructed him that it was impossible to gain Buddhahood by meditation alone, they left his perfected physical body (vipākakāya) on the bank of the Nairājinā River and conducted his knowledge body (manomaya-kāya) to Akanīṣṭha where they first bestowed upon him the diadem consecration (mukutābhisēka) and then made him pursue the five abhisambodhis. After the completion of the fifth abhisambodhi Siddhārtha attained to the supreme Buddhahood. Immediately after that he performed the four Miraculous Activities, went to the summit of Mt Meru to proclaim the Yoga Tantra teachings, and then descending down to earth he joined his physical body and performed the remaining deeds of his earthly life.

Ānandagarbha in his Tattvāloka explains that after amassing the store of merit and knowledge (punyajñanasambhāra) for three incalculable kalpas and when he was born in his last life as a Bodhisattva of the tenth Stage, Śākyamuni entered the four dhyānas in the Akanīṣṭha abode. He was drawn out from his meditation, received the diadem consecration and then became a perfect Buddha by means of the five abhisambodhis. After the performance of the four Miraculous Activities and the proclamation of the Yoga Tantra on the summit of Mt Meru, he descended to earth and was born as the son of Śuddhodana and accomplished the remaining activities of the twelve Buddha Acts.

A modified version of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment is provided in the rDo-rje-sni-po-rgyan-rgyu quoted by Bu-ston where it is said that Śākyamuni on hearing supplications, left Akanīṣṭha, took residence in the Tuṣita Heaven where he proclaimed Dharma to the resident gods and then was born into the Śākya Clan.

What is then the essential notion of the Akanīṣṭha Paradise? bSod-nams-rtses-mo (1142-1182), the second of the five Sa-skya masters explains in his General Introduction to the Tantras that it is for the benefit of Jambudvīpa that the best of the Śākyas penetrate into the Supreme Truth (paramārtha) in the Akanīṣṭha Heaven just as it is stated in the Lankāvatāra Sūtra that the perfect Buddhas gain their Buddhahood in Akanīṣṭha and then through their nirmānakāyas manifest themselves on the earth. As for the saying in the STTS that Vairocana and his entourage resided in Akanīṣṭha in the place of the king of the gods, it implies that the Akanīṣṭha gods are the Bodhisattvas of the tenth Stage. As for the exact location of Akanīṣṭha, some people say that it is a pure and aloof abode, some consider it as the residence of Maheśvara, and yet other people thinking in terms of this world’s impermanence assume it to be an indestructible sphere. These
explanations, continues bSod-nams-rtse-mo, are rather inadequate because they do not define Akanistiṣṭha as the place with its precincts divided into different sections, and as the residence of the Buddhas manifested in their sambhogakāyas who give instructions to the Bodhisattvas of the tenth Stage. The most comprehensive explanation, according to bSod-nams-rtse-mo, comes from the Buddhavatāmsaka where it is said that the whole ocean of different worlds is contained within the palm of the Tathāgata Vairocana who, abiding in his perfect Wisdom, resides together with the Great Bodhisattvas (Mahābodhisattva = Bodhisattva of the tenth Stage) in the Ghanavyūha Sphere, the abode of the perfect Buddhas manifested in their sambhogakāyas. Within the Ghanavyūha Sphere there are several different realms one of which is destined for the Buddhas in their nirmānakāyas who in due succession of their heroic achievements appear in Jambudvīpa.

There are of course other descriptions and interpretations of the Akanistiṣṭha Paradise but for our purpose here it will be sufficient to become aware that for the Yoga Tantra the Akanistiṣṭha abode denominates the residence of the Buddhas manifested in their sambhogakāyas and the place of enlightenment of the Great Bodhisattvas.

Now we come to consider the first abhisambodhi. In the STTS it is described as follows. The Tathāgatas manifested themselves in their sambhogakāyas before the Bodhisattva Siddhiirtha and addressed him in these words: “O noble son, how will you gain the perfect Buddhahood (sambodhi) while you are enduring all the sorrows (sarvaduḥkha) on account of your unawareness (anabhijñā) of the Truth (tattva) of all the Tathāgatas?” Siddhiirtha emerged from his imper turbable (āśphānaka) meditation and begged saying: “O Lord Tathāgatas, please instruct me. What is the essence of the Tathāgatas and how am I to accomplish it.” The Tathāgatas answered: “O noble son, pondering in your mind enter into an equipoise and reciting this self-perfected mantra achieve the goal: OM CITTA-PRATIVEDHAM KAROMI.” The Bodhisattva addressed the Buddhas: “O Lord Tathāgatas, I perceive in my heart a form of a lunar disc.” And the Tathāgatas explained: “O noble son, this mind (citta) is the Clear Light by its own nature (prakrti-prabhāsvara). As one purifies it, so it becomes just as a white cloth stained with colour.”

In the Vajraśekhara we read in the relevant passage that the Bodhisattva Mahāmati was awakened from his meditation by the Tathāgatas by pronouncing the mantra OM VAJRAUTTIṢṬHA and by snapping their fingers. As he arose from his meditation he perceived an ocean of Buddhas and bowing before them he asked them for instructions and the Buddhas spoke up:

“What is like the sphere of activities of the mind? They said. As for the mind, it is the perfect discernment (pratyavekṣanā). Having heard the voice of all the Tathāgatas he remained for a long time deliberating in his mind but did not perceive the form of his mind. Having exhausted all the different possibilities he made a request: O Lord Tathāgatas,
I do not perceive the form of my mind. What are like then the primary characteristics (mtshan-ñid) of the mind? The the Tathāgatas said: It is difficult to know the mind’s sphere of activity. We give you this hrdaya OM CITTA-PRATIVEDHAM KAROMI. Perform a subtle recitation! Having received this pure spell, he pondered it over in his mind according-ly and in that very instant he duly perceived a lunar disc.

What is this mind? Is it the source of the defilements (kleśa) or is it the mind of virtue or non-virtue (kuśala-akuśala), or is it the mind endowed with the seed of the primordial substratum (ālaya, kun-gzi)? After receiving and understanding the substance of Dharma, Siddhiirtha adhered to the Six Pāramitās and became a purified being. Totally free from the defilements he amassed for a long period of time the store of merit and knowledge. Just like the full moon, pure and unimpeded in its brightness, his mind too, on account of the perfect merit and knowledge, was like the full moon; it was in a state of neither becoming nor non-becoming (bhāva-abhāva). In the same way just like the full moon, the great merit and knowledge showed themselves as a moon. Being endowed with the store of merit and knowledge he per­ceived the lunar disc of his mind. He rejoiced and showed devotion and then he spoke once more: O Lord Protectors, I, being free from all defilements and impurities perceive my mind, free of the subject-object relation, as a lunar disc."

It is evident from the above citation that the fundamental notion of the first abhisambodhi is the understanding of the true nature of the mind (cittadhammatā).

Buddhaguhya and Ānandagarbha disagree as to the clarity and appearance of the lunar disc. Buddhaguhya in his Tantrārthāvatāra says that Siddhārtha saw a lunar disc which was empty inside and which resembled the part of the moon of the first day of the month. Firstly, he argues, Siddhārtha saw a lunar disc because he abandoned all the impurities of the skandhas, dhātus, āyatana, the subject-object manner of thinking and so forth by means of the undisputed tenet of the Teaching that all the dharmas have no true nature of their own. But this vision of a lunar disc was impaired because after the elimination of the haze (khug-rna) of the dust of the samsāra’s impregnations (vāsanā) his mind became purified but since it was endowed with somewhat minute impregnations of Dharma, pure from eternity, the form of the lunar disc remained imperfect. So long as the accumulation of merit and knowledge remain imperfect, there is no vision of one perfect moon. However on account of one’s knowledge together with the appropriate fruition, the residence (gnas) of the impregnation of the pure and timeless Dharma comes into vision.

Ānandagarbha argues that it was a vision of a perfect lunar disc because Siddhārtha’s mind was abiding in its own true nature and by its own nature the mind is the Clear Light (‘od-gsal). This notion of the mind as the Clear Light is
very much stressed by Bu-ston in his Introduction to the Yoga Tantra. Bu-ston also elaborates on another interpretation which purports that in this abhisambodhi through the means of meditation and the recitation of the mantra, the mind’s foundation as dharmadhatu, beginningless and infinite, becomes manifested as having the nature of the sixteenfold Śūnyatā, and then as the consequence of the supramundane knowledge being born within oneself, one perceives a lunar disc. He further elaborates that in the first instant the relative truth (kun-rdzob) perceives a vision which is like a mirage (mig-yor) but subsequently the dharma-tā of the mind endowed with perfect understanding (abhisamaya) manifests itself, assuming the form of a lunar disc.

Yet another interpretation of this abhisambodhi is provided by Śākyamitra in his Kosalālambāra. Siddhārtha had difficulties in becoming a Buddha by means of the four dhyānas, says Śākyamitra, because the āsphānaka meditation is a state of a total isolation in which the bodily and mental activities are suspended. By entering such a meditation he became completely isolated and consequently unable to pursue the activities for the benefit of other living beings; and this was the chief reason why Siddhārtha failed in his efforts and was awakened from his meditation. Furthermore the conversation that ensued between the Bodhisattva and the Buddhas demonstrates the teacher-disciple relationship. The knowledge in the manner of reciting mantras, the characteristics of the pledges (samaya), the consecrations, the wisdom of the sages, and the benefit of others come from the teacher. Thus without respect for one’s guru, it is impossible to achieve the fruition of the mantras. Siddhārtha was a disciple endowed with excellent qualities and with sense-faculties perfected he was well disposed to gain Buddhahood. However, although his accomplished merit and knowledge became a perfect repository for the primary cause (or motivation-hetu), his maturation-state was not completely perfect because there existed an obstacle of inspiration (luñ). Siddhārtha, continues Śākyamitra, by discerning in his mind and by meditation alone did not progress towards the supreme goal. Discerning in one’s mind or applying one’s mind for the sake of understanding the skandhas and the rest, or retaining it in a state without a meditative object, or even pratyavekṣāna combined with meditation are insufficient. The inefficacy of the above means was compensated by providing Siddhārtha with a self-perfected mantra. Thus with the help of such a perfect mantra he pursued in his mind the notion of the True Nature in order to bring to perfection his own nature (bdag-gi-ño-bo) in compliance with the primary cause. Then in order to demonstrate the kind of knowledge which he apprehended the store-conciousness (ālayavijñāna), perfectly pure, became present in the form of the Mirror-like-Wisdom (ādarśajñāna).

The second abhisambodhi. Next the Tathāgatas in order to increase the knowledge of Siddhārtha’s translucent mind taught him the manner of raising the thought of enlightenment of the Great Bodhisattvas with the following mantra: OM BODHICITTAM UTPADAYĀMI, and they instructed him to comprehend this hrdaya of the Tathāgatas as the thought-generating Samantabhadra. Since his mind was purified from the subject-object impregnations, he
perceived it as All-Good (*Samantabhadra*) and as the primary cause of all the perfect thoughts of all living beings, and also as the Mind-essence of all the *Tathiigatas*. This kind of germinated thought of enlightenment resulted in gaining the Wisdom of Sameness (*samatājñāna*).

According to *bSod-nams-grags-pa*, Siddhārtha perceived here in a direct manner the true nature of the mind (*cittadharmatā*), which he equates with *śūnyatā*. According to Buddhaguhya, in the first *abhisambodhi* one is blessed (byin-gyis-rlabs) and reaches the level of perfection resulting from the study of the *Pāramitās* and the practice of the *Bodhisattva-bhūmis*. In the second *abhisambodhi* one acquires the mind which has the nature of enlightenment gained and perfectly understood by the *Tathiigatas*. The thought of enlightenment as a *hrdaya* is the Mind of the *Tathiigatas* which comprises the wisdom of all the Omniscient Ones.

*Bu-ston* equates the mind’s true nature with the Clear Light and explains that once the mind becomes purged from the subject-object impregnations, all the subtle impurities are removed and the mind becomes translucent. The purification from the impregnations is accomplished at this stage by the Supreme Truth and as the mind understands its own true nature to be the Clear Light, it becomes further expanded by the perfect knowledge (*abhisamaya*).

In the third *abhisambodhi*, in order to fortify and to make steady the thought-generating *Samantabhadra* of all the *Tathiigatas*, Siddhārtha received the following mantra: OM TĪṢTHA VAJRA; and he was instructed to envisage a *vajra* inside the lunar disc resting in his heart. At this stage the thought generating *Samantabhadra* assumed the form of a *vajra* imbued with the essence of all the *Tathiigatas*. His mind became endowed with the five-pronged *vajra* symbolizing *Śūnyatā* which had the nature of the Five Buddha-Wisdoms, and in particular he gained in this *abhisambodhi* the Discriminating Wisdom (*pratyaveksana*) of perfect and unerring understanding.

In the fourth *abhisambodhi* in order to stabilize the *Samantabhadra-vajra*, *Siddhārtha* was given to recite and to contemplate the following mantra: OM VAJRA-ĀṬMAKO 'HAM. This being accomplished, the spheres of the Body, Speech and Mind of all the *Tathiigatas* through their blessing penetrated the *vajra* in the *Bodhisattva*’s heart. Next the *Tathiigatas* bestowed upon him the *vajra-name* consecration of *Vajradhātu*. As a result the *Bodhisattva Vajradhātu* perceived himself as having the Body of all the *Tathiigatas*. Furthermore, as the *mahāmudrā* of the Body-sphere of the Five Buddha-Families, the Secrets of their Speech-sphere, and the *vajra* of their Mind-sphere penetrated the *vajra* in *Vajradhātu*’s heart, he became endowed with the Body-sphere (*sku-dbyins*) of *Vairocana*. Having been thus imbued with the *vajra*-nature of all the *Tathiigatas*, he perceived himself as possessing a *Tathiigata-Body*. In addition to that, since the goal of liberation (*rnam-par-thar-pa*) in its own nature is the Clear Light, *Vajradhātu* obtained here the Active Wisdom (*kṛtya-anuśṭhāna-jñāna*) of pursuing the welfare and good of all the living beings.

With the *mantra* OM YATHĀ-SARVATATHĀGATĀS-TATHĀ-AHAM,
SAKYAMUNI'S ENLIGHTENMENT

bestowed during the fifth abhisambodhi, the Bodhisattva Vajradhātu gained the supreme Buddhahood as Vairocana who represents or epitomizes all the Buddhas, and who is manifested at this stage as Mahāvairocana in his sambhogakāya.

From the vajra-form of the third abhisambodhi there evolved a Buddha-Body of the fourth abhisambodhi with which Vajradhātu identified himself, but he did not as yet fully perceive it as being enodowed with the major and minor auspicious bodily marks (laksana & upalaksana). It was in the fifth adhisambodhi that he completely understood, perceived and gained a perfect Buddha-Body and acquired the Absolute Wisdom (dharmadhātu-jñāna) becoming thus a perfectly enlightened Buddha.

On the completion of the five abhisambodhis the newly enlightened Buddha received consecrations to stabilize his Buddhahood. All the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas became manifested and then the main teachings of the Yoga Tantra were pronounced.

The five abhisambodhis by being placed at the beginning of the mūlatantra, the STTS, serve as a declaration or a manifest of the Yoga Tantra’s position and they are meant to provide a general framework for various practices expounded in the main body of the Yoga Tantra teachings. By attributing this particular manner of experiencing the five abhisambodhis to Śākyamuni Buddha, the Yoga Tantra justifies its practices and all its scriptures assume the same importance and validity as the canonical scriptures of other schools. Furthermore through this particular exposition of the five abhisambodhis the Yoga Tantra demonstrates that the manner of gaining enlightenment as presented by other traditions (especially the triyānas) is quite inadequate, and in particular it demonstrates that philosophy or thinking alone does not bring about a spiritual realisation. The previous traditions and philosophies connected with them are not rejected as such but they are made used of as a starting point. It is insufficient to train the mind alone but it is necessary to imbue it with the essence and nature of the Tathāgatas. The Yoga Tantra takes for granted the knowledge of different philophical schools and makes use of them for its own purposes. Philosophy as such, it is quite evident, is consigned to the very first stage of spiritual life. It reaches its apex in the first abhisambodhi or perhaps even that much cannot be said for already at this stage an intervention of the Tathāgatas is apparent.

If we examine the terminology employed to explain the successive abhisambodhis we can see clearly that the Yoga Tantra introduces some unification into all different philosophical interpretations of the reality and shows indirectly a basic unity of those interpretations provided that one retains a clear awareness of their different levels of reference. We encounter constantly the technical terminology which refers to the nature of the mind (cittadharmatā), to the nature of the relative and absolute reality as explained by the sūnyatā or ālayavijñāna interpretations, and of course the trikāya theory. Different terms such as cittatā, dharmatā, sūnyatā or prabhāsvara are employed almost at the same time as an indication that they refer to the same reality from different angles or through different
Tantric Buddhism (including China and Japan) approaches. It is only when they are as if combined together that one is able to gain a sufficiently comprehensive understanding of the whole reality before one embarks on the mystical experience portrayed in the five abhisambodhis.

Finally in the five abhisambodhis one can see the Yoga Tantra's contribution to the Buddhist thought and religious practices, namely the method of visualization and gradual identification with the supreme Buddhahood, the introduction of consecrations as necessary aids and the use of various objects such as vajra or moon which receive a special symbolic meaning.

Notes

1 Here below are listed the main sources for this short study.

   Sarvatathāgataatattvasamgraha; Facsimile reproduction of a tenth century Sanskrit manuscript from Nepal. Reproduced by Lokesh Chandra and David L. Snellgrove. Satapitaka Series vol. 269, New Delhi 1981. This work contains an excellent introduction by David Snellgrove in which he gives a succinct summary of the whole tantra and gives lists of different mandalas.


   Vajraśīkhara-mahāgūhyayogatantra; Tibetan translation in the Tibetan Tripitaka (= T.T.), Pekin Edition of the Otani University, No. 113, vol. 5, pp.1–3


   rGyud-sde-spyi’i-rnam-par-gzāg-pa by bSod-nams-rtses-mo, in the Sa-skya-pa’i bk’a’-bum, the Toyo Bunko 1968, vol. 2, folio 41a onwards.


2 It might be of use to outline here briefly Śākyamuni’s enlightenment as presented by other Buddhist schools. For this short exposition I make use of bSod-nams-grags-pa’s introduction to the tantras listed in the previous note.

   According to the Śrāvakā Vehicle Śākyamuni raised the thought of enlightenment before Mahāsākyamuni and then accumulated merit and knowledge during three successive aeons. At the end of amassing merit and knowledge he was born as Siddhārtha and son of Suddhodana. At the age of thirty-five, on the 15th day of the last month of the spring and at dusk he subdued Māra. At midnight while he was seated in meditative equipoise he manifested the path of preparation, the path of vision and the path of meditation. At dawn he gained the perfect Buddhahood. He performed these acts as a man. At the age of eighty he passed into nirvāṇa and the continuance of his knowledge was cut off like an extinguished candle.

   According to the Prājñāpāramitā school Śākyamuni after the three aëons of amassing merit and knowledge and pursuing the Bodhisattva Stages reached his final state. He then received from the Buddhas a consecration known as ‘Great Light’. Next during the first and second instances of his adamantine concentration he gained Dharma-kāya and Sambhogakāya becoming thus a perfect Buddha. His Sambhogakāya took residence in the Akanīṣṭha Heaven and his Nirmānakāya performed the twelve Buddha acts in Jambudvīpa.
In the anuttara tantras such as the Kalacakra or Hevajra we find no explanation of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment. It is however expounded by Āryadeva’s and Jñānapāda’s schools. These two schools put forward basically the same exposition. They set forth two possibilities concerning a Bodhisattva’s last life and enlightenment. One is that a Bodhisattva of the tenth Stage is bound to one more rebirth and the other that a Bodhisattva of the tenth Stage gains Buddhahood during that very last life. Thus according to these schools Śākyamuni after amassing his merit and knowledge through the practice of the Pāramitās entered in the Akaniñtha Heaven a state of concentration known as ‘Space-pervading’. The Buddhas interrupted his meditation, summoned a divine maiden called Tilottamā and bestowed upon him the third consecration. Then he pursued the successive abhisambodhis. At midnight through dissolving into three successive kinds of Emptiness he perceived the Clear Light of the Universal Emptiness. By doing this he gained the union (zung-jug) of learning. After receiving the fourth consecration he performed the Buddha acts, and then entering into a meditation which was like a vajra he purified all obstructions to knowledge and gained the union beyond learning becoming thus a perfect Buddha.

3 For an exposition of the Bodhisattva bhūmis see Har Dayal’s The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, London 1932, reprinted in Delhi, 1970.


5 The four Miraculous Activities (cho-phrul-rnam-pa-bzī) are the following ones: 1. Blessing (byin-gyis-rlob), 2. Consecration (dban-bskur-ba), 3. Meditative concentration (tiṅ-ṅe-dzin), and 4. Wondrous Acts (phrin-las); bSod-nams grags pa folio 5b.


7 Thus in STTS page 7 and translated into Tibetan (T.T. vol. 4, p.219–4–7) as mi-g.yo-ba’i tiṅ-ṅe-dzin. This samādhi is also referred to as āspharaṇaka in different texts.

8 Vajrasikhara p. 3–1–1 to 7.

9 For these technical terms see Th. Stcherbatsky’s The Central Philosophy of Buddhism and the Meaning of the word Dharma, reprinted in Delhi 1970.


11 The consecrations as a part of the five abhisambodhis are not explained in great detail by the commentaries. A good interpretation of them in this connection can be found in bSod-nams-rtse-mo’s introduction to the tantras folio 43b onwards. I may add here that the four consecrations bestowed upon the newly enlightened Buddha are interpreted in terms of the Buddha Bodies. The first consecration is called the Vajrasattva consecration and it bestows the nature of Svabhāvakāya; the second one Vajradharma bestows Sambhogakāya; the third of Vajraratna bestows the Buddha lakṣaṇa and upalakṣaṇa; and the fourth of Vajrakarma bestows the nature of Nirmānakāya.
1. General remarks: the ‘critical’ character of Tantric Buddhism

i. Buddhist Tantra on the ridge

In trying to get a total image of the history of the Tantric thought of Buddhism in India, it is first necessary for us to observe the diametrically opposed characters of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra*\(^1\) (大日經) and the *Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra*\(^2\) (金剛頂經) i.e. the two greatest scriptures of the Shingon-sect (真言宗) of Japan. These two scriptures include two opposite ideas or logics; one the Mahāyānic idea of the accumulation of two kinds of merits, viz. moral and intellectual (福智二資糧), or the logic of action and its result (karman 業), the other the Tantric idea of the essential union of the individual existence with the ultimate reality, or the logic of yogic practice.

I would like to depict the point of contact of these two scriptures metaphorically as the sharp ridge of a mountain upon which one cannot find an inch of flat place upon which to balance oneself. Ascending to the uppermost part of the slope of Mahāyāna Buddhism, that is, the first chapter of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra*, we find ourselves facing the dizzy precipice of Tantrism which starts from the *Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra* at the opposite side of knife-edged ridge.

The theoretical part of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra* i.e. the first chapter, may well be regarded as the summit of Mahāyāna Buddhism due to its magnificent and harmonious image of the world, its deep insight into the reality of human life and its noble, lofty ideal of life reassuringly advocated on the basis of this insight into the structure of the world and human nature.

The theoretical framework of this *sūtra*, however, did not necessitate any Tantric practices. There is a critical, unbridgeable gap between the Mahāyānic theoretical part of this scripture i.e. the first chapter, namely, the chapter of the progressing stages of the human mind (心品) and the practical Tantric part i.e. all the following chapters.

At the time when Buddhism was declining at an accelerated pace, the reli-
gious ideal of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra*, which in its essential part rests on the plane of Mahāyāna Buddhism having as its goal the remote attainment of enlightenment through the accumulation of the two kinds of necessary merits over the unimaginably long period of the three great uncountable aeons (三大阿僧祇劫), had come to be regarded as too remote and too sluggish for the people of the time. Such people, being urged by vague but impending feeling of the crisis of their own civilization, were looking impatiently for a method and theory of quick attainment of enlightenment (即身成佛). In order to discover the logic of quick attainment of enlightenment, it was necessary for them to cross over to the slope of Tantrism by overcoming the Mahāyānic aspect of the theoretical system of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra*.

Conversely, in the *Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra*, the rationalistic wall of Mahāyāna Buddhism having been overcome, “the truth of all the *tathāgatas*”, or the secret of the universe, was revealed to all people, and the method of quick attainment of enlightenment, as far as the Tantric mode of thinking goes, was presented to them in completeness. However, this was made possible only by destroying the Mahāyānic framework of the theory and discarding the lofty ideal of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra*.

On the slope of Tantrism, one is necessarily a solitary yogin confronting the ultimate reality by himself. For him the outer world or the existence of others is of no meaning. For him capabilities, ethical or religious efforts and even the friendliness and mercy toward others (慈悲), the essential virtue of Mahāyāna Buddhism, are not necessary.

Such logical extremism, however, causes a basic feeling of uncertainty as to the efficacy of the very logic of *yoga* in those who are still not free from the Mahāyāna Buddhistic consciousness, not allowing them to rest easily on the plane of Tantrism.

We may safely say that the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra*, essentially being Mahāyānic, was not yet complete as a system of Tantrism, and that the *Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra* as a completed Tantric system ceased to be Mahāyānic.

**ii. Kūkai, the herald of the ‘critical’ or precarious character of the Tantric Buddhism**

In the Japanese world of the Shingon sect (真言宗, it has been assumed traditionally that these two systems, *viz.* the system of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra* and that of the *Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra*, together constituting the authentic esoteric Buddhism (純粹密教) are not different in their ability to bring about enlightenment quickly, and that they bring people to one and the same truth. In reality, however, the Mahāyānic logic of accumulating merits found in the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra* and the mystical, Upanisadic logic of *yoga* advocated in the *Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra* are completely antithetical and can not be synthesized. In my opinion, the only figure who has noticed the ‘critical’ or precarious character of Tantric Buddhism is Kūkai (空海), posthumously named
Kōbō-daishi (弘法大師, the great master Kōbō 774–835 A.D.), the founder of the Japanese sect of Shingon Buddhism (真言宗).

In the concluding part of the Un-ji-gi (吽字義, “The Meaning of the Character Hūṃ”), the last work of his life, Kūkai states:

“Moreover, I will explain the fact that this single character (Hūṃ) includes all the truths (理) expounded in all the scriptures and treatises. Whatsoever is expounded in the Mahāvairocana-sūtra and the Tattvasamgraha-tantra is nothing more than ‘the three phrases’ (三句); viz. ‘(of sarvajñajñāna, viz. the omniscience 一切智智) the human mind seeking for enlightenment (bodhicitta 善提心) is the cause; the great compassion (mahākarunā 大悲) (of Vairocana Tathāgata) is the root; and (employing) practical means (upāya 方便) (to save all the living beings of the world) is the final aim (paravasāna 究竟)’.

If we summarize the diffusive to the concise, and the derivative to the original, all the doctrines can be brought back to these three phrases; and these three phrases can be condensed to the single character Hūṃ. Even if (these doctrines are) diffused, (they are) not confused; even if (they are) condensed, none of them is left behind. This is possible because of the unthinkable talent of the tathāgatas and the natural efficacy of the truth itself. (Truths expounded) in tens of thousands of scriptures and treatises do not go beyond these three phrases”.

As will be explained later, ‘the three phrases’ thoroughly represent the idea of the Vairocanaḥbhisaṃbodhi-sūtra, but not that of the Tattvasamgrahatantra; and it goes without saying that Kūkai was well aware of this fact. I am convinced that Kūkai clearly noticing that the ridge composed by the two slopes of these ‘two great scriptures’ was too sharp for one to balance oneself upon, kept himself consciously on the side of the Vairocanaḥbhisaṃbodhi-sūtra. He must have intentionally mentioned both the Tattvasamgraha-tantra and the Vairocanaḥbhisaṃbodhi-sūtra to remind us that the ideal of ‘the three phrases’ is to be retained by one who, keeping himself on the humane slope of Mahāyāna Buddhism, can command a view of the tempting, but dangerous slope of Tantrism yet to be synthesized with Mahāyāna Buddhism. I imagine, it must have been an unfinished dream of Kūkai to establish an ideal Tantric Buddhism precisely on the soaring ridge of the two greatest scriptures by harmonizing the noble humanism of the Vairocanaḥbhisaṃbodhi-sūtra with the dazzingly miraculous secret of the quick attainment of enlightenment advocated within the Tattvasamgraha-tantra.

iii. Tantrism subsequent to the Tattvasamgraha-tantra

In the Tattvasamgraha-tantra, the secret of the quick attainment of enlightenment was actually revealed. There, the Mahāyānic ideal of strenuous effort (難行), the idea of the accumulation of the two kinds of merits (二資糧の積集)
over the long period of the three great uncountable aeons (三大阿僧祇劫) proposed by the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra was surpassed, and the Tantric ideal of the quick attainment of enlightenment through the easy practice (易行) of yoga was declared on the basis of a clear methodical consciousness.

The antithetical character of the two scriptures requires their followers to assume the two contrastive attitudes. A Mahāyānic practitioner of the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra is essentially a pilgrim who, following the example of Sudhanaśreṣṭhīraka (善財童子) of the Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra (華嚴經入法界品), being urged by the compassion to others, courses in the world for the sake of realizing the lofty ideal of saving all living beings. Conversely, the practitioner of the Tattvasaṃgrahā-tantra is a meditator who sits solitarily without taking any interest in others.

This character of the two is reflected also in the contrastive forms of their maṇḍalas. The maṇḍala of the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra can be represented in concentric circles, the centre of which is the brightest; each successive circle becoming darker. On the contrary, the maṇḍala of the Tattvasaṃgrahā-tantra is a plain white circle, in clear contrast with the outer darkness, containing no difference of brightness within.

After the Tantric logic of yoga was proclaimed in the Tattvasaṃgrahā-tantra, followers of all systems of Tantric Buddhism should have become sitting meditators, the maṇḍala of those systems being of same type as that of the Tattvasaṃgrahā-tantra. As the universal formula of attaining enlightenment, together with an example and its mode of operation were presented in the Tattvasaṃgrahā-tantra the practicers should have been able to attain enlightenment merely by applying the formula exactly as it was applied in the Tattvasaṃgrahā-tantra itself. Then, did they actually attain enlightenment? To this question, the general image of Tantric Buddhism of the stage subsequent to the Tattvasaṃgrahā-tantra offers a negative answer.

The formula itself found within the Tattvasaṃgrahā-tantra must have been right; but it left too many elements yet to be clarified when one tries to apply it practically. In the time of tantras subsequent to the Tattvasaṃgrahā-tantra, such as the Guhyasāmiya-tantra and the Sarvabuddhasaṃyoga-ḍākinīmāyāsaṃvara-tantra, many attempts were made unsuccessfully to solve problems by applying the formula. The formula was presented in the last step of the so-called five-stepped process of attaining enlightenment (pañcākārābhisaṃbodhi-krama 五相成身觀) as follows:

"Yathā sarvatathāgatās tathāham" (As all the tathāgatas are, so am I.)

This was interpreted by the tantrists of the time as follows:

‘If the individual existence and the ultimate reality are homologous, they are identical.’
or,

‘If the individual existence successfully reorganizes itself to be homologous with the ultimate reality, the former can unite itself with the latter.’

According to this interpretation, some tried to pick up the elements common to both the individual existence and the ultimate reality, from the multiform structures of both, so as to reconstruct the structure of the former homologous with that of the latter. Others combined the homogeneity of the two as a new condition which was hoped to increase the certainty of the efficacy of the formula. These efforts, however, drove them ironically into a pitfall i.e. the idea of the so-called Sahaja-yāna (俱生乘) which claims that we are by birth (sahaja 俱生) enlightened. Here, they no longer needed Tantric practice to reconstruct themselves in a form homologous with the ultimate reality, since they were already endowed with the structural similarity, and consequently were already in unity with it.

As far as the Tantric logic of yoga is concerned, it is difficult to reject this idea of sahaja, and at the same time, it is also undeniable that the Tantric mentality of sahaja is nothing other than the state which undermines Tantrism itself. Thus, in the system of sahaja, the Tantric logic of the quick attainment of enlightenment resulted in denying the Tantric practice of attaining enlightenment.

The lack of religious substantiality within this system of sahaja caused anxiety in its believers. The anxiety was not overcome before they established a revolutionarily new religion, that is, the religion of the Hevajra-tantra on the basis of the seemingly abominable, heretical cult of cemetery (śmaśāna 戸林).

iv. The cult of cemetery

What I call ‘the cult of cemetery’ is a diabolical cult of Bhairava, a demonic form of the Great God Śiva, and his consort which was prevalent among the lowest strata of the rural, matriarchal community of the time. It is thought to have been a cult usually performed in a cemetery (śmaśāna) by secret societies of lower class women of rural communities who were regarded as or called themselves yoginīs or dāhinīs.

These women assembled in a circle (yoginī-cakra or dāhinī-jāla) within a cemetery (śmaśāna) at midnight on a certain day of the month and celebrated orgies drinking liquor and eating meat. They sacrificed in orgies, even human sacrifice on occasion, to Bhairava for the sake of attaining magical power. They assumed the role of the consort of Bhairava i.e. Durgā, who is referred to by other names such as Kāli, Cāmuṇḍā, Kālarātri, Śyāmā and so on as the occasion demands, and practised sexual yogic practices surrounding the male object of the practice (yogin or ṛka) i.e. the hero (vīra), who assumed the role of the lord Bhairava, both experiencing unusual, supreme pleasures.
These women were regarded with great aversion and horror by outsiders because of the abominable aspect of their cult based on all the hideous and repulsive elements of the cemetery. At the same time, however, they were awed and revered because of their marvelous attainment of magical power (siddhi) and their unusual ecstasy which could only be realized in an exclusive society.

In the course of time, their sexual yogic practices were systematized to present a general idea of the physical structure of three veins (nāḍī) and six nerve centres (cakra) within the body, and accordingly, the certainty and universality of the sexual pleasure which was realized through these practices was increased. It was at this stage that a group of Tantric Buddhists, noticing the mental and physiological certainty of the effect of the sexual yogic practices of these yoginīs, adopted this cult of cemetery so as to utilize the concrete basis of the cult in order to attain a solid answer to the anxiety caused by the formula of the quick attainment of enlightenment presented in the Tattvasamgraha-tantra.

At that time, the male objects (yogin) of the sexual practices of these women, who were fundamentally non-clerical and territorial, were the somewhat more professional and migratory practitioners of yoga, affiliated with the lower sects of Śaivism such as Kāpālikas or Kālāmukhas.

The Buddhist immigrants to the cult of cemetery tried to take the place of these Śaivaite yogins leaving the basic structure of the cult, that is, the group of yoginīs (yoginī- cakra) untouched. Preserving almost all the elements of Bhairava, the god of śmaśāna, adding only trivial elements, they created a new, demonic God Heruka, alias Hevajra, who stands trampling his own father Bhairava under foot assuming almost an identical form.

v. The Hevajra-tantra, Buddhism of the cemetery

Originally, eight yoginīs formed a group and practised sexual yoga in rotation surrounding a male object (yogin). This phenomenon is alluded to by the word saṃcāra (translocation). To this original group of eight yoginīs, Buddhist immigrants introduced, with a clear methodological consciousness, the group of five yoginīs to form a new living maṇḍala. In the maṇḍala of the Hevajra-tantra, the original group of eight yoginīs was pushed away to the outer circle (bāhyaprūta) of the maṇḍala and excluded from the sexual yoga with the Lord Hevajra.

In the Hevajra-tantra, the five yoginīs who compose the newly introduced group are regarded as nothing other than the five families of tathāgatas which composed the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (the maṇḍala of the adamantine sphere 金刚界曼茶羅), the ultimate reality of the Tattvasamgraha-tantra. Here, the wild lower caste women of the time, who used to assemble in a cemetery at midnight and indulge themselves in witchcraft and sexual practices in the orgie, were reorganized to form a new matrix in which the quick attainment of enlightenment was expected to be realized. Thus, the universal formula which had been
advocated ideally in the Tattvasamgraha-tantra was tentatively realized through sexual practice with the yoginīs who actually existed at the time.

vi. The ‘critical’ or precarious character of Saṁvara Tantrism

According to the Tantric way of thinking, the formula of the quick attainment of enlightenment was thus brought into practice successfully by incorporating the practical cogency of the cult of śmaśāna. The ultimate truth should have been realized through the sexual yoga practised in the group of yoginīs (yoginī-cakra); there should have been nothing left to be done. Nevertheless, they dared go beyond it.

These Tantrists of śmaśāna were still at least half Buddhist; and this self-consciousness of Mahāyānic Buddhists prevented them from staying exclusively on the slope of Tantrism. To the truth practically realized, they added, according to their own original system of consecration (abhiṣeκa灌頂), a fourth consecration (caturthābhiṣeκa) of the Hevajra-tantra, an aphorismic truth which would seem unnecessary from the Tantric view of the truth. Consequently, they were in need of substantiating this aphorismic truth. However, the Tantric method was not applicable to this purpose. At this time, they reached a stage in which they had to judge the truth or falsehood of the Tantric logic of yoga itself on a basis other than that of Tantric practice.

They had no choice but to have recourse to the difficult practice (難行) to substantiate the logic of the easy attainment of the ultimate truth (易行). Actually, they tried to substantiate the logic of meditation by the antithetical practice of pilgrimage in the stage of the Saṁvarodaya-tantra subsequent to the Hevajra-tantra.

During the short lapse of time between the Hevajra-tantra and the Saṁvarodaya-tantra, the earliest of the Saṁvara literature, the system of twenty-four pīthas of ten classes was very quickly organized. The followers of the Saṁvara Tantrism actually pilgrimaged, at least in its early stage, to these pīthas located in various parts of the Indian subcontinent with the consciousness that they were advancing along the genuinely Mahāyānic process of the ten stages of the bodhisattva (daśabhūmi菩薩十地) successively.

However, this system of external pīthas (bāhyapīṭha) was immediately reorganized through the Tantric logic of symbolization as an internal, physical system (adhyātma-pīṭha) homologous with the system of external pīthas. Consequently, the internal system replaced the actual, difficult practice of making a pilgrimage and allowed practicers to attain the goal easily and quickly through a physical yogic practice.

From the point of view of the forms of maṇḍalas, the maṇḍala of the Hevajra-tantra, in its essential part, that is, the inner circle consisting of five yoginīs closely follows the form of the maṇḍala of the Tattvasamgraha-tantra; that is the plain white circle containing no differences of brightness within. This type of maṇḍala indicates the religion of sitting meditators (yogin), and in fact,
the follower of the Hevajra-tantra was fundamentally a meditator. However, as it had become obvious that the logic of yoga, or the logic of the religion of the meditators, could only be proved by the antithetical practice of pilgrimage, the sitting meditator of the Hevajra-tantra rose to his feet and went on a pilgrimage. Subsequently, the follower of the Samvarodaya-tantra came to be an alternating practicer of both pilgrimage and meditation. This fact is reflected in the form of the complete Samvara-maṇḍala of sixty-two deities, which is composed of two concentric parts: the inner circle of a meditator practising yoga with five dākinīs in rotation (sāricāra) and the outer twenty-four pilgrims coupled with their female partners.

The Samvara-maṇḍala of this form looks very similar to the maṇḍala of the Vairocanaḥhisambodhi-sūtra which is also composed of two parts: the central circle of complete brightness, the sphere of those who have already attained the ideal, and the outer circle of those who are in the process of attaining the ideal increasing in brightness from the outer layers to the inner layers. In view of this then, were the two antithetical elements of Tantric Buddhism, viz. the Mahāyānic idea of accumulating merits through difficult practices and the Tantric logic of quickly uniting the individual with the ultimate reality through the easy practice of yoga, or the religion of walking pilgrims and the religion of sitting meditators, harmonized in the Samvara Tantrism? To this question, we are not able to give an affirmative answer.

It was not until the theory of the internal pīṭhas (adhyātmapīṭha) was completed in the Vajraḍāka-tantra that the twenty-four couples of dākas and dākinīs were introduced to the maṇḍala of the Samvarodaya-tantra. Until this point, the maṇḍala of the Samvarodaya-tantra, being very similar to the maṇḍala of the Hevajra-tantra, had not been able to reflect the pilgrimage aspect of its cult, which was later to be manifested in the outer circle of the Samvara-maṇḍala of sixty-two deities. In the Vajraḍāka-tantra, each of twenty-four dākinīs, who are at the same time nothing other than veins (nādi) rest on each of twenty-four pīṭhas, the twenty-four parts composing a human body, are respectively coupled with their male partners. These twenty-four couples are then classified into three groups located in the sky, on the earth and under the earth, viz. the circle of mind (citta-cakra), the circle of speech (vāk-cakra) and the circle of body (kāya-cakra). These three totally constitute the substance of the ultimate reality.

Since the outer circle of the Samvara-maṇḍala is the result of the Tantric idea of the theory of the internal pīṭhas and is equipped with all the necessary conditions to guarantee the homology of the individual existence with the ultimate reality, it is sufficient unto itself as a basis of Tantric practice and allows one attain the ultimate truth easily and quickly just as the inner circle had done through an alternative method. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the Samvara-maṇḍala looks harmonious in its form, it involves an internal discrepancy between its inner and outer circles both of which can work independently of each other.

This internal discrepancy of the Samvara-maṇḍala indicates the 'critical' or
precarious character of Tantric Buddhism paradoxically exposed in the *Samvara* Tantrism. The *Samvara* Tantrism became precarious when it replaced improperly or too hastily the Mahāyānic practice of going on pilgrim to external *piṭhas* (*bāhyapīṭha*) with the yogic practice of internal *piṭhas* (*adhyaṭmapiṭha*). Both of the two antithetical elements of Tantric Buddhism, viz. Mahāyānic idea of accumulating merits and Tantric logic of *yoga* were indispensable for the dialectical development of Tantric Buddhism itself. Tantric Buddhism was destined to keep walking along the sharp ridge composed of these two elements being urged by a sense of crisis. Replacing the Mahāyānic practice of pilgrimage, which together with the Tantric practice of sexual *yoga* with the group of five *ādikīns* represented by the inner circle of the *Samvara-*madāla, constitutes the *Samvara* Tantrism itself with another Tantric practice of internal *piṭhas*, the *Samvara* Tantrism lost its own religious vitality caused by the consciousness of the 'crisis'.

In the following chapters of this article, I would like to substantiate the 'critical' or precarious character of Tantric Buddhism I have thus sketched out so as to have my image of Tantric Buddhism as 'critical' or precarious critically examined.

II. The world view of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra*

i. The image of the world of Vairocana

An image of the world of the *tathāgata* Vairocana (毘盧遮那, 大日如來) in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra* can be constructed from the scene of the mystical drama at the introductory section of the first chapter of the *sūtra*. The Tibetan version of the *sūtra* states:

"Thus have I heard at one time. The Reverend Lord (Vairocana) dwelt together with vajradharas (holders of adamantine wisdom, 持金剛) to be counted by the number of dusts of ten buddha-countries, such as 'Sky-spotless' vajradhara (虚空無垢執金剛), 'Walking-in-the-sky' vajradhara (虚空遊步執金剛), 'Appearing-from-the-sky' vajradhara, (虚空生執金剛, ... and Vajrapāni, the chief of gulujakas (秘密主金剛手), in the vast, huge palace of the grand admantine sphere of the reality (大金剛法界宮) resided in by (all the) *tathāgatas*. This grand palace named 'King-jewel' had become visible as it had been imagined by *tathāgatas* as having neither a centre nor a boundary, and immense height, and being decorated very beautifully with king-jewels. He dwelt sitting on the lion-throne though he was assuming the appearance of a *bodhisattva*.

He, being surrounded and faced by the people straining after enlightenment (*bodhisattva* 菩薩), the great people (*mahāsattva* 摩訶薩), such as Samantabhadra (普賢), Maitreya (彌勒), Mañjuśrī (文殊師利),
Sarvanivaranaśīkamābhini (除一切難障) etc., preached the truth of the teaching called ‘the phrase of the sameness of body, speech and mind’ after blessing (those people) as the ‘sun-like tathāgata’.

Accordingly, those bodhisattvas such as Samantabhadra etc. and vajradharas headed by Vajrapāni entered into the storehouse of inexhaustible ornaments of the sameness of the body (身平等性無盡莊嚴藏) which was displayed to them though the blessing of the Lord Vairocana. They entered also into the storehouse of inexhaustible ornaments of the sameness of the speech and the sameness of the mind. They did not, however, imagine that they had entered into the body, the speech and the mind of the Lord Vairocana, nor did they imagine that they had come out of them.

They saw that all the bodily activities, all the oral activities and all the mental activities of the Lord Vairocana were preaching teachings broadly in all the spheres of living beings in all the places of the world by means of the words of the way of the secret mantras (秘密真言道). They saw people having the same appearance as the vajradharas and bodhisattvas such as Samantabhadra, Padmapāni (蓮華手) etc, that is to say, the people who were preaching by means of the words of the way of the secret mantras, by means of completely purified words in ten directions, so as to have beings, who were in their (present) lives totally as a result of former deeds, live through the whole process of their lives, starting from the first birth of the (bodhi-) mind and lasting until the tenth stage (or bodhisattvas), and fulfil (their lives) by attaining this (tenth stage). They were preaching so as to have the lives of beings, whose lives of deeds (業壽) had been interrupted, bud out again.”

They, the vajradharas and bodhisattvas, entered into the maṇḍala, the world of the ultimate reality, and saw the maṇḍala itself. Vajrapāni expresses this state of being as follows:

“Tathāgatas, arhats, samyaksambuddhas, having attained the omniscience (sarvajñānāna 一切智智), display this omniscience perfectly to all the living beings.”

This remark shows the fact that, the maṇḍala is nothing but omniscience (sarvajñānāna, literally, the knowledge of the omniscient), the totality of all the spiritual existences extending all over the world.

**ii. Various aspects of the world of Vairocana**

It is convenient to represent the maṇḍala of the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra as a figure with a large circle which represents the entire maṇḍala with a small circle in the centre of it. The former indicates theistically the buddha as the
ultimate reality (dhammakāya 法身, literally, the body of truth), and the latter the buddha enjoying the fruit of all the meritorious deeds he has accumulated (saṁbhogakāya 報身身, the body of enjoyment).

The first thing we notice in this long quotation from the introductory section of the Vairocanaāhāsambodhi-sūtra is that, the whole maṇḍala and its centre are indicated with one and the same word “Vairocana”. Here, we notice a tendency, if unconscious, common in every system of maṇḍala, to represent the whole maṇḍala and its centre as the same. This state of affairs must have been taken as a condition of enlightenment.

In the Vairacanābhisambodhi-sūtra, this identity of the entirety and its centre occurs only when one successfully arrives at the centre of the maṇḍala after fulfilling all the necessary stages of the process of attaining enlightenment over the long period of ‘the three great uncountable aeons’ (三大阿僧祇劫). In the Hevajra-tantra, this condition of sameness is retained though in a reversed manner. In the case of the Hevajra-tantra, the whole maṇḍala is occupied by one and only deity Hevajra. Therefore, if one homologically imitates Hevajra through the sexual yoga with the group of five yoginis (yogini-cakra), representing the substance of the maṇḍala, he can become identical with the whole maṇḍala and can attain enlightenment in one moment.

Secondly, within this quotation, we notice the image of the double-layered world. Using the constituent words of the full title of the Vairocanaābhisambodhi-sūtra, viz. Mahāvairocanaābhisambodhivikurvātāhāsthānavipaityasūtra-indrarājā nāma dharmaparyāya (大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經), the structure of the world is expressed as follows:

The world is composed of two strata: the world of natural existences (A) and the world of vikurvaṇa (神變) (A’) placed upon these natural existences (adhiṣṭāna 加持). Vikurvaṇa (神變), the miraculous transformation of all merits thus accumulated occurs at the critical moment of the abhisambodhi (現等覺) of Vairocana. A and A’ meet within every individual existence which in itself constitutes the entire world in its capacity as a particle of it.

There, bodhisattvas such as Samantabhadra etc. (A) saw “the people of the same appearances” as Samantabhadra etc. (A’) acting for the benefit of the living being in the world. Each individual is called an “ornament” (莊嚴) as long as A and A’ are indivisibly united within him. Those great people such as Samantabhadra etc. well understand this state of being. This is indicated by the expression “they did not imagine that they had entered into the body, the speech and the mind of the Lord Vairocana, nor did they imagine that they had come out of them”.

The world of Vairocana is composed of two currents flowing in opposite directions: one from the circumference to the centre and the other from the centre to the circumference. The former is the direction of wisdom (智慧) which realizes itself through the voluntary, subjective efforts of individuals to promote themselves toward the centre of the world, viz. enlightenment (abhisambodhi 現等覺). Our minds are to be improved through our own efforts of incessantly
negating and overcoming each of the successive stages of our mind through the observation of essencelessness (śūnyatā 空性). This is the direction of self benefit (自利, svārtha or svahita) of improving the wisdom of enlightenment (prajñā 般若), which is the universal matrix of the ultimate reality and is at the same time innate within us.

The latter is the direction of the universal compassion (慈悲) emanating from the centre of the world. This universal compassion is reflected within our individual minds and is realized by our personal exertions (upāya 方便) for the benefit of others (利他, parārtha or parahita).

The current from the circumference to the centre is nothing but the stratum A' and the current opposite to this is the stratum A' abovementioned. Prajñā (般若), the wisdom for self benefit (自利), and upāya (方便), the actual exertion for the benefit of others (利他) through compassion (慈悲) meet within each of us who make up the world of Vairocana. In other words, we can become the component parts of the world of Vairocana only on the condition that these two elements i.e. prajñā and upāya are indivisibly united in our individual existence to form our minds directing toward enlightenment (bodhicitta 菩提心). Here is presented the most fundamental axiom:

‘prajñā plus upāya is bodhicitta’.

This was the essential axiom through the course of the development of Tantric ideas. Tantric Buddhists interpreted literally the metaphor prevalent in Mahāyāna Buddhism, which compares prajñā to the mother and upāya to the father of a buddha. They represented the innate bodhicitta with the mixture of menstrual fluid and semen which is originated through the sexual union of the mother (prajñā) and the father (upāya).

They should have been able to attain enlightenment easily and quickly only by making the symbolized bodhicitta (the mixture of menstrual fluid and semen) ascend through the spinal vein (nādi) of their bodies i.e. Avadhūti to the topmost nerve centre (cakra) thought to be situated on the uppermost part of the head. So far as the Tantric logic is concerned, because that which is to be symbolized and the symbol itself are one and the same, when the symbolized bodhicitta attains to the topmost cakra of great pleasure (Mahāsukha-cakra), having been promoted through the symbolized process of attaining enlightenment, that is, the vein Avadhūti, enlightenment should be realized thereupon.

Here, we notice the critical turn which divides Tantrism from Mahāyāna Buddhism. At the moment when they replaced upāya (方便), direct exertions based on compassion (慈悲), with another symbol such as semen, they passed over the ridge to the slope of Tantrism. For a follower of the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra, it was inconceivable at all to symbolize upāya, manipulate it through physical or sexual yogic practice and consequently dissolve the basic principle of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Thirdly, in this long quotation from the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra, we find
the Mahāyānic ideal of life, which is completely antithetical to the Tantric ideal of the quick attainment of enlightenment. The Mahāyānic ideal regards human life as the entire process of the current flowing from the circumference to the centre of the world of Vairocana. The image of a human being in the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra is that of a pilgrim who continues walking this nearly endless course of life steadily and unceasingly.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, in order to fulfil the entire process of attaining enlightenment, the unimaginably long period of the three great uncountable aeons (三大阿僧祇劫) is thought to be needed. On the other hand, Tantrism advocated a revolutionally new ideal of attaining enlightenment quickly on the basis of the logic of yoga. In the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra, however, which has been taken as one of the two Fundamental scriptures of Tantric Buddhism, the ideal of quick attainment of enlightenment is denied for the very reason that the structure of the world and human existence require a gradual process of attainment.

In the latter portion of the first chapter, the chapter of the progressing stages of mind (生心品) of the Chinese translation of the text, a section called the process of promoting the grades of mind (心品轉昇次第) describes the state of mind which has already been completely purified through the effort over the unimaginably long period as follows:

“Within the bodhisattvas who practise the practice of bodhisattvas through the way of secret mantras (秘密真言道) and who have already accumulated infinite materials of both meritorious deeds (福德) and knowledge (智慧) for an unimaginably long period of hundreds of thousands of millions of innumerable aeons, occurs the completely characterless mind (無我清浄心), which is accompanied by infinite wisdom (無量智) and means (道具). . . . . O the chief of guhyakas, this is nothing but the mind of enlightenment of the first stage (of bodhisattvas) (初地菩提心).”

Here, it is clearly advocated that, in order to reach to the inner circle of the maṇḍala of the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra, along with the improvement of wisdom, the accumulation of the material of meritorious deeds (punyasambhāra 福德資糧) ‘s indispensable. Punyasambhāra is the result of all the direct exertions for the benefit of others performed because of compassion (慈悲). These exertions are impressed and stored in one’s mind, just like a kind of energy, constituting the necessary materials for the attainment of enlightenment. As long as one needs this punyasambhāra, which is produced through one’s actions (harman 業) for the benefit of others, he can not jump over the stages of the improvement of mind as is done in Tantrism.

The word “lives of deeds” (業業) refers to the chain of action (karman 業) formerly done and its fruit, that is, afflicting existence (業) in the world.

In Hīnayāna Buddhism, bringing oneself to the absolute nothingness of
nirvāṇa (涅槃) through abstaining from action, thus severing the chain of action and its results which have been in existence since the beginningless past was the ideal. In Tantrism, however, action and its results have ceased to be the issue. For a Tantrist, who is essentially a solitary yogin sitting in meditation directly facing the ultimate reality by himself, the existence of others is of no meaning. For him, no compassion toward others and no exertions for the benefit of others based of compassion are necessary.

On the other hand, in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra* quoted at the beginning of this chapter, it is clearly stated that the ideal is not to sever the chain of action and its results, but to complete the chain itself. It naturally follows that everyone is responsible for the continued existence of the world of Vairocana. The compassion of Vairocana works so as to have each one of them live their lives completely through the entire process which seems practically endless. Correspondingly, each person has as the duty of his life to live so as to have Vairocana continue to exist. The world of reality, the omniscience (sarvajñā-jñāna (一切智智), or Vairocana as the ultimate reality (dharmakāya 法身) continues to exist for its own sake, simply because its existence itself is good.

### iii. Conditions for the existence of the world of Vairocana

As is natural to a Mahāyānic way of thinking, this world of Vairocana is thought to exist not as an objective, solid substance, but as an essenceless (śūnya 空), conditional existence (缘生). It exists as long as certain necessary conditions are complete.

Vajrapāṇi, who has seen the world of Vairocana and recognized it to be the self-development of the universal wisdom (sarvajñā-jñāna 一切智智) (see p. 178), compares it to the five gross elements, viz. ether, earth, fire, wind and water (pañcamahābhūta 五大). Subsequently, he asks the Reverend Lord Vairocana the conditions which keep the universal wisdom, which is nothing other than the world of Vairocana, existent:

"... O Reverend Lord, metaphorically speaking, the element of water makes the bodies of all living beings comfortable. Likewise, the wisdom of the omniscient (sarvajñā-jñāna 一切智智) makes the world accompanied with the celestials comfortable. In that case, what is the cause (因)? What is the root (根)? And what is the final aim (究究) of this wisdom?"14

The answer to this question is contained in what has been referred to as 'the three phrases' (三句) (see p. 169).

"O Vajrapāṇi! Well done! Well done! You cleverly asked me those questions. Listen and remember rightly and completely what I will tell you. The cause is the mind seeking for enlightenment (bodhicitta
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The root is the compassion (karuṇā 悲); and the final aim (paravyasāna 究竟) is means (practically employed for the benefit of others) (upāya 方便).\(^{15}\)

O the chief of guhyakas! What is the enlightenment then? It is to know our own mind truly and thoroughly; and (what is attained there-through) is nothing but the highest, the right and the complete enlightenment (anuttarasamyaksambodhi 無上正等覺)."\(^{16}\)

Herein lies another maxim which together with 'the three phrases' has been traditionally taken as the most essential teaching of the system of the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra, viz. 'recognize your own mind truly and thoroughly' (如實知自心). Subsequently, Vajrapāṇi asks another supplementary question:

"O Reverend Lord! From what position should the state of the omniscient (sarvajñatā 一切智性) be sought after? Through what should the enlightenment be attained definitely and perfectly?"\(^{17}\)

The Lord Vairocana answers:

"The enlightenment (菩提) and the state of the omniscient (一切智性) are to be sought after from one's own mind; the mind is (as its very bottom the universal mind which has been) completely purified by nature (from the first). (本性清浄, Tib. rañ bshin gyis yoṅs su dag pa, svabhāvaparīśuddha or prakṛtiparīśuddha?)."\(^{18}\)

These questions and answers clearly indicate the Mahāyānic idea of the relation between the ultimate reality and the individual existence. The universal, ultimate reality owes the conditions of its existence and its continuation to the intellectual and practical effort of an individual existence. The universal wisdom (sarvajñajñāna), which is nothing but the ultimate reality or the maṇḍala of Vairocana is to be realized through the personal effort of penetrating one's own mind to its very bottom. At this point, the individual and the universal are unified as one and the same thing. In the system of the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra, the unity or yoga of the individual existence with the ultimate reality, which is nothing other than the religious ideal of Tantric Buddhism, occurs only at the very bottom of human mind, or in other words, the place where the enlightenment is actually realized (bodhimanda 菩提道場), which is figuratively the centre of the maṇḍala.

This fact exactly corresponds with the statement that "the whole maṇḍala and its centre are indicated with one and the same word i.e. Vairocana (see p. 179).

The world of Vairocana is to be depicted as a circle the radius of which represents the entire process of the progress of the human mind toward enlightenment. While within this circle, one ought to continue walking as a pilgrim on the destined course toward the centre, Vairocana. One continues walking voluntarily harmonizing within himself bodhicitta,\(^{19}\) the mind aiming toward enlightenment

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with karuna, the universal compassion of Vairocana reflected upon him, so as to realize the final aim (parīvasāna 究竟) of saving all living beings through practical means (upāya 方便). This aim is to be realized only when he attains enlightenment (abhisaṃbodhi 現等覚).

The religious ideal of the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra is placed in the far future beyond the three great uncountable aeons (三大阿僧祇劫); but, as long as one continues walking on the way toward the ideal, one is walking within the ideal itself.

iv. The theory of one hundred and sixty monadic minds

As can be expected from the remark in the previous section (see p. 183) that "the enlightenment and the state of the omniscient are to be sought after from one's own mind" the structure of the world is determined by that of the individual existence. Thus, it should also serve as a basis of morals helping people to decide their practical behaviour in the world. The structure of the individual existence, which we will refer to as 'the theory of one hundred and sixty minds' may well be regarded as the most important problem of the whole theoretical system of the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra.

The Chinese title of the first chapter of the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra, viz. 住心品 literally means "the chapter of the various stages of human mind". Kōbō-daishi Kūkai (弘法大師空海), the founder of the Shingon-sect of Japanese Esoteric Buddhism, taking the word 住心 literally as referring to the process of promoting the grades of mind (心品轉昇の次第) (see p. 15), established his fundamental system of 'the ten progressive stages of mind' (十住心の教判). According to this system, the process of the promotion of mind mentioned in the sūtra is divided into ten stages from the first, viz. 'the mind of people (in the natural state) as foolish as goats or sheeps' (異生駄羊心) to the tenth, viz. 'the mind (constituting the world of Vairocana) as a secret ornament (of it)' (秘密莊嚴心). He applied each of the extant sects of Buddhism and even Confucianism and Taoism to these ten stages, and thus established successfully a complete system which presents to us the magnificent, harmonious image of the world of Vairocana. On the uppermost layer of this world is situated the Esoteric Buddhism of the Shingon-sect (九願一密), and at the same time, all the layers are included within the field of Esoteric Buddhism (九願十密).

As Kūkai's systematization is so complete and his influence so decisive, it has never been doubted that the word 住心 means the progressive stages of the human mind or that it refers to the process of promoting the grades of mind (心品轉昇の次第). This fact, however, does not necessarily mean that the only possible interpretation of the word 住心 is as the vertical, progressing stages of human mind. In fact, we do not even find this word in the text of the first chapter of the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra itself, which is the context in which one should interpret the meaning of the title of the chapter 住心品.

Now, if we enlarge our scope to the Tibetan version of the text and the
commentaries of Buddhaguhya (c. 800 A.D.), we find another possible way of interpreting the word which enables us to reconstruct the structure of the individual existence, on the basis of which we can describe the structure of the world precisely, and at the same time determine our practical behaviour logically. Actually, means ‘the chapter of one hundred and sixty minds’.

In the Tibetan version, the title of the first chapter is “sems kyi khyad par rim par phye ba” (Skt. cittaviveśa-patāla?) which means ‘the chapter of various minds’ or ‘the chapter of distinctions of mind’ (心差別品). On the other hand, the Unrevised Longer Commentary of Buddhaguhya gives the title “sems kyi rgyud rim par phye ba (Skt. cittasamtiinapatāla or cittasamtatipatāla?) which means ‘the chapter of the continuation of mind’ or ‘the chapter of minds as continuations’ (心相續品). As it is our fundamental premise that these two words, viz. sems kyi khyad par and sems kyi rgyud should indicate one and the same thing, even if it is difficult to find a Sanskrit equivalent common to these two Tibetan words, we can easily determine the passage which indicates the meaning of the chapter by comparing the quotations from the Unrevised Longer Commentary of Buddhaguhya, which cover the sūtra nearly completely, with the Tibetan version of the sūtra, and locating the place where these two words, viz. sems hyi rgyud of Buddhaguhya’s commentary and sems hyi khyad par of the Tibetan version of the sūtra correspond. These two words correspond in only one paragraph, which enumerates and explains each of the sixty experiential minds actually occurring in our minds.

To Vajrapāni’s question abovementioned (see p. 183), the Lord Vairocana answers that “the enlightenment and the state of the omniscient are to be sought after from one’s own mind” and subsequently describes the state of mind which is at the very bottom of our mind and is nothing other than the enlightenment itself. This state of mind is called ‘the mind of enlightenment of the first stages of the bodhisattvas’ (初地善提心), or ‘the first course of the realm where the truth is realized’ (初法明道). Subsequently, Vajrapāni asks the Lord questions as follows:

“O Reverend Lord! How does the mind of enlightenment arise?
How shall I look for the characteristics of this mind (thus) arisen
from which the enlightenment occurs?
O the most excellent of the people who know this mind!
O the great hero who has arisen from the wisdom!
Tell me, after overcoming how many minds does this mind arise?
O the protector! Tell me broadly the aspects of minds and the time
(to be spent to overcome these minds).
O great saint! How are the merits of these (minds)?
How are the practices (to be practised in each of the stages) of these
(minds)?
Tell me the distinctions of each (of these) minds.”
The Lord answers:

“Well done! My son!
The aspect of the continuation of mind, which is the highest stage of
the Great Vehicle,
is the most excellent of the secrets of the perfectly enlightened ones.
It can not be known by any of the people who thinks of things logically.
Concentrate your mind and listen to me. I will tell you the whole
truth”.22

Thus, the Lord Vairocana begins to relate the whole process of the progressing grades of minds (心品轉昇の次第). In the beginning, Vairocana mentions the eight stages of mundane minds (世間八心) in which the real existence of ātman is upheld. Subsequently after these eight, so to speak, ‘vertical’ mundane minds, the sixty, so to speak, ‘horizontal’ mundane minds out of a total of one hundred and sixty minds are enumerated.

Vajrapāni asks a question, in which the two words abovementioned, viz. sems kyi khyad par and sems kyi rgyud, correspond.

\[bcom ldan hdas sems kyi khyad par de dag bṣad du gsol\]23
“O Reverend Lord! Tell me those various minds!”

The Unrevised Longer Commentary of Buddhaguhya gives following quotation:

\[bcom ldan hdas sems kyi rgyud de dag bṣad du gsol\]24
“O Reverend Lord! Tell me those minds as continuations!”

The Lord answers to this question and enumerates sixty minds:

“O the chief of guhyakas! Listen to the characteristics of various minds.
O the chief of guhyakas! Those minds are: the mind of desire (貪心),
the mind without desire (無貪心), the mind of wrath (瞋心), the mind of
friendliness (慈心), the mind of foolishness (癡心), . . . .

What is the mind of desire then? It is (the mind) of a person who has
desire coming into contact with an object. What is the mind without
desire? It is (the mind of) a person who is free from desire coming into
contact with an object. What is the mind of wrath? It is (the mind of a
person) who has wrath coming into contact with an object. What is the
mind of friendliness? It is (the mind of) a person who has friendliness
coming into contact with an object. What is the mind of foolishness?
It is (the mind of a person) coming into contact with an object without consideration.

O the chief of guhyakas! When one expends three aeons (kalpa劫), one overcomes one hundred and sixty minds, which is obtained by once, twice, three times, four times and five times multiplying by two, the supermundane mind occurs within him. That is to say:

As this (world) is nothing but (the aggregate of) the skandhas (蕴), ātman (我) does not exist at all.

This world is to be abandoned as it is of no use, because it is nothing more than the object of senses.

It is of course tenable to assume that those one hundred and sixty minds are mundane and occur only once at the last stage of the eight mundane minds (世間六心). However, inasmuch as we must recognize the fact that these one hundred and sixty minds are of such importance that they are referred to by the title of the first chapter of the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra and occupy as much as one quarter of the whole chapter, we can not merely be contented with the hitherto accepted interpretation.

We would like to reconstruct the structure of human mind on the two co-ordinates, viz. the ordinate of the vertical process of progressive grades of mind (品品轉昇的次第) and the abscissa of the horizontal one hundred and sixty minds.

From this point of view, we notice that Vajrapāni’s questions refer to nothing other than this total structure of human mind to be understood in both vertical and horizontal terms. When he asked “the characteristics of the mind (thus) arisen” (sems shyes pañi mtshan niid), he was referring to the mind of a bodhisattva who has entered into the first stage of the bodhisattvas (初地), which is the ideal state described in the answer of the Lord as “the highest stage of the Great Vehicle” (theg pa chen po hi go hphan mchog 大乘 穀最勝位). This “highest” mind on the vertical scale is also composed of one hundred and sixty horizontal minds such as “the mind of desire” (貪心) and so on.

We assume that this was the original interpretation of the structure of mind within the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra. However, we only occasionally get a glimpse of it in an exceptional remark appearing in the commentators, viz. Śubhakarasimha (善無畏, died 735 A.D.) and Buddhaguhya, both of them took the one hundred and sixty minds only as mundane. The only example we can find in Buddhaguhya’s commentary is as follows:

sangs rgyas pa do gsum gyi tshogs kyi bskyen chen chos dus bskal gsum ma phad bya bcos phyi mtha’i ras gsum du phyi ’chen legs gsum po de drug pa de rin chen par byed yas gsum gsum du phyi ’chen legs du gsum bya ba d’byar byul la kyi sde la sgrigs pa chen
Even when we increase the (number of) substantial minds from sixty to one hundred and sixty, they are thought to be classified into nine as we divide the degrees of the obstruction (of these minds) into three in accordance with its grossness and minuteness and again sub-divide each of these three classes into three.

When the obstruction (of the one hundred and sixty horizontal minds) is (to be classed as) the gross of the gross, (the mind of) the first (stage of the vertical process of progressing grades of the mind) abandons (these one hundred and sixty minds). When (the obstruction is) the medium of the gross, the second (mind) abandons (the one hundred and sixty horizontal minds corresponding to it). When (the obstruction is) the minute of the gross, the third abandons. When the gross of the medium, the fourth abandons. When the medium of the medium, the fifth abandons. When the medium of the medium, the sixth abandons. When the gross of the minute, the seventh abandons. When the medium of the minute, the eighth abandons. In the manner shown later, one completes thus the adhimukticaryā-bhūmi by exterminating the one hundred and sixty (horizontal) minds (which correspond to the vertical mind) of adhimukticaryā-bhūmi.

Then, exterminating (the one hundred and sixty minds the obstacle of which is) the minute of the minute, (and which correspond to) the last of all the nine (stage of the vertical process of mind), he is known to enter into the stage of wisdom (jñāna-bhūmi 慧地).”

This enigmatic passage makes sense only when we apply our hypothetical understanding of the above-mentioned structure of human mind.

Here, the nine layers of the one hundred and sixty horizontal minds, which are described as “substantial minds” (sems kyi dnos po, citta-vastu?), are aligned vertically according to the decreasing grossness of the obstruction (sgrib pa, āvarana); or, according to the factor of each of these one hundred and sixty minds which obstructs or conceals the original brightness of these “substantial minds”. On top of these nine layers, is added the tenth layer of one hundred and sixty minds each of which has no obstructions at all. These ten layers of horizontal minds form the ordinate of the vertical process of ten progressing stages of the mind.

The key to a satisfactory translation of this passage is found in the last
sentence. In Buddhaguhya’s system, *adhimukticaryā-bhūmi* (mos pas spyyod paṅjī sa 信解行地), which usually means the ten stage of the *bodhisatvas* (菩萨十地), is the stage just prior to the first stage of the *bodhisattvas* (初地) which is referred to by the word *ye sges hyi sa* (*jñāna-bhūmi*? 慧地) in this passage.

Therefore, when one exterminates the ninth layer of one hundred and sixty minds, the obstruction of which is the minute of the minute, corresponding to the stage just prior to “the stage of wisdom” (*ye sges hyi sa*), one enters into “the stage of wisdom” of one hundred and sixty minds in which there are no obstructions still to be exterminated. This layer of one hundred and sixty minds thus completely purified is nothing other than ‘substance’ of the mind of enlightenment of the first stage of the *bodhisattvas* (初地菩提心) or “the completely characterless mind” (極無自性心) (see p. 181).

Applying this understanding to the sentence *chun ṉuṅhi ḫrīṅ la bṛgyad spoṅ*, we obtain the meaning of the sentence as follows: “when (the obstruction of the one hundred and sixty minds is) the medium of the minute, (the mind of) the eighth (stage) exterminates (these one hundred and sixty minds)”. The above passage should be translated accordingly.

This idea of overcoming the layers of the horizontal one hundred and sixty minds appears also as an exception in the commentary 27 of Subhakarasimha in the well-known passage of his ‘secret interpretation’ demonstrating the possibility of attaining enlightenment quickly. He translates the passage which corresponds to the last part of the above quotation, viz. *de ltar na gcig gnis gsum bshi lha gnis su bsgyur ba byas pas/* ḫjig rten paṅjī sems bṛgya drug cu bshal pa gsum gvis ḫdas nas/* ḫjig rten pas ḫdas paṅjī sems skye ste* / as follows:

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秘密主一二三四五六再數. 凡百六十心. 越世間三妄執. 出世間心生. 28
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He explains this sentence as follows:

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越世間三妄執出世間心生者. 若以浮善菩提心為出世間心. 即是超越三劫瑜伽行. 梵云. 劫敗. 有二義. 一者時分. 二者妄執. 若依常途解釋. 度三阿僧祇劫得成正覺. 若秘密彌. 超一劫瑜伽行. 即度百六十心等一切執妄執. 名一阿僧祇劫. 超二劫瑜伽行. 又度一百六十心等一切細妄執. 名二阿僧祇劫. 鳳凰門行者. 復越一劫. 更度百六十心等一切極細妄執. 得至佛慧初心. 故云三阿僧祇劫成佛也. 若一生度此三妄執. 則一生成佛. 何論時分耶. 29
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“The meaning of the passage ‘overcoming three kinds of mundane *kalpas* the supermundane mind occures’ is as follows: if this ‘supermundane mind’ is the pure mind of enlightenment, it requires yogic practice (of unimaginably long period) over the three aeons (*halpa*). The Sanskrit word *halpa* means two things, that is, firstly, duration of time, and secondly, misleading attachment. If we rely on an ordinary interpretation, it means that one attains enlightenment only after the long period of three uncountable aeons. If we rely on the secret interpretation, the meaning is as follows: to exceed the practice of the first
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aeon is nothing other than to overcome the layer of one hundred and sixty minds of gross attachment; and this is called the first uncountable aeon. To exceed the practice of the second aeon is to overcome the layer of one hundred and sixty minds of minute attachment; this is called the second uncountable aeon. When a practitioner of mantras exceeds (the practice of) one more aeon, he attains the first mind of the wisdom of buddhas by overcoming the layer of one hundred and sixty minds of extremely minute attachment. Therefore, the enlightenment is said to be attained through three uncountable aeons. If he overcomes these three kinds of attachment in his life, he can attain enlightenment in his very life. Why do we have to call the duration of time to account?"

We also find in Śubhakarasimha’s commentary an example of the idea classifying the vertical process of the promotion of mind into nine according to the qualities of the defilement of the mind. Explaining the reason why the horizontal minds, which he takes as the minds of defilements (煩惱心 number one hundred and sixty, he states:

以衆生煩惱心。常依二法不得中道故。隨事異名雖分為二。就此二中。復更展轉細分之。其名相。具如十萬偈中說。若更上中下九品等。乃至八萬餘勞。廣則無量。30

“Whenever one comes into contact with an object, one’s mind of defilement comes to have two different names as one always relies on the two extremes but not on the middle way. The names and characteristics (of the one hundred and sixty minds, the number of which can be obtained by) dividing these two minds again and again, are fully mentioned in the (longer Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra of) 100,000 verses. If we divide (each of these one hundred and sixty minds) into nine classes according to their qualities of superior, medium and inferior, the number of afflictions finally come to eighty thousand. If we divide more minutely, they become innumerable.”

From these examples, we assume the original image of the human mind in the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra to be as follows:

The human mind is, at any moment, composed of one hundred and sixty monadic or substantial minds, which were referred to in the title of the first chapter of the sūtra as “various minds” or “distinctions of minds” (sems hyi hhyad par, cittaviśeṣa? 心差別) in the Tibetan version, or as “continuation of mind” or “minds as continuations” (sems hyi rgyud, 心相續) in the version used by the commentator Buddhaguhya. These minds, which are enumerated, on a basis yet to be known, number one hundred and sixty, and are seen as operations or tendencies of mind, or the forms of operations of mind which were obtained empirically and introspectively by the author of the sūtra through the careful
observation of his own mind. These one hundred and sixty monadic minds, being in horizontal row, form the ‘width’ of the mind of a person.

These one hundred and sixty minds arise in a person as the internal reflection of his various actions towards an object when he comes into contact with that object. Therefore, he can make these minds occur at will by exercising himself upon an object, and accordingly, he can promote his mind by making a new kind of one hundred and sixty minds occur through new action.

The mind of a person, in its total structure, consists of the innumerable layers of these one hundred and sixty minds accumulated throughout the whole course of his life beginning from the first origination of the mind aimed toward enlightenment (初發心) and ending in the actual attainment of enlightenment (現等覺). Here, we can recognize the fact that the idea of one hundred and sixty minds is located on the pivot of the whole theoretical system of the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra.

v. The structure of the Maṇḍala of the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhisūtra

As was previously mentioned (see p. 182), the universal wisdom (sarvajñajñāna (一切智智, which is nothing other than the dharmakāya (法身, the body of the ultimate reality) of Vairocana or the world of Vairocana itself, functions so as to allow a person complete his entire life which begins from the circumference of the world of Vairocana and ends at its centre. On the other hand, this person in turn is responsible for the existence of the world of Vairocana and has to live his entire life maintaining at every moment the three conditions of the existence of the world of Vairocana, viz. bodhicitta as the cause (菩提心為因) harunā as the root (悲為根本) and upāya as the final aim (方便為究竟). How then is he to live his entire life completely?

As the structure of his mind composed of one hundred and sixty monadic minds requires, he should observe his own one hundred and sixty minds objectively at every moment and judge their position on the ‘yardmeasure’ of his entire life; that is on the radius of the world of Vairocana. Then, he should overcome the one hundred and sixty minds of each stage by making the one hundred and sixty minds of the next stage occur through his new action for the benefit of others. He drives himself incessantly toward new actions as he is always urged on by the compassion (harunā 悲) of Vairocana which he is asked to take as the root. He does not terminate even for a moment his self-recognizing or self-negating wisdom. In other words, the aspiring tendency of his mind (bodhicitta 菩提心, the mind aimed toward enlightenment) does not allow him to do so. He continues his effort of purifying his one hundred and sixty minds until they come to have no defitements or obstructions left to be purified. He is always guided by his final aim to save all living beings through exertions or means (upāya 方便), which are to be realized only when he attains enlightenment (現等覺). Thus, we notice the fact that in any layer of one hundred and sixty
minds occurring at any moment all of the three conditions of the existence of the world of Vairocana are retained, and that these one hundred and sixty monadic or substantial minds are nothing other than the bodhicitta (the mind of enlightenment) as is shown in the axiom ‘prajñā plus upāya is bodhicitta’ (see p. 180). This constitutes the world of Vairocana as Buddhaguhya rightly says:

“One hundred and sixty mundane minds etc. are the material cause (upādāna-hāraṇa) of Vairocana”.

Furthermore, we notice that the idea of one hundred and sixty minds makes the meaning of the maxim ‘recognize your mind truly and thoroughly’ clear. This maxim is commanding us to live our entire life of ‘the three great uncountable aeons’ (三大阿僧祗劫) completely through the incessant effort of recognizing our own one hundred and sixty minds at every moment and overcoming them through actions for the benefit of others.

The total structure of human mind thus being reconstructed, it becomes obvious that the world of Vairocana is to be expressed in a globular form composed of all the lives of all living beings; that is, the accumulations of innumerable layers of one hundred and sixty minds, concentrated toward their common aim, Vairocana as the centre of the world.

As is already shown by both Buddhaguhya and Śubhakarasimha, the vertical process of the progress of mind, which is the process of decreasing the defilements or obstructions of each layer of one hundred and sixty minds, is divided into nine stages. It is reasonable to divide the entire process into ten layers by placing one more layer of one hundred and sixty minds which are completely purified upon these nine layers as Kūkai describes in his Himitsu-maṇḍala-jūjūshin-ron (秘密曼茶羅十住心論) as follows:

“The process of the progress of mind is to be divided into innumerable stages; however, we would like to divide it for convenience’ sake into ten and classify innumerable minute stages of mind into these ten big classes.”

If we try to draw the figure of this world on a plane, it is convenient to add two more layers of one hundred and sixty minds completely purified upon these ten layers and depict them schematically as twelve concentric circles with the diameter of the central circle the same in width as each of the twelve layers (fig. 1).

If we draw a small circle of the same diameter as the width of each layer on the outermost layer of these concentric circles and connect it with two parallel lines with the central circle, we can indicate the entire course of the life of a person who lives in this world of Vairocana. Or, we can express it as a line of twelve small circles set between these parallel lines. The small circle, which indicates the mind of a person at any moment as the aggregate of one hundred
and sixty monadic minds, decreases in darkness and increases in brightness as it ascends in its course toward the centre i.e. Vairocana. When it reaches the tenth layer, it becomes completely pure. This state is called 'the first course of the realm where the truth is realized' (初法明道), and is mentioned in the sûra as follows:

"O the chief of guhyakas! This is called the entrance into the completely purified mind of enlightenment of the bodhisattvas. This is the entrance into the realm where the truth is realized. This is the first course of the realm where the truth is realized. The bodhisattvas, who have reached this stage, will be able to attain the trance (samādhi 三昧) of exterminating all the obstructions of minds without difficulty. Consequently, attaining this samādhi, these bodhisattvas will be able to meet with all the tathāgatas in the same assembly and will be able to acquire five kinds of supernatural faculties (abhijñā 神通). They will acquire mystical charms (dhārani 陀羅尼) composed of infinite words, syllables and sounds. They will understand the intentions of living beings. They, being overpowered by all the tathāgatas, will come to acquire the truth which will never be ruined in the transmigration. They will never become weary of doing actions for the benefit of living beings. They will observe good precepts even if they are not instituted. Having abandoned the wrong view completely, they will attain the right view and understand it. O the chief of guhyakal In the next place, the bodhisattvas who stay in this trance of exterminating all the obstruc-
tions will complete all the truths of buddhas without difficulty as they are equipped with the power of confidence (信解力), originated within them. O the chief of guhyakas! Concisely speaking, these sons or daughters of noble families will acquire infinite merits".33

As is known from this quotation, the inner part of the tenth circle of these concentric circles indicates the ideal realm of the world of Vairocana and is thought to correspond to the palace of Vairocana, "the palace of the grand adamantine sphere of the reality" (大金剛法界宮) mentioned at the beginning of the sūtra (see p. 177). Therefore, we can divide the world or mandala of Vairocana into two parts (fig. 2): the inner circle (A) which corresponds to the centre and two inner layers of fig. 1 and does not contain any differences of quality or brightness, and the outer circle (B) which corresponds to the outer nine layers of fig. 1 and contains differences of quality or brightness. This inner circle (A) only is adopted by the Tattvasamgrahatantra. Here it becomes the Vajradhātu-mandala composed of five buddhas or five families of buddhas, the first expression of the Tantric image of the world of the ultimate reality (fig. 2).

The outer circle (B) of the mandala of the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra having been discarded, the Vajradhātu-mandala contains no part representing the realm of people who are on the process of gradual promotion. What is needed for the people of the Tantric world is not the strenuous efforts of accumulating two kinds of merits, viz. moral and intellectual, but an 'easy' yogic practice of uniting themselves with the ultimate reality which appears high in the sky as the Vajradhātu-mandala.

In the next chapter, we would like to observe the Tantric view of the world, expressed in the Tattvasamgraha-tantra, which is in every aspect anti-thetical to the Mahāyānic view of the world shown in the Vairocanābhisam-bodhi-sūtra discussed in this chapter.
III. The Tantric view of the world and the logic of Yoga

i. The Tantric scenes of attaining enlightenment

First of all, we would like to pick up, from the Sanskrit text, the essential context of the opening part of the mystical drama which represents the image of the world of the Tattvasamgraha-tantra as follows:

(1) evaṁ mayā śrutam ekasmin samaye (2) bhagavān . . . . . (3) mahākṛ- pāvairocanaḥ . . . . . (4) sarvatathāgatādhyuṣita- . . . . . akanīṣṭhadevarājasya bhavane vijahāra / (5) navanavatibhir bodhisvakoṭibhibhī śārdham / . . . . . (6) gāṅānaḍīvālukāsamākhyaītaīś ca tathāgatais tad yathāpi nāma tilabimbam iva paripūrṇam jambūdvipe samādṛṣyaṭe / . . . . . (7) atha bhagavān mahāvairocanaḥ sarvākāśadhā- tussadāvasthitakāyavākcittavajraḥ / (8) sarvataṭhāgatasamavasa- ranatayā sarvavajradhvāvabodhanajñānasativāḥ / . . . . . (15) . . . . . jīnām . . . . . sarvatathāgataḥ // . . . . . vairocano . . . . (17) bhagavān mahābodhicicṭtaḥ samantabhadro mahābodhisattvah sarvatathā- gatakāyasa vijahāra // atha sarvataṭhāgataiḥ idām buddhakṣetram tad yathā tilabimbam iva paripūrṇam

“(1) Thus have I heard at one time. (2) The Reverend Lord . . . . . (3) Vairocana of great compassion . . . . . (4) dwelt in the palace of the king of the deities of the uppermost stratum of the region of forms (色究竟天王宮) resided in by all the tathāgatas . . . . . (5) Together with ninety-nine koṭis (俱胝) of bodhisattvas . . . . . (6) and tathāgatas to be counted by (the number of) the sands of the River Gāṅā, he appeared in the Jambūdvipa Continent filling (it) as (sesame seeds fill) a sesame husk. . . . . .

(7) At that time, the Reverend Lord Mahāvairocana, who is the adamantine (aggregate of) body, speech and mind which perpetually resides pervading the whole sphere of the sky, (8) who is, as the complete aggregate of all the tathāgatas (一切如來) the being of the wisdom (智慧) which makes people aware of the whole of the adamantine realm (金刚界) . . . . . (15) . . . . . who is the wisdom itself . . . . . who is the one and whole tathāgata (一切如來) . . . . . , who is Vairocana, . . . . . (17) the Reverend Lord, the great mind of enlightenment (大菩提心), the great bodhisattva Samantabhadrā (普賢大菩薩), dwelt in the hearts of all the tathāgatas (一切如來).

Now, this district of the buddha was filled with all the tathāgatas as (sesame seeds fill) a sesame husk.”

It is obvious that this “palace of the king of the deities of the uppermost stratum of the region of forms” (akaniṣṭhadevarājasya bhavana (色究竟天王宮) corresponds to “the palace of the grand adamantine sphere of the reality”
(大金剛法界宮) of the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra (see p. 196). It is to be noticed, however, that the former is limited to the uppermost stratum of the region of forms (akaniśhadeva 色究竟天) which is a kind of space and is at the same time a stage of deepness of meditation, while the latter is the unlimited sphere of the reality (dharmadhātu 法界).

Here, the ultimate reality is expressed as the substantial aggregate of all the tathāgatas. The word sarvatathāgata (一切如來) is essential to an understanding of the image of the world of the Tattvasāṃgraha-tantra. When it is used in the singular, it means Vairocana Tathāgata who is the central deity of the maṇḍala. When it is used in the plural, it means all of the innumerable tathāgatas filling the whole world. These tathāgatas as an aggregate constitute a substantial matrix called “the adamantine sphere” (vajradhātu 金剛界) or the world of reality. Thirdly, the word sarvatathāgata is used in the plural or in the singular indicating the five buddhas or each of five buddhas who constitute the whole Vajradhātu-maṇḍala as representatives of all of the innumerable tathāgatas. In accord with the way of thinking found in the Tattvasāṃgraha-tantra, if A represents a group B, A is nothing other than B. Therefore, the five tathāgatas as five sarvatathāgatas are nothing other than all the innumerable tathāgatas. This process of thinking was indispensable as the ultimate reality of the Tattvasāṃgraha-tantra had to be limited and made visible as the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala of five tathāgatas so as to enable people living in this world Jambudvīpa to imitate it homologously and unite themselves with it on the basis of the Tantric logic of yoga (see p.171).

The world of reality itself is theistically called Mahāvairocana; and in correspondence to the idea of the dharmakāya of Vairocana in the Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra, it exists perpetually. However, when it was located in “the palace of the king of the deities of the uppermost stratum of the region of forms”, it was the reality yet to be limited and was not manifested to people living in the Jambudvīpa. There, it was a kind of imaginary or ideal existence as is assumed from the expression “dwelt in the hearts of all the tathāgatas”.

The second scene of this mystic drama is laid in this world of Jambudvīpa. Vairocana who descended from the Akaniṣṭha heaven shows himself for a moment as Śākyamuni Tathāgata on the earth.

Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi (一切義成就菩薩), that is, Śākyamuni immediately before the attainment of enlightenment, having completed entirely the necessary process of accumulating two kinds of merits, viz. moral and intellectual, was sitting on the seat of enlightenment (bodhimaṇḍa 菩提道場) and was absorbed in the trance of no movement (āśphānaka-samādhi 無動三昧), having stopped all the movements of his body, speech and mind and even having stopped breathing. All the tathāgatas make their appearance to the bodhisattva and awaken him with the following words:

\[\text{katham kulaputānuttarām samyaksambodhim abhisambhoṣyase yas tvam sarvatathāgatatattvānabhijñatayā sarvaduḥkarāṇy utsahasīti} \]
"O son of a noble family! How can you attain the highest and complete enlightenment, you who are enduring all kinds of difficult deeds (難行) without knowing the truth of all the tathāgatas?"

The bodhisattva, recovering self-consciousness and coming back from the trance, asks the tathāgatas the way to attain the truth and the proposition of the truth itself as follows:

bhagavantas tathāgatā ājñāpayata katham pratipadyāmi hidṛṣam tattvam iti //

"O Reverend Lord! Tell me, how and what kind of truth shall I attain?" 36

All the tathāgatas, accordingly, teach him the so-called ‘five-stepped process of attaining enlightenment (pañcākārbhisambodhi-krama 五相成身觀). The bodhisattva practises as he was taught and attains the highest and complete enlightenment on the spot and becomes Vajradhatu Tathāgata (金剛界如来). Here we notice that the Mahāyānic ideal of strenuous effort (難行), which had been proposed by the Vairocanābhīsambodhī-sūtra, was surpassed by the awakening words abovementioned. Thus, the Tantric ideal of quick attainment of enlightenment through the easy practice (易行) of yoga was declared on the basis of a clear methodical consciousness.

The method of attaining “the truth of all the tathāgatas”, that is, the ultimate truth is shown here, and the bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi actually attained the ultimate truth by this method. Therefore, we can observe the ultimate truth itself and the method of attaining the truth in his ‘five-stepped process of attaining enlightenment’.

Each of five steps constituting the whole process are composed of the following three factors:

a a step of instruction for observing the truth given by all the tathāgatas.
b a mantra (mystical spell) which can be substituted for (a).
c Sarvārthasiddhi’s perception of the truth shown in a concrete, symbolic figure as the result of (b).

For example, the passage which corresponds with the first step, viz. so-called ‘piercing into the mind of enlightenment’ (通達菩提心) is described as follows:

evam ukte sarvatathāgatās tam bodhisattvam ekakāṃṭhenaiyam āhuḥ / pratipadyasva kulaputra suncittapratyavekṣaṇasamādhānena prakṛtisiddhena rucijaptena mantreneti //

Om cittaprativedham karomi //

atha bodhisattvāh sarvataḥtathāgatān evam āha / ājñātām me bhagavantas tathāgatāḥ svahṛdi candramandalākāram paśyāmi /37
“When (the bodhisattva) asked (the question) abovementioned, all the tathāgatas told the bodhisattva in unison as follows:

‘Attain (the mind of enlightenment first) through the meditation of observing your own mind carefully, by reciting the following mantra, as many times as you like, the efficacy of which is established by nature.

Om cittaprativedham karomi

(Om I will pierce my mind into its bottom.)

Then, the bodhisattva said to all the tathāgatas as follows:

‘I was taught. O Reverend Tathāgatas! I see the appearance of the lunar disk on my heart.’

Here, we must notice first the fact that svacittapratyaveksanassamādhānena and prakṛtisiddhena ruciṣaptena mantrena are appositional. The word pratayeṣāṇa instantly reminds us the process of observing each of the one hundred and sixty monadic minds individually as we have explained in the previous chapter. In the Vairocanaḥbhisaṃbodhi-sūtra, one was able to “pierce one’s own mind to its bottom” and attain the completely purified mind of enlightenment only by completing the entire process of accumulating “infinite materials of both meritorious deeds and knowledge for an unimaginably long period of hundreds of thousands of innumerable aeons” (see p. 181). Here, however, the mantra “Om I will pierce my mind into the bottom” replaces the entire process. This is not astonishing, however, for a Tantrist, for the simple reason that a mantra has such a miraculous efficacy by nature (prakṛtisiddha). The laborious process of promoting one’s own mind by observing layers of one hundred and sixty monadic minds incessantly and by overcoming them through actual deeds for the benefit of others, which continues for nearly eternal period of the three great uncountable aeons, was thus replaced by an easy practice of simply reciting a mantra as many times as one likes. Here, even upāya, our direct and actual exertions for the benefit of others, was replaced by a symbolic deed, not to speak of prajñā, a mental operation of observing the essencelessness (śūyatā 空性). Herein we find a critical turning point from Mahāyāna Buddhism or especially the Vairocanaḥbhisaṃbodhi-sūtra to Tantrism.

In addition, the attainment of the mind of enlightenment is depicted symbolically here through the appearance of the lunar disk on the heart. This means that, if one can manipulate the symbolic figure which appears in his mind in meditation, one can conversely control the world of reality through it. This idea of controlling the world of reality through the manipulation of symbols is represented in the five-stepped process of attaining enlightenment which can be summarized according to the three factors above-mentioned as follows:36

I. The step of piercing into the mind of enlightenment (通達菩提心).

   a “Attain (the mind of enlightenment first) through the meditation of observing your mind carefully.”
b Om cittapratisedham karomi. 
   (Om I will pierce my mind to its bottom.)

c “I see the appearance of the lunar disk on my heart.”

II. The step of realizing the mind of enlightenment (修菩提心).

a “(Your) mind (thus imagined) is (nothing but the universal mind) shining by its own nature (prkṛtiprabhāṣvara 自性清浄).”

b Om bodhicittam utpādayāmi 
   (Om I will make the mind of enlightenment arise.)

c Sarvārthasiddhi actually made the mind of enlightenment arise through reciting the mantra (b) which is by nature efficient. He says: “I see that the appearance of the lunar disk is nothing but the lunar disk itself.”

III. The step of realizing the adamantine mind (修金刚心).

a “This is the heart of all the tathāgatas for you. You actually made your mind of Samantabhadra (普賢心) arise. So as to make this arisen mind firm, you should imagine the figure of a vajra-pestle in the lunar disk of your heart through reciting following mantra.”

b Om tiṣṭha vajra. (Om Stand up! O Vajra!)

c “I see the vajra-pestle in the lunar disk.”

IV. The step of realizing the adamantine body (修金刚身).

a “Make this adamantine mind of Samantabhadra (which is composed) of all the tathāgatas firm through the following mantra.”

b Om vajrātmako 'ham. 
   (Om I am of the essence of the adamant.)

c The whole adamantine sphere (vajradhātu 金刚界) composed of the bodies, speeches and minds of all the tathāgatas pervading the whole sphere of the sky enters into this adamantine existence (sattvavajra 薩埵金刚) (of the bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi) through the benefit of all the tathāgatas. He is invested by all the tathāgatas with the consecratory name ‘Vajradhātu’ (金刚界). He says: “O Reverend Tathāgatas! I see myself as the body (composed) of all the tathāgatas.”

V. The step of the body of a buddha completed (佛身具備).

a “Imagine yourself as ‘the adamantine existence’ (sattvavajra) which is equipped with all the most excellent aspects (of the whole universe) and (at the same time) the figure of a buddha (as the centre of the universe).”

b Om yathā sarvatathāgatās tathāham. 
   (Om As all the tathāgatas are, so am I.)

c Thus, Vajradhātu Bodhisattva attains the highest and complete enlightenment.
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Here, with this fifth mantra, "the truth of all the tathāgatas", that is, the ultimate truth is indicated. This mantra is nothing other than the universal formula through which anyone can attain enlightenment quickly and easily within his very lifetime (ihaiva janmanī). As was mentioned above (see p. 171), this formula was interpreted by the subsequent Tantrists as follows:

"If the individual existence and the ultimate reality are homologous, they are one and the same."

therefore:

"If the individual existence successfully reorganizes itself to be homologous with the ultimate reality, the former can unite itself with the latter."

This is what we call 'the logic of Tantrism' or 'the logic of yoga'. This entire process of five steps itself provides an example of this logic. As the bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi recited the fourth mantra "Om vajrātmako 'ham" (Om I am of the essence of the adamant), which controls the world of reality, the entire adamantine sphere (vajradhātu 金剛界), the ultimate reality itself, entered into "the adamantine existence" which is the symbolic representation imagined in his mind. Thus, "the adamantine existence" was completed as a symbolic system representing the adamantine sphere in miniature. Then, he imagines himself as identical with this symbol which is "equipped with all the most excellent aspects" (sarvāhāravaropetam). It is to be noted that the word sarvākāravaropetam refers to the dharmakāya of a buddha or the whole world of reality, while the word buddhabimbam ("equipped with the figure of a buddha") refers to a buddha of sambhogakāya (the body of enjoyment) which is the centre of the world and is equipped with thirty-two lakṣānas (三十二相) and eighty anuvyaj−janas (八十種好). Recitation of the fifth mantra "Om yathā sarvatathāgataś tathāham" (Om as all the tathāgatas are, so am I) makes him realize that he himself is homologous with, and therefore identical with the aggregate of all the tathāgatas or the entire adamantine sphere as he is identical with the symbolic figure which is the miniature of the adamantine sphere. Thus, he, while retaining the individual "figure" as the centre of the world, becomes the entire world of reality itself. In this manner, he, the individual existence, successfully united himself with the ultimate reality through the catalytic action of "the adamantine existence", a system of symbols constructed mechanically through the recitation of mantras and the imagination of symbolic figures. After this, anyone can reorganize himself mechanically through reciting mantras and imagining symbolic figures into a symbolic system which is homologous with the ultimate reality, and consequently unite himself easily and quickly with the ultimate reality. Thus, the secret of the quick attainent of enlightenment was revealed.

The bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi attained enlightenment in this manner and
became Vajradhātu Tathāgata (金剛界如來) who was concurrently Śākyamuni Buddha who attained enlightenment on the seat of enlightenment bodhi-manda (菩提道場) under a bodhi-tree on the bank of the River Nairājana in the suburbs of Gayā. As soon as Sarvārthasiddhi became the buddha, all the tathāgatas led him away from this world to “the pavilion with the pinnacle of adamantine jewel” (vajramaṇiratnaśikharakūtāgāra 金剛摩尼寶頂樓閣) situated on the top of Mt. Sumu in order to enthrone him as the creator of the whole universe (visvakarman) as the representative (sarvatathāgata, sg.) of all the tathāgatas (sarvatathāgata, pl.).

In the third scene of this mystical drama, all the tathāgatas arriving at the palace nominate Vajradhātu Tathāgata, that is, Vairocana for the position of their representative making him ascend the lion-seat as the representative of all the tathāgatas (sarvatathāgatasimhāsana) and sit on the throne facing in all the directions.

Subsequently, the four tathāgatas, viz. Akṣobhya (阿閦), Ratnasambhava (寶生), Lokeśvararāja (世自在王) and Amoghasiddhi (不空成就) nominate themselves for the position of representatives (sarvatathāgata) of all of the innumerable tathāgatas and sit on all sides of “the Reverend Lord Śākyamuni Tathāgata”. Thus, the five tathāgatas constituting the adamantine sphere were selected.

According to the Tantric way of thinking, ‘when A represents a group B, A is identical with the whole of B’. Therefore, these five tathāgatas are nothing other than all of the innumerable tathāgatas filling the whole world of reality. In other words, the ultimate reality, with Śākyamuni Buddha as its nucleus, appears itself as the aggregate of five tathāgatas. Just as a transparent solution gels when a drop of reagent is added, as the process of self-realization progresses further, the ultimate reality makes its appearance finally as the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala of thirty-seven deities high above the world of human beings.

We can illustrate this process of self-realization of “the adamantine sphere” as follows (fig. 3).

“The adamantine sphere”, the world of reality as the aggregate of all the innumerable tathāgatas can be expressed by two concentric circles. The inner circle corresponds to the central circle of the maṇḍala of the Vairocanābhi-sambodhi-sūtra (fig. 1) and represents Vairocana Tathāgata. The outer circle corresponds to the centre and inner two layers of fig. 1 or the inner circle (A) of fig. 2 within which there is no difference of brightness. When this “adamantine sphere” is situated on “the palace of the king of the Akaniśṭha deities” (akaniśṭhadevarājasya bhavana) (scene i.), these two circles are drawn with dotted lines as the sphere has not yet made its appearance to us existing on earth. When Śākyamuni Buddha, who can also be represented by the central circle of fig. 1, appears on the earth after completing the process of accumulating merits over the three great uncountable aeons, the concentric circles of “the adamantine sphere” descend from the Akaniśṭha heaven, its inner circle overlapping with the circle of Śākyamuni is solidified and Vairocana, who is an imaginary or ideal being in the
Akaniṣṭha heaven, is actualized for the first time when he descends to the earth synchronously with Śākyamuni’s attainment of enlightenment (scene ii.).

The world of reality which has descended to the earth springs up to the top of Mt. Sumeru in the next moment and disappears from the earth. Here at “the pavilion with the pinnacle of adamantine jewel” (scene iii.), the world of reality actualizes itself as the Vajradhatu-manḍala, viz. the aggregate of five tathāgatas or five families of tathāgatas. Only when “the adamantine sphere” as the aggregate of all the innumerable tathāgatas is concretized as the aggregate of five tathāgatas, can we imagine it and make ourselves homologous with it through the manipulation of symbols.

Here, it must again be noted that this manḍala of the Tattvasaṃgrahatantra does not contain any distinctions of brightness and that for us who live on earth it exists externally. Homogeneity and externality are the two special features of the manḍala of the religion of yogins or sitting meditators who attempt to unite themselves with the external absolute through the yogic practice.

**ii. The new concept of quick attainment of enlightenment**

Having noted this process of the self-development of “the adamantine sphere” which descends from the Akaniṣṭha heaven to the earth and springs up in the next moment to the top of Mt. Sumeru just like a ball bounded on the floor, we may possibly interpret the image of the world of the Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra in the same way as we interpreted the world of the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhisūtra, attaching importance to our world, Jambūdvīpa.

Śākyamuni appeared on the earth as a buddha after completing “all kinds of difficult deeds” over the period of the three great uncountable aeons. By becoming
a *buddha*, he made himself the nucleus of “the adamantine sphere”, and made “the adamantine sphere” which had existed as *dynamis* or as an ideal or possible being actual in its turn as the *Vajra*dhaatu-*manḍala* composed of five *tathāgatas* or five families of *tathāgatas*. “The adamantine sphere” or the universal *buddha* Mahāvairocana perpetually exists pervading the whole universe, but it is not significant for us until it actualizes itself as a *manḍala* visible to us. 5,670,000,000 years subsequent to Śākyamuni, Maitreya Buddha will appear on earth, make himself Vairocana, the centre of the world of reality, and thereby cause the world of reality, the universal *buddha* Mahāvairocana to shine forth. Similarly, innumerable *buddhas* will appear on the earth (Jambūdvīpa) one after another, and Vairocana will continue shining at the centre of the universe. We also in our turn, after completing the process of accumulating two kinds of merits over the period of the three great uncountable aeons, will appear on earth as *buddhas* and cause the world of reality to shine forth. Therefore, everyone of us is responsible for the existence of the world of reality and is requested to continue incessantly both moral and intellectual efforts for the sake of others and ourselves.

This romantic interpretation is not untenable. In fact, the thousand *buddhas* of this aeon (*bhadrakalpa* 賢劫) are waiting for the time when they will attain enlightenment and make the whole *manḍala* shine forth as the centre of the world of reality. On the other hand, however, a completely new method of attaining enlightenment is also presented here. The Mahāyānic ideal of attaining enlightenment through difficult deeds has been rejected by the awakening words abovementioned (see p. 199), the meaning of which is as follows:

“If you do not know the truth of the universe, you can not attain enlightenment even thought you complete the entire process of accumulating merits over the three great uncountable aeons.”

One can attain enlightenment not by accumulating merits but by realizing the ultimate truth which was revealed as the fifth *mantra* of the five-stepped process of attaining enlightenment (五相成身觀). Śākyamuni’s actual attainment of enlightenment was not a result of the completion of the entire process of accumulating merits, but rather a result of the practice of the five-stepped process of attaining enlightenment. His accumulation of merits had nothing to do with his attainment of enlightenment structurally. In the *Tattvasaṁgraha-tantra*, an individual existence is requested structurally to do nothing more than provide the mouth which recites *mantras*, the mind which imagines symbolic figures and the hands which bind finger-postures (*mudrā* 印契). The ultimate reality had already appeared at “the pavilion with the pinnacle of adamantine jewel” on the top of Mt. Sumeru as the *Vajra*dhaatu-*manḍala* of thirty-seven deities.

The *Tattvasaṁgraha-tantra* mentions four kinds of *mudrās*, viz. *mahāmudrā* (大印), that is, the thirty-seven deities expressed in pictures or statues, *samaya-mudrā* (三昧耶印), the hand-postures expressing these deities by assuming the emblems of each of them, *dharmamudrā* (法印), that is, the *mantras* or syllables
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(bija 種子) which indicate each of these deities and karmamudrā (羯摩印), hand-postures expressing actions of each of these deities. Each of these four kinds of symbols can serve as a substitute for the deities which they symbolize. The symbol is identical to the symbolized. Through the monumental fact of Śākyamuni’s attainment of enlightenment, the ultimate reality has been actualized as the Vajradhātu-mandala of thirty-seven deities. If one recites the five mantras of the five-stepped process of attaining enlightenment and imagines the transformation of the symbolic figure in one’s mind, one instantly enters into the centre of the maṇḍala and attains enlightenment. Or if one imagines figures of thirty-seven deities in one’s mind, recites mantras or syllables of each of these deities and binds hand-postures (mudrā) of them in regular succession, one can transform oneself into symbolic representation of “the adamantine sphere” and unite oneself with it on the spot as one is completely homologous with it. Since Śākyamuni has attained enlightenment, we need not perform any deeds of accumulating merits. This is the new concept of quick attainment of enlightenment which is completely antithetical to the Mahāyānic idea of the gradual attainment of enlightenment advocated in the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra.

In the Vairacanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra, both prajñā, the wisdom of observing essencelessness (sūnyatā 空性), and upāya, actual deeds performed through compassion (karuṇā 慈悲) for the benefit of others, were indispensable in allowing a person to exist in the world of reality. Unlike prajñā, upāya could not be substituted by a symbol as it was actual and direct to the end. The practicer of the Tattvasaṅgraha-tantra very easily passed over the ridge which the Mahāyānic practicer of the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-sūtra did not dare pass over, his yogic manner of thinking allowing him to do so. As we have already mentioned (see p. 168), the follower of the Tattvasaṅgraha-tantra is a solitary yogin confronting the absolute by himself. For him the actual world, society or the existence of others is of no significance. For him capabilities, ethical or religious efforts and even the friendliness and mercy towards others (慈悲), that is, the essential virtue of Mahāyāna Buddhism, are not at all necessary. This feature of Tantrism is the most clearly expressed in the following passage which mentions the adventitiousness of such capabilities as qualifications for entering the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala:

“Then, I will show the extensive ritual of entering into the Grand maṇḍala of the Vajradhātu and other (rituals) for an adamantine disciple.

First of all, the purpose of entering (into the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala) is to attain the aim of the highest accomplishment of saving all living beings of the world without remainder and without leavings, and making them all prosperous and comfortable. In this case, it should not be decided whether or not he is competent for entering into the Grand maṇḍala. What is the reason?

O Reverend Tathāgatas! There might be some people who commit
great crimes. However, once they see this Grand maṇḍala of the Vajradhātu and enter into it, they will get rid of all the crimes.

O Reverend Tathāgatas! There might be some people who are covetous of all kinds of food, drink and objects of sense, who hate religious precepts (samaya 三昧耶) and who are not competent for preparatory rites. Nevertheless, once they enter into this (Vajradhātu-maṇḍala), all the desires will be fulfilled completely even for them as things are effected in conformance with their desire (in this maṇḍala).

O Reverend Tathāgatas! There might be some people who indulge in all kinds of dances, songs, comical or lascivious dances, food and games, entering into the maṇḍalas of the families of heretical deities without realizing the truth through the clear understanding of the Mahāyāna of all the tathāgatas. They do not enter into the maṇḍala of the family of all the tathāgatas which is the aggregate of those which fulfill all the desires and which brings about the highest pleasure, satisfaction and joy, as they are frightened by the fear of moral precepts. For these people who face the evil maṇḍalas, it is suitable to enter into the Grand maṇḍala of the Vajradhātu as they can enjoy the pleasure and happiness of the highest accomplishment of all the pleasures and joys, and turn back from the way leading to all evil states.

Furthermore, O Reverend Tathāgatas! There might be some virtuous people who, wishing to attain the enlightenment of a buddha by means of the highest accomplishment of precepts, concentration of mind and wisdom, make efforts on the (four) stages of meditation, (eight kinds of) getting rid (of attachments) and so on. Still they might be afflicted (not getting enlightenment). For them, the state of all the tathāgatas is not difficult to attain simply by entering into the Grand maṇḍala of the Vajradhātu on the spot, much less the other accomplishments." 39

Thus, the new concept of quick attainment of enlightenment (即身成佛) was declared definitely and logically as the antithesis of the Mahāyānic ideal of the gradual attainment of enlightenment through the accumulation of moral and intellectual merits. The secret of the quick attainment of enlightenment was actually presented to everyone in a logically thorough manner. However, this logical thoroughness, extreme easiness and quickness of attaining enlightenment, and the structural adventitiousness of moral and intellectual efforts, in short, all the features of this Tantric concept of quick attainment of enlightenment effected the dissolution of the religion of the Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra itself. When it declared "the truth of all the tathāgatas" or the universal formula of quick attainment of enlightenment triumphantly, it found itself standing on the brink of the dizzy precipice of nihilism. This religious vacuity undoubtedly caused great uneasiness in the minds of subsequent Tantrists and drove them to the opposite extreme. In fact, a group of Tantrists who were the orthodox inheri-
tors of the religion of the Tattvasaṅgraha-tantra took as their recourse the hideous and repulsive cult of cemetery (śmaśāna).

IV. The Hevajra-tantra: Buddhism of cemetery

i. The group of Yoginis: the new matrix of enlightenment

The most definite description of the religion of Buddhist immigrants to ‘the cult of cemetery (śmaśāna)’ centered on a group of yoginis (yogīṇī-cakra) of cemetery (śmaśāna) can be found in a passage of the Hevajra-tantra (HV, I.v.4.–8.), which has been reconstructed by D.L. Snellgrove as follows:

mudrāḥ pañcaḥulānīti kathyate mokṣahetunā //
vajreṇa mudryaye 'nena mudrā tenāvhidehiyate // (4)
Vajra Padma tathā Karma Tathāgata Ratnaiva ca //
kulāni pañcavidhāṇyā āhur uttamāṇi mahākṛpa // (5)
Vajre Dombī bhaven mudrā Padme Narī tathaiva ca //
Karmanī Rajakī ākhyātā Brāhmaṇī ca Tathāgata // (6)
Ratne Caṇḍalinī jñeyā pañcamudrā viṁścitāḥ //
tathāgataḥulam caitat saṁh ‘ṣepenābhīdhiyate // (7)
tathātāyaṁ gatah śrīmān āgataś ca tathaiva ca //
anayā prajñayā yuḥtyā tathāgato ‘bhidhiyate // (8)\n
“(4) In order that one may gain release, these Mudrā are identified with the Five Families. She is called Mudrā or Sign, because she is signed with the Vajra.

(5) Vajra, Padma, Karma, Tathāgata, Ratna; these are known as the Five Families supreme, O thou of great compassion. (6 and 7) These then are their five Mudrā: Dombī for Vajra, Narī for Padma, Rajakī for Karma, Brāhmaṇī for Tathāgata, and Caṇḍalinī for Ratna. For short, they are called the families of the tathāgatas. (8) He enters supreme reality, he the Blessed One, and comes just as he went, and so on account of this play on words, it’s as Tathāgata he’s known.”\n
However, this reconstruction, especially verse 6, the essential part of this passage, is difficult to support on the basis of the manuscripts\2 we have examined thus far. We would reconstruct it as follows:

mudrāḥ pañcaḥulānīti kathyate mokṣahetunā /
vajreṇa mudryaye 'nena mudrā tenāvhidehiyate //4//
vajrapadmaṁ tathā karma tathāgatam ratnam eva ca /
kulāni pañcavidhāṇyā āhur uttamāṇi mahākṛpa //5//
vajraṁ ḍombī bhaven mudrā padmaṁ narī tathaiva ca /
karma rajahī samākhyātā brāhmaṇī ca tathāgatī //6//
This reconstruction offers a clear vision of a new stage of Tantric Buddhism which has overcome successfully the unrealistic or ideal character of the religion of the Tattvasamgraha-tantra and has recovered religious 'substantiality' on the basis of the psychological and psychological strain experienced during the hideous and, at the same time, enchanting cults of the group of yoginīs. We can translate this passage as follows:

"The fact that the five mudrās (which constitute the group of yoginīs) are nothing other than the five families (of tathāgatas constituting the Vajradhātu-manḍala of the Tattvasamgraha-tantra) is declared to be the cause of (attaining) liberation. She (that is, a yoginī) is called mudrā or sign as she is signed with an adamant (vajra) (4).

Vajra, Padma, Karma, Tathāgata and Ratna are said to be the five highest kinds of families, O you of great compassion (5)!

The mudrā Dombi is (nothing other than) the Vajra (-family), and likewise, (the mudrā) Narī is (nothing other than) the Padma (-family). (The mudrā) Rajakī is said to be (nothing other than) the Karma (-family), and (the mudrā) Brāhmaṇī is (the mudrā who is nothing other than) the Tathāgata (-family) (6).

Cāndālinī is known to be (nothing other than) the Ratna (-family). (Thus,) five families are set down. In short, (the whole of) this (world of reality which is the aggregate of these five mudrās or five families) is (nothing other than the centre of the world i.e.) the Tathāgata-family (7). (The Lord Hevajra), the auspicious one, who has gone to reality (tathātā), and who has come back from (the reality) is called tathāgata because he is united with prajñā (the wisdom of enlightenment which is at the same time a woman called mudrā or an aggregate of those mudrās, that is, yoginī-cakra) (8)."

In the Tattvasamgraha-tantra, the ultimate reality appeared in a imaginary, mystical region of the Akaniśṭha heaven high above the world. Practicers should have been able to unite themselves with this ultimate reality very easily and very quickly only by reciting mantras, binding mudrās (hand-postures) and imagining symbolic figures (samaya 三昧耶形) in the mind. Qualifications, abilities and efforts moral or intellectual were not necessary. In short, they did not have to do anything 'religious'. This complete ease of attaining enlightenment, however, caused the distinction between the enlightened state and the non-enlightened state to be minimized. Though they may attain enlightenment, they would not be able to confirm it objectively or subjectively on psychological and physiological
grounds. Thus, the methodical completion of the idea of quick attainment of enlightenment in the *Tattvasamgraha-tantra* resulted in ‘religious vacuity’. This ‘vacuity’ caused strong anxiety, and this anxiety in turn drove them to another extreme; the extreme *Numinose* of the heretical cult of cemetery (*śmaśāna*). This provided a psychological strain through the hideous, sanguinary and horrible cults of a cemetery filled with a putrid smell, as well as the strong physiological stimuli of the sexual yogic practice experienced in the group of bewitching *yoginīs*. Thus they established the religion of the *Hevajra-tantra*, the characteristics of which were fully indicated in the above quotation.

In this quotation, the five families comprising the *Vajradhātu-maṇḍala* have been replaced with the group of five *mudrās* or *yoginīs* (fig. 4).

Now, “the adamantine sphere” appears not in the lofty, imaginary region of the Akaniṣṭha heaven but on earth as a group of *yoginīs* with which one can unite oneself actually through sexual yogic practice. The one and only God Hevajra who is sexually united with the group of five *yoginīs* is nothing other than the *dharmakāya* (法身, the body of the ultimate reality) of Vairocana who is himself the aggregate of the five families of the *Vajradhātu-maṇḍala* as well as the one and only God Hevajra who is sexually united with the group of five *yoginīs* is nothing other than the *dharmakāya* form, constituting both the whole of the maṇḍala and the centre of the maṇḍala, as was referred to in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra* and the *Tattvasamgraha-tantra* in idea only, actually appeared on the earth as the demonic God Heruka, alias Hevajra.

The group of *yoginīs* has decisive reality. It is nothing other than the female principle *prajñā* and in this quotation it is regarded as *tathātā* (真如). It is a new, real matrix in which enlightenment is realized certainly on psychological and physiological grounds. Therefore, as is indicated by the axiom ‘*prajñā* plus *upāya* is *bodhicitta*’ (see p. 180), the God Hevajra, who is by himself the male principle *upāya*, is realized as the ultimate reality *bodhicitta* as long as his is united with these *yoginīs*. A practicer who regards himself as Hevajra, visiting a group of these *yoginīs* in a place of cemetery and practising sexual *yoga* with them, attains enlightenment on the spot.

![Fig. 4](image-url)
In the Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra, the enlightenment should be possible for anyone, regardless of their personal qualifications or abilities, if only they enter into the maṇḍala. In the Hevajra-tantra, it has become possible for one to enter into the maṇḍala actually. Thus, a concrete method to realize the ideal of the quick attainment of enlightenment declared in the Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra was presented in the Hevajra-tantra.

**ii. The fourth consecration: the critical turn of the Hevajra-tantra**

In the Hevajra-tantra, which synthesized the Tantric logic of yoga declared in the Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra and the cult of cemetery, Tantrism developed to its apex. Though it was a clever device of the author of the Hevajra-tantra to identify the group of yoginīs with the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, the matrix of enlightenment, when, following the Mahāyānic tendency within himself, he regarded each of the five yoginīs or mudrās as completely identical with the corresponding families of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, he betrayed, if not consciously, the Tantric logic of symbolism. When we say, according to the Tantric way of thinking, “if a symbol A symbolizes B, A is identical with B” or “when A represents a group B, A is identical with the whole B”, it is tacitly understood that A and B are objectively different. Therefore, when the author of the Hevajra-tantra attempted to symbolize the Vajradhātu of five families by a group of yoginīs or mudrās, he should have been contented with the fact that a yoginī or a mudrā and a family of the Vajradhātu are different from one another and that the former is only a symbol or a representative of the latter. For example, in the first pada of the verse 5 of the above quotation, viz. “vajraṁ ḍombi bhaven”, ḍombi should have remained different from the Vajra-family of the Vajradhātu serving merely as a representative of or a substitute for the latter as was indicated by Snellgrove’s reconstruction “Vajre ḍombi bhaven”. The author of the Hevajra-tantra, however, went beyond himself and regarded ḍombi one and the same with the Vajra-family. When he did, though perhaps not consciously, he no longer placed entire confidence in the Tantric logic of symbolism. He removed the distinction between ḍombi and the Vajra-family so as to emphasize their essential identity, and through this unnecessary identification he made the relation between the symbol and the symbolized something metaphorical or conventional. It could be assumed that this identification of mudrās and the families of the Vajradhātu was an accidental slip of the pen. However, the same tendency of taking the efficacy of symbolism only as metaphorical or conventional can be found in the system of consecration peculiar to the Hevajra-tantra; that is, the fourth consecration. Consecration is the most essential cult for a Tantrist.

In the Hevajra-tantra, the system of consecration is composed of following four kinds of consecrations:

1. ācārya-abhiṣeka (阿闍梨灌頂, consecration to become a master)
2. guhya-abhiṣeṣa (秘密灌頂, the secret consecration)
The first is the usual consecration to become a master. It is also called kalasha-abhiṣeka (the consecration with a pitcher), in which water gathered from the five oceans of the world, symbolizing the five kinds of wisdom (五智) which constitute the dharmahāya of Vairocana, viz. bodhicitta (the mind of enlightenment), is poured from a pitcher on the top of the head of a disciple so as to implant the five kinds of wisdom within him.

The second is said to be the original consecration of the Guhyasamājatantra. The master (ācārya) who is identified with Vajrasattva (‘adamantine being’ who is both the absolute reality itself and a concrete being) practises sexual yoga with a beautiful girl of sixteen years old (mahāmudrā, the material aspect of the entire maṇḍala and at the same time a woman) who was dedicated to him by the disciple during her menstruation. The master drops the bodhicitta, the mixture of his semen (upāya) and the menstrual fluid of the girl (prajñā), into the mouth of the disciple whose eyes are bound with a cloth, and thus implants the bodhicitta within him.

The third is thought to be the original consecration of the Buddhist immigrants to the cult of cemetery, and is performed in conformance with the idea of the structure of the human body, thought to be borrowed from the cult of cemetery.

There are two veins (nādi) on both sides of the central or spinal vein Avadhūti, viz. Lalana, (left) and Rasanā (right). Lalana conveys prajñā and Rasanā conveys upāya. Through the sexual yoga, bodhicitta, the mixture of prajñā and upāya, occurs at the confluence of these two veins. Through yogic practice, the yogin makes this bodhicitta ascend through the central vein Avadhūti. Avadhūti runs through four cakras (similar to nerve centres), viz. nirmāṇa-cakra, dharma-cakra, sambhoga-cakra and mahāsukha-cakra which are imagined to be located in the navel, in the heart, in the throat and in the head as sixty-four petalled, eight petalled, sixteen petalled and thirty-two petalled respectively. As the bodhicitta passes through these four cakras in regular succession, the four kinds of pleasures, viz. ānanda (usual sexual pleasure), paramānanda (the supreme pleasure), viramānanda (pleasure no longer sexual) and sahajānanda (the innate pleasure) are experienced. The last of these four, which is experienced when the bodhicitta attains to the cakra in the head, viz. mahāsukha-cakra (the cakra of the great pleasure) is the great pleasure (mahā-sukha 大樂) which is an aspect of the ultimate reality and is nothing other than the state of enlightenment. This idea of mahāsukha as the state of enlightenment or as an aspect of dharmahāya obviously corresponds to the aspect of ānanda of brahman, the universal reality of Brahmnic Philosophy, which is equipped with three aspects, viz. sat (substantiality), cit (spirituality) and ānanda (pleasure).

In the prajñājñāna-abhiṣeka, the master (ācārya) makes the disciple practice
in turn sexual yoga with the girl and teaches him the process of promoting bodhicitta allowing him experience himself the pleasures of each stage. This process is a homologous miniaturization of the Mahāyānic process of accumulating merits over the period of the three great uncountable aeons.

When the bodhicitta of the disciple reaches the mahāsukha-cakra located in the head, according to the Tantric logic of symbolism, he should enter in to the sphere of the universal pleasure, or the ultimate state of enlightenment. He should have nothing more to do; still he goes beyond this.

The disciple, having attained the great pleasure through his yogic practice with the girl who was once given to the master, rejoices. He thanks the master heartily and gives him a great amount of honorarium. He even offers him himself as a slave as well as his wife and children, and subsequently asks to receive the fourth consecration. The master, according to the Samputodbhavatantra "will give him the (precious) consecration like a jewel with nothing but words, which the disciple will realize later" (vācaiva dadyād abhiśekaratnam / paścāt svasamvedayate sa śisyāḥ). The fourth consecration is the consecration with words, or Upaniṣadic teaching of the secret expression in the form of maxims.

According to the Tantric way of thinking, there can be no truth which can not be attained through Tantric practice of manipulating symbols. The yogic practice of the third consecration was perfectly successful in symbolizing the world of reality. It should have convinced the disciple that the pleasure he experienced in the consecration is nothing other than the universal pleasure which is an aspect of the ultimate reality. There should be no further truth to be received through words. Still in the fourth consecration, the truth was to be taught with words. Thus the system of the Hevajra-tantra itself betrayed Tantrism. Here, we notice the critical turn, or rather a critical turning back from Tantrism to Mahāyāna Buddhism.

What was the ultimate truth then? Bu ston (1290–1364 A.D.) offers in his dpal bde mchog sdom pa ḥbyuṅ bahi dkyil ḥkhor gyi cho ga dri ma med pahi chu rgyun, the following sentence, which appears at the end of the Hevajra­tantra, as the substance of the fourth consecration:

\[\text{idam jñānam mahāsūkṣmaṁ vajramanḍamaṁ nabhopamam /} \]
\[\text{virajam mokaśadāmaṁ sāntam pitā te tvam asi svayami/} \] (HV. II. xii. 4.)

“This wisdom is very subtle; it is the cream of the adamant and is like the empty sky.
It is free from the dust (of passion), brings about liberation and is tranquil.
You are your self your own father.”

Followers of the Hevajra-tantra were betrayed in the last moment in the Hevajra-tantra itself through this verse. In time, however, recovering from bewilderment, they again rose from meditation and started on a pilgrimage
A CRITICAL TANTRISM

attempting to realize this Upaniṣadic, enigmatic remark that “you are yourself your own father”. Since the yogic practice of Tantrism was judged as a conventional means only, they had nothing left other than the Mahāyānic practice through which to solve the mystery of this remark. This can be attested to by the fact that the system of pilgrimage places (piṭha) was very quickly consolidated in the short period of transition from the Hevajra-tantra to the subsequent Saṃvarodaya-tantra.

V. The fate of Tantric Buddhism

i. The theory of pilgrimage places

The practice of pilgrimage did exist in the time of the Hevajra-tantra. The followers of the Hevajra-tantra actually visited sacred places of the cult of yoginīs in quest of a group of yoginīs external to them just as the Vajra-dhātu-manḍala was external to the followers of the Tattvasamgraha-tantra. They did go on pilgrimages, but pilgrimage itself was not essential for them. If a group of yoginīs could have been found nearby, it would have eliminated the need for pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage places (piṭha) and names of countries or cities are enumerated though not systematically in the Hevajra-tantra as follows:

"[vajragarbha uvāca] /
he bhagavan he te melāpakasthānāḥ //
bhagavān āha /
piṭhāṇ copapiṭhāṇ ca kṣetraṇ copakṣetram eva ca /
chandohaṇ copacchandohaṇ melāpakopamāṇakam tathā //10//
piḷavopapīḷavaṇ caiva śmasānopasmaśnaṇ ca /
etā dvādaśabhūmayāḥ //
daśabhūmiśvaro nātha ebhir anyair na hathyate //11//
[vajragarbha uvāca] /
he bhagavan he te piṭhādayāḥ //
bhagavān āha
piṭhāṃ jālandharam khyātam odiyānam tathaiva ca /
piṭhāṃ pūrṇagiriś caiva kāmarūpaṃ tathaiva ca //12//
upapiṭhāṃ mālavam prohtam sindhu nagaram eva ca /
kṣetram munmuni khyātam hṣetram kāuṇyapāṭakam /
devāhoṇ tathā kṣetraṃ kṣetram karmārapāṭakam //13//
upakṣetram hulatā proktam arbudāṃ ca tathaiva ca /
godāvari himādriś ca upalṣeteraṇ ca samkṣepa //14//
chandoham harikelaṇ ca lavanasāgaramadhyajam /
lampākam kāncikāṇ caiva saurāstrāṇ ca tathaiva ca //15//
kaliṅgam upacchandoham dvīpaṇ caṁkikarāṇvītam /
kokanāṇ copacchandoham samāsenābhīdhīyate //16//
piḷavam grāmāntasthaṃ piḷavaṃ nagarasya ca /
In this passage, the list of ten kinds of pithas and places which correspond to them is as follows:

2. **upapitha:** a. Mālava b. Sindhu c. Nagara
5. **chandoha:** a. Harikera b. (the place) arisen in the middle of the salt-ocean c. Lampāka d. Kāṇcika e. Saurāṣṭra
6. **upacchandoha:** Kaliṅga b. the island of gold c. Kokaṇa
7. **piḷava:** a. (the place) on the boundary of the village b. (the place on the boundary) of the city c. Caritra d. Kośala e. Vindyā f. Kaumārapaurikā
8. **upapiḷava:** a. (the place) near to it
9. **śmaśāna:** a. (the place) where dead spirits haunt b. the ocean-shore
10. **upasmaśāna:** a. the garden b. the shore of the pool

Here, melāpaka and upamelāpaka which appeared in verse 10 were eliminated. Some of these names of places appear to be imaginary or to be mere modifiers; the number of these places is difficult to determine. However, in the Saṃvarodaya-tantra which follows the Hevajra-tantra, the system of the places of pilgrimage has been consolidated firmly as is shown in the following passage of the chapter 9 of the tantra:

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madyamāṁśapriyā nityam lajjābhayanāsaṇi ca yā /
dākinikhalasamhūṭah sahajā iī iit hathyate /
dese dese 'bhijāyante yoginiḥ sevayet sadā //12//
pīṭhopiṭhakṣetropakṣetrapakṣetrancaḥandhopacchandoham elāpakapam /
śmaśānaṁ copāsmaśānaṁ ca jambudvīpe vyavasthītāḥ //13//
pīṭhaṁ pūrṇagiraud khyātam pīṭham jālandharam tathā /
oḍiyānam tathā pīṭham pīṭham arbudam eva ca //14//
godāvary upapiṭham svāt tathā rāmeśvarā dvayam /
devikoṭabhidhānaḥ ca mālavaṅ copaṭihām //15//
kāmarūpaṁ dvyaṁ kṣetram oḍrakṣetraḥbhidhānakam /
triśakuny upakṣetram svāt hosalas copaṇṭakam //16//
kaliṅgalampākayos ca cchandohāṇ ca tathaiva ca /
kāṇcikā copacchandohsam himālaya viśeṣataḥ //17//
pretādhivāsinī melā grhadevatam eva ca /
saurāṣṭre suvaṇṇadvīpe ca upamelāpakadvayam //18//
```
śmaśānam pātaliputram śmaśānam sindhum eva ca / 
marukulatādvayasthānam upaśmaśāna kathaye //19//. 
bāhyapīṭhan tathā khyātam adhyātīmam deham ucyate / 
suadehe nādikārūpaṁ pīṭhanāvatī kārtīlai //20// 
tadṛṣṭam devalākāram tenādhyātmayavasthitih /
tena tatpīṭhāyam deham sarvabuddhanmo hy asau //21//
pīṭham pramuditā bhūmir upaṇīṭham vimalā tathā /
kuṭtram prabhākarī bhumir arciṣamty upakṣetram //22//
chandhoḥ bhimukhi jñeyopacchandohāḥ sudurjayā /
dūraṅgametī melā syād acaalākyopametali //23// 
śmaśānam sādhumātī caiva dharmapīṭhāmaśānākām /
bhūmipīṭhādisanśuddhim kathayāmi yathākramam //24//
pīṭhopaṇīṭhasevanāṁ nirmalo bhavati mānakāh /
bhraman nimittāṁ saṃlakṣya nirvikalpena dhīmatāḥ //25//19

“A woman who is always fond of meat and spirituous liquors and forgets 
shame and fear is said to be an ‘innate woman’ born of the 
ḏākinī family. They 
are born in each district; (these) yoginis should be worshipped at all times (12).

(The places of pilgrimage, that is,) pīṭha (‘the seat’), upaṇīṭha (‘the sub­ 
sidiary seat’), kuṭra (‘the field’), upaṇīṭra (‘the subsidiary field’), chandho, 
upacchandohā, melāpaka (‘the meeting-place’), upamelāpaka (‘the subsidiary 
meeting-place’), śmaśāna (‘the cemetery’) and upaśmaśāna (‘the subsidiary 
cemetery’) are located in Jambudvīpa (13).

(Name of places corresponding to these places of pilgrimage is as follows:)
3 kuṭra: a. Kāmarūpa b. Odra 
5 chandho: a. Kaliṅga b. Lamāpaka 
7 melāpaka: a. Pretādhivāsinī b. Grhadevata 
8 upamelāpaka: a. Saurāṣṭra b. Svarṇadvīpa (18) 
9 śmaśāna: a. Pātaliputra b. Sindhu 
10 upaśmaśāna a. Maru b. Kulaṭā (19)

Thus, the external pīṭhas (bāhyapīṭha) are told; the internal (adhyātmapīṭha) is 
said to be (the pīṭha which exists in) the body. It is said that the ‘abode’ of a 
vein in one’s own body has the name pīṭha (20). Its form has the aspect of a 
deity, (viz. a ḍākinī); for this reason, it is established as the internal (pīṭha). For 
this reason, the body consists of the ‘lump’ of them; he (who has this body) is 
equal to (the aggregate of) all the buddhas (21).

pīṭha is the (first) stage (of bodhisattvas called) Pramuditā (‘joyful’). 
upaṇīṭha is the (second stage) Vimalā (‘immaculate’).
kṣetra is the (third) stage Prabhākara (‘radiant’).
upakṣetra is the (fourth stage) Arciṣmati (‘flaming’) (22).
chandoha is the (sixth stage) Abhimukhi (‘confronted’).
upacchandoha is the (fifth stage) Sudurjaya (‘invincible’).
melāpaha is the (seventh stage) Dūraṅgamā (‘far-going’).
upamelāpaka is the (eighth stage) Acalā (‘immovable’) (23).
śmasāna is the (ninth stage) Śādhunā (‘successful’).
upasmasāna is the (tenth stage) Dharmameghā (‘the cloud of truth’).

I will speak of the purification of pīṭhas and so on (that is, the ten)
stages (of bodhisattvas) in due order (24).
By resorting to (the places of) pīṭhas or upaṇḍas, one can become
stainless. Wandering (amid these places) and observing (their) features,
he will become wise and be free from imaginary ideas (25).”

In the correspondence of ten pīṭhas and the ten stages of bodhisattvas
(菩萨十地), and especially in the last part of this passage (verses 22–25), we can
discern the original image of ‘the theory of external pīṭhas’. Practicers are imag­
ined to have done pilgrimage from one pīṭha to another with the consciousness
that they were walking through the Mahāyānic process of purifying mind by
degrees, if symbolically. Pilgrimage itself was their aim. According to the
Mahāyānic ideal, they hoped to be able to purify themselves through pilgrimage.
At the same time, according to the Tantric ideal, they hoped to be able to per­
sonally testify to the Tantric formula of attaining perfection (siddhi 悉地)
quickly through the Mahāyānic idea of performing difficult deeds. Thus, the
followers of the Saṃvarodaya-tantra came to be alternating practicers of both
pilgrimage and meditation.

However, this Mahāyānic idea of going on pilgrimage to ‘external pīṭhas’,
though already a deed symbolic of the Mahāyānic performance of “difficult
deed” (duhkara 難行) in its true sense of the word, was almost simultaneously
replace with the Tantric idea of ‘internal pīṭhas’ as is shown in the following
passage found in chapter 7 of the same text:

 athātah sampravakṣyāmi nādiṣcakra yathākramam /
dvāsaptatisahasrāṇi nādi dehāṅgā bhavet //1//
nādiṅka upanāḍīnāṁ tāsāṁ sathānasamāsrtāḥ/
vimśottatasatam nāma nāḍīprāḍhānyam ucyate //2//
nāḍīsthānaṁ ca pīṭhaṁ ca catuviniṁśatpamāṇataḥ /
tesāṁ madhye trayo nādyā aśrayanti ca sarvagāḥ //3//
pulliramalaye śirasī nakhadantavahā sthitā /
jālandharāśikāsthāne heśaromasamāvahā //4//
odiyāne dakṣinē harne nāḍī tvanmalavāhinī /
arbude prāṭhavamśe tu nāḍī pīṣitavāhinī //5//
godāvariśivamakarnē nāḍī snāyuvāhinī /
rāmeśvare bhruvo madhye asti vahati sarvadā //6//
Now, I will explain the circle of veins in due order. Veins circulating in the body are seventy-two thousand (1).

Veins rely on the abodes of these subsidiary veins. One hundred and twenty (veins) are said to be the principal veins (2).

The abode of veins, (that is,) ‘the seats’ (pīṭha) are twenty-four in number; in the middle of them dwell three veins; they are omnipresent (3).

In Pulliramalaya, (that is,) the head exists (a vein) flowing through fingernails and teeth. In the abode of the top of the head, (that is,) Jālandhara, there exists (a vein which) flows through the hair of the head and body (4).

In Oḍīvāna, (that is,) the right ear, a vein flows through the skin and dirt; and in Arbuda, (that is,) the back-bone, a vein flows through the flesh (5).

In Godāvari, (that is,) the left ear, a vein flows through the muscle. Among the eyebrows, (that is,) Rāmesvara, (a vein) always flows through bones (6).

A vein existing in Devīkota, (that is,) the eyes flows through the liver. In Mālava, (that is,) the abode of both shoulders is the vein flowing through the heart (7).

In the abode of Kāmaru, (that is,) the two armpits, (a vein) always flows through the eyes. In Oḍra, (that is,) the two breasts a vein always conveys bile (8).

In the navel, (that is,) the abode of Triśakuni, a vein flows through the lungs. In Kośala, (that is,) the top of the nose exists a vein flowing through the wreath of entrails (9).
In the abode of mouth, (that is,) Kaliṅga, always exists (a vein) moving in the rectum. In Lampāka, that is, the abode of the throat, the vein is always flowing through the stomach (10).

In Kāñci, the abode of the heart, a vein conveys faeces. In Himalaya, the abode of penis, a vein goes to the middle of the parting of the hair (11).

In Pretādhivāsinī, (that is,) the linga, the vein conveys phlegm. In the abode of rectum, (that is,) Grhadevatā is (a vein) always conveying purulent matter (12).

In Saurāṣṭra, (that is,) the both thighs a vein always conveys blood.

In Suvanādīvīpa, (that is,) the abode of the shank, a vein conveys sweat (13).

In Nagarā, (that is,) the toe, a vein is known to be always conveying fat. In Sindhu, the abode of the instep, (the vein) Rūpinī conveys tears (14).

In Maru, the abode of both thumbs, a vein conveys phlegm at all times. Existing in Kulatā, (that is,) the two knees, (a vein) always conveys snivel (15)."  

Here, the correspondence between each of twenty-four pīthas, that is, twenty-four parts of the body and twenty-four humours or internal organs is shown. We can reconstruct the idea of ‘the internal pīthas’ on the basis of verses 20 and 21 of above-mentioned chapter 9 as follows:

‘Internal pīthas’ are abodes of veins (nāḍīsthāna, VII.3.) as ‘external pīthas’ are abode of dākinīs. They are twenty-four parts of a body such as “the head” corresponding to the external pītha Pulliramalaya (VII.4.) etc. There are twenty-four veins (nāḍī) which rely on these internal pīthas such as “(a vein) flowing through fingernails and teeth” (nakhadantavadā, VII.4.) etc. These veins (nāḍī) are regarded as deities (devatā, IX.21.), that is, dākinīs. A nāḍī is nothing other than a dākinī as is shown exceptionally in the case of Rūpinī (VII.14.). A human body is composed of these twenty-four ‘internal pīthas’ such as “the head” (VII.4.) etc. as the world, that is, the Jambūdvīpa in this case, is composed of twenty-four ‘external pīthas’ i.e. twenty-four countries such as Pulliramalaya etc. An ‘internal pītha’ is existent as long as it is an abode of a vein. A vein in turn is existent as long as it conveys a humour in it or it flows in an internal organ. Therefore, if one makes twenty-four veins of one’s own body active, through yogic practice of making each of humours flow through the corresponding veins or each of veins flow through the corresponding internal organs, he transforms his body into an aggregate of internal pīthas or an aggregate of dākinīs, a homologous miniaturization of the world as an aggregate of external pīthas or an aggregate of dākinīs (dākinījāla). Thus, he can unite himself with the ultimate reality on the basis of the Tantric logic of symbolism.
ii. The structure of the Samvara-maṇḍala

The theory of internal pīṭhas is brought to completion in the Vajradāka-tantra which succeeds to the pīṭha theory of the Sampūtodbhava-tantra. We would like to show the latter half of chapter 14 of the Vajra-liiika-tantra, the first half of which corresponds with the last part of kalpa II. prakaraṇa I of the Sampūtodbhava-tantra and shows the correspondence between each of twenty-four external pīṭhas and twenty-four internal pīṭhas:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{esu sthānesu yāḥ kanyā nādirūpena samsthitāḥ} / \\
&\text{ity āha bhagavān vajrī vajradākāh yathāparam //14//} \\
&\text{svavīrasamāyogaḍākinijālasamvaram} / \\
&\text{kathayāmi samāsena tan me nigaditam śṛṇu //15//} \\
&\text{pulkramalaye khandaṇkapālināḥ pracaṇḍa nakhadantāvahā /} \\
&\text{jārāndhare mahākāmākālacaṇḍāḥṣi hešaromāvahā //16//} \\
&\text{odiyāne kaiṅkālaprabhāvati śvaṁmalāvahā /} \\
&\text{arube vikaṭaḍamsśrinā mahānāsā pīṣitāvahā / pīṭha //17//} \\
&\text{godāvāryāṁ suravairināvaramati nāhāruḥ vahati sarvadā /} \\
&\text{rāmeśvare amitāḥbhakharparī asthimālāvahā //18//} \\
&\text{devikoṭe vajraprabhalankaśvarī bukkam vahati nityasaḥ /} \\
&\text{mālave vajradehadrumacchaṭyā hṛdmanḍalāvahā //19//} \\
&\text{ity evam kathitan devi cittacakrasya khecari} \\
&\text{samāpattyā vyavasthitā //20//} \\
&\text{kāmarūpe ankurika-aṅravati caksur vahati sā nityam} / \\
&\text{odre vajrajaṭilamahābhairavā pīṭāvahā prakṛtiṭā / kṣetra //21//} \\
&\text{triṣkunau mahāvīravāyuvegā sā phuphusāvahā /} \\
&\text{kośale vajraḥūmkārasurābhakṣi antramālāvahā / upakṣetra //22//} \\
&\text{kaliṅge subhadrasāyāmdevi pārśvatas tu samākhyātā /} \\
&\text{lampaṇe vajrabhadrasubhadṛ udaram vahati garḍaḥā / chandoha //23//} \\
&\text{kāncyāṁ bhairavahayakarnā viṣṭāvaha prakṛtiṭā} / \\
&\text{himālaye virūpākṣahagānanā śimāntasya madhyagā vyavasthitā /} \\
&\text{upacchandoha //24//} \\
&\text{vākacakrasya bhūcari samāpattyā vyavasthitā //25//} \\
&\text{pretādhivāsinī mahābalacakravegā ślesmaṇi vahati sarvadā /} \\
&\text{grhaṇevaṭāyāṁ rataṇavajraḥkhaṇḍarohā pīṇyāṁ vahati nityasaḥ //26//} \\
&\text{saurṣṭre hayagrīvaśaṇḍūṇī naktavahā prakṛtiṭā /} \\
&\text{suvarṇadvīpe ākāśgarbhaḥacakravarmini prasvedavahā tathā /} \\
&\text{melāpakopamalāpakam matam //27//} \\
&\text{nagara mārārisuvīrā medavahā /} \\
&\text{śindhudeśe padmanarṭesuvaramahābalā āṣrū vahati nityasaḥ śaśāna //28//} \\
&\text{marau vairocanaḥacakravartini kheṭāvahā prakṛtiṭā /} \\
&\text{kulatāyāṁ vajrasattvalahāvīryā bālasimhānāvāhini / upaśmaśāna //29//}
\end{align*}
\]
“In these places (of pilgrimage), the girls are abiding in the forms of veins.’ Thus said the Reverend Lord, the holder of an adamant, Vajrapāka.

‘I will tell you summarily the supreme pleasure (śāṅvara) (which is to be realized) in the group of dākinīs perfectly united with all the heroes. Listen to what is said by me (15).

In Phulliramalaya, there exists Pracāṇḍā, (the consort) of Khaṇḍaka-pālin, flowing through fingernails and teeth.

In Jālandhara, there exists Caṇḍākṣī (united) with Mahākāṃkāla flowing through the hair of the head and body (16).

In Odīyāna, Prabhāvatī (united) with Kāṁkāla flows through the skin and dirt.

In Arbuda, Mahānāsā, together with Viṣṇudāmisṭrin flows through the flesh. (These four places are) pīṭhas (17).

In Godāvāri, Viṣramaṇi (united) with Suravairinā always flows through nahāruḥ (?)

In Rāmeśvara, Kharparī (united) with Aṃtābhā flows through the wreath of bones (18).

In Devikoṭā, Laṅkēsvārī (united) with Vajraprabha flows through the liver.

In Mālava, Drumacchāyā (united) with Vajradeha flows through the maṇḍala of the heart (19).

Thus what was said is, O Goddess, the aerial girls, who are belonging to the wheel of mind, abiding in union (with their male partners) (20).

In Kāmarūpa, Airāvatī (united) with Aṅkurika exists. (As a vein), she always flows through the eyes.

In Odāra, there exists Mahābhairavā (united) with Vajrajaṭilā. She is said to be (the vein) conveying bile. (These two are) hṣetras (21).

In Trīsakuni, there exists Vāyuvegā (united) with Mahāvīra. (As a vein) she flows through the lungs.

In Kośala, there exists Surābhakṣī, (united) with Vajrahūm-kāra, flowing through the wreath of entrails. (These are) upakṣetras (22).

In Kalinga, there exists Śyāmadevī (united) with Subhadra. (She is) said to be (the vein flowing) through the place of the ribs.

In Lampāka, there exists Subhadrā (united) with Vajrābhadrā. (As a vein, she is) Garddabhi flowing through the stomatch. (These are) chandohas (23).

In Kāśi, there exists Hayakarṇā (united) with Bhairava. (She is) said to be (the vein) conveying faeces.
In Himālaya, there exists Khagānanā, (united) with Virūpākṣa, going to the middle of the parting of the hair. (These are) upacchandohas (24).

(Thus) exist girls inhabiting on the earth (bhūcarī), who are belonging to the wheel of speech, being in union (with their male partners) (25).

In Pretādhivāsin, there exists Cakravegā (united) with Mahābala. She always conveys phlegm.

In Grhadevatā, there exists Khāṇḍarohā (united) with Ratnavajra. She always conveys purulent matter (26).

In Saurāṣṭra, there exists Śaunḍinī (united) with Hayagrīva. (She is) said to be (the vein) conveying blood.

In Suvarṇadvīpa, there exists Cakravarminī, (united) with Ākaśagarbha, conveying sweat. (These are) melūpakas and upamelūpakas (27).

In Nagara, there exists Suvīrā, (united) with Mārāri, conveying fat.

In Sindhu, There exists Mahābalā (united) with Padmanartesvara. (As a vein, she) always conveys tears. (These are) śmaśānas (28).

In Maru, there exists Cakravartinī (united) with Vairocana. (She is) said to be (the vein) conveying phlegm.

In Kulatā, there exists Mahāvīryā, (united) with Vajrasattva, conveying snivel. (These are) upaśmaśānas (29).

(Thus) exist girls inhabiting in the outer (of the three layers constituting the outer circle of the maṇḍala, that is), the region under the earth, who are belonging to the wheel of body, abiding in union (with their male partners) (30).

Thus, said the Reverend Lord, the holder of an adamant, the Adamantine-being, tathāgata, Vajraṭaka in perfect union with all the dākinīs, the Supreme Pleasure.”

In this passage, we find all the elements constituting the outer circle of the Samvara-maṇḍala of sixty-two deities, the names and positions of which are as follows:

I. The Inner Circle.
1. Heruka 2. Vajravārāhī the pericarp of the central lotus
3. Dākinī 4. Lāmā the east petal of the central lotus the south petal
5. Khāṇḍalohā 6. Rūpinī the west petal the north petal

II. The Outer Circle.
1. Dhākinīs in the Sky.
11. Kaṅkāla 12. Prabhāvatī west spoke (Oḍiyāna)
15. Suravairiṇa 16. Vīrāmati southeasteast spoke (Godāvari)
17. Amitābha 18. Kharpārī southwest spoke (Rāmeśvara)
19. Vajraprabha 20. Laṅkēsvarī northwest spoke (Devikoṭa)
21. Vajradeha 22. Drumacchāyā northeast spoke (Mālava)

ii. Ḍākinīs on the Earth.
23. Aṅkurika 24. Airāvatī east spoke (Kāmarūpa)
25. Vajrajaṭila 26. Mahābhairavī north spoke (Oḍra)
27. Mahābala 28. Vāyuvegā west spoke (Triśakuni)
29. Vajraḥūmkāra 30. Surābhakṣi south spoke (Kosala)
31. Subhadra 32. Śyāmadevī southeast spoke (Kaliṅga)
33. Vajrabhadra 34. Subhadrā southwest spoke (Laṅaka)
35. Mahābhairava 36. Hayakārṇa northwest spoke (Kāñcī)
37. Virūpākṣa 38. Khagānaṇa northeast spoke (Himālaya)

iii. Ḍākinīs under the Earth.
39. Mahābala 40. Cakravegā east spoke (Pretapuri)
41. Ratnavajra 42. Khaṇḍarohā north spoke (Grhadevata)
43. Hayagrīva 44. Śauṇḍinī west spoke (Saurāṣṭra)
45. Ākāśagarbha 46. Cakravarmanī south spoke (Suvarṇadvīpa)
47. Heruka 48. Suvīrā southeast spoke (Nagara)
49. Padmanartesvara 50. Mahābala southwest (Sindhu)
51. Vairocana 52. Cakravartinī northwest (Maru)
53. Vajrasattva 54. Mahāvīryā northeast (Kulatā)

III. Guardians.
55. Kākāṣyā east gate
56. Ulukāṣyā north gate
57. Śvānāṣyā west gate
58. Śūkarāṣyā south gate
59. Yamadṛḍhī southeast corner
60. Yamadūṭi southwest corner
61. Yamadarśtrī northwest corner
62. Yamamathanī northeast corner

The Saṁvara-māṇḍala thus completes itself by incorporating twenty­four dākinīs each of which are united with their male partners (dāhas). We should describe it the most properly by overlapping the three māṇḍalas of the body, speech and mind described separately in chapter four, five and six of the Abhidhānottarottara-tantra which follows the Vajraḍāka-tantra as follows:
These dākas or heroes (vīra) constituting the outer circle of the Samvara-maṇḍala were originally pilgrims in the process of purifying themselves. Therefore, the outer circle composed of three layers in the region which corresponds to the outer nine layers of the maṇḍala of the Vairocānābhi-saṃbodhi-sūtra (fig. 1) or the outer circle (B) of fig. 2 which is the region of people who are on the process of accumulating merits.

The inner circle of the maṇḍala of the Vairocānābhi-saṃbodhi-sūtra was adopted by the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala of the Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra (see fig. 2). The Hevajra-tantra adopted the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala replacing the five families of the former with five yoginīs. The inner circle of the Samvara-maṇḍala is simply the maṇḍala of the Hevajra-tantra; and now we find that the outer circle of the maṇḍala of the Vairocānābhi-saṃbodhi-sūtra which had been rejected by the Tattvasaṃgraha-tantra was restored here as the outer circle of the Samvara-maṇḍala (fig. 6).

In the Samvara-maṇḍala, the inner circle is the maṇḍala of the religion of sitting meditators and the outer circle is the maṇḍala of the religion of pilgrims. The form of the Samvara-maṇḍala apparently suggests that the two antithetical elements of Tantric Buddhism, viz. the Mahāyānic ideal of difficult deeds and the Tantric logic of the quick attainment of enlightenment were successfully
synthesized in the religion of the Samvara literature. In order to judge whether this assumption is correct or not, we must examine the structure of the Samvara-mandala once again.

**iii. The ‘critical’ character of the Samvara Tantrism**

The outer circle of the Samvara-mandala had not been formed before the theory of the internal pithas was completed. The aggregate of twenty-four dakinis united with twenty-four dakas was a complete world in itself. It had ceased to be the mandala of pilgrims when it was incorporated into the mandala of the Samvarodaya-tantra composed of fourteen deities which was essentially the
same as that of the Hevajra-tantra of sixteen deities. Therefore, the outer and the inner circles of Samvara-manḍala represent two different manḍalas of the religion of meditators which can function independently. This manḍala itself does not necessarily show that the two antithetical elements of Tantric Buddhism, viz. the Mahāyānic ideal of accumulating merits and the Tantric logic of yoga were successfully synthesized within it.

However, it has become apparent that the true problem does not exist in the fact that these two elements were synthesized. In reality, they did not have to be synthesized at all. Now it is apparent that the problem consists in the fact that the followers of the Samvara Tantrism, who were essentially Tantrists, retaining the Mahāyānic idea of the truth adopted from the fourth consecration of the Hevajra-tantra, rejected the Mahāyānic practice needed for realizing the Mahāyānic truth.

The idea of the fourth consecration, which teaches the Mahāyānic idea of the truth, was accepted in the Samvara Tantrism at all times. In the Tattvasaṁgraha-tantra, there were no metaphysical or philosophical arguments about the abstract truth discussed. Arguments of this kind were not necessary for the followers of the tantra as they could unite themselves with the truth itself instantly. In the Hevajra-tantra, there is an independent chapter which argues about the nature of truth, viz. Tattvapāṭalāḥ pañcamaḥ. However, its contents were not the arguments about abstract, philosophical problems as we can see it from the passage we quoted above (see p. 209). In the Samvara literature, each text has an independent chapter about the nature of truth, such as chapter 29 of the Samvarodaya-tantra: Tattvanirdeśa-patāla, chapter 69 of the Abhidhānottarottaratana: Tattvapāṭala, kalpa II, prakaraṇa i of the Samputodbhava-tantra: Nirākāriṇkṣataattvopadesabhadhāvanā-prakaraṇa, the first chapter of the Vaijraṭāka-tantra: Paramatattvāvalokaviṣayāvatārajñāna-patāla etc. in which it attempts to express the truth itself with words.

This tendency in the Samvara literature of betraying Tantrism may be symbolically indicated with following quotations: one is from abovementioned chapter of the Samvarodaya-tantra (abbrev. SU) and the other from abovementioned prakaraṇa of the Samputodbhava-tantra. These were referred to by Bston in his abovementioned work together with the quotation from the Hevajra-tantra we have discussed (see p. 215) as the contents of the fourth consecration. The passage from the Samvarodaya-tantra is as follows (SU. XXIX.):\(^\text{55}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
nirūpamkṛtam ānandaḥ svayambhūr udayati asau / 
\text{tathācittatayā cittam ekaviśvāvabodhakam} / / 10 / 
\text{bhāvābhāvavivekatāviraḥ yatra svayaṁ rājate} / 
\text{sāndrānandamayayaḥ prabodhamahīṁ vyomāntaravyāpakah} / 
\text{nānākāravīsamṛi nirmalatāyādarśasuprad maṇḍalam} / 
\text{prāyaḥ sarvasukhālayaḥ sa sahajānandaḥ caturthākyayā} / / 11 / 
\text{nātra praṁṇā na copāyaḥ samyaktattvāvabodhakah} / 
\text{yoginyāḥ kalpanāḥ sarvā maṇḍalam bhuvanatrayam} / / 12 / 
\end{align*}
\]
“And likewise, (this samvara, the supreme pleasure as the ultimate reality) is not the spiritual being and (at the same time) is the spirit itself. It is the complete one who awakens (10).

Here, (in the supreme pleasure, the Lord Heruka,) who is free from diffusive imaginations as to whether he exists or does not exist, shines forth of himself. He is composed of intense pleasure, great in making people awaken and spreading throughout the entire sky. He is (at the same time nothing other than) the mandala which is making various kinds of appearances and shining like a mirror because of its stainlessness. In short, he (the Lord Heruka) is the abode of all the pleasure and is, in the fourth name, the innate joy (11).

Here, there is neither prajñā nor upāya. He makes (living beings) awaken to the right truth. All the diffusive imaginations are (nothing other than all) the yoginis (situated in this mandala). The three worlds are nothing other than the mandala (12.)”

The quotation from the Samputodbhava-tantra (SPU.II.i.) is:

svasaṁvedyam bhaved jñānam parasaṁvittivarjitam /
khasamaṁ virajam śūnyam bhāvabhāvātmakaṁ param //41//
prajñopāyasamābhūtām rāgavirāgamiśritam /
sa eva prānināh prāṇah sa eva paramāksarāh //42//
sarvavypāpi sa cvāsau sa eva tu śrīherukaḥ /
bhāvabhāvau tadudbhūtāv anyāni yānī tānī ca //43//

“The wisdom (which is the mind of enlightenment) is recognizable only by one’s self. It is free from perception by others. It is equal to the empty sky, free from dust (of passion) and is essenceless. It is of the essence of existence and (at the same time) of non-existence (41).

It has originated from prajñā and upāya (united indivisibly). It is the mixture of desire and non-desire. It is the vital air of all living beings. It is the highest letter (Om) (42).

It is pervading the whole (universe). It is nothing other than the auspicious Heruka. From it, (all the) existence and non-existence have originated, and (all) other things (have originated) (43).”

These truths obviously claim themselves to be placed higher than the state realized through the Tantric practice of yoga. Though they should have been realized through nothing other than the Mahāyānic practice of pilgrimage, still the followers of the Samvara Tantrism relinquished the practice.

In the Hevajra-tantra, the Tantric logic of symbolism was betrayed by the Mahāyānic idea of the truth which is to be realized through difficult deeds. The followers of the Samvarodaya-tantra in their turn took revenge on the Mahāyānic tendency replacing the practice of pilgrimage to external pithas with the yogic practice based on the theory of the internal pithas; but, they did it too carelessly and too hastily.
After the theory of internal pīthas was established, they substituted the yogic practice of making humours circulate within the body for the Mahāyānic practice of doing the pilgrimage along the lengthy path of the three great uncountable aeons, or at least for going on pilgrimage all over the Indian subcontinent, though pilgrimage itself was already a deed symbolizing the former. The pilgrim, who being urged by the fourth consecration of the Hevajra-tantra had once started on a pilgrimage, resigned his pilgrimage too easily and returned to the state of a yogin sitting without any relation to the outer world. When he resigned pilgrimage, he had not settled the pending question set by the Hevajra-tantra. They should not have attempted to solve this question through the Tantric logic; they should not have made the practice of pilgrimage internal. In doing so, however, they crushed the Mahāyānic practice which was needed to realize the truth shown in the fourth consecration.

Here, we find that a new aspect of the ‘critical’ or precarious character of Tantric Buddhism presents itself in the Samvara Tantrism. The followers of Samvara Tantrism were entertaining the Mahāyānic idea of truth, which is to be realized only through the Mahāyānic practice of accumulating merits over the unimaginably long period of the three great uncountable aeons; still they engaged in the Tantric practice which is not valid for realizing the Mahāyānic idea of the truth expressed in such maxims as were quoted above.

The ‘crisis’ of the Samvara Tantrism lies in the fact that the Mahāyānic ideal makes the Tantric logic of yoga and the Tantric practices based on it only metaphorical or conventional; and the Tantric practice in turn makes the Mahāyānic ideal end only in an empty talk.

The ‘crisis’ innate within the Samvara Tantrism should have been condensed to its critical point of explosion and developed thereby a new, revolutionary system of Tantric Buddhism. I have no way to determine whether it occurred at all or how it occurred as my knowledge about Tantrism does not go any further. Therefore, I can only surmise that the general decline of Buddhism at the time indicates that the critical point of explosion was never reached. It would seem that there were no new system developed within the Tantric Buddhism of India which surpassed the Buddhism of śmaśāna, viz. the Hevajra-tantra and the subsequent tantras of the Samvara literature in their vitality.

Notes
TANTRIC BUDDHISM (INCLUDING CHINA AND JAPAN)


3 次明以此一字通勝諸經論等所明理者，且大日經及金剛頂經所明皆不過此善提為因大悲為根方便為究竟之三句，若略廣就略闡未詳本，則一切教義不過此三句，束此三句以爲一符字，廣而不亂略而不離此則如來不思議力法無加持之所為也，雖千經萬論亦不出此三句一字。Ju-kkan-jā (『十卷章』). Koyasan University, 1959, p. 70.


9 We find an example which looks, at first sight, contradictory to this in the apabhraṃa verses of the Hevajra-tantra (II. v. 20–23.) providing an evidence for the phenomenon of sañcāra, the transposition of yoginīs. In these four verses, four yoginīs, viz. Pukkasī, Śavarī, Candālī and Doṃbī, who are located on the outer circle, alternately ask the Lord, who has ‘melted’ (drutabhūta) in the sexual union with his consort Nalrātmyā, to stand up again and practice sexual yoga also with them. This is, however, to be taken as an exceptional example reflecting the influence of the original practice of the group of eight yoginīs. To this passage, Snellgrove gives following translation:

(20) “Arise, O Lord, thou whose mind is compassion, and save me, Pukkasī. Embrace me in the union of great bliss, and abandon the condition of voidness.”

(20) “Without you I die. Arise, O Hevajra. Leave the condition of voidness, and prosper the doings of Śavarī.”

(22) “O Lord of Bliss, who speak your words of power for the benefit of the world, why do you remain in the void? I, Candāl, entreat you, for without you I cannot consume the four quarters.”


11 Ḫdi skad bdag gis thos pa dus gcig na / bcom Idan Ḧdas de bshin gšegs pa thams cad byin gis rlob pa / rdo rje chen po rgya che ha / chos kyi dbyiṅs kyi pho brai / rdo rje hdsin thams cad Ḧdu sa / de bshin gšegs pa'i mtho mtho pa / mtho mtho ma Ḧbuṅ Ḧi bhaṅ chen po chen po chen po chen po / byaṅ chub sems dpaṅ lus
This passage is quoted in Kamalasila's A CRITICAL TANTRISM Part 2, 241-1-5-6. This is a word of double meaning. The commentator Buddhaguhya rightly says in his Longer Commentary: “bodhicitta is of two kinds: one is the brave mind
seeking after enlightenment, the other, the mind of the nature of enlightenment." de la hyan chub kyi sems la yan rnam pa gnis te byan chub kyi phyir sems dpah dan / byan chub kyi ran bshin gyi sems so // Peking. Vol. 77, 236–4–3–4 (Revised) and 116–4–5 (Unrevised Longer Commentary). Bodhicitta shown in the axiom 'prajñā plus upāya is bodhicitta' (see p. 21) corresponds with what Buddhagubhya says “the mind of the nature of enlightenment”.


28 Taisho. Vol. 18, p. 3, a, 1.28 f.

29 Taisho. Vol. 39, p. 600, c, 1. 19 f.

30 Taisho. Vol. 39, p. 600, c, 1. 4 f.


32 住心雖無量. 剪斷十刺利之衆毛. Taisho. No. 2425, Vol. 77, p. 303, c, 1. 27 f.

33 gsañ ba pañi bdag po ſœ̄ ni byañ chub sems dpah byañ chub kyi sems mnam par dag pañi sgo shes bya ba / chos snañ bahl sgo chos snañ bahl tshul dañ po ste / gañ la gnas na bya chub sems dpah mnams tshugs chuñ nus sgrīb pa thams cad spoñi bahl uñ ne ḡdsin thob ciñ // de thob pa byañ chub sems dpah mnams sañs ſrgyas thams cad dañ lhan cīg ḡhrog pa ḡthag pa ḡgyur / mnun par šes pa ina dag kyanṛ ḡthob par ḡgyur / skad dañ sgra dañ bdyains mñañ yas pañi gznis kyanṛ ḡthob par ḡgyur / sems can gyn
bsam pa rjes su śes pa dañ / de bshin gšegs pa thams cad kyis byin gyis brlabs šin ḥkhor ba na yons su mi fiam pañi chos can du Ḥgyur / sems can gyi don bya ba dag la yons su mi skyo bar Ḥgyur / ḍhus ma byas kyi tshui khrims la rab tu gnas pa dañ / log par lta ba nram par span śa pa dañ / yañ dag par lta ra rtogs par khoṅ du chud par Ḥgyur ba yin no // gsaṅ ba pañi bdag po / gshan yan agrib pa thams cad spoṅ bañi tin i ne ḍhisī ḍla gnas pañi byan chub sems dpañ ni / mos pañi stobs bskeyed pa / tshegs chuṅ ḍus sans rgyas kyi chos thams cad yons su rdsogs par byed de / gsaṅ ba pañi bdag po / mdor na rigś kyi bu ḍam rigś kyi bu mo de ni yon tan dpag tu med pa dañ / Idañ par Ḥgyur ro // Peking. Vol. 5, 241-3.8-4.5.

34 Sanskrit text edit. by K. Horiuchi, 1~17.
35 Horiuchi’s text, 18.
36 Horiuchi, ibid. 19.
37 Horiuchi, ibid. 20~21.
38 Horiuchi, ibid. 20~29.
39 Horiuchi, ibid. 210~213.
41 Snellgrove, ibid. Part II, p. 61.
42 MS belonging to the University of Tokyo, No. 511 (dated 1595 A.D.) vajraṃ dömbl bhavet mudrā padmāṃiti tathāvai ca / katma rajakī sadākhyātā brāhmaṇī ca tathāgatī / (11b. 2~3)
MS belonging to the University of Tokyo, No. 509 (dated 1830 A.D.) vajrath dāmbī bhavyaṅ mudrā padma nartī tathāvai ca / karmma rajakī sadākhyātā brāhmaṇī ca tathāgatī / (8a. 1~2)
MS belonging to the University of Tokyo, No. 512 (dated 1844 A.D.) vajraṃ dömbl bhaven mudrā padman nartī tathāvai ca / karma rajakī sadākhyātā brāhmaṇī ca tathāgatī / (9b. 6~10a. 1)
MS belonging to the University of Tokyo, No. 510 (not dated) vajraṃ dömbl bhaven mudrā padma nartī tathāvai ca / karma raṁjakī (?) samākhyātā brdhmaṇī ca tathāgata // (7b. 5~6)
MS belonging to the University of Kyoto, No. 2252787 (dated 1911 A.D.) vajra dömbl bhaven mudrā padma nartī tathāvai ca // karma rajakī samākhyātā brāhmaṇī ca tathāgatī / (8a. 8~8b. 1)
43 In the Hevajra-tantra, the maṇḍala is described in conformity to the Tattvasaṅgraha-tantra. yathi Tattvasaṅgraha maṇḍalavidhis tathā kartavyam // “The maṇḍala-ritual should be performed as it is given in the Tattvasaṅgraha.” HV. II. v. 57. Snellgrave, ibid. Part II, p. 84, Part I, p. 113.
44 For this idea of the structure of the human body, see S. Tsuda, ‘四輪三脈の身體観’、『中村元博士還暦記念論集インド思想と仏教』, Tokyo, 1974, p. 293 f.
46 The Collected Works of Bu ston, edit. by Lokesh Chandra, Ja, 595~5~6.
47 Snellgrove, ibid. Part II, 100, Part I, p. 119.
49 S. Tsuda. The Samvarodaya-tantra Selected Chapters, p. 104 f.
51 S. Tsuda, The Samvarodaya-tantra Selected Chapters, p. 93 f.
52 Tsuda, ibid. p. 260 f.
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54 For the Sanskrit text of the Vajraḍāha-tantra, see S. Tsuda, Theory of Piṭha in the Samvara Literature, Buzan Gakuho, No. 17.18.


56 For this passage, see S. Tsuda, The Rite of Consecration in the Samputodbhavatantra, Studies in Buddhist Thought abovementioned (Note 45).